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A Feminine Past? Gender, Genre, and Historical Knowledge in England, 1500–1800

D. R. WOOLF

THE LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITIES OF EARLY MODERN ENGLISHWOMEN have received much attention. Yet we still know very little about their relationship to the study of history.¹ This neglect is understandable, since the world of the published historian remained, for all but a few, well out of reach until the nineteenth century.² Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay, the first woman to write a full-length history of England (and that limited to the seventeenth century), remained for a long time a lonely example of a female political historian. After hers, there is but one case before the nineteenth century of a full-dress history by a woman, Charlotte Cowley; unlike Macaulay's book, it was intended specifically for women rather than for the reading public at large.³

It is not my intention to dwell on this paucity, although a lengthier treatment of the questions raised herein would surely deepen our understanding of how women

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¹ The subject of women and history comes up in passing in Dorothy Gardiner's classic, *English Girlhood at School: A Study of Women's Education through Twelve Centuries* (Oxford, 1929); and in Myra Reynolds, *The Learned Lady in England, 1650–1760* (Boston, 1920).

² Early exceptions are Anne Edgecombe Dowriche's brief verse account of three French atrocities against Protestants, *The French Historie* (London, 1589); and an anonymous *History of the Life, Reign and Death of Edward II* (London, 1680) sometimes ascribed to Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland, but by no means certainly her work. For the fullest recent lists of early published works by women, see Patricia Crawford, "Women's Published Writings 1600–1700," in Mary Prior, ed., *Women in English Society, 1500–1800* (London, 1985), 211–82; Hilda L. Smith and Susan Cardinale, *Women and the Literature of the Seventeenth Century: An Annotated Bibliography Based on Wing's Short-title Catalogue* (New York, 1990).

³ Bridget Hill, *The Republican Virago: The Life and Times of Catharine Macaulay, Historian* (Oxford, 1992); Charlotte Cowley, *The Ladies History of England: From the Descent of Julius Caesar, to the Summer of 1780, Calculated for the use of the Ladies of Great-Britain and Ireland; and Likewise adapted to General Use, Entertainment, and Instruction* (London, 1780).

came to be excluded from participation in "mainstream" historical writing, which through much of this period meant political or military history. It would also, however, accentuate the ways in which this exclusion was regularly subverted through writing in other genres, among them autobiography and biography, two literary forms within which women could, to paraphrase a recent essay, write themselves into history at the very time that they were still being written out of it by men.⁴ This in turn would help us to comprehend a puzzling anomaly—why women are even less evident as historians in early modern England than in some other parts of Europe. The narrow but bright continental string connecting Christine de Pizan in the early fifteenth century to Germaine de Staël in the early nineteenth is only faintly replicated in England by a short and slender thread stretched from the biographers Margaret Cavendish and Lucy Hutchinson to the "republican virago" Macaulay barely a century later.⁵

There are, naturally, limits to what an inquiry focused on England alone or even Europe can achieve, since other societies have developed distinctive historical cultures of their own, and since one cannot simply take evidence found in one place and time and use it to generalize, *mutatis mutandis*, about the case of another. On the other hand, such questions are hardly unique to the West. An international perspective on the history of women in history would contextualize the Anglo-European experience through cross-cultural comparison with women who at various periods have engaged in analogous pursuits elsewhere. One thinks, for instance, of Pan Chao, a Chinese woman of the late first century, who undertook with Imperial approval the completion of the *Hanshu* (the official history of the Western Han dynasty) begun by her father and brother, but who rarely rates more than a footnote in histories of Chinese historical writing.⁶ The historical memoirs of various French aristocratic women in the age of Louis XIV, examples of which will figure below, can certainly be placed side by side with the smaller number of such works by English counterparts such as the duchess of Marlborough.⁷ However, they also share some narrative features with the works of Japanese noblewomen of seven centuries earlier, most notably the Heian aristocrat Murasaki Shikibu (*circa* 975–1014), who joined her brother in studying revered Chinese histories before

⁴ "Introduction," in Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman, eds., *Women, Writing, History: 1640–1740* (London, 1992), 11. Several of the essays in this volume deal with related questions such as the hostility toward women taking up the pen: see especially the chapters by Catherine Sharrock (on Mary Astell) and Valerie Rumbold (on Mary Caesar). For female autobiography, see Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography from Antiquity to the Present* (Boston, 1986), 23–40. Well-known seventeenth-century examples of biography crossing into history, not directly discussed in this essay, include the lives of their husbands by Margaret Cavendish and Lucy Hutchinson.

⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400–1820," in Patricia H. Labalme, ed., *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past* (New York, 1980), 153–82; Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women and the World of the Annales," *History Workshop Journal* 33 (Spring 1992): 121–37; Bonnie G. Smith, "The Contribution of Women to Modern Historiography in Great Britain, France, and the United States, 1750–1940," *AHR* 89 (June 1984): 709–32; Bonnie G. Smith, "History and Genius: The Narcotic, Erotic, and Baroque Life of Germaine de Staël," *French Historical Studies* 19 (1996): 1059–81.

⁶ Charles S. Gardner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), does not mention Pan Chao at all; W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank, eds., *Historians of China and Japan* (London, 1961), contains a passing reference at p. 39. See, however, Nancy Lee Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China* (New York, 1932), 61–69.

⁷ *Memoirs of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, Together with Her Characters of Her Contemporaries and Her Opinions*, William King, ed. (London, 1930).

writing her *Genji Monogatari*, a celebrated tale of court life that mimics the style and content of male chroniclers. As we will see further on, Murasaki shared something else with many Englishwomen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an inclination toward self-censorship: she worried about being thought an erudite pedant (her own father wished she had been born a man), and for a time she disguised her abilities by feigning illiteracy.⁸

Globalizing these questions will be a monumental task, and one best not undertaken until there has been close examination of a number of national cases. The purpose of this essay is to offer one such study. Its scope is explicitly Anglocentric, though with occasional glances across the English Channel, and it uses evidence derived mainly from the nobility, gentry, and literate middling sort. I wish in particular to demonstrate two related points. The first is that, despite their lack of authorship of works of history, women were very much interested in the past and contributed in several ways to what may be called the "social circulation" of historical knowledge by reading history, by acquiring familiarity with its details and certain documentary sources, and by discussing this knowledge conversationally or in private writings. The second is that a distinction between the lessons and values women could take from the pages of history and those that men might derive therefrom was recognized as early as the Restoration (1660) and further developed over the next 150 years. By providing the realist bedrock for the eighteenth-century novel (which in turn would lead to history's eventual mass appeal to the expanded literary public of the nineteenth century), the acknowledgement of gender contributed to history's emergence as both a major branch of literature and a field of knowledge prior to 1800. The making of modern genres is thus intimately bound up with the making of modern gender—that is, with the replacement of Renaissance notions of cosmic hierarchy and male superiority by an ideology of learned and socially constructed sexual difference that conceived of the masculine and the feminine as complementary qualities rather than opposed essences.⁹

As models and generic boundaries were established for history, so history also found a place in the education and socialization of girls and women that differed from its analogous role for boys and men. Consequently, eighteenth-century prescriptions on history are much more strongly marked by gender than those of their Renaissance and early seventeenth-century predecessors.¹⁰ I attempt to explain this development by examining two types of interaction between gender and genre. One took place while stereotypically "female" literary forms such as romance

⁸ Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, Arthur Waley, trans., 2 vols. (Boston, 1934); Richard Bowring, *Murasaki Shikibu, Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs: A Translation and Study* (Princeton, N.J., 1982), 15, 19–21, 139; Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (New York, 1964), 199–200, 251–64.

⁹ For a recent study of this in the context of eighteenth-century England, see G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 1992), 1–36.

¹⁰ On the mental and intellectual aspects of early modern women's lives, see especially Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies* (Amherst, Mass., 1987); and Hilda Smith, *Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists* (Urbana, Ill., 1982). On social and legal aspects, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988); and Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500–1800* (New Haven, Conn., 1995). None of these deals in any direct way with the issue of history, nor, despite its title, does Beth Fowkes Tobin, ed., *History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Athens, Ga., 1994).

and the novel accommodated themselves to a cognitive universe increasingly dominated by the "real" historical past¹¹ and a moral universe ruled by clear understandings of desirable masculine and feminine traits. The other occurred as writers on pedagogy and manners, male and female, attempted to win back women from the seductive powers of fiction. They did so by stressing history's equal capacity to entertain and amuse, its superiority as a font of material for social conversation, and its utility as a source of examples of properly feminine behavior. This gendering of genre is itself one episode in a longer-standing and specifically English contest between reality and imagination, fact and fiction, which—unlike the pan-European Woman Question—was not fought very strenuously on other continental fronts.¹² In the last section, I will measure and qualify the influence of such prescriptive recommendations with reference to evidence of the actual practice of female reading and history-book ownership.

THERE IS NO NEED FOR A REVIEW OF THE RISE OF HISTORY as a genre from 1500 to 1800, but the following points should be briefly noted. Firstly, the number of historical works available in print increased gradually in the sixteenth, more rapidly in the seventeenth, and very quickly indeed in the eighteenth century, when the word "history" pops up in book titles almost indiscriminately. Secondly, one consequence of this was an attempt to work out generic definitions, beginning in the late sixteenth century with Sir Philip Sidney's comparison between the limited, contingent, and particular truths of history and the deeper general truths illustrated in poetry. Subsequent genre-sorting exercises concentrated less on defending history against poetry than on distinguishing among historical discourses of various kinds (sacred and profane, general histories and epitomes, true histories and fictional ones), marking out appropriate territory for the historian as opposed to the author of "lives," and separating the functions and sphere of interest occupied by history proper from those occupied by related but distinct scholarly genres such as genealogy, chronology, natural history, and antiquarian topography.¹³

¹¹ This theme connects the otherwise varying accounts in Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley, Calif., 1957); Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York, 1983); Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (Baltimore, Md., 1987). In the most recent treatment of the novel's origins, J. Paul Hunter observes, "Conceptually, the writing of history had an impact on the context in which novels began to be written and read, and as an enabling force on the scope of novels it would be hard to overestimate its importance." Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York, 1990), 341.

¹² One has only to consider the contributions to both history and literature of Voltaire, Friedrich Schiller, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as illustration, for which see the classic account in Friedrich Meinecke, *Historicism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*, J. E. Anderson, trans., rev. edn. (New York, 1972). The absence in Germany especially of a protracted struggle between history and literature may be attributable in part to the underdeveloped nature of German cultural life, itself heavily influenced by French models, from the Thirty Years' War to the advent of Romanticism. I am grateful to Peter Paret for suggesting the differences and to Harry Liebersohn and Henning Köhler for discussing them with me.

¹³ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, Geoffrey Shepherd, ed. (Manchester, 1973), 105; F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580–1640* (London, 1962); F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Calif., 1967); Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham, N.C., 1979). For

These rhetorical negotiations required more or less continuous diplomatic intervention from abroad. Before the writings of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, and David Hume in the middle of the eighteenth century, English theoretical literature on history's nature and scope was poorly developed and derivative in comparison with the long tradition of continental *artes historicae*. It was largely to these *artes* that English writers and readers would turn for guidance in delimiting history, with French manuals proving especially popular in the second half of the seventeenth century.¹⁴ Early on, the French also established gender lines within historical genres, identifying biographical texts authored by women as "particular history," distinguishable from the "general history" written by men, and thereby excluded "lives" from the rubric of history proper.¹⁵

By about 1660, these generic frontiers had been set, even if they could be crossed periodically within a single work or by the same author. History had come to occupy a higher position in the hierarchy of intellectual pursuits than it had ever held before, and among its subtypes, the political narrative had a special seat of honor. This type of history was characterized by a focus on great events and personalities and the exclusion of the trivial or anecdotal,¹⁶ thus a stress on public career rather than private life; a critical skepticism toward myth, legend, and rumor; and the conscious emulation of famous historians of antiquity (Polybius, Sallust, Caesar, Livy, and especially Tacitus and Thucydides), and to a lesser degree of some of their admirable sixteenth and early seventeenth-century successors, especially the Italians Francesco Guicciardini, Enrico Caterino Davila, and Paolo Sarpi, the Spaniard Juan de Mariana, and the Frenchman Jacques-Auguste de Thou.

History was also characteristically associated with male authors only, with those who made events through participation in war or government especially entitled to write about those events. The pacesetter for the first half of the eighteenth century fit the bill perfectly. A work by Edward Hyde, the earl of Clarendon—*The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*—was widely read after its posthumous publication in 1702 and gained admirers for its author's shrewd analysis of historical cause, his deft selection of raw evidence, and his judicious assessments of individual

antiquarianism, see Joseph M. Levine, *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987); Stan A. E. Mendyk, "Speculum Britanniae": Regional Study, Antiquarianism, and Science in Britain to 1700 (Toronto, 1989); Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1995).

¹⁴ René Rapin, *Instructions for History*, John Davies, trans. (London, 1680); Pierre Le Moyne, *Of the Art Both of Writing & Judging of History with Reflections upon Ancient as Well as Modern Historians* (London, 1695); Nicolas Lenglet du Fresnoy, *New Method of Studying History*, Richard Rawlinson, trans., 2 vols. (London, 1728).

¹⁵ Faith Beasley, *Revising Memory: Women's Fiction and Memoirs in Seventeenth-Century France* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1990), 31; for contemporary mainstream historical writing, see Orest Ranum, *Artisans of Glory: Writers and Historical Thought in Seventeenth-Century France* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1989). On the *ars historica* in England, the most recent study is J. H. M. Salmon, "Precept, Example, and Truth: Degory Wheare and the *Ars Historica*," in Donald R. Kelley and David H. Sacks, eds., *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1997), 11–36.

