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The Creighton Century, 1907–2007

Edited by David Bates, Jennifer Wallis and Jane Winters

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Contents

Foreword
to the 2020 edition

The first edition of *The Creighton Century* was published in 2009 to mark the recent centenary of the Creighton Lectures at the University of London. The lecture series was established, and substantially supported by, the historian and social activist Louise Hume Creighton (1856–1930) to commemorate her husband, the historian and Church of England bishop Mandell Creighton (1843–1901). The first lecture was delivered on 4 October 1907 and has since been followed by annual events at the University. For *The Creighton Century*, I and my fellow editors – Jennifer Wallis and Jane Winters – chose ten lectures from the first 100 years of the series. Each lecture was introduced by a historian who was then teaching at the University of London. In addition to these ten lectures and commentaries our 2009 collection included the published version of Robert Evans's 2007 Creighton Lecture, 'The Creighton century: British historians and Europe, 1907–2007'.

In 2009 *The Creighton Century* was available only as a print publication. I am therefore delighted that the Institute of Historical Research (I.H.R.) and University of London Press are now reissuing the collection in July 2020 as a free open access edition, with this new joint foreword by myself and Jo Fox, the current director of the Institute.

After re-reading my original foreword, in preparation for writing these new remarks, my first reaction was to repeat everything that I wrote in 2009. The opinions and sentiments it contains certainly merit repetition. But re-reading the volume steadily moved my thoughts in a different direction, back to the ideals that animated Mandell and Louise Creighton and forward to the year 2020 and the unknowable beyond. In relation to the first, I started to think of the Creightons' belief in the international

importance of the study of history and the unshakeable commitment to history's significance in national and public life. And as far as the second is concerned, while I need hardly remind present readers that 2020 is the year of Covid-19, it may be necessary to jog the memories of future ones. This is also a year of much else besides. It is assuredly a time when we are starting to reconsider the inherited values and ethics that have shaped the way in which we think about the past and write history.

Tempting as it is, I cannot – and must not – start to paraphrase the extraordinary richness of the eleven Creighton Lectures reprinted in this volume. Nor indeed the insightful commentaries by distinguished historians based in the colleges, schools and institutes of the University of London. But no one could surely object if I made an initial specific reference to Eric Hobsbawm's 1993 lecture, 'The present as history', with its theme of writing the history of one's own time. Both poignant and profound as a reflection on the twentieth century and, at the end, on the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ideals it was supposed to embody, the lecture's concluding broadening of perspective and Hobsbawm's reflections on how history might be written in the future supplied signposts to be followed. I found the invitation to reflect on the subsequent thirty years just one of the multiple messages his lecture conveyed. It also made me wonder how he might have interpreted those years if he had been able to revisit and update the lecture.

The medievalist that I am cannot resist making reference to R. I. Moore's lecture on the twelfth- and thirteenth-century war on heresy and the profound social, legal, political and cultural changes it brought about. Here is another case of a historian changing opinions over a lifetime; Jinty Nelson makes this point in her commentary. The war, as Bob Moore says in a lecture at which I presided in 2004, can be seen as a case of the imposition from above of a set of ideological beliefs that led to the destruction of thousands of livelihoods and major political and religious change. He also comments that it had happened before and was to happen many times again, a reminder that we never neglect the seemingly remote past. Alongside these two lectures, and no matter what historical period they were dealing with, many others in this volume reflect on the use that the present they were writing about has made of the past. This is clearly there in the lectures given by Robert Evans, R. B. Haldane, R. W. Seton-Watson, Keith Thomas and Donald Coleman.

A foreword must be brief. But I must speculate on how Robert Evans might deliver his 2007 centenary lecture on British historians and Europe, which I heard, in these post-Brexit years. This lecture must certainly be required reading for anyone charged with responsibility for this country's future. And when I re-read the other lectures, I can only reflect that R. H. Tawney's has surely been more productive of constructive controversy than most and that Lucy Sutherland's on eighteenth-century London radicalism is another one that must give food for thought in present times. And that in these times, when university and school history syllabuses and historical perspectives are becoming increasingly global, the lectures by Joseph Needham and Ian Nish – devoted respectively to Chinese and Japanese history – widen horizons in remarkable ways.

I will conclude by saying that, approximately twelve years after writing my first foreword, it has been an immensely stimulating experience to be invited to write a second one for this new edition of *The Creighton Century*. All the lectures seem just as 'relevant' as they were then. To read them in 2020 is every bit as thought-provoking as it was in 2008–9. I might even say that it has been more so, second time around. Alongside other recent experiences, I have been made to think about the history of my own times. A lot has changed since the Creighton centenary year of 2007. New values indicate that there are subjects which we would now want to be there in the first one hundred years. That they are not is ultimately a reflection on how the discipline continues to evolve and needs to change. All of this fully justifies the reissue of this volume. The breadth of historical vision that it brings together makes this collection required reading for all who are committed – as Louise and Mandell Creighton were – to the cause of history in national, public and international life.

Professor David Bates
Director, Institute of Historical Research, 2003–8
July 2020

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I am very grateful to David for agreeing to write a new foreword to this 2020 reissue of his edited collection *The Creighton Century* which was originally published by the Institute of Historical Research in 2009. David's remarks are an eloquent reminder of how much has changed in little over a decade since the book's publication, and how this informs re-readings of these eleven essays, delivered as Creighton Lectures at the University of London between 1913 and 2007. Equally eloquent is David's appreciation of the value of these essays, in setting present events in historical context and preparing us for a challenging future.

Since the first publication of this collection the annual Creighton Lectures have continued, most recently at the I.H.R. The published version of Robert Evans's 2007 centenary lecture, which opens this volume, included a listing of every Creighton Lecture from 1907. For this reissue we now bring this record up-to-date, with details of the most recent Creighton lecturers and their chosen subjects, beginning with Professor Evans in 2007 (see pp. 25–8).

The twelve Creighton Lectures delivered in and since 2007 encompass the medieval to the contemporary past, and survey histories of Britain, Europe, the former British empire and the wider world. They chart the actions of singular individuals alongside accounts of mass movements and regimes, the brutality of which continues to shock. Several of the lectures delivered since 2007 also engaged actively with questions of historical practice, methods and historiography – subjects that remain central to our work at the I.H.R. Two of these recent lectures were published in the Institute's journal, *Historical Research*, while the ideas raised in others now find expression in some very important monographs by these extremely distinguished historians.

As David notes, the decade since publication of *The Creighton Century* has witnessed significant developments, not least how historians research, read and communicate about the past. A key driver here is the growth of digital publishing and the capacity for academic publishers – like the I.H.R. and University of London Press – to make many more of their titles available free as open access publications. It is in this format that the reissued *Creighton Century* now appears, and I hope this will allow new readers to discover and share these fascinating essays. On a more sombre note, the decade since the collection's first publication has also seen the death of several of its lecturers and their commentators: Eric Hobsbawm (1917–2012), F. M. L. Thompson (1925–2017), a predecessor of David's and mine as director of the I.H.R.,

and Justin Champion (1960–2020) who was another great friend of the Institute and who will be very much missed.

This new edition of *The Creighton Century* appears, as David observes, in the midst of a global crisis that leaves many of us troubled for the future. Historians are rightly concerned about the implications for their practice and profession, and especially the research infrastructure needed to support future generations of scholars. The Institute of Historical Research is playing its part, with others, to limit the impact of this crisis as best it can. And, like the Creighton Lectures in 2007, the Institute does so nearing its own centenary in July 2021. We are currently preparing for a centenary year that will explore the 'past, present and future' of historical research, concluding in summer 2022. In *The Creighton Century* we have the judgment and insights of some superb historians, past and present. Like David, I am confident their example will also be taken on by today's early career researchers, thanks in part to the greater availability of collections like this.

Professor Jo Fox
Director, Institute of Historical Research
July 2020

Foreword

to the 2009 edition

The first Creighton Lecture was given on 4 October 1907 by Thomas Hodgkin at University College, thereby inaugurating a series of lectures in history supported ever since by the Creighton Memorial Fund. Over the subsequent century, the lecture has been given by many who would unquestionably be regarded as among the most eminent historians employed in British universities; and – just occasionally – by non-British ones. The present volume celebrates this remarkable series and also the immense contribution to historical scholarship over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries of the historians of the University of London.

While it is a salutary reflection on all fund-raising projects that Louise Creighton's and the committee's original objective was to support a lectureship or professorship in history, the compensation for the failure to raise the required endowment has been a profoundly influential series of lectures. This volume publishes ten of these lectures, selected and introduced by a distinguished historian from a department represented on the University's Board of Studies in History, the body responsible for choosing the lecturer on the basis of recommendations drawn from the history departments in the colleges. The earliest lecture published dates from 1913; the latest from 2004. Each introduction is significantly different in approach, usually reflecting on the lecture's contemporary and historiographical significance, the career and contribution of the lecturer, and in some cases inserting personal memories of the occasion on which the lecture was given. The volume also contains the full text of the centenary Creighton Lecture given in the Great Hall of King's College by Professor Robert Evans on 26 November 2007. Professor Evans's lecture constitutes a magnificent commentary on what we may surely call the Creighton Century, taking the opportunity to use the

lectures as a prism through which has been refracted since 1907 historians' attitudes to Europe and to Mandell Creighton's own historical ideals.

It is a particular personal pleasure for me to contribute this foreword since, as the then Director of the Institute of Historical Research, I was responsible for organizing the lectures between 2003 and 2008. That time brought home to me with great force some things that I in truth already knew, but of which it does no harm to remind myself and, through this foreword, others. The first is that the University of London hosts one of the great lectures in history in the British Isles, a responsibility that it has discharged with great distinction. The second is that collectively the historians in the history departments of the London colleges and the various institutes which now make up the School of Advanced Study constitute one of the most numerous and intellectually powerful conglomerates of historians in the world. In these days when the federal University has been greatly decentralized, it is worth bearing in mind the sheer power and brilliance of this collective mass. The third is that the ideals that animated Mandell and Louise Creighton, namely respect for the highest standards of scholarship, historical impartiality, the international importance of the study of history, and an unshakeable commitment to history's significance in national and public life, are every bit as relevant now as they were in 1907. In celebrating a century of Creighton Lectures, this volume looks forward to the achievements of the second Creighton Century.

David Bates
7 January 2009

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(2020)

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The Creighton century: British historians and Europe, 1907–2007*

R. J. W. Evans

The first Creighton Lecture took place on 4 October 1907, almost seven years after the death of the scholar and bishop whom it honoured. Apart from being delivered by a lifelong friend, its published version stands in no discernible relation to Mandell Creighton himself, except for treating of his narrower *patria*, the Anglo-Scottish border. In fact the whole subsequent lecture series has been a second-best, a way of expending revenue from the fund (£650 at that time, half of it donated by Creighton's widow Louise) until such time – so the enabling decree prescribed – as a chair, or at least a permanent lecturership, could be created.[1] At any rate it has clearly served

* This is the lightly modified text of an address given at King's College London on 26 Nov. 2007, in celebration of the centenary of the Creighton Lectures. A list of all of them is supplied as an appendix (see pp. 25–8). For that reason, I shall not give further bibliographical references for those mentioned in this article. Some of the ideas in what follows were first sketched out in my 'Europa in der britischen Historiographie', in *Nationale Geschichtskulturen. Bilanz, Ausstrahlung, Europabezogenheit*, ed. H. Duchhardt (Mainz/Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 77–93. I remain very grateful for the invitation from the Mainz Institut für Europäische Geschichte and Akademie der Wissenschaft und der Literatur which allowed me to think them through.

This article was first published in *Historical Research*, lxxxii (2009), 320–39. The editors would like to thank Professor Evans for his kind permission to reproduce it here.

[1] Hodgkin, *Wardens*, prefatory note; University of London, minutes of academic council,

R. J. W. Evans, 'The Creighton century: British historians and Europe, 1907–2007', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 1–28.

the memory of Creighton, not so much as a remarkable prelate and public figure, but in his earlier and lasting avocation, as historian.

Mandell Creighton was, and felt himself to be, very English. He gave a famous address, to which I shall return, on English 'national character'.[2] Yet he ranks, equally and inseparably, as a 'European', indeed as one of the earliest of them in our profession. Let me identify three strands in that Europeanness. First, the five stout volumes of Creighton's account of the late medieval papacy. This magnum opus was (needless to say) no narrowly Catholic or institutional survey; on the contrary, Creighton called it 'materials for a judgment of ... the Reformation'. Rather it constitutes one of the first great attempts to introduce the British to explicitly *modern* and *European* history. In his preface the author is quite definite about both those interlocking purposes: 'I have taken the history of the Papacy as the central point of my investigation, because it gives the largest opportunity for a survey of European affairs as a whole ... The object of the following pages is to trace ... the working of the causes which brought about the change from medieval to modern times.'[3]

This enterprise earned Mandell the newly established Dixie chair at Cambridge (and a full three-quarters of a century later a distinguished successor in that office would remarkably devote his entire inaugural to Creighton).[4] It also led to Creighton's role in a second manifesto of European intent: the *English Historical Review*, of which he became founding editor when it was launched in 1886. The title connoted a local habitation ('England') for an openly international journal, designed to match Germany's *Historische Zeitschrift* or France's *Revue Historique*. The preface announced universal concerns and sought the aid of continental scholars; and Creighton was eager to secure foreign books for attention in its columns.[5]

Once he was appointed bishop (of Peterborough, then of London), other priorities imposed themselves upon Creighton. However, his European horizons continued to expand, even – and third, in our sequence – as far

28 Jan., 11 March, 25 March, 29 May, 3 July 1907. I am most grateful to Jane Winters for help with this source.

[2] M. Creighton, 'The English national character', *Historical Lectures and Addresses*, ed. L. Creighton (1903), pp. 213–40.

[3] M. Creighton, *A History of the Papacy during the Period of the Reformation* (5 vols., 1882–94), i, pp. v (preface), 3.

[4] O. Chadwick, *Creighton on Luther* (Cambridge, 1959).

[5] *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, i (1886), 1–6.

as Russia, where he paid an official visit as British representative at the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II in 1896. Mandell covered the event extensively in correspondence to his wife (whose father had been born in Reval, in the *guberniya* of Estonia). He was bowled over by the lavishness of the ceremonial, religious and secular intermingling, and by popular fervour at what would prove to be the last great spectacle of Russia's *ancien regime*. Moreover, this liberal Anglican bishop was hugely impressed by the regime's reactionary *éminence grise*, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, whose 'powerful mind, clear vision and large knowledge' made him 'one of the ablest men I have ever met'. The letters were preserved like relics among the family papers; and on the occasion of the *English Historical Review*'s centenary in 1986, I had the opportunity to consult them, courtesy of Mandell's grandson.[6]

All this gives me my theme for the present centenary commemoration, afforced as it is by a further anniversary: that of the treaty signed exactly half as long ago, in that same city of Rome which was so central to Creighton's professional concerns, both academic and ecclesiastical. In part I shall use as illustration some of the earlier lectures in the series. But bear in mind two considerations. On the one hand, the diversity and range of the annual Creighton Lectures have been vast: an appendix (below) shows titles and publication details, so far as the university secretariat in London and I have been able to establish them. About a third of them only will qualify for any mention at all in the present context. On the other hand, the question to be treated in my title is evidently itself much broader. So I shall endeavour to blend laconic case-studies with pointers to larger trends. Moreover, I shall say little about medieval topics, as lying beyond my competence; or about very recent times and colleagues still in harness, as lying beyond my presumption.

My overall aim is to suggest (in highly preliminary fashion) approaches to a gap in the literature on twentieth-century historiography in the United Kingdom.[7] As a genre this literature remains very British-, even English-

[6] L. H. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton* (2 vols., 1904), ii. 146–62; also M. Creighton, *Historical Essays and Reviews* (1902), pp. 297–329. J. T. Covert, *A Victorian Marriage: Mandell and Louise Creighton* (2000), pp. 243–7. Creighton's MS. Moscow diary and correspondence are hereafter cited as 'Creighton papers'. For Pobedonostsev, see Creighton papers, Mandell to Louise, 'Whitsunday' 1896.

[7] C. Parker, *The English Historical Tradition since 1850* (Edinburgh, 1990); *Geschichtsschreibung im 20. Jahrhundert: Neuzeithistoriographie und Geschichtsdenken im westlichen Europa und in den USA*, ed. G. Lozek (Berlin, 1998), pp. 47–112; I. I. Sharifzhanov, *Angliiskaia istoriografia v 20. veke. Osnovnie teoretiko-metodologicheskie tendentsii, shkoli*

centred. Not only is it stronger on method and theory than on form and content, but its subject matter has been almost exclusively national and domestic. Yet even if we wished to contend that native themes held hegemonic status in British historiography over that whole period (and I do not), it would seem important at least to consider how our Continental neighbours have been viewed. In other words, 'European history' is a valid category, beyond its own intrinsic worth, even for understanding British views of a *British* past. We ought to bring its practitioners within the canon, and also beware of miscasting some of our authors as exclusively English by bracketing out their own forays across the Channel.

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The years around 1907 looked promising for the nascent Creightonian vision of 'Europe'. The publication of the *Cambridge Modern History*, launched by Lord Acton (who had wanted Creighton to contribute a general introduction on the 'medieval roots of modern history'),[8] was now in full swing under Adolphus William Ward, a scholar equally committed (as the son of a British consul in Germany) to its inter- and trans-continental coverage. Related works of substance, such as Edward Armstrong's two volumes on the Emperor Charles V, had begun to appear.[9] There were fresh textbooks on recent European developments by John Holland Rose, J. A. R. Marriott, C. T. Atkinson and others. Creighton's enthusiasm for Italy from the Renaissance to the Risorgimento (he named his daughters after characters in Dante) had been inherited by such as his family friend, G. M. Trevelyan.[10] The first chairs in modern languages were springing up, sometimes helped into being by prominent historians like Charles Firth.[11] Precisely 100 years ago as I write, a pioneering School of Russian Studies was

i napravleniya (Kazan, 2004) is from the same stable. *History and Historians in the 20th Century*, ed. P. Burke (Oxford, 2002) covers some themes, but not this one. Latest is M. Bentley, *Modernizing England's Past: English Historiography in the Age of Modernism, 1870–1970* (Cambridge, 2005).

[8] Creighton, *Life and Letters*, ii. 203ff.

[9] E. Armstrong, *The Emperor Charles V* (2 vols., 1902); cf. *The Histories of Emperor Charles V: Nationale Perspektiven von Persönlichkeit und Herrschaft*, ed. C. Scott Dixon and M. Fuchs (Münster, 2005), pp. 185–6.

[10] For Creighton's first visits to Italy as a young tutor, see Creighton, *Life and Letters*, i. 69ff., 133, 139. G. M. Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic, 1848–9* (1907); G. M. Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Thousand* (1909); G. M. Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy* (1911).

[11] Cf. esp. C. H. Firth, *Modern Languages at Oxford, 1724–1929* (Oxford, 1929).

established at Liverpool under Bernard Pares. In the same year the young Robert William Seton-Watson published his first work on the Habsburgs; and his exact contemporary, Harold Temperley, was also at large in central Europe.[12] Britons took a growing part in the early international (at that stage effectively European) congresses of historians, which culminated in the 1913 event, held in London, when they delivered nearly half the papers (ninety-one in all).[13] The leading light of the country's research culture, T. F. Tout, pronounced in 1906 that 'in our academic curriculum, we ought ... to throw our main stress on foreign history, medieval and modern'.[14]

Yet what did 'Europe' mean? It remained an epithet which British commentators tended to hold at arm's length. It certainly had little place in university curricula. Stubbsian Oxford had divided the world's past into 'English history' and 'General history' (Europe being wholly absorbed within the second of these): two essentially watertight compartments which still had a rich and bright future before them. Edward Grey – in his younger days Creighton's protégé and confidant – knew nothing of the Continent from personal experience, either before or after he became responsible for British policy towards it.[15] The 1913 conference had many of its sessions on Great Britain, in deference to the proclivities of its hosts. Besides, there was the current cult of 'Englishness', which had been nurtured by Creighton too, as an embodiment of his own mission to promote the humane Christian values of the Renaissance. In 1896, at the acme of Britain's imperial self-assurance, Mandell had given a lecture at Oxford on English national character, a set of distinctive traits which he claimed had been established by his own nation before any other, and with freedom of expression and tolerance of opinions at their root. He saw it as a primordial historical construct: England's 'desire to manage its own affairs, and adapt its institutions to its own needs ... institutions [which]

[12] M. Hughes, 'Bernard Pares, Russian studies and the promotion of Anglo-Russian friendship, 1907–14', *Slavonic and East European Rev.*, lxxviii (2000), 510–35; 'Scotus Viator' [= R. W. Seton-Watson], *The Future of Austria-Hungary and the Attitude of the Great Powers* (1907); J. D. Fair, *Harold Temperley: a Scholar and Romantic in the Public Realm* (Newark, Del., 1992), pp. 65ff.

[13] G. Volpe, *Storici e maestri* (2nd edn., Florence, 1967); K. D. Erdmann, *Die Ökumene der Historiker: Geschichte der Internationalen Historikerkongresse und des comité international des sciences historiques* (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 86–96.

[14] T. F. Tout, *Collected Papers* (3 vols., Manchester, 1932–4), i. 96.

[15] Creighton, *Life and Letters*, i. 176, 202-3, 209-10, ii. 99, 103, 141; Creighton papers, Grey to Creighton, 29 May 1885; Creighton to Grey, 25 Oct. 1899. K. Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey: a Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon* (1971), pp. 15, 19ff., 126-7 and *passim*.

depend for their success on the capacity of the English people to work them' – so they patently cannot be exported. 'Our air of condescension towards foreigners', remarked Creighton, 'is certainly of long standing'. Yes, indeed! One wonders what his friend Pobedonostsev, who we know read the text assiduously, made of that.[16]

The historiographical imprint of this ambivalence towards Continental Europe can best be illustrated with relation to Germany, that great formative influence on Victorian historiography, which proved the most lasting receptacle for ideas of historicism, prevalent for a shorter time in many branches of British learning.[17] Stubbs's inaugural address back in 1866 had looked to a 'republic of workers' in modern history, led by the Germans.[18] The constitution of that polity was supplied by Acton, especially through his famous lead article in the first number of the *English Historical Review* on 'German schools of historiography', which Creighton thought would 'command attention all over the Continent'.[19] James Bryce, another of Mandell's close associates on the journal and elsewhere, and president of the 1913 international congress, was a close student of those schools; so was the bilingual Ward, the main organizer in 1913. On that occasion sixty-five Germans came to London, headed by Otto von Gierke and Karl Lamprecht, and twenty-five more from Austria-Hungary (besides such products of the German system as Henri Pirenne). Firth and Tout used their presence to lament some of the limitations of the historical profession in Britain, as measured by their standard.[20]

[16] Creighton, 'English national character', at pp. 221, 224, 231. '"National character is the abiding product of a nation's past", comme vous avez très bien dit et expliqué dans votre discours que je viens de recevoir et de lire avec le plus grand intérêt' (Creighton papers, Pobedonostsev to Creighton, Moscow 9/21 July 1896). Creighton was, however, far from consistent on the point. At different times he declared that 'we [the British] do not recognize differences of civilization, modes of thought, above all conceptions of freedom', but also that 'we have not at any time been swayed by the general ideas which have prevailed on the Continent' (Creighton, *Life and Letters*, ii. 173; Creighton, 'English national character', p. 220).

[17] K. Dockhorn, *Der deutsche Historismus in England. Ein Beitrag zur englischen Geistesgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1950); M. Messerschmidt, *Deutschland in englischer Sicht. Die Wandlungen des Deutschlandbildes in der englischen Geschichtsschreibung* (Düsseldorf, 1955), pp. 26–41; C. E. McClelland, The German *Historians and England: a Study in 19th-Century Views* (Cambridge, 1971); J. Campbell, P. Bahners and J. Burrow, in *British and German Historiography, 1750–1950*, ed. B. Stuchtey and P. Wende (Oxford, 2000), pp. 114ff., 123ff., 255ff.

[18] W. Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Mediaeval and Modern History* (1887), pp. 1–28, at pp. 10ff.

[19] *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, i (1886), 7–42; Creighton, *Life and Letters*, i. 339.

[20] Volpe; B. Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: a Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent, 1974), pp.

Creighton himself had trained in the German historical literature of his day (even translating a volume of Ranke), thanks not least to his wife, née Louise von Glehn and a native speaker.[21] His whole *Papacy* strove towards an understanding of Luther (even if Chadwick later thought he underrated theology in his presentation of the Reformation). Once Creighton preached before Kaiser Wilhelm II at Sandringham and stressed the joint providential responsibilities of the 'nations of Teutonic race'.[22] G. P. Gooch, a private savant with German *Ausbildung* and a German wife, was the chief British exponent of the study of European historiography, himself particularly strong on the Prussian School. Karl Alexander von Müller, the first future German historian to go to Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, was enraptured by the place.[23]

And yet the relationship soon came under impossible strain. There were already signs of alienation from the German side before 1914.[24] In Britain understanding (including linguistic) was never complete, and appreciation not unmixed.[25] Then came wartime acrimony, even as Ward, in his three volumes on nineteenth-century Germany (1916–18), published the finest fruits of earlier co-operation. Other current work already took sides markedly, as with Marriott's and Robertson's treatment of Prussia, or the latter's of Bismarck. Later, Robertson's strange nativist manifesto for a Creighton audience in 1927 was cast in the same vein. Gooch held to his standards and contacts: his Creighton Lecture of 1923 on the origins of the war is as dispassionate as his 1925 survey of modern Germany.[26] But he stood largely alone. No other British colleague features in the published inter-war correspondence of Berlin's best-known historian, Friedrich Meinecke, although Meinecke was busy reading English texts for his *Entstehung des*

60 ff. Firth and Tout, in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vi (1913–14), 139–66.

[21] For Louise, see J. T. Covert, 'Creighton, Louise', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38640> [accessed 15 Sept. 2008]; cf. *Memoir of a Victorian Woman: Reflections of Louise Creighton, 1850–1936*, ed. J. T. Covert (Bloomington, Ind., 1994).

[22] Dockhorn, pp. 167-8; Chadwick; Creighton, *Life and Letters*, ii. 404-5, 417-18.

[23] F. Eyck, *G. P. Gooch: a Study in History and Politics* (1982). K. A. von Müller, *Aus Gärten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungen, 1882–1914* (Stuttgart, 1951), pp. 297–398.

[24] McClelland, pp. 161–236.

[25] Examples in Bentley, pp. 36n., 56.

[26] A. W. Ward, *Germany, 1815–90* (3 vols., Cambridge, 1916–18); J. A. R. Marriott and C. Grant Robertson, *The Evolution of Prussia: the Making of an Empire* (Oxford, 1915); C. Grant Robertson, *Bismarck* (1918). Cf. Messerschmidt, pp. 80–2, 105–13, 158–61; and his verdict on Ward (pp. 72–6); Eyck.

Historismus and was elected a fellow of the Royal Historical Society.[27] There are none at all in that of the rising star of the next generation, Gerhard Ritter, although Ritter likewise drew on English sources.[28] Moreover, the later career of Müller must give us pause; despite his edition of a translation of Seeley's *Expansion of England*, and a life of Pitt the Elder, he became the most prominent supporter within the profession of the Nazi regime. We might feel a slight shudder when in his memoirs he praises Oxford's college system for its promotion of *Lebensgemeinschaft*.[29]

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The Great War was naturally reflected in contemporary Creighton Lecture themes: from Bryce at its outset on 'the part played in history'– although only really in the recent past, as he opined – 'by a conscious sentiment of race'; to Firth in 1917, inspiriting his audience by parallels with (he argued) the far tougher and more protracted defence of Britain against Napoleon. War and its aftermath suddenly validated contemporary history, yielding jobs in the profession for such as Seton-Watson and Charles Webster or Llewellyn Woodward, who both made their name in topical fashion with comparative studies of previous peace congresses. They also secured a heightened role for Europe, at least as a meaningful collection of inter-state relationships. That was buttressed by the official historiography which the war spawned: the Peace Pamphlets, the work of Chatham House (soon to be run by Arnold Toynbee), and the big editions – Temperley's *History of the Peace Conference*; Ward's and Gooch's *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*; then Gooch's and Temperley's *British Documents on the Origins of the War* – consciously part of an international debate (even if constrained by patriotic objectives too).[30] Alongside them appeared new handbooks, destined to be long lasting: Grant's and Temperley's *Europe in the Nineteenth*

[27] F. Meinecke, *Ausgewählter Briefwechsel*, ed. L. Dehio and P. Classen (Stuttgart, 1962), esp. pp. 163, 181–2.

[28] C. Cornelißen, *Gerhard Ritter: Geschichtswissenschaft und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Düsseldorf, 2001), pp. 84, 316ff. When Ritter visited England in 1949 (cf. below), he noted: 'nun endlich eine Verbindung mit der englischen Historiographie ... die bisher fast völlig fehlte' (Cornelißen, p. 458).

[29] J. R. Seeley, *Die Ausbreitung Englands*, ed. K. A. von Müller (Stuttgart, 1928); K. A. von Müller, *Der ältere Pitt* (Munich, 1937); Müller, Gärten, at p. 379.

[30] Eyck, pp. 311ff.; E. Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1916–20* (Oxford, 1991); Keith Hamilton, in *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians through Two World Wars*, ed. K. M. Wilson (Providence, R.I., 1996), pp. 192–229.

Century; Gooch's *History of Modern Europe*; Thompson's *Lectures on Foreign History*.

Some of this labour flowed over into a wider partnership with Continental colleagues, at least those from friendly powers. Admiration for Pirenne, now transformed into the soul of an *anti*-German historians' front, led to his delivering (in 1930) the only Creighton Lecture in the entire series so far in a foreign tongue.[31] Out of the congress which Pirenne mounted at Brussels in 1923 grew a new international association, the Comité International des Sciences Historiques (C.I.S.H.), on which the United Kingdom was represented initially by Temperley.[32] Trevelyan stressed the need to learn Continental history and modern languages.[33] However, we find little sign of lasting British involvement in Pirenne's circle. His Dutch equivalent Huizinga was more clearly Anglophile; but again next to no Britons appear among his correspondents, even after the success of his *Waning of the Middle Ages*, translated in 1924.[34]

The outcome of the war had, after all, confirmed some of this island's firmest conceits too, of the kind espoused by Creighton. It was a victory for the values of 'our race ... history's blood royal, English of the old stock, with the greatest record of ordered progress in the world', as Trevelyan put it in his 1919 Creighton Lecture.[35] And although the fighting took millions across the Channel, 'war reinforced a feeling of insularity'. 'Continentals', as Keith Robbins has nicely put it, still 'had to be made aware that there was an

[31] Pirenne's Creighton Lecture remained unpublished. His pre-war Chichele Lectures at Oxford in 1913 were also given in French: 'Les phases principales du développement politique, économique et social en Belgique depuis le commencement du moyen-âge jusqu'au 19. siècle'. Cf. Lyon, pp. 198ff. Pirenne's recoil from his 'grand illusion' about Germany is exhaustively documented by C. Violante, La fine della 'grande illusione'. Uno storico europeo tra guerra e dopoguerra: Henri Pirenne, 1914–23. P*er una rilettura della 'Histoire de l'Europe'* (Bologna, 1997). The German version of Violante's work, *Das Ende der 'großen Illusion'. Ein europäischer Historiker im Spannungsfeld von Krieg und Nachkriegszeit: Henri Pirenne (1914–23). Zu einer Neulesung der 'Geschichte Europas'*, ed. G. Dilcher (Berlin, 2004), reveals Violante's own passage to Germanophobia.

[32] Erdmann. By 1938 the British representative was Woodward; from 1948 and in the 1950s it was Webster; in the 1960s Ernest Jacob; then a gap to Theo Barker (below) by 1980 (and president in the 1990s).

[33] K. Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* (1993), pp. 48–9.

[34] J. Huizinga, *Briefwisseling*, ed. L. Hanssen and others (3 vols., Veen, 1989–91). In Britain only P. S. Allen and his wife were 'groote vrienden' (and Gilbert Murray was 'welbekend') (Huizinga, iii. 429). Gooch and Temperley, e.g., are not even mentioned.

[35] Trevelyan, *War and European Revolution*, p. 8.

offshore light beckoning them in the right direction'.[36] Temperley, president of the C.I.S.H. by the mid nineteen-thirties, might be lionized abroad, but he became rather pompous and fractious and out of touch at home.[37] Besides, he and his like continued to project abroad a detached version of the liberalism (and often the Anglicanism as well) which had fallen into crisis within Britain.[38] And his compatriots dropped out of the international circuit: their percentage of papers presented slipped from eleven at Brussels to five per cent or less for the rest of the inter-war period.[39]

What of France? Did she now command an enhanced place, in lieu of Germany, in a historians' *entente cordiale*? Certainly we can see adjustments, including a decline in the earlier long-time British obsession with Napoleon, even if it was still in evidence at Creighton Lectures by Firth, as we have seen, and by Julian Corbett in 1922. In the Creighton Lecture for 1920, Tout stressed an 'undercurrent of affinities' throughout Anglo-French relations right up to the war, which derived from the common civilization of the Normans; this formed the nucleus of a series of lectures he later gave at Rennes.[40]

France, at that juncture and in this context, meant above all Elie Halévy, whose links with Great Britain had burgeoned since the eighteen-nineties, and who himself, as he laboriously composed his *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIXe siècle*, meditated on the 'national character' of 'unphilosophical' and non-revolutionary England. 'Les Anglais sont tous des brutes': but, as he quickly adds, he meant brutes 'in the most noble acceptance of the word', for their incapacity to reflect, for their disdain of theories, for their frankness, etc. 'L'Angleterre ... a donné à l'Europe des leçons de politique.'[41] Halévy's correspondence was mainly with Bertrand Russell, the Webbs and Graham Wallas (Creighton Lecturer in 1925, on the subject of Halévy's beloved Bentham); although he evidently knew a range of historians too, and he received an Oxford honorary degree just when the *peuple anglais* was

[36] Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity*, pp. 48–50.

[37] Erdmann, ch. 11; Fair, pp. 245ff.

[38] Parker, pp. 119ff.; cf. Breuilly, in Burke, *History and Historians*, pp. 55ff.; Bentley, esp. pp. 83–4.

[39] The totals (as listed in Erdmann) were: 40 at Brussels (1923), 13 at Oslo (1928), 10 at Warsaw (1933), 14 at Zurich (1938).

[40] Tout, 'England and France', p. 2 etc. The Rennes Lectures led to his book *France and England: their Relations in the Middle Ages and Now* (Manchester, 1922).

[41] E. Halévy, *Correspondance (1891-1937)*, ed. H. Guy-Loë and others (Paris, 1996), at pp. 94 ('brutes'), 370 ('leçons').

finally baring its teeth, during the General Strike.[42] A direct result of new national committees generated by the C.I.S.H. were bilateral conferences held in London and Paris in 1933 and 1934 and involving the likes of Temperley and Webster, as well as Halévy.[43]

Yet there was little reflection across La Manche of the greatest innovation in the French historiography of the day: the inception of the *Annales*. Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch built on their links with Pirenne and other internationalists; whereas they made desultory and largely unavailing attempts to find British contributors and subscribers.[44] Even later their journal achieved only a slow, hesitant impact here.[45] This had to do with another weakness of our 'European' field. The newer economic and social school of analysis in Britain largely passed it by: from the days of William Cunningham and Sir William Ashley; through the Webbs and Hammonds and the establishment of the London School of Economics; to T. S. Ashton, R. H. Tawney, Eileen Power, J. H. Clapham and the floating of the Economic History Society and its *Review* in 1926–7.[46] Bloch did visit the United Kingdom in 1934 and met many of them; for example Tawney, listed as the only Briton among the initial fifty-two 'collaborateurs' of the *Annales*; and Clapham did deliver one thoughtful review for it.[47] Both were, of course, broad-based scholars, Tawney notable as a popularizer of the Weber thesis; but his Creighton Lecture of 1937, one of the most fertile in the series, set off a very English hare about the gentry. Clapham had also written on the

[42] Halévy, *Correspondance*, nos. 306, 309, 311, 317, 319, 330 (Russell); 377, 423, 434, 511, 565, 627–8, 654, 656, 660, 736, 738 (Wallas); also nos. 629, 695, 751–2; mentions of historians at pp. 416-17 (Prothero), 588 (E. Barker), 589 (H. A. L. Fisher), 668 (Trevelyan), 677 (Wickham Steed), 682 (E. Power); and see pp. 679–81 (Oxford degree). See also Barker's tribute in *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, liii (1938), 79–87.

[43] *Studies in Anglo-French History during the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. A. Coville and H. Temperley (Cambridge, 1935).

[44] M. Bloch and L. Febvre, *Les Annales d'histoire économique et sociale: correspondance*, ed. B. Müller (3 vols., Paris, 1994–2003), i. 21, 24, 77-8, 94, 145, 180, 186, 203, 327, 439. Cf. *The Birth of Annales History: the Letters of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch to Henri Pirenne (1921–35)*, ed. B. Lyon and M. Lyon (Brussels, 1991).

[45] P. Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: the Annales School, 1929–89* (Stanford, Calif., 1990), pp. 96-7; Bentley, pp. 132ff.

[46] D. C. Coleman, *History and the Economic Past: an Account of the Rise and Decline of Economic History in Britain* (Oxford, 1987), although he only implies the European point; likewise Bentley, pp. 119ff. The same was eminently true of technology (cf. D. Cannadine, 'Engineering history, or the history of engineering? Rewriting the technological past', *Trans. Newcomen Soc.*, lxxiv (2004), 163–80).

[47] Bloch and Febvre, i. 44-5, 289, 312, 500; ii. 18ff.; cf. ii, pp. xxxiv–v.

French and German economies in the nineteenth century, and when he presented a Creighton Lecture, in autumn 1938, it dealt with the liberal policies, especially economic, of Elector Karl Ludwig in the Rhenish Palatinate after the Thirty Years' War – a curious offering, and lacking any obvious apropos, seemingly a world away from the anxieties associated at that exact moment with those other old haunts of his Wittelsbach family, Berchtesgaden and Munich.

Elsewhere in inter-war Europe, I have the impression that British historiographical attentions were equally patchy. In respect of Italy a distinct decline seems to have taken place. Trevelyan moved away from the Garibaldians to rediscover Englishness: both his own and that of his native society and particularly of one of its iconic representatives, Edward Grey, by now Earl Grey of Fallodon.[48] Benedetto Croce was a good deal translated, and espoused by some on the philosophical wing of the profession, among them Ernest Barker, while principal of King's College London. But study of the Renaissance reached a low ebb, as Hans Baron found when he arrived from Germany as a refugee and tried to propagate his novel ideas about it.[49] Much the same was true for Spain, in which little interest was shown after the death of its chief British specialist, Martin Hume, in 1910. Maybe Spain was just not 'liberal' enough.[50] The larger anglophone names, Roger B. Merriman and Earl J. Hamilton, were Americans; Britain had to make do with E. Allison Peers and Trevor Davies, neither of them mainstream historians.

The centre and east of the continent became a largely Slavonic preserve for British observers, focused on the new 'successor' nation-states, with Germany ostracized and the U.S.S.R. marginalized. A School of Slavonic and East European Studies (also initially at King's College London) made modest progress under the limp and dysfunctional management of Pares and Seton-Watson, but the latter pressed the case for historians to attempt

[48] G. M. Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon: Being the Life of Sir Edward Grey, Afterwards Viscount Grey of Fallodon* (1937); cf. Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity*, pp. 48ff.

[49] B. Croce, *Theory and History of Historiography* (1921). However, his influence was also resisted (Sharifzhanov, p. 25; Bentley, p. 206). Croce's *History of Italy, 1871–1915* (Oxford, 1929) and *History of Europe in the 19th Century* (1934) were also translated during this period. Cf. E. Barker, *Age and Youth: Memories of Three Universities; Father of the Man* (1953), pp. 109–55 passim. On Baron, see K. Schiller, in *Historikerdialoge: Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch, 1750–2000*, ed. S. Berger and others (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 345–60.

[50] Cf. A. Galán Sánchez, *Una visión de la 'decadencia española': la historiografía anglosajona sobre mudéjares y moriscos* (siglos XVIII–XX) (Malaga, 1991), for a particular aspect of this.

an assessment of recent events, as in his Creighton Lecture of 1928, while the eccentric Pares remained Britain's authority on the Russian past until superseded by the more penetrating Humphrey Sumner.[51] Talented younger scholars moved into the open terrain: Toynbee in the Balkans; C. A. Macartney for Austria and Hungary.[52] Into this area too fell what later became probably the most densely commentated upon of all British conversions to the study of continental history. The young A. J. P. Taylor was recommended by his Oxford mentors to the diplomatic expert Alfred Francis Pribram in Vienna, initially to address an English topic; but there he went native and bought into local radical-liberal traditions in order to construct his later clever and incisive, but overly centralist and dismissive account of the last century of Habsburg government, as well as his objurgatory interpretations of the German past which we shall encounter again shortly.[53]

It is not surprising, in light of all this, that the European idea or ideal itself made little headway in British historiography during the inter-war years. The Catholic medievalist and visionary Christopher Dawson, who issued his *Making of Europe* in 1932, stayed isolated.[54] Rather, a far more sceptical witness took centre stage. H. A. L. Fisher was capable of very broad

[51] Seton-Watson, 'Plea', strangely makes no reference to his own work, but he had just written a book about the Sarajevo assassination (R. W. Seton-Watson, *Sarajevo: a Study in the Origins of the Great War* (1926)). See, in general, R. J. W. Evans, *Great Britain and East-Central Europe, 1908–48: a Study in Perceptions* (2001). For the Slavonic School, see Barker, *Age and Youth*, pp. 123–4, 142ff.; and I. W. Roberts, *History of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1915–90* (1991). Sumner's massive but incisive *Russia and the Balkans, 1870–80*, appeared in 1937; his brilliant *Survey of Russian History* in 1944.

[52] For this phase of Toynbee's career, cf. R. Clogg, *Politics and the Academy: Arnold Toynbee and the Koraes Chair* (1986). Macartney's early work was mainly on contemporary history – *The Social Revolution in Austria* (1926); *National States and National Minorities* (1934); *Hungary* (1934); *Hungary and her Successors: the Treaty of Trianon and its Consequences, 1919–37* (1937) – but he also did pioneering research into the early Hungarian chronicles.

[53] A. Sisman, *A. J. P. Taylor: a Biography* (1994), pp. 73ff.; K. Burk, *Troublemaker: the Life and History of A. J. P. Taylor* (New Haven, Conn., 2000), pp. 92ff., 225ff.; C. J. Wrigley, *A. J. P. Taylor, Radical Historian of Europe* (2006), pp. 56ff., 112ff., 192ff. But cf. S. Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 375–92, for a wider critical appraisal of Taylor. His views on central Europe, as advanced especially in *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1815–1918: a History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (1941), owed much to Heinrich Friedjung, Louis Eisenmann, Josef Redlich and Otto Bauer.

[54] D. Knowles, in *Proc. British Academy*, lvii (1971), 439–52; C. Scott, *A Historian and his World: a Life of Christopher Dawson, 1889–1970* (1984); *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History*, ed. S. Caldecott and J. Morrill (Edinburgh, 1997). Dawson is noticed too in Lozek, pp. 70-1, 74–6.

and analytical views, as his Creighton Lecture of 1911 had shown, with its survey of forms of political association, 'composite' states, in Europe and beyond. But now his celebrated *History of Europe* of 1935 conveyed a very mixed message: it notoriously announced 'no rhythm [or] predetermined pattern ... only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave'.[55] A quixotic Oxford University Press venture entitled *European Civilization: its Origin and Development* was simultaneously designed to trace 'the rise of Europe and distinctive character of European civilization' in seven volumes and no fewer than 7,820 pages. Its dates, 1934–9, help to explain why it sank without trace.

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The Second World War had an impact upon our subject similar to that of its predecessor, only less dramatic, since the co-ordinates were already established. On the one hand, it reasserted some historians' public or quasi-public roles. Again Webster and Woodward were to the fore, both involved with European aspects of the official British history of the conflict. But now there was a wider picture too. In the immediate aftermath of the war we find Webster characteristically instructing a Creighton audience on the circumstances of the creation of the United Nations, while Toynbee issued a prophetic and cogent plea for 'global' history in the same forum twelve months later.

On the other hand, 1945 saw the culmination of a renewed anti-German mood, most conspicuous in Taylor's ill-judged new *Course of German History*. The auguries did not look good for any restoration of the special relationship of Creighton's day, even if Gooch (once again) sought to act as intermediary, for instance helping to get Meinecke back to his chair in Berlin, and humouring Ritter.[56] The latter, despite repeated translation of his work into English at this time and a whistle-stop tour of universities in 1949 (organized by Ernest Barker), never came to terms with British attitudes towards his heroes – Luther, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, Goerdeler.[57] As

[55] H. A. L. Fisher, *A History of Europe* (3 vols., 1935), i, preface.

[56] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: a Survey of the Development of Germany since 1815* (1945), regularly reprinted into the 1970s. It was designed as 'a 1066 and all that in German terms' (cf. Wrigley, pp. 154ff.). Meinecke, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 252, 276-7; *Gerhard Ritter: Ein politischer Historiker in seinen Briefen*, ed. K. Schwabe and R. Reichardt (Boppard a.R., 1984), nos. 152, 153; Cornelißen, pp. 271, 502.

[57] Cornelißen, pp. 170, 458, 463 and n., 464ff.; Schwabe and Reichardt, no. 162, to Barraclough, etc.

late as 1973 Taylor ('an impudent [*schnoddriger*] semi-journalist', in Ritter's view) used the occasion of a Creighton Lecture, in an otherwise shrewd, concise analysis of the pattern of events from 1939 to 1945, for an infamous outburst: 'Only after the war did it become clear that the gas chambers of Osiewic [*sic*] represented German civilization as truly as Gothic cathedrals represented the civilization of the Middle Ages.' (It is typical perhaps of his attitude to lands further east that he wanted to render 'Auschwitz' into Polish – but got it wrong.)[58] By that time Taylor, like Trevelyan before him, had anyway withdrawn from serious professional interest in the continent of Europe.

Meanwhile two new tendencies were afoot after 1945 which complemented and partly countervailed existing British attitudes to the continental past. The first was the impact of émigrés. It is hard to overestimate their importance for our theme in the United Kingdom (even if far larger numbers of them settled in the U.S.A. and transformed the discipline there still more completely).[59] Whatever the (very mixed) feelings of incomers about the circumstances of their transferral here and the nature of their reception, they tended to remain concretely and inescapably 'European'. Of course, there had already been emigrants much earlier. At the very beginning of the century Pavel Gavrilovich (= Sir Paul) Vinogradoff had evaded the constraints of the late tsarist universities to build up a legal history school at Oxford and deliver one of the first Creighton Lectures.[60] Then came Ludwik Niemirowski, from the then Austrian province of Galicia. Lewis Namier – for this was he! – is famous more for the compensation mechanism whereby he turned into a chronicler of English landed society, but he never abandoned a critical engagement with his central European past and retained strong views about it. Think of his venomous sketch of the 1848 revolutionaries there.[61] Namier's Creighton Lecture of 1952 is in the same vein: slight and comparatively underpowered, but of interest for

[58] Taylor, *Second World War,* p. 11; cf. Berger, p. 109, and the view of Ritter's student Messerschmidt, pp. 118ff. Quoted from Cornelißen, p. 468.

[59] The leaven of pupils of Meinecke alone in the U.S.A. from the 1930s is apparent from F. Meinecke, *Akademischer Lehrer und emigrierte Schüler: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, 1910–77*, ed. G. A. Ritter (Munich, 2006). Cf. also *An Interrupted Past: German-speaking Refugee Historians in the United States after 1933*, ed. H. Lehmann and J. J. Sheehan (Washington, D.C., 2002).

[60] H. A. L. Fisher, *Paul Vinogradoff: a Memoir* (Oxford, 1927).

[61] L. Namier, *1848: the Revolution of the Intellectuals* (1944). Cf., in general, A. Ng, *Nationalism and Political Liberty: Redlich, Namier, and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2004).

returning to the issue of 'linguistic nationality' (as he calls it) and its drastic consequences in the Habsburg lands – as well as for reminding us how far he encouraged Taylor's ideas, not just on Austria, since Namier's lecture almost reads like a trailer for the *Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, which appeared two years later. Between the wars two further exiles from the same general area stayed on and gave Creighton Lectures decades after their arrival: Mikhail Moissey Postan, from today's Moldova, another who became *par excellence* a historian of (mostly medieval) England; and the Riga-born Isaiah Berlin, who in the 1971 lecture evoked that guru of the nineteen-hundreds, and of the nineteen-sixties, and the Halévys' family friend, Georges Sorel.[62]

Other authoritarian regimes exported to the United Kingdom only individual historians, and often on a temporary basis: examples are Salvador de Madariaga and Gaetano Salvemini. Nazism, however, delivered a raft of highly cultured and versatile Jewish refugees from central Europe who made their academic careers here after 1945. Here is a selection, in order of birth: Walter Ullmann, F. L. Carsten, Nicolai Rubinstein, H. G. Koenigsberger, Karl Leyser, Gottfried Ehrenberg, Werner Mosse, Edgar Feuchtwanger, A. F. Pollard, E. P. Hennock, J. A. S. Grenville, Peter Pulzer.[63] And whereas Ehrenberg, who renamed himself Geoffrey Elton, followed Namier's fascination with the making of English political traditions, on the whole the newcomers formed a bond to the Continent and devoted much of their energy to foreign history. Only one of this cohort gave a Creighton Lecture, and he was not a mainstream historian. In his lecture Viennese-born art critic Ernst Gombrich vividly shared his insights into what he alleged to be 'the only [historical] subject in which I had really specialized': Nazi wartime propaganda, the 'imposition of a paranoiac pattern on world events', which he had been employed to monitor for the British intelligence services at Caversham.[64]

Evidently the circumstances which had caused this tide of immigration and then belligerence continued to excite attention within the host nation. It issued in renowned investigations into Hitler's personal role by Hugh

[62] Postan's lecture was given in 1977, shortly before his death: cf. Edward Miller, in *Proc. British Academy*, lxix (1983), 543–57. Berlin's lecture first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 31 Dec. 1971.

[63] Those still alive in the mid 1990s (plus Walter Ullmann, who had left a memoir) contributed autobiographical essays to *Out of the Third Reich: Refugee Historians in Post-war Britain*, ed. P. Alter (1998); summarized by Alter in Berger, pp. 331–44.

[64] Gombrich, *Myth and Reality,* p. 14 and *passim*.

Trevor-Roper and Alan Bullock;[65] and it was reflected in other Creighton Lectures. In 1968 W. N. Medlicott gave a detached but lively presentation of nineteen-thirties diplomacy, finding no clear 'doves' or 'hawks' in Whitehall.[66] Later the German challenges of the nineteen-hundreds and the nineteen-thirties were used as exemplars, in an elegant, urbane and thoughtful Creighton Lecture by Michael Howard, to illustrate the causes of wars (whereas earlier ages, like Creighton's, as he notes, had been more drawn to examine the causes of stability). That chimed in with an earlier Creighton Lecture: that by G. N. Clark in the wake of 1945, which reviewed the long pedigree but doubtful cogency of cyclical theories of war and peace as linked to the alternation of poverty and plenty. Clark's chief witness was actually a sixteenth-century German chronicler, Michael von Eitzing; and it was ironically German studies that were to benefit most from the influx of immigrant scholars. Once these had fully found their feet, there took place a rapid re-engagement with central Europe, by contrast with the experience after 1918. A striking case is that of Franz Ludwig, later Francis, Carsten, historian of the Old Reich and its institutions, of Prussia and its society, of working-class movements in Germany and Austria, and of fascism across the whole area, who from 1961 occupied the country's only university chair which was expressly *mitteleuropäisch*.[67] By 1976 the German government moved to recognize the critical mass of such research with the establishment of the German Historical Institute in London, one of the most conspicuously productive and successful organizations of its kind.[68] Britain's own German History Society expanded rapidly from small beginnings in the early nineteen-eighties.

A rapprochement with Germany, or most of it, was crucial for the second novel formation in this post-war landscape: the partial realization of the European idea, shaped by the dictates of the Cold War and the beginnings of economic integration, along with its intellectual roots on the Continent which rested mainly in the resurgent Christian Democracy of the day. As such the 'making of Europe' still lay closest to Dawson, who stood on the

[65] H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (1947; 7th edn., 1995); A. Bullock, *Hitler: a Study in Tyranny* (1952; new edn., 1990).

[66] Medlicott, *Britain and Germany*, p. 32 and *passim*.

[67] Alter, *Out of the Third Reich*, pp. 27–39; Peter Alter, in *Proc. British Academy*, cxv (2002), 119–29; cf. R. J. W. Evans, 'Coming to terms with the Habsburgs: reflections on the historiography of central Europe', in *Does Central Europe Still Exist? History, Economy, Identity*, ed. T. Row (Vienna, 2007), pp. 11–24.

[68] *Deutsches Historisches Institut, London, 1976–2001* (2001).

edge of the British historical guild; and there was little immediate sign of any wider enthusiasm. Denys Hay contributed an innovative investigation into the Renaissance origins of the concept of 'Europe', which appeared in the same year as the Treaty of Rome;[69] and Oxford gave an honorary degree to Federico Chabod, who in the fifties not only embodied the European movement within the profession at large, but also represented the cosmopolitan face of Italian historical scholarship, in direct succession to Croce, and was the main organizer of the 1955 international congress held in Rome. Yet Chabod appears to have had no close links with Britain, and serious involvement from these islands in the C.I.S.H. was left to Webster and a few others.[70] Evidently all this anyway long remained a Western enterprise; and few apart from the erratic Geoffrey Barraclough seem to have thought in a coherent way about a Europe beyond the conventional boundaries of our near neighbours until much later, until the nineteen-nineties in fact.[71]

One talismanic endeavour deserves to be recalled, an initiative of Dawson's one-time teacher, Ernest Barker, by now Sir Ernest. The three volumes entitled *The European Inheritance* were an overdue outcome in 1954 of wartime co-operation on an Allied Books Commission, with authors from both sides of the Channel. However, they also bore the stamp of their chief commissioner and editor, and acted as a belated extension of 'Englishness' and whiggism to the Continent, since Barker continued to be another foremost proponent of the notion of national character and the particular English contribution to civilization.[72] The book hardly did better than its fellow O.U.P. product of the nineteen-thirties, described above. Even larger, but better focused and in more traditional mould, was the Cambridge relaunch of the *(New) Cambridge Modern History*, conceived by Clark and Herbert Butterfield in 1945, on the premise that 'the accepted idea of general history has changed', and appearing between 1957 (that date

[69] D. Hay, *Europe: the Emergence of an Idea* (1957).

[70] *Per Federico Chabod (1901-60)*, ed. S. Bertelli (2 vols., Perugia, 1981), esp. i. 9ff. (by Fernand Braudel); *Federico Chabod e la Nuova Storiografia Italiana, 1919–50*, ed. B. Vigezzi (Milan, 1984). See also Charles Webster's appreciation of Chabod, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, lxxii (1960), 625–8, notably solemn alongside Braudel *et al.* (pp. 617–834). Stuart Woolf, in *Jour. Modern Italian Stud.*, vii (2002), 269–92, discusses Chabod's European ideas.

[71] G. Barraclough, *European Unity in Thought and Action* (Oxford, 1963).

[72] E. Barker, *National Character and the Factors in its Formation (1927); The Character of England*, ed. E. Barker and C. F. C. Hawkes (Oxford, 1947). Cf. Barker, *Age and Youth*, pp. 212–16; J. Stapleton, *Englishness and the Study of Politics: the Social and Political Thought of Ernest Barker* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 178ff. and *passim*.

again!) and 1979.[73] Alongside it the same press issued a still more protracted series as a kind of companion, whose title marks another phase in the development of my topic: the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*.

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The European Economic Community represented one element in the new thinking from the nineteen-fifties to the nineteen-seventies. These were decades of the dominance of economic and related forms of social history: boom years for the Economic History Society (which numbered some 5,000 members) and its *Review*, with their wider role in galvanizing the discipline.[74] They were often associated with the new political left, which was heavily influenced by continental thinkers, above all Marx, and generated powerful commentaries on his philosophy of history by Maurice Dobb and later Perry Anderson.[75] *Past & Present*, which began as a house journal of the more radical thinkers, was avowedly international. The *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, a remarkably comprehensive and cosmopolitan venture, had originally been conceived by Clapham and Power, and was later taken over especially by Postan, whose work included a vigorous sideline in analysis of the post-1945 European economic transformation.[76] A collaborator was Sidney Pollard, originally Siegfried Pollak from Vienna, who moved towards European themes later in his career (which included a post in Germany for a time).[77] Others ranged from W. O. Henderson, the orthodox analyst of German industrial development, to the card-carrying Communist, George Rudé, who addressed the psychology of the French masses. Longest-lived and increasingly best-known of this generation, Eric Hobsbawm excelled with a trilogy on nineteenth-century Europe issued from the nineteen-sixties to the nineteen-eighties which at last saw off, even from remoter library shelves, some of those dated textbooks of a much earlier era.[78]

But we should beware of generalizing from these examples, many of them

[73] Bentley, pp. 112–13.

[74] Coleman, *History and the Economic Past*, pp. 93ff.

[75] Parker, pp. 177–201.

[76] *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, ed. M. M. Postan and others (8 vols. in 10, Cambridge, 1941–89); M. M. Postan, *An Economic History of Western Europe* (1967).

[77] D. Renton, *Sidney Pollard: a Life in History* (2004), esp. pp. 122ff.

[78] E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789–1848* (1962); E. J. Hobsbawm, The *Age of Capital, 1848–75* (1975); E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (1987). Cf. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: the Short 20th Century, 1914–91* (1994).

émigrés. On the whole, British-based economic and social history long stuck to study of the United Kingdom, in the traditions of earlier pioneers of labour history, fortified by suspicion of the 'capitalist club' being floated across the Channel. *Past & Present* was certainly no sectarian mouthpiece, but its initial programmatic statement (1952) skipped Europe entirely, to announce a yet wider agenda of 'Indian, Chinese, Arab, African [and] Latin-American history'.[79] Donald Coleman, surveying for his Creighton Lecture in 1989 the subject which had always been central to his colleagues, subversively showed that the term 'Industrial Revolution' (commonly employed *tout court*, like the queen's head on a stamp, on the assumption that it referred to Britain) was originally a continental one, and had long and regularly been used in an adverse sense, until caught up in nostalgia for the heritage of British manufactures and in Thatcherite enthusiasm for entrepreneurs. When Britain's participation in the C.I.S.H. bureau revived, its representative was Theo Barker, another economic historian, but one whose work maintained an exclusively English focus, from London Transport to Pilkington Glass.

Whereas earlier the whole reaction against 'scientific' history may have involved some retreat from a 'European' perspective (as with Trevelyan or Butterfield),[80] now when debates on techniques themselves took over, the British patch usually appeared self-sufficient. Not until Tim Mason's work in the nineteen-seventies did these debates prove much of an export commodity.[81] Meanwhile, however, traditional, pragmatic, highly empirical approaches were proving more significant overall and yielded rich achievements by British historians in reinterpretations of individual foreign countries. They are underrepresented in the Creighton Lectures, and I cannot offer more than a roll call of a few, but it is the phenomenon itself which deserves outline attention for our present purposes. In respect of France, institutional props remained exiguous: bilateral Anglo-French meetings tailed off, although they did yield a major gathering and published collection in the late nineteen-seventies on themes of mutual concern, introduced from the French side by François Crouzet with reflections a

[79] *Past & Present*, i (1952), i–iv.

[80] For these issues, but not their (absence of a) European dimension, see Sharifzhanov, pp. 15ff.

[81] T. W. Mason, *Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft: Dokumente und Materialien zur deutschen Arbeiterpolitik 1936–9* (Opladen, 1975).

little like those of Tout sixty years before.[82] Meanwhile the field was being transformed here, above all by those near-homophones, Cobban and Cobb, alike deeply versed in primary sources and undermining ideological understandings of French history, especially for the revolutionary period, in their very different ways.[83] Both inspired a further generation of pupils (through to the Creighton Lecture of 2006, given by Olwen Hufton); as did their near-contemporary, Douglas Johnson, Crouzet's old confederate, who in the 1990 lecture treated a topic, the Vichy regime, to which British historians have made very notable contributions over recent years.[84]

The equivalent for Italy would be the iconoclastic but gracious *oeuvre* of Denis Mack Smith, who likewise established himself as the most authoritative expositor of major themes in the national history. For Spain it must suffice to cite, as *pars pro toto*, J. H. Elliott's Creighton Lecture of 1991 about the domestic debate there between spokesmen for providentialist versus subversive views of Iberian empire, culminating in the key contest of the earlier seventeenth century on which he had already written so authoritatively.[85] On Sweden, Michael Roberts also used a Creighton occasion back in 1965 to illustrate his analytic power with a model lecture on 'aristocratic constitutionalism': an important theme, a broad range, a clear and cogent argument, meticulous but stylish, invoking comparisons (why did Sweden produce 'no Bate and Cony, Prynne or Lilburne', no 'village Hampdens', no Bouillon, no Montmorency, no Condé?), but viewing Scandinavia very much in its own terms.[86] There grew up a

[82] *De Guillaume le conquérant au Marché Commun. Dix siècles d'histoire franco-britannique*, ed. F. Bédarida and others (Paris, 1979), esp. pp. 13–17 (Crouzet); translated as *Britain and France: Ten Centuries* (Folkestone, 1980). Cf. Crouzet, in *Histoires d'outre-Manche. Tendances récentes de l'historiographie britannique*, ed. F. Lachaud and others (Paris, 2001), pp. 9–12; and, for renewed collaboration, most recently, *Liens personnels, résaux, solidarités en France et dans les îles Britanniques, XIe–XXe siècle*, ed. D. Bates and V. Gazeau (Paris, 2006).

[83] For Alfred Cobban, see *French Government and Society 1500–1850: Essays in Memory of Alfred Cobban*, ed. J. F. Bosher (1973); for Richard Cobb, see *Beyond the Terror: Essays in French Regional and Social History, 1794–1815*, ed. G. Lewis and C. Lucas (Cambridge, 1983).

[84] Cf. Johnson, in Bédarida and others, pp. 18–20.

[85] I must restrict myself to one or two characteristic works of the living authors mentioned in this paragraph: D. Mack Smith, *Cavour and Garibaldi, 1860: a Study in Political Conflict* (Cambridge, 1954); D. Mack Smith, *Mussolini's Roman Empire* (1976). J. H. Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans: a Study in the Decline of Spain (1598–1640)* (Cambridge, 1963); J. H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: the Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven, Conn., 1986).

[86] Roberts, *Aristocratic Constitutionalism*, at pp. 30, 32, 40. Cf. M. Roberts, *Gustavus*

new professionalism in Seton-Watson's old area too: from Macartney, underrated grandmaster of several different genres in the history of Austria and Hungary, to Norman Davies on Poland, and including the remarkable dissections of the eighteenth-century Habsburg state by Peter Dickson and Derek Beales in the nineteen-eighties.[87]

Most striking of all was the case of the Soviet Union. After the post-war refloating of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, the greatest British figure in Russian historiography formed no part of it. E. H. Carr was controversial (is that why he gave no Creighton Lecture?): a radical liberal of the salon kind, but also an establishment figure – ex-diplomat and deputy editor of *The Times*. Decisive for Carr's scholarly career was the Soviet Revolution and the (as he put it) 'narrow, blind and stupid' reaction to this of the West; then in years at the British embassy in Riga he laid the roots of his erudition on Russian culture. He resolved to write a history of Soviet Russia when the Red Army invaded Poland in 1944, completing just over one volume per Bolshevik year to reach 1929 before his death in 1982.[88] It is a progressive, purposive view of history; but at all events unrivalled in scope and execution, even if Carr's subject-matter now looks very different. The same could be said about Hobsbawm's, and was said by him, very candidly, in a Creighton Lecture given in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, when he reflected on some of the issues of the 'history of the present' which had earlier exercised Seton-Watson or Webster, and admitted that 'much of my life ... was devoted to a ... cause which has plainly failed: the Communism initiated by the October Revolution'.[89]

I hope I have not dwelled too much on the legacy of 1907 in my stray centenary reflections. In covering, all too briefly, the developing relationship of British historians to Europe (with Creighton addresses adduced as seemed appropriate), I have concentrated on intellectual trends. Alongside these, we must naturally remember some practical and material considerations, which

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Adolphus: a History of Sweden, 1611–32 (2 vols., 1953–8); M. Roberts, *The Early Vasas: a History of Sweden, 1523–1611* (Cambridge, 1968).

[87] C. A. Macartney, *October 15th: a History of Modern Hungary, 1929–45* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1957); C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire, 1790–1918* (1968); N. Davies, *God's Playground: a History of Poland* (2 vols., Oxford, 1981); P. G. M. Dickson, *Finance and Government under Maria Theresia, 1740–80* (2 vols., Oxford, 1987); D. Beales, *Joseph II, i: in the Shadow of Maria Theresa, 1741–80* (Cambridge, 1987).

[88] J. Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity: E. H. Carr, 1892–1982* (1999), pp. 20, 134 and *passim*. For the Slavonic School, see Roberts, *History*.

[89] Hobsbawm, *Present as History*, p. 18 etc.

would deserve mapping in their own right. Excellent library collections for 'general' history have been built up in Britain on generous nineteenth-century foundations: the acquisition policy evolved by Anthony Panizzi at the British Library and the extraordinary resources assembled by Acton for Cambridge University Library are leading examples. More recently, and particularly since the nineteen-fifties, access to continental archives and the like has much improved. Research fields are related to the job market in ways that could not be explored here: suffice it to recall the high valuation placed on history (over most of the period) as an unfettered and liberal education at British universities, and the absence of much explicit or institutionalized 'national history', precisely because it was so taken for granted and needed no special provision. Another issue is the changing prospects for learning of modern foreign languages. On the whole, the Creighton century was an age of linguistic openness, long based on the classical heritage, increasingly transferred to modern tongues; but nowadays the threat to this is severe, with communication coming to rest more and more on the ability and willingness of others to present their findings in English. That has gone with the modest beginnings of career interaction: first of all, perhaps, just fifty years ago with the post in Dutch history at University College London, where E. H. Kossmann lectured between 1957 and 1966, the springboard for his later activities in the United Kingdom, including a Creighton Lecture in 1987, which focused tightly on the Netherlands' failure to invent the modern world just two centuries earlier.[90] Lately we have discovered the world of Euro-funding, with its stock requirements of a foreign dimension, albeit maybe nothing more than a token Latvian or Portuguese.

Yet both the conscious attitudes of individual scholars, and these features of the working environment for the profession, themselves rested on certain deeper assumptions. 'Englishness' and British exceptionalism were hardy survivals within the guild, long after 1945. One scholar widely perceived to embody them was Butterfield, a central figure in the post-war years: his own Creighton Lecture of 1961 is remarkably dense and self-contained, reverting to the old chestnut of Britain and Napoleon, and dealing with a kind of non-subject, the abortive peace negotiations of 1806. However, a fondness for the 'English national character', and the separateness of English national history, proved compatible with European interests, in Creighton and later.

[90] For Kossmann, see the obituary (by F. R. Ankersmit) at <http://www.rug.nl/let/onderzoek/onderzoekcentra/ErnstKossmanninstituut/kossm/leven.pdf> [accessed 15 Sept. 2008].

Perhaps it could actually aid exploration of other continental cultures and societies on their own terms, and without cross-channel linkages? The Continent was *different*: that yielded scope for investigations which could be pursued without reference to the (ineffable) homeland. They certainly were not value-free, but the values themselves might be fruitfully employed elsewhere.

One such was the export of empiricism, largely untroubled by the presuppositions of practitioners in the target-country about their own history, and backed by a high self-estimation of British matter-of-factness, enhanced when the long apprenticeship to German *Geschichtswissenschaft* turned sour. Individualism too – another complacent self-ascription – did yield dividends in unchaperoned access to new territories abroad. European horizons, I have suggested, were as a rule loosely associated with liberal positions, rather than conservative or socialist enterprises, or with any strident political agenda on the home front. At the same time, domestic concerns could give rise to benefits when they stimulated fresh exploration of other people's pasts and the application to them of new kinds of conceptual grid: as with C. V. Wedgwood's masterly writing on the Thirty Years' War against a background of international affairs in the nineteen-thirties, or the British contribution to the German *Sonderweg* debate in the nineteen-eighties, informed as it was by a reaction against whig presuppositions at home.[91] And then there was empire. Increasingly Europe stood at a distance from the imperial embrace, but there were synergies too. Continental studies could be favoured by the larger perspectives which imperial traditions inculcated. An 'imperialist' mentality gave scope for serious attention to foreign events, while at the same time rendering a merely comparative approach otiose: it had, after all, sent informed, reasonably dispassionate observers to view the rituals and usages of others, like Creighton as a kibitzer at the coronation of Tsar Nicholas, and in his deep intellectual intercourse with Pobedonostsev.

And finally, the want of much British commitment to Europe as an idea, of any mission to *faire l'Europe*, may also have helped with lesser objectives. Such sense of the whole as British historians possessed tended merely to form part of an abstract superstructure which detained few in their research activities, although it may have helped some in their anatomy of broader

[91] C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (1938); her translation of K. Brandi, *The Emperor Charles V: the Growth and Destiny of a Man and of a World-Empire*, with its telling subtitle, appeared the following year, as Hitler's war broke out. For the Sonderweg debate, cf., most recently, A. Bauerkämper, in Berger, pp. 383–438.

'continental' movements or phenomena, such as the Enlightenment (for Cobban, say) or 'absolutism', in J. H. Burns's neat and cogent examination of its limits in a Creighton Lecture in 1986. I have the strong impression that British writing on the history of different – but usually discrete – parts of the rest of Europe bulks considerably larger over the entire Creighton century than research in the other direction. That is, of course, a further and separate issue, and as yet largely uncharted terrain. If true, it should give us pause. Would any of our continental neighbours have run such a series for 100 years with so many forays into foreign parts, yet without attracting a single paper on any aspect of the subject of Europe's own collective past?

Appendix: Creighton Lectures, 1907–2019[92]

(date indicates start of the academic year in which a lecture was held)

1907 Thomas Hodgkin, *The Wardens of the Northern Marches* (pub. 1908)

1908 G. W. Prothero, 'The arrival of Napoleon III' [unpub.]

1909 J. B. Bury, *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire* (pub. 1910)

1910 F. J. Haverfield, 'Greek and Roman town-planning'; expanded into his *Ancient Town-Planning* (1913)

1911 H. A. L. Fisher, *Political Unions* (pub. 1911)

1912 Paul Vinogradoff, 'Constitutional history and the year books', *Law Quarterly Review*, xxix (1913), 273–84

1913 R. B. Haldane, *The Meaning of Truth in History* (pub. 1914)

1914 James Bryce, *Race Sentiment as a Factor in History* (pub. 1915)

1915 J. W. Fortescue, 'England at war in three centuries' [unpub.?]

1916 A. F. Pollard, 'The growth of an imperial parliament', *History*, i (1916–17), 129–46

1917 C. H. Firth, *Then and Now, or a Comparison between the War with Napoleon and the Present War* (pub. 1917)

1918 Gilbert Murray, *Aristophanes and the War Party: a Study in the Contemporary Criticism of the Peloponnesian War* (pub. 1919)

1919 G. M. Trevelyan, *The War and the European Revolution in Relation to History* (pub. 1920)

1920 T. F. Tout, 'England and France in the 14th century and now'; expanded into his *France and England: their Relations in the Middle Ages and Now* (1922)

1921 Julian Corbett, 'Napoleon and the British Navy after Trafalgar', *Quarterly Review*, ccxxxvii (1922), 238–55

[92] I am very grateful to Samantha Jordan for supplying the list of lectures as held at the University of London as of 2006. The appendix is an amplified version, which seeks to record details of publication. As will be seen, there remain some gaps and queries.

1922 Charles Oman, 'Historical perspective'; cf. his *On the Writing of History* (1939), pp. 76ff.

1923 G. P. Gooch, *Franco-German Relations, 1867–1914* (pub. 1923)

1924 W. S. Holdsworth, *The Influence of the Legal Profession on the Growth of the English Constitution* (pub. 1924)

1925 Graham Wallas, 'Bentham as political inventor', *Contemporary Review*, cxxix (1926), 308–19

1926 C. W. Alvord, 'The significance of the new interpretation of Georgian politics' [unpub.?]

1927 C. Grant Robertson, *History and Citizenship* (pub. 1928)

1928 R. W. Seton-Watson, 'A plea for the study of contemporary history', *History*, xiv (1929–30), 1–18

1929 'E. Barber' [?= Ernest Barker], 'Political ideas in Boston during the American Revolution' [unpub.?]

1930 Henri Pirenne, 'La révolution belge de 1830' [unpub.]

1931 Edward Jenks, 'History and the historical novel', *The Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1932

1932 F. M. Powicke, 'Pope Boniface VIII', *History*, xviii (1933–4), 307–29

1933 N. H. Baynes, 'The Byzantine imperial ideal' [unpub.?]

1934 A. P. Newton, 'The West Indies in international politics, 1550–1850', *History*, xix (1934–5), 193–207, 302–10

1935 F. M. Stenton, 'The road system of medieval England', *Economic History Review*, vii (1936–7), 1–21

1936 Charles Peers, 'History in the making', *History*, xxi (1936–7), 302–16

1937 R. H. Tawney, 'The economic advance of the squirearchy in the two generations before the civil war'; cf. his 'Rise of the gentry, 1558–1640', *Economic History Review*, xi (1941), 1–38

1938 J. H. Clapham, 'Charles Louis, Elector Palatine, 1617–80: an early experiment in liberalism', *Economica*, new ser., vii (1940), 381–96

[NO LECTURES 1939–45]

1946 C. K. Webster, 'The making of the charter of the United Nations', *History*, xxxii (1947), 16–38

1947 A. Toynbee, 'The unification of the world and the change in historical perspective', *History*, xxxiii (1948), 1–28

1948 G. N. Clark, *The Cycle of War and Peace in Modern History* (pub. 1949)

1949 V. H. Galbraith, *Historical Research in Medieval England* (pub. 1951)

1950 J. E. Neale, *The Elizabethan Age* (pub. 1951)

1951 E. F. Jacob, *Henry Chichele and the Ecclesiastical Politics of his Age* (pub. 1952)

1952 Lewis Namier, *Basic Factors in 19th-Century European History* (pub. 1953)

1953 T. F. T. Plucknett, *The Mediaeval Bailiff* (pub. 1954)

1954 H. Hale Bellot, *Woodrow Wilson* (pub. 1955)

1955 Keith Hancock, *The Smuts Papers* (pub. 1956)

1956 M. D. Knowles, *Cardinal Gasquet as an Historian* (pub. 1957)

1957 J. G. Edwards, *The Commons in Medieval English Parliaments* (pub. 1958)

1958 Lucy S. Sutherland, *The City of London and the Opposition to Government, 1768–74: a Study in the Rise of Metropolitan Radicalism* (pub. 1959)

1959 Steven Runciman, *The Families of Outremer: the Feudal Nobility of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099–1291* (pub. 1960)

1960 Lillian Penson, *Foreign Affairs under the Third Marquis of Salisbury* (pub. 1962)

1961 Herbert Butterfield, *Charles James Fox and Napoleon: the Peace Negotiations of 1806* (pub. 1962)

1962 R. R. Darlington, *The Norman Conquest* (pub. 1963)

1963 Ronald Syme, 'Caesar: drama, legend, personality' [unpub.?]

1964 R. A. Humphreys, *Tradition and Revolt in Latin America* (pub. 1965)

1965 Michael Roberts, *On Aristocratic Constitutionalism in Swedish History, 1520–1720* (pub. 1966)

1966 R. W. Southern, 'England and the continent in the twelfth century'; cf. his *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (1970), pp. 135–57

1967 A. H. M. Jones, 'The caste system in the later Roman empire' [unpub.?]

1968 W. N. Medlicott, *Britain and Germany: the Search for Agreement, 1930–7* (pub. 1969)

1969 E. H. Gombrich, *Myth and Reality in German War-time Broadcasts* (pub. 1970)

1970 Philip Grierson, *The Origins of Money* (pub. 1977)

1971 Isaiah Berlin, 'Georges Sorel [Harbinger of the Storm]', in *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr*, ed. C. Abramsky (1974), pp. 3–35

1972 C. H. Philips, *The Young Wellington in India* (pub. 1973)

1973 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Second World War* (pub. 1974)

1974 F. J. Fisher, 'Labour in the economy of Stuart England' [unpub.]

1975 Owen Chadwick, *Acton and Gladstone* (pub. 1976)

1976 A. Blunt, 'Illusionism in Baroque architecture' [unpub.?]

1977 M. M. Postan, 'The English rural labourer in the later middle ages' [unpub.]

1978 Joel Hurstfield, *The Illusion of Power in Tudor Politics* (pub. 1979)

1979 Joseph Needham, *The Guns of Kaifêng-fu: China's Development of Man's First Chemical Explosive* (pub. 1979)

1980 A. Momigliano, 'The origins of universal history', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, ser. 3, xii (1982), 533–60

1981 Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars* (pub. 1981)

1982 Ragnhild M. Hatton, *The Anglo-Hanoverian Connection*, 1714–60 (pub. 1983)

1983 Keith Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England* (pub. 1983)

1984 W. G. Beasley, *The Nature of Japanese Imperialism* (pub. 1985)

1985 M. H. Keen, *Some Late Medieval Views on Nobility* (pub. 1985)

1986 J. H. Burns, *Absolutism: the History of an Idea* (pub. 1986)

1987 E. H. Kossmann, *1787: the Collapse of the Patriot Movement and the Problem of Dutch Decline* (pub. 1988)

1988 H. R. Loyn, *The 'Matter of Britain': a Historian's Perspective* (pub. 1989)

1989 D. C. Coleman, *Myth, History and the Industrial Revolution* (pub. 1989)

1990 Douglas Johnson, 'Occupation and collaboration: the conscience of France' [unpub.?]

1991 J. H. Elliott, *Illusion and Disillusionment: Spain and the Indies* (pub. 1992)

1992 I. Nish, *The Uncertainties of Isolation: Japan between the Wars* (pub. 1993)

1993 E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Present as History: Writing the History of One's Own Times* (pub. 1993)

1994 P. J. Marshall, *Imperial Britain* (pub. 1994)

1995 James Campbell, 'European economic development in the eleventh century: an English case-study' [unpub.?]

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2008 Chris Wickham, 'Medieval assembly. The culture of the public: assembly politics and the feudal revolution'

2009 Robert Service, 'Russia since 1917 in Western mirrors'

2010 Tim Blanning, 'The Holy Roman Empire of the German nation past and present', *Historical Research*, lxxxv (2012), 57–70

2011 Catherine Hall, 'Macaulay and son: an imperial story'

2012 Quentin Skinner, 'John Milton as a theorist of liberty'

2013 Lisa Jardine, 'Meeting my own history coming back: Jacob Bronowski's MI5 files'

2014 Richard J. Evans, 'Was the 'Final Solution' unique? Reflections on twentieth-century genocides'

2015 Margaret MacMillan, 'The outbreak of the First World War: why the debate goes on'

2016 John Darwin, 'The globe, the sea and the city: port cities and globalisation in the long nineteenth century'

2017 Miri Rubin, 'Strangers in medieval cities'

2018 Richard Vinen, 'When was Thatcherism?'

2019 No lecture

The meaning of truth in history
R. B. Haldane (1913)

Introduction

Justin Champion

On the evening of 6 March 1914 at University College, Viscount Haldane – the lord chancellor of England and former secretary of state for war – delivered the seventh Creighton Annual Lecture with the widow of the commemorated in the large audience.[1] It is testimony to both the intellectual distinction of the speaker and the status of the lecture that such a distinguished political figure chose to take the platform. Indeed, the lecture given by England's 'philosopher-Statesman' was reported in full form in *The Times* on the following Friday and Saturday: the report also indicated the glittering and titled audience attracted by the event, including ambassadors from Italy, Germany, Austria, Russia, Japan and Spain, and ministers of state from Norway, Portugal, Chile, Colombia, Switzerland, Persia, Mexico and Bulgaria; M.P.s, consuls and judges were joined by academic and literary figures like Edmund Gosse and G. P. Gooch.[2] The foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, K.G., introducing the event, underscored the present-centred function of historical enquiry outlined in the lecture – historical truth was an instrument of public analysis and understanding.

