

mor may be unique in its time and has lost nothing through the passage of the centuries. Next to him, his predecessors and most of his contemporaries remain two-dimensional.

What I am suggesting, then, is that More's originality, his modernity, rests on his self-consciousness; and that his self-consciousness allowed him to separate himself from his world and view it objectively, even while he remained self-absorbed within his own soul. He was probably the first person in England to explore the tension between the real and the ideal, and thus between history and fiction, in a way that is still interesting to us. He is, in Burckhardt's terms, the first English Renaissance individual. But as the first of his kind he lived apart from other men, cut off from his contemporaries and thoroughly uncomfortable in his time. We can read him as a harbinger of things to come but we should not exaggerate his modernity. It is only when the social and cultural scene shifted sufficiently to turn everything medieval into anachronism that More's precocious self-consciousness will become general and everyone will think of keeping a diary and writing an autobiography. But by then, paradoxically, *Utopia* will have turned itself into a classic and appear to have values that are timeless, even though its own argument can probably best be understood and appreciated by retrieving the peculiar circumstances of its original composition.

Little Crosby and the horizons of early modern historical culture

D. R. WOOLF

The importance of antiquarianism in the creation of modern attitudes to the past, and of modern historical method, has long been acknowledged. Building on the work of classicists and Europeanists such as Arnaldo Momigliano, students of English historiography in particular have pointed out the ways in which confrontation with the archaeological and documentary remains of ancient and modern times reoriented history away from a recitation of events toward an appreciation of cultural change, institutional development, and social evolution. Works by Thomas Kendrick, David C. Douglas, Stuart Piggott, F. J. Levy, J. G. A. Pocock, Arthur B. Ferguson, Joseph M. Levine, and Stan A. E. Mendyk demonstrate how the antiquarian methods developed by John Leland, William Camden, Henry Spelman, and others, growing out of the powerful tradition of Renaissance scholarship that included Flavio Biondo, Poggio Bracciolini, Lorenzo Valla, Guillaume Budé, and Joseph Scaliger, provided the foundations for the great achievements of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians like Edward Gibbon, while gradually diminishing belief in legendary personalities such as Albion, Samothès, and Brutus the Trojan.¹

I am indebted for their comments and criticism to the participants (and especially to Linda Levy Peck, Annabel Patterson, Richard Helgersen, and John Pocock), and members of the audience at the 1993 Woodrow Wilson Center conference at which a very different version of the present essay was read. Helpful criticisms have been offered by David Harris Sacks, Donald R. Kelley, Mark Kishlansky, Jack Crowley, and Paul Fidler. I wish also to thank my past and present graduate students, Kathryn Brammall, Greg Bak, Krista Kesselring, and Ruth McClelland-Nugent for discussions of the material and themes covered herein. The archivist and staff of the Lancashire Record Office have been unfailingly helpful during and since my research there in 1992 and 1995. Above all, I am grateful to Brian Whitlock Blundell for his keen interest in and assistance to my pursuit of his family's past. The research for this chapter was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

¹ A. D. Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," in *Studies in Historiography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 1-39; T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (Lon-

My task is not to dispute this "high" account of the origins of history. Rather, I wish to broaden it beyond its usual concerns – matters of evidence, literary craftsmanship, and philological technique – into a consideration of the social and cultural grounds in the early modern period that gave rise to the very methodological advances that are usually accredited wholly to intellectual stimuli such as "humanism." The present essay touches on traditional historiographical issues but plumbs more deeply for some of the defining characteristics of early modern English historical culture between the early sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries to speculate on that culture's relation to the profoundly historical popular mindset of the modern West. The term "historical culture" is nothing more than a convenient shorthand for the perceptual and cognitive matrix of relations among past, present, and future, a matrix that gives rise to, nurtures, and is in turn influenced by the formal historical writing of that era, but that also manifests itself in other ways, including many that look decidedly suspicious from the point of view of modern historical method.² A historical culture consists of habits of thought, languages and media of communication, and patterns of social convention that embrace elite and popular, narrative and nonnarrative modes of discourse. It is expressed both in texts and in commonplace forms of behavior, for instance in the keeping of time, in the celebration of anniversaries and birthdays, and in the resolution of conflicts through reference to a widely accepted historical standard such as "antiquity." The defining characteristics of a historical culture are subject to material, social, and circumstantial forces that, as much as the traditionally studied intellectual influences, condition the way in which the mind thinks, reads, writes, and speaks of the past.

don: Methuen, 1950); David C. Douglas, *English Scholars 1660–1730*, rev. ed. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951); Stuart Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1976), and *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination: Ideas from the Renaissance to the Regency* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989); F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1967); 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: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979); Joseph M. Levine, *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Stan A. E. Mendyk, "Speculum Britanniae": *Regional Study, Antiquarianism and Science in Britain to 1700* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

² My usage of this expression derives not from Sande Cohen's semiological investigation of the modes of current academic historical signification in his *Historical Culture: On the Recoding of an Academic Discipline* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1986), but from Bernard Guenée's important study, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier, 1980).

This essay will address some of these issues concretely by examining a relatively obscure incident at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Unraveling this single event and placing it within a number of cultural contexts (contexts that can be further illustrated by reference to other contemporary sources lying further afield) may provide an agenda for future research into early modern historical thought and writing. Such research will link formal historiography to issues that were of basic importance in defining the mentality of contemporaries: the applicability of the past to daily life; nostalgia; reverence for and capitalization on family ancestry; the relationship between time and space; and the circulation of historical knowledge in both textual and nontextual forms.

THE PATH TO THE HARKIRKE, AND WHAT MR. BLUNDELL FOUND THERE

The story that now concerns us indirectly involves the usual historiographical questions of scholarship and the interpretation of evidence, but it takes place off the beaten track rather than at the centers of learning, London, Oxford, and Cambridge. It occurs, instead, at the geographic and social margins, in the northwest of England, on the manor of a struggling minor gentleman who was both regionally (he lived in rural Lancashire) and religiously (he was a firm recusant) outside the mainstream. It begins not with any epoch-making date in political history, nor with the publication of a landmark historical text such as Camden's *Britannia* (though that book has its place in the narrative), but on an ordinary day when those involved had anything but historical research on their minds.

On the morning of Monday, 8 April 1611, it was particularly wet and muddy at Little Crosby, a village of about forty households within the parish of Sefton in the West Derby Hundred of Lancashire, a few miles north of Liverpool. Thomas Ryse (the fourteen-year-old son of John Ryse, a local tenant farmer), was taking the cattle of his father's landlord, William Blundell (1560–1638), from the hall to graze in a nearby field. His path took him directly across a ditch that marked one end of a section of demesne land known locally as the Harkirke (fig. 1), where a day earlier an old man from the village – a Roman Catholic like Thomas Ryse and many of the other tenants and neighbors – had been buried. What caught young Thomas's eye on this morning was the glint of something unusual, a number of silver coins like no others that the lad had seen, lying on the sandy soil at the edge of the ditch.

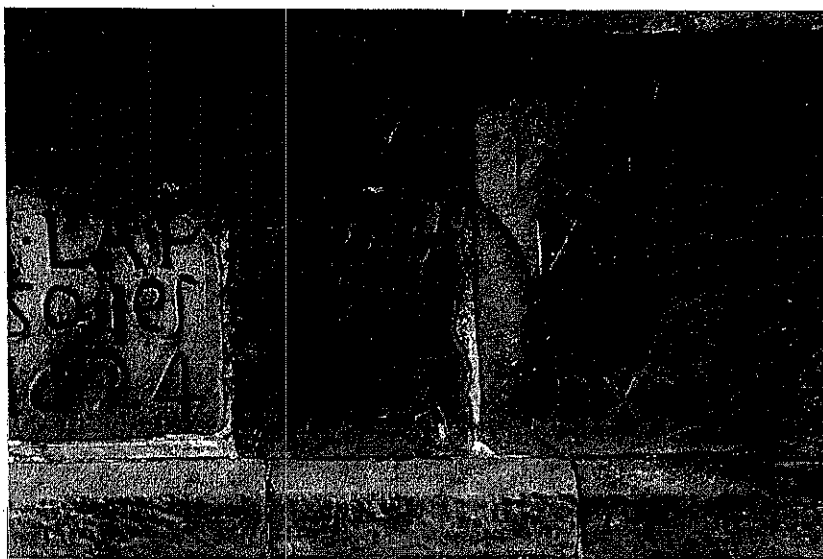


Figure 1. Tombstones at the Harkirke. Photo by John Daley, Crosby Herald. Courtesy of Brian Whitlock Blundell

Perplexed at his find, the boy picked up a coin and took it back to the hall, where he showed it to the other servants. One or two were able to read, such as Edward Denton, Blundell's secretary, but none could explain the strange letters on the coin.³ Nevertheless, there was much discussion. No doubt someone even wondered aloud what the piece would be worth, though it would now have to be given up to the lord of Little Crosby; turned up on his property, it could not be sold, as such objects often were, to a traveler with antiquarian interests. Eventually the servants were joined by their master, William Blundell, who had overheard

³ Denton is the author of many of the rentals in Lancashire Record Office (hereafter Lancs RO), DDBI (Blundell of Little Crosby). See especially DDBI Acc. 6121, fol. 97. Denton would survive to serve, in the 1630s, William's grandson, William "the Cavalier," who in 1663 enjoined his heirs to take due account of the "long and faithful service of... Edward Denton, performed to my grandfather and myself," and show kindness to Denton's nephew and his family "according as he regardeth or ought to regard his ancient tenants." *Crosby Records: A Cavalier's Note Book*, ed. T. E. Gibson (London: Longmans, Green, 1880), 250. (Hereafter cited as *Cavalier's Note Book*.) Denton died on 7 May 1656 according to the Cavalier's notes in "Great Hodge Podge," fol. 185r. This volume, together with a distinct volume entitled "Hodge Podge the third," is part of the uncatalogued series (which includes the "account" described below) in Lancs RO DDBI Acc. 6121.

the discussions. "I comminge into the kitchen amongst them whoe were lookinge and musing at them," he tells us, "I presentlie tooke the coine and laide it uppe." Blundell was an educated man, apparently with a variety of books on history and antiquities in his personal library, or available from nearby acquaintances; he had even consulted, if he did not actually own, as heretical a tome as John Foxe's fervently anti-Catholic *Acts and Monuments*.⁴ He was passingly familiar with old coinage from reading Camden, and he even knew some old English from reading Asser's *Life of Alfred* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. He knew intuitively that the prized object was a very old coin indeed, probably – though this would require some research on his part to confirm – dating from the Saxon period.

Blundell's discovery was the unexpected reward for an act of charity that he had performed for "suche Catholiques either of myne owne howse or of the neighbourhoode." According to the reminiscences of Blundell's own grandson and namesake (William, known as "the Cavalier" [1620–98], who inherited both his grandfather's property and his antiquarian tastes), Little Crosby was an almost entirely Catholic manor lying within a formally Protestant parish.⁵ The younger William commented in the 1640s that it had known no beggars, alehouses, or Protestants within living memory, and the recusant roll of 1641 bears him

⁴ Evidence of his knowledge of Foxe is in Lancs RO DDBI Acc. 6121, untoliated notebook, which is also the source of this account of the find. The works referred to specifically by Blundell are in this version of his narrative, together with the verbal descriptions of coins, but are absent from the roll version from which it was apparently copied, Lancs RO DDBI 24/12. Both versions were drafted by Blundell himself. No specific list of Blundell's personal books survives, and a search by the present author of the library at Crosby Hall in February 1995 failed to turn up any books that were owned by him rather than by later descendants, with the conspicuous exception of his Douai Bible, discussed below. Nevertheless, it is plain that he indeed owned a number of books because the probate inventory of his goods (Lancs RO DDBI 24/13, compiled 6 July 1638) lists him as worth £665 19s. 11d. and includes the tantalizingly vague "item in boockes, 5 £." An attempt to follow up these unnamed books through the inventories of surviving family members such as his daughter-in-law Jane (mother of William the Cavalier), who died in 1640 and whose goods included one pound's worth of unnamed books, and the Cavalier himself, for whom no inventory survives, failed to provide further clues as to the older William Blundell's reading.

