

# JHET INTERVIEWS: MARGARET SCHABAS

BY  
HARRO MAAS 

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## Drei Romanzen für Hoboe

(ad libitum Violine)

mit Begleitung des Pianoforte

Schumann's Werke.

von

Serie 5. № 13.

ROBERT SCHUMANN.

Op. 94.

I.



FIGURE 1. Robert Schumann's First Romance for oboe and piano (Opus 94). Source: International Music Score Library Project.

## A SCHOLAR WHO PLAYS TO HER OWN TUNE

Margaret Schabas has had a distinguished career in the history and philosophy of economics. In addition to her five books and numerous articles and book chapters, she served as president of the History of Economics Society (2013–14) and hosted the annual meeting in 2013 at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. She served on the editorial boards for *History of Political Economy (HOPE)* and *Economics and Philosophy* for over thirty years, as well as for several journals in philosophy, including *Hume Studies* and *History of Philosophy of Science (HOPOS)*, amongst other boards. She has a Dean of Arts teaching prize from York University and a Killam research award from University of British Columbia.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: the interview was conducted in the spring of 2021, lasting 2.5 hours. After the transcription, Margaret Schabas and Harro Maas reworked the interview iteratively.

Margaret has written three well-received monographs: *A World Ruled by Number: William Stanley Jevons and the Rise of Mathematical Economics* (Princeton University Press, 1990); *The Natural Origins of Economics* (University of Chicago Press, 2005); and, recently, co-authored with Carl Wennerlind, *A Philosopher's Economist: Hume and the Rise of Capitalism* (University of Chicago Press, 2020). She has co-edited two volumes, the first with Neil De Marchi, *Economies in the Age of Newton* (*HOPE* annual supplement to volume 35, 2003); and the second with Carl Wennerlind, *David Hume's Political Economy* (Routledge, 2008).

Most historians of economics will remember her article in *HOPE*, "Breaking Away: History of Economics as History of Science" (1992), which prompted a vigorous debate on the standing of our field in the economics profession. What many readers may not know is that Margaret was once a professional oboist, so I couldn't resist this opportunity to select one of my favorite pieces for the oboe, Robert Schumann's First Romance for oboe and piano (Opus 94), to prompt her to reflect about her youth and education. I quizzed her on the performers (Alfred Brendel and Heinz Holliger), and then learned that Schumann's Romance, music that goes, in Margaret's words, "right to the heart," had played an important part in her early career choices.

**Schabas:** In fact, it was the very first piece that I ever recorded on tape, when I applied at age seventeen for the performance degree at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. I chose it not because it is technically difficult but because it enabled my musicality to shine through. After one and half years at Toronto, I transferred to the renowned School of Music at Indiana University where I completed my degree in music.

**Maas:** What made you take up the oboe?

**Schabas:** I come from a musical family, and I loved the sound of the oboe. My father, who passed away in 2020, was a professor of music, and our house was brimming with music. He played the clarinet and studied at Juilliard at age sixteen, before enlisting in the army in 1943 and having the good fortune to spend the war playing in the US airforce band. And then he went to Columbia University for his Master's degree and within a year found a post as a young professor, first at the University of Massachusetts and then at Western Reserve (before it became Case Western University) in Cleveland. He and my mother moved to Toronto, her hometown, in 1952, and I was born two years later. He became a professor at the University of Toronto, and finished his career as principal of the Royal Conservatory in Toronto.

My parents loved to entertain, and many famous musicians came to our house over the years. My four brothers also played instruments; the youngest one also became a freelance musician, playing the French horn, but is now a judge for the Ontario Superior Court. I had become an adept pianist by the age of fifteen and then decided that I needed to take up an instrument. I had played the oboe in middle school and decided to pursue it seriously as I started grade twelve, and within a year I was first oboe of the Toronto Youth Orchestra.

**Maas:** It sounds like you come from a family with high aspirations.

**Schabas:** My mother was never one to push us; in fact, she has a calm and patient demeanor. She had five children in nine years (I'm in the middle) and was just like those

mothers in a TV sitcom, sewing our Halloween costumes, making casseroles, and baking cookies. But she already had a Master's degree in physics when she met my father at age twenty-four, and she always intended to have a career once it was feasible. My father was very supportive. When my youngest brother started kindergarten, in 1963, my mother returned to university for a degree in library science and, two years later, because of her physics degrees and interests in science librarianship, became a professor in the Faculty of Library Science at the University of Toronto, which is now called Information Science. She would run computer searches for information, setting up metrics to expedite the line of inquiry and render the path more efficient. In many respects, her research field resembled what we do with Google every day, but this was in the 1960s! When I was young, I would tell my friends that my mother works on information retrieval in an automated environment, but to be honest I didn't have a clue what that meant.

**Maas:** What about your father?

**Schabas:** It was my father who had high ambitions and pushed us hard. He announced when I was about eight or nine years old that I ought to aspire to become the head of the United Nations or the first woman on the Supreme Court of Canada. He eventually lowered his aspirations, and in the last decade of his life merely urged me to become a president of a university or head of the Canada Council. My father would hold forth over dinner. We had nightly quizzes, facts about battles and world events or the names of American presidents. My father was a voracious reader. His paternal grandfather had been a successful architect in Berlin, and his father attended a good gymnasium in central Berlin; they lived right on *Fasanenstrasse*.<sup>2</sup> But my grandfather dropped out at sixteen to go to New York to seek his fortune, which he never found. They lived in a modest apartment in Washington Heights. My father was the only one of his siblings to go to university; the Master's degree at Columbia was covered on the GI bill. My father wrote five books on music history, and one won the City of Toronto Book Award, which normally goes to fiction books. He loved history and he cultivated my two older brothers to become historians. He assumed because I was good at science that I would go into medicine. Ironically, my second oldest brother became a doctor, so we switched roles.

**Maas:** At Indiana University you started taking courses in the history and philosophy of science. Did these courses prompt you to decide to switch your career?

**Schabas:** Not exactly. I had started taking philosophy and history courses at Toronto in my first year, and was in effect pursuing parallel degrees from the start because I never planned to be an orchestral musician for very long. You can't take up music later in life, so I had to give it a try first, but I knew I loved to learn, both the sciences and the arts. I wasn't sure how far I would get as an oboist. But I was fortunate to have one fellow oboist in my same year at Indiana, Sherry Sylar, who within a few years became the associate principal oboe of the New York Philharmonic. So already at age nineteen I could see that Sherry was going places that I would never reach and because my studies in philosophy and physics were going well, I realized that my path was not that of a serious oboist.

