

## BROOKLYN, BERNINI, AND BEYOND

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Kai Erikson's flattering invitation to give this talk was impossible to turn down. It gives me an opportunity to thank Kai for leading us on, with his customary grace, humor, and wisdom, in this new series, to further discoveries about ourselves and about each other. This occasion also allows me to honor David Apter, who came up with the idea of these Trajectories and presided over them till he became too ill to continue. And it allows me to remember how I first came to know him and Eleanor well about thirty-five years ago, first through mutual friends and then, a little later, at their house, at a faculty seminar. David's spontaneity, his inquisitiveness and openness to the ideas and interests of others, as well as his immense charm and warmth, were a great gift to me in those early years at Yale and since. I miss him a lot.

But it was when I reread David's trajectory in Volume One of this series that I decided to do this. For mine is another "New York Story." Very different, of course, in most, but not in all, respects from David's. For we have our secular, and "pinko" past in common, which I'll come back to. And a long talk with my husband of ten years, Wayne Meeks, also helped me to take this step. It's about time he understood why I am the way I am – and that has to do, in large part, with the fact that I grew up in New York.

Actually, I'm from Brooklyn. I was an only child in a lower-middle-class, professional family, and we lived in Flatbush. My mother was born in Minsk, in present-day Belarus. Her parents were apparently well off there, since they owned a shoe factory and some orchards. My grandfather, whom I never knew, was known as a "Litvak intellectual." This was a whole cultural movement of East European Jews, characterized by immense seriousness and discipline but also skepticism, not only about all forms of religious enthusiasm but in their daily lives. According to my oldest cousin, my grandfather was a chain smoker, for example, but wouldn't dream of lighting up on the Sabbath. The Litvaks in Russia, as well as in Poland and Lithuania, had the highest proportion of children enrolled in an extensive school system. But, by the early 1910s, my grandparents could no longer assure their four children a decent education – which was all-important to them – and the family moved to New York. They settled first on the Lower East Side and soon afterward in Brooklyn. There my grandmother, who was something of a powerhouse and whom I *did* know, became a seamstress and also invested actively in real estate. I haven't been able to find out what my grandfather did when they came to this country. But my cousin, who was five when my grandfather died in 1935, remembers that her father, my mother, and their two brothers "tried to get him to change his pious ways because they were now in a 'modern' country." To which he responded: "I came here to be free to be what I am!"

My mother was six when she and two of her brothers arrived in New York, in 1912. Someone at Ellis Island changed her first name from Berta – not to Roberta who might have made some sense – but to Betty. Later, she went to high school in Brooklyn, and she lived for many years with her mother and her oldest brother and his wife. When my gifted oldest cousin came along, in 1930, my mother taught her how to read and they became very close. By then my mother had taken training courses and, when she was about twenty-one, qualified as an elementary school teacher in the New York City system. She taught first, second, and third grade until 1952.

My father was born in this country, in Boston, in 1903, but his family moved to Brooklyn when he was a child. His mother was from a large family of secular German Jews, all or some of whom had lived in the East End of London on their way to America. One of his aunts, the only one I knew really well, held onto certain Britishisms way into her nineties. She used to say “take a run around the block,” and she called my father Jamesy when everyone else called him Jim. He had lost his father, a distinguished-looking man named William Cohen who I think was a whisky salesman, when he was ten. My father graduated from Erasmus Hall High School in 1920, thirty-nine years before I did. A replica of the seventeenth-century bronze statue of Desiderius Erasmus (we called him “Desi”) stood, and for all I know still stands, in the courtyard of the school (in my day we threw pennies in his big open book, for good luck before Regents examinations). When my parents and I got to Rotterdam in 1961 and stood in front of the real statue, *my father* remembered the words of our alma mater and I didn’t. He won a French medal at graduation, among other honors, which had something to do with my lifelong attachment to France and to the language. When he was twenty or twenty-one, he became an office boy in the firm of a Beaux-Arts architect named Donn Barber (who built the present “tomb” of Berzelius, the secret society on Trumbull Street between Temple and Whitney). He took night courses at Cooper Union and Stuyvesant, and probably elsewhere, to qualify as an architect.

