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Erudition and the Idea of History in Renaissance England

by D. R. WOOLF

It has become a commonplace that Tudor and early Stuart historical authors recognized a formal distinction between "antiquities" and "history," yet neither the grounds nor the extent of the distinction has been explored in depth. Because some Tudor historical writers could and, on occasion, did ignore it in practice, the distinction has sometimes been deemed a technicality of only minor interest. Nearly twenty-five years ago, F. Smith Fussner described what he termed an English "historical revolution" between 1580 and 1640, a revolution which witnessed the rise of historical writing in something like its modern form.¹ From Fussner's point of view, it mattered only that men were bringing new sources and innovative, critical research methods to the study of the past; whether they called themselves historians, scholars, philologists or antiquaries was of little importance. Whether or not one accepts his general thesis, there is no doubt that the period witnessed substantial and significant changes in historical writing and in public consciousness of the past. Fussner was justified in arguing that the early modern historical mind cannot be studied simply by reading works which call themselves histories. And, since sixteenth- and seventeenth-century men held to an Erasmian notion of knowledge as a unified *Wissenschaft*, not as a series of compartmentalized disciplines, Fussner was right to point out that ideas and practices from one branch of knowledge often seeped into another; in this case, "history" absorbed the "scientific," empirical outlook of a few great minds, and especially that of Fussner's hero, Francis Bacon.²

¹F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution* (London, 1962). For criticism of the Fussner thesis by scholars who wish to stress continuity rather than change in English historical thought, see Joseph M. Levine, "Ancients, Moderns and the Continuity of English Historical Writing in the Later Seventeenth Century," in *Studies in Change and Revolution*, ed. Paul J. Korshin (London, 1972), pp. 43-75; Joseph Preston, "Was there an Historical Revolution?," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 33 (1977), 353-64.

²Fussner, *Historical Revolution*, pp. 274, 299-321. Some of the problems raised in the present essay receive attention in George Nadel, "Philosophy of History before Historicism," *History and Theory*, 3 (1963-64), 291-315. For intellectual context see Eugene F. Rice, Jr., *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 93-105; Fritz Caspari, *Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England* (New York, 1954), pp. 164-65, 343-44; Gerald R. Cragg, *Freedom and Authority: a Study of English Thought in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1975); Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1983); Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth-Century Background* (Anchor edn., New York, 1953), pp. 11-31.

Other writers, less attracted to the notion of an historical revolution, have been more cautious in discussing contemporary distinctions among types of historical enterprise. F. J. Levy includes a chapter on antiquarianism in his *Tudor Historical Thought*, but makes it clear that the antiquaries, Camden, Lambarde, and their successors, did not regard themselves as historians. More recently, Arthur B. Ferguson has made much the same point, even more strongly. In his view, historians were men of little imagination who wrote about the great dead and their great deeds; those who tackled other aspects of the past, such as social and cultural change, were not considered historians by their contemporaries. Essentially, Ferguson accepts the notion of an historical revolution, but one in which historians played little part.³

The fact of such a split between "erudition" and "history" seems clear enough, and this essay will offer a number of examples in order to drive the point home. Yet it is far less clear just how and when "history," in the formal sense, came to mean something broader than past politics, and conversely, precisely when learned scholars began to consider themselves as historians. Equally vague is the process whereby history finally absorbed some of the methods commonly practised by "ancillary" disciplines such as legal philology, numismatics and epigraphy. By paying close attention to the meanings assigned by contemporaries to terms like "history" or "historian" and "antiquities" or "antiquary," it may be possible both to chart changes in the idea of history and to relate such changes to their intellectual and social context. The evidence which follows will show, I hope, that a watershed of some significance occurred early in the seventeenth century, when a few students of antiquities, most notably John Selden, stopped denying that they were historians and asserted instead that no matter what sources they studied, no matter what aspect of the past they wrote about, and no matter what form their writings took, they were indeed historians and what they did was history.

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Professor Arnaldo Momigliano once observed, in a now famous essay, that Renaissance students of the past, and especially of the an-

³F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Cal., 1967), pp. 148-59, 279-85; Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham, N.C., 1979), pp. 78-125.

cient world, were remarkably reluctant to write new narrative accounts of Greek and Roman history.⁴ Since the ancient historians had usually lived in or shortly after the times of which they wrote, and since they had collectively covered the subject both exhaustively and (more importantly) elegantly, any attempt by modern men to imitate them would be regarded as an act of hubris. With this restriction in mind, many sixteenth-century writers eschewed altogether the narrative of great events for a topical, often topographically-organized, account of their nations' antiquities.

Nowhere was this more true than in Tudor England. There was no good ancient example of an antiquarian treatise available (the much-praised Varro had vanished into oblivion, leaving only a few scraps), so those students of the non-political past who soon came to be called "antiquaries" were forced by default to turn to geography as a model. In organizing their accounts of the past, they followed Strabo, Ptolemy and Pliny, rather than Thucydides, Caesar and Tacitus, partly because there were adequate medieval precedents for doing so (for example, the writings of Gerald of Wales), but principally because they and the historians were writing about different sorts of things. It was one thing to write about England's Roman past and its surviving remnants, and quite another to attempt to supplant Tacitus. The former was a useful and reverent casting of light upon buried ancient culture; the latter was a pretentious waste of time. As a result, Momigliano argued, no one before Gibbon saw fit to construct a fresh narrative account of ancient history, based on a thorough reexamination of all available sources.⁵

This pious dread of the ancient masters did not, of course, prevent the writing of historical narratives of the non-classical past. It may even have encouraged such projects. What better burden could the admirer of Livy take up than to do for his own nation what the Paduan had done for the Roman republic? In early modern England, as elsewhere in Europe, narrative history commonly took two forms. A moribund medieval chronicle tradition lingered through the six-

⁴Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 13 (1950), 285-313, reprinted in his *Studies in Historiography* (London, 1966), pp. 1-39. Momigliano's thesis has been qualified by H. J. Erasmus in *The Origins of Rome in Historiography from Petrarch to Perizonius* (Assen, 1962), pp. 34, 36, 44, 58, 123.

⁵Arnaldo Momigliano, "Gibbon's Contribution to Historical Method," *Studies in Historiography*, pp. 40-55.

teenth century to breathe its last in the seventeenth. Meanwhile, the influence of humanist rhetoric triggered the development in the Elizabethan era of a more sophisticated and elegant political narrative, the authors of which confined their gaze principally to medieval and modern times; they emulated the practice of the ancients without stealing their material. In the seventeenth century, this tradition would spawn such classic histories as Bacon's *Henry VII*, Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* and Burnet's *History of his Own Times*.⁶ These were literary masterpieces of a kind, but they were, it is generally agreed, devoid of the minute erudition gradually being amassed by antiquaries and archivists from Leland in the 1530s to Hearne, Madox and Rymer in the early eighteenth century. Change would come, but not until the late eighteenth century, when Gibbon synthesized his vast learning into the polished phrases of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a work of history which unashamedly addressed issues of the social and cultural past with the same care and interest with which it narrated imperial politics.

Momigliano concerned himself primarily with historical investigations of the classical world, and his comments on the distinction between antiquaries and historians of the non- or post-classical world are, understandably, less full. But it is clear that he did not ascribe such importance to this distinction with regard to the non-classical past:

While the student of Latin and Greek antiquities did not feel entitled to consider himself a historian, the student of the antiquities of Britain, France and the rest was only formally distinguishable from the student of the history of those countries—and therefore was inclined to forget the distinction. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there were both antiquarians and historians (often indistinguishable from each other) for the non-classical and post-classical world, but only antiquarians for the classical world.⁷

While it is true that there were indeed both sorts of writers on the medieval past, where there was only the one kind for antiquity, it is less clear whether the student of the British, French or German past really could "forget the distinction" with the ease which this state-

⁶On "politic history," see Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, ch. vii; Eduard Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie* (Munich and Berlin, 1911), pp. 166–70; Leonard F. Dean, *Tudor Theories of History-Writing* (University of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology, no. 1, April, 1947).

⁷Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," *Studies in Historiography*, p. 8.

ment implies. Other writers, though following Momigliano's lead, have been less sanguine on this score, and it seems probable that, as far as the theory of history-writing is concerned, much of what Momigliano holds for studies of the ancient past can be extended to medieval history as well. Professor J. G. A. Pocock put the case forcefully in 1957:

It is one of the great facts about the history of historiography that the critical techniques evolved during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were only very slowly and very late combined with the writing of history as a form of literary narrative; that there was a great divorce between the scholars and antiquarians on the one hand, and the literary historians on the other; that history as a literary form went serenely on its way, neither taking account of the critical techniques evolved by the scholars, nor evolving similar techniques of its own, until there was a kind of pyrrhonist revolt, a widespread movement of scepticism as to whether the story of the past could be reliably told at all.⁸

More recently, the works of Professors Donald R. Kelley and George Huppert have argued persuasively that the "foundations of modern historical scholarship" were laid not by literary historians composing elegant narratives of *res gestae*, but by French philologists and archival researchers such as Guillaume Budé, Etienne Pasquier, Nicolas Vignier, Jean du Tillet and the brothers Pithou.⁹ Huppert contends further that the developments of the French Renaissance did not lead in a straight line toward the triumph of modern historical methods. On the contrary, *érudits* like Pasquier were either brushed

⁸J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge, 1957; Norton edn., 1967), p. 6. For historical pyrrhonism, see Paul Hazard, *The European Mind, 1680-1715*, trans. J. L. May (1953), pp. 48-52; Julian H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Sixteenth-Century Revolution in the Methodology of Law and History* (New York, 1963), pp. 83-102; Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (2nd ed.; Berkeley, 1979), p. 111; Louis I. Bredvold, *The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden* (Ann Arbor, 1956), pp. 16-46; Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty*, pp. 119-62.