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<sup>2</sup> *Fasanenstrasse* is a street in the middle of Wilmersdorf-Charlottenburg, a bourgeois area of Berlin.

Indiana offers a special degree for people like me, a Bachelor of Science in Music. You do all the core courses in music theory and history, and pursue the performance track, but you do another degree in the College of Arts and Sciences. Even better, they let me create my own major, which I called “philosophy of science,” so my degree on my transcript is listed as a BS in Oboe and Philosophy of Science. Indiana also allowed one to overlap degrees, and one of my History and Philosophy of Science professors, Noretta Koertge, found a way to enroll me in the PhD program with a full fellowship in January of my last year of the BS. I wasn’t going to say no to that, especially since I had only one course to complete, my senior oboe recital. And I really hadn’t given much thought to applications for graduate school at that point, since I was only twenty years old.

**Maas:** And what PhD program was this?

**Schabas:** History and Philosophy of Science. Indiana has one of the oldest departments in the world, founded in 1960, and it is still very reputable. Before my time, the faculty included Wesley Salmon and [Norwood] Russell Hanson. I took two courses with the renowned Newton scholar Richard S. [Sam] Westfall, one on Newton’s *Principia*.

**Maas:** You also took courses with Scott Gordon. Would you tell me about him?

**Schabas:** Sure. I didn’t think about studying social science, let alone economics. But Noretta told me I should take his course on the history and philosophy of the social sciences.<sup>3</sup> His lectures were brilliant and I was completely hooked and so I took another course from him, on the history of economics, in my last semester at Indiana. He told me that I thought like an economist and, since I had voiced a preference to return to Toronto, he also told me there was an established scholar there—Sam Hollander—who could supervise me for the PhD. Toronto also had an Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology. My reasons for returning to Toronto were partly to live in a big city again but also so I could freelance as an oboist, which as a Canadian I couldn’t do in the States. I hadn’t heard of Hollander, but I counted on Scott to know this would work out. Several years later, Scott served as the external examiner for my doctoral thesis, thus partaking once more in my education.

**Maas:** So you went back to Toronto to pursue your PhD with Sam Hollander?

**Schabas:** Not directly. I auditioned for and received a Canada Council grant to study the oboe abroad for a year. Initially I was going to New York, but I ended up in London, England, studying with Janet Craxton at the Royal Academy of Music. I harbored aspirations of studying with Heinz Holliger at the University of Freiburg and a friend who had studied with him arranged for me to play for him in early June. It went well enough, and he said, “Oh, this is good, but you must come back in September and audition with everyone else at the same time.” But when I went back to audition in early September, he said, “I’m sorry, but I’m not going to be able to admit you. You need a real

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<sup>3</sup> Scott Gordon is originally from Montreal. He went back to Ontario every summer, where he had a cottage and taught the history of economics at Queen’s University. He was known for an analysis of the tragedy of the commons, using fishing as his case study. See Gordon, H. Scott. 1954. “The Economic Theory of a Common-Property Resource: The Fishery.” In *Classic Papers in Natural Resource Economics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 178–203.

teacher.” So I spent the year (1977–78) in London, living first in Chelsea and then near Russell Square.

When I arrived at Toronto after that year in London to start my doctorate, I had to take a few courses, and one of them was Sam Hollander’s graduate course in the history of economics. Toronto mostly offered year-long courses, and Sam was just finishing his book on Ricardo so we read Adam Smith and David Ricardo for most of the year, as I recall. Evelyn Forget, by the way, was in the same class. There were probably twenty students in the class, because it was required.

I also announced to the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) faculty that I wanted to specialize in the history of economics, but they voiced strong scepticism, remarking that I would never get a job. I drafted a reading list to show them it was a substantial field, so they decided to let their one senior colleague decide, Stillman Drake, the renowned Galileo scholar. I went to his office, listening politely as he spoke about Galileo’s interest in economics. And that was that. He decided in my favor and they made Sam an affiliate so that he could serve as my co-supervisor. I think they warmed to the subject a bit more as they came to know Sam, not least because of his sense of humor. I took four comprehensive exams that spring, one in the history of economics, one in the history of physics, one in the history of biology, and one in philosophy of science. It was an oral exam and it gave Sam a chance to shine. But my professors were right about getting a job; it proved very challenging.

**Maas:** We’ll get to that. But let’s first talk a bit about your thesis work.

**Schabas:** I was Sam’s first doctoral student. Evelyn was pursuing her Master’s when I first met her, and Sandra Peart was an undergraduate at Toronto, but they both also wrote their thesis under Sam’s supervision. I already knew I wanted to work on the Marginal Revolution because I had written my term paper for Scott Gordon on that topic. Also of importance was the recent publication of seven volumes of William Stanley Jevons’s correspondence and papers. I was able to buy the set, as well as many of Jevons’s books (originals and reprints), at Atticus Bookstore close to the university.

**Maas:** Did you try to get into contact with the editors, R. D. Collison (Bob) Black and Rosamond Könekamp, Jevons’s granddaughter?

**Schabas:** Yes, I did. In fact, I kept their letters. They each had beautiful handwriting.

**Maas:** What got you interested in the Marginal Revolution in the first place?

**Schabas:** When I was a student in the late seventies and early eighties, HPS was still enthralled with the work of Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, and Imre Lakatos. My mentor in philosophy of science at Indiana, Noretta Koertge, had taken her PhD in London and was a Popperian. Terence Hutchinson published his book on revolutions in economics in 1978, and others such as Neil De Marchi, Roy Weintraub, and Mark Blaug had imposed a Lakatosian spin on various historical case studies. I thought the Marginal Revolution was the ideal candidate for the history of economics. *HOPE* had devoted an issue (Fall 1972) specifically to the question of the legitimacy of the Marginal Revolution, and it was reprinted as a book, edited by Craufurd Goodwin, among others. To my dismay, I discovered that Sam Hollander didn’t think there was a revolution. Everything was neoclassical from the start. So we would debate this and,

in order to complete the thesis, I realized I would have to downplay my portrayal of Jevons as a radical. I took several years to revise the thesis into a book and was then able to motivate my belief that this was an excellent example of a Kuhnian revolution. I gave a talk on this at a special workshop that Larry Laudan organized in the mid-1980s, but it did not get published until I worked it up as a contribution to a *Festschrift* in honor of Bob Black, edited by Antoin Murphy and Renee Prendergast in 2000.

