

Chapter 23

Historical Writing in Britain from the Late Middle Ages to the Eve of Enlightenment

Daniel Woolf

Historical writing in Britain underwent extraordinary changes between 1400 and 1700.¹ Before 1500, history was a minor genre written principally by clergy and circulated principally in manuscript form, within a society still largely dependent on oral communication. By the end of the period, 250 years of print and steadily rising literacy, together with immense social and demographic change, had made history the most widely read of literary forms and the chosen subject of hundreds of writers. Taking a longer view of these changes highlights continuities and discontinuities that are obscured in shorter-term studies. Some of the continuities are obvious: throughout the period the past was seen predominantly as a source of examples, though how those examples were to be construed would vary; and the entire period is devoid, with a few notable exceptions, of historical works written by women, though female readership of history was relatively commonplace among the nobility and gentry, and many women showed an interest in informal types of historical enquiry, often focusing on familial issues.²

Leaving for others the ‘Enlightened’ historiography of the mid- to late eighteenth century, the era of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, which both built on and departed from the historical writing of the previous generations, this chapter suggests three phases for the principal developments of the period from 1400 to

¹ I am grateful to Juan Maiguashca, David Allan, and Stuart Macintyre for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay, which I dedicate to the memory of Joseph M. Levine. For reasons of space, this chapter will exclude Ireland and the predominantly oral historical memory of Gaelic Scotland—though see Martin MacGregor, ‘The Genealogical Histories of Gaelic Scotland’, in Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain 1500–1850* (Manchester, 2002). For broader issues of historical thought, perceptions of the past, or the social circulation of historical knowledge, see my book *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford, 2003).

² Well-known exceptions include Lucy Hutchinson, discussed below, and Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle; for other examples see my essay ‘A Feminine Past: Gender, Genre and Historical Knowledge in England, 1500–1800’, *American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), 645–79.

about 1740. The obvious cautions apply that any such articulation is rough-edged, must allow for overlap as well as long transitions, and should not obscure other changes of relevance that can cross these rather arbitrary lines:

1) The first phase, from 1400 to about 1550, is dominated by dynastic and nationalist themes inherited from the royal/baronial and monarchical/papal struggles of the Later Middle Ages.

2) A 'Late Renaissance and Reformation' phase, c.1540–1660, is governed by the religious tensions that climaxed in rebellion in both kingdoms.

3) A 'Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century' phase, ending about 1740. During this phase historical writing adjusted itself to the permanent presence of ideological division, to the reality of a multi-denominational kingdom in England and of a Scotland increasingly dependent upon its wealthier southern neighbour, and to the tastes of a broader and more demanding readership.

DYNASTIC AND NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1400–c.1550

The historical writing of the late medieval and early Renaissance era continued themes and tendencies of the previous several hundred years, including a concern with issues of succession, legitimacy, and royal power that would carry over into the early sixteenth century. Perhaps the most notable feature was the rapid growth of writing in English throughout the fifteenth century in a country increasingly conscious of its anti-French national identity. This tendency, and the exposure of history to a wider lay audience than was possible in previous centuries, would be accentuated by the advent of printing in England from the 1470s, and among the earliest titles to come from William Caxton's press were a number of histories. While there is no space here for a lengthy discussion of the impact of print there is no doubt that it was enormous, and previous research has demonstrated an almost exponential growth in history books, and their readers, between 1500 and 1730, with the most vigorous growth occurring after 1640.³

One can distinguish four varieties of historical writing in this early phase.⁴ First, a long-standing tradition of clerical historiography, organized around the central role of the kings of England, had produced the monastic 'St Albans' chroniclers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (the closest thing to a counterpart to the vernacular, Crown-sponsored 1476–7 *Grandes Chroniques de France* [The Great Chronicles of France]) or the rich tradition of medieval

³ Daniel Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁴ Charles L. Kingsford's survey, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1913), remains a serviceable if dated survey; cf. Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY, 1982); and Mary-Rose McLaren, *The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century* (Rochester, NY, 2002).

Spanish royal historiography. The St Albans authors found fifteenth-century heirs in a monk such as Thomas Walsingham, and in secular clergy such as Adam of Usk, author of a Latin chronicle covering English history from 1377 to 1421. The *Polychronicon*, a Latin world chronicle written in the 1340s by Ranulf Higden, a Chester monk, achieved greater readership in the fifteenth century through the 1387 English translation by John Trevisa.⁵ Secondly, chivalric and militaristic historical writing, influenced by romances on Alexander, Charlemagne, or Richard I, as well as by the historiography of the Crusades, and originating in earlier adaptations (often in verse) of Geoffrey of Monmouth's mid-twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae* [History of the Kings of Britain] had grown in popularity through historians of the Hundred Years War such as Jean Froissart, who would be translated into English in the 1520s. This type of writing was continued in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries by both clerical and lay authors. Examples include the *Liber Metricus de Henrico Quinto* [literally, 'A Poem about Henry V'], a Latin verse chronicle (completed c.1418) by the monk Thomas of Elmham, and the chronicle of John Hardyng beginning with Brutus, the Trojan refugee widely held to have first established a monarchy in Britain. Hardyng's chronicle, written in English in the 1450s, was rewritten in the 1460s in a pro-Yorkist version. Various versions of the anonymous, London-based chronicle *The Brut* also circulated, the continuations of this originally Anglo-Norman work being the first prose histories composed in English since the ninth-century *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.⁶

Thirdly, a number of biographies of notables were written. Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, employed the Italian Tito Livio Frulovisi to pen a life of the duke's brother, King Henry V (r. 1413–22).⁷ A highly hagiographic encomium of the last Lancastrian monarch, Henry VI, would be written by his former chaplain, John Blakman (or Blacman) during the Yorkist regime and published early in the sixteenth century.⁸ Fourthly, the growth of incorporated cities and towns, especially London, nurtured a modest tradition of urban chronicle writing. This followed the annalistic organization of ecclesiastical chronicles, but with a much more local focus, each annal usually listing the mayor and other officers and then adding in brief accounts of miscellaneous events of local and occasionally national significance. This group includes the anonymous *Great Chronicle of London* and an early Tudor specimen, Robert Fabyan's two-volume *Newe*

⁵ John Taylor, *The 'Universal Chronicle' of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford, 1966).

⁶ Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, 2004),

140.

⁷ Recent treatments have been less kind to this work than previous scholars since Kingsford: see David Rundle, 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti*', *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 1109–31.

⁸ Roger Lovatt, 'John Blacman: Biographer of Henry VI', in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1981), 415–44.

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Cronycles of Englande and Fraunce (1516), which covered all of English history since Brutus but from a Londoner's perspective.