⁹Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law and History in the French Renaissance* (New York, 1970); George Huppert, *The Idea of Perfect History: Historical Erudition and Historical Philosophy in Renaissance France* (Urbana and Chicago, 1970). Professor Kelley has commented elsewhere on the lack of attention paid by English scholars and lawyers to French learning, though he makes of John Selden a conspicuous exception: "History, English Law, and the Renaissance," *Past and Present*, 65 (1974), 24-51. But cf. the reply to this by C. Brooks and K. M. Sharpe, "Debate: History, English Law and the Renaissance," *Past and Present*, 72 (1976), 133-42. For a critique of the notion of "historicism" present in the above works, see Zachary S. Schiffman, "Renaissance Historicism Reconsidered," *History and Theory*, 24 (1985), 170-82.

off as pedants or, worse, lumped with the atheists and freethinkers as "libertines" in the following century. In practical terms, these French scholars had ignored the distinction between history proper and erudition, but such a formal distinction remained nonetheless. While it remained, one can talk of the rise of a modern historical method, but not of a modern concept of "history." By the eighteenth century, it seems, the belletristic historiography of the French court and the technical erudition practised by the Bollandists, the Maurists and others, were as far apart as possible, operating in parallel, non-intersecting grooves, though occasional exceptions like Vico—who was entirely unappreciated in his day—sprang up along the way.¹⁰

This is a case of a revolution accomplished and then betrayed—or at least ignored. Although the *érudits* were unappreciated in late Valois and Bourbon France, some of them seem to have realized that what they were doing constituted history. The popular, vernacular writers described by Huppert, men like Pasquier and la Popelinière, may have grasped this notion rather more quickly than more learned scholars such as Joseph Scaliger: partly because they were less dutiful students of the classics, and partly because a growing fascination with the Middle Ages often subdued their interest in antiquity. Pasquier's huge, seemingly formless and random *Recherches* into the French past assume that their subject is "history."¹¹ La Popelinière, himself a traditional narrative historian, argued that historians should be narrating things other than politics.¹² But in England the case seems to have been rather different. Not only did historians and antiquaries remain virtually oblivious of each other's existence, or per-

¹⁰Huppert, *Perfect History*, pp. 5, 170–82. Cf. W. J. Bouwsma, "Three Types of Historiography in Post-Renaissance Italy," *History and Theory*, 4 (1965), 303–14; Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 479–93.

¹¹Etienne Pasquier, *Recherches de la France*, in Pasquier, *Oeuvres* (2 vols.; Amsterdam, 1723), I, 441, 908.

¹²Henri Lancelot Voisin, Sieur de la Popelinière, *Histoire des Histoires: avec L'Idée de l'Histoire accomplie* (1 vol. in 3 parts; Paris, 1599), represents an attempt to integrate custom, religion, climate and other "social" topics into a general narrative; cf. Herbert Butterfield, *Man on his Past* (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 205–206; G. W. Sypher, "Similarities between the Scientific and Historical Revolutions at the End of the Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 26 (1965), 353–68; Myriam Yardeni, "La conception de l'histoire dans l'oeuvre de la Popelinière," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 11 (1964), 109–26.

versely unwilling (as it seems to us) to help each other in writing what la Popelinière craved, an "histoire accomplie"; they did not even recognize that they were all essentially doing, in different ways, a subject called history.

Men who wrote histories were called historians (Latin, *historici*) in Elizabethan England, or historiographers, or sometimes "historicians." Occasionally they were called chroniclers even if, like John Speed, they thought that they were superior to the medieval and early Tudor chroniclers whose accounts they plundered remorselessly for the materials with which to construct their own.¹³ The meaning of the word *history* (Latin, *historia*) itself is much more problematic and fluid. Different writers used it in different contexts to mean different things. At its most fundamental level, however, it almost always meant either (a) a *story* (the two words are often used interchangeably) of some sort or, less commonly, (b) an *inventory* of factual knowledge, for example, a "natural history."¹⁴

Both these senses have respectable classical pedigrees. The latter does not immediately concern us, since it does not typically involve an account of the past. Natural history began with Herodotus's *ἱστορία* (an enquiry which included matters of the past as well as of geography and nature) and continued in the works of Aristotle, Pliny, Theophrastus and others.¹⁵ The natural historian was one who surveyed and drew up an inventory or list of natural life and of the composition of the world or the cosmos. Since there was as yet no notion of evolution, such an inventory inevitably depicted a world of stasis, not of change; it made no distinction between past and

¹³Examples of these different terms may be found in a wide variety of sources from actual histories to parliamentary debates: T. E. Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*, I (London, 1981), p. 28; John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (London, 1610 ed.), I, 8; Thomas Pie, *An houre glasse contayning a computation from the beginning of time to Christ* (London, 1597), pp. 85–86.

¹⁴For an Elizabethan instance of "history" as a kind of register or record, see the speech of Pisanio in *Cymbeline* (III, v, 98–99): "This paper is the history of my knowledge/Touching her flight."

¹⁵R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1961), Part One, *passim*; Gerald A. Press, *The Development of the Idea of History in Antiquity* (Kingston and Montreal, 1982); J. Karl Keuck, *Historia: Geschichte des Wortes und seiner Bedeutungen in der Antike und der romanischen Sprachen* (Emsdetten, 1934). Cf. the recent Göttingen University doctoral dissertation by Joachim Knappe, "*Historie*" im Mittelalter und frühneuzeit, *Saecula Spiritalia*, 10 (Baden-Baden, 1984). I owe this last reference to the kindness of Fritz Levy.

present. The absence of a temporal dimension is reflected in the synchronic—that is, non-narrative—form of all natural histories of the period. Robert Fludd's *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, atque technica historia* (Oppenheim, 1617–1621) is a good example of history-as-inventory. Thomas Hobbes similarly considered history as the register of all factual knowledge, distinguishing it from philosophy (or science) which deals with matters *conditional*.¹⁶ Bacon's list of projected "histories" (of the winds, of life and death, etc.) is largely devoted to the composition of such inventories, a pursuit which manifestly has little to do with the exploration of the past, though Bacon often dabbled in this also.¹⁷ His awareness of the confusion caused by the fact that one word, *historia*, which he equated with "experience," signified two really mutually exclusive types of discourse led Bacon, following a long line of continental *artes historicae*,¹⁸ to construct an elaborate taxonomy of histories which in its final form neatly divided history into two major categories, civil and natural.

History as "story" is more complex. In common parlance, a play could be a history, or a "tragical history," or a "historical comedy," or even, somewhat redundantly, a "chronicle history."¹⁹ Poems

¹⁶*Leviathan*, I, ix. Similar taxonomies can be found in Grey Brydges, fifth Lord Chandos (attribution questionable), *Horae subsecivae: observations and discourses* (London, 1620), pp. 194–95; Peter Heylyn, *Microcosmus, or a little description of the great world* (Oxford, 1621); and Degory Whear, *Relectiones hyemales de ratione et methodo legendi utrasque Historias civiles et ecclesiasticas* (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1637; trans. Edmund Bohun, London, 1685).

¹⁷*Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, R. L. Ellis and D. D. Heath (7 vols.; 1861–74), IV, 303–304; George Nadel, "History as Psychology in Francis Bacon's Theory of History," *History and Theory*, 5 (1966), 275–8; Fussner, *Historical Revolution*, pp. 150–53, 253–62; Arno Seifert, *Cognitio Historica: Die Geschichte als Namengeberin der frühneuzeitlichen Empirie* (Berlin, 1976), pp. 116–38; Arthur B. Ferguson, "The Non-Political Past in Bacon's Theory of History," *Journal of British Studies*, 14 (1974), 4–20; D. S. T. Clark, "Francis Bacon: The Study of History and the Science of Man" (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1971); Leonard F. Dean, "Francis Bacon's Theory of Civil History-Writing," in *Essential Articles for the Study of Francis Bacon*, ed. Brian W. Vickers (Hamden, Conn., 1968), pp. 211–35; Lisa Jardine, *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 163ff.

¹⁸On the *artes historicae*, contemporary manuals on history-writing, see Beatrice Reynolds, "Shifting Currents of Historical Criticism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 14 (1953), 471–92 and, more recently, Girolamo Cotroneo, *I trattatisti del "Ars Historica"* (Naples, 1971).

¹⁹E.g. Lewis Machin and Gervase Markham, *The dumbe knight* (London, 1608), an "historicall comedy" which involves fictional personages; or John Ford, *The chronicle*

were also often considered histories, especially but not exclusively when they versified events generally accepted as having actually occurred. Samuel Daniel's *The Civil Wars* was considered a history both by its author and by his sternest critic, Ben Jonson, who complained that for a history of civil wars it was remarkably devoid of battles.²⁰ A variety of prose forms were also called histories. Besides the obvious candidates—Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* (1622), Camden's *Annales* (1615–1627) and the like—narratives of current events, which would now be deemed journalism, were commonly referred to as histories: for example, the newsbooks which reported events on the continent.²¹ So, too, were works which dealt with a romanticized and atemporal past, didactic pieces such as the venerable allegories, the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Seven Wise Masters of Rome*, and works for entertainment such as the chivalric romances: the *History of Guy of Warwick*, *Palmerin of England*, and a dozen similar tales.²² All these genres have two features in common: they tell stories, true or false, about real or imaginary men and women who lived in the remote or the recent past; and they take the form not of a synchronic *inventory* of information but of a diachronic *narrative*.

During Elizabeth's reign, certain conventions of usage began to develop. It became more common to distinguish between history proper, a truthful account of real events, and poetry or fable, the account of the verisimilar or fabulous. Aristotle had made a rigid distinction between history and poetry (which defenders of poetry such as Sidney were quick to exploit), while Cicero, the touchstone on

historie of Perkin Warbeck (London, 1634) which concerns real ones. Shakespeare's "histories" also provide an excellent example.

²⁰Samuel Daniel, *The Civil Wars* (London, 1595–1609), ed. Laurence Michel (New Haven, 1958), I, 6 and introduction. Other examples include Francis Hubert's verse *Historie of Edward the second* (London, 1629) and the many historical poems of Michael Drayton and Thomas May. Cf. E. B. Benjamin, "Fame, Poetry and the Order of History in the Literature of the English Renaissance," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 6 (1959), 64–84.

²¹E.g., *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland . . . 1475–1640*, ed. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave (London, 1926), no. 3528, by "N.C.": *The modern history of the world. Or an historicall relation since the beginning of 1635* (part eight of the *Swedish Intelligencer*), 1635.