¹⁶ On the exclusion by humanist historians of several different modes of historical experience previously included in chronicles, among them women's history, see Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago, 1994), 215–33; and Richard Helgerson, "Murder in Faversham: Holinshed's Impertinent History," in Kelley and Sacks, *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, 133–58.

character.¹⁷ Clarendon's occasional biographical and anecdotal passages revealed the intimate side of court and parliamentary personalities under Charles I and seemed to readers more like enriching insights into character in the fashion of Tacitus than lurid lapses into the inferior and licentious "secret history" genre of Suetonius and Procopius. Clarendon's combination of his own autobiography with an older manuscript of the history (a blending criticized by many modern scholars) and his use of first-person narration appeared to early readers as an artful fusion of the political with the personal. And Clarendon explicitly aimed at the "pleasure" as much as the edification of his readers.¹⁸ These features may help to account for the popularity of the *History of the Rebellion* among eighteenth-century women such as the aging Whig matriarch, Lady Sarah Cowper, who thought highly of its character sketches, or the Jacobite Mary Caesar, who found memoirs like Clarendon's more believable than other forms of history (and at one point aspired to write a history of her own times), or, forty years later still, the young Caroline Lennox, who read Clarendon for recreation while vacationing in Bath.¹⁹ Later historians in the same "neoclassical" mold, most notably Hume himself, William Robertson, and Edward Gibbon, were frequently measured against Clarendon's standards of style and impartiality.²⁰

Meanwhile, the audience for history was expanding and changing. There were many more readers for history books by 1660 than there had been a century earlier, and the numbers would continue to rise, further driving the production of abridgements, digests, and epitomes. Women were reading history books in increasing numbers, but it is not clear that they were especially interested in the political and military events that dominated most of them. The classical humanist construction of history as a truthful narrative of kings, statesmen, and battles best told by those with an insider's view and intended for the instruction of effective political action by morally autonomous citizens would, perhaps, have had limited appeal to a gender largely prevented from turning its examples into practice.

IF HISTORY PROPER WAS LARGELY CONCERNED WITH matters of marginal interest to females, the same was not true of other varieties of learning about the past. The very interest in domestic and familial affairs that induced women to keep diaries

¹⁷ Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Begun in the Year 1641*, W. Dunn Macray, ed., 6 vols. (Oxford, 1888).

¹⁸ Several of these points are made persuasively in the most recent account of the *History* and the literary problems Clarendon faced in writing it, Martine Watson Brownley, *Clarendon and the Rhetoric of Historical Form* (Philadelphia, 1985), 20, 30, 62, 146–58. This departs from the more critical view of the *History*'s success in blending history and autobiography in B. H. G. Wormald, *Clarendon: Politics, Historiography, and Religion, 1640–1660* (Cambridge, 1964), x.

¹⁹ Hertfordshire Record Office, Hertford, England (hereafter, Herts RO), Penshanger MSS, D/EP.F.29–35 (Diary of Sarah Cowper, 1700 to 1716), vol. 3, pp. 10–37 (January–March 1705); Valerie Rumbold, "The Jacobite Vision of Mary Caesar," in Grundy and Wiseman, *Women, Writing, History*, 196–97; Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa, and Sarah Lennox, 1740–1832* (London, 1994), 39. I owe this last reference to David Brewer.

²⁰ Philip Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture: From Clarendon to Hume* (New York, 1996); James W. Johnson, *The Formation of English Neo-Classical Thought* (Princeton, N.J., 1967), 31–68; Leo Braudy, *Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding, and Gibbon* (Princeton, 1970), 14–30.

also led them to assist in the work of antiquaries, whose focus on genealogy, topography, and architecture more closely accorded with female concerns than did the writings of historians. This is not to say that antiquarianism was any less blind to gender than history. The skills that it required included a high level of proficiency in ancient and medieval tongues that only rare women like the Anglo-Saxonist Elizabeth Elstob managed to achieve, and even she was spoken of in rather patronizing terms as a "Saxon nymph" by her male admirers.²¹ Yet women's interests in such matters were acknowledged by men. Indeed, wits even poked fun at the figure of the female antiquary unable to understand the objects in her possession. Lewis Theobald mocked the wife of a coffeehouse owner who laid claim to her husband's virtuoso knowledge but showed so little "judgment as an antiquary" that he expected her to bring forth a splinter of the pillar of salt into which Lot's wife had been turned or "a piece of the ruins of old Troy." He also made fun of "she-pedants" and recommended that a wife who venerated antiquity should be subjugated by telling her that "the Antediluvian Ladies were great Housewives, and that Sappho herself kept a Dairy."²²

Such satires distort and exaggerate rather than invent. A variety of evidence suggests that women were indeed drawn to participate informally in certain types of antiquarian activity, that even if most could not handle the languages of antiquity, they were at least well acquainted with the vernacular family documents of the more recent past (pedigrees, conveyances, and the like), and that they helped to preserve and circulate this sort of antiquarian knowledge while maintaining a familiarity with such sources that would permit their more direct involvement in local and medieval historical scholarship from the late nineteenth century onward. Moreover, women's knowledge was not limited to the documentary, for they were clearly part of the gender-neutral "they" or "local people" often mentioned by visiting scholars as the sources for the anecdotes and historical explanations repeated in works such as William Camden's *Britannia* (1586).²³ Englishwomen appear to have retained a more acute sense of the traditional, oral past than men well into the nineteenth century—so much so that one proponent of Catholic emancipation believed that the tales of papist atrocities that continued to circulate had been handed down from one old woman to another.²⁴ Again, this is not an exclusively English phenomenon. Female storytelling is to be found in the *veillées*, or evening gatherings of rural France during the same period, where village women were less likely than men to

²¹ One recalls the condescension toward learned Renaissance women by male admirers such as Angelo Poliziano three centuries earlier. Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago, 1993); Lisa Jardine, "'O decus Italiae virgo,' or the Myth of the Learned Lady in the Renaissance," *Historical Journal* 28 (1985): 799–819. For Elstob's career, see Reynolds, *Learned Lady*, 169–85; S. F. D. Hughes, "Mrs. Elstob's Defense of Antiquarian Learning in Her Rudiments of Grammar for the English-Saxon Tongue (1715)," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 27 (1979): 172–91.

²² Lewis Theobald, *The Censor*, 3 vols. (London, 1717), 1: 149–50; 2: 156, 160.

²³ John Aubrey, for one, specified "old woemen and children" as the source of some traditional verses about "Rattle-Bone," a local hero who had fought the Danes at Sherston Magna in Wiltshire; the verses have little to do with his military exploits, which are not specifically mentioned, being principally a recitation of all the land he acquired thereby. *Wiltshire: The Topographical Collections of John Aubrey, F.R.S.*, J. E. Jackson, ed. (Devizes, 1862), 107.

²⁴ D. R. Woolf, "The 'Common Voice': History, Folklore, and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 120 (August 1988): 26–52; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn., 1992), 332.

be able to draw on books and depended instead on oral tradition for many of their tales.²⁵ Recent scholarship presents modern evidence of an even sharper gender division in oral/folkloric cultures outside Europe, especially in South Asia. Velcheau Narayana Rao, for instance, has argued that the *Ramayana* provides a flexible language used by women to "say what they wish to say as women" in a "distinctly female way," its songs, when recounted and performed by women, stressing episodes of pregnancy, birth, and child-rearing.²⁶

It is difficult to make such claims for early modern Englishwomen, since we do not know enough of the content of what they recounted. But because a significant proportion of their rights under the law continued to rest on custom rather than statute, it is not unreasonable to assume a similar reliance on mnemonic recollection and oral transmission of facts about the past—familial, local, or even national.²⁷ The seventeenth-century antiquary John Aubrey saw this sort of traditional knowledge in decline, and he explicitly connected its marginalization from history proper with rising literacy, especially among women who had allowed book learning to interfere with their memories. Aubrey himself had received his earliest lessons in history "from the Conquest down to [Charles] I in ballad" from his nurse, and he rather wistfully recalled that "in the old, ignorant times, before women were readers . . . the history was handed downe from mother to daughter."²⁸ Aubrey had in mind the common folk, but elite women, who were much less dependent on oral transmission, were also concerned with some of the same issues. Their relations to the past were shaped by a familiarity with their ancestry and their location, and by a sense of historical continuity that encompassed both. A good example can be found in Anne Clifford (1590–1676), successively countess of Dorset and Pembroke, whose diaries brim full of interest in her forebears. A precise knowledge of her family history was wrapped up in an equally strong sense of location. She repeatedly associates her properties, and particular rooms in those properties, with events or characters from history. Sections of her Westmorland home, Brough Castle, were familiarly known as "Clifford's Tower," "Caesar's Tower," and "the Roman Tower." Clifford could also put her understanding of place in a wider context with reference to the history of the realm. After she made extensive repairs to one of her properties, Pendragon Castle, Clifford remarked that "it had layen desolate ever since the 15th yeare of Edward the third in 1341,

²⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford, Calif., 1975), 201–02.

²⁶ Velcheau Narayana Rao, "A Ramayana of Their Own: Women's Oral Tradition in Telugu," in Paula Richman, ed., *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991), 114, 118. A. K. Ramanujan similarly proposes a distinction between "domestic" versus "public" tales in Kannada folklore: "Two Problems of Kannada Folklore," in S. H. Blackburn and A. K. Ramanujan, eds., *Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India* (Berkeley, 1986), 41–75. I owe these two references to Emily Kearns. See also Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger, *Gender and Genre in the Folklore of Middle India* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996), 148–50.

²⁷ Tim Stretton, "Women, Custom and Equity in the Court of Requests," in Jennifer Kermode and Garthine Walker, eds., *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), 170–89; Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993), 6, 23.

²⁸ John Aubrey, *The Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey* (written 1673–92), 5 vols. (1719; facs. edn., Dorking, 1975), 1: 93, 99, 102, 106, 115–16; Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme*, James Britten, ed. (London, 1881), 67–68. Like his contemporary John Locke, however (for whom see below), Aubrey did not think history itself a suitable study for women: John Aubrey, *Aubrey on Education*, J. E. Stephens, ed. (London, 1972), 71, 75.

which is 320 yeares agoe"; she knew the cause of the ruin as well as the date, "for then (as [in] old Records and Chronicles it appears) the Scotts made an inroad into the West of England totally destroying it and pulling downe all the timber and a greate parte of the Stone building of it."²⁹

Women were directly involved in the gathering of information that concerned the antiquaries. Early in the seventeenth century, Anne Blundell, the elderly dowager of Little Crosby, Lancashire, accompanied her son William on a leisurely afternoon search for Anglo-Saxon coins buried on their land during the Viking invasions.³⁰ A hundred years later, the Cheshire diarist Henry Prescott records a rainy day when two young ladies came to see his collection of Roman coins and were "well entertaind."³¹ Women included "historic sites" on their tours, as the journals of the late seventeenth-century aristocratic traveler Celia Fiennes abundantly illustrate.³² The travels of Edward Harley, second earl of Oxford, through Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Berkshire in 1738, described in letters to his wife, reveal a shared interest in local antiquities. On one occasion, Oxford reminded the countess to take note of a church monument, and on another he expressed his skepticism about the origins of King Arthur's Hall at Winchester. Lady Oxford was no bored female humoring her husband's antiquarian fetish. Her own journeys through Yorkshire and Durham in 1745, four years after her husband's death, took in Clifford's Tower, "which is a very fine ruin," and collections of Roman coins and medieval manuscripts. She expressed outright disappointment at Durham Cathedral because, in her judgment, it was "very small and in bad repair and affords very few antiquities."³³ The letters of Mary Wortley Montagu at about the same time attest to her similar interest in curiosities from the past, and other examples can be found up to 1800, in the letters of Lady Mary Coke and in the journals of Mary Berry and Mary Anne Flaxman.³⁴

For many women, antiquarian and especially genealogical pursuits were less a matter of amassing superfluous erudition than of constructing a personal historical domain by applying imagination and feeling to documentary and material evidence. The discovery of both the correspondence and the Elizabethan clothing of one of her female ancestors, for instance, encouraged Cassandra Willoughby to embark on

²⁹ *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, D. J. H. Clifford, ed. (Wolfeboro Falls, N.H., 1991), 56, 154, 224.

³⁰ Lancashire Record Office, Preston, Blundell of Little Crosby Papers, DDBI 24/12; D. R. Woolf, "Little Crosby and the Horizons of Early Modern Historical Culture," in Kelley and Sacks, *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, 93–132.

³¹ *Diary of Henry Prescott, Deputy Registrar of Chester Diocese*, J. Addy and P. McNiven, eds., 2 vols., Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 132 (1994), 2: 364. In 1717, the Sussex barrister Timothy Burrell left his "curious collection of gold coins" to his infant grand-daughter: R. W. Blencowe, "Extracts from the Journal and Account-Book of Timothy Burrell, Esq. . . . from 1683 to 1714," *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 3 (1850): 172.

³² *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, Christopher Morris, ed. (London, 1982), 48. Fiennes' comments on local and national history were not always accurate, but she had done advance reading in preparation for her visits, citing works like Camden's *Britannia* periodically.

³³ Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland, Preserved at Welbeck Abbey* 6 (1901): 173, 174, 182–90.

