

**Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center
Institute for Advanced Study**

**Oral History Project
Interview Transcript**

**History Working Group:
Céline Bessière
Thomas Dodman
Klaus Oschema**

**Interviewed by Linda Arntzenius
July 25, 2018**

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L. G. Arntzenius

Name of Witness: LINDA
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Name of Witness: LINDA
ARNTZENIUS


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Date: 07/25/2018

Linda Arntzenius: It is July 25th, 2018 and I'm here at the Institute for Advanced Study with Céline Bessière,¹ Klaus Oschema,² and Thomas Dodman.³ All three of you were members during the academic year 2016-17 and at that time, two of you at least, cofounded the History Working Group. You are back now again working with the History Working Group and so we're going to talk about that.

But, before we get to that I wonder if you could very briefly just say a few words about your background. I'll start with Thomas — something about where you grew up, what your parents did for a living, and how it was that you came to your love of history. Two historians here and one social scientist, right? So, Thomas, if you would start.

Thomas Dodman: I am British by birth, but I actually grew up in Italy and from English parents who were part of that generation that emigrated to Italy deciding that it was a much better place to live and teach English. My mother is an English language teacher and my father is a linguist. So, I grew up in Italy, in Francophone schools – French schools, mostly. And went back to the UK to study at university, not necessarily knowing that I wanted to study history. I think I decided to do that at 2:00 a.m. the day my UCAS [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service] forms had to be sent in for university applications.

But I was fortunate in finding amazing professors who really made me want to be a historian and gave me the passion of being a historian. Which is something that I've re-discovered here, [the] kind of excitement you get from discovering stuff in the archives and realizing there's a whole story that you can spin out of little threads and bits of documents and traces of the past.

So that's about it. Some of these professors were American and encouraged me to move to the States afterwards, which is why I moved over here to get my PhD.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay, so what was your childhood ambition, if it wasn't to be a historian?

Thomas Dodman: Goodness. That's a difficult one. Well, as we were at the cinema watching *Grease*, the sing-along, last night with Céline and our kids

¹ Céline Bessière, Member in the School of Social Science, 2016-2017; Visitor, 2018.

² Klaus Oschema, Member in the School of Historical Studies, 2016-2017.

³ Thomas Dodman, Member in the School of Historical Studies, 2016-2017; Visitor, 2018.

– I feel I have to confess that what I really wanted to be was a rock star. *[Laughter]*

Linda Arntzenius: Really? My goodness. And have you found an outlet for that ambition?

Thomas Dodman: I listen to a lot of hard rock, yes. Together with jazz.

Linda Arntzenius: Alright. Klaus, can you match that? *[Laughs]*

Klaus Oschema: No. Actually I can't. *[Laughter]* So, I was born and raised, and grew up in a little province town called Bamberg in northern Bavaria, which is the region of Franconia, actually — a cute little town which has been founded around the year 1000. Very historic, even for more recent history. My father was a carpenter, so I feel a little bit like Jesus [though] I'm older than 33 now. *[Laughter]* My mother, basically, was a housewife when I grew up; she had an education as an Administrative Aide, but she didn't really work [outside the home]. She only started working when I was around 12. I'm the youngest of three siblings. I'm the first in my family who did *Abitur*, the German equivalent to A levels. I went on to University, so I became something like a black sheep of my family. *[Laughs]*

Linda Arntzenius: Because you didn't use your hands!

Klaus Oschema: Yes, exactly. And, well, when I decided to study history it was really more of an accident, like in Thomas's case apparently, because at the outset I wanted to do biochemistry. There's a central application procedure for all of Germany and I missed the important date and I decided to enroll nevertheless for "fiscal reasons" and also to be able to work on the side and gain my living.

I was looking for, more or less, the extreme opposite of what biochemistry would have been, so I enrolled for Ancient History and Philosophy. Something completely "useless" on the surface of things at least. And, since I had to learn Latin first, I really couldn't motivate myself to continue with learning Greek in order to do ancient history; so I changed to medieval history, a decision that was also influenced by a professor who arrived at more or less that same time in Bamberg, where I studied, or where I started studying.

Linda Arntzenius: Mm-hmm, who was that?

Klaus Oschema: Bernd Schneidmüller,⁴ who is now a professor in Late Medieval History at Heidelberg. He was an excellent teacher and very inspiring so that kind of drew me into the medieval.

Linda Arntzenius: You had no desires to be a carpenter as a child?

Klaus Oschema: Not necessarily. I was quite fond of reading books, so I feel that might have predisposed me for an academic career.

Linda Arntzenius: Alright. Céline?

Céline Bessière: So... I was born in Chartres, which is a small town next to Paris, 100 kilometers south. Both of my parents were engineers in agriculture. My dad worked in agriculture and my mom was, in between working/not working, raising the kids. So, my childhood was very boring. *[Laughs]* and the only wish I had for the future was to leave this place. And school was maybe the best place to invest for this purpose. And so, when I was 17, I went to Paris, to do *une classe préparatoire*. There is no translation for this. And then I went to *École normale supérieure*. When I arrived there, my education was very general. It was mathematics, social science, history, philosophy, everything. A little bit of everything.

And at that moment I decided to continue in sociology and economics. At that moment, I didn't distinguish very well between the two. For me, they were part of the same social science, but then I realized economics was really different.

I became a sociologist after that, because the economists were now telling me, "You have to do *only* economics if you want to be an economist." Whereas the sociologists were more – they welcomed me – and you could do a little bit of whatever you wanted. So, this is how I became a sociologist and I specialized in the economy in the family, so economics is part of my work.

Linda Arntzenius: That's a very interesting topic in France, isn't it? With their hereditary rules and so forth. So how did you come to be at the Institute last year?

Céline Bessière: I had this project. I had to do my *habilitation* and –

Linda Arntzenius: That's like your doctoral thesis?

Céline Bessière: No.

⁴ Bernd Schneidmüller, Visitor in the School of Historical Studies, 2013-2014.

Linda Arntzenius: No, it's before?

Céline Bessière: It's after.

Thomas Dodman: It's the equivalent of tenure. It's a big exam.

Linda Arntzenius: Ah! Okay.

Céline Bessière: Yes, Yes. You do your PhD in France, then if you get the position as associate professor, directly you are tenured. You already have a position and then ten years later you have to do a second, like, a second PhD thesis, which is called *habilitation*. I had to write this and I knew that I needed to go far away from my university, from the students, the administrative job, etc. And so, my work is on the economy of the family and especially I study inheritance and marital breakdowns and what is going on then; the economic and also legal aspects of this moment. I had to find a way to have one year far away. So, I applied to the Institute.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you apply anywhere else?