⁵ Lancs RO DDBI 24/10 inquisition after the death of William Blundell (deceased 2 July 1638); this incidentally lists the younger William as being eighteen years, twelve weeks, and six days old on 16 October 1638; consequently underage, he fell under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards (PRO WARD 7 91/184) as well as of the Duchy of Lancaster (PRO DL 7 28/154). The younger William Blundell was the author of *A History of the Isle of Man*, edited by William Harrison for the Manx Society (vols. 25, 27 [1876, 1877]), wherein several of the books quoted by his grandfather are also used.

out.⁶ It was a community of close, neighborly ties between coreligionists that cut across and overlaid the division of social status that distinguished the landlord from his tenants and servants. The apparent solidarity of the Blundells with their social inferiors over religious matters, stretching to William Blundell's passive support for the riot recounted below, must be read in the context of the normal legal and social disputes to which Little Crosby, judging by its court rolls, was far from immune.⁷ But as far as loyalty to the old church was concerned, the senior Blundell and most of his tenants were of the same mind.

Blundell himself was the scion of a family that had held the manor since the mid-fourteenth century (fig. 2).⁸ He was no stranger to the persecution of Catholics during what he hoped would be a passing "tyme of these troubles" under established Protestantism, and had been sent in his youth to study at the English College in Douai. His father, Richard, was imprisoned in Lancaster Castle in 1590, charged with harboring a seminary priest; he died there in 1591.⁹ William, then in his early thirties, was imprisoned at the same time; after his release, he was quickly re-arrested and spent two years in prison in London.¹⁰ A search of the hall

⁶ Recusant role of 1641 cited in W. Farrer and J. Brownhill, ed., *The Victoria History of the County of Lancaster* (Folkstone, England: Dawson, for the University of London Institute of Historical Research, 1990), hereafter cited as *VCH, Lancaster*, 1:259; T. Gibson, ed., *Crosby Records: A Chapter of Lancashire Recusancy*, Chetham Society, n.s. 12 (1887), contains a transcription of the notebook version of William I's account of the coin hoard together with the burial register of the Harkirke from 1611–1753. References to the account will be principally to the notebook version, which is unfoliated; I have therefore provided the equivalent reference in Gibson's printed version, which is largely but not entirely accurate.

⁷ See *Lancs RO DDBI* 48/1, 2, 3, 4 Little Crosby court rolls 1557–1637. Thomas Ryse (the cowherd) would be in trouble as late as 1637 for having "sheared grasse . . . contrary to an former order," for which he was fined 3d; judging by 48/3 (courts baron of 2 April 1628 and 21 October 1634) there were considerable instances of illegal building, threshing, and water diversion requiring the squire's direct intervention.

⁸ For the Blundell coat of arms and lineage, see John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Colburn, 1834–8), 2:527–30. The earliest record of the family in the manor dates from 1199. By 31 Hen. 8, James Blundell, Esq., held Little Crosby of Sir William Molyneux by knight's service, as well as lands and messuages and tenements in Much Crosby of the king as duke of Lancaster, in socage by fealty. Burke erroneously reports Richard Blundell, William's father, as dying in 1567.

⁹ *Lancs RO DDBI* 30/1, indictment of William Blundell for harboring Robert Woodrooffe alias Witherroope of Burnley, seminary priest 24 August 1590, and writ of outlawry against Blundell, 26 March 1599.

¹⁰ *Lancs RO DDBI* 30/4, enrolment of recusancy fines in Little Crosby 1595–1656; M. M. C. Calthrop, ed., *Recusant Roll no. I, 1592–3: Exchequer Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer Pipe Office Series*, Catholic Record Society 18 (Wigan, England, 1916), 185, 189 (Michaelmas 1592); H. Bowler, ed., *Recusant Roll No. II, 1593–94*, Catholic Record Society 57 (1965), 78; H. Bowler, ed., *Recusant Roll No. III, 1594–95*, Catholic Record Society

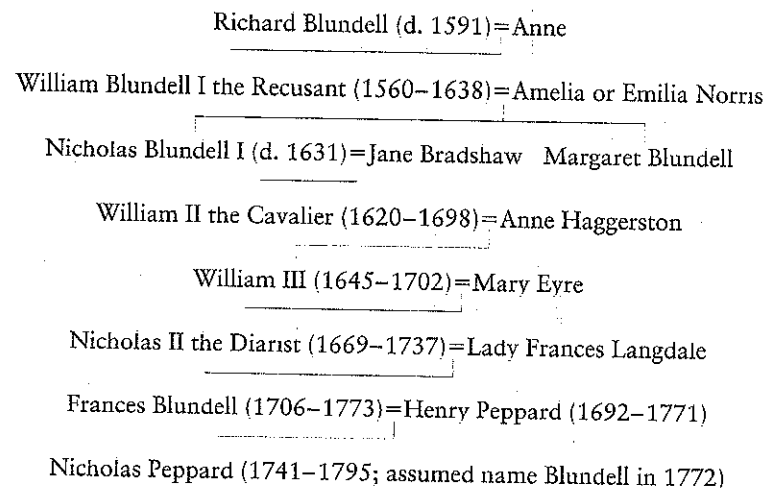


Figure 2. Simplified Genealogy of the Blundells, 1560–1772. This chart shows only the direct line of succession and siblings mentioned in this study.

late in the 1590s forced William to flee; his wife, Emilia, was also committed to prison and released only on the intercession of friends at court.¹¹ Both Blundells received pardons at the accession of James, but this did not mitigate the persecutions by Protestant neighbors and shrieval officials, who conducted frequent raids on his cattle and searches of the hall through the next three decades, culminating in the sequestration of the estate during the civil war.¹² Toward the close of 1610, a young woman

61 (1970), 169, for a forty-pound fine levied on Emilia Blundell, William's wife. Both Richard and William Blundell appear in J. R. Dasent, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council of England 1598–99* (London: HMSO, 1905), 118, 220, for contributions required by recusants; William is also listed as a recusant in a 1601 signet bill. W. P. W. Phillimore, ed., *An Index to Bills of Privy Signet* (London: British Record Society/Index Library, 1890), 49.

¹¹ *Lancs RO DDBI* 30/2, orders relative to imprisonment of Emilia, his wife, 31 May and 8 July 1599.

¹² PRO E 179/131/318, schedule of recusants liable to poll tax, 1626, listing Emilia Blundell; E 179/132/340, subsidy assessment 17 Car. 1 (1641), assessing the younger William Blundell for £7 28s. (i.e., £8 8s.) and an additional twenty-eight shillings "for his lands being a convicte & Recusante"; *VCH Lancashire*, 1:259; J. Gillow, *A Literary and Biographical History, or Bibliographical Dictionary, of the English Catholics* (1885–1902; reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 1:248–50, for entries on both William Blundells; and Blundell's own account in *Crosby Records*, 22 ff., 32. For the general context of Catholic persecution and confessional relations in this period see the following: Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (London: Blandford Press, 1967); John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570–1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), esp. chap. 6, "Types of Religious Behaviour"; J. C. H.

had been refused burial in the parish by John Nutter, the vehemently anti-Catholic parson of Sefton, because of her recusancy. Miserably, her family had planted the corpse at the side of the main road, but it soon rained, and several horsemen, drays, and carriages trundled across the site, disturbing the body, parts of which were later found on the road; when "swyne beganne to wroote her bodie uppe" and eat it, her family "layd a great number of paving stones uppon the grave" as a temporary but hardly adequate solution.¹³

Out of both piety and paternalism, Blundell resolved to set aside a small corner of his demesne land as a Catholic burial site to serve Little Crosby and adjoining manors like Ince Blundell and Much or Great Crosby. He chose a location at some remove from the manor house, "a place called of ould tyme (as it is nowe also) the Harkirke." He had two of his tenants, John Ryse (father of our observant cowherd) and Thomas Marrall (or Marrowe),¹⁴ dig a ditch on two sides of the Harkirke, the two others being already fenced. This separated the cemetery from the path to the common field, marking it off as informally sacred ground. (A year or so later Blundell would build a wall, so pleased was he with his coins, an "unexpected gyfte from Heaven."¹⁵) Although the ditching was completed shortly before Christmas of 1610, the makeshift graveyard was not needed until the following spring, when at noon on 7 April the corpse of William Mathewson, having similarly been denied burial in the Sefton churchyard, was transported to the Harkirke, "carried and attended or accompanied" by the old man's neighbors, and interred while Blundell, whose own neighborliness knew some limits, sat home at dinner. It was this second disturbance of the soil, coupled with the wet weather, that had caused the earth to disgorge its numismatic treasures.

Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: The Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation* (London: Blond and Briggs, 1976), chaps. 2, 6. At the time this essay was completed I had not yet seen J. A. Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire: From Reformation to Renewal 1559-1991* (Chichester, England: Phillimore, 1994), and I thank Dr. Michael Mullett for pointing it out to me.

¹³ Lancs RO DDBI 24/11, "A note of what was done to the baliffes the 26 of October last," fol. 1; cf. the account of Blundell's grandson, William Blundell the Cavalier, in a letter to James Scarisbrick of 29 April 1655. "Great Hodge Podge," DDBI Acc. 6121, fol. 85v (reprinted in *Crosby Records*, 42).

¹⁴ The Marralls had been tenants of the Blundells for some time; Blundell's grandson, William the Cavalier, observed in the 1660s that several villagers had famous, if earthy-sounding, names; Marrall ("marrow") being perhaps related to Sir William Marrow, a fifteenth-century mayor of London. *Cavalier's Note Book*, 183-4.

¹⁵ William Blundell the Cavalier to Rev. Thomas Blundell, SJ, 29 December 1686, *Crosby Records*, 44.

Blundell had the boy Thomas lead him to the precise spot where he had found the mysterious money, a corner of the Harkirke beside a "gap" that had not been enclosed. With them went the servant Denton and Blundell's son Nicholas (future father of the Cavalier), then a young man.¹⁶ They were joined at the site a few minutes later by Richard Blundell the younger, William's brother, a priest who had been a longtime chaplain to the Houghtons, a Catholic family of nearby Lea Hall. Before very long, they had found several more coins but, the hour being late, the party returned to the hall for dinner, only to come back to the cemetery in the mid-afternoon. Perhaps eager to gather as many of the coins as he could, Blundell now took most of his family along, including his wife and his widowed mother, Anne, whom it "pleased" to visit the site of the discovery. They were to be rather disappointed, finding only a few more coins. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, Blundell had in his hands a minor hoard of "about 4 score, none bigger than a groat or smaller than 2 pence," and several more unidentifiable fragments.

It was as well that Blundell found the coins when he did. In 1624, when just under seventy Catholics from Sefton and nearby parishes had been buried, the Harkirke was set upon by agents of his inveterate foe, Sir Ralph Assheton, then sheriff of Lancashire. Thirty men knocked down the walls and scattered the stone markers that Blundell and his people had used instead of crosses in a fruitless bid to keep their funerary activities secretive. Blundell's tenants put up some show of resistance, in part because their cattle were being seized, and the result was a riot. Blundell was eventually fined £2000 by Star Chamber, in the Easter term of 1629, not only for the riot but, according to Blundell's own account, "for suffering a place of buriall in my Demaine."¹⁷ It is clear from the voluminous Star Chamber documents in the case that the graveyard was in fact of secondary interest to the sheriff, and it does not feature, unlike the riot, in all the interrogatories. It is also plain that Blundell and several of his servants, especially Denton, attempted to feign innocence of direct encouragement of the riot and, in Denton's case, of the deliberate erection of the graveyard; the secretary would testify that the Harkirke was no more

¹⁶ Nicholas would predecease his father in 1631, leaving his son, the younger William, then aged eleven, as the older William's heir.

