

**THE ACADEMIC TRAJECTORY OF NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS FROM  
1955 TO 2019**

by

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## **Abstract**

This is a historiographical examination of Natalie Zemon Davis and her contribution to historical writing over the course of her academic career. I examine Davis' body of work from her first published article as a graduate student in 1955 to her latest publication in 2019. Accompanying the examination of Davis' trajectory as a scholar, this thesis will also include many moments of her personal life: her Jewish upbringing, marrying young, the seizure of her passport during the 'Red Scare,' political and social activism, and motherhood. These moments in Davis' personal life influenced the scope and the subjects of her writing, and this correlation will be evident as this thesis moves throughout each decade of her life. In addition to her academic and private life, I place Davis within a broader context of the trends and transitions within the discipline of history itself, with a primary focus on the rise of social, women's, cultural, and global history. This thesis closely follows the journey of how Davis began as a social historian of the printing industry, and of sixteenth-century Lyon, to an interdisciplinary scholar who is currently investigating Jewish slave ownership on the plantations of colonial Suriname.

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To Michael, thank you for everything. You have always supported me, cheered me on, and believed in me. Thank you for letting me call you countless times to ramble out my ideas until they made sense, or for letting me vent when they didn’t. You have been my rock throughout this all, and there is no one else who I would want by my side. I love you so very much.

Last, but certainly not least, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my family. To Kristina, thank you for supporting me in ways only a big sister can. To my parents, Debi and Mark, I dedicate my thesis to the two of you. To Dad, thank you for all your encouragement and for motivating me to keep going (even when I really didn’t want to hear it), you are my absolute hero. And, to Mum, you have always been my number one cheerleader, and I wouldn’t be where I am, or who I am without your guidance. I love you all to the moon & back.

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## Introduction

### Childhood and Historical Curiosity

Natalie Zemon Davis (1928 - ) began her career as a social and cultural historian of early modern France, with a primary focus on the sixteenth-century printing industry of Lyon. In recent years Davis' research has taken her well beyond France and other parts of Europe, and she has since explored North America, North Africa, and the Caribbean. This thesis will follow the trajectory of Davis' academic and intellectual journey from her earliest published article as a graduate student, "On the Protestantism of Benoît Rigaud" (1955) to her latest article published as this thesis was completed, "Women, Jewish History, European History" (2019). Accompanying the examination of Davis' trajectory as a scholar, the thesis will also include many moments of her personal life: her Jewish upbringing, marrying young, the seizure of her passport during the 'Red Scare,' political and social activism, and motherhood. These moments in Davis' personal life influenced the scope and the subjects of her writing, and this correlation will be evident as this thesis moves throughout each decade of her life.

Growing up in a middle-class Jewish family in Detroit Michigan, Davis' experience as a child is tied up with a sensitivity that most Jewish children would have experienced in the years prior to World War II. As a child, her home was one of the two Jewish homes on the block, which made Christmas a time of "excruciating embarrassment" as their house would be dark while the rest of the street was lit.<sup>1</sup> As a child in grade school in the 1930s, Davis was aware that anti-Semitism was a part of her and her family's life because of their Jewish identity. There had been Jewish children who were refugees from Nazi Germany who

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Adelson, "Interview with Natalie Davis", *The Historian*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1991):404-422, 407.

came to her school which caused an uproar from many of the non-Jewish parents.<sup>2</sup> One day while walking home from school a young boy from Davis' block pointed and had yelled: "You are a Jew!" "So what?" she responded.<sup>3</sup> In a later interview she had been a part of as an adult, Davis recalled the time when her father, Julian Zemon was refused a letter at a tennis club in Michigan. This interaction had "his anti-Semitic coach [refusing] to give him the letter because he was a Jew, someone [...] intervened, and he finally got that 'M.' I still have it."<sup>4</sup> Despite her young age, Davis claims that she was able to identify anti-Semitism and it became a part of her life without it ever being discussed with her parents.<sup>5</sup> This sense of Jewish anxiety and perspective is reflected in the first poem Davis had written for Sunday school and it goes as follows:

Fellow Jews in foreign lands  
Whose lives are in a monster's hands,  
Very soon will come relief  
In God's power is our belief.<sup>6</sup>

From the age of twelve to sixteen Davis attended Kingswood, a private school for girls in the suburban part of Detroit. While a student there, Davis was among a small number of Jewish students who had been admitted to Kingswood based on a quota of typically two to three Jewish students per class.<sup>7</sup> During school assemblies when students would sing hymns Davis recalled how she "kept my fingers crossed so God would not be angry with me."<sup>8</sup> Although Davis wanted to do well academically, wanted to be popular, and was not considered "poor"

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<sup>2</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "A Life of Learning" (Charles Homer Haskins Lecture for 1997) (New York: American Council of Learned Societies Occasional Paper, No. 39, 1997): 1-26, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 407.

<sup>4</sup> Adelson, 407.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 407.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 407

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 408.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Harding and Judy Coffin, "Natalie Zemon Davis", pp. 98-122, in *Visions of History: by MARHO the Radical Historians Organization*, eds. Henry Abelove and E.P. Thompson (New York: Patheon Books, 1984) 100. *Visions of History* is a volume of interviews of 'radical' historians – most of them were far more radical than Davis.

by her classmates, she still felt as if she was an outsider because she was Jewish.<sup>9</sup> It was during this time that Davis' Jewish identity would begin to drive her interest in history - European history in particular. In a 1983 interview, Davis shares how her last few years at Kingswood, where she had begun to take history classes, had, for the first time, started to give her a sense of her own past:

In some sense I found my past in those courses. It wasn't my Jewish past speaking to me [...] My grandparents had never communicated anything to me about the old country, and my parents were very present-minded. [...] It was the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and the American Revolution. [...] I have subsequently thought about that and talked about it with other historians of Jewish background. In some ways it's easier to look into the European past, which is where you ancestors were in the nineteenth century, than into the American past.<sup>10</sup>

Davis continued to be drawn to Europe rather than the American history that was taught in high school, which "did not seem like my history. Although I'm American, it nonetheless seemed the history of others."<sup>11</sup> Her Jewish identity and experience in grade school, and as a high school student at Kingswood would shape Davis' style of writing and would prompt her sense of historical curiosity. In a more recent interview (2010) Davis reflects on how these formative years would later influence her approach to the past:

This habit of looking for points of difference goes back to my girlhood as a Jew in a world where I shared many of the views, practices, and customs of those around me, but still felt that I was positioned in it differently and had my own critical views. Perhaps this youthful experience predisposed me to expect that not everyone was in agreement with a seemingly dominant view and that one should seek the points of friction.<sup>12</sup>

As we will see, throughout the 1970s and 1980s Davis would begin to engage with Jewish history, (and her own Jewish past) through teaching and her published essays. Davis' latest articles, "Jewish History in a New Key" (2018) and "Women, Jewish History and

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<sup>9</sup> Harding and Coffin, "Natalie Zemon Davis", *Visions of History*, 100.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

<sup>11</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *A Passion for History: Conversations with Denis Crouzet*, Edited by Michael Wolfe, Translated by Natalie Zemon Davis (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2010) 94.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

European History” (2019) reflect on her interaction with Jewish history throughout her career. When her focus is not directly on the Jewish experience, Davis has been, and continues to be, committed to those who are positioned outside the traditional centres of power or wealth in the early modern and modern period.

### **Thesis Organization and Overview**

This thesis has been organized chronologically into three chapters in order to show a clear trajectory of Natalie Zemon Davis’ academic career and intellectual style. Each chapter is comprised of two to three decades, and is then further divided by a single decade per section of the chapter. In addition to an examination of Davis’ academic trajectory, I also place her in context to contemporary historical trends. For example, social history of the 1950s and 1960s, second-wave feminism and the rise of Women’s History in the 1970s, the literary turn in the 1980s, rise of cultural theory in the 1990s, and globalization and global theory in the 2000s until present day. I have done this to demonstrate how Davis’ body of work ‘fits’ in relation to the discipline itself; where she follows, leads, and challenges varying historical trends.

Chapter 1 will examine Davis’ early academic career as a historian in the 1950s and 1960s. The first section of the chapter attends to Davis’ experience as an undergraduate student at Smith College in 1949, and when she began her Ph.D. at the University of Michigan in 1951. It was during this time that Davis’ interest in the lower classes and her introduction to the late medieval writings of Christine de Pizan and the modern scholarship of Henri Hauser would prompt her dissertation topic on the resistance by, and social structure of, the *menu people* (best translated as “ordinary people”) In 1955 Davis would publish her first two articles, “On the Protestantism of Benoît Rigaud” and “Christophe Plantin’s Childhood at Saint Just,” and in 1959 she completed her dissertation “Protestantism and the



Printing Workers of Lyon.” The second section explores how Davis developed her style as a social historian of sixteenth-century France. After the completion of her dissertation Davis began to move away from more Marxist understandings of class, believing that class consciousness needed be explained in a more multi-dimensional way. Throughout the 1960s Davis published a number of articles written in the tradition of classic social history, most of which would later appear in her book *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (1975). These essays explore how printer journeymen, humanists, and other Protestant men had to adapt to their social, economic and political setting which reflected some of the constraints Davis had felt in her personal life as a young academic, newlywed and as a first-time mother.

Chapter 2 is also divided into two sections: the 1970s and the 1980s. In the 1970s Davis explored two distinct avenues, one which focuses on women and the other on crowd behaviour. Davis’ work on women in the 1970s ties in neatly with second wave feminism in North America, and with the rise of Women’s Studies and Women’s History. While newly employed as a professor at the University of Toronto in 1963, Davis continued to be a social activist, this time particularly on behalf of female graduate students with children; alongside her colleague Jill Kerr Conway, she founded the first Women’s History course in Canada. In 1975 Davis’ first book, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, was published; while this primarily tackled the lives of various Protestant men, it also sought to engage with crowd behaviour and the role of women during the Reformation. “Reasons of Misrule” (1972) investigated the social behaviour and symbolic actions of urban and youth groups in sixteenth-century France; this would also mark the point at which Davis began to incorporate elements of anthropology into her methodology. Davis’ interest in anthropology and anthropological techniques continued to develop in the late 1970s and through the 1980s when she began to familiarize herself with Clifford Geertz, Sidney Mintz, Victor Turner, and

Eric Wolf. In 1982, Davis served as the historical consultant for the film *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*, which fulfilled her desire of close ethnographic observation, which her colleagues in anthropology had often done. In the following year, Davis published *The Return of Martin Guerre* to offer her own interpretation of the evidence concerning Bertrande de Rols, Martin Guerre, and Arnaud du Tilh in order to remedy the departures from the historical record the film had taken.

Chapter 3 is comprised of three sections: 1990s, 2000s and the 2010s. The 1990s saw a rise in cultural studies and cultural history and Davis' articles reflected this movement. Throughout the decade Davis wrote "Toward Mixtures and Margins" (1992), "Who Owns History?" (1996), "Cultural Mixture and Historical Meditation" (1997) and "Beyond Evolution: Comparative History and its Goals" (1998) which each encapsulate cultural methodology and challenge contemporary historical writing in varying ways. Davis published *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Women* in 1995, a book which captures the biographical snapshots of three seventeenth-century women, leaving the reader to engage with topics of religion, race, family, rhetoric and women and gender. In the 2000s, as historians began to focus on the transnational and globalization, Davis' own writing neatly followed the historiographic and intellectual trend as she grappled with questions of globalization, global history, and what she calls 'global consciousness.' Two of the books released in this decade, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (2000), and *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth Century Muslim Between Worlds* (2007) directly engage with these global processes and questions. Continuing her interest in film seen in the 1980s, Davis published *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision* (2000) to highlight the value of historical film to the study of history. The 2010s have seen Davis continue to write and think globally. While Davis' early career was located strictly within France and the city of Lyon, her publications in the last decade "Judges, Masters, Diviners" (2011), "Physicians, Healers, and

their Remedies in Colonial Suriname” (2015) and “Regaining Jerusalem” (2016) have focused on colonial Suriname. Despite her departure from the printer journeymen in Lyon to the plantations of seventeenth-century Suriname, Davis has consistently given voice to those who had to manoeuvre within their social, economic and political constraints.

While I recognize that my thesis is different than most submissions, being that it uses a historiographical approach to investigate one person’s body of work, I believe that it is both an original and valuable contribution. Natalie Zemon Davis is leading European, feminist, social, cultural and interdisciplinary historian with over one hundred published contributions. I was introduced to Davis during a graduate seminar “Global World and Transnational History.” Her 2011 article “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World” was listed under additional reading – it was not required for class discussion and I do not recall what prompted me to read it – but I am very glad that I did. In the article Davis challenges the historian to look beyond superficial dissimilarities of historical actors, and to discontinue placing these actors in separate and distinct boxes – which has previously prevented any sense of interconnectedness.<sup>13</sup> In doing so, Davis comparatively examines the literary careers of Ibn Khaldun and Christine de Pizan, both of whom were situated on either side of the Mediterranean in the late fourteenth and early fifteen centuries. There was likely no personal connection between the two scholars, but nonetheless it is useful to consider how their writing reflects their similar and dissimilar experiences. This article forced me to rethink how I approached figures of the past and the tendency to not ignore these superficial dissimilarities in my own research. As my curiosity grew about this historian whom I had never encountered before, I wondered how Davis started as a historian of the printing industry and of sixteenth-century Lyon to the Jewish slave ownerships on the plantations of

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<sup>13</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World”, *History and Theory*, Vol. 50 No. 2 (May 2011): 188-202, 188. I speak in more detail about this article in Chapter 3.

Colonial Suriname. The resulting research I have done has satisfied these questions I previously had regarding Davis' progression and journey as a historian. This thesis is a comprehensive and concise examination of the work Davis has written since her first published article sixty-four years prior. As of 2019 there is no existing evaluation that encompasses Davis' personal life and writing into one chronological assessment, and this perhaps will be a useful reference for those just as curious as I was of her material in future years.

## Chapter 1

### Activism, the Archives and Lyon: The 1950s and 1960s

#### Introduction

Despite her current prominence as a cultural, feminist and interdisciplinary scholar, this is not where Natalie Zemon Davis began. Her doctoral dissertation in 1959, “Protestantism and the Printing Workers of Lyon: A Study in the Problem of Religion and Social Class in the Reformation” was written from a Marxist point of view.<sup>1</sup> However the findings of her thesis prompted Davis to rethink the significance of social and class conflict in religious change. This chapter will begin with Davis’ early academic career as an undergraduate at Smith College, a master’s student at Radcliffe College, and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Michigan. I will argue that it is during this period that Davis assumed the role of the Marxist social historian throughout the 1950s and the traditional social historian in the 1960s. It is during the 1960s, as this chapter will show, Davis came to perceive culture as a driving force of historical change, and allied herself with scholars such as E.P. Thompson, Charles Tilly and Eric Hobsbawm. During the 1950s and 1960s Davis did not release a book, but her articles show a very interesting development in her writing, thinking and portrayal of sixteenth and seventeenth-century persons. As this thesis follows Davis’ intellectual journey and how her writing compares to trends of historical writing, it is important to start from the very beginning.

#### The 1950s: Natalie Zemon and Early Intellectual Influences

As an undergraduate Davis, then Natalie Zemon, attended Smith College in Massachusetts, an independent liberal arts college for women. For Davis, Smith was an

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Adelson, “Interview with Natalie Davis”, *The Historian*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1991):404-422, 415. See also, Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 11.

exhilarating place to be in the years after World War II.<sup>2</sup> While a student at Smith, Davis would be involved with activism and among a community of women, including women of colour and other Jewish women. Davis' social and political activism included her membership at the American Youth for Democracy; she was also the President of the Young Progressives and Head of the Marxist Discussion Group.<sup>3</sup> They were the activists, the class of 1949, concerned about the rebuilding of Europe, working for what was then called "Negro-self-determination, supporting the United Nations, and creating peace during the beginnings of the Cold War."<sup>4</sup> It was during her undergraduate years that Davis was introduced to the writings of Marx. In her first year at Smith Davis had read *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). This early introduction to Marxism and Marxist socialism would influence her subsequent articles published during her graduate career. Marxist socialism appeared to offer a solution to the competition of one individual against another, or one nation against the other.

Here was a way to obliterate crass materialism and allow people to enjoy the work they did. I imagined a future where changed structures truly transformed human behaviour [...] "You're just the kind of person they'd put away," one of my professors said to me, holding up the Stalinist camps as a rebuke to my activities. He was right, of course, I would have been a prisoner if I'd lived in the Soviet Union, but Russia was then a distant and for me an unimportant example. America was near, and within the frame of my Utopian idealism.<sup>5</sup>

Active in the 'progressive' Marxist groups on campus, these matters made Davis more passionately interested in history. Her experience forced her to ask questions about race, class systems, class conflict and historical change.<sup>6</sup> Another influence on Davis' historical direction was her residency during her undergraduate years. She lived in the *maison française* where her teacher, Leona Gabel, taught Renaissance philosophy.<sup>7</sup> Davis soon began to follow

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<sup>2</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 4.

<sup>3</sup> Adelson, "Interview with Natalie Davis", 409.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 409.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 5.

<sup>6</sup> Adelson, 410-411.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 5.

the French Revolution closely through *Le Moniteur*, a French newspaper (f. 1789 – 1868); she found the access to these primary sources both intriguing and fascinating.<sup>8</sup> Her political and philosophical fascination led Davis to write her honours thesis on Pietro Pomponazzi, a rational Aristotelian of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>9</sup>

In her personal life, Davis encountered Chandler Davis at the end of her junior year at Smith College; the future couple had met at a Progressive Party meeting. Chandler at the time was a mathematics graduate student at Harvard. Chandler proposed just three weeks later; and after six weeks the pair eloped at Boston City Hall. Their marriage was a scandal for two reasons; it was illegal to be married at Smith without permission, and Chandler was not Jewish.<sup>10</sup> Davis has consistently reflected in her later interviews that she considers herself a non-practicing, non-traditional Jew, but her mother refused to accept the marriage for many years.<sup>11</sup> As a newlywed, Davis now had to consider her position as a wife and as a female scholar in heavily male-dominated academic circles. Davis' mother at this point was no more accepting of her scholarly interests than of her marriage. Even Professor Gabel, who had encouraged Davis in the *maison française*, worried that the marriage would hinder her potential career as a historian. The sense of doubt was generational: 'how could I ever be a scholar if I were traipsing after my husband amid the clutter of children?'<sup>12</sup> Davis, however, was not phased. Chandler himself believed in women having their own careers and this encouraged Natalie toward her vocational path.<sup>13</sup> Throughout her academic career, as we shall see, Davis has cited the support and encouragement of, and equal partnership with, her husband.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Adelson, 410.

<sup>10</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 7. See also, Natalie Zemon Davis, "Turning Points", Letter in *Mathematical Intelligencer* (2014) pp.18-19, 18.

In 1949 Davis began her graduate training at Radcliffe College, at what was once an all-women's liberal arts school (now integrated within Harvard University). Davis completed a one-year Master's degree and continued her undergraduate interest in the early modern period and its history. While her senior thesis had focused on the Renaissance intellectual Pomponazzi, her interest began to shift to society at large. Davis soon became interested in the lower and middle classes, the *menu peuple* – the labourers, merchants, artisans and peasants. Much of her graduate work was influenced by her initial influence and involvement with Marxism. In 1951 she began her Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. Davis cites this period as occasioning a shift in her historical focus from the history of ideas to social history.<sup>14</sup> After writing a seminar paper on the French scholar and humanist, Guillaume Budé, Davis discovered that scholars, princes, and preachers were not the only subjects who made history.<sup>15</sup> Encouraged by W.K. Jordan, a historian of early modern Britain, and equally inspired by the French Annaliste Marc Bloch's *Feudal Society*, Davis focused her attention on the sixteenth century. As she continued her doctoral studies, Palmer A. Throop of her Renaissance history seminar suggested that Davis research the poet, Christine de Pizan.<sup>16</sup> Her paper "Christine de Pizan as a Prototype of the Professional Literary Woman" was a social study of Pizan's position as a professional and as a woman in early modern Europe. Although Davis had been inspired by Pizan and her *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) and while Professor Throop urged her to do so, she did not want to pursue Christine as the subject for her doctoral dissertation. Davis did not want to be categorized as a woman doing women's history; she wanted to be involved with issues of class and society.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Davis, "Turning Points", 18.

<sup>16</sup> Davis, *A Passion for History*, 109.

<sup>17</sup> Jill Ker Conway and Natalie Zemon Davis, "Feminism and a Scholarly Friendship", in *Minds of our Own: Inventing Feminist Scholarship in Canada and Quebec, 1966-76*. Edited by Wendy Roberts. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008) pp. 78-88, 78.



While in pursuit of class and society in the early modern period, Davis encountered the work of Henri Hauser (1866-1946). Hauser was a French historian whose work had been prominent in the late 1890s and who is today still considered a pioneer in the study of early modern economic history. Throughout her reading of Hauser's work she was introduced to *the menu peuple* of Lyon, their grain riots and printing strikes, and the Protestant uprising of 1562.<sup>18</sup> Resistance by, and the social structure of, the *menu peuple* would become her thesis topic. For Davis,

Lyon had everything I needed. Here I could test the ideas of Marx on religion as a super-structure reflecting material interest and of Max Weber on Protestantism as encouraging the capitalist spirit. [...] what I think saw to be the birthplace of our modern ills and adventures: ferocious competition and capitalistic greed, but also hopes for changes and the seeds of democracy.<sup>19</sup>

In the following year (1952) Davis left for the archives in Lyon. At this point she had not worked in an archive and had only used published excerpts from archival material, family records and guild registers. But now Davis was 'hungry' for the sources in Lyon, to see firsthand how contemporaries had interpreted and legitimated their behaviour and actions during the Reformation.<sup>20</sup> Although grateful for what the archives offered, Davis had not anticipated the difficulty of reading the handwriting of sixteenth-century notaries.

Nonetheless she persisted. She began to compile both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Generally speaking, quantitative research is a hallmark of mid-twentieth century social history while qualitative evidence lends itself more to cultural studies, a concept that in itself did not exist in the 1950s. In her 'quantitative' pile Davis had collected a portrait of the Protestants in Lyon, their occupation, taxes and status. Printed pamphlets, sermons, playlets

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<sup>18</sup> Adelson, 412.

<sup>19</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 7.

<sup>20</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Writing the 'Rites of Violence' and Afterward", in *Ritual and Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France*, ed. Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts and Andrew Spicer, *Past and Present* (2012), Supplement 7 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 8-29, 14.

and polemics connected with the Protestant and Catholic movements in Lyon made up Davis' qualitative sources.<sup>21</sup>

After spending six months in the Lyon archives, Davis returned to Ann Arbor, whereupon both Natalie's and Chandler's passports were confiscated by the FBI. The couple had remained involved with activism and politics as they had in their undergrad and early graduate days. Prior to her Lyon sojourn Davis had researched and written for a pamphlet called *Operation Mind*.<sup>22</sup> The pamphlet attacked 'unconstitutional activities of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.' While Davis had had this published anonymously, it was traceable to her husband as he had signed the cheque for the printer. This was happening during the Second Red Scare (1947-60) which in short was the fear of the rise of Communist ideology in the United States and hostility toward the Stalinist Soviet Union. This state of fear was enflamed in the early 1950s by Joseph McCarthy, a the junior senator from Wisconsin and prime mover of what became known as McCarthyism, which saw accusations of being Communists or sympathizers ("fellow travellers") to be made without proper evidence. The pamphlet was evidence enough that the Davises were Communists and this allegation was one of the main reasons for the seizure of their passports. The course of the next few years had an unfortunate domino effect for the Davises. Chandler was terminated from his position at the University of Michigan, blacklisted by other American universities, denied certiorari (judicial review) for his case, and eventually sentenced to six months at the Danbury Correctional Institution.<sup>23</sup> To make matters even more complicated Natalie was pregnant with their first child when their passports were initially taken. Fortunately, Davis would prove able to manoeuvre and compromise in order to accommodate her academic and personal lives.

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<sup>21</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning" 8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 9.

With a dissertation yet to be written and no access to the archives in Lyon Davis was initially devastated.<sup>24</sup> It immediately cut her off from the materials she needed to pursue the type of social history she wished to write. Following her husband's release from prison, the couple had relocated to New York and while there Davis came to the revelation that 'the FBI could keep me out of France but not from the New York Public Library, or the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, or other great rare book collections in the U.S.'<sup>25</sup> Some of the sixteenth-century Protestant books and bibles were available in these American rare book libraries in New York. This led Davis down the unexpected avenue of what would become known as "the history of the book" (*histoire du livre*), which she managed to combine with social history. *Histoire du livre* allowed Davis to study how printers had disguised Protestant propaganda to avoid censorship and fool inquisitors.<sup>26</sup> This combined research of archival material and early printed books would help Davis bridge elements of cultural history, anthropology and ethnography into her social-historical methodology. Although a turbulent period for the young graduate student, recently married and newly pregnant, this episode expanded her notions of human response to situations of constraint, both in her own life and with the people of the past.

