

Questionable Histories
and the Aesthetics of Historiography from Shakespeare to Milton

By

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M.A., University of Pennsylvania, 2014

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English at Brown University

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

May 2023

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This dissertation by Ali Madani is accepted in its present form
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Acknowledgments

This dissertation benefited foremost from the sustained guidance of Karen Newman. I am grateful for her incisive commentary and reliable direction. I thank Richard Rambuss for continuing to point me back to the text. Zachary Lesser modeled how to investigate the materiality of texts and to foreground the role of editors in shaping latter-day assumptions. I thank him for offering me new tools to investigate old texts. My approach to literary criticism likewise has been shaped by the faculties at The University of Pennsylvania, Brown, and Princeton, especially Margreta de Grazia, Paul Guyer, Ania Loomba, Russ Leo, and Peter Stallybrass; and by friends and colleagues at these and other institutions, especially Megan Cook, Devorah Fischler, Claire Grandy, Joan Lubin, Dianne Mitchell, David Nee, and Marissa Nicosia. Sophia van Dyk has lived with this project as long as I have, and I thank her for her patience and care.

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Introduction

In the beginning was story. Myths spun by pre-historic narrators imputed meaning to experience and setting with explanatory plot, action, and actor. Audiences for these narratives gleaned lessons and insights regarding social and political life as well as natural and supernatural worlds. Then, so the story goes, with modernity arrived a sense of secular discernment for the credibility of these accounts of the past. Foundational narratives that had informed and sustained premodern communities shook from the force of skeptical historians tasked with modernizing and revising the national record. So parted story from history, diverging as the project of modernity took hold.

Accounting for the split between the disciplines of literature and history in this simplified manner seems plausible rather than merely reductive in light of explanations influential editors have provided for determining which texts of the English renaissance appearing under the heading ‘history’ truly belong to the category. In the triumphalist version of the twinned arrivals of modernity and secular historiography elaborated by philosophers and critics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Western Europe, playwrights, poets, statesmen, and historians near the end of the sixteenth century registered the shifting *zeitgeist* across a variety of narrative forms: printed stage drama, verse and prose chronicle, and travel narrative, most notably.¹ In England and with Shakespeare in particular, history emerged as a co-equal dramatic genre

¹ For the foundational account of the emergence of historical consciousness in early modernity, see W. G. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bamberg and Würzburg by Joseph Anton Goebhardt, 1807). On Hegel’s conception of history’s self-consciousness ramifying in early modern English literature and criticism, see Margreta de Grazia, “Soliloquies and Wages in the Age of Emergent Consciousness,” in *Textual Practice* 9.1 (1995): 67-92.

alongside the ancient forms of comedy and tragedy. Narrative verses still sung the past but now in keys reserved for fiction. Chronicles, the form typically set in opposition to poetry's fanciful and potentially reckless modes of representing the past, purged the unverifiable to confine itself to the space of the factual.²

This accounting for history's modernization participates in the broader processes of secularization and disenchantment that have come both to instantiate the early modern period as one distinguished from the antecedent medieval and to yoke early modernity to our own late modern present.³ The four centuries that separate the modern present from its origin contain evidence for a progressive narrative of the waxing of rationality, science, and fact in eclipse of superstition, legend, and religion.

Yet these grander narratives, persuasive though they may be, obscure the winding paths of historical change that undermine the straight story certified by editorial decisions in the reproduction of early modern texts.⁴ Those editions of Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, and others, the product of staggering intellectual labor, have achieved a remarkable feat by correcting, annotating, and introducing these works for modern readers. Consequently, generations of editors have made invisible many of the questions concerning the nature of early modern history the following chapters attempt to answer. To see the challenges and possibilities presented by

² For prescriptive accounts of the proper contents of poetic and historical forms in England around the turn of the seventeenth century, see George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007) and Sir Philip Sidney, *Defence of Poesie*, (London: William Ponsonby, 1595).

³ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Methuen, 1971 [1920]), 270.

⁴ On the role of editors in fixing conceptions of early modern texts, see Stephen Orgel, *The Authentic Shakespeare, and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage* (London: Routledge, 2002), David Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (London: Clarendon Press, 1991).

texts lodged in the murky space between history and literature, then, requires that we participate in the critical project of un-editing while also attending to the ideologies regulating historiographical credibility.⁵ This dissertation unites examinations of England's sixteenth and seventeenth-century historiographical standardization with literary-historical texts and genres of the period. Its aim is two-fold. First, this project tracks the unevenness of modernizing historiographical protocols from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. It showcases how ambitious designs for an ideal history purged of unverifiable fancy consistently fell short of stated goals, swaying instead with pull of nationalist and colonial ideologies. Though tainted by inescapable subjectivities, these histories assumed an aura of objectivity with the support of scientism's self-affirming ideological neutrality. As antiquarians, historians, and practitioners of the New Science could all make related claims to be acting as mere collectors of facts, truth claims clung to a secular rubric through which the veracity of events and persons unobservable in the present might be adjudicated. The rise of this new scientism's significance for evaluating and categorizing historiographical narratives, then, afforded an internally coherent logic by which to police the credible borders of the past. Despite claims to the contrary, scientific history could not do without passionate interest any more than those who practiced it.

The antiquarian—obsessed with the past, hunched over dusty records and fragmentary artifacts—was already a figure of satire by the time that Friedrich Nietzsche, in his *Unfashionable Observations*, wrote of antiquarian history as that which preserves and admires,

⁵ On the radical potential of un-editing the renaissance text, see Randall McLeod, "Fiat Flux," in *Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance: Papers Given at the Twenty-Fourth Annual Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto, 4-5 November 1988* (New York: AMS Press, 1994) and Randall McLeod, "Un "Editing" Shak-speare," *SubStance* 10.4 (1981), p. 26.

contrasting it unfavorably with monumental and critical modes of history.⁶ A century later, Frederic Jameson again invoked the notion of antiquarian history, building on Nietzsche to characterize it as something like history without ideology, a “simple” model in which “the past does not have to justify its claim of interest on us.”⁷ For Jameson, antiquarian history refuses the very problem historicisms attempt to solve: that contact with the past always is mediated by ideologies of the imaginary and therefore in need of remedy. Both Nietzsche and Jameson schematize historiographical modes in a manner that reduces antiquarianism to its simple form: compared with other, more ambitious modes, antiquarian history is apolitical, disinterested, empiricist, the antiquarian a collector of bare facts and data.

Arnoldo Momigliano, writing in 1950, offers a modified perspective, defining the antiquary as “a student of the past who is not quite a historian.”⁸ Antiquaries are said to stand apart from the historian’s logic of chronology and explanation; rather than interpreting, they collect and taxonomize. If then antiquarianism might be understood now as a form of historicism that history does not claim and which it often uses as a foil for that which it does claim, it is perhaps unsurprising that as a concept and as a practice it remains relatively untheorized in literary studies. And yet the drive to collect and organize the remains of the past that characterizes antiquarianism is both a persistent historiographic impulse and one that prepares the groundwork for other forms of historiography.⁹ To query the antiquarian’s neutrality in

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, translated by Peter Preuss (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, Inc., 1980 [1874]), 13-14.

⁷ Fredric Jameson, “Marxism and Historicism,” in *New Literary History* 11.1 (1979), 45-46.

⁸ Arnoldo Momigliano, “Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13.3/4 (1950), 286.

⁹ On the antiquarian’s role in cultivating the early modern conception of literature, see Megan L. Cook, *The Poet and the Antiquaries: Chaucerian Scholarship and the Rise of Literary History, 1532-1635* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

amassing and categorizing data, then, permits us to take notice of the unstable foundations subtending our own sense for the credibility of historical information.

The second aim of this project follows from the first by assessing the literary-formal consequences of editors' and readers' evolving sense of history. It is a truism that works of literature are subject to fluctuating tastes across time and cultures; but the means by which we recognize literature *qua* literature analogously lack transhistorical fixity. At what point and by what logic might an account of heroic victory in battle trip from fact to fiction, from record to rhetoric? What metric offers a sufficient historical *imprimatur* to certify the righteousness of early modern conquest and colonization? The uses of history as a tool of political justification are vast and varied. And absent divine sanction, politics knows no more efficient rationale for action than to claim that such an action had already happened or was always the case, never really happened or was never the case. It is unsurprising, then, that the modernizing histories this project considers tend to negotiate in their pages the facts and fictions of ancient British and early modern English colonization. Here territories as distant as ancient Albion and Ireland and Guinea and Madagascar serve as staging grounds for early modern historians, poets, and critics to determine the limits of narrative plausibility. The understanding that emerges from these episodes centers the role of political power in determining the historical reality of a given narrative to affirm the premise for this dissertation's investigations: recognizing history as a descriptive mode or category of writing necessitates that one witness its active construction rather than rely on a passive inheritance. The present study, then, is a genealogy of the concept of history as it ramifies in literary aesthetics.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), esp. p. 61.

The literary and cultural production of early modern England offers abundant examples through which to trace the vagaries of literary-history's aesthetic wanderings. As English writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries considered Britain's antiquity with nationalist zeal, history as an advertised genre acquired greater intellectual and popular currency. The stamp of history appeared with greater frequency in print on title pages of works to flag and market a tantalizing relationship with the past.¹¹ Yet the nature of the relationship conveyed by these titles is altogether unclear. 'History' could nominate serious antiquarian endeavors like those of Raphael Holinshed, William Camden, and James Ware, or it could serve as a synonym for 'story'. In the latter, more flexible usage the history may appear absent the antiquarian rigor of the former, designed to narrate a plot but not referee factual accuracy.

Contemporary scholars of early modern England typically ascribe this flexibility of the designation 'history' to the word's many associations with 'story'.¹² The sonic affiliation linking the two categories, however, elides the very conceptual and epistemic drift that has come to characterize the period. Rather than prompt a reevaluation of the genealogies of the concepts, the ambiguity of the terms' meanings often results in a presentist delimiting of the acceptable range of history's appropriate usage. Histories that do not comport neatly with Enlightenment expectations typically are framed by editors and critics as mere story. Yet for critics to know in the twenty-first century when to trust or dismiss early modern texts' claims to credibility calls for greater scrutiny of early modern historiography's own methods.

¹¹ Amy Lidster, *Publishing the History Play in the Time of Shakespeare: Stationers Shaping a Genre* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1-7.

¹² Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "What is Early Modern History?: An Origin Story," *Journal of Early Modern History* 25.6 (2021), p. 560-572.

If, as Fredric Jameson famously proclaimed, a premise for rigorous scholarship about literary and cultural objects is that it must always historicize, how might we account for a prior era's own standards for credible historical knowledge?¹³ What if that period's very standards are in flux, caught in transitions in modes of understanding prompted by globalizing networks of exchange and colonial expansion? "Questionable Histories" addresses these questions by investigating the relationship between the early modern genre system and the modernization of the writing of history. Through readings of prose dialogues, stage drama, chronicles, and narrative verse—as well as the editorial apparatus that transport these texts across time—this project counters the sanitizing impulse to assimilate aberrant histories to mere story by reclaiming the eccentric range of credible histories in the period and re-circuiting critical reflexes to historical genres of the page and stage. Reading the emergent scientism and colonialism of the English seventeenth century as motors of aesthetic recalibration, this project identifies aesthetic impasses in literary and historiographic texts that reconfigure the representational possibilities of both categories. I argue that the swift and inconsistent modernization of the practices of writing the past obscures the diversity of credible early modern historical knowledge while concealing literary formalism's dependence on colonial logics of historiography.

Conceit, Genre, Standardization

¹³ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 1-4.

When the two parts of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* debuted in print in 1590, a note "To the Gentlemen Readers and others, that take pleasure in reading Histories" preceded the play's prologue. Though flagged as a "tragicall discourse of the Scythian Shepherd" on the title page, the printer's note announces his ambitions for the playtext: "My hope is, that it will bee now no lesse acceptable unto you to reade after your serious affaires and studies, then it hath bene (lately) delightfull for manye of you to see, when the same was shewed in London upon Stages."¹⁴ In this opening address, the printer Richard Jones strategically frames the play for its first readers so that they will anticipate a work of history both pleasurable and edifying. Placed between seriousness and delight, this octavo text of *Tamburlaine* aims to affirm the happy combination of study and entertainment. Jones's note continues,

I have (purposely) omitted and left out some fond and frivolous Jestures, digressing (and in my poore opinion) far unmeet for the matter, which I thought, might seeme more tedious unto the wise, than any way els to be regarded...Nevertheless now, to be 8nstant in print with such matter of worth, it would prove a great disgrace to so honorable & stately a historie.¹⁵

Jones's note serves as a marketing advertisement for his printing of Marlowe's crowd-pleasing *Tamburlaine* in a way that foregrounds its successful mixture of history and story, but his address is not exclusively a conceit for marketing and sales. Though pitching the playtext to the widest audience through flattery undoubtedly is a goal, Jones's note to the reader specifies how he has edited the version performed on stage to fit more squarely the standards of serious-minded

¹⁴ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great. Who, from a Scythian Shepherde, by his rare and wonderfull Conquests became a most puissant and mightye Monarque, And (for his tyranny, and terrour in Warre) was tearmed, The Source of God. Divided into two Tragicall Discourses, as they were sundrie times shewed upon Stages in the Citie of London* (Printed by Richard Jhones: at the signs of the Rose and Crowne neere Holborne Bridge, 1590), A1-2.

¹⁵ Ibid.

readers of history. Stripping the “fond and frivolous” aspects found in the staged performance permits the wise reader easy access to information concerning the Central Asian conqueror’s life, death, and exploits.

The presentation of Marlowe’s play in print crystalizes the larger issues at stake in this dissertation. First, it troubles the critic’s sense of the nature of the historical conceit and how or if it signified to earlier readers. By ‘historical conceit’ I mean an appeal to history in a work’s title, generic nomination, or narrative content that functions to ground a text’s authority and intellectual or market value. As the rubrics used to adjudicate historical plausibility themselves undergo substantive reevaluation during the period considered in this project, contemporary assumptions about claims to history—and whether they are conceit at all—are clouded by the expectations of modern historiography. To what extent is Jones’s claim that his editing has rendered *Tamburlaine* sufficiently historical for the wiser sort a ploy for buyers in the book trade, and to what extent is Jones’s note sincere? Does the framing of this printed play and other verse and prose narratives reliant on historical material contribute to an aesthetic of fiction or nonfiction?¹⁶ The chapters of this dissertation investigate the early modern borders of literary-formal categories to assess the textures of history during the modern formation of the disciplines of literature and history.

To assume that at some point in time there were clear separations between history and story that would obtain across popular and specialized historical writing would be misguided. Even in the second decade of the twenty-first century, categorical distinctions separating facts and fictions are easily and often intentionally blurred beyond recognition. Ideology expressed as

¹⁶ On the question of sincerity and fiction, see Julie Orlemansky’s comments on “semantic unearnestness” in “Who has Fiction? Modernity, Fictionality, and the Middle Ages” in *New Literary History* 50.2 (Spring 2019): 145-170.

misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda consistently informs the legibility of historiography and the sincerity of historiographers. The authority granted by history's sanctions often prove too compelling not to warp or censor a more accurate version of the past. England around the turn of the seventeenth century witnessed a remarkable cultural vogue for history in its many trappings that coincided with a broader shift toward standardization. As English antiquarians and historians were following their French counterparts, especially Jean Bodin in his *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, by adopting legal protocols for vetting historical claims, English playwrights like Marlowe, Thomas Haywood, and William Shakespeare helped popularize dramatic histories for the London theaters. At both ends of the spectrum of historical representation, audiences and readers found an exponential rise in content to satisfy their taste for more secular narratives of the past. History's ascendance as a form of entertainment, therefore, exists in tension with a move toward disciplinary standardization seeking to define and limit the scope of historiography. It is this twinned phenomenon—at once popular and scientific—that generates the historical conceit's aesthetic intrigue.

That categorical friction is felt in our own era in ways akin to the early modern. Even so, having come to expect the standards of fact that were merely inchoate at the turn of the seventeenth century conditions readers and critics in the present to proceed as though the difference between history and story is clear and, perhaps more importantly, that that assumed difference matters for how we regulate encounters with the past. John Selden forcefully castigated Michael Drayton's verse chorography *Poly-Olbion* for its casual indifference to emergent practices of modern historiography, but he did so in the published annotations accompanying the verses themselves. The caustic corrections occasioned little concern for Drayton and his readers, as neither he nor they were as active participants in historiography's

scientific modernization. Selden's specialization places him at one extreme of the early modern historiographical spectrum, and it would take a more advanced stage of Enlightenment thinking for writers of fiction to acknowledge and incorporate Selden's more rigid sensibilities. Even long after the assumed ossification of the border of fact and fiction, however, those walls remain stubbornly permeable. The dream of an objective encapsulation of past experience, at least insofar as it benefits the powerful and those wielding the narrative, continues undeterred.

Standardization and the attitudes it cultivated for writing the past gained traction across diverse fields of epistemology in the seventeenth century. Reliance on axiomatic reasoning and conceptual first principles distinguished both the rationalist philosophical systems of René Descartes and Baruch Spinoza and the empiricism of Francis Bacon's *New Science* from the medieval scholasticism that preceded it. Building a reliable, coherent, and secular account of the world, according to these philosophers, required starting fresh from the beginning. Rules for making sense of present and past experience, in the empiricist mode, were to be governed by evidence in its various forms: observable data, eye-witness testimony, material traces.

Yet even these tightly regulated philosophical systems could not avoid the persuasive allure of an origin story. Descartes's rationalism relied on divine goodness to affirm the non-simulated reality of material experience, while Spinoza's axiomatic reasoning depended on foundational and unarguable building blocks.¹⁷ This is my second point: the rules-based order that standardization imagined relies on a curious myth of objectivity, and the secular modes of assurance developed a substitute for the confidence of divine revelation. In each example discussed in this project, however, the substitute fails to rival divinity's comforting foundations.

¹⁷ On Descartes's philosophical entanglements with imaginative narrative and verse, see *Cartesian Poetics: The Art of Thinking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

The categorization of Marlowe's or Shakespeare's plays, typified by John Heminge's and Henry Condell's Catalogue in the 1623 First Folio, provided a printed scaffolding that seemed to fix genres that had been and continued to be mobile. Modified antiquarian methods of historiography that claimed to purge myth and legend from chronicles instead lent England's colonial projects a cloak of objectivity to ground historically the desire to conquer, conscript, or eliminate peoples inhabiting valuable territories.

As these examples clarify, however, objectivity's shortcomings do not make the standard any less consequential either for contemporary criticism or early modern politics. In the domain of genre, the First Folio and subsequent attempts to standardize the species of plays has meant that Shakespeare's English history plays narrating monarchal reigns after the Norman Conquest of 1066 are sequestered from plays dramatizing English and British history set before the Conquest. Those latter plays like *King Lear* and *Macbeth* instead sit squarely within the space of tragedy, while *Cymbeline* flutters across centuries among tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, and romance. The effects of this categorization are not limited to the organization of tables of contents in anthologies. A reader's encounter with a text begins with the work's title and genre, setting expectations about the narrative content of the reading experience to come. Whether *Lear* appears with its tragic affiliation, as it has consistently for the last century, or in its historical dressing, as it had for much of its first century in print, shapes what readers make of the story it tells. Do we follow A.C. Bradley by claiming *Lear*'s central feature is the purging catharsis that follows the deaths of Cordelia and her father?¹⁸ Or, instead, might we claim that *Lear* stages the

¹⁸ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 243-279. It is important to note here that Cordelia's death typically was omitted in the Restoration and the tragic ending circumvented entirely for generations of spectators and viewers.

struggles of British kingship and succession in ways analogous to *1 Henry IV* and the other plays that fall under the Folio's History heading. A more measured response to these questions would admit that the answer cannot be exclusive, as the play contains multitudes. The categorical flexibility of early modernity's idea of history, however, is one tool to access the broader view.

But the accumulation of meaning and expectation for tragedy in *The Tragedy of King Lear*, to continue the example, makes such a reasonable answer challenging. Taught and studied alongside a canon of tragedy both ancient and modern, *Lear* as well as *Macbeth* have come to define the genre by typifying its formal features. As Amy Lidster recently has demonstrated, our assumptions about the English history play that take Shakespeare's to define the genre "dangerously conflate stage and print matters, ignores the evidence for other historical pasts that were a vital part of theatrical repertoires, and overlooks the interplay of agents and influences that control the transmission of plays in print."¹⁹ It is all the more difficult, then, to disentangle literary texts from the generic markers they acquired late and subsequently typify.

This project's historicist methodology embraces the unsettled nature of history in its transition to its modern forms as a means of making legible texts obscured by *post facto* standardization protocols: indigenous narratives of migration, political histories utilizing fable story structure, tales of marvels in global travel and exploration. Modernizing history, as this dissertation's archive attests, takes place not in an instant of revision but across generations and even centuries of culture and scholarship. It is a process both abstractly intellectual and materially informed. The story this dissertation tells tracks literary-historical thinking generated in the wake of the dissolution of the monasteries as England turns in early modernity to the wider world. And given the role of England's ambitions for territorial expansion and colonial influence

¹⁹ Lidster, 91.

during this same timeframe, it is especially productive to join Ania Loomba in apprehending this period through the lens of the early colonial.²⁰ Attempts by historiographers and editors to stabilize history's parameters took place against a backdrop of novel colonial endeavors by the nascent empire in Wales, Ireland, Virginia, St. Kitts, Barbados, Nevis and elsewhere. Violent encounters with indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Black Africans that made the North American and Irish colonies profitable facilitated economic upheavals with related aesthetic consequences. As Kim Hall has argued, "This moment of transition—England's movement from geographic isolation into military and mercantile contest with other countries—sets the stage for the longer process by which preexisting literary tropes" were reconfigured in response to racialized difference and economic competition.²¹

This dissertation maintains that the elusive ideal of a historiography regulated by objective standards narrows history's purview in the efflorescence of alternative narratives of the past. The increase in models for reckoning with non-verifiable, though not necessarily inaccurate, ancient stories brought on by mercantile and colonial contact afforded a path towards a modernization more inclusive of diverse historiographical modes.²² Instead, the imperial drive to conquer and master and the capitalist drive to maximize exchange value encouraged cultural, economic, and political domination. Admitting value for Irish oral histories and the dignity it granted Irish people would have weakened England's colonial cattle trade in the British Isles and sugar production in the Caribbean. Recognizing structural homologies between Guinean and

²⁰ Ania Loomba, "Early Modern or Early Colonial?," in *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 14.1 (2014): 143-148.

²¹ Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 3-4.

²² See Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

ancient British succession crises, as Shakespeare's editors resist in the case of *King Lear* that I discuss in Chapter 2, similarly would have called into question the conscription of racialized populations for the cultivation of commodity crops in the New World.

The legibility of competing historiographical modes—non-standardized, subaltern, dominant—has had significant consequences for literary formal aesthetics. The first half of this project traces over two chapters the fluctuation of historiographical standards that permitted or refused the co-mingling of the fantastical and the verifiable in chronicle and stage narratives of the British past. In Chapter 1 I track developments in representing ancient Britain's giants at either end of the literature-history spectrum. The consequences of fictionalizing ancient Albion's giants are not merely aesthetic. As founding narrative, the Trojan colonization of the British Isles relates a racialized indigenous genocide that slips into fiction just as England initiates the modern project of empire. I locate sites of methodological contestation in prose and verse histories wherein rationales for expelling legendary material from the historical record are tried. Competing epistemologies—scientific, Christian, nationalist—offer incongruent, if momentarily compatible, explanations for the placement of giants at the origin of British history, and I argue for the necessity of utilizing a period-specific conjectural historiography to perceive erstwhile historical objects.

This chapter examines the difficulties inherent in imposing standards of fact on histories of the settlement of the British Isles. The narrative reevaluated by Raphael Holinshed, William Camden, John Selden, and Michael Drayton unfolds with similar unease in these authors' various historiographical modes. Chronicles and verse and prose chorographies, all with distinct relationships to factual exactness, wield newly scientific instruments to recognize and trim away legendary flourishes from Monmouth's twelfth-century account of Trojan Brutus's colonizing

efforts. What is left after various efforts at modernization is something of a representational *détente*. As none of these historiographical modes will confirm the narrative's details as definitively factual, neither will they reject it outright. The chapter concludes by considering John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the gigantic scale of its fallen anti-hero in light of the conjectural status of Britain's ancient giants. I argue for the relevance of historical giants for modifying the readers' sense of the epic's many conceits of history and origin.

In Chapter 2 I follow the trail of conjecture to the staggered borders of the English history play. Reconstructing the turbulent arc of the categorization of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, this chapter animates the processes by which a play dramatizing the British monarchy at the BC/AD divide ceased registering historically in response to modernizing historiographical and aesthetic taste. Shakespeare's dramatic genres owe much of their presumed integrity to the 1623 First Folio's standardizing Catalogue. Yet the history of editing and printing affirms great categorical flexibility well into the nineteenth century. I demonstrate how Samuel Johnson, anticipating Hegel's assertion that Africa has no history, excludes *Cymbeline* and *King Lear* from his edition's history plays by noting the similarity of their apparently illogical and fanciful plots to ongoing political turmoil in the courts of Madagascar and Guinea. Analogous eighteenth-century succession crises in these African kingdoms curiously affirm for Johnson the *unhistorical* nature of *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*. I argue that the Enlightenment sensibilities of Shakespeare's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editors served to justify the creation of Shakespearean dramatic romance, an anachronistic genre premised on "biographical conjectures" of the author's intellectual development and a dislocation from historical reality.

Edward Dowden makes this last point explicitly in his nineteenth-century edition of Shakespeare's plays when he constructs a chronology of the works that marches progressively

along a timeline in tandem with the author's perceived physical and artistic maturity. That such a chronology could exist in the absence of reliable records of composition is itself doubtful. When combined with an authorial biography that exists more as a product of critical desire than as a deduction from documented evidence, the system that licenses *Cymbeline* as dramatic romance proves fundamentally unreliable.

The second half of this project pivots from chronicle and stage drama to prose dialogue and epic. In Chapter 3 I read Edmund Spenser's colonial *A View of the State of Ireland* at three materially distinct moments, each documented within the Huntington Library copy of *The Historie of Ireland*: the 1596 composition of the text, the 1633 first printing, and the c. 1670 annotation by Arthur Annesley, 1st Earl of Anglesey and colonial Ireland's Vice-Treasurer. I constellate these overlapping material and historical episodes to reconceive Spenser's tract as a work of dialogic history serving to ground Britain's colonial brutality and the racist logic of empire. As I demonstrate with the aid of archival materials, *A View* was mined for historically grounded strategies for violent subjugation and forced labor of Irish rebels by the very officials tasked with organizing and executing such policies. I argue that the reflex to absolve Spenser of racialized colonial violence with the aid of fiction's conceits—polyvocality, irony, hyperbole—falters when confronted with the text's use in the seventeenth century as a tool of empire in Ireland, Barbados, and the Virginia colony.

With the rise of postcolonial scholarship in early modern studies in the last three decades, some prominent critics of *A View* have utilized the dialogue's form to resist a seemingly obvious reading of the tract as a defense of English colonization. The polyvocality of the work diffuses the author's position across the two speakers to obscure affiliation. The text's fictionality places the author at an even greater remove, leading some to conclude that Spenser's own sentiments

are of little or no consequence for interpretation. Instances of plausible irony, meanwhile, introduce an unpredictable element to any reading of *A View* such that passages advocating Irish subjugation based on historically grounded reasoning become proof for contrary interpretations. Practices of literary interpretation, I claim, have conditioned contemporary readers to separate *A View* from the historiographical context of James Ware's *History of Ireland* and the tradition of historical writing in which it is embedded. Analysis of Anglesey's methodical annotating of Spenser's text for his own history of Ireland towards the end of the seventeenth century reasserts this historiographical context to reassess the balance of fiction and history and the tools we utilize for critical analysis.

The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation considers the insights of an abstract global perspective of historical change by examining the uses of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* as both terminus of the renaissance and harbinger of modernity. I utilize the vast geographic and temporal scales of the epic to theorize the stakes of literary-historical periodization and the effects of modernity's arrival on perceptions of the poem's models of historical change. Reconstructing the poem's own logic of periodization, detailed within Book 10 in the first edition and subsequently across Books 11 and 12, privileges the biblical Flood. In doing so the poem syncretically links the patriarch Noah and two-faced Roman deity Janus to offer a model history premised on cyclical return. This chapter unites the analogous discourses regarding poet and poem to explore alternatives to teleological modernity, arguing instead that progressive historiography has presupposed linearity and novelty at the expense of cyclicity. Lost in the progressive march forward is a fuller reckoning with the legacies undergirding an aspirationally secular, rational, and enlightened modernity.

The arrangement of these chapters proceeds from what has been termed the transition from myth to history at ancient Britain's founding to retrace evolutions of historical thinking that alter critical perceptions of literature's form. It does so by moving chronologically from texts composed toward the end of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth to theorize the non-linear modes of historical reckoning contained throughout: the anachronistic plotting in performances of ancient British history, the repetitive halcyon days of Irish troubles, the Janusian cyclicity of Milton's epic periods. Rather than relate a narrative of forward progression from myth to modernity, these chapters dramatize the upheavals and digressions in literary criticism and historical scholarship as they adopt increasingly scientific mechanisms to assemble and categorize cultural production. To move temporally from the moment of production, as this project shows, is to witness the compounding of techniques for reckoning with representations of the past. Furthermore, the accretion of literary critical methods tends to obscure the literary object as it was understood by prior generations of readers. This dissertation offers clarity to those processes and tools for seeing through the layers of history's history.

Chapter 1 | Myth After History: Chronicling England's Gyaunts

In 1742 the purported biography *The History of Cajanus the Swedish Giant, from his Birth to the Present Time* was published for Thomas Boreman. The title page notes that Boreman is no stranger to the topic of outsized creatures, as the text advertises his expertise deriving from his previous 1741 two-volume “Gigantick Histories.” These volumes detail the “two famous giants and other curiosities in Guildhall, London.” Perhaps more surprising than the subject matter for this series is their size: the 128-page “History of Cajanus the Swedish Giant” measures just over 2 inches in height.¹ The two volumes of the “Gigantick History” are similarly miniature in scale. The texts Boreman produced contain descriptions and illustrations of various oddities and wonders and were intended to delight and entertain an audience of children. Many of these miniature books contain as well lists of subscriber-readers comprised of devoted children and parents. For Boreman and his readers, enthusiastic for fanciful details of giants, the play of scale between the books’ size and content added to the allure. When contrasted with the details of giants contained within, the incongruent material size serves as a kind of marketing gimmick or method for soliciting an easy chuckle from an enthusiastic audience.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the joke works here in the mid-eighteenth century precisely because of the uncontroversial premise that giants are not materially real, that giants lack a scientifically verifiable history. They are instead the stuff of children’s literature, and

¹ Thomas Boreman, *The History of Cajanus the Swedish giant, from his birth to the present time* (London: Printed for Tho. Boreman, 1742). The Houghton Library copy of this text was lost by librarians for several months after I first examined it; an unfortunate, if predictable, risk for a miniature book.

Boreman himself was one of the earliest popularizers of children's books in England. That "Cajanus the Swedish Giant" was in fact Daniel Cajanus, an abnormally large man from Finland who made his living displaying himself as a curiosity, makes little difference to the fantastical nature of his "history." Giants at this point in the middle of the eighteenth century are for wonder, spectacle, and fiction.

In this chapter I focus my attention on examining the presence of giants in history books of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century, the kind of chronicles of Britain that presume a sophisticated and discerning audience and, perhaps more importantly for literary scholars, the kind of history books that provide the "raw material" for the likes of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton and other poets of the period. During the span of time in question—roughly 1577 to 1650—the historical reality of giants in England was by no means a settled question, and editorial battles were fought concerning the inclusion of giants in narrations of ancient Albion and the founding of Britain.

For the popular imagination and for literary criticism, the figure of the giant presently occupies a decidedly legendary or mythological space. These outsized creatures appear most commonly in fanciful narrations as captors of distressed princesses, villains to be defeated by knights errant and wandering epic hero, or predators lurking atop commensurately giant beanstalks. Their threatening size has led even some would-be slayers to confuse them for a field of windmills. These popular associations concede the fabulous nature of giants, dismissing out of hand the potential for a home for these threatening beings outside of fairy tale, romance, or children's fable. Rather than specify an historical setting or political moment in which a giant might appear, these narratives often take place in the hazy time of the non-distinct and distant past. Giants, we might justifiably surmise given their place in the early modern and the modern

literary imagination, inhabit a loosely medieval setting in which knights wander rural landscapes in search of adventure and tests of valor. In accounts of the founding of Britain, these gargantuan bodies precede the arrival of the non-native populations led by Trojan Brutus in the Year of the World 2855, 334 years before the first Olympiad, and 1108 years before the birth of Christ.² Less fanciful seventeenth-century genres featuring giants, including the chronicle and the topographically-inflected history known as chorography, take a different approach to narrating accounts of the notionally extinct and colossal bipeds. Given the difficult task of constructing credible accounts of the distant history of the British Isles during a period that witnessed a rise in the importance of verifiable documentary evidence and a nascent fidelity to fact, writers of these texts were forced to grapple with the proper methods for representing accurately a past that reasonably could be discarded as legendary.

Popular and respected antiquarians and historians in England such as William Camden, Raphael Holinshed, John Clapham, William Harrison, John Selden, and John Milton all grappled with the challenges of explaining how Britain came to be, from where it derived its name, who first settled its islands, and who was responsible for its perplexing landmasses and imposing artificial structures. Given this last question and the sites at Carnac, Avebury, Stonehenge and elsewhere that feature enormous and inexplicable menhir standing stones, often arranged in circular patterns, it is easy to imagine creatures much larger and stronger than humans having a

² William Camden, *Britannia, or A Chorographicall Description of the Most flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Ilands adioyning, out of the depth of Antiquitie*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: 1610), A3R/5. Camden provides these three dates from Geoffrey of Monmouth for Brutus' arrival on the British Isles and first encounter with Gogmagog, the "hugest" giant of them all. While it is common for chronicles of the period to date ancient British history counting up from creation for the age of the world, more typical sources for comparative reference can be found in events and kings named in the Old Testament. Camden's reference to the first Olympiad in this instance highlights the significance of the Aegean world to the legendary founding of Britain.

hand. As Mary Williams suggests, one would “naturally conclude that only giants could have moved such immense masses of stone and set them upright.”³ Latter-day spectators could observe the dispersed boulders dotting the landscape and conclude that giants had a hand in the placement.

Despite such compelling material reasons for the common person to find stories of historic giants credible in seventeenth-century England, scholars have focused their attention far more on the fabular qualities of giants and their abstract symbolic role in conceptions of the nation, the body politic, and the landscape. This chapter will attend instead to the fraught topic of the representation of England’s giants in seventeenth-century prose and verse histories. These historiographical texts—chronicles, chorographies, historical narrations—present a representational challenge for the simple reason that they strive for truth by means of an assembly of reliable *facts*. I detail first the scholarly attention England’s giants have received in literary criticism. In turning next to investigate their role as historiographical subjects, I consider the emergence of the category of *fact* as it is developed by early modern French and English legal historians. Finally, this chapter concludes by examining the tense interplay of fact and poetic representation in the first books of Michael Drayton and John Selden’s *Poly-Olbion* (1612) and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667).

³ Mary Williams, “Folklore and Placenames,” *Folklore* 74.2 (1963): p. 365. Cited in Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992): 72. See also H.J. Massingham, *Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum or The Giants in England* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1926), 66. Massingham contends that the Cerne Giant, the Wilmington Long Man, and the White Horse of White Horse Vale in Berkshire “antiquate antiquity.”

The topic of giants—literary or otherwise—has received some scholarly attention in recent decades. Susanne Wofford recounts the significance of the creatures in her writing on Spenser’s giants in the *Faerie Queene*, arguing that they “expose an ambivalence about the political system—in the self or in the society—that they either threaten or protect, and signal a concern about the legitimacy of the order allegory is able to represent.”⁴ And she considers them both in their classical mode as rebellious subjects and in the popular, Tudor mode as representations of the body politic. Susan Stewart likewise theorizes the gigantic in her influential 1984 book *On Longing*, where she positions the giant against the miniature and designates the former as representing “infinity, exteriority, the public, and the overly natural” and the latter as “closure, interiority, the domestic, and the overly cultural.” Giants, Stewart observes, “like dinosaurs, in their anonymous singularity always seem to be the last of their race.”⁵

Given this depiction of giants in their march toward their own extinction, it is important to take note of what springs from their demise. For Stewart, that period bracketed at one end by the decline of the giant also witnesses the turn to history. She argues, “[w]e find the miniature at the origin of private, individual history, but we find the gigantic at the origin of public and natural history. The gigantic becomes an explanation for the environment, a figure on the interface between the natural and the human.”⁶ With the disappearance of giants hulking on the horizon, later inhabitants are left to deduce from observable traces and conjectural explanations

⁴ Susanne Wofford, “Spenser’s Giants,” in *Critical Essays on Edmund Spenser*, edited by Mihoko Suzuki (New York, G.K. Hall & Co., 1996), 200.

⁵ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 70-74.

⁶ *ibid*, 71.

of the natural history they helped shape and the human history from which they are excluded. Often these explanations are poetic and literary rather than scientific and verifiable.

