

# From Hystories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500–1700

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IN 1967, F. J. LEVY PUBLISHED a concise and eloquent survey, *Tudor Historical Thought*.<sup>1</sup> Lamentably out of print until recently, Levy's work was neither the first nor the last word on the subject, but it has proved remarkably useful to subsequent generations of scholars. Since its initial publication, there has been a profusion of articles and books on historical narratives, on antiquarianism and archaeology, and on the wider

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1. F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Calif., 1967; reprint ed., Toronto, 2004). I am especially grateful to Fritz Levy for many years of advice, friendship, and encouragement; this essay is dedicated to him.

2. This essay is an effort at distillation and generalization rather than a comprehensive study; it is certainly not a bibliographic survey. Many of the ideas and supporting examples expressed here derive from my work in the field over many years, in particular from three books and a number of essays published between 1983 and 2003, which are cited in the notes, and among which the present essay attempts to provide some missing connections; several of the examples used in those publications are repeated here. A few of the major recent titles in the field include: Philip Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture from Clarendon to Hume* (New York, 1996); Rosemary Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1997); Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge, 1997); Joseph M. Levine, *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987); idem, *The Battle of the Books: Literature and History in Augustan England* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991); idem, *The Autonomy of History: Truth and Method from Erasmus to Gibbon* (Chicago, 1999); idem, *Between the Ancients and the Moderns: Baroque Culture in Restoration England* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1999); Colin Kidd, *British Identities before*

sense of the past in early modern England by historians of historiography.<sup>2</sup> There have been nearly as many contributions from literary scholars,<sup>3</sup> while historians of political theory have also paid close attention to historical thought, which (as Blair Worden reminds us in the present collection) served both to bridge the gaps between political thought, philosophy, and fiction and to provide source material for all three.<sup>4</sup>

Many of these studies have now gone beyond the textual evidence of historical works themselves to investigate more closely their political and social contexts, often using archival evidence (correspondence, diaries, library lists) not widely available to a previous generation.<sup>5</sup> Several decades of attention to social history, and to local sources, have forcibly reframed the questions we now ask about earlier centuries' views of their own pasts, and we no longer habitually identify the literary genre "history" with "the sense of the past," which has a much broader meaning. A combination of 1980s revisionism and 1990s postmodernism has also made recent scholars (even those among us who remain unconvinced by extreme arguments about the purely imagina-

*Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge and New York, 1999), which expands the enquiry to Scotland and Ireland. As these titles indicate, there has been a noticeable and welcome increase in the interest in Restoration and eighteenth-century historiography, which is helpful in getting us past the 1640 divide that marks Renaissance-focused works. On broader perceptions of the past, see Keith Thomas's important lecture *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England*, Creighton Trust Lecture, 1983 (London, 1983); and two works by Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham, N.C., 1979); *Utter Antiquity* (Durham, N.C., 1993).

3. Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1995); Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's "Chronicles"* (Chicago, 1994); Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992); Achsah Guibbory, *The Map of Time: Seventeenth-Century English Literature and Ideas of Pattern in History* (Urbana, Ill., 1986). See also the several essays in Donald R. Kelley and David H. Sacks, eds., *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800* (Cambridge and Washington, D.C., 1997); and Bart van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford, 2002). I will not attempt to list the enormous quantity of periodical literature connected with historical writing and thought.

4. See esp. Glenn Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven, Conn., 1996); idem, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603–1642* (Basingstoke, U.K., 1992); Melinda S. Zook, *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (University Park, Pa., 1999); Janelle R. Greenberg, *The Radical Face of the Ancient Constitution: St. Edward's "Laws" in Early Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2001). See also the very important revised edition of another seminal work, J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century, a Reissue with a Retrospect* (Cambridge, 1987; first published 1957). Classical republicanism has been especially well studied by Pocock in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Baltimore, 1975). See also a number of important essays by Blair Worden: "Classical Republicanism and the Puritan Revolution," in H. Lloyd-Jones, V. Pearl, and B. Worden, eds., *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper* (London, 1981), 182–200; idem, "Ben Jonson among the Historians," in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake, eds., *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke, U.K., 1994), 67–89; idem, "English Republicanism," in J. H. Burns and M. Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991), 443–75.

5. See, for instance, two very good Midland studies: M. W. Greenslade, *The Staffordshire Historians* (Stafford, U.K., 1982); and Jan Broadway, *William Dugdale and the Significance of County History in Early Stuart England*, Dugdale Soc. Occasional Papers, no. 39 (1999). We await Dr. Broadway's forthcoming book on gentry consciousness and local history.

tive, constructive, and even arbitrary nature of representations of the past) rather cautious about articulating simple progressive narratives of historiographic change along positivist lines. The study of popular culture and the influence of postcolonial theory have also made us deeply aware that perceptions of the past are not necessarily uniformly shared at all levels of society, nor uncontested.<sup>6</sup>

If reviewing this historiography of historiography is a challenge, then it is even more difficult to summarize in a single article the breadth and depth of historical writing and historical thought during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. My purpose here is the rather different one of exploring, at a “macro” level, some critical transformations in historical thinking in early modern England, and in particular the changes in the mental apprehension, cognition, and communicative articulation of elements of the past. Although narrating a process of change, my analysis here is concerned neither with advances in scholarship and knowledge through the achievements of certain important historians, antiquarians, and philologists (impressive though those were), nor even with the social conditions that facilitated a significant transformation in the public status of history, which have been addressed elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> Rather, the essay focuses on “mentalities” in the narrower sense of the thought processes at work in any informed individual’s act of making sense of the past, and on the cumulative effect of these in establishing the “historical” as a major category of personal and collective knowledge and a significant specie of conversational currency in a way it had not been two centuries previously.<sup>8</sup> This category emerged, paradoxically, at the very time that historically based argumentation was in certain arenas losing some of its political and social force to argument from reason, natural law, or sheer practicality—even if the past remained an often ferociously contested territory, a point illustrated in John

6. The literature on popular culture is too voluminous and well known to cite here. Among theoretical and postcolonial writings, I have found especially useful Arjun Appadurai, “The Past as a Scarce Resource,” *Man* 16, no. 2 (1981): 201–19; Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History* (New York, 2002); Ashis Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” *History and Theory* 34 (1995): 44–66; Vinay Lal, *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India* (Oxford and New Delhi, 2003). In the last, see esp. chap. 1, “The History of Ahistoricity.”

7. See my recent monographs *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000); and *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford, 2003).

8. The adjective “historical” first turns up, in different senses, in the sixteenth century. The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes Spenser’s 1590 use of the term “poet historical” (meaning the epic poets from Homer and Virgil to Tasso and Ariosto) in Sidneysque contradistinction to a “historiographer” (*Faerie Queene*, “A letter of the authors expounding his whole intention in the course of this worke,” addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh). Various earlier sixteenth-century usages occur, for example in connection with the notion of “historical faith.” “Historic” in the sense of “highly significant” appears to have a more recent origin when it was used by Gibbon in the later eighteenth century. However, this meaning presupposes the development of a sense that “history” is not merely a genre, story, or book but an overarching meta-narrative in which either immediate or long-term effects or momentous change have bestowed the quality “historic” on an event, displacing the “miraculous,” an earlier instance of extraordinary occurrence but one signifying momentary divine intervention rather than the unfolding of events seriatim.

9. For this argument, see the conclusion to Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*; for the declining relevance of genealogy to land cases, see p. 113.

Spurr's and Andrew Starkie's essays in this collection.<sup>9</sup>

The general tendencies in early modern historical thought might best be summarized as a set of transitions, interconnected but not running in series, from “hystories” to “the historical.” To put it another way, and peering between the chronological bookends of the late fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries, there occurs within that span a noticeable shift between two cultural frames. At the beginning of the period, there was knowledge to be found in histories, but no category of learning that we might call “historical knowledge”. Historical details were contained in and conveyed by external authorities (by and large chronicles, the classical authors, and of course the Bible). Among the educated they were quoted selectively and often decisively in oral or written rhetorical contexts arising from political, judicial, religious, and pedagogical dialogues or disputes. A small number of individuals possessed broad knowledge of the past, but very few, if any, thought about the past as a whole as a discrete and meaningful field over which constructive thought could be exercised; Ian Archer has accurately captured, in this collection, some of the constraints on historical knowledge in his essay about Londoners. By 1700, however, the picture is very different. Details about the past traded at a much higher rate in public and domestic settings, even where not much depended on their possession. They circulated textually, verbally, graphically, and tangibly with such frequency and velocity that it was possible to *think* in ways that were fundamentally historical. And there were, among the possessors of such erudition, enough internalized reference points, and sufficient sense of their dynamic interconnection, for there to develop that previously missing mental category of historical knowledge, eventually extended to nature as well as to human action.

There are other compelling contrasts between the two points on this temporal scale. At the early end, the late medieval and early Renaissance practice of intensive private and selective performative group reading was directed at the communication of a history's *story* principally for purposes of moral edification or entertainment, with examples and models to be absorbed by individual reader/listeners.<sup>10</sup> The story itself was secondary to the icons that populated it: little more than a vessel to make the historical example more palatable. Two centuries later we find a much more public mode of discussion and social exchange, in which historical facts and information have become more than mere units of knowledge conveyed in relatively private settings for very specific purposes. They have become a prominent form of cultural currency within the social agora, deployable in multiple contexts, serious or frivolous; and knowledge of both the detail and the grand landscape of the past has acquired the social value that made history the dominant literary genre of the eighteenth century, rivaled only by the novel.

10. Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy,” *Past and Present*, no. 129 (1990): 30–78; William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, Mass., 1995); Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven, Conn., 2000).

The late William J. Bouwsma once commented of historiography in sixteenth-century Italy that it had “moved from the *piazza* into the *studio*, detached itself from active politics and reflected a steady decline in human confidence.”<sup>11</sup> We can see something of this in the England of the 1630s, when the flow of new historical works that had issued from Elizabethan and Jacobean authors all but dried up. Such new works as appeared (and that were not simply continuations or updates of earlier titles) were often either written under direct court patronage or composed with the sort of overtly panegyric purpose that is less egregious in previous decades.<sup>12</sup> But this was a very short-lived trend, rapidly brought to a close by the collapse of censorship and the urgent and public debate of important ideological issues after 1640. The tendency from the Restoration continues to point in a public rather than a private direction. The clubs and libraries of the eighteenth century, along with plentiful male and female correspondence, afford us numerous examples of the movement of historical knowledge out of the library and the closet and into the marketplace, the dining room, and the garden. If, as Keith Wrightson suggests, the period between the start of the sixteenth century and the start of the eighteenth was one of transition to a “commercial economy,” is it then a stretch to imagine that the more elaborate networks of exchange that had matured in an economic setting would also be observable in (and indeed facilitate) intellectual commerce, including the social circulation of historical knowledge?<sup>13</sup> As Craig Muldrew has observed in a similar vein, “the early modern economy was a system of cultural, as well as material, exchanges, in which the central mediating factor was trust.”<sup>14</sup> Whether real or intellectual, coins are current only if they have a widely accepted value and can be exchanged among a variety of parties who are not mutually acquainted. The historical “fact” (as opposed to the more traditional “belief”)—the two were only just beginning to separate) could circulate beyond a very local setting only to the degree that it either derived from credit-worthy provenance or was at least suitable for absorption into “common knowledge” among the polite and the political.

11. W. J. Bouwsma, “Three Types of Historiography in Post-Renaissance Italy,” *History and Theory* 4 (1964–65): 303–14 at 304.

12. For example, Thomas Heywood, *A chronographicall history of all the kings and memorable passages of this kingdome from Brute to the reigne of Our Royal Soveraigne King Charles with the life and predictions of Merline (sirnamed Ambrosius) the ancient British prophet, his propheties interpreted and their truth made good by our English annals . . .* (London, 1641); idem, *Englands Elizabeth her life and troubles, during her minoritie, from the cradle to the crowne. Historically laid open and interwouen with such eminent passages of state, as happened vnder the reigne of Henry the Eight, Edvard the Sixt, Q. Mary; all of them aptly introducing to the present relation* (London, 1631); Robert Powell, *The life of Alfred, or, Alvred: the first institutor of subordinate government in this kingdome, and refounder of the Vniversity of Oxford Together with a parallell of our soveraigne lord, K. Charles untill this yeare, 1634* (1634); William Habington, *The historie of Edvard the Fourth, King of England* (1640).

13. Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2000), esp. 95–98, 331–36. I thank Matthew Neufeld for this suggestion.

14. Craig Muldrew, “‘Hard Food for Midas’: Cash and Its Social Value in Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, no. 170 (2001): 78–120 at 85.

The problem in any history, however, is not simply to identify the contrasts at either end of a period. Rather, it is to untangle the processes that led from a to b and to explain how historical thinking evolved over two centuries. Various indexes of change may be identified at the outset and, though one could certainly adduce others,<sup>15</sup> I will focus on the following five interconnected transitions:

1. The articulation of a sense of period and the acquisition, among a greater proportion of the population than previously, of a historical mental map.
2. The emergence of a sense of the past as continuous process and the establishment of the primacy of causal relationships between diachronically contiguous or proximate events over exemplary and analogical relationships between temporally remote and disconnected ones.
3. The development of a visual sense of the past.
4. A growing understanding of formal boundaries between genres but also of the liquidity of historical matter and its capacity to transcend such boundaries.
5. A more confident sense of the “real” and the “probable,” together with a willingness to concede the existence of the unknowable rather than attempt to “fill in the blanks.”

