

Carol Clover Transcript

00:00:27:13 - 00:01:08:28

Mark Sandberg

My name is Mark Sandberg, and I'm a professor in the Department of Scandinavian and the Film & Media department. And it's a great pleasure for me to introduce to you today my colleague and former dissertation advisor Carol Clover. For many years ago, as we have known each other and worked together for many years as both student mentor and colleagues in the Department of Scandinavian, Carol is the emerita professor of the Class of 1936 and has had appointments in the departments of Scandinavian and Comp Lit and Rhetoric and Film Studies.

00:01:10:16 - 00:01:38:02

Sandberg

So I think to start with it would probably make sense to have you talk a little bit about your background and your early years, not so much to create a biography, but maybe to talk about the way that being a native Californian and growing up in California and experiencing the California public education system and all of that, how that plays an important role in your connection to UC Berkeley.

00:01:38:02 - 00:01:42:22

Sandberg

So maybe start off by telling us a little bit about your early years.

00:01:43:17 - 00:02:12:18

Carol Clover

Well, thank you, Mark, for that. I yes, I am a Californian, born and raised in California, as were both my parents. It's kind of unusual in Berkeley to meet Californians, but I and my brothers grew up in Sacramento during the war years, and some of my earliest memories were of sirens and bomb scares. Because don't forget, we on the Pacific Coast were also at war.

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Clover

And my father, who comes from Los Angeles, was a radio engineer, and his he installed and serviced radio stations up and down the West Coast, but mainly in California. And this counted as civil defense during World War Two. But the minute the war was over, we fled the city and went to the country. My mother's family's ranching area up there.

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Clover

And so I spent the rest of my life in rural California, Shasta County. And it was a world of you know, we lived on a small ranch right next to a large family ranch. And it was a world of cattle and horses and crops. And, you know, I was I grew up in a very musical family.

00:03:09:03 - 00:03:31:17

Clover

And we had other we knew other musical people. So we did a lot of playing together. And the other family we were closest to was another family that had fled Santa Cruz during the war and moved to North. And that was the Rhodes family. And they we called each other our God families, even though we were not technically that.

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Clover

But my God, Sister Lynn, I had two, Lynn and Jean but are still in my very much in my life. So it was a rural life, but we made occasional trips to the two cities, you know, to Los Angeles, to visit my father's family or to San Francisco to go to the symphony and to Berkeley, actually, because my parents both had friends in Berkeley.

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Clover

So so I knew I knew California cities as well. I went to a one room school, a tiny, quaint building that eight grades in one room had a little bell on the top. And I went in that up, here's a little story. In 1948, when I was eight years old, there was a bad winter storm that came and it blew part of the school roof off.

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Clover

And so my father, who was president of the school board, consulted with my mother, who was the president of the PTA, and they went to the county office to ask what could be done about this? And the county said, this is not a county issue. This is a state issue, so you need to go to Sacramento. So my father and I drove to Sacramento, which was a four-hour drive or something, waited in a line in a building and got to the window.

00:04:58:09 - 00:05:26:09

Clover

And they were interested in hearing this story and they said, Just wait a minute. And the guy at the window disappeared and came back after a while and he said, We think this is something that the governor would like to you should discuss with the governor. And it was clear they sought the photo op in this. Right. So we were walked over to the governor's mansion and all the talk of the Sacramento Bee photographers was that we're out watching this.

00:05:26:16 - 00:05:36:24

Clover

I still have pictures of it and went in a talk with the governor. And this is Earl Warren or "Jarl Varren" was his birth name. He's Norwegian background.

00:05:37:02 - 00:05:41:02

Sandberg

Oh is that right? Yeah.

00:05:41:02 - 00:06:07:16

Clover

And he gave a speech. I was seated on the side of his desk for the photographers, and he gave me a little speech about how even though I went to this tiny one room school, I was getting the same education as the kids in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and it was the best school system, you know, school system in the in the world, certainly in the US.

00:06:07:16 - 00:06:20:16

Clover

And he said possibly the world, he said and when you get you can go to junior college, you can go to college, you can go to the University of California, you can go to Berkeley. So I think of Earl Warren now and then.

00:06:20:26 - 00:06:40:13

Sandberg

And that that was kind of at the height of the California system when it was really functioning. Yeah. Did did you feel like when you were in Shasta County that you were, that you didn't have access to everything? Or did you feel like things were anything that you wanted to learn or do you could do?

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Clover

Well, not anything but but lots of things. For one thing I should mention that when I was in elementary school, a bookmobile came once a week and you could check out books and so forth. And an Instrument Mobile came once a month. You could check out any instrument you wanted and try it out for a month and then turn it in and get another instrument.

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Clover

So my brothers and I tried out all kinds of things. One of my brothers tried out-little kid brother tried out a French horn, and he could hardly hold it up. Anyway, it was so we had just incredible and we had a great

library, wonderful public library in Redding, which was a bit of a drive, but still we would go there regularly.

00:07:25:01 - 00:07:28:12

Clover

So no, I did not feel deprived.

