JOHN ELLIOTT

John Huxtable Elliott

23 June 1930 – 9 March 2022

elected Fellow of the British Academy 1972

by

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Fellow of the Academy

Sir John H. Elliott was the world's leading expert on the history of early modern Spain and its overseas empire. Recipient of numerous honours and awards, he taught at Cambridge University and King's College London before becoming professor of history in the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, New Jersey. He returned to Britain in 1991 as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University, retiring in 1997, but remained an active, engaged scholar until his death in March 2022. His legacy includes numerous books, notably his internationally acclaimed *The Count-Duke of Olivares: A Statesman in an Age of Decline* (1986) and *Empires of the Atlantic world: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1820* (2006). He also trained and inspired dozens of disciples on both sides of the Atlantic.

Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy, 21, 151–250
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Figure 1. Stephen Farthing, 'Historians of *Past and Present*' (NPG 6518). Elliott included a reproduction of this group portrait, done in 1999, in his autobiographical account, *History in the making*, with the following caption: '[It] depicts members of the editorial board of the journal in the 1960s, some more recognizable than others (left to right, standing: Eric John Hobsbawm, 1917–2012; Rodney Hilton, 1916–2002; Lawrence Stone, 1919–99; Sir Keith Thomas, b. 1933; seated: Christopher Hill, 1912–2003; Sir John Elliott, 1930–2022; Joan Thirsk, 1922–2013). The setting is imaginary but the doorway at the back may have been suggested by Velázquez's *Las meninas*, about which the artist and the author talked as the author sat for him.' By 1999 all seven members of the Board portrayed were Fellows of the British Academy.

On 4 March 1856, the House of Lords approved a Motion to Queen Victoria 'praying that Her Majesty will be graciously pleased to take into Her Royal Consideration the expediency of forming a gallery of the portraits of the most eminent persons in British History', to include 'those persons who are most honourably commemorated in British history, as warriors or as statesmen, or in Arts, in Literature, or in Science'. Philip, Earl Stanhope, who presented the Motion, quoted a letter of support from Sir Charles Eastlake, President of the Royal Academy, stipulating that the collection should 'be formed exclusively for authentic likenesses of celebrated individuals, not necessarily with reference to the merit of the works of art'.[1]

In keeping with these principles, in 1998 Charles Saumarez Smith, Director of the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), accepted a proposal from the Editorial Board of *Past and Present*, one of Britain's most prestigious historical journals, to commission a group portrait of its leading members, in part because 'historians were not particularly well represented in the modern collections of the gallery'. He approached Stephen Farthing, then Ruskin Master at the Ruskin School of Fine Art and Drawing in Oxford, 'because he was at the time working on a series of pictures based on precedents in historical portraiture'. The invitation stressed that the surviving board members formed 'A coherent group of historians all of whom have made a major contribution to the study of the subject area (particularly through the investigation of social history). I think as a group they would be interesting; particularly if the portrait can in some way convey the sense of the importance of history to contemporary society.'[2]

Since it proved impossible to assemble the seven as a group, Farthing compiled a questionnaire in order to learn more about their personalities and how each wanted to be represented. He filled in each one while he made his preliminary sketches, 'the idea being that they should furnish me with enough information about themselves and the way that they believed they fitted together so as to allow me to paint a picture that they had unwittingly designed'. What Farthing learned about the board members' personal relationships and political alignments is reflected in the position they occupy in the portrait: Christopher Hill, Rodney Hilton and Eric Hobsbawm (all Marxists) on the left; the Socialist Joan Thirsk sitting by herself; the anti-Marxists Lawrence Stone, John Elliott and Keith Thomas on the right. When asked in 2022 about the sittings he had conducted, Farthing recalled that Elliott 'struck me as a thoughtful person who didn't seem to find

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, third series 140 (London, 1856), cols 1770–1789, House of Lords debate, 4 March 1856, on a 'Gallery of National Portraits'.

[2] https://charlessaumarezsmith.com/2022/10/14/the-founders-of-past-and-present/ (accessed 15 February 2023). The idea of a group portrait originated with Sir David Cannadine, and was conveyed to Saumarez Smith by Paul Slack (represented in the group portrait by his pipe and a puff of smoke upper left). Farthing deposited the questionnaires compiled for each subject at the NPG library (NPG46/66/6/1/2 and RP 6518), and we thank Barbara Canepa for providing scans of them and for permission to quote from them.

engaging with me as "the person behind the easel" a problem. He was the only sitter who I talked at any length to about art.'

> He wasn't keen on talking to me about himself; he just wanted to talk about [Diego de] Velázquez and the Prado. I think we fell on that subject as a result of us talking about the traditions of the group portrait and how they seemed to have gone out of fashion, which with hindsight must have grown out of him making the connection between the project in hand and a painting he clearly loved, Velázquez's *Las Meninas* … My lingering memory is of the depth of his engagement and willingness to enter into dialogue. At the end of the last sitting I remember thinking 'I bet he is a really good teacher and diligent supervisor'.

When Farthing asked him to summarise what *Past and Present* stood for, he answered 'The big picture'.[3]

These insights epitomised Sir John Elliott: passionate about history and art history alike; willing to 'enter into dialogue' but reluctant to talk about himself; 'a really good teacher and diligent supervisor'; and a scholar who never lost sight of 'the big picture'. He was also the most influential and important historian of early modern Spain and its world.

I. Apprenticeship, 1930–56

John Huxtable Elliott was born in Reading, England, on 23 June 1930, the first child and only son of Thomas Charles Elliott and Janet Mary Payne, both schoolteachers.[4] Elliott noted that 'by a curious coincidence both my grandfathers were watchmakers and jewellers', and regretted that 'I signally failed to inherit their manual skills, although I may have inherited something of their concern for accuracy and precision.'[5] T.C. Elliott

[3] Stephen Farthing emails to the authors, 6 and 26 September and 18 October 2022 (Keith Thomas vehemently objected to being placed to the right of Elliott: email to the authors, 16 June 2022). See also Elliott's speech at the official unveiling of the portrait on 15 February 2000, in the NPG archive.

[4] 'Huxtable' was a family name. According to Orest Ranum, 'John remained puzzled by how bibliographers had ascertained his middle name, and he never did find out' (Email to the authors, 28 May 2022); but the explanation is simple. Cambridge University Library expected those charged with cataloguing books to find the full name of each author; since Elliott's first academic books identified him as 'Fellow of Trinity College' they simply consulted the college's 'List of fellows', which provided his full name.

[5] Elliott, 'Biographical Notes' [henceforth 'BN'], a typescript he deposited with the British Academy in 2006 specifically to guide his future obituarists. All quotations, unless otherwise attributed, come from this document. It was thus no coincidence that when in 2017 he became the first Hispanist to make a 'deposit' in the 'Caja de Letras' of the Instituto Cervantes in Madrid, Elliott deposited a watch – the watch he had purchased at age 16 on his first trip to the continent of Europe – 'because we historians are both by training and vocation the guardians of time'. The watch occupies, appropriately, deposit box # 1492: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yj51KQsH_8.

was born in 1892 to a Quaker family and went to Sidcot, a Quaker co-educational boarding school in Somerset. From there he went to Manchester University, where 'he acquired a deep love of French; and when he took up a teaching career he specialized in the teaching of French'. Janet Payne, born in 1902 to a Wesleyan family, went to Girton College, Cambridge, where she read English and joined the Society of Friends. She, too, decided to become a teacher and met her future husband at a weekend teaching conference in Manchester in February 1929. They were married at Jordan's Meeting House in Berkshire the following August and moved to Reading, where T.C. Elliott was a housemaster at Leighton Park, another Quaker school. Shortly after John's birth, his father became headmaster of his old school, Sidcot, but shortly afterwards he and his wife converted to Christian Science and he 'came to the conclusion that he could not in honour remain the headmaster of the school of a different religious denomination. Therefore, at the height of the Depression, and with no private resources and two young children to support, he resigned his headmastership.' Luckily, his parents 'learnt of plans to found a preparatory school for the sons of Christian Scientists. In 1933 my father was asked to help start the new school, the Trustees of which appointed him as its first headmaster.' With only five boys in the first year, T.C. Elliott received no salary, just board and lodging in rather cramped premises; but after some months they all moved to Fan Court, near Chertsey in Surrey, a handsome, square, late Regency mansion set in sixty acres of lawns and shrubberies.

John's schooling began at nearby Virginia Water Junior School, where according to a school report in Spring 1937, his writing was 'Good, when he does not go too fast' (praise that will surprise all who encountered Elliott's later script); his English was 'Very good. He continues to express himself very easily on paper'; and his History was also 'Very good'.[6] Later that year he became a pupil at Fan Court, which by then had some sixty-five boarders and day boys between the ages of seven and thirteen. At the end of each day Elliott's mother would read the younger children a bedtime story in the sitting room, while his father would read the stories of Horatio Hornblower or Rider Haggard to the older boys in his study. One of those boys, Peter Marshall, later an eminent historian of the British Empire, remembers Fan Court as a 'very well conducted school' that

[6] Elliott's report card from Virginia Water Junior School, spring 1937, just before he transferred to Fan Court. For more on that school, see http://www.photoeyes.biz/vwjs.htm. We invite those who doubt the impenetrability of Elliott's script to consult Hoover Institution Library and Archives: Felix Gilbert Papers [hereafter HI FGP], Box 61, Elliott to Gilbert, 14 October 1972, holograph. Gilbert's secretary typed out the whole letter, presumably because Gilbert could not read it, but left several blanks where she failed to decipher one or more words. In several cases she misread what she typed. Gilbert – a scholar proficient in Renaissance palaeography, be it noted – later tried to fill in some blanks in the typed text but he, too, misread some words in the original. See also the lament about Elliott's script by Jonathan Brown on page 208 below.

was 'a happy and supportive place for young people', and young John Elliott as 'already obviously a very clever but also very urbane young person'.[7]

Maintaining a school during the Depression presented many challenges. 'Financial resources were always limited', Elliott later recalled, and 'there was one year when his father had to pawn his typewriter because they were completely out of cash and credit'. Then came the Second World War, 'when the boys would troop down to the large Victorian cellars during the height of the Blitz' because the school was only twenty miles from London. On some nights they could hear the bombs drop and see the flames that engulfed the capital; and, like the rest of Britain, they endured food rationing and sometimes went short.[8]

Elliott became a voracious reader thanks to 'the resources of the well-stocked library at Fan Court School'. He recalled poring 'over the text and illustrations of the capacious volumes, bound in green, of *The romance of the Nation: a stirring pageant of the British peoples through the ages*', so that in deciding to study history at university he was 'returning to an early enthusiasm'.[9] He also acquired other skills. The entries in his diary for November 1939 recorded that he 'scored two goals in football', practised the violin, and 'drew a Christmas Card of a Spanish galleon and wrote a short poem about it' – perhaps his first encounter with the country he would later study. That month his father gave him 'a book called *King Solomon's Mines*': a novel for boys set in southern Africa by H. Rider Haggard. Shortly afterwards 'I made a map of an unknown world', probably inspired by the map drawn in his own blood by the Portuguese explorer 'José da Silvestra' reproduced in Haggard's book – perhaps Elliott's first encounter with European exploration.[10]

Elliott also developed a 'consuming interest in current events', stimulated 'by being allowed by my parents to stay up for the nightly news broadcasts'. In 2018, after giving an invited lecture at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, after dinner 'conversation turned to all of the diners' earliest historical memories. Student jaws sagged when our guest paused thoughtfully, and then said: "Probably it would be Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia"' in 1936.[11]

[7] Peter Marshall emails to the authors, 11 and 15 May 2022. Further details supplied by Judith Elliott Davis.
[8] Orest Ranum email to the authors, 28 May 2022.
[9] Elliott, *History in the making* (New Haven and London, 2012 [hereafter *HM*]), pp. 2–3.
[10] Elliott family archives, London [Henceforth EFA], Elliott's Diary for 1939, entries for 10, 22, 28 and 29 November and 1 December. H**.** Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines: A novel* (London, 1885), dedicated 'to all the big and little boys who read it'. The map appears on p. 19. Elliott remained interested in football: when asked in an interview on Radio Barcelona in 1956 to name 'three things' he would like to take home to England with him, he included 'Kubala and di Stefano to revive England's decadent football': EFA 'Interview in the programme *Agora*, Radio Barcelona, 11 March 1956', English transcript [henceforth 'Agora'].
[11] https://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/news/memory-sir-john-elliott–1930–2022.

Thanks to 'an extremely good teacher in history, who really awakened my interest in the past', and to a local vicar who taught him Greek, at age twelve Elliott took the scholarship entrance exam for Eton (only eight miles from Fan Court).[12] According to his own modest account:

> I did sufficiently well to scrape into a place near the bottom of the list. Normally this would not have been sufficient to win me a scholarship, but for the 1943 election there were more vacant places than usual, in part because of the circumstances created by the war, and I was promised a place in College, with the offer of two terms in an Oppidan house until a College vacancy became available. I therefore moved to Eton, as a boarder at Butterwick's, in the autumn of 1943, and transferred to College in the summer of 1944.

He continued:

> Eton was a totally new world for me, and life in an Oppidan house, where I was astonished by the life-style and obvious affluence of many of the inmates, came as something of a culture shock. College, with its greater work ethos, proved to be a more congenial habitat, and I shall for ever be grateful to a school which gave me a fine liberal education free of charge.

He also won several prizes at Eton, including his first history prize for 'a paper on Deneys Reitz's *No outspan*, an account of the Boer War commandos', and maintained his interest in current affairs, keeping 'a map of Europe on the wall of my room in College, into which I would stick pins to mark the progress of the Allied armies' on both the Eastern and Western Fronts.[13]

The war also came to Eton. Each Sunday at evensong he listened as the names of Etonians killed in action were read out, and he 'lived in an atmosphere of sirens and shelters' as first V1 and then V2 rockets came over, some of them exploding quite close to the school. In July 1944, the alarms went off nine times in a single week, and on one occasion the boys had to stay in the shelter for ten hours. The ordeal only ended on 8 May 1945, 'VE Day', when Elliott travelled to neighbouring 'Windsor Castle to see the fireworks and to celebrate' the defeat of Germany. In an interview published in a Catalan newspaper seven decades later, Elliott affirmed that the war provided him with important perspectives on 'great power rivalry, the strength of tyranny, the struggle for freedom'.[14]

[12] *Colloquium. A journal of historical and social thought*, 1 (April, 1964) [hereafter *Colloquium*], 18–24, interview by Norman F. Cantor, at 19; EFA, 'Form of admission of King's Scholars at Eton College' in favour of 'Johannem Huxtable Elliott', dated 'III Non. Mai MDCCCCXLIV'.

[13] 'BN', 5. Reitz did indeed write about his commando experience in *Commando. A Boer Journal of the Boer War* (1929), a ripping yarn that included an encounter with Winston Churchill (then a journalist); but *No outspan* (1943) was the third volume of Reitz's autobiography, which narrated his life after 1919. We suspect Young Elliott wrote his prize-winning essay about *Commando*.

[14] Details from Douglas Hurd, *Memoirs* (London, 2003), pp, 35–6 (all of chap. 2 vividly describes the life of a King's Scholar at Eton during and just after World War II); and *L'Avenç; Revista d'història*

When only sixteen, Elliott wrote and published his first book, *Nibble the squirrel*, a story for children composed in collaboration with Julian Slade, a fellow Etonian, who also provided the illustrations. According to Felipe Fernández Armesto: 'John used to joke that *Nibble* earned him more money than all his academic books put together.'[15] According to Elliott himself, *Nibble* 'sold 10,000 copies. On the strength of the proceeds I travelled to Switzerland, on my first ever visit to the continent, to stay in Zurich in the home of one of my early Swiss governesses.' He spent a month there 'to learn German'. After he returned to Eton, now able to read French and German literature in the original, he decided to specialise in modern languages and this 'gave me a growing interest in comparative studies, in comparing my English experience with continental experience, and perhaps it made me think more in continental terms than many schoolboys would at that particular stage'. His language skills won him a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge, but 'having won my scholarship, I switched to History for my last nine months at Eton and enormously enjoyed it.' In addition, 'In my last year I thought it might not be a bad idea to know a little Spanish, and so I started to learn it.'[16]

In between school and university, Elliott became a soldier. Under the terms of the National Service Act introduced after the Second World War, which affected almost all British males after they turned 18, he served a year as a lance-corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps, stationed in England. He seldom spoke about his military career, which he described as 'undistinguished and uninteresting', although he learned to touch-type with enviable speed and, equally important, 'how to compose sentences in his head from having been made to use a typewriter during his National Service'.[17]

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moderna, 355 (March 2010), 20–9, 'L'entrevista: John H. Elliott, una visió de fora estant' [hereafter *L'Avenç*], at 22; 'Conversa amb John H. Elliott', *Manuscrits. Revista d'historia moderna*, 15 (1997), [hereafter 'Conversa'], 183–98, at 184.

[15] Felipe Fernández Armesto, 'John Huxtable Elliott', *Hispanic-American Historical Review*, 111 (2022), 705–8. The papers kept by Elliott's mother contain a prototype of *Nibble*: an undated manuscript entitled 'Isabel the Guinea Pig' by John Elliott and Julian Slade, with four illustrations by Slade. According to the entry in the British Library catalogue for *Nibble*, the author was 'John Elliott, writer of tales'. Geoffrey Parker first saw the work in 1969, when the Elliotts invited him, his wife, and his daughter Susie, then almost four, for afternoon tea. When Susie got bored, Elliott located a copy of *Nibble* and read part of it to her, whispering to her proud father with a wink: 'Elliott's first book'. For those seeking to complete their set of Elliott's publications, in January 2023 copies of *Nibble* were available on eBay for £32, plus shipping.

[16] *Colloquium*, 19; 'BN', 5; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yj51KQsH_8 (on learning German in Switzerland); *ABC*, 13 July 2015, interview with Elliott by Luis Ventosa (learning Spanish in his last year at Eton).

[17] Elliott email to Richard Kagan, 3 July 2000; Alastair Malcolm, interviewed by Philip Carter, 11 April 2022, at https://blog.royalhistsoc.org/2022/04/11/sir-john-elliott–1930–2022-a-personal-recollection-by-alistair-malcolm/. Brian Pullan recalled a rare boast by Elliott: 'Oonah can type, but I can type better' (letter to the authors, 18 March 1994)

Perhaps like Douglas Hurd, another King's Scholar from Eton who began National Service in 1948, Elliott found that 'After Eton there was nothing particularly barbarous to me about sharing a wooden hut with twenty other conscripts, or about the food or other physical conditions.' His initiation as a soldier probably resembled that of Sir Keith Thomas, conscripted two years later:

> My first fortnight of basic training was traumatic. Immediately on arrival, we were lined up to be vaccinated and given four roughly administered injections. The painful swelling in my arm was as nothing compared with the horrors of the barrack room … surrounded by miners, steel-workers and labourers, who had never possessed pyjamas, who when they spoke of 'books' meant the Dandy or the Beano, and whose conversation was an unbroken stream of obscenity.[18]

According to Richard Vinen's history of National Service, conscripts like John Elliott and Keith Thomas often became corporals or lance-corporals with clerical duties because they 'were too well educated to stay in the ranks but too plebeian, obviously lacking in martial qualities, or rebellious, to become officers'. Perhaps Elliott appeared to lack 'martial qualities' on account of his heritage (his father had been a pacifist in the First World War). In any case, his military service ended after one year because, in the early years of the scheme, men who had secured a place at university were released in September to take it up.[19]

In 1949, Elliott went up to Cambridge and joined about twenty other freshmen reading history at Trinity College under the genial guidance of George Kitson Clark, an expert on Victorian England. 'Not having been a historian at school', Elliott wrote, 'I found the first-year syllabus, and especially British economic history, tough going', but 'every week I had to write an essay of between five and eight pages on some historical topic, and then meet my tutor for 45 minutes, during which he criticized my argument and my style. Everyone stressed the importance of writing well.' Elliott 'was extremely surprised when I emerged with a first [-class degree] in "Prelims" at the end of the academic year. From that point on I felt a growing confidence in my capacity to do well.'[20]

[18] Hurd, *Memoirs*, pp. 61–2; Keith Thomas, 'Two years a squaddie', https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v37/n03/keith-thomas/diary (and attached 'Letters' from readers).

[19] Richard Vinen, *National service: a generation in uniform 1945–1963* (revised edition, Harmondsworth, 2015), p. 240. See *ibid.,* chap. 7 on the misery of 'Basic Training'; and also pp. xxx, 4 and 442 n. 17, on the early release of conscripts who had already won a university place. Douglas Hurd, who began his National Service as soon as he left Eton in 1948, was also released in September 1949: *Memoirs*, p. 68. Patrick Collinson wrote eloquently in his autobiography about National Service as an NCO at the same time as Elliott: *History of a History Man. Or, the twentieth century viewed from a safe distance* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 64–8.

[20] 'BN', 5–6; *ABC* interview 13 July 2015.

His interest in Spain and its history began by accident shortly afterwards when he saw 'an announcement in the undergraduate newspaper, *Varsity*, that one or two places were still vacant for a Long Vacation group tour round the Iberian peninsula, in an elderly and battered truck. So I signed on, and in doing so changed the course of my life.' Together with a dozen other students, 'for six weeks in the heat of July and August [1950] we drove round Spain and Portugal, staying in cheap boarding houses or spending the night camping out in olive groves, sometimes to find ourselves woken at dawn by an annoyed peasant farmer who told us to clear off from his land.' Nevertheless,

> Like so many others from the North who make contact for the first time with the civilization of Southern Europe, I was immediately enthralled. Here was a society which, amidst all the sadness of the post-war period, gave the impression of possessing an extraordinary basic vitality amid its austerity which had a profound effect on me; and I felt an immediate desire to pursue my own exploration of these mysteries.

A visit to the Prado Museum in Madrid formed the highlight of the trip.

> I was left overwhelmed by the variety and the quality of the collection, and I was particularly affected by the work of Velázquez, of which I had until then seen very little. All of his portraits fascinated me; but my attention was particularly attracted to the great equestrian portrait of the count-duke of Olivares, for reasons that even now I cannot entirely explain. I stood before a historical figure of outstanding importance who, in the hands of Velázquez, had acquired extraordinary stature.

Elliott later wondered: 'Did I feel some deeper attraction in Velázquez's portrait, which seemed to incarnate the arrogance of power?'

> Perhaps the very sight of the man on horseback, with his general's baton, his goatee beard and the upturned ends of his moustache had a certain romantic charm on our first encounter, because it certainly evoked the world of *The Three Musketeers*. When I learned more about the Count-Duke, perhaps I felt attracted by the contrast between the sense of power projected by the portrait and the awareness of the failure and defeat in which his political career would end. We historians are very sensitive to the ironies of the Past.[21]

[21] *HM*, p. 1; *Discurso de investidura de Doctor 'Honoris Causa': Profesor John H. Elliott* (Madrid, 1984) [hereafter *Discurso*], pp. 23–4; 'Biografia política: el conde-duque de Olivares y su época', in Isabel Burdiel and Roy Foster, eds, *La historia biográfica en Europa. Nuevas perspectivas* (Zaragoza, 2015) [Hereafter 'BP'], pp. 145–62, at p. 148. More than seventy years later, John's sister Judith (then aged eleven) still remembered 'his coming home from his very first visit to Spain' and how 'that first encounter hooked him for life. I remember him talking about the Velázquez portrait of the conde-duque de Olivares, which he saw for the first time on his first visit to the Museo del Prado, knowing nothing either of the artist or the subject': Judith Elliott Davis, speech at the ceremony making Elliott an 'adopted son' of the town of Olivares, 2 February 2023. When asked on Radio Barcelona in 1956 to name 'three things' he would like to take home to England with him, 'The portrait of the Conde Duque de Olivares by Velázquez' came first ('Agora').

Sir Raymond Carr, who like Elliott visited Spain for the first time in 1950, observed that 'It is difficult these days to remember the way in which the simple act of visiting Spain' in the decades after the Civil War was seen as a betrayal by many Britons.[22] For intellectuals sympathetic to the Republic – and (as Carr noted) 'almost every writer of significance sympathized with the Republic' – General Franco's Spain became a pariah state to be attacked and criticised, but never visited, and definitely not a suitable terrain for serious historical research. Consequently its history and culture were scarcely taught in British universities outside the language faculties, and when Elliott got back to England he found that 'even the basic text books on seventeenth-century Europe had little or nothing to say about the Count-Duke'.[23]

In his second year of undergraduate studies he had 'the schizophrenic experience of being taught medieval history alternately by Steven Runciman and Walter Ullmann', and he attended supervisions on Anglo-Saxon England given by Jack Gallagher, whose specialty was the history of British West Africa. More significantly, one of his supervisors made him read a big new book by Fernand Braudel: *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*. He later recalled that 'I read it with enthusiasm. It was a book that opened my eyes to the rich possibilities of studying the past as no previous historical work had done.' He also attended courses of lectures by Herbert Butterfield, David Knowles, J.H. Plumb and M.M. Postan, but 'those that made the biggest impression' on him 'were the lectures given on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings by Nikolaus Pevsner which did perhaps more than anything else to open my eyes to the world of the visual arts'.[24]

His final year included a 'Special Subject', a standard feature of undergraduate History degrees at all British universities, which required a close reading of about 1,000 pages of printed primary sources. Elliott and Patrick Collinson (another future Regius Professor) both opted to take 'Religion and politics of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England', taught by Norman Sykes, Professor of Ecclesiastical History. Elliott enjoyed the course because 'by having to look at texts and constitutional documents in a Special Subject one was trained in a certain degree of precision, which came in very useful in the future'. Collinson considered it 'quite a soft option' but admired Elliott as one of 'the stars in our little firmament' – and indeed the results of

[22] 'Testimonio personal: la España que conoció Raymond Carr' (1986), quoted in María Jesús González, *Raymond Carr. The curiosity of the fox* (Eastbourne, 2013), p. 128. Carr's impressions of Spain in 1950 matched those of Elliott – both, for example, were dumbstruck by the 'revelation of supreme painting' in the Prado (ibid., p. 124).

[23] Raymond Carr, ed., *The Republic and the Civil War in Spain* (London, 1971), p. 125; *Discurso*, pp. 23–4

[24] 'BN', 6; Elliott, 'El Franco Condado de Lucien Febvre', in Doris Moreno and Manuel Peña Díaz, eds, *Diálogos con la Historia: Ricardo García Cárcel y el oficio de historiador* (Madrid, 2019) [hereafter 'Franco Condado'], pp. 22–26, at p. 22.

Part II of the Cambridge History Tripos in 1952, showed that 'Elliott, J.H., Trin.' graduated with a starred first-class degree ('Collinson, P., Pemb.' graduated with a first-class degree, and so did 'Hurd, D.R., Trin.' and 'Wrigley, E.A., Pet.,' a future President of the British Academy).[25]

Elliott originally considered a career in the diplomatic service ('as an early teenager I even kept a chart of ambassadorial moves and appointments as they appeared in *The Times*'), but once at Cambridge he 'increasingly felt the lure of an academic life as a professional historian'; and his first-class degree made him eligible for a three-year state scholarship to undertake postgraduate study.[26] 'For a moment I toyed with the thought of research into eighteenth-century English political history, which I had found attractive as an undergraduate', no doubt inspired by Sir Lewis Namier's meticulous studies of the interlock between local and national politics, as well as by Norman Sykes's Special Subject; but 'once again I felt the lure of Spain and second thoughts prevailed'.[27]

Elliott chose well, because 'Here was a country with rich archives and an underdeveloped historiography. In effect, there were opportunities here to make a mark ... The field was wide open, as it would not have been if I had chosen instead to research on Stuart England.' Raymond Carr reached the same conclusion at exactly the same time: although he 'later wondered whether he might have done better to focus on a country that was more "relevant" to a European context, such as Germany', he realised that studying Spain instead had 'placed him in the privileged position of being a "big fish in a small pond"'.[28]

[25] Elliott, 'Making history: the changing place of the profession in Britain' (an interview at Oriel College on 7 March 2008 [hereafter 'MH']), 2; Collinson, *History*, p. 75 (part of Collinson's detailed account of the undergraduate experiences of the cohort to which he and Elliott belonged: ibid., pp. 74–6); *Cambridge University Reporter*, no. 3800 (14 June 1952), 1454. In 'BN', 6, Elliott recalled that in preparation for his final exams, at the suggestion of his supervisor Michael Vyvyan, he read 'the works of Friedrich Meinecke, none of which, I think, had at that stage been translated into English': that, no doubt, added distinction to his Tripos papers.

[26] 'BN', 6–7. Christ Church Library, Oxford [henceforth CC] SOC/Dacre/1/2/33, Lady Patricia Gore-Booth to Hugh Trevor-Roper, 23 February 1989, recalled that her husband, Baron Paul Gore-Booth, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, had 'tried to help John when at one time he thought of joining the Foreign Service'. The Gore-Booths sent both their sons to Fan Court School and thus knew Elliott's parents well.

[27] *HM*, p. 4. Elliott himself acknowledged his debt to Namier in 'Conversa', 196, and also to Ronald Syme, a distinguished historian of the late Roman Republic (*HM*, pp. 101–4, and 'BP', p. 156).

[28] Elliott 'La trayectoria de un hispanista', in José Manuel Bernardo Ares, ed., *El Hispanismo anglonorteamericano. Aportaciones, problemas y perspectivas sobre historia, arte y literatura españolas (siglos XVI-XVIII)* 2 vols (Córdoba, 1997), pp. 121–40 [hereafter 'La trayectoria'], at p. 137; González, *Raymond Carr*, p. 143, quoting her interview with Carr in 2004. Elliott later noted another contrast: 'I think intellectuals, scholars, enjoy more prestige in Spain than in England – with the sole exception of those who gain a transient celebrity on television': interview published in *ABC*, 13 July 2015.

Nevertheless as Sir Keith Thomas, Elliott's friend and colleague for sixty years, observed, 'There was always something incongruous about John's interest in Spain'.

> It is not hard to see why a dashing Oxford figure like Raymond Carr, well-known for his colourful life-style and enthusiasm for fox-hunting, nightclubs, cigarettes, whisky, women and jazz, should, after dabbling in the Swedish past, have been attracted to the altogether more exotic history of Spain. But it is harder to explain why John, this gentle Cambridge scholar, Protestant, teetotal and peace-loving, should have wanted to devote his life to the history of this Catholic, wine-drinking, bull-fighting, Fascist and sometimes violent country and its American satellites.[29]

Elliott himself offered three reasons for his decision:

> I had some talent for foreign languages; a foreign topic seemed to offer more exciting opportunities, both for travel and for discovery, than a subject chosen from the history of my own country; and already, in the early 1950s, it was borne in on me that, if I wanted to have an academic career, there was standing-room only in British history.[30]

He therefore consulted Herbert Butterfield about 'the possibilities of research into the history of seventeenth-century Spain, with my focus on Olivares and his times', even though Butterfield was 'not a Hispanist and had no idea about the subject I had chosen for my thesis. That, in part, was why I chose him: I did not want someone who would tie me down.' Butterfield was nevertheless a natural choice. Elliott considered him 'perhaps the most interesting modern historian in Cambridge at the time'; he was also then a Methodist lay preacher; and he had recently published *George III, Lord North and the People, 1779–1780* (London, 1949), a study of a king and his chief minister as they faced a major rebellion on the periphery of an empire under stress. He found Butterfield 'an excellent intuitive research supervisor, who, while having no specialist information to offer, could anticipate the problems that a research student was likely to meet, and give valuable general guidance and support.'[31]

[29] Remarks by Sir Keith Thomas at the Memorial Service for John Elliott in Oxford, 10 June 2022. You can hear them at: https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/article/sir-john-elliott–23-june–1930–10-march–2022. Thomas had made much the same point in his review of *History in the making*: 'The empires of Elliott', *The New York Times Review of Books*, 21 February 2013.

[30] *HM*, p. 4.

[31] 'Conversa', 185–6 (revealing that he thought 'that Butterfield could not read Spanish'); 'BN', 8; Elliott, 'In Search of 1640', *Revista Internacional de Catalanística = Journal of Catalan Studies*, 4 (2001) http://anglo-catalan.org/oldjocs/4/articles/elliott2/index.html [henceforth 'In Search of 1640']. In an interview in 1963, Elliott praised Butterfield's 'intuition and insight' as a research supervisor and especially his 'genius for always being one jump ahead, and for being able to warn me of the kind of problems that were likely to face me next': *Colloquium*, 23. Geoffrey Elton, 'Herbert Butterfield and the study of history', *The historical journal*, 27 (1984), 729–44, at 730, noted (with a measure of disapproval) Butterfield's 'dread of becoming the master of a school and his honourable refusal to impose himself even on students who needed firmer direction'.

