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The Writing of History in Shakespeare's England

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I

More than seventy historical dramas were written in England between the middle of the sixteenth century and the Revolution, the greater number of them seeing the light of day during the closing decade and a half of Elizabeth's reign. To appreciate this large and important body of plays it is vital not merely to identify its historical sources – that is, for instance, to ask what bits of Halle or Holinshed we can identify in Shakespeare – but understand why in his first tetralogy Shakespeare more or less follows Edward Hall's providential pro-Tudor historical vision while he resolutely undermines that very same vision in *Henry V* and *Henry VIII*. To begin to address this and other similar questions, it is necessary to investigate first the various developments in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century historiography in England. In particular, it is crucial to understand that the proliferation of new and innovative historiographical methods, styles, and goals that arose in the sixteenth century helped wreck whatever univocality may have existed concerning, among other things, England's Trojan heritage and the providential shape of its history. This proliferation did not produce a national identity crisis by any means, but it did generate enough variety of interpretation, contradiction, and disagreement to provide a basis from which to contest from within Elizabethan and early Stuart society the *grand récits* of medieval historiography and Tudor orthodoxy that we find articulated in the writings of critics such as E. W. M. Tillyard.¹

What was the status of historical writing in the age of Shakespeare? When we read Louis B. Wright's *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* we come away with the impression that virtually all Englishmen and women in the sixteenth century, regardless of their socioeconomic background or their religious beliefs, were avid readers of historical texts.² The reason for this widespread appeal of historical texts was, Wright suggests, that people firmly believed that, next to the study of the Bible itself, the study of history was best suited to instruct human beings how to live a moral life.

Those belonging to Wright's so-called Elizabethan middle class who could afford them purchased copies of sixteenth-century chronicles and the less expensive chapbooks or the even more affordable broadside ballads. There is no doubt that events such as the conflicts with Rome in the early part of the sixteenth century encouraged an interest in religious, legal, and parliamentary history, and that the strife with Spain in the second half of the century promoted a fervent patriotism that found an expression in nationalistic historiography. History's popularity, however, does not give us insight into the public's sophistication concerning matters of method, innovation, and divergent interpretations. D. R. Woolf's new research amply demonstrates that there were some in the late sixteenth century who read historical texts with immense vigor. Woolf describes, for instance, a man named John Thomas, whose copy of Camden's *Britannia* is "interleaved and thickly annotated . . . adding his own comments, together with poetry and extracts from the other histories he had read [as well as] page references to passages elsewhere in *Britannia* itself, to other works of relevance to Camden's topics, and to manuscript in [John Thomas's] possession" (Woolf 2000: 90). Additional examples supplied by Woolf indicate beyond question that some early modern readers read historical texts not as "passive receptacles" but with something resembling scholarly intensity. Despite the breadth and depth of Woolf's research, however, it is not clear how widespread this way of reading historical texts was (especially before 1640), and it is an accepted critical commonplace that many more (especially Londoners) would have gotten their "history" from historical dramas by Shakespeare, Heywood, Jonsen, Marlowe, and others, rather than from proper historical texts.³ With the exception of those in the scholarly communities of Oxford and Cambridge, most libraries during the Tudor period housed mostly religious texts.⁴ What is more, even if we grant Louis Wright's thesis about the widespread public consumption of historical texts, we have to make two important qualifications: first, that the reading of history for moral edification and patriotic reasons tended to subordinate factual accuracy to literary and ideological concerns, and, secondly, that with one or two notable exceptions one would not turn to chronicles, chapbooks, and broadsides to learn about either historiographical rigor or historiographical innovation.⁵ One has to assume, therefore, that Englishmen and women, with some exceptions, were not in a position to evaluate critically the historical knowledge they received.

This is not an insignificant point because this is the time when the medieval chronicle largely fades from existence and is succeeded by a wide array of "historical texts" such as "poems, plays, antiquarian tracts, [and] humanist 'politic histories'" (Woolf 2000: 8).⁶ Notwithstanding Annabel Patterson's thesis about the multivocality of Holinshed's *Chronicle* (in which she argues that Holinshed deliberately included versions of events at variance with one another), there is a strong sense that history writing as a field became even more fragmented when its dominant genre, the chronicle, was phased out. Each of the newly emerging historiographical genres was shaped by a different set of principles, making the end of the sixteenth century a particularly important, yet difficult time for anyone wanting to evaluate the veracity of historical claims. Surprisingly, only a few of the historians themselves in the late sixteenth and

early seventeenth centuries display a keen enough awareness of the range of historiographical practices to evaluate the merits and shortcomings of each. Most historians simply repeat the commonplaces about history's duty to represent the past in as life-like a manner as possible, and to do so without malice or prejudice, so that readers can receive moral instruction from the examples cited.

The Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, on the other hand, we know read the historical texts available to them with considerable care, and, of course, with an eye to how history might be transformed into a profitable commodity for the theatre. This care, as I have argued elsewhere,⁷ led the dramatists to a greater awareness of methodological contradictions and/or inconsistencies within the rapidly proliferating historiographical genres. This awareness made it possible for Renaissance dramatists to appropriate for the stage not only the substance or content of the historical texts they read, but also the historiographical methods employed in those texts. Our understanding of what Marlowe, Shakespeare, Heywood, Jonson, Massinger, Fletcher, Ford, and others were up to in their history plays can be enhanced by examining the various types of history writing available to them. In this essay I try to lay the foundation for an enriched understanding of the Renaissance history play by discussing Renaissance understandings of the term "history," and by considering historiography's development during roughly the period of Shakespeare's life. The remainder of the essay will consider the three main "schools" of Renaissance historical thought: the providential, the humanist, and the antiquarian.

II

Modern historians studying the field of Renaissance historiography have at times attempted to discern a pattern or progress in its rich and sometimes perplexing heterogeneity. In an influential 1962 study, F. Smith Fussner proffered that history writing underwent a major revolution in England in the late sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth century. Fussner argued that in the 1580s English history writing underwent crucial changes "when more adequate facilities for research became available, and the antiquaries began to question their medieval authorities" (p. 300). The publication of William Camden's *Britannia* (1586), an antiquarian study of England's Roman heritage, is a watershed event in this argument. Camden relied on archival sources, allowing him strictly to limit both conjecture and reliance on divine causes, and to use a comparativist's approach to test inherited historical "truths."

The teleological character of Fussner's historical revolution has been criticized, most recently by D. R. Woolf, who observes that Fussner's conception of a historical revolution as "the late Elizabethan and early Stuart working-out of proper historical method" (Woolf 2000: 7) may be primarily a projection of modern (and Fussner's own) historiographical practices onto an early modern context. Woolf maintains that the historical revolution is less a catalyst *for* than an effect *of* a broad range of cultural

changes that are taking place in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. That said, Fussner's argument is more complex than Woolf's brief criticism of it here suggests, as Fussner is very much aware that "The historical revolution, unlike the scientific, resulted in no great Newtonian synthesis" (p. 305), and that the end of the Renaissance did not witness anything like uniformity of method or purpose in English historiography. However, the progressive trajectory of Fussner's argument – from error-perpetuating chronicles to sound antiquarian research – is manifest throughout *The Historical Revolution*.