Prior to the completion of her dissertation Davis had published a number of articles. The few that were published in during this period between her research in Lyon and 1959 lean toward social history in the traditional sense. The growing popularity of social history arose out of a reaction against traditional nationalist political history, and was also influenced by an increase in educational levels after the war, and the expansion of university-level teaching of the discipline itself.<sup>27</sup> While early efforts at social history had been made in the

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<sup>24</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "How the FBI Turned Me on to Rare Books", *The New York Review of Books*, Blog (13 July 2013)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 10.

<sup>27</sup> Alun Munslow, *A History of History* (New York: Routledge, 2012) 74.

United States (for instance in the pre-World War I movement known as the ‘New’ history, and in the work of ‘Progressive’ historians such as Charles A. Beard between the wars), social history did not fully emerge, and begin to achieve popularity among students, until after World War II. In the U.S. the rise of social history helped anchor contemporary movements for labour organizing, feminism and minority of all kinds.<sup>28</sup> This avenue of history however was later critiqued. Alun Munslow argues that this traditional form of social history was “seemingly useful” but “fatally flawed” and Peter Burke refers to social history as history without the names of individuals or without names at all.<sup>29</sup> The following section in this chapter will discuss how Davis and other younger historians would gradually be drawn away from this style of historical writing. In the meantime, however, traditional social history did provide Davis with techniques of comparison, especially in the cases of class and religion, for which she would be grateful later in her career.<sup>30</sup>

The first two articles published in 1955 were “On the Protestantism of Benoît Rigaud” and “Christophe Plantin’s Childhood at Saint Just”. Both articles (although short) discuss the roles of two men in the printing industry during the Reformation. Davis’ focus on Christophe Plantin (1520-1589) does not speak to his career as a book printer or publisher but explores his childhood experiences in the Church of Saint-Just. She chose here to focus on Plantin’s childhood as Davis believed that this time spent with this father at Saint-Just would later influence some of his cultural and religious values, and it would give life to some of the people who were involved in his childhood.<sup>31</sup> The principal source used by Davis is a letter written to Plantin by his childhood friend Pierre Porret, who had also spent considerable time at Saint Just. While religious instruction may not have been as robust might be as expected,

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<sup>28</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014) 7.

<sup>29</sup> Munslow, *A History of History* 76; Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) 8.

<sup>30</sup> Conway and Davis, “Feminism and Scholarly Friendship”, 79.

<sup>31</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Christophe Plantin’s Childhood at Saint Just”, *De Gulden Passer* 35 (1957) pp. 107-120, 107.

Plantin's interaction with the *menu peuple* who lived at Saint Just or close by, and those living in the legal and financial quarters, would have been significant.<sup>32</sup> Although Plantin had spent much of his time at Saint Just and would have future business dealings with the printers and booksellers of Lyons, he never returned there. During the uprising of 1562 Protestant soldiers organized a systematic demolition of the buildings and chapters of Saint Just.<sup>33</sup> This piece especially reflects Davis' predilection toward more quantitative research in the beginning as the article spends much of its time fleshing out the occupation and status of Christophe, his friend Pierre, and their families. The second article released the same year appears to continue to incorporate quantitative sources but in the case of Benoît Rigaud, Davis added more to the life, behaviour and feelings of the prolific printer from Lyon.

"On the Protestantism of Benoît Rigaud" examined the supposed abjuration of Rigaud from a Protestant to 'unimpeachable orthodoxy.'<sup>34</sup> Rigaud would also be one of the many examples of individuals who manoeuvred around the religious and social circumstances of his life. In 1562 a revolution broke out in Lyon, resulting in the Protestant government taking control of the city.<sup>35</sup> It was during this time that Rigaud changed his religious affiliation. Davis argues that his productions now consisted only of royal edicts and ordinances, and prior to 1562 Rigaud had not published Catholic theological or polemical works.<sup>36</sup> It appears that Rigaud had chosen to censor what he produced and released to the public as a result of the social climate. However in 1569 Rigaud regularly published Catholic devotional work in French as a justification to his 'Catholic fellow citizens.'<sup>37</sup> By the early 1580s Rigaud's publishing of Catholic works decreased and by the end of the decade he was printing work by

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<sup>32</sup> Davis, "Christophe Plantin's Childhood at Saint Just", 112.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 118.

<sup>34</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "On the Protestantism of Benoît Rigaud", *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 17 (1955) : 246-251, 250.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 248.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 245,250.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 250. See also, Natalie Zemon Davis, "The 1592 Edition of Estienne's 'Apologie pour Hérodote,' in G. Berthoud, et al. *Aspects de la propagande religieuse* (Geneva: E. Droz, 1957) pp. 373-376, 373.

Protestants of various occupations.<sup>38</sup> Moderation and some self-censorship remained however; Rigaud no longer printed heretical works or texts that demonstrated an extreme political stance. Davis attributes this ‘conversion’ not to religious motivation but to non-religious values; she argues that there was weak religious motivation behind Rigaud’s Protestant adherence and this led to anxiety when the persecutions began, along with the dark period of French history known as the Wars of Religion.<sup>39</sup> In addition to this, Rigaud had only begun to reduce the number of Catholic works that he published after he felt that there was social and political stability in the city once more. This was one of the first examples that we see where Davis has explored the psychology and sensibility of the character she studied. Rigaud’s anxiety during the Protestant uprising was clear as he self-censored his publications and he himself was not a devoutly religious person. Davis captured how someone in the artisanal milieu navigated and protected themselves and their business from persecution and bankruptcy.

Continuing her investigation of the printing workers, Davis would discover that the behaviour of Benoît Rigaud was, in fact, fairly typical. In her 1957 article “The Protestant Printing Workers of Lyons in 1551” Davis investigates the religious life of these workers to provide insight on issues of the Reformation. This article should be considered as the prelude to “Strikes and Salvations”, an article that Davis would publish in 1965. The Protestant workers that are examined here however participated in the customary singing of the Psalms through the streets of Lyon.<sup>40</sup> This custom was banned in a royal edict, but the printing workers continued to sing their Psalms in the streets; sometimes violence accompanied this group behaviour. The association of armed printing workers, strikes, and pillaging caused

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 251.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 251.

<sup>40</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Protestant Printing Workers of Lyons in 1551”, in G. Berthoud, et al., eds., *Aspects de la propagande religieuse* (Geneva: E. Droz, 1957) : 247-257, 247.

fear both in Catholic and Reformed circles.<sup>41</sup> The primary source used for Davis' argument is a letter written by Claude Baudel, a Protestant who had lived in Lyon during 1551. Davis highlights Baudel's feelings of anxiety about the potential danger to his life, the lives of those in his flock, and concerns about matters of order and property.<sup>42</sup> There was public anxiety also. These public demonstrations by the printing workers reinforced the stereotype of the lower class using religion as a pretext for the illegal acquisition of goods and that Protestantism offered the possibility of sacking the rich.<sup>43</sup> However, Davis argues that to assume that the Protestant printing workers were all involved in some level of violence and unrest is a serious oversight. The assembly of the large group singing the Psalms in the streets would serve a similar function for the Protestant printing workers. It would reinforce the sense of belonging created by the custom.<sup>44</sup>

In 1959 Davis submitted her dissertation "Protestantism and the Printing Workers of Lyon" to the committee at the University of Michigan. At a lecture held in 1997, Davis reflected on how her dissertation had been shaped by isolation from the traditional academic communities that concerned themselves with religious history, and how this had allowed her to develop her own view.<sup>45</sup> She expressed that,

Reformation studies in the 1950s were still primarily conducted as confessional history: Protestants wrote about Protestantism; Catholics about Catholicism [...] these writings told the story from one point of view.<sup>46</sup>

Since Davis was Jewish she was able to portray both Catholic and Protestant figures, processes and frameworks without taking sides. However, Davis did see her subjects through a different lens, that of class: she acknowledges that she had been influenced largely by Marx

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 248.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 249.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 250.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 251.

<sup>45</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 11.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 10.

and Weber and had rooted for “the people” and for “progressive” movements that favoured literacy.<sup>47</sup> Her dissertation was essentially an accumulation of the articles Davis had released thus far: the social, economic, psychological and political justification of Protestation and Catholic behaviour.<sup>48</sup> The dissertation addresses the social and occupational portraits of male Protestants and how they positioned themselves during the French Reformation.<sup>49</sup> One of the conclusions, which would become a common theme in her publications of the 1960s, was that religious ‘enemies’ often became allies when it came to the striking printers and efforts toward systems of welfare. Although Davis claims that she would most likely reformulate some of these conclusions today, she stands behind the social, cultural and psychological engagements she made with the *menu peuple* of sixteenth-century Lyon.<sup>50</sup> While much of Davis’ early work as a young graduate student was social history in the traditional sense, she was continually working to investigate the actual lived experiences of peoples in the past. After graduating from the University of Michigan, Davis would shift how she approached the problems of the French Reformation and would begin to rethink notions of validation, behaviour and justification when observing how her subjects navigated their social, economic and political situations.

### **The 1960s: A Social History of the *menu peuple***

The 1960s would define and shape Natalie Zemon Davis as a scholar, educator, wife, and historian. As noted above, her husband, Chandler, had been sentenced to prison for six months for his support and suspected membership to the Communist Party of America.<sup>51</sup> His position as a mathematics professor at the University of Michigan had been terminated as a

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Protestantism and the Printing Workers of Lyon: A Study in the Problem of Religion and Social Class During the Reformation” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing: University of Michigan, 1959) pp. 1-621, 20.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 144.

<sup>50</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 9.



result of his arrest. Chandler was released in 1960 to return to Davis and their three young children. The silver lining for Davis, other than her husband's release, was the return of her passport.<sup>52</sup> In another exciting turn of events, Chandler had been offered a tenure-track position in the mathematics department at the University of Toronto. In 1962 Davis, Chandler and their children emigrated to Canada. Soon after their relocation Davis obtained a position teaching at the same institution in the Department of Political Economy.<sup>53</sup> Not long after her arrival in Toronto, Davis met James Kelsey McConica, a Catholic priest and former history professor at the University of Saskatchewan. The pair shared their research and findings with one another, and discussed the wealth of knowledge and expertise in Renaissance and Reformation studies across the departments and colleges of the University of Toronto and in the surrounding area; however, Davis and McConica only knew a handful of these scholars, while others were just names.<sup>54</sup> Davis then asked, "Why not try to bring people together in an interdisciplinary colloquium, to learn of each other's research and to establish an enduring network of communication in our part of Ontario?"<sup>55</sup> With McConica and editorial assistant, Germaine Warkentin, the peer-reviewed, bilingual journal *Renaissance and Reformation* came to fruition in 1964. Davis observed that she helped to found the journal for two reasons: to create an interdisciplinary scholarly community in Ontario, and to develop primary sources that could enrich research and teaching when one was distanced from the libraries and archives of Europe – much as she herself had been just a few short years prior.<sup>56</sup>

When Davis first began to teach economic history at the University of Toronto she introduced a section on women in the labour force. However, women and notions of gender

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, James McConica and Germaine Warkentin, "Calling the World to Come and Share our Finds: Three Memoirs and Some Highlights from the Founding of Renaissance and Reformation", *Renaissance and Reformation, Renaissance et Réforme* 37:3 (2014): 53-68, 55.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 53.

were not at the centre of her teaching – yet. Women would enter Davis’ writing and teaching as recipients of poor relief in sixteenth-century France, but not as actors of change or resistance.<sup>57</sup> While Davis’ work in the 1970s and onward shows a clear predilection toward including women at the centre of things, her articles throughout the 1960s focused on the male actors of the *menu peuple*. Women’s history had not yet emerged at this time and the following chapter will indicate Davis’ transition to include women in her sphere of interest. The mid-60s would however present more feminist questions at the centre of Davis’ activism. In an interview with former colleague Jill Ker Conway (1934-2018), Davis explains that she clearly saw the struggle of women in the graduate program and within professional circles at the University of Toronto. Davis recalls how a male colleague at the university would refer to all the men in the department as professor or Dr. and her as ‘Mrs’.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Davis often found herself as the only woman in her department or part of a small group of female lecturers and assistants.<sup>59</sup> As a result of this, in 1966 Davis and her female colleagues submitted a report titled “A Study of 42 Women Who Have Children and Who Are in Graduate Programs at the University of Toronto” to the administration.<sup>60</sup> The report proposed flexible schedules and extended library hours for women with children and to have an on-campus day-care centre.<sup>61</sup> The goal was to accommodate women who were attempting to balance their responsibilities to their studies, marriage and children. There was no response. The following chapter of this thesis “*Society and Culture, Women and Anthropology: The 1970s and 1980s*” will further explore the growth of the women’s movement at the University of Toronto, writing women into history, and Davis’ obvious and leading role within this social and academic shift.

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<sup>57</sup> Davis, “Feminism and a Scholarly Friendship” 79.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

This section intends to examine the shift in Davis' writing and how her engagement with social history was at its peak. I also want to argue that her writing in the mid-1960s is very much anticipatory of her current work, despite her clear social-history methodology and geographical emphasis on France. Until the late 1960s Davis' historical research and publication on sixteenth-century France was primarily focused on the lower classes where she observed resistance movements, prototypical "trade union" activity, social welfare and popular beliefs.<sup>62</sup> As in the previous decade, Davis did not release a book and instead published a number of articles. After she had finished her dissertation in 1959 she began to rethink the significance of social class. Davis realized that understanding class consciousness required a more multi-dimensional view of society, rather than continuing to focus on class determinism.<sup>63</sup> It will be evident from the 1960s articles that she developed a more complex understanding of Protestantism and the Reformation than she had previously. Exploring this complexity Davis turned to Eric Hobsbawm, Charles Tilly, and E.P. Thompson. Charles Tilly, a sociologist by training but with a strong interest in social history, offered pioneering work in the 1960s on collective violence and the social composition of crowds, Eric Hobsbawm validated social banditry and millenarianism in *Primitive Rebels*, and E.P. Thompson explored working class consciousness in his seminal book, *The Making of the English Working Class*.<sup>64</sup> Although she would fully explore the concept of misrule in the 1970s, Davis was already beginning to engage with ideas of group behaviour, justification and violence and this is evident in the articles she wrote in throughout the 60s. The first

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 79. The term trade union is a modern 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> c. conception. They would have called it a "Company" (*compagnonnage*) in French. Davis' argument is that this affiliation group of printer journeymen from Lyon resembles a modern trade union, not that it literally was one.

<sup>63</sup> Adelson, 414.

<sup>64</sup> See Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective", in *The History of Violence in America: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence*, eds. Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr (New York: New York Times Company, 1969) pp. 4-45, 13. Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester: The University Press, 1959) 13-16. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1965) 10.

article, “Sixteenth-Century French Arithmetics on Business Life” (1960) considers this complexity but is largely written in the same style as her earlier articles from the ‘50s. However, “The Good Name of Martin Ponthus” published in the same year, and “Peletier and Beza Part Company” (1964) capture a more *human* element to these social histories. The articles that followed “Strikes and Salvation at Lyons” (1965), “A Trade Union in Sixteenth-Century France” (1966), “Publisher Guillaume Rouille, Businessman and Humanist” (1966), “Gregory Nazianzen in the Service of Humanist Social Reform” (1967) and “Poor Relief, Humanism, and Hersey: The Case of Lyon” (1968) reflect Davis’ desire to continue to write social history while also considering other avenues of methodology such as anthropology and ethnographic studies.

Perhaps inspired by her husband’s mathematical interests, one the first articles published after Davis’ dissertation concerned sixteenth-century French arithmetic. This article bridges Davis’ new direction toward social history and her previous influence of Marxism. Here Davis explores the defense of business life against religious and secular criticism. She argues business played an important role in the history of ideas and was a major factor in the development of capitalism during the sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>65</sup> Religious criticism grew out of the concern of immoral behaviour. For a business man to be considered a good Christian, he had to demonstrate that buying, selling, lending and investing money was done with morally sound motives.<sup>66</sup> In secular circles, the *homme d’affaires* would have to uphold the same commitment to impeccable morals. A commercial arithmetic could be associated with the social elite of France. This, however, was dependent on morals and motives. On one hand, the commercial arithmetic evoked strong

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<sup>65</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Sixteenth-Century French Arithmetics on the Business Life”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 21 No. 1 (January-March 1960) pp. 18-48, 18. Davis had also explored a similar topic in her article, “Mathematicians in the Sixteenth-Century French Academies: Some Further Evidence” (1958)

<sup>66</sup> Davis, “Sixteenth-Century French Arithmetics on the Business Life”, 18, 21.

emotions about business and was labelled as ‘vile’ or ‘low’ for their impairment by commerce and banking.<sup>67</sup> This view, consistent with traditional ideas about nobility, argued that it was incompatible with business activity. However, business activity could bring glorification and an honourable reputation. This prestige was rewarded if the businessman consciously wished to improve the reputation and productivity of the business for which he worked.<sup>68</sup> Eventually, commercial applications of arithmetic became increasingly popular and were among the most commonly printed material for the technical instruction of the seventeenth-century French merchant and banker.<sup>69</sup> This well-established genre covered mathematical subjects such as instructions on usual activities and relationships of business, profit and loss, and rules of exchange and banking. Non-mathematical material was also frequently printed; arithmetic literature would also advise on how to draw up bills of exchange and descriptions of credit customs in different European cities.<sup>70</sup> While this article’s subject matter appears economically-centred, it is very much written from the perspective of social history. It is typical for the social historian to sympathize with the working class and in Davis’ case, the *menu peuple*. Davis’ investigation into the printed work of commercial arithmetics allows for an understanding of the attitude toward, and status of business life in relation to capitalism, secularism and religion.

In the same year as her arithmetic article Davis wrote an interesting piece on Martin Ponthus. Although not her first essay on an individual intellectual character it does however seem to be one of the first cases of her using speculative language. In the present-day Davis is well known for her use of speculation as she interprets evidence; most famously (and controversially) in her book *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983). I will address this further in

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 20.

the second chapter but her investigation here of Ponthus does contain striking similarities to her later work on Martin Guerre. In this case Davis explores the reputation of Ponthus after he was named in a scandalous statement by Catholic lawyer of Lyons, Claude de Rubys. Rubys had suggested that Ponthus had an adulterous affair with Queen Marguerite of Navarre.<sup>71</sup> Davis defends the newly married merchant and his unlikely role in the affair. Ponthus had been elected to rector of the Aumône-Générale, a welfare organization in Lyon in 1558.<sup>72</sup> Davis investigates Aumône-Générale as a source of poor relief in France in her later articles so I do not intend to explain the organization here. As rector Ponthus would have had the responsibilities of raising, training and protection the male and female orphans of Lyon. Davis questions the candidacy of Ponthus as rector to this important charity if he had engaged in ‘immoral behaviour’. The responsibilities asked of the rector were great and the position itself was one of prestige. This alone was reason for Davis’ scepticism. Davis instead proposes a few different possibilities for this case of mistaken identity. First, the likelihood of Ponthus being in the area at the time was unlikely. Ponthus and his brother François were among the Protestants suffering economic persecution after the outbreak of the Second Religious War (1567-8).<sup>73</sup> François was murdered in 1572 and Davis suggests that Ponthus was either not in the city or had escaped by luck. The second possibility is that Rubys had been moved by religious partisanship and had fabricated the episode.<sup>74</sup> The last possibility that Davis proposes is that Rubys had mistaken the street which the guilty merchant had lived on and confused this with Ponthus.<sup>75</sup> Although Davis considers various possibilities in the defence of Ponthus, she acknowledges that she is still left without certainty.

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<sup>71</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Good Name of Martin Ponthus”, *Bibliothèque d’humanisme et renaissance*, Vol. 22 No. 2 (1960) pp. 287-293, 287, 292.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 288.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 291.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 292.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 293.

The investigation of Martin Ponthus focused on the complexity of the individual – his status, nature and place in society as a Protestant. Davis has since kept her attention on the human element of her characters. Social, religious and intellectual frameworks become secondary to the story of the people. The 1964 article “Peletier and Beza Part Company” is a clear example of how a story of a sixteenth-century friendship can overlay the more traditional framework that had dominated much of 1950s social history. The article examines the friendship and misunderstandings between two former best friends, Jacques Peletier and Theodore Beza, the latter soon to be a major disciple of Jean Calvin. Davis wanted to discuss the emotional and intellectual problems that were faced by humanist and reformers alike.<sup>76</sup> The majority of Davis’ work during the remainder of the 1960s concerns this crossover between social history and psychology. Peletier was a humanist who had worked on a number of intellectual ‘reform’ projects during the 1547-8. His work tackled spelling, literary style and mathematics. Davis notes that Peletier was particularly sensitive to rejection and did not care for opinions that criticized his projects – especially in the case of spelling reform.<sup>77</sup> Beza, on the other hand was unsure whether to be a traditional humanist or a reformer with humanist training. His religious and humanist interests were often a source of tension for the duo. Beza had hoped to gain recognition for publishing his *Poemata* and Peletier had encouraged his friend’s seemingly bright career and admired him greatly.<sup>78</sup> However in October of 1548, without so much as a goodbye, Beza departed for Geneva. Peletier remained behind in France shocked and searching for clues to explain why his friend had left so abruptly. Davis uses the works that were subsequently published by the two men to reveal the dissolution of their former friendship.

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<sup>76</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Peletier and Beza Part Company”, *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol. 11 (1964): 188-222, 189.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 191-192.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

Peletier had dedicated *The Arithmetic* to Beza. Davis speculates that Peletier would have thought this testimony to their friendship would be reason enough for Beza to return back to France.<sup>79</sup> This was not the case. In a series of letters, Beza had publicly ridiculed Peletier's proposals for spelling reform. Davis proposes that although Peletier and Beza had previously disagreed on spelling reform, Peletier would not have minded the banter between the two but Beza would have known of his sensitivity to criticism and knowingly recognized that this would hurt Peletier.<sup>80</sup> The third edition of *The Arithmetic* removed all mention of Beza. In 1555 Peletier had ignored Beza where it would have been natural to mention him in *Art Poétique*; he went as far as to cite other intellectuals whose work he had not read in place of Beza.<sup>81</sup> Nearly a decade after Beza's departure, Davis concludes that perhaps Peletier had by now accepted the betrayal of his friend in letters where he described 'fair-weather' friends who care more about status than their virtue.<sup>82</sup> In this article Davis has located the emotions, personality and the individuals themselves amongst the larger context of the Reformation. There were obvious overlaps as Davis claims that the fear of persecution played a role in Peletier's movements during 1549 and 1552 and influenced some of his work too. In Peletier's *Orthography* he attacked priests, but in a way that would have been acceptable to both Protestants and pre-Reformation Erasmian humanists.<sup>83</sup> This idea of manoeuvring oneself within one's subjects lives and writings is something we will see in Davis' later work, first with Bertrande and later Leo Africanus. This article indeed, marked a moment in which Davis has begun to define herself as the historian of *people* rather than of larger processes and structures, and as a scholar who would describe her subjects in ways that made them relatable and, seemingly, less distant despite the gap of centuries.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 212.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 215.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 220.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 207, 209.



The next series of essays written by Davis were in the tradition of classic social history. While “Strikes and Salvation” and “A Trade Union in Sixteenth-Century France” were later republished in Davis’ *Society and Culture* (1975), they belong chronologically to her 1960s scholarship. I think it is important to keep these articles in the context of when they were first written as Davis was still in the Political Economy department at the University of Toronto. In a 2012 piece “Writing ‘The Rites of Violence’ and Afterward” Davis reflects on the inspiration of these social articles and what she had hoped to achieve when writing them. She expressed that,

In the years before 1972, I was figuring out how to combine classic social history with descriptive and semiotic approaches that I had learned from reading cultural anthropology, ethnography and literary criticism.<sup>84</sup>

Her investigation of Martin Ponthus, Peletier and Beza are clear examples of how Davis had begun to incorporate other disciplines to aid her social and historical analysis. For the remainder of the 1960s Davis hoped to connect patterns of experience and the adoption of social identities, aspirations and religious belief.<sup>85</sup> These patterns of subjective *experience* are reflected in patterns of recorded *behaviour* – social, political, and religious and in the reasons justifying this behaviour. With these factors at the forefront of her analysis it allowed her to continue to develop her original assumption that interactions between Protestantism and Catholicism was more complex than previously thought. With respect to Davis’ remaining output during the 1960s—itsself an increasing time of political turmoil, especially in the United States - I will I want to treat “Strikes and Salvation” and “Publisher Guillaume

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<sup>84</sup> Davis, “Writing the ‘Rites of Violence’ and Afterward”, 8.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

Rouille” together as they each concern the printing industry.<sup>86</sup> “A Trade Union” will be discussed separately but also as an expansion on the concept of solidarity of the printer journeymen from “Strikes and Salvation”. The last two articles “Gregory Nazianzen” and “Poor Relief” will be combined together as they both deal with similar themes of welfare reform and the ‘war on poverty.’