In retrospect, Elliott felt that his strong attraction to the study of Spain in the 17th century in part reflected his awareness 'as an Englishman living in the aftermath of the Second World War' that:

> The collective predicament of the last great imperial generation of Spaniards after the triumphs of the sixteenth century was not entirely dissimilar to the collective predicament of my own generation after the triumphs of the nineteenth and early twentieth. At least this may have given me a certain sympathy across the centuries with the aspirations and dilemmas of men who, as heirs to a glorious historical legacy, were seeking for national renewal in the midst of perceived decline.

Moreover Elliott lived 'in post-war Britain, a period just at the end of the Attlee government [1945–51], in a society which had gone through a great stage of central planning. I think we had all been fascinated by the degree of government intervention, the attempts at government control, and also – what was becoming clear at that same time – the limits of the effectiveness of central planning. That was very much at the back of my mind' as he started to study Olivares and his times.[32]

Since Elliott at this point had only a 'rudimentary knowledge of Spanish', after graduation he took a summer language course in Santiago de Compostela. 'It was not a great success from the educational point of view', he later recalled, because the course 'was full of English, North American and Chinese students who had no wish to learn' and so 'I ended up speaking a Spanish that no-one else could understand.' Nevertheless, 'the time spent in this most beautiful of cities confirmed me in my belief that studying the history of Spain and Spanish civilization was what appealed most of all.'[33]

He spent his first year as a research student struggling to master early modern palaeography ('I went and found an expert in calligraphy in Cambridge, who was able to teach me a little bit about Spanish handwriting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries') and using this knowledge to decipher some of the 17th-century Spanish documents preserved in the British Museum Library. He later regretted that 'graduate training at Cambridge was very amateur. There were no seminars for doctoral students. They expected everyone to figure it out on their own.' So he read widely on the history of Spain and its empire, including the 1912 study by Braudel's mentor, Lucien Febvre: *Philippe II et la Franche Comté. Étude d'histoire politique, religieuse et sociale*, a detailed study of 'an exposed and isolated outpost of the Spanish Monarchy' in the second half of the 16th century. At first 'I had my doubts' about whether 'such a small area could merit so many years of research and more than 700 pages', especially since it seemed to have escaped critical attention in Britain; 'but as soon I started to read it, I was

[32] Elliott, *Spain and its world 1500–1700. Selected essays* (New Haven and London, 1989), p. ix; Address to the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Studies Annual Meeting in Toronto in 1995: *SSPHS Bulletin*, 20/2 (1995), 5–11, at 7. See also Elliott's similar thoughts in *HM*, p. 11; and in Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 132.
[33] *L'Avenç*, 23; *ABC* interview 13 July 2015; *HM*, p. 4.

captivated.' Here was 'total history' like Braudel's *Meditérranée*, but on a more realistic scale, and with politics and personalities included:

> All the great issues of the day were present, but viewed through the lens of Franche-Comté, with its family rivalries and factional struggles … When my own research led me, unexpectedly but inexorably, to the study of the Catalan revolt of 1640, I realized that Lucien Febvre had provided me with the perfect model of what I wanted to do. Catalunya became for me another Franche-Comté.[34]

Elliott also visited Josep M. Batista i Roca, a Catalan historian living in exile in Cambridge, who 'was very encouraging about my research proposal, and made various good suggestions for preliminary reading. He never tried to push me in a particular direction, but made it clear that, if I were to concentrate on Olivares's plans for the reorganization of the *Monarquía*, I would have to pay some attention to how he attempted to introduce those plans in Catalunya.' However, 'at that time the history of Catalonia did not interest me. I was far more interested in … the aims of the dominant elite in Madrid.' The working title of his thesis became 'Olivares's policy of centralisation'.[35]

The only cloud on his horizon was a letter from Fernand Braudel. Although Elliott had admired *La Méditerranée*, he evidently failed to grasp the significance of a review article by Braudel, published in 1947, that belittled biographies in general and biographies of Olivares in particular:

> I confess that if I ever wanted to study the count-duke of Olivares, I would recoil before the enormity of the task. Can one evaluate the man without following his labours day-by-day for more than twenty years, when he was the master of Spain's empire, furiously reading, writing and issuing orders either to thwart or exploit developments? And after all that, what would you know of the man himself?[36]

These views had not changed five years later, when Elliott wrote to seek Braudel's blessing for his thesis topic. The reply was glacial: 'The count-duke's policies were sufficiently well known and studied', so that the 'general conclusions can be guessed in advance'. Elliott should instead 'plunge into the massive fiscal documentation in the

[34] 'MH', p. 10 (on the 'expert in calligraphy'); Josep Fradera, 'Conversa: John H. Elliott', *L'Avenç*, 123 (February 1989), 56-65, at 57 [henceforth 'Fradera']; 'El Franco Condado', 25–6 (on Febvre).

[35] Elliott, 'In search of 1640' (a touching portrait of Batista); *Solemne investidura de Doctor Honoris Causa al Professor Sir John Elliott* (Barcelona, 1994) [hereafter *Solemne investidura*], p. 25.

[36] Fernand Braudel, 'En Espagne au temps de Richelieu et d'Olivares', *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations*, 2 (1947), 354–8, at 357 (a review of Auguste Leman, *Richelieu et Olivarès : Leurs négociations secrètes de 1636 à 1642 pour le rétablissement de la paix*; a German edition of Gregorio Marañón, *El conde-duque de Olivares. La pasión de mandar*; and Alfred van der Essen, *Le cardinal-infant et la politique européenne de l'Espagne, 1609–1641* – a book that Braudel comprehensively trashed, despite the fact that 'no review copy was sent to the *Annales*': 357 n. 1.) Elliott admitted that when he eventually read the criticisms in Braudel's review article, 'me hicieron sentir escalofríos': 'BP', p. 152.

archive of Simancas'. The letter 'came as something of a shock', Elliott admitted; but 'in spite of Braudel's admonition, my instinct told me to persevere.'[37]

In August 1953, Elliott set forth for Barcelona where (at the urging of Batista i Roca) he introduced himself to several Catalan historians, including Professor Jaume Vicens Vives, who was working on late medieval Catalonia while trying to incorporate the latest foreign research into the study of Spanish history. He also asked the Director of the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón whether he 'would find there the *consultas* [memoranda] of the council of Aragon between 1621 and 1640'.[38] From Barcelona, Elliott travelled to the castle of Simancas, five miles from Valladolid, to consult the archives of the central government of the Habsburg Monarchy; but he soon became frustrated because the dossiers he consulted contained no trace of Olivares's plans for domestic reform and 'centralization'.

'I must confess', Elliott wrote thirty years later,

> Those weeks of fruitless research in 1953 were among the most desolate of my life. And when I found out by chance, during these very weeks, that the personal archive of the count-duke had been destroyed by a fire in the palace of the dukes of Alba in the late eighteenth century, my sense of desolation was complete. The worst fate that awaits a research student had befallen me: I had lost my topic.[39]

Realising that 'I could not return to England with nothing to show for two months' research, and with no chance of writing a thesis on my chosen subject', Elliott

> Had to do some quick rethinking. If I wanted on go on studying Olivares' period in power, I would have to approach it from another direction. The two great incidents of Olivares' tenure of office were the revolt of Portugal and the revolt of Catalonia. Both of those revolutions took place in 1640. It seemed to me possible by studying one of those revolutions to find out something about Olivares' policies as seen from the area in which they were put into effect, and about the kinds of reaction those policies produced.

But where should he start: Catalonia or Portugal?[40]

Thanks to his previous visit to Barcelona, he knew that the consultas of the council of Aragon survived there almost intact, and he had already met Vicens Vives and some other Catalan historians. He therefore decided 'to go east. Since the basic documentation

[37] 'BN', 9; and *HM*, p. 12, quoting Braudel's letter to Elliott dated 10 December 1952.

[38] https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/archivos-aca/en/exposiciones-virtuales/elliott.html, image 1, Elliott to Director Ernesto Martínez Fernando, 24 March 1953.

[39] *Discurso*, pp. 25–6. https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultura/mc/bellasartes/conocemas/galeria-imagenes/archivos/historicas/ags.html, image 13, shows Elliott at work in the search room of Simancas as his hopes faded in the summer of 1953.

[40] *HM*, pp. 12–13; Elliott, 'El Imperio Español y mi trayectoria historiográfica', in David García Hernán, ed., *La historia sin complejos. La nueva visión del Imperio Español (estudios en honor de John H. Elliott)* (Madrid, 2010 [hereafter 'IE']), pp. 358–71, at p. 360; *Colloquium*, 20. See also 'Fradera', p. 58.

on the origins of the Portuguese revolt has still not come to light, and possibly no longer exists, this decision proved to be my salvation.'[41] The fact that Elliott knew not a word of Catalan did not deter him. He placed an advertisement in a Barcelona newspaper that read 'Young Englishman, working in the archives, seeks a room in a Catalan household near the city centre and wants to learn Catalan' – a bold statement, given the hostile attitude of Franco's government towards the Catalan language. He received dozens of replies, most of them from 'elderly widows with ever more elderly mothers, living up six flights of dirty stairs, in dark rooms'. In the end he took an 'unpretentious but adequately pleasant room' in the apartment of a local lawyer in the Eixample, informing his parents that 'as they are Catalan, I hope to become acquainted with that hideous language'. He did not try very hard. In late February 1954 he felt 'rather ashamed at not having learned Catalan yet' and resolved that 'starting today, I will make a sustained effort to speak it.' In May, just before he left Barcelona, he managed to give a lecture about his research in Catalan (albeit using a text translated by a colleague) and 'was even dreaming in Catalan'.[42]

In December 1953 he explained his research project at a meeting with Vicens Vives, who also admired the work of Febvre and the Annales school, and now took Elliott under his wing. At the outset, Vicens pointed out that 'another historian was working on the revolutionary years of the Catalan revolt', namely Father Josep Sanabre, and so 'it made no sense for me to try to reconstruct the events of those revolutionary years to which Sanabre had already devoted so much time.' Vicens Vives urged Elliott to concentrate instead 'on the origins of the revolt, and to stop in 1640 or early 1641'.[43] He also invited Elliott to attend the weekly meetings he hosted at his home for his students and junior colleagues, including Joan Reglà, Jordi Nadal and Emili Giralt. They and other young Catalan historians were

> Going back like myself to the archives and discovering that many of the documents they found simply didn't produce conclusions that were in any way in conformity with what they had read in traditional textbooks. So that in the 1950s a revisionist movement was already beginning in Catalan historiography, and I came at the just the right moment.[44]

[41] *HM*, p. 16; *Discurso*, p. 26

[42] EFA Elliott to his parents, 3 October 1953, and 28 February, 7 March and 23 May 1954; *HM*, p. 18. *L'Avenç*, 24, reproduced the advertisement in *La Vanguardia*, dated 29 September 1953, placed by a 'Joven inglés, trabajando archivos'. On Elliott's personal experience of official hostility towards Catalan in this time, see *Solemne investidura*, pp. 27–8.

[43] *La Commemoració de l'Onze de Setembre a Barcelona* (Barcelona, 1994), pp. 63–71, 'Reflexions d'un anglès sobre Catalunya i Europa al segle XVII' [Hereafter *LC*], at p. 64. In 1956, Sanabre published *La acción de Francia en Cataluña en la pugna por la hegemonía de Europe, 1640–1659*, a 747-page monograph based on extensive research in Spain, France and Italy. In the Preface to *Revolt* in 1963, Elliott thanked Sanabre, 'the constant partner of my incursions into the Catalonia of the seventeenth century' (p. xiii); but in an interview in 2010 he felt that ending *Revolt* in 1641 simply because of Sanabre's work 'potser va ser un error, però una persona no pot fer-ho tot' (*L'Avenç*, 26).

[44] *Colloquium*, 22.

Elliott would learn much at those weekly meetings, which often lasted for three hours – though not at first because 'they take place in Catalan, which I still find hard to understand'. The seminar 'ranged widely over Catalan history, with some discussion of contemporary political events, and one or two of us expounded on what we were finding in the archives'; but Vicens Vives remained the 'animating figure at the centre of these discussions, provoking us with his impulsive remarks to think for ourselves', and he 'exercised a greater influence on me than any other living historian'.

> I think I was impressed above all by his vigour, his sheer historical intelligence, and the intensity of his commitment to history as a serious intellectual enterprise ... His mission, as he saw it, was to demythologize the history of Catalonia, and indeed of Spain, and put in its place a history which combined intense archival work with the approaches and the insights of the most up-to-date historical scholarship.

In 2001 Elliott ranked Vicens Vives as 'the most important Spanish historian of the twentieth century'.[45]

Elliott did not confine his research to Barcelona. He also travelled 'around Catalonia in search of local archives, both municipal and ecclesiastical – a very difficult feat, given the general poverty and the lack of catalogues. Everything depended on the archivists, most of them helpful, but all working other jobs. The archives were open short hours – but travelling by bus from one place to another allowed me to get to know the country better.'[46] By May 1954 he felt he had assembled enough material for a thesis, and he returned to England to write up his findings. Thanks to the skills he had learned in the army, 'for six weeks I battered out on my typewriter nearly a thousand pages on "Castile and Catalonia 1621–40"' and submitted them for a Prize Fellowship at Trinity College. He succeeded, which guaranteed him research funding for four more years.

Elliott's first action was to condense his prize essay into a PhD thesis of 60,000 words, entitled 'Castile and Catalonia during the Ministry of the Conde Duque de Olivares'. He did this

[45] EFA Elliott to his parents, 5 December 1953; *Solemne investidura*, pp. 29 and 25; Elliott's 'Foreword' to a 2001 reprint of *Imperial Spain*. In an interview in December 1963, Elliott added that Vicens Vives 'was even more impressive as a person than as a historian… I learned a lot from just seeing him in action' (*Colloquium*, 23). Elliott rarely bestowed unqualified praise, however, and in 1987 he expressed some reservations. Vicens 'tenía, naturalment, les seves faltes': he was sometimes too impatient, too rapid in his judgements, too iconoclastic, and so on: *LC*, 66. Raymond Carr also held Vices Vives in the highest esteem and 'regarded him as his master': González, *Raymond Carr*, p, 141. See also the eulogy of Stanley Payne, 'Jaime Vicens Vives and the writing of Spanish history', *Journal of Modern History*, 34 (1962), 119–34, and the biography of Josep María Muñoz Lloret, *Jaume Vicens i Vives (1910–1960). Una biografía intel•lectual* (Barcelona, 1997).

[46] *L'Avenç*, 24. At this time he grew a moustache in the style of Ronald Colman in 'The prisoner of Zenda': it appears in *HM*, plate 3, a photograph with his hosts in Barcelona, the Coderch family. See also Figure 2.

> Very much against the advice of Butterfield, who had no use for Ph.D.'s. It seemed to me, though, that a doctoral title might be useful for someone travelling on the continent and working on continental history, and I was duly awarded my doctorate after the thesis was examined by Sir George Clark and Jean Lindsay. The thesis also won me the Prince Consort Prize and Seeley Medal.[47]

In August 1955 the newly minted Dr Elliott set forth for Spain again. This time he stopped off in Paris to consult Braudel in person, but as before he 'was very much against my subject and wanted me to concentrate on the financial history of the period.' Nevertheless Elliott emerged from his audience impressed by Braudel's 'vision of total history, however difficult to achieve, and the need to combine political, social, economic, cultural history, if possible, in one whole. And I think this was terribly important in my intellectual formation.' He had only one reservation: 'I could never accept the determinism that one finds even in Braudel (perhaps because of the influence of Butterfield I was always impressed by the role of personality and contingency in the development of historical events).' In addition, 'I was very aware of the interactions, imitations and parallel developments' elsewhere in early modern Europe 'resulting from what in many respects were similar social and economic backgrounds'.[48]

Armed with these insights, Elliott returned to Simancas. 'Since my last stay', he found, 'they have built a special "Residencia" there for historians.'

> It's very modern and very comfortable but also very isolated, with no means of communication with the outside world. Since for most of the time I was the only resident, I felt rather like Robinson Crusoe on an island with every mod. con. It seems extraordinary that, at the very height of the summer vacations, there should be no more than 2 or 3 historians (apart from the usual collection of monks and priests) in one of the world's greatest archives. Even the Braudel boys are missing this year.[49]

This situation changed when an eminent 'Braudel boy' arrived at Simancas and also stayed at the Residencia: Henri Lapèyre, who had recently published two ambitious studies of Spanish trade and public finance in the age of Philip II, directed by Braudel. He was pleased that Elliott had already purchased one of those books, and perhaps it was

[47] *HM*, p. 21; 'BN', 10.

[48] Elliott mentioned his visit to touch the hem of Braudel's robe in Paris in 1955 in both 'MH', 3–4, and *HM*, pp. 21–3; but in 'IE', 360, he claimed he visited Braudel in Paris on his way to Spain in 1953. The later date seems more plausible.

[49] Cambridge University Library GBR/0012/Ms Butterfield [hereafter CUL *MB*] E14, Elliott to Butterfield, Cervera, 22 October 1955. Elliott gave more information – equally disparaging – about 'the usual collection of monks' in a 2010 interview: 'dues o tres monges, que feien petites biographies sobre les reines d'Espanya i coses així' (*L'Avenç*, 25). He provided a fuller description of his 'Robinson Cruso [sic] existence' and the 'fairly good quality but incredibly monotonous' meals at the Residencia in a letter to Hugh Trevor-Roper dated 28 June 1956: CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/2.

Lapèyre who persuaded him to follow Braudel's advice and immerse himself in the fiscal records of the Spanish central government because he now 'took the trouble to read through the consultas of the Consejo de Hacienda for the first forty years of the seventeenth century' until (he boasted to Butterfield) 'I think I know more about the finances of the Spanish Monarchy in Philip III's reign than anyone else.' He planned 'to write it up as an article for the "Annales" and, as it were, out-Braudelise the Braudelistes at their own game'.[50]

Elliott changed his plan after he noticed that the older Spanish historian sitting at an adjacent desk opposite in the search room at Simancas (Figure 2) was examining documents from exactly the same series. It was Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, who 'was generous in placing at my disposal the information he had amassed during many years

Figure 2. John Elliott working at his desk in the Sala de los Investigadores, Archivo General de Simancas, 1954. Elliott considered it 'a rather good photo' and sent a copy home: 'Here you see J.H.E., already the distinguished historian, in what he considers a very natural pose. The pile of documents impressive too.' Sixty years later, when the archivists of Simancas showed the same photo to Geoffrey Parker, Elliott's assessment had changed: 'Wow! Oonah had a look, and disowned me' (EFA, Elliott to his parents, 8 May 1954; Elliott email to Parker, 18 May 2016). Photo: courtesy of the Archivo General de Simancas.

[50] Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 123**;** CUL *MB* E14, Elliott to Butterfield, 22 October 1955; 'Conversa', 190. Lapèyre had published *Simón Ruiz et les asientos de Philippe II* (Paris, 1953) and *Une famille des marchands: les Ruiz. Contribution à l'étude du commerce entre la France et l'Espagne au temps de Philippe II* (Paris, 1955), and was working on *La géographie de l'Espagne morisque* (Paris, 1959). On his career, see Luis Miguel Enciso Recio, *Henri Lapèyre y la historia de España* (Valladolid, 1984), pp. 11–12.

of research in Spanish archives' (later published as *Política y hacienda de Felipe IV*). In addition, 'over our unappetizing lunches and dinners in the Residencia', Elliott learned much from Domínguez Ortiz 'not only about the history of his country, but also about its current problems, and the difficulties that faced Spanish scholars, most of whom had neither the resources nor the opportunities for serious research, and were too busy trying to earn a living by teaching and writing to find time to settle down to work in the archives.'[51]

After five weeks at Simancas, Elliott went to Madrid 'but I find it almost impossible to work there. Everything's hopelessly uncatalogued and the archivists … regard the historian as a most suspicious creature who is best kept well away from the documents.' He also felt 'very much on my own in Madrid, living in a pension while I worked in the archives, and scarcely anybody knew me'. Therefore, 'despairing of finding much there', he departed for Catalonia; but instead of going straight to Barcelona, as he originally planned, he decided to 'drop in at Lerida [Lleida] on the off chance that it might have a municipal archive. It did too, and really rather a good one.' This led Elliott to make an important discovery about his subject:

> The Catalans who have written about the revolution [of 1640] mostly come from Barcelona and so write about it from a Barcelona standpoint. It's very interesting indeed to see events from the viewpoint of a provincial town with an intense life of its own like Lerida, as reflected in the letters of its citizens who happened to be in Barcelona on business.

He now devised a new research strategy: 'While in Lerida, I went one Sunday sight-seeing to Cervera, which is fairly close. As always, I asked if there is a municipal archive and, on learning that there was, managed to get in.' This time he found 'three vast rooms' filled with documents that had been carefully collected and catalogued by 'a little wizened old man' who 'handed over the keys to me'. He took copious notes on what he found. Elliott also hired a bicycle in order to visit the various places mentioned in his documents, such as the castles of the predatory barons who sought jurisdiction over Cervera, so that 'I hope by the time I return to England to have a really good first-hand knowledge of the country I'm trying to describe.' Seeing for himself the places about which he wrote became another hallmark of Elliott's historical methodology.[52]

[51] *HM*, pp. 21–3. Don Antonio (born in 1909) also described the shock he experienced on discovering that he and the young English historian at the adjacent desk in the search room were consulting the same documents: Domínguez Ortiz, 'Prólogo', in Richard L. Kagan and Geoffrey Parker, eds, *España, Europa y el mundo hispánico: homenaje a John H. Elliott* (Madrid, 2001), p. 1. Domínguez Ortiz was also a close collaborator of Vicens Vives: see Peter Bakewell (one of Elliott's doctoral advisees), 'An interview with Antonio Domínguez Ortiz', *Hispanic-American Historical Review*, 65 (1985),189–202, at 193–4.

[52] 'Conversa', 187; CUL *MB* E14, Elliott to Butterfield, 22 October 1955.

Elliott concluded a long letter to Butterfield from Barcelona in October 1955 by casually stating that an article he had published in a local journal 'has caused a sensation'. He alluded to his first publication since *Nibble the squirrel*: 'The Catalan Revolution of 1640: some suggestions for a historical revision', which had just appeared in a new journal, *Estudios de Historia Moderna*. Its editor, Vicens Vives, predicted that 'your contribution to the events of 1640 will cause a sensation when it is published' and therefore commissioned a Spanish translation of the text. In the event, Vicens decided 'that my article should be left in the decent obscurity of the English language, although it remains unclear whether he was more concerned about government censorship or about the reactions my piece might provoke inside Catalonia itself.'.[53]

Both possibilities are plausible because the title of the article was deceptive: Elliott did not merely offer 'suggestions' but rather an entirely new agenda for the study of the revolt of the Catalans – one that placed it in a European context, drawing parallels with contemporaneous revolts elsewhere. His article also deprecated both the nationalist and the separatist views then favoured by most Spanish historians: the revolt of the Catalans, he argued, was far more than 'a romantic drama of conscious villainy foiled by the noble patriots'.[54] Almost simultaneously another article by Elliott, entitled 'The king and the Catalans, 1621–1640' and making a similar argument, appeared in *The Cambridge Historical Journal*. The same volume included articles by Walter Ullmann, who had taught Elliott as an undergraduate; Herbert Butterfield, his doctoral adviser; and Sir George Clark, who had examined his thesis. To appear in such company was no mean achievement for a historian aged twenty-four.[55]

By the time the two articles appeared, Elliott had decided to extend his research on Catalonia 'backwards towards 1600' because '1621 was too late a date to start a study of the origins of the 1640 revolution'.

> The unfortunate Olivares was handed a problem already so difficult and complicated that it would have needed the very highest political skill (and also a continuation of Philip III's policy of peace with foreign powers) to cope with it satisfactorily. The history

[53] Elliott, 'The Catalan Revolution of 1640. Some suggestions for a historical revision', *Estudios de historia moderna*, 4 (1954), 275–300; J. Clara, P. Cornellà, F. Marina and A. Simon, eds, *Epistolari de Jaume Vicens Vives*, 2 (Girona, 1998), pp. 172–3, Vicens Vives to Elliott, September 1954 (we thank Xavier Gil for this reference); *HM*, p. 44. In 'Conversa', 189, Elliott revealed that he had protested about the apparent censorship 'to someone in the Spanish embassy in London. They made enquiries and told me that there had been no censorship by the Spanish authorities. I therefore concluded that Vicens himself decided' not to publish in Spanish.

[54] Fernández Albaladejo and Pardos Martínez attested to the dramatic impact of Elliott's 'suggestions' on Catalan historiography in their 'Postfacio' to the 2013 edition of Elliott, *La rebelión*, pp. 614–15.

[55] Elliott, 'The king and the Catalans, 1621–1640', *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, 11 (1955), 253–71. The list of contributors at p. 359 also included J. P. T. Bury, Geoffrey Elton, A. H. M. Jones, John Kenyon and Victor Kiernan.

> of those years [1600–21] is extremely complicated because there are so many strands to follow, and I'm wondering how I'm going to turn it into an artistic whole.

In February 1956 he tried out his ideas in 'a talk, based on a few notes, to a group of historians' in Barcelona. He argued that three developments – 'the rapidly increasing Castilianization of the Spanish Empire'; 'a very serious economic and commercial crisis in Catalonia and Castile'; and 'a strong growth of brigandage' – between them led to 'an almost total collapse of government of Catalonia'.

> So when Philip IV comes to the throne, Catalonia is already in a state of acute neurosis about Castile's intentions, with everyone aggrieved and a kind of defensive nationalism rampant. And this is the moment when Olivares (driven by Castile's economic troubles) is compelled to choose to formulate his plans for a 'union' of the provinces of Spain, which must involve at least a reduction of Catalonia's liberties and exemptions. In these circumstances, it's hard to see how a clash could have been avoided.[56]

Readers familiar with *The revolt of the Catalans* will immediately recognise here the outlines of the book.

At the same time, Elliott had one of those 'sudden moments of intense surprise and pleasure' that lucky researchers experience once or twice in their lives. While working in the Barcelona University Library he came across a detailed diary that covered the years 1627–1630. He eventually identified its author as Jeroni Pujades, a regional lawyer and chronicler, and this led him to discover three more volumes of the diary in another library. 'That's sensational, Elliott: absolutely sensational', Vicens Vives exclaimed when he heard of the find, and it would later inspire the reunion of the four surviving volumes of the diary and their publication.[57] Elliott also located in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón ninety-two boxes of papers left by the count of Santa Coloma, the viceroy murdered as he tried to escape the rebels in 1640, including his letters from and to Olivares on the growing crisis in Catalonia.[58]

In spring 1956 Elliott left Barcelona, and once again had 'a fascinating time travelling around Catalonia'. He informed Butterfield that:

[56] CUL *MB* E15, Elliott to Butterfield, Barcelona, 29 February 1956.

[57] *Solemne investidura*, 28; Josep Maria Casas Homs, ed., *Dietari de Jeroni Pujades*, 4 vols (Barcelona, 1975–6). For the value of this source, see James S. Amelang, 'The mental world of Jeroni Pujades', in Richard L. Kagan and Geoffrey Parker, eds, *Spain, Europe and the Atlantic world: essays in honour of John H. Elliott* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 211–26. EFA Elliott to his parents, 3 and 11 February 1956, exulted over his new find.

[58] Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, *Generalitat: Correspondencia del virrey Conde de Santa Coloma*. The series is now digitized and available online: http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/1502975. Those interested can track Elliott's progress in the archive in 1954, 1955, and 1956 through the lists of documents ordered and delivered to his desk each day, duly recorded by the archive staff: https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/archivos-aca/en/exposiciones-virtuales/elliott.html, images 6, 7 and 8 (a terrifying reminder that archivists know and remember *everything* about you).

> By the time I have finished I shall have seen, I think, the archives of all the important Catalan towns. It's proving a very valuable experience, both for getting to the country (and there's no better way of getting to know it than coping with local archives and archivists) and for picking up the kind of information which merges local with national history and is unobtainable at Barcelona.

His sense of adventure was heightened by the fact that 'there's no information about [local] archives, so it's simply a matter of going from town to town, not knowing whether you'll find a hundred documents or none' – but he always found a welcome, which he attributed in part to surprise at the unannounced arrival of 'a foreigner speaking Catalan'. Better yet, 'the documents that interest me appear never to have been looked at.'[59]

Elliott also explored some ecclesiastical archives. His experience at the cathedral of La Seu d'Urgell, in the foothills of the Catalan Pyrenees, proved particularly memorable. 'The cultural level', he confided to Butterfield, was 'the lowest I have found in any Catalan town', with its inhabitants divided by a bitter dispute between the bishop and the cathedral canons, just as they had been in the 1630s.

> I eventually discovered a learned, Johnsonian canon who held a key to the chapter's archive. He was most understanding, but warned me that the canons would never allow me to look at their archive, and anyhow were quite incapable of understanding why anyone should want to do so. So we would station ourselves in the cloister and, when the coast was clear of canons, would dart through a side door to the archives, a vast room filled with hundreds of completely disorganized bundles covered with dust … As it was impossible to work there, as this would expose the canon to the wrath of his colleagues, the only thing to do was to smuggle the bundles out to a place of refuge, which we did under the capacious folds of his soutane.

These and other documents, sometimes read in his hotel room, convinced Elliott that:

> I've been overestimating conspiracy and underestimating popular passion in the outbreak of the revolution. More and more evidence is coming in of the uncontrollable gangs which swept the country in the summer of 1640. I have a feeling that the Catalan leaders found themselves being driven more and more to the Left, and decided that it was better to lead the revolution, even to extremes, than to be swamped by it.

These ideas, too, will be familiar to readers of *The revolt of the Catalans*.[60]

[59] CUL *MB* E15, Elliott to Butterfield, Barcelona, 29 February 1956. In an interview in 1995, Elliott recalled that his willingness to learn and speak Catalan 'opened every door to me in Catalonia, because they were so pleased, especially in a period when Catalan culture was suppressed by Franco': see 'A spell of decline: Sir John Elliott and the Hispanic World, 1995', in Leonard Blussé, Frans-Paul van der Putten and Hans Vogel, eds, *Pilgrims to the past. Private conversations with historians of European expansion* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 321–30, at p. 322

[60] CUL *MB* E16, Elliott to Butterfield, Camprodón, 18 April 1956. His experience at La Seu d'Urgell remained vivid in 2012, when he repeated it in *History in the making*, adding that the Johnsonian canon 'would lock me into the archive for the morning and I had the run of it to myself – on one occasion for rather too long, since he forgot to let me out at lunchtime': *HM*, p. 25. The 'Johnsonian canon' was Father Pere Pujol.

Elliott was often the only researcher in each local archive, working (he later reminded an audience in Barcelona) 'in challenging conditions, without the aid of catalogues, and without heat'.

> Many of my discoveries were the result of chance, combined with historical intuition, rather than precise references. So you should not be surprised if my documentation seems a trifle capricious: I just did what I could. You must also bear in mind that I was a foreigner without complete fluency in seventeenth-century Catalan, and that some of the documents were extremely hard to read, so that my transcripts were sometimes slightly defective. I certainly made mistakes, some of them already discovered and others awaiting discovery.[61]

In February 1956 he assured Butterfield that 'I intend to return to England in June to get down to writing. I'd very much like to get the first draft of my book finished by the autumn'. In the event, that task would take him almost seven years. Why?

Part of the explanation is that Young Elliott was enjoying himself. In Barcelona, he stayed with the family of a young doctor who boasted both his own programme on Radio Barcelona and a wide circle of contacts among the city's professional and cultural elite. 'We did not talk so much about politics as about social problems and so on', he recalled, and 'through them I came to know some very interesting people who were not historians.' Thanks to his immersion in the archives and constant practice, his language skills improved until he could write letters 'in perfect Catalan, albeit of the seventeenth century'.[62] He also spent time with a visitor from England: Hugh Trevor-Roper, whom he had met two years before. They spent Easter weekend together in the mountain village of Viladrau, scene of a major witch trial in the early 17th century, where the two future Regius Professors almost drowned in a rapidly swelling stream when they rashly went walking in the hills after torrential rains.[63]

Elliott now faced a far greater obstacle: 'The question of length'. He had written 1,000 pages on the period 1621–1640 in his prize fellowship dissertation, 'but since then I've acquired all this new mass of information, and have decided to begin in 1600 instead

[61] 'Conferència', 174. See also https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/archivos-aca/en/exposiciones-virtuales/elliott.html, images 3 and 4, Elliott to Director Martínez Ferrando, 11 August 1959, asking if an archivist could decipher two proper nouns in a document from 1640 that mystified him. Notably, Elliott wrote his request in excellent Catalan. Equally notably, even the archivists could not make out one of those proper nouns.

