

READING HISTORY IN
EARLY MODERN
ENGLAND

D. R. WOOLF



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CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page vii
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>List of abbreviations and note on the text</i>	xv
Introduction	1
1 The death of the chronicle	11
2 The contexts and purposes of history reading	79
3 The ownership of historical works	132
4 Borrowing and lending	168
5 Clio unbound and bound	203
6 Marketing history	255
7 Conclusion	318
<i>Appendix A</i> A bookseller's inventory in history books, ca. 1730: evidence from Folger MS Add. 923	327
<i>Appendix B</i> History by auction: an analysis of select auction sale catalogs, 1686–1700	346
<i>Index</i>	353

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

1.1	The dissolution of the chronicle.	<i>page 27</i>
2.2	Henry Prescott's reading, 1704–19. From the <i>Diary of Henry Prescott</i> , 2 vols., ed. J. M. Addy and P. McNiven, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 127 (1987) and 132 (1994).	120
3.3	Subjects of history books in Robert Burton's library, 1640. From Nicholas K. Kiessling, <i>The Library of Robert Burton</i> (Oxford, 1988).	161
3.4	Subjects of history books in Thomas Baker's library, 1740. From Frans Korsten, <i>A Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Baker</i> (Cambridge, 1990).	162
3.5	Decade of publication of books in Thomas Baker's library. From Frans Korsten, <i>A Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Baker</i> (Cambridge, 1990).	163
5.6	Historical writings by subject: a late seventeenth-century estimate. Thomas Tanner's list of printed materials on English history.	237
5.7	History in the Stationers' Register, 1580–1700, including fictional "histories," verse, and historical drama.	238
5.8	History publication in the 1720s: total figures from Wilford's <i>Monthly Catalogues</i> .	241
5.9a	The publication of history in the 1720s: Wilford's <i>Monthly Catalogues</i> , 1723–30: new editions.	242
5.9b	The publication of history in the 1720s: Wilford's <i>Monthly Catalogues</i> , 1723–30: reprints.	243
6.10	Publication of historical matter: notices in <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , 1731. Source: <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , I; booklist for August 1731 absent.	266
6.11	Subscribers to <i>The Great Historical, Geographical and Poetical Dictionary</i> .	296

Maps

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 1.1 | Urban chronicles in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England | 68 |
| 6.2 | Booksellers subscribing to <i>The Great Historical, Geographical and Poetical Dictionary</i> . | 298 |
| 6.3 | Location of subscribers to <i>The Great Historical, Geographical and Poetical Dictionary</i> . | 300 |
| 6.4 | Identifiable subscribers to John Walker's <i>Sufferings of the Clergy</i> . | 314 |

Plates

- | | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1.1 | An early example of an authorial image, in this case contrived: "The portrature of John Harding: maker of these chronicles." The illustration in fact is a colored woodcut by Lucas Cranach the younger portraying George the Pious, prince of Anhalt, from the latter's <i>Conciones et scripta</i> (Wittenberg, 1520). By permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, from MS Ashm. 34, facing fo. 1r. | 17 |
| 1.2 | Title page to vol. III of the second edition of Holinshed's <i>Chronicles</i> (1587). McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. | 38 |
| 1.3 | Printed chronological tables: the title page of <i>Chronological Tables of Europe</i> , by Colonel William Parsons, one of several such works popular in the early eighteenth century, adapted from a French work by Guillaume Marcel. Reprinted by permission of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin. | 60 |
| 1.4 | Adaptation of the annalistic format outside the chronicle: a sketch of "The History of York Minster" in Archbishop Sharpe's manuscripts, vol. I, p. 56 (Bishopsthorpe Papers Bp. Div. I). Reprinted by permission of the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, University of York. | 62 |
| 1.5 | Parochial collections: a page from Berks. RO, D/P 145/28/7, a bound octavo book entitled "A Rhapsodicall Collection of Various Matters relating to the Vicaridge of Wargrave in ye Diocess [<i>sic</i>] of Sarum: By William Derham late vicar there AD 1690." By permission of the Berkshire Record Office and the Vicar of Wargrave. | 77 |
| 2.6 | Indexing history: indexes became increasingly important to readers wishing to "look up" particular facts in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. By the early eighteenth | |

- century, indexes had become a standard feature of most historical works. Here indexing is illustrated in vol. I of Rapin-Thoyras' *History* translated by Nicholas Tindal (1728–32). McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 84
- 2.7 The visual culture of the history book, in directions for using the genealogical tables to the revised edition of Francis Sandford's *Genealogical History*, revised by S. Stebbing (1707), sig. Kkk2. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 86
- 2.8 From Stow's *Annales*, 1631, continued by Edmund Howes, sig. ¶, "To the honest and understanding reader," a page showing marginal annotations by an anonymous seventeenth-century hand. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 89
- 2.9 Printed marginal notes and page layout illustrated; in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, 1587. Note the use of distinctive fonts in the glosses to separate citations of sources from subject pointers. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 91
- 2.10 Compiling usable lists from historical works exemplified in "a list of some of the Lords Treasurers of England," from Bodl. MS Rawl. D. 969, art. iv, fos. 56v–59r, an undated and anonymous historical notebook, principally relating to Kent, from the middle to late seventeenth century. Reprinted by permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. 122
- 4.11 Page from a contemporary catalog of the library of the Towneley family, Chetham's Library, Manchester, Mun. A.2.67. Reprinted by kind permission of the Governors, Chetham's Library, Manchester. 176
- 5.12 A major work abridged for a wider market: the 1701 version, revised and much reduced, of Edmund Gibson's earlier edition of *Camden's Britannia*, 1695, itself one of the major historical publications of the end of the seventeenth century. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 244
- 5.13 Title page of volume III of the first edition of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* (Cambridge University Library), a copy whose last private owner was the philosopher Bertrand Russell. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library, Bertrand Russell collection. 247
- 5.14 A contract to write a history from preexisting collections. An agreement between William Holman the younger and the translator-historian Nicholas Tindal to turn the collections of the Rev. William Holman the elder into a history of Essex, witnessed by the future historian of Essex, Philip Morant, and

- in his hand. The intent of these articles is both to authorize Tindal to use the materials and to assign copyright jointly to him and to the younger Holman, while also dividing the expenses of publication. Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, T/A 497, by permission of the Essex Record Office. 250
- 6.15 The advertisement of historical works, illustrated from the final page of *Grub Street Journal*, 37 (1730). By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC (shelfmark AP3 G9 cage, vol. I). 265
- 6.16 A page from the *History of the Works of the Learned*, vol. III (January 1701), p. 18, an early example of a critical review of a history book. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 267
- 6.17 The first version of a successful serialized work of history, Paul de Rapin-Thoyras' *The History of England, as well ecclesiastical as civil*, translated by Nicholas Tindal, 15 vols., (1728–32), vol. I. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 278
- 6.18 Subscription list to Samuel Stebbing's revised edition of Francis Sandford, *Genealogical History of the Kings of England* (1707); the first edition of Sandford's work (1677) was among the earliest historical works published by subscription. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 282
- 6.19 Justification for a new and "improved" edition of a subscription work, in Samuel Stebbing's edition of Francis Sandford's *Genealogical History* (1707). McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 286–7
- 6.20 Detail of "The Parochial Clergy" from John Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy* (1714), p. 251. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 295
- 6.21 Title page of the 1701 revision, by Jeremy Collier, of Louis Moréri's *Great Historical . . . Dictionary*, 2 vols., London, 1701. Collier also compiled an "appendix" and a "supplement" to the work. McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library. 297
- 7.22 By the early eighteenth century images of authors were much better known to generations now used to collecting portraits, and historians themselves had a much better established public persona, here illustrated in the engraved image of the earl of Clarendon preceding each of three volumes of his *History of the Rebellion* (Oxford, 1702–4): from Bertrand Russell's copy of the *History*, now in McMaster University, Mills Memorial Library, Bertrand Russell collection. 325

The death of the chronicle

I ha' bene here ever since seven a clock i' the morning to get matter for one page, and I thinke I have it compleate; for I have both noted the number and the capacity of the degrees here; and told twice over how many candles there are i' th' roome lighted, which I will set you downe to a snuffe precisely, because I love to give light to posteritie in the truth of things.