Dynastic or nationalistic themes run through much of the historical writing of the period, some of it even directly encouraged by court patronage, though nothing emerged like the conscious programmes of 'official' historiography in late medieval France or Spain and, slightly later, in the Italian city-states and principalities. Moreover, whereas the historical writing of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries would with few exceptions be unimpeachably pro-royalist, and its authors acutely wary of the likely penalties for presenting alternative views, it is notable that fifteenth-century writers seem to have worried less about their works falling into the wrong hands—the pro-Lancastrian chronicle of the Wars of the Roses attributed to one Warkworth, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, was completed under the Yorkist Edward IV.⁹

The advent of the Tudor dynasty in 1485 marked no watershed in historical writing. Although very little further monastic history was produced—even before Henry VIII (r. 1509–47) dissolved the religious houses in the 1530s—dynastic themes remained dominant. Henry VII, the first Tudor king, employed a number of foreign poet/historians such as the Frenchman Bernard André. The greatest of these imports, who arrived in England in 1501 and sojourned there for most of his long life, was Polydore Vergil, a papal functionary from Urbino. Vergil was the first to write a humanist history of England, the *Anglica Historia* [English History] (1534) in Renaissance Latin, organized by reigns instead of annalistically. Vergil challenged the historicity of the line of Galfridian (that is, derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth) British kings, and the myth of a Trojan foundation, only to incur the wrath of English and Welsh critics, many of them humanists themselves, in the first great English historical controversy of the print age.¹⁰

Scottish historical writing from the late fourteenth through to the early sixteenth century was virtually conceived in opposition to, or defence against, its English counterpart. Aside from the vernacular patriotic verse represented by such works as *The Bruce* and *The Wallace*, celebrating the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century struggles for independence, learned Latin historiography, too, had to contend with its English counterpart. The prominence of Galfridian views of a British past wherein Brutus's heirs had ruled the whole island provoked among the lowland Scots a parallel myth of Scotland's equally ancient foundation and continued independence. John of Fordun's fourteenth-century *Chronica Gentis Scottorum* [Chronicle of the Scottish People] (transplanted wholesale into the *Scotichronicon* by the early fifteenth-century abbot Walter Bower) had invested the early West

⁹ Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 211.

¹⁰ F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Calif., 1967); Denys Hay, *Polydore Vergil: Renaissance Historian and Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1952); and Peter Roberts, 'Tudor Wales, National Identity and the British Inheritance', in Brendan Bradshaw and Roberts (eds.), *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998), 8–42, esp. 15.

Highland Scots with an ancient monarchy while at the same time contrasting the barbarity of highlanders with the civility of lowlanders, and thereby giving rise to a long historiographic tradition distinguishing the two. The Scots had their own national mythology going back (via historical kings such as the ninth-century Kenneth MacAlpin, subjugator of the Picts) to the mythical Fergus MacFerquard. They even produced a countervailing foundational hero to Brutus the Trojan in the person of the Greek prince Gathelos and his Egyptian wife Scota—superior because the Greeks had, of course, vanquished the Trojans.¹¹

Building on Fordun and Bower, the early Scottish humanist Hector Boece wrote a Latin *Scotorum Historiae a prima gentis origine* [Histories of the Scots from the Origin of the Race] (1527) complete with a full-fledged line of Scottish kings starting with Gathelos; the work achieved great popularity through the rather loose 1536 English translation by John Bellenden, who had previously translated parts of Livy's history of Rome. A much more pro-'British' history by John Mair or Major, the *Historia Maioris Britanniae* [The History of Greater Britain] (1521), its title a pun on the author's name, had already appeared a few years earlier. Mair was a Parisian-trained scholastic eager to promote Anglo-Scottish amity by downplaying past conflicts and stressing common origins. His sentiments ran very much against the fervently independence-minded temper of his contemporaries, and consequently it was Boece's perspective, not Mair's, that would influence George Buchanan, the most outstanding Scottish historian of the century. Buchanan was somewhat sceptical of the earlier bits of Boece,¹² and his philological training led him to reject Gathelos. Fergus, however, became in Buchanan's telling the founder in 330 BC of a line of forty-five fully independent kings, while his post-Roman descendant Fergus II had re-initiated a kingdom that survived all subsequent incursions, English or Norman.

But the Protestant Buchanan also had a quite separate interest in the first Fergus that went beyond older issues of national pride, and which makes him a figure of the Reformation as much as the Renaissance. His Fergus was elected by clan chiefs, who were themselves chosen by their followers, thereby providing historical evidence for Buchanan's radical political theory which imposed severe limits on a monarch. That such cases could be argued either way is illustrated by Buchanan's own royal pupil, James VI (r. 1567–1625; from 1603–25 also James I of England), who would turn Fergus into a precedent for unrestricted royal authority, and a ruler by conquest rather than election.

¹¹ Roger Mason, 'Scotching the Brut: Politics, History and National Myth in Sixteenth-Century Britain', in Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England 1286–1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), 60–84; and Steve Boardman, 'Late Medieval Scotland and the Matter of Britain', in Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002), 47–72.

¹² Roger Mason, 'Civil Society and the Celts: Hector Boece, George Buchanan and the Ancient British Past', in Cowan and Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History*, 95–119.

LATE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION
HISTORIOGRAPHY

Whatever the partisan differences separating families with royal aspirations and their literary advocates, historical writing prior to the mid-sixteenth century was uncomplicated by genuinely ideological issues. The Reformation changed this profoundly by introducing religious divisions into the mix. In Scotland, which came to Protestantism slightly later and rather more abruptly than England, history was almost immediately linked to the development of a political theory that could support severe limits on royal power within a Presbyterian context that saw kings as leading members of, not heads of, a Calvinist Kirk. In England, where royal jurisdiction over religion was never in serious jeopardy before the 1640s, the majority of historians accepted episcopal Protestantism as a core derivative of monarchical authority. Here, the dissenting voice came less from puritan critics of episcopacy than from a tiny minority of (principally émigré or underground) Catholic writers such as Nicholas Sander and Robert Persons.¹³

There is also a discernible change in focus among historians in both realms. In England, the fixation on dynastic stability that dominated historical writing through the first flourishing of humanism shifted quite noticeably between 1530 and 1580 on to the need to provide a pedigree for a newly independent English church, only returning to dynastic and succession questions near the end of the sixteenth century as English poets, playwrights, and historians faced the grim prospect of a disputed succession following the death of the childless Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603). North of the border, the driving force behind Buchanan's *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* [A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland] (1579) and his *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* [History of Scottish Affairs] (1582) was neither simply love of scholarship nor his inherited Boecian nationalism, but the provision of intellectual foundations for a Reformation more radical than Stuart monarchs were prepared to contemplate. This was even truer of John Knox, whose vernacular *History of the Reformation of the Church of Scotland*, published in fragments in 1587, avoided the remote past of the ancient kings and began with Lollard persecutions. Knox's Catholic counterpart, John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, wrote his *History of Scotland* from 1436 to 1571 (1578) with similar religious concerns rather than older issues of Scottish independence or royal/noble relations, disputing with both Knox and Buchanan. By the early seventeenth century, hardening lines between Episcopalian and Presbyterian factions within the Scottish Kirk generated posthumously published rival histories by the Episcopalian Archbishop John Spottiswood (*History of the*

¹³ Christopher Highley, '“A Pestilent and Seditious Book”: Nicholas Sander's *Schismatis Anglicani* and Catholic Histories of the Reformation', in Paulina Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, Calif., 2006), 147–67.

