WAS THERE AN HISTORICAL REVOLUTION?

BY JOSEPH H. PRESTON

Contemporary interest in the development of historiography has swung rather sharply to the periods of the Renaissance and early modern Europe; however this refocusing of historiographical interest has produced a great diversity of informed opinion. How important and dramatic were the changes in historical consciousness that occurred in these historical eras? Some, like F. Smith Fussner, Giorgio Spini, J. G. A. Pocock, Julian Franklin, Peter Burke, and Donald R. Kelley have not hesitated to declare that they constituted a revolution. Others have expressed skepticism about the validity of the term “revolution” or have preferred not to use it. Turning to those who have endorsed the term, we may inquire: Where was the historical revolution accomplished? Some select England, others focus on France, and still others point to Italy. When did the significant changes occur? Why, in the fourteenth century, the fifteenth century, the sixteenth century, and the seventeenth century? Who was the first modern historian? That accolade has been awarded to Leonardo Bruni, Francois Baudouin, and Francis Bacon.


3Fussner, Historical Revolution.

4Franklin, Jean Bodin.

5Spini, “Historiography.”

6Louis Green, Chronicle into History (Cambridge, 1972).


Such variations of judgment, while important, conceal considerable agreement. It is the purpose of this essay to probe the extent of agreement and conflict, to suggest some of the sources of disagreement, to assess the usefulness of the term "historical revolution," and to attempt a synthesis of recent scholarship on the topic. Since England, France, and Italy have all been singled out as the home of the significant changes that occurred, these countries will be considered sequentially before proceeding to more general considerations.

In considering England, we find that J. G. A. Pocock was the first to proclaim an historical revolution while at the same time admitting the importance of the French jurists. The French were able to portray feudalism as a product of complex, organic growth which despite its divergencies displayed universal characteristics. English jurists viewed their legal history as being based upon immemorial custom, an error not possible in France where customary law had an acknowledged rival in Roman law. But English jurists under the spell of custom discounted the influence of Norman feudalism, a feat which was accomplished only by an unhistorical reading of the past. Later, however, in the struggle between Crown and Parliament, there was a tendency to forget about the customary basis of the law itself and instead to insist upon the immemorial right of Parliament to make law. This shift of emphasis, of course, necessitated the construction of fresh myths.

Since the common-law mind was obsessed with the immemorial, it was unlikely that English jurists would achieve a breakthrough, which came instead from Sir Henry Spelman, an antiquary. Sir Henry, benefitting from a general increase in the knowledge of European scholarship and from his communication with many continental students of law, approached the reappraisal of English law through the study of language, and his investigations led him to view the English law in relation to the development of Continental feudalism, or as Pocock puts it:

Spelman had thus established that the basic tenure of English law had at a time past involved the whole complex of lord-vassal relationships described by . . . a great company of continental writers on feudal and customary law. It could now be seen that a large number of those relationships were in fact mentioned or implied in the books of the common law and could be explained by reference to a common origin. It was this which constituted the seventeenth-century revolution in English historiography.

Spelman was thus able to impose a new scheme of periodization (pre-feudal, feudal, and post-feudal) that has continued to the present. This achievement had many important implications as Pocock asserts:

The practice of interpreting medieval law as the consequence of relationships based on the _feudum_ had now resulted in a denial that parliament was immemorial, and in a very strong argument that kingdom had once been de-

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13Roman law may have had a greater role in England than was earlier believed. See esp. the chapter "Quod omnes tangit" in Gaines Post, _Studies in Medieval Legal Thought_ (Princeton, 1964).

14Pocock, _Ancient Constitution_, 1–90.

15Ibid., 102. Quentin Skinner has asserted that Spelman was far from unique in seeing the conquest as a break with the past: "History and Ideology in the English Revolution," _The Historical Journal_, 8 (1965), 156–60.
termined by the tenure of the crown, and in which consequently the only kind of parliment that could be imagined as existing was a feudal council on the exact analogy of the curia. This is very probably the most important single discovery that has ever been made in the historiography of the medieval constitution, and the fact that Spelman made it dwarfs into insignificance the outmoded postulates which it contains and on which it is partly based.¹⁶

Indeed the implications were so important that most Englishmen shied away from them, and we find that Spelman and his intellectual heirs were overwhelmed by the tides of triumphant Whiggism. The idea of the immemorial was incorporated in eighteenth-century Whig ideology. The cause of historiographical progress was correspondingly set back, and feudalism was not properly discovered until the nineteenth century. Although the idea of the ancient constitution did not escape entirely unscathed, it is apparent that the revolution perceived by Pocock won the support of few historians and failed to produce an enduring change in the rereading of the past.¹⁷