Another good reason to work on Jevons was his seminal work in philosophy of science and logic. The first philosophy class I ever took was in logic, and for the thesis I worked through the logical systems devised by George Boole and by Augustus De Morgan, the ones that Jevons effectively revised and sold to the world with his primers on logic. Jevons's largest book, as you know, is his *Principles of Science* (1874), so that was reason alone for him to be studied under the rubric of HPS. Jevons worshipped John Herschel and, at the time, the HPS world was highly attentive to the debates between William Whewell, Herschel, and John Stuart Mill. My thesis on Jevons argued that it was his novel ideas in logic and philosophy of science that motivated his project to mathematize economics.

**Maas:** In the HPS department, your thesis supervisor was Trevor Levere, the historian of chemistry. Please tell me something about him and about the joint thesis supervision with Sam Hollander.

**Schabas:** Trevor, like Sam, was from London. He wrote many books. One was about Coleridge and science.<sup>4</sup> He had broad interests in cultural history, although he made disparaging remarks about economics, as did most of my professors at HPS. Trevor's PhD was from Oxford and he set very high standards for his students, and tended to disparage the undergraduates for their poor skills at writing. I served as his teaching assistant for several years, so I imbibed his gift for lecturing. Sam was also a terrific lecturer. He had done his PhD at Princeton with Jacob Viner, and Lionel Robbins had blessed him as an undergraduate at the London School of Economics. So my academic grandfathers were Viner and Robbins. I never met either of them, but they were there in the room, if you know what I mean.

Sam and Trevor were both hired at the University of Toronto when they were very young, mid-twenties perhaps. I think they each expected to go back to England, and kept publishing one book after another, but that phone call never came, at least as far as I knew. Ironically, they each helped to raise the reputation of the University of Toronto. The philosophy department at Toronto, for example, now ranks with Oxford, and the economics department is comparable with the one at Duke. Both Trevor and Sam taught me to write. They would go over every sentence, and teach me how to use footnotes with precision and develop a cogent argument. They were terrific supervisors, each in their own right. Sometimes, Sam and I would haggle about a single sentence for an hour. He later told me that I scared him, but it felt the other way round to me.

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<sup>4</sup> Editor's note: Levere, Trevor H. 1981. *Poetry Realized in Nature—Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Early Nineteenth-Century Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Maas:** You mentioned the publication of Jevons's *Papers and Correspondence*. But part of your thesis relied on archival papers in New Jersey that had been brought to your attention, the Seton–Jevons papers. How important are archival materials for your work?

**Schabas:** I'm a firm believer in the importance of archival research, but I live in Vancouver, and it's not so easy to find archives here. But I have spent many months over the years either at the Harvard Kress Library or the British Library. I spent one and a half years at Harvard, and made return visits to the Kress collection in the 1990s. I have two brothers living in London, and many friends, so I try to visit every year, and when I do, I go to the British Library and immerse myself in the collection of manuscripts and rare books.

With my thesis I did get very lucky. I went to Manchester to work in the Jevons Archives at the John Rylands University Library, as you have done after me. That was the summer of 1982, right before the last year of my PhD. When I returned in the fall, I happened to mention something about John Stuart Mill to Sam and he became very excited. "How did you know this?" he asked. Well, there was a letter in the Jevons Archives from Mill to Jevons. "We've been looking for that letter," he said. "We knew it existed because his wife Harriet had referred to it, but then it went missing. I suppose Bob Black missed it when he compiled the collected papers, or it had been filed someplace else." The general editor of the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, John M. Robson, was also a professor at the University of Toronto, in the English department. He encouraged me to write up a brief article about the significance of the letter and he then published it.

The letter made clear Mill's appreciation for Jevons's logic and a more common position on induction than one might gather from reading Jevons alone. It was published in *The Mill News Letter* (1982), a periodical that has since morphed into the journal *Utilitas*. If I hadn't had that conversation with Sam, and he hadn't known about Mill because of collaborations with Jack Robson, none of this would have happened. I think the first publication is always the hardest, but since this came out before I finished my PhD in 1983, I was much inspired to publish more.

Finding the New Jersey archives was a complete fluke. A friend of mine was doing her Master's degree in museum studies at New York University and she had a friend in the program who had a part-time job working in the archives at Seton Hall University. He happened to mention to her that they had just spent \$10,000 on a set of letters by Jevons. That was a lot of money in those days; I mean, that was a starting salary for many people. She said, "I know that name. My friend Margaret is writing her thesis on Jevons." At least a decade before, Bob Black had gone to Long Island and knocked on the door of Ferdinand Jevons, who was Jevons's great-nephew, but Ferdinand insisted there were no such letters. Ferdinand died in the early 1980s, and the letters were in the proverbial attic, and then sold. Why? Because Tom Jevons, Stanley's younger brother, had married into a prominent and wealthy banking family in New York, the Seton family, after whom Seton Hall University is named. The library no doubt purchased the letters because of the Seton connection, not Jevons. Some of these letters had been read by Harriet Jevons, since she had included a number of them in her 1889 edition of letters by her husband. But some important and personal ones were left out. I didn't visit the New Jersey archive until I was revising the thesis into a book, but they proved interesting. I also went back to Manchester one more time to peruse the archives and was taken with the fact that Jevons had a manuscript on music theory. I also studied his statistical atlas that is in the

British Library. Because it is too large to bring out of storage, they made an exception and let me go into the deep basement (this was when the British Library was still part of the British Museum, with the leaky domed roof).

Finding these papers and the letter by Mill was serendipitous but not so unusual. I imagine almost everyone has some chance encounters or unanticipated discoveries like this. The narratives of my favorite novelist, Thomas Hardy, stand and fall on unforeseen paths crossing. When I interviewed Neil De Marchi for *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, I found the same pattern shaped his early career.<sup>5</sup> A chance encounter can make all the difference. I mean, why did I go into the history of economics? I could have stayed in history and philosophy of physics, but Scott Gordon's courses served to show me that economics was full of problems at the conceptual and methodological levels. Economists also needed their act cleaned up more than physicists. This was the age of Milton Friedman and the Chicago boys going to Chile with the kind of atrocities that Naomi Klein writes about.<sup>6</sup> Margaret Thatcher was in power, with all of her efforts at privatization and harsh politics for the poor. My maternal grandmother, Margaret Fairley, had been the editor of the *Marxist Quarterly*. She was active in the Communist Party and she was a McCarthy victim. I grew up in a family that leaned to the left. So I thought I could leave my mark by exposing the shortcomings of mainstream economics. And now, of course, I'm much more humble. I don't think I changed anything, but that's what motivated me back in the 1970s. Phil Mirowski is not much older than I am, and I think has left a mark. He is much more insistent and successful in his efforts to show that the emperor has no clothes.

