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David Sabean is Henry J. Bruman Professor of German History at the University of California, Los Angeles. He studied at Houghton College, Brandeis University, the University of Wisconsin, and the Universität Tübingen, receiving his Ph.D. in history in 1969 from the University of Wisconsin. He spent a post-doctoral year at Cambridge University in 1972–73, reading in social anthropology. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has taught at the University of East Anglia (Norwich, England), the University of Pittsburgh, Cornell University, and UCLA. From 1977–83, he was a Fellow of the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen. He has published in German rural history, the history of the family, popular culture, sexuality, bureaucratic text production, the self, and religious ritual. His two volumes on the village of Neckarhausen were part of a thirty-year project to understand the dynamics of kinship in European culture and society: *Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen 1700–1870* (Cambridge, 1990) and *Kinship in Neckarhausen 1700–1870* (Cambridge, 1998). Among his other publications are: *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1984; German: *Das zweischneidige Schwert: Herrschaft und Widerspruch im Württemberg der frühen Neuzeit*. Berlin, 1986). He is currently doing work on the history of incest discourse in Europe and the United States since the Renaissance and on the dynamics of kinship in Europe during modernization. – Address: Department of History, University of California, 6265 Bunche Hall, Box 951473, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1473, USA.

I came to the Wissenschaftskolleg with the intent to make a great deal of progress on my project of understanding the salient features of incest discourse in the West over the course

of religious renovation, secularization, and modernization. I started with the simple idea that different epochs have centered their concerns around particular pairs and that the focus – or perhaps better, obsession (at least in the United States) – on father/daughter incest is largely a product of post-World War II culture and dates roughly from the late 1960s. I had known from my work on European kinship that the center of interest in the representation of incest in the period of the Baroque circled for the most part around pairs that modern ideas find hard to imagine as incestuous, since they do not directly involve blood or genetic relations. The central pair seems to have been the brother and sister-in-law. Between around 1740 and 1840, the focus shifted to brothers and sisters. And late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture put the greatest emphasis on the mother/son relationship. My work this year concentrated on figuring out the seventeenth-century obsession with the deceased wife's sister. This led me in two directions: natural law and belletristic. There is a very large number of texts on the subject by theologians, lawyers, and natural law writers, but what has become clear to me is that the history of natural law speculation is a confusing and not very well understood field. During the past fifteen years or so, there has been a renaissance in natural law studies, and this literature engaged a great deal of my attention. But exactly how natural law ideas developed within Protestant and Catholic theology and in the law and medicine faculties is not very well chronicled or understood. Even when one studies the texts of scholars at great length, however, one is still puzzled about the unease in the society and the culture about the wife's sister. To get at the force of the problem, it is necessary to turn to other kinds of sources: plays, epic poems, romances, and other forms of literary production, such as sermons. Here I have only begun to scratch the surface, partly because there are no guides to the theme in European literature as a whole.

I spent a considerable part of the year trying to deepen my understanding of European kinship. I lectured about the issues in several universities in Germany, but just at the very end had a very stimulating evening discussing kinship and modernization at the Freie Universität. The response there suggests that there is slowly building up a renaissance in social history, something I had already remarked in my discussions at the Kolleg with John Breuilly and Beshara Doumani. It seems to me that the great open questions have to do with two great transitions: from the late Middle Ages to the Early Modern period and from the latter to the Modern period, with the break coming around 1750. The shift from vertically constructed familial relationships and an exogamous marriage system to horizontally constructed kinship relations and an intense endogamy, which characterized nineteenth-century Europe, demands to be much more thoroughly mapped and explained. Part of my

time during the year was devoted to a paper on “Kinship and Class in Nineteenth-Century Europe” for a September conference in Ascona on “Kinship in Europe, the Long Run 1300–1900”.

As everyone remarks who gets to spend a year at the Wissenschaftskolleg, the great surprise is whom one ends up talking with and what one gets to think about. I had taken it upon myself to learn a great deal about opera and to go to as many classical plays as I could (I saw Goethe’s “Iphigenie auf Tauris” at the Maxim Gorki Theater three times, finding more and more to enjoy and understand with each performance.) The surprise was the presence of Gérard Mortier, who on the first day wanted to talk about incest in opera with me. After that, I went over each opera with him the day after I saw it, and often went back for another look. The other great surprise was Helmut Lachenmann, whose presence prompted me to listen intently to *Neue Musik*. Early on, he asked me to introduce him at his Tuesday Colloquium, and that sent me off to read his stunning essays and to study the Internet comments about his music. This part of the year’s experience has been an education: the highlight was an evening session where he explained one of his pieces (“Variations on a theme by Schubert”) to three of us Fellows for three hours. It also turned out that he has deep Swabian roots and since most of my research has circled around villages he has lived in or lived near, we found a great deal to talk about, especially in the culinary realm. His wife Yukiko Sugawara continuously brought me care packages of Maultaschen to ease my existence in Berlin.

Berlin has a curious ambivalence about its three operas, and there is a continuous complaint that Berlin cannot afford three houses. But, of course, what makes Berlin different from any other major city in the world is the wealth of its music. It would be a much poorer place without all three operas – the only improvement I can see is to fill in Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays more consistently.