Church of Scotland [1655]) and the Presbyterian David Calderwood (*History of the Kirk of Scotland* [1842–9]).

Much has been written about the influence of continental humanism on historical writing, and once again Scotland and England exhibit somewhat different patterns. There are similarities: both kingdoms had an underdeveloped tradition of ‘official historiography’; and in neither kingdom had there emerged a very vigorous urban chronicling tradition—certainly not when compared with the contemporaneous town chronicles of Switzerland and Germany, the modern edition of which fills several bookshelves.¹⁴ Yet Scottish historians, fewer in number though they were, embraced a humanist style of historical writing much more firmly and quickly than did England. There is a continuity of style and of Latin models from Boece through Buchanan, with very little by way of medieval annalistic survivals, though of course there was not much there to begin with, poetry and song having been the preferred noble genres of historical representation. This is much less obvious in England (despite its considerably greater volume of writing) where early attempts to write classical-style regnal history, represented by Vergil’s *Anglica Historia* and by Sir Thomas More’s biographical *History of Richard III*, failed for the moment to take root, despite the adoption of the regnal format in Edward Hall’s *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre [and] York* (1548), the last of the major dynastically oriented histories. Printing, which affected the distribution and popularity of history much faster in England than in Scotland, was the occasion of first an Indian summer for, and then the rapid decline and virtual extinction of, the chronicle. A long series of writers from society’s middling ranks, including Richard Grafton, John Stow, and the editorial teams associated with Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1577; expanded edn, 1587), put out book after book from the 1550s to the 1580s; reprints and revisions of Stow in particular appeared at intervals until the 1630s.

The reasons for this disparity in the shift to humanist models are not entirely clear, but the traditional links of Scotland with the continent and especially France were undoubtedly a factor (as two centuries later they would be in causing Scottish historians to embrace European philosophical history faster and more fervently than their southern counterparts). While English writers were certainly aware of humanist and ancient models they did not, Vergil and More aside, choose to follow them. In the 1580s this began to change, first with a small number of works offering prescriptions for the writing or reading of history. These would include an English adaptation by Thomas Blundeville of two Italian works as *The True Order and Methode of Wrying and Reading Hystories* (1576) and the witty, provocative critique of history contained in the *Defense of Poesy* (1595) by the courtier and poet Sir Philip Sidney. Particularly striking was the popularity at Cambridge University of the

¹⁴ *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis in 16. Jahrhundert*, 38 vols. (Leipzig, 1862–1968); and F. R. H. Du Boulay, ‘The German Town Chronicles’, in Davis and Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages*, 445–69.

French theorist Jean Bodin, whose *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* [Method for the Easy Comprehension of History] (1566) marked the peak of the European tradition of *artes historicae*.¹⁵

An even more powerful influence on history-writing was the vogue for the Roman historian Tacitus, who offered political acuity in a terse and epigrammatic style, and without the negative associations then attached to another shrewd political observer, the Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli. Tacitus was translated in the 1590s, and a series of historians quickly abandoned the chronicle for histories of particular monarchs, whose stories were simultaneously being engraved on English consciousness through the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. These 'politic' historians include the civil lawyer John Hayward (author among other works of a controversial history of the accession of Henry IV), William Camden (the reluctant historian of Elizabeth I's reign, arranged as Tacitean *Annales*), Sir Robert Cotton (author of a *roman à clef* on the reign of Henry III with obvious application to his own times), Francis Bacon (attempting to use his analysis of Henry VII's reign as a ticket back to royal favour following his disgrace in 1621), and Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury, whose history of Henry VIII is a late entry in this group. Press restrictions combined with self-censorship by authors fearful of offending the Crown kept political opinions within a fairly narrow spectrum, but authors such as Bacon and Cotton, and many playwrights and poets would nevertheless use the past obliquely to criticize and comment on contemporary policy. Perhaps the most outstanding narrative was *The Collection of the Historie of England* (1618), the work of a Jacobean poet, Samuel Daniel, whose subtle sense of cultural, legal, and linguistic change suffuses his account of events from the Norman Conquest to the late fourteenth century.

Politics and religion were by now inextricably linked, and the renewed concerns for dynastic stability, magnified by emerging English imperial aspirations, were not simply a revival of early Tudor issues. Indeed, a strong and independent monarchy provided the natural defence in England (unlike Scotland) against assertions of papal suzerainty. The older Galfridian myths proved to be of limited utility in this context. Much more relevant were the historical Emperor Constantine (the future 'champion' of Christianity born in Britain, allegedly of a British mother), and the murky figure of 'King Lucius', an entirely supposititious first- or second-century monarch who was converted by the emissaries of an early (and thus uncorrupted) pope, Eleutherius.¹⁶ Many writers in this phase used history as a weapon in the task of Reformation, but none more effectively, nor

¹⁵ Scotland never developed an *ars historica*, and England adopted it relatively late, and then derived largely from continental authors. Anthony Grafton, *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007); J. H. M. Salmon, 'Precept, Example, and Truth: Degory Wheare and the *Ars Historica*', in Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (eds.), *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1997), 11–36.

¹⁶ Felicity Heal, 'What can King Lucius do for You? The Reformation and the Early British Church', *English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 593–614.

with greater impact, than John Foxe. Exiled during the brief restoration of Catholicism under Queen Mary I, Foxe was heavily influenced by continental Protestant ecclesiastical historiography. He would write the single most widely read history book of his era, *Acts and Monuments*, first published in 1563 and continuously expanded in several further editions. Because of its focus on the pious lives and heroic deaths of his subjects, often informed by both documentary accounts and contemporary witnesses, Foxe has become known as a martyrologist in the tradition of contemporary continental Protestants such as Jean Crespin, and his work has very often been called simply the ‘Book of Martyrs’. But it was simultaneously an account of medieval and recent English history, as well as a church history in the tradition of Eusebius and Orosius.

Religion did not, however, feature prominently in the work of the politic historians at the start of the seventeenth century; indeed, many preferred to sidestep it as dangerous terrain. An exception of sorts was the ill-fated adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh, who famously published a *History of the World* (1614) that owed something to the tradition of ‘prudence’ to be found in Tacitus and Machiavelli, but much more to Protestant continental histories. Raleigh’s work ended in AD 130, and thus avoided engaging directly with the recent history of Christianity, but in its providentialism, organized around the convention of four empires or world monarchies (a periodization rejected by Jean Bodin), it exhibited an implicit apocalyptic element that hearkens back to Foxe. It also abutted on another important and neglected genre of historical writing, chronology. This was essentially the science of figuring out, from a comparison of accurately edited ancient texts originating in different cultures, the precise age of the world (feasible in a mental environment that took the Old Testament account of Creation literally) and the key dates of ancient kingdoms, pagan and Jewish. No easy task, this demanded mastery of multiple tongues and often complex mathematical calculations then necessary to use astronomical data. Already the subject of a number of Tudor writings (including a notable unpublished example by the cleric William Harrison, a contributor to Holinshed’s *Chronicles*), specimens of this multiplied in the seventeenth century. Few English practitioners actually met the bar set by Europeans such as Joseph Justus Scaliger—Thomas Lydiat and John Marsham spring to mind, as well as the Anglo-Irish bishop, James Ussher, who famously dated the Creation to a specific evening in October, 4004 BC. Chronology would find practitioners in the next decades such as William Howell, and even the great Sir Isaac Newton. But the genre was rather more vigorously practised in Scotland, where, nurtured by Knoxian apocalypticism, it famously inspired the laird John Napier’s invention of logarithms as a calculating tool.¹⁷