All this is to say that my parents never went to college, but they both were extremely intelligent, well-read, and had wide cultural interests. They took me to the Brooklyn Museum or the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens nearly every Sunday. I knew the collections by heart, not just of the Egyptian mummies but of the European and American paintings as well. And not just Cherry Walk, the esplanade of Japanese flowering cherries that bloomed every spring, but the Japanese Garden and the Shakespeare Garden, too. As I said, I was an only child; my mother didn’t believe in baby-sitters, so I was taken to the Metropolitan Opera when I was about eight or nine to see *Don Giovanni* once, and *La Gioconda* another time. My parents and another couple, both of whom were handicapped, had subscriptions together for years to the New York Philharmonic, way up in the second balcony at Carnegie Hall. The friends needed to use the elevator to get up there and the operator always recognized them, so they never had to show their tickets. I was the beneficiary of one of them, and happily sat on the stairs for years. This way, I was treated to many of the great performances

and conductors of the 1950s: George Szell, Dimitri Mitropoulos, and so on. I carried a picture of the handsome Italian conductor Guido Cantelli in my wallet when my friends, even the girls, all had baseball cards.

Besides being involved in the cultural life of New York, my parents were active in left-wing politics. Unlike in David Apter's case, they were different from the rest of their families — more or less observant Jews on my mother's side, and, on my father's, some politically conservative and some involved in the arts, especially the theater. There were no other Marxists among them. My parents often took me with them, in the early and mid-50s, when they met with people in a predominantly Negro neighborhood, on Bedford Avenue. I went with them to see Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* when it first came out. One of my clearest memories of those years is being on the train to Washington, in the spring of 1953, as part of a vain attempt to save the Rosenbergs from the electric chair. Probably earlier, I went with my mother to at least one Teacher's Union march in downtown Brooklyn. I remember some of the songs and that many people carried placards, but not what they said. In the middle of fifth grade, I was abruptly pulled out of the elementary school my mother taught in and enrolled in the school near our home. She had been called before some branch of the House Un-American Activities Committee to name names of friends and colleagues, but, instead of appearing, she resigned on the spot. I don't think my parents were card-carrying Communists, but they were members of the Progressive Party. When I was a child I came upon copies of the *Daily Worker* hidden in my mother's dresser drawer. I always wondered why she took a cruise to Russia in the summer of 1936, but I accepted her explanation that she joined a group of doctors so that my confirmed bachelor-father would miss her and ask her, after several years of courtship, to marry him. That worked — the story seemed logical — and I never pushed it any further.

My father had his reasons for procrastinating, and I'm not talking about his group of bachelor friends or his possessive mother. His job, or rather jobs, was much less secure during those Depression years than my mother's. He worked both for the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and for the Public Works Administration. He also made elegant designs, which I still have, for toothpaste boxes and other products, but no one bought them. And he studied, and copied, furniture from the period rooms in the Brooklyn Museum, the Met, and elsewhere, and made beautiful drawings of interiors which he showed to prospective clients. I don't think he ever made a living as a decorator, but he had a love for fine furniture and for the history of taste which he imparted to me early on. Part of the family lore was that my father couldn't get a job as an architect because he was Jewish, but, after he changed his name from Cohen to Colton in the late 1930s, the firms he approached were looking for token Jews and turned him down. By the time I came along, he'd gone into business for himself, and I can see him at a drafting table in my parents' bedroom, with drawings and blueprints everywhere. Later, in the 1950s, he was on the staff of several large New York firms: Harrison and Abramovitz, C. W. Post, and others. At one point he worked for a

smaller firm called Cohen and Butler, and, when the principals died and the staff were being let go, they were encouraged to choose works of art and newspaper clippings from the owners' collections. I still have the Piranesi engravings, some of which are large and striking and some purely technical, as well as articles of 1922 describing the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. My father was a gentle person – my mother was the more forceful one. His love of and lifetime involvement with art and architecture, languages, and literature – especially poetry and just plain word-play – and, much later, with travel, had a role to play in the choices I've made.

By the time I got to Erasmus, the big public high school was a very competitive place; the members of my class were given a ranking, at graduation, from 1 to 1100. Like my friends, I was motivated by that spirit of competition. We were encouraged to apply to particular colleges not because our interests would fit with what they had to offer but rather because of our grade-point averages, worked out to five or six decimal places. Yet I remember making serious efforts to sound and act a lot dumber than I was. Not with my teachers but with fellow students – in typing class, and in Latin class, for example. It was in an exam in second-year Latin that a kid told me to sit in the center so that he and his friends could cheat off my copy; he also boasted that he'd started a fire in the Brooklyn Public Library the day before. I never checked to see whether that was true, and I never held onto much Latin either.