Céline Bessière: I had to apply to many other things in order for my university to let me go, but no, actually it's the only place I applied to, and I got in.

Linda Arntzenius: What did you know of the Institute? What made you think of the Institute?

Céline Bessière: Okay. I knew Didier Fassin.⁵ I knew Joan Scott.⁶ So, I had an idea that this place [*Laughs*] existed and I had a colleague of mine who came here, Vincent Dubois,⁷ who was a Member here, four, five years ago. So I had a vague idea that this place existed and then I checked and I realized that the theme – in the [School of] Social Science there is a theme every year – was law and social science, and because in my work there are a lot of things about law, obviously, because I study inheritance and marital breakdowns, so those are moments with a legal frame which is very strong. So, I knew it was, maybe, the good place to be.

Linda Arntzenius: All right, I come to you, Klaus. Can you say what brought you to the Institute?

⁵ Didier Fassin (1955-), Professor in the School of Social Science, 2009- .

⁶ Joan Wallach Scott (1941-), Member in the School of Social Science, 1978-1979; Professor, 1985-2014; Emeritus Professor, 2014- .

⁷ Vincent Dubois, Member in the School of Social Science, 2012-2013.

Klaus Oschema: Actually, there are two lines of arguments that, in a certain way, combine. For a five-year period, I've been a member of the *Junge Akademie*,⁸ the German Young Academy, where now 50 young scholars of all disciplines work on interdisciplinary projects. Princeton, obviously, is a mythical place for all the mathematicians in this group, so that was one line of thought.

On the other hand, there is the more specifically medieval aspect. I did part of my PhD and part of my studies in France and was working in quite interdisciplinary contexts and not only from the historical side. People like [Ernst] Kantorowicz,⁹ for example, obviously, set the name of the Institute on the international platform or agenda in a certain way. Also [Erwin] Panofsky,¹⁰ working on images. So, these kinds of interests combined and I've actually been knowing [Institute medieval historian] Patrick Geary¹¹ for quite a long time. I think I met him in person for the first time around 2004, 2005. He'd been telling me from a certain moment onwards about the institute when he became appointed. I think that must have been around 2009, if I'm not entirely mistaken. And, since he was cooperating quite closely with the University of Heidelberg where I'd been teaching in the 2010's, he invited me over for a first time for a two-week period in 2014. He was generous enough to do so and I was really extremely impressed by the working conditions, etc.

I decided to apply for a longer period, since I've been teaching at Heidelberg on a quasi-professorial status but without the right to have sabbaticals. So, I had to organize something for myself in order to get a term or better even: a year off. Which finally worked out with the Institute's help.

Linda Arntzenius: Excellent. Thomas, how about you? What did you know of the Institute before you came here?

Thomas Dodman: What did I know about the Institute? A bit like Céline, I knew people, well, I didn't know them personally, but the work of people, mostly in the School of Social Science: Didier Fassin, Joan Scott

⁸ Founded in 2000, *Die Junge Akademie* at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, the two oldest scientific academies in Germany, is an interdisciplinary platform for up-and-coming academics. It comprises 50 young academics and artists from a broad range of disciplines, from the German-speaking countries, committed to interdisciplinary discourse.

⁹ Ernst Kantorowicz (1895-1963), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1951-1963.

¹⁰ Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1935-1962; Emeritus Professor, 1962-1968.

¹¹ Patrick J. Geary (1948-), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1990-1991; Professor, 2012- .

and going all the way back to Bill Sewell,¹² [Clifford] Geertz¹³ and Albert Hirschman.¹⁴ The other thing I knew through people who had been here and particularly Bill, I think, was that it's one of the few places where you can come with your family.

When you need the kind of year of leave to write a book, or to make progress on a second project. I'm in a similar situation; I needed a year on leave to move on with a second book project. [I was] looking towards tenure at the time and the previous time I'd been on leave I'd had to commute back and forth, because the family couldn't come with me. And so, I think one of the big assets of a place like the Institute was the possibility of coming here to work with people that I admired very much but also come with my family and so... My wife actually ended up taking a year of leave herself from her job. She resigned and everybody came with me. So that was one of the big assets.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you have young children?

Thomas Dodman: Young and not so young. [*Laughs*] 12 and 7.

Linda Arntzenius: And, you have two children, right? [Addressing Céline]

Céline Bessièrè: Yes, 13 and 4.

Linda Arntzenius: How about you? [To Klaus]

Klaus Oschema: I don't have children.

Linda Arntzenius: So, you're the bachelor among the group.

Klaus Oschema: Well, I am married, so I'm not technically a bachelor.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay, sorry. [*Laughs*] Apologies to your wife. Was there anything – and anyone jump in here – was there anything that surprised you about the place when you got here?

Céline Bessièrè: [*Laughs*] So many things! For my family – because for us, for me too, it was a family project to come spend one year here. So,

¹² William H. Sewell, Jr. (1940-), Member in the School of Social Science, 1971-1972, 1975-1980, 2002-2003.

¹³ Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), Professor in the School of Social Science, 1970-2000; Emeritus Professor, 2000-2006.

¹⁴ Albert O. Hirschman (1915-2012), Member in the School of Social Science, 1972-1973; Faculty in the School of Social Science, 1974-1985.

because Pascal [Marichalar] that you interviewed, came too and the two kids.

It was a family adventure to leave France, for the kids to learn English so, so fast. And the fact [that] we were used to living in Paris. We had a very busy life in Paris, running around all the time and to be here living in the forest [Laughs] was a big change of all of our habits. To have the daycare center right next door. For us, all of a sudden, everything was so simple that — okay, we can tell this — we call this place, the Institute, a Club Med for intellectuals. [Laughter] Because for us being here is perfect. Because our kids are happy, we work a lot. What I did last year in 11 months; it would have taken, for me, three years in France to do. So, we worked a lot, because we were focused on one thing, there are not many distractions and the fact that, at the same time, everything is so easy — to pick up the kids at Crossroads just after the [school] bus —

Thomas Dodman: With the older ones, with the school bus taking them to the public schools, yes.

Céline Bessière: Everything is so well organized for us. Like, there is a bulb, a light [Laughs] that doesn't work, it is fixed right away. So, we only have one thing to focus on, which is our work, Pascal's work, my work. And so, for us it was, like, phew, so fantastic. And surprising also because it's also a *monacal* life.