²²Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (London, 1981), pp. 219–57; R. S. Crane, *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance during the English Renaissance* (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1919).

most matters of good form, had developed the literary concept of history still further. In *De inventione*, he listed *historia* as one of three branches of *narratio*—the other two being *fabula* and *argumentum*. *Historia* dealt with the true account of things done in the remote past, *argumentum* with a fictional but plausible action of the sort found in tragedy or comedy, and *fabula* with the completely imaginary.²³

This nomenclature, primarily a rhetorical one—for history in the classical tradition was conceived of as a branch of oratory—was reinforced by Cicero's own defense of *historia* and its moral virtues in *De oratore*. In this extremely influential work, a history was defined as a book (or speech) about the past, not as the past in its totality, a sense of the word current today. For Cicero, *historia* was not simply another kind of literature: it was a source of correct action and human wisdom, the *lux veritatis* and *magistra vitae*. The well-known passage from *De oratore* which praises history for its didactic effectiveness acquired the status of a topos in Elizabethan historical theory, soon becoming an incantation chanted in preface after preface. By 1581, it had grown so familiar that John Marbeck could define history in a mere two lines simply by citing Cicero with no further comment: "What an historie is. Tullie calleth an historie the witness of times, the light of vertue, the life of memorie, maistres of life."²⁴

Like history, "antiquities," the remnants of the past, can be grouped easily into two broad classes. The written accounts of the more remote past—chronicles, histories and records—touched on antiquities in the sense of "matters pertaining to the distant past" (i.e. to antiquity). Since the political facts of the distant past were often very sparse, narrative accounts often dealt in passing with antiquities in this sense, such as the religion of the ancient Britons, or the laws of the Saxon kings. Brian Melbancke referred to "auncient antiquities" in this sense in 1583. Richard White of Basingstoke could include, in his Latin *Historiarum Britanniae Libri XI*, notes and comments on *antiquitates*, meaning things that occurred in antiquity, without ever con-

²³Aristotle, *Poetics*, ix. 1-3; Cicero, *De Inventione*, I, xix.27-xxi.30 (trans. H. M. Hubbard, Loeb ed., 1960, pp. 55-63); William Nelson, *Fact or Fiction: the Dilemma of the Renaissance Story-teller* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 5; Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 57-81, 99-105; Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York, 1983), pp. 42-70.

²⁴Cicero, *De oratore*, II, 36 (ed. E. W. Sutton, Loeb ed., 1942, p. 307); John Marbeck, *A booke of notes and common-places* (London, 1581), p. 492.

sidering himself an antiquary in the alternative sense of a student of topography, monuments and philological problems. John Speed's *History* refers to antiquities in the former sense, and its earlier chapters are devoted partly to a description of the cultures, religions and institutions of the Britons, Romans, Saxons and Danes, largely because of what Speed regarded (despite the readily available, if unverifiable, sources such as Tacitus and Bede) as the uncertainty and paucity of historical facts in this period. For him, such an antiquarian digression could only be a filler, and from the Norman Conquest on, his book is a straightforward narrative of events.²⁵

In a different but closely related sense, "antiquities" could also mean, more tangibly, the actual physical remains of the past which by the end of the sixteenth century were turning up in growing quantities. Old coins, charters, manuscript chronicles, bones, fossils, funeral urns, and a wide variety of legal records were the "antiquities" which the "antiquary" studied so that he could make some sense out of "antiquity," the obscure past. But the written form in which he expressed his views did not take the form of a narrative, and he did not call his work a history. The surviving essays of the Elizabethan society of antiquaries are a good example. These exploit a wide range of legal records, muniments and non-literary evidence such as coins and seals in order to deal with a variety of topics which would now be deemed historical: the origins of knights or of the earl marshal's office, the beginning of land measurement, the early Christian church, and the division of England into shires. Yet not one of these brief tracts is called a history, nor is there any hint among them that their authors considered them to be so. This seems to be not only because these discourses were non-narrative (for in a crude sense, they were, since they generally followed the development of institutions and customs chronologically) but for a number of other reasons: because they dealt with things rather than men, with customs or institutions rather than with events; because they were devoid of moral or exemplary content; and, finally, because their au-

²⁵Brian Melbancke, *Philotimus* (London, 1583), sig. Aii^v; Richard White of Basingstoke, *Historiarum Britanniae libri (I-XI) cum notis antiquitatum Britannicarum* (Arras and Douai, 1597-1607); John Speed, *The historie of Great Britaine* (London, 1611). John Caius, however, used the terms *antiquarii* and *historici* indiscriminately to describe the sources for his *De antiquitate Cantabrigiensis Academiae libri duo* (London, 1568) and the *Historia Cantabrigiensis Academiae ab urbe condita* (London, 1574), but he seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.

thors were almost entirely unconcerned with the rhetorical conventions of form which applied to true history-writing.²⁶ In other words, contemporaries had few doubts that whatever history was, it did not include antiquarian writings. There were points of contact between the two—the past was still the past, no matter how it was studied—but we do well not to underestimate the importance of formal distinctions to minds which placed a high premium on eloquence and order.

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The distinction between history and antiquities was a consequence of late Elizabethan over-exposure to the rays of continental rhetoric. It was not the indigenous inheritance of an unbroken medieval convention, and earlier in the century it seems to have mattered a good deal less. John Leland, the first great Tudor antiquary, did not recognize such a distinction. Leland's projected *magnum opus* was to be called "De Antiquitate Britannica, or els civilis historia," of which the first part (fifty books) would deal, in a narrative form, with "the beginniges, encreases and memorable actes of the chief tounes and castelles of the province allotid to hit." A second section would chronicle the kings, queens and nobles from British times to his own day. We all know what happened to Leland, and it is worth remembering that his Elizabethan disciples knew it, too. The problem of putting his vast store of data into a rhetorically satisfactory form drove him insane. All that remains of his grand design are its data base, the manuscript collections now known as the *Itinerary* and the *Collectanea*. Useful as these have proven to later scholars, the only section of either which is cast in anything like a narrative is part vii of the *Itinerary*, a brief travelogue written in the first person. Leland was the Marley's ghost of Tudor historical writing, and one of the consequences of his failure was that he was the first and last Tudor antiquary to attempt a general history from non-narrative sources.²⁷

²⁶Thomas Hearne, *A Collection of Curious Discourses* (revised ed., ed. Joseph Ayloffe, 2 vols.; London, 1771); on the society itself, see Linda Van Norden, "The Elizabethan College of Antiquaries" (Ph.D. thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1946), and "Sir Henry Spelman on the Chronology of the Elizabethan College of Antiquaries," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 13 (1949-50), 131-60; May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 85-93; Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 7-13; Joseph M. Levine, "Tudor Antiquaries," *History Today*, 20 (April, 1970), 278-85.

²⁷*Leland's Itinerary in England*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (2nd ed.; Carbondale, Ill., 1964), I, xlii; IV, 1-35; *Collectanea*, ed. Thomas Hearne (3 vols. in 4 parts; Oxford, 1715); T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (1950; reprint London, 1970), pp. 45-64.

Nevertheless, there is little sign of a firm distinction before the reign of Elizabeth. It appears to have arisen amid the sharp increase in the publication of antiquarian and topographical treatises which began in the 1570s and continued through the last two decades of the century. Sheer volume soon demanded some sort of *modus vivendi* between new and old forms of writing about the past, particularly since acceptance of the Ciceronian rhetorical conception of *historia* and the rules of discourse which governed it also reached a high watermark at about the same time. Even so, it was still possible for Sidney, as late as the 1580s, to confuse the two types of writers about the past in his witty but rather unfair caricature of the historian:

The historian scarcely giveth leisure to the moralist to say so much, but that he, loaden with old mouse-eaten records, authorising himself (for the most part) upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundations of hearsay; having much ado to accord differing writers and to pick truth out of partiality; better acquainted with a thousand years ago than with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goeth than how his own wit runneth; curious for antiquities and inquisitive of novelties; a wonder to young folks and a tyrant in table talk, denieth, in a great chafe, that any man for teaching of virtue, and virtuous actions is comparable to him. "I am *testis temporum, lux veritatis, magistra vitae, nuncia vetustatis*."²⁸

There is an obvious internal contradiction in this caricature which Sidney either did not see or chose to ignore: his historian was both obsessed with old records like the new-fangled antiquary *and* at the same time reliant "for the most part . . . upon other histories" like the old-fashioned chronicler. Such a confusion of terms was useful, of course, to his argument that poetry, the act of imagining or *making* the past, was superior to any form of writing that sought to record the merely factual and, as far as Sidney was concerned, the unknowable.²⁹

With this sword of Damocles suspended over their heads, it is hardly surprising that the antiquaries sought to distance themselves from the narrative historians and chroniclers. Thus it was the antiquaries themselves, first and foremost, who persistently proclaimed

²⁸Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry* (1st ed., London, 1595, written c. 1581–83), ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (2nd ed.; Manchester, 1973), p. 105.

²⁹Sidney's polemic was not entirely sincere, since in a letter to his brother, Robert, he accorded history limited usefulness as a teacher of political action, though not as a teacher of morality: *The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat (repr. Cambridge, 1962), III, 130–33; F. J. Levy, "Sir Philip Sidney and the Idea of History," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 26 (1964), 608–17.

their independence of the aims and rules of history-writing, abdicating the title of historian at the same time. If Camden's *Britannia*, which was unquestionably the most widely-read and influential book of topographical antiquities, makes one thing clear, it is that its author believed that he was not a historian. He derived his title of "chorographer" from geography rather than history. Not only did Camden persistently disclaim any intention of writing a history, "remembering my selfe to be a chorographer"; he went out of his way to abort any unconscious slips into a narrative of men and deeds. At one point, his discussion of the razing of Reading Castle by Henry II leads him briefly into a paean on that king's great deeds. The brakes are applied almost instantly. "But these are things without our element," he apologizes. "Let us returne againe from persons to places." Elsewhere, he aborts an account of the successive invaders of the Isle of Thanet, "which I leave to historians . . . least I might seeme to digresse extraordinarily." The description of Barclay Castle, Gloucestershire, occasions mentioning the murder of Edward II, a subject which Camden "had rather you should seeke in *Historians*, than looke for at my hands." At another point he begs "leave for a while to play the part of an historiographer, which I will speedily give over againe as not well able to act it."³⁰ These remarks illustrate both the strength and the flexibility of categories like "historian" and "antiquary," for, paradoxically, Camden was obliged to state the distinction only at those points where he was, in effect, ignoring it.

It was not that Camden thought he was better or worse than a recorder of names and dates. On the contrary, his disclaimers were a sign that he did not wish to be judged by the rhetorical standards which applied to historians. With his classical training, he knew perfectly well that the *Britannia* lacked both the form and the function of a history. It is true that Camden and many other Elizabethan topographers achieved an order of *some sort* by dividing their works by counties, and by following a pre-existing spatial pattern (following rivers imaginatively in their prose, from town to town, as they had followed them literally on their travels).³¹ A few others, like John

³⁰William Camden, *Britain*, trans. Philemon Holland (London, 1610), pp. 340, 363, 369, 371. The corresponding passages in the 1607 Latin edition are at pp. 206, 239, 256, 260–61. Cf. Stuart Piggott, "William Camden and the *Britannia*," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 37 (1951), 199–217; F. J. Levy, "The Making of Camden's *Britannia*," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 26 (1964), 70–97.

