

Building on Stone:
Perspectives on the
Shelby Cullom
Davis Center for
Historical Studies
at Fifty

Edited by Angela N. H. Creager

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Picture of all of the current and former Davis Center directors except Lawrence Stone. Top panel (all names given left to right): David Bell, Anthony Grafton; middle panel: Gyan Prakash, Philip Nord, Natalie Zemon Davis; bottom panel: Daniel Rodgers, Angela Creager, William Jordan.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

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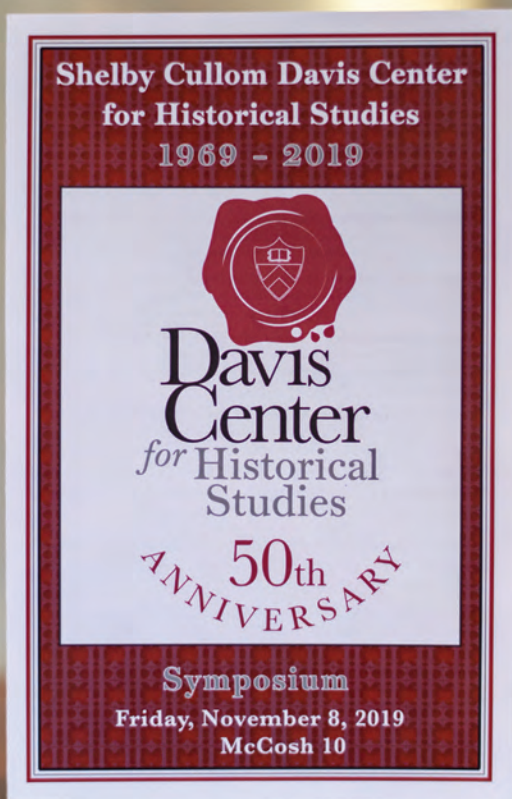
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Photograph of the Symposium program taken on November 8, 2019.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I am deeply grateful to the symposium speakers, several of whom traveled a long distance to join us. Jennifer Goldman organized the symposium and reception with energy and flair, and Indra Gill designed our program. Randall Pippenger managed our event email. The work he and Sean Vanatta undertook on the history of the Davis Center was critical to planning the event; they were excellent collaborators and co-conspirators. Kim Hastings did a meticulous job copyediting the manuscript, and Leona Rosso-Dzugan at Princeton Printing and Mailing designed and oversaw production of this volume. Francesca DeRosa offered her excellent skills in proof-reading. Sameer Khan of Fotobuddy captured our November 8 event in his wonderful photographs. Two contributions to our celebration are not recorded here except in pictures: Dan Rodgers gave a Davis Center-style recap of the talks to end our symposium, and Phil Nord offered a toast to begin the party—and to wish Natalie Zemon Davis a happy birthday! I extend my appreciation to them and to all of the other former directors for contributing to our celebration. Lastly, I thank Keith Wailoo, who was our department chair, for his support of all of my initiatives at the Davis Center, including this event.

The published remarks are arranged roughly chronologically in their coverage of the Davis Center, which differs somewhat from their order of presentation on November 8. Sean Vanatta and Randall Pippenger's contribution is an excerpt from their longer history, *"Let's Have at It": The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Fifty*, the companion publication to this booklet.



Keith Wailoo giving Welcoming Comments.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

WELCOMING COMMENTS | Keith Andrew Wailoo

Hello, I'm Keith Wailoo, chair of the History department. I'm honored to welcome you to the fiftieth-anniversary celebration of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, its charter created in the eventful month of April 1968, six days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, and updated in June 1969.

June 1969 was another eventful month in the life of the nation and this region, with high-profile, though less tragic, events like the retirement speech of Mickey Mantle and the infamous fire on Cleveland's Cuyahoga River. It was also a year of not-so-high profile events, whose significance grew with time to take on resounding significance.

For example, June 1969 was the month when police carried out an early morning raid on a gay bar called the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, prompting a riot and a catalyzing activism—an event still noted, celebrated, and acknowledged as, if not a start of something fundamentally new, then a crucial milestone event in our nation's history. And that very month in Princeton, on a slightly different register, a small gathering called the Davis Center was instituted. Of course, it was nowhere near as tumultuous as the events in Greenwich Village, and I'm told no police were involved.

The heart of the Davis Center was to be, and remains today, the weekly seminar, focused on discussion of a work of historical scholarship by the author—a discussion that often built up the work, often took it apart, but always did so with an eye toward advancing the field of historical inquiry. The success of this enterprise owes a great deal to the founding gift of Shelby Cullom Davis, but the Center's accomplishments over the decades would not have been possible without the faculty members from History who took turns directing it, the visiting fellows, students, faculty members who animated and enriched the weekly discussions, and (perhaps most important) the spirit of collaborative and combative exchange (more collaborative in recent decades) about how to do history, what the proper subject matter of the field ought to be, and the pursuit of excellence in the discipline.

To quote the founding document, the aim was to develop Princeton “as a leading center for historical research” and to “stimulate intellectual interchange within the Department of History, between members of the Department and scholars in other disciplines, and between members of the Department and visitors from this country and overseas.”¹ In a sense related to Stonewall, the goal was to build a community. It is impossible to list the number of books, pathbreaking articles, and careers that have been nurtured and shaped by the Center.

Over the years, the Center has done far more—under the directorship of Lawrence Stone (about whom more shortly), followed by Natalie Zemon Davis, William Chester Jordan, and then Tony Grafton, who inaugurated the Lawrence Stone Lectures series in honor of the Center's first director, who led the effort from 1969 to 1990. Grafton was followed as director by Gyan Prakash, Dan Rodgers, Phil Nord, and Angela Creager, and a new era will begin next year with David Bell as director. Across the years, here in Princeton in the History department and far beyond, and certainly throughout the field of history, this institution has had its own kind of resounding intellectual impact—if not quite “Stonewallesque,” then close.

Princeton president Bill Bowen wrote to Lawrence Stone in 1987, “When I think back on the events of the last decade or so, I am reminded of how many times I have used the Davis Center as an example of the intellectual gains that can be achieved by bringing together individuals from a ‘home campus’ with exceptional visitors for spirited discussions.”² Having watched academic centers (here and elsewhere) come and go, many of which I regard as self-centers (designed in the image of the creator, but not with an eye toward advancing the field and enduring across the years), I think that Bowen's comment highlights one simple truth of why the Davis Center endured and thrived.

Today, we'll hear reflections about this amazing academic

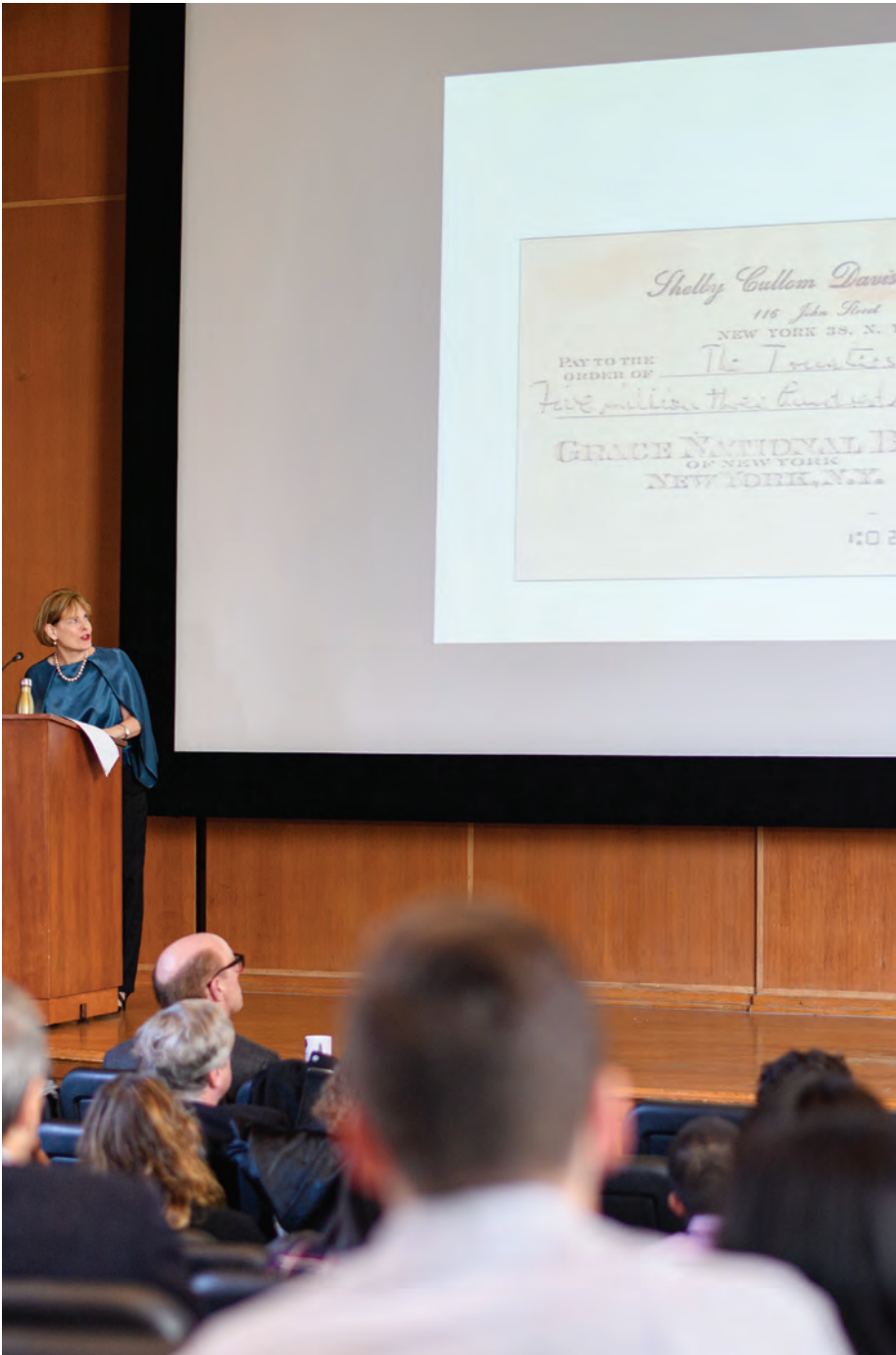
¹Press Release, Department of Public Information, Princeton University, December 8, 1968, Office of Communications Records, Series 3: Faculty and Staff Biographical Files, 1886–1987, Folder: Lawrence Stone, AC168, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

²William G. Bowen to Lawrence Stone, July 22, 1987, folder 3, box 15, Office of the President Records: William G. Bowen Subgroup, AC187, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

community, about its past leaders, its participating scholars, and its enduring “intellectual gains”—in two panels of speakers. I will serve as chair of the first panel, which involves a biography of Stone by Professor David Cannadine, two reflections from the standpoint of Davis Center participants (Professors Carlo Ginzburg and Andrew Abbott), and comments on the original Davis gift and the experience of working in the Center by current director Angela Creager. The second panel will be chaired by the incoming Davis Center director, David Bell.

Before I hand the stage over to the speakers in our first panel, let me pause to acknowledge those who have done the work of organizing this fantastic event. Professor Angela Creager, the Thomas M. Siebel Professor in the History of Science and current director of the Davis Center, had the vision and has done the extraordinary work of organizing this event, with the exceptional assistance of Jennifer Goldman and the staff of the History department. A round of applause for all of them, please.

Welcome, once again, to what I expect will be a fascinating discussion.



Angela Creager showing a slide of Shelby Cullom Davis's \$5,306,903.17 check, dated November 10, 1964, which endowed the Davis Center for Historical Studies.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

THE GIFT | Sean H. Vanatta and Randall Todd Pippenger

Two years ago, at the initiative of Professor Angela N. H. Creager, the eighth director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, we began a project dedicated to documenting and preserving the first fifty years of the Davis Center's history. At first, we saw this as a matter of assembling an intellectual archive of sorts by conducting oral histories and interviews with former directors, executive secretaries, managers, department chairs, and long-term participants in the Davis Center's seminar; compiling surveys of past fellows; and gathering annual reports, programs, memoranda, private correspondence, and newspaper, magazine, and journal articles. A bit later, Professor Creager commissioned us to write a short commemorative essay for the Davis Center's fiftieth anniversary. That "short" essay, *"Let's Have at It": The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Fifty*, turned into a large forty-thousand-word pamphlet (available in hard copy to any and all who would like one for their bookshelves!). The length reflects the rich supply of stories and intellectual artifacts we recovered documenting the history of the Center—with its directors, fellows, and staff—and of the department in which it sits—with its faculty, graduate students, personnel, and even built environment. In many ways, *"Let's Have at It"* is not only a history of the Davis Center and the seminar that made it famous but also one of Princeton's History department and its members for the past half century.

In its first half century of existence, almost four hundred scholars have been formally connected to the Davis Center for Historical Studies as fellows, executive secretaries, and directors. Thousands more, including both of us, have received financial support from the Center for academic research. What follows is an excerpt from our pamphlet that details the financial foundation of the Davis Center, the generosity and "the gift" of Shelby Cullom Davis '30.

Shelby Cullom Davis graduated in history with highest honors from Princeton in 1930 and went on to earn an MA from Columbia and a PhD from Geneva in 1934. (So did his wife, Jeanne, a Wellesley

grad and remarkable person in her own right.) But in the depths of the Great Depression, history was not to be his vocation. Davis went into investment banking, set up his own company, and did very well. He was active in Princeton alumni affairs and chaired the History department's advisory council beginning in 1941.

In January 1961, Davis decided to make a sizeable gift to the department, drawing on a fund he had been building. Beginning with an initial investment of \$4,000 in 1938, Davis had contributed steadily to a trust fund intended for his twenty-two-year-old daughter, Diana Cullom Davis. By 1961, the fund amounted to more than \$2 million. As Davis wrote to Harold H. Helm, the chairman of Princeton's Board of Trustees, "Since our daughter has been otherwise provided for, we are seriously considering turning over this trust fund to Princeton University for the express benefit of the History Department."³

As a legal matter, Princeton's lawyers explained, Shelby Davis was not entitled to simply turn over the funds. Rather, that authority lay with Diana. To ensure her consent and the unimpeachable legal propriety of the transaction, Princeton's fundraising officers conceived of a plan they deemed a "master stroke," a public signing ceremony, where Diana would sign the trust over to Princeton.⁴ The university's attorneys implored Davis to make very clear to his daughter that the money, which on further accounting actually totaled \$3.8 million, was entirely hers, and that she had no obligation to sign it over.⁵ Shelby Davis, for his part, found it "unfortunate that lawyers and accountants had to complicate the whole matter."⁶

The master stroke did not go off as planned. Diana Davis, as it turned out, was unaware of the existence of her trust, and when her parents explained their plans for this part of her patrimony, Diana refused to sign over the funds.⁷ Shelby had informed the university that the transfer was entirely a "family affair," but he had not been

³ Shelby Cullom Davis to Harold H. Helm, January 20, 1961, folder 17, box 481, Office of the President Records: Robert F. Goheen Subgroup, AC193, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library (hereafter: Goheen Papers).

⁴ Ricardo A. Mestres to Robert F. Goheen, May 17, 1961, folder 17, box 481, Goheen Papers.

⁵ William Pell Jr. to Mr. & Mrs. Shelby Cullom Davis, May 29, 1961, folder 17, box 481, Goheen Papers.

⁶ Ricardo A. Mestres to Robert F. Goheen, June 5, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

⁷ Mestres to Goheen, June 5, 1961.

fully forthcoming about the internal complexities involved.⁸ In one version of events, Diana had not been aware of her trust's existence because Davis never intended the trust to come to her. Rather, by creating a trust in her name, Davis constructed a tax shelter for future philanthropy, secure from federal tax authorities. Shelby Davis later lamented that Diana could not well appreciate these careful designs. "The reason for securities to be registered in the name of someone who is not really the owner," Davis explained to the editor of *Newsweek*, "might be too obtuse for the young female mind."⁹

The press offered another version of events in the days after Diana refused to attend the signing ceremony. In a front-page story in the *New York Times*, Diana Davis accused her father of applying financial "pressure" because he disapproved of her fiancé, a high school history teacher.¹⁰

After news broke that Diana had hired a lawyer to ensure that the trust came to her, Shelby Davis told *Newsday*: "I fear what Diana needs is a good spanking."¹¹



Associated Press Photo **Won't Surrender Funds**

NEW YORK—Heiress Diana Cullom Davis, who has refused to surrender a \$3,800,000 trust fund to her father's Alma Mater, Princeton University, is shown in the garden of her New York apartment Friday. Miss Davis, 22, is at odds with her father over the fund, which he started for her with \$4,000 at her birth. She plans to wed John Means Spencer, a school teacher, on June 24.

As the saga over the Davis trust played out in the national press, alumni grew concerned. A self-described "fundraiser emeritus" from Savannah, Georgia, mailed this clipping to the administration, requesting the university's "official position" on the matter.

Source: Freeman Napier Jelks Jr. to Office of the Treasury, Princeton University, June 5, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

⁸ Mestres to Goheen, May 17, 1961.

⁹ Shelby Cullom Davis to Osborn Elliott, June 26, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

¹⁰ Charles Grutzner, "Girl Refuses to Yield 3.8 Million to Princeton as Father Planned," *New York Times*, June 2, 1961, 1.

¹¹ John Van Doom, "Spanking New Idea Hits Father of Balky Heiress," *Newsday*, June 5, 1961, 4.

Shelby Davis was certain his daughter would eventually come around. "It is by no means dead, Harold," Davis assured Helm after the signing ceremony fell through.¹² Shelby's optimism was warranted, and by late June 1961 he had reconciled with Diana.¹³ Diana agreed to donate the proceeds of her trust, less \$1 million that she would keep, for the purposes her father intended. As Davis and his daughter disputed how the trust would be distributed, the assets continued to accumulate.¹⁴ Princeton's fundraising officers did their best to stay out of the conflict. "There's a lot of money involved," one member of

the administration wrote, as Diana's lawyer floated a complex tax scheme strongly opposed by Shelby Davis, "but the University's reputation is also involved."¹⁵ Shelby Davis's public machinations made Princeton's fundraising officers cringe, but they reflected a deep, patriarchal loyalty to both alma mater and family that had motivated Davis's generosity in the first place. The gift was to recognize both, by honoring his father, George Henry Davis, Princeton class of 1886.¹⁶ (For those of you who are feeling outraged on behalf of Diana Davis, she did well financially and is now a major conservative philanthropist, supporting causes such as the Federalist Society.)



Shelby Cullom Davis and Robert F. Goheen pictured in the *Daily Princetonian*. "I am happy to present this fulfillment of my pledge to Princeton," Davis remarked at the banquet honoring his gift, continuing, "a fulfillment which by good luck and perhaps some good management is even ... greater than originally anticipated."

Source: John Kretzmann, "Goheen Accepts Davis Gift; \$5 Million Bolsters History," *Daily Princetonian*, November 11, 1964, folder 1, box 37, Historical Subject Files Collection, AC109, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

¹² Shelby Cullom Davis to Harold H. Helm, June 1, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

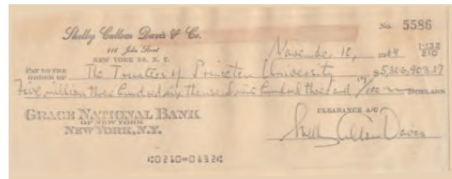
¹³ Shelby Cullom Davis to Robert F. Goheen, June 27, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

¹⁴ Diana Cullom Davis to the Trustees of Princeton University, June 22, 1961; and Ricardo A. Mestres to Robert F. Goheen, Harold H. Helm, James F. Oates, and Edgar E. Gremmel, September 18, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

¹⁵ Ricardo A. Mestres to William Pell Jr., September 8, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

¹⁶ "Draft of Proposed Purposes to Be Included in the Shelby Cullom Davis Trust," n.d., ca. May 1961, folder 17, box 481, Goheen Papers.

The assets continued to appreciate until the date of transfer, in November 1964.¹⁷ To mark the occasion, President Goheen hosted a lavish dinner party at the Princeton Inn (now Forbes College), where a portrait of George Henry Davis was unveiled on what would have been his one hundredth birthday.



The copy of Shelby Cullom Davis's \$5,306,903.17 check, which, until Angela Creager and Sean Vanatta pried it out of its frame to obtain this copy, hung in the Davis Center conference room. The check will be restored as soon as practical.



At the banquet celebrating Davis's gift, President Goheen presented Davis with a portrait of Davis's late father, George Henry Davis. The portrait, which can be seen in the background, subsequently hung in room 211 of Dickinson Hall, where the Davis seminar has met since the early 1990s.

Source: Pamphlet, Princeton University, "The Establishment of the George Henry Davis '86 and Shelby Cullom Davis '30 Fund in Support of the Department of History," November 10, 1964, folder 1, box 37, Historical Subject Files Collection, AC109, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Shelby Davis arrived at the celebration with a surprise in hand. Having liquidated all of the trust's holdings over the previous month, Davis presented Goheen with a check in the amount of \$5,306,903.17.¹⁸

Because such a sum would earn the endowment \$600 of interest per day, the university officers bypassed the usual channels and whisked the check to New York for deposit. They preserved a xerox of the check for posterity—and to impress the “girls” in the university's

¹⁷ William Pell Jr. to File [1], December 27, 1961, folder 2, box 482, Goheen Papers.

¹⁸ Ricardo A. Mestres to R. F. Goheen, October 30, 1964, folder 3, box 482, Goheen Papers.

accounting office.¹⁹ As for the portrait of George Henry Davis, it now presides over all of our seminars. The check established the Shelby Cullom Davis Fund; the Center began its operation five years later, after Lawrence Stone became chair and envisioned a research seminar and visiting fellows as the best way to use the support.