“Strikes and Salvation” explores the printer journeymen of sixteenth-century Lyon. It is not just an examination of the printing industry but looks collectively at those who lived during, but were not actively involved in, the Reformation. Davis uses Guillaume Rouille as an individual example to show how someone could live during the Reformation, and react to it without becoming an active participant either in favour of or opposed to reform. While Rouille was not a printer but rather a merchant publisher, of a higher social standing, Davis investigates the genre of books he published during this time to explore the effects, if any, that the Reformation had on him. Despite Rouille being a relative newcomer to the world of publishing, he marshalled capital right away.<sup>87</sup> Davis attributes this to Rouille’s good fortune that his in-laws had purchased a paper mill, allowing him unlimited access to the single most expensive item at the time.<sup>88</sup> This access allowed Rouille to grow his business quickly; in his first year he had published eight books and by his fifth year he had published forty-six. Davis praises Trouville’s expertise, claiming that few could match his involvement in editing, correcting and illustration.<sup>89</sup> While Rouille had published books about law, medicine, botany,

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<sup>86</sup> Two prominent movements in the United States were the Civil rights movement (1954-1968) and the response to the Vietnam War (1964-73). Across the U.S. there was a growing sentiment among Americans against the deployment of American troops and involvement in the war. In 1966 March 26<sup>th</sup>, approximately 200,000 protestors attended anti-Vietnam war protests around the world. For additional reading on student activism and experience on U.S. college campuses see Helen L. Horowitz, “The 1960s and the Transformation of Campus Cultures” *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 1986): 1-38 and Philip G. Altbach and Robert Cohen, “American Student Activism: The Post-Sixties Transformation” in *The Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb., 1990): 32-49.

<sup>87</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Publisher Guillaume Rouillé, Businessman and Humanist”, in R. J. Schoeck, ed., *Editing Sixteenth-Century Texts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966): 72-112, 76.

<sup>88</sup> Davis, “Publisher Guillaume Rouillé, Businessman and Humanist”, 73.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

pure mathematics and some translated literary work by Boccaccio, Dante and Petrarch, there was little indication as to his religious allegiance.<sup>90</sup> Davis observed a notable rise in Rouille's publication of sacred texts during the 1540s and 1550s; during those two decades he had printed nineteen Bibles and New Testaments, fifteen in the vernacular.<sup>91</sup> Yet, Davis argued, this was not necessarily an indication of support for Protestantism: any religious work that Rouille published was done so for business reasons. Davis contended that this was a reflection of his situation in Lyon; most of his colleagues and partners were Protestants and it was a matter of appealing to a paying audience. Rouille did not work exclusively with Protestants; in fact, he would often wait through periods of plague and religious persecution to work with particular authors.<sup>92</sup> As it was difficult to relate Rouille's religious interests, and he becomes the example of someone who lived during the Reformation but remained separate from it. Rouille also provides a contrast with Benoît Rigaud from Davis' 1955 article, discussed above. Rigaud was not an active participant in the Reformation but he had carefully manipulated his publishing, which included instances of judicious self-censorship, while Rouille's experience appears to have been far more removed from the anxieties of either persecution or bankruptcy.

While the case of Rouille as the businessman and merchant used an individual example, "Strikes and Salvation" focuses on group behaviour and reaction. In this 1965 article, Davis chose to explore the problems in the printing industry for the printer journeymen and how this was tied to the changing religious life in Lyon.<sup>93</sup> Much like Rigaud and Rouille, the printer journeymen were tied to the Reformation habitually but their behaviour responded to personal and vocational rather than religious needs. For these

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 77-85.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>93</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Strikes and Salvation at Lyons", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, Vol. 56 (1965): 48-64, 50, 57.

reasons, Davis considered the relations between ‘social forces’ and Reformation in the city. She defines ‘social forces’ into two groups: the first refers to how circumstances or an event can shape a man’s attitude, and the second refers to the specific goals a man consciously adopts in regard to his job and the steps he needs to take to achieve these goals.<sup>94</sup> Throughout Davis’ article it appears that the printer journeymen responded principally to the second type of ‘social forces.’ The printer journeymen belonged to a relatively new trade with few traditions.<sup>95</sup> The trade brought a sense of confidence and pride; printing was seen as valuable to Christian society and over half of the printer journeymen had at least a basic ability to read and write.<sup>96</sup> This self-confidence brought success and consequences. The printer journeymen were among the highest paid workers in Lyon but felt uneasy about their position to their masters.<sup>97</sup> This was the ‘social force’ that would provoke them to strike. Collectively the printer journeymen formed the secular group the company of *Griffains* to both position and protect themselves against repercussions for striking behaviour. Davis expands on the demands and the tactics used by the *Griffains* in her later article “A Trade Union.” (1966) In this earlier article Davis focused on the notion of solidarity between the journeymen printers and how their actions within the industry were not an isolated result of religious agitation.

“A Trade Union in Sixteenth-Century France” examines the secular demands of the printer journeymen during 1539 and 1570. While Davis’ earlier 1957 article “The Protestant Printing Workers of Lyons in 1551” had focused on those that marched publicly in the streets chanting Psalms, this group’s behaviour was quite different. Davis’ interest in the 1950s about the *menu peuple* had grown out of Henri Hauser’s earlier work on gain riots, printing strikes and the Protestant uprising of 1562; in this 1966 article, however, she reveals some

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<sup>94</sup> Davis, “Strikes and Salvation at Lyons”, 48, 50. See also Charles Tilly, *Measuring Political Upheaval* (Center of International Studies: Princeton University, 1965) 9-10.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 50, 53. Very few would become master printers as one type press could cost an entire year’s salary.

scepticism toward Hauser's conclusions. Davis argues that while Hauser had provided an overview of what the organization behind these workers could have been like, much of his argument was vitiated by new evidence that had emerged since his own time.<sup>98</sup> The members of the company were cited in government edicts or master complaints; these documents often omitted legal and charitable activities, initiation and special oaths that were taken by members.<sup>99</sup> Davis turned to information about the lives of the 'ordinary' and individual printer from their perspective. The first sign of the company had been a series of restless street fights in 1514 but within twenty years the Company had become a large disciplined organization.<sup>100</sup> As discussed previously, the main source for this striking behaviour was labour and economic agitation, not religious impulses. For context, the population of Lyon was continuing to increase and the city was becoming more cosmopolitan; this brought an increasing demand for books as religious and intellectual circles also grew.<sup>101</sup> Until the 1570s master printers had stood with their journeymen printers and merchant publishers. By this time, however, despite the ever-growing demand for books, the master printers believed that their profit margin was too small and began to view the printer journeymen as a financial burden, attempting to replace them with unpaid apprentices.<sup>102</sup> The situation became more turbulent as the sense of pride and confidence that the printer journeyman had acquired began to fuel resentment. A number of journeymen were literate and printing was also a physically demanding job, requiring physical stamina. With three to four men to a press it also required teamwork and discipline, and printing shops would often run from 2am to 10pm.<sup>103</sup> With master printers attempting to reduce labour costs with unpaid apprenticeships the journeymen

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<sup>98</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "A Trade Union in Sixteenth-Century France", *Economic History Review*, Vol. 19 No. 1 (1966): 48-69, 49.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 50, 51

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

printers increasingly felt underappreciated and further removed from responsibility and management of the shop, alienated in their relationship with their superiors, and underpaid for their labour.<sup>104</sup>

When the journeymen chose to strike, they did so not individually and chaotically but by way of a cohesive group decision. Membership within the company included men of wide experience and facilitated labour unity between Protestants and Catholics in the group.<sup>105</sup> The solidarity of the *Griffains* was enhanced by secret oaths and initiation ceremonies. A member joined the company at a closed ceremony during which one was ‘passed’ after taking an oath on a dagger; this was open to most but relatives and those who had been apprenticed at the shop were strongly encouraged to join.<sup>106</sup> The strength of the company depended on the power of the strike. If a journeyman felt wronged by the master, whether a member had been unjustly fired or because of wages, the printer would ask the master to reconsider three times. If the master did not change his mind then the printer would signal to the other workers and the whole shop would walk out; any apprentice who refused to comply would be beaten until he did.<sup>107</sup> Strikes most frequently occurred when a fellow printer had been fired and when the demand for days off were denied. Due to the physical labour of the press the printers would demand a day off every two to three weeks; they were not, however, asking for shortened work hours.<sup>108</sup> The organization the journeymen in Lyon was based on camaraderie and pride rather than religious affiliation.

The last two articles I want to discuss are “Gregory Nazianzen” (1967) and “Poor Relief” (1968) since they both deal with similar themes of welfare reform and the ‘war on poverty.’ Building on the mention of the welfare organization. Aumône-Générale from her

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>105</sup> Davis, “Strikes and Salvation”, 54. Davis, “A Trade Union in Sixteenth-Century France”, 56.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 58, 60.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 53.

earlier article “The Good Name of Martin Ponthus” (1964) Davis continued her qualitative approach. In 1539 Sebastien Gryphius, a prominent humanist printer of Lyon had published the French translation of a sermon by the fourth-century bishop St. Gregory Nazianzen.<sup>109</sup> Davis argues that the printing of this sermon stood in stark contrast to the situation in Lyon at the time. The sermon expresses Gregory’s love, support and caring of the poor.<sup>110</sup> In Lyon, however, poverty and illness in the 1530s was becoming an unsightly crisis. Poverty was not concealed, it poured into the streets with begging, noise, crime, the threat of disease and rioting.<sup>111</sup> Davis believed that the appeal of the sermon which had encouraged the care of the poor was used to promote the Aumône-Générale as a system of poor-relief.<sup>112</sup> Gryphius’ publication of the sermon is another example of how publishing particular materials could be used to manipulate circumstances. The sermon became a justification for funding the Aumône-Générale and for satisfying humanist interests for amending the disorder and ‘ugliness’ in the city.<sup>113</sup>

By now a member of the History Department at the University of Toronto, Davis published “Poor-Relief, Humanism, and Heresy: The Case of Lyon” in 1968. For this article Davis hoped to use her evidence from Lyon to rethink the directions of Marx and Weber in the case of whether Protestantism was the “sole mother” of new forms of welfare.<sup>114</sup> Davis has noted that she was drawn to cases of welfare at this time of American debate regarding President Lyndon Johnson’s ‘war on poverty.’<sup>115</sup> As in our previous examples, Lyon remained a unique and interesting case in the 1530s since it was a Catholic city with a

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<sup>109</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Gregory Nazianzen in the Service of Humanist Social Reform”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 20 No. 4 (Winter 1967) pp. 455-464, 455.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 459.

<sup>111</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Poor Relief, Humanism and Heresy: The Case of Lyon”, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, Vol. 5 (1968): 217-275, 224-226.

<sup>112</sup> Davis, “Gregory Nazianzen in the Service of Humanist Social Reform”, 457, 459.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 456.

<sup>114</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 12.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

cosmopolitan and growing population, humanist intellectual activity and a small but identifiable Protestant movement.<sup>116</sup> The humanist enterprise in Lyon was important as it was responsible for many of the poor-relief initiatives, particularly that of the Aumône-Générale. Humanists Jean de Vauzelles and Pagnini of Lucca illustrated an activist and socially conscious side to Christian humanism.<sup>117</sup> Poverty was not exclusive to the growing population of immigrants. Lyon natives, skilled and unskilled men were impacted just as affected by poverty.<sup>118</sup> A table that Davis cited as part of her investigation indicates that seventy-seven families (where the husband of the family was still alive) had been added to relief rolls during a fifteen month period in the 1530s.<sup>119</sup> Poor economic effects were also detrimental to public health. During the same period 334 people in poverty entered Hôtel-Dieu for ailments other than the plague and more than thirty percent died there as a result.<sup>120</sup>

Vauzelles and Pagnini founded the Aumône-Générale as a solution in their own ‘war on poverty.’ The goal of the welfare organization, Aumône-Générale, was to eliminate death as a result of starvation and to eliminate the need for begging in the city.<sup>121</sup> As they were both humanists, Vauzelles and Pagnini promoted education programs in the name of social rehabilitation with a focus on vagrant children.<sup>122</sup> Boys were taught to read and write, some girls were given this opportunity too, and most male orphans were apprenticed to artisans.<sup>123</sup> This idea behind educating the youth was that this would break the pattern of poverty and introduce them into trade or some sort of vocation. The number of children in the streets did, in fact, dramatically decrease.<sup>124</sup> The progress of the poor-relief initiative is especially

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<sup>116</sup> Davis, “Poor Relief, Humanism and Heresy: The Case of Lyon”, 221-222.

<sup>117</sup> Davis, “Gregory Nazianzen in the Service of Humanist Social Reform”, 462.

<sup>118</sup> Davis, “Poor Relief, Humanism and Heresy: The Case of Lyon”, 222.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 223.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 224, 227.

<sup>121</sup> Davis, “Gregory Nazianzen in the Service of Humanist Social Reform”, 459.

<sup>122</sup> Davis, “Poor Relief, Humanism and Heresy: The Case of Lyon”, 246, 265.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 247.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 255.



interesting as it was a combined effort by Catholics and Protestants. The coalition for welfare reform was not necessarily a united front and there were clearly defined parties, but it was a cooperative initiative undertaken by members of rival confessions for the greater good of ridding the city of begging, disease and poverty.<sup>125</sup> In this case study of Lyon Davis was able to weave together sixteenth-century business values with Christian humanist beliefs and sensibilities. She expresses that what is most significant is how despite a variety of personal religious views, Aumône-Générale survived the religious wars – a tribute to the strength and validation behind the coalition in which it was founded.<sup>126</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how Davis first began her journey as a historian. Her political and social activism on campus during her undergraduate and graduate studies only further fueled her passion for history. After the loss of her passport following only six months of archival research in Lyon, Davis had to rethink her approach to sources. This led to the combined research of archival material and the early printed books from rare book libraries which allowed Davis to integrate elements of cultural history, anthropology and ethnography into her social methodology. Much of Davis' need to manoeuvre within the worlds of scholarship, marriage, and motherhood is reflected in the work she published in the 1950s and 1960s. There are many individual and group cases of how printer journeymen, humanists, and other Protestant men had to adapt to their social, economic and political setting. The following chapter will continue our discussion of Davis' work on the French printing industry but with a shift in focus toward her explorations of misrule, group and individual behaviour, and the role of women in and of the Reformation.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 239.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 266, 267.

## Chapter 2

### ***Society and Culture, Women and Anthropology: The 1970s and 1980s***

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will explore a few central themes that appeared in Davis' publications during the 1970s and the 1980s, including crowd behaviour, violence, women, and storytelling. I will argue that it is during this period that Davis made a decisive transition from her earlier work in the 1950s and 1960s, - which focused on class consciousness, to a gender-based approach that focused on the consciousness of women. It is important to recognize the context of Davis' writing during these years as it framed much of her content, as noted in the previous chapter. The first section of this chapter will address how the growth of Women's movements in Canada and international second-wave feminism influenced the field of history and Davis' approach to exploring issues of gender and the sexes. Additional topics that Davis spent much of the early 1970s addressing was community, social commentary and group behaviour. Although Davis explored elements of anthropology in "Reasons of Misrule" (1972) she began to integrate work from scholars such as Clifford Geertz, Sidney Mintz and Victor Turner in the 1980s. During this time Davis produced two books, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983) and *Fiction in the Archives* (1987), in which she investigates performative and storytelling aspect of early modern culture. While the previous chapter spoke to Davis as a social historian who was beginning to dabble in cultural history, the 1970s and 1980s saw her become a more interdisciplinary scholar influenced variously by nascent gender-theory, by cultural anthropology, by literature and film, and by legal studies.

## **The 1970s: The Rise of Women's History**

Women's movements during the 1970s and 1980s in Canada and the United States prompted a shift in historical scholarship and writing.<sup>1</sup> Second-wave feminism was established during the early 1970s and feminist interpretations of gender difference began to gain momentum during this time.<sup>2</sup> The history of women would eventually become influenced by postmodernism during the 1980s, which aimed to establish limits to extent that gender and sex were determined by biology and physiology, and to what extent certain modes of behaviours were programmed, historically constructed and flexible in different genders.<sup>3</sup> This response encouraged new terrain for asking new questions about the status and work performed by women of the past. The increased dialogue between anthropologists, sociologists and historians has also enabled a more interdisciplinary approach to these questions. Davis would later speculate that one of the subjects that facilitated this interdisciplinary approach was the study of women.<sup>4</sup>

Women's history offers a new perspective on the past as most schemes of history have been devised without the inclusion of women.<sup>5</sup> As an agent of history, women have been virtually 'invisible' to historians in the sense that the importance of their everyday work, their political influence (at any level) has been ignored.<sup>6</sup> The 'invisible woman' is not a new concept. As we saw in the previous chapter, feminist questions for Davis were not at the centre of her research – and this was typical of more traditional approaches to social history.

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<sup>1</sup> I am choosing to focus on North America rather than a global trend as Davis held academic positions in Canada and in the United States during this period.

<sup>2</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis and Jill Ker Conway, "The Rest of the Story", *The New York Times Magazine* (16 May 1999) pp. 80-85, 85. For additional context see Veronica Strong-Boag, "Women's Movements in Canada: 1960-85", *The Canadian Encyclopaedia* (September 12, 2016)

<sup>3</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003): Achievements and the Challenges Ahead", *Pedrales. Revista d'història Moderna*, 22 (2002): pp.15-28, 22. See also, Marianne H. Marchand and Jane L. Parpart, "Exploding the Canon: An Introduction/Conclusion" in *Feminism/Postmodernism/Development*, eds. Jane L. Parpart and Marianna H. Marchand, 1-23 (London: Routledge, 1995)

<sup>4</sup> Davis, "The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003)", 16.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

Frantz Fanon, the Martinique-based influential early proponent of post-colonial studies, once suggested that the colonial settlers had been self-conscious agents who create the totality of history; colonized men and women who are the subjects of history, in contrast, are condemned to immobility and silence.<sup>7</sup> However Joan Scott, a leading historian of women, gender and feminist theory, argues that a re-writing of this history is the solution for casting women not as a subject but as an active agent of history.<sup>8</sup> Though she herself quickly abandoned it, Scott continues to maintain that “her-story” (as 1970s-vintage women’s history is sometimes called) has had a significant impact on historical scholarship. There is too much evidence regarding the lives, expressions, ideas, experiences and action of women to adhere to an argument that claims that women have been inactive and invisible in historical events.<sup>9</sup>

There are, however, some risks to re-writing women into the centre of history. Scott warns of three of these: the conflation of the woman’s experience and the positive assessment of everything the woman did or said, and the isolation of the woman as special or separate in history.<sup>10</sup> The debate of how to write women’s history is not new. Female historians such as Louise Tilly and Joan Scott have emphasized the similarities and the achievements of women within traditionally male fields, while other writers such as Carol Smith-Rosenberg have stressed their moral, ethical and practical difference.<sup>11</sup> For Davis, her stake in the debate has been,

to understand the significance of the *sexes*, of gender groups in the historical past. Our goal is to discover the range in sex roles and in sexual symbolism in different societies and periods, to find out what meaning they had and how they functioned to maintain the social order or to promote its change. Our goal is to explain why sex

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<sup>7</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004) 140. See also Robert J. C. Young, *White Mythologies* (London: Routledge, 2004) 120.

<sup>8</sup> Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 18.

<sup>9</sup> Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Davis, “The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003), 21. See also Joan Scott and Louise, *Women, Work and Family* (London: Routledge, 1978) and Carol Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America”, *The University of Chicago Press*, Vol. 1, No 1. (Autumn, 1975) pp. 1-29.

roles were sometimes tightly prescribed and sometimes fluid, sometimes markedly asymmetrical and sometimes more even.<sup>12</sup>

To view both sexes in isolation from one another tells us little about sex roles in social life and about how they are affected by historical change. By examining these social definitions of gender and sex this allows for a more conclusive view of economic and political institutions, and also of class and power.<sup>13</sup> Historians working toward re-writing women's history should be interested in both men *and* women. In addition to this, the historian should avoid "working on the subjected sex any more than a historian of class can focus entirely on peasants."<sup>14</sup> For Davis it appears to remain useful to focus on the changing relations between men and women, on gender boundaries and conceptions of what is properly masculine or feminine.<sup>15</sup>

As debate ensued and work on the subject of women was coming to fruition in North America in the early 1970s, it was also an important period for Davis' own goal of historical writing. After investigating the people of Lyon during the Protestant Reformation, Davis began to undertake the study of women within the same location and period.<sup>16</sup> One question Davis had asked herself was "what do women do when they write history?"<sup>17</sup> In this chapter we will see how Davis contributed to the historiography of women in "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820" (1980) and "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Early Modern France" (1986), and in the subsequent chapter with "Women and the World of the 'Annales,'" (1990) and *Women on the Margins* (1995). However, Davis' broader concern in the 1970s was women *in* history and she would soon publish her first works that addressed

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<sup>12</sup> Davis, "'Women's History' in Transition: The European Case", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 4 (Spring, 1976) pp. 83-103, 90.

<sup>13</sup> Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, "Women's History" in Transition", 90.

<sup>15</sup> Burke, 52.

<sup>16</sup> Davis, "The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003)", 16.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

the history of women. As mentioned above, traditional scholars insisted that there were few sources about women, consequently rendering women virtually invisible in historical accounts unless they were of high stature (queens, prominent noblewomen, and the occasional woman of learning such as Christine de Pizan, whom Davis, it will be recalled, had studied as a young scholar). However, Davis and other scholars working on this subject quickly found that there were plenty of sources not only about women but actually written by women.<sup>18</sup> Davis set three main objectives for conceptualizing women's history; first to fill the gaps in the historical record; second, to find out what women were writing and publishing (particularly focusing on women who were literate); and third, to discover how women of all levels – from queens to peasants - were participating in politics.<sup>19</sup> As the rest of this chapter will show, the history of women became a multidisciplinary subject which addressed various questions regarding the social, economic, political, biological and the psychological. These questions sought to explain women's attitudes toward gender, the contrast between what women thought and what the social system taught, prescriptions and laws about women, the relationship between behaviour and practice, and establishing the attitudes toward women and how these were different from their own.<sup>20</sup>

Davis had first demonstrated her willingness to improve the situation of women graduate students at the University of Toronto with her submission of the unanswered 1966 report to the administration. Her desire to work with women became more than just a practical matter but an intellectual one too. In response to the growing questions and the momentum of women's movements on the Toronto campus in North America, Davis allied herself with Jill Ker Conway (1934-2018). Considered a pioneer of the new history of women in the United States, Conway's research investigated the experiences and mentalities of the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 17.

first generation of American women to obtain their doctorate degrees in the last nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>21</sup> Both Davis and Conway were then Professors at the University of Toronto and together they founded the first History of Women course in Canada, and one of the first in North America.<sup>22</sup> There was no pre-existing syllabus or model to follow; the responsibility was on Davis and Conway to accumulate their material from rare book libraries and the archives.<sup>23</sup>

The graduate seminar “Society and the Sexes” was a comparative course that was broken into two sections, with Davis lecturing the first half of the course on early modern Europe, and Conway concluding the second half with women in colonial America.<sup>24</sup> Each semester would transition between the construction of gender, demography, family relations, women in economic, religious and professional roles, and the course would close with discussions of sexuality.<sup>25</sup> Using primary sources written by men and women at the time, Davis would begin the course with an excerpt from the *Malleus Maleficarum*.<sup>26</sup> This fifteenth-century book was written by Heinrich Institoris, a discredited German inquisitor who offers descriptions of the female character as an explanation for witches being predominantly female.<sup>27</sup> Davis would then have her students read Christine de Pizan’s *The Book of the City of Ladies*, to juxtapose the negative attitude toward women. As Davis was living in Canada she wanted to bring in a figure that would connect the students with the

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<sup>21</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 22. See also, Jill Ker Conway, “Coeducation and Women's Studies: Two Approaches to the Question of Woman's Place in the Contemporary University” in *Daedalus* Vol. 103, No. 4 (1974), pp. 239-249, particularly pages 240-242. Jill Ker Conway (1934-2018) became University of Toronto’s Vice-president of internal affairs in 1973. During her time in this role she implemented a pay equity program after presenting the difference in the pay of female faculty to male counterparts who had similar academic and publishing experience. In 1975 Conway became the first female president of Smith College in Massachusetts. In the same year Conway was named “Woman of the Year” by *Time* magazine. In 1989 Conway published her autobiography, *The Road From Coorain* (New York: Distributed by Random House, 1989)

<sup>22</sup> Davis, “The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003), 18.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Conway and Davis, “Feminism and a Scholarly Friendship”, 82.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, “The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003), 18.