³¹For other examples, see Thomas Habington's *A Survey of Worcestershire* (written in the 1630s and 1640s, ed. J. Amphlett, 2 vols. Worcestershire Historical Society; Ox-

Norden, used different systems, such as the alphabet, to organize their materials.³² But they all eschewed chronology, the *sine qua non* of history. Moreover, the antiquaries subscribed to the widespread notion that historians should properly be men of state, diplomats or military leaders. Most of the greats—Thucydides, Polybius, Josephus and Tacitus—had been politicians or generals themselves, and this sort of man had the personal experience and social stature necessary to the re-teller of remote events and indispensable to the historian of recent times. The student of antiquities needed linguistic agility, an enthusiasm for the past and a large capacity for tedium: he did not have to be Julius Caesar.

There is thus a certain irony, of which Camden himself was painfully aware, in the criticisms of his *Britannia* by Ralph Brooke, the obnoxious York herald who would plague him and the College of Arms for several decades. Brooke accused Camden—quite erroneously—of pretending to the title of historian, since the *Britannia* dealt with the pedigrees of great families, and incidentally with their great deeds, often (this much was true) inaccurately. Brooke's argument was simply that scholars were not historians and never could be, because of their lack of political experience:

And doubtles for a meere scholler to be an historian, that must take up all by hearesay, and uncertaine rumors, not being acquainted with the secretes and occurrences of state matters, I take it (as many other affirme with me) verie unfit, and dangerous.³³

Camden could not have agreed more. As far as we can tell, he believed to the end of his days that the *Britannia* was not a history. And even when, late in life and doubtless with Brooke's stinging attack still in mind, he finally did write a history, the *Annales*, he found it heavy going. He complained to his friend, Jacques-Auguste de Thou, that he found history-writing a tiresome, odious task, enforced on him against his will by royal command. The man who wrote one of the greatest works of chorography and perhaps the most meticulously-researched political history of the age, a man

ford, 1893–99), I, 184, where the work is framed as a “flight” on “our Pegasus of Worcestershire”; Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (London, 1612), for which see further below, carries this poetic device even further, invoking muses and river spirits.

³²John Norden, *Speculum Britanniae*, Part One, Middlesex (1593).

³³Ralph Brooke, *A discoverie of certaine errors published in print in the much commended Britannia* (London, 1596), “To maister Camden”; Mark Noble, *A History of the College of Arms* (London, 1804), pp. 240–45.

whose interests were as wide as his intellectual circle, did not recognize the essential similarity of his two masterpieces.³⁴

Camden's older friend and disciple, John Stow, also believed that he was writing something quite different in kind from the many *Chronicles* and *Annales* he had produced over the years when he published his *Survey of London* in 1598. At no point does he call this work a history of London, and like Camden, Stow avoided slipping into narrative. The only "history" in the book is a brief prefatory account of the ancient Britons and Romans. William Claxton, one of Stow's correspondents, shared his friend's recognition of the distinction. He praised Stow for "proceeding to the publishing of such grave histories and antiquities of worthy memorie," by which he meant the chronicles and other sources, both documentary and architectural, that Stow had "published" insofar as he had used them as evidence in his work. Claxton suggested that Stow augment the book, "because never any hath taken the like matter of antiquitie in hand."³⁵ Even those, like Thomas Martin, who actually wrote history from archival sources, rather than from chronicles, could not make the conceptual link between their pursuit and that of the antiquaries. Martin's Latin biography of William of Wickham exploits a wide range of manuscript and archival material. When he came to list the most famous writers on Wickham, however, he termed Leland "antiquitatis cum primis studiosus," and Camden the author of a *descriptio* of Britain. Of all his sources, only two merited the title of *historiographus*: the fifteenth-century chronicler, Thomas of Walsingham, and the early sixteenth-century Italian emigré, Polydore Vergil.³⁶

If the historians and antiquaries could agree so readily to an amicable divorce, how can one expect their lay readers to have attempted a reconciliation? Casual comments illustrate how the dichotomy had become axiomatic by the beginning of the seventeenth century. The

³⁴Camden to de Thou, 10 August, 1612: Bibliothèque National, Paris, Collection Dupuy, MS 632, fols. 103^{r-v} (a copy of this is in Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Smith 74, fols. 25-28). For the *Annales*, see H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Queen Elizabeth's First Historian: William Camden and the Beginnings of English "Civil" History* (Neale lecture, London, 1971). The breadth of Camden's interests are illustrated in the admirable library list compiled by Richard L. DeMolen, "The Library of William Camden," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 128, no. 4, 327-409.

³⁵John Stow, *A survey of London*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (2 vols.; Oxford, 1908), I, 3; Claxton to Stow, 10 April, 1594, Brit. Lib. MS Harl. 374 (D'Ewes papers), fol. 21.

³⁶Thomas Martin, *Historica descriptio complectens vitam, ac res gestas beatissimi viri Guilielmi Wicami* . . . (London, 1597), sig. c2.

anonymous author of a Jacobean manual for aspiring courtiers recommended that a courtier be both "an excellent antiquary, and well red Historian." Henry Peacham, who took a similar view, treated history and antiquities in different chapters of *The Complete Gentleman*. Richard Brathwait had more respect for the "laborious and judicious antiquaries" of his day than for historians, but he asserted that historians who did venture to dabble in erudition benefitted none but themselves, since they "hardly can communicate the best of their knowledge unto others"—a fairly clear statement of the unsuitability of narrative as a medium for the communication of scholarly detail.³⁷ When Fulke Greville sought to erect a history lectureship in 1615, a plan which did not reach fruition for another twelve years, Sir John Coke warned him to choose his man carefully. The ideal candidate for the job would be an historian learned in matters of theology and church history, perhaps even a divine, "able to joyne church and comonwealth together w[hi]ch to separate is to betray." If Greville elected such a historian, his endowment would be productive, "wheras if you plant but a critical antiquarie instead of an historian, nothing can bee more unthrifitie nor vaine." Since Coke's letter goes on to reveal that he himself had acquired a good deal of knowledge about epitaphs and funeral laws, his distinction suggests not that he found the pursuits of the antiquaries dull or unimportant, but that he felt they did not belong in a university history lectureship.³⁸ The attitude of Bacon, who embraced the notion of the statesman-historian with a special fervor, is much the same. He found antiquities interesting, and he praised the "industrious men" who unearthed and studied them, but he did not consider them to be historians; at best, they were research assistants.³⁹

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So far we have demonstrated that the distinction between history on the one hand and antiquities, erudition or scholarship on the other, was as rigid, perhaps even more rigid, than has been previ-

³⁷A. D. B., *The Court of the most illustrious James the first* (London, 1619), p. 46; Henry Peacham, *The Complete Gentleman* (London, 1622, 1634), ed. Virgil B. Heltzel (Ithaca, N. Y., 1962), pp. 62-63, 117-27; Richard Brathwait, *The schollers medley* (London, 1614), pp. 61, 80.

³⁸Coke to Greville, 15 September, 1615, printed in N. Farmer, Jr., "Fulke Greville and Sir John Coke: An Exchange of Letters on a History Lectureship and Certain Latin Verses on Sir Philip Sidney," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 33 (1969-70), 217-36.

³⁹Bacon, *Works*, II, 334; IV, 303-4.

ously recognized, particularly toward the end of Elizabeth's reign and early in her successor's. Yet exceptions to the rule did occur: because the concept of history, for all Cicero's influence, was still in a state of ferment; because the same writers often did in fact write both sorts of work; and, most importantly, whatever the rhetorical necessity of a formal distinction, there was a countervailing tendency in the Renaissance mind which allowed it to apply insights borrowed from one sphere of knowledge to problems presented by another, all for the love of that elusive goddess, Truth. Geography had already proven useful; now, as lawyers joined heralds in the study of the past, the legal humanists' love of philology began to exercise an even more potent influence, as it had done earlier in France.⁴⁰ Furthermore, as the comments by Peacham, Brathwait and other courtly writers make clear, antiquarianism was fast acquiring social acceptability. By the end of the sixteenth century, the traditional civic humanist conception of the historian as orator was giving way to a newer patriotic ideal of the complete gentleman, an ideal which encouraged a certain amount of erudite learning. As the courtier-soldier of the sixteenth century gradually evolved into the virtuoso of the seventeenth, legal scholars such as Sir Edward Coke, Sir John Davies and Francis Tate and collectors such as Sir Robert Cotton and the earl of Arundel became involved in the affairs of the kingdom in a way quite unlike most of their Tudor predecessors: in this, they were following the lead not of Camden, but of William Lambarde. This redefinition of the social function of erudite learning, which made it almost as acceptable a pursuit as traditional history, was bound to contribute to a fruitful interchange between the two, albeit initially a slow one.

At the same time, there was a growing awareness among *fin-de-siècle* Englishmen, as earlier among Frenchmen, that they lived in an unstable world. The crises of the last years of Elizabeth's reign and the political debates of James forced men to turn to the past for solace and reassurance: it was no longer sufficient to analyze vicissitude simply in terms of the rise and fall of fortune's wheel. What some of them found was that time could change not only dynasties but societies, not only individuals but institutions. As the confessional controversies that had dominated sixteenth-century political discourse

⁴⁰Richard Schoeck, "The Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries and Men of Law," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 1 (1954), 417-21; McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, pp. 78-82.

faded—for the moment—into the background, attention was directed to the common law and its institutions.

This heightened awareness of time and mutability was a two-edged blade. On the one hand it could lead some, such as Sir Edward Coke, to avoid the spectre of change altogether by denying it or minimizing its importance: the “common-law mind” and the myth which it spawned of an “immemorial” ancient constitution, unaltered by the Norman Conquest, indicate a conscious attempt to push the origins of the common law so far back in time that they lay, in effect, beyond history. On the other hand, though, close examination of legal institutions through the documents which they had generated over the centuries could lead to consciousness not only of change, but of *development*. Closely linked to this was a nascent sense of relativism, an understanding that the phenomena of the past had to be understood on their own terms as the products of specific times and locations. It was this sort of historical *verstehen* which led Sir Henry Spelman, the greatest legal mind among the antiquaries, to the realization that Norman England, with its “feudal” system, differed fundamentally both from Anglo-Saxon England and from the society of his own time.⁴¹

Hints of the view that erudite study had an important role to play in the search for knowledge of the past, and with it the beginnings of the expansion of the definition of history to include any surviving portion of the past can be found as early as 1591 in Lambarde’s *Archion*. Lambarde refers in this work, which remained in manuscript until 1635, to “some records of history” that he had seen concerning the earl marshal’s court: clearly an antiquarian topic.⁴² In the *Perambulation of Kent* (1572), the first of the county chorographies, Lambarde highlighted the principal rhetorical problem facing the topographer: how to describe the past without writing a history. Having listed the Anglo-Saxon kings of Kent, he immediately apologized for having lapsed into history:

Now, although it might heere seeme convenient, before I passed any further, to disclose such memorable things, as have chanced during the reignes of all

⁴¹Pocock, *Ancient Constitution*, pp. 91–123; Ferguson, *Clio Unbound*, pp. 259–311.