Both Wofford and Stewart provide a substantial theorization of the gigantic, but neither considers the giant as a potentially “real” being. Texts from the early seventeenth century, however, cannot as easily consign these creatures to the space of fancy. If by the early eighteenth century it is uncomplicated for writers like Boreman and literary critics of the period to tend to giants as wholly fantastical, the same cannot be said for critics, historians, and poets in the early seventeenth century. For this latter group, conceptions of the origin of the English people and nation were intimately bound with tales of indigenous giants. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century narrative provided the standard account that informed both English cultural celebrations and historical writing alike.⁷

In brief, Monmouth tells of Brutus leaving Troy and building the city of Tours in modern-day France (according to Homer’s eye-witness account) before “making spoil of Gaule.” Having plundered the territory, Brutus set sail once more and made landfall on an island to the north. Brutus and his company quickly discover the island to be populated by a race of giants. They conquer the giants and their leader Gogmagog, “the hugest of them all,” slaughter them, and proceed to colonize a New Troy on the banks of the river Thames. Brutus bestowed his own

⁷ Ashe, 158-9. See William J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973; first pub. 1926), 10-13. Many pre-Conquest charters contain references to Albion, and twenty-one charters align tenth- and eleventh-century kings with “the rule of Albion.” Though the ancient name for the region, Albion, was derived from Ptolemy and Pliny and had legal significance in pre-Conquest England, no sources prior to the thirteenth century provided any particulars regarding the inchoate British realm. See also Julia Crick, “Edgar Albion and Insular Dominion” in Donald Scragg (ed.), *Edgard, King of the English 959-975: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), 161.

name on the island, calling it “Britain.”⁸ While this narrative from Monmouth takes for granted the existence of the giants of Albion, other popular histories attempted to explain the source of the peculiar race. The thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman poem known as *Des Grantz Geanz* incorporated some of the *Brut* myth but supplied its own explanatory back story. In this telling, the noble woman “Albina” gave the name to the uninhabited island. Arriving to Britain from either Greece or Syria, Albina and her thirty sisters settle there and have sex with demons they encounter. Together these women and demons generate the race of giants that Brutus and his band later encounter.⁹

Holinshed’s fourth chapter in his *Chronicles*, “Whether it be likely that there were ever any Gyaunts in habiting in this Isle or not,” takes the credibility of these founding narratives as a central concern. The chapter rehearses the general contention in its opening passage:

Besides these aforesayde nations, which have crept as you have heard into our Islande, we reade of sundry Gyaunts that shoulde inhabite here, which report as it is not
26nstant26io incredible, sith the posterities of diverse princes were called by {the} name:
so unto some mens eares it seemeth so straunge a rehearsal, that for the same onely they
suspect the credite of our whole hystorie and reiect it as a fable, unworthy to be read. For
this cause therefore I have nowe taken upon me to make thys briefe discourse insuing
thereby to prove, that the opinion of Gyaunts is not altogether grounded upon vayne and
fabulous narrations, invented only to delite the eares of the hearers with the report of
marveilous things. But that there have bene such men indeede, as for their hugenesse of
person have resembled rather highe towers then mortall men, although their posterities
are now sonsumed, and their monstrous races utterly worne out of knowledge.¹⁰

⁸ Camden, A3R. For an alternative etymology of Albion, see Ashe, “Holinshed and Mythical History,” 159-160.

⁹ See also James P. Carley and Julia Crick, “Constructing Albion’s Past: An Annotated Edition of *De origine gigantum*,” *Arthurian Literature*, 13 (1995), 41-114; Jane Taylor, “The French Prose *Brut*: Popular History in Fourteenth-Century England” in Mark Ormrod (ed.), *England in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986), 247-9.

¹⁰ Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1577), 3R.

The question of the reality of giants is of such importance for the 1577 volume that an answer in the negative would indict the entirety of the chronicles. If talk of giants serves only or even primarily to “delight” and entertain the reader, the historical enterprise is doomed. The creeping sense that Holinshed’s history, like poetry of the period, might delight instead of inform lingers throughout the passage in its use of qualifying, litotic phrases. The stories of giants are “not 27nstant27io incredible,” “not 27nstant27io grounded upon vayve and fabulous narrations.” By this measure, of course, the chronicle falls short of a full endorsement. Instead, the chapter leaves space for recognizing extinct giants even in the absence of firm historical knowledge.

With the stakes of this argument, according to the writer, so high as to determine the success or failure of the chronicles, Holinshed marshals a diverse range of argumentative techniques in service of the defense. Disregarding accounts of giants found in stories of Hercules, Holinshed turns instead to sacred history and the words of Moses recounting the state of the world following the great flood. He details the giants in the city of Denon,

wherein Guauntes dyd inhabit, who trusting to the strength and hugenesse of their bodies, dyd verye great oppression and 27nstant27 in the worlde. The Hebrews called them generally by the name of Enach peradventure of Henoch the sonne of Cain, from whom that pestilent race at the first decended. And of these monsters also some families remained unto the time of Moses, in comparison of whom the children of Israell confessed themselves to be but Grashoppers, which is one noble testimonie that the word Gygas or Enach is so well taken for a man of huge stature, as for an homeborne childe, wicked tyraunt, and oppressour of the people.¹¹

Biblical narrative serves here as common ground for believers and skeptics of giants alike. One need not rely on hearsay and popular myth to contemplate a colossal and menacing population, as Enoch and the race of Cain have long been regarded as such by ecclesiastical authorities and

¹¹ Holinshed, 3V.

common parlance. The “children of Israel” find themselves dwarfed by Enoch’s descendants and rendered “grashoppers.” The striking comparison to the giants diminishes the Israelites to the stature of a lowly insect, as it substitutes human stature for the “highe towers” referenced above. Giants existing beside humans threaten the latter group by transforming them into comparatively insignificant and defenseless bugs.

Not satisfied with Biblical accounts of relative size alone, Holinshed employs weight and measure to justify the name “giant” in describing these outsized creatures as they appear in I Samuel:

you shall reade of Goliath a philistine, the weight of whose Iaberde or iacke was of five hundredth sicles, or so many ounces, that is, 312 pounce after the rate of a sicke to an ounce, his speare was like a weavers beame, the onely head whereof weighed 600 ounces of yron, or 37 pounce and a halfe constant, his height also was measured at 6 cubites and an hande breadth, all which do importe that he was a notable Gyaunt, and a man of great strength to weare such an armour and beweld so heavy a launce.”¹²

The explanatory comparisons for Goliath draw on both precise measuring and poetic analogy: His armor weighed 312 pounds while his spear was “like a weavers beam.” Toggling back and forth between strict calculation and general reference provides a sense of modern scientific legitimacy to the Bible’s imagistic, literary description. The reader is presented with distinct, though compatible, methods for comprehending the giant’s dimensions. Similar uses of weights and measures appear in the evidence the chronicle culls from Augustine and John Boscage, the latter of whom recounts the discovery of an “exceeding high Gyaunt...three of whose teeth did weigh 100 ounces, which being converted into English poise, doth yeelde 8 pounce and 4

¹² *ibid.*

ounces, after twelve ounces to the pound.”¹³ As the survey of giants moves closer to the chronicle’s present, the use of material evidence and measurement increases: a body discovered in Italy in 1038 measuring 20 feet in length; another in Wales in 1087 of 14 feet; another in 1475 near Salisbury of 14 feet. These examples do not serve merely as compounding evidence for the case of the existence of giants—though they do that as well—instead their power derives from their specific form of witness credibility: “All which testimonies I note together because they proceede from Christian writers, from whome nothing shoulde bee farther or more distant, then of set purpose to lie, and feede the world with Fables.”¹⁴ Simply put, that these accounts of giants are provided by esteemed Christians is reason enough to find them credible. The appeal to scientific calculation, while unnecessary, nods at the rise of a more secular standard of argumentation and historiography.

A prime difficulty for incorporating these fixtures of both the popular imagination and historiographical tradition at least since Monmouth’s *Historia* (c. 1136) is the swelling importance of the modern fact. Beginning with Lorraine Daston’s consideration of “marvelous facts and miraculous evidence” in the mid-1980s, the seemingly-obvious nature of the fact has invited increased critical attention.¹⁵ Mary Poovey, in constructing a broader history of the

¹³ *ibid.*, 4R. The passage’s logic also include arguments based on symmetry from various known body parts and extrapolates to the larger body: “Richarde Grafton, in his Manuell telleth of one whose shinne bone contained sixe foote, and his scul so great that it was able to receive 5 peckes of wheate, wherefore by contjecturall symmetrye of these partes, his bodye must needes be of 28 foote, or rather more, if it were diligently discussed.”

¹⁴ *ibid.* Though the 1587 second edition of the chronicle questions some of the eye-witness evidence that had come to be discredited in the late sixteenth century, it nevertheless holds fast to its convictions that the giants and their extinction by Trojan Brutus should stand alongside more modern accounts of English monarchs.

¹⁵ Lorraine Daston, “Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe,” *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991): 93-124; Daston, “The Factual Sensibility,” *Isis* 79.3 (1988): 452-67; Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston, “Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England,” *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 20-54.

development of the modern fact from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, helpfully interrogates the objective aura of facts:

What are facts? Are they incontrovertible data that simply demonstrate what is true? Or are they bits of evidence marshaled to persuade others of the theory one sets out with? Do facts somehow exist in the world like pebbles, waiting to be picked up? Or are they manufactured and thus informed by all the social and personal factors that go into every act of human creation? Are facts beyond interpretation? Or are they the very stuff of interpretation, its symptomatic incarnation instead of the place where it begins?¹⁶

Apart from cataloguing a host of questions pertaining to facts, Poovey's queries point implicitly to the historicity of the fact and its persuasive force. What historical circumstances, for example, would make precise measurements of ancient giants a more viable method than popular myth for arriving at truth? The "Glory of Historians" in early seventeenth-century England and France was marked by the supposed attainment of impartiality and "indifference" in the writing of historical events.¹⁷ And as historiographers grappled with thorny issues related to evidentiary standards, chronicling the distant past with cool indifference became a uniquely vexing problem.

Poovey takes the epistemological unit of the fact as her object of inquiry because it precedes, both conceptually and chronologically, the discourses that otherwise shape forms of understanding and therefore can reveal underpinning logics.¹⁸ With the rise of historiography and a more skeptical, "modern" disposition toward its methods in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we witness the co-emergence of the modern concept of fact.

¹⁶ Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1.

¹⁷ For a recent and thorough treatment of early modern scientific moods related to "indifferency" and "nonchalance," see David Carrol Simon, *Light without Heat: The Observational Mood from Bacon to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 1-34; 35-79.

¹⁸ Poovey, 18.

“Facts” and the related “matters of fact” that feature so prominently in the early modern English empirical tradition trace their lineage to the discipline of jurisprudence. The tools for investigative fact-finding adopted by experimental science, in the legal sphere, were deployed to ascertain the actions and events in which individuals brought before the courts participated. Here, the fact or “factum” simply described an action that the court itself could not observe. Nevertheless, such an action could be known, believed, and judged if barristers presented well established facts. As the success of a fact was grounded in its ability to persuade, it is fitting that “matters of fact” in English common law were determined by lay jurors; professional judges, in contrast, were concerned with “matters of law.”¹⁹ The many non-specialized individuals who served as jurors, then, gained a familiarity with “facts” by assessing witness testimony, weighing evidence, and finally passing judgment on the credibility of the facts in question.

Following the lead of jurisprudence, other fact-based disciplines establishing standards of practice in the seventeenth century adopted the legal concept of “matter of fact” and its concomitant methods of employing investigative impartiality, credible witness testimony, and fact-based inference. Given the close association of law and history, indeed intermingling in spaces like the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries, writers of civil and human history were among the earliest to borrow these concepts.²⁰ For historians the prospect of integrating standards of fact into a historiographical practice that relied heavily on embellished rhetoric or outright fabrication for recorded speeches proved challenging, and its results mixed.

¹⁹ Shapiro, 227-9. The precise origin of the distinction between matters of law and fact is murky, but the sixteenth century witnessed a more established distinction than that found in the medieval period.

²⁰ *ibid*, 233-4.

Yet the English, following their French counterparts, took to reevaluate their history and expunge that history of unverifiable fable and myth. Historically oriented lawyers in the sixteenth century began to examine the French constitutional past with a newfound insistence on the propriety of legal concepts for historical inquiry. Distinguishing history from fable, romance, and legend followed from the application of these imported dispositions: the necessity of documentary evidence, the superiority of originals over copies and eyewitness accounts over hearsay, and a cultivated skepticism regarding historical forgeries.²¹ These material standards of evidence and methods of verification, however, were not without limit. The legal concepts, once applied to historiography, were circumscribed by certain tenants of religious dogma. Yet, as I show below, though the ideal separation did not hold for long in either English or French contexts, it nonetheless counterpoised a writing of human actions that was governed by *factum* to that of God's that was measured according to the standard of *verum*.²²

If, as Susan Stewart has suggested, the disappearance of the giants marks the beginning of public and civil history, it is not difficult to imagine how these creatures and the sliver of early history they occupy would have presented a challenge for fact-oriented historiographers. Appearing in unimpeachable biblical narratives and fallible nation-founding legend, the race of giants straddles both a methodological and period divide. John Selden, the historian and writer of

²¹ For more on this transformation in the French constitutional past, see Donald Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law and History in the French Renaissance* (New York, 1970); Julia Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Sixteenth Century Revolution in the Methodology of Law and History* (New York, 1963); George Huppert, *The Idea of Perfect History: Historical Erudition and Historical Philosophy in Renaissance France* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1970).

²² Shapiro, 234. See also Kelley, *Foundations*, p. 3. Kelly contends that Bodin's method allowed for the standard of *factum* to apply as well to climate and geography so long as there were reliable sources and evidence to support such a history of the natural world. See also Huppert, *Perfect History*, pp. 93-99. For more on the separations of *res humanae* and *res naturales*, see Kelley, *Foundations*, p. 130.

the “illustrations” that accompany Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, rigidly employed legal standards to ascertain “historical facts” through “a kind of trial,” and he asserted in his *Historie of Tithes* that history is that “which is only fact.” For both the *Poly-Olbion* and *Historie of Tithes*, Selden condemned the inclusion of King Arthur and other legends that could not hold up in the court of facts.²³

In instances such as these we witness historians striving to act as bare collectors of particularized fact. Yet by no means did those collectors have exclusive rights to facts or history in the seventeenth century.²⁴ Similarly, Thomas Gale sought to arrive at conclusions by means of a trial of facts: “From so great a concurrence and Combination of the Evidences, both Artificial and Inartificial,...the main conclusion will appear more than conjectural, to any judicious reader.”²⁵ The status of the persuasive force of “conjecture” was at issue in these assemblies of fact, and the opinion of the practice of making conjectures divided historians. As interest in chronicles that recounted the rise and fall of monarchs declined in the early seventeenth century,

²³ Selden, *Historie of Tithes*, pp. xii. See also David Sandler Berkowitz, *John Selden’s Formative Years: Politics and Society in Early Seventeenth-Century England* (London and Toronto: Folger Books, 1988), pp. 41-2. See also Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. M. Oakeshott (New York, 1962), p. 69 and *Elements of Law*, Pt I, ch. 6, para. 9. Thomas Hobbes likewise equated history with fact in the *Leviathan*, denoting natural history as that of “such Facts, or Effects of Nature...Such as the histories of Metalls, Plants, Animals, Regions and the like. The other is Civil History, which [is] the History of the Voluntary Actions of Men in Commonwealths.”

²⁴ Oliver Cromwell, for example, lamented the practice of historians writing pure “narrations of matters of fact,” favoring instead a historiography that attended more broadly to the arc of history, the “strange windings and turnings of Providence,” and “the great appearances of God.” Quoted in C.H. Firth, “Sir Walter Raleigh’s History of the World,” in *Essays Historical and Literary* (Oxford, 1938), pp. 53-4.

²⁵ Quoted in Shapiro, 236. Gale, *Court of the Gentiles*, p. 3.

topographical genres, as Richard Helgerson has maintained, gained in popularity while providing outlets for patriotic sentiment external to the king.²⁶

Milton the historiographer takes a decidedly more skeptical approach to mythical British history in his recounting of the founding of the island. “What ever might be the reason,” he argues, “this we find, that of *British affairs*, from the first peopling of the Iland to the coming of *Julius Caesar*, nothing certain, either by Tradition, History, or Ancient Fame hath hitherto bin left us. That which we have of oldest seeming, hath by the greater part of judicious Antiquaries bin long rejected for a modern Fable.”²⁷ Tradition, History, and Ancient Fame all have a great deal to say about the “first peopling of the Iland.” The sticking point for Milton in his *History* is that none of these sources provides the *certainty* he demands. His insistence on certainty as a standard for historical knowledge distinguishing it from poetic understanding becomes clearer when viewed as part of a modern desire for objective historical writing. We might be inclined as well to group Milton and his *History* with the more modern practices of historiography that look something like our own: evidence-based, fact-based, making narrow claims with a level head. Indeed, he sees himself quite clearly aligned with those “judicious Antiquaries” who judge harshly those looking for stories of the outsized in the chronicles. Yet Milton’s historiographical practices make such a conclusion less certain. He argues:

²⁶ Graham Parray, “Ancient Britons and Early Stuarts,” in *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History, and Politics*, eds. Robin Wells, Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), 167; See also Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 146-7. See especially chapter 4, “The Land Speaks.”

²⁷ Milton, *History of Britain*, 2. Though Milton’s “History of Britain” was first published in 1670, the first books relating to the ancient founding were written beginning in the 1640s.

Nevertheless there being others besides the first constant Author, men not unread, nor unlearned in Antiquitie, who admit that for approved story, which the former explore for fiction, and seeing that oft-times relations heretofore accounted fabulous have bin after found to contain in them many footsteps, and reliques of something true, as what we read in Poets of the Flood, and Giants little beleev'd, till undoubted witnesses taught us, that all was not fain'd; I have therefore determin'd to bestow the telling over ev'n of these reputed Tales; be it for nothing else but in favour of our English Poets, and Rhetoricians, who by thir Art will know, how to use them judiciously."²⁸

The hedging litotes from Holinshed reappear in this passage to qualify begrudging acquiescence: "men not unread, nor unlearned in Antiquitie" affirm seemingly-fanciful stories. Though short of a full endorsement, Milton's phrasing leaves room for some truth to the giant narratives by keeping open the possibility of suitable evidence and "undoubted witnesses." Rather than excise the un-believable giants and other similar fables from his text, Milton retains them in order that he might still provide matter for the poets. His caveat puts pressure on the well-trained poet and artist to be able to find the higher truth of the matter and to fashion it into material in service of the reader's edification.

As the historian Laura Ashe has observed, the process by which writers of the period differentiated history and myth was uneven and slow-moving. Modern standards of history increased in tandem with the popularity of the Brutus founding myths. Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Milton's *History* participated in the awkward project of expanding the myth while refining the historical tools that would challenge similar accounts of the distant past.²⁹ Milton's inclusion of these stories renders his history self-aware but not more modern in content. For by retaining the outmoded and outsized giants in the earliest history of Britain for poets, Milton nevertheless produces a history indebted to the supposedly fanciful. The trajectory to a more modern

²⁸ Milton, *History*, 3.

²⁹ Laura Ashe, "Holinshed and Mythical History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, Eds. Paulina Kewes, Ian Archer, and Felicity Heal (London: OUP, 2012), 158.

historiography does not follow a consistent arc, and the mixing of the fabled with the seemingly more rigorously “historical” in these texts make available new questions for historical material—poems, stage dramas, chronicles—in literary criticism.

Unlike Milton’s *History* or Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, chorographical works synthesized history, topography, natural history, antiquities, and genealogy. This assemblage of diverse genres into a broader project often provided a site for conjectural analysis. John Stow’s *Survey of London* (1598) and William Camden’s *Brittania or A Chorographicall description of Britain* (1587, 1610) provide examples at either end of the scale of chorography, the former limited to the city and the latter encompassing the whole of the British Isles. At either scale, however, writers in the genre assembled data and evidence, and they examined first-hand documentary evidence alongside witness testimony to arrive at the judicious conjecture.³⁰

Perhaps the best instance of conjectural analysis and a defense of the practice as used when detailing the distant past appears in William Camden’s *Britain*.³¹ Camden narrates the impetus for the project in this way:

Abraham Ortelius the worthy restorer of Ancient Geographie arriving here in England, above thirty foure 36nsta past, dealt earnestly with me that I would illustrate this I’e of Britain, or (as he said) that I would restore antiquity to Britain, and Britain to his antiquity; which was as I understood, that I would renew ancientrie, enlighten obscuritie, clear doubts, and recall home Veriti by way of recovery, which the negligence of writers and credulitie of the common sort had in a manner proscribed and utterly banished from amongst us. A painfull matter I assure you...³²

³⁰ See F.J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1953), 163; Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 215, 221, 223, 227, 228.

³¹ First printed in 1587, Camden’s Latin *Britannia* went through five editions before seeing the first English translation by Philemon Holland in 1610.

³² Camden, “Preface,” 4.

Camden's drive to "restore antiquity to Britain, and Britain to his antiquity" appears especially "painfull" in light of the new standards of "creduiltie." For Camden recovery of "ancientrie" serves as a panacea for the ills of contemporary ignorance. Understanding the deep past enlightens readers of their ancestral nature at the same time as it re-establishes lost truths. Chief among Camden's concerns is the task of narrating accurately "the etymology of Britaine" and its first inhabitants." In describing the challenge, Camden likens the deep history of Britain to the spring of great rivers: "For I am not ignorant that the first oringalls of nations are obscure by reason of their profound antiquitie, as things which are seene very deepe and farre remote: like as the courses, the reaches, the confluents, and the out-lets of great reivers are well knowne, yet their first 37nstant37i and heads be commonly unknown."³³ The expression of difficulty by means of an analogy to nature crystalizes the broader project of Camden's chorography: natural and human history are related in conjunction with one another for a fuller depiction of the origin and evolution of the nation. The reader must follow these streams and tributaries until the sources reveal themselves. Or rather Camden instructs his readers to follow him on his hunt at least until the stream runs dry. Where the waters cease to reveal their origins, conjectures fill in.

While Camden can provide evidence and reliable sources for his conclusions, these conjectures often cannot rise to the standards of *fact*. Here, the conjecture serves as a ground or reason for a conclusion, but it does not amount to a logical demonstration.³⁴ I linger on the conjecture because Camden and others rely on its acceptability in historiography in order to

³³ *ibid*, 4.

³⁴ OED, definition 6.

supplement for a dearth of hard fact. In a telling section of his preface, Camden vigorously defends his lesser standard:

Many happily will insult over me for that I have adventured to hunt after the originals of names by coniectures, who if they proceed on to reiect all coneictures, I feare me a great part of liberall learning and humane knowledge will be utterly out-cast into banishment. For the edge of our understanding is so blunt that we are of necessity enforced to prosecute the many matters in all professions coniecturally. In Physick...which are nothing else but coniectures, have their place, and stand in good steed, likewise in Rhetorike, Civil law, and other artes they are admitted and allowed. And whereas coniectures are certain detections of things unknowne, and as Fabius tearmeth them, directions of reason to verity, I have 38nstan thought that they were to be accounted among the skuppers wherewith Time worketh and draweth VERITIE out of Demorutius his deepe dungeon. But if these men may be induced to attribute ought to coniectures, I doubt not but my modesty and moderation in coniecturing may 38nstan purchase my pardon.³⁵

Camden's marshalling of disciplines as diverse as physics, rhetoric, and law asserts the omnipresence of conjectural reasoning in various contemporary fields of epistemology. Indeed, the stakes of the viability of the standard are such that the whole of "liberall learning" stands or falls based on the success of the conjecture. Rather than prop up less rigorous scholarship, Camden sees the proper role of conjecture as scouring the "blunt edge" of our understanding. It is at the hazy limit of knowledge that the conjecture can work to detect "things unknown," to search in the darkness for glimmers of "veritie." The imagery of personified Conjecture teaming with Time is striking in its spectacle. Figured as a pair of classical heroes, the two abstractions work together to rescue Veritie from the prison of Demorutius' [Democritus'] dungeon. The heroes, like the mytho-historical narratives they defend, labor to protect humanist knowledge production from the menace of Democritus' atomist and purposeless understanding of matter.

³⁵ Camden, 5.

Acceptance of the standard of conjecture for the goal of “renew[ing] ancientrie” necessitates sifting fable from history to arrive at worthy conclusions. “As for obscurity, fables, extravagant digressions,” Camden writes, “I trust there is no cause to sue out my pardon. There will be no obscuritie but to them which have not supped the first elements of Antiquity, and our histories: upon fables I have in no wise relied...”³⁶ Rejecting the association with fable when tending to Albion is essential for the serious historian, since with Albion comes Trojan Brutus and the eponymous giant. Neither of these stories, indeed much the earliest received knowledge of early Britain, can satisfy the demands of fact. Nevertheless, Camden implores his reader for both judiciousness and leniency when assessing his conjectures: “Neither have I assumed upon myself any perswaison of knowledge, but onely that I have beene desirous to know much. And I right willingly acknowledge that I may erre much, neither will I sooth and smoth my errours. Who shooting all day long doth always hit the mark?”³⁷

Camden set himself a difficult task in “hit[ting] the mark” when presenting the nation-founding myth, as the historical record proved severely limited. He describes the challenge in this way:

But who were the most ancient and the very first Inhabitants of this Ile, as also, from whence this word *Britaine* had the originall derivation, sundry opinions one after another have risen; and many we have seene, who being uncerteine in this point, have seemed to put downe the certaine resolution thereof. Neither can we hope to atteine unto any certaintie 39nstan, more than all other nations, which (setting those aside that have their originall avouched unto them out of holy Scripture) as well as wee, touching their point, abide in great darkenesse, error and ignorance. And how, to speak truly, can it otherwise be? Considering that the trueth, after so many revolutions of ages and times, could not chuse but be deeply hidden. For the first inhabitours of countreys had other cares and

³⁶ *ibid*, 7.

³⁷ *ibid*.

thoughts to busie and trouble their heads, than to deliver their beginnings unto posteritie.³⁸

In the absence of scriptural imprimatur, the truth of all nation-founding accounts is shrouded in “darkness” and its narratives prone to “errour and ignorance.” Eye-witness testimony, the preferred evidence of the legal-minded historian, simply does not exist in such cases. Like Camden’s opening description of the difficulty of following rivers to their sources, here he uses another spatial metaphor to account for lost information. The passing of time and the “revolutions” of the earth have left evidence of the past buried deep underground. Camden’s excavation proceeds in the metaphorical register, and he digs into stories instead of the dirt to find the truth.

Having recounted Monmouth’s etiological explanation of the names Albion and Britain, Camden surveys the other potential glosses: the British word Prid-cain (pure white form); the Danish word Bridania (Free Dania); the German region Prutentia; the Spanish word Bretta (Earth); etc. Casting barbs in response to these possibilities, Camden “cannot but smile at the fictions of strangers.” No respectable historiographer, he claims, believes these possibilities.³⁹ Importantly, however, Camden does not confess his unquestioning faith in the Brutus story. Neither does he reject the Trojan narrative. What follows in the opening pages of his *Britannia* is a nuanced compromise that expresses resigned fealty to Monmouth’s account. “But as touching those reports of *Brutus*,” Camden concludes, “were they true, certeine, and undoubted, there is no cause why any man should bestow farther study and labor in searching out the beginning of

³⁸ Camden, A2V.

³⁹ Camden offers this criticism: The name ‘Britain’ antedates the name ‘Dane’ and place ‘Prutentia’; the word ‘Britannia’ has nothing to do with the Spanish ‘Bretta’ (if, indeed, it is Spanish to begin with); and why would an island be named after a Greek drink? His refutations are reasoned, if curt.

the Britains.” Skeptical of the premise that additional scholarship will render more credible knowledge on the subject, he opts instead not “to struggle against an opinion commonly and long since received.”⁴⁰

Stated resignation does not preclude careful consideration, however, as Camden rehearses other historiographers’ persuasive criticisms of traditional founding narratives. Invoking the authority of the first-century BC Roman historian Varro, he reminds readers of a frequently accepted premise that undercuts the credibility of the Brutus story. First, with the exception of sacred history, “all is but fabulous...whatsoever is reported to have been done before the first *Olympias*, to wit, the yeere 770 before the birth of Christ: like as these reports of Brutus, which are before the said time 300 yeeres and more.”⁴¹ In the Varronian chronology, the period lasting from creation to the great flood was termed “uncertain,” and the period from the flood to the first *Olympias* “fabulous.” If the former was nominated based on its absence of historical record, the latter was so named because “in that time there is related nothing else (for the most part) but tales...” Tales, alas, could not warrant belief.⁴²

Camden concludes by presenting a comparative study of analogous European claims to Trojan descent, questioning why the Britains maintain allegiance to Brutus even as peer nations “escaped out of those darke mists of fatall ignorance.” The French, Dane, Saxon, and Scot “wiser sort,” he observes, have dismissed the historical reality of their Francio, Danus, Saxo, and Scota,

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 6.

⁴¹ *ibid*.

⁴² Camden proceeds to quote John of Westhamsted, Abbot of St. Albanes (d. 1465), “a most judicious man,” supplying his verdict that “the whole Discourse of this Brutus is rather Poeticall than historicall...” Separated by more than fifteen-hundred years, Varro and John of Westhamsted concur on the necessarily fictive nature of this period of Brutus’ founding.

their “counterfet Progenitor[s].”⁴³ One would be forgiven for supposing disbelief in Brutus on the part of Camden. His rhetorical acumen in presenting and refuting arguments and trying the case in a manner guided by legal methods places him, at least stylistically, on the side of the skeptic. His explicit statements, however, cut in the other direction. He confesses, “For mine owne part, let Brutus be taken for the father, and founder of the British nation; I will not be of a contrarie minde. Let the Britains resolve still of their originall, to have proceeded from the Trojans (into which stock, as I will 42nstant42i prove, they may truly ingrasse themselves) I will not gain-stand it.”⁴⁴ In acquiescing to the popular narrative, even in light of doubts raised by ascendant historiographical practices, Camden, like Milton in his *History*, supplies reluctant conjecture to an instance where facts are unavailable.

Verse chorographies and historical poems participated in the project of reclaiming Britain’s antiquity, and stories of giants provided supple material for poets to comment on royal authority. The reign of James I, and the uneasy transfer of sovereign power to the Scottish monarch, helped sustain historiographic and poetic attention to Britain’s deep past, since through his relation to the Tudors he could claim Trojan descent and consequent legitimacy. Entertainment at James’ coronation included works by Ben Jonson, Camden’s pupil, and Thomas Dekker, steeped with references to Trojan Brutus and his role in establishing Britain. In affirming the Tudor assertion of descent from Brutus, James could more persuasively link his reign to the historical origins of the nation. Perhaps most crucially stemming from this affiliation

⁴³ *ibid.* “Wiser sort” is a term deployed by Camden in this passage. For an account of Gabriel Harvey’s more famous usage, see Lesser and Stallybrass, “The First Literary Hamlet and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays,” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.4 (2008), 371-420.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 8.

with Brutus is an argument in support of his union of Scotland and England. In Monmouth's telling, Brutus ruled all of Britain. At his death the kingdom was fractured and parceled out to his three sons, with Locrine assuming dominion of England, Kamber of Wales, and Albanactus of Scotland. At James' restoration of the island's unified rule, and at his insistence, the name Great Britain proliferated in royalist political discourse.⁴⁵

Brutus and the giants remained core figures in public pageantry even as some historians openly doubted that they could have certain knowledge of the period in question. Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612) stands as a strikingly apt instance of this uneasy pairing of popular belief and scholarly skepticism. Though the project as presented to the reader in 1612 and subsequent printings do not announce its collaborative authorship on title pages, the historian John Selden supplied the "illustrations" that annotated the poem's first songs. Drayton waxed poetic about the features of Great Britain; Selden complemented and corrected with a historian's rigidity. The title page of Drayton's work, furthermore, lays out the complications of writing this kind of history and poetry in an era increasingly skeptical of the non-factually verifiable. Its full title reads as such: *Poly-Olbion. Or A Chorographicall Description of Tracts, Rivers, Mountaines, Forests, and other Parts of this renowned Isle of Great Britaine, with intermixtures of the most Remarquable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, Rarities, Pleasures, and Commodities of the Same*. Participating in the trending minor genre of chorography, Drayton's poetic project borrows the representational strategies popularized by historiographers like Camden and infuses such descriptive geography with verse. Descriptions of the land, rivers, and forests, the common subjects of chorography, are interlaced with entertaining stories collectively "digested in a poem."

⁴⁵ Parray, 156. See also Helgerson, 146-7.

With the raw materials of the nation's past and physical features poetically "digested," Selden's illustrations name and expound upon the particularities of the undigested source material.⁴⁶ Put more cynically, the illustrations clarify what the verse obscures. The scope of Drayton's poetic project renders the inclusion of heroes, nymphs, and shepherds all but required, leading to frustration on the part of Selden. It is clear in the illustrations that Selden fundamentally opposes Drayton's untroubled mixing of history with the unverifiable. Selden describes his role in the project in this way:

Permit mee thus much of these Notes to My Friend. What the Verse oft, with allusion, as supposing a full knowing Reader, lets slip; or in winding steps of Personating Fictions (as some times) so infolds, that suddaine conceipt cannot abstract a Forme of the clothed Truth, I have, as I might, *Illustrated*.⁴⁷

Selden's address to the reader expresses his weary attitude regarding the project of historical poetry. In the hands of a poet, he contends, the subject matter is liable to be misconstrued in service of dramatic flourish or narrative convenience. More specifically, the representational quality of the verse has the potential to remove access to truths conveyed by the historical episodes. With allusions and "winding steps," the verse "infolds" the truth; poetic abstractions inherent to the meaning-making of verse, it seems, too often fail to deliver historical reality.

⁴⁶ The metaphor of digestion is not a straight-forward one for thinking through the role of the illustrations. Perhaps "regurgitation" is a more accurate corollary and corrective to the poem's "digestion." The sequencing of song and illustration also suggests a movement backwards to the "true" historical source material.

⁴⁷ Selden, "From the Author of the Illustrations," in *Poly-Olbion* (London: Printed for Matthew Lowndes, I. Browne, I. Helms, and I. Busbie), A2.

Drayton's first song of *Poly-Olbion* recounts the events that led the enslaved Brutus to fight for freedom and find a new home to perpetuate the Trojan race. The oracle points him to his new homeland:

To shew them where the stock of ancient Troy to place.
The Goddess, that both knew and lov'd the Troian race,
Reveal'd to him in dreames, that furthest to the West,
He should descrie the Ile of *Albion*, highlie blest;
With Giants latelie stor'd; their numbers now decaid;
By vanquishing the rest, his hopes should there be staid:
Where, from the stock of Troy, those puissant Kings should rise,
Whose conquests from the West, the world should scant suffice.⁴⁸

These fanciful details rely heavily on myth and oral tradition to compensate for an absence of objective data pertaining to ancient Albion. As verse, of course, it should be unsurprising that the story grows in embellishment beyond the bare points noted in the chronicles. Here even the rhyming couplets bolster the project of Trojan settlement in Albion. The rhyme words certify the fitting conjunction of “race” and “place,” insisting on the proper spatial location for the recently-captive population. In like fashion Brutus’ *45nstant45ion imperii* is “blest” in its movement “West,” as the colonial enterprise to New Troy has been prepared in advance. Affirming Susan Stewart’s claim that giants are always encountered on the brink of extinction, these giants represent a “decaid” population, and their displacement by a new people appears pre-ordained. The rhyming couplets work by a poetic logic that reinforces the meaning in the content while simultaneously propelling the reader to the next line. It is with this easy association between pleasing sound or vivid allusion and truth, however, that Selden will find greatest fault.

⁴⁸ Drayton, 10.

Following an elaborate description of a battle at Turon in Gaul, Brutus and his company make haste to their destined Isle. Drayton writes,

For *Albion* sayling then, th'arrived quicklie 46nst
(O! never in this world men halfe so ioyful were
With shoutes heard up to heaven, when they behelf the Land)
And in this verie place where Totnesse now doth stand,
First set their Gods of *Troy*, kissing the blessed shore;
Then, foraging this Ile, long promisd them before,
Amontst the ragged Cleeves those monstrous Giants sought:
Who (of their dreadfull kind) t'appall the Troians, brought
Great *Gogmagog*, an Oak that by the roots could teare:⁴⁹

In mixing the imaginative narration with concrete locales, the poem provides a clear instance of why an unsympathetic historian might worry. The lines enumerate the bends and twists of the landscape of present-day southwest England with the prized indifference of Stow in his *Survey*, yet quickly thereafter the poem recounts the striking blows of Brutus and Gogmagog in battle. The abutting of chorographical specificity of place and physical feature with euphuistic phrasing and unregulated fantasy affords credibility to the latter while tarnishing the objectivity of the former. The final line in the passage provides relative measurements for Gogmagog with an admittedly disorienting turn of phrase: “Great Gogmagog, an Oak that by the roots could teare.” The qualifying description initially metaphorizes the giant’s size by labeling him an oak. Gogmagog’s scale, it appears, is of the order of trees instead of humans. Yet the conclusion of the line clarifies its subject and corrects the reader’s error. Rather than relating size, the reference to the oak is indicative of the giant’s strength and his ability to uproot tall trees. I will return to

⁴⁹ Drayton, 11.

this subject and consider a similar effect involving scale and readerly confusion in *Paradise Lost* in the final section of this chapter.

Selden's corresponding illustrations (Figure 1) dissect with exacting precision the poem's flights of fancy. A line or fragment from the poet elicits paragraphs and pages and marginal commentary from the historian.



Figure 1. Selden's gloss of Drayton's poetic Albion. *Poly-Olbion* (London: Printed for Matthew

Lownes, I. Browne, I. Helms, and I. Busbie), 11.