Canadian world of women. She introduced them to Marie de L'Incarnation, a nun who had travelled to Quebec from France in the seventeenth-century to convert aboriginal women to Christianity; Davis had translated some of Marie de L'Incarnation's autobiography into English for her students.<sup>28</sup> There was an additional connection Davis wanted to share with her students. For the first time in her teaching career, Davis assigned a major text in Jewish history and she had her students read Glikl Hamel's autobiography.<sup>29</sup> It was especially important for her to introduce Jewish history, and Glikl as a Jewish merchant, as Davis had previously only mentioned Jews in her courses on French history or the Reformation when it was relevant to existing Christian narratives.<sup>30</sup> The autobiographical *Life of Glückel of Hameln, 1646-1724*, engaged with the themes of the course: marriage, family life, female religious sensibility, and women's narrative skills.<sup>31</sup> Glikl's *Life* was a success for Davis and was popular with her students. In 2019 Davis reflected on what the success and popularity of the text meant for her:

The students loved the book, and I was delighted that a Jewish figure could become a model from which we started our gender voyage rather than a marked side case. Since in those early days of teaching women's history, we were sharing our syllabi across North American, other historians learned of Glikl's text and assigned it as well. I continued to have students read Glikl in my Society and Sexes course until I retired from Princeton University in 1996.<sup>32</sup>

Glikl Hamel and Marie de L'Incarnation also appear again in-depth, as two of the main subjects of Davis' 1995 *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Women*.

Despite its existence at the infancy of women's history, the course conceptually had made several leaps. When it came to tackling questions of the subordination of women, and

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<sup>28</sup> Jessica Roitman and Karwan Fatah-Black, "“Being speculative is better than to not do it at all”: an interview with Natalie Zemon Davis" *Research Institute for History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2015): 3 – 15, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women, Jewish History, European History", *Jewish Social Studies* 24:2 (Winter 2019): 33-36, 33.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 33. The example Davis gives of when Jews were relevant to Christian narratives was Luther's attack on "the Jews and their lies".

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 34.



of the existence and impact of gender systems, Davis often taught that the domination of women was a way of upholding social systems and she regularly acknowledged Michel Foucault's similar conception and theory of power for social discipline and conformity.<sup>33</sup> Neither Davis nor Conway used a model of progress to modernity nor a narrative of decline from an aristocratic, pre-industrial, golden age.<sup>34</sup> With "Society and the Sexes" both Conway and Davis shared a double goal: to deepen European history with the inclusion of women, and to broaden the category of European women through the inclusion of people of different religions and status.<sup>35</sup>

The success of the graduate seminar was reflected in the response within academic circles. Both Davis and Conway would attend scholarly meetings on women's history expecting a few hundred people and would be greeted by 2,000 other attendees.<sup>36</sup> While "Society and the Sexes" did not prompt a strong interest in recruiting female scholars to the history department, the course syllabus and its bibliography became nationally and internationally known and were frequently drawn upon by other historians teaching in the field.<sup>37</sup> The course was unexpectedly popular and needed to be moved to a larger lecture hall to accommodate two hundred students, double than what was expected.<sup>38</sup> While Davis helped initiate change within the History Department at the University of Toronto, later that year she would face career decisions. In 1971 the History Department at the University of California at Berkeley had invited Davis to become a professor there.<sup>39</sup> The decision to leave her

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<sup>33</sup> Davis, "The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003)", 24. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences*, originally published as *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966) English edition first published in 1970 by Tavistock Publications, UK. Important to note that Foucault predated the work of Scott by a decade.

<sup>34</sup> Conway and Davis, "Feminism and a Scholarly Friendship", 84.

<sup>35</sup> Davis, "Women, Jewish History, European History", 33.

<sup>36</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 22.

<sup>37</sup> Conway and Davis, "Feminism and a Scholarly Friendship", 85.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Blackwell, "UofT Remembers Jill Ker Conway", *UofT News*, July 17 2018.

[://www.utoronto.ca/news/jill-ker-conway-trail-blazing-historian-and-feminist-was-u-t-s-first-female-vice-president](http://www.utoronto.ca/news/jill-ker-conway-trail-blazing-historian-and-feminist-was-u-t-s-first-female-vice-president)

<sup>39</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 16.

position in Toronto was not taken lightly as it required some difficult navigation in her personal and marital life. With their youngest child entering the ninth grade, Davis and her husband decided to “make a go of a commuting marriage” – and so they did for the next six years, three time zones apart.<sup>40</sup> During this time Davis’ work on women and anthropology would slowly displace her previous orientate on toward a more traditional social history. She would go on to teach “Society and the Sexes” at Berkeley, where Davis was also responsible for helping to establish a women’s studies program.<sup>41</sup> As the remainder of this chapter will show, Davis’ historical publications in the 1970s and 1980s would integrate women and gender fully into the story of her career.

Before Davis released the majority of her publications on women, however, she first continued to develop her ideas of group behaviour, popular protest and misrule. In her personal life, popular protest had become a part of her own political world in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as she was a regular participant in marches and demonstrations in Toronto and at Berkeley.<sup>42</sup> While Davis was still a faculty member at the University of Toronto she participated in a day-care sit-in in March 1970. Davis considered this demonstration her “closest encounter with disruptive action” which left her with mixed emotions.<sup>43</sup> On one hand, Davis was passionate about working with and supporting women within the university but on the other hand, she found the breach of order “quite frightening.”<sup>44</sup> Her own involvement in cases of group behaviour and protest led Davis to questions surrounding disruption and violence, and then justification of the violence. Exploring these themes, Davis published “The Reasons of Misrule” (1971) and “The Rites of Violence” (1972). Both of these articles would later be included in Davis’ first book, the essay collection *Society and*

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>41</sup> Conway and Davis, “Feminism and a Scholarly Friendship”, 85.

<sup>42</sup> Davis, “Writing the ‘Rites of Violence’ and Afterward”, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 12.

*Culture in Early Modern France* (1975) but I want to address them as they were originally published as they indicate the direction of Davis' writing following the previous chapter.

“The Reasons of Misrule” investigates the social behaviour and symbolic actions of urban and youth groups in sixteenth-century France. Although Davis was still attentive to Lyon, the Reformation, and what human subjects had said or done by way of resistance or reform, she now tried to give reason for their behaviour. In 1969 when Davis began writing “The Reasons of Misrule”, she struggled to locate the significance of customs and organizations in sixteenth-century Lyon by using her usual social history habits, only by exploring a different approach she revealed patterns of behaviour that were “baffling.”<sup>45</sup> While still at the University of Toronto Davis made her way to the anthropology section in the library, introducing herself to the work of French ethnographer and folklorist, Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957). Gennep's *Manuel de folklore français* opened Davis' thinking about rural youth groups, their masked demonstrations, and marriages in France and throughout Europe.<sup>46</sup> Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969) proposed that ritual behavior and symbolism could be used to understand social structure and processes—or, in other words, that there was a correlation between the community, social behavior and social practice.<sup>47</sup> Following the path laid by these anthropologists would lead Davis to consider the role of the carnival, the notion of the world-turned-upside-down, and community rituals such as charivari - linking these forms to crowd behaviour in religious and civic disturbances. Davis wanted to portray how festive life can both perpetuate certain values of the community while simultaneously criticizing political order.<sup>48</sup> The other mission

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 9. See also, Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 18.

<sup>46</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 18. See also, Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Reasons of Misrule: Youth-Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France”, *Past and Present*, Vol. 50 (February 1971): pp. 41-75, 49.

<sup>47</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969) For an early example of when Davis began to turn toward anthropology see Alexandra Walsham's “Rough Music and Charivari: Letters Between Natalie Zemon Davis and Edward Thompson, 1970-1972” *Past and Present*, Vol. 235 Issue 1 (2017): 243-262.

<sup>48</sup> Davis, “The Reasons of Misrule”, 41.

Davis undertook was to revise, or at least challenge, previous typologies of the carnival and of misrule. Davis argued here that the French critic, Roger Caillois' *Les jeux et les hommes* (1967) and British historian, Keith Thomas' "Work and Leisure in Pre-Industrial Society" (1964) had described the carnival as pre-political and as having the functional characteristics of primitive or pre-industrial societies.<sup>49</sup> Davis instead aligned herself with the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) who claimed that carnivals provided the people with experience of life without hierarchy and opposed the fixed categories of 'official' culture.<sup>50</sup> Further still, Davis turned to anthropologist André Varagnac and the sociologist Shmuel N. Eisenstadt on the importance of age categories and groups in the traditional rural community, in order to help explain how the peasant community defended its identity against the outside world.<sup>51</sup> "Reasons of Misrule" confronts the misconception that the charivari and the Abbeys of Misrule were chaotic, frivolous and unimportant.

Those that belonged to the "Abbeys of Misrule" (as Davis refers to them) were laymen who would play with themes of power, jurisdiction, youth, misrule, pleasure and madness.<sup>52</sup> Real life and social commentary and criticism was deeply embedded in these carnivals. The Abbeys had jurisdiction over people their own age and the youth of the town; the rural youth-abbeys had important jurisdiction over the behaviour of married people.<sup>53</sup> The masked youth would noisily gather outside the house of their victim with pots, tambourines, bells and horns for a week long clamour until the victim settled and paid a fine.<sup>54</sup> The victims would range from newly-weds who had failed to become pregnant during the year, husbands dominated and beaten by their wives, and sometimes adulterers.<sup>55</sup> The character of misrule

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 48-49.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>52</sup> Abbeys of Misrule were sometimes referred to as 'fool-societies' or 'play-acting societies': Ibid, 42-3.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 51-52.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 52.

had an important function in the village. Misrule in a sense provided rules for the youth. Misrule outlined the responsibilities and expectations (in terms of marriage) that needed to be enforced to maintain a proper order and sustain the biological continuity within their community.<sup>56</sup> It would be a mistake to categorize the youth-abbeyes as inherently violent or disorderly; any violence that occurred was seen as unintentional and in most cases consequences would come from the royal court.<sup>57</sup> Much of the article attends to the social contribution and expectations of youth groups, but Davis also comparatively engages with the relation of misrule to religious institutions and movements. Before the mid-seventeenth century there had been no systematic attempt to do away with the Abbeyes of Misrule.<sup>58</sup> The Church had prohibited masked indecency within church buildings or cemeteries, but some Catholic authorities subordinated the Misrule to their own agenda as the Abbeyes often organized and timed themselves around Feast Days – which the Protestants had abolished.<sup>59</sup> The Protestant response, however, was more hostile to these Abbeyes of Misrule. Davis claims that a number of youth-abbeyes from Switzerland and Geneva were early supporters of the new religion and had integrated Protestant themes into their festivals.<sup>60</sup> However, once the Reformation had become more established in France, it too became fair game for mockery and insolence from both Catholic and Protestant youth of the Abbeyes.<sup>61</sup> While investigating the Abbeyes of Misrule Davis demonstrated how festive roles and the social organization among lower orders, particularly the unmarried men in the village, could be used to reflect the realities of community and marriage. By incorporating a more multidisciplinary approach, through the works of Bakhtin, Thompson and Hobsbawm, into these youth groups Davis was

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 70, 72

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 70-71.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 71.

able to challenge previous typologies regarding the performance and character of these social forms.<sup>62</sup>

Moving further into the realm of symbolic action, Davis published “Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth–Century France” (1973). Davis defines religious riots as “any violent action, with words or weapons, undertaken against religious targets by people who are not acting *officially and formally* as agents of political and ecclesiastical authority.”<sup>63</sup> The purpose of the article is to explore the shape and structure of the religious riot in French cities during the 1560s and 1570s, and in particular the goals, legitimation, and differences between Protestant and Catholic styles of crowd behaviour.<sup>64</sup> What had sparked Davis’ initial interest in writing this article was her lived experience – the “ghost of violence from the past which haunted me for years”- the Holocaust.<sup>65</sup> As a historian, but also as a Jewish woman, Davis reflected that, “if I had grown up Jewish in Europe rather than in Detroit I might well have ended up on a transport train to Auschwitz”.<sup>66</sup> Davis had asked herself how the smallest acts of exclusion could have evolved into a mass project of extermination, how human behaviour could be historically conditioned. As she asked herself these questions, Davis also wondered if she had unintentionally justified an “anything goes” attitude toward religious violence.<sup>67</sup> “Rites of Violence” became an effort to address the ‘holocaust problem’ while demonstrating that religious violence could not be read as a replica of the holocaust but as a reflection.<sup>68</sup> In any case, a crowd can justify their behaviour and their violence but this does not ensure it is

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<sup>62</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 13-16. See also, E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century”, *Past and Present*, Vol. 50 (February 1971) pp. 91-115.

<sup>63</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France”, *Past and Present* Vol. 59 No. 1 (May 1973) pp. 51-91, 52.

<sup>64</sup> Davis, “The Rites of Violence”, 54.

<sup>65</sup> Davis, “Writing the ‘Rites of Violence’ and Afterward”, 12.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>67</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Davis, “Writing the ‘Rites of Violence’ and Afterward”, 13.

the right thing to do. To clarify her position Davis concluded the article with the following observation:

But the rites of violence are not the rights of violence in any *absolute* sense. They simply remind us that if we try to increase safety and trust within a community [...] then we must think less about pacifying “deviants” and more about changing central values.<sup>69</sup>

Those that engaged in these violent riots included men and women on either side of the religious divide. A large percentage of men who had participated in the Protestant iconoclastic riots and in crowds of Catholic killers in 1572 were characterized as artisans.<sup>70</sup> Disturbance from both sides was not strictly a problem of the lower orders, the *menu peuple*. The social composition of the crowds included merchants, notaries, lawyers as well as clerics.<sup>71</sup> Continuing her focus on youth groups from “Reasons of Misrule”, Davis highlights the role of adolescent males aged ten to twelve in these riots. Protestant teenaged boys were often mentioned in cases of iconoclastic disturbances and frequently took the initiative in smashing statues and overturning altars.<sup>72</sup> In 1562 across several towns in Provence such as Marseille and Toulon, Catholic youngsters were known to have stoned Protestants to death and burned their bodies.<sup>73</sup> Davis does not offer a detailed conclusion for the license allowed to the youth to violence in religious riots, but she does suggest that it is closely tied to the festive license that allowed misrule to help enforce the community values.<sup>74</sup> The second group that had significant participation in these riots were the city women. Although Davis treats this subject more in-depth in her following article “City Women and Religious Change” and “Men, Women, and Violence: Some Reflections on Equality” she acknowledges their varying acts of resistance during the riots. Women were busy in the

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<sup>69</sup> Davis, “The Rites of Violence”, 91.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 85-86.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 88. See also, Davis, “The Reasons of Misrule”, 54.

iconoclastic riots of the Protestants, marching with their Catholic husbands in day processions, and making general slurs toward one another.<sup>75</sup> In 1572 at Aix-en-Provence a group of butcher women tormented a Protestant woman and hung her from a pine tree which had been a known meeting place for Protestant worship.<sup>76</sup> Davis argues that their most extreme cases of violence seem to be directed against other women, and that women were not passive participants during times of religious and social conflict. Violence in religious riots appealed to various demographics, even to those who were further removed from political power, showing how closely related crowd behaviour was to the maintenance of community order.

“Reasons of Misrule” and “Rites of Violence” both challenge the conceptualization of crowds and social behaviour. It was, in Davis’ view, a disservice to approach misrule or religious violence as pre-industrial, primitive, a product of frenzy and disorder. It is important to recognize the organization and order that was put into these religious riots – this is what makes these cases of extreme violence all the more “disturbing.”<sup>77</sup> Davis also supports the idea that urban violence was not exclusively driven by either religious or socio-economic conflicts. The French historian Janine Estèbe had challenged Davis for completely omitting the role of social tensions in these religious disturbances.<sup>78</sup> However, Davis responded that economic opponents were often religious allies in these riots (drawing on some of her earlier arguments with respect to the interaction of faith and economic/social status), and that it is best not to assume that economic and spiritual issues were indistinguishable.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Davis, “The Rites of Violence”, 86.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

<sup>78</sup> Janine Estèbe, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France A Comment” *Past and Present*, Vol. 67 Issue 1 (May 1975) pp. 127-130.

<sup>79</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “‘A Rejoinder’ to Janine Estèbe, ‘Debate. The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France’”, *Past and Present*, Vol. 67 (May 1975) pp. 131-135, 132.



Prior to the appearance of *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (1975) Davis published “City Women and Religious Change” (1973), another essay that would be reprinted in the book. This article explores women who became Protestant and the appeal of the new doctrine and liturgy, and what changes the reform movement brought to women. Davis sought to answer what kind of women the Reformation appealed to, how they brought about religious change, and if whether changes affected women of different social classes.<sup>80</sup> In a similar manner as the previous two articles where Davis challenged assumptions about group behaviour, she disputes the expectation of the docile woman. An older hypothesis that Davis particularly attempts to debunk is one that is offered by Max Weber. Weber suggested in his *Sociology of Religion* (1920) that women are more receptive to non-military and non-political action, and religious movements that are more emotional or hysterical in nature.<sup>81</sup> As we saw with “Rites of Violence” women on both Catholic and Protestant sides were direct participants in riots and were often involved in cases of extreme violence. Exploring the kinds of women engaged with the reform movement and the varieties of their experience helps for a better understanding of how Protestantism affected both sexes.

The city women of the sixteenth century were drawn from different social classes. One of the most populous sectors that women in Lyon belonged to was domestic service; this included serving girls, working at orphan-hospitals (such as Aumône-Générale) and bath-houses.<sup>82</sup> A significant proportion of women among the *menu peuple* had employment of their own: working with textiles, running inns and taverns, or working as midwives.<sup>83</sup> During the 1560s Lyon’s immigrant population surged, but while male immigrants participated in all

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<sup>80</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “City Women and Religious Change in Sixteenth-Century France”, in Dorothy McGuigan, ed., *A Sampler of Women’s Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Continuing Education of Women, 1973), 17-45, 18.

<sup>81</sup> Davis, “City Women and Religious Change in Sixteenth-Century France”, 18. See also Shmuel Eisenstadt, “Some Reflections on the Significance of Max Weber’s Sociology of Religious for the Analysis of non-European Modernity”, *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, Vol. 32 (1971) pp. 29-52.

<sup>82</sup> Davis, “City Women and Religious Change in Sixteenth-Century France, 21.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

levels of the vocational hierarchy, female immigrants were often at the bottom of the ladder and sought jobs within domestic service.<sup>84</sup> Despite their only modest representation among lawyers, notaries and merchants women contributed significantly to the economic life of the city.

Urban women were attracted to the Reform movement and Protestantism despite the movement offering both some freedom and restriction. It is important to note that political activity of all urban women was indirect or informal only; women who were heads of households appeared on tax lists and were expected to supply money or men as the city government required but this was the extent of their political participation.<sup>85</sup> One of the ways in which women were encouraged to join the Protestant movement was literature. The new image of the Christian woman in Calvinist popular literature in the 1540s and 1560s identified the woman by her relation to Scripture.<sup>86</sup> The pre-Reformation era saw women in tension with the Catholic Church as they attempted to involve themselves closer to religion and questions of theology. Popular literature promoted the idea of the Protestant woman as having their souls free from the rule of priests and doctors of theology, they would be able to engage with the scripture with their husbands.<sup>87</sup> Davis suggests that this undercuts Max Weber's claim that women were only attracted to religion through emotional and hysterical means as this clearly demonstrates women wanting to involve themselves in religion for intellectual reasons.<sup>88</sup> Not all women, however, were attracted to the cause. The Protestant movement did not pull in the small, yet significant group of learned women in the city.<sup>89</sup> Davis proposes two reasons for this: first, literary women were already involved in intellectual activity and did not need Scripture for their learning, and second, some women

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 26-27.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 28.

were independent in the market and in the street without the reform movement.<sup>90</sup>

Protestantism was not always positive for women and it, too, posed some restrictions on their participation. One example was that Reformed prayer could no longer be addressed to a woman. This directly affected women during childbirth as it was common to pray to the Virgin and to Saint Margaret – instead they “sighed to the Lord and He received those groans as a sign of their obedience.”<sup>91</sup> Ultimately, women faced limitations in both Catholic and Protestant circles. “Women, no matter how rich or well read, were just wives: together with men in a new relation to the Word – but unequal nevertheless.”<sup>92</sup> While the reformed solution left women still powerless, in comparison to their husbands at the very least, Davis highlights individual cases of agency and the significant role women had in the economic, family, intellectual and vocational life of their cities.

In 1975 Davis published *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* which features eight essays, five of which – “Strikes and Salvation at Lyon”, “Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy”, “City Women and Religious Change”, “The Reasons of Misrule” and “The Rites of Violence” - have been discussed heretofore. “Women on Top” continues to explore festive cross-dressing and the carnivalesque reversal of gender. Men who belonged to the Abbeys would play with the image of the unruly, disorderly woman in literature, popular festivity and in ordinary life.<sup>93</sup> These plays and the portrayal of women added to the social commentary that the Abbeys of Misrule aimed to use to keep social order. “Printing and the People” returns to themes explored in Chapter 1, specifically the impact of the printing industry on city people, both literate and illiterate, in the sixteenth-century Lyon.<sup>94</sup> The last chapter, or essay of the book “Proverbial Wisdom and Popular Errors” concentrates on common

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 34-35.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>93</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) 129, 139.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 194, 209.

proverbs and popular beliefs and practices of medicine and health.<sup>95</sup> Davis investigates popular culture and popular religion in a number of articles throughout the decade which I will speak to shortly. Davis had entitled the book *Society and Culture*, and at the time she believed it seemed “quite fresh and anthropological at the time. I tried to hold on to the critical edge that I had given to my earlier social history.”<sup>96</sup> Although she had been hopeful that the book would be well-received, Davis herself was surprised at how widely-read it became. Davis reflected on the success in an interview and said the following:

I think people simply want to know more about the common people of the past. [...] Perhaps the books continued usefulness arises from my careful research and writing. Being published in the early stage of the women’s movement was also important, because students and historians were curious about what a female historian had to say about women in sixteenth-century France. The book helped make me a model for women in history.<sup>97</sup>

For the remainder of the 1970s Davis continued to focus her research on women. “‘Women’s History’ in Transition: The European Case” (1976) and “Ghosts, Kin, and Progeny” (1977) examine the relations between the sexes and of the family structure during periods of political, economic and cultural change in early modern France. “Men, Women, and Violence: Some Reflections on Equality” (1977) echoes previous notions of gender difference and assumptions about women’s relation to violence. “Ghosts, Kin, and Progeny” was written as Davis was mourning the death of her mother, which also led her to investigate sixteenth and seventeenth-century literature on mourning.<sup>98</sup> It also is not surprising that Davis chose to focus more on the history of the family; it was a rapidly growing field of historical

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 229. See also, Natalie Zemon Davis, “Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion”, in Charles Trinkaus and Heiko Oberman, eds., *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion: Papers from the University of Michigan Conference* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) pp. 307-336, 311. And Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Historian and Popular Culture”, in Jacques Beauroy, Marc Bertrand, and Edward T. Gargan, eds., *The Wolf and the Lamb: Popular Culture in France from the Old Regime to the Twentieth Century* (Saratoga, Cal.: Anima Libri, 1977) pp. 9-16, 14.

<sup>96</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 15.

<sup>97</sup> Adelson, “Interview with Natalie Davis, 415.

<sup>98</sup> Harding and Judy Coffin, “Natalie Zemon Davis”, *Visions of History*, 117. Natalie Zemon Davis, “Ghosts, Kin and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 106 No. 2 (Spring 1977): 87-114, 92-96.

research at the time, though generally in a much more quantitative vein than Davis herself preferred.<sup>99</sup> Family structure changed in two distinct ways in sixteenth-century France. First, the slow decline of feudal lords and of distant kin allowed families a freer hand in how they divided their property, left bequests, and even how they functioned as a unit.<sup>100</sup> Second, the expansion of the urban economy and of the job market offered more choices for families – families could make new plans and had new forms of control.<sup>101</sup> While the family structure continued to evolve it would be a misconception, Davis remarks, to generalize this transition as one leading from an “extended family” to a “nuclear one.”<sup>102</sup> Davis argues that the nuclear family existed from the late Middle Ages in western Europe but it was regularly expanded to include other kin (such as parents, grandparents, or their older children) when the economic, financial or personal circumstances required it.<sup>103</sup> Within this cluster of articles Davis place the woman - as the wife and mother –within a comparative context to their male counterparts to demonstrate how sex roles functioned to maintain social order or negotiate change. As the next section of this chapter will show, Davis would continue to deepen this notion of the consciousness of women and sex roles through pardon tales, fiction, and film.