Still, I loved French and had a marvelous teacher, wanted to be French, and was thrilled when I got into Smith College because I'd set my heart on spending my Junior Year in Paris. I had to get through freshman and sophomore years before I could go to France, and that wasn't easy. First, I was from a big New York City high school, for various reasons about two years younger than many of my peers, thrown together with private school girls who seemed far better trained and who were much more sure of themselves. So I worked very hard and became a "grind" – it seemed the only way to survive. Secondly, my preppy friends made fun of me: in December freshman year, they gave me a teether and a phonetics book for Christmas! (I was still only sixteen, and *they thought* I had a Brooklyn accent.) I loved literature and discovered history, but I didn't take any History of Art until my second year. I must have known about it, even if it wasn't offered in my high school. Maybe the fact that I'd been in France the summer before sophomore year, living with a family in a small town in Brittany, and visiting Paris for nearly a week on my own, had something to do with my new interest: I spent several days in the Poussin exhibition at the Louvre, a major show organized by Anthony Blunt in 1960, and I can't help thinking that my love affair with French art started during those few days.

So I majored in History of Art and spent a year in Paris in 1961-62. It was an extraordinary time to be there. The war for Algerian independence was raging, and in the apartment building I lived in there were members of the OAS (Organisation de l'Armée secrète) and the FLN (Front de Libération nationale), the two rival factions in the conflict, so we were warned that a bomb could go off there any day. When I was

alone I took a chair and my books into the walk-in closet in my room. All this came back to me last autumn, when Wayne and I lectured on an Association of Yale Alumni trip to North Africa and spent three very fascinating, and quite moving, days in Algeria. In Paris, my Smith roommate and I lived with a widow, la Comtesse Germaine de Renty, who was a member of the French nobility and who, with her husband, Robert, had been active in the Resistance during the War. They were both deported in 1944. She survived, but he did not. It was the same host family that Jackie Kennedy had lived with some years earlier. The dictionary I was given to use had Jacqueline Bouvier's name in it. Through this experience, I became aware of World War II in a much more direct way than I had before. (I was born in 1943, but my father was too old to be drafted and my parents hadn't talked a lot about the war when I was growing up.) So I read a lot about it, especially about the Resistance. And I traveled a great deal and, as one could in those days, even hitchhiked with a Smith friend in southern European countries like Greece and Italy. I shudder to think about it now.

The ties to France and things French remained very strong after that year. With many of my friends from the Paris group, I moved into Dawes, the French "house" at Smith. We dressed in city clothes while our fellow students were wearing Bermuda shorts, we spoke French to each other, held poetry readings with boys from Amherst, and must have seemed pretty stuck-up—but we thrived in that setting. Senior year I took a whole range of courses in History of Art (to make up for the Paris courses which weren't actually that good). I was increasingly drawn to research topics that allowed me to read newspaper articles, critical accounts, and other historical documents that shed light on developments in French art. And that's pretty much where I ended up for a good part of my career.

Still, I didn't really know what I was doing when I got to graduate school, at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, the following September. I was twenty. I don't think I ever considered *not* going to graduate school. I had always admired my oldest cousin, whom I've mentioned; she had a Masters degree then and I wanted one too. But where to go? I'd been too scared of what seemed then like the "old boy" atmosphere of Yale and Harvard to apply to either of them, and the Institute offered me more money than Columbia, so I went there. I had no idea what I wanted to specialize in.

My first semester, I took four lecture courses (no seminars!) that covered the whole spectrum of western art history (or so it seemed to me then). Besides one on Greek geometric pottery and another on 'schemata,' or manuscript illuminations of the Middle Ages containing diagrams with philosophical content, two had more lasting value for me. There was Erwin Panofsky's on Titian, the glorious Venetian colorist of the sixteenth century. It was taught entirely with black and white slides because Panofsky, rightly in those days, thought that the color slides he could get hold of would falsify Titian's work too much. This course was an amazing experience nonetheless, and it was one of several which I took with the great Panofsky, the "founder" of one branch of art history called "Iconology," of which more later. But it was my

fourth course which led me to my further work. That was with H. W. Janson, and I'll also come back to it, and to him, below.