**Maas:** What changed your mind?

**Schabas:** After I worked on Jevons, I came to a different understanding. I think mathematics is as or more warranted in a science like economics, for much the same reasons as in physics. I don't think Jevons just dressed it up to look like physics. His math is inadequate; his command of the calculus, in chapter four of the *Theory*, is so weak that you wish he had not bothered. But I think his arguments are really very compelling. There is a sense in which we deliberate at the margin. Our minds do a type of utility calculus in the marketplace. I'm looking at my menu in the restaurant and I'm really deciding, Do I want that extra dinner for two more dollars?, and I'm thinking it through. There is a kind of weirdness to this. Jevons's view is that the mind is actually deliberating at the margin and doing these infinitesimal adjudications. I love the labor curve in his book. I think that's just wonderful. So in a sense I don't think the emperor has no clothes.

Think about the nature of the phenomena in economics—and this goes back to Aristotle. He asked, brilliantly, Why don't we just have one science? There's one universe, so why not one science? The reason is that the universe presents itself empirically to us in clusters of phenomena. So Aristotle wrote a treatise on meteorology and he looked at hailstones and why they have the shape they have. He wrote treatises on animals, plants, and on physics. Given this view, if economics doesn't address money

<sup>5</sup> Editor's note: Schabas, Margaret. 2020. "JHET Interviews: Neil De Marchi." *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 42 (3): 439–447.

<sup>6</sup> Editor's note: Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.



and markets and prices, who else will? This is what economists need to do. And if they don't study these phenomena, then no other science would.

Now we know about economic imperialism: Gary Becker or Jack Hirschleifer saying, well, we cover everything in the social realm as economists. They got carried away. But there is certainly a sense in which the core phenomena are quantitative, as Jevons has argued, and their motion is relatively continuous. The interest rate is not going to go from 2% to 20% overnight. There is a sense in which Jevons's picture of the world is a very warranted picture. Jevons's phrase on which I based the title of my book commits to a type of Pythagoreanism, one that runs deep and connects to his pioneering work in logicism. Jevons had a deep philosophical mind. He grasped that math sits upon logic, which in turn boils down to a few simple inferences, such as resemblance. Of course one can challenge this view, but at the time, what he was grasping was a very important moment in the history of logic.

**Maas:** Is it not difficult to square Jevons's encompassing notion that all phenomena, not just in economics, at the end of the day can be reduced to mathematics, or even to logic, with the thesis of your second book, *The Natural Origins of Economics*, that historically situates the separation between the natural and the social in the work of John Stuart Mill?

**Schabas:** I think the second book comes from the first. But I think the question that motivated me for the first is: Why did economics become a mathematical discipline? Why and when? The second book was motivated by the question: Why do we believe there are laws in the economy? And, for that matter: What is the economy? The simple answer is because we believe that there are fundamental uniformities to human behavior, but that in itself needs to be put into the broader nomological context of the physical world. And then, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that there are considerable vestiges of the appeal to natural uniformities in economics. The agrarian limits that stem from diminishing returns appeal to physical nature and not the social realm, or so Thomas Robert Malthus believed.

Now that I have worked on David Hume, I might want to step back a little. I think, in some sense, we need to see everything through the prism of the human mind and the human perceptual apparatus. In that sense, the natural is permeated with the social from the get-go. But I think of all these prominent thinkers in some sense rejigging the balance between the natural and the social, and the person I end up positioning as the most critical in *The Natural Origins of Economics* is John Stuart Mill, because he addressed this head-on. He claimed that some of the laws are material and some are mental. How do we determine the relation between the two and settle this? Well, he ends up pushing towards Jevons's view, which is that economics is a science of the mind, that economics is completely mental through and through, because when you maximize utility, you don't maximize anything physical. Jevons defined "utility" very carefully as the relation between a mind and an object that becomes a commodity through the utility regard; utility is a mental undertaking that ascribes features to our world, turning objects and actions into commodities or services. The thrust of economics in the twentieth century is that it embraced this non-material, ever expanding, ephemeral sense of the world. When I did doctoral level studies in economics at Michigan, we covered the topology of utility space and commodity space. In some interesting way the physical features get tucked away. This was a science that was once about growing food, in the mud ...

**Maas:** ... and then gets grounded in the mind.

**Schabas:** Yes, for François Quesnay, it was all about the rain and the sunshine creating our wealth as an agrarian yield. And then you get the abstract conception of Arrow–Debreu.

**Maas:** You just mentioned you did your economics studies at the University of Michigan. Did you study with the philosopher Alan Gibbard?

**Schabas:** Well, he did a directed reading course with me. As a graduate student, Alan Gibbard produced a theorem that made him famous. He figured out a loophole in Kenneth Arrow's impossibility theorem and published it. He's a brilliant man, I think just retiring now. We read all of Amartya Sen's work. We read John Harsanyi, and we went through a lot of the technical literature in decision theory of the fifties and sixties. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman were not known at the time, but we read them, too. Alan seemed to really enjoy reading that material and so we met every week in the summer. That was the last course I needed to get my Master's degree in economics. I had two other scholars in those years to whom I was much indebted. One is Warren Samuels, whom I saw regularly while at Michigan State University, and the other was David Hollinger, in history at the University of Michigan. They both gave me reason to remain optimistic that I would eventually land a good job.

**Maas:** In what years?

**Schabas:** This would have been 1983 to 1985. So I have a Master's degree from Indiana and another from Michigan. When I was writing my thesis at Toronto (1980 to 1983), I started taking undergraduate core courses in economics. I skipped the first-year courses, but took the second-year, and then the advanced-level micro, macro, and statistics. So I had the core courses and the math from my physics study and the University of Michigan seemed to think that this was sufficient to admit me to the doctoral program.

**Maas:** The year you finished your PhD at Toronto (1983), you took up your first teaching job at Michigan State University (MSU). Why did you return to pursue a second PhD?