Haldane was a public intellectual of international repute. H. A. L. Fisher described him as 'a great national figure, a statesman, a lawyer, a

[1] On Mrs. Creighton, see J. Covert, *A Victorian Marriage: Mandell and Louise Creighton* (2000); see also Louise Creighton's biography of her husband, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton* (2 vols., 1904).

[2] The phrase is used by R. F. A Hoernlé, 'The Oxford Congress of Philosophy', *Philosophical Rev.*, xxx (1921), 57–72.

J. Champion, Introduction; and R.B. Haldane, 'The meaning of truth in history', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 29–53.

metaphysician, a fervent apostle of educational progress'.[3] Born in Edinburgh to Calvinist parents, Haldane was educated successively at Göttingen and Edinburgh, concentrating on philosophy but dabbling in physics and classical studies. His encounter with German philosophical traditions was to shape his intellectual commitments for life. He also rejected the religious 'fundamentalism' of his background for a life of philosophy: textual criticism and Darwin's legacy had reduced the sacred claims of religion to an absurdity. He was called to the bar in 1879. As interested in science and technology as in philosophy and law, Haldane published translations of Schopenhauer, wrote important volumes of essays on Hegel and the idealist tradition, delivered the Gifford Lectures (published as *The Pathway to Reality* in 1904) and, indeed, later in 1921 wrote a work thinking through the epistemological implications of his friend Albert Einstein's insights into a theory of relativity. Combined with this prodigious intellectual appetite, Haldane pursued a political and judicial career.

Representing Haddingtonshire as a Liberal M.P. after 1885, Haldane achieved high office a decade later, undertaking significant administrative reorganization of the armed forces. Campbell Bannerman commented on this appointment as secretary for war, 'we shall now see how Schopenhauer gets on in the kailyard'. Ironically given his later experience at the hands of xenophobic public opinion whipped up by the *Daily Express*, Haldane was responsible, with the establishment of the British Expeditionary Force (capable of mobilizing 80,000 men in August 1914), for ensuring that the country was prepared for a Continental war. Elevated to a peerage in 1911, the following year Haldane became lord chancellor. The Creighton Lecture was delivered, then, at a moment of high achievement. The following year Haldane resigned his office and from the cabinet in the face of false and malicious press accusations of having pro-German sympathies. He was to return to national government in the Labour ministry of Ramsay MacDonald, when he served another term as the first Labour lord chancellor in 1923.[4]

Haldane made considerable contributions to the development of public education, most notably as a broker of the 1918 Education Act which itself was underpinned by a vision of a linked system of primary, secondary and

[3] H. A. L. Fisher, 'The whig historians', *Proc. British Academy*, xiv (1928), 297–341, at p. 298.

[4] See A. S. Pringle-Pattison and Viscount Dunedin, 'Obituary: Richard Burton Haldane (1856–1928)', *Proc. British Academy*, xiv (1928), 405–44.

tertiary education. He was passionate about the development of regional universities and adult education. Especially intimate in the affairs of the University of London, he chaired the royal commission and was involved in the foundations and development of the London School of Economics and Bedford, Birkbeck and Imperial Colleges.[5] He drove forward the broader idea of a civic university.[6] As a co-founder of the British Institute of Adult Education he saw the 'value of university training to … democracy' and 'looked forward to a time when higher education should not be the monopoly of one class but something every workman might hope for'; provision of good educational opportunity was the 'great way to solve the problem of labour and capital'.[7]

Haldane addressed his subject in the Creighton Lecture at a critical moment in the history of history in Britain. Not quite established as an academic subject in the Oxbridge universities, it was dwindling in the University of London. Men of letters outside the academy continued to publish popular books for broad audiences, but the professional discipline was fledgling: the first decade of the twentieth century saw fundamental contestation about the identity and methods of the practice. Creighton, Bury and Trevelyan had all contributed vitally to the question 'Was history an art or a science?'[8] The intellectual context is perhaps best provided by A. F. Pollard in his 1904 lecture 'The University of London and the study of history'.[9] Pollard bemoaned the lack of institutional infrastructure for the teaching of history (of course this was to be remedied with the later foundation of the Institute of Historical Research). Indeed, the initial project to establish a university chair in history in memory of Creighton had been a 'fiasco' (it had raised only £300, 'just sufficient to pay one lecturer £100 a year for three years'). A second attempt in 1906 had met with no better success.[10] The ambition was to create a chair which reflected London's

[5] D. Logan 'Haldane and the University of London' (Haldane Memorial Lecture, 1960).

[6] See S. V. Barnes, 'England's civic universities and the triumph of the Oxbridge ideal', *History of Education Quarterly*, xxxvi (1996), 271–305; E. Ashby and M. Anderson, *A Portrait of Haldane at Work on Education* (1974).

[7] *The Times*, 22 June 1914, p. 5.

[8] See J. P. Kenyon, *The History Men* (1993). For context which briefly discusses Haldane, see F. W. Mason, 'History as art: the psychological-romantic view', *Jour. Hist. of Ideas*, xviii (1957), 270–9.

[9] See A. F. Pollard, 'The University of London and the study of history', in A. F. Pollard, *Factors in Modern History* (1948), pp. 262–87.

[10] Indeed the university records suggest that by 1907 the Creighton committee had raised some £666, the substantial proportion being a gift of £300 from Mrs. Creighton (see *The*

status as 'capital of the Empire'. The 'national intellect' needed a foundation to match this imperial vision: 'it will not be the business of a School of History merely to make Historians, but to discover and spread historical truth'. Such an enterprise was to 'focus knowledge, radiate truth and help to illumine the national mind'.[11] Haldane's Creighton Lecture addressed this debate head on.

The reportage of the lecture in *The Times* noted this context. Haldane had 'lifted a well worn theme far above the region of commonplace' by addressing 'fundamental controversies, coeval with history itself'. The lecture was conceived as 'an insurrection against a pseudo-scientific despotism, which for a time seemed irresistible – a rising protest against those who would wholly withdraw history from the domain of literature and annex it to science'. Haldane was represented as arguing against the archival and empiricist traditions of the day which over-valorized the private papers of great men.[12] Echoing Haldane's words, the historian's task was not to be a photographer recording history, but an artist fashioning representation. As *The Times* leader noted, 'the chief lesson to be gathered from the address is that there is need, and there is ample room, for many diverse searchers after "truth in history"'.

Haldane denounced those 'who would have history handled with the severity and aridity of a book upon biology'.[13] Creighton's life work had been 'consecrated' to the pursuit of 'genuine knowledge', to 'treat the facts justly, to see things not merely on the side that is external and superficial and therefore transitory, but in their fuller and more enduring significance'. This identification of the deeper rational truths of the past was, for Haldane (exposing his commitments to Hegel), the proper function of history. Like the artist, the historian had to 'disentangle the significance of the whole from its details and to reproduce it'. History was not simply a 'mere narration of details' but an interpretation which created 'a shape that is symbolic of what is at once ideal and real'. Great historians (Gibbon or Mommsen) had the ability to 'select their details … [which] can be moulded into a

University of London: the Historical Record 1836–1926 (1926), p. 19). Further details can be found in the minutes of the academic council and the London University Gazette. I am very grateful to Jane Winters of the I.H.R. for supplying me with copies of these.

[11] Pollard, 'The University of London', pp. 272, 282, 287.

[12] For a contemporary hostile response, see H. R. Tedder, 'The forthcoming bibliography of modern British history', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, viii (1914), 41–54, which complained of the 'scant respect' paid by Haldane to 'original sources' (pp. 47–9).

[13] 'Leader', *The Times*, 6 March 1914, p. 9.

characteristic setting without sacrifice of integrity or accuracy'. Firmly, he declared (in a phrase with striking contemporary resonance), 'we do not always want all of the details'. The consequence was (and it is one, again, with which we are familiar today) that 'there may be several histories, equal in value, but differing in a similar fashion'. Like artists, historians aimed to capture the ideal rather than 'the particularity of the events that obscure its meaning'. Although historical writing is constrained in a way the artist is not (by 'actual facts'), 'the picture created by the historian … can only be created by his genius and must be born of his mind'.

For Haldane, much like the Cambridge contextualist school today, placing events and actions in 'context' or (in the Hegelian vocabulary of his day) in the 'spirit' of the age was essential to determine proper meaning.[14] This reconstruction of meaning was stringent: as Haldane wrote, 'exact these details must be, but complete they cannot be. Much must be rejected as irrelevant'. It was the historian's skill 'as it were by direct perception' to recognize 'deep significance'. The process of selection was fraught with what Haldane called the dangers of 'unconscious pre-judgements' or personal obsessions: 'no one can wholly escape it'. The problem was the same in scientific method where preconceived hypotheses might shape the process of observation. Haldane hoped that it was possible to escape unthinking metaphysics, or at the very least to recognize such underpinnings. Neither the impossibility of 'reliable history' nor the certainty of 'archival research' were attractive alternatives: instead, Haldane counselled 'careful selection' and 'recasting' of the fragmentary and incomplete sources. Historians were not 'mere recorder[s]' but expressers of 'truth about the whole'. 'Reality', for Haldane, was not a rigorous presentation of the details but an inner perception of the 'spirit' of an age, 'refashioned in the mind of the historian'. His attractive conclusion was, then, that (in the gendered language of his day) the historian 'must always be a man of Art as well as of Science'.

The lecture itself was immediately published by the University of London Press in 1914; subsequently it was republished in Haldane's popular collection *The Conduct of Life* (John Murray, London, 1914: 2 editions, 1915; E. P. Dutton, New York, 1915). Simultaneously with these publications the address was also included in the *Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation*. Without doubt, then, the Creighton Lecture

[14] A. Vincent, 'German philosophy and British public policy: Richard Burton Haldane in theory and practice', *Jour. Hist. of Ideas*, lxviii (2007), 157–79. For contemporary context, see Lord Acton, 'German schools of history', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, i (1886), 7–42.

received distinguished international exposure. The year 1914 was the high-water mark of Haldane's public popularity. The malicious reportage of his 1912 mission to Germany gave opportunity to the press to represent him as a disloyal and treacherous figure. Letters to *The Times* complained that he had failed in his public duties as a 'watchman of the Empire' (citing *Ezekiel* XXXII 2–6), holding him 'chiefly' responsible for the blood which was shed in the Great War.[15] By November 1916, in stark contrast to the glorious reception of his Creighton Lecture, Haldane found himself subjected to abuse and interruption while chairing a meeting of the Sociological Society in the hall of the Royal Society of Arts. His 'first sentence had not been completed when a well dressed woman rose in the centre of the hall and shouted "shame on you, Haldane. What do you know about international Law or politics? You are a pro-German"'.[16] Haldane's lecture was perceptive and bold – it still speaks to the public-centred focus of the historical enterprise today.

[15] *The Times*, 18 Aug. 1915, p. 7.
[16] *The Times*, 29 Nov. 1916, p. 10.

The meaning of truth in history*

R. B. Haldane (1913)

The occasion on which it is my privilege to address you is one which is associated with the name of a remarkable man. He possessed gifts of intellect and of character which would have made him eminent in careers other than the one he chose for himself. But he held tenaciously the principle adherence to which is essential for a man who genuinely aspires to accomplish anything lasting. He knew that he must concentrate, and he did so. He lived a dedicated life – dedicated to the service of his God and his church, as he conceived them. Such were his gifts that his work deeply impressed with the sense of its reality those who were permitted to come near him. The impression he made was heightened by his obvious conviction that he could best render the service to which he had consecrated his life by following truth unswervingly, and seeking as well as he could to extend the province of genuine knowledge. The result of an unfaltering adhesion to this principle was that his writings produced on the public an impression of sincerity and thoroughness – an impression which deepened as time went on. In so far as he devoted his gifts to the study of history it was therefore natural that his integrity of purpose and his desire for the truth should lead to his becoming known and trusted as a historian of a wide and searching outlook. It accords with what is fitting that among the memorials erected to him there should have been included this lectureship.

* Creighton Lecture delivered at University College, London, on 6 March 1914; the Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey, Bart., K.G., His Majesty's principal secretary of state for foreign affairs, in the chair.

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To me it has fallen to be the lecturer this year, and to choose a topic that is appropriate. What Bishop Creighton cared for in historical work was, above all, to treat the facts justly, to see things not merely on the side that is external and superficial and therefore transitory, but in their fuller and more enduring significance. It is out of a feeling of respect for this characteristic of his life and writing that I have selected for my subject 'The meaning of truth in history'.

Analogy with art

But the subject is full of difficulty. As decade succeeds decade we in this country are learning more and more, in science, in art and in religion alike, that the question 'What is truth?' is a question of far-reaching significance, a significance that seems to reach farther the more we reflect. And the perplexity of the question extends not least to the case of the historian. For it seems today that the genuine historian must be more than a biographer or a recorder. The field of his inquiry cannot be limited by the personality of any single human being, nor can it be occupied by any mere enumeration of details or chronicle of events. A great man, such as Caesar or Charlemagne, may stand for a period, but his personality is, after all, a feature that is transitory. The spirit of the age is generally greater and more lasting than the spirit of any individual. The spirit of the age is also more than a mere aggregate of the events that a period can display, or than any mere sum of individual wills. What then is to be the standard of truth for the historian? The analogy of the artist who paints a portrait may prove not without significance for the answer to this question. The great artist does not put on canvas a simple reproduction of the appearance of his subject at a particular moment; that is the work of the photographer. Art, in the highest sense, has to disentangle the significance of the whole from its details and to reproduce it. The truth of art is a truth that must thus be born again of the artist's mind. No mere narration of details will give the whole that at once dominates these details and yet does not exist apart from them. But art, with its freedom to choose and to reject, selects details and moulds them into a shape that is symbolic of what is at once ideal and real. In art thought and sense enter into the closest union, or rather they form an entirety within which both are abstractions from an actual that does not let itself be broken up.

Limitations of the analogy

Now the historian surely must resemble the portrait painter rather than the photographer. The secret of the art of a Gibbon or a Mommsen seems to lie in this, that they select their details, select those that are relevant and that can be moulded into a characteristic setting without sacrifice of integrity or accuracy, a setting which is typical of a period. At some point or other we may want to have the details which have been passed by. We may want them for a picture of the period under another aspect. But we do not always want all the details. 'Le secret d'ennuyer c'est tout dire.' Carlyle passed much by when he wrote his *French Revolution*, and it is well that he did. We find what he left alone in other historians who present the story from a different standpoint. Just as there may be several portraits, all of superlative excellence, while differing in details and even in their presentation of actual features, so there may be several histories, equal in value, but differing in a similar fashion. To judge, then, of excellence in the historian we must possess a standard not wholly dissimilar from that by which we judge of excellence in the artist. In the case of the artist there can be little doubt about one point at all events in that standard. Whether it is nature or man that he presents, the image must interpret character. It does not detract from the truth of the work of the artist that the cottage and the figures in his landscape never existed exactly as he has painted them, or even at all. What is important is that they should suggest the deeper and more enduring meaning of what is actual, in the fullest and most important sense. The expression which the portrait painter has put on canvas may be a rare one – the expression, perhaps, of an individuality seized at a unique moment of existence. But all the more does that expression stand out as the truth about the real life of the man whose portrait is there. Now the historian also is concerned with what is ideal. He is concerned with this just because it is only through the ideal that what has happened can be lifted above the particularity of the events that obscure its meaning. M. Renan has put this point admirably:

> Il n'y a guère de détails certains en histoire; les détails cependant ont toujours quelque signification. Le talent de l'historien consiste à faire un ensemble vrai avec des traits qui ne sont vrais qu'à demi.

And again:

> L'histoire pure doit construire son édifice avec deux sortes de données, et, si j'ose le dire, deux facteurs; d'abord, l'état général de l'âme humaine en un siècle et dans un pays donnés; en second lieu, les incidents particuliers qui, se combinant avec les causes générales, ont déterminé le cours des événements. Expliquer l'histoire par des incidents est aussi faux que de l'expliquer par des principes purement philosophiques. Les deux explications doivent se soutenir et se compléter l'une l'autre.[1]

The work of the historian and that of the artist seem to be so far analogous. Both are directed to finding the true expression of their subjects. Neither is concerned with accidents of detail that are fortuitous. But the analogy extends only a little way, for the subjects are very different. That of a portrait is after all a single and isolated personality. It is the business of the artist to express this personality, and to express it as a work of art in which thought and feeling are blended in a unity that cannot be broken up. But the historian is not concerned with any single personality. His work seems rather to be to display the development of a nation or of a period, and to record accurately, and in the light of the spirit of the nation or period, the sequence of events in which its character has manifested itself. Like the artist, the historian may omit many details. But he does not possess the freedom of the artist. What we ask from the great painter is his interpretation of a personality, and he may take liberties in imagining costume and background. Indeed, he often must take liberties, for the expression counts for more than circumstances which obscure rather than assist in revealing it. But the picture created by the historian, though it, too, can only be created by his genius and must be born of his mind, is of a different order. The presentation of the whole and his description of actual facts are here more closely related. Literal accuracy counts for much, for others than himself will claim the liberty to refer to his book for actual facts, and to interpret them, it may be, differently from his rendering. Thus the historian is under restrictions greater than those of the artist. If he uses as complete a liberty as the artist claims, he is reckoned as belonging to quite a different profession, that of a writer of historical romance, such as the romances of Sir Walter Scott.

[1] *Vie de Jésus*: préface de la treizième édition.

The genesis of events and institutions

But this is not all. The artist depicts as what is characteristic an expression that may have been found only at one moment in the history of his subject. The historian has to present events and their meaning over a period that is often long. Even occurrences that seem isolated, like the execution of Charles I, or the taking of the Bastille, or the battle of Waterloo, have to be shown as culminating events in a course of development which must be recorded because apart from it they lose their significance. It is only by tracing the genesis not merely of culminating events but of national institutions, and by exhibiting them as the outcome and embodiment of the genius of the people to whom they belong, that in many cases they can be made intelligible. This principle is the foundation of the historical method. It is a principle which today seems almost a commonplace, but it has not always been so. It is striking to observe how really great writers suffer when they violate it. Some extreme instances are to be found among the historians of jurisprudence. I will take two cases of the kind, and I offer no apology for turning aside for a moment to the highly specialized branch of history from which I take them. For they are admirable examples of the fault in method which I wish to illustrate. Moreover, I am a lawyer whose almost daily duty it is to ascertain the reasons why the law has become what it is, because unless I can do so I am bound to fail in the interpretation of its scope and authority. There has thus been forced on me direct experience of the embarrassment which the fault of which I am speaking causes. Those who have to consult almost daily otherwise great books dealing with the history of legal institutions encounter this fault in its worst form.

Bentham's lack of historic sense

I will refer first to the shortcomings of a really remarkable Englishman. The case of Jeremy Bentham is notable. He ignored the light which history had to throw on the institutions about which he was writing, and his reputation thereby suffered. He rendered great services to the cause of law reform in England and elsewhere by the force of his destructive criticism. The very abstractness of his methods added to the incisiveness of this criticism. But when he describes, and even where he brings an indictment that is obviously true, he is, generally speaking, utterly defective as a historian. His unconsciousness of the genesis of the facts with which he is dealing is extraordinary in a man of such acuteness. He attributes the continued existence of bad laws to the unscrupulousness of contemporary rulers and

judges, as if they had individually devised them. When, for example, with admirable insistence, he denounces the existence of the rule which, contrary to what we now regard as plain common sense, used to prevent a party to a suit from giving evidence in it, he is apparently unconscious of the fact that there was once a stage in the evolution of public opinion at which it was inevitable that the rule should be what it was.[2] While religious opinion dominated in matters secular it was almost universally held that to allow an interested party to give evidence on his own behalf was to tempt him to perjury, and perjury, which meant everlasting damnation, seemed to our forefathers a more disastrous result than the loss of property. It was in such a period quite natural that public opinion should prefer spiritual safety to secular justice, and fashion law accordingly. We have to understand that this was so, if we would understand the history of the rules which restricted the admission of evidence in the courts of England. That we have now passed to a different standpoint does not lessen the necessity. Bentham again, to take another example, denounced the Roman law as being a parcel of dissertations badly drawn up! He knew nothing of its history or of the circumstances of its development. He had not heard of the work of the great historical school of Roman law which Savigny was even then leading. His method was always to assume certain abstract principles, and to judge everything in their light without regard to time or place. He insisted on immediate codification, just as Savigny, on the other hand, insisted on the postponement of codes until the common law had completed a full course of natural growth.

Savigny

But Savigny himself, to take my second illustration, at times incurred the perils which are inseparable from occasional lapses into abstractness of mind. Although he was an apostle of the historical method and in general took far more account of history than did Bentham, he, too, at moments made what to a later generation have become mistakes. For example, he attacked the code which Napoleon had enacted for France. He attacked it on the ground that to enact such a code was unscientific.[3] He was probably right in desiring that the spirit of the great Roman lawyers should

[2] See his remarks on Blackstone and the judges in his *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*, bk. ix, ch. 5 (vol. 7 of Bowring's edition of his works).

[3] See the section headed 'Die drei neuen Gesetzbücher', in his book *Vom Beruf unsrer Zeit für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft*.

continue, at least for a time, to work throughout Germany, where it held sway, unobstructed by the rules of a rigid code. In that country, where the tradition of the Roman law actually occupied the field, the provisions of a code might well have proved not only unduly rigid but also artificial. Yet his attack on Napoleon's great code did not do justice to the overwhelming reasons for enacting it in France. France, unlike Germany, had before Napoleon's time no general body of laws. The different parts of the country were subject to utterly divergent systems, such as were the customs of Paris and of Normandy. It was remarked by Voltaire that a man travelling in France in his own time changed laws as often as he changed horses. The rough common sense of Napoleon saw that a general code was a necessity. He framed one that was not ideal, judged by the high standards of Savigny, but it was the best he could frame at a time when nothing was to be hoped for in the way of development on the basis of the prevailing laws. Gradual reform of this kind might well have been possible had the Roman law been the general foundation of a single system of jurisprudence in France. But it was not so, and Napoleon therefore took the course which the necessities of the time dictated.

Context of historical events

I have cited these examples of the desirability of the historical spirit in estimating legal institutions, partly because they illustrate admirably the truth of the saying of Balduinus, a great jurist of the sixteenth century, 'Sine historia cæcam esse jurisprudentiam'. But I have cited them also because they illustrate the wider proposition that no event in history of any kind can be judged without full knowledge of its context and of the spirit of its particular age. The execution of Charles I has been the subject of the hottest controversy. Did the tribunal which decreed it sit wholly without constitutional warrant, and was the trial conducted quite illegally? Probably both questions must be answered affirmatively from the standpoint of the common law. But this does not conclude the discussion. It is true that acts of the kind that is revolutionary are outside the provisions of ordinary law. And yet they may be justified under what is called martial law but is in our country only an application of the maxim 'Salus populi suprema lex'. Had Cromwell not put Charles to death, it was more than merely possible that Charles would have seized the first chance of putting Cromwell himself to death and of upsetting the new order of government. As Lord Morley, in his *Life of Cromwell*, has pointed out, the real justification of Cromwell

must depend on the question whether what can only be justified as an act of war was or was not a public necessity. And the answer to this question requires that the problem should be approached as a large one, and in the spirit which demands a survey of the events of the periods both before and after the year 1649. The judgement of posterity upon the act of Oliver Cromwell must turn, not on what he was as an individual, but on the extent to which he was the representative figure in a movement which must be judged before he can be approved or condemned.

Control of details

Now it is just this obligation of the historian that makes his work so difficult. Like the portrait painter, he has, in his search after expression, to select details, but he has to select them under far more stringent conditions as to completeness and accuracy. Exact these details must be, but complete they cannot be. Much must be rejected as irrelevant. The test of relevancy is the standard of what is necessary, not merely for exactness, but for the adequate portraiture of the spirit of the time. And this test necessitates great insight into the characteristics of that spirit. Otherwise misleading details will be selected, and undue prominences and proportions will be assigned. The historian must be able to estimate what are the true and large characteristics of the age, and one test of his success will be, as in the case of the artist, the test of his stature. Can he rise high enough to present the truth in what, almost as it were by direct perception, we seem to recognize as a great form of deep significance? I say almost by direct perception, for the analogy of the intuition of art and literature appears to come in here. One recognizes the quality of size in a Gibbon or a Carlyle as one recognizes it in the great portrait painter and the great dramatic poet. But in the domain of history the predominance of this quality is conditioned by the imperative duty to be accurate to an extent that is incumbent neither on the painter nor on the poet. The historian who has a whole period to describe must be more than exact; he has to be lord over his details. He must marshal these details and tower above them, and reject and select in the light of nothing less than the whole. He must not let his view of that whole, as has been the case with both a Bossuet, on the one hand, and a Buckle, on the other, be distorted by a priori conceptions that are abstract and inadequate to the riches of the facts of life. He must frame his estimate after a study of the whole sequence of events, of those events which throw light on the conduct and characteristics of a nation in the variety of phases in its existence. It is just

here that he is apt to be beset by obsessions that come from unconscious pre-judgements.

Scientific method of historical study

I wish to try to say something about the origin of this kind of temptation to pre-judgement, a temptation to which a long list of historians have succumbed in a greater or less degree. Indeed no one can wholly escape it. But it has various forms, some of which are worse than others. In those that are most misleading it seems to arise from an insufficiently considered application of the conceptions under which the observer searches after facts, conceptions which are often too narrow for the facts themselves. It appears as exactly the same kind of temptation as that into which in various forms students of the exact sciences have been prone to fall. I will therefore ask you to bear with me while I touch on the general subject of scientific method. For in every department of science just the same difficulty arises as arises in that of the historian, and the source of these difficulties in some branches of science can be easily traced. Facts are apt to be distorted in the mind of the observer by preconceived hypotheses of which he is hardly conscious. The attempts which have been made to exhibit the life of an organism as the result of physical forces operating from without on an aggregate of minute mechanisms or chemical compounds have, notwithstanding their usefulness from the point of view of physics and chemistry, fallen short as regards the nature of life itself. When we are confronted with the unquestionable facts of reproduction and heredity these attempts have always broken down. We are driven to admit, not the existence of a special vital force controlling development from without, but the conception of something in the nature of an end realizing itself, a whole which exists only in what it controls, but which, while it may still fall far short of conscious purpose, is not on that account less real. We may indeed dislike expressions which suggest abstract or even conscious purpose, and prefer, with the author of that remarkable book, *Creative Evolution*, to speak of what is realized as a tendency rather than an end. But one thing is clear however we may express ourselves. We must not let the terror of theology and the supernatural which often afflicts men of science with fears deflect us from our duty to be true in our descriptions to actual experience, and drive us by way of reaction into purely mechanistic theories which are inadequate to explain it. The history of biology seems to have been at times as sad an illustration of the dangers of anti-theological dogmas as it has at other periods been of the dangers of those of a theological teleology.

Absence of prejudice

In the same way if we would know the truth about men and affairs we must learn to study their history quite simply and with minds as free as we can make them from prejudice. Our preconceptions generally arise from our having unconsciously become metaphysicians. We do not need to be metaphysicians at all, except to the modest extent of knowing how to guard against falling without being aware of it into bad metaphysics. Unconscious prejudice is apt to tempt us to deny the reality of much of the world as it seems, and seek to stretch that world on the rack of some special principle of very limited application. The only way of safety is to train the mind to be on the watch for the intrusion of limited and exclusive ideas. If to yield to such intrusion is dangerous in the field of biology, the danger becomes still more apparent when we are confronted with the phenomena which belong to the region of human existence. We can neither deny the reality of the moral and intellectual atmosphere in which as persons we live and move and have our being, nor resolve it into the constructions which represent the utmost limits attainable by the mathematical and physical sciences. Of all that really lives Goethe's well-known criticism appears to be true:

> Wer will was Lebendig's erkennen und beschreiben
> Sucht erst den Geist heraus zu treiben,
> Dann hat er die Theile in seiner Hand,
> Fehlt leider nur das geistige Band.
>
> *Who'll know aught living and describe it well,*
> *Seeks first the spirit to expel.*
> *He then has the component parts in hand*
> *But lacks, alas, the spirit's band.*[4]

In truth the warning which Goethe gave to the biologist of his time is not less important for the student of history. The latter, also, must refuse the injunctions to limit his outlook which come from the materialist, and he must refuse not less sternly the counter-materialism of those who would seek in the events of the world only for the interference and mechanical guidance of a power operating from without. He must recognize, too, the reality of social wholes outside of which individuals cannot live, social wholes which are actual just in so far as the individuals who compose them in some measure think and will identically. For apart from his social surroundings

[4] Translation taken from <http://einam.com/faust> [accessed 25 March 2009].

the individual appears to have no adequate life. Such social wholes cannot be satisfactorily described in biological language. The practice of attempting to so express them is a very common one. People talk of social organisms and their development by means of natural selection. But in speaking of the organization of society and of its development we have passed into a region where the categories of biology are not adequate. In this region we only darken counsel by using phrases drawn from the vocabulary of a branch of knowledge that does not take account of conscious purpose and of the intelligence and volition which are characteristic of persons as distinguished from organisms. No doubt human beings are organisms. But they are also much more than organisms. The biological method in history and sociology is therefore unsatisfactory. It may be and sometimes must be used, just as are the methods of physics and chemistry in biology itself. But its application ought always to be a restricted and guarded one, because, if the application is made uncritically, the reality of much that is actual in present and past alike will inevitably be ignored. Darwinian methods and conceptions avail here only to a very limited extent. For the social wholes with which history has to deal are conscious wholes representing intelligence and volition. And this is why the historian is not only at liberty but is bound to recognize in the spirit of an age something of which he can legitimately take account. It is also the reason why he can never be a mere recorder, and why he must always be a man of art as well as of science. For art alone can adequately make the idea of the whole shine forth in the particulars in which it is immanent, and this is as true of the history of a period as it is of a moment in the life of a man.

Combination of art with science

In saying these things I am far from suggesting that the historian should become a student of philosophy with a view to having a standpoint of his own. I have touched on the topic for a directly contrary purpose. I am anxious that he should not unconsciously commit the fault of a Bossuet or a Bentham or a Buckle by slipping into a philosophical attitude without knowing it. It may well be that he cannot avoid placing himself at some particular standpoint for the purposes of his review. Most historians seem to me to do so to a greater or less degree. What I am concerned about is simply to make it plain that the choice of such a standpoint is no easy matter, or one that a man dare lightly adventure. And I have said what I have simply for the purpose of laying emphasis on the need, in making

such a choice, of knowledge of the alternatives and consciousness of the magnitude of the field of controversy. The historian has to approach the records of the experience of nations with a mind sufficiently open to enable him to attach weight to every phase of that experience. His conception of it must be sufficiently wide to enable him to take account of every aspect which he may encounter. He must exclude neither rationality nor irrationality. Now if experience thus conceived be the material on which the historian has to operate, his method cannot be either to search for and record isolated facts which can never really be interpreted apart from their context, or to set out abstract principles. The very width of his field of research must necessitate the selection of his facts and their relation to each other and to the particular system in which alone they have their meaning. For meaning is the foundation of system in history. The sense of this, and the extraordinary difficulty which the historian has in determining what is relevant and what is not relevant to a true interpretation, has caused some critics to despair of history and others to try to confine its task in a fashion which, if strictly carried out, would deprive the historian of the chance of calling to his aid the method of the artist. It is interesting to observe to what lengths these two divergent tendencies have been carried.

Perils of archival research

I will refer first to the criticism which rejects the possibility of reliable history altogether. In his *Farbenlehre* Goethe makes an observation on the value of exact records. 'We are told', he says, 'to look to the spirit rather than to the letter. Usually, however, the spirit has destroyed the letter, or has so altered it that nothing remains of its original character and significance'. He puts the same thought in another fashion when he makes Faust say to Wagner, in an often quoted passage:

> Mein Freund, die Zeiten der Vergangenheit,
> Sind uns ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln;
> Was ihr den Geist der Zeiten heisst,
> Das ist im Grund der Herren eigner Geist
> In dem die Zeiten sich bespiegeln.
>
> *My friend, the ages of aforetime are*
> *To us a book of seven seals.*
> *What you call 'spirit of the ages'*

Is after all the spirit of those sages
In which the mirrored age itself reveals.[5]

This seems a highly sceptical utterance. The historian is told that he can succeed neither in recovering the spirit of the past nor in discovering its letter. And if the historian were faced with the dilemma Goethe puts to him, his case would indeed be a difficult one. But is it so? Let us look at the case of records. Goethe was no doubt right in his scepticism about mere records. For if a man indulges himself with the belief that in quoting records accurately he is collecting the truth about the history of a period, he is indulging himself rashly. What do such records consist of? Biographies, written at the time, letters and state papers are their main forms. As to the biographies, they are often valuable as presenting a fine portrait of their subject, and the narrative and the correspondence quoted are of course of much use. But they are almost invariably coloured. The selection of material is necessarily dependent on the object with which the selection is made, and that is the biography of one man. You have only to read another biography, that of his political rival, in order, if they were both famous men, to realize that whatever value the story possesses as portraiture it is by no means to be relied on implicitly for a scientific record of the facts. Lord Morley, in his *Notes on Politics and History*, quotes Bismarck on this point. Reading a book of superior calibre, that remarkable man once came (so Lord Morley tells us) on a portrait of an eminent personage whom he had known well. 'Such a man as is described here', he cried, 'never existed. It is not in diplomatic materials, but in their life of every day that you come to know men'. So, remarks Lord Morley, does a singularly good judge warn us of the perils of archival research.

Letters

As to isolated letters, there again colour is inevitably present. The writers, however intimately acquainted with the facts, are too near to see them in their proper perspective. From their correspondence many fragments of solid and useful fact may be extracted; but the bulk of what is there is, taken by itself, unreliable material for the historian. It is only by careful selection from a variety of sources, and by recasting – that is, by following the method of art rather than that of science – that he can produce the true expression of the period as a living whole.

[5] Translation taken from <http://einam.com/faust> [accessed 25 March 2009].

State papers

State papers, again, are written by ministers or by diplomatists, or more often by their officials under somewhat loose inspiration. They embody the view of the moment. Their value is mainly a passing one. They may contain documents of more than passing value, treaties or agreements or plans which have subsequently been translated into action. But as material out of which a scientific and lasting account of the facts can be reconstructed, they suffer from inevitable because inherent defects. Ambassadors' letters and the letters written to them are documents in which the impressions of the moments are recorded, impressions which are very often evanescent. Such documents are, from the circumstances in which they are composed, almost always fragmentary and incomplete. In public life the point of view is constantly changing. If 100 years after this a historian, desiring to describe the relations between Great Britain and Germany, or between the former country and France, in the commencement of the twentieth century, were to confine himself to the state papers of particular years he would be misled. He would see little to explain the rapid evolution and change that had taken place within a very brief period. Nor could he ever discover the traces of almost imperceptible and rarely recorded influences and incidents which had stimulated the development. This is true of the evolution of policy at home as well as abroad. Speaking with some knowledge of what has gone on from day to day during the last eight years of the public life of this country, my experience has impressed me with a strong feeling that to try to reconstruct the story from state papers or newspaper accounts or letters or biographical sources would be at present, and must for some time remain, a hopeless attempt. And I know from my conversations with men of still longer and greater experience that they hold this view as strongly as I do. The materials so afforded must be used at a later period by a man who possesses the gifts requisite for presenting the narrative as that of an organic whole, and that organic whole must in its expression be born afresh in his mind. So only will he present a picture of what actually happened in a period of history. The historian will fail hopelessly if he seeks to be a mere recorder. For the truth about the whole, the expression of which is what matters, was not realized in its completeness until time and the working of the spirit of the period had enabled the process developed in a succession of particular events to be completed. It is a mistake to suppose that statesmen are always conscious of the ends which they are accomplishing. It is not by

the piecing together of mechanical fragments, but by a process more akin to the development of life, that societies grow and are changed.

Selection of facts necessary for truth

There is thus, if I am right, an inevitable element of what seems at first sight to be unreality in even the best work of historians. But this need not discourage us if our notion of reality, and therefore of our standard of truth, is something more than the mere correspondence of isolated images and facts. If the test of truth in history must be the presentation of an expression, true at least in the sense in which we use the word about a great portrait, then the recording of the chance fragments of isolated facts which alone have survived for us is quite inadequate to the fulfilment of the test. All the historian writes ought to be true in the sense of being a faithful and accurate account of what has happened. But that does not mean that he should record every detail of what has happened. If he tries to do this he will lose both his real subject and himself. His business is to select in the light of a larger conception of the truth. He must look at his period as a whole and in the completeness of its development. And this is a task rather of the spirit than of the letter. Those who furnish him with the materials have not, and cannot have, the insight which is requisite for him, if he is to be a great historian of reality. And yet, of course, their work if it is well done is indispensable. It is indispensable, only it is not history until it has been refashioned in the mind of the historian. When a really competent historian has done this we may fairly think, Goethe's scepticism notwithstanding, that real history is possible inasmuch as we see before us the picture of the spirit of the past.

History as a science

I now turn to a second form of criticism, that which would reject as inadmissible the intrusion of art into the domain of history. Two well-known authorities on its study, M. Langlois and M. Seignobos, some fifteen years ago published a joint book for the purpose of warning their students at the Sorbonne what the study of history ought not to be. It was in effect an essay on the method of the historical sciences. It is interesting to observe the result at which they arrived, for this result shows the difficulties into which anyone is bound to get who adopts their conception of the subject. Broadly stated, their conclusion is that while up to about the middle of last century history continued to be treated as a branch of literature, a change

has now taken place, and scientific forms of historical exposition have been evolved and settled, based on the general principle that the aim of history must be, not to arouse the emotions or to give moral guidance, but to impart knowledge pure and simple. They admit that for many form still counts before matter, and that consequently a Macaulay or a Michelet or a Carlyle continues to be read, although he is no longer on a level with current knowledge. But such writing is not, according to them, history proper. What is justified in the case of a work of art is not justified in a work of science. And the methods of the older historians cannot, they therefore hold, now be justified. Thus, they say, Thucydides and Livy wrote to preserve the memory and propagate the knowledge of glorious deeds or of important events, and Polybius and Plutarch wrote to instruct and give recipes for action. Political incidents, wars and revolutions were in this fashion the main theme of ancient history. Even in our own time they think that the German historians have adopted the old rejected habits. Mommsen and Curtius they instance as authors whose desire to make a strong impression has led them to a certain relaxation of scientific vigour. Speaking for myself, I should not have been surprised had they, on the assumption that their severe standard is to be adopted, put Treitschke in particular into the pillory, for he was a very great offender against their precepts. According to them history ought to be in the main a science and not an art. It is only indirectly that it should possess practical utility. Its main object should be accuracy in recording. It consists only, so they say, in the utilization of documents, and chance therefore predominates in the formation of history, because it is a matter of chance whether documents are preserved or lost. But they admit that the work of the historian cannot be limited by the bare documentary facts which he collects himself. To an even greater degree than other men of science he works with material which is to a large extent collected by others. These may have been men who devoted their energies to the task of search and collection, whose work has merely been what is called 'heuristic'. Or they may have been previous historians. The point is that, as the knowledge of the historian is only partially derived from his own direct research, his science is one of inference rather than of observation.

Combination of art and science in history

It is a corollary from the view of truth in history which I have just been quoting that it should reject, not merely all efforts to look for the hand

of Providence as the interpretation of human development, but also the attempts which have been made in philosophies of history to see in it the evolution of forms of mind. Bossuet and Hegel come alike under condemnation. 'On ne s'arrête plus guère aujourd'hui à discuter', says M. Seignobos, 'sous la forme théologique la théorie de la Providence dans l'histoire. Mais la tendance à expliquer les faits historiques par les causes transcendantes persiste dans des théories plus modernes, où la métaphysique se déguise sous des formes scientifiques'. Now there is no doubt much to be said for the resolute spirit in which the two professors of the Sorbonne set themselves to eliminate all prejudices and theories and methods which can distract from impartiality and exactness of description. But their own admissions, as I have just quoted them, about deficiency in material, and the impossibility of history being a science of pure observation as distinguished from inference, deprive their protest of a good deal of its value. Without going so far as Goethe went in his scepticism about records, it is plain that the business of selection must bulk largely in every historical undertaking. And that is why, while rules as to historical evidence such as the two authors lay down are of use and should be adhered to wherever it is possible, the historian who confined himself within what alone these rules allow would produce little or nothing. The necessity of artistic selection from materials which are admittedly imperfect, not to speak of the personal equation of the writer, would make a history founded on merely scientific methods a mockery. History belongs to the region of art at least as much as it does to that of science, and this is why, pace M. Seignobos, we shall continue to delight in Michelet and Macaulay and Carlyle, and to insist on regarding their books as among the world's most valuable records. They are presentations by great artists of the spirit of a period, and the artists are great because with the power of genius they have drawn portraits which we recognize as resembling the results of direct perception. Genius has been called the capacity for taking pains that is infinite, and these men have taken immeasurable pains and have been inspired by a passion for truth according to their lights. Of course they have selected and refashioned the materials which through close research were first collected, as great artists always must. Doubtless, too, there are aspects which they have left out or left over for presentation by other artists. But portraits may, as we have seen, vary in expression and yet be true, for the characteristic of what is alive and intelligent and spiritual is that it may have many expressions, all of which are true. With what is inert and mechanical it is for certain purposes

different, but what is inert and mechanical is the subject neither of the artist nor the historian. It is because they let themselves go in bringing out the expression of life and personality that we continue to cling to Gibbon and Mommsen. Their problem is to display before us the course of the lives of men and of nations. Men and nations cannot be estimated through the medium of the balance and the measuring rod alone, nor are these the most important instruments for estimating them. The phenomena which belong to the region of the spirit can be interpreted only through the medium of the spirit itself. We cannot interpret by mechanical methods a play of Shakespeare or a sonata of Beethoven. In the regions of life and personality the interpretation must come through life and personality, and the mind recognizes the truth of their interpretation when it recognizes in it what accords with its own highest phases. History is not mere imagination. It must always rest on a severely proved basis of fact. But no mere severity of proof will give the historian even this basis. The judgement of truth implies a yet higher standard of completeness and perfection.

Truth as result of the combination

I am therefore unable to agree with those who think that history must be either exclusively a science or exclusively an art. It is a science to the extent to which what are commonly known as scientific methods are requisite for accuracy and proper proportion in the details used in the presentation. But the presentation must always be largely that of an artist in whose mind it is endowed with life and form. Truth in history requires, in order to be truth in its completeness, that the mind of the reader should find itself satisfied by that harmony and sense of inevitability which only a work of art can give. Abstractness of detail and absence of coherence offend this sense of harmony and so offend against truth by incompleteness of presentation. The reader feels that the facts must have appeared, at the period in which they did really appear, in a fashion quite different. Unless the history which he reads gives him something of a direct sense of the presence of the actual, his assent will be at the most what Cardinal Newman called notional as distinguished from real. To define the meaning of truth in history thus becomes a problem that is difficult because it is complex. But this at least seems clear, that some notions about this meaning that have been current in days gone by, and are still current, ought to be reconsidered. A clear conception of first principles is essential in most things, and not least in the writing of history. If I have succeeded in rendering plain to you the reasons

which make me feel this need strongly, I shall have accomplished all that I ventured to hope for on the present occasion.

A plea for the study of contemporary history
R. W. Seton-Watson (1929)

Introduction

Martyn Rady

The Creighton Lecture for 1928 was delivered by Robert W. Seton-Watson, Masaryk Professor of Central European History at the School of Slavonic (and East European) Studies, then a part of King's College, but now, with parentheses long ago removed, in U.C.L.

While an undergraduate at New College, Oxford, Seton had been much inspired by the German historian, Leopold von Ranke. In this lecture, however, he challenges Ranke's assumption that the recovery of the past, *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, can only be achieved after the passage of time, when the historian has access to the necessary documents and can comprehend the meaning of events by seeing the long-term consequences. First, Seton argues that in respect of contemporary history, historians have at their disposal sufficient records to permit both narrative and judgement. With regard to the events leading up to the First World War, he thus alludes to *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914* (53 vols., Berlin, 1922–7), and to the less cumbersome *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914* (ed. Gooch and Temperley, 11 vols., 1926–38), as well as to the flow of autobiographies and to the recently acquired 'habit of publicity'. Second, Seton boldly turns Ranke on his head by arguing that the study of the present may serve to illumine the past and so guide the historian's understanding of what really happened. Seton thus neatly anticipates the verdict of a later historian: 'Separating the contemporary artificially from history diminishes both.'[1]

[1] P. Catterall, 'What (if anything) is distinctive about contemporary history', *Jour. Contemporary Hist.*, xxxii (1997), 441–52, at p. 449.

M. Rady, Introduction; and R. W. Seton-Watson, 'A plea for the study of contemporary history', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 55–76.

Seton does not give in this lecture any chronological definition of contemporary history. His audience could, however, have been in no doubt that Seton was actually referring throughout to his own prodigious output on the eve, during and in the wake of the Great War. In the decade preceding 1914, Seton had examined in several big books and in a succession of essays (some penned as 'Scotus Viator') the politics and history of the nations of central and south-eastern Europe. He was particularly opposed to Hungarian ambitions, disliking Hungary's policy of 'Magyarization' (while overlooking the 'Anglicization' that had taken place in his native Scotland and elsewhere on the Celtic periphery), and he regarded Hungary as a destabilizing element in Habsburg and thus European politics.[2] Meanwhile, he championed the cause of the South Slavs, most notably in a work that remains of value to this day, *The South Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy* (1911), as well as pressing the claims of the Slovak nation against Hungarian hegemony. His interest in the Czechs was aroused later, during the course of the war, by the exiled T. G. Masaryk. Seton's writing combined a thorough knowledge of the historical record and contemporary politics into which he wove personal recollections, the details of conversations with contemporary politicians and others, and the texts of important documents. Nevertheless, as one of Seton's students was later to remark of him, 'his inexhaustible knowledge of the seamier side of Danubian politics was combined with a serene faith in the future of his Slavonic protégés'.[3]

In 1916, Seton founded the weekly *The New Europe* which was devoted to the cause of an 'integral peace' that would accommodate the desire for independence of central and south-eastern Europe's small nations. Although its circulation seldom rose above 4,000, *The New Europe* was feted as 'the most instructive public organ of the day'.[4] It was influential in stalling Lloyd George's several bids to conclude a separate peace with Austria-Hungary and in determining for a while the putative line of the Italian-Yugoslav frontier. Although criticized as an 'ethnological museum',[5] *The New Europe*

[2] See here L. Péter, 'R. W. Seton-Watson's changing views on the national question of the Habsburg monarchy and the European balance of power', *Slavonic and East European Rev.*, lxxxii (2004), 655–79

[3] W. N. Medlicott, 'The scope and study of international history', *International Affairs*, xxxi (1955), 413–26, at p. 413.

[4] H. Seton-Watson and C. Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (1981), p. 195.

[5] Seton-Watson and Seton-Watson, p. 283.

introduced its readership to the variety of central and south-east European nations and to the complexity of their historical, ethnic and political relations. After the war, Seton attended the Paris Peace Conference on behalf of *The Times*, dispensing advice on the demarcation of new frontiers.

In 1920, *The New Europe* ceased publication and Seton assumed an academic career, but, sustained by a large private income, did not bother to draw his professorial salary. In 1931, however, he lost a considerable part of his investments. Too poor to maintain his extensive travels, he settled down to write works of 'conventional' history. Three of these, *A History of the Roumanians* (1934), *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question* (1935) and *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (1943), remain among the leading accounts of these topics. Seton thus combined in his career the distinction of being a historian of both past and present as well as a publicist who contributed by his work to the reshaping of contemporary Europe in the aftermath of the First World War.

A plea for the study of contemporary history*

R. W. Seton-Watson (1929)

It is, I trust, unnecessary to remind my present audience that the study of history, though today one of the most popular subjects in most of our universities, is nonetheless a comparative newcomer, and that there are still many who view its popularity with considerable misgiving and challenge its claim to rank as the equal of the more traditional subjects. Nor is this entirely due to the fact that so many historians are either incapable of rising above the level of the mere chronicler or deliberately limit their field to 'what really happened', in the mistaken belief that they have no right to express any verdict upon facts or any theory of underlying causes. It is above all due to a widespread suspicion that the historian is too much at the mercy of inadequate materials and that much of the most essential evidence required for a final verdict is withheld, and always will be withheld, from him. It dates from an all too recent period when the historian tended to be either a brilliant literary amateur or a depressing pedant.

The prejudice against history as a serious study died hard, but that it is by now virtually moribund can best be realized by comparing its position 100, or fifty, or again twenty-five years ago, with what it is today in this country. When Stubbs delivered his inaugural lecture in 1867 he was deprecatory and on the defensive. But he was still at the height of his powers when Seeley

* The Creighton Lecture, delivered in the University of London on 13 Dec. 1928, at University College.

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carried the war into the enemy's country by boldly proclaiming history as a science. The expansion of historical studies still proceeds apace, and I may be excused for noting in parenthesis that there is no place where it has made greater and more rapid strides than in our own University of London, which has been all too tardily, but at last most effectively, recognized as an ideal centre for such studies, owing to certain special advantages that London possesses as the centre of a great empire, and much the most important repository of its records. The foundation of a whole series of special chairs devoted to specific fields of history – a process which is still not complete – has already culminated in the foundation of the Institute of Historical Research, on lines which should prevent it from ever becoming the preserve of any single university.

It may well be that our descendants will in all seriousness regard the regular introduction of history into the curriculum of our schools and universities as a change no less revolutionary in its effect on education than the introduction of the classics, instead of the Schoolmen, into the educational system of the sixteenth century.

In any case we may start from the assumption that the place of history, and even 'modern history' so called, is now unassailable, and that despite subdued murmurs from the wings there is no longer active opposition on the stage. But an exception is still made with regard to contemporary history, which, it is plausibly contended, is not, and cannot be, a worthy subject for the true historian's pen, still less a fit study for the younger generation whom it may be his duty to instruct. It is, we are told, incompatible with the detachment and calm of academic life. It is utterly narrow by comparison with the great studies of a classical past, and must therefore have a narrowing effect upon minds which need above all distraction from everyday issues. It is partisan because it inevitably imports the disputes of the hustings into the classroom. And above all it is fatally handicapped by ignorance of essential facts and documents, and by the knowledge that its results will at best be out of date almost as soon as they are written and can never hope to stand the test of time.

It is arguments of such nature which I wish to examine in my present lecture. And in so doing I am anxious to avoid dogmatism. I do not for a moment suggest that contemporary history is the subject of study par excellence. I am not attacking other branches of history – either modern, medieval or ancient. I am merely advancing on behalf of their younger sister, who has just attained to years of discretion, a plea for recognition and

equality of treatment. In effect, I am suggesting that all of us, whether we be students, teachers or men of action, should not, in our researches, in our interests or in our demands upon our pupils' interest, stop just at the point where historical studies acquire their most practical value, namely, at the very threshold of our own age. I yield to no one in my respect and sympathy for medieval history in particular: I am profoundly convinced that it, no less than classical history, which needs no defence, has many lessons to offer to the modern world, and that an understanding of its outlook and mental processes may serve as antidote to some of our most obvious modern failings. But I submit that contemporary history, for a number of reasons which I propose to explore, is a subject of rapidly growing importance, and will be even more important in the immediate future. Just twenty-one years ago, in this very college, Professor Tout used this phrase: 'Time was when serious people maintained that history could not be properly taught at all', and went on to argue that 'experience had demonstrated the untruth of this dictum'.[1]

It is not necessary to put forward any hard and fast definition of the phrase 'contemporary history', which changes automatically with the passage of time. It obviously does not mean the study of the current year in which we are speaking. It may perhaps suffice to call it the history of the period upon which men still at the height of their powers can look back. It is clear that there must always be overlapping between contemporary history, however defined, and the period immediately preceding it. But whether at this moment the year 1871 or 1878 or 1890 be selected as the point of departure is a matter of comparative indifference. Dates are merely the clothes pegs of history, without which even the finest linen cannot be hung out to dry, and this is as true of the more crowded canvases of our own day as it is of earlier centuries, where there is a longer perspective.

What is really essential is that the altered conditions of modern life – the great agglomeration of population, the rapid spread of democratic tendencies even in countries where autocratic systems prevail, the ease of intercourse between nations and individuals, the power of public opinion and the written word (even in its lowest form, the gutter press) and, last of all, the momentous development of wireless – all this and more have helped to project history into our everyday lives, to make the thinking public more conscious of its bearing upon problems of home and foreign

[1] *Outlines versus Periods* (Historical Assoc., 1907), p. 3.

policy, and to make statesmen more ready to seek in it the justification of their actions. The crowning example of this attitude is to be found in the famous covering letter which was presented to the Germans with the draft Treaty of Versailles, and which sought to anticipate the verdict of history in favour of the victors.

But already, long before the Great War, a series of brilliant writers and teachers, not content with the new interest which their efforts had evoked, had boldly proclaimed history now as a science, and now as an art, and had strengthened their position by more and more frequent raids into such subsidiary sciences as anthropology, archaeology, palaeography and philology.

It is too much the fashion nowadays to scoff at that gallant pioneer, Thomas Arnold; for though as a historian he was the veriest amateur, he was perhaps unequalled as one who knew how to draw inspiration from the dead facts of history and impart new inspirations to the next generation. But Arnold's successors soon left him far behind, both in their scholarship and their pretensions. Freeman contended that it was the right and duty of the historian to range over the whole period from the call of Abraham to the Russo-Turkish war (which was to him as he spoke as recent an event as the Kellogg pact to ourselves). He coined the famous epigram: 'History is past politics, and politics are present history' – a phrase which a well-known American university in its first fine careless rapture of dogmatic faith inscribed over the entrance to its new history department. Seeley restated the same idea in the new form, 'Without history politics has no root, without politics history has no fruit'. Indeed Seeley's whole life's work rested upon the claim that history is the school of statesmanship, or that 'Politics and history are only different aspects of the same study'. Or, again, 'Politics are vulgar when they are not liberalised by history, and history fades into mere literature [how characteristic this is of Seeley!] when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics'.[2]

The assumption that contemporary history cannot ever be written, much less taught, is, I strongly suspect, nothing more than an unproved theory handed down by an older generation whose own historical education was shockingly neglected and at best stopped abruptly at the Reform Bill of 1832. It is in glaring conflict with past experience. For, indeed, if we pass in survey the historians of past ages – let us say up to the year 1850, for it is perhaps

[2] *The Expansion of England*: second course, lecture i: 'History and politics'.

still too soon to decide the eventual fate of later writers – we shall find that almost all who have achieved full immortality were essentially writers of contemporary history. Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides, Tacitus, or, in later times, Matthew Paris, Froissart, Villani, Comines, Guicciardini, Machiavelli, De Thou, Clarendon, Burnet are but a few names selected at random, but not, I think, unfairly. Of all the historians whom the eighteenth century produced, is there any, save the incomparable Gibbon, who dealt solely with times other than his own and who has survived to our own day as a recognized and readable classic? Even Hume and Smollett as historians are utterly extinct.

The commonest of all the arguments used against the contemporary historian is that the verdict of contemporaries is never the verdict of posterity, and that nothing approaching the full truth regarding our own times can be told during the lifetime of the principal actors, for the simple reason that the main evidence is not available. Let us consider how far these two arguments are well grounded.

The obvious answer to the first is that every generation revises the verdict of its predecessor not merely upon the events of yesterday, but also upon those of all previous ages. The criticism, if once admitted, would be fatal to the writing of any history at all. There has been a constant fluctuation of opinion in successive eras, not merely with regard to notable historical figures – let me instance Caesar, Cromwell, Napoleon, Marx – but, above all, with regard to such great historical landmarks as the Reformation and the Counter Reformation, the Civil War, the French and American Revolutions, the Oxford Movement, the Victorian era. 'Every generation', said Treitschke, 'has the right to portray the past as it appears to his own eyes'. This is a rather dangerous way of expressing the truth formulated by Niebuhr half a century earlier (1814): 'There have never been immovable political laws: where an attempt has been made to maintain them as such, the nation has been stifled'. The word portraits of historical characters, like their counterparts in the realm of art, will always tend to vary, because every writer, as every artist, however mediocre his quality may be, is yet human enough to put something of himself into his finished work. The pedant may frown and regard this as a violation of historical impartiality. Personally, I remain impenitent and agree with Professor A. F. Pollard that 'imagination' stands in the forefront of those qualities which we demand from the ideal historian. Eliminate personality and you eliminate human nature, and what is history then but a wretched husk? The historian, like workers in other

trades, must take his risks and steer between the two extremes of which no other than Macaulay was thinking when he regretted that history is 'sometimes fiction and sometimes theory'.[3]

That historical verdicts fluctuate and require to be perpetually recast – sometimes in the light of new documentary evidence, but quite as often because moral or social standards have changed with the passage of time – tells equally against all history, but is not really a reason for ceasing to write it, but merely an admission that there is seldom finality in human verdicts. All that can fairly be said about contemporary history, in this connection, is that with the heightened pace of modern life these fluctuations of opinion are even more frequent than formerly. The outlook of our contemporaries towards the Victorian era has changed more than once since the Great War, and the changing outlook towards the Great War itself, and towards both Woodrow Wilson the man and Wilsonian principles, reads like one of those weather charts that register the English climate.

It is not necessary to go so far as Freeman, who in his Inaugural praised Thomas Arnold for 'standing forth as the righteous judge', or to endorse the sentiment of an Austrian essayist who declared that 'it is the duty of history not only to crown with glory him to whom glory is due, but also, when necessary, to use the branding iron'.[4] But it is *most* necessary to bear in mind the words with which Lord Acton closed his memorable Inaugural in 1895: 'If we lower our standard in history we cannot uphold it in Church or State.' Historians must accept as an axiom the constant fluctuation of standards and must boldly set theirs as high as possible: more than that they cannot do. But they can take courage when they remember that some of the greatest writers and thinkers of the eighteenth century idolized rulers who were then known as enlightened, but who were the very reverse of moral on any modern showing, and that this type of idolatry finds no exponents today, save in the columns of a Yellow Press or in countries where liberty of the press no longer exists. They can also take courage from the thought that though the idea of human progress has only in quite recent times asserted itself as a dogma of civilized mankind, it rests on the essentially Christian belief in the perfectibility of human nature and has slowly been permeating the consciousness of the world.

What then of the other great argument against contemporary history – that in the nature of things so much essential material is withheld from

[3] T. B. Macaulay, *Works* (1879 edn.), v. 22, in the essay entitled 'History'.

[4] Baron Alfred Berger, *Buch der Heimat*, i. 66.

the historian that what he writes of his own day is a mere parody? In the first place, I would remind you how utterly illogical the theory I desire to refute really is; for, once accept it, and we must reject as valueless the great mass of existing historical writings, since for many periods of prime importance we depend mainly on contemporary accounts and lack any documentary background. It is quite true that the older historian was gravely handicapped by the secrecy which long surrounded documents of state and by the pressure by which sovereigns could ensure a flattering estimate of their activities. But, on the other hand, historians were then still in the main drawn from a class which enjoyed contact with affairs and were able to glean some information behind the scenes, while events were far less complicated and were decided by a relatively small number of people, all more or less known personally to each other.

Today this has all changed. The historian is no longer drawn from any one class of the community, and he probably does not spend much time in antechambers. But he has 100 sources which were denied to his forerunners. The harvest has not been winnowed, as in antiquity: the gleaners will always be too few. If already in 1895 Lord Acton himself, whose mastery of written material was simply fabulous, could complain that there was 'more fear of drowning than of drought', what would he say today, when the mass of material has had another whole generation in which to swell? Not the least merit of the nineteenth century was the zeal with which, under the spur of the nationalist and romantic movements, it set itself to rescue, sift and make accessible whatever had survived of the records of past ages. This process, which incidentally gave birth, or a new lease of life, to quite a number of subsidiary sciences, and enlisted the help of experts from quite unexpected fields, is not, of course, complete even today; but the vast and varied collections of state papers and diplomatic documents, of parliamentary and other records, which now adorn the shelves of our great libraries, prove that the heaviest spadework has already been accomplished and that the main task of the twentieth century will be to put flesh upon the dry bones and make them live again. Seventy years ago, the mentality of those in authority being what it then was, the opening of the archives of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was already regarded as a great concession: the secrets of Philip II, Charles II, Louis XIV, even Frederick the Great or Joseph II, were allowed to trickle out, but a strict veto was still upheld for a period corresponding very roughly to the three last generations. But in proportion as the arrears relating to earlier centuries

were disposed of, the date at which records were made available tended to advance by slow stages nearer to the present time; and even in the first half of the nineteenth century the habit of Blue Books and similar publications firmly established itself. At first, of course, they contained more sins of omission than of commission, and were doubtless often issued for the same motive as prompts the occupants of a sledge to throw out provisions to a pursuing pack of wolves. But gradually the habit of indiscretion forced its way even into these much-expurgated collections: a famous early example is the publication of dispatches from our ambassador in St. Petersburg, Sir Hamilton Seymour, containing the highly confidential proposals of Tsar Nicholas for joint Russo-British action in the Eastern Question. The sensation which these documents caused was an important factor in inflaming British suspicions of Russia during the Crimean War. It is probably true to assert that public opinion in our own country has never been more chaotic, more gullible and more unbalanced than in the Crimean period; and not the least reason was the secrecy which still veiled so much that was most essential in the situation.

In the half century that followed, the habit of publicity grew apace; the press, with all its faults, became more and more the repository of information that in any former age would have perished out of sight. New generations arose, less reticent and less wedded to discretion, and while with every decade the press grew more outspoken in its language and more relentless in its pursuit of the secrets of the recent past, revelation through the medium of biographies, memoirs and correspondence came to be practised on a large scale, until today there is scarcely a public man not only of the first, but even of the second or third rank, in the last century of British history, who is not commemorated by at least two stately volumes, and we have now got to four- or even six-volume 'Lives'. The revolution wrought by improved communications and multiplied records, in the era of cheap travelling and good roads, of the motor car, the telephone, the typewriter (and, let us not forget, the carbon copy), may be described almost equally as cause and as effect of this steady triumph of publicity. Moreover, scientific methods applied to bibliography and the improved conditions in the great libraries and archives have contributed to the general result.

Already in the first decade of the twentieth century publicity was invading the old methods of government at every turn, and more and more material became available at an earlier date than ever in the past. On the eve of the Great War the old diplomacy still upheld the traditional methods of

secrecy, and the success with which the text of the Triple Alliance and its supplementary conventions, or again of the Franco-Russian Alliance, was kept inviolate, is a measure of the transformation wrought by the Great War. It is true that even in those days there were occasional revelations proceeding from the very fountainhead – such, for instance, as Bismarck's celebrated publication of the Russo-German re-insurance treaty. It is probable that the system of secrecy was already crumbling before the supreme crisis of the Great War: a notable example (of which the Western public had scarcely time to take note before the World War absorbed its attention) was the way in which the extremely secret pacts concluded between the Balkan States in 1912 became known almost instantly. Within eighteen months of their first signature their texts were published by the *Matin*, and this was followed by a whole crop of sensational revelations of military and political documents in Sofia and other Balkan capitals.

It is surely superfluous to insist that the general process thus briefly indicated received a gigantic impetus from the Great War and the series of revolutions in which it culminated. Joseph de Maistre, writing to a friend at the height of the French Revolution, argued that 'the project of putting the Lake of Geneva into bottles is much less mad than that of re-establishing matters on the same footing as before the Revolution';[5] and it may be contended that the Great War has had the same revolutionary effect upon historical studies, and, above all, the study of contemporary history. The war has not merely given rise to a vast amount of ephemeral literature which, partisan though it be, is of the first importance to an understanding of its causes and results, and which will tax the selective powers of the most ardent student; it has led to the most far-reaching revelations of all the secret understandings upon which the old diplomacy rested: the advent of revolutionary governments to power in Russia, Germany and Austria resulted in an opening of the archives on a scale never hitherto dreamt of. The tremendous series of 'Die Grosse Politik' with its fifty-three volumes and its 15,800 documents, and, to a lesser degree, the Bolshevik collection of 'Krasny Arkhiv', have provided the student of contemporary history with an almost inexhaustible mine. It was obvious that the precedent thus set was bound to be followed even by those governments which had escaped a revolution, as their refusal to publish would not merely be exploited by their critics as a proof of guilty conscience, but would be the gravest possible

[5] To Vignet, 1793.

handicap to themselves, since even the most impartial writers would draw more from the one set of sources so long as the others were withheld from them. And thus, to the satisfaction not only of historians but of all true believers in the new European order, the German series of documents has been followed by the British, and the French are about to follow upon an even larger scale. It only remains to remove the scandalous embargo imposed by the Allied Powers upon the Austrian archives for the period between 1894 and 1914, and we shall soon be in possession of all the most essential archive material for a history of our own times. Meanwhile it may safely be contended that with regard to the immediate origins of the war – in other words, the period from 28 June to 4 August, 1914 – we already have as complete a chain of relevant diplomatic documents as exists for any similar crisis in all history, and that there are very few unexhausted sources from which we may hope to supplement our knowledge.[6]

But this rich crop of diplomatic collections is but a fragment of the first-hand material available. On the one hand, genuinely democratic tendencies, the demand for more open methods of diplomacy and the growing need for statesmen and even soldiers to justify their actions before public opinion, and again the habit of indiscretion, the temptations of publicity and material profit and the competition in revelations which after a certain stage becomes almost automatic – these and other motives besides have in the last ten years provided us with a vast mass of autobiography, memoirs, correspondence and documentary evidence of the very first importance, from which we can study and compare the policy and achievements of almost all the leading actors in the Great War and many of their subordinates. The extent and importance of this new literature may be best gathered by a perusal of Dr. G. P. Gooch's lucid survey entitled *Recent Revelations of European Diplomacy*. A situation has been reached in which the foremost makers of history vie with each other in making a story public, and if one holds back a little, for whatever reason, another very speedily fills up the gaps. Whether we like it or not, the whole trend is against discretion and reticence.

Suffice it, then, to say that never before in the history of the world has so much material become so soon available, and that today the chief problem which faces the contemporary historian is the bulk and fullness, not the paucity, of his sources. The publication of such books as Colonel House's papers on the one hand and the twin memoirs of President Masaryk and Dr. Benes on the other (to take only two classical instances) are, it may be

[6] With minor qualifications to this claim I need not concern myself here.

fairly argued, in themselves striking proof that the whole outlook of the world upon the history of the recent past has been radically altered by the Great War. Moreover, this habit of publicity, which is spreading upwards and infecting even the most responsible circles, carries with it increased opportunities for the historian to check from the mouths of contemporary actors the details of what he has already gleaned from documentary sources. And here it is superfluous to point out the advantage which he enjoys both as against previous historical students of all periods and as against present-day students of earlier periods.

Without venturing upon prophecy, I find it difficult to believe that the process I have tried to describe can now be arrested, and if so contemporary history, in its most modern form, is bound to assert itself as one of the first importance.

Let me turn to another criticism. It may very reasonably be argued that the dangers of political partisanship weigh more heavily upon the contemporary historian than upon his colleagues in other fields. But I venture to maintain that it is every whit as easy to import party passion into the portrayal of past ages as into contemporary narrative. Alison's massive history was a mere tract in disproof of democracy, and the opening of the archives has long since robbed it of its value. But did he import a greater measure of modern party spirit than Mitford working on Greece, or, dare I add, the giant Mommsen writing upon Rome, to quote only two examples? The fact is that certain writers will import political passion into *any* period which they touch, whereas others will cast an icy spell over the most lively and stirring scene. Moreover, there has always been a certain salutary check upon the contemporary historian, and one which is stronger than ever in these days of heightened publicity and intercourse. I venture to suggest that today it is impossible for any reputable historian to risk such a travesty of character – shall we say, for the sake of argument, of President Wilson or Mr. Lloyd George – as that which a great historian of last century perpetrated upon Henry VIII or Mary Queen of Scots. But Henry and Mary and all who knew them had long been in their graves when Mr. Froude wrote his 'History'. Today those who, encouraged by the wealth of first-hand material already at their disposal, attempt to pass no less summary a judgement on the statesmen of 1918 are at once confronted by a crowd of contemporaries ready to brand them as mere caricaturists.[7]

[7] A possible exception to this is the caricature of Sir Henry Wilson by Sir Andrew Macphail in the *Quarterly Review* of Aug. 1928. The dead general's friends appear, perhaps

As a matter of fact, as Mr. Baldwin reminded us at King's College some two years ago,[8] a frank expression of opinions is not such a desperate failing from the general reader's point of view. For overstatement of the kind to which I have just alluded is a timely warning to most readers of any intelligence, who will take note of the facts and draw suitable conclusions of their own. I must confess that in my own experience I am far more frightened of authors who make loud professions of impartiality and are all the time leaving all the light or all the shadow out of their picture. And so far as contemporary history is concerned, I have often drawn more profit and even more information from a book of inferior workmanship and open bias, where I was forewarned by the author's own prejudice, than from some colourless narrative which gave no clue to the author's party allegiance or ulterior motive.

Meanwhile, there is an even more disastrous, if nobler, partisanship than that of mere ephemeral parties; for no man, and certainly no historian who is worth his salt, can altogether avoid taking sides in the tremendous controversies of Authority and Reason, of Tradition and Liberty, of unquestioning faith and sceptical inquiry. Must we, in order to write good history, abjure every doctrine alike of Bolshevism or fascism, of democracy or representative government? If so, is it not even more essential that we should avoid the bias imparted by religious belief, and forswear Christianity or Islam, Judaism or Buddhism alike? And if we push the argument to its logical conclusion, must we not fill our veins with milk instead of blood and abjure our human origin?

In any case, that 'distortion of facts to suit general principles' which Macaulay so strongly condemns, and of which he may not have been altogether innocent himself, has never been a monopoly of contemporary writers: it is the besetting sin of all historians. If, then, the writer of contemporary history is especially liable to the temptation of partisanship, he is held in leash by the increased opportunities for challenging false doctrine. Meanwhile, as biography and autobiography tend more and more with every year to overflow the banks of history, he finds it necessary, to a degree never before equalled, to devote himself to the study of psychology. Biography is only too often uncritical and adulatory; autobiography is

mistakenly, to have considered that its crudity rendered any answer superfluous: but when it appeared in book form, the reviewers were deservedly severe.

[8] In an address to the Anglo-American Conference of Historians; reported verbatim in *The Times*, 14 July 1926.

sometimes deliberately employed to perpetuate a false theory. Fortunately it is a two-edged sword which most men use at their peril, for to the critical eye its revelations are not by any means those of which its author was conscious.[9] 'L'historien doit être psychologue', said M. Maurice Donnay, speaking, at his reception to the French Academy, of his great predecessor Albert Sorel; and of none is this so true as of the contemporary historian. But how can he be a psychologist and read the motives and characters of men of action if his whole time is spent among his books, and in communing with the past? He must meet and study live men at least as much as dead documents. The motives of statesmen are as infinite, as complex, as variable as human nature itself: it is not so much that they vary from age to age, as that altered circumstances lay a new emphasis on this or that tendency and give play to new temptations. It is a commonplace that the present is inexplicable without a knowledge of the past. But this is only half the truth, and I boldly contend that the best way to understand the past is very often to study the present. Let me draw a practical illustration from my own special subject. Most of the misconceptions prevalent in the West today with regard to the so-called 'Succession States' of Austria-Hungary are due to ignorance of fundamental facts in the history of the Habsburg dynasty, of the Dual System, or of the complicated question of nationalities – all of which still provide the key to what is happening before our eyes under radically changed conditions. But, once more, that is only half the truth; and I contend that a close study of (supplemented if possible by personal acquaintance with) the political, intellectual and industrial leaders of today is one of the most effective means of testing theories evolved from a documentary study of the age of Metternich and Francis, of Kossuth and Deak. I am not, of course, advocating the dire heresy of judging the present by the past or the past by the present:[10] I am only suggesting that the method of constant comparison between the two, of frequent but vigilant reference from one to the other, is likely to sharpen and humanize the historian's judgements upon men and affairs. It is one very practical side of the comparative method, which to my mind is one of the most profitable of all historical methods, when kept within due limits.

It does not by any means follow from what has been said that the historian must be an active politician. At the same time it is significant of the growing interaction of history and politics during the past 100 years,

[9] Cf. Lord Acton's inaugural lecture, p. 17.
[10] Cf. Macaulay's *History* (1879 edn.), ii. 60.

that throughout central and south-eastern Europe historians and historical writings have played a very notable part in the actual shaping of political events. This is a development of which I attempted a brief survey in my own inaugural lecture in 1922, entitled 'The historian as a political force in central Europe', and I shall not, therefore, dwell upon it further now, except to remark that it has not yet received the attention which it deserves in this country, though certain aspects of it can be studied in Dr. Gooch's *Historians in the Nineteenth Century*.

Apart from close attention to psychology and direct contact with the present-day life of the peoples whom he is studying, there are other tests which our ideal historian should be able, or should endeavour, to pass. But in essence they are the same for the writer of contemporary or of earlier history: they differ not in quality, but in degree. Even those thorough linguistic qualifications which earlier writers too often lacked are now very properly exacted from all alike. For it is at last generally recognized that ignorance of German is at least a serious blemish even in a writer upon purely English history, and that the biographer of, let us say, a British statesman, who has not studied the foreign as well as the British literature upon that statesman and has not tried to measure him against his foreign contemporaries, is only an amateur at the trade of biography and has neglected essential canons of criticism. It is worth adding that a knowledge of languages will in the future be more and more incumbent upon all historians, if they are to cultivate closer intercourse with fellow craftsmen of all countries and thereby fulfil their proper function as interpreters, by toning down rather than accentuating national prejudices.

There remains a problem which to my mind is of capital importance and which may conveniently be introduced by quoting certain phrases of Niebuhr, who has not unjustly been regarded as a pioneer of modern historical criticism. In his introduction to a course of lectures on the history of the revolutionary era, he asks his listeners to trust his 'love of truth', and then continues:

> I shall not go into detail on all subjects: what must be painful to myself and to every German, what I should wish to delete from the history of the age with my own blood, I shall only touch upon shortly: where exposure of mistakes which have wounded me too deeply is not necessary for further comprehension of the whole matter, I prefer to pass them over.

This seems to me a most dangerous doctrine. The true test of the historian, and above all of the contemporary historian, is surely not a resolve to weigh good and evil in the balance until the reader is in doubt as to which of the two either reader or writer prefers, but a constant effort to omit nothing that is essential to a comprehension of rival points of view. The unpardonable sin is not bias, which the discerning reader can always detect and guard against, but deliberate suppression, which may only too often deceive all save the expert. And this problem is one of ever growing importance as the volume of material swells and threatens to overwhelm even the most omnivorous student. Selection has always been a fine art, and in our day it makes heavy demands upon our powers of judgement and upon our honesty. In this situation the gentle art of omission or suppression is a temptation against which it is constantly necessary to struggle, and which must often seem venial, if not altogether justifiable.

There must always be a marshalling and selection of the facts, but to delay judgement till all the facts are before us would simply be to abandon all idea of any judgement at all, since we never can have all the facts. It would also be to forget that it is sometimes possible to reach the heart of a matter without a knowledge of anything like all the facts – for the simple reason that all facts are not essential. 'It perpetually happens', said Macaulay, 'that one writer tells less *truth* than another, merely because he tells more truths'.[11]

These truisms are worth stressing at a moment when all historians have their appetite whetted for hitherto unpublished documents, and when some people are apt to forget that a document is not necessarily either valuable or interesting merely because it has remained unprinted. But for the student it may be affirmed that those altered conditions of study in the post-war period, to which allusion has been made, make of contemporary history a very valuable training ground, that in this field there is, so to speak, more building material available than in any other, better means of testing and controlling it than ever before, and hence abundant opportunity for exercising the critical and artistic faculties.

These altered conditions are creating a new hybrid type of historian – one who has lived through many of the events which he describes and has perhaps been in close contact with some of the chief actors, but who supplements this element of 'Erlebtes' – of life and atmosphere, shall I say?

[11] Essay on 'History', in Macaulay, *Works*, v. 130.

– by a conscientious study of the press, of diplomatic documents printed and unprinted, of biography and letters, of propagandist and ephemeral literature. This man can hardly be called a contemporary historian *pur et simple*. But his very existence is a proof of the extent to which changing conditions of life since the turn of the century have transformed historical studies with the rest, and have brought the historian into closer contact with political life. The fact that specialization is more than ever necessary in history, as in every other branch of study, makes this close contact all the more important, as a guarantee of realism.

In this connection it is necessary to allude briefly to a problem which the Great War raised in an acute form – the relation of the historian to the state. The course which higher education has followed in this island has fortunately made our historians much freer from state control than those of the Continent. When Sybel in his Inaugural at Marburg in 1856 proclaimed the need for 'an alliance between history and politics', he was only putting forward the same theory as Seeley a generation later at Cambridge. But he failed to foresee that the very process of which he was a foremost exponent was undermining that independence which was once the glory of the German historical school. It is only necessary to think of the position of the great Ranke, who was consulted by monarchs and publicly thanked by statesmen, but preserved to the very end a serene and Spartan impartiality, and then to contrast it with the Byzantinism of a later generation. This evolution towards subservience to a state or a dynasty was only one phase of the doctrine of force which pervaded the contemporaries of Bismarck. Since the Great War there has been a considerable rebound from this doctrine in all countries save Russia and Italy, and there are fewer people than before who uphold the essentially un-Christian quip (I will not call it a theory) that nothing succeeds like success. The historian, too, after a bout of propagandist activity during the Great War – a disease common to all nations – has on the whole shaken off state control more successfully than his predecessors. It is of the utmost importance that this state of affairs should continue, and there is reason to hope that it may. For events have shown that governments are dependent upon historians and need their help if the documents which they lay before the world are to command the confidence of the public. Those upon whom the choice has fallen, first in Germany, then in our own country, and now in France, have set a high standard of independence, and the precedents created in connection with the editing of documents concerning the origins of the war may exercise a

noticeable influence, not only on historical studies, but even on political and diplomatic development.

I have left till last the utilitarian side of the problem: it is not one that I desire to stress unduly, but there are two aspects of it which ought not to be ignored. In history, as in other studies, the false doctrine of 'Art for Art's sake' is always cropping up, though most of the historical writers who act upon it are sadly lacking in the artistic sense. I submit that it is today increasingly important that both teachers and writers of history should in their selection of subjects and material preserve a sense of proportion and perspective and give a preference to those which have some direct bearing upon the life and thought of our own age. Those who have real talent should be encouraged to choose a noble theme, and then every age stands open to them, from Egypt, Nineveh and Rome to the medieval empire, scholastic philosophy and the dawn of constitutional government, and so down to the history of our own age. But the learned buffaloes of our art, who merely wallow in facts and have a talent for collecting rather than for interpreting, should be reminded that contemporary history contains endless unsolved problems on which there is already material at least as ample as that of former centuries, and whose adequate, even uninspired, treatment may be a valuable contribution to contemporary progress, by checking the errors of public opinion and providing a necessary groundwork for politicians and administrators.

My other point in this connection is that a close study of recent history is an essential corollary of the new international peace movement which centres round the League of Nations, and on which the avoidance of fresh upheavals must so largely depend. I am not so foolish as to plead for the enlistment of historians as mere propagandists of this or that campaign of pacifism or disarmament; but it is self evident that they have a very special function to perform in promoting that scientific study of recent times which is one of the essential foundations on which a new world and a new mentality must be constructed. It is often said that every generation must learn its own lessons and make its own mistakes, and that no amount of historical knowledge will prevent them. This, I venture to maintain, is one of the most mischievous of half truths. Of course we shall all, both collectively and individually, continue to make mistakes and disregard sound advice; but to say that a man who knows the facts has no better chance of success than a man who does *not* know them is simply nonsense, and while there are many situations in history where events were too big

for the biggest man, there are countless others where it can be proved up to the hilt that if this or that statesman had been properly informed on this or that question he (and so perhaps his country with him) would have avoided this or that mistake.

It is high time to conclude a survey which makes no pretence whatever to being systematic, but is merely an attempt to place certain problems of historical study in a new perspective. Indeed my main contention is that the Age of Industry, Science and Democracy, which has so completely revolutionized transport and communication, and with them the daily life of every human being, has also altered the focus both of the historian and of the general public towards history. It has established closer contact between past and present history, it has led both the official world and the average thinking man to attach a new importance to the verdict of the past, and it is placing at the disposal of both a rich material such as no previous age ever possessed, at an increasingly early date. I trust that I have said enough to prove that recent or contemporary history has thus been placed on an entirely new footing, and that it is entitled to claim a position of equality with the history of earlier centuries.