The Davis gift was steeped in ironies. The first was that the field of history, and in particular the department at Princeton, was poised on the brink of significant transformation, away from entrenched elite-driven political history, toward new social and cultural methods that emphasized the lives and experiences of ordinary people. At the celebratory dinner, President Goheen expressed his continued adherence to the idea that “the individual man, the Great Man, is still a prime factor in human affairs. That is how Princeton teaches it, and,” Goheen continued, “I believe that is what gives Princeton men their drive and morale—their sense of individual worth and potential.”²⁰ However, in the audience were newer and younger faculty members who would soon pursue very different lines of inquiry. Foremost among them was Stone, new to the department and seated at a back table.²¹

Second, Davis conveyed his gift to a university on the cusp of transformations that would profoundly alienate him and other conservative alumni. Here, Goheen's invocation of “Princeton men” signaled the key point. In November 1964, coeducation was at most a topic of muted discussion on campus.²² Students, faculty, and alumni were divided on the issue, and Goheen initially opposed the idea. Princeton's leadership also recognized the wider currents of social change and the specific fact that Princeton was increasingly losing talented young men to coed peer institutions. After thorough study, influential trustees came around, and in January 1969 the trustees embraced a coed future for Princeton.²³ Davis, whom Richard Nixon appointed

¹⁹ Frederic Fox to Ricardo A. Mestres, November 17, 1964, folder 2, box 482, Goheen Papers; and Ricardo A. Mestres to Frederic Fox, November 19, 1964, folder 2, box 482, Goheen Papers.

²⁰ Draft for the President, “Shelby Cullom Davis Day,” November 10, 1964, folder 3, box 482, Goheen Papers.

²¹ “Seating Tables,” November 10, 1964, folder 3, box 482, Goheen Papers.

²² Nancy Weiss Malkiel, “*Keep the Damned Women Out*”: *The Struggle for Coeducation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 89–93.

²³ Malkiel, 174–77.

ambassador to Switzerland in April 1969, became an indefatigable critic of coeducation and what he perceived as the leftward turn of his beloved university. From the Ambassador's residence in Bern, Davis fired off complaint letters at a rapid clip, often inviting the recipients of his pique to visit him in Switzerland to discuss the matter in person. As Richard Challener, the chair of the History department, wrote in a letter to President William Bowen in July 1973, "if every Princetonian he has invited to the Residence showed up at the same time, he would be putting us up in tents."²⁴ Ultimately, his gift to the department fulfilled the terms Davis set out, but Princeton is not the same institution he sought to support with it.



Photograph of Randall Todd Pippenger at a Davis Center seminar lunch, September 13, 2019.

Photo credit: Tasha Schwartz.



Photograph of Sean H. Vanatta at a Davis Center seminar lunch, September 13, 2019.

Photo credit: Tasha Schwartz.

²⁴ Richard Challener to William G. Bowen, July 12, 1973, folder 6, box 142, Office of the President Records: William G. Bowen Subgroup, AC187, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.



Sir David Cannadine giving his remarks.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

LAWRENCE STONE
REMEMBERED—AT THE DAVIS CENTER
AND ELSEWHERE | David Cannadine

Lawrence Stone was Dodge Professor of History at Princeton University from 1963 until his retirement in 1990, at what was then, to his great regret, the compulsory age of seventy. He was chair of the Princeton History department from 1967 to 1970 and in 1969 became the founding director of its Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies. He remained a commanding presence for the next twenty-one years, holding a seemingly “perpetual directorship” that is unlikely to be equaled by anyone else.²⁵ Indeed, following Lawrence’s departure, it would take no fewer than five subsequent directors to match the span of years that he had single-handedly been in charge—an incontrovertible and unfalsifiable statistic that would surely have given him much pleasure. No other Princeton historian of modern times looms so large in the history of the Davis Center (or, indeed, in the history of the History department or of the university) as Lawrence: not for nothing was he known among his graduate students as “Lorenzo Il Magnifico” or (less plausibly, since he was a lifelong agnostic) as “the Pope of Princeton.”²⁶ But Lawrence retired thirty years ago, and died more than twenty years ago, which means that only the most senior Princeton historians, many of whom he had a significant hand in appointing, can recall him at the top of his game and in his incomparable prime. For as will be the fate of all of us, Lawrence is now passing from memory to history. But in his case, the memories of many of us are appropriately strong and vivid, and I offer mine, interspersed and augmented with a more conventional account of what was an extraordinary life and, by the standards of the time, a very unconventional career.

²⁵ Sean H. Vanatta and Randall Todd Pippenger, “Let’s Have at It”: *The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Fifty* (Princeton: Princeton University Printing, 2019), 38.

²⁶ Miriam Slater, “Il Magnifico,” in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 15–20.



A 1972 portrait of Lawrence Stone by David M. Hingston.

Office of Communications Records, Series 3: Faculty and Staff Biographical Files, 1886–1987, Folder: Lawrence Stone, AC168, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

I first met Lawrence Stone in September 1973. There are some people who knew him longer, and there are some who knew him better; but I knew him for almost thirty years, I liked and admired him, he was very good to me—as he was to all his graduate students—and we became friends. My recollections are, then, far from being impartial; but *nor are they wrong*. I had arrived at Princeton as a Jane Eliza Procter Visiting Fellow, on what was my first ever visit to the United States, urged on by Sir Eric Ashby, the master of my Cambridge college, who had spent time at the Institute for Advanced Study and who shared with Lawrence

an interest in the history of education. My year in Princeton would, Ashby assured me, be a great liberation and would expand my mind and broaden my horizons in important and necessary ways. It did, indeed, do both of those things and then some: for although I did not know it at the time, my life would be massively changed by my time at Princeton, and in all ways for the better. On my arrival, I set up an appointment with Lawrence in his office in Dickinson Hall, armed with letters of introduction (how that dates things!), not only from Ashby, but also from Richard Southern, the eminent medievalist and president of St John's, my Oxford college; from Keith Thomas, the no-less-eminent early modernist and also then a fellow of St John's; and from Peter Mathias, the economic historian and my research supervisor. Lawrence tore the letters open, scanned them quickly, we talked, and this was the beginning of a conversation that lasted until his death.

No doubt I retrospectively romanticize this initial encounter, but whenever I have recalled it, I have often remembered the words that

Winston Churchill used to describe his initial meeting with Franklin Roosevelt: it was, he said, like drinking your first glass of champagne (and from such a renowned and lifelong imbibers that was high praise indeed). I am no Churchill, and Lawrence was no Roosevelt: but his wide-ranging curiosity, his intellectual energy, his extraordinary open-mindedness, and his buoyancy, vitality, and optimism were all instantly manifest and immediately apparent in a way that I had never previously encountered in so tonic and concentrated a form on the part of any Oxbridge academic, however brilliant.²⁷ I gave Lawrence some things I had written and we agreed to meet again to discuss them. We did so, but under circumstances neither of us could have foreseen. A few days after my first visit, Lawrence's wife, Jeanne (of whom more later), telephoned, explained that Lawrence had suffered a mild heart attack (I don't think I was to blame for that, though it did happen soon after we had met), and said that he was being treated in the Princeton hospital. But he was eager to see me, and would I go and see him? I duly did so, but instead of encountering (as I had feared) an ailing academic, clinging feebly to a much-diminished existence on life support, I found Lawrence once again full of energy and curiosity, eager for conversation, surrounded by books and papers, and beginning the massive amount of reading for what would eventually become *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (1977).

We talked about the British aristocracy: Lawrence had written his greatest book to date on that subject, and I was working on my Oxford dissertation on landowners and nineteenth-century urban real estate development. He advised me what courses I should (and should not) take in the History department and beyond, and I later helped set up an extra graduate seminar on eighteenth-century Britain, which Lawrence agreed to chair in the spring semester, which he did brilliantly. I kept in touch with him when I returned to Britain, and revisited Princeton in 1980–1981, as a visiting member at the Institute for Advanced Study. Lawrence hatched a plot to get me to the university on a permanent basis, but that foundered (he was never quite as all-powerful in the department as his critics sometimes

²⁷ For another picture of Lawrence Stone at this time, from the perspective of the wife of a Princeton graduate student, see Lucia Adams, *Memoria Academia, 1960–1976* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2014), 11–12, 19–21, 46, 66.

claimed), so we were never colleagues (only in 2008 did I finally join the faculty). But we met every summer in Oxford for lunch before the July gathering of the board of *Past & Present*, of which we were both members (something that I no doubt owed in large part to him), and until his declining years, these were always exhilarating occasions, as were the meetings, at which Lawrence invariably shone and scintillated and provoked. I coedited the Festschrift to mark his retirement, I wrote his obituary for *The Independent*, and I spoke at his memorial service in Oxford.²⁸ He was, I noted then, ruffling feathers in a manner of which I hoped he would have approved, “far too big a figure for Oxford to constrain or to confine, and what conclusions,” I wondered aloud, “should we be drawing from *that*?”—an important point to which I shall return.

Only much later did I learn that Lawrence Stone had been brought up by his mother, a single parent, who was clearly a resourceful and resilient woman. Lawrence's father was a commercial artist, who had walked out of the marriage when Lawrence was a boy, and he never saw him again. But there was sufficient money to send young Lawrence to Charterhouse, where Hugh Trevor-Roper had earlier been a pupil (they did not overlap), and where, like many public-school boys of his generation, he studied classics unwillingly. He would later give a memorable account of what it was like to be subjected to such an elite education during the interwar years of the twentieth century.²⁹ It was, he averred,

an extended male puberty rite, very similar to those of many other, more primitive societies in the world: total segregation from the other sex; regular beatings to be endured in stoical silence; humiliation rituals; a complex formal hierarchy symbolized by elaborate

²⁸ *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); David Cannadine, “Professor Lawrence Stone,” *The Independent*, June 26, 1999. See also Cannadine, “Elite History,” in *The Pleasures of the Past* (London: Collins, 1989), 194–205; Cannadine, “Recessional: Two Historians, the Sixties and Beyond,” in *Making History Now and Then: Discoveries, Controversies and Explorations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 235–73.

²⁹ Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010), xvii.

dress codes; inadequate food; sexual intimidation by older males; and the learning of a secret language, in this case, Latin.³⁰

Stone was rescued by Robert Birley, the recently appointed headmaster, who coached him for a history scholarship, which he duly won to Christ Church, Oxford. He spent several months in 1938 attending lectures at the Sorbonne, which gave him an abiding interest in the French way of doing history, but his undergraduate studies were interrupted by wartime service in the Royal Navy, in both the Atlantic and the Pacific. He published his first academic article on the shabby treatment of English sailors after the Armada campaign—the first time, but not the last, that his work was influenced by contemporary events.³¹

In 1945, Lawrence returned to Oxford, graduating with first class honors the following year; after a stint as a lecturer at University College, he was elected a fellow and tutor at Wadham College in 1950, in part thanks to the support of Hugh Trevor-Roper, who had taught him at Christ Church when he came back from military service, and who had alerted him to some important sources concerning the early modern English aristocracy when he began his researches. Although he believed the Second World War had been a just one, and that it had to be fought and won, he was understandably eager to make up for lost time once he resumed his studies.³² He had already established connections with academics and publishers that were rare in one so young, but he had also acquired a reputation for arrogance and for being a young man in too much of a hurry. Guided and influenced by R. H. Tawney, Stone published an article in the *Economic History Review* in 1948, arguing that the Elizabethan aristocracy had been on the verge of financial ruin, while the gentry class beneath them were doing much better and were on the rise.³³ At first Stone's interpreta-

³⁰ "Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself," in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 577. This celebrated description had its first outing in Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England: 1640–1900," *Past & Present* 42 (1969): 72.

³¹ Lawrence Stone, "The Armada Campaign of 1588," *History* 29 (1944): 120–43.

³² "Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself," 580.

³³ Lawrence Stone, "The Anatomy of the Elizabethan Aristocracy," *Economic History Review* 18 (1948): 1–53.

tion carried all before it, but it was soon demolished by Trevor-Roper, in an article, as Stone later conceded, "of vituperative denunciation which connoisseurs of intellectual terrorism still cherish to this day." He showed that Stone had misunderstood the details and the technicalities of the documents involved, and that he had greatly exaggerated the degree of aristocratic indebtedness in early modern England.³⁴ Stone replied as best he could; but the damage had been done. Having previously been regarded as the coming man among young Oxford historians, Stone now stood damned and discredited in many people's eyes for his cavalier scholarship, his misuse of the evidence, and his unreliable statistics.³⁵

This was the beginning of what became known as the "storm over the gentry," an academic controversy that was unusual both in its sustained and unrelenting ferocity and in the public interest that it soon aroused, and it was in many ways the defining episode in Stone's professional life. "The experience," he later recalled, "taught me the importance of sheer factual information...in the cut throat struggle for survival in the life of learning, I discovered that knowledge is power."³⁶ It also earned him the long-standing enmity of Hugh Trevor-Roper, who turned on his former pupil, now insisting that Stone was a fraud and a charlatan, who was "neither honest nor a scholar." He would have "destroyed" his career and "liquidated" him if he could, and two undergraduates at that time noticed a file in Trevor-Roper's college rooms labeled "Death of Stone."³⁷ In the Oxford of the 1950s, Stone could not have made a more powerful or more determined enemy: Trevor-Roper had many friends in high places, he was a consummate academic politician, he relished combat and controversy, and the prime minister, Harold Macmillan, appointed him Regius Professor of Modern History in 1957. As a result, Stone's prospects of promotion,

³⁴ Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Elizabethan Aristocracy: An Anatomy Anatomised," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 3 (1950-51): 279-98; "Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself" 582; Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, 145, 164, 186-94, 202-8.

³⁵ Lawrence Stone, "The Elizabethan Aristocracy: A Re-statement," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 4 (1951-52): 302-21.

³⁶ J. H. Hexter, "Storm over the Gentry," in *Reappraisals in History* (London: Longmans, 1961), 117-62; "Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself" 578.

³⁷ Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, 191, 202; *Letters from Oxford: Hugh Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson*, ed. Richard Davenport-Hines (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), 130-32, 287.

preferment, or power in Oxford were less than zero, he attracted few graduate students, and there would always be those who thought him “inclined to hyperbole and factual error.”³⁸ Frustrated, kept down and marginalized in Oxford, Stone would soon be on the lookout for opportunities and possibilities elsewhere—and, ironically, it would be because of further efforts by Trevor-Roper to do him down in Britain that “elsewhere” eventually turned out to be Princeton.

Although he would make light of it in later years, the “storm over the gentry” left Stone permanently scarred, not least because he never fully lived it down. He was hyperactive and highly strung, and in later life would suffer two heart attacks and take valium to lower his stress levels. He would frequently claim that he relished academic controversy, but in reality, he had little choice, since hostile reviewers would eagerly check his references and pounce on mistakes, or point out that his interpretations were once again tendentious, and he in turn did not mince his words in finding fault with the work of other historians. But Stone was also exceptionally resilient, he had friends in Oxford (especially at Wadham, where he had tenure) as well as enemies, and throughout the 1950s, he maintained a formidable schedule of research and writing. His first book, *Sculpture in Britain: The Middle Ages* (1955), was an unexpected diversion from his main field of research, having been commissioned by Nikolaus Pevsner for the Pelican History of Art when Stone was still an undergraduate.³⁹ The following year, he published *An Elizabethan: Sir Horatio Palavincino*, whom he described as “a late sixteenth-century entrepreneur, a financier of governments, an espionage agent, a diplomat engaged in the recruitment of mercenary armies, a world monopolist of alum, and a business tycoon with a finger in many, usually unsavory, pies.” As such, Stone recalled, the book “illuminated the seamier side of early international finance capitalism,” a way of doing business that was especially disapproved of in the heady years of Attlee’s postwar

³⁸ Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, 194; C.S.L. Davies, “Lawrence Stone,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Stone’s letter of congratulation to Trevor-Roper on his appointment cannot have been easy for him to write: “Inevitably, I view it with somewhat mixed feelings, but I am glad that, for a change, it has been given to someone of obvious intellectual distinction”; Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, 287–88.

³⁹ Lawrence Stone, *Sculpture in Britain: The Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), xxi; “Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself,” 582–83.

Labour government, when nationalization and state planning seemed the long-overdue solution to the accumulated failings of private enterprise.⁴⁰

But Stone well knew that if he was to atone for his earlier errors, he needed to produce a big and commanding book on the early modern English aristocracy, which would confound (although not necessarily convince) his critics. Even as he was writing *Sculpture* and *Palavincino*, publishing yet more articles, on subjects ranging from architectural to economic history, and also reviewing for *The Spectator* and the *New Statesman*, his main effort was directed toward attacking the archival collections of many aristocratic families that had suddenly become publicly available in the aftermath of the Second World War.⁴¹ In researching and writing what eventually became *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (1965), Stone sought to accomplish two prime objectives: to provide quantifiable evidence of deep-rooted social change among the English upper class, who were in serious difficulties by the 1630s, which he believed was a significant cause of the English Civil War; and to offer a pioneering account of the total environment of the elite, “material and economic, ideological and cultural, educational and moral.”⁴² This would be history on a grand scale, informed by the sociology of Max Weber rather than Karl Marx, buttressed by an impressive array of statistics, and also owing much to the work of the *Annales* historians in France, by whom Stone had been fascinated and influenced since his prewar visit to the Sorbonne. In 1960–1961, he spent a sabbatical year at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, where he virtually completed *Crisis*, and first encountered the History department at the university; and while he was there, the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy early in 1961 seemed to portend a new era of liberal optimism and confidence in the Western world.⁴³

On returning to Britain, Stone hoped to become the founding Professor of History at the University of York, with the exciting

⁴⁰ Lawrence Stone, *An Elizabethan: Sir Horatio Palavincino* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956); “Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself,” 581–82.

⁴¹ For a full bibliography of Stone's writings, up until 1989, see *The First Modern Society*, 597–611.

⁴² Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 7–8.

⁴³ Cannadine, “Recessional,” 236–40.

prospect of creating an entire academic school in his own image. But Trevor-Roper blocked the appointment, and it was on the rebound that Stone accepted an invitation to join the Princeton History department, which he did in the autumn of 1963. If Stone had gone to York, he would have become a very different historian from the one that he eventually became at Princeton, and the History department at Princeton would have been a different and lesser place if he had never come here. Such were the unintended—but for once beneficent—consequences of long-lasting academic enmity. There was much mirth in Oxford when it was learned that Stone's chair would be named the "Dodge" Professorship, since it seemed an apt designation for a scholar whose handling of facts and figures was still regarded in some critical quarters as cavalier and unreliable. Soon after he arrived in Princeton, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* was published to acclaim that was widespread but by no means universal. There was criticism of the statistics, and of the central argument that the nobility was socially and economically stricken on the eve of the Civil War. But "the magnitude of his achievement was never in doubt" and the book was widely recognized as a monumental work of scholarship and a brilliant portrayal of early modern aristocratic life; it also provided an unanswerable riposte to Trevor-Roper, who, for all his polemical brilliance, never produced a major book in his lifetime (although his posthumous publication record did improve).⁴⁴

The Princeton University that Lawrence Stone joined in the autumn of 1963 was a very different place from the academic powerhouse it is today, with its diverse student body, its internationally acclaimed faculty, and its high ranking among the universities of the world. As

⁴⁴J. P. Kenyon, *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England since the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993), 261; Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, 347–48, 372–75; Blair Worden, "The Puritan Revolution," in *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Historian*, ed. Blair Worden (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 54–84. Among the most significant reviews of *Crisis* were G. E. Aylmer, "Review Article: *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641*," *Past & Present* 32 (1965): 113–25; D. C. Coleman, "The 'Gentry' Controversy and the Aristocracy in Crisis, 1558–1641," *History* 51 (1966): 165–74; J. H. Hexter, "Lawrence Stone and the English Aristocracy," *Journal of British Studies* 8 (1968): 22–78; Robert Ashton, "The Aristocracy in Transition," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 22 (1969): 308–22. The most unforgiving review, published anonymously, as was then the custom, was by J. P. Cooper in the *Times Literary Supplement*, April 7, 1966, 285–88.

was the case elsewhere on its campus, the history professors were then entirely male (and primarily interested in the political histories of Europe and the United States), and so were the graduate students and the undergraduate body. In many ways, Princeton was still what it had always been since its eighteenth-century foundation: a small college town that had somehow slipped west and south from New England, and a country club and finishing school for the sons of Southern gentry, and of the Scots-Irish plutocracy of western Pennsylvania, whom it would teach and train to become the governing and business elite of the nation. That was also the original view of President Robert Goheen, although it was on his watch that the university admitted women, and his successor, William G. Bowen, who took office in 1972, was responsible for transforming Princeton into one of the great universities of the Western world.⁴⁵ Stone and Bowen enjoyed a complex, creative, love-hate relationship: Stone strongly supported Bowen's promotion from provost to president, yet he was also indefatigably aggressive in seeking (and in getting) more of the revenue derived from the generous \$5.3 million gift of the alumnus Shelby Cullom Davis, made over in November 1964, which had been intended for the benefit of the History department but that the central administration had previously sought to retain and disburse for its own purposes.⁴⁶

All this was in the unknowable future when Lawrence Stone arrived at Princeton as Dodge Professor. Having completed his magnum opus on the aristocracy, he threw himself energetically into the life of the department, rightly sensing there were opportunities and possibilities that would never have come his way had he remained constrained and confined in Oxford. Across the next twenty-seven years, he would establish himself as the most significant historian in the university, becoming departmental chairman soon after he arrived, and often acting as shadow chairman thereafter. He reformed the appointments procedure, helped bring to Princeton such luminaries as Robert Darnton, Carl Schorske, Natalie Zemon Davis, and Peter Brown, who did history in new and more exciting ways, attracted many graduate students who now occupy high places in American

⁴⁵ Vanatta and Pippenger, "Let's Have at It," 11; Nancy Weiss Malkiel, "Keep the Damned Women Out": *The Struggle for Coeducation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 81–84.