### **The 1980s: Exploring Anthropology and Martin Guerre**

As the previous section indicated, Davis was becoming increasingly interested in anthropology with her references to André Varagnac, Arnold Van Gennep, and Victor Turner, and fusion of social-historical methodology and anthropology throughout the essays which appeared in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (1975). The six years Davis had spent in the History department at Berkeley had helped foster her anthropological

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<sup>99</sup> Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 53.

<sup>100</sup> Davis, “Ghosts, Kin and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 106 No. 2 (Spring 1977) pp. 87-114, 89.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

<sup>102</sup> Davis, ““Women’s History” in Transition: The European Case” 87.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 87-88.

interests during the 1970s. By 1980 Davis had been working at Princeton University as the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History for two years.<sup>104</sup> Princeton would become a favourable location for the cinematic and literary interests that appear in much of Davis' work during the 1980s.<sup>105</sup> During her time employed at Princeton, Davis would work closely with British historian Lawrence Stone (1919-1999) and American cultural historian Carl Schorske (1915-2015), as well as with Mark Cohen (1943 - ), who studies Jewish civilization in the Near East.<sup>106</sup>

Before I move into a discussion that is primarily focused on anthropology, however, I first want to highlight Davis' experience with teaching and exploring Jewish history. The previous section has already given some insight to how Davis originally incorporated a Jewish text, the autobiography of Glikl, into her 1971 graduate seminar "Society and the Sexes" at the University of Toronto. In 1979 Davis turned to Mark Cohen, a young medievalist who had recently been hired to teach Jewish history, and they agreed to team up, with another colleague, for the early modern semester of his three-term course.<sup>107</sup> Davis was responsible the design of the course: choosing topics which included social structure, family and gender styles, welfare and poor relief, and patterns of literacy.<sup>108</sup> Cohen provided his expertise in Jewish texts and selected the primary sources for the syllabus.<sup>109</sup> Within a year colleagues in Jewish studies from other universities had heard about their course, and Davis

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<sup>104</sup> Davis had accepted this position to be closer to her husband, Chandler, who was still employed at the University of Toronto.

<sup>105</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 19.

<sup>106</sup> Davis would later dedicate *Fiction in the Archives* (1987) to Lawrence Stone, "historian par excellence and storyteller, too"

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 20. See also Davis, "Women, Jewish History, European History" 34. Davis and Cohen also worked on the course with another colleague Theodore K. Rabb (1937-2019), Davis, however, seems to only elaborate on her collaboration with Cohen. For additional reading of Cohens scholarship, *Jewish self-government in medieval Egypt: the origins of the office of head of the Jews, ca.1065-1126* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) *Under Crescent and Under Cross: the Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and *Maimonides and the Merchants: Jewish Law and Society in the Medieval Islamic World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017)

<sup>108</sup> Davis, "Women, Jewish History, European History" 34.

<sup>109</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 20.

and Cohen were invited to present it to the meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies.<sup>110</sup>

The feedback was mixed:

During the question period, a senior male scholar rose, dismissed the course, and – looking directly at me – said the field did not benefit from “outsiders.” We were then defended by [...] Elliott Horowitz zt”l, and many of the young historians in the audience took our syllabus.<sup>111</sup>

In response to this statement Davis later reflects that, “if along the way, however, my work has been useful to specialists in Jewish history, ‘outsider’ though I may be in my training, I would be very pleased indeed.”<sup>112</sup> While working and teaching alongside Cohen, Davis and her colleagues published the autobiography of the seventeenth-century Venetian rabbi Leon Modena, translated from Hebrew by Cohen in 1988. Davis’ contribution was an essay entitled “Fame and Secrecy: Leon Modena’s *Life* as an Early Modern Autobiography. In this historiographical essay Davis’ wanted to write Leon into the European historical record and show what difference that made to thinking about the past, in a similar way as she had done with her studies of women and gender. The essay considers the tension Modena had narrated in *Life*, celebrating his success as a Rabbi while confessing to his sins, such as gambling.<sup>113</sup> Davis’ focus was to highlight Modenas autobiography as a Jewish text, but also as a European text; he was a product of his experience and shared many of the same experiences, celebrations and sins with his Christian counterparts.<sup>114</sup> Behind the course in which Cohen and Davis had taught and presented to prominent scholars of Jewish studies, in conjunction with the autobiography of Modena, lay the idea that Jewish history could be easily integrated into European history and should be written as part of it.

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<sup>110</sup> Davis, “Women, Jewish History, European History” 34.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>113</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Fame and Secrecy: Leon Modena’s *Life* as an Early Modern Autobiography” In *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena’s “Life of Judah.”* Trans and ed. by Mark Cohen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988): 50-70, 58.

<sup>114</sup> Davis, “Fame and Secrecy: Leon Modena’s *Life* as an Early Modern Autobiography”, 69. See also Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 20.

One other scholar Davis would work closely with during her time at Princeton was anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), who worked in the School of Social Sciences at the Institute for Advanced Study, a separate organization from the University located on the other side of town; she would co-teach a course with Geertz for one semester.<sup>115</sup> In a later article “Clifford Geertz on Time and Change”(2005) Davis reflects on the influence he had to the field of anthropology, history and to her own writing. Geertz had appealed to younger historians who wished to study ceremony, liturgy, festivals and other forms of symbolic behaviour that had been previously ignored by social historians or who had dubbed these behaviours as irrational.<sup>116</sup> The anthropologist had also promoted change as part of the story of people, communities – change was everywhere – and it came from outside rather than as a result of instability or conflict within the town.<sup>117</sup> This is echoed in how Davis began to view change and development in the people and places she studied. In a 1981 interview for the volume *Visions of History* Davis stated that,

When I was younger, what was important was to show the stages of historical development in the Marxist sense [...] Now I don't believe in inevitable stages and I don't believe in automatic evolution. There theories end up assigning high marks to some powerful modernizing nation.<sup>118</sup>

In addition to the work of Geertz, Davis began reading other anthropological works by Sidney Mintz, Victor Turner, and Eric Wolf. Yet Davis did not look to anthropology for solutions but for questions, and for processes and alternative approaches that could help her make sense of sixteenth and seventeenth-century European evidence.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>116</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Clifford Geertz on Time and Change”, in Richard A. Shweder and Byron Good, eds., *Clifford Geertz by His Colleagues* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2005) pp. 38-44, 38. See also Davis, “Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion”, 314 for a discussion on ‘irrational’ and ‘rational’ behaviour.

<sup>117</sup> Davis, “Clifford Geertz on Time and Change”, 38.

<sup>118</sup> Harding and Coffin, “Natalie Zemon Davis”, 114.

<sup>119</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 14.



In 1981 Davis published two essays, “Anthropology and History in the 1980s” and “The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon.” The first article explores the possible approaches and questions that anthropology poses and how these can be applied to historical writing and, more generally, to thinking about the past. Davis proposes that anthropology can be useful to the historian in four ways: through close observation of living process of social interaction; by offering ways to interpret symbolic behaviour; by providing suggestions as to how the parts of a social system fit together; and by presenting cultural material quite different from that which historians are accustomed to studying.<sup>120</sup> One example of how anthropology can help expand the historian’s interpretation of their evidence is through the study of popular religion. In Davis’ earlier article “Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion” (1974) she explores the boundary drawn between religion and magic as ‘rational’ and ‘irrational.’<sup>121</sup> In response to the historian’s tendency to define these events as irrational or superstitious, and to explain situations in terms of rational interests Davis suggests that anthropologists are able to organize their observations differently. Anthropologists observe and listen carefully to what people said, to the intricate rhythms of ceremonies, reactions of spectators, and offer the historian a new way to look at analogous material.<sup>122</sup> In the case of popular religion, applying an anthropological lens to the historical evidence can prevent problems of sorting religion and magic under categories such as “traditional” and “progressive”. A variant of anthropology, potentially beneficial to the historian and which will be explored below, is ethnography. Ethnographic studies are able to highlight informal or small-scale interactions which show important conflicts and linkages

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<sup>120</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Anthropology and History in the 1980s: The Possibilities of the Past”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 12 No. 2 (Autumn 1981) pp. 267-275, 267.

<sup>121</sup> Davis, “Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion”, in Charles Trinkaus and Heiko Oberman, eds., *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion: Papers from the University of Michigan Conference* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) pp. 307-336, 311

<sup>122</sup> Davis, “Anthropology and History in the 1980s”, 268.

that may have been previously overlooked.<sup>123</sup> Understanding these linkages exclusively through qualitative analysis allows issues of culture, psychology, sexuality and gender to be foregrounded. Davis also offers some cautions: while anthropology offers new opportunities for the historian, it also has limitations (as with any field of study). Anthropological writings should be considered suggestions and not as prescriptions to be used in place of historical sources; the evidence must come from the people and the institutions of the time.<sup>124</sup> Davis essentially sees anthropology as a “sister discipline” the toolkit of which should not replace historians’ methods but complement them.<sup>125</sup>

In the same year Davis published ‘The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth Century Lyon’ (1981) Following the publication of ‘The Rites of Violence’(1972) she sought to fulfil the anthropological programme behind that essay in regard to the location of the sacred.<sup>126</sup> The opening line of the 1981 article asks “Where is the sacred in the sixteenth-century French city?” Davis claims that historians have often written the sacred into locations that are familiar: the poor waiting for alms bread in the courtyard, Protestant worshippers singing psalms in the street, or the sound of the church bells ringing to mark feast days, mass, and even death.<sup>127</sup> In this way the sacred becomes characterized by the religious styles of different social groups and is more focused on doctrine and church teachings. This view of the sacred, for Davis, is limited both because it fails to consider the roles that religion plays in urban life, and it ignores other forms of worship, supplication and sacrifice.<sup>128</sup> Davis approached Catholicism and Protestantism as two languages which describe, mark and interpret three aspects of urban life – space, time and community.<sup>129</sup> This approach fits neatly

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 269.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 273.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 274.

<sup>126</sup> Davis, “Writing the ‘Rites of Violence’ and Afterward”, 22.

<sup>127</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon”, *Past and Present*, Vol 90 No. 1 (February 1981) pp. 40-70, 40.

<sup>128</sup> Davis, “The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon”, 40-41.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 42.

with Davis' revision of ideas of change and progress after collaborating with Geertz and absorbing other anthropological work. The three aspects of urban life would show how Protestants and Catholics shared some metaphors and vocabulary in relation to urban life, and they both yielded alternative paths to modernity – one path was not more 'rational' than the other.<sup>130</sup> Doctrine in part influenced urban space, time and community but the sacred was just as important and was located and experienced differently by social and working groups but also on an individual scale.

In addition to anthropology, the 1980s were a period of interest in film, literature and storytelling for Davis. I first want to focus on film and literature as that shaped much of her earlier writing during the decade, and storytelling very much belongs to *Fiction in the Archives* which was published later in 1987. While still at Berkeley, Davis had been searching the Rare Book Collection of the Law School Library for material for her graduate seminar on the family when she came across Judge Jean de Coras' *Memorable Decree* (1561).<sup>131</sup> The book told a peculiar story of the small French village of Artigat, peasant imposture, and a dramatic trial. Davis' first response to this discovery was "This must become a film," and three years later in 1980 she would be working alongside screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière and director Daniel Vigne.<sup>132</sup> Davis attributes this reaction to a "youthful hope to make documentary films," but mostly her response was a result of missing the close ethnographic observation fieldwork that the anthropologists she studied and worked were able to do.<sup>133</sup> Her recent engagement with anthropologically-influenced history enabled her to visualize the "lower orders" and to write the characters of Bertrande de Rols, Martin

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<sup>130</sup> Davis, "Writing the 'Rites of Violence' and Afterward", 23.

<sup>131</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "'The Sense of History': A Case Study", in Barbara Abrash and Janet Sternburg, eds., *Historians and Filmmakers: Toward Collaboration* (New York: Institute for Research in History, 1983) pp. 28-39, 29.

<sup>132</sup> Davis, "'The Sense of History,' 29. See also Davis, "A Life of Learning", 18.

<sup>133</sup> Davis, "A Life of Learning", 18.

Guerre, and Arnaud du Tilh as realistic as she could.<sup>134</sup> The film became an opportunity to see history in a new way and work closely with the reactions of, and interactions among, some specific individuals from the past.

*Le Retour de Martin Guerre* was released in 1982. Despite the film faring well with the public, Davis herself had a number of reservations about the transfer of historic material to the screen.<sup>135</sup> During the early stages of production Davis had sent Carrière and Vigne roughly a hundred pages of her work on early modern French culture and society, with notes on characterization – the spirit of the characters was what Davis cared about most.<sup>136</sup> Two of the actors for the film, Maurice Barrier and Nathalie Baye, also cared about their characters (Pierre and Bertrande) and wished adequately to convey their psychology. Barrier had said, ‘I can’t play this part as if all that mattered were the money’ to which Davis would respond “you’re right, he cared about deep dishonesty as well.”<sup>137</sup> Baye on the other hand questioned why Bertrande had waited such a long time before turning against the impostor in the trial – why, she queried, would a peasant woman take such a chance? Davis explained that the real, historical Bertrande would have needed to rethink her position best to protect herself and her children.<sup>138</sup> Although Davis served as the historical consultant for the project, she did not have any power – she only had “sway.”<sup>139</sup> The film began to veer from the historical record in a number of ways, but the treatment of Bertrande was perhaps the biggest departure. Bertrande was recast to portray a woman who romantically followed the impostor she loved

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<sup>134</sup> Adelson, “Interview with Natalie Zemon Davis”, 417.

<sup>135</sup> *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* won the following awards: Cesar Award for Best Original Score, National Society of Film Critics Award for Best Actor, Cesar Award for Best Writing – Original, Caesar Award for Best Production Design

<sup>136</sup> Davis, “The Sense of History”, 31.

<sup>137</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Who Owns History?” in Anne Ollila, ed., *Historical Perspectives on Memory* (Helsinki: Studia Historica, 1999), pp. 19-34, 29.

<sup>138</sup> Davis, “Who Owns History?”, 29.

<sup>139</sup> Davis, “The Sense of History”, 31.

without practical considerations for her children or her own life.<sup>140</sup> The historical Bertrande had quickly changed her position during the trial and feigned innocence; this version of Bertrande is described in Davis' book *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983) which I will discuss more in depth shortly. As a result of the cinematic treatment of Bertrande, Davis fought in the film to make her a plausible sixteenth-century peasant woman, replacing overly romantic lines with expressions and feelings Bertrande could reasonably have experienced.<sup>141</sup> Other (more trivial) departures from the historical record included costume and the public trial of Arnaud du Tilh: the judges of the Parlement of Toulouse wear red robes throughout the trial in the film, when they would have worn black until the final reading of judgement; the film's trial was publicly held when in Old Regime France it would have been a closed affair.<sup>142</sup> Despite the extensive departures from the original source for the purpose of film, Davis still considered film a viable medium for historical knowledge and information and would explore its potential further in a later book, *Slaves on Screen* (2000) discussed in the following chapter.

In 1983 Davis published *The Return of Martin Guerre* to present her interpretation of the evidence of Bertrande de Rols, Martin Guerre, and Arnaud du Tilh. Davis' version of the sources told the story of Bertrande, a French peasant woman who in 1548 was abandoned by her husband Martin Guerre. Martin had disappeared without a trace and had left to join the Habsburg armies. In 1566 'Martin' seemed to have returned from battle. The returnee, however, was Arnaud du Tilh; also known as Pansette "the belly" for his great appetite, drinking, love of carnivals and sexual adventures.<sup>143</sup> Arnaud appeared in the village of Artigat to pose as the long-absent Martin to claim his wife, child and property. The imposter

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<sup>140</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Movie or Monograph? A Historian/Filmmaker's Perspective", *The Public Historian* No. 25 Vol. 3 (Summer 2003): pp.45-48, 46.

<sup>141</sup> Davis, "'The Sense of History,' 31.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 33. See also Davis, "Movie or Monograph? A Historian/Filmmaker's Perspective", 48.

<sup>143</sup> Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) 37.

had carefully learned what he could about the real Martin Guerre as he worked in neighbouring towns and acutely listened to the village “gossip network” before he assumed this new identity.<sup>144</sup> The imposter went undetected until he quarrelled with his ‘uncle’ Pierre, who took him to court at Toulouse as a fraud. During the trial Bertrande was called to the stand, and she faithfully and vehemently defended her supposed husband.<sup>145</sup> It was then - in dramatic Hollywood fashion - that the real Martin Guerre (albeit with one leg lost in the battle of Saint-Quentin) entered the courtroom. Seemingly shocked by this revelation Bertrande changed her position and welcomed back the real Martin. Conceding to the charge of fraud, du Tilh was sentenced to death for his imposture.<sup>146</sup>

Davis is quick to address her use of speculative language in *The Return of Martin Guerre*. To the reader she states, “What I offer you here is in part my invention, but held tightly in check by the voices of the past.”<sup>147</sup> Her intention was to legitimize the ability of the historian to fill in these gaps or silences using their inventions, while being sure to make explicit what appears in the sources and what does not. The need for speculation was a result of the imperfect and incomplete documentation left by Judge Jean de Coras, the nature of Arnaud du Tilh’s masquerade as another, and Bertrande’s personal motivation for accepting her impostor husband and her reaction in court with the return of the real Martin. However, Davis’ use of speculation and fictionalizing received mixed response, and she was criticized for projecting the values of a late twentieth-century woman on to sixteenth-century Bertrande. One reviewer wondered if Davis “at times leaves us wondering whether she is following closely the two original contemporary accounts of the Martin Guerre story or

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>145</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “On the Lame”, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 93 No. 3 (June 1988) pp. 572-603, 580-583.

<sup>146</sup> Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, 83, 93.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, viii.

drifting into the ‘perhapses’ of her contextual analysis”<sup>148</sup> while another remarked that “Dr Davis has probably done as much as anyone could to understand [Martin, Bertrande and du Tilh].<sup>149</sup> Perhaps Davis’ sharpest critic was Robert Finlay. His critique suggests that Davis has presented a radically different interpretation of the traditional story of Martin Guerre – distorting the character of Bertrande and while simultaneously ‘refashioning’ Martin.<sup>150</sup>

Finlay writes,

Bertrande is not an interpretation based on the sources; it is, rather, an opinion by a modern historian who apparently believes that unsubstantiated insight can itself be taken as evidence. This is a flimsy foundation on which to build an interpretation of the Martin Guerre story that contradicts the surviving evidence.<sup>151</sup>

For Finlay, the portrait of the historical Bertrande had been reconstructed; no longer a dupe or a victim, but a romanticized heroine, a ‘sort of proto-feminist’ of peasant culture.<sup>152</sup> This was a careless reading of her text, Davis countered and that Finlay was ill-informed about the meaning of feminist, romantic, and heroic.<sup>153</sup> While Davis has not denied that her feminist consciousness and historian’s belief that people in part make their own lives motivated her to write Bertrande de Rols as an active maker of her own world, she does not remotely imagine her as a feminist figure.<sup>154</sup> Finlay, however, remained concerned that Davis permitted an excess of invention which obscured the lives of the people who ‘engaged her sympathy and imagination.’<sup>155</sup> While the core sources, the *Arrest Memorable* of Judge Jean de Coras -the *Historia Admiranda* of Guillaume Le Sueur and the criminal records of Toulouse - gave clear

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<sup>148</sup> A. Lloyd Moote, “Review: Natalie Zemon Davis *The Return of Martin Guerre*”, *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 90, No. 4 (October 1985) 943.

<sup>149</sup> David Potter, “Review:: Natalie Zemon Davis *The Return of Martin Guerre*”, *The English Historical Review*. Vol. 101, No. 400 (July 1986): 713-714.714.

<sup>150</sup> Robert Finlay, “The Refashioning of Martin Guerre”, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 93 No. 3 (June 1988) pp. 553-571, 565.

<sup>151</sup> Finlay, “The Refashioning of Martin Guerre”, 559.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 570.

<sup>153</sup> Davis, “On the Lame”, 584.

<sup>154</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Remaking Impostors: From Martin Guerre to Sommersby, Hayes Robinson Lecture, 7 March 1995 (Royal Holloway, University of London, 1997): 1-22,17. See also, “On the Lame” 587.

<sup>155</sup> Finlay, 571.

evidence of the trial of Martin, Bertrande and Arnaud there were still fillable gaps to the story.<sup>156</sup> Davis clustered evidence of peasant doings and sayings, speculating as to both possible socio-cultural exchanges and psychological reactions that would have been closely linked to sixteenth century concerns, to the end of writing the most plausible and compelling version possible.<sup>157</sup> And, for the patient reader, Davis remarks, there is an exhaustive amount of research evidence cited in her notes which allowed her to speculate what made the most plausible sense of the sixteenth century lives she helped narrate.<sup>158</sup> Davis further clarifies that her goal is not to provide a historical account that is definitive, but to inform readers that there are alternative perspectives for reading and interpreting the past beside the one she offers.<sup>159</sup> As historians, they both seek to understand ‘what happened,’ but Davis claims she is willing to accept a *possible* truth, whereas Finlay appears to require an *absolute* truth.<sup>160</sup> The epilogue to *The Return of Martin Guerre*, leaves open the possibility of further interpretation and imagination to the sixteenth century story with the concluding remarks,

The story of Martin Guerre is told and retold because it reminds us that astonishing things are possible. Even for the historian who has deciphered it, it retains a stubborn vitality. I think I have uncovered the true face of the past – or has Pansette done it again?<sup>161</sup>

Bertrande was only one woman Davis sought to explore in her writing in the 1980s. During this period Davis was still very much involved in issues of gender and the presence of female scholars at Princeton. She belonged to a small group of women who instituted a Women’s Studies Program on campus.<sup>162</sup> In 1988 the numbers of women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four on college and universities campus overtook for the first time the

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<sup>156</sup> Davis, “On the Lame”, 574-575.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 574.

<sup>158</sup> Finlay, 571.

<sup>159</sup> Denis Crouzet, “Wonderments” in *A Passion for History: Conversations with Denis Crouzet*, Edited by Michael Wolfe, Translated by Natalie Zemon Davis, pp.1-30 (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2010) 13.

<sup>160</sup> Davis, “On the Lame”, 574.

<sup>161</sup> Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, 125.

<sup>162</sup> Davis, “A Life of Learning”, 19.



numbers of men.<sup>163</sup> It is fitting then that Davis continued to address questions of women, their attitudes and attitudes toward women. “Women in the Arts Mécaniques in Sixteenth-Century Lyon” (1980) looks at the role of women in the crafts. While Davis does explore various employment roles in “City Women and Religious Change” (1973), and much of this article expands on domestic service and work within city orphanages it does however acknowledge women’s occupational identity. Women’s work identity depended on four factors: the character of the city and the jobs available, the extent capitalist organization in a trade (women were often clustered at the bottom), the technology of a craft and the culture attached to it; and fourth, the politics of the family.<sup>164</sup> In a similar manner as seen with Bertrande, these sixteenth-century women worked within their constraints best to position themselves and their family.

As in the case of Martin Guerre where Davis had been drawn to the legal texts, literature and history would continue to influence her writing in the 1980s. It was during this time that the literary turn (sometimes referred to as the linguistic turn) began to appear in both historical and anthropological works.<sup>165</sup> Jaume Aurell, a historian of autobiography and historiography, has defined the literary turn as an acknowledgement and embrace of the active role in which language, text and narrative structures perform in the representation of historical reality.<sup>166</sup> For Davis, she viewed language as an avenue into the mental world of the

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<sup>163</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2014) 5. Statistically 30.4% of women and 30.2% of men globally were enrolled in college or university. Given that enrolment of women in what are now called STEM disciplines continued then and continues now to lag that of men, the growth in female enrolment in humanities subjects like history would have been even higher in order to compensate.

<sup>164</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Women in the Arts Mécaniques in Sixteenth-Century Lyon”, in Françoise Bayard et al., *Lyon et l’Europe. Hommes et sociétés. Mélanges d’histoire offerts à Richard Gascon*, vol. 1 (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1980) pp. 139-167, 158-159.

<sup>165</sup> For additional reading see Clifford Geertz, *Works and lives: The anthropologist as author* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988) Gabrielle M. Spiegel explores theories of the linguistic turn in *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)

<sup>166</sup> Jaume Aurell, *Theoretical Perspectives on Historians’ Autobiographies: From Documentation to Intervention* (New York: Routledge, 2016) 172.

past.<sup>167</sup> In “A Renaissance text to the historian’s eye: the gifts of Montaigne” (1985) Davis compared how the literary scholar/critic and the social historian would read Montaigne’s essay “De l’affection des pères aux enfants’ (1578). Davis suggests that the historian would place the essay within a grid of social and family events in sixteenth-century Gascony, while the literary scholar would extract pieces of Montaigne’s biography:

At its end we want to explain something different. The critic will return to his or her literary text, its author, relations around the text, or the nature of a genre; I to a set of events, to cultural, economic, or political connections, or to an actor in one of these settings.<sup>168</sup>

As with history and anthropology, it would thicken cultural understanding and expand the meaning of the Montaigne’s essay if the literary scholar and the social historian sought to be interdisciplinary. This is not to suggest two scholars of different disciplines must necessarily work collaboratively, but rather, that each should widen their sources and the questions they ask of the text in order to add complexity and depth to themes of culture and conflict.<sup>169</sup> As we have seen (especially with the subjects of Davis’ historiographical essays), literature and history were worlds constantly in exchange, reacting and reflecting the experience of the author.