Like Camden and others before him, Selden takes issue with the poetic tradition's adherence to the Brutus founding myth. He quotes a line from the poem: "Which now the *envious world* doth slander for a *dreame*." His illustration denounces Drayton in such harsh terms that it is no wonder that Selden is absent from subsequently printed parts of *Poly-Olbion*. He explains,

I should the sooner have beene of the Authors opinion (in more then Poeticall forme, standing for *Brute*) if any *Greeke* or *Latine* Storie authentique, speaking of *Aeneas* and his planting in *Latium*, were mention made of any such like thing. To reckon the learned men which denie him, or at least permit him not in coniecture, were too long a Catalogue...⁵⁰

Drayton's historical poem, Selden judges, lacks proper historical rigor to justify its claims. Even making allowances for admissible evidence from classical poems like the *Aeneid* is insufficient for corroborating the Trojan story. Traces of the Brutus founding myth simply cannot be found until at least a millennium later. The list of dissenting experts, Selden informs the reader, would require too much space to include it in the illustration; nevertheless, he proceeds to survey the usual objections for another page before moving on to another gloss.

Like Camden, Selden invokes the standard of conjecture in his refutation of Drayton and Brutus. As in Camden's *Britannia*, the limits of the scope of conjecture dictate the viability of any historical project that falls short of fact's high bar. Conjecture, as I have discussed previously in this chapter, granted Camden latitude in considering seriously those topics that sit at the edge of certainty and fact. More specifically, explanations for events in the distant past that lack the full accountability of historical method must be allowed as a means for testing ideas. Conjecture, he argued, is responsible for nothing less than propping up the whole of knowledge.

⁵⁰ Drayton, 17/C3R.

Selden here further specifies the parameters of conjecture, esteeming the Brutus story unworthy of its permissive mandate. Camden's and Selden's difference of opinion regarding the same standard seemingly derives from the level of detail afforded and the consideration of alternative possibilities. For Selden, *Poly-Olbion*'s lavish embellishment and narrative detail trip too far into the territory of fancy. Camden's chorography, however, flags its Brutus conjecture in order to debate its merits or even its suitability as a placeholder explanation until such time that direct evidence will clarify the matter. Drayton's chorography, according to the author of the illustrations, misleads its audience with Brutus by entertaining with pseudo-historical invention. The explanation is singular, the details untenable.

Selden finds greater fault with the Trojan story and the use of Brutus as an etymological explanation for the name Britain than he does with any other contention in the first songs of *Poly-Olbion*. When addressing the giants in particular, Selden glosses the reference to the "mighty" men the Trojans battled with a telling conditional:

If you trust our stories, you must instantly, the land then peopled with Giants, of vast bodily composure. I have read of the *Nephilium*, the *Raphaim*, *Anakim*, *Og*, *Goliath*, and other in holy writ: of *Mars*, *Tityus*, *Antaus*, *Turnus*, and the *Titans* in *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Ovid*, and of Adams stature (according to Jewish fiction) equaling at first the worlds Diameter;⁵¹

Those stories that condition belief in giants come in two varieties: sacred scripture and classical verse. For followers of the Bible the presence of giants in records of the distant past is nothing unusual. The Old Testament is littered with references to races of giants and their menacing way with humans. Jurisprudential history, it bears repeating, does not subject sacred scripture to its

⁵¹ Drayton, 20.

skeptical procedures, leaving it instead to its own standards of revealed truth. Likewise, Homer, Vergil, and Ovid attest to the durability of stories of giants and their menacing ways.

With classical *exempla* and scriptural *imprimatur*, however, the dispassionate historian finds himself caught between ideologies of scientism and faith. Selden considers with careful moderation the objective evidence in the matter:

I could think that there are some, as great Statures, as for the most part have beene, and that Giants were but of a somewhat more then vulgar excellence in bodie, and martiall performance. If you object the finding of great bones, which, measured by proportion, largely exceed our times. I first answer, that in some singulars, as Monsters rather then 50nstant, such prooffe hath bin; but withal, that both now and of ancient time, the eyes iudgement in such like hath beene, and is, subiect to much imposture; mistaking bones of huge beasts for humane...But this is no place to examine it.⁵²

With the blanket judgement that the eyes do not serve as reliable sources, Selden casts doubt on both ancient report and contemporary observation. Accounts of towering giants, he contends, likely more accurately describe above-average bodies. As with the *History of Cajanus the Swedish Giant*, the “giant” often is simply a very large human, perhaps one with atypical glandular function. An attempt here is made, as in Holinshed, to address the fossils of giants found and exhibited by naturalists. Yet whereas Holinshed determined these skeletal remains proof-positive of the existence of gargantuan bipeds, Selden sees in them a case of mistaken identity. These bones belong not to giants but to whales or elephants.

Crucially in this case Selden rejects the purported material evidence out of hand while leaving open the possibility that something approaching a giant could have existed. The lack of accurate fossil records does not disqualify belief in the tradition, rather the dearth of evidence

⁵² *ibid*, 21.

shifts the question decidedly to the domain of sacred history. Conjecture has no place in sacred history, and Selden makes no mention of his prior standard for this question. Giants, he resolves, may or may not have occupied Britain before Brutus, “but this is no place to examine it.” On matters for which the Bible and classical poetry are the authorities, the secular historian makes no comment.

Drayton and Selden’s collaborative chorography fails in its goal of sustaining productive dialog between historical verse and historical method. The historian does not return a decade later for the second part of the project, leaving the latter half of *Poly-Olbion* to stand on its own without notes, commentary, and references to source material. The cleaving of the historian’s contextualization arguably contributes to a more successful poem, one that no longer strives for the veneer of historicity conveyed by its rigorously historical apparatus.

A more harmonious merger of verse and history can be found in *Paradise Lost*’s description of Satan’s spear and its use of measure, gigantic scale, and relative comparison. I conclude by turning to this instance where, as with Gogmagog and the oak in *Poly-Olbion*, the poem confounds the reader by revising its scalar points of reference along the way. Following upon a debate between Satan and Beezelbub concerning their fallenness, the poem takes stock of the scene in this way:

He scarce had ceased when the superior fiend
Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.
His spear, to equal which the tallest pine

Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
Of some great admiral, were but a wand... (I.283-294)

I qualify this episode as more harmonious than that in Drayton insofar as it comfortably negotiates the demands of sacred history and early modern historiography when addressing giants. As it participates in the tradition of sacred history by narrating the falls of angels and humans, the poem evades secular historiography's jurisdiction and its regime of facts. More specifically, *Paradise Lost*'s comparative use of gigantic and human scales for describing other orders of being (angelic bodies, for example) is germane to the biblical source material that likewise acknowledges the existence of a race of giants.

Stanley Fish's now-standard reading of these lines of the poem in *Surprised by Sin* understands them to demonstrate *Paradise Lost*'s instructive inducements to mis-reading and self-correction. For Fish, the sequence of the lines encourages the reader to misidentify the size of Satan's spear as equaling a ship's mast for three simple reasons: reading takes place in time; line breaks correspond to mental pauses; and the mind orders successive details in the simplest scheme.⁵³ A correct interpretation of the size of the spear, Fish insists, requires the reader to reevaluate the terms of comparison and thereby recognize that there is no quantifiable relationship between spear, mast, tree, and wand. Instead, the lines inform the reader of a failure of comparison when the subjects of the simile are constellated. The spear stands in relation to the pine as the pine to the wand, but the spear is unlike both.

Though the logical statement of relative magnitudes is sound, it is unable to provide concrete information to the reader because the simile yolks earthly and otherworldly objects.

⁵³ Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1967), 23.

Fish writes, “Paradoxically, our awareness of the inadequacy of what is described and what we can apprehend provides, if only negatively, a sense of what cannot be described and what we cannot apprehend. Thus Milton is able to suggest a reality beyond this one by forcing us to feel, dramatically, its unavailability.”⁵⁴ While Fish is right to point out the disjointed nature of the simile, his conclusion that the effect is to render the spear’s size inaccessible is less persuasive. The broader poetic analysis of Satan’s spear and shield takes great effort to translate angelic dimensions with recourse to astronomical measurement and comparison to giants. Satan’s “ponderous shield...Hung on his shoulders like the moon, Whose orb / Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views” (287-288). This first portion of the epic simile enlists Galileo and telescopic scientific observation to express the relative size of the shield. Here the power of the “optic glass” translates the alien moon features with an earthly vocabulary, making visible “new lands, / Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe” (290-291). Furthermore, the simile’s use of the moon figures Satan as a minor Atlas—a Titan giant—while also providing a literal and material reference for scale. The heavenly body of the moon gives the reader some grasp of the heavenly body of Satan “moving toward the shore.”

The perspective for viewing the shield and spear is resolutely earthly. The simile supplies specifically Norwegian pines and the eye of Galileo studying the moon from specific Florentine locations. In the case of the shield, the moon is an apposite comparison because of its great remove from earth. The scale of the moon provides dimensions for Satan otherwise unavailable to the earth-bound reader. Similarly, the Norwegian pine, lacking direct comparison to the spear, offers a relation characterized by comical dwarfing. Since the tree is on earth, the Satanic spear makes miniature the Norwegian pine like the pine does the wand. My use of the descriptors

⁵⁴ *ibid*, 27.

“dwarf” and “miniature” point back to the role of the gigantic in accurately comprehending angel size. Fish acknowledges the embedded reference in the simile to the giant Cyclops Polyphemus, who in the *Aeneid* is identified “as a lopped pine and likened in the *Odyssey* to ‘the mast of some black ship of twenty oars.’”⁵⁵ With the aid of references to Atlas and the Cyclops, then, the poem quite directly informs the reader of its subject’s dimensions by scaling up to the fittingly gigantic. Unlike in Fish’s interpretation, size is knowable, if overwhelming.

Milton’s contention in his *History* that including stories of giants serves to provide matter for poets bears fruit in his own epic. His sources for depicting his angels range from classical epic and early modern history to the Bible. These three arenas that historiographers frequently pointed to as worthy of belief hang together comfortably with the common subject of the giant. The peripherally legitimate historical subject, as this chapter has demonstrated, sits teetering on the precipice of myth throughout the seventeenth century. And though giants eventually join fairies, trolls, dragons and other beings discarded by modern and scientific historiography, their presence as objects of conjecture allow them to persist at least a while longer. The subsequent chapters in this dissertation proceed to track the shifting territory of the historical as it draws more defined lines distinguishing its purview from *story*. The diverging paths of story and history, however, do not proceed in orderly fashion; they intersect, overlap, and wander.

The recent turn in literary studies to questions of temporal and spatial scale has brought renewed attention to the outsized and the disproportionate. In theorizing the post-human comedy, for example, Mark McGurl has turned to the appearance and disappearance of giants in the rise of the realist novel, writing

⁵⁵ *ibid*, 24.

This is a story about giants, about giants in literature but also, and more importantly, about the disappearance of giants from literary history or, rather, their migration from the mainline of that history to its margins, such that the phenomenon traditionally described as the rise of the novel occurs largely unburdened by the supersized being who live on in children's literature and cinema and advertisements for frozen vegetables.⁵⁶

"If the triumph of the novel," he suggests, "is also the triumph of its realism, then that triumph would appear to have required the gradual culling of the herd of literary giants...to get real."⁵⁷

McGurl takes for granted the un-real condition of giants, grouping them with elves, trolls, and wizards. Naming and excluding the un-real from the novel, he contends, makes room for "representations of everyday life in which that life is treated seriously." Emphasizing the comic elements within the quotidian seriousness of the eighteenth-century novel, McGurl concentrates on "the giant's defining feature, his size, and not his obvious fictionality."⁵⁸ Like Boreman, playing with the scale of the material book for comedic effect, McGurl examines the dizzying psychological effects of stumbling upon a giant footprint in *Robinson Crusoe* given the "obvious fictionality" of the giant and his consequential generic transgression in appearing in the realist novel. It is essential for McGurl, for example, that giants no longer be associated with the non-fictional in *Robinson Crusoe* to render intelligible the psychic turmoil Crusoe suffers when hallucinating a giant. The giants must be un-real if their appearance is to be symptomatic. The legal historian Barbara Shapiro has noted the significance of this collision between fact and fiction: "Without a belief in the value of 'facts' a fiction based on fictional 'facts' would not have been possible. Thus Defoe, insisting that he was merely an editor, described Robinson

⁵⁶ Mark McGurl, "Gigantic Realism: The Rise of the Novel and the Comedy of Scale" in *Critical Inquiry* 43.2 (2017), 403.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, 403-4

⁵⁸ *ibid*, 404.

Crusoe as ‘a just history of fact; nor is there any appearance of fiction in it...’.”⁵⁹ Like the play of the miniature size of the printed text of *History of Cajanus*, these observations about giants in *Robinson Crusoe* presume giants to be fanciful. This chapter has detailed a history of the literariness of giants and their winding path in the seventeenth century away from history.

⁵⁹ Barbara Shapiro, “The Concept “Fact”: Legal Origins and Cultural Diffusion,” in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 26.2 (1994), 239.

Chapter 2 | Before and After Romance: *Cymbeline*, Biography, and Shakespearean History

Waking from a strange fifth-act slumber during which Jupiter and several ghosts appear in a dream, *Cymbeline*'s virtuous Posthumus remarks on his tantalizing visions:

Sleep, thou hast been a grandsire and begot
A father to me, and thou hast created
A mother and two brothers. But, O scorn,
Gone! They went hence so soon as they were born.
And so I am awake (5.4.93-97).¹

The orphaned Posthumous here conscripts Sleep himself in the production of a patrilineage, fashioning the abstraction as a begetting sire. Sleep likewise “created” a mother and siblings to fill their waking void. This familial production occurs out of time’s usual sequences: father is begotten after son, if only for the span of Posthumus’s slumber. Furthermore, the enjambment of the first two lines suggests that Posthumus’s own generation as well as his father’s arise without the aid of women. Perhaps just as curiously, these newly created family members cease to exist “as soon as they were born.” Posthumus’s narrative of his dream, as out of joint as its procreation timeline may be, moves from beginning to end to explain his current state of conscious confusion.

Jupiter’s tablet that Posthumus discovers upon awakening offers little help for deciphering the convoluted plot. Having read the cryptic message foretelling of long-dead cedar branches reviving, Posthumus considers his predicament:

¹ References to the play, unless otherwise noted, are found in William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare, Cymbeline*, ed. Valerie Wayne (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017).

Tis still a dream, or else such stuff as madmen
Tongue and brain not; either both, or nothing,
Or senseless speaking, or speaking such
As sense cannot untie. Be what it is,
The action of my life is like it, which I'll keep,
If but for sympathy (5.4.116-121).

The presumably explanatory tablet grants little clarity, as the prophesy effectively blurs the boundary between wakefulness and dreaming, sanity and madness. Posthumus's reading of the tablet and his dream convey the puzzlement that follow from a disordered plot and convoluted narrative. His resolution, nevertheless, presents a model for a reaction distinct from that of *Cymbeline*'s editors frustrated with a play presenting similar difficulties. "Sympathy," Posthumus announces, provides compensation for text "as sense cannot untie." Posthumus's own past and future, obscured in either direction by unknown family and prophetic prose, find similarities or homologues in the opaque text—"the action of my life is like it"—that affectively comfort the man unmoored by the writing of his own history. "Sympathy" offers vague familiarity for a narrative that resists conventional expectations and concrete detail. Given *Cymbeline*'s own challenges as a play that thwarts generic legibility and Enlightenment conceptions of historical representation, critical "sympathy" might open space for the kind of flexibility necessary to receive the play according to standards alien to the present.

This chapter traces the intersecting trajectories of early modern genres of the stage and historical epistemology across the English seventeenth century to refine critical sensitivity to some of Shakespeare's plays distorted by the modernization of historical writing. I argue that shifts in the boundaries of permissible history in the seventeenth century obscure *Cymbeline*'s relation to the traditional canon of Shakespeare's history plays, thereby withholding from

Cymbeline the aura of historicity radiating from the tetralogies and others in the Folio canon. In realigning the play with these standard histories, this chapter challenges the logic underpinning the creation of Shakespearean romance in the nineteenth century to recuperate a more diverse sense of the history genre. I contend that seventeenth-century stage histories, especially those narrating the reigns of monarchs in the deep past, permit a more extravagant range of acceptably historical plots than acknowledged by contemporary criticism. Debates about generic affiliation are not merely terminological quibbles. Examining *Cymbeline*'s genres with the aid of conceptual archaeology offers nuance for understanding what Hans Robert Jauss refers to as the horizon of expectations readers and audiences bring to a play.² Historicizing interpretive possibilities signaled by the affixing and revising of generic nomination avails readers of the flexibility inherent in the ostensibly rigid categories produced by editing.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation detailed the upheavals in historiographic methods at the turn of the seventeenth century by scrutinizing justifications for the inclusion of retrospectively implausible subjects in the historical record. Examining the consequences of imposing a standard predicated on evidentiary facts onto the distant past clarifies the limits of this emergent epistemology. To compensate for the inadequacy, historians like William Camden crafted and theorized an alternative standard termed conjecture to regulate the historiographic relationship to ancient Britain. In this chapter I investigate related problems of historical classification for genres of stage drama arising from a critical interest in another form of historical writing: biography. Much like the writing of ancient Britain and its indigenous giants, the life of William

² Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Timothy Bahti trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 79.

Shakespeare lacks reliable information that might bestow credibility to the project of biographical criticism and editing.

The classification and reception of *Cymbeline*, moreover, has depended on the romantic understanding of the author in his mature and 'late' style, free from the constraints of youth and the old genres. *Cymbeline*, then, sits at the intersection of two modes of historical interpretation. In the first instance, the play stages ancient Britain at the edge of the Roman empire during a pivotal period that witnessed the birth of Christ. This shifts from BC to AD time marks perhaps the most consequential period shift for early modern historical thinking, as it initiates the ascendance of a Christian empire to supplant the Roman. In the second instance *Cymbeline* is interpreted as a particularly Shakespearean dramatic romance, and the play's critics depend on a history of the author's life to make sense of the play's seeming unconventionality. Once subjected to the demands of modern historical accuracy, however, neither the play's representation of the distant past nor criticism's representation of the life of Shakespeare prove reliable. Nevertheless, reckoning with the play without recourse to authorial biography and Enlightenment conceptions of historiography, I maintain, presents us with a strangely historical play.

I.

Samuel Johnson's withering assessment of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* leaves little uncertainty about the sources of the critic's distaste:

This play has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes, but they are obtained at the expense of much incongruity. To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names, and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.³

The unsparing assessment is the totality of Johnson's commentary in the General Observations of his posthumously published collection of the plays. In calculating the price for the drama's "folly," "absurdity," "confusion," and "impossibility," Johnson concludes that the play's "just sentiments," "natural dialogues," and "pleasing scenes" are insufficient to overcome *Cymbeline*'s inanity. The play's "unresisting imbecility," according to Johnson, arises from the improbability of the plot's twists and turns as well as from a fundamental disregard for temporal and historical consistency. Disrespecting the historical differences that distinguish the play's setting—around the transition from BC to AD time—from that of its composition—around 1609 or 1610—violates the more sophisticated tastes of the modern reader. Johnson's preference for the structure of classical drama here shines through, and *Cymbeline* serves as a cautionary tale for the complications that arise from transgressing expectations of instant exactness with promiscuous anachronism.

Johnson's General Observations of *Cymbeline* lodge between his considerations of Shakespeare's history plays and of *King Lear*, thus constructing for the reader an array of judgements regarding dramatic historical verisimilitude. Assuming a critical posture antithetical to that informing his observations about *Cymbeline*, Johnson carves out allowances for *Lear*'s "improbabilities" that offer a masterful lesson in historicist literary method. "On the seeming

³ Samuel Johnson, *General Observations on The Plays of William Shakespeare*, (London, printer for J. and R. Tonson, 1756), 78.

improbability of Lear's conduct, it may be observed," Johnson explains, "that he is represented according to histories at that time vulgarly received as true. And, perhaps, if we turn our thoughts upon the barbarity and ignorance of the age to which this story is referred, it will appear not so unlikely as while we estimate Lear's manners by our own."⁴ Like *Cymbeline* immediately preceding it in the General Observations, *Lear* operates from a premise that to modern readers appears absurd. Who would think it probable that a ruler would seek to partition a kingdom on the basis of a performance of filial love? Johnson's answer, like that assumed by many twenty-first century critics, affirms the necessity of historicizing our early modern objects of study. Projecting latter-day mores onto the past, the thinking goes, disrespects historical difference.⁵ Once correctly aligned to the standards of the period in question, the critic will understand Lear's actions as "not so unlikely."

Johnson concludes his assessment of the credibility of Lear's actions and *King Lear*'s plot with appeals to the probability of such narratives unfolding in comparative eighteenth-century framework. He explains, "Such preference of one daughter to another, or resignation of dominion on such conditions, would be yet credible, if told of a petty prince of Guinea or Madagascar."⁶ In this analogy, Johnson likens the BC-era reign of Lear to that of African rulers of his present. Lear's incredible and improbable action, once subjected to the standards of a distant time or a contemporary African kingdom, come in to critical and historical focus:

Shakespeare, indeed, by the mention of his earls and dukes, has given us the idea of times more civilized, and of life regulated by softer manners; and the truth is, that though he so nicely discriminates, and so minutely describes the characters of men, he commonly

⁴ Johnson, 78-9.

⁵ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 1-4.

⁶ Ibid, 79.

neglects and confounds the characters of ages, by mingling customs ancient and modern, English and foreign.⁷

Lear's characters express a more “civilized” age than warranted by their historical and geographic setting. Yet to understand and appreciate *King Lear*, Johnson insists, readers must esteem Shakespeare’s facility with the “characters of men” more greatly than his respect for the “character of ages.” As Shakespeare’s characters are deemed timeless in this posture, the sins of anachronistic representation are absolved.

That eighteenth-century Madagascar did in fact witness political turmoil analogous to *Lear* and his daughters in ancient Britain supplies a curious turn in Johnson’s strict historicism. A national partition similar to that instigated by *Lear* occurred in Madagascar in the early eighteenth century when King Andriamasinavalona split the kingdom among his four sons. King Andrianampoinimerina reunited the kingdom in 1793.⁸ Meanwhile Guinea, for the majority of Johnson’s life, was governed under the Imamate of Futa Jallon, a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic theocratic state with alternating rulers and a written constitution.⁹ The incongruent analogy conscripts African kingdoms of the eighteenth century to argue the basis of modern historicist literary criticism. Seeming to affirm W.F.G. Hegel’s pronouncement that Africa has

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See Ian Hodder, *Symbolic and Structural Archaeology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 59. For a broader survey of early modern Africa, see Bethwell Ogot, *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1992). Britain was likewise partitioned following the death of its first king, Brutus. His three sons Locrinus, Albanactus, and Kamber respectively rule England, Scotland, and Wales. See Holinshed, 9-10.

⁹ See Colleen E. Kriger, *Making Money: Life, Death, and Early Modern Trade on Africa’s Guinea Coast* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2017) and Bernard Salvaing, *Colonial Rule and Fulfulde Literature in Futa Jallon in Sudanic Africa* 15 (2004): 111-132.

no history, Johnson collapses the vast history he respects so insistently to equate his contemporary Madagascar and Guinea with ancient, pre-Christian Britain.¹⁰

Johnson's harshly contrasting evaluations of *Cymbeline* and *King Lear* for nearly identical faults appear all the more striking in light of their proximate locations on the page. This evaluative inconsistency, arising from a general consensus pertaining to the characterological merits of either play, resolves with the rise of a new generation of Shakespeare critics eager to move away from the standards of historical exactness in favor of the elasticity of romance. William Harness' 1838 edition of the plays, for example, reproduces Johnson's familiar denunciation of *Cymbeline* along with an impassioned rejoinder from Dr. Nathan Drake immediately following. Drake's note reads,

Of the enormous injustice of the above sentence, nearly every page of *Cymbeline* will, to a reader of any taste or discrimination, bring the most decisive evidence. That it possesses many of the too common inattentions of Shakespeare, that it exhibits a frequent violation to costume, and a singular confusion of nomenclature, cannot be denied; but there are trifles light as air, when contrasted with its merits, which are of the very essence of dramatic worth, rich and full in all that breathes of vigour, animation, and intellect; in all that elevates the fancy, and improves the heart.¹¹

In Harness' edition of *Cymbeline*, the contrasting assessments of the play from Johnson and Drake appear at the conclusion of Act V, with Drake's labored defense overwhelming the page and serving as the final word. The latter critic, finding the play's inconsistencies and confusions a fair trade for the attainment of "the very essence of dramatic worth," notably leans on the evaluation of another "of equal learning with, and superior taste to, Johnson..." Bolstering the

¹⁰ On Hegel and Africa, see Ronald Kuyendall, "Hegel and Africa: An Evaluation of Africa in the Philosophy of History" in *Journal of Black Studies* 23.4 (1993), 571-581.

¹¹ *Complete Works: With Dr. Johnson's Preface...*, ed. William Harness (London: Printed for Scott, Webster, and Geary, 1838): 729.

reputation of Shakespeare's odd drama, Drake enlists Friedrich Schlegel and his ascendant regime of romantic interpretation. "He has here connected," Drake contends, "a novel of Boccaccio with traditionary tales of the ancient Britons, reaching back to the times of the first Roman emperors; and he has contrived by the most gentle transitions, to blend together into a harmonious whole, the social manners of the latest times, heroic deeds, and even with the appearance of the gods."¹² What was for Johnson a messy contrivance here is refashioned by Drake and Schlegel a singular achievement. The play's blending of disparate historical episodes grants access to a transcendent and "harmonious whole" that reaches beyond the constraints of narrative plausibility. *Cymbeline*'s failure to obey tragedy's generic conventions and plot structures opens the possibility for something more striking and revelatory than historical coherence permits, something romantic.

Our understanding of Shakespeare's genres derives in large part from inferences pertaining to decisions about the printing and organization of quarto and folio texts during and after Shakespeare's life. Before 1623, half of the plays we take to comprise the Shakespearean dramatic canon had been printed in some form. Notable newcomers in the First Folio include *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Cymbeline*. Meanwhile, the eighteen or so materially extant plays were edited and reprinted for the First Folio, providing ample opportunities for subsequent centuries' critics to collate and compare. Which texts, they asked, align most closely with the performance script, the fair copy, or Shakespeare's intent? What interpretive cruxes register through printing's proliferation of textual variance? Unsurprisingly, this latter grouping

¹² Ibid. See Friedrich Schlegel, "Remarks on the Romance-Poetry of the Middle Ages and on Shakespeare," in *The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Friedrich von Schlegel*, E. Millington (trans.), London: H. G. Bohn.

of plays, with visibly distinct material instantiations, has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars working in the history of the book and critical bibliography. The plays without a pre-1623 quarto history have received comparatively less of this targeted attention, and the cases opened regarding the many *Lears* or *Hamlets* rarely find parallel investigations for plays like *Cymbeline* that appear in print only after the death of the author.

In the approximately four centuries since the play's first printing in 1623, *Cymbeline* has been hailed as a tragedy, a comedy, and a tragicomedy before being shuffled into the comparatively novel grouping of Shakespearean romance. *Cymbeline*, like all of Shakespeare's canonical history plays as well as *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, finds its source in Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1586). Unlike the Folio history 1 and 2 *Henry IV*, *Richard II* and *Richard III*, *Cymbeline* takes place during antiquity, with the reign of its eponymous king straddling the BC-AD divide. In performance by 1611, *Cymbeline* stages a complex plot surrounding the first-century ruler of Britain, missing heirs and a succession crisis, disguises and mistaken identities, and a dispute over Britain's tribute to Rome.¹³ Like some other English early modern chronicle narratives of ancient history, the play makes reference to pre-Christian deities, and it concludes with a fifth act *deus ex machina* in which Jupiter descends to help unravel the play's many tangled threads. The rise of the modern fact and its significance for historiographic methods registered in an uneven and inconsistent "sifting" of fact from fiction, both on the stage and in the chronicle. With uncertain factual legitimacy, some of the earliest

¹³ While it is generally accepted that *Cymbeline* was composed in either 1609 or 1610, it is unclear if it preceded or followed *The Winter's Tale*. Notes on a 1611 performance likewise do not indicate if the play was staged at the outdoor Globe theater or the indoor Blackfriars, but the technical capability required to execute the appearance of Jupiter in Act 5 suggest that Blackfriars as a likely site of performance. See Jean Howard, "Introduction to *Cymbeline*" in *The Norton Anthology of William Shakespeare*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 2964.

episodes from the English chronicles have found themselves edited out of modern histories to comport with evolving standards of credibility. The apparent fancifulness of the record of this era of ancient history, as I demonstrate below, contributes to the creation of Shakespearean romance.

The Folio's Catalogue neatly and in grand fashion arranged the plays together by genre, adding to the classical division of Comedy and Tragedy to include History. The history play, extant in England for less than a century, only recently had come into fashion at the turn of the seventeenth century. Consequently, its generic conventions and boundaries lacked the expansive theorization and definition of classical genres.¹⁴ The Folio, in addition to regularizing the titles and chronological sequencing, also served to standardize the category of early modern stage history more generally. While history had been used in some earlier quartos to denote a specific accounting of a historic event concerning the rule of a monarch, the term also appeared in the titles of printed plays less strictly to mean "story," as in the *History of the Merchant of Venice*, a quarto title of the popular comedy. This liberal use of the term in play titles consequently has made its absence or presence on the page inconclusive evidence for ascertaining a work's genre. The Catalogue groupings, however, make the logic of its categorizations appear intuitive.

¹⁴ For a recent study of the early modern reception and interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, see Russ Leo, *Tragedy as Philosophy in the Reformation World* (Oxford: OUP, 2019).

A C A T A L O G V E

of the feuerall Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies contained in this Volume.

COMEDIES.

 He Tempest.	Folio 1.
<i>The two Gentlemen of Verona.</i>	20
<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor.</i>	38
<i>Measure for Measure.</i>	61
<i>The Comedy of Errors.</i>	85
<i>Much ado about Nothing.</i>	101
<i>Love's Labour lost.</i>	122
<i>A Midsummer Nights Dreame.</i>	145
<i>The Merchant of Venice.</i>	163
<i>As you Like it.</i>	185
<i>The Taming of the Shrew.</i>	208
<i>All is well, that Ends well.</i>	230
<i>Twelfth-Night, or what you will.</i>	255
<i>The Winters Tale.</i>	304

HISTORIES.

<i>The Life and Death of King John.</i>	Fol. 1.
<i>The Life & death of Richard the second.</i>	23

<i>The First part of King Henry the fourth.</i>	46
<i>The Second part of K. Henry the fourth.</i>	74
<i>The Life of King Henry the Fifth.</i>	69
<i>The First part of King Henry the Sixth.</i>	96
<i>The Second part of King Hen. the Sixth.</i>	120
<i>The Third part of King Henry the Sixth.</i>	147
<i>The Life & Death of Richard the Third.</i>	173
<i>The Life of King Henry the Eighth.</i>	205

TRAGEDIES.

<i>The Tragedy of Coriolanus.</i>	Fol. 1.
<i>Titus Andronicus.</i>	31
<i>Romeo and Juliet.</i>	53
<i>Timon of Athens.</i>	80
<i>The Life and death of Julius Cesar.</i>	109
<i>The Tragedy of Macbeth.</i>	131
<i>The Tragedy of Hamlet.</i>	152
<i>King Lear.</i>	283
<i>Othello, the Moore of Venice.</i>	310
<i>Anthony and Cleopatra.</i>	346
<i>Cymbeline King of Britaine.</i>	369

The titles of Shakespeare's Folio History plays assume a form distinct from earlier quarto instantiations, with each title coming to nominate all or part of a regnal period. The Folio compilers regularized the grouping of plays by inserting a monarch's name in the three titles that appeared in quarto form without one. Where spaced allowed, "King" was affixed to each play title; and the three titles that had previously included *Tragedy* in quarto form dropped it in Folio.¹⁵ The removal of *Tragedy* and insertion of *King* in the Catalogue History titles indicates the central importance of the English monarch to the narratives contained within this version of

¹⁵ See Margreta de Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 45-80.

the Shakespeare genre. It is noteworthy, then, that the only other plays on the page to share the commitment to *King* in the title are *Cymbeline King of Britaine* and *King Lear*.

The relatively new genre of the stage did not shy from the terrain of tragedy. Dramatists turned to England's proliferating chronicle narrations for subjects worthy of tragic treatment for the public theater. Norton and Sackville's *Gorboduc* (1561/1565), likely the earliest blank-verse English drama, takes as its subject the eighteenth ruler of England. Having assumed power in the year of the world 3418, Gorboduc's reign began 313 years after the beginning of the rule of King Lear. Tragedy and history braid one another in the project of national mythmaking and the construction of shared cultural memory.¹⁶ As in the context of *Cymbeline*, the plots of tragic and historical drama often overlapped, and the interlinked genres share a sense that actions are inescapable, pre-ordained, or divinely sanctioned. In her introduction to the Norton Shakespeare, for example, Jean Howard makes an affirmative case for the romance designation, "even though in the First Folio of 1623 it was grouped with the tragedies, probably because it dramatizes serious historical matter taken from the reign of an early Briton King."¹⁷

This conceptual interpenetration should prompt critics to consider, then, how the Folio Catalogue justifies the neat separations of its genres. Why not have *Lear* and *Macbeth* and the Roman plays, for example, included with the histories? Recent scholarship has proffered persuasive explications regarding the Folio compilers rubric limiting these several English and Roman plays: First, the Folio's history genre concerns only English monarchs; and second, only the lives of monarchs ruling after the Conquest of 1066 qualify. *Cymbeline*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth*

¹⁶ On *Gorboduc*'s relation to historical memory, see Kyle Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form: Making the Early Modern English Nation* (Lanham: University of Delaware Press, 2015), esp. pp. 29-54.

¹⁷ Howard, 2964.

all are set before the rule of William the Conqueror, the acclaimed progenitor of the subsequent twenty-five kings of England. In the Folio, at least, narratives of England's monarchs can be disarticulated from the tragic genre, so long as those historical events unfolded after William I's reign.

While this explanation elucidates the tripartite categorization scheme of the Folio, it provides little insight into a non-Folio logic of dramatic genre or of plays of the period termed histories by dramatists other than Shakespeare. The printing and performance history of *King Lear* serves as an apt example of the limits of the Folio categorization schema, since for *Lear* history has proven difficult to evade. In the seventeenth century the play was a tragedy only while bound together with Shakespeare's other works in the Folios.¹⁸ Having been advertised in two quarto editions prior to the 1623 Folio as a chronicle history, subsequent single-play editions of *Lear* dropped the tragic association for the next century. Likewise, the Pavier quartos printed by William Jaggard with forged dates for the so-called False Folio of 1619 demonstrate the unfixed generic nomenclature of Shakespeare's history and history-adjacent plays. This collection, the first attempt to collect and sell Shakespeare's dramatic *oeuvre*, hails *Lear* as "*M. William Shak-speare, His True Chronicle History of the life and death of King Lear, and his three daughters...*"¹⁹ *Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3*, in contrast, appear together under the title *The*

¹⁸ The quarto editions of 1608 and 1619, like the anonymous *True Chronicle History of King Leir* printed in 1605 and entered into the Stationers' Register on 15 May 1594, advertise the play as a history. Performance history, likewise, affirms this toggle between history and tragedy. Nahum Tate's sanitized vision of the historical drama dominated the stage from at least 1681 until 1838. See Stanley Wells, "Introduction" from *King Lear* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 63.

¹⁹ *M. William Shak-speare, His True Chronicle History of the life and death of King Lear, and his three daughters*. (London: Printed for Nathaniel Butter, 1608). The quarto title page is falsely dated. See Alfred W. Pollard, *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos: A Study in the Bibliography of Shakespeare's Plays 1593-1685*, Oxford, OUP, 1909), 81-107.

Whole Contention Between the Two Famous Houses, Lancaster and York...Divided into Two Parts. These examples from the False Folio and the First Folio demonstrate the indeterminacy provided by the affixing of ‘history’ to printed play titles. My observation is that history was an operative generic mode for plays like *Lear* and *Cymbeline* in a broader way than the Folio presentation allows. The neat delineations between the genres of tragedy and history marked materially by the Folio’s Catalogue obscure the unsettled nature of the bounds of historical drama in the seventeenth century.

Given the relative youth of the English history play, the generic slippage that so often characterized the formal and material presentation of plays representing historical persons and events in the chronicles should be unsurprising. That the status of these same plays appears now as uncontroversial affirms the success of a persuasive editorial and critical history. At least one early spectator associated the play with the historical record of its source in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, noting its setting “in Lucius time.” Dr. Simon Forman’s notes from a performance of the play in 1611 comment on Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* with recourse to the chronicle narration of the ancient British ruler:

of Cimbalin king of England Remember also the storri of Cymbalin king of England in Lucius tyme. Howe Lucius Cam from octauus Cesar for Tribut and being denied. After sent Lucius with a greate Arme of Souldiars who landed at milford hauen. And After wer vanquished by Cimbalin and Lucius taken prisoner and all by means of 3 outlawes of the which 2 of them were the sons of Cimbelim token from him when they were but 2 yers old. By an old man whom Cymbalin banished. And he kept them as his own sons...²⁰

²⁰ Samuel Forman, *The Booke of Plaies and Notes therof per forman for Common Pollicie*. Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 208, folio 206 recto (1611). Accessed via <https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/resource/document/formans-account-seeing-plays-globe-macbeth-cymbeline-winters-tale>

Tellingly, Forman's notes in response to the performance frame his recapitulation with reference to "Lucius time." Distinct from the Lucius in the play, Forman's reference to "Lucius time" denotes an historical era instead of a person.