Broad theories of change are Sirens, simultaneously alluring and dangerous. Observing the occurrence of these transitions is, let it be stated unambiguously, not to propose that they unfolded in lockstep, at the same time, or at an even pace. Indeed, as will be clear below, (3) was a gradual process that began in the sixteenth century, while (2) was at least in part the less predictable consequence of a severe shock to the body politic in the 1640s, comparable to the late-fifteenth-century *calamità Italia*, the Dutch revolt, or the French wars of religion.<sup>16</sup> Nor were features of historical culture observable at the end of the period entirely absent at the beginning—several of them were immanent in late medieval and early Tudor discourse—or indeed vice versa. But taken in aggregate, there are statements that can safely be made about the past-consciousness of the early eighteenth century that do not hold true for the past-consciousness of two hundred years prior.

15. Space limitations oblige me not to consider two other important changes discussed at length in other places—namely, the much greater prominence of open ideological difference among historians after 1640 and the much greater “public” role of historical discourse from the mid-seventeenth century on, including its changing relationship with the circulation of news. For the first, see D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and the “Light of Truth” from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto, 1990); for news, see a variety of recent works including Steve Pincus, “‘Coffee Politicians Does Create’: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture,” *Journal of Modern History* 65 (1995): 807–34; Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641–1649* (Oxford and New York, 1996); Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1666* (Cambridge, 2002). Brian Cowan’s important *The Social Life of Coffee: Curiosity, Commerce, and Civil Society in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, Conn., 2005) had not appeared when this essay was in press.

16. The European examples are well known, and the Italian has been especially well treated in Pocock’s account in *The Machiavellian Moment*. It is worth observing that similar sudden reversals of

The engineers of historiographical “progress” have traditionally been seen as the historians or antiquaries themselves, bringing in or thinking up new ideas that gradually won adherents and soon became normative, with incremental improvements in knowledge ensuing in particular areas. I have suggested elsewhere that this is not a very useful model and that the causes and processes through which historical cultures either come into being or change are in fact much more complex than accounts based on this model allow. They depend not just upon author-to-author transmission of knowledge or ideas—that, after all, has occurred through much of Western history since the Greeks—but also upon the degree to which such knowledge circulates socially, on the communicative systems in play (including both conversational opportunities and, in a culture of the book, the multilateral and ongoing interactions among authors, readers, and publishers), on changing political constraints or motivators, and on social conventions that either facilitate or retard such circulation.<sup>17</sup>

### 🌀 Navigating the Mental Map of Chronology

The understanding of historical periods and of the relative chronology of events, in particular of events that occurred in different places at the same time, is one of the hallmarks of modern historical thinking. This reaches beyond the familiar and oft-cited “sense of anachronism” that the Renaissance has widely been praised for originating (though the pace at which this sense may have developed is also open to debate). It also extends further than a simple capacity to list events in their chronological order of occurrence, which both Hellenistic and late Roman “world” historians and then medieval chroniclers had already demonstrated (relying on textual authorities and, for contemporary events, eyewitness accounts). In the case of most medieval clerical chroniclers and eventually urban lay chroniclers—even those who told extended stories—annals provided the contiguous units of time against which events could be laid out, with all the limitations that spans of a single year for events imposed on the observation and representation of longer-term patterns and of cause-and-effect relationships that straddled calendar years.<sup>18</sup> Secular and aristocratic chroniclers such as Froissart departed from the annalistic scheme but were no more able to escape the boundaries of the particular episode or story being narrated (nor, to be fair, would

fortune or political crises appear to have motivated decisive turns toward linear thinking in late imperial China and Meiji-era Japan; see Luke S. K. Kwong, “The Rise of the Linear Perspective on History and Time in Late Qing China,” *Past and Present*, no. 173 (2001): 157–190; and Peter Duus, “Whig History, Japanese Style: The Min’yūsha Historians and the Meiji Restoration,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 33 (1974): 415–36.

17. D. Woolf, “A High Road to the Archives? Rewriting the History of Early Modern English Historical Culture,” *Storia della storiografia* 32 (1997): 33–59.

18. On the narrative qualities of annal, chronicle, and history, see Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” in his *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore, 1987), 1–25.

19. While there is no space here for a review of the characteristics of medieval historical thought, the following have proved especially helpful: William J. Brandt, *The Shape of Medieval History: Studies in Modes of Perception* (New Haven, Conn., 1966); Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London, 1974); Nancy F. Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago, 1977); Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in*

they have seen a need to do so).<sup>19</sup> What was lacking in both types of chronicles, and emphatically did *not* arrive with Renaissance humanism, was a more widespread and individually internalized knowledge of the interconnection and chronological placing of world events from different locations (a problem with which the ancient and medieval worlds did not need to wrestle, given the relative finitude of European horizons and the absolute supremacy of common calendars such as the Julian for long periods of time).

The later sixteenth century added considerably greater knowledge of other ancient peoples as a small number of scholars began to master tongues beyond Greek, Latin, or even Hebrew.<sup>20</sup> Following early triumphs in the exposure of backdated falsities such as the Donation of Constantine, and in the wake of the Reformation, the efforts of many of the great philological masters turned to problems of chronology. From the Huguenot Joseph Scaliger and the Catholic Denis Petau or Petavius, through millennial speculators such as the Scot John Napier and the Cambridge scholar Joseph Mede, to the English Protestants William Whiston and Sir Isaac Newton a century later, chronologers of varying ability and preoccupation attempted to rectify discrepancies in dating and often to solve related riddles such as the precise date of the Creation (a particular fixation of Archbishop James Ussher) or the sequence of apocalyptic successions of empires. The string theory of its day, its best practitioners resting atop the pyramid of learned skills, chronology established decisively that there *were* multiple timelines for world events, that it was possible to determine what John Selden would call “synchronisms” among them, and that differing accounts of the same event might indeed be used as a check on the accuracy of its dating or even the fact of its

*Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992); Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 2 vols. (Ithaca, N.Y., 1974–82). See also the perceptive essay by R. W. Southern, “Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing, the Sense of the Past,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 23 (1973): 243–63.

20. See the standard studies of European historical thought at this time. For France: Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York, 1970); George Huppert, *The Idea of Perfect History: Historical Erudition and Historical Philosophy in Renaissance France* (Chicago and Urbana, 1970); Julian H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Sixteenth-Century Revolution in the Methodology of Law and History* (New York, 1963); Zachary S. Schiffman, *On the Threshold of Modernity: Relativism in the French Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1991). For Italy: Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton, N.J., 1965); Mark Phillips, *Francesco Guicciardini: The Historian's Craft* (Toronto, 1977); Donald J. Wilcox, *The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969); Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981); N. S. Struener, *The Language of History in the Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J., 1970). Scholarship itself is well handled—with proper attention to its polemical context—in Anthony Grafton's several books, in particular *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (Princeton, N.J., 1990); and *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

21. The definitive treatment of Renaissance chronological scholarship is provided in volume 2 of Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1983–93). For a Restoration attempt at a history of the world reconciling known chronologies, see William Howell, *An Institution of General History* (1680); for Selden's use of synchronism, see Woolf, *Idea of History*, chap. 7.



occurrence (sometimes with gloriously wrong results, as the comparison of accounts of the Great Flood illustrates).<sup>21</sup>

The expansion of European horizons both east and west occurred more or less contemporaneously with much of this chronological work. It is perhaps no coincidence that the decades that witnessed important advances in cartography, spurred both by a widening world and the need to locate its various bits accurately, also saw the development of a “cartography of time.” The relations between geography and history were explicitly acknowledged by poets such as Samuel Daniel, who famously dubbed history “but a map of men.”<sup>22</sup> Historical knowledge in the early sixteenth century was sufficiently limited, interest in the subject being neither strong nor pervasive, that most readers of historical works arguably needed the security of the annalistic or genealogical stepping-stone to proceed in a linear fashion through time, especially where the under-classicized pasts of mythical founders and medieval monarchs were concerned.<sup>23</sup> (Mentally comparing like with like and constructing atemporal type-groups such as “the Nine Worthies” or the “Four Empires” *across* time was both intuitively and mnemonically easier, a point to which we will return in the next section.)

A continuous narrative that uses years but does not anchor every event to them, such as the English humanist narratives or “politic histories” that displaced the chronicle at the end of the sixteenth century, assumes a sufficient comfort level among readers with the framework of events such that the story related by the historian can be followed without the crutch of the annal. This may help to explain the enduring background use of annals—in some cases reduced to simple markers for the reader rather than main headings—by early Stuart authors such as William Camden (aspiring to a Tacitist rather than a medieval usage) and Daniel (who noted regnal and calendar years only marginally in his *Collection of the Historie of England*).<sup>24</sup> It would take a much greater transformation, imposed by the additional uncertainties injected by seventeenth-century geological and natural discoveries, before any account would venture out of the safe harbor of a finite Old Testament chronology and rather hesitantly into the charting of a deep sea of millennia, beyond the ancient boundaries set by Genesis. An awareness of geological time would not fully settle in till the time of Lyell and Darwin two centuries later, but early clues to the pushing of the boundaries can be seen in the seventeenth century—for example, in Edmond

22. Daniel, “A Defense of Ryme” (1607), in *Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 5 vols. (New York, 1963), 4:50–51, quoted in William K. Hall, “A Topography of Time: Historical Narration in John Stow’s *Survey of London*,” *Studies in Philology* 88 (1991): 1–15.

23. “Under-classicized” seems an inelegant but more accurate term to describe the mythical pre- or medieval post-classical pasts, since both medieval and early modern writers, albeit to different degrees, were guided by categories contained in such ancient historians as were known to them, however imperfectly.

24. Conversely, a lack of comfort among a more popular readership such as the seventeenth-century consumers of almanac chronologies (cheaper than the now-defunct chronicle) may in part explain the tendency of the almanac writers to place events on a time scheme backward from the present or in terms of years lapsed (“number of years since boots invented” or “years since the Flood”).

Halley's suspicions that Stonehenge (variously assigned to *historical* peoples such as the Romans, the Druids, or even the Phoenicians) was considerably older than recorded events.<sup>25</sup> Paradoxically, by 1700, in the wake of the doubts of Spinoza, la Peyrère, and Bayle about the authorship and literal truth of the Pentateuch, the harbor itself was looking a good deal less tranquil. The mists had settled, for a time, much closer to the pier.

What of the individual's cognition of the temporal ocean and its thousands of event-islands? There is a subtle difference between knowing, intellectually, that Micronesia is a series of archipelagos in the south Pacific and being able instantly to place it on an intuited map-in-the-head. The same distinction applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the apprehension of temporal events and their participants. Awareness that the Plantagenets and the Heptarchs ruled England in "times past" implies a relatively rudimentary level of historical knowledge. Knowing, without having to look up the fact, that King Henry II immediately preceded King Richard I who preceded King John requires a more robust grasp of chronology; and understanding that there is both a chronological *and* a causal relationship (however remote) between, say, the challenges to royal authority of Thomas à Becket and those of Stephen Langton, and that these in turn can be meaningfully connected to much later arguments over clerical power in the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, belongs to a more nimble level still. The capacity to cast the past into complex and dynamic relationships with itself and with the present, as opposed simply to producing parallels in the manner of Plutarch, yoking multiple cautionary cases as do the authors of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, or even distilling examples into principles of prudence as did Machiavelli presupposes a sufficient grasp not only of the events themselves but also of their interconnection over periods of time much longer than a year or even a reign.<sup>26</sup>

This ability to steer a narrative course through time without cautiously tacking from year to contiguous year had developed by the early seventeenth century into the perception that history as a formal genre could even recount the chronological development of, and changes over time of, non-human objects or customs.<sup>27</sup> The earliest significant English example of this is Selden's *Historie of tithes* (1618), which constructs

25. According to Thomas Hearne, Halley suspected Stonehenge of being as old as the Flood, an interesting example of empirical instincts (in support of the monument's extreme age) colliding with the brick wall of scriptural boundaries, rather than the narrower classical constraints that inspired various other attributions of the megalith to Phoenicians, Druids, and even (by Inigo Jones) the Romans. *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, ed. C. E. Doble, D. W. Rannie, and H. E. Salter, 11 vols., Oxford Historical Society (Oxford, 1885–1921), 7:350.

26. Paul Budra, *A Mirror for Magistrates and the de Casibus Tradition* (Toronto, 2000); Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*. On varieties of Renaissance practice with respect to exemplarity, Timothy Hampton's *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990) is illuminating.

27. The classic expression of the separation of antiquarianism and narrative history prior to Edward Gibbon is the seminal essay by Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," in his *Studies in Historiography* (London, 1966), 1–39; but cf. J. G. A. Pocock's ongoing major study of Gibbon, *Barbarism and Religion*, 3 vols. to date (Cambridge, 1999–), esp. vol. 2.

a narrative account of tithing practices through the ages. This work was a breakthrough in contemporary rhetorical definitions of history as a genre (see below), since it concerned a *thing* not a *king*, and in methodology, since it directly integrated non-narrative legal-antiquarian research into narrative history in a way that challenged the strict division of the two activities that had held for the previous several decades.<sup>28</sup> But Selden's practice of following a single thread through a succession of social and religious contexts to his own present, innovative as it was in conception and execution, also reflected a relatively new capacity to explore the ocean by using particular historical landmarks. The same skills had earlier permitted the great martyrologist John Foxe to shepherd his readers through an episodic succession of persecutions over fifteen centuries, set against the wider timescape of European ecclesiastical history.