⁴⁶ Vanatta and Pippenger, "Let's Have at It," 3, 11, 15.

academe, and through his energy, engagement, and commitment put the department on its mettle in a way that no one had done before—and no one has quite done since.⁴⁷ If, as the *New York Times* claimed, Princeton had become the home of the only “hot history department” in the country, it was Stone more than anyone who had lit the fire and fanned the flames that heated it up.⁴⁸ The arrival of John Elliott at the School of Historical Studies at the Institute of Advanced Study in the autumn of 1973 presented a further opportunity for Stone. They were good friends, and both were members of the editorial board of *Past & Present*.⁴⁹ Together they created links between the Princeton History department and the School of Historical Studies that had never existed before, and many visiting scholars, primarily from Europe and North America, would spend one seminar at the Davis Center, the other at the Institute.

Having successfully pried additional funding out of the university administration, Lawrence Stone was the obvious choice to be the founding director of the Davis Center when it was inaugurated in 1969; and by the time I first met him, four years later, he was fully settled into the job, and the work and identity of the Center were already well established. A theme was chosen, in some cases related to Stone’s own interests (such as *History of Education* and *History of the Family*), in other cases not (such as *Popular Culture* or *Charity and Welfare*).⁵⁰ Precirculated papers, offered by the visiting fellows, Princeton faculty,

⁴⁷ John M. Murrin, “The Eminence Rouge?,” in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 25–26.

⁴⁸ Mark Silk, “The Hot History Department,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1987; Vanatta and Pippenger, “Let’s Have at It,” 1, 6.

⁴⁹ Lawrence Stone, review of *The Revolt of the Catalans*, by J. H. Elliott, *New Statesman*, August 23, 1963, 228; J. H. Elliott, “Lawrence Stone,” *Past & Present* 164 (1999): 3–5.

⁵⁰ Lawrence Stone, “The Educational Revolution in England: 1560–1640,” *Past & Present* 28 (1964): 41–80; Stone, “Literacy and Education in England,” 69–139; Stone, “The Size and Composition of the Oxford Student Body, 1580–1910,” in *The University in Society*, ed. Lawrence Stone, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 1:13–57; *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education*, ed. Lawrence Stone (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Stone, “Social Control and Intellectual Excellence: Oxbridge and Edinburgh 1560–1983,” in *Universities, Society and the Future*, ed. Nicholas T. Phillipson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 1–29; Stone, “The Rise of the Nuclear Family in Early Modern England,” in *The Family in History*, ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 13–57; Stone, “Family History in the 1980s: Past Achievements and Future Trends,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 12 (1981): 1–25.

or invited outsiders, were discussed each Friday during the two semesters. Stone presided, and invariably dominated the proceedings, often announcing at the beginning of the seminar what was wrong with the paper, and regularly summing up the discussion in a similarly critical vein. At the same time, junior faculty and graduate students often vied with each other in asking increasingly difficult questions, in the hope that further challenging the paper-giver would win them Stone's recognition and approval. Unsurprisingly, the Davis Center seminars acquired a reputation for being gladiatorial and bloody, and while this may have been exaggerated, it was not wholly undeserved.⁵¹ One hapless paper-giver was Steven E. Ozment, the distinguished historian of early modern Europe, who was subjected to an unrelenting onslaught: the wounds were deep, and he neither forgot nor forgave. "An early version of several sections of this study," he wrote in the preface to his next book, "were debated by a remarkably confident group of scholars under the direction of Lawrence Stone in the Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University."⁵² Stone certainly believed that arguing things out was the best way to get somewhere toward historical truth, regardless of where the conversation led; but having been put through the mill during the "storm over the gentry," he may also have believed that other historians should endure similar treatment.

By the time I returned to Princeton for my second stay, in 1980–1981, the Davis Center had sponsored a significant array of publications, largely deriving from the papers discussed at the Friday seminars, and during that academic year, the Center also arranged its first day-long conference (on political ritual and royal ceremonial, in which I participated), which thereafter became a regular annual event.⁵³ These varied yet interconnected activities enabled Stone to make the Davis Center the beating heart of the History department,

⁵¹ Vanatta and Pippenger, "Let's Have at It," 1, 57–63.

⁵² Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), ix. I am grateful to Professors John Gascoigne and Anthony Grafton for this reference.

⁵³ David Cannadine, "Splendour out of Court: Royal Spectacle and Pageantry in Modern Britain, c. 1820–1977," in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages*, ed. Sean Wilentz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 206–43; Vanatta and Pippenger, "Let's Have at It," 44–45.

as it became a powerful centripetal focus and force. But Stone's ambitions for the Center were much greater than that. In selecting areas of research that were only just emerging as being of major academic interest, he hoped the Center would significantly influence—and help change—the broader agenda of historical inquiry in the United States and far beyond.⁵⁴ This was especially so in the realms of the “new” social history and the history of mentalities, of which Stone was a vigorous and determined advocate: partly because he believed they held the key to understanding major but neglected historical issues, partly because they drew on interdisciplinary approaches derived from the social sciences of which he was a strong supporter, and partly because he was reacting against what he had come to regard as the sterile obsession in Oxford with narrow political and diplomatic history. But to his critics, this “slash and burn” approach seemed no more and no better than the ephemeral embrace and misguided pursuit of faddishness and fashion, as one subject after another was initially taken up, with excessive optimism and enthusiasm, but then just as suddenly given up and cast aside in favor of something else.⁵⁵

Together, the Princeton History department gave Lawrence Stone the sort of academic power base, and the Davis Center provided him with the kind of dramatic academic arena, that he would never have been able to create or command in Oxford (or at York?). At the same time, Stone also remained an exceptionally influential member of the editorial board of *Past & Present*, to which he had been appointed while still in Oxford: from the 1950s to the 1990s, he published more articles in the journal than any other member of the board, and with the help of John Elliott, he steered many of the best papers delivered at the Davis Center in the same direction.⁵⁶ He was a regular and trenchant contributor to the *New York Review of Books*, praising historians who were doing history the way he thought it should be done, but trouncing those who remained beguiled by more traditional approaches. He also continued to publish prolifically. There was an admirably even-handed account of the issues engaged

⁵⁴ Vanatta and Pippenger, “Let’s Have at It,” 43–44.

⁵⁵ Keith V. Thomas, “The Ferment of Fashion,” review of *The Past and the Present*, by Lawrence Stone, *Times Literary Supplement*, April 30, 1982, 485.

⁵⁶ Jacques Le Goff, “Past and Present: Later History,” *Past & Present* 100 (1983): 19.

in the “storm over the gentry,” and a coda to *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, offering detailed case studies of particular noble families.⁵⁷ In *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529–1642* (1972), Stone produced his most interdisciplinary work, full of sociological and political science jargon, and arguing that a three-stage model of preconditions, precipitants, and triggers was the best way to explain the outbreak of the Civil War. And *An Open Elite? England 1540–1880* (1984), which had been begun soon after *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* was finished, was his final work influenced by sociology and quantification, arguing that the English landed class was almost unchangingly enduring across the centuries, and that opportunities for self-made men to buy their way in were very limited. For someone who had once declared “if history is not concerned with change, it is nothing,” and who had previously argued that the early Stuart aristocracy had been in crisis by the 1630s, it was an unexpected recantation on his part to embrace the very different approach embodied in “histoire immobile.”⁵⁸

Yet by then, Stone had largely given up on sociology and quantification, the interdisciplinary methodologies of which he had earlier been so enamored, and he had instead embraced anthropology, as had already been much in evidence in *The Family, Sex and Marriage*. There were negative and positive reasons for this significant change of emphasis and interest: negative, in Stone's growing sense that sociology and quantification could not, after all, and despite his earlier optimistic hopes to the contrary, solve the great historical questions in the way that practitioners of the “new” history had believed; positive, in that it was more fruitful to move from focusing on causes and explanations as to how historical change happened to exploring meaning and understanding as to how things were different in the past.⁵⁹ In this shift of emphasis, which he signaled in his article “The Revival of Narrative,” but which might more plausibly have been called “The End of Causation,” the influence of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who had arrived

⁵⁷ Lawrence Stone, *Social Change and Revolution in England, 1540–1640* (London: Longmans, 1965); Stone, *Family and Fortune: Studies in Aristocratic Finance in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁵⁸ Stone, *Crisis*, 4; Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 422.

⁵⁹ David Cannadine, preface to *What Is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), ix–xii.

at the Institute for Advanced Study in 1970, was of especial significance, as the epigraph to *The Family, Sex and Marriage* made plain.⁶⁰ This change of interest was even more on display in Stone's final major work, his trilogy on attitudes to divorce in England from the sixteenth to the late twentieth century. "I am," I recall him saying during his later years, "just an old man sitting by the fire, telling stories." That was a serious retreat and retrogression from the ardent hopes and high ambitions he had earlier entertained during those Princeton years, for what a rejuvenated history, proclaimed, assisted, and promoted by the work of the Davis Center, might accomplish and achieve.⁶¹

In 1981 Stone published *The Past and the Present*, which collected many of the essays he had contributed to the *New York Review of Books*, prefaced by some broader reflections on the development of the historical profession during his lifetime. These ostensibly general thoughts were in fact highly autobiographical, since much that had been accomplished during what Stone regarded as "the most fruitful and creative period in the whole history of the profession" bore a close resemblance to the sort of history he had himself been writing. He also worried that the golden age was over, and that there was "a growing mood of skepticism abroad about the value to historians of much of the newest and most extreme social science methodology."⁶² But that was merely another way of saying that as he moved toward retirement, Stone was no longer defining and setting the scholarly agenda as he had earlier aspired to do. Even in his prime, he had had his blind spots. Although he spent his Princeton years in active revolt against the narrow focus on high politics that characterized the Oxford history syllabus, his own geographical horizons remained constrained ever after by that university's concentration on the *English* past: Wales, Scotland, and Ireland were of little interest to him, as was the British Empire (although he did belatedly engage with these subjects in his

⁶⁰ Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past & Present* 85 (1979): 3–24; Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), vii, xxix.

⁶¹ "Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself," 585.

⁶² Lawrence Stone, *The Past and the Present* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), subsequently extended and reissued as *The Past and the Present Revisited* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), from which quotations are taken at pp. 30, 43.

edited volume *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* [1994]). Despite his long-standing connections with Parisian intellectuals, he only ventured into European history in his reviews. To be sure, Stone coauthored an article with a Princeton colleague comparing education and modernization in Japan and England, but the histories of Asia, Africa, Australasia, Latin America, and the United States were largely beyond his field of vision.⁶³ And while he constantly exhorted his colleagues to study the lives of ordinary people and the working classes, he himself never had much time or sympathy for them.

It was also the case that as Stone's intellectual arteries hardened, he ceased to be as open-minded as he had earlier been to new approaches to the past, showing little interest in areas such as race and ethnicity, literary theory, poststructuralism and postcolonial studies, the subjects that were increasingly coming to the fore in the academy during the 1980s and 1990s.⁶⁴ This limitation was especially marked when it came to women's history and gender studies, to neither of which was Stone seriously sympathetic. To be sure, he played a major part in bringing Natalie Zemon Davis to Princeton, and she would eventually succeed him as director of the Davis Center; and the gender balance of visiting fellows at the Center moved markedly in favor of women during his own time in charge.⁶⁵ But in a deeper sense, Stone simply did not "get" women's issues, as was famously demonstrated in the ill-judged piece he wrote in the *New York Review of Books* in April 1985, discussing Antonia Fraser's *The Weaker Vessel* and Mary Prior's edited volume, *Women in English Society, 1500–1800*. He began it by listing what he termed the "ten commandments" that he thought all historians should observe in writing women's history. They were couched in faux-biblical language "for patently facetious rhetorical purposes," but their tone was unmistakably (and unwisely) Olympian, and they

⁶³ Lawrence Stone and Marius B. Jansen, "Education and Modernization in Japan and England," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9 (1967): 208–32; Vanatta and Pippenger, "Let's Have at It," 36.

⁶⁴ Lawrence Stone, "History and Post-Modernism," *Past & Present* 131 (1991): 217–18; Patrick Joyce, "History and Post-Modernism," *Past & Present* 133 (1991): 204–9; Lawrence Stone, "History and Post-Modernism," *Past & Present* 135 (1992): 189–94; "Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself," 585.

⁶⁵ Vanatta and Pippenger, "Let's Have at It," 69–70.

provoked an excoriating response from Joan Scott, who damned them (and him) for being crass, ignorant, condescending, and patriarchal (and this review may well have cost Stone the vote of many female historians, which meant he was not elected, as he should have been, to be president of the American Historical Association).⁶⁶

Patrick O'Brien once told me the reason Lawrence Stone did not connect with feminists and feminism was that he was the son and husband of two strong-willed and assertive women, and that they were more than enough for him to cope with during one lifetime. I never met his mother, but it was impossible to know Lawrence without encountering his wife, Jeanne. She was the daughter of the distinguished medieval French historian Robert Fawtier, and Lawrence and Jeanne had married in 1943. Thereafter, and like many academic wives of her generation, Jeanne devoted herself entirely and selflessly to Lawrence's personal care and professional well-being. She made their homes, brought up their children, and produced many memorable meals, not only on what was then the extended Princeton professorial dining circuit, but also for visiting speakers at the Davis Center on the Thursday evenings before the Friday seminars. When I first arrived at Princeton in the autumn of 1973, I was given a departmental handout listing the professors and their wives: Jeanne was described by Lawrence as being an "unpaid research assistant working at home." As he regularly acknowledged, she typed Lawrence's books, checked his footnotes, made his indexes, and undertook much of the research on which his writings depended. Lawrence finally acknowledged her substantial contribution by billing Jeanne as his coauthor for *An Open Elite?* Instead of being a closed elite of one, I somewhat mischievously noted in my review of their one and only joint book, Lawrence had belatedly recognized that he was half of an open elite of two.⁶⁷

Lawrence and Jeanne's was a long, loyal, and happy marriage, one indication of which was that Jeanne had been collaterally scarred by Lawrence's early mauling at the hands of Trevor-Roper. It must

⁶⁶ Lawrence Stone, "Only Women," *New York Review of Books*, April 11, 1985, 21-23; Joan W. Scott, letter, *New York Review of Books*, May 30, 1985, 53; Vanatta and Pippenger, "Let's Have at It," 36-37.

⁶⁷ Cannadine, "Elite History," 197.

have been hard to have been married to someone who, in the Oxford of the 1950s, was regarded by many as a pariah. But it was also Jeanne, not Trevor-Roper, who was Lawrence's severest and most unrelenting critic. She had, he noted, in the acknowledgments to *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, "not only taken on many of the more tedious chores of book production—typing and re-typing manuscripts, index-making and helping to check footnotes"; she had also "constantly criticized the shape, the organization, the style and the argument."⁶⁸ Indeed, "constant criticism" of Lawrence by Jeanne seems to have been an essential ingredient of their highly successful marriage, and their sparring was invariably on display at the many dinners they hosted. Harold Perkin remembered one such occasion when the two of them argued "over such questions as the precise date of publication of George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier*, or whether the current fall in the birthrate explained why people were now 'patting little blond heads in supermarkets.' 'Lawrence,' exploded Jeanne, 'when were you last in a bloody supermarket?'"⁶⁹ This was indeed a palpable hit, since Lawrence left the shopping, like so much else, to Jeanne, and when they eventually moved out of university accommodation at Princeton, Lawrence had simply instructed Jeanne "to go out and buy a house," as he might have asked her to purchase a carton of milk, in the naively mistaken belief that this showed what an emancipated husband he was. Did they deliberately stage these dinner-table disagreements to stimulate (or embarrass) their guests? I'm not sure anyone knew the answer; perhaps they didn't either.

Very often at these dinners, the conversation turned to the University of Oxford, to which Lawrence remained deeply attached (though Jeanne probably less so: she later recalled Lawrence "dining on swan" at Wadham, while she stayed at home eating a boiled egg). Although he repudiated the narrowness of its history curriculum, he came to recognize that it had been, after its fashion, a good education, and he continued to publish most of his books with Oxford University

⁶⁸ Stone, *Crisis*, xix. For his other acknowledgments to Jeanne, see Stone, *Sculpture*, xxi; Stone, *Palavincino*, viii; Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, xxx; Stone and Stone, *Open Elite?*, xxiii; Stone, *Road to Divorce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), vi. See also E. Callaci, "History Unclassified: On Acknowledgements," *American Historical Review* (February 2020): 1–6.

⁶⁹ Harold J. Perkin, *The Making of a Social Historian* (London: Athena, 2002), 190; Vanatta and Pippenger, "Let's Have at It," 54–55. See also Adams, *Memoria Academia*, 11–12.

Press. On departing to Princeton, he and Jeanne retained their house in Oxford, returning for a month every summer to keep up their many friendships and catch up on the latest gossip. And as Stone became an ever more commanding transatlantic figure, the climate in Oxford became more benevolent. Wadham elected him to an honorary fellowship, and the university awarded him an honorary degree. He once told me that these two forms of recognition meant more to him than anything else (though the land of his birth never awarded him the honorary knighthood that was surely his due). Even his relations with Trevor-Roper thawed. In 1992, Stone reviewed the latest volume of his collected essays, *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution*, for the *Times Literary Supplement*.⁷⁰ Although he felt bound to point out that Trevor-Roper had not “written a major work of history” for “half a century,” Stone’s review was generous, magnanimous, and perceptive, acclaiming Trevor-Roper as “the most witty, perceptive, thoughtful and brilliant historical essayist of our time,” who believed in “the supreme value of moderation and toleration.” Trevor-Roper wrote to thank Stone, who replied that their views on many historical issues were in fact “extremely close,” adding that the *TLS* “had hoped for a really nasty review, a request which I found repugnant.” As Stone subsequently explained to Edward Cheney: “Our quarrels are so old now that I thought it was high time they were buried and forgotten. Anyway, we now have many more dangerous enemies in common.”⁷¹

This last sentence bears some elaboration. Stone had been implausibly denounced in some neoconservative American quarters for being a Marxist, but in fact he was a lifelong Whig; and while the Fellows of Peterhouse had elected Trevor-Roper in the belief that he was a Tory, he was, in reality, another Whig.⁷² This meant that by the 1980s and 1990s, the “dangerous enemies” the two men had “in common” were the self-styled “revisionists,” who claimed that the Civil War had no long-term causes, and that seventeenth-century England was an

⁷⁰ Lawrence Stone, “The Undaunted Whig,” review of *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution*, by Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, *Times Literary Supplement*, June 5, 1992.

⁷¹ Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, 530.

⁷² Murrin, “The Eminence Rouge?,” 29–30; Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, 522.

“un-revolutionary” place.⁷³ The book that embodied all the views the revisionists sought to attack and overturn in its most concentrated and uncompromising form was Stone’s *Causes of the English Revolution*, which was in many ways the traditional Whig interpretation of the origins of the Civil War dressed up in the fashionable garb of sociology and political science. In a postscript to a second edition of *Causes*, completed in 1985, Stone noted that in recent years, “a huge amount of ink—and blood (a great deal of it mine)”—had been shed by the revisionists, but although he admitted he would deploy less jargon were he writing the book anew, and conceded that there were some areas where his argument needed modifying, he insisted that “my model has ... been reinforced rather than undermined by the rush to consensual revisionism.”⁷⁴ Behind the revisionists, whom Stone elsewhere dubbed “young antiquarian empiricists,” lay the figure of Geoffrey Elton, and the enmity between him and Stone was lifelong and never abated. I once wrote a highly critical review of Elton’s short book on F. W. Maitland, which even his most ardent admirer would surely admit was not his best work. Elton, so brave and bold when berating others, but so touchy and tender when paid out in his own coin, sent me a scorching letter, saying he hoped Lawrence had paid me a substantial sum for writing it.⁷⁵

When pondering Elton’s ridiculous missive, I recalled some comments that Lawrence habitually offered to his graduate students when they obtained their doctorates and went out to earn their livings in the wider academic world: “Remember,” he cautioned them, “that your connection with me will not only ensure you some friends, but will also guarantee you some enemies.” There were, indeed, many friends, but the critics did not abate. Stone was never again involved in a controversy so bitter as the “storm over the gentry,” which had engulfed him in Oxford, but during his Princeton years he succeeded in making a whole new cohort of adversaries, clashing with Edward Shorter

⁷³ Cannadine, “Recessional,” 258–62.

⁷⁴ Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529–1642*, 2nd ed. (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1986), 165, 167.

⁷⁵ Stone, *Past and Present Revisited*, 93; David Cannadine, “On Reviewing and Being Reviewed,” in *Making History Now and Then*, 304–5; Adams, *Memoria Academia*, 190.

over the history of the family, with Alan Macfarlane on the subject of English individualism, with David and Eileen Spring over the degree to which the English landed elite was open or closed, and with Michel Foucault about almost everything.⁷⁶ All his working life, Stone's way of doing history was high-energy, high-octane, high-temperature, and high-risk; he admitted to having been "wounded" by the sustained onslaughts of the revisionists and by Joan Scott's withering put-down in the correspondence columns of the *New York Review of Books*; and Elton did everything he could to prevent Lawrence from being elected a corresponding fellow of the British Academy (he did not succeed).⁷⁷ "I have," he noted, when recalling his *Life of Learning* for the American Council of Learned Societies, "constantly been under attack from ogres, dragons and sea-serpents; I have several times been seduced by attractive seeming sirens; [and] I have made mistakes of navigation which at least once brought me close to shipwreck."⁷⁸

It was a characteristically vivid summation of a life that was not then "yet over"; and on another occasion, Lawrence described himself as a "grave robber," plundering other disciplines for insights, then getting out fast and moving on.⁷⁹ On retiring from his Princeton professorship and the directorship of the Davis Center, Lawrence and Jeanne duly moved on, spending two years at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina, where he brought to completion his trilogy on divorce.⁸⁰ (When Harold James, who had joined the Princeton history faculty in 1986, got married, Lawrence's idea of an appropriate wedding present was to give the bride and groom one of those

⁷⁶ Lawrence Stone, review of *The Making of the Modern Family*, by Edward Shorter, *Times Literary Supplement*, May 28, 1976, 637; Stone, review of *A History of Women's Bodies*, by Edward Shorter, *New York Times Book Review*, January 2, 1983, 6; Stone, "Goodbye to Nearly All That," review of *The Origins of English Individualism*, by Alan Macfarlane, *New York Review of Books*, April 19, 1979, 40–41; Stone, review of *Marriage and Love in England*, by Alan Macfarlane, *Times Literary Supplement*, May 16, 1986, 525; Stone, reply to David and Eileen Spring, *Albion* 17 (1985): 1267–80; Stone, exchange with Michel Foucault, *New York Review of Books*, March 31, 1983, 42–44.