The economic advance of the squirearchy in the two generations before the Civil War
R. H. Tawney (1937)

Introduction

F. M. L. Thompson

Nobody today refers to Tawney's 1937 Creighton Lecture, 'The economic advance of the squirearchy in the two generations before the Civil War', for the excellent reason that it was never published and no manuscript is known to survive. It is generally accepted, however, that this lecture, no doubt somewhat expanded and refined in the interval, resurfaced in 1941 as 'The rise of the gentry, 1558–1640'.[1] The evidence for this supposition is suggestive rather than conclusive. In defending his 1941 article from criticism Tawney referred in his 1954 'Postscript' to contemporary opinion 'that the two generations before the Civil War saw an advance in the fortunes of the class described as the gentry',[2] wording distinctly reminiscent of the title of his Creighton Lecture, save that at one time he had held that squirearchy and gentry were distinct social groups. Meanwhile in 1940, that is, a year before 'The rise of the gentry' appeared in print, Habakkuk had observed that 'this notion of the rise of the squirearchy has become the organising conception of English social history between the Dissolution of the Monasteries and 1640'.[3] There is a strong implication here that this had recently become the received view, and Tawney, his lectures at the London School of Economics and his Creighton Lecture, is its most likely source.

[1] R. H. Tawney, 'The rise of the gentry, 1558–1640', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, xi (1941), repr. in *Essays in Economic History*, i, ed. E. M. Carus-Wilson (1954), pp. 173–206.

[2] R. H. Tawney, 'The rise of the gentry: a postscript', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., vii (1954), 91–7, repr. in Carus-Wilson, pp. 206–14.

[3] H. J. Habakkuk, 'English landownership, 1680–1740', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, x (1940), 2.

F. M. L. Thompson, Introduction; and R. H. Tawney, 'The economic advance of the squirearchy in the two generations before the Civil War', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 77–121.

Hence it seems reasonable to accept that 'The economic advance of the squirearchy' became 'The rise of the gentry'.

The hundred years before the Civil War, 1540–1640, soon became known as 'Tawney's century', the century whose distinctive social and political character he established in two dazzling articles in 1941: 'The rise of the gentry', and his Raleigh Lecture 'Harrington's interpretation of his age'.[4] In splendid prose, itself reflecting Tawney's affection for sixteenth-century literature, these articles told the story of the rise of a new class of gentry landowners profiting from the plundering of monastic and church lands, from the necessities of a crown obliged to sell lands, and at the expense of an extravagant, indebted and incompetent nobility. In 1656 James Harrington had contended, in *Oceana*, that political power was determined by the prevailing distribution of property in a community, and that since the time of Henry VII there had been a decisive shift in the balance of landownership away from the old nobility and in favour of the commons, which had resulted in the Civil War. Now in 1941 Tawney produced the economic history which confirmed that such a change in the distribution of landownership had indeed taken place, and in doing so provided an interpretation of the origins of the Civil War in terms of a conflict between gentry and aristocracy. For good measure Tawney attributed the expansion of the gentry class mainly to their adoption of new techniques of estate management and accountancy, pursuing efficiency and profit with a zeal beyond the comprehension or competence of the old nobility.

Although he allowed that the ranks of the gentry were swollen by some movement of mercantile fortunes into land, Tawney's emphasis on new-fangled managerial and marketing methods as the key to the triumph of the gentry over an effete and old-fashioned aristocracy was readily interpreted as meaning that the gentry rose by embracing bourgeois values. The new gentry were clearly characterized as 'agricultural capitalists': 'all watch markets closely; buy and sell in bulk; compare the costs and yields of different crops; charge the rent, when custom allows, which a farm will stand; keep careful accounts'.[5] From this position it was only a short step, although not one taken by Tawney himself, to concluding that the Civil War and the English Revolution were essentially a conflict between decaying feudalism and rising capitalism, the result of a somewhat improbable

[4] R. H. Tawney, 'Harrington's interpretation of his age', *Proc. British Academy*, xxvii (1941).

[5] See below, p. 99.

combination of a bourgeois risen landed gentry and a genuinely urban financial and mercantile bourgeoisie challenging the old feudal order. That Geoffrey Elton was later to castigate Tawney for leading innocent young idealists astray into the false paths of Marxist determinism – he instanced Christopher Hill as his prime example – was grossly unfair and unjustified, but nevertheless understandable.[6]

Tawney's ideas were hugely influential, but as with many excitingly novel historical theses they had a limited shelf life; in this instance, about thirty years at most. For a dozen years after 1941 rising gentry and declining aristocracy formed the accepted view of the economic and social setting of the Civil War. Rather unfortunately, as it turned out, Lawrence Stone decided to gild the lily by buttressing the Tawney case with a more thoroughly documented account of aristocratic decline. His 1948 article was promptly shredded by Hugh Trevor-Roper, who exposed the errors and misunderstandings of Stone's hasty trawl of public records, and Stone's partial retreat in 1952 did nothing to deter Trevor-Roper's frontal attack on the entire Harrington-Tawney-Stone position in his 1953 article 'The gentry, 1540–1640'.[7] This proposed a radically different explanation of the rising gentry. Modernizing agricultural capitalism was out as the driving force behind the new gentry, and was replaced by the somewhat traditional crown and court patronage as the path trodden by the new men. The notion of any general crisis of the aristocracy as a social class was also dismissed: some large landowners fell out of favour or impoverished themselves, others prospered and enriched themselves. A court-country conflict replaced the new gentry-feudal aristocracy conflict as the context for the Civil War, and this became the new received wisdom for the next decade or so. News of this academic in-fighting spread beyond the world of disputatious dons and the readership of the *Economic History Review* with the appearance of J. H. Hexter's 'Storm over the gentry', originally published in the intellectuals' journal *Encounter* in 1958. Although not uncritical of Trevor-Roper's version of social history Hexter pronounced a more emphatic dismissal of Tawney's 'Rise of the gentry'.[8]

[6] Elton, in *History, Society, and the Churches*, ed. D. Beales (1985).

[7] L. Stone, 'The anatomy of the Elizabethan aristocracy', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, xviii (1948); H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'The Elizabethan aristocracy: an anatomy atomized', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., iii (1951); L. Stone, 'The Elizabethan aristocracy – a restatement', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., iv (1952); H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'The gentry, 1540–1640', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, supplement, no. 1 (Cambridge, 1953).

[8] J. H. Hexter, 'Storm over the gentry', *Encounter*, x (1958); repr. with footnotes in J. H.

Meanwhile the statistical foundations of the rise of the gentry, in changes in the ownership of manors in seven counties, had been weakened by J. P. Cooper's 1956 article, 'The counting of manors', which also aimed a blow at Stone's crisis in aristocratic landownership as being 'an exceedingly dubious proposition'.[9] Lawrence Stone's retreat to Princeton may not have been entirely unconnected to these academic jousts in Oxford, and once there he devoted many years to preparing a definitive defence of the rise of the gentry by providing a conclusive demonstration of the complementary decline of the aristocracy. *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* appeared in 1965, a formidable feat of historical scholarship which, however, despite its 841 pages and thirty-seven appendices and its fascinating accounts of the lives of the nobility, failed to convince that the aristocracy as a class experienced any general economic or financial crisis.[10] In any case it appeared too late to halt the new wave of revisionists, gathering force from a group of studies of county communities and carrying all before it in the nineteen-seventies, sweeping away any idea that either gentry-aristocracy or court-country divisions had anything to do with the origins of the Civil War or with determining who became roundheads and who cavaliers. 'The fag end, the long death, of the gentry controversy' was marked by the appearance of Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* and Lawrence Stone's *The Causes of the English Revolution* in the early nineteen-seventies, which were themselves quickly swept into oblivion by the revisionist school headed by Conrad Russell.[11] All explanations of the Civil War in terms of preceding social changes were dismissed and consigned to the dustbin. In the revisionist high-political narrative constructed by Russell and buttressed by the work of Gerald Aylmer, Mark Kishlansky, Nicholas Tyacke, John Morrill, Kevin Sharpe and others there was no place for rising gentry, court vs. country, or a crisis of the aristocracy: the 'structural breakdown' of royal finances emerged as the key to the events leading to Civil War.

Tawney's 'Rise of the gentry' had given rise to a remarkable outpouring of research, controversy and publication, and suffered the not uncommon fate of being rendered obsolete by the volume and quality of the attention

Hexter, *Reappraisals in History* (1961).

[9] J. P. Cooper, 'The counting of manors', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., viii (1956).

[10] L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford, 1965); and see the review article by D. C. Coleman, 'The gentry controversy and the aristocracy in crisis, 1558–1641', *History*, li (1966).

[11] T. Cogswell, R. Cust and P. Lake, *Revisionism and its Legacies: the Work of Conrad Russell* (Cambridge, 2002), introduction, pp. 1–17.

it had excited. It is political historians, however, who have decided that the state of the gentry is irrelevant for their purposes, and hence that there is no point in establishing whether the gentry were indeed rising or the large landowners were indeed declining. Economic and social historians, and particularly historians of landownership, have not found many occasions to address the question since Habakkuk's conclusion in 1958 that 'the principal importance [of the sales of monastic lands] lay in altering the balance of property, and possibly of power, between families who were already landowners before 1540, rather than in affording means for the founding of entirely new landed families'.[12] This is consistent with a view that sales of monastic lands, and probably by association sales of crown lands, enabled some established large landowners to enlarge their estates, and similarly some established gentry to enlarge their properties. It does not seem likely that gentry estates in aggregate grew at the expense of large, or aristocratic, estates, and quite probably the late seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century trend towards expansion of the overall share of large estates was already under way.[13]

[12] H. J. Habakkuk, 'The market for monastic property, 1539–1603', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., x (1958), 380.

[13] The general, and somewhat speculative, surveys of the distribution of land in England over the long term by F. M. L. Thompson, 'The social distribution of landed property in England since the 16th century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xix (1966) and J. P. Cooper, 'The social distribution of land and men in England, 1436–1700', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, xx (1967) are consistent with this view

The rise of the gentry, 1558–1640*

R. H. Tawney (1937)[1]

The first French translator[2] of Locke's *Thoughts on Education* introduced it with the remark that foreign readers, in order to appreciate it, must remember the audience to whom it was addressed. It was composed, he explained, for the edification of an element in society to which the Continent offered no exact analogy, but which had become in the last century the dominant force in English life. To M. Coste, in 1695, the triumphant ascent of the English gentry – neither a *noblesse*, nor a bureaucracy, but mere *bons bourgeois* – seemed proof of an insular dynamic of which France, with the aid of his translation, would do well to learn the secret. His compatriots, a century and a half later, hailed the effortless survival of the same class in an age which had seen *seigneurs* in flight from their castles, and even *junkers* cajoled into some semblance of concessions, as an example of social stability as eccentric as it was remarkable, and marvelled at the depth to which the tree had struck its roots. De Tocqueville in the forties, de Lavergne in the fifties, Taine in the sixties and seventies, wrote in a mood of reaction; but they had some excuse for opening their eyes.[3] In spite of the influx in the

* This article was first published in the *Economic History Review*, xi (1941). F. M. L. Thompson argues in his introduction (pp. 81–5) that it was derived from Tawney's 1937 Creighton Lecture. The editors are grateful to Wiley-Blackwell for permission to reproduce it here.

[1] The omission of some references, which should have been inserted, and the incompleteness of some others, require an apology. They are due to circumstances which, since the article was written, have made it difficult to consult some of the sources used.

[2] Pierre Coste, *De l'éducation des enfants* (1695).

[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien régime* (trans. H. Reeves), pp. 15, 72, 77, 85; L. de Lavergne, *The Rural Economy of England, Scotland and Ireland* (trans. 1855), chs. ix and x; H. Taine, *Notes sur l'Angleterre* (1872).

interval of Scots, Nabobs, some merchants, a few bankers and an occasional industrialist, not less than one in every eight of the members sitting for English and Welsh seats in the last unreformed house of commons, and one in five of the house of lords, belonged to families which, two centuries before, had given representatives to the house of commons in the Long Parliament.[4] Ten English counties had been blessed in 1640 with some sixty-two leading landowners, masters of six or more manors apiece. Of those in the whole ten one half, of those in five just under two-thirds, had descendants or kin who owned 3,000 acres or upwards in 1874.[5]

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The political role of this tenacious class has not lacked its eulogists. It has itself, however, a history which is not only political, but also economic; and the decisive period of that history is the two generations before the Civil War. 'Could humanity ever attain happiness', wrote Hume of that momentous half century, 'the condition of the English gentry at this period might merit that appellation'. Contemporary opinion, if more conscious of the casualties of progress, would have been disposed, nevertheless, to endorse his verdict. Observers became conscious, in the later years of Elizabeth, of an alteration in the balance of social forces, and a stream of comment began which continued to swell, until, towards the close of the next century, a new equilibrium was seen to have been reached. Its theme was the changing composition, at once erosion and reconstruction, of the upper strata of the social pyramid. It was, in particular, since their preponderance was not yet axiomatic, the increase in the wealth and influence of certain intermediate groups, compared with the nobility, the crown and the mass of small landholders. Of those groups the most important, 'situated', as one of its most brilliant members wrote, 'neither in the lowest grounds . . . nor in the highest mountains . . . but in the valleys between both',[6] was the squirearchy and its connections.

[4] *Official Return of Members of the House of Commons* (1878).

[5] The counties concerned are Herts., Beds., Bucks., Surrey, Hants., N. Riding of Yorks., Worcs., Glos., Warwicks. and Northants. The facts for the first seven in 1640 are taken from the lists of manors and their owners given in the V.C.H., and for the last three from Sir Robert Atkyns, *The ancient and present state of Gloucestershire*; William Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*; John Bridges, *History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*. Those for 1874 are taken from John Bateman, *The Acreocracy of England, a list of all owners of three thousand acres and upwards … from the Modern Domesday Book*.

[6] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Concerning the Causes of the Magnificency and Opulency of Cities* (1657).

Holding a position determined, not by legal distinctions, but by common estimation; kept few[7] and tough by the ruthlessness of the English family system, which sacrificed the individual to the institution, and, if it did not drown all the kittens but one, threw all but one into the water; pouring the martyrs of that prudent egotism, their younger sons, not only into the learned professions, but into armies, English and foreign, exploration and colonization, and every branch of business enterprise; barred themselves by no rule as to *dérogeance* from supplementing their incomes from whatever source they pleased, yet never, as in Holland, wholly severed from their rural roots, the English gentry combined the local and popular attachments essential for a representative role with the aristocratic aroma of *nobiles minores*, and played each card in turn with tactful, but remorseless, realism. Satirists[8] made merry with the homely dialect, strong liquor and horse-coping of the provincial squire; but, in spite of the Slenders and Shallows, the mere bumpkins of the class, for whom the French invented a special name, were not too distressingly conspicuous. Its failures, instead of, as on the Continent, hanging round its neck and helping to sink it, discreetly disappeared with the disappearance of their incomes. Its successes supplied the materials for a new nobility. They provided more than one.

Inconsistencies were inevitable in speaking of a class freely recruited from below, in a society where the lines of social stratification were drawn not, as in most parts of the Continent, by birth and legal privilege, but by gradations of wealth. The elasticity which such peculiarities conferred has often been applauded, but they were not favourable to precise classifications; nor was precision in demand. There were moments, it is true, when it was convenient to stand on a hereditary dignity, authentic or assumed; did not the arch-leveller of the age, free-born John himself, win one of the earliest of his famous collection of judicial scalps by refusing to plead to an indictment drawn against 'John Lilburne, yeoman'?[9] There were voices from the past which, when the crash came, hailed the fall of the monarchy

[7] Thomas Wilson, *The State of England Anno Dom. 1600*, ed. F. J. Fisher (Camden Miscellany, xvi, 1936), p. 23, put the number of gentlemen at '16,000 or thereabouts', plus some 500 knights. For the purposes of this article, no distinction is drawn between knights and gentry.

[8] Samuel Butler, *Characters and Passages from Notebooks*, ed. A. R. Waller; and John Earle, *Micro-Cosmographie* (1628). See G. Davies, *The Early Stuarts, 1603–60* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 264–72.

[9] *The Examination and Confession of Captain Lilbourne* (British Library, E.130/33). I owe this reference to P. Gregg.

as the inevitable nemesis of a general downward slide towards the abyss of social 'parity', and reproached the professional custodians of traditional proprieties with opening to fees doors which a prudent rigour would have locked.[10] But agricultural, commercial and industrial interests were, in most parts of the country, inextricably intertwined. Mere caste had few admirers – fewer probably among the gentry militant of the early seventeenth century than among the gentry triumphant of the early eighteenth – and that note was rarely heard. Common sense endorsed the remark that 'gentility is nothing but ancient riches',[11] adding under its breath that they need not be very ancient. Sir Thomas Smith had said that a gentleman is a man who spends his money like a gentleman.[12] Of the theorists rash enough to attempt a definition, few succeeded in improving on that wise tautology.

In spite, nevertheless, of ambiguities, the group concerned was not difficult to identify. Its members varied widely in wealth;[13] but, though ragged at its edges, it had a solid core. That core consisted of the landed proprietors, above the yeomanry, and below the peerage, together with a growing body of well-to-do farmers, sometimes tenants of their relatives, who had succeeded the humble peasants of the past as lessees of demesne farms; professional men, also rapidly increasing in number, such as the more eminent lawyers, divines and an occasional medical practitioner; and the wealthier merchants, who, if not, as many were, themselves sons of landed families, had received a similar education, moved in the same circles, and in England, unlike France, were commonly recognized to be socially indistinguishable from them. It was this upper layer of commoners, heterogeneous, but compact, whose rapid rise in wealth and power most impressed contemporaries. Literature celebrated its triumphs. Travelled intellectuals sought to polish its crudities. Manuals[14] written for its edification

[10] See, for the tendency towards a 'parity', Sir Edward Walker, *Historical Discourses upon Several Occasions* (1705), and, for the laxity of heralds, the same writer's *Observations upon the Inconveniences that have attended the frequent Promotions to Titles of Honour and Dignity since King James came to the Crown of England* (1653).

[11] Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Portland MSS.*, ix. 5.

[12] *De Republica Anglorum*, ed. L. Alston (1906), pp. 39–40: 'and, to be shorte, who can live idly and without manuall labour, and will bear the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall be … taken for a gentleman.'

[13] Wilson, *The State of England*, pp. 23–4, gives £650–£1,000 a year as the income of a gentleman in London and the home counties, and £300–£400 as the figure for the remoter provinces. He describes knights as men of £1,000–£2,000 a year, but cites some with incomes of £5,000–£7,000.

[14] E.g. Henry Peacham, *The Complete Gentleman* (1622); Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman* (1633).

laid the foundations of a flattering legend. Education, the professions, the arts, above all, architecture, reflected its influence. Nor were there wanting observers who discerned in a changing social order the herald of a new state.

Interrelations of the political breakdown of the age, of a kind which today would be called sociological, have commonly received short shrift from historians. The tougher breed which experienced it has some right to an opinion. It was disposed to take them seriously. Once thought has been stirred by a crisis, the attempt to pierce behind controversial externals to the hidden springs of the movement is in all periods common form. The influence in the second half of the century of doctrines which sought one of the dynamics of revolution in antecedent economic change is not, therefore, surprising. But the disturbance of the social equilibrium has excited the curiosity of a generation which could only guess at its political repercussions. Theories canvassed in the fifties in the Rota Club had faint fragmentary anticipations before Harrington had started on his travels, and when Neville was still a schoolboy.

The facts were plain enough. The ruin of famous families by personal extravagance and political ineptitude; the decline in the position of the yeomanry towards the turn of the century, when long leases fell in; the loss, not only of revenue, but of authority, by the monarchy, as crown lands melted; the mounting fortunes of the residuary legatee, a gentry whose aggregate income was put even in 1600 at some three times that of peers, bishops, deans and chapters, and richer yeomen together, and who steadily gathered into their hands estates slipping from the grasp of peasant, nobility, church and crown alike – such movements and their consequences were visible to all. Not only a precocious economist like Thomas Wilson the younger, the nephew of Elizabeth's secretary of state, but men of greater eminence – Bacon; Cranfield; Selden; the shifty but not unintelligent Goodman; those artists in crying stinking fish, the Venetian embassy in London; Coke, most amiable and most futile of secretaries of state, who begs Buckingham, of all people, to save crown lands from the spoiler – wrote footnotes on the same theme.[15]

[15] Wilson, *The State of England*, pp. 18–24; Francis Bacon, 'Certain observations upon a libel published this present year 1592', in *Works*, i, ed. Bohn, p. 385; G. Goodman, *The Court of King James I*, ed. J. Brewer (2 vols., 1839), i. 311, 290–1, 322–3; John Selden, *Table Talk*, under 'Land' (see also under 'Knight Service'); *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian, 1603–7*, no. 729; *Cal. S.P. Ven. 1617–19*, no. 658; *Cal. S.P. Ven. 1621–3*, no. 603; *Cal. S.P. Ven. 1629–32*, no. 374; Hist. MSS. Comm., *Cowper MSS.*, i. 129.

The man who saw deepest into the moral of it all was primarily neither a theorist nor a politician, though he had the gifts of both. He was a great man of action, perhaps the greatest of his age. The doctrine that political stability depends on the maintenance of that Balance of Property, which was later to become a term of art, was not, in essence, novel. It was implicit in the conception of society as an organism, requiring the maintenance of a due proportion between its different members, which was part of the medieval legacy. But it is one thing to repeat a formula, another to apply it. Raleigh's dialogue, composed, it seems, in 1615, just after the central crisis of James's reign, was the first attempt to state the relevance of that conception to the changing circumstances of his day, and to deduce from it the need, not for mere conservatism, but for reform. The argument with which his country gentleman confutes the noble parasite is no abstract disquisition on constitutional formalities. It is a deduction from social history. The centre of social gravity has shifted; political power is shifting with it. The earl who could once put a thousand horse into the field cannot now put twenty-five; if the greatest lord lifts a finger, he will be locked up by the next constable. The commons today command most of the wealth, and all the weapons. It is they, not the heirs of the feudal past, who hold the keys of the future. It is with them; with their natural leaders, the gentry; with the house of commons, which is their organ, that the monarchy, if it is wise, will hasten to makes its peace.[16]

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These hints of political deductions from the fact of social change must not now detain us. In considering the character of that change itself, the right point of departure is that which Raleigh suggests. To speak of the transition from a feudal to a bourgeois society is to decline upon a cliché. But a process difficult to epitomize in less hackneyed terms has left deep marks on the social systems of most parts of Europe. What a contemporary described in 1600 as the conversion of 'a gentry addicted to war' into 'good husbands', who 'know as well how to improve their lands to the uttermost as the farmer or countryman',[17] may reasonably be regarded as an insular species of the same genus.

[16] *The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh, Knt.*, ed. T. Birch (1751), i. 9 (where the metaphor of a scales is used) and pp. 206–7.

[17] Wilson, *The State of England*, p. 18.

It was a precocious species which later, when its survival was assured, was to be the admiration of foreigners, but which for long found few imitators; nor was it accomplished without anguish. The movement passed through the three familiar stages of breakdown, reconstruction and stabilization. If one aspect of the first phase consisted in the political and legal reforms[18] by which the Tudor state consolidated its power, another aspect was economic. Jolted sharply by the great depreciation; then squeezed by its masters to find the means for new styles in fashion and display; then pulled by expanding markets, when expedients adopted to stave off catastrophe were discovered, once systematized, to pay dividends beyond hope, agrarian society was everywhere under strain. The ability of nature to cause confusion with her silver is greatly inferior, we now know, to that of human art; and, in view of the dimensions of the movement, the lamentations provoked by it seem today overdone. But, in judging the effects of this most un-revolutionary of monetary revolutions, three truisms must be remembered. It broke on a world which had known within living memory something like a currency famine. The society which experienced it was crossed by lines of petrification, which make modern rigidities seem elastic. Except for brief intervals, the movement was continuous, on the Continent for some three generations, in England for nearly four. The wave of rising prices struck the dyke of customary obligations, static burdens, customary dues; rebounded; struck again; and then either broke it, or carved new channels which turned its flank.

More than one country had known a dreadful interlude, when anarchy was not remote. In most it was discovered, when the worst was over, that the land system which came out of the crisis was not that which had gone into it. The key, as usual, was finance. The items comprising the landowner's revenue change their relative importance. The value of all customary and non-commercial payments tumbles down;[19] that of the more elastic sources

[18] See the admirable article by H. M. Cam, 'The decline and fall of English feudalism', *History*, xxv (1940); and R. R. Reid, 'The rebellion of the earls, 1569', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, new ser., xx (1906).

[19] For the fall in the value of one item, profits of courts, see *Cottoni Posthuma* (1651 edn.), p. 180, where it is stated that on crown estates 'the casual profits of courts never paid to the present officers their fees and expenses', and that in 44 Eliz. the costs of collection exceeded the receipts by £8,000. For a similar condition on a private property, see *Bedford MSS.*, 'Answere to my L. Treasurer's demands, and what may growe to the payment of my late lordes debts', 20 Apr. 1586, 'the profyttes of Courtes will not be much moare than to answer the stuerdes and officers' fees, and in some places the same will not be discharged with their profyttes'. I am indebted to G. Scott Thomson for a transcript of this document.

of income increases. Some groups can adapt themselves to the new tensions and opportunities; others cannot. The former rise; the latter sink. Examples of both are to be found in every stratum of society. There are grounds, nevertheless, for thinking that what Professor Bloch has called *la crise des fortunes seigneuriales*[20] was felt more acutely, and surmounted with greater difficulty, by the heirs of ancient wealth, with its complex and dispersed interests, and large public responsibilities, than by men of humbler position or more recent eminence. Contemporaries noted the turn of the wheel in their superb prose. 'How many noble families have there been whose memory is utterly abolished! How many flourishing houses have we seen which oblivion hath now obfuscated . . . ! Time doth diminish and consume all.'[21] But time was not the chief destroyer.

Such a family, inheriting great estates, often inherited trouble. Its standards of expenditure were those of one age, its income that of another. 'Port' – the display becoming in a great position – was a point of honour; who would wish to be thought, like Lord Dencourt, to 'live like a hog'?[22] 'What by reason', wrote a close observer, 'of their magnificence and waste in expense, and what by reason of a desire to advance and make great their own families',[23] the life of a considerable part of the aristocracy was apt to offer an example of what a modern economist has called 'conspicuous waste'. Other regalities might have gone; what remained, and, indeed, increased, was a regal ostentation. The overheads of the noble landowner – a great establishment, and often more than one; troops of servants and retainers; stables fit for a regiment of cavalry; endless hospitality to neighbours and national notabilities; visits to court, at once ruinous and unavoidable; litigation descending, like an heirloom, from generation to generation – had always been enormous. Now, on the top of these traditional liabilities, came the demands of a new world of luxury and fashion. With the fortunes resulting from inflation and booming trade all standards are rising. London, rapidly advancing in financial and commercial importance, with a court that under James is a lottery of unearned fortunes, exercises a stronger pull. Town houses increase in number; visits to the capital are spun out;

[20] M. Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française* (1931).

[21] *The Harleian Miscellany*, ed. William Oldys (8 vols., 1744–6), ii. 515 *et seq.*; 'The Mirror of Worldly Fame' (1603), ch. iii.

[22] Edward Hyde, 1st earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in Ireland*, vi. 58.

[23] Francis Bacon, 'Of the True Greatness of the Kingdom of Britain', in *Works*, i, ed. Bohn, p. 507.

residential quarters are developed; to the delight of dressmakers, something like a season begins to emerge. Culture has demands to which homage must be paid. New and more costly styles of building; the maintenance of a troop of needy scholars and poets; collections of pictures; here and there – an extreme case – the avenues of posturing nudities which Bacon saluted at Arundel with ironical dismay – 'the resurrection of the dead!'[24] – all have their votaries. Public duties, in some cases, complete what private prodigality has begun. They yielded some pickings; but, under Elizabeth and her two successors, more than one bearer of a famous name was brought near to ruin by the crowning catastrophe of a useful career.

So towering a superstructure required broad foundations. Too often they were lacking. The wealth of some of the nobility, and especially of the older families, was not infrequently more spectacular than substantial. It was locked up in frozen assets – in sumptuous appurtenances, at once splendid and unrealistic. More important, the whole structure and organization of their estates was often of a kind, which, once a pillar of the social system, was now obsolescent. Side by side with more lucrative possessions, their properties included majestic, but un-remunerative, franchises – hundreds, boroughs, fairs and markets; a multitude of knights' fees, all honour and no profit; freeholds created in an age when falling, not rising, prices had been the great landowners' problem, and fixed rents were an insurance; hundreds of prickly copyholds, whose occupants pocketed an unearned increment while the real income of their landlord fell. What was the use, a disconsolate peer expostulated with the queen, of pretending to relieve his necessities by the gift of a manor whose tenants were protected by law against an increase in rents, and by custom against an increase in fines?[25] That cheerless condition was to be expected in properties which Elizabeth thought suitable for peasants; but it was not, unfortunately, confined to them. The administrative machine which controlled a great estate had some of the vices of a miniature state department. It was cumbrous, conservative, difficult to divert from its traditional routine to new and speculative enterprises. The very magnitude and wide dispersion of the interests concerned – property of a dozen different kinds in a dozen different counties – made drastic reconstruction a formidable business, which it needed an

[24] L. Aikin, *Memoirs of the Court of King James I* (2 vols., 1822), p. 300.

[25] Hist. MSS. Comm., *Bedford MSS.*, 'Reasons to move her Mat[s] gracious consideration towards the Erle of Bedf.', Feb. 1579. I am indebted to G. Scott Thomson for a transcript of this document.

exceptional personality to force through. It is not surprising that inherited opulence should sometimes have lacked the initiative to launch it.

Such difficulties confronted all conservative landowners, both peers and commoners, in proportion to the magnitude of their commitments and the rigidity of their incomes. The most that can be said is that the former usually carried more sail than the latter, and found it, when the wind changed, more difficult to tack. Mere majestic inertia, however, was an expensive luxury. As the tension tightened, something had to go. What went first was an aspect of life once of the first importance, but to which justice today is not easily done. The words 'hospitality' or 'housekeeping', its ordinary designation, were the description, not of a personal trait or a private habit, but of a semi-public institution, whose political dangers, once a menace to the state, were a thing of the past, but whose social significance had survived little abated. As the centre of a system of relations offering employment, succour, a humble, but recognized, niche to men helpless in isolation, the great household had performed somewhat the same role as was played, until yesterday, by the informal communism of the family system in China, and its break-up was attended by the same symptoms of disintegration as have followed in the Far East the shattering of ancient social cadres by Western industrialism. The stream of lamentations voiced by popular opinion, conservative moralists and the government itself, all strike the same note. Their burden is that, as expenses are cut down, staffs reduced and household economy put on a business footing, a cell of the social organism is ceasing to function. The plight of younger brothers, put off, like Orlando 'with the stalling of an ox', or compelled – to the public advantage, but to their own exasperation – to take 'to letters or to arms'[26] is a footnote to the same story; it is not a chance that attacks on primogeniture become more vocal at the moment when once prosperous families are feeling the pinch. The social dislocation, if exaggerated, was not a trifle; but the relief to the landowner was not proportionate to it. Since his real income, in default of other measures, continued to decline, it was, at best, only a respite.

The materials for generalization have hardly yet been put together; but to say that many noble families – though not they alone – encountered, in the two generations before the Civil War, a financial crisis is probably not an overstatement. The fate of the conservative aristocrat was, in fact, an

[26] Wilson, *The State of England*, p. 24.

unhappy one. Reduced to living 'like a rich beggar, in perpetual want',[27] he sees his influence, popularity and property all melt together. Some, like Lord Howard of Effingham and the earl of Sussex, part with their estates to their creditors, or sell outlying portions to save the remainder. Some resort to half-obsolete claims on their tenants, with which, as a Lancashire landlord remarked, the victims comply, 'if not for love, then for fear';[28] claims resembling, in their pedantic and exasperating legality, those most criticized in the crown, but which – so merciful is history to the victors – are commonly ignored in the case of private landowners. Some, like the Berkeleys, do both. The sixth earl,[29] for whom his admiring biographer – a lover of honorific titles – could find no more appropriate name than Lord Henry the Harmless, combined with the style and establishment of a medieval potentate the sporting tastes of a country gentleman; periodical plunges into the world of fashion in London; the maintenance of a *salon* as a concession to culture; and an heirloom in the shape of a lawsuit, which when he inherited it had already lasted a century, and which in 1609, four years before his death, he steered at last, with cries of self congratulation, to a disastrous victory. While continuing to manage his Gloucestershire estates with a conservatism as agreeable to his tenants as it was fatal to himself, he sinks ever deeper into debt to tradesmen, to scriveners, to merchant bankers; sells land outside the county to the value of £60,000; and ends his life in a maze of financial expedients, charged with a slightly exotic odour, as of the Seine rather than the Severn – collecting an aid from his freeholders to knight his eldest son, releasing his customary tenants from irksome obligations that had elsewhere long vanished, and raising a benevolence to pay for the ruinous results of his triumphs as a litigant. Other landowners again – Lord Compton, Lord Noel, Lord Willoughby, the earl of Holderness – restore their fortunes by marrying City money.[30]

[27] Hist. MSS. Comm., *Portland MSS.*, ix. 5.

[28] *Chetham Miscellanies*, iii. 6–7, 'Some Instructions given by William Booth to his stewards …'.

[29] John Smyth, *The Berkeley MSS.*, ii: *the Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. J. Maclean (3 vols., Gloucester, 1883–5), pp. 265–417; and Smyth Papers in the Gloucestershire Archives.

[30] Lord Compton married the daughter of Sir John Spencer, lord mayor in 1594, who died worth £300,000 (some said £800,000) (Goodman, ii. 127–32); Lord Noel a daughter of Sir Baptist Hicks, mercer (*The Court and Times of Charles I*, ed. T. Birch (2 vols., 1838), ii. 355); Lord Willoughby a daughter of Alderman Cockayne, 'who brought him £10,000 in money … £1,000 a year pension out of the Exchequer, and a house very richly furnished' (Birch, *Court and Times*, ii. 220); the earl of Holderness another daughter of Cockayne, with £10,000 as portion (*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1623–5*, p. 54).

Others, with a pull in the right quarter, plant themselves on the preposterous pension list of the crown, angle – an odious business – for 'concealed lands', or intrigue, with a kind of amateurish greed, for patents and monopolies.

Whether their embarrassments were increasing it is impossible to say; some debts, it is fair to remember, represented reproductive expenditure on development and improvements. But soundings, wherever taken, show much water in the hold. The correspondence of Burleigh,[31] in the last decade of Elizabeth, reads like the report of a receiver in bankruptcy to the nobility and gentry. A few years later, when, with the opening of the great boom which began in 1606, things should have been better, Cranfield, no financial leviathan, had a score of them in his books, while, to judge by stray references, Hicks the silk-man and banker – later Lord Campden – and Herriott, the goldsmith, may well have had more. Rubens, no stranger to the costly futilities of courts, still retained sufficient naïveté to lift his eyebrows at the orgy of extravagance and peculation – 'business, public and private, sold cash down, over the counter'[32] – which distinguished that of James. Clarendon's[33] account of the notabilities of his day is a catalogue of splendid spendthrifts. When, in 1642, all went into the melting pot, the debts owed to the City by royalists alone were put, in a financial memorandum, at not less than £2,000,000.[34] Of the commercial magnates who, a few years later, scrambled for confiscated estates, not a few, as Dr. Chesney[35] has shown, were creditors entering on properties long mortgaged to them. It was discovered, not for the last time, that as a method of foreclosure war was cheaper than litigation.

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For, if the new world had its victims, it had also its conquerors. That 'the wanton bringing up and ignorance of the nobility force the prince to advance new men that can serve, which . . . subvert the noble houses to have

[31] See Hist. MSS. Comm., *Salisbury MSS.*, *passim*. Some references to the indebtedness of the nobility will be found in Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse Upon Usury*, introduction, pp. 31–42.

[32] M. Roose and C. Ruelens, *Correspondence de Rubens et Documents Epistolaires*, v. 116: 'moltri altri, signori e ministri … sono sforzati a buscari la vita come possono, e per cio qui si vendono gli negoci publici e privati a dinari contanti'.

[33] E.g., Clarendon, i. 131–6, 115–26, 131, 167, 170; iii. 27, 93, 95, 283.

[34] State Papers Domestic, Charles I, ccccxcvii, no. 59, March 1642–3.

[35] H. E. Chesney, 'The transference of lands in England, 1640–60', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 4th ser., xv (1932), 181–210.

their rooms themselves',[36] had been noted with uneasiness in the early years of Elizabeth, when suggestions were considered for redressing the balance. Half a century later, the consequences of the movement were visible to all, and there could be no question of reversing it. 'The age was one', writes Miss Wake in her account of Northamptonshire under James, 'which had recently seen the rise of the solid middle class of lesser landowning gentry on the ruins of the ancient aristocracy. The families were few which … managed to survive the turbulent end of the middle ages … Many of the knights and squires belonged to families of local and extraneous origin who had made money early in the previous century by the law, trade, or sheep-farming.'[37] That picture is true of more counties than one. The conditions which depressed some incomes inflated others; and, while one group of landowners bumped heavily along the bottom, another, which was quicker to catch the tide when it turned, was floated to fortune. The process of readjustment was complex; but two broad movements can be observed, affecting respectively the technique of land management and the ownership of landed property.

While the crisis of depreciation was not confined to one country, the English response to it had a character of its own. Partly for economic reasons, partly owing to the political and military conditions of a frontier region, parts of eastern Europe had met the emergency by a servile reaction which gave villeinage a new life. In East Prussia, in particular, the great estate, half farm, half fortress, swollen by the holdings of evicted peasants, and worked by its owner with the aid of *corvées*, became the dominant institution, against which the reforming monarchy, when it took the matter up – not to mention its successors – would for long struggle in vain. France had felt the same tightening of the screw, but the French escape from the *impasse* – if it was an escape – took the opposite direction. Precluded by law from evicting the *censitaires* – the customary tenants – French landowners had been thrown back on the policy of a more remorseless exaction of customary dues, of which the last desperate gamble, when the clock had almost struck, was to be denounced under the name of the feudal reaction, but which in fact, other avenues being blocked, had gone on piecemeal for centuries. In England, as elsewhere, it was necessary for landlords, if ruin was to be averted, to play to the score; but the tune called by English

[36] Hist. MSS. Comm., *Salisbury MSS.*, i. 162–5.

[37] *The Montagu Musters Book, 1602–23*, ed. J. Wake (Northamptonshire Record Soc., vii, Peterborough, 1935), introduction, pp. xiv–xv.

conditions was neither the despotism of the *junker* nor the half-abdication of the *seigneur*. English agriculture had as its setting a commercial, increasingly individualistic society, in process of an industrialization that was more than merely local. Landowners learned – when they did learn – from their environment, and cured their wounds with a hair of the dog that bit them. Fixed incomes falling, and profits rising, who could question that the way of salvation was to contract interests as a *rentier*, and expand them as an entrepreneur? The experts, at any rate, felt no doubts on the subject. Business is booming. They cry with one accord, 'Go into business and prosper'.

Business methods and modernization, the fashionable specific, have different meanings in different ages. The stage at which matters stood under the early Stuarts was that, not of crops and rotations, but of marketing, management, tenures, the arrangement of holdings, and reclamation. If modern analogies are sought, they are to be found in the sphere, not of cultivation and breeding, but of rationalizing the administration of estates and improving their layout. The problem was, in the first place, a financial one. Certain sources of income were drying up; a substitute must be found for them. Several lines of attack were possible, but the most characteristic were four. First, customary payments dwindling, the landlord could revise the terms on which his property was held, get rid of the unprofitable copyholders when lives ran out, buy out small freeholders, and throw the land so secured into larger farms to be let on lease. Rent at this period is an ambiguous category; but leasehold rents were certainly rising – on the view of Thorold Rogers[38] six-fold in half a century, on the estimate of a contemporary[39] five-fold in rather less, on the evidence of some estate documents about three- to four-fold. Second, instead of, or in addition to, letting, he could expand his own business activities, run his home farm, not to supply his household, but as a commercial concern, enlarge his demesnes, and enclose for the purpose of carrying more stock or increasing his output of grain. Third, if he had the means, he could invest capital in bringing new land into cultivation, clearing woodlands, breaking up waste, draining marshes. Finally, he could supplement his agricultural income by other types of enterprise, going into the timber trade, exploiting coal, iron and

[38] T. Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, 1259–1793* (7 vols., Oxford, 1866–1902), v. 812.

[39] *Harleian Miscellany*, iii. 552 *et seq.*, 'The present state of England', by Walter Carey (1627).

lead, speculating in urban ground rents. Naturally, none of these departures was without abundant precedents. Naturally, again, the particular policy, or combination of policies, adopted depended both on local circumstances and on individual resources. But the tendency of all was the same. In each case, whatever the particular expedient used, the emphasis of the up-to-date landowner is increasingly thrown on the business side of land management. He relies for his income on the rents or profits derived from it.

The situation confronting the landed classes in the half century before the Civil War resembled in miniature that of 1850–70. Not only were prices rising, but, with the progress of internal unification, the development of specialized semi-industrial areas and the growth of urban markets, demand was expanding. The advice to put estate management on a business footing was, in such circumstances, sound; but not everyone could take it, and not all who could would. Then, as now, rationalization might look easy on paper, but was, in fact, no simple matter. Then, as now, therefore, what appeared at first sight a mere pedestrian improvement in methods of administration set in motion, as it developed, subtle social changes. It was to be expected that men with the resources and ambition to play the part of pioneers should gain at the expense of groups, whether below them or above, less qualified by means and traditions to adapt themselves to a new climate. The well-to-do yeoman, the *kulak* of the day, might maintain, or even improve, his position; but the extension of demesne farms, the upward movement of rents and fines, and encroachments on the commons, combined in parts of the country to tilt the scales against the humbler peasants. To that chapter of the story, whose local diversities still remain to be worked out, but of which the outlines are known, must be added another, of which historians have said less, but by which contemporaries were impressed. There was a struggle for survival, not only between large landowners and small, but between different categories among the former.

It was primarily a struggle between economies of different types, which corresponded more closely with regional peculiarities than with social divisions. There are plenty of gentry who stagnate or go downhill. It would be easy to find noble landowners who move with the times, and make the most of their properties; the sheep farming of Lord Spencer; the enclosures of Lords Brudenell, Huntingdon and Saye and Sele; the coal mines of the earl of Northumberland and the earl of Wemyss; above all the grandiose reconstruction carried through by the Russells, are cases in point. The smaller the part, nevertheless, played by passive property, as compared with active

enterprise, the larger the opportunities of rising; and the increased rewards to be reaped by the improving landlord favoured classes still ascending the ladder compared with those already at the summit. The charms of established wealth might be represented by an earl of Newcastle, with a rent-roll of £22,000, or an earl of Pembroke, with the ninety-three manors, four boroughs and estates scattered over ten counties from Middlesex to Yorkshire, which gave him, at his death in 1630, the reputation of one of the richest peers in England.[40] But, when experiment and innovation were the order of the day, the cards were in other hands. They were all on the side of the enterprising country gentleman.

Professor Kosminsky has described the owners of 'small and medium sized estates' in the thirteenth century as 'all people less intimately involved in the economic system of feudalism, and early subject to capitalist transformation'.[41] It is the representatives of much the same indeterminate middle class, with interests large enough to offer a secure base for manoeuvre, but not so large as to be top heavy, who, three centuries later, are quickest, when the wind shifts, to trim their sails. Such a man was not tempted by great possessions into the somnolence of the *rentier*; was less loaded than most noble landowners with heavy overhead charges in the shape of great establishments; did his work for himself, instead of relying on a cumbrous machine to do it for him; owned, in short, his property, instead of being owned by it. Usually, unless one of the minority of active administrators, he was freer from public duties in his county, and more immune to the blandishments of London. The problem confronting him, if he undertook reconstruction or development, was of manageable dimensions. It demanded practical experience of farming, common sense, attention to detail, not the rarer gifts of the business strategist.

Under the pressure of an environment in motion, several types emerge. Some strike no roots; others survive and become fixed. There is the gentleman farmer, leasing land, till he makes money, without owning it, and not infrequently – since the thing is his profession – running several farms at once. There is the man who works his land as a commercial undertaking – a John Toke in Kent, buying Welsh and Scottish runts to finish on

[40] Margaret, duchess of Newcastle, *Life of the Duke of Newcastle* (Everyman edn.), pp. 98–100; *Abstract of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Post-Mortem Inquisitions* (1893–7), pp. 97–101; Clarendon, i. 120–6.

[41] E. A. Kosminsky. 'Services and money rents in the 13th century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, v (1935).

Romney marsh for the London market; a Robert Loder in Berkshire, all piety and profits; a Sir Thoman Tresham in Northamptonshire, selling everything, from rabbits supplied on contract to a poulterer in Gracechurch Street, to wool to the value of £1,000 a year, whose dual role as a leader of the Catholic cause in England and the most hated encloser in his much disturbed county is a point on the side of those who dismiss as a mare's nest the alleged affinities of economic and religious radicalism; a Sir John Wynn in North Wales, cattle breeder, tribal chieftain, land grabber, scholar and prospector for minerals unknown to science, with the vanity of a savage and the credulity of his beloved alchemists, whose dealings with his tenants were too much for his own class, and cost him his seat on the council of Wales. There are families like the Pelhams and Twysdens, living mainly on rents, but doing on the side a useful trade in grain, hops, wool and iron in local markets and in London.[42] Each type has its own idiosyncrasies, but none is in land for its health. All watch markets closely; buy and sell in bulk; compare the costs and yields of different crops; charge the rent, when custom allows, which a farm will stand; keep careful accounts. Fussell's[43] description of one of them – 'before all things a business man' – is true of all.

It was agricultural capitalists of this type who were making the pace, and to whom the future belonged. Nor, if land supplied the base from which they started, were their interests confined to it. The lament that 'it is impossible for the mere country gentleman ever to grow rich or raise his house, he must have some other profession'[44] was uttered at a moment when pessimism was pardonable, and was too pessimistic. It is true, however, that many of the class, whether of necessity or by choice, were up to the eyes in other branches of business. Naturally, they turned first to the industries native to their own districts – iron in Sussex and the Forest of Dean; tin in Cornwall; lead in Derbyshire and North Wales; coal in Nottinghamshire,

[42] *The Account-Book of a Kentish Estate, 1616–1704*, ed. E. C. Lodge (1927); *Robert Loder's Farm-Accounts, 1610–20*, ed. G. E. Fussell (Camden, 3rd ser., liii, 1936); British Library, Additional MS. 39836, and Hist. MSS. Comm., *Report on MSS. in Various Collections*, iii (1904; Tresham papers); National Library of Wales, Wynn Papers, and published *Calendar of Wynn (of Gwydir) Papers, 1515–1690* (Aberystwyth, 1926); Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 33142 (agricultural accounts of the Pelhams) and Add. MS. 33154 (accounts relating to iron); Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 34167–77 (Twysden papers).

[43] *Robert Loder's Farm-Accounts*, introduction.

[44] *A Royalist's Note-book, the Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander of Nunwell, 1622–52*, ed. F. Bamford (1936), p. 75.

Durham and Northumberland; textiles in a dozen counties. But their business connections were not merely local. The habit of investment was spreading rapidly among the upper classes, and the starry host of notabilities, who lent lustre to the Virginia and East India Companies, contributed less to its development than did the web woven by the humbler ventures of hundreds of obscure squires. Some of them, too, held shares in those much advertised undertakings. More had relations in the City, and sent their sons into business. An increasing number – for the current did not run only one way – had been in business themselves.

'See', wrote Cobden to Bright, 'how every successful trader buys an estate!'[45] The remark might have been made with equal truth under James I. The movement from trade into land had long been an old story. Each successive generation made its bow to the proprieties by affecting surprise at it. It was not so long, indeed, since a statesman, alarmed at the crumbling of the social pyramid, had proposed to shore it up, by fixing a legal maximum to the real property which vulgar persons, like mere merchants, might buy.[46] Thirty years later that pose had worn thin. The government of the first two Stuarts continued, on a more majestic scale, the Elizabethan policy of turning crown estates into cash. So far from deprecating the acquisition of land by the business world, it threw land at its head. It was not surprising that a successful merchant, who had made his pile in trade, should prefer to the risks of commerce the decorous stability of what was regarded as a gilt-edged investment. By the middle years of James, if not, indeed, earlier, it is difficult to find a prominent London capitalist who is not also a substantial landowner; even such dubious cosmopolitans as Van Lore and Burlamachi, like Pallavicino before them, feel obliged to astonish the natives by setting up as country gentlemen. Fortunes made in law went the same way. Whether it is true or not, as was alleged, that leading barristers[47] were making, in the later years of Elizabeth, £20,000 to £30,000 a year, there was general agreement that their emoluments were not trifling. Their profession had taught them what, properly handled, land could be made to yield; naturally, they used their knowledge. Popham, who speculated

[45] Quoted by O. F. Christie, *The Transition to Democracy, 1867–1914* (1934), pp. 147–8.

[46] Hist. MSS Comm., *Salisbury MSS.*, i. 162–3, 'Considerations delivered to the Parliament, 1559'. See, for earlier complaints, King Edward VI's *Remains*, 'Discourse Concerning the Reformation of many Abuses'; and F. J. Fisher, 'Commercial trends and policy in 16th-century England', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, x (1940), 110.

[47] Wilson, *The State of England*, p. 25.

heavily in crown lands; Ellesmere, who left his son £12,000 a year; the odious, but indispensable, Coke, were all substantial landowners; the last, indeed, with his fifty odd manors, was well up in the first flight. In the twenties, the inroads of the London plutocracy on the home counties gave rise to complaints; and what was true of the neighbourhood of London was hardly less true of the environs of other growing cities, for example Bristol.[48] In such conditions, the social categories used to distinguish the landed and trading classes, which in France and Germany remained terms with a legal significance, lost in England any claim to precision which they may once have possessed. The landowner living on the profits and rents of commercial farming, and the merchant or banker who was also a landowner, represented, not two classes, but one. Patrician and parvenu both owed their ascent to causes of the same order. Judged by the source of their incomes, both were equally bourgeois.

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The advance of the classes representing a more business-like agriculture was accompanied by a second movement, which at once reflected its influence and consolidated its results. That movement was the heightened rapidity with which land was changing hands. The land market deals in a form of capital, and, in many societies, the most important form. The article which it handles is not merely a commodity, but an instrument of social prestige and political power. It is most active, therefore, when a rise in incomes swells the surplus for investment, and when wealth, in addition to increasing, is passing into new hands. Commercial expansion, industrial progress, discovery and invention, but also financial recklessness, revolution and war, have all at different times set the wheel spinning with heightened speed. In the age of Elizabeth and her two successors, economic and political conditions combined to mobilize real property, while the hostility of the courts to entails gave both forces free play.[49] The former, apart from occasional severe depressions, acted continuously, and with increasing force, to augment the demand for it. The latter, by periodically bringing fresh blocks of land into the market, supplied recurrent opportunities for profitable speculation.

[48] State Papers Domestic, James I, xxii, no. 63, contains complaints of the purchase of Suffolk manors by Londoners. For Bristol, see State Papers Domestic, Charles I, xxxv, no. 43, 8 Sept. 1626; and W. B. Willcox, *Gloucestershire: a Study in Local Government 1590–1640* (1940), p. 105.

[49] The attitude of the courts is well summarized in H. J. Habbakuk's article, 'English landownership 1680–1740', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, x (1940).

The economic causes which lent property wings need no lengthy explanation. By depreciating fixed incomes, and inflating profits, rising prices sapped the reluctance of conservative owners to sell, and heightened both the eagerness and the ability of the business classes, whether agriculturalists or merchants, to buy. The very customary arrangements – fixed freehold and copyhold rents, and, sometimes fixed fines – which, if maintained, threatened ruin, could be turned by a bold policy of innovation from a liability to an asset. Involving, as they did, the existence of a wide margin between the actual receipts from a property and its potential yield, they offered, like an old-fashioned company which has survived into a boom, a golden opportunity for a remunerative reconstruction. Given a knowledge of the ropes, manors could be refloated as easily as mills, with results as agreeable to those who got in on the ground floor, and equally unpleasant to everyone else. To the purchaser with the capital and capacity to undertake it, modernization was as profitable as it was unpopular with his tenants. If himself a farmer, he sold his produce in a rising market. If he dealt in land as a speculation, he could count on reselling at a profit. If he bought to hold, he could feel a reasonable confidence that he would leave to his heirs an estate appreciating in value. In the event, many bought for a committee of enemies at Goldsmiths Hall. But none foresaw the war.

Our first formal accounts of the land market seem to be subsequent to the Restoration.[50] The picture then drawn is of a stream of mortgages and sales in London, which, owing to its financial resources, had the bulk of the business, even from the remotest counties, in its hands. Before the end of the previous century, however, it had been realized that the increased volume of transactions raised some awkward problems. The later seventies and early eighties appear to have been a period of exceptional activity. There were complaints of malpractices, and legislation was passed to check them. An act of 1585 voided fraudulent conveyances, imposed heavy penalties on the guilty parties, and required all mortgages to be entered with the clerks of recognizances, who were to keep a record, which intending purchasers could inspect on payment of a small fee.[51] The last provision appears to

[50] *Harleian Miscellany*, vii. 488–93, 'Reasons and Proposals for a Registry … of all Deeds and Incumbrances of Real Estate etc.', by Nicholas Philpott (1671); *Harleian Miscellany*, vii. 493–501, 'A Treatise concerning Registers … of Estates, Bonds, Bills, etc., with Reasons against such Registers', by William Pierrepoint.

[51] 27 Eliz., c iv. An earlier act requiring the enrolment of sales of land had been passed in 1536. For an example of enrolments under it in one county, see *Somerset Enrolled Deeds*, ed. S. W. B. Harbin (Somerset Record Soc., li, 1937).

have remained a dead letter, but the issue raised did not die down. The unorganized condition of the market was thought to depress prices, and a patent was granted in 1611 for the establishment of a public office, which was to have as part of its business the provision of facilities for dealing in real property and the recording of transactions. Copyholds – it was an advantage to set against their inconveniences – were transferred publicly in the court of the manor, so that encumbrances on them could not be concealed. It was natural that it should be asked whether the purchaser of a freehold could not be given similar security. Registration of title, advocated and opposed on the same grounds as today, was being urged from the left by the forties, and found later a place in the abortive programmes of land reform prepared during the Interregnum.[52]

Long before that date, a second unpleasant symptom of the increased scale of the business had attracted general comment. Lawyers were not beloved by laymen; 'Peace and law', wrote an indignant country gentleman, who had seen much of the tribe, 'hath beggared us all'.[53] The portentous inflation of the legal profession – the figures of men called to the bar at Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn rose[54] by almost two-thirds between 1591–1600 and 1631–40 – was ascribed largely to the new opportunities open to the conveyancer. Nor, perhaps, is it without significance that it was in 1612, towards the end of the greatest orgy of speculation seen since the Reformation, that another body of practitioners which handled the same business, the growing trade of scriveners, applied for a charter of incorporation.[55] 'Sell not thy land; … rather feed on bread and water than be the confusion of thy house',[56] might be the motto of parents. Things were in the saddle and rode their sons. The earliest version of 'clogs to clogs in three generations' was applied, not to Lancashire mills, but to Lancashire land.[57] The rapid absorption by absentee aliens of estates in Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire was noted with disfavour under James I, and much the same statement as to properties in

[52] *Harleian Miscellany*, vi. 72, 'A word for the Army and two words for the Kingdom', by Hugh Peters (1647); *Harleian Miscellany*, vii. 25–35, 'A Rod for the Lawyers', by William Cole (1659).

[53] *A Royalist's Note-Book*, p. 14. An earlier complaint on the same subject is contained in Wilson, *The State of England*, pp. 24–5.

[54] For Gray's Inn, see Brit. Libr., Harleian MS. 1912, no. 16, fo. 207b; and for Lincoln's Inn, *The Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: the Black Books*, ed. W. P. Baildon (5 vols., 1897–1902), ii.

[55] *Cal. S.P. Dom., Charles I*, p. 87, 20 June 1631.

[56] *A Royalist's Note-Book*, p. 212.

[57] *The Dr. Farmer Chetham MSS.* (Chetham Soc., 1873), pp. 122–3.

Berkshire was made half a century later by Fuller; while nearly two-thirds of the gentry owning land in Bedfordshire in 1620 were said to have sold it and left the county by 1668. The oft-quoted remark that half the properties in conservative Staffordshire had changed hands in sixty years does not, in the light of such evidence, appear too implausible.[58] The passing of familiar names, the break-up of patriarchal households, the unpleasantness of the parvenus who rose on their ruins, provided dramatists with materials for satire and moralists for sermons. If Sir Petronel Flash and Sir Giles Overreach were successful as parodies, it was that the nauseous reality was not too grossly caricatured.

Lamentations that the oaks are shedding their leaves are a piece of sentimental common form, too fashionable in all ages to throw much light on any one of them. Rising classes, like crowned heads, have always known how to grab and weep at once; nor, once in possession of the title deeds, are they at a loss for a pedigree. In reality, the Bladesovers of England, repeatedly submerged beneath a flood of new wealth, have been refloated not less often, with undiminished buoyancy, as wealth has found a way to make novelty venerable. The statistical evidence of the dimensions of the movement has not yet been put together, nor is it often in the form most instructive to posterity. Contemporaries commonly thought in terms, not of acreage, but of manors; they spoke of a man owning manors, or selling them, much as today he might be said to hold, or to dispose of, large investments, in order to convey an impression, not to record precise facts. The category, needless to say, is a highly ambiguous one, embracing estates varying widely in magnitude, value and organization. At best, it covers only one species of real property, and that not the most marketable. In the two generations before the Long Parliament such property seems, nevertheless, for what the fact is worth, to have changed hands with fair rapidity. Of 2,500 odd manors in seven counties, whose owners can be traced, just under one in three were sold once in the forty years between 1561 and 1600, and rather more than one in three between 1601 and 1640. In the case of the 600 odd in Hertfordshire and Surrey, which felt the wash of the London

[58] Hist. MSS Comm., *Buccleuch MSS.*, iii. 182 (Northants.); J. D. Chambers, *Nottinghamshire in the 18th Century: a Study of Life and Labour under the Squirearchy* (1932), pp. 6–7; T. Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (1840 edn.), i. 140; *The Visitations of Bedfordshire*, ed. F. A. Blaydes (Harleian Soc., xix, 1884), pp. 206–8; Sir Simon Degge in Sampson Erdeswicke's *Survey of Staffordshire*.

whirlpool, the figure in the second period was over forty per cent.[59]

The only continuous register of sales of smaller parcels of land, which naturally came into the market more often, seems to be that supplied by the records of the office of alienations.[60] The land which it handled, being subject to awkward financial obligations to the crown, was not attractive to purchasers. But the average sales per decade described a rising curve, in rough correspondence with the movement of foreign trade, which helped to determine the surplus available for investment. In the expansion of the seventies and early eighties the figure bounded up; declined with the slump which began on the eve of the Armada; rose again with the beginning of recovery at the turn of the century; reached the highest point yet attained in the boom of 1606–16; and fell sharply with the depression of the early twenties. It ended at a level which, from 1630 to 1639, stood well above twice that at which it had started. It is not, perhaps, an exaggeration to say that for two generations there was an intermittent real estate boom. Naturally land values bounded up. An observer who stated in the later years of Elizabeth that they had risen ten-fold[61] within living memory overstated his case; but there was general agreement that the rise had been impressive. Not much weight can be attached to the fact that under James I some crown land was sold at the fantastic price of forty-five[62] years purchase, for such land – it was one of its attractions – was notoriously under-rented. Twenty-eight[63] years purchase, however, was quoted in the later twenties as the price at which some estates were then changing hands.

This mobilization of property, the result of commercial expansion and inflation combined, was not peculiar to England. As Professor Bloch and M. Raveau have shown, a similar reshuffling of possessions was occurring

[59] The counties concerned are Surrey, Herts., Beds., Bucks., Hants., Worcs. and N. Riding of Yorks. The figures, which I owe to the kindness of F. J. Fisher, are taken from the lists of manors and their owners given in the V.C.H. They exclude transfers of leases, and transfers due to marriage, gift, inheritance, forfeiture or other non-commercial transactions.

[60] Exchequer accounts, alienations office, *Entries of Licenses and Pardons for Alienations*.

[61] Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Otho E X, no. 10, fos. 64–78 (*c*.1590).

[62] Brit. Libr., Lansdowne MSS., vol. 169, art. 51, fo. 110, contract made with Sir Baptist Hicks and others, 19 Dec., 18 Jas. I (by which land with an annual value of £1,000 was sold for £45,000).

[63] State Papers Domestic, Charles I, cix, no. 44, quoted by W. R. Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720* (Cambridge, 1910–12), i. 192. As Professor Scott points out, the price of land reflected not only the annual rent, but casualties, such as fines.

at the same time in France.[64] But in England the results of an accelerated economic tempo were heightened by adventitious causes. The state threw its weight into the scales, and permanently depressed them. Intending to buttress its own foundations, it released currents which, in the end, carried them and it away.

Periodical redistributions of land by acts of public policy, to the gain or loss now of this class, now of that, are not the astonishing departure from pre-established harmonies which they appear to their victims. In one form or another, they are a recurrent feature of European history, whose repeated appearance lends colour to the view which sees in them, not an accident, but the prelude to a new era. The decorous story of England is no exception to that rule. In the century and a half between the Reformation and Restoration, such a redistribution took place on a scale not seen since the Conquest. There were two immense confiscations, the result of revolution and civil war, and a steady alienation, under financial duress, of estates formerly used to provide a revenue for public purposes.

The opening act of the drama is not here in place. But the story which had begun with the Dissolution had not ended with it. Like taxation, the fruits of confiscation do not always rest where they first light. It is an error to suppose that, when James skipped happily on to his throne of thorns, the results of that great transaction were already ancient history. Property producing a gross income equal to about half the then yield of the customs had been cut adrift from its moorings, and added to the acreage available for acquisition by influence or enterprise. When the first fever of speculation was over, it had continued to float from hand to hand in the ordinary way of business, coming at intervals to anchor only again to resume its exciting voyages. Nor had the crown's interest in the matter ceased with the mere act of confiscation and the sales which followed it. For one thing, though it had disposed within a decade of the greater part of the spoils, those which it retained remained substantial. For another, part of the land with which it parted had not been sold outright, but had been leased for terms of years, and ultimately returned to it. In the third place, part of that which it sold came back to it later through escheats and confiscations. Two generations later, therefore, it still owned, as a result of the Dissolution, a great mass of property, which could be leased, mortgaged or sold, and which, when the court of augmentations was wound up in 1554, had continued to be

[64] Bloch, pp. 140–5; P. Raveau, *L'agriculture et les classes paysannes: la transformation de la propriété dans le Haut-Poitou au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1926), esp. ch. ii.

administered by the augmentations office of the exchequer. A vast deal in chantry lands brought temporary relief to the financial embarrassments of the early years of James. His son was disposing of monastic estates within a decade of the Long Parliament.

The continued redistribution of monastic property in the century following the Reformation was as momentous, therefore, as that which accompanied it. The transference to lay hands of part of the land owned by bishops and by deans and chapters – 'their wings … well clipt of late by courtiers and noblemen, and some quite cut away'[65] – has been studied in detail only during the Interregnum, but the statements of contemporaries suggest that the scale on which it took place under Elizabeth was not inconsiderable. Nor was it only ecclesiastical property which came into the market in large blocks. Few rulers have acted more remorselessly than the early Tudors on the maxim that the foundations of political authority are economic. They had made the augmentation of the royal demesnes one of the keystones of their policy.[66] They had enjoyed, as a consequence, not only a large revenue from land, but the extensive economic patronage which great estates conferred, and had been powerful as kings partly because unrivalled as landowners. A shrewd foreigner remarked, as he watched in the next century the headlong plunge downhill of the crown finances, that the Stuarts were on the way to be overshadowed in wealth by their subjects before they were overthrown by them.[67] There was some substance in the view, hinted more than once under James, that the New Monarchy was undermined by reversing for three generations the financial policy which had helped to establish it. Each of the three great crises of Elizabeth's reign carried its own block of crown estates away; she sold in her forty-five years land to the value, in all, of some £817,000. Her two successors inherited the nemesis of living on capital, as well as of rising prices and of their own characters. They sold in thirty years nearly twice as much. In spite of half-hearted attempts to tie his hands, alienations of property under James reached about £775,000, and those of Charles I, in the first decade of his reign, over £650,000.[68] The estates remaining to the crown, when the

[65] Wilson, *The State of England*, pp. 22–3.

[66] F. C. Dietz, *English Government Finance, 1485–1558* (Urbana, Ill., 1920).

[67] *Cal. S.P. Ven., 1603–7*, no. 709; *Cal. S.P. Ven., 1617–19*, no. 658; *Cal. S.P. Ven., 1621–3*, no. 603; *Cal. S.P. Ven., 1629–32*, no. 374.

[68] For sales of crown land under Elizabeth, see State Papers Domestic, James I, xlvii, nos. 99, 100, 101, and S. J. Madge, *The Domesday of Crown Lands* (1938), pp. 41–2; under James, Brit. Libr., Lansdowne MSS., vol. 169, art. 51; under Charles I, Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 18705

Long Parliament met, were still, of course, substantial; but how ruinously they had been dilapidated can be shown by a comparison. Between 1558 and 1635 crown lands to the value of some £2,240,000 had been thrown on the market. When, in the crisis of the Civil War, the remains were swept together and put up to auction, the sum realized, it seems, was under £2,000,000.[69]

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What, if any, were the social consequences of these portentous landslides? Did they, while changing, or reflecting a change in, the fortunes of individuals, leave unaltered the distribution of property between different groups? Or was the set of social forces such that some classes gained, while others lost? Is there truth in the suggestion of a later political theorist that 'two parts in ten of all those vast estates' of the nobility, 'by the luxury and folly of their owners, have … been purchased by the lesser gentry and commons', and that 'the crown-lands, that is the public patrimony, are come to make up the interest of the commons'?[70]

As to the tendency of private transactions, little can at present be said. Some great estates can be seen disintegrating, and others being formed. A comparison of the distribution at different dates of certain categories of property reveals the results. But the threads in the intricate skein leading from the first stage to the last can rarely be unravelled.[71] The dealings in monastic and crown lands left a trail which is easier to follow. Much is still obscure; but enough is known to suggest certain provisional conclusions.

The natural starting point, in considering the former, is the classification of grantees made, some thirty years ago, by Dr. Savine.[72] His figures suggest that the lion's share of the spoils had passed, in the first instance, to two

fos. 2–22, and State Papers Domestic, Charles I, cxxiv, no. 51; and under the two last, and 1649–56, Madge, pp. 47–64.

[69] Madge, p. 256.

[70] Henry Neville, *Plato Redivivus* (1763 edn.), p. 39.

[71] One example may be given. John Smythe (*Lives of the Berkeleys*, ii. 356–61) gives particulars of property sold by Lord Henry Berkeley between 1561 and 1613 to the value of approximately £42,000. Sales of 25 manors and of the lease of one manor, realizing £39,279 odd, were made to 13 persons (seven knights or baronets, five esquires and the trustees of a peer), the remainder, to the value of £2,789, going to 25 other persons of unspecified condition. Thus i) 38 owners succeeded one; ii) over nine-tenths of the property sold was acquired by purchasers relatively high in the social scale.

[72] Dr. Savine's figures are printed in H. A. L. Fisher, *The History of England: from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of Henry VIII (1485–1547)* (1910), app. ii, pp. 497–9.

categories of persons. The first, the peers, received the largest individual grants; the second, the gentry and their connections, the largest aggregate share. What is known of the subsequent history of the land in question suggests that the second of these groups had the greater survival value. Properties dispersed, like the acquisitions of some noble grantees, over half a dozen different counties, were more readily sold than smaller and more compact estates, to which their owners were bound by strong local attachments. The squirearchy was less exposed to the vicissitudes which ruined some aristocratic families; while, keen farmers and businessmen as many of them were, they were in a better position to reap the fruits of commercial progress and improved methods of agriculture. Hence while, as a class, they had gained most by the Dissolution, they not only succeeded in retaining their acquisitions, but continued to add to them in the course of the next century.

'As the Gibeonites', wrote Fuller, 'though by their mouldy bread and clouted shoes pretending to a long peregrination, were but of the vicinage; so most of those gentry [*sc*., in the later years of Henry VIII], notwithstanding their specious claims to antiquity, will be found to be … low enough in themselves, did they not stand on the vantage ground heightened on the rubbish of the ruins of monasteries'.[73] The settlement of monastic estates into the hands of the most progressive element in rural society may be illustrated by the course of events in one small corner of the country. In Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire about 317 manors, together with a mass of miscellaneous property – tithes, rectories and land in different places – appear to have changed hands at the Dissolution.[74] Of the manors, which are more easily traced than the smaller acquisitions, between 250 and 260 passed into the ownership of individuals, the remainder being attained by bishops, deans and chapters, colleges and other corporations. The nobility had done fairly, though not immoderately, well; twenty-six[75] peers had acquired monastic property of some kind, and seventeen had secured just over forty manors. Crown officials, like Sadler and Kingston,

[73] Fuller, i. 60.

[74] The following account of the fate of monastic property in three counties does not pretend to complete accuracy. It is based mainly on Sir Robert Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire*, and *Men and Armour in Gloucestershire in 1608* (1902), a list compiled by John Smythe from the musters roll of 1608; Bridges, *History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*; and Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*.

[75] I.e., eliminating duplication arising from the fact that several peers acquired monastic property in more than one of the three counties in question.

the two largest grantees of Gloucestershire estates; big business, in the persons of Gresham, Sharington and Stump; and a ubiquitous group of professional speculators, had all got their share; while a number of smaller men picked up crumbs from the cake. The bulk of the property had gone, however, not to influential aliens, but to well-known local families. In Gloucestershire the beneficiaries had included Chamberlains, Poynzs, Thynnes, Throckmortons, Tracies, Dennises, Porters, Comptons and Botelers; in Northamptonshire Montagues, Knightleys, Kirkhams, Cecils and Fermors; in Warwickshire Knightleys, Aglionbys and Throckmortons. Precision is impossible; but it is probably not an exaggeration to say that from one half to two-thirds of the property acquired by individuals had passed to men of this type and to humbler members of the same class. In so far as there had been competition between national notabilities and tenacious local interests, local interests had won.

Their victory became steadily more decisive in the course of the next century. Compared with the adventurers who dealt in properties that they had never seen, the local gentry were a settled population confronting mere marauders. As the revolution receded, and its first turmoil died down, their strategic advantage – the advantage of a settled base – asserted itself with ever increasing force. Political convulsions shook down the estates of one group of absentees; financial embarrassments sapped the staying power of another. As each over-rigged vessel went on the rocks, the patient watchers on the shore brought home fresh flotsam from the wreck. Long after the last monk had died, they were adding to their abbey lands, and, if not admitted on the ground floor, became shareholders at one remove. In Gloucestershire the estates of Cromwell, Northumberland and the Seymours drifted, some quickly, some gradually, into the hands of the Duttons, Winstons, Dorringtons and Chamberlains. The property of the earl of Pembroke, who browsed juicier pastures elsewhere, passed, soon after its acquisition, to the Dennises and Comptons. The lands of Sir Thomas Gresham came by marriage to the Thynnes, and those of Lord Clinton and Sir Robert Tyrwitt to the Heydons; while, of the eight manors secured by Sir Anthony Kingston, more than half had passed by 1608 to other families, in particular the Baynhams and Sandys. Sir Ralph Sadler's descendants continued to be considerable landowners in the county; but the property acquired by him from the abbey of Winchcombe, and four of the six manors taken from the college of Westbury-on-Trim, had left them by that date, some passing to the Actons and Bridges, others to less well-known families. In

Northamptonshire, of the property acquired by peers at the Dissolution, some, by the beginning of the next century, had returned to the crown; most of it had come to Kirkhams, Hattons, Spencers, Andrews, Stanhopes, Cradocks, Griffins and Ishams. In Warwickshire, the families who gained most by later reshuffles were the Leighs, Dilkes, Throckmortons and Spencers. The general result in these counties, in spite of the reputation of Northamptonshire as the Dukeries of the age, was that, of the forty odd manors which had gone to peers at the Reformation, those remaining to them two generations later numbered only six, while the remainder swelled the fortunes of rising middle-class families. Something between two-thirds and three-quarters of the manors secured by private persons had gone originally to the squirearchy. By the early years of the next century, the proportion in their hands was over nine-tenths. Thus the ultimate consequences of the Dissolution, if similar in kind to its immediate effects, were different in degree. In this part of England, at any rate, it did not so much endow an existing nobility, as lay the foundations of a new nobility to arise in the next century.

'It is owing', writes Dr. Chambers in his study of Nottinghamshire, 'to the elimination of these factors, the monasteries, the copyholders, the Crown, and the Church, as rivals to the gentry, that Thoroton is enabled to place them on the pedestal of unchallenged local supremacy'.[76] The full effects of the dismemberment of crown estates before the Civil War still remain to be worked out; but enough is known to suggest that it is not of one county alone that his statement is true. The individuals into whose hands the land in question passed fell, between 1600 and 1640, into three main categories. Part of it was acquired by the peasants on crown estates; part, in the first instance, by syndicates of speculators, who bought land in large blocks, subdivided and resold it; part by well-to-do landowners and businessmen. The government's dealings with the first class in parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire have been described by Dr. Tupling.[77] Their social effects were not without interest; but, as a solution of the financial problem, that method of disposing of crown property was of worse than dubious value. It involved prolonged higgling with obstinate copyholders; years of surveying, hearings before commissions and litigation; the extraction from thousands of petty transactions of sums which, in the end, were liable to be

[76] Chambers, p. 4.

[77] G. H. Tupling, *The Economic History of Rossendale* (Chetham Soc., new ser., lxxxvi, 1927).

unimpressive. What the government wanted was to get large tracts of land taken off its hands for prompt and substantial payments. If it was to secure that result, it must clearly look elsewhere than to the cautious avidity of impecunious peasants.

These reasons caused the best market for crown property to be found, not among the smaller cultivators, but in the classes who could afford to deal on a large scale. Many well-to-do families had been interested in particular estates long before they came to be offered for sale. Among the lessees of crown lands in the first decade of Elizabeth appear, side by side with humble members of the royal household, distinguished civil servants and statesmen, like Smith and Cecil, judges and law officers of the crown, and leading country gentlemen.[78] Down to, and after, the beginning of the century, much of the property in question was notoriously under-rented.[79] As a consequence, a would-be purchaser could offer a figure which appeared on paper impressive, but which in fact, especially if he bought to reconstruct, was money in his pocket. In such circumstances, it was natural that prosperous landowners, who already held crown land on lease, should welcome the prospects of acquiring the freehold. The Irish war had brought one great opportunity. The accession of James was the occasion of a second. The great deals in crown property were financed largely on credit;[80] one leading speculator professed to have raised £80,000 in the City, and to have burned his fingers. The boom in trade, which began with the peace of 1605, meant easy money. With a debt which by Michaelmas 1606 was over £550,000, and showed signs of mounting, fresh spoils were in the offing. As usual, it was complained that Scots got more than their fair share; but there is no sign that the higher civilization was backward in the scramble. 'At court', wrote a future secretary of state, shocked – not for the last time – by the magnitude of the depredations, 'every man findeth way for his

[78] The source of this statement is a list of lessees of crown land 1–12 Eliz., contained (I think) in State Papers Domestic, Eliz., clxvi, but the reference has been mislaid. The list includes among others, Sir William Cecil, Sir Thomas Smith, Anthony Brown (justice of the common pleas), David Lewis (judge of the court of admiralty), Sir Francis Knollys, Sir Maurice Berkeley, Sir Henry Jernigan, Sir Walter Mildmay, Sir Gervase Clifton, Richard Hampden, etc.

[79] Francis Bacon, 'Discourse in the Praise of his Sovereign', in *Works*, i, ed. Bohn, p. 371. For statistical evidence of under-renting, see Madge, pp. 55–6.

[80] This was so, e.g., in the case of Lionel Cranfield's speculation of 1609. His ledger shows that he and his partners borrowed £529 from Sir John Spencer, £427 from Lady Slanye and £209 from Thomas Mun. I am indebted to Lord Sackville and Professor A. P. Newton for permission to examine the Cranfield papers.

own ends'.[81] Coke was not alone in thinking that the thing threatened to become a ramp.

The dimensions of the business, and the anxiety of the government to realize without delay, prompted the adoption of a technique which, if not new in principle, was now practised on a novel scale. The traditional expedient of sale through special commissions brought in, between 1603 and 1614, just over £180,000. What was done, in addition, was to use the financial machinery of the City. The procedure was somewhat analogous to the underwriting of a government loan today by a group of issuing houses, except that what was involved was an actual transference of property. Instead of itself dealing with prospective purchasers, the crown disposed of land wholesale to financial syndicates, who paid cash down, retained as much as they wanted for themselves, and peddled the remainder over a period of years. One group, for example, took over in 1605–6, and again in 1611, a mass of tithes, priory lands and chantry lands; a second just over 400 crown mills, with the land attached to them; several others different blocks of property. The 'contractors', as they were called, included, in addition to certain guinea pigs in the shape of courtiers and officials, the leading business magnates of the day, such as Garway and Jones, two farmers of the customs; Hicks, the silk merchant and banker; the masters and prominent members of certain City companies; and – the man who plunged most heavily, being engaged in seven separate deals to the value of £137,055 – Arthur Ingram, the controller of the customs. The separate bargains made with these syndicates between 1605 and 1614 numbered seventeen, and the sum thus obtained – apart from sales direct to individuals – amounted to just under half a million.[82]

The capitalists concerned bought primarily, of course, not to hold, but as a speculation, unloading partly on subsidiary rings of middlemen, whose names also are known, partly on the public, at the best price they could get. It was complained in the House in 1614 they made 100 per cent, and skinned purchasers alive.[83] The procedure adopted masked the personalities of the ultimate beneficiaries; but, wherever the latter can be traced, while part of the land goes in small lots to obscure peasants or craftsmen in

[81] Hist. MSS. Comm., *Cowper MSS.*, i. 50.

[82] A summary of these transactions, with the names of the principal contractors, is contained in Brit. Libr., Lansdowne MSS., vol. 169, art. 51, fo. 110. State Papers Domestic, James I, xl–lxxv, contain many references to the subject.

[83] *Commons Journal*, 18 Apr. 1614, speech of Mr. Hoskyns.

Devonshire, the Isle of Wight and elsewhere, the bulk of it is seen passing, as would be expected, to people of substance, such as leading lawyers, country gentlemen and business men.[84] The same tendency can be traced in greater detail in the transactions of the next reign. The most imposing deals were two. In the first place, a commission[85] was set to work, which, between 1625 and 1634, disposed of property to the value of £247,597. In the second place, with a view to settling outstanding debts and to raising a further loan, the crown transferred to the City Corporation land valued at £349,897.[86] The City marketed it gradually during the next twelve years, using the proceeds to pay the crown's creditors.

The purchasers concerned in the first of these transactions numbered 218, and the value of the land which can be traced £234,437. The comment of a foreigner – that most of the property went to courtiers who had secured promises for it in advance – exaggerated the part played by influence, as distinct from money; but, in emphasizing that the sales of crown land under Charles, when the financial system of the monarchy was tottering to its fall, were, to an even greater extent than under his predecessors, a deal between crown, big business and the richer country gentry, he put his finger on a vital point. For obvious reasons of speed and economy, the policy of the commission was to sell in large blocks. Lots of £1,000 and upwards, accounting for four-fifths of the land sold, went to less than one third of the purchasers. The scale of the transactions naturally narrowed the market. Five merchants got one tenth of the total; twenty-seven peers between one quarter and one third; a group of 133 knights, esquires and gentlemen rather more than half. The second and larger deal, in which the City was the auctioneer, differed from the first only in the fact that the business world had a larger hand in it, and the nobility a smaller, the latter acquiring about one tenth of the land and the former one quarter. But the bulk of it went in the same direction as before. Among the 350 odd purchasers the squirearchy and its dependants formed the largest group, and acquired well

[84] I take these particulars from the Cranfield MSS. For the deal in which he was specially engaged, see State Papers Domestic, James I, xlv, no. 159 (articles between the commissioners for the sale and demise of crown lands and John Eldred and others, contractors for purchase of the same).

[85] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 18795 fos. 2–22.

[86] *Cal. S.P. Dom., 1628–9*, cxxiv, no. 51. The sale of land to the City was the result of a contract made in 1628 with Edw. Ditchfield and other trustees acting on behalf of the corporation. Particulars as to the subsequent sale by the City of the properties concerned are contained in the royal contract deeds in the Guildhall.

over half the total. It is not an exaggeration, in fact, to say that, apart from purchases affected through other channels, these two transactions alone had the effect that, in the course of something over fifteen years, several hundred families of country gentry added to their possessions land to the value of £350,000 to £400,000. Nor is that the whole story. Much of the property was sold as undeveloped land to men who, when the time came, would seize the chance to develop it. If an exasperated official, who put the difference in value between the two at twenty-fold,[87] overstated his case, we know from other sources – for example, the margin between old rents and improved rents on private estates – that the difference sometimes ran into hundreds per cent. It was this margin – not merely the price at which crown land was transferred, but the prospective increment of rack rents, enclosure, exploitation of timber and minerals – which must be considered in estimating the gains accruing to its purchasers.