[62] *L'Avenç*, 'Entrevista' with John Elliott, 25 (naming his host: Dr. Gonçal Lloveras, also thanked in *Revolt*, p. xiii); 'Conversa', 187; *Solemne investidura*, 28.

[63] Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper. The biography* (London, 2010), p. 271, gives a hilarious account of the incident. Elliott thought his ability to converse in Catalan persuaded a local farmer to rescue the two historians and provide them with shelter and a warm fire (EFA, Elliott to Geoffrey Best, 28 April 1956). Elliott said he had known Trevor-Roper since 1954 in 'The "General Crisis of the seventeenth century', in Blair Worden, ed., *Hugh Trevor-Roper. The historian* (London, 2016), pp. 45–53, at p. 46.

of 1621. This means that, when I get down to writing my book this summer, it's bound to be very long.' He felt that:

> Even the modern historical works which have most appeal to me, like Febvre's *Franche-Comté*, and Eisenmann on the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, seem to me to fade after page 600, and I have no wish to bore my readers … I don't know whether it's better, when I settle down to writing, to fix on an outside limit of say 500 pages and keep myself to this scale, or simply write as much as I have to say and then prune furiously.

He predicted that he would do both. He was right.[64]

Looking back, Elliott felt that his time living and researching in Catalonia taught him, 'as nothing could have taught me in my own country':

> The enormous moral strength generated by the sense of collective identity, as transmitted from one generation to the next. But they also taught me, thanks in part to the example and the inspiration of Jaume Vicens Vives, that it is the obligation of the historian to follow what he believes to be the truth, however uncomfortable the consequences may be. All societies need their myths; but all societies also need their historians to question those myths, and to ensure that the past does not become fossilized in the minds of the present.[65]

He spoke those words in 1994. Seven years earlier, when the city of Barcelona asked him to deliver a keynote address on 11 September, Catalonia's national day, Elliott provided more detail. After thanking the organisers for the opportunity to revisit the Catalan past, and especially the 17th century, he continued: 'But you have also given me, perhaps inadvertently, an opportunity to revisit my own past – because I too have a Catalan past.' He revisited it 'in Catalan, even though I have scarcely had a chance to speak the language for the past twenty-five years', and he began by teasing his audience:

> When I lived and researched in Barcelona in the 1950s, I had many Catalan friends. You will be familiar with one or two of them – such as Pau Claris, Joan Pere Fontanella [leaders of the 1640 rebellion] and Jeroni Pujades – but I discovered most of them myself in the archive of the Crown of Aragon or in the archives of Girona, Lleida or Vic. With a wave of the historian's magic wand I was able, in a way, to bring them back to life.

He then provided his audience with some specific examples, linking individuals to the different sources that brought them back to life: their diaries, their letters, their chronicles, their inventories, their court cases – some of them involving '"Hardened criminals, guilty of committing many murders and other heinous crimes". Although these people

[64] CUL *MB* E16, Elliott to Butterfield, 18 April 1956. It seems typical of Elliott that both the books he praised were written in French before World War I, and neither related to Spain: Febvre, *Philippe II et la Franche Comté* (Paris, 1912, 883 pp.), and Louis Eisenmann, *Le compromis austro-hongrois de 1867. Étude sur le dualisme* (Paris, 1904; 730 pp). In the end, *Revolt of the Catalans* covered a mere 640 pages.
[65] *Solemne investidura*, p. 29.

were not exactly my friends, I spent hours and hours in their company, and I had many questions to ask them – even though they never answered.' Probably all historians feel a similar thrill as they uncover their sources; few still feel that thrill three decades later. Elliott's 'Catalan past' never left him.[66]

II. Cambridge don, 1956–67

On his way home in May 1956, Elliott returned to Paris and again 'met Braudel in a brief, pleasant interview'. His report to Trevor-Roper on the meeting made a telling comparison between Febvre's *Franche-Comté* and Braudel's *Méditerranée*:

> The whole design is there in Febvre, and I don't believe that Braudel has added anything from the point of view of historical *method*, except perhaps a universalism which has its disadvantages as well as advantages. The Franche-Comté in Philip II's reign is graspable in a single volume; the Mediterranean, for all Braudel's genius, is not. I don't believe that Braudel has solved the supreme problem of linking the social and economic analysis to the history of events; and I sometimes wonder if anyone ever will. On so wide a subject as the Mediterranean I suspect it's impossible.

He added an interesting coda to this sweeping judgement: 'I was suggesting this point to M. [Pierre] Vilar yesterday, and was interested to hear him say that these were the things that were thought but not expressed' in Braudel's presence at the Centre d'Études Historiques.[67]

Once back in England, Elliott stayed with his parents at Fan Court School but was still 'unable to start on my book' because he became side-tracked by two tasks. He had taken advantage of a scheme offered by the Cambridge History Faculty Board, which allowed college research fellows to deliver a course of eight 'Voluntary Lectures' to interested undergraduates. With the academic term approaching, he needed to prepare 'lectures on Spain 1479–1640, and [I] am finding it very difficult. This lack of modern research on sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spain makes it terribly hard to give a satisfactory outline course which doesn't sound superficial'. His other summer vacation task also caused frustration: correcting the proofs of *Spain in decline, 1621–1700* by Reginald Trevor Davies, a book commissioned by Macmillan but left incomplete when Davies died. Elliott found the task 'even more depressing than I imagined possible'. Not only was it 'full of mistakes', but Davies 'has copied great chunks, almost word for word, out of Hume and Hamilton, and probably several other people too'. He sent some

[66] *LC*, 63. See also 'In search of 1640': 'The experience of those years of immersion in the archives of Castile and Catalonia was crucial to my formation both as a person and as a scholar.' In 2009 he assured an interviewer, Alicia Almárcegui, 'Tengo más amigos españoles del siglo XVII, que amigos de cualquier parte hoy día': *Andalucía en la Historia*, 76 (January 2009), 78.

[67] CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/2, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 31 May 1956.

examples of this plagiarism to Macmillan in the hope that they would cancel publication because 'I find it very depressing to think that a book like this can still be published as a serious historical work in 1956.' He made a mental note to do better himself.[68]

Once he returned to Cambridge, however, he became involved in teaching. Peter Laslett, Director of Studies in History at Trinity, asked Elliott to give supervisions to undergraduates on a subject no one else wanted to teach: English economic history. The following year the History Faculty Board appointed him to a five-year post as University Assistant Lecturer with the obligation to deliver eighteen lectures on the history of early modern Europe, on top of 'around 16 hours of individual teaching in my college' each week, on a wide range of courses. Despite these obligations, he took a personal interest in his students. John Lonsdale would always remember sitting in Mill Lane Lecture Rooms when Elliott congratulated him and another Trinity undergraduate from the podium because he had spotted their names in the Engagements column in that morning's *Times*.[69]

By then, Elliott too had become engaged, thanks to J.R.M. Butler, vice-master of Trinity College and former Regius Professor of Modern History. Because he and Butler 'were co-religionaries, I came to know him at an early stage in my undergraduate career', and at a lunch party 'he introduced me to his niece', Oonah Sophia Butler, the daughter of Sir Nevile Butler, who had recently retired from a distinguished career in the diplomatic service. She had studied history at Girton College, graduating just before Elliott went up to Cambridge. Oonah and John, too, were 'co-religionaries' and 'a few months after our first meeting I crossed to Galway, where she was staying for a summer holiday in a fishing lodge that belonged to an aunt', and in Eyre Square in the centre of Galway Town, in the rain, 'I asked her to marry me. Our wedding took place in March 1958.'[70]

A few months later John and Oonah took up residence at 73, Long Road, Cambridge. 'Moving house was very wearing and absorbed all my energies', John complained, but from the first he and Oonah welcomed students and colleagues there. Oonah cooked memorable meals for their guests as well as creating a magnificent garden. She also

[68] CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/2, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 28 June 1956. Macmillan, who had published *The Golden Century of Spain 1501–1620* in 1937, went ahead and published the sequel in 1957, with thanks to Elliott for contributing new material on the Catalan Revolution. It went through numerous editions, and was translated into several foreign languages. Derek Lomax was one of the few reviewers who noticed the overlaps with Hamilton and Hume: *Hispania*, 19 (1959), 296–8. The Reverend Trevor Davies, a university lecturer in Spanish History at Oxford, died in 1953. In an interview in 1997 Elliott added that Davies's work 'en parte es un plagio del libro *España bajo los Austrias* de Eduardo Ibarra' ('Conversa', 186).

[69] 'MH', 8; John Lonsdale email to the authors, 21 September 2022. Geoffrey Parker still has his notes on Elliott's lectures on the period 1494–1648 given in Michaelmas Term 1964, and they reveal how clearly he set out the fruits of the latest research and reading.

[70] 'BN', 13; Nicholas Canny supplied the exact location in an email to the authors on 8 February 2023. At this stage Elliott had another connection with J. R. M. Butler, who was writing a biography of Philip Kerr, Lord Lothian, a Christian Scientist who had served as an administrator in South Africa and then as private secretary to Prime Minister David Lloyd George.

learned both Spanish and Spanish palaeography (in 1971 John reported she 'is getting quite expert at seventeenth-century writing, but fears that seventeenth-century Spanish may affect her spelling adversely'); and she prepared the indexes of Elliott's books. She was already an accomplished traveller (as the daughter of a diplomat she had lived in Tehran, Rio de Janeiro, Washington and the Hague), and now she accompanied her husband on lecture tours and on his visits to the places about which he wrote. In 1973 they took a memorable horseback tour of the Alpujarras, scene of a rebellion by its Morisco population against Philip II. Their group rode over difficult terrain for several days, passing through Trevélez (then the highest inhabited village in Europe) and Yegen (the setting for Gerald Brenan's autobiography *South from Granada*). Elliott had 'slipped into my saddle bag' a copy of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza's *Guerra de Granada*, an eye-witness account of the repression of the Morisco rebellion, but he found little time to read it because he had to groom, feed and water his horse every night before eating a spartan dinner and collapsing onto a spartan bed. He ended the holiday exhausted.[71]

In July 1957 Elliott took part in a conference on 'Seventeenth century revolutions' organised in London by the editors of *Past and Present: a journal of scientific history*, a relatively new periodical founded and run by a group of historians who were mostly Marxists. Trevor-Roper agreed to open the morning session but pulled out at the last minute. Eric Hobsbawm took his place and Elliott opened the afternoon session with a paper on 'The Catalan Revolution of 1640'. He later recognised his good fortune that 'at just this time' other English historians began 'to be interested in the "General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century"' so that his Catalan research 'immediately became a topic of great historiographical interest'.[72]

Such prominence was another remarkable achievement for a young historian and it led to a visit from Hobsbawm, who invited him to join the Editorial Board of *Past and Present*. Elliott was about to decline when Lawrence Stone phoned him to say that he and Trevor Aston (a historian of medieval England) had received a similar invitation and suggested a joint approach. The Board invited the three of them to attend a meeting on 19 July 1958, and according to the minutes they stated that they 'wanted to be sure the journal was politically respectable' and therefore demanded that 'the subtitle "A journal of scientific history" be dropped'. After vigorous debate, the Board grudgingly accepted this demand and also agreed to appoint 'an editor or additional editor in whose judgement and political neutrality the existing board and ourselves and the outside world will

[71] CC SCO/Dacre 1/2/3, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 7 July 1959, 'as from 73, Long Road' (the letter appears to be dated '1956' but internal evidence shows it was written in July 1959); EFA Elliott to his mother, Simancas 18 August 1971; Elliott letter to Parker, 29 May 1976 (describing his sufferings in the Alpujarras for the benefit of one of Parker's students who wished to emulate his odyssey); David Lagomarsino Zoom call, 29 May 2022 (on Elliott's state when he staggered into Simancas after his 'holiday').

[72] *Past and Present* [hereafter *P&P*], 13 (1958), 63–72 (67–8 summarised Elliott's paper); 'Fradera', 59.

have confidence'. Issue 14 of the journal, in November 1958, listed the new members of the Editorial Board, including Aston as Assistant Editor, and Issue 15 displayed the new subtitle: *A journal of historical studies*. Elliott published his first article in the journal, entitled 'The decline of Spain', in Issue 20 in 1961.[73]

Past and Present absorbed a lot of Elliott's time because 'we all read all the articles that came in' (a single copy circulated between board members by Recorded Delivery), and afterwards 'there would be really strong debates about individual pieces at our Board meetings' every two months or so, because 'there were some strong personalities on that Board'. Looking back in 2000, Elliott jested that the meetings 'were not as grim as our facial expressions' in Stephen Farthing's portrait (Figure 1) might suggest: 'Indeed, my outstanding memory is of what fun they were, as we revelled in the quick riposte of continuing and hard-hitting debate, not about points of ideology but about the quality of the articles that were under review'. He felt less charitable towards the founding editor, John Morris, another Marxist, whom he considered 'eccentric and totally disorganized. We could see that the journal had no chance of survival without better organization'. After Aston took over as editor in 1960, 'with better organization and better issues, the journal began to have a greater impact' until Elliott considered it 'the most influential journal in early modern history of my lifetime', with one of the highest global circulations of all British-based historical journals.[74]

When the journal deposited its archives in the Bodleian Library, it placed a seventy-year embargo on all reports by members of the Board – a decision strongly supported by Elliott, on the grounds that reviewers needed an absolute guarantee that what they wrote would remain confidential for their own lifetime and that of the author. Nevertheless, the Board generously shared with us extracts from Elliott's reports between 1961 and 2001. They tended to be 'summative', but it is possible to hear his distinctive voice in both the positive and the negative verdicts: 'Well documented, and does an excellent job in setting an individual case history in wider historical and historiographical context'; 'Gosh. I've done my best to try to understand it, and got some quite interesting glimmerings'; 'Not fair to other contributors to let him write at such

[73] Minutes of Past and Present Editorial Board meeting, 19 July 1958 (held by the Past and Present Society and generously provided to the authors by the Associate Editor, Anna Bayman); Christopher Hill, R. H. Hilton and E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Past and Present. Origin and Early Years', *P&P*, 100 (1983), 3–14 (see p. 12 for the 'conditions'). Two autobiographies shed additional light: Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting times. A twentieth-century life* (London, 2002), pp. 230–1 (how and why he recruited non-Marxist Board members); and Norman Birnbaum, *From the Bronx to Oxford and not quite back* (Washington, D.C., 2018), pp. 241–4 (how the enlarged Board appeared to one of its left-wing sociologist members).

[74] Elliott speech at the official unveiling of the group portrait on 15 February 2000 (NPG46/66/6/1 (RP 6518)); Elliott, 'Lawrence Stone', *P&P*, 164 (2000), 3–6; 'Conversa', 185; 'MH', 7–8.

length'; 'Material wonderfully rich, but handling pedestrian, and conceptualisation rather simple and naïf'; and 'One's final reaction can only be: what a waste!'[75]

Elliott 'learned an enormous amount from being on the Editorial Board of *Past and Present*, reading innumerable articles' and taking part in the 'really strong debates'; but, together with his teaching, this further delayed completion of his own book. The delay nevertheless had a silver lining. Above all, Pierre Vilar 'with characteristic generosity' lent him 'the sections dealing with the seventeenth century in his as yet unpublished book', *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne*, 'and thus helped to give direction to my own research'.

> I learned much from [Vilar's] typescript about the character of Catalan society and the Catalan economy. Above all, his work reinforced my sense of the fundamental importance in Iberian history of the theme of unity and diversity, by showing how different parts of the peninsula had their own economic rhythms and did not move in unison. What Vilar had to say on the subject did much to clarify and sharpen my own thoughts on the relationship of centre and periphery.[76]

The delay also gave Elliott time to broaden the appeal of his subject. 'If I wanted to find an English publisher', he realised, 'I needed to think first and foremost of the English public, most of whom would not know where to find Catalonia on a map of Europe'. He therefore worked hard to construct 'a narrative that would grab and keep the attention of readers for whom the history of Catalonia in the seventeenth century would necessarily seem of marginal interest. And in those days, narrative was out of fashion.' He also sought 'to leave space for historical contingency and for the plans, ambitions and errors of human beings. More historians share that view today than in the fifties and sixties, and I think that has helped to save my book from the ossification that affects all history books that are no more than auto-reflexes to the historical fashions of the day'. Elliott aimed 'to combine analysis with the narrative ... to place the opposing viewpoints of the central

[75] Joanna Innes email to the authors, 1 September 2022; Rothermere American Institute, Interview with Sir John Elliott by Pekka Hämäläinen, June 2013 [hereafter RAI], 3; *L'Avenç*, 28. Joanna Innes generously examined for us the archived files of reports for every twentieth issue between number 20 in 1961 and number 200 in 2005, and found 'at least one report by [Elliott] in every file I looked at.' We thank her for providing the extracts from Elliott's reports quoted here. Lyndal Roper and Alexandra Walsham also illuminated for us Elliott's reviewing style for *Past and Present*.

[76] *LC,* p. 67; 'Conversa', 190 ; 'La trayectoria', pp. 128–9. The first volume of Vilar's *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne. Recherches sur les fondements économiques des structures nationales*, 3 vols (Paris, 1962), included a dazzling section on 'Le milieu naturel et le milieu historique' which Elliott no doubt found particularly inspiring. Vilar started research in Spain in 1927, but stopped during the Spanish Civil War. Like Fernand Braudel, he was mobilized in 1939 and after France surrendered spent five years in a prisoner of war camp, planning out his great work. Shortly after returning to Spain he was exiled by Franco, which delayed publication still further. See 'Pierre Vilar: History in the Making', an interview by Peter Schöttler originally published in 1987 and reprinted with an introduction in *New Left Review*, 136 (2022), 118–32.

government under Olivares and of the rebellious Catalans in their contemporary context'. He therefore emphasised the parallels with the opposition of the Scottish Covenanters to King Charles I, and of the Nu-Pieds of Normandy to Cardinal Richelieu, drawing on what he had learned at the 1957 *Past and Present* conference, and through his general reading, which 'helped me situate events in Catalonia in a broader context, a European context'. He even tinkered with his title 'which was going to be *Catalonia and the Court of Spain* until I was convinced that it would have more impact on English readers with a more dramatic title': hence *The revolt of the Catalans. A study in the decline of Spain, 1598–1640*.[77]

As soon as Elliott had delivered his typescript to Cambridge University Press he turned to a second project: a general textbook on early modern Spain. He had evidently started thinking about it early in 1956, while researching in Barcelona, because he told Butterfield that:

> I think the time is approaching when we shall have to start entirely re-thinking the traditional Merriman-like picture of sixteenth-century Spain. Why, for instance, should this be no more than the history of sixteenth-century Castile, as if the union of the crowns of Castile and Aragon brought the history of Aragon, Valencia and Catalonia to an end. And even of Castile, we still know so little. The whole question of the social structure of the country is still untouched.'[78]

His experience later that year with Trevor Davies's *Spain in decline* awakened him 'to the need to produce a more up-to-date work'; but in retrospect he still marvelled at his 'presumption' in 'writing a textbook of that sort at the beginning of one's career. I was completely ignorant of whole areas of the subject, but I needed such a book for my own courses at Cambridge and, since none seemed to exist, I was almost forced to write my own.' Then 'a talent scout from Edward Arnold' (a London trade publisher) heard about his lectures on Spain 'and asked if I would turn them into a book'. He welcomed the opportunity to escape from 'the labyrinth of details that threatened to absorb my study of the count-duke of Olivares and Catalonia' and instead 'identify and analyse those themes which seemed to me most important in the history of Spain from the accession of the Catholic Kings to the succession of the Bourbons'.[79]

He drew strength from the work of three other scholars. First, Pierre Vilar's emphasis on the influence on geography was apparent from Elliott's opening paragraph, often quoted but never surpassed as a description of the central paradox of Spanish history:

[77] 'Conferència', 174–6.
[78] CUL *MB* E15, Elliott to Butterfield, Barcelona, 29 February 1956. He referred to Roger Merriman, *The rise of the Spanish empire in the Old World and the New*, 4 vols (New York, 1918–34).
[79] 'BN', 12; Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 129; *Discurso*, p. 28.

> A dry, barren, impoverished land: 10 per cent of its soil bare rock; 35 per cent poor and unproductive; 45 per cent moderately fertile; 10 per cent rich. A peninsula separated from the continent of Europe by the mountain barrier of the Pyrenees – isolated and remote. A country divided within itself, broken by a high central tableland that stretches from the Pyrenees to the southern coast. No natural centre, no easy routes. Fragmented, disparate, a complex of different races, languages, and civilizations – this was, and is, Spain.[80]

Second, the Catalan focus of his research led him to embrace a concept developed not only by Pierre Vilar but also by Edward Shils, a sociologist who held a joint appointment at Cambridge and in 1961 published an influential essay entitled 'Centre and Periphery'. This became the organising theme of his textbook – witness statements such as: 'The history of Spain in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was to consist of a continuing, and fruitful, dialogue between periphery and centre.'[81] The third scholar whose work helped Elliott to shape his volume was the noted Hispanist Alexander Parker 'who suggested to me those areas in which the student of Golden Age Literature most needed help from the historian, e.g. social history, the Counter-Reformation, the state of the law, administration, etc'. As a result, Elliott hoped 'that this book will be less misleading to those whose prime interest is in literature'.[82] Alec Parker's advice was no doubt all the more welcome because both men had the same 'rigorous standards of precision, logic and clarity in scholarship', and both believed that 'the first priority of a professor is good teaching'.[83]

Elliott's publishers also helped to shape his book. They insisted that it must 'begin with the age of Ferdinand and Isabella, rather than with Charles V', and continue 'down to the end of the Habsburg era', instead of ending 'in the middle years of the seventeenth century' as Elliott had intended, 'with the passing of Spain's European hegemony to the France of Louis XIV'. Extending the chronology, and making 'space for those aspects of economic and social history that were deepening our knowledge and understanding of the period', compelled the author 'to cut down on more traditional themes. These

[80] Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469–1716* (London, 1963), p. 1.

[81] Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, p. 32; Edward Shils, 'Centre and periphery,' in *The logic of personal knowledge. Essays presented to Michael Polanyi* (London, 1961), pp. 117–30 (the authors thank Richard Groening of the Ohio State University for drawing this reference to their attention). Elliott stressed that he developed the theme 'long before Immanuel Wallerstein had popularized the concept' in his influential quartet *The modern world system* (New York and London, 1974–2011): 'La trayectoria', p. 131.

[82] Elliott, 'The historian and the literary specialist', paper at a panel of the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland's Annual Meeting in 1971 (quotation from the typescript summary of proceedings); *Imperial Spain*, p. vii.

[83] Margaret Greer, 'In Memoriam: Alexander Augustine Parker', *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, 10/2 (1990), 105–8. Greer's spectacular story about how Alec Parker revealed his role as a code-breaker at Bletchley Park during World War II is confirmed by https://bletchleypark.org.uk/roll-of-honour/6932/

included detailed discussion of foreign policy and diplomacy' – omissions for which some reviewers in Spain would criticise him. But their objections were nothing compared with the outcry there over his title.[84]

Elliott originally submitted his typescript to the press with the title *Spain 1469–1716*, but 'my editor told me that although the book was indeed very interesting, the title was very boring and I needed to come up with something more striking. One day, while taking a bath and contemplating what title I could devise, almost instinctively I thought of *Imperial Spain*, simply because it sounded so good in English.'[85] The title sounded very different in Franco's Spain, where the regime sought every opportunity to promote national unity. The government's censors therefore welcomed a book that appeared to promote the official line, and it appeared in Castilian in 1965. The censors evidently missed the 'subversive' nature of a book whose central theme was the tension between centre and periphery, and especially between Madrid and Catalonia, but others did not. In May 1972 he gave a lecture at the university of Madrid to 'a vast audience – about 300 I should think – as I'm a textbook, known as "El Elliott"'.[86]

Imperial Spain also repudiated another core mantra of the Franco regime: 'Spain is different'. That phrase 'caught my attention', Elliott wrote,

> Because it reflected Spain's view of its history since the nineteenth century. The great defeats of 1898 gave rise to a collective introspection which interpreted Spanish history in terms of its failures … The Franco regime took pride in the 'difference' that allowed it to present Spain as the last refuge for the great traditional values, a nation that protected itself by protecting the world from liberalism, atheism, materialism, Marxism, and so on.

Elliott, by contrast, aimed to 're-integrate the history of Spain within general European history, albeit without hiding those differences.' For example, he presented the age-old issue of Spain's decline in the 17th century, traditionally interpreted (especially by Protestant scholars) as the result of weaknesses inherent in Spanish national character and religion, as part of the congeries of economic, demographic, social, and political setbacks now known as the 'General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century', from which no European state emerged unscathed.[87]

[84] Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 129, acknowledged that he 'made quite heavy use of Merriman, *The rise of the Spanish empire*, 'for political and institutional history' down to 1598; that 'the relative absence of an American dimension from *Imperial Spain* is certainly a defect of the book'; and that 'the treatment of religious history is relatively weak'.

[85] Elliott's 'Foreword' to the 2001 reprint of *Imperial Spain*; 'IE', p. 363.

[86] EFA Elliott to his mother, Madrid, 8 May 1972

[87] 'Doce voces de la historiografia Mexicana: V. John H. Elliott o el dominio del mar atlántico', *Letras Libres* (May 2010) [hereafter *LL*], 62–70, at 67.

Thanks to his distinctive perspective, both as a foreigner aware of the major historiographical currents flowing elsewhere in Europe and as an expert on Catalonia rather than on Castile, *Imperial Spain 1469–1716* bristled with new questions and research topics – many of them taken up, in due course, by others. It was then, and it remains, a marvellous textbook in both its English and its Spanish incarnations: a model of its kind.[88]

With the publication of his two books in 1963, Elliott felt confident that the 'combined work' of Vicens Vives and his group (in which he included himself) would produce 'a more realistic picture of the Catalan past':

> A picture which explains many of the troubles of Catalonia, not as the result of the designs of Castile but as a result of the internal deficiencies and weaknesses of Catalan society. Once the Catalans begin to appreciate from these historical studies that perhaps, after all, Castile is not responsible for all their misfortunes, I think the way may have been opened for a better understanding of Catalonia itself, its strengths and weaknesses, and also of Castile. Here you have a perfect example of the way in which a historian can contribute to the thought of his own time.

It was a bold statement for a man aged thirty-three, but it proved true. *The revolt of the Catalans* (which appeared in Catalan translation in 1966 and in Spanish in 1977) and especially *La España imperial* made him famous throughout Spain.[89]

Elliott's 'work on seventeenth-century Spain began to influence my compatriots' thinking about twentieth-century Britain'. Journalists and politicians there began to cite his analysis of the struggle of Habsburg Spain's elite to adjust to a decline 'from national greatness and imperial power to second-rate status' and to 'see Mrs Thatcher as the English equivalent to the Conde-Duque de Olivares, determined to check decline and I think at the end of the story failing to do so'.[90] In addition *The revolt of the Catalans*

> Caught the attention of a young historian of seventeenth-century England, Conrad Russell, who came to realize that he could usefully apply the concept of a composite monarchy to the problems of governing the British Isles in the seventeenth century. My reading of the Conde-Duque's problems with the Catalans, as mediated to British readers through the publications of Professor Russell, has therefore made its own contribution

[88] Elliott admitted the subversive nature of his book in 'IE', pp. 363–4, and *LL*, 67. He was right to be concerned: Octavio Jordà, a man caught in 1967 smuggling into Spain copies of Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, a work deemed 'communist misinformation' by government prosecutors, was gaoled for two years: González, *Raymond Carr*, p. 157

[89] *Colloquium*, 22–3. For the impact on Spanish students of *La España imperial, 1469–1716*, see Carlos Martínez Shaw, 'Crónica de un deslumbramiento: *La España imperial*', in Fernández et al, *El Oficio del Historiador*, pp. 43–58; for the parallel impact of *La rebelión,* see Ricardo García Cárcel, 'John Elliott y *La rebelión de los catalanes (1598–1640)*', in ibid., pp. 59–71.

[90] *HM*, pp. 114–15 (quoting Anthony Sampson, *The new anatomy of Britain* (London, 1971), p. v, and Peter Jenkins, 'Patient Britain', *New Republic*, 23 December 1985, 15); 'A spell of decline', p. 324.

> to the current reassessment of the reign of Charles I and the origins and character of the English Civil War.[91]

Cambridge took longer to recognise Elliott's early achievements. In March 1961, 'after many years of total traffic jam in the History Faculty here, a full lectureship has just become available and I, as an assistant lecturer due to expire next year, am naturally applying for it.' He asked Butterfield and Trevor-Roper to serve as his referees. The latter's letter praised 'the clarity and force of his mind', and rated him 'the ablest young historian I know'. Nevertheless, in November Elliott complained that:

> Things here are in turmoil and flux, as ever. I hear reports from underground sources that the History Faculty Board is belatedly awakening to the fact that, when my assistant lectureship expires in the summer, there will be no one to lecture on Early Modern for them at all. … Whether anyone can actually create a job for me remains to be seen. There are moments when I feel that, even if they did, I should contemptuously dismiss the offer and depart for Brighton – thus teaching them, by example, that even in the History Faculty long-term planning is not to be entirely despised.[92]

For a time he consoled himself that 'another scheme I have possesses, I think, more hope of success': namely, 'a new series called "Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History", for studies primarily continental'. He proposed it to the Syndics of Cambridge University Press, but they showed no more enthusiasm than the Faculty Board, rejecting it outright. Elliott was crestfallen: 'I still feel', he told Butterfield, 'that from a purely historical angle the idea was a useful one, but I suppose publishers always have the last word.'[93]

In the end, of course, everything came out right. The University Press eventually accepted 'Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History', edited jointly by Elliott and another of Butterfield's doctoral advisees, Helmut G. Koenigsberger, which eventually published fifty fine monographs; and the Faculty Board not only appointed him a University Lecturer but, in conjunction with Trinity College, granted him sabbatical leave for the year 1963–4. He and Oonah decided to spend it in America.

[91] Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 138 (he referred to Russell, *The fall of the British Monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford, 1991), which stressed the neglected role of Scotland and Ireland in bringing down the 'composite' Stuart Monarchy); Elliott, 'Introduction', in *Revista internacional de los Estudios Vascos*, 5 (2009), 13–19, at 13.

[92] CC SOC/Dacre/9/5/10, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 8 March 1961; SOC/Dacre/1/2/2, Trevor-Roper to W. R. Brock, 22 April 1961, and Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 12 November 1961. The university of Sussex received its Royal Charter in August 1961 and enrolled its first class of 52 students the following Autumn: Elliott would thus have joined Asa Briggs and Peter Burke as a founding faculty member.

[93] CUL *MB* E17, R. J. L. Kingsford to Elliott, 17 November 1961; E18, Elliott to Butterfield, 17 November 1961; and E19, Butterfield to Elliott, 18 November 1961, carbon copy. This may be Elliott's first used of the term 'early modern'. His account in *MH*, pp. 58–9, must be read in conjunction with Phil Witherington, *Society in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), chaps. 1 and 2; and Hamish Scott, ed., *The Oxford handbook of early modern European history, 1350–1750*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2015), 1, 'Introduction'.

He already knew what he wanted to write next. In 1960 William Collins, a prestigious London publisher, approved a proposal from J.H. Plumb, general editor of *The Fontana History of Europe*, to commission Elliott to write a volume on the period 1559–1598. He accepted, but with one reservation: 'Although I covered this period in my outline lecture course on sixteenth- and seventeenth century Europe, I needed time for more reading, and also to embark on writing the book.'[94] At the same time, writing *Imperial Spain* 'had alerted me to the importance of the transatlantic dimension of Spanish history, and a sabbatical year seemed to provide a perfect opportunity for travel and research in Iberian America' He shared his excitement with Herbert Butterfield:

> I think there are enormous possibilities of getting new insights on Early Modern Europe from a closer consideration of Europe in its relation to the outer world. I'm sure that some months' research in Latin America could be of enormous value, both for my own future writing and also for my lectures. I should love, for instance, to attempt one day a course on the New World and the Old. [95]

Elliott applied for and received generous grants from the Leverhulme, Rockefeller and Astor Foundations; and in June 1963, having 'just managed to finish the last proofs of *Imperial Spain*', he and Oonah set sail for America. They began in New York where Lewis Hanke, America's most distinguished Latin American historian, took them to admire the paintings and manuscripts in the Hispanic Society of America: 'It is going to be a wonderful hunting ground for the autumn', he told his parents. First, however, thanks to an exchange arrangement with Trinity College they spent two months at Rice University in Houston, Texas, where they felt overwhelmed by the heat and underwhelmed by the historians they encountered. 'Many of the faculty were away and those who were left were distinctly unexciting'. Those at the University of Texas, Austin, were little better: 'I've never met so many historians who simply don't *listen*', he grumbled. In September the Elliotts moved northeast, 'sight-seeing as we went, until reaching New York, where we settled into a Columbia University apartment on Morningside Drive'.[96]

Over the next three months he found Columbia 'a thrilling place to be, and I feel my batteries are being recharged at high speed'. Oonah took Spanish language classes and

[94] Cambridge University Library, Sir John Plumb Papers [hereafter CUL Plumb Papers], Fontana file, Plumb to Billy Collins, 21 January 1960, declaring his intention to commission volumes from 'Denis Hay, G. R Elton, John Elliott and Michael Roberts'; and Elliott to Plumb, 2 February 1960 ('I've thought about the 16th-century history in the new Collins series and feel I should like to do it'). Elton, *Reformation Europe, 1517–1559*, appeared in 1963 (the Preface thanked Elliott for assistance); John Hale replaced Hay (*Renaissance Europe* appeared in 1971); and after Roberts turned him down, Plumb commissioned in turn J.W. Smit, Orest Ranum, Hugh Trevor-Roper and eventually Geoffrey Parker, who published *Europe in Crisis, 1598–1648* in 1979.