⁷⁷ Lawrence Stone, reply to Joan Scott, *New York Review of Books*, May 30, 1985, 53; Stone, *Causes*, 169.

⁷⁸ "Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself," 595.

⁷⁹ Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, 187.

⁸⁰ Lawrence Stone, *Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England, 1660–1753* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Stone, *Broken Lives: Separation and Divorce in England, 1660–1857* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

volumes.) During his early seventies, Lawrence had remained a very young old man, still the life force and tonic spirit he had been for so long; but as his eighth decade drew on, he gradually began to flag and fade and fail, and he died in Princeton on June 16, 1999, in his eightieth year. On the last two occasions when I saw him, at what turned out to be his final summer meetings of the *Past & Present* board, he said scarcely anything, which would have been inconceivable only a few years before. He stopped writing and reviewing, bundled up his accumulated research notes and correspondence, and threw them all away. When asked why, he replied, "They must know me by my books." There was—and is—a great deal to know, for in the course of his long, creative, controversial career, Lawrence Stone had produced more than a million words on more than a millennium of history, and it is inconceivable that any other scholar will ever write with the same audacity and authority, confidence and command, that he displayed in treating every century of the English past from the fifth to the twentieth.⁸¹ He had also accomplished a great deal more than that, especially, but not exclusively, as director of the Davis Center, and his halcyon years at Princeton were truly the time of his life—and of Jeanne's life, too.

By an extraordinary calendrical coincidence, the autumn of 2019 marked not only the half century since the establishment of the Davis Center but also one hundred years since Lawrence Stone's birth on December 4, 1919. It was, then, entirely right that this anniversary and birthday should have been celebrated together, and it was equally predictable that during the course of these festivities, a certain amount of nostalgic reminiscence took place, about what some regarded as the heyday and apogee of the Davis Center under Lawrence during the 1970s and 1980s.⁸² Occasionally, this verged on ancestor worship, a phrase first coined by Herbert Spencer, to describe the beliefs and practices of what were then termed "primitive" societies in Asia and Africa, who were convinced that the spirits of their dead forebears still played a major part in the affairs of the living. The concept was later extended to encompass the "modern" Western world, where

⁸¹ Davies, "Lawrence Stone."

⁸² Vanatta and Pippenger, "*Let's Have at It*," 96.

such veneration and idolatry have been equally prevalent, as an essential and affirming element in the narratives of founding figures, shared purpose, and collective identity on which so many institutions rely and depend, from schools and universities, via voluntary societies and sports teams, to businesses and political parties.⁸³ That Lawrence Stone, who was well (but unevenly) read in anthropology, would have appreciated such posthumous acclaim seems highly likely; that as the least sentimental of men, he would also have scorned it seems no less plausible. Indeed, if he were alive today, he would surely be posing an appropriately challenging, trenchant, and unsettling question, once again to put us on our mettle: if the Davis Center were being established anew and afresh, here and now, then how would—and how should—it differ from, and move on from, the intellectual powerhouse that he had created at Princeton fifty years ago?

⁸³ *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edwin R. A. Seligman, assoc. ed. Alvin Johnson, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 53–54.



Carlo Ginzburg giving his remarks.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

LEARNING FROM ANOMALIES | Carlo Ginzburg

The time I spent as a fellow of the Davis Center in the fall of 1973 was a turning point in my education, on many levels. Being not so young (I was thirty-four years old), I would never have expected to learn so many things in just a few months. At the Scuola Normale at Pisa, where I studied, I had participated in many seminars that deeply impressed me, above all those coordinated by my mentor, Delio Cantimori. But the debating style I came across at the Davis Center was new for me. It was aggressive, although in that aggressiveness there was no personal animus. It was, above all, analytic. I was used to debates that took an argument as a whole; this was not the case at all at the Davis Center. In listening at those debates, I suddenly thought of the Greek word *mageiros*: the person who in ancient Greece cut off the members of an animal in a sacrifice. The comparison between an argument and the body of an animal was put forward in a famous passage of Plato's *Phaedrus* (266 b): cutting the articulations away, focusing on a single connection, and so forth. Later on, I tried to convey this kind of experience to my students, first in Italy and then in the US, and then back in Italy again. I had naively thought that kind of debating style was typically American; then I realized it was a British, more specifically a Stonian, debating style. What we learned about Lawrence Stone's biography was known to most of us: but Sir David Cannadine's brilliant and insightful portrait of Lawrence was truly enlightening. In the style he conveyed at the Davis Center, Stone's personal experience was deeply important.

Another element that was new for me was the Center's focus on a topic, rather than on a text or an author. In this way, comparison was brought to the forefront. In Italy, at that moment, comparison was absent from historical studies; in fact, I would say that a comparative approach to history remains a sort of unexplored continent. After all, we are still reading Marc Bloch's essay "Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes" as a sort of unfinished project that needs to be developed. My reflections on different kinds of comparison, as well as on the relationship between morphology and history (an issue I

spoke about in Princeton a few years ago), were certainly elicited from the topic we focused on at the Davis Center in 1973: *Popular Religion*.

The paper I presented was an early version of what later became my book *The Cheese and the Worms*. I had come across the case of Menocchio, the Friulian miller, while I was working on Inquisition trials dealing with witchcraft in early modern Italy. I went to Friuli and tried to visit the ecclesiastical archive in Udine. At that moment the archive was inaccessible to scholars; but luckily enough, a document from that archive, stolen at an unknown date, had been bought by the Biblioteca Comunale at Udine, where I was able to consult it. It was an eighteenth-century handwritten list of the first one thousand inquisitorial trials performed in Friuli, involving short descriptions of each trial. I still remember the moment in which I read a few lines referring to two trials against a peasant who argued that the world was born from rotten matter. I took a note and then I went back to my project on witchcraft trials. For seven years I didn't touch that note at all, but it stuck in my mind. Then I decided to work on it; I went back to Udine, and I was able to transcribe the documents concerning the two trials preserved in the Udine Ecclesiastical Archive. When I came to Princeton, I had that project in mind and I wrote a paper (in French; my English was very poor at that time) based on those transcripts.

Now I have to say something that is in a way related to my experience at the Davis Center, meaning my passion for anomalies. I wouldn't say that Lawrence Stone shared that passion as such, but I was struck by his extraordinary intellectual generosity in being open to a kind of research that was completely foreign to what he was doing and what he had done. This meant freedom—not only in debate but concerning the range of possible historical experiments. But what is the relationship between anomalies and comparison? Let me tell you a little anecdote I heard in Pisa, when I was a student, from Gianfranco Contini, the great romance philologist. He told a story about two French philologists. One of them, who had a long beard, was passionate for anomalies: grammatical anomalies, morphological anomalies, and so on. When he came across one of them, he caressed his beard and said, "C'est bizarre." Then there was another philologist, who was completely different. He had a lucid mind, he was bald—a lucid mind both outside and inside. He was a kind of Cartesian philologist,

passionate for rules: for him, anomalies should be brought back to rules. When he succeeded in doing this, he rubbed his hands and said: “C’est satisfaisant pour l’esprit,” it’s satisfying for the mind.

I heard this anecdote and I thought, “Well, I’m sort of on the side of the man with a long beard even if I never had a beard. ‘C’est bizarre.’ Anomalies, this is what I am really fond of.” But later on, I realized that my attitude was much more complicated than that. An anomaly taken in itself as something bizarre doesn’t mean anything. What’s important is a cognitive superiority of anomalies vis-à-vis the norms, because the norm cannot include all possible anomalies; on the contrary, any anomaly must include the norm.

I put forward this argument many years later, reflecting on my own work, first of all *The Cheese and the Worms*. Then Henrique Espada Lima, a Brazilian historian who wrote a detailed, insightful book on Italian *microstoria*, sent me a message saying, “Are you aware that this argument about anomalies and norms was in fact put forward by Carl Schmitt?” I was surprised because I had put forward that argument before reading Schmitt. But then I went back to Schmitt’s *Politische Theologie*, and I realized that this was not Schmitt. He quoted a Protestant theologian without naming him—i.e., Kierkegaard.

I think that the argument I just mentioned was at the very center of what I tried to do in my own work, along the years. The paper I submitted at the Davis Center focused on a deeply anomalous case, but then I was confronted with comparison. In which sense was this anomalous case significant? As I said before, that year the topic at the Davis Center was *Popular Religion*. In my analysis of Menocchio’s anomalous ideas, I was confronted with the books he read and the way in which he read them. Books of very different kinds, including pamphlets, John Mandeville’s *Travels*, and Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. I identified Menocchio’s readings, and every time I discovered a gap between his recollections of a book and the books themselves. The gap implied a filter that was related, I argued, to oral culture. Menocchio’s deeply anomalous case opened up the possibility to explore the impact of printed books over oral culture.

Many years later I developed Menocchio’s case in a different direction, trying to unfold the implications of my deep uneasiness concerning the notion of identity—which is, in my view, a political

weapon, devoid of any analytical value. I tentatively argued that an individual can be looked at as the result of a convergence between different sets. Take my case. I am a member of the animal species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*. I'm a member of masculine moiety of it. I'm a member of a set including retired professors from UCLA born in Turin, and so on and so forth. Then there is a set to which there is just one member, meaning my fingerprints. To look at an individual, focusing on the set in which he is the only member, makes sense in certain contexts—in a judicial context, for instance. But we, as historians, should look at an individual from a different, more complex point of view, exploring the interaction, within a single biological individual, between what is highly specific or even unique and what is not unique at all, but generic and even more generic. This interaction implies the possibility of looking at a completely anomalous case like that of Menocchio as related to something larger. In my introduction to the enlarged edition of *The Cheese and the Worms*, which was written after my experience at the Davis Center, I argued that François Furet's argument that popular classes can be approached only through statistical evidence could in fact be refuted by the case I had been working on.

The word *microstoria*, microhistory, is often associated with *The Cheese and the Worms*. In fact, the word is never mentioned in it. It emerged in Italy in a debate that involved several historians, all of them connected to the journal *Quaderni storici*: Edoardo Grendi, Giovanni Levi, Carlo Poni, and myself. That debate included a reflection on *The Cheese and the Worms*, which Edoardo Grendi initially criticized. But, as I realized recently, one year later Grendi reworked his criticism on the basis of what I had written in my introduction, in which I stressed the fact that the anomalous, exceptional case I was dealing with had a larger implication, related to something *normale*. At that moment, Edoardo Grendi launched his beautiful oxymoron, *eccezionale normale*.

The impact of microhistory is, in my view, related to geopolitics, insofar as an apparently minor case, related to an alleged “marginal” country, can have an impact, based on its analytic results, on the international scene. There is a widespread misunderstanding about the word “microhistory,” because the prefix “micro-” has often been related to the dimensions, either symbolic or literal, of the object. Our

project was completely different: “micro-” was related to the microscope. The series *Microstorie*, which was directed by Giovanni Levi and me, and published by Einaudi, began in 1981 with a book I wrote on Piero della Francesca: certainly not a minor painter, as you can understand. The object of the analysis can be any topic. The problem is how to relate this analytic approach to something larger. So we are back to generalization, and back to comparison. My approach to what later became microhistory was deeply influenced by my experience at the Davis Center. My fascination with Menocchio’s case developed under the influence of a comparative approach.

Some years ago the Italian historian Francesco Benigno wrote an essay in which he argued, referring to my own writings, that the notion of popular culture (which of course includes popular religion) is today completely unusable—a relic from the past. I just published a new edition of my book, *Il formaggio e i vermi*, in Italian, with a new postface, in which I said very quickly that Benigno’s argument is, to say the least, myopic. Why? Because historians working in the perspective of global history are confronted with enormous amounts of evidence, produced by colonizers in Asia, in Africa, in the Americas, and deeply marked by the interaction between colonizers and the natives or colonized peoples. This interaction raises methodological problems that are not so far away from the ones I (like other historians) was confronted with, in dealing with Inquisition trials. I tried to read them between the lines, in order to rescue the voices of the oppressed; but at a certain moment I realized a troubling intellectual contiguity with the inquisitors, which pushed me to write an essay entitled “The Inquisitor as Anthropologist.” An oblique approach to inquisitorial trials can teach us something about documents produced by colonizers all over the world.



Andrew Abbott giving his remarks.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF THE DAVIS CENTER | Andrew Abbott

I would like to thank Angela Creager for the invitation to speak. This talk gives me a chance to give thanks where thanks are due.

As you can see from the program, I'm the outside person. I have not been the director or a fellow of the Davis Center. I have never been a faculty member or a student at Princeton University. I am not even an historian. So it is obviously my job to speak for people from other settings, other universities, and other disciplines. I should tell you what the Davis Center has accomplished for them ... and if not for all of them, then at least for me as one of them.

I came to the Davis Center as an outsider: a sociologist, at Rutgers, in my first year of teaching, with an unfinished dissertation. But the Davis Center topic in the years 1978–1980 was *History of the Professions*, and as it happened, I was writing a dissertation on the history of a profession. My topic was the evolution of American psychiatry from 1880 to 1930, a topic I had taken up because my advisor—someone who made Lawrence Stone look positively sweet-tempered—had rejected my earlier proposal to do an ethnography of the large mental hospital where I worked three-quarter time to earn my registration fees at Chicago. In a rage I had sworn to write my entire dissertation on one sentence from the original proposal: the sentence about how the psychiatrists became absentee landlords of the great hospitals, leaving the raving psychotics in their warehouses while they themselves went off to alleviate the gentler neuroses of the middle and upper classes.

Here I was, then, about two months into my Rutgers instructorship and only about six months out of the mental hospital: sitting in the basement of Firestone Library in a real seminar, a place I would be every Friday morning for the next two academic years. From there, the story is simple enough. Over those next two years I finished my dissertation, even while facing the weekly challenge to sharpen my theoretical concepts to handle yet another Davis Center paper. A needed job talk two years later catalyzed the assembly of those concepts into a

general theory, and then four years of writing produced the synthetic book that made my career, in which I used all the wonderful examples provided in those Davis Center papers.

In short, I'm the person who used the historians' own data to create the sociological theory of professions that replaced the one that both Lawrence Stone and the Davis Center fellows of those years found to be worthless. I won the lottery.

The question is why. It's not because I'm some kind of master-mind. The room was full of minds as good as mine or better. The real question is whether it's because theory is portable and so has lots of influence, or because sociology ignores details and creates cheap theories that sell well, or because of some odd confluence of accidents that would glad the heart of a classical narrative historian.

Now the quick answer, for me, is yes, it's true that theory is portable and sometimes has much wider influence than empirics, as we see from the careers of people like Pierre Bourdieu, whose theories have had much wider influence than their empirical work. I also think it's right that sociology often achieves its theoretical syntheses by shortchanging the details. The sociological literature on revolutions was guilty of this, for example. But in the end, I vote for the view that this story is explained by an odd confluence of accidents.

The main reason I believe in the "accidents" argument is that narratives are made step by step, not all at once. It is true that by the end of the two years of Davis Center seminars, I could read a paper on professions and see at once both why its argument didn't work and how I could probably fix it. But I did not really understand myself as "having a theory." I could fix the paper up in my head, but I had no idea how to exteriorize that process. I didn't in fact "know what I was doing." As Arthur Danto says, Petrarch's brother saw him climb Mt. Ventoux but did not see him open the Renaissance. And it's worth noting, by the way, that while I had read Petrarch's famous essay in college, it was a Davis Center fellow of those years—Wilfrid Prest—who directed me to the writings of Arthur Danto and his peers on the philosophy of history, work that would permanently shape my thinking in this and all other areas.

And not only did I not really know that I had built a theory by the time the Davis Center years on the professions came to an end;

I was still an imposter. I had not yet defended my dissertation on American psychiatry, by then grown to sixty-five tables, fifty pages of bibliography, and over two hundred thousand words. But the end of those Davis Center years did present me with a decision: either to undertake the staggering revisions that would have been necessary to publish my thesis or to somehow specify the hunches that enabled me to privately revise and clarify every paper in those last months of my Davis Center experience.

My choice was forced by a slightly later event. In the summer of 1981, the great Harvard sociologist Harrison White read an article of mine and somehow decided to recruit me. I knew White only through his strange book on vacancy chains, which are systems of mobility where individual people hold individual jobs, and hence vacancies rather than people hold the initiative in mobility. But White had been thinking about clergymen moving through church vacancies, while I needed a job talk about professions, not about individual people. In a flash, I saw the equivalence. The professions were like the clergymen, and the areas of professional work were like the parish vacancies. One profession can't seize a new work area until some other profession leaves it open, just as one clergyman can't take a parish until the previous incumbent has left the job available. The world of professions was just a giant vacancy system where professions competed over the control of professionalizable work. My 1988 book is simply the exploration of the various aspects and implications of that one flash idea, which by itself organized all the various theoretical understandings that I had developed during the Davis Center years. By giving that job talk, I essentially decided that in the last analysis, the two-hundred-thousand-word dissertation would go by the board. I was really a sociologist, not an historian.

So my own experience of the Davis Center shows that there *are* theoretical regularities in social life, but that those regularities have their effect only through the causal mechanisms of events in the present. Ironically, the main point of my book was that the narrative histories of professions were mirages; professions were mainly shaped by other professions, in the present, not by the narrative chains that brought them to that present. To be sure, those past chains that historians narrated had provided the endowments with which the profes-

sions faced their present challenges. But they did not define what happened now. Their competitors did that. Then, still later events would redefine what those competitors had done, just as a free association about Harrison White had redefined my Davis Center experience from "more background for my thesis" into "foundations of a synthetic work on professions." Thus, historical narrative and present-time causality flow together into a single thing—the social process.

So while it is an obvious example of interdisciplinarity that a sociologist sitting in a roomful of historians could treat all the presentations as data and strive to theorize them, it is by no means necessary that this situation should always have such a successful result. It took a certain kind of person, a certain kind of moment, and a certain set of succeeding events. History throws many grappling hooks across into the unknown, but all those who would leap over and board the future will pull only on the one line that holds most securely.

All this, then, is to theorize a bit about the possibilities for outsiders and imposters and interdisciplinarians in the Davis Center. And there have probably been many such stories about outsiders, much less about speakers and fellows. These stories are simply hard to see. You owe my particular example to a chance conversation between Angela Creager and me at a conference last June that I almost did not attend. One of the difficulties of historical memory is that it is bad for precisely such coincidental things.

Indeed, it may well be the case that *most* of the outcomes of such ongoing seminars as that of the Davis Center have their main consequences in narrative chains that are unrelated to the main chain of the seminar itself. Not only might these be stories like my own; they might involve lines of narrative much further afield—how many couples met at the Davis Center? Or split up there, for that matter? How many people decided their views of Princeton, or of the Ivy League in general, or perhaps even of the United States, on the basis of the experience of speaking at a Davis Center seminar? One could go on. It is quite possible that the most consequential aspects of any social world are precisely these hordes of minor events that seem unrelated to its own narrative but that by their very number have broader importance through their impact in myriads of other lineages of events.

But let me now leave this theorizing and give you a bit of *microstoria*. Let me try to reawaken for you what the Davis Center was for me at the time. These memories are inevitably romantic, since it was for me a time of happy beginnings and astonishing good fortune. I was newly married. My one job offer had turned up late in the year and was only seventy miles from my new wife's new job in Allentown, Pennsylvania. I was teaching at last and free of both everyday graduate life at Chicago and the strange world of Manteno State Hospital. And here was the nearby university sponsoring a seminar right in the middle of my own intellectual interests!

Little surprise, then, that my heart would sing as I left my house out in Phillipsburg on the Delaware to drive my burbling Peugeot diesel across the glorious hills of Hunterdon County to Princeton. In my mind's eye I can still see every single turning of Route 579, every little notability on that road: the bridge over the Musconetcong at Bloomsbury, the zigzags up Jugtown Mountain, the supremely pretty girl I saw one morning in Pittstown, the abandoned greenhouses south of Croton, the little railroad museum in Ringoes, the fading Stewart's root beer stand that signaled the left turn toward Hopewell, the abandoned tracks of the Reading Railroad mainline, the turnoff at ETS, the shingle-style mansion at Route 206, and finally Firestone itself—the last landmark, for I invariably parked on the south side of Prospect, way down at the end of the line of parked cars. I would walk up the hill to the Wilson School and have coffee and a muffin while rereading the morning's seminar paper in the sunny café space, preparing my questions for the speaker. I would always arrive to the seminar too early and would wait for at least two others to populate the room before entering it myself.

I needn't describe the scene in that room; it's no doubt familiar to everyone here: the light shaft and courtyard with their cheerful ambience, the square of tables with Lawrence Stone midway on the south side of the square, with the speaker on his left, and the rest of us—fifteen to twenty in those years—sitting randomly around the room. There was some positioning by the speaker and perhaps an initial commenter, but what really mattered was Lawrence's own intervention—always the first open question and always a direct challenge about major issues. There would be a response and then we

would move on to questions around the room. Two hours later, most of us would troop off to Prospect for a subsidized lunch. I would then drive back up to New Brunswick, push some papers around in the afternoon, and commute the fifty miles back to Phillipsburg on the interstates.

What excitement drove this Friday morning romance? Well, for one thing, I had known the name of Lawrence Stone for half my life, having started the English track in Harvard's History and Lit program one year after the publication of *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*. And I had breathed plenty of archival dust. My undergraduate thesis had compared upper-, middle-, and working-class periodicals in the Britain of George IV, and my dissertation had taken me to half a dozen archive centers and to every major medical specialty library in the US. This pretraining as an historian was one of the crucial facilitators of the interdisciplinarity I discussed earlier. It was a prepared mind that chance had favored.