³⁴ *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, W. Moy Thomas, ed., rev. edn., 2 vols. (London, 1887), 1: 205, 272; 2: 187; *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, 4 vols. (London, 1888–96), 3: 223; British Library (hereafter, BL), MS Add 37729, fols. 13r, 34v, 126v (Berry); BL MS Add. 39792, vol. A (Flaxman).

a family history in which she also consulted William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, Robert Thoroton's *Antiquities of Nottinghamshire*, and Richard Baker's *Chronicle*.³⁵ Genealogical pursuits also provided a means for women to counteract the anomaly in the English legal system that acknowledged them as kin for purposes of inheritance but overlooked them in the written record of descents, which stressed the male line. Consequently, women were sometimes the principal source of basic information about land, estates, and buildings whose histories had been complicated through marriage and alienation. When the Jacobean knight Sir Edward Rodney wrote a family history for his daughters, he owed to his own mother information about the family's origins in the time of King Stephen, which she recalled from a brass plaque no longer extant by the time her son wrote. Elizabeth Pepys, who at other times accompanied her husband on visits to historic sites, took refuge from Samuel's philandering in the pursuit of her family's history and in particular its coats of arms. The Pepyses discussed this subject on several occasions, and in 1667 Samuel bought his wife a copy of John Guillim's *Display of Heraldry*, a Jacobean heraldic manual that had been reprinted in 1664.³⁶ Outside London, William Holman's investigations of Essex family origins, conducted during the 1720s, provides important evidence of extensive female participation in the informal preservation of family lineage. At several points in his correspondence, Holman, a nonconformist cleric, was referred by local gentry, and even fellow antiquaries, to their wives, mothers, and sisters as sources for reliable genealogical information.³⁷

The strong interest of women in genealogy did not escape notice, especially when public display of such knowledge transgressed the rules of humility and modesty laid out in such books as *The Ladies Calling*, by Richard Allestree.³⁸ Like Theobald's imagined female antiquary, those who turned erudition into conversation were given short shrift by many male observers. One of Joseph Addison's mock correspondents, Sir John Enville, complains of his wife, who uses her own family's pedigree to subjugate him. "Our children have been trained up from their infancy with so many accounts of their mother's family, that they know the stories of all the great men and women it has produced. Their mother tells them, that such an one

³⁵ Cassandra Willoughby, "An Account of the Willoughby's of Wollaton, taken out of the Pedigree, old Letters, and old Books of Accounts, in my Brother Sir Thomas Willoughby's study, Dec., A.D. 1702," calendared in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton* (London, 1911), 504–609.

³⁶ *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A New and Complete Transcription*, Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds., 11 vols. (Berkeley, Calif., 1970–83), 2: 93 (May 2, 1661); 8: 422 (September 6, 1667).

³⁷ Elizabeth Cressener, for example, searched on Holman's behalf "over all our writings" for such evidence, although she could not answer his particular query. Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, D/Y/1/1/95, Holman Letters [1723]. For other examples from Holman's incoming correspondence, see Essex Record Office D/Y/1/1/55, Elizabeth Bassett Goffen to Holman, September 11, 1720; Essex Record Office D/Y/1/1/12, William Ashby to Holman, August 8, 1720; Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, 2 vols. (London, 1768), 2: 449.

³⁸ Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*, 2 parts in 1 vol. (London, 1673); Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, 384–92, points out that this is the first manual on manners thoroughly devoted to establishing learned gender identities distinct from biological sexual differences. Compare Michael McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660–1760," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28 (1995): 295–322; Fenela A. Childs, "Prescriptions for Manners in English Courtesy Literature, 1690–1760, and Their Social Implications" (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1984).

commanded in such a sea engagement, that their great grandfather had a horse shot under him at Edgehill, that their uncle [sic] was at the siege of Buda, and that her mother danced in a ball at court with the duke of Monmouth." Enville is most vexed by the fact that his daughter has asked why he never tells tales about the generals and admirals in *his* family. Elsewhere, in a description of a ladies' meeting, Addison describes "one of those female historians that upon all occasions enters into pedigrees and descents, and finds herself related, by some offshoot or other, to almost every great family in England: for which reason she jars and is out of tune very often in conversation, for the company's want of due attention and respect for her."³⁹

The family therefore lay at the heart of the female understanding of the past; affective ties in the present provided a lens through which history could be "domesticated." This same perspective was applied to episodes from history proper when women read about them. The commonplace book of the Jacobean gentlewoman Lady Anne Southwell, for example, contains verses on Julius Caesar that highlight the private and emotive, stressing matters such as Brutus's bastardy, his unfilial betrayal of his benefactor, and the love between Cleopatra and Caesar. This is not unlike the displacement of classical military and political concerns for eroticism and chivalric courtesy that Gabrielle M. Spiegel has noted in thirteenth-century prose chronicle treatments of Caesar's career.⁴⁰ It even more closely resembles the efforts of Southwell's early seventeenth-century contemporaries, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, and Thomas Heywood, to trim a course between poetry and history by stressing the sentimental and romantic lives of the female characters in their historical verse and prose.⁴¹ This focus on private comportment and the observation of "family values" can still be found a century later, when Princess Caroline gave her favorite, Mary, Countess Cowper, a copy of the works of Madame Desboulrière. The account of Caesar's assassination contained therein elicited ruminations on friendship and loyalty that transcended Whig principles of resistance to tyranny. Brutus's tyrannicide was also a patricide and something "which, as much a Whig as I am, I cannot come up to," the countess recorded, "for I think Brutus should either have been faithful to Caesar, or he should have refused his favours; the baseness of his ingratitude blackening, in my opinion, all that could

³⁹ *The Spectator*, no. 299 (February 12, 1712), Donald F. Bond, ed., 5 vols. (Oxford, 1965), 3: 70–71; *The Tatler* 157 (April 11, 1710), George Aitken, ed., 4 vols. (London, 1898–99), 3: 230–31.

⁴⁰ "An abstract of the lives of the Romaine Empourers as the [sic] have bin releted [sic] unto us by Plinie Plutarch; and Suetonius and first of the first," commonplace book of Lady Anne Southwell, fl. 1588–1636, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. (hereafter, Folger), MS B.b.198, fols. 30v, 59r–v, 64v–65r; Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), 202–13.

⁴¹ For instance, Thomas Heywood, *England's Elizabeth* (London, 1631); *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women of the World* (London, 1640); and, most interesting of all, *Gynaikeion: or, Nine Books of Various History Concerning Women* (London, 1624). Heywood was also the founder in England of a "history of famous women" genre that would achieve greater prominence in eighteenth-century works such as William Alexander, *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time*, 2 vols. (London, 1779), and George Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain Who Have Been Celebrated for Their Writings or Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts and Sciences* (1755), Ruth Perry, ed. (Detroit, Mich., 1985). The idea for writing this last work, interestingly, came from Elizabeth Elstob.

be said for his zeal for his country." Her comments occasioned vigorous discussion among her friends as to Brutus's character.⁴²

BY MARY COWPER'S TIME, the old Renaissance trope that the historian ought to be a man of *affairs* had become the axiom that he must be a *man* of affairs. Periodicals like *The Guardian* and *The Tatler* stressed the reasons why women ought not to attempt to write history themselves.⁴³ Their apparent preoccupation with the domestic and emotional provided further argument for this exclusion: that females were simply unable to distinguish the important from the trivial, the extraordinary from the mundane, the public from the private. Sir Richard Steele ventured the thought that "history . . . written by a woman, you will easily imagine to consist of love in all its forms."⁴⁴

Reading, however, was another matter. Commentators universally recognized that female readers would not have the chance to put the lessons of history into practice, exceptions like the "not very amiably feminine" Queen Elizabeth notwithstanding.⁴⁵ Yet history had long been acknowledged as suitable for girls and young women.⁴⁶ Leonardo Bruni's letter to Baptista di Montefeltro (*circa* 1405) put it first among those studies a woman ought to pursue after religion and morality. The Florentine statesman saw such historians as Sallust, Livy, and Caesar as "fully within the comprehension of a studious lady. *For, after all, History is an easy subject: there is nothing in its study subtle or complex.* It consists in the narration of the simplest matters of fact which, once grasped, are readily retained in the memory."⁴⁷ Bruni was prepared to concede that women could learn from history, albeit stressing its apparent simplicity and making no allowance for the fact that some women might wish to read an account of the past that referred to matters other than

⁴² *Diary of Mary Countess Cowper*, S. Cowper, ed. (London, 1864), 115 (July 1716).

⁴³ *The Guardian* 25 (April 9, 1713), in John Calhoun Stephens, ed. (Lexington, Ky., 1982), 114.

⁴⁴ *The Tatler* 36 (July 2, 1709), 1: 292; cited in Isobel Grundy, "Women's History? Writings by English Nuns," in Grundy and Wiseman, *Women, Writing, History*, 126–38, n. 2. There is a parallel to the exclusion of women from history writing in the visual arts. Through most of the period, women were deemed unqualified to work in history painting (traditionally the highest form of art) and confined to work in portraiture and still-life, on the grounds that their male figures might be effeminate or anatomically incorrect; one or two notable exceptions such as Angelica Kauffman managed, however, to overcome this stricture: Wendy W. Roworth, "Anatomy in Destiny: Regarding the Body in the Art of Angelica Kauffman," in Gill Perry and Michael Rossington, eds., *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture* (Manchester, 1994), 41–62; the point is made for other parts of Europe in the essay by Gen Doy, "Women and the Bourgeois Revolution of 1789: Artists, Mothers and Makers of (Art) History," in Perry and Rossington, *Femininity and Masculinity*, 184–203, at 188.

⁴⁵ The quotation comes from the Rev. James Fordyce's popular *Addresses to Young Men*, 2 vols. (London, 1777), 2: 136.

⁴⁶ This is not a prominent fact in accounts of women's education, for instance Norma McMullen, "The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540–1640," *History of Education* 6 (1977): 87–101; or Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, 364–75, the fullest recent summary of the literature.

⁴⁷ Leonardo Bruni d'Arezzo, "Concerning the Study of Literature," rpt. in William Harrison Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators* (New York, 1963), 127–28, my emphasis, text discussed in Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana, Ill., 1956), 70–71. For Renaissance women and study in general, see Margaret L. King, "Book-Lined Cells: Women and Humanism in the Early Italian Renaissance," in Albert Rabil, Jr., ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), 1: 435–53; and King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 172–82; Joan Kelly, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in Kelly, *Women, History, and Theory* (Chicago, 1984).

Julius Caesar's Gaul-bashing. His is, however, among the earliest attempts to promote history as specifically suited to female understanding.

In this regard, Bruni had few imitators among English Renaissance educational writers, who either ignored history or saw it as equally well fitted to both sexes.⁴⁸ Richard Brathwait omitted history altogether from a work written for women in 1631. In a companion volume directed at men, however, he declaimed at great length on the merits of "our owne moderne chronicles" as the highest guide to things that really mattered: "the revolution of times, the mutation of states, the natures and dispositions of persons, the issues and events of things."⁴⁹ Others failed to consider the problem of history's greater appeal to men or the question of precisely what women should do with their historical knowledge, once attained. When, in the 1570s, the clergyman William Harrison had commented approvingly on the "antient ladies" of Elizabeth's court who avoided idleness "in continual reading either of the Holy Scriptures or histories," he probably had in mind the usefulness of keeping them occupied and free from natural female "vices" such as sinful sloth, sexual license, and gossip. There is no mention of which histories should be read or of how they might be effective in inculcating specific virtues.⁵⁰ The puritan Lady Grace Mildmay similarly urged "understanding and knowledge of the chronicles of the land" on young women simply as an exemplary encouragement to obedience.⁵¹ They were in this sense preferable to chivalric romances, which, according to one Jacobean writer, might make women "idle sisters of Don Quixote" while leading to mannish fantasies, cross-dressing, and the loss of their "naturall perfections."⁵²

It is only in the second half of the seventeenth century—not coincidentally, after a brief period during which women had been active and outspoken as petitioners, writers, organizers, ecstatic visionaries, and prophets⁵³—that discussions of the uses

⁴⁸ An exception, again continental, is Juan-Luis Vives, *A Very Frutefull and Pleasant Booke Called the Instruction of a Christen Woman*, R. Hyrde, trans. (London, 1529), who recommended ancient history both to Princess Mary Tudor and Lord Mountjoy but was careful to prescribe only "easy" historians like Justin, Florus, and Valerius Maximus to the former, while also making clear that a male tutor should provide the guide through such material; compare discussion in Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, 73–74.

⁴⁹ Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentlewoman* (London, 1631), 183; *The English Gentleman* (London, 1631), 211–20; Richard Mulcaster is similarly silent in the earlier *Positions Concerning the Training up of Children*, William Barker, ed. (Toronto, 1994), 169–84, 265–66. One recalls Virginia Woolf's comment that the "important" and the "trivial" were nearly always defined with respect to masculine and feminine values. "This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room. A scene in a battlefield is more important than a scene in a shop." *A Room of One's Own* (London, 1929), 128.

⁵⁰ William Harrison, *Description of England* (London, 1577, expanded 1587), cited by Retha M. Warnicke, "Women and Humanism in England," in Rabil, *Renaissance Humanism*, 2: 49.

⁵¹ This was a sensible recommendation, given that several prominent women had been executed in recent decades and given also the well-established patriarchal connection between royal and husbandly authority: autobiography of Grace Mildmay, rpt. in Linda Pollock, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552–1620* (London, 1993), 23; also printed, with some errors, in Rachel Weigall, "An Elizabethan Gentlewoman: The Journal of Lady Mildmay," *Quarterly Review* 215 (1911): 127.

⁵² Anon., *Hic Mulier: or, The Man-Woman; being a Medicine to Cure the Staggers in the Masculine-Feminines of our Times* (London, 1620), sig. B3r–v.

⁵³ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), esp. 45–124; Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720* (London,

of history begin to treat women as a distinct category of reader. Contemporary treatises on history writing and early research manuals on erudite skills like numismatics and philology sought to evaluate suitable historians for men to read and, if so inclined, to imitate. In contrast, advice on history aimed at females is contained almost exclusively in courtesy literature and pedagogical tracts. These concentrate on making a case for why their readers should be interested in history at all and only secondarily on recommending particular authors, in part because literary miscellanies and periodicals were at the same time removing the need for making such choices by preselecting materials for their female audiences.