Davis’ historiographical essay, “Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820” (1980) studies how learned women contributed to historical writing. Davis places female writers such as Christine de Pisan (recalling her undergraduate interest in that late medieval figure), Charlotte Arbaleste, Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay and Germaine de Staël within the history of historical writing and then analyses how their work reflected their

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<sup>167</sup> Roitman and Fatah-Black, ““Being speculative is better than to not do it at all”: an interview with Natalie Zemon Davis” 8.

<sup>168</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “A Renaissance Text to the Historian’s Eye: The Gifts of Montaigne”, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 15:1 (Spring 1985): 47-56, 47.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

concerns with the politics of their time.<sup>170</sup> Pisan's *The Cité des Dames* (1405) is not necessarily a history of women, but she considered the position of women at different periods.<sup>171</sup> With the emergence of family history as a popular genre of historical writing, Charlotte Arbaleste had described her religion, and her life with her husband Philippe du Plessis Mornay, in a memoir bequeathed to her son.<sup>172</sup> By the time the Englishwoman Macaulay published her first volume of *History of England* in 1763, it was becoming increasingly common for learned and literary women to publish a variety of historical works.<sup>173</sup> Posthumously, in 1888, Madame de Staël's *Considérations sue les principaux événements de la révolution française* (1818) was published and joined the growing number of philosophical histories of the time.<sup>174</sup> Davis studying the historiographic trend of early modern learned women simultaneously adds to the growing field of Women's history and discovery of sources written by women of the past.

Another of Davis' historiographical essays of the decade was "History's Two Bodies" (1988) which was delivered as her Presidential address to the American Historical Association. In 1987 Davis had been elected to the annually awarded position of President for the American Historical Association. Davis was only the second woman, after the medievalist Nellie Neilson (in the 1940s), to hold this title.<sup>175</sup> In the essay, Davis considers how historians have conceptualized the body of historical knowledge, the shape of the historical community

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<sup>170</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820", in Patricia H. Labalme, ed., *Beyond their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), pp. 153-182, 157.

<sup>171</sup> Davis, "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820", 160.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, 162-3. See also, Natalie Zemon Davis, "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Early Modern France", in Thomas C. Heller, et al., eds., *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1986) 57-58.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 166-7.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 171.

<sup>175</sup> The American Historical Association (AHA) was founded in 1884 and is one of the largest societies for historians and Professors of history in the United States. Nellie Neilson (1873-1947) was the first female president of the AHA in 1943 and the first female to have an article published by the *American Historical Review*. In 1897, under the gender-obscuring name of N. Neilson, her article "Boon Services on the Estates of Ramsey Abbey" was published by the *American Historical Review*; which made her the first woman to be published in the *AHR*.

and the methods of history.<sup>176</sup> She places historians throughout the centuries: Estienne Pasquier, David Hume, Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay, Nellie Neilson, Marc Bloch, Eileen Power, and Lucien Febvre in dialogue with one another. Davis explores the body of work by each historian and some of their main arguments with each other. For example, Davis compares how in the eighteenth century, Hume and Macaulay differed in their views about the English revolutions, and how in the 1920s, Bloch and Power approached the issue of historical succession from two different positions.<sup>177</sup> Davis places these scholars in dialogue with one another, even when correspondence did not exist, because this is how she envisions history to work:

History would have at least two bodies in it, at least two persons talking, arguing. Always listening to the other as they gestured at their books; and it would be a film, not a still picture, so that you could see that sometimes they wept, sometimes they were astonished, sometimes they were knowing, and sometimes they laughed with delight.<sup>178</sup>

To view the historian's work in isolation from his or her contemporaries (and beyond) does little to expand the breadth of their original arguments; it is not necessarily about reaching a definitive answer but rather about describing various possibilities of the past.

As mentioned earlier, in the 1980s Davis had acquired an interest in the phenomenon of storytelling. It began with a desire to understand how people in past times told stories about themselves and events around them; she soon stumbled across stories people told of murder. *Fiction in the Archives* (1987) explores the crafting of letters of remission and pardon seeking in sixteenth-century France as literary evidence to a wider understanding of social values. Her research into these royal letters of pardon reveal how legal rule shaped peasant narratives – each letter involved a royal notary and his clerks, a demonstration of how

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<sup>176</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "History's Two Bodies" (Presidential Address, American Historical Association), *American Historical Review* 93:1 (February 1988): 1-30, 2.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 9, 19, 21.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

early modern sovereigns attempted to ‘civilize’ the tongue of their subjects.<sup>179</sup> The reader is first introduced by Davis to the supplicant Thomas Manny, a poor ploughman. Angered by the suspicion that his wife had been engaging in adulterous activity, Thomas murdered his wife on the day of Mary Magdalene. As Manny beat and stabbed his wife, he had asked her “Must I die for a Whore?” and then he left her for dead.<sup>180</sup> Elite university-trained notaries and clerks wove a crafted narrative of a person of ‘good’ and ‘honest nature’, who had only committed this act of violence in a “hot anger” that had been heightened by the carnivalesque frame of the feast of Mary Magdalene. This crafted narrative helped release Manny, without infamy, from prison.<sup>181</sup> The crafting of pardon tales for women was more difficult. The female supplicants used different strategies to describe their state of mind as they committed a homicide.<sup>182</sup> Women’s pardon tales were also quite different from the men’s in the complexity of the story that was told: gender expectations meant that they could not cite reasons of drunkenness or ‘hot anger’; rather, they had to construct a narrative around the topos of the ‘patient wife’.<sup>183</sup> Using literary and ethnographic techniques Davis is able to value these pardon tales as a new source of evidence despite some of their clearly fictive qualities. The inclusion of these sources also help answer the broader questions that we have seen women’s history ask - the attitudes of women and about women, the differences of the same process to both sexes, and how women fought to position themselves within their community.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>179</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth Century France* (Stanford University Press, 1987) 25-28.

<sup>180</sup> Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 28. See also, See Natalie Zemon Davis, “Life-Saving Stories”, in Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) pp. 139-144, 142.

<sup>181</sup> Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 2, 29.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, 82.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 103-4.

This chapter has shown how Davis tackled topics as various as crowd behaviour, violence, women and gender, using extra-disciplinary methods previously less familiar to her. Her growing interest in anthropology and ethnographic studies enabled her to create a better analysis of sermons, tales, proverbs and pictures that belonged to and were a part of the lives of peasants and artisans of Lyon. As the second wave of feminism gained momentum in North America alongside the rise of Women's history, Davis continuously inserted herself into the debate, particularly in cases of gender difference – a subject then still some years away from being more fully theorized by the likes of Joan Wallach Scott. During the 1970s and 1980s Davis became more interdisciplinary in her approach to history as she considered the role of film, the literary and law. The following and final chapter will explore the rising trends of cultural theory, globalization and global history during the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. While Davis holds tightly to the voices of women throughout the remainder of her career, the next chapter will show how her historical writing would finally depart from the confines of sixteenth-century France.

## Chapter 3

### Cultural Theory and ‘Global Consciousness’: The 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s

#### Introduction

This chapter will explore how Davis’ work reflected the rising trends of cultural theory, globalization and global history during the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. As mentioned above, during this time Davis largely left behind the worlds of the Lyon artisan and the rural peasant, and found herself exploring Canada with Marie de L’Incarnation, between worlds with al-Hasan al-Wazzan, and on the plantations of colonial Suriname. To clarify her position, Davis writes that, “The experience of writing *Women on the Margins* changed my sense of myself as a historian. I was no longer going to think of myself as “a Europeanist” but would be a historian who would change her sites.”<sup>1</sup> This chapter will highlight how Davis has become increasingly interested in the identities and experiences of her historical subjects, especially those who are products of cultural mixture and cultural entanglements. This final assessment of Davis’ academic trajectory shows her transition from class consciousness in the 1960s, the consciousness of women in the 1970s, and now to what might be described as global consciousness in the 1990s and onward; this is not to say that Davis has abandoned themes reflecting class and women, but rather that she has continued to develop these ideas to fit within the emergence of globalization and a corresponding desire to write about the past globally. As much of this discussion will discuss global history and theory, I want to briefly clarify the difference between world history and global history. The term ‘world’ can refer to the whole world or it may reflect a world in its own,

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World”, 194.

while global history accounts for everything. World history will engage within the realms of these smaller worlds; global history is considered the tout ensemble.<sup>2</sup> Throughout these three decades Davis produced four books, *Women on the Margins* (1995), *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (2000), *Slaves on Screen: Historical Film and Vision* (2000), and *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth Century Muslim Between Worlds* (2007) which each engage, on various levels, with processes of cultural entanglement, globalization and global consciousness. The previous chapter saw Davis' engagement with gender theory, cultural anthropology, literature and film in the 1970s and 1980s. The most recent decades of her career show Davis' continued promotion of an interdisciplinary approach of the past, which has since led her to her current prestigious reputation and decorated scholar.<sup>3</sup>

### **The 1990s: Rise of Cultural Theory and Cultural History**

Following the pull toward Women's history in the 1970s, the literary turn and anthropology in the 1980s, cultural history gained traction throughout the 1990s. The primary task of cultural history was to challenge and dismantle previous paradigms of historical research. Marxism, modernization, and the Annales School are considered to be the major post-World War II paradigms that have continued to exert their authority, albeit to varying degrees.<sup>4</sup> Each of these frameworks have created an overarching, meta-narrative, which have embodied a hierarchy of factors that have determined meaning, and agenda of research. The "cultural challenge" began its deconstruction of these three paradigms as early as the 1950s, but cultural history did not reach a

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<sup>2</sup> Amitava Chowdhury, "Conclusion: Diaspora as Global History" In *Between Dispersion and Belonging: Global Approaches to Diaspora in Practice*, eds. by Donald Akenson and Amitava Chowdhury, 254-263 (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016) 257-258.

<sup>3</sup> In 1994, *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800): essays in honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*, eds. by Barbara B. Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) acknowledges Davis' scholarship and contribution to the field of cultural and social history.

<sup>4</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2014) 13.



peak until the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> Although these paradigms have been introduced throughout this thesis, I want to briefly place them in conversation with one another to clearly show an overview of their agenda of research and also how cultural theory challenges them. Marxism encouraged the study of specific modes of production, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and revolutions. E.P.

Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) showed the limitations of this paradigm.<sup>6</sup> While Thompson himself was rooted in Marxism he chose to focus on more cultural aspects - working class consciousness, collectivism and agency, rather than a traditional Marxist analysis of class relations or economic production. Often referred to as the founder of "new social history," Thompson helped provide "Marxism with a face."<sup>7</sup> Some social historians began to question the validity of a Marxist historical approach, for Thompson had shown how this perspective overlooked popular culture within the working class, disregarding an important element of an entire social class of people.<sup>8</sup> The second paradigm that cultural history challenged was the Annales School. The Annales School emerged in France during the 1930s and early 1940s, founded by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch after the journal was established in 1929. The Annales focused primarily on preindustrial societies and how climate, the environment and demography have shaped human activity.<sup>9</sup> The main "cultural challenge" toward the Annales School was on its emphasis (particularly that of second-generation Annaliste Fernand Braudel) on the *longue durée*.<sup>10</sup> The argument was that the belief that structures, process and events were

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<sup>5</sup> Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 31.

<sup>6</sup> For additional reading see Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995)

<sup>7</sup> Craig Calhoun, "E. P. Thompson and the Discipline of Historical Context" in *Social Research*, Vol. 61 No. 2 (Summer 1994): 223-243, 223. See also, E.P. Thompson, *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (New York: New Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Hunt, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 17. See also Lynn Hunt, "French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the Annales Paradigm", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Apr., 1986): 209-224.

<sup>10</sup> For additional reading see Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein, "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée", *Review*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2009):171-203.

slowly evolving did not adequately consider the current rapid changes which were occurring in social and cultural life experienced in the West in the post-World War II period.<sup>11</sup> The Annales School did however acknowledge this shift in the late 1980s and onward. The journal was once, *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations* (1946) and was later rebranded as *Annales: histoire, sciences sociales* (1994).<sup>12</sup> In a 1988 editorial the *Annales* promoted the usefulness of microhistorical approaches, rather than their previous customary focus on large regions of France, or of Braudel's *Mediterranean* (1949).<sup>13</sup> Unlike the first two paradigms, modernization as a paradigm cannot be linked to one person and one theory. Lynn Hunt has suggested that the ideas of Émile Durkheim and Max Weber are often incorporated into the modernization paradigm in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>14</sup> Modernization theory attends to the expansion of state powers, the growing density of communication, urbanization, migration, technology and emphasizes the differentiation of knowledge and social functions.<sup>15</sup> This paradigm however has been criticized, particularly by post-colonialists, for its equation of 'modern' to 'Western' and its subscription to a Westernized model of 'progress.'

Cultural theory does not offer a comprehensive paradigm as an alternative to Marxism, the Annales School, or modernization, and is particularly hostile toward paradigms and meta-narratives as a whole. Cultural theory does however re-centre historical inquiry to be more inclusive with categories of analysis. New cultural theories are grouped together under various

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<sup>11</sup> Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Annales*, "Histoire et sciences sociales. Un tournant critique?" *Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 43, No. 2 (1988): 291-293, 292. See also Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

<sup>14</sup> Hunt, 15. For additional reading see Dean C. Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (March, 1973): 199-226, 219.

<sup>15</sup> Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 15.

labels, the linguistic turn, poststructuralism, postmodernism, post-colonialism, cultural studies, or simply ‘theory.’<sup>16</sup> Cultural theories that emerged in the 1950s and early 1960s drew attention to meaning behind language, symbols and rituals – where Davis’ work has neatly fit. Later cultural theories, developed between the 1970s and 1990s, further challenged the assumption that economic and social relations provide the sole foundation for cultural and political expressions. This supported a belief that social categories (such as sexuality) and economics themselves only came into being through linguistic and cultural representations—it was thus argued that culture shapes class and politics, not the other way around.<sup>17</sup> Within the historical discipline itself, the 1990s saw a surge of interest in cultural history in the United States as it grew to be the most popular subject among members of the American Historical Association; Women’s history and religious history followed closely behind, while publications on political and traditional social history continued to decline.<sup>18</sup>

As the previous chapter highlighted the rise of women’s history, anthropology and the linguistic turn of the 1970s and 1980s, this first section will discuss how Davis has continued to engage with these approaches and further developed her investigative style. As cultural theory continued to attack major paradigms of historical research, Davis was too. Throughout the 1990s, Davis released several important and reflective articles, “Stories and the Hunger to Know” (1992), “Toward Mixtures and Margins” (1992), “Who Owns History?” (1996), “Cultural Mixture and Historical Meditation” (1997) and “Beyond Evolution: Comparative History and its Goals”

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 31. See also Hunt, “French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the Annales Paradigm”, 216. For a more current take on the rise and decline of varying historical fields see Steven Pincus and William Novak, “Political History after the Cultural Turn”, *American Historical Association: New Perspectives* (May 1, 2011).

(1998), addressing the status of cultural history and the future of historical writing. Tackling questions of women, gender and of modernization theory, Davis wrote “Women and the World of the Annales” (1992), “Iroquois Women, European Women” (1993), “Displacing and Displeasing: Writing about Women in the Early Modern Period” (1998), and “The Rest of the Story” (1999). Davis additionally released *Women on the Margins* (1995) capturing the biographical snapshots of three seventeenth-century women, leaving the reader to engage with topics of religion, race, family, rhetoric and women and gender.

I first want to examine Davis’ continued focus on women and gender, and how her writing evolved with the trajectory of cultural and intellectual history in the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> One of her first publications in the 1990s was an elaborate historiographical discussion on two women of the margins of scholarship, Lucie Varga and Suzanne Dognon. The emergence of the Annales School is heavily associated with the co-founders, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, but Davis places Varga and Dognon within the same scholarly circles as the two Frenchmen. Varga was a Jewish refugee, a French historian and ethnographer, who acted as an assistant for Febvre, translating and writing notes on books which Febvre would later incorporate into his courses and reviews.<sup>20</sup> Dognon, married to Febvre, was an associate professor in history and geography who was ‘determined not to be her husband’s research assistant’ and instead became the first female librarian at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* at Sèvres.<sup>21</sup> Further developing the findings of the

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<sup>19</sup> Davis co-edited *Gender in the Academy: Women and Learning from Plato to Princeton; An Exhibition Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Undergraduate Coeducation at Princeton University* (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1990) which discusses the intersection of women as scholars and as educators at Princeton.

<sup>20</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Women and the World of the ‘Annales,’” *History Workshop*, No. 33 (Spring, 1992): 121-37, 121, 123.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 122.

German historian Peter Schöttler<sup>22</sup>, Davis highlights the struggles and successes both female intellectuals faced in an all-male environment. While there was a dramatic and intimate dynamic between Varga and Febvre, and Febvre and Dognon, which Davis does discuss, I however do not find it essential to the overall intent of the article – the gender issues are more central.<sup>23</sup> Marc Bloch’s wife, Simonne, had served throughout his career as his assistant, secretary and reader of all his manuscripts, a role which had never been acknowledged in Bloch’s many publications. There had been only two women contributors between its founding in 1929 to 1944, yet the *Annales* journal drew significantly on the private or paid assistance of well-educated women. While Dognon and Varga continued to exist outside the centre of French historical scholarship, Davis importantly places these two female scholars within the ‘sodality of brothers’.<sup>24</sup>

The notion of gender roles is at the centre of Davis’ two articles, “Iroquois Women, European Women” and “Displacing and Displeasing: Writing about Women in the Early Modern Period”. Although there is a five-year gap between the two articles, both strongly indicate the social construction of gender. The earlier article is a comparative study of Amerindian women and European women, looking at sources of change among the Iroquoian and Algonquian speaking peoples prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Davis is careful not to assert that the encounter with the Europeans was the determining factor in Amerindian history or at the centre of their consciousness.<sup>25</sup> Davis also subtly attacks modernization theory as she presents multiple narratives of and about Amerindian and European women without privileging one over the other

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Schöttler is a German historian known for his translations of the works of Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, and Fernand Braudel. He has explored and popularized the work of Lucie Varga the first woman member of the *Annales*. He edited Lucie Varga’s *Les Autorités invisibles. Une historienne autrichienne aux ‘Annales’* in 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Davis suggests there was an adulterous relationship between Febvre and Varga, 124.

<sup>24</sup> Davis, “Women and the World of the ‘Annales’”, 123.

<sup>25</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Iroquois Women, European Women”, in Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker, eds., *Women, ‘Race,’ and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 97-111, 97.

as more ‘advanced’ and the other as ‘primitive.’ The intent of her essay was to discuss the lives of women on each side of the cultural divide to gain new insight into the meeting of peoples in North America. Prior to this article, Davis had been invited to a conference held at the University of Chicago. The conference was structured around the question, “Do We Need ‘The Renaissance’?” At first, Davis thought not--the Renaissance would be inapplicable to the North American woodlands.<sup>26</sup> Then, she considered if it was immediately exclusionary to discount the Amerindians from having a history ‘fit’ with European writings. Ultimately Davis’ investigation of travel accounts, Jesuit writings, ethnographic studies, material cultures, and Amerindian tales and legends concluded that Amerindian peoples did experience two elements of change that are central to Renaissance historiography – eloquence and sense of self. Amerindian men in particular, experienced the deepening of eloquence with political oratory, and women sought the chance to speak publicly through religion.<sup>27</sup> Davis is able successfully to attend to the gender divide on both sides of the colonizer/colonized dichotomy, and offers a comparative analysis which decentres European formulations and exclusion.

Davis’ later article, “Displacing and Displeasing” (1998) examines the surge of writing about women in the early modern period that had been written alongside the rise of Women’s and gender history in the 1980s.<sup>28</sup> With the linguistic turn of the 1980s there had been a sharp increase of cross-disciplinary collaboration, predominantly with the intersection of the historical and literary. This collaboration allowed for nuanced investigation into the social situations and varieties of experience of women. For example, feminist in France writing on matters of gender

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<sup>26</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Displacing and Displeasing: Writing about Women in the Early Modern Period”, in Susan D. Amussen and Adele Seeff, eds., *Attending to Early Modern Women* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998):25-37, 34.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, “Iroquois Women, European Women”, 106.

<sup>28</sup> Hunt, 5.

and public law in the sixteenth and seventeenth century France had to find a way to define constitutionally without the exclusion of women as a category of analysis.<sup>29</sup> Davis additionally argues that previous research would not account for how women made use of religion and community for their own devices (as had Bertrande de Rols). Recent research however, which Davis praises, has studied same-sex unions in the early modern period, friendships within the Catholic nunnery, and cases of female households where one of the pair dresses as a man.<sup>30</sup> Women's and gender history, as demonstrated by Davis and within the discipline itself, was becoming increasingly aware of cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary connections.

Her 1995 book, *Women on the Margins*, is the perfect example of how Davis continued to entangle herself with topics that fueled much of her recent work – the complexities of women and gender, rhetoric, and culture. In *Women on the Margins*, Davis has retrieved the lives of three seventeenth-century women and examined their opportunities, hardships, familial relationships, migration, religion, and lifestyle; all in the attempt to locate these individuals in their social life. Her exploration of Glikl Bas Judah Leib, Marie de L'Incarnation and Maria Sibylla Merian in *Women on the Margins* is particularly effective in illustrating how women took advantage of their position in their social life. The titular margins on which these seventeenth-century women reside reflect the varieties of their experience and adventure, and Davis simultaneously brings these three distinct women into a single narrative of interconnectedness. Glikl, a successful Jewish business woman, displaced from Hamburg, penned seven confessional autobiographical accounts for her children. In her book of her life, Glikl expressed her pain, annoyances, and celebrations – from the death of her beloved husband Haim, to her distaste for

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<sup>29</sup> Davis, "Displacing and Displeasing" 28.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 33.

how the younger generation “want to take away everything from their parents without asking whether they are in a position to give that much.”<sup>31</sup> Marie, in a similar fashion to Glikl, authored her autobiography for her son, Claude Martin. Following Marie’s departure from France for her involvement as a missionary in the ‘New World’, Claude “begged her to provide him an account of her interior life and of the grace and favors the Lord had bestowed upon her.”<sup>32</sup> She was also encouraged to attach writing to her religious experience and was soon immersed in a world of literate culture that a Marie, as a Catholic tradeswoman would not normally have access to. The last of the three women, Maria is also located by her written word, but unlike to Glikl and Marie, the Protestant naturalist and scientific illustrator had left behind no memoir or autobiography. Instead, Maria is accounted for through her art, her work of observing and depicting the insects, butterflies and tropical plants she encountered. Maria had left her home in Nuremberg to journey to Suriname for the purpose of studying tropical ecology.<sup>33</sup> Each woman was removed from formal centres of learning and institutions, but Davis argues that in their own way the women embraced their marginal position and reconstituted it as a locally defined centre.<sup>34</sup>

It is during this period that Davis begins to introduce herself (and her audience) to topics more theoretical in nature, and inquisitive of the state of historical inquiry. Two of the earlier articles, “Stories and the Hunger to Know” (1992) and “Toward Mixtures and Margins” (1992) argue the usefulness of looking beyond the boundaries of the document for historical sources. Davis proposes that while social history was not the most popular subject in the 1990s as it once

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<sup>31</sup> Glikl Bas Judah Leib, *Die Memoiren der Glukel von Hameln*, 1645-1719, ed. David Kaufmann (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kaufmann) See also Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth Century Lives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 45.

<sup>32</sup> Davis, *Women on the Margins*, 64.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 210.



it is still useful to marry the techniques of classical social theory with cultural history.<sup>35</sup> Often cultural history is studied using microhistorical methods, but keeping the two techniques associated with one another privileges both a micro and macro view.<sup>36</sup> This does not assume that the social is the ‘real’ and the cultural derivative or ‘secondary.’ Cultural questions of symbols, beliefs and customs are often understandable through the analysis of power, communication, and social structures.<sup>37</sup> This interrelationship, in turn, then enables the historians to move between written and oral sources. For Davis, recovering as many voices from the “dead subjects of the past” is crucial for analysis.<sup>38</sup> The story that the historian tells should include input from as many peoples as possible – even the chances encounters should be included. Merging cultural and social questions, and written and oral accounts together, will enable narratives that move between the mainstream and the margins.