Woolf has suggested that the truly significant historical revolution did not occur until the eighteenth century. The Renaissance historical "revolution" consisted of a wide array "of changes in the purpose, content, and style of historical writing" (Fussner 1962: 300), but the serious discussion of these changes was limited to "a very small segment of highly educated people, mainly men," compared to "the almost daily conversations, familial readings, public performances, and correspondence discussions of historical issues in the eighteenth century, among both men and women, involving nearly everything about the past, British, European, and Asian, as well as the older classical and biblical material" (Woolf 2000: 7). It is not necessary here to adjudicate between these two positions because Fussner and Woolf appear in general agreement that there did occur a number of legitimate innovations in the world of historiography in the late sixteenth century. The difference between their positions lies in the degree to which these innovations took hold and exactly when they permanently changed the course of historical research in England. Certainly, we have to consider that even if we can identify moments of genuine methodological innovations in antiquarian and humanist "politic histories," we cannot expect those innovations to have a particularly profound impact on the historical understanding of a populace whose ideas had been shaped for decades by stories from the chronicles and, beginning with Bale's *King Johan* and Marlowe's *Edward II*, by historical dramas.

In a succinct and still useful essay, Leonard F. Dean (1947) describes several emerging trends in history writing in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (pp. 3–4). Dean notes that historians increasingly limited both the time-frame and the geographical region to be treated in a single work. Historians also increasingly believed that their work should teach moral, religious, or political lessons, that truthfulness should be "the first law of history" (p. 3), and that while God is the prime mover of history, the "historian should depict human motives since they are the secondary causes of worldly actions. Therefore, councils should be fully presented and interpreted, [and] probable thoughts invented and attributed to the various personages" (pp. 3–4). Along the same lines, Dean observes that historians increasingly tried to heighten the instructional value of their work by manipulating it rhetorically, that is, by inventing rhetorical set speeches to produce a more intense effect upon the reader (p. 4). Lastly, historians began to provide greater narrative coherence to the chronological sequences that characterize the annals and, to a lesser extent, the chronicles.

I said that Dean's formulation is still useful, but only if we realize that there are important exceptions to all the trends he identifies. The Reformation, the emergence

of humanism and antiquarian research, as well as other continental influences in the sixteenth century certainly had an impact on both the method and the purposes of history writing, but even as important innovations were vigorously embraced by some historians, others merely paid lip service to them or rejected them outright in favor of time-honored medieval practices. Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*, for instance, is unashamedly universal in scope even though it is published in 1614 (well into the period where these trends could have taken hold), and begins with the creation of the world, even though Dean suggests that histories become narrower in scope. Likewise, Raleigh writes a vigorous defense of a historian's use of conjecture ("to rehearse probabilities as bare coniectures" (pp. 212–17),⁸ even though antiquarian researchers had firmly rejected this practice as speculative and misleading. The so-called set speech, a distinctive feature of classical historiography going back to Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, was an important part of humanist histories such as Thomas More's *History of Richard III* (1543),⁹ but its validity was explicitly denied by Thomas Blundeville in his 1574 treatise on history writing, in which he maintains that historians "ought not to fayne anye Orations" (Blundeville 1940: 164). Still others – in fact most non-antiquarian producers of historical texts at this time – freely mixed providential historiography with a humanist emphasis on secondary causes and wedded verifiable facts with legendary materials from the chronicles. Finally, as we shall see when we come to the antiquarians, there was an important group of scholars doing historical research that cared little for the kind of moral, political, or religious didacticism prevalent in chronicles and humanist histories.

In fact, "history," although (or perhaps because) many Renaissance writers professed to define it, was not a stable term. "History" could in fact refer to an impressive variety of texts. Poems, plays, memorials, biographies, narratives of current events, political narratives, annals, chronicles, surveys, antiquarian accounts – all could bear the name of "history" in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹⁰ The chorus in Shakespeare's *Henry V* asks the audience to "admit [him] chorus to this history," seemingly implying that a literary work that deals with historical matters constitutes a "history." Less plausibly (to our ears, at least), a character in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* describes the production to be staged before Sly as "a kind of history," suggesting that an entirely fictitious story can also carry the name of "history." In his letter to Walter Raleigh, Edmund Spenser claimed to "haue followed all the antique Poets historicall" such as Homer, Virgil, and Tasso when he composed *The Faerie Queene*, and to have "coloured" his epic with "an historical fiction" (Spenser 1989: 787). For Degory Wheare, the first man to hold a chair in history at Oxford University, history was "nothing but moral philosophy, clothed in examples" (Haddock 1980: 80), whereas grammar school education used (classical) history primarily as a reservoir of rhetorical and literary conventions to be imitated (Levy 1967: 40–50). It has been suggested that by the seventeenth century all this ambiguity was cleared up as "history had become an autonomous discipline with its own purposes and methods, clearly distinguished from myth and literature, and accountable to different formal requirements and different truth criteria" (Rackin 1990: 19). I think that this assess-

ment is too optimistic and definitive, although clear patterns of usage were beginning to emerge by the end of the sixteenth century as chronicle writers, humanists, and antiquarians gradually established practices that can be distinguished from those of poets, playwrights, religious writers, and polemicists.

These patterns, however, were undermined – in theory and practice – almost at the same time that they took shape. When, for instance, the prolific Renaissance writer Thomas Heywood composed his prose history entitled *Englands Elizabeth* (1631), he predictably turned to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, and Fabyan's *Newe Chronycles of Englande and of France* (1516) for information. Like so many other Renaissance historians, Heywood had neither the opportunity nor the inclination to search for original documents to verify or correct what his predecessors had written about England's queen. Although Heywood, by going about his project in this way, had little or no chance to contribute to what we might call new knowledge of Elizabeth's life and career, he also did not deviate from the common Renaissance practice of relying on other "authorities" without any great concern for their veracity. But in composing *Englands Elizabeth* Heywood also turned to a play about the life of Elizabeth in her minority which he himself had written circa 1603.¹¹ There may be several possible explanations for Heywood's decision to draw on a literary text to write a history, but I am here less interested in Heywood's particular motives than I am in the fact that he did it – and that others did it, while still others observed that this practice was hardly uncommon. In Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*, for instance, one character compliments another's knowledge of the chronicles, to which the second party heartily replies, "No, I confess I have it from the play-books, / And think they are *more* authentic" (emphasis added). As a ferocious reader of classical history and devout ex-student of the learned antiquarian William Camden, a sarcastic Jonson is merely lambasting the rapid proliferation of English chronicles at the time, and certainly not dismissing the veracity or generic distinctiveness of all historical writing. On the other side of the literature–history coin, we find Thomas More's *History of Richard III*, one of the great achievements of English humanist historiography, described by one modern historian as "almost as much fiction as . . . history, though it is a fiction imagined as though it had happened that way" (Levine 1999: 21). What these examples suggest is a trend toward cross-fertilizations and (apparent) interchangeability of history and literature in the early Renaissance, a trend also observed by Walter Raleigh in *The History of the World* (1614), where he writes that "it was well-noted by that worthy Gentleman Sir Philip Sidney, that Historians do borrow of Poets, not only much of their ornament, but somewhat of their substance" (Raleigh 1971: 213). And Sidney himself wrote in *The Defence* that the historian often has to "tell events whereof he can yield no cause; or, if he do it, it must be poetically" (Sidney 1989: 224).