Educational writings from about 1660 become more sensitive to the sexes. John Locke's discussions of history and chronology are thoroughly gendered, a feature that is all the more striking when one considers that, in contrast to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* a century later, his general precepts are not. Locke found history's potential as a moral educator wanting—it offered “nothing almost but Fighting and Killing”; accordingly, he suggested that it was best left “to the study of Grown Men,” or at least to “young lad[s],” who could profit from its political or military lessons.⁵⁴ As for moral guidance, he echoed Sidney a century earlier in finding fiction just as useful as history, stories of Caesar and Alexander being “not one jot to be preferred to the history of Robin Hood or the seven wise masters.”⁵⁵ Mary Astell argued Locke's point from the opposite perspective in 1705, putting the disjunction between study and practice with much greater force and expressing an even stronger skepticism toward history's claim to teach morality to women:

They allow us Poetry, Plays, and Romances, to divert us and themselves, and when they would express particular esteem for a woman's sense, they recommend history; tho' with submission, history can only serve us for amusement and a subject of discourse. For tho' it may be of use to the men who govern affairs, to know how their fore-fathers acted, yet what is this to us, who have nothing to do with such business? Some good examples indeed are to be found in history, tho' generally the bad are ten for one; but how will this help our conduct, or excite in us a generous emulation? Since the men being the historians, they seldom condescend to record the great and good actions of women.⁵⁶

Astell's objections, like Locke's, are entirely in keeping with the emergent understanding of historical knowledge as in itself masculine, taken either as a classroom for political action or, alternatively (in the case of natural history and antiquarian topography), as a field of knowledge to be invaded, conquered, and

1993), 160–82; Keith Thomas, “Women and the Civil War Sects,” *Past and Present* 13 (1958): 42–62; Bernard Capp, “Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England,” in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle, eds., *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London, 1996), 117–45.

⁵⁴ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton, eds. (Oxford, 1989), 181, 238. For Locke's particular prescriptions, which are similarly gendered, see 322–23.

⁵⁵ John Locke, “Of Study,” in *The Educational Writings of John Locke*, James L. Axtell, ed. (Cambridge, 1968), 409.

⁵⁶ Mary Astell, *The Christian Religion* (London, 1705), 202, passage rpt. in *The First English Feminist: Reflections upon Marriage and Other Writings by Mary Astell*, Bridget Hill, ed. (Aldershot, 1986), 201; also cited in Ruth Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* (Chicago, 1986), 9. Given this comment, it is not surprising that Astell's more widely cited *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (London, 1697) has nothing to say on the subject of history.

"mastered." It was no accident that Francis Bacon had entitled one of his programmatic works *The Masculine Birth of Time* nor that his later admirers in the Royal Society dedicated themselves "to raise a masculine philosophy," devoid of passion, misunderstanding, and mercurial imagination.⁵⁷ Clio's femininity aside, true history acquired in the violent seventeenth century a male rigor, an authoritative forcefulness that contrasted with the unreliability of tales and traditions associated with old wives. Worthy women like Elizabeth Walker—who banished "foolish stories" and "idle songs" from her household, while having "usefull histories" such as John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and "abbreviations of our English chronicles" read aloud to her children and servants—were praised by their husbands and biographers for acquiring knowledge that was "clear, solid and indeed masculine."⁵⁸

Under such circumstances, one might expect Augustan and Georgian women to show little interest in history at all, or to be told that its masculine spin made it unsuitable. But this is not what happened, and most prescriptions followed neither Locke nor Astell. The very definition of masculinity was itself softened during the eighteenth century, moving toward a middle ground between harshness and effeminacy. The third earl of Shaftesbury had stressed the "Oeconomy of Passions" in his writings on virtue and pointed out the importance of emotions such as affection to men and women alike. Various other male and female writers up to the Rev. James Fordyce in 1781 discussed the need to engender both "men of feeling" and women who could balance passion with common sense, severity with delicacy.⁵⁹

One approach to the problem of history's suitability acknowledged that women might be able to make use of it in ways not open to the less sensitive males. The French advocate of female access to political and military office, François Poullain de La Barre, who was read in England, thought women not only good readers of history but capable of bringing something to it that men could not. Acquired familiarity with "the transactions of men in general" would make a woman a superior interpreter of the lessons of history, bringing her "into the Mystery of Policy, Interest and Passions," and helping her to "discover the moving wheele, and spring, of enterprizes, the fountain and source of revolutions." Most interesting, she would be able to add something to what she read, "to supply in great Undertakings the lesser things which have made them prosper, which have escaped Histories," and her superior sense of vice and virtue will preserve her "from the Corruption,

⁵⁷ Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis, 1984), 10–17. The tradition into which Bacon falls differs from an older, medieval tradition that made science or knowledge (*scientia*) itself, rather than nature, into a feminine icon: Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 122–44; Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven, Conn., 1985), 33–42.

⁵⁸ Anthony Walker, *The Holy Life of Mrs Elizabeth Walker* (London, 1696), 11, 69, 71, my emphasis. The major English historical thinker of the first half of the eighteenth century, Bolingbroke, implicitly endorsed the view of historical knowledge as male by speaking consistently of the history reader as "he": *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 2 vols. (London, 1752).

⁵⁹ Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit*, D. Walford, ed. (Manchester, 1977), 57, 78; James Fordyce, "On a Manly Spirit, as Opposed to Effeminacy," in *Addresses to Young Men*, 2: 129–78; James Fordyce, *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women*, 3d edn. (Boston, 1781), 24–25, 42; Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 37–103; Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, 297–321, 364–75.

which infect[s] men in reading of Histories.”⁶⁰ Poullain’s views on the equality of the sexes would not be endorsed before Mary Wollstonecraft’s writings over a century later, but many English writers were at least prepared to contemplate a middle ground in which history could be somehow rendered both appealing and useful to women. Daniel Defoe, for instance, defended the female sex as naturally “quick and sharp” and advocated the establishment of a female academy where young women could study free of men. In addition to the “breeding” that they could acquire in music and dancing, Defoe was explicit in arguing the cause of Clio for women. “They should be brought to read books, and especially history,” he proposed, and not merely because it would bestow “the necessary air of conversation” but because it would “make them understand the world” and render this knowledge socially useful beyond their closets.⁶¹

Prescriptions for historical reading were beginning to recognize a need to fit it into a carefully crafted educational curriculum designed to promote feminine social traits. The century and a half after 1660 witnessed many further attempts in this direction. The literary diet of elite men and women had expanded considerably during the seventeenth century as literacy rates and the volume of printed books increased. This development occasioned an expansion and further confusion of genre, as newer literary forms borrowed piecemeal from older ones and as the “main” stream of political history written on classical models had to fight off competition from epitomes, abridgements, almanacs, and chapbooks.⁶² Consequently, both male and female writers on education and manners were required to validate entire branches of literature as more or less suitable for certain categories of reader.

History was consistently and sharply distinguished during this period from various forms of fiction, and in most instances it was allotted a higher rank in the literary kingdom. It had now been established that the public lessons of the past were to be enacted only by men, that the stories of the past should be written only by men, and that the sorts of informal antiquarian and erudite pursuits in which women had long participated were much too complicated for them to read about in detail, much less write about.⁶³ Some effort therefore had to go into preventing women from taking up Locke’s and Astell’s advice and abandoning history altogether, since it could be positively useful to their formation as wives and

⁶⁰ François Poullain de La Barre, *The Woman as Good as the Man, or, The Equality of Both Sexes*, A. L., trans. (1677), Gerald MacLean, ed. (Detroit, 1988), 110–12, my emphasis.

⁶¹ Daniel Defoe, “Of Academies,” in *The Earlier Life and the Chief Earlier Works of Daniel Defoe*, H. Morley, ed. (London, 1889), 148, 152.

⁶² Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture*, 41–42.

⁶³ Some of the criticism, naturally, emanated from other women. Aphra Behn created her Lady Knowall as a classicizing, Tacitus-spouting caricature in *Sir Patient Fancy* (London, 1678), cited by Antonia Fraser in *The Weaker Vessel: Woman’s Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1984), 377. A century later, Isabella Howard, the countess of Carlisle, warned women to be careful about speaking publicly with regard to history and geography, since a male audience would expect them to get their facts wrong: Howard, *Thoughts in the Form of Maxims*, 2d edn. (London, 1790), 123, 128, quoted in Alice Browne, *The Eighteenth Century Feminist Mind* (London, 1987), 117. Internalized knowledge and understanding in a female might veer toward masculine firmness, but outward manners and comportment—including the display of such knowledge publicly—ought not to follow suit; see Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 293, 357, 365, and (for the specter of the learned “Amazon”) 352.

mothers, and since, too, it was morally and intellectually preferable to other forms of literature, especially romances and novels.

The Restoration herald Sir Edward Walker, reacting to a new genre he disliked (but of which his friends Samuel and Elizabeth Pepys were dismayingly fond) warned in 1664 against prose romances. Because they have the look of verisimilitude and are "wrote of matters in general true," he believed that they would hopelessly confuse readers five centuries in the future as to "which is the true and which the false."⁶⁴ Walker was not simply crying wolf. Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* had already established a vogue for "realist" fiction a few decades earlier; now, prominent French aristocratic women such as the duchess of Montpensier (who had been politically active during the Fronde) were challenging head-on the boundaries of history, writing historical memoirs and *chroniques scandaleuses* in which women were often at center stage. Others such as Madame de Villedieu took advantage of a nascent salon culture to produce and disseminate historical romances or "novels."⁶⁵ Both secret histories and historical romances would find imitators among English writers such as Mary de la Rivière Manley and, a generation later, Eliza Haywood, but both genres would also be regarded with suspicion by the arbiters of sensibility and morality.

Among the romances of the mid to late seventeenth century, Madeleine de Scudéry's *Artamenes, or the Grand Cyrus* was especially popular with women; it was among the books that the well-read Dorothy Osborne sent to her future husband, Sir William Temple.⁶⁶ *Artamenes* presents a powerful defense of fiction dressed up as history. In Scudéry's judgment, "the intrigues of war and peace are better, many times, laid open and satyri'd in a Romance, than in a downright History, which being oblig'd to name the persons, is often forc'd for several reasons and motives to be too partial and sparing." Scudéry included in her pastiche of antiquity all the rhetorical elements of humanist history, such as lengthy correspondence between major characters (soon to play a major part in the epistolary novel) and eloquent set speeches. The preface to another of Scudéry's romances, *Ibrahim*, defended the use of historical settings to supply plausibility but criticized as an "old chronicle" any work that did not employ style and invention to stir the passions.⁶⁷ Several other French romance writers did much the same in treating sixteenth-century English history, while, in England, Aphra Behn mimicked the veracity claims of historians in the "true historie" of *Oroonoko* and used real historical events in her pro-Tory play, *The Roundheads*.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 5: 319 (November 11, 1664).

⁶⁵ F. Beasley, *Revising Memory*, 31–42, 53. As Beasley also points out (p. 131), the fictional aspects of such works rather than the factual ones were sometimes emphasized in English translations: Ann Floyd translated the comtesse de Lafayette's *Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre* (Amsterdam, 1720) as if it were a novel under the title *Fatal Gallantry: or, The Secret History of Henrietta Princess of England* (London, 1722).

⁶⁶ *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple 1652–54*, K. Hart, ed. (London, 1968), 58.

⁶⁷ Madeleine de Scudéry, *Artamenes, or, The Grand Cyrus*, E. S., trans., 5 vols. (London, 1691 [first English edition, 1653–55]); Georges de Scudéry, preface to *Ibrahim*, H. Cogan, trans. (London, 1652), sigs. A3v–A4v; F. Beasley, *Revising Memory*, 35.

⁶⁸ Marie Madeline Pioche de la Vergne, Comtesse de Lafayette, *The Princess of Montpensier* (London, 1666), is set amid the French wars of religion; Marie Catherine Hortense Desjardins, *The Annals of Love* (London, 1672), consists of assorted "histories" of royal courtships, including that of Catherine of Aragon; Marie Catherine Jumelle de Berneville, Comtesse d'Aulnoy, *The Novels of*

The salient difference between the prose romances of the seventeenth century and their Renaissance predecessors lies in the later fictions' abandoning of Sidneyesque Arcadian and Utopian settings (themselves remnants of Greek and medieval models) for the verisimilitude of false stories told about real historical persons, ancient or modern. Their authors thereby accommodated their tales to a post-Baconian epistemic universe over which history, science, and other empirical studies increasingly reigned supreme. They had little choice, because, as early as the middle of the seventeenth century, other female writers, as well as males, were beginning to take the side of history against poetry and prose fiction. The duchess of Newcastle, though admitting to a personal preference for poetry (whose practitioners, she felt, had "quicker" brains), nevertheless recognized a clear distinction between its fictions and the "truth" of history. "Poesy is most fiction, and history should be truth; poesy may be phantastical, History must be grave, Poesy is to move passions, History is to confirm truth . . . Poesy is simulising, History is repetition; Poesy is beautiful and spritely, History is brown and lovely." As for romances, they were "an adulterate issue, begot betwixt History and Poetry."⁶⁹

In *The Excellent Woman*, published in English in 1656 and again in 1692, Jacques du Bosc drew a sharp distinction between history and fiction. "The historians recount successes; poets invent them." Romance he deemed a genre unrivaled for its pernicious effect on morals and its heating up of the passions—which Scudéry had seen as among its greatest virtues. Besides, he asked, "what satisfaction can any seek in Romances, which may not found in History?" For du Bosc, romance represented a deformed and emotive reality, to be contrasted with bare truth, which could be found "with all her purity among the historians . . . not disorder'd by passions."⁷⁰ Male and female pedagogues put such arguments into practice when laying out courses of education. Bathsua Makin, a disciple of the influential Jan Amos Comenius, took the hard line, banishing all romance from her school for girls and promoting the reading of history to an advanced level in its curriculum.⁷¹ Half a century later, John Essex proved slightly less rigid. By way of urging reading upon women, he referred them to historical examples of chastity, fortitude, and constancy and concluded with instructions to parents, guardians, and governesses that

Elizabeth Queen of England, containing the History of Queen Ann of Bullen, S[pencer] H[ickman], trans. (London, 1680), 2. Aulnoy also wrote *The History of the Earl of Warwick, Sirnam'd the King-maker: Containing His Amours, and Other Memorable Transactions* (London, 1708); the translator's preface to this proclaims that it shows how "at last, love exerts her utmost charms, and gives us undeniable proofs of the absolute sway she bares even in the most memorable actions of the greatest of men, and the most stupendous events in the world" (sig. A2r); Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave: A True History* (London, 1688); Aphra Behn, *The Roundheads; or, The Good Old Cause* (London, 1682). I thank Ruth McClelland-Nugent for several discussions of Behn.