As Raphael Holinshed makes clear in his entry, time and history weigh greatly in Cymbeline's reign. The entry in Holinshed's volume for Kymbeline begins, "The son of Theomantius was of the Britaynes made king after the decesse of his father; in the yeere of the world. 3944. After the building of Rome. 728. And before the birth of oure Savioure. 23."²¹ The chronicle clocks the historical setting by constellating chronological systems, most significantly by counting up from creation ("the year of the world"), from the founding of Rome, and from the beginning of the Christian era. This last origin point for determining the year coincides with the era bracketed by the play, as the birth of Christ takes place during this regnal period. *Cymbeline*, then, straddles the most consequential period divide for Christendom. The entry continues by compounding historical markers in a way that compensates for the scarcity of documented evidence that might elucidate the ruler's life:

This man as some write, was brought up at Rome, and there made knight by Augustus Cesar, under whome he served in the warres, and was in suche favour with him, that he was at libertie to pay his tribute or not. Little other mention is made of his doyngs, except that during his rainge, the Saviour of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only sone of God, was borne of a Virgin about the. 23. Yeare of the reygne of this Kymbalyne, and in the. 42. Of the Emperor Octavius Augustus, that is to witte, in the year of the Worlde. 3966. In the second year of the. 194. Olympiade, after the building of the Citie of Rome. 750. Nigh at an end, after the universal flood. 2311. From the birth of Abraham. 2019. After the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt. 1513 after the captivity of Babylon 535. From the building of the Temple by Solomon. 1034. And from the arrival of Brute. 1116.²²

²¹ Holinshed, 50.

²² Holinshed, *History of England*, 45-6.

The Virgin Birth, the Great Flood, the founding of Britain, the birth of Abraham, the Exodus of the Israelites, and other points of reference swarm in acknowledgement of the world-historical significance of Cymbeline's monumentally significant reign. As dramatic source material, this king's period offers something decidedly distinct from tragedy. Rather than conclude with piles of bodies and disarray for the monarchy and body politic, *Cymbeline's* fifth act stages a family reunion, a nation healed, and the preservation of the king's line.

Despite the historical stakes of the play, editors have eschewed *Cymbeline's* historical associations since the early eighteenth century. Lewis Theobald, in the first note on the play in his 1726 *Shakespeare Restored*, takes the play's relationship with history to task:

Mr Pope has remark'd that little, besides the Names, is historical in this Play. On the contrary, it appears to me that the Author has taken pains to insert Points of History, both British and Roman, in the Detail of his Scenary. Indeed, he sometimes puts a Change upon Facts, as well as subverts the Chronology of Actions; of which I shall take particular notice in the proper Places.²³

Theobald here argues that the abundance of history in the play indeed is the problem. As Johnson laments the play's—and Shakespeare's—disrespect for the “character of ages,” Theobald remarks that Shakespeare does not follow “the Chronology of Actions” or the strict timeline and details of specific historical events as specified in the source material. Though a fair description of the play's divergence from chronicle record, Theobald establishes a difficult standard for dramatic representation to meet. It is challenging to imagine the absence of similar sequencing

²³ Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored: or, A Specimen of the Many Errors, as well Committed, as Unamended, by Mr. Pope in his Late Edition of the Poet* (London: Printed for R. Francklin under Tom's, 1726), 205. On the eighteenth-century critical turn to anachronism and the application of chronology to poetry, see John T. Lynch, *The Age of Elizabeth in The Age of Johnson* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

flexibility in the First Folio's history plays. The charge that *Cymbeline* suffers from an unacknowledged and unforgiveable case of *hysteron proteron* belies the clunky application of a rigid Enlightenment standard of historiography to a dramatic work. Theobald's promise to "take particular notice" of the play's anachronisms, however, assumes that this kind of temporal malleability is a compositional error in need of editorial acknowledgment and correction.

Anachronism's constitutive critique of errors in temporal succession requires, however, a taste for the fixity of chronological exactness sensed less strongly before the seventeenth century in England than after. According to de Grazia, the inaugural appearance of *anachronism* in English occurs in Thomas Blount's *Glossographia or a Dictionary* (1656) to mean an error in chronology. Its subspecies *metachronism* and *prochronism* appear two years later in Edward Phillips's *The New World of English Words* (1658) to signal, respectively, the placing of an event before or after it occurred.²⁴ The term appeared first in the vernacular in 1629, six years after the publication of the First Folio, in "the father of chronology" Joseph Scaliger's *De Emendatio Temporum*.²⁵ In the domain of poetic theory, as de Grazia documents, George Puttenham utilizes the phrase 'Counterfiet Time', an anglicization of *anachronism*, in his *Art of English Poesy* (1589). For him, the term stands alongside *prosopopoeia* and *topographia* in describing specific species of mimetic conceit: counterfeit time, counterfeit persons, counterfeit places.²⁶ And toward the end of the seventeenth century, John Dryden absolves Virgil's *Aeneid*

²⁴ Margreta de Grazia, "Anachronism," in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford University Press, 2010), 15. See also *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, University of Toronto <www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/chwp/CHC2003/Lancashire2.htm>

²⁵ *ibid*, 14; See also Joseph Scaliger, *De Emendatio Temporum*, 2nd edition (1629); Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 2: *Historical Chronology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁶ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 324.

of the sin of anachronism by carving out space in poetry for achronological representation: “a man may be an admirable poet, without being an exact chronologer.” One strategy for limiting the ill effects of anachronism, Dryden maintains, is to “choose an obscure and remote Era, where they may invent a pleasure, and not be easily contradicted.”²⁷ Dryden’s excuse for Virgil and advice to other poets resound in the case of the historically distant and temporally asynchronous *Cymbeline*.

For Theobald, however, the trouble with the play arises from the flexibility with which Shakespeare treats the “facts” of the matter and the “75nstant[sion] of the Chronology of Action.” And much of the criticism from editors in the eighteenth century focuses on similar apparent problems of chronology and fact in denunciation of the play. But in arguing so vehemently with the aid of modern standards of fact and history, critics have overlooked the shifting nature of those standards when the play was first staged and when the compilers began to organize and segment the Shakespearean corpus.

Demoting topics not suitably historical, editors and critics devised interpretive methods by which to continue vaunting Shakespeare’s presumably late works. The romantic conception of Shakespeare, perhaps the clearest of these critical tools, helped to gaze into the author as he worked his genius. Contemporary criticism works with the products of this generative methodology, most notably in the case of *Hamlet* scholarship and its potential for limitless psychological criticism. In his 1875 *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, Edward Dowden, cultivating this scholastic mode, regrouped *Cymbeline* and the other plays thought to have been written late under the banner of this new genre termed Shakespearean romance.

²⁷ Virgil. *The Works of Virgil*, trans. Dryden, 2: 144, 145. See also de Grazia, “Anachronism,” 19.

The opening words of Dowden's study announce the logic of the new genre as one that owes less, as in comedy or tragedy, to plot structure than it does to the development of an author's mind: "The attempt made in this volume to connect the study of Shakespeare's works with an inquiry after the personality of the writer, and to observe, as far as is possible, in its several stages the growth of his intellect and character from youth to full maturity, distinguished the work from the greater number of preceding criticism of Shakespeare."²⁸ Dowden makes clear his editorial and critical methodology is premised on the search for the author in the study of his textual-material afterlife; and the aim of the volume, he affirms, is to ascertain the "personality" of the writer of the plays. The production, or rather composition, of the plays, therefore, must be construed as a progressive march in order that it might map neatly onto the maturation of the playwright. The critic must begin with an authorial life in order to see retrospectively how the works express the life. He explains,

In all essentials I have adhered to the chronological method of studying Shakespeare's writing. But it seemed pedantry to sacrifice certain advantages of contrast and comparison to a procedure in every instance, from play to play, according to dates... For the purposes of such a study as the present, if it be admitted that these plays belong to one and the same period,—the final period of the growth of Shakespeare's art,—it matters little how the plays succeeded one another within that period.²⁹

Dowden arranges this grouping of late plays—*Pericles*, *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Henry VIII*—in order to qualify the ultimate stage of Shakespeare's career, mind, and artistry. Consequently, this final period must be a time of unparalleled maturity and exquisite genius.

²⁸ Edward Dowden, *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1876): 1-2.

²⁹ *ibid*

TRIAL TABLE OF THE ORDER OF SHAKSPERE'S PLAYS—Continued.

	Supposed Date.	Earliest Allusion.	Date of Publication.
SECOND PERIOD.			
Merchant of Venice	(?) 1596	1598 M	1600†
Taming of the Shrew, part	(?) 1596-7		1623*
1 Henry IV.	1596-7†	1598 M	1598
2 Henry IV.	1597-8†	1598 M	1600
Merry Wives	1598-9	1602	1602
Henry V.	1599†	1599	1600
Much Ado	1599-1600†	1600	1600
As you Like it	1600†	1600	1623§
Twelfth Night	1601†	1602	1623
All's Well (? L's. L. Wonne re-cast)	1601-2		1623
Sonnets	(?) 1592-1602	1598 M	1609
THIRD PERIOD.			
Hamlet	1602-3†	(?)	1603*
Measure for Measure	(?) 1603		1623
Julius Cæsar	(?) 1601-3	(?)	1623
Othello	(?) 1604	1610	1622
Macbeth	1605-6†	1610	1623
Lear	1605-6†	1606	1608*
Troilus & Cressida (?) completed	1606-7	1609	1609
Antony and Cleopatra	1606-7	1608 (?)	1623
Coriolanus	(?) 1607-8		1623
Timon, part	1607-8		1623
FOURTH PERIOD.			
Pericles, part	1608†	1608	1609*
Two Noble Kinsmen	1609		1634
Tempest	1610	? 1614	1623
Cymbeline	1610-12		1623
Winter's Tale	(?) 1611	1611	1623
Henry VIII., part	1613†	1613 (?)	1623

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The exact details and chronology of the composition, production, and printing of the plays, he reminds the reader, will not forestall potential insights to the author's mind arising from the overlay of biography and career. And while errors in the sequence of actions prove, for Johnson and Theobald, *Cymbeline's* inanity, this interpretive mode affords understanding and lenience for what might prove to be the critic's errors in constructing the chronology of the plays. A general sense of which plays appear in the Fourth Period (no matter that the dates of composition in his Table resist the clear separation of periods) is sufficient to illuminate Shakespeare's maturation. *Cymbeline*, despite—or perhaps *because* of—the liberties its plot takes with the sequences of

³⁰ Dowden, ix.

actions and the “characters of ages,” must express Shakespeare highest artistic achievement. Personal and professional maturity, in this configuration of critical priorities, must join hands with one another to work toward a shared end.

Dowden expounds upon his schema of Shakespeare’s professional periods by recognizing a remarkable shift in the playwright’s sensitivity and focus:

We suddenly pass to beauty and serenity; from the plays concerned with violent breaking of human bonds, to a group of plays which are all concerned with the knitting together of human bonds, the reunion of parted kindred, the forgiveness of enemies, the atonement for wrong...The dramas have a grave beauty, a sweet serenity, which seem to render the name “comedies” inappropriate; we may smile tenderly, but we never laugh loudly, as we read them. Let us, then, name this group, consisting of four plays, Romances.³¹

Similar in kind with neither the tragedies of the third period nor the comedies of the second, the mature plays of the final period synthesize a career-spanning fascination with the variety of human emotion and experience. The “grave beauty” and “sweet serenity” that permeate these romances must be symptomatic. We “smile tenderly” along with Shakespeare, knowing that romance can only come late.

³¹ Dowden, 1879, 54-6.

II. Biography: Romantic and Postmodern

Given the confusion that arises from the many uses of the term “romance,” I want first to disentangle the sonically intertwined concepts before returning to investigate the ways Shakespeare’s biography ramifies in readings of *Cymbeline*. As Barbara Fuch’s notes in her work on early modernity’s diverse deployments of ‘romance’, “the romancing of Shakespeare” commenced with Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s account of “romantic dramas, or dramatic romances” as those of “a different genus, diverse in kind.”³² More specifically, these plays, for Coleridge, “are in the ancient sense neither tragedies nor comedies, nor both in one...” Rejecting the ancient categories as well as hybrids like tragicomedy, Coleridge conceived dramatic romance as a *sui generis* form. The genetic resonances of ‘genus’ and ‘kind’ establish the essential independence of plays like *Cymbeline* from both the Shakespearean dramatic canon and the history of drama from antiquity to the seventeenth century.³³ Romance here has no lineage prior to spontaneously generating from authorial creativity. Curiously, in carving out space for the exceptionality of Shakespearean romantic dramas, neither Coleridge nor Fuchs acknowledges the unclassical nature of Shakespeare’s tragedies and this grouping of plays’ indifference to Aristotelian unities of time and space. Dramatic romance must be wholly novel if it is to justify the instantiation of a new genre of the stage.

But why did romantic critics like Coleridge and Dowden isolate plays into a dramatic genre christened “romance,” and how are these two species of romance—philosophical and

³² Barbara Fuchs. *Romance* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), 94. Quoted material from S.T. Coleridge’s notes for Lecture 5 of the 1812 series, in Foakes (50).

³³ On the language of genetics, hybridity, the “mongrel” in early modern drama, see Zachary Lesser, “Tragical-Comical-Pastoral-Colonial: Economic Sovereignty, Globalization, and the Form of Tragicomedy,” in *ELH* 74 (2007), 881-908.

generic—related to those many romances that proliferated in medieval and early modern England and Continental Europe? For several centuries prior to the romantic period of art and criticism, romances were characterized by wandering travels through exotic lands and structured according to similarly alinear plotting. Popular medieval romances like *le Roman de la Rose* became notorious for depictions of chivalric values and courtly eroticism, for models of seduction and amorous *romance*.³⁴ Early modern iterations like Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* perpetuated the genre’s tropes of errancy and eros for new cultural and political contexts. Yet another category of romances that included works like *Romans of Partenay* earned the slippery moniker in part from associations with the matter of Rome and the consequences of its expanding or collapsing empire.³⁵ Interactions in these narratives with the politics of Rome denoted its own kind of romance. The London commercial theater, meanwhile, produced dramas with material adapted from prose romances in the concluding decades of the sixteenth century. Some of these staged romances, like *Clyomon and Clamydes* (1583/1599) and *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* (1582/1589), even provided source material for Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*.³⁶ In sum, romantic critics at the turn of the nineteenth century designated a peculiarly Shakespearean dramatic romance that may or may not source plots from a distinct grouping of

³⁴ On the long arc of the English romance, see Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and Corinne Saunders, ed. *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). On the social and cultural function of medieval romance, see Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) and Stephen Knight, “The Social Function of the Middle English Romance” in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, and History*, ed David Aers (New York: St. Martin’s, 1986), 99-122.

³⁵ On the relationship between romance and Rome, see *Thinking Medieval Romance*, ed Nicola McDonald (Oxford University Press, 2018) and *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester University Press, 2004).

³⁶ Wayne, 5. On the effects of Shakespearean romance obscuring and distorting early modern England’s non-Shakespearean dramatic romances, see Fuchs, 93-4.

prose and verse romances that may or may not pertain to Rome but likely included representations of courtly love.

Given these various associations, it is tempting to conclude that Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, with its plot propelled by the imperial politics of Rome and the demand for Britain's tribute, followed a familiar critical path in acquiring the romantic nomination.³⁷ Yet while these other early modern and medieval species of romance inhabit historical and geographic spaces in which European powers negotiate the fluctuating forces of empire and Church, Shakespearean romance, in Coleridge's influential formulation, insists on a constitutive disregard for history and documentable reality:

... a specimen of the romantic drama; that is, of a drama, the interests of which are independent of all historical facts and associations, and arise from their fitness to that faculty of our nature, the imagination I mean, which owes no allegiance to time and place,—a species of drama, therefore, in which errors in chronology and geography, no mortal sins in any species, are venial, or count for nothing.³⁸

Coleridge's account of romantic drama, descriptive of a style if not yet a genre, is remarkable in its refusal "of all historical facts and associations."³⁹ Contrary to Johnson's withering inditement of *Cymbeline*'s misaligned chronologies and errors of fact, Coleridge finds easy absolution for dramatic romances from the "venial" sins of anachronism and *topographia*. The rarified air that provides a setting for these romantic narratives leaves behind the stuff of "time and place" for the

³⁷ For more on the Shakespearean editorial tradition's break with earlier romances' generic qualifications, see Mulready, *Romance*, 34. For earlier usages of the term 'romance' in relation to Shakespeare criticism, see Lamb and Wayne, 7.

³⁸ Coleridge, 1959: 203.

³⁹ On the scholarly usages of 'romance' before Dowden, see Wayne, 18.

relaxed abstraction of the immaterial “imagination.” Shakespearean romance, it would seem, wants neither history nor fact.

Returning to Dowden’s theorization of romantic drama with the aid of this critical history clarifies the process by which his evaluation of *Cymbeline* inverts that of Johnson. Following Coleridge, Dowden affirmed and applauded the seeming ahistorical nature of the play. In doing so, he dislodged *Cymbeline* from its historical setting during the reign of its titular monarch and inserted it instead into the history of its author’s life. This substitution of both production and setting for the chronology of authorial career was sustained with the aid of a biography of Shakespeare with little commitment to historical fact or material evidence. As the 1848 Harness edition of the plays that began this chapter prefaces the Shakespearean corpus with “a memoir of the author,” Dowden likewise leans on an elaborated pseudo-biography:⁴⁰

Characteristics of versification and style, and the enlarged place given to scenic spectacle, indicate that these plays were produced much about the same time. But the ties of deepest kinship between them are spiritual. There is a certain romantic element in each. They receive contributions from every portion of Shakspeare’s genius, but all are mellowed, refined, made exquisite; they avoid the extremes of broad humour and of tragic intensity; they were written with less of passionate concentration than the plays which immediately precede them, but with more of a spirit of deep or exquisite recreation.⁴¹

Following a brief acknowledgement of the materiality of production that could serve as the basis for the establishment of the category of late plays, Dowden supplies the necessary lens and disposition through which to spot Shakespearean romance for the first time. Once aligned with authorial biography, readers can perceive that “the ties of deepest kinship between [the late

⁴⁰ The Harness edition uses the terms “memoir of the author” and “A Life of William Shakspeare” interchangeably.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

plays] are spiritual.” But given that a cohesive biography did not exist until the eighteenth century, we should recognize the unstable bond that links authorial maturity and genre. As Margreta de Grazia and other scholars of Shakespearean life-writing have signaled, biography relies on the construction of a chronology: “...until you have such a chronology, even a conjectural one...the words cannot be interlocked with the life in a way that looks to us properly biographical. The fact that a chronology of Shakespeare’s works is to this day uncertain and unstable renders the whole biographical enterprise fundamentally shaky.”⁴²

Like William Camden’s historiographical conjectures licensing the inclusion of the giant in fact-based history, biographical conjecture justifies both the romancing and lateness of Shakespeare’s plays. Conjecture, largely inappropriate for national and political histories by the nineteenth century, finds new life in animating the character and career of England’s Bard. Dowden narrates the transition from Shakespeare’s third period to his fourth with the aid of this handy device. Speaking to the measured language of *Timon of Athens*, the play he deems the final of the third period, Dowden suggests that “[i]f such conjectures were allowed to possess any worth, one might venture to assert that by the time this play was written, Shakespere had mastered the impulses within himself to mere rage against the evil that is in the world. The impression which the play leaves is that of Shakespere’s sanity.”⁴³ The conjectural “venture” makes *Timon* a transitional art object in the personal development of Shakespeare’s professional career. In *Timon* the playwright sloughs off the affective intensity of the high tragedies of the

⁴² Paul Edmondson, “Writing and Re-Writing Shakespeare’s Life: A Roundtable Discussion with Margreta de Grazia, Katherine Scheil, James Shapiro and Stanley Wells,” in *Shakespeare Survey* 70 (2016), 60. Paul Edmondson convened a session of biographers, Shakespeareans, and biographers of Shakespeare to discuss the possibilities and complications of writing a life of Shakespeare without access to a great many details of the life of the playwright.

⁴³ Dowden, 382.

third period—as well as his own intense emotions—to allow for the ultimate growth of the romantic sensibility in the fourth.

Dowden likewise conscripts facts to aid in his conjecture-dependent reevaluation of early modern drama and Shakespeare, contending,

The chief play-wright of the movement declared that the end of playing, “both at the first and now, was and is to hold as ‘twere the mirror up to nature.” A mirror has no tendency. The questions we ask about it are, “Does this mirror reflect clearly and faithfully?” and “In what direction is it turned?” Capacity for perceiving, for enjoying, and for reproducing facts, and facts of as great variety as possible,—this was the qualification of a dramatist in the days of Elizabeth.⁴⁴

Conflating Hamlet’s notes to the players with Shakespeare’s theory of performance, Dowden utilizes the metaphor of the mirror to describe the substance and purpose of facts in Elizabethan drama. This description of the intersecting histories of facts and representation contributes to an understanding of successful drama in the age of Elizabeth as synonymous with “perceiving,” “enjoying,” and “reproducing” facts. The goal, Dowden informs, is to evaluate dramatic representation with a scale tracking the accuracy of factual mirroring. But the facts are not what they seem: “The facts were those of human passion, and human activity...The mere fact was enough without any theory about the fact; and this fact men saw more in its totality, more in the round, because they approached it in the spirit of frank enjoyment.”⁴⁵ Accurately capturing—or mirroring—human passion in drama supplies the factual basis of Shakespeare’s plays. While Johnson judged *Cymbeline*’s errors of fact irredeemably inane, Dowden’s romantic understanding re-defines facts in a way that trades material evidence or history for affective

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

realness of “human passion.” Facts cease corroborating historical events or persons just as they are redeployed to substantiate transhistorical human emotion.

In *Cymbeline*, what once looked hopelessly muddled and contrived now registers as transcendently beautiful. With the aid of biographical conjecture, Dowden asks the reader to see a mature mellowness that skirts the extremes of the classical genres. Neither the wails of tragedy nor the bawdiness of comedy, *Cymbeline* and its fourth-period companions luxuriate, we are told, in the “exquisite recreation” of late career. Little or no care is paid by Dowden to broader trends in renaissance playwriting or non-Shakespearean plays with claims on romance.⁴⁶ Nor is there any consideration in this description of the affective extremes of comedy and tragedy for the Folio’s third generic grouping. What matters is not the location of the play in time and space, nor the writer in a particular history or geography. What assumes priority instead is the mind of the writer and the ease with which it mixes and remixes itself, winks and smirks at itself. Shakespearean romance, for Dowden, shows itself in the facility of the artist to move beyond constraints both of established genres and time itself.

Despite the vexed application of romance to Shakespeare, Valerie Wayne, the *Arden Shakespeare*, third series editor of *Cymbeline*, affirms the appropriateness of hailing the play according to the standard crafted by Dowden, the first editor of *Cymbeline* in the *Arden Shakespeare* series. She explains, “The term most often used to describe plays based on romance material in Shakespeare’s day was ‘history’ (*OED*, ‘history’, n.1.b.; Mulready, *Romance*, 21-2), but in our own time ‘dramatic romance’ and ‘stage romance’ describe them best.”⁴⁷ She does not

⁴⁶ On the distortion of early modern stage romance by Bardic exceptionalism, see Fuchs, 93-4.

⁴⁷ Valerie Wayne, “Introduction” in *William Shakespeare’s Cymbeline*, ed. Valerie Wayne (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017), 18. On expressions of generic romance across historical periods, see Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*:

elaborate. Wayne's superlative endorsement trades the permissiveness of early modern England's use of 'history' for the contemporary's multivalent 'romance'. Noting this complication in the history of the critical lexicon, Wayne concedes that "Dowden seems to have come up with the right word for the wrong reasons..." Nevertheless, she maintains that the romances "invited spectators in the theatre to accept the preposterous yet wonderful illusions staged in front of their very eyes."⁴⁸ Rather than prefer the stability offered by critical present to the more fluid categories of the past, I have suggested in this chapter the ways in which historicizing the boundaries of early modern history in order produce more reliable knowledge concerning both *Cymbeline* and a related range of historical stage drama.

While Wayne locates a separate rationale for retaining *Cymbeline*'s romantic affiliation, many critics in the present follow Dowden's lead by pairing the Shakespearean corpus with authorial biography. Jean Howard, in her introduction to the play in the Norton *Shakespeare*, concedes that "[w]hatever its exact date, *Cymbeline* belongs to Shakespeare's late period, and because of its setting it allowed Shakespeare simultaneously to address his long-standing interests both in British and in Roman history."⁴⁹ In Howard's presentation, the composition of

Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare (Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 284-292 and 327-84.

⁴⁸ Wayne, 19. Wayne finds aid in Helen Cooper's grand *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*, following the thread of the misogynist calumny plot through centuries of romance works. In the context of Shakespeare, however, Cooper examines 'motifs' rather than genres. She follows the transformations of the transposable plot in *Cymbeline* as well as *King Henry VIII*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, and others. Moreover, the timeframe bracketed by the title of Cooper's book pointedly concludes with Shakespeare's death in 1616, leaving the generic re-classifications of later centuries beyond the scope of the monograph. On Shakespeare as defender of women from the calumny plot, see Cooper, 276. On the plot more broadly in *Cymbeline*, see Coppelia Kahn, 168.

⁴⁹ Jean Howard, "Introduction" to *Cymbeline*, *Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008): 2964. Howard also notes the play's additional sourcing from Holinshed's

the plot of *Cymbeline* arises from a mixture of biography and history. The play acquires the association with generic romance, she informs, by presenting a conclusion expressing the possibility that hope can arise from overwhelming suffering.⁵⁰ Howard's commitment to apprehending the play by means of its authorial lateness participates in what Gordon McMullan has called an "organic understanding of style," one that "continues to provide the basic foundation of everyday thinking about creativity even now, despite the best efforts of poststructuralism and postmodernism to dislodge it."⁵¹ This organic understanding persists, McMullan contends, despite the shakiness of the biographical and professional record in part because of its apparent naturalism.

But how might recent interventions in the study of Shakespeare life-writing estrange this sense of naturalism? The concluding section of this chapter takes stock of novel experiments constructing something approaching a life of the author to track the intimately linked fate of *Cymbeline*'s ahistorical romance. Julia Lupton has described the contemporary emphasis of Shakespearean biography in this way:

Modern biographies of Shakespeare resolutely reject hagiographic legend in favor of documentary evidence, gradually sifting the anecdotal and speculative from the verifiable and historical. What is at stake for the modern biographical project is not the death of the author so much as the birth of the author: by what worldly coincidence of temperament

History of Scotland and the account of the farmer named Hay and his sons vanquishing invading Danes in the Battle of Luncarty around 976 C.E. See Howard, 2965.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Gordon McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing: Authorship in the Proximity of Death*. (New York: Cambridge U Press, 2007), 2. McMullan sees the idea of late style emerging first within musicology before being transposed to literary studies. 'Late Shakespeare', however, contributed to a broader "discourse of lateness," defined as "a construct, ideological, rhetorical and heuristic, a function not of life or of art but of the practice of reading or appreciating certain texts within a set of predetermined parameters." See McMullan, 5.

and disposition, education and early exposure, and collaboration and context did the baby from Stratford become the man behind the Folio?⁵²

A revision of Lupton's concluding statement is in order. We might substitute "the man pictured in the Folio" for "the man behind the Folio" to capture a fuller sense of the postmortem compilation.

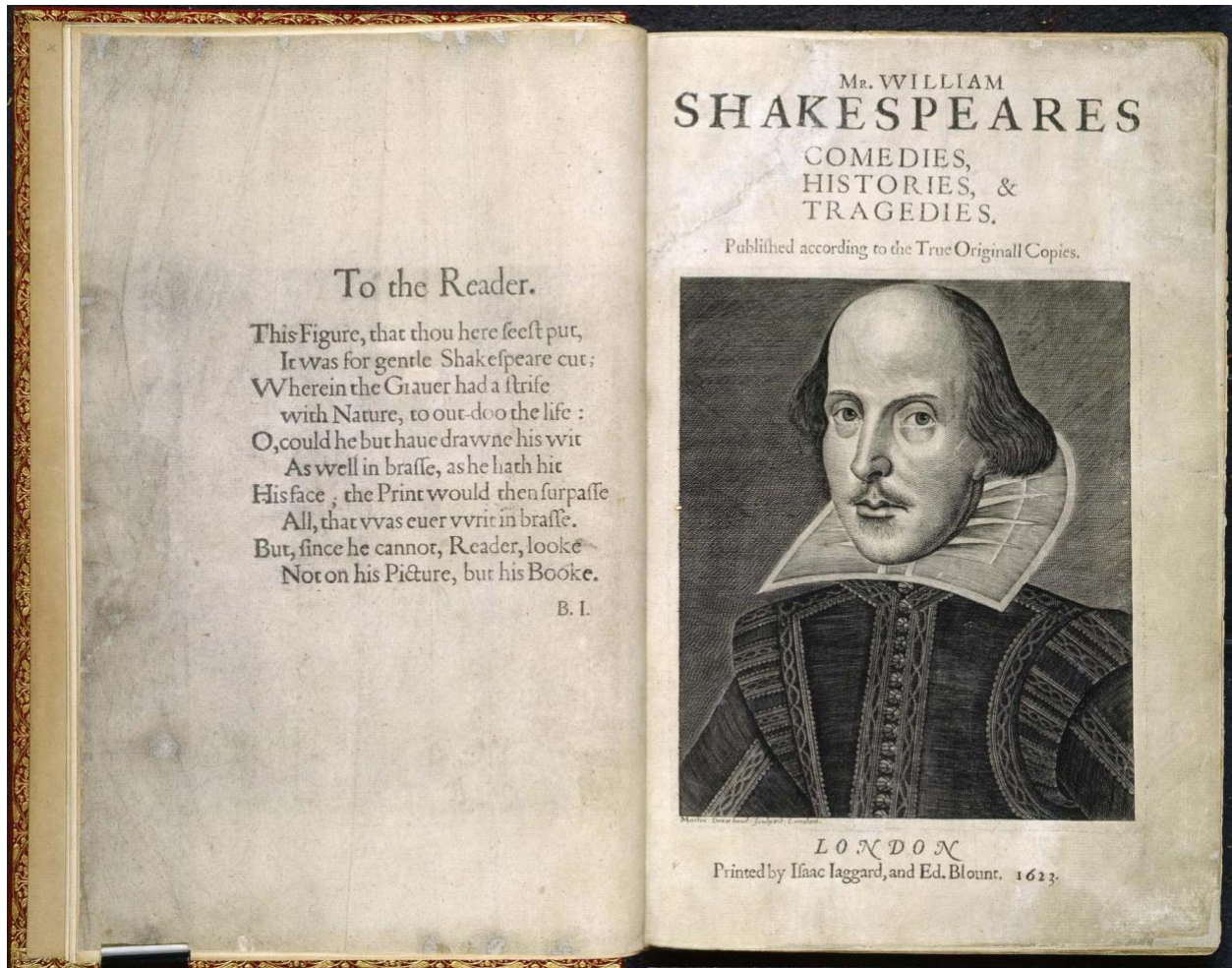


Figure 4. Title page of the Shakespeare First Folio (London, 1623).

⁵² Julia Lupton, "Birth Places: Shakespeare's Beliefs/Believing in Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65.4 (2014), 401.

Rather than see the man by means of the Folio, alive in the verse, readers more accurately catch sight of Shakespeare in his now ubiquitous portrait. Indeed, as Hugh Craig astutely notes, searching for the author through plays that are said to express the complex fullness of human experience (most lavishly in those called romances) is a surprisingly daunting task as “[t]hese general notions about exceptional variety and the absence of a recognizable voice run counter to the requirements for authorship attribution, among which consistency and distinctiveness are paramount.”⁵³

According to Ben Jonson’s poem on the facing page, the portrait provides a model for engaging the work that fixes Shakespeare the man in time: “Wherein the Graver had a strife / with Nature, to out-doo the life” (3-4). The engraver’s losing struggle to re-animate the dead by means of portraiture opens space for attention to “his Booke” (10). Yet this encouragement of a readerly encounter likewise cannot “out-doo” or even approach the life. Reading the Folio collection instead provides a sense of Shakespeare’s “wit” (5). The alternate formulation of Lupton’s question emphasizes the many hands and years contributing to the Folio and the first printing of *Cymbeline*, and it recognizes the historical chasm that maintains the distance between Shakespeare and his Folio and post-Folio readers.⁵⁴

Lupton helpfully diagnoses the impulse of recent biographers of Shakespeare to “sift” fact from fiction, legend from history. Akin to the practices of many scholars of early modern

⁵³ Hugh Craig, “Authorial Attribution and Shakespearean Variety: Genre, Form, and Chronology.” *Shakespeare Survey* 70 (2017), 154.

⁵⁴ On the early material processes constructing Shakespeare as author, see Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 80-101. On the making of the Folio and its precursors, see Peter Blayney, *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1991); Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Jeffrey Todd Knight, “Making Shakespeare’s Books: Assembly and Intertextuality in the Archives,” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60.3 (2009), 304-340.

historiography discussed in other chapters of this dissertation, sifting for facts has become the labor of contemporary biography. Yet while the former collection of historians presupposes the inevitability of Enlightenment evidence rising to the surface once the dust of legend and anecdote fall from the discerning sieve, Lupton advocates reserving space in the biographical enterprise for the hagiographical element “cultivated with care, neither blindly embraced nor cynically instrumentalized but rather seen as a legitimate part of biography’s curatorial and performative vocation within a wider field of humanistic love and knowledge.”⁵⁵ For her, the mandate to sift diminishes the possibilities of “humanistic love” cultivated by a speculative identity of Shakespeare.

Brian Cummings, offering another model of Shakespeare biography, employs the same metaphor for different ends by contending that the “blank” that forms the majority of the record of Shakespeare’s timeline “only serves to remind us that historical knowledge always depends on argument and on the sifting of evidence.”⁵⁶ The uncertainty of historical knowledge pertaining to the life of Shakespeare, Cummings suggests, may prompt a desire for knowable facts and further sifting. Instead, however, he finds the conjectural nature of Shakespeare life-writing “an instructive opportunity for us to rethink the boundaries of contextualization more generally.”⁵⁷ He returns to Malone’s “An attempt to ascertain the order” to locate a source of sifting biographer’s desire, finding an answer in Malone’s belief that “every circumstance that relates to those persons whose writings we admire awakens our curiosity.”⁵⁸ Malone sought to overlay the

⁵⁵ Lupton, 420.

⁵⁶ Brian Cummings, “Last Words: The Biographemes of Shakespeare,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65.4 (2014), 489.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ See Malone, “An attempt to ascertain the order,” 1:269 as well as Malone, Prospectus, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity*. 1795, also appended to the very end of *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments* (London: T. Cadell [Jr.]

biographical timeline with the chronology of the plays in order to see which personal facts coincide with moments in the professional career. The past decade has seen greater attention paid to traces of material evidence substantiating the non-professional life of Shakespeare. Examples include the collecting of Shakespeare's signatures on legal documents and the circulation of information pertaining to the Shakespeare family's coat of arms at the turn of the seventeenth century. For instance, the coat of arms granted to John Shakespeare in 1596, following an unsuccessful first application in the 1570s, conferred the status of gentry on the dramatist's father. Inheriting the coat of arms after his father's death in 1601, Shakespeare subsequently could be referred to as a gentleman.⁵⁹ Archival discoveries of this kind amass a body of documentary evidence to produce stable historical knowledge of the man behind the plays. But for Cummings, "this is the puzzle of Shakespeare life studies—not the lack of documents themselves, but a lack of access to context that the documents might seem to supply."⁶⁰ Documentary discovery pertaining to the life of the author does not manifest a context for *Cymbeline* or other plays. In this model, we might understand biography as "an exercise in wish fulfillment," an attempt to construct a life in order to explain the production of the works.

For successful Shakespeare life-writing, Lupton urges a balancing of biography and hagiography, fact and affect. Her approach to biography provides allowances for poetic interpretation as evidence of authorial belief. "If biography combines love and knowledge in the form of history and fiction," she posits, "then religion nominates that area of life writing where

and W. Davies, 1795). On the transformation of the life of Shakespeare from Rowe to Malone, See de Grazia, "Shakespeare's Timeline," in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 65.4 (2014), 379-398.

⁵⁹ See Heather Wolf describing the coat-of-arms produced by William Dethick, Garter King of Arms. <https://www.folger.edu/shakespeare-coat-of-arms-discovery>.

⁶⁰ Cummings, 488.

knowledge meets its limits and where love has no bounds.”⁶¹ Lupton tests this approach to Shakespeare life-writing by examining *Cymbeline*’s complex staging of religion at the Incarnation that instantiates the epochal BC-AD transition: “In *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare’s decision to stage the historical moment before Christ’s birth without ever directly alluding to that event sets his characters loose in a time pregnant with multiple religious possibilities but reducible to no single one of them.”⁶² Lupton recognizes an historical parallel in the temporal setting of the play and the time of Shakespeare’s writing, mapping the “pregnant” time of *Cymbeline*’s reign onto Reformation England and Shakespeare’s own confessional indeterminacy. Her approach to answering the biographical question of Shakespeare’s closet Catholicism relies on uniting the multiple temporalities and possibilities underlying *Cymbeline* with Hannah Arendt’s concept of natality, defined here as the “proposition that actions initiate new beginnings in the web of human relationships and the forms of narratives they spawn.”⁶³ The tension dramatized between the sacred and secular in the play and Reformation England finds an analogous application in the writing of Shakespeare’s life. The web of natality in each context permits “speculative mythmaking” primed to compensate for an absence in the historical record.

Designated an expression of this biographical method, Stephen Greenblatt’s *Will in the World* answers Lupton’s opening question of how the boy became the man (behind the Folio) by turning to religion and its domain of “aspiration, prophesy, and conjecture.”⁶⁴ Greenblatt conjects,

⁶¹ Lupton, 399-400.