I made two big mistakes that first term: I audited, and not very assiduously, two courses that I still regret not having taken for credit. One marked me anyway, but anecdotally rather than professionally, and that was Walter Friedländer's *Caravaggio*. Friedländer was over ninety when I got to the Institute, and I wasn't grown-up enough to understand what I could learn from him. The first day, two of his devoted graduate students supported him as he walked to the front of the lecture room and helped him to a chair. Then he had to warm up. "Ca ca ca carafacho." And, once he got out the name of the artist, with his thick German accent, he was on a roll. Friedländer had written the most important book on Caravaggio to date as well as several other studies which shaped my teaching for years to come. Only a year or so later did one of my most beloved teachers, Willibald Sauerländer, tell me that for him Friedländer was the youngest in spirit and the most "on the ball" of all his colleagues at the Institute!

The other mistake I made was in not taking Richard Krautheimer's course on Italian Baroque architecture, which he never repeated and in which he treated the works, by Bernini, Borromini, and others, that I also taught for the rest of my career. He forgave me for this error, if he even knew about it. Indeed, Krautheimer adopted me as one of his "children" because all my friends were his favorite students. Maybe, without realizing it, I followed him in this later on at Yale.

Another of my professors who set an important human example, in addition to being one of the best-known scholars in the field, was Panofsky. I've already mentioned his lecture course on Titian, but now I want to talk about his famous seminar called "Studies in Iconology," which I took in the autumn of 1964. Panofsky came to New York every Tuesday from Princeton, where he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study—and a friend of Einstein, among others. In order to get into his class, we had to state, in a one-to-one interview, that we could read French, German, Italian, Latin, and Greek. (One of our fellow students *could* read Greek, so the rest of us figured we'd depend on her.) Even though he spent the first few sessions dictating bibliography, much of which was indeed in French, German, and Italian, it was clear from the outset that, serious and scholarly as he was, Panofsky was also a real person. He *looked* totally approachable, even slightly vulnerable. But I was still pretty frightened, especially during the week before my conference with him. This had to be over lunch because it was the only time he could meet with me. I stopped doing all my other work and tried to read everything he'd ever written. Then came the lunch, which was more like a date than a conference. I can still see him holding open the heavy door of the Institute as we headed for the Hyde Park Restaurant on Madison Avenue. We spent the whole lunch talking about living in Paris and contemporary French literature, about Robbe-Grillet and Ionesco and Marguerite Duras. As we came back to the building, and just before his (and my) 2:00 class, he remembered: "Ach, your seminar report. We forgot to talk about your seminar report." To which



he added something that made then, and still makes, a very deep impression on me. Probably he was just trying to get to class on time, but he said “You know more about Endymion (the mythological figure which was my subject) than anyone else.” Imagine being twenty-one years old and hearing, from one of the founding fathers of the field, that I knew more about something than he did! After that, I was never afraid of the great man again.

Panofsky encouraged me to continue work on a beautiful painting by Poussin at the Detroit Institute of Arts (fig.1). Here, the shepherd Endymion is not asleep as he usually is in renditions of this subject, all of which I had tried to gather at the outset of my research. Rather, he kneels before the moon goddess Selene, or Diana, and appears to be asking her not to leave after their nighttime tryst. Poussin includes the figure of Night at the right, who draws back the curtain to reveal Somnus, still asleep, and Aurora leading the chariot of Apollo as the sheep of Endymion graze in the light of dawn. The artist’s very personal interpretation of the Endymion myth becomes then a meditation on time and the transitoriness of human life. In addition, a novel had just been published in France which Poussin, surprisingly for that snobby intellectual, used for inspiration. In the novel, and in an engraving that was included in it, Endymion admires the gentle majesty of the goddess. He is given the opportunity to make a wish and he asks for a place among the stars. The accompanying plate, no great work of art, shows the youth kneeling before the serene goddess. Poussin transforms this simple scene into a glorious picture in which his ardent shepherd, begging for immortality, takes on the role of a Neo-Platonic seeker of truth. A year or so later,

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Fig.1

with Panofsky's encouragement, I turned this part of my seminar report into an article in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*. This allowed me to do further work in the Warburg Institute in London and to have a memorable meeting with Sir Ernst Gombrich, who was then the journal's editor.

