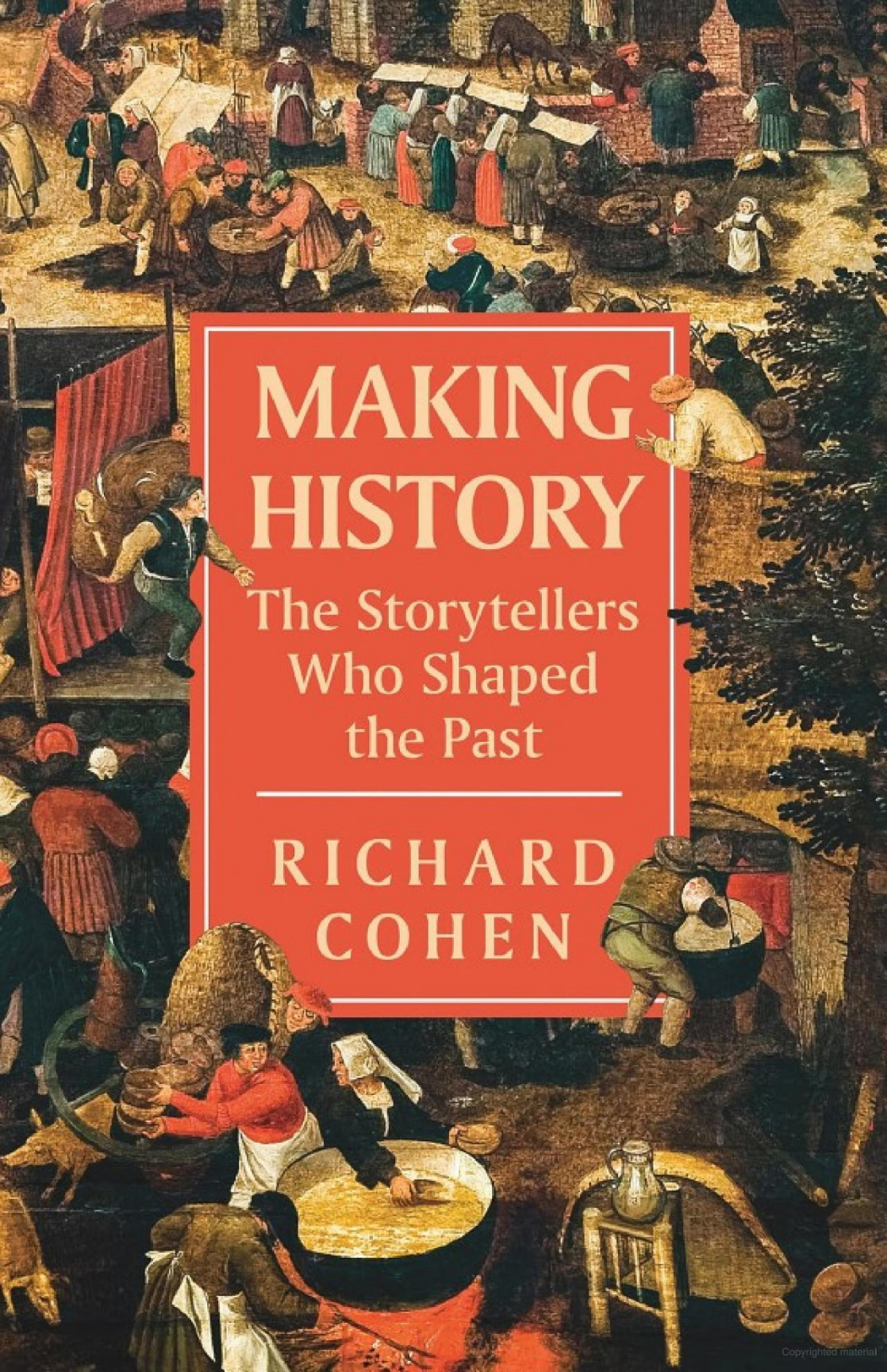

MAKING HISTORY

The Storytellers Who Shaped the Past

RICHARD COHEN

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Before you study the history, study the historian.

E. H. CARR, *What Is History?* (1961)

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MAKING HISTORY

PREFACE

A man sets out to draw the world. As the years go by, he peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, instruments, stars, horses, and individuals. A short time before he dies, he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the lineaments of his own face.

—JORGE LUIS BORGES, 1960

First, some personal history. In September 1960 I enrolled at Downside School, set in the heart of the English countryside, about half an hour's journey from the ancient city of Bath. This all-boys Roman Catholic academy was under the direct control of Downside Abbey, an offshoot of a Benedictine community founded in the Habsburg Netherlands four centuries before and driven to England by the French Revolution.