After the release of *Women on the Margins* in 1995, Davis became more attentive to questions of historiography and historical methods, particularly as the world was beginning to become more interconnected. The following section will address globalization in greater depth as at this time it was still in its infancy. “Who Owns History” (1996), “Cultural Mixture and Historical Meditation” (1997) and “Comparative History and its Goals” (1998) collectively address issues of nationalism, ethnicity and identity. Davis asks ‘do people own their own history?’<sup>39</sup> The debate on this question is ongoing. Some groups have been silenced, misrepresented and underrepresented in historical publications. This silence can come as a form

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 31. See also, Natalie Zemon Davis, “Stories and the Hunger to Know”, *Yale Journal of Criticism* No. 5 Vol. 4 (Spring 1992): pp. 159-163, 160.

<sup>36</sup> For additional reading on microhistorical methods see Levi, Giovanni Levi, “On Microhistory” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Polity Press: Cambridge. 1991) , 97-120.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>39</sup> Davis, “Who Owns History?” 20.

of domination, lack of access to materials to build their own historical account, or have simply been left out.<sup>40</sup> Davis highlights A.M. Sullivan's *Story of Ireland* (1867) as a source of misrepresentation. Sullivan argued that Irish history had been absorbed into England's 'corrupt' narrative which had showcased only bloodshed and war, and ignored the 'glorious' biographies of Irishmen.<sup>41</sup> The other question Davis asks is 'does the West own history?' She looks to post-colonial and subaltern historian Dipesh Chakrabarty for one possible answer. While Chakrabarty suggests that Indian history is conceptualized in terms of a western narrative, often branding India as 'not-there-yet' – he imagines a new kind of history that casts modernity as something seized forcibly by Europe and always contested.<sup>42</sup> Davis does not believe that the West owns history. Davis continues to argue that ownership of history does not even belong to professional historians and that this is not necessarily a bad realization.<sup>43</sup> History does not belong to one party but requires replenishment through collective research and shared memories that explore expository and rhetorical strategies for weaving different genres and accounts together.<sup>44</sup>

The article "Cultural Mixture" continues this theme of inclusion of multiple voices. Following the Second World War, studies of ethnicity, immigration, national movements, the nature of the citizen, post-colonial politics and identities have belonged to two axes: that of assimilation and that of authenticity.<sup>45</sup> Recent interpretations, particularly those by intellectuals from former colonial empires or students of colonial discourse utilize three different approaches.

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<sup>40</sup> Conway and Davis, "Feminism and a Scholarly Friendship", 82.

<sup>41</sup> Davis, "Who Owns History?" 21.

<sup>42</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" In *Representations*, 37 (1992): 1-26, 10-11. See also Chakrabarty later publication which expands on this argument, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2009) 71.

<sup>43</sup> Davis, "Who Owns History?" 26.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 26, 34.

<sup>45</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Cultural Mixture and Historical Meditation", *Budapest Review of Books* No. 7 Vol.1 (Spring 1997): 6-9, 7.

The first, *Métissage culturel* is the examination of the mental universe of those who have experienced emigration. The second explores how knowledge travels across boundaries, creating “patchwork identities.”<sup>46</sup> The third, acknowledges hybridity and culture across an ethnic divide. For Davis, ethnicity is constructed from history, memory, customs and language; it can be multiple and is always changing.<sup>47</sup> Two cases of cultural mixture that Davis first explores in this article is that of Leo Africanus and David Nassy. Leo Africanus, the subject of her later work *Trickster Travels*, moved between the two worlds of Christianity and Islam. David Nassy, whom Davis would explore more fully in the years to come, was a member of the Jewish community, a plantation owner in colonial Suriname – he was both a member of a religious minority and simultaneously an imperial figure. Both men were conscious of their hybridity in multiple worlds, of their ethnicity, and of the complexities of their identity.<sup>48</sup>

“Comparative History and its Goals” is one of Davis’ last publications in the 1990s which considers various strategies for approaching civilizations, culture and mixture. Davis was, of course, no stranger to comparative models as we have seen in “Reasons of Misrule” (1971), “‘Women’s History’ in Transition: The European Case” (1976) and in her graduate course “Society and the Sexes”. Comparative history contrasts instances of the same institution or event to establish a narrative and factors to explain differences and similarities.<sup>49</sup> There are two methods often used for comparative histories. The first looks at societies that were contemporary and adjacent.<sup>50</sup> This method tends to matters of exchange and diffusion of peoples, goods, beliefs

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<sup>46</sup> Davis, “Cultural Mixture and Historical Meditation”, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Beyond Evolution: Comparative History and its Goals”, in *Wojciecha Wrozsaka*, ed., *Swiat historii. Prace z metodologii historii i historii historiografii dedykowane Jerzemu Topolskiemu* (Pozna: Instytut Historii, 1998), pp. 149-157,

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 149.

and ideas. The second peers between societies separated by either time or place (or both). This method instead draws comparisons despite little, to non-existent interaction between these societies. Comparative history may be hard to do well because of sweeping generalizations, but as it works closely on both the ethnographic and on the grand scales it has the potential to provide a high level of satisfaction.<sup>51</sup> As the next section of this chapter will show, Davis would continue to work with comparative methods on the micro and on the macro scale as global history came to maturity in the 2000s.

### **The 2000s: Globalization and Writing Globally**

There seemed to be a ‘historiographic revolution’ at the end of the 1990s, with a heightened focus on the transnational, on globalization, and the global. This shift in historical inquiry was the attempt to offer a new model for understanding our place in a highly interconnected and interdependent world. As this chapter has discussed, cultural theories - under their various labels – have frequently attacked nation-focused history. In the early 2000s the nation-centered historical writing began to stretch under the change and diversity in national identities. Historians began increasingly seeking to place their own nation-state within a global context.<sup>52</sup> A transnational approach considers the movement of people, goods and ideas across nationally-drawn boundaries.<sup>53</sup> This approach offers an analysis for migratory patterns and cultural exchange. However, the tendency to focus on the identity of the nation is problematic as the nation and identity, as suggested by cultural theory, is a construction in and of itself. Even as we moved into a more global world, there was still pressure for nation-bound and nationalist

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>52</sup> Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 51.

<sup>53</sup> CA Bayley, “AHR Conversation: On Transnational History”, *The American Historical Review* 111, No. 5 (2006), 1443.

history; in 1949 a textbook was commissioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for middle school French students.<sup>54</sup> The UNESCO initially wanted to encourage an international comprehension. Unfortunately neither author of the 1949 textbook, Lucien Febvre and François Crouzet, would live to see the textbook published as it was blocked from being published until 2012 for its de-emphasis on the nation and of Europe.<sup>55</sup>

Globalization as a governing concept in historiography has only relatively recently been adopted by historians, beginning in the early 2000s. Lynn Hunt proposes that globalization is the next new paradigm which has since replaced modernization.<sup>56</sup> There is no concrete consensus as to when, historically, the process of globalization began. However, there are three competing arguments as to its origins. The first, claims that globalization was born out of the nineteenth century revolution in transport and communication – bringing with it faster and more effective ways to facilitate long distance connections.<sup>57</sup> The second sees globalization as a gradual, long-term development with frequent periods of interruption. The third argument determines globalization as much more recent—largely a consequence of the invention and global usage of the internet. Two of the major contenders who have attempted to define globalization are Immanuel Wallerstein and Anibal Quijano. Immanuel Wallerstein, an American sociologist, had decades earlier introduced “world-systems theory” to examine processes of change and development through capitalism, economics and the division of labour.<sup>58</sup> Wallerstein’s system, however, is said to be constructed from the perspective and experience of the ‘first world’.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*, 46-47.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 47-49.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>58</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Duke University Press, 2012) xxvi.

<sup>59</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *World –Systems Analysis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) 16.

Anibal Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist instead offered his version of Wallerstein's theory, rejecting the notion that globalization is tied naturally to Europe. Quijano emphasizes the crucial role played by the Americas as the first modern and global geo-cultural identity.<sup>60</sup> Further still, Quijano suggests that globalization rests on a coloniality of power with two axes: capitalism based on enforced labour, and race as the biological codification of differences between the 'conquered' and the 'conqueror'.<sup>61</sup> Walter Mignolo, author of *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* proposes that globalization is not simply an absorption of Western values. The key marker of globalization is interdependence; that is, there is a two way relationship within this process of change, and non-Western histories (and non-Western scholars) are equally crucial for understanding this jointly constructed relationship.<sup>62</sup> The key argument here is that multiple modernities are imaginable – complete with alternative paths to them.

Davis' relationship with globalization was briefly introduced into her writing in the late 1990s as she engaged with topics of cultural mixture and comparative models of history. This section will highlight Davis' publications during the 2000s. Her writing in this period neatly follows the historiographic and intellectual trend as Davis grapples with questions of globalization, global history and what she calls "global consciousness."<sup>63</sup> Several of her earlier articles correspond with the initial spike in the number of historians writing about globalization, "Global History: Many Stories" (2000), "Polarities, Hybridities: What Strategies for Decentring?" (2001), "The Historians and Literary Uses" (2003), and "What is Universal about History?" (2006). Two of the books released in this decade, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century*

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<sup>60</sup> Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, xxvi.

<sup>61</sup> Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* 62.

<sup>62</sup> Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, xi-5.

<sup>63</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Global History, Many Stories", in *Eine Welt--Eine Geschichte?* 43 (2000):373-380, 375.

*France* (2000), and *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth Century Muslim Between Worlds* (2007) directly engage with processes of globalization and global consciousness. It is during this period that Davis began to develop her understanding and increase her interaction with the value of historical film with *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision* (2000) and “Movie or Monograph? A Historian/Filmmakers Perspective” (2003).

I first want to explore Davis’s venture into the field of historical film. As the previous chapter highlighted, Davis was no stranger to film, as we have seen through her role as a historical consultant during the production of *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* in 1982.<sup>64</sup> Twenty years later, Davis proposes that “we can ask questions of historical films that are parallel to those we ask of historical books.”<sup>65</sup> *Slaves on Screen* concentrates on five films, *Spartacus*, *Burn!*, *The Last Supper*, *Amistad* and *Beloved*, each a portrayal of different forms of slave resistance. While this is not a comprehensive study of – “filmic historying” (to borrow the phrase from Robert Rosenstone), Davis does attempt to place each film within a historical context.<sup>66</sup> Although it may appear as an unprecedented path for Davis to travel, in fact she has not departed too far from her usual subjects (though, geographically and chronologically, she could no longer be defined principally as a historian of sixteenth-century France). As we have seen, there has been a consistent focus on people outside the traditional centres of power or wealth in the early modern period. The 1990s showcased how Davis began to introduce issues of cultural mixture and promoted a more global orientation of the past. Still an advocate for looking beyond the

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<sup>64</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Historian and Literary Uses” *Profession* (2003) pp. 21-27, 23.

<sup>65</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) 15.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History*, Second Edition (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2012) 27. Rosenstone is a leading historian who studies the relationship between history and visual media. For additional reading see, *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* and *Experiments in rethinking History*, ed. Alun Munslow and Robert Rosenstone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

boundaries of literature. The films featured in *Slaves on Screen* focus on slavery, plantations, uprising, resistance, and identity – some of these themes were prominent in previous works that we have seen, and the subjects of slavery and plantations would be addressed by Davis in following years. Her analysis on *Burn!* for example, examines how culture is effectively portrayed on screen through religion and ceremonial festivity. The film shows how the slave children would paint their bodies before the carnival, how the men women and children would dance, and would play African songs in the background.<sup>67</sup> While Davis notes that both African and Christian motifs are employed within the film, it nevertheless is able to capture the mixture of culture, power, class, ethnicity and historicity all in one scene.<sup>68</sup> Reflecting on her personal experience with film as history, Davis offers the eager historian some advice. The historian should fight to have final say about the major historical elements in the film and should work with a crew who is equally as responsive to historical and cinematic criteria.<sup>69</sup> Her historic/cinematic criteria include the construction of an image of a past time and place that is plausible, the scripting of a plot should not do serious damage to the concrete evidence, and the constraint of the imagination of the filmmaker/historian by the available evidence.<sup>70</sup> Film is one avenue to explore the possibilities and knowledge of the past. It should, and does open up a wide discussion as much as a historical book can.

The Davis' article "Polarities, Hybridities: What Strategies for Decentring?" (2001) there is a continued discussion of the 'Renaissance question' that Davis asked in her comparative study of Iroquois and European women. Here, Davis considers the three main strategies for

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<sup>67</sup> Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, 49-50.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 52. For a similar argument see also, E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 9, 11, 404.

<sup>69</sup> Davis, "Movie or Monograph? A Historian/Filmmaker's Perspective", 47.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 47.



decentring the Renaissance: the gaze strategy, equal privilege, and hybridity. The limitations of the gaze strategy is that it is typically a European gaze, focused on western perceptions and writings. The gaze casts Indigenous peoples as peculiar characters in European fantasies and plots.<sup>71</sup> The second strategy is mostly used by ethnographers and social historians who have tried to privilege both sides as reactors and actors.<sup>72</sup> Davis associates the third strategy with Homi Bhabha, author of *Nation and Narration* (1990), and a well-known Indian scholar and literary theorist. Bhabha has used the term hybridity to describe the process of exchange and mixture across the cultural divide, ‘freeing it from its racial connotation.’<sup>73</sup> This colonial mentality often promotes the idea of seeing one culture as ‘behind’. Pursuing the strategy of exchange and mixture puts certain forms of inquiry into the foreground. It allows for the micro-historical portrait of the individual to be placed in relation to cultural patterns and practices. One of the examples Davis cites Native American historian Richard White’s, ‘middle ground’ for how the historian can manoeuvre between polarities and hybridity. White proposes that the ‘middle ground’ can reflect the accumulated practices of Amerindians and Europeans who had dealt with each other diplomatically, violently—in both friendship and anger.<sup>74</sup> It is a way to view kinds of transactions and interactions, the many ways in which actors learn from one another. Gift exchange and barter can be examined in terms of the creation of a middle ground and system of common practice. Using the exchange-and-mixture strategy promoted by Bhabha, it allows the objects themselves to be followed and the subsequent interactions studied. Items and objects

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<sup>71</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Polarities, Hybridities: What Strategies for Decentring?” Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podruchny, eds., in *Decentring the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 19-32, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Davis, “Polarities, Hybridities: What Strategies for Decentring?”, 24.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 26. See also Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 15, 307.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 26. See also Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

alone can carry multiple meanings and messages tied to diplomatic, economic, and religious connotations.

In 2000 Davis published her fourth book, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, which complements the above article “Polarities, Hybridities” well, as she continues to document the meanings and messages of gifts and gift exchange in sixteenth-century France. Davis’ method combines both social and cultural techniques to understand the modes of gift and exchange, and changes to the ‘gift system’ over time. While much of the book is focused on France, in her chapter “Gifts Gone Wrong”, Davis looks beyond Europe to acknowledge the dimension of gift exchange with the Iroquois. The Frenchmen would distribute small items of use to one another, such as knives, axes and combs.<sup>75</sup> In Europe, the knife especially was considered a token of an important relationship and friendship, it sustained trust.<sup>76</sup> However, across the Atlantic, these objects became the substance of European gifting and barter with the Amerindian peoples. The customary exchange that carried meanings of friendship became the deceptive granting of goods that the Europeans believed to have been overvalued. The Amerindian ‘savages’ were not considered qualified for full reciprocity according to European rules.<sup>77</sup> But the Amerindians were not oblivious to this deception. They were often hostile and skeptical towards the Europeans.<sup>78</sup> The gift-giving landscape in the ‘New World’ was unbalanced and the objects presented as gifts carried misleading meanings and ‘European’ messages. With gifts as her main subject Davis is able to elucidate a theory that goes beyond the economic aspect of exchange. The exploration of

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<sup>75</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000) 80. Davis had first explored this topic in 1982 with her article “Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, series 5, 33 (1983): 69-88.

<sup>76</sup> Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 81. See also, ““Polarities, Hybridities: What Strategies for Decentring?”” 22.

<sup>77</sup> Davis, 82.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 82-83.

how gifts are received and given from positions of royalty to peasantry, from France to the New World, between men and women, for barter or for friendship, allows for an interdisciplinary and ethnographical study of the sixteenth-century past, but now with a trans-Atlantic dimension.

As this Davis continued to venture into cases of historical inquiry and cases of globalization, “Global History, Many Stories” (2000) addressed such questions. She compares prominent practitioners of global history in the early 2000s, Bruce Mazlish, William McNeill and his son J.R. McNeill. Mazlish backed the theory that global history is more recent, most likely tied to the eighteenth century with the movement of populations.<sup>79</sup> William McNeill and his son J.R. McNeill instead argued that this global phenomenon dated back many centuries and went beyond the movement of people, and should include the movement of plants, animals and diseases.<sup>80</sup> In this article however, Davis is firm when she says that she would ‘like to give a defence [sic] to not global history, but to global consciousness.’<sup>81</sup> Global consciousness forces research into historical encounters between cultures that perceived themselves as radically different. In the above article we saw Davis write this sense of global consciousness for the Amerindian and European peoples. Global history, for Davis, has two broad tasks: the first centres on communication, the second on power. Global history should describe and analyze the movements, connections and exchange between peoples.<sup>82</sup> This history must also include the description and analysis of the domination of people and their resistance to it.<sup>83</sup> As Davis moves

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<sup>79</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Global History: Many Stories” in *Eine Welt--Eine Geschichte? 43. Deutscher Historikertag in Aachen, 26.bis 29. September 2000* (Munich: Berichtsband, 2001), pp. 373-380, 373.

<sup>80</sup> Davis, “Global History, Many Stories”, 373. See also, J.R. McNeill, William McNeill and W.H McNeill, *A Bird's-eye View of World History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003) Although William McNeill tends to reflect an older style of world history and not global history, especially with the *The Rise of the West* (1963) he later addressed this imperial, post-war perspective in the article “‘The Rise of the West’ After 25 Years” *Journal of World History*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring, 1990), pp. 1-21.

<sup>81</sup> Davis, “Global History, Many Stories”, 374.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 378.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 378.

heavily into research of cross-cultural interaction and cultural mixture she tries to account for imbalances of power, migration, hybridity and identity by staying faithful to these two tasks of global history.

Prior to the release of *Trickster Travels* in 2007, Davis considers the limitations of a universal history in her article “What is Universal about History” (2005). Davis claims universal history has not effectively dealt with deep cultural and social difference.<sup>84</sup> Universal history is often triumphalist, celebrating the victory of empires, and adhering to the ‘Western’ model of progress that has been discussed above. Davis promotes the notion of multiple modernities to replace the conception of linear thinking and progress.<sup>85</sup> Alan Lester, a historian of colonialism and imperialism, defines this notion as consisting of multiple trajectories of historical change that define and space and place. In a system of networks, webs, and circuits, this multiplicity connects histories globally and presents them as fluid and reciprocally interrelated.<sup>86</sup> As Davis began to focus on cultural entanglement on a global scale it is not surprising that she saw this as a strategy of inclusion and disfavoured single evolutionary schemes. Davis writes that, ‘I might have said post-colonial world or post-cold-war world, but with new imperialism and new fundamentalism [...] those post phrases are too sanguine.’<sup>87</sup> Preference for multiple paths and alternative trajectories challenges the assessment of historical societies into binaries of

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<sup>84</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “What is Universal about History?” in Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz, eds., *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005) 15-20, 15.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 16. See also Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, xxvi. The idea of multiple modernities was introduced with an earlier discussion of Immanuel Wallerstein and Anibal Quijano on p80.

<sup>86</sup> Alan Lester, “Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire” *History Compass*, Vol 4, No. 1 (2006): 124-141, 124, 132.

<sup>87</sup> Davis, “What is Universal about History?” 19.

backward/advanced or spiritual/material.<sup>88</sup> Davis concludes her article with the following declaration:

We need this enlargement for ourselves as historians, for our local associations, and for the power of our collective voice in support of historical inquiry and expression. [...] With our expanded networks of collaboration, our potential for wisdom as historians and our ability for telling what women and men made happen in the past it is greater than ever.<sup>89</sup>

*Trickster Travels* (2007) is the last book Davis has published to date, and is an example of how she has further widened her scope of study. While researching merchant publishers in sixteenth-century France, Davis had first encountered *The Description of Africa* more than forty years earlier. The French merchant, Jean Temporal, had translated the work into French – but at the time this did not pique Davis’ interest in more than the brief encounter.<sup>90</sup> Later, as her own writing began to shift in perspective, she returned to this work. In 2001 Davis had originally planned to publish a chapter on Leo Africanus, but then 9/11 happened, and she decided to dedicate a full book to him.<sup>91</sup> *The Description of Africa* (1550) continued to shape European visions of Africa. It was one of the first publications that spoke about Africa from the perspective of someone who had lived and travelled in those parts.<sup>92</sup> The 1550 book was categorized into nine parts, beginning with a general introduction on geography, weather, customs, economy, and culture.<sup>93</sup> Seven of the parts were devoted to description of towns, villages, mountains, desert region and people dwelling there. The author of the 1550 book, al-Hasan al-Wazzan, better

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>90</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007) 10.

<sup>91</sup> Roitman and Fatah-Black, ““Being speculative is better than to not do it at all”: an interview with Natalie Zemon Davis”, 4.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>93</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, ““Leo Africanus’ Presents Africa to Europeans”, in Joaneath Spicer, ed., *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2012): 60-74, 71.

known as ‘Leo Africanus’, became another example of how an individual could exist in a state of hybridity and within multiple worlds. To be as faithful to Leo Africanus’s character as evidence allowed, Davis was careful to locate him as accurately as she could within sixteenth-century North Africa. The society at the time was populated by the Berbers, Arabs, Jew, Andalusians, and Blacks – with Europeans closing in on its borders.<sup>94</sup> Wazzan was trained in rhetoric, law and theology became a prominent diplomat and visited many polities across Morocco.<sup>95</sup> During his travels Wazzan was captured by Christian Spanish pirates and instead of being taken as ransom, was presented as a ‘gift’ to Pope Leo X. Wazzan was later baptized by Pope Leo and was given the new Christian name of ‘Joannes Leo Giovannie Leone.’<sup>96</sup> Although free from his original imprisonment, Leo Africanus relied heavily on Christian favour and continued to exist on the margin of elite European circles.

In the case of Leo Africanus, Davis pursues his entangled identity; he had not been entirely stripped of his past identity nor had he fully embraced his new Christian one. Leo Africanus moved between two worlds consciously and made use of the cultural and social resources he needed to survive, discover, write, make relationships and reflect on society around him and himself. *Trickster Travels* highlights two processes: cultural strategies and religious commitment.<sup>97</sup> Davis suggests that Leo knowingly drew upon cultural strategies he had learned during his time in Italy to survive as a Christian and Muslim simultaneously.<sup>98</sup> The diplomat also had to sustain his commitment to Islam while he was physically living in a place of Christian learning.<sup>99</sup> *The Description of Africa* reflected both of these processes. The book was not only

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<sup>94</sup> Davis, *Trickster Travels*, 12.

<sup>95</sup> Davis, “‘Leo Africanus’ Presents Africa to Europeans”, 61.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>97</sup> Davis, “Writing the ‘Rites of Violence’ and Afterward”, 28.

<sup>98</sup> Davis, *Trickster Travels*, 59, 65.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 69, 80.

free of religious polemic that had dominated much of the contemporary writing, but Leo had to exercise discretion and balance so as not to offend his Christian masters and yet be excusable one day to powerful Muslims who might learn of the manuscript.<sup>100</sup> Here Davis explored polarities of Leo Africanus' capture and subsequent domination, and his resistance through the cultural contracts and choices he consciously made as a result; she had "tried to recreate him as he was, reinvigorate him as an Arab and a Muslim, give him back his Arab name."<sup>101</sup> Despite *Trickster Travels* being Davis' last completed book, as the next section will show, she continues to ask questions to locate processes of social and cultural exchange, and cases of cultural entanglements.

### **The 2010s: Colonial Suriname and Slave Experience**

The current state of historical inquiry relies heavily on a global perspective. The trend of globalization and global theory has continued to influence Davis' writings. Another change that has been important intellectually, particularly in North America, has been the emergence of queer theory.<sup>102</sup> What had used to be called 'Gay and Lesbian studies' went under a radical shift after Judith Butler, a prominent feminist and American scholar, argued that sexuality as well as gender was constructed.<sup>103</sup> This notion challenged the use of men and women as categories, and gender itself as a category of analysis.<sup>104</sup> This supports the cultural theories that have been discussed in this chapter thus far, which had re-centred the emphasis on culture, and had challenged these paradigms that overlook culture. While Davis has asked questions of culture

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<sup>100</sup> Davis, "Writing the 'Rites of Violence' and Afterward", 22.

<sup>101</sup> Roitman and Fatah-Black, "'Being speculative is better than to not do it at all': an interview with Natalie Zemon Davis" 4.