00:07:28:19 - 00:07:28:28

Sandberg

Yeah.

00:07:29:18 - 00:07:30:17

Clover

... to be in the country.

00:07:31:11 - 00:07:47:20

Sandberg

So when you decided to go off to college, you moved to the Bay Area. And maybe it'd be interesting to hear you talk a little bit about what you saw as your possible areas of study. What did you think you might study when you went to college and how did that turn out?

00:07:49:13 - 00:08:34:07

Clover

I assumed I just took for granted that I would do music because that had been, had loomed so large in my in my childhood. And I applied to San Francisco State University and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. They had a joint program, so I was accepted into that. So I came to San Francisco for that. It didn't work out very well because after a couple of weeks I was assigned an advisor in the Conservatory part of this and the advisor said, Which of the three lines do you want to do?

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Clover

Do you want to do? The lines are. He told me about the three lines and he said there's composition and musicology and performance. And I said, composition, because that's the whole point for me. And he said, Well, that's not open to girls, so you'll have to choose one or the other two. And I didn't want to choose the other two, so I stopped going to my classes at the conservatory and paid attention to my classes over at San Francisco State.

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Clover

And I happened to be taking a class over there on - a required undergraduate course - and in the English department. And it was in the history of world epic. Okay. So we read *Gilgamesh*, you know, *The Iliad*, *The Aeneid*, *The Odyssey*, on, marching on until the last one on the list was Njal's Saga. And that one just blew me into kingdom come.

00:09:36:21 - 00:10:13:09

Clover

I just that was just the best thing I'd ever read in my life. I really loved it. And so I went to the library and, uh, found other sagas. You know, I looked up in the card catalog, and I found other sagas, and I read those, too, and I just absolutely loved that. But the whole thing sort of stopped short when I, I mean, I got married at that point, just six days after I turned 20, and my husband was accepted to Berkeley as a graduate student in sociology.

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Clover

So we moved to Berkeley, and in 1961 I had my first child and that's my daughter Greta, and I had a second child. And the following year, 1962, that's my son Joshua. But I was taking courses during that time. I was allowed to sit in on courses and I, at some point along the way, got accepted as a student at Berkeley.

00:10:42:02 - 00:10:45:09

Clover

So I was actually taking courses toward graduation.

00:10:45:28 - 00:10:50:16

Sandberg

So you took courses before you were actually transferred? Officially, is that right?

00:10:50:23 - 00:11:34:18

Clover

I was, I took one course before I was officially transferred, and then I started doing other courses and then I would start taking the required courses. So I took, um, lots - three biol.. serious biology courses and one physics course. Physics was from Edward Teller, by the way. And actually I remember it was a huge class held in Wheeler Auditorium, and I remember we all, we had TA's, we had sections and I go once to my TA's office, once to ask a question and as I was waiting to see my TA, I saw that outside his door...

00:11:34:19 - 00:12:00:23

Clover

...there was a little sign that said, you can lead an undergraduate to knowledge, but you can't make her think. That mostly I took biology courses because that was I seemed I felt kind of predestined to do biology. One of my brothers had done biology at Berkeley in graduate school, and the other brother also got a B.A. in biology.

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Clover

And growing up in the country, it just seemed like the natural thing to do.

00:12:06:08 - 00:12:13:03

Sandberg

So. So why am I not interviewing a famous professor of biology right now?

00:12:13:03 - 00:12:41:15

Clover

Because I was going to apply to graduate school in biology. I did my undergraduate biology required courses and I was advised to go introduce myself to the chair of the department to, you know, warn him that I would be applying and sort of brag about who, you know, my background and so forth. So I got all spiffed up and I made an appointment and I got all spiffed up and went over there one day and told him my story.

00:12:41:15 - 00:13:15:03

Clover

And he said, Well, that all sounds very good, but unfortunately we think it's not fair to the taxpayers of California to have girls as graduate students because they end up getting married and having children. And I thought I'd been handed my trump card. I said, I've already had my children. And he said, Oh, well, then you should be home taking care of them.

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Clover

So back to the Njal's Saga. I went to the Scandinavian. You know, I have taken enough I've taken Swedish already because I wanted to study Old Norse on the side. So I, I did that and I was by 1963, I was, I was I was actually divorced, separated and divorced in the mid sixties. So I was on my own with my kids after that.

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Clover

And, and I did Scandinavian as a graduate student.

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Sandberg

And then. So you started in graduate school and you were a single mother of two kids. How did that work? I mean, how did you navigate that through graduate school?

00:14:02:00 - 00:14:40:07

Clover

Well, I one thing to talk about here is the financial support, because it was it was the you know, it was the heyday of the Cold War. Right. And the Congress had passed this, these lavish sort of things about, uh, uh, support for students who are “studying strategic” languages. So and Scandinavian languages counted as strategic because they were not Slavic, but they were on the edge.