Of the various historical revolutions, the one which supplies the title of Fussner’s book is perhaps the most sweeping. This work is a very comprehensive account which places changes in historical thought and practice in their proper context, and that context is very broad indeed. Fussner first defines the historical revolution in general terms as a

whole complex of changes in the purpose, content, method, and style of historical writing in the period between about 1580, and 1660. . . . In the decades after 1660, English scholars were reputed among the best in Europe. The output of historical works more than kept pace with the general increase in the publication of books; libraries grew rapidly in size; and the institutional arrangements of scholarship took on a recognizably modern form. By 1707, when the modern Society of Antiquaries was founded, the outcome of the historical revolution was beyond dispute; massive works of erudition were available; major historical generalizations about the nature of feudalism had been formulated; sound methodological principles had been elaborated and put to use. The publication of Clarendon’s History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England left no doubt that modern history had become a part of modern literature.¹⁸

Breaking down his generalization into specifics, Fussner asserts that the purpose of history changed from moral lessons to that of utility, a change from obsession with metaphysical truth, before which facts pale in significance, to se-

¹⁶Pocock, Ancient Constitution, 111.
¹⁸Fussner, Historical Revolution, 300–01. Many of Fussner’s assertions are supported by the participants in a conference arranged by the Dugdale Society in 1956, although they stop short of declaring a revolution. Sir Maurice Powicke and others, “The Value of Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Scholarship to Modern Historical Research,” English Historical Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries ed. by Levi Fox (New York, 1956), 116–18.
cular concern which displays a devotion to both facts and generalization. In the process, the role of Providence in history was eliminated. The old authority of Scripture and tradition declined in the face of growing insistence on the importance of original documents, and this change in turn raised the important question of relevance. Style changed from the “baroque magnificence” of Ralegh’s prose to the simplicity that accords with rationalism and utility. The chronicle, with its emphasis on a strictly chronological order, declined before the growing influence of classical models which showed more concern for topics and periods. The setting off of periods also raised the issues of relevance and context because it was necessary to explain how one period differed from another. Finally, the variety of histories expanded, as did man’s ideas about them. Sir Francis Bacon broke with the traditional distinction between civil and ecclesiastical history and instead opposed civil to natural history with literary and ecclesiastical history as subvarieties of civil history. The writers of history increasingly produced problematic, territorial, and local history, and at the same time expanded the content of legal and constitutional history. Despite the vast range of changes in historical thought and practice, medieval attitudes and outlooks persisted, and religious issues were not eclipsed by the growing secularism.19

The explanation for Fussner’s historical revolution is exceedingly broad. The first category of explanation is to be found in both general and specific historical movements. The Renaissance, the Reformation, the “Scientific Revolution” and, in England, constitutional conflicts and civil war all acted diversely to encourage historical investigation and occasionally to reorient thought about the purpose and method of history. Such movements gave rise to a new intellectual milieu distinguished by an attack on old authorities, an appeal to experience, the rationalization of utility, and the extension of quantitative methods.20

Institutional growth and development also played an important role in setting the stage. The growing concern for records, the new libraries, the expanded role of universities and church in historical investigation were all conducive to the historiographical developments which have been enumerated; and the formation of societies of scholars increased possibilities of communication. Finally, economic changes played a role which Fussner at first states a priori. Ultimately, however, he maintains that in the production of goods there was a shift of emphasis from quality and aesthetic values to quantity and utility; this change corresponds to the new stress on utility in the field of historical writing.21

Christopher Hill has generally endorsed the concept of historical revolution put forward by Fussner and to some extent incorporated it in his survey of the Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution. Fussner’s work, however, preceded his own by such a narrow margin that Hill was unable to make full use of it. On the other hand, unlike Fussner, he emphasizes the importance of James Harrington’s contention that history is a science because man can control it.

19 Fussner, Historical Revolution, xvi–xxiii, 256, 310–11.
21 Ibid., 102–11, 306.
"This was the high point of historical thinking in seventeenth-century England."