⁶² *ibid*, 401.

⁶³ *ibid*, 400.

⁶⁴ Lupton, 418.

The vicious, murky world of Tudor religious conflict will help to explain why an adolescent boy, fresh from school, might have ventured from the Midlands of England to the north, how he could have had a connection with a powerful Catholic family there, and why that family would have bothered to employ someone like him rather than a licensed schoolmaster with an Oxford or Cambridge education.⁶⁵

My attention to ‘conjecture’ might appear redundant if it were not for the term’s foundational and yet undertheorized presence in the archives of Shakespearean romance and biography.

Lupton justifies her and Greenblatt’s conjectural-speculative mythmaking by affirming Samuel Schoenbaum’s contention that “the workings of myth have a place in the historical record, and may sometimes conceal elusive germs of truth.”⁶⁶ The atmosphere of calm rationality assumed by a biographical project pinned exclusively to material evidence, these critics maintain, obscures its own fantastical underpinnings. They are surely correct. Myths in the historical record index the differences manifested by inquiry into times, cultures, and customs removed from the critical present, and their preservation provides insight into the workings of a historical epistemology otherwise unimaginable by our own. But, like Brian Cummings, we must reconsider the value presupposed by the desire for literary-biographical contextualism and speculative mythmaking. Myths of the author and the orderly timelines of his life and work, however, license critical speculation where none is required. The strategy to appeal to the “vicious, murky world” of religious conflict in the England of Shakespeare’s youth generates its own historical murkiness, clouding our perception of what we know and what we project.

Are Schoenbaum’s “germs of truth” sifted as well? Or must we deduce their nascent veracity by the fruits they bear? Lupton might call these fruits expressions of humanistic love

⁶⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York: Norton, 2004), 89.

⁶⁶ Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), xi. Quoted in Lupton, 415.

and love for Shakespeare. This literary-critical method is not naïve; Lupton urges care with the cultivation of these germs. But as the approach circumscribes the search for historical knowledge rather than expands it, there exists a greater risk of indulging in a critical narcissism. With this methodology, the search for greater understanding of Shakespeare's drama favors generating greater love for the work and author. That love breathes life into the romance genre and maintains the conditions for romantically seducing readers. But is this romance something we want? "In *Cymbeline*," Lupton maintains, "Shakespeare's decision to depict the time touched by but not cognizant of Nativity invites this broader inventorying of messianic and postconfessional possibility. The romances, beholden to the entertainment needs of the Jacobean court, run the risk of sentimentality, spectacle, and bad faith...Yet bad faith and authenticity can sometimes coexist..."⁶⁷ That "bad faith and authenticity can sometimes coexist" might well be accurate. Affirming the marriage of the two as the foundation of a simultaneously biographical and literary-critical project, however, authorizes subjective scholarship of the kind that T.S. Eliot bemoaned in the case of *Hamlet*. Unmoored from history this critical offspring swoons, floating in a sea of love.

Suppositions about *Cymbeline* arrived at with these tools create and uphold earlier critical and romantic projections of the play. The particular nexus of time represented in and by the play, it bears repeating, "invites this broader inventorying of messianic and postconfessional possibility." Prescriptive of neither actions nor limits, the invitation to inventory possibilities assumes a posture of critical neutrality; it is but an opening to take stock of what might be. But the assembly of subjectively determined possibilities is inherently partisan, informed by ideologies latent or manifest. Dowden, building on Malone's chronology, likewise envisioned a

⁶⁷ Lupton, 419.

Shakespeare that, “if an idealist, was also above all else a realist in art, and lurk[ing] almost impregnable behind his work.” The roots of the critical romantic vocabulary’s discourse of pregnancy show themselves embedded in the early theorization of the genre. With the aid of biographical conjecture, critics cultivate the growth of possibilities. “If we could watch his writings closely, and observe their growth,” Dowden continues, “the laws of that growth would be referable to the nature of the man, and to the nature of his environment.”⁶⁸ The statement is conditional; the logic circular.

Synecdochic of the biographical impulse, the revelation of late, fourth period, or romantic Shakespeare elaborates the biographical-professional-historical record to suit the critical intuition. We could, like John Porter Houston, see the short sentences in *Cymbeline* as symptomatic “of a stylistic design independent of the expression of strong feelings or other common reasons one could find for them.” And we might conclude as he does that criticism must “have recourse to the notion of some general design in the language of the play rather than to that of character or scene.”⁶⁹ That the examples of this grand stylistic design undoubtedly have local explanations in scenes depicting expressions of frustration and anger is insubstantial to those informed by romance. The post-facto search for romantically styled syntax and sentence length reverses the standard critical sequencing wherein evidence informs conclusions. This kind of “residually subjectivist criticism,” to borrow Gordan McMullan’s phrasing, sustains the hunt

⁶⁸ Dowden, 9.

⁶⁹ John Porter Houston, *Shakespearean Sentences: A Study in Style and Syntax* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1988), 200, 207). For additional examples of scholarship that reads closely for broad stylistic intent, see George T. Wright, *Shakespeare’s Metrical Art* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1991) and Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (OUP, 2001).

for late style, in spite of the understanding in early modern England that style is something akin to a garment to be adorned or discarded at specific times and for specific purposes.⁷⁰

What meaningful differences might discarding *Cymbeline*'s classification as a Shakespearean dramatic romance unveil? The play would continue signaling to an informed audience its indebtedness to a different romance tradition, one resplendent with recognizable motifs like the calumny plot, the matter of Rome, and supernatural action. The romance designation, however, would cease its function as an organizing rubric of contemporary editing, scholarship, and syllabi. The teaching of Shakespeare, often still adherent to the laws of genre for shuffling plays into discrete semesters, could find *Cymbeline* sandwiched between *King Lear* and *Richard II*. The editor of *Cymbeline* for the *Arden Shakespeare* fourth series might trade the anachronistic categorization for the period specific—though similarly complicated--‘history’, prompting a turn in scholarship toward investigating the transformations in historical epistemology. Additional nuance in our understanding of the staging of history meaningfully augments our sense of early modern historiography more broadly, for as Brian Walsh maintains, “[o]f all the forms of history, performance alone supplies a pretense of sensual contact with the vanished past through the bodies that move and speak on stage.”⁷¹ Recognizing a fuller range of the performance of history by reevaluating inherited and suspect critical categories contributes finer texture to that sensual contact with the past.

In this way, Walsh's own significant contribution to knowledge of the cultures of staging early modern history shows room for expansion. The history plays he devotes chapters to in his

⁷⁰ McMullan, 122.

⁷¹ Brian Walsh, *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History* (Cambridge UP, 2009), 1.

monograph on the topic come from Shakespeare (*I Henry, VI, Richard III, and Henry V*) and the reparatory of the Queen's Men (the anonymously authored *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and *The True Tragedy of Richard III*). These works, he explains, "suggest a distinctive consciousness of history, one that understands the generation and production of historical narratives as driven by a sense of longing for contact with the past, a desire that is doomed from the start to remain unfulfilled."⁷² Walsh thoughtfully pushes criticism beyond assessing the topicality of the history play for Elizabethan and Jacobean matters of state; and rather than investigate the "politics of history," he provides a roadmap for considering "the dramatic exploration of the *idea* of history in the period." The admittedly narrow selection of plays serves this interest by sacrificing explanatory coverage for depth.

Reconceiving of *Cymbeline* in the way this chapter has peels back the layers of critical and editorial history to present the play as a participant in the "dramatic exploration of the *idea* of history in the period." Simon Forman's notes from viewing an early performance of the play do not offer much about the visual spectacle of the *deus ex machina*, for example. His attention can redirect our own to the historical register of the drama. Forman omits any mention of Jupiter's appearance at the play's conclusion, and he substitutes 'England' for 'Britain' more than once. Following the topical mode of analyzing history plays, we can draw a link from *Cymbeline* to the surging interests in historiography at the turn of the seventeenth century. The logic of separating the Folio histories from the others insists on a breach in historical lineage and relevance occasioned by the Norman Conquest in 1066. Unlike the Folio histories, however, viewing a performance of *Cymbeline* around 1610 provided representation of an ancient lineage. Investment in the 'England' of *Cymbeline* by early modern audiences shows the play working

⁷² *Ibid.*

with William Camden's *Britannia* to restore antiquity to Britain and Britain to antiquity. Prince Henry, like his father James I and VI, was particularly invested of his territory's ancient past, studying Holinshed's and Stow's chronicles.⁷³ More than a passing interest, links to Brutus, the first ruler of Britain, solidified the Stuart claim to the throne.

Cymbeline's concern for succession appears most distinctly in the problem of missing heirs. Like Prince Henry, Guiderius and Arvirargus hail from the relative wilderness of Wales. But *Cymbeline* demonstrates less of a fixation on the heritage of important persons and more on the qualities that attract public admiration. We see the foregrounding of the qualities of leaders in the fidelity of Imogen and Posthumus in the calumny plot. They do not themselves inherit the kingdom, but they do serve as ancient models of noble behavior. The trajectory of Posthumus in particular provides an historical *exemplum* of class mobility for the early modern audience.

Posthumous having been orphaned,

...The King, he takes the babe
To his protection, calls him Posthumus Leonatus,
Breeds him and makes him of his bedchamber,
Puts to him all the learning that his time
Could make him the receiver of, which he took
As we do air, fast as 'twas ministered,
And in's spring became a harvest... (1.1.40-46)

As in the Stuart court, *Cymbeline*'s Gentlemen of the Bedchamber were given special privileges and personal affordances. Yet the language relating Posthumus' position enlists the young man as a formidable member of the royal family: the king 'breeds' him. His breeding, analogous to Christ's in both time and manner, is immaculate. Like the unmentioned harbinger of the common

⁷³ See Roy Strong, *Prince Henry of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (1986), 145-7 as well as Marisa R. Cull, *Shakespeare's Princes of Wales* (Oxford, 2014), 120-6.

era, Posthumus' unblemished breeding finds its source in the sovereign. Personal advancement in this case depends on a *post facto* act of generation. Posthumus' continued advancement, however, depends on his ongoing bodily receptivity. The Gentlemen relating Posthumus' upbringing note his special skill as a 'receiver', metaphorizing him as a *seed* soaking up 'all the learning [of] his time'. His resulting 'spring' adulthood then is produced by taking in the 'air' of learning to grow abundantly into the fullness of 'a harvest'. Posthumus has no need for sifting.

The narrative of Posthumus moving from orphan to prosthetic heir supplies a performance of history with an alternate model for succession. Though the Gentleman narrator "cannot delve him to the root" (1.1.28) to locate Posthumus' origin in Brutus, "his virtue / By [Imogen's] election may be truly read / What kind of man he is" (1.1.52-4). While this mode of succession falls away by the play's end, *Cymbeline* presents Posthumus' advancement as a possibility to its audience with the weight of historical precedent. It offers a model of belonging and access to power lodged in Britain's own ancient history. As *King Lear* stages the tragic unraveling of an ancient British monarch, *Cymbeline* dramatizes an array of historical possibilities, any number of which could serve in the present of performance as historically grounded alternatives. The play's non-tragic plotting permits the entertaining of historical realities free from the codified rigidity of drama's ancient generic boundaries. In performance, any of these available options travel across a great expanse of time sealed with the *imprimatur* of ancient history.

The time of *Cymbeline* indeed is pregnant with possibility. The biographical romancing of the play, however, is not a requirement to recognize the overlapping historical pathways that intersect to entertain, if only for the span of performance, the divergent trajectories that might have been. Here we see a speculative mythmaking of historical possibility in the play rather than

about the author. In contemporary criticism, the romance designation continues to elevate the latter while clouding the former. The pre-romantic conception described by this chapter facilitates the sensuous contact with the past, presenting *Cymbeline* as invested with futures only history can dramatize.

Chapter 3 | Dialogic History and Colonial Form: Spenser's *A View of the State of Ireland*

Historiography tells a story with scientific ambitions; and achieving such ambitions requires marshalling material as well as textual authority. This chapter excavates Edmund Spenser's colonial dialogue on the state of Ireland and the Irish peoples at three distinct historical moments: 1596, 1633, and 1670. The earliest date in this series accounts for the composition and circulation of what one critic nominated Spenser's "complex prose work."¹ Attending to this admittedly vague description of *A View* occasions the examination of the dialogue at the second historical juncture. 1633 marks the inaugural year of the text in print, appearing in a volume compiled, edited, and censored by James Ware. Though much has been made of Ware's hand in shaping Spenser's work for public consumption, the book itself has received little attention. That book, *The Historie of Ireland, Collected by Three Learned Authors viz. Meredith Hanmer, Edmund Campion, and Edmund Spenser*, situates *A View* following two more standard chronicle

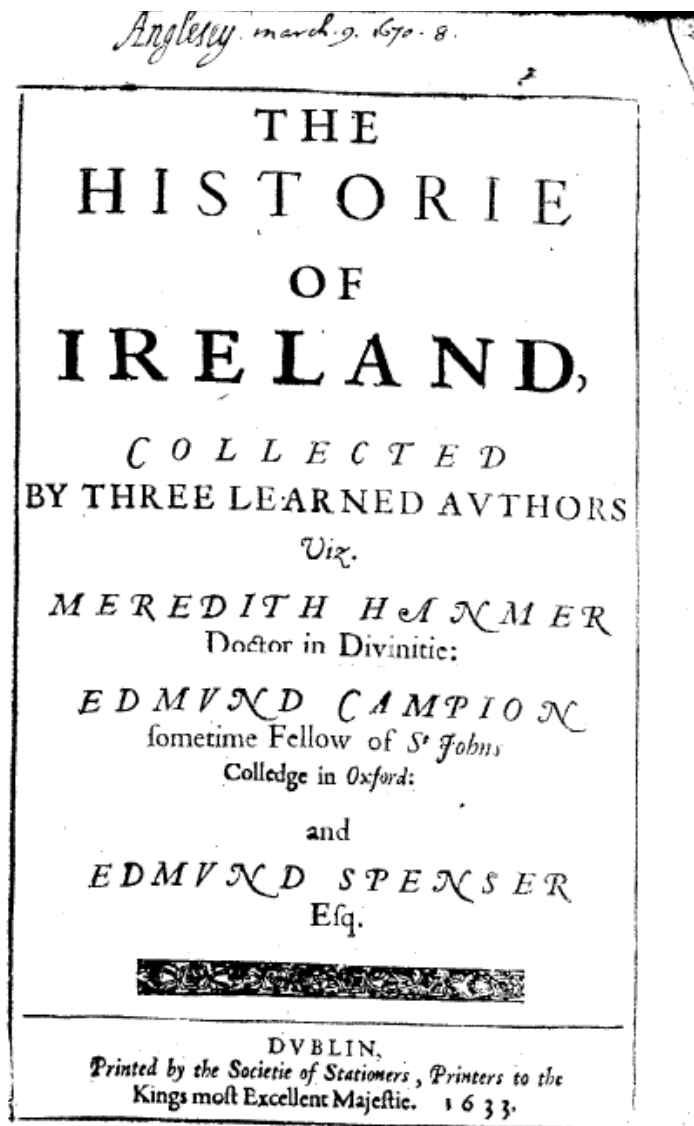
¹ Nicholas Canny, "Reviewing "A View of the Present State of Ireland," *Irish University Review* 26.2 (1996): 252. For foundational work on Spenser in Ireland, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980); Nicholas Canny, "Edmund Spenser and the Development of an Anglo-Irish Identity," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983): 1–19; David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984); Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); Willy Maley, *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture, and Identity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); and Richard McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002). For a thorough bibliography on Spenser's Ireland, see Willy Maley, "Spenser and Ireland: A Select Bibliography" *Spenser Studies* 9 (1988): 225–42, and "Spenser and Ireland: An Annotated Bibliography 1986–96" *Irish University Review* 26 (1996): 342–53. See also Andrew Murphy, *'But the Irish Sea Betwixt Us': Ireland, Colonialism, and Renaissance Literature* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1999); Joan Fitzpatrick, *Irish Demons: English Writings on Ireland, the Irish, and Gender by Spenser and his Contemporaries* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 2000); Thomas Herron, *Spenser's Irish Work: Poetry, Plantation, and Colonial Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); and Richard Rambuss, *Spenser's Secret Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

narrations.² Bound, sold, and circulated together, these three accounts of Ireland served to inform Anglo readers in the seventeenth century on either side of the Irish Sea of the historical causes and novel prescriptions for Ireland's subjugation.

That readers of these histories conceived of these texts together and mined them for historically grounded political strategy is attested by the Huntington Library's copy of Ware's edition. Littered with detailed marginal notes, the Huntington's copy of *The Historie of Ireland* features on an initial blank page the bookplate of Charles Viscount Bruce of Amphilhill, dating his purchase to 1712, in addition to the signature of John Barton, indicating his acquisition of the book nine years earlier in 1703. Yet the marginal notes match the hand used to inscribe "Anglesey" and the date March 9, 1670 at the top of the title page.³

² Henry Marleburrough's brief and unadvertised *Chronicle of Ireland* lodges between Hanmer's *Chonricle* and Spenser's *A View*. Marleburrough's *Chronicle* begins in 1285 with Lord Theobald Butler fleeing from Dublin and dying "shortly after" (222). It concludes in 1421 with Parliament beginning the third time at Dublin, ordaining that "agents should be sent over unto the King for reformation of matters touching the state of the land." The final sentences recount the Lord Lieutenent, in the fourteenth yeare of the rein of King Henry VI, leading a "great army, and for the space of foure days together, slaying the people, till the Irish were glad to sue for peace" (223).

³ While the dating of purchase to March 9, 1670 is clear from the inscription, the concluding '8' affords less clarity. The Huntington catalogue information posits that the "1670.8" might attest to a range of years. The more likely explanation for the final notation is as reference to purchase price: 8 p.



Cross-referencing other books in the Huntington collection confirms the marginal annotations

belong to Arthur Annesley, first Earl of Anglesey (1614-1686).⁴ Humphrey Lhwyd's *Cambriae*

⁴ *A View of the State of Ireland*, edited by James Ware (Dublin, 1633). I have determined ownership by the Earl of Anglesey through a comparison of title page manuscript inscriptions in the Huntington Library's copies of *The History of Ireland* and *The Court of the Gentiles: or A discourse touching the Original of Human Literature...* (1672). This latter text provides a cleared indication of provenance, indicating that Anglesey was "given [the book] by the learned author John Brown, Sept 28 1677." The signatures of ownership match one another as well as the hand of the marginal notes throughout *The History of Ireland*. For examples of Arthur Annesley's habits of book ownership, see T. Birrell, *Books and buyers in 17th-century English auction sales*,

Typus below shows the location of the island Anglesey across the Irish Sea from Dublin in northwest Wales. Annesley's expansion from his earldom in Wales (itself annexed by England through the Laws in Wales Acts of 1535 and 1542) to Dublin enacts England's sixteenth-century territorial expansion in its progressive movement westward.



5

in R. Meyers et al (eds), *Under the hammer*, 2001, 51-64; G. Mandelbrote, *The organization of book auctions*, 15-59; Book Owners Online https://www.bookowners.online/Arthur_Annesley
⁵ Humphrey Lhwyd, *Cambriae Typus* (published by Abraham Ortelus, 1573). *Cambriae Typus* is notable for being the first printed map of Wales, as well as for improving upon prior maps' "sophistication" and accuracy. It devotes greater attention to the history and culture of the region than to the contemporary politics of England's annexation of Wales.

Annesley's marginal notes will serve to clarify both the political and formal stakes of the dialogue, stakes that have appeared hopelessly muddled to critics of the last several decades. Reviewing the state of criticism at the height of scholarly interest in the mid-1990s, John Breen noted that readings of *A View* clustered around two interpretive poles that understood the text either as "policy paper" or autobiography.⁶ Those who take as their focus the dialogue's prescriptions for subjugating or exterminating the Irish hear the voice of Irenius as clear and direct advocate for particular actions by the Crown. For these critics the exchange between Eudoxus and Irenius speaks with a singular voice, a monologue staged as a conversation. David Norbrook and Stephen Greenblatt meanwhile read *A View* by attending to Spenser's personal and professional ambitions. For Greenblatt, "the colonial violence inflicted upon the Irish is at the same time the force that fashions the identity of the English."⁷ Brutal colonization of the Irish during this formative period of the modern nation-state helped to distinguish the emergent capitalist subject from the agrarian savage. For the New English in Ireland and their compatriots across the Irish Sea, domination served to fortify the idea of an Englishman.⁸

Annabel Patterson has advocated a recuperation of the text by tethering it to a reading of the Egalitarian Giant of Book V of the *Faerie Queen*, an interpretive model perhaps more

⁶ John Breen, "Imagining Voices in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*: A Discussion of Recent Studies Concerning Edmund Spenser's Dialogue." *Connotation* 4.1-2 (1994/5): 120. For examples of these two interpretive camps, see Raymond Jenkins, "Spenser with Lord Grey in Ireland," *PMLA* 52 (1937): 338-53; Clark Hulse, "Spenser, Bacon, and the Myth of Power," *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1988) 315-46.

⁷ Greenblatt, 87-88.

⁸ David Norbrook examined Spenser's anticipated social gains from his dialogue's prescriptions, contending that "the *View*... is almost unique amongst Elizabethan political treatises in advocating, not a mere defense and consolidation of the status quo, but radical innovation, a conscious and ruthless process of social transformation." See Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1984) 155.

influential for apprehending the dialogue's purportedly opaque politics.⁹ Locating its skepticism and "political unorthodoxy," Patterson maintains, redeems the otherwise alarming calls for violent population control. She challenges the rigid conceptual periodization scheme of Lucien Febvre's *Le problème de l'incroyance*¹⁰ to argue for Spenser's "foresight" and his "capab[ility] of ideas that, some have argued, were not conceivable until two centuries later."¹¹ That is to say, Patterson advances a kind of contrapuntal reading of *A View* in which, when understood in conjunction with the Egalitarian Giant, an enlightened author speaks to us in anticipation of our postcolonial present.

In this chapter I turn to Anglesey's marked copy to facilitate a reconsideration of the form and content of Spenser's *View* and, by extension, the genres of early modern literary historiography. Anglesey's copious marginal notes in Ware's *The History of Ireland* supply privileged insights for conceiving of Spenser's dialogue in the manner of its first public audiences in the seventeenth century in part because of the Anglesey's shifting place within the politics of the nascent British imperial project. First, I situate the dialogue within the vast body of Spenser scholarship that has recognized in this strange text valuable context for interpreting *The Faerie Queene*. Contemporary critical sensitivities to the dialogue, I demonstrate below, have been refined to a remarkable extent by New Historicist attention to socio-political contextualization and operations of power in literary representation. That *A View* persists as an exemplary text to mine in search of historical anecdotes of power vis-à-vis *The Faerie Queene*

⁹ Annabel Patterson, "The Egalitarian Giant: Representations of Justice in History/Literature," in *Journal of British studies* 31.2 (1992): 97-132.

¹⁰ See Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, trans. Beatrice Gottlieb (Cambridge, Mass., 1982).

¹¹ Patterson, 111. Patterson here affirms the insights of G. L. Craik in *Spenser and His Poetry*, 3 vols. (London, 1845, 1871; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1971), 2:194-5.

attests to its marriage of the literary and the political. Yet the durability of this approach has left little room for alternative modes of understanding.

I transition from questions of interpretation to an adjacent question of form, and I consider *A View* by returning to Anglesey's notes in the 1633 text in order to chart the seventeenth-century trajectory of Spenser's suspect Elizabethan text. I conclude with a reading of the dialogue's capitalist millenarian ending and its prescriptions for labor regulation. I argue that this broad temporal scale of analysis loosens the Tudor grip on interpretations of *A View*, repositioning the dialogue squarely within Britain's tumultuous seventeenth century. Dwelling on these novel contexts for reading *A View*, I maintain, attends to the politics and methods of historiography obscured by contextualist interpretive protocols artificially limited to the moment of composition. While confirming accounts of the circulations of power and the politics of literary representation in the colonial context, this chapter also destabilizes the post-facto Enlightenment demarcation of the literary and the historical responsible for sequestering investigations of historiographical *techne* from the aesthetics.

I.

In the epistle dedicatory to *A View*, addressed to the deputy general of Ireland, Thomas, Lord Viscount Wentworth, successor to Spenser's employer, James Ware conveys the affect with which readers should engage the dialogue:

The sense of that happy peace, which by the divine providence this Kingdome hath enjoyed, since the beginning of the raigne of his late Majestie of ever sacred memory, doth then take the deeper impression, when these our halcyon days are compared with the former turbulent and tempestuous times, and with the miseries (of several kindes)

incident unto them.¹²

Two years after the composition of the dialogue, Spenser himself was forced to flee his home in County Cork amid a siege by native Irish forces in the Nine Years' War (1593-1603).¹³ His castle at Kilcolman having been burned, Spenser returned to London and died not long after in 1599. Ware's opening sentence designates the war's formal conclusion in the Treaty of Mellifont in 1603 as inaugurating a period of "happy peace" coextensive with the reign of James VI and I (1603-1625). "Those calamities," Ware continues, "are fully set out, and to the life by Mr. Spenser, with a discovery of their causes, and remedies, being for the most part excellent ground of reformation."¹⁴ It is the dedication's contention that Spenser's lived experience in Ireland, like that of his supposed stand-in in the dialogue, affords privileged insights regarding the deep roots of the struggle to manage the colonized population. Moreover, Spenser's scientific investigation into the historical 'causes' of strife certifies his brutal prescriptions with Protestant zeal. The Reformation that dissolved the Roman Church's ties to England serves here to bolster an Irish reformation that will cement England's dominance. The epistle dedicatory concludes by commending the dialogue "[i]n these respects, and for other good uses...afford[ed] for matter of history and policy."

Yet the use of "halcyon days" to describe the period beginning in 1603 and continuing through to the book's present in 1633 appears truer to the mythic origins of the phrase than its

¹² James Ware, "Epistle Dedicatory" in *A View of the State of Ireland* (printer, Dublin, 1633), preliminary material 2R.

¹³ For an overview of the Nine Years War, see Hiram Morgan, "Hugh O'Neil and the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland." *The Historical Journal* 36.1 (1993): 21-37. See also Morgan's *Tyrone's Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 1999).

¹⁴ *ibid*, 2V.

writer could know. The “former turbulent and tempestuous times” that occasion the accounting of the present in blissful terms acknowledges the source of the phrase “halcyon days.” In Ovid’s etiological account in the *Metamorphoses*, the designation arises in the context of the narrative of Alcyone and Ceyx to nominate the seven days on either side of the winter solstice when there are no storms. Lost at sea during a tempest, Ceyx (and later Alcyone) is transformed into a kingfisher. The eponymous halcyon days permit Alcyone to lay her eggs and nest on the beach while her father Aeolus, the god of the winds, calms the sea and air.¹⁵ That the calm Ware inhabits following the “turbulent and tempestuous times” of the Nine Years’ War is exceptional rather than durable is latent in the evocation of the Ovidian story.

Ware, however, misrecognizes the relative peace of his present as a sign of victory secured by the policies implemented during the reign of King James, seizing the occasion for polite denunciation of Spenser’s more genocidal prescriptions for Irish reformation. He concedes,

As for his worke now published, although it sufficiently testifieth his learning and deepe judgment, yet we may wish that in some passages it had bin temprered with more moderation. The troubles and miseries of the time when he wrote it, doe partly excuse him, And surely wee may conceive, that if hee had lived to see these times, and the good effects which the last 30 yeares peace have produced in this land, both for obeidience to the lawes, as also in traffique, husbandry, civility, & learning, he would have omitted those passages which may seeme to lay either any particular aspersion upon some families, or generall upon the Nation.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses: Book XI*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: 1567), 404-918. A plausible additional intertext signaled by Ware’s reference to ‘halcyon days’ is the *Halcyon* dialogue attributed at various times to Plato, Lucian, and Favorinus. The dialogue was excised from the Platonic canon prior to the 1578 Stephanus pagination of Plato’s complete works, translated by Jannes Serranus and published by Henricus Stephanus in Geneva.

¹⁶ James Ware, “Preface” to *A View of the State of Ireland* (printer, Dublin, 1633), preliminary matter 3V.

The circumstances of the Nine Years' War, Ware contends, "doe partly excuse him," and hindsight supplies vital clarity for the "temper[ing]" and "moderat[ing]" of ruthless colonial policy. Moreover, the privileged retrospection fixes attention on the successes of comparatively measured colonization strategies that manifested a docile and obedient population suitable for international commercial "traffique," land capitalization, and political, social, and religious re-education. Ware's counterfactual proposition in which the author's life extends to witness the Stuart monarchy's realization of Tudor colonial ambitions exculpates Spenser's vengeful "aspersions" either against particular "families, or generall upon the Nation." While the former recognizes impolitic denunciations of important clans, the latter target of the "Nation" emphasizes the significance of birth—from the Old French *nacion*—rather than the modern nation-state. At risk in the reading of *A View*, Ware cautions, is the inducement to sympathy with the immoderate proposition that the Irish people, united in "common descent, culture, history, and occupation of the same territory,"¹⁷ are worthy of "general" extermination.

The Preface's apology for Spenser's violent prescriptions for Irish reformation has prompted sustained scholarly attention to the editor's role in censoring the dialogue. Arising from the absence of a comprehensive critical bibliography of Spenser's manuscript and the incomplete construction of the relationships of surviving manuscript copies, possible explanations for the text's censorship and delayed publication range from concerns for the inflammatory content and the author's reputation to licensing requirements, expense considerations, and questions regarding attribution to Spenser more broadly.¹⁸ As Jean R. Brink

17 "nation, n.1". OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press.
<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125285?rskey=AMsTTN&result=1>.

¹⁸ On the publishing of Spenser's dialogue, see Jean R. Brink, "Publishing Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland*: from Matthew Lownes and Thomas Man (1598) to James Ware

has observed, those arguing the significance of censorship by royal authorities look to the Stationers' Register entry on April 14, 1598 and its "Condicion that hee [Matthew Lownes] get further auctoritie before yt be printed."¹⁹ Though Matthew and Humphrey Lownes printed folio editions of Spenser's *Works* (1611, 1613, and 1617) and *The Faerie Queene* (1609), the compilations did not include *A View*.²⁰ W. L. Renwick likewise maintained that "[t]he *View* was a political document of practical and immediate intention, and as such was recognized by the cautious Warden of the Stationers' Company who refused to take responsibility of an unconditional entry in the Register, and by the authorities who forbade its printing."²¹ Andrew Hadfield, co-editor of the only modern version of *A View* in the last century, concurs with the suspicion that publication was delayed for "political reasons," even while Henry Todd, editor of the 1805 *Works*, surmised that the text was "probably composed at the command of the queen" and therefore afforded greater laxity by the authorities.²²

But many of the explanations for the apparent censorship of *A View*—that publication might exacerbate conflicts in Ireland or tarnish Spenser's reputation, most centrally—sit uneasily with scholarly considerations of the form of the dialogue. As Virginia Cox argues, the

(1633)," in *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual*, 29 (2014), esp. 297-8. See also Brink, "Constructing the View of the Present State of Ireland," *Spenser Studies*, 11 (1994), 203-28.

¹⁹ Quoted in Brink, "Publishing," 302. See *A Transcript of the Company of Stationers of London 1554-1640*, ed. Edward Arber, 5 vols. (London, 1875-94; reprinted Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967), 3: 111.

²⁰ To explain the delayed appearance in print, Brink suggests that the manuscript copy of *A View* belonged to Thomas Man, one-time father-in-law to Lownes, and remained in the Man family until bequeathed to James Ware.

²¹ *A View of the Present State of Ireland by Edmund Spenser*, ed. W. L. Renwick (1934; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 189-90.

²² Quoted in Brink, 202. Henry Todd, *Works of Edmund Spenser*, 8 vols. (London: T. C. Rivington, T. Payne, Cadell and Davies, & R. H. Evans, 1805), 1: cxxiii.

conversation staged in a dialogue serves as an analogous exchange to that of the text and reader. The symmetry of the analogy, however, depends on the degree of irony or intimacy cultivated by the dialogue's voices in relation to an author's presumed intent.²³ Critical consensus sees the dialogue form dispersing responsibility for *A View*'s more egregious prescriptions for successful colonization, affirming the non-identity of Spenser the author and Irenius the eye-witness expert. A humanist device for staging constructive engagement, the dialogue obscures the source and motives of the speaking "I" in order to present multiple perspectives without assigning a single position to the author. Patricia Coughlan sees in Spenser's choice of the form his inclination for its tradition of "civility and urban philosophical reflection," arguing

... for a fuller awareness of the fictive mode of existence of the *View*, and against the treatment of it as an expository document, viewing Spenser's, and by implication all writing, as simultaneously textual and political, fictive and discursive, and of refusing any disjunction between the realms of symbolic representation and social practice.²⁴

The fraught complexity of assigning Spenser the author to either Irenius or the educated generalist Euxodus is embedded, it would seem, in the generic form itself. George Puttenham names this dubiousness of the speaking voice the *aporia*.²⁵ Coughlan's argument privileges the humanist urbanity of the form over the staggering incivility of *A View*'s content. Insistence on a "fuller awareness of the fictive mode of existence" in the text, however, blinds the scholar to the

²³ Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 7. See also Katherine Wilson, *Incomplete Fictions: The Formation of English Renaissance Dialogue* (Washington, DC: Catholic UP, 1985).

²⁴ Quoted in Breen, 125. See Coughlan, "'Some Secret Scourge which Shall by Her come unto England': Ireland and Incivility in Spenser," in *Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Patricia Coughlan (Cork: Cork UP, 1989) 47, 71.

²⁵ George Puttenham, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1560), ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1936), 226.

historical mode informing the dialogue and conditioning its potentially enthusiastically violent reception.

Despite attempts by critics to impose distance between the esteemed poet and the advocacy in his text for increased violence, genocide, and the complete dispossession of Irish land from Irish people, seventeenth-century readers readily conflated Spenser with his dialogue's expert informant. The significance of the naïve reader, indelibly present from the moment of publication in Ware's prefatory address, cannot be overstated; and it is in this context that Anglesey's first marginal notes appear.

Ex Bibliotheca Remi in Christo patris D. Iacobus Viceris Archiep. Armachensis.
m^r Spenser censured by s^r James waves mistale of immoderation
for the rebellion of oct. 23. 1691. justified spencers wisdom and deep insight into that barbarous nation
we were woefully deluded by a false people

As for his worke now ^b published, although it sufficiently testifieth his learning and deepe judgement, yet we may wish that in some passages it had bin tempered with more moderation. The troubles and miseries of the time when he wrote it, doe partly excuse him, And surely wee may conceive, that if hee had lived to see these times, and the good effects which the last 30. yeares peace have produced in this land, both for obedience to the lawes, as also in trafficque, husbandry, civility, & learning, he would have omitted those passages which may seeme to lay either any particular asperision upon some families, or generall upon the Nation, For now we may truly say, *jam cuncti gens una sumus*, and that upon just cause those ancient statutes, wherein

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²⁶ Ware, "Preface," 3v.

Responding to Ware's judgment that "we may wish that in some passages [Spenser's dialogue] had bin tempered with more moderation," Anglesey notes that "Mr Spenser censured by S. James Wares mistakes of immoderation." The commentor and historiographer redirects the editor's charge of Spenser's immoderation against the edited text itself. With the hindsight of the 1670s, it is evident to Anglesey that "mistakes" in *A View* stem from Ware's poor judgement of the political conditions in Ireland and the history of its people.

The subsequent marginal note qualifies Anglesey's critique: "For the rebellion of Oct. 23. 1641 justified Spensers wisdom and deep insight into that barbarous nation." With the clarity provided by some four decades of historical distance, Anglesey acknowledges the "halcyon days" of Ware's 1633 volume as an exception to the troubles rather than as the early days of a durable period of peace. The "rebellion of Oct. 23 1641" he notes as vindicating Spenser's most extreme proposals, a reference to The Irish Rebellion of 1641 (*Éirí Amach 1641* in Irish), initiated the Irish Confederate Wars or Eleven Years' War (1641-53), seen by many as exacerbating tensions between King and Parliament and contributing to the First English Civil War (1642-46).²⁷ Indeed, the wars in Ireland in the mid-seventeenth century were but one theater in the broader Wars of the Three Kingdoms that extended from the Bishops' Wars in Scotland (1639-40) until Cromwell's re-conquest of Ireland (1649-53). Before these wars Irish Catholics possessed roughly sixty percent of the land on the island. By the Restoration of the monarchy in

²⁷ On the causes of the First English Civil War, see David R. Como, *Radical Parliamentarians and the English Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Malcolm Wanklyn, *A Military History of the English Civil War: 1642-1649* (London: Routledge, 2005); Edward Andrew, *Imperial Republics: Revolution, War, and Territorial Expansion from the English Civil War to the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); M. J. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire: a new history of the English Civil Wars* (London: Penguin Press, 2009).

1660, that percentage had fallen to just twenty.²⁸ Forty percent of Ireland's pre-war population had died, and some fifty thousand of the defeated had been sold into indentured servitude to labor in England's colonies in Virginia and Barbados.²⁹

The turbulent Irish seventeenth century appears rarely in scholarly treatments of Spenser's dialogue, an understandable omission given the text's date of composition but a lamentable lapse given its publication history. A century Spenser did not live to see, these decades witnessed a stunning acceleration of colonial struggle and war. Transformations of the economy, land, and population fundamentally augmented the available contexts for reading *A View* beyond that which conditioned its composition. Readers who opened *The Historie of Ireland* similarly did so in an age of more advanced English colonization of the Americas. Acknowledging these developments asks that we see Spenser's Ireland not merely as precursor to or testing ground for colonial resource extraction in the Americas; the Atlantic contexts are intimately linked.