In short, sufficient understanding of and comfort with chronology and with the course of world events facilitated the telling of multiple kinds of stories about the past. In an excellent revisionist study, Annabel Patterson has located such pluralism of accounts in a work such as Holinshed's *Chronicles*, suggesting that such an approach was diminished by the "univocal" character of elite politic history.<sup>29</sup> I would concur with Patterson's first point but not entirely with the second. While *individual* historians certainly offered single-voiced accounts of the past (an important point, to which we will return), this precluded neither the existence of alternative and indeed ideologically orthogonal voices, especially after the collapse of censorship in 1641, nor the conceptualization of entirely different patterns of connection across time. The collection of historical documents, their inclusion within narratives or their publication in separate volumes (which practice increased significantly during and after the Civil Wars), further allowed readers to decide for themselves on major topics of political or ecclesiastical history.<sup>30</sup> By 1700, the sharpest historical thought could slice through the past from many different angles—for evidence one has only to look at titles on Augustan subscription lists and booksellers' advertisements—and it could even embrace local materials that were once the province of the chronicler.<sup>31</sup> This was not the case two centuries previously.

### ~ The Past as Continuous Process

Directly connected with the argument just made with respect to the ability to move

28. Woolf, *Idea of History*, chap. 7, passim. Two studies published more recently extend the exploration of Selden's thought in different directions: Paul Christianson, *Discourse on History, Law, and Governance in the Public Career of John Selden, 1610–1635* (Toronto, 1996); Reid Barbour, *John Selden: Measures of the Holy Commonwealth in Seventeenth-Century England* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London, 2003).

29. Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's "Chronicles,"* which accurately points out the inclusion by the chroniclers of aspects of what we would now term "social history"; this runs against the more traditional view as put, for instance, by Paola Pugliatti, "That Tudor chroniclers ignored social history and that their works were exclusively 'the bokes of great princes and lordes' is a fact" (*Shakespeare the Historian* [New York, 1996], 181).

30. I thank Malcolm Smuts for pointing this out in a perceptive review of *Reading History in Early Modern England*.

31. While Patterson is again correct to point out the exile of the local and social from early Stuart works of narrative political history, the prominence of antiquarian and archaeological works after the Restoration suggests the transfer of local knowledge to other genres of writing about the past rather than their elimination.

mentally across historical time with confidence while accurately locating discrete “history-objects” (persons, groups, ideas, things, or events) is a further shift in historical thinking, one that pertains to the manner in which the connections between those objects are conceived. Expressed figuratively, this might reasonably be seen in the classic structuralist manner as a movement away from metaphor-intensive thought (defined by analogy/similitude/typology) and toward metonymy-intensive (defined by contiguity/causation) thought. There is no need to revisit here the elaborate edifice erected on this foundation by Hayden White for nineteenth-century historiography.<sup>32</sup> But it is fair to argue in general terms that the humanist conception of history (both in the sense of “all significant events that have occurred” and “the accumulation of individual ‘hystories’”) was as an ore-vein of data—in the literal sense of “givens,” not normally open to question in their own right—whence could be extracted exemplary nuggets applicable in the world of that-which-is-yet-to-occur.

The Ciceronian concept of history, the *lux veritatis et magistra vitae*, adjoined to a longer-standing scholastic tendency to think dialectically, typologically, and allegorically, predisposed the sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century reader to categorize the knowledge acquired from reading “hystories” in ways that enabled the illustration of points and the advancing of arguments. The deeply rooted Christian view of human time, *chronos*, was of a set of this-worldly events and persons related allegorically to eternal qualities in divine time, or *kairos*, and related typologically to future earthly events and persons that “fulfilled” the promise of the past without being an “effect” of that past. This provided a strong foundation for a metaphorical and analogical predisposition, conventions for which were worked out and elaborated within specific political and cultural settings, such as Elizabethan England. To put it another way, mainstream secular humanist thought about the past as a whole, whether Britannic or Continental, did not differ remarkably from its medieval theological precursor in certain of its mental habits; but it considerably broadened the field of *comparanda*, expanded the moral contexts within which analogy was useful, and adumbrated a sophisticated language of prophecy, iconography, allegory, and typology that suffuses Renaissance poetry, history, and visual art (for instance, in depictions of Queen Elizabeth).<sup>33</sup>

Commonplace books throughout the two centuries both reflected and reinforced this mindset since they grouped examples and quotations under topics wrested from their immediate temporal context, with chronology barely relevant. So, too, did a number of major works that were not histories per se but that unquestionably relied on historical examples to prove a case—again Machiavelli’s *Prince* and *Discourses* provide typical Renaissance cases of metaphorical thinking about the past and

32. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973).

33. I am indebted to an unpublished essay by Matthew Neufeld for reminding me of the similarities between medieval and Renaissance typology. For a recent examination of the critical importance of analogy in Elizabethan discourse about the past, see Van Es, *Spenser’s Forms of History*, 139–45.

34. Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, unlike *The Prince*, does follow a chronological pattern insofar as it is cast as a book-by-book commentary on Livy’s history; but the whole purpose remains the generation

its utility to the present and future.<sup>34</sup> The practice is sustained in derivative English Elizabethan and early Stuart imitations such as Richard Becon's *Solon his follie* (1594), Robert Dallington's *Aphorismes civill and militarie* (1613), and the English translation of Giovanni Manzini's *Political observations upon the fall of Sejanus* (1634).<sup>35</sup> Such texts intentionally de-narrativize the past in order to find historically transcendent patterns, except insofar as the basic story of individual events must be alluded to or briefly ad-duced for the reader—something must happen to or be done by a character in order for him or her to become exemplary.<sup>36</sup> Historically themed plays—both the chronicle plays about the native past and those based on classical figures—also told versions of stories, but they, too, often relied on audiences to see in the characters upon the stage the figures of real persons of the present or recent past. The number of stage “favorites” from Marlowe's *Edward II* through Jonson's *Sejanus his Fall* to Daniel's *Philotas* increased, while their powers to do evil and inflict terror grew, as the unfortunate Essex gave way to Jacobean and Caroline versions such as Somerset and Buckingham. The subject did not disappear after the Restoration, and older plays such as Jonson's *Sejanus* could be reframed for new audiences in order to reflect on more current political figures.<sup>37</sup>

Machiavelli's contemporary Francesco Guicciardini had acknowledged serious doubts about this manner of envisioning the past (or at least about the real value of any lessons drawn from it). He stressed the change in context that could vitiate the applicability of any past example to the present unless circumstances were nearly identical—which for the most part they weren't. It is no accident that Guicciardini chose to write in maturity a history of very recent events in European diplomacy, the Spanish and

of political prudence of an exemplary type, such as “killing the sons of Brutus.” For the general use of Roman history (often refracted through neostoic philosophy), see Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton 1586–1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1979); J. H. M. Salmon, “Stoicism and Roman Example: Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50 (1989); idem, “Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England,” in Linda Levy Peck, ed., *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1991), 169–88; Malcolm Smuts, “Court-Centered Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c.1590–1630,” in Sharpe and Lake, eds., *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, 21–43; A. T. Bradford, “Stuart Absolutism and the ‘Utility’ of Tacitus,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46 (1983): 127–55.

35. Richard Becon, *Solon his follie, or, A politique discourse touching the reformation of common-weales conquered, declined or corrupted* (Oxford, 1594); Robert Dallington, *Aphorismes civill and militarie: amplified with authorities and exemplified with historie, out of the first quaterne, of Fr. Guicciardine* (London, 1613); Giovanni Manzini, *Political observations upon the fall of Sejanus*, trans. Sir T[homas] H[awkins] (London, 1634).

36. It must again be restated firmly that these modes of relating aspects of the past to each other and to the present are not mutually exclusive, even at a particular time. A heuristic analogy can be found, perhaps in music, in which melody provides the narrative or forward movement, and harmony the linkage between notes that permits polyphony and a much richer sound. The humanist narrative historian (a Bacon, for example) thus can relate a coherent story but still derive examples and make connections other than those of contiguity, in essence deploying the historical equivalent of a chord structure.

37. Blair Worden, “Favourites on the English Stage,” in J. H. Elliott and W. B. Brockliss, eds., *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1999), 160–83.

French invasions of Italy. This narrative stressed occurrences so fresh and, owing to superior documentation, so clear as to make the temporal flow and the contingent connection of event to event among its most remarkable features. The work was translated into French, and thence into English by Sir Geoffrey Fenton. Featured by Barnabe Barnes as the ghostly chorus in his 1607 play *The Devil's Charter*, on the life of Pope Alexander VI, Guicciardini sounded a warning against the reliance upon the transplanted example:

But it is a thing very dangerous for men to governe themselves by examples, if there be not a concurrence of the same reasons, not onely in generall, but even in all particularities; and if things be not ruled with the same wisdom: and if lastly over and besides all other foundations, the selfe same fortune have not her part.<sup>38</sup>

This was some distance from the *magistra vitae*, but it was for the moment a minority position. More typical in sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century England was the straightforward admiration of Clio the governess. “Where can Phylosophie finde such sober precepts as out of history?” enthused William Habington in 1641: “History, that faithfull preserver of things past, that great instructor of the present, and certaine Prophet of the future.” Educational manuals such as Henry Peacham’s *Compleat Gentleman* (1622) sounded the utility of history for the education of youth; the 1678 English translation of a similarly titled work by Jean Gailhard concludes with a list of “Histories, and other curious discourses, fit to be read by young gentlemen.”<sup>39</sup> Francis Bacon, the most philosophically minded early Stuart commentator on the uses of the past (not a difficult achievement), clearly saw “civil history” and especially “perfect history” as above all providing guidance to the rising politician (and most effectively through narration rather than disconnected example), though it was as a fallen one that he himself first essayed to practice what he preached.

By the early eighteenth century, another disgraced statesman turned would-be philosopher, the exiled Lord Bolingbroke, had doubts as to the efficacy of the decontextualized historical example. It is true that he parroted the specific phraseology of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, that history is “philosophy teaching by examples,” and he would endorse the classical view of history as a bountiful lake full of instructive cases. But he now did so (building on another humanist tradition expounded by Bacon, that of the “statesman-historian” as ideal narrator of the past) with a critically important qualification: without personal experience, such exemplary knowledge was the property of the pedant, at best dead and at worst misleading. The *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* must inform each other. A huge commonplace book, Bolingbroke suggests, “wherein all the remarkable sayings and facts that we find in history are to be regis-

38. *The Historie of Guicciardin*, trans. G. Fenton, 3d ed. (London, 1618), 41.

39. William Habington, *Observations upon historie* (1641), “Epistle to the Reader”; J. Gailhard, *The Compleat Gentleman* (1678), following p. 196.

tered,” may allow a man to speak or write like Bodin but will not make him a useful citizen. Firsthand experience must always trump mere intellectual knowledge of the past. “The late duke of Marlborough,” he notes of a one-time political patron, “never read Xenophon, most certainly, nor the relation perhaps of any modern wars.” The use of history is precisely that in the right hands it is able to combine in one place both the individual example and the cumulative experience of the ages, including all the “events that stand recorded in history,” which we are able to see together, “*as they followed one another, or as they produced one another, causes or effects, immediate or remote.*” Bolingbroke specifically criticizes Machiavelli’s method and quotes with approval Guicciardini’s cautions.<sup>40</sup>

Literary authors, journalists, politicians, and even historians have never, to be sure, given over the support of an argument through the effective use of historical example. The choice individual or event from the past retained its persuasive power in the eighteenth century and afterward. It suffuses the writing of prolific intellectuals such as Samuel Johnson, and remained an essential part of pedagogy; an influential education manual of the 1790s emphasized the need for students to acquire both “the habit of reasoning and the power of combining distant analogies” before they could make sense of history.<sup>41</sup> But though exemplarity and the metaphorical instinct that it represented unquestionably endured, they did not do so unaltered, nor as the sole meaningful way of constructing connections between past and present. While the writers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had continued in the Ciceronian vein, trolling for examples to be displayed in political essays, sermons, debates, and other argumentative situations, there is a noticeable swing in the 1640s toward granting greater priority to causation, contingency, and contiguity.

This might be reasonably expected in a situation of grave national crisis, and it is observable in at least three different ways. First, the continuous narrative political history, while conceived for didactic purposes (as Bacon’s hortatory, critical, and cautionary *History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* [1622] certainly was),<sup>42</sup> did in fact stress the proximity of events and the chain of cause and effect. Even if the fates of king and kingdom were linked mechanically and reductively, proximity to the sources compensated in detailed knowledge of the connections among events for anything that might have been obscured in the long lens of temporal distance. And the clearer the immediate motives and drivers behind events, the less likely were historians simply to shrug their shoulders and attribute outcomes directly to fate, chance, or providence. As with Guicciardini nearly a century earlier, this is especially noticeable in the detailed

40. Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, in *Lord Bolingbroke: Historical Writings*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Chicago, 1972), letter 2, pp. 13, 18; letter 3, pp. 26, 30; emphasis added.