Panofsky's approach, at least as I experienced it then and in subsequent years, came out of that intense humanity I've been describing. It was, as one of his book titles indicates, and as the example of "my" painting by Poussin suggests, a search for "meaning in the visual arts." For Panofsky, as he himself said it best, the study of works of art in their intellectual, and cultural, context became a "humanistic discipline." What I took away from Panofsky's teaching and his work wasn't so much his specific "method" of "reading" a work of art, which had constituted part of our training and which could be the subject of another lecture. Nor was it some of his goals, which were soon out of fashion and often misunderstood in later decades. Rather, what was important for me was the way he saw and exhorted us to explore other fields of study—what we now call "visual culture." No reassessment of Panofsky in the light of deconstruction or post-modernism can take that away.

To come back to the Institute of Fine Arts in the 1960s, it has become clear from the little I've said that the place was chock full of art history "greats." How each of them came to be part of that faculty, how many of them had emigrated from Nazi Germany or had been invited from places to which they had first fled, is another very fascinating story. In addition to the emigrés were others, like Sauerländer and Charles Sterling, who visited from Europe, often for a long period or on a regular basis for several years in a row. One had frequently to translate back to German, or French, to understand something that was being said in class: angels with their "ailes," for example. Adjoining the room where I did much of my reading (the library was divided into rooms by fields, and mine by then was the "Baroque Room"), Walter Friedländer dictated his latest book on Poussin to his assistant, and often I found myself interrupting my work to try to hear and understand what he was saying. Then there was a younger generation of scholars, most of whom were students of the "great masters." Friedländer's prize student, Donald Posner, became my closest friend on the faculty, and unofficial adviser.

The "great men" I've been describing are part of my "story," in more ways than one. But, first, I had to "sign on" to eighteenth-century studies. That started in the course I took with Janson my first term, in which he departed radically from the canon of French artists usually included—Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, and so on. Instead I was led into a whole other world, and this by someone whose publications to date had centered on Italian Renaissance sculpture. Janson had also written a general *History of Art*, which became so famous, and was reprinted so many times, that it was even included, more than twenty years later, in *The Ronald Reagan Coloring Book*! No one expected great things of his course, and they were wrong. Janson introduced us to quirky and even troubling artists, to British and Scandinavian artists, and to



sculptors as well as painters; one of the course's themes was the confluence of artists in Rome in the 1750s, 60s, and 70s and the artistic and other activities that took place around them there.

So, although I had somehow assumed I'd end up in nineteenth-century studies, the earlier period was wide open and more exciting. For my M.A. thesis I followed the practice I'd begun in college, but now with a summer in Paris, of reading contemporary documents, newspapers, and flimsy anonymous pamphlets, and wrote about the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in the second half of the eighteenth century. One of the questions I was asking was whether artists could make a name for themselves if they weren't part of the all-powerful Royal machine. I learned as much as I could about rival exhibitions and street fairs. Could artists really find recognition without being accepted into the centralized and hierarchical, rules-bound Academy, which had been established under Louis XIV in the 1660s? Were the other avenues open to them sufficient? Much as I wanted to, I couldn't find enough proof one way or the other. But what I did learn was that the royal body itself had become somewhat lax and that artists within it could get around some of its rules. For example Chardin, the wonderful painter of everyday scenes and of still life, who had started out exhibiting in the open air, became a major force in the Royal Academy even though he wasn't a history painter. I don't think my readers actually figured out that I was vainly trying to fight for the underdog. It's hardly surprising that many of the questions that interested me reflected those political and social values I was steeped in since my childhood. But, in this case and in many others to follow, I didn't push a Marxist or any other political agenda. It was the history and the works of art themselves that counted.

I was drawn to the study of monuments, specifically to those honoring great men in the period of the Enlightenment. This became the subject of my PhD dissertation. I first tackled the complex story of a statue of the nude Voltaire, made in 1770, during his lifetime (fig. 2). This was commissioned by "the gens de lettres" (notice, not the *men* but the *people*) of "enlightened" France to make a statement about freedom of thought, in the face of the oppression that they felt from the repressive government of



Fig.2

the Ancien Régime. The artist they chose to carry out this commission was Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, and in fact the whole course in which I did my early work on the statue was a seminar on Pigalle taught by Posner. In his letters, Voltaire was unstoppable in his comments about his statue: “Where did Pigalle get the idea,” the seventy-six-year-old writer wrote, “of portraying me as Venus?”