In Barbados, for example, the swift transition from small-scale crop farming to an export-based economy reliant on sugar production took place in the beginning of the 1640s, achieving maximum profitability by the mid-1670s. Its enslaved African and African-descended population by this point was approximately 33,000, while its free and indentured white population totaled about 21,500.³⁰ As Jerome Handler and Matthew Reilly note, "The histories of enslaved Africans

²⁸ Padraig Lenihan, *Confederate Catholics at War* (Cork, Ireland: Cork UP, 2001), 111.

²⁹ Sean O'Callaghan, *To Hell or Barbados: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ireland* (New York: The O'Brien Press, 2013), 85. On the significant distinctions between indentured servitude and enslavement in Barbados, see Jerome S. Handler and Matthew C. Reilly, "Contesting 'White Slavery' in the Caribbean: Enslaved Africans and European Indentured Servants in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," in *NWIG: New West Indian Guide* 91.1/2 (2017), 30-55.

³⁰ Handler and Reilly, 32-3. A group of Barbados planters claimed in 1655 to have in their service 12,000 prisoners of war (Planters of Barbados 1655).

and European indentured servants are intimately tied to the emergence of the plantation complex and the economic success of the early English colony.”³¹ The intimacy extended to the indentured Irish and enslaved Africans banding together in Barbados to plot revolts against English masters.³² Yet as Handler and Reilly make clear, socioeconomic and legal factors render these two forms of forced labor—chattel slavery and indentured servitude—meaningfully distinct. Prisoners of war like the Irish typically were conscripted into contracts lasting approximately ten years. Even as the penalty for servants’ violation of laws typically meant time added to the indentured period, and Irish and other Europeans in Barbados had the potential for indefinite servitude,³³ A.E. Smith is right to acknowledge that “there was never any such thing as perpetual slavery for any white man in any English colony.”³⁴ Though exploited for the same profit motive, “red” Irish and black Africans experienced distinct forms of racialized unfree labor.

The broader Atlantic context afforded by reading Spenser’s dialogue in the era in which it was made public invites further consideration of the English racialization of the Irish. Ware’s prolonged apology for *A View*’s provocations, and Anglesey’s response to it, troubles the racial logic structuring the neat binary of enslaved Africans and indentured white Irish. The “wisdom and deep insight into that barbarous nation” that Anglesey credits Spenser, he claims, argues for the recognition of the Irish as essentially different from English and other Northern European peoples. Continuing the counter-factual defense that Spenser, were he still living, would not cast

³¹ *ibid*, 33. On the terms of bondage for indentured servants in Barbados, see Eltis 2000:76; Hall 1764:455; Pitman 1689; Rivers & Foyle 1659.

³² *ibid*, 36. See also Beckles 1990; Dunn 1972; Handler 1982; Handler & Reilly 2015; Newman 2013; Shaw 2013.

³³ On the legal penalties for indentured servants, see Jennings (1654) and the 1661 servants act (Hall 1764), 35-42.

³⁴ A.E. Smith, *Colonists in Bondage* (1947), 171.

“aspersion upon some families, or generall upon the Nation”³⁵ offers insight to Ware’s goal of rehabilitating the author’s public image. He supposes that Spenser would agree that

For now we may truly say, *jam cuncti gens una sumus*, and that upon just cause those ancient statutes [The Statutes of Killkenny], wherein the natives of Irish descent were held to be, and named Irish enemies, and wherein those of English blood were forbidden to marry and commerce with them, were repealed by act of Parliament, in the raigne of our late Sovereigne King James of ever blessed memory.³⁶

Ware’s use of the Latin phrase “*jam cuncti gens una sumus*” [today we are all one nation] finds its most proximate source in William Camden’s *Britain: Or, a Chorographicall Description of the Most Flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1610). In that antecedent instance, Camden deploys the phrase in his introductory remarks on Scotland to justify his historiography of a nation or *gens* not his own. With James VI of Scotland succeeding Elizabeth and bringing “sweet concord” and “endless joy,” as the introduction celebrates, Camden asserts the newfound unity to license the Scottish wing of his decidedly British project.³⁷

Anglesey’s response to Ware’s historiographical echo, however, emphatically resists the unity proclamation. His marginal note (visible at the bottom of the image above) insists, “[we] were woefully deluded by a false people.” Rather than affirm a *gens una* [one people], Anglesey considers the 1633 to 1670 interim to have solidified the distinctions in *kind* that distinguish Irish

³⁵ On the strategies for negotiating Irish, Old English, and New English identities in the early seventeenth century, see Aidan Clakre, *The Old English in Ireland, 1625-42* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000—first pub. 1966); For a more sustained engagement with late Tudor policies for managing ethnic tensions in Ireland, see Richard Anthony McCabe, *Spenser’s Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³⁶ Ware, “Preface,” 3v-4r.

³⁷ William Camden, *Britain: Or, A Chorographicall Description of the Most Flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Ilands adjoining, out of the depth of Antiquitie*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: 1610), Aaaa2, p. 3 of “Scotland.”

from English. The sense of halcyon harmony resonating from James's reign was not merely temporary but delusional. Falseness, he suggests, is a quality of the Irish *genus*. The Spenser of Ware's imagination, the editor projects, would have recognized that those "ancient statutes" prohibiting "natives of Irish descent" from trade and marriage with the English were improper, given the unified rule of the British Isles. And yet the tool to differentiate the English and Irish, in Ware's own formulation, is not political cohesion or religious confession but rather "bloud." Broadly speaking, blood, in Roland Greene's formulation of the critical semantics of early modern Europe, serves as "a conceptual envelope, the coherence of which depend on the continued validity of its contemporary allegories"; and by around 1600 "most of the received allegories around blood [had] been compromised, and the envelope is frayed."³⁸ Greene considers this fraying in the context of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, demonstrating the divergent significations of the word in Shylock's "if you prick us, do we not bleed?" plea for sympathy and in his appeals to familiar bonds—"My own flesh and blood to rebel!" The toggle between the desire for universal sympathy and particular responsibility foregrounds the conceptual plasticity of blood in the early seventeenth century. While the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290 may have rendered Shylock's plea for shared humanity a relatively abstract consideration for London theater audiences, English colonization of Ireland posed immediate political and ethical questions of "bloud" for seventeenth-century Anglo readers.³⁹

³⁸ Roland Greene, *Five Words: Critical Semantics in the Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 108-9.

³⁹ For more recent and sustained engagements with Spenser and questions of race, see Andrew Hadfield, "In the Blood: Spenser, Race, and Identity," in *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Annual* 35 (2021): 47-68. See also Urvashi Chakravarty, "'Fit for Faire Habitation': Kinship and Race in *A Vewe of the Present State of Ireland*," in *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Annual* 35 (2021): 22-46.

Spenser and his contemporaries, as Jean Feerick has observed, “generally employed *race* with reference to a person’s birth and lineage, suggesting its close affinities with properties of blood and heritable order.”⁴⁰ This conception linking blood and race “reveals how the early modern category of race could describe differences *internal* to a polity, even enable and support identifications across national and political lines for people of similar social location...”⁴¹ In this premodern understanding, race may express a relation akin to rank. Despite the meaningful ways in which modern usages of race depart from the early modern, this earlier formulation “had deep, if oblique, connections to the later ideology.” Even the sonics of Spenser’s Ireland speak to the inherent substance of racial difference. Discussing the Irish ‘manner of raising of there crye in their confliectes and at other troublesome times of uprore’, Irenius hears the cry “as if through the auricle of history.” His description of Irish battle cries appears alongside considerations of other ‘Scithian Customes’ that continue to resound in the sixteenth-century Irish, such as the characteristic cloak or mantle. The cry, like the dress and blood, ‘is verye natural Scythyan...’⁴² The etymological argument implying shared ancestry for the Irish and Eurasian nomads, though “coniecture onely” (according to Irenius), offers another avenue for conceiving of the Irish as of another kind.⁴³ Regardless of the etymological conjecture, Anglesey’s comment on the matters of

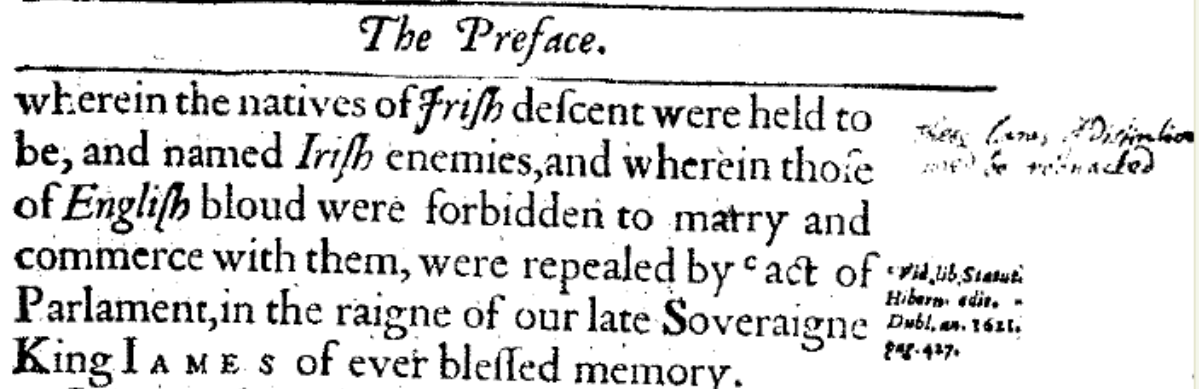
⁴⁰ Jean E. Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 8. On the signification of blood in the transition to modernity more broadly, see *Blood Matters: Studies in European literature and thought, 1400-1700*, eds. Bonnie Lander Johnson and Eleanor Decamp (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Thomas Ward, “Spenser’s Irish Hubbub,” in *ELH* 81.3 (2014): 766.

⁴³ According to Andrew Hadfield, the use of unstable etymologies as argument calls into question the dialogue’s own truth-claims, so that “the etymological root is established as an epistemological principle in Spenser’s work, along with the perpetual fear that it might be undermined, not least by the use of the pun, the harbinger of uncertainty and insecurity.” See Hadfield, *Spenser’s Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Savage Soyl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 98-99.

English-Irish commerce and marriage activates both modern and pre-modern conceptions of race. Responding to Ware's joy occasioned by parliament repealing the "ancient statutes" that codified Irish exclusion, Anglesey marks that "these laws of distinction need by reinstated."⁴⁴



The ideologies evident in Ware's apology and Anglesey's defense attest to early modernity's knotty transitional cultural categories. "Blood" and "*gens*" unite in this textual interchange to racialize a nation.

If blood serves as a "conceptual envelope" dependent on "contemporary allegories," in which literary-historical forms does Spenser's *A View* operate? Given the dialogue's historiographical context in seventeenth-century print and its literary context in modern criticism, the nature of *A View*'s "allegories" proves conceptually labile. At one pole, the fictive nature of the dialogue form provides a literary-critical excuse for the use of blood by Spenser, Ware, or Anglesey to affirm or deny the inclusion of the Irish within the Anglo idea of a valued race. At the other extreme, the historiographical enterprise encourages readers to assume the perspective

⁴⁴ Ware, "Preface," 3r. Anglesey's advocacy for reinstituting the legal prohibition of English-Irish marriage reveals apparent tensions within his own immediate family, as two of his daughters married Catholic Irish nobles.

of a naïve reader for whom blood and race, like class and status, are inherited. The distance between these poles may not be as great as presumed. For Anglesey and Spenserian Irenius, the blood-based racial allegory mandates categorical difference to license colonization, conscripted servitude, and mass death. For Ware, blood's essential flexibility moderates violence with the hope that the colonial project will succeed in grafting the Irish, like the Scottish, into the body politic of the Anglo *gens una*. The greater difference for the fact/fiction binary, then, appears less consequential for the text's form than it does for the modern critics' desire to recuperate the author.

As this chapter relies on Anglesey's marginalia to help parse the formal and political stakes of *A View*, locating the Earl within the political landscape of his own period's expansionist British Empire will clarify his use of *The Historie of Ireland*. Born in Dublin in 1614 to Francis Annelsey, first Baron Mountnorris and second Viscount Valentia, Arthur Annesley entered Magdalen College, Oxford around 1630 and subsequently was admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1633. An owner of substantial land in Ireland, he sat for Dublin in Richard Cromwell's Parliament beginning early in 1659. It was in this role in Parliament that Annesley established contact with Charles II in exile, obtaining a commission to treat with rebels and leading the charge for securing the king's return from the Netherlands.⁴⁵ His drive for Charles's return was premised in part on acquiring guarantees for the security of the Earl's estates in Ireland. Having been sworn a privy councilor on 1 June 1659, Anglesey in 1660 inherited his father's Irish titles and in 1661 he was created Baron Pagnel and Earl of Anglesey in the English peerage. Around this same time in 1660 he was appointed vice-treasurer and receiver-general of Ireland, becoming involved to a

⁴⁵ For a detailed overview of Arthur Annesley, first earl of Anglesey, see Perceval-Maxwell, M. "Annesley, Arthur, first earl of Anglesey (1614–1686), politician." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. 23 Sep. 2004.

greater extent in negotiating the Irish land settlement. By May 1663 the Earl's influence carried such sway that secretary of state Sir Henry Bennet esteemed him one of the three most powerful men in Ireland, placing him in the company of the Duke of Ormond, lord lieutenant of Ireland, and the Earl of Orrey.

Just as his political influence over Ireland was nearly unmatched in the mid-century, so Anglesey's book collection comprising some 30,000 volumes was unrivaled. M. Perceval-Maxwell designated Anglesey the first of the English peers to dedicate substantial investments of time and money to the construction of a renowned private library, making his collection the largest of the time.⁴⁶ The Earl's heft in the spheres of politics and books united in his endeavor to compile his own history of Ireland, an effort received as a menacing threat by political rivals like the Duke of Ormond. We can glimpse Anglesey's lost plans for his historical effort in the marginalia of his copy of Ware's tripartite *History*. Scrutinizing his many notes in Ware's compilation generally and Spenser's *A View* specifically affords ample indications of book use. Anglesey's use of Spenser's *A View* as a historiographical source on par with those generated by Meredith Hanmer and Edmund Campion compels reevaluation of the dialogue as well as the narrative of modernizing historiographical standards for which it supplies contrary evidence.⁴⁷ Rather than discard the dialogue as unserious and unsuited for rigorously modern history near the end of the seventeenth century, Anglesey's marks convey the degree to which the purportedly

⁴⁶ *ibid.* The reference to Annesley's prominence as a book collector in the English peerage appears in the first edition of the *ODNB*. Sales catalogues appearing in the wake of Annesley's death indicate that he purchased entire libraries in his drive for a great library of his own, resulting in many duplicate books. See N. Malcolm, The Library of Henry Oldenburg, *Electronic British Library Journal* 2005 article 7; G. Mandelbrote. The organization of book auctions, *Electronic British Library Journal* 2005, 15-50.

⁴⁷ For an overview of the methods of reading for use in early modern England, see William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), esp. 3-52.

fact-based histories maintained some allegiance to historiographical practices less wedded to aspirational objectivity or standards of material evidence.

Vehemently opposed to England's protectionist Cattle Acts in 1665 and 1666, Anglesey's stranglehold on Ireland's finances fashioned him a political juggernaut for the final two decades of his life. Yet the Earl's religious puritanism, and not merely his financial heft, provide the conditions for his place in this chapter's consideration of early modern literary history. Anglesey utilized his resources to protect, for example, the nonconformist publisher Nathaniel Ponder and to support puritan writers, most notably Andrew Marvell. The Earl's library was the largest private library of the time, and Marvell turned to Anglesey's immense collection of books to research his satires of the early 1670s.⁴⁸ More significant to the historiographical controversies of the period, Anglesey understood the writing of Irish history as the site at which his political, confessional, and personal grievances intersected and grew by their confluence.

In February 1681 Anglesey turned his ire on his former colleague the duke of Ormond and the Catholic earl of Castlehaven, James Touchet. Having received pages of Castlehaven's unpublished memoir from his time serving during the early years of the Irish rebellion as general to the Catholic confederation, Anglesey published excerpts replete with criticisms of Catholic sympathies. Castlehaven was the nominal target of the pamphlets, but Anglesey used the occasion to attack the duke of Ormond for betraying, along with Charles I, English protestant interests in Ireland in the 1640s. That Anglesey used events some four decades prior to solidify his own public Protestant image confirms the relevance of upheavals in Ireland occurring in the

⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that both *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672) and *The Rehearsal Transpros'd: the Second Part* (1673) were targeted at the high Anglican Samuel Parker. On the politics of Andrew Marvell's works, see Nigel Smith, *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

intervals between Spenser's composition of *A View* in 1596, the publication of *A View* in 1633, and Anglesey's active reading and marking of Ware's *History* beginning in 1670. Ormond's reticence to spar publicly with Anglesey resulted in a letter issued in response to the Earl's critique; and Anglesey promptly published as a pamphlet Ormond's letter alongside his own reply. Ormond's distaste for escalating the caustic public spat derived from a central concern: *it was known by Ormond and others that Anglesey was writing a history of Ireland*. The publication of Anglesey's Irish history, Ormond feared, had the potential to sully his reputation and place him at greater risk of removal as lord lieutenant of Ireland.

II.

While these moments in the Preface have been interpreted by Richard Anthony McCabe, for instance, as attesting to Spenser's having been "obsessed by ancient myths of racial difference,"⁴⁹ here I examine the historiographical practices that trouble the alleged 'mythic' origins of *A View*'s politico-racial ideology. Reassessing the balance of myth and history in the dialogue, I argue, emphasizes the degree to which *A View* revises ancient history for modern historiographical and political purposes. Not only is the text informed by a canon of historical scholarship and presented, by Ware, with an editorial apparatus flagging its sources. *A View* also appears either to the naïve or erudite reader as the product of eye-witness testimony. These features of form, production, editing, and reception compound to ground an otherwise fanicful humanist dialogue of Irish barbarity in rigorous history. The logic of colonialism that the dialogue presents—that the Irish are historically savage, of a different race or kind, and must be

⁴⁹ McCabe, 274.

exterminated—comes certified not in myth but by modern history. To confront the work’s policy proposals, I argue, we must recognize the degree to which *A View*’s dialogue functions historically. Moreover, the clarity that this eccentric historiographical form affords spotlights seventeenth-century historiography’s winding path in search of scientific modernization.

Ware concludes the Preface by pivoting from an apology for Spenser’s prescriptions for racial violence to a consideration of the text’s method of argumentation: “His proofes (although most of them conjecturall) concerning the originall of the language, customes of the Nation, and the first peopling of the severall parts of the Iland, are full of good reading, and doe shew a sound judgement.”⁵⁰ Anglesey’s note in the margin affirms the quality of the dialogue’s historical reasoning:

Parlament, in the raigne of our late Soveraigne
King IAMES of ever blessed memory.
His proofes (although most of them conjecturall) concerning the originall of the language, customes of the Nation, and the first peopling of the severall parts of the Iland, are full of good reading, and doe shew a sound judgement. They may be further confirmed by comparing them with *Richard Creagh's Booke*

Hibern. edis. n. Dubl. an. 1621. pag. 427.

His proofes full of good reading and shew a sound judgement.

Richard Creagh's Booke ⁵¹

“His proofes talk of good reading and show a sound judgement.” Notable in this paraphrase is the absence of Ware’s parenthetical hedging. The “conjecturall” nature of Spenser’s “proofes” is

⁵⁰ Ware, Preface, 4r.

⁵¹ Ware, “Preface,” 4r.

of less importance for Anglesey than the general soundness of the historical enterprise. Chapter 1 of this dissertation investigated the hazy limits of the historiographical standard of conjecture, arguing that the temporal distance of the ancient narratives it was deployed to safeguard warranted a more speculative historical reasoning. Absent any stable material evidence, verifiable testimony, or hard fact, the deep past opens itself for rigorous conjecture. Chapter 2, meanwhile, observed conjectural reasoning at the core of the Shakespearean Romantic regime of interpretation. Seamlessly grafting the author onto the dramatic corpus, biographical conjectures licensed an authorial lifeline to correspond with the history of the plays' production. With conjectures, I argued, the development of genius evident in the four periods of the plays tracked with the personal maturation of an author growing into his powers.

In the narratives of the Trojan founding of ancient Britain, King Cymbeline's negotiations with imperial Roman, and now Irish-Anglo relations, conjecture serves as the mechanism by which distant colonial narratives are apprehended and subsequently utilized for contemporary purposes. That the contours of permissible conjecture form in dynamic relation to historiographical accounts of colonization perhaps is unsurprising. These narratives of national origin weave the fabric from which early modern English identity is cut. Processes for modernizing the premises of national identity, however, steadfastly avoid substantial revision in order to repackage shared stories for a new generation, epoch, or episteme. In the cases examined in this project, this process necessarily involves certifying the origin of a collective self-understanding with an attending affect of scientific objectivity and modern facticity. As the case of Spenser's dialogue typifies, modernization of historiography in England occurred in tandem with the acceleration of the era of Western European colonization. Irish indentured servitude in North America and the Caribbean establishes the clearest link between experiments in colonial

strategy and what would become recognizable, from a post-colonial perspective, as its expression in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁵²

Brutus and his followers eradicated that “race of giants,” the chronicles maintain, so that the Trojans could re-people the island. The chronicles pass over this episode quickly, saying little to confer maximum credibility. The story of the colonization of Ireland diverges in significant ways, not least of which is the abundant reality of the indigenous population facing depopulation and replacement. Spenser’s Irenius, like Spenser himself, has seen and documented the native peoples he wishes destroyed. Comparing these historiographical narratives of colonization, one foundational and the other expansionist, prompts a reevaluation of each. For the former, the flexible usage of race fashions the giants a non-human impediment to safe harbor. Genocide of the indigenous population requires uncomplicated or even unacknowledged justification. In the Irish context, justification for population replacement fluctuates in relation to moments of relative peace or upheaval: Spenser’s 1596, Ware’s 1633, and Anglesey’s 1670. In each case, however, prescriptions for reformation are grounded in national imperative and articulated with reference to historical causes.

Ware follows his parenthetical note on Spenser’s conjectures by supporting the author’s “sound judgement” with comparisons to august historical sources on the same subject. “They may be confirmed,” the editor insists, “by comparing them with Richard Creagh’s Booke *de Lingua Hiberinca*, which is yet extant in the original manuscript...” Ware continues, “& although mixed with matter of story, leaning too much on some fabulous traditions, yet in other respects

⁵² On the legacy of Spenser’s involvement in the colonial project in Ireland, see Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Random House, 1993), esp. 7-10.

[it is] worthy of light.”⁵³ The survival of the manuscript copy of Creagh’s book lends credibility to its contents that overcome the inclusion of “fabulous” details. “Original manuscript” signifies for the historiographer here in the same manner as that prized material evidence or eye-witness testimony. The hand lends the content historical weight. Anglesey notes in the margins Creagh’s “worth[iness] of light.”

At no time in the Preface, it should be noted, does the antiquarian editor nominate particular sections of Spenser’s or Creagh’s texts that draw too heavily on the “fabulous.” Indeed, he concludes his Preface by elevating Spenser’s dialogue above all other works of its time pertaining to Ireland:

Touching the generall scope intended by the author for the reformation of abuses and ill customes, This we may say, that although very many have taken paines in the same subject, during the raigne of Queene *Elizabeth*, and some before, as the author of the booke intituled *Salus populi*, and after him *Patrick Finglas*, cheife Baron of the Exchequer here, and afterwards cheife Iustice of the common pleas, yet none came so neere to the best grounds for reformation, a few passages excepted, as *Spenser* hath done in this.⁵⁴

As with Creagh, the incredible passages in this work must speak for themselves. The sensitive reader is left to sift fact from fiction in order to determine which episodes in this history of Ireland warrant serious attention. More likely, the reader will forget this word of caution and proceed like Anglesey to search for authoritative information pertaining to the nature of the Irish. This much Ware can say for certain: Spenser’s *View* is the most authoritative source for “the reformation of abuses and ill customes.” Though others have devoted great effort to examining

⁵³ Ware, 4r.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

the roots of the “ill customes” that require, for English colonists, correction, Spenser supplies the best understanding of the “grounds.”

The word “grounds” operates throughout this text simultaneously as metaphor and as material soil. It is most easily grasped in the metaphorical register as the premise from which arguments proceed. The logical demonstrations for reformation stem from the rigorousness of the observed sources of ill custom. But because this historical endeavor is also a colonial blueprint, “grounds” in this instance doubles as reference to the physical Irish territory and lands. The dialogue begins by reveling in the twin meanings of the term, as Eudoxus first asks Irenius, “But if that Country of Ireland, whence you lately came, bee of so goodly and commodious a soyle as you report, I wonder that no course is taken for the turning thereof to good uses, and reducing that nation to better government and civility.”⁵⁵ For the land to be useful to the English, “turning” of the soil is required. Implied in the action of turning is the transfer of ownership from Irish shepherds to English planters as well as the tilling of soil required for crop cultivation.⁵⁶ Likewise, “reducing” functions to note the need “to lead or bring back from error, sin, immorality, etc.; to restore to the truth or the right faith”⁵⁷ In its more literal, farming context, it means “to render (land) fit for cultivation.”⁵⁸

Irenius utters his first words in response to Eudoxus’s question by continuing the play of words. He explains, “Marry so there have bin diverse good plottes divided, & wise Councils cast

⁵⁵ Spenser, *A View*, A.

⁵⁶ On the history of faming and crop cultivation in the British Isles, see Thirsk, “Farming Techniques,” in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, ed. Thirsk, 8 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1967) 4:163.

⁵⁷ “reduce, v.”. OED Online. January 2021. Oxford University Press. 6b.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 23.

already about reformation of that Realme...”⁵⁹ The “good plottes divised” to which Irenius speaks activates “plot” both as demarcated area for planting and as plan of action. Taken with the latter meaning, the plot relies on narrative and military planning to effect the desired outcome. Irenius’s answer at once explains the shortcomings of crop yields and the short sidedness of plans to cement English rule in Ireland. What follows in the dialogue, then, is an historical explanation which casts land and plan as two sides of the same coin. As Benjamin Myers observes, Irish pastoral nomadism is made “to function as the universal stamp of barbarity.”⁶⁰ Irenius, drawing on sources ranging from the scriptural to the medieval and classical, thus echoes other Anglo polemicists on Ireland in contending that a pastoral way of life is inferior to one sustained by the cultivation of crops.

The first-person testimonial from Irenius, moreover, links the Irish people’s pastoral inclination to a pre-modern relationship with the soil:

[T]he people that live thus in these Bollies grow thereby the more Barbarous and live more licentiously then they Could in townes using what meanes they list and practicing what mischeifs and villanies they will either against the government there generally by

⁵⁹ Spenser, *A View*, A.

⁶⁰ Benjamin P. Myers. “The Green and Golden World: Spenser’s Rewriting of the Munster Plantation,” in *ELH* 76.2 (2009): 479. Myers notes that Spenser’s most direct precursor in think this evolutionary understanding of Irish ecology is Gerald of Wales: “Irish are a rude people, subsisting on the produce of their cattle only, and living themselves like beasts—a people that has not yet departed from the primitive habits of pastoral life. In the common course of things, mankind progresses from the forest to the field, from the field to the town, and to the social conditions of citizens.” See *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis*, trans. Richard Colt Hoare, ed. Thomas Write (London: George Bell and Sons, 1894), 124. For the influence of Gerald on Tudor approaches to Ireland, see Hiram Norgan, “Giraldus Cambrensis and the Tudor Conquest of Ireland” in *Political Ideology in Ireland, 1541-1641*, ed. Hiram Morgan (Dublin: Fore Courts Press, 1999).

theire Combinacions or against private men whom they maligne by stealing theire goodes or murdering themselves.⁶¹

An impediment to England's plots to colonize Ireland, Irenius maintains, is a lack of success first converting pastured land to plotted land, barbarous bollies to peaceful towns. As a straightforward narrative plot locates its end from a generative start, turning or reducing the Irish must begin with proper land management. By these means might the English subvert the natural Irish tendency to mischief, villainy, stealing, and murder.

The primary motivation for writing *A View*—as well as how to disentangle the dialogue's main parts—long has puzzled the text's critics. In one section the dialogue appears fixated on providing a history of Irish antiquities, while a subsequent section sustains on calling for the English government to military action to safeguard the interests of colonists.⁶² The explanations more often than not toggle between these two possibilities, sensing one or the other side of the binary must be the answer. If antiquarianism is the prime motivator, why the delay in the dialogue's publication? Jean Brink voices the problem in this way: "If Spenser was assigned the task, or took it upon himself, of explaining why the government should send a military force to Ireland, then some of the antiquarian lore included seems irrelevant."⁶³ While Brink ultimately concludes that licensing disputes likely caused the three-decade publication delay, her judgment that the "antiquarian lore" contained in the work "seems irrelevant" speaks to a broader misrecognition of the text's historiographical mode. This chapter takes the position of the dialogue's opening remarks investigating the history of the soil and its indigenous people as

⁶¹ Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, in *The Works of Edmund Spenser, A Variorum Edition: The Prose Works* ed. Rudolf Gottfried (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1947), 98.

⁶² Brink, 304.

⁶³ *ibid.*

entirely relevant to any policy proposal. Francis Bacon's famous aphorism "knowledge is power" functions in the same way. His impetus for attempting to reform natural philosophy, as Julian Martin has argued, was to redirect and bolster the Tudor monarchy. The 'crisis of knowledge' he desired to solve was not knowledge for its own sake but knowledge as the instrument of reason of state.⁶⁴ Bacon's aphorism, Mary Poovey contends, should be read in this context: "as a statement about the instrumental value that a certain kind of knowledge could have for a specific form of political power."⁶⁵

III.

If, as I have argued, *A View* was apprehended and used as a work of historiographical significance for at least the first century of its appearance in print, how does this historical narrative end? The final section of this chapter reads the conclusion of the dialogue in light of the conventions of seventeenth-century English Protestantism's millenarianism. More specifically, I detail how *A View* marries the antiquarian historicism of early modern chronicles and a nascent capitalist adventurism to produce a beatific vision of maximally efficient land utilization. It is in this vision of the capitalist eschaton that historically minded readers can plot the final period of

⁶⁴ See Julian Martin, *Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. chapter 3. Martin argues that Thomas Cromwell, who initiated the reforms in government to which Bacon and his father were committed, learned from Italian political arguments during his travels between 1500 and 1512. Cromwell began issuing policies from these reason-of-state arguments from the 1530s. See Martin, 11-15.

⁶⁵ Mary Poovey, *A history of the modern fact: problems of knowledge in the sciences of wealth and society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 98.

Ireland's transformation from a land of barbarous and inefficient hoarders to one of reformed and zealous resource extractors.

A View concludes in its final pages by means of an exchange revisiting Irenius's prescriptions for managing the unruly labor force required for turning the soil to good use. "Surely I am of your minde," Eudoxus remarks, "that nothing will bring them from their uncivill life sooner then learning and discipline, next after knowledge and feare of God. And therefore I doe still expect that you should come thereunto, and set some order for the reformation of religion, which is first to bee respected..."⁶⁶ Eudoxus's view of the utility of the "fear of God" in disciplining the Irish serves to question his interlocutor's surprising attention to reforming Ireland's cattle farmers. For Irenius, focus on instituting the colonialist sense of proper work is without rival:

... though Ireland bee by nature counted a great soyle of pasture, yet had I rather have fewer cowes kept, and men better mannered, then to have such huge increase of cattle, and no increase of good condition. I would therefore wish that there were some ordinances made amongst them, that whosoever keepeth twentie kine, should keep a plough going...⁶⁷

The number of "cowes kept" and "men better mannered" are conceived of in inverse relation to one another; as cows decrease the quality of men's behavior increases. Or rather, Irenius supposes that any increase in profits gained through additional cattle farming would be insufficient to curtail the unruly behavior inculcated by the farmers' pasturing lifestyle. The proposal that farms with more than twenty cows must also plough, he explains, will regularize more productive cultivation of crops for export which will, in turn, minimize Irish sloth.

⁶⁶ *A View*, 151.

⁶⁷ *ibid*, 150.

Transitioning the manner of Irish labor away from pasturing must precede the broader colonial domestication plot.

Irenius's response, while acknowledging the unique power of Protestantism to civilize the Irish, argues the priority for all Irish subjects regulation by "some honest trade of life" and the watchful eye of local law enforcement. By these two methods those "ordiances which shall afterwards bee set for religion, may abide the more firmly, and bee observed more diligently." Irenius's hierarchy of regulatory mechanisms proposes a reordering of the values and practices that had come to structure daily life in Reformation England.⁶⁸ Indeed, Irenius's strategies for regulation signal a secularization of the very concept: regulation, as the *OED* traces, looked either to the rule of the sovereign (*regis*) or to that of religious observance (*regulare*) to structure behaviors and practices.⁶⁹ Supplanting both monarch and Church, labor, in Irenius's telling, conditions all subsequent obedience.

The easy transposition of labor and religion as strategies for colonial reformation is remarkable in itself. The proposed conversion plot, of course, intends not to guide the reformed soul to proper relation with the divine but the barbarous farmer to maximal yields. Indeed, the proposal contributes to colonizing practices Urvashi Chakravarti has called chrononormativity, a mode of organizing human bodies in time toward greatest productivity.⁷⁰ Even the use of

⁶⁸ For an overview of the literary history of the transition from feudal to capitalist system in England, see Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. 19-60.

⁶⁹ "regular, adj., n., and adv." A.1.a and b. *OED Online*. June 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/161414?redirectedFrom=regular>

For an account of the linguistic effects of secularization, see Margreta de Grazia, "The Secularization of Language in the Seventeenth Century," in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41.2 (1980): 319-329.

⁷⁰ Chakravarty, 36. Chakravarty's use of chrononormativity occurs in a discussion of straightening the queer kinship of the Irish. The concept derives from Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 3, 4.

‘reformation’ to signal the conversion of the Irish people assumes the priority of secular economic policy.

For Irenius, then, absent his prescriptions for colonial reformation the Irish risk nothing less than a repetition of the original fall in Eden, yet with a remarkable twist. Continuing his exploration of the equation linking the quantity of cows both to efficient production and mannered obedience, Irenius worries that “for otherwise all men would fall to pasturage, and none to husbandry, which is a great cause of this dearth now in England, and a cause of the usual stealthes in Ireland.”⁷¹ The prophesied “fall” is figured as a kind of entropic return, with humans tending toward wasteful “pasturage” at the expense of cultivating crops. “Tending to wild,” as Milton’s Eve would have it.⁷² Yet while the Eve of *Paradise Lost* naively (for she could only be so) privileges the management of her garden over that of herself, Spenser’s Irenius knows his history. His name and form of speaking both harken to classical antiquity, both resurrected here at the close of the sixteenth century and repurposed for civil and commercial manners rather than Christian morals.

As Irenius admits, falling is a given. The grammatical construction of his observation suggests a parallel, if only obliquely, characterizing both pasturage and husbandry as lapses while maintaining the possibility that crop cultivation is the righteous way. Yet what matters from this perspective is not *that* one falls but the direction. Without Irenius’s proposed labor rules the colonized population, indeed all of humanity, would fall not toward husbandry but pasturage. For Spenser’s expert informant this post-lapsarian inclination to further falling must be governed by husbandry’s requisite tilling and the growing of crops for export to England.

⁷¹ *A View*, 150.

⁷² *Paradise Lost* 9.212.

Like the re-conceptualization of ‘regular’ noted above, the use of ‘husbandry’ signals a distinctly commercial activity: “agricultural produce, cultivated crops. *Obsolete.*”⁷³ Unlike the secular bent ‘regular’ acquired in early modernity, however, ‘husbandry’ has registered as more clearly Christian in the centuries following its usage in *A View*: “Christian people, humankind, etc., regarded as the domain of God’s ministry.”⁷⁴ Husbandry’s conceptual pivot more likely tracks with a shift in attention from matters of the home to those of the field.⁷⁵ As labor moves toward increasing crop cultivation, the conceptual vocabulary of divine care draws more from agricultural produce and less from shepherding. The change in husbandry’s meaning, then, falls less along a secular dividing line than an economic one.

It might be wise to avoid attempting to differentiate secular and economic modernization narratives, as secularization and the primitive accumulation of capital walk hand-in-hand.⁷⁶ But for Irenius the distinction is clear. Pasturage leads to “the usuall stealthes in Ireland” that husbandry serves to remedy.⁷⁷ Irenius helpfully contextualizes these “stealthes” by turning to the bellicose behavior of those others at the periphery or to the east of civilized Europe:

For looke into all countreyes that live in such sort by keeping of cattle, and you shall finde that they are both very barbarous and uncivill, and also greatly given to warre. The Tartarians, the Muscovites, the Norwegians, the Gothes, the Armenians, and many other doe witnesse the same. And therefore since now wee purpose to draw the Irish, from desire of warre and tumults, to the love of peace and civility, it is expedient to abridge

⁷³ “husbandry, n.” 4.d. *OED* Online.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 4.c.

⁷⁵ Compare *OED* definitions 1.a, 1.b, 2.a, 2.b with 3a.

⁷⁶ See Halpern, 61-70.

⁷⁷ Irenius adds that both a marshal and sheriff will team up to enforce “[Y]et perhappes there will bee some stragglers and runnagates, which will not of themselves come in a yield themselves to this order,” Irenius remarks on the effects of his labor policies, “and yet after well finishing of the present warre, and establishing of the garrisons in all strong places of the country, where there wonted refuge was most, I suppose a few will stand out, or if they doe, they will shortly bee brought in by the eares” (151).

their great custome of hardening, and augment their trade of tillage and husbandry.⁷⁸

The peoples or nations listed here highlight the eccentric location of Ireland, its geography distant from the emerging core of a Eurocentric globe. While this chapter eschews the irony critics in the twentieth century have invested in *A View*'s dialogic form, this passage evinces the troubling contradiction inherent in English colonists claiming for themselves qualities of "peace and civility." Violence and domination, Irenius assures, beget peace and profit. To translate "desire" to "love" by "abridg[ing]" "custome" and "augment[ing]" "trade," peaceful and civil ends justify violent and uncivil means.