41. See esp. John A. Vance, *Samuel Johnson and the Sense of History* (Athens, Ga., 1984), 31–38; the manual is Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, new ed., 2 vols. (London, 1798), 1:442.

42. Francis Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*, ed. F. J. Levy (New York, 1972); Jonathan Marwil, *The Trials of Counsel: Francis Bacon in 1621* (Detroit, 1976); Perez Zagorin, *Francis Bacon* (Princeton, N.J., 1998).

archival work that underlay Camden's *Annales*, a book very unlike most of its kind in that it was almost completely dependent on primary sources. (This is one among many reasons why Camden, often lumped with John Hayward and Francis Bacon, was no English Machiavelli and a poor fit with the notion of a politic historian.)<sup>43</sup> There were no earlier chronicles or histories to which Camden could turn and little but his own memories of the reign to guide his interpretation of the documentary jigsaw puzzle. Meanwhile, antiquaries examining relatively obscure aspects of more remote periods, with a similar dearth of pre-existing scholarship, developed linear thinking in a rather different way, by adopting and adapting the mental habits of the practicing common lawyer.<sup>44</sup> Legal thinking was built on connections of precedent, prescription, and custom (even if these were often antithetical to the notion of change), and—uniquely among Renaissance modes of cognition concerned with the past—it encouraged the reading of documents, cases, and statutes in chronological order, as the latter confirmed or modified the former.

Second, in the decades between roughly 1590 and 1630, English historical works had acquired—or, perhaps more accurately, reacquired—unified authorial voices. The guiding presence of a narrator was evident in a classical or Renaissance historian such as Thucydides, Tacitus, or Guicciardini but is rather more opaque among late medieval and Tudor chronicles, even where the chronicler had an established reputation or “authority.” Print may even in the first instance have worked against rather than reaffirmed authorial identity, since the first printed chronicles were the work of relatively obscure creators.<sup>45</sup> By the 1590s, however, the voice that told the history while drawing out its lessons was increasingly linked to an identifiable or even well-known personality, if not yet the celebrated public intellectual and salon habitué of Hume's or Gibbon's day. In fact, this is the same sort of “omniscient narrator” that we normally associate with the novel—the absolute confidence of his or her assertions constrained only by limits of evidence that do not affect the writer of fiction.

An authorial voice bestows more than personality, however; it unifies otherwise parallel and disconnected stories, the historian's melodic lines, into a harmonic whole. As the anthropologist Shelly Errington has observed, it enables true historical narrative to possess a “meanwhile.” An omniscient narrative perspective presumes

43. This is a point well made in Patrick Collinson's excellent essay on Camden, “One of Us? William Camden and the Making of History,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 8 (1998): 139–63. See also H. R. Trevor-Roper's classic account of the *Annales*, “Queen Elizabeth's First Historian: William Camden,” in Trevor-Roper, *Renaissance Essays* (London, 1985), chap. 8.

44. R. Schoeck, “The Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries and Men of Law,” *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 1 (1954): 417–21.

45. This point is well made by Alfred Hiatt, “Stow, Grafton, and Fifteenth-Century Historiography,” in Gadd and Gillespie, eds., *John Stow*, 45–55. Hiatt points out that medieval historians such as Bede and Higden, and lesser authors such as John Hardyng, had a “public identity” of sorts. That is surely true, but the constraints of pre-print distribution, even if they supported a firm *identity*, nevertheless limited its *public* considerably in size. A somewhat different point is that the accretive nature of the annalistic form cut against the kind of coherent “plot” that one finds in late Elizabethan and early Stuart historical writing, even where some kind of unified authorial voice can be detected.



that both historian and reader occupy a position *outside* the past that is being narrated in order to be able to identify all the multifarious causal connections and contingent events that coincide, cross-connect, and ultimately make the story resolve either in the present or in later sequences of events that ultimately end up in the present. Or, as Errington writes:

From the distant peak of present perspective, the author, and the reader, can look down on the strands of events which in a tangled mass form “the past,” can discern where they touched each other and, as a consequence, resulted in yet other strands, which touched yet others, and eventually became the present. The world of the past thus stands apart from reader and author alike, an object for inspection.<sup>46</sup>

This is qualitatively different from the vantage point and practice of the chronicler. Chronicles recount a series of event-years leading to the present. Some, to be sure, stray into the realm of the “meanwhile,” more often expressed as temporal coincidence than as interconnection: thus Robert Fabyan’s “and in this year,” “about this time,” or “in this whyle,” or even the more sophisticated Edward Hall’s “in this meane tyme” and “duryng whiche season.”<sup>47</sup> However, they do so paratactically, with reduced emphasis on this-worldly causation or explanation, and, most critically, without a self-conscious sense of standing outside a matrix of connected events. The chronicler often continues to add on to the end (there is no real *ending* in the sense of a conclusive weaving together of strands) as his own present moves forward, and in so doing deliberately enfolds his own time within a past that ceases to be a distinctive and separate tableau of human experience.<sup>48</sup> This is not, it must be stressed, a distinction between humanist and non-humanist, Renaissance and medieval; for the practice of the humanist harvester of examples is just as remote from Errington’s omniscient author. Though he

46. Shelly Errington, “Some Comments on Style in the Meanings of the Past,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 38 (1979): 231–44 at 239–40. Errington’s observations are made in the context of the Malay *hikayat*, a historical genre that notably lacks a sense of “meanwhile.”

47. *The Chronicle of Fabyan, whiche he nameth the concordance of histories, newly perused* (London, 1559), 214, 248; *Hall’s Chronicle*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1809), 428, 522.

48. This is most obviously true for the ecclesiastical chronicler, the present being itself of little interest except as a further earthly moment of mutability to be judged against a future, and much more “real,” redemptive ending. But it also applies to a good deal of the vernacular chronicle writing of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Consider for instance the frequent updating of the most prolific of the Tudor chroniclers, John Stow, and his continuations by Edmund Howes in the early seventeenth century—a series that comes to an abrupt end in the 1630s. It would be worth exploring in greater detail the coincidence in time between the rediscovery of historical narrative intended explicitly to explain the present and the circumstances that created for the first time a meaningful “present,” the origins of which could indeed be narrated. For a preliminary attempt to address this problem in the context of the connection between history and news, see D. Woolf, “News, History, and the Construction of the Present in Early Modern England,” in B. Dooley and S. Baron, eds., *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York, 2001), 80–118.

may well stand outside the various stories he deploys, the exemplary writer sees no particular importance in their chronological interconnection, as opposed to their reflective similarity to events of other times.

Third, there is a discernible shift in focus toward the recent past beginning in the 1640s. This is to be found in news books; in sometimes scurrilous histories of early Stuart England by the likes of William Sanderson, Edward Peyton, Arthur Wilson, James Howell, Anthony Weldon, and others on both sides of the troubles; and in more subtle fare such as James Harrington's prudential *Commonwealth of Oceana*. These accounts made cause and effect (even if equated with "blame" and "punishment" in the Lactantian mode employed by Foxe) rather than type or analogy the analytical axis of historical narrative. Together with Continental models such as Jacques-Auguste de Thou's *Historia sui temporis*, Camden's *Annales* lit the way. Once again, Camden's own proximity to Queen Elizabeth's time and privileged access to its documents gave him a sense of events not available to its actual participants, a combination of perspective and knowledge that rendered the *Annales* by far the most complex account of a single reign to be written during the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. In its ability to provide the reader with a thread of Ariadne through the labyrinth of occurrences and personalities that populated late-sixteenth-century England, it was virtually unique in early Stuart England (though the young Simonds D'Ewes once planned to write his own history of Elizabeth).<sup>49</sup> But we should not leap from this fact to the conclusion that self-censorship and fear of reprisal were primarily responsible for the dearth of causal-historical analysis of recent events. Linearity with respect to the recent past or present was not per se more dangerous than analogical thinking. As is well known, while contemporary events were not addressed directly by historians, they were often approached through the mirror of analogy, indicating that metaphorically driven thought about the past could be just as dangerous and potentially seditious as any more direct attempt at causal analysis of recent history.<sup>50</sup> Rather, there seems to have been no particular reason prior to 1640 to focus on the chain of efficient causes leading to present difficulties; the hermeneutic capacity of the analogy had proved adequate till then, and analogical thinking at least conferred the advantage of plausible deniability in the face of any threat of reprisal.<sup>51</sup>

49. *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes (1622–1624)*, ed. E. Bourcier (Paris, 1974), 81.

50. See further Blair Worden's essay in this volume.

51. Prior to 1640, complete explicative narratives of recent events are more likely to be found, somewhat paradoxically, in ballads and chronicle-incorporated accounts of domestic tragedies and crimes, such as the famous Arden of Faversham murder recounted by Holinshed—exactly the type of event exiled as "lowbrow" by the politic historians; though the purpose of the treatment of these events was undeniably didactic-exemplary, these accounts often come closer to a non-annalistic narrative of recent events than do these same chroniclers' versions of national history. See Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's "Chronicles,"* passim, and "'Foul, his Wife, the Mayor, and Foul's Mare': The Power of Anecdote in Tudor Historiography," in Kelley and Sacks, eds., *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, 159–78; see also, in the same collection, Richard Helgerson, "Murder in Faversham: Holinshed's Impertinent History," 133–58. I am grateful to Patricia Fumerton for reminding me of this point.

Most historians writing in the 1640s and afterward enjoyed nothing like Camden's access to a "full" set of documents, but in more violently polarized and disruptive domestic circumstances they began to see the public disclosure of such sources as essential to the penetration and revelation of *arcana imperii*: John Rushworth's *Historical Collections* is only the most famous product of this tendency. They also sought other models for the recounting of contemporary history. This was a subject previously avoided outright or narrowly skirted; truth, if followed by the writer "too neare the heeles," as Sir Walter Raleigh remarked, "may happily strike out his teeth." After 1640, however, the recent past loomed larger and with more sinister and immediate implications than the comparatively remote troubles of medieval kings.<sup>52</sup> As with late-fifteenth-century Italians and late-sixteenth-century Dutch and French religious combatants, the need to explain the "origins of present crises" refocused attention on the immediate past. For the narration of recent events, new models needed to be found; the contemporary accounts of "survivors" were polished and restated by historians of subsequent generations, as Hugo Grotius and Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft revised and "tacitized" the accounts of the Dutch revolt they had inherited from nearer contemporaries, such as Emanuel van Meteren.<sup>53</sup>

The most influential of all early modern contemporary histories, Jacques-Auguste de Thou's *Historia sui temporis*, was not translated into English until the eighteenth century, but it was familiar in Latin to Camden and other English readers. The future Parliamentarian D'Ewes expressed his admiration for de Thou as "the wisest Historian one of them that ever lived."<sup>54</sup> D'Ewes lauded "Thuanus" frequently in his *Autobiography*—clearly intended as the beginnings of D'Ewes's own "history of his own

52. Hayward's implied comparison of Elizabeth with Richard II in 1599 and the staging of a Richard II play just prior to the revolt of the historian's patron, the Earl of Essex, are the most infamous examples, but they are not unique; difficulties attended the lectures of Isaac Dorislaus on Roman history at Cambridge in 1628 and various comparisons of the Duke of Buckingham with past "evil favorites" such as Piers Gaveston and Aelius Sejanus. The Raleigh quotation is from *The History of the World* (London, 1614), sig. E4r.

53. E. O. G. Haitzma Mulier, "Grotius, Hooft, and the Writing of History in the Dutch Republic," in A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse, eds., *Clio's Mirror: Historiography in Britain and the Netherlands*, Britain and the Netherlands, no. 8 (Zutphen, 1985), 55–72; and in the same volume, A. E. M. Janssen, "A 'Trias Historica' on the Revolt of the Netherlands: Emanuel van Meteren, Pieter Bor, and Everhard van Reyd as Exponents of Contemporary Historiography," 9–30.

54. *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes from the First Recess of the Long Parliament to the Withdrawal of King Charles from London*, ed. Willson H. Coates (1942; reprint ed., North Haven, Conn., 1970), 26; be it noted, however, that, D'Ewes is here using de Thou analogically, as an authority for the wisdom of reducing the secular power of clerics, in the context of the Long Parliament debate on episcopal membership in the Lords. I owe these latter references to the kind assistance of Sears McGee.