**Schabas:** In 1984, the History of Science Society started to publish data on the job market. And it was shocking. There were twelve jobs in total in the whole of North America, and only half of those were tenure-track jobs. The other half were temporary jobs. And the one I held, a one-year post in STS (science and technology studies) at Michigan State, was one of those six. It was beyond scary. Now, academia was very hard in the mid-eighties in general. A lot of my cohort from Toronto suffered in the same way as I did, finding one-year jobs here or there, and it was very hard to get out of that rut. So I had to be realistic that there might be no future and for that reason, I decided to start a PhD in economics, as a fallback, not to mention to learn more economics.

**Maas:** And then at a certain point, you went to Wisconsin-Madison.

**Schabas:** Yes, but that was after two more jobs. After teaching STS at MSU for one and a half years, and then teaching economics at Michigan for one semester while completing the Master's, I got a two-year job in the philosophy department, at Boulder, Colorado. They had expressed an interest in the philosophy of economics, and I had hoped it would turn into a permanent job, but it didn't. And then I got the jackpot. I got offers from

Harvard and Wisconsin. Wisconsin has one of the oldest history of science departments in the world. It was far beyond my aspirations. I never thought I would get an academic job as good as that.

**Maas:** And that was a tenure-track job?

**Schabas:** Yes. I already had the Mellon Fellowship to go to Harvard for a year, and Wisconsin agreed that I could come a year later. So I did. Harvard proved to be very stimulating and inspiring, and for the first time I felt respected as a young woman scholar. The senior professors, Everett Mendelsohn, Gerald Holton, and I. Bernard Cohen, had read my work before I first met them in September, and this amazed me.

I taught only one course at Harvard, a seminar in the history of the social sciences, and I also oversaw Tim Alborn's comprehensive exam in the history of economics. In the spring, Harvard asked me to stay on as an assistant professor, not on tenure track, mind you. I regret not taking that because the intellectual life at Harvard is second to none. I have never been in another place where you have uplifting encounters almost daily. I audited Amartya Sen's graduate course on rationality. He was brand new to Harvard then. And I audited the non-neoclassical economics course taught by Stephen Marglin and Juliet Schor. That year at Harvard also gave me the time to finish my Jevons book. I had worked hard on it at Boulder but needed another semester without teaching to finish it.

**Maas:** How did you get it launched as a book?

**Schabas:** Everyone at Harvard will have one lunch with you and you have to make the most of it. I. B. Cohen, the great historian of science, had lunch with me sometime in March and he was already intrigued with Jevons. So we had our lunch and he said, "Well, I'd love to read your book manuscript." A couple of weeks later, this happened with another wonderful scholar, Robert Nye, who was visiting at Harvard. They both read it. I gave it to them on the Friday. By Monday, they both had told me they had called up the same editor, unbeknownst to each other, at Princeton University Press, Ed Tenner, and told him he had to publish it. So here is this editor at Princeton getting two distinguished scholars, calling him on the same day. And the fact that they read it over the weekend, I mean, I don't even do that. Warren Samuels was like that, too. He could read anything on the day you gave it to him. His desk was always clean. I learned to do this when I became department head, but I am now constantly behind.

**Maas:** So that's how your Jevons book got published with Princeton. And then you went to Wisconsin?

**Schabas:** This is when the history of chemistry comes in. The tenure-track job at Wisconsin was the first hire they had done in fifteen or more years and it was to replace a person retiring; he had specialized in the history of chemistry, but in the ad they stated that they were willing to consider other fields. I applied. I got an interview and I could tell it had gone very well. By the way, they had no women, so they really had a gun at their head to hire their first woman. I got the job, even though most of them had no idea what the history of economics was about. One member in the department championed my cause, William Coleman. I had reviewed his book for *HOPE* and he really liked it. *Death Is a Social Disease* is about the medical statistician Louis René Villermé in early nineteenth-century France, a great book. Coleman had spent a year with Mary Morgan, Ted Porter, Lorraine Daston, and Nancy Cartwright at Bielefeld, working on the history

of probability. So he overlapped with our field, but, alas, he died of leukemia the year I was at Harvard. I believe he was only in his fifties.

It was a challenging job, and I found myself always walking on eggshells. Wisconsin had just experienced a wave of new hires, and there was considerable pressure to hire women. Someone had set up monthly social meetings for us, and I learned that others were also finding it very challenging. Many of us, including myself, left in the first five years. A couple of years after I left (I held the post for four years), I had a lengthy interview with someone at the Department of Justice in Washington, because they were considering a class action suit against the University of Wisconsin, to rectify the attrition of recently appointed women faculty. But the case was given up when the main advocate moved to a different department, so nothing came of the suit.

I don't want to speak ill of people, so I think I shouldn't say much more. I was in a small department in the history of science but forged ties with the philosophers one floor above. Dan Hausman had come the year before me and had just started the journal *Economics and Philosophy*. He asked me to become the first book review editor. I didn't hesitate for a minute, both because I knew the value of book reviews and because I wished to keep my philosophy profile alive. I held the post for ten years.

Each of the places I taught were different when it came to handling young women colleagues. Harvard was the best, partly, I think, because they had produced a number of remarkable scholars: Lorraine Daston, Katharine Parker, and Joan Richards, to name just a few. When I left Wisconsin for York, I found it to be very supportive as well. My own department at University of British Columbia had only one woman when I was hired in 2001, but now we are up to ten, with a faculty of about twenty-five. So we are doing well. There's no need to talk about it anymore. Canadian universities never had affirmative action policies, but our job ads spell out the preference for equity candidates.

**Maas:** When you left Madison, you left for Toronto?

**Schabas:** Yes, for York University, but I took a detour to Duke for four months because I had a large grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) that gave me a semester free of teaching. I had planned to stay in Wisconsin but Mary Morgan was visiting at Duke that year, and she and her husband encouraged me to spend the winter there. They found me a lovely house to rent, and the sojourn was wonderful, as I'm sure many readers of this journal could attest, having spent time at Duke themselves.

Every Monday at Duke, Craufurd Goodwin, Roy Weintraub, Neil De Marchi, Bob Coats, Mary, and myself would meet for lunch. Neil was chair of the economics department but he taught one course, on Adam Smith, which I audited and loved. Neil, Mary, and I had our own reading group on Bernard Mandeville. We called it our Bees. So much fun!

**Maas:** Were not you and Mary Morgan for a long time the only two women in the History of Economics Society (HES)? How did you meet?