I was put into a group of twelve boys, aged thirteen (as I was) to fifteen, to study medieval history. Our special subject was Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries and its leading authority was one David Knowles, then professor of medieval history at Cambridge. His view of the worldly monks was forthright: "They had it coming." It was only toward the end of my time at Downside that I learned that Knowles himself had once been a monk there and had left some twenty years earlier under something of a cloud. It passed into my unformed mind that his judgments must surely have been colored by his time in orders.

After my schooldays, I began to wonder about other writers who have framed the way we conceive the past. How did their lives shape what they wrote? I read John Lukacs, who noted that

"history" has a double meaning, as "history" is the past but also a *description* of that past, so every author of a work of history is an interpreter, a filter, with his or her own personal input.

The list of books, even in English, about the nature of history and those who practice it is a long one, with plenty of room for going one's own way. Closest to what I am trying to do is *A History of Histories* (2009) by the late John Burrow, who, true to his name, closeted himself away in his Oxford study with thirty-seven chosen texts to produce his own magisterial tome. As he notes, "Almost all historians except the very dullest have some characteristic weakness: some complicity, idealization, identification; some impulse to indignation, to right wrongs, to deliver a message. It is often the source of their most interesting writing." He goes on to examine how the depiction of past events has changed over the years under different political, religious, cultural, and patriotic forces. But he concentrates on ancient and medieval history and is mainly interested in historiography —the study of historical writing—and less so in the historians themselves. This is where our perspectives diverge.

Edward Gibbon, whose account of the fall of the Roman Empire is one of the best known of all historical works, also wrote six substantially differing volumes of autobiography and was well aware how accounts of the past are necessarily the children of the shaping intellect. In an unpublished manuscript, the "Mémoire sur la monarchie des Mèdes," he reflected:

> Every man of genius who writes history infuses into it, perhaps unconsciously, the character of his own spirit. His characters, despite their extensive variety of passion and situation, seem to have only one manner of thinking and feeling, and that is the manner of the author.

Men of genius, the people who write history, the manner of the author—these phrases need unpacking. The present book attempts to do so, taking in the rivalries of scholars, the demands of patronage, the need to make a living, physical disabilities, changing fashions, cultural pressures, religious beliefs, patriotic sensibilities, love affairs, the longing for fame. It seeks also to narrate the changing ideas of what a historian is, while

explaining why the great practitioners came to set down their versions as they did. Martin Heidegger is said to have begun a seminar by saying, "Aristotle was born, he worked, and he died. Now let's move on to his thought." For me, such a division makes little sense.

I have selected writers whose work has weathered the test of time—Herodotus and Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus, on through Froissart, Gibbon, the great nineteenth-century historians, and up to the present day. But I have also included Winston Churchill, never a great historian but crucially a *participant* recorder, both highly persuasive and widely read, and historians such as Simon Schama and Mary Beard, whose fame and influence grew to a different order once they appeared on television.

It may be presumptuous to use my chosen title, as "History" might more accurately appear in parenthesis, since it has—well, a complicated past. My criteria are more based on that issue of "influence" than a reflection of some agreed-upon pantheon, for it is remarkable how many people who have profoundly given us our history would not have called themselves historians. As the Black academician W. J. Moses wrote nearly a quarter of a century ago, "Historical consciousness is neither the independent creation nor the exclusive possession of professional scholars." I have included the composers of the Bible, several novelists, one dramatist—William Shakespeare, judging him to have formed more people's ideas of the past than any writer of history *or* of literature—and a diarist, Samuel Pepys. Some may argue that Pepys's private musings are primary sources rather than works of history, but they are both, showing preeminently what middle-class life in England was like during the second half of the seventeenth century. Diaries are also a form of secret history, consciously kept out of sight, whispers that challenge the public assertions of the powerful. In the Second World War, the best diarists were women—in Italy, Iris Origo; in Holland, Anne Frank; in Germany, Ursula von Kardorff—while in certain countries (Australia, for instance) keeping a diary could be a court-martial offense. In 1941, at the start of the siege of Leningrad, diary writing was encouraged as

a form of witness; later on, such records were censored, as they might undermine the collective narrative of daily heroism.

It is obviously impossible to give an account of all historians throughout time and geography, and although I have done my best according to what interests me—and my lived experiences—I am one more example of how anyone writing about the past is subjective, bounded by circumstances, experiences, and time. However, the fight over the narratives of who we are and who gets to write history shows itself in all cultures, and what we understand of our history affects what we do and what we believe. As James Baldwin wrote:

> History does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspiration.

Some years ago, as I was setting out on this book, I gave a talk about it to a group of history professors at Amherst College in Massachusetts. Afterward, a professor of Latin American history came up and, after a few kind words about the lecture, told me: "You take a horizontal approach to your subject. We here take a vertical one. You'd never get tenure at Amherst." I do not find this geometry convincing, but historians in our universities may be unhappy even at such a broad church as I am attempting.