⁴²William Lambarde, *Archion, or a comentary upon the high courts of justice in England* (London, 1635), p. 53. The dedication to Sir Robert Cecil is dated 22 October 1591. Retha M. Warnicke, *William Lambarde, Elizabethan Antiquary: 1536–1601* (Chichester, 1973), pp. 27–35.

these forenamed kings: yet forasmuch as my purpose specially is to write a topographie, or description of places, and no chronographie, or storie of times (although I must now and then use both, since one can not fully bee performed without enterlacing the other) and for that also I shall have just occasion heereafter in the particulars of this shyre, to disclose many of the same. . . .⁴³

The tensions between *descriptio* and *narratio*, between disposition along spatial or along temporal axes, leap out of this passage. History and antiquarian chorography were distinct genres, but how could one keep them apart? The trick was to reconcile content with form, the presentation of truth embodied in factual detail with the requirement that the presentation itself be both orderly and aesthetic.⁴⁴ The rambling, disorganized, and often dull prose of this and many other topographical works shows that the solution was not close at hand.

Antiquities also seeped into history in the work of Francis Godwin, successively bishop of Llandaff and of Hereford. Godwin had accompanied Camden on the latter's antiquarian peregrinations and was himself a keen collector of antiquities who used archival sources and manuscript chronicles to compile his *Catalogue of the Bishops of England*.⁴⁵ His narrative of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary, the *Annales of England*, begins with an urgent plea for a new history which will supersede Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia*:

It being therefore to be wished, and is much desired, that some one versed in our Antiquities would (as learned Mr. Camden hath already done for the description of the Island) consecrate part of his learned labours to the eternitie of Britaine, not in reforming that obsolete Virgilian history, but in composing a new one; our antiquaries may justly be taxed of sloath.

⁴³Lambarde, *The perambulation of Kent* (2nd ed.; London, 1596), p. 23. Cf. Lambarde's *Dictionarium Angliae topographicum & historicum* (1st ed.; 1730). In the dedication to the *Perambulation* Lambarde explains that he called this work a dictionary and not a history "because it was digested into titles by order of alphabet, and concerned the description of places."

⁴⁴Lambarde's friend, Sir Thomas Wotton, actually referred to the *Perambulation* as a history in his commendatory letter to the second (1596) edition—but only because it did some of the things he thought a history should do, such as recounting the deeds of the county's great men in "good words well placed, eloquently"! *Ibid.*, epistle dedicatory; Thomas Wotton, "To his counciemen, the gentlemen of Kent," *ibid.*, sigs. A3–A4^v.

⁴⁵Godwin to Camden, 27 May 1608 and 9 October 1620, in *Gulielmi Camdeni et illustrium virorum ad G. Camdenum epistolae*, ed. Thomas Smith (London, 1691), pp. 109, 308; W. M. Merchant, "Bishop Francis Godwin, Historian and Novelist," *Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales*, 5 (1955), 45–51.

Godwin was calling for a new history, and he recognized that his antiquary friends were the ones to write it. It is unclear precisely what form he thought it should take, but we may draw a clue from the traditional character of his own *Annales*, in which, like any good historian, he offered a treasury of "examples of most eminent virtues."⁴⁶

A much less equivocal call for an erudite history came from the enterprising virtuoso and intellectual entrepreneur, Edmund Bolton. Bolton's wide interests extended to heraldry, poetry, philology and cartography, as well as to English history. The "Academ Roial" which in vain he tried to establish would have included both antiquaries and historians, and the extant plans for it suggest that he made little distinction between the two.⁴⁷ In his *Hypercritica: or a rule of judgment for writing or reading our histories*, written between 1618 and 1621, he expressed the hope that someone would write a new "universal history for England," even at the cost of having "to turn over so many musty rolls, so many dry, bloodless chronicles, and so many dull and heavy paced histories, as they must who will obtain the crown and triumphal ensign of having compos'd a *Corpus Rerum Anglicarum*."⁴⁸ Unlike Godwin, Bolton practised what he preached: his *Nero Caesar, or monarchy depraved* (1624) is a striking exception to Momigliano's rule, a narrative account of the reign of Nero which actually uses the non-literary evidence of coins to verify the accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius.⁴⁹

Bolton's virtuosity allowed him to slip over the traditional boundaries of history, into the realm of philological research, but the short-

⁴⁶Francis Godwin, *Catalogue of the bishops of England* (1601; revised ed., London 1616); *Rerum Anglicarum Henrico VIII, Edwardo VI et Maria regnantibus, Annales* (London, 1616), translated by Morgan Godwin as *Annales of England* (London, 1630), sig. A2. Camden's Parisian friend, Pierre Dupuy, went further than Godwin, urging Camden to write a new English history "cum illis nummis & sigillis"—with coins and seals: Dupuy to Camden, 16 November 1618, in *Camdeni epistolae*, p. 263.

⁴⁷W. E. Houghton, "The English Virtuoso in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 3 (1942), 51–73; Ethel M. Portal, "The Academ Roial of King James I," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 7 (1915–16), 189–208; R. Caudill, "Some Literary Evidence of the Development of English Virtuoso Interests in the Seventeenth Century" (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1975), pp. 267–86.

⁴⁸Edmund Bolton, *Hypercritica: or a rule of judgment for writing or reading our histories*, in *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Oxford, 1907), pp. 83, 93, 97.

⁴⁹Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or monarchie depraved* (London, 1624); the sources for this can be gleaned from Bolton's notes and letters in Brit. Lib. MS Harl. 6521.

ness of his attention span and the relative shallowness of his erudition prevented him from doing anything of substance while he was there. And, like Godwin, he had missed the essential point: one did not need to integrate antiquarian detail into a "new" narrative history of England to be doing history. For that matter, one did not even have to write a history of England at all, for entities other than kingdoms or individuals have a past. Thus, while both these men—like Francis Bacon—exhibited a certain logical dissatisfaction with the prevailing rhetorical hierarchy that kept erudition from invading the territory of the historian, neither had the necessary sense of historical development that would allow him to deal with the non-political past historically.

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Before Elizabeth's reign was out, she had been petitioned by Sir Robert Cotton and two associates to establish a national "library and an academy for the study of antiquities and history." The supplicants' goal was the preservation of "the matter of history of this realm, original charters, and monuments." This was a significant step. These suitors did not yet recognize the work of the antiquary as being history in a formal sense, but it is clear that they were ready to view antiquities as constituting the matter from which history should be written. A virtuoso himself, Cotton blurred the distinction between history and antiquities still further by building a huge library of both narrative (chronicle) and non-narrative sources for history, especially medieval history.⁵⁰ It was in this library, under Cotton's aegis, that the young John Selden set to work in the 1610s, and it is probably these fortuitous circumstances, combined with the catholicity of his interests, that led Selden eventually to disregard the distinction entirely and, as a result, redefine "history" in something like its modern sense. Selden cannot take all the credit for this. He worked within an environment and among other scholars sympathetic to his views—if he had not, then his most striking insights would have amounted to little. Yet it is in his works, read widely in

⁵⁰Hearne, *Curious Discourses*, II, 324; on the Cottonian library, see Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586–1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1979), ch. ii; Fussner, *Historical Revolution*, ch. iii; and C. E. Wright, "The Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries and the Formation of the Cottonian Library," in *The English Library before 1700*, ed. Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright (London, 1958), pp. 176–212.

ensuing decades, that we encounter the most profound, articulate and original comments on the scope and purpose of history yet made by any Renaissance Englishman. If the laurel of "discovering" feudalism is to go to Spelman, Selden at least deserves credit for recognizing that discoveries of this sort lay within the ambit of the historian.

Selden's particular contribution to the Renaissance theory of history has never really been recognized, partly because his status as an important and influential thinker has been hidden, until very recently, by his convoluted and at times incomprehensible style (a problem exacerbated by his preference for writing in Latin), and partly because his most important work in this regard, *The historie of tithes* (1618) has long been famous for quite different reasons. Cotton's friend, Henry Peacham, admired the young lawyer and called him "the rising star of good letters and antiquity," the heir of Camden.⁵¹ To a point, the compliment was well-placed, but Selden was an antiquary of quite a different sort from either Camden or Lambarde, though he shared some of the interests of each. Unlike those wanderers, who went to great trouble to search for coins, monuments and manuscripts scattered from one end of the country to the other, Selden was a philologist who confined his searches for the most part to the shelves of a number of libraries; where he used physical remains such as the Arundel marbles, they had generally been unearthed, and in some cases already published, by others; in a literal sense, he was quite prepared to let others do the spadework while he sat back and interpreted what they turned up. In the early years of his career, his interests lay primarily in the development of English law from earliest times to his own day. Like Cotton and several members of the defunct society of antiquaries, Selden wrote about the past with one eye on the present. He first wrote a series of works on English laws and institutions; beginning with the *Analecton Anglo-Britannicon* (written c. 1605 but only published on the continent in 1615) and culminating in the second, enlarged edition of *Titles of Honour* (1631), these revealed an increasingly deep understanding of England's "ancient constitution." His learning was all the more sophis-

⁵¹Peacham, *The Complete Gentleman*, pp. 62-63, 124. Still the most exhaustive study of Selden's early career is the regrettably unpublished study by the late Professor David S. Berkowitz, "Young Mr. Selden. Essays in Seventeenth Century Learning and Politics" (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1946).

ticated because it was based upon continental as well as British sources. The story of Selden's constitutional ideas and of his attempts to put them into effect in parliament has been well told elsewhere.⁵² We are more concerned with his attitude to the writing of history and to the relationship he perceived between the philologist and the historian.

From this angle, Selden's early works seem quite unremarkable. Although it is organized by reigns, he in no place calls his first work of legal scholarship, the Latin *Analecton*, a history; nor does he consider its comparatively few non-narrative sources to be historical. The same can be said of that book's more sophisticated successor, the *Jani Anglorum Facies Altera* (1610), which shows a substantially greater debt to French philology, especially to the work of the man who was to become Selden's idol, the great linguist and chronologer, Joseph Scaliger.⁵³ The *Jani Anglorum* is, in a sense, a narrative, since it follows the development of the English constitution chronologically, from the Anglo-Saxon era to the seventeenth century, after the fashion of the antiquaries' discourses, but in much greater depth. Yet it does not recount great deeds, it points no morals, and it certainly lacks eloquence: by the contemporary definition, at least, it was plainly not a history, and its author was not a historian.⁵⁴ That Selden initially accepted the rhetorical distinction is revealed explicitly in a passage which recalls Camden's protestation in the *Britannia*. In his illustrations to the eleventh song of Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612), he records the names of the seven original Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (the heptarchy), their dates, and the manuscript and printed authorities for these. But he stops short of giving a narrative account of the process whereby the kingdom of Wessex gradually achieved hegemony, referring the reader elsewhere: "How in time they successively came under the West-Saxon rule, I must not tell

⁵²H. D. Hazeltine, "Selden as Legal Historian," in *Festschrift Heinrich Brunner* (Weimar, 1910), pp. 579-630; Paul Christianson, "Young John Selden and the Ancient Constitution, 1610-1618," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 128 (1984), 271-315; Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: their Origins and Development* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 82-100.