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Clover

So, you know, I studied Swedish and Old Norse and Old High German, Middle High German. And I actually did also take two semesters of Russian and one I even took one semester of old Church Slavonic and I got really very considerable support from just from that Fulbright Act. Yeah. That's how it.

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Sandberg

It's, it's always surprised me that the Scandinavian languages got pulled into that because it seemed like they were the “third—way” languages that were outside and outside the Cold War. But I guess the proximity was the reason.

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Clover

Yeah. Yeah, that's what they said. Yeah. I mean I don't think people in French got them right.

00:15:28:16 - 00:15:29:14

Sandberg

Right. Exactly. Yeah.

00:15:29:29 - 00:15:34:04

Clover

It was really Scandinavian and I wasn't the only one who was profiting from this.

00:15:34:09 - 00:15:38:10

Sandberg

Yeah. And you had a you had a Fulbright to Sweden, right? Yes.

00:15:38:19 - 00:15:53:12

Clover

1965 - 66. And again, I went there as a single mother. But, um, there was child care. Swedish child care was, you know, famous worldwide. And it was truly great. My kids still remember it.

00:15:53:20 - 00:15:55:29

Sandberg

Yeah.

00:15:55:29 - 00:16:00:09

Clover

I mean, for example, they had at the child care center, they had mini kitchens.

00:16:00:20 - 00:16:01:04

Sandberg

Uh huh.

00:16:01:11 - 00:16:10:08

Clover

With little tiny stoves and little tiny refrigerators and tables and chairs and ... anyway...

00:16:12:00 - 00:16:36:16

Sandberg

So maybe we could talk a little bit about the intellectual fields that you started to develop while you were in graduate school and how they interest you. So you said a little bit about the Icelandic sagas and especially Njal's Saga, and why they caught your interest. But maybe you could say a little bit more for the audience and explain a little bit about the Icelandic sagas and what makes them a kind of fascinating area of study.

00:16:36:21 - 00:16:37:05

Clover

Okay.

00:16:37:11 - 00:17:04:28

Clover

Well, I yeah, in the Scandinavian department, I again, it was Njal's Saga that got me all into this. And Njal's Saga... there are lots of Icelandic sagas, sagas that were written down in the early Middle Ages. And they but they describe events from the settlement of Iceland in about 800 to the christianization of Iceland in about the year 1000.

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Clover

So that 250-year period, about was is completely fascinating historically. And and in terms of a history of literature, I mean, the sagas are unlike anything else. They're they range in length from 50 pages to, well, Njal's Saga over 300 pages. And so they, they, they're epics in a way they tell about the founding of a country and so on and so forth, except there's something wrong with them as epics.

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Clover

They're in prose and epics are all in verse. It's the definition almost of an epic. So that makes the Icelandic sagas... they're going to be Europe's only prose epics or its first two novels.

00:17:53:08 - 00:18:15:00

Clover

And that just fascinated me in itself. And but also just reading the sagas, it's this fantastic reading. I mean, just to learn about a culture that in that much detail, it's about everyday life. They're not epics that are about grand wars and so forth. They're about families and squabbles in the neighborhood and.

00:18:17:06 - 00:18:33:02

Sandberg

And you were also really interested in how these long forms came out of oral storytelling, right? And about how what the relationship between the written form was. Yes. And the and the kind of kernels of oral storytelling that preceded them.

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Clover

Yeah. Yeah. I'm definitely interested in that. I've done a lot of work on that. But yeah, it's kind of technical to talk about.

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Sandberg

Okay.

00:18:42:12 - 00:19:22:00

Clover

But I will say this, that one of the things I loved and still love about the sagas is that they are so understated.

They're, you know, they never will talk, there's never any flamboyance about language, about people's feelings or anything like that. It's just and everything is subtle. And that's true of its humor, too. There are always understated jokes, you know, that are in them and I remember and sometimes you can read a saga and now and once or twice or three times and then and then you finally get it, you know?

00:19:22:00 - 00:19:35:13

Clover

And I remember once that happened to me, I've written, you know, Saga six times or something, and I read it for the seventh time and, and I, I, I got the joke for the first time.

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Clover

Chapter 63, I think. I was like, you know, somebody in Iceland told a joke and somebody in California laughed. A thousand years later.

00:19:46:09 - 00:19:47:12

Sandberg

That's right. Yeah.

00:19:48:19 - 00:20:18:16

Sandberg

I mean, I don't know if you remember this, but I took Old Norse from you when I first came to Berkeley and started graduate school. And I remember how infectious your enthusiasm was for the sagas and and and, you know, sort of felt the tug of medieval studies, even as I was more of a modern student. And I also remember that you used to go around evangelizing for Njal's Saga and giving people copies.

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Sandberg

Actually, there probably people who will watch this that have gotten a copy of Njal's Saga from you and I also gave one to my son at one point and he was totally enthralled by it. And so so there really is something kind of engaging about this material for anybody who encounters it. I think.

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Clover

Yeah.

00:20:46:04 - 00:20:56:24

Sandberg

I, I think you also got interested in legal procedure by reading the sagas and did some work on that. Maybe you could say a bit more about your interest in law.