[95] 'BN', 15–16; CUL *MB* E 20, Elliott to Butterfield, 27 December 1962.

[96] CUL *MB* E 22 and 23, Elliott to Butterfield, 21 June and 17 November 1963; 'BN', 16; EFA Elliott to his parents, 9 July 1963 (visiting the Hispanic Society of America).

Elliott 'made great friends with a young historian called [Orest] Ranum, who has written a book on Richelieu's secretaries and advisers, and we were thinking that we might collaborate on a joint study of France under Richelieu and Spain under Olivares, comparing the personalities and methods of the two Favourites, and the capacities of their two countries for war' – another project that he would later bring to fruition.[97]

He was surprised when a senior colleague in the History Department enquired whether he would consider joining them

> I must say that it's flattering to be offered a big appointment – probably with few teaching obligations simply because they want to add lustre to their department. I cannot see English university departments behaving like this. In many ways it's extremely tempting, while it may just be the novelty of it. Columbia is, at least to date, the most stimulating university I know, and I feel in many ways much more at home here than in Cambridge.

He reassured his mother that 'there is no need for any alarm' because he felt he owed Cambridge three or four more years.[98]

He found another invitation more tempting: to contribute a book on *Philip II's Seville* to a series of urban histories edited by Norman F. Cantor (then also teaching at Columbia). Cantor announced this commitment in an interview with Elliott in December 1963, published in his new journal *Colloquium*. Cantor's penultimate question concerned Elliott's impression of 'the greatest strength and greatest weakness of American historians'. His reply praised 'the professionalism of American historians' which he found a congenial contrast with 'the country gentleman historian' who seemed dominant in England; but, he continued, 'I have got the impression that American historians are more interested to talk to than to read … I may have got a jaundiced view from reading a number of peculiarly arid American monographs recently' he conceded, but 'unless we are prepared to take some trouble with our writing, I can see no reason why we should be read.'[99]

Perhaps it was pride in his own prose that made Elliott so sensitive to criticisms by some early reviewers. He complained that the reviewer of *Imperial Spain* in *The Times Literary Supplement*, the first to appear, 'seems to have got me all wrong on the question of race … Some of the mistakes he points out are not in fact mistakes'. The notice in *The Times Educational Supplement* 'might have been written by a schoolboy'. Only the

[97] CUL *MB* E 22, 23 and 24, Elliott to Butterfield, 21 June and 17 November 1963, and 1 April 1964; 'BN', 16. Ranum recorded in his 'Daybooks' sixteen meetings with Elliott during his stay at Columbia, often discussing 'our work on long walks around Morningside Heights': email to the authors, 28 May 2022.

[98] EFA Elliott to his parents, 30 October 1963

[99] *Colloquium*, 18 (book on Seville) and 24 (loquacious Americans). As general editor of the series *New Dimensions in history: Historical Cities*, Cantor commissioned several distinguished studies of early modern cities, including *Calvin's Geneva* by William Monter, *Renaissance Florence* by Gene Brucker, and *Dr Johnson's London* by Dorothy Marshall. He evidently thought Elliott had signed up for Seville. If so, he was wrong.

'staggering review' in *The Economist*, although anonymous, satisfied him, and he particularly relished the reviewer's compliment that his narrative moved 'with the grace of a pavane for a dead Infanta'. That phrase would appear on the jacket of successive reprints of the work, starting with the American edition, for which Elliott gathered illustrations and wrote captions just before he left Columbia.[100]

After Christmas, Elliott joined 4,200 others at the annual meeting of 'the American Historical Association at Philadelphia, which was entertainingly horrid beyond belief'. Then he and Oonah took the train across America – stopping at St Louis (making a detour to visit Principia College, founded by Christian Scientists), Denver (where he enjoyed watching his first rodeo: 'men in cowboy hats and smoking cigars') and Salt Lake City – on their way to spend a few weeks at the University of California at Berkeley.[101] Once again he felt disappointed. Although he encountered 'a very lively history department indeed', he detected 'a curious kind of intellectual remoteness about the place'. Moreover although he had 'met hundreds of historians' during his six months in the United States, 'the Latin Americanists I met tended to be a depressing crowd', and 'the reputation of Latin American studies is low, and with good reason, as far as I could see.' He felt much the same when he got to Mexico, where he spent the next three months 'delving in the archives', 'visiting lovely colonial towns and buildings', and meeting local historians. 'It's a tremendous country', he informed Butterfield, but he despaired of 'modern Mexican historiography, which is earnest, meticulous and painstaking, and strikingly parochial in character.'

> I don't see myself ever getting down to a detailed monograph on Mexican or Latin American history, but I do find myself increasingly interested in the interplay between Europe and America in the 16th and 17th centuries, and feel in my bones that this may be one way of refreshing our history of Early Modern Europe, though I don't yet see any clear path before me. But just being over here, and looking back at the Old World from the vantage point of the New, gives one new perspectives and insights, and perhaps something will come of it some day.[102]

While in Mexico, Elliott wrote his first article for the newly-founded *New York Review of Books*: 'Chronicles of the Conquest' reviewed three new books that explored

[100] EFA Elliott to his parents, 3 November (choosing pictures), 16 November (*TLS* review) and 14 December 1963 (*TES* review), and 5 January 1964. At a conference in Elliott's honour in Albuquerque in 2013, James Boyden cited the memorable praise (the title of a composition by Maurice Ravel: 'Pavane pour une infante défunte) and Elliott revealed that the anonymous reviewer was 'Menna Prestwich, the formidable Oxford historian of early modern France': *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, 38 (2013), Article 11 (pp. 200–29), at 215 and 227.

[101] EFA Elliott to his parents, 5, 11 and 18 January 1964.

[102] CUL *MB* E 24, Elliott to Butterfield, Mexico, 1 April 1964. He duly turned down an invitation from J. H. Plumb to write 'A concise history of Mexico' for Penguin Books: CUL *Plumb Papers*, Penguin series files.

different aspects of 16th-century Mexico, telling his parents that the newspaper offered 'lots of space and they pay well'.[103] After Mexico, the Elliotts spent two weeks in Guatemala, working some of the time in the National Archive, and then in Colombia (he found the National Archive 'somewhat disorganized' so that 'flying visits are not much good'). From there, they 'gradually made our way counter-clockwise round Latin America, visiting in turn Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia (including the silver mountain of Potosí), Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela', before returning to Mexico ('the archives are appalling – you've never seen such a mess in your life – and goodness knows how one will find anything'). They returned to England in September 1964. Looking back almost fifty years later, Elliott recognised his ambitious South American odyssey as a critical stage in his historical development:

> Seeing the enormous spaces, trying to travel through the Andes by whatever method, you get a totally different sense of time, and of the variety of landscapes and variety of populations. Those nine months I had in Mexico and Peru, travelling around major Latin American countries, absolutely opened my eyes to this wider world.

'I only began to appreciate the full importance of the American dimension of Spanish history after my first visit to Spanish America in 1963–4.'[104]

Back at Cambridge, Elliott decided to 'prepare a course of lectures on the conquest of Mexico, which led me to immerse myself in contemporary accounts of the Indies'. In 1965–6 he offered 'The Conquest and Colonization of Colonial Mexico, 1519–1550' as a Special Subject. 'Many documents had to be studied in Spanish, for which I had special language classes arranged' for his students (a typically thoughtful act), and the course proved very popular. Simon Schama, who had just graduated with a starred first, assured Jonathan Israel that 'for sheer engagement, getting to grips with the essence of history and what needs researching, clarity, excitement, good lecturing and wonderful responses to questions, there was none to match Elliott'. Israel therefore enrolled in the course in 1966–7, and had no regrets.[105]

It was while teaching his new course that he received an invitation to deliver the 1969 Wiles Lectures on a 'broad issue relating to the general history of civilization',

[103] EFA Elliott to his parents, 22 March 1964. Elliott had already begun to write well-paid articles on both history and art for *Horizon*, a lavishly illustrated magazine of the arts, thanks to J. H. Plumb, who served as European editor for the publisher, American Heritage Publications, and first suggested Elliott as a potential Horizon author in December 1961.

[104] EFA Elliott to his parents, 3 and 24 May and 9 July 1964; 'BN', 17; RAI, 10; Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 130.

[105] Elliott, 'Final reflections: *The Old World and the New* revisited', in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750* (Chapel Hill, 1995; reprinted 2017), pp. 391–408, at p. 391; 'BN' 18; Jonathan Israel email to the authors, 19 September 2022. See also page 234 below.

hosted by the History Department of the Queen's University, Belfast, and delivered on four successive days. Butterfield had played a key role in setting up the Wiles Lectures, and gave the inaugural series himself. He now secured an invitation for his former advisee to speak. Elliott chose as his theme 'The Old World and the New, 1492–1650', a title inspired by Roger Merriman's vintage history, *The Rise of the Spanish Empire in the Old World and in the New*, 'which I regard as the most important Anglo-American contribution of the first half of the [20th] century to Spanish history in this period'. He read widely in English, French, Italian and Spanish primary sources, drawing on the incomparable resources of the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island, before flying to Belfast in October 1969 to deliver his lectures in a city scarred by the 'Troubles' which had begun two months before.[106]

Elliott's first two lectures examined 'the process by which the New World found its place within the mental horizons of Europe'; the others examined the incorporation of America into Europe's economic and political systems. In the interests of compression, he concentrated 'almost exclusively on the Iberian world of central and south America, at the expense of the Anglo-French world of the north'; he largely ignored Scandinavia and Europe east of the Elbe; and he stopped in 1650. Since the Wiles Trust stipulated that 'rigorous academic feedback' should follow each lecture, Elliott spent an hour answering the cunning questions posed by QUB's formidable faculty (who then included Jim Beckett, John Bossy, Peter Jupp, Michael Roberts, Nicholas Round, A.T.Q. Stewart, and Lewis Warren) as well as by almost a dozen invited scholars from elsewhere (their expenses paid by the Wiles Trust).[107]

He took literally the desire of the Wiles Trust to publish the lectures more or less as they had been delivered, and despite his claim to have 'done my best to bear in mind the general tenor of our conversations when preparing the lectures for the press' they remained virtually unchanged when he signed the preface of the book after only a few weeks. He took enormous satisfaction from the fact that two conferences were 'directly

[106] Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 130**.** Elliott 'Final reflections', pp. 391–3, also acknowledged the 'inspiration' of Merriman's title and described how he had prepared his lectures. He defended his decision to end in 1650, but regretted his 'neglect of cartographic developments: ibid., p. 408 n. 45.

[107] Elliott mentioned Butterfield's role in the invitation from the Wiles Trust in 'IE', 366. We surmise that he received it soon after his return to Cambridge because Hugh Trevor-Roper received an invitation to deliver the 1975 Wiles Lecture in November 1971, 'so far in advance that it would have been hard to find a plausible reason to say no': Worden, *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, pp. 102–3. For Butterfield's role in shaping the Wiles Lectures, see Elton, 'Herbert Butterfield', 730–1; for the terms, see https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/happ/Events/annual-lectures/wiles-lecture-series/JanetBoydandtheWilesLectures/ It was characteristic of Elliott to invite not only Butterfield but also most of his newly-doctored advisees living in Britain. That week in Belfast, with many of its buildings pocked by bullet holes and defended by soldiers behind sandbags armed with machine guns, provided our first exposure to the 'Troubles' as well as to 'Atlantic History'.

prompted by my book': one in 1975 at the Center for Medieval Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, the second in 1991 at the John Carter Brown Library.[108]

Elliott's Latin American odyssey also produced two prestigious lectures and a book chapter. He addressed the Royal Historical Society (London) in 1966 on 'The mental world of Hernán Cortés', a subject chosen because 'I first became interested in Cortés in 1964 during my own first visit to the Indies. The absence in Mexico City of any public statue to the destroyer, and founder, of Mexico brought home to me, perhaps more vividly than anything else, the ambiguities and the controversy that surround the Spanish legacy to America.' He followed up five years later with a long essay on the Machiavellian strategies pursued by Cortés to outwit both his immediate superior, the governor of Cuba, and his sovereign, Emperor Charles V.[109] In 1972 he delivered the Raleigh Lecture on History to the British Academy (which elected him to a Fellowship that same year) on 'The discovery of America and the discovery of Man': an examination of both the perception of others and the revelation of self among early modern Europeans.[110]

Elliott also continued to work on *Europe in Crisis, 1559–1598*, his volume in the *Fontana History of Europe*. Looking back in 2010, he felt that

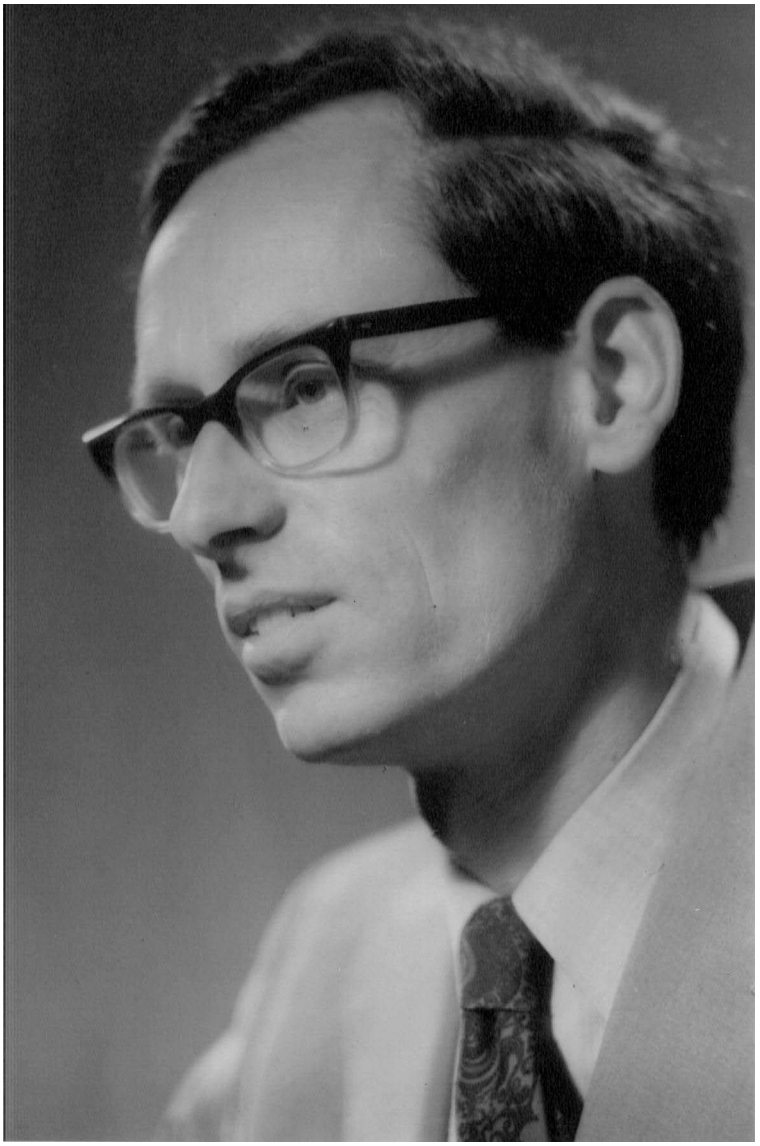
> The most important lesson I learned while writing this book was the transcendental importance of narrative, which at the time was out of fashion in Western Europe, including England. I realized, however, that it was essential to be able to follow the sequence of events across time during those four decades, because many developments depend on contingency at certain moments, for example the arrival or non-arrival of letters.

He wrote his core chapters in chronological order, and by November 1966 was 'busily at work on chapter seven, to be devoted solely to the year 1572 (new ploy: Brill and St Barth[olomew])' – a connection between events France and the Low Countries that may seem obvious now, but was novel when Elliott wrote. He realised that chronology alone would not suffice, however:

[108] Elliott, *The Old World and the New, 1492–1650* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. ix-x (Preface, signed December 1969). The book would later count as the first volume of the series 'Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History'. See also See also Elliott 'Final reflections: The Old World and the New revisited' (he discussed the two conferences at pp. 391–5).

[109] Elliott, 'The mental world of Hernán Cortés', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 5th series 17 (1967), 41–58, reprinted in *SW*, pp. 27–41; Elliott, 'Cortés, Velázquez and Charles V', in Anthony Pagden, ed., *Hernán Cortés: letters from Mexico* (New York, 1971; reprinted New Haven and London, 1986), pp. xi-xxxvii. He wrote about the lack of a statue honouring Cortés at greater length in 'The Spanish heritage: on a missing statue', *Encounter*, 25/3 (March 1965), 34–40.

[110] Elliott, 'The discovery of America and the discovery of man', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 58 (1972), 101–25, reprinted in *SW*, pp. 42–64. Elliott continued to write on the subject, notably two chapters in Leslie Bethel, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, 1 (Cambridge, 1984), 149–206 and 287–339.



John H. Elliott

Figure 3. Photograph of John Elliott deposited with the British Academy around the time of his election as a Fellow in 1972, plus a copy of his signature in the Roll of the British Academy.

> The greatest challenge in writing this sort of history is to combine a lively and accessible narrative, which will attract readers, with an analysis and explanation of the events that you are narrating. And for me, this is the fundamental problem facing all historians: how to combine narrative and analysis while keeping them in equilibrium. That is what I have tried to do throughout my professional life.[111]

He sent a complete typescript to both Plumb and Elton in December 1967; both historians delivered their imprimatur within two weeks. The volume contained three structural chapters on international relations, the economy, and political institutions, followed by nine chapters that covered events in western Europe down to 1598 and in eastern Europe down to 1592–3. Elliott himself considered it 'technically the best-crafted of my books', but by the time it came out, he had resigned from both Cambridge University and Trinity College.[112]

III. King's College, London, 1968–73

> There was one further, and perhaps less predictable consequence of my own personal discovery of the New World of America in 1963–4: it left me restless and unsettled on my return to Cambridge. I had felt the vitality of American intellectual life, and seen how at least two major American universities operated. Cambridge, by contrast, seemed painfully parochial.[113]

He also felt increasingly overworked. In addition to his undergraduate supervisions and lecture courses, Elliott accepted a growing number of doctoral advisees. He also served as Secretary of the History Faculty Board between 1965 and 1967, when business was handled from the Secretary's College rooms assisted only by a part-time staff member in a cramped office in Green Street. Some of the business proved contentious. In his first year, with Charles Wilson as chairman, the Board spent much time discussing a thorough reform of the syllabus for undergraduates. Elliott sided with those who wished to reduce the number of compulsory courses in English history in order to make space for European and extra-European history, alienating several of his colleagues (after one meeting 'Geoffrey Elton told me he would never speak to me again – which, needless to say, he promptly did').[114] Then, with J.H. Plumb as chairman, 'we were discussing the

[111] 'IE', 365; Elliott letter to Parker, 8 November 1966 (he entitled the chapter 7 'Crisis in the North, 1572'); 'BN', 18. The omission of Britain from the volume may seem surprising, but it was a deliberate feature of the entire Fontana series.

[112] CUL Plumb Papers, Fontana file, Elliott to Plumb, 19 December 1967 and 2 January 1968.

[113] 'BN', 18.

[114] 'BN', 19. Wilson apparently did not appreciate working with Elliott, telling Hugh Trevor-Roper in 1972 'I have never believed that Elliott was more than a diligent (and ambitious) man of second-class talent who had

construction of the new Faculty building much of the time, and for good or ill, he was determined to get his way. Faculty meetings were, not surprisingly, ill-tempered occasions … Geoffrey Elton and Harry Hinsley were his two particular bêtes noirs, and [Plumb] would do anything to cross them'.[115]

In February 1967 such frustrations led Elliott to apply for the vacant Chair of History at King's College, London. Once again, he asked Trevor-Roper for a reference; once again it glowed:

> I can say that I know of no one whose work I respect more highly, and whom I would support more enthusiastically, for such a post. He is the historian whom, of his own generation, I respect most in England … He is productive; and everything he writes is well-written and is a pleasure to read. He is also a very attractive personality. What more can one say?[116]

Elliott had negotiated a sabbatical term before he started, which he used to finish *Europe in Crisis* and draft his Wiles Lectures, and he only took up his new position in January 1968. He and Oonah acquired an apartment in London and spent the week there, but at weekends they returned to 73 Long Road, Cambridge, where they continued to entertain (among others) Elliott's doctoral advisees – provided they arrived bearing another thesis chapter for his scrutiny.

King's College consumed more of Elliott's energies than he had anticipated: 'The Chair carried with it the permanent Headship of the History Department, and I was involved in too many London University committees.' On the positive side, 'unlike the Cambridge colleges, which were for men only, one of the advantages of London was that I could teach women as well as men', and in 1970 he welcomed his first female doctoral advisee: Linda Martz.[117] Elliott's junior colleague Peter J. Marshall recalled that his new Chair soon became 'deeply engaged in the day-to-day business of the department, above all in undergraduate teaching' and that he attempted to introduce more political, social, economic and cultural history into the undergraduate curriculum, presenting a programme for implementation to a special meeting of the staff. 'It cannot be said that his suggestions were enthusiastically received by most of my colleagues', Marshall recalled. 'They seem to have felt that it was their right to continue to teach in the way they thought appropriate.' Elliott was nevertheless 'both a good friend and a fount of kindness' to his colleagues, especially the younger ones, 'taking a keen interest in our work and

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been well taught at Eton': CC Dacre/SOC 1/2/15, Wilson to Trevor-Roper, 7 March 1972, a letter apparently designed to persuade the British Academy's Section XIII to reject Elliott's name for election to a Fellowship at their next meeting ('In short, I shall not vote for him'). The attempt failed.

[115] Elliott email to Parker 1 August 2021 on the squabbles.

[116] CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/2, Trevor-Roper to the Registrar of King's College London, 5 March 1967.

[117] 'BN', 19; *L'Avenç*, p. 28. Cambridge University Press published Martz's thesis in 1983 as *Poverty and welfare in Habsburg Spain: the example of Toledo*.

seeking to promote our careers'. Marshall added: 'His influence on my career was transformative.'[118]

These activities inevitably affected Elliott's scholarly output. For the next decade, instead of researching more books he produced learned articles and book chapters, many of them based on lectures and conference papers, starting with his Inaugural Lecture at King's. 'Revolution and continuity in Early Modern Europe' contrasted uprisings in the 16th and 17th centuries that sought 'restoration' and 'renovation' with later ones aimed at 'innovation' and radical change, and proposed a distinction between rebellions and revolutions. Elliott also developed the doubts about the singularity of the 'General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century' that he had expressed at the *Past and Present* conference a decade before, situating the experience of Catalonia in the 1630s and '40s within a broader context, both geographical (by looking at the contemporaneous unrest in France, Italy, Sweden, Ukraine, and the entire Stuart Monarchy) and chronological (pointing to the similarly broad wave of unrest in western Europe in the 1560s).[119] He also contributed a paper on 'Revolts in the Spanish Monarchy' to a colloquium at the Johns Hopkins University in 1968 on 'The comparative history of modern revolutions', later published in the influential volume *Preconditions of revolution in early modern Europe*; and a chapter on 'England and Europe: a common malady?' to a volume on the causes of the English Civil War, edited by Conrad Russell. 'Viewed in retrospect', he thought that 'the General Crisis controversy marks a critical moment in the history of twentieth-century historical writing' because since then 'perhaps as a consequence of that debate, historians have shown a renewed interest in the character, the structure and the operations of the state as an agent of change. This might be regarded as an overdue reinsertion of politics into history, after a long period of its relegation to the sidelines at a time when economic and social interpretations were in the ascendant.'[120]

[118] Obituary of Elliott by Peter J. Marshall, 13 April 2022, https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/sir-john-elliott-obituary; Marshall email to the authors, 11 May 2022.

[119] 'Revolution and continuity in Early Modern Europe', *P&P*, 42 (1969), 35–56 (reprinted in *SW*, pp. 92–113). As with his Wiles lectures, Elliott's printed text closely followed the oral version. Perez Zagorin, *Rebels and rulers, 1500*–1650, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1982), p. 26, would dismiss the distinction between rebellions and revolutions as an 'unnecessary distortion'; but Elliott's view has prevailed. See, for example, Yacoob Dweck, *The Dissident Rabbi: The Life of Jacob Sasportas* (Princeton, 2019), pp. 19–20.

[120] 'Revolts in the Spanish Monarchy', in Robert Forster and Jack P. Greene, eds, *Preconditions of revolution in early modern Europe* (Baltimore, 1970), pp. 109–30; 'England and Europe: a common malady?' in Conrad Russell, ed., *The origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 107–44; *HM*, pp. 64–5. He also brought out three articles about the count-duke of Olivares: 'The statecraft of Olivares', in Elliott and Helmut G. Koenigsberger, eds, *The diversity of history. Essays in honour of Sir Herbert Butterfield* (London, 1970), 117–47; 'La España del conde de Olivares', *Revista de Occidente*, 107 (1972), pp. 180–97; and 'Nueva Luz sobre la prisión de Quevedo y Adam de la Parra', *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 169 (1972), 171–82. In addition, Elliott's chapter 'The Spanish peninsula, 1598–1648' appeared in J. P. Cooper, ed., *The New Cambridge Modern History*, 4 (1970), 435–73, but as Elliott pointed out in an irate footnote: 'The typescript of this chapter was completed in the summer of 1959' (p. 435 n.1).

Then, after less than four years at King's, he decided to leave England to take up a permanent position at the School of Historical Studies in the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) at Princeton. The offer of a job came 'out of the blue'. When the Elliotts visited the Institute a decade before they were not impressed. Although they liked the setting, with 'beautifully landscaped grounds', it seemed to them 'curiously isolated': a place where they would have been 'bored to distraction' if they spent even a semester there. Nor did they much like Princeton itself, describing it as a 'curiously artificial little town, its university absurdly neo-Gothic'. He found the faculty 'all too much pleased with themselves, and even more parochial than Cambridge'. Ten years later they changed their mind.[121]

In spring 1972 Elliott went for lunch with his colleague Mary Enole Gilbert, who taught German Literature at King's, and there he met Mary's brother Felix, a distinguished Renaissance historian about to retire from a permanent post at IAS. Felix Gilbert 'obviously was looking me over at the same time, and so I met him then and he asked me if I would like to apply to be a visiting member.' Elliott later said that 'I've always suspected, although I don't know it, that Lawrence [Stone, then Dodge Professor of History at Princeton University] may have played a part in suggesting my name to Felix Gilbert' – but this was only part of the story. Elliott himself may never have known the rest.[122]

Carl Kaysen, who became Director of the Institute in 1966, wanted 'to build up the history faculty [because] there hadn't been appointments for a while'. He initially 'wanted to appoint Lawrence Stone' because Stone 'was exactly what the School of Historical Studies needed, a very brilliant, very wide-ranging social historian with an interest in everything and stimulating to students'. According to Kaysen 'Lawrence wanted to be appointed', but Felix Gilbert warned him that the nomination 'would never fly' because 'Lawrence had already annoyed some of the old guys. And then Felix I guess suggested John Elliott and Lawrence knew John Elliott, they were friends, and so Lawrence and Felix helped me recruit John Elliott. Hanna Gray, whom I had invited to the Board of the Institute, was influential in helping me do that.'[123]

[121] EFA Elliott to his parents, 1 December 1963. Jonathan Brown, then a graduate student at Princeton, also commented on the 'decidedly rural character' of the town at that time: Brown, *In the shadow of Velázquez. A life in art history* (New Haven and London, 2014), pp. 17–18.

[122] 'BN', 19–20; Institute for Advanced Study, Oral History Project, Interview with John Elliott, 15 May 1990 (sealed until 2005) [hereafter 'Elliott IAS Interview'], pp. 1–2, and pp. 18–19. The courtship seems to have begun slightly earlier: in September 1971 Gilbert sent Elliott a 'brief pamphlet on the work of the Institute which you might want to look at', and said that IAS Director Carl Kaysen 'would like very much to see you' on a projected visit to London in November: HI FGP Box 61, Gilbert to Elliott, 22 September 1961.

[123] Institute for Advanced Study, Oral History Project, Interview with Carl Kaysen, 6 July 1994, (sealed until after Kaysen's death) [hereafter Kaysen IAS Interview], pp. 64–6. Hanna Gray's support is easily explained: Felix Gilbert was a close friend of her father (they had both studied with Friedrich Meinecke in Berlin) and he had taught her as a student at Bryn Mawr. She had learned to trust his judgement. Elliott had read Meinecke in the original German as an undergraduate: p. 165 n. 25..

George Kennan, on behalf of the School of Historical Studies at IAS, now asked Hugh Trevor-Roper for his assessment of Elliott's suitability as a permanent faculty member. Once again, Trevor-Roper saluted Elliott's 'great gifts as a historian – analytical power, lucidity of mind, breadth of interest' – and also praised two of his research students: 'I am greatly impressed by the range of interest which he can arouse in them, the technical exactitude they can learn from him'. He deemed Elliott 'the paragon of historians of his age group'. But then came a long and remarkable caveat:

> Elliott's marvellous lucidity is an exceptionally cold light. Having known him as well (I think) as anyone has done for twenty years, having walked with him for days in Spain, and spent Georgic hours with him in the country, far from the academic treadmill (or jungle), I still find his personality unknowable, and I have never met anyone who claims to have penetrated it. His mind sometimes seems to me a marvellous machine rather than a human organ. I know of no other scholar who could say, as Elliott said to me not long ago, in a calm, matter-of-fact way, that he had now completed everything that he had planned to do, was up to schedule on everything, and was considering upon what new field he should now embark.

Trevor-Roper admitted that 'such efficiency, such tidiness of mind, such quiet satisfaction' left him 'fascinated, but at the same time baffled and somewhat depressed':

> How can anyone achieve such barely human exactitude? Perhaps by being a Christian Scientist. It is certainly a very extraordinary religion. But you must know more than I can about that transatlantic ideology. It is not a subject on which I could hope to have a free discussion with Elliott, even after twenty years, even in the most carefree walks in the most sylvan solitude.[124]

These remarkable revelations would surely have disqualified most other candidates, but they did not deter Gilbert, Kaysen and Kennan. Armed with a letter attesting to Elliott's high standing among historians within Spain provided by Domínguez Ortiz, they convinced their IAS colleagues to hire Elliott because, according to Kaysen, he was 'a very distinguished historian' and 'the mathematicians respected him [because] they respected anybody with a wide linguistic command'. In addition, Kennan hoped 'his presence in the States should bring historians in the European and in the Latin American fields closer together'; and because every year IAS received 'many applications for membership from British scholars … it will be a boon to British scholarship, I think, as well as to ourselves, to have someone who can help us to find' British scholars of distinction.[125]

[124] CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/2, George Kennan to Trevor-Roper 24 April 1972 (stating that, if appointed, Elliott would replace Gilbert); and Trevor-Roper's reply on 28 April 1972, copy.