¹⁷ PRO E 159/469, entries of estreats into Exchequer; *Crosby Records*, 34-40. Blundell's brother-in-law, Sir William Norris, was also fined for an altercation with John More, a local JP, arising from Norris's protests about More's persecution of his family. *Ibid.*, xxiii.

than a place for letting the cattle cross to pasture.¹⁸ Although the penalty was subsequently reduced,¹⁹ this was not the last such invasion of his land or his hall. Such persecutions took and continued to take their toll on his family, but also strengthened their adherence to Rome. In 1615 Blundell's twenty-three-year-old daughter, Margaret (d. 1647), would abandon England to become a nun at the English Augustinian house of St. Monica's in Louvain, where she took the name of the Anglo-Saxon saint Winifred.²⁰ Her kin at home obstinately stuck to both their faith and their land, and a century later William's great-great-grandson, another Nicholas (1669–1737), would pen an informative diary of life in the area.²¹ Nor did the destruction of the markers spell the end of the graveyard, which continued to receive the remains of family members, Sefton and neighboring Lancashire Catholics, and the occasional priest until 1753.²²

Blundell immediately set himself the task of trying to identify his coins, which he did with reference to books that will be discussed in the final section of this essay. The hoard is now known to have been deposited by the Danes within a few years of their retreat to Northumbria in A.D. 910,

¹⁸ PRO STAC 9/1/2; Denton's answer is at fol. 304v, and he was supported in this denial by William Norreys, one of those charged in the riot (fol. 305). Blundell's own answer and admission of how he came to set up the burial ground is at fol. 553. The case itself has been thoroughly studied, though not from this perspective, in Frank Tyrer, "A Star Chamber Case: Assheton v. Blundell 1624–31," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 118 (1966 [1967]): 19–37.

¹⁹ Lancs RO DDBI 30/6, copy of letters close: Charles I to Lord Treasurer Richard Weston, recommending reduction of the fine from £2000 to £250, 19 May 1631; the verso refers specifically to the £2000 having been levied for both the riot and rescue as well as for "mainteyninge a church yard for the buriall of seminarie preists & popish recusants." That Blundell's income was grossly insufficient to cover such a fine is clear from valuations of the estate at various points before and after the civil war: in 1660 his grandson would be assessed at 8s. 8d. for his fifteenth while the twenty tenements and properties, such as Thomas Marrall's, were liable to rates as low as 3d. "A true particular of ye fifteene wch every person is to pay within Little Crosby," 1660, Acc. 6121, "Great Hodge Podge," fol. 72v.

²⁰ William the Cavalier's children would continue this tradition. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 24, 111–13. It is Sister Winifred Blundell who is the source of much of the information on the cemetery's creation and destruction, having related the story to the sister conventuant who penned *The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St Monica's in Louvain*, ed. Dom A. Hamilton (Edinburgh and London: Sands and Co., 1904–6), 1:153.

²¹ *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire*, ed. Frank Tyrer and J. J. Bagley, 3 vols. (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1968–72).

²² Gillow, 1:247; VCH, *Lancashire*, III, 89; and *Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell*, 1:138, 146, 296. Nicholas refers, for instance (*ibid.*, 1:309), to the burial of his spinster great-aunt, Frances (youngest sister of William II, the Cavalier), in December 1711 at the age of eighty-one. The complete burial records are printed in *Crosby Records*, 69–85.

and numismatists have identified in it the coinage of kings Alfred the Great, Edward the Elder, and Cnut of Northumbria. In many cases, Blundell's assessment of the individual pieces was not far off. He even recognized varieties of the ecclesiastical coinage of York and East Anglia, though he and most local inhabitants mistakenly called these "the money of Sainte Peter," thinking them coins especially minted for Peter's pence. He was more thoroughly stumped by some foreign coins that bore "strange and to me unknown inscriptions." Blundell set down at least two accounts of his find, each of which contains his pen and ink drawings of thirty-five of them. The first of these is a lengthy two-membrane roll of the sort that often contained deeds, surveys, and family pedigrees.²³ A surviving copperplate of the coins, probably derived from this, dates from as early as 1613. The second of Blundell's accounts is a small duodecimo paper notebook of twenty-seven leaves, bound in a medieval missal, in which he tells his story of the establishment of the cemetery and the circumstances of the initial coin find and subsequent treasure hunt. This version features one less coin than the roll, but it includes something that the roll lacks, detailed verbal descriptions of the coins together with references to several medieval and modern historical works.²⁴ Both versions are headed by a quotation from the apocryphal book of Tobit, given in Latin and English, that speaks to the recusant's placing of God before monarch: "To hyde the secret of a kinge is goode; but to reveale and confesse the woorke of God is an honorable thinge."²⁵

In fact, Blundell had not hidden but "revealed" the secret of a king in uncovering and deciphering these artifacts, buried long ago on the site of

²³ Lancs RO DDBI 24/12; *Crosby Records*, 42, 63.

²⁴ Lancs RO DDBI Acc. 6121 includes the copperplate, which was sent by William's great-great-grandson, Nicholas II (the diarist), to London through a Liverpool printer named John Aldridge, who had several prints made "of the money found in the Harkerk." *Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell*, 1:86 (12 June 1705). William Blundell the Cavalier had already printed up to two hundred copies in 1676. Gibson, preface to *Crosby Records*, xv. Images of the coins were obtained from a manuscript in Corpus Christi College, Oxford, by the publishers of Sir John Spelman's *Aelfredi Magni Anglorum Regis invictissimi vita tribus libris comprehensa* (Oxford: at Sheldonian Theatre, 1678), sig. c2r-v and table 3: "Nummi in hac tabula descripti reperti sunt Aprilis 8. anno 1611. in loco Harkerke [in black letter] dicto in paroecia Septtoniae Comitatu Lancastriae; & habentur tum manu descripti in Bibliotheca C.C.C. Oxon. tum aere incisi & excusi." The manuscript referred to by Spelman is CCC Oxon MS 255, fols. 82–3, and is an inferior copy made by a later draughtsman, in the judgment of R. H. M. Dolley, "A Further Note on the Harkerke Find," *Numismatic Chronicle*, 6th series, 15 (1955): 189–93, for which reference I am grateful to Mr. Brian Whitlock Blundell.

²⁵ Lancs RO DDBI 24/12 and DDBI Acc. 6121. Blundell himself marks the epigraph, on both roll and notebook, as "Tob. 12 vs. 7," but this has been misleadingly transcribed by Gibson as "Iob" [i.e., Job] in *Crosby Records*, 45.

a church. In having them printed and circulating their images (arranged in the shape of a cross) so that, as his grandson put it, "ye copyes flew abroad in ye country," he had also revealed the miraculous work of God in preserving these vestiges of remote antiquity over the centuries, within formerly hallowed territory, and restoring them to view as a sign of divine pleasure at Blundell's charity and the people's adherence to Catholic burial rites.²⁶ And by turning his account into a family record, Blundell was also asserting a proprietary claim to objects recovered on his demesne – a claim that flew in the face of the English law of treasure trove and brought him once again into potential conflict with authority.

Although inconsistently enforced by the Crown over the centuries, the law of treasure trove was reasonably clear by the early seventeenth century.²⁷ Its earliest expressions come from the various *laga*, or laws, of the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman kings. Blundell certainly knew of these laws, since, as we shall see, his admiration of certain Saxon monarchs (especially Alfred and Edward the Confessor) was based on a belief that the interests of spirituality and temporality, church and crown, had been balanced and harmonized in the England converted by "Austin" (Augustine of Canterbury), through the beneficent acts of "Catholic Saxon kings" well disposed to Holy Church and conscious of their duty to Rome.²⁸ Although William Lambarde's *Archaeologia* (1568), a standard

²⁶ The Cavalier reported in 1655 that his grandfather had in fact caused copies of his drafting of the coins to be printed, "ye brazen cuts wherof are now extant with me." *Crosby Records*, 42. The younger William Blundell believed his grandfather had published "because he knew well yt to reveile ye works of God was an honorable thing." *Ibid.*, emphasis in original. British Library, Harleian MS 1437, art. 8 (loose paper near end) is a surviving copy from Blundell's original copperplate (though perhaps not from his initial printing) of the coins. Their arrangement in the form of a cross in this print (they are not so arranged in either the roll or the notebook) evidently vexed Humfrey Wanley, who identified thirty-two of the coins as Saxon and three as foreign. An antiquary of a later age and different interests, Wanley commented in his account of the manuscript in the *Harleian Catalogue* that its author had "more superstition than learning." *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 4 vols. (London: HMSO, 1808), 2:51–2.

²⁷ The definitive work is George Hill, *Treasure Trove in Law and Practice from the Earliest Time to the Present Day* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 185–255. The Crown had at various times since the twelfth century granted by patent limited rights to search for and take treasure, and in 5 Ed. 1 (1276–7) Sir Robert Blundell de Crosby made over to his son Nicholas all his lands in Annosdale (now Ainsdale) but saved to himself "Shipwreck" in that and other estates. Burke, *Commoners*, 2:528; and *Cavalier: Letters of William Blundell to his Friends, 1620–1698*, ed. M. Blundell (London, New York, and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1933), 1.

²⁸ The phrase is William the Cavalier's, who claimed, in a letter to his son Thomas Blundell, SJ (29 December 1686), that he had sent several of the coins into Wales "for better security in ye tyme of War," together with family muniments, and that many of these too were lost. *Crosby Records*, 44; and B. J. N. Edwards, "The Vikings in North-West

source for the early law codes, is not among the works that Blundell cites specifically, the evidence suggests that he was familiar with these laws, for they are alluded to in the bogus chronicle known as *Ingulph of Croyland* and in other works that Blundell had certainly read and cites.

So far as Blundell's hoard is concerned, the critical aspects of treasure law are twofold. First, any silver, bullion, or coin found *hidden* in the earth (as opposed to merely lying abandoned on the surface) was treasure trove owed in entirety to the Crown. The *Leges Henrici primi*, compiled in the early twelfth century, give exclusive claim on such treasure to the king. Second – and here the matter of where the coins were discovered is crucial – the somewhat later law code known as the Laws of Edward the Confessor (which in the seventeenth century was erroneously held to be of eleventh-century, pre-Norman, origins) bestows gold and silver on the king *unless* it be found in a church or cemetery. In such case the gold still belongs to the Crown, and half the silver, but the remaining silver must be given to the church.²⁹

These laws, and the law of treasure generally, have been neglected in earlier accounts of Blundell's find, yet they provide an important piece of the puzzle. They help to explain, for instance, some of Blundell's apparently odd behavior, such as using his family (including household servants) rather than having tenants or laborers gather the coins, since other laws of trove, contained in Henry de Bracton, expressly prohibit the hiring of men to dig for treasure while permitting purely fortuitous discoveries made by landowners and their immediate families.³⁰ The laws also explain the careful language of the notebook and roll accounts, in which Blundell cautiously asserts a claim to the coins while scrupulously documenting that they were found accidentally and *lying on the surface* (albeit disturbed by his tenants' illicit funerary activities) and had not been deliberately dug for. He thereby provided himself the basis for a case that the coins were not, in fact, true treasure trove. Finally, all this helps to sort out the confusion regarding the eventual fate of the coins, some of

England: The Physical Evidence," in *Viking Treasure from the North West: The Cuerdale Hoard in its Context*, ed. James Graham-Campbell (Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1992), 58–60. I am indebted to Mr. Edwards for having shown me a copy of this article before its publication.

²⁹ See Edward the Confessor's laws, no. 14, "De thesauris," in William Lambarde, *Archaeologia*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 1643), separately paginated and appended to Abraham Wheloc's edition of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge, 1643): "Thesauri de terra domini Regis sunt, nisi in Ecclesia vel in coemeterio inveniuntur: Et licet ibi inveniuntur, aurum regis est, & medietas argenti, & medietas Ecclesiae ubi inventum fuerit, quaecunque ipsa fuerit vel dives, vel pauper."

³⁰ Hill, *Treasure Trove*, 193.

which were sent for safekeeping by William the Cavalier into Wales (probably to his kinsmen the Banisters at Wrexham) in 1642, at the start of the civil war, and were subsequently lost. It is clear from the first William's account of the discovery that he found many more coins than he actually drew and described, though probably not the "three hundred" that his grandson fancifully recalled in the 1680s.³¹ Those selected by Blundell in 1611 or 1612 for drawing, engraving, and publication were almost certainly the coins that the Cavalier, who inherited them, would send to Wrexham thirty years later.