The position of Fritz Levy toward the historical revolution is somewhat ambivalent. Originally he strongly asserted the validity of the concept but on the basis of rather slender evidence. In his subsequent and much more substantial work, Tudor Historical Thought, he does not insist upon the term. Perhaps it would be best to let him speak for himself: "Any study of a subject over a span of time of over a century will bring about change, and whether the change is called development, progress, degeneration, process, revolution or collapse does not alter the fundamental point." Although Levy sees revolutionary change as characteristic of Tudor England, and although there were also substantial historiographic changes, there was also continuity. The fundamental changes took place slowly and gradually without causing disruption. He perceives Ralegh as a synthesis of the old and the new elements in Tudor historiography.

Other historians have emphasized that significant changes occurred prior to the latter part of the sixteenth century, thus minimizing later changes or denying their revolutionary character. Joseph Levine, W. R. Trimble, and E. L. Woodward have all stressed the importance of early sixteenth-century developments. Charles Kingsford saw the fifteenth century as an especially significant period. Denys Hay agrees with all of the above.

Not unrelated to the foregoing is another approach which tends to flatten out the historiographic topography by stressing the gradual and continuous character of changes in historical vision. Hay, for example, claims a large role for Polydore Vergil in stimulating a movement that began "with Camden, Josselin and Parker and culminated in Spelman, Dugdale and Wharton." Nor is Hay alone as an observer of this phenomenon.

Another variation in this vein of skepticism is one which most of the proponents of revolution would admit: the basic ambivalence of the period. Changes were frequently not consolidated; the old and the new exist side by side. Peter Gay summed up all this quite succinctly in contending that the history of history is not a neat progression from one mode of thought to another.

Each period accommodates and assimilates survivals and anticipations—new ideas, ideas in their prime, and ideas kept alive only by the tenacity of conserva-

22Hill, Intellectual Origins, ix, 203.
24Ibid., 287–94.
25Levy, Tudor Historical Thought, 3.
29Ibid., 165–66.
This ambivalence has been detected by a variety of authors. These views, then, which perceive historiographic change taking place over a lengthy period of time and proceeding both gradually and decisively are generally erosive of the concept of historical revolution. Donald R. Kelley has recently attempted a more brisk approach. He observes that English law and history did not develop a strong alliance and that both were the poorer for it. As a result English writers failed to properly consider historical perspective and context. Consequently, sixteenth-century scholarship was isolated and stagnant. Seventeenth century developments were significant but not revolutionary. The views of Henry Spelman and John Selden were omens of progress, but, due to ideological conflicts, that promise was not fulfilled. Kelley firmly rejects the concept of an English historical revolution as "extravagant" and "inappropriate." Kelley, however, should not be regarded as an entrenched opponent of the concept of historical revolution, for while he criticizes such claims in England, he defends them on the Continent.

One of the earliest assertions of an historical revolution on the Continent was put forward by Julian Franklin in *Jean Bodin and the Sixteenth Century Revolution in the Methodology of Law and History*. Franklin contends that the significant changes in historical thought grew out of a "juristic revolution" which was initially a revolt against Roman law. Medieval jurists had taken Justinian's *Corpus Juris* as an authority possessed of universal validity. Studying the *Corpus Juris* by methods which correspond to those of scholastic science, the medieval glossators worked out an exegesis which suited the needs of European civilization in the later Middle Ages. In an effort to find solutions for contemporary problems, men increasingly shifted from strict to loose construction.

The growth of humanism, however, posed a serious problem for the medieval jurist because the humanists united interest in philological studies with the desire to come to a more accurate understanding of the classical past. Italian humanists were the first to reveal that the medieval version of the

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31 Gay went on to suggest that by 1630, history was delicately balanced on the brink of modernity but that the triumph of modern historiography was still a century away. Gay, *Loss of Mastery*, 21–22. C. A. Patrides, a scholar from the field of English literature, views Milton's *Paradise Lost* as the end of an era in intellectual history because it is the last poetic work which elaborated the Christian view of history. Like Gay, Patrides sees a decisive historiographic turning point in the eighteenth century. C. A. Patrides, *The Phoenix and the Ladder* (Berkeley, Calif., 1964), 67.


