Part I
Disciplining the Past

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Chapter 1

Manufacturing the Past: The Victorian Background

1848 and the Intellectual Evangelists

The early nineteenth-century English university was a fellowship of gentlemen, more precisely Anglican clergymen, who sought to imbue their pupils with their own values by the subtle process of social osmosis later dubbed 'liberal education'. As bastion and bulwark of the state, the university's role was not to pursue knowledge but to protect it; tuition, through the classical tripos, was about affirming established truths, not challenging them. This concept took on particular resonance in the wake of the French Revolution: as Samuel Parr said in a much-quoted phrase, the English university was a place in which 'young men can be so largely stored with principles that may enable them to detect the fallacy, and to escape the contamination of those metaphysical novelties, which are said to have gained a wide and dangerous ascendancy on the continent'.[1]

These 'metaphysical novelties' might be characterized as the 'enlightenment agenda': an approach, a set of values, that espoused the cause of Humanism, focusing on the achievements and potential of the human race. Constructed in opposition to what was perceived as the hidebound, static and oppressive doctrines of the Church and its political allies, the enlightenment agenda posed a continual challenge to those in positions of power, who saw it, with justification, as 'revolu10tionary'.[2]

Throughout the nineteenth century, British commentators both hostile and cautionary were quick to point out the relative superiority of the (state-funded, free-thinking) German universities and their academic

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achievements. Even the Prussian victory over France in 1870 was attributed to the effectiveness of the German university system, and the growing sense of competition with Germany in the run-up to the Great War helped promote the change in attitude which led to properly funded research within British universities.[3]

The German system fostered a sense of mission and intellectual zeal which even its opponents realized had political implications: already in 1820, the English conservative *Quarterly Review* had accused the free universities of Germany of producing students who 'are all puffed up . . . with their perfect fitness to introduce a new order of things and to become the regenerators of Europe'.[4]

Ron Eyerman believes that the advent of the intellectual-as-missionary was much boosted by the upheavals of 1848 in Europe: 'the idea began to take form that intellectuals were a social group with a distinct historical mission to perform . . . It was the intellectuals who claimed to perceive the laws of this motion, taking for themselves the role of leading blind social forces in the right direction . . . free from the domination of the state and the interests of private life, the idea of the intellectual is an inherently political idea.' The intellectual was an agent of change; merely to apply the knowledge that he possessed was a political act. In the words of Regis Debray, 'the diffusion of knowledge and the political crusade were one and the same thing. The savant was also a militant because he was a savant.'[5]

On the face of it, the situation was very different in England: conservative, reactionary (or at least anti-revolutionary), complacent. It is true that English university reform, when it came, was motivated primarily by a desire to expand the possibilities for the middle classes: the growth of 'professionalization' which, to some scholars at least, was driven by aspirations to gentility combined with the need for an income: 'Fundamentally, a profession was an occupation which a gentleman could follow without losing his claim to this coveted social position.'[6] This implied both a shake-up of the curriculum, to accommodate new subjects which had some potential professional application, and a revision in the status and prospects of tutors themselves that would recast them as 'professionals'. Tutors, like schoolmasters, had little status in their own right; as junior Fellows of their colleges, their only claim to gentlemanly status came from their position as clergymen, with the prospects of eventually receiving their own benefice.

In fact, the European 'intellectuals' had much in common with the English 'reformers' who succeeded in transforming most aspects of public

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life during the mid-nineteenth century – including the universities. The new University of London, opened in 1828, was conceived as 'a German university' according to contemporaries.[7] Forty-five years later, *The Times* declared that even within the older universities a 'restless educational fervour has taken possession of the most able residents and a propagandist spirit has been developed which desires to carry university teaching and university influence to every corner of the land':[8] these 'most able residents' were certainly 'intellectuals' on Eyerman's definition.

Professionalizing the Past

A widespread belief that English society was in some profound way 'different' has tended to occlude the fact that academic communities were engaged in very similar activities across Europe.

This was particularly true of the historians, creating seamless 'national' histories to legitimize polities whose foundations were often new and shaky. British historians propounded a similar mix of nationalism and progress as their counterparts in Europe, appropriately recast. Thus the events of 1848 prompted English historians to assert the enduring value of Anglo-Saxon institutions; and more generally, in Philippa Levine's words, 'to establish an organic continuity with the English past wherein present conditions could claim to be not just the only logical but the best outcome of a revered and celebrated past'.[9]

History was, quite literally, political. The niche which the discipline's professional advocates secured within academia was justified and underwritten by its vocation as training for the next generation of rulers. Thus E S Creasy, at his 1840 inaugural lecture to the University of London, spoke of the need to 'qualify ourselves by the study of the Past for our high prerogative of controlling the Present and moulding the destinies of the Future'.[10] Levine has shown how closely historical discourse was tangled up with national politics; many MPs had written works of history. Gladstone described it as 'a noble, invigorating manly study, essentially political and judicial, fitted for and indispensable to, a free country'.[11]

Historians and Antiquarians: Marginalizing the Amateur

Peter Slee argues convincingly that a profession of tutor-historians had emerged by the 1860s. But as an academic discipline, History had a sticky