To complete the picture of property passing from the crown to its wealthier subjects, it would be necessary, in the first place, to take account of further less obtrusive changes, which went on side by side with these grandiose deals. The process of piecemeal disintegration associated with the dubious business of 'concealed lands', and with gifts and grants, such as the concessions of 'drowned lands' to persons willing to reclaim them, still awaits its historian. Even the famous matter of the forests made little noise till near the end, when it made too much. The de facto transference of possessions involved in the absorption by neighbouring landowners of the last alone would seem not to have been a trifle. 'The King loseth daily by intrusions and encroachments'; 'wholly converted to the private benefits of the officers and private men'; '[private] claims do swallow up the whole forest, not allowing his Majesty the breadth of one foot'[88] – such lamentations, though uttered before the question entered politics, may sound like the voice of official pessimism; but the routine returns of encroachments contained in the records of some forest courts make them appear not implausible. It would be necessary, in the second place, for the purpose of obtaining a comprehensive view, to compare the course of events in England with the

[87] *Cal. S.P. Dom., James I*, no. 80, 15 Dec. 1619, Sir T. Wilson to master of rolls: 'The King was greatly deceived in the Chantry lands which he granted to discharge that debt, for he passed the lands with £5,000 or £6,000 a year at the old rents, which are now worth 20 times as much … The whole affair was a cozenage'.

[88] Cranfield MS. 8236 (1622), Selwood forest; Cranfield MS. 8328 (1622), crown forests in general, parts of Whittlewood, Barnwood and Sherwood being specially mentioned; State Papers Domestic, James I, lxxxiv, no. 46, Norden's survey of Kingswood forest.

history of those parts of the Continent where matters went a different way. Leaving these further questions, however, on one side, what significance, if any, it may be asked, is to be attached to the movement of which the dull transactions described above are specimens?

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Its financial consequences are obvious; they were those which led Hobbes to make his comment on the futility of attempting to support a state by endowing it with property subject to alienation.[89] The effect on the peasants of recurrent orgies of land speculation, if less conspicuous, is equally certain. In the third place, such figures as we possess suggest that the tendency of an active land market was, on the whole, to increase the number of medium-sized properties, while diminishing that of the largest.[90] Mr. Habakkuk has shown in a striking article[91] that 'the general drift of property in the sixty years after 1690 was in favour of the large estate and the great lord', and has explained the causes of that movement. During the preceding century and a half the current, as he points out, appears to have flowed in the opposite direction, with the result that, as the number of great properties was levelled down, and that of properties of moderate size levelled up, the upper ranges of English society came to resemble less a chain of high peaks than an undulating table-land. Is it too incautious, in the fourth place, to regard as one symptom of the change

[89] *Leviathan*, ch. xxiv.

[90] The following figures, which I owe to the kindness of F. J. Fisher, are based on the lists of manors and their owners contained in the V.C.H. They relate to manors whose ownership is known at all the four dates given below in the seven counties of Herts., Beds., Bucks., Surrey, Worcs., Hants. and the N. Riding of Yorks.

	1561	%	1601	%	1640	%	1680	%
Total	2547		2547		2547		2547	
Belonging to owners with four manors and under	1445	56.7	1457	57.2	1638	64.3	1684	66.1
Belonging to owners with five manors and under ten	490	19.2	544	21.3	488	19.1	556	21.8
Belonging to owners with ten manors or more	612	24.0	546	21.4	421	16.5	347	13.6

[91] Habbakuk, p. 2.

in the distribution of wealth the acquisition of new dignities by members of the class which gained most from it? Of 135 peers in the house of lords in 1642, over half had obtained their titles since 1603. They included some lawyers and merchants, but the majority of them were well-to-do country gentlemen. The creation by the Stuarts of a parvenu nobility, like the sale of baronetcies to knights and esquires with an income from land of £1,000 a year, if politically a blunder, showed some insight into economic realities. It owed such fiscal utility as it possessed to the existence of a social situation which such expedients could exploit.

Nor, finally, were political attitudes unaffected by the same influences. With the growth of speculative dealings in land, the depreciation of the capital value of certain categories of real property by the antiquated form of land taxation known as the feudal incidents became doubly intolerable. The more intimately an industry – agriculture or any other – depends on the market, the more closely is it affected by the policy of governments, and the more determined do those engaged in it become to control policy. The fact that entrepreneur predominated over *rentier* interests in the house of commons, was, therefore, a point of some importance. The revolt against the regulation by authority of the internal trade in agricultural produce, like the demand for the prohibition of Irish cattle imports and a stiffer tariff on grain, was natural when farming was so thoroughly commercialized that it could be said that the fall in wool prices alone in the depression of 1621 had reduced rents by over £800,000 a year. The freezing reception given by the Long Parliament to petitions from the peasants for the redress of agrarian grievances is hardly surprising, when it is remembered that one in every two of the members returned, up to the end of 1640, for the five midland counties which were the disturbed area of the day, either themselves had been recently fined for depopulation or belonged to families which had been.[92] The economic reality behind the famous battle over the forests was the struggle between more extensive and more intensive methods of land utilization, to which the increased profitableness of capitalist farming lent a new ferocity. Most of the attitudes and measures, in fact, which were to triumph at the Restoration

[92] *Chancery Petty Bag., Miscellaneous Rolls*, no. 20, gives the names of persons fined for depopulation 1635–8. The five counties in question are Leicester, Northants., Notts., Hunts. and Lincs., which accounted for 506 out of 589 individuals fined and for £39,208 out of £44,054 collected. The names of M.P.s are taken from the *Official Return of Members of the House of Commons* (1878).

can be seen taking shape between the death of Elizabeth and the opening of the Civil War.

To attempt an answer which went beyond these commonplaces would, perhaps, be rash. But it is not presumptuous to address the question to contemporaries; and some of them have left us in little doubt as to their opinion. Mr. Russell Smith,[93] in his interesting study of Harrington, has suggested that the thesis as to the political repercussion of changes in the distribution of landed property, which is the central doctrine of the *Oceana*, if partly inspired by a study of Roman history, derived its actuality from the English confiscations in Ireland under the act of 1642 and the Diggers' movement in England. In reality, it was needless for Harrington to look so far afield as the first, or in spheres so humble as the second. In so far as he was in debt to previous writers, his master was Machiavelli; but the process from which he generalized had been taking place beneath his eyes. His own relatives had been engaged in it.[94]

Had he shared the modern taste for figures, he would have found little difficulty in supporting his doctrine by some casual scraps of statistical evidence. He would have observed, for example, had he taken as a sample some 3,300 manors in ten counties, that out of 730 held by the crown and the peerage in 1561, some 430 had left them (if new creations[95] are ignored) by 1640, while an additional 400 had been acquired by the gentry. He would have discovered that, as a consequence, the crown, which in 1561 owned just one tenth (nine per cent) of the total, owned in 1640 one fiftieth (two per cent); that the peers held one eighth (12.6 per cent) at the first date, and (ignoring new creations) one sixteenth (6.7 per cent) at the second; and that the share of the gentry had risen from two-thirds (sixty-seven per cent), when the period began, to four-fifths (eighty per cent) at the end of it. His remarks on the social changes which caused the house of commons 'to raise that head which since hath been so high and formidable unto their princes that they have looked pale upon those assemblies', and his celebrated paradox, 'Wherefore the dissolution of this Government

[93] H. F. Russell Smith, *Harrington and his Oceana* (Cambridge, 1914), ch. iii.

[94] J. Wright, *History and Antiquities of Rutland* (1684), p. 135; E. J. Benger, *Memoirs of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia* (1825), pp. 68, 285; H. Grove, *Alienated Tithes in Appropriated and Impropriated Parishes* (1896), under Leicestershire, parishes of Bitteswell, Laund, Loddington, Melbourne and Owston; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 18795, pp. 2–22, which shows Sir William Harrington and a partner buying crown lands between Dec. 1626 and Feb. 1627.

[95] Several of the families concerned had acquired peerages under James or Charles.

caused the war, not the war the dissolution of this Government',[96] were based on his argument as to the significance of a 'balance' of property; and that argument took its point from his belief that in his own day the balance had been altered. To the sceptic who questioned its historical foundations, he would probably have replied – for he was an obstinate person – by inviting him either to submit rebutting evidence, or to agree that there was some prima facie reason, at least, for supposing that, in the counties in question, the landed property of the crown had diminished under Parthenia, Morpheus and his successor by three-quarters (seventy-six per cent), and that of the older nobility by approximately half (47.1 per cent), while that of the gentry had increased by not much less than one fifth (17.8 per cent).[97]

In reality, however, as far as this side of his doctrines was concerned, there were few sceptics to challenge him. To regard Harrington as an isolated doctrinaire is an error. In spite of its thin dress of fancy, his work was not a Utopia, but partly a social history, partly a programme based upon it. Contemporaries who abhorred the second were not indisposed to agree with the first, for it accorded with their own experience. The political effect of the transference of property appeared as obvious to authors on the right, like Sir Edward Walker, whose book appeared three years before the *Oceana*, as to Ludlow, to that formidable bluestocking, Mrs. Hutchinson, and to Neville, on the left.[98] If, in 1600, it could be said[99] that the richer gentry had the incomes of an earl, and in 1628 that the house of commons could buy the house of lords three times over,[100] the argument advanced in some quarters in 1659 that, since the peers, who once held two-thirds of the land, now held less than one twelfth, the day for a house of lords was passed, was not, perhaps, surprising.[101] It overstated its case; but a case existed.

[96] James Harrington, *Oceana*, ed. S. B. Liljegren (Lund, 1924), pp. 49–50.

[97] The figures in this paragraph relate to the counties of Herts., Beds., Bucks., Surrey, Hants., Worcs., N. Riding of Yorks., Glos., Warwicks. and Northants. For those of the first seven counties I am indebted, as before, to F. J. Fisher.

[98] Sir Edward Walker, *Observations upon the Inconveniences* (1653), especially his remarks on the effect of granting monastic lands to 'mean families'; Edmund Ludlow, *The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, ed. C. H. Firth (2 vols., Oxford, 1894), ii. 59; *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (Everyman edn.), pp. 59–60.

[99] Wilson, *The State of England*, p. 23.

[100] Birch, *Court and Times*, i. 331.

[101] *Diary of Thomas Burton, Esq.*, iii. 408. See, on the whole subject, C. H. Firth, *The House of Lords During the Civil War* (1910), pp. 21–32.

The next generation, while repudiating Harrington's conclusions, rarely disputed his premises. Dryden was not the only person to see political significance in the fact that

> The power for property allowed
> Is mischievously seated in the crowd.

Thorndike complained that 'so great a part of the gentry as have shared with the Crown in the spoils of the monasteries think it in their interest to hold up that which … would justify their title in point of conscience'; that the result had been 'a sort of mongrel clergy of lecturers'; and that 'it is visible that the late war hath had its rise here'. Temple defended the plutocratic composition of his proposed new council with the remark that 'authority is observed much to follow land'. Burnet wrote that the crown had never recovered from the sales of land by James I, not merely for the reason of their effect on the revenue, but because they snapped the links which had kept the tenants of the crown 'in a dependence' upon it; Sidney that the nobility, having sacrificed 'the command of men' to the appetite for money, retained 'neither the interest nor the estates' necessary to political leadership, and that, as a consequence, 'all things have been brought into the hands of the Crown and the commons', with 'nothing left to cement them and to maintain their union'; an author – possibly Defoe – with the *nom de plume* of Richard Harley, that the 'second and less observed cause' of the troubles of his youth was 'the passage of land from its former possessors into the hands of a numerous gentry and commonalty'; Davenant that the case for a resumption, at any rate of recent grants, was overwhelming, though it would be prudent to try it, in the first place, in Ireland.[102]

The moral for governments desirous of stability was drawn by a writer[103] who borrowed Burnet's name, and whose father – if the ordinary ascription is correct – had had much to say half a century before on the effects of the transference of land in his own county of Gloucestershire. He

[102] John Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, pt. i, 777; Herbert Thorndike, *Theological Works*, v. 440–2, 337–9, 371–3; Sir W. Temple, *Miscellaneous Writings*, pt. iii, p. 16; Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of his own Times* (4 vols., 1815 edn.), i. 12; Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government* (1750 edn.), pp. 311–13; John Somers, *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts*, xiii. 679, Richard Harley, 'Faults on both Sides'; Charles Davenant, *A Discourse upon Grants and Resumptions*. See also P. Larkin, *Property in the 18th Century* (1930), pp. 35–57.

[103] *A Memorial Offered to Her Royal Highness the Princess Sophia* (1815). Foxcroft (*A Life of Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1907), ii, app. ii, p. 556) ascribes the work to George Smythe of North Nibley.

condemned the book of Harrington – 'calculated wholly for the meridian of a Commonwealth' – but quoted its doctrines, and propounded a policy, which, but for his republicanism, Harrington himself might have endorsed. The cause of all the trouble, he wrote, had been the reckless alienation of the estates of the crown and nobility. Salvation was to be found by reversing the process. The crown should by purchase gradually build up a new demesne, which should remain inalienable; and – 'since a monarchy cannot subsist without a nobility' – should confine new peerages to persons with estates worth at least £6,000 a year and entailed on their heirs. Of these proposals, the first had long been impracticable, the second was superfluous.

The City of London and the opposition to government, 1768–74: a study in the rise of metropolitan radicalism
L. S. Sutherland (1958)

Introduction

P. J. Marshall

When Lucy Sutherland delivered the Creighton Lecture in 1958, she had attained a position of high eminence in the historical profession. It was widely known that in the previous year the prime minister, Harold Macmillan, on the advice of Lewis Namier, had nominated her for the Regius Chair at Oxford. Apparently because she could not hold the chair and remain principal of Lady Margaret Hall, she had declined it, clearing the way for what was assumed to be a contest between Hugh Trevor-Roper, who was appointed, and A. J. P. Taylor, who was not. Far too trivial to be mentioned in the same breath as with these great matters, also in 1957, she became the supervisor of what was to be my Oxford D.Phil. thesis. By then she had written two major books: *A London Merchant 1695–1774*, published in 1933, and her magnum opus, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics*, which appeared in 1952. As John Bromley pointed out in an assessment of her life's work, her writings had been marked by an unusual mastery both of the political and of the economic history of the eighteenth century.[1]

London as a political and commercial and financial centre provided the focus of what she had already written and it seems that she was intent on a full-scale survey of London and national politics. Two major pilot studies appeared in the nineteen-fifties. One was entitled 'The City of London in eighteenth-century politics'.[2] The other one follows. The book on London

[1] 'Lucy Sutherland as historian', in *Politics and Finance in the 18th Century: Lucy Sutherland*, ed. A. Newman (1984), p. xi.

[2] In *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, ed. R. Pares and A. J. P. Taylor (1956), pp. 41–66; repr. in Newman, pp. 49–74.

P. J. Marshall, Introduction; and L. S. Sutherland, 'The City of London and the opposition to government, 1768–74: a study in the rise of metropolitan radicalism', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 123–53.

was never to appear, although Dame Lucy, as she had become in 1969, worked on it for a considerable time. I recall discussions with her about Jacobite radicalism in the mid century City. Other commitments took priority, above all in her later years, the massive fifth volume of the *History of the University of Oxford*, which covered the period from 1688 to 1800. She contributed four substantial chapters and edited the whole until the illness which led to her death in 1980.

Her lecture was an exploration of that 'ill-defined surge of opinion which we call eighteenth-century radicalism', focusing on the 'crisis of 1769–70, associated with John Wilkes and the Middlesex election'. She thought that these events had at that time 'aroused far less comment' than later phases of radicalism. Five years later, when George Rudé published his authoritative study of Wilkes's London, called *Wilkes and Liberty*, he concurred.[3] For him to try to answer such questions as 'What were the causes of Wilkes's popularity among such widely differing social classes? How far did his influence extend? What have been the ultimate results and historical significance of the Wilkite movement?' rather than offering another biographical study of Wilkes himself, was to adopt a new approach.[4] Rudé's questions were also Sutherland's questions.

Her concern was not simply with the expression of what might be regarded as radical views by extra-parliamentary opinion, since such views were often elicited by party politicians. It was important to be able to show that the initiative 'had passed from the groups in parliament to groups of persons outside the House'. She believed that there was clear evidence that the City of London was articulating its own independent views from about 1756. She attributed an important role in this to William Beckford, a great West Indian planter, M.P. for London and twice lord mayor.[5] Beckford and others like him began to formulate a programme that appealed to the 'lower middle classes', not only in the City of London but in a much wider metropolitan area. By 1770 Beckford was advocating 'shorter parliaments, a place and pension bill and the more equal representation of the people'. In Sutherland's view, this new radicalism was growing on its own momentum, but it was given immense if short-lived impetus by being associated with the cause of John Wilkes, who had been elected M.P. for Middlesex but

[3] G. Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: a Social Study of 1763–74* (Oxford, 1962).

[4] Rudé, pp. xiv–xv.

[5] See her very informative short biography of him in L. Namier and J. Brooke, *The House of Commons 1754–90* (3 vols., 1964), ii. 75–8.

had been prevented from taking his seat by the house of commons. She is dismissive of Wilkes: 'His methods were those of inspired opportunism; his ends simple and purely personal'. But she recognizes that his cause attracted support within the metropolitan area on a vast scale. Attempts to engage nationwide involvement were, in her view, largely unsuccessful and London radicalism soon split. Nevertheless, the reform programme, enunciated by Beckford and those who thought like him, became the aspirations of future campaigns.

A lecture delivered in 1958 must now of course be read in the light of much subsequent scholarship. In his *Wilkes and Liberty* and other writings, Rudé extended social analysis beyond the metropolitan activists to those who participated in the defiance of authority in demonstrations and disorder. John Brewer offers a corrective to Lucy Sutherland's dismissive approach to Wilkes, cogently explaining why, if ideologically barren, he was still so potent a figure in popular rituals. He also questions whether Wilkite influence was ineffective outside the metropolis.[6] Nicholas Rogers's work has given us a much fuller account of the early phases of London radicalism.[7] There are many other important contributions to be taken into account. Even so, this article both set trends for much of the subsequent findings and is a tantalizing glimpse of what a full treatment by Lucy Sutherland of London and national politics would have been like.

[6] J. Brewer, 'Personality, propaganda and ritual: Wilkes and the Wilkites', in J. Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 163–200.

[7] N. Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford, 1989).

The City of London and the opposition to government, 1768–74: a study in the rise of metropolitan radicalism*

L. S. Sutherland (1958)

It is with feelings of gratitude, but also of the liveliest apprehension, that I stand before you today. I am fully aware how great an honour it is to speak to such an audience on such an occasion. The fame of the historian whom this lecture commemorates and the distinction of my predecessors make me very uneasy about my own powers of maintaining adequately so high and reputable a tradition. Consideration of the lectures only of those of my predecessors to whom I am personally indebted for friendship and encouragement over many years – Sir Lewis Namier, mentor of all eighteenth-century historians, and Professor Edwards whose advice no scholar seeks in vain – brings home to me not merely the limitations of my own powers, but also the narrowness of the subject on which I shall be speaking. For while they treated the growth of great institutions, or the vast movements of peoples and nations, I shall be speaking of a few short years in the history of one city, and the heroes of my tale (so far as I have any) are an almost forgotten lord mayor and an only half-remembered demagogue. My only excuse for offering such a subject is that the city of which I shall

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be speaking is one famous and well known to all of us, and that I believe that what happened in it during these years, and to its lord mayor and its demagogue, was of more than local and temporary importance.

In the Guildhall of the City of London, slightly scarred by the mischances of war, there stands a statue erected by the corporation in 1772 to commemorate Alderman William Beckford, twice lord mayor and for sixteen years member of parliament for the City, who had died during his second mayoralty in 1770.[1] It depicts him life-size, in an oratorical attitude, and it bears as inscription the words which he was supposed to have addressed a few weeks before his death to his sovereign George III, when presenting a remonstrance from the City of London arising out of the famous Middlesex election dispute.[2] After assuring the king of the City's loyalty and its affliction under royal displeasure, he is there said to have continued:

> Permit me, Sir, to observe that whoever has already dared, or shall hereafter endeavour, by false insinuations and suggestions, to alienate your Majesty's affections from your loyal subjects in general, and from the City of London in particular, is an enemy to your Majesty's person and family, a violator of the public peace, and a betrayer of our happy Constitution, as it was established at the Glorious Revolution.[3]

[1] William Beckford (b. in Jamaica 1709; d. 21 June 1770), M.P. for Shaftesbury 1747–54 and London 1754–70, lord mayor 1762–3 and 1769–70. The statue, voted in 1770, was declared by his fellow citizens, when displayed to them, to be an excellent likeness (*London Chronicle*, xxxi (11–13 June 1772), 562).

[2] The remonstrance was presented on 23 May 1770.

[3] The words engraved on the statue were those published in the press. John Horne (Horne Tooke) claimed, probably correctly, to have written them up for the press, and also to have suggested that the lord mayor should address the king. Much later he gave his support to the rumour that no such speech had been made. W. P. Treloar, who examined the matter in his *Wilkes and the City* (1917), pp. 98–100, was convinced that 'Beckford made no rejoinder … or merely muttered a few indistinct words, and the speech was concocted afterwards'. The contemporary evidence is, however, quite clear. Richard Rigby wrote to the duke of Bedford on the same day, having just come from court, describing the incident and giving the gist of the words, adding 'This is the first attempt ever made to hold a colloquy with the King by any subject, and is indecent to the highest degree' (J. Russell, *The Correspondence of John, 4th Duke of Bedford* (1846), iii. 413–14). James Townsend, present as sheriff, wrote to Chatham, also on 23 May, that the lord mayor's speech 'greatly disconcerted the Court. He has promised to recollect what he said, and I fancy the substance will appear in the papers tomorrow' (J. H. Pringle and W. S. Taylor, *The Correspondence of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham* (1839) (hereafter *Chatham Correspondence*), iii. 458). Beckford, replying to Chatham's congratulations, said that he spoke 'the language of truth, and with that

The satisfaction of the City with the boldness of these words, and their belief in their value to posterity, was shared by others outside their walls. It was echoed by the great William Pitt, Lord Chatham (whose political follower Beckford was), who wrote in congratulation:

> The spirit of Old England spoke that never-to-be-forgotten day … *true Lord Mayor of London*; that is *first* magistrate of the *first* City in the World! I mean to tell you only a plain truth, when I say, Your Lordship's mayoralty will be revered till the constitution is destroyed and forgotten.[4]

Time has dealt less kindly with Beckford and his mayoralty than either his followers in the City or his leader in parliament expected. William Beckford was a man of some note in his day, and a very unusual figure among the sober ranks of the mercantile lord mayors of his time. He was the richest absentee West Indian sugar planter of his generation, owning vast estates and many slaves in Jamaica (a somewhat embarrassing possession for a spokesman for English freedom),[5] was a big landowner also in Wiltshire,[6] where he exercised some political influence, had been since 1756 the devoted henchman of William Pitt[7] and – a vigorous, loquacious and by no means unintelligent man – he was a prominent figure in parliamentary and City life. Nevertheless, his personal fame, such as it was, has been swallowed up in the notoriety of his son, the eccentric author of *Vathek*,[8] while his reputation in the City has been eclipsed by that of the picturesque demagogue John Wilkes, who may be considered his political successor there. Nor does the speech itself, or the occasion on which it was delivered, convey much to the posterity for which it has been preserved. It is a commentary on the fact that

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humility and submission which becomes a subject speaking to his lawful king' (*Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 463).

[4] *Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 462.

[5] A rhyme was printed in the *Public Advertiser* on 18 Nov. 1769:
For B[eck]f[or]d he was chosen May'r
A wight of high renown.
To see a slave he could not bear,
– Unless it were his own.

[6] He had purchased the estate of Fonthill, at Fonthill Giffard, Wilts., and greatly enlarged and beautified the house.

[7] When he entered the House he supported the country party in opposition and was known as a tory. After the death of the prince of Wales he gave his allegiance first to the duke of Bedford and then to Henry Fox, but when Pitt's abilities as a war leader became evident he attached himself enthusiastically and permanently to this new leader.

[8] William Beckford, jun. (1759–1844).

no age finds it easy to judge what about itself will be significant to the future that those wishing to honour Beckford should do so by commemorating an incident, in itself but a nine days wonder but charged with the memories of past conflicts, while ignoring others of far greater interest in connection with the events of the time and the struggles of the future. Only a few weeks earlier, also in connection with the Middlesex dispute, the lord mayor had propounded to the Livery in common hall assembled what he called his 'Political Creed' – that 'the number of little paltry rotten boroughs', the placemen and pensioners in the house of commons, and the corruption of electors and elected alike were ruining the state, and that to cure these evils there should be not only fewer pensioners and placemen (an old cry) but better public accounts and 'a more equal representation of the people'.[9]

For the importance of the career of Beckford as a leader in the City, and of his last mayoralty in particular, is to be sought in their relation to that ill-defined surge of opinion which we call eighteenth-century Radicalism, a movement interesting in itself, and of importance in relation to the nineteenth-century movement which succeeded it. The outburst of popular opinion which found expression during the revolutionary wars in the corresponding societies, and that earlier movement organized into the county associations during the latter years of the American war of independence, have received a good deal of attention from historians interested in the history of the Radical movement. The earlier crisis of 1769–70, associated with John Wilkes and the Middlesex election, and in which Beckford was concerned, has aroused far less comment, though Professor Butterfield has noted its significance[10] and it finds a place in Dr. Maccoby's comprehensive work.[11] Nevertheless, this earlier movement prepared the way for both the later outbursts of popular activity, and was accompanied by a remarkable ferment of opinion within the City and its surroundings – what we may call the metropolitan area – which left its mark upon the future.

It is the contention which I wish to advance today that a study of eighteenth-century Radicalism can best begin with an examination of what was actually going on in and around London at this time; that the origins of these events can be traced, in the City of London at least, as far back as 1756; and that the fact that they took place in the metropolis and found as yet little reflection in the country as a whole is the result of a circumstance

[9] *London Chronicle*, xxvii (6–8 March 1770), 225.
[10] H. Butterfield, *George III, Lord North, and the People, 1779–80* (1949), pp. 181 *seq*.
[11] S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism 1762–85: the Origins* (1955).

of some importance: that in the metropolitan area, and at this time in the metropolitan area alone, there existed the predisposing conditions for the development of Radicalism as a political force – an organization adapted to political intervention and a sizeable body of persons, some of them at least with some education and independence of mind, who felt themselves ill-served by and were in consequence critical of their social and political environment.

All movements of public opinion are in their early stages ill-defined and inarticulate, and their characteristics are in consequence hard to isolate. These difficulties of identification are increased in the case of the eighteenth-century Radical movement by the fact that the organization of expressions of extra-parliamentary opinion had long been one of the recognized weapons of eighteenth-century political warfare; and that petitions, instructions and thanks to representatives both from the counties and the City of London were part of the stock-in-trade of parliamentary oppositions of the period. It is not therefore safe to assume that such manifestations necessarily represent in themselves a movement of spontaneous popular opinion. We can be sure that such a movement is in being only when it can be shown that the initiative in organizing such manifestations has passed from the political groups in parliament to groups of persons outside the House. When, in addition, those taking part in such manifestations begin to display an increasingly critical attitude to existing institutions, and their political programmes to reflect this attitude, we can consider that something which may reasonably be called Radicalism has come into existence. This is, I think, precisely what we can see beginning to happen in the City of London in the last years of the reign of George II, gaining momentum in the first eight years of the new reign, and breaking into full expression in the metropolitan area in the general election of 1768 and the Middlesex election dispute which succeeded it.

The City of London had a long tradition of corporate solidarity and also a long tradition of political activity in which this solidarity expressed itself. This is not to say, of course, that there were not differences of opinion among its inhabitants, and often active conflict within it. One of the most permanent of these divisions was one based on some sort of class conflict between a City aristocracy of wealth and office and the main body of what contemporaries called the 'middling' class of their fellow citizens. But it is, nevertheless, justifiable to speak throughout the century of the political opinion of the City since, in times of stress, the climate of political thinking

there was determined not by the prosperous aldermen, the directors of the great joint-stock companies, the rich merchants and the thriving financiers of the London money market, nor by those whom they could carry with them (though in quiet and uncontentious times their influence was considerable). It was determined on the contrary by the lesser merchants, the tradesmen, the master-craftsmen and the host of minor intermediaries who formed the majority in the popular organs of City government and who thronged the meetings and clubs where political opinion was formulated. And while the more prominent citizens tended for a number of reasons to give their political support to the government of the day, the 'middling' citizens tended almost always in times of political controversy to find themselves in alliance with the parties in opposition.[12] It is paradoxical, but true to state, that throughout the first half of the eighteenth century there was no body of men more ready to be swayed by the catchwords of the old 'country' party as advanced by the opposition groups in parliament than these inhabitants of the nation's greatest city. Demands for the repeal of the Septennial Act, for place and pension bills and for the reduction of the standing army – all measures directed at the power of the crown which the seventeenth-century constitutional struggles had taught Englishmen to suspect – were applauded as enthusiastically by the citizen in common council or common hall or in his tavern or coffeehouse, as by any country squire on his grand jury or at the race meeting. But the citizen can no more be called a Radical because he held these views than can the country squire. It was only when the City began to some extent to dissociate itself from the politics of opposition as well as those of government, to feel resentment at its place in a political system dominated by interests in many ways alien to it, that it can begin to be considered a focus of Radicalism as distinct from a centre of traditional anti-ministerialism.

The first clear signs of such a development seem to appear, like so many changes, as a result of war, and to have been the outcome of one of the rare occasions on which City opinion was ardently in support of, and not in opposition to, the government. Between 1756 and 1768 its growth can be traced in three stages. In the first, during the great war ministry of William Pitt, when his unique personal supremacy depended on the support of public opinion as much outside as within the House, the City's sense of its political significance as a body was stimulated by the court which was

[12] I have treated this subject more fully in my 'The City of London in 18th-century politics', in *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, ed. R. Pares and A. J. P. Taylor (1956).

paid to it and by its share in the exhilaration of victory. In the second stage, during the dissensions accompanying the peace settlement and the confusion following the break-up of the political system of the old reign, the City was again in opposition, and again acting in support of the opposition groups in parliament; but on such matters as its agitation against the peace terms, and its turbulent adherence to the cause of John Wilkes over the North Briton case and the issue of general warrants, it displayed a degree of independence of action greater than it had shown on issues of national importance before. But the third stage, that between 1764 and 1768, was perhaps the most important of all, though during these years there was no issue in national politics which called the City into corporate action. For these were years of bad harvests, high cost of living and industrial changes in the metropolitan area which caused a good deal of hardship and discontent and led to great and persistent labour unrest.[13] From 1764 onwards a strong undercurrent of economic malaise and social unrest is discernible beneath the surface of the life of the metropolis, and though until 1768 no major issue arose to transfer this discontent to the political field, there were already indications that such a transfer was imminent.

The development of these years can also be traced through the career as a City leader of William Beckford, for his entry into City politics in 1754 roughly coincided with it, and his actions did a good deal to further it. Before Beckford's time the political leaders to whom the City paid allegiance were themselves citizens first and foremost, and had risen to prominence through active participation in City government. Beckford, when he first stood for the City, was a man of some note and experience in parliamentary opposition but he had only two years before taken his freedom by redemption and been elected alderman,[14] and these steps

[13] The price of wheat reached a peak in the very bad year 1767, but was high (by comparison with the five years ending 1763) in the period 1764–8 inclusive, and the numbers of cattle and sheep brought to Smithfield market were also significantly lower in most of these years (T. S. Ashton, *An Economic History of England: the 18th Century* (1955), tables I and VII, pp. 239 and 245). The first serious outburst of labour unrest in London was the riot in 1765 of the Spitalfield silk-weavers, automatically protected from French competition during the war. It was followed in the ensuing years by others, more or less serious, among the coal-heavers, sailors, weavers, tailors, hatters, and even (in 1771) by the cabinet-makers against the importation of foreign furniture by abuse of diplomatic privilege. An official return made in 1772 to the City of the number of death sentences passed at the Old Bailey showed an increase from 14 in 1760 to 91 in 1770 (*London Chronicle*, xxxii (3–5 Nov. 1772), 440).

[14] He became a freeman of the Ironmongers' Company, and was alderman for Billingsgate ward.

were taken in preparation for his candidature.[15] He was the first politician of some experience outside the City to see its value as a backing for his personal power and the causes he wished to further, and, at first in self-interest, then with real zest, he worked his way through the offices of the City corporation and increasingly identified himself with his constituents to consolidate his power. As Pitt's supporter he played the chief part in forging the links between the City and the great war minister;[16] as lord mayor in 1762–3 he led their opposition to the peace;[17] and in and after his mayoralty he encouraged their support of John Wilkes, though there was even then no love lost between the two men.[18] And in his speeches and his actions he reflected the growing self-consciousness and dissatisfaction of his constituents, and in doing so he began to earn the reputation of something of a demagogue in the house of commons.[19] As early as 1761 he had extolled the 'middling classes of England' against 'Your Nobility, about 200 <of> men of quality' who 'receive more from the Public than they pay to it'.[20] In 1767 when he voted against a reduction in the land tax he did so, he claimed, because 'relief ought to be given to the poor man in pre-

[15] He was supported by the tory interest in the City, in particular it would seem by Alderman William Benn, a notable City politician of the time. After his election he thanked the electors for the trust they placed in him despite 'the short time I have had the honour of being known to you, and the prejudices that have been injuriously raised against me' (*Public Advertiser*, 8 May 1754).

[16] There is considerable evidence of this in the printed *Chatham Correspondence* and in the unpublished Pitt MSS. in The National Archives of the U.K.

[17] He opposed the preliminaries of the Peace of Paris in the House in Nov. 1762 and in 1763 when the court of aldermen, not daring to summon the common council, voted an address, refused to accompany them to present it (Court of aldermen, repertory book 167, pp. 280 *seq*.; British Library, Additional MS. 32948 fo. 269, T. Walpole to Newcastle, 12 May 1763).

[18] Wilkes attacked Beckford savagely in the *North Briton*, though when writing to Lord Temple, who thought well of Beckford, he tried to blame the hostility shown on Charles Churchill (W. J. Smith, *The Grenville Papers* (1852), ii. 59). Reports made to the secretary of state on Wilkes's movements noted on 8 Nov. 1763 a visit of Wilkes to the lord mayor Beckford at his house (*Grenville Papers*, ii. 158), and on 19 Dec. 1763 Beckford wrote him a friendly letter promising assistance (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 30867 fo. 242). On 17 Feb. 1764 Beckford spoke and voted in the House against general warrants (MS. parliamentary diary of James Harris).

[19] He was called 'The scavenger to throw dirt upon government' (MS. parliamentary diary of James Harris, 16 Nov. 1763) and 'the Dr. Lucas of the English House of Commons' (Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Emly MSS.*, pt. i, sect. 1, 190 b, 7 March 1765).

[20] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 38334 fos. 29 *seq*. Apparently an attempt at a verbatim report of Beckford's speech on the address on 13 Nov. 1761.

ference to the opulent land-holder',[21] and in 1768 he voted, as he said, 'on principle' against the Nullum Tempus Act,[22] forced on the government to secure landowners against the dormant claims of the crown. In the light of this attitude, too, may be judged his tentative criticism of the existing political order. At his election in 1761 (though only seven years before he had spent great sums himself in borough elections) he told the City electors that 'our Constitution is deficient only in one point, and that is, that little, pitiful boroughs send members to parliament equal to great cities, and it is contrary to the maxim, that power should follow property';[23] and in 1768 he introduced a bill (repudiated energetically by opposition and government supporters alike) to impose an oath against bribery on parliamentary candidates at elections.[24] And, when he was preparing to fight a contested election for his City seat in the general election of that year, he claimed credit from his constituents for what he had said and done.

If the situation in the metropolis and the attitude of the City leaders be taken into account, it seems indeed fairly clear that even had there been no re-emergence of John Wilkes, and no Middlesex election to bring matters to a head, there would have been a recrudescence after 1768 of political activity in the City in alliance with the opposition groups in parliament, and that the City's share in this alliance would have been far from passive. As it was, the nature of the forces released by these new factors was quickly apparent. When in 1769 the ebullient Parson John Home declared that 'Boroughs are, indeed, the deadly part of our Constitution';[25] when Beckford in 1770, during his second mayoralty, invited the opposition leaders to dine at Mansion House with the intention of springing on them a pledge to a programme of parliamentary reform;[26] and when these leaders, on their way

[21] So he claimed in 1768 (*Public Advertiser*, 22 March 1768). As he was at this time still a supporter of the administration set up by Chatham there may well, however, be other reasons.

[22] H. Cavendish, *Debates of the House of Commons during the 13th Parliament of Great Britain* (1841), i. 241.

[23] *London Evening Post*, 4–7 Apr. 1761, quoted in *Memoirs of William Beckford* (1859), i. 33.

[24] J. Brooke, *The Chatham Administration, 1766–8* (1956), p. 337, n. 4. Sir Roger Newdigate welcomed the proposal as likely to reduce competition for seats from 'Nabobs' and other monied rivals of the landed interests. Cf. H. Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of King George III*, ed. D. Le Marchant (1845), iii. 157–60.

[25] He expanded this statement with the condition 'if they are to be the instruments of forcing through those barriers which the Wisdom of our Ancestors has placed between the hereditary and elective legislators of England' (*Public Advertiser*, 8 Sept. 1769).

[26] A. Stephens, *Memoirs of John Horne Tooke* (1813), i. 387–8. Horne's account of this

to the dinner (having evaded the pledge), 'remarked that a great part of the populace had tickets in their hats on which was the following inscription: 'Annual Parliaments. Equal Representation. Place and Pension Bill';[27] no one could doubt that a fully developed Radical movement within the City had come into existence.

It was, however, the almost unheralded, and quite uninvited, return of John Wilkes during the 1768 general election from exile in France (into which he had fled from justice four years before), and the renewal of his old claim to popularity during the excitement of a contested City election, which brought these forces into the open. His subsequent election for Middlesex, the muddle of his arrest, his sentence to imprisonment for his former offences, and his long contest from behind his prison walls with the ministry and the majority of the house of commons, brought about a surge of popular feeling under the pressure of which latent suspicions and hostilities became overt, and strange and unsuspected forces were suddenly released.

The impact of John Wilkes and his grievances on the political life of the nation in this, his second period of political activity, forms an odd interlude in the history of George III's reign. Historians have noted the constitutional precedents created by the Middlesex election dispute, but have not found it easy to determine the importance of the episode in the politics of the time. It is, I think, only possible to do so with any accuracy if it is recognized, first, that the forces released by the excitement of his cause were those already taking shape within the metropolitan area, and that the ferment which prevailed there had only a transient effect outside its bounds; and, second, that the activities resulting from the ferment within the metropolitan area had little to do with Wilkes as a person or as a political leader, and arose only indirectly out of his grievances. To make clear why these propositions are correct it is necessary to analyse the character and career at this time of Wilkes himself, and the nature of the sentiments which he called forth, and the situation which was created within the metropolis by the outburst of these feelings.

John Wilkes was said to have observed some years later of one of his followers, 'He was a Wilkite, ... I never was',[28] and a recognition of the

incident is supported by a letter from Chatham (*Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 431, n. 1).

[27] *London Chronicle*, xxvii (24–27 March 1770), 296.

[28] He was alleged to have said this to George III of Sgt. John Glynn. The story was widely reported (see H. Bleackley, *Life of John Wilkes* (1917), p. 376).

truth of this admission is the first step to an understanding of his career and what was going on at this time. To many of the issues which most deeply concerned the more thoughtful and intelligent of his followers Wilkes himself was profoundly indifferent, and the fervent loyalty of his less sophisticated followers also raised in him no more than a cynical acceptance. The qualities which brought him success as a demagogical political leader were: a strikingly original, if disreputable, personality, a great deal of assurance, a skill in exploiting the resources of the press unparalleled up to that time (unlike most demagogues Wilkes was a poor public speaker),[29] and considerable success in those arts of political management which have in more recent times been associated with the office of a 'political boss'. His methods were those of inspired opportunism; his ends simple and purely personal. The gamble of his return from France in defiance of the law and his creditors was largely an enforced one, for his debts in France were too heavy for him to be able to remain there. His intention in this return was to make use of his old popularity and the excitement of a general election to raise, as a supporter frankly said, 'a storm … under which you may get into port'.[30] The port he was making for was a seat in the house of commons with the protection this would bring him from his creditors, and the improved bargaining power with an unfriendly administration which the status might be expected to carry with it. After his failure in the City, and the check to his success at Middlesex, the extraordinary outburst of feeling which he evoked opened up an alternative course for him as soon as he should have served his prison sentence. From early in 1769 when (with still more than a year's sentence to run) he was elected an alderman of the City in his absence,[31] he set himself deliberately to the conquest of the City's corporate machine, seeing in it, no doubt, a new sphere of political power and a possible source

[29] He had a weak voice and was unable to sway large assemblies, e.g. the large and contentious meeting at Westminster Hall on 31 Oct. 1770, at which Wilkes completely lost control of proceedings. He himself referred to his 'weak and bad voice' (*London Chronicle*, xxviii (8–10 Nov. 1770), 456).

[30] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 30869 fo. 175, H. Cotes to J. Wilkes, 15 Dec. 1767. Some time before 16 June 1767 Wilkes had suggested to his friends that he might stand for the City (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 30869 fo. 131, Heaton Wilkes to J. Wilkes, 16 June 1769). They were uniformly discouraging. He nevertheless persisted, and on 6 Oct. 1767 a letter from him to Arthur Beardmore, a City politician, was printed in the *St. James's Chronicle*. Cotes thought Westminster more hopeful.

[31] He was, on 2 Jan. 1769, elected alderman of the ward of Farringdon Without. His eligibility for election was challenged, but legal action was not taken, and after his release from prison he was sworn in. The question is fully treated in Treloar, pp. 70 *seq*.

of revenue when the financial bounty of his followers should be exhausted.[32] And so great was the popular support which he called forth that the very City leaders whom he was working to supplant, including Beckford himself, had to assist his rise in order to preserve their own popularity.[33] Though as time went on during this struggle he was obliged, in competition with those who had been his friends and became his rivals, to advance some programme of reform, in the years when metropolitan Radicalism was taking shape under the pressure of the forces his cause had released, he displayed not the slightest interest in its manifestations, and, indeed, deprecated any widening of the issue raised by the Middlesex election[34] as likely to distract attention from his own grievances and person.

If then the Radicalism of these years owed nothing to Wilkes but was the outcome of the feelings aroused by his cause, it is necessary both to try to analyse the nature of this feeling and to determine how and by whom it was bent to Radical ends. Though every effort was made by propaganda in the press to suggest that the personal popularity of Wilkes was strong throughout the kingdom, an examination of the evidence soon makes it clear that there was nothing in the nature of a vigorous and lasting Wilkite movement outside the metropolitan area. All the parliamentary opposition parties were both slow and reluctant to take up his cause against administration (well suited though it obviously was for opposition purposes), and when they did, they sought to isolate the cause of the electors of Middlesex from that of their chosen representative.[35] And that they were not merely politicians out of touch with public opinion but reflected the views of the politically

[32] As early as 1770 it seems clear that he was trying to get profitable jobs in the City for friends and relatives in the proceeds of which he might share (*Public Advertiser*, 27 May 1771 *seq.*). In 1779, after a three-year struggle, he achieved the climax of his personal ambition, the highly lucrative position of City chamberlain.

[33] Camden congratulated Beckford on Wilkes's failure to be elected for the City (letter of 28 March 1768 in the Hamilton MSS.), though during the election Beckford and the other popular candidate Barlow Trecothick had treated Wilkes 'with much civility' (Walpole, *Memoirs*, iii. 185) and supported Wilkes's candidature for Middlesex, and for election as alderman.

[34] *Public Advertiser*, 22 May 1771. H. Cotes in a letter to John Horne said that the breach between Horne and Wilkes really began over the Middlesex petition of 1769, which Wilkes had wished to be confined entirely to the rights of the electors of that county.

[35] Edmund Burke wrote to his friend Charles O'Hara on 9 June 1768: 'The plan of our party was … not to provoke Administration into any violent measure upon this subject … besides we had not the least desire of taking up that gentleman's cause as personally favourable to him' (pr. in R. J. S. Hoffman, *Edmund Burke, New York Agent* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1956), p. 434).

active classes as a whole was shown clearly by the events of the petitioning movement of 1769–70.[36] It is true that in some parts of the country, and particularly in the commercial cities and great seaports and in some of the industrialized areas, there were signs of a sympathetic response to the clamorous exaltations of the metropolis, a response due no doubt to some similarities in their general conditions and attitude of mind;[37] but even here it was for the most part evanescent and it found at this time no organization to give it permanent force. And even the presence of the demagogue himself when he made a triumphal tour through the provinces after his release from prison did not succeed in giving the movement the vitality it was to show some years later.

The Wilkite movement was thus essentially, as the later Radical movements were not, a product of the metropolis. Here the personal devotion which he evoked was of a curious kind, impervious to disillusionment and discreditable revelations, and unaffected by the leader's unconcealed contempt for his followers. Edmund Burke, marvelling at his 'imprudence' and the fact that it did nothing to discredit him in the eyes of his fellows, remarked acutely that 'it may perhaps be … some unusual and eccentric kind of wisdom'.[38] The devotion of the rank and file of these followers seems

[36] See below..

[37] The response in different parts of the country varied greatly and can only be understood in relation to local conditions. One of the most interesting accounts in the press was a letter in the *London Chronicle*, xxvii (10–12 May 1770), 452 from one signing himself 'Viator', whose business, he said, took him much about the kingdom: 'There is scarce an inn, shop, or private house, into which I enter, but the pleasure of conversation, and the regular despatch of business, are hindered by discourse and altercations about Wilkes, Grievances and Middlesex Election'. He adds that he was in Worcestershire when Wilkes was released from prison and that in some places he passed through on 17 and 18 Apr. no business could be done, that Worcester itself was a scene of confusion, but that in Kidderminster the 'Vicar of the Parish, the Bailiff of the Borough, the Master-weavers and principal inhabitants' had managed to prevent riotous behaviour by 'journeyman-weavers, their apprentices and others of the vulgar'. In Bristol there was in 1769 a considerable body of discontent, described by Richard Champion in his MS. letter book (in the possession of Miss P. Rawlins, of Denbigh, N. Wales) as having 'a great and formidable appearance, and a real strength'. The local friends of Wilkes 'took advantage of the times to head' it but behaved 'with such a wildness of popularity and so little attention to common sense' that they 'frightened away many worthy men'. At Plymouth there were riotous rejoicings when the news was received in June 1769 that John Sawbridge and James Townsend had been elected sheriffs. The crowd changed the name of H.M. ship *Barrington* to *Liberty*, and burned jack-boots and an effigy of Bute. They were said to be led by an 'eminent attorney' (*Gentleman's Magazine* (1769), p. 361).

[38] E. Burke to C. O'Hara, 19 Nov. 1773 (Hoffman, p. 551).

to have been compounded of appreciation of a personality so foreign to their own, sympathy for him as the victim (so they believed) of persecution by the great whose privileges they resented, and a delighted admiration of the insolence and imperturbability with which he defied and put out of countenance these persecutors. It would seem as if inarticulate resentment and dissatisfaction which had been piling up within the metropolitan area for years had suddenly found an outlet and a solace in identification with him and his cause. So new a phenomenon was this popular feeling that it has sometimes been suggested that it derived its strength from the emergence into political awareness of classes hitherto submerged, of the unorganized and ill-paid manual workers of the metropolis, and its wretched and degraded underworld. But, though the labour unrest of the recent years reached a climax about the time of the Middlesex election and its accompanying disorders, there seems good reason to believe that it had little direct connection with the Wilkite manifestations,[39] and the support of such allies would, in any case, have checked rather than assisted Wilkes's rise to power.

It is clear indeed that the backbone of Wilkes's support in the metropolis was precisely the same classes as that of the earlier popular leaders, what we should call its lower middle classes. In the City's corporation it was the common hall, composed of the liverymen of the City companies, which was always the bulwark of his power, and his voting strength there depended largely on the liverymen of the numerous lesser companies, for which the livery fines were low and many of which still retained to a considerable degree their old craft associations.[40] And outside the City, in other parts of the metropolis, the position was very similar. In Westminster, for instance, a list of twenty of his most active supporters drawn up in 1770 included the names of three apothecaries, two carpenters, a well-to-do poulterer, a

[39] See G. F. E. Rudé, 'Wilkes and liberty, 1768–9', *Guildhall Miscellany* (July 1957); and 'The London "Mob" of the 18th century', *Historical Jour.*, ii (1956), 1–18. There was much unrest among the merchant seamen in the Thames-side just at the time of the riots accompanying Wilkes's election for Middlesex, but even his enemies made no attempt to suggest he did anything to exacerbate these disorders. Rockingham, reporting to the duke of Newcastle on 10 May 1768 the dispersal of the mob which had collected outside the house of lords, said that the justices returning reported that the crowds were 'much diminished but … that they [*sic*] were still some who cried Wilkes and Liberty and some who cried that bread and beer were too dear and that it was as well to be hanged as starved' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 32990 fo. 36v).

[40] J. R. Kellett, 'The breakdown of gild and corporation control over the handicraft and retail trade in London', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., x (1958), 381 *seq.*

stable-keeper, an engraver, a bookseller, an upholsterer, a coachmaker and a working jeweller – as well as a baronet, two parsons (one of whom was respectable), a barrister and a solicitor.[41]

But though the classes on which Wilkes's power ultimately rested were the same as those who supported his predecessors, the very strength of the feeling he elicited made fundamental changes in the movement which was coming into being. In the first place his influence extended over a wider area than that of any of his predecessors. London had long outgrown its ancient city boundaries and the city of Westminster, the borough of Southwark, much of the county of Middlesex and even some of the county of Surrey were already becoming for all practical purposes part of the same great urban centre. But this expansion of the City had so far been reflected only very partially in a unity of political actions and ideas.[42] The strength of the City leaders of the past had depended on their control over the corporate organization of the ancient City, and they had only occasionally concerned themselves with stimulating the political opinion of the surrounding areas and never with giving it a permanent organization. Now, with all these areas united in a community of feeling, co-ordinated action could be planned and was in fact carried out. Not only were their corporate activities now synchronized, but a network of interrelated clubs and societies was created, through which enthusiasm could be maintained and the views of the various parts of the metropolis kept in line.[43] The famous Radical Quadrilateral, or even the Quintuple Alliance, of the future was thus foreshadowed. Wilkes has a claim to be considered at the same time the last of the old City leaders, whose strength rested on their control over the corporation, and the first of the new metropolitan popular leaders who relied on less tangible but more wide-flung support.

[41] List of the signatories to the Westminster remonstrance, with their occupations, inserted by 'Sly-boots' in the *Public Advertiser*, 7 Apr. 1770.

[42] L. B. Namier, *Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (2nd edn., 1957), pp. 65 *seq*.

[43] Wilkes was an honorary member of a wide variety of convivial clubs, most of which had some political significance. The most important of the societies primarily political in their purpose were, besides the Supporters of the Bill of Rights who met at the London Tavern, the Sons of Freedom who met at Appleby's Tavern in Westminster, the Society which met at the Standard Tavern, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the long-established Society of the Antigallicans whose annual meeting was said in 1771 to be 'the most numerous meeting of the year of the Middlesex Freeholders' (*Public Advertiser*, 25 Apr. 1771). The annual May Feast at Southwark was also this year used for political ends (*Public Advertiser*, 29 May 1771).

In the second place, and partly because the area over which his influence extended was thus enlarged, the cause of Wilkes attracted to him a type of supporter whose alliance earlier leaders had never enjoyed. These were the men, all of some education and some of considerable standing, who formed the nucleus of the Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights, a society founded early in 1769 to buy off Wilkes's creditors, but which became in these earlier years the mainspring of the movement's policy. Few of these men were freemen of the City; but most of them had strong interests in the metropolitan area, and the greater number of them pursued their careers there. They were a highly diversified group of men, but they were all for one reason or another dissatisfied with the existing order; with few exceptions they were rather young, and a high proportion of them belonged to the rising professional classes (they tended to be the less prosperous and well-established members of the less socially regarded of these classes) for which, like the ordinary merchant and trading classes of the City, the existing political and social system made little provision.[44] And though, at first at any rate, most of them were warmly attached to the cause of Wilkes as a person, they were basically more concerned with the wider issues to which the Middlesex election dispute gave rise. The most prominent among them were the able but erratic and misfit Parson John Horne (later to be known as Horne Tooke),[45] and two new and idealistic members of parliament, James

[44] In the earlier years of the Society several country gentlemen were members: Sir Francis Blake Delavel, Bt., of Seaton Delavel, Northumberland, 1754–68 M.P. for Andover; Sir Robert Bernard, Bt., of Brampton, Hunts., who was returned by the popular interest for Westminster in 1770 and held the seat until 1774; a young Welsh gentleman Robert Jones of Fonmor Castle, near Cardiff, and Hill Street, Berkeley Square, 'a gentleman of good character, but not esteemed to be a man of very extensive literature and knowledge' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 35632 fo. 49, John Vernon to 2nd Lord Hardwicke, 12 June 1769); and Lord Mountmorres, the younger brother of the patriotic Irish peer Lord Charlemont. They each seem to have had different private reasons for their allegiance, to have been concerned chiefly with the activities in Westminster, and to have detached themselves from the movement after the split within the Society in 1771. Another highly individualistic supporter, and one who remained personally attached to Wilkes throughout, was old Dr. Thomas Wilson, prebendary of Westminster, an ardent admirer of the republican historian Mrs. Catherine Macaulay, sister of John Sawbridge. Among the legal supporters were Sgt. John Glynn, M.P. for Middlesex 1768–79, Wilkes's counsel, two young barristers William Adair and Robert Morris, a Welshman, the attorneys Charles Martin and John Reynolds (the latter Wilkes's attorney), George Bellas, proctor of the admiralty court, Arthur Beardmore and John Boddington. Sir Joseph Mawbey, Bt., brewer and distiller and M.P. for Southwark 1761–74, represented the older type of popular leader.

[45] 1736–1812. For him, see A. Stephens, *Memoirs of John Horne Tooke* (2 vols., 1813).

Townsend[46] and John Sawbridge,[47] both of families with City antecedents, though they themselves had not hitherto displayed interest in its affairs. They were all in their thirties, were all to be prominent in Radical agitation for many years to come, and it was to a considerable degree through their influence that the fervour of the Wilkites was, in these early years, harnessed to Radical ends.

It might, however, be asked how it was that, with a leader like Wilkes, himself indifferent or even hostile to the raising of such issues, they were able to bring about this result. The answer lies in the fact that until his release from prison in April 1770, Wilkes was not in a position to exercise leadership over the forces he had raised. The easy discipline of the king's bench prison in which he was confined permitted him, it is true, to keep himself in the public eye and to fight his battle with the house of commons, but he could neither take part in the corporate activities of the City, nor exercise a preponderant influence over the day-to-day activities of his supporters in the rest of the metropolis, until he was able to be present in person. In the City it was in consequence William Beckford who, until his sudden death in June 1770, reaped the fruits of Wilkes's popularity, and between Beckford and these new and ardent recruits the links both of personal friendship and similarity of ideas were strong. In particular, both Townsend and Sawbridge adhered in parliament to the Chatham group of which Beckford was an old supporter.[48] And when in the summer of 1769 Beckford persuaded both of them to take up the freedom of the City, and arranged for them not only to be elected aldermen but also sheriffs for the year,[49] and when in November he himself was for the second time chosen lord mayor,[50] the control of the popular forces both in the City and in the

[46] 1737–87. Son of Chauncy Townsend, merchant and contractor; M.P. for West Looe 1767–74 and for Calne 1782–7; took up his freedom by patrimony 1769; alderman 1769; sheriff 1769–70; lord mayor 1772–3 (see W. P. Courtney, 'James Townsend, M.P.', *Notes & Queries*, 11th ser., v. 2–4).

[47] *c.*1732-95. M.P. for Hythe 1768–74; for London 1774–95; took up his freedom by redemption in 1769; alderman 1769; sheriff 1769–70; lord mayor 1775–6.

[48] In 1771 Townsend called Beckford 'my intimate confidential friend' (*London Chronicle*, xxx (10–12 Oct. 1771), 360).

[49] John Horne in a letter signed 'Roberto' in *The Gazetteer*, 25 Sept. 1771, described Beckford's initiative in this manner.

[50] Beckford's nomination was organized by James Townsend. Beckford wrote to Shelburne, 24 Oct. 1769, 'Our friend Townsend has, by his encouragement, brought this about' (Bowood MSS.). When his name was put forward with that of Trecothick, the hostile majority in the court of aldermen, believing his protestations that he would not stand,

metropolis as a whole was placed firmly in their united and friendly hands.

Since the alliance between Beckford and Wilkes was purely one of convenience – Beckford never joined the Supporters of the Bill of Rights and even in the two months between Wilkes's release from prison and Beckford's death it began to wear thin – Beckford had every reason to stress rather the general issues arising out of the demagogue's cause than his personal grievances. Moreover the main issue which could be extracted from the Middlesex election dispute, the threat to the rights of the electors from what might be considered a corrupt house of commons, fitted in well with the tentative ideas about electoral and parliamentary reform which he had already been advancing. Thus the sympathies of the new recruits and the ideas of the old City leader were easily assimilated. In consequence it was during the short period between the rise of the Wilkite movement and the struggle of Wilkes himself to assume control of it that the main contributions were made by the metropolis to the development of eighteenth-century Radicalism. In this period something in the nature of a programme of parliamentary reform was adumbrated; an attempt was made to set on foot a nationwide agitation in support of their views, and (less important, but equally significant of the forces at work in the metropolis) a plot was laid to force a pledge of support for a reform programme on the leaders of the opposition groups in parliament.

The first of these contributions was that of the most permanent importance. It would seem to have been Beckford who took the lead here. The first step was taken at the beginning of 1769 when the metropolitan constituencies decided to send instructions to their representatives protesting against the actions of the House against Wilkes, and advancing other grievances. Both Middlesex and Westminster adopted and published their instructions before the City did, but it was the City's instructions, in the preparation of which Beckford was actively concerned, which first raised the issue of electoral and parliamentary reform.[51] The City representatives were instructed to work for shorter parliaments and a place and pension bill (both echoes of the old oppositions with which Beckford was familiar) and for the imposition of the oath against bribery at elections which Beckford

elected him in order to force on another election. When Beckford permitted the Livery to persuade him to change his mind, they considered this a disreputable trick.

[51] The Middlesex freeholders met to agree on instructions to their representatives on 12 Jan.; those of Westminster on 25 Jan. The City instructions were agreed on 10 Feb. 1769. For Beckford's part in this, see *Public Advertiser*, 11 Feb. 1769.

had demanded in his abortive bill at the end of the last parliament. (A further proposal advanced that voting might be by ballot is of more uncertain origin, and does not occur again.) Further, throughout the rest of 1769 Beckford began to dwell in his speeches in the House on the 'little paltry boroughs' he had complained of as early as 1761, and on the undue influence which they gave to the aristocracy and to other borough owners.[52] And by 1770 he had produced the threefold programme of reform – shorter parliaments, a place and pension bill and the more equal representation of the people – which he tried to force on the unwilling parliamentary opposition, and which obtained widespread support in the metropolis. It was a programme based on the assumption that representation and property were closely related, and it was in no sense a demand for popular sovereignty, but it was (largely for this reason) one which was to remain acceptable to most English reformers for many years to come.

More immediately striking, however, though of less long-term significance, were the attempts in these years to extend the movement inside the metropolis to the nation as a whole. The course of these attempts illustrates so well both the strength and the limitations of this Radical movement of the metropolis in relation to the country as a whole, that it is worth going into it in some detail. A first attempt made by the City on its own at the time of the publication of its instructions to its representatives was an almost complete failure.[53] Even in the commercial centres where it was accustomed to stimulate common action on commercial issues, it ran into unexpected difficulties, and in the counties its contacts were too slight

[52] On 29 Feb. 1769 he stated, 'The fact is, a number of great men are got together to parcel out every thing, without regard to the people' (Cavendish, *Debates*, i. 150). On 1 March 1769 he stated, 'We should cut off the small paltry boroughs' (Cavendish, *Debates*, i. 281) and the next day he spoke of M.P.s whose seats were obtained by 'bribing some paltry borough' (Cavendish, *Debates*, i. 304).

[53] *The London Chronicle*, xxv (2–4 Feb. 1769), 114, reported that Essex was said to be considering instructions and that Bristol 'and the capital places in the kingdom, are impatiently waiting the sense of the City of London' to draw up their instructions. In all between 31 Jan. and 9 Feb. the paper reported four cities – Norwich, Exeter, London, Bristol – and six counties – Devon, Middlesex, Essex, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Berkshire – as awaiting the London lead. Copies of the London instructions were sent by post to all parts of the kingdom 'with a view to animate other Counties and Boroughs to follow the example' (*London Chronicle*, xxv (9–11 Feb. 1769), 144). Bristol sent instructions. For their reaction, see W. R. Savadge, 'The west country and the American mainland colonies 1703–83, with special reference to the merchants of Bristol' (unpublished University of Oxford B.Litt. thesis, 1951).

to bring forth a response.[54] A second attempt in the summer of 1769 was made under more auspicious circumstances, and met with more success. It did so because it was undertaken in collaboration with the opposition groups in parliament. As soon as the house of commons had resolved on 15 April 1769 that, Wilkes being incapable of sitting, Colonel Luttrell, the rival candidate, be declared elected in his stead, a meeting of Middlesex freeholders was summoned, at which James Townsend announced 'the necessity of seeking out some new remedy for a new grievance'.[55] Shortly afterwards a deputation of the Livery of the City asked for a common hall for the same purpose;[56] and it soon became known that the 'new remedy' proposed by both Middlesex and the City was the presentation of petitions to the crown, which would not only demand redress of various grievances, but (a definitely unorthodox departure) would also protest to the king against the actions of the house of commons. Early in May it was rumoured that 'a petition of a very extraordinary kind is actually preparing, to be sent through every county in England in order to be signed by such freeholders … as may approve of its contents'.[57]

Before any petition was formally adopted, however, on the last day of the parliamentary session a dinner was held at the Thatched House Tavern, attended by the house of commons members of all the opposition groups, at which it was agreed to take common action during the recess to stir up expressions of public opinion throughout the country in protest against the Middlesex Resolution.[58] All those metropolitan leaders who were also members of parliament were present; the toast of 'the City of London, not forgetting the Livery thereof'[59] was drunk, and though no statement was made about the means to be employed to voice the country's protest, it

[54] Its chief effect was to stimulate a crop of loyal addresses to the crown, organized by the supporters of the administration. They were duly printed in the *London Gazette* from the beginning of Feb. until the end of May 1769.

[55] *London Chronicle*, xxv (15–18 Apr. 1769), 366.

[56] The calling of a common hall was first demanded on 27 Apr. 1769, the day on which the Middlesex petition was passed, but owing to obstruction the petition from London was not presented until 5 July 1769.

[57] *London Chronicle*, xxv (11–13 May 1769), 456. There was a precedent. The petition of the City to the crown against the Cider Tax in 1764 was said in the House to be 'the first instance of a petition to the King against Parliament' (MS. parliamentary diary of James Harris, 16 March 1764).

[58] The dinner was held on 9 May 1769. A list of the 72 members of the opposition in the house of commons present is included in *Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 359–60, n. 1.

[59] *London Chronicle*, xxv (11–13 May 1769), 450.

was obviously generally accepted that petitions to the crown as proposed in Middlesex and London should be pressed on all counties and some of the larger boroughs, and that the leaders of metropolitan opinion and the parliamentary opposition groups should work alongside each other in the campaign.[60] There are even some signs of a definite 'deal' between the two groups of allies. All sections of the parliamentary opposition shared, together with their dislike of Wilkes, a suspicion of the Radicalism of the metropolis. They were, in consequence, anxious to confine the petitions to the issue of the Middlesex election alone.[61] It may therefore be of some significance that a circumstantial account appeared in the press a few days before the Thatched House dinner of a meeting between George Grenville and William Dowdeswell, the leaders of the two main opposition groups in the house of commons, with some persons in the City,[62] to discuss possible modifications in the terms of the Middlesex petition; and it may also be noted that, though the petitions of Middlesex and the City ultimately came out in their original form, those from other parts of the metropolis, which were drawn up later, followed the pattern set by the rest of the country and confined themselves to the Middlesex issue.[63]

The popular leaders of the metropolis had thus succeeded in reaching an agreement with the parliamentary opposition to work for a nationwide expression of public opinion, and had imposed on them their own plan of action – though they may have done so at the cost of narrowing the issues on which the support of the nation was to be sought. In the implementing of the plan they also took an active part. In the county of Surrey[64] as well

[60] There was no formal agreement on the steps to be taken.

[61] The marquess of Rockingham suspected the followers of Grenville and Chatham of a desire to introduce radical matters into the petition. He wrote to Burke about the proposed Buckinghamshire petition expressing gloomy suspicions of the attitude of Lord Temple and his supporters. 'Lord Temple will try to include all the matters mentioned in the City and Livery Petition, he will do it politically as a compliment to them and I even should scarce be surprized [*sic*] if annual or triennial Parliaments were recommended' (Sheffield, FitzWilliam MSS., Rockingham to E. Burke, 17 July 1769). But in fact Temple and Grenville fully accepted the desirability of confining the petition 'to the principal point, and to express themselves upon that with vigour and decency' (FitzWilliam MSS., T. Whately to E. Burke, 23 Aug. 1769).

[62] *London Chronicle*, xxv (4–6 May 1769), 430.

[63] The Westminster petition was, however, the first to call for the dissolution of parliament, a point on which they were later followed by the Yorkshire petition.

[64] See p. 141. An account of the popular activities in Surrey at this time was published by Sir Joseph Mawbey under the title of 'Surriensis' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1788), pp. 1052–3.

as throughout the metropolitan area it was they who made the running; they were also able to exert some influence over the commercial centres with which they were in contact, and individuals among them could help in stimulating opinion in counties further afield. It was reported in August that 'many of them are dispersed in different parts of the country endeavouring to stir up meetings of the freeholders',[65] and Sergeant John Glynn in Cornwall and Exeter,[66] Beckford in Wiltshire and Somerset,[67] John Sawbridge in Kent,[68] and possibly one or two others elsewhere were active and prominent in this work.[69]

These activities mark, however, the extent of what they could do to further the progress of the campaign. The appeal was primarily to the counties, and by the very nature of the case, the chief part in arousing support in the counties had to be taken by the political leaders whom they trusted, and it is significant that almost without exception the influence exerted by individual metropolitan leaders in the counties arose from the fact that they were property owners there. More general efforts to exercise influence from the metropolis over the course of events were unsuccessful. An attempt by the Supporters of the Bill of Rights by circularizing the counties to encourage the setting up of permanent local organizations to correspond

[65] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 35632 fo. 51, John Vernon to the 2nd Lord Hardwicke, 16 Aug. 1769.

[66] He was a freeholder in Cornwall and was recorder of Exeter. At the Cornish meeting of freeholders at Bodmin on 6 Oct. 1769 he spoke for an hour. At Exeter at a meeting at Guildhall in the same month he attended as recorder and made an excellent speech (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 30870 fo. 213, [unsigned], Exeter, 24 Oct. 1769).

[67] Beckford attended the Wiltshire meeting at Devizes on 16 Aug. 1769 with Lord Temple who was visiting him, and spoke. The duke of Grafton considered the petition largely the work of 'our old friends Popham and Beckford' (*Autobiography and Political Correspondence of Augustus Henry, 3rd Duke of Grafton*, ed. W. R. Anson (1898), p. 239). He was unable to attend the meeting at Wells in Oct. to pass the petition from Somerset, but he sent a letter giving 'my sentiments freely and a copy of the chief grievance', which he authorized his correspondent to make public if necessary (Bowood MSS., W. Beckford to Shelburne, 24 Oct. 1769).

[68] In Kent a petition was, after a good deal of difficulty, stirred up despite the opposition of the gentry. John Sawbridge was among those active in furthering it (*Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 365, J. Calcraft to Chatham, 25 Nov. 1769; Walpole, *Memoirs*, iii. 393: 'Sawbridge and Calcraft obtained … a petition from the county of Kent, though all the magistrates shrunk from it, two gentlemen only appearing there and they dissenting').

[69] Horace Walpole reported that Sir Joseph Mawbey and Calcraft, assisted by Sir Robert Bernard, also took the lead in obtaining the Essex petition (Walpole, *Memoirs*, iii. 400) without the support of the gentry.

with, was very coldly received;[70] and the intervention of John Horne, Sir Robert Bernard and others in the borough of Bedford to defeat the mayor favoured by the duke of Bedford,[71] did not (as it was confidently hoped) prove the beginning of a movement of revolt by boroughs against their patrons,[72] and would have been highly unpopular with their parliamentary allies if it had.

When the campaign had once been agreed on, therefore, the Radical forces in the metropolis could hope to play only a minor part in its course. Their influence was further weakened, moreover, by the open suspicion with which they were regarded by at least one section of the parliamentary opposition and by large sections of public opinion throughout the country. While that part of the opposition which followed the lead of Chatham and the Grenvilles were prepared to work amicably with them, this was by no means the case with the party supporting the marquess of Rockingham. The marquess himself for a long time resisted the proposal to promote a petition in his own county of Yorkshire, and did so largely because of his dislike of the metropolis and its motives. 'I *must say*', he wrote, 'that the thing which weighs most against adopting the mode of petitioning the King is, *where* the example was first set'.[73] And the course of the campaign showed that this suspicion was so widely shared by those whose signatures were being sought, that in many parts of the country the support of the metropolis was a hindrance rather than a help in the agitation. William Dowdeswell, the leader of the Rockinghams in the house of commons, lamented from Worcestershire that 'Wilkes's character … and the advantage

[70] The Supporters of the Bill of Rights at a meeting on 31 May agreed to dispatch a circular 'invoking the friends of Liberty throughout the whole British Empire to concur in promoting the Constitutional Purposes for which this Society was established'. Two complementary letters were sent out. Copies, dated 20 July, are reproduced in the *London Chronicle*, xxvii (17–20 Feb. 1770), 174–5. Dowdeswell, who received a copy, decided not to reply (Ann Arbor, Michigan, Clements Library, Dowdeswell MSS., W. Dowdeswell to E. Burke, 10 Aug. 1769). Walpole reported that it received little response (Walpole, *Memoirs*, iii. 372).

[71] For this incident, see *Public Advertiser*, 6 Sept. 1769, *seq*.

[72] A good deal of propaganda was put out in the press to encourage it, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to repeat the operation against the duke of Grafton at Thetford (*Public Advertiser*, 20 Sept. 1769). On 11 Oct. the same paper reported that such was the feeling throughout the corporations of the kingdom that at their annual elections of officers they 'seem determined to make choice of those gentlemen only whose conduct has proved them to be steady friends to their Country' – an obvious piece of propaganda quite unrelated to fact.

[73] FitzWilliam MSS., Rockingham to E. Burke, 1, 3 Sept. 1769.

which he necessarily must receive from the restitution made to the Public of its rights … have checkt this proceeding in most places', and he added 'The injudicious list of grievances, which filled the first petitions [i.e., those of Middlesex and London], still more disinclined the sober part of the People to signing petitions'.[74] While in Surrey the highly respectable Sir Anthony Abdy, battling in vain against the incursion of metropolitan organizers into the county, protested at 'the wild and warm proceedings of Messrs. Home, Bellas etc. and others of the London Tavern, the generality of whose opinions and ideas I cannot agree or subscribe to'.[75]

The campaign as a whole had only a limited success. Only eighteen out of the forty English counties[76] and over a dozen of the larger boroughs[77] finally presented petitions, and these often took months to procure despite strenuous efforts on the part of those promoting them. Whether from suspicion of metropolitan Radicalism or dislike of Wilkes, or for other reasons, there was little sign that the country gentry as a whole were anxious to make a protest even on the limited issue of the Middlesex Resolution. It was probably true that in most counties there were enough of what Rockingham called the 'young men' and 'the warm spirits'[78] to get a petition through a county meeting if they were given a lead by those whom they were accustomed to follow. It was also true that here and there they took the initiative without such a lead, or, as in Yorkshire itself, forced their leaders into action. In consequence in most counties where members of the parliamentary opposition were influential petitions were set on foot. But when it came to circulating the petitions for signature the organizers often found a good deal of unwillingness to sign. 'It is amazing', complained Dowdeswell, 'how in most places people of rank and fortune shrink from this measure; and with what deference all others below them

[74] Dowdeswell MSS., W. Dowdeswell to E. Burke, 5 Sept. 1769.

[75] FitzWilliam MSS., Sir Anthony Abdy to Sir George Colebrooke (copy), 1 July 1769.

[76] Middlesex, Surrey, Devonshire, Cornwall, Wiltshire, Somersetshire, Gloucestershire, Buckinghamshire, Yorkshire, Essex, Worcestershire, Derbyshire, Cumberland, Herefordshire, Kent, Dorset, Northumberland, Durham.

[77] It is not always easy to be certain which of the petitions discussed in the boroughs were actually delivered, particularly in the case of those which came late in the movement, when the arrangements for publicity were uncertain. The following seem, however, certainly to have been presented: Westminster, Southwark, Canterbury, Exeter, Bristol, Liverpool, Berwick-on-Tweed, Worcester, Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Coventry, Wells and Hereford. The official *Gazette*, which so carefully included all the earlier loyal addresses, ignored the petitions completely.

[78] FitzWilliam MSS., Rockingham to E. Burke, 1–3 Sept. 1769.

wait for their leaders'.[79] And if there were unwillingness among the gentry, there was ignorance among the freeholders. There were indeed some signs of independent approval of the movement among the more substantial class of freeholder. John Robinson, suspiciously watching the progress of the Yorkshire petition from the neighbouring county of Westmorland, wrote, 'It gives me concern to find that the Quakers and Dissenters are so infatuated … as to sign and support it'[80] and the notably independent freeholders of Kent, and apparently those of Essex,[81] supported petitions against the wishes of most of the local gentry. But in general the situation seems to have been much as Lord Temple described it in Buckinghamshire where he 'found the freeholders in general totally ignorant of the question, and but very little affected with it'.[82] The duke of Richmond also gave an admirable account of the position in an out-of-the-way county, that of Sussex, when explaining why, despite his personal sympathies, he did not organize a petition there:

> You will naturally say then, well why do not the effects appear? The reason is that from the distant situation of Sussex from London, … from the weight of Government on account of the many dependants which so many Seaports occasion, from many of the leading men being in place or attached to Court; from the long habit in which the Duke of Newcastle had brought the Whigs of approving all the measures of the old Court, the attachment of the Torys [*sic*] to the new Court, and from the natural indolence of men who do not feel the immediate effects of oppression. From all these causes, there was a supineness, that of itself would not stirr, tho' they must and do see that things are not right. I could plainly see that there was discontent enough, if it was encouraged to do the business of a Petition, but I must have stirred it up, and in so doing I should have appear'd factious.[83]

Nor was the response of the boroughs, even the more important ones, much more encouraging. Even in Bristol, though a petition was set going with enthusiasm, it hung fire so much that at one time doubts were felt

[79] Dowdeswell MSS., W. Dowdeswell to E. Burke, 5 Sept. 1769.
[80] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 38206 fo. 149, J. Robinson to C. Jenkinson, 3 Nov. 1769.
[81] See above.
[82] FitzWilliam MSS., E. Burke to Rockingham, 9 Sept. 1769.
[83] Rockingham MSS., Richmond to E. Burke, 2 Sept. 1769.

whether it would ever be presented,[84] and at Liverpool a petition from a body of freemen was immediately offset by a counter-petition from the corporation. In view of the conflicting interests among those sponsoring the petitions, and the evidence of widespread indifference and even dislike of the measure among those who were approached, it is not surprising that the administration, at first alarmed at the prospect of an outburst of public feeling on a nationwide scale, ended by ignoring it altogether, nor that the movement petered out.

With the dying away of the agitations of these years, the bid which the Radical forces of the metropolis had made to enlist the country in their cause was virtually over. Beckford's attempts in 1770 to pledge the leaders of the opposition to his programme of reform were easily evaded and were thus of comparatively little significance,[85] and the Remonstrances of the same year, in the course of which he won his posthumous statue from his fellow citizens, called forth little response outside the metropolis. And with his death and the violent internal dissensions which accompanied the succession of Wilkes to power, the breach between the metropolis and the rest of the country was further widened. When in 1771 the lord mayor, Brass Crosby, was committed to the Tower by the house of commons during the dispute between the City and the House over the printing of the Commons' Debates, the incident aroused in the country as a whole, as Edmund Burke mournfully observed,[86] little general comment or even surprise.

Nevertheless, the events of these years had a real importance in the history of eighteenth-century England. It was not without cause that Christopher Wyvill, leader of the famous Yorkshire Association ten years later, printed as the introduction to his political papers the proceedings in Yorkshire in 1769–70,[87] and in the metropolis itself forces had been set at work which did

[84] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 30870 fo. 190, J. Green (of Wine Street, Bristol) to J. Wilkes, 16 Sept. 1769.

[85] See p. 144 above. Besides the attempt to pledge the opposition leaders into a programme of reform, they also tried to trick Chatham into pledging his support of triennial parliaments (*Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 464, n. 1). He rejected the idea, though on 1 May 1771 he declared himself converted to it.

[86] He wrote to Charles O'Hara, 2 Apr. 1711 (pr. in Hoffman, p. 488): 'The people of the City have habituated themselves to *play* with violent measures. A Mayor of London sent to the Tower in his year of office, would at any other time have been a very dangerous symptom. It is now no indifferent one; but not what it would have been formerly'.

[87] C. Wyvill, *Political Papers, chiefly respecting the Attempt of the County of York and other Considerable Districts, … to effect a Reformation of the Parliament of Great-Britain* (York, n.d.), I, ix, *seq*.

not again die down. Moreover the sketch of a programme of parliamentary reform had been drawn up which was to serve as the basis of the ideas of the majority of reformers for many years to come, and which might also serve as a starting point for more revolutionary proposals. In 1771 when Wilkes and his friends felt obliged to advance proposals for reform they adopted Beckford's propositions en bloc,[88] but five years later, when Wilkes made his speech on reform in the new parliament in which he was permitted to sit, Beckford's 'more equal representation of the people' had developed into the principle 'that every free agent in this kingdom should … be represented in parliament'.[89] And even when Wilkes spoke, Major Cartwright's famous pamphlet *Take Your Choice*, in which he advocated universal suffrage, was being shown round in manuscript in preparation for publication.[90]

[88] The Bill of Rights Society first adopted this programme at a meeting on 11 June 1771 (*Public Advertiser*, 13 June 1771).

[89] *Parliamentary History*, xviii. 1295.

[90] F. D. Cartwright, *The Life and Correspondence of Major Cartwright* (1826), i. 95.

The guns of Kaifêng-Fu: China's development of man's first chemical explosive
Joseph Needham (1979)

Introduction

Janet Hunter

Joseph Needham is most famous for his work *Science and Civilisation in China*, to which he devoted himself from the late nineteen-forties until his death in 1995 at the age of ninety-five. This wide-ranging project, which saw Needham collaborating with both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars, and whose work still continues, has had a major impact not only on studies of China, but more broadly on the history of science and technology. Needham's Creighton Lecture of November 1979 takes its title from a battle against the Chin Tartars in 1126, in which the Chinese made use of 'thunder bombs' and 'fire lances'. The use of these weapons embodied the successful development, over many centuries, of gunpowder. While it was not until the later thirteenth century that the 'true' gun or cannon appeared, using gunpowder as a propellant, Needham argues that the use of gunpowder in a military context was widespread in China by the eleventh century, and the weapons of Kaifêng-Fu represented the existence of the precursors of the metal-barrelled cannon. The development of gunpowder weapons, suggests Needham, was one of the great achievements of medieval China. It symbolized a broader capacity for making significant technological advances that were subsequently transmitted to Europe, where they in many respects revolutionized both economy and society in ways they had failed to do in China. Herein, of course, lies the heart of what we now know as the 'Needham puzzle' or the 'Needham paradox', namely the question of why medieval China failed to progress to an industrial revolution or industrialization despite its technological capability being so much more

J. Hunter, Introduction; and J. Needham, 'The guns of Kaifêng-Fu: China's development of man's first chemical explosive', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 155–78.

advanced than that of Europe. This 1979 lecture therefore has a fresh resonance in the light of recent scholarship in global and world history.