¹⁷ For Napier see Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI* (Edinburgh, 1979); on chronology more generally see Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1993). Chronology remained a critically important and highly specialized subfield of historical enquiry well

Religious issues ultimately proved the catalyst for twenty years of political instability across the British Isles as first the Scottish Calvinists and then their English puritan counterparts rebelled against an episcopal regime, suspiciously close to ‘popery’, supported by King Charles I (r. 1625–49). Successive civil wars fought in Scotland, England, and Ireland during the 1640s climaxed in the execution of the king in 1649 and the establishment of a godly republic in England and, in turn, its direct military governance of a Scotland that had belatedly thrown in with the king and his son, Charles II. The two decades of civil conflict and frequent regime change marked the climax of this phase in British historical writing—a time of ‘Wars of Religion’ on the continent, too—but also a transition to our next phase.

The collapse of government and clerical censorship combined with the proliferation of cheap printing in aid of the various sides’ propaganda efforts also had other effects. Most obviously, there was an immediate and considerable increase in the volume of historical writing—much of it oriented towards the very recent past which had been largely skirted by earlier generations as politically delicate. This gradually redirected public attention to the past as *cause* of the present rather than merely *mirror* on the present and source of cautionary examples, as it had done in sixteenth-century Italy and France. Above all, it produced much more explicit ideological divisions into historiography than existed previously. Prior to 1640, with a very few outlying exceptions, English historical writing was almost uniformly royalist in tone. Religion had of course long occasioned heated disagreement—Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* is a testament to the intensity of anti-Catholic feelings—but this did not feature prominently in the main stream of narrative histories which (again, with some Catholic exceptions) tended to cleave to the church and royal authority insofar as they discussed religion at all. After 1640, the distribution of viewpoints—parliamentarian, royalist, republican, Presbyterian, independent—became much wider as historians debated responsibility for the current predicament.

As so often is the case, a crisis reinvigorated narrative historical writing, which had notably run out of things to say about the English past—most of the best politic histories were the product of James I’s reign with relatively few being contributed in the 1630s. There is an interesting parallel to be drawn with the Italy of the 1490s, where several decades of increasingly repetitive humanist historiography was suddenly re-catalyzed by the crisis of the French and Spanish invasions, producing the likes of Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini.¹⁸ It must be admitted that few of the works produced in the 1640s are remarkable examples of research or intellectual achievement. Indeed, a great majority are the lacklustre efforts of parliamentarian partisans such as Arthur Wilson or their

into the eighteenth century, as exemplified in the late works of Sir Isaac Newton. See Frank E. Manuel, *Isaac Newton, Historian* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

¹⁸ Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981), 163.

royalist opponents such as Peter Heylyn. Nevertheless, the conflict, as such turmoil often does, provided a new set of issues for historians to sort out, amid desperate circumstances, and in the end it produced a few lasting gems. Thomas May, a parliamentarian and translator of the Roman historical poet Lucan, contributed a history of the then-current Long Parliament (1647) while the staunchly puritan Lucy Hutchinson, a rare female historian, penned a life of her republican husband, Colonel Thomas Hutchinson, which languished unpublished until the nineteenth century.¹⁹ The political philosopher James Harrington, heir to late Renaissance republicanism and Machiavellian prudence, achieved a stroke of brilliance in his conceptualization of the civil wars as the culmination of a century of social and economic change that he traced back to the Tudor assault on aristocratic power and the redistribution of ecclesiastical lands by Henry VIII. Harrington's *Common-wealth of Oceana* (1656) fictionalized England ('Oceana') and its recent monarchs, but the history it recounts in its early pages is unmistakable. The other great philosopher of the time, Thomas Hobbes, one-time translator of Thucydides and author of the infamous political treatise *Leviathan* (1651), would eventually answer May with his own history (cast in dialogic rather than narrative form) of the Long Parliament, *Behemoth* (1679).²⁰ Finally, the moderate royalist adviser to Charles I (and sometime Lord Chancellor to Charles II), Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, who fled the realm in the 1640s and then again following his fall from power in 1667, used his exiles to pen the manuscripts that have become his celebrated *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (1702–4). This fascinating combination of third-person recitation of events with autobiographical self-vindication is one of the greatest works of historiography in the English language regardless of its factual flaws and biases. It has immortalized its author, whose most fervent advocates in the next century would compare him with Thucydides. Clarendon's and many of these other works point ahead to (and often chronologically belong to) the Restoration, and they each anticipate one of the central concerns of the next few decades—how to explain the past conflicts in an increasingly partisan environment without inflaming further violence.²¹

¹⁹ Devoney Looser, *British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670–1820* (Baltimore, 2000), 28–60.

²⁰ On civil war historians see R. C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution* (3rd edn, Manchester, 1998); Royce MacGillivray, *Restoration Historians and the English Civil War* (The Hague, 1974), esp. 15–47; and David Cressy, 'Remembrancers of the Revolution: Histories and Historiographies of the 1640s', in Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History*, 253–64.

²¹ This problem, and the relation between history and memory in a post-civil war context, is the subject of Dr Matthew Neufeld's recent thesis, 'Narrating Troubled Times: Making Sense of the Civil Wars and Interregnum in Memory and History, England 1660–1714', Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 2008.

THE RESTORATION AND EARLY
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The historians of the Restoration and early eighteenth century inherited two problems, one political and social, the other intellectual and aesthetic. The first was the fallout of two decades of intense instability culminating in a previously unthinkable regicide. Explanation of the civil wars continued to provide the dominant subject of narrative among both triumphant royalists of various stripes and the defeated. The latter included Edmund Ludlow, a former army officer and radical in exile, and the poet and former republican official John Milton, who published an unfinished *History of Britain* (1670), largely written during the 1650s. Nominally about divine punishment of the ancient Britons for collective sin, it was really on the failure of godly rule in his own times.²² Many others such as the parliamentary general Sir Thomas Fairfax (1699), the Cromwellian official Bulstrode Whitelocke (1682), the cleric Richard Baxter (1696), and the royalist Sir Philip Warwick (1701) authored posthumously published (and often heavily censored) memoirs of their experiences in the fashion of the fifteenth-century French historian Commynes. The Crown even created in 1661 a French-style office of Historiographer Royal, with expressly polemical purposes. None of its early occupants produced original historical work, and they were selected principally for their polemical skills or for their literary reputation and connections with the powerful. Their number included the poet John Dryden, whose major contribution was the translation of the French Jesuit Louis Maimbourg's *History of the League* (1684), really a thinly disguised attack on the Whig parliamentary leader the earl of Shaftesbury. The office was subject to partisan patronage and at the Glorious Revolution Dryden was out, succeeded by his long-standing foe, the playwright Thomas Shadwell.²³ A comparable office was also established in Scotland to similar ends, and unlike its English counterpart has survived to the present day.²⁴

Though the violence had abated and a precarious stability returned, this was not the Britain of a generation earlier. This period has often been distinguished for the emergence of the first political parties, Whig and Tory, towards the end of the century and for the so-called rage of party that ensued early in the next. But long before any parties came into being the political landscape was already well and truly fractured. So, too, was the religious picture, as neither

²² Nicholas Von Maltzahn, *Milton's History of Britain* (Oxford, 1991).