But another reason for romantic excitement was that I had never before attended a seminar with such a challenging format: a preread paper, an opening commentary, and a seminar leader who built an order of questioners as people caught his eye. A good deal of ink has been spilled over the exact quality and character of what happened in that room, but it seems to me that the long-standing disagreements about the ambience of Davis Center seminars arise more in the eyes of the beholders than in the experiences themselves. But, of course, you should remember that I had stars in my eyes in 1978.

To me, the seminar in those years consisted mostly of tough but reasonable questions and frank challenges to data or interpretation. It was rigorous but cordial, perhaps in part because of the highly focused topic and the security of each speaker on his home turf, which was usually unknown to most others in the room. But there were also occasional mentions of distantly relevant facts noticed by a questioner in some folio volume in the Archives de France-Outre-Mer or some similar place, and there were occasional mentions of some recent book or article that the speaker had perhaps...missed? I don't remember the meetings as ever being overtly hostile, but all the same, one was expected to know a lot about professions other than one's own and about countries and periods outside one's normal range. Not a few meetings

sent me home with many new names to master. It was at a Davis Center seminar that I first heard the name of Gaspard Monge, for example. And certainly it was clear that one ought to be able to pronounce such things properly. Names and words from foreign languages were usually pronounced with considerable—even ostentatious—perfection. In sum, “supportive” is not the first word you would use to characterize the Lawrence Stone Davis Center seminar; that first word was either “rigorous” or “challenging.” But all the same, I had had classes in boarding school that made that seminar seem like a tea party.

Again, we are returned to the issue of interdisciplinarity. Because I was a sociologist, I was in a sense outside of whatever competitiveness existed within the seminar. I seemed to be the only one in the theorizing game, so I was spared the difficulties of having to defend arguments that were being made up as I went along. It’s also true that I never *said* I was developing a theoretical argument and, indeed, did not really myself understand that I was doing so. And thus I never had to answer to direct critique, except from myself. Interdisciplinarity worked not because it was interdisciplinary but precisely because it was coordinated pursuit, in one setting, of two quite different approaches to thinking, one of which kept very carefully out of the other’s way.

It turned out that there was *another* closet theorist, historian Sam Haber. But he too had been quiet about it. Being quiet about theory building was probably just as well. Most of the fellows of those two years were very skeptical about theory. My files contain the pre-circulated papers for a special session on December 15, 1978, at which Steve Botein, Robert Fox, Don Scott, and John Weiss gave their analyses of various general theoretical issues about professions. They were thoroughly skeptical. So was Lawrence Stone, in the Annual Reports of the Davis Center for those years, which I also found in my files. He writes:

Week after week the theoretical model failed to illuminate the concrete problem under discussion. By the end of the year some of us were beginning to have doubts about the validity of the concept [of professions] as a useful historical tool.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Lawrence Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” 6.

Or again, the following year:

The trouble lies in the fact that the professions are so deeply embedded in society that almost everything acts upon them.... This means that the monographic approach, studying one profession at one period at one time, which is all the historian can usually handle, merely produces a bewildering series of different case studies, which are almost impossible to knit together into a single over-arching model of explanation.⁸⁵

What they all wanted—I do remember thinking this at the time—was an overarching theory, but a theory of contingency.

But let me return to the issue of competitiveness. That the seminar's competitiveness had limits was made evident on the one particular occasion when a speaker was invited more or less by mistake. The paper's argument was not very interesting, but it had lots of facts that were good to think with, and perhaps Professor Stone had taken a long-shot chance. But the gamble failed. The opening of the seminar—the speaker's positioning remarks, the opening discussion, and the exchange with Lawrence himself—made it very clear that the speaker was completely unable to function in the seminar as it then operated. We seemed headed for a dreadful experience—humiliating for the speaker, embarrassing to the inviter, and awkward for the participants. Seated as he was beside the speaker, who did not turn to see him, Lawrence employed his expressive face to its utmost and telegraphed silently to everyone in the room that we were to set all standard practices aside. By directing a few general questions to the group, he then initiated an open conversation among us all, leading us to include the speaker as a participant but by no means to focus on him. We all followed Lawrence's lead without a hitch, and the room had a fruitful and indeed surprisingly convivial discussion for two hours, precisely about the general theoretical issues that, as I noted above, had been so perplexing. I am sure the speaker never realized that the seminar had changed from its normal format.

And yet one wonders if we would have had such a conversation if it had been scheduled in advance. I think not. It was the suddenness of the release from normal habits—and the moral imperative

⁸⁵ Lawrence Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1979–1980," 5–6.

that enforced it—that together produced that magical conversation. I am confirmed in this memory by perusal of the Center report for 1978–1979, in which Lawrence complains of the unevenness of the presented papers but sees the same silver lining:

The problem of the greatly varying quality of the papers presented to the Seminar continued to plague us. On the other hand there was only limited observable correlation between the quality of the paper and that of the discussion, so that even a bad paper often had its compensations.⁸⁶

No doubt he was remembering the occasion I have just described.

The late 1970s were a time of beginnings not just for me but for history as well. Cliometrics had been the cult of the 1960s, but culture was the cult of the 1970s. And it was in that decade that Clifford Geertz first throned in Princeton. A generation encountered anthropology through the pyrotechnics of the cockfight essay, a clever one-off whose dazzled young readers were unaware of Geertz's seven prior monographs on Indonesia.

Inevitably, the Geertz/Schneider gospel entered the Princeton history world, and in the Davis Center environment, Bill Sewell was its main evangelist. Bill was then finishing his five years with Geertz at the Institute, and often dropped in on Davis Center meetings, at one point giving a fine paper on his new work about the names of labor in Marseille. But one day, the cultural turn, *microstoria*, and rhetorical artifice did come to an unforgettable climax at the Davis Center. I think this story actually dates from a couple of years later, when a presentation about the history of medicine brought me again to the basement of Firestone. The speaker must have been either very well known or a product of the Penn history of medicine shop, for Charles Rosenberg had come up for the session, bringing a group of his Penn graduate students. Charles himself was, of course, of the pre-Geertz generation. His books were profoundly researched in the style of his predecessor Owsei Temkin, but at the same time he wrote them as smooth, compelling narratives.

So Charles was at the seminar with his troops, and the topic of the new culturalism arose. With it came the question of the article

⁸⁶ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979," 6.

as a clever interpretation, of the title as a deft turning of the phrase, indeed of the whole *petit diamant* style of history then being brought to Princeton by Robert Darnton in *History* 406 and by the relatively newly arrived Professor Davis, who was even then taking *microstoria* to the silver screen with Gérard Depardieu and Nathalie Baye in the superb *Retour de Martin Guerre*. It was a style exemplified for everyone in Professor Ginzburg's equally wonderful *Il formaggio e i vermi*, which had appeared in book translation in 1980 after being presented in paper form at the Davis Center in 1973–1974. Indeed, by now even the Annales school had made the cultural move, for Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou* had appeared in English in 1979.

All this was on the table, but as an historian of medicine of the old school, Charles was having none of it. He gave us an impassioned argument:

For example, let's take labor history. There's a book from 1840 [I forget the exact year], and in that book there's a huge fold-out with a printed lithograph showing a labor parade through New York, with all the various labor groups and unions and so on marching in order. And some *idiot* has probably written an article using just this picture to set forth an entire analysis of New York labor at the time.

Charles glared angrily at us all, and into the shocked silence came the inevitable response: "I just did." It was Sean Wilentz.

Let me conclude, however, with the seminar as a romantic fact in my own life. To me as I was then, the Davis Center represented an ideal of inquiry: seminars run as they should be, with a kind of tough respect and a relative minimum of posturing, bringing together scholars interested in a common area, mutually respectful although also driven and very competitive, with a common aim to understand the past on its own terms, for what it had tried to be, and without making any moral judgment of past people on present terms. That I found this kind of rigorous and humane outlook at the very beginning of my academic career gave me great hope and energy.

But the magic of it all was quite accidental. As we have already seen, it was accidental that the Davis Center was doing my topic at the very time I began my career at a nearby university. And it was

also accidental that the seminar was small: Lawrence's reports happily noted the cohesion of the *Professions* seminar after the unmanageable groups of thirty to forty during the *History of the Family* years. Even the cordiality was accidental. Lawrence had been happily surprised by the strong camaraderie among the fellows of 1978–1979—Steve Botein, Robert Fox, Sam Haber, Robert Muchembeld, Don Scott, Andy Scull, and John Weiss. Very much against previous precedent, they had met weekly to exchange ideas, but they were also an outward-looking group, who, as Lawrence reported, “made many friends among faculty and graduate students.”⁸⁷

While not wishing to take anything away from his peers, I cannot help but see in this close collaboration the warmth and grace of Steve Botein, who was struck down by a cerebral aneurysm only seven years later, at forty-four. For the last of the perfect things that lined up for me at the Davis Center was Steve's friendliness. Steve quickly saw through my curious mixture of timidity and arrogance, and his warmth made me feel welcome indeed. He had been a history and lit tutor at Harvard when I was an undergraduate, and even claimed to remember the contentious meeting at which my BA thesis was turned down for honors—a claim that was no doubt a kindly prevarication on his part. Heaven only knows how Steve's warmth and grace had survived graduate school and assistant professorhood. But they had, and I—like many others—am greatly in his debt.

I found other friends at the Davis Center, too, in particular Gerry Geison and Ted Rabb, who went out of their way to be welcoming. It would be in Ted's adventurous *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* that I would publish in 1986 the first paper applying sequencing algorithms to social data. The orthodox statisticians in my own discipline wouldn't have touched such a thing for love nor money.

But in the last analysis, the success of the Davis Center in stimulating my work, and the romantic and special place that it occupies in my memory, derived like so many things from the architecture of contingency. And because of that happy architecture, I am lucky to have, on those difficult days whose number seems always to increase, this golden memory to take out and relive, from the first moment of

⁸⁷ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” 7.

setting out from Phillipsburg to the afternoon slog back up Route 1 to Rutgers and reality. The Davis Center was my introduction to adult academic life, and it remains for me an ideal—not necessarily to replicate, of course, but to reconsider, to recast in current terms, and to reenact as I have the ability and the opportunity.

Like all golden memories, this one retains its power to push me to new possibilities and new goals. And it will lose that ability soon enough when I, like so many of the characters of this, my story, shall myself die. One hopes, then, to have left a few such memories for others in their turn. The good news is that we have ourselves probably done that. The bad news is that we don't know which memories we have left and where we have left them.

For if there were a place where all these Davis Center ghosts were together assembled, I would go there at once and gabble out my thanks. But they are gone or changed. And you, my audience, must stand in their place.

Thanks.





David Bell introducing Natalie Zemon Davis.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

FIRE ARROWS IN THE DARKNESS | David A. Bell

When I was a graduate student here at Princeton, the Davis Center was just as important to my historical education as any of the formal seminars I took. It was an incredible experience to attend each week, to see some of the greatest historians in the world present their work—and just as important, to see the great historians of this department challenge that work, criticize it, and sometimes clinically dissect it, showing what succeeded and what did not, where the arguments and evidence were strong, and where they were not.

The most vivid recollection I have of the seminar comes from a memorable session in, I believe, 1987, when Natalie Zemon Davis presented two chapters of her book *Fiction in the Archives*. The book was as daring as it was brilliant, and Natalie's colleagues did not shirk from some very vigorous criticism—to which she replied with an equally vigorous and very effective defense. I particularly remember Lawrence Stone's criticism as he opened the seminar with his usual comment (in those days, Stone always gave the comment). I won't repeat the substance of it here, but I do want to recall the striking analogy he used. He said that Natalie's work reminded him of fire arrows shot into the darkness, illuminating pieces of the landscape as they flew by. I am fairly sure he did not mean this entirely as a compliment—Stone himself probably saw searchlights as a more certain form of illumination. But it strikes me that the analogy is actually an excellent one for the Davis seminar as a whole. Each week's discussion is a fire arrow shot into the darkness, revealing different pieces of the historical landscape as they fly by, sometimes flickeringly, sometimes very brightly, but always an illumination.



Natalie Zemon Davis giving her remarks.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

WIDENING THE HORIZON 1990–1994 | Natalie Zemon Davis

I came to Princeton to teach in 1978, invited by Lawrence Stone. He had been something of a mentor to me in earlier years. Indeed, I had been thrilled and deeply honored in the mid-1960s, when he expressed interest in my work after I gave my first paper at the American Historical Association. He had been for my generation one of the pioneers of the new social history, representing the school of *Past & Present* in America. In 1977 he had published his *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*. Whatever the limits of that book in its treatment of women, it still brought his enormous prestige to bear in support of the history of women, whose study a group of us feminist scholars were trying to encourage.

Already before moving to Princeton, I had attended the famed sessions of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies. The themes in those years included the History of Education and History of the Family, vanguard subjects at the time. The Friday seminars were spoken of with awe, as Lawrence's cogent but sharp commentaries on the papers set the tone for the scholarly exchange. He ordinarily told us what view came out on top.

Much as I learned from and appreciated Lawrence's Davis Center years, I wanted to shift the Center's approach somewhat once I became director in 1990, opening it up to wider participation and themes. I added a second person to the director's assistant, assigning them more initiative: Gyan Prakash and Robert Shell served in 1990–1992, Elizabeth Lunbeck and Suzanne Marchand in 1992–1994. I invited colleagues in History and other departments to give the formal commentary on the paper at the weekly seminar and reserved for myself only the role of summing up the discussion at the end. I tried to identify areas of agreement and define the controversies that remained for our research and debate.

As for the themes followed over the decades at the Davis Center during Lawrence's tenure, they had stayed close to American and English history, sometimes straying across the Channel to France and

Western Europe. To relocate our focus, we set up *Imperialism, Colonialism, and the Colonial Aftermath* as our theme for 1990–1992. This expansion was applauded by our colleagues in the department who were working on non-Western subjects. As for our fellows, only a few came from areas that had been subject to colonial domination (India, Martinique), but their topics for research concerned Africa, India, the Middle East, the Pacific, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

In pursuing our theme in papers and conferences, we looked both at structures and practices of domination and at forms of resistance. We did not limit ourselves to binaries, however: rather we examined mixed states and the challenges they provoked. Ann Stoler told us of the children born of mixed parentage in Southeast Asia and how they were viewed: were they to be excluded from family life or educated by their fathers according to a Western model? Irene Silverblatt talked of the Andean religion in seventeenth-century Peru, which mingled indigenous motifs with Christian saintly images, especially in regard to the Virgin Mary. Mixture was also found in the medical practice of African healers, as recounted by Steven Feierman. Even while opposing European competitors and their vaccinations, they turned to some of their cures.

How far should mixture go? Valentin Mudimbé described the then forthcoming Dictionary of African Religion and Philosophy, of which he was one of the editors. What kind of entries should it have? Should the categories be those of Western philosophy and religion or those emerging from the African milieu? (A lively debate ensued between Mudimbé and the folklorist Roger Abrahams, who argued for the latter, while Mudimbé defended the former.)

Advancing our understanding significantly on these matters was Gyan Prakash's presentation "Science in Translation in Colonial India." Here were examples of both resistance and indifference to colonial domination as well as states of mixture. The science museums set up by English colonial authorities were intended to contrast modern knowledge with the alleged superstition of the Indian masses—including the mounting of exhibitions on "primitive tribes." The Indian public attended the exhibitions and enjoyed them, so Gyan discovered. They found them wondrous and entertaining. Instead of the binary English science/Indian superstition, the Indian public took to them both.

Gyan expanded this topic into an interesting Davis Center Colloquium on Museums and Collection, Colonial and Postcolonial, which brought together scholars and museum directors. A striking debate ensued between the late Michael Coe of the Peabody Museum at Yale and Ruth Phillips, then at Carleton University in Ottawa. Coe had pioneered in introducing Olmec heads and Mayan ceramics and other objects into the world of “art,” but he balked at Ruth Phillips’s making the same extension to the beaded purses and other objects produced by the indigenous peoples of North America. Ruth defended her interpretation vigorously and went on to produce an innovative book a few years later, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in North American Art from the Northeast, 1700–1900*.⁸⁸

Along the way during 1990–1992, fellows reminded us that the topic of *Imperialism and Colonialism* had an impact on our work as historians, that is, on the character of historical memory and historical narrative. Colin Dayan pointed out that the history of Haiti originated in violence, that Jean-Jacques Dessalines and *voudun* needed to be integrated into the story along with Toussaint L’Ouverture and his reasoned argument for freedom and equality.⁸⁹ Garth Fowden called us to an even larger modification, redefining the Islamic empire as a continuation of rather than a rupture with the Roman past, a quest for “political and religious universalism.” Steven Feierman insisted that African history itself challenged the themes and models that were claimed to be universal by historians of the West.⁹⁰

Shahid Amin’s project was an example of this transformation. He had come to the Davis Center with extensive notes on his fieldwork in the Indian village of Chauri Chaura, the site of a very “un-Gandhian” uprising (as he put it) in 1922. In the wake of a harsh police attack on peaceful political protest against British domination, the villagers responded with violence, burning down a building with policemen

⁸⁸ Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in North American Art from the Northeast, 1700–1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Montreal: McGill-Queen’s, 1998).

⁸⁹ The seminar presentation of Colin Dayan (then known as Joan Dayan) was the basis for her book *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

⁹⁰ The initial presentations by Steven Feierman, Joan Dayan, and Ruth B. Phillips are among those included in Gyan Prakash’s excellent edition of selected papers from the Davis Center sessions during 1990–1992: *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

inside it. The subsequent crackdown was severe, with some rebels executed, others sentenced to many years in prison. Shahid Amin, a learned historian from a distinguished Muslim family of Delhi, had gone to the village and interviewed the few still alive from the earlier event and the descendants of both the police and their opponents.

Shahid's initial plan was simply to do a straight history of what had happened in 1922. In the course of Davis Center discussion, his project widened. One of the most interesting features of the event had been the *way* it was recounted to him, the professor-outsider, by the villagers: participants had different memories and especially the event had different meanings to people of different generations. Shahid decided to incorporate all this into his study: how was the event recalled? How did their stories allow them to live together? He entitled his 1995 book *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922–1992*.⁹¹

The theme taken up by the Davis Center for 1992–1994—*Proof and Persuasion*—grew in part out of our conversations about conflicting testimonies during the two years on *Imperialism* and in part out of the argument for cultural relativism erupting in literary studies. Elizabeth Lunbeck, Suzanne Marchand, and Anthony Grafton were among the colleagues who led the way in conceptualizing the issues. Again we sought to go beyond the binary so frequently enacted in the current debate: those arguing, on the one hand, for the existence of an objective truth, available to the reasonable mind; those arguing, on the other hand, that cultural values and perspectives always determined one's outlook. Instead our goal was to examine cases in which evidence was being amassed and assessed and to look at the rhetorical and other devices used to persuade people of the validity of a position.

Looking over the presentations and projects for those years, I find the range quite dazzling. If we stayed geographically within Western zones, we moved chronologically from ancient Greece, with an account of the probative arguments used by its orators and historians, to our own times, with a description of the structure of debates about the causes of cancer.

⁹¹ Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922–1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995; Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

There was a range, too, in disciplinary theme. In the history of philosophy, Quentin Skinner analyzed Thomas Hobbes's critique of rhetoric as a means for expressing the truth and Hobbes's own preference for plain speech. We had several sessions in the history of law, including a colloquium organized by Hendrik Hartog and William Chester Jordan on proof and evidence from the medieval period through the nineteenth century. Richard Sherwin, a scholar at the New York University School of Law, brought us a film, *The Thin Blue Line*, about the murder of a Texas police officer. It was an apt illustration of the complexities and uncertainties in legal proof.

Of course, the history of historical writing itself was often at issue and was astutely explored during a conference convened by Anthony Grafton and Suzanne Marchand, "Standards of Proof and Methods of Persuasion in the Discipline of History." Carlo Ginzburg reported there on the controversy that had arisen around his interpretation of Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation*, and Anthony Grafton gave his famous paper on "the Footnote."⁹²

Two colloquia were organized around themes in the history of science, with Elizabeth Lunbeck playing a major role in their design. The first of them had as its theme "Credibility and Consensus in Scientific Communities," and Steven Shapin presented his brand new material on the ways in which the polite manners and social status of a natural philosopher in the seventeenth century had an important influence on the acceptance of his evidence (he might well have added gender, as was suggested in the discussion). The second circled around "The Early Psychoanalytic Case: Patients and Narratives," with Freud himself the major case on the table.⁹³

⁹² Most of the papers from the conference were reproduced in "Proof and Persuasion in History," ed. Anthony T. Grafton and Suzanne L. Marchand, special issue, *History and Theory* 33, no. 4 (December 1994). The volume included Suzanne Marchand's paper "C. H. Becker and Josef Strzygowski: German Orientalism and Humanism between East and West," which anticipated themes that were part of her book *Down from Olympus: Archeology and Panhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). It also included Anthony Grafton's paper, which was ultimately expanded into his delightful and informative book *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁹³ Steven Shapin's influential book was just then appearing: *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Elizabeth Lunbeck's pioneering book on psychiatric knowledge was also just being published: *The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America* (Princeton:

As for our overall conclusions from the two years on *Proof and Persuasion*, I would say, first, that we settled for having to live with mixed possibilities. Values and language shape our perceptions but also can add to the tools of our trade as we seek for and evaluate evidence. We may not be able to arrive at complete closure, but, as one fellow put it, we can become accustomed to situations where we can be “more or less” in accord and use them as a springboard for further quest. Second, we were regularly reminded how important it is for the historian to be aware of the fictions with which we live. This need not undermine our loyalty to evidence. Once again, we can look at these fictions not merely as handicaps or harmful prejudices but also as assets to further our historical practice.