[125] HI FGP Box 61, Gilbert to Domínguez Ortiz, 25 May 1972 (requesting 'quelques lignes sur la réputation de notre ami John H Elliott parmi les historiens espagnoles' to show to 'nos collègues dans les sciences

A formal letter of invitation soon followed, and in October 1972 Elliott informed Gilbert that 'I'm very much looking forward to the prospect of Princeton, sad as I am at the thought of leaving a job which I very much enjoyed. But my department is now in peak running order.' Moreover, 'I feel I've just about completed the things I wanted to achieve there, so it's not a bad moment to be clearing out ... And I'm longing for an opportunity to get on with my own work.'[126] He now plied Gilbert with letters about housing possibilities and library holdings (did the IAS library subscribe to *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 'valuable for research pieces by Braudel boys on field-work in Spain'?) until in March 1973 the Elliotts returned to Princeton to 'see if we liked the place any better than on our first visit'. Kennan showed them round the campus, and although 'Oonah was a bit reluctant' at first, she appreciated the 'sheer beauty' of the place, and as soon as she had absorbed the opportunities it offered her husband assured him that going there made 'made absolute sense' for both of them. Some British colleagues told Elliott that 'it was both a grave defection' and 'extremely unwise to cut oneself from teaching', but he could not resist 'the incomparable privilege of living the life of the university professor without any obligation to teach'. After a 'Gothick drama' to obtain a work permit that forced them to cancel 'our sailing on the QE2 (£300 down the drain)', he and Oonah flew to Princeton in early October 1973 and 'moved into a small but charming Connecticut-style salt-box house, 14 Newlin Road, owned by the Institute. This was five minutes' walk from the splendid office that was allocated to me in the handsome West Building, recently built to house historians and social scientists.'[127]

IV. Institute for Advanced Study, 1973–91

That is how Elliott recalled his early years at IAS in 2006, when he composed some 'Biographical Notes' on his career. It seemed somewhat less idyllic at the time. Long before he left King's, 'once people knew that I had accepted, I was constantly being sent press cuttings, both from this side of the Atlantic and the other, warning me of the terrible thing I was about to do and the awful place I was about to find myself in' because of the tension between Carl Kaysen and most of his Faculty. The latter objected to three recent decisions by the director: creating a new School of Social Science to join the existing Schools of Historical Studies, Natural Sciences, and Mathematics; constructing a new

naturelles'), and his reply (in French) dated 31 May 1972; Kaysen IAS Interview, p. 66; CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/2, Kennan to Trevor-Roper, 16 May 1972.

[126] HI FGP Box 61, Elliott to Gilbert, 14 October 1972.

[127] HI FGP Box 61, Elliott to Gilbert, 12 December 1972 (the 'Braudel boys') and 20 September 1973 (the 'Gothick drama of our Visa problems'); Elliott IAS Interview, 15 May 1990, pp. 3 and 34–5; 'BN', 20.

cafeteria and the West Building (largely to house the new School of Social Science); and persuading the Board of Trustees to hire the sociologist Robert Bellah as a permanent faculty member of the new School, in the teeth of vigorous opposition from the Institute's mathematicians and some historians. The divisions of IAS faculty over the 'Bellah Affair' made the front page of several newspapers, and in May 1973 Kaysen felt obliged to warn Elliott that he was about to enter a 'snake pit', and offered details, but Elliott replied: 'It makes sad reading but I'd like to think that the Institute is now sailing into calmer waters. If things go right, the Institute's potential and opportunities seem to me enormous.' Bellah resigned the following month, but the bitterness lived on: more than half the permanent professors now sought Kaysen's resignation, and many of them refused to eat in the new cafeteria.[128]

Initially Elliott did nothing to charm the snakes. 'I fear I was too much of a Young Turk for some of my colleagues', he wrote, and he took some provocative decisions. Long before he moved to Princeton, Elliott informed Gilbert that 'I would rather (having spent so much of my working life in old rooms) be accommodated in the new block' instead of with the other historians in the Institute's original building, Fuld Hall.[129] Elliott later observed that he also 'very much wanted to be on a corridor with social scientists so that there was the possibility of mixing up', and therefore moved into the West Building. Joan Scott, a historian appointed to the Institute's School of Social Science in 1985, considered this an 'act of defiance' signalling Elliott's receptiveness to different disciplines – but it was far more. Elliott felt that the School of Historical Studies 'had turned into something of a gentleman's club' and he resolved to 'shake up the place'. In particular he objected to the preponderance of Ancient historians:

> I just couldn't believe that the History School was so heavily oriented to Greece and Rome, and that was one of my great concerns. The first time I saw my new colleagues, I realized that this, as far as I was concerned, was going to be a difficulty in the future ... I felt that pretty boring scholars were being let in as members in Classical studies at the expense of much livelier people in modern history.

He was rebuked 'by one of my senior colleagues, I suppose after the first term or two: "We invited you into our club, and the first thing you did was to start moving the furniture

[128] 'BN', 3; IAS archive, Kaysen to Elliott, 9 May 1973 (we thank Jonathan Israel for bringing this letter to our attention); Matteo Bortolini, 'The "Bellah Affair" at Princeton: scholarly excellence and academic freedom in America in the 1970s', *The American Sociologist*, 42 (2011), 3–33. Landon Jones, 'Bad days on Mount Olympus: the big shoot-out at the Institute of Advanced Study', *The Atlantic*, 233/2 (February 1974), 51–3, stated that 17 of the 30 permanent professors wanted Kaysen to resign. Clifford Geertz, *After the fact. Two countries, four decades, one anthropologist* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), chap. 5, reflected on his troubled time at the Institute.

[129] HI FGP Box 61, Elliott to Gilbert, 12 December 1972.

around".' He remained unrepentant: 'Well, I came here partly because I thought the furniture needed moving around.'[130]

Others shared Elliott's view. André Weil, a professor in the School of Mathematics, mischievously claimed that the Institute had become 'a nursery of mathematicians and a nursing home for historians'. Kaysen hailed Elliott's arrival as 'a breath of fresh air' for the Institute. Quentin Skinner, who spent the year 1974–5 at IAS as a member of the School of Historical Studies, found 'the people in the School of Social Science were, apart from John Elliott and Felix Gilbert … all more interesting scholars. I also found them intellectually more congenial people.' Before long, Elliott 'found life in my School so difficult, and thought the future of the School was so dark', that he wondered if 'it might be a more satisfactory solution for all of us if modern history or at least my part of it, and more modern, was attached to the Social Science School.' But as he 'thought about the nature of the two disciplines', he concluded 'that there was too much difference between the social science approach and the historical approach … and it seemed better to fight my battles in the History School, and if possible reform it from within, than to break away from it.'[131]

Part of the attraction of the School of Social Science to Elliott was Clifford Geertz, whose work on the 19th-century Balinese 'theatre-state', and emphasis on the importance of rituals and symbols in the exercise of political power, suggested new ways of approaching the study of kingship in early modern Europe.[132] The two men soon developed close ties and Elliott joined him on a committee to select a second professor in the School. They chose Albert Hirschman, a noted political economist who had fought for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War and worked as an economist in Colombia. He and Elliott soon became close, not only because of their shared interest in the Spanish-speaking world, but also because Elliott selected visiting faculty ('Members', in IAS parlance) 'who really had an interest in social science and participated in our seminars'. An early manifestation of their collaboration at IAS was an interdisciplinary programme, 'Self-Perception, Mutual Perception, and Historical Development', which the two

[130] Elliott IAS Interview, pp. 8–9 and 12; Joan Wallach Scott email to the authors, 18 August 2022. Scott also noted that the passions generated by the 'Bellah affair' were 'still very much alive among the faculty' when she arrived in 1985. After Elliott's departure, she moved into his former office.

[131] Kaysen IAS Interview, pp. 55 (quoting Weil) and 66; Institute for Advanced Study, Oral History Project, Interview with Quentin Skinner, 17 February 1995 [hereafter Skinner IAS Interview], 2 (Skinner marvelled that when Felix Gilbert retired in 1975, after thirteen years as a faculty member, 'the School of Historical Studies as a body had no particular intention to celebrate his retirement in any way… And I suppose that must have been in some way connected with quarrels that were still very recent'); Elliott IAS Interview, pp. 43–4.

[132] Geertz became the founding professor in the School of Social Science in 1970, and his work on Indonesian societies led to his influential book: *Negara. The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980). On his appointment at IAS see Kaysen IAS interview, pp. 92–3.

developed in an effort to explore 'the interplay between self-perception and action as a generating force in history'. The topic was partly inspired by Hirschman's fascination with how the ways in which people looked at the world affected economic development, and it influenced Elliott's 1977 path-breaking article, 'Self-perception and decline in early seventeenth-century Spain', which focused on the influence of the pessimistic writings of Spain's *arbitristas* and other writers concerning the statecraft of Olivares.[133]

Other faculty were less accommodating. Looking back, Elliott felt that 'my colleagues in the History School' were so 'traumatized' by Kaysen's initiatives – 'the introduction of Social Sciences'; the new buildings; Bellah; 'the way in which Carl did' things – that they saw everything 'in terms of a kind of conspiracy theory. I think they thought that I myself was part of a plot by Kaysen to change the School in ways that they found unattractive, and so I think that added to my difficulties at the beginning.' At the end of his first year, 'in one of the more pathetic occasions of my life, [Kaysen] came round to my office' and 'asked me how I saw his personal situation'. Elliott told him 'Frankly, I thought his position was completely untenable, that he simply couldn't carry enough of the Faculty with him to go on doing things. And I've never seen a man look so downcast. But I'm sure I was telling the truth.'[134]

For some time life at IAS seemed to Elliott like 'one long battle', but in September 1975 he reported to his mother that although 'my senior colleagues' still seemed 'distinctly frosty, the pending departure of our Director has certainly eased the general atmosphere, and even the dourest mathematicians are becoming more genial.' The other historians even accepted him as Executive Officer of their School.[135]

In part Elliott won over his colleagues through the time he devoted to welcoming and mentoring visiting scholars. Carlos Eire, now a professor at Yale, expressed his appreciation of the way Elliott had helped him 'transition from German/French Reformation history to Spanish history. The year I spent under his tutelage at the Institute for Advanced Study helped shape my work much more than the six years I spent in graduate school.' According to Quentin Skinner, Elliott 'was a model of how to be at the Institute. That's to say, he was, like Albert [Hirschman], an immensely ambassadorial sort of person, he had a great gift for languages, he could welcome people in many tongues, he entertained everyone, he was very receptive in listening to what people had to say, he was a great

[133] Institute for Advanced Study, Oral History Project, Interview with Albert O. Hirschman, 19 April 1994, pp. 5 and 10; Jeremy Adelman, *Worldly Philosopher: The Odyssey of Albert O. Hirschman* (Princeton, 2013), p. 544; Elliott, 'Self-perception and decline in early seventeenth-century Spain', *P&P*, 74 (1977), 41–61 (reprinted in *SW*, pp. 241–61). For more on the background to this article, see *HM*, chap. 4.

[134] Elliott IAS Interview, pp. 22–3 (Elliott, ever relishing comparisons, 'felt terrible similarities between [President] Nixon's position, which was becoming impossible, and Kaysen's position').

[135] EFA Elliott to his mother, 28 September 1975. Elliott did not exaggerate: in 2010 Freeman Dyson, professor in the School of Natural Sciences from 1953 to 1994, compared the raucous opposition to Kaysen with 'the campaign of the tea-party Republicans against Obama': https://www.ias.edu/ideas/2010/dyson-kaysen.

enabler, a great introducer of people to people … He was a great role model.' Natalie Zemon Davis, then a member of the Princeton History Faculty, likewise recalled that:

> Any young scholar arriving at the Institute for Advanced Study could be assured of a warm welcome. John introduced them around, set up connections with historians and others at the University, and brought them into his home for a cordial greeting, along with a substantial, generally English-style meal expertly prepared by Oonah, who was forever at John's side and always integral to John's life and work, entwined as completely and necessarily as life and work or breath and brain, but always pursuing her own interests in pottery and as docent at the Princeton University Art Museum.[136]

When Princeton historians went on leave Elliott 'stood in and had graduate seminars in my office for a term'. This enabled him 'to select one or two of the brighter graduate students and invite them to come as my research assistants', which allowed them 'another year to write their thesis up as a book'. In other years, Elliott also welcomed young Spanish scholars, some as his assistants and others as members, which enabled him 'in a sense to begin to train a new generation of Spanish historians, giving them a chance to see what Anglo-American historical scholarship is like' and also 'to perfect their command of English'. They included Josep M. Fradera, Xavier Gil Pujol, Vicente Lleó-Cañal, Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, and (in 1987–8) Mercedes García Arenal, a specialist in the history of Spain's Morisco population. 'John', she recalled, 'was tolerant, generous, extraordinarily accessible, attentive to the work of others, offering both counsel and criticism in the guise of suggestions. A veritable *maestro*.'[137] Elliott also invited some established Spanish historians as IAS Members – including Gonzalo Anes, Ernest Lluch, Jordi Nadal (a friend from his days in Barcelona), Felipe Ruiz Martín and Gabriel Tortella – in the hope that relief from teaching would allow them to complete a project. Nor did he neglect his former doctoral advisees (Peter Bakewell, Robert Evans and Richard Kagan all became members); and, just as George Kennan had hoped, he invited a steady stream of British academics (whom, according to some, he pumped for British academic gossip).

Elliott also made time to interact with others who shared his interests. He attended the evening seminars held in Geertz's home, together with others from IAS and also History Department faculty interested in the early modern period such as David Cannadine, Robert Darnton, Natalie Zemon Davis, Ted Rabb and Lawrence Stone. This, according to Elliott, 'helped keep me intellectually alive'; and attending the 'lively, and sometimes bloody, encounters' at the seminars held in the department's Shelby Cullom

[136] Carlos Eire email to the authors, 25 March 2022; Skinner IAS interview, 17 February 1995, p. 38; Natalie Zemon Davis email to the authors, 13 August 2022.

[137] Elliott IAS Interview, pp. 19–20; *L'Avenç*, 28 ('dominar l'idioma'); Mercedes Garcia Arenal email to the authors. 21 June 2022.

Davis Center also 'did much to expand my range as a historian'. He rarely missed the large luncheon seminars hosted by the Institute's School of Social Science, although he later observed that 'discussion over lunch with the clattering of the trays and such a large number of people attending' made for 'grandstanding' and rendered substantive dialogue 'virtually impossible'.[138]

Meanwhile Elliott took advantage of his 'freedom' at the IAS to write an impressive string of reviews and review essays, many for *The New York Review of Books* [henceforth *NYRB*]. These included 'Mediterranean Mysteries', which criticised Fernand Braudel's deterministic approach to history (3 May 1973); 'Global Vision', a glowing review of *The Times Atlas of World History* edited by Geoffrey Barraclough (7 December 1978); and 'Rats or Cheese', a less glowing review of Carlo Ginzburg's *The cheese and the worms* and Carlo Cipolla's *Faith, Reason and Plague in Seventeenth-Century Tuscany* (26 January 1980). In all, Elliott published almost fifty reviews in *NYRB*, each a minor masterpiece of historical writing, reaching a readership that extended well beyond historians of Spain.[139]

The *NYRB* reviews also afforded him opportunities to express his own views about the nature of history and historical practice. Apart from his rejection of the economic and geographical determinism that he associated with Braudel and the *Annales*, Elliott argued that 'theory is of less importance for the writing of good history than the ability to enter imaginatively into the life of a society remote in time or place, and produce a plausible explanation of why its inhabitants thought and behaved as they did' through prolonged archival research. He did not regard all archival research as equal, however, questioning the value of focusing on micro-historical figures such as Menocchio, a miller from Friuli whose bizarre cosmology – reconstructed from Inquisition records – formed Ginzburg's core source. His *NYRB* review in 1980 asked pointedly:

> Can this man really be considered representative of that sixteenth-century peasant society to which Ginzburg wishes to relate him? Were there indeed innumerable Menocchios scattered through the villages of northern Italy, or does this book tell us about one man, and one man only – Menocchio himself? … Was Menocchio any more representative of the Italian peasant than was Don Quijote of the Castilian *hidalgo*?[140]

As time passed, Elliott became increasingly impatient with microhistory, in part because he worried that the growing popularity of 'history from below' might jeopardise the careers of historians who studied statecraft, high culture, and broad economic and

[138] Elliott IAS interview, p. 7; 'BN', 22.

[139] Elliott first reviewed for *NYRB* in 1964 ('Chronicles of the Conquest': see above). His last review for *NYRB* also covered the Spanish conquest of Mexico: 'Mastering the glyphs' (2 December 2021).

[140] *HM*, p. xi; Elliott, 'Cheese or rats', *NYRB*, 26 January 1980, a review that devoted the lion's share of the attention to the English translation of Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the worms. The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller* (Baltimore and London, 1980).

political trends. In 1990, ten years after his critique of Menocchio, he asserted: 'I am disturbed about a society in which Martin Guerre' – a 16th-century French imposter who featured in a best-selling microhistory by Natalie Zemon Davis – 'looms larger than Martin Luther'. In 2001, he asserted that some microhistories 'are little more than a form of historical voyeurism made possible by the chance survival of certain documents'. In 2012, he added Benedetta Carlini, a lesbian nun in Renaissance Italy, to the galaxy of 'individual case studies, however skilfully conducted' that do not 'really tell us much' about 'the larger society to which she or he belongs'.[141]

Not everyone took such strictures in their stride. In 1976, Elliott had a frosty encounter at the Johns Hopkins University with Braudel, 'whom I had not seen for some twenty years, and who was unaware that he had ever set eyes on me'. After 'an oration on global economics, the villain then asked me to comment before the assembled multitude. Awkward, but I managed a few irrelevant banalities in French. I think he was a bit wary of me, as I don't think he liked my review of the Mediterranean in the *NYRB*.'[142] In an interview in 2002, Carlo Ginzburg expressed gratitude that Elliott's review of *The Cheese and the worms* 'attracted attention to the book' but thought his 'idea of opposing micro-history to macro-history doesn't really make sense. And even less the idea of opposing social history to political history.'[143] In 2014, Natalie Zemon Davis published an article protesting that 'Martin Guerre and Martin Luther are both necessary parts of a wide realm of historical inquiry. There is no zero-sum game going on here.'[144]

[141] *HM*, p. xi; Elliott IAS Interview, p. 39; Elliott, 'El oficio de historiador', in Roberto Fernández, Antonio Passola and María José Vilalta, eds, *John Elliott El oficio de historiador* (Lleida, 2001), pp. 7–20, at p. 19; *HM*, pp. 161–2 (Carlini). Elliott also belittled the importance of Martin Guerre in his Inaugural Lecture at Oxford in 1991 (*National and comparative history*, pp. 9–10); and he questioned the importance of both Menocchio and Martin Guerre in the preface to the second edition of *Europe Divided* in 2000: see p. x. Elliott's additional targets were Natalie Zemon Davis, *The return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge MA, 1983); and Judith Brown, *Immodest acts. The life of a lesbian nun in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1986).

[142] Elliott letter to Parker, 12 April 1976. EFA Elliott to his mother, 11 April 1976, related the same story, adding that he and Braudel 'have a rather wary relationship in view of some critical comments I once put in a review of his book'. To be fair, Elliott was by no means the sole target of such 'villainy': Braudel's standard procedure after giving a lecture was not to wait for questions but instead to pick on someone in the audience whom he recognized and call upon them to respond. Nevertheless since Braudel, too, resented critical reviews he no doubt derived special pleasure from making Elliott feel 'awkward'.

[143] Maria Lucia Pallares-Burke, *The new history: confessions and conversations* (Oxford, 2002), 196–7, interview with Ginzburg. See also *ibid*, 20, 67–70, and 96 for the views of Jack Goody, Natalie Zemon Davis and Keith Thomas on Elliott's critique of micro-histories.

[144] Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Martin Luther, Martin Guerre, and ways of knowing', *Common Knowledge*, 20/1 (2014), 4–8.

V. The Count-Duke of Olivares and his world

The crowning academic achievement of Elliott's years at the IAS was the completion of his program of research and writing centred on Olivares. Since fire had destroyed the count-duke's own archive, the bibliographical appendix to *Revolt of the Catalans* echoed the pessimistic assessment of Fernand Braudel: 'It is unlikely that it will ever be possible to give to Olivares the kind of study that has been given to Richelieu'. Nevertheless 'the desire to disprove Braudel', reinforced by his 'belief in the value and importance of political biography' led Elliott in 1972 to begin a search for alternative sources.[145]

He worked first in the archives of Simancas, Madrid, and Seville, although the lack of adequate catalogues meant that 'It's very difficult everywhere (indeed impossible) to find out what the archives contain without simply plodding through vast masses of largely useless material.'[146] After he migrated to Princeton, Elliott made use of the Institute's long vacations to travel to other European archives and libraries in search of relevant papers – in particular the dispatches of the dozen foreign ambassadors who resided at the Court of Spain, and the archives of eight noble families that contained either counterparts or copies of the documents destroyed in the palace of the dukes of Alba. Although he located much new material,

> This made me realize that some of those documents – notably the state papers and letters written by Olivares, whether originals or (more often) contemporary or subsequent copies – were of such interest and importance that they deserved to be published in their own right. They would also constitute the primary sources from which I would create my political biography.

Because he considered that 'Spanish editing of state papers and political correspondence fell seriously short of European standards', he engaged José Francisco de la Peña (known to all as Quisco), son of a former director of Seville's Archivo General de las Indias, as his research assistant between 1974 and 1979, paid by the Institute. 'Together we selected, collated and studied the various copies of the documents that I considered crucial to Olivares's ministerial career, and composed an introduction to each document, which explained the context of its composition and the intentions of its author.' In addition, Quisco provided vital assistance 'in the complex process of decoding for me the mysteries of the life and the customs of the people of Seville, both then and now'. The *Memoriales y Cartas del Conde-Duque de Olivares* appeared in two volumes in 1978

[145] *Revolt of the Catalans*, p. 579; 'La trayectoria', p. 133.
[146] EFA Elliott to his mother, 28 April 1972.

and 1980. Elliott felt confident that they 'helped to set a new standard for the editing of Early Modern Spanish state papers'.[147]

At the same time, Elliott brought a parallel project to completion. In his first term at the Institute he attended a lecture by Jonathan Brown on Velázquez's painting *Las meninas*, and afterwards introduced himself. They agreed to meet again and, Brown recalled, 'we discovered that we had much in common, especially a passionate interest in the reign of Philip IV and a desire to re-integrate the history of Spain into the history of Europe.' Because 'the art historian felt the need for more knowledge of the historical background' and 'the political and social historian felt the need for more knowledge of art', they discussed the possibility of pooling their knowledge and skills and collaborating on a book, and over the next few years Elliott 'developed with [Brown] what was to be the closest intellectual and personal friendship of my academic career'.[148]

At first they envisaged a volume for the Penguin series *Art in Context* on 'The surrender of Breda' by Velázquez, whose equestrian portrait of Olivares had inspired Elliott to work on early modern Spain; but they soon discarded this topic as too narrow. The huge canvas – celebrating a major victory by Philip IV's forces against the Dutch in 1625 – was but one of a series of twelve battle pictures commissioned at much the same time to decorate the *Salón de Reinos* (Hall of Realms) in the Buen Retiro palace, built for the king by Olivares on the outskirts of Madrid. Brown and Elliott therefore decided to write 'a "total history" of the palace – the reasons for its building, the methods and costs of its construction, the uses to which it was put, and the iconographical programme of the Hall of Realms'. They worked together in the archives of Simancas and Madrid in the summers of 1975–77 – Elliott reporting that 'fortunately, Jonathan is tackling the account books, which saves me from struggling with complicated figures calculated in millions of maravedis all in Roman numerals' – and they began writing up their findings the following year at the Institute, where Brown spent a sabbatical year with an office adjacent to his co-author. Elliott told his mother that he and Brown were 'each keeping the other up to the mark. I must say it's rather enjoyable to be writing something *with* somebody, and our temperaments seem ideally matched for this kind of thing' – although he also told her that their collaboration 'may break over my handwriting'.[149]

[147] 'La trayectoria', p. 134; 'BP', 149 and 153; 'BN', 23. *Acto de investidura como Doctor* Honoris Causa *de la Universidad de Sevilla del profesor Dr. Sir John Elliott* (Seville, 2011), p. 70. In 2013, the two volumes of *Memoriales y Cartas* were re-issued as a single item, now called 'Volumen I'. In 2021, in collaboration with Fernando Negredo del Cerro, Elliott published a critical edition of 164 holograph letters exchanged between the count-duke and Philip IV's younger brother, Cardinal-Infante Fernando, governor of the Low Countries, between 1635 and 1641. It was called *Memoriales y Cartas*, Volumen II. See the admirable review by Christopher Storrs in *Cuadernos de historia moderna*, 47 (2022), 267–8.

[148] Brown, *In the shadow*, p. 75; *HM*, p. 138.

[149] 'BN', 23–4 (acknowledging the inspiration of Hugh Thomas, *Goya: the Third of May 1808*, published in the series in 1973); EFA Elliott to his mother, 3 July 1977, 1 and 22 October 1978. *HM*, chap. 5, describes the venture, together with Elliott's thoughts on the proper relationship between history and art history.

Brown remembered the collaboration in much the same way, including the problems posed by Elliott's appalling handwriting:

> Propinquity was essential: email had not yet been invented and it would have been very difficult to complete the work were we not neighbors at home and at work. We were fortunate in that our prose styles were similar – lucid, concise and supple, if I may be allowed to say so. We were bent on writing a book that could be read with profit and pleasure by anyone, specialist or not, with an interest in later European history. Such differences as existed between our writing styles were smoothed over by constant reading and correcting of each other's text, which imparts stylistic unity to the book. This method requires a sturdy but flexible ego and a willingness to accept criticism.

Brown particularly admired Elliott's 'hard-won knowledge' about Habsburg Spain, which was 'crucial to the writing of our book'.

> To cite one example of the reach of his studies: he kept in his office, on a shelf just behind his desk, a green metal box that contained index cards. It turned out that, *in his almost illegible scrawl*, he was compiling biographical information on just about every person at the Spanish Court who was mentioned in the documents. Whenever I came across mention of one of these people, I could get immediate, unpublished information simply by knocking on the door of John's office.

Although Elliott took pride in his personal prosopography, he repeatedly complained about the lack of anything like a *Dictionary of National Biography* for Spain – even though the creation of such a dictionary had formed part of the original mission of Spain's Real Academia de la Historia, founded in 1738. He therefore took partial credit – and derived great satisfaction – when in 2011 the Real Academia published a *Diccionario Biográfico Español* in fifty volumes.[150]

Elliott derived less satisfaction from reviews of *A palace for a king*: *the Buen Retiro and the* C*ourt of Philip IV*, published in 1980, because he felt they failed to recognise its innovative interdisciplinary approach. He later found consolation on this score in the favourable reviews of the Spanish translation (1981), and of the revised and expanded edition, published in English and Spanish (2003). He considered *A palace for a king*:

> Probably the book of mine that I have most enjoyed writing, partly because of the subject itself and partly because of the stimulus of working with someone who was on the same wavelength as myself but possessed a different expertise to my own. Not only did the exercise teach me a great deal of art history, but it also impressed on me how paintings

[150] Brown, *In the shadow*, pp. 77–8 (italics added); 'BP', p. 155: 'Al final, la Real Academia de la Historia aceptó el desafío y considero un especie de triunfo personal que recientemente haya aparecido bajo sus auspicios el *Diccionario Biográfico Español*, en cincuenta volúmenes'. Since 2018 the *Diccionario*, with data on more than 50,000 people, has been available online at http://dbe.rah.es. The founding director of the project, Gonzalo Anes, had spent the year 1975–6 as a member of IAS, which perhaps made him more receptive to Elliott's nagging.

> themselves can be seen as documents in their own right… It helped, I think, to open the eyes of historians, and also of art and architectural historians, to the possibilities inherent in a 'total' approach to the history of a particular building.[151]

He also predicted that 'in the long run it may prove to be the most enduringly influential of my books' because 'one of our hopes in writing the book was that it might one day lead to the restoration of the series of paintings commissioned for the Hall of Realms to the original space intended for them.' After all, the Prado Museum owned 26 of the 27 original paintings, and the adjacent Hall of Realms had miraculously survived intact (the sole part of the Buen Retiro complex to do so), albeit it housed Spain's Army Museum. In 1996, supported by Fernando Checa, Director of the Prado Museum, Elliott and Brown pitched the case for restoration at a meeting with José María Aznar López, head of the newly elected Spanish government, and he expressed cautious support – but progress was slow. In 2005 the Prado mounted a special exhibition within a reconstruction of the *Salón de Reinos*, to show how a full restoration would provide a glimpse of the glories of Golden Age Spain and also, 'above all, do what works of art are uniquely equipped to do – bring an age to life'. In 2010, the Army Museum vacated the *Salón* and relocated to Toledo, and in 2021 Spain's government finally authorised the building's restoration; but sadly neither Brown nor Elliott lived long enough to see their dream of a re-created Hall of Realms fulfilled.[152]

Elliott later admitted that 'to some extent *A palace for a king* diverted time and attention from my political biography of Olivares', but 'it also extended my knowledge and understanding of the Spain of Olivares, and in that sense served to strengthen and enrich the project'. The same equation prevailed when in September 1981 he received an invitation from Cambridge University to deliver the 1983 Trevelyan Lectures. 'My first thought was to compare the Spain of Olivares and the France of Richelieu in an attempt to see why France eventually emerged as the victor', but he 'quickly realized that the state of the historical literature at the time made such a comparison, at least at that moment, an impossible ambitious enterprise'.[153] He therefore decided on a more manageable topic whose origins can be traced back to his discussions with Orest Ranum at Columbia University twenty years before (page 188 above): a comparison of Richelieu

[151] 'BN', 24–5; Nicholas Canny emails to the authors, 22–23 August 2022. 'A spell of decline', p. 330, contains an excellent summary of Elliott's own view of his achievement.

[152] *HM*, p. 167. Ibid., plate 8, shows Brown and Elliott surrounded by the paintings at the 2005 Prado exhibition. Brown, *In the shadow*, 78–82, sheds more light on the efforts to re-create the *Salón*, with a striking photo of the 2005 reconstruction at p. 80. See also the lavish catalogue: Andrés Úbeda de los Cobos, ed., *El palacio del Rey Planeta: Felipe IV y el Buen Retiro/ Paintings for the Planet King. Philip IV and the decoration of the Buen Retiro* (Madrid, 2005).

[153] 'BN', 25–6; *HM*, 178–9. Elliott's letter to Parker on 30 June 1982 mentioned that he had received the Trevelyan invitation the previous September.

and Olivares, two exact contemporaries who wrestled with remarkably similar problems as they sought to govern their countries (including royal indebtedness, challenges to royal authority, construction of an invincible navy, crippling defence costs, and the revitalisation of the economy). Given that Olivares and Richelieu watched one another like cats, each adjusting their policies according to their perception of what the other was doing, Elliott decided to frame his lectures as a 'historical Wimbledon' that showed that problems long considered specific to Spain were in fact common to most of Europe in the first half of the 17th century.

Elliott gave his lectures in Cambridge early in 1983 but felt 'annoyed at the lack of publicity and the poor turn-out for the lectures. Scarcely an undergraduate showed up, even for the first one'. He also 'got the impression of a History Faculty with even less esprit de corps than in my own time, and everyone busily engaged in his or her own thing without regard for what was happening on the other side of the fence.'[154] He consoled himself with a round-the-world tour with Oonah, starting with three weeks in India (where 'I felt that I had seen the Middle Ages and that they worked') and then Sri Lanka, before moving on to Australia, New Zealand (where they walked on a glacier), Hawai'i (where they canoed in Captain Cook's Bay) and Tahiti (where they went snorkelling). They returned to Princeton 'with a strengthened global perspective'. As with the Wiles Lectures fourteen years earlier, Elliott decided to publish his Trevelyan lectures more or less as he had given them, and delivered the text to Cambridge University Press the following June. 'I think it's a useful essay', he observed, 'but telescoping important issues and events without oversimplifying to the point of crudity has made me sweat blood'. *Richelieu and Olivares* appeared in 1984 and won the best book prize of the French Société du XVIIe siècle.[155]

Elliott now devoted all his energies to completing his political biography of Olivares. He had not only accumulated an enviable reservoir of documents but also worked out what he could exclude: 'It seemed to me that the book by Marañón [*El conde-duque de Olivares: la pasión de mandar* (Madrid, 1936)] rendered a traditional biography superfluous. Thanks to him, we already had a fairly convincing picture of Olivares as a man, but there was much still to say about him as a statesman.' He had also published many key documents in *Memoriales y cartas*, and dealt with the cultural ambience of the count-duke's world in *A palace for a king.* Elliott therefore resolved to concentrate on

[154] HI FGP Box 61, Elliott to Gilbert, Fort Aguada Beach Resort, Goa, 20 February 1983.

[155] Chronology of the trip reconstructed from EFA, Elliott to his mother 20 February, 9 April, 6 May and 8 August 1983; from Elliott's letters to Parker, 3 and 27 May 1983; and from a conversation in February 1983 in Goa, where the Elliotts 'swam in the Arabian Sea' while Parker toiled in the archives (contradiction is futile: we have photographic proof and we have the letters). For a thoughtful and amusing appreciation of *Richelieu and Olivares*, see James Amelang, 'Richelieu y Olivares', in Fernández *et al.*, *El Oficio del Historiador*, pp. 97–106.

'his political aims and activities, and the extent to which he achieved or fell short of his objectives' – although even this involved challenges. Above all, 'How can one be sure that one has succeeded in entering in his mind-set rather than simply reconstructing it from afar?'