55. *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, Bart.*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell, 2 vols. (London, 1845), 1:5 (Josephus); 2:34. Cf. D'Ewes's other glowing references to de Thou, 1:5–6, 83, 84, 99; 2:92–93, 127; Sir Simonds D'Ewes, *The Primitive Practise for Preserving Truth or An Historical Narration, shewing what course the Primitive Church anciently, and the best Reformed Churches since have taken to suppress Heresie and Schisme*, second impression (London, 1645), 34. I owe these references to the generosity of Sears McGee.

time”—as “the most exact and excellent [history] that was ever written by a humane pen.” He had similar regard for Josephus, among the ancients, because of his personal knowledge of the events of the first-century Jewish wars.<sup>55</sup> Paolo Sarpi’s expository *Historie of the Councel of Trent*, though not quite the work of firsthand knowledge, was nonetheless the word of a Catholic insider; Sarpi’s credibility having been validated by failed papal assassination plots and the interdict of his native Venice, the *History* had proved enormously popular among history readers on its appearance during James I’s reign.<sup>56</sup> The work of another Italian historian, Enrico Caterino Davila’s firsthand account of the French wars of religion was completed in 1630 and first published in an English edition in 1647. Not coincidentally, Thucydides, translated in 1629 by Thomas Hobbes, began to enjoy, on a smaller scale, something like the admiration that had attached fifty years earlier to Tacitus. Thucydides provided the example par excellence of an ancient historian in pursuit of the causes of a political and military cataclysm, and of the self-conscious transmission of this treatment to posterity rather than its mere commemoration in the author’s present.<sup>57</sup> Hobbes himself would several decades later imitate the Athenian in providing his own analysis of civil conflict in the dialogic history *Behemoth; or the long parliament*.<sup>58</sup>

Cromwell might still be the archetype of an evil and grasping regicide to Restoration and eighteenth-century historians, just as the Duke of Monmouth would later be figured as a rogue biblical scion in Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*. But the exemplary function of such individual characters was by now secondary to the telling of the story as one of the interconnection of contiguous historical entities and the occurrences that their interactions generate. Cromwell’s standing in Clarendon’s mind as a great wicked man, and the exemplary function that he assumed the Protector would occupy for posterity, are of secondary importance to Clarendon’s recitation of the Protector’s prominent role in events. Both Oliver’s virtues and his vices are important less for what they signify than for the historical outcomes they facilitated.

[Cromwell] was one of those men *quos vituperare ne inimici quidem*

56. Paolo Sarpi, *The historie of the Covncel of Trent: containing eight bookes; in which (besides the ordinarie actes of the Councell) are declared many notable occurrences, which happened in Christendome, during the space of fourtie yeeres and more*, trans. Nathanael Brent (London, 1620).

57. For Thucydides (translated by Thomas Hobbes in 1629), especially as a model for Clarendon, see Hicks, *Neoclassical Culture*, 46–81. See P. Burke, “A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450–1700,” *History and Theory* 5 (1966): 135–52, tables 1 and 2. Sallust was consistently, and uniquely, in the “top three” in terms of printed editions across Europe from 1450 to 1700; Thucydides never rose above fourteenth place but did experience a modest increase in editions after 1650. He was also among those historians (unlike Caesar or Livy) who had a much greater appeal in vernacular editions than in Greek or Latin.

58. Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth; or the Long Parliament*, ed. F. Tönnies, with a new introduction by Stephen Holmes (Chicago, 1990). Ironically, the reading by youth of “the books written by famous men of the ancient Grecian and Roman commonwealths concerning their polity and great actions” (p. 3), a category that clearly includes Thucydides, is the fourth of several causes adduced by Hobbes for the outbreak of rebellion.

*possunt nisi ut simul laudent*; for he could never have done half that mischief [*sic*] without great parts of courage and industry and judgment. . . . Without doubt, no man with more wickedness ever attempted any thing, or brought to pass what he desired more wickedly, more in the face and contempt of religion and moral honesty; yet wickedness as great as his could never have accomplished those trophies without the assistance of a great spirit, an admirable circumspection and sagacity, and a most magnanimous resolution. . . . [H]e will be looked upon by posterity as a brave bad man.<sup>59</sup>

The royalist Clarendon, studied in the present volume by Paul Seaward, was not alone in emphasizing plot over character. The court-poet-turned-Parliamentarian Thomas May, one-time translator of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, started his account of recent events—*The history of the Parliament of England, which began November the third, MDCXL with a short and necessary view of some precedent yeares*—with the Elizabethan religious settlement.<sup>60</sup> And perhaps the most sophisticated student of Machiavellian politics in the mid-seventeenth century, the republican James Harrington, cast his own analysis of the collapse of English monarchy in the form of the thinly disguised historical *roman à clef* about Oceana. Harrington pushed his hunt for proximate and ultimate causes well back past the *fontes et origines* identified by Clarendon to the social dislocation of the mid-sixteenth-century monastic dissolution, beyond this to the decline of bastard feudal aristocratic power under “Panurgus” (Henry VII), and back further still to the Norman, Saxon, and Roman military occupations.<sup>61</sup> These tendencies continued after the Restoration. As Mark Knights shows in his essay in this volume, Tories and Whigs at opposite ends of the political spectrum could peer back to the 1640s in constructing partisan accounts of the origins of troubles in the 1680s.

Sharing with both Clarendon and Thucydides the humbling experience of sudden fall and exile, Bolingbroke once again proved an enlightened product of this tran-

59. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England begun in the Year 1641*, bk. 15, chaps. 147, 156, ed. W. Dunn Macray, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1888), 6:91, 97. Of course, the exemplary function never disappeared entirely—it was a principal reason adduced that women should read histories (rather than novels), and, in the following centuries, that statesmen should read them; the nature of modern historiographic argumentation within the academy is heavily dependent on the citation of examples to prove theses rather than simply “telling what happened.”

60. Thomas May, *The history of the Parliament of England, which began November the third, MDCXL with a short and necessary view of some precedent yeares* (1647); J. G. A. Pocock, “Thomas May and the Narrative of Civil War,” in Derek Hirst and Richard Strier, eds., *Writing and Political Engagement in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1999), 112–44.

61. James Harrington, *The Common-Wealth of Oceana* (1656), “The second part of the preliminaries,” 34–40. Harrington's overarching vision of world history as the supersession of ancient by modern “prudence” begins even earlier, with the Romans' loss of empire owing to the end of agrarian balance, the onset of luxury, and the “execrable” rule of emperors.

sition. Insisting that examples could be useful only if they were analyzed for complex and lengthy causal chains, he pushed the Revolution of 1688 backward by steps through Restoration, Civil War, and earlier. “It was necessary therefore . . . to go back in history . . . even to the beginning of King James the First’s reign, to render this event a *complete example*.”<sup>62</sup> History might still provide a cautionary tale, but better it should be the whole history, not its desiccated chunks. Put another way, exemplarity was still of enormous importance to both authors and readers, but that exemplarity now derived preferentially from historical processes rather than iconic individuals or even singular episodes.<sup>63</sup>

### 🌀 A Visual Sense of the Past

There is a wonderful conversation in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* between the innocent, unsuspecting Prince Edward and his “guardian” the Duke of Buckingham concerning the Tower of London.

PRINCE: I do not like the Tower, of any place.  
Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?  
BUCK: He did, my gracious lord, begin that place,  
Which, since, succeeding ages have re-edified.  
PRINCE: Is it upon record, or else reported  
Successively from age to age, he built it?  
BUCK: Upon record, my gracious lord.  
PRINCE: But say, my lord, it were not regist’red,  
Methinks the truth should live from age to age,  
As ’twere retail’d to all posterity,  
Even to the general all-ending day.

(*Richard III*, 3.1.68–78)

This is dramatically ironic in its foreshadowing of the terrible fate awaiting the young prince and his brother at the hands of Richard’s minions (and the prince’s gut-felt fear presumes an implicit knowledge among the audience of what happens next). But the passage is interesting for other reasons, since it captures both the vivid association of particular places with famous historical pseudo-founders such as Caesar

62. Bolingbroke, *Historical Writings*, 20; my emphasis. Once again the inspiration may be Bacon’s contrast of the experience of reading Tacitus with that of reading Suetonius: “Certainly when I read in Tacitus of the actions of Nero or Claudius, invested with all the circumstances of time, persons and occasions, I see nothing in them very improbable; but when I read the same in Suetonius Tranquillus, gathered unto titles and common places, and not presented in order of time, they seem something prodigious and quite incredible” (*Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. Spedding et al., 7 vols. [London, 1858–61], 4:359).

63. For further commentary on this theme, see Karen O’Brien’s essay in this volume.

and the conviction that such fame endures orally, with or without “characters” as Gloucester himself adds in a pun on the word:

GLouc: [aside] So wise so young, they say do never live long.

PRINCE: What say you, Uncle?

GLouc: I say, without characters fame lives long.

(3.1.79–81)<sup>64</sup>

It is an axiom of early modern scholarship that an intensely visual culture, dominated in particular by religious objects and representations of sacred figures and equally graphic images of heaven and hell, was displaced after the Reformation by a more austere and textually based religion. Scripture (both the reading and the preaching thereof) superseded ritual and ornament as the focus of spirituality, and individual study and reflection, as well as internal repentance, supplanted visible demonstrations of piety or “good works”; Gregory the Great’s classic sixth-century defense of images as the manner in which the literate could acquire *historia* was roundly rejected by English reformers deeply worried about idolatry and superstition.<sup>65</sup> There is no space here to rehearse the long debate concerning the degree to which Protestantism was iconoclastic or “iconophobic”;<sup>66</sup> rather, the purpose of this section is to reinforce a point made long ago by Margaret Aston—namely, that countervailing tendencies toward the book and the word notwithstanding, the development of a visual sense of the past and its objects, both extant and vanished, can be traced to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>67</sup>

64. Cited from the Riverside edition, gen ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston and New York., 1997). For a study of the place of Caesar as a dramatic and poetic figure, see Paulina Kewes, “Julius Caesar in Jacobean England,” *The Seventeenth Century* 17 (2002): 155–86.

65. Gregory the Great, quoted in Jack M. Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative* (Chicago and London, 1992), 35.

66. Tessa Watt has demonstrated that visual images such as woodcuts or engravings could be lifted from books such as *Acts and Monuments* and posted as aids to worship; *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991), 178–216. See also Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation* (Reading, U.K., 1986); and Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000).

67. Margaret Aston, “English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973): 232–55; cf. Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, chap. 6. Again, the reactions of fifteenth-century Italians provides a point of comparison, well treated in Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven, Conn., 1999). The relationship between antiquarianism and art in England prior to 1700 is understudied; for a later period, see Sam Smiles, *The Image of Antiquity: Ancient Britain and the Romantic Imagination* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1994).

68. The virtual absence of *historia*, or narrative historical painting, in England—at a period when Italian theorists such as Leon Battista Alberti and practitioners such as Mantegna had long-since prescribed *historia* as the highest form of art—remains mysterious, as does the rather motionless and stiff quality of English portraiture, whose subjects remained iconic symbols rather than actors situated in an event. The conventional argument about profound Protestant iconophobia is not entirely persuasive

This did not happen quickly in a country that developed realist commemoration of contemporary figures through portraiture but demonstrated remarkably little interest in the painted narration of the past.<sup>68</sup> Historical episodes as recounted in late medieval chronicles or Tudor histories did little to develop a sense of the actual appearance of historical figures, much less accurate representation of contemporary garb. Where such works did include simple woodcuts as illustration (few prior to Foxe and Holinshed did), these were often stereotypes without much similarity even to then-known images of monarchs. As is well known, a sense of period costume was also elusive, and the representation of figures from antiquity as medieval knights, or of Asian despots dressed as Elizabethan courtiers, was not uncommon. The most influential history book of them all, Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, cuts in both directions. The repeated, duplicated images of martyrs both named and nameless bear no resemblance to their real historical appearances, which in the overwhelming number of cases could not have been known to Foxe himself, much less to his readers. Their inclusion, however, is an acknowledgment that both literate and non-literate audiences may better internalize the story if presented with vivid images. The more elaborate engravings (for instance, the scene of Bishop Bonner flogging a heretic in his garden, or the serial panels narrating the murder of a Tudor-garbed King John) go a step beyond this to illustrate specific historical scenes. Foxe himself acknowledged the importance of visual reminders of the martyrs:

[M]e thinks I have good cause to wish, that like as other subjectes, even so also kinges and princes, which commonly delite in heroicall stories, would diligently peruse such Monumentes of Martyrs, and lay them alwayes in sight, not alonely to read, but to follow, and would paynt them upon theyr walles, cups, ringes, and gates.<sup>69</sup>

Through the trope of prosopopeia, the poet moved into a visualized past rather more easily than did the chronicler or historian. In the "Induction" he wrote for the second edition of *The Mirror for Magistrates* in 1563, Thomas Sackville expressly describes his dreaming of the past as an ocular encounter with its unfortunate denizens, his own version of Odysseus' visit to Hades.

Xerxes the Percian kyng, yet sawe I there  
 With his huge host that dranke the riuers drye,  
 Dismounted hilles, and made the vales vprere,  
 His hoste and all yet sawe I slayne perdy.

since Dutch Protestants did pursue a narrative tradition of painting. I am grateful for a discussion on the latter point to Ann Jensen Adams. On the superiority of *historia*, see Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative*, 34–42.

69. John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1583), vol. 1, "The utilitie of this Storie."

70. Thomas Sackville, "The Induction," lines 428–34, in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell (New York, 1938), 313.