²³ Paulina Kewes, 'Acts of Remembrance, Acts of Oblivion: Rhetoric, Law, and National Memory in Early Restoration England', in Lorna Clymer (ed.), *Ritual, Routine, and Regime: Institutions of Repetition in Euro-American Cultures, 1650–1832* (Toronto, 2006), 103–31.

²⁴ Denys Hay, 'The Historiographers Royal in England and Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review*, 30 (1951), 15–29. Only in the next century did the English office begin to be awarded to men of principally scholarly, rather than literary, abilities.

the re-establishment of the Church of England nor a series of punitive laws against former puritans—now called ‘dissenters’ or ‘nonconformists’—could eradicate the various denominations and sects that had emerged in the 1640s and 1650s.

The consequences for historiography were several: that historians now very explicitly wrote from a distinctive politico-religious perspective, even while outwardly claiming that they were presenting the unvarnished truth; that debate continued (even more acerbically despite the insistence of literary arbiters such as Joseph Addison on ‘polite’ learning); and that this in turn imposed a need for these historiographical combatants to prove both their own veracity, probity, and ‘impartiality’, and their opponents’ moral defects, poor judgement, and partisan bias.²⁵ Borrowing a traditional technique of church history, the historians of the Restoration turned to the transcription and printing of documents and political tracts at length. John Rushworth, a former parliamentary official, published *Historical Collections* (1659–1701) consisting entirely of such documents, a work answered by the *Impartial Collection* (1682) of his royalist counterpart, John Nalson. This document-mongering (unsatisfactory in literary terms, but ultimately helpful to later generations of historians) would continue through to the early eighteenth century, on both political and religious history; an author such as John Strype virtually making a career out of the publication of documents combined with lives of Tudor prelates. Others adopted the Procopian genre, previously underutilized in Britain, of the ‘Secret History’, purporting to lay open in public the *arcana imperii* and the private scandals of great men.²⁶ By the century’s end, the former royalist and parliamentary positions of the 1640s to the 1660s had transitioned, more or less, into identifiable ‘Whig’ and ‘Tory’ interpretations of history, their differences discernible not only in descriptions of seventeenth-century troubles but in attitudes to a whole range of episodes in English history such as the Norman Conquest, the relation of the medieval kings to their parliaments and nobility, and the course of the Reformation itself.²⁷

The second problem was a consequence of the first. Historians and some readers were deeply dissatisfied with the quality of narrative historiography. In part this can be attributed to a renewed popularity of the *ars historica*, especially though French authors such as Pierre Le Moyne, and new editions of older English works such as those of Degory Wheare (1623; translated from Latin 1685) and Matthias Prideaux, whose *An Easy and Compendious Introduction for Reading*

²⁵ Joseph H. Preston, ‘English Ecclesiastical Historians and the Problem of Bias, 1559–1742’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 32 (1971), 203–20.

²⁶ Eve Tavor Bannet, ‘“Secret History”: or, Talebearing Inside and Outside the Secretorie’, in Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History*, 367–88; and Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore, 2005), 469–73, 482–505.

²⁷ Mark Knights, ‘The Tory Interpretation of History in the Rage of Parties’, in Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History*, 347–66; Blair Worden, *Roundhead Reputations: the English Civil Wars and the Passions of Posterity* (London, 2001); and Melinda S. Zook, ‘The Restoration Remembered: The First Whigs and the Making of their History’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 17 (2002), 213–29.

all Sorts of Histories (1648), the work of a student, had reached its sixth edition by 1682. These delivered stylistic canons for the writing of history, and criticism of past historians, which ran well beyond the more general advice of an ancient authority such as Cicero, whose dictum that history was *lux veritatis et magistra vitae* now evolved into a more narrow construction of history as ‘the most admirable foundation for politicks’.²⁸ Virtually none of the previous century of English historians was deemed adequate, and the chroniclers in particular were by now well beyond the pale, though one notes the survival of the annalistic form in many unpublished parochial and town chronicles of the eighteenth century.²⁹ Partly this was because of a conviction, articulated by earlier writers such as Bacon and Raleigh but never much honoured before 1660, that in order to write proper history one had to be a man of experience, education, high birth, and public life. Few had the requisite standing and experience to write a general history of England in the style of Livy (whose stock rose anew in this era of neoclassicism), or a history of a particular event such as the civil wars, after Thucydides, easily the most admired of the ancients in the second half of the century given the urgent reorientation of historiography to the recent past. Nor could most come up to the mark set by two much-respected early seventeenth-century figures, the Italian cleric Paolo Sarpi, whose antipapal politics and critical *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino* [History of the Council of Trent] (1619) played very well in Protestant England, and the French politician Jacques-Auguste de Thou, whose *Historia sui temporis* [History of his Own Times] (1604–20, its negative portrayal of Mary, Queen of Scots having provided the spark for Camden’s *Annales* in response) became a model for contemporary political history. Perhaps the most successful imitator of Thucydides, de Thou, and the Italian historian of the French wars of religion, Davila, was Clarendon himself, whose work was published by his Tory sons in 1702–4 to a generally positive reception.³⁰ The posthumously published *History of his own Time* (1724) by the Scottish-born Whig Bishop Gilbert Burnet (who had in 1679 received the thanks of parliament for the first volume of his *History of the Reformation* [1679–1714]) proved much more divisive, generally attracting derision from Tories and High Church clerics, and scathing reviews from such notable literary figures as

²⁸ The remark is that of John Dunton, a hack writer of the end of the century; quoted in Daniel Woolf, ‘Narrative Historical Writing in Restoration England: A Preliminary Survey’, in W. Gerald Marshall (ed.), *The Restoration Mind* (London, 1997), 207–51, at 208.

²⁹ Philip Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture: From Clarendon to Hume* (Basingstoke, 1996), 1–22, on dissatisfaction with the writing of English history; for urban chronicles, see Rosemary Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), 74–99.

³⁰ Clarendon remains the best-studied of English historians from this period: see B. H. G. Wormald, *Clarendon: Politics, Historiography and Religion, 1640–1660* (Cambridge, 1951); Martine Watson Brownley, *Clarendon and the Rhetoric of Historical Form* (Philadelphia, 1985); and Paul Seaward, ‘Clarendon, Tacitism, and the Civil Wars of Europe’, in Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History*, 285–306.