As to the others, they were turned by the first William Blundell into a pyx and chalice that remained in later centuries at Little Crosby's Catholic church. The chalice was stolen in the nineteenth century; the pyx (fig. 3) remains in the sacristy of Little Crosby Church, bearing the inscription "This was made of silver found in the burial place / W. Bl."³² Blundell himself had kept the thirty-five most interesting coins, those that appear in the two extant accounts, and then given up the rest as a pious offering. In doing so, he was paying heed to the law of Edward the Confessor, a pious king whom he knew had regularly paid Peter's pence, and returning half of this discovered silver to the church. Yet more was at stake than obedience to an obscure treasure law. In returning the coins into historical time, and giving them back to the church, Blundell was also reversing a painful episode of more recent history, the spoliation of church plate and property that had begun during the reign of Henry VIII, when, as Blundell put it, new religions had been "coined" each day, out of monastic and chantry property, in sharp contrast to the harmonious coexistence of church and crown that Blundell believed (however naively) had marked the Anglo-Saxon era.

SPACE, TIME, AND TRADITION

A conventional historiographical analysis would see the Little Crosby episode as simply one more example, and a minor one at that, of the development of antiquarian interests in the seventeenth century – hardly worth more than a footnote in an account of early modern historical

³¹ *Crosby Records*, 43.

³² Edwards, "Vikings in North-West England," reports the pyx as having been stolen, like the chalice, but this is incorrect. The present author is grateful to Mr. Brian Whitlock Blundell and Canon Roger Daley for showing him the pyx, now at Little Crosby Church (and for providing photographs); a spectrographic analysis of the pyx in the 1970s demonstrated that it was made of silver consistent with the age of the coins.



Figure 3. William Blundell's pyx, Little Crosby Church. Photo by John Daley, *Crosby Herald*. Courtesy of Brian Whitlock Blundell

thought. But Blundell's detailed narrative of his servants' discovery and of his own historical detective work opens a window onto a number of different cultural transactions and intellectual assumptions. The story raises questions concerning the significance of objects from the past for their elite collectors and for the humble folk who found them, and the mental world of the rural Catholic squire attempting to make some sense of his find. What did Blundell, and the numerous other like-minded

gentry around the English countryside, imagine such objects as coins, urns, "giant" bones, and the like to be? For that matter, what did the Thomas Ryses of the time, unfamiliar with much of national history, make of such trinkets that they turned up while ploughing, digging, or building? And can the negotiations between servants and masters, vulgar and learned, over the residue of the past tell us something about the workings of the historical imagination in early modern England?

The best point of departure lies at the place of discovery. The make-shift graveyard was itself an intersection of historical inheritance, community ritual, and sustained religious disobedience, for all that it yielded those classic symbols of royal authority, coins of the realm. Its creation was the act of a community marginalized by recent political circumstances, and of a religion whose practitioners throughout the land were much given to wishful recollections of the past.³³ Blundell had himself authored, while in prison, a "dittie" lamenting the persecution of "Those whom they suspect or knowe / Ancient truthe affectinge, new fond faithes rejecting" and protesting "What in Sefton we endure / For no strange opinion, but that ould Religion / Austin planted here most sure." Much of this verse is suffused with nostalgia, and with a firm conviction that time and the weight of history are on the side of Catholicism, here identified with social justice and an older, preinflationary coinage:

The tyme hath been wee hadd one faith,
And strode aright one ancient path,
The thym is now that each man may
See newe Religions coynd each day.

The tyme hath beene the prelate's dore
Was seldome shotte against the pore,
The tyme is now, so wives goe fine,
They take not thought the kyne.³⁴

³³ On Catholic nostalgia see K. Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England* (London: Creighton Trust Lecture, 1983), passim. Another Lancashire example of a Catholic intensely interested in the past is provided by Christopher Towneley (1604–74), an antiquary and the uncle of Richard Towneley, the natural philosopher (1629–1707). See Chetham's Library, Manchester, MSS C.6.1–2 for two volumes of notes for the history of Lancashire, part of a proposed history by Richard Kuerden (1623–90?) and Christopher Towneley; MSS D.3.1–13 contain several books of further material (mainly copies of family evidences, but some inscriptions and genealogies) compiled by the older Towneley for the proposed history. For their activities see C. Webster, "Richard Towneley (1629–1707), the Towneley Group and Seventeenth-Century Science," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 118 (1966[1967]): 51–76.
³⁴ *Crosby Records*, 24–9; Lancs RO DDBI Acct. 6121, "Great Hodge Podge," fol. 132r, Latin verses on "An expostulation or chydying of Jesus with man perishing through his

Blundell was, in short, a defender of walking in "antient pathes."³⁵ A further indication of his views is provided by the annotations that he made in his copy of the Douai Bible (with selected apocryphal books), which was published in two volumes in 1609–10, and which he may already have owned at the time of the incident of the coins. Rather like some Protestant readers, but with obviously different aspirations, Blundell read the Scripture as a prophetic text, paying close attention to such episodes as the successive captivities of the children of Israel: Thus Exodus 40, which records the Israelites as dwelling in Egypt for "some foure hundred thirty yeares" was glossed by Blundell "430 years," as if anticipating a similar period of trials for English Catholicism. A later manuscript note in the printed gloss on the Apocrypha has Blundell writing, "They adored God & then the king." And on the conflict of Israelites and Philistines at 1 Kings 13.19 we find him commenting, "how great was ye subjection of the Isralites to ye Philistines."³⁶

"Harkirke," the name of the spot at which the coins were found, is an Old English word, derived from the Anglo-Saxon *All hāra Cyrice*, and handed down by tradition from a time when a "grey and hoary" church, long vanished, had stood on the spot; it appears in local records from as early as 1275.³⁷ Blundell's tenants and neighbors used the term, inherited from generations of local inhabitants, without paying much attention to it, but all across England some of the most commonplace signs of rudimentary historical thinking came from people's creative explanations for such place-names. And Blundell himself had certainly fathomed the significance of the spot in choosing it for his burial ground.³⁸

In modern historical thinking, time must precede space, the moment of an occurrence go before its location. Events happen *at* a particular time, or *from* one time to another, and we must fix them chronologically before

owne fawlte; translated out of Latin verse into Englishe as toloweth by Wil. Bl."; *ibid.*, 135v–136r ff. for more ditties and music written by William.

³⁵ The phrase, from Jeremiah 6.16, appears in Lancs RO DDBI Acct. 6121; *Crosby Records*, 63.

³⁶ Crosby Hall, Little Crosby, Liverpool, *The Holie Bible faithfully translated into English, out of the authentical Latim*, (2 vols., Douai: Lawrence Kellam, 1609–10). Blundell's note on the gloss on the Apocrypha appears at 2:1115; his comment on the Israelites and Philistines is at 1:59. I am extremely grateful to Mr. Brian Whitlock Blundell and Mr. Mark Whitlock Blundell for making the family library and deposited papers available to me.

³⁷ Lancs RO DDBI 50/16; Edwards, "Vikings in North-West England," 58.

³⁸ For early modern burial practices and another religious minority, the Familists, at almost exactly the same date, see Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550–1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 218–31.

we can do much else with them. When always precedes modern historians' where, to say nothing of their how and why. This was true for Renaissance narrative historians as well (for whom chronology was the first and geography the second, and subordinate, "eye" of history), but not for the antiquaries of the late sixteenth century, who began with locations, rather than events; this was one reason that many of them protested that their "chorographies" and "surveys" were not, according to long-accepted rhetorical conventions, "histories" at all.³⁹ Such fine generic distinctions are often belied by actual contents, in this case by the inevitable inclusion of historical episodes in most antiquarian texts. A more significant difference emerges from the manner in which local communities constituted and defined the boundaries of the historical. They put place first, ahead of time. For the locals of Little Crosby, remembered images of the vanished "hoary church" preceded and transcended the importance of any date, any precise temporal pigeonhole. A modern historian or even a casual visitor would instinctively want to know when the place was given such a name, in what period, and in whose reign.

The primacy of space over time on the mental horizons of the local community does not mean that there can be found in such settings no sense of their relation. On the contrary, it is worth recalling that the coins were found precisely because the landlord, in responding to the needs of his tenants and coreligionists, had decided to mark an artificial sacred zone. The new burial ground was consecrated by neither law nor established church, but purely by the manorial community's sense of the importance of the customary rite of passage, and by its belief in the religious significance of this particular place. The phantom Saxon church helped to soften the ad hoc character of the arrangement. This kind of practice was not the exclusive preserve of Catholicism. Every Protestant parish in England, in consecrating particular spaces to sepulchral and sacramental purposes, demonstrated some such understanding of the burden of the past. So did the Ascensiontide ritual of beating the bounds, which established and annually proclaimed to the contiguous world the frontiers of a parish, for economic as well as symbolic reasons.⁴⁰ The perambulation

³⁹ D. R. Woolf, "Erudition and the Idea of History in Renaissance England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 40 (1987): 11–48.

⁴⁰ The link between antiquarianism and a strong sense of local space is not coincidental: the earliest county chorography, by William Lambarde, was entitled *The Perambulation of Kent*. Elizabethan and early Stuart contributions to the genre were invariably called either descriptions or, more commonly, "surveys," the works of John Norden in the 1590s, for instance, being the work of a professional surveyor. Only in the mid-seventeenth century, with massive tomes like Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*

asserted parochial control over those things that lay within, and defended parishioners against incurring, in the absence of precise surveys, responsibility for foreign paupers, or for the repair of buildings, roads, and bridges that had not traditionally lain in their charge. Since it conserved the boundaries of a space that had been defined time out of mind, it was also a repetitive rite of communication among the young, the aged, and the dead, between the present and the past, paying heed to the biblical injunction (Proverbs 22.28) "Do not move the ancient boundary-stone which your forefathers set up." That the seventeenth century produced local maps and estate surveys in greater numbers than previous eras was similarly a consequence of a need to ensure the accurate memory of familial and parochial boundaries beyond a living generation, a need all the more pressing in the face of a volatile land market and of cataclysmic events like the civil war, which caused the destruction of many traditional landmarks. Such, for instance, was the explanation for one rector's codification of his Essex parish's boundaries at the end of the century. "In the time of the long Rebellion the landmarcks of our parish were cut downe, and it would be difficult for posterity to find out the proper precincts which our parish are incompassed withal," wrote Robert Poole of Belchamp Otten, who was himself adding a perambulation to the parochial accounts in his keeping "that this may be a memorial to posterity" and thereby prevent future litigation.⁴¹

THE ANCESTRAL AND THE ANTIQUARIAN

Blundell's sense of obligation to his coreligionists was complemented by a fervent understanding of his duty to his ancestors and descendants. The latter he served in various ways, by keeping elaborate estate records, by keeping up the fabric of village properties, and by tending to the improvement of his land. When still a relatively young man, he had added what his descendants would still call, forty years later, a "new" orchard. An oak that he planted as a sapling during Elizabeth's reign would grow over the decades and come to symbolize for both him and his grandson the long-standing connection between the family and its land. In about 1629, when young William, his grandson, was nine, old William showed him

(1656), did the close connection of the genre with its roots in local documents, and in ceremonies of spatial definition, become less prominent. The previous usage continued, however, in the "natural history" genre of authors like Robert Plot and Charles Leigh.