When I was at Cambridge in the mid-1960s the doyen of the history faculty was the German-born Tudor specialist G. R. Elton. In 1967 he published *The Practice of History,* in which he argued that only "the professional" writes real history, while "the hallmark of the amateur is a failure of instinctive understanding.... The amateur shows a tendency to find the past, or parts of it, quaint; the professional is totally incapable of this." In the final analysis, he went on, it is "imagination, controlled by learning and scholarship, learning and scholarship rendered meaningful by imagination" that comprise the tools of the professional. I know from conversations I have had with Sir Richard Evans, a brilliant interpreter of twentieth-century

Germany and until recently Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, that Elton's views still hold sway. For Evans, no biographer, no memoirist, nor anyone approaching his or her subject with an agenda can be a legitimate historian. Welsh chapels can be lonely places.

Objectivity is a fine concept, but when in 2011 I asked the ninety-two-year-old Eric Hobsbawm whether it was possible to be objective as a historian, he laughed. "Of course not," he replied. "But I try to obey the rules." Most modern writers make some attempt to come clean about their prejudices. As Arnold Toynbee observed, "Every nation, every people has an agenda, either conscious or unconscious. Those who do not become the victim of other people's agendas." One should remember that objectivity is an agenda too.

It is impossible to eradicate every bias, and I have not eradicated mine. But that is my point. Sometimes I have chosen stories because they interest me, but in the main I have selected historians who have preeminently formed our ideas about what the past was like. I recognize that my chosen group may annoy, perhaps even outrage, the "professional" historian. Unmentioned, or given the smallest walk-on parts, are such eminent practitioners as Cassius Dio, the Earl of Clarendon, Baron de Montesquieu, Jules Michelet, Giambattista Vico (who invented the philosophy of history), Francesco Guicciardini (Machiavelli's friend and neighbor), Giorgio Vasari (the founder of art-historical writing), Theodor Mommsen (the only professor of history to receive a Nobel Prize in literature), Jacob Burckhardt (rated by Lukacs as perhaps the greatest historian of the last two centuries), Francis Parkman, Thomas Carlyle (whose history of the French Revolution, for its "sheer volcanic literary eruptions," was in Simon Schama's list of top ten historical works), Henry Adams, F. W. Maitland, Johan Huizinga, Pieter Geyl, Eduardo Galeano (the great historian of Latin America); the outstanding chronicler of Mao's early years, Gao Hua (d. 2011) and his mentor Chen Yinke; the oral historians Studs Terkel (whom I once edited) and Oscar Lewis, the Australian omnivore Robert Hughes, and Ron Chernow, whose biography of Alexander Hamilton led to the most influential musical of the century. I

also believe we are in the midst of a golden period, and I have a list of more than thirty contemporary historians who have published important works. They are not included here (with the exception of some who have won widespread acclaim through TV), as it is too soon to judge how they will fare in the long term.

My approach is generally chronological, but not rigidly so. I offer several main themes, which I hope evolve over the course of the book: how our accounts of the past come to be created and what happens to them after they have been set down; how the use of sources—from archives to contemporary witnesses and the development of "dumb" evidence (buildings, gravesites, objects)—has changed through the centuries; the nature of bias, its failings and, counterintuitively, surprising strengths, as passionate subjectivity in a historian, when combined with talent, can be a blessing; the relationship of historians to governments and the demands of patriotism; the role of storytelling and the relationship between narrative and truth.

When Herodotus composed his great work, people named it *The Histories,* but scholars have pointed out that the word means more accurately "inquiries" or "researches." Calling it *The Histories* dilutes its originality. I want to make a larger claim about those who have shaped the way we view our past—actually, who have *given* us our past. I believe that that wandering Greek's investigations brought into play, 2,500 years ago, a special kind of inquiry—one that encompasses geography, ethnography, philology, genealogy, sociology, biography, anthropology, psychology, imaginative re-creation (as in the arts), and many other kinds of knowledge too. The person who exhibits this wide-ranging curiosity should rejoice in the title: historian.

OVERTURE

The Monk Outside the Monastery

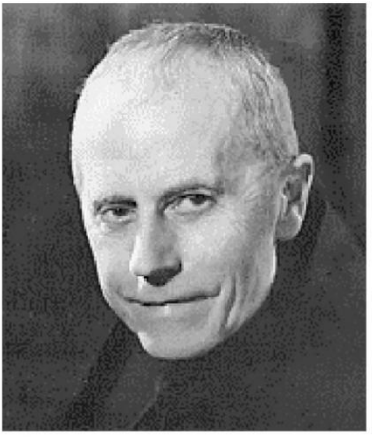
> However evolved our methods