34 Franklin, *Jean Bodin*, 2–35.
Corpus Juris was corrupt, that medieval jurists had not approached it with any sense of historical context and that the Corpus itself was not an entirely coherent or systematic body of law. In France this criticism may be dated from the writings of Guillaume Budé early in the sixteenth century, and his writing served as a springboard for François Hotman and François Baudouin, who attacked the authority of the Roman law on the grounds that it was not suited to French circumstances. Jean Bodin agreed with their arguments but also advocated that a new system of law be derived from a comparative study of all legal systems; the materials of universal history could be utilized for this purpose.35

Because history played such an important role both in the criticism of Roman law and in the constructive proposal of Bodin, the French jurists ultimately became concerned with the methodological problems of history, a concern which was heightened by attacks on the usefulness of history by skeptics 36 like Cornelius Agrippa and Francesco Patrizzi. The concern of the jurists led them to respond to the charges, Baudouin in his Prolegomenon on the Teaching of History and Its Conjunction with Jurisprudence and Bodin in his Method For the Easy Comprehension of Histories. Earlier treatises on history had been preoccupied with the art of writing history—essentially with literary problems. Baudouin and Bodin, however, were concerned with reading, i.e., evaluating history. Confronted with the problems of sources and documentation which had been raised by the pyrrhonist attack on the conditions of historical belief and the way in which certainty might be approximated, the jurists developed methods for establishing the authenticity of documents and a psychological approach for determining bias. The revolution, then, was one of historical methodology and thought; it proved to be of continuing importance because the jurists were influential with subsequent generations of scholars.37

In 1970, the developments which Franklin had mapped out were substantially enlarged by the appearance of two new and impressive works of scholarship: Donald R. Kelley’s Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship and George Huppert’s The Idea of Perfect History. In these works the relevant changes take place over a longer period of time, the importance of the Italian connection is clarified and strengthened, the scope of change is broadened, the roster of revolutionary personnel is lengthened, contextual explanation is diversified, and the relationship with later periods receives attention. With this broadening and lengthening there is a concomitant loss of simple clarity, and the revolution becomes a more complex phenomenon.

Kelley and Huppert emphasize the importance of the Italian humanist philological movement which paved the way for later developments in France. Lorenzo Valla is especially singled out and credited with providing a paradigm for the emergence of the historical revolution.38 The importance of legal issues

36Franklin classifies both Agrippa and Patrizzi as pyrrhonists. It is doubtful, however, if Agrippa was a pyrrhonist in the strict sense because he was concerned with the truthfulness of history as it was written rather than the possibility of historical truth. Patrizzi argued that history could be generally true but not exactly true. Ibid., 96, 100.
37Ibid., 84–88.
38Kelley, Foundations, 45.
continued, but political and religious issues provided additional stimuli to historical thinking.

The number of contributors to historiographic progress is lengthened impressively to include Louis LeRoy, La Popelière, Jean du Tillet, Bernard Girard, Pierre Pithou, Etienne Pasquier, and Nicolas Vignier. The listing is not exhaustive.

Just as the number of contributors increased, so too, the scope of historiographic change. Criticism of sources remains central to the movement, but a sense of anachronism is more firmly incorporated. It is even applied to historiography itself. More attention is given to the form of history in the sense that it deals with all men and all of man’s activities. Types of organization became more diverse with the appearance of institutional and problematic history. There is a shift of emphasis from moral to political wisdom. The essence of the achievement is a thoroughgoing historicism, a tendency to view everything in terms of its history. Thus it pervasively affects all areas of culture.

Kelley and Huppert are agreed that this achievement reached its climax in the sixteenth century and withered in the seventeenth century due to an uncongenial intellectual climate which was the product of the distracting influence of the scientific revolution, the oppressive demands of official ideology, and the overwhelming tides of historical pyrrhonism. As a result there was a growing tendency to eschew analysis and take refuge in erudition.

Both scholars assert that the movement produced no masterpiece and achieved no synthesis. Huppert feels sure that there is a connection between the sixteenth-century achievement and the eighteenth-century outlook but suggests that more research is needed to establish its character. Kelley does not hesitate to assert the revolutionary character of the changes described, but Huppert is more cautious. The latter is apparently deterred by an awareness that the phenomenon he describes is not a sharp break and is substantially indebted to the erudition of earlier jurists, antiquaries, and historians—especially Italians.