Suzanne Marchand and Elizabeth Lunbeck put it very well in the introduction to their published selection of papers, *Proof and Persuasion: Essays on Authority, Objectivity, and Evidence*. They talked of Freud as “the scholar-skeptic” who tried to reconcile us to “a condition of permanent uncertainty, a world of better or worse answers. And, in the end, it is Freud, the scholar-skeptic, not Iago, the cynical deceiver, whose spirit animates this book.”⁹⁴

I conclude with a favorite story from my four years as director of the Davis Center, one that illustrates the advantage that can accrue from looking at the past from a startling viewpoint and narrating it in a new way. I learned of this tale from the project of Tapati Guha-Thakurta: “Monuments and Lost Histories: The Archaeological Imagination in Colonial India.” She described the work of English archaeologists in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as they unearthed ancient Buddhist monuments in central India. They hired and trained Indian assistants but considered themselves the experts, the true discoverers of India's past. As put by Alexander Cunningham in 1854, these stones had stood

Silent and lasting up their parent rock,

And still as cities under magic's wand;

Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁹⁴ *Proof and Persuasion: Essays on Authority, Objectivity, and Evidence*, ed. Suzanne Marchand and Elizabeth Lunbeck (A Publication of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University; Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), xv.

Till curious Saxons, from a distant land

Unlocked the treasures of two thousand years.⁹⁵

Rakhaldas Banerjee (1885–1930) was one of the next generation of Indian archaeologists and became as well a pioneering scholar of early Bengali script and of ancient India. In 1914 he decided to publish a book, *Pashaner Katha*, which among other things would put to rest the doubts of English specialists about creativity in ancient India before contact with Greek sculptural style. Banarjee wrote it in the form of a “historical tale,” having as its narrator a stone from the celebrated stupa of Bharhut. (He knew the stupa from the Indian Museum, where the English archaeologists had deposited and reconstructed the stones and where he himself had been working on the collection.)

Banarjee’s stone tells a story of creation, going back to the time when it was a morsel of sand in the sea. It recounts the coming of humankind and then the long history of India, the invasion and movement of different peoples, the emergence of kingdoms, and the glorious days of early Buddhism, when the stupa of Bharhut was erected. The Muslim invasion of the sixteenth century was a sorrowful turning point in the stone’s narrative, which then jumped to the English archaeologists and their discovery of the stupa centuries later.⁹⁶ However appreciative of their work, for Banarjee, the stones of India have a story to tell in their own way.

⁹⁵ Tapati Guha-Thakurta, “Monuments and Lost Histories: The Archaeological Imagination in Colonial India,” in *Proof and Persuasion*, 144–64; Tapati Guha-Thakurta, “Tales of the Bharhut Stupa: Archeology in the Colonial Nationalist Imagination,” in *Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space-Time in Representations and Design*, ed. G.H.R. Tillotson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 26–46. These subjects were incorporated and expanded in Guha-Thakurta’s book, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Alexander Cunningham, *The Bhilsa Topes; or Buddhist Monuments of Central India* (London: Smith, Elder and Co.; Bombay: Smith, Taylor and Co., 1854), 368.

⁹⁶ Guha-Thakurta, “Monuments,” 164–70; “Tales,” 47–58; Theodor Bloch, *Supplementary Catalogue of the Archeological Collection of the Indian Museum* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission, 1911), i; Rakhaldas Banarjee, *Descriptive List of Sculptures and Coins in the Museum of the Bangiya Sahita Parishad* (Calcutta: R. K. Sinha, 1911).



Angela Creager beginning her remarks, holding up a copy of the just-published *"Let's Have at It"* by Sean H. Vanatta and Randall Todd Pippenger.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

THE SERF | Angela N. H. Creager

By a happy coincidence of history, my directorship has coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies. Two years ago, I tapped Sean Vanatta, a recent PhD of the History department, to launch a research project, including archival work and oral histories, on the first half century of the Davis Center. We had in mind to deposit the interviews in the Princeton University Archives and produce an article on the Center's history. That essay, coauthored by Vanatta and Randall Pippenger, another recent Princeton PhD who joined the project, grew to forty thousand words over the course of their work. It was published as a handsome booklet by Princeton University Printing just in time for our November 2019 event and is now available for download on the Davis Center website.⁹⁷ At our event, I offered a preview of their work as well as my own tribute to William Chester Jordan's directorship. Since readers may consult the remarkable story behind the Shelby Cullom Davis gift to Princeton in the published history, which I presented in November, or in their contribution to this booklet of remarks, here I focus on how my experience as an assistant professor at Princeton was shaped by the Davis Center.

I had the great fortune of attending one Davis Center seminar under the directorship of Natalie Zemon Davis in the spring of 1993, when I was being recruited to Princeton. This was at a conference, "Credibility and Consensus in Scientific Communities," featuring papers by Peter Dear, Steven Shapin, and Karin Knorr Cetina. It was a thrill to meet those speakers and see Natalie in action. However, my real immersion in the Davis Center occurred when I actually moved to Princeton in 1994, just as Bill Jordan assumed the directorship.

I met some amazing scholars during the years of *Business, Enterprise, and Culture*, especially Lou Galambos and Charles Perrow, but it was Jordan's next theme that really caught my imagination: *Animals and Human Society*. This was, as I learned later, something

⁹⁷ Sean H. Vanatta and Randall Todd Pippenger, "Let's Have at It": *The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Fifty* (Princeton: Princeton University Printing, 2019).

of a controversial choice. Peter Brown was very enthusiastic, but there were detractors on the Davis Center Executive Committee as well as in the department at large. And, it must be said, the fellowship ad drew a somewhat wider range of applicants than usual, as I learned when I was on the review committee one year. Nonetheless, a stellar set of fellows joined the Center each of those two years, among them some outstanding historians of science and medicine: Karen Rader, Mary Fissell, Gregg Mitman, and Susan Lederer.

Animals and Human Society spoke directly to interests of Princeton's Program in History of Science, in which I was (and am) an active part. I gave my first Davis Center comment on one of the papers the first year, an essay by my colleague Gerald Geison on Louis Pasteur's investigations of silkworm disease. Moreover, both of the executive secretaries, Mary Henninger-Voss and I, came from History of Science. By then, we were rarely referred to as *secretaries*. Rather, the role had been renamed, if unofficially, as executive serf, in recognition of having a medievalist at the helm. The new title stuck, and I much preferred it to being called a secretary.

Animals and Human Society proved an important and influential theme more generally—it caught a rising tide of scholarly interest in animals that was still quite new, even edgy. Peter Singer's 1975 book *Animal Liberation* had provoked scholars to consider the ethics of animal research and treatment of captive animals and livestock.⁹⁸ In 1983, Keith Thomas's *Man and the Natural World* focused on changing sensibilities to what he called "the brute creation."⁹⁹ Donna Haraway's publication of *Primate Visions* in 1988, and the appearance of her widely read essay "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" a few years earlier, showed how fruitfully scholars could use race and gender theory to understand animal-human relations—and science itself.¹⁰⁰ Fiction was feeding into the intellectual ferment as well, especially through the novels of J. M. Coetzee. In his 1980 fable *Waiting for the Barbarians*, "Coetzee makes

⁹⁸ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York: New York Review, Distributed by Random House, 1975).

⁹⁹ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon, 1983).

¹⁰⁰ Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936," *Social Text* 11 (1984): 20–64; Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1979).

clear [that distinctions between human and animal] are [intimately] related to other distinctions, including male and female, colonizer and colonized, civilized and primitive.”¹⁰¹ Coetzee brought his compelling prose to Princeton, giving the Tanner Lectures in 1997 on “The Lives of Animals.”¹⁰² Those lectures were held during the fall when I was executive serf, and I found them unforgettable.

What was so remarkable about *Animals and Human Society* was that the Center was in some way ahead of the curve, or at least in the avant-garde, something not characteristic of Princeton. For some of our fellows, the Davis Center’s chosen theme confirmed their scholarly existence. Nigel Rothfels wrote in response to our fellows survey:

Throughout my dissertation years, people kept asking me why I wanted to write about animals and that the work would not be supported. I struggled on the job market, but the announcement that the Davis Center Seminar was going to devote two years of research to Animals and History seemed a huge validation of what I hoped to do. When I received word that I had been awarded one of the fellowships, I literally wept.¹⁰³

Why did Bill Jordan choose it? For years he had been teaching a graduate seminar on rural society in the Middle Ages. In addition, he was just finishing *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century*.¹⁰⁴ While the title generally conjures human hunger, the book includes many perishing animals, starving, sick, or cold, whose deaths stripped humans of both plow labor and meat. He shows how crop failure went hand in hand (or hoof in hoof) with a crisis among flocks and herds, often due to epizootics. The Great Famine was a tragedy not just for people but for creatures as well. As might be expected, the *Animals and Human Society* series included some excellent papers by medievalists, such as Richard Hoffman, Paul Freedman, Ruth Mazo Karras, Rob Meens, Joyce Salisbury, and

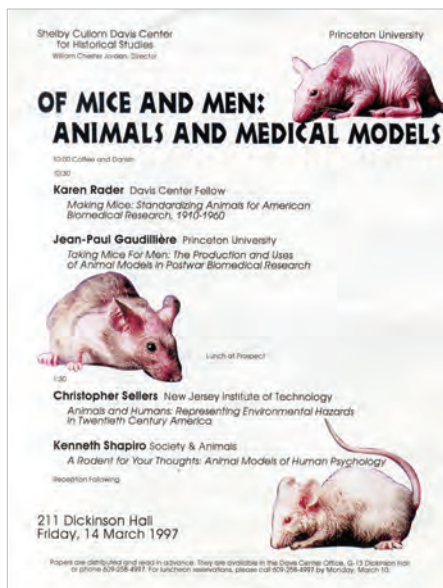
¹⁰¹ Molly H. Mullin, “Mirrors and Windows: Sociocultural Studies of Animal-Human Relationships,” *Annual Reviews in Anthropology* 28 (1999): 201–24.

¹⁰² J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹⁰³ Nigel Rothfels, Fellows Survey by Randall Todd Pippenger, 2018, 20–21, as quoted in Vanatta and Pippenger, “Let’s Have at It,” 68.

¹⁰⁴ William Chester Jordan, *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Maryanne Kowaleski. Earlier periods were part of the scene, too—one of the fellows, William Hallo, worked on animal husbandry in the twenty-first century BCE. But the theme hit a nerve in the broader historical community as well, from the time of its announcement. As Bill put it in his 1996–1997 report, “Many of us went into the theme of ‘Animals and Human Society’ with some apprehension....



Poster for “Of Mice and Men: Animals and Medical Models,” a four-paper conference on March 14, 1997, which was part of the *Animals and Human Society* theme directed by William Chester Jordan.



Poster for “The Animal as Image and Metaphor,” a four-paper conference on March 13, 1998, which was part of the *Animals and Human Society* theme directed by William Chester Jordan.

I received more mail from scholars around the country praising the topic than I ever expected.”¹⁰⁵

The program did go in some unusual directions, as illustrated by conference posters. And some of the seminars were memorable for other reasons. Lee Siegel of University of Hawaii gave a paper on Indian snake charmers. At the end of the seminar, to the surprise of the attendees, he actually pulled out a live snake. As reported by the director, “Several colleagues were captivated, some perhaps a bit too captivated. Others, myself included, have rather less enthusiasm for

¹⁰⁵ William Chester Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1996–1997,” 4.

serpents. Still, the snake behaved itself tolerably well at lunch, and there is really nothing more pleasant than having a well-mannered guest at lunch.”¹⁰⁶

If some topics were entertaining, others were more ethically tough. The second year, there were two papers on bestiality, one by Piers Beirne, a sociologist attempting to find secular grounds for prohibiting animal abuse, since much of existing law on this topic derives from religious principles. The discussion in his paper of animal pornography was just hard to read, and when he reached into his bag to indicate that he was willing to show us the video in question, the director drew back in revulsion. As it turned out, Piers was just joking—he pulled out a VCR copy of the movie *Babe*.

Continuing Davis Center tradition, two volumes of essays were published on this theme, one by each of the serfs.¹⁰⁷ The first volume was more focused on cultural history, whereas the second examined how maintaining a boundary between humans and nonhuman animals is inherently about social differences as well, and analyzed instances in which that boundary is intentionally breached. The volume contains two papers on witchcraft, two on bestiality (as mentioned above), one on xenotransplantation, among other topics. The volumes received a joint review under the title “Utterly Beastly” in the



The lyrics prepared by Petra van Damm for “Old Bill Jordan Had a Farm,” sung by the Davis Center fellows and serfs at a surprise celebration of William Chester Jordan’s fiftieth birthday in spring 1998.

¹⁰⁶ Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1996–1997,” 7.

¹⁰⁷ *Animals in Human Histories: The Mirror of Nature and Culture*, ed. Mary J. Henninger-Voss (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002); *The Animal/Human Boundary: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Angela N. H. Creager and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002). The second title includes an essay by John Murrin on bestiality laws in early America as well as the one mentioned by Piers Beirne.

Times Literary Supplement.¹⁰⁸ And, of course, we had our fun. For the director's fiftieth birthday, visiting fellow Petra van Damm organized a special presentation with that year's fellows, a singing of "Old Bill Jordan Had a Farm."

When the two years had concluded, Bill Jordan wrote, "I have never learned so much as I did every week during the seminars on 'Animals and Human Society,' and I have never been more certain that an undertaking in which I have played a part had a more important impact on the direction of scholarship."¹⁰⁹ In the years since, animal studies has only grown in scope and influence.¹¹⁰ If the Davis Center didn't lead the pack, to use a canine metaphor, it was certainly running right along. Of course, the Center moved on to other topics and concerns. The one-year *Corruption* theme in 1998–1999 was innovative in its own way: the Center partnered with the Open Society Institute (underwritten by George Soros) to explore the history of corruption and democracy through a series of international conferences. But I would like to think that the animal theme stayed with Bill Jordan, and I do have some evidence, given his publication of "Count Robert's 'Pet' Wolf."¹¹¹ This remarkable essay should be regarded, I think, as more than a pet project.

¹⁰⁸ Kevin de Ornellas, "Utterly Beastly," *Times Literary Supplement*, July 30, 2004, 23.

¹⁰⁹ Jordan, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1997–1998," 6–7.

¹¹⁰ In addition to the voluminous, interdisciplinary scholarship on this topic, in 2018 New York University launched an animal studies MA program.

¹¹¹ William Chester Jordan, "Count Robert's 'Pet' Wolf," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 155 (2011): 404–17. In 2012, this essay won the Henry Allen Moe Prize from the American Philosophical Society.





Gyan Prakash giving his remarks.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

VANDALIZING HISTORY | Gyan Prakash

My connection to the Davis Center is not limited to the five years I served as its director but goes back to 1988 when I joined the department as an assistant professor. I was welcomed very warmly even though the department had never had a historian of India, and the search in which I was selected was for a historian of modern India and/or precolonial Africa. I had heard of the Center and of course of its founding director, Lawrence Stone. I had read Lawrence Stone as an undergraduate at Delhi University, particularly his article studying the debates over the Civil War and Revolution in seventeenth-century England. So I immediately started attending the Davis Center seminars, which I knew only as a legend. I came to Princeton from Cal Tech, where I had been a postdoc for two years. Cal Tech was personally very useful to me as it sparked my research in the cultural authority of science in modern India. But history and the humanities occupied a very small, marginal place at Cal Tech. There was seldom any seminar or conference on history and the humanities. So I was hungry when I joined Princeton. The weekly seminar was the most exciting intellectual event on campus, and I became a regular attendee. Reading the precirculated paper every Thursday evening, preparing notes, and attending the seminar became a habit.

Stimulating as the seminars were, I was struck by their predominantly European and American focus—actually more European and less American. If there were comparisons, they were generally inter-European. Frequently, the comparisons were between England and France. I remember asking in one of the seminars why this was so, and someone responded that it was because the contemporaries themselves were making this comparison. I responded that this was all the more reason that the comparison needed to be historicized. I was not alone in asking such a question. The postcolonial wind was beginning to blow by this time. Subaltern studies was a hot new intervention in historiography, and Edward Said's *Orientalism* was already a sensation. It was in this context that Natalie Zemon Davis took over as the Davis Center director. She decided on *Colonialism, Imperialism,*

and the Colonial Aftermath as the Davis Center topic and asked me to be the executive secretary.

Natalie ushered in a cultural change at the Davis Center. Not only did the topic shift the discussion away from a Eurocentric orientation; she also took the Davis Center's interdisciplinary tradition even further. So when we organized a conference on imperialism, the Center invited scholars from a range of disciplines including history, anthropology, art history, literature, postcolonial studies, and others. The culture of the seminar also changed. I remember a seminar under Lawrence in which James Scott from Yale presented a paper. Presented with a particularly challenging critique of his paper, he acknowledged a gap in his paper but said that he hadn't been bloodied, suggesting that he saw the seminar as blood sport. Natalie did not look for flaws and gaps in papers but looked for their potential, what was valuable and what could be further developed. It was a cooperative and constructive model of collective intellectual exchange that drew people from all over campus and beyond. Natalie established a model of intellectual exchange that Bill Jordan and Tony Grafton continued, and it was one that I tried to further when I was asked to direct the Davis Center in 2003.

I was taken completely by surprise when Bob Tignor, the department chair, offered me the directorship. I asked if I could take a few days to consider it. He said, you can take all the time you want but you have to accept it. There was no choice. So I did. But it was intimidating because I was all too aware of the Center's distinguished history and the towering figures that had previously led it. Still, being asked to direct the Davis Center was like being given the keys to the master's house. And once given the keys, I wanted to vandalize it, to break things.

Let me explain. As a historian of colonialism, I had a problematic relationship with the discipline of history. In his book *Silencing the Past*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot refers to the discipline's blind spot. He notes that the Haitian Revolution, in spite of its historic importance, receives no more than a brief mention in Eric Hobsbawm's justly celebrated *Age of Revolutions*. The problem was not just bias but what Trouillot called the *unthinkability* of the Haitian Revolution in historiography. How could black people in a colony make a revolution?

They could be violent, even rebel, but a Black Revolution was unthinkable. Both history and the archives registered this blind spot; and it was not until the publication of C.L.R. James's *Black Jacobins* that the Haitian Revolution began to get serious historical attention.

British colonialism had used history as an instrument of its rule in India. Even the archive, the calling card of historians, couldn't be approached without serious second thoughts. You couldn't use it extractively as a mine of information, for it contained what Ranajit Guha calls "the prose of counter-insurgency."¹¹² The origin of official records in the archives lay in colonial power. Every piece of correspondence, every report, every inquiry, every official minute, all information on society, economy, law, and culture had originated in the exercise of colonial power.

John Stuart Mill, who like his father was employed by the East India Company, testifying before the Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1852 said: "The whole Government of India is carried out in writing. There is no single act of the government that is not placed on record. This appears to me a greater security for good government than exists in almost any government in the world because no other system of recordation is so complete."¹¹³ Ruling through writing and exhaustive record-keeping substituted for representative government; it justified colonialism.

With records serving as instruments of rule, one couldn't approach the archives and histories written based on its records without a heavy dose of skepticism. I became aware of this when I was doing my dissertation research on the history of bonded labor in colonial India. When I went to the archives, I found a history already written there. I found records of legislations, first abolishing slavery in 1843 and then abolishing bonded labor in 1920. In both cases, the British attributed the presence of servitude to Indian backwardness, to the weight of its past. They denounced this as denial of freedom and represented their legislations as the restoration of freedom. I found this remarkable, for I couldn't find the idea of freedom as a natural

¹¹² Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 45–88.

¹¹³ *Parliamentary Papers*, 1852–1853, XXX, Testimony of John Stuart Mill to a Select Committee of the House of Lords, June 21, 1852, 301.

right in the history of precolonial India. In fact, Louis Dumont had argued that unlike Europe, India was defined by *Homo hierarchicus* of the caste system. Obviously, labor servitude couldn't be understood as unfreedom, as denial of natural freedom. Yet, that is how colonial governance and its laws had constituted labor bondage. The records in the colonial archives, therefore, were not so much about bonded labor as about the composition of the discourse of freedom, with colonialism serving as the agent of free labor, which Marx called wage slavery. So I had to go outside the archives for the history of bonded labor. What you found outside was not history but oral traditions. In collecting these oral traditions, I became aware that here were representations of the past that would not count as history but as myths. And yet they were representations of the past, and they had to be included in the account. So I did and called them "True Stories."

Let me give you one more example. Being at Cal Tech had sparked my interest in the history of science, but that interest became a project during my first year at Princeton. I received a letter from a friend at Cal Tech who edited their house journal. She wrote to me, asking for my opinion on a matter. They had recently received an envelope from India, containing a letter written by Mr. Biswas. The letter is worth quoting in full:

Sir,

With a great hope, I am writing this letter that you will not refuse my request.

I am an Indian, writing to you with a good hope in our Indian culture.

Recently (on 27.6.1988) my wife has given birth [to] our first child [female]. Our hope is that she (child) will be genius [*sic*] and will go abroad for higher study in future. In our culture, we consider the "Umbilical Chord" of new born child very auspicious and generally we keep this underneath [*sic*] the ground in places of tradition such as University, Temple, Church, etc., with a hope that she/he will become famous according to the place where the "chord" is kept.

I believe that at present your Institute is one of the greatest Institutes in the world. So with a great hope, I am sending you that auspicious “Umbilical Chord” of my child to you with the request to put in any where underneath [*sic*] of the University campus....

The power of science is palpable in the “Chord from Mr. Biswas.” So powerful that not even the enunciation of “our culture” could escape its force. On reading the letter, I began to think that a history of the cultural authority of science in India must include the umbilical cord; that science’s translation into “our culture” must be understood as an aspect of the cultural and intellectual experience of imperial power. The history of science had to be contaminated with the presence of its impure other.

Frantz Fanon said that you have to stretch Marxism in the Third World. This is what I call vandalizing history. I carried something of this approach to the Davis Center. We chose *Cities* as the first theme of the seminar. Urban history was not a new topic. But I felt that much of urban history took the city only as an inert site where important historical events took place. New studies in the disciplines of human geography, sociology, literary studies, and urban theory, however, were presenting the city not as an inert container for historical processes but as a historically produced space that shapes and is shaped by politics, economics, and culture. There was also a revival of Walter Benjamin’s and Henri Lefebvre’s writings, which were being used by scholars to rethink the everyday urban life not in the fashion of social history but as a space of power. I thought that history as a discipline should learn from these new writings.

