

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY  
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540

SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

MODERN HISTORY

Felix Gilbert

Professors Kennan and Gilbert worked in the field of modern ~~European~~ history conceived as extending from the sixteenth century to the present.

Professor Kennan's particular interests are diplomatic history, especially American diplomatic history, and Russian history. He has published in the last years his memoirs which are widely concerned with his own diplomatic experiences. But he has also published a book on The Marquis de Custine and His Russia in 1839 and for several years he has been at work on a comprehensive study of the formation of the Russo-Franco alliance. It is clear that the visiting members with whom he was in close contact and who benefited most from his presence at the Institute were scholars working in the fields of diplomatic history and international relations. I might mention Sir Frederick W. Deakin; Fritz Fischer; Chihiro Hosoya, one of the leading Japanese modern historians; James Joll, Professor of International Relations at the University of London; Otto Pflanze from the University of Minnesota; and Fritz Stern from Columbia University. Professor Kennan also took particular care to have a number of historians working in the East European and Russian field as visitors at the Institute: from the Lenin biographer, Louis Fischer, who worked as Professor Kennan's Research Associate, to the Stalin biographer, Robert Tucker, with whom Professor Kennan had already been connected when he was Ambassador to Russia. But I should also mention Loren R. Graham, Arthur Lehning, Alexander Rabinowitch, Janusz K. Zawodny. You will find in all their publications references to how they benefited from their stay at the Institute.

In his own work Professor Gilbert has been concerned with the history of the Renaissance and with intellectual history throughout modern times, particularly the developments and the methods of historiography. A large number of historians working in the sixteenth century, from the United States, England, Germany and Italy, have been visiting members of the Institute during the last decade (Becker, Bertelli, Breen, Brucker, Burke, Cantimori, Chojnacki, Cozzi, Giesey, Gundersheimer, Herde, Holmes, Kelley, Kingdon, Kirshner, Kristeller, Maffei, Major, Morris, Rice, Rubinstein, Sella, Trexler, Weinstein).

The presence of several people working in the same era led to fruitful discussions and the stay of four prominent Italian Renaissance historians - Bertelli, Cantimori, Cozzi, Maffei - proved to be particularly helpful to those who had worked or wanted to work in the Italian archives. I think one can say that the composition of many of the more important works in the Renaissance field - like Gene Rice's The Prefatory Epistles of Lefevre, Nicolai Rubinstein's The Government of Florence under the Medici (1434-94), Gene Brucker's Renaissance Florence, Donald Kelley's Francois Hotman, Giesey and Salmon's Francogallia, George Holmes' The Florentine Enlightenment 1400-50, Gundersheimer's Ferrara - was accelerated or made possible through the stay of their authors at the Institute.

Another unifying bond for visitors like Professors Schieder, Schorske, H. and W. Moomsen, James Sheehan, Leonard Krieger, was interest in the development of historiography and historical methodology, particularly the relation of history to the social sciences, and the presence of the School of Social Science provided for them a valuable stimulus.

It should also be mentioned that Professors Kennan and Gilbert place some emphasis on giving European scholars who were particularly interested in American history or taught American history at European universities an opportunity of working in American surroundings and of becoming acquainted with American historians. I might mention here Bracher and Hartmut Lehmann from Germany, Nicholas from England and Gerald Stourzh from Austria. Stourzh's much-discussed book on Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of American Government was chiefly written at the Institute. *Review of 1961*

Of course, many other modern historians have been visiting members of the Institute. We have always been glad to have here prominent scholars who believed that a year at the Institute would be useful for their work. I might mention here of historians working in European history Franklin Ford, Robert Palmer, Jakob Talmon, Roberto Vivarelli; of historians working in American history Jack Greene, John Higham, Stanley Elkins, Eric McKittrick.