> Eventually I convinced myself that there was a test, simple although somewhat basic, which I could use: the test of predictability. If one wants to get to know a person fairly well, there comes a point in which one can predict with a fair degree of precision how they will react in a given situation. … Although the way Olivares expressed himself surprised me – and continues to surprise me – there came a moment in my studies when his reaction in general terms did not. I began to know intuitively how he would respond. And that was perhaps the moment at which a biographer can start writing.

Elliott still 'spent several nights thinking about the problems that face the Count-Duke, trying to solve them – for example, "What should we do about the Netherlands"' – but he now felt more confident that he could do justice to such issues.

> Although to some extent the space I devoted to war and diplomacy may reflect an imbalance in the documentation produced by the chance survival of documents, it has to be recognized that these issues themselves absorbed a large part of Olivares's time and energies over the course of his twenty-two years tenure of power. I therefore had no doubt in my own mind that, as a historian not only of Spain but of Europe, I had to present him as a *European* as well as a Spanish statesman.[156]

As he corrected the proofs of his monumental study, he worried (as he had done with *Revolt of the Catalans*) about its length – 'I don't know who will read such a large book' he told his mother – but, once again, his pessimism was misplaced. Although 738 pages long, *The count-duke of Olivares: the statesman in an age of decline* sold spectacularly well in English from the moment of its publication in 1986, and it won the annual Wolfson Prize for History and Biography. The Spanish translation, published four years later, also sold well. The jacket of both editions displayed the equestrian portrait by Velázquez that had first kindled Elliott's interest in his subject.[157]

One reason for the book's success was summed up by Keith Thomas: Elliott's 'prose is invariably lucid and elegant, and he is incapable of writing a bad sentence.' In an interview a few years later the author revealed his secret:

> I work very hard on writing in such a way that I can be understood. I do tend, when I write, to speak what I'm saying as I work on the typewriter or now the word processor, to say it aloud so that I get some rhythm to the sentences; and then I work a lot on second, third and fourth drafts to try and get the maximum clarity, the maximum elegance

[156] 'BP', p. 155 (an essay written in 2015 that any biographer or would-be biographer will find rewarding); *LL*, 70; 'La trayectoria', pp. 134–5.
[157] EFA Elliott to his mother, 19 April 1986.

> while not losing the complexity of what I'm trying to say, which seems to be the greatest and the most difficult art of all.

He provided further details in another interview a few years later:

> Most of my books I write three or four times. I work a lot on individual passages, and I am especially very conscious of the links between paragraphs. I'm always trying to tell a story, which I find very important for historians. There must be an unbroken stream. You've got to carry the reader on. At the same time you have to incorporate analysis into the story.[158]

A further reason for the success of *The count-duke* was Elliott's ability to use the original sources he had unearthed all over Europe and the Americas in ways that brought the past alive and addressed a major problem of permanent relevance: how political leaders with aspirations imbibed from a former age struggle to achieve almost impossible goals with diminished resources. The result, as all reviewers said, was a triumph – and one that, ironically, turned the tables on the count-duke's old rival: historians (at least those who read only English) now know and understand far more about Olivares than about Richelieu.[159]

VI. Regius Professor, 1990–1997

In the course of his career, Elliott received several attractive job offers, starting when he was a visiting scholar at Columbia in 1963 (page 188 above), followed a few months later while he was in Mexico City when he received an invitation to fly back to England to be interviewed for the chair of History at the new university of Keele. Again 'I said no. Nice to have an offer though (salary = £3000).'[160] In January 1980 he learned that he was being considered as a candidate for the Regius Professorship at Oxford, soon to be vacated by Trevor-Roper. Elliott, however, informed his mother that:

[158] Thomas, 'The empires of Elliott'; Elliott IAS Interview, pp. 41–2; 'A spell of decline', p. 327. See also his comment to Alistair Malcolm (p. 158 above) on how touch-typing enabled him to think in paragraphs. Alas we are unlikely to know how much he changed in each draft because, as he left Princeton, 'I've just thrown away all the drafts of *Olivares*': EFA Elliott to his mother, 21 April 1990.

[159] Thirty years spent on *The Count-Duke* cured Elliott of any desire to write further biographies. When in 2010 a Spanish journalist asked if he might write a biography of Diego de Velázquez, Elliott replied with a resounding (and lengthy) negative: *LL*, 70.

[160] EFA Elliott to his parents, 30 March 1964.

> If by any chance I *should* be approached, I should almost certainly decline. We are both extremely happy here, and I don't really see myself in the rather bickering and spiteful atmosphere of Oxford common rooms. Nor do I think that O[onah] would have anything like the enjoyable life she is living in Princeton, which has quite transformed her.[161]

He was not quite so resolute in a letter to Trevor-Roper on the subject. He averred that although 'this place gives me the opportunity to do my own thing, in fact I'm not convinced that the opportunity is necessarily making me a better historian'. He continued: 'I do not regard emigration, like death, as an irreversible process', but

> I do feel that at this moment the Institute is doing something uniquely important in providing a temporary refuge for hard-pressed scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, and that the contribution I can make to this process is a worthwhile one, both in terms of selecting promising and deserving historians, and helping to create the kind of environment in which they can give of their best. The time may well come when I tire of this kind of existence, but I'd feel very reluctant at present to throw it up, unless it were for a post in which I felt I could make a distinctive contribution of roughly comparable usefulness. I'm not at all sure that Oxbridge in the 1980s offers that kind of scope.[162]

Elliott's resolve was put to the test three years later. While in England to give his Trevelyan Lectures, he 'had the bizarre experience of being offered the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge by the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher'. Her Secretary for Appointments invited him to Downing Street, London,

> To give advice on the future of the Chair, which was shortly to be made vacant by the retirement of Owen Chadwick. I duly went to Number 10 and had a conversation with him about possible candidates. I was then called upstairs to see Mrs Thatcher, who was full of compliments, and after uttering the immortal phrase 'You are without an equal', offered me the post. Flattering as this was, I had more or less made up my mind before going to Downing Street that, if by any chance I should be offered the Chair, I would almost certainly not accept it.

[161] EFA Elliott to his mother, 20 January 1980, occasioned by a phone call from *The Sunday Times* asking for a photo to accompany an article assessing the chances of five historians who might succeed Trevor-Roper as Regius Professor: Raymond Carr, Michael Howard, F.S.L. Lyons, Keith Thomas and 'Jack Elliott'. The article, 'Dons line up for historic battle', by Andrew Lycett, described Elliott as a 'brilliant polariser, stylish writer, energetic and scrupulous scholar' (*The Sunday Times*, 20 January 1980, 20). Lycett predicted that Howard would prevail, and he was right: https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/48336/page/14213, *The London Gazette*, 13 October 1980.

[162] CC SCO/Dacre/1/1/24, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 15 January 1980. Two months later, the Prime Minister's Secretary for Appointments asked J. H. Plumb for advice on who should succeed Trevor-Roper and he replied that his 'first choice would be Professor John Elliott who is clearly the most outstanding historian of his generation' (CUL Plumb Papers, Correspondence, Plumb to the Secretary for Appointments, 7 March 1980).

Elliott 'asked the Prime Minister for a day or two to think, and, if necessary, consult'; and he consulted J.H. Plumb, who warned that if he declined the offer 'it was unlikely to be repeated at a later date'. Nevertheless decline he did. 'I suspected that the offer was at least in part determined by Cambridge Faculty in-fighting, and represented an attempt to keep the obvious successor, Geoffrey Elton, out of the chair. This would not in itself have worried me' – an interesting admission – 'but both my wife and I loved the life of the Princeton Institute. I also felt that there still remained much for me to do there, both in terms of my own writing and research, and for the more general cause of historical scholarship.' Elton therefore succeeded Chadwick as Regius Professor.[163]

Elliott felt much the same in 1984 when he was named in a newspaper article as a possible successor to Sir Alan Hodgkin as Master of Trinity (another crown appointment). He explained to his mother that 'If by any remote eventuality, I were approached, it really would be rather desperate. I love this place [Princeton and the IAS] where we're wonderfully happy and have made more and better friends than anywhere I've been' – another interesting admission. 'What's more, I am desperately needed here for the time being, and my departure would be a terrible blow for the Institute.' He and Oonah now 'expected to spend the rest of our lives at the Institute and what better way to spend one's life? You don't retire here until seventy, you keep your office, you still have this interaction with the members, if you want it.'[164]

Everything changed in 1989 when he received a 'rather surprising message in the form of a letter, an envelope inside an envelope inside an envelope with the third envelope saying 10 Downing Street on the back, asking if I would allow my name to go forward to the Queen as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford and I really had to make up my mind extremely quickly. I actually had about 24 hours to think.'[165] The news caught him by surprise. As he explained to his mother: 'You'll remember that the Spanish ambassador gave Mrs. T[hatcher] a copy of *Olivares* as a Xmas present when it first came out. It can't have done me any harm! I must say that I assumed I'd dished myself

[163] 'BN', 26–27. According to a note in the Plumb papers, Elliott's audience lasted twenty minutes: CUL Plumb Papers, Correspondence, note on the dorse of the Secretary for Appointments to Plumb, 12 March 1980 [sic]. Elliott was mortified in 1989 when a *Daily Telegraph* journalist revealed 'that the job was first offered to me' because 'it will let the whole world know that Elton was second choice'. He suspected the leak came from a 'retired Cambridge historian with a long-standing feud against Elton': EFA Elliott to his mother, 26 August 1989. Presumably the leak came from Plumb, who certainly had 'a long-standing feud' against Elton, and was one of the very few others who knew of the prior offer to Elliott.

[164] EFA Elliott to his mother, 18 February 1984; Elliott IAS interview, p. 34. In an article entitled 'Tension at Trinity over Master's vote splits the high table' in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 29 January 1984, Sebastian Faulks deemed Elliott a 'sound candidate' and thought Sir Andrew Huxley had 'less chance'. Faulks was wrong.

[165] Elliott IAS interview, pp. 35–6. He did worry that he might be part of a Faculty plot to keep out Keith Thomas, just as he had been part of a Faculty plot at Cambridge in 1983 to keep out Geoffrey Elton: Nicholas Canny email to the authors, 23 August 2022.

for the future when I said "no" to her in 1983, but obviously not!' Nevertheless, he was ready to decline once more when he received a phone call from Hugh Trevor-Roper which 'galvanized me, and such were your rhetorical powers, even at 3,000 miles of distance, that after a night of soul-searching my mind was made up.' He accepted the honour, on condition that he could defer for an entire academic year ('I just can't walk out overnight' from Princeton, he told Trevor-Roper). His appointment was not announced in the London Gazette until 2 July 1990.[166]

In an 'exit interview' at IAS, Elliott gave two reasons for his decision to accept. First, he intended it to send a patriotic message: 'I wanted very much to reverse the brain-drain' that had led so many talented British scholars, alienated by the hostility of the Thatcher government towards universities, to flee across the Atlantic. He hoped his decision would 'restore morale in British academic life in the Humanities in particular'. His second reason was also altruistic: he hoped that 'as a European historian with now really very extensive knowledge of the American world', he could exploit his 'European interests at a time when there's a real danger of a renewed parochialism in England' to develop the links between British and European historians.

> I hate the thought of leaving our friends here, of sacrificing the kind of secretarial amenities, facilities, leaving such a wonderful community as Princeton has been, and my wife feels the same about it; but I felt there was a very important job to be done, that I was well placed to do that job and that it was right to accept under the circumstances. So I go with a broken heart but with high hopes for the future.[167]

Elsewhere he mentioned only two negative reasons for leaving. 'I had a feeling that new trends in historiography, especially in the USA – some of which I greatly disliked – were making it more difficult for me to identify promising young historians for invitations to the Institute.' In addition, if he stayed at Princeton, then 'like Louis XIV I would know for the rest of my life exactly what I would do every hour of every day: I would be writing.'[168]

Elliott reported to his mother that 'there was consternation here when I broke the news. Jonathan [Brown] is inconsolable, and several of Oonah's friends broke into tears.' But there was no turning back and that summer the Elliotts went to Oxford to find a

[166] EFA Elliott to his mother, 3 June and 26 August 1989; CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/23, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 26 May 1989; *The London Gazette*, 2 July 1990 https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/52199/page/11319. The phone call led Elliott to suspect that Trevor-Roper had put forward his name ('BN', 30), and he may have been right: how else would Trevor-Roper have known he had received the offer? A few months earlier Lady Patricia Gore-Booth, an old friend of the entire Elliott family, urged Trevor-Roper to 'put John's name forward to the Honours Committee here in London': CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/33 Lady Patricia Gore-Booth to Hugh Trevor-Roper, 23 February 1989.

[167] Elliott IAS interview, pp. 35–6.

[168] 'BN', 30–1 (presumably another swipe at the rise of 'microhistories'); 'Conversa', 193.

house. Although 'we want the impossible – a centrally located house with a garden for Oonah, and a vast amount of library space for me, since we shall not want to move again' after he retired – they 'were extremely fortunate to find in Iffley, at the very beginning of our house-hunting, a late eighteenth-century stone house with a cottage-style garden, which perfectly suited our needs'.[169]

Elliott spent his last year at Princeton preparing for publication a volume of his essays, *Spain and its World, 1500–1700*, first in English, then in Spanish; writing his valedictory lecture at the IAS, entitled 'Why Spain?' (later published in revised form as the first chapter of his autobiography *History in the making*); and 'working flat out' on 'the proofs of the Spanish translation of *Olivares*'. He also read 'very extensively in North American history' in preparation for his 'next big project': a comparative study of British and Spanish America in the colonial period. Had he stayed at Princeton, he observed wistfully in his exit interview, 'I would probably have started writing in the course of the next year', and the project 'is bound to go onto the back burner now because of Oxford'; but he did not worry unduly. After all, Trevor-Roper had told him when he was appointed 'that holding the Regius Chair is great fun': what could possibly go wrong?[170]

The new Regius Professor assumed his duties at Oxford at the start of Michaelmas Term, 1990 – but only after he had recovered from two unpleasant surprises at the Bodleian Library. When he went to the Admissions Office to obtain a reader's ticket, he was asked to produce a college ID. Although he did not yet have one, he had brought his letter of appointment and now produced it (just possibly with a flourish and a slight smile). 'Oh very nice, sir', the Admissions Officer exclaimed. 'I haven't seen one of those for a while. But to issue a reader's ticket I do need to see a college ID.' The new Regius Professor therefore returned empty-handed to Oriel. The second surprise was the discovery, after he eventually obtained his reader's ticket, that no books could be borrowed from any of the Bodleian Libraries.[171]

Neither of these setbacks featured in Elliott's inaugural lecture in May 1991, entitled 'National and Comparative History'. Instead, he called upon his colleagues, particularly those in British history, to adopt his own, broad-brushed approach to history and to introduce an awareness of European developments into their research and writings on the past. He deprecated the tendency of British historians to see the Past as 'exceptional' or in isolation, pointedly reminding his listeners that 'British history need not be, and should not be, insular history'. He went on to express regret that

[169] EFA Elliott to his mother, 13 August 1989; CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/33, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 26 May 1989.
[170] Elliott IAS interview (1990), p. 38; EFA Elliott to his mother, 25 November 1989 (*Empires of the Atlantic world: Britain and Spain in America* would not come out until 2006); 'Making history' interview (2008). Lawrence Stone proved more prescient: he 'warned me that Oxford would defeat me' ('BN', 30).
[171] Both Kevin Sharpe and Orest Ranum relayed Elliott's Admissions saga to the authors; David Cannadine informed them that Elliott phoned him to complain when he found that he could not borrow books.

> We do not have more historians on the faculty whose prime speciality is in the history of a country other than their own. I am concerned, too, by the fact that the structure of our syllabus makes it too easy for undergraduates to leave this university with only the narrowest and most chronologically limited knowledge of continental European history. Finally, I am concerned, as we must all be concerned, by their widespread inability to read historical works in any language other than English, and by their reluctance to choose subjects requiring the study of foreign-language texts.[172]

Elliott restated this theme a few months later when he delivered a lecture on 'The Study of History at Oxford' to the incoming cohort of history undergraduates. He began by congratulating them for deciding to study history because 'an ahistorical society is dangerous', and he stressed that the skills they would develop in studying the Past would prove valuable even – perhaps especially – to those who later pursued careers far removed from professional history, because History allows 'us to ask questions and to understand people and events with a greater degree of sophistication. Ideas and movements and people do not disappear. They re-surface, they change, and are remembered and represented in multiple ways.' He then repeated his criticism of his colleagues in British history, warning his audience of the dangers of 'insular thinking, of atomised pasts, of private universes detached from larger mental worlds, of unexamined notions of exceptionalism'. Instead, he encouraged them 'to connect across what might seem like distinct readings, processes, and contexts … To isolate differences, to push beyond similarities, in considering their units of comparison.'[173]

Throughout his time at Oxford, Elliott attempted to broaden the geographical scope of an undergraduate curriculum weighted so heavily towards the study of the English past. As usual he led from the front. While investing considerable effort in trying to persuade his colleagues to introduce new courses, he set an example by offering a course of lectures entitled 'Conquest and Colonization: Spain and America in the Sixteenth Century,' and another entitled 'Topics in Early Modern History'.[174]

Elliott soon realised that Trevor-Roper had misled him when he said 'holding the Regius Chair is great fun', and charitably speculated that 'I think it was much more fun

[172] Elliott, *National and Comparative History: an inaugural lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on 10 May 1991* (Oxford, 1991), p. 15

[173] Kenneth Mills, 'Espíritu, historiador y director de investigadores,' in Fernández et al, *El Oficio del Historiador,* pp. 155–61. We thank Professor Mills for graciously sharing his original English text with us. Elliott delivered the lecture which so impressed Mills on 14 October 1991, during the first week of Michaelmas Term.

[174] David Parrott email to the authors 21 January 2023. According to Parrott, in 1996 that course of eight lectures addressed the following topics: Pre-Columbian Societies on the Eve of the Conquest; The Spanish and Caribbean Background; Narratives of Conquest; Military Conquest and the Division of the Spoils; The Spiritual Conquest; The Debate on the Indians; Demographic and Economic Change; and The Transformation of Indigenous Society.

in his time than it was when I got to it.' He certainly had little fun sitting on the 'enormous number of committees' on which he served, or as chairman of the History Faculty Board – especially in 1992, when he had to implement the 'Research Assessment Exercise' imposed by the government. Some faculty members, he recalled, 'would have absolutely nothing to do with the exercise, and even refused to put forward the names of their publications', which 'meant a lot of cracking the whip I didn't particularly enjoy'.[175]

His efforts to shape Oxford's new 'Rothermere American Institute' also brought disappointment. As chair of the planning task force from 1991, and in keeping with his new research project on the comparative history of the Spanish and British empires in the New World, Elliott envisioned a centre dedicated to 'Atlantic Studies, embracing North and South America' from colonial times onward. Others on the task force, and potential funders (notably Lord Rothermere), disagreed, ultimately reducing the focus of the Institute to 'the University of Oxford's centre for the study of the United States and its place in the world'.[176]

Elliott refused to relinquish pressure on his British colleagues, especially those in early modern history, to broaden their scope. In 1992 his Creighton Lecture at the University of London stressed the advantages of comparing Spain and America; and his *Past and Present* article 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies' employed a concept originally formulated by Helmut Koenigsberger to demonstrate the extent to which all early modern rulers had to contend with a patchwork of local laws and privileges that limited the exercise of their executive power. In addition to the popularising use of 'composite monarchy' as a substitute for 'absolute monarchy,' Elliott also demonstrated that the loose dynastic union of early modern Britain was far from unique.[177]

In a lecture in Santiago de Compostela in 1995, Elliott offered a detailed justification for comparative history, taking as his text 'The famous injunction of the novelist E.M. Forster: "Only connect". There are many ways of making historical connections, but I believe that one of the most promising, if also one of the most demanding, is by means of comparative history. Comparative history was never more necessary than it is today.' Nevertheless, Elliott highlighted important dangers, starting with 'the natural bias of the comparative historian … to emphasize common features and to play down the differences'. He recalled that the parts of *Richelieu and Olivares* which he had found 'easiest

[175] 'Making history' interview, 2008.

[176] Alan Ryan email to the authors, 25 August 2022; Sally Mason to the authors via an email from Phil Morgan, 26 August 2022; Byron Shafer to the authors, 30 August 2022.

[177] Elliott, *Illusion and disillusionment: Spain and the Indies* (London, 1992: the Creighton Lecture; reprinted in *Spain, Europe and the Wider World, 1500–1800* (London, 2009) [henceforth *SEWW*], pp. 131–48); 'A Europe of composite monarchies', *P&P*, 137 (1992), 45–71 (the article originated in a lecture Elliott delivered at the Royal Historical Society in September 1991; Elliott reprinted it in *SEWW*, pp. 3–24). See also 'Catalunya dins d'una Europa de Monarquies Compostes', *Pedralbes*, 13/1 (1993), 11–23.

to write were those which depicted the two ministers confronting similar problems and provoking similar responses' – for example, both put forward plans for naval and commercial revival and encountered similar obstacles – but in other areas he found 'no commonality of problems. Richelieu, for instance, is faced by religious dissidence and Olivares is not. Clearly, any account of Richelieu's ministry would be distorted if adequate space were not given to his difficulties with the Huguenots' – yet doing so would create asymmetrical coverage. This did not worry Elliott, because simply identifying differences and exploring them can prove illuminating. In this case, without drawing attention to that comparison 'we might not have focused on the high degree of religious consensus in Spain as a possible explanation of the weakness of political opposition against an unpopular regime'. He continued

> This persistent tension between similarity and difference lies at the very heart of the comparative enterprise. I think this tension has to be frankly acknowledged, and seen for what it is: an opportunity for creative opportunity within some clear constraints, … as a device for raising and testing hypotheses. It provides us, in effect, with a useful method for discovering whether the local has a wider resonance, and whether the general has important variations.[178]

This historical philosophy would inform most of Elliott's subsequent scholarly endeavours. His 1994 Stenton Lecture at Reading University compared Spanish and British colonisation in the Americas. The 1996 international conference on 'The World of the Favourite', which he organised at Oxford together with Laurence Brockliss, explored the commonalities as well as the differences between English Favourites such as Robert Cecil and the duke of Buckingham and their counterparts in France, Spain, and other European Monarchies. The papers presented at the conference subsequently appeared in an important volume published by Yale University Press.[179]

By 1997, when he reached the mandatory retiring age of 67 as Regius Professor (succeeded by one his former advisees, Robert J.W. Evans), Elliott's multiple contributions to scholarship had garnered numerous honours. In addition to honorary degrees from several universities in both Europe and America, the Spanish government conferred on him the Grand Cross of Alfonso the Wise in 1988, and the Grand Cross of Isabella the Catholic in 1996; and in 1994 Queen Elizabeth II knighted him for his

[178] Elliott, 'Comparative history', in Carlos Barros, ed., *Historia a debate. Actas del Congreso Internacional 'A historia a debate'*, 6 vols (Santiago de Compostela, 1995), 3, pp. 9–19, at pp. 9–10. Elliott returned to the subject of 'asymmetrical comparisons' in an extended interview in 2009, and he stressed the need for 'every graduate student to try to train himself or herself to think comparatively from the beginning, while knowing they've got to anchor themselves' in the locality that they want to make their focus: 'RAI', 9.

[179] Elliott, *Britain and Spain in America: colonists and colonised* (Reading, 1994: the Stenton Lecture; reprinted in *SEWW*, pp. 149–72); Laurence Brockliss and John Elliott, eds, *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven and London, 1999).

Figure 4. Photograph (from the 1990s?) used to accompany Elliott's biographical entry on the British Academy website. Elliott usually smiled when he spoke – a charming habit on which many have commented.

services to history. The year before he received the Premio Elio Antonio de Nebrija from the university of Salamanca; in 1996 Spain's Prince of Asturias Prize for the Social Sciences; and in 1999 Catalonia's Creu de Sant Jordi. That same year he also received the Balzan Prize for 'History, 1500–1800'. The terms of the Balzan Prize require recipients to invest part of the substantial cash award in a research project (see below). He used the rest to purchase a portrait of the count-duke of Olivares by the 17th-century Spanish master, Valdés Leal, to hang in his study.

VII. An active retirement 1998–2022

This painting soon joined others decorating the walls of the Elliotts' home in Iffley, adjacent to its Anglo-Norman church and enriched by a splendid garden carefully tended by Oonah. In keeping with his growing appreciation for art history, Elliott spent part of his long, active and exceptionally productive retirement on his favourite pastimes: visiting art exhibitions, looking at pictures, and occasionally purchasing pieces of Spanish art. He had acquired a small Miró when still living in Princeton, and an engraved portrait of Olivares by Paulus Pontius (after a drawing by Rubens) soon followed. Later purchases, apart from the Valdés Leal portrait, included an anonymous floral still-life; a street scene in Seville; and a stunning portrait by Murillo.[180] In 1996 Madrid's Prado museum

[180] Patrick Lenaghan email to the authors, 3 July 2022. New York's Frick Collection decided to include Elliott's painting in their 2017 exhibition 'Murillo: The Self-Portraits', and paid to have it restored and verified as a Murillo (Judith Elliott to the authors).

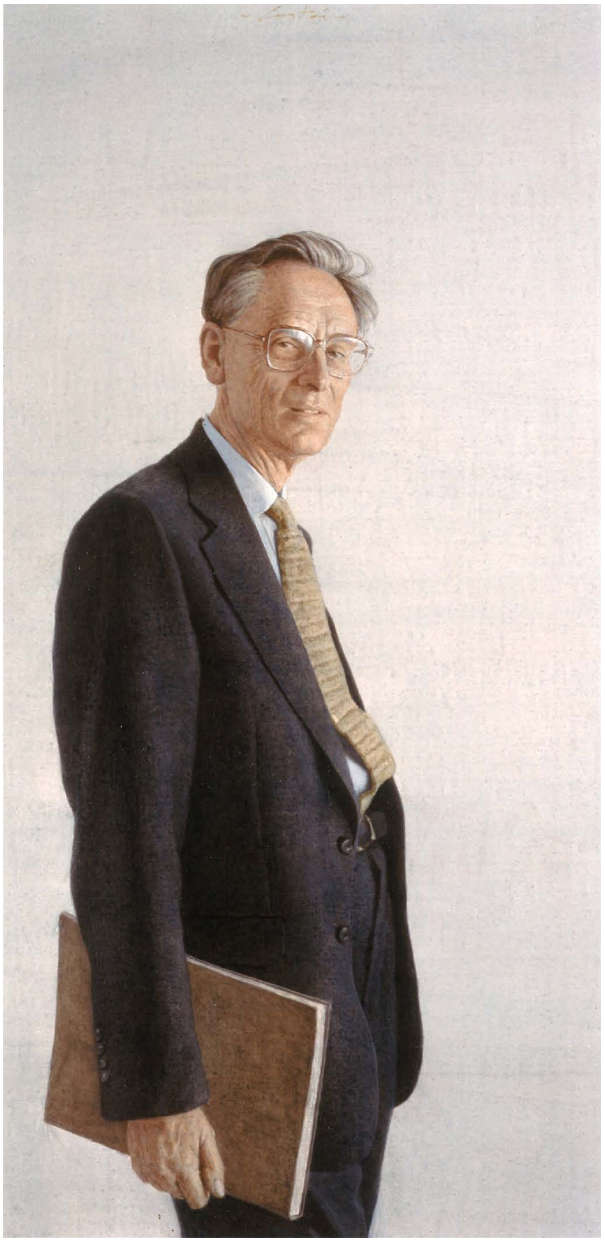

Figure 5. Portrait of John Elliott by Hernán Cortés Moreno, 2002. Elliott 'sat' for Cortés Moreno several times in 2001 and 2002 and both men described 'the intimacy that developed between the painter and his subject': Elliott in 'La visión del retratado', an essay to accompany an exhibition of Cortés Moreno's work; the painter in a moving posthumous tribute. They both felt that 'It's the psychological penetration rather than a superficial realism that distinguished good portraits from the rest' and that the portrait of Elliott 'was a joint effort' (Hernán Cortés Moreno, 'John H. Elliott visto por su retratista', *Letras Libres*, 1 May 2022). Private collection.

appointed Elliott to its newly formed 'scientific oversight committee' and later to its *Patronato* (Board of Trustees), a position he especially relished because its biannual meetings offered him opportunities to visit the museum after hours and admire its vast holdings practically on his own.

Elliott's interest in art led him to contribute essays to the catalogues that accompanied exhibitions of paintings by Murillo (1983), Velázquez (1996) and El Greco (2003); and in 2002 he and Jonathan Brown organised a large and highly successful exhibition at the Prado Museum, *The Sale of the Century*, which explored 'the cultural relationship between Spain and Great Britain from 1604 to 1655, a period that culminated in the purchase by Philip IV of the cream of Charles I's collection of paintings', sold by England's Republican Regime at auction after the regicide in 1649. The princes of Wales and the Asturias jointly opened the exhibition, thus repeating the encounter in Spain in 1623 of their predecessors, also called Charles and Philip.[181]

By then, Elliott's major scholarly concern was the completion of another ambitious project first outlined in a lecture, 'Do the Americas have a Common History', delivered at Brown University in 1988. He took as his point of departure the Presidential Address to the American Historical Association in 1932 by Herbert E. Bolton, entitled 'The Epic of Greater America', and called for a broad, comparative approach to the emergent field of Atlantic history. From this he gradually constructed a comprehensive comparison of the Spanish and British empires in America that took issue with previous accounts that emphasised the role of national character as a historical agent and contrasted Spain's 'empire of conquest' with England's 'empire of commerce'. He also examined the character of the indigenous peoples encountered by the two imperial powers, the differences in the kinds of societies they established, and the methods by which they were governed. In keeping with his doubts about Braudel's economically-determined view of history, Elliott also made certain that his comparison examined the extent to which human actors, together with such factors as chance and serendipity, factored into the history of the two empires under review.[182]

[181] 'BN', 32–3. Jonathan Brown and John Elliott, *The sale of the century. Artistic relations between Spain and Great Britain, 1604–1655* (New Haven and London, 2002; Spanish edition, *La almoneda del siglo*, Madrid, 2002). Elliott printed his essays for the Velázquez and El Greco exhibitions in *SEWW*, chaps XII and XIV.

[182] Bolton, 'The epic of greater America', *American historical review*, 38 (1933), 448–74. Elliott delivered a revised version of his lecture at the sesquicentennial celebration of the John Carter Brown Library: Elliott, *Do the Americas have a common history? An address* (Providence RI, 1998). He also pleaded for a broad-based comparative approach to Atlantic history in 'Empire and State in British and Spanish America', in Serge Gruzinski and Nathan Wachtel, eds, *Le Nouveau Monde, mondes nouveaux: L'expérience américaine* (Paris, 1996), pp. 365–82; in 'En búsqueda de la historia atlántica', *XIV Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2001), pp. 20–36; and in 'Atlantic History, a circumnavigation', in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds, *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (London, 2002), pp. 253–270.

Another concern was to explore what the 'settlers', both British and Spanish, were 'trying to do and the kinds of societies they were trying to forge and create'. This approach distinguished *Empires* from numerous other studies that favoured the 'vision of the vanquished'; but, as Elliott recognised in 2015, that 'story gave a particular direction to the book, and I don't know that I would have written it in quite the same way if I hadn't been somewhat preoccupied by what I thought was in danger of becoming an excessive emphasis on the underprivileged – on the indigenous peoples and slavery. The solidity of the work is much more important than its fashionability. I've never wanted particularly to be in fashion.'[183]

Although Elliott himself predicted that *A Palace for a King* would become the 'most enduringly influential of my books', *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (2006) soon became – and is likely to remain – his most widely read work. Robert Baldock, his editor at Yale University Press, described *Empires* as a 'blockbuster': a volume that, despite its hefty 600 pages, sells as a core title in both the English and American markets.[184] Its monumental scope helps to explain why it garnered the American Historical Association's 2007 Francis Parkman Prize for the best book in American History. That same year The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, the Virginia colony's first capital, awarded Elliott an honorary degree, and its prestigious Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture appointed him to its Board of Directors.