This work has always intrigued me, but one crucial aspect of its story still remains something of a mystery. This was the notion that Voltaire was here being likened – secretly – to the noble Roman philosopher Seneca severing his veins in order to commit suicide after a failed plot to kill the emperor Nero. In his study of the Enlightenment, Peter Gay had made abundantly clear that Diderot and his fellow *philosophes* loved to keep secrets. Whether they really asked the sculptor to portray Voltaire in the guise of the dying Seneca was a secret they all took to their graves. I’m convinced not only that they did, but that Voltaire himself upheld the idea even when the original backers turned away. I shared an interest in Pigalle’s *Voltaire* with Willibald Sauerländer, whose studies of French medieval sculpture and articles in the *New York Review of Books* are as well known as his interest in French eighteenth-century sculpture is not.

A study of a large group of lifesize statues of the great men of France, representatives both of the active and of the contemplative life, became an important part of my dissertation as well. For this I was allowed, even encouraged, to study at Columbia, with the wonderful Robert Rosenblum (who actually was visiting from Princeton, but who later became a major force at the Institute of Fine Arts – and in the New York art world). But I was never given permission to go down to Washington Square to take courses for credit on the literature of the Enlightenment. Art history, at least as practiced at the Institute in 1965, was not yet ready for true interdisciplinary studies.

I went off to Paris, as I’ve indicated, first on a Fulbright, to do my research; and I stayed for four years. I lived on various bits of scholarship money and even typed a sociology dissertation in order to buy food when I was running out of funds. So I was very much there in May 1968, spending more time in the Luxembourg Gardens reading the *Nouvel Observateur* and listening to speeches at the Sorbonne than doing my research at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Archives. Once again, as at the time of the Algerian crisis, it was a fascinating time to be in Paris. I, like all my peers, questioned why we were so attached to the past and whether we could ever make a difference to the students of today.

My two closest friends in Paris literally put me on the boat train at the Gare Saint-Lazare in July of 1970 – to come back to the States and get on with my professional life. That meant taking my Ph.D. orals, which I hadn’t yet done, and actually writing the dissertation, as well as getting a job. During those first few years back, I did two short teaching stints, first at Bennington College, and then at Queens, part of the City University of New York. At Bennington, I had the pleasure (though it was often a trial – and a trial by fire) of teaching art history to artists – in a required course, no less. Students, especially art students, weren’t wildly articulate in the early seventies,

and their reactions to the works of art I showed them were different from anything I'd come to expect: "That brown of Caravaggio's is 'really good'. I'll see what I can do with it in the studio." I don't know if they ever discussed the works they saw in my class with the artists who circled around Bennington in those years—Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Anthony Caro, and so on, but they did talk about their own work with me. In addition, I became a devotee of the contemporary art scene in New York, which meant spending Saturday afternoons going to galleries. In the early 1970s, Soho was a place where artists lived in lofts and the art world gathered—and where there were not yet any boutiques! At Bennington, I got to know Bernard Malamud, my fellow Erasmian, the poet Stephen Sandy, and other wonderful, underpaid, faculty members, as well as a number of young artists (now well known) with whom I traveled up from New York City every Tuesday at dawn. I became close to a sculptor originally from South Africa named Isaac Witkin and his wife Thelma Appel, a landscape painter. Isaac created "monuments" of a very different sort from the ones I studied, large abstract structures made of welded steel, and placed them outdoors. I climbed on one of them with his children on a perfect autumn day when the leaves were in full glory. It had great, sweeping curves and had turned a wonderful rust color. And I fell in love with the New England landscape. Bennington wasn't a happy place; but it was in a spectacular setting and I'm pretty sure I got a lot more out of that year than my students did out of the art history course that I taught there.

I met new artist friends during the following year when, thanks to Creighton Gilbert who hired me to replace someone on sabbatical, I taught at Queens College. Here too, as at Bennington, many of my students were artists. This was also true at Yale, and I got to know some of them well; but I regret to say I didn't have here the kind of sustained contact with artists, both students and faculty, that I had in those two years of teaching. I suppose it has to do with what was then the 'long' block between Chapel and High and Chapel and York and the different worlds in which we lived and pressures we faced.