Ben Jonson, *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon*¹

Jonson's caricature of a chronicler desperate to find news with which to stuff his tome, having promised his stationer to use at least three reams of paper, may well have amused his audience, but it would scarcely have surprised them. The chronicler had provided easy prey for wits for at least three decades by the time Jonson wrote. A tongue even sharper than his own, that of Thomas Nashe, had lashed out against the hapless recorder of events as early as 1592. Characteristically, Nashe managed to present his victim in the worst possible light, warning his gentle readers against "lay chronigraphers, that write of nothing but of mayors and sheriefs, and the dere yere, and the great frost."² Digression, irrelevance, and triviality seemed to many seventeenth-century historians and their readers to be the essence of chronicles. Most modern scholars have agreed with the thrust of Nashe's and Jonson's statements, even while making the more subtle distinctions among different chroniclers that the perspective of four centuries provides.

While there is considerable agreement on the fact of the chronicle's decline, there is little in the way of an explanation for that decline; nor (ironically, given the subject) is its chronology very clear. The standard works on Renaissance historiography round up the usual suspects, among which "humanism" is by far the leading contender. The chronicle lost status

¹ Jonson, *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon*, in Ben Jonson, ed. C. H. Herford, P. Simpson and E. Simpson (11 vols., Oxford, 1925–52), VII, 514. Herford (X, 596) redates this from 6 January 1621 to the same date in 1620. This chapter was previously published, in a different form, as "Genre into Artifact: the Decline of the English Chronicle in the Sixteenth Century," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (1988), 321–54. It has been considerably revised since then, in particular by the addition of archival material not then known to me. ² *The Works of Thomas Nashe* ed. R. B. McKerrow (Oxford, 1904–10), I, 194.

in the sixteenth century, we are told, because historians were no longer satisfied with its rigid, annalistic structure, or because they found its style barbaric, or because its providential mode of explanation had ceased to provide a satisfactory interpretation of the unfolding of events now perceived as having immediate, contingent causes, human or natural. Historians evolved other forms such as the “politic” history (itself a return to a Latin, particularly Tacitean style of historiography), which transcended the confines of the annal and which sought the causes of the events it depicted in human nature rather than providence, fate, or fortune; or the antiquarian treatise in which remnants of the past were organized topographically or topically rather than chronologically.³

Such generalizations contain an element of truth, but they leave much unnoticed. A number of other factors must be taken into any account of the decay of the chronicle from its former stature as a living, growing genre into a remnant of the past useful mainly as evidence for the modern historian.⁴ I suggest that the social, cultural, and technological changes that affected other forms of studying or representing the past also lie behind the transformation of the chronicle, and that the advent of humanist historical writing in the later sixteenth century is not so much a cause of the chronicle’s demise as one among several consequences of the broader developments that occasioned this.⁵ The present chapter accordingly opens our inquiry into the early modern history book with an exploration of how it emerged from, and eclipsed, its medieval predecessor.

³ On antiquities and history in ancient and Renaissance times, see Arnaldo Momigliano, “Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” *Studies in Historiography* (1966).

⁴ A terminological note: in the present work I have taken history, in all its many, and increasing, types, as a “subject” (a “discipline” being grossly anachronistic at this juncture). Where I use the term “genre” it is nearly always in reference to *types* of historical writing: chronicles, politic histories, antiquarian works, biographies, and so on, with occasional finer distinctions of subgenre having to be made, in particular where quantitative analysis has been employed (for instance in appendix B, below). “Format” (or sometimes, more colloquially, “size”) reflects the bibliographical and printing distinction among works published as folio, quarto, octavo, and so on.

⁵ Annabel Patterson’s *Reading Holinshed’s Chronicles* (Chicago, 1994) is the first serious attempt to deal with the question of what Holinshed and his collaborators were trying to do, and to what audience they were appealing, without looking at that book either as the fount of Shakespeariana or as a sign of the decadence of a medieval genre. I have found Patterson’s discussion stimulating, in particular her emphasis on the polyvocality inherent in so many-authored a work. I agree with much of it, not least her justified criticism of earlier books on Tudor and Stuart historiography (including one by the present author) for not taking the chronicles on their own merits. On the other hand, I find less convincing her reading of the *Chronicles* as a manifesto of early modern liberalism, and would want to argue that whatever the intrinsic merits of the *Chronicles* and its clear appeal to contemporaries (Shakespeare among them), it was nevertheless part of a genre that was already on its last legs; where my own differs from older accounts is in the reasons for that decline, which is really a sign of transmutation into something else, the modern genres of history, fiction, and news.

INTO THE AGE OF PRINT: HIGDEN'S "POLYCHRONICON"
AND ITS IMITATORS

There is no space in the current book for a lengthy review of the origins and history of the chronicle in its various medieval forms. The progress over nearly two centuries of the best-known late medieval chronicle, Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, however, offers an excellent example of the changing social role of the chronicle in the later Middle Ages. There is no reason to suppose that Higden (d. 1364), a Benedictine monk of Chester, wrote his universal chronicle for any other than the Latinate monastic orders for which such chronicles were usually written, or at most for the benefit of a highly select audience around the king, yet the *Polychronicon* proved to be the medieval equivalent of a best-seller.⁶ Many chronicles began with the Creation or with Brutus the Trojan, but Higden's was the first truly "universal" history written in England. Divided into seven books (for the seven ages of man) which dealt with a wide variety of topics including social customs, religion, geography, natural history, and numerology, it was a true encyclopedia in the earlier medieval tradition of Isidore of Seville and Vincent of Beauvais. Higden was influenced by the homiletic impulses of his day,⁷ but he could not resist telling entertaining stories, often without an obvious moral, and all these features combined to make the *Polychronicon* so popular that, in the words of a recent scholar, it "killed the demand for the older histories."⁸ Later chroniclers often found it easier to write their own works as continuations of Higden's. Others imitated its form, though they failed to achieve its popularity. So well known was Higden's work that by 1387 it had been translated by John de Trevisa, a secular clerk, for the benefit of the fourth Baron Berkeley; another translation was made in the fifteenth century.⁹ In Trevisa's version, the *Polychronicon* became one of the most familiar accounts of both universal and English history, rivaling the popularity of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the *Brut* family of chronicles.

Trevisa's translation became even better known when Caxton chose it as one of the first historical works to emerge from his press, publishing part of it in 1480 and the whole work in 1482, with a continuation covering the period from 1377 to 1461. Caxton's successor, Wynkyn de Worde, published another edition in 1495 and Peter Treveris a third in 1527, the latter

⁶ Higden, who was probably his abbey's librarian, was summoned in 1352 to appear at Westminster "with all his chronicles" to advise the council: J. G. Edwards, "Ranulph, Monk of Chester," *English Historical Review*, 47 (1932), 94; John Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford, 1966), p. 1.