In 2007 Elliott reached the palindromic age of 77, the point when many scholars begin to slow down. Instead, according to Robert Baldock, 'it is astonishing that his output remains so prodigious, and that his written work appears precisely and immaculately on schedule' – especially since Elliott

> Has never used a literary agent. He handles all his own business affairs, and with Yale maintains a relationship not only with the acquiring editor, but with his manuscript editor, the colleagues who will produce and manufacture the book, with the jacket designer, the promotional staff and those who sell his books internationally. He recalls the names of staff members he has worked with thirty years previously, and on his frequent visits to Yale's offices … makes a point of checking in with his key contacts.[185]

In all, Elliott published nine books with Yale University Press, and Baldock's files contain more than 700 emails about them between 2005 and 2018, 'together with notes made following conversations' with Elliott 'over the years'. They revealed 'how carefully he plans his future writing projects, shares possible projects, not only with his

[183] RAI, pp. 5–6: a fascinating account of how Elliott planned and wrote *Empires of the Atlantic World*.
[184] Robert Baldock email to the authors, 18 August 2022.
[185] Robert Baldock email to the authors, 4 September 2022; Baldock's speech at the 'launch' of *Scots and Catalans* in October 2018, graciously shared with the authors.

editor, but with friends and colleagues, genuinely seeks advice and feedback – and acts on it.' Nevertheless, after delivering his typescript, Baldock noticed that Elliott became less receptive to advice and feedback.

> John sailed over the normal conventions of scholarly readers' anonymity. He was very interested in to whom his proposals (or finished MSS) were sent. He suggested names, and guessed most others, often wanting to write and thank them directly. He let them know when he didn't agree, and was often disinclined to make the suggested changes, observing that his points were 'intentional'. It was the same with reviews: he was very keen to have them but somewhat unimpressed when they came. ('I'm not sure that the reviews of *Empires* were very enlightening about comparative history, or anything much else, but I'll have a look').

In addition to reviews, Elliott 'closely monitored the placement of announcements and ads for his books, making suggestions about where and when they might appear, linking them to his visits, lectures and shorter pieces. He would on occasion directly suggest reviewers for his books to Bob Silvers of *NYRB*, and had no hesitation approaching Blackwell's about an in-store display.'[186]

Elliott also remained extraordinarily active on the lecture circuit in both Europe and the United States, and in 2009 published (again with Yale) *Spain, Europe and the Wider World, 1500–1800*, a second volume of his collected essays (many of them first delivered as lectures) organised around three themes: early modern Europe, European overseas expansion, and the historical context of artists that included Rubens, Velázquez and Van Dyck. His introduction to the book included insights into his academic life and work, but not nearly as much as he revealed in the numerous interviews he gave, starting in 1963 while he was a visiting scholar at Columbia and Norman F. Cantor interviewed him about his views on history and historians. He also revealed much in the 'acceptance speeches' at the various Spanish universities which conferred honorary degrees upon him, as well as in an 'exit interview' recorded and transcribed as part of the Oral History Project at IAS in 1990, and also in an autobiographical memoir he deposited with the British Academy in 2006 (see an incomplete list of Elliott's 'ego documents' in the 'Sources and acknowledgements' section below).

In 2012, Elliott published a longer autobiographical account entitled *History in the Making*, which he described as 'both an impersonal and personal book' because it juxtaposed autobiography (his life and work) with historiography, tracing the broader changes in the practice of history, especially in those fields most closely related to his

[186] Robert Baldock email to the authors, 4 September 2022. When Elliott spotted a reference to *History in the Making* in an article by Geoffrey Parker published in 2013, he fired off a brusque email asking Parker if he had been a press reader for his book. Parker was lucky that he could truthfully deny it (he had managed to insert the reference on the second proofs). Parker was even more lucky that Elliott never asked if he had been a press reader for *SEWW*.

own interests and concerns. The balance he struck did not escape criticism. Some readers wanted more autobiography, especially further insights into Elliott's interactions with colleagues at the IAS, such as Clifford Geertz, and on his collaboration with Jonathan Brown. Others challenged what they considered Elliott's dualistic philosophy of history that imagined an 'imperial', impartial historian struggling to offer a comprehensive explanation of the past even though he recognised, a priori, the impossibility of such a task. Whatever its short-comings, however, *History in the Making* remains an invaluable guide to the evolution of Elliott's ideas about history as well as about the responsibility of the historian to offer balanced and plausible examinations of the past that help further understanding of the complexities of human experience.

The complexities of human experience also featured in Elliott's last and most controversial book: *Scots and Catalans: Union and Disunion*. He had first mentioned the possibility of such an exercise in his lecture in Barcelona on 11 September 1987, Catalunya's *Diada* or National Day, in which he drew parallels and contrasts between the revolts of Scotland in 1639 and of Catalonia in 1640. At that time, Elliott couched the experience of the two 'peripheral' states within the framework of the 'general crisis of the seventeenth century'; but for the book he extended the comparison back to 1469 and on to the present. This required him to immerse himself in Scottish history, a subject he knew relatively little about, as well as in the history of Catalonia during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Published in 2018, in the wake of the Scottish and Catalan referendums on independence, *Scots and Catalans* reflected Elliott's growing worries about the implications of these Separatist movements for the future of Great Britain, his native land, and of Spain, the country whose history and people he had studied for almost seventy years. Elliott was equally disturbed by the manner in which Catalan Nationalists purposely distorted history for political ends. The result was a dense but engaging narrative, tilted more towards Catalonia than Scotland. It highlighted the important similarities between the two regions, notably their status during much of the early modern era as semi-autonomous entities nestled into a larger 'composite monarchy', as well as examining the differences, which accelerated in the 19th century, that set them apart. Scotland, for example, obtained a far greater say in London than Catalonia ever achieved in Madrid; by contrast, Scotland's romantic nationalism led to statues of Robert the Bruce but never coalesced into a broad-based cultural movement comparable with Catalonia's *Renaixença* and its embrace of the region's romantic medieval past, imagined as an unparalleled era of freedom and artistic creativity. The two diverged even further in the 20th century, owing principally to the devastation caused in Catalonia by Spain's Civil War and by the loss of its political autonomy (and even for a time the public use of its language) under the Fascist regime that followed.

Widely reviewed in the popular press as well as in specialised journals, the reception of *Scots and Catalans* was mixed. Most praised the book's ambitious scope, lucid prose, and attention to detail, but some criticised Elliott's failure to examine recent Catalan and Scottish Separatist movements within the broader context of 'regionalization' in various parts of Europe. One reviewer, branding Elliott an 'old-school historian' for whom the basic drivers of policy are 'great men, wars, and national interest', also faulted him for ignoring the popular psychology, social change, and grass-roots politics that help to explain why Catalan Nationalists seem to be so much more fervent than their Scottish counterparts. The most strident criticism, mainly the work of Catalan *independentistas* and their sympathisers in Scotland, was directed at the book's epilogue, where Elliott openly expressed his lack of enthusiasm for the Separatist cause. He called instead for dialogue and for compromise, and concluded by citing Thomas Jefferson's memorable phrase: 'Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes.'[187]

At the book's launch, hosted by the Spanish Embassy in London's Cavendish Square the following June, Elliott offered a broad comparative overview of Catalan and Scottish history, although possibly out of deference to some members of his audience, he pointedly avoided mention of his opinions concerning the concurrent Separatist movements discussed in the book. Instead, he openly aired these opinions in a gruelling series of interviews, conferences and talks occasioned by the release of his book. In September 2018, for example, Elliott travelled to Scotland to participate in a roundtable discussion of *Scots and Catalans*, hosted by Aberdeen University.[188]

The book's translation into both Catalan and Castilian that same year sparked another round of discussions in Spain, but Elliott had already expressed in public his fears that separatism jeopardised the achievements made since the death of Franco.[189] He did so, apparently for the first time, in 2003 in a speech at the Spanish Senate to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Constitution of 1978. After expressing doubts about his competence to speak, since he was 'not an expert on either constitutional law or the constitutions of Spain, and to cap it all I come from a country that prides itself on never having had a written constitution', he spoke as 'a historian who has been an eye-witness of the transformation undergone by this country' in a single generation. He began by reminding his audience that

[187] Elliott, *Scots and Catalans: Union and disunion* (London and New Haven, 2018), reviewed by Neal Ascherson (a Scot, and also a King's Scholar at Eton two years behind Elliott),'The Value of Independence', *NYRB*, 18 April 2019; and by Andrew Moravcsik, *Foreign Affairs*, 97/6 (Nov/Dec. 2018), 216–17.

[188] One can watch the round table discussion in Aberdeen on 24 September 2018, organized by Robert Frost, available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoAa4GLuUf0.

[189] *Catalanes y Escoceses: unión y discordia* (Barcelona, 2018); *Catalans i escocesos: unió i discòrdia* (Barcelona, 2018).

> For those of us who are foreigners, perhaps more than for Spaniards themselves, this transformation seems little short of a miracle. Here is a society that has passed from misery to considerable prosperity, from dictatorship to democracy and a constitutional monarchy, from centrally-imposed uniformity to an acceptance of pluralism, from dogmatism to tolerance, and from international isolation to global influence. And it has achieved this massive transformation while preserving a high degree of social and political stability.

He took particular pleasure in noting that 'the most surprising characteristic of Spain since 1978' was its 'return to a political system that resembles in broad terms the "composite monarchy" of the Habsburg period'. He therefore saw nothing new or particularly threatening in the rising tension between centre and periphery: it was normal in a composite state. Although he recognised the importance of the support of other European states for Spain's liberal and democratic constitution (unlike their successful efforts to undermine the liberal and democratic Constitution of Cadiz of 1812), he regarded as critical the 'brilliant combination of improvisation and creative thought' by Spain's political leaders, who agreed to sink their differences and seize the opportunity created by the death of Franco to produce a Constitution that would endure.[190]

He felt far less optimistic in 2015. On receiving an honorary doctorate from the Universidad de Cantabria in Santander, he warned his audience that

> We live at a time that is either totally a-historical or else tolerates visions of the past that are all too often partial and which are often the result of political manipulation and falsification. I therefore want to talk about what I see as the importance of a historical perspective to understand the difficult times that we face today. … It is important that those who have no memory of the Franco years should make themselves aware of the difficulties faced by the generation that achieved the Transition, and of the extent of their success in overcoming those difficulties.

He repeated his mantra that 'there is no better antidote to the distortions that arise from exceptionalism than making comparisons, because doing so makes you cross the barriers exposed by your own concepts and culture and see things through the eyes of others'; but now he expressed alarm that 'just like the horsemen of the Apocalypse, we face cynicism, defeatism and despair – and there is not much holding them back.' He understood

[190] *25 años de constitución: retos de las democracias contemporáneas* (Madrid, 2005; a speech delivered on 21 November 2003), pp. 17–31, quotations from pp. 17–18, 22 and 30. Fear of appearing pedants almost forbids us from observing that England did have a written constitution during the Republican decade of the 1650s.

> How globalization has spread in lockstep with the growth of localism. When globalism is accompanied, as it is today, by economic recession, the desire for separatism grows stronger. Being small may seem best, if it allows a region to manage its own affairs, on the reasonable assumption that it will be better informed about its own needs and problems than some bureaucrats in a distant capital.

Once again he praised the Constitution of 1978, which he compared with the 'composite states' of early modern Europe because it allowed pluralism in politics and culture. A similar balance of centre and periphery had promoted stability and flexibility before, and it could do so again.[191]

Although Elliott would repeat the same message at the various panels and interviews occasioned by the publication of *Catalanes y Escoceses*, he still found the energy to speak on other subjects and in other places. In April 2019 he went to Rome to deliver a talk at a memorial conference honouring the work of his long-time friend, the Neapolitan historian Rosario Villari. Typically, Elliott prepared by brushing up his Italian through conversations with Giuseppe Marcocci, an Oxford colleague, and his speech about Villari reduced many in his audience to tears.[192] Six months later he returned to Rome to speak, this time in Spanish, to a 'full house' at the Accademia dei Lincei. He also guided Teófilo Ruiz, a historian at UCLA, and other friends though the church of San Pietro in Montorio, largely funded by Spain's Catholic Monarchs. Ruiz reported that 'John's delight in guiding us through the art and architecture was contagious, as he explained to us the importance of Bramante's *Tempietto*', commissioned by the Catholic Monarchs. Nor did the trip lack adventure. The night before the lecture to the Lincei, the Elliotts inadvertently locked themselves inside their room at the Accademia di Spagna but when their efforts to reach an attendant via telephone failed, they resourcefully hung out of their window a bed sheet on which they had written the Italian word for 'HELP' in order to alert passers-by to their predicament and thus secure their release. 'No damage done,' he reported, 'but it was dramatic at the time.'[193]

That visit, which ended on 12 October 2019 – Columbus Day – was the Elliotts' last foreign journey. The spread of Covid–19 the following year forced the cancellation of some long-planned trips and even their regular outings to London. They both found it difficult to cope with the repeated lockdowns, although gardening offered Oonah an escape whereas John, barred from working in the Bodleian, took refuge in his study and

[191] Elliott, 'España, patria común. Monarquía compuesta y Constitución de 1978', *Papers Tocqueville: Pensamiento político*, 20 (May 2022), reprinted Elliott's 2015 speech. We thank Xavier Gil for providing us with this text, as well as many others.

[192] The text appeared in Elliott, 'Rosario: storico e amico', *Studi storici*, 61/2 (2020), 545–51 (part of a special issue devoted to Villari and his legacy).

[193] Teófilo Ruiz email to the authors, 16 July 2022; Giuseppe Marcocci email to authors, 3 March 2023, citing emails Elliott sent to him on 8 and 11 October 2019.

got his teeth into a new and ambitious research project: a comparative history of the Spanish and Portuguese overseas empires.

The genesis of this project remains obscure but may reflect conversations with visiting scholars at the IAS, such as Stuart Schwartz, with expertise in the subject. A 1991 essay about Portugal's experience of union with Castile (1580–1640) indicated Elliott's growing interest in a comparison; and in the introduction to *Empires of the Atlantic World* in 2006 he underscored the need for a comparative study of the 'entire New World' that would necessarily incorporate Portuguese Brazil.[194] The next indication of his developing interest in the subject occurred in a lecture on Atlantic history he presented at a conference held in the Canary Islands in October 2012, and four years later in another long review in *NYRB*. A trip to Portugal in 2017 that included conversations with Pedro Cardim, Mafalda Soares da Cunha and other Portuguese scholars may have been the immediate catalyst of Elliott's decision to examine the ways in which Portugal's imperial experience differed from that of Spain.[195]

Elliott provided some hints about the nature of his new project in a long review of Cardim's *Portugal y la Monarquía Hispánica*, published in December 2018; in his remarks at the launch of the Routledge volume *The Iberian World* in Oxford in November 2019; and yet again in a review article of five books about the Iberian empires submitted to the *Journal of Early Modern History* in May 2021.[196] By November, he had drafted the first chapter of his book, and when in January 2022 Gabriel Paquette, a specialist in Iberian history, offered to send Elliott a scan of *Political Thought in Portugal and its Empire, c. 1500–1800*, a volume just published by Cambridge University Press, Elliott replied almost immediately 'I already have a copy … Bang up to date as you see!' He added: 'I am just embarking on chapter 2 of my absurdly ambitious comparative book, "Spain, Portugal and their Overseas Empires. Convergence and Divergence, c.1450–1700".'[197]

The pandemic did not prevent Elliott from continuing other scholarly pursuits. He attended meetings of the *Past and Present* Editorial Board via Zoom, commented on the two articles selected for discussion at each meeting, and showed continued interest in the

[194] Elliott, 'The Spanish Monarchy and the kingdom of Portugal, 1580–1640', in Mark Greengrass, ed., *Conquest and Coalescence: The shaping of the state in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1991), pp. 48–67.
[195] Giuseppe Marcocci email to the authors, 7 August 2022; Elliott, *El Atlántico español* y *el Atlántico luso*: *Divergencias* y *convergencias* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2014); Elliott, 'Portugal's Empire: Ruthless and Intermingling,' *NYRB* (2 January 2016: a review of Roger Crowley, *Conquerors: How Portugal Forged the First Global Empire*, and the multi-authored volume, *The Global City: On the Street of Renaissance Lisbon*.
[196] *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, 43/2 (2018), 573–7 (review of Cardim); *Journal of Early Modern History* 26/1–2 (2022), 154–162.
[197] Giuseppe Marcocci email to the authors, 7 August 2022; Gabriel Paquette email to the authors 14 June 2022, forwarding his emails from Elliott on 11 and 13 January.

shape and direction of the journal.[198] He also read and commented on the stream of books and manuscripts that arrived in his mailbox at Iffley, and reviewed at length the latest scholarship about the Aztec empire and the Spanish conquest of Mexico (published in *NYRB* in December 2021). He presented several lectures via Zoom on topics that continued to command his interest, such as 'The Prince, the Count-Duke, and the Buen Retiro' as part of the Wallace Collection's webinar, 'Velázquez and the Spanish Prince: Baltasar Carlos at the Riding School' in March 2021. Six months later he accepted a special invitation from the town council of Olivares in southern Spain to speak about the Count Duke of Olivares at the town's first annual conference, 'Jornadas de Historia Conde-Duque de Olivares', to celebrate the community's most famous resident. He delivered his text in Spanish, again via Zoom, to a packed audience on 12 October 2021. Three days later the town honoured Elliott by designating him an 'hijo adoptivo' (adopted son).

Two months later Elliott made virtual presentations to a conference held in Madrid centred on the reign of Philip III. He opened the conference with a Zoom lecture, in which he frankly acknowledged that he had previously undervalued the accomplishments of Philip III, and then patiently listened – again via Zoom – to two gruelling days of papers before ending the proceedings with helpful suggestions that pinpointed areas of Philip's reign that required more research. By his own admission the conference left him 'utterly exhausted', and he feared that his closing remarks were not up to his own high standards: 'I found myself groping for words and mis-pronouncing horribly.'[199]

Few of those who saw and heard him then could have guessed that this would be his last public appearance. Habitually private with respect to his health, Elliott had not even told close friends that cardiac problems led him to overcome a life-long commitment to the principles of Christian Science and have a pacemaker installed in summer 2020. When his health continued to deteriorate, early in 2022 he was hospitalised for observation but remained in good spirits. Richard Kagan phoned in February, partly to ask after his health but also to share the sad news that an old friend, the historian Richard S. Dunn, had just died. 'By comparison', Kagan observed, 'you are doing quite well.' Sharp as ever, Elliott quipped, 'Yes, but I am a comparative historian after all.' Hamish Scott, another early modern historian and his neighbour in Iffley, also found him alert when he visited, with 'two books in Portuguese on Portugal's empire on his bedside table'. Elliott's final words to Scott as he 'left the hospital room were that he was anxious to get home to get on with his book'. Instead he died peacefully on the evening of 9 March 2022.[200]

[198] Alexandra Walsham email to the editors, 27 February 2023.

[199] Elliott emails to the authors, 8 and 10 December 2021.

[200] Hamish Scott email to the authors, 15 November 2022; Giuseppe Marcocci email to the authors, 7 August 2022. Because the hospital only published the news of Elliott's passing the following morning, 10 March is often listed as the date of his death. Since John always insisted on historical accuracy and precision, it is our manifest duty to correct this error.

VIII. The legacy

In 1983 the British historian Robert Stradling noted the impact of what he called the 'school of Elliott' on the study of early modern Spain; and almost simultaneously a Dutch scholar praised the influence of the 'Scuola di Elliott' on the study of Dutch history. Many Spanish scholars use the term 'la Escuela de Elliott' with reference to his many pupils who have written about their country. Nevertheless, no such 'School' ever existed. For one thing, Elliott never wanted one – 'I hope I shall never become a *grand maître*, like Braudel' he told one advisee – and he never required his research students to favour particular topics over others, or even to utilise a particular historical method: rather, to borrow a Spanish expression, he generally gave his pupils enough rope to hang themselves.[201]

His laissez-faire policy was severely tested in 1965 when six research students whose theses he had agreed to direct arrived simultaneously outside his rooms in Trinity College.[202] By then, Elliott had already directed two doctoral dissertation to completion – by Brian Pullan (1962) and Tony Thompson (1965) – with two more in progress – Peter Brightwell (1967) and Edward Cooper (1969) – but the advent of six eager young researchers posed a challenge of a different sort. At the outset Elliott presented each of them with a 'Guide for research workers in 16th and 17th century Spanish and Spanish-American history': a comprehensive study manual-cum-bibliography that covered 18 foolscap pages.[203] Elliott also created for this group what amounted to Cambridge's first

[201] R.A. Stradling, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 60 (1983), 62–3 (a review of John Lynch, *Spain under the Habsburgs*); P.B.M. Blaas, 'La storiografia nei Paesi Bassi dal 1945 in poi', *Rivista storica italiana*, 95 (1983), 593–647, at 613 (a special issue of the journal devoted to Netherlands historiography); Elliott letter to Parker, 12 April 1976. For further insights into this 'school' and a survey of Elliott's historical contributions, see Davide Maffi, 'La Spagna e l'Europa: l'opera storica di Sir John Elliott', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 112 (2000); 282–317. Elton, 'Herbert Butterfield', 730, noted that Elliott's doctoral advisor had the same 'dread of becoming the master of a school'.

[202] The sudden influx seems to have been fortuitous, even though all six had just graduated: Robert Evans, Albert Lovett and Geoffrey Parker in History at Cambridge, and Peter Bakewell in Spanish; James Casey from The Queen's University, Belfast; and Richard Kagan from Columbia University, New York. Charles Jago from the University of Western Ontario soon joined the team, and in July 1967 Elliott received a note from Don Ricardo Magdaleno, Director of the Archives of Simancas, to say that although all his students behaved 'con la mayor corrección' he would be 'grateful if their visits could, as far as possible, be staggered' in order to leave some space for others in the archive reading room. Elliott passed this message on to those concerned with only a hint of self-satisfaction. Following this cohort of students, Elliott supervised to completion the dissertations of three more graduates before he left for Princeton: Paul Wright (1971) and David Lagomarsino (1974) at Cambridge, and Linda Martz (1974) at King's College, London.

[203] The copy received by Kagan and Parker was dated October 1965, and was almost certainly new then. In May 1967 he informed his advisees: 'I thought it would be a good idea to ask you all to produce comments on archives… I was wondering whether we couldn't, between us all, produce a revised and expanded edition of my 'Guide to Research Students': Elliott to Parker, 28 May 1967.

graduate research seminar in early modern history, in which each student had to present an account of the dissertation they hoped to write before they left for the archives: what today would be called a 'Proposal Coloquium'. He also arranged for the group to pay collective visits to touch the hem of the robes of other Cambridge dons with research interests and methodologies different from his own: Tony Wrigley for demography and quantification; Harry Hinsley and Herbert Butterfield for international relations; Peter Laslett for the science of bibliography; Charles Wilson for economic history; George Kitson Clark for social issues. John hoped that these group activities would encourage his students to work together as well as broaden their intellectual horizons, and the technique worked splendidly. Those of us who survive still correspond and share information, and the advice we received in those early visits has left its mark: the bar-graphs and tables in our various books came from Wrigley; the willingness to use oft-despised ambassadorial reports ('poor for interpretation, good for circumstantial details, excellent for dates') from Butterfield; the importance of looking for what documents do *not* contain from Hinsley; the attention to how books were made and printed from Laslett; the importance of serial history from Wilson and Kitson Clark.

Unlike some advisers, Elliott never 'gave' his students a topic for study, and so their dissertations varied widely both in terms of both geography – Venice, Bohemia, colonial Mexico, as well as Spain – and theme – economic, military, social and cultural as well as political history. Nevertheless, many of those topics arose from an idea he threw out, either in presentations, in letters, or in conversation, as worthy of further investigation. For example, during a lecture on the Dutch Revolt in his undergraduate course on early modern Europe at Cambridge in 1964, Elliott pointed to the map behind him and observed: 'One of the aspects of the Eighty Years' War that no one has yet explained is just how Spain managed to maintain an army of 80,000 men, 1000 miles away, for almost eighty years. How did she recruit and move the men? How did she supply them? How did she pay them?' Geoffrey Parker, a member of the audience, trailed Elliott back to his rooms just off Trinity's Great Court to ask for some reading on the subject. He was directed to Lucien Febvre's *Philippe II et Franche-Comté*, which included a whole chapter on the passage through Franche-Comté of 10,000 Spanish and Italian troops in 1567. Under Elliott's firm guidance, the suggestion became a doctoral thesis and then a book about what contemporaries called 'the Spanish Road'.

After Elliott's advisees left to research abroad he demanded regular progress reports, to which he wrote an immediate, often holograph and always full of good advice and support. The burden that this imposed must have been intolerable, yet he never complained (although in August 1967, when eight of his graduate students were simultaneously researching abroad, one letter briefly noted that 'the demand on my 9-pence stamps has been fantastic over the last few months'). No letter ever went unanswered for long: between August 1966, just after he arrived at Simancas for the first time, and August

1967, when he prepared to head home, Geoffrey Parker received thirteen letters of advice from Elliott – many of them full of exciting ideas and suggestions, such as this one, written after the recipient had spent three months in the archives seeking documents about the troops who moved along the Spanish Road:

> I wish, incidentally, that it was possible to discover something of the effects of *travel* on all these men: how constant movement about Europe affected their habits, speech, dress etc. I always think this is a neglected feature of historical writing, especially when you think that quantities of people – students, soldiers, government officials – were moving around the world all the time. I'm sure this is something to bear in mind, and collect by degrees any scraps of information that turn up – e.g. did any of the men get infected by heresies? Was a change of faith ever a cause of desertion? How many acquired Dutch women and even learnt a little Dutch?

That same letter also suggested: 'The final title ought to be something like "The Flanders Army and the Spanish Road".'[204]

When his advisees had been abroad in the archives for about nine months, Elliott's letters began to stress the need to return home and start writing ('the top priority now is to finish writing up the material you already have'), and to focus on 'the big picture':

> The thesis looks as if it's taking shape. What it needs to round it off is something much more impressive by way of a conclusion. I'd like to see a general assessment of the effect of logistics and communications difficulties on the outcome of the Netherlands war; and some general reflections on the relationship of such difficulties on sixteenth-century warfare and diplomacy in general. A tall order, I know, but it is vital to raise one's eyes beyond the road.[205]

After they returned to Cambridge, Elliott took a close interest in the process of 'writing up'. Although he allowed each advisee to write the kind of history to which they felt personally attracted, he insisted on three things: a clear and if possible elegant exposition (as he once wrote to Richard Kagan: 'It's not the matter but the manner that worries me ...'); a broad framework; and, most important, a bold theme. He therefore required each advisee to produce the draft of a new chapter every month. Those who possessed telephones dreaded a call early on Monday morning ('John Elliott here ...') reminding them to appear the following Friday with another chapter; the rest never received their daily mail free from fear that it might contain an envelope embossed with the Trinity College crest enclosing a similar summons. How Elliott found the time to read through

[204] Elliott letters to Parker 2 August 1967 (9-pence stamps) and 3 October 1966 (topics and title). Six years later, Parker published a book based on his thesis entitled *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road: The logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries Wars, 1567–1659*, which contained a chapter on 'Life in the Army of Flanders' that addressed many of the issues Elliott had highlighted in his letter.
[205] Elliott letters to Parker 6 February 1968 (writing up), and 12 June 1967 (the big picture).

and critique innumerable drafts of six theses simultaneously in 1967–8, while he was also teaching undergraduates, writing *Europe divided*, and planning *The Old World and the New*, remains a mystery; but all six were completed within three years of being started.

Elliott's insistence on scholarly rigour, discipline and style also characterised his undergraduate teaching. Brian Pullan recalled that, as an undergraduate at Trinity in 1957–8, in his tutorials on English economic history (a compulsory subject detested by virtually everyone), John gave his students skilfully chosen pamphlets and articles and discussed these items 'lucidly and amiably in the spirit of someone who is only a few years further down the road than ourselves. He was affable, but very firm about the need to write readably, elegantly, and coherently.' At one point Elliott even required Anil Seal, another Trinity undergraduate with a distinguished career before him, to 'write headlines for each of his paragraphs, explaining what each of them was supposedly driving at'. Seal and Pullan 'spent a happy evening devising headings in the style of the Marginalia of *The Ancient Mariner*, which John took in moderately good part ("This is all very amusing, Seal, but is it helpful?").' Elliott had no time 'for anyone who claimed to be suffering from writer's block: to him this was just weak-mindedness and disorganization'. Some, Pullan thought, may have found him 'a trifle schoolmasterly (he was, after all, a headmaster's son and had been to Eton)', and

> Woe betide anyone who presumed to turn up at his rooms without the required essay and say 'Couldn't we just discuss it?' Indeed, he was quite capable of demanding that some slipshod pupil should write his essay again and of reducing a few sensitive souls to tears, though a friend of his told that such incidents worried him for days and he was in danger of being the first to weep.[206]

Elliott himself thought that 'I probably never taught as well as in those graduate student years'; but a decade later Jonathan Israel, who took Elliot's course on the history of colonial Mexico, found his teaching equally effective. 'Passionately committed, exceptionally clear, and always raising fascinating possibilities and aspects', his teaching 'left an indelible mark on me, especially by showing that history is a drama made up of human personalities in rivalry, tension and alliance against a background of social and economic forces which have a large but never exclusive impact on the outcome.'[207]

In the 1990s, in Oxford, Kenneth Mills noted that in his meetings 'about my pieces of writing, he never spoke from behind a desk or beside a computer … He would sit beside or across from me, in a chair', and 'this made a powerful impression. The meetings were meaningful and not rushed.' Mills resolved that 'If I have the space, I want to come out and sit with my students, pointing at their texts, interrupting them, checking a

[206] Brian Pullan letter to the authors, 18 March 1994, and email 27 May 2022.
[207] 'BN', 7; Jonathan Israel email to the authors, 19 September 2022.

reference, not letting a lazy sentence alone!' Elliott also demanded that his advisees see themselves as Europeanists who happened to specialise on the history of a single country, whether Spain, France, Italy or the Low Countries. Similarly, in the case of those studying South America, 'he encouraged the Andeanist within to become also a historian of the Spanish world.' Elliott also stressed that studying a foreign country from 'our watchtowers, or *atalayas*, outside the peninsula' brought risks as well as gains. Foreign historians 'will always have blind spots for some aspects of Spanish culture and society; but, as if by compensation, they will also observe with a keener vision than the majority of native historians some features of the historical landscape which may be of great significance.'[208]

Elliott always made sure that his protégés knew what others in the field were doing, and he arranged for them to meet important colleagues and attend conferences (four went as his guests to Belfast for a week to hear his Wiles Lectures in 1969, and to enjoy the legendary hospitality that accompanies them). He developed job strategies with them, above all weighing the pros and cons of a short-term research fellowship against those of a permanent job. When Geoffrey Parker received the offer of a lectureship at Nottingham University just after starting his research at Simancas, and asked Elliott's advice, he replied firmly 'I think *no*. I quite see the financial lure, and Nottingham is no bad place, but this is probably the one and only chance in your life to have a clear run of research, and I think you'll always be sorry if you cut it short.' Parker duly turned it down, and with Elliott's support two years later he won a research fellowship.[209]

Elliott also took an active interest in getting the work of his advisees into print. *Past and Present* published articles by a dozen of them, and in 1982 he oversaw their translation into Spanish in a volume entitled *Poder y sociedad en la España de los Austrias*, with an introduction by the maestro (thus inadvertently promoting the idea that an 'Escuela de Elliott' did in fact exist). When their theses became ready for publication, usually after further advice and editing by Elliott, he did his best to include them in 'Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History'.

Elliott never entirely let his advisees go. Peter Bakewell fondly remembered spending a year at the IAS as a visiting member in 1985–6 during which Elliott provided regular advice on a new major book project: the activities of a 17th-century mining magnate in the Andean silver mining town of Potosí. Nor did age provide an excuse for sloppy prose. In 2013, Elliott sent an email to Geoffrey Parker (then sixty-nine) criticising a feature of his latest book: 'I hope to get back to reading *Global Crisis* shortly. On the negative side I found you using a formula which tends to become too formulaic:

[208] Mills, 'Espíritu'; Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 139.

[209] Elliott to Parker, 3 October 1966. The 'financial lure' was considerable, since Parker was then married with a daughter, and Nottingham offered a permanent job at a salary more than twice the size of his three-year graduate student stipend. The next two years were very hard.

"There are three reasons for this. First.. Second.. Finally". Best to cut down on this in the future, if you can!'[210] Even the advisees of others did not escape the lash. Alarmed by reports that a graduate student at Oxford had failed to turn in a 'reasonably finalized draft', Elliott pointed out to the student's adviser (Hugh Trevor-Roper, who did not lack experience in the matter): 'This is just the kind of circumstance in which a clever man can come a cropper. He needs to complete a draft, leaving major revisions to the time when he prepares it as a book.'[211]

Elliott took an equally keen interest in the eight graduate students whose theses he supervised to completion during his tenure as Regius Professor at Oxford, as the following comment from Harald Braun, now professor of history at Liverpool, attests:

> Within twenty-four hours of submitting a draft, invariably I would find myself either in his study or the beautiful garden at the house in Iffley. My work had been read and annotated carefully and extensively, and down to the last footnote. Sir John never imposed or proposed his views. He walked with me through my drafts, offering incisive observations, queries, and critique, often mixed with suggestions for further reading. He quietly encouraged, observed how I responded to and followed up on his critique and suggestions, and kept inviting me to query my preconceptions and try different angles. Sir John, in short, had a generous and maieutic, even self-effacing approach to doctoral supervision. The very idea of creating acolytes was loathsome to him. His declared intention was to help his pupils to find and define their own identity as historians.