⁴¹ Essex RO D/DU 441/96, pp. 22–3, Belchamp Otten parish accounts, 1700–1701.

the tree and made the boy encircle it with his arms, whereupon the child found that "my finger ends did overreach each other some little, less than an inch I take it." By way of demonstration, the older man told him "that he did plant that tree when it was like a small twig which he showed me (less than ordinary riding rod)." Years later, when William II was 43, and still reveling in the return of the monarchy – of which the oak was a traditional emblem – he made a point of encompassing the tree once more, "clipping it in my arms as high as I could well reach, standing on the west side, and I found it to be 9 inches (within less than one straw's breadth) more than I could fathom." He was struck by the longevity of this minor landmark, a living connection between him and his children and the generation of his grandfather, who, as he recorded there for his children's benefit, "was born [in] 1560."⁴²

The measurement of the tree was a rare and incidental ritual for both William Blundells, albeit one that quietly proclaimed the family's past and future ties to its property, suggesting both permanence and growth in the face of disturbances from a hostile world beyond the village. A more frequent occurrence was the funeral, which testified to transience and decay. The burial ceremony, in Little Crosby as elsewhere, was a rite of both communion and separation between the living and the dead, including the recently deceased as well as speechless generations of ancestors, lords, tenants, and laborers.⁴³ But in a Catholic enclave such as Little Crosby, the ritual was both confessionally exclusionary, widening the parochial religious divide, and, within the manor, socially integrative. Where Protestant burials were tied to an official body of the church and to salvation through Christ alone, Catholic funerary rituals instead linked the deceased and survivors to a vanished religious community of the past.⁴⁴ In

⁴² *Cavalier's Note Book*, 214. For a similar example from the later seventeenth century involving trees and grandfather-grandson inheritances, see the "Book of William Storr." Samuel Storr was a Yorkshire Quaker who at the age of eighty-four wanted to be buried in his own father's former land at Holderness, and had "got a man to proune for me graftes from my fathers mulberry tree in holderness for my grandsoneses gardens," thereby transplanting the family tree from Holderness to Wislow, then occupied by his grandson, William (principal author of this manuscript), Samuel Storr's two sons having predeceased their father in the 1690s. Borthwick Inst., York, MD 112, p. 129 for William Storr's perspective on the ancestral trees. At p. 273 is a mulberry leaf allegedly from the same tree, pressed into the volume in 1919.

⁴³ For further evidence of these relations in another part of England, see Richard Gough's well-known account of his parish and its spatial and hierarchical arrangements, *The History of Myddle*, ed. D. Hey (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1981).

⁴⁴ On traditional Catholic versus Protestant attitudes toward death, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 301–76.

marking off the Harkirke as a quasi-sacred spot (all the more suitable, because of its name, for the interment of human remains), and then in actually carrying out the burial of Mathewson's and later cadavers, Blundell and his tenants were honoring through reenactment a practice inherited from their forebears; and they were doing so in quiet defiance of the sheriff and of what, to them, seemed a relatively recently and precariously established Protestant Church. In scraping over the wet sand for antique groats they were indirectly doing the same thing, gathering nostalgic reminders of their remote progenitors, as another northwesterner, Charles Leigh, would recognize a century later in justifying local antiquarianism. "To know what our ancestors were, cannot be more lively delineated to us, than by the ruines we discover of those days, hence it is that by penetrating the bowels of the earth, we can trace the footsteps of our forefathers, and imprint upon our minds some ideas of their times."⁴⁵

Early modern England was a society immensely conscious of ancestry, even though a degree of social mobility ensured that long lineage mattered relatively little, in comparison with much of the rest of Europe, in defining the essentials of status. There was no ancestor worship of the sort practiced in some Far Eastern countries then and now, no totemic icons of grandparents alongside images of saints and the virgin in Catholic dwellings; and the Protestant majority was even louder in its disapproval of anything approaching reverence to the long-departed. Ancestors in early modern England were not cohabitants of the household, any more than were living grandparents commonly to be found under the same roof as grandchildren (gentry exceptions like the Blundells being in a minority); and they did not provide semideistic links between the present generation and the eternal by making the dead perpetually present.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the dead and departed had a passive role to play. Commemorated in funeral monuments and honored in the maintenance of public and familial rituals, immediate and remote ancestors provided the gentry and peerage with a significant means of self-identification and social distinction. The tendency to wrap up familial status in the clothing of ancestry was more a characteristic of the landed, who had written evidences of their long-term location within the realm, than of their social

⁴⁵ Charles Leigh, *The Natural History of Lancashire, Cheshire, and the Peak, in Derbyshire*, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1720), b. 3, p. 1; copy in Lancs RO.

⁴⁶ For a different attitude toward ancestors from that in early modern England, see F. L. K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestors' Shadow: Chinese Culture and Personality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), esp. 154–65; and F. W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 99.

inferiors, particularly as shorter leases and economically driven migration diminished tenurial longevity. Even at the upper reaches of the gentry there had long existed analogous constraints on the appeal to ancestry, such as the practice of strict primogeniture, which drove younger children off family estates; the alienation of parts of landholdings; and the tendency of cadet lines to relocate, sometimes at a great distance.

In the case of the Blundells, ancestry was inseparably tied to the manor itself, its buildings, and the exploits of various family members in defense of their faith. Sister Winifred ensured that her father's and grandfather's sufferings became a matter of record in her house's chronicle. Much later, William Blundell's great-great-grandson, Nicholas the diarist, would be fascinated by the career of his own grandfather, William II, the Cavalier, who had died at seventy-eight in 1698, when Nicholas was in his late twenties. It was William II who taught the diarist reading and arithmetic as a child living at the hall, before Nicholas was sent to the Jesuit college at St. Omer. The Cavalier also introduced Nicholas to the family's history, including the story of William I's tribulations (and his coins), ceaselessly chastised the boy for his poor memory, and reminded him that the descent in the male line had been unbroken for several centuries – a point that must later have galled Nicholas, who was unable to produce a son. Nicholas himself carried on this pursuit of the familial past, at one point searching the family muniments and manorial documents back to the twelfth century.⁴⁷

Although the enthusiasm for researching, creating, and registering pedigrees peaked under Elizabeth and James, ordinary gentry, successful yeomen like Robert Furse of Devon, and even ambitious urban householders like Denis Bond of Dorchester remained busy during the middle and latter decades of the seventeenth century rifling through their evidences, sorting through the old and the recent, adding information, and having clearer, fancier copies made.⁴⁸ At the opposite end of both the country and the religious spectrum, successive generations of Blundells took note of their ante-

⁴⁷ *Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell*, 3:ix. For information on the later history of the family, see B. M. Whitlock Blundell, "Little Crosby and the Blundell Family," unpublished paper in possession of the author; I am indebted to Brian Whitlock Blundell for providing me with a copy of this paper.

⁴⁸ H. J. Carpenter, "Furse of Moreshead: A Family Record of the Sixteenth Century," *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art* 26 (1894): 169; David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 49. Blundell's family is an excellent example: the "Great Hodge Podge" includes, among other things, the births, marriages, and deaths of family members noted by William, his grandson William, and the latter's grandson Nicholas,

cedents and carefully recorded births, marriages, and deaths in the several "Hodge Podes" begun by William the recusant and continued by his grandson and great-great-grandson. Thus William the Cavalier, approaching middle age in the 1670s, determined to present a definitive family history building on his grandfather's exemplary record keeping, assisted by contributions from his mother. "All of this page & the following I W Bl [i.e., the Cavalier] extracted out of severall old deeds and from notes from my grandfather Blundells hand; most exactly, and scrupulously" the Cavalier remarked with due piety, "& I hope to bring up ye Pedegree successively to Sr Robert Blundell Kt who lived in ye dayes of King John."⁴⁹

Once established and acknowledged by the heralds, or reconfirmed in state documents such as letters patent, a worthy ancestry was displayed boldly on various parts of family property more visible than parchment pedigrees. The coat of arms, originally devised by the medieval military aristocracy in order to assist battlefield recognition (a use it had largely lost with the advent of Tudor measures against liveries), became the most recognizable symbol of gentility, and the educated layman soon grew passably familiar with the arcana of heraldry through the Elizabethan and Jacobean manuals published by officers of arms like John Guillim, and by enterprising amateurs like Edmund Bolton, both of whose works appeared in 1610.⁵⁰ The blazons adorning architecture, funereal art, and decorative chattels from the period are further evidence of this particular survival of the past, and of the related phenomenon of turning the newest, blandest implement into a *bien inaliénable*. In January 1617, for instance, Richard Brownlow paid 2d. for "engraving the arms" on a basin and ewer he had purchased for £23 7s. 8d. The cost of such engraving was not high, and it protected an otherwise unremarkable object

⁴⁹ Lancs RO DDBI Acc. 6121, "Great Hodge Podge," fols. 76v–78r, including a reverse genealogy from the Cavalier back to ancestors in the late thirteenth century. Some of his very early material came from beyond the family sources: he consulted "Doctor Cureden" (Richard Kuerden, another Lancashire recusant antiquary, some of whose papers survive in Chetham's Library, Manchester), who "told me since, that he had made som further discoveryes of ye Antiquity of my Family, & that he had given his said discoveryes to Mr Dugdale, ye Herald, at our last visitation about ye year 1665." Cf. *ibid.*, fol. 184r, for names of all the children of the Cavalier's father, Nicholas, and Jane, his wife (thirteen in all including a previous William who died in infancy). The names reinforce the impression that the Blundells stuck very firmly to a small range of Christian names: Margaret, William, Emilia, Anne, William (the Cavalier), Dorothy, Margaret, Anne, Elizabeth, Richard, Winifred (d. 1677), and Frances (d. 1711) ("she was buried in ye Harkerk"). The Cavalier derived this list (dated by him 21 February 1648/9) "out of a note under my mothers owne hand."

⁵⁰ John Guillim, *A Display of Heraldrie* (London: W. Hall for R. Mab, 1610); Edmund Bolton, *The Elements of Armories* (London: G. Eld, 1610).

against theft, projected a visible symbol of family history, and made even the most recently acquired trinket into a potential heirloom.⁵¹

This brings us directly back to the matter of Blundell's coins. Unlike King Alfred or Cnut, the Harkirke hoard was a durable commodity imported from remote antiquity, a semipermanent collection of artifacts nearly immune from time – a few, Blundell tells us, were broken – if not beyond human transformation into pyx and chalice. We can sense from Blundell's account of their discovery that the coins represented many things to different people. His servants, from Thomas Ryse to Edward Denton, knew enough to recognize that they were not current, that they belonged to "old time." If stories had developed about these coins – as such tales attached to innumerable other archaeological discoveries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – they would probably have involved some element of narrative fabrication with tenuous roots in the documentable: a king, a Viking, or a defeated Saxon burying his treasure to save capture by an enemy, or perhaps marking the site of a great battle with abandoned spurs, swords, and horse brasses. On the other hand, folk culture from ancient British times to the present century has also found more practical uses for such accidental discoveries, turning them from curiosity to implement like a monastic ruin reclaimed to provide shelter. A Saxon or Romano-British coin could not be spent in the same way that an old angel or shilling could be; but it might still be adapted for use in the present. Although Blundell's entry into the scene came moments too late to tell us for certain, there can be little doubt that some of the kitchen conversation among the servants with regard to young Thomas Ryse's coin had to do with the possible uses of the discovery. Any object may serve more than one function, even for a single owner. It is not impossible that Thomas and his father recognized these coins as potential historical evidence, but this was surely not the first thing that came to their minds, just as Blundell himself, in turning them into church plate, was simultaneously both restoring the silver to a sacred use, at a cost to the coins'

⁵¹ Elizabeth Bligh, Lady Cust, *Records of the Cust Family: Second Series, the Brownlows of Belton, 1550–1779* (London: Mitchell, Hughes and Clarke, 1909), 54. For some other examples see the index to H. M. Colvin, ed., *The History of the King's Works, III, 1485–1660* (London: HMSO, 1975–82), 1:441, sub. "Heraldic Decoration".) According to Malcolm Airls, initials, dates, mottoes, and heraldic devices emblazoned on buildings are "sufficient testimony to their builders' desire for immortality." Malcolm Airls, *The Making of the English Country House, 1500–1640* (London: Architectural Press, 1975), 8. They are also a sign of the respect for these ancestors among those who chose to dwell in the presence of such tokens of descent.

historical value, and creating in the pyx and chalice objects that had a functional existence in the present.