Needham's lecture demonstrates the extraordinary erudition and attention to detail that characterizes all his research into the history of China's science and technology, and at the same time his ability to link the detailed evidence to broader issues of major historical importance. Drawing on numerous written texts and archaeological evidence, the lecture traces the origins of gunpowder use from the ancient Chinese practices of fumigation and steaming for hygienic and insecticidal purposes, and the experimentations with a variety of substances by alchemists keen to enhance longevity and achieve immortality. As such, gunpowder was more than a purely technical invention. Needham disputes the cliché that in China gunpowder was used merely for peaceful purposes such as fireworks, although lack of evidence makes it hard to know how far civilian use was extended beyond fireworks to areas such as mining and infrastructure construction. Whatever the case, though, it is clear that the military use of gunpowder was the outcome of centuries of development, and predated equivalent discoveries in the world of Islam or Christian Europe. The fact that saltpetre was referred to as 'Chinese snow' in Arabic is indicative of the geographical origins of such scientific knowledge, and subsequent gunpowder use in the western half of Eurasia was undoubtedly the consequence of this Chinese knowledge being transmitted across the land mass over a relatively short space of time. This leads to the lecturer's addressing two major historical issues: first, what were the means by which this knowledge was transmitted; and second, what was the impact of that transmitted knowledge on the recipient societies?

In respect of the first of these questions, Needham acknowledges that our understanding of the means of transmission of knowledge across the Eurasian landmass is highly imperfect, but argues for the undoubted importance of human agents in the process. Marco Polo was only the most famous individual to have travelled across Eurasia during the second half of the thirteenth century, the key period for the transmission of knowledge of this technology from China to Europe and the Islamic world. Other possible candidates for communication of tacit knowledge include Franciscan friars visiting the Mongol court, Nestorian Christians educated in Peking and visiting Europe, travelling merchants and even, perhaps, the occasional Chinese craftsman. Significantly, historians have identified the existence of successive 'transmission clusters' in knowledge flows from China, in each of which several important inventions and discoveries came westward

together. For historians of Europe, however, it is Needham's answer to the second question that is of particular importance. In China itself the gradual development of these technologies over many centuries was contained and incorporated into the existing imperial system and its organizations. The basic structures of bureaucratic feudalism remained largely unchanged. By contrast, in medieval Europe, whose society, Needham argues, was far less stable than that of China, gunpowder and its military use had revolutionary effects, bringing about the demise of the structures of military aristocratic feudalism, with its dependence on cavalry and castles. Regimes that had previously been set up by a much earlier Chinese invention, the stirrup, were now destroyed by a new imported technology. Needham's claim that the gunpowder technology embodied Chinese warfare's belief in action at a distance applied not just on the battlefield, but many thousands of miles away.

The guns of Kaifêng-Fu: China's development of man's first chemical explosive*

Joseph Needham (1979)

The development of gunpowder weapons was certainly one of the greatest achievements of the medieval Chinese world. One finds the beginning of it towards the end of the Thang, in the ninth century A.D., when the first reference to the mixing of charcoal, saltpetre (that is, potassium nitrate) and sulphur is found. This occurs in a Taoist book which strongly recommends alchemists not to mix these substances, especially with the addition of arsenic, because some of those who have done so have had the mixture deflagrate, singe their beards and burn down the building in which they were working.

The beginnings of the gunpowder story take us back to those wilder shores of religion and liturgy which involved the 'smoking out' of undesirable things in general. The burning of incense was only part of a much wider complex in Chinese custom, fumigation as such (*hsün*). That this type of procedure, carried on for hygienic and insecticidal reasons, was much older than the Han, appears at once from a *locus classicus* in the *Shih Ching* (Book of Odes), where the annual purification of dwellings is referred to in an ancient song. It says:

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In the tenth month, the crickets
Chirp, chirp beneath our beds.
Chinks are filled up, and rats are smoked out,
Windows that face the north are stopped up
And all the doors are plastered ...
The Changing of the Year requires it ...

This could be dated in the seventh century B.C. or somewhat earlier. It is perhaps the oldest mention of the universal later custom of 'changing the fire' (*kuan huo, huan huo*), a 'new fire' ceremony annually carried out in every home. The medical fumigation of houses, after sealing all the apertures, with *Catalpa* wood, is referred to in the *Kuan Tzu* book not many centuries later, and the *Chou Li*, of archaizing tendency even if a Chhien Han compilation, has several descriptions of officials superintending fumigation with the insecticidal principles of the plants *Illicium* and *Pyrethrum.* From later literature we know that Chinese scholars regularly fumigated their libraries to keep down the depredations of bookworms, a great pest, especially in the centre and south.

Such techniques being so old, it is not perhaps surprising to find that the uses of scalding steam in medical sterilization were appreciated as early as the tenth century. Thus in his *Ko Wu Tshu Than* (Simple Discourses on the Investigation of Things) about 980, Tsan-Ning wrote: 'When there is an epidemic of febrile disease, let the clothes of the sick persons be collected as soon as possible after the onset of the malady and thoroughly steamed; in this way the rest of the family will escape infection.' This would have intrigued Pasteur and Lister.

Not only in peace, moreover, but also in war, the ancient Chinese were great smoke-producers. Toxic smokes and smokescreens generated by pumps and furnaces for siege warfare occur in the military sections of the *Mo Tzu* book (fourth century B.C.), especially as part of the techniques of sapping and mining; for this purpose mustard and other dried vegetable material containing irritant volatile oils was used. There may not be sources much earlier than this, but there are certainly abundant sources later, for all through the centuries these strangely modern, if reprehensible, techniques were elaborated ad infinitum. For example, another device of the same kind, the toxic smoke bombs (*huo chhiu*) of the fifteenth century, recall the numerous detailed formulae given in the *Wu Ching Tsung Yao* of 1044. The sea battles of the twelfth century between the Sung and the Chin Tartars,

as well as the civil wars and rebellions of the time, show many further examples of the use of toxic smokes containing lime and arsenic. Indeed, the earth-shaking invention of gunpowder itself, some time probably in the ninth century, was closely related to these, for it certainly derived, as they did, from incendiary preparations, and its earliest formulae sometimes contained arsenic.

The whole story from beginning to end illustrates a cardinal feature of Chinese technology and science, the belief in action at a distance. In the history of naval warfare, for instance, one can show that the projectile mentality dominated over ramming or boarding, with its close-contact combat. Smokes, perfumes, hallucinogens, incendiaries, flames, and ultimately the use of the propellant force of gunpowder itself, form part of one consistent tendency discernible throughout Chinese culture from the earliest times to the transmission of the bombard, gun and cannon to the rest of the world about 1300.

Next we have to think about the limiting factor of saltpetre, potassium nitrate. Written by an anonymous author probably during the time of Sun Ssu-Mo (in the seventh century or soon after) is an important alchemical text entitled *Chin Shih Pu Wu Chiu Shu Chüeh* (Explanation of the Inventory of Metals and Minerals according to the Numbers Five and Nine). It is particularly interesting because it tells how substances can be identified, and says that their 'quality' must be known before they can be used for making elixirs, besides mentioning the occurrences and properties of some of them. Of special interest are the names of foreign countries, such as Persia, Annam and Udyāna, and the names of outlandish Buddhist monks mentioned in it. The following passage illustrates this:

> Saltpetre (*hsiao shih*).
>
> Originally this was produced in I-chou by the Chiang tribes-people, Wu-tu and Lung-hsi, (but now) that which comes from the Wu-Chhang country (Udyāna) is (also) of good quality. In recent times, during the Lin-Tê reign-period of the Thang, in a chia-tzu year (664), a certain Śaka or Sogdian monk (lit. Brahmin) called Chih Fa-Lin (came to China from central Asia), bringing with him (some sūtras in) the Sanskrit (language) for translation. He asked if he might visit the Wu-thai Shan mountains to study (Buddhist) customs, (and was allowed to do so). When he reached the Ling-shih district in Fên-chou he said: 'This place abounds in saltpetre. Why is it not collected

> and put to use?' At that time this monk was in the company of twelve persons, among whom were Chao Ju-Kuei and Tu Fa-Liang. Together they collected some of the substance and put it to the test, but found it unsuitable (for use) and not comparable to that produced in Wu-Chhang. Later they came to Tsê-chou, where they found a mountain covered with beautiful trees. (The monk) said once again: 'Saltpetre should also occur in this region. I wonder whether it will be as useless as (what we came across) before?' Whereupon together with the Chinese monk Ling-Wu they collected the substance, and found that upon burning it emitted copious purple flames (lit. smoke). The foreign monk said: 'This marvellous substance can produce changes in the Five Metals, and when the various minerals are brought into contact with it they are completely transmuted into liquid form (*chin pien chhêng shui*)'. And the fact that its properties were indeed the same as those of the material from Wu-Chhang was confirmed by testing it several times on different metals. Compared to that from Wu-Chhang this from Tsê-chou was a little softer.

Here we have mention of the potassium flame, and of the use of saltpetre as a flux in smelting. This passage raises several important questions, notably the appearance of close chemical contacts between China and central Asia during the Thang period, and the exact time when potassium nitrate was reliably discovered, identified and used.

If one thing more than any other comes out crystal clear from this and many other accounts, it is that methods for the collection and purification of potassium nitrate were steadily developing during the seven centuries preceding the first knowledge of the salt in Islam or the West, that is, between 500 and 1200; and probably during the last three or four of these, that is, from the late part of the Thang period, it was being turned out on a manufacturing scale by artisans who achieved a fairly constant product but were not able to explain to the scholars exactly how they did so. Why should one then be surprised that formulae for proto-gunpowder began to appear during the last half of the ninth century?

Hsiao shih (which goes back as a name to the fourth century B.C.) is often said to give a bluish-purple flame when put in the fire, a statement which immediately rules out salts of sodium and magnesium. The oldest description of this test comes from about 500, but it could safely be placed a couple of centuries earlier, as far back as Ko Hung. Many alchemical

and pharmaceutical texts from the second century B.C. onwards also say that *hsiao shih* can liquefy ores, acting as a flux, and dissolve minerals to form aqueous solutions. There are also instances where *hsiao shih* is said to produce explosions or deflagrations, and we have of course the gunpowder formulae with *hsiao shih* in them. In such circumstances one can feel fully justified in extrapolating back the results of analyses of modern samples of *hsiao shih* which show it to be saltpetre. Rightly therefore was it called in Arabic *thalj al-Sîn* (Chinese snow) for it was recognized and used in China long before anywhere else.

The oldest extant Arabic mention is in the *Kitāb al-Jāmi fi al-Adwiya al-Mufrada* (Book of the Assembly of Medical Simples) finished by Abū Muhammad al-Mālaqî Ibn al-Baytar about 1240. Others follow shortly after, for example Ibn Abū Usaybia, in his history of medicine, but as he refers back to the otherwise unknown Ibn Bakhtawayhi and his *Kitāb al-Muqaddîmāt* (Book of Introductions), it would be wise to place the first knowledge of saltpetre among the Arabs in the earliest decades of the thirteenth century. On the other hand their understanding of its use in war, especially for gunpowder, belongs to the latest decades of the same century, as we know from the book of al-Hasan al-Rammāh, *Kitāb al-Furūsiya wa'l-Munāsab al-Harbîya* (Treatise on Horsemanship and Stratagems of War), which cannot have been composed before about 1280. The same date, as near as makes no matter, can be accepted for the completion of the *Liber Ignium ad Comburendos Hostes* of Marcus Graecus (whether or not there was ever any such individual person), and by this time both saltpetre and gunpowder, or at least proto-gunpowder, had become acclimatized in the Latin West.

Some discoveries that may have been Sun Ssu-Mo's are embodied in short extracts quoted in other collections. For example, the *Chu Chia Shen Phin Tan Fa* appears to quote him as follows:

> Take of sulphur and saltpetre (*hsiao shih*) 2 oz. each and grind them together, then put them in a silver-melting crucible or a refractory pot (*sha kuan*). Dig a pit in the ground and put the vessel inside it so that its top is level with the ground, and cover it all round with earth. Take three perfect pods of the soap-bean tree, uneaten by insects, and char them so that they keep their shape, then put them into the pot (with the sulphur and saltpetre). After the flames have subsided close the mouth and place three catties (1 lb) of glowing charcoal (on the

> lid); when this has been about one third consumed remove all of it. The substance need not be cool before it is taken out – it has been 'subdued by fire' (*fu huo*) (i.e., chemical changes have taken place giving a new and stable product).

Someone seems to have been engaged here about 650 in an operation designed, as it were, to produce potassium sulphate, and therefore not very exciting, but on the way he stumbled upon the first preparation of a deflagrating (and later explosive) mixture in the history of all civilization. Exciting must have been the word for that.

Chao Nai-An's *Chhien Hung Chia Kêng Chih Pao Chi Chhêng,* whether of 808 or later, is a *florilegium* of alchemical writings in five chapters. It is full of interesting things; it uses an empty hen's egg suitably supported as an aludel or 'chaos vessel' (*hun tun*), it preserves an alchemical *mantram* in an Indian language, and most of its formulae include vegetable ingredients. For this reason it takes its place naturally as another of the earliest known records of a proto-gunpowder mixture, describing, under the heading *Fu huo fan fa* (Method of Subduing Alum (or Vitriol) by Fire), a composition of sulphur, saltpetre and dried aristolochia (*ma tou ling*) as the carbon source. This would have ignited suddenly, bursting into flames, without actually exploding. The exact sequence of these first accounts has yet to be determined, but if Sun Ssu-Mo was really the experimenter of the *Chu Chia Shen Phin Tan Fa* the middle of the seventh century would have seen that first beginning; and it does look like the most archaic procedure, for the carbon source in the shape of the soap-bean pods was doubtless added with far different intention. The *Chen Yuan Miao Tao Yao Lüeh*, with its use of dried honey, is dated plausibly by Fêng Chia-Shêng between the mid eighth century and the end of the ninth. If our present text, which uses another kind of plant material for the carbon, is rightly placed at the beginning of the ninth, it could be the second oldest reference, but if it should turn out to be rather of Wu Tai or early Sung it could belong to the first or second half of the tenth or even the first half of the eleventh. In any case it must surely precede by some time the first regular gunpowder formulae in the military encyclopaedia *Wu Ching Tsung Yao* of 1044. And most probably it will also be older than 919, the first appearance of gunpowder (*huo yao*) in a military context.

The tractate entitled *Chen Yuan Miao Tao Yao Lueh* (Classified Essentials of the Mysterious Tao of the True Origin (of Things)) is attributed to

Chêng Yin (third century). Although the text available to us in the *Tao Tsang* is probably mostly of the eighth or the ninth century, the putative author himself may have been responsible for the older parts of the book. It mentions no fewer than thirty-five different elixir formulae which the writer points out to be wrong or dangerous, though popular in his time. It tells of cases where people died after consuming elixirs prepared from cinnabar, mercury, lead and silver; other cases where people suffered from boils on the head and sores on the back after ingesting cinnabar obtained from heating mercury and sulphur together; and cases of serious illness when people drank 'black lead juice', possibly a hot suspension of graphite. Among the erroneous methods mentioned are the following: (1) boiling the ash obtained from burning mulberry wood and regarding it as *chhiu shih* (urinary hormones); (2) mixing common salt, ammonium chloride and urine, evaporating to dryness and regarding the sublimate from that as *chhien hung* (lit. 'lead and mercury'); (3) digesting nitre (or saltpetre) and quartz (for a long time) in a gourd and using the product as an elixir; (4) boiling nitre (or saltpetre) and blue-green rock-salt (*chhing yen*) in water; (5) making an egg-shaped container of silver to hold cinnabar, mercury and alum; (6) using iron rust and copper as ingredients for an elixir called 'golden flower' (*chin hua*); (7) heating mercury together with malachite and asurite (copper carbonate and basic copper carbonate); (8) heating realgar and orpiment; (9) heating black lead with silver; and (10) burning together dried dung and wax. The book also warns against a very interesting procedure, saying that some of the alchemists had heated sulphur together with realgar, saltpetre and honey, with the result that their hands and faces had been scorched when the mixture deflagrated, and even their houses burnt down. This passage is of outstanding importance because it is one of the first references to an explosive mixture, proto-gunpowder, combining sulphur with nitrate and a source of carbon, in any civilization. The book also gives a test for saltpetre. Exactly how much of all this material goes back to the days of Chêng Yin himself is extremely difficult to determine, but future research may be expected to throw more light on the problem. In the meantime, having regard to the general pattern of development of chemical knowledge and use of explosives, we place the essential passages in the Thang period.

After that things happened rather rapidly. The 'fire rug' or 'fire chemical' (*huo yao*), which is the characteristic term for gunpowder mixtures, occurs as igniter or slow-match in a flamethrower in 919, and by the time we

reach the year 1000 the practice of using gunpowder in simple bombs and grenades was coming into use, especially thrown or lobbed over from trebuchets (*huo phao*).

For example, in the *Ching-Khang Chhuan Hsin Lu* by Li Kang, we hear how he ordered the use of *phi-li-phao* (thunder bombs) by the defenders of Kaifêng against the Chin Tartars in 1126:

> First Tshai Mou gave orders to the soldiers that (even) when the Chin troops came near the city, the catapults should not be used. So those who were in charge of the trebuchets (*phao*) and the crossbow-catapults on frames were very angry and beat him up. I myself then took over the command and ordered them to shoot off all the artillery, as to each gunner might seem good, and those who hit their mark best were well rewarded. At night the *phi-li-phao* were set off, which hit and destroyed many, so that they were all howling with fright.

The first composition formulae for gunpowder appear in print in 1044. This is a good deal earlier than the oldest reference to any gunpowder composition in Europe, 1300, at best 1260. These bombs and grenades of the beginning of the eleventh century did not of course contain a brisant explosive like that which became known in the following two centuries when the proportion of nitrate was raised; they were more like rocket compositions which go off with a 'whoosh' rather than anything which gives a destructive explosion. This is technically known as 'deflagration', and if the source of carbon was material other than charcoal, the term 'proto-gunpowder' could properly be applied to it.

Thence there followed the important transition to the barrel gun. It occurred in the middle of the tenth century, as we know from a silk banner in the Musée Guimet in Paris, one of those found at the Tunhuang cave-temples in Kansu. The scene depicts the temptation of the Buddha by the hosts of Mara, many of whose demons are dressed in military uniforms and carry weapons, all aiming to distract him from his meditation. One of them, wearing a headdress of three serpents, is directing a fire-lance (*huo chhiang*) at the seated figure, holding it with both hands and watching the flames shooting out horizontally. Here immediately we see the importance of the availability of a natural form of tubing, the stem of the bamboo. The fire-lance played a very prominent part in the wars between the Sung and the Jurchen Chin Tartars from 1100 onwards. In a remarkable book by Ch'en Kuei, the *Shou Chêng Lu*, on the defence of a certain city north

of Hankow about 1120, there is described the use of the fire-lance – a tube filled with rocket composition but not allowed to go loose, held instead upon the end of a spear. An adequate supply of these five-minutes flame-throwers, passed on from hand to hand, must have effectively discouraged enemy troops from storming one's city wall.

By about 1230 the proportion of nitrate was raised, and we begin to have descriptions of really destructive explosions in the later campaigns between the Sung and the Yuan Mongols. City gates could be broken in, and walls blown up. Now the technical terms 'explosion' and 'detonation' become applicable, but the powder is still not strictly propellant. Then about 1280 comes the appearance of the metal-barrel bombard, cannon or gun, somewhere in the Old World. In these the full propellant force of the explosive is used to launch a projectile which fills fully the diameter of the mouth or muzzle. There has been great doubt as to where this first occurred, whether among the Arabs with their *madfa'a,* or whether possibly among the Westerners. Between 1280 and 1320 is the key period for the appearance of the metal-barrel cannon. I have no doubt whatever that its real ancestry was the substantial bamboo tube of the Chinese fire-lance.

Indeed the tube could also be of paper – another Chinese invention. By appropriate treatment paper can be made so hard that it was actually used for armour. In the *Chin Shih* (History of the Chin Tartar Dynasty) we read that:

> The method of making (fire-)lances was to take (thick) 'imperial yellow' paper and to make it into a tube (with walls composed of) sixteen layers, about two feet long. It was then filled with (a mixture of) willow charcoal, iron in the form of powder, sulphur, (saltpetre), arsenious oxide (*phi shuang*) and other things. It was tied with cords to the end of the lance. Each soldier carried with him, hanging down (from his belt), a small iron fire-box (of glowing tinder). At the appropriate time he lit (the fuse), and the flames shot forth from the lance more than ten feet. After the composition had burnt out the tube was not damaged. When Kaifêng was being besieged (in 1126), these (fire-lances) were used a great deal, and they still are.

Here then was one of the sorts of 'guns of Kaifêng-fu'.

We must follow this through several further developments of great significance before we can talk about other important inventions connected with gunpowder. To begin with, I should like to point out how easy and

logical was the development of the fire-lance from the flame-thrower (the 'fierce fire oil machine', *mêng huo yu chi*, using 'Greek Fire', that is, naphtha, or distilled light petroleum fractions). First, it turned that petrol-projector into a portable hand-weapon flame-thrower; and second, gunpowder, even though very low in nitrate, had already been used in that force-pump as a slow-match igniter. Hence the transition must have been quite natural. It is interesting to note that Greek Fire itself goes back to a chemist named Callinicus in seventh-century Byzantium, and naphtha was used freely in the wars of the Arabs, while by the tenth century the rulers of the Five Dynasties period in China were often giving presents of it to each other. So much was being passed around that the Chinese must have been distilling it themselves.

The fire-lance (*huo chhiang*) then, was certainly in existence by 950, and was very prominent by 1110. The gunpowder which it contained was emphatically not a high-nitrate brisant explosive mixture, but more like a rocket-composition, as in a 'Roman candle', deflagrating violently and shooting forth powerful flames, not going off suddenly with a mighty bang. These fire-lances lasted in use down to our own time, especially among the Chinese naval and pirate ships of the South China seas. At first they were held manually by the fire-weapon soldiers, but by the time of the Southern Sung they were made of bamboos much larger in diameter, perhaps up to a foot across, and mounted on frames with legs, sometimes even provided with wheels so as to make them moderately mobile. This gave rise to weapons for which we have found it necessary to coin a word – 'eruptors' – since nothing (or almost nothing) like them existed in the West. There are one or two exceptions, for example something of the kind was used by the defenders of Malta in the Turkish siege of 1565. It was called a 'trump' and made a snoring noise as it discharged its flames. We are not quite certain that low-nitrate gunpowder was used in it; if so, in our view, it would betray, together with so many other things, a direct indebtedness to east Asian origins.

Even more remarkable, the Chinese eruptors were so constructed as to shoot out projectiles along with the flames. Once again we need a new word for this, and we have decided to call these objects 'co-viative projectiles'. They could be just bits of old iron, or even broken pottery or glass. This system was quite different, however, from the 'chain-shot' of later Napoleonic Europe, because there the function of the gunpowder was explosively propellant, and the chain-shot took the place of the normal

solid cannonball. The co-viative projectiles of the eruptors of the Sung and Yuan were more like 'case-shot', which Mainwaring in 1644 defined as 'any kind of old iron, stones, musket-bullets or the like, which we put into cases to shoot out of our great ordnance'; but again the difference was that in the older Chinese system the pieces of hard, sharp-edged rubbish were actually mixed with the rocket-composition gunpowder. Other names for case-shot were 'canister-shot', and 'langrel' or 'langrage', but none of these things was co-viative, since that belonged to a much earlier stage of the story. But some of the trumps shot forth co-viative projectiles, which strengthens the derivation from China.

Generally the eruptors were made of bamboo barrels and mounted on carriages, but it was in connection with these that the first metal barrels appeared, cast in bronze or iron, a most important event. One extraordinary fact is that before the end of the eruptor period actual explosive shells were fired forth as co-viative projectiles; this must have been the time of their first invention. But eruptors with co-viative projectiles could also be small enough to be held manually; and by the late thirteenth century and the early fourteenth, when all this was in its prime, co-viative arrow-launchers were also used. The arrows probably did not fly very far, since the gunpowder was not exerting its full propellant force, but for close combat on city walls their effects may have been impressive enough, especially against personnel armoured lightly or not at all.

Lastly there appeared the metal-barrel firearm characterized by two other basic features: (a) the use of high-nitrate gunpowder; and (b) the total occlusion of the muzzle (or front orifice) by a projectile such as a bullet or cannon-ball, so that the gunpowder exerted its full propellant effect. This type of firearm may be described as the 'true' gun or cannon, and if it appeared in early Yuan times, about 1290, as we believe it did, its development had taken just about three and a half centuries since the first of the fire-lance flame-throwers. The 'bombard' as it may now be called, made its first appearance in Europe in 1327, as we know from the famous manuscript of Walter de Milamete in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. We must not imagine a long smooth bore with parallel walls to guide the projectile at this early time; the first bombards of Europe were distinctively vase-shaped, with a rounded belly and a muzzle splayed outwards like the mouth of a blunderbuss. The shooting must therefore have been very 'hit-or-miss', but presumably the charge of gunpowder was rammed down into the bombard, and the ball packed into the narrowest part – then even if they

could not aim accurately at anything it would have been all right against castle walls or city-gates, or the massed troops of men in close order that probably moved about in those times.

Now the interesting thing is that we find Chinese drawings of such bombards, exactly similar in shape to the first European fourteenth-century ones; so the probability is that they originated in China and were copied exactly in the West, where the beginnings of knowledge of gunpowder itself go back only to 1260 or so. This would mean that the purely propellant phase of gunpowder and shot, the culminating stage of all the gunpowder uses, was attained in China with these bottle-shaped bombards just as the first knowledge of gunpowder itself was beginning to reach Europe. And the whole development, from the earliest experiments of Sun Ssu-Mo and his friends onwards, would have taken just on seven centuries – not bad going for the middle ages.

Here it is important to realize that archaeological finds of bronze and iron bombards and cannon in China have revealed more than twenty examples self-dated by inscriptions, all between 1280 and 1380; therefore much older than any yet found in Europe. This straddles the year 1327, and there are many from the last seven decades of that same century.

The bombards with metal barrels were generally mounted on gun-carriages, but it was not long before they were reduced in size to form handguns which could be carried and fired by a single person, hence the line ran straight to the arquebus and the musket. Later on, in the sixteenth century, the Chinese were deeply impressed by the handguns of the Portuguese, which they called *fo-lang-chi* (Frankish devices), but that is another story which we have no time to go into today. They were also much taken with their light swivelling shipboard cannon, or breech-loading culverins, with removable metal cartridge-holders, but again these *niao tsui chi* fall outside the crucial periods we are discussing. Finally, long before that, the bombards and the handguns both were mounted on stands in multiple batteries.

The difficulty of knowing whether the vase-shaped bombards first appeared in China or Europe arises largely from the peculiarities of the literature at both ends of the Old World. The Western chroniclers do not provide very much information until a rather later date, so that the iconographic evidence has particular importance; while in China we are faced with the difficulty that the technical books come at rather widely-spaced intervals, and in several different versions which differ among themselves, and are

not always precisely datable. We have already mentioned the *Wu Ching Tsung Yao* (Compendium of the Most Important Military Techniques) assembled by Tsêng Kung-Liang in 1044. I once found a Ming edition of this in the Liu-li-chang in Peking from which the whole of the gunpowder chapter was missing, so the information at that time was evidently still 'restricted'; eventually I presented it to the Library of Academia Sinica. Then the next landmark was the *Huo Lung Ching* (Fire Drake Manual). This comes in half-a-dozen different parts and versions, associated with a variety of authors' names, some evidently fictitious such as Chuko Liang, others quite likely such as Liu Chi, a learned technical general of the early Yuan time. The bibliography and contents of this work, perhaps the most important of all for the history of gunpowder in Chinese culture, have been brilliantly elucidated of late by Ho Ping-Yü and Wang Ching-Ning in Australia. The various versions of the book can be dated, I believe, between 1280, the end of the Sung, and about 1380, well after the establishment of the Ming. It thus covers the period of the Yuan dynasty and the time when the new emperor-to-be, Chu Yuan-Chang, was conducting his campaign to overthrow the Mongolian dominance, a campaign in which he made use of guns and cannon, especially the new bombards. One of his master-gunners, Chiao Yü, was probably an ancestor of another of the same family, Chiao Hsü, who lived much later in the Ming, and both were associated with the *Huo Lung Ching* tradition. Next we have to turn to the *Wu Pei Chih* (Record of Arsenal Preparations) compiled by Mao Yuan-I in 1621, a very important work, also with abundant illustrations and also extant in several versions, some with slightly different titles. Besides these primary sources, some information about gunpowder weapons can also be found in other technical books, for example the celebrated *Thien Kung Khai Wu* (Exploitation of the Works of Nature), written by Sung Ying-Hsing in 1637. And further information can of course be picked up in the many encyclopaedias of all dates.

Now the curious thing about this literature is that it looks both backwards and forwards. For example, there are insertions which are clearly anachronistic, such as pictures of bombards and culverins in the *Wu Ching Tsung Yao*, without accompanying textual references, and these must have been put in by later editors. Conversely, the *Huo Lung Ching* and the *Wu Pei Chih* illustrate and describe, presumably for the sake of completeness, a large number of gunpowder weapons which were almost certainly obsolete long before their time.

Consequently, in delineating the rise and development of gunpowder weapons we have to do a certain amount of conjectural reconstruction, arranging the different forms in the order most likely to have been that in which they actually appeared, aided now and then by certain dates which the texts themselves vouchsafe. This is the kind of reason which makes it difficult to say with complete certainty that the final bombard stage appeared in China before it appeared in Europe. But it does really look as if the entire line of development, from the first mixing of sulphur, saltpetre and a source of carbon, to the metal-barrel gun and cannon, took place in China first, and passed to Islam and Christendom only afterwards. In any case, the principle of the gun-barrel is unquestionably Chinese, and its origin lay in that natural tubing which had been so convenient for all kinds of scientific and technological purposes, the stem of the bamboo.

You may have felt rather surprised that until now nothing has been said about the rocket. In this day and age, when men and vehicles have landed on the moon, and when the exploration of outer space by means of rocket-propelled craft is opening before mankind, it is hardly necessary to expatiate upon what the Chinese started when they first made rockets fly. After all, it was only necessary to attach the bamboo tube of the fire-lance to an arrow, in the reverse direction, and let it fly free in order to obtain the rocket effect. Exactly when this first 'great reversal' happened has been the debatable question. Twenty years ago, when our contribution to the 'Legacy of China' was written, we thought that rocket arrows were developed first about 1000, in time for the *Wu Ching Tsung Yao.* Unfortunately the lack of an adequate descriptive terminology here is deceptive, because this work gives drawings of *huo chien* (fire-arrows) which look quite like later drawings of rockets; and these in their turn were also called *huo chien.* But as the former were stated to have been launched like spears or javelins by means of an *atlatl* or spear-thrower, it is unlikely that they were rockets, but rather tubes filled with incendiary substances designed for setting on fire the thatch and other roofs of the enemy's city. This is not at all the first time that we have encountered situations where a fundamentally new thing did not generate a new name. That was the case, for example, with hydro-mechanical clockwork. Here the term *huo chien*, used for incendiary arrows, goes back at least as far as the fourth century.

So which came first, the fire-lance or the rocket? The discovery of the Tunhuang banner of about 950 settled the question in one sense. It now seems that we have to look in another direction for the beginnings of the

rocket, and at a considerably later date. Towards the end of the twelfth century, in the Southern Sung, there are descriptions of a firework used in some displays at court, the 'earth rat' or *ti lao shu*, a bamboo tube filled with low-nitrate rocket composition and allowed to rush freely about on the floor. It was capable of frightening people, and we have a record that one of the Sung empresses was 'not amused' thereby. This civilian use would have reminded the wielders of fire-lances of the recoil effect which they must always have had to withstand, whereupon someone tried a fire-lance fitted backwards on an arrow, with the result that it whizzed away into the air towards a target. This would have come about, we suppose, at some time early in the thirteenth century, and rockets were certainly well established as firearms during the Yuan time in the fourteenth. It remains possible that the rocket existed by 1044, but the evidence is not quite conclusive.

Many further developments of great interest occurred during the Ming and Chhing. First of all there were large two-stage rockets, reminiscent of the Apollo spacecraft, where propulsion rockets were ignited in two successive stages, releasing automatically towards the end of the trajectory a swarm of rocket-propelled arrows to harass the enemy's troop concentrations. Rockets were also provided with wings and given a bird-like shape, in early attempts to give some aerodynamic stability to the rocket flight. Then there were multiple rocket-arrow launchers, where one fuse would ignite as many as fifty projectiles; and later these were mounted on wheelbarrows, so that whole batteries could be trundled into action positions like regular artillery later on. It is not generally known that rocket artillery played a considerable part in the military and naval history of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the Western world. The city of Copenhagen was set on fire by rockets from the British Navy during the Napoleonic wars, and rocket troops were prominent in the days of the (so-called) Honourable East India Company contending with princes like Tippoo Sahib. But it was a phase which came and went, for high explosive shells and incendiary shells could be fired from more advanced artillery with much greater accuracy of aim; so that the rocket batteries of the West died out after about 1850. Only in our own time did rocket propulsion come back into its own with the determination of man to leave the earth's atmosphere altogether – the high explosive could do nothing to help that, in spite of Jules Verne's vast cannon pointed upwards at the moon.

Now what of the transmission to the Western world? We can be fairly sure of one thing, namely that it must have occurred at some time during

the second half of the thirteenth century. This was just the period of the massive penetration of eastern Europe by the Mongolian people under Bātū Khan, yet paradoxically they do not seem to have been responsible for the transmission. They valued gunpowder greatly later on, especially in the fighting which put Khubilai Khan on the Chinese throne, but in their earlier phases, when as nomadic mounted archers and consummate horsemen they routed the knightly chivalry of Europe at the Battle of Liegnitz in 1241, firearms had not yet reached the state of development when they would have been useful for cavalry operations. The pistol, carbine or revolver was still far in the future. No, the probabilities lie in rather different directions.

Let us review for a moment the course of events in this turbulent century. The Mongols were on the up and up. First the Khwarizmian lands were annexed. The Jurchen Chin dynasty was overthrown in 1234, and far away to the west, Mangu Khan invaded Armenia in 1236. The following year saw the fall of Russian Ryazan, and the Mongols invaded Poland. In 1241, along with the victory of Liegnitz, there was the siege and taking of Budapest, but also the death of Ogotai Khan, to be succeeded by Mangu ten years later. Around 1253 came the journeys of William de Rubruquis and a number of other Franciscan friars to the Mongolian court at Karakoron; they were diplomatic envoys more than missionaries, commissioned to seek the help of the Mongols against the Muslims, the traditional foes of the Frankish Christians. It was a classic case of that circling strategy by which one seeks to mobilize the forces of allies whose lands lie beyond those of one's immediate enemy. One would give a good deal to know what exactly the Franciscans saw of gunpowder and firearms during their wanderings in Mongolia and China; although such interests consorted ill with their habit, they may have felt it their duty to bring back knowledge and skills which might conserve the safety and power of Christendom against the infidel. Thus the activities of the friars need looking at more closely than hitherto, with this transmission in mind. One of them might even have been accompanied by a Chinese gunner who knew the multifarious devices of the previous half-dozen centuries as well as the latest inventions, and was not averse to seeking his fortune in strange foreign lands – but so far history has not heard of him.

As for the strategy, it succeeded beyond all expectation, apart from the fact that the Mongols did it for themselves and formed no alliances with the Christians. Having subdued Persia, they invaded Iraq beyond the Persian Gulf, and Baghdad fell in 1258. Soon afterwards the Mongolian Ilkhānate,

centred on Iran, was established, and the great astronomical observatory of Marāghah was founded. Then came a second possible medium of transmission, the travels of Rabban Bar Sauma and his friend, the account of which was translated from the Syriac long ago by Wallis Budge. These young men were two Chinese Christian (Nestorian) priests of Uighur stock, born and educated in Peking, who pined to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Neither of them ever got there, but they did travel the whole length of the Old World before one of them returned (1278–90). The friend was unexpectedly elected a bishop, and Catholicos of all the Nestorian churches, when in Tabriz or somewhere in Persia, and his duties therefore detained him there indefinitely. But Bar Sauma travelled on to the West, visited Italy and in 1287 was warmly received at Rome (where no inconvenient doctrinal questions were asked), finally reached Bordeaux (where he celebrated the liturgy in the presence of the king of England) and eventually got all the way back to China. The purpose of this pilgrimage may also have been partly political, possibly to get Western assistance for the Sung against the Mongols, and if so it never had the slightest chance of success; but once again, our shadowy Chinese gunner might have come along with the two priests, and handed on his knowledge to discreet persons in Europe who were capable of receiving it.

Lastly in this century there were not only Franciscan friars and Nestorian priests but also – even more famous – the travelling merchants, of whom the most celebrated was of course Marco Polo, 'Il Milione' (the man who affirmed that there were millions of ships on China's rivers, and millions of bridges in Hangchow – and fundamentally he was not wrong). The crucial date at which Marco Polo eventually left China was 1284. He had served Khubilai Khan (1216–94) for twenty years or so, sometimes on secret service missions, more often in the salt administration, and when he left it was by sea, accompanying a Chinese princess proceeding with a great fleet to wed some Middle Eastern potentate. This might have been an even more appropriate scenario for the Chinese gunner we have in mind, but unfortunately it is a little late, for the gunpowder formula was first given in Europe just about that same time, by Roger Bacon and perhaps by Albertus Magnus, a Franciscan and a Dominican respectively. However, Marco Polo was by no means the only Italian merchant in China during the thirteenth century; there was a whole settlement of European merchants and their wives at Hangchow, to say nothing of the famous French artisan, Guillaume Boucher, serving the Khan at Karakoron. Notes on how to get

to China and back were published by Francesco Pegolotti in his *Practica della Mercatura*. So there are many possibilities, and much may yet emerge from them. By 1355, the time when Chu Yuan-Chang was crowning his successes in China, the moment is far too late, for the Europeans were certainly firing off bombards by 1327. The peak point at which we need to visualize our Chinese *huo shou* as coming West lies rather between 1260 and 1300, that is to say a time at which both the eruptors and the true cannon in China were undergoing rapid development. Further research will doubtless bring us more light.

It may also be fruitful to consider the environment or accompanying circumstances in which the transmission occurred. From all our work we have been enabled to distinguish particular 'transmission clusters', when several important inventions and discoveries came westwards together. For example, there were several which accompanied the transmission of the magnetic compass, the windmill and the axial rudder in the twelfth century; and there were others which went along with the mechanical clock, the blast-furnace for cast iron, the segmental arch bridge and the helicopter top in the fourteenth. It remains to be seen what transmissions exactly we should place with gunpowder in the thirteenth; probably certain forms of textile machinery were among them, but above all there was that deep conviction emanating from China that if men knew more about chemistry untold longevity could be achieved. Roger Bacon (1214–92), the first European to talk like a Taoist, represented this outstandingly – and yet paradoxically he was also the first European to record the gunpowder formula.

Next there is one more point which needs to be raised, a cliché perhaps, an *idée reçue*, a vulgarism, a false impression. The somewhat gloomy aspect of our whole subject is considerably relieved by the reflection that the oldest chemical explosive known to man has been of immeasurable importance not only in war, but also in the arts of peace. Without it, the innumerable products of mining needed by modern civilization could not have been won; without it, the cuttings and tunnels that have been necessary for our lines of communication by river, canal, rail and road could never have been formed. What a pity it was, as Shakespeare wrote, 'that villainous saltpetre should be digg'd' out of the earth, to decimate the ranks of armoured knights and longbowmen in Lincoln green; but he was never able to converse with the engineers of the industrial revolution, who had a totally different conception of the function of explosives, and the high explosives that followed on, as a natural consequence of modern chemistry. We must take, therefore, a more

balanced view of the discovery of explosives, and not be obsessed by their warlike murderous uses.

Now the cliché to which I referred is one still often heard in the rest of the world, namely that although the Chinese discovered gunpowder, they never used it for military weapons but only for fireworks. This is often said with a patronizing undertone, suggesting that the Chinese were just simple-minded; yet it has an aspect of admiration too, stemming from the Chinoiserie period of the eighteenth century, when European thinkers had the impression that China was ruled by a 'benevolent despotism' of sages. And indeed it was quite true that the military were always – at least theoretically – kept subservient in China to the bureaucratic officiate. Like scientists in the England of the Second World War, they were supposed to be 'on tap, but not on top'. So the cliché could have been right, but unfortunately it is not.

If we place the final experiments which led to the correct gunpowder formula (even though low in nitrate) somewhere between 800 and 850 then, as we know, the mixture was already used as a slow-match in the flame-thrower pump by 919, and fully operative in the rocket-composition flame-thrower of 950. For recreational fireworks of course it must have been used too. So far as we are aware, no adequate history of fireworks in China has ever been written, but still it is likely that proto-fireworks flourished at the courts of Sui and Thang, with coloured lights and balls of flame. No doubt rocket-composition gunpowder was employed in these displays as soon as it became available. During the Wu Tai (Five Dynasties) period gunpowder came into its own as a military weapon. No sooner had the Sung dynasty commenced, that is, by about 1000, than the semi-explosive gunpowder was being enclosed in bombs and launched through the air by trebuchets (or mangonels, as they are sometimes called), those early forms of artillery based upon the swape and the sling. Equally there were grenades thrown by hand. But this did not mean that fireworks did not continue, and indeed China became pre-eminent for them, as the Jesuits like J. J. Amiot found when they came to China after 1584. So the two uses, civilian and military, went on together, down to the present day.

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Finally, the question may be raised whether explosives were ever used pre-industrially in traditional China. Here a difficulty arises because of terminology. The practice of 'fire-setting' is ancient in mining and

engineering, that is, the splitting of rocks by heat, after which they are easier to remove. Thus when it is said, as for example in the *Ming Shu*, that a certain governor set *huo kung* technicians to work clearing away rocky projections in order to make some river navigable, it may well be that gunpowder was used, though the technique may also have been only fire-setting. This question needs more careful examination.

There are two important points to be made about this Chinese development of the first chemical explosive known to man. First, it is not to be regarded as a purely technological achievement. Gunpowder was not the invention of artisans, farmers or master-masons; it arose from the systematic if obscure investigations of Taoist alchemists. I say 'systematic' most advisedly, for although in the sixth and eighth centuries they had no theories of modern type to work with, that does not mean that they worked with no theories at all; on the contrary Ho Ping-Yü and I have shown that an elaborate doctrine of categories or affinities had grown up by the Thang, reminiscent in some ways of the sympathies and antipathies of the Alexandrian proto-chemists, but more developed and less animistic. Those first chemists of Hellenistic times, whose writings are preserved in the *Corpus Alchemicorum Graecorum*, though very interested in counterfeiting gold, and in all kinds of chemical and metallurgical transformations, were not as yet in pursuit of a 'philosopher's stone' which would give a medicine of immortality or an 'elixir of life'. There is every reason for believing that the basic ideas of Chinese alchemy, which had been 'longevity-conscious' from the beginning, made their way to the West through the Arabic world. Indeed, one cannot really speak of alchemy in the strict sense before the contribution of the Arabs, and it is even claimed that the word itself, and also other alchemical terms, are derived from Chinese originals.

Many pieces of chemical apparatus from the Han period have come down to us, such as bronze vessels with two re-entrant arms probably used for the sublimation of camphor, vapour rising through the two tubes and condensing in the centre above. Certain forms of distilling apparatus are also typically Chinese, and quite different from those in use in the West. The distillate, condensed by a vessel of cold water above, drips down not into an annular rim peripherally but into a cup or receiver centrally, and flows out through a side-tube. This is an ancestor of apparatus used in modern chemistry. One can easily imagine the Taoist alchemists mixing everything off the shelves in all kinds of permutations and combinations to see what would happen – once saltpetre had been recognized and isolated, as it was

at least since Thao Hung-Ching's time about 500, the inevitable was going to happen. In sum, the first compounding of an explosive mixture arose in the course of a systematic exploration of the chemical and pharmaceutical properties of a great variety of substances, inspired by the hope of attaining longevity or material immortality. The Taoists got something else, but in its way also an immense benefit to humanity.

Second, in the gunpowder epic we have another case of the socially devastating discovery which China could somehow take in her stride but which had revolutionary effects in Europe. For decades, indeed for centuries, from Shakespeare's time onwards, European historians have recognized in the first salvoes of the fourteenth-century bombards the death-knell of the castle, and hence of Western military aristocratic feudalism. It would be tedious to enlarge upon this here. In one single year (1449) the artillery train of the king of France, making a tour of the castles still held by the English in Normandy, battered them down, one after another, at the rate of five a month. Nor were the effects of gunpowder confined to the land; they had profound influence also at sea, for in due time they gave the death-blow to the multi-oared, slave-manned galley of the Mediterranean, which was unable to provide gun-platforms sufficiently stable for naval cannonades and broadsides. Less well known, but meriting passing mention here, is the fact that during the century before the appearance of gunpowder in Europe (that is, the thirteenth) its poliorcetic value had been foreshadowed by another, less lasting development, that of the counter-weighted trebuchet, also most dangerous for even the stoutest castle walls. This was an Arabic improvement of the projectile-throwing device (*phao*) most characteristic of Chinese military art, not the torsion or spring devices of Alexandrian or Byzantine catapults, but the simpler swape-like lever bearing a sling at the end of its longer arm and operated by manned ropes attached to the end of its shorter one.

Here the contrast with China is particularly noteworthy. The basic structure of bureaucratic feudalism remained after five centuries or so of gunpowder weapons – just about the same as it had been before the invention had developed. The birth of chemical warfare had occurred in the Thang but it did not find wide military use before the Wu Tai and Sung, and its real proving-grounds were the wars between the Sung empire, the Chin Tartars and the Mongols, in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. There are plenty of examples of its use by the forces of agrarian rebellions, and it was employed at sea as well as on land, in siege warfare no less than in the

field. But as there was no heavily armoured knightly cavalry in China, nor any aristocratic or manorial feudal castles, the new weapon simply supplemented those which had been in use before, and produced no perceptible effect upon the age-old civil and military bureaucratic apparatus, which each new foreign conqueror had to take over and use in his turn.

Finally, the sting in the tail, which shows once again how unstable Western medieval society was in comparison with that of China, is the foot- or boot-stirrup (*têng*). After many discussions involving the nomadic peoples, the conclusion now is that it was a Chinese invention, for tomb-figures of about 300 clearly show it, and the first textual descriptions come from the following century (477), about which time there are numerous representations, Korean as well as Chinese. Foot-stirrups did not appear in the West (or Byzantium) till the eighth century, but their sociological influence there was quite extraordinary; for it welded the horseman and the horse together, and applied animal-power to shock combat. Such horsemen, equipped with the spear or the heavy lance, and more and more enveloped in metal armour, came in fact to constitute the familiar feudal chivalry of nearly ten European medieval centuries – that same body of knights which the Mongolian mounted archers had overcome, as before mentioned, on the field of Liegnitz. There is no need to stress all that the equipment of the knights had meant for the institution of medieval military aristocratic feudalism. Thus one can conclude that just as Chinese gunpowder helped to shatter this form of society at the end of the period, so Chinese stirrups had originally helped to set it up. But the mandarinate went on its way century after century unperturbed, and even at this very day the ideal of government by a non-hereditary, non-acquisitive, non-aristocratic elite holds sway among the thousand million people of the Chinese culture-area.

The perception of the past in early modern England
Keith Thomas (1983)

Introduction

Ariel Hessayon

Keith Thomas has always been an innovator. When one thinks of his ground-breaking work perhaps the most striking feature is the elegant way in which he illuminates an often hitherto peripheral subject through a dizzying array of sources while at the same time gently guiding his readers towards important conclusions. Moreover, reviewing Thomas's extensive publications in chronological sequence one marvels not only at the magisterial breadth of research interests, but also at his uncanny knack for anticipating scholarly fashion. Examples include an article on 'Women and the Civil War sects' (*Past & Present*, 1958); 'The double standard' (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1959); 'History and anthropology' (*Past & Present*, 1963); 'Work and leisure in pre-industrial England' (*Past & Present*, 1964); 'The tools and the job' (*Times Literary Supplement*, vii, April 1966); the incomparable *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (1971), a work that despite its critics has worn well with time; 'Rule and misrule in the schools of early modern England' (Stenton Lecture, 1976); 'Age and authority in early modern England' (Raleigh Lecture on History, British Academy, 1976); 'The place of laughter in Tudor and Stuart England' (Neale Lecture, University College, London, 1977); 'The puritans and adultery: the Act of 1650 reconsidered', in a Festschrift for Christopher Hill (Oxford, 1978); the wonderful *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (1983), which set the scene for the advent of Green History; 'The meaning of literacy in early

A. Hessayon, Introduction; and K. Thomas, 'The perception of the past in early modern England', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 181–216.

modern England' (Wolfson College Lectures, Oxford, 1986); 'Numeracy in early modern England' (Prothero Lecture, Royal Historical Society, 1987); 'History and literature' (Ernest Hughes Memorial Lecture, 1988); 'Children in early modern England', in a Festschrift for Iona and Peter Opie (Oxford, 1989); 'Cases of conscience in seventeenth-century England', in a Festschrift for Gerald Aylmer (Oxford, 1993); 'Cleanliness and godliness in early modern England', in a Festschrift for Patrick Collinson (Cambridge, 1994); 'Health and morality in early modern England', in an edited collection of essays (1997); an edited anthology of sources for *The Oxford Book of Work* (Oxford, 1999); 'Changing conceptions of national biography: the *Oxford D.N.B.* in historical perspective' (Leslie Stephen Lecture, Cambridge, 2005); and 'Art and iconoclasm in early modern England', in a Festschrift for Nicholas Tyacke (Woodbridge, 2006).[1]

From this it seems that the direction of Thomas's research has been predominantly shaped by two impulses: the impact of contemporary events (feminism; changing attitudes towards sexuality, the family, childhood and the elderly, as well as labour and recreational activities; government education policies; Harold Wilson's 'white heat' of technology and optimism about the use of computers; environmental concerns; fear of deadly, incurable epidemic disease, particularly AIDS) and new theories about human nature and human behaviour (notably developments arising from progress in psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics). Coincidentally, he recently predicted that future innovations in our discipline would spring from these same two sources.[2] In all this an understated radical agenda emerges. For although Thomas never fully embraced Marxism, with its once seductive teleology and overarching categories, he nonetheless successfully broke away from what were traditional, indeed narrow, intellectual preoccupations when he began his career at Oxford: the behemoths of political, diplomatic and military history. Escaping what he considers to be the tyranny of present-mindedness, Thomas's imaginative, not to say sometimes nostalgic, reconstructions of earlier mental worlds and the varieties of lived human experiences have substantially enriched what was

[1] P. Burke, B. Harrison and P. Slack, 'Keith Thomas', and G. Mandelbrote, 'The published writings of Keith Thomas, 1957–98', in *Civil Histories: Essays presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, ed. P. Burke, B. Harrison and P. Slack (Oxford, 2000), pp. 1–30, 359–77; *The Royal Historical Society Bibliography of British and Irish History* <http://www.rhs.ac.uk/bibl/> [accessed 21 Nov. 2008].

[2] K. V. Thomas, 'History revisited', *Times Literary Supplement* (11 Oct. 2006) <http://tls.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,25340-2399024,00.html> [accessed 21 Nov. 2008].

then largely unexplored historical terrain. So much so that his legacy has been like a giant oak tree whose branches spread almost haphazardly, roots delving deeply into fertile soil, evergreen foliage covering the vicinity in its shade.

Yet for all that, there has also been an acknowledged element of serendipity. When combined with what today appears a quaint way of organizing and writing up material – stuffing bits of paper containing handwritten information into thematically arranged envelopes; using ink, typewriter and eventually word processor – the result conveys a sense of traditional scholarly methods. This impression is reinforced when one considers Thomas's habit of initially approaching fresh research topics through random, if gargantuan, browsing that enables him to harvest incidental references. Accumulating evidence piecemeal, with systematic and exhaustive reading following at a later stage, the impetus to fashion talks and articles in particular has come from a number of directions; suggestions from colleagues, contributions to Festschrifts and invitations to deliver prestigious lectures. Modern scholars working to deadlines imposed by the Research Assessment Exercise, publishing more frequently and earlier than they might have wished, can only envy such an unhurried pace of production. But that is a bygone age.

Coming to Thomas's Creighton Trust Lecture on 'The perception of the past in early modern England' twenty-five years to the day after it was delivered before the University of London, the first thing one notices is that his key question remains relevant: should the past be studied for its own sake or in the service of the present? As he expertly demonstrates, the answer would have been straightforward to contemporaries – the past existed to legitimate or subvert present-day reality. Displaying the influence of social anthropology, briefly engaging with Michel Foucault's view of popular memory and Antonio Gramsci's notion of folklore, Thomas weaves together scattered and occasionally obscure sources into a vivid tapestry depicting sixteenth- and seventeenth-century learned and popular mentalities. He shows how a range of manuscripts and printed texts (authentic and forged documents such as charters and deeds, genuine and spurious genealogies, myths of national and civic origin, chronicles, histories, topographies, history plays, ballads, almanacs and chivalric romances) intermingled with collective memory of local legends (noble ladies riding naked through towns, the Danish Yoke, underground passages) and physical evidence (buildings, ruins, earthworks, stone circles, oddly shaped rocks, wells,

place names, coins, weapons, skeletons, funeral monuments, stained glass windows, portraits, clothing and other artefacts), not to mention traditions (common law, religious rituals, calendar customs, Sunday sports, pastimes), to create both underlying tensions and sources of stability within English parliamentary, courtly and county politics as well as urban and rural life. These vestiges of the past, whether actual or fabricated, which had survived by chance or design, were appropriated by politicians, theologians, religious radicals, humanist scholars, antiquarians, playwrights, almanac writers, poets and painters, among others, in vital struggles during and after the Reformation as Catholics and Protestants constructed competing national, institutional, communal and individual identities. For as Thomas observes, the Reformation had created the sense of an 'unbridgeable divide' (p. 197) between the present and the past, a gaping gulf that despite 'cultural and institutional continuity' (p. 199) separated early modern from medieval England.

Since Thomas's lecture our understanding of how the past was perceived in early modern England has been greatly enhanced by the work of Daniel Woolf, whose doctoral dissertation Thomas co-examined. In addition, thanks to Adam Fox's research, we now know a great deal more about oral traditions and the interplay between oral and literate cultures in early modern England. Nonetheless, the outline that Thomas presents here continues to be an excellent introduction to this fascinating and central field. Furthermore, if it is self-evident that the world around us influences the ways in which we approach the past, and the aspects we choose to focus upon in our investigation, then it is equally true, as Thomas concludes, that 'what we write has, willy-nilly, implications for the present' (p. 214). Which is a roundabout way of saying that not only does the present influence the study of the past, but that very study influences the present, or as Thomas Hobbes succinctly put it; 'of our conceptions of the past, we make a future'.

The perception of the past in early modern England*

Keith Thomas (1983)

The very great honour of being invited to give the Creighton Lecture is matched only by the difficulty of choosing an appropriate subject for the occasion. When Mandell Creighton himself was asked to deliver the Romanes Lecture at Oxford in 1896, he found it hard to settle on a topic which, as he put it, would occupy an hour without boring people too much. Eventually he plumped for what he called 'a frivolous subject', 'The English national character',[1] a tempting theme, but one which, as a Welshman, I feel it would be prudent for me to avoid.

One of the reasons for Bishop Creighton's hesitation was that, like many modern historians, he had no particular axe to grind. G. P. Gooch would write of him: 'he had no theories, no philosophy of history, no wish to prove or disprove anything'.[2] Creighton studied the past for its own sake; and many, perhaps most, academic historians would say that that was the right attitude to take. Professor Elton tells us that 'those who would wish to make history acceptable and socially serviceable by directing its thoughts to the present day and the alleged demands of contemporary society

* This lecture was drafted during my time as a visiting fellow at the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra. I am grateful to the director, Professor Ian Donaldson, and to the deputy director, Professor Graeme Clarke, for much kindness.

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[1] L. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton* (5th imprint, 1905), ii. 165–6.

[2] G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the 19th Century* (2nd edn., 1952), p. 349.

unfortunately, with the best of intentions, lead it straight to destruction and damnation'.[3]

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England that would have seemed a very strange position for a historian to adopt. The *only* respectable justification for the study of the past was that it could be of service to the present. The idea of history for history's sake was no more acceptable (or even intelligible) than that of art for art's sake. The case for recalling the past was a practical one. History was a great repository of experience from which useful lessons could be drawn. This assumption united the theologians, who saw in the past the workings of God, the moralists, who valued it for its examples of virtuous conduct, and the 'politic' historians, who looked to it as a source for maxims of statecraft.

Together, these practical expectations account for the great bulk of historical writing published in the early modern period. It is true that, under humanist influence, there was beginning to develop a critical scholarship which showed an embryonic concern with reconstructing the past 'as it really was', rather than just dipping into it for some particular purpose. But most historical and antiquarian study was animated by strong contemporary preoccupations and the notion of detached academic history belonged essentially to the future.

Meanwhile, the selection of those aspects of the past which were to be preserved was largely determined by contemporary needs. The most common reason for invoking the past was to legitimate the prevailing distribution of power. Antiquarians made historical inquiries so as to resolve questions of jurisdiction and precedence. Historians were concerned to instil patriotism, loyalty and acceptable political attitudes. They also provided genealogies and myths of origin for the ruling dynasty, the church, the common law and the aristocracy. To landowners, records of the past were indispensable as a buttress of property rights in the present. When Warden Woodward toured the New College estates in the sixteen-seventies, he used manorial documents from the reign of Richard II.[4]

Of course, many of these invocations of the past were historical fictions. There was a well-developed trade in the forgery of so-called 'old deeds', which could be made more convincing by being smeared on dirty windows

[3] G. R. Elton, 'The historian's social function', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., xxvii (1977), 210.

[4] *Progress Notes of Warden Woodward for the Wiltshire Estates of New College, Oxford, 1659–75*, ed. R. L. Rickard (Wilts. Archaeol. and Natural Hist. Soc., 1957), p. 61.

or carried around for weeks in the forger's pocket;[5] and spurious genealogies were ubiquitous. The fabulous past was present in the royal pedigrees tracing the ruler's descent from Noah or the Trojan Brutus, no less than in the ambitious family trees of Tudor gentlemen like Sir Arthur Heveningham of Norfolk, whose line went back to 'Arphaxad, who was one of the knights that watched Christ's sepulchre'.[6] The University of Cambridge cited 'ancient and credible historians' to prove its foundation by 'one Cantabar, a Spaniard', 375 years before the incarnation of Christ.[7] The moral or aesthetic value of such legends was at least as important as their historical veracity.[8]

Similar traditions were invoked by local communities to justify their civic rights or their common land or their immunity from some particular jurisdiction. Usually, they involved a mythical figure whose heroism had secured lasting benefits for posterity. It was not only Coventry which was indebted to a noble lady. At St. Briavel's in Gloucestershire a countess of Hereford had ridden naked through the town (the only voyeur being struck blind) in order to secure the commons for the people;[9] and at Dunster in Somerset Lady Mohun had obtained as much common land for the people as she could walk round barefoot in one day.[10] At Tilney in Norfolk they could point to the tomb ('of a wondrous antique fashion') of one Hikifricke, who, 'upon a time (no man knows how long since)', had established the boundaries of the great common of Tilney Smeath by leading the neighbouring villagers in a battle against the landlord.[11]

[5] E.g., *The Lady Ivie's Trial*, ed. Sir J. C. Fox (Oxford, 1929), pp. 121–4, 157–8.

[6] A. Hassell Smith, *County and Court* (Oxford, 1974), p. 158. Cf. A. R. Wagner, *English Genealogy* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1972), pp. 358–66; W. H. Greenleaf, 'Filmer's patriarchal history', *Historical Jour.*, ix (1966).

[7] P. Stubbes, *A Motive to Good Workes* (1593), pp. 46–7; T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (1950), pp. 25–6.

[8] Cf. John Rastell's comment on the history of Geoffrey of Monmouth: 'For although that many men suppose it to be a feigned story … yet … in the same story reading a man may see so many notable examples of divers noble princes that wisely and virtuously governed their people, which may be an example to princes now living to use the same' (*The Pastime of People* (1529; 1811 edn.), p. 7).

[9] British Library, Additional MS. 53726 fo. 38; Samuel Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire* (Cirencester, 1779), p. 307 (a slightly different version). Cf. J. C. Lancaster, *Godiva of Coventry* (Coventry, 1967).

[10] H. C. Maxwell Lyte, *Dunster and its Lords, 1066–1881* (1882), p. 19.

[11] John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631), p. 866. In William Dugdale, *The History of Imbanking and Drayning* (1662), p. 244, 'Hikifric' is said to have been not the leader of the villagers but the owner of the disputed ground. It is tempting to connect him with the hero of the popular chapbook, *The History of Thomas Hickathrift*, a giant-killer who gave part of his lands to the poor to be their common.

True or false, these myths functioned in early modern England to provide what the anthropologists call a 'charter' for contemporary claims. They called in the past to ratify the present. In a more subtle, but also more profound, way this was what most written works of history did too. For in their selection of subject matter they implicitly conveyed to their readers a sense of what was important, not just about the past but also about the present. The history offered by the Tudor chroniclers was the story of kings and nobles, wars and dynasties. The subject of the topographies and county histories which proliferated in the seventeenth century was the landed gentry, their seats and estates, their manorial descents, their heraldry, genealogy and monuments. In civic histories the chronology was that of the mayoral year and the election of municipal officers. The virtual exclusion of a large proportion of the population from any of these works paralleled their exclusion from social and political power. In this way the ruling authorities obtained what Sir John Plumb has called 'a secure and usable past'. 'If one controls people's memory', writes Michel Foucault, 'one controls their dynamism'; and he argues that 'it is vital to have possession of this memory, to control it, administer it, tell it what it must contain'.[12]

But in early modern England such a goal was impossible to achieve. Anthropologists suggest that in some oral societies historical myth and contemporary reality neatly fit each other; no tradition will last which is incompatible with the prevailing distribution of power; and if a version of the past no longer serves to provide a modern 'charter' it will either be revised or swallowed up and forgotten.[13] England was not like that. With its written records and printed books, it was incapable of such instant amnesia. The unassimilated, unfunctional past could not be so easily shrugged off. Much of it lay around in physical form. Buildings, ruins and earthworks were there for all to see. Coins, weapons and human bones were turned up by the plough. The names of houses, fields and villages recalled vanished institutions and previous inhabitants. The memory of the past was preserved in calendar rituals, like that of Hock Tuesday, which commemorated Anglo-Saxon resistance to the Danes, and in funeral monuments, like

[12] J. H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past* (1969), p. 41; 'Film and popular memory: an interview with Michel Foucault', *Cahiers du Cinéma* (July–Aug. 1974), pp. 251–2 (trans. in *Radical Philosophy*, xi (1975), 25–6).

[13] See, e.g., *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. J. Goody (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 30–4; M. T. Clanchy, 'Remembering the past and the good old law', *History*, lv (1970), 166–7; D. P. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* (Oxford, 1974), esp. ch. 1.

the royal effigies in Westminster abbey, which in the seventeenth century crowds of people came 'daily to view'.[14]

So much of the past was on permanent display that there was always a risk that some inadvertent survival might prove not supportive but subversive of contemporary claims; and when that happened the authorities had to intervene in an effort to suppress the unacceptable memory. This was why Protestant reformers smashed the images and painted glass which preserved memories of Catholic saints; and it was why Thomas Cromwell rewrote the story of Thomas Becket. In the same spirit, his adviser Sir Richard Morison urged the suppression of the Robin Hood games on May Day, because they encouraged the wrong attitude by depicting the outlaw in the act of rescuing from the sheriff of Nottingham 'one that, for offending the laws, should have suffered execution'.[15] Elizabethan and Jacobean historians were strongly discouraged from penetrating the secrets of state; and censorship of their writings was common.[16]

But the legacy of the past was too ubiquitous for any government to control. Popular perceptions were shaped by a host of competing influences, too complex to be easily manipulated. There were all the published chronicles and abridgements. There were historical plays, which, by Jacobean times, were numerous enough to give illiterate spectators some knowledge of every segment of British history from Brutus to James I, even if the knowledge was not always reliable: in 1683 the city of Norwich agreed to license a puppet show entitled 'Henry the Fourth and Jane Shore', after tactfully pointing out to the showman that 'it should be Edward IV and not Henry'.[17] There were ballads and verse histories: John Aubrey recalled that, when he was a child, his nurse 'had the history from the Conquest down to Charles I in ballad'.[18] There were the almanacs, with their admirably precise chronologies: 907 B.C. 'Boots invented'; 1195 A.D. 'The Bible first divided into chapters'.[19] And there were the chivalric romances, which, in chapbook

[14] Weever, p. 41.

[15] Brit. Libr., Cotton MS., Faustina C II fo. 18; G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 185, 257, n. 1.

[16] See, e.g., F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution* (1962), pp. 38–41; H. Baker, *The Race of Time* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 28–34.

[17] *Extracts from the Court Books of the City of Norwich, 1666–88*, ed. W. Rye (Norfolk and Norwich Archaeol. Soc., 1905), p. 169. Cf. F. E. Schelling, *The English Chronicle Play* (New York, 1902); Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (1612; Shakespeare Soc., 1841), pp. 52–3.

[18] *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. O. Lawson Dick (1950), p. xxix.

[19] Thomas Tegg, *Chronology, or the Historian's Companion* (7th edn., 1831), p. 88; Richard Saunders, *1665: Apollo Anglicanus* (1665), sig. A4.

form, retained a large lower-class readership well into the eighteenth century. These tales of Bevis of Southampton and Guy of Warwick did at least as much as more conventional historical writing to shape popular notions of the past. For, then as now, the distinction between history and the fiction of 'once upon a time' was not easy to comprehend, particularly when the doings of these romantic heroes were located in some specific historical era: Guy of Warwick, for example, flourished (as the chapbook put it) 'in the blessed time when Athelstan wore the crown of the English nation'.[20]

This half-historic, half-mythical past was firmly anchored in popular consciousness by the widespread habit of attaching heroes and events to specific localities. When the antiquary John Leland visited Alcester in the reign of Henry VIII, he found that 'the people there speak much of one S. Cedde, bishop of Lichfield, and of injuries there done to him'; at Lichfield they showed him a stone at the bottom of a well, 'on the which some say that Ced was wont naked to stand on in the water, and pray'.[21] Relatively few of these saints' legends survived the Reformation, but when later antiquarians travelled through England, they encountered hundreds of similar local associations. Some may have been genuine, like the belief of the inhabitants of Chilham, Kent, that Julius Caesar had camped in their village during his second expedition to Britain. Some were at least possible, as in the identification of the place where William I had set up his standard before Hastings.[22] But others were more optimistic. A visitor to seventeenth-century England could, if he wished, see the spot where Edward I had pitched the tent in which he died, the sword which had killed Thomas Becket, the hill where St. George had killed the dragon and the funeral effigies of Pontius Pilate and his wife.[23] At Nottingham he could

[20] *The History of Guy, Earl of Warwick*, in V. E. Neuberg, *The Penny Histories* (1968), p. 82. On the romances, see R. S. Crane, 'The vogue of *Guy of Warwick* from the close of the middle ages to the romantic revival', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, xxx (1915); R. S. Crane, *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance during the English Renaissance* (Menasha, Wis., 1919); M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (1981), ch. 9.

[21] *The Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith (1964 edn.), ii. 51, 99.

[22] *Camden's Britannia*, ed. Edmund Gibson (1695), p. 197; Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through England and Wales* (Everyman's Library, 1928), i. 125.

[23] Defoe, *Tour*, ii. 277; John Denton, *An Accompt of the most considerable Estates and Families in the County of Cumberland*, ed. R. S. Ferguson (Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeol. Soc., tract ser., ii, 1887), p. 68; *The Travels of Dr. Richard Pococke*, ed. J. J. Cartwright (Camden Soc., 1888–9), ii. 249; *The Torrington Diaries*, ed. C. Bruyn Andrews (1934; repr. 1970), iii. 206–7.

contemplate Robin Hood's well, his chair, his bow and his cap; at Guy's Cliffe he could inspect the cave in which Guy of Warwick used to sleep and in Warwick castle he could gape at his sword, his armour and a rib of the monstrous boar he slew.[24]

The past was also invoked to explain peculiarities in the local landscape. Ancient stone circles were said to be armies or wedding guests turned into stone.[25] Cromlechs and barrows were the graves of ancient princes or tombs of men slain in great battles, usually against the Danes.[26] Curiously shaped rocks were the work of giants[27] or the Devil (whose impact on the English landscape was considerable)[28] or of King Arthur, to whom, wrote William Camden, 'the common sort ascribe whatsoever is ancient and strange'. Arthur already had his 'chair', his 'oven', his 'palace' and his 'well'. Sir Gawain's skull was preserved in Dover castle; the Round Table was at Winchester; and in Cornwall was the place where Arthur had fought his last battle, 'in token whereof', reported Leland, 'the people find there, in ploughing, bones and harness'.[29]

The past was thus ever-present in the minds of the common people. They showed visitors the sites of famous battles.[30] They had traditions about the origins of particular settlements[31] and they offered ingenious explanations of how they had acquired their names: 'our vulgar are whimsical in nothing more than etymologies of places', thought Edward Lhwyd.[32] Traditions about the past which validated contemporary claims were jealously cherished.

[24] Charles Deering, *Nottingham Vetus et Nova* (Nottingham, 1751), p. 73; J. C. Holt, *Robin Hood* (1982), pp. 106–8, 176–8; Crane, 'The vogue of *Guy of Warwick*', pp. 135–6, 168–9.

[25] John Aubrey, *Monumenta Britannica*, ed. R. Legg and others (Sherborne, 1980), pp. 47, 66; *Camden's Britannia*, ed. Gibson, pp. 254, 269.

[26] Aubrey, *Monumenta*, pp. 83, 238, 259, 794; Thomas Gerard, *The Particular Description of the County of Somerset*, ed. E. H. Bates (Somerset Record Soc., 1900), p. 85; W. Johnson, *Folk-Memory or the Continuity of British Archaeology* (Oxford, 1908), p. 87.

[27] Aubrey, *Monumenta*, pp. 68, 386, 388, 810, 1024, 1036.

[28] Johnson, pp. 70–1, 74; Aubrey, *Monumenta*, pp. 272, 924.

[29] *Camden's Britannia*, ed. Gibson, pp. 545n.–546n.; Browne Willis, *A Survey of the Cathedral Church of St. David's* (1717), pp. 65–6; E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* (1927; repr. 1964), pp. 183–95; *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. E. Vinaver (1954), p. xvi; *Itinerary of John Leland*, i. 316.

[30] Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Stafford-Shire* (Oxford, 1686), p. 449; Defoe, *Tour*, ii. 88; William Burton, *The Description of Leicester Shire* (1622), p. 47; Nathaniel Salmon, *The History of Hertfordshire* (1728), p. 56.

[31] E.g., *Itinerary of John Leland*, ii. 21; Gerard, p. 115; Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Oxford-Shire* (Oxford, 1677), pp. 352–3.

[32] R. T. Gunther, *Early Science in Oxford*, xiv (Oxford, 1945), 465.

When Leland visited Scarborough it was 'an old mariner' who explained to him that Henry I had granted the town its privileges; and in the New Forest in the eighteenth century there was still a family occupying the ground which they claimed had been given as a reward to their ancestor, a charcoal-burner, who had picked up William Rufus's body and piously carried it in his cart for burial in Winchester.[33] Early modern England was, therefore, not at all like fourteenth-century Montaillou, where the mental world of the French villagers, we are told, had virtually no historical dimension at all.[34]

Yet though there was a historical side to popular thinking, it did not necessarily coincide with the perceptions of the learned. The popular perception of the past was much less sequential or chronological. Episodes from different periods were not ranged in temporal order; they seem to have existed alongside each other in a single conflated past; and it was only the literary influences of the Bible, the chronicles and the almanacs which gradually helped to inculcate a more linear mode of thought.[35]

Moreover, though popular memory was as selective as that of the educated, its principles of selection were not the same. Ordinary people could be indifferent to aspects of the past which their betters regarded as important. 'Where is the folk ballad of Magna Carta?' asks the historian of the folk song, 'Or of Agincourt, for the matter of that?'[36] The historical records cherished by the well-to-do might be precisely those which the lower classes were content to do without. In one Staffordshire village the Elizabethan inhabitants deliberately defaced a church monument to the Beke family because it preserved details of the labour services due from the tenants of their lands.[37] During the Interregnum some radicals suggested that the manorial records which the gentry hoarded so diligently should be destroyed as instruments of tyranny. 'Thou shalt see a cartload of skins, being records', cried a sectary; 'Prophesy against them: say they shall bear record no longer'.[38]

[33] *Itinerary of John Leland*, i. 60; William Camden, *Britannia*, ed. R. Gough (2nd edn., 1806), i. 186; J. R. Wise, *The New Forest: its History and its Scenery* (1863), p. 97.

[34] E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village Occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris, 1975), pp. 426–7, 430.

[35] Cf. the remarks of Paul Rousset in *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge dediées à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris, 1951), pp. 630–1; and M. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England* (1954), p. 77.

[36] A. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (1967; 1975 edn.), p. 137.

[37] Sampson Erdeswicke, *A Survey of Staffordshire* (1717), p. 192.

[38] Nicholas Smith, *A Warning to the World* (1653), p. 4. Cf. Hugh Peter, *Good Work for a Good Magistrate* (1651), p. 33 ('it is very advisable to burn all the old records; yea, even those in the Tower, the monuments of tyranny').

In recent times some European historians have been attracted by the Italian Marxist Gramsci's conceptions of 'folklore' as a body of popular belief which is formed, at least implicitly, in opposition to official views of the past;[39] and it is tempting to suppose that the traditions of the common people embodied a subversive memory of their struggles against their superiors. There are elements in the popular view of the past in this period which might support such a view; the idea that the people's liberties had been lost under the Norman Yoke, for example[40] (though it is hard to find any popular, as opposed to learned, hostility to the Conquest and its legacy before the sixteen-forties; and the evidence of local tradition suggests that it was less the Norman Yoke than the Danish Yoke which was most vivid in the popular mind).[41] There were subversive tales about outlaws: not just Robin Hood, but all his analogues and parallels, like 'wild' Humphry Kynaston of Myddle in Shropshire, who defied the under-sheriff and his posse by making a great leap on his horse over the Severn and about whom the people told 'many romantic stories', or the giant Jack of Legs, whose grave could be seen in Weston, Hertfordshire, and who, 'as fame goes ... was a great robber but a generous one, for he plundered the rich to feed the poor'.[42] In highly exceptional circumstances there could even be an explicit rejection of the whole tradition of official historiography. At the Putney Debates in 1647 the Leveller John Wildman declared that 'whereas it's spoken much of chronicles, I conceive there is no credit to be given to any of them; and the reason is because those that were our lords, and made us their vassals, would suffer nothing else to be chronicled'.[43]

Yet though the people's perception of the past was often different from that of their superiors, it was not necessarily antagonistic. Nor was it formed independently of other influences. Indeed there are two distinct reasons for hesitating to accept popular folklore as the expression of an autonomous lower-class view of the past. The first is that the extent of popular 'belief' in these traditions is easy to exaggerate. As Edmund Gibson observed, when discussing the habit of labelling stones as King Arthur's 'table' or 'chairs', these nicknames were not given 'so much (as some have imagined) out of

[39] A. Gramsci, 'Osservazioni sul Folclore', *Opere di Antonio Gramsci*, vi (Torino, 1950), 215.

[40] C. Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in his *Puritanism and Revolution* (1958).

[41] See app. A.

[42] R. Gough, *Antiquities and Memoirs of the Parish of Myddle* (Shrewsbury, 1875), pp. 28–9; Salmon, p. 184.

[43] *The Clarke Papers*, ed. C. H. Firth (Camden Soc., 1891–1901), i. 318.

ignorance and credulity', but 'as a kind of rustic diversion'.[44] Many stories about the past survived because they were colourful, humorous, intrinsically memorable. It would be naïve to attribute their longevity solely to their 'sheer entertainment value' or to 'popular love of a good story', for there is no such thing as 'sheer entertainment value', unrelated to the audience's own hopes and fears; and it would be right to enquire why particular stories should have evoked so strong a response. Nevertheless, there is a half-flippant quality about some of these rural traditions which should restrain us from treating them portentously.[45]

The second reason for caution is that a large proportion, perhaps the overwhelming majority, of popular beliefs about the past had literary origins. They were not the pure water of oral tradition, springing unpolluted from the font of popular memory. Rather, they had been distilled by a long interaction between popular and learned culture. 'Local tradition', remarked W. H. Stevenson sardonically, is usually the false identification of a local antiquary impressed upon the minds of the inhabitants. Or, as Sir Edmund Chambers wrote more mildly, 'folk belief on the one hand, literary and antiquarian ideas on the other, interpenetrate'.[46] Some of the topographical associations with King Arthur date back to the ninth century and beyond, but the great majority are subsequent, often long subsequent, to the twelfth-century history of Geoffrey of Monmouth. The 'memories' of St. Chad which Leland encountered at Lichfield are unlikely to have dated from the seventh century. They are much more likely to have been propagated by the zealous clergy who were the custodians of his profitable shrine and had read accounts of the saint's life. Many medieval churches disseminated hagiographic legends by incorporating them in the noticeboards displayed for the benefit of visitors.[47]

Notions which had originated with, or at least been preserved by, literate authors could thus become the property of the common people, and could be sustained or transmuted by them when they had been discarded by the educated. Tudor and Stuart antiquarians became increasingly self-conscious about the distinction between history and myth. Hostile to romances ('the

[44] *Camden's Britannia*, ed. Gibson, pp. 628–9.

[45] On the problem of 'belief' in folk-tales, cf. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Zande Trickster* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 24–5.

[46] *Asser's Life of King of Alfred*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904; 1959 edn.), p. 237. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, p. 194. Cf. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition*, pp. 97–103.

[47] A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* (1974–82), ii, app. E (*Tabulae*).

bastard sort of histories', as one writer called them),[48] they specialized in debunking stories of Brutus or Arthur or Godiva; and in their readiness to denounce so-called 'vulgar errors' they did not always recognize their literary origins. Edmund Gibson dismissed Welsh mythology about drowned cities as 'one of those erroneous traditions of the vulgar', but the most recent student of this mythology concludes that it owed more to learned authors than to popular memory.[49] In 1715 Ralph Thoresby lamented the 'brutish ignorance' of some Yorkshire labourers who had destroyed a recently unearthed Roman statue in the hope of finding treasure; but the original source for the view that the Romans had buried their treasure before leaving Britain was the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.[50]

Of course, the debris of literate culture could be reconstituted by the uneducated into an authentically 'popular' view of the past. But we should realize that such a view did not arise primarily out of oral tradition. All the evidence of other societies suggests that, without written records, memories will be short and very selective. People remember their fathers, but their grandfathers are hazier; and after that things are soon forgotten, though there may well be founding myths about the remote origins of society.[51] We find the same in early modern England. There were the mythical founders of cities and families and there were the aboriginal giants who had hurled stones around the landscape and whose bones were occasionally still dug up.[52] Biblical history had left its mark in the fossils, salt springs and marl pits which were popularly thought to be the result of Noah's Flood.[53] But the interval between remote antiquity and the present day was much more

[48] Mathias Prideaux, *An Easy and Compendious Introduction for Reading all Sorts of Histories* (Oxford, 1645), p. 343.

[49] *Camden's Britannia*, ed. Gibson, p. 591; F. J. North, *Sunken Cities* (Cardiff, 1957), pp. 87, 14.

[50] Ralph Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis* (1715), p. 159; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. G. M. Garmonsway (Everyman's Library, 1953), pp. 10–11 (*s.a.* 418).

[51] See, e.g., C. Waterton, *Wanderings in South America* (Everyman's Library, n.d.), p. 148; R. Redfield and A. Villa Rojas, *Chan Kom: a Maya Village* (Chicago, Ill., 1934), p. 12; A. Irving Hallowell, 'Temporary orientation in Western civilization and in a preliterate society', *American Anthropologist*, xxxix (1937), 666–7; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford, 1940), pp. 105, 108; Clanchy, p. 167.

[52] Aubrey, *Monumenta*, p. 116; *The Berkeley Manuscripts*, ed. Sir J. Maclean (Gloucester, 1883–5), iii. 193.