January 28, 1975

FELIX GILBERT - CURRICULUM VITAE

Born: May 21, 1905 in Baden-Baden (Germany)

Nationality: American citizen since February 1943

Education: Studied at the Universities of Heidelberg, Munich and Berlin  
(at this last university worked principally with Prof.  
Friedrich Meinecke)

1925-1927 Research Assistant to the editors of "Die Grosse Politik der  
Europaeischen Kabinette"

1931 Ph. D. from the University of Berlin

1934-1936 In England with research grant of the Faculty of History,  
Cambridge

1936-1937 Teaching: History Department, Scripps College, Claremont,  
California and summer schools at Brooklyn College, Colorado  
College, University of Denver

1939-1943 Member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey

1943-1945 From July 1943 to December 1945 was with Research and Analysis  
Branch, Office of Strategic Services. Served in Washington,  
in London (March 1944 to March 1945), Paris (March 1945 to  
May 1945), Germany (June 1945 to December 1945)

1946 January to July with Department of State, Washington, D. C.

1946-1947 Lecturer in History, Bryn Mawr College

1947- Associate Professor of History, Bryn Mawr College  
(also teaching one seminar at Swarthmore College)

FELIX GILBERT - BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Edited and with an Introduction by Felix Gilbert, William Robertson, The Progress  
of Society in Europe; A Historical Outline from the Subversion of the Roman Empire  
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Fae Gilbert

The Institute for Advanced Study  
Princeton, New Jersey

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1962

The Institute for Advanced Study announces with pleasure two appointments to its School of Historical Studies.

Dr. Felix Gilbert, formerly Professor of History at Bryn Mawr College, has accepted a professorship at the Institute.

Dr. Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Professor Emeritus of English in the Graduate School of Columbia University, has accepted a two-year membership in the Institute, for the years 1963-65.

(We attach a brief vita of Dr. Gilbert and Dr. Nicolson.)



MARJORIE HOPE NICOLSON

For many years Marjorie Hope Nicolson has been regarded by her colleagues, in the same and allied fields, as one of the most eminent living historians of Renaissance and post-Renaissance culture. She has been not only a productive scholar but a great teacher, a dean of Smith College for twelve years, and an Editor of the Journal of the History of Ideas. The origin of her dozen or more honorary degrees might be attributed by some to surprise and pleasure at such extraordinary capacity in a woman, but no one would ascribe such a motive to Princeton University, which gave her, in addition, an exceptional role in the celebration of its Bicentennial in 1946.

She has devoted herself to literature which, in the English-speaking world, has been the central art since the fifteenth century, and which is not cultivated by any member of the present faculty of the School of Historical Studies. In the second place, she has been primarily concerned with literature as a carrier or creator of ideas. Her work is relevant to that of the Institute as a whole because of her long standing interest in the effect of science upon literature and the literary imagination. The titles of several of her books, which are listed below, suggest the direction of her thought.

The Art of Description, 1926  
Conway Letters, 1930  
The Microscope and English Imagination, 1935  
A World in the Moon, 1937  
Newton Demands the Muse, 1946  
Voyages to the Moon, 1948  
The Breaking of the Circle, 1950  
Science and Imagination, 1956  
Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory. The Development  
of the Aesthetics of the Infinite, 1959

x            x            x            x            x

b. Yonkers, NY, 2/18/94; AB, U. of Mich., 1914, AM, 1918; Ph.D., Yale Univ., 1920; Instr., U. of Minn., 1920-22, asst. prof. English, 1922-23; asst. prof., Goucher Coll., 1923-26; fellow John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 1926-27; asso. prof. English, Smith Coll., 1926-29, prof. and dean, 1929-41; prof. of English Grad. School, Columbia, 1941-62; vis. prof., Claremont Coll., 1962-63.

### FELIX GILBERT

Felix Gilbert, Professor of History at Bryn Mawr College, was born at Baden-Baden, Germany, on May 21, 1905. He studied History, Philosophy, and Economics in Heidelberg and Munich and finally in Berlin, where he took his Ph.D. in 1931. The late Friedrich Meinecke, a historian of truly great caliber and the most honest and noble representative of modern historical studies in pre-Nazi Germany, was Gilbert's teacher. Without following Meinecke's method slavishly Gilbert was greatly influenced by him. From him Gilbert inherited his vivid interest in both the history of practical politics and the history of political ideas, that is, in the interplay of practice and thought. And like his teacher he straddled from the very beginning the history of the Renaissance and that of modern times. Gilbert's interests are as comprehensive as were those of his teacher, and when investigating seemingly quite unimportant minutiae he never failed to give them their place in the universal outlook. "In these days (a colleague at Princeton University wrote of him twelve years ago), when historians tend to be swallowed up by their specialties, Gilbert is one of the relatively few younger historians who has refused to allow this to happen to him."