00:20:56:24 - 00:21:32:01

Clover

Oh, yeah. Well, the sagas are about often about lawsuits. People either fued if they have a disagreement or they got take it to court outdoors,... Iceland is actually the world's first parliamentary democracy. And that was during this era. Yeah, the legal. and it's just fascinating to see the first instance of the adversarial trial because the Icelandic trials are the ancestors of our trials and the Anglo-American world.

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Clover

And you know that that was a society, it's a kind of legal system that came into being because there was no autocrat at the top, there was no king. So people had to sort it out themselves. So they created this legal system. And Njal's Saga has a trial that goes on for 30 pages. And people who do the history of legal process all know that trial.

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Clover

It's very well known.

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Sandberg

It's not boring either.

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Clover

No, it's not, it's really interesting. And I think that made me so interested in law that I actually got I started thinking, making other kinds of speculations about kind of the social consequences of that legal system and I mean, I think there are lots of literary consequences in our world. I think detective narrative comes from the underlying legal system and, and, and certain other things too.

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Clover

But I was, I was really quite taken with that and started at some point I thought I would write a book on, on this, on the effects of the adversary structure. And then I started going wherever I went in the world, I started going, finding courtrooms and going to trials. So I've been to trials in I think 13 countries.

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Sandberg

And you had a fundamental experience on jury duty that also contributed to.

00:23:10:07 - 00:23:11:04

Sandberg

this as well.

00:23:11:15 - 00:23:11:25

Clover

Yeah, that too.

00:23:11:25 - 00:23:12:06

Sandberg

Yeah.

00:23:12:18 - 00:23:35:07

Clover

Yeah. But I did want to say that the most interesting trial I went to it in another country was in South Africa because that's both the Dutch and the English, and that's two different legal systems that got smushed together there. And they've created this kind of bastard trial system. So that was really fascinating too. Yeah.

00:23:35:07 - 00:24:09:18

Sandberg

So this is going to sound like an arbitrary next question, which is that another field of interest that you developed during your time in college and graduate school was in film, and that we'll get back to how this all fits together. But back in the sixties when you were an undergrad, I am assuming there weren't actually film studies departments anywhere that that was just an emerging institutional structure at that point.

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Sandberg

Often they were in English departments or COMPLIT departments or other places, which.

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Clover

Was, I don't think film was even taught as a subject in those departments for quite a while actually.

00:24:21:02 - 00:24:27:21



Sandberg

Yeah. So, so how did you become interested in film on the side, so to speak?

00:24:27:22 - 00:24:56:02

Clover

Okay. Well, I... when I first moved to San Francisco, okay, in '59, I was living out near my, the Conservatory of Music in San Francisco State. The conservatory was out out there then in the west part of San Francisco. And there was the Surf Theater. I don't know if you know the Surf Theater. It was an, an art film theater, although I have no idea about concept was at the time.

00:24:56:02 - 00:25:03:10

Clover

But I just I knew that people who were the cool kids in San Francisco State were going to the cinema so.

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Clover

So I went myself to the Surf and they were showing Wild Strawberries. It's the first. And I also because I grew up in the country, I barely had been to movie theaters. Yeah. You know, maybe five or six times in my life. And so going to the Surf Theater and seeing this amazing movie with subtitles I had never seen, subtitles, it was really kind of mind boggling, and I wanted to see more.

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Clover

So I started going to movies and I got married and moved to Berkeley and, uh, there were lots of little theaters in Berkeley too, on Telegraph Avenue, on Euclid Avenue. Uh, two more, three more on Shattuck Avenue. Little ones. We're talking art theaters. Yeah, and I really. I really loved those.

00:26:00:24 - 00:26:14:07

Sandberg

It just struck me that 1959 would be the year that Wild Strawberries had just come out. And so you were not seeing it as an art film. It was the latest thing from Sweden. Yeah. Interesting.

00:26:14:08 - 00:26:15:29

Clover

Yeah, I really, I really loved them.

00:26:16:24 - 00:26:32:19

Sandberg

Yeah. So, so, so let's start maybe talking about how you started your career as a professor and when you were finishing up your dissertation, you got this contact from Harvard about a position there. So say a bit about that and then.

00:26:32:29 - 00:27:03:21

Clover

Yeah, well I, I came to the point I was writing my dissertation not finished, but there, there were I think 3 jobs available then sort of in my field early northern Europe and one of them was at the University of Washington, one at University of Texas, and one was at Harvard. And I think they were interested in me and Harvard...

00:27:04:16 - 00:27:25:07

Clover

...I think they were all three interested in me. But of course, the Big H, right? I mean, I wanted to go to Harvard and I actually got a counter offer from Berkeley when I got the Harvard offer, which is a better offer. But, you know, again, the Big H. I wanted to go there so my kids so I packed up and went to Harvard and it was in Comparative Literature and Germanic.

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Sandberg

So you finished up writing the dissertation after you were there, is that right?