It would be wrong to say that early modern men and women had no conception of truth and falsehood, but it is obvious that the difference between them – especially if the problem was couched in terms of "fact" and "fiction" – was not of paramount importance when it came to the production of historical texts. Or, to put it differently,

just because a story was fictional did not mean it was false, nor was it enough to disqualify that story from being included in a “history.” As observed by Joseph Levine, it was not uncommon for medieval historians to substitute legend or pure fabrication for history. In his *History of Britain*, twelfth-century Geoffrey of Monmouth, for instance, “seems to have invented (or borrowed) an entire fictional history of early Britain, culminating in the legendary Celtic King Arthur . . . What Geoffrey thought he was doing is now beyond retrieval, but it is clear that no medieval author was willing to declare his purpose by making a bold distinction between fiction and history. When they told a fiction they pretended it was history; when they recounted a history, they included fiction; and neither authors nor audience seemed much to care” (Levine 1999: 16, 17).

That the Italian humanist Polydore Vergil debunked the myth of England’s Trojan origins in his history of England, *Anglica Historia* (1534, 1555),¹² written at the behest of Henry VII, of course constituted an advance in the procedures of history writing, but this advance went generally unheeded. Geoffrey of Monmouth and virtually all medieval historians maintained that Brutus, the great grandson of Aeneas, the legendary founder of Rome and son of Venus, founded Britain at the goddess Diana’s behest. Careful not to offend or disillusion those who have embraced the concept of England’s Trojan beginnings, Polydore Vergil declares that he “will nether affirme as trew, nether reprove as false, the judgement of one or other as concerning the originall of soe auncient a people,” but nevertheless dismantles the Brutus myth by pointing out, among other things, that “nether Livie, nether Dionisius Halicarnaseus, who writt dilligentlie of the Romane antiquities . . . did ever once make rehersall of this Brutus, neither could that bee notified bie the cronicles of the Brittons, sithe that longe agoe thei loste all bookes of their monuments, as Gildas witnesseth” (Vergil 1846: 31, 30). Polydore then goes on to suggest politely that in “olde times” many nations “weare so bowlde as to derive their beginnings of their stocke from the Goddes” so that the people and cities might be more prosperous, although now such stories sound “more like fabels then the sincere witness of noble acts” (p. 31). From our modern vantage point, Polydore’s findings appear judicious because he compares sources and vainly searches for evidence to corroborate the claims of earlier historians, but a number of Renaissance historians begged to differ. The noted antiquarian John Leland, who generally served the progress of historiography better than many of his contemporaries, was so outraged by Polydore’s less than patriotic attack on the Brutus legend that in 1544 he challenged the Italian historian’s findings in print and vigorously defended Monmouth’s history of Britain (Gransden 1982: 472). As late as 1603, we find John Stow addressing the issue of Troynovant with considerable caution in *The Survey of London*. A self-styled yet sophisticated antiquarian and topographer, Stow had in his *Annales* (1592) already rejected another historian’s fraudulent attempt to establish a genealogical link between the native British and the sons of Noah. Stow was also fully aware that the popular story of Britain’s Trojan origins had been called into question, but he nonetheless includes it on the *Survey*’s opening page, justifying its place there by explaining that he is simply following his source, Geoffrey of Monmouth, who in turn is following the time-honored practice of Roman writers

who, "to glorify the city of Rome, derive the original thereof from gods and demi-gods, by the Trojan progeny" (p. 3). Sensitive to the traditional beliefs of his readers, Stow, a man not given to embrace legend before fact, somewhat discredits the Trojan story but declines to displace it altogether with a more credible account, which he could have taken from Polydore.

Levine explains this somewhat confounding treatment of "fact" and "fiction" by suggesting that a distinction between the two terms did not enter medieval life until people were beginning to notice "a disjunction between the real features of English public life and the idealized versions of medieval fiction" that had been "invented as a set of fictional ideals to meet the needs of medieval feudalism" (Levine 1999: 19).¹³ This sort of identification of an "originary" moment is always fraught with difficulty, but Levine's argument *vis-à-vis* feudalism can be seen as part of a broad fabric of late medieval and Renaissance forces that include economic changes, international commerce, the advent of print, geographical exploration, the Reformation, the rediscovery of classical antiquity – all of which contributed to an emerging sense of genuine difference between England and other nations and between England's present and past.¹⁴ The idea here is that "difference" entails the articulation of alternatives (is one saved by works and faith or by faith alone? Does the power to make law reside with parliament or crown? Does the king's power derive from God or the people?), and that such articulations become invariably contested, and that competition between alternatives frequently leads to searches for origins and foundational documents, and that such investigations lead to greater scrutiny and the development of the methods of historical investigation.

However, even as the slow but significant changes in historiography that occurred between the arrival in England of the Italian humanist Polydore Vergil in 1502 and the death of England's greatest antiquarian, Camden, in 1623, gradually took hold, we have to admit that (a) the fact–fiction paradox continued well into the seventeenth century, that (b) medieval elements that were squarely at odds with more sophisticated humanist and antiquarian practices continued to be employed by historians (including those same humanists and antiquarians), and that (c) historiography, although it was becoming a field of inquiry gradually distinct from poetry and literature, experienced neither cohesiveness nor anything like a unitary development. One reason for historiography's eclecticism of course is that at this time it was not an academic subject, and that "neither its authors nor its readers ever received any formal training in it" (Levy 1967: 51). Another crux in the haphazard progress of English Renaissance historiography is the lingering presence of providentialist thought and its general incompatibility with the secondary causes analysis of historical events advocated by some humanists.

III

In part, the seemingly contradictory character of Renaissance historiography has its roots in providential medieval historical thought and practice. Medieval historians

produced an impressive range of texts. They wrote ecclesiastical histories, universal histories (reaching back to the moment of creation), monastic chronicles (capturing the daily lives of monastic communities), topographical studies, *de casibus* histories (recounting the fall of princes for the moral edification of the reader), and so forth. But despite the different purposes and methodologies of these types of historical writing, they all shared a fundamental belief in a providentially organized cosmos. And while it was understood that God's divine plan might not always be apparent to the eye of the historian, it was taken as self-evident that "history demonstrated the workings of God's will on earth; as mankind proceeded towards its destiny, the last judgment and eternal life in heaven and hell, God rewarded virtue, punished vice and otherwise showed His omnipotence" (Gransden 1982: 454). The historian's labors, therefore, B. A. Haddock (1980) observes, were no more than an "anticipation of the detailed disclosure of a pattern of events which God had revealed in outline. Men could pursue what ends they might but they could not alter the framework of their lives. Innovation was the exclusive preserve of God" (pp. 1–2).

Shakespeare's Hamlet takes this view to its logical extreme when he says to Horatio, "We defy augury. There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (5.2.157–8). Horatio has just suggested that if Hamlet's "mind dislike anything" about the upcoming duel with Laertes, he should declare himself unfit to fight. But Hamlet rejects augury – that is, the practice of divination from omens – on biblical grounds that everything is guided by God's will, even those minor and seemingly trivial events that appear to take place outside of God's "general providence" but which are part of his "special providence."¹⁵ Hamlet's defiance of augury amounts to a rejection of historical interpretation: "If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all" (158–60).

However, built into this linear view of time – which stretches from creation to final judgment – was a paradoxical sense that history also repeated itself. The origins of the idea of repetition can be found in a number of classical writers and appear "based on cycles observable in nature" (Woolf 1990: 5), but the internal logic of medieval Christian thought, which preached that each human being's life is a kind of universal morality drama with the fate of the human soul as its focal point, is an equally compelling basis for the need of a powerful concept of repetition. The resulting shape of time was that of a spiral, endlessly repeating the drama of rise and fall, of sin, repentance, and mercy and punishment, and ever coming nearer the apocalypse (ibid). Plays such as *Everyman* and literary–historical texts such as Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and its sixteenth-century successor *The Mirror for Magistrates* embody this type of cyclicism. One notable consequence of this view of history as spiral was that the details (or the facts) were of very little importance in and of themselves because their primary function was to illuminate the omnipresence of God's truth and will. In other words, Richard Grafton's 1570 preface to poet–historian John Hardyng's (1378–1464) *Chronicle* may vaguely sound like a modern political historian when he proclaims that "Chronicles dooe recorde and testifye" of the rise and decay of nations, and do this so faithfully that "thinges antique to vs bee apparent, / As yf at their doinges we had

been present" (Hardyng and Grafton 1812: 8), but it is hardly Hardyng's (or Grafton's) intent to produce a detailed and accurate factual account of the past for its own sake.¹⁶ Rather, he tells us, chronicles are texts of "great fruite and vtilitie" approved by God himself to teach us "What waies to refuse, and what to folowe." Endeavoring to establish his credentials as a serious historian, Grafton explains that he has abandoned Hardyng's verse form in the newly added chapter on Henry VIII so that he can report "worde for worde" "the truth without fraude or glose" (p. 12), only to have described in the previous stanza Richard III as the man who was plagued "With shamefull death, as Goddes vengeance" for murdering Edward V.

This mixing of a desire to report history as accurately as possible and an equally strong desire to interpret history providentially was not limited to the work of medieval historians or those like Grafton and Hall who wrote in the sixteenth-century chronicle tradition. Quite clearly, the link between history writing and providentialism promoted a kind of social and political conservatism that could serve those in power. As Gransden observes, a longing among Renaissance historians not to be at odds with crown and government made them treat

The fifteenth century . . . as a prelude to the accession of Henry Tudor. Already John Hardyng had written of the doom which enshrouded the Lancastrian kings because of Henry Bolingbroke's illegal seizure of power and the murder of Richard II. Polydore Vergil expanded this theme: he saw God's vengeance manifested in the alternation of an unhappy reign with a more propitious one, and regarded Richard III as the wickedest of kings. This embryonic historiographical structure reached its full development in the chronicle of Edward Hall, completed in about 1532. (Gransden 1982: 470)

We have to look to the Italian humanist influence, particularly the influence of Machiavelli and Guicciardini (and Tacitus through them), on English historians such as William Camden, Samuel Daniel, Francis Bacon, and John Hayward before we can begin to discern a significant break with the providentialism that still creeps into the historical writings of More and Polydore.

Humanist historiography in Renaissance England sets itself apart from other forms of history writing by virtue of its interest in secondary causes and human psychology, in matters of politics, and in its careful attention to rhetorical/literary style. Modern historians have at times proclaimed that the advent of humanism also marked the birth of modernity, but Antonia Gransden observes that continental humanist influences on English historiography did not produce an "abrupt break with the medieval tradition," but that humanist historians accelerated already existing trends and helped bring about a "gradual shift" (p. 426). In fact, the single most crucial premise of humanist historiography – the assumption that history can teach us about the present because history repeats itself – closely resembles the medieval notion of time as cyclical. That is, humanists held that whatever predicament confronts us now, a search of history will yield an identical situation in the past which can be used to guide successful conduct in the present. In *The Prince* (1532) and elsewhere, Niccolò Machiavelli refines this

historical cyclicism by relying less on specific examples than on a set of principles based on a wide range of historical examples. These principles remain essentially stable over time, and form the basis of an early attempt at political science.

Another Italian, Francesco Guicciardini, took issue with Machiavelli's cyclicism on the grounds that all historical moments are truly unique and therefore are unlikely to illuminate one another. Guicciardini concludes that "It is most misleading to judge by examples; for unless these be in all respects parallel, they are of no force, the least diversity in the circumstances giving rise to the widest divergence in the conclusions. To discern these minute differences requires a just and clear eye" (Guicciardini 1949: 211). In other words, Guicciardini understands that the differences are at least as important as the similarities, and the context of any given event shapes the meaning and significance often as much as the event itself.¹⁷ As I have argued elsewhere, Thomas Heywood uses this particular insight to great advantage and effect in his drama about the difficult days of Elizabeth Tudor before she became queen. During Elizabeth's imprisonment in the Tower at the hands of Queen Mary, the men who have to guard the princess cautiously discuss what "a man may say, without offence," and conclude that what constitutes offense and what does not depends entirely on the historical/political context in which a statement is uttered (Kamps 1996: 79–82).

Where Machiavelli decisively separates himself from any medieval tradition of historiography is on the question of religion. Whereas most humanist historians allow for the presence of God and providence in their analyses of the world,¹⁸ Machiavelli the pragmatist categorically divorces history from theology (Fussner 1962: 12; see also Trompf 1979: 283–91; and Kahn 1985: 186). In *The Prince* the ultimate objective is power – not heaven – and Machiavelli's universe changes accordingly. For all practical purposes, he substitutes for the Christian concept of the Wheel of Fortune (which almost randomly changes the fate of man so that no one will become proud or complacent about their salvation) the concept of an indifferent force named *fortuna*. Machiavelli also necessarily abandons the notion that one's godliness makes one perhaps a little less vulnerable to the spinning of the wheel (on the whole the good should receive less misfortune than do the wicked, though being good does by no means shield one from ill fortune), and argues instead that an individual's *virtù* (ability), combined with a knowledge of historical principles, better prepares them to deal with *fortuna*. Machiavelli never advocates amoral behavior for its own sake, but he does make it clear that "man must choose: he could live aside from the stream of politics and follow the dictates of Christian morality; but if man entered upon the *vita activa* of politics, he must act according to its laws" (Gilbert 1984: 197). Machiavelli's ideas, though usually condemned, found their way into English culture even before the middle of the sixteenth century (see Fussner 1962: 14), and we see them everywhere in the drama of the period.

In English historiography his perceived atheism is hardly welcomed, but Machiavelli's emphases on secondary causes, psychological insight, and historical and political conditions do find their way (often indirectly) into English historical thought. Nowhere is Renaissance historiography's almost schizophrenic character

more apparent than in Thomas Blundeville's *The True Order and Methode of Wryting and Reading Hystories* (1574), a translation and adaptation of "the precepts of Francisco Patricio and Accontio Tridentino." This brief treatise on how to write and read historical texts – the first such metahistorical treatise to be printed separately in England – yokes together an abridged translation of Francesco Patrizi's distinctly humanist–political text *Della Historia Diece Dialoghi* (1560) and Giacomo Concio's much more traditional, and medieval, treatise. In the first part of the *Methode*, the portion adapted from Patrizi, Blundeville insists that historians ought "to tell things as they were done without either augmenting or diminishing them, or swaruing one iote from the truth. Whereby it appeareth that the hystoriographers ought not to fayne anye Orations nor any other thing, but trully to reporte euery such speech, and deede, euen as it was spoken, or done" (p. 164). The edict against the invention of speeches is noteworthy because it is an indirect criticism of humanist historians such as Thomas More, who, taking their cue from that Roman school of history writing that viewed history as a subcategory of rhetoric, believed that invented speeches would enhance history's exemplary powers. The first part of Blundeville's assertion, his uncompromising dedication to truth and factual accuracy without any embellishment whatsoever, however, is not remarkable and can be found in any number of histories of the period, including those of Holinshed, Bacon, Hardyng, and others. What constitutes unadorned truth for Blundeville is a different matter. Blundeville emphasizes the historian's duty to describe a country or city's economic life, its political organization, as well as its military make-up. The historians must also convey what knowledge can be gathered about the city or country's origins, "what kinde of gouernement [it] had in his beginning, augmentation, state, declynation, and ende. And whither there were any chaunge of gouernement, for what cause, and howe the same was done, and what good or euill ensued thereof" (p. 156). Patrizi may have found his inspiration for this passage in Machiavelli, but more important to our understanding of the development of English historiography is that Blundeville elected to include it in his adaptation because it implies his appreciation for the significance of changing historical contexts. To understand a city or country at any moment in history, Blundeville argues, the historian must endeavor to understand that city or country's entire history and its political development because only then can its institutions, customs, and practices be properly contextualized. Blundeville then proceeds to a discussion of the role of the individual in history, and although he essentially follows the familiar "great men" model, we find here too the author shuns divine explanations in favor of a consideration of the context in which the "great man" acts, his objectives, his personal history, his reasons and "passions of . . . mynde," as well as any "outwarde" causes such as "force, or fortune" that may have played a role in the event. The historian's proper purview includes human psychology, biography, sociology, military affairs, and politics. Only if the historian investigates these areas thoroughly will the reader "receyve any good by his writing" (pp. 156–7).

The "profite" or benefit of properly written and researched historical texts is that they reveal ("much more playnlye" and with greater efficacy than philosophical texts),

by virtue of their “particular examples and experiences,” how history can guide conduct in the present (p. 161). Blundeville shares this emphasis on exemplarity with his medieval predecessors, but with the crucial difference that medieval exemplarity is inevitably moral in character, whereas Blundeville’s humanist exemplarity uses examples to draw political and civil lessons. Blundeville’s insufficient awareness of the absolute uniqueness of each historical context does not allow him to achieve Francesco Guicciardini’s level of sophistication on this question, but his very insistence on the search for secondary (as opposed to divine) causes in the understanding of history makes him anticipate a historical consciousness that does not take hold firmly in England until centuries later. Blundeville’s modernity, however, vanishes abruptly when we get to the last section of the *Methode*, namely the portion translated from Concio.

This section’s title promises a discussion of “the methode to be obserued in reading hystories” (p. 165). If the reader is to understand “howe hystories are to bee readde,” Blundeville observes, the reader must first “knowe the endes and purposes for which they are written.” At first it seems unnecessary to make the point because it is evident from the earlier sections in which the purposes and the benefits have been laid out. But in the first and second paragraphs we learn that there are three reasons to read history:

First that we may learne thereby to acknowledge the prouidence of God, whereby all things are gouerned and directed. Secondly, that by the examples of the wise, we maye learne wisdomes wysely to behaue our selues in all our actions . . .

Thirdly, that we maye be stirred by example of the good to follow the good, and by examples of the euill to flee the euill. (p. 165)

Now, until this point in the treatise, Blundeville has mentioned God just once and only in a perfunctory manner (p. 164), let alone given any indication how the kind of history writing he advocates will yield any insight into the workings of divine providence. Likewise, exemplarity’s role has taken on a distinctly medieval quality, exhorting readers to live moral lives by following historical examples of goodness and avoiding those that are evil.

What is more, if Blundeville’s translation of Patrizi emphasizes the importance of secondary causes above all others, his adaptation of Concio offers a familiar medieval argument that reverses that order, even if the evidence does not support such a reversal. “As touching the prouidence of God,” Blundeville writes,

We haue to note for what causes and by what meanes hee ouerthroweth one kingdome & setteth vp an other. For though things many times doe succede according to the discourse of māns reason: yet mans wisdomes is oftentimes greatlye deceyued. And with those accede[n]ts which mans wisdomes reiecteth and little regardeth: God by his prouidence vseth, when he thinketh good, to worke marueylous effects. And though he suffreth the wicked for the most part to liue in prosperitie, and the good in

aduersitie: yet we maye see by many notable examples, declaring aswell his wrath, and reuenge towardes the wicked, as also his pittie and clemencie towardes the good, that nothing is done by chaunce, but all things by his foresight, counsell, and diuine prouidence. (p. 165)

When we see the wicked prosper, it is a sign of God's providence; when we see the good suffer, it is an indication of God's providence. If we see the wicked punished, that too is a sign of God's providence; and if the good receive pity and mercy, this is also to be taken as evidence of God's providence. In short, everything is a manifestation of God's providence. This view of course creates a contradiction within the exemplarity model, because if God sends prosperity and adversity to the good and the wicked alike, then historical examples cannot effectively guide our behavior, unless of course we have *a priori* notions about good and evil and heaven and hell that supersede any historical examples and make them irrelevant as anything other than an affirmation of what we already know to be the case. Blundeville, however, makes the precise opposite assertion when he writes that we read history so that "we may learne thereby to acknowledge the prouidence of God" (p. 165).

What is remarkable about all this is not that Blundeville appears to believe that providence illuminates history and that history illuminates providence (in a Christian context this is less contradiction than a commonplace), but that he identifies two radically different ways of conceiving of the past but fails to recognize the profound methodological and epistemological differences between *explaining* an event in social, economic, political, or psychological terms, and merely *accounting* for it by attribution to God's will. If the schizophrenic character of Blundeville's hybrid text (perhaps inadvertently) highlights the disjunction between providential and secular humanist historiography, Raleigh's *History of the World*, published exactly forty years after the *Methode*, almost entirely confounds any differences between the two by once again equating history with providence. History, Raleigh asserts, allows us to "behold how [the world] was gouerned: how it was couered with waters, and againe repeopleed: How Kings and Kingdomes have florished and fallen; and for what vertue and piety GOD made prosperous; and for what vice and deformity he made wretched, both the one and the other" (Raleigh 1971: 48). In other words, a king or kingdom falls because its ruler acts immorally and incurs God's displeasure; and not because a ruler refuses "to act immorally" and therefore loses his grip on power, as Machiavelli suggests in *The Prince* (pp. 54–5). Indeed, in the second book of *The History* Raleigh goes so far as to chastise some historians for recording "information of humaine counsailes and euent, as farre forth as the knowledge and faith of the writers can afford; but of Gods will, by which all things are ordered, they speak onely at random, and many times falsly. This we often finde in prophane writers" (p. 212). The absence of a consideration of "second causes" is not a problem as long as the historian refers "all vnto the will of God" (p. 213). This of course does not mean that Raleigh was not a keen interpreter of political events in history or that *The History* (which concludes at 168 BC) had no perceived bearing on early seventeenth-century English life. James I was

upset enough with Raleigh's book to suppress it "for divers exceptions, but specially for being too sawcie in censuring princes" (p. 11). Francis Bacon's *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*, on the other hand, though it too falls short of modern historiographical standards, enthusiastically follows the emphases and precepts of Italian humanist thought, as it depicts "with detached coolness the acts that *necessity*, as opposed to justice, requires" (Weinberger 1996: 11), the all-important events surrounding the birth of the Tudor dynasty. These examples illustrate that something like "progress" toward modern historiography is discernible, but that that progress is haphazard and limited to the work of specific historians.

Antiquarian scholars set out to "investigate the laws, customs, and institutions of England" (Fussner 1962: 95). For us it is not difficult to recognize the vital contributions made by these scholars to the development of historical thought and practice. Unlike the chronicle writers and the early humanist historians, antiquarians did not easily accept and incorporate the "facts" and interpretations provided by previous generations of historians. They insisted on original, often archival, research and scrupulously compared and discredited sources, where chroniclers had commonly opted to be uncritically inclusive and accumulative. However, antiquarians were a relatively small and elite gathering of mostly well-to-do men (some of them were titled, some were lawyers, diplomats, heralds, or official record keepers, though John Stow was a tailor) that worked in a closed society known as the Elizabethan College of Antiquaries, an organization founded in 1586. The discourses produced by antiquaries, however, were not meant to compete in the public marketplace of historical ideas. Antiquarians conducted mostly group research and presented reports of their findings to the college. Some of this research had great political potential as it dealt with legal precedents and the ancient constitution, the rights of parliament, and the powers of the crown. There is little evidence that antiquarians did this research for the purpose of intervening politically, but it is clear that others, including James I, recognized the increasing importance of "precedent" in the struggle between king and parliament. In 1614, when the Society of Antiquaries planned to resume its meeting, King James expressed "a little dislike of [the] Society; not being inform'd that we had resolv'd to decline all Matters of State" (quoted in Fussner 1962: 95).

More than anything, antiquarians desired to reconstruct, through study of both textual and physical remains of the past, an "exact memory" of the objects of antiquity (Levine 1987: 73, 77). In this respect, they were on the surface not all that different from their chronicle-writing and humanist contemporaries. In fact, we find the wish to create a perfect record of the past – "As yf at their doinges we had been present" (Hardyng and Grafton 1812: 8) – expressed in virtually all chronicles and "politic" histories.¹⁹ There are at least four factors that most clearly distinguish antiquarians from chroniclers and narrative historians. First, antiquarians had little or no interest in using the past for the purpose of moral didacticism. Secondly, antiquarians were interested in "antiquity for its own sake" (MacCaffrey 1970: xvi) and did not try to make historical events applicable to the present; nor, thirdly, did they concern themselves with providential explanations. And, fourthly, their

historical interests were of a synchronic rather than a diachronic nature. Modern historians, F. Smith Fussner and J. G. A. Pocock prominent among them, have hailed antiquarians as those who introduced “modern” research principles essential to the continued development of history writing, but antiquarians were in their own time frequently the object of scorn and derision. The primary objections against antiquarian scholarship were that it was obscure, had little relevance to the present, and therefore served no pedagogical or utilitarian function. Philip Sidney, for instance, described antiquarians as obsessed with “mouse-eaten records” and “better acquainted with a thousand years ago than with the present age” (Sidney 1989: 220). And Arnaldo Momigliano observes that antiquarians were thought of as “imperfect historians who helped to salvage relics of the past too fragmentary to be the subject of proper history” (Momigliano 1966: 7). To all but a few in early modern England, “history that did not teach was utterly inconceivable” (Levy 1967: 7).

As has been pointed out time and again, the English Renaissance is marked by a renewed fascination with the texts of antiquity and their rapid proliferation beyond the walls of the old monastic libraries. In a wider European context it has been noted that the desire to determine the authenticity and exact meaning of these texts gave rise to Renaissance philology (Levine 1987: 76). Lorenzo Valla’s use of general linguistic analysis combined with his ability to discern anachronistic word usage allowed him to expose the “Donation of Constantine” as a fraud. Valla argued that the vocabulary and idiom of the “Donation” did not fit the linguistic characteristics of the early fourth century, the period in which it was thought to have been written, and thereby refuted the legal footing for the Papal States. In England the antiquarian John Selden introduced essentially the same principle by coining the word “synchronism.” The term “implied a strict adherence to principles of chronology in the use and interpretation of sources” (Woolf 1990: 213). If a text was claimed to have been written in a particular historical period but it revealed “some trace of debt to a later period, either in handwriting or contents,” then it had to be a fake (*ibid*).

In addition to legal and textual scholarship, antiquarians also concerned themselves intensely with the objects of the past, such as road maps, monuments, inscriptions, road signs, building foundations, and coins. In contrast with other historians who always sought to establish a link of relevance between objects and events of the past and the present moment, antiquarians studied historical artifacts for their own sake and for what they revealed about the nature of cultures of those who produced and/or used them. Because of this desire to study the past on its own terms, antiquarians had little use for narrative and only infrequently sought to establish diachronic causality chains. Instead they wrote in a synchronic or “systematic order,” so that they could “collect all the items that are connected with a certain subject, whether they help to solve a problem or not” (Momigliano 1966: 3). Antiquarian John Leland grasped “that the many new devices of Italian humanism could be employed not only to resuscitate classical antiquity but to recover the whole of the British past” (Levine 1987: 82). In his *Britannia*, for instance, fellow antiquarian William Camden organizes his labors favoring the ancient division of Britain into Roman provinces over Britain’s sixteenth-

century division into counties. To produce his chorography of Britain, Camden claimed to have traveled the land and to have consulted public records, old deeds, ecclesiastical registers, the archives of cities and churches as well as monuments.²⁰ No chronicle writer or humanist historian of the period could boast the same. There is no doubt that Camden's *Britannia* resonated with the public in part because of a revived interest during the Tudor period in England's Trojan origins. But Camden was clearly not seeking popular acclaim or trying to capitalize on the revival. First, he published the 1586 edition only in Latin,²¹ severely limiting its audience, and he explicitly rejected the Trojan legend, instead emphasizing the French roots of many of England's most prominent families.

In his *Remains Concerning Britain* the antiquarian restraint of Camden's scholarship is equally clear. Discussing the rightful claim of English monarchs to the title *Defensor fidei*, Camden recalls the saga of "Brithwald the Monke," which is "often recorded in our Histories" (Camden 1605: 8–9). Brithwald apparently became deeply concerned with the succession of the crown because "the blood Royall was almost extinguished," but then heard a divine "voyce, which forbade him to be inquisitive of such matters resounding in his eares. *The kingdome of England is Gods owne kingdome, and for it God himselfe will provide.* But these, & such like are more fit for a graver Treatise than this." The final sentence in this quotation is not in italics in the original, but it is the one we need to emphasize because it displays Camden's blend of patriotism and religious fervor, but then exiles both from the historical investigation. The remaining chapters of the *Remains* go about the business of collecting information about Christian names, surnames, unusual names, anagrams, proverbs, epitaphs, money, and sundry other items. Most of the *Remains* reads like a barely digested and non-contextualized gathering of facts, quotations, poems, and epitaphs. In some ways it is no more than a carefully organized archive. It has been observed that sixteenth-century antiquaries "were content to explore the past, find and describe its remainders, and leave it at that" (Breisach 1983: 177). Some antiquarian texts are adequately described in this fashion, but it may be too severe a judgment of the sum of their labors. One example will illustrate the point.

In his remarkable *History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth Late Queen of England* (first published in Latin in 1615 under the title *Annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elizabetha*), Camden may appear restrained and to let the facts speak for themselves, but he certainly relies on his readers' ability to recognize irony and on their shared feelings of patriotism and Protestantism to properly understand the meaning of the facts. Describing the year 1588, the year of the Spanish Armada, Camden relates dryly how after prolonged rumors of war, it was now a "certain Truth" that "a most invincible Armada was rigged and prepared in Spain against England, and that the famousest Captains and expertest Leader and old Souldiers were sent for out of Italy, Sicily, yea and out of America into Spain" (Camden 1970: 308). The superlatives used to describe the power of the invincible Armada go unchecked in Camden's narration, except that they are clearly modulated by the outcome of the battle, known to every English man and woman. The very invinci-

bility of the Armada (which Camden stresses but which he ascribes to various reports, implying his own restraint) of course only heightens the greatness of England's victory.

Camden then proceeds to tell us by means of a long quotation how the pope and various prominent Catholics tried to persuade the king of Spain to undertake this venture against England:

That seeing God had blessed him [Philip II of Spain] with such exceeding great Blessings and Benefits, Portugal with the East-Indies and many rich Islands being laid of late to his Dominions, he in like manner would perform somewhat which might be pleasing and acceptable to God the Giver of so great Good things, and be seeming the Grandeur and Majesty of the Catholick King. But nothing could there be more acceptable to God, or more be seeming to him, than to propagate and enlarge the Church of God. That the Church of God could not be more gloriously nor more meritoriously be propagated, than by the Conquest of England, and replanting the Catholick Roman Religion, and abolishing Heresie there. (Ibid: 308–9)

The zealous Protestant historian John Foxe might have taken this occasion to vent against the corrupt and cruel Rome, but Camden studiously refrains from editorializing and merely continues to describe how the Armada was put together (310ff.). However, in light of the Armada's devastating defeat, even an ardent Catholic would have to consider the possibility that the pope and other prominent Catholics interpreted God's will erroneously. That Camden does not hit his reader over the head with this appraisal hardly makes it any less obvious. Even when recounting the Armada's inglorious end Camden relies on simple irony instead of grand interpretation: "And thus this great Armada, which had three complete Years in rigging and preparing with infinite Expense, was within one Month's space many times fought with, and at last overthrown, with the Slaughter of many men, not an hundred of the English being missing, nor any Ship lost, save onely that small one of Cock's: (for all the Shot from the Tall Spanish ships flew quite over the English:)" (pp. 326–7). The interpretation lies in the stark contrast between the extraordinary preparation of the Armada and its fairly simple defeat. The standard interpretation – the English Protestant God defeats the Spanish Catholic God is offered, but not as Camden's own. Camden simply relates how the queen "commanded publick prayer," and how she herself went to Paul's Church to give "most hearty Thanks to God," and where she "heard a Sermon, wherein the Glory was given to God alone" (p. 328).²² Camden's *Annales* is not a study of antiquity but it contains ample evidence of the author's desire and ability to synthesize and interpret the "remainders" he describes, albeit through the use of irony, juxtaposition, and a firm knowledge of what his readers know to be true.²³ It is also true, however, that Camden's history of Elizabeth is not typical of most antiquarian research in the period, which was quite austere and content to let the facts speak for themselves.

But it was the sheer commitment to rigor, the archive, and to philological competence that set the antiquarians apart from other historians of the period. Moreover,

antiquarians such as Camden, Selden,²⁴ and Henry Spelman separated divine causes from human causes even more decisively than did the humanists Polydore Vergil and Thomas More. Of course we cannot forget D. R. Woolf's thesis that the historical revolution that was to incorporate these antiquarian skills and innovations did not occur until long after the age of Shakespeare. Until the late seventeenth century, narrative and antiquarian methods were hardly ever practiced in unison.

But that does not mean that antiquarian innovations are any less important to Elizabethan and Jacobean drama than are the providentialism and psychological and political analyses of the chronicles or the humanists' "politic" histories. This essay has concerned itself with historiography in Shakespeare's time, and not with historiography's impact on the drama. In closing, however, I do wish to say a word about that impact. In my view, the drama's borrowings from the historians greatly exceed the level identified by a number of well-known older studies by E. M. W. Tillyard, Felix E. Schelling, M. M. Reese, and Alvin Kernan. According to these critics, playwrights' interaction with historical texts is limited to a scouring of the chronicles for content fit for a play, and, at times, for historical patterns that would give a proper shape to content. Irving Ribner and, more recently, Phyllis Rackin, Graham Holderness, and Paola Pugliatta have gone beyond these matters to consider what *theories* of history writing might be appropriated (and investigated) on the public stage. My own contribution to this more recent trend is premised on the claim that playwrights such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, Thomas Heywood, Dekker, and Ford aggressively appropriated and sometimes even simulated for their own purposes the plurality of historiographical methods described in the present essay. I have argued elsewhere that the playwrights were *more* acutely aware than most historians of the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in the various historical methods that all purported to yield a true and accurate account of the past (Kamps 1996). In *Henry VIII*, for example, Shakespeare and Fletcher dramatize four distinct historiographical methods (providential, antiquarian, early humanist, and humanist) and give us insight into the very process of historiographical production, not to elevate one approach over the others or to push a particular ideological agenda, but to show that there are legitimate alternatives to the potent providentialism of Cranmer's prophetic speech at the christening of the infant Elizabeth. Entering the historical fray in different fashion, John Ford offers a controversial presentation of Perkin Warbeck, the man who claimed to be the Yorkist heir to the throne occupied by Henry VII. Taking a stance against "the libertie of vsing coniecture in Histories," practiced by Raleigh (1971: 212–17) and many other historians, Ford simply refuses to interpret the identity of Perkin Warbeck beyond what the factual record grants, thereby castigating Hall, Holinshed, Gainsford, and Bacon, who all readily perpetuate the official Tudor line that Warbeck was an obvious fraud. In this manner, dramatists like Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Ford, who were important disseminators of historical knowledge in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean London, claimed for the stage historiographical methods and capitalized on the internal confusion in the field of history writing to achieve powerful dramatic and political effects.

NOTES

- 1 See Patterson (1994) and Rackin (1990: 1–12, 13).
- 2 See also Dean (1947: 1–2); Rackin (1990: 1–3); Levy (1967: 202–36, esp. 234).
- 3 Discussing the importance of orality in medieval and Renaissance culture, Woolf himself admits that “prior to 1600, and perhaps even a century later, most people would have heard their history in one form or another long before they read it, if they ever read it at all” (Woolf 2000: 83).
- 4 See Woolf (2000: 134–6).
- 5 Holinshed's *Chronicle* would be such an exception, especially now that Patterson has shown it to be a far more complex and thoughtful text than was commonly assumed by critics.
- 6 For a detailed account of the chronicle's demise, see Woolf (2000, 11–78).
- 7 See Kamps (1996).
- 8 “For he doth not faine, that rehearseth probabilities as bare coniectures; neither doth he deprave the text, that seeketh to illustrate and make good in humane reason, those things, which authoritie alone, without further circumstance, ought to haue confirmed in euery mans beliefe” (Raleigh 1971: 217).
- 9 The 1543 date refers to the inclusion of More's *History* in Richard Grafton's edition of *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*.
- 10 See Woolf (1990: 16) and Levy (1967: 153–4).
- 11 See Heywood, *If You Know Not Me* (pp. 222–3).
- 12 The first edition of *Anglica Historia*, published in Basle in 1534, dealt with the period from Roman Britain to 1509; the third edition of 1555 went to 1537.
- 13 For a different view, see Kelley (1998: 103).
- 14 J. G. A. Pocock (1987) notes, for instance, that the humanists' wish to “return to the ancient world as it really was” placed them “on the threshold of the modern historical consciousness” (p. 4). Kelley (1998) observes, “Scholars in the Middle Ages also had an appreciation of classical historiography, including the rhetorical forms and values on which this rested. Yet this historical sense was selective and subordinated to deep religious commitments and inhibitions which frustrated both a discriminating perspective on the ancient world and a clear perception of the differences not so much as ‘modern’ as a world darkening or ‘grown old,’ with a bright future reserved for things spiritual and posthumous. In general, chronological awareness was tied to a rigorous concern for the Year of Our Lord, and geography to small circles of local experience, natural as well as human; and historical knowledge was limited to rumors of farther-off happenings and relevance to the myopic concerns of monastery, cathedral, court, and, eventually, city” (p. 130). For the impact of foreign travel on English consciousness, see Kamps and Singh (2001).
- 15 See Matthew 10: 29; and explanatory note in Norton Shakespeare.
- 16 “When the historian spoke of the ‘truth’ of histories, he meant their moral as much as their factual veracity; he never had in mind the kind of precise, literal truth denoted in the nineteenth century by Ranke's famous phrase ‘the past as it actually happened’” (Woolf 1990: 12).
- 17 For comparative treatments of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, see Kelley (1998: 146–52); Gilbert (1984); Pocock (1975).
- 18 As Gransden observes, “The humanists, like their medieval predecessors, saw history as the manifestation of God's will on earth; the future was predicted by prodigies and portents, and the Wheel of Fortune continued to turn. But the humanists laid greater emphasis on natural causation: God remained the prime mover of events, but usually worked through secondary, natural causes. This view led to a careful analysis of motives, especially of psychological, but also of political ones” (Gransden 1982: 427).
- 19 See, for instance, Edward Halle (1548), who suggests that “memorie maketh menne ded many thousande yere still to live as though they were present: Thus fame triumpheth upon death, and renoune upon Oblivion, all by reason of wryting and historie” (p. ii).

- 20 See "Mr. Camden's Preface to the Reader."
 21 The English authorized translation (produced by Philemon Holland) did not appear until 1610.
 22 Woolf makes the same point about a different part of the *Annales* (Woolf 1990: 124).
 23 But see MacCaffrey (1970), who argues that Camden "seeks to accomplish [this] not by praising her merits but, more obliquely, more delicately, by laying out the record of her reign. To him that record is self-evident; its very recital will command the admiration of the world and posterity. What Camden did not quite grasp is that the record by itself, unadorned by interpretation or examination, is intellectually unassimilable by his readers. The relentless flow of historical facts informs their minds without illuminating their understanding" (p. xxxi).
 24 For an excellent treatment of Selden, see Woolf (1990: 200–42).

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