[53] T. Habington, *A Survey of Worcestershire*, ed. J. Amphlett (Worcs. Historical Soc., 1893–9), p. 466; Charles Leigh, *The Natural History of Lancashire, Cheshire, and the Peak* (Oxford, 1700), i. 59; G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, ed. H. Owen (Cymmrodorion Record Ser., 1892–1936), pp. 71–2.

perfunctorily sketched. Many genealogies leaped quickly from mythical ancestor to modern times; as one antiquary put it, they were like head and feet without a body, two ends without a middle.[54]

This shallowness of oral tradition did not, however, prevent the emergence of some conception of what the relatively recent past had been like. On the contrary, it made the construction of such a notion all the easier by giving abundant scope to the imagination. The dramatic rupture with the medieval past occasioned by the Reformation created a sense of separateness and of an unbridgeable divide. This made it possible to perceive the recent past, not just as a collection of founding myths and precedents, but as the embodiment of an alternative way of life and set of values. The thought of the early modern period is well known to have been deeply affected by quasi-historical perceptions of ancient Israel and classical Rome. It was equally affected by a perception of medieval England.

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Early modern England had not one myth of the middle ages, but two; and they were sharply opposed to each other. One was supportive of the social order, the other potentially subversive. The opposition was not between learned and popular. It was between competing ideas among the learned themselves. Long afterwards, the essence of these conflicting views was admirably expressed in one of the brisk dialogues in Thomas Love Peacock's novel *Crotchet Castle* (1831). For one of the participants, the romantic Mr. Chainmail, the middle ages meant fighting, feasting, praying, chivalry, courtly love and charity. For the other, the pounds-shillings-and-pence philosopher Mr. MacQuedy, they were a dreadful period of brutality and violence, barbarous poetry, lazy monks and immoral friars.

In the century following the establishment of the Tudor dynasty and the breach with Rome, the official view was close to that of Mr. MacQuedy. The times of popery, explained a Jacobean preacher, were 'full of wars, bloodshed, massacres, treasons, rebellions, robberies ... Wicked and monstrous were those days'.[55] Protestants and humanists made a self-conscious breach with the immediate past. The Reformers claimed to return to the traditions of the primitive church, strenuously disowning those of its medieval successor. The humanists preferred classical antiquity to the

[54] Habington, i. 192.

[55] Thomas Granger, *A Familiar Exposition or Commentarie on Ecclesiastes* (1621), p. 171.

degenerate Latin and credulous writings of the monastic era. Together, they portrayed the high middle ages as a period of ignorance and superstition, evoking it with appropriate meteorological metaphors: 'thick mist', 'gross darkness', a 'cloud of ignorance'. 'In the time of Popery',' wrote an Elizabethan, 'they made darkness and ignorance two of their pillars. They fed the people with scum and dross'.[56] Literary critics disparaged the medieval romances for their barbarous rhymes, their inherent improbability and their unacceptable values: in the *Morte d'Arthur*, thought Roger Ascham, 'those be accounted the noblest knights that do kill most men without any quarrel and commit foulest adulteries by subtlest shifts'.[57] Chivalric romances, ancient prophecies, tales of goblins and fairies were dismissed as part of one great clerical conspiracy 'to busy the minds of the vulgar sort ... and to avert their conceits from the consideration of serious, and graver matters ... lest they might otherwise ... intend ... matters of state or religion ... which they kept secret and covert, as mystical privities ... to be handled and disposed by the clergy'.[58]

At the centre of this conspiracy were the monks – idle, gluttonous, lecherous. The monks had been so lazy, it was said, that it was proverbial to call idle people 'abbey-lubbers' and 'fat men were said to have abbots' faces'.[59] The restraints of an unnatural celibacy had been so ineffective that the bones of thousands of dead infants had been found in the monastic fishponds.[60] The monastic orders would later achieve a central role in English pornography. When Willian Prynne sat next to Samuel Pepys at a dinner, he talked of the records he had found of 'the lust and wicked lives of the nuns heretofore in England', pulling an example out of his pocket to show him.[61]

[56] Peter Barker, *A Iudicious and Painefull Exposition upon the Ten Commandements* (1624), p. 85; W. Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–47* (Mass. Hist. Soc., 1912), i. 3; Sir Francis Hastings, *A Watch-Word to all Religious, and True Hearted English-Men* (1598), p. 9; William Worsnop, *A Discoverie of Sundrie Errours* (1582), sigs. E3^{v}–4.

[57] *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. G. Smith (1904), i. 3–4, 239–40, 323; ii. 12–16.

[58] I[ohn] H[arvey], *A Discoursive Probleme concerning Prophesies* (1588), pp. 68–9.

[59] *The Works of James Pilkington*, ed. J. Scholefield (Parker Soc., Cambridge, 1842), p. 610; [Francis Trigge], *An Apologie, or Defence of our Dayes* (1589), p. 9.

[60] I. R[hodes], *An Answere to a Romish Rime lately printed* (1602), sig. D4; James Hart, Κλινικη, *or the Diet of the Diseased* (1633), p. 330; John Favour, *Antiquitie triumphing over Noveltie* (1619), p. 541; [John White], *The First Century of Scandalous, Malignant Priests* (1643), sig. A4v.

[61] *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. R. Latham and W. Matthews (1970–83), iii. 93. Cf. R. Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears* (1979), ch. 8.

In Protestant tradition, the middle ages became a time of darkness and mystery, ghosts and fairies, secret tunnels and alchemical elixirs. When Francis Kilvert was a Wiltshire curate in the eighteen-seventies, he found that the old people told strange tales of ancient times, declaring that the past was full of 'witches, weasels [wizards] and wolves'. This view of the middle ages as strange and occult did not originate with the Romantic period or with eighteenth-century tales of gothic horror. It went back to the century after the Reformation, when Protestant theologians claimed that the medieval church's doctrine of purgatory had fostered belief in ghosts, just as its exorcisms had encouraged stories of elves and fairies.[62] By the nineteenth century there was scarcely a village in England without its tale of an underground passage supposedly linking the church or manor house with a deserted chapel or monastic ruin. Such legends date from the sixteenth century and the notion of the monastic era as a time of illicit intrigue.[63]

The cultural and institutional continuity between Tudor England and the medieval past was, of course, too great to permit such a caricature to go unchallenged. The universities retained the scholastic syllabus, just as the lawyers looked to the judgements of their medieval predecessors. Literary advocates of the vernacular praised the work of Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate, thus helping to establish the canon of medieval English literature.[64] The Elizabethan reading public devoured medieval romances, while the courtiers of the Virgin Queen practised a romantic chivalry of jousts and tournaments, masquerading as Arthurian knights and defending mock castles in cardboard pageants.[65] Edward III and the Black Prince were accepted models of valour and military prowess; and in 1582 the privy council commanded that a highly nationalistic Latin verse account of English military exploits in the later middle ages be studied in all grammar schools.[66] The poetry of Daniel and Drayton represented the recent past as a time of heroic deeds and national glory:

[62] *Kilvert's Diary*, ed. W. Plomer (new edn., 1960), iii. 154; K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971), pp. 269, 391, 589–90, 607, 610.

[63] See app. B.

[64] R. Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language* (Stanford, Calif., 1953), pp. 83–4, 118, 171, 178n.; Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, i. 240–2; J. A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and their Work* (Oxford, 1982), ch. 5.

[65] M. Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (1983), pp. 210–17.

[66] *Acts of the Privy Council*, new ser., xiii (1581–2), pp. 389–90. The book was Christopher Ocland, *Anglorum Praelia* (1580), later translated by I.S. as *The Valiant Actes and Victorious Battailes of the English Nation* (1585). Cf. D. H. Horne, *The Life and Minor Works of George Peele* (New Haven, Conn., 1952), pp. 250–1; and Charles Allen, *The Battailes of Crescey, and Poictiers* (1631).

O when shall English men
With such acts fill a pen,
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry?

The parvenu gentry of late Tudor England happily identified with a feudal past, building sham castles and commissioning monuments to their medieval ancestors.[67]

This sentimental appeal to the medieval past was harmless enough, reinforcing as it did the nationalist aspirations and social authority of the Elizabethan aristocracy. But a much less comfortable view was developed by those who had lost out at the Reformation, the Catholics. Like other losers, they chose to romanticize the past in order to attack the present. Catholic propagandists noted that the breach with Rome had been followed by heavy taxation, a huge rise in prices and a general worsening in the position of the peasantry; and they contrasted these developments with what they called 'those happy days past', 'the late better times'.[68] They confidently blamed Protestantism for the difference. The abolition of fast days, they suggested, had put up the price of meat.[69] The end of the confessional had sapped moral standards, unleashed avarice and precipitated a torrent of litigation.[70] The abandoning of the doctrine of purgatory had ended good works of charity.[71] The marriage of the clergy meant that ministers could no longer afford to dispense hospitality, 'as in times past was accustomed'; it also threatened to multiply the population to an intolerable level: one Elizabethan propagandist calculated that if clerical marriage were to

[67] J. G. Mann, 'Instances of antiquarian feeling in medieval and Renaissance art', *Archaeol. Jour.*, lxxxix (1932); E. Mercer, *English Art, 1553–1625* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 4–5, 87–8; J. Mordaunt Crook, 'Introduction' to C. L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival* (2nd edn., Leicester, 1978), pp. 27–8; Girouard, pp. 219–32.

[68] William Allen, *A Defence and Declaration of the Catholike Churchie's Doctrine touching Purgatory* (Antwerp, 1565), fos. 168^{v}, 169^{v}. Cf. John Christoferson, *An Exhortation* (1554), sig. Aa iij^{r-v}; *Pole's Defense of the Unity of the Church*, trans. J. G. Dwyer (Westminster, Md., 1965), p. 202; N. Sander, *Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, trans. D. Lewis (1877), i. 156–8.

[69] Epistle by the translator ('G.T.' [Robert Persons?]), 'to the Honorable Lordes of Her Majesties Preevie Councell', pp. 13–15, in [Robert Persons], *An Epistle of the Persecution of Catholics in Englande* (Douay, [1582]); [Richard Broughton], *An Apologicall Epistle* (Antwerp, 1601), pp. 92–4; *Tudor Treatises*, ed. A. G. Dickens (Yorks. Archaeol. Soc., 1959), p. 134.

[70] Epistle by G.T., pp. 25–7, in [Persons], *Epistle of the Persecution of Catholics*; [Broughton], *Apologicall Epistle*, p. 122; Thomas, pp. 155–6.

[71] Allen, *Defence and Declaration of … Purgatory*, fo. 158.

continue for the next 400 years, the population of England would reach the grand total of 603,550,000.[72]

Above all, the Catholics portrayed the Dissolution of the monasteries as a major catastrophe. It had flooded the labour market with unemployed persons. It had installed a new set of avaricious landlords, whose methods contrasted sadly with the lenient rule of the monks; and it had cut off charity to the poor.[73] The papist Nicholas Harpsfield, languishing in the Tower, offered a simple diagnosis of Elizabethan economic problems: 'Whereby is it come to pass that where before there dwelt many a good yeoman … there is nobody now dwelling but a shepherd with his dog, but by the suppression of the abbeys? Whereby is it that … now sheep eat up houses, whole towns, yea, men and all, but by the suppression of the abbeys?' Across the channel, the Jesuit Robert Persons took up the refrain: 'Our religion prohibiteth landlords to raise their rents or any other way to press their tenants … Our good forefathers in times past, and especially all religious men, used to let their lands at a reasonable rate.'[74]

Implicit in these writings was a picture of the medieval past as an idyllic time of charity, hospitality and prosperity: 'it was a good world when Mass was up, for then all things were cheap.'[75]

Just how cheap was a matter of dispute. Harpsfield thought that before the Dissolution eggs were 'at twelve or more a penny', whereas some of his co-religionists allegedly claimed that in those days 'bread was bigger, ale was stronger, beef more plentiful ... twenty-four eggs for a penny'. The ballad-maker Deloney has 'Ignorance' asserting:

> before the Vriars went hence,
> A bushel of the best wheat
> was zold for vourteen pence:
> And vorty eggs a penny.

In modern times the painstaking researches of Thorold Rogers would reveal that the correct figure was twenty for a penny.[76]

[72] Epistle by G.T., pp. 16–17, in [Persons], *Epistle of the Persecution of Catholics*; [Broughton], *Apologicall Epistle*, p. 91.

[73] [Broughton], *Apologicall Epistle*, pp. 111–12; Nicholas Harpsfield, *A Treatise of the Pretended Divorce between Henry VIII and Catharine of Aragon*, ed. N. Pocock (Camden Soc., 1878), pp. 298–9; Dickens, p. 135; Sander, p. 157.

[74] Harpsfield, *Treatise of the Pretended Divorce*, p. 299; Epistle by G.T. in [Persons], *Epistle of the Persecution of Catholics*, pp. 17–18.

[75] William Harrison and William Leygh, *Deaths Advantage little regarded* (1602), sig. N1^{v}.

[76] Harpsfield, *Treatise of the Pretended Divorce*, p. 299; John Walsal, *A Sermon preached at*

Such discrepancies did not affect the main message. 'Every man that is about thirty years old', declared John Christoferson in 1554, 'shall witness with me that I say true that before we forsook the whole Catholic Church of God ... our commonwealth was so rich ... strong and mighty that no other was there ... that might be compared with it'. At the accession of Henry VIII, agreed George Cavendish, 'this fertile and plentiful realm of England ... flourished in all abundance of wealth and riches' and was 'called then the golden world, such grace of plenty reigned then within this realm'.[77]

Cavendish's reference to the golden world alerts us. For it reveals that his picture of pre-Reformation England is not the simple product of oral tradition, but has been overlaid by literary convention. The same convention influenced other Catholics, like Thomas Dorman, who wrote in the fifteen-sixties that, before the Reformation, 'charity, simplicity, sobriety, so reigned universally, that of us that time might well be called the golden age of which the poets dreamed'.[78]

The classical idea of the golden age was not necessarily backward-looking, for it was common for Renaissance poets to pretend that a new golden age was about to be inaugurated by the accession of a virtuous ruler, like Elizabeth or James, who would restore the felicity of the past.[79] But more commonly the myth of the golden age represented a happiness which had gone for ever. It was now an age of iron.[80] Such a notion fitted in easily with the widespread, pessimistic belief that people were living in 'the latter days', which the scriptures had foreseen as a time of corruption and decay, marked by the declining fertility of the earth and the growing weakness of human bodies.[81]

The Catholics were therefore not the only ones to invoke 'the former and better times of our forefathers', 'the flourishing and golden days', 'the

Pauls Crosse … 1578 (n.d.), sig. Dvii; *The Works of Thomas Deloney*, ed. F. O. Mann (Oxford, 1912), p. 352; J. E. Thorold Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England* (Oxford, 1866–1902), iv. 381.

[77] Christoferson, *Exhortation*, sig. Zvii^{r-v}; George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. R. S. Sylvester (Early English Text Soc., 1959), p. 11.

[78] Thomas Dorman, *A Proufe of Certeyne Articles in Religion* (Antwerp, 1564), fo. 138.

[79] F. A. Yates, *Astraea* (1975), pp. 29–87; G. Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd* (1981), pp. 16–18; A. Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 46–7.

[80] E. Armstrong, *Ronsard and the Age of Gold* (Cambridge, 1968); H. Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance* (1969); H. Kamen, 'Golden age, iron age: a conflict of concepts in the Renaissance', *Jour. Medieval and Renaissance Stud.*, iv (1974).

[81] H. Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance* (New York, 1950), pp. 525–33; H. Baker, *The Wars of Truth* (1952), pp. 65–78.

constant service of the antique world'.[82] Of course, not everybody was so pessimistic. Those who believed in the steady ascent of man scorned the myth of the golden age: life in the remote past had been rough and barbarous; new inventions were daily improving the quality of human life.[83] But nostalgia for the past remained implicit in most social criticism: one attacked an evil by evoking an earlier age when it had not existed. All through the middle ages there had been commentators who had looked back to some previous period as a time of lost perfection, whether the days of Richard II, or of Edward III, or of Edward, king and martyr, or even of St. Oswald, king of the Northumbrians.[84] Such a lament was a commonplace in European literature: 'il buon tempo antico'; 'le bon vieux temps'; 'die gute alte Zeit'.[85] No doubt, it reflected the universal tendency of old men to look back wistfully to the idealized days of their youth.

> O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
> And life ran gaily as the sparking Thames;
> Before this strange disease of modern life ...

So when Elizabethan Catholics made a nostalgic appeal to medieval England they were drawing upon assumptions which were shared by many of their contemporaries; and a heavy weight of literary and intellectual authority underpinned their lament. The notion of a lost medieval age of gold was upheld by many social critics, Protestant no less than Catholic; and if we examine the ephemeral literature of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries we can see it everywhere.[86] The chronology is vague and the details vary with the critic concerned. But the main features are remarkably constant.

[82] Godfrey Goodman, *The Fall of Man* (1616), pp. 247–8; I.M., *A Health to the Gentlemanly Profession of Serving-Men* (Shakespeare Assoc. facsimile, 1931), sig. C4; William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, act ii, scene 3.

[83] A. B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound* (Durham, N.C., 1979), chs. x, xi.

[84] *Political Poems and Songs relating to English History*, ed. T. Wright (Rolls ser., 1861), ii. 267; John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, prologus, ll. 93–117; John Gower, *Vox Clamantis*, lib. vi, cap. xiii; F. Graus, 'Social utopias in the middle ages', *Past & Present*, xxxviii (1967), 14. Cf. G. G. Coulton, *Medieval Panorama* (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 624–5.

[85] C. T. Davis, 'Il buon tempo antico', in *Florentine Studies*, ed. N. Rubinstein (1968); N. Edelman, *Attitudes of 17th-Century France toward the Middle Ages* (Morningside Heights, N.Y., 1946), pp. 41–2; H. Delbrück, 'Die gute alte Zeit', in *Erinnerungen, Aufsätze und Reden* (Berlin, 1902), pp. 179–212.

[86] See J. Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 68–9, 71, 104; and, esp., M. Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (1966), pp. 204–7, where the description of 'nostalgic utopianism' anticipates some of my argument.

It was a rural age: people lived in 'the sweet country', not in 'unsavoury London'.[87] It was socially static: everyone kept his place and was 'content with his vocation'.[88] Clothes were unpretentious: 'the old English garb' was plain country russet and each man dressed according to his station, not trying to pass himself off as better than he was.[89] Not yet effeminated by 'luxury', the inhabitants were healthy and vigorous, fighting, not with gunpowder but with the longbow, 'the ancient glory of England'.[90] They had better teeth too ('no tobacco taken in those days').[91] The ancient Britons had been healthier still, living on roots and the bark of trees, and capable of standing up to their chins in watery marshes for days on end.[92] All this contrasted sadly with current physical deterioration. An observer in 1638 thought that the distance over which men shot arrows at the butts had diminished even since the accession of Elizabeth; and there was now no one strong enough to wield the lance which had been borne by Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, the favourite of Henry VIII.[93]

It is not difficult to recognize in this picture the 'hard' primitivism of classical tradition.[94] The notion of medieval Englishmen as vigorous, uncorrupted by luxury and social ambition, is so close to that of the sturdy citizens of republican Rome or the honest peasants of pastoral myth that it is tempting to dismiss the whole image as the product of rhetorical tradition. Certainly it is very close to the parallel myth constructed by Elizabethan Protestant nationalists of the Anglo-Saxons as a manly, warlike and pious race.[95]

Yet, though this model of the past was shaped by obvious literary influences, it was not purely literary, for it possessed some distinctive

[87] Walter Cary, *The Present State of England* (1626), p. 13.

[88] Dorman, *A Proufe*, fo. 138; *Works of James Pilkington*, p. 415; Tristram Risdon, *The Chorographical Description or Survey of the County of Devon* (1811), p. 10.

[89] William Terilo, *A Piece of Friar Bacons Brazen-Head Prophesie* (1604), sigs. B4, C1^{v}, C2^{v}; Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlinson B 206 fo. 60 (and [Humphrey King], *An Halfe-Penny-Worth of Wit* (3rd imprint., 1613), pp. 20–1); Cary, *Present State of England*, pp. 10–11.

[90] Goodman, *The Fall of Man*, p. 106; Sir John Smythe, *Certain Discourses Military*, ed. J. R. Hale (Ithaca, N.Y., 1964), pp. xli, 69, 75, 108.

[91] Aubrey, *Monumenta*, p. 52.

[92] Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse* (1579; Shakespeare Soc., 1841), p. 24 (drawing on Dio, *Roman History*, lxxvii. 12).

[93] Henry Peacham, *The Truth of our Times* (1638), pp. 189–90.

[94] Cf. A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (1935; repr., N.Y., 1965), pp. 9–11.

[95] R. Tuve, 'Ancients, moderns and Saxons', *E.L.H.: Jour. Eng. Literary Hist.*, vi (1939).

features which were the result of genuine observation, albeit observation of the present rather than the past.

First, there was an awareness that consumer goods had multiplied. The supposed simplicities of the medieval age were contrasted with the Elizabethan clothes of silk and velvet, the silver and pewter on the tables, the newly invented coaches in the stable. Though most people welcomed the increase in comfort, there were others who could not reconcile themselves to the fickleness of fashion and who saw in the imitative buying of the lower-class consumer a threat to the certainties of the social order. The lament for a vanished age was implicit in the demand for new sumptuary laws, the vain attempts to establish a 'settled fashion' and the belief that most consumer goods were unnecessary superfluities.[96] It was pleasant to recall the past, when the only looking-glass for most women was a tub of water.[97]

Second, there was hostility to the multiplication of lawyers and the growing volume of litigation. The medieval past was seen as a time when there had been few disputes and those had been amicably settled by informal arbitration:

> If neighbours were at variance they ran not straight to law,
> Daysmen took up the matter, and cost them not a straw.[98]

The barrister John March produced statistics to show that actions for slander were non-existent before the reign of Edward III and very rare before the time of Elizabeth.[99] The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries may well have been the most litigious period in English history and the early middle ages the least, but a closer look at the judicial records of the fifteenth century would have dispelled the myth of an unlitigious past.[100] It survived because it fitted the belief (for which there was strong Biblical support)[101] that in the perfect world lawyers and litigants did not exist.

[96] I hope to write at greater length on this subject elsewhere.

[97] William Warner, *Albions England* (1612 edn.), p. 201.

[98] *A New Enterlude no lesse wittie: then pleasant, entituled New Custome* (1573), sig. Aiv^{v}; *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. W. Chappell (Ballad Soc., 1871–4), ii. 585.

[99] J[ohn] M[arch], *Actions for Slaunder* (1647), pp. 7–9.

[100] C. W. Brooks, 'Litigants and attorneys in the king's bench and common pleas, 1560–1640', in *Legal Records and the Historian*, ed. J. H. Baker (1978), p. 44; E. W. Ives, *The Common Lawyers of Pre-Reformation England* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 7, 216. For a similar myth in France, see François Hotman, *Francogallia*, ed. R. E. Giesey, trans. J. H. M. Salmon (Cambridge, 1972), p. 520.

[101] I Corinthians VI: 7.

Third, the medieval past had been sober. Conveniently forgetting the tradition that the invasion of William the Conqueror had succeeded because the English were drunk at the time, having been corrupted long before by the Danes,[102] many critics now asserted that drunkenness had not reached England until the fifteen-eighties, when English soldiers fighting in the Netherlands had picked up bad habits from the Dutch.[103] John Aubrey later explained that in the middle ages, there were 'no alehouses … When they had a mind to drink, they went to the friaries'.[104]

Fourth, medieval sobriety had been accompanied, paradoxically enough, by lavish hospitality, freely extended by great householders to passers-by. This, it was said, was the 'ancient custom of this realm of England'.[105] John Norden evoked the 'old worthy houses ... whose kitchens' smoke sent forth clouds of good meat and showers of drink for the poor'; and Bishop Goodman recalled the 'huge gates and open doors, spacious halls, long tables, great kitchens, large chimneys … cellars, ovens, vessels, pots and powdering tubs, deep, profound, and bottomless'.[106] Conviviality became associated with the past. Hospitality was not just hospitality; it was 'ancient hospitality', 'the true old English hospitality'.[107] Christmas was not just Christmas; it was 'old Christmas', ultimately the 'old-fashioned Christmas'. 'Old hospitality; old wine; old ale; all the images of old England', as Peacock's Dr. Folliot would put it.[108]

Fifth, the medieval past had been a time of piety, honesty and 'plain dealing'.[109] 'Then were the churches open all day long, men and women

[102] R. V. French, *Nineteen Centuries of Drink in England* (2nd edn., n.d.), p. 54; William Lambard, *A Perambulation of Kent* (1576), pp. 280–2; *Joannis Seldeni Opera Omnia*, ed. David Wilkins (1726), iii, pt. 2, 1816.

[103] William Camden, *Annales*, trans. Abraham Darcie (1625), 2nd pagination, p. 5; Smythe, *Certain Discourses Military*, pp. 28–9.

[104] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon Various Subjects* (4th edn., 1857), p. 215.

[105] *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life* (1579), sig. Bii^{v}.

[106] J[ohn] N[orden], *The Surveyors Dialogue* (1607), p. 85; Goodman, *Fall of Man*, p. 375.

[107] *The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene*, ed. A. B. Grosart (Huth Library, 1881–6), xi. 272. *Camden's Britannia*, ed. Gibson, p. 874; *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. G. Birkbeck Hill and L. F. Powell (Oxford, 1934–50), ii. 167.

[108] *The Pepys Ballads*, ed. H. E. Rollins (Cambridge, Mass., 1929–32), iii. 51; John Taylor, *The Complaint of Christmas and the Teares of Twelfetyde* (1631); *The World*, civ (26 Dec. 1754), 104; Thomas Love Peacock, *Crotchet Castle* (1831), ch. xvii.

[109] F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder* (Chelmsford, 1970), p. 60; Thomas Dorman, *A Disproufe of M. Nowelles Reproufe* (Antwerp, 1565), fo. 29v; *A New Enterlude … entituled New Custome*, sig. Aiv^{v}; *Old English Ballads, 1553–1625*, ed. H. E. Rollins (Cambridge, 1920), p. 134.

going daily in and out hourly, to and from their devotions.' On the walls of their dwellings ('as in some old houses is yet to be seen') there were painted hangings on which 'were writ good, moral sentences ... which argues the goodness of that age'.[110] Theft was so rare that there was no need for locks and keys.[111] A man's word was his bond and legal obligations were unnecessary.

> Was not then a merry time
> When they [*sic*] neighbour came to mine:
> Canst thou lend me twenty pound
> For to buy a piece of ground?
> Without statute or a bond,
> Their word as good as any hand.[112]

This is the simplicity of pastoral, no doubt, but many were seduced by this vision of the innocent, trusting past. The Laudian divine John Pocklington was accused in 1641 of having affirmed 'it to be an evident sign how acceptable the Romish religion was to God in former ages, because there were not then in the times of Popery so many murders, adulteries, robberies, etc., as since have been in the time of Protestancy'. Even the stout Protestant Philip Stubbes confessed that 'if we look narrowly into the former times, and ages past, we shall find more godliness, devotion and zeal (though it were but a blind zeal), more love one towards another, more simplicity in dealing, more fidelity and faithfulness ... than is now to be found'.[113]

And, finally, the medieval past had been an age of charity. Benevolent monks and pious endowments had taken care of the poor, without any of the terrors and expense of the Elizabethan Poor Law. 'Our forefathers', thought Henry Smith, were men of 'large liberality'. The 'ancient citizens' of London, noted John Stow, spent their money on hospitals and poor relief, not on banqueting houses for show and vanity. It was a great source of humiliation to godly Protestants that their forefathers should have so surpassed them in the performance of good works.[114]

[110] Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, p. 218; *Aubrey on Education*, ed. J. E. Stephens (1972), p. 63.

[111] Terilo, *A Piece of Friar Bacons Brazen-Heads Prophesie*, sig. C1^{v}.

[112] [King], *Halfe-Penny-worth of Wit*, p. 20. Cf. Christoferson, *Exhortation*, sig. Aavij^{v}; I. M., *Health to the Gentlemanly Profession of Serving-Men*, sig. G3.

[113] *The Petition and Articles, or Severall Charge exhibited in Parliament against John Pocklington* (1641), p. 29; Stubbes, *Motive to Good Workes*, p. 43.

[114] *The Works of Henry Smith* (Edinburgh, 1866), ii. 49; John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1908), ii. 78; Lambard, *Perambulation of Kent*, p. 230; H. C. White, *Social Criticism in Popular Religious Literature of the 16th Century* (New York, 1944), p. 269; W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480–1660* (1959), pp. 230–2.

This stylized picture of the medieval past would reach its apotheosis in the writings of John Aubrey, whose vivid picture of the later middle ages, virile and warlike, yet also charitable, pious, festive and unlitigious, has been admirably evoked by Dr. Michael Hunter.[115] It would be wrong to mistake it for genuine social analysis. But neither can it be dismissed as a mere literary artefact. It was shaped by the historical circumstances of post-Reformation England and was an amalgam in which real social facts jostled together with the images of literary convention and the inherent nostalgia of social criticism. It was propagated by educated writers, but it also struck popular roots.

Particularly evident in Elizabethan England was nostalgia for the monasteries. 'Many do lament the pulling down of abbeys', wrote Francis Trigge in 1589. 'They highly commend their liberality to the poor, their courtesy to their tenants, their commodity to the commonwealth'.[116] There was widespread agreement that opportunities had been missed. The monasteries might have been reformed rather than abolished; or, at least, their resources could have been put to better use, to strengthen the royal finances, to help the poor, to support education and the clergy.[117] From the localities came complaints that the Dissolution had jeopardized the prosperity of towns, the upkeep of roads and bridges, the repair of sea defences and the fabric of churches.[118] Regret for the destruction of monastic buildings, attachment to the notion of a pious, contemplative life, the belief that abbeys and convents had provided employment for the gentry's younger sons and a safe refuge for their unmarried daughters: all combined to produce a nostalgic picture of England before the Dissolution.[119]

[115] M. Hunter, *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning* (1975), esp. pp. 186, 215–16; Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, pp. 213–21.

[116] Triffe, *An Apologie*, p. 7.

[117] Edward Coke, *The Fourth Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England* (1817 edn.), pp. 43–4; H. C. White, ch. 3; A. B. Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham, N.C., 1958), pp. 252–61; Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Everyman's Library, 1932), i. 247–8.

[118] E.g., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1581–90*, p. 13; George Poulson, *Beverlac* (1829), i. 338; J. Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming* (1957), pp. 26–7; F. W. Austen, *Rectors of Two Essex Parishes and their Times* (Colchester, 1943), p. 65; *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, iv, ed. J. Thirsk (Cambridge, 1967), 337–8; Somerset Record Office, Wells diocesan records, A 91, A 98, A 101 (presentments for South Stoke).

[119] Christopher Lever, *The Historie of the Defenders of the Catholique Faith* (1627), p. 56; A. Wood, *The History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1792), i. sig. e3^{r-v}; M. Aston, 'English ruins and English history: the Dissolution and the sense of the English past', *Jour. Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxxvi (1973).

Above all, it was said, the people had suffered. The end of monastic alms-giving, thought an Elizabethan, was a loss 'of which the poor so much complain when they see the scattered walls that yet do stand'.[120] This gratitude for monastic hospitality was not shared by all the commons, many of whom had rushed to participate in the destruction of the abbeys and to ransack the ruins for building materials.[121] But it was kept alive in ballads and popular doggerel:

> That which was used in ancient time
> When that abbeys were in prime,
> When the beef and brews flourished,
> When the silly souls were nourished,
> Every table then was spread,
> Even furnisht out with beef and bread.
>
> Who was then the abbot's guest?
> The widow poor that was oppresst,
> The pilgrims with their silvered hairs,
> The orphans with their brinish tears.[122]

In 1668 a woman in St. Albans related to Elias Ashmole how her grandfather 'would often discourse' of the abbey before the Dissolution, recalling that every stranger was given three days hospitality before any questions were asked. When Dr. Pococke visited Glastonbury in 1750, he reported that 'the people here seem to have learnt by tradition to lament the loss of support they had from this abbey'. He was told that the monastery used to consume six oxen weekly and that the monks would ring the bell to call in the poor to eat what was left over.[123]

The notion that the abbeys were particularly benevolent landlords also became deeply entrenched, ironic though it must have seemed to those who recalled the attacks which had once been made upon monastic enclosers and

[120] J. Barston, *The Safegarde of Societie* (1576), fo. 109v.

[121] *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, ed. Sir H. Ellis (3rd ser., 1846), iii. 139.

[122] Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawlinson B 206 fo. 59r–v. In the printed version the allusions to abbeys and pilgrims have been removed and gentry houses and disbanded soldiers put in their place ([King], *Halfe-Penny-worth of Wit*, pp. 19–20).

[123] *Elias Ashmole (1617–92)*, ed. C. H. Josten (Oxford, 1966), pp. 1127–8; *Travels of Dr. Richard Pococke*, i. 147, 149. Some years ago the senior common room butler of my Oxford college showed me a watercolour of St. John's in the early 19th century which he kept in his pantry. It depicted a group of gypsies and their children outside the kitchen door. The butler explained that 'the old monks' used to feed the poor at the gates of the college.

engrossers.[124] In the early sixteenth century the abbey of Furness had alienated its tenants by its modernizing estates policy, but by 1583 the tenants were contrasting their new landlord unfavourably with the monks of the past, who had provided them with weekly disbursements of bread and beer.[125]

The reformers found this popular tradition of a charitable and prosperous middle ages a real obstacle to their progress; and at the Hampton Court conference in 1604 it was urged that 'lamentable experience ... doth too plainly witness in most places' that many people wanted Catholicism back because they thought that 'love and charity and plenty' had gone out of the world when the gospel came in. One of the 'common opinions' of 'poor' and 'ignorant' people which William Perkins thought it most important to dislodge was 'that it was a good world when the old religion was, because all things were cheap'.[126]

Transmitted both orally and through the published histories of Jeremy Collier in the eighteenth century and William Cobbett in the nineteenth, this image of medieval charity would survive to colour the thinking of many Victorian social reformers.[127] In the later sixteenth century it was greatly exploited by Catholic propagandists, who unashamedly identified medieval England with the vanished golden age. Robert Persons in his *Memorial* promised an end to the racking of rents, a check to social mobility, a reduction in litigation and the return of the commons to 'their old simplicity, both in apparel, diet, innocency of life, and plainness of dealing'.[128] The prospect of 'a golden day' was held out in many of the prophecies with which discontented recusants sustained their hopes. With the return of popery and the monasteries would come 'cheapness and plenty'.[129] During the fifteen-eighties and fifteen-nineties, bad harvests and heavy taxation generated what has been described as the 'extraordinary fantasy of a vagrant army under

[124] Cf. the editor's judicious remarks in Dickens, pp. 32–3, 36–9.

[125] S. M. Harrison, *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties, 1536–7* (1981), pp. 20–1, 61–2; Thomas West, *The Antiquities of Furness* (1774), pp. 122–8.

[126] Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the MSS. of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu* (1900), p. 37; *The Workes of … William Perkins*, i (Cambridge, 1616–18), sig. A2.

[127] Jeremy Collier, *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain* (1708–14), ii. 163–5; Defoe, *Tour*, ii. 214; William Cobbett, *A History of the Protestant 'Reformation'* (1824–6); A. Chandler, *A Dream of Order: the Medieval Ideal in 19th-Century English Literature* (1971), esp. chs. 2, 5.

[128] Edward Gee, *The Jesuit's Memorial, for the Intended Reformation of England* (1690), pp. 232–7, 256, 257.

[129] Thomas, pp. 406–8.

Catholic commanders ready to liberate the poor of England'.[130] Meanwhile, Catholics in exile contrasted the alleged miseries of Elizabeth's subjects with the felicity enjoyed before the Reformation, stressing all the now-conventional signs of deterioration: 'there were never so many suits in law'; 'never less neighbourhood among the people'; 'never so much injustice, never so much extortion, never so much theft, never so much pride, ebriety'.[131] The same power of this literary commonplace to stimulate political action can be seen in the royal proclamations by which the early Stuart kings repeatedly commanded the gentry to leave London and return to their houses in the countryside, there to dispense what was described as the 'ancient and laudable custom' of hospitality. 'Let us in God's name ... keep the old fashion of England', urged James I; and his son repeated the theme: hospitality was an 'ancient usage', 'for which this nation in former times hath been much renowned'.[132] A similar acceptance of the myth of the past underlay the statute of 1607 against 'the loathsome and odious sin of drunkenness', which it described as 'of late grown into common use within this realm'.[133]

It was out of all these different allusions to a bygone age of happiness that there gradually evolved the now familiar notion of Merry England. It had long been customary for people who grumbled about the times to say that it 'had never been merry' since whatever they deplored had come into existence. 'Surely, surely, good neighbours', they said in the fifteen-thirties, 'we had never merry nor wealthy world since abbeys were put down'; and in early Stuart times the old-style parson would lament that 'it was never merry world since there was so much preaching, for now all hospitality and good-fellowship was laid abed'.[134] Scores of such utterances are recorded; and they carried with them the unmistakable implication that the past had been merrier than the present: 'It was a merry world ... before the Bible came forth in English; all things were good cheap and plentiful.'

[130] W. Hunt, *The Puritan Movement* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p. 60; P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution* (Hassocks, 1977), pp. 249–50, 454.

[131] [Richard Verstegan], *A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles* (1592), p. 59; [William Allen], *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defence, of English Catholiques* (n.d. [1584]), p. 168; T. H. Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers* (Chicago, Ill., 1964), pp. 28–30; *The Letters and Despatches of Richard Verstegan*, ed. A. G. Petti (Catholic Record Soc., 1959), pp. 12–14.

[132] *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, ed. J. F. Larkin and P. L. Hughes (Oxford, 1973–83), i. 370, 561 (and 357); ii. 112, 350 (and 171, 301); *The Political Works of James I*, ed. C. H. McIlwain (Cambridge, Mass., 1918), pp. 343–4.

[133] 4 Jac. I, c. 5.

[134] Brit. Libr., MS. Royal 17 B xxxv fo. 9v; A. G. Matthews, *Walker Revised* (Oxford, 1948), p. 162.

Vor when we had the old Law
A merry world was then:
And every thing was plenty
Among all zorts of men.[135]

In 1552 Dr. John Caius urged his contemporaries 'to live quietly, friendly and merrily one with another, as men were wont to do in the old world, when this country was called merry England'. 'Twas a merry world in the old time', says a character in a Jacobean dialogue – a formula which William Wordsworth would echo over 200 years later:

They called Thee MERRY ENGLAND, in old time.[136]

Originally, the word 'merry' had meant no more than 'pleasant' or 'happy'. As Sir George Clark sternly remarks, 'the phrase "Merry England" does not imply any abnormal jollity among our ancestors'. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the expression carried overtones of prosperity and fertility; and it was in that sense that Brutus was said to have conquered 'Merry England'. But gradually the term acquired an increasingly festive connotation, conveying not just contentment but jollity and conviviality, as in 'the merry monarch' or 'merry Christmas'.[137]

This association of Merry England with festive rejoicing, particularly with the rural sports of the village green, owed something to the tradition of pastoral romance which inspired such royal diversions as the 'Maying' of Henry VIII at Shooters Hill in 1515, when the king and queen sat on the greensward and were served with wine and venison by royal archers dressed as Robin Hood and his merry men, or the entertainment for Queen Elizabeth at Elvetham in 1591, when three musicians 'disguised in ancient country attire' greeted her with 'a pleasant song of Corydon and Phillida'.[138]

[135] *The Works of Roger Hutchinson*, ed. J. Bruce (Parker Soc., Cambridge, 1842), p. 8; *Works of Thomas Deloney*, p. 351. For others, see, e.g., Emmison, pp. 47, 48; Worsnop, *Discoverie of Sundrie Errours*, sig. I2v; *Calendar of Assize Records. Sussex Indictments. Elizabeth I*, ed. J. S. Cockburn (1975), no. 520; Richard Porder, *A Sermon of Gods Fearfull Threatnings* (1570), fo. 12v.

[136] John Caius, *A Boke or Counsell against the Disease commonly called the Sweate* (1552), p. 29, in *The Works of John Caius*, ed. E. S. Roberts (Cambridge, 1912); *A Fooles Bolt is soone shott* (1614), p. 28, in *The Complete Works of Samuel Rowlands* (Hunterian Club, 1880), ii; *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. T. Hutchinson, rev. E. de Selincourt (1904), p. 463.

[137] G. N. Clark, *The Wealth of England* (1946), p. 60n.; *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. H. Kurath, S. M. Kuhn and others (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1954), *s.v.* 'miri(e)'; *A New English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. H. Murray (Oxford, 1888–1933), *s.v.* 'merry'.

[138] *Hall's Chronicle* (1809), p. 582; John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth* (1823), p. 116.

The pastoral myth of shepherds fleeting the time carelessly as they did in the golden world exerted as powerful a spell on the courtiers of Elizabeth as it would do on those of Marie Antoinette.

But what really established the association between Merry England and bucolic rejoicing was the attempt in the early seventeenth century by crown and church to revive country revels, Sunday sports and what they called 'the old exercise of England'. Their aim was to show that the popish past had no monopoly of festivity and to rebuff the puritans, who had tried to suppress wakes and ales. Rural sports supposedly fostered neighbourliness, while diverting the populace from more seditious amusements. Such considerations underlay Captain Robert Dover's revival of the Cotswold games in 1612 and the issue of the two Declarations of Sports in 1618 and 1633. They were still there at the Restoration, when the duke of Newcastle advised Charles II to bring back maypoles, cakes and ale and 'all the old holidays, with their mirth … Feasting daily will be in Merry England … The divertisements will amuse the people's thoughts and keep them in harmless action, which will free your Majesty from faction and rebellion'.[139]

It was in defence of such pastimes against their puritan critics that the myth of Merry England finally emerged.

> Happy the age, and harmless were the days
> (For then true love and amity were found)
> When every village did a may-pole raise,
> And Whitsun-ales and May-games did abound:
>
> Then reigned plain honest meaning, and good will.[140]

In the early seventeenth century Nicholas Breton, William Warner, Richard Corbett, Ben Jonson and other writers helped to consolidate this nostalgic image of the village green with its maypole and dancing, its curds and cream, cheesecake and syllabub, all set in a rapidly receding past in which classical arcadia and rural England were evenly blended.

> I should think it still might be
> As 'twas, a happy age, when on the plains

[139] C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (1964), pp. 192, 195; *Robert Dover and the Cotswold Games. Annalia Dubrensia*, ed. C. Whitfield (1962), pp. 17–18, 132; S. A. Strong, *A Catalogue of Letters and other Historical documents exhibited in the Library at Welbeck* (1903), pp. 226–7.

[140] [William Fennor?], *Pasquils Palinodia* (1619), sig. B3.

> The woodmen met the damsels, and the swains,
> The neatherds, ploughmen and the pipers loud,
> And each did dance, some to the kit or crowd,
> Some to the bagpipe; some the tabret moved,
> And all did either love or were beloved.[141]

Already Merry England had moved from the late middle ages to the Elizabethan period. In due course it would move still further forward. For Dryden it lay in the early seventeenth century:

> Then our age was in its prime,
> Free from rage and free from crime,
> A very merry, dancing, drinking,
> Laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time.[142]

By the mid Hanoverian period 'the glory of old England' was associated with the age of Anne, supposedly the last period of simple manners before the corruption of the Walpolean era.

> were England now [sighed William Cowper]
> What England was, plain hospitable, kind
> And undebauched.[143]

By the eighteen-twenties it had reached a point somewhere in the mid eighteenth century, 'when the tables were covered with brawn, and beef, and humming ale ... and when rich and poor were alike welcome to enter and make merry', as Washington Irving's Squire Bracebridge put it.[144] By mid Victorian times, the past invoked by the demure revivals of maypoles and rush-bearing was too vague to be capable of any precise chronological location. But the attributes of Merry England were constant: a contented, revelling peasantry and a hierarchical order in which each one happily

[141] Ben Jonson, *The Sad Shepherd*, I.ii (on which see J. B. Bamborough, 'The rusticity of Ben Jonson', in *Jonson and Shakespeare*, ed. I. Donaldson (1983); and A. Barton, 'Harking back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline nostalgia', *E.L.H.*, xlviii (1981), 726–8); Nicholas Breton, *The Court and Country* (1618), in *Inedited Tracts*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt (1868), p. 183; Warner, *Albions England*, p. 121; *The Poems of Richard Corbett*, ed. J. A. W. Bennett and H. R. Trevor-Roper (Oxford, 1955), pp. 49–52; Whitfield, *Robert Dover and the Cotswold Game*, *passim*.

[142] *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. J. Kinsley (Oxford, 1958), iv. 1763.

[143] H. M. Atherton, *Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 119–20; *A Collection of Letters publish'd in Old England* (n.d. [1743?]), p. 28; William Cowper, *The Task*, iii, ll. 742–4.

[144] Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (1819–20; World's Classic edn., 1912), p. 265.

accepted his place and where the feast in the baronial hall symbolized the ideal social relationship.[145]

Of course, the myth was strenuously denounced from the moment it appeared. 'They say it was merry', sneered a pamphleteer of 1534, 'but they tell not what time it was, with whom, nor wherein it was merry'. And the challenge was repeated by many later critics. 'Show me when this good world was.'[146] Defenders of the new order protested that the days of popery had not been days of plenty. 'See what dearth, death and dearness was then!' cried Bishop Pilkington. If the monks had seemed generous landlords, argued Francis Trigge, that was only because the population had been so reduced by the Black Death that landlords were glad to get tenants on any terms. The low prices of the past had the same explanation: 'Who would not sell twenty eggs a penny than keep them till they be rotten?'[147] If our forefathers were less litigious, said George Hakewill, that was because they settled their disputes by violence and civil war.[148] As for 'ancient hospitality', its extent had been greatly exaggerated and its effect was to nourish a throng of beggars who would have been better off beating hemp in Bridewell. If the so-called 'good-housekeeping' of former times were examined, said the preacher Richard Bernard, 'we should find ... such houses were houses of riot, excess, prodigality, gluttony, and drunkenness'. The traveller Fynes Moryson rejected 'the vulgar opinion, preferring old times to ours, because it is apparent that the cloisters of monks (who spoiled all that they might be beneficial to few) and gentlemen's houses (who nourished a rabble of servants in idleness, and in robbing by the highways) ... were cause of greater ill than good'.[149] Anyway, even if the poor had been materially better off in the past, they had the gospel now and that was worth more than any carnal blessing.[150]

[145] R. Judge, *The Jack-in-the-Green* (Folklore Soc., 1979), pp. 58–65; B. Bushaway, *By Rite* (1982), pp. 21, 268, 274. Cf. E. McDermott, *The Merrie Days of England. Sketches of the Olden Time* (1859).

[146] *A Litel Treatise ageynste the mutterynge of some papists in corners* (1534), sig. Bvi; Granger, *Familiar Exposition on Ecclesiastes*, p. 170.

[147] *Works of James Pilkington*, p. 611; Trigge, *An Apologie*, pp. 11–12.

[148] George Hakewill, *An Apologie or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God* (2nd edn., 1630), pp. 466–7.

[149] Richard Bernard, *Ruths Recompence* (1628), p. 150; F. Moryson, *An Itinerary* (Glasgow, 1907–8), iv. 94; *Works of James Pilkington*, pp. 610–11.

[150] *Works of James Pilkington*, p. 612; Porder, *Sermon of Gods Fearfull Threatnings*, fo. 13; *A Fooles Bolt is soone shott*, p. 29, in *Complete Works of Samuel Rowlands*, ii; Robert Abbot, *A Hand of Fellowship* (1623), p. 267.

In the same spirit the puritan clergy opposed the Laudian attempt to restore the mirth of the village green. To them, wakes and maygames were heathenish vanities, encouraging idleness and wasting energy. One puritan sympathizer, denouncing May Day customs and Whitsun sports, declared that those who followed the Hocktide practice of importuning people for money for the church 'did as good pick their pockets'.[151] For these enemies of collective revelry, the myth of Merry England could hold no charm.

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There was thus no single perception of the medieval past in early modern England and no unchallenged custodian of popular memory. Rival myths, developed in the course of political and religious struggle, and shaped by inherited literary convention, competed for popular allegiance. At a time of fierce ideological conflict, a 'balanced' view of the recent past, of the kind hinted at in the writings of Samuel Daniel, was inevitably a rarity.[152] What was at issue in the conflicting attitudes of Laudians and puritans to the idea of Merry England was less a view of the past than a clash between two sets of values in the present: the one upholding community, conviviality and hierarchy; the other emphasizing sobriety, industry and individualism. A similar conflict of values underlay the contrasting Protestant and Catholic views of the middle ages. Because these rival myths were so deeply rooted in opposing views of the world, they could never be dislodged by historical research; and each would have a long subsequent life. Myths which express some social or ideological need can seldom be refuted; and the debate between Mr. Chainmail and Mr. MacQuedy can go on forever, regardless of whatever our modern, hard-headed medievalists say.

The relative impotence of historical scholarship in areas like these should give academic historians pause for thought. It is, I think, a relatively common experience to find that what we write about the past has very little effect upon the historical conceptions of ordinary people. Since most academics write for each other, this is perhaps not very surprising. But the tenaciously ineradicable character of some popular stereotypes of the past is something of which we should be aware.

[151] Bodl. Libr., Oxford diocesan papers, c. 27, fo. 46. Cf. Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, ch. 5.

[152] Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ii. 367–73; M. McKisack, 'Samuel Daniel as historian', *Rev. Eng. Stud.*, xxiii (1947), 237–8.

No doubt, our most deeply rooted images of the past are those acquired in childhood; and until historians rewrite the literature of the nursery they will never alter popular perceptions. But there is more to it than that. These historical myths have an imaginative utility and a social function, ratifying as they do our deepest assumptions. People hold on to outdated images of the past because they need them. The modern sceptical historian is a debunker of myth and contemptuous of the sort of sentimentality about the past I have been describing. But the sad truth is that he can only expect to be listened to when he operates in an area wholly uncharged with current social meaning, that is to say when he deals with issues to which his contemporaries are indifferent. Only when the past is seen as irrelevant to the present, can detached academic history hope to enjoy a monopoly of attention.[153] Meanwhile it competes with a host of more powerful influences.

Yet how detached is academic history itself? The irony is that even the most scrupulous historian is busy myth-making, whether or not he realizes it. For are we not, all of us, manipulating our genealogies to meet new social needs when we investigate hitherto neglected aspects of the past, constructing pedigrees for, say, the working classes or for women or for black people? And even when our subject matter remains resolutely traditional, are we not reassuring ourselves when we demonstrate that the people of the past were no less subject than we to the pressures of economic interest or sexuality or whatever our current anxieties may be? We are thus just as active as our unacademic predecessors in constructing a charter to reinforce, or sometimes to subvert, present-day attitudes; and our perception of the past is still unconsciously shaped by contemporary preoccupations. Perhaps the myths we construct are less influential than the popular myths with which they compete. But that does not make them any less mythical.

So though, like Bishop Creighton, we may have no wish to prove or disprove anything, we should be aware that what we write has, willy-nilly, implications for the present. And not only for the present. For it is still the case, as Thomas Hobbes wrote long ago, that 'of our conceptions of the past, we make a future'.[154]

[153] Cf. J. G. A. Pocock, 'Time, institutions and understanding', in *Politics and Experience: Essays presented to Michael Oakeshott*, ed. P. King and B. C. Parekh (Cambridge, 1968), p. 237.

[154] Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, ed. F. Tonnies (2nd edn., 1969), p. 15.

Appendix A
The Danish Yoke

There is much evidence for popular mythology relating to the Danish occupation. The Northamptonshire antiquary John Morton thought in 1712 that local legends about battles between the Saxons and the Danes should be disregarded: ''tis the way of the vulgar with us to attribute all such actions to the Danes and ... there are many such erroneous traditions.'[155] Castles, stone circles, burial mounds and other monuments were frequently associated with the struggle against the Danish invaders.[156] Several wild plants were said (perhaps originally by local antiquaries) to have derived their reddish colour from the blood spilt during the resistance; and in the north the dwarf mulberry (or cloud berry) was popularly known as the Knotberry because the Danish king Cnut had allegedly subsisted on it during a beleaguered period. In Lancashire there was a bird ('of a luscious taste') which 'in remembrance of King Cnut they call the Knot-bird'.[157] Traditions of resistance to the Danes were kept alive by the Hock Tuesday play and by annual bonfires.[158] The widely read romance of Guy of Warwick told how that hero had distinguished himself fighting against the 'bloody Danes'; and the great cruelty of the Danish invaders was proverbial.[159]

Appendix B
Underground passages

Popular belief in the existence of subterranean passages between old houses, castles, monasteries and other ruins is attested in most modern studies of regional folklore.[160] If all these alleged subways had really existed, it has been said, 'medieval England must have been honey-combed by a tube-system of singular and bewildering intricacy'.[161] The belief in their existence seems to have been established by the later sixteenth century. In 1570 John Dee casually referred to 'secret passages underground, between place and place (as this land hath divers)'; and George Owen records an example

[155] John Morton, *The Natural History of Northampton-Shire* (1712), p. 53.

[156] E.g. John Aubrey, *Monumenta*, p. 816; Camden, *Britannia*, ed. Gough, i. 95, 103; Plot, *Natural History of Stafford-Shire*, p. 432.

[157] *Camden's Britannia*, ed. Gibson, p. 802; G. Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora* (1955), pp. 35, 346, 348.

[158] E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, i (1903), 154; Plot, *Natural History of Stafford-Shire*, p. 385.

[159] Spufford, p. 225; Risdon, p. 143; Stephen Gardiner, *A Machiavellian Treatise*, ed. P. Donaldson (Cambridge, 1975), p. 50.

[160] E.g. J. Trotter Brockett, *A Glossary of North Country Words* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1825), p. 211; *Shropshire Folk-Lore*, ed. C. S. Burne (1883), pp. 85–9; J. Simpson, *The Folklore of Sussex* (1973), pp. 24–6; E. Porter, *The Folklore of East Anglia* (1974), pp. 106–8; D. Jones-Baker, *The Folklore of Hertfordshire* (1977), pp. 41–5; Marilyn Lewis in *The Local Historian*, xv (1983), 493.

[161] A. H. Thompson, 'Superstitions regarding the middle ages', *Trans. Leicestershire Archaeol. Soc.*, xxv (1949), 40.

in Elizabethan Pembrokeshire.[162] There are several seventeenth-century instances. Tristram Risdon mentions a castle in Womworthy, Devonshire, 'between which and the house (as some say) was a passage under ground in our forefathers' remembrance'. In Doncaster Abraham de la Pryme saw in the ruins of a religious house the entrance into a 'private subterranean passage' running two or three miles under the river 'to another ancient monastery'. In 1700 Charles Leigh referred to 'those subterraneous passages made use of by the monks which may be observed in various monasteries'.[163] It has been suggested that the delusion (which is not confined to England)[164] was encouraged by the discovery of cellars, undercrofts and elaborate drainage systems in some of the great abbeys.[165] But this does not account for the popular readiness to discover tunnels which were not there.

[162] John Dee, preface to *The Elements of Geometrie of … Euclide*, trans. H. Billingsley (1570), sig. djv; Owen, *Description of Pembrokeshire*, p. 245.

[163] Risdon, p. 294; *The Diary of Abraham de la Pryme*, ed. C. Jackson (Surtees Soc., 1870), p. 35; Charles Leigh, *The Natural History of Lancashire, Cheshire, and the Peak*, (Oxford, 1700), i. 13. Cf. *Reliquia Spelmannianae* (Oxford, 1698), p. 150.

[164] G. L. Kittredge, 'The friar's lantern and Friar Rush', *Publications of the Modern Language Assoc. of America*, xv (1900), 433.

[165] A. H. Thompson, p. 40; B. S. Smith, *A History of Malvern* (Malvern, 1964), p. 76.

Myth, history and the Industrial Revolution
D. C. Coleman (1989)

Introduction

Julian Hoppit

Donald Coleman's Creighton Lecture formed part of his final intellectual project, a history of economic history in Britain that included his *History and the Economic Past: an Account of the Rise and Decline of Economic History in Britain* (Oxford, 1987) and ended with *Myth, History and the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1992), a volume collecting together some of his most celebrated articles, with an extended version of his Creighton Lecture given pride of place. That is to say, his lecture related to his interest in how the discipline of economic history had changed in Britain and provided the capstone to his own studies of the development of the British (more usually English) economy since the early sixteenth century that had occupied him since he became a researcher in the late nineteen-forties.

Coleman was highly suspicious of developments within the field of economic history since the nineteen-sixties. In particular, he complained at its increasing narrowness, of subject and of method, which he believed diminished the popularity of the subject and led to the promulgation of false nostrums. He was especially agitated by 'cliometric' history (also known as 'econometric history'), which came to the fore first in the U.S.A. but which by the nineteen-eighties had some devoted practitioners within the U.K., because, he thought, it put too much store upon certain ahistorical economic theories and quantitative methods. It is notable that his Creighton Lecture turns upon anthropological notions of 'myth', at one point wittily comparing the Trobriand islanders famously studied by Malinowski with

J. Hoppit, Introduction; and D. C. Coleman, 'Myth, history and the Industrial Revolution', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 219–43.

British islanders. Coleman believed that the unwillingness of cliometricians even to countenance such ideas meant that their findings could only ever be highly partial, quite apart from the fact that many of the key statistics they employed were little more than educated guesses.

Yet Coleman was certainly no free spirit as a historian. Quite the opposite. He loathed imprecision, which helps to explain his considerable impatience towards much social history, and relished cutting fashionable concepts down to size: that 'mercantilism' was an anachronism, fathered by Adam Smith for rhetorical and polemical reasons; that 'proto-industrialization' was a 'concept too many'; and, critically, that the alleged discovery by historians of 'industrial revolutions' in periods stretching back to the bronze age debased the term. On this last point, he had completed pioneering studies of both the British paper industry, 1450–1860, and of the textile giant Courtaulds, from its nineteenth-century origins to its battle with I.C.I. He knew better than most how distinctive were the changes wrought in Britain from the late eighteenth century and how complex were the interactions between markets, technology, entrepreneurship, culture and the state. To him the industrial revolution in Britain involved understanding all those elements and more.

Of course, Coleman's Creighton Lecture did not enter upon virgin territory. In 1952, Sir G. N. Clark had lectured at Glasgow on 'The idea of the industrial revolution', tracing the uses of the term from its early nineteenth-century origins. This was taken significantly further in a stimulating article by David Cannadine in *Past & Present* in 1984.[1] Yet despite these important contributions, F. M. L. Thompson and Peter Mathias have described Coleman's lecture as 'the most perceptive study in English of the historiography of the Industrial Revolution'.[2] One aspect that marks it apart is its willingness to engage seriously, if necessarily briefly, with the intellectual contexts within which the term was first developed in France and in Germany, particularly of romanticism and socialism. Another is an appreciation of the social and political importance of myth, and of how the mushrooming 'heritage industry' was contributing to that. Throughout, the extraordinary clarity of Coleman's thinking and writing shines through.

At the end of his lecture Coleman warned that unless the concept of the industrial revolution 'is addressed by historians in more comprehensive

[1] 'The present and the past in Britain's industrial revolution, 1880–1980', *Past & Present*, ciii (1984), 131–72.

[2] 'Donald Cuthbert Coleman, 1920–95', *Proc. British Academy*, cxv (2002), 182.

terms than is currently fashionable, then I fear that the gap between the truth which historians seek and the myth which societies need will not be narrowed and may even be widened' (p. 247). More than anyone else, E. A. Wrigley has risen to that challenge, escaping from the constraints of the national income approach by using plausible estimates of population, occupations and urbanization to look at long-run changes. Another notable widening of scope has included locating Britain's industrial revolution globally, with Kenneth Pomeranz and Patrick O'Brien, among others, making highly important interventions. And recent interest in the history of consumption and the culture of commerce has allowed some significant bridges to be rebuilt between economic and social history. But I suspect that Coleman, who died in 1995, would be bemused or infuriated by some well-known recent contributions to the historiography of the industrial revolution, by the barely implicit politics behind popular books by David Landes and Niall Ferguson, or by the astonishingly perilous statistics employed in places by Gregory Clark. However, not the least of the merits of Coleman's lecture is that it provides a means critically to appreciate such contributions.

Myth, history and the Industrial Revolution*

D. C. Coleman (1989)

A popular tourist venue in Shropshire welcomes its clientele with the alluring claim: 'The Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution'.[1] It has its rivals, further north, which commonly figure as 'cradles' of the same phenomenon. Note the anthropomorphic label. Not quite Mecca or Bethlehem perhaps; but certainly shrines. Like Drake and the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the Industrial Revolution has attained the status of myth in the nation's history.

At this point I must clarify the meaning of myth. The word has two definitions. First, it means a notion or narrative, sometimes though not necessarily involving supernatural or imaginary persons, which embodies popular ideas on natural or social phenomena. This may be called its anthropological definition. Of myth in primitive cultures, for example, it has been said that it 'expresses, enhances, and codifies belief'.[2] In its second, or vulgar, definition myth means simply a fictitious thing, idea or person. My main theme in this lecture is the Industrial Revolution as myth, in accordance with the first definition.

History clearly contributes to the myth-making process. Perhaps, indeed, it is one of its chief social functions. Of course, particular myths appeal to

* This article is a revised version of the Creighton Lecture delivered in 1989. It was first published by the University of London, 1989. The editors would like to thank Continuum Publishing for permission to reproduce it here.

[1] Brochure of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum.

[2] B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and other Essays* (New York, 1948; 1974 edn.), p. 101.

particular groups or classes; and some myths, like unwanted monarchs, are eventually dethroned. Those two eminent Victorians, Macaulay and Marx, for example, must rank high among great historical myth-makers; yet both their legacies have lost some of their shine. Each of their differing visions of history acquired the status of myth by providing accounts of the past which seemed to carry a special relevance to the present – albeit to different groups in different places – by energizing, dramatizing, even sanctifying current attitudes and actions. In such ways are myths generated and sustained. How, then, has the historical idea of the Industrial Revolution come to acquire the status of myth? How, indeed, did the term originate and come into circulation?

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Over the years various articles have enquired into the origins and dissemination of the term. Received wisdom in Britain assigns responsibility for its adoption and extended usage to Arnold Toynbee. His *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the 18th Century in England*, posthumously published in 1884, was the first book to deploy the term in its title; and his immediate successors gave him the credit both for originating the revolutionary label and for providing the first account of the subject. In 1953 Sir George Clark examined, elaborated upon and in effect confirmed that priority.[3] Very much more recently David Cannadine, in an article relating interpretations of the Industrial Revolution to contemporary historical changes, has accepted it by taking Toynbee's as the first of those interpretations.[4]

Alas, it is not so simple. The first writer not only to use the term repeatedly but also to present it as a traumatic and revolutionary event, possessed of great historical significance for England, was Friedrich Engels. It is with Engels that the idea of the Industrial Revolution began its career as a crucial myth for the political Left. Most later writers on English economic history, even when they knew Engels's work, have said little or nothing of this original usage. In 1906 Mantoux, for example, in a footnote to the original French edition of his textbook, conceded that the *Condition of the Working Classes in England* was the location of an early use of the term but

[3] G. N. Clark, *The Idea of the Industrial Revolution* (Glasgow, 1953).

[4] D. Cannadine, 'The past and the present in the English Industrial Revolution, 1880–1980', *Past & Present*, ciii (1984), 131–72. Likewise Koot: 'Toynbee brought the term into the English language' (G. M. Koot, *English Historical Economies, 1870–1926* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 86).

left it at that.[5] Clark went some way towards noting the distinctive nature of Engels's (and later of Marx's) usage but then dropped all further reference to these foreigners.[6] Although a few more recent writers have heeded Engels, the significance of his use of the term is normally ignored.[7]

Engels was, of course, by no means its earliest user. The first sightings of that once unidentified flying object, the Industrial Revolution, were not surprisingly made in France. The political revolutions of 1789 and 1830 invited the drawing of parallels with technical changes in manufactures. They were duly drawn in the eighteen-twenties and thirties. Most were little more than literary similes, underlining the potency of the new spinning machines or steam engines, a 'révolution industrielle' being seen to happen in, for example, the textile manufacturing town of Rouen.[8] In 1837 Jerome Adolphe Blanqui in his *Histoire de l'économie politique* briefly noted the wider social implications and observed that 'la révolution industrielle se mit en possession de l'Angleterre'.[9] Two years later the Belgian writer Natalis Briavoinne made extensive use of the term in his book *De l'industrie en Belgique*. In a chapter entitled 'Révolution Industrielle' he wrote discursively about the growth of population, trade and wealth in later eighteenth-century Europe, especially in England and France. France he saw as pre-eminent in scientific advance, England in the Industrial Revolution.[10]

It was presumably such usages as these that enabled Engels, in the opening sentences of the *Condition of the Working Classes in England*, to say that it was 'well-known' that the textile inventions together with the steam engine had given rise to 'an industrial revolution'. He went on to assert that this industrial revolution was as important for England as the political revolution

[5] P. Mantoux, *La révolution industrielle au XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1906), p. 1, n. 1. The same note appears in the English translation, *The Industrial Revolution in the 18th Century* (1928), p. 25, n. 1.

[6] Clark, *The Idea of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 13–14.

[7] A notable exception is G. Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty* (1984) where she observes that Engels used the term 'not once but repeatedly, and with the full force of a revolutionary event' (p. 282).

[8] See A. Bezanson, 'The early use of the term Industrial Revolution', *Quarterly Jour. Economics*, xxxvi (1922), 343–9.

[9] Quoted in Clark, *The Idea of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 10.

[10] N. Briavoinne, *De l'industrie en Belgique* (Brussels, 1839), pp. 185–6, 191–2 and ff. In 1770, he observed, 'la révolution industrielle avait pris en Angleterre un caractère déterminé' (p. 197). A number of other uses in French can be found at about this time, e.g. L. Faucher, *Etudes sur l'Angleterre* (2 vols., Paris, 1845), i. 307, ii. 135.

had been for France and the philosophical revolution for Germany.[11] He could hardly have derived the term from England because, despite much contemporary comment on industrial and social change, the concept of an Industrial Revolution seems at that time to have been virtually unknown in the country which was supposed to be experiencing it. In none of the major sources which Engels used does the term appear. It was not used by such popular English historians of the period as Harriet Martineau, let alone Macaulay. It does not figure in the terminology of contemporary literary protest, not even in Carlyle's denunciations of the England of his day which so appealed to Engels that he translated some very selective chunks of them into German. His long article 'Die Lage Englands' – inspired by Carlyle's *Past and Present*, incorporating those translations and published in three parts in the course of 1844 – contained much that was subsequently to appear in the *Condition of the Working Classes*. It included one of his key definitions, namely the contention that the most important effect of the eighteenth century for England was 'the creation of the proletariat by the industrial revolution'.[12]

The word 'revolution' by itself was, of course, often used in various ways. Baines, for example, in his *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain* of 1835 spoke of the textile inventions effecting 'as great a revolution in manufactures as the invention of printing effected in literature'; Carlyle talked of 'these revolutionary times'.[13] Peter Gaskell on whose work, *The Manufacturing Population of England* (1833), Engels drew heavily, talked of a 'complete revolution' in the distribution of property. He came nearest to offering the vision which was later to become familiar when he wrote: 'One of the most striking revolutions ever produced in the moral and social

[11] F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Classes in England* (1845, ed. and trans. W. H. Chaloner and W.O. Henderson; 2nd edn., Oxford, 1971), pp. 9, 23.

[12] The first part of the article, written early in 1844 and containing most of the translations from Carlyle, was published in the *Deutsch-Französiche Jahrbücher*. The remaining two parts were intended for the same journal but as it ceased publication, they appeared in *Vorwärts*. That dealing with the Industrial Revolution, 'The condition of England: the 18th century', came out in nos. lxx–lxxiii, Aug.–Sept. 1844. See K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, iii (1975), pp. 444–68 and 469-88, esp. p. 487.

[13] E. Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain* (1853, ed. W. H. Chaloner; 1966), preface, p. 6. The same author uses much the same terminology in his *Account of the Woollen Manufacture in England* (originally presented as a paper to the British Association in 1858, printed in 1875, ed. K. G. Ponting (1970), pp. 126–7). In neither is the term 'industrial revolution' used. T. Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1839), in *Sartor Resartus and Selected Prose*, ed. H. Sussman (New York, 1970), p. 35.

condition of a moiety of a great nation, is that which has been consequent to the application of steam to machinery'.[14] All this, however, without once using the tell-tale term.

As an idea, the Industrial Revolution was a child of romanticism. In shaping, creating and distorting popular images of the past, romanticism has been a good servant to the generation of myths, be they of golden ages, of ancient equalities or, indeed, of general pre-lapsarian bliss. The particular concept of the Industrial Revolution as a thing-in-itself sprang from the marriage of romanticism and revolution, a familiar union which, of course, flowered with especial luxuriance in Continental Europe. The young Engels was borne along by a current of ideas which ran, very roughly, from Rousseau to Bakunin. It absorbed en route all manner of revolutionaries and revolts against absolutist regimes. In insular Britain, by contrast, romanticism's revolutionary force was feeble. Shelley and Byron (despite the latter's fate at Missolonghi) left a literary rather than a political legacy; not even Tom Paine could ignite the fire of revolution against a less than absolutist regime, and Chartism, for all its rhetoric, failed. In effect, literature and painting remained to enshrine romanticism in Britain save for one initially unnoticed foreign importation: the idea of the Industrial Revolution.[15]

In the three years before he sailed, aged twenty-two, for the Manchester branch office of his father's firm in November 1842, Engels had moved from being a clerk with literary aspirations to being an enthusiastic revolutionary. From publishing poems and satirical pieces attacking the religious and cultural milieux of the pious bourgeoisie from which he sprang, he came, under the influence of sundry radical mentors, to believe that England would be the setting for a great social revolution.[16] When he had arrived, observed some striking contrasts of wealth and poverty, and absorbed the

[14] P. Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England* (1833), p. 52. On other occasions in the book he wrote of a 'complete revolution', e.g. pp. 33, 173–4.

[15] The literature on romanticism is, of course, enormous, but the following have provided some suggestive ideas on these points: E. H. Carr, *The Romantic Exiles* (1933); G. Kitson Clark, 'The romantic element 1830–50', in S*tudies in Social History*, ed. J. H. Plumb (1955); R. Williams, *Culture and Society* (1958); H. G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics* (1966); G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class* (Cambridge, 1983); *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. E. J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (Cambridge, 1984); and R. Ashton, *Little Germany: Exile and Asylum in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1986).

[16] W. O. Henderson, *The Life of Friedrich Engels* (2 vols., 1976), i. 6–10; Chaloner and Henderson, pp. xxx–xxxi; P. Demetz, *Marx, Engels and the Poets* (Chicago, Ill., 1967), pp. 9–25, 34–5.

various sources upon which he drew, then he conceived and presented the uniquely English Industrial Revolution as crucial for carrying through the social revolution. It had 'world-historical significance' and England was 'the classical land' wherein to study the consequences of the transformation of the social order and the creation of the proletariat; its factory workers were 'the eldest children of the industrial revolution' and it provided the example of the link between industrialization and the worker's movement.[17]

To what extent Engels exaggerated and distorted the condition of the English working classes in the eighteen-forties is not my concern here. That there were some startling visible contrasts of wealth and poverty, alike in Manchester and London, is surely incontestable. The 'condition-of-England question' had been raised; and the relevant social circumstances had been depicted, sometimes in lurid colours, not only by domestic commentators of varying political hues but also by foreign visitors as diverse as the French radical revolutionary Ledru Rollin or the king of Saxony's physician Karl Gustav Carus.[18] But when Engels presented an entity called 'the industrial revolution' as the cause of the trouble he was both justifying a conviction and also incorporating into his vision a picture taken over from others, especially from Peter Gaskell and Carlyle, of sudden and sweeping change. It had seemingly happened in the later eighteenth century to an England which was still feudal and in which rural workers had vegetated in an idyllic life and, but for the Industrial Revolution, would have gone on so doing.[19]

Die lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England was published in Leipzig in 1845 and reprinted in 1848. Engels's concept of the Industrial Revolution as well as the term itself was taken over by Karl Marx and used in the first

[17] See *Marx-Engels Werke*, ii (Berlin, 1962), pp. 237, 253. The translation in the Chaloner and Henderson edition (p. 9) does not convey the full implication of England's providing for Engels a classical example of what theory predicted ('England ist der klassiche Boden dieser Umwälzung, die um so gewaltiger war, je geräuschloser sie vor sich ging, und England ist darum das klassiche Land für die Entwicklung ihres hauptsächlisten Resultats, des Proletariats'). The translation of this passage in the Wischnewetzky edition (see below, n. 39), as in the *Collected Works*, iv. 307, though generally more literal and less readable, is in this particular matter more accurate. It should also be noted that although Engels did indeed use the term 'industrielle Revolution' frequently, that frequency was not so great as appears in the Chaloner and Henderson version. Cf., e.g., *Marx-Engels Werke*, ii. 243, 254, 306, 313, and Chaloner and Henderson, pp. 16, 28, 88, 95.

[18] A. Ledru Rollin, *De la décadence de l'Angleterre* (2 vols., Paris, 1850); K. G. Carus, *England und Schottland im Jahre 1844* (Berlin, 1845), trans. as *The King of Saxony's Journey through England and Scotland in the year 1844* (1846). For the 'condition-of-England' question, see T. Carlyle, *Chartism* (1840), ch. 1.

[19] Chaloner and Henderson, p. 1.

volume of *Das Kapital* published in German in 1867.[20] In Marx's hands, however, the concept lost some of the romantic flavour which Engels had given it. This is, of course, merely a particular case of the general way in which Marx – himself in his youth swept along by romantic enthusiasm – sought to de-romanticize revolution.[21] Dialectical materialism, scientific socialism, Marxist economics: these were the intellectual replacements for the idealistic yearnings of romantic revolutionaries. But the concept of the Industrial Revolution survived.

To be more exact, it survived as 'die industrielle Revolution' or 'la révolution industrielle' but still very little in English. Even by the mid century, for example, it does not appear in the second edition of Porter's *Progress of the Nation* or later in the writings of Leone Levi or Robert Giffen or in reports of official bodies.[22] It was used neither by enthusiasts for entrepreneurial zeal, such as Samuel Smiles, nor by satirists of the self-made such as Trollope in *The Way We Live Now* of 1875. Exceptions to prove the rule are provided by some economists perhaps familiar with French usage, for example John Stuart Mill and W. S. Jevons. In the 1848 edition of his *Principles of Political Economy* Mill wrote of the opening of foreign trade sometimes working 'a complete industrial revolution'. But this is no more than a passing phrase and is given no particular significance. Moreover, the cautious Mill subsequently qualified even this by changing it in later editions to 'a sort of industrial revolution'.[23] Similarly, Jevons, in *The Coal Question* of 1865, has again merely one passing use of the term which he seems to have derived from Briavionne's work.[24]

[20] *Marx-Engels Werke*, xxiii. 392, 296, 498 etc. The term was also used by Marx and Engels in their *Grundsätze des Kommunismus* (*Marx-Engels Werke*, iv. 363), a draft for the *Communist Manifesto* in the final form of which, however, it is not used.

[21] Marx, like Engels, found an early outlet in the writing of poetry; his concept of alienated man in industrial society has a romantic charge (see Demetz, pp. 48–64).

[22] See, e.g., G. R. Porter, *Progress of the Nation* (2nd edn., 1847); L. Levi, *The History of British Commerce, 1768–1870* (2 vols., 2nd edn., 1880); R. Giffen, *The Progress of the Working Classes* (1883).

[23] J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), ii. 19, and 7th edn. (1871), ii. 122. Mill's, though not Jevons's, usage of the term is noted in Clark, *The Idea of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 12.

[24] W. S. Jevons, *The Coal Question* (1865), p. 341. Elsewhere, in referring to Briavoinne's work, Jevons uses the term 'commercial revolution' (p. 181), despite Briavoinne's own use of 'révolution industrielle', even when translating the very phrase quoted in n. 10 above. There is no mention of industrial revolution in Jevons's papers and letters (see *Papers and Correspondence of William Stanley Jones*, ed. R. D. Collinson Black and R. Könekemp (7 vols., 1972–81)).

Before considering how and why the term came later to make so triumphant and enduring an arrival into the English language, another obvious question poses itself: why not earlier?

Arguing from negative evidence is notoriously hazardous but so curious a gap in this myth-making sequence can hardly be passed by without some inspection. To early nineteenth-century insular Englishmen the word 'revolution', though diversely used, carried a reminder of the 'excesses' of the French Revolution – and that was something which happened to foreigners. At home, as Macaulay observed, the revolution of 1688 was 'our last revolution'; and was peculiarly different from those 'Continental revolutions' which have 'during the last sixty years, overthrown so many ancient governments'.[25] As the word took on the associations of the French Revolution it became all the more difficult in English to have 'industrial' grafted on to it and for the result to be applied to a bunch of technical innovations. Despite reactions, horrified or admiring, such things did not represent opposition to the established government; nor were they visibly led by dangerous men needing to be suppressed by the authority of the state. Moreover, 'industry' was still normally used to mean work or industriousness: the opposite of idleness as in Hogarth's celebrated moral prints. 'There are some sorts of industry', wrote Adam Smith, 'which can be carried on nowhere but in a great town. A porter, for example, can find employment and subsistence in no other place'. Comparing the manufacturer and the soldier, he observed that 'application and industry have been familiar to the one: idleness and dissipation to the other'.[26] Half a century later, writers on the achievements of the day normally used, like Smith, 'manufacture' or 'trade' to designate what we have come to call industry. Likewise, 'industrial' was little used save in the sense of 'the industrial classes'.[27] A typical example in the mid century is provided by this commentator on the Great Exhibition of 1851: 'Let anyone who wishes to be instructed as to the character of the industrial classes of England and London especially go to the Exhibition and watch how well they behave themselves'.[28]

So it is hardly surprising that for much of the nineteenth century, although Britons talked of factories (by which they almost always meant textile mills) or the 'manufacturing system', they did not normally talk of

[25] T. B. Macaulay, *History of England* (2 vols., 1889 edn.), i. 651–5.

[26] A. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776; Modern Library edn., 1937), pp. 17, 437.

[27] In general on these usages, see R. Williams, *Keywords* (2nd edn., 1983).

[28] Quoted in *The Great Exhibition of 1851: a Commemorative Album*, comp. C. H. Gibbs-Smith for the Victoria & Albert Museum (1950), p. 64.

the Industrial Revolution. Carlyle, who had got nearest to it in coining the word 'industrialism', fulminated against 'Midas-eared Mammonism' and the 'millocrats', much as Cobbett thundered against tax-eaters and the Wen, or Chartists such as Julian Harney roasted 'the vile shopocracy'.[29] And romantic vistas of furnaces, forges and the like were illumined on the canvases of such artists as John Joseph Cotman, Turner or Joseph Wright as well as inspiring the illustrative fantasies of John Martin. But only a romantic outsider, burning with a new philosophy, could conceive of England as undergoing that industrial revolution which was a necessary step to the great revolution of all working men.

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From the eighteen-sixties and seventies onwards, the vocabulary of British comment changed. It was not merely the spread and consolidation of factories and railways, the alleviation of some of the worst poverty and social hardship or the extinction of the older sorts of political radicalism which brought these changes. It was a growing awareness of new sorts of challenges; and they appeared well before the 'condition-of-England question' resurfaced in the eighteen-eighties. The very name and location of the 'New York Industrial Exhibition' of 1854 was no more than a symbol or portent. When, however, the select committee on scientific instruction reported worryingly in 1868 on 'the relation of industrial education to industrial progress', the new connotation of these words mirrored a new concern[30] – a consciousness of living in 'the modern industrial system' or of being troubled, in the eighteen-seventies, by 'the great industrial questions of the day',[31] unequivocally signalled in the title as well as the content of that massive enquiry of the eighteen-eighties, the royal commission on … the depression of trade and industry.

The times were obviously propitious for that historical Industrial Revolution to be discovered, or rather rediscovered. Yet, we cannot know precisely why Arnold Toynbee decided to use the term for the book which he was planning to write under that title while he was giving the lectures

[29] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, p. 129; his *Past and Present* (1843) is particularly rich in such examples of rhetorical and declamatory prose attacking his especial hates in the economic and social environment. For Harney on, e.g., the 'nasty, filthy, crawling Aristocratic and Shopocratic bugs', see A. R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge* (1956), pp. 49, 96.

[30] *Select Committee on Scientific Instruction* (P.P. 1867–8, XV), p. 20.