⁵³On Scaliger, perhaps the best-equipped student of antiquity of his day and a master of philological methods, see Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, I (Oxford, 1983), 101-33, 180-226.

⁵⁴Selden, *Analecton Anglo-Britannicon libri duo* (Frankfurt, 1615), in *Joannis Seldenis jurisconsulti opera omnia*, ed. David Wilkins (3 vols. in 6 parts; London, 1726), II, 940 ff.; *Jani Anglorum Facies Altera* (London, 1610), *Opera omnia*, II, 974.

you, unless I should untimely put on the person of an historian. Our common annals manifest it." Elsewhere, he comments that "history, not this place, must informe the reader of more particulars of the Danes."⁵⁵

In the first edition of *Titles of Honour* (1614) one finds the beginnings of a shift in attitude. This work is organized on hierarchical lines; title by title, from emperor down to esquire, though within each title Selden follows chronological principles, tracing each title from its origins to the present. The breadth of learning in this book, particularly in continental sources, is quite remarkable, but no more so than the prefatory statement containing Selden's views on the uses of philology.

As Selden envisaged it, the purpose of all research and writing was the discovery of truth. Like the most erudite of his contemporaries—Bacon, Fludd, and Spelman, to name but a few—Selden believed that the pursuit of truth knew no disciplinary boundaries: or, at least, that whatever the nature of such boundaries in theory, they were not unpassable in practice. Indeed, in the second edition of *Titles*, he would expand on this view, using the metaphor of a world of learning divided into islands (one recalls Bacon's "intellectual globe") to characterize the scholar's search for knowledge:

It is said that all isles and continents (which are indeed but greater isles) are so seated, that there is none, but that, from some shore of it, another may be discovered. . . . Certainly the severed [*sic*] parts of good arts and learning, have that kind of site. And, as all are to be diligently sought to be possessed by mankind, so every one hath so much relation to some other, that it hath not only use often of the aid of what is next it, but, through that, also of what is out of ken to it.⁵⁶

Selden allowed that the "vast circle of knowledge" could be divided along disciplinary lines, but at the same time he asserted the freedom of one discipline to borrow from another.

⁵⁵Selden, "Illustrations" to Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (Part One, 1612), in *Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. W. Hebel (2nd ed., 5 vols.; Oxford, 1961), IV, 246, 272.

⁵⁶Selden, *Titles of Honour* (1st ed.; London, 1614), epistle dedicatory, sig. 23; *Titles of Honour* (2nd ed.; London, 1631), in *Opera omnia*, III, 99. The first edition includes an extensive bibliography of Selden's sources (sigs. Ddd4^v–Fff^v). Further information on Selden's reading list appears in D. M. Barratt, "The Library of John Selden and Its Later History," *Bodleian Library Record*, 3 (1950–51), 128–42, 208–13, 256–74; and in J. Sparrow, "The Earlier Owners of Books in John Selden's Library," *Bodleian Quarterly Record*, 6 (1931), 263–71. These can be supplemented by the manuscript library list and correspondence in Bodl. Lib. MSS Selden Supra 108–109, 111 and 123.

Books such as Selden's have one of two functions, declares the author: *verum* and *bonum*, each contributing something to the perfection of man. *Titles of Honour* is a work of "verum chiefly, in matter of story and philologie." By "story," it is plain that he meant "history." Philology, on the other hand, was Selden's map through the labyrinth of antiquity. It consisted for him not simply in the study of a thing through the study of the words signifying it, but, more importantly, in the establishment of the historical context within which customs, laws and institutions arose. Selden called his notion of historical context "synchronism," and philology was the key to it, the master science which could be used as a bridge from one island of learning to another: from antiquities to history.⁵⁷ It is probably fair to say that Selden placed an even higher emphasis on philology than did his French predecessors. In the wide sense he gave it, it could be mixed with history in a work of this sort. And by so closely associating "story" and "philologie," he came within a hair's breadth of equating them.

This conceptual leap Selden made four years later, in *The historie of tithes*. A detailed investigation of the customs and institutions of tithing in the history of the English church and in other countries from biblical times to the end of the sixteenth century, the *Historie* was inspired by a short essay of Scaliger which Selden had first read as early as 1612, and by a desire to correct a number of recent works which had asserted the clergy's right to tithes *jure divino*.⁵⁸ This was no dry academic dispute—not, we might say, an example of irrelevant antiquarianism. Over and above the obvious economic implications of an attack on *jure divino* tithes, Selden's research demonstrated conclusively that the canon law could only be effective when it was incorporated, either by custom or statute, into the laws of individual nations. In his efforts to relate the true history of tithing practices he was lighting a match to read the label on a barrel of gunpowder.

⁵⁷For "synchronism," see Selden's introduction to *Poly-Olbion*, *Works of Michael Drayton*, IV, viii*.

⁵⁸Joseph Justus Scaliger, *Diatriba de Decimis*, *Opuscula varia antehac non edita*, ed. Isaac Casaubon (Paris, 1610), pp. 61–70. Selden cites this in his illustrations to *Poly-Olbion* (*Works of Michael Drayton*, IV, 186), and some notes in his hand on Scaliger's essay are to be found in Bodl. MS Selden Supra 108, fols. 187–90^v. The works which may have aroused Selden's interest in the issue include Sir Henry Spelman, *De non temerandis Ecclesiis* (London, 1613) and Foulke Robartes, *The Revenue of the Gospel is tythes, due to the ministerie of the word, by that word* (Cambridge, 1613).

The consequence of this was to force Selden into calling his work a *history* so that he could pose as a neutral in the tithes controversy. He had to deny that he was writing a polemical tract, that he had a point to prove. A "discourse on tithes," or a "treatise on tithes" would be taken as a partisan attack on the clergy; a history, on the other hand, being simply a narrative of what had happened in the past, might not cause offence. As things turned out, this was almost incredible naïveté, but the results of this rhetorical sleight-of-hand proved to be important in the long term.

Selden deliberately cast in chronological form a book that is manifestly a piece of erudite scholarship, of antiquarian philology, attempting the difficult task of representing in a narrative the findings of detailed research in non-narrative sources. In one way, he simply returned to the original, Herodotean sense of ἱστορία (enquiry), protesting that he was not arguing a case but simply writing a morally neutral history in the tradition of Pliny and Aristotle:

Neither is it any thing else but it self, that is, a meer narration, and the *Historie of tithes*. Nor is the law of God, whence tithes are commonly derivd, more disputed in it, then the divine law whence all creatures have their continuing subsistence, is inquired after in Aristotle's historie of living creatures, in Plinie's naturall historie, or in Theophrastus his historie of plants.⁵⁹

Yet there was one important difference between Selden's work and a conventional natural history: *The historie of tithes* dealt with the past and its institutions, with a world of flux, not with the static realm of nature. Selden had successfully conflated several different modes of historical discourse, bringing the antiquary's sense of the past and the idea of history as "inventory" under the same conceptual umbrella as the historian *qua* narrator of events. In short, he had seen both that a single institutional aspect of the present, tithing, had evolved in several stages over the centuries, and that the tale of that evolution merited being told in a history.

In his methodological preface, Selden asserts that he wishes to establish the veracity of the historical argument that tithes had always been paid to the clergy *jure divino*. This is not a matter of theology but of "fact, that is practice [i.e., custom] and storie." He admits that his book, the first of its kind, is likely to be unpopular, and reminds the reader that such earlier scholars as Reuchlin, Budé, and Erasmus had also been resented for their erudition. The same lack of modesty

⁵⁹Selden, *The historie of tithes* (London, 1618), facing p. 1, italicized in original.

which is obvious in this implied comparison of himself with such a pantheon of learning no doubt also allowed Selden to avoid Camden's self-denying ordinance, the protestation that a scholar such as he would never presume to interfere in the writing of history. If continental authors such as Budé, Cujas, Pithou and Pasquier can bring philology to the "rectifying of storie," asks Selden, "why then may not equally a common lawyer of England use this philologie?" A reliable miniature of even the narrowest corner of the past could not be drawn without an understanding of the complete picture, and that in turn could only be achieved through a synthesis of philology with history. Selden had arrived, in theory as well as practice, at a point reached earlier by the French scholars he cites, the alliance of different branches of knowledge in the pursuit of historical truth.⁶⁰

Another point needs highlighting. Selden distinguished between a constructive study of antiquities on the one hand and an undisciplined love of old things on the other. He was careful to argue that he was not interested in the flotsam of the past for its own sake but in the production of a meaningful, useful narrative which would illuminate not only the history of tithing practices, but the entire institutional framework of the church as it had developed down to his own day:

For as on the one side, it cannot be doubted but that the too studious affectation of bare and sterile antiquitie, which is nothing els but to bee exceeding busie about nothing may soon descend to a dotage; so on the other, the neglect or only vulgar regard of the fruitfull and precious part of it, which gives necessary light to the present in matter of state, law, historie, and the understanding of good autors [*sic*], is but preferring that kind of ignorant infancie, which our short life alone allows us, before the many ages of former experience and observation, which may so accumulat yeers to us as if we had livd even from the beginning of time.⁶¹

He was not interested merely in "what hath been" but in its relevance to "the practice and doubts of the present." Like many other politically active early Stuart antiquaries, Selden saw his erudition as a means of contributing to the common weal.

The effects of all this were threefold. First, Selden had given constructive and methodical antiquarian research a formal place in historical narrative. Secondly, he had asserted the freedom of the histo-

⁶⁰Selden, *Historie*, preface, pp. vi, xvi, xx; François Baudouin, *De Institutione historiae universae et ejus cum jurisprudentia conjunctione* (1st ed.; Paris, 1561), repr. in *Artes historicae penus*, ed. J. Wolf (Basel, 1576), p. 668; cited by Kelley, *Foundations*, p. 116.

⁶¹Selden, *Historie*, sig. a2-a3.

rian to alight on any topic he chose: to write the history of "things" as well as of men and kingdoms. Thirdly, he had also denied a place to the unmethodical antiquary, the man interested only in collecting coins or examining old documents for their own sake, without a larger concept of history against which to measure their importance. The passage quoted above puts Selden in precisely the same category as George Huppert's philosophical scholars; the words could have been written by Pasquier or la Popelinière. Selden lacked the burning love of the past for its own sake which drove some others on endless searches for coins and monuments while blinding them as to the meaning of their discoveries; instead, he directed his research to the answering of broad questions.