It is obvious then that Italian developments must be considered crucial to the unfolding of historiographical development. But before shifting from Western to Southern Europe, notice must be accorded to the late Dom David Knowles’ account of Great Historical Enterprises. This work focusses on the emergence of Maurist and Bollandist cooperative works in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. These movements not only contributed impressively to the technical aspects of modern scholarship, but also demonstrated the advantages of coordination. Chronologically, the peak period of achievement includes the latter portion of the seventeenth century, a time which others have seen as a low point in historiographical development. Knowles did not regard the Maurist and Bollandist movements as isolated phenomena but as having

41 Kelley is somewhat ambivalent on this issue in that he describes Pasquier’s work as “a matchless and indeed a unique synthesis.” Kelley, Foundations, 300, 307; Huppert, Perfect History, 11.
42 Huppert, Perfect History, 10–11, 178; Kelley, Foundations, 3, 21, 45.
distinct connections with the earlier humanist movement. The pace of change was gradual and evolutionary.43

It has already been shown that those who have concentrated on French historiographical development were fully aware of the important infusion of antecedent progress in Italy. Kelley, especially, has urged the decisive character of Lorenzo Valla’s contributions, describing him as a founding-father of modern historical thought and as one who helped to provide a paradigm for the emergence of the historical revolution. More than any other, Valla deserves comparison with Copernicus. Valla is important not only for a developed sense of anachronism but also for an emphasis on original sources and the investigation of particulars.44 B. L. Ullman has accorded similar distinction to Leonardo Bruni, praising his broad search for materials, critical judgment, discernment of underlying causes, and sense of historical perspective. Although Ullman called Bruni the first modern historian, he warns that “it is no more true of historiography than of other activities that the Renaissance marks a sharp break with the Middle Ages or that all humanists were alike. Much medieval thinking persisted. . . .”45

Such cautionary advice has been firmly rejected by Giorgio Spini, who did not hesitate to proclaim that an historical revolution of Copernican dimensions took place in the late Italian Renaissance. It was a revolution that took place during the period of the Counter-Reformation and involved a rejection of the earlier humanist interest in developing new varieties of history and in improving historical writing in favor of a more theoretical emphasis on the nature and art of history. The chief architects of this revolution were Francesco Patrizzi, Traiano Boccalini, and Tommaso Campanella. However, the heirs of the revolution, (the Tacitists) who were associated with Venice, became involved in a debate with the “proponents of a rhetorical and moral Ciceronianism”46 (the Anti-Tacitists) who supported the Roman Curia and Spain. The latter ultimately triumphed and the revolution proved impermanent.47

Other observers of the Italian scene stress the importance of a much earlier era. A. D. Momigliano, for example, credits the Renaissance (from Petrarch to Biondo) with recapturing the Varronian ideal after the Middle Ages had lost the systematic character of that approach.48 More recently Louis Green has discerned a change from medieval to modern consciousness that occurred in

47Ibid., 92–93, 104–05, 123, 127, 131. The comparison of the Tacitists and the Anti-Tacitists is confusing because of some reversed parallelism, 115ff.
fourteenth-century Florentine chronicles. The familiar-sounding developments include: the growth of a more objective approach, a retreat from judgment in terms of godly virtue to something more vague and remote, less emphasis on providence, a greater sense of historical depth, and a growing awareness of the possibilities of a comparative approach to historical study. While divine will was not eliminated, events formed a patterned expression of "the inherent tendencies of human action" which also involved the introduction of a rational method. Again there was a juxtaposition of the old and the new.

What had been conjoined parts of a total view of reality were in consequence separated. On one side of the division a rational order modified and replaced a religious one: on the other, the supernatural, redundant to the physical world, detached itself from it, assuming the character of abnormality that was to distinguish it throughout the early modern period. There was no break, at least immediately, either with the sense that a harmonious order underlay existence or with faith in the spiritual as such. Nature, idealized to denote a set of values as well as the substance of physical reality, replaced providence as the regulative force maintaining the balance and equity of things. The supernatural, increasingly alienated from ordinary experience (which in view of the enhanced stature of nature became intelligible without it) receded to the fringes of life. . . .

Such was the general intellectual process, and the Florentine chronicles of the fourteenth century, by demonstrating how the new attitudes evolved from the old, reveal the stages of the transition and display a patterned process of change.

Now if it should be granted that these various investigators of the historiographic past are not totally imperceptive, the pieces of this puzzle begin to fall into place. The movement began in Italy in the fourteenth century and reached at least one peak in the Quattrocento. From Italy it was transmitted, both directly and indirectly to France and England where it flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This movement was characterized by a growing secularism, emphasis on evidence, and a sense of anachronism; it received a considerable part of its momentum from philological studies. Taking place over several centuries, it was a transformation from medieval to modern that proceeded at a somewhat erratic pace. In blending the old and the new it exhibited characteristics that were uniquely its own. It is obvious that what we have been describing is the Renaissance; there is no need to invent another term. It cannot properly be called a revolution because it traverses too long a time span and because it exhibits substantial continuity as well as change.