Perhaps more significant in this discussion of labor most conducive to resource extraction is the curious shimmer of Christianity below the lexical surface. One recognizes the language of *Hebrews* in its warning to "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness."⁷⁹ A reference to the "rebellion" against God by the Israelites in the desert, the verse is translated by Irenius into a command against the "hardening" of the Irish custom of pasturage. Evidence for the Biblical citation may appear wanting, but the echo resounds in its placement in a plot advancing Irish reformation by means of a de-centering of pasturage. As a stated aim of this social and economic transformation is "the love of peace," it is difficult to ignore that the "Prince of Peace" was himself a shepherd and not a gardener: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."⁸⁰ The verse from *Isaiah* has been read typologically to prophesy the arrival

⁷⁸ *A View*, 150.

⁷⁹ *Hebrews* 3:8. King James Version.

⁸⁰ *Isaiah* 9:6, King James Version.

of Christ and eschatologically to qualify the millennium over which he will reign on earth before the final judgment.⁸¹ (That final judgment is preceded by Satan gathering Gog and Magog for one last battle, thus returning us to the giant Gogmagog in the first chapter of this dissertation and to the beginning of Britain's history). Christ as shepherd of his flock, Christ as peacemaker. These descriptions of God made flesh do not sit comfortably with the labor hierarchy erected by Irenius. Nor does Irenius's use of "husbandry" sit well with the Christian Bible, since as Tyndale's translation of 1 *Corinthians* 3:9 tells us, "Ye are goddis husbandrye, ye are goddis bylydynges."

What are we to make of Irenius's seemingly un-Christian prescriptions for reformation? Is the irony of advocating peace through racialized violence an absurdist wink from Spenser or quotidian evidence of colonization's normalized brutality? Do we read the dialogue's glaring omissions and logical contradictions as authorial traps set to induce the reader to more ethical reasoning, to contemplate the stakes of the colonial project? Posing these kinds of questions about a text saturated with history for the sake of strategizing arrival at the unambiguous goal of social, cultural, economic, and religious transformation is possible only because the text for so long has been mined by critics searching for Spenserian prose to add texture to readings of the *Faerie Queene*. Like E.K. in *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579) or Ware in the 1633 *A View*, the text of Spenser's dialogue more often than not is unbound from *The Historie of Ireland* in order that it might be applied to episodes, phrases, geographies, or customs referenced in Spenser's epic and function as a dense gloss.⁸² Many of the readings that utilize this critical methodology

⁸¹ *Rev.* 20:4-6.

⁸² For a recent example of this method of glossing *The Faerie Queene* with *A View of the State of Ireland*, see Thomas Ward, 757-786. For an influential model of this interpretive practice, see Annabel Patterson, 98-108.

do so to great effect, producing nuanced engagements with the poem and its knotty representation of a mytho-historic Ireland.

Yet to instrumentalize *A View* to decipher or elaborate features of *The Faerie Queene* poses significant complications. When *A View* serves primarily to complement or illuminate *The Faerie Queene*, the dialogue's own complexities tend to shade into irrelevance. The ethnographic anecdotes lifted from the pages of *A View* clarify the epic while further obscuring the ways in which the dialogue was printed, read, and used before this interpretive method became *de rigueur*. The dialogue was not included with the epic in the early folios, and the two works were not read together in criticism until New Historicist critics toward the end of the twentieth century modeled a more explicitly politico-historical contextualization of vaunted poetry. Criticism in this vein almost invariably utilizes the early twentieth-century Edwin Greenlaw variorum edition (*A vewe*)⁸³ rather than either the early seventeenth-century Ware or late twentieth-century Hadfield and Maley (*A View*) texts. Preferring *A vewe* to *A View*, while likely a consequence of the variorum's convenient collation of the text's emendations, privileges a version of the dialogue stripped of the dense materiality inescapable to its early readers: the book *The Historie of Ireland*.⁸⁴

The set with which the chapter began requires augmentation: to 1596, 1633, and 1670 could be added 1993. For while scholarly attention to the dialogue's form reached its apogee by 1993, it did so before the advent of the only edition of the text to include Ware's apparatus. The *Variorum's A vewe*, the text available outside of copies in rare book rooms, decentered the book

⁸³ Spenser, *A vewe of the present state of Ireland*, in *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw and others, 11 vol. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1932-1957), vol. 10.

⁸⁴ The Hadfield and Maley edition (1993) reproduces James Ware's annotations from 1633.

for New Historicist inquiry. The modern history of interpreting *A View* is itself shaped by the continuous history of mediation.

If Spenser's *A View* and Ware's *The Historie of Ireland* provoke in modern critics skepticism about the suitability of the nomination "history," the discomfort owes more to the texts' transgressions of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment conceptions of properly disciplined history than it does to any early modern historiographical standards. For while sixteenth and seventeenth-century historians advocated for a presentation of the past governed by evidence and facts, the same historians not infrequently failed to meet their own aspirational standards (nor were those standards uniformly accepted or applied). In this dialogic history, the indeterminate mixture of story and history prompts weariness of the text's impure representational tactics. "Frankly I do not know what literature is," critic of secularism John Parker admits, "but I notice we tend to bestow the title on the kind of document whose relation to the facts of history traditional historians are trained to doubt."⁸⁵ Parker's observations concern the autonomy of the aesthetic, but they draw attention to the role of suspicion in determining on how we judge the fictionality of textual objects. That sense of suspicion is not a consistent one; nor is its accuracy necessarily more sophisticated later in modernity. Doubt instigated by "traditional historians" has informed the construction of the disciplinary walls between departments of history and literature that make a binary choice between the historical and the literary appear natural.

This chapter began with the modest claim that a work appearing in *The Historie of Ireland* can be read productively as a history, albeit an eccentric one. By utilizing analytical tools from the history of the book and book use, it supplied evidence for the claim by excavating the

⁸⁵ Parker, John. "The Promise of History," in *Shakespeare Studies* 30 (2002): 44.

marginal notes of a colonial powerbroker and would-be historian some seventy years after Spenser's composition. The extended scale of analysis provided by this archive, I have argued, clarifies the formal and political stakes of *A View*. As James Ware's preface and the Earl of Anglesey's notes attest, the dialogue's proposals to manage the Irish to effect millenarian agricultural productivity did not invite readers to entertain the possibility that the work asked for skepticism. The suggestion that the author deploys irony is a development much later in the history of reading, one unlikely before the decolonial era and the critical desire to recuperate politically compromised poets of England's "Golden Age."

What we are left with, then, is a historico-political treatment—"written dialogue wise between Eudoxus and Irenius," as its title page specifies—that registered more as history than story for its early readers. Ware's "Preface to the Subsequent Histories" in his volume celebrate the diversity of material: "What varietie of choyse matter the affaires of this Kingdome doe afford to an Historian...But if we consider how little hath hitherto bin published, wee cannot but blame the slowness of our learned men, who have (for by-respects) forborne to take paines in so worthy a subject." Ware celebrates the variety of material available to the historiographer of Ireland by comparing it to efforts in England:

England hath had the happines that some parts of her Historie have bin lately excellently performed by the right honorable Francis late Viscount St Alban, the right Reverend Francis Lo: Bishop of Hereford, the most learned William Camden and others. Some will hereafter, I hope, doe the like for Ireland.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ware, 3v. The language of performance is reminiscent of title pages of printed plays of the period advertising the quarto's fidelity to live staging.

Ware's description of the "subsequent histories" compares their worthiness to the modernized historiographies of England printed around the turn of the seventeenth century. Unlike Camden's *Britannia*, for which the stated goal is to renew ancientry, Spenser's text will help to *construct* Irish ancientry for English purposes. To write Irish history is to set the terms for Irish reformation and English profit. Knowledge is power, one need only ask the Earl of Anglesey.

The Huntington Library copy of the book edited by Ware and owned and annotated by Anglesey fashions itself a history while containing within it a material history of reading and use. Antiquarian details in Spenser's text only appear "irrelevant" if the decision concerning the project's form—colonial plan of action or classical dialogue or antiquarian ethnography—is governed by a policy of mutual exclusivity. Containing records of composition, publication, ownership, and use, the book offers material evidence to construct another history that speaks to different stages of English colonization and the British imperial project. The Huntington's copy, not merely a testament to Spenser's artful representation of the territory in which he resided, sketches a map that traces England's expansion first to Scotland, Wales, and Ireland and next to Barbados, Virginia, and the wider globe. Anglesey's notes permit the reader to witness historiography in progress, as the accretion of subjective observation and colonial perspective acquires the aura of objectivity and scientific fact. Investigating the use of Spenser's text in its capacity as both history and story, then, documents the ideological utility of modernizing historiography for the British imperial project in its transition from minor player to world power.

Chapter 4 | Periodization, Milton, and the Faces of History

That at some particular time, here and now, a 'new epoch' of
world history begins, and one could have been present at the
event...is never a secure historical fact.

Hans Blumenberg¹

For the concluding future-historical books of *Paradise Lost*, persons and events across time recur, echo, and rhyme in a way exceptional even for such a self-referential poem. History, rather than a record of progress or socio-political development, records an iterative story. Nowhere is that echo across past, present, and future heard more distinctly than in the forecasting to Adam of Noah and the Flood in the epic's concluding books. "But who was that Just Man," Adam inquires of his guide, "whom had not Heav'n / Rescu'd, had in his Righteousness bin lost?" (1667: 10.677-678).² Michael's descriptive responses curiously affirm the historical singularity of the patriarch Noah in his righteous justness: "The onely righteous in a World perverse, / And therefore hated, therefore so beset / With Foes for daring single to be just" (10.697-679). While the *Genesis* account of the Flood affirms that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (6:8)³ and that "Noah was a just man" (6:9), the epic's insistence on the uniqueness

¹ Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 457.

² John Milton, *Paradise Lost. A Poem Written in Ten Books* (London: Printed and sold by Peter Parker under Creed Church neer Aldgate, And by Robert Boulter at the Turks Head in Bishopsgate-street; And Matthias Walker, under St. Dunstons Church in Fleet Street, 1667), Rr.

³ All biblical references can be found in *The King James Version*. For a comparison of the *Latin Vulgate Bible* and *KJV* verses, see <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.

of the patriarch, coupled with its withholding of that just man's name, seduces the reader to transpose Jesus and Noah.

One man except, the onely Son of light
 In a dark Age, against example good,
 Against allurements, custom, and a World
 Offended, fearless of reproach and scorn,
 Or violence, hee of thir wicked ways
 Shall them admonish, and before them set
 The paths of righteousness, how much more safe,
 And full of peace, denouncing wrauth to come
 On thir impenitence; and shall returne
 Of them derided, but of God observ'd
 The one just Man alive; by his command ... (10.804-814).

The poem's description of Noah contained within this extended sentence amasses clauses reverberating with typological significance, concluding with reference to the epic's opening lines in Book 1 summarizing the plot of Christian history: "...till one greater Man / Restore us, and regain that blissful Seat" (1.4-5). Flexible spacing accommodating the stylized "O" in the 1667 edition [left] and the historiated "O" in the 1674 edition [right] offsets and centers a schematic reading of human history before initiating the poem's unbroken lines of iambic pentameter.



O Mans First Disobedience, and
 the Fruit
 Of that Forbidden Tree, whose
 mortal tast
 Brought Death into the World,
 and all our woe,
 With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,



O Mans First Disobedience, and
 the Fruit
 Of that Forbidden Tree, whose
 mortal tast
 Brought Death into the World,
 and all our woe,
 With loss of *Eden*, till one
 greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
 Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top

In this spacio-typographic distillation of an already abbreviated summary, “The Fruit” and “mortal tast” give way to “all our woe” and “greater man.”⁴ In a suggestive visual, the historiated initial that begins the twelve-book 1674 edition of the poem features a cloaked man in the center of the capital “O.” His feet positioned to indicate directional movement leftward, the man grasps a tail or ligature attached to the top of the character. The ligature’s location, furthermore, suggests that this “O” arises from a “Q” having been rolled or perhaps flipped along the horizontal axis. As the man shuffles toward the left, the O/Q cycles like a wheel. Moreover, Q’s lack of fixity in the textual image that begins *Paradise Lost* affirms the letter’s preposterous nature—the confusion of before and after caused by the placement of its tale—in seventeenth-century printing.⁵ The narrative proffered by the historiated capital consequently is one premised both on cyclicity and movement, a version in miniature of the poem’s broader historiographic enterprise.

As in other episodes, the epic’s narrative elaboration anticipating the Flood far exceeds that supplied by the *Genesis* account. Indeed, the thread inserted into Milton’s poetic history without Biblical precedent, that instantiating the Christ-like characterization of the nameless Noah, works in tandem with the poem’s representation of the conditions preceding God’s cleansing deluge. The corruption of the world that stokes God’s destructive grief for creation, the *Genesis* narrative relates, stems from angels taking mortal women for wives: “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born unto them,

⁴ On the performative potential of typography in seventeenth-century books, see Claire Bourne, *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England* (London and New York: OUP, 2020).

⁵ Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies: Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare’s Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 6. Masten elaborates the sodomical nature of Q in the placement of its essential penile ligature on the rear. On the standardization of letters and bodies, see Tom Conley, *Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 62-87.

that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose” (*Genesis* 6:1-2). From these unholy unions sprang “giants,” “mighty men which were of old, men of renown” (6:5). Their wickedness having metastasized to the general population, “the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face [*facie*] of the earth” (6:7).

Genesis makes no mention of Noah’s persecution by the wicked nor of his attempts to preach and thereby convert the corrupted from violence. Rather than spread a gospel of goodness, the Noah of *Genesis* embodies his role by safeguarding his “perfect” “generations” (6:9). That is to say, as the seventh man or generation from Adam, Noah has fathered sons who will perpetuate a line uncontaminated by giants and lustful angels. Yet in Michael’s future-historical projection in *Paradise Lost* Noah acts heroically, “fearless of reproach and scorn, / Or Violence” (807-8), and he warns the general population of the consequences of their “wicked ways” (809). The way of “safety,” “righteousness,” and “peace” that he teaches follows a messianic script from the New Testament gospels.

That unnamed “One man except, the onely Son of light” in the poem’s vision of future history likewise nods to the proem of Book 3 and its opening invocation: “Hail holy Light, offspring of Heav’n first-born, / Or of th’Eternal Coeternal beam / May I express thee unblam’d (3.1-3). Yet in recounting Noah’s righteousness rather than the Son’s, poetic enjambment redirects the referential object away from the divine eternity of the invocation, favoring instead an historical location: “...the onely Son of light / In a dark Age.” The temporal specificity afforded by designating a temporal “Age” serves as a correction to any misidentification with “th’Eternal Coeternal beam.” Such adjustment similarly registers in the upper (3.1) and lower case (1667, 10.804) “L” type applied in the printing of the two instances of ‘light.’ When used to

describe Noah, “light” serves to counter the darkness of his “Age” rather than flag his filial relation to God the father.

In the passage primarily concerning Noah, the final line—“The one just Man alive; by his command” (814)—similarly affirms the man’s temporal situatedness as Michael supplies the consequential qualifier “alive” to begin the third iamb. Like the enjambment hooking “light” (804) to “dark” (805), the iambic “alive” attaches to its subject—both “one just man” and “one man except”—as a revisionary addendum. The poetic effect is something akin to that theorized by Stanley Fish in his foundational study of the epic’s instructive seductions.⁶ Yet the confusion of *personae* and subsequent dangling corrections characteristic of Noah in this episode do not provide moral instruction, nor do they enlighten the reader to the sinful allure of a fallen interpretive schema. The reader might find herself confused as to the nominal subject of the verses but not, in Fish’s formulation, surprised by sin. Why, then, misdirect? My claim is that this poetic book of history, especially in its representation of the Flood and the re-creation of both society and land, has designs on the writing and reading of history. Rather than represent historical change as a story of increasing modernization and systematic development, the epic narrates the boom and bust of a violence that transgresses social and territorial borders circumscribed at creation. The epic remembers and repeats, at times proleptically, the substance of historical periods in a manner admitting of change but resistant to conceptions of teleological modernity.⁷

⁶ Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

⁷ On the repetitive nature of Miltonic creation, see Regina M. Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation in Paradise Lost* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

It is a surprising swerve in the long arcs of criticism and reading that Milton's epic singing the foundation of Christian history appears to many in this century so brimming with the matter of modernity. Modernity as secular, rational, capitalist, and nationalist here finds an awkward vehicle for expression in sacred, pre-capitalist biblical narration, and modernity's economic and political concerns appear far afield from those entertained either in the Pentateuch or *Paradise Lost*.⁸ And yet studies of Milton in the opening decades of the twenty-first century have been motivated to a great extent by the poet-polemicist-statesman's entanglements with the modern.⁹ To consider the labile "modern" in these contexts, however, requires greater definitional specificity. In one sense, what is modern about Milton is the way in which his writing—in verse or prose, Latin or English—anticipates, represents, or foments turns in culture, politics, and economics that register as prescient or relevant from the critic's vantage. In another, more limited sense Milton's modernity adheres roughly to his present and not ours. This usage of the term, to a greater extent than the former, was operative for those in the seventeenth century as a way to refer deictically to the writerly present.¹⁰ Not an epoch of history following in

⁸ On modernity as defined according to these premises, see Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London, Methuen: 1971 [1920]), 270.

⁹ For representative scholarship on questions of Milton and modernity, see Gordon Teskey, *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006); *Milton's Modernities: Poetry, Philosophy, and History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, eds. Fadley and Mohamed (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017); Ross Lerner, *Unknowing Fanaticism: Reformation Literature of Self-Annihilation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019); Feisal Mohamed, *Sovereignty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); *Milton and the Post-Secular Present*, eds. Feisal Mohamed and Mary Nyquist (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Ryan Netzley, *Lyric Apocalypse: Milton, Marvell, and the Nature of Events* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); Lee Morrissey, "Milton, Modernity, and the Periodization of Politics," *Modern Language Quarterly* 78.3 (2017): 301-319.

¹⁰ Gordon Teskey's *Delirious Milton* makes the most sustained case for the modern Milton. Subsequent sections of this chapter will attend to his conception of modernity and Milton's "Janus perspective" sitting at the divide between the medieval and the modern. For an account of the uses of "modern" in early modernity, see Margreta de Grazia, *Four Shakespearean Period*

chronological sequence from the medieval, modern denoted a mobile and subjective present as it slipped into a past.

Like the period marker qualifying Milton's works with reference subsequent centuries' political and social forms, the latter meaning of modern has gained traction in scholarly investigations of the author and his works. The temporal constriction of this more conservative historicist mode of criticism examines, for example, the publishers and book sellers in the late-seventeenth century book trade who delivered the printed Milton to readers and writers who, in turn, helped furnish an idea of the poet in the Restoration.¹¹ As my use of Charles II's regnal reinstatement to clock historical time attests, considerations of the local-modern also rely on the construction of a period with a characteristic *mentalité* to situate, explain, or diagnose a given text: a context.¹² While those invested in modernity writ large traverse periods or pleat time in search of resonance, influence, or historical homologues, critics confined to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offer findings to more local questions of cultural change.¹³ Temporal scale, then, serves to modulate analyses of Milton's modernities and thereby govern critical engagements within and about historical periods.

Pieces (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 4-17, esp. 16. De Grazia specifies that the usage of 'modern' available to Shakespeare resembled closely the Latin *modernus* from which the English word derived.

¹¹ A recent and thorough treatment of Milton in his lifetime and immediately after can be found in *Making Milton: Print, Authorship, Afterlives*, eds. Emma Depledge, John S. Garrison, and Marissa Nicosia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). For a related investigation of the Restoration Milton, see *Milton in the Long Restoration*, eds. Blair Hoxby and Ann Baynes Coiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹² On the question of period integrity, character, or *mentalité*, see Margreta de Grazia, "Anachronism," in *Cultural Reformations*, ed. James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 13-32.

¹³ Theorization of the polychronic, multitemporal quality of historical eras and the pleating that draws disparate episodes together can be found in the work of Michel Serres, in particular in Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995): esp. 60.

This chapter shuttles between these disparate methods of scholarly inquiry as they pertain to Milton's great epic. The first three chapters of this dissertation have tested the clarifying potential of a critical perspective calibrated to the middle-distance of historical change. Confined neither to immediate contexts of production nor *longue durée* processes of becoming, these chapters instead track changes in historical sensitivities indexed by literary-historical texts in their crossing of the various borders bracketing literary-historical periods: the regnal (Tudor to Stuart), the century (sixteenth to seventeenth to eighteenth), the epistemological ("age of faith" to "age of reason"), the economic (feudalism to capitalism). In each instance I have advocated for the productive nuance afforded by transgressing disciplinary segmentations of the past, as professionally useful as they can be. Investigations delimited by this kind of professional convention condition us to see historical coherence within blocks of time where incoherence and disunity rule. The character of an age is a *narrative* product, after all, and our willingness to think otherwise is a testament to the persuasive force of the rhetorical construction.

In what follows I step back from the previous chapters' considerations of facticity and historiographical legibility to take up questions of periodization and historical change more broadly. As the rich body of criticism responsive to it attests, Milton's *Paradise Lost* is an apt text for thinking broadly about the historical: the epic sings its survey of creation, destruction, and redemption in a genre marshalled to narrate the founding of empires. The empire that is the epic's notional subject is established in the beginning as coextensive with creation itself; the Son, agent of creation in Book 3, gives form to what is. Representing in verse the full span of human history, especially in the archangel Michael's audio-visual narration in the final book (1667) or books (1674), Milton's poem affords unique opportunity to reckon with logics of period division

and modernity. To do so, this chapter dilates on the destruction of the world by flood that bridges Books 11 and 12 of the revised 1674 edition of the poem.

I argue that this affirmed period transition cleaving the epic's final books—"Thus thou hast seen one world begin and end / And man as from a second stock proceed" (12.6-7)—mobilizes the Bible's Noah and the Roman god Janus in a manner resistant to progressive models of historical reasoning. The historical division represented in the epic—the singular Flood—asserts a divinely sanctioned period break substituting for those operative both in early modern chronicles and latter-day professional conventions. Privileging the Flood may appear unusual, as the Incarnation bifurcating time before and after Christ has persisted as the most durable historical marker in the West. But if cyclicity rather than progression instantiates periods in the epic, each iteration of the Just Man—Noah, Jesus in his first and second coming—cradles the others. I will first take stock of the recent turn in pre-modern studies to questions of periodization before returning to the modern Milton, the two-faced Janus, and *Paradise Lost's* poetics of historical division.

I.

The structural framework of intellectual and cultural history known as periodization has attracted sustained scrutiny in recent years, especially from critics working in fields traditionally demoted in significance by the hierarchies of relevance instilled by periodization's logic. From one vantage, post-colonialists like Homi Bhaba and Dipesh Chakrabarty have charged traditional literary-historical periodization, established by and centered in the West, with rigging a race of

modernization and progress.¹⁴ If modernity is wedded to sixteenth-century Europe's changing economic, religious, philosophical, and governmental systems, those cultures dominated by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European colonial projects must wait for the revelations of modernity to reach the periphery. These non-Western others, then, bear the charges of brute, savage, medieval.

This last insult—*medieval*—spotlights another significant vantage from which periodization has been targeted. The designation in literary studies that a text is (early) modern, according to Margreta de Grazia, conveys such critical weight and prestige precisely because the qualifier certifies relevance for the contemporary. One side of the modern divide presumes darkness and superstition while the other radiates light and reason.¹⁵ Yet medievalists like Eric Weiskott, Carolyn Dinshaw, and John Parker have challenged the foundations of these value judgements. For Dinshaw, as for Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon in early modern studies, the queerness of affective temporalities—the ways feelings or senses resonate across periods and geographic contexts—brings into intimate relation disparate points on otherwise linear, straight timelines.¹⁶ Weiskott and Parker likewise challenge a structuring premise of modernity that renders the premodern and medieval irrelevant: the secularization thesis. In this narrative of modernization, the Church's influences in social and political life waned in the renaissance's intellectual and cultural flourishing to cede ground to profane forces. E. K.

¹⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), esp. 73-77, 237-55; Homi Bhaba, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁵ Margreta de Grazia, "The Modern Divide: From Either Side," in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37.3 (2007): 453-467, esp. 453-456.

¹⁶ See especially Dinshaw et al. "Theorizing Queer Temporalities," in *GLQ* 13.2-3 (2007): 177-195; See also Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, "Queering History," in *PMLA* 120.5 (2005): 1608-1617.

Chambers, acclaimed editor and critic of Shakespeare, espoused perhaps the most influential version of the secularization thesis for early modern literary studies, tracing the apparent purge of religion from church performance to the London commercial theater.¹⁷

The turn in criticism to questions of religion and confession towards the end of the twentieth century, however, put considerable pressure on the durability of this tidy story.¹⁸ Likewise, the destabilizing effects of extremist Islamisms, Hindu nationalism, and American archconservative Christian nationalism in the twenty-first century have shattered the post-Cold War geopolitical order that saw in itself the achievement of world-historical progress, indeed the very end of history.¹⁹

Though Chambers and others saw the retreat of Christianity in drama as a novelty of the early modern theater, indeed what licenses it as modern, versions of secularism sprouted throughout premodernity. Prohibitions in sixteenth-century England against staging divinity decoupled the London commercial theater from its origins in the pageants of medieval mystery cycles and the theater of the mass; but one of the consequences of the broad secularization

¹⁷ E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, I:v-vi for an explicit narrative particular to the drama, see also 2:68-105. For a detailed reading of Chambers' argument, see John Parker, "Who's Afraid of Darwin? Revisiting Chambers and Hardison...and Nietzsche," in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40.1 (2010): 7-35.

¹⁸ For later scholarship pertaining to questions of religion on the early modern stage, see Stephen Greenblatt, "Remnants of the Sacred in Early Modern England," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 337-348, esp. 344; Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

¹⁹ The collapse of the USSR was celebrated as the end of history in that it appeared to conclude the ideological war between capitalism and communism that had occupied the previous two centuries. For the popular explanation of the determination of the end of history, see Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). For a description of the novel-like progression of human spirit in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, see Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and the Structure of Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit,"* trans. Samuel Cherniak (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1979), 12.

narrative is that it projects onto the premodern a unity of religiosity that admits few exceptions. One such exception readily available is the “already secular” form of medieval political prophecy.²⁰ Grander concessions still are called for from the secularization thesis. Rather than presume that there existed a Christianity and Christian drama prior to the Reformation operating without the polluting social, psychological, social, political, and economic influences, we might join Parker in acknowledging that “a pure spirituality does inhere in Christianity, but it is neither pure, nor spirit, because it is art.”²¹ In light of these forceful challenges it is imperative that we revise our notions of a chasm separating the medieval and modern ages by attending to the domain of the aesthetic, a space saturated at any point along the timeline by the political.

The beneficiaries of the modernization and secularization narratives likewise have joined calls to challenge the premises of disciplinary periodization’s intellectual grounding. As Kristen Poole and Owen Williams suggest, the time is ripe to test the historiographical narratives concerning religion, poetics, Shakespeare, selfhood, and materiality that structure contemporary research.²² Recent investigations of basic concepts like chronology, anachronism, and period put pressure squarely on the master narrative of secularization.²³ If, as these critiques suggest, the secularization thesis is constructed on unstable ground, so too are the professional periods it justifies. How will we know what is modern and relevant without a period sense of premodernity’s irrelevance?

²⁰ Eric Weiskott, “Futures Past: Prophecy, Periodization, and Reinhart Koselleck,” in *NLH* 52.1 (2021): 169-188. See also Weiskott, *Meter and Modernity in English Verse, 1350-1650* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

²¹ John Parker, *Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), ix-x.

²² Kristen Poole and Owen Williams, “Introduction,” in *Early Modern Histories of Time: Periodizations of Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019): 1-19.

²³ de Grazia, *Four*, esp. 1-22.

More locally, Milton studies presently is undergoing a similar examination of the fundamentals of period legibility. Yet while Shakespeare has been celebrated as having ushered a modern theater and subjectivity in the decades around the turn of the seventeenth century (most notably in the play *Hamlet* and its titular *persona*),²⁴ Milton's entanglements with the modern until recently have not registered to his critics. Even so, Milton's claim to the title of harbinger of modernity is anything but eccentric to contemporary criticism. His final works in prose and verse arrive in the present teeming with contemporary relevance. Texts like *Areopagitica*, we are told, speak to the modern reader about the necessity of a free press in the digital age.²⁵ His *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and *Paradise Lost* offer valuable insights for questions of political sovereignty circulating in the present.²⁶ His Satan in *Paradise Regained* is secular, partly.²⁷

The contemporary framing of Milton's intellectual and poetic output invites some additional questions. Did stage drama secularize earlier than lyric or epic? Did the commercial theater represent persons and actions more in sync with modern times than non-dramatic verse some fifty years later?²⁸ Such framing might also license a question more to the point: when did Milton become modern? An answer to this final question will clarify the others, as the

²⁴ See de Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. 1-6.

²⁵ A popular instance of this presentation of Milton can be found in Nicholas McDowell's "Milton Versus the Mob" in *aeon* (26 April 2021), <https://aeon.co/essays/reading-john-miltons-areopagitica-in-the-information-age>. See also McDowell's *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* (2009) and the biography *Poet of Revolution: The Making of John Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

²⁶ See Feisal G. Mohamed, *Sovereignty: Seventeenth-Century England and the Making of the Modern Political Imaginary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²⁷ Raphael Magarik, "Simile for the Devil: *Paradise Regained* and the Secularization of Satan," in *PMLA* 136.2 (2021): 229-245.

²⁸ Preliminary thoughts in answer to this question can be found in John Staines, "The Age of Shakespeare versus the Age of Milton: Reopening the Noisy Theaters," in *Modern Language Quarterly* 78.3 (2017): 395-419.

pronouncement of a modern Milton signifies the achievement of a periodization scheme connecting early modernity to late. Historicizing the use of the term “period” in the seventeenth century is instructive in that it emphasizes the cyclical quality of the concept through the word’s associations with lunar calculations and celestial repetition. For early modern English, periodization as that which both distinguishes between different occurrences and tracks reoccurrences in a given space of time emerged after 1500. (The early modern sense is itself a humanist resurrection or cyclical reoccurrence of the ancient Greek model.)²⁹ In this post-1500 conception, however, a period could also mean an ending. The apparent paradox—both a span and an end—registers the complexity and flexibility of the period concept as deployed at different historical.

Despite the challenges and internal contradictions inherent to the seventeenth century’s fluctuating application of the period concept, the professional utility of literary history’s chronological sequencing has grounded its intellectual framing. Conventions dictate that ordering works sequentially in time permits, in Gordon Teskey’s formulation, investigating “causal or even casual—which is to say, collateral entangling—resonant relations among them.”³⁰ Cyclicity may be inherent to the idea of a period, though understanding it as “a span of linear time” makes it professionally useful.³¹ Sequencing is essential, and there exists no better mechanism for understanding the relation of English poets than with the recognition that Milton

²⁹ Nigel Smith, “Time Boundaries and Time Shifts in Early Modern Literary Studies,” in *Early Modern Histories of Time: The Periodizations of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, eds Kristen Poole and Owen (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019): 36.

³⁰ Gordon Teskey, “The Period Concept and 17th-century Poetry,” in *Early Modern Histories of Time*, eds Kristen Poole and Owen Williams (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania 2020): 146.

³¹ *Ibid*, 148.

follows Donne, Shakespeare, and Spenser. “It is impossible,” Teskey maintains, “to learn about events without arranging them sequentially, since their temporality is a vital part of their truth.”³²

Is a poem an event? And if it is, does that event occur in the composition, circulation, or printing and publishing of the poem? At what point in a span of linear time does a poem fall if it is made public posthumously in relation to its author? Teskey’s notion that truth finds footing in sequential chronology allocates substantial power to the modern critic, as it is only from this objectifying distance that wandering histories might be aligned by means of a straight story. His persuasive account of the natural movement of English poetry from Spenser to Milton, for example, fits a century of cultural production to the curricular imperatives of a standard university survey course. Yet narratives, like periods, are rarely as natural as they appear. To fortify the narrative of historical-chronological unfolding one needs something like the perspective of Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History.

³² Ibid, 145-6.



33

That pervasive emblem of postmodern historiography, Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920), Benjamin explains, appears with "His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a change of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet."³⁴ The spectacle of the past dazzles in its wreckage while the future arrives unseen. The German Jewish philosopher's reading of Klee's painting, written in 1940 just before his death while in flight from the Nazis, recognizes the calamity of history and the insufficiency of progressive historical narratives.

Recent scholarship investigating Milton's temporal enmeshments, and early modern literature's more broadly, has adopted Benjamin's interpretation of Klee's *Angel* with an

³³ Paul Klee. Swiss, 1879-1940. "Angelus Novus," 1920 (possibly January 1). India ink, color chalks, and brown wash on paper. 23.2 x 24.2 cm. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

<https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/199799?itemNum=199799>

³⁴ Benjamin, *Theses* 9. Benjamin's seventh and ninth theses serve as the theoretical basis for many projects critical of narratives of modernization and progress.

important modification. Unlike the fixed angel, “we, as scholars of early modernity, can swivel our heads,” John Garrison and Marissa Nicosia note. “We can see the future—both the one envisioned by early moderns and the one that came to pass. In doing so, we can decode these visions in order to draw insights into the anxieties, desire, values, and investments of those producing these visions.”³⁵ Yet Klee’s *Angelus Novus* can only look back, “[for] a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.”³⁶ A storm from Paradise, indeed. Benjamin’s standpoint witnessing the rise of Nazi Germany affirmed the illusory nature of historical progress. For Miltonists like Garrison and Nicosia, to “swivel our heads,” to apply the vision granted by a twenty-first century perspective to Benjamin’s necessarily backward-facing angel, permits a Janusian bidirectionality. As the critic looks to a past projecting into the future, the critic more expertly evaluates, symptomatizes, or contextualizes the projections of the artwork.

Miltonist modifications to the Angel of History’s unidirectional gaze alter the critic’s orientation as well as the poet’s. Whereas Benjamin interprets the angel’s expression as evidence of the failure of progressive historiography to account for the horrors of the Holocaust and global conflict, these critics imagine simultaneous vision orientated toward past and future. The effect is an historicist standpoint unshackled to Benjaminian pessimism and open instead to an understanding of broadscale history in which meaningfully distinct epochs move in the direction of liberation. Reading Milton into a future he did not himself inhabit, then, permits a version of

³⁵ John Garrison and Marissa Nicosia, “The Illusion of a Future: Early Modern Conceptions of the World to Come,” in *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 45 (2019): 1.

³⁶ Benjamin, *Theses* 9.

the poet as prophet of the modern age and privileged interpreter of the past. This conception of Milton, moreover, presents not merely a spread of events across time but a history in which the future events and representations clarify or recast past. The angel's swiveling head, like the modern Janus's opposing faces, prioritizes the present in deference to progressive teleology's pull.

II

To understand claims to Milton's modernity I read the relationship linking two-faced Janus, Milton, and the epic narration of the Flood in *Paradise Lost*. Like Klee's *Angelus* and Benjamin's *Angel* but with greater frequency, the image of the Roman god Janus appears in criticism to metaphorize Milton's epochal historical vantage. Gordon Teskey voices most thoroughly the utility of the critical reflex to pair the poet and the deity:

To be a *theoretical poet*, therefore, is to look in both directions at once, like Janus, double-faced Roman god of thresholds. For a Christian poet such as Milton, it is to look back into the past, into the totality of what has already been made by man within the frame of the larger totality of divine Creation—"Creation," as I shall put it when the word is used in this sense, with a capital C. But it is also to look forward in time, into the temporal scene of the emergence of everything human that has yet to be made, including the poem that the poet is working on now.³⁷

Theoretical poet that he is—attentive, in Teksey's definition, to the foundations of creation and creativity—Milton mines the resources of the past while simultaneously gazing into the future of becoming, of that which is not yet. The epochal transition Milton mediates is enormously consequential for understanding literary history, and no other poet occupies Milton's historical

³⁷ Teskey, 2. Emphasis in Teskey.

perspective: “[B]ecause of this double perspective—on divine Creation in the past and human creativity in the future—Milton represents a watershed in the seventeenth century, and therefore in the history of art in the West, in which the artist begins to play a new and unfamiliar role, as one who mediates spiritual power, like a shaman.”³⁸ According to Teskey, the historical transition personified by Milton is that of the artist representing experience to communicating experience, from technician to shaman. Using the metaphor of Milton as “watershed” periodizes so concretely that all poetic production “in the West” is seen to flow toward a conception of art as shamanic mediation. Teskey’s topographical image, then, insists on historical change admitting no backsliding to the technician’s mode in subsequent *poesis*.

The invocation of Janus, Roman god of thresholds, serves here to emblemize the predicament of the artist “on the threshold of a post-theological world.” The delirium induced by the liminal perch—is it vertigo?—creates for Teskey the necessary condition for Milton’s place of prominence in the canon. “Milton is the last major poet in the European literary tradition,” he maintains, “for whom the act of creation is centered in God and the first in whom the act of creation begins to find its center in the human.”³⁹ Perhaps it is curious, then, that Teskey later announces that this incarnation of creative potential “was heard for the first time in the Italian Renaissance, when the traditional hostility of Christian thought to the artistic imagination gave way to a new elevation of the artist from the practitioner of a craft to something intensely spiritualized and almost divine.”⁴⁰ *Il divino*, Michelangelo called himself *circa* 1500. The threshold is mobile.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, 5-6.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 21.