**Schabas:** Mary and I were not the only women at the HES conferences. There were other women who would come: Karen Vaughn, Ingrid Rima, Nancy Wulwick, Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson, and, soon, Evelyn Forget and Sandra Peart. Ingrid and Karen were particularly wonderful mentors to me. Both of them would always make an effort to see how I was doing. My very first meeting was in Pittsburgh, in 1984, and I drove there with John Davis and Zohreh Emami, who were both in the field, and in graduate school at

MSU. The way the HES conference worked was different then from the way it works now. You didn't present your paper. It had to be submitted in advance and someone else critiqued it for about ten minutes. As the author, you had perhaps five minutes to respond and then there was Q&A. I had submitted the same paper the summer before to *HOPE*. It challenged Neil De Marchi's position on Mill and Jevons. Well, who was assigned to critique my paper at the HES? Mark Blaug. He was strongly critical, as I recall, or, since I came to know him later on, just being himself. But being the confident person that I am, I held my own. And unbeknownst to me, Craufurd and Neil were in the audience and they came up afterwards, introduced themselves, and gave me nice praise. Not only that, Craufurd told me then and there my paper was accepted for publication. It was a wonderful moment, a publication in a journal I much admired and the beginning of a good rapport with both Neil and Craufurd (and Mark, for that matter). Neil told me that there was another young woman at the meetings named Mary Morgan. The next day, we found ourselves washing our hands at adjacent sinks in the women's washroom and looked at each other: You must be Mary? I asked; You must be Margaret? she replied. And that's how we met.

**Maas:** You said you went to Duke in 1991 on an NSF grant. What was that grant about?

**Schabas:** Well, I think it was to start the next book that became *The Natural Origins of Economics*. But I can't be sure.

**Maas:** The NSF grant was in 1991, the *Natural Origins* came out in 2005. What happened in the meanwhile?

**Schabas:** Well, I suppose it took me ten years to write. I know I turned it into the press in 2001, just before leaving Toronto for my University of British Columbia (UBC) post. But I needed another year or so to revise it in light of the referee reports. So I must have submitted it in 2003 and it took two more years to be released.

**Maas:** Why did it take so long to get published?

**Schabas:** Well, I became a single mother in 1997, and I suppose that is part of the story. But my next book took even longer. So I have no excuse there, other than the fact that I published two co-edited books in that decade as well.

**Maas:** We'll get to your recent book on Hume, but let's first talk a bit more about the intermittent years. You secured a stable position at York University, in philosophy, and you became a mother. And you continued to publish many articles and book chapters. I remember one of them for an edited volume by I. B. Cohen and another one for Bernie Lightman for a book on Victorian science.

**Schabas:** Yes, I. B. Cohen took one of my early Jevons articles in *Victorian Studies* and I rewrote it a little for his edited volume on the natural sciences and the social sciences. It's a great title: "From Political Economy to Market Mechanics: The Jevonian Moment in the History of Economics."

**Maas:** Mark Blaug once said to me that if you have a title, you're in the game. Does that feel the same for you?

**Schabas:** Not really, but I have been praised for my titles; many liked the title of my Jevons book, for example.<sup>7</sup> I'm not sure we have the right title for the recent book on Hume, but we've been getting compliments for the phrase "a philosopher's economist."<sup>8</sup> Carl Wennerlind is optimistic that it will become a kind of catchphrase. Months after we decided on it, I discovered that it had already been coined by Richard Sturn. I knew his article well, so the phrase must have been there somewhere in the back of my mind all along.

I didn't know that claim by Mark Blaug, but I agree with it to some extent. MSU, where I held my first job, is an agricultural school and I remember being amazed that one could do a PhD in packaging. And I thought, that's what life is about, building a better egg carton. So, yes, I suppose Mark had a point; packaging is really important.

**Maas:** Does packaging also pertain to the history of economics itself? One of the things that you wrote about is how and for which audience to package the history of economics. That was and still is an important discussion in our community. Where are we going? Where do we belong? I seem to remember your first contribution on this was in *HOPE* and then a second in a supplementary *HOPE* volume a decade later.

**Schabas:** "Breaking Away" was the first one. And then the second was "Coming Together."<sup>9</sup> Roy Weintraub was the associate editor of *HOPE*, with Neil, and he was in charge of these symposia. For the first one, Roy asked me to write the lead article and then it was sent out to about ten scholars for brief commentary. This was before someone like Phil Mirowski had shifted over to the HPS department at Notre Dame. When Roy commissioned it, I was still at Wisconsin's history of science department. One of the things I always wanted to promote, and I'm very pleased to think it has taken hold in our community, is to call the field the "history of economics" because it's so important to look at not just the ideas as a kind of rarefied body of thought but to address the institutions and the social milieu, as Bob Coats was doing. You don't want to just do the history of economic thought.

When I wrote "Breaking Away," its position seemed to me to be a no-brainer. There is a science or a social science called "economics." And you need to do its history and do it well for its own sake. My view is that a lot of the history of economics in the past was written only for contemporary economists to consume and that's a disservice. As I showed in "Coming Together," a lot of people in the broader world of history and philosophy of science are very keen to understand what happened in the history of economics. I also think a number of scholars in an earlier generation were trying to prove something to economists. I'm not sure what they were trying to prove, but they seemed to want the approval or the blessings of the economists, much like a father to a son.

<sup>7</sup> Schabas, Margaret. 1990. *A World Ruled by Number: William Stanley Jevons and the Rise of Mathematical Economics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Schabas, Margaret, and Carl Wennerlind. 2020. *A Philosopher's Economist: Hume and the Rise of Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>9</sup> Editor's note: Schabas, Margaret. 1992. "Breaking Away: History of Economics as History of Science." *History of Political Economy* 24 (1): 187–203. Schabas, Margaret. 2002. "Coming Together: History of Economics as History of Science." *History of Political Economy* 34 (5): 208–225.

This tended to make the field very Whiggish, a claim that Paul Samuelson promoted.<sup>10</sup> For my standpoint, that distorts the record; it makes me cringe. You're not capturing what actually transpired and bringing out what's most interesting, which is usually what happens behind the scenes, what people did unwittingly. History is about irony and the paths not taken.

So that was my position. I didn't mean that people should have their paychecks reduced by leaving economics departments. I simply wanted the field to adopt a different sensibility. It resembled other beleaguered fields done outside mainstream history of science, namely, the history of psychology, the history of mathematics, and the history of medicine. The history of medicine had been held back when it was mostly written by retiring doctors, but it turned a corner when scholars such as Roy Porter became specialists while in the field of history of science, and thus without a stake in the game. That is what I wanted for our field, too. Now, fortunately, I think our field has always had amazing scholars, many of whom I have named already. But I still had that sense that some of them were misdirecting their energies by writing for economists and not for a broader and more interdisciplinary group of scholars. There's so much cross-fertilization between economics and other sciences, as, say, in the efforts to promote military ends in the Cold War USA.