⁶⁹ Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Worlds Olio* (London, 1655), 6–7.

⁷⁰ Jacques du Bosc, *The Excellent Woman* (London, 1692), 5, 14–15, 17, 24.

⁷¹ Bathsua Pell Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts and Tongues* (London, 1673), 9, 21, 28, 43; Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School*, 225, 250; J. R. Brink, "Bathsua Makin: 'Most Learned Matron,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54 (1991): 313–26. For a similar argument, which also lists history as a subject suitable for young ladies, see Anna Maria van Schurman, *The Learned Maid; or, Whether a Maid May Be a Scholar?* (London, 1659). The ascription of the liberal arts, including history, to the Muses, the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (memory), was a *topos* often repeated by defenders of women, for instance Ester Sowernam, *Ester Hath Hang'd Haman* (London, 1617), 18. For a discussion of Clio relevant here, see Natalie Zemon Davis, "History's Two Bodies," *AHR* 93 (February 1988): 1–30.

explicitly repudiated romances and ghost stories but allowed verisimilar fictions as well as "real histories."⁷²

The early eighteenth-century miscellanists who prescribed and printed extracts for their readers also made a persuasive argument in support of history, sometimes including selections from historians.⁷³ Lady Mary Wray, the probable author of a highly successful Augustan miscellany (seven editions by 1772) aimed specifically at women, suggested that "the means of diverting their relish from the frivolous fictions of romances, is to give them a true taste of useful and delightful histories." A lengthier passage at the beginning of her first volume prescribed a course in Greek, Roman, and British history reading as essential in the development of good taste and the preparation of young women for adult life, because of the "illustrious patterns of virtue" that they can find therein "which will make the stronger impression on their minds." Wray thought the histories of other nations and the lives of heroes and philosophers "both a pleasant and instructive entertainment. The reading [of] the best authors on these subjects, will enlarge and elevate their souls, and *give them a contempt for the common amusements of the sex.*" She enjoined her female readers to avoid vanity and affectation but to have confidence in their own educability. "There's no lady, let the measure of her understanding be what it will, but may benefit by them; it *will add a lustre to her other shining qualities*, and help to supply the place of 'em where such qualities are wanting." The critical point, however, is the end to which this historical knowledge is to be put: in this instance, the cultivation of feminine sociability.

To our reading must be added conversation, which are together absolutely necessary to form a sound understanding and *an agreeable temper*. No reading better qualifies a person to converse well in the world than that of history, which is here especially recommended, because most of the other parts of learning are clogg'd with terms that are not easily intelligible. Reason speaks in all languages, and there is no part of learning but may be exprest in English, as well as in Greek and Latin.⁷⁴

Reading about the past will, as Wray puts it, add a "lustre" and endow a female with an "agreeable temper." Her contemporary, Judith Drake (who thought that if any "histories were anciently written by women" they had most likely been destroyed by men to support their title to superiority), makes the same point about the usefulness of history. "For conversation, it is not requisite we should be philologers, rhetoricians, historians, or poets." Since a man who knew the histories of European countries but had no Greek and Latin would not be deemed unlearned, Drake writes, women, too, could acquire sufficient knowledge of modern history and other

⁷² John Essex, *The Young Ladies Conduct, or, Rules for Education* (London, 1722), 60, 129–33.

⁷³ For example, *An Historical Miscellany* (London, 1771); *The Historical Mirror, or Biographical Miscellany, for the Instruction and Entertainment of Youth* (London, 1775); Barbara M. Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), 45, 166–70, 183.

⁷⁴ *The Ladies Library*, anonymous but attributed to Lady Mary Wray (d. 1745), and published by Richard Steele in collaboration with Jacob Tonson, 3 vols. (London, 1714), 1: 20–22; 2: 172, my emphasis. For rules of conversation in this period, see Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1993), esp. 108–17.

subjects from books in English and take their ancient history from summaries such as her personal favorite, Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*.⁷⁵

The somewhat matronizing tone of Wray's comments with regard to women and books "clogg'd with terms" suggests that, by the end of Queen Anne's reign, history was still seen as an easily understood and morally sound genre that would neither muddle nor corrupt women's minds. Male and female writers stretching half a century in either direction concurred in Wray's gendered justification, where history fit easily between mathematics, theology, and philosophy, which were too difficult, and romance, which was frivolously simple. As Mark Salber Phillips writes in a different context, history was well on its way to becoming a kind of "middle term against which other genres positioned themselves."⁷⁶ Henry More regularly made allusions to Herodotus and to episodes in ancient history in his letters to Viscountess Conway, who was well read in natural philosophy and had opinions on the great attainments of antiquity, but he was concerned that reading Descartes would produce one of her frequent headaches.⁷⁷ Mary Lady Chudleigh thought history, enriched by chronology and geography, a suitable subject, especially "when we are tir'd with more intricate Studies."⁷⁸ The negative side of this "easy history" argument can be seen in the preface to the English edition of the abbé d'Ancourt's *The Lady's Preceptor*, whose translator backhandedly minimizes the depth of knowledge to which the woman should aspire. "I think, Madam, a competent knowledge in that of your country and of a few of her neighbours . . . is quite sufficient for a young lady; not that there could be any harm . . . in knowing that Achilles was a Grecian, Pompey a Roman and the celebrated Cleopatra no more than a crafty Gipsy."⁷⁹ It can be seen, too, in the pages of periodicals intended specifically for women such as the *Ladies Magazine*, which again followed French models in digesting histories into excerpts or into question and answer form.⁸⁰

THROUGHOUT THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, continued efforts were made to impress upon women the superiority of history to the romance and then the novel, while writers of fiction answered back by adopting the title and narrative realism of "histories" without abandoning sentiment or ornament.⁸¹ But the in-

⁷⁵ Judith Drake, *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (London, 1696), 23, 27, 37–38, 45, 53. The former ascription of this work to Mary Astell is no longer accepted: see Perry, *Celebrated Mary Astell*, 106 and note.

⁷⁶ Mark Salber Phillips, "Adam Smith and the History of Private Life: Social and Sentimental Narratives in Eighteenth-Century Historiography," in Kelley and Sacks, *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, 318.

⁷⁷ *Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends, 1642–1684*, Marjorie Hope Nicolson, ed., rev. edn., Sarah Hutton (Oxford, 1992), 36 (Anne Conway to Viscount Conway, October 2, 1651); 145 (More to Anne Conway, February 8, 1658); 183 (same to same, December 27, 1660).

⁷⁸ Mary, Lady Chudleigh, "Of Knowledge," from *Essays of Several Subjects in Prose and Verse* (1710), in *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*, Margaret J. M. Ezell, ed. (New York, 1993), 257–58; Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain*, 353.

⁷⁹ *The Lady's Preceptor*, 4th edn. (London, 1752), quoted in Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School*, 403.

⁸⁰ Davis, "Gender and Genre," 155.

⁸¹ In a famous chapter of *Tom Jones* entitled "Of those who lawfully may, and of those who may not write such Histories as this," Henry Fielding distinguished his work from the older romances, cognizant

fluences between history and fiction ultimately flowed in both directions. So far as attracting a mass female readership away from the novel, the historians were fighting a losing battle. Augustan historical works by Paul de Rapin-Thoyras, John Oldmixon, and Thomas Carte sold well, but none achieved the literary appeal that Clarendon had enjoyed at the beginning of the century, the historic battles they recounted being described with less passion than they injected into their polemical attacks on each other. By 1750, the novel had firmly established itself as successor to the prose romance and as an even more potent threat to the position of history, since its fictive "contemporary history," presented in settings domestic and present rather than past and foreign, could provide many of the same benefits. If Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne could be charged with indelicacy and roughness, other novelists such as Samuel Richardson were notable in their encouragement of morality and virtue. Half a century later still, the genre had become so appealing that more women than men were writing novels, something else that was likely to detract from their attention to history: Fanny Burney had to work late into the night on her novel *Evelina* because her daytime hours were consumed with the transcription of her father's *General History of Music*.⁸² A discerning commentator such as the bookseller James Lackington commented that though women were reading much else besides novels, the latter offered "a more genuine history of man . . . than is sometimes to be found under the more respectable title of History, Biography, etc." It is not surprising therefore to find that a few historians in the second half of the century, Hume, Adam Smith, Robertson, and Gibbon among them, were adopting some of the novel's sentimental techniques in order to make their own factual truths more stirring and were even experimenting with generic boundaries in order to encompass aspects of private life.⁸³

It was in this context that Hume inverted the traditional subordination of passions to reason, thereby repudiating any implicit link between these and the differences between male and female qualities. Hume, who thought women possessed of both a superior sensibility in the "ornaments of life" and an ability to reform the social manners of men, was consequently able to contemplate a history that appealed to passion, or at least to sentiment. "There is nothing which I would recommend more earnestly to my female readers than the study of history, as an occupation, of all others, the best suited both to their sex and education, much more instructive than their ordinary books of amusement, and more entertaining than those serious compositions, which are usually to be found in their closets."

of the inferior status they occupied, by asserting that his labors "have sufficient title to History" because extracted, if not from "records," then from "the vast authentic Doomsday-Book of Nature." Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, Book 9, chap. 1, Fredson Bowers, ed., 2 vols. (Oxford, 1974), 1: 489; Jerry C. Beasley, *Novels of the 1740s* (Athens, Ga., 1982), 74–84.

⁸² Katharine M. Rogers, *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Urbana, Ill., 1982), 25.

⁸³ James Lackington, cited in Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 168; J. Beasley, *Novels of the 1740s*, 23–42; Phillips, "Adam Smith and the History of Private Life," 321. Gibbon, much influenced in early life by both his aunt and his stepmother, deals with questions of masculinity and effeminacy explicitly in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and may have written with a female audience in mind as well as the historians such as Hume, a generation his senior, whose approbation he wished: Lionel Gossman, *The Empire Unpossessed: An Essay on Gibbon's Decline and Fall* (Cambridge, 1981); Patricia Craddock, "Contemplative Heroes and Gibbon's Historical Imagination," in Kelley and Sacks, *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, 348, n. 10.

Influenced by the *histoire des moeurs* approach pioneered by Voltaire, Hume also recognized that the political aspects of history would fall flat with many female readers. His injection of love and "a thousand other passions" into the matter covered by the historian therefore marks an important attempt to re-gender history itself and make it more appealing to precisely those feminine feelings that it had supposedly been nurturing all along.

It was not only from reason but from the passions and sentiments, properly directed, Hume suggested, that a sense of morality could spring.⁸⁴ A man acquainted with history may "be said to have lived from the beginning of the world" and will be better fitted to enter into "life and action." As for a woman, history will give her a commonplace familiarity with her nation's past and that of Greece and Rome, without which "it is impossible her conversation can afford any entertainment to men of sense and reflection." If such a history be dry, however, it is unpalatable, and if it is left on the plate, then no nourishment is to be had. "If Mrs Mure be not sorry for poor King Charles," he told his friend William Mure in 1754, "I shall burn all my papers, & return to philosophy." Writing to the historian William Robertson in 1759, Hume attempted to dissuade him from attempting his history of Charles V. "That subject is disjointed; & your hero, who is the sole connexion, is not very interesting . . . And tho' some parts of the story may be entertaining, there would be many dry & barren, and the whole seems not to have any great charms."⁸⁵

This reassertion of the entertainment value of history and the legitimacy of its dealing with human emotions points ahead, in one direction, to the even closer reconciliation of history and fiction in the nineteenth-century historical novel.⁸⁶ But while Hume recognized that history had to be made more woman-friendly, he continued to insist on women's lack of intellectual capacity to study the past "straight up" and to assume their reluctance to read it unless suitably enlivened by dramatic narrative and sentimental language. Hume's view has a female counterpart in Hester Chapone, whose *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, first published in 1773, advised young women not to bother with "learned languages." To read works in English or in another modern tongue was suitable to a lady; to attempt higher learning would put her in danger of pedantry, of "exchanging the graces of imagination for the severity and preciseness of a scholar." Her comments on the superiority of history to other genres are worth quoting for their proximity to Hume's:

⁸⁴ Lloyd, *Man of Reason*, 50–56; Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 134; Mark Salber Phillips, "If Mrs Mure be not Sorry for Poor King Charles': History, the Novel, and the Sentimental Reader," *History Workshop Journal* 43 (1997), in press. I am very grateful to Mark Phillips for allowing me to see his article well in advance of publication, for several discussions of matters raised in the present essay, and especially for steering me toward the late eighteenth-century exchanges treated more fully by him. My analysis is similar to his but is based on my own somewhat different reading of the texts cited below.

⁸⁵ "Of the Study of History" (1741), in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1854), 4: 508–13; also rpt. in *David Hume: Philosophical Historian*, Richard H. Popkin and David Fate Norton, eds. (Indianapolis, 1965), 35–50; *The Letters of David Hume*, J. Y. T. Greig, ed., 2 vols. (Oxford, 1932), 1: 210 (Hume to Mure, October 1754); *New Letters of David Hume*, Raymond Klibansky and Ernest C. Mossner, eds. (Oxford, 1954), 48 (Hume to Robertson, April 1759).

⁸⁶ Braudy, *Narrative Form in History and Fiction*, 144–80.