That intention never flagged. As he had previously done, he encouraged each member of his new cohort of advisees to explore different approaches to history and write about topics they particularly liked, and then he helped them revise and publish their books.[212]

Elliott's graduate advisees represent only a fraction of those who benefited from his wisdom and advice. Throughout his time at the Institute, Elliott regularly welcomed graduate students from Princeton into his office for one-to-one chats and helped in other ways to advance their careers. One of those students, Jodi Bilinkoff, recalls a moment in 1982 when Elliott politely refused a request from a Carmelite Father to present a lecture

[210] Peter Bakewell email to the authors, 18 August 2022; Elliott email to Parker, 12 April 2013. In his response, Parker dutifully promised to purge '"first/second/third" in future editions, and also in future writing. If I can!'

[211] CC SOC/Dacre/1/2/24, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 15 January 1980. Readers are invited to identify the delinquent: the authors have set aside a small reward for the first correct answer.

[212] Harald Braun email to the authors, 15 August 2022. Books based on theses directed by Elliott include Kenneth R. Mills, *Idolatry and its enemies: colonial Andean religion and extirpation* (Princeton, 1997); Bruce Taylor, *Structures of reform: the Mercedarian Order in the Spanish Golden Age* (Leiden, 2000); Toby Osborne, *Dynasty and Diplomacy in the Court of Savoy: Political Culture and the Thirty Years' War* Cambridge, 2002); Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo, *Politics and Reform in Spain and Viceregal Mexico: the life and thought of Juan de Palafox, 1600–1659* (Oxford, 2004); Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World: Richard Verstegan and the international culture of Catholicism* (Leuven, 2004); Harald Braun, *Juan de Mariana and Early Modern Spanish Political Thought* (London 2007); and Alistair Malcolm, *Royal Favouritism and the governing elite of the Spanish Monarchy, 1640–1665* (Oxford, 2017).

Figure 6. John and Oonah Elliott surrounded by his advisees and friends at a gathering to celebrate his seventy-fifth birthday, Oriel College, Oxford, June 2005. Photo: the authors.

at the conference he was organising in Washington DC to celebrate the life and time of St. Teresa de Avila, and recommended her instead. She further attests that the paper in question 'helped launch my professional career and to begin a professional relationship with the Discalced Carmelites … that has continued to this day.'[213]

In much the same way Elliott helped launch Bilinkoff's career, he made a practice of inviting students to participate in the numerous conferences he organised in Spain, such as 'The Spain of the Count-Duke of Olivares', held in 1987 in Toro, the small Castilian town where Olivares died in exile from the Court in 1645. Most presenters at the gathering were well-established scholars from England, France, Italy, Spain and the US; but Elliott also invited graduate students from various Spanish universities to participate – and even included several of their papers in the conference's published proceedings.[214]

Elliott's mentoring skills were equally in evidence during the 1990s in a series of summer seminars, each one lasting several weeks, sponsored by the Fundación Duques de Soria and convened in Soria, a small city in the heart of Old Castile. Organised with the assistance of Antonio Feros, his last Research Assistant at IAS, each seminar aimed to introduce budding Spanish historians to Elliott's vision of what constituted good history. Modelled upon the seminars he had observed at both Johns Hopkins and the Davis Center, these summer sessions, entailed discussion of pre-circulated papers in a variety of fields because Elliott, keen to broaden the students' understanding of history, purposely solicited presentations from art historians and literary scholars whose interests

[213] Jodi Bilinkoff email to the authors, 22 December 2022.
[214] Angel García Sanz and John Elliott, eds, *La España del Conde Duque de Olivares* (Valladolid, 1990).

and methodologies differed from his own. In 1993, for example, the seminar's theme was 'Spain and Europe: the same or different?', and the Spanish and Anglophone scholars invited to Soria included Margaret Greer, a specialist in Baroque literature at Duke University. Greer's paper, centred on court theatre, compared the differences and similarities between the various performances staged for monarchs in Madrid, London and Paris; but Elliott also encouraged her to mingle with the students in the cafeteria, over a meal, and in the course of outings to nearby tourist sites. Elliott himself was an ever-present, seemingly tireless force, chatting with the student participants throughout the day, offering advice about their subjects. Carmen Sanz Ayán, one of those students at Soria, felt sure that his professional counsel helped her become a professor at the Universidad Complutense of Madrid.[215]

Elliott's own lectures at conferences and seminars could also inspire young and old alike. At one such gathering, the mega-conference 'Hacía el Nuevo Humanismo: El Hispanismo Anglo-Norteamericano' held in the Andalucian city of Córdoba for five days in September 1997, Elliott delivered one of his most revealing autobiographies, 'A Hispanist's trajectory', often quoted in this Memoir, to an audience that included not only hundreds of historians and history students but also Queen Sofia, who had travelled to Córdoba specially to hear him. He also gave 'votes of thanks' in impeccable Spanish on behalf of the entire conference whenever we travelled to neighbouring communities and received their hospitality. Each speech was elegant and concise, yet each one was different – a truly memorable achievement.[216]

Equally memorable was Elliott's lecture 'The Iberian Atlantic and Virginia', presented in 2004 at the Omohundro Institute in Williamsburg, Virginia, which outlined the main arguments of his forthcoming book, *Empires of the Atlantic World*. Among those who heard him speak was Molly Warsh, then a postdoctoral fellow at the Omohundro, who later wrote that the lecture 'produced in me an exhilaration unrefined as his talk was focused and elegant.'[217] Elliott's last public appearance in the United States in April 2013 also sparked exhilaration. He and Oonah had accepted an invitation to cross the Atlantic to attend the 44th Annual meeting of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Studies in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where Xavier Gil and Geoffrey Parker had organised a special session to celebrate the Golden Anniversaries of the publication of *Revolt of the Catalans* and *Imperial Spain*. They organised panels that paired

[215] Margaret Greer and Carmen Sanz Ayán emails to the authors, 11 October and 28 August 2022.

[216] Elliott, 'La trayectoria', pp. 121–40. See also the photo of Elliott sitting next to Queen Sofia at the inaugural session, ibid., p. 18. Six of Elliott's former doctoral students also gave papers at that conference: another measure of his influence.

[217] Molly Warsh in *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, 38 (2013), 218. Elliott's lecture later appeared in Peter C. Mancall, ed., *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550–1624* (Chapel Hill, 2007), pp. 541–555.

someone who had worked with Elliott with someone who knew him only through his written work to discuss three themes: Elliott's impact on the writing of Spanish history (Xavier Gil and Antonio Zaldívar); his appreciation of the role of human agency in history (Ruth MacKay and James Boyden); and his impact on writing comparative, Atlantic, and global history (Molly Warsh and Geoffrey Parker). At first Elliott declined an invitation to attend, but expressed the hope that 'it won't be like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark'. The organisers shamelessly exploited this careless simile until they persuaded Elliott that 'Hamlet should have its prince'.[218]

Whatever Elliott's thoughts as he listened to the six speakers salute his achievements, he kept them to himself. By previous agreement he did not offer any closing remarks, preferring to leave time for an extended Q &A, but subsequent shameless blackmail by the session's organisers produced a 'coda' to the published texts of their contributions, conveying what Elliott termed 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. Apart from thanking the panellists – 'It is enormously gratifying, after sixty or more years spent at the coalface, to emerge blinking into the sunlight and find that the hard years of labour have had some impact on the lives and thoughts of others, and particularly on those who had not even been born in 1963' – he addressed a question from the audience that *History in the Making* had failed to address: 'The possible impact of the several changes of location in the course of my career on the kind of historical projects that I undertook.' On reflection he felt that:

> The opportunity to live and work in Spain as a graduate student was obviously critical to everything that followed, but I think it is true to say that changes of work-place, of country, and still more of continents, force one to take stock and rethink both past and current projects and future plans. New environments bring new challenges, but also new opportunities. … The effect was to broaden my horizons and open my eyes to new worlds and new possibilities.'[219]

Although the trip to Albuquerque would be Elliott's last visit to the United States, he left a permanent legacy thanks to the 'John H. Elliott membership' programme at IAS, created in 2016 by Spain's Centro de Estudios Europa-Hispánica, in conjunction with its New York branch, the Center for Spain in America, reserved for scholars pursuing studies related to early modern Spain. Oxford had already done the same. Elliott donated part of his Balzan Prize to the Rothermere American Institute, which established an annual lecture to be known as 'The Sir John Elliott Annual Lecture in Atlantic History'. He

[218] Elliott emails to Parker, 6 and 9 January 2013.

[219] Geoffrey Parker, Xavier Gil, Antonio M. Zaldivar, Ruth MacKay, James Boyden, Molly Warsh and John Elliott, 'BSPHS Forum: Golden Anniversaries: Sir John Elliott's Imperial Spain and The Revolt of the Catalans after fifty years', *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, 38 (2013), Article 11 (pp. 200–29). Available at: http://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs/vol38/iss1/11.

inaugurated the series himself in 2013 with a presentation entitled 'Spanning the Atlantic', which argued for the need to set the history of the Atlantic within a broader, even global context that emphasised the movement of peoples and ideas.[220] He also helped to endow the 'Sir John Elliott Junior Research Fellowship in European History 1500–1800' at Oriel College starting in 2014, and persuaded Exeter College to establish a new position in Iberian history. Exeter College was already home to the university's King Alfonso XIII Chair in Spanish Studies, a position established in 1927 but reserved mainly for specialists in literature: the new position brought Giuseppe Marcocci, an Italian scholar who specialised in early modern Portuguese history, to the university in 2017. The following year saw the inauguration of the 'Sir John Elliott Junior Research Fellowship in Spanish History (1400–1900)', also at Exeter College and once again funded by Spain's Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica.

These initiatives indicated that Elliott's efforts to broaden the geographical range of Oxford's History Faculty had finally borne fruit. More followed. In 2019 the History Faculty instituted a permanent Iberian History Seminar that, prior to the start of the pandemic, became Elliott's home away from home. He delivered the first paper, on 'Forms of Union and their impact: Catalonia, Portugal and Scotland', in a room 'full to overflowing'. After that,

> Sir John used to arrive in the seminar room ten minutes early and take one of the seats around the table, neither too close to the invited guest nor too far away. Sometimes, the day before a session, his lean figure could be seen bent over a table in the Bodleian Library. He was preparing for the seminar by reading some of the speaker's most recent works. When the talk was finished, Sir John was never the first to ask a question because he did not want to set the tone. He let the debate flow and, only towards the end, in his characteristically elegant and respectful manner, raised his hand to ask short, sharp, and always penetrating questions.

Elliott will doubtless continue to mentor and inspire junior scholars through his work. Guy Rowlands, professor of history at the University of St Andrews and a specialist in French history, gives the following advice to any student who needs to improve their prose:

> I tell them: Read J.H. Elliott. If they are working on Spain, I point them to *The Count-Duke of Olivares*; if they are working on the Americas, I send them to *Empires of the Atlantic World*; if they are studying Europe more generally, I point them to *Imperial Spain*. When they return to writing, it is invariably better, smoother, well-organised and

[220] For more on this lecture and for Elliott's thoughts about Atlantic history at that moment, see 'RAI': his interview with Pekka Hämäläinen in June 2013. https://www.rai.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/rai/documents/media/sir_john_elliott_interview_-_rai_website.pdf. Neither this lecture, nor a related one on 'Imperial Assumptions and Colonial Realities', given in 2012 at the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, have yet appeared in print.

> even inspired. John, without perhaps realising it, was a one-man enhancer of student transferable skills.[221]

There were, of course, some things that Elliott did not like – apart from imprecise prose; overdue assignments; theorising about history instead of just writing it; and Menocchio, Martin Guerre and lesbian nuns. He lamented that the Research Assessment Exercises introduced by the British Government since 1983 had created 'a growing pressure to publish, and publish to a deadline – which I think is a disaster, and has been an intellectual disaster'.[222] Conversely, he deprecated the lack of government support for learning foreign languages. 'Because of the time pressures now, English students who are entering the graduate world are refusing to learn foreign languages because they know it's effectively going to take a year out of their lives', he lamented in an interview in 2008. And yet, he observed in another interview five years later, 'Learning foreign languages is absolutely critical' for students. 'They have got to learn other languages and that's one of the great defects at present of our training. And unfortunately, this has not been recognised in research grants.' In consequence, he feared that British historians were 'becoming more parochial as a result of the inability to master foreign tongues' and 'far too many of them are being channelled into British history, where there are no posts.'[223]

He also grumbled about the Internet. He expressed vehement disapproval of the money spent by the Spanish government on PARES (Portal de Archivos Españoles): an initiative that placed online scanned images of millions of documents from Spanish public archives, and of the catalogues to go with them. 'I must admit to being in two minds about the investment of vast resources on computerizing archives' he wrote when he heard about the launch of the project in 2003, 'if (as I suspect) it means neglecting more basic needs, like keeping archives open for longer hours.' He repeated his opposition six years later, when he told a journalist in Seville: 'Digitizing is very useful, a great public service, but I still have my doubts. I am an old-fashioned Romantic: I need to see the document, to smell it. Reading a document on the screen is not the same as seeing it for yourself. What matters is keeping the archives open for longer.' In 2012 he re-stated the point more forcefully:

[221] Guy Rowlands email to the authors, 7 May 2022. Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661 to 1701* (Cambridge, 2002), would be the last volume in the Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History before the Syndics of the University Press decided to end the series. When it won the Royal Historical Society's Gladstone Prize (2003), Elliott wrote to Rowlands that it was good to see the series ending 'with a whiff of grapeshot in the direction of the Syndics'.
[222] 'MH', 9. See also Mary Lindemann's 2021 Presidential Address to the American Historical Association: 'Slow history', *American Historical Review*, 126 (2021), 1–18, which praised Elliott's historical method.
[223] 'MH', 10–11; RAI, 9.

> The sight, the touch and even the smell of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century documents, the dried brown ink, the paper itself sometimes crumbling in one's hand — all these sensory qualities enhanced, at least in my own experience, that imaginative and intuitive sense which is so important for the historical reconstruction of past societies.

The following year he admitted that:

> The new generation has the advantage, which my generation did not have, of online publications and digitalisation of archives. You have much more material accessible without travelling to foreign parts. It is an advantage in some ways but a disadvantage in others because you don't get that surrounding sense of a society you can only get from living in a country for some time, getting to know its people, its ways of thinking, its archives.

He only softened his view when Covid–19 made PARES the only way that he could still consult documents in Spanish archives. He even became proficient on Skype and Zoom, when there was no alternative, although (as his editor at Yale University Press noted sadly) he 'clung to Word Perfect long after the rest of the world moved on to Word'.[224]

Elliott also held some conservative views on art. When Glyn Redworth unwisely mentioned that he intended to visit an exhibition of paintings by Joaquín Sorolla, Elliott snapped back 'Kitsch! Can't stand it!' On this occasion, Redworth wondered whether it was a joke, because Sir John had an excellent sense of humour. Thus in 1984 he began his 'Discurso' accepting the honorary doctorate just conferred on him by the Universidad Autónoma of Madrid by regaling his audience with his recent experience when hailing a taxi in the city centre:

> I went to the nearest taxi rank because I wanted to go to the Ministry of Culture. No sooner had I spoken the words 'To the Ministry' than the entire group of taxi drivers gasped: 'It's Alfonso'. At first I failed to understand what was happening, but then I realized and explained that, no, I was not the Deputy Prime Minister [Alfonso Guerra], nor did I have the honour of knowing him. I was just an English tourist who wanted to go to the Ministry of Culture.

Some years later, when he entered the monastery of Poblet as Catalan Separatism gained ground, the abbot slyly asked him: 'We Catalans are just the same as we were in 1640, Professor, don't you agree?' 'Yes', Elliott replied: 'You're still at each other's throats.'[225]

[224] Elliott email to Geoffrey Parker, 24 March 2003; Interview with Alicia Almárcegui in *Andalucía en la Historia*, 76 (Jan. 2009), 80; *HM*, p. 12; RAI, 9; Robert Baldock email to the authors, 4 September 2022.

[225] Glyn Redworth email to the authors, 23 May 2022; *Discurso*, p. 21. To be fair to the taxistas of Madrid, there was at the time a striking resemblance between the two men. See: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfonso_Guerra#/media/Archivo:Alfonso_Guerra_conversa_con_el_secretario_general_de_AP_en_el_Congreso_de_los_Diputados.jpeg) We thank Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo for the Poblet anecdote.

At the Memorial Service in Oxford in June 2022, Fernando Cervantes shared another example of Elliott's sense of humour. At a dinner attended by both of them soon after the death of Geoffrey Elton,

> Our host was telling us with undisguised sarcasm about a recent telephone call he'd received from a Cambridge historian, claiming that he had been by Geoffrey Elton's side when he died, and that he had made sure that Geoffrey had gone to Heaven. Detecting a certain malice in the tone, and clearly uncomfortable with the topic of conversation, John merely looked pensive for a moment and then said: 'I don't think Geoffrey would enjoy Heaven, you know?'[226]

Readers who have reached this point in our account of Sir John Elliott's academic achievements (and we have omitted many more) may wonder if he had time for anything apart from history. Robert Baldock, Elliott's publisher for over thirty years, was not the only one to be astonished by 'How often John would respond [to emails] within a couple of hours, even when it involved considerable perusal. He appeared always to be at his desk, with his computer on.' His sister Judith noted that 'Most of his evenings were spent reading the kind of books he was working on all day. I think one reason he got through so much work was that he simply dismissed anything he assumed would not interest him, so he never wasted time — as he saw it — on inessentials.' Although he 'rarely tried current English-language fiction, one of his favourite works, to which he often returned, was Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time*'; and he enjoyed contemporary novels from Spain and South America, particularly those by Carlos Fuentes.[227]

In addition, he and Oonah enjoyed watching movies, including *Tom Jones* (which they saw twice during their American sabbatical: an odd choice, one might think, for Christian Scientists) and *Chariots of fire* ('very enjoyable if sentimental; and it is amusing to be carried back to Eton though disconcerting to find it standing in for Cambridge'). At a conference in his honour in 1999 he took satisfaction in correcting one of his advisees on the subject of historical films. When James Amelang, a movie enthusiast, claimed that Richelieu had appeared on the big screen more than thirty times but the count-duke only once (in *El rey pasmado*), Elliott pointed out that he had also appeared (albeit fleetingly) in *La kermesse héroique.*[228] Early in 1961 he informed Trevor-Roper that 'Having been given a television set for Christmas, we've become addicts. This is likely to reduce historical

[226] We thank Fernando Cervantes for sharing with us a copy of his address at the Memorial Service, and for confirming that the malevolent dinner conversation occurred early in 1995.
[227] Robert Baldock email to the authors, 4 September 2022. Further details supplied by Judith Elliott.
[228] EFA Elliott to his parents, New York, 16 November 1963, and Guatemala City, 3 May 1964; and to his mother 14 February 1982; Amelang, 'Richelieu y Olivares', 104

production.' Although this proved untrue, he and Oonah watched television documentaries on history, politics and art (which John usually found annoying), and more surprisingly they became hooked on 'The West Wing', 'Homeland' and re-runs of 'Yes, Minister'. Outdoors, the Elliotts loved to walk together, and until Covid struck they seem to have done so every fine day they were in Iffley; John played tennis both at Cambridge and at Princeton (against Jonathan Brown); on occasion he went cross-country skiing. Oonah created a wonderful garden at their houses in Cambridge, in Princeton, and in Iffley (which she tended until shortly before she died in May 2023).[229]

Elliott had two other enthusiasms apart from history: art and Christian Science. Just after Elliott's death, Quentin Skinner wrote eloquently about the former: 'Although John generally spoke of his scholarly interests in a measured way, the exception was his interest in painting. Here he always seemed to me to speak with real passion, as well as from a basis of very extensive knowledge, especially about early-modern European art.' He kept his life-long commitment to Christian Science largely to himself, but his letters to his parents mentioned any visits to Christian Science establishments, and his Sunday School teaching. He taught his last class at Princeton in April 1990, but resumed the practice in Oxford. This, and regular visits to the Christian Science church in St Giles, continued until Covid made social interaction impossible.[230]

Just as Elliott has pre-empted biographers by writing his own account of his academic life and works, so he has pre-empted those who might wish to sum up his approach to History. In both *Spain, Europe and the Wider World* (2009), a second collection of his essays, and again in *History in the making* (2012), he cited his illustrious French contemporary, Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, who 'once famously divided historians into parachutists and truffle hunters. I would like to think that this volume is the work of a parachutist with a few truffles in his bag.' What did Elliott mean by this? Characteristically, he explained in a footnote: 'When I asked Ladurie for the reference some years ago, he was unable to come up with it, but assured me that I could cite him with confidence (letter to the author 4 May 1999). The contrast is between parachutists who, like French soldiers in Algeria around 1960, scour large areas of territory and truffle hunters who unearth a buried treasure.'[231]

[229] CC SCO/Dacre 1/2/5, Elliott to Trevor-Roper, 21 January 1961; EFA Elliott to his mother, 11 June 1988 (tennis), 24 January 1984 and 25 November 1989 (skiing). Further details supplied by Judith Elliott.

[230] Quentin Skinner email to the authors, 13 May 2022; EFA Elliott to his parents, 11 January 1964 (visiting Principia College, a Christian Science establishment near St. Louis); 19 November 1978 (teaching a class of twelve-year-olds); and to his mother from Princeton 21 April 1990 ('last Sunday School class! Just resigning').

[231] *SEWW*, p. xx and note, repeated almost verbatim three year later in *HM*, p. 197. Lawrence Stone popularized Le Roy Ladurie's distinction between 'the truffle hunters and the parachutists' in: 'History and the social sciences in the twentieth century', in C. F. Delzell, ed., *The future of history* (Nashville, 1977), pp. 3–44, at

This was not quite what Le Roy Ladurie meant, however. The first volume of his own autobiography, published in 1982, described the dual research strategy he developed for *Les paysans de Languedoc*, his comprehensive study of a region adjacent to Catalonia, published in 1966. He attributed it to Jean-Louis van Regemorter, a historian of Russia, a member of the Communist Party (like Le Roy Ladurie at the time) and a man who loved paradoxes:

> The historian must be simultaneously a paratrooper and a truffle-hunter. The paratroopers (to use a sad metaphor from the Algerian war) ransack a territory in search of the broadest understanding and knowledge, whereas the truffle-hunters look for a tiny treasure, formerly buried and hidden. So I ransacked 'my' Languedoc by studying its vast series of tax and tithe records, its church accounts, and its libraries. And by poking around those archives and the learned journals, from time to time I unearthed a real jewel.[232]

It would be hard to find a better description of Elliott's research strategy. He always ranged widely and sought to dominate the entire terrain he had chosen, but he always paused when he found truffles, the real jewels, such as the *Dietari* of Jeroni Pujades or the personal archive left by Viceroy Santa Coloma. In addition, he was always meticulous in his scholarship so that it was never necessary to check any reference in his footnotes: they were always right thanks to his tireless quest for accuracy (itself perhaps the legacy of his two watchmaker grandfathers).

No bibliography of early modern Europe or the Americas would be complete without including Elliott's books and articles, or without the legion of books and articles by scholars whose work he nurtured and inspired. Taken together they form an academic legacy unlikely ever to be equalled, let alone surpassed. And yet Elliott created it with humility – a point made by several colleagues who sent us their recollections of Elliott for this Memoir. He remained 'humble and self-effacing, despite all the accolades', wrote Philip Morgan: 'Above all, what I most remember about John was his decency. His fair-mindedness shone through.' 'He was amazingly supportive of his former graduate students', Peter Bakewell recalled, 'for example, suggesting words when I

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p. 7. It seems to have spread from there: see, for example, Nicola Gallerano, 'Cercatori di tartufi contro paracudisti: tendenze receti della storiografia sociale americana', *Passato e presente*, 2 (1983), issue 4, 181–96, at 184.

[232] Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Paris-Montpellier: PC-PSU 1945–1963* (Paris, 1982), pp. 207–8. 'Paratrooper' is the correct translation of '*parachutiste*', as the reference to the Algerian war makes clear; the reference also gives a violent sense to the verb 'ratisser': to 'ransack', or 'mop up'. In an interview with Marc Riglet, broadcast in 2000, Le Roy Ladurie described how he had used the same combination of research strategies in *Montaillou: village Occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris, 1975): 'Le parachutiste, bon, c'est un mauvais souvenir de la guerre d'Algérie, c'est *celui qui ratisse les djebels* ou alors, plus poli, celui qui domine, et donc qui essaie de faire une vision très, très complète'. He concluded 'I believe I have been both paratrooper and truffle-hunter but in that book obviously I was more of a truffle-hunter'. https://entretiens.ina.fr/paroles-d-historiens/Leroyladurie/emmanuel-le-roy-ladurie/transcription. Italics added.

could not find the right one for something I was writing' and 'always ready to chat and advise'. He was 'so gentle and humble and kind', wrote Molly Warsh: 'I was absolutely transformed by his work, like so many of us, but also by his spirit of scholarly generosity and humility.' Perhaps Alexandra Walsham, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University, put it best: John Elliott was 'an extraordinarily nice man: urbane, unpretentious, and irreplaceable. We shall not see his like again.'[233]

Sources and acknowledgements

In an interview with the Catalan historical journal *Manuscrits* in 1997, Sir John Elliott ascribed the relative lack of autobiographies written by British historians, compared with those written by their French counterparts, to 'an absence of public interest in our lives, in what we write and what we do.' A decade later, when asked whether he felt tempted to write an autobiography, as Eric Hobsbawm had done, Elliott replied enigmatically: 'Let's just say that his life story is more interesting than mine.' He rectified the situation somewhat in 2012 with *History in the making* but, as Sir Keith Thomas observed in *The New York Review of Books*, it was 'an unusual mixture of intellectual biography and historical reflection': Elliott 'concentrates on his writings and their implications' but is 'relatively sparing on personal detail'.[234] He shared rather more details in the introductions to his two collections of essays – *Spain and its world* (1989) and *Spain, Europe and the Wider World* (2009) – and more still in the speeches he gave when awarded an honorary degree, especially at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (1984); the Universitat de Barcelona (1994); and the Universidad de Sevilla (2011). He also revealed much about himself in some conference volumes, notably in a special issue of the journal *Manuscrits* in 1997 entitled 'Catalunya i Espanya a l'època moderna. Homenatge a John H. Elliott'; in *John Elliott: El oficio de historiador* (papers at a conference in his honour when he received an honorary degree at the Universitat de Lleida in 1999); and at a conference on Anglophone 'Hispanism' held at Córdoba in 1997, where he apologised (in an unusually frank presentation) for discussing the subjects 'through my own personal experience – the one subject on which I can claim to speak with uncontested authority'.[235] Most revealing of all were a score of substantial published interviews, starting with a radio interview in Barcelona in 1956; and the 'Biographical Notes' he deposited with the British Academy in 2006, explicitly to assist his obituarist.

[233] Phil Morgan email to the authors 20 August 2022; Peter Bakewell and Molly Warsh emails to the authors, both on 18 August 2022; Alexandra Walsham Zoom call with Geoffrey Parker, 22 June 2022.
[234] 'Conversa', 183; Alicia Almárcegui Elduayen, 'Entrevista con John H. Elliott: "Sin imaginación el historiador se convierte en anticuario"', *Andalucía en la Historia*, 23 (January 2009), 76–80, at 80; Keith Thomas, 'The empires of Elliott', *NYRB*, 21 February 2013.
[235] Elliott, 'La trayectoria', p. 121.

The existence of so many 'ego documents' by Elliott, spanning more than sixty years sometimes causes confusion. For example in 2012, in *History in the making*, p. 18, he asserted that as soon as he arrived in Barcelona, 'by insisting that the [Coderch] family should only talk to me in Catalan I gradually acquired a working knowledge of the language'. Yet in March 1954, after six months with the Coderch family, he informed his parents that 'I'm just beginning to buckle down to Catalan', adding: 'It is difficult to get the family to speak to me in Catalan as opposed to Castilian. I thought at first it [Catalan] was the ugliest of languages, but now I find in it a strength and robustness which seems to me to be lacking in Castilian' (EFA Elliott to his parents, 10 March 1954). To take another example, in a talk in 1997 Elliott claimed he could not remember where he first read Lucien Febvre's *Philippe II et la Franche Comté*, but in 2019 he wrote an entire article about the impact of the book on the way he studied the similar history of Catalonia, and stated that he first read it during his first year of graduate studies.[236] In such cases of contradiction, we have chosen the most plausible account.

Although Elliott's own archive is not yet available, we have drawn on five other important collections of correspondence that contain letters from or about him:

- The Butterfield Papers in Cambridge University Library (1955–70).
- The Dacre Papers in Christ Church, Oxford (1956–2000).
- The Sir John Plumb Papers in Cambridge University Library, General Correspondence files (1960–95); American Heritage files (contributions to *Horizon*); and Penguin Archive files.[237]
- The Felix Gilbert papers at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives (1971–80).
- The 'Elliott Family Archives': papers found in the apartment of John Elliott's mother, who retained numerous items from his school days, and his letters to both his parents 1953–69, when his father died, and to his mother until 1990. Judith Elliott informed us that 'both parents would write each of us children a letter every Sunday when we were away from home, and all of us would write back every week'.

No doubt other sources have eluded us, because Elliott was an intensely private person. In the words of his sister Judith, he 'never liked to discuss his joys and woes. Maybe a part of him yearned for the vividness and colour he found in Spain but not in his own environment. I don't think he was interested in self-analysis.'

[236] 'Conferència', 173; Elliott, 'El Franco Condado'.

[237] The Sir John Plumb Papers are still in the process of bring catalogued, and no call numbers are yet available.

List of major 'ego documents' in chronological order

(* Indicates a volume devoted to Elliott and his scholarship. We have added the abbreviation used in the notes)

'Interview in the programme *Agora*, Radio Barcelona, 11 March 1956', English transcript in EFA ['Agora']

Colloquium. A journal of historical and social thought, 1 (April, 1964), 18–24 (Elliott interviewed by Norman F. Cantor in December 1963, after three months as a visiting scholar at Columbia)

Elliott, 'The Future of History', *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 April 1974

Discurso de investidura de Doctor 'Honoris Causa': Profesor John H. Elliott (Universidad Autónoma, Madrid, 1984)

Elliott, 'Reflexions d'un anglès sobre Catalunya i Europa al segle XVII', in *La commemoració de l'Onze de Setembre a Barcelona* (Barcelona, 1994), pp. 63–71 (a speech delivered on 11 September 1987) [*LC*]

Elliott IAS Interview 1990, transcript (part of the Institute's 'Oral History Project' available online). The transcripts of interviews with Albert Hirschman, Carl Kaysen and Quentin Skinner, also available online, include important assessments of Elliott's time at IAS.

Solemne investidura de Doctor Honoris Causa al Professor Sir John Elliott (Barcelona, 1994) (all quotations in our text come from Elliott's original English text, graciously supplied by Xavier Gil)

Elliott, 'Address' at the ASPHS annual meeting in Toronto 1995, printed in *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, 20/2 (1985), 6–11

'Conversa. John H. Elliott: Balanç de 25 anys d'Hispanisme', *L'Avenç*, 123 (February 1989), 56-65, interview with Josep, M. Fradera ['Fradera']

Elliott, 'Final reflections: *The Old World and the New* revisited', in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750* (Chapel Hill, 1995; reprinted 2017), pp. 391–408

* Richard L. Kagan and Geoffrey Parker, eds, *Spain, Europe and the Atlantic world: essays in honour of John H. Elliott* (Cambridge, 1995)

Elliott, 'Comparative history' in Carlos Barros, ed., *Historia a debate. Actas del Congreso Internacional 'A historia a debate'*, 6 vols (Santiago de Compostela, 1995), 3, pp. 9–19

'A spell of decline: Sir John Elliott and the Hispanic World, 1995', in Leonard Blussé, Frans-Paul van der Putten and Hans Vogel, eds, *Pilgrims to the past. Private conversations with historians of European expansion* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 321–30 (an interview recorded after Elliott led a seminar at Leiden University in 1995)

* 'Catalunya i Espanya a l'època moderna. Homenatge a John H. Elliott', a special issue of *Manuscrits. Revista d'història moderna*, 15 (1997), including 'Conversa amb John H. Elliott', 183–98 ['Conversa']; and a 'Conferència' by Elliott, 171–80 ['Conferència']

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Detailed references to about a hundred of Elliott's numerous publications, some with links to the text, is available through Dialnet.[238] Many more await the persevering researcher.

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[238] https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=551973