Jonathan Swift. Critics of historical writing focused much more squarely than their Tudor predecessors on stylistic issues, and the very documents and quotations deemed essential to prove a case were disruptive of narrative flow and offered a poor substitute for the dramatic set speeches of ancient historiography.

The Restoration also saw renewed and more acute concern over the history of English law, its predating of the Norman Conquest (for if a Conqueror such as William I could set aside all laws, what was to stop his modern-day Stuart successors?), and the antiquity of institutions such as parliament. These issues dated back to the early seventeenth-century scholarship of Selden and Spelman, and to subsequent polemics against a Norman ‘yoke’ by the radical Levellers of the 1640s, but they acquired a new urgency in the post-civil war era, a time in which fear of absolutism and ‘universal monarchy’, embodied in France’s Louis XIV, accentuated older anti-Catholic feeling. Both the royalist Robert Brady, author of a high Tory *Complete History of England* (1685) and several other historical works, and his Whig critic James Tyrrell, author of a three-volume *General History of England* (1696–1704) covering history up to Richard II, embody a historiography that attended anew to the medieval past in as highly polemical a fashion as the innumerable accounts of the recent wars.³¹ Religion remained similarly controversial, and it too generated scholarship in support of argument, in various forms. These included pan-insular explorations of the primitive church in Britain such as Bishop Edward Stillingfleet’s *Origines Britannicae* (1685); full-scale narrative church histories in the mode of Thomas Fuller’s *Church-history of Britain* (1655), and Jeremy Collier’s *Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain* (1708); lives of bishops and archbishops (most notably Henry Wharton’s collection, *Anglia Sacra* [1691]); new editions of medieval chronicles (the stock-in-trade of the Oxford Tory Thomas Hearne early in the eighteenth century);³² and, in the work of a cleric such as George Hicks, superior philological and linguistic scholarship.

In many ways, these decades saw a kind of ‘reclericalization’ of history as, for the first time since the end of the Middle Ages, significant numbers of clergy of various ranks engaged either in narrative history (as in the case of the rural cleric Laurence Echard, whose general *History of England* appeared in instalments from 1707 to 1718), or antiquarian scholarship. The universities, themselves clerically dominated institutions, played a much more direct role in generating both historical scholarship and historical narrative than they had done earlier in the century. This culminated in 1724 with the establishment of Regius Professorships

³¹ The indispensable account of these issues remains J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge, 1957; rev. edn, Cambridge, 1987). Cf. Janelle Renfrow Greenberg, *The Radical Face of the Ancient Constitution: St Edward’s ‘Laws’ in Early Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2001).

³² Theodor Harmsen, *Antiquarianism in the Augustan Age: Thomas Hearne, 1678–1735* (Oxford/New York, 2000).

of Modern History ('modern' here beginning in late antiquity) at Oxford and Cambridge. This court-sponsored initiative produced little concrete history for the moment, but it marked a milestone in the association of historical writing with the culture of academe (following the establishment by Camden of a chair in ancient history at Oxford a century earlier and a short-lived counterpart professorship at Cambridge about the same time). Moreover, the argumentative tactics embraced by lay authors such as Brady and Tyrrell were often derived from sacred history, including the tendency to bury one's opponents in a sea of quotations and documents.³³

Faced with the challenge of writing what Francis Bacon had once called 'perfect history',³⁴ many aspiring historians self-insured against public failure by adopting the old tactic of the antiquaries—asserting that they were in fact *not* historians but rather assemblers of the materials for some future history. Even a bold spirit like Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, a transitional figure to the Enlightenment and the quintessential creature of party, would eventually formulate his reflections on history as *Letters* (1752) rather than as a history *per se*. Others abandoned their histories incomplete or half-baked. Sir William Temple, one of the most outspoken critics of modern historical writing, called for a new national history, but his own efforts stopped short with an *Introduction to the History of England* (1695) that got no further than the Norman Conquest. Swift, Temple's more illustrious secretary, tried to continue his employer's work but would lay down his quill at the mid-twelfth century.³⁵

Those with strong views on the literary deficiencies of historians faced an even worse spectacle in the very rapid climb in history's popularity during these decades. No longer a minor literary form, history had arguably become by the early eighteenth century the single most commercially popular and fashionable published form of writing, a supremacy that would be rivalled in coming decades only by the fledgling novel—itself generally packaged as a 'history'.³⁶ Historical works also achieved much wider distribution, socially and geographically, than ever before and genres and formats proliferated as publishers and would-be authors cashed in on this success. Where early Stuart readers had available a limited selection of classics and new works, their Restoration and early eighteenth-century successors faced a bewildering array of choices between large and expensive works on the one hand and compendia, epitomes, chapbooks, broadsheet ballads, and chronologies on the other. The sufferings of English and Scottish dissenters under the Restoration regime were chronicled respectively

³³ Hicks, *Neoclassical History*, 36–9, 91–8.

³⁴ George Huppert, *The Idea of Perfect History* (Urbana, 1970).

³⁵ Hicks, *Neoclassical History*, 100–1. Swift did, however, contribute a history in *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen* about politics under Queen Anne, which would not be published until 1758.

³⁶ Karen O'Brien, 'History and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History*, 397–413.

by Edmund Calamy and his Scottish correspondent, the Glaswegian-born minister Robert Wodrow.³⁷ Clever authors and booksellers simultaneously devised a new strategy for making expensive books affordable through serialization, the means by which the French-born Paul de Rapin-Thoyras published the popular English translation of his *Histoire d'Angleterre* [History of England] (written 1707–24; serialized in English 1728–32). Many others sought advance subscription for works tailored to a particular group or even political party.³⁸ The Whig John Oldmixon would sell his *History of England during the Reigns of the Royal House of Stuart* (1730) in this manner. An ambitious literary projector named John Hughes commissioned a *Complete History of England* (1706) consisting of two volumes of reprints of early and mid-seventeenth-century histories and a third volume of new material, written by the Whig cleric White Kennett, beginning with Charles I and running up to the present. The durability of the earlier works is in itself a comment on the perceived poverty of more recent efforts, and may in turn have been partially responsible for the relative dearth of new writing on the political history of the late medieval and Tudor centuries before the mid-1700s.³⁹

ANTIQUARIANISM

While humanism had failed initially to take hold of narrative history, it proved more immediately successful with other forms of scholarship related to the past, in particular the several different activities that have collectively acquired the unflattering modern name 'antiquarianism'.⁴⁰ Its practitioners were linked by a love of learning and of the evidentiary fragments of the past that largely eluded most narrative historians. The antiquaries were not oblivious to present concerns, nor to useful lessons that the past could provide, but their hearts lay elsewhere. For some time, most of them self-consciously eschewed both the duties and the title of historian, even though from our present-day perspective they were engaged in historical research, organizing their works around particular places or topics rather than chronologically. Peter N. Miller's and Donald R. Kelley's chapters in this volume provide surveys of antiquarian and philological scholarship across this long period, permitting a briefer excursus here.