**Maas:** With Neil De Marchi you organized such a cross-disciplinary conference for the early modern period, and *Economies in the Age of Newton* is the volume that came out in 2003. Can you tell us how that conference came about?

**Schabas:** Neil is the one who pitched the idea that we do this volume on the overlap between early modern history of science and economics. I came up with the title, post facto. Neil was always a bit sceptical of how the volume was received. But actually, historians of science know and appreciate it because there isn't really anything else quite like it. Neil came up to Toronto, in February 1999 as I recall, and we brainstormed about what themes could be developed and who might be an appropriate contributor. And then we put out the call for papers, and had about forty submissions. We selected a subset, but the strong response tells you there's a lot more work to be done on the subject. Then, as you know because you have a chapter in the book, on Thomas Reid, we held a conference at Duke as was the case for all the *HOPE* supplementary volumes. We sent out the papers for refereeing and oversaw the revisions. For a brief spell, it had a nice cover as a book issued by Duke University Press and then the cover mysteriously disappeared.

With Carl Wennerlind, I published a co-edited book, which was done in a manner similar to the one with Neil, and at much the same time. Both of those were done in the early 2000s, soon after I moved to Vancouver. Carl and I had already each published a few articles on Hume's economics. We had met at the HES meetings in Greensboro, in 1999. First we organized a conference, at Barnard College in 2003, and brought together many leading Hume scholars. What we had not anticipated was the fact that many of them had frosty relations based on grudges reaching back for decades. So our gathering proved to break the ice, so to speak, and helped restore more amicable rapports between

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<sup>10</sup> Editor's note: Samuelson, Paul. 1987. "Out of the Closet: A Program for the Whig History of Economic Science: Keynote Address at History of Economics Society Boston Meeting, June 20, 1987." *History of Economics Society Bulletin* 9 (1): 51–60.

the elder scholars in the field. The book was very successful, and became a paperback within a year. The last essay in the book is by Istvan Hont, one of the last things he wrote before his untimely death in 2013. The title is less imaginative than my others. It's called *David Hume's Political Economy*. I have now come to grasp the fact that "political economy" as a phrase was not much in use in the mid-eighteenth century.

**Maas:** Then you co-authored your book on Hume's economics with Carl Wennerlind, *A Philosopher's Economist: Hume and the Rise of Capitalism*. Tell me about the collaboration.

**Schabas:** I think Carl and I brought complementary strengths to that book. He's much more steeped in early modern history than I am, while I brought my philosophical training to the project. For this, I found remarkable Hume's efforts to argue for the scientific standing of economics, as well as to devise proto-econometric methods to identify and measure leading indicators and mean-reverting norms. There's a lot of formalistic thinking in Hume that other scholars have discovered: for example, Robert Sugden, Russell Harden, and André Lapidus. Hume's *Political Discourses* (1752) is a literary work, but underneath, and this was even more true for his *Treatise of Human Nature*, he was much more scientific than meets the eye.

At this moment in time Isaac Newton has not yet become the grandiose figure that he does become for the next century and a half. His appeal to the occult force of gravity was still challenged in the 1730s and '40s when Hume did most of his philosophical work. The Cartesians and the Leibnizians were still more powerful, particularly in France, the center of the Enlightenment. Of the three grand systems, Newton ended up as the winner, mostly due to important empirical confirmations that you find in Adam Smith's essay on the history of astronomy. Pierre Louis Maupertuis measured the shape of the earth in Lapland and showed that it was flatter at the poles, and thus conformed to Newton's theory, and not René Descartes's. Alexis Clairaut helped figure out the lunar orbit and made some headway on the three-body problem, but above all, Halley's Comet returned more or less as predicted, in 1759. It was the best confirmation of the Newtonian system.

But even there, some scholars argue that Newton became unequivocally the reigning authority only in the 1770s or 1780s. Because Hume wrote his *Treatise* in France in the 1730s, and his later work on philosophy and economics mostly in the 1740s, he did not write with the understanding that physics had yet achieved the resounding status it came to have with the Newtonian system. As he, and Smith also, argued, it seemed that physicists differed on the fundamentals and could be wildly wrong, as, say, with the system of Cartesian vortices. At least in economics, they each argued, one had common sense to indicate when the reasoning had become too fictitious.

**Maas:** But Hume doesn't quite talk about "economics" or "the economy"?

**Schabas:** Well, he does but only once or twice. He actually more often calls it the "science of commerce" or the "science of politics," but he refers to the physiocrats as the "economists." Strictly speaking, no one called it "economics." But hardly any called it "political economy" either, just Antoine de Montchrétien, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and later James Steuart. That term gets entrenched only in the nineteenth century, with Jean-Baptiste Say, Malthus, and Ricardo. I think because we know very well that "economics" replaced "political economy" with Alfred Marshall, we have assumed that



this term was in use in the eighteenth century, but it was not except in rare cases. So we have to be more careful. As a historian of science, if you do this history of chemistry, you still talk about chemistry in the seventeenth century, even if people didn't necessarily use the term. In doing the history of physics, you start with the Greeks and trace its development over the centuries. I think the same holds true for the history of economics, at least for Western thought. Plato, Xenophon, and above all Aristotle laid down some general principles, about the value of labor, commerce, money, and prices. Aristotle asked the most important question in the entire history of economics: What is a price? There's no better question to ask. And so, to me, Aristotle is part of the history of economics. He's really an important part of it. And for that matter, so is Thomas Aquinas and certainly Thomas Mun and Mandeville, whether they call it that or not.

**Maas:** One of the things that I found quite convincing in the book is that you argue that economics nourished Hume's work as a philosopher.

**Schabas:** Yes. And I love that word "nourishing." That's a perfect image. There's a standard view that Hume took a break from philosophy, and that he wrote the *Political Discourses* in about a year. He published it in early 1752 and then that's the end of it. What we show is that his thinking about economics was actually deeply rooted in his thinking and activities from an early age, not least because he worked for a merchant or later worked as an accountant—keeping the ship's records—while serving under General St. Clair. This was another discovery I made while perusing the St. Clair papers in Edinburgh, many in Hume's own hand. In 1748, Hume traveled across Europe with St. Clair, from Rotterdam to Vienna, and back through Italy and France. He kept a long diary, and it shows that he was making careful observations about the standards of living, patterns of consumption, the variance of prices, and about war. When he sees the devastation not far from where you are in Flanders fields, he speculates that the French would have to give up the fight and accept a peace treaty because the whole area was so bereft economically. And this is what happened; they signed a treaty before Hume reached Vienna.