As an innovative experiment in the reconciliation of erudition and story-telling, the *Historie* was only partially successful. Although Selden kept to a chronological structure in general, he was unable to integrate certain topics into this pattern. The early development of parochial organization, and of tithe jurisdiction, lent themselves more readily to separate treatment, which they received in chapters bracketed off from the story recounted in the rest of the volume. The main problem was that tithes could not be studied in isolation from other ecclesiastical developments. The result, therefore, mixed the topical and the chronological uneasily. A better stylist, more capable of digesting and selecting from his huge collection of information, might have succeeded in composing a more interesting and rhetorically satisfactory book. The weight of Selden's learning buckles the narrative skeleton underneath it.

But whatever its aesthetic shortcomings, Selden's book and the erudition behind it frightened the clergy and their allies into responding.⁶² The first two replies, by Sir James Sempill, a friend of the king, and Richard Tillesley, the archdeacon of Rochester, were lightweight and trivial: they did little more than assert that Selden had misread his documents, or that, whatever the record showed, tithes were the property of the priest by divine right.⁶³ But another re-

⁶²In February, 1619, the bishop of London had all unsold copies of the book seized from the booksellers; but, as Selden told the French scholar, Peiresc, he had managed to save and circulate the manuscript: Selden to Peiresc, 6 February, 1618/19, Bodl. MS Smith 74, fols. 163-65.

⁶³Sir James Sempill, *Sacrilege sacredly handled* (London, 1619); Richard Tillesley, *Animadversions upon M. Selden's History of Tithes* (London, 1619); a later example, in much the same vein, is Richard Perrot, *Jacobs vowe, or the true historie of tithes* (Cambridge, 1627).

sponse, that of the skilled polemicist and future bishop, Richard Mountagu, was more thoughtful, and is of interest precisely because it responds to Selden's principal rhetorical strategy, his claim that he was only a historian, with an articulate reassertion of the traditional view of history's form and limits. Mountagu bows to Selden's learning but discounts the argument that this is only "a meere narration of tithes": "A meere narration is a plaine relation, nothing else. History disputeth not pro or con, concludeth what should be, or not be: censureth not what was well done, or done amisse: but proposeth accidents and occurrences as they fall out: examples and precedents unto posterity."⁶⁴ Mountagu's criticism of Selden's supposed pronunciation of rightness and wrongness in the *Historie* would at first seem to amount to a virtual reduction of history ("plaine relation") to chronicle, thereby denying the historian the didactic role that almost all parties agreed was an essential part of the rhetoric of history. But what he really intends by this is not that history is amoral, but that its lessons should be so obvious from the narrative itself that the historian need not intrude, heavyhanded, with his own explication of them. All Selden had done was make himself a party, "which no historian doth or at least should do." The reader must be left alone to judge the events and personages of the past for himself, following his own moral sense rather than the arguments of a prejudiced author.

In addition, Mountagu continued, Selden had attempted to confound a straightforward narration with "philology and humane learning." Mountagu denounced "those French lawyers," the continental philologists whom Selden had imitated, though he himself did not balk at using them to refute Selden on specific points. Correcting the received view of the past was a "morbus epidemicus" among the philologists, and Selden had only succeeded in undermining the *certainity* in history. Instead of recounting the past in its accepted form for the sake of edifying the reader, Selden had made of history a battle of "text against text: translation against translation." It is clear from these remarks that Mountagu had failed to grasp the essence of Selden's methodology: the strict attention to "synchronism" which allowed the philologist to distinguish the best version of a source from among a number of extant copies. To Mountagu this was mere

⁶⁴Richard Mountagu, *Diatribae upon the first part of the late History of Tithes* (London, 1622), p. 16.

pedantry which could do no more than confuse and mislead the innocent reader.

Mountagu was particularly adamant on the dangers of digging up the remnants of antiquity which did not accord with the values and practices of the present:

Whatsoever you have heaped and raked together out of chartularies, leigier books, moath-eaten evidences, records, remembrances, etc., wherein your greatest adventure is, and most glorious atchievement doth consist, is onely to bring in, set up, or ratifie and confirme a custome to undoe the clergie by, and to breake the necke, were it possible, of their *Ius Divinum*, by bearing up with, and giving life unto the *Ius humanum positivum*.

This clash between canon and customary law therefore entailed a confrontation between two different outlooks on the nature and purpose of historical enquiry.⁶⁵ Mountagu objected to Selden's book precisely because he perceived that it turned history, the great schoolroom of morality, toward the advocacy of a position that was *immoral*. His attack is the English counterpart of the charges of scepticism and atheism laid against the *érudits* in Richelieu's France.

Royal command prevented Selden from replying to his opponents, though his venomous responses to Sempill and Tillesley have survived.⁶⁶ By 1622, he was at work on other projects. The publication by Augustine Vincent, a heraldic deputy of the now frail Camden, of *A discoverie of errors* in Ralph Brooke's 1619 catalogue of the nobility, afforded Selden an opportunity to fill out the thoughts on historical research in *The historie of tithes*. Selden's commendatory epistle to Vincent's book praises the author's use of unprinted sources, "the more abstruse parts of history which lie hid, either in private manuscripts, or in the publick records of the kingdom." The historian cannot live by printed books alone, and when the archives are ignored, he adds, "you know what a deficiency must thence come into the knowledge of history." He includes a catalogue of the best ancient and English historians, judging them not according to their elegance or the wisdom of the lessons they teach, but according to their use of manuscript sources. Polybius, Livy, Suetonius and Tacitus had all used the public records of their day, and it is for that

⁶⁵Mountagu, *Diatribae*, pp. 17, 24, 29, 73, 120, 123, 125–6, 217.

⁶⁶Selden, *An admonition to the reader of Sir James Sempill's Appendix*, *Opera omnia*, III, 1349–64; *A reply to Dr. Tillesley's animadversions upon the History of Tythes*, *Opera omnia*, III, 1369–86.

reason that their histories were still so valuable. In comparison, there is a dearth of good modern histories of England, "except only the annals of Queen Elizabeth and the life and reign of King Henry VII, lately set forth by learned men of most excelling abilities."⁶⁷ This praise was directed at Camden's *Annales* and Bacon's *Henry VII*; the former of these had been painstakingly pieced together from state papers, while Selden had helped in the writing of the latter by supplying the former lord chancellor with transcripts of public records.⁶⁸

In the second edition of *Titles of Honour*, published in 1631, Selden drove the point home by offering an articulate redefinition of history that expanded the meaning of the word:

Under histories, I comprehend here not only the numerous store of histories and annals of several states and ages, *wherein the actions of them are put together in some continued discourse or thred of time*, but those also that otherwise, being written for some narrow particulars, and *sometimes under other names*, so shew us in example what was done in erecting or granting or otherwise, concerning the titles here medled with, that we may thence extract what conduces to the representation of the formes and patents of erections and grants, and of the circumstances and nature of the being of them.⁶⁹

This was a step beyond *The historie of tithes*. Selden had returned to the organization of his earlier works, whereby time was subordinated to topic, though he continued to discuss each title chronologically. But there is an important difference. Though he never called the whole book a history, he made it clear that it was *historical* simply because it pertained to the discovery and presentation of facts about the past. The presence or absence of a chronologically organized narrative structure was of no importance. Matter took precedence, at long last, over form. The public records, private archives, episcopal registers and other sources, including non-documentary ones such as inscriptions, were not merely the materials from which a history could be composed. They were, in their totality, the essence of history itself:

⁶⁷Selden, "To my singular good friend, Mr. Augustine Vincent," in Vincent, *A discoverie of errors in the first edition of the catalogue of nobility, published by Ralph Brooke, Yorke Herald, 1619* (London, 1622), sigs. a-a^v. Selden's own annotated copy of this work is Bodl. lib. shelfmark S.1.11.Jur. Seld.

⁶⁸D. R. Woolf, "John Selden, John Borough, and Francis Bacon's *History of Henry VII*, 1621," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 47 (1984-85), pp. 47-53.

⁶⁹Selden, *Titles of Honour* (2nd ed.), *Opera omnia*, III, 102 (my emphasis).

[They] are to be reckoned for history or among the parts of it, and of necessary use in the search of it; *though they bear other titles*, and are too much neglected chiefly by compilers of annals and history, who for the most part seek no other materials or helps, than what obvious volumes that beare but such kind of names as their own shall, can easily afford them.⁷⁰

These passages demonstrate conclusively that Selden regarded non-narrative documents—whose authors had not, of course, considered them as historical when they wrote them—as the matter through which the diligent investigator, guided by the touchstone of synchronism, could liberate himself from the limitations of those sources which *had* been intended as histories, and thereby write a more accurate description of the past.

* * * * *

The notoriety of *The historie of tithes*, as much as the quality of its scholarship, ensured it a wide readership, while *Titles of Honour* became a standard reference work for the rest of the century, time enough for Selden's more comprehensive concept of history and historical method to establish itself as a credible alternative to the older humanist notion. Philologists, antiquaries and legal writers could now legitimately consider themselves to be doing history, and a gradually increasing number of works were devoted to the history of institutions instead of individuals. Sir John Dodderidge, the antiquary and judge who died in 1628, had completed in 1604 a *discourse* on the development of the offices and institutions of the principality of Wales and its related honours, the duchy of Cornwall and the earldom of Chester. When this finally reached the press in 1630, its printer gave it a new title which belies its antiquarian content and its topical arrangement: *The historie of the ancient and moderne estate of the principality of Wales*.⁷¹ Dodderidge, like Selden, had seen that an institution of state could be described historically; it remained for his publisher to go a little further by calling the work a history. Peter Heylyn imitated the form of Selden's *Historie* in his own study of another religious custom, the *History of the Sabbath* (1636), which Heylyn described as "a story which shall represent unto you the constant practise of Gods church in the present busines, from the creation to these

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, III, 103.