Thebes I sawe, all razde howe it dyd lye  
In heapes of stones, and Tyrus put to spoyle,  
With walles and towers flat euened with the soyle.<sup>70</sup>

Sackville tells us how he has imaginatively envisaged people and scenes from the past but he is short on detail. Only Sackville himself, therefore, knew how he “saw” these scenes; no pictorial illustrations accompany this flight of fancy. Measuring mental phenomena is invariably difficult owing to the nature of the evidence, but there does appear to have been a notable development in the later sixteenth century of the inclination and capacity to visualize the past, at least among those widely read in history—though it is rather unlikely that the later consumers of epitomes and ballads especially cared what Richard II actually looked like. Various reasons can be adduced for this change, first and foremost being the increasing number of printed illustrations that sought visual verisimilitude in physiognomy or costume. In a pre-photographic era, when the only lasting representations of people were to be found in portraits (available only to a small number, usually family members), on coins,<sup>71</sup> in funeral effigies, and in printed engravings such as authorial frontispieces, widespread awareness of the appearance of even contemporary notables was rather limited. But images of the reigning monarchs since Henry VII had been sufficiently widely propagated in engravings and woodcuts as to make the Tudors the first historical dynasty of which it can be said that there is a traditional and even commonplace visual depiction. The stout Henry VIII in feathered cap and beard and his ruff-necked younger daughter are so iconic that the images themselves serve as pictorial metonyms for the biography and history behind them, just as did the ubiquitous visage of Charles I, once replicated in the hagiographic and historical literature that followed the regicide.

Increasing numbers of historians and especially antiquaries began to pay attention to the accuracy of such representations, whether they concerned remote or relatively recent figures. Richard Verstegan’s *Restitution of decayed intelligence* (1605) contains numerous images of objects and even imagined scenes, such as the landing of the Anglo-Saxons in Kent or the first preaching of Christianity by Augustine of Canterbury.<sup>72</sup> A very small number of early- and mid-seventeenth-century historical narratives contain semi-accurate pictures of their more famous subjects: the numismatic portraits heading regnal chapters of John Speed’s *Historie of Great Britaine* (1611) from Henry VIII on; the illustrations in Camden’s *Annales* (1615), Bacon’s *Historie of the raigne of King Henrie the Seventh* (1622), and Herbert of Cherbury’s *Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* (1649); or the images of King James I in Sir Anthony Weldon’s *Court and Character of King James* and in some copies of Arthur Wilson’s *History of Great*

71. Francis Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven, Conn., 1993), chap. 2.

72. R. Verstegan, *A Restitution of decayed intelligence* (Antwerp, 1605), 117, 144. For a useful treatment of the visual illustration of the past in print, see James A. Knapp, *Illustrating the Past in Early Modern England: The Representation of History in Printed Books* (Aldershot, U.K., 2003).

73. Engravings were often printed as inserts between pages of text and could subsequently be either added or removed; my own copy of Wilson’s 1653 *History of Great Britain* lacks all the illustrative materials inserted into the Huntington Library’s copy of the same edition.

Britain and its royalist antithesis, Sir William Sanderson's *A compleat history of the lives and reigns of, Mary Queen of Scotland, and of her son and successor, James the Sixth, King of Scotland*.<sup>73</sup> Authors themselves, as suggested above, were increasingly recognizable in the seventeenth century as distinctive personalities. They also began to appear more frequently in portraits affixed to their printed texts—the now-familiar face of Shakespeare was placed, seven years after his death, in the 1623 folio edition of his works.<sup>74</sup> Antiquaries could tackle the same problem in more remote times, where portraits did not exist, through the imperfect images supplied by funeral effigies. Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, one of the last in the line of Elizabethan and early Stuart county surveys to be focused on family and genealogy, includes a number of detailed engravings of figures from the past and accurate renditions of effigies of more minor figures.

Dramatists, too, were attending to these details. In his late Elizabethan neo-Latin dramatization of the fall of Jerusalem, Thomas Legge strove for historical accuracy of costume, prescribing, for instance, the proper appearance of the Pharisees in “a long linnen gowne somthing strait against their body; the undergowne sleeves turned up at the hands. on their shoulders Philacteres; that is a litle short cloake of linnen like a Womans cloake, mantelwise laied on their shoulders.”<sup>75</sup> Performers in a lost play of 1599 about the taking of Turnhout in the previous year strove for visual accuracy, and the actor portraying Sir Francis Vere “gott a Beard resembling his.”<sup>76</sup> Late Elizabethan Lord Mayor's Shows routinely included representations of kings and historical worthies belonging to particular guilds, and recently deceased or contemporary figures were also depicted by itinerant showmen presenting their wax figures, glass works, and puppets at metropolitan and provincial fairs. In 1633, one Thomas Gibson presented Norwich City Council with “a licence under the hand and seale of the master of the Revelles for licence to shewe the pictures in wax of the Kinge of Sweden & others.”<sup>77</sup>

There was of course much more to the past than pictures of kings or aristocrats. Physical antiquities, which first intrude on history-writing more as decoration than as source (as for instance in Speed's *Historie*), were also subjects for representation. Camden's other great work, *Britannia*, is full of drawings of Roman monuments, complete with inscriptions, as well as of coins. His slightly younger contemporary, the Lancashire recusant William Blundell, ensured the fame of his private trove of Anglo-Saxon coins by

74. Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies (1623), sig. A1r.

75. Thomas Legge, *the Complete Plays*, vol. 2, *Solymitana Clades (the Destruction of Jerusalem)*, ed. and trans. Dana Sutton (New York, 1993), appendix 1, p. 607, punctuation modified here for clarity. I thank Paulina Kewes for pointing this out to me.

76. Quoted in Paulina Kewes, “The Elizabethan History Play: A True Genre?” in Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, eds., *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, vol. 2, *The Histories* (Oxford, 2003), 170–93.

77. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623–73*, ed. N. W. Bawcutt (Oxford, 1996), 181.

78. D. R. Woolf, “Little Crosby and the Horizons of Early Modern Historical Culture,” in Kelley and Sacks, eds., *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, 93–132.

sketching them, complete with his best efforts at epigraphy, and then printing a copperplate with a selection of them arranged into a crucifix.<sup>78</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, the focus of many antiquaries had drifted away from the genealogical and numismatic toward the natural and archaeological, in conjunction with developments in post-Baconian empirical philosophy. Other objects such as bones, fossils, gems, weapons, and armour, and larger remains such as burrows and ancient megaliths feature more prominently. Not only observation of and commentary upon objects, but also systematic comparison of similar ones from different locations and times began to supersede their recording as individual wonders or curiosities.<sup>79</sup> The Society of Antiquaries was re-established in 1707 not merely to study and converse about objects from the past, as their Elizabethan predecessors had done, but specifically to ensure that accurate prints of such objects were executed for posterity and to aid in comparison with those yet to be uncovered.<sup>80</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, and the advent of Romanticism, the way lay clear for something that had been largely absent from English painting over the previous three hundred years—namely, narrative pictures of episodes from British history and intricate re-imaginings of particular scenes (the murder of the two princes in the Tower, for instance), which filled nineteenth-century textbooks.<sup>81</sup>

Topographical works also multiplied during the period, and these, too, contained illustrations of what might be called “historic sites,” from enigmatically ancient monuments such as Stonehenge and Avebury to the scenes of famous battles (Hobbes’s translation of Thucydides contains cartographic renderings of episodes from the Peloponnesian war).<sup>82</sup> Historic sites and buildings were similarly more likely to be represented visually in books than they had been a century earlier, when the pace of architectural change had not yet created much sense that some building styles were themselves “historical.” Expensive Augustan books like Robert Castell’s *The villas of the ancients illustrated* (1728) contain elaborately detailed engravings of classical homes

79. Marjorie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, 2001), is the best recent study of its topic, and especially useful on the visual appeal of collections; see also K. Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800*, trans. E. Wiles-Portier (Cambridge, 1990); Stephen J. Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” in his *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York, 1990), 161–83.

80. R. Mitchell, *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830–1870* (Oxford, 2000), though largely concerned with a much later period, is useful on early illustrators such as George Vertue, much used by the society; see also M. Myrone, “Graphic Antiquarianism in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Career and Reputation of George Vertue (1684–1756),” in M. Myrone and L. Peltz, eds., *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice 1700–1850* (Aldershot, U.K., 1999), 35–54.

81. Mitchell, *Picturing the Past*, passim. For eighteenth-century antiquarianism, see Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2004).

82. *Eight bookes of the Peloponnesian Warre*, trans. T. Hobbes (London, 1629 [Huntington Library copy]; London, 1634 [copy in author’s possession]). For later topographical prints in the post-Hollar period, see R. Russell, *Guide to British Topographical Prints* (Newton Abbot, London, and North Pomfret, Vt., 1979), principally on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

83. Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, 204–12.

and gardens, as post-Restoration and eighteenth-century grandees built themselves stately modern pleasure domes.<sup>83</sup> Travel within Britain and abroad considerably expanded with the improvement of transportation and the popularity of the Grand Tour, and prints or images of particular locations became, along with coins and other small objects, the frequent souvenirs of such excursions. What the past actually looked like was becoming, if not immediately clearer, then at least of more compelling interest.

### ∞ The Historical in and between the Genres

The increase in published historical literature that began under the early Tudors had turned by Elizabeth's reign into a proliferation of genres. The chronicle became increasingly complex and weighty, including by the end of the century details of theatrical events such as royal entries and mayoral processions. Temporarily aided by print, the chronicle enjoyed an Indian Summer in the middle decades of the sixteenth century before its superannuation by a number of historical forms. These included both the protean "genre" known as the history play (derived variously from chronicles, Continental and classical histories, and medieval plays about saints such as Thomas à Becket, as well as ballads and oral tradition), historical poetry, the humanist "politic" history, and, somewhat more remotely, the news book. These genres individually assumed a number of the chronicle's multiple functions.<sup>84</sup>

With the multiplication of genres came a degree of classificatory anxiety. Late Tudor literate culture embraced a mature humanism that borrowed not just from the classicism of the European Renaissance but also from other Continental currents, notably the attention to "method" and "order" in enumerating and describing literary genres and their boundaries. There was no "poetics of historiography" as such. There was, however, a brief efflorescence of the *artes historicae* in Europe,<sup>85</sup> culminating in Jean Bodin's *Methodus* (a Latin work devoted to the reading of "histories") and, a generation later, Henri Lancelot Voisin de la Popelinière's very different *L'histoire des histoires, avec l'idée de l'histoire accomplie* (1599), a book that prescribed the method by which a "perfect" history of France might be written.<sup>86</sup> Collectively, these *artes* betray an anxiety about where to slot many of the newer genres, as well as how to describe and sort the various ancient and medieval forms of historiography that the sixteenth century had inherited.<sup>87</sup> Physical problems such as the shelving of books in meaningful categories (normally within their format, that is folio, quarto, or octavo) also intruded

84. Woolf, *Reading History*, chap. 1; Kewes, "The Elizabethan History Play," 186–88. Paulina Kewes has reminded me of both Grafton's and Holinshed's descriptions of Elizabeth's coronation entry, and of Fleming's addition to the second (1587) edition of Holinshed of earlier pamphlet accounts of the queen's 1578 East Anglian progress. On the history play, see Richard Dutton's essay in the present volume.

85. Many of these works were collected by the Swiss printer Johann Wolf and published as *Artis historicae penus* (Basel, 1579).

86. Jean Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, trans. B. Reynolds (New York, 1969); Henri Lancelot Voisin, Sieur de la Popelinière, *L'histoire des histoires, avec l'idée de l'histoire accomplie* (Paris, 1599).

87. Donald R. Kelley, "The Theory of History," in C. B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner, eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), 746–61.

as press outputs increased and ancient classifications no longer covered all titles very effectively. The old grand division between sacred and profane history still stood, but it was now in urgent need of subdivision on the secular side.

English commentators on the subject achieved less renown than their Continental counterparts, especially Bodin, who was widely read at the universities in the 1580s, and who would be cited by John Hayward at his examination by the Privy Council in 1601.<sup>88</sup> If one exempts the ponderous survey of Greek and Roman historians (preceded by a shorter *Ars historica*) by G. J. Vossius, a Dutch scholar who spent time in England during the early 1630s, then the list is neither long nor especially impressive by European standards.<sup>89</sup> The notable efforts include, early on, Thomas Blundeville's digest of two Italian *artes* by Francesco Patrizzi and Giacomo Aconcio; the brief but oft-quoted neo-Aristotelian division of history from poetry by Sir Philip Sidney (with the balance sheet set firmly if rhetorically on the side of poetry); Edmund Bolton's underrated and routinely misdated *Hypercritica* (completed 1621); and, most famously, the nomenclature and classification of histories in Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, which owed a good deal to the European works.<sup>90</sup> There were many successors, of course, of which the most successful (at least in terms of evident durability) were Degory Wheare's *Relectiones hyemales de ratione & methodo legendi utrasq; historias civiles & ecclesiasticas* (reprinted in Latin and English editions at least ten times before the century's end), and two more modest forays into the subject, one by Peter Heylyn and the other by Mathias Prideaux (whose biblically oriented *Easy and compendious introduction*, originally intended for private consumption, was reprinted at least a dozen times before 1682). The late seventeenth century saw still further examples, including French imports such as René Rapin's *Instructions for*

88. L. F. Dean, "Bodin's *Methodus* in England before 1625," *Studies in Philology* 39 (1942): 160–66; Woolf, *Idea of History*, 292 n. 24.