⁷ Margaret Jennings, "Monks and the *Artes Praedicandi* in the Time of Ranulf Higden," *Revue Benedictine*, 86 (1976), 119-28. ⁸ Taylor, *Universal Chronicle of Ranulph Higden*, p. 16.

⁹ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* (2 vols., Ithaca, N.Y., 1974-82), II, 220; D. C. Fowler, "New Light on John Trevisa," *Traditio*, 18 (1962), 289-317.

sponsored jointly by the bookseller and a London mercer named Roger Thomye.¹⁰ The survival of a trial title page for that edition, and its revision, with the title itself considerably enlarged, demonstrates that the *Polychronicon* had already achieved a kind of “brand-name” recognition which the publisher was keen to accentuate.¹¹ Printed versions of Higden’s book retained a certain marketability even in the late seventeenth century, while manuscripts of it – rather more commonplace than for most medieval historical texts – changed hands throughout the period. The manuscript now in the Somerset Record Office, for instance, began the sixteenth century in the Augustinian abbey of Keynsham before being acquired after the dissolution by Richard Godwyn; later in the century, one Robert Rosewell would pay 7s 6d for it, and a new owner purchased it in the seventeenth century.¹²

Throughout the Middle Ages the limitations on reproduction imposed by a chirographic technology had restricted the medieval chronicle, monastic, secular or lay, chivalric or urban, to a comparatively small audience of readers (or listeners) in the present and future. The developing appetite for history among a lay audience slowly drew the records of the past out of the *scriptoria* and abbey libraries, into scribes’ shops and noble and gentry collections – a process which the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s completed rather than began. But such expansion was severely limited by the cost and slowness of reproducing and distributing manuscripts.¹³ A 1333 version of the *Brut*, now in the Inner Temple Library, cost a total of 6s 9d for its nineteen quires, including the parchment and the scribe’s fee, a sum certainly beyond the range of most buyers below the aristocracy.¹⁴

The coming to England of movable type in the last quarter of the fifteenth century did not initiate the dissemination of historical books like the *Polychronicon*, but it amplified it enormously. Tudor printers found a market for the mass reproduction of historical texts, some, like Bede (trans. 1565), written centuries earlier, others, like Fabyan’s chronicle (1516), written very recently. One must be careful neither to minimize nor to overstate the impact of print, which in this case was longer-term rather than immediate. Up to the

¹⁰ James Kelsey McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics Under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford, 1965), p. 63.

¹¹ Percy Simpson, *Proof-Reading in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries* (1935, reprinted 1970), p. 65 and plates III and IV.

¹² *MMBL*, IV, 488, referring to Somerset RO (Taunton), DD/SAS C/1193/66. Another manuscript was being used by a Bath provisioner to wrap butter, cheese, and other foods as late as the 1860s: *MMBL*, II, 223.

¹³ For the distribution of literature to provincial households in the later Middle Ages, see A. I. Doyle in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne (New York, 1983), pp. 163–81; for historical interests among the aristocracy, see R. F. Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1980), pp. 135–42.

¹⁴ *MMBL*, I, 88, referring to Inner Temple Lib., MS 511.19.

1550s, historical works as a whole constituted only a tiny fraction of the output of printers, even of those specifically interested in history, like Caxton; and among the many different types of work claiming to be “historical,” allegorical, didactic works like the ancient *Gesta Romanorum* or *The Seven Wise Masters of Rome*, and vernacular romances such as *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Southampton* clearly surpassed the chronicles in popularity. Nevertheless, under the stimulus of a revival of chivalric values under Edward IV and Henry VIII, a steady trickle appeared of editions of medieval chronicles hitherto available only in manuscript, accompanied by translations such as Lord Berners’ of Froissart (1523–25) and an English life of Henry V (1513) by an anonymous author claiming to “translate” Titus Livius Frulovisi’s fifteenth-century *Vita Henrici Quinti*.¹⁵ The *Brut* was published in 1480 and again in 1482, with four more editions before 1500 and seven others over ensuing decades, and manuscripts of this, like the *Polychronicon*, circulated throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁶ Caxton himself commented on the increasing availability of chronicles as early as 1480, noting that “in many and diverse places the comyn cronicles of england ben had and also now late enprinted at Westmynstre.”¹⁷ The next step was the production of chronicles specifically for the press, initially in the form of updating existing ones. Although Caxton contributed little of his own material to the *Brut*, it soon became known as “Caxton’s Chronicle.”¹⁸ He added an eighth book to the *Polychronicon* in 1482, “to thentente that such thynges as have ben don syth the deth or ende of the sayd boke of polychronicon shold be had in remembraunce and not putte in oblyvyon ne forgetyng.” Successive printers of Fabyan’s chronicle similarly brought that work forward in time at every edition until early in Elizabeth’s reign.¹⁹

A further by-product of the printing of chronicles was the creation, really for the first time in England, of a public identity for the chronicler. This is

¹⁵ A second edition of Berners’ translation appeared in 1545, and an epitome of it in 1608; *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1911). A new Latin life was written in the 1570s by Robert Redmayne: *Memorials of Henry the Fifth*, ed. C. A. Cole, Rolls Series (1858), pp. 3–59; R. R. Reid, “The Date and Authorship of Redmayne’s Life of Henry V,” *English Historical Review*, 30 (1915), 691–98.

¹⁶ Syon College acquired a fifteenth-century English version in the mid-seventeenth century: *MMBL*, I, 289–90.

¹⁷ Caxton, *The Chronicles of England* (1480 *et seq.*). E. Gordon Duff, *Fifteenth-Century English Books* (Bibliographical Society, Oxford, 1917), nos. 97–102. Other editions were published by Caxton’s apprentice, Wynkyn de Worde, and by alien rivals in London and St. Albans, such as the Frenchman Julian Notary and the Fleming William de Machinlia: E. J. Worman, *Alien Members of the Book Trade* (1906); E. Gordon Duff, *Wynkyn de Worde and his Contemporaries* (1925).

¹⁸ Stow pointed out in the 1590s that “Caxton’s Chronicle” had in fact acquired that name only because Caxton had printed it: Kingsford, *English Historical Literature* (Oxford, 1913), p. 137.

¹⁹ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. Caxton (1482), fo. 449r. The several continuations of Fabyan in 1516, 1533, 1542, and 1559 are reproduced in Ellis’ edition of 1811.

signified in the practice, standard from this time, of identifying individual chronicles as the work of an author: “Caxton’s Chronicle” and “Fabyan’s Chronicle,” then “Hall’s Chronicle,” “Holinshed’s Chronicle[s],” and finally, in the seventeenth century, “Baker’s Chronicle” join European favorites like “Carion’s Chronicle” as standard citations in marginal glosses and references to history reading. As polemic and argumentation increased with the confessional and dynastic quarrels of the day, so the shoulder of an author’s printed name in the margins was increasingly put to the wheel of argument.²⁰ The identity of many medieval chroniclers had of course been known for some time (even if attributions were wrong), but the authors remained shadowy figures compared with knowledge of ancient historians, who had generally been more notable figures. The publication of chronicles in general would serve to promote the identification of particular chronicles with their authors, whether or not they were in print. An early anticipation of the engraved or woodcut authorial portraits in histories of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can be found in the peculiar decision of one sixteenth-century reader, in possession of a late fifteenth-century manuscript of Hardyng’s chronicle, to supply an author’s portrait for his book (pl. 1.1). Since no likeness of Hardyng himself was at hand, the owner pasted in a woodcut by Lucas Cranach the younger of a German prince, decoratively colored for the purpose and with invented coats of arms superimposed, together with the legend “The portrature of John Harding: maker of these chronicles.”²¹

ADAPTING TO CHANGE: THE TUDOR CHRONICLE

At this stage in its relations with print, the chronicle was still a thriving genre whose individual examples were subject to editorial modification by author/printers attempting to keep them current. About 1530 the lawyer and

²⁰ For the early development of reference to authority in early modern historical texts, see Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: a Curious History* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), especially ch. 6.