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46Green, Chronicle Into History, 7, 149.
50Ibid., 151–152.
51Ibid., 149–51.
52Peter Burke, The Renaissance Sense of the Past is unique in weaving developments in all three countries into one account. For a more complete analysis of the nature of the transition see Gay, Loss of Mastery, 17–20.
53Some of the proponents of historical revolution concede this point. There is also growing skepticism whether the term "revolution" may properly be used to describe changes in science and whether there ever was a scientific revolution. ± I. Bernard Cohen, "The Eighteenth Century Origins of the Concept of Scientific Revolution," J.H.I., 37 (1976), 257–88.
If it is true, as I have suggested, that the term "historical revolution" is unjustified, why has it so frequently been proclaimed? It should be noted that historians have not been able to agree upon an anatomy, structure, or even a definition of revolution. Although more attention has recently been given to the problem, R. G. Collingwood's suggestion that the word be abolished has its present-day counterpart in Felix Gilbert's assertion that the principal reason for the popularity of the term has been its flexibility. "It could be used by writers who might have very different opinions about the explanation of change."54 Certainly it is true that the writers surveyed in this paper have generally not even bothered to define the term. Instead they have noted changes in historical thought and practice and then declared that the changes constituted a revolution.

It is obvious, too, that the very conditions of modern scholarship do not encourage the long view but instead force concentration on smaller units of time and space. Those who have proclaimed the revolution have commendably showed some awareness of other times and climes, but their very mode of organization encourages them to emphasize the importance of their specialty rather than to consider the larger movement as a whole. This aspect of modern scholarship, however, does not constitute the complete explanation. Different historians have different priorities in assessing historiographic progress. Some have prized vision, some have stressed techniques and methodology, and still others have been more interested in men who have put their vision and methodology to the test by actually writing history. The very use of the word progress, however, suggests another problem.

Ever since Herbert Butterfield published The Whig Interpretation of History in 1931, we have received many warnings about the dangers of falling into the whiggish trap, but most of us are used to thinking of whig history as being especially concerned with politics and religion. Butterfield, however, warned "that there is a tendency for all history to veer into whig history,"55 to view the past in terms of its relationship to the present, to concentrate on its progressive elements, and to rob the past of its complexity by taking short cuts along the route to a connection.56 The application to historiography has not escaped Frances Yates.

Historians of history may be subject to the danger which has beset the historians of science, I mean the reading of history forward to some modern concept of history or modern scientific position, extracting from the people of former times what seem to be forward-looking elements in their thought and neglecting their context in the thought as a whole.57


56Ibid., 3, 6–13, 23, 28–29.

The “historian’s time”\textsuperscript{58} must be linked to the past as well as to the present.\textsuperscript{59}

J. H. Plumb has attested that change and revolution are more attractive to historians than continuity and stability,\textsuperscript{60} and as Levy has observed, “the inevitable desire of a historian to record flux may mean the omission (or at least the neglect) of a substratum of ideas shared by those of whom he writes, and this omission by exaggerating the differences, may distort the picture.\textsuperscript{61}”

While there is still a substantial body of opinion which locates the foundation of modern historiography after 1700,\textsuperscript{62} others may have found it difficult to resist another built-in impetus toward revisionism. It is certainly not a new impetus. Thomas Fuller, the seventeenth-century church historian, noted the changing interpretation of Richard III and remarked: “Besides, there are some birds (sea-pies by name) who cannot rise except it be by flying against the wind, as some hope to achieve their advancement by being contrary and paradoxal in judgment to all before them.\textsuperscript{63}”

It is not proper, however, to end on such a churlish note. The impetus to revisionism has its positive as well as its negative side, and in any case it is built into much of our professional organization. The proponents of revolution have produced substantial works of scholarship and erudition. In so doing they, too, have illumined the path of Renaissance historiography.

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\textsuperscript{58}That is, the time the historian studies, as used by J. H. Hexter, \textit{Reappraisals in History} (Evanston, Ill., 1961), 10–11.

\textsuperscript{59}Yates, “Old and New History,” 25. It should be pointed out, however, that Donald Kelley, who has avoided this pitfall better than most, still is an advocate of historical revolution.


\textsuperscript{61}Levy, \textit{Tudor Historical Thought}, 3.


\textsuperscript{63}Thomas Fuller, \textit{The Church History of Britain} ed. by J. S. Brewer (Oxford, 1845), II, 490.