³⁷ Calamy's Tory counterpart, John Walker, answered with a comparable account of *The Sufferings of the Clergy* (London, 1714) an account of ministers persecuted during the civil wars and interregnum.

³⁸ W. A. Speck, 'Politicians, Peers and Publication by Subscription, 1700–1750', in Isabel Rivers (ed.), *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1982), 47–68; and Woolf, *Reading History*, 281–317.

³⁹ Woolf, 'Narrative Historical Writing', 212.

⁴⁰ May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford, 1971), remains the best single account of Tudor antiquarianism.

The antiquaries initially fell into two distinct but not mutually exclusive groups, both to some degree resembling a pair of fifteenth-century progenitors, William Worcestre and John Rous, but descended more directly from the Henrician scholar John Leland. The first group operated in the grand tradition of continental Renaissance philology, their scholarship directed towards the recovery and restoration of ancient and eventually medieval texts. This was Leland's principal interest, and his charge from Henry VIII following the dissolution of the great monastic houses (custodians of much of the kingdom's medieval heritage) was to rescue and preserve from ruin the manuscripts within which evidence might be found for the historical independence of the English Church and king from papal interference. A line of philological antiquaries stretches from Leland at the beginning of the sixteenth century through Richard Bentley two hundred years later, and includes along the way Archbishop Matthew Parker (a collector of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts which could be adduced to support a Protestant inheritance), Sir Henry Savile (translator of Tacitus and editor of medieval chronicles), and an outstanding early Stuart student of legal and ecclesiastical antiquities, Sir Henry Spelman. The most remarkable antiquary of the period, and England's most celebrated scholar internationally, was Spelman's younger contemporary, John Selden. A lawyer, parliamentarian, and polyglot admirer of French philology, Selden brought unrivalled erudition and a sophisticated sense of change to the writing of historical works. In the first half of the seventeenth century he poured out a stream of volumes on the institutions of English law, on the history of social arrangements such as ranks and titles (*Titles of Honor* [1614]), and on the payment of tithes (*Historie of Tithes* [1618]), often within a comparative framework that drew on ancient and contemporary European examples.

The other major category of antiquarianism descended even more directly from Leland. Though he published very little in his lifetime, Leland's peripatetic *Itinerary* through England in the 1540s recorded both popular lore (eventually repudiated in the next century by increasingly document-oriented writers) and local topography and antiquities. His manuscripts circulated in subsequent decades and influenced several Elizabethan and early Stuart scholars beginning with William Lambarde, who in 1576 published a *Perambulation of Kent* describing that shire's topography, great families, and other features of interest. There followed a series of county surveys or 'chorographies', and one or two comparable studies of particular cities (including the chronicler Stow's detailed *Survey of London* [1598]). It also pushed Camden, the future historian of Queen Elizabeth, to write an island-wide survey of British antiquities, *Britannia*, which first appeared in 1586 (in Latin since his target audience included foreign scholars). He expanded it over several further editions up to 1594, and had it translated into English in 1610; through further posthumous editions it became both anchor and guiding light for two centuries of English genealogical and archaeological antiquarianism, which relied less exclusively on close analysis of textual change and

rather more on observation of natural or man-made physical objects. Many scholars followed Camden, variously concerned with everything from Roman or Saxon coins, funeral monuments, or the origins of particular customs or traditions, to family ancestry, titles, and heraldry.⁴¹ This early explosion of antiquarian activity, often patronized by the wealthy virtuosi who were simultaneously amassing collections of interesting objects, even gave rise to a short-lived society or ‘college’ of antiquaries (1586–1614).

The Restoration saw significant changes in antiquarianism, especially its peripatetic variant. The keen interest in matters of ancestry and genealogy had abated considerably, reflecting the loosening of social standards for the claiming of social ‘gentility’. County chorography continued with even more counties being surveyed, but the tone and scope of the post-Restoration specimens differs markedly from that of Camden’s time, even though his *Britannia* continued to provide a revered point of departure, and was modernized and retranslated by a team of editors, led by the future bishop Edmund Gibson (1695). The reputation and recognizable name of Francis Bacon, whose methods provided guidance for the enquiries into ‘natural history’ of the Royal Society, also affected antiquarianism, which now bestowed on natural specimens and topographical features the enthusiasm it already devoted to man-made antiquities such as coins and monuments. Some of these early efforts, by the likes of Robert Plot, were of limited success, and virtually all—including the often bizarre essays on the construction of Stonehenge or on the origins of the earth and the genesis of fossils—were circumscribed by the instinctive privileging of classical culture and by a biblically limited chronology of five or six millennia. But the trend towards direct observation and even maverick departure from guiding ancient texts is unmistakable in the writings of John Aubrey, the Welshman Edward Lhuyd (an outstanding philologist and pioneer in Celtic studies as well as an exemplary field archaeologist), and the most distinguished antiquary of the first third of the eighteenth century, William Stukeley.⁴² The informal networks of the previous century were now augmented by more institutional connections, first through the Royal Society and then through a new Society of Antiquaries that began meeting informally in 1707; this process mirrored that occurring in the academies of continental Europe.

The changes on the philological side of antiquarianism are more subtle. The heirs of Selden practised their craft at an increasingly high and often more specialized register in support of the Church or royal authority, or in pursuit of a literary and aesthetic debate such as the notorious ‘Battle of the Books’ (an

⁴¹ Woolf, *Social Circulation*, 73–137 (on genealogy and ancestry), 141–256 (on antiquarianism); and Jan Broadway, ‘No Historie So Meete’: *Gentry Culture and the Development of Local History in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Manchester, 2006).

⁴² Michael Hunter, *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning* (London, 1975); Stuart Piggott, *William Stukeley: An Eighteenth-Century Antiquary* (Oxford, 1950; rev. edn, 1985); Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquaries of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1995).

episode in the longer running European *querelle* of ancients and moderns) that pitted newer-style philologists such as Bentley against champions of the superiority of antiquity like Temple, and others who thought ancient texts needed to be presented without modern emendations.⁴³ Others such as the palaeographer and bibliophile Humfrey Wanley improved the study of Anglo-Saxon, or prepared editions of medieval documents such as Thomas Rymer's *Foedera* (1704–35) or Thomas Madox's *Formulare Anglicanum, or a Collection of Ancient Charters and Instruments* (1702). Still others, such as the clergyman Henry Bourne, turned their attention to local traditions; his *Antiquitates Vulgares, or The Antiquities of the Common People* (1725) providing a bridge between the Tudor antiquaries who had first recorded these and the nineteenth-century rediscovery of 'folklore'. The ecclesiastical preoccupations that we have seen previously also informed a good deal of antiquarian enquiry as authors such as Browne Willis, a prolific Tory squire, and Kennett, a future Whig bishop, attempted surveys of parochial antiquities and studies of individual churches and cathedrals.