²¹ Bodl. MS Ashm. 34 (Hardyng’s chronicle), facing fo. 1r. The MS was purchased for twenty shillings in 1604, probably with the portrait already in it, by Peter Fanwood (see note at fo. 177v). For description of the Hardyng MS and identification of the portrait, see the handwritten annotations to W. H. Black, *A Descriptive, Analytical and Critical Catalogue of the Manuscripts bequeathed to the University of Oxford by Elias Ashmole* (Oxford, 1845) in Duke Humfrey’s library, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Plate 1.1 (*opposite*) An early example of an authorial image, in this case contrived: “The portrature of John Harding: maker of these chronicles.” The illustration in fact is a colored woodcut by Lucas Cranach the younger portraying George the Pious, prince of Anhalt, from the latter’s *Conciones et scripta* (Wittenberg, 1520).



printer, John Rastell, compiled and printed a completely new chronicle, *The pastyme of people*.²² Robert Wyer probably compiled the short chronicle, distilled from *Brut* and Lydgate, which he printed some time before 1535.²³ Short chronicles such as these enjoyed some popularity until the mid-sixteenth century,²⁴ but the production of larger works for the press would peak under Elizabeth in the activities of the prodigious printer and chronicler Richard Grafton and in the even better-known works of John Stow. The consequence of all these developments was to make the chronicle more widely accessible than it had ever been or would be again. Paradoxically, this very accessibility may also have contributed to its demise.

The structure of the chronicle had proved remarkably resistant to change over the centuries. Typography replaced the illumination with the woodcut, the roll with the folio or quarto page, but little else changed in the form in which chronicles were written, at least until the mid-Tudor period. Typical entries almost always record a miscellany of events under a given year. Some merely list these events; others offer some elaboration, perhaps even occasional references backwards or forwards to other events. Charles Wriothesley appended his own chronicle for Henry VIII's reign to a paraphrase of that of Richard Arnold for the reign of Henry VII, published in 1502 and 1521 and often known as *The Customes of London*. Arnold in turn had taken the early portions of his account from a manuscript chronicle that survives in the British Library.²⁵ A few entries give some idea of the flavor of Wriothesley's work and of such annals in general:

Henrici VII. Anno 5.

This yeare Creplegate was new made, and E. Francke and other put to death.

Henrici VII. Anno 6.

This yeare, in June, Kinge Henrie the Eight was borne at Greenewich, which was second sonne to King Henry the VIIth, named Duke of Yorke. Sir Robert Chamberlayne beheaded. A conduit begun at Christ Church.²⁶

²² John Rastell, *The pastyme of people. The cronycles of dyvers realmes and most specyally of Englund compyled & empynted* (ca. 1530).

²³ [Robert Wyer], *The Cronycle begynnynge at the vii ages of the worlde with the comynge of Brute & the reygne of all the kynges* (n.d., but pre-1535); see STC 9984; F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, CA, 1967), p. 25.

²⁴ See, for example: J. Byddell (printer), *A short cronycle, wherein is mencioned all names of all the kings* (1539); J. Judson (printer), *A cronicle of years, wherein ye shall find the names of all the kings* (ca. 1552), a work which ends with a list of the principal roads of England; and an anonymous broadsheet, *The cronycle of all the kynges, syth Wyllyam Conqueroure* (ca. 1590).²⁵ BL MS Cott. Jul. B I.

²⁶ *Wriothesley's Chronicle*, ed. W. D. Hamilton Camden Soc., n.s. XI, XX (2 vols., 1875–77), I, 2. Compare these entries with Arnold, *The Customs of London, otherwise called Arnold's Chronicle*, ed. F. Douce (1811), p. xxxviii. The section of Arnold that is specifically historical runs only from p. xix to p. liii, with the annals increasing substantially in length from 1499. The remaining nine-tenths of the volume contains charters, customs, and various documents concerning the city, with incidental reference to national politics and ecclesiastical matters.

In each annal, events of national importance are accorded no more significance than those of purely local interest. In the entry for 1491–92, Wriothesley is able to describe the birth of a royal child who by his own time had indeed become king; he thus exploits hindsight to see in the event more than it could have signified at the time that Henry, a second son, had been born, and thereby adds a detail absent in Arnold's annal for the same year.²⁷ But there is no attempt to relate any of these events one to another, no evidence that either Wriothesley or Arnold perceived these events as anything other than interesting, discrete occurrences related solely by chronology. To read either work, the only event of any importance to occur in 1498 was the repairing of the weathercock, cross, and bowl of St. Paul's in December and their solemn hallowing and reattachment six months later.²⁸ Only when these writers came to compose their own annals for the very recent past do their entries begin to fill out and gain value as independent sources.

Entries in the latest surviving monastic chronicles, those of Thornton Abbey (1139–1526) and Butley Priory (1509–35), are a little fuller.²⁹ One of the last monastic chronicles to be written in England, that of the Grey Friars of Newgate, began in the late fifteenth century and survived the dissolution of the house in 1538 only to expire in 1556. Commencing in 1189, it is virtually indistinguishable from a London chronicle, and scarcely less parochial:

xxii Ao. This yere was chosyn [sheriff] by the citte one Jonson a goldesmythe, and he made hys fest; but within iiii dayes he was dyschargyd at the commandment of the kyng, and William Fitzwilliam chosyn, and so kepte alle the hole yere, and the other toke soche a thowthe [*sic*] that he dyde. Item the bakeres howse in Warwyke lane burnyd. And twelve herynges a jd. And a gally burnyd at Hamton.³⁰

The same chronicle's entry for 1536 reports on the rebellions in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire; that for the following year, however, is concerned with the murder of a mercer in Cheapside and the mayoral proclamation promising a reward for the capture of the killer. The executions of Thomas More

²⁷ *Arnold's Chronicle*, p. xxxviii. The bringing of such hindsight to annal entries is not uncommon and provides a reminder that the date of entry generally lagged behind the date of the event, often by several years. A similar example can be found in the chronicle of Lynn where again the chronicler records "And in this yere Kyng henrye the VIIIth was borne": Flenley, *Six Town Chronicles* (Oxford, 1911), p. 187, from Bodl. MS Top. Norfolk c.2.

²⁸ *Wriothesley's Chronicle*, I, 3; *Arnold's Chronicle*, p. xxxix.

²⁹ *Historia abbatiae sive monasterii de Thornton super Humbriam in comitatu Lincoln*, Bodl. MS Tanner 166, fos. 4r–20r; this was used by Wharton in the late seventeenth century as the text for his collection *Anglia Sacra*, as was the mid-sixteenth century chronicle of Lichfield, *Chronicon Lichfeldensis Ecclesiae*, in BL MS Cott. Vesp. E.xvi, art 2, fos. 26–37, annotated in the late sixteenth century by John Stow (fo. 29v) and Thomas Talbot (fos. 46–7).