00:27:30:05 - 00:27:55:05

Clover

Yeah I. Was, uh. Was, was horrible. That first year I was just busy teaching, but the summer, the first summer I had there. Einar Haugen, a professor, an older professor, let me use his study in the Widener Library for the summer. And that was fantastic. And my kids also went to California to stay with my parents for a while.

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Clover

So I finished my dissertation then.

00:27:58:13 - 00:28:11:23

Sandberg

And then you started off teaching medieval materials and Scandinavian materials and, um, how did the film part of this start up at Harvard?

00:28:12:14 - 00:28:31:08

Clover

Well, before I do that, let me just say, first of all, I did not... I did not love Harvard. Um, I knew some great people in it and the department was very kind to me, but I was, I got the California treatment and...

00:28:31:08 - 00:28:32:00

Sandberg

What was that?

00:28:32:00 - 00:28:47:18

Clover

Oh, it's. You're from California. Where's your surfboard? You're from California. Can you think? I mean, it was harder to be a Californian at Harvard than a woman, I would say. I just took so much grief from being from California.

00:28:47:25 - 00:28:48:03

Sandberg

Huh.

00:28:48:22 - 00:29:26:23

Clover

Um, yeah. I mainly taught medieval Scandinavian, although, and also some modern courses, Ibsen and Strindberg a couple of times. But one day, it was early on, actually like within the first week that I was there, there was a knock on my office door and it was a man who introduced himself as being the head of the Carpenter Center at Harvard, which was, I think then an art museum, but I think it's now called a Center for Visual Arts or something like that.

00:29:28:03 - 00:29:49:05

Clover

And it was he said, "We understand that you do cinema." I said, "Well, sort of." And he said, "We want to teach a course. Would you be willing to teach a course? We can get you all the films to see in advance." And you know, it's Harvard. Yeah, they have deep pockets. So I said, sure. And so they... I was going to teach...."

00:29:49:08 - 00:30:11:29

Clover

...they asked me to teach a course on Ingmar Bergman. So I, they got all the films and that was films like reels of film, you know. Yeah, looking through old projectors. But they brought all the films in advance for

me to see. And then again, when I taught the course, they brought all the films and it was just an incredible kind of infrastructure for teaching.

00:30:12:05 - 00:30:21:19

Clover

Yeah, so that was from then on, I taught film and medieval. I've taught those things together, always.

00:30:21:19 - 00:30:41:00

Sandberg

Yeah, I know we've talked about how in some ways the filmmakers like Bergman, were the Trojan horse that allowed film studies to come into the academy because they were philosophically, you know, challenging and and that things like genre films would not have been able to start.

00:30:41:05 - 00:30:48:17

Clover

That's exactly right. Yeah. Genre film came later, that was. Kind of trashier. Yeah. Yeah. I mean.

00:30:49:27 - 00:31:10:03

Sandberg

I don't know if you remember this too, that when I was a graduate student, then we did a whole semester of independent study together on Ingmar Bergman. That led to my first published article. And so we kind of relived all of the the Bergman work that you had done up to that point. And you handed that Bergman course off to me...

00:31:10:11 - 00:31:15:06

Sandberg

and I handed it off to Linda Rugg. And it's been taught in different ways in the department. Yeah.

00:31:16:01 - 00:31:16:14

Clover

Right.

00:31:16:20 - 00:31:43:23

Sandberg

Um, so I think we've arrived at the kind of question of destiny, which is the one that you've been asked many times, which is how can you possibly be working in such different fields as the sagas and film studies? People think these are probably opposite fields in some ways, and and I've always enjoyed your explanation of that.

00:31:43:23 - 00:31:49:07

Sandberg

So let me sort of sort of ask the question and invite you to do that. Yeah.

00:31:50:06 - 00:32:32:23

Clover

Yes, I've been asked that question countless times. How can you work in two such opposite fields? And my answer is always the same: they're not opposites. They're the same thing, sort of. And... and, you know, the answer to that is this is a long answer, I'm afraid. But it's you know, there there's a term of, especially since I work on genre films, you know, so it's the genre films and my medieval stuff that's those are very similar, same kind of sets of questions and so forth.

00:32:32:23 - 00:32:56:01

Clover

Because, because they're generic, because they're typed, and you're looking, it's the art... art in a closed field. The answer is, how do you, within all the constraints and the rules of the genre, how does it how does it perform kind of in its own way and sometimes brilliantly?

00:32:56:07 - 00:32:56:15

Sandberg  
Yeah.

00:32:56:25 - 00:32:59:23

Clover  
Great genre films, great sagas. Oh.

00:33:00:03 - 00:33:05:19

Sandberg  
Yeah. It's that creativity within constraint that becomes interesting, right? Yeah.

00:33:05:24 - 00:33:32:03

Clover  
And you know, in music, I, I, I love classical music and go to it a lot, but I also love popular music and that's mainly what I play now. It's just play by ear with friends and improvise. And that's art within a closed field, you know, it's the same old set of chords. Yeah, but everything else is a little different.