Hume witnessed conditions that affirm what Albert Hirschman will call the "Montesquieu–Steuart thesis," namely, that peace comes out of economic trade and prosperity. The more trade there is, the more we will form a world that is peaceful rather than combative. Hume, of course, wants that. He was very committed for his whole life, as my colleague Paul Russell has argued, to promoting a world that is no longer religious. There is a part of him that thinks that the scourge of his world and especially the seventeenth century were the religious wars. He described the Thirty Years War as an "ocean of blood." Hume believed that religion has done more harm than good. He is not opposed to religion as a source of ethical training or education or abating people's fears if that's what they need to do, if they are afraid of death. But his view is, as a stoic, that you just face death with equanimity. You realize we are but a little speck in the universe. Hume read Baruch Spinoza as a young man, and no doubt appreciated the beauty of his arguments that we are part of some eternal order, or, as Hume put it, that we are of no more significance than an oyster. He used that phrase twice. If you cannot come to terms with that and have to turn to religion, so be it. But don't, don't shed blood over it.

So how does this relate to his economics? Well, for Hume, the best path forward to enlightenment is the modern commercial world of a city like London where people of different backgrounds meet, converse, and shape one another. Hume and Voltaire both

acknowledged that the London stock market is full of people from about a dozen different language or religious groups, and that they worship only money. And that's good because it gets rid of all the other hostilities that led to bloodshed. It is an appeal to the argument of *doux commerce*. And Hume's specie-flow mechanism helps to bolster the Montesquieu–Steuart thesis as well, since it achieves a global justice under ideal frictionless conditions. Hume adopted as his mission the goal of building a more enlightened, peaceful, tolerant, and urbane world. He loved the cultural life of the inner city, that men and women flock together and converse. This is something Roy Porter wrote about very admirably. That eighteenth-century England is when husbands and wives finally talk to each other as equals. Hume believed that with the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the unification of Scotland in 1707, Britain had never been better. It did not mean there was no room for improvement, but there was also much to celebrate. Of course, there were horrible scourges, and Hume deplored them all: the ever-mounting public debt, the practices of slavery, colonization, even the press gangs. All of these needed to be removed. But the foundations for the path forward, Hume thought, was exemplified by Georgian Britain. That is the world he wanted to cement more than anything.

**Maas:** Let me ask you about your own life as a traveler. I met you at various places and I wondered about your affiliations. You moved to Vancouver, but then I heard you were in London because you took up the Ludwig Lachmann Fellowship (2006–07). I am pretty sure that if there was no lockdown this year, you might have been in Berlin or Moscow or Japan. Tell me, how do you manage such a traveling life as an academic and a mother?

**Schabas:** Well, a lot of things flash through my mind on this. I think of David Lodge's hilarious book, *Changing Places*, in which the professors flew all over the world to conferences. I am guilty as charged. I love to travel and would look very much forward to getting back on a plane. I do get chided by friends here in Vancouver that my ecological footprint is too large. But I think that the trips are invaluable, for the unanticipated experiences, the chance conversation with someone in the hallway. That's how I met my co-authors, Neil and Carl, by going to HES meetings. In Vancouver I don't have anyone in the same field, while in Toronto I was spoiled. Sam Hollander and I ran a fortnightly York–Toronto workshop for about eight years. He found some funds, so we were able to bring in invited speakers as well as platform our local talents. This included Don Moggridge, Sue Howson, Avi Cohen, Ted Winslow, and John Smithin, as well as some coming from nearby, such as Bob Dimand and David Laidler. I certainly miss that. When I came to UBC, I realized that I had no close colleagues, but I found other ways to collaborate or bring in scholars. Malcolm Rutherford visited regularly because his daughter was a student at UBC. Even though I lack a community, I certainly don't regret the move to Vancouver for a moment. I am able to teach large upper-level courses each term on the history and philosophy of economics, running from Aristotle to Sen.

**Maas:** How did you manage to travel as a single mother?

**Schabas:** Well, I had help. I always had people in my family; my brother and sister-in-law in Toronto were really good at taking my son for a few days here and there. I did two sabbaticals in England, one at Clare Hall in Cambridge and one at the London School of Economics, as a Lachmann Fellow. And in both cases, my brother in London and his wife also helped out a bit. So I'm lucky. I've also hired many sitters.

One of the techniques I learned pretty early on is this—and this is a good tip for people who are parenting on their own and bringing their child to a conference—I write to the conference organizers maybe a week and a half before the event. And I say, you know you have those people who sit at a desk when people register and they're usually students? Well, after the first day, they just sit there and there's not much going on. Do you think my son, who's say five or six, could just be plunked there with a bunch of Lego and play for a couple of hours and then I'll come back and check on him and take him to the bathroom and then feed him and then maybe bring him back? And I would pay them well. It always worked out.

**Maas:** Margaret, you have been, and still are, an active member of various scholarly societies, among others, of course, the History of Economics Society for which you served as its president in 2013. I think it's something that belongs also to an academic life, taking responsibility for where you are and the communities you're in, whether that's, say, the faculty that you are affiliated with or the societies that you feel attached to. But how did it work for you?

**Schabas:** Well, I tend to accept invitations to serve on editorial boards, on committees, adjudicating prizes and honors, etc. I think I was on the executive of the HES a good ten years before I was president, maybe even before that, back in the days of people like Donald Walker. I think it is really important to do these services. At UBC, we have an understanding that the normal professor does 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service. At present, I have a heavier service load and a lighter teaching load, because I am seconded for two years as senior advisor to the provost, on academic freedom. I have repaired the website for him, and am proud of this, and also handle various crises that crop up from time to time, including issues that arose from the pandemic and the transition to online teaching. And I take on the burden of extra-mural service. I believe that it's very important to referee for journals, and adjudicate tenure files and promotion files. After all, we have the privilege of tenure. Such job security is uncommon in this world and must not be taken for granted.

**Maas:** What advice do you have for graduate students in our field?

**Schabas:** Well, just follow your passions and don't listen too carefully to anyone who tells you not to pursue the history of economics, or you'll never make it. Just persevere and do it well.

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view a bibliography of Margaret Schabas's publications, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837222000025>