Linda Arntzenius: Monastic?

Céline Bessière: Monastic, yes.

Thomas Dodman: Monastic, yes, the isolation.

Céline Bessière: Yes. The fact that we are living away from everything, in the woods — we didn't have a car last year. So you had to take your bike [bicycle] to go to Princeton, it's far away. New York is even farther. And, at the same time, not so far. You can go during the weekend. The fact that you are in this place, only in this place, meeting always the same people, during the day, meeting them 20 times every day, "Hi." [Laughs] We liked it.

Thomas Dodman: The thing about that is that the first impact, and I think we [Thomas and Céline] certainly had the same [impression], I don't know about you, Klaus, is that when you arrive you think, "Oh my god, I'm going to spend a year here?"

Céline Bessière: Oh yes.

Thomas Dodman: But then very quickly – and I remember we [Thomas and Céline] met the first day we were here at the swimming pool.

Céline Bessière: Yes.

Thomas Dodman: Because we have kids and so that's an obvious place where you go after a long journey, right? And very quickly you realize if you're lucky and it's a good year and you meet a lot of people who you get along with all of a sudden not only do you have the ideal working conditions to be as productive as you would normally be in three years elsewhere but also you just make wonderful friends.

Céline Bessière: Yes.

Thomas Dodman: It's intellectually stimulating, it's socially rewarding, it's fantastic. So very quickly that sense of isolation fades away and cedes space to a kind of club-like atmosphere where you're eating together at somebody's else's house, doing this together, doing that, creating your work projects like we ended up doing. So, it's very interesting.

Linda Arntzenius: Is there anything that surprised you, Klaus?

Klaus Oschema: Oof. *[Laughs]* I had my first impression — and that was also the first time I came to the States — in 2014. At the time that had been [an] extremely productive two weeks that I spent here at the Institute, because I had the opportunity to finish three articles and to get them ready for submission in that period. So that was really, exactly the experience I was kind of looking for when I applied.

And, all in all, this has been confirmed. I mean, the most surprising element, coming not only from Germany, but basically from Europe, I suppose, when you arrive here at this particular place, was this overwhelming experience when you arrive on spot. Everything is prepared, and the entire staff is here only to care for you and to make your installing and settling in so extremely efficient. That was really just amazing.

Linda Arntzenius: Have any of you been to other institutes that support research studies? Have you anything to compare it with?

Céline Bessière: No. Not me.

Thomas Dodman: Nothing like this, no.

Klaus Oschema: I had short glimpses. I haven't been there for long periods, but, there are, for example, the *Wissenschaftskolleg* of Berlin or the FRIAS in Freiburg. I think the really fundamental difference is this kind of effect of living together in one spot. Because in Berlin you share the building where you got your offices – but then in the evening everyone goes his or her own ways. Whereas here it's really about the experience of living together.

Linda Arntzenius: Mm-hmm. Being in residence.

Alright, so all three of you came in the fall of 2016, which was a very important year for the United States and it's no surprise, or no secret, that the publication that came out of the History Working Group [*A Refuge for Scholars*] was prompted, so I understand, by President Trump's executive order banning travel from several Muslim countries.

Could you, perhaps Thomas; could you talk me through how that process of founding the History Working Group came about and the relationship between that and the Town Hall meetings?

Thomas Dodman: Sure. And Céline remembers bits that I don't actually remember all that well, so please jump in at various moments. I remember very clearly the night of the election, for a start, in November. We were all together, watching it at a friend's house and just mentioning it now, brings shivers down my spine, because it was such an unexpected and devastating moment. I remember staying up all that night afterwards writing an article for the French Huffington Post where I sometimes write pieces.

And just trying to sort of metabolize, get out, what was happening. And I remember my daughter was in tears saying, *Are we going to have to leave this country?* And so, it was a very emotional, a very strong moment.

And then, you know, we all had our work and so, you don't forget, but you move on. And then when Trump actually came into power, the executive orders started coming through and our worst nightmares started getting realized and we could see where this was, perhaps, going. I think there was a shared sense of – I came to think of it as a sort of grotesque privilege of being in this bubble, in this Club Med at a time when this was happening around us. For me, it was unsustainable. It was a sense that I couldn't just go on as if nothing was happening.

- Linda Arntzenius:* Were there any Members that you knew of who were from Muslim countries who might have been affected by the ban?
- Thomas Dodman:* There was talk of people being affected for the summer program, if I remember correctly. There was somebody, I think, in the School of Social Science – I can't remember exactly.
- Céline Bessière:* We had friends coming from Iran who had Canadian citizenship. They were okay, but they were expecting a baby and their family couldn't come.
- Thomas Dodman:* Right. It wasn't, I mean, it wasn't yet immediate.
- There was this evening, this dinner, and we were all together having dinner and all of the sudden I think we all realized that we had to do something. It wasn't sustainable to just go on pretending nothing was happening.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Mm-hmm. And what had you thought of? *Do something. What could we do?* I mean, the whole country's saying, *What can we do?*
- Céline Bessière:* Yes.
- Thomas Dodman:* Right. That was one of the key things, I think, about the group right from the start: that we were always talking amongst each other. *What do we do? What actually...can we do?*
- Obviously – we knew we weren't going to change anything. But, I remember that evening, after this dinner, writing to the heads of the four schools and several professors that I knew: Joan [Scott] and Didier [Fassin] and professors in the School of Historical Studies, basically asking them to convene some sort of a meeting. And put pressure on Robbert [Dijkgraaf]¹⁵ to –
- Céline Bessière:* Yes. We wanted something, maybe a statement –
- Thomas Dodman:* We wanted a statement. Exactly. We wanted a statement from the IAS...
- Céline Bessière:* We wanted a statement, I think, at that moment, and many of us coming from France, our first idea was to do what we do in France, which is to do *une AG* [*Une assemblée générale extraordinaire*], a Town Hall meeting. So, we had this kind of – model in mind, that –

¹⁵ Robbert Dijkgraaf (1960-), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1991-1992; Visitor, 2002; IAS Director and Leon Levy Professor, 2012- .