The principal study I would recommend, is *history*. I know of nothing equally proper to *entertain and improve at the same time*, or that is so likely to form and strengthen your judgment, and, by giving you a liberal and comprehensive view of human nature, in some measure to supply the defect of that experience, which is usually attained too late to be of much service to us. Let me add, that more materials for conversation are supplied by this kind of knowledge, than by almost any other.

More striking, however, is Chapone's distinction between a woman's purpose in reading history and a man's. Even though English historians are susceptible to partisan influences, and male readers were preoccupied by this problem throughout the century, this need not vex the female reader. "As you will not read with a critical view, nor enter deeply into politics, I think you may be allowed to choose that which is most entertaining."⁸⁷ Chapone shared with Hume an interest in cultivating a broader philosophical understanding of history rather than the amassing of mere erudition, but unlike Hume, she placed the assessment of truth and impartiality behind the freedom to select reading material on the basis of interest.⁸⁸

Debates over history's proper relation to fiction and the status of each in female education engaged several women of differing political hues at the very end of the eighteenth century, none of them adopting the position of Hume or Chapone. Mary Wollstonecraft was not a writer especially interested in history as such, but in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), she discussed it in the context of her attack on the separation of male and female educational curricula. Wollstonecraft supported her own case for female rationality and her opposition to the exclusion of women from public life with recommendations for a largely genderless education in which girls and boys, studying together, could learn "religion, history, the history of man, and politics."⁸⁹ Wollstonecraft's opinions were, as is well known, exceptional in their radicalism, and, despite the initial positive reception of the *Vindication*, the combination of anti-Jacobin hysteria and her own controversial private life had, within five years, muted its impact. But the critical point is that, while Wollstonecraft's attack on ignorant readers of novels who slight "the sober dignity and *matron graces* of history" in some ways resembles the denigration of romance a century earlier, it was a position advanced for entirely different reasons.⁹⁰ For Restoration and Augustan writers, male and female, history had been simply a safer and more useful genre than those of fiction. In Wollstonecraft's view, women could and should read history rather than fiction, but they should read it in the same way that men did, as a serious challenge to the intellect and a

⁸⁷ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady* (London, 1801), 158, 202, my emphasis. Elizabeth Carter's judgment on several historians, in particular the highly valued Caesar and Francesco Guicciardini, and Catharine Macaulay, similarly suggests that entertainment, as much as scholarship, was what appealed even to learned female readers: *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs Elizabeth Carter*, Montagu Pennington, ed. (London, 1807), 466.

⁸⁸ "The first quality of an historian is to be true and impartial; the next to be interesting." *Letters of David Hume*, 1: 210 (Hume to Mure, October 1754). On the question of impartiality, see Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture*, 13–14, 177–78, 194–95; J. H. Preston, "English Ecclesiastical Historians and the Problem of Bias, 1559–1742," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971): 203–20.

⁸⁹ *A Critical Edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Ulrich H. Hardt, ed. (Troy, N.Y., 1982), 356.

⁹⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 392, my emphasis; for the influence on manners of conservative and evangelical reaction to the French Revolution, especially to the Terror, see Maurice J. Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude: A History of English Manners, 1700–1830* (New York, 1951), 68–100.

preparation for public life. Her opinion is thus directly opposed to Hume's attempt at mediation between the genres according to gender.

There are glimmers of both Hume and Wollstonecraft in Mary Hays's nearly contemporaneous recommendation of historical biography as a middle step on the ascent of female understanding to equality with males. Hays believed that Voltaire's *Charles XII* and the duke of Sully's *Memoirs of Henry IV* were among those works that could bridge the pedagogical space between *Clarissa* and true history by their ability to "excite our sympathy, engage our affections, and awaken our curiosity," thereby generating "a taste for historical reading."⁹¹ Although Hays shared many of her friend Wollstonecraft's political opinions, the latter's position on the equal suitability of history for women and men is, paradoxically, more clearly articulated by two writers at the conservative end of the political spectrum. The anti-Jacobin Elizabeth Hamilton, who believed conventional female education to be a recipe for "beautiful imbecility," dealt with history largely without reference to sex in her *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* (1801). She would later illustrate these principles in an 1804 biography of the Roman noblewoman Agrippina, digested from translated Roman historians, although this was intended less for the learned than for "readers of her own sex, who are only acquainted with the outline of Roman history." For Hamilton, biography offered a truer, safer mode of representing human behavior than novels, since "the emotions produced will . . . probably be less vivid, but the interest will be deeper."⁹² Before either of these more serious works appeared, however, Hamilton had published a satirical novel of her own, the *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), in which the dangers of fiction were highlighted even more boldly and with particular reference to females. Here, the "active and judicious" Harriet Orwell, having attended to her proper household duties, passes her leisure hours usefully, "quietly seated at her work with her aunt and sister, listening to Hume's History of England as it was read to them by a little orphan girl she had herself instructed." Meanwhile, the ill-fated Julia Delmond ignores the history she reads to her military father, while privately devouring novels and romances in her own room, free of the restraining hand of a tutor or parent. Aroused by these fictions, "Imagination, wild and ungoverned imagination reigned paramount in her breast," and Julia's poor judgment makes of her a "dupe."⁹³

⁹¹ Mary Hays, *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* (London, 1793), facs. rpt., Gina Luria, intro. (New York, 1974), 97. In a work now attributed to Hays, the *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (London, 1798), facs. rpt., Gina Luria, intro. (New York, 1974), esp. 152, 170–72, Hays repeatedly appeals to history to construct her own vindication of women, and she repeats Wollstonecraft's denunciation of sex-divided education.

⁹² Elizabeth Hamilton, *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education*, 2 vols. (Bath, 1801–02), 2: 224–29, 230–44; Hamilton, *Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina, Wife of Germanicus*, 2d edn., 2 vols. (London, 1811), 1: xiv. In *Letters*, 2: 226, 230, 235, Hamilton discusses the need to strike a balance in history between two extremes: on the one hand, "cold" histories and bare abridgements, which cannot promote moral development (she excepts "nursery catalogues of kings and queens," which she sees as useful primers but does not consider to be history); on the other, she dismisses "those fictions which stimulate the imagination, while they retard the operation of judgment," a category that did not, however, include all novelists. Hamilton warned also that the power of the historian to sway the passions needed to be carefully checked by an already well-developed "judgment" on the part of the reader.

⁹³ Elizabeth Hamilton, *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, 3 vols. (Bath, 1800), 1: 107–08, 146; 2: 170. For a much fuller discussion of Hamilton's views on history than can be offered here, see Phillips, "If Mrs Mure."

Hannah More had listened to her father read Plutarch as a child, and she, too, preferred history to fiction. But despite her own considerable learning, she was no apologist for female equality, educational or political, and her pedagogical writings are devoted to the preservation of traditional female roles. More's own discussion of history and fiction anticipate by a year Hamilton's concerns about unbridled imagination but take them in a slightly different direction, substituting for the former's concern with "judgment" a renewed emphasis on religion. Education for women had once, More conceded, narrowly stressed "what was merely useful" (crafts such as spinning and needlework, and the keeping of accounts), but it now veered too far toward "what is merely ornamental." More especially feared the imperialist expansion of fiction's dominion. Novels, "which chiefly used to be dangerous in one respect, are now become dangerous in a thousand," she wrote. "They are continually shifting their ground, and enlarging their sphere, and are daily becoming vehicles of wider mischief." As an alternative, she highlights history's religious and moral effectiveness. In a chapter of her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), devoted to "the religious and moral use of history and geography," she made clear that the fundamental purpose of history was the inculcation of religious values. This was not, however, quite what sixteenth-century commentators, with their similarly pious preoccupations, had had in mind. More, fully a product of the eighteenth century, believed less in suppressing innate female vices than in shaping positive feminine virtues; these were to be adorned with an evangelical glow atop Mary Wray's earlier decorative "lustre." For More, proper religious understanding of the workings of providence and the cultivation of a quiet, respectful piety, rather than social grace and entertainment, were history's principal good. Most of these lessons can be derived by "youths" of both sexes, together with the truth that "they will not inevitably meet in this world with reward and success according to their merit." When More's discussion returned specifically to girls, the emphasis shifted to the promotion of self-knowledge and to the imitation, on the narrower stage of private life, of the sacrifices made in the public by great historical figures. "It will be to no purpose that the reader weeps over the fortitude of the Christian hero, or the constancy of the martyr, if she do not bear in mind that she herself is called to endure her own common trials with something of the same temper." A public act of martyrdom is no longer, as it might have been for a sixteenth-century woman, the sort of sacrifice envisaged, but the female reader "applauding the self-denying saint" should at least ask herself if she is prepared to give up her company or alter her dinner hour to enable her family to attend public worship in the afternoon.⁹⁴

We are not quite done with these matters. Aside from Hume's *via media* and the differing responses of Wollstonecraft, Hays, Hamilton, and More, there was one other position, harking back to Mary Astell: the rejection of history altogether. This was no longer an opinion easily voiced in public, and the only thorough-going denunciation of history to appear at the end of the eighteenth century is uttered by a fictional character, Catherine Morland, in Jane Austen's Gothic spoof, *Northanger Abbey*. In a familiar but widely misinterpreted passage, Catherine stridently asserts

⁹⁴ Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 3d edn., 2 vols. (1799), 1: 32, 115, 203, 204.

her preference for romantic novels such as Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* over "real, solemn history." Catherine is a more subtly drawn and sympathetic version of Hamilton's Julia Delmond, a few years earlier. Like Julia, she consumes the very miscellanies and Gothic fiction that More had so recently condemned, but her dislike of history is even fiercer. "I read it [history] a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all."⁹⁵ Even interesting wars and sorrowful pestilences after Hume are apparently insufficient to balance history's continued marginalization of women as subjects, and Catherine also believes most of it to be made up, as much a fiction as her novels and considerably less entertaining. Jane Austen's last heroine, *Persuasion's* Anne Elliot, is scarcely more positive. When debating the subject of female constancy with an argumentative Captain Harville, she is told that "all histories are against you" and he anticipates her objection: "But perhaps you will say, these were all written by men." Anne's rejoinder recalls Judith Drake a century earlier. "Men have had every advantage to us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything."⁹⁶

Anne Elliot may be more in her brilliant maker's image than was Austen's earlier protagonist Catherine Morland, but neither can be taken as indicative of late eighteenth-century female attitudes to history. Catherine's own views are in fact convincingly challenged by her friend Eleanor Tilney, who claims to be "fond of history" because it provides a rattling good yarn and has enough weight of evidence to approximate truth. In Austen's "education" novel, *Mansfield Park*, eighteenth-century principles of female pedagogy, including supervised reading in history, are applied to the thoroughly moldable Fanny Price with happy results for her character and fortune. (The rote memorization of the facts of history, however, is savaged in Fanny's indiscriminating cousins, the Miss Bertrams.) Fanny later declares her own intellectual independence by selecting histories and biographies from a circulating library in order to educate her less privileged younger sister. And one should not forget that the novelist herself, as a fifteen-year-old, knew enough of England's past history to parody it in a work focusing on the Stuarts, one with a great many women thrown in and the promise of "very few dates."⁹⁷ Whatever the complexities of her disposition toward historians, Jane Austen knew them well enough.

⁹⁵ Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (completed by 1803), Margaret Drabble, intro. (1818; London, 1989), 109–11. The antihistorical position in this scene is oversimplified by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, Conn., 1979), 132–33; it is persuasively challenged in Christopher Kent, "Learning History with, and from, Jane Austen," in J. D. Grey, ed., *Jane Austen's Beginnings* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1989), 59–71 (for which reference I am grateful to Ian Dyck). Other useful treatments of Jane Austen's reactions to and treatment of history include Christopher Kent, "'Real Solemn History' and Social History," in David Monaghan, ed., *Jane Austen in a Social Context* (London, 1981), 86–104; Warren Roberts, *Jane Austen and the French Revolution* (New York, 1979); and Brigid Brophy, "Jane Austen and the Stuarts," in B. C. Southam, ed., *Critical Essays on Jane Austen* (London, 1968), 21–38.

⁹⁶ Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, Margaret Drabble, intro. (1818; London, 1996), 264.

⁹⁷ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, Margaret Drabble, intro. (1814; London, 1996), 35–36, 363. Compare More, *Strictures on . . . Female Education*, 1: 175: "The names of the renowned characters in history thus become familiar in the mouths of those who can neither attach to the ideas of the person, the series of his actions nor the peculiarities of his character." Jane Austen, *The History of England*,

NOVELS, LIKE PRESCRIPTIVE LITERATURE, tell us what was thought, expected, or imagined rather than what was done. There is separate evidence that suggests Hume was wrong and Wollstonecraft and Hamilton right on the matter of women being prepared to read dry, masculine history without any concessions in the direction of sentiment. If we turn from theoretical recommendations to actual instances of real history readers, we can learn a great deal to reinforce and add some nuance to the connections suggested above.

Although the surviving documents come once again principally from the elite and middling ranks, it is clear that women were both buying and reading historical works in progressively greater numbers. References to reading or ownership increase most strikingly after 1660, even if the figures remain low compared to their purchases of other genres.⁹⁸ Yet if library lists, diaries, and account books are to be believed, we can push the beginnings of a female market for history books back at least to the middle of the sixteenth century. The countess of Rutland's personal expenses for 1550 show an edition of Thucydides and the then-new *Hall's Chronicle*.⁹⁹ The library of Mary Queen of Scots included an extraordinary number and variety of historical works, among them a number of vernacular chronicles, several of the romance "histories," Livy, Plutarch, and other ancient authors. William Cecil (whose own queen, Elizabeth I, also read Tacitus and Livy) was told by a correspondent that the Scottish queen read every day after dinner "instructed by a learned man, Mr George Buchanan, somewhat of Livy."¹⁰⁰

It is in the seventeenth century, however, that instances of women owning history books occur with greater frequency, many of the examples preceding the prescriptions of the later period by several decades: Anne Clifford had a history of the Netherlands read to her in 1616, while the following year, she read for herself "the Turkish History and Chaucer." Elsewhere, she records reading in the chronicles about such events as the fourteenth-century wars with Scotland and the Wars of the Roses.¹⁰¹ Many further examples can be found, and considerably lower down the social ladder than Clifford or Mary Stuart. Anne Southwell owned a number of

Deidre Le Faye, ed., A. S. Byatt, intro. (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1993); Kent, "Learning History with, and from, Jane Austen," 63–64.