I was very lucky indeed to have landed at Yale. This had a lot to do with Walter Cahn, whom I met at a reception at the College Art Association (our professional organization) and who uttered the magic words "we could be interested in you again." I had been approached first by Bob Herbert and then by Walter when I was in Paris in the late sixties, but I wasn't finished with my dissertation research and I wasn't yet ready to come home. By the time I got to Yale, in the fall of 1973, I had developed a strong interest in British gardens, especially of the eighteenth century, and in garden history in general, and I began to teach and write about monuments in gardens and gardens themselves. This had come out of my Ph.D. work. Toward the end of my time in Paris, I'd gone over to England to do some fruitful research. There, I focused on statues of Handel and Shakespeare and Newton but also on the Temple of British Worthies at Stowe and other garden structures, including some that no longer exist, which were loaded with meaning and accompanied by verses and engravings. While

in England I was lucky enough to visit Stowe with George Clarke, the leading authority on that magnificent garden and a Latin and English master at the Stowe School. It was natural to develop these interests at Yale, in part because there were, and there had been, all sorts of people here in fields that intersected with mine. There were the folks in English literature—Maynard Mack, Martin Price, and John Hollander, and some of their younger colleagues. I also had lively exchanges with Herbert Atherton about graphic satire and British political life. Jules Prown first brought me into the ‘family’ of the British Art Center when I came up to visit the department, and thanks to him and to all his successors in the directorship I’ve been happily and actively involved with that great institution ever since. But Charles Porter, Georges May, and many visitors who came to Yale on Focillon Fellowships over the years reminded me of my loyalties to France; in fact, Bob Herbert always called me “Judisse de Smisse,” perhaps to make sure that I’d never give up the French in favor of the newer British, and later the Italian, enticements.

It was altogether a wonderful time. I didn’t mind all that much, in those early days, being one of only two women in History of Art. My colleague Anne Coffin Hanson became a close friend right away. When she spent her leave in Rome, my second term at Yale, I was the only female faculty member in the department. (If our legendary slide librarian Helen Chillman hadn’t also come to our monthly meetings, I would probably have felt more self-conscious than I did.) My colleagues were open to the sorts of things I chose to teach and to write about. So, in addition to my general courses on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century art, I came up with some on women in the Paris literary Salons; on “heroes and hero-worship”; on festival decoration and temporary architecture in the Early Modern period; on the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns; and on “the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque” in British aesthetic theory. Apparently, Vincent Scully told someone back then that all I was interested in was the history of parties. Perhaps he was serious. After all, I held forth on the entertainments staged in the gardens of Versailles, with fountains of wine shooting into the air, and other such extravagances. And a very brilliant graduate student, who is now Professor of the Social History of Art at the Courtauld Institute in London, accused me in 1975 of being a “cultural historian.” If only I’d been able to predict back then where *he* was going to end up!

But these were hardly setbacks. Rather, four or five of my colleagues generously read the manuscript of my first book, in which I used the largely unrealized project of a would-be aristocrat named Titon du Tillet to explore the origins in early eighteenth-century France of the monument to “genius,” or at least to “great men.” Titon and his family were active in court circles and that, along with his scholarly pretensions, led him to envisage a colossal Mount Parnassus, with lifesize statues of the great writers of the Age of Louis XIV—Corneille, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine, and others—and one musician, Lully, as the Muses, with three literary women as the Graces. This monument, which exists in the form of an elaborate bronze model, was to have been

placed on a prominent site in or near Paris: in the *cour carrée* (square court) of the Louvre, at the Etoile, where the Arc de Triomphe was later built, or in the garden of Versailles. Future men and, presumably, women of letters would have climbed up on it and been inspired by their recent predecessors. Alas (or, maybe, luckily), this didn't happen; but in order to explore Titon's grandiose ideas I did have to do research on earlier "parties" – that is, temporary and ephemeral decoration connected with triumphal entries and other festivals, as well as Ancient and Renaissance precedents for multigure sculpture. I also came up with a category called the "Rococo Sublime," which gained currency for only one night, when I impersonated it in a Halloween party in the department. No one guessed who I was, whereas everyone remembered my previous incarnation as Judith with the head of Holofernes – a pumpkin – for which, ironically, I'd gotten the prize the year before for the most "sublime and horrific" costume.