³⁰ *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London* ed. J. G. Nichols, Camden Soc. original series 53 (1852), p. 29.

and Anne Boleyn, in 1535 and 1536, are mentioned in passing without elaboration.³¹

Like Wriothesley's lay chronicle, the Grey Friars' annals were not written for publication, so it is not surprising that they are somewhat more simple than some published chronicles of about the same date. The surprising thing is that many of those that *were* written expressly for the press are hardly more polished or sophisticated, while their form of presentation is little different; the authors of the newer chronicles, like most printers and readers, did not at first grasp that print was more than simply a fast method of replicating manuscripts. When Thomas Lanquet died in 1545 at the age of twenty-four, he left his *Epitome of Cronicles* completed only to the birth of Christ. It remained for Thomas Cooper (d. 1594), later the bishop of Winchester, to complete the work and publish it. The preface makes it clear that Cooper was not simply engaged in an amusing pastime. He intended this book, complete with an index and a healthy dose of protestant polemic, for the public. So did Robert Crowley, who published a pirated version and forced Cooper into producing a second edition of his own. Even with a wider audience, Cooper remained true to the rudimentary annals of Lanquet's book:

[AD 1399] 5360/5339

A great noubre of people in Fraunce, were vexed and dyed of the plague Ipedimie. A blasing sterre was sene at the same tyme wyth beames of most fervent fire. Henrye the .iiii was ordeyned kynge of Englande more by force, as it appeared, than by lawful succession or election, which thing turned him to muche unquietnesse, & caused often rebellion in this realme[.] of courage he was noble and valiant, and after the civil warres was appeased, shewed him selfe very gentil and lovinge to his subjectes. Henrie his sonne was made prince of Wales.³²

Richard Grafton, who had experienced success with his editions of Hall (1548, 1550, 1552) and the metrical chronicle by John Hardyng (1543), which he continued to the year 1509, published his own *Chronicle at Large* in 1569, in order to correct what he believed to be gross errors in Cooper's work. Only one edition of this exists, and it was alone among Grafton's works in failing to be reprinted. Grafton may have found that this relatively large volume could not compete in popularity with the various abridgments of the chronicles that he published between 1562 and 1576, works of the same shape and size as Cooper's *Epitome*.

For most readers, at least until the latter part of Elizabeth I's reign, accounts such as Cooper's proved adequate. In the citizen's perception of the unfolding of events, each occurrence held some significance, and each was

³¹ This is sometimes considered the last monastic chronicle written in England but later chronicles by Catholic authors and members of religious orders on mission in England, occur, often in Latin, well into the seventeenth and even eighteenth centuries.

³² Thomas Lanquet (ed. Cooper), *Epitome of cronicles* (1549; 2nd edn, 1559), fo. 250v.

equally comprehensible in terms of the will of God. Indeed, this last point was so obvious to contemporaries that it needed little in the way of a formal statement; few chroniclers bothered to make explicit the providential aspect of all but the most wonderful or strange events. Nowadays we pay attention each day to national events, local occurrences, and to matters that involve our immediate circle of friends and relatives. The difference is that these are not usually recorded together: even the daily newspaper is divided into world, national, and local sections, thereby dissecting and prearranging our perception of experience by reducing it into discrete categories of varying significance.³³ The town chronicler of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries shaped his reader's perception in a different way: he wrote a kind of civic commonplace book in which the entire spectrum of urban experience was represented as a whole, precisely as the monastic chronicler of early centuries had done. Robert Fabyan (d. 1513) divided his *New Chronicles*, the primary vehicle through which Hall and Holinshed received the London chronicles, into seven books, not to represent a variety of topics in a logical arrangement, but to symbolize the Seven Joys of the Virgin Mary, whose cult was particularly important in pre-reformation London. Earlier chroniclers had, of course, often adopted this seven-book arrangement to reflect the Seven Ages of Man or the Seven Days of Creation; such strategies for the periodization of history endured well into the sixteenth century. Fabyan's chronicle, unlike the *Great Chronicle of London*, which may also be by him,³⁴ was not specifically written about the city, though Fabyan, a prominent citizen who had been sheriff in 1493, could not resist according London pride of place in his accounts of events.

THE TUDOR CHRONICLE: FRIENDS AND FOES

As a vendible genre, designed for public consumption rather than for institutional or corporate record-keeping, the Tudor chronicle was at the whim of a market that was to prove both soft and short-lived. Peaking at mid-century, the market had largely been glutted by 1600. The new chronicles were often the creation of the printers, who kept supply in close proximity to demand, and whose marketing strategies anticipate the newspapers' appeal to novelty and currency a century and a half later – a resemblance that we shall shortly find to have been hereditary rather than accidental. The production of such

³³ On seventeenth-century news and its shaping of perceptions of reality see C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: cultural dynamics of daily information* (New York, 1996).

³⁴ *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (1938), introduction, pp. xli–xlvi, lxx–lxxvi; Robert Fabyan, *New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. Henry Ellis (1811). This was first published by Thomas Pynson in 1516 without Fabyan's name, which first appears in Rastell's 1533 edition.

chronicles began with Caxton's claim that his edition of Higden was a "new chronicle"; it continued with Richard Pynson's retitling of Fabyan's chronicle (originally a "Concordance of Histories") as *New Chronicles*, and with private works, not designed for publication, such as William Latymer's "briefe cronickille" of Anne Boleyn, which is a biography rather than a chronicle.³⁵ It had almost entirely ceased by the mid-seventeenth century, with some significant exceptions that will be described later.

As late as 1569, the chronicle still seemed to the English writer to be the most appropriate, indeed the only, available vehicle for the written representation of history. Grafton could conclude his *Chronicle at Large* in that year with an apology for his "rude and unlearned woorke, not worthye the name of a Chronicle."³⁶ The word "chronicle" itself remained in common parlance as a useful generic term for any historical writing, long after the writing of genuine chronicles had ceased. It was possible to use the word in such a way without pejorative associations, for example as the physical embodiment of the collective human memory.

Let me embrace thee, good old chronicle,
That hast so long walk'd hand in hand with time.

Thus Hector greets the venerable Nestor in *Troilus and Cressida* (IV, v, 202). Among the men met by a speaker in an anonymous Jacobean dialogue is one "so old that I should have had a Chronicle, to answer him."³⁷

At its peak in the later sixteenth century, the chronicle's popularity extended down to the lower levels of the literate. The Devon yeoman Robert Furse, in his family record book, advised his children to read and hear scripture, be familiar with the laws of the realm, and to "have to rede the old crownekeles and shuch like awnshyente hystoriese rememburyng yt ys a commone saynge yt is a shame for a man to be ignorante of that whyche he ofte to knowe."³⁸ The chronicle provided the most basic kind of record of the past, and it had a divinely inspired archetype in the middle books of the Old Testament, two of which were indeed called "chronicles." Thus when William Fulke described King David to his congregation in 1581 he pointed out that the king's "chronicle" was blotted with sins such as Uriah's death.³⁹ In addition to recording a man's evil deeds, a chronicle could record his great ones, too, the inclusion of which in a chronicle could guarantee immortality. So Mortimer promises the prospective killer of Piers Gaveston in Marlowe's *Edward II*:

³⁵ M. Dowling (ed.), "William Latymer's Cronickille of Anne Bulleyne," *Camden Miscellany*, 30 (Camden Soc., 4th series 39, 1990), 23–65.

³⁶ *Grafton's Chronicle* (2 vols., 1809), II, 567.

³⁷ Anon., *Choice, chance and change* (1606), sig. D4.