Moreover, the historiography of modern cities often took European cities as the paradigmatic model of modernity and saw the global history of modern cities in diffusionist terms. Take for example Marshall Berman’s magnificent *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, which identifies a modernist dialectic in Goethe, fully fleshed out in Marx, and then materialized in the Paris of Baudelaire. From there, this modernist dialectic is diffused, with St. Petersburg serving as a pale and fantastic copy of the Parisian original.

We tried to break from this diffusionist, Eurocentric model by taking advantage of the new urban literature and theories, and chose fellows and designed our seminars and conferences accordingly. This also meant choosing younger scholars who were in conversation with



Social gathering of 2003–2004 Davis Center fellows, on the theme *Cities: Space, Society, and History*. From left: Gyan Prakash, Jennifer Goldman (Center Manager), Ranjani Mazumdar, Belinda Davis, and Willem Jongman.

these new trends. This had a consequence in the social life of the Center. With younger scholars as fellows, dinner parties at the end of conferences or workshops sometimes turned into dance parties with strobe lights and fog machines!

Intellectually, the new direction meant an increased attention on cultural forms and representations. This was very much in line with what Jonathan Raban says in his book *Soft City*. “The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture.”¹¹⁴ I took this to heart, and accordingly the Center’s work included an increased focus on forms like cinema and artistic expressions. My own research on Bombay’s history also led me in this direction, including writing the script for the film *Bombay Velvet*.

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), 2.

I also wanted the Center to be innovative, foster new themes and research, to push boundaries not only in the seminars, conferences, and publications but also in the kinds of activities we did. So, under the theme of *Utopia/Dystopia*, we held a two-day event called “Utopia Station.” This was a project led by three contemporary artists—Hans Ulrich Obrist, Molly Nesbitt, and Rirkrit Tirvanija—who had first held the “Utopia Station” event at the Venice Biennale in 2003. Over two days, they conducted workshops, held performances, made video projections, and produced art objects as part of a project that envisioned utopia as an ongoing project, a way station to reflect, converse, create, produce, imagine, rather than as a destination. Looking back, I think of this event as an attempt to bring historians in conversation with artists seeking to stretch what utopia could mean as practice rather than as just a thought of the future. When the theme was *Fear*, we organized a workshop that included cognitive psychologists and the crime fiction writer Henning Mankell. Mankell was looking to historians to get fresh fodder for his crime fiction, and we sought to discover from him how the protagonists in his novels experienced and used fear. So, this was our vandalism.

What made all this possible were our wonderful fellows, manager Jennifer Houle Goldman, and executive secretaries. Most of all, we were blessed with the resources of the Center, which made our vandalism possible. As you can tell, it wasn’t nihilistic. We broke things but did so to create, to open up history and force it to speak with its subaltern others.



Hilda Sabato giving her remarks.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

LES COMBATS POUR L'HISTOIRE:
THE NEW JERSEY CORNER | Hilda Sabato

I was a fellow at the Davis Center in 2012, finally a bona fide member of the privileged community that I had witnessed many years before as an outsider. My first encounter with 211 Dickinson Hall took place in the fall of 1990, during my year of seclusion at the Institute for Advanced Study. Almost every Friday, I emerged from the woods and came downtown, as we used to say with a grain of optimism, met my friend Arcadio Diaz Quiñones, and together we attended regularly the Davis seminar. After that academic year, I often came back to Princeton for short visits, but only in 2012 did I return to room 211, this time joining the fellows with a seat at the table.

On the first Friday of the semester, in entering that room I felt immediately at home and at the same time a bit perplexed: almost twenty years had passed and yet everything looked exactly the same. By then, I was used to this feeling on each and every visit to Princeton, where continuity beats change. I must admit that cafés and new restaurants make everyday life more pleasant than thirty years ago, but nevertheless the overall atmosphere is resilient to innovation. So, that Friday I simply assumed that the same was true for the Davis seminar.

I was wrong. And in the next few minutes I would like to tell you why. Most of you will probably guess the answer, but I ask for a bit of patience to hear my side of the story. Personal experience and memories are not the best counselors when doing history, but this piece is less ambitious: just an exercise of historiographical recollection by a witness of two very specific moments of the Davis seminar, 1990–1991 and 2012, when I happened to be a regular.

Tension and thrill ran across the room way back in the early '90s. There was an ongoing war in the profession, particularly in the US, and Princeton featured as one of the more visible battle sites of these *combats pour l'histoire*. The linguistic turn—let me use, for short, this controversial term—was reaching its highest point, and the Davis seminar offered the grounds for the display of forces: the

militant turners against the conservatives, an assorted lot of those who resisted the more radical formulations of the former. By 2012, instead, on Friday mornings a peaceful atmosphere reigned at ZIL. Well before that year, the war was over. There are several markers of this outcome, but probably the most explicit formulation was the much-cited phrase pronounced by Gabrielle Spiegel in her 2009 presidential address at the American Historical Association annual meeting: "We all sense that this profound change has run its course."¹¹⁵ Three and a half years later, precisely in 2012, the *American Historical Review* published a forum under the title "Historiographic 'Turns' in Critical Perspective."¹¹⁶ Please note the plural of "turns," which suggests what the articles included actually spell out, in more than a hundred pages of print: what in 1990 we lived as a radical shift of paradigm, twenty years after had become just one within a series of ongoing historiographical changes in a profession that seems always ready to absorb innovations. In fact, the papers we discussed then—in 2012—could be read in the context of several of those successive turns: spatial, global, transnational, environmental, and so on.

Nothing too new in this generational story, which has already been told through the analytical lenses of historians who have experienced and even led these changes, such as Geoff Eley, Bill Sewell, Lynn Hunt, Joan Scott, among others, as well as by those, like the participants in the *AHR* forum I just mentioned, who cast a critical eye upon those times past from the perspective of what happened thereafter. So why bring this somewhat old-fashioned debate here today? Probably just to celebrate by setting the Center at the heart of the historiographical events of the last half century, where it belongs. And now, let me indulge in some details.

The theme for 1990 was *Colonialism, Imperialism, and the Colonial Aftermath*, most likely a symptom of what came to be identified as the imperial turn. Fellows came from various fields of history; most of them worked on what we would now call the Global South (Haiti, India, Ghana, Mexico) and fitted well within the theme of the year,

¹¹⁵ Gabrielle Spiegel, "The Task of the Historian," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 1 (February 2009): 3.

¹¹⁶ "AHR Forum: Historiographic 'Turns' in Critical Perspective," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 2012): 698–813.

while their disciplinary backgrounds ranged from social to cultural history, from subaltern studies to comparative literature and cultural anthropology. As for the Friday seminar, papers varied greatly in content and perspective. Unfortunately, there is no systematic record of the titles for that year in the Center's archives, but I recall a wide range of thematic foci, from the initial massively attended session by Edward Said, "Secular Interpretation, the Geographical Element and the Methodology of Imperialism," a critique of the absence of the imperial factor in current cultural studies; to more specific works, like Robert Shell's on religion and slavery in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century South Africa; to more ambitious essays, like Michael Taussig's "Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses." In this assorted lot, their shared core theme—empire, colonialism, postcolonialism—itself posed a challenge to conventional American historiography, also in Princeton. Yet at the same time, it is hard to identify any theoretical or methodological common ground, and although one could possibly point to an emphasis on discourse, narrative, and language in several of the presentations, as well as the recurrence of poststructuralist referents like Foucault, Derrida, or Spivak (who, by the way, was a fellow that year), these did not amount to an overall shared historiographical perspective. There were important differences in this regard and, therefore, there was room for controversy. But in most sessions, debate went well beyond the usual dynamics of paper discussion in our academic milieu, and on numerous occasions the battlefield warmed up to heated exchanges, finally quenched by the always balanced intervention of the chair, none other than Natalie Zemon Davis.

Why were these sessions so intense? At the time, I was a bit puzzled. It was my first long-term immersion in American academic life, and although I was used to passionate historical debates at home, they usually referred to competing interpretations of the past. In this case, however, it was the notion of the past itself that was at stake. What until recently had been shared assumptions regarding historical knowledge had come under heavy fire, and I was then witnessing the final stages of a decade-long offensive to eradicate them for good from the mainstream of the profession. Princeton was, of course, one of the privileged sites of this venture, although by no means the only one.

In his thought-provoking *Logics of History*, Bill Sewell described in retrospect how important his passage through Princeton (the Institute but also this Center) in the mid-'70s was to his personal shift from social to cultural history.¹¹⁷ Like other social historians at the time—Geoff Eley, Lynn Hunt, Joan Scott, among others—who had started their research careers committed to the structural, materialist approaches to societies past, predominant in the 1960s and early '70s, he questioned his own former certainties to explore the new terrain opened up by anthropologists and literary critics and soon fueled by poststructuralist theory and gender history. By the late 1980s—so claimed Sewell—social history had declined from hegemony to “a position of intellectual marginality,” while cultural history claimed to have “usurped definitely that hegemonic position.”¹¹⁸ And by 2005, when he published this book, he was concerned by this outcome as he “came to feel that something has been lost in the turn from social to cultural history.”¹¹⁹

And yet...only a few years later Spiegel pronounced the verdict I cited above, and she was by no means alone in this regard. As you know, she did not dismiss the impact of the linguistic turn; to the contrary, she acknowledged that it “represented a massive change in our understanding of the nature of historical reality, the methods of research we deployed in seeking to recover the past, and the nature of the truth claims that could be asserted about the product of our labors.”¹²⁰ But by the time she wrote this address, the influence of this “rather extreme case of historiographical change” was declining, and it was then a matter of determining “what remains valuable” or “what might be worth saving.” In her view, however, there was no new hegemon; just a reasonable acceptance of the epigones, and the opening up to new historiographical “turns.”

If we now move to the Davis Center in 2012, this overall appraisal seems confirmed. The theme for that year was *Authority and Legitimation*, and during the spring semester, we fellows were four

¹¹⁷ William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹¹⁸ Sewell, 48.

¹¹⁹ Sewell, 18.

¹²⁰ Spiegel, “The Task of the Historian,” 2.

historians and one anthropologist, working on various topics and periods, with different disciplinary inclinations and perspectives: social, legal, cultural, political, intellectual. The seminar, in turn, convened an even wider variety of scholars, themes, and approaches. In retrospect, it is easy to trace some concerns that were shared by several of the papers, such as an awareness of space and territoriality, the drive toward the transnational and the global, an interest in “stories of displacement, belonging, and...translocated authority,” as Vincent Brown proposed in his piece on Africans and slavery in the Atlantic world.¹²¹ In tune with the convening theme, there was a lot of talk on power, authority, violence, and warfare, addressed in both orthodox and unorthodox ways. But none of these papers made explicit claims to epistemological ruptures, while gender perspectives, discourse and narrative analysis, or cultural approaches were often included without explicit advocacy. Seminar discussions were quite animated, but in this case, there was no display of competing passions and the chair, Dan Rodgers, had no need to appease the audience; rather, he encouraged debate through his own sharp interventions. Were we already in the turf of the many turns—in the plural—announced by the *AHR* forum?

In that forum, Spiegel’s former diagnosis was forcefully questioned in a compelling article by Judith Surkis (a fellow this year, I gather!) on several grounds.¹²² For the sake of this exercise, I will pick up only a couple of points, starting with her critique of the concept of linguistic turn itself, used by Spiegel and so many other scholars before and since. “As a look at some key texts in the adventure of this concept will show,” she argues, “it is difficult to clearly pinpoint a singular or coherent ‘turn’ as having taken place.” She thus questions the conflation of very different trends of thought under a single conceptual and historiographical umbrella, which leaves no room to account for the differences and debates within the presumably unified team of linguistic turners. She also discusses the recent fashionable notion of “turn”—starting with the linguistic, the cultural, and the imperial,

¹²¹ Vincent Brown, “Apongo aka Wager, Prince of Guinea and Rebel of Jamaica: Locating African Authority in the Atlantic World” (paper presented at the Davis seminar, Princeton, February 17, 2012).

¹²² Judith Surkis, “When Was the Linguistic Turn? A Genealogy,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 2012): 700–722.

followed by the transnational, the global, the spatial, the digital, and so on—a conception that presumes “a supersession of one disciplinary trend by another.”¹²³

With this critique in mind, let me come back to Princeton 1990 and 2012. There was, as I mentioned, a diversity of scholars and an assorted variety of discussion papers at the 1990 Davis seminar, including quite a few who could be identified with one or more of the different strands of thought later unified under the LT logo. Differences arose and debate happened among them, with creative exchanges. But the big battles were fought on other turf. They featured the cultural historians and anthropologists, the poststructuralists and the feminists on the same side, waging their war against the former status-quo keepers, the empiricists and the realists, the social historians, all of whom were, by that late date, on the defensive, being pushed sideward from their former power positions. At that time, a new hegemony was successfully building up, not just in terms of knowledge claims but also, and maybe as important, in institutional terms within academia. So, despite Surkis's later objections to the concept, the linguistic turn did in fact represent a major intellectual event. Julia Adeney Thomas used these very words to dismiss her colleague's objections in the same forum.¹²⁴ Sure, she argues, it lacked “concision, homogeneity, and uniformity” and was traversed “by disputes, nuances, and ambiguities,” but “it altered what we took to be real,” “it produced new objects of enquiry and new ways of talking about them.” And, she concludes, its effects still endure: “We continue to live and work in the turn's wake.”¹²⁵

And yet.... This major event did not amount, in the end, to a new hegemonic way of doing history. It shattered the existing edifice, but in ways quite different from those intended by the advocates of the linguistic turn. Rather than replacing the old paradigm with a new one, history opened up in many different directions. While mainstream scholarship in the '60s and '70s (not only in the North but also in the Global South) had to deal with the social, search for the hidden

¹²³ Surkis, 702.

¹²⁴ Julia Adeney Thomas, “Comment: Not Yet Far Enough,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 2012): 794–803.

¹²⁵ Thomas, 797.

structure of an alleged reality, and seek theoretical inspiration in the social sciences, today no new “musts” have replaced the old, and there are very few explicit limits to what historians may validly do. The crisis of the former epistemological consensus and the radical formulations of the linguistic turn pushed the discipline toward new boundaries, well beyond the parameters initially proposed by the 1980s revolution. There are no universally acclaimed specific fields or favorite topics, no mandatory methodological recipes or theoretical references. The past appears segmented, research languages and strategies multiply, and no object is precluded from the historian’s gaze. Not that everything is valid: historiographical practice continuously defines new parameters for our *métier*, rules and protocols always in flux and subject to revision and change, which have resisted subordination to theories and philosophies of history. There are, of course, more and less fashionable topics and methods, but none seem to reach the degree of power once held by social history or, for that matter, by cultural history—albeit for a shorter span. And this leads me back to the so-called turns and to the end of this exercise.

After the successful career of the notion of linguistic turn, there followed a tendency to find, define, and promote numerous others in generational succession: imperial, spatial or territorial, global, digital, environmental, and so on. Yet none of the new turns amount to an intellectual event of the far-reaching consequences of their controversial predecessor. If the term, as Judith Surkis argues, “seems to signal innovation and renewal,” it also suggests the supersession of the current status quo, its displacement in face of the emerging paradigm. None of this has actually happened with the successive novelties of the last decade or two, which do not fundamentally challenge the loose historiographical consensus that grew in the aftermath of the linguistic turn. No wonder that the debates of the Davis Center in 2012 did not stir deep passions. The stakes were not as high: there was an implicit agreement on what history is all about, and therefore, we could enjoy inspiring intellectual discussions within or without the alleged new turns, with no further implications but those of our own taste for knowledge. This is not to minimize the challenging developments and controversies that today mobilize the discipline all over the world or the advantages of our historiographical plurality—which

I certainly cherish—but just to highlight how much they/we owe to the last major event we experienced in the profession, warts and all. And as of today, I am convinced that a new spell of “deep change,” in the sense evoked by Spiegel, is not within our range of visibility...so if and when it happens, it will most likely come about from different, probably unforeseen quarters. Whether in Princeton or in Argentina, we veterans of past wars will probably not see it coming.





Yael Sternhell giving her remarks.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.

**“IN THE AFTERMATH OF CATASTROPHE”:
A DAVIS CENTER THEME,
APPLIED | Yael A. Sternhell**

I arrived for my Davis Center fellowship in January 2016, almost eight years to the day after having left Dickinson Hall, dissertation in hand. A lot had transpired during that time—I had gone back to my native Israel, started teaching, published my first book. But amidst all this change, much remained the same: Princeton was still a safe haven from the pressures of Israeli life, still the best place I knew for the kind of total immersion in my research I was desperately craving. Driving into town from Newark on an early, chilly morning, I simply could not have been happier to be back.

The annual theme, under the directorship of Phil Nord, was *In the Aftermath of Catastrophe*. My contribution was based on a project I had been working on for a while, on the efforts by the United States government after the Civil War to preserve the archival record of its vanquished foe, the Confederate States of America. Rest assured, everything that is supposed to happen to a project while it is underway at the Davis Center actually did: the conceptual framework expanded considerably into a larger study of the Federal Civil War archive and how it has shaped what we know, or think we know, about the Civil War; exciting new questions came up in a series of formative conversations with members of the department: on the history of information, on the role of the state, on the uniquely democratic nature of American archiving. The seminar in which I presented my paper was one of the best professional experiences of my life: spending two hours in one room with forty of the smartest people in the world, who were truly committed to thinking through my project with me, with a kind of rigor and enthusiasm that is such a rarity in any academic setting. In short, to paraphrase an old ad for the United States Army, the Davis Center was a place where I felt like I could be all that I can be as a historian.

But there was more, of course, than simply the work I did on my own project. The Davis Center is a community of learning, and the

ideas we shared and developed here during that semester have stayed with me over the last few years and molded my thinking about the very notions of “aftermath” and “catastrophe,” and how these have played out in my own life, touched as it is by past and present catastrophes and their long aftermaths.

The lineup for the semester was rich and diverse, moving between East and West, from premodern to postmodern, and running the full gamut of the human experience, from the individual to the global. And yet one catastrophe still loomed large. World War II was the subject of six of the twelve papers that semester and came up in multiple other discussions. This is hardly surprising, of course. Phil's scholarly interests have something to do with it, but more critically, our unique focus on WWII reflects its unique status in Western culture as the ultimate catastrophe, an absolute standard against which all other events of death and suffering are measured. Don't get me wrong—I wasn't complaining. World War II has shaped my own life in myriad ways, from where I live to what I do for a living. I am happy to spend every Friday morning thinking about it. And the papers, to state the obvious, were fantastic. The semester opened with Rana Mitter's work on the Chinese postwar, focusing on a four-year period, 1945–1949, when China developed a new model for an illiberal state; it continued with Tom Trezise's paper on historical and psychoanalytical readings of Holocaust testimony, and a related paper by Jochen Hellbeck on a Soviet historical commission and its work in collecting testimonies on German atrocities; Mira Siegelberg spoke about the emergence of statelessness as a problem of personal trauma rather than a mere legal category; Leora Auslander presented on Berlin and Paris Jews coming out of hiding or returning from the camps to find their apartments empty, their material possessions gone. We concluded with a semiautobiographical meditation by Jan Gross, on the persecution of Jews in postwar Poland and the silence that kept it hidden in plain sight for two generations. Collectively, these papers provided a powerful and unsettling account of how human life continues in the face of unspeakable loss, chaos, and cruelty.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Rana Mitter, “The Chinese Postwar: The Making of Global Order and Domestic Disorder in East Asia, 1945–1949”; Tom Trezise, “Perspectives in the Theory of Trauma”; Jochen Hellbeck, “Moral Tales and Political Reckonings: Soviet Survivors of Nazi Occupation and

Early 2016 was an interesting time to be having these conversations about the aftermath of WWII. While we were seated in the seminar room, great historical undercurrents were bringing that long aftermath to an end. When the semester started, Donald Trump was still an alarming curiosity, but as the weeks went by, he was becoming less of a curiosity and more a source of alarm. On May 3, a week after our final meeting, his isolationist, nationalist, white-supremacist message won him the Indiana primary and the Republican Party's nomination. Maybe because we were so fixated on Trump, we paid little attention to what seemed at the time like a bizarre scheme hatched by the dregs of the Conservative Party in Britain, nicknamed Brexit. Granted, I actually made good on my promise of total immersion in scholarship and was not entirely on top of international news, but as far as I can remember there was one academic conference devoted to the topic, and otherwise it barely came up. On June 23, shortly before leaving to go back home, I watched in disbelief the breaking news announcing that the United Kingdom had voted to leave the EU. Suddenly, the idea of aftermath took on new meanings. Though I had suffered none of the trauma, displacement, and dispossession populating the pages of the papers we read all semester, I too was a creature of the war's aftermath. Now, it became clear, that aftermath was finally coming to a close.

Three and a half years have gone by. What does the aftermath of the aftermath actually look like? For most of us, I would guess, life goes on pretty much as it did before 2016. Trade networks, international institutions, and human rights organizations are still functional. Not every election produces a Donald Trump. But change is nevertheless upon us. "The old certainties of the postwar order no longer apply," said Angela Merkel last year, which is probably the right way to put it.¹²⁷ As historians, we should not be surprised by anything, least of all by the human capacity to forget and move on. Yet there seem

Their Audiences, 1943-1945"; Mira Siegelberg, "The Stateless in the History of Global Order"; Leora Auslander, "After Catastrophe, Jewish Berliners and Parisians Re-Imagine Belonging, 1945-1962"; Jan Gross, "Making History: A Historian's Intellectual Journey into the Hidden Polish Past."