⁷¹Compare this title with the autograph MS, "a discourse or relation both of the auncent and modern estate of the principality of Wales, dutchie of Cornewall, and earledom of Chester," Inner Temple Library, London, Petyt MS 538, vol. 39, fols. 205–264^v, signed and dated by Dodderidge (fol. 206), 1 Jan. 1 Jas.I (i.e., 1604).

daies." Heylyn was not in Selden's league as a scholar, but there can be no doubt that his book, a polemic against the sabbatarian movement, is modelled on the lawyer's.⁷²

As more histories became concerned with traditionally extra-historical subjects, so more works of scholarship laid claim to the dignity of histories. William Burton, a friend of Selden, who had sent him documents from the Cottonian library, produced a *Description of Leicestershire* in 1622 which went beyond a description of local antiquities to include "matters of historye, armoury and genealogy." Burton made no apology for mixing history and chorography. Nor did William Bedwell, who considered his topographical account of Tottenham High cross to be "an historicall narration."⁷³ John Philipot, another former deputy of Camden, and a man much influenced by French scholarship, seems to have been the first Englishman to refer to his master's *Britannia* as a "history" of Britain.⁷⁴ William Dugdale, the greatest antiquary of the next generation, published his *Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1656, two years after the death of Selden. He wrote in his preface, which quotes extensively from Selden's commendatory epistle to Vincent, of "historie in general," of which his book represented one sort; and when he cited Cicero's *De oratore*, as a traditional historian might do, the passage concerned the historian's duty to uncover the truth, not his need to moralize and instruct. In collaboration with Sir Edward Dering, Sir Thomas Shirley and Sir Christopher Hatton, Dugdale had already attempted, in 1638, to revive the society of antiquaries. The twenty articles of the *Antiquitatis Rediviva* included one under which the members agreed to collect everything needed for "historicall illustration of this kingdom." ⁷⁵

⁷²Peter Heylyn, *The history of the Sabbath* (London, 1636), sig. A6.

⁷³William Burton, *The description of Leicestershire* (London, 1622), pp. 8-9; William Bedwell, *A briefe description of the towne of Tottenham High-Crosse in Middlesex* (London, 1631), sig. E3^v.

⁷⁴John Philipot, *Catalogue of the chancellors of England, the lord keepers of the greateseale, and the lord treasurers of England* (London, 1636), sig. B^v; Philipot appears to have modelled his book on the *Recueil des roys de France, leur couronne et maison* (7th edn., 3 parts; Paris, 1607) by the French archivist, Jean du Tillet, for which see Kelley, *Foundations*, pp. 222-33.

⁷⁵Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire illustrated* (London, 1656), preface; Van Norden, "Elizabethan College of Antiquaries," diss. cit., pp. 482-83. Against this, compare a remark by Dering, in some undated notes, that to call St. Osmund a Norman simply because he had come over with William the Conqueror (as had, he claimed, John Bale and Francis Godwin) was "very pardonable in such an historyn, but not so in an Antiquary." Kent Archives Office, U.133, Z.3, p. 16. I owe this reference to the kindness of Mr. Peter Salt of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

From the 1630s on, the words “antiquary” and “historian” were often used synonymously. In Shakerley Marmion’s play, *The Antiquary* (1641), Leonardo comments that he has heard “of an antiquary who, if he be as good at wine as at history, he is sure an excellent companion.”⁷⁶ By the early 1700s, it was possible for White Kennett to offer much the same argument in defence of “historical antiquities” as they were often now called, that apologists for traditional history had raised a century earlier, an appeal to the moral succour it could provide:

I am sensible there be some who slight and despise this sort of learning, and represent it to be a dry, barren, monkish study. I leave such to their clear enjoyment of ignorance and ease. But I dare assure any wise and sober man, that historical antiquities, especially a search into the notices of our own nation, do deserve and will reward the pains of any English student, will make him understand the state of former ages, the constitution of governments, the fundamental reasons of equity and law, the rise and succession of doctrines and opinions, the original of ancient, and the composition of modern tongues, the tenures of property, the maxims of policy, the rites of religion, the characters of virtue and vice, and indeed the nature of mankind.⁷⁷

But a side-effect of this recognition of the close relationship between the historian and the antiquary was a growing tendency to discount the latter when he did not contribute to history-writing. The term “antiquary” itself gradually evolved into “antiquarian,” a more restricted term with connotations of pedantry, of mustiness, and of a perverse love of dead things.⁷⁸ Marmion’s own caricature of Veterano, the aged antiquary, is a good example:

He is grown obsolete,
And 'tis time he were out of date. They say he sits
All day in contemplation of a statue
With ne'er a nose, and doats on the decays. . . .⁷⁹

John Earle provided an even more amusing caricature, in which the antiquary became one of his own hoary artifacts, “one that hath that

⁷⁶Shakerley Marmion, *The Antiquary*, Act I, p. 216, in *Dramatic Works of Shakerley Marmion* (Edinburgh and London, n.d.).

⁷⁷White Kennett, *Parochial Antiquities, Attempted in the History of Ambrosden, Burcester, and other adjacent parts in the counties of Oxford and Bucks*, ed. B. Bandinel (2 vols.; Oxford, 1818), I, xvii. Interestingly, Kennett tried to arrange his antiquities in chronological order, proceeding like an annalist, year by year from the Norman Conquest.

⁷⁸The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the first use of “antiquarian” as a noun as early as 1610, though it did not enjoy much use till considerably later; the adjective, however, did not become current before the mid-eighteenth century.

⁷⁹Marmion, *The Antiquary*, I, 210.

unnaturall disease to bee enamour'd of old age and wrinkles." The antiquary's estate "consists much in shekels, and Roman coynes," he sneered, "and he hath more pictures of Caesar, then James, or Elizabeth."⁸⁰ Thus, while antiquaries could now consider themselves to be researching and writing history, the terms "antiquities" and "antiquary" managed to maintain a separate identity only at the cost of acquiring a good deal of undesirable connotative baggage.

A caveat should be added here. Whatever the relevance of constructive antiquarianism for history-writing, the two fields were never completely identified. The circles occupied by historian and antiquary now overlapped in a way that they had not before, but the overlap was never complete, and was never universally accepted. The resistance of the traditional definition of a history as a narrative form dealing principally with important events did not collapse overnight. History could now include antiquities among its sources, and could address antiquarian problems, but not every learned discourse about the past was a history. In the early eighteenth century, as good a scholar as Richard Rawlinson could still recognize a distinction between scholarship and narrative history; the difference between his view and the Elizabethan position was that he regarded research in antiquities as an indispensable preparation for history-writing. He even referred to non-narrative topographical works as "histories," but, like Selden, considered the true historian to be the man who could use his erudition to compose a whole greater than the sum of its parts. The ability to write elegantly and persuasively was still important, and this led Rawlinson to comment of Dugdale, who had dabbled in narrative history, that he was "a better antiquary than historian." Today, we would say that Dugdale was a better researcher than a writer.⁸¹ In the early seventeenth century, many men laid claim to the title of antiquary, while comparatively few, as we have seen, considered themselves historians. The opposite is now true, and the beginnings of a tendency toward holding the scholar up to scorn are apparent in the Augustan age.⁸² In the

⁸⁰John Earle, *Micro-cosmographie or a piece of the world discovered* (6th ed.; London, 1633), no. 9. For later examples, see *A new dictionary of the canting crew* (London, 1690) and James Puckle, *The Club: or a dialogue between father and son* (London, 1711), pp. 10-11. I owe this last reference to Jane Arscott.

⁸¹Richard Rawlinson, *A New Method of Studying History, Geography and Cosmology* (2 vols.; London, 1730), II, 460-62.

⁸²Joseph M. Levine, *Doctor Woodward's Shield: History, Science and Satire in Augustan England* (Berkeley and London, 1977), pp. 114-29.

Europe of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, narrative histories whose sources were themselves narratives continued to draw more public attention than the erudite and dry works of the scholars.⁸³

Yet for all this, it is equally clear that the relationship between scholarship and history had changed, and that with this shift, the meaning of the word "history" had evolved into something close to its modern sense. If men now faced the prospect of the impossibility of a "perfect" history such as that advocated by la Popelinière in France and Edmund Bolton in England, they at least saw that they need no longer confine themselves to a single aspect of the past, that they could explain the world around them in the language of history. Later narrative historians could, and did ignore the researches of the scholars, but Bishop William Nicolson's popular *The English Historical Library*, the standard bibliographical manual on historical research and writing for many decades, makes it clear that to do so was folly. Nicolson's inclusion of topographical, archival, numismatic and bibliographical research under the rubric of history is a measure of just how much the meaning of the word had evolved in the seventeenth century.

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It has been argued here that the *idea* of history, as much as its practice, was in a state of ferment in Renaissance England, and that the growing "sense of the past" led legal scholars and philologists not only to develop new techniques for and approaches to the study of the past, but also to make a strong case for their adoption by historians. The result was a "takeover bid" which, though it did not result in a wholesale merger, certainly increased the capital of English scholarship at the same time that it enriched public understanding of what it was that history did. This is not to argue for an historical revolution, since the changes described above were gradual and, for the most part, quiet. Nor is it even to exaggerate the contribution of the English since, as we have seen, the course of development outlined here broadly followed and paralleled that in France two generations or so earlier.

⁸³On Augustan scholarship, see D. C. Douglas, *English Scholars, 1660-1730* (2nd ed.; London, 1951); Levine, *Doctor Woodward's Shield*, pp. 93-150, 291-93; Michael Hunter, *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning* (London, 1975).

Yet the similarities between the French and English experiences, especially in the seventeenth century, must be qualified by the very different intellectual environments in the two countries. The reaction against erudite research in protestant England, both before and after the disturbances of the mid-century, never reached the proportions it had attained in absolutist France, which also evolved a stronger tradition of courtly, panegyric history than ever developed in England. In the 1630s, the Trojan myth was revived in England in an attempt to buttress the public image of the Stuart monarchy, but it is significant that this revival was restricted to poetry and to the masque; there was no revival of quasi-mythical prose history to compare with the belletristic renaissance of Brutus's Gallic cousin, Francion. The late and faint-hearted foundation of a royal historiographership, after the Restoration,⁸⁴ could not succeed in dissolving the new relationship between critical learning and historical writing, a relationship which would produce Gibbon's masterpiece in the eighteenth century, and which, fertilized by the fresh influences of German scholarship in the nineteenth century, developed into the magnificent researches of the Victorian and Edwardian masters, Stubbs, Tout and Maitland. The modern history of "history" begins not with the revival of Ciceronian formalism but with the discovery that it was the matter of the past, and not the box which contained it, which could shed light on the present.⁸⁵

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⁸⁴Denys Hay, "The Historiographers Royal in England and Scotland," *Scottish Historical Review*, 30 (1951), 15-29; Herschel Baker, *The Race of Time: Three Lectures on Renaissance Historiography* (Toronto, 1967), p. 95.

⁸⁵Among the several friends and colleagues who have read and commented on earlier versions of this essay, I should like to thank especially Fritz Levy and Paul Christianson. A travel grant from Queen's University at Kingston allowed me to read an abridged version at the Pacific Northwest Renaissance Conference in Vancouver, 29 March, 1985. I am grateful to the conference members for their comments. None of the above is responsible for the errors that remain.