00:33:33:24 - 00:34:07:15

Sandberg  
I mean, one of the, I think one of the really powerful ideas that I picked up from you when I was in graduate school was just how interesting it was to think comparatively about versions of different things and and how that really opened up a way of, of thinking analytically about, about form. And so I think that's, you know, definitely one of the legacies of our conversations together.

00:34:07:15 - 00:34:38:09

Sandberg  
So maybe you could say a little bit about *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* and and that, you know, this is one of the I remember the moment that you showed me that Princeton University had come out with their centenary edition of the 100 interesting books from Princeton University Press on the 100th year and they're alongside Einstein's theory of relativity was *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* and I've I've often loved telling that story to people.

00:34:39:24 - 00:34:59:14

Sandberg  
And and how does that fit into these same kind of concerns about generic form and about the kind of virtuoso performance of generic form and then maybe another field that has been really important to you, which is about thinking about gender and gender theory. So.

00:35:00:11 - 00:35:32:21

Clover  
Oh, that's big. But before I go there, let me just say that Princeton, I, when I turned in my manuscript to Princeton, that's a classy University Press, right? And I'm told this by somebody who was there on the board when they and they said, "What?", you know, and then one and then one of them said, is that Carol Clover, the medievalist, and and they said, yes, it is.

00:35:32:21 - 00:35:38:03

Clover  
And they said, we'll take it. Well, I was told that I don't know if it's true. I hope it's true.

00:35:38:13 - 00:35:39:01

Sandberg  
And I'll.

00:35:39:01 - 00:35:39:20

Clover  
I'll find out.

00:35:39:22 - 00:35:44:01

Sandberg

Yeah. Another Trojan horse story. Right. So.

00:35:44:20 - 00:36:18:22

Clover

Well, first of all, to make the obvious point, the third chapter of that book, it's called "Getting Even", and it's all about revenge movies. And that's straight out, that comes straight out of Icelandic sagas. The whole logic of, you know, of discord and revenge is, I mean, that's a whole huge subject, and it... it drives all of our popular movie culture.

00:36:18:22 - 00:36:29:21

Clover

I mean, there's revenge can be, you know, even a movie for teenagers about, you know, high school is a revenge... - usually's got a revenge story in it.

00:36:29:22 - 00:36:33:12

Sandberg

Yeah, "mean girl" stories are revenge stories. Yeah.

00:36:34:10 - 00:36:44:23

Clover

I mean, it's very hard to find a genre film that is not ultimately about revenge, getting even in one way or another. It may not be violent at all.

00:36:44:26 - 00:36:49:05

Sandberg

But yeah.

00:36:49:05 - 00:36:49:18

Clover

Yeah, well-

00:36:49:18 - 00:37:20:12

Sandberg

And so and the other story I remember about *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* is that one of the video stores here in in Berkeley told you one time when you were in there that when people came in asking for low budget horror videos, that they would also hand out one of your articles that that was also brought into that book.

00:37:20:12 - 00:38:06:23

Sandberg

And that that one of the things that really strikes me about that book is that it had such explanatory power for people who had been sort of engaged with this genre of horror film and, and maybe felt like they were fans of it. But what you did there, in talking about it in terms of gender theory, really laid out a structure that that I know sometimes you feel like gets too flattened according to the argument that you want to make but do you have any thoughts about sort of the afterlife of that book and, and what it's meant and...

00:38:06:23 - 00:38:07:05

Clover

Well.

00:38:08:22 - 00:38:16:24

Clover

I mean, it's still going, I'm still getting royalty checks. It's unbelievable. It's 1992.

00:38:17:04 - 00:38:17:14

Sandberg  
Yeah.

00:38:19:09 - 00:38:23:13

Clover  
I think it's the best-selling book Princeton's ever had.

00:38:23:29 - 00:38:26:28

Sandberg  
Huh.

00:38:26:28 - 00:38:40:05

Clover  
Yeah, I'm. I'm just. I was. I'm astonished to this day, I can't believe it, because that was not the plan it was supposed to be an academic book on film, and it took off. And of course, the term final girl took off.

00:38:40:17 - 00:38:45:15

Sandberg  
And in in ways that in a way. Yeah, yeah.

00:38:47:06 - 00:38:54:26

Clover  
But you know, there's a movie called Final Girl. There's a there is a rock group called Final Girls, you know, on and on and on.

00:38:55:01 - 00:39:33:07

Sandberg  
Yeah. But even even students in my classes now that are interested in trans theory are still going back to that and looking at that kind of gender crossing that you're doing in that book. Yeah. Yeah. So why don't we turn to life on the Berkeley campus now and kind of the institutional roles that you've played? So say a bit about the two departments or three (three?) departments that you've been in I guess at different times?

00:39:33:13 - 00:39:42:03

Clover  
Yeah, I was in Scandinavian; I was hired and Scandinavian, but then joint with Comparative Literature because that's where Film was.

00:39:42:10 - 00:39:42:20

Sandberg  
Uh huh.