[31] *Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction* (P.P. 1872, XXV), p. 623.

on that topic in Balliol between October 1881 and mid summer 1882.[32] He had certainly read Mill and Jevons but he imparted to the term a far greater significance than they had, one nearer to that of Engels. When W. J. Ashley later observed that Toynbee was 'but scantily acquainted with German economic discussions', he was almost certainly referring to the German school of historical economists whom Ashley so much admired.[33] Toynbee did, however, refer on a number of occasions to Marx's ideas and he spoke of *Das Kapital* as one of the 'great text-books of socialism'.[34] As it was not translated into English until three years after Toynbee's death, this suggests some familiarity with either the German original or the French translation of 1875.[35] As early as 1873 in a letter to his sister, then in Germany, Toynbee had looked forward to her returning with 'a great deal of German' so that she would be able to help him 'in reading German books and learning the language'.[36] It is possible, therefore, that Toynbee made the acquaintance with the idea of the Industrial Revolution, as something more than a mere metaphor, in Engels's work. In 1940 that very eccentric Cambridge economic historian C. R. Fay asserted: 'Ask an Oxford student who is being viva'd in Modern Greats, "who invented the term Industrial Revolution?" and he will reply smartly: "Arnold Toynbee, who got it from Marx"'.[37] Toynbee was, however, at pains to distance himself from Marxian socialism. Yet, his evocation of the suffering masses and of the cataclysmic nature of industrial change, arriving at the end of the eighteenth century and replacing a rural, feudal and medieval England, clearly has echoes of Engels as well as of Gaskell and Carlyle from whose *Past and Present* he quotes.[38]

[32] A. Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution* (1884; 1969 edn., with introduction by T. S. Ashton), p. 27, n. 1. For an examination of Toynbee's prior acquaintance with the work of Engels, Marx, Mill, Jevons, and their use of the term, see the valuable biography by A. Kadish, *Apostle Arnold: the Life and Death of Arnold Toynbee, 1852–83* (1986).

[33] W. J. Ashley, *Surveys Historic and Economic* (1900), p. 430. Ashley had attended Toynbee's lectures and been, in part, responsible for gathering the notes which were printed as *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution*.

[34] Toynbee, *Lectures*, pp. 127, 130, 212. He sought to distinguish his brand of radicalism from both Marxist socialism and 'tory socialism' in his lecture 'Are radicals socialists?', given in London in 1883 (see M. Richter, *The Politics of Conscience* (1964), pp. 287–90).

[35] The first French translation of vol. i of *Das Kapital* came out in parts between 1872 and 1875. The translation, which did not meet with Marx's approval, was by Joseph Roy (see K. Marx, *Oeuvres*, i (Paris, 1963), pp. 538–41).

[36] *Reminiscences and Letters of Joseph and Arnold Toynbee*, ed. G. Toynbee (n.d.), pp. 113–14, 116–17.

[37] C. R. Fay, *English Economic History mainly since 1700* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 8.

[38] Toynbee, *Lectures*, p. 193.

Within a few years of the posthumous publication of Toynbee's *Industrial Revolution*, Engels's *Condition of the Working Classes* had appeared in English, in New York in 1887 and in London in 1892.[39] Before then, however, in fact even before Toynbee's book came out, Marx's and Engels's usage of the term had appeared in English in H. M. Hyndman's *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England*. Published in 1883, much of it is derived directly from their writings. To give one example, Engels's comparison of political, philosophical and industrial revolutions in France, Germany and England duly appears, in a modified form, in Hyndman.[40] So by the turn of the century, when the revived 'condition-of-England question' was still vibrating with ample resonance, the two lines of argument, Marxist and non-Marxist, which created the concept of the Industrial Revolution as a social disaster for the British working classes were available in English.

Outside that concept the two streams of thought remained as strikingly divergent as were Engels and Toynbee themselves. The contrasting characteristics of these two founding fathers of a myth merit a moment of emphasis. The one, detesting the Pietism of his parents, saw the Christian church as an arm of the repressive state and regarded its Evangelical manifestations in England as the hypocritical outpourings of the 'parsonocracy'; the other, drawing upon an Evangelical background and much influenced at Oxford by the idealism of T. H. Green, was a deeply religious man in whom intellectual interests and Christian convictions were fused in the interest of social reform. The one thundered against classical political economy; the other was rare among its historicist critics in trying to combine its teachings, suitably humanized, with the study of history. The one sought the revolutionary overthrow of the state by the workers; the other urged the desirability of more intervention by that state on behalf of the workers. And, perhaps the most striking contrast in view of their having both sprung from comfortable circumstances in the bourgeoisie, the one preached hatred of the middle class as an essential ingredient of socialism; the other, suffused by a sense of sin, saw an awareness of middle-class social guilt as the pathway to reforms to be carried through by enlightened leaders of the middle class on behalf of the alienated workers.

For the myth-making process such divergences scarcely matter. However diffused, the idea of the Industrial Revolution (by now very much in capital letters) as social catastrophe gathered momentum for sixty or so years, from

[39] Translated by Florence Wischnewetzky (New York, 1887; London, 1892).

[40] H. M. Hyndman, *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England* (1883), p. 138.

roughly the eighteen-nineties to the nineteen-fifties. Its dissemination via the newly emergent subject of economic history, and embodied in a series of well-known texts, has been amply treated and will certainly be familiar to this audience. Two particular points about this aspect of the diaspora may perhaps be stressed.

First, although the Toynbeean, non-Marxist stream was certainly the dominant influence in Britain, the Engels/Marx treatment of the Industrial Revolution left an early mark albeit limited in impact. As well as Hyndman's diffusion of a somewhat garbled version of this approach, there was, for example, Sidney Webb in the very first volume of the *Economic Journal* writing in 1891 of 'the subtle and pregnant analysis of the facts of the Industrial Revolution by Karl Marx'; and the bibliography of the Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism* of 1894 cites Engels's *Condition of the Working Classe*s in both German- and English-language editions as well as *Das Kapital* in both languages, but does not include Toynbee.[41] Engels's work also appeared in other relevant bibliographies around the turn of the century, for example in those of the textbooks by Cunningham and Beard.[42]

Second, and more important, was the notable enthusiasm for economic history evident in the university extension and workers' educational movements, especially the latter. By 1914 over half of all Workers' Educational Association (W.E.A.) tutorial classes were studying economics and economic history; and the especial popularity of industrial history ensured that various mutants of the Toynbee version of the Industrial Revolution were being disseminated in extra-mural lectures and W.E.A. classes.[43]

From one viewpoint the topic and the treatment were peculiarly well suited to that 'consciousness of sin' which had afflicted T. H. Green, Toynbee, Canon Barnett, Beatrice Webb and similar reforming spirits.

[41] S. Webb, 'The difficulties of individualism', *Economic Jour.*, i (1891), 360. S. and B. Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (1894), pp. 499–543; this bibliography, compiled by R. A. Peddie, does not appear in the 1920 edition. On the dissemination, in sundry guises and through various channels, of Marx's and Engels's ideas, including the role of the Industrial Revolution, see B. Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement, 1870–1920* (1965).

[42] W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, iii, pt. ii (1907), p. 955. In the text (p. 807), Cunningham comments that Engels's 'painstaking description of the housing of the Manchester poor is well worth perusal'. See also C. Beard, *The Industrial Revolution* (1901).

[43] A. Mansbridge, *An Adventure in Working Class Education* (1920), pp. 10, 42, 66; W. H. Draper, *University Extension: a Survey of 50 Years 1873–1923* (1923), pp. 71, 91–101; T. Kelley, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain* (2nd edn., 1970), p. 254.

For the consolidation of the role of the Industrial Revolution as myth, it mattered not at all that, from another viewpoint, there was hostility to the rapidly expanding W.E.A. on the part of the Plebs League and the Labour College which had been founded in 1909.[44] The Engels/Marx version was readily deployable in support of such confident assertions as that of Raymond Postgate who, in 1924, announced that the W.E.A. approach, and indeed 'all education that is not based on the central fact of the class struggle', was 'false history and false economics'.[45]

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Such remarks take us beyond economic and social history as an academic subject and into the wider world of politics and popular usage. Along diverse paths, both intra-mural and extra-mural, the idea of the Industrial Revolution reached the adherents, growing in number and variety, of the New Liberalism and the New Socialism. At Harrow in the nineteen-hundreds, via Townsend Warner's textbook, it reached the future whig historian G. M. Trevelyan;[46] in Liverpool in the nineteen-twenties, via Karl Marx, it reached the future trade union leader Jack Jones. As the latter recalled, he attended the local Labour College and 'even had a go at Marx's *Capital* … the first part made a big impression on me ... the enclosures and the revelations about factory conditions'. He admitted it was hard going but as 'an exposure of capitalism it helped me a great deal'.[47]

For trade unionists such historical offerings had an obvious appeal. They seemed so much more pertinent to their past and expressive of their hopes than conventional historical learning. Indeed, the trade union movement as a whole, growing in strength and confidence, increasingly drew upon its own history as myth. Its early struggles were readily identified with the trauma of the Industrial Revolution, complete with heroes, banners and martyrs. Of these the Tolpuddle farm labourers, celebrated in a centenary volume published by the Trades Union Congress in 1934, are the best known. This collective folklore provides a pertinent example of myth, enhancing and

[44] Simon, pp. 330–4; Kelley, p. 258.

[45] Quoted in M. Stocks, *The Workers Educational Association* (1953), p. 88.

[46] G. M. Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays* (1949), pp. 11–12. G. Townsend Warner, *Landmarks in English Industrial History* (1899) was an early, best-selling textbook much influenced by Toynbee, as was its immediate predecessor, H. de B. Gibbins, *The Industrial History of England* (1890) (see *The Study of Economic History*, ed. N. B. Harte (1971), p. xxiii).

[47] J. Jones, 'A Liverpool socialist education', *History Workshop*, xviii (1984), 95.

dramatizing belief.[48] The need for working men to be better educated and thus better equipped for the class battle was a theme of early socialists such as Hyndman and Morris; and appeals to history have long remained an important ingredient of reformist as well as revolutionary political thinking. So between the poles of Marxian socialism and middle-class, guilt-inspired reformism, the emergent Labour party and the trade unions created yet another focus upon the Industrial Revolution.

The term soon began to appear in sundry sorts of popular books, thus implanting it in ever-widening circles of public consciousness. It appeared in bestselling histories by authors as divergent in the political spectrum as H. G. Wells and Arthur Bryant.[49] In Wells's *Outline of History*, for example, first published in 1920 and then selling widely in popular editions during the inter-war years, the 'great change in human affairs known as the Industrial Revolution' brought a 'new barbarism'.[50] From the nineteen-thirties onwards sundry writers on philosophy, politics and literature took it up, underlining both the romantic and the catastrophic associations of the term. Stephen Spender, Bertrand Russell and Raymond Williams are merely a few of the better known examples of such disseminators.[51] It was increasingly paraded in all sorts of publications in the literary field. The introduction to a 1969 paperback edition of Dickens's *Hard Times*, for example, spoke of 'the first maniac onset of the Industrial Revolution'.[52] Across the Atlantic, American contributors to literary and political history likewise continued the catastrophic emphasis. In 1957, for instance, Richard Altick quoted Engels and presented the Industrial Revolution as an era when 'the English masses approached a state of downright bestiality'.[53] And the Toynbeean theme of rapid and total transformation can still be

[48] See especially H. Phelps Brown, *The Origins of Trade Union Power* (Oxford, 1986), p. 215; A. Fox, *History and Heritage: the Social Origins of the British Industrial Relations System* (1985), p. 91.

[49] A. Bryant, *English Saga 1840–1940* (1940). This work provides a notable example of history as myth replete with a golden age, patriotic sentiments and a demon king in the shape of laissez-faire industrialism. Bryant swallows Engels more or less whole and quotes him on 'the industrial revolution' (p. 48). *H. G. Wells, Outline of History* (1920).

[50] Wells, *Outline of History* (1930 edn.), pp. 856–7.

[51] S. Spender, *Forward from Liberalism* (1937), pp. 35, 87; B. Russell, *The Impact of Science on Society* (1951) and his *Autobiography*, ii (1968; pbk. edn. 1971), p. 203 ('The Industrial Revolution has destroyed the home, and the discovery of contraceptives is destroying the family'); Williams, *Culture*, pp. xiii–xiv, 30–1, 56–7.

[52] C. Dickens, *Hard Times* (Harmondsworth, 1969, ed. D. Craig), p. 16.

[53] R. D. Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago, Ill., 1957), pp. 94–6.

heard in the nineteen-eighties enunciated by various reputable writers.[54] In art and architecture, too, historical enquiries latched on to it as a great transforming agent. F. D. Klingender's *Art and the Industrial Revolution* of 1947 stressed its impact on romantic painting and poetry; and a decade later J. M. Richards's *The Functional Tradition* recorded and depicted its role in furthering the construction of mills, docks and warehouses. In a popular television series of 1969–70, *Civilization*, Kenneth Clark illuminated the familiar catastrophic vision and categorized the Industrial Revolution as 'part of the Romantic movement'.[55]

Widening awareness and the build up of myth were in no way impeded by the scholarly attack upon the interpretation of the Industrial Revolution as social catastrophe. Although Sir John Clapham's massive volumes never reached the sales levels enjoyed by the popular works of the Hammonds or Cole and Postgate, the reverberations of criticism grew louder from the nineteen-fifties onward. They came from the familiar writings of T. S. Ashton, Freidrich Hayek, W. W. Rostow and R. M. Hartwell; from the post-war boom in economic history in a much expanded university population; and from the dissemination through television, radio and the press of a growing general interest in the country's economic and social past. Attack brought counterattack from more sophisticated Marxists such as Eric Hobsbawm and Edward Thompson (the latter, in the nineteen-sixties, was still emphasizing the 'truly catastrophic nature of the Industrial Revolution').[56] The range of debate between 'optimists' and 'pessimists' was limited in the main to embattled intellectuals, though more and more of the interested public caught a whiff of the smoke of battle.

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By the nineteen-seventies, however, new influences outside this learned debate on interpretation were bearing upon the idea of the Industrial Revolution. As they made themselves felt so was the popular image shifted away from catastrophe to achievement; and the myth became, at least in part, a totem for the political Right rather than for the political Left.

[54] E.g., I. Webb, *From Custom to Capital: the English Novel and the Industrial Revolution* (New York, 1981), pp. 9, 162; I. Kramnick, 'Children's literature and bourgeois ideology: observations on culture and industrial capitalism', in *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment*, ed. P. Zagorin (Berkeley, Calif., 1980), pp. 204–5.

[55] F. D. Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution* (1947); J. M. Richards, *The Functional Tradition* (1955); K. Clark, *Civilization* (1969; pbk. edn. 1971), p. 324 and ff.

[56] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1965), p. 198.

Technical advance, especially in power-driven machinery, had, of course, been stressed by many authors, contemporary and later. It was central to the arguments of such enthusiasts as Sir Edward Baines, Charles Babbage and Andrew Ure; it formed a crucial part of Marx's economic analysis; and, until very recently, it has also been a main pillar of virtually all non-Marxist interpretations of the Industrial Revolution.[57] As the usage of the term widened it was picked up by quite disparate writers concerned not with social catastrophe but with technological change. The twentieth-century diffusion of the term also coincided with an increasing range of innovations affecting everyday life. Not surprisingly, therefore, other so-called 'industrial revolutions' were discovered to have happened at sundry times and in sundry places. They ranged from the bronze age to the twentieth century and were presented by a variety of scholars.[58] By the nineteen-fifties this multiplicity of revolutions was moving out of learned works into more popular media; and there was much talk of a 'second industrial revolution' going on or just about to happen. Various engineers and writers on science and industry presented it as a creature of factory automation, bringing massive social change.[59] Politicians took it up and in the nineteen-sixties the 'white heat' of yet another technologically based industrial revolution was being promised, even by left-wing enthusiasts who seemed to have entirely mislaid their copies of Engels. The term had really entered into common parlance. If its precise meaning was becoming obscured that was, after all, the normal fate of any truly worthwhile historical myth.

What, however, was finally to establish it in the great mythic pantheon of English history was not any new industrial revolution but the shrinkage or collapse of just those industries upon which the original Industrial Revolution had been founded. This, in turn, induced a massive wave of nostalgia, an emotion to which the British public seem curiously devoted. Taken in conjunction with the rise, for quite other reasons, of mass tourism, these developments have combined to transform the relics of Britain's industrial past into tourist shrines.[60] As cotton's glory finally departed, as textile mills

[57] Despite variations in the treatment of the role of machinery – be it in Charles Babbage's *On the Economy of Manufactures* (1832), Andrew Ure's *Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835) or in vol. i of Marx's *Das Kapital* – its central importance remained, just as it does in such modern works as P. Mathias, *The First Industrial Revolution* (1969; 2nd edn., 1983).

[58] See Clark, *The Idea of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 12–13.

[59] D. C. Coleman, 'Industrial growth and industrial revolutions', *Economica* (Feb. 1956), pp. 1–22.

[60] See R. Hewison, *The Heritage Industry* (1987), esp. ch. 4.

closed and as blast furnaces, steel works, shipyards, venerable docks and rural railways went the same way – so did *the* Industrial Revolution and its heroes enter Valhalla. Pioneered by the British but acquiring a name from the vocabulary of European romanticism, it achieved an appropriate immortality. Attended at its obsequies by cohorts of steam railway buffs, industrial archaeologists, canal restorers, cotton mill conservers and a gaggle of tourists, it suffered the ultimate take-over: it passed into the hands of the heritage business.

In the nineteen-seventies some 200 industrial sites of Britain's former glory were being restored. Laudatory testimonials rang out from celebrants: 'The Industrial Revolution was Great Britain's greatest single contribution to world civilization. The monuments to its early stages are as unique to Great Britain as those of classical antiquity to Greece or the Renaissance to the cities of northern Italy'.[61] Long obsolete machinery has been lovingly restored and put to work in museums. By the mid eighties, no fewer than 464 museums, many of them founded only since 1970, possessed collections of industrial material.[62] The Industrial Revolution, complete with much dubious history, had at last become a myth to be venerated; a new tradition had been invented.[63]

Engels and Toynbee may well both be turning in their graves. What on earth has happened to social catastrophe? The answer lies, of course, in the politics of economic policy. When the 'condition-of-England question' surfaced and resurfaced in the nineteenth century, the issue on both occasions was essentially the paradox of poverty amidst wealth. The fact of wealth was not in contention; the concern was for its distribution. In the new version of the nineteen-seventies, however, the paradox was reversed: much redistribution had been carried out but the wealth which had permitted it was seen to be slipping away as the industrial base decayed. The policy response, sanctioned by the return to power at three successive elections of the Thatcher governments, has uniquely sought to promote wealth creation by a return to what are now *believed* to have been the circumstances and attitudes attendant upon the Industrial Revolution.

[61] B. Trinder, 'Industrial conservation and industrial history', *History Workshop*, ii (1976), 172.

[62] Hewison, p. 91.

[63] Cf. other examples in Hobsbawm and Ranger; and for examples of myth-making and image-creating from popular prints, see R. Porter, 'Seeing the past', *Past & Present*, cxviii (1988), 186–205.

The name of Adam Smith is today regularly invoked by influential bodies concerned to promote the maximum of competition and the minimum of government intervention; an 'enterprise culture', presented as the reason for Britain's nineteenth-century industrial glory, is contrasted with a 'dependency culture' which is said to have sapped entrepreneurial vitality. The advocacy of economic freedoms, as popularized in classical political economy, allied to a celebration of past technical advances has echoed and re-echoed, even though not necessarily traced back to the works of Ure or J. R. McCulloch. A new edition, in 1986, of Smiles's *Self-Help*, complete with the imprimatur of an introduction by Sir Keith Joseph, sanctified 'Victorian values'.[64] Hayek is in and Keynes is out. Historians not normally associated with enquiries into our economic past have testified to the value of free enterprise in bringing about the Industrial Revolution. In 1978, for example, Hugh Thomas (now Lord Thomas) provided just such an offering. It was duly published with a foreword by the prime minister herself in which she deplored that 'the blackest picture of precisely those periods of our history when the greatest progress was achieved … and when Britain was furthest in advance of other nations' had been drawn by 'our Socialist academics'.[65] A new, entrepreneurial version of the great Industrial Revolution myth has thus been consecrated. The trophy has been captured by the radicals of the Right; the trade unionists have lost a banner; the Marxists have been alienated; and Toynbeean liberals and democrats pushed into a wet wilderness.

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What, meanwhile, are the economic historians doing about that one piece of the British economic past which the public has taken to heart? Here there is a nice irony, for the latest fashion is so to cut the Industrial Revolution down to size as almost to make it disappear. Disapproval of the term has

[64] S. Smiles, *Self-Help* (1859; 1986 edn., with introduction by Sir Keith Joseph). The introduction includes the claim that 'of all economic histories ever written, it is Smiles's *Self-Help* that most explicitly and vividly portrays, celebrates and – above all, *understands* – the "entrepreneur"' (p. 16). One cannot but wonder how many of 'all the economic histories ever written' Sir Keith had in fact read.

[65] M. Thatcher, foreword to H. Thomas, *History, Capitalism and Freedom* (1978). This pamphlet originated as a lecture given under the auspices of the Centre for Policy Studies at the Conservative party conference in 1978. I am grateful for the reference to my colleague James Raven whose article, 'British history and the enterprise culture', *Past & Present*, cxxiii (1989), 178–204, provides some interesting examples of the links between present politics and past history.

long been familiar in learned debate, evident of course more among the neutralists and optimists than among reformists and pessimists. Reservations are regularly aired in articles or in the introductory pages of textbooks. For various reasons it is said to be inappropriate or confusing; and it has even been suggested that the Industrial Revolution is a myth in the vulgar definition of that word.[66] Limiting definitions are periodically offered and revised. In recent times, however, these reservations have acquired a new force as a result of the work of econometrically minded historians. They have largely reduced the experience of those years to an assemblage of sectoral and aggregate growth rates: of output in agriculture, industry and commerce; of gross national product, capital formation, productivity and population. The prime result is to squash the Revolution into evolution: its origins are to be found earlier, its effects evident only later. Before 1830 economic growth was slow, with neither output nor incomes per head showing much increase; notable change was severely limited in extent. Only after the mid century was the economy much different and even then it was more a matter of structural change, from agriculture to industry, than the attainment of higher productivity. In short, continuity is stressed and the discontinuity implied by the idea of a revolution dismissed or, at best, downgraded. N. F. R. Crafts's *British Economic Growth* offers the clearest embodiment of this approach.[67]

The contrast between these econometric findings and those of the romantic versions, be they catastrophic or entrepreneurial, could hardly be

[66] Clapham had reservations about the use of the term and used it only very sparingly in his *Economic History of Modern Britain*. T. S. Ashton similarly distrusted it but saw it as 'so firmly embedded in common speech that it would be pedantic to offer a substitute' (T. S. Ashton, *The Industrial Revolution* (1948), p. 2). For an orthodox modern consideration, see Mathias, pp. 1–19; for a sophisticated reinterpretation, E. A. Wrigley, *Continuity and Change: the Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (Cambridge, 1986); and for one recent view of its capacity to mislead, see R. Cameron, 'A new view of European industrialization', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xxxviii (1985), 1–23. The contention that it simply did not happen can be found in M. Fores, 'The myth of a British Industrial Revolution', *History*, lxvi (1981), 181–98; and a stout rebuttal in A. E. Musson, 'The British Industrial Revolution', *History*, xlvii (1982), 252–8. A rather different sort of attack on the concept, particularly on the catastrophic vision, can be found in J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688–1832* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 64–93 and in his *Revolution and Rebellion* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 37–9 wherein it is suggested that it should be added to the 'list of spurious revolutions' (p. 38).

[67] N. F. R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1985). See also *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, ed. R. Floud and D. McCloskey (2 vols., Cambridge, 1981), especially vol. i; and C. H. Lee, *The British Economy since 1700* (Cambridge, 1986).

greater. In one, just a little happened. In the other, individual endeavour was crowned by transformation, wonders proliferated, suffering and exploitation were endured, wealth and poverty alike multiplied. In the one, the only contemporary evidence used is that which can be made to yield statistics.[68] In the other, mighty volumes of committee reports and evidence, literary outpourings, travellers' commentaries, moralists' reflections and political thunderings are all pressed into service. A musical analogy may help to bring out the contrast. Wagner's *Ring* cycle enshrines the romantic, revolutionary myth. (The *Ring* has itself, of course, been variously interpreted as myth; and it is no coincidence that in one well-known production, symbols of the Industrial Revolution have figured on stage, with Wotan as a Victorian entrepreneur.) Conversely, the econometric version is patently equivalent to the current fad of minimalism – sets of repetitive sequences with minimal marginal variations.

'Historians of all persuasions', it has been observed by Joel Mokyr, have come to the conclusion 'that the Industrial Revolution in Britain constituted a new point of departure in human history, an event of such moment to daily life that it compares to the advent of monotheism or the development of language'.[69] Yet, this is certainly *not* how it appears in some recent influential studies. Historians tackling any 'new point of departure in human history' might reasonably be expected to take heed of contemporary reactions. In practice, however, the perceptions of those experiencing that new departure in human history, whether they rejoiced in it or deplored it, are almost totally ignored by our quantitative minimalists. Views of the past consisting of measurable economic conclusions or judgements based upon assumptions of rational self-interest bear only a partial resemblance to history. This is not to imply that they are either unimportant or irrelevant. But to salute them as saviours come to demonstrate the falsity of a Marxist myth (as is done by Jonathan Clark)[70] is as misleading as to hail them as scientific truths hidden from those bunkered by conventional techniques of enquiry (a greeting favoured by some of the econometric historians). The entrepreneurial vision is as much a half truth as the catastrophic.

[68] A striking illustration is provided by the bibliographies in modern econometrically-orientated texts. They are almost completely bare of contemporary sources of any sort. The student is thus given virtually no guidance towards contemporary opinion, ideas or reactions.

[69] *The Economics of the Industrial Revolution*, ed. J. Mokyr (1985), p. 1.

[70] Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion*, p. 39.

Both, however, are reflections of the past which cannot but elude those who confine their attention to the measurable. What contemporaries believed they were witnessing, feeling, enjoying or suffering is an essential component of history as myth and demands the historian's attention. For it is upon such beliefs that many subsequent actions and convictions have rested.

The historian must therefore take proper cognisance of the Industrial Revolution as potent myth. In that capacity it has, as Bronislaw Malinowski put it, 'expressed, enhanced and codified beliefs'. Malinowski's statement was derived from his observations, as an anthropologist, of the Trobriand islanders. Yet, his extended comments on the subject are only too recognizably pertinent to the British islanders: 'The historical consideration of myth … shows that myth, taken as a whole, cannot be sober dispassionate history, since it is always made *ad hoc* to fulfill a certain sociological function, to glorify a certain group, or to justify an anomalous status'.[71] So what is the moral of this tale for the historian whose topic has thus been swept up into this mythic category? What dangers lurk in these historical depths?

Truth is what historians seek; myth is what societies need. Governments have long demonstrated their awareness of the latter by including historical myths in their arsenals of coercion and control. Theocracies have burned books and people alike in the name of religious myths; secular tyrannies, of more than one political hue, have at best deprived people of rights and at worst exterminated whole groups in the name of myths of colour, race or class. States mercifully free of such odious habits have been content gently to burnish sundry historical myths, blessing them both as part of their cultural inheritance and as suitable aids to their retention of power. In this country today a rosy version of the Industrial Revolution as myth, sanitized for tourists and theme parks, is being dutifully burnished and circulated.[72] This puts the serious historian of the Industrial Revolution into a difficult but challenging position. A *trahison des clercs* would be disgraceful; a return to the romantic version of catastrophe is clearly untenable; and a continued devotion to econometric minimalism,

[71] Malinowski, p. 125.

[72] Here is a nice example of the procedure apropos the former Quarry Bank textile mill. The apprentice house there is 'reinstated as a visitor attraction of historical significance and value … visitors are guided around the house by costumed staff who bring to life the working and living routines of the mill children in the Industrial Revolution' (*National Trust Magazine*, Spring 1989, p. 41).

however seductive to professional cognoscenti, looks like a pathway to neglect by the laity.

What lines should the historian follow? Obviously he (or she) should continue to debunk the pretentious or absurd, no doubt facing the while the same sort of indignation as recently greeted scholars who deflated the great Spanish Armada myth. To 'Disgusted, Plymouth Hoe' may well be added 'Outraged, Coalbrookdale'. Obviously, truth must be pursued along whatever lines seem right to the researcher. But it seems to me overwhelmingly important that historical enquiry should not ignore contemporary perception, be it political or religious, social or economic. Contemporaries knew only the partial truths of their own limited vision – filtered and distorted through the glass of irrationality and prejudice, ignorance and conviction.

Because the concept of the Industrial Revolution is enjoying a new incarnation as a symbol for a revived entrepreneurial enthusiasm, it is especially necessary that historians should present it in the round. There it should stand: warts and all, successes and failures, the howls of indignation and the cheers of approval, the reality of poverty along with unimagined improvements, the tribes of dreary imitators as well as the triumphant innovators, enlightenment and brutality, change and continuity, the measurable and the immeasurable. Furthermore, it needs to be placed in the continuum of earlier history. Because it has been seen as a romantic thing-in-itself, because of the extreme chronological specialization of historical studies, and because of the whiggishness of economic history, it is commonly treated as a necessary gateway to the future, a 'take-off' to the industrialized world of today. Most authorities on the Industrial Revolution do little more than glance at the world of Tudor or Stuart England. Who studies the period, say, 1450–1850 or 1500–1900? Too much of its current treatment is both limited in range and ahistorical in approach. The real gains in analysis have too often been made at the expense of narrative. The two must complement each other just as an appreciation of the economics of the Industrial Revolution needs to be complemented by an understanding of the political and social structure in which it took place or the variant brands of Christianity which inspired so much of contemporary response.

In the final analysis the term is a metaphor for a complexity not otherwise describable. The metaphor has become myth – emotive, politically useful, detachable from reality. To quote Malinowski once again: 'Myth is an indispensable ingredient of all cultures. It is constantly regenerated; every

historical change creates its mythology, which is, however, but indirectly related to historical fact. Myth is a constant by-product of living faith, which is in need of miracles; of sociological status, which demands precedent; of moral rule, which requires sanction'.[73] Spawned by romanticism and its meaning variously distorted, the idea of the Industrial Revolution can now join the ranks of potent myths and take its place alongside those diverse images of the past which Bernard Lewis has so neatly categorized as history remembered, recovered or invented.[74] Whatever its position in a wider analysis of economic growth, the Industrial Revolution cannot but remain a central topic in this country's history. Unless, however, it is addressed by historians in more comprehensive terms than is currently fashionable, then I fear that the gap between that truth which the historian seeks and that myth which societies need will not be narrowed and may even be widened. I hope it is not too late.

[73] Malinowski, p. 146.
[74] B. Lewis, *History Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton, N.J., 1976).

The uncertainties of isolation: Japan between the wars
Ian Nish (1992)

Introduction

Antony Best

Ian Nish is renowned as one of the leading experts in the world on the history of Japanese foreign relations in the modern era. In a long and distinguished career he has written about many different aspects of Japan's interaction with the world, but he is probably best known for his magisterial two-volume history of the Anglo-Japanese alliance – *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: the Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894–1907* (1966) and *Alliance in Decline: a Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1908–23* (1972). Nish's Creighton Lecture of October 1992 builds on this work by providing a penetrating overview of the effect that international isolation had on Japan in the years following the end of the alliance in 1922 until the eventual ill-fated signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany in 1936. The lecture also draws on the splendid book that he had published the previous year, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China and the League of Nations, 1931–3* (1991) which analysed why Japan chose to break with the Western-dominated League of Nations in 1933.

In this lecture Nish clearly demonstrates why he has such a high reputation in the discipline of international history. Focusing in particular on why it was not possible in the early nineteen-thirties to breathe new life into Anglo-Japanese relations, he uses a wide variety of both Japanese- and English-language primary and secondary sources to weave together a fascinating, witty and perceptive study that brings great clarity to an immensely complicated series of events. He also shows that he is fully aware

A. Best, Introduction; and I. Nish, 'The uncertainties of isolation: Japan between the wars', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 247–66.

of recent trends in the historical debate about his subject and incorporates these new historiographical insights into his overview.

The main argument that Nish puts forward in the lecture is that Japan's isolation in the world was as much a reflection of its domestic politics as of international events. This is an important observation for it reminds us that, for all of the talk of Imperial Japan in the nineteen-thirties being dominated by the army, the country cannot be treated as simply monolithic. Instead it was divided into a number of different factions and this frequently had the effect of pitting its key institutions, such as the army, the navy, the court and the diet, against each other. Thus, he argues that in late 1931 the Japanese foreign ministry agreed to a League of Nations enquiry into the events that had led to the outbreak of the Manchurian crisis earlier that year in the hope that this might help to curb the army's interest in imperial expansion. He also notes that in 1934, when the Japanese government and the army appeared to show some interest in coming to a *modus vivendi* with the British, it was the navy, which typically has been seen as a pro-Western apolitical force, that emerged as the irreconcilable obstacle to any such overture. Finally, he demonstrates that even Japan's eventual exit from isolation – its signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936 – was a matter of contention, for it was an army initiative which garnered little enthusiasm from the other pillars of power in the country.

Another aspect of the times that stands out from this lecture is the difficulty that the Japanese elite had in understanding the outside world. Nish observes that in 1933 Japan left the League of Nations in the belief that the organization did not understand the regional politics of East Asia, but instead judged events from a global perspective. But how could a body based on the universal principle of collective security be expected to react in any other way? Moreover, he outlines that by 1932 a number of Japanese figures felt that Japan's future lay in rebuilding relations with Britain on the basis that the latter would be keen to associate itself with any anti-Soviet grouping. Here too was naïve and wishful thinking. For Britain, the Soviet Union represented at this time an ideological threat for the long term, whereas the rise of Japanese expansionism, in particular when seen in the context of growing instability in Europe, posed a real military menace to the British colonies and interests in Asia that it was ill-equipped to defend.

Nish thus presents us with an image not of an all-conquering militarist country in the Nazi mould, but rather with a confused and intensely divided nation with a weak government, which, both admiring and resentful of the

West, followed a meandering path that would eventually lead it to stumble into a catastrophic series of wars. The key word in the title of the lecture therefore turns out to be 'uncertainty', for here was a state deeply uncertain about how to advance its interests in the world and whether it needed a partner to help it do so. In drawing our attention to the significance of this factor, Nish makes a very important point, for he emphasizes the complexity of Japan's position and underlines the danger of interpreting Japan's road to war as an exercise in determinism.

I should note finally that I am very touched that towards the end of the lecture Ian, who was my doctoral supervisor, mentions my own research findings and refers to me as Dr. Best, for it was on that very day that I had passed my viva and thus earned that title. The generosity of the gesture is typical of one of the historical profession's great figures.

The uncertainties of isolation: Japan between the wars*

Ian Nish (1992)

Principal, Professor Beasley, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very conscious of the honour which the University has done me by inviting me to deliver the Creighton Trust Lecture and to join the distinguished company of those who have given the lectures in memory, and to the honour, of Bishop Mandell Creighton, cleric, historian and educationist.

Bishop Creighton became bishop of London in 1897 and through his friendship with Beatrice Webb became the first president of the court of governors of the London School of Economics.[1] In that capacity he laid the foundation stone of the building in Houghton Street and Clare Market on 2 July 1900. He also made a formidable contribution to the University, having served as chairman of one of the commissions on the University of London and later as a member of the royal (Gresham) commission on the subject.

Bishop Creighton died in the same month as Queen Victoria, in January 1901. He did not live to see the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in January 1902. I am not sure that it would have occurred to him to listen to an academic lecture on Japanese history. But I am fortified in offering such a thing today by your presence in the chair as your many writings on the subject from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries were the pioneer studies in this country.

* This article was first published by the University of London, 1993. The editors would like to thank Professor Nish for his kind permission to reproduce it here, and for his helpful comments during the publication process.

[1] '[Creighton was] one of our best friends' (N. and J. MacKenzie, *Diary of Beatrice Webb*, ii: *1892–1905* (1983), p. 197, entry for 15 Jan. 1901).

This lecture deals with Japan between the wars, that is, between the First World War in which she was a minor participant and the skirmishes of July 1937 which led on to a full-scale war with China. For most of this period Japan was politically isolated, in the sense that she had no formal partner or ally, although she was an active enough member of the international community. This led to a sense of uncertainty and insecurity, which was felt in varying degrees by statesmen of the period. The question was how far Japan's vulnerability mattered in view of the fact that she was geographically remote from the rest of the world.

One of the arguments which was often heard in the nineteen-thirties was that Japan had no reason to fear isolation because she had been for over two centuries between the sixteen-thirties and 1853 a sealed country (*sakoku*) and had despite her isolation made abundant progress during that period. But recent scholarship suggests that it is a historical misconception to speak of this period as one of 'isolation'. While the shogun rulers of the day did not want the intrusion of missionaries and political subversives from the West and issued their exclusion edicts, they were at the same time permitting a thriving trade with China and through the Chinese (and to a lesser extent the Dutch) with south-east Asia. This China trade which was concentrated on the port of Nagasaki in western Japan also had a deep influence on Japan's political and cultural life.[2]

So the 'isolation' of which we shall be speaking is not Japan's isolation from China and her continental neighbours which has hardly been feasible for most periods of her history. We shall be speaking of Japan's isolation in the world. This distinction is familiar enough to an island-kingdom like Britain. The third marquess of Salisbury reminds us:

> There is all the difference in the world between good-natured, good-humoured effort to keep well in with your neighbours and that spirit of haughty and sullen isolation which has been dignified by the name of 'non-intervention'. We are part of the Community of Europe and we must do our duty as such. (1888)[3]

I do not wish to dwell on the latter part of that explosive message from the past so much as the former. The Japanese did not think of relations with

[2] R. Toby, 'Rekishiteki ni mita kindai Nihon no hyōsō to shinsō', in *Sekai no naka no Nohinjin* (Osaka, 1990), pp. 209–32; M. B. Jansen, *China in the Tokugawa World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), chs. 1, 3.

[3] Quoted in *The FCO: Policy, People and Places, 1782–1991* (F.O. Historical Branch, 1991), p. 12.

China as being a matter of isolation. But from the coming of Commodore Perry in 1853 onwards, Japan, as Professor Beasley has written in more than one of his books, had her noisy group of 'Eurosceptics', that is, those who wanted Europeans to keep their distance. Compared to the more modern phenomenon of that name, the Japanese sceptics were probably more skilful at assassination.

As the Meiji government settled down after 1868 Japan was much preoccupied with her dealings with Korea, China, the Ryukyu islands and Taiwan. But east Asia was until the eighteen-nineties isolated from the rest of the world. The problem for the Meiji leaders was whether their country needed a closer relationship with one of the countries of Europe. In private memoranda of the period there were many possible partners mentioned: Germany, France and Britain. After some decades of speculation Japan decided to enter into an alliance with Britain in 1902 which was to last for two decades. While the Japanese insisted that the terms of the alliance treaty should specify that it was limited to 'the Extreme East', it was in practice global.

The Anglo-Japanese alliance came to an end at the Washington Conference in 1921 and was replaced by a four-power treaty taking in the United States and France as well as the original allies. Most modern scholars regard the new treaty as a feeble substitute for the alliance, even though it was itself in decline. In a speech in Washington on the announcement of the change, Arthur Balfour summed up Britain's feelings thus: 'When two nations have been united in that fiery ordeal, they cannot at the end of it take off their hats one to the other and politely part as two strangers part who travel together for a few hours in a railway train'.[4] The experience of working together in the First World War had left its mark on both countries and the parting was a matter of regret for Britain. Hence this fastidious metaphor of Edwardian respectability – the raising of hats.

But how did Japan really react to the dropping of the alliance? General Itami Matsuo, the Japanese military attaché in London, compared the alliance to a 'whiskey and soda' and the four-power treaty to a 'lemon squash', adding that he had been around officers' messes in Britain long enough to prefer the former concoction.[5] Not all Japanese could treat the matter so jocularly. Now that the Japanese have published their documents on their reaction to the Washington settlement, we can form some judgement on how their

[4] B. E. C. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, ii: *1906-30* (1936), p. 330.
[5] F. S. G. Piggot, *Broken Thread* (Aldershot, 1950), pp. 148–9.

leaders viewed it. One who drew up a memorandum of his reactions as soon as the conference ended was General Tanaka Kunishige, head of the military delegation and also a former military attaché in London:

> I felt acutely throughout the conference that each country's attitude was being decided by calculations about its own position purely on the basis of its national self-interest. If there are those who think that permanent peace in the Far East or the Pacific has in practice been brought about as a result of this conference, one must say that they are making a big mistake [*mōdan*]. In one section of the American people, some have expressed the view that the attitude taken by Japan at this conference has been unexpectedly conciliatory and understanding and that its success has been due to this change on the part of Japan. While the black clouds which used to exist between the United States and Japan have certainly been dispelled and relations between the two should improve in future, America's satisfaction over the success of the conference is no more than a short-lived phenomenon. In the course of time she will return to her former posture and assume the mantle of the hegemonic power [in the Pacific region]. There will probably come a time when Japan may regret that she is being restricted [*sokubaku*] by the various treaties concluded at this conference and will lose her freedom of action. I believe it to be important that our people should with great determination [*kakugo*] use this time to explore the ways of self-sufficiency and prepare for new international competition.[6]

This assessment by one of Japan's thinking soldiers may not be representative of Japanese political thinking as a whole but it was intended for circulation among his military colleagues and was probably typical of military thinking. In Japan, as in other countries, the historian has to be wary about taking a single opinion for that of a whole nation: one Japanese swallow does not make a Japanese summer. One hesitates to describe Tanaka's views as broadly supported. But they were probably more representative than many of the public speeches which other leaders made when they returned from Washington. These tended to be worded more soothingly for the purpose of international consumption.[7]

[6] Tanaka to Yamanashi, 8 Feb. 1922 (*Nihon gaikō bunsho* (Washington Conference ser., ii, Tokyo, 1978), pp. 637–9).

[7] *Nihon gaikō bunsho*, pp. 656–65.

The diplomats too faced the changes which had crept into the post-war world without enthusiasm. The Japanese did not like the New Diplomacy which had led to the rejection of the British alliance. The veteran diplomat, Viscount Ishii Kikujirō, bemoaned the passing of the Old Diplomacy. He wrote in his autobiography in 1930 that diplomacy had since 1919 come to involve too large a measure of propaganda (*senden*). In the Old Japan, he claimed, there had been no such thing as propaganda; and politics were conducted in secrecy. But, because of the new-style diplomacy introduced under President Wilson, it had become necessary to set up a press and information department (*Jōhōbu*) in the foreign ministry. Ishii conceded that it had become necessary to inform one's own people and explain things to the press, both domestic and foreign. This was uncongenial to most Japanese bureaucrats, who preferred secrecy to openness. So far as dealings with the international media were concerned, the Japanese were exposed to them on a large scale at the Paris Peace Conference and the Washington Conference. Ishii frankly admitted that they were hampered there because 'languages are the great shortcoming of our people'.[8] And social conventions were also changing. There is the story of Japan's chief delegate at the Washington Conference, Admiral Katō Tomosaburō, being groomed on what was expected of an international statesman and being told that he had to wear civilian dress and wave nonchalantly to the crowds and the cameramen. We may imagine that he felt that it was out of character for an admiral of the fleet to smile to cameras.[9] How many politicians must have said this since then (under their breath, of course)?

While the alliance had ended, it cast a long shadow over the nineteen-twenties. As Professor Hosoya has argued, there was an afterglow to the alliance for a decade.[10] 'Afterglow' is an imprecise concept; and the ending of the alliance closed some doors but left others unaffected. Thus, Japanese officers could no longer come to British naval colleges and instead looked to Germany for technological help with the navy and the naval air arm, while British military attachés could not so readily attend Japanese army manoeuvres.[11] On the other hand, the men who ruled Japan had grown

[8] Ishii Kikujirō, *Gaikō Yoroku* (Tokyo, 1930), pp. 436–7. This section summarizes the arguments of Ishii in chs. 6–7 (pp. 403–41).

[9] Bamba Nobuya, *Japanese Diplomacy in a Dilemma* (Kyoto, 1972), p. 158, quoting Shidehara Kijurō, *Gaikō 50-nen*.

[10] Hosoya Chihiro, *Nichi-Ei kankeishi, 1917–49* (Tokyo, 1982), pp. 8–13.

[11] *Nihon gaikō bunsho*, p. 666.

up in the alliance period and were used to this nexus. And as Professor Wakamura shows, bankers and businessmen seem to have clung to the existing British channels because of an assumed hostility on the part of Wall Street. The Gold Standard was upheld despite the turbulent scene of banking collapses.[12] Had Japan been able to form some alternative arrangement, it might have been different; but relations with the United States were increasingly accorded a greater degree of importance than those with Britain. But for most of the nineteen-twenties Japan was preoccupied with the domestic scene after the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923. Britain, like the United States, contributed generously to the cause of earthquake relief.

Mr. Smith of the University of Ulster in a recent study has argued that Sir Charles Eliot, the British ambassador in Tokyo from 1921 to 1926, who was particularly distressed by the abrogation of the alliance, set out to project an image of a Britain which had not entirely abandoned its old ally. He concludes, however, that these views did not tally with those of the London government which tended to consider that Japanese interests and British interests in east Asia were at odds and that Britain's came closer to those of the United States.[13]

Be that as it may, the wind of change blew rather coldly against Japan when Uchida visited London in 1928 after signing the Kellogg-Briand pact. His mission from Prime Minister Tanaka was to seek co-operation from Britain in China, if need be by offering some sort of return to the alliance. But Britain, while she welcomed joint consultation, had no interest in open partnership in China.[14]

In compensation for the isolation brought about by the loss of the alliance, Japan became a founder member of the League of Nations and a permanent member of council, which offered her a global role. The first occasion on which Japan was seriously at odds with the League was in 1927 when the far eastern question livened up and the Chinese Nationalist government referred the Tsinan incident for determination by the League. On 19 April the Seiyūkai cabinet of General Tanaka Giichi decided to send an expeditionary force to Shantung. These troops became involved in

[12] Nakamura Takafusa in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vi: *20th Century* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 454; Fukai Eigō, *Kaiko 70-nen* (Tokyo, 1941), chs. 19–20.

[13] D. Smith, 'Sir Charles Eliot (1862–1931) and Japan', in *Britain and Japan, 1859–1991: Themes and Personalities*, ed. Sir H. Cortazzi and G. Daniels (1991), pp. 196–7.

[14] *Uchida Yasuya*, ed. Ikei Masaru (Tokyo, 1969), pp. 283–4.

fighting with the Kuomintang forces of China in the inland city of Tsinan in May. Among other actions, the Nanking government complained to the League and called for the council to be convened. Sir Eric Drummond, the secretary-general, and the senior Japanese official on the secretariat, Sugimura Yotarō, tried to overcome the problem by exchange of correspondence. Kuomintang China was in any case not recognized by many of the powers and was not paying her subscriptions to the League regularly so was not in a strong position to press her demands. It did not, therefore, become a major issue at Geneva at this time.

Japan remained an enthusiastic member of the League so long as its rulings did not conflict with her national interests. She was, however, taken aback when China referred the Manchurian crisis to the League on 19 September 1931. To her surprise the League took it up when the Japanese Kwantung army had foreseen that Europe was looking the other way because of the devastating European economic depression and would not allow itself to get involved. The weak Japanese cabinet initially defended the army's position in debates at Geneva but soon found that the army was seriously out of control. After considering various options to secure discipline over the army, it decided to play (what might be called) the League card. In the tug of war which was Japanese politics in the nineteen-thirties, the civilians had to mobilize whatever ally was available, often the navy against the army. On this occasion, it sought to bring in the League as counterpoise to the Kwantung army by sponsoring the notion that the League should send a commission of enquiry (which ultimately came to be known as 'the Lytton Commission') to enquire into, and report on, the happenings in Manchuria.[15] This risky strategy of 'bringing in the Old World to redress the balance of the New' (if I may twist the words of George Canning) was later to be regretted.

The more the League criticized Japan, the more the League's Japanese critics called for Japan to leave the League and go it alone. By the time Manchukuo had been created in the spring of 1932, the army and its civilian allies had become extremely vociferous. The army predicted that none of the League powers would lift a finger against Japan and she had nothing to lose by isolation. The civilian politicians who supported the military in their actions claimed in the parliamentary debate in August that Japan had in practice already adopted an independent policy and jettisoned the

[15] I. Nish, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China and the League of Nations, 1931–3* (1992), ch. 2 *passim*.

'imitative diplomacy' which she had employed in the nineteen-twenties; Japan was now able to stand on her own feet.[16] She might be 'isolated' but she had proved that there was nothing to fear from being isolated. The League, they argued, needed Japan more than Japan needed the League.

By the time the Lytton report had been published and the debates on it were taking place in Geneva, the feeling was gaining ground in Japan that the League was the symbol of an international order that was unjust to her. Prince Konoe, later to be prime minister but then on the fringes of politics, argued in an essay in February 1933, that 'there was inherent injustice in international affairs: the world war had been a struggle between advanced countries that were satisfied by the status quo and less advanced countries that were not. It was fallacious for Western countries to oppose Japanese actions in Manchuria in the name of peace'.[17] Sentiments, I suspect, very similar to those which could be heard in Germany. On 24 February 1933 the League assembly adopted the Lytton commission's report. By this time it was apparent that, while the League would endorse the findings of its Lytton commission, it was not going to expel Japan from its membership. Should Japan herself take the initiative and leave the League? This led to an agonizing debate during March. Against were the arguments about the consequences for Japan of isolation. In favour were the tub-thumping rhetoric of the past year, the desire for an overdue autonomy and the pride of the military which had been hurt by the League's findings. In the event, the decision was more emotional than rational, a foretaste perhaps of the decision in 1941 about Pearl Harbor and Malaya. In a divided house, the Japanese decided irretrievably on leaving the League and notice was given on 27 March.

In her letter giving notice of withdrawal, Japan stated that she had 'been led to realise the existence of an irreconcilable divergence of views, dividing Japan and the League on policies of peace, and especially as regards the fundamental principles to be followed in the establishment of a durable peace in the Far East'.[18] The League had demonstrated that it did not understand the affairs of east Asia. Japan felt she had genuine grievances against China and had little sense of guilt over happenings in Manchuria. Nor did she have much remorse at leaving the League which was after all

[16] Nish, *Japan's Struggle*, p. 159.

[17] Usui Katsumi in Hosoya, *Nichi-Ei kankeishi*, pp. 134–5.

[18] Uchida to secretary-general, League of Nations, 27 March 1933 (quoted in I. Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869–1942: Kasumigaseki to Miyakezaka* (1977), pp. 299–300).

a voluntary body. It had, in Japan's view, made a decision based on global considerations over a regional incident in which it had not much expertise. Resignation was the natural course for a country which felt that it was fully justified in its actions.

Even those of moderate opinion did not dispute Japan's withdrawal. Let me illustrate this by quoting one of Japan's League enthusiasts, Nitobe Inazō, who had been Japan's nominee as assistant secretary of the League in the nineteen-twenties:

> The time is not yet ripe for international cooperation ... Strong nationalistic tendencies [are] recently rampant in every country of the world. A dozen years ago, when the Great War ended, the nations stood aghast at the horrors of war, and they made a holy decision to abolish it. Now that these horrors are fast fading out of man's memory, the sordid interests of each nation are once more the dominant motives of statesmen. If, under these conditions, the League does not act with the wisdom of a serpent, taking due account of nationalism, it may foster international disruption by its meddlesome policy.[19]

In other words, Japan was within her rights in doing what she did in Manchuria and the League had made matters worse by interfering. Obviously those less attached to the League were less broad-minded. But the official line was expressed by the new foreign minister in his diet speech on 22 January 1934: 'Although Japan has left the League, it is not her purpose to isolate herself from that body or to stand alone in the Far East. On the contrary she wished to make clear to the world that her cause was a just one'.[20]

Japan was much less self-confident than the public rhetoric of the early nineteen-thirties would suggest. There was real uncertainty about the possible effects of the course of isolation which she had chosen for herself. We may separate the economic from the political and strategic aspects of isolation. Many Japanese recognized the fragility of Japan's economic position in a hostile international financial world. The Japanese ambassador in London was to complain to the foreign office that his country's financial credit in Britain was unhappily low. He:

[19] 'Stress on nationalism', 18 July 1933, in *The Works of Inazo Nitobe* (Tokyo, 1972), pp. 493–4.

[20] Cf. *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–39*, ed. W. N. Medlicott (2nd ser., xx, 1984), no. 79.

> considered it undeservedly so, for Japan had never defaulted on her obligations, whereas China who had defaulted, had now better credit in London than Japan. It seemed as though it would therefore pay Japan to default. She might then get better terms ... The heavy financial charges which Japan had to bear, not only in paying interest on her foreign loans, but also owing to the high cost to her of trade bills, in its turn due to the low value of the yen, resulted in Japan having to export more in order to meet her obligations.[21]

Resentful as Japan was at these instances of apparent discrimination, she had to bear with them as she could hardly afford the greatly increased budgets for the development of Manchuria and might need to have recourse to world money markets. It was the government's hope to encourage investment especially from Britain and the United States. But it was awkward that both of these powers had declined to recognize Manchukuo.

Turning from finance to trading, there was real uncertainty about the possible effects of 'commercial encirclement' over raw materials and energy sources as factors of economic isolation. Was the world likely to gang up against a country like Japan which was so short of natural resources? It already seemed that certain powers were shutting off their dependent territories against Japanese competition. And could Japan cope with her great population explosion without the co-operation of the colonial powers? However inconsistent it was with her policy of withdrawal from the League, Japan did not dare to stand aloof from the World Economic Conference held in London in June 1933.[22]

There were signs that some also feared political isolation. There were abortive approaches for a treaty to the Soviet Union during 1932 and to France in September of that year. In the aftermath of the Manchurian crisis Japan seems to have set about repairing her fences in a business-like manner, turning to the United States and Britain in particular. I shall not touch in detail here on the so-called Anglo-Japanese rapprochement of 1934. It was first brought to public notice by Professor D. Cameron Watt in 1965 and has since been explored by several authors.[23] It is a tantalizing story because,

[21] *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–39*, ed. W. N. Medlicott (2nd ser., xxi, 1984), no. 1, Eden to Clive, 6 Nov. 1936.

[22] Fukai, *Kaiko 70-nen*, p. 280.

[23] D. C. Watt, *Personalities and Policies* (1965), pp. 83–99. The most recent study of this topic is G. Bennett, 'British policy in the Far East, 1933–6: treasury and foreign office', *Modern Asian Stud.*, xxvi (1992), 545–68.

like so many cases in the Anglo-Japanese relationship, the archives of the two countries do not tally and the story that emerges from British libraries and private papers cannot be readily confirmed in Japan.

The mystery is increased by a third factor, Japan's fear of military isolation. After the euphoria of 1932 had passed, Japanese generals began to look for partners. Their purpose was to identify friendly powers which would join them in deterring Soviet Russia. The army minister from late 1931 to the end of 1933 was General Araki Sadao who might be described as the intellectual soldier. He was popular among the younger officers and was one of the leaders of the *kōdōha* wing in the Japanese army, notable for its suspicion of Soviet Russia. By a strange paradox, he was unusually accessible to foreigners. He had held discussions through an interpreter with Lord Lytton and his colleagues and scored rather a success with them in 1932.[24] Because of his anti-communism, he clung to the idea which had developed under the Seiyūkai ministry of General Tanaka Giichi (1927–9) that co-operation with Britain would be beneficial for Japan.

Strangely enough this idea was upheld under totally different circumstances by the later Seiyūkai ministry of Inukai Tsuyoshi (Ki) in 1931–2 and the cross-party ministry of Admiral Saitō Makoto (1932–4). A ministry of war pamphlet drawn up in July 1932 analysed the attitudes of the Great Powers towards the Manchurian crisis. It took the view that Britain was the most favourable to Japan and predicted that her friendly posture would continue.[25] Even more surprisingly, the Kwantung army in its appreciation of the situation in the autumn of 1932 favoured the pursuit of a pro-British policy. It even speculated about the desirability of giving Britain a guarantee for the security of her Indian territories – a strange echo of the Indian clause in the 1905 Anglo-Japanese alliance.[26] Nothing came of these expressions of opinion; but they are important for the historian as indicating the optimism of the Japanese military about the state of British opinion (which was scarcely justified).

The appointment of Arthur Edwardes, a British national who had formerly been the inspector-general of the Chinese maritime customs, as adviser to the Manchukuo government may be relevant in this context. It took place in the autumn of 1932 and just as the Manchurian issue was about to come before the League of Nations. It may have been thought

[24] Nish, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism*, p. 108.
[25] Hosoya in Hosoya, *Nichi-Ei kankeishi*, p. 17.
[26] Hosoya in Hosoya, *Nichi-Ei kankeishi*, p. 17.

that Edwardes would be useful as a lobbyist to win over some elements of British opinion which were not thought to be fundamentally ill-disposed to the Japanese case.[27]

The same theme recurs at the time of the Five-minister Conference in October 1933. Araki and the army generally still held the view that collaboration with Britain was the best way to save Japan from isolation and improve security vis-à-vis the Comintern. It does not seem to have struck him that Britain's standpoint had been radically transformed because of the Manchurian crisis and Japan's departure from the League. On 1 November 1933 he passed a message through intermediaries – a conventional practice in Japan – that he would like to meet the British chargé d'affaires to have a frank discussion on Anglo-Japanese relations.[28] After authorization from London the chargé held an informal meeting with Araki; but it was only after Ambassador Lindley's return from leave that any serious talks took place. This meeting took place far from the prying eyes of the press at a country inn at Atami on 20 February 1934. Araki, who had become ill in January, was by this time out of office though he still had enough support within the *kōdō* wing of the army to carry weight in the government. He put his view that Anglo-Japanese relations should be improved as a defence against Bolshevism by an alliance of these two monarchic states.[29] This accorded with Araki's faith in the imperial system in Japan. But the views he advocated of improved Anglo-Japanese relations were broadly in line with the ideas circulating in the foreign ministry. It was odd, therefore, that the spokesman for the Japanese should on this occasion come from the ranks of the military – and from one who had something of the reputation of being a bogeyman abroad. Nonetheless the British were fairly responsive: Ambassador Lindley left Tokyo on retirement at the end of April but his successor, Sir Robert Clive, continued to meet Araki and speak nostalgically on the Anglo-Japanese alliance. This was clearly an authorized act. Something of London's thinking at the time comes out in a remark of the influential undersecretary, Sir Victor Wellesley, on 3 April: 'The key note of Japan's policy is always the *fear of political isolation* and, however much

[27] Nish, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism*, p. 189.

[28] Diary of Capt. Malcolm Kennedy, 1 Nov. 1933, in Kennedy Papers (University of Sheffield Library). Kennedy's own version of these events is given in M. D. Kennedy, *The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917-35* (Manchester, 1969), pp. 269–72. Unfortunately these events are not confirmed from Japanese sources though Kennedy's account is generally supported by official British sources.

[29] *Documents on British Foreign Policy* (2nd ser., xx), nos. 50, 88.

we may quarrel with her, in the end she will always come back to her first love, not because she really likes us but because on the whole we are the best of the bunch'.[30] Wellesley overestimated Britain's bargaining position. But he evidently recognized Japan as being another opportunistic power like herself.

The absence of the navy from these overtures was conspicuous. Despite the goodwill promoted by the visit of Admiral Sir Frederic Dreyer and Britain's far eastern squadron to Japanese ports in December 1933, the old Anglophile groups in Japanese naval circles no longer carried the same weight as before. The remaining members of the treaty faction (*jōyakuha*) had been removed in the Osumi purge in 1934.[31] The problem for Japan was that the Washington and London naval treaties were due to lapse unless renewed in 1936. The consensus in the navy was that Japan could no longer accept quantitative restriction of the size of her fleet. If the treaties were to be denounced, Japan would have to give notice during 1934. Unlike the army, the navy favoured going it alone and cutting adrift from the entanglements imposed by international disarmament.

Britain wanted to keep the naval treaties going but there was a yawning gap about the tactics to be applied to keep Japan within the treaty structure. When the report of the defence requirements committee came before the cabinet on 13 March 1934, it carried with it a strong call from Neville Chamberlain as chancellor of the exchequer for an improvement in Anglo-Japanese relations. Because of a loss of confidence in the United States, the admiralty was inclined to support this on the ground that 'Japan wanted equality in armaments, but she might not press this demand if she had a pact of mutual non-aggression'.[32] Even the foreign office, which was the ministry most distrustful of Japan, agreed that, if some sort of pact could be worked out before the preliminary naval talks which were due to begin in the autumn, it would be worth exploring.

For some months no forward move was made. But on 3 July, just three days before a new Japanese government came to office under Admiral Okada, the foreign minister himself proposed to the British ambassador, Sir Robert Clive, that 'Japan would be ready to conclude a non-aggression pact' with Britain. London did not immediately respond. It was August

[30] *Documents on British Foreign Policy* (2nd ser., xx), nos. 88, n. 4 (my italics).

[31] Ikeda Kiyoshi, *Nihon no kaigun*, ii. 125, describes the purge conducted by Admiral of the Fleet Osumi Mineo, when he became navy minister in 1934.

[32] *Documents on British Foreign Policy* (2nd ser., xx), no. 97, p. 188.

before Britain burst into activity. The ministers, having retreated to the country, became hyperactive, while the bureaucrats left resentfully in Whitehall became hyper-inactive, interposing all manner of objections. It was therefore not until 25 September that Ambassador Clive was authorized to open 'strictly unofficial' parleys with Hirota in order to uncover what was behind his statement of 3 July.[33]

Even if Britain's expression of interest had not been so long delayed, it is doubtful whether it would have succeeded. It was basically an attempt to offer political assurances in China in order to preserve the status quo over naval building. But Japan's naval specialists had since the start of 1934 decided on their approach to any preliminary naval discussions: they insisted on a treaty which would be based on the principle of a common maximum armament and, if this was not agreed, were prepared to pull out of the Washington naval treaty and, by extension, the London treaty. Admiral Okada's cabinet had at its meeting on 7 September 'adopted the [naval] conditions it would insist on'.[34] Hence Britain's response of 25 September came two weeks too late. It was met with an embarrassed silence in Tokyo. Britain's hope of assuaging the Japanese navalists by offering some political assurances against isolation in advance of the London meetings petered out. At its meeting on 25 October the London cabinet postponed the approach until Japan showed itself willing to make material concessions. It was not that the Japanese isolationists had won the day; but the navy's insistence on ending the 'unequal naval treaties' as they called them prevented an acceptable deal being made.

The naval negotiations took their inexorable course. On 17 September Japan had informed Washington of her intentions to pull out of the naval limitation treaties before the end of the year. Despite the talks in London, no compromise could be reached. On 27 November the Japanese foreign minister proposed to France and Italy that the three of them should jointly withdraw from the Washington treaty; but both refused. Evidently Japan did not want to denounce the treaty in isolation and sought to create a sort of dissenting bloc. When this failed, the Tokyo cabinet decided to announce its withdrawal from the treaty unilaterally. In consequence the sadly misnamed 'preparatory naval talks' were formally adjourned in 19

[33] *Documents on British Foreign Policy* (2nd ser., xx), no. 149; *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, ed. W. N. Medlicott (2nd ser., xiii, 1973), no. 26.

[34] Ikeda, *Nihon no kaigun*, ii. 138; *Nihon gaikō nempyō narabini shuyō bunsho*, ii.

December.[35] The Japanese government had as a deliberate act of policy pulled out of an important set of international agreements where her interests were at odds with other governments. Britain for her part had at least tried by mediation to prevent Japan's estrangement from the global naval community.

The Anglo-Japanese approaches were scarcely over when the army ministry began to make approaches to Germany. It was the work of General Ōshima Hiroshi who had served as assistant military attaché in Berlin in 1921 and military attaché in Austria and Hungary in 1923. He was appointed full attaché in Berlin in March 1934. He was specially instructed to co-operate with the Germans in gathering intelligence abut Soviet Russia. Because his powers of conversation in German were unrivalled, he had access to influential government circles. It was in July 1935 that he unofficially broached the subject of an anti-Soviet agreement to Joachim von Ribbentrop. His instructions were to enquire what kind of 'co-operative treaty' Ribbentrop had in mind. It was the underlying assumption (whether right or wrong) that the initiative had come from the German side. Negotiations were carried on initially between the Japanese general staff and war ministry and the Nazi party through Ōshima and the special emissary from Tokyo, Lieutenant-Colonel Wakamatsu Tadaichi. They were then transferred to the ambassador, who supposedly came to learn of them for the first time in March 1936. The agreement was carried to completion on 11 November, though it was not announced until the end of the month. The anodyne pact was less significant than the unpublished note which laid down that 'should one of the parties be unprovokedly attacked or threatened by the Soviet Union, the other party agrees not to carry out any measures which would relieve the position of the Soviet Union'.[36] It would have to be concluded that Japan's isolation was ended when this was signed.

And yet the Anti-Comintern pact was the result of a split decision. Many in Japan – and especially the foreign ministry – opposed the idea of a pact with Germany particularly after Hitler's move into the Rhineland in March. When after nine months' leave the ambassador was sent back to Berlin to undertake the formal last stage of the negotiations he was explicitly told to aim at a noncommittal agreement 'written in watery ink'.[37] After it had

[35] *Nihon gaikō bunsho*, '1935-nen Rondon kaigun kaigi', pp. 288–96, 234–5; *Documents on British Foreign Policy* (2nd ser., xiii), nos. 83, 87.

[36] *Nihon gaikō nempyō narabini shuyō bunsho*, ii. 352–4.

[37] *Deterrent Diplomacy: Japan, Germany and USSR, 1935–40*, ed. J. W. Morley (New York,

been completed, many did not like it. Some tried to reduce its effectiveness by widening it to take in other powers. It may be that the faltering steps which Ambassador Yoshida took in London in late 1936 and early 1937 may have been motivated by this idea. But Anthony Eden firmly scotched any idea of identifying Britain with the Anti-Comintern pact, because Britain had by this time broken the Japanese diplomatic code and knew what lay behind its terms, as Dr. Best has convincingly shown.[38]

Prime Minister Hirota took an interesting line to justify the conclusion of the German pact with those likely to be ill-disposed to it. He admitted to Harada Kumao, the middleman with the Elder Statesman, that, when the Anglo-Japanese alliance was signed, the navy had been given its head to bring about what it wanted; now that the Anti-Comintern pact had come into being, the army had been given its head and most of its wishes had been conceded.[39]

With that remark this lecture has come full circle. Japan escaped from isolation in 1902 by entering into a naval alliance which was eventually discarded at the behest of the international community at the Washington Conference. That left her in varying degrees of isolation for fifteen years. It had of course become more difficult for Japan to find a firm ally in these years. But the problem over isolation, was, in fact, as much domestic as international. There was inevitably a trial of strength between the army and the navy: the army first isolated Japan from world opinion by its actions in Manchuria, then the navy cut Japan off through denouncing the Washington Naval Treaty and the army, fearing its neighbours and distrusting isolation, sought the co-operation of Germany. In 1936 the civilian leaders gave in to army pressure and, against the dictates of their more cautious judgement, entered into an agreement with Germany, albeit a series of diplomatic instruments not signed by the German foreign minister but by Joachim von Ribbentrop as plenipotentiary.[40]

1976), p. 28; G. Kubota, 'Arita Hachirō-Nichi-Doku bōkyo kyōtei ni okeru usuzumiiro gaikō no tenkai', in *Kokusai Seiji*, lvi (1976), 52–3.

[38] A. M. Best, 'Avoiding war: the diplomacy of Sir Robert Craigie and Shigemitsu Mamoru, 1937–41' (unpublished University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1992); I have dealt with this theme in greater detail in I. Nish, 'Ambassador at large: Yoshida and his mission to Britain, 1932–7', in *Themes and Theories in Modern Japanese History*, ed. S. Henny and J.-P. Lehmann (1988), pp. 194–212.

[39] Morley, p. 35.

[40] *Nihon gaikō nempyō narabini shuyō bunsho*, ii. 352–4. The Japanese signatory was Ambassador Mushakoji.

It suggests the weakness of Japan's style of government. Many authors like Professor Ann Trotter have written of the phenomenon of Dual Diplomacy in the field of foreign policy which was common at this time.[41] In the case of Japan in the nineteen-thirties, government was like a three-legged race. In that race the civilians and the military (army and navy) were moving in the same general direction but were often staggering awkwardly. Each had independent limbs and was able to do things on its own. But ultimately it was the legs that were bound together that set the course. More often than not the army and navy dictated the direction of march, though sometimes, as in the case of the Anti-Comintern pact, the civilians managed to outflank the military by weak devices like thinning the printer's ink.[42]

From 1918 to 1937 Japan was being pulled in opposite directions over the question of isolation, one party saying that Japan was strong enough to go it alone, the other saying that Japan could not afford to be isolated. Japan was not unique in this. Many nations in modern times have had doubts about where they stood in the league table of world powers. In the nineteen-thirties this was so for Japan which opted, after exploring other possibilities, such as Britain, France and Italy, for a relationship with Germany and the axis. The compromise was struck between the contending forces within Japan by asking that parts of the pact should be regarded by Japan as grey rather than black, as being less binding than the army imagined.

There is a point of historical interest here – and I trust that Bishop Creighton will grant me absolution for introducing contemporary politics into this lecture. We belong to the Maastricht generation of historians. We know that, when statesmen stand up after signing an international treaty and smilingly give each other a hearty handshake, they often take out of the treaty quite different notions of what it contains. These differences emerge from the process of tough negotiation and the uncomfortable compromises which often have to be made. Further differences arise when the statesman returns from the conference table to find that the terms may not be acceptable to his own public. From a distance the pigmentation of a treaty often looks different. So the concept of 'watery ink' invented by Japan in the nineteen-thirties may still be a serviceable concept of wider than oriental application.

[41] A. Trotter, *Britain and East Asia, 1933–7* (Cambridge, 1975), ch. 12.

[42] I. Nish, 'Finance Minister Takahashi and the aftermath of the Manchurian crisis' (unpublished).

The present as history:
writing the history of one's own time
Eric Hobsbawm (1993)

Introduction

Virginia Berridge

I well remember attending this lecture in 1993 and was immediately able to retrieve my notes on it. As I sat in the Beveridge Hall, on the left-hand raised side adjacent to the stage, I thought back to the first time I had heard Eric Hobsbawm lecture. Then I had been sitting in exactly the same spot. I was an undergraduate at Westfield College in Hampstead. We students all used to come down to Senate House for the intercollegiate lectures on European history each Monday and that set of seats was our regular territory. The lecturers were the cream of the University – I remember Joel Hurstfield's talk being greeted with a burst of applause, something which our students in this more demonstrative age often do now, but which was certainly not common then.

Eric's lecture in that series had been quite different to the rest. He loped on to the stage and gave an incisive and wide-ranging performance which linked the events of the nineteenth century to contemporary issues such as Cuba and Vietnam. At the time, I thought this was just wonderful and exciting: it was the first time in my university career when anything I had been taught had seemed remotely relevant. I could not have been very organized because for some while afterwards I thought that the wonderful lecturer had been Douglas Dakin (in fact the previous week's speaker), obviously a very different kettle of fish, although also from Birkbeck. Subsequently I became one of Eric's postgraduate students and attended the seminars he ran at the Institute of Historical Research – but that is another story.

V. Berridge, Introduction; and E. Hobsbawm, 'The present as history: writing the history of one's own time', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 269–83.

It was not just nostalgia that brought me to Senate House again in November 1993. Eric's topic, writing the history of one's own times, was very close to my heart. I wanted to hear what a master of the craft had to say about it. At that time, I was researching and writing the history of HIV/AIDS and policy-making, a subject which, in its immediacy (policy-making in the U.K. had really only begun in the mid nineteen-eighties, not even ten years before), many considered to be inappropriate for historical analysis. Eric stressed the importance of whether or not the historian has lived through the events under consideration, using his own experience of the rise of Nazism and the Second World War as a counterpoint to the recent reinterpretations by younger historians. This struck a chord with me which I noted at the time. I had found the same in a different way with interpretations of the initial response to HIV. These had been characterized by sociologists as 'moral panic' within that well-known framework. I had found myself in disagreement with this interpretation through personal experience. In 1986 I had been scientific secretary to a drug addiction research initiative and my experience then of the early response to HIV in the U.K. led me to interpret the policy response as a panic which was 'real' rather than 'moral', not homophobic (gay men in policy were among the key players), but a genuine period of 'grande peur' in elite governing circles. Living through history had formed an interpretation different from that of those who had not.

The need to escape from the assumptions of the time – which he stresses – is something which has to be borne in mind when one is researching and writing about events which still have current significance. In writing the contemporary history of controversial areas, it is better in my view to be a 'policy cool' rather than a 'policy hot'.

And reference to the potentially unmanageable excess of sources for contemporary history was all too relevant – printed sources there were in abundance for HIV/AIDS. But at this time in the nineteen-nineties there was no Freedom of Information and Open Government had not produced very much on recent history. I had to rely for my archival sources on key players in the field who let me have unofficial access to the minutes of committees and on other sympathetic people with inside knowledge. Now, of course, it is different. More archives are theoretically available, although not all departments are able to produce them, as I have found with recent research. The home office's record keeping leaves much to be desired. But technology, the ability to use digitized sources for

example, is potentially transforming the modes of research, and not just for contemporary history.

In the nineteen-nineties, I also used oral history intensively and have continued to do so. Here I part company with Eric's dismissal of it in the lecture. I do not agree that one needs to know more than the interviewee to get much out of the encounter or that memories are mostly 'wrong'. The issue of memory has been much discussed by oral historians and would take a chapter on its own to debate. Knowing a lot can in fact be counterproductive: professing ignorance can be a good tactic in the interview, but clearly that was not Eric's style in his Fabian oral histories.

The end of the lecture, delivered not so long after the end of the U.S.S.R. and the changes in eastern Europe, brought with it a recognition of the defeat of hopes and the political cause embodied in communism initiated by the October Revolution. But defeat was to bring a sharper historical perspective. Eric's personal history against this backdrop has been much discussed subsequently, in particular since the publication of his autobiography. Both for the older historian delivering the lecture and for the younger one listening to him, the passage of time and the themes of the lecture came together in an ending which was as elegant as ever, yet charged with emotion. Now, fifteen years later, would this response still be the same? What Eric would call 'short term movements of the historical weather' might once more affect the perspective on such events.

The present as history: writing the history of one's own time*

Eric Hobsbawm (1993)

It has been said that all history is contemporary history in fancy dress. As we all know, there is something in this. The great Theodor Mommsen was writing about the Roman empire as a German liberal of the '48 vintage reflecting also on the new German empire. Behind Julius Caesar we discern the shadow of Bismarck. The same is even more plainly true of Ronald Syme. Behind *his* Caesar there is the shadow of the fascist dictators. And yet, it is one thing to write the history of classical antiquity, or the Crusades, or Tudor England as a child of the twentieth century, as all historians of these periods must do, and quite another to write the history of one's own lifetime. The problems and possibilities of doing so are the subject of my lecture tonight. I shall consider mainly three of these problems: the problem of the historian's own date of birth, or more generally, of generations; the problem of how one's own perspective on the past can change as history proceeds; and the problem of how to escape the assumptions of the time which most of us share.

I speak to you as one who, for most of his career as an essentially nineteenth-century historian, deliberately kept away, at least in his professional writings, though not in his extracurricular ones, from the world after 1914. Like Sir Edward Grey's lights of Europe, mine also went out after Sarajevo – or, as we must now learn to call it, the first Sarajevo crisis, the one of 1914, of which President Mitterand tried to remind the world by visiting that city

* This article was first published by the University of London, 1993. The editors would like to thank Professor Hobsbawm for his kind permission to reproduce it here.

on 28 June 1992, the anniversary of the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Alas, so far as I can tell, not a single journalist picked up what, for all educated Europeans of my age, was an obvious reference.

Still, for various reasons I find myself finally writing about the history of the short twentieth century – the period which begins at Sarajevo and (as we can now sadly recognize) also ends at Sarajevo, or rather with the collapse of the socialist regimes of the Soviet Union and, consequently, of the eastern half of Europe. This is what has led me to reflect on writing about the history of one's own lifetime, for as someone born in 1917 my own life virtually coincides with the period about which I am now trying to write.

Yet the very phrase 'one's own lifetime' begs a major question. It assumes that an individual life experience is also a collective one. In some sense this is obviously true, though paradoxical. If most of us recognize the major landmarks of global or national history in our lifetime, it is not because all of us have experienced them, even though some of us may actually have done so or even been aware at the time that they were landmarks. It is because we accept the consensus that they are landmarks. But how is such a consensus formed? Is it really as general as we, from our British or European or Western perspective, assume? There are probably not more than a half dozen dates which are simultaneous landmarks in the separate histories of all regions of the world. The year 1914 is not among them, though the end of the Second World War and the Great Depression of 1929–33 probably are. There are others which, though not particularly prominent in this or that national history, would have to enter it simply because of their worldwide repercussions. The October Revolution is one such event. Insofar as there is such a consensus, how far is it permanent, how far subject to change, to erosion, to transformation and how or why? I shall try to look at some of these questions later.

Yet if we leave aside this framework of contemporary history which is constructed for us and into which we fit our own experiences, they are our own. Every historian has his or her own lifetime, a private perch from which to survey the world. Perhaps it is shared with others in a comparable situation, but, among the 6,000 million human beings at the end of the century, such peer groups are statistically insignificant. My own perch is constructed, among other materials, of a childhood in the Vienna of the nineteen-twenties, the years of Hitler's rise in Berlin, which determined my politics and my interest in history, and the England, and especially the

Cambridge, of the nineteen-thirties, which confirmed both. I know that, presumably largely because of these things, my angle of vision is different even from that of other historians who share or shared my brand of historical interpretation and worked in the same field – let's say, nineteenth-century labour history – even when we came to the same conclusions about the same problems. In his or her own way every other historian with a taste for a little analytical introspection probably has the same feeling. And when one writes not about classical antiquity or the nineteenth century, but about one's own time, inevitably the personal experience of these times shapes the way we see them, and even the way we assess the evidence to which all of us, irrespective of our views, must appeal and submit. If I were to write about the Second World War, through which I served as an entirely undistinguished serviceman who never fired a shot in anger, I must in some sense see things differently from my friends whose experience of war was different – for instance from the late E. P. Thompson who served as a tank commander in the Italian campaign, or from the Africanist Basil Davidson who fought with the partisans in the Voivodina and Liguria.

If this is so for historians of the same age and background, the difference between generations is enough to divide human beings profoundly. When I tell my American students that I can remember the day in Berlin on which Hitler became chancellor of Germany, they look at me as though I had told them that I was present in Ford's Theatre when President Lincoln was assassinated in 1865: both events are equally prehistoric for them. But for me 30 January 1933 is a part of the past which is still part of my present. The schoolboy who walked home from school with his sister that day and saw the headline is still in me somewhere. I can still see the scene, as in a dream.

These divisions of age apply to historians also. The debate about John Charmley's recent *Churchill, the End of Glory: a Political Biography* has illustrated this dramatically. The argument is not about the facts, even the facts of Churchill's very poor record of judgement as a politician and a strategist. These have not been in serious dispute for a long time. Nor is it only about whether Neville Chamberlain was more right than those who wanted to resist Hitler's Germany. It is also about the *experience* of living through 1940 in Britain, which men of Dr. Charmley's age cannot have had. Very few of those who were lucky enough to live through that extraordinary moment in our history doubted then, or doubt now, that Churchill put into words what most British people – no, what *the* British people – then felt. Certainly I did not doubt it at the time, a sapper in a very working-class unit

trying to build some patently inadequate defences against invasion on the coasts of East Anglia. What struck me then was the automatic, unthinking, absolute assumption of my mates in the 560 Field Company R.E., that we would go on fighting. Not that we *had* to or *chose* to or followed our leaders, but that the option of *not* going on was simply not considered. No doubt this was the reflex of men too ignorant and unthinking to recognize the desperate predicament in which Britain found herself after the fall of France, and which was obvious even to a displaced young intellectual who had only the newsagents of Norfolk to inform him. And yet, it was clear to me even then that there was an unassuming grandeur about this moment, whether or not we choose to call it 'Britain's finest hour'. *C'était magnifique – et c'était la guerre*: and Churchill put it into words. But then, I was there.