- Thomas Dodman:* And the faculty, I think, were already taking that initiative and so very quickly things accelerated and the statement was put up on the website and the first Town Hall meeting was convened.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Who did you write to? You wrote to people in Historical Studies...
- Thomas Dodman:* No. That evening, I know I wrote to the four chief officers of the four schools and a number of professors that I knew personally.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Okay. Mostly in Historical Studies or in Social Science?
- Thomas Dodman:* Mostly in Social Science and in Historical Studies. Those are the ones that I know.
- Céline Bessière:* At that moment we had very tiny links with the School of Mathematics...
- Thomas Dodman:* Right, so that was one of the key [concerns]. I remember writing to the executive officers of the four schools, because we desperately wanted this to be not just the historians and social scientists. We really wanted to try to make this a schoolwide phenomenon.
- Céline Bessière:* Mm-hmm.
- Thomas Dodman:* And it was partly successful. I don't think it was entirely successful. I think there are different communities here; that's one of the things about this place that you learn very quickly is that there is a bit of a rift between two schools on one side and two schools on the other side.
- But what did happen was that very quickly things got going. A Town Hall meeting was called. And what was remarkable, I think, was just how many people showed up.
- Céline Bessière:* Right.
- Thomas Dodman:* And from across the whole community. And something quite special, I think, happened there. Which was that all of a sudden the rifts and the kind of hierarchies that exist in this place, especially between faculty members and staff, all of a sudden sort of crumbled. And so, you had a lot of staff members who normally are very, very *effacé*, we say in French.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Self-effacing.

Thomas Dodman: Self-effacing and always there to help and all of a sudden they had a stake – I think they had something to say they were willing to speak up.

There was, obviously, debate and disagreement over what *could* be done, what *should* be done. But there was this sort of opening up of the possibility of a sort of public debate.

Linda Arntzenius: So, you say a Town Hall meeting was called. *How* did that come about? Did someone from the Director's Office send out an e-mail to everyone inviting the Institute community?

Thomas Dodman: I think so. I think that's how it happened.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you remember? Was that before or after Robbert's statement?

Thomas Dodman: It was in conjunction with. I mean, it all happened fairly quickly. Once the ball got rolling it happened fairly quickly.

Céline Bessière: Yes.

Thomas Dodman: I seem to remember there was some back and forth over the statement.

Linda Arntzenius: As there would be with any document.

Thomas Dodman: There was a first version that wasn't as strong as one would hope. And so, it was made clearer and that went up on the website.

Linda Arntzenius: Who worked on that statement from the History Working Group?

Thomas Dodman: No, we didn't. What I remember is Didier and – I think the executive officers had a say in the revisions of it. But that's more or less what I remember –

Linda Arntzenius: That's just your sense of it, yes.

Thomas Dodman: Yes. I can't, I wouldn't be able to say that for sure. But yes, then things happened very quickly and the Town Halls, there were two that I can remember, there may have been a third one, I can't remember. One sort of more programmatic towards the end.

But that's where the idea of the History Working Group emerged and Pascal was really the one who found the key intervention. The key thing that we could do *as scholars*.

Because we wanted to make sure that we weren't just suddenly just becoming agitators. We were here to be scholars and we also had work agendas that we needed to pursue.

Some people didn't pursue them as much as they should have. *[Laughs]* But, um, but we wanted, we felt that we were not going to start a revolution, or whatever, but what we can do, as scholars, was something that might have a ripple effect and might sort of be useful.

And Pascal had been working a bit in the archives. He'd just recently discovered the archives and all of a sudden came up with the idea that these kinds of questions had already emerged at the beginning of the founding of the Institute when there were problems with refugees, scholars at risk. This was one of the big things we were trying to put on the table of the administration.

And so, all of a sudden we thought, *Well, maybe we can actually go into the archives, work with these moments in the history of the Institute and see how they shed a light on our present challenges today.*

Linda Arntzenius: Excellent. How do you recall the first Town Hall meeting, Klaus?

Klaus Oschema: Well, actually I consider myself something like a friendly observer from the outside who then joined the group. So, as far as the inner workings are concerned I can't really contribute any further insight in addition to what Thomas has said.

I was quite surprised by the dynamics, though, of this kind of Town Hall meeting, because that's something you don't really experience in the setting of German university life. Usually you have this kind of strong sense of a distinction between what's political, what's scientific. And there's nearly never a moments when the different parts of the university — staff, students, and professors — come together outside of committees that strictly concern university life. So, that was kind of a new experience to me.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you have any sense that it was also new for the Institute?

Klaus Oschema: Yes, I did, actually, and I think we were all equally surprised — for example, by the presence of the popcorn machine.

Linda Arntzenius: Ah, yes. This is a Town Hall meeting with the popcorn machine?

Klaus Oschema: When we arrived on site, so there was a —

Céline Bessière: Yes.

Thomas Dodman: Yes, there was clearly some improvising.

Klaus Oschema: Yes, there was some improvising. Which clearly signaled that this was not an every-day moment in the Institute's life. You could see how, well, people tried to give it a certain form and it was not really – um...

Linda Arntzenius: So did that feel a little awkward? Inappropriately festive, or what? What was your reaction to that?

Thomas Dodman: I think it was a nice gesture, but as Céline was saying, when you're used to *assemblées générales* in France, you don't expect popcorn. *[Laughs]*

Céline Bessière: No. I was just checking my e-mails for the calendar. So, January the 30th, we received – I didn't remember that part – we received an e-mail from Pepe Karmel.¹⁶ Do you, do you remember this? Department of Art History, New York University, saying that NYU Department has been having a lively discussion about ways to respond to Trump's executive order. So, we were aware that somewhere else there were things going on. And then I remember that this e-mail circulated among us and Yve-Alain Bois¹⁷ said: "This seems to me an excellent initiative."

Thomas Dodman: Yes.

Céline Bessière: And then a lot of people, Patrick Geary and Caroline Bynum,¹⁸ so a lot of people answered that.

Thomas Dodman: Yes, there was a response to the e-mail.

Céline Bessière: Then there was the Institute's statement, the day after, January, 31st.

Thomas Dodman: Yes.

Céline Bessière: This is after your e-mail. You sent this e-mail saying we would like something coming from the Institute. And they did something at the

¹⁶ Pepe Karmel is Associate Professor of Art History at New York University.

¹⁷ Yve-Alain Bois (1952-), Faculty in the School of Historical Studies, 2005- .

¹⁸ Caroline Walker Bynum (1941-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 2003-2011; Emeritus Professor, 2011- .

very, very end of January. So just after NYU. I think Princeton [University] did something, too.

Thomas Dodman: Yes. There was a sense that other institutions were reacting a bit quicker and that the Institute was not.