<sup>102</sup> Davis, "The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003)", 26.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 26-27. See Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>104</sup> For further reading see Joan Scott's "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" *The American Historical Review* Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), pp. 1053-1075.

and of globalization, she has yet to engage fully with the emerging trend of queer theory.<sup>105</sup> This is not to say that she has been absent in the debate, as she is quite obviously an intersectional feminist, as she accounts for more than sex and gender but class and race too, in her later writing but Davis has not discussed queer theory beyond acknowledging other historian's research on same-sex unions in the early modern period.<sup>106</sup>

To elaborate further on the two broad tasks of global history given by Davis, one focused on communication, and the second on power. Our own 'global age' promotes an alternative framework for analysis which encourages historians to distance themselves further from national and nation-state bound narratives. Global history essentially enables the historian to move beyond arbitrarily-defined and historically unstable spatial units, including empires, nations, religions, and civilizations.<sup>107</sup> As this section will demonstrate, the ability to transcend previously established boundaries and borders allows for 'decentring' narratives in order to realize a new potential in historical writing. There are several distinct features of global methodology: its proposal of alternative places of space, its emphasis on the synchronicity of historical events, its rejection of the teleologies of the modernization theory; and its self-reflectivity on the issue of eurocentrism.<sup>108</sup> It is a new approach in both scale and narrative style, and is particularly concerned with a 're-spacing' of the globe.

Yet a global approach to the past, however, is not without limitations. One concern of the global, is the assumption that global history focuses a macro-narrative and operates on a

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<sup>105</sup> For additional reading consider Annamarie Jagose, "Feminism's Queer Theory" *Sage Journals: Feminism and Psychology*, 157-174 (2009) 160.

<sup>106</sup> Davis, "Displacing and Displeasing" 33. The term intersectionality was coined by feminist scholar and civil rights activist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989, it is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage."

<sup>107</sup> Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) 116.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 64-67.



planetary scale. Global history that incorporates a macro scale is at risk of generalizing, stereotyping and categorizing the historical subjects they seek to explore.<sup>109</sup> However, Clare Anderson, who studies subaltern history, has found a middle ground as she promotes both micro and macro scale as a method of understanding. Anderson applies the macro scale to transportation, but also focuses life histories and biography as part of her micro-narrative within a global practice.<sup>110</sup> Another critique concerns how this methodology is self-reflective of eurocentrism. In a thought-provoking essay, Antoinette Burton, a global and transnational historian, suggests that what may look marginal from the perspective of Euro-American historiographies and locations, may not be.<sup>111</sup> This, then, is a struggle against a view of the world that can still be unconsciously Eurocentric. There also has to be caution toward removing Eurocentrism while replacing it with Eurasian-centrism.<sup>112</sup> With these limitations in mind, the following discussion will place Davis' articles from 2010 to 2019 in dialogue with, and in context of, the current move toward global historical writing and methodology.

Before I move into discussion of some key articles authored by Davis in the past ten years, I first want to acknowledge her current status as a scholar and historian. This thesis has closely followed the trajectory of Davis' career from 1955, and, it is during this period she became especially decorated and rewarded for her academic contributions. Acknowledged as a prolific publisher of articles, in 2010 Davis received the Norwegian government's Holberg

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<sup>109</sup> Francesca Trivellato, "Is there a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?" *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011) 2.

<sup>110</sup> Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 5.

<sup>111</sup> Antoinette Burton, "Not Even Remotely Global? Method and Scale in World History" In *History Workshop Journal*, 64 (2007):323-328, 326. Burton has focused on similar topics as Davis, women, slavery, resistance and family but geographically focuses on India; see her book *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>112</sup> Maxine Berg, "Global History: approaches and new directions," in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century*, edited by Maxine Berg (Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

International Memorial Prize for being ‘one of the most creative historians writing today’ and for her efforts to reshape the field of the early modern period.<sup>113</sup> She was awarded this prestigious prize for her continuous inspiration of young scholars and her promotion of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the past. In 2012, Davis was named the Companion of the Order of Canada, awarded to those who have demonstrated the highest degree of merit to Canada and to the humanities.<sup>114</sup> Her academic recognition continued in 2013 as she received the National Humanities Medal, presented to her by President Barack Obama.<sup>115</sup> The recipients of the humanities medal were asked to share a ‘turning point’ in their life and the motivation behind the character of their work. In a letter of reflection ‘Turning Points’, Davis expressed that her husband, Chandler had been her support behind the type of work that she does,

His courage and independence of mind are linked to the encouragement he offered at many moments in my life. When I wanted to do my dissertation on artisans and printing workers [...] he said, “Go for it.” When I wanted to expand my work to the study of women and gender, he said “Go for it.” He had always encouraged me to write accessibly and, as my best and first “common reader,” has helped fit my books to reach a wider audience.<sup>116</sup>

The majority of Davis’ book publications have been dedicated to Chandler, referring to him once as her ‘authentic husband.’<sup>117</sup>

Although Davis had discussed “decentring” previously with the ‘Renaissance question’, her article “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World” (2011) considers a broader global context. This article challenges the historian to look beyond superficial dissimilarities of historical actors, and to discontinue placing these actors in separate

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<sup>113</sup> Davis, “How the FBI Turned Me on to Rare Books”, 18.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>117</sup> Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, viii.

and distinct boxes – which has previously worked against any sense of interconnectedness.<sup>118</sup> Davis comparatively examines the literary careers of Ibn Khaldun and (in a nod to one of her earliest subjects) Christine de Pizan, both of whom are situated on either side of the Mediterranean in the late fourteenth and early fifteen centuries. Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah* (*Book of Examples*), a study written in Arabic as a prologue to a longer world history, describes the character and history of all civilizations, while Christine de Pizan’s work, *The City of Ladies*, defends the qualities and accomplishments of women, past and present. Davis chooses to juxtapose these two literary figures as they represent a history that has been ‘decentered’ yet held together in a globalized world.<sup>119</sup> Ibn Khaldun and Christine Pizan represent an example of an unknown interconnected world, previously overlooked by the historian. For Davis, these two historical actors exemplify alternative versions of life as people of letters on two sides of the Mediterranean. Ibn Khaldun and Christine Pizan, both strong philosophical and academic figures, wrote their literary work addressing men and women among court royals, scholars, and clerics, writing about and reflecting upon their own conception of the human experience during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>120</sup> Davis does however note, that there is no evidence to suggest that either scholar knew of the other’s work, or had any level of mutual interaction.<sup>121</sup> Still, Davis insists that the two Mediterranean authors were, nonetheless, connected in meaningful ways. The direct comparison of Ibn Khaldun and Pizan forces the permeability of geopolitical and cultural borders of history, whereas a previous historian would have centered the site of production and circulation of knowledge exclusively within these borders.

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<sup>118</sup> Davis, “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World”, 188.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 190.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 195.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 197.

In 2002, Davis predicted that history would become increasingly more interdisciplinary; she suspected that one of the trends that would soon present itself in upcoming studies would be the intersection of history and law.<sup>122</sup> Interestingly enough, Davis wrote “Judges, Masters, Diviners” in 2011 which was then published by the *Law and History Review*. The subject matter of this article is perhaps the furthest departure from her earlier work; the European experience is no longer the central focus. In this article she investigates the varieties of criminal justice experienced by slaves in Suriname in the late seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Davis sought to address the gaps in the history of slavery, especially when it came to the slaves’ own efforts to police their own community on the plantation. Davis had hinted at her curiosity with slavery and resistance in colonial Suriname in her earlier article “Cultural Mixture and Historical Meditation” (1997) with the story of David Nassy, the Jewish plantation owner.<sup>123</sup> However, now her attention was centred on matters of law, crime, hearings, punishment, slave experience and slave memories. Europe has a presence as the colonial power in Suriname, but Davis here does not privilege a narrative that carries a ‘European gaze’ and instead attends to cross-cultural interactions. Davis wanted to “sketch a fuller picture of the possible structures and practices of slave-initiated justice in Suriname.”<sup>124</sup> The slave community often preferred to deal with its own offenders first before taking a matter to the plantation owner or colonial court. During the earliest stage of accusation, a seer or diviner would be brought in. The accused would have to go through three various ‘ordeals’ which would either prove innocence or guilt.<sup>125</sup> Davis includes three ordeals that are tied to a particular cultural and geographic area. The first, from the

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<sup>122</sup> Davis, “The History of Women and Gender (1970-2003)” 27.

<sup>123</sup> Davis, “Cultural Mixture and Historical Meditation”, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Judges, Masters, Diviners: Slaves’ Experience of Criminal Justice in Colonial Suriname”, *Law and History Review*, Vol. 29 No. 4 (2011): pp. 925-984, 939.

<sup>125</sup> Davis, “Judges, Masters, Diviners”, 932-933. Similar idea to the ‘rough justice’ depicted by E.P. Thompson in “Rough Music” 467-539, in *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (Merlin Press, 1992).

Akan polity, involved consuming a special drink or food after an oath was taken by the accused.<sup>126</sup> The second, from the Congo, had the accused test their skin against the heat of boiling water. An ordeal from the Kingdom of Benin had the seer pass a quill through the tongue of the accused – if it passed through with ease it indicated innocence. However, the diviners would meet with the accused prior to the ordeal and could be swayed with the negotiation of gifts.<sup>127</sup>

The diviners were seen as part of an influential group within the slave community. Others in this group included the *bassia* and skilled women and men.<sup>128</sup> The *bassia* was a black slave driver, who was a figure who existed along the planes of hybridity and cultural mixture. The driver existed as a slave, an authority figure, a colonized subject, who both submitted and resisted.<sup>129</sup> He was a complex figure who had to seek approval from his white superiors and his slave community on the plantation. Although he is often depicted with a whip in his hand, the driver must ‘never raise his whip to punish his own or to have been believed to have done so.’<sup>130</sup> The third influential group within the community were the skilled workers. Inventories would list skilled men of carpentry and bricklaying directly below that of the *bassia*.<sup>131</sup> Skilled women such as the cooks, seamstresses, servers of the house were recorded at the top of the inventory list of slave women.<sup>132</sup> Despite the location and the historical subjects of this article lying far from Lyon and sixteenth-century France, Davis has captured similar social behaviours. As we saw with the Charivari in “Reasons of Misrule” (1972) Davis had explored how festive roles and the

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<sup>126</sup> Davis, “Judges, Masters, Diviners”, 934.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 934.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 947.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 947-948.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 949.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 949.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 949.

social organization among lower orders, particularly the unmarried men in the village, could be used to reflect the realities of community and marriage. “Judges, Masters, Diviners” depicts the dichotomy of masters and slaves (in a similar manner to the comparison of the youth-Abbeys to the Protestant and Catholic Church), but also how the slave community practiced some form of order and maintenance among themselves. Davis’ transition to a more intersectional study of history, with law, culture and anthropology especially prominent, has enabled her to fill in certain gaps in the history of slavery: African innovation, resistance, crime, punishment, authority, and social organization of the slave community in colonial Suriname.<sup>133</sup>

Davis’ 2015 article, “Physicians, Healers, and their Remedies in Colonial Suriname” utilizes a number of medical records, traveller memoirs and observations from visiting naturalists and botanists to contextualize the social, religious and medical life for those living in Suriname during the 1750s and 1790s. It should be acknowledged, however, that the sources utilized for this research are primarily written from a western perspective: the medical accounts were from the perspectives of three Europeans: Phillipe Fermin, Godfriend Wilhelm Schilling, and (once again) David Nassy.<sup>134</sup> However, written documentation is not the only avenue investigated by Davis as she explores both Indigenous memory and oral history. Local medical knowledge of black healers had been passed down from parents, and this knowledge, along with the beliefs and medical practices, was circulated throughout Suriname.<sup>135</sup> This included Surinamese women whom were essential for treating everyday ailment, - especially those of young children - knowing the correct herbs, drinks, lotions, baths and other remedies to use as this knowledge had

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 927.

<sup>134</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Physicians, Healers, and their Remedies in Colonial Suriname”, *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, Vol. 33 No. 1 (2016): 3-34, 8-10.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

been taught to them, by their own mothers and other local women before them.<sup>136</sup> By combining both Indigenous oral accounts with medical documents of European physicians, Davis is able to go beyond the common narrative of European medical knowledge as they colonized unfamiliar lands and people, and rather, placed emphasis on how the Surinamese peoples understood their traditions, culture and medical practices.

While the second half of the article continues to explore medical knowledge and practice in colonial Suriname using ethnographic techniques, Davis shifts her focus slightly to investigate cases of racial tension, racism and the biography of those that belonged to the slave community. In 1710, a young African boy was purchased by a Dutch plantation owner and was given the slave name 'Quassie'. His medical skills developed at a young age, enhanced by his communication with indigenous healers; Quassie later developed a beverage that used the bark of a local tree to help reduce fever in both his fellow slaves and whites were beginning to use it too.<sup>137</sup> By 1763 Quassie had been purchased and freed by the governor of Suriname, and botanist Daniel Rolander recalled that people "came to believe Quassie capable of curing all diseases, even those called incurable. [...] He was thus venerated by the Blacks as a divinity and greatly respected even by the Whites."<sup>138</sup> While the positive representation and narrative of Quassie was shared among some of the European medical community in Suriname, and could have lightened the tension between both the enslaved population and the indigenous healers these borders still very much existed. Davis comments that white fear of slave enmity and the racist indifference to black medical expertise was ongoing during the 1760s and onward,

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>137</sup> Davis, "Judges, Diviners, and Masters", 951.

<sup>138</sup> Davis, "Physicians, Healers, and their Remedies in Colonial Suriname", 16.

particularly in the wake of the 1760 slave rebellion.<sup>139</sup> This article moves back and forth between Indigenous and African memory to European narrative, and as Davis has done previously in her discussions of the Amerindian and European women and the Renaissance question, she does not privilege a narrative that carries a ‘European gaze’ and instead attends to cross-cultural interactions to account for possible structures and practices in Colonial Suriname.

Continuing her study of the lives of enslaved people in colonial Suriname, “Regaining Jerusalem” tackles cultural mixture and conscious hybridity of David Nassy. Davis had originally wondered about the Jewish settlers in Suriname, which had led her to the Nassys, one of the founding families of the colony.<sup>140</sup> As mentioned earlier, Nassy’s world was comprised of multiple hybridities – many of them conflicting. Nassy’s hope for Jewish colonization were both economic and eschatological.<sup>141</sup> Many of the Jewish plantations in the seventeenth century were clustered along the upper Suriname River. Their slaves could row them to the seaport town of Paramaribo (the then and current capital of Suriname) in under six hours.<sup>142</sup> Davis pays particular attention to the contradictions of what freedom meant for the Nassy family. She reveals that there is no evidence to suggest that the Nassy family and other Jewish owners saw a discrepancy between their struggle for equal status, particularly in Europe but also within the colonies, and their purchase and enslavement of the African people. There was a certain amount of cultural exchange and ‘creolization’ that transpired between the Jews and the Africans. On the Jewish plantations there was a distinctive culture, language and rhythm of work and leisure. Davis argues that in all cases, the Africans would become familiar with the Jewish organization

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>140</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Regaining Jerusalem: Eschatology and Slavery in Jewish Colonization in Seventeenth-Century Suriname”, *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* Vol. 3 No. 1 (January 2016): 11-38, 11.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 25.



of time and would compare this to their own.<sup>143</sup> The cooks and housemaids, roles dominated by women, learned Jewish food preparations and prohibitions which then women would compare to their own rules and regulations that they had in Africa.<sup>144</sup> The case of David Nassy and his family operates within an environment of colonial violence and desire. He was a Jew in a world that was dominated by Christianity, at a time where Portuguese Jews were seeking emancipation and equal status and yet were enslaving others. Davis' approach to the Jewish and African experience on Jewish plantations incorporates both global and microhistorical perspectives. She is able to show cross-cultural connections between the Jewish and Christian community in Europe and in the colonies, *and* between Jewish and African peoples across the Caribbean and Guiana. Davis writes her history in a way that reflects the fluidity, interaction, resistance, violence and experience that these people lived.

The last two publications this thesis will discuss are Davis' most recent, "Jewish History in a New Key" (2018) and "Women, Jewish History and European History" (2019). The first article is a brief historiographical essay of Elliott Horowitz (1953-2017); the young scholar who had defended Davis and Cohen at the Association of Jewish Studies in 1980.<sup>145</sup> In a similar manner to Davis' earlier work in the 1970s, Horowitz had focused on religious violence, the location of the sacred, and community. Davis suggests that his main argument addressed not violence against Jews, but rather, male Jews against the Christians.<sup>146</sup> Seventeenth-century traveler documents had often depicted the "faint-hearted Jew" during periods of violence, going

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 34. See also, Natalie Zemon Davis, "Jewish History in a New Key", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 108:3 (Summer 2018): 353-358, 353.

<sup>146</sup> Davis, "Jewish History in a New Key", 354. For additional reading of work written by Horowitz, *Reckless rites: Purim and the legacy of Jewish violence* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

as far as to describe some Jewish men as effeminate.<sup>147</sup> Horowitz had sought to challenge this commonplace, and told a contrasting story of Jews attacking or insulting Christian holy objects: for Davis, this research into Jewish attacks created a new perspective on Calvinist iconoclasm in sixteenth-century France and the Netherlands.<sup>148</sup> Ultimately, Davis praises Horowitz's contributions to history, historiography, and to European history more generally. Throughout her most recent article, "Women, Jewish History and European History" (2019), Davis is reflective of her interaction with Jewish history throughout her career. Much of the content of the article has been integrated previously in earlier chapters of this thesis with the inclusion of Glikl's autobiography as part of the "Society and the Sexes" syllabi, and with Davis' contribution to Mark Cohen's work on Leon Modena.<sup>149</sup> Davis' strongest goal has been:

To transform European history through the *inclusion* of Jewish history. Too often in those earlier days some 40 years ago, Jews entered the story of early modern Europe simply through accounts of antisemitism, efforts at conversion [...] Rather, Jews should be seen to represent one of the ways in which people lived with their contemporaries.<sup>150</sup>

While Davis's work has not been primarily centered on Jewish issues, we have seen her explore Jewish subjects in her research and acknowledging her Jewish background as a factor shaping her identity as a historian.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how Davis' historical writing departed from the confines of sixteenth-century France and went global. Despite a shift in geographic focus, Davis continued to maintain an interest in anthropology, ethnographic studies, film, the literary and law. Her readers,

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 354.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 354, 356.

<sup>149</sup> Davis, "Women, Jewish History, European History" 34-35.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 33-34.

however, would be introduced to topics with a primary focus on power and resistance, slave communities, punishment and crime. With the rise of cultural theory in the 1990s, Davis became equally reflective of the status of historical writing: this became a period in which she would challenge disciplinary separation and would encourage crossovers. This decade saw Davis return to Glikl Hamel and Marie de L'Incarnation two historical figures she had encountered nearly thirty years prior. In the 2000s as the world became more interconnected Davis tried to replicate processes of globalization and the movement of cultures with gift exchange and al-Hasan al-Wazzan's experience between Christianity and Islam. Shifting her focus to colonial Suriname and the plantations, she has since explored dichotomies of power and experience, especially with the case study of David Nassy as a Jewish man and as plantation owner. Despite her seemingly new direction of interest in the last few years, Davis continues to focus on people outside the traditional centres of power and given voice to those that had to manoeuvre within, and against, their social, economic and political constraints.

## Conclusion

Natalie Zemon Davis is still active and as of mid-2019 is known to be working on two projects. The first concerns the Jewish Romanian linguist Lazare Sainéan (1859-1934). Davis had encountered the linguist early during her career as he had written a well-known book on the language of Rabelais in the 1920s.<sup>151</sup> However, as she continued to investigate Glikl while trying to get a background in Yiddish (as that was the language of Glikl's autobiography) Davis came across Sainéan's name unexpectedly:

I suddenly see an essay entitled "Lazare Sainéan's contribution to Yiddish." "What?" I said. "What's he doing here?" And sure enough. Sainéan had a whole other life as a pioneer in the Yiddish and Romanian languages and folklore before he came to France and ended up writing about Rabelais.<sup>152</sup>

This project continues Davis' interest in uncovering important Jewish historical figures while using language as an important informer of the author's life and experience.

The second upcoming project of Davis' is *Braided Histories*, which is founded on a manuscript of the four generations of a family in Suriname.<sup>153</sup> The first time Davis had hinted at this project was in her article "Global History, Many Stories" (2000). As in the case with Leo Africanus, there were certain silences about his life as there is little left by his own hand or by those that knew him, and Davis had wondered how to account for him. With the mulatto slave woman Joanna, Davis experienced similar difficulties.<sup>154</sup> Davis suggests that Joanna had an

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<sup>151</sup> Lazare Sainéan, *La Langue de Rabelais* (Paris, 1922).

<sup>152</sup> Roitman and Fatah-Black, "'Being speculative is better than to not do it at all': an interview with Natalie Zemon Davis" 6.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>154</sup> Davis, "Global History, Many Stories" 379. Mulatto refers to a person of a mixed ancestry.

alleged romance with John Gabriel Stedman, a colonial soldier, and to account for her Davis needed to look at how colonial power played a role.<sup>155</sup> Although Joanna was literate and multilingual she had left behind no self-authored written remains, but nonetheless, has left important traces in the archives.<sup>156</sup> Similar to how Davis wrote Bertrande in the most plausible sense as she could, but in ‘speculative language’, in *Braided Histories* Davis is creating “two or three historically plausible Joannas.”<sup>157</sup> The relationship between Stedman and Joanna were the starting point of this project, in a 2015 interview Davis claims:

I was planning to do something on the son they had together. But then I started reading about Joanna’s mother and her twenty-year relationship with Joanna’s white father. They had five children together. So I’ve devoted long chapters to them. [...] Already back in 1996, when I had just started thinking about Joanna, the wonderful Africanist Paul Lovejoy asked me, “Where was Joanna born?” [...] his question remained in the back of mind in the years when I turned to al-Wazzan and learned so much about the Land of the Blacks during the sixteenth century.<sup>158</sup>

It was not until a few years ago when Davis had been asked to write a paper on Suriname slave experience of crime and punishment that she realized she needed to ask questions about colonial and African memory. In the same interview, Davis continues:

I had to look at the memories of African crime and punishment that the slaves had brought over with them across the Atlantic. Once I saw how important those memories were in shaping Suriname ways of living, I realized I really must try to do it for Joanna’s family, [...] figure who her grandparents were and where in Africa they came from – what gods and customs they brought with them. [...] It’s much more speculative for Joanna’s grandmother. But I think I’ve got the right person. A very interesting woman – another gift from the past.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 378.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 378.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 378.

<sup>158</sup> Roitman and Fatah-Black, ““Being speculative is better than to not do it at all”: an interview with Natalie Zemon Davis” 10.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 10.

The modern project of Lazare Sainéan and the Suriname project share similar thematic concerns. As we have seen in the last chapter, Davis has continued to focus on going beyond textual boundaries to explore how knowledge and information travels through language, and cultural crossovers and entanglements; these two projects both appear to follow this pattern.

Like many other historians of her generation, Davis' graduate training had led her to focus initially on social history. As a graduate student at the University of Michigan in 1951 Davis had been introduced to the *menu peuple* of Lyon, their grain riots and printing strikes, and the Protestant uprising of 1562. The resistance and social structure of the *menu peuple* would become her thesis topic. Each chapter of this thesis has addressed three key features: the context of the decade in relation to the discipline of history (and where relevant, the political and social setting); the main events in Davis' personal life; and her publications throughout each decade. This has shown a clear trajectory of how Davis transitioned from a social historian in the traditional sense, to writing history with a global consciousness. Although Davis has focused on various locations: France, North America, North Africa, and Suriname she has remained committed to finding the voices of those left out in standard historical sources.

I sometimes feel that my historical research has come to me as a gift, a gift from people of the past and from other historians, dead and living. The gift imposes on me the obligation to recount their lives and their worlds with responsibility [...] For me, the possibilities of the past invite a commitment to humanity and offer a ray of hope for the future.<sup>160</sup>

Whatever lies ahead for the now-nonenarian scholar, Natalie Zemon Davis' ability to open new horizons in the study of history, especially in the cross-disciplinary links between history and anthropology, and of studies on women and gender has given us much to be thankful for.

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<sup>160</sup> Davis, *A Passion for History*, 175.

## **Appendix A Timeline of Natalie Zemon Davis's Academic Appointments**

Brown University (1959-1963)

University of Toronto (1963-1971)

- (1963-1968) Department of Political Economy
- (1968-1971) Department of History

University of California at Berkeley (1971-1977)

Princeton University as Henry Charles Lea Professor (1978-1996)

Balliol College, Oxford (1994-1995)

- George Eastman Professor

University of Toronto (Fall, 1996)

- Northrop Frye Professor of Literary Theory

Retired from teaching in 1996

Currently holds the title of Henry Charles Lea Professor Emerita at Princeton, and Professor of History Emerita at the University of Toronto (2019)

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