³⁸ H. J. Carpenter, "Furse of Moreshead: a Family Record of the Sixteenth Century," *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 26 (1894), 168–84, p. 172.

³⁹ William Fulke, *A godly and learned sermon* (1581), p. 55.

And in the chronicle enroll his name
For purging of the realm of such a plague!⁴⁰

The puritan clergyman Stephen Marshall, preaching to the Long Parliament, warned MPs to act so that “the generations to come, and future chroniclers” would look back on their age as one of piety and reformation.⁴¹

Nor was the distinction between histories on the one hand and chronicles or annals on the other as firm as it might seem, though some historians protested their superiority. Godfrey Goodman refers with reverence to the “chronicle” of Elizabeth’s reign by “my most deare and loving schoolemaster, Mr. William Camden, now Clarenceux, the famous and most renowned Antiquarie of our age.”⁴² In his *A treatise and discourse of the lawes of the forest*, John Manwood uses chronicles frequently as a blanket term for all historical works, though at one point he makes a threefold distinction between “chronicles, histories [and] record.”⁴³ Gervase Markham’s encomium on the earls of Southampton, Oxford, and Essex urges the reader to “let their chronicles furnish thy best libraries.”⁴⁴ Walter Owsolde played upon the association of history with ballads and other types of fiction to distinguish between “histories . . . containing the amorous discourses of young gallants, with the lives of their enamoured mistresses” and “chronicles, declaring the famous and worthy acts of valiant captaines, and famous governors, with the changes and alterations of former times.”⁴⁵ Here, not for the last time, was new history identified with romance, myth, and imagination, old chronicle with truth and the hard facts of reality.

Many of these comments date from the seventeenth century. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, remarks on the insufficiency of the chronicles, or their lack of style, were becoming modish, particularly among those who believed that they themselves could write with greater eloquence or erudition. Polydore Vergil, the Italian emigré whose *Anglica historia* was the first full-length humanist-style history to be written in England, was no help as a model since he had long been a subject of derision for having raised doubts about the historicity of Brutus the Trojan and the ancient kings described by Geoffrey of Monmouth; most Elizabethans did not, in any case,

⁴⁰ Marlowe, *Edward II*, scene IV, lines 269–70.

⁴¹ Stephen Marshall, *A sermon preached to the honorable house of Commons*, 26 January 1648 (published 1647/8), pp. 15–16; facsimile in *The English Revolution: Fast Sermons*, ed. R. Jeffs, 30 (1972), p. 110.

⁴² Godfrey Goodman, *The fall of man* (1616), p. 366; the first part of Camden’s *Annales* had appeared, in Latin, a year earlier.

⁴³ John Manwood, *A treatise and discourse of the lawes of the forest* (1598), fo. 5v.

⁴⁴ Gervase Markham, *Honour in his perfection* (1624), p. 8; cf. Markham and Lewis Machin’s play *The dumbe knight* (1608), where one of the characters refers to the sun, the witness of his deeds, as “Joves great chronicler” (sig. B2) and another boasts that fame will “chronicle mine enterprise” (sig. Hv).

⁴⁵ Walter Owsolde, *The varietie of memorable and worthy matters* (1605), “To the curious reader.”

recognize that Vergil's work was not a chronicle at all, since the word was still virtually synonymous with "history." Bishop Francis Godwin proclaimed in 1616 the inadequacies of the *Anglica historia* and his desire for a new national history, something he shared with his contemporary, Francis Bacon.⁴⁶ A dozen years later, when Vergil's name was introduced in the House of Commons to support Cambridge's claim to greater antiquity than Oxford, the Oxonian alumnus Edward Littleton showed his contempt for such a witness: "What have we to do with Polydore Vergil? One Vergil was a poet, the other a liar." Edwin Sandys and Dudley Digges both objected to using chronicles as sources for parliamentary speeches (though Digges, for one, seems to have done so quite regularly). Sandys, weighing the respective values of chronicles and law books as sources of precedent, thought "chronicle precedent . . . no better than chronicle law". He was immediately echoed by Digges' declaration "that many things in the chronicles [are] very untrue."⁴⁷ Outside Westminster, Edmund Howes, a Welshman who was reluctant to abandon the Galfridian inheritance, thought Vergil had been too critical of the ancient histories, "and himselfe deserveth to bee rejected for his many fabulous narrations"; Henry Peacham repeated the long-standing rumor that Vergil had hoarded and exported out of England many crucial documents, thereby making correction of his errors difficult.⁴⁸

None of this criticism of Polydore Vergil need be taken as an implicit criticism of chronicles as a genre. Howes and Peacham clearly thought they were defending English historical writers against a foreign interloper, while lawyers and parliamentarians such as Digges, Sandys, and Sir Edward Coke wished principally to enforce a distinction between documents with the status of official records and those that had not, a point often overlooked by non-lawyers.⁴⁹ Littleton, apparently despising Vergil, had himself announced

⁴⁶ Francis Godwin, *Annales of England*, trans. Morgan Godwin (1630), sig. A2r; Bacon, *Letters and Life* (7 vols., 1861–74), III, 90–99. For a review of contemporary (and modern) critiques of the chronicles, see Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, ch. 1. The call for a new national history to replace inadequate, partisan, or outdated ones, including the chronicles, was taken up again in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by later critics of the chronicles such as Sir William Temple and Laurence Echard, but with no more success: Philip Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture from Clarendon to Hume* (New York, 1996), *passim*; Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books* (Ithaca, NY, 1991).

⁴⁷ *Commons Debates, 1628*, ed. Mary Frear Keeler, Maija Jansson Cole, and William B. Bidwell (New Haven and London, 1977–83), IV, 42 (31 May 1628); *Proceedings in Parliament (House of Commons), 1614*, ed. M. Jansson (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 356, 358. On the objection of Sir Edward Coke and other lawyers to the use of chronicles as sources of law, see D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and the "Light of Truth" from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto, 1990), pp. 27–8.

⁴⁸ Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman*, 3rd edn (1634), p. 51.

⁴⁹ Thus the historian and polemicist Peter Heylyn was reminded of the distinctive status of records by one of his correspondents in the 1650s. Herts RO, XII.A.45, Nathan Donbavand to Heylyn, 29 September 1658, specifically cites Coke's argument in the *Institutes*. On the other hand, chronicles provided extremely useful sources of precedent, albeit (as Littleton had

before the Commons barely six weeks earlier that he held Matthew Paris to be “an author of special credit.”⁵⁰

More dangerous objections to the chronicle as a form of historical writing would come from other quarters, in particular from humanist-trained Elizabethan and Jacobean historical writers, beginning with Sir Henry Savile’s famous blanket denunciation of medieval historiography in the 1590s.⁵¹ Philip Hicks has aptly summarized the humanist position on the chronicle as “a useless jumble of disconnected facts and fictions, written in bad Latin by superstitious monks.”⁵² The insufficiency of the Elizabethan chronicles offered one of the very few issues on which the classically minded Gabriel Harvey found himself in agreement with his archenemy, Thomas Nashe. Annotating his copy of Livy’s *Romanae Historiae Principis*, probably in 1590, Harvey wondered whether a British Livy, Tacitus, or Frontinus would emerge while complaining of the “many asses who dare to compile histories, chronicles, annals, commentaries.” These include “Grafton, Stow, Holinshed, and a few others like them who are not cognizant of law or politics, nor of the art of depicting character, nor are they in any way learned.”⁵³ The anonymous author of the continuation of William Martyn’s *History of the Kings of England* exploited the annals of John Stow, while attacking chroniclers as a group – “not the learnedst generation among us” – and preferring to any English account of the later sixteenth century the elegant Latin of Jacques-Auguste de Thou’s *Historia sui temporis*.⁵⁴ The minor verse historian Charles Aleyn, perhaps conscious of the weakness of his own claim to historical veracity, dismissed the chronicle accounts of Henry VII’s defeat of the earl of Lincoln’s rising as a superficial list of events:

Chronicles doe it so lamely tell
As if twere sayd, they came, they fought, they fell.⁵⁵

Most of all, it was easy to poke fun at the reliability of the chronicler by exposing the very disagreement of the sources on which he based his account and his failure to reconcile them. The learned Lord Chancellor Ellesmere refused to cite evidence from Richard II’s reign during the debate on the case

pointed out) without standing at law. The genealogical evidences of William Seymour, marquis of Hertford and duke of Somerset in the mid-seventeenth century, including his descent from the family of Grey, contain numerous references to Hall, Fabian, and Holinshed: Hist. MSS Comm., *Bath Longleat MSS*, IV (Seymour papers), 215.