Under the guidance of Meinecke Gilbert took his Ph.D. in Berlin. His dissertation on Johann Gustav Droysen, the 19th-century historian and discoverer of what is now customarily called the "Hellenistic Age," was so remarkable that the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin immediately entrusted him with the edition of Droysen's Politische Schriften which was published under the auspices of the Academy in 1933.

This fateful year also marked the end of Gilbert's promising career in Germany. While his father came of an English family, Gilbert is on his mother's side a great-grandson of Felix Mendelssohn, the composer, and was therefore

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The field, in which he is today the recognized master, however, and in which his prestige is equally high among American scholars and European, is the Renaissance, especially the turn from the Quattrocento to the Cinquecento. His early occupation with a great historiographer, Droysen, has sharpened his ear for historiographical problems in general. Machiavelli's Discorsi were a turning-point in Western historical writing inasmuch as in them for the first time, to our knowledge, the work of a classical historian, Livy, was commented and glossed with an eye to establishing a regola generale for historico-political practice and thought and to making Roman political activity fruitful for Machiavelli's own time--a procedure comparable in the profane secular sphere only to the earlier comments and glosses made on the Corpus of Aristotle's works and the Corpus of Roman Law. The other great historian of that period, Guicciardini, though belonging to the same school of realistic historical thinking and of rationalizing historical experience, argued, it is true, against Machiavelli on several accounts but displayed in his Ricordi and Considerazioni, as Gilbert has shown, a profound knowledge of Machiavelli's historical writings even before their publication. This intricate relation between the two Renaissance historians marks the starting point of Gilbert's work on Guicciardini, an author strangely neglected among the figures of the Italian Renaissance. Some results of Gilbert's work on Guicciardini and of his researches into the archives of Tuscany and elsewhere for more than twenty years, have been published in a number of studies among which his long article on "Bernardo Rucellai and the Orti Oricellari: A Study on the Origin of Modern Political Thought," in the Warburg Journal, deserves a special mention. For here, proceeding from seemingly insignificant minutiae, Gilbert proves that the realistic

## FELIX GILBERT

Felix Gilbert, Professor of History at Bryn Mawr College, was born at Baden-Baden, Germany, on May 21, 1905. He studied History, Philosophy, and Economics in Heidelberg and Munich and finally in Berlin, where he took his Ph.D. in 1931. The late Friedrich Meinecke, a historian of truly great caliber and the most honest and noble representative of modern historical studies in pre-Nazi Germany, was Gilbert's teacher. Without following Meinecke's method slavishly Gilbert was greatly influenced by him. From him Gilbert inherited his vivid interest in both the history of practical politics and the history of political ideas, that is, in the interplay of practice and thought. And like his teacher he straddled from the very beginning the history of the Renaissance and that of modern times. Gilbert's interests are as comprehensive as were those of his teacher, and when investigating seemingly quite unimportant minutiae he never failed to give them their place in the universal outlook. "In these days (a colleague at Princeton University wrote of him twelve years ago), when historians tend to be swallowed up by their specialties, Gilbert is one of the relatively few younger historians who has refused to allow this to happen to him."

Under the guidance of Meinecke Gilbert took his Ph.D. in Berlin. His dissertation on Johann Gustav Droysen, the 19th-century historian and discoverer of what is now customarily called the "Hellenistic Age," was so remarkable that the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin immediately entrusted him with the edition of Droysen's Politische Schriften which was published under the auspices of the Academy in 1933.