¹²⁷ Stefan Kornelius, Nico Fried, and Philip Oltermann, "Merkel: Europe Must Unite to Stand Up to China, Russia and US," *Guardian*, May 15, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/15/angela-merkel-interview-europe-cu-unite-challenge-us-russia-china>.

to be nonstop opportunities for disorientation and dismay. Alexander Gauland, the leader of Germany's far right party, the Alternative für Deutschland, published an op-ed with striking similarities to a speech delivered by Hitler in 1933, and as Masha Gessen described it in the *New Yorker*, did no more than shrug in boredom when historians called him out.¹²⁸ Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, has expunged Poland, Hungary, and Lithuania of responsibility for collaborating with Nazi occupation forces in the extermination of their Jewish populations, going so far as to offer official support—by the state of Israel—for the Polish law criminalizing individuals accusing Poland of complicity in Nazi crimes.¹²⁹ Israeli historians exploded in anger with petitions, interviews, and op-eds, but to no avail.¹³⁰ For the Israeli right, the history of the Holocaust is political play dough, to be twisted and turned depending on the political exigencies of the moment. What matters now is forming strong relationships with like-minded ruling parties in a new alliance of illiberal democracies. Watching these eastern European autocrats on state visits to Jerusalem, I feel like a relic of an era gone by.

So much for “aftermath” and on to “catastrophe.” Despite the many seductions of the World War II scholarship presented over the

¹²⁸ Kate Connolly, “AfD Leader Accused of Echoing Hitler in Article for German Newspaper,” *Guardian*, October 10, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/10/germanys-afd-leader-alexander-gauland-accused-of-echoing-hitler-in-newspaper-article>; Masha Gessen, “Putin and Trump’s Ominous Nostalgia for the Second World War,” *New Yorker*, May 10, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/putin-and-trumps-ominous-nostalgia-for-the-second-world-war>.

¹²⁹ Noa Landau, “Netanyahu Meets Lithuanian President in Latest Overture to Former Soviet Bloc,” *Haaretz*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/netanyahu-meets-lithuanian-president-in-latest-overture-to-former-soviet-bloc-1.6893553>; Herb Keinon, “Viktor Orban, Hungary’s Controversial Prime Minister, Set to Begin Israel Trip,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 18, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Viktor-Orban-Hungarys-controversial-prime-minister-set-to-begin-Israel-trip-562769>; Raphael Ahren, “Decrying ‘Betrayal,’ Hungary Jews Say Netanyahu Ignoring Them,” *Times of Israel*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/decrying-netanyahu-betrayal-hungary-jews-say-pm-ignoring-them/>; Joint Declaration of Prime Ministers of the State of Israel and the Republic of Poland, June 27, 2018, <https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/joint-declaration-of-prime-ministers-of-the-state-of-israel-and-the-republic-of-poland.html>; Anshel Pfeffer, “With Poland, Netanyahu Discovers the Limits of Playing with History,” *Haaretz*, February 18, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-in-poland-netanyahu-discovers-the-limits-of-playing-with-history-1.6941215?&ts=1579273760580>.

¹³⁰ See for example, the reaction of Yad Vashem, <https://www.yadvashem.org/press-release/05-july-2018-07-34.html>; Noa Landau, “Israel Refuses to Reveal Who Drafted Controversial Joint Holocaust Statement with Poland,” *Haaretz*, July 11, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-israel-refuses-to-reveal-who-phrased-controversial-joint-polish-holocaust-statement-1.7493068>.

course of the semester, the paper with the greatest staying power in my mind was the one set in the Middle Ages. “At Empire’s End: Ideas of Decline from Metochites to Ibn Khaldun,” by Princeton’s Teresa Shawcross, explored ideas of catastrophe entertained by scholars in the Mediterranean basin during the fourteenth century. As Teresa explained, it was standard in the world she was studying to identify calamity with the sack of a great city, but the dissolution of the era’s great imperial power did not begin with the sack of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204 or by the Ottomans in 1453. It actually occurred over the course of an entire century. The paper examined how some of the era’s great historical thinkers tried to make sense of the shifting currents—the prolonged but perceptible decline of the Egyptian and the Byzantine empires and the rise of new geopolitical forces. They were particularly worried about the growing presence of nomadic Turkic societies, displaced by the Mongol-Turkoman empire in Asia and searching for new pastureland, first on the margins of the great Mediterranean empires but gradually deeper into the mainland. One of these itinerant leaders was Osman, founder of the Ottoman dynasty, which meant that these bards were not entirely wrong to be panicking.

Rereading the paper in 2019, the language of imperial decline spoken by Teresa’s protagonists seems strangely familiar to those of us observing the global democratic recession. Some looked and found fault for the crises threatening their societies in bungling politicians, ineffective financial institutions, flawed constitutional principles, and corrupt elites. The great Maghrebi historian Ibn Khaldun concluded that empires cannot last more than four generations, or a little more than a century. This, at least to me, immediately brings to mind the contemporary United States, which seems to be running out of steam about one hundred years after it assumed the position of a global power.

And yet the real appeal of Teresa’s paper had to do with the fact that the catastrophe she was studying was not an all-consuming, fast-moving calamity à la World War II but rather, as she beautifully put it, “a slow, creeping disaster, made up of a series of interlocking crises.” For as long as I can remember, I have been fully expecting to face a World War II–type event, just as my father had as a young boy in Poland. Growing up in Jerusalem, I spent a lot of time planning what my family would do if something like this happened to



"The Palestinian Territories," as depicted by Conquer and Divide: The Shattering of Palestinian Space by Israel.

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us, and worried a great deal about whether we would recognize impending doom early enough to escape it. But at the same time, I have actually lived my life in the shadow of a very different sort of catastrophe, much more similar to the one Teresa was studying: the slow-moving, yet omnipresent, erosion of Palestinian society and sovereignty in greater Israel/Palestine through the encroachment on territory, not by nomads, but by the Israeli hard right and its many enablers (from the lowly soldier standing at the check point to every American president and

every American Congress). This process has been going on gradually, systemically, unstopably, for decades, and it is hard to imagine at this point when or how it would come to a halt.

A recent digital project, entitled *Conquer and Divide: The Shattering of Palestinian Space by Israel*, provides a haunting visualization of the catastrophe slowly unfolding in the Occupied Territories (<https://conquer-and-divide.btselem.org/map-en.html#>). The project is a collaboration between one of Israel's oldest and best-known human rights organizations, B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, and the research agency Forensic Architecture, based at Goldsmiths,



"Declaration of State Land by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," as depicted by Conquer and Divide: The Shattering of Palestinian Space by Israel, <https://conquer-and-divide.btselem.org/>.

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University of London, which specializes in spatial and media investigations into human rights violations around the world.¹³¹ *Conquer and Divide* makes several important contributions to our understanding of the scale and dynamics of the Palestinian catastrophe, which go beyond the visual presentation of data. The project undertakes a process-based approach and brings into sharp relief the transformation of Palestinian lands through a wide variety of policies, some of which have taken decades to truly make their mark. It provides critical information on lesser-known modes of encroachment by Israel, like the declaration of state land and the confiscation of territory for nature reserves, which draw only minimal attention from anyone except the most dedicated activists though they have had, and continue to have, a monumental impact on the availability of agricultural land for Palestinians.¹³²

Conquer and Divide also highlights the unexpected twists and turns in the decades-long venture to splinter the Occupied Territories. Restrictions on movement, which nowadays are considered a hallmark of Israeli control over the lives of men, women, and children, and are often seen as the most objectionable form of day-to-day domination, were only put in place in January 1991, during the First Gulf War and an entire generation after conquest. Finally, the visual tools provide a stark representation of a fact that is obvious in principle but is rarely acknowledged: The Oslo Accords of 1995, which are popularly considered a major breakthrough in the conflict and a huge concession by Israel (so much so that the prime minister who signed them, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated by a hard-right activist), actually continued

¹³¹ In February, the founder of Forensic Architecture was denied entry to the United States on a visitor visa after having been identified by the State Department as a “security threat.” Colin Moynihan, “Forensic Architecture Founder Says United States Prevented His Visit,” *New York Times*, February 19, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/19/arts/design/forensic-architecture-founder-says-us-denied-him-visa.html>.

¹³² Case in point: the latest declaration of “nature reserves,” by Israel’s ultra-rightist secretary of defense, Naftali Bennett, will effectively confiscate thirty-two thousand acres of land in the Occupied Territories. The decision, made public in mid-January 2020, received no more than a passing mention in Israel’s various media outlets. Hagar Shezaf, “Israeli Defense Chief Approves New West Bank Nature Reserves to ‘Develop Jewish Settlement,’” *Haaretz*, January 15, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-defense-chief-approves-west-bank-nature-reserves-to-develop-jewish-settlement-1.8405284>. Other media outlets did not dwell on the human cost of this deeply political move and focused on its implications for tourism in the West Bank.



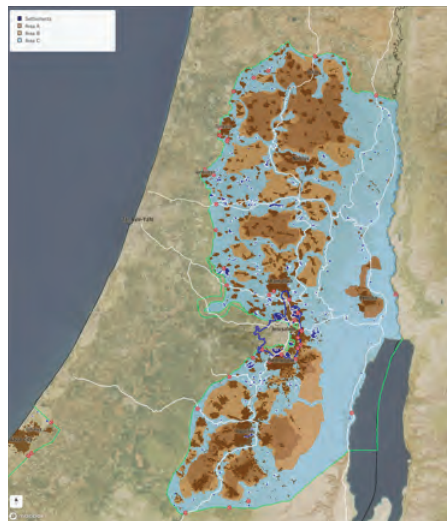
"Restrictions on Palestinian Movement in the Occupied Territories," as depicted by Conquer and Divide: The Shattering of Palestinian Space by Israel, <https://conquer-and-divide.btselem.org/>.

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monumental in scope and in impact, has become largely invisible, not merely to outsiders, but also to the very people executing it. It takes place no more than twenty miles away from Tel Aviv yet is all but absent from the day-to-day workings of the country. Whether they love it or hate it, Israeli Jews have developed a remarkable ability to simply deny the existence of the occupation and its ramifications altogether. Israeli Palestinians have too many problems of their own, on the one hand, and are also increasingly integrated into the same oblivious Israeli mainstream, on the other. The disjuncture, in such a miniscule geographical space, between

and even intensified the process of shattering Palestinian space. The defining feature of the Oslo Accords was the division of the Occupied Territories into three zones, A, B, and C, which were determined by demographic realities—that is, by how many Palestinians or Jewish settlers lived in a particular locale. As *Conquer and Divide* shows us, geographical considerations did not factor into the new divisions. A generation later, the implications for the spatial cohesion of Palestine scream at us from the screen.

The truly remarkable fact about all of this is that this catastrophe,



"Impact of the Oslo Accords," as depicted by Conquer and Divide: The Shattering of Palestinian Space by Israel, <https://conquer-and-divide.btselem.org/>.

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the flourishing Israeli state and the disaster inflicted on its subjects, is incomprehensible. No matter how active in the struggle many of us try to be, most of the time, to be perfectly honest, we simply choose to avert our gaze and get by. It is impossible to predict the future and there is a good chance that someday the pace will pick up and the creeping disaster will beget the kind of all-out, destructive conflict we moderns associate with the term “catastrophe.” Until then, like Metochites and Ibn Khaldun, under the same pleasant Mediterranean sun, we simply stare in despair at the encroachments of the Israeli state, as it continues to irreversibly remake the spatial, political, and social realities of the Occupied Territories and the people they entrap.

Tragic as it is, in the larger scheme of things, Israel/Palestine is a sideshow to the ultimate slow-moving catastrophe. Climate change has arrived, and helpless bystanders that we are, we watch an overheated planet begin to consume itself with fires, floods, rising seas, and disappearing species. As some commentators have noted, climate change and World War II have a great deal in common—both are the outcomes of industrialized societies wielding the awesome powers of technology irresponsibly and bringing the human race to the brink of extinction.¹³³ But I wonder whether that comparison is actually helpful. Perhaps World War II’s predominance in our historical imagination is clouding our vision and preventing us from realizing, truly, that our undoing as a civilization is no less real when it takes place at the speed of a melting glacier rather than through the frenetic movement of fighter jets. Perhaps the predominance of young people in the fight against climate change has something to do not just with their acute realization that they will live to see disaster (at the rate things are going now, we Generation Xrs should be equally worried) but because they, growing up after the aftermath, are not bound to a certain vision of how their world will come to an end. Perhaps only when we begin to dread the heat of the sun as much as we do the heat of the crematorium will we begin to act on the advent of the next catastrophe, the one that may not even have an aftermath.

¹³³ See, for example, Gessen, “Putin and Trump’s Ominous Nostalgia.”



CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Abbott is the Gustavus F. and Ann M. Swift Distinguished Professor at the University of Chicago. While teaching at Rutgers University in the late 1970s, he regularly attended Davis Center seminars on the theme *History of the Professions*. Known for his sociological theories of professions, Abbott also pioneered computational analysis of social sequence data. He has written on the philosophical foundations of social science and on the evolution of the social sciences, the academic system, and research libraries. He is presently completing a general work of social theory entitled *The Social Process*.

David A. Bell is the Sidney and Ruth Lapidus Professor in the Era of North Atlantic Revolutions in the Princeton Department of History and from 2020 to 2024 is serving as director of the Davis Center. He was educated at Harvard, the École Normale Supérieure, and Princeton and previously taught at Yale and Johns Hopkins, where he also served as Dean of Faculty. He is the author of seven books, including *The Cult of the Nation in France* (2001) and *The First Total War* (2007). He has held Guggenheim, Wilson Center, ACLS, and Cullman Center fellowships and is a regular contributor to the *New York Review of Books*.

Sir David Cannadine is President of the British Academy, the Dodge Professor of History at Princeton University, and Visiting Professor at the University of Oxford. He is author of many books, including *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800–1906* (2018); *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (1990); *Class in Britain* (1998); *Ornamentalism* (2001); *The Undivided Past* (2013); and biographies of G. M. Trevelyan, Andrew W. Mellon, King George V, and Margaret Thatcher. He is the current editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. He coedited a collection of essays in honor of Lawrence Stone in 1989, and in 2002 he published the essay “Historians in the ‘Liberal Hour’: Lawrence Stone and J. H. Plumb Revisited.”

Angela N. H. Creager is the Thomas M. Siebel Professor in the History of Science and was director of the Davis Center from 2016 to 2020. She writes on the history of twentieth-century biology and biomedical research. She is author of two monographs, most recently *Life Atomic: A History of Radioisotopes in Science and Medicine* (2013). In 1997–1998 she served as executive secretary under William Chester Jordan on the theme *Animals and Human Society*. She is currently chair of the Department of History.

Natalie Zemon Davis is the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History, Emerita at Princeton and Professor of History at the University of Toronto. She was the second director of the Davis Center, overseeing its activities from 1990 to 1994. Her books include *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (1987), and *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (1995), written while she was teaching at Princeton; and *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (2000) and *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Words* (2006), written since her retirement. She has served as consultant for both historical film and historical theater.

Carlo Ginzburg is Professor Emeritus of History at UCLA. As a Davis Center fellow in the 1973–1974 academic year, when the theme under Lawrence Stone was *Popular Religion*, he first presented a paper on the beliefs of an Italian heretic, Menocchio, that developed into his book *The Cheese and the Worms* (1976). Two of his other books have examined visionary folk traditions, *The Night Battles* (1966) and *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (1989). Ginzburg's long-standing interest in method, exemplified in his 1980 essay "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method," has led him in recent years to examine the relationship between morphology and history.

Randall Todd Pippenger is Lecturer in History at Princeton University, where he received his PhD in 2018. He was awarded the 2020 Van Courtlandt Elliott Prize by the Medieval Academy of America for his 2018 article "Lives on Hold: The Dampierre Family, Captivity, and

the Crusades in Thirteenth-Century Champagne,” which appeared in the *Journal of Medieval History*. He is also author, with Sean H. Vanatta, of “Let’s Have at It (2020),” the history of the Davis Center published for its fiftieth anniversary.

Gyan Prakash is the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History and directed the Davis Center from 2003 to 2008, leading programs on the themes of *Cities, Utopia/Dystopia*, and *Fear*. He also served as executive secretary under Natalie Zemon Davis in 1990–1992 on the theme *Colonialism, Imperialism, and the Colonial Aftermath*. He is the author of several books, including *Mumbai Fables* (2010) and *Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy’s Turning Point* (2019). He also wrote the story and co-wrote the script for the film *Bombay Velvet* (2016).

Hilda Sabato is Head Researcher at Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (Argentina) and former Professor of History at University of Buenos Aires. She was a fellow at the Davis Center in 2011–2012 on the theme *Authority and Legitimation* with Daniel T. Rodgers, where she worked on her book *Republics of the New World: The Revolutionary Political Experiment in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, published by Princeton University Press in 2018.

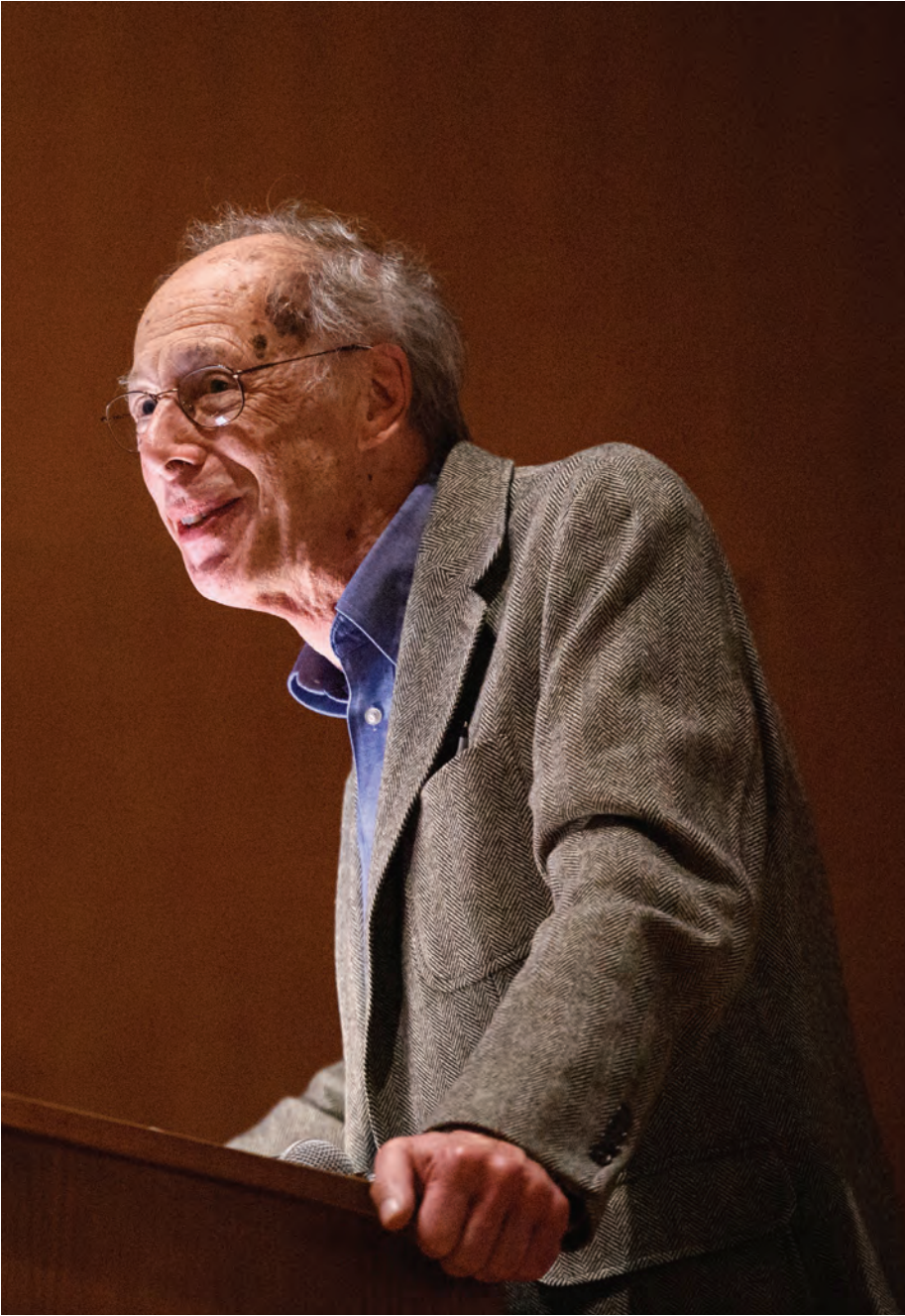
Yael A. Sternhell is Associate Professor of History and American Studies at Tel Aviv University. She is author of *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (2012) and is currently working on a second book that traces the complex and surprising history of the written records generated by the US Civil War. Her other publications examine rumors, emancipation, and the antiwar turn in Civil War scholarship. She was a Davis Center fellow in spring 2016 on the theme *In the Aftermath of Catastrophe* with Philip Nord.

Sean H. Vanatta is Lecturer in Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow. His article “Citibank, Credit Cards, and the Local Politics of National Consumer Finance, 1968–1991” received the 2016 Henrietta Larson Award from the *Business History Review* for the best article in that year’s journal. From 2018 to 2019, he conducted

oral history interviews for the Davis Center's fiftieth-anniversary project and coauthored, with Randall Todd Pippenger, the anniversary essay, "*Let's Have at It* (2020)."

Keith Andrew Wailoo is the Henry Putnam University Professor of History and Public Affairs at Princeton University, where he teaches in the Department of History and the School of Public and International Affairs. He was chair of the Department of History from 2017 to 2020 and is the former vice dean of the School of Public and International Affairs. He is the author of numerous books, including *Dying the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race and Health* (2001); *Pain: A Political History* (2014); and *Pushing Cool: Big Tobacco, Racial Marketing, and the Untold Story of the Menthol Cigarette* (2021).





Dan Rodgers closing the Symposium with a Davis Center-style recap.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan.



Phil Nord toasting the fiftieth anniversary of the Davis Center and Natalie Zemon Davis's birthday, which was (also) on November 8.

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