Céline Bessièrè: Okay and the Institute statement was online February the 1st. And then, in my e-mail, I can find a draft letter to the director, from you [speaking to Thomas Dodman].

Thomas Dodman: From me? Oh, okay. So maybe we did . . .

Céline Bessièrè: That you wrote, I guess, maybe with Pascal. And that moment we were close to Sobhan.¹⁹

Linda Arntzenius: Sobhan?

Céline Bessièrè: Sobhan is the one I was talking about, the Canadian citizen, but from Iran. So Sobhan was here. What is Sobhan's last name? Hmm.

Thomas Dodman: I can't remember.

Céline Bessièrè: So, we wrote this e-mail. I guess it was something collective. And this e-mail was, "Dear Robbert, like many others at the Institute we have been following with mounting concern these first two weeks of the new administration." Et cetera, et cetera. "And we're asking for a meeting." And it was February the 3rd.

Thomas Dodman: Okay, so we did actually ask for that meeting. I didn't remember this. Okay.

Linda Arntzenius: As you say, it did all happen quite quickly.

Thomas Dodman: It all happened very quickly and –

Céline Bessièrè: Yes, Yes, Yes. You see the 30th, 31st and then the – one week.

Thomas Dodman: And one thing I remember about that was the thrill of it. I mean, there was a sense – there was an excitement. And, Joan Scott confirmed this at one of the meetings. She said, "This is one of the most exciting things I've seen happen at the Institute."

Céline Bessièrè: Yes. Okay so it's very explicit [quoting from her laptop]. "We would, therefore, be grateful if you could spare us some time, perhaps next

¹⁹ Sobhan Seyfaddini, Member in the School of Mathematics, 2016-2017.

week, to meet with you, a few of us, to discuss what we might be able to do. A first step we had thought of could be organizing a Town Hall-style meeting one evening, inviting all members of our community.”

Thomas Dodman: So, yes, so –

Céline Bessière: “Faculty, staff, and members to come together, to voice their concerns, share ideas and more generally know that nobody’s being left alone.”

Thomas Dodman: So, we actually – we were a bit more militant than I remember us being. *[Laughs]*

Céline Bessière: Yep.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes, you were, instigators.

Céline Bessière: Yes!

Thomas Dodman: Um, yes.

Céline Bessière: And then, when was it, exactly, do you remember the date?

Thomas Dodman: I don’t, no.

Linda Arntzenius: So, did you actually meet with Robbert before the [Town Hall] meeting? Do you remember?

Thomas Dodman: We met Josie.

Céline Bessière: We met Josie.

Thomas Dodman: Yes. Josie was the interface. We met with her and that was probably where the decision was made to have this wider Town Hall.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay and where was it held?

Thomas Dodman: The first Town Hall was in the Dilworth Room. The second one was in the dining room and there were lots of people there.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, I missed it. I’m so annoyed about that.

Thomas Dodman: Josie met us there, I remember that meeting with Josie now.

Linda Arntzenius: Alright. So, Céline, how did you get involved with the History Working Group? Did you work with them last year?

Céline Bessièrè: Okay, so last year, as you can see, I was part of all these things, but I had my manuscript to finish and I had a very strong deadline in June. So, I went to the Town Hall meeting and participated through these e-mails and I saw Josie too. When you decided to go one step more and to dive into the archives and do this, I couldn't.

I didn't have [the time]. I had one year off from my university, so I really couldn't do something else than writing my manuscript. So, of course, I followed this, because these were all my friends and my partner [Pascal Marichalar], so... [*Laughs*] very close... I mean, I was really aware of what they were doing, but I didn't do that last year. But this year, I participated.

Linda Arntzenius: So, you're back for, what, just a month, right? For the summer here.

Céline Bessièrè: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: And what are you working on now for the History Working Group?

Céline Bessièrè: Okay, so after – but maybe you should talk more about –

Linda Arntzenius: We will.

Céline Bessièrè: Oh, you will. Okay, so [*Laughs*], so the idea was to continue, um, Pascal and Thom, you had the feeling that there were so many things in these archives that could be done. And it's so easy to do history in these conditions. I mean – you ask, you have all the digital archives and the physical archives and everything's so accessible, so fast, so after this first experience you knew we could do more.

And so, we were looking for new topics. With always a relation to the present. I mean, it's not like history for the history of the institution, but also doing history of this institution in a particular moment. So, two topics came up for this year; one was the bombs. I guess you talked about that with Pascal. And the other one was more about gender and the place of women at the Institute.

I was more involved in the gender topic and my idea, our idea, was not only to do the history, like the official history of all the female members who came here. To do this also, like, to do statistics, to count all the woman in the different schools and the evolutions et cetera. To do, also, like, biographies like what Klaus is doing right

now. Like doing the biography of [Hetty] Goldman,²⁰ who was the first female member of the faculty here.

But I was thinking that in this place you have very few female members of the faculty, not so many, female Members, but there are a lot of women. And they have a lot of women [as] part of the staff and a lot of women who are here, because they are the partner or the spouse of a Member here. And so we were trying to figure out an angle to talk about this and we found Crossroads, the nursery school. And it was a bet at the beginning, but I think it was a good bet.

Thomas Dodman: It paid off.

Céline Bessière: I have a daughter at Crossroads who is four years old and who was there last year, so I knew the place and I knew how important it was for men and women to do what they have to do here, to work. And Danielle Otis, the Director of Crossroads, gave us two boxes of archives that were not in the official archives of the Institute. Not sorted out at all. It was a big mess inside, but very, very rich. So, we can do the history of Crossroads since the beginning, 1947, until...

Thomas Dodman: 2007.

Céline Bessière: Yes, 2005, '06, '07. And it's so rich, because when I started the research, like one month ago, I had really my perspective, which is the perspective of a female Member who is the parent of a child at Crossroads.

And going through the archives I realized that there were also the teachers' perspective. The question of their salary, the question of their professionalism and their number, and the question of their benefits, their conditions of working, their relation to the kids, the quality of their work, the perspective of the direction of the Institute, which is sometimes different than the perspective of the teachers at Crossroads.

And it's so interesting too, because through this very localized place, you can feel all the tensions between the Institute and the community. Between man and woman at the Institute – because it's only in 1995 that this place became a full daycare center and before that it was only a part time care center. Only for three hours in the morning. So, in the '70s you have Members, male and

²⁰ Hetty Goldman (1881-1972), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1936-1947; Emeritus Professor, 1947-1972.

female, saying there is a big problem there. *[Laughs]* “We have children and my wife is not happy here, because she has to take care of the kids, or... et cetera.” So it’s, it’s so interesting. And to see why and how it takes such a long time to...