At the time of their discovery the coins were something more than salvageable chunks of silver to Blundell, and his interests, otherwise apparently in harmony with his social inferiors', here competed with theirs just as they competed with the implicit interests of the Crown in treasure rights. What to the servants were objects of mild curiosity and potential economic benefit were to the leisured Blundell a physical link to local, national, and providential pasts he had hitherto been able to commune with only textually, but of which he had a higher than average awareness. To put it another way, the past played its part in the mental horizons of all the denizens of Little Crosby, but only Blundell, and perhaps some members of his family, had the scholarly knowledge – the historical "literacy," one might say – to connect its deposits to a specific moment in history. Much later, in 1655, his grandson would express the conviction that coins such as these could provide even the poorest yokel with a sense of history not to be found in books. Writing to an absent Catholic friend on whose land a tenant had just unearthed a trove of Roman coins bearing the image of Vespasian and symbols such as "SPQR" and the Roman eagle, the Cavalier enthused about the tangible history lesson this could provide the illiterate, bringing the dead directly into their hands. "Thus, sir, you may see that your learned Worships poore tenants neighbours [interlined], without the trouble of Livie, Tacitus, Sueton, or any other of thos crabbed companions, are as conversant with the noble old heroes as your self."⁵²

COMMUNICATING ANTIQUARIAN DISCOVERIES

Conversing with noble old Alfred through his coins was probably the furthest thing from the minds of Ryse, Marrall, and Denton on that brisk morning in 1611. Nevertheless, the manner in which the older Blundell had acquired his hoard testifies to the existence and snowball-like growth of what may be called the archaeological economy in early modern England, a commercial and intellectual loop along which artifacts and old objects in general were recovered, sold or traded, interpreted, and (as ultimately happened in this case) redeployed to other uses. This was an

⁵² Lancs RO DDBl Acc. 6121, "Great Hodge Podge," 85v, William Blundell to James Scarisbrick, 29 April 1655; reprinted with modernized spelling in *Cavalier's Note Book*, 280.

exceptional case insofar as the precious objects, unearthed by accident rather than by conscious excavation, came to Blundell more or less directly. In numerous other incidents all across the English countryside similar discoveries met, from the virtuoso's perspective, with less happy results. What if Blundell's coins had not been found by a member of his household, but, as was often the case, by a stranger, or for that matter, had been unearthed outside his demesne? Ploughmen, shepherds, and laborers were perennially turning up odds and ends of antiquity, urns, coins, arrowheads, and armor, and not infrequently speculating as to their origins; and the items themselves did not always end up in the closets of the learned. Stories abound about the destruction of this or that historical treasure by superstitious or avaricious locals, and Joseph Levine has documented a good example of this in the ruin of the Stonesfield pavement at the start of the eighteenth century.⁵³

Because they nearly always provide our only source for the circumstances of antiquarian discoveries, there is some risk in taking the intellectual and social snobbery of the historically minded humanist too far. More often than not, interesting antiquities first reached educated minds through rough hands and dirty jerkins. Many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century collectors would gloat in their letters and diaries of the yokels and bumpkins who had easily parted with a gold coin, bronze shield, or other valuable for a pittance. To read the accounts of some Restoration and Hanoverian antiquaries, these objects were almost invariably stumbled over by plain, frieze-clad rascals and simpletons who either destroyed them or, nearly as foolish, gave them up en route to the alehouse. The disparagement of the discoverer and procurer of antiquities as alternatively greedy or stupid is a mark of deteriorating cultural relations beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century. It is much less evident in the comments of Tudor and early Stuart antiquaries: Blundell's account conveys gratitude and even a hint of admiration for the quick-wittedness of young Thomas Ryse, rather than the sort of "see-the-silly-cowherd" contempt one reads in an Anthony à Wood or a Thomas Hearne fifty or a hundred years later.

An antiquity having been wrested from its initial finder, the further communication of such discoveries within the educated elite took place along both formal and informal lines, leaving more obvious traces from

⁵³ Joseph M. Levine, "The Stonesfield Pavement: Archaeology in Augustan England," in *Humanism and History*, 107–22.

which we can excavate regional and national intellectual networks. Not all of this activity can be attributed to the press. Print had certainly made possible cheap reproductions (like Blundell's copperplate) of texts and artifacts, but autograph transcripts of rare books and documents continued to travel across the English countryside by carrier, accounting for the enormous numbers of surviving sixteenth- and seventeenth-century copies of particular medieval documents and of entire books that had failed to reach the typesetter. Leland's *Itinerary* and a few of the early county chorographies, Sampson Erdeswicke's *Staffordshire* and Tristram Risdon's *Devon* (none of which books emerged from a press before the eighteenth century), are particularly notable in this regard.⁵⁴ The frosty climate of Sefton notwithstanding, religion was generally no impediment to contact with other antiquaries, scholarly interests crossing confessional lines with relative ease. Had Blundell been better known he might well have lent his coins out – we do not know, in fact, that he did not do so. This practice was less common in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries than it would eventually become. The favored Jacobean and Caroline practice was to distribute workmanlike transcripts and drawings, just as pedigrees and coats of arms were similarly sketched and circulated; Blundell did just this in causing the coins to be engraved and having copies distributed in the countryside.

By the end of the seventeenth century a much improved public carriage system, better roads, and a superabundance of numismatic discoveries had made such items easier to disseminate and had substantially reduced both the monetary and the historical value of any single trove. Coins, urns, bronzes, and other objects changed hands in greater numbers, either on loan or as gifts.⁵⁵ A remarkable illustration of how such artifacts could circulate, given a network considerably more elaborate than Blundell's,

⁵⁴ For example, Cambridge University Library (CUL) Mm.4.23, an eighty-two-leaf copy, written in the late seventeenth century, of Erdeswicke, with three pages of the continuation (written c. 1673) of that author by Sir Simon Degge. The *Staffordshire Record Office* and *William Salt Library* each have several other manuscripts; several manuscript copies of Risdon's *Chorographical Description or Survey of Devon*, first printed by Edmund Curl in 1711 (in a bad edition), are held at the *West Country Studies Library* and in the *Devon Record Office*, both in Exeter. A further example would be "The Peregrination of Doctor Boorde," a copy of Andrew Boorde's topographical travels, in the hand of Laurence Nowell and passed on, via William Lambarde (who signed the work in Anglo-Saxon characters), to seventeenth-century users. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Top. gen. e. 62, fols. 7–54.

⁵⁵ Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–63.

comes from the late 1690s, when some medals were found in Wallingford. According to Thomas Ford, writing about the discovery, "Tis suspected there were gold & pure silver peices amongst them, tho' concealed by the greedy discoverers. A great part of them they sent to London to be refined for the silver; some few were distributed to such country fellows as came to gaze & wonder at such strange money; the rest are ingrossed by an iron-monger in Wallingford who having heard how valuable single & particular medals are, sets extravagant rates on them, imagining al to be such." Ford himself had heard of these only at Christmas of 1699, while visiting relations in the area, but by that point only a handful was still there. Ford's lament for the fate of this discovery echoes the "greedy ignorant countryman" motif common in such accounts by 1700, and casts further light on Blundell's rush, in 1611, to snap up the coins on his land. "Tis pitty," Ford remarks, "so many excellent monuments of antiquity should be so lost or that some curious person was not at the discovery who might have redeemed many valuable pieces from the crucible & settled many controverted points of history by their most certain testimony."⁵⁶

But there is an intellectual and not just a chronological gap between Ford's remark and Blundell's description of his own discovery nearly a century before. From Blundell's sharing in his tenants' sense of wonder, from the excitement of discovery and the challenge of explaining the Harkirke coins as an intellectual problem in itself, we come to Ford's more passive, scholarly, and cold evaluation of the Wallingford hoard as simply several lost bits of information for the incremental construction of a definitively "true" history of Britain, information nearly vitiated by the very vulgar sort whose traditions and beliefs continually conspired against the hegemony of the documentable past. For Ford, who never laid eyes on these particular coins, they were less artifacts to be collected and cherished, even donated as gifts, and certainly shown off to visitors, than they were pocket-sized ingots of information to be fitted into a historical picture and used to sharpen that picture around the edges, purging popular error along the way. Of course there were elements of that implicit in Blundell's account also, but in his case the recourse to medieval and modern authorities was to the end of identifying the coins, not the other way around. The reliclike quality that the archaeological finds of the sixteenth century had possessed was much dissipated by the end of the following century, when both the depth and quantity of antiquarian and

⁵⁶ CUL MS Mm.6.50 (Covel letters), fol. 229, Ford to John Covel, 29 January 1699/1700.

numismatic scholarship had expanded. As one East Anglian scholar, Thomas Pocock, remarked to a friend, "I have so many affairs of importance on my hands, besides collecting rarities in art and nature, that I have no time for local words, or the usual catachreses of the vulgar."⁵⁷

Once acquired by local antiquaries, coins and other artifacts often reentered circulation, either literally as gifts or loans, or intellectually through written descriptions and letters. Blundell published the coins locally, and without his historical deliberations on them, in the copperplate, and seems to have done so primarily for religious reasons. Had he lived sixty years later, he could easily have done as many rural squires and clerics with greater pretensions to citizenship in the *respublica literarum* and submitted his work to the Royal Society or, later still, to the Society of Antiquaries, which was refounded in Queen Anne's reign.⁵⁸ But in 1611 there were few such outlets. Blundell was not a lawyer and did not have connections with the philological elite, which included Spelman, John Selden, John Dodderidge, John Davies, and other lawyer-scholars. The informal Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries had not met for several years, and would reassemble only briefly in 1614. But the existence of two copies of Blundell's account, one done up for the engraver, the other in a private notebook bound within another remnant of the family's medieval past, suggests that he entertained thoughts of having both his discovery and his ruminations on it survive his death.

This may be the reason why the notebook contains verbal descriptions and references to historical sources. It takes the bare depiction of the coins in the roll account and dresses it in the trappings of historical scholarship, in much the way that heralds and antiquaries from William Camden to William Dugdale converted raw familial evidences into learned accounts of gentry pedigrees buttressed by citations from chronicles and other records. The coins serve in the notebook – as they do not in the roll – as so many tiny, circular windows through which Blundell could peer into the past to construct mininarratives of various kings' reigns, while obliquely commenting on the present; but they figure promi-

⁵⁷ Essex RO D/Y/1/1/N-P, Pocock (in Danbury) to Rev. William Holman, 24 May 1723.

⁵⁸ The manuscript minute book of the Society of Antiquaries of London (SAL), Antiquaries MS 265 bulges with reports by eager fellows and correspondents of such discoveries as Blundell's, a century after the Harkirke coins appeared, but these are almost always less informative than the Blundell account, carrying little reference to the identities of the finders beyond their low class. I am indebted to Mr. Bernard Nurse, librarian to the Society of Antiquaries of London, for making this manuscript available to me.

nently in these accounts rather than merely decorating them. He endeavored, for instance, to explain the name Cudberht on the reverse of one of Alfred's coins, though he could "fynde written no espetiall cause or reason why this kinge shoulde set him in his coyne." Mindful of St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne (mentioned in Bede) who is supposed to have appeared to Alfred in a vision during his darkest time, Blundell used his imagination to bridge the gap between coin and book. "I thinke it moste lyke and probable that K. Aelfred caused the coine so to be made in memorie of the fore said miracle." In this vision, Cuthbert had reassured Alfred that the English were suffering "by the swoorde of ye Danes" for their sins, but that the Lord would not allow their extinction "in respecte of so manie saintes that had been of yt nation."⁵⁹ In Blundell's Saxon "English" one can read Jacobean "Catholics"; perhaps it had not escaped his notice that the new king, who had so recently revived the persecutions of his predecessor, was in fact married to a Dane.

INTERPRETING THE DISCOVERY: ARTIFACT ENCOUNTERS TEXT

This brings us, at long last, to the point at which one might normally expect a historiographical study to have begun, namely Blundell's efforts to situate his find in history, to evaluate and then to exploit its potential as scholarly evidence of life in the past. Here we enter into an intellectual process that separates him, the somewhat learned enthusiast with a modicum of knowledge and an abundance of religious conviction, from his servants and family, who now fade from the story. The coins themselves had, in the space of a few hours, moved from lost treasure, to recovered objects of popular speculation, to family possessions transferred from tenurial outreach into the private household, to become, finally, the focus of critical, scholarly contemplation in the solitude of Blundell's study. Here he communed silently with the textual authorities represented in his library. The "living" past of the disgorged artifacts was now being mediated through and explained by the historical past, the unattainable realm of dead kings and chroniclers. Although the works to which Blundell refers in the notebook are a mixture of medieval and modern, antiquarian

⁵⁹ The story of King Alfred, complete with persecution by Danes, flight, and hunger, had particular appeal to the long-suffering Blundell, who saw in him an ancient model for faith under dire circumstances. *Crosby Records*, 50-1. Similar sentiments color his account of Edward the Martyr, *ibid.*, 59.

and historical, he was reading them for other than the conventional exemplary or commemorative value. He was instead using them as props, aids to guide his historical imagination, in thinking about how and why the coins were made, by whom, and, perhaps, how they came to be buried where they were.