00:39:43:15 - 00:39:56:25

Clover  
And then Film shifted to Rhetoric. So I followed it to Rhetoric, and then Film became its own department. And I never went that far because I was close to retirement, I didn't want to get involved. I might have to chair it.

00:39:57:04 - 00:39:57:13

Sandberg  
Yeah.

00:39:58:27 - 00:39:59:25

Clover  
That's the other thing about being in a small department: how much time you spend...

00:40:00:02 - 00:40:08:04

Clover

Yes... running things? Yes. Never. Yeah, but you know perfectly well. You never get a break

00:40:08:05 - 00:40:42:05

Sandberg

Yeah, I think I ended up chairing that department because you...right now, um, I mean, maybe because not everybody on the faculty here is in two small departments like that, it might be interesting just to hear a little bit about what that means about turn taking and about about, you know, both the advantages of that, you know, openness and flexibility of not being sort of deep within a large department and the discipline that goes with it.

00:40:42:05 - 00:40:49:28

Sandberg

So it gives you a kind of flexibility. Yeah, but how did you experience that as you were in those departments?

00:40:49:28 - 00:41:08:10

Clover

Well, it's yeah, I was in two small departments, although I tried to play them off against each other. You know, not do two jobs. But, you know, serving as you had to, you know, in a small department of five or six people, you have to have an undergraduate advisor, a graduate advisor, a chair, a vice and blah, blah, blah.

00:41:08:10 - 00:41:33:05

Clover

And so that means you're always doing something or two things. And if you're a split department, as I was then, that was even more of a thing. But I nonetheless... actually one reason I well, I also served on academic Senate committees. I was on Admissions, DIVCO.

00:41:33:25 - 00:41:35:22

Sandberg

Committee on Committees at some point.

00:41:36:01 - 00:41:57:27

Clover

Committee on Committees, Academic Planning. Yeah. And of course the Budget Committee, which I was on for not the usual three but four years because I had to substitute for someone and that was all fascinating. And but when I was doing when I was chair of the Budget Committee, I didn't have to do any departmental stuff. Yeah. So that was.

00:41:57:27 - 00:42:09:18

Sandberg

Yeah, right. Right. I mean I've heard you talk in glowing terms about Budget Committee, which has always been a mystery to me. But tell me why that was, like a rewarding...

00:42:09:26 - 00:42:39:10

Clover

Oh, yeah. Oh, well, first of all, it has a lot of power at the university. And you're making important decisions. You're dealing, you're dealing at the level of the Chancellor. You're talking with the Chancellor. Okay. And and that, you know, that meant you had to think hard about things and learn things and know a lot. And and that was that was challenging.

00:42:39:10 - 00:43:16:17

Clover

And I very much appreciated that. And I also came to appreciate it and truly believe in I'm a deep believer in shared governance, which is a University of California thing that dates from, I think, 1917 or about then when there was this kind of faculty revolution and in which there was resolution, was that they would set up a structure so that the faculty would and the administration would be sort of the equal partners in all

important decision making.

00:43:16:17 - 00:43:48:21

Clover

So and the Budget Committee, of course, at Berkeley is the most important on that side of the thing. So it was it just felt so gratifying to be dealing with important business and and also just meeting all the people that you meet on the budget coming from all over campus. I mean, I made some very good friends on the Budget Committee, including Steve Glickman, by the way, who just died two years ago, but who has also had a legacy interview, I believe.

00:43:49:21 - 00:43:51:03

Clover

Yes, he has, I seen it.

00:43:51:11 - 00:43:59:28

Sandberg

Um, and I imagine the exposure to the research that's going on and all the different parts of campus is really interesting as well.

00:43:59:28 - 00:44:16:20

Clover

Really fascinating. Yeah. And although you don't have time to read somebody's incredibly interesting looking book, but you can at least leaf through it, you know, and find out. Yeah, absolutely, totally interesting.

00:44:16:20 - 00:44:47:22

Sandberg

Um, so you've had a number of career awards and are there any that you're particularly proud of? You have, I mean, going back to the *Wild Strawberries* reference earlier on there, for those who don't know the film, there's a very famous honorary doctorate ceremony that's being done at the end and I remember when you were given an honorary doctorate in Lund, that you were reliving that film as well in some way.

00:44:47:22 - 00:44:49:11

Sandberg

I mean, how did that...

00:44:49:11 - 00:44:49:23

Clover

In the same cathedral...

00:44:49:23 - 00:44:54:10

Sandberg

...in the same cathedral, with the same ritual.

00:44:54:16 - 00:44:55:06

Clover

And the same...

00:44:55:23 - 00:44:57:03

Sandberg

...That the hat and...

00:44:57:08 - 00:44:59:01

Clover

Not the hat. But I have a little...what do you call it?

00:45:00:08 - 00:45:04:27



Sandberg

Oh, a laurel wreath. Yes, yes, yes.

00:45:05:00 - 00:45:06:10

Clover

I still have it. It's all dried up.