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politico-historical thinking characteristic of Machiavelli was in fact dominant already in the conversations of the scholars who met in the Rucellai gardens a decade or more before Machiavelli began to write. Gilbert's decisive opus magnum on Machiavelli and Guicciardini has only just gone to the press and will appear in the course of 1962. An advance copy of this substantial book would probably be obtainable from his publisher; but there is no doubt that the appearance of this long-awaited work will make a major impression upon the community of historians. Machiavelli's political theories are, after all, within the grasp not only of Renaissance and modern historians but also of mediaevalists and ancient historians. It may be added that Gilbert's occupation with military history derives organically from Machiavelli and Guicciardini, since both authors wrote tractates on L'arte della guerra.

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Felix Gilbert's personality could not be better described than in the words of the late Hermann Weyl who, in January 1949, wrote about him in another context:

"I came to know Gilbert during his stay at the Institute in the years 1939-1943, and my wife and I soon grew very fond of him. He is a man both of deep feelings and clear decisions. Although by nature predestined for friendship, he found himself forced to break with many a friend in Europe who had made concessions to the Nazis. He knew no compromises in that respect. His passions were deeply aroused by the events leading to and following upon Hitler's ascent to power, and yet passion never beclouded his appraisal of historical facts and realities, and of the strength of the conflicting forces. His political and historical judgments have seemed to me almost invariably based on profound and balanced knowledge of the relevant facts, and to be singularly objective, clear-headed and incisive.

"Gilbert is a descendant of the musician Mendelssohn, and thus belongs to a ramified family several branches of which have played a role in the cultural life of Germany and of Europe. He himself is a highly cultured man. Although my relation with Gilbert is chiefly based on common interests in literature and in the

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great historians (including such historian-philosophers as Burckhardt and Dilthey), I do not feel in a position to pass judgment on Gilbert's own gifts and accomplishments as a historian. I can only say that I sense in him that open-mindedness, all-round human experience and appreciation of human values, that discrimination and rigor in weighing empirical evidence, combined with power of hermeneutic interpretation, that go into the making of a historian. His historical interests are pretty universal, but the field of his most detailed research experience is the Renaissance period.

"I am told that Gilbert has been highly successful as a teacher of history in Bryn Mawr.

"As you know, he is a very pleasant man to have around, of great personal and intellectual honesty, stimulating in conversation, never pompous and never trivial, with a remarkable discriminating capacity for enjoying the good things in art and in life, natural and loyal in his human relations."

Hermann Weyl's letter only epitomizes what many others have expressed in similar terms. It has been pointed out, for example, how valuable Gilbert could be "as a collaborator between the University and the Institute. He has an extraordinary knowledge of historians (American and European) as well as of history." The fact that for many years he has been a regular and very active member of the annual meetings of the American Historical Association (as lecturer, as chairman, and in the drafting of programs) has made his knowledge of the guild very extensive, and his counsel would be of supreme value to us. His very obvious classical background--now so rare among modern historians--would fit perfectly with our community and would strengthen the present homogeneity of the School of

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Historical Studies, while the fact that he is generally recognized as the best scholar in his field and has undisputed authority therein will react most beneficially upon our whole School. It will bring a long-neglected field again to the fore and will bring to the Institute temporary members who are beyond the reach of our present permanent members.

Ernst H. Kantorowicz  
For the School of Historical Studies

FELIX GILBERT

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Princeton New Jersey

Department of History

February 12, 1962

Professor E. H. Kantorowicz  
Institute for Advanced Study  
Princeton, New Jersey

Dear Professor Kantorowicz:

I am very much interested in hearing that you are considering Felix Gilbert for an appointment in the Institute. Gilbert occupies a most unusual place among historians in this country: he is a man whose opinion is universally respected and whose criticism is eagerly sought. This is due partly to his wide range of interests, running from the fifteenth century down to the present and from intellectual to diplomatic to military history, and to his unusual ability to see the essential issues in any problem. He has written, and will write, important books and he will be one of the most influential people in our profession. I should be delighted to have him as a neighbor in Princeton and I think that most of the senior members of the Department of History would feel the same way. He would be a real addition to our community and I hope very much that you will be able to bring him to Princeton.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Joseph R. Strayer  
Dayton-Stockton Pro-  
fessor of History

JRS:ED