That does not mean that Charmley, Neville Chamberlain's biographer, is not right to revive the case for the appeasers; something that is quite easy for a historian in his thirties, but almost impossible for historians of the war generation to envisage, let alone to do. The appeasers *had* a case, the force of which the young anti-fascists of the nineteen-thirties did not recognize, because our ends were not Chamberlain's and Halifax's. In their own terms, which were also Churchill's – the preservation of the British empire – they had a better case than Churchill's, except in one respect. Like his greater contemporary Charles de Gaulle, he knew that the loss of a people's sense of dignity, pride and self respect may be worse for it than the loss of wars and empires. We can see this as we look around Britain today.

And yet, as our generation knows without having to go to archives, the appeasers were wrong, and Churchill, for once, was right, in recognizing that a deal with Hitler was not possible. In terms of rational politics it made sense, on the assumption that Hitler's Germany was a 'great power' like any other, playing the game by the tested and cynical rules of power politics, as even Mussolini did. But it was not. Almost everybody in the nineteen-thirties at one time or another believed that such deals could be made, including Stalin. The grand alliance which eventually fought and beat the Axis, came into being not because the resisters won out over the appeasers, but because German aggression *forced* the future allies together between 1938 and the end of 1941. What faced Britain in 1940–1 was not the choice between a blind will to hold out without the slightest visible prospect of victory, and the search for a compromise peace 'on reasonable conditions', for even then the record suggested that such a peace was not possible with Hitler's Germany. What was on offer was, or seemed at best to be, a slightly

more face-saving version of Pétain's France. And the fact that, whatever views to the contrary can be found in the archives, Churchill carried the government with him, speaks for itself. Few thought that a peace would be more than a euphemism for Nazi domination.

I do not wish to suggest that only those who can remember 1940 are likely to come to this conclusion. However, for a young historian to reach it requires an effort of the imagination, a willingness to suspend beliefs based on his or her own life experience, and a lot of hard research work. For us it does not. Nor, of course, do I wish to suggest that Dr. Charmley's assessment of the consequences of going on fighting in 1940 are as mistaken as his assessment of the situation in 1940. Arguments about counterfactual alternatives cannot be settled by evidence, since evidence is about what happened and hypothetical situations did not happen. They belong to politics or ideology and not to history. I do not think Charmley is right, but that argument does not belong in this lecture.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not just making a case for old historians of the twentieth century over young ones. I began my career as a young historian interviewing survivors of the pre-1914 Fabian Society about their times, and the first lesson I learned was that they were not even worth interviewing unless I had first found out more about the subject of the interview than they could remember. The second lesson was, that on any independently verifiable fact, their memory was likely to be wrong. The third lesson was, that it was pointless to get them to change their ideas which had been formed and set a very long time ago. Historians in their twenties and thirties no doubt have this experience still with their aged sources, which must, in principle, include historians who are also rather senior citizens. Nevertheless, we have some advantages. Not the least of them, for those who set out to write the history of the twentieth century, is the mere fact of knowing, without special effort, *how much things have changed*. The past thirty or forty years have been the most revolutionary era in recorded history. Never before has the world, that is to say the lives of the men and women who live on earth, been so profoundly, dramatically and extraordinarily transformed within such a brief period. This is difficult for generations to grasp intuitively, who have not seen what it was like before. A former member of the band of the Sicilian bandit Giuliano, returned after twenty years in jail to his native town near Palermo, once told me, lost and disoriented: 'Where once there were vineyards, now there are *palazzi*' (he meant the apartment blocks of

the real estate developers). Indeed, he was right. The country of his birth had become unrecognizable.

Those who are old enough to remember do not take these changes for granted. They *know*, as very young historians cannot, without a special effort, that 'the past is another country. They do things differently there'. This may have a direct bearing on our judgement of both past and present. For instance, as someone who lived through the rise of Hitler in Germany, I know that the old street corner Nazis behaved quite differently from the neo-Nazis of today. For one thing, I doubt whether in the early nineteen-thirties there is a recorded case of a Jewish house being attacked and burned down with its inhabitants by young Nazis acting without specific orders, as happens quite often now to Turkish and other immigrant houses. The young men who do this may use the symbols of the Hitler era, but they represent a different political phenomenon. Insofar as the beginning of historical understanding is an appreciation of the *otherness* of the past, and the worst sin of historians is anachronism, we have a built-in advantage to offset our numerous disadvantages.

However, whether or not we give old age the advantage over youth, in one respect the change in generations is patently central to both the writing and the practice of twentieth-century history. There is no country in which the passing of the political generation which had direct experience of the Second World War has not marked a major, if often silent, shift in that country's politics, as well as in its historical perspective on the war and – as is evident in both France and Italy – the Resistance. This applies, more generally, to the memory of any of the great upheavals and traumas in national life. I do not think it is an accident that a history of Israel which is not dominated by nationalist mythology and polemic did not appear in that country until the mid nineteen-eighties – say forty years after the establishment of the state – or that Irish history written by the Irish did not really emancipate itself from the heritage of both Fenian myth and unionist counter-myth until the nineteen-sixties.

Let me now turn to the second of my observations, which is the reverse of the first. It deals not with the effect of the historian's age or his perspective on the century, but with the effect of the passing years of the century on the historian's perspective, whatever his or her age.

Let me begin with a conversation between Harold Macmillan and President Kennedy in 1961. Macmillan thought the Soviets had 'a buoyant economy and will soon outmatch capitalist society in the race for material

wealth'. However preposterous the statement now seems, there were plenty of well-informed people at the end of the nineteen-fifties who took, or at any rate did not dismiss, this view, especially after the Soviets demonstrated that they had beaten the U.S.A. in space technology. It would not have been absurd for a contemporary historian writing in the nineteen-sixties to have accepted it.

Our wisdom is not that we necessarily understand the mechanisms of the Soviet economy better than the economists of 1961, but that the passage of time has provided us with the historian's ultimate weapon, hindsight. In this instance hindsight is correct, but it can also be misleading. For instance, since 1989 it has become common among many observers, especially economists with a better understanding of market theory than of historical reality, to think of the Soviet and similar economies as a complete field of ruins, because that is what they became after the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the Soviet Union. But in fact, though by the nineteen-eighties plainly quite creaky and inferior to capitalist economies both in technology and the ability to provide their inhabitants with goods and services, and slowly running down, they were in their own way a working economic system. They were not on the verge of collapse. Indeed, my friend Ernest Gellner, a lifelong critic of communism, who spent a year in Moscow in the late nineteen-eighties, has recently suggested that, if the U.S.S.R. could have isolated itself totally from the rest of the world as a sort of small planet of its own, its inhabitants would almost certainly have agreed that they lived better and easier lives under Brezhnev than any earlier generation of Russians.

What is at issue here is not simply the historian's or anyone else's capacity to predict. It might well be worth discussing why so very few of the dramatic events in world history of the past forty years have been either predicted or even expected. I would even guess that the predictability of twentieth-century history has become distinctly lower since the Second World War. After 1918 the Second World War and even the world depression were quite often predicted. But, after the Second World War, did the economists predict the 'thirty glorious years' of the great world boom? No. They expected a post-war slump. Did they predict the end of the golden age at the start of the nineteen-seventies? The O.E.C.D. predicted continued, even accelerated, growth of five per cent per annum. Did they predict the present economic troubles, which are sufficiently serious to have broken the half-century's taboo on the use of the word 'depression'? Not much.

Predictions were and are being made on the basis of far more advanced models than were available between the wars, and on the basis of enormous and unprecedented inputs of data, processed at the speed of light by the most complex and sophisticated machinery. The record of the political predictors, amateurs by comparison, is no better. However, I have not the time to consider the nature and the methodological implications of these failures here. The point I want to concentrate on is that *even the recorded past* changes in the light of subsequent history.

Let me illustrate. Very few people would deny that an epoch in world history ended with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the Soviet Union, whatever we read into the events of 1989–91. A page in history has been turned. The mere fact that this is so is enough to change the vision of every living historian of the twentieth century, for it turns a tract of time into a historic period with its own structure and coherence or incoherence – 'the short twentieth century' as my friend Ivan Berend calls it. Whoever we are, we cannot fail to see the century as a whole differently from the way we would have done before 1989–91 inserted its punctuation mark into its flow. It would be absurd to say that we can now stand back from it, as we can from the nineteenth century, but at least we can see it as a whole. In a word, the history of the twentieth century written in the nineteen-nineties must be qualitatively different from any such history written before.

Let me be even more concrete. When I was first asked to write a book on the twentieth century to round off or complement the three volumes I had written about the nineteenth, that is to say about five years ago, I thought I could see the short century as a sort of diptych. Its first half – from 1914 to the aftermath of the Second World War – was plainly an age of catastrophe, in which every aspect of nineteenth-century liberal capitalist society collapsed. It was an era of world wars, followed by social revolutions and the collapse of the old empires, of the world economy close to breakdown, of the collapse or defeat of liberal democratic institutions almost everywhere. The second half, from the late forties on, was the exact opposite: an era when, in one way or another, liberal capitalist society reformed and restored itself to flourish as never before. And the extraordinary, unprecedented and unparalleled 'great leap forward' of this world economy in the third quarter of the (long) twentieth century seemed to me – and still seems to me – to be the feature of the twentieth-century landscape which observers will see as central in the third millennium. It was possible, even then, to see the socialist sector of the world not as a global economic alternative to

capitalism – by the nineteen-eighties its inferiority was evident – but as a product of capitalism's age of catastrophe. In the nineteen-eighties it no longer looked like the global alternative to capitalism, as it had done to many in the nineteen-thirties. Though its future seemed problematic, it no longer looked central. Again, everyone was aware that the golden age of the world economy's 'great leap forward' had come to an end in the early nineteen-seventies. Economic historians are quite familiar with these long swings of twenty to thirty years of economic boom followed by a much more problematic period of about the same length. They can be traced back to at least the eighteenth century; they are best known as the Kondratiev Long Waves, and so far quite inexplicable. Nevertheless, though these changes of, as it were, global pace, have usually had fairly substantial political and ideological consequences, these did not yet seem sufficiently dramatic to disturb the general picture. You will recall that the later nineteen-eighties were a period of substantial boom in the developed capitalist world.

Within a year or two it plainly became necessary to rethink this binary shape of the twentieth century. On the one hand, the Soviet world collapsed, with unpredicted but catastrophic economic consequences. On the other, it became increasingly evident that the Western world economy itself was in the most severe trouble it had known since the nineteen-thirties. By the early nineteen-nineties even Japan was shaky, and the economists once again began to worry about mass unemployment rather than inflation, as they had in the prehistoric days of the nineteen-forties. Governments of all shapes and sizes, though now advised by greater armies of economists than ever before, once again found themselves not knowing what to do, or helpless. The ghost of Kondratiev had, after all, struck again. It also now appeared that while the eastern political systems ceased to exist, the stability of the non-communist ones, in both the developed and the third worlds, could also no longer be taken for granted. To put it briefly, the history of the short twentieth century now looked much more like a triptych, or a sandwich: a comparatively brief golden age separating two periods of major crisis. We do not yet know the outcome of the second of these. That will have to be left to the historians of the next century.

When I first submitted an outline to my publishers, I did not see things this way. I could not have seen it this way, though perhaps a better historian might have. As I am fortunately a procrastinating author, by the time I began to write I did. What had changed was not the facts of world history since 1973 as I knew them, but the sudden conjunction of events in both

East and West since 1989 which almost forced me to see the past twenty years in a new perspective. I cite my experience not because I want to persuade you to see the century in this perspective also, but simply to demonstrate what a difference living through two or three dramatic years can make to the way one historian can look at the past. Will a historian writing in fifty years time see our century in this light? Who knows? It does not matter whether I care. But he or she will almost certainly be less at the mercy of relatively short-term movements of the historical weather, as experienced by those who live through them. This is the predicament of the historian of his or her own times.

Let me now turn to the third problem of writing twentieth-century history. It affects historians of all generations and is, unfortunately, less subject to rapid revision in the light of historical events, although it is fortunately not immune to the erosion of historical change. It brings me back to the question of historical consensus which I mentioned earlier on. I mean the general pattern of our ideas about our times, which imposes itself on our observation. We have lived through a century of wars of religion and this has affected all of us, including the historians. It is not only the rhetoric of politicians which treats the events of the century as a struggle between good and evil, Christ and Antichrist. The German *Historikerstreit*, or 'Battle of the Historians', of the nineteen-eighties was not about whether the Nazi period should be seen as part of German history, rather than a strange nightmare parenthesis in it. There was no real disagreement about this. It was about whether any historical attitude to Nazi Germany other than total condemnation did not run the risk of rehabilitating an utterly infamous system, or at least of mitigating its crimes. At a lower level, many of us still find the behaviour of the sort of young men who become football hooligans more shocking and frightening when it is accompanied by swastikas and S.S. tattoos – and conversely, the subcultures which deliberately adopt these fashions do so as a declaration of total rejection of the conventional standards of a society which sees these symbols as, literally, the marks of hell. The strength of these feelings is such that while I am saying these sentences, I am uneasily aware that even today they may still be interpreted by some as a sign of being 'soft on Nazism', and so require some kind of disclaimer.

The danger of wars of religion is that we continue to see the world in terms of zero-sum games, of mutually incompatible binary divisions, even when the wars are over. Seventy-odd years of worldwide ideological conflict

have made it almost second nature to divide the economies of the world into socialist and capitalist ones, state and privately based economies, and to see an either/or choice between the two. If we see conflict between the two as normal, the nineteen-thirties and forties when liberal capitalism and Stalinist communism found themselves making common cause against the danger of Nazi Germany will look anomalous. They still seem so to me, though they were clearly in some sense the central hinge of twentieth-century history. For it was both the sacrifice of the U.S.S.R., and the ideas of macro-economic planning and management pioneered there, that saved liberal capitalism and helped to reconstitute it. It was the salutary fear of revolution that provided much of the incentive to do so.

But will these central decades of the century seem so anomalous to the historian of 2093, who, looking back, will observe that actually the mutual declarations of hostility between capitalism and socialism never led to real war between them, though socialist countries launched military operations against one another, and so did non-socialist countries?

If the famous imaginary Martian observer were to look at our world, would he, she or it actually choose to make such a binary division? Would the Martian classify the social and political economies of the U.S.A., South Korea, Austria, Brazil, Singapore and Ireland under the same heading? Would the economy of the U.S.S.R. which collapsed under the stress of reform be fitted into the same pigeonhole as that of China, which plainly did not? If we put ourselves in the position of such an observer, we would have no trouble finding a dozen other patterns into which the economic structures of the world's countries can be fitted more easily than into a binary bed of Procrustes. But we are once again at the mercy of time. If it is now possible at least to abandon the pattern of mutually exclusive binary opposites, it is as yet far from clear which of the thinkable alternatives can be most usefully substituted. Once again, we shall have to leave it to the twenty-first century to make its own decisions.

I have little to say about the most obvious limitation on the contemporary historian, namely the inaccessibility of certain sources, because this strikes me as among the least of his or her problems. Of course we can all think of cases where such sources are essential. Clearly much of the history of the Second World War had to be incomplete or even wrong until writing about Bletchley became permissible in the nineteen-seventies. Yet in this respect the historian of his own times is not worse off than the historian of the sixteenth century, but better off. At least we know what might, and in

most cases sooner or later will, become available, whereas the gaps in the past record are almost certainly permanent. In any case the fundamental problem for the contemporary historian in our endlessly bureaucratized, documented and endlessly enquiring times, is an unmanageable excess of primary sources rather than a shortage of them. Today even the last great archival continent, the public records of the Soviet bloc, has been opened to exploration. Inadequacy of sources is the last thing we can complain about.

You will, perhaps, be relieved that at the end of a lecture devoted to the difficulties of writing the history of one's own times, I seem to end on this note of modest encouragement. You may feel that it hardly compensates for the scepticism of my earlier remarks. But I would not want to be misunderstood. I speak as someone who is actually trying to write about the history of his own times and not as someone who tries to show how impossible it is to do so. However, the fundamental experience of everyone who has lived through much of this century is error and surprise. What has happened has been, far more often than not, quite unexpected. All of us have been mistaken more than once in our judgements and expectations. Some have found themselves agreeably surprised by the course of events, but probably more have been disappointed, their disappointment often sharpened by earlier hope, or even, as in 1989, euphoria. Whatever our reaction, the discovery that we were mistaken, that we cannot have understood it adequately, must be the starting point of our reflections on the history of our times.

There are cases – perhaps mine is among them – where this discovery can be particularly helpful. Much of my life, probably most of my conscious life, was devoted to a hope which has been plainly disappointed, and to a cause which has plainly failed: the communism initiated by the October Revolution. But there is nothing which can sharpen the historian's mind like defeat. Let me conclude with a passage from an old friend of very different convictions, who has used this observation to explain the achievement of a whole range of historical innovators from Herodotus and Thucydides to Marx and Weber. This is what Professor Reinhard Koselleck writes:

> The historian on the winning side is easily inclined to interpret short-term success in terms of a long-term ex-post teleology. Not so the defeated. Their primary experience is that everything happened otherwise than hoped or planned … They have a greater need to explain why something else occurred and not what they thought

> would happen. This may stimulate the search for middle-range and long-term causes which explain the … surprise … generating more lasting insights of, consequently, greater explanatory power. In the short run history may be made by the victors. In the long run the gains in historical understanding have come from the defeated.

Koselleck has a point, even if he stretches it. (In fairness to him I should add that, knowing German historiography of both the post-war periods, he does not suggest that the experience of defeat *alone* is enough to guarantee good history.) Still, if he is even partly right, the end of this millennium should inspire a lot of good and innovatory history. For as the century ends, the world is fuller of defeated thinkers wearing a very wide variety of ideological badges, than of triumphant ones. Especially among those old enough to have long memories.

Let us see whether he is right.

The war against heresy in medieval Europe
R. I. Moore (2004)

Introduction

Jinty Nelson

Among British historians who have made their mark on the historiography of the European middle ages in the second half of the twentieth century, R. I. Moore (familiarly and affectionately known as Bob) is the one whose work has struck the strongest chord both with colleagues and with every successive student generation from the nineteen-seventies until the present. He is also probably the one most celebrated outside the U.K., notably in North America. Sessions in his honour were held not long ago at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, Michigan, and those papers are the core of a remarkable collection.[1] The editor, and most of the contributors, are Americans. In exploring Bob Moore's impact on medieval history, some of them also showed how his work has engaged with important concerns, scholarly and more popular, of the post nineteen-sixties world: minorities, dissent and heresy, and persecution. That was an agenda tailor-made for American readers. Not that Bob Moore was ever a prophet without honour in his own country – on the contrary, his source-collection *The Birth of Popular Heresy* (1975), closely followed by *The Origins of European Dissent* (1977) and *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (1987), earned and have kept places on every university medieval history syllabus in the U.K. In 2000, timely as ever, Moore produced *The First European Revolution c.970–1215*, in a series, *The Making of Europe*, edited by Jacques Le Goff and published

[1] *Heresy and the Persecuting Society in the Middle Ages: Essays on the Work of R. I. Moore*, ed. M. Frassetto (Leiden, 2006).

J. L. Nelson, Introduction; and R. I. Moore, 'The war against heresy in medieval Europe', in *The Creighton Century, 1907–2007*, ed. D. Bates, J. Wallis and J. Winters (London, 2020 [2009]), pp. 287–314.

simultaneously in the five major European languages. Here Moore set the themes of the earlier books in a wider context and offered a multi-factored explanation of the eleventh and twelfth centuries' dramatic and often violent upheavals. In earlier papers, he had written of 'the appearance of the crowd on the stage of public events' in the eleventh century, and of the 'active and explicit involvement of the people', stirred in various contexts, liturgical and political, by the great peace councils of the decades around the year 1000.[2] In 2000, he painted in the huge backcloth extending through the long twelfth century, economic and social changes interacting and combining to produce religious discontent, and demands for reform, surging from below, in the heartlands of Old Europe, evoking institutional response from a newly energized church. Meanwhile, in further papers, Moore identified the precise mechanisms of ecclesiastical centralization that were to become the props of inquisition and persecution.

In his 2004 Creighton Lecture, Moore returned to his longstanding preoccupation with the origins of 'the war on heresy', to re-pose two basic questions: when did that war begin, and why? His responses had previously centred on popular dissent and heresy, originating haltingly at first in the incipient, and localized, social and economic changes of the pre-Gregorian period, then growing rapidly in the generalized urbanization and commercialization of the twelfth century. For Moore to ask these questions anew in 2004 meant, as a rapt audience soon realized, an admission that his earlier answers, and those of other scholars in his wake, were no longer sufficient. The new answers focused, still, only more insistently, on the eleventh and twelfth centuries when were formed the preconditions for the persecuting society that emerged in the thirteenth. But Moore now took account of notable new work in the past decade or so, to emphasize less social and economic changes, than new ideas about the church articulated by a new type of churchman, not wandering preachers or heretic myth-weavers, but Catholic theologians trained in the rigorous rational routines of the schools of northern France. The war on heresy entailed the new construction of heresy itself as an ideological project. Moore's own thinking took a new turn, inspired less by anthropology than by intellectual historians. His new reading of the first European reformation, interestingly developed

[2] R. I. Moore, 'Family, community and cult on the eve of the Gregorian reform', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., xxx (1980), 49–70, at p. 49; R. I. Moore, 'Postscript: the peace of God and the social revolution', in T. Head and R. Landes, *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), pp. 308–26, at p. 320.

simultaneously with (but as far as I can see independently of) Diarmaid MacCulloch's synoptic take on the second, sixteenth-century Reformation, highlighted the role of ideas, more than social and economic change, in driving the two great cultural revolutions of pre-modern Europe. Moore now re-imagined what had too often been termed papal reform, or more vaguely, Reform, as the first major intervention of intellectuals in Western European history, in this respect picking up Le Goff's understanding of the twelfth-century renaissance. In 2004, Moore focused firmly on the twelfth century, with Berengar of Tours a harbinger, and Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable the key innovators, aided by a legally-trained papal emigré in France: Alexander III's summoning of the Council of Tours, in 1163, was a critical turn of the screw.

New political forces were ready and able to harness the new trained minds. First the puny yet strategically placed monarchy and the princes of eleventh- and early twelfth-century France, then the mighty Angevin empire, promoted and exploited what might be termed *l'embauche des clercs* – the recruiting and setting to work of the intellectuals. The Gregorian papacy had summoned up ecclesiastical cadres, a new self-conscious elite, to drive Reform forward. Moore now clearly distinguished the different stages in an evolving project embodied in men of different twelfth-century generations: Bernard and Peter constructed heretics and deviants within, and enemies without, while the representative figure in the next generation was John aux Belles-Mains, the new churchman serving the modern prince, Henry II. (The contemporary nickname, with its hint of irony, nicely epitomizes a shift in what was required of clerical hands.)

All this was, and is, more than a revised version of Richard Southern's account of the role of the *clerici* in twelfth-century European administrations, although the French focus resembles Southern's. Moore re-envisioned the eleventh and twelfth centuries in much harder-headed mode as an age of new power. In his contribution to the essays acknowledging Moore's impact, Edward Peters drew attention to the *professionalization* of the clerical cadre as key to their capacity to function in their new international role.[3] Moore's own injection of the political into the history of heresy is more than convincing per se, it allows newly convincing answers to be given to his when and why questions about the war on heresy. Only

[3] E. Peters, 'Moore's 11th and 12th centuries: travels in the agro-literate polity', in Frassetto, pp. 11–29, recalling the insights of H. G. Koenigsberger, an early modernist who wrote one of the best books on medieval Europe.

clerical stormtrooper-intellectuals, and not before the twelfth century, were equipped and motivated to construct the problem to which war was the only solution. Such clarity is clear gain.

There is also a loss. 'The people' may not have quit the stage, but their voices, individual and collective, are muted. They end up, now, in another part of the wood: a pre-medieval reformation world which Moore regards as actually *predating* Europe's construction. In this latest phase of Moore's dazzling intellectual trajectory, the high-medieval 'popular' has been replaced by the political, while, in a paradoxical effect of this tracing back of origins, Carolingian culture, as manifested in 'pre-Gregorian Catholicism', perforce becomes 'popular' in the sense that Peter Brown saw in the pre-twelfth-century ordeal as popular – implausible as that may seem to the average earlier medievalist. Bob Moore has always been one to challenge conventional categories, including periodizations. What we can be sure of is that his trajectory will continue, watched eagerly not just by medievalists but by historians across the discipline which the Creighton Lectures exist to celebrate, publicize and – now – diffuse to a wider public.

The war against heresy in medieval Europe*

R. I. Moore

By the end of the twelfth century the belief that heresy constituted not only a theoretical but a real and present danger to the faith had in itself become a test of Catholic orthodoxy. The growing fear of heresy was expressed in a battery of measures for its detection and suppression, but not assuaged by them. War was held to be permissible against heretics as against unbelievers. The Albigensian crusade, launched against the county of Toulouse in 1209, was only the first, although the most notorious, bloody and consequential, of the wars against heresy – in the literal sense rather than the metaphorical one of the title of this article – which marked the history of the thirteenth century, and whose essentially political character became ever more overt. In principle, responsibility for the prosecution of heresy belonged to the bishops in their dioceses, but they were increasingly urged to action by kings and popes, who in 1184 instructed them to make regular inquisition for heretics and their supporters on pain of themselves being identified as such. When that failed to yield the expected results, inquisition for heresy

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was increasingly taken out of the hands of the bishops, and entrusted to special agents directly armed by papal authority with sweeping powers to enter and interrogate whole communities, and to impose upon those whom they found to be recalcitrant heretics, their families and their supporters, a draconian array of penalties ranging from penance (such as the greatly feared obligation to wear distinguishing marks on the clothing), to imprisonment, confiscation and disinheritance, to death. The activities of the inquisitors extended throughout Latin Christendom, except for Scandinavia and the British Isles.[1] They were, however, most extensive, and most intensive, in an area of the Languedoc roughly centred on the territory between Toulouse, Albi, Béziers, Carcassonne and Foix,[2] and in many of the cities of Lombardy and Tuscany. From the beginning of the thirteenth century the war against heresy was waged in its many forms for the rest of the middle ages, perhaps reaching its peak in the reign of Pope John XXII, who died in 1322.

The ultimate penalty was exacted from a relatively small proportion of those convicted – for example in only 6.5 per cent (forty-one) of the 630 cases recorded by Bernard Gui, who as inquisitor of Toulouse between 1308 and 1323 kept a full and meticulous account of his activities.[3] Conversely, it follows that the burnings represent only a small part of the lives devastated, of families destroyed, of communities traumatized, in the pursuit of heresy. Behind them all, although to degrees that varied with the circumstances of particular inquisitions and the temperaments of particular inquisitors, lay, as Colin Morris puts it, 'the effective introduction, on an international scale, of procedures of enquiry which dispensed with the existing ideas of legality',[4] and in particular with the protections of permitting the accused to know the nature of the charges and evidence against him or her and the names of the witnesses, and to challenge them, and to call witnesses on his or her own behalf. The consequent opportunities for every kind of

[1] H. C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (3 vols., New York, 1887; frequently reprinted) remains by far the best general account, although greatly exaggerating the extent to which 'the inquisition' should be envisaged as a single, centralized institution (cf. R. Kieckhefer, 'The office of inquisition and medieval heresy: the transition from personal to institutional jurisdiction', *Jour. Eccles. Hist.*, xlvi (1995), 36–61).

[2] There is, notoriously, no satisfactory name, then or now, for the region to which I refer for convenience as the Languedoc (cf. F. L. Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001), pp. 3–4, 41–3).

[3] J. Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline and Resistance in Languedoc* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1997), p. 69.

[4] C. Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: the Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford, 1989), p. 474.

victimization and extortion wove dark threads of evasion, suspicion and duplicity into the fabric of European culture, and created a legacy, and a legend, with which we must still contend.[5] One particular product of the energy and ingenuity of the inquisitors, however, goes to the heart of any attempt to understand them, or the circumstances that gave rise to them, and bedevils every attempt to write their history, or their pre-history. As the author of the most penetrating study of their methods to date, James Given, says, 'The inquisitors were not mere slaves of reality. Their investigative techniques allowed them to create their own, tailor-made truth. Through their interrogation procedures the inquisitors could make concrete the ideas, fears and fantasies that resided only in their own minds. In a sense they could make these phantasms objectively real.'[6]

The inquisitors were not the first to achieve that feat, but they did it on an altogether new scale, with a consistency and power that dominated the historical record and historical memory so completely as to absorb within their own 'tailor-made truth' the fears and fantasies of earlier generations. In doing so they entrenched and validated them to an extent that bedevils every aspect of the question at issue here, simple enough on the face of it: 'When and why did the war against heresy which was waged with such momentous consequences in thirteenth-century Europe begin?' The answer of those who made the war was equally simple. The Third Lateran Council, which met in 1179, received the reports of a papal mission dispatched in the previous year to the city of Toulouse and the countryside around it.[7] The heresy of the Cathars had been found well established in the city. The head of one of its wealthiest merchant families had been exposed as a devotee. At Albi it had been necessary for one of the leaders of the expedition, Abbot

[5] For a searching account of the permeation of mentalities by stereotypes derived from heresy hunting, see K. Sullivan, *Truth and the Heretic: Crises of Knowledge in Medieval French Literature* (Chicago, Ill., 2005); for the legacy and the legend, see E. Peters, *Inquisition* (New York, 1988).

[6] Given, pp. 231–4. For the new levels of sophistication which this central preoccupation of inquisitorial studies has attained in recent years, see also M. Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: the Great Inquisition of 1245–6* (Princeton, N.J., 2001), esp. chs. 4–11; J. H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia, Pa., 2001); *Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy*, ed. C. Bruschi and P. Biller (Woodbridge, 2004).

[7] See the letters of Pietro of S. Chrysogono and Henri de Marci in *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. W. Stubbs (2 vols., 1867), i. 202–6, 214–20 (trans. R. I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy* (1975), pp. 113–22). For a full account and analysis of the mission and its aftermath, see Cheyette, pp. 286–322.

Henri de Marci of Clairvaux, to free the bishop of Albi from the prison of Roger of Béziers, notorious to posterity as a supporter of the heretics.[8] The council ordained that the heretics and their supporters were to be excommunicated and their lands confiscated, and that those who took up arms against them were to receive the privileges of crusaders. Abbot Henri himself was elevated to the cardinalate, and two years later returned to the region with a large army, capturing the town of Lavaur and a number of leading heretics who confessed and renounced their errors. Henri did not believe them to be sincere, and his pessimism was confirmed by a mounting tide of reports over the following years that the heretics continued to enjoy widespread and public support against which the church was helpless.

Similar anxieties in Lombardy and Tuscany – entirely different from the Languedoc in almost everything except the absence of effective and centralized political authority – led pope and emperor, in rare unity, to issue at Verona in 1184 the decree *Ad abolendam*, which condemned a long list of heresies, and prescribed comprehensive and draconian penalties for them, their supporters and all who failed to act against them.[9] Nevertheless, when Innocent III ascended the papal throne in 1198 he was fully persuaded that the influence of heresy was a primary obstacle to the re-establishment of the authority of his see, a view quickly reinforced by the murder of the governor whom he sent to restore Catholic authority in Orvieto. The decree *Vergentis in senium*, which Innocent addressed to the city of Viterbo in 1199, in effect equated heretics with traitors, liable to confiscation of all their property and thus to disinheritance.[10] This provided a formidable incentive to respond to Innocent's call in 1208 for a crusade against the count of Toulouse, as a protector of heretics, when the replacement of the archbishop of Narbonne, the preaching of Dominic Guzman and his companions and the dispatch of a series of papal legates to the Languedoc had achieved nothing except the murder of one of the legates, Peter of Castelnau. King Philip II of France held back, but could or would not prevent his vassals from seizing the opportunity. The sack of Béziers and of Carcassonne in 1209, conducted with notorious savagery, opened the series of wars which remains legendary – perhaps in both senses – for its cruelty and relentlessness, devastated the region, destroyed

[8] Cheyette, pp. 315–22, comments that the dispute was probably over lordly rights, and that Henri was always on the lookout for heretics.

[9] J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, xxii, col. 492.

[10] *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne (221 vols., Paris, 1844–1904), ccxiv, col. 537.

its aristocracy and with it a brilliant court civilization, and provided the field in which the first inquisitors went to work.

Until late in the twentieth century the open presence of heresy in the Languedoc and its command of aristocratic patronage were usually accepted as sufficient, if not always exclusive, explanation of these events. Most historians – Protestant and Catholic alike, although of course in very different tones – accepted at face value the descriptions of the heretics themselves, their beliefs and organization, which were provided first by Catholic chroniclers and later by the Dominican inquisitors, who compiled with immense thoroughness and often impressive care quantities of data that are still very far from having been fully examined, let alone assimilated, by modern scholars. The many reports of other heresies and heretics in the following decades, from almost every part of Europe – Waldensians, Spiritual Franciscans, Brethren of the Free Spirit and so many others – have similarly been accepted at face value until quite recently. Greater scepticism in the last three or four decades about the inquisitors' assessment of the breadth of support for these heresies, and still more about the extent to which they constituted coherent and organized movements or conspiracies, raises new questions about the response of authority to them.[11] Nobody is likely to doubt either the reality or the profound importance of the political, legal, social and cultural changes that the war on heresy brought about, not only in the areas most directly affected, but in Europe as a whole. The question is, does heresy itself provide a sufficient explanation for it?

The most obvious reason for asking this question is that neither the fact nor the fear of heresy was in itself new in the thirteenth century. The use of heresy accusations to discredit opponents or undermine rivals had been a common resort since the conversion of Constantine, especially, perhaps, at times when established elites found positions as royal favourites and advisers under challenge from aggressive and talented newcomers.[12] One such case is often, if somewhat misleadingly, cited as inaugurating the history of popular heresy in medieval Europe. The fourteen or sixteen courtiers of King Robert I of France, clerics and laypeople, who at Orléans in 1022 became the first people in European history to be burned as heretics, were

[11] Cf. R. E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif., 1972), esp. at pp. 1–32.

[12] Cf. P. Brown, 'Sorcery, demons and the rise of Christianity: from late antiquity into the middle ages', in his *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (1972), pp. 119–46; E. Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1978), pp. 15–18.

victims of the complicated and unrelenting vendettas that reverberated for generations after the *coup d'état* by which the Capetians seized the kingdom in 987.[13] Some of those enmities continued to echo through the long series of condemnations of Berengar of Tours between 1050 and 1079, the most notorious and consequential heresy accusations against any individual in our entire period, still under-analysed, especially in their political dimensions.[14] The career of Berengar is also, and perhaps more obviously, a reminder that learned heresy had always been a matter for concern, which varied in intensity, broadly speaking, with that of scholarly activity, but never quite died away. Learned heresy could assume a political dimension when great men chose to adopt scholars as their champions or standard bearers in public debate, a practice which has been very acutely and illuminatingly examined in respect of the Islamic world at this time,[15] but insufficiently recognized in Western Europe, although it was plainly manifested not only in the trials of Berengar but probably in the better known ones of Peter Abelard.[16] The political dimension was also in some measure a public, if not quite a popular one: when Abelard was summoned to Soissons in 1121 to defend his views on the Trinity, 'I and the few pupils who accompanied me narrowly escaped being stoned by the people on the first day we arrived'.[17]

Political rivalry and personal enmity were probably always the commonest source of heresy accusations. Vast new opportunities were opened for both,

[13] The most familiar, although not the earliest, account of this much-discussed episode is that of Paul of St. Père de Chartres, *Gesta Synodi Aurelianensis* (*Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, ed. M. Bouquet and others (24 vols., Paris, 1738–1904), x. 536–9). Its political context was established by R. H. Bautier, 'L'hérésie d'Orléans et le mouvement intellectuel au début du xie siècle', in *Enseignement et vie intellectuelle, IXe–XVIe siècles: actes du 95e Congrés National des Sociétés Savantes (Reims, 1970), Section de philologie et d'histoire jusqu'à 1610* (2 vols., Paris, 1975), i. 63–88; and B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* (Princeton, N.J., 1983), pp. 106–20, showed how 'through textual reconstruction [the accused] were made part of a widespread, historically evolving conspiracy against the church, of which they had no knowledge, and to which they were little if at all related' (p. 120).

[14] For a recent summary, see C. M. Radding and F. Newton, *Theology, Rhetoric and Politics in the Eucharistic Controversy, 1078–9: Alberic of Monte Cassino against Berengar of Tours* (New York, 2003), pp. 1–31.

[15] M. Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994).

[16] R. H. Bautier, 'Paris au temps d'Abélard', in *Abélard en son temps*, ed. J. Jolivet (Paris, 1981), pp. 21–77, at p. 60. I have developed this point further in 'Heresy as politics and the politics of heresy, 1022–1180', in *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, ed. R. M. Karras, J. Kaye and E. A. Matter (Philadelphia, Pa., 2008).

[17] *Historia calamitatum*, trans. in B. Radice, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (rev. edn., 2003), p. 20; cf. M. Clanchy, *Abelard: a Medieval Life* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 289–92.

in combination with burning idealism, altruism and personal sacrifice on a heroic scale, by the movement for the revitalization and reform of Catholic Christianity that drove and shaped the reconstruction – or, as some of us would maintain, construction – of European society and culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. From the end of the tenth century a strenuous insistence on identifying personal worth with the renunciation of worldly pleasures, possessions and power became increasingly influential. It stretched to breaking point the tension between the perceived ideals of the gospels and the apostles on the one hand, and the practical necessities of resourcing, organizing and manning the church in this world on the other, exposing the church and its ministers to the contempt and obloquy of its most ardent believers as well as its bitterest enemies, until it was often difficult, or impossible, to tell them apart. In the eleventh century this conflict assumed its most acute and fundamental form in the struggle against the *simoniaca heresis*. As Cardinal Humbert argued so devastatingly in his *Books against the Simoniacs* of 1058, the exchange of money or land for the power to perform the sacraments, which accompanied virtually every ordination and ecclesiastical appointment, revolted the sensibilities of the pious and undermined every claim to moral and spiritual authority (although not, it was necessary for Peter Damiani to insist in the following year, the validity of the sacraments themselves). It followed that the campaign against simony provided every bishop in every diocese with an urgent and compelling rationale for attacking and replacing the canons of his cathedral, scions of the local landed families whose command of their territory and regional balance of power rested, often crucially, on their control of the church's endowments. The accompanying attack on clerical marriage not only reinforced this assault on the cathedral clergy, but thrust it still deeper, to the level of the parish, where in many regions hereditary priesthood was synonymous with long-established and well-respected communal leadership.

In short, not for the first time in European history, and very far from the last, the banner of reform flew above the eternal, unremitting struggle not only of purity against corruption, but of centralizing power against local hegemony. In one way or another it also provided the occasion of many accusations and counter-accusations of heresy. As early as 1016 we find the duke of Aquitaine supporting the bishop of Poitiers against his cathedral chapter by informing the canons that failure to support the bishop's reforms – that is, to give up either their canonries or their wives and family incomes

– would render them guilty of the Arian heresy.[18] This had nothing to do with any speculation in which they may have indulged, in the intervals of fulfilling their matrimonial obligations, as to the priority of the persons of the Holy Trinity. Still less does it imply, as the discoverers of the duke's charter suggested, that anyone had been agitating the populace over such questions. To invoke the name of the father of heresy, the greatest of all dividers of the church, was a standard formula for insisting on ecclesiastical obedience.[19] It was precisely in support of this same demand for reform of the cathedral chapter that the Patarenes brought the people of Milan into open revolt against their archbishop and his clergy for most of the ten-fifties and ten-sixties, and that bishops were boycotted throughout Lombardy, and then all over Europe.[20] When Henry of Lausanne was permitted to preach at Le Mans in 1115, and Valdès in Lyons in the eleven-seventies, it seems probable that they were deliberately employed by the respective bishops, Hildebert of Lavardin and Guichard of Pontigny, to bring popular pressure to bear against recalcitrant cathedral clergy, although both men subsequently became notorious as heretics and enemies of episcopal authority.[21]

Henry continued for another thirty years after his expulsion from Le Mans to preach against clerical corruption and immorality throughout Aquitaine and especially in the region of Toulouse. He came radically to

[18] P. Bonnassie and R. Landes, 'Une nouvelle hérésie est née dans le monde', in *Les sociétés méridionales autour de l'an mil*, ed. M. Zimmerman (Paris, 1992), pp. 435–59.

[19] Y. M. J. Congar, 'Arriana haeresis', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, xliii (1959), 449–61. The point is nicely illustrated by Wazo of Liège, who on receiving from Bishop Roger of Châlons-sur-Marne a description of heretics whom Roger regarded as Manichees, because they 'shun the eating of meat and believe it profane to kill animals', replied: 'The Christian religion abhors this view and finds these heretics guilty of the Arian heresy' (Anselm of Liège, *Gesta episcoporum Leodicensis*, ed. R. Koepke (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, vii), p. 227; Moore, *Heresy*, p. 22). Wazo, one of the most learned men of his day, was perfectly aware of the theological difference between an Arian and a Manichee, but it was discipline, not theology, that he saw at issue here.

[20] H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'The papacy, the Patarenes and the church of Milan', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., xviii (1968), 25–48; I. R. Robinson, 'The friendship network of Gregory VII', *History*, lxiii (1978), 1–22.

[21] R. I. Moore, 'Heresy, repression and social change in the age of Gregorian reform', in *Christendom and its Discontents*, ed. S. D. Waugh and P. D. Diehl (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 19–46, at pp. 38–41; M. Rubellin, 'Au temps où Valdès n'était pas hérétique: hypothèse sur la rôle de Valdès à Lyon', in *Inventer l'hérésie? Discours polémiques et pouvoirs avant l'inquisition*, ed. M. Zerner (Nice, 1998), pp. 193–218; M. Rubellin, 'Guichard de Pontigny et Valdès à Lyon: la rencontre de deux idéaux réformateurs', *Revue d'histoire des religions*, ccxvii (2000), 39–58.

deny the spiritual as well as the fiscal claims of the bishops and priests of the church, and some of what were becoming its central doctrines, and apparently left numerous followers and a persistent memory in many villages of the region, where they 'hated priests and enjoyed Henry's jokes'.[22] The followers of Valdès later embraced rather similar beliefs, and came to be execrated and pursued as the most dangerous enemies of the church apart from the 'Cathars', but only after their repeated attempts to be accepted as loyal, although not necessarily obedient, sons and daughters of the church had been spurned.[23] Both examples show that when the church and its ministers failed to embody the apostolic ideal of poverty and humility which the church itself had disseminated so effectively, the faithful might be persuaded to seek it elsewhere. Some did so discreetly, like the groups of unauthorized bible-readers who were reported to several bishops in Champagne and Flanders in the third and fourth decades of the eleventh century, and as those examined at Arras in 1024–5 put it, 'had learned the precepts of the Gospels and the Apostles, and would follow no other scripture but this'.[24] Others attracted great notoriety, like the haggard and skin-clad preachers of half a century or so later who, whether they were heroes of the church like Robert of Arbrissel and Norbert of Xanten, or infamous heretics like Henry of Lausanne and Tanchelm of Antwerp, denounced the sins of the clergy with the same eloquence and attracted the same eager and adoring crowds to hear them do so. In either case, the primary source of their energy and their message was Catholic piety itself.

Almost all charges and assertions of heresy in the 200 years or so before the Dominican inquisition was established at Toulouse in 1233 arose in contexts like these – of disputes among the higher clergy, or ardent, but initially and essentially Catholic, evangelism. Until the eleven-forties at least there is no occasion on which we are compelled to suspect any other source or motivation, and few when any but the most excitable need be tempted to do so. Nevertheless, we should add that these early charges were

[22] Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita Prima s. Bernardi* (*P.L.*, clxxxv), cols. 410–16, at col. 412; R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1987), pp. 83–114. My account of Henry's teachings, however, will be significantly modified (although not necessarily moderated) by Monique Zerner's forthcoming edition of his debate with the monk William (see, meanwhile, her 'Au temps de l'appel aux armes contre les hérétiques: du contra Henricum du moine Guillaume aux contra hereticos', in Zerner, *Inventer*, pp. 119–56).

[23] Rubellin; E. Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 11–35.

[24] *Acta Synodi Atrebatensis* (*P.L.*, cxlii), col. 1272; Moore, *Heresy*, pp. 16–17.

usually accompanied by suggestions that the accused, or their leaders, were also resisting at least some of the innovations in the life of the church and its relations with the daily life of the believer that constituted both the pastoral objective of ecclesiastical reform, and its most substantial and far-reaching achievement – the baptism of infants, the sacralization of marriage, regular attendance at mass, confession to the priest and the subsequent penance, prayers and masses for the dead – as well as the construction of the cathedral and parish churches which for so many today remain the most characteristic achievements of medieval civilization. It was at this time that the network of parishes was completed in most parts of lowland Europe, that the sacraments of the church were defined and prescribed with new precision, that the framework and fabric to support them, comprehensively defined by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and sustained by great landed endowments and an extensive array of revenues from many sources, was put in place – when the Catholic Europe of the *ancien régime* took shape, not perfectly or completely, of course, but for the first time universally and unmistakeably, with all that that implies.

Indeed, when we consider, from whatever perspective, the extent of the transformation in the daily lives of every family that these developments represented, the transfer of wealth that they demanded, and the social upheavals that were necessary to secure them, we may wonder whether what needs to be explained is the presence of popular dissent or its absence. It is sometimes forgotten that in most regions, and for most of our period, the most common and most popular alternative to Gregorian Catholicism was not heresy, either native or imported, and not (as is still occasionally imagined) pre-Christian survival, but pre-Gregorian Catholicism.[25] What exactly that meant is a question still far from satisfactorily answered, and any answer must obviously give great weight to local and regional variety, but it seems reasonable, if verging on tautology, to suppose at least that it usually included a much closer cultural identification between the priest and the community,[26] a more active collective involvement in ostensibly

[25] I use the term Catholicism because acknowledgment of the centrality and primacy of Rome was universal and uncontested (as far as we can tell), although it was understood and exercised very differently from what became the case after the late 11th century (cf. L. K. Little, 'Romanesque Christianity in Germanic Europe', *Jour. Interdisciplinary Hist.*, xxiii (1993), 453–74).

[26] Cheyette's discussion, with calculations, of the relative wealth of parish clergy (pp. 302–7) offers a useful caution on this point, but it is based on much later data: the crucial question here is when and how the distance his figures suggest for the 13th century between

religious decision making (for example, in respect of such matters as sexual behaviour or sorcery accusations) than Gregorians would come to regard as proper, and less emphasis on the sacraments as defined and administered, as it were *de haut en bas*, by the clergy to the people. This is a point of particular relevance for the present argument in relation to the Languedoc, where for many reasons reform arrived much later than in the north – in many respects, indeed, hardly at all until the thirteenth century – with the result that a visitor like St. Bernard (in 1145) was shocked by what he found – 'Churches without people, people without priests, priests without the deference due to them'[27] – and may have attributed to the positive influence of heresy a great deal that was simply a continuation of traditional practice much less different than he imagined from that of his own homelands in the not very distant past.

The presence of heresy among the people, whatever its source, does not seem to have worried the higher clergy very much until surprisingly late. The moment when it assumed a prominent place on the agenda of the universal church is very easily identified. In 1139 Abbot Peter of Cluny addressed to four Provençal bishops a treatise against Peter of Bruys, whose 'stupid and sacrilegious heresy has killed many souls and infected more in and around your dioceses', urging that 'with your active help the grace of God will remove it little by little from your regions'.[28] According to Peter the Venerable – whose treatise and prefatory letter are the only evidence we possess – his namesake had been active in the region for twenty years, preaching particularly and successfully against infant baptism, the building of churches, the eucharist, the veneration of the cross, and prayers for the dead, before meeting his death in a bonfire of crosses made by his own followers at St. Gilles du Gard, on to which he was thrown by its indignant citizenry. About five years later Bernard of Clairvaux wrote to Count Alphonse-Jordan of Toulouse to announce that in company with a papal legate and the bishop of Chartres he was undertaking a preaching mission in the count's lands, in order to combat 'the great evils which the heretic Henry inflicts every day on the church'.[29] The burden of his complaint was

even the poorest parish clergy and the peasantry had originated.

[27] Bernard, *Epistola* 241 (*P.L.*, clxxxii), col. 434.

[28] Peter the Venerable, *Tractatus contra Petrobrusianos*, ed. J. Fearns (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, x, Turnhout, 1968), 3–6; Moore, *Heresy*, p. 60. For a comprehensive and searching analysis, see D. Iogna-Prat, *Ordonner et exclure* (Paris, 1998), pp. 99–264 (translated as D. Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion* (Ithaca and London, 2002)).

[29] See above, n. 27.

that in consequence of Henry's activity the services and sacraments of the church were being spurned and its priests scorned throughout the count's territories. In 1145 Bernard completed the mission and scored some dramatic successes, including a long string of miracles, but concluded gloomily that he had failed to eradicate heresy from the region, which remained in need of 'a great work of preaching'.[30]

Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux were the two most eminent and influential churchmen in Europe at this time. That both should have decided almost simultaneously – and as far as we know independently – to proclaim that popular preaching of heresy in the Languedoc was a menace to the faith, and to call for action against it, signalled a step change in the seriousness with which it would be treated thenceforward. No doubt their influence had something to do with the reissue by the Second Lateran Council, in 1139, of a decree of Pope Calixtus II at Toulouse in 1119 condemning as heretical 'whosoever under the guise of piety condemns the eucharist, infant baptism, priesthood and religious ordination, as well as legitimate matrimony'.[31] Nor can I think it altogether a coincidence that when in 1145 the clergy of Liège found some heretics in their city they reported the matter to the pope. No surviving record suggests that this had been done in any previous case – the same clergy of Liège had apparently not thought it necessary in similar circumstances ten years earlier – but it seems henceforth to have been normal.[32]

Scholars, myself included, have not usually made much of this sudden urgency, no doubt because they have assumed that it represented the culmination of steadily mounting concern in response to the slowly widening trickle of complaints about popular heresy which so many of us have painstakingly traced from around the beginning of the eleventh century.[33]

[30] Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita Prima s. Bernardi* (*P.L.*, clxxxv), cols. 410–16, at col. 412. On Bernard, Peter and the highlighting of heresy at this point, cf. J.-L. Biget, '"Les Albigeois": remarques sur une dénomination', in Zerner, *Inventer*, pp. 219–55, at p. 227.

[31] This canon might have been directed against either Henry or Peter, both probably active in the Languedoc by 1119, but it may not have been: there is no reason to assume that they were the only people resisting these innovations. It may be noted, tediously, that there is no suggestion of external influence, or of theological dualism, although this is often cited by those who take every reference to dissidence in this region as a manifestation of 'Catharism'.

[32] *P.L.*, clxxix, col. 937–8; *Annales Rodenses* (M.G.H., Scriptores, xvi), p. 711.

[33] The subject of a great deal of discussion in recent years, fully and fairly surveyed by M. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation* (3rd edn., Oxford, 2002), pp. 14–41.

That presumption turns out to be surprisingly difficult to substantiate. It is not only that the trickle dissolves into droplets, if not into a miasma, as soon as we distinguish accusations arising from political and ecclesiastical rivalries or uninhibited spiritual enthusiasm from those which clearly reacted to the propagation of heterodox teachings in conscious defiance of authority. It is also that the chronic anxiety about the presence or dissemination of popular heresy that is sometimes supposed to have haunted the dreams of medieval Catholics is conspicuous in the tenth century, and even with certain well-defined exceptions in the eleventh, chiefly by its absence. The negative, of course, is incapable of proof, but the possibility of electronic searching brings us, practically speaking, a little closer than we were before. In the tenth century there was no contemporaneously recorded case of a heresy accusation. A doubtless unskilled search of Migne's *Patrologia Latina* reveals only a handful of references to the great heretics of antiquity, none of them in a context which suggests any contemporary resonance, or any anxiety. This is by no means an exhaustive test, but it should be good enough to show up some smoke if there had been a fire of any size.[34]

In and around the third decade of the eleventh century there was some serious persecution. There were burnings not only at Orléans in 1022, discussed above, but at Milan, where the members of a group discovered at the castle of Monforte di Alba, near Turin, were put to the stake in 1028.[35] In that year also the duke of Aquitaine summoned a council at Charroux 'to extirpate', according to Ademar of Chabannes, 'the heresies which the Manichees had been spreading among the people'.[36] Ademar of Chabannes is one of the most voluminous and extraordinary writers of the early middle ages, whose works are only now becoming known and edited, with fascinating and important results. He certainly believed that heretics, whom he called Manichees, were active in the later part of his lifetime,

[34] The strange story of Vilgardus of Ravenna, allegedly condemned at some time before 970 for preaching that the sayings of Virgil, Horace and Juvenal 'should be believed in everything', is reported *c.*1040 by Rodulfus Glaber, *Opera*, ed. J. France (Oxford, 1989), pp. 92–3. The exaction of a formulaic profession of faith from Gerbert of Aurillac on his consecration as archbishop of Reims in 991 does not seem to have been prompted by any specific accusation of heresy (cf. I. da Milano 'L'eresia popolari del secolo XI nell'Europa occidentale' (still a fundamental study), in *Studi Gregoriani*, ii, ed. G. B. Borino (Rome, 1947), 43–89, at pp. 44–6).

[35] Landulf Senior, *Historia mediolanensis*, ed. D. L. C. Bethnann and W. Wattenbach (M.G.H., Scriptores, viii), pp. 65–6.

[36] Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, ed. J. Chavanon (Paris, 1897), p. 194.

referring to them repeatedly in his sermons as well as his chronicle.[37] He also believed that the patron saint of his abbey, Martial of Limoges, was one of the twelve apostles, and went mad when his attempt to prove it was publicly and humiliatingly rebutted.[38] His editors are inclined to think that he was right about the Manichees, but are willing to concede that he is short on specifics, to the point where we are still unable to point to any individual, with or without a name, anywhere in Europe, who could plausibly be described in that way before those of the eleven-forties to whom I will turn in a moment.[39]

Nevertheless, Ademar, like Rodulfus Glaber, another highly idiosyncratic writer with an agenda of his own, was convinced, or at least anxious to convince his readers, that heresy was indeed resurgent in the eleventh century, for the first time since antiquity. Current opinion is sharply divided as to the extent and nature of what Ademar and Rodulfus knew and described, but whether or not we take them at their word (as for my own part I would not), their anxiety was not widely shared by their contemporaries or, for another 100 years, by their successors. Bishop Gerard of Cambrai dealt temperately, if loquaciously, with a group of lay gospel readers brought to his attention in 1024–5.[40] They avowed some serious errors, including the belief that the sacrament of baptism was annulled by the sins of the priest who administered it, but Gerard let them off with a sermon and a confession. Bishop Wazo of Liège, about twenty years later, famously counselled his brother of Châlons against imitating 'the usual hasty fervour of the French' by handing some suspected heretics in his diocese to the secular arm for punishment.[41] Granted, this implies *a fortiori* a less relaxed

[37] D. Callahan, 'The Manichaeans and the Antichrist in the writings of Ademar of Chabannes: the origins of popular heresy in the medieval West and "the terrors of the year 1000"', in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, xv (1995), 163–22; M. Frassetto, 'Heresy, celibacy and reform in the sermons of Ademar of Chabannes', in *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform*, ed. M. Frassetto (New York, 1998), pp. 131–48.

[38] R. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), pp. 251–81.

[39] I am grateful to Michael Frassetto for information on this point. The issue of the nature and extent of popular heresy in this region has been revisited with exemplary scholarship and perspicacity by C. Taylor, *Heresy in Medieval France: Dualism in Aquitaine and the Agenais, 1000–1249* (Woodbridge, 2005); though I am still not persuaded that 'it seems far more likely that dualist ideas or even missionaries did reach the west than did not' (p. 115) this study will remain indispensable to future discussion.

[40] See above, n. 24.

[41] Anselm of Liège (above, n. 19).

view on the part of the bishop of Châlons to whom Wazo wrote, and perhaps on that of the French as well, but once again the *Patrologia* offers nothing to support it more generally. It shows the vocabulary of heresy in use in two eleventh-century contexts only: the long and widely reported series of disputes over the eucharist which raged around the life and trials of Berengar of Tours; and the great conflict between the reforming papacy and its numerous antagonists which dominated the second half of the century. On this evidence the only heresiarchs of the eleventh century were Berengar and the anti-pope Guido of Ravenna; the *simoniaca heresis* was added to the *ariana heresis* as an accusation that bishops could conveniently invoke to discipline their clergy; and the Manichaeans were an occasional historical memory. No words were wasted on heresy among the people.

The storm that had begun in the ten-fifties when the Patarenes of Milan attacked the archbishop and his clergy as monsters of incontinence and corruption, steeped in the heresy of simony, raged through Europe well into the twelfth century, and left few corners untouched. In one place after another monks and hermits appeared to denounce the bishop and his clergy, calling on the populace – as Ramihrdus did at Cambrai in 1076 – to boycott their services in accordance with papal directives; in one diocese after another, with motives of varying degrees of purity, bishops expelled, or tried to expel, married canons from their cathedrals and married priests from their parishes. Such conditions, not to mention wider changes like the rapid growth of the new monasticism and the cathedral schools in these decades, might seem likely to have fostered not only popular heresy itself, which to a very limited extent it did, but widespread anxiety about it, which so far as I can see it did not. Certainly there was concern that anticlerical agitation might be dangerous: as Marbod of Rennes complained of the hermit Robert of Arbrissel's blistering attacks on the incontinence and avarice of the Breton clergy, 'this is not to preach but to undermine'.[42] But such occasional misgivings were expressed in the context of a wider confidence that Christianity had finally triumphed over its enemies.

Jay Rubinstein has recently painted a most interesting picture of the young Guibert of Nogent growing up in Picardy in the ten-eighties and ten-nineties, and forming 'a remarkably naive view of eleventh-century Europe – one that sees Christianization as complete, and senses no danger from heretics and no rivalry with Judaism'[43] – a view precisely echoed by

[42] Ep. vi (*P.L.*, clxxi), col. 1484.

[43] J. Rubinstein, *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind* (New York and London, 2002), p. 30.

Bishop Herbert Losinga of Norwich (d. 1119) when he wrote that 'the Catholic faith has fought, and has crushed, conquered and annihilated the blasphemies of the heretics, so that either there are no more heretics or they do not dare to show themselves'.[44] Guibert's confidence would be shaken only when he became an abbot, and was thrown into contact with the lively and unruly scholarly and urban communities of Laon and Soissons. Even then, although he did interrogate some suspected heretics whom he identified (wrongly) as 'Manichees', in 1114,[45] it was his encounters with Jews, not with Christian heretics, that convinced him that the faith was under siege.[46] His younger contemporary Ordericus Vitalis, author of the widest-ranging and most voluminous chronicle of the age, showed a not unfriendly interest in the hermit-preachers, despite their attacks on the hierarchy and the traditional style of monasticism practised in his own house at St. Evroul, but none whatsoever in popular heresy or the threat of it. He does not mention, although it is hard to imagine that he did not hear about it, the episode in 1116 of which historians have made so much (*mea culpa*), when Henry of Lausanne fomented a popular insurrection against the clergy of Le Mans, and presided for some weeks over what amounted to a commune there. By the eleven-twenties, if we are to believe Peter the Venerable, Peter of Bruys had launched a spectacular and violent career of anticlerical agitation in Provence – which, apart from a contemptuous passing reference from Abelard,[47] went apparently more or less unnoticed outside the region until Peter the Venerable himself produced his treatise two decades later.

It appears, therefore, that the *démarche* of Peter the Venerable and St. Bernard was both sudden and disproportionate equally to the real and to the perceived threat represented by dissident activity. Yet, by a curious irony, these years in which they were raising it for the first time to the level of a real and present danger to the church as a whole, and not merely an occasional local nuisance, saw the first clear description of what their successors were to identify, rightly or wrongly, as the most dangerous of all the heresies to threaten the medieval church. It is in a letter to Bernard

[44] Sermon 14, in *The Life, Letters and Sermons of Bishop Herbert de Losinga*, ed. E. M. Goulburn and H. Symonds (2 vols., Oxford, 1878), ii. 418 (quoted by Morris, p. 339).

[45] Guibert of Nogent, 'De vita sua', iii. xvii (*Autobiographie*, ed. E. R. Labande (Paris, 1981), pp. 429–34).

[46] Rubinstein, pp. 111–72.

[47] *Theologia*, ed. E. M. Buytaert and C. J. Mews, in *Petri Abaelardi opera theologica* (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, xiii, 1987), p. 439.

himself, from Eberwin, provost of the Premonstratensian canonry of Steinfeld, near Cologne.[48] Eberwin describes the interrogation in Cologne in 1143 not of one group of heretics but of two, who had brought themselves to the attention of the authorities by quarrelling publicly with each other. Two spokesmen of one group, namely 'one who was called their bishop with his companion', claimed that 'their heresy had been hidden until now ever since the time of the martyrs, and persisted in Greece and other lands'. They described in some detail beliefs and practices very like those of the Bogomils in Bulgaria as described by Cosmas the Priest (soon after 972) and later Byzantine writers, and their sect was divided between simple believers (*auditores*) and initiates (*electi*) by whom alone its rituals could be carried out and the sect perpetuated. The bishop and his companion went to the stake, 'and endured the torment of the flames not merely courageously but joyfully'. The diffusion of this sect in the Rhineland and the development of its teachings during the next twenty years may be traced in the sermons of Eckbert of Schönau (1163–7).[49] Many connect it, quite plausibly, with the purge, trial and burning of Bogomils in Constantinople in 1143,[50] in consequence of which, it is suggested, fugitives, or migrants, continued to make their way up the Danube and the Rhine, occasionally attracting converts, and occasionally persecution. Until recently nobody has questioned either the authenticity or the accuracy of Eberwin's account, although it now seems that we must at least be prepared not to take it simply at face value.[51]

Most specialists heretofore have agreed, however, that what Eberwin and Eckbert were describing was the appearance and early development of what came to be conventionally described as the Cathar heresy. Indeed, Eckbert was the first to use the word to describe medieval heretics, although

[48] *P.L.*, clxxxii, cols. 676–80.

[49] *P.L.*, cxcv, cols. 11–102.

[50] D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils: a Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 220–1.

[51] U. Brunn, 'L'hérésie dans l'archevêché de Cologne, 1100–1233', *Heresis*, xxxviii (2003), 183–90. Brunn's conclusion (p. 190) that 'the heresy called "Cathar"– a term little known in the twelfth century – was born of a complex discursive construction in the West, and not from doctrinal exchanges with the East' is strikingly congruent with the argument presented below in respect of the Languedoc. See now U. Brunn, *Des contestataires aux 'Cathares': discours de réforme et propagande antihérétique dans le pays du Rhin et de la Meuse avant l'Inquisition* (Collection des Etudes Augustiniennes, Paris, 2006), a work of fundamental importance and far-reaching implications.

it never caught on in the middle ages as it has with modern historians.[52] We might be tempted to entertain the possibility that it was not by coincidence that Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux were denouncing the dangers of heretical preaching with a new stridency at just the same time. Is it not conceivable that they expressed alarm at the appearance of a new and dangerous heresy because they knew that a new and dangerous heresy was in fact appearing? The evidence is against it. It is not simply that neither Peter nor Bernard mentions any of the obvious differences that we would expect to find between Western anti-clericals and Eastern dualists, and which Eberwin listed clearly in a letter to Bernard himself. In the sermon that Bernard composed in response he attached little importance to the distinction that Eberwin had made between the two groups of heretics, did not address the issue of theological dualism or associate the errors of either group with it, and did not appear to link the heresy that Eberwin said had 'lain hidden in eastern lands since antiquity' with either Mani or any other heresiarch, actually complaining that these people seemed to have no prophet after whom their sect could be named.[53] Nor did the fact that he had been alerted in this way by Eberwin only a year or so previously cause Bernard to suggest that either a foreign or a dualist heresy was among the dangers to the faith with which he believed the Languedoc to be so abundantly infected in 1145, either when he wrote to the count of Toulouse before he embarked on his mission or through the account which his secretary Geoffrey of Auxerre composed of it afterwards.[54]

The testimony of Eberwin and Eckbert is accompanied by a number of further incidents in the Rhineland, Flanders and northern France in the eleven-fifties and eleven-sixties.[55] The differences between them, even in very fragmentary reports, invalidate the common assumption that they can all be assimilated to the same sect or movement. For example, the common habit

[52] See now M. Pegg, '"Catharism" and the study of medieval heresy', in *New Medieval Literatures*, vi, ed. D. Lawton, R. Copeland and W. Scase (Oxford, 2004), pp. 249–69, pointing out at p. 262, n. 26 that Eckbert got the word from Ivo of Chartres, who was quoting Pope Innocent I (401–17).

[53] 'Sermones super cantica canticorum, 66', in *S. Bernardi opera*, ed. J. Leclerq and others (2 vols., Rome, 1957–8), ii. 179.

[54] R. I. Moore, 'St. Bernard's mission to the Languedoc in 1145', *Bull. Inst. Hist. Research*, xlvii (1974), 1–10. I follow here the view of Bernard's editors that the letter from Eberwin and sermon 66 preceded the mission to the Languedoc. In the opposite case, however, the argument would simply be reversed: Bernard had seen nothing in the Languedoc which caused him either to understand Eberwin's information or to take it seriously.

[55] Moore, *Origins*, pp. 175–96, now subject to the reservations implied in this article.

of describing the 'Publicani' who were found in England *c.*1165 as 'Cathars' is flatly contradicted by William of Newburgh's account of their beliefs, the only one that we have, according to which they 'attacked holy baptism, communion and matrimony', as we should expect of anyone accused of heresy by this time, but accepted the incarnation of Christ, as theological dualists could not have done.[56] The admission of heretical beliefs about the sacraments excludes the possibility that the accused were dissembling, to which twentieth-century scholars, like twelfth-century bishops, were apt to resort when the evidence failed to confirm their expectations: what would have been the point of denying one charge while conceding the others?

Nevertheless, there is enough at this time to suggest that something new was afoot. What we may think it was is a question inseparably linked with another and fundamental change in the way in which those accused of heresy were treated. Up to 1140 or so action against heresy had been confined, by and large, to those who forced themselves on the attention of the clergy by preaching it, and its discovery resulted in death, by burning or otherwise, only in rather exceptional circumstances, for example when the political stakes were high, as at Orléans or Monforte in the ten-twenties, or when churchmen were trying to override the outcome of trial by ordeal.[57] In 1157, however, a council at Reims demanded that not only the heretics (described as Manichees) whom it complained of, 'hiding among the poor and under the veil of religion labouring to undermine the faith of the simple', but their followers should be punished by imprisonment, branding and exile;[58] in 1163 a group, including a young girl whose steadfastness moved the onlookers to pity, were burned at Cologne, having been found when their neighbours noticed that they did not go to church on Sundays;[59] and in 1165 King Henry II caused 'rather more than thirty people, both men and women' to be stripped and driven from the city of Oxford 'with ringing blows into the intolerable cold, for it was winter . . . and they died in misery'. Apart from their leader, these were 'simple and illiterate people, quite uncultivated peasants, Germans by race and language', whose evangelism had secured the conversion of one old woman.[60] This amounted to the first mass execution

[56] William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, ed. R. Howlett (2 vols., 1884–5), ii. 131.

[57] R. I. Moore, 'Popular heresy and popular violence, 1022–1179', in *Studies in Church History*, xxi: *Persecution and Toleration*, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford, 1984), pp. 43–50.

[58] Mansi, xxi, col. 843.

[59] *Chronica regia Coloniensis* (M.G.H., Scriptores, xviii), p. 114.

[60] William of Newburgh, pp. 132–3.

for heresy in the middle ages, and for good measure Henry followed it up a few weeks later with the first secular legislation against it, in the twenty-first chapter of the Assize of Clarendon, which proclaimed harsh penalties for anyone who gave aid or succour to these people – even though he must have known perfectly well that they were already dead. In short, we see in the years around and after 1160 a clear shift in the direction of punishing not only the preachers of heresy but their followers, and of punishing them severely.

However the scattered and fragmentary appearances, or accusations, of heresy in the eleven-fifties and early eleven-sixties are to be interpreted, none of them concerned the county of Toulouse. We have no suggestion from that region of anything since Bernard's 1145 mission to excite the alarm of the prelates assembled at Tours in 1163, under the presidency of Pope Alexander III. Yet, if there was a moment at which the war against heresy might be said to have been formally declared it was when they called for the extirpation of the heresy now 'spreading like a cancer from Toulouse through Gascony and neighbouring regions'.[61] The council's demand that the devotees of this heresy should be searched out for public exposure, social and commercial boycott and other punishment anticipated not only the procedures of the inquisitors but their premise that heretics were there to be found, and that failure to show themselves only confirmed their perfidy. Tours was the favourite city of Henry II, upon whose support the pope, exiled from Italy by his conflict with Frederick Barbarossa, was heavily dependent at this time. Henry took an active interest in the preparation of the council, encouraging the bishops of all his lordships to attend it, in marked contrast to his English predecessors, who had preferred to keep their bishops at home on such occasions.[62] We may regard this as heartening testimony of the king's pious concern for the spiritual welfare of his subjects, unless some other possibility suggests itself.

Whatever may have been the situation before the Council of Tours, reports quickly follow it that heretics were numerous, brazen and well entrenched in the county of Toulouse. We are told, for instance, that in 1165, at a meeting summoned at Lombers with the apparent object of reassuring outside opinion that the directive of Tours was being implemented, they defied

[61] William of Newburgh, p. 137. The council of Reims of 1148 had prohibited support for 'the heresiarchs who linger in Gascony and Provence or their followers' (Mansi, xxi, col. 718). Toulouse, like the metaphor of cancer, appears for the first time in the canon of Tours.

[62] W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (2 edn., 1991), pp. 451–2.

the assembled secular and ecclesiastical notables of the region, denounced the church as corrupt and refused to confirm by oath their own assertions of Catholic orthodoxy.[63] The seriousness of the situation eventually led to the dispatch of a papal legation, in 1178, under heavy pressure from Louis VII and Henry II, who provided most of its members. According to one of its leaders the mission 'found [Toulouse] so diseased that from head to feet there was not a healthy place in it'.[64] We have already noted that the reports of the legates to the Third Lateran Council in the following year presented an account of Catholicism helpless before an aggressive and powerfully supported dualist sect whose leaders were wealthy and influential public figures, which in turn laid the foundation for the ecclesiastical, diplomatic and eventually military offensives that followed over the next thirty years, and has been accepted effectively without question by almost all subsequent historians.

The difficulty about all this, however, is that in recent years it has become clear that virtually all of the evidence for heresy in twelfth-century Languedoc is tainted, although it is not yet clear quite how irredeemably, not only in having been written some time after the events in question, and therefore at best with hindsight, but by the political and ecclesiastical ambitions of its sponsors. Most of what comes from the Cistercian order is associated with the abbeys of Fontfroide, near Narbonne, which served as a base for the campaigns against heresy in the later part of the century, and for preparations for the crusade, including among others the activities of Henry de Marcy, Peter of Castelnau and the first leader of the crusade, Arnold-Amaury of Cîteaux, and of Hautecombe, near Chambéry, of which Henri de Marcy and Geoffrey of Auxerre were successively abbots.[65] For the crucial period from the Council of Tours to the mission of 1178, all the evidence comes, directly or indirectly, from Angevin chronicles, and especially from Roger of Howden. When this remarkable but seldom remarked fact first struck me, more than thirty years ago, I was content to attribute it, as apparently everyone else had done, to the inherent superiority of English historiography, but since John Gillingham has shown us just how close Roger was to the royal household it assumes an altogether new

[63] *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. W. Stubbs (4 vols., 1868–71), ii. 105–7.

[64] *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, p. 215.

[65] Zerner, *Inventer*, *passim*; and esp. Biget, pp. 219–55. For the Cistercian point of view, see B. M. Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania, 1145–1229* (Woodbridge, 2001).

significance.[66] In short, as I have argued in more detail elsewhere,[67] both the canon of 1163 – or at the least its reference to Toulouse – and the tone of the subsequent historiography – how far the substance we will never know for sure – were inspired by the political requirements of Henry's forty-year war against Toulouse (as William of Newburgh called it), launched after the failure of his expedition of 1159. This was the greatest military commitment of the reign, which had been frustrated when Louis VII interposed himself between Henry and the city, so that Henry could pursue his prey only at the price of attacking his lord. That would have ceased to be a problem if either Louis or Raymond could plausibly be accused of protecting heretics. It may, of course, have been merely coincidental that a torrent of information about the extent and activity of heresy in the county began to emanate from the Angevin court immediately afterwards. What is certainly the case is that if we depended for information on sources like the *Chronicle of Morigny*, Hugh of Poitiers or Geoffrey de Vigeois, so much nearer the spot, we should have no evidence whatsoever that there was anything unusual amiss, religiously speaking, in the count's dominions at this time.[68]

The fabrication which can be observed in the second half of the twelfth century of a unified and doctrinally coherent anti-church out of a multitude of various and for the most part insignificant deviations from Catholic teaching and practice, real and alleged, contributed immensely if not indispensably to the preparation and conduct of the war against heresy in the thirteenth century. Still, we must not fall, historiographically, into the corresponding error of attributing it exclusively to the designs of Henry II on the count and county of Toulouse and the spiritual anxieties and ambitions of the Cistercians. Religious differences evoked similar responses and were put to similar uses in other parts of Europe, although on nothing like so ambitious a scale, either politically or intellectually. To look back

[66] J. Gillingham, 'The travels of Roger of Howden and his views of the Irish, Scots and Welsh', *Anglo-Norman Stud.*, xx (1998), 152–69 (repr. in J. Gillingham, *The English in the 12th Century* (Woodbridge, 2000)). J. Gillingham, 'Royal newsletters, forgeries and English historians: some links between court and history in the reign of Richard I', in *La Cour Plantagenêt (1154–1204)*, ed. M. Aurell (Poitiers, 2000), pp. 171–86. I am grateful to John Gillingham for offprints and discussion.

[67] R. I. Moore, 'Les albigeois d'après les chroniques angevines', in *La Croisade Albigeoise: actes du Colloque du Centre d'Études Cathares Carcassonne, October 2002* (Carcassonne, 2004), pp. 81–90.

[68] Similarly, Biget, p. 232n., remarks that the Agenais, 'zone frontière entre le comté de Toulouse et le duché d'Aquitaine, disputée entre les deux principautés, est également réputé terre d'hérésie par les chroniqueurs proches du pouvoir Plantegenêt'.

from the eleven-eighties is to see how the identification of popular heresy as a serious and a general danger to the church and the faithful in the generation of Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux had opened the way to the elaboration of a set of ideas and the construction of institutions which fuelled the war against heresy in the years to come. It also underpinned the formation of what I have previously called the persecuting society, not only because its victims included in addition to heretics, Jews, lepers, homosexual men, prostitute women and many others, but because in order to persecute these groups it was necessary first, in varying degrees, to create them, by welding scattered fragments of reality into coherent abstractions – 'the Jew', 'the heretic', 'the Albigensian' and so on – and then to classify the resultant stereotype as a menace to Christian society which must be ruthlessly extirpated. I have always insisted, and do so again, that this was neither a wholly cynical nor a deliberate or consciously co-ordinated process.[69] We persuade others most effectively when we have first persuaded ourselves, and transparent sincerity, however misguided, is a powerful asset in any cause.

We have identified the years around 1140 as the moment when the identification and classification of heresy (but not yet of the Cathar heresy) as a general and present danger took place. It is an interesting moment at which to search for an explanation, a moment when the new scholastic culture whose adepts would form the clerical elite – and the power elite – of the new Europe was crystallizing. It was at about this time, for example, that the arts curriculum was settling into shape in Paris and the first Gratian was completing his concordance of canon law in Bologna. It was in 1141 that Peter Abelard was accused of heresy at Sens, in a confrontation whose roots stretched back for two decades and more through the bitter political and clerical factions of northern France, and Constant Mews has argued that one of the most powerful anxieties that Abelard had aroused was precisely that his strictures on the abuse of spiritual power might undermine the authority of the French bishops just when they were peculiarly nervous of popular unrest in their cities, and the papacy was under similar pressure in Rome.[70]

[69] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (2nd edn., Oxford, 2006).

[70] C. Mews, 'The council of Sens (1141): Abelard, Bernard and the fear of social upheaval', *Speculum*, lxxvii (2002), 342–82.

At a personal level Bernard's role as the prosecutor of Abelard at Sens is perhaps a reminder that we need seek no very elaborate explanation of his response to the letter of Eberwin of Steinfeld and the preaching of Henry of Lausanne. It was his habit to see the church beset by dangers on every side, and he devoted his life to combating them. The case of Peter the Venerable is more revealing. In these years Peter put together his treatises not only against heresy but against the Saracens and the Jews. In a masterly study Dominique Iogna-Prat has shown how in those works Peter drew upon the immense authority and resources of his congregation – Cluny was the superior of something in excess of 1,000 monastic houses all over Europe, and still, although no longer considered to be at the spiritual cutting edge, the cynosure of many more, with measureless prestige and connection among the aristocracy, the higher the better – to define and defend Latin Christendom against its foes, by identifying and exposing its most dangerous enemies. That work was necessary because two centuries of upheaval and reconstruction had, to borrow Max Weber's terms, shattered a community (or communities) of blood and replaced it with a community of faith. That does not mean that family ceased to matter, or that faith had not mattered before. It does mean that the men who henceforth assumed more and more commandingly the dynamic and creative roles in the making of Europe, in its secular and ecclesiastical courts, its universities and its cities, were united and driven by ties of culture which for them overrode the values and loyalties of kinship. That culture was encapsulated in a renewed and rearticulated faith, which now made much greater personal and spiritual demands on its clerisy, in proportion to the power, status and authority it conferred on them. It needed its enemies, to unite and discipline its followers, and to show the world the urgency of heeding their commands.

This community of faith, however, was a northern construct. It had been hammered together, over the previous century and a half, in the territories of the old Carolingian heartlands between the Loire and the Rhine, with outposts in its English and Sicilian colonies, Lombardy, Tuscany and Catalonia, to provide a stable basis for the management of an advanced agrarian economy, and the more elaborate political and cultural structures that it could support. The costs in both collective and individual disruption had been enormous, including the enserfment of free peasantries; the replacement of the loosely structured kin-group by the dynastic lineage, with the accompanying restriction of inheritance, in many regions, to a single descendant, usually the eldest legitimate son; the creation of a rigid

demarcation, in both people and land, between church and laity; and the promulgation and absorption of a code of values, including a formulation of the Christian faith, based on the permanent or at least indefinite renunciation of personal independence and legitimate sexual gratification. Those who secured the benefits and suffered the pains of that transformation quickly came to see their neighbours who had not, in Ireland, or in Wales, or in the Languedoc, as less than human, enemies of God and threatening to man, and treated them accordingly.[71]

The generation of Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable, both born around 1090, was perhaps the first to be clearly recognizable as the product of these changes. It was also the generation that put in place the foundations of the new world, which by 1140 were beginning to show, as it were, above ground. Their successors, students when they were at the height of their powers, held responsible positions in the households of great men by the eleven-fifties, and were great men themselves by the eleven-seventies: John 'aux Belles Mains' of Canterbury, for example, served his apprenticeship in the household of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, and became bishop of Poitiers in 1162, in which capacity he attended the Council of Tours and was a member of the mission to Toulouse in 1178; he became archbishop of Lyons, on the death of Guichard of Pontigny, in 1181, and withdrew his predecessor's protection of Valdès, whose followers rapidly descended, or were driven, into bitter and durable enmity to the church.[72]

It does not seem unduly fanciful to account in that way for a certain chronological regularity which may not have been immediately obvious in this narrative. The menace of heresy among the people, identified in general terms in the early eleven-forties, had become the object of hot pursuit in the sixties; by the eleven-eighties a battery of propaganda and procedures was in place to justify and sustain the campaigns that were waged on all fronts in the thirteenth century. It would be rash to insist that those intervals of twenty years or so are anything more than suggestive. On the other hand, if the war against heresy was conceived at a moment when the scholastic culture which defined, articulated and sustained the new social order that we call medieval Europe was becoming more self-conscious, and bracing itself to secure its command both of cultural and of social power, its

[71] The connections asserted in this and the preceding paragraph are defended in R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c.970–1215* (Oxford, 2000).

[72] Warren, pp. 515–16; F. Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (1986), *passim*.

subsequent development might suggest that it served not only to articulate the values of a new ruling culture, but to consolidate the influence of a new governing class.

The Creighton Century, 1907–2007 offers a selection of ten lectures from the first 100 years of the University of London's prestigious Creighton Lecture series. Each of the chosen lectures, delivered between 1913 and 2004, is introduced and set in context by a historian of the modern-day University. The collection also includes, and is introduced by, Robert Evans's 2007 centenary lecture, 'The Creighton century: British historians and Europe, 1907–2007'.

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