00:45:06:10 - 00:45:21:06

Sandberg

Okay. Yeah. Yeah. So you had honorary doctorates from Sweden and from Iceland also for the work on medieval saga material. Um, but are there, are there other awards that are...

00:45:21:14 - 00:45:31:12

Clover

I've gotten some other awards, but I think the one that matters most to me actually is the Distinguished Service Award on campus. Um.

00:45:32:15 - 00:45:36:08

Sandberg

And why, why is that more meaningful than others? Maybe.

00:45:36:22 - 00:45:49:27

Clover

Um, it's an acknowledgment of all the, the work I did and in all the committees I served on and so forth. So I actually was very appreciative of that.

00:45:51:24 - 00:46:14:29

Sandberg

It I think people who work in the Academic Senate often feel like there's a lot that is done invisibly or behind the scenes or that just is necessary to keep the university going. And I imagine there probably felt like bringing it out into the open a little bit with an acknowledgment was gratifying. Yeah, yeah.

00:46:16:13 - 00:46:38:13

Clover

I've also been on, um, sort of search committees for the search committee for the Chancellor, for example, and, and that was hard work, but really interesting. And one of the things I learned is how hard it is to, um, to hire a Chancellor at Berkeley.

00:46:39:16 - 00:46:40:01

Sandberg

And why, why?

00:46:40:01 - 00:47:13:12

Clover

Because people from private schools at our level, you know, the best private universities are, are not used to dealing with the Academic Senate because, again, shared governance. And there are, you know, we've had some from private schools and they screw it up usually, frankly. And people from public schools also don't understand shared governance because that makes us different from the University of Texas, the University of Minnesota or whatever.

00:47:14:11 - 00:47:20:11

Clover

Um, so, yeah, I would, I enjoyed that service too.

00:47:20:19 - 00:47:38:28

Sandberg

Yeah. Yeah. So one of the sort of early forms of gender studies on campus was in a women's studies

program. And I know you had some role in that. Can you say a little bit about your involvement with women's studies and what it was like then?

00:47:39:16 - 00:48:02:27

Clover

Well, there was no women's studies at all at Berkeley. There was nothing. And, uh, I think people in the English department might have been teaching sort of courses on women in the novel or something like that, occasional things like that on campus, but otherwise it was nothing. And other universities were forming women's studies programs, so some of us started thinking we should too.

00:48:03:16 - 00:48:30:22

Clover

And so we, a lot of women got together and we, you know, we came up with ideas and we also started a program; we requested three things I remember we wanted a place for women to go on campus, a place that would be for women only. And we wanted a department. And what else did we want?

00:48:30:22 - 00:48:59:19

Clover

We wanted research and research. Oh, yeah, research money. Money for research. And especially on women's issues. And that was going and then lots of people got involved in this and from lots of different angles and with... different people had different stakes in it. So it became kind of a mess. And I did run the proto-research unit for a while.

00:48:59:19 - 00:49:11:29

Clover

Um, and then she stepped down and let somebody take that over. But, you know, it did finally end up with a department for... a regular department. So yeah.

00:49:11:29 - 00:49:21:05

Sandberg

So you've had opportunities to leave Berkeley at different times. Why did you decide to stay here for your career?

00:49:22:28 - 00:49:36:11

Clover

Oh, well, first of all, this is, you know, I'm a Californian and this is my life. You know, by the time I... the last offer I had from the University of Chicago, I just I was too entrenched here. I didn't want to do it. Yeah.

00:49:36:23 - 00:50:06:10

Sandberg

So, ok, you've, you've, I guess you're one of the few people who've been here from before the free speech movement as an undergraduate. Yes. Through graduate school and then as of as sort of junior faculty through the ranks as well. What, what changes have you seen in Berkeley over time and what what what sticks out in your mind about the institution itself?

00:50:06:10 - 00:50:12:11

Sandberg

Are there things that feel the same? Um, are there things that have changed dramatically?

00:50:13:00 - 00:50:42:03

Clover

I think Berkeley has changed more than the institution has really. I mean, when I first came here, Telegraph Avenue was a real upscale... fancy shops, you know, the furniture stores and things like that. The FSM changed everything. Oh, and downtown Berkeley, of course. And that that was changed by BART. You know, once we got BART that very much changed because there used to be nice department stores and things in downtown Berkeley that disappeared.

00:50:42:03 - 00:50:48:22

Clover

So the city has changed considerably, really considerably.

00:50:48:22 - 00:50:51:28

Sandberg

And the campus, you feel like is there...

00:50:52:04 - 00:50:57:20

Clover

It gets more and more crowded as buildings go up. But, but otherwise, it's I think pretty much the same.

00:50:57:20 - 00:51:31:10

Sandberg

So it's been a pleasure talking to you, Carol, and reliving some memories together. And it's been really fun to think back over the years that we've worked together as colleagues. And thank you for the interview.

00:51:31:10 - 00:51:43:19

Clover

Well, thank you so much. And thank you for putting I know you're very busy teaching these days, so I thank you very much for your time and for being a good interviewer.