Linda Arntzenius: And did you find, or are you finding, *developing* attitudes from older wives and younger wives as to...?

Thomas Dodman: There is a generational [component].

Céline Bessièrè: Yes. Because it started – yes. But you will see that in the article. *[Laughs]*

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting. Alright. So –

Thomas Dodman: Well, just one little, quick, addition to that. We are the beneficiaries of the battles that were waged over Crossroads, because we have been able to come here and – well, not me, particularly, but – to be able to come here with kids – and place them and not have that problem of what you do with the kids.

Céline Bessièrè: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: The introduction [to *A Refuge for Scholars*] is written by Peter Goddard.²¹ Did he offer any particular guidelines, or suggestions, when you – did you take the idea of the History Working Group to him? How, how did that come about?

Thomas Dodman: Yes.

Klaus Oschema: You’d know more about that.

Thomas Dodman: Throughout last year we were in constant conversation with Peter, partly because we realized very quickly that he knew so much about this place, more than anybody I think, probably, here. And so, he was somebody to go to, to pitch ideas. Somebody to get corrections from. I remember some instances when I was telling him about, “Oh, I found this in the archives.” And he said, “Well, yes, but you’ve got to be careful, because you’re taking it out of context.” And so, he was a sort of cautioning voice in that respect, too. More than anything I think, though, he was... I hope I’m right in saying this, but, in his very sort of self-effaced, quiet, discrete sort of way, I think he was a strong advocate of what we were doing in

²¹ Peter Goddard (1945-), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1972-1974; Member in the School of Mathematics, 1988; IAS Director, 2004-2012; Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 2012-2016; Emeritus Professor, 2016- .

our corner of the ring and we felt it was very important to have him as a major institutional figure here supporting what we were doing and giving it some sort of intellectual validity.

And institutional validity, too. And so, partly because of what we learned from him in conversation because of his indirect contribution to what we were doing and partly because of who he is and what he has done for this Institute, we felt it would be a good idea, um, and I think Didier Fassin, in this particular instance was, was also very instrumental in getting Peter to write the preface to this book.

Linda Arntzenius: Excellent. So, we've got, I think, there were six founding members [of the History Working Group].

Thomas Dodman: That sounds about right.

Linda Arntzenius: Three were in social science, that's Fadi,²² Pascal, and Peter Redfield.²³ Two in historical studies, Klaus, Thomas, and one in mathematics, that would be Ian Jauslin.²⁴

When you're working on – I'll address you, Klaus. When you were working on the History Working Group, working with this group of people, did you encounter any differences of methodology that might have been helpful in any way? Helpful, perhaps, in your own research?

Klaus Oschema: Well, obviously different disciplinary backgrounds bring with them different formatted kinds of questioning and first approaches to subjects.

That having been said I think we very much worked in quite an interdisciplinary fashion. So, so there might have been an awkward feeling at first, thinking: well, the sociologists are going to ask this particular kind of question – they would be interested in statistics, while the historian would rather value a direct quote, word by word, or things like that. In the end, it really fit together quite harmoniously.

The major problem in writing some of the parts of the text was . . .
Take my part that I tried to bring in and add to the entire project,

²² Fadi A. Bardawil, Member in the School of Social Science, 2016-2017; Visitor, 2018.

²³ Peter Redfield, Member in the School of Social Science, 2016-2017; Visitor, 2018.

²⁴ Ian Jauslin, Member in the School of Mathematics, 2016-2018.

which was the Emmy Noether²⁵ piece. I thought that it would be interesting to have the particular perspective of someone who ended up *not* being at the Institute in the end, actually, because she was never appointed. She gave lectures here at Princeton; but then you have this extremely interesting combination of her being a woman on the one hand and being a German refugee on the other hand. So, I thought her quite fascinating.

At one point we wanted to include her particular contribution to mathematics in order to highlight the importance of her as a really inspiring figure in the development of mathematical thinking in the 20th Century. And I think that was one of the biggest problems to integrate, because how do you —

Thomas Dodman: That's where Ian [Jauslin] came in.

Klaus Oschema: Yes, that's where Ian came in. How do you combine this kind of biographical stratum where she had difficulties being a Jew, especially being a pacifist, in Germany. And then being a woman, the only woman in Göttingen, as it was, in the department of mathematics. How do you integrate this with the strictly scientific value of her contribution to the discipline? Reading the text you can still see this kind of hiatus between the two dimensions.

Thomas Dodman: I think the key thing, very quickly, we all, more or less, agreed on was that we wanted to do more or less historical research, but from the standpoint of the present, which is what Céline was saying. That we weren't interested in doing some sort of hagiographic, or just anecdotal history of, *Oh, this is an interesting snippet of history from the Institute's archives.*

What we were doing was done from the standpoint of the present with an eye to a critical intervention in the present. Which comes with a slight methodological cost in the sense that we worked fast. We worked fast somewhat as amateurs and we are not, none of us are specialists. We're increasingly becoming specialists. *[Laughs]* Pascal and Peter know a heck of a lot about the bomb at this point, which is almost worrying, perhaps. But, the point for us was, you know, to do serious work. We are serious scholars and so we checked our sources and our facts. But to make them speak to our present predicament. We weren't looking for being 100 percent exhaustive in the past episode we were looking at, we really wanted to see what in that episode reflects back on our present day.

²⁵ Amalie (Emmy) Noether (1882-1935), Visitor in the School of Mathematics, 1933-1935.

Linda Arntzenius: And are the articles, [is] anything that comes out of the project, will that be used for, say, the Institute newsletter? The IAS Letter?

Thomas Dodman: The three articles we wrote last year were first published in the newsletter before the book [*A Refuge for Scholars*]. I'm assuming that what we're doing this year will also be published. And, in fact, some of the stuff that our successors, if I may say, who've kept alive the Working Group this year, have already published one and I think there are two more articles coming out in the near future. And so, that was something that was important. I mean, it's a separate topic. At the end of last year, there was a feeling that this had to continue.

Partly because we knew we were going to be coming back. But there was an attempt to sort of draw the next crop of Members in and seduce a few of them into this doing this.

And it worked and quite a few of them actually continue. So, the group is expanding and, I think, the most important aspect is that it's no longer a boy's club, which it was for various reasons at first. Now it's becoming a more gender differentiated group, which is an important point.