The exercise began with a "more dilligent reveue" of the coins' condition and their inscriptions, but soon ran up against Blundell's own rather limited linguistic ability: Several of the coins were not English but Danish, and by his own admission he was unable to "perfectly imitate and expresse" the "strange characters" on many of them. To proceed further he needed outside help, to be provided by his books. And even this help had its limits. Antiquarianism by 1611 had fixed its gaze more steadily upon Roman remains than medieval, though the Old English editions produced under Elizabeth by Archbishop Matthew Parker and his associates, the legal texts of William Lambarde, and language studies such as Richard Verstegan's *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (the work of another nostalgic Catholic) and Camden's *Remains* were together beginning to shift interest in the latter direction. If Blundell was successful in identifying most of the individual coins, however, he conspicuously failed to fit them into the broader picture of Anglo-Danish history, instead reducing them to biographical mininarratives of each depicted king's reign. Without the critical tools to generalize about life and events in the tenth-century north, he fell back on the genre he knew best, the formal history. In so doing he was following in reverse the very route being taken at exactly the same time, several hundred miles to the south, by the London historian John Speed, who in 1611 was preparing coins to decorate the heads of his reign-by-reign *History of Great Britain*.⁶⁰

We know from Blundell's own account that his reading was wide and that he was better than usually acquainted with some of the major medieval and post-medieval authors of the past.⁶¹ By 1611, printed editions existed of many of the medieval historians. Various works by William of Malmesbury and Roger of Hoveden (or Howden) had been available in Latin for little over a decade in the collection of chroniclers published by

⁶⁰ Henry Ellis, ed., *Original Letters of Eminent Literary Men of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Camden Society, o.s. 23 (London, 1843), 108-13; 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: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 68.

⁶¹ For the medieval historians, the indispensable work is Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 2 vols. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974-82).

Sir Henry Savile, while Bede, the most admired Anglo-Saxon historian, had been translated into English by the Catholic propagandist Thomas Stapleton in 1565, copies of his history having been known even earlier in private libraries such as those of Cambridge.⁶² Blundell's familiarity with Bede, a northerner and a monk, is not surprising. The chronicles of Malmesbury and Hoveden were a bit more out of the way.⁶³ His source for Edward the Confessor's payment of Peter's pence is given as a life of the Confessor by "Alred." This is without doubt Ailred or Ethelred of Rievaulx (c. 1109–66), whose life of Edward was compiled after the king's canonization in 1161.⁶⁴ Acquaintance with this, and with Asser's life of Alfred, published by Archbishop Parker in a Latin and Anglo-Saxon edition in 1574, bespeaks a particular concern with the Anglo-Saxon era, one that contrasts with the usual Protestant veneration of Alfred as a kind of proto-Protestant monarch ruling free of papal tyranny, as exemplified in Robert Powell's 1634 comparison of that king with Charles I.⁶⁵

Blundell's veneration of Alfred as a pious lawgiver is clear. The king was "of such pietie and devotion as Florent. Westmon. and others write that hee daylie heard masse, and in the night season unknown to all his servants, hee frequented churches to here service. He wrote and promulgated most christian lawes." Alfred alone among England's kings, notes Blundell (from Foxe's *Acts of all places*!) "tooke his crowne and unction

⁶² E. Leedham-Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) lists four Tudor copies of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.

⁶³ The *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores post Bedam*, ed. H. Savile (London: G. Bishop, R. Nuberie & R. Barker, 1606; 2d ed., Frankfurt: Typis Wecheliani apud C. Marnium & heredes I. Aubrij, 1601) included, in addition to Malmesbury and Hoveden, the *Chronicon Ethelwerdi* and a few other late Saxon–early Norman historical works such as the chronicle then attributed to Ingulph of Croyland (which was in fact a late medieval forgery but would not be exposed as such till the early nineteenth century). It is certain from Blundell's own page references to Ingulph that he used the Frankfurt edition of 1601, which paginates differently from the earlier London edition. Ingulph concludes with a reference to the Laws of Edward, the texts of which are not there included, but were easily available in Lambard. Blundell also took extracts from Malmesbury out of a more modern and less direct source, Robert Parsons's *A Treatise of Three Conversations of England* (St. Omer, 1603).

⁶⁴ It was printed in a mutilated form in John Capgrave's *Legenda nova* (1516), and in a publication by Laurentius Surius at Cologne in the late sixteenth century. Blundell must have used the Capgrave volume, since the full text was first accurately printed by Roger Twysden in 1652 in his *Historia Anglicanae Scriptores Decem*.

⁶⁵ Robert Powell, *The Life of Alfred* (London: R. Badger for T. Alchorn, 1634); Aelfric of Eynsham's writings, published by Archbishop Parker's circle of Anglo-Saxon scholars as *A Testimonie of Antiquitie* (London: John Day, 1566), is another example of the Protestant attempt to find ancient roots for the reformed church in the Anglo-Saxon era. Asser was also published in Camden's edition of chronicles, *Anglia, Normannica ... a veteribus scripta* (Frankfurt: I. Claudi, Marnij, & Haeredum, 1603).

of the pope."⁶⁶ The reference to "Florent. Westmon." is in itself of interest. There is no chronicler called "Florence of Westminster"; Blundell probably meant to write "Florent. Wigorn.," in reference to the twelfth-century Worcester chronicle which was then (and until recent times) ascribed to one Florence, a monk of Worcester. Alternatively, he may have intended the *Flores Historiarum*, a work now attributed to Matthew Paris (continuing Roger of Wendover) but then thought to be by the nonexistent "Matthew of Westminster." Both works begin with Creation and therefore include the reign of Alfred, and both were in print by the end of the sixteenth century.⁶⁷ But Blundell's confused reference suggests that he had conflated the two books, and thereby helps to identify the precise edition he used: not the first, 1592 edition of Florence, which was edited by the northern Catholic antiquary William Howard of Naworth, but rather the version of this appended to an edition of the *Flores Historiarum* published at Frankfurt in 1601.⁶⁸

Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* and the *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil are other obvious sources – Blundell was looking up "authorities," not doing "research" in the modern sense, and so did not discriminate among his books as to "primary" and "secondary." The *Polychronicon*, in the late-fourteenth-century English of John of Trevisa, was one of the best-known potboilers of the later Middle Ages, printed by William Caxton in 1482 and republished several times in the early Tudor decades. Vergil's *Anglica Historia*, though notoriously unpopular among its English critics for its doubt of Arthurian and other British myths (and its

⁶⁶ Lincs, RO DDBI Acc. 6121; *Crosby Records*, 52. Blundell also relies here on Richard Verstegan's *Restitution*, published in 1605. It should be pointed out that relations between the Blundells and individual members of the pre-Reformation clergy had not always been smooth. A bitter civil dispute in 1519 had occurred between William's ancestor, another Nicholas Blundell, and Sir Edward Mulnes or Molyneux, parson of Sefton. See Lincs RO DDBI 24/3 and 4 for "the wronges and ingerys that dame Anne Mulnes and Sir Edward Mulnes, clerke, person of the church of Sefton, by thare gret mygth and pawer have done to Nycholas Blundell and his wvff and chyl dren": the matter finally had to be resolved by a decree in Star Chamber of 14 November 1527, for which see Lincs RO DDBI 24/5. The Molyneuxs, whose seat was at Sefton within the same parish, would prove formidable enemies to the Blundells over the ensuing century; Sir Richard Molyneux led the search of William Blundell's house in 1598.

⁶⁷ See Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 1:143–4; and Richard Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 94.

⁶⁸ Florence of Worcester, *Chronicon ex chronicis, ab initio mundi usque ad annum MCXVII*, ed. W. Howard of Naworth (London: T. Dawson for R. Watkins, 1592); *Flores historiarum per Matthaeum Westmonasteriensem collecti ... Et Chronicon ex chronicis, ab initio mundi usque ad annum Domini MCXVIII, deductum auctore Florentio Wigorniensis* (Frankfurt: Typis Wecheliani apud Claudium, Marnium & heredes Ioannis Aubrij, 1601), 459–696.

author's papal office), would no doubt appeal to a stubborn Catholic like the lord of Little Crosby.

Blundell resorted to books even more recent than Vergil's as well, since they could provide a guide to the contents of the older, less easily consulted medieval histories. It comes as no surprise to find John Stow among the authors consulted. By 1611, just four years before the second to last edition of Stow's *Annales* was to appear, his series of chronicles had become for most Englishmen the easiest point of access to their own history. More up-to-date than the earlier chronicles of Thomas Lanquet, Edward Hall, and Richard Grafton, and less bulky than the enormous and expensive Holinshed (Speed's *History*, we have seen, was still in press), Stow's *Summaries*, *Chronicles*, and *Annales* are frequently to be found in early-seventeenth-century book lists. Francis Godwin's book of bishops is a somewhat more peculiar choice, given that its account (which earned the author his own episcopal see) demonstrates the succession of archbishops and bishops free of papal suzerainty and under royal authority. But it, too, was often to be found in Stuart libraries, and its pre-Tudor emphasis lent it special relevance to Blundell's fixation on the Middle Ages; the Cavalier would make use of the same work in his own notes on bishoprics a few decades later.⁶⁹ John Caius's *De antiquitate Cantabrigiensis academiae libri duo* (a historical "proof" of the greater antiquity of Cambridge over Oxford) held similar information, making mention of Alfred's laws, and discussing ancient coinage and its values; this book also included a *catalogus* of major historians that Blundell would have found useful.⁷⁰ The presence of Foxe is tougher to account for, though Blundell may have wished to acquire a good sense of the enemy, and the Book of Martyrs contains informative narratives of the activities of Anglo-Saxon clergy and kings; his account of the coins makes frequent reference to *The Acts and Monuments* without any confessional sniping.⁷¹ It is Foxe, along with Polydore and Roger Hoveden, whom

⁶⁹ Lancs RO DDBI Acc. 6121, "Great Hodge Podge," fol. 93r.

⁷⁰ See John Caius, *De antiquitate Cantabrigiensis academiae libri duo*, 328, for Alfred's laws, and 361–6 for his *catalogus*.

⁷¹ In any case, Blundell was not alone among Elizabethan Catholics in citing Foxe to his own ends: in 1583 Lady Tresham recorded that her husband had cited Foxe's martyrs in defense of his refusal to acknowledge fault in concealing the Jesuit Edmund Campion. Hist. MSS Comm., *Various Collections*, 3:30. Indeed, Blundell almost makes Foxe look like a Catholic historian, writing of Athelstan's survival of a conspiracy: "In this king's tyme there befell a notable miracle recited by John Foxe, and registered by Malmesburie"; Foxe certainly did not record this as a "miracle." *Crosby Records*, 57; and Lancs RO DDBI Acc. 6121.

Blundell cites in support of his case for the continuity of payment of Peter's pence from early Saxon times, through the Danish invasions and the Norman conquest, up to the time of Henry VIII, who "brake off with the pope, and sea of Rome, for causes whiche all men knowe."⁷²

But the most important book here, medieval or modern, is Camden's, for its examples and discussions of ancient and medieval coinage. Blundell himself was obviously able to read Latin, since he refers specifically to pages in the 1594 edition of *Britannia* (Philemon Holland's 1610 translation having apparently not yet found its way to Little Crosby).⁷³ In either language, Camden's was the book that more than any other equipped the would-be provincial scholar, dwelling far from libraries and official records and isolated from the conversation of the most learned, with the minimum of what he needed to know. Camden was to the island's prehistoric, Roman, and early medieval antiquities what his older contemporary Lambarde had been to JPs cutting their way through thickets of Elizabethan statutes, and what still another William, the fifteenth-century canonist Lyndewode, had been to pre-Reformation church lawyers. *Britannia* deserves a special place in the history of history in England, less for what its author did for historical method than for what the book itself did, in the century after its first publication in 1586, for the dissemination of a rudimentary knowledge of British antiquity, and the turning of many gentry minds toward the history and archaeology of their localities. It would be reedited in 1695 by a team of scholars led by Edmund Gibson, who invited contributions from gentry throughout the kingdom with regard to county antiquities and natural history – and one of these contributions would come from Blundell's eventual heir, William the Cavalier, who thereby put back into the changing text of *Britannia* something comparable to that which his grandfather had taken out eighty-four years earlier.⁷⁴

Blundell's own synthesis of his reading from Camden with his own and his neighbors' knowledge is evident from his treatment of the Northumbrian king, St. Oswald, martyred at the hands of Penda, king of Mercia, in A.D. 642 (and more often associated with Whitchurch in Shrop-

⁷² Lancs RO DDBI Acc. 6121; *Crosby Records*, 48.