⁹⁸ In comparison, medieval women seem to have had little interest in history, works on that subject being not well represented in a recent study of female wills before 1500, though one or two exceptions are noted, one man having left his wife a copy of the *Brut* (a popular vernacular chronicle of ancient Britain), in 1398. Carol M. Meale, "'... Alle the Bokes that I have of Latyn, Englisch, and Frensch': Laywomen and Their Books in Late Medieval England," in Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500* (Cambridge, 1993), 142. See also Mary C. Erler, "Exchange of Books between Nuns and Laywomen: Three Surviving Examples," in Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper, eds., *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscript and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle* (Aldershot, 1995), 360–73.

⁹⁹ Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, G.C.B., Preserved at Belvoir Castle*, 4 vols. (London, 1888–1905), 4: 369.

¹⁰⁰ Julian Sharman, *The Library of Mary Queen of Scots* (London, 1889), 30 and throughout; *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, 1561–1562*, no. 985(4), p. 584 (April 7, 1562); Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain*, 218. Over a century later, another Queen Mary, the co-regent of William III, who believed that "women should not meddle in government," records that she "set my self to the reading our English history with attention." *Memoirs of Mary, Queen of England, 1689–1693*, R. Doebner, ed. (Leipzig, 1886), 23, 44.

¹⁰¹ *Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, 41, 54. The two histories in question were almost certainly Edward Grimeston, *The Generall History of the Netherlands* (London, 1608), and Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London, 1610).

histories along with her Bible and *Faerie Queene*.¹⁰² Elizabeth Josselyn, a London stationer's wife, possessed a small library that she shared with her mother; she loaned a "History of the Queen of Scots" to her melancholic neighbor John Felton in 1628, which he inconveniently failed to return before it helped inspire him to assassinate the duke of Buckingham. The inventory of Frances Jodrell, a Stockport spinster who died in 1639, lists two boxes of books among her possessions, one of which had fifty-three volumes, "most of them ould historie bookes," valued at four shillings.¹⁰³ Frances Wolfreston (d. 1677) of Tamworth, Staffordshire, assembled a personal library of verse, drama, and moral theological writings, which also included a significant number of histories and a standard antiquarian treatise, Camden's *Britannia*.¹⁰⁴ When the cantankerous widow Elizabeth Freke made an inventory of her own belongings in 1711, she included her collection of well over a hundred books, kept in various trunks and chests, of which a significant number were histories, among them Clarendon, a history of China, histories of Richard III and Henry VII, and three volumes of John Rushworth's *Historical Collections*.¹⁰⁵

The reading of history, like the reading of novels and devotional works, was not yet, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a solitary affair, although there are cases like Sarah Cowper, whose massive diaries and commonplace books show her retreating into histories from a world she distrusted and a husband she despised (and writing an abridged history of the world for her daughter-in-law, Judith). Her above-mentioned readings of Clarendon, however, took place in the company of a literate female servant, on whom she was increasingly dependent owing to blindness.¹⁰⁶ Reading typically took place in groups, especially between husbands and wives and, later, male and female friends (often, as with the bluestockings of

¹⁰² Folger MS B.b.198, fols. 59r-v, 64v-65r; J. C. Cavanaugh, "The Library of Lady Southwell and Captain Sibthorpe," *Studies in Bibliography* 20 (1967): 243-54. Southwell's historical titles include (among others) Edward Grimeston, *The Generall History of the Netherlands* (London, 1608); Sallust's histories in English; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*; Suetonius, *The Historie of Twelve Caesars*; William Camden's antiquarian work, *Reges, reginae, nobiles, & alii in ecclesia collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij sepulti*, (London, 1600); and Samuel Daniel's *Collection of the Historie of England* (London, 1618).

¹⁰³ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1628-29*, 343, examination of Elizabeth Josselyn (October 3, 1628); *Stockport Probate Records 1620-1650*, C. B. Phillips and J. H. Smith, eds., Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 131 (1992): 319.

¹⁰⁴ P. Morgan, "Frances Wolfreston and 'Hor Bouks': A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book-Collector," *The Library*, 6th ser., 11, no. 3 (1989): 198-219; the list of "historical" books still extant and located by Morgan includes mainly historical drama and verse (some in chapbook format), such as Robert Chester, *Love's Martyr, or Rosalins Complaint* (1601); Emmanuel Forde, *The Famous Historie of Montelyon* (1640); *A Pleasant History of the Life and Death of Will Summers* (1637); and anon., *The Life and Death of the Famous Champion of England, S. George* (circa 1660); but this does not include all the works in an 1856 sale catalogue, among which was the *Britannia*.

¹⁰⁵ "Mrs Elizabeth Freke, Her Diary, 1671-1714," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 2d ser., 18, nos. 16-19 (1910-13), 205-06; Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, 8 vols. (London, 1901-14), 8: 182. That the books were kept in chests does not mean that they were unread: many people who could afford books stored them in this way rather than investing money in expensive presses.

¹⁰⁶ Herts RO, Penshanger MSS, D/EP.F.29-35 (Diary of Sarah Cowper, 1700 to 1716), 3: 56 (April 12, 1705); Herts RO, Penshanger MSS, D/EP.F.36 (commonplace books of Sarah Cowper), 1: 97; Cowper, "Collections of Several Things out of History, Began about the Year 1670," in commonplace books, vol. 1, unpaginated leaf at end of volume; Herts RO, Penshanger MSS, D/EP.F.41, Cowper, "History of the World" (1686), derived from William Howell, *An Institution of General History* (London, 1661); Anne Kugler, "Prescription, Culture, and Shaping Identity: Lady Sarah Cowper (1644-1720)" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1994). I am indebted to Dr. Kugler for a copy of her important study.

the later eighteenth century, through correspondence as well as in person). Mary Coke, for instance, writes of her objections to Mrs. Macaulay's "partiality" and tells us of her conversations with David Hume on the character and religious views of Cromwell.¹⁰⁷ Such interaction was not always by choice. We do not know the reactions of Sir Thomas Browne's daughter, Betty, who read to her aged father from Paul Rycaut's newly published *History of the Turkish Empire*, but the diary of the pious Mary Rich, countess of Warwick, shows her frequently reading history to her ailing husband without much interest. Only Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, much read by seventeenth-century women, aroused the countess's spirits.¹⁰⁸ In contrast, the diary of Lady East of Hall Place, Hurley, a century later, records its author's pleasure in repeated readings of Gibbon, almost always in the company of her own sick spouse.¹⁰⁹ Intrafamilial reading interests suggest that gender lines were far from hard. We have already seen Elizabeth Pepys showing an interest in genealogy. Her husband's diary also reveals the two of them sharing both history and romance; for, though Elizabeth was inordinately fond of the writings of Scudéry, Samuel often read to her from historical works such as Thomas Fuller's *Church-History* and *Worthies*, and the couple took turns reading to each other from an ex-slave's history of North Africa, even though Elizabeth was suffering from toothache at the time.¹¹⁰

There are also examples of women inheriting and giving away history books. The Coventry School donors' book, detailing bequests or gifts of volumes to its library through the seventeenth century, records the donation by a widow, Margaret Porteman, of a folio "Historie of the World," probably an edition of the famous work by Sir Walter Raleigh; it was unquestionably Raleigh's *History* that Lady Susannah Hopton, a devotional writer, gave to the Lady Hawkins School in Kington at her death in 1709.¹¹¹ Wills and the accompanying probate inventories that

¹⁰⁷ *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, 3: 4–6, 18, 19, 51. The discussions of history and historians by such notable literary women as Fanny Burney, Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Montagu, and others require extensive treatment of their own, there being insufficient space herein: see, for example, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 3: *The Streatham Years, Part I, 1778–1779*, Lars E. Troide and Stewart J. Cooke, eds. (Oxford, 1994); *The Letters of Mrs Elizabeth Montagu, with Some of the Letters of Her Correspondents*, Matthew Montagu, ed., 2 pts. in 4 vols. (London, 1809–13); *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs Elizabeth Carter*, Montagu Pennington, ed. (London, 1807); *Letters from Mrs Elizabeth Carter, to Mrs Montagu, between the Years 1755 and 1800*, Montagu Pennington, ed., 3 vols. (London, 1817). All of these have a great deal to say about history and particular historians.

¹⁰⁸ *Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, G. L. Keynes, ed., 2d edn., 4 vols. (Chicago, 1964), 4: 145 (Browne to Edward Browne, December 22, 1679); BL MS Add. 27351 (diary of Mary Rich), fol. 297r (February 25, 1669); Add. 27352, Diary vol. 2, fol. 5v (November 26, 1669). For an explicit complaint of the time taken attending her husband and the brief moments seized for personal reading and meditation, see vol. 2, fols. 87r and 229v. For Foxe and the female literary diet, see Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School*, 269, 373. In the following century, Gilbert Burnet seems to have been, like Foxe, another ecclesiastical historian deemed appropriate to read to women. Dudley Ryder, then a young law student anxious to make and please female acquaintances, read "[Burnet's] *History of the Reformation to the women*" one day in 1715, despite his dislike for Burnet's style as "too stiff and formal." *The Diary of Dudley Ryder 1715–1716*, W. Matthews, ed. (London, 1939), 111.

¹⁰⁹ Berkshire Record Office, Reading, D/EX 1306/1, diary of Lady East, 1791–92, unfoliated. The relevant entries begin with that of February 7, 1791. "I was very ill all day & did not go out. [I] began to read the 4th Vol. of Gibbon Roman History." Her readings, together with her husband and sometimes others, continued to February 20, 1791.

¹¹⁰ *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 7: 302 (September 30, 1666); 8: 582, 585 (December 18, 21, 1667); *The History of Algiers and Its Slavery*, John Davies of Kidwelly, trans. (London, 1666).

¹¹¹ Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 4467, Coventry School donors' book, undated (but late seventeenth century) entry at fol. 23r; P. E. Morgan, "The Library of Lady Hawkins' School, Kington, Herefordshire," *National Library of Wales Journal* 24 (1985): 53.

frequently list books sometimes itemize histories and assign them to female relations. When Henry Stringer, the warden of New College, left his cousin Anne Daston a copy of "Sir Walter Rawleys History in folio" along with a book on theology, it is difficult to tell which of those most appealed to her, or why Stringer left this to her as opposed to his copy of John Stow's *Chronicles*, which went to a male cousin.¹¹² In this instance, it is possible that Daston had a particular interest in Raleigh's book, but just as likely that her learned cousin had decided to cater to her familiarity with history, which probably included a smattering of the ancients but very little on the medieval English period covered by Stow.¹¹³

One must obviously be careful with many of these documents, since they record possession rather than firm interest, but there is no reason to assume that every history in a woman's library was put there by a man to the indifference of his female beneficiary. The book bills for the countess of Rutland, cited above, tell us otherwise. It should also be pointed out that the ownership and acquisition of history books (and, for that matter, books of any other kind) is often hidden by the nature of the evidence, since many bought or otherwise acquired books through their husbands or other family members. In a copy of Robert Peirce's *History and Memoirs of the Bath* (1713), the first name in the Latin inscription "Jacobi Joye" has been crossed out and the name "Jane" written above it in English. Although women's names appear much more rarely than those of men in book inscriptions, there are other examples, like the copy of a French history of the Roman emperors that belonged in the seventeenth century to one Mary Gaude, or the seven volumes of Archibald Bower's *History of the Popes*, in all of which the eighteenth-century owner Elizabeth Norris inscribed her name.¹¹⁴ Henry Prescott picked up a copy of Raleigh's *History of the World* at his bookseller's because he saw the name "Lydia" written on the title page and thought it might have belonged to his favorite daughter. (To his irritation, he discovered on taking it home that it belonged to another woman altogether.)¹¹⁵ At the still-preserved library of the Bar Convent school in York, established in the 1680s for the clandestine education of Catholic girls, one finds an English translation of a multi-volume history of the church in Japan that bears the signature of a pupil, Elizabeth Tuite. Another volume of the

¹¹² Herts RO, Wills 147 70c (will of Henry Stringer, January 14, 1657/8).

¹¹³ In contrast to their interest in relatively recent familial history, women's taste for history reading generally inclined, until the Gothic Revival and the early Romantic period, toward the modern, classical, and scriptural pasts rather than the medieval period, which was doubly suspect as both barbarous and superstitious. The Whig icon Lady Rachel Russell, for instance, took notes on Roman history, for which she had acquired a taste early in life: Lois G. Schworer, *Lady Rachel Russell: "One of the Best of Women"* (Baltimore, 1988), 16, 253 n. 77. Caroline Lennox, the mother of Charles James Fox, had similar inclinations: Tillyard, *Aristocrats*, 16.

¹¹⁴ Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, shelfmark QUA/RA 850 B3 P45 1713 HRC (Peirce volume); Jacques Esprinchaud, Sieur du Plom, *L'histoire auguste, en II volumes, contenant les vies des empereurs romains depuis Iules Caesar iusques a Rodolphe II*, 2 vols. (Cologne, 1610), Durham University Library, Cosin Library S.5.8-9 (name on flyleaf of vol. 2); Archibald Bower, *The History of the Popes, from the Foundation of the See of Rome, to the Present Time*, 7 vols. (London, 1748-[66]), Cosin Library Z.3.1-7. I am grateful to Miss Beth Rainey and Dr. A. I. Doyle of the Durham University Library for making available to me a computer printout of the provenance list of the Cosin collection.