⁵⁰ *Commons Debates*, 1628, II, 335 (7 April 1628).

⁵¹ Henry Savile, *Scriptores post Bedam*, preface; BL MS Harl. 6521, fo. 137.

⁵² Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture*, p. 24.

⁵³ Virginia F. Stern, *Gabriel Harvey: his Life, Marginalia and Library* (Oxford, 1979), p. 152. Stern dates this remark to 1580, but Harvey’s reference to Camden and Hakluyt in the same passage make the later date more likely.

⁵⁴ William Martyn, *The historie of the kings of England since the conquest* (2nd edn, 1638), p. 376.

⁵⁵ Charles Aleyn, *The historie of that wise prince, Henrie the seventh* (1638). Aleyn presumably did not include his principal source, Bacon’s *Henry the Seventh*, in this number.

of the post-nati in 1608, because “some of our chroniclers doe talke idely [of it] and understand little.” And in Jonson’s *News from the New World*, already cited, the chronicler despairs of being able to write the truth. “I have been so cheated with false relations in my time, as I have found it a harder thing to correct my book than to collect it.”⁵⁶ In the Putney debates of October 1647, the Leveller John Wildman, in making his argument that “Our very laws were made by our conquerors,” would even turn the traditional charge of excessive inclusivity upside down, into one of class-biased selectivity. “Whereas it’s spoken much of chronicles, I conceive there is no credit to be given to any of them; and the reason is because those that were our lords, and made us their vassals, would suffer nothing else to be chronicled.”⁵⁷

PARASITE GENRES

Ironically, the very instrument that had given the chronicle its widest readership, the printing press, also contributed in different ways to its “genocide.” By making the chronicle, and with it the facts of the past, a common intellectual currency, the press rendered possible the development of other genres. These clearly derived from the chronicle but were much more able to meet the public demand whether because more readable, cheaper, or more novel. I shall call them, for want of a more accurate phrase, “parasite genres,” a term that reflects both their feeding upon a chronicle host and, in the case of one of them – the “chronicle play” – an inability to survive once that host had withered away. The “parasite” historical genres began to flourish from the middle of the sixteenth century, and drew much of their material from the chronicle. They soon proved better able to satisfy public interest in history, with the result that the chronicle itself was soon made redundant.

The functions of any medieval chronicle had variously included the narration of past history, the presentation of information, the communication of news, the commemoration of great events and preservation of documents, and the entertainment of the reader. These functions passed in the Elizabethan and early Stuart period to the newer genres. In short, the chronicle did not so much decay as *dissolve* into a variety of genres such as almanacs (informative); newsbooks, diurnals, and finally newspapers (communicative); antiquarian treatises and classically modeled humanist histories (historical), diaries, biographies and autobiographies (commemorative) and historical drama, verse and prose fiction (entertaining), a process depicted graphically in fig. 1.1.

⁵⁶ Ben Jonson, VII, 515.

⁵⁷ G. E. Aylmer, *The Levellers in the English Revolution* (1975), p. 109.

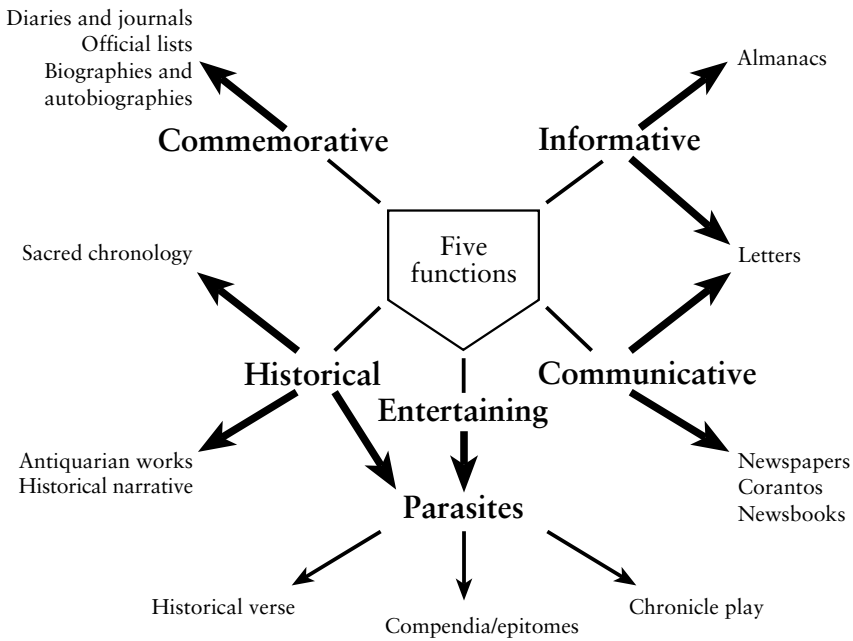


Figure 1.1 The dissolution of the chronicle: five functions and their descendent genres.

The most obvious consequence of the advent of print was to rob the chronicle, now perceived as a public rather than private record of the past,⁵⁸ of its function as the recorder and communicator of recent events, that is, as a medium of what would soon become the realm of news. Pre-typographic cultures depend upon a variety of media for the transmission of events from the human voice to the letter to the manuscript. All are slow in comparison with print, just as print itself cannot compete with the electronic media that today have made possible almost instantaneous communication over thousands of miles. One of the most important changes wrought by movable type was the speed at which information could be stored, reproduced, and transmitted quickly to a wide audience; the Tudor manipulation of the press for political purposes shows that contemporaries could exploit this phenomenon even if they did not yet fully understand its significance. But this Promethean innovation had one major limitation that has not changed much in half a millennium: the speed at which a book can be produced

⁵⁸ The mining of the chronicle for political purposes, and more important the public acknowledgment of this, may be said to have begun with the famous preamble to the 1533 Act of Appeals, which draws authority from “divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles.”

depends very much on the type of book, its typographical complexity, and its format and size.