As I've indicated, I had countless opportunities to teach new courses and to meet people in related fields. I got to try out some of those courses in those few full-fledged summer terms that Yale experimented with in the 1970s, and in which I taught twice. In that context, I became friendly with John Blum, who opened my eyes to many things about Yale. And I met Bart Giamatti in the Blums' kitchen in 1975, when, I think I'm right in saying, he was still an English professor and when we were given the task of making salad for an early summer gathering. In 1980, Bart and Peter Brooks chose me to be an Inaugural Fellow of the Whitney Humanities Center. It was in that context that David Apter held that faculty seminar I referred to earlier, called "Deconstructing Disciplines," at which Bob Herbert and I tried to make some sense of our discipline in the light of what Geoffrey Hartman and Hillis Miller and others were up to. Even if what we did that evening wasn't particularly memorable, the whole thing, like everything else David undertook, was imbued with a spirit of fun and adventure.

I haven't yet talked much about all the rest of my teaching, and I'll do that briefly. I was the only member of the department teaching Southern Baroque (that is, seventeenth-century art outside of the Low Countries) and eighteenth-century European art. (Now, essentially, there's no one, but that's another story.) For me, nothing was more enjoyable than getting up there and "selling" Caravaggio, Bernini, and even Poussin. I discovered Italian painting – and Italy in general – and also became far more interested in connoisseurship, really in just plain looking, than I ever had been back in graduate school.

With my late colleague George Hersey, I co-curated an exhibition at the Yale Art Gallery of Neapolitan seventeenth and eighteenth-century painting in American collections. Some of you may have seen the show. It traveled to the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida and to the Nelson-Atkins in Kansas City afterward and it was called "A Taste for Angels." But during its three months at Yale, in the fall of 1987, it was dubbed – first by Duncan Robinson, the director of the British Art Center, and then



by everybody – the “Tasty Angels” show. Graduate students from Yale and elsewhere were involved from the very beginning with the exhibition and the catalogue – in seminars, on countless trips to New York to galleries and auction houses, to a church in the Village where we ‘discovered’ a painting, a *Death of St. Joseph*, by Francesco Solimena, one of our most important artists, and even to Naples, where most of us were able to meet one July. We two co-curators and some guests wrote essays and, despite my new infatuation with connoisseurship, mine was on the biographer of Neapolitan artists, Bernardo De Dominici, and his relationship to the tradition of artistic biography going back to Vasari two centuries earlier. I also wrote the biography of a prolific artist, Luca Giordano, nicknamed “Luca fa presto”. Several of the students were also responsible for the entire *oeuvre* of an artist: their biographies contained the most up-to-date information on painters who were not well known; a few other students, including two at Princeton and one at Johns Hopkins, and a visitor to the British Art Center from London, contributed entries on individual pictures. We all gave gallery talks while the show was on, but by far the most memorable and most hilarious were those of David Nolta, a former student and still a close friend. The guards from the Yale Center for British Art, especially those with Italian roots, and many others, became devoted followers of his. Some visitors had never set foot in the Art Gallery before.

I’ve said that I formed very close bonds with students in the four or five years that we spent preparing the Naples show. But I was lucky enough to have had this experience all through my time at Yale. Some of the undergraduates I knew well and some of my own advisees have gone on to distinguished careers. My first and second Ph.D. students are museum directors and another is a deputy director. I’ve followed their progress and visited their museums, and they’re terrific. Several others are highly respected curators. The rest are academics: one is a professor of design as well as of architectural history; one is foolish enough to be a dean. Of course there are those who have dropped off the radar screen. I’m in touch with others, these days even on Facebook, who weren’t my students but whom I got to know at least as well as those who were. It’s all very gratifying, especially since the History of Art department was my “family” for many decades. I know that Mary Miller will be remembered for many things: for her work on Mayan art, first and foremost; for her stewardship of Saybrook College; and now for her role as Dean of Yale College. But Mary’s greatest gift to me was the dinner party she gave at Saybrook after my retirement party. Mary invited those members of my “family” that I’ve been talking about – the grads and undergrads I’d stayed in closest touch with – and a few dozen of them actually came. When I was still in my twenties, my teacher Donald Posner (who wasn’t very old himself at the time) used always to say to me, when he was being generous in, say, writing a letter of recommendation, that he was “passing the torch.” I didn’t have a clue, then, as to what he meant. Now I do, and I’m enormously grateful to Yale for making this possible.