Céline Bessièrè: Did you meet Bregje?²⁶

Thomas Dodman: Bregje is a Member from this year who published an article in the last newsletter. And she's doing really interesting stuff on the questions of funding at the Institute.

Linda Arntzenius: That's wonderful.

Céline Bessièrè: Uh, yes. [*Laughs*]

Thomas Dodman: It's an expanding, sprawling, heterogenous kind of project.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes! Whew. That is an excellent project. I'm very excited to see it. An exhibition came out as well.

Thomas Dodman: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Could you tell me a little bit about the exhibition?

Thomas Dodman: So, the exhibition was, again – we did the articles, they got published – and all of a sudden I can't remember who it was, but I

²⁶ Bregje van Eekelen, Member in the School of Social Science, 2017-2018.

think it might have been Josie [Faass], came up to me and said, “The board meeting is in two weeks. Do you think you could put together an exhibit for it?” Or, could you present something on what you’ve done?

I can’t remember if it was Josie, but – there was a sense that it would be something worth doing for the board meeting. And, um, by that point I had, more or less, given up on my work, what I was going to do at Institute in the spring semester. Basically, this sort of gobbled up the whole spring semester.

And so, I thought, “Sure, yes.” And so, we quickly decided we should build on the articles, take the best kind of documents from them, expand a little bit, and that’s where the stuff on Hirschman and the founding of the School of Social Science came into the exhibit.

And so, myself, Pascal, Klaus, I think, you [addressing Céline] – I can’t remember but I think you contributed a bit. And a few other people, actually, Fadi [Abdo Bardawil] with Peter [Redfield] were very much involved.

Céline Bessière: David.

Thomas Dodman: David Kazanjian,²⁷ right, who was also contributing. I mean, a number of people – many people who are not listed here as official members did this. We were a very porous and open kind of group. And basically, we spent those two weeks, I want to say, night and day. Sometimes it was, literally, night and day working, on... I can’t remember how many – ten, 11 panels – which are now in Fuld Hall, which is very, very generous.

And the goal was to give a visual representation, a nice visual representation. I think that it worked out really well and there I have to thank, in particular, Maria Tuya, who did a tremendous job. She devoted a lot of her precious time to helping us to do this. And so, she, Casey [Westerman], Erica [Mosner]. They’re all mentioned – they’re listed in the book. They played a shadowy but vital role, as they do every day here at the Institute, I think.

I remember driving with Maria on a Saturday afternoon to FedEx/Kinkos on Route 1 and bringing them the PDFs of the posters: *We need them by Monday. It has to be done.* And so, it was all very, very rushed. But it paid off handsomely. The morning

²⁷ David Kazanjian, Member in the School of Social Science, 2016-2017.

of the day the board was arriving they were being put up in the corridor going to the Dilworth Room and that evening all the board members were there at dinner and they were looking at it [the exhibit] and then I gave a brief presentation of what we had done and it was quite magical. It was really – and so you had these very important people, some of whom have dinner with Trump, I was told, hearing what we'd been doing, why we'd been doing it, and what we thought this was an intervention about.

And what we thought the Institute should be, because it had been. Because, I mean, the whole point of what we ended up doing was to show that this place *is* a bubble, *is* a “Paradise for Scholars,” the original, sort of, appellation, a way it's described often. But that from the very beginning it was also a place that was *in* the world, in contact with what was happening around it in the world. And that it was a refuge for scholars at risk.

And that it would never have become the place that it became had it not been for its openness to the outside world. Had it not been for the courage that Veblen²⁸ and others showed in welcoming people like Einstein,²⁹ people like [Hermann] Weyl,³⁰ persecuted scholars in Nazi Germany.

At a time when there was clear discussion between them about needing to make sure they didn't give the impression that they were privileging foreign scholars over American scholars. That's actually in the archives. They take a stand. They are brave and bold about it and this place becomes the place that it is. And had Einstein not come here I doubt very much the Institute would be what it is today.

So, what we were trying to show was that there are these two strands in the DNA, as it were, that's the way we sort of ended up thinking of it, of the Institute, and that one is necessary to the other. No refuge, no paradise. You don't have one without the other.

And so that was our way of trying to show that the Institute needs to take more of a stand today. Needs to be a bit more attentive to what's happening in the world and take positions.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you speak to any trustees? Did you get feedback?

²⁸ Oswald Veblen (1880-1960), Professor in the School of Mathematics, 1932-1950; Emeritus Professor, 1950-1960.

²⁹ Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Professor in the Schools of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, 1933-1946; Emeritus Professor, 1946-1955.

³⁰ Hermann Weyl (1885-1955), Professor in the School of Mathematics, 1933-1951; Emeritus Professor, 1951-1955.

Thomas Dodman: I did, that evening. I remember speaking to a number of trustees that evening. They were all very interested and complimentary. I don't think we had much of an impact, necessarily, but, perhaps, given that this is continuing, perhaps there was a little bit, or at least we showed them that this place can't just be a sort of bubble, unto itself. It needs to take stands in the world.

Linda Arntzenius: It's probably too early to ask you this question. It's obviously a question I ask to older scholars who've been here many times, or Members who've been here many times, or people on the faculty. The impact of the Institute on your careers, or your working methods. Can you say something about that? *[Laughter]* Too soon?

Thomas Dodman: Well, there's some immediate, uh, payoffs. You got your *habilitation* [addressing Céline].

Céline Bessièrè: Yes, Yes. I got – okay, I got my *habilitation* because I spent this year here – and I had the time to concentrate on it and to finish it. And, also, I became a full professor in France.... It's difficult to say which is part of what, but – Yes.

Thomas Dodman: We all actually changed positions last year, right?

Céline Bessièrè: You too?

Thomas Dodman: Me too, yes.

Céline Bessièrè: So for all of us.

Klaus Oschema: Yes, we all changed positions. And it's kind of hard to tell why ... Because upon arriving here, just two weeks before, I received the offer of one full professorship in Germany and then when I had been here, two weeks after, I received a second offer. So, it's kind of hard to tell to... say, uh, if the category: *He's at Princeton now*, had anything to do with it.

I strongly doubt it for the moment (for myself). Because I kept it quite secret, actually. I never mentioned. . . when I applied in Germany, I never mentioned in the discussions with the committees that I was going to Princeton, because I knew that in both jobs they were looking for someone who was ready to jump in in the winter term. And I wasn't going to do that. So, I really did my best to keep it a secret at the time.