¹¹⁵ *Diary of Henry Prescott*, 2: 482, December 22, 1715.

same work has the names of several girls and the dated phrase "Mary Cook reeds in this book" in the margins of the preface.¹¹⁶

Loans between friends and family are a better guide since they generally involve a specific request for a book. Examples can once again be found of females seeking out history books from family and friends. On the last day of a five-week trip to London in 1639, Humphrey Mildmay "lent to Mrs James 2 booke thone Cornelius Tacitus & thother Mr Sandis his Ovids Metamorphosis." Among the many books loaned by William Blundell to relatives was his copy of the Byzantine historian Nicetas, borrowed by Blundell's sister Winifred in 1676.¹¹⁷ In 1714, Henry Prescott borrowed from a female neighbor two volumes of the *Complete History of England* (1706) while lending her his own copy of White Kennett's brief history of the origins of the civil war, packaged as a sermon on the meaning of the Fifth of November.¹¹⁸ The circulation of books through loan and bequest within the Baker family of Penn, Buckinghamshire, around 1700, provides several examples of historical interests crossing genders and generations, as history books were borrowed by boys from their mother and bequeathed by their father to daughters.¹¹⁹

Finally, the book subscription lists offer some indication of discrimination among historical subgenres by subject, language, and period. This evidence requires closer scrutiny than can be offered here, but analysis of a sample of fifteen history books of various kinds, published between 1680 and 1730, demonstrates considerable variation. Far fewer women were prepared to pay for John Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy* (10 of 1,333) than were willing to order narrative histories like Nicholas Rowe's translation of Lucan (28 of 387) or a late throwback to the romance of medieval history, Aaron Thompson's new edition of Geoffrey of Monmouth (53 of 326, a striking 17.5 percent). A new edition of Philippe de Commines' *Memoirs* (11 of 520) was more attractive to females than a Latin edition of Asser's *Life of Alfred* (none of 346) or the deep philological learning to be had from Edward Lhwyd's *Archaeologica Britannica* (none of 203).¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ L'Abbé de T., *The History of the Church of Japan Written Originally in French by Monsieur l'Abbé de T.*, N. N., trans., 3 vols. (London, 1707), copy in Bar Convent Library, York. Identifications of owners and readers whose signatures appear to derive from Mother Mary Davies (1701–60), "Anecdotes of the Bar from the Year 1735," Bar Convent Archives 3/B/4, unfoliated; from H. J. Coleridge, *St Mary's Convent Micklegate Bar York* (London, 1887), 406, 415; and from a card index of members of the order graciously supplied to me by the current librarian, Sister Gregory IBVM. I am grateful to Sara and Bill Shiels for directing me to this library.

¹¹⁷ Folger MS W.b. 600 (Diary of Humphrey Mildmay, 1633–47, a typescript transcript of BL MS Harl. 454), pp. 101–02 (May 30, 1639); Lancashire Record Office, DDBI Acc. 6121, uncatalogued volume of accounts entitled "Hodge Podge the third," fol. 42v; this William Blundell was the grandson of the same-named Jacobean antiquary mentioned above, p. 653.

¹¹⁸ *Diary of Henry Prescott*, 2: 480 (December 15, 1715); 2: 490 (February 3, 1716).

¹¹⁹ Buckinghamshire Record Office, Aylesbury, D/X 1069/2/23 (March 24, 1706/7), Samuel Baker's book list endorsed by his mother, Martha Baker, April 6, 1707; D/X 1069/3/6, p. 21, for her own borrowed books; D/X 1069/3/6, pp. 12–20, for history books chosen by his daughters under the bequest of Daniel Baker.

¹²⁰ This analysis is based on tabulation of subscription list data that I have assembled for another work in progress. I have used the following lists: Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Stafford-shire* (Oxford, 1686); William Camden, *Annales*, Thomas Hearne, ed. (Oxford, 1717–18); John de Fordun, *Scotichronicon*, Thomas Hearne, ed. (Oxford, 1722); John Leland, *Itinerary*, Thomas Hearne, ed., vol. 3 (Oxford, 1711); *Memorials of Affairs of State*, Edmund Sawyer, ed. (London, 1725); Louis Moréri, *The Great Historical, Geographical and Poetical Dictionary* (London, 1694); John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation*, 2d edn. (London, 1725), vol. 1; Edward Lhwyd, *Archaeologica Britannica* (London, 1707); John Walker, *Sufferings of the Clergy* (London, 1714); Jeremy Collier, *Ecclesiastical History* (London,

More research of this sort needs to be done in order to develop a clearer picture of male and female readership patterns; a similar survey of late eighteenth-century subscriptions might well reveal some interesting changes. All in all, the evidence of women's reading and owning history books suggests that the eighteenth century's hard-selling of history may have been less essential than its authors thought. Women were already reading it regularly by 1700; the prescriptions simply provided reinforcement for this behavior in the face of mounting competition from fiction and ensured that it led in the right direction.

HISTORIOGRAPHICALLY SPEAKING, the nineteenth century opened for women with the novels of Maria Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott, and with the first publication of a variety of biographical works, of which we may mention three: Mary Hays's *Female Biography* (1803), Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina* (1804), and Lucy Hutchinson's life of her parliamentary husband. Hutchinson's book, composed a century and a half previously, was retitled *Memoirs* by her descendant, Julius Hutchinson, who believed that "the most numerous class of readers are the lovers of biography." Her book would appeal equally to men and women: the former would profit from intimate familiarity with its hero, while the latter would "feel that it carries with it all the interest of a novel, strengthened with the authenticity of real history." As a bonus, women would experience an "additional satisfaction" in the author's "descent" from her lofty erudition to perform her duties as wife and mother.¹²¹ As to the two newer titles, Hays's was a six-volume alphabetical dictionary of nearly three hundred lives of worthy women from antiquity to recent times and something of a retreat for this erstwhile radical; Hamilton's, we have seen, was a detailed single life intended to illustrate the workings of the passions through the concrete example of a historical heroine. These works would set the tone for female historical interests in the first half of the new century, and the tensions signaled in them between the political and social, the public and the private, would continue to mark the "golden age" of historical writing and the great age of the Victorian novel.¹²² The best-selling history of the middle years of the century, Thomas Babington Macaulay's *History of England from the Accession of James II* (1848–1855), paid close attention to customs and manners and was well received by female readers. Its author was an admirer of Scott. As a younger man, Macaulay believed that "a truly great historian would reclaim those

1708), vol. 1; *Lucan's Pharsalia*, Nicholas Rowe, trans. (London, 1718 [actually 1719; simultaneously published at Dublin with a different subscription list]); Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The British History*, A. Thompson, trans. (London, 1718); Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time* (London, 1724), vol. 1; Philippe de Comynes, *The Memoirs of Philip de Comines*, T. Uvedale, trans. (London, 1712); Nathaniel Salmon, *The History of Hertfordshire* (London, 1728); Asser, *Annales rerum gestarum Aelfredi magni*, F. Wise, ed. (London, 1722); Robert Castell, *The Villas of the Ancients Illustrated* (London, 1728). They reveal a strong variance in female subscription patterns among different types of history.

¹²¹ Julius Hutchinson, preface to Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, 3d edn., 2 vols. (London, 1810), 1: xxiv–xxviii, also discussed in Phillips, "Adam Smith and the History of Private Life," 339–40.

¹²² Mary Hays, *Female Biography; or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of All Ages and Countries*, 6 vols. (London, 1803); Hamilton, *Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina*.

materials which the novelist has appropriated."¹²³ It is worth noting that when a child he had received his first books from Hannah More, who might by then have reluctantly agreed.

The increasing importance of German-style archival scholarship in the second half of the nineteenth century modified but certainly did not remove the gender gap in historiography. An increasing number of women followed Catharine Macaulay's lead but Mary Hays's example, streaming themselves away from political history in the direction of historical biography (as most famously did Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland). Others, however, began to turn again to the non-narrative past, to the editing of documents and to the emerging inquiry into the material world of economic and social history. As illustrations, one need only consider the many contributions by female medievalists to the early volumes of the *Victoria History of the Counties of England*, the scholarly works of individual women such as Alice Stopford Green, Alice Clark, Mary Bateson, and the American Lucy Maynard Salmon, and the brief but remarkable career of Eileen Power during the interwar years.¹²⁴ It is true that many of these women were assisted in this streaming by contemporary male hostility to their involvement in "real, solemn" history. Yet, just as one wishes to avoid essentializing women's historical tastes and talents on the one hand, or giving such patterns the appearance of inevitability, so on the other we need to avoid slipping into a rhetoric of subjection. To assume that female achievements resulted purely from male exclusion is not accurate, nor should we suppose that nineteenth-century women would really much rather have been imitating political historians such as Samuel Rawson Gardiner, Edward Augustus Freeman, and James Anthony Froude—or even that other Macaulay.

A middle road between these positions will lie open once the experiences of women with history during the past hundred years have themselves been more thoroughly historicized.¹²⁵ Both the female interest in history and the creation of gender distinctions in its study have their origins in the early modern period. Much of what made up the "feminine past," as I have termed it, the past of place, family, and material environment, was deemed through most of this period to be a past unworthy of the title of true history. The success of social and family history in the last thirty years suggests that the broader types of knowledge which this feminine past included, marginalized for several centuries, have regained their vigor, but the divisions have still not been resolved, as is evident in the frequently observed

¹²³ Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (New York, 1995), 23.

¹²⁴ Joan Thirsk, "The History Women," in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert, eds., *Chattel, Servant or Citizen* (Belfast, 1995), 1–11; Joan Thirsk, "Women Local and Family Historians," in David Hey, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History* (Oxford, 1996), 498–504; Rohan Maitzen, "'This Feminine Preserve': Historical Biographies by Victorian Women," *Victorian Studies* 38 (1995): 371–93; Joan Wallach Scott, "American Women Historians, 1884–1984," in her *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988), 178–231; Judith P. Zinsser, *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full* (New York, 1993), 64, 113–20; Maxine Berg, *A Woman in History: Eileen Power, 1889–1940* (Cambridge, 1996), 6, 55–82, 246–62. Power commented in 1920, concerning one senior male academic, "One of his obiter dicta was 'I have often been amused at women historians; so many of the springs of human action must be hidden from them.'" Power to G. G. Coulton, April 27, 1920, quoted in Berg, *Woman in History*, 83.

¹²⁵ Although I cannot agree with all of its conclusions, Billie Melman's essay "Gender, History and Memory: The Invention of Women's Past in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *History and Memory* 5 (1993): 5–41, provides a suggestive start in this direction.

tendency of female graduate students to steer clear of political, diplomatic, and military history.¹²⁶

Once again, there are both parallels and variations to be found abroad. The German organization of archival training around young male apprentice-historians in the nineteenth century, adopted with some modification by the French, marks an interesting reversal of the private and public. It trivialized the public sphere of the lecture hall or salon, to which women were admitted for readings by famous historians, while elevating the masculine activity of research in the secretive belly of remote archives and the discussion of documents within the almost masonically private space of the "seminar"—itself a procreatively loaded term, as Bonnie G. Smith has recently noted.¹²⁷ The United States quickly snapped up the Rankean culture of the *Doktorvater*, while France concentrated advanced source-criticism in schools such as the Ecole des Chartes. England, in contrast, adopted archival scholarship principally through reforms to the preservation and publication of records, while its universities by and large remained conservative, undergraduate lecture-tutorial institutions. It is worth wondering whether the failure of the universities to embrace anything approximating the German system may paradoxically have allowed late Victorian women, many of whom were now students in female-only colleges, the opportunity actually to do historical research and get it published. Their high level of participation in several historical societies and frequency of periodical contributions suggests this.¹²⁸ Further afield, as Western conventions of historical writing spread to other parts of the world, they brought with them not only their teaching methods but their limited horizons. This is evident in the curricula of African secondary schools and colleges until recent times. In both Africa and Asia, Western influence for a long time confined the scope of historical inquiry to offshoots of politics such as diplomacy and the machinery of imperial administration, inhibiting the development of social and women's history.¹²⁹

The encounter of early modern Englishwomen with the past forms only one strand in a larger tapestry, but there is something to be learned from the ways in which their very outsider status ultimately helped to broaden the modern discipline. For if women did not write history, they certainly read it, thought about it, and discussed it, and their participation in the social circulation of historical knowledge of different sorts had effects that were long lasting. From a literary perspective, the emerging differences between what men and women sought in reading history

¹²⁶ Maria Grever, "Scolding Old Bags and Whining Hags': Women's History and the Myth of Compatible Paradigms in History," in O'Dowd and Wichert, *Chattel, Servant or Citizen*, 22–33.

¹²⁷ Bonnie G. Smith, "Gender and the Practices of Scientific History: The Seminar and Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century," *AHR* 100 (October 1995): 1150–76. Smith's forthcoming book *The Gender of History* should answer many of these and other questions in more detail.

¹²⁸ Melman, "Gender, History, and Memory," 18; on the universities' history teaching versus research, see Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838–1886* (Cambridge, 1986), 135–63.

¹²⁹ Aparna Basu, "Women's History in India: An Historiographical Survey," in Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson, and Jane Rendall, eds., *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (Bloomington, Ind., 1991), 181–209; Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva, "Women's History in Brazil: Production and Perspectives," in *Writing Women's History*, 369–80. In Africa, a region once thought to have no history to speak of, a kind of double exclusion has been at work until very recent years: Bolanle Awe, "Writing Women into History: The Nigerian Experience," in *Writing Women's History*, 211–20.

played no small part in establishing the rapprochement between narrative history and fiction that is a feature of the nineteenth-century novel. From the historian's viewpoint, those same differences also preserved over the *longue durée* an alternative sense of what is important and useful in the past and an attentiveness to the material and documentary sources from which such information could be drawn. When the Anglo-American historical profession was finally, grudgingly, ready to admit women to its "ranks," they had been prepared to join it for quite some time. Perhaps more important, they brought something new with them.

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