The chronicler had never been the primary reporter of news; manuscript newsletters had circulated as early as the twelfth century and, together with oral communication, were certainly more important in this regard. But the chronicle had also enjoyed a special relationship with other forms of news, the newsletter among them, and this relationship had been symbiotic rather than competitive. Readers had included newsletters within the same manuscript volumes as extracts of annals, and chroniclers had themselves borrowed from newsletters and documents supplied by the crown while taking many other facts from the mouths of witnesses deemed reliable: the sharp increase in Scottish material in English chronicles after 1296 almost certainly derives from information supplied by a combination of these sources.⁵⁹

There is a late recognition of the connection between news and the chronicle in John Donne's fourth *Satyre*, whose narrator's strange companion is a conflation of chronicler and gossip monger, connected by their common fixation on the trivial:

More then ten Hollensheads, or Halls, or Stowes,
Of triviall household trash he knowes; He knowes
When the Queen frown'd, or smil'd, and he knowes what
A subtle States-man may gather of that;
He knowes who loves; whom; and who by poyson
Hasts to an Offices reversion.⁶⁰

But by the time Donne wrote these lines, a few years before the advent of the 1620s newsbooks, the link between the chronicle and news was already coming apart, something more obvious a few years later in Jonson's very clear distinction between newsman and chronicler in *News from the New World*. The growing detachment of news from history in the half-century leading up to the 1640s thus had a direct impact on at least one of the chronicle's major social functions. In comparison with almanacs, manuscript newsletters, and eventually the printed newspaper, the chronicle was too

⁵⁹ D. W. Burton, "1264: Some New Documents," *Historical Research*, 66 (1993), 317–28 includes a contemporary newsletter about the battle of Lewes, in a fourteenth-century volume that also includes William of Malmesbury's *Gesta pontificum*; J. R. Maddicott, "The Mise of Lewes, 1264," *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983), 588–603, especially 592–93, 602–3; C. A. J. Armstrong, "Some Examples of the Distribution of News in England at the Time of the Wars of the Roses," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*, ed. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin, and R. W. Southern (Oxford, 1948), pp. 429–54; *The Anonimale Chronicle, 1333–1381*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester, 1927), p. xxxiv f.; Lionel Stones, "English Chroniclers and the Affairs of Scotland, 1286–1296," in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 323–48, especially p. 337–39.

⁶⁰ Donne, *Satyres*, IV, 97–102, in *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. W. Milgate (Oxford, 1967), p. 17. This passage follows by a few lines a similar dismissal as "base, Mechanique, coarse" the man who "keeps the Abbey tombes, / And for his price doth with who ever comes, / Of all our Harries, and our Edwards talke": *ibid.*, lines 75–7.

bulky, too long in the press and too expensive to keep up, either in speed or volume, with the various genres created by print. By the time a chronicler such as Stow had recorded a contemporary event it was already well known; by the time it passed through the press and reached the bookseller it was no longer news but history. And history, as the early Stuart historians well knew, was neither very safely nor truthfully written about contemporary events – as one seventeenth-century commentator would remark in 1648, “Writing your Kings’ chronicles in their life time . . . is a doctrine of Devils.”⁶¹

It is thus no accident at all that the virtual end of chronicle publication in England (rare anomalies like Sir Richard Baker’s *Chronicle* aside) with the Jacobean and Caroline reprints of Stow, coincided with the first wave of corantos and newsbooks. The chronicler could no longer claim to be the primary or even an effective recorder of the events of the present, since the very notion of the “present” and the universe of literary genres used to represent it had changed. At best he could record the recent past, and that only in year-long periods that were simply too long for a reading culture by now adjusting itself to shorter-term change. Eventually, the weekly newsbook would give way to the dailies for similar reasons. The cavalier poet John Cleveland made the nature of the relationship between newsbook and chronicle explicit in a satire, first printed in 1643, of parliamentary (though not royalist) newsbooks:

A *Diurnall* is a puny chronicle, scarce pin-feather’d with the wings of time. It is an Historie in Sippets [*sic*]; the English *Iliads* in a Nut-shell; the *Apocryphall* Parliaments book of *Maccabees* in single sheets. It would tire a Welch-pedigree, to reckon how many aps [*sic*] ’tis remov’d from an Annall. For it is of that Extract: onely of the younger House, like a Shrimp to a Lobster.⁶²

The modern newspaper’s distant antecedents are betrayed in the number of newspapers which today call themselves “chronicles,” but in the early days of the Restoration newspaper the resemblance lay in more than a name. James Sutherland has remarked on the amount of news about ghosts, storms, fires and floods, monsters and omens that appear in Restoration papers such as Thomas Benskin’s *Domestick Intelligence* – the same sorts of information now deemed too trivial for history, and for which the chroniclers had been

⁶¹ Anon., *The Kingdomes Briefe Answer, to the Late Declaration of the House of Commons, Feb. 11, 1647* (1648), BL Thomason Tracts E 431 (9), cited in A. J. Bellany, “The Poisoning of Legitimacy? Court Scandal, News Culture and Politics in England” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1995), 702. On the strictures against “contemporary” history and its eruption after 1640, see Woolf, *Idea of History*, ch. 8.

⁶² John Cleveland, *The Character of a London-diurnall* (1647: Wing C4664), p. 1. The manuscript newsletter proved more durable, however, because its recipients liked being part of a select audience and presumed that the sources of their newsletters were often better informed than the public press.

attacked.⁶³ Even in the 1720s and 1730s, with monsters and prodigies giving way increasingly to scandals and criminals, a sensational element remained that points ahead to the supermarket tabloid. There is a further resemblance between the chronicle and the weekly newsbooks of the Augustan era, and that lies in the manner in which material was frequently digested for the benefit of the reader. Here, the comprehensiveness of the chronicle, with its set of regular year entries, seemed to offer as sensible a solution as any. In the *Grub-Street Journal* of the 1730s, for example, advertisements jostle for place with daily summaries of the previous weeks' news, mainly digested from daily papers, and arranged diurnally in much the same way as a Tudor printer/chronicler like Grafton or Holinshed would have arranged his material under years.⁶⁴

The development of the diary as a popular form of self-expression in the later sixteenth and especially in the seventeenth centuries reflects a parallel adjustment of literary form to temporal perception, once more at the expense of the chronicle. The chronicle had always been in part a record of the writer's personal experience of recent time, and the perception that meaningful events happened on a day-to-day, rather than year-to-year, schedule required the individual to adjust the timetable according to which he recorded those events. Geoffrey le Baker had found he could record contemporary occurrences in the form of a chronicle in the early fourteenth century, as would the master of Peterhouse, John Warkworth, in the late fifteenth century.⁶⁵ Seventeenth-century diaries offer a marked contrast. Another cleric, Ralph Josselin, would record on a daily basis the events that affected and afflicted his family, together with news from the wider world. The Berkshire diarist Anthony Blagrave, though he was the cousin of the regicide MP, Daniel, made little reference to political events in his own diary, but he registered his personal affairs, travels, incessant bodily ailments, and even moods with an almost tiresome dailiness.⁶⁶

Insofar as it is a record of unfolding events rather than (as in the case of autobiography) a preorganized retrospective, the diary is, like its public sphere counterpart, the newspaper, simply the chronicle literally "brought up to speed" and turned into a medium for capturing individual perceptions of the flow of events, private, local, or national.⁶⁷ The same sorts of entries

⁶³ James Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper and its Development* (Cambridge and New York, 1986), pp. 98–99, 122. On the relations between news and history from the 1640s, see Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641–1649* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 269–313. ⁶⁴ *Grub-Street Journal* (1730), *passim*.

⁶⁵ Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, II, 257–8; *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, Camden Soc., o.s. 10 (1839).

⁶⁶ Bodl. MS Eng. misc. e. 118 (Blagrave diary, 1650–52), fos. 13v–14r, 16r, 20r, 73v–4, 87r–88r.

⁶⁷ On the connection between time consciousness and the diary, especially in the period after the Restoration, see Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form 1660–1785* (Chicago, 1996).