Céline Bessièrè: Ah. *[Laughter]*

Thomas Dodman: But I think, obviously intellectually, the kinds of discussions you have here –

Linda Arntzenius: Have an impact, mm-hmm.

Céline Bessière: Oh, Yes.

Thomas Dodman: – interdisciplinary ones. Even though the interdisciplinarity is still a bit – the glass is not full, let's put it that way. It's half empty, definitely. Pat Geary told a number of us, I think, the same thing about this place that in retrospect is increasingly becoming true to me. That it's only later on, and it's a sort of trickling effect over the years after you're at the Institute, that you realize just how important it was. So we're almost a little bit too close.

Céline Bessière: Yes.

Thomas Dodman: But definitely – just the amount of time we had here to, to read, to broaden our horizons, to discuss with people – I think the payoff is going to be staggered over time. But it will come back and we will remember that.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you get a feeling that the Institute is really an *international* organization, or a deeply *American* organization that invites foreigners to come in? How, how did you feel about that aspect?

Thomas Dodman: I think it's *international* with a strong...focus on some countries. I would probably characterize it that way. I mean, it's clearly a place where... at a time when a lot of American institutions (I teach in this country) are for very good reasons, moving away from Euro-centric focuses in their various fields, this a place that I think remains somewhat Euro-centric. For better and for worse. But the community definitely feels very international and that's, I think –

Céline Bessière: Yes.

Thomas Dodman: – is one of the enriching factors. The people who come here are from all around.

Linda Arntzenius: Alright. So, when people ask you about your year at the Institute, or your time at the Institute, *what is the Institute?* What do you tell them? What are the anecdotes and stories that you like to tell?

Thomas Dodman: The official ones, or? [*Laughter*] We had a great time. We partied a lot.

Céline Bessièrè: We advise our friends who ask – I have a lot of colleagues in France who ask me – because they think about applying – and I tell them that it's fantastic. And you say that to your friends in New York, too.

Thomas Dodman: Mm.

Céline Bessièrè: To come here with your family and to really spend –

Thomas Dodman: To not commute back and forth.

Céline Bessièrè: Not to commute, to really take advantage of being here. It's part of what the Institute brings. Friendship, I mean, we have so many close friends. One year after you can say that we have – very, very strong connections with friends that are all over the world.

Thomas Dodman: Yep.

Céline Bessièrè: And, and it's because we spent so much time together here. These discussions, for me, maybe it's more related to your previous question.

I had the feeling being here that we were here in New Jersey in the woods. But there was this Chinese colleague, this Turkish colleague. And the Iranian family and the people from Europe, all the countries. We had the feeling that all was happening in the world, which was, basically, bad things. Here we could discuss very deeply all these events. Because they were people directly involved. Like Erdoğan last year.

Thomas Dodman: Mm-hmm. Yes, gosh, I remember that.

Céline Bessièrè: Like, um – the discrimination against Turkish scholars. I was thinking about Ayşe³¹... I mean, you know it exists, but when you have actually friends and colleagues who cannot go back to their country and they're here... it becomes –

Thomas Dodman: This is a colleague who couldn't go back to Turkey because she'd signed the petition against President Erdoğan [a petition calling for peace with the Kurds]. She had a job in Turkey, but she couldn't go back. The fear was that she would be arrested. And so, in that case the Institute did perform its function of a refuge. She was able to stay on here this past year as a Visiting scholar. And, in the process, get a job here in the U.S.

³¹ Ayşe Parla, Member in the School of Social Science, 2016-2017; Visitor, 2017-2018.

- Céline Bessièrè:* So, we had very deep discussions about what was going on in Turkey. What was going on in Syria. There were so many colleagues working on Syria last year.
- Thomas Dodman:* Right.
- Céline Bessièrè:* For me it was like a discovery that, being here, I had the feeling to know more about the world, the entire world.
- Thomas Dodman:* Which is partly, I think, why doing this kind of work was so rewarding. And for me it's become something that I'm now going to make much more part of my scholarship going forward. I want to do stuff that, not always, necessarily, but that, insofar as possible, has something to say in the present. I am no longer satisfied with just doing my sort of antiquarian historian's job.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Klaus? Anything to add?
- Klaus Oschema:* I find that quite interesting coming from a Modernist, actually.
- Thomas Dodman:* It's a little too strong.
- Klaus Oschema:* I'm currently editing a book that's been in process for two years now and hopefully comes out next year on the *relevance* of the Middle Ages. Because that's a question that, as a Medievalist, you're constantly confronted with. Whenever your own discipline and the material you are working on really becomes relevant in everyday political discourse it's for the worse, actually.
- It's racists and Nazis in Charlottesville who harbor medieval emblems and symbols, even though they don't understand what they originally meant and it's a sheer instance of abuse of interpretation. But, nevertheless, medieval studies has to... – I mean there are very intensive debates going on about the role of medieval studies and also the role of, um, the degree to which we should reflect in a political way about what we're doing as medievalists. So, hearing something that's quite normal for me actually coming from a Modernist – I find that a very interesting combination.
- Thomas Dodman:* Yes.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Huh. Alright, well I'm coming to the end of my questions and, if there's a question that you expected me to ask that I haven't touched on, please correct me.

Thomas Dodman: I think you've been very exhaustive.

Céline Bessière: Yes.

Thomas Dodman: I did want to have it recorded just how grateful we are to the Institute and to some certain people in particular for facilitating what we've been doing. I'm thinking, obviously, of Casey and Erica, Marcia in the library and the archives. My sense is that they were so happy to have people who were working in the archives, obviously not for the first time, but who had come here not expecting to work in the archives at the Institute.

They have just been phenomenal and you can see that what we do means something to them and it's just been absolutely wonderful to work with them. Josie has been terrific in working as an interface with Robbert, who's been very supportive throughout. And I think that should be acknowledged.

Faculty members have lent their support. I've mentioned several of them throughout the interview and Linda Cooper, also, who was, I think, instrumental in organizing our return this year. Maria Tuya, I mentioned already.

The staff here sometimes don't get all the credit they're due and we really enjoyed working with them and look forward to working more with [them].

Linda Arntzenius: Excellent. Thank you very much. Thomas, Klaus, Céline.

Céline Bessière: Thank you, Linda.

Linda Arntzenius: A pleasure. Absolute pleasure.

Thomas Dodman: Thank you, Linda.

[End of Audio]