I mean to put pressure on the key theoretical arguments we rely on to give modern meaning to our historical objects. One answer to this central question of when Milton became modern can be ascertained in Teskey's analysis. His claim is that prior critics had not devoted much attention to Milton's poetic or artistic relation to the future: "The present book is an attempt at a beginning...and it is precisely the role of the creative artist—is the artist a technician or a shaman?—that modernity has called into question."⁴¹ Modernity in this formulation is the condition of being transitory and contingent, a state induced by the need to mediate spirit without the clear aid of "any authoritative ideology, such as medieval Christianity."⁴² The Miltonic modernity described here is one subsequent to the medieval totality presumed to have directed cultural production to pre-secular ends. In light of the multi-front critique of modernity's secularization narrative, these binaries—medieval/modern, sacred/secular—appear less stable some sixteen years from Milton's nomination as the inaugural poet of modernity. According to Teskey, "Milton alone was capable of accepting [the mantle of modernity] because he was a sort of Janus figure, looking at once into the culture of the past, which he mastered and possessed, and into the culture of the future, which he unintentionally prophesied when he made the real subject of *Paradise Lost* the excitement of an epic being made."⁴³ Teskey's modern Milton is not, however, premised on the loss of the artistic aura but a reinvigoration of that aura through a poetic shamanism. This conception of artistic production in modernity resists the disenchantment Max Weber saw as a core feature of secularizing Western society, as the modern artist channels through his person the power of human creativity to compensate for the receding presence of the divine.

⁴¹ Ibid, 7.

⁴² Ibid, 24.

⁴³ Ibid, 29.

But what then of Janus? With the two-faced deity from classical antiquity, represented below in a sixteenth-century woodcut from Sebastian Munster's *Cosmographia* (1552), critics invested in Milton's modernity like Teskey, Mohamed, and Fadley, for instance, visualize Milton's bi-directional orientation to the historical timeline. Looking backward, he sees Spenser, Ariosto, Virgil, and Homer, as well as Calvin, Luther, Maimonides, Augustine, Jesus, Moses, Noah, Eve, and Adam. Projecting forward, he anticipates Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Schmitt, and Deleuze,⁴⁴ as well as Blake, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. The 'he' in this instance is Milton and not Janus. Critics use the Janus metaphor not in a technical sense or one particular either to early modernity or antiquity; rather, they do so merely in reference to the two-dimensional face that neatly overlays onto chronology's timeline.

⁴⁴ For an array of affinities linking Milton to continental philosophers, see Fadely and Mohamed, 3-21.



Yet as the god of beginnings and endings, thresholds and gates, Janus presumes not linear progression but cyclical return. It is for this reason that typically he is associated with the month of January. The calendrical year crosses the threshold at its ending in December to proceed from whence it began; the gates bearing his name in Rome opened in wartime and closed to mark the peace. The key in one hand and the harvest in another. This more technical understanding, though likely not what critics like Teskey and others have in mind when deploying references to Janus, presents the opportunity to explore alternative modes of engaging with the historiographical models subtending *Paradise Lost*'s future-historical books.

⁴⁵ "Janus," Illustration to the Latin edition of Sebastian Munster, 'Cosmographia', Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1552, The trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Janus' two faces, in Munster's rendering and elsewhere, approximate identity. To the extent that the artistic medium allows, Janus' faces mirror one another in showing men of the same age with the same facial features. Lacking distinguishable faces, Janus serves as the representative of a threshold through which one parts and returns rather than a gate through which one advances.⁴⁶ The minor globes on which Janus stands in the woodcut above provide him a perch while reinforcing the sense of revolution resonant in seventeenth-century conceptions of 'period'. A Janusian period thus might be said to follow the logic of the cosmos rather than that of developmental progression.

Like the self-identity of the two faces, Janus was also rendered syncretically identical in humanist Christianity to the biblical Noah. An inscription found in 1574 on the Isola Tiberina beginning "SEMO SANCO DEO FIDIO,"⁴⁷ according to Scipione Sgambati, supported the transposability of the two on the basis that Semo seemed to refer to Noah's son Sem.⁴⁸ Thomas

⁴⁶ While there are perhaps minor differences between the two faces—the noses might be differently shaped and one face might have more or less lines—a woodblock engraver would have been able to mark the faces as obviously non-identical with distinguishing feature like the absence of a beard. Identity in this case appears to be an assumption.

⁴⁷ The piece is now held at the Vatican museums. cf. *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum* VI, I, no. 567. Referenced in Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New York and London: Norton, 1968), 251.

⁴⁸ Scipione Sgambati, *Archivia Veteris Testamenti* I, 1703, p. 165; cf. I. A. Fabricius, *Codex pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti* I, 1722, p. 287. Referenced in Wind, 251. The account linking Noah and Janus in this way was promoted perhaps earliest by Annio of Viterbo in his *Antiquities* (1498). On verbal associations of Semo with Janus, cf. Gyrardus, *Opera* I, 20, s.v. 'Semones dei', with references to Livy and Augustine. Although rejected by Gyrardus as absurd and 'exotic' (ibid, 157), the equation of Janus with Noah remained popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; See Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d' amore* iii (tr. cit., p. 292); Egidio da Viterbo, *Historia viginti saeculorum* (MS cit., fol. I recto); Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographia* II (1545), pp. 112 f.; Iacobus Laurus, *Antiquae urbis splendor* (1641), whose genealogical table of the founders of Rome refers to Janus as *quem cum Annio Viterbiensi Noem multi existimant*. Another Christian echo of Janus might be recognized in the depictions of the Trinity in late Antiquity and early medieval paintings. As Peter Stallybrass has shown, the Trinity tended to be represented as three identical men rather than as an aged Father and a younger Son.

Browne echoes the association with characteristic skepticism in his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, referring to the Roman deity as “Janus whom Annius of Viterbo and the chorographers of Italy do make to be the same Noah.”⁴⁹ Likewise, a stone altar in the Museum Romanité at Nîmes depicts a combination of images to dramatize Noah’s Ark atop waves, Noah’s sacrifice following the flood, and Janus.⁵⁰ The unifying image of syncretic doubles activates Janus’s classical association with nautical navigation while reinforcing the functional sameness of Janus and Noah.⁵¹

As Janus was superseded partially by Noah in Italian humanist representations, his gazes remained indifferent to linear time. Pico della Mirandola notably allocated the sign of Janus to those “celestial souls” who, “like him with eyes in front and behind, they can at the same time see the spiritual things and provide for the material.”⁵² Pico’s use of two-faced Janus celebrates a completeness of perspective defined not by temporal directionality but harmonious understanding, the kind of understanding that derives from recognizing the revolutions of celestial orbits and the repetition of historical periods. The representations of Janus in the renaissance index the overlap of pagan and Christian conceptions of time in a way that resists a progressive historiography that sees the Christian era as supplanting the pagan, the modern disposing with the medieval. As the Janus figure relies on a cyclical plot, Noah returns to a renewed postdiluvian world, a renaissance.

⁴⁹ cf. Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia epidemica* (1646) VI, vi.

⁵⁰ See Wind, 251. The piece was housed formerly at the Musée Épigraphique (no longer extant).

⁵¹ On Janus’ associations with navigation, see Valeriano, *Heiroyphica* (fol. 228recto).

⁵² Pico della Mirandola. *Commento* II, xxv (ed. Garin III, iv, pp. 527 ff.). Quoted in Wind, 201.

III

What's Janus to Milton? The final segment of this chapter turns to Michael's survey of future-history in the concluding books of *Paradise Lost*, pausing at the world's great period dividing books 11 and 12. Taking stock of the generic conventions subtending these epic historiographical texts, I then examine the poetics of Miltonic periodization in the Flood to clarify Janus' role in shaping the epic's representation of progression, teleology, and modernity. I suggest that the poem registers the Flood as the primary period marker. Noah serves to reset history from the beginning in order to prepare the way for the Son, his sacrifice, and human redemption. In this sense, then, the period in question signifies both a cycle and an end.

Milton was a stranger neither to the broad view of history nor the force of the historical conceit. As Janelle Greenberg has suggested, Milton can be considered a practitioner of the techniques put to use by the radical ancient constitutionalists of England's the mid-seventeenth century. More directly, the methods used to construct his *History of Britain* and *History of Moscovia* demonstrate fluency with the practices of credible historical writing of the period. And in parallel fashion in *Paradise Lost* we witness the repeated invocation of the veracity of the poem's content by the vatic narrator. Rising above mere poetic conceit of inspired truth, the substance of the epic stands alongside the revealed word of the Bible as true narration "unattempted yet in prose or rhyme."

If we take these last books as broadly historical, their organization and segmentation of history appears consequential. The 1674 second edition of *Paradise Lost* introduced alterations to the structure and presentation of the poem, the most readily apparent to modern readers being the reshuffling of the ten books of the 1667 edition into the more classically epical twelve-book

format. “Argument” descriptions were likewise inserted before the verse proper to provide synopses for the narrative content of each book. The 1667 edition of the poem presented what we now read as the final two books of 1674 together in the unified whole of Book 10. The stylistic shifts regularly noted in this portion of the text appear all the more striking when viewed as a single exception in ten, and the directness of relating future history with limited flourish becomes more pronounced. When taken in the 1667 form, the book of future history truly is a single book, ready to be unfolded for the reader or viewer or auditor.⁵³ When reading the revised form, both the Argument and verse of Book 11 conclude with the period break instantiated by the Flood: “Adam pleads but submits; the angel leads him up on a high Hill, sets before him in vision what shall happ’n till the Flood.”⁵⁴

Near the end of Book 11 of *Paradise Lost*, Adam witnesses the future history of the great Flood and near-universal destruction of the earth and its inhabitants:

Meanwhile the south wind rose, and with black wings
Wide hovering, all the clouds together drove
From under heaven; the hills to their supply
Vapour, and exhalation dusk and moist,
Sent up amain; and now the thickened sky
Like a dark ceiling stood; down rushed the rain
Impetuous, and continued till the earth
No more was seen... (11.738-745).⁵⁵

⁵³ The delivery of history through the ear instead of the eye, while a substantial difference for Adam and many modern readers, was standard practice for a significant number of consumers of history-writing from the late Middle Ages through the seventeenth century. While silent reading was performed to some degree for various texts from at least the fourteenth century, reading history aloud continued until the nineteenth century and increased in the spaces such as the private home with gains in literacy rates. See D.R. Woolf, *Readings*, 80

⁵⁴ *Paradise Lost* (1674), 285.

⁵⁵ Unless a seventeenth-century edition is specified, all citations of the poem come from John Milton, *The Major Poems and Prose of John Milton*. Ed. Jonathan Goldberg and Stephen Orgel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

“Hills” conspire with “clouds” to add dense “vapour” to the darkened skies. The rain bombards the earth into murky submission. These rushing waters wreak havoc on the wicked descendants of the epic’s protagonists, washing them away “with all their pomp” (748). Yet this “depopulation” (756), as the narrator nominates the purge, moves Adam—the witness, spectator, audience—in similar fashion. “[T]hee another flood,” the narrator relates, “Of tears and sorrow a flood thee also drowned, / And sunk thee as thy sons” (756-8). The epic’s narrator shifts here from an ekphrastic reading of the visual scene of Noah’s ark bobbing on the “sea covered sea / sea without shore” (749-750) to describe the affective experience of encountering the scene. One of the rare epic similes in these final two books describes Adam’s response to the destruction in these conspicuously aestheticized terms: “...as when a father mourns / His children, all in view destroyed at once” (760-1). As the narrator turns from the scene of future history to the human audience, he claims a parallel action has consumed both the spectacle and the spectator. The flood of tears that momentarily drowns Adam in his sorrows, while perfectly apt for this uniquely devastating scene, appears all the more stunning given its placement among the more restrained poetics characteristic of the conclusion of the epic. These final two books of the poem, together with *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, often are taken by critics to be aesthetically muted on account of their plain or simple verse. Nevertheless, this “spectacle of too much weight,” to borrow John Donne’s phrase,⁵⁶ renders Adam in this instance in need of the archangel Michael’s aid to regain his standing posture: “...till gently reared / By the angel, on thy feet thou stood’st at last, / Though comfortless” (758-60).

⁵⁶ Donne’s description of “too much weight” is aimed at the scene of the crucifixion, so I’m borrowing loosely. I think that the phrase is apt given that both biblical scenes render the witness to them unable to consume such devastation.

Teskey reads the historical past of the final books as symptomatic of Milton's Janusian vision, contending that "the text itself seems to hang before us as a veil through which we dimly discern something else, a mystery that, if we could see it clearly, might bring before our eyes a scene of hectic production and shamanistic role-playing not unlike the art of our time."⁵⁷ Hazy from one side and vivacious on the other, modernity is the condition of Milton's artistic production. Yet if Milton's double vision is iterative rather than predictive, cyclical rather than linear, the extent to which Milton in these books is modern depends on how forcefully we peg him to the center of our canon. Narratives of secularization and modernity claim the poet for a future to which he is blind, while Milton sees himself inhabiting not a progressive timeline but a cyclical 'now' imbued with expectations for the Son.

A brief survey of English historiography in the seventeenth century will help to ground Milton's models. The chronicle, while providing the important functions of updating and maintaining records of the past in order to supply examples useful to the present, experienced demotions in its status by the turn of the seventeenth century that rendered it the object of withering criticism. Ben Jonson and Thomas Nashe, among others, lambasted chronicle texts and their proliferation by pointing to their proclivity for "digression, irrelevance, and triviality."⁵⁸ Though the chronicle found its model as recorder of past events and persons in the Hebrew Bible's lengthy middle books of the same name, the opinion of the form in England was conceived of as both a calcified relic of the past and as something organic, evolving, and accommodating of the present. Two other contributing factors to the decline and reformation of

⁵⁷ Teskey, *Delirious*, 9.

⁵⁸ Woolf, 11. See also *The Works of Thomas Nashe* ed. R.B. McKerrow (Oxford, 1904-10), I, 194. Nashe directs readers away from the "lay chronigraphers, that write of nothing but of mayors and sheriefts, and the deer here, and the great frost."

the historiographical enterprise: first, historians found the chronicle's rigid structure tedious or even "barbaric," and second, historical explanations based on divine providence provided less interpretive satisfaction for the cause of events unfolding in the present. This last, more secular critique of the chronicle carried the force of scientific modes of understanding that preferred more material causes found in humans and the natural world.⁵⁹

Clear lines separating the chronicle from annals or histories in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were often difficult to determine, despite common protests that sought to align history with story and fable and chronicle with hard-won fact. In John Manwood's *A treatise and discourse of the lawes of the forest*, for example, 'chronicle' regularly serves as a catch-all term for all historical works.⁶⁰ Polydore Vergil's *Anglica historia* (1555/6), the first full-length humanist history in England, likewise prompted criticism precisely because its author had been identified with skepticism of the foundational Brutus story's veracity. The historicity of the account of the Trojan Brutus slaying Albion's giants had been cemented much earlier in the national consciousness of many scholars and lay readers by Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Despite Polydore Vergil's preference for a categorical difference between chronicles and histories, and what contents were appropriate to each, the two nominations often were interchangeable.⁶¹

The advent of the English Civil Wars, and the related political and ideological instability in the middle of the seventeenth century, brought with it a shift in the historiography from the

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 11-12.

⁶⁰ John Manwood, *A Treatise and discourse of the lawes of the forest* (1598), fo. 5v. For a dissenting opinion on the separation of history from chronicle, see Walter Oswolde, *The varietie of memorable and worthy matters* (1605), "To the curious reader."

⁶¹ D.R. Woolf, "The Death of the Chronicle," in *Reading History in Early Modern England* (CUP, 2000): 23-4.

1640s to the 1670s. Narrowly targeted historical parallels, both persons and events, became a more popular form of historical analysis, taking the place of Elizabethan and early Stuart historiographies governed by the search for general historical analogs.⁶² Yet the standard mode of historical analysis more popular in England made use of a sustained analysis over great stretches of time to demonstrate the durability of historical processes or ways of unfolding. While the Southern European and earlier English modes gravitated toward comparative moments at different points in time, the distinct method that arose in the mid-seventeenth century valued consistency through the historical record. Owing to this growing preference for a record of consistency, D.R. Woolf acknowledges, the extended view of the past became a major historiographical mode: “History might still provide a cautionary tale, but better it should be the whole history, not its desiccated chunks.”⁶³

Woolf’s emphasis on the “whole history” helps elucidate the tendencies of mid-century writers to utilize great stretches of time for presentist political purposes. As historiography changed course to emphasize processes of historical continuity leading up to and including the Civil Wars—the precise time that Milton begins writing *Paradise Lost* and his own *History of Britain*—I want to consider the historiographical trends of these broader constructions and appeals to history.

That more totalizing chronicle history, the universal history, that should inform our readings of Milton and of the final two books of *Paradise Lost* first appeared in England by way of Ranulf Higden’s *Polychronicon* (c. 1357). Higden’s encyclopedic tome, divided into seven books to follow the seven ages of man, contained within it an immensely broad body of

⁶² *ibid*, 14.

⁶³ D.R. Woolf, “From Hystories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500-1700,” in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (Huntington, 2006): 31-68.

knowledge concerning the varieties of life starting from the creation itself: natural history, numerology, religion, social custom, geography, and more.⁶⁴ The renown and scholastic and court interest in the *Polychronicon* led John de Trevisa subsequently to shepherd an English translation of Higden's Latin text for the fourth Baron Berkeley around 1387, and Trevisa's version quickly came to rival in popularity even Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* as the universal English history of choice (c. 1136).⁶⁵

In the case of *Paradise Lost* and its final books, traditional literary forms have appeared the natural choice for generic determinations. This question of the governing genre of the final books of the epic has reemerged as a central concern for critics in the twenty-first century. For Luke Taylor and J.K. Barrett, the archangel Michael's prophetic-historical narration of the arc of human action leading up to the apocalypse fits best into the generic parameters of romance.⁶⁶ Taylor recognizes that for Milton "history is not an epic with an overarching telos but a romance concatenation of errors."⁶⁷ Likewise for Barrett the romance genre best nominates the nearly endless variability of actions, decisions, and pathways undertaken by individual humans after the expulsion from the Garden and before the second coming of the Son. It is fitting then, Barrett reminds us, that Adam and Eve conclude the poem "hand in hand with wandring steps and slow, / Through Eden took thir solitarie way" (XII 648-9).⁶⁸ The crooked and meandering path

⁶⁴ Woolf, 13.

⁶⁵ For an account of the implications of Trevisa's translation project and its resulting popularity, see Emily Steiner, *John Trevisa's Information Age: Knowledge and the Pursuit of Literature, c. 1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

⁶⁶ Luke Taylor, "Milton and the Romance of History," *Milton Studies* 56 (2015): 301-329; J.K. Barrett, "Afterword: Circles of the Future: Memory or Monument in *Paradise Lost*" in *Untold Futures: Time and Literary Culture in Renaissance England*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016): 209-224.

⁶⁷ *ibid*, 302.

⁶⁸ Milton, 1674, p. 333.

suggested by “wandering” here invites readers to associate the coming travails of the first man and woman with the episodic and endlessly iterative errors found in Edmund Spenser’s *Fairie Queene* and other popular romances.

Fixing the final two books of *Paradise Lost* into a stable genre like romance or prophecy—a compelling option given the deluge of vivid and terrifying information presented by Michael in visual (Book 11) and audible (Book 12) form—serves an immensely consequential function for readers and critics of the poem. Does the wandering make progress? Does it allow for the formation of periods to encapsulate episodes of experience? Is there modernity in romance? The more recognizably literary form put forth by Barrett subordinates history as a minor category in service to the dominant literary form’s expression. History, in this configuration, works to add details to the subject matter of the narratives that populate the stories bracketed by Eden and apocalypse. This “romance concatenation of errors,” in Taylor’s compelling analysis, minimizes history as a narrative form with the powers of orchestrating audience reception and acting as a master discourse framing the episodes of romance, tragedy, or prophecy that give substance to its forms. Milton’s poetic history, in contrast to the version Barrett and Taylor present, does have a prophesied ending. The story it tells is not one of meandering romance error, even if particular stories include wandering. To register the broader form of these historical books requires expanding the limits of literary formal categories to include forms not confined to the discipline of literature.

As Raphael relates to Adam the battles in heaven and the creation of the earth and its inhabitants in his own miniature epic spanning Books 5 to 8 as well as the beginning of time to the moment of its telling, Michael details through the medium of prophecy the events that will occur from the expulsion from the Garden until the Son’s return. Barbara Lewalski examined

this aspect of the epic's structure to articulate the ways in which Milton deployed generic conventions in order to accommodate the fallen reader circa 1660. Taken together, Michael and Raphael function as talented "prophets" in a way that facilitates the construction of a narratively legible bridge between reader and event.⁶⁹ For what the poem's angelic narrators deploy as prophecy, Milton and the poem's audience (should they decide to follow the poem's historical conceit) receive as history, genealogy, chronicle, record.⁷⁰ The complex traffic in form applied analogously to the Bible, as the New Testament's prophetic Book of Revelation was at once a "most long and doleful Tragedy" and "an ecclesiastical history of the troubles and persecutions of the church."⁷¹ Assessed with the aid of this conceptual apparatus, Michael's future-historical narrative in Books 11 and 12 may be slotted in time as a forerunner of Augustine's own "classic of Christian historiography," *City of God*.⁷² As Augustine wrote in order to correct the historical record and defend against allegations of Christians' culpability in the sacking of Rome, *Paradise Lost*'s recounting of future history helps to set the record straight on the shape of history from a divinely-inspired historian.

These final books of the poem dramatize the didactic nature of proper historiography, subverting the erroneous conception that human actions are constrained by divine foreknowledge. Thomas Amorose calls this an apocalyptic, even millenarian presentation of history. The end result of this process, he contends, is the "freeing [of] mankind from fallen

⁶⁹ For an account of the role of prophecy in Hebrew exegesis of the period, see John Smith, "Of Prophesie," in his *Select Discourses* (London, 1660), pp. 169-171.

⁷⁰ Barbara Lewalski, "The Genres of 'Paradise Lost': Literary Genre as a Means of Accommodation," *Milton Studies* 17 (1983), 94.

⁷¹ Thomas Brightman, *A Revelation of the Apocalypse*, in *Works* (London 1644), p. 234.

⁷² Lewalski, 96.

history.”⁷³ If fallen history manifests as an absence of freedom, recognizing the unforced patterns of a cyclical history offers an offramp to repeating humanity’s calamitous errors. Historical echoes and rhymes, when presented in proper historiographical form, contribute to the fulfillment of the theodicy subtending the epic. And History’s didactic quality is one of the means by which humanity can be understood to help itself in its fallen state. In similar fashion, these books show how the possibility of ignoring or misinterpreting history, like improperly writing history, leaves humanity “free to fall.” Milton, rejecting the stricter, predetermined versions of cyclical conceptions of history, proffers a scheme that works to convey to the reader God’s designs for human redemption, humanity’s role in achieving such aims, and the dialectical struggle between counteracting forces that give way to new modes of being in union with God.⁷⁴ And in doing so, the poem marries aspects of the Northern European historiographical mode begun in the sixteenth century to justify the Protestant Reformation with the Southern mode from which it departed: Southerners recognized cyclical structures of history in works by classical authors while Northerners developed more linear understandings of history based on typological interpretation of the Bible.⁷⁵ Indeed, some advocates of this Northern European method of historiography took an even more defined posture regarding the reading and writing of history,

⁷³ Thomas Amorose, “Milton the Apocalyptic Historian: Competing Genres in *Paradise Lost*, Books XI-XII,” *Milton Studies* 17 (1983): 141.

⁷⁴ Amorose argues that Milton’s rejection of strict cyclicity in advocating this view of history can be attributed to the contrasting schools of historiography in northern and southern Europe, with Italian humanists lending their tools to the rhetorical force of presentist and nationalist policies and northern Europeans utilizing humanist methods in support of reformation ideology. See F.J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Calif., 1967), p. 35 and John L. Brown, *The “Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem” of Jean Bodin: A Critical Study* (Washington, D.C., 1939), p. 68.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, 144. See also C.A. Patrides, *The Phoenix and the Ladder* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964) and Herschel Baker, *The Race of Time: Three Lectures on Renaissance Historiography* (Toronto, 1967), p. 16.

arguing that the writing and understanding of history must occur in tandem with the reading and understanding of biblical prophecy. To these Protestant historiographers, prophecy was rendered valid through a comparative reading of events unfolding in history; and those histories were valid for comparison insofar as they bore out the substance of prophecy. But for Milton in *Paradise Lost* and even *The History of Britain*, history as such extends beyond the inevitable or predestined to the human actions that work to bring about divine providence.⁷⁶

The historiographical backdrop to Milton's thinking prepares us to return to the question of Milton's modernity and the world's great period at the Flood toward the end of *Paradise Lost*. Having been hoisted back by Michael to a standing position on top of the high hill, Adam laments his lot as a spectator of the ills of humanity. He cries, "O visions ill foreseen! better had I / Lived ignorant of future, so had borne / My part of evil alone..." (11.763-5). Adam takes as tragic that which he has just learned, and he resigns himself to the force of what seems like a fated outcome: "...by my foreknowledge gaining birth / Abortive, to torment me ere their being, / With thought that they must be" (11.768-770). The potential joy and bliss of foreknowledge, until this point inaccessible to Adam and Eve in their pre-lapsarian state, here finds an abrupt confrontation with the reality of the horrors of the future. The striking enjambment that renders the "birth" of new knowledge immediately "abortive" makes stark the tragic consequences of the first sin of disobedience. Having been pregnant with the promise of the future, Adam's joys are terminated and new burdens must be added to his daily toil and labor. This tragic recognition of the ramifications of sin compound with the assurance that "they must be so."

Yet Adam urges Michael to continue ushering him through future history. "How comes it

⁷⁶ Amorose, 145. For more on the relationship in Milton between history and providence, see Mary Ann Radinowicz, *Toward "Samson Agonistes": The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton, 1978), p. 88. See also Milton's "Digression" to the *History of Britain* (YP, V, 441).

thus?” he asks, “Unfold, celestial guide, / And whether here the race of man will end” (785-6).

Adam desires to know if the universal flood he has just witnessed stands as the terminal point of human history, but he crafts this inquiry with a markedly material word: “unfold.” The term in this instance designates a command or request to open and reveal the secrets contained within. Adam’s request of Michael likewise situates the kind of knowledge he seeks squarely within the book. One need only to unfold the manuscript or open the book to read and take in the future history of the human race.

The sight of Cain murdering Abel and the subsequent atrocities that precede the universal flood prove too much for Adam and he becomes instead the auditor of future history:

...But to nobler sights
Michael from Adam’s eyes the film removed
Which that false fruit that promised clearer sight
Had bred; then purged with euphrasy and rue
The visual nerve, for he had much to see;
And from the well of life three drops instilled.
So deep the power of these ingredients pierced,
Even to the inmost seat of mental sight,
That Adam now enforced to close his eyes,
Sunk down and all his spirits became entranced... (11.411-420).

Formerly tethered to the path and sight of Satan, the poet in Book 11 inhabits the vision of Adam most directly. The blind poet, transposed onto the first man, can see clearly the future history of the world with purged and spiritually perfected sight. Having witnessed the horrors of the first murder in Cain and Abel and the great flood that destroyed all except for the occupants of Noah’s ark, Adam faints and cannot bear the sight human history any longer.

Book 12 substitutes Michael’s ekphrastic reading of the scene of universal history for Adam’s unmediated vision in the previous book. In parallel fashion, the voice of the poet

becomes Michael's and we the reader witness the first history of the world—perhaps the only history that precedes Milton's poem—sung by the angelic bard. Whereas previously the epic narrator related the vision of future history as seen by Adam, in Book 12 Michael 'unfolds' himself to Adam by taking on the role vatic bard. The Argument describes the content of the book in this way: "The Angel Michael continues from the Flood to relate what shall succeed; then, in the mention of Abraham, comes by degrees to explain, who that Seed of the Woman shall be, which was promised Adam and Even in the Fall; his Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension; the state of the Church till his second Coming."⁷⁷ From the Flood begins the second and final period. The substance of this period is "success." In one sense, "success" suggests the line of generation extending from Noah to the Incarnation to the Second Coming. In another sense, "success" connotes victory. If the first period ended in defeat and annihilation for all but those on the Ark, the second will end in divine triumph. The latter period repeats the former with the all-important difference of the Son. The relationship between the two is not progressive but flexibly iterative.

The complex typology linking Noah and the Son conditions the poem's narration of the flood:

And of thir doings great dislike declar'd
And testifi'd against thir ways; he oft
Frequented thir Assemblies, whereso met,
Triumphs or Festivals, and to them preachd
Conversion and Repentance, as to Souls
In prison under Judgements imminent.
But all in vain (1667: 10.716-722).

⁷⁷ *Paradise Lost* (1674), 313.

Michael's narration of Noah as the "Reverend Sire" shades into a depiction of Christ as shepherd. His preaching for "conversion and repentance" presages a more successful descendant who will save future generations from divine punishment. This wicked population, however, waits "all in vain," ignorant of the preacher's warnings and the history into which they are now written. With "all the Cataracts / Of Heav'n set open on the Earth" (820-1) and "Raine day and night, all fountains of the Deep / Broke up" (822-3), "Sea cover'd sea, / Sea without shoar" (1667: 10.745-6). The boundaries inhabitants had erected to mark territories and distinguish friend from enemy here dissolve as the waters swell. The didactic nature of this historical narration nevertheless leaves room for the outcome to be otherwise, for future readers to glean historical insights in a future cycle.

Michael's opening to the final book affirms this continuity of periods in its first simile: "As one who in his journey bates at Noone, / Though bent on speed, so heer the Archangel paus'd, / Betwixt the world destroy'd and the world restor'd" (1-3). The break between Books 11 and 12 is less of a break and more of a mid-day pause. Half-way through a course at the sun's peak, Michael has half the history left to tell. The relationship between the two halves, however, is formal rather than sequential. The second half restarts the narrative from a refreshed origin: the world "restor'd," the world recomposed in language and narrative. Milton's aestheticized narrative of creation need not signal a watershed moment in the history of art in the West. His poetic creation does not usurp a pure Christian spirit of representation associated with the pre-modern because that Christian, biblical representation was already art. That is why Christianity, according to John Parker, "could no more do away with all claims to historicity than with the apparent fiction of its history. To achieve the effect of divine revelation in history requires

holding the two in permanent dialectical suspension.”⁷⁸ As Augustine maintains, “Just as the opposition of contraries bestows beauty upon language, then, so is the beauty of this world composed by the opposition of contraries, arranged, as it were, by an eloquence not of words, but of things.”⁷⁹ The poem’s complicated representation of divine revelation in history, while writing history, before all other histories makes locating its generic literary and historiographic models especially difficult if these forms appear to us categorically distinct.

Following his noontime rest, Michael resumes his lesson on periodization by visualizing the regrowth of humanity from Noah. “Thus thou hast seen one world begin and end; / And man as from a second stock proceed” (6-7). The directness of the first line serves as a foil to the aestheticized image of the second. The summation of the first line captures the period begun with Adam and Eve with bracing efficiency. The second line’s simile of the stock, however, complicates the sense of an ending seemingly affirmed by the Flood’s utter destruction. Because Noah and his children are all that remain, the human race must “from a second stock proceed.” Yet that second stock maintains continuity with the first both through Noah and the denuded tree. All was not lost in the period transition: enough remains of humanity’s trunk to cycle through history yet again. The Janusian Noah knows this all well. To return to the January of human history asks that we entertain the idea that we have never been modern in a progressive sense, for we continue to toil and wait for the Son to return.⁸⁰ We might see Milton as lynchpin of modernity, but that literary-historical narrative that places him at this millennium’s great period went unacknowledged until the twenty-first century. The revolutionary Milton tripped on the

⁷⁸ Parker, 34.

⁷⁹ *De civ. dei* 11.18; LCL vol.3

⁸⁰ Bruno Latour, *We have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

“revolving” nature of change and the cycles of history.⁸¹

Tracing the lineages—critical, biblical, humanist—that equate Milton with Janus and Janus with Noah facilitates a broader reckoning with conceptions of historical change and period progression that condition our frameworks of literary-historical scholarship. In contrast to critics who affirm a novel modernity resonant in Milton’s epic, I have argued that the idea of a Miltonic Janus grants us an escape from modernity’s insistent teleology. To see outside of the disciplinary conventions that compel scholars to locate modern relevance afresh frees us to ask questions that might aid those in the present to find strategies, resources, and insights from different pasts.

⁸¹ See Marissa Greenberg, “Milton Much Revolting,” in *MLQ* 78.3 (2017): 373-393. On the inaccessibility of those living in the period of the Restoration to recognize it as distinct, see Mihoko Suzuki, “Did the Seventeenth Century Really end at 1660? Subaltern Perspectives on the Continuing Impact of the English Civil Wars,” in *Early Modern Histories of Time: The Periodizations of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, eds Kristen Poole and Owen (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019): 230-247.

Coda

While listening to WNYC's *Science Friday* in early 2019, a report on ancient Britain caught my ear. Mark G. Thomas, professor of evolutionary genetics at University College London, had co-authored an article in the journal *Nature* analyzing the arrival of Aegean migrants to the British Isles around 4,000 BC.¹ The "dark-skinned foragers" who had inhabited the territory since at least 8,500 BC, the geneticists demonstrated, did not adopt the imported farming techniques brought by the new Aegean arrivals. Nor did they interbreed and adapt. These hunter-gatherers were instead "replaced," and the population currently living in Britain maintains no genetic link to the indigenous pre-Aegeans. In a surprising twist of twenty-first century epistemology, early modern historiographers committed to the Brutus founding myth have found themselves, as it were, on the right side of history.

Buttressed by the authority of a new science with ever more specific claims to objectivity and hard fact, those who sympathize with the Brutus narrative find a strange alliance in the twenty-first century propensity to locate certainty in genetic data. This contemporary scientific epistemology, consequently, might be seen to modernize further the historiographical narratives of Britain's colonization found in Holinshed and Camden. Here, however, skin color rather than body size emerges as a distinguishing somatic feature of the indigenous population. As sixteenth and seventeenth-century English chroniclers were revising records of nation founding, English explorers and colonists established outposts with varying degrees of success in Ireland, the

¹ Mark G. Thomas et al., "Ancient genomes indicate population replacement in Early Neolithic Britain," in *Nature Ecology and Evolution* 3 (2019): 765-771.

Caribbean, and the eastern coast of North America. Like Samuel Johnson in his eighteenth-century editions of *Lear* and *Cymbeline*, early modern colonists refereed indigenous claims to history according to English colonial standards. Local histories routinely were dismissed in deference to the demands of private land acquisition and agricultural productivity.



An analogous historical rhyme sounded in the 2022 Jubilee celebration of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and its reactivation of old tropes deployed by England's monarchs to certify the right to rule. Like James I and VI who saw in Brutus an anchoring claim to sovereign legitimacy, Elizabeth II grafted herself onto Britain's ancient symbols: the arc of her reign here projects onto the pillars of Stonehenge, that durable landmark in her realm, with portraits illuminating each of the queen's seven decades on the throne. Public criticism of Stonehenge's use as royalist prop was swift and fierce, with anti-monarchists charging that the projections

² Photo credit: Jim Holden/English Heritage/AP. Included in Jacqui Palumbo, "‘Completely Unhinged’: Stonehenge Lights up with portraits of the Queen," May 31, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/stonehenge-queen-elizabeth-platinum-jubilee-2022/index.html>

inappropriately conscripted the Bronze Age monument for regnal pomp.³ Though presently owned by the Crown, these ritual standing stones serve for many not as a screen on which to view a monarch's biography but as a living memorial to a pre-Christian worldview grounded in celestial repetition and pagan ritual.

The blowback during the monarch's celebration is ripe for representation in a future episode of *The Crown*, the episodic drama devoted to chronicling the major events in Elizabeth II's reign. The show's creator, Peter Morgan, has already found himself in a historiographical conundrum familiar to this dissertation's concerns. He explains the court intrigue in which he was implicated: "... [former Prime Minister] Tony Blair, when referring back to that critical period in the aftermath of Diana's death, used a number of expressions and quotations that seemed to me to be very similar because they sounded like my dialogue." More than mere coincidence, the convergence of Blair's fictional and lived conversations merged in his own memory and now the public record. The experience for the show's creator of hearing Blair's version of events was both uncanny and flattering: "it seems that even Blair's memory had sort of become blurred with what we had done."⁴ In this instance, the historical event was recorded by a first-person participant but narrated in a language borrowed from popular culture. The true eye-witness testimony of a historical actor supplied not experiential verisimilitude but artistic conjecture informed by media.

As this dissertation has maintained, distinctions separating histories and stories, like those distancing facts from fictions, owe a substantial debt to historically-specific understandings of

³ See Palumbo.

⁴ "The Crown' Creator Sees Britain's Royals as 'Just A Regular Family,'" on *Fresh Air* November 15, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/15/779667255/the-crown-creator-sees-britain-s-royals-as-just-a-regular-family>

rhetorical modes, narrative forms, and political expedience. That historical site of meaning-making does not inhabit an isolated sliver of time but unfolds in a process subject to the conditions of globalizing markets and colonial ideologies. Investigating the modernizing epistemologies that reconfigured narrative form and genre to regulate historiographical credibility showcases history's categorical plasticity, and tracing the literary consequences of this flexibility across early modernity broadens the critical lens while affirming that there are more histories to write.

The past is dead. Long live the past!

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