89. N. Wickenden, *G. J. Vossius and the Humanist Concept of History* (Assen, The Netherlands, 1993).

90. Thomas Blundeville, "The True Order and Methode of Wryting and Reading Histories" (1574), ed. H. G. Dick, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 2 (1940): 149–70; Sir Philip Sidney, *An apologie for poetrie* (1595), sigs. B3r, D1v; Edmund Bolton, "Hypercritica, or a Rule of Judgment for Writing or Reading our Histories," in J. E. Spingarn, ed., *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1907), 1:82–115; Bacon, *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, in *Works*, 4:300–304 and elsewhere; L. F. Dean, "Tudor Theories of History Writing," *University of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology* 1 (1947).

91. D. Wheare, *The Method and Order of Reading both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories*, trans. E. Bohun (1698; translation from Latin, Oxford, 1628), for which see John Salmon's important essay, "Precept, Example, and Truth: Degory Wheare and the *ars historica*," in Kelley and Sacks, eds., *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, 11–36; P. Heylyn, *Microcosmus, or a little description of the great world* (Oxford, 1621, and several subsequent editions); M. Prideaux, *An easy and compendious introduction for reading all sorts of histories* (Oxford, 1648); *Horae subsecivae* (London, 1620); essay "Of Reading History," variously ascribed to Grey Brydges, Lord Chandos, and to Thomas Hobbes and Thomas Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire. An excellent recent discussion is Fritz Levy, "The Background of Hobbes's *Behemoth*," in Kelley and Sacks, eds., *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, 243–66, esp. 258–60. For Bolingbroke, see above citation in note 40. For the "Method of Reading Profane Histories" by John Hales of Merton College (unpublished until the eighteenth century), see M. Feingold, "The Humanities," in N. Tyacke, ed., *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 4, *Seventeenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford, 1997), 334.

*History*, and by the 1730s we are in the thoroughly political realm of Bolingbroke's *Letters on the Study and Use of History*.<sup>91</sup> There was also, however, a quite different group of such works that began to focus, as la Popelinière and Bolton had done (and Bodin and Bacon had not), on "method" not as "order"—an exercise in the imposition of logical-rhetorical categories on genres and of prescriptive advice on how and when to read them—but as a set of protocols for evaluating both sources and truth claims about the past derived therefrom. That is, they turned from the question of selecting and arranging the historical *datum*, as a part of programmatic reading, to its verification or even revision, a quite significant distinction that has often been overlooked. Early utterances in this vein include those by Selden and lesser scholars such as Bolton, whose *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraved* (1624) put into practice some of the suggestions he had made in the unpublished *Hypercritica*.<sup>92</sup>

Whether these early forays into historiography, especially those that focused on genre classification, were the last stages of Renaissance rhetorical thought refracted through the filter of Ramist logic, or the early signs of the classificatory mode of thinking that Foucault has made a hallmark of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Bacon appears easily to straddle the gap between Ramus or Bodin, and Linnaeus or Vico), is a question for another occasion. There is no doubt, however, that by the middle of the seventeenth century those who were drawn to the study of the past were beginning to settle on the following points: that there were a variety of literary forms through which that past could be represented; that not all of these were actually "histories" according to the strict classical definition of the scope and language that were to be found in works so-called; that among that subset of works about the past deemed to be histories there was an implied hierarchy of genres (and within that a ranking of authors according to both stylistic and non-stylistic considerations) at the bottom of which one found the now-disparaged chronicle;<sup>93</sup> and, most important, that the quality that connected all works purporting to make true statements about the past was that of being "historical."<sup>94</sup>

The Renaissance attention to formal boundaries seems quaint to a modern age that thinks of the historical as being defined by its subject matter, not the genre in which it is contained, and it is true that for some time the common conceptualization of history remained circumscribed by such concerns. Its practice, increasingly, did not. The same author could both maintain a sense of the differences between genres and operate comfortably within a number of them. John Stow (perhaps not a good exam-

92. Momigliano first drew attention to the antiquaries' realization of the distinction between "original" and "derivative" authorities (or as we now say, primary and secondary) sources ("Ancient History and the Antiquarian," 2).

93. Bacon, of course, makes the genres explicitly hierarchical, placing natural and civil (that is, human) history as grand categories, of which the latter consisted of various subspecies such as sacred history and civil history proper (the actions of men), which in turn ranks higher than antiquities or memorials; *De augmentis scientiarum*, in *Works*, vol. 4, esp. 300–304.

94. See van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History*, for a recent and thorough evaluation of the degree to which genre or "form" determined perspective and content.

95. Oliver Harris, "Stow and the Contemporary Antiquarian Network," in Gadd and Gillespie, eds., *John Stow and the Making of the English Past*, 27–35.

ple since his lack of formal education already freed him from obedience to classical niceties) moved successfully from chronicler to urban chorographer and back again, his antiquarian instincts deployable in both.<sup>95</sup> Daniel, perhaps the subtlest historical mind of the early seventeenth century, switched at mid-career from verse to prose but retained throughout a focus on the Middle Ages and a particular interest in problems of law and community. Camden saw his *Annales* of Queen Elizabeth as a history, and equally fervently denied that his *Britannia* was one, but he peppered the latter with historical digressions and didactic micro-narratives. *Britannia's* English translator, the Coventry physician Philemon Holland, also translated Suetonius, Livy, Florus, and Ammianus Marcellinus, as well as Pliny's *Natural History* and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. Selden, Camden's junior by a generation, defended the impartiality of his own antiquarian work *The History of tithes* by presenting it as a narrative history. He pushed the genre boundaries still further in subsequent works such as the revised 1631 edition of *Titles of Honor*.<sup>96</sup>

Gradually authors and readers accepted, if one can judge by word usage in titles and prefaces, that works dealing with the past, even the non-political or non-ecclesiastical past, could in some circumstances be called historical. The bolder spirits among the antiquaries shed their reluctance to describe themselves as historians, as can be observed in midcentury works such as Sir William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, whose author refers to his own work as a specimen of history.<sup>97</sup> Nor were the antiquaries the only ones to cross genres. Several authors of narrative histories, such as Daniel and Thomas Heywood, were also historical poets, translators, and playwrights, while dramatists such as Jonson (himself the author of a lost history of Henry V) borrowed extensively from Tacitus and Sallust for his plays *Sejanus his fall* (1605) and *Catiline his Conspiracie* (1611). By the end of the century, in the age of the Royal Society and with the interest of many antiquaries shifting away from the heraldic and genealogical and toward natural and archaeological antiquities, Bacon's Plinian notion of natural "histories" could be redeployed to comprehend the very same county studies previously entitled surveys or descriptions.<sup>98</sup>

In the course of the seventeenth century, too, the word *history* continued to be used rather profligately in other contexts, including news reports and eventually fictions such as romances (a pattern that would continue with Fielding and the novel in the next century). Benjamin Griffin, rejecting the suggestion that the quality of "truth" was an essential marker of history plays, has recently pointed out the weak correlation in titles between the use of the words "history" and "true." Sometimes the word *history* was not used where one might expect it to be. Shakespeare and his con-

96. Woolf, *Idea of History*, passim, for the authors mentioned in this paragraph.

97. *Ibid.*, 240.

98. For instance, see Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Stafford-shire* (Oxford, 1686), 392; John Morton, *The natural history of Northamptonshire; with some account of the antiquities* (London, 1712); Thomas Robinson, *An essay towards a natural history of Westmorland and Cumberland. Wherein an account is given of their several mineral and surface productions, with some directions how to discover minerals by the external and adjacent strata and upper covers, &c.* (London, 1709).

temporaries had often anchored verisimilar, factitious stagings of English history in a real past by calling them “histories,” though that word was often added or eliminated at points between performance, entry in the Stationers’ Register, and publication—the anonymous *True chronicle history of King Leir* for instance was a “famous Chronicle historye” in its 1594 entry, but “Tragecall” when entered again in 1605, and only “true” once printed in that year.<sup>99</sup> Early in the century, there is slightly greater clarity to the definition of the Shakespearean history play, as folio versions of the tragedies and comedies lose the “historical” appellation and most histories lose a titular connection to tragedy while retaining a unifying connection to the English (and sometimes the wider British and Irish) past. At the same time, however, many plays not termed histories and concerning Continental affairs involved English characters or offered parabolic commentary on English events, while Roman plays invited reflections on recent history. The same text could resonate differently from one time to the next as the current political context changed.<sup>100</sup>

The Restoration and early-eighteenth-century dramatists who revived the history play and adapted it for more modern audiences often deployed the word “historical” to highlight their grounding in actual events. Thomas Otway’s *The history and fall of Caius Marius* (1680) transplanted *Romeo and Juliet* to republican Rome and inserted real historical characters such as Marius and Sulla (the antagonists, a century earlier, in Thomas Lodge’s 1588 drama *The wounds of civill warre*) in lieu of the Montagues and Capulets.<sup>101</sup> Nahum Tate’s 1681 adaptation of *King Lear* added the word “history” before the title, where Shakespeare’s original had not, perhaps to counterbalance the considerably greater doubt that now attached to the story of Lear and his daughters.<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, many playwrights often found no need to signal so explicitly that the subjects they were portraying, such as Anne Boleyn or Jane Grey, were historical; they

99. Benjamin Griffin, *Playing the Past: Approaches to English Historical Drama 1385–1600* (Cambridge, 2001), 7 n. 20, which takes issue with G. K. Hunter’s “Truth and Art in History Plays,” *Shakespeare Survey* 42 (1989): 15–24. Griffin offers numerous illustrations of inconsistent use of the term *history*. Notwithstanding this, there was clearly an attempt by those interested in the genre of history proper (narratives about an actual past), such as Bacon and Selden, to set some boundaries, find some methodological principles, and establish categories. Cf. Kewes, “The Elizabethan History Play.”

100. Griffin, *Playing the Past*, 17–18; Paulina Kewes, “Roman History and Early Stuart Drama: Thomas Heywood’s *The Rape of Lucrece*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 32 (2002): 239–67. The history play was not, of course, unique to England, and English affairs were often the chosen subject of foreign historical dramatists such as the prolific Spaniard Lope de Vega (1562–1635). I am grateful to William Gahan for a reminder on this point.

101. Paulina Kewes, “Otway, Lee, and the Restoration History Play,” in Susan J. Owen, ed., *A Companion to Restoration Drama* (Oxford, 2001), 355–95.

102. Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship, 1660–1769* (Oxford, 1992), 76–87; and Susan J. Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford, 1996), 4, 220–25 (Tate’s *Richard II*), 225–28 (Tate’s *Lear*). New plays also stressed their historical content, for instance John Crowne’s *The History of Charles the Eighth of France, or The Invasion of Naples by the French* (1672); Aphra Behn’s *The widow Ranter, or, The history of Bacon in Virginia a tragi-comedy* (1690); *King Edward the Third, With the Fall of Mortimer Earl of March. An Historical Play*, sometimes attributed to John Bancroft (London, 1691).



were known to be based on real people, unlike *Romeo and Juliet* or even, by now, a legendary figure such as King Lear. Such “characters” were now sufficiently familiar that audiences could be expected to connect the play to history rather than to fiction, while also accepting that the dialogues were theatrical devices rather than word-for-word recitations of actual speeches (in the same way that we can now silently filter the oddity of supposedly foreign characters in a movie or play speaking English). Of the Earl of Orrery’s plays, only his 1664 *Henry V* is billed as a “history.” Half a century later, Rowe’s neo-Shakespearian *Jane Shore* and *Jane Grey* are noticeably “tragedies” like Shakespeare’s and Davenant’s versions of *Macbeth*, not “histories” like *Richard III* and *King Lear*, despite their manifestly historical subjects; Colley Cibber would turn *Richard III* into a “tragical history.”<sup>103</sup>

### ☞ Probability, Truth and the Sense of the Real

How “real,” then, was the past to its early modern observers? It has been persuasively argued that there is no natural and inherent sense of reality.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps not, but there are certainly both culturally informed and socially conditioned reactions as to the likely and the improbable, even in the case of phenomena such as reports concerning past events, recent or remote, that are not immediately apprehensible. As early as the 1530s, the normally open-minded John Leland knew when some of the numerous oral traditions he recorded, straddling the line between truth and fiction, had decisively crossed over into the latter domain.<sup>105</sup> Coeval with the development of the notion of probability in something like its modern form, and with socially based claims to truth-authority, came a sharper distinction between the factual and the fictional in assessing reports of past events.<sup>106</sup>

History’s borderland with fiction has been intermittently crossed and defended since Herodotus’ critics first alleged that he had told “lies” about the past. But the frontier itself has remained neither fixed nor impermeable, as historical persons have at various points been deployed in fictional discourses, and imaginary scenes have inevitably infiltrated works that appeared to be based on fact. Recent historio-

103. As Paulina Kewes has pointed out, playgoers of the Restoration were often given a pamphlet summarizing the relevant historical events. This was true, for instance, of Dryden and Lee’s *The Duke of Guise* and Rowe’s *Jane Shore*; P. Kewes, “Otway, Lee, and the Restoration History Play,” in Owen, ed., *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, 355–77; idem, “‘The State is out of Tune’: Nicholas Rowe’s *Jane Shore* and the Succession Crisis of 1713–1714,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 64 (2001): 301–21; idem, “Dryden and the Staging of Popular Politics,” in Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, eds., *John Dryden: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford, 2000), 57–91.

104. Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay in the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. P. Wissing (Chicago and London, 1988), 27.

105. For Leland’s approach to oral tradition, see Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, 358.

106. Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, N.J., 1983); idem, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550–1720* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000); Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability* (1975; Cambridge, 1984); Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1994); see, most recently, Joseph M. Levine, “Matter of Fact in the English Revolution,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2003), special issue on historical evidence, 317–35.

graphical thought has made it fashionable to dissolve the boundaries altogether into a happy free-trade zone where the historical and the literary are virtually indistinguishable and interchangeable. Eltonian warnings aside, this has had a salutary effect in recalibrating older positivist notions of the firm separation of the historically real from the mythopoetically and literarily imaginative. Current postmodern views are themselves frontal assaults against a very specific instance of the boundary, the nineteenth-century Berlin wall erected between truth and untruth, as Rankeans based at that and other German universities and their foreign disciples proclaimed a fact-based history based on *Quellenkritik* and reconceived the study of the past as a branch of *Wissenschaft* capable of representing the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Their literary counterparts agreed to stay on their side of the wall while peering over it, into the “real” past, in order to borrow settings for such genres as the historical novel.<sup>107</sup>

Frontiers in the early modern period were much less obvious than in the age of the national state. Much like the medieval marches between England and Scotland, they were more often a matter of negotiation than of confrontation. This was just as true of intellectual borders, which by and large lacked any means of policing the outposts—to watch for smugglers of dangerous fictions, repel interlopers, and publicly humiliate would-be defectors, as modern professional associations, scholarly reviews, and other academic disciplinary structures now do.<sup>108</sup> In the early decades of the sixteenth century, there was a strong predisposition to affirm positively, or at least to accept passively, received stories, especially about the ancient past. This was both because they often appeared to rest on respectable authorities and because to disbelieve in them created the awkward uncertainty of an empty space (recall the above-discussed tenuousness of mental navigation). The same abhorrence of a vacuum accounts for a good deal of the wilder genealogical speculation of the late sixteenth century, as families either pushed back ancestral chains of descent or creatively filled in missing generational links. Polydore Vergil’s assault on the Galfridian line of ancient British kings and their progenitor Brutus the Trojan certainly inflamed Anglo-Welsh sensitivities, but it is worth remembering that Geoffrey of Monmouth had inspired doubt as early as the thirteenth century. It was difficult, however, to dispatch Brutus, or even the later and less patently fictitious King Arthur, without having something to put in their places. By the end of the sixteenth century, when all manner of received traditions, especially religious, had been challenged, a gap opened up that permitted a kind of skeptical “plug” to restrain the anxiety of a knowledge vacuum—an open admission that “there are

107. Linda Orr, “The Revenge of Literature: A History of History,” *New Literary History* 18 (1986–87): 1–21.

108. There is, again, an enormous quantity of literary and historical writing on the fact/fiction relationship: see William Nelson, *Fact or Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Story-teller* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); and among more recent studies, P. Collinson, “Truth and Legend: The Veracity of John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs,” in Duke and Tamse, eds., *Clio’s Mirror*, 31–54; Joseph M. Levine, “Thomas More and the English Renaissance: History and Fiction in *Utopia*,” *Clio’s Mirror*, 69–92. See also Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven, Conn., 1984), for a highly nuanced treatment of the construction of “lives.”

some things back then that we simply don't know." Camden had too cautious a temperament to be explicit as to his doubts about pre-Roman British history, but he was able to signal pretty clearly in *Britannia* a kind of historical agnosticism that left the question undecided. Readers could decide for themselves whether they wished to embrace the Trojan legend as literal truth in whole or part.<sup>109</sup>

Within a generation of *Britannia*, the poet-historian Daniel had cut the pre-Roman period right out of his own *Collection of the Historie of England*. John Speed, a less perceptive writer, confessed to regarding the whole of ancient times as a "labyrinth of ambiguity," his way of asserting moderate disbelief without the risks of full-scale denial.<sup>110</sup> Michael Drayton opted for the ingenious tactic of including with his poetic, mythologizing *Poly-Olbion* the trenchant skepticism of annotations provided by Selden; the great antiquary had no such illusions about the fabulousness of Galfridian antiquity but remained committed to an accurate rendering of the historical British and open to the possibility of accurate bardic transmission.<sup>111</sup> The fence-sitting is well illustrated by the late Elizabethan poetic historian William Warner in the "Epitome of the whole historie of England," which he appended to the revised (1602) edition of his *Albions England*, a narrative that nonetheless begins with Brutus:

I leaue it disputable to the Censurors of our by-passed and moderne Historiographers: onely adding, that before the first entrie here of the *Romaines*, our Historie avoideth not the suspition of some fabulous errors. Neither let it bee offensively spoken, or as prejudicating others in their opinions, that touching the Originales, and first denominations of the first Incolents, and of this our Iland, I concurre with our learned and studious Antiquarie Master *Camden*, in such as is by him circumspectly set downe in his well-merriting worke, intituled *Britannia*: out of which, I confesse my selfe, to haue gleaned not a little apting to this our abridged Historie. Howbeit, to auoide Novelties (lesse nugations, perhaps, than

109. For the disconnect between Camden's views of ancient Britain and the inherited Galfridian tradition, see Graham Parry, "Ancient Britons and Early Stuarts," in R. H. Wells, G. Burgess, and R. Wymer, eds., *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History, and Politics* (Cambridge, 2000), 155–78.

110. Woolf, *Idea of History*, 67.

111. Drayton's work, and his appeal to bards and druids, has been seen as a last-ditch resistance to the critical culture of antiquarianism and in favor of inherited tradition; see, for instance, John Curran Jr., "The History Never Written: Bards, Druids, and the Problems of Antiquarianism in *Poly-Olbion*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 498–525. Others see the relationship between Selden's notes and Drayton's verse itself much more as a dialogue between poetry and history, a position that (given Selden's sympathies toward oral culture) appears to me to be more accurate; see, for instance, Anne Lake Prescott, "Drayton's Muse and Selden's 'Story': The Interfacing of Poetry and History in *Poly-Olbion*," *Studies in Philology* 87 (1990): 128–35; Angus Vine has in progress a complete study of Drayton in the context of early modern antiquarianism, and I am grateful for the opportunity of reading his 2005 Cambridge Ph.D. thesis on the subject.

112. William Warner, *Albions England A continued historie of the same kingdome, from the originals of the first inhabitants thereof: with most the chiefe alterations and accidents theare hapning, vnto, and in the*

many Relations, for their onely antiquities, received for verities) I purpose no other, or not a much different course, than thorough the Currant of our common Chronicles.<sup>112</sup>

In short, many of these authors signified to their readers the dark forests and swamps that lay beyond various safe markers such as the Norman Conquest or the first Roman contact, the realm of Albion, Gog-magog, and Samothēs; but they declined any longer to act as guides through such dangerous terrain. Reader beware: here there be monsters, giants, and phantom monarchs.

We should naturally be cautious ourselves about overstating the pace of this narrowing of the realm of the historically real. This was, after all, an age acutely sensitive to the occult meanings of omens, prodigies, seemingly providential disasters, and unnatural births.<sup>113</sup> It was also a time that saw a violent civil conflict in which *recent* historical events could be stretched and twisted into exaggerated fictions, via the printed news books, for the express purpose of propaganda. The most widely used historical book in England remained Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, an excellent example, as Patrick Collinson has noted, of a work about the past that editorially blurs the line between the factual and the fictional in order to sharpen the virtues of martyrs and atrocities of persecutors, ancient and modern. Foxe aimed to tell the truth as a fervent Elizabethan Protestant understood it, but not without lurid details and rhetorical flights that readers need not take literally in order to rely on the work's core historical veracity.<sup>114</sup>

Yet there was more than fact and fiction at stake in writing about the past, or in evaluating the truth of what others had written. A seventeenth-century notion of probability—expressed most succinctly by another historian and religious thinker, Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury—deemed it not just the “likelihood that such an event *will* occur” or even “has occurred,” but also the “capacity to be proved.” This was a kind of reverse anticipation of Karl Popper's modern concept of falsifiability. Herbert, perhaps the first Englishman to give serious thought to questions of the epistemology of history (as opposed simply to making arguments about what sorts of documents and testimony should be believed, as did the most talented antiquaries), is most famous for ecumenical, proto-deist ideas on “common notions” of divinity connecting

*happie raigne of our now most gracious soueraigne, Queene Elizabeth: not barren in varietie of inuentiue and historicall intermixtures* (revised ed., 1602), 351.

113. The seminal treatment remains Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971). See also Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York and Cambridge, Mass., 1998). A more specific treatment of the post-Civil War period can be found in W. Burns, *An Age of Wonders: Prodigies, Politics, and Providence in England, 1657–1727* (Manchester, 2002). The best treatment of providence is Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999); two concrete and detailed case studies can be found in Paul Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, Calif., 1986); and David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1992).

114. Collinson, “Truth and Legend,” 31–54; idem, “Truth, Lies, and Fiction in Sixteenth-Century Protestant Historiography,” in Kelley and Sacks, eds., *Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*. See further on Foxe in John N. King's and Christopher Highley's essays in the present volume.

all peoples. He also wrote a history of Henry VIII that applied some of this speculation to a king who had already, a century after his death, assumed a larger-than-life presence in the national historical memory.

The seventeenth century also witnessed a sea change in the acceptability of oral sources that was very much connected with probability (in both senses of the word, “likely” and “subject to proof”), whether the traditions voiced by local people to antiquaries from Leland on, or the testimony of witnesses concerning more recent events. Social preconceptions in favor of learned testimony and ill disposed to “vulgar” error increasingly proved to be a litmus test, determining acceptance or rejection of a fact related orally. Both the durability of oral culture and its mutually constructive interaction with the written word, as traced by Adam Fox and others, suggest that the degree of this change as a more general phenomenon must be more cautiously assessed.<sup>115</sup> But the position of most historians and antiquaries by the late seventeenth century weighed heavily in favor of written authority, while it was even possible for one Royal Society wit to calculate mathematically that the rate of decline in the veracity of testimony would be precipitous over a mere two decades.<sup>116</sup>



The essays in the present special issue demonstrate the many different directions that have been taken by literary scholars and historians since Levy’s *Tudor Historical Thought* and earlier ventures such as F. S. Fussner’s *The Historical Revolution* or Arnaldo Momigliano’s seminal article “Ancient History and the Antiquarian.” Much remains to be done in a number of areas, especially those lying beyond the 1640 boundary of Pollard and Redgrave’s *Short-Title Catalogue*. The historiography of the Civil War period, addressed in this issue by David Cressy, awaits a thorough full-length study that ranges beyond major authors such as Clarendon, Hobbes, or May; similarly, there is a large assortment of Restoration and early-eighteenth-century historical writing, good and bad, in need of systematic assessment.<sup>117</sup> Recent work has also demonstrated the degree to which historical thinking and conversation could occur, without reference to historians or history books, through the enduring resilience of oral culture, in popular literature such as chapbooks, and in the knowledge embodied in custom and tradition. We need further studies of local networks of historical knowledge, and these are now re-

115. Adam Fox, “Remembering the Past in Early Modern England: Oral and Written Tradition,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 9 (1999): 233–56; idem, *Oral and Literate Culture in England* (Oxford, 2000).

116. Anon., “The Credibility of Human Testimony,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 21 (1699): 359–65.

117. D. R. Woolf, “Narrative Historiography in Restoration England: A Preliminary Survey,” in W. G. Marshall, ed., *The Restoration Mind* (Newark, Del., 1997), 207–51.

118. For a good illustration of an intensive study of a regional antiquarian network from local sources, see Broadway, *William Dugdale and the Significance of County History in Early Stuart England* and her forthcoming book on the gentry and local history.

coverable through hitherto under-exploited local archival collections.<sup>118</sup> With the completion of the electronic, and searchable, *English Short-Title Catalogue*, the kind of quantitative analysis of publication rates and linguistic usage undertaken less than two decades ago by manual counting has become considerably easier.<sup>119</sup> It is now possible to see the long period from 1475 to 1800 as a unit, with Gibbon and Catharine Macaulay properly connected not only to their contemporaries but also to their Renaissance predecessors. If we remain flexible and open to a historiography that ventures beyond the canon of greats, perhaps we, too, can reach beyond past histories to achieve a more complex understanding of early modernity's invention of the historical.

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**ABSTRACT**

Drawing on recent work in early modern historiography as well as original sources, Daniel R. Woolf argues that several fundamental changes occurred in the perception of "history" in early modern England that collectively led, by the early eighteenth century, to the development of "historical knowledge" as a category, whereas two centuries previously there had been histories and some knowledge of the past, but no sense of the historical as a distinctive mode of cognition. Five key transitions are identified and discussed: the development, among consumers of history, of a "mental map" allowing for easier navigation through the record of the past; the increasing primacy of causal relationships over exemplary ones; the heightening of a visual sense of the past; an understanding that historical knowledge was not confined to works classically termed "histories" but could be con-

119. The sort of line-by-line counting of chronicles in the STC and Wing catalogues undertaken by the present author in 1986 over a period of two months can now be done, it is somewhat depressing to admit, in a matter of minutes using modern search engines.