⁷³ *Crosby Records*, 55.

⁷⁴ In the 1695 edition of *Camden's Britannia*, edited by Gibson (London: F. Collins for A. Swalle . . . and A. & J. Churchill), 802, an addition by the editor refers to the coins as having been found 8 April 1611 by Blundell "in a place call'd Harkirke," and mentions their having been printed in a "copper-plate," it then goes on to acknowledge the assistance of the Cavalier, "to whom we are indebted for some particulars belonging to those parts."

shire, near the site of his death). Blundell transcribed from Camden some verses inscribed on the porch of Winwick Church, about thirty miles from Little Crosby:

Hic locus, Oswalde, quondam placuit tibi valde
Northanhumbroꝝ fueras Rex, nuncque Polorum
Regna tenes, loco passus Marcelde vocato.⁷⁵

Rather than rest here, Blundell – who unlike Camden was eager to believe stories of Oswald's miraculous deeds – embellished his account with reference to oral tradition:

See Cambden, pag. 981, in ye impression at London of ye yeare 1594. More-
o[ver], a Catholique gentleman and frend of myne whoe had dwelte heretofore
nere to the saide place, beinge moved by my letter to certifie me what hee knewe
thereof, writethe that the people thereabout have yet in there mouthes (it may be
by tradition) yt K. Oswalde beinge grevouslie wounded in a battell not farre from
yt place, vowed yt if hee might wendequicke (or whicke accordinge to there
speache) hee wolde there builde a Church, wherupon (as they saye) it was then
called Wendwhicke, now Winwicke.

Moreover on yt syde of Newton parke wch is towards Winwick not eight
roods (as I rem[em]ber saith this gentleman) from the pale, there is a little well
walled with stone within, which ye people call St. Oswald's well, and neare
therunto there was an olde tree standinge in my tyme which had (as the people
say) a picture standinge in it, the place shewinge when I lived there yt it might
fitlie be used for such a purpose, and further (as I remember saithe hee) I have
hearde it there reported that there had bine a greate pilgremage to yt place. And
thus I have thought good to take or rather seeke occasion here to write of ye place
of this blessed K. and martir his death, because ye same is by wronge information
saide in a late pious booke to have bine at Osestree.⁷⁶

Limited and without context as it may have been, William Blundell's knowledge of medieval history and numismatics was not commonplace in 1611. Yet it was fast becoming so. Since Leland's exploration of the monastic ruins and his examination of English monuments seventy years earlier, and even more since the advent of the county chorographies and the publication of a number of Tudor chronicles, historical and antiquar-

⁷⁵ "This happy place did holy Oswald love / Who once Northumbria rul'd, now reigns
above, / And from Marcelde did to Heaven remove." *Camden's Britannia* (1695), 790;
The Latin version is from *Britannia* (London: G. Bishop, 1607), 612.

⁷⁶ *Crosby Records*, 56, 56n. For Camden's more meager account see the edition of 1607,
612; and the edition of 1695, 790. There is more on Oswald's miracles (which Camden
regards as the "ridiculous" invention of medieval historians), and on his death, see
Britannia 452, and *Camden's Britannia*, 854. The connection between Alfred and Os-
wald is that Blundell felt obliged to explain the difference between Alfred the Great and
Alfred of Northumberland, the latter being a "nephew" to St. Oswald.

ian knowledge of the classical and medieval periods had achieved an unprecedented public prominence. From having once been the preserve of clerics and a few bookish aristocrats, it was now the common domain of the educated gentleman. The appearance of multiple historical genres in the late sixteenth century, as the chronicle yielded its virtual monopoly to the humanist "politic" history, the history play, and the historical verse narrative (from the *Mirror for Magistrates* to the minor epics of Michael Drayton and Samuel Daniel), reflects a rising level of historical literacy, a ready familiarity with and interest in the major episodes and personalities of the national and international past beyond the contents of classical historians studied for rhetorical purposes at the universities.

The speed of this change should be neither exaggerated nor denied. The real "revolution" in historical thinking came over a period of more than a century, and it is less discernible in the genres within which history was written than in the several ways in which and increasing frequency with which it was read. Were a graph to be drawn of the expansion of England's historical readership, it would ascend gently from as early as the 1470s, and a bit more vigorously after 1550; the sharpest rise, however, would come in the century after William Blundell's death in 1638, public interest driving and in turn fueled by a vastly increased number of published works about the past, of varying shapes, sizes, and descriptions. By the time of Nicholas Blundell the diarist, the boundaries between the oral and popular on the one hand, and the official, if partisan, versions of history contained in books on the other, were more firmly established than they had been in that of his great-great-grandfather a century earlier. The number of books on "history" of different sorts had increased to such a degree that something like a modern notion of proper historical literacy is evident, with historical episodes suffusing civilized discourse. This is concretely evident in the contents of libraries: Those for the sixteenth century generally contain few historical titles; even allowing for the greater numbers of books in print on a wide range of historical topics, the number of library lists, private catalogues, and publicly available copies of history books increased enormously during the seventeenth century.

What we would now call mainstream historical episodes from classical, medieval, and recent history, domestic and foreign – the material highlighted in humanist historiography – was becoming the stuff of daily conversation in the early seventeenth century, especially among the social and political elite: It saturates the writings of early Stuart miscellanists and

letter writers such as Robert Burton and James Howell. The great event had still to compete with the marginal and trivial, whether jokes and anecdotes involving famous persons, or the more popular variety of local lore and tradition that made its way around the village community to be picked up by (and perhaps sometimes embellished or invented for) traveling scholars such as Leland, Camden, and their many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century successors. Like the historical reader, these informal, oral modes of historical discourse have been little studied, despite the fact that a majority of Tudor and early Stuart antiquaries thought them worth recording and believed them to be a legitimate supplement to written evidence. The historical and pseudohistorical anecdote remained, and indeed became more commonplace in verbal discourse about the past at the very time that it was fading, according to Annabel Patterson, from humanist historiography: It found a new home in informal history when exiled from the formal genre. The anecdote was a manageable, portable snatch of the past that could be dropped into the most mundane social situations by men or women.⁷⁷

The conversational anecdote of the elite had its popular counterpart in village oral traditions of the sort that Blundell had heard about King Oswald. As late as the 1690s, Abraham de la Pryme, a Yorkshire vicar, boasted of his use of such sources at the beginning of his unpublished history of the town of Hatfield Chase. "I have searched & examined not onely all printed books & chronicles, in which I might expect to find any thing relateing there to, but have also examind all the most antient men liveing in the whole country round about." His historical practice follows this announced method, as he relies, during his recitation of regional history from the time of the Cimbri, on the popular sense of place and event to locate, in a small hill of earth near Hadham field, the battle of Heathfield (which Pryme thought was his own parish of Hatfield). Pryme's knowledge of history and chronology told him that this battle had occurred on 12 October 633 between the Deirans and Mercians, and that in it Edwin, king of Deira, and many of his nobles had perished. What he could not find from books was the precise location of the field of battle:

The country people know the aforesayd place very well, & will shew a place a little way of which they call Stei-Bur-Hill-Slac – where blood they say (by tradi-

⁷⁷ I am indebted to Annabel Patterson's essay in this volume for making me consider more thoroughly the matter of "portability."

tion) flow'd down in whole torrents unto the lower parts of the field and then ran like a river into the commonside to the southwards. . . . But when all this happen they do not know, but tis most certain & undoubted that it was after this great fight.⁷⁸

Such beliefs were as much a part of the early modern sense of the past as impolitic comparisons between Elizabeth I and Richard II, parliamentary tributes to Magna Carta, or narratives of Cannae, Philippi, and Hastings. Nor were they, as the interest of a Hans Sloane or a John Locke demonstrates toward the end of the period, strictly for the ears of the vulgar. The scholarly, "modern" variety of history, socially sanctioned and documented, proved remarkably flexible in appropriating certain vestiges of previously local legends, turning select regional heroes into national figures. Robin Hood was one example, and Guy of Warwick another. William Jackson, the customs master of Yarmouth in the late seventeenth century, joined in attempts to domesticate and historicize Robin Hood by drawing up an elaborate pedigree for him. This made Robin the ancestor of the Devereux earls of Essex and of Jackson's own contemporary, Viscount Hereford. Jackson places Robin in Henry III's time and recounts his death seven miles from Wakefield, in a nunnery; "over [his] grave is a stone with some obsolete letters not to be read and now to be seene called Robin Hoods grave & formerly an arbour of trees and wood", eager to fix this legendary figure in time, he even dates Robin's death to 50 Hen. 3 (1265), perhaps because he was familiar with the year as the date of the fall of Simon de Montfort.⁷⁹ The imaginative process could still, as it had for William Blundell many years before, tame even the wildest aspects of the past. Given a little outside reading and a memory for detail, an educated mind could take the unglossed, disorderly fuzz of inherited myth and tradition, much as it might take the more tangible but no less raw matter of a Saxon coin trove, and turn it into the comforting neatness of datable, chronological history.

This essay has raised several problems without pretending to do more than lay them open for further discussion. It may be time to cease picking over the carcass of early modern historiography for the origins of modern method, and to reexamine our own definition of the historical before we seek to impose it on the past. Future scholarship will have to take greater note of such matters as the perception of time and space, attitudes to

⁷⁸ BL MS Lans. 897, fol. 11r, 29r.

⁷⁹ CUL Oo.6.115, collections of William Jackson of Yarmouth.

ancestry, the sense of the continuity of past and present, and the ways in which history was read and imagined, as well as researched and written. Perhaps the techniques and sources of modern local social history can eventually show us how the inhabitants of our past went about the business of sorting out *their* past. The historical culture that produced and read Camden's *Britannia*, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, Stow's *Annales*, and Dugdale's *Monasticon* was unquestionably Camden's, Foxe's, Stow's, and Dugdale's. But it was also the culture of the curious landlord, William Blundell, his family, and their dawdling cowherd.

Murder in Faversham: Holinshed's impertinent history

RICHARD HELGERSON

As its first entry for the year 1551, Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577 and 1587) presents a detailed account of the murder of a certain Master Arden, a gentleman of Faversham in Kent, by his wife, her lover, and a host of accomplices. The entry is not unique. Leaving aside political assassinations, Holinshed's 1587 index lists some twenty-three murders. But its length does make it unusual. Where most of Holinshed's other murder stories get no more than a sentence or two, the Arden account goes on for a full seven tightly printed folio columns, nearly five thousand words, considerably more than he gives many events of state. Perhaps that's why he felt the need for a justification and apology: "The which murder, for the horribleness thereof, although otherwise it may seem to be but a private matter and therefore, as it were, impertinent to this history, I have thought good to set it forth somewhat at large."¹

The "horribleness" Holinshed vaunts is obvious enough: a wife's adultery leading to the murder of her husband; servants rebelling against their master; neighbors turning against neighbor; the engagement first of a poisoner and then of "a notorious murdering ruffian" and his vagabond companion; a whole series of grotesque failed attempts, culminating in a successfully brutal murder in the victim's own parlor; and finally eight spectacular public executions. Nor was the horribleness only a matter of

¹ Raphael Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles* (London: J. Harison et al., 1587), sig. kkkkki^r. Holinshed's 1577 account of Arden's murder differs mainly in lacking the extensive marginal glosses that distinguish the posthumous 1587 edition. In this and other quotations, I have modernized both spelling and punctuation. I also modernize spelling and punctuation in titles mentioned in the text, but I retain the original spelling, regularizing i, j, u, and v, in titles cited in notes. One further procedural note: in referring to "Holinshed," I am referring to the editorial group that produced Holinshed's *Chronicles*, a group that included a number of people in addition to Holinshed himself.

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