By now, antiquarian pursuits had stretched into Scotland, which, having largely missed the sixteenth-century wave, now produced in Sir James Balfour of Denmilne a keen collector of old documents. After the Restoration, the Scots began to catch up with important figures such as Sir Robert Sibbald (a contributor to the 1695 edition of *Britannia*) and Father Thomas Innes. The last-mentioned, a Catholic priest who spent much of his life in Paris, would become a disciple of current continental historical techniques (especially the pioneering diplomatic and palaeographic work of Jean Mabillon); he would employ these tools to begin the process of sceptically demolishing the mythic kings inherited from Hector Boece.

The engagement with both English and continental scholarship exhibited by this generation of Scots was a further harbinger of things to come following the legislative union of Scotland and England in 1707. While Bolingbroke's 1752 *Letters* (mainly written in the late 1730s) reflect older Renaissance traditions of didactic history and Augustan concerns for style, order, and the primacy of political advice,⁴⁴ they also point to the Enlightenment's philosophical consideration of history, characterized by a moderate scepticism towards received truth, an ability to step back from the particular and generalize, and an inclination to look for human commonalities rather than national differences. Style remained a critical concern of authors and readers, and historians such as Hume attended increasingly to securing appropriate reactions from their readers, addressing the inner lives of historical figures as well as their public selves, and striking a

⁴³ Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca, NY, 1991).

⁴⁴ Isaac Kramnick, 'Editor's Introduction', in Bolingbroke, *Historical Writings*, ed. Kramnick (Chicago, 1972), pp. xi–liii; and Kramnick, 'Augustan Politics and English Historiography: The Debate on the English Past, 1730–35', *History and Theory*, 6 (1967), 33–56.

sympathetic or ‘sentimental’ chord.⁴⁵ If a satisfactory national history remained the elusive grail, at least till Hume, its absence was less acute a concern, having been displaced by interests that are less nationalistic and more cosmopolitan, and by a new attention to the private over the public, the cultural, social, and economic over the political, and the imaginatively conjectured over the strictly documentable. As early as the 1720s Rapin-Thoyras’s *Histoire*, the work of an outsider, had attempted to integrate England into a wider European past, his William I, as Karen O’Brien has noted, being virtually a prototype for his William III, ‘a military hero who pushes the insular English people into an international arena’.⁴⁶ Bolingbroke himself, retired from party politics, even argued that among history’s uses was its ability to purge, rather than enflame, ‘those national partialities and prejudices that we are apt to contract in our education’.⁴⁷ The cosmopolitanism of eighteenth-century historiography is all the more remarkable given that the same period witnessed extended territorial warfare among the great powers, a furnace in which a united Britain achieved its sense of identity in opposition to—once again—French influence.

In this vein, we can close our account with an ambitious and bold project of the mid-eighteenth century, an entry in the resurgent genre of ‘universal history’. If not quite the global history of today, neither was this simply a reincarnation of Eusebian ecclesiastical history. Indeed, it was largely stripped of the religious focus that had informed such works from late antiquity and the apocalyptic tone that marked more recent versions from Sleidan to Sir Walter Raleigh. Like Holinshed’s *Chronicles* nearly two centuries earlier but on a much grander scale, the *Universal History* (1747–68) was the work of many hands, among them the Arabic scholar George Sale and the Scottish once-and-future Jesuit Archibald Bower.⁴⁸ This was remarkable for its scope: it was a genuine attempt to grasp the histories of other countries beyond Europe, and it had few British precursors. With some notable exceptions such as Richard Knolles’s *Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603) or its Restoration extension by Sir Paul Rycaut (1667), the accounting for other countries’ pasts had consisted very largely in translations or adaptations of foreign-authored histories. Universal history points ahead to the encyclopedic interests and cosmopolitan and pan-European values of much of the historiography of the Enlightenment, in Britain as much as on the continent, the subject of chapters elsewhere in this volume.⁴⁹ National histories of Scotland and of England continued to be written throughout

⁴⁵ Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740–1820* (Princeton, 2000); McKeon, *Secret History of Domesticity*, esp. 547–87; and Victor G. Wexler, *David Hume and the History of England* (Philadelphia, 1979), 14.

⁴⁶ Karen O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge, 1997), 17.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15; and see ch. 25 by Karen O’Brien in this volume.

⁴⁸ Guido Abbattista, ‘The Business of Paternoster Row: Towards a Publishing History of the *Universal History* (1736–65)’, *Publishing History*, 17 (1985), 5–50; and Tamara Griggs, ‘Universal History from Counter-Reformation to Enlightenment’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 4 (2007), 219–47.

⁴⁹ For an excellent account of the transitions in eighteenth-century historiography see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 2: *Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge, 1999).

the eighteenth century, along with accounts of other countries. Oldmixon's Whig and Echar'd's Tory histories, and Scottish counterparts such as Patrick Abercromby's *The Martial Achievements of the Scots Nation* (1711–15) were echoed at mid-century by the Jacobite Thomas Carte's *General History of England* (1747–55),⁵⁰ and by general histories-for-hire produced by literary figures such as Oliver Goldsmith and Tobias Smollett. But the eighteenth century would belong to the conjectural, philosophical history of Robertson, Kames, Ferguson, Hume, and Gibbon, and to the study of manners and civility rather than national martial achievement or religious difference. This was a very different world than Boece or Buchanan, or Camden or Bacon—or even Clarendon or Burnet—could ever have imagined.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

- 1399 Deposition of Richard II (England) and Lancastrian accession
- 1453 End of the 'Hundred Years War' between England and France
- c.1455–85 Yorkist–Lancastrian 'Wars of the Roses' and Yorkist rule (1461–85) of Edward IV and Richard III
- 1485 Henry Tudor defeats Richard III to become first Tudor monarch
- 1530s Henry VIII breaks with Rome, inaugurating the first phase of England's Protestant Reformation; dissolution of monasteries and abbeys in England, 1536–40
- 1558 Catholic Queen Mary I dies, bringing an end to mid-century persecutions of Protestants; Elizabeth I succeeds
- 1560 Advent of Reformation in Scotland
- 1587 Execution of Mary Stewart (or Stuart), Queen of Scots (in English captivity since 1567)
- 1603 James VI, king of Scotland, son of Mary Stewart, succeeds Elizabeth I as king of England; 'union of crowns'
- 1625 Accession of Charles I as king of England and of Scotland
- 1642 Outbreak of civil war in England between parliament and king
- 1649 Execution of Charles I following a second civil war; England becomes a republic, eventually governed (1654–58) by Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell
- 1651–60 Scotland under English military government
- 1660 Restoration of Charles II to English and Scottish thrones
- 1678–81 Popish plot and Exclusion Crisis in England; emergence of early versions of Whig and Tory parties
- 1688 'Glorious' Revolution deposes Catholic King James VII of Scotland/James II of England; succeeded by William III and Mary II

⁵⁰ On Carte see Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 4: *Barbarians, Savages and Empires* (Cambridge, 2005), 65–78.

1707 Parliamentary Union of England and Scotland into United Kingdom of Great Britain

1714 George I becomes first Hanoverian king of Great Britain

1715, 1745 'Jacobites' (supporters of exiled Stuart claimants to the throne) unsuccessfully rebel

KEY HISTORICAL SOURCES

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