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start. Opponents criticized it, amongst other reasons, for a perceived lack of rigour: 'In stark contrast to its ancient counterpart, modern history lacked concrete authorities', says Slee. 'Truth was a standard to be sought and discovered rather than inherited.'[12]

That standard was set by the new academics. Doris Goldstein believes that William Stubbs, J R Green and E A Freeman, the triumvirate of Oxford historian-reformers, regarded themselves as 'custodians of the new scholarly standard', and were keen to draw distinctions between 'workers at history', such as themselves, and 'impostors' such as J A Froude, Thomas Babington Macaulay and Charles Kingsley. In Slee's words, they stressed 'the importance of a university-based clerisy of historical scholars who would strive to maintain a conceptual hygiene and keep the professional study free from the grip of literary terrorists and editorial desperadoes'.[13]

These men were intellectual missionaries, in Eyerman's terms. Doris Goldstein observes that J R Seeley, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge from 1870, had an 'almost messianic conception' of his role within the university. Professionalizing scholarship was to him a matter of national importance: 'in the warfare of thought we have hoped to resist regular troops by volunteers'.[14]

This statement highlights the fact that there was still virtually no professional historical research being carried out within the academy. What little financial support the universities did offer to research was channelled through the professoriat: a body of learned scholars who were funded (often nominally) to deliver a certain number of lectures each year, and (in theory) to bring lustre to the institution from their association with it. But attendance at their lectures was often very poor, since their work rarely bore any connection with the studies that undergraduates were expected to pursue; and in practice many appointments were political, and professors often unqualified.[15]

Even so, when the movement for Reform began to reach the ancient universities, there was much rivalry and bitterness between the college-based tutorial system and the university-funded professoriat, which was often seen as dangerously radical. A self-styled 'Sinecure Fellow' writing in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1872 deplored the proliferation of 'extraordinary supplementary professors and private lecturers'; this 'industrious multitude . . . have no genius in particular; they are simply meritorious hewers of wood and drawers of water in the temple of the Muses; they advance knowledge because it is their métier'.[16]

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Others accepted the need for the 'Endowment of Research', although even reformers such as Benjamin Jowett expressed concern that such funding must 'have definite results in adding to knowledge' and not be used to subsidize 'mere unproductive study'.[17] In Oxford, the principle was accepted in 1877, but college obfuscation, coupled with a severe drop in university income owing to agricultural depression, meant that a career-path for in-house academic research stayed a dead-letter for a generation. It was not until Cecil Rhodes' famous bequest of 1902, providing funding for 300 post-graduate students, that a graduate school developed at Oxford; the first doctorates were introduced in 1917. London's first History PhDs were awarded in 1921.[18]

However, although formal remuneration for academic research may have been non-existent, a de facto corps of researchers had long existed in the form of university Fellows who, having done their time as university tutors, were rewarded with college benefices and thereafter devoted themselves to their researches; they account for the 'extraordinary preponderance' of clergymen that Levine has found amongst the membership of the many antiquarian, archaeological and historical societies that came into existence after the 1840s.[19] Confronted by the new breed of historians, they found themselves very much part of the 'old guard', often sympathetic to the Oxford Movement and its enthusiasm for the medieval past: as Francis Haverfield noted, 'the antiquary and the tractarian have much in common'.[20] Antiquarianism consequently became marginalized, as its practitioners were themselves marginalized within their own institutions, eclipsed by the new professionals who, by the 1870s, had decided what counted as history, how it should be researched and how presented: through their control of curriculae, the books that they wrote 'in their own time', and, later, the agendas of periodicals such as the *English Historical Review*.

The distinction between 'antiquarian' and 'historian', words that had once been more or less interchangeable, grew more and more loaded. As Levine has demonstrated, by the 1880s the word 'antiquarian' 'acquired the sub-meaning amateur, and with it a definite depreciation in value'.[21]

Method was the touchstone. Antiquarians lacked the cohesion of a single methodology and set of standards, and antiquarianism was accordingly defined, or rather confined, by historians. In 1860 *Pass & Class*, a shrewd guide to undergraduate success in history examinations published in 1860, Montague Burrows advised candidates to concentrate on filling in the two-inch slots on their exam papers with facts and not opinions.

In 1884 the same man, now Chichele Professor of History at Oxford, declared that 'Facts, naked, unadorned facts, are the objects of the love and reverence of the rigid antiquarian.'[22] Antiquarians were thus being steered into what was at best a supportive role. '[T]here is less and less room for the untrained, untaught and unscholarly amateur', declared Sir Henry Howorth in 1892. They were effectively marginalized, driven back to the fastnesses of local history: 'The triumph of the new professionals was in confining antiquarianism to the fringes of historical enterprise where their efforts posed no threat to the monopoly of expertise necessary to the standing of the new professions', in Levine's words.[23]

Archaeology: Academic Cinderella?

Archaeology had an even more equivocal status, even though some archaeologists were keen to distinguish their work from that of the antiquarians. 'Archaeology, by the use of strictly inductive methods, has grown from a mere antiquarian speculation into a science', declared William Boyd Dawkins in 1874;[24] in 1883 Flinders Petrie called for 'the mathematical and mechanical study of antiquities',[25] and General Pitt Rivers obliged, with his thorough and pioneering excavation work at Cranborne Chase during the 1880s.

On the basis of such examples, although she acknowledges that archaeologists' poor purchase within the university 'did nothing to bolster their sense of a collective image', Philippa Levine suggests that the word 'archaeologist', like 'historian' (and unlike 'antiquarian'), had by the 1880s come 'to signify the trained and respected professional'. This optimistic assessment about the status of academic archaeology is at odds with her own evidence, since she demonstrates that the Cambridge Faculty Board tried to sever Archaeology from History three times during the 1880s by stressing its links with Classics. This was matched by Oxford, where attempts to include Classical Archaeology in the final exams were thrice foiled in the 90s.[26]

The historians tended to make little distinction between archaeologists and antiquarians. Between themselves, they were quite supercilious about the others' enthusiasm for minutiae and artefacts. In 1867, plans were mooted for 'a purely Historical Review . . . avoid[ing] the rock of mere archaeology', and when in 1886 the *English Historical Review* finally appeared, archaeology and antiquarianism were notable by their absence. '[T]he method of History is extensive, and that of Archaeology intensive

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cultivation', the historian Thomas Hodgkin declared in 1891: 'we may not improperly compare the instruments used by the Historians to the telescope, and those handled by the Archaeologists to the microscope . . . the Archaeologist collects facts relating to the past and the Historian arranges them'.[27]

Anthropology and Archaeology

Post-Darwinian fascination with the origin of the species spurred the growth of interest in Palaeolithic archaeology, which crept into academia under the auspices of Geology. Boyd Dawkins, who made his reputation as an archaeologist with the publication of Cave Hunting (1874) and Early Man in Britain (1880), was Professor of Geology and Palaeontology at Owens College, later the University of Manchester. Geology provided a respectably academic basis for archaeological speculation well into the twentieth century: other well-known archaeo-geologists included the Oxford professor W J Sollas, whose influential *Ancient Hunters and their Modern Representatives* appeared in 1911, T McKenny Hughes and his successor J E Marr, Professors at Cambridge, and their pupil Miles Burkitt, who became the first lecturer in prehistoric archaeology.[28]

It was as an adjunct to the study of classical antiquity, however, that archaeologists and anthropologists managed to convince the academic authorities of their worth. The Disney Chair of Archaeology at Cambridge was established in 1851, its incumbent expected to deliver at least six lectures a year 'on the subject of Classical, Medieval and other Antiquities, the Fine Arts and all matters and things connected therewith'.[29] The Yates Chair of Classical Archaeology was established at London in 1880; a similar Chair was set up at Oxford in 1887, and the Edwardes Chair of Egyptology was established for Flinders Petrie at London in 1893.[30]

The emphasis on the classical world was a matter of some bitterness to would-be prehistoric scholars. Sir Arthur Evans turned down the Oxford Chair because, as he wrote to Freeman, 'to confine a Professor of Archaeology to classical times seems to me as reasonable as to create a Chair of "Insular Geography" or "Mesozoic Geology" '.[31]

Some professors of classical archaeology slyly sought to broaden their remits. Percy Gardner, who took the job that Evans had declined, sent his pupil J L Myres to work for the British School at Athens, where his brother Ernest was Director. Myres worked mostly on prehistoric sites, and went on to become a prominent anthropologist.[32] Reginald Poole,

Yates Professor from 1889 to 1894, turned his Chair 'into a centre for a wide range of archaeological studies'.[33] Ernest Gardner (Percy's brother), Poole's successor, encouraged his pupil Mortimer Wheeler 'to embrace the more earth-bound forms of archaeology'; in 1913 he and Evans contrived to award Wheeler the new Franks studentship.[34] The remit of the Disney Chair at Cambridge was likewise susceptible to broad interpretation, a freedom exploited to the full by Sir William Ridgeway, Disney Professor from 1892 to 1926, who played the leading role in setting up the Board of Anthropology Studies in 1904: early graduates included both Bronislaw Malinowski and A R Radcliffe-Brown.[35]

Yet the relevance of anthropology to the classical world remained the chief justification for its study. 'To have suggested that Greek art could ever have had an early stage comparable to that of modern savages had never entered the head of any student of classical archaeology and still less of any professor of fine art', thundered Ridgeway in his Presidential Address to the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1908.[36] That same year, Anthropology's Oxford champions, who had finally succeeded in introducing a postgraduate diploma in 1905,[37] published a series of lectures entitled Anthropology and the Classics, with the aim of 'inducing classical scholars to study the lower culture as it bears upon the higher'.[38] Prehistoric archaeology thus appeared in both institutions under the umbrella of anthropology, and in both cases its inclusion was justified by the light that it could throw on the origins of classical antiquity.

By 1918, 'archaeology' had come to mean two very different things: the residual antiquarianism of the mid-nineteenth century, and the thriving new 'scientific' study of ancient humankind which had grown out of geology and, later, anthropology. Between the wars, the 'scientific' school became professionalized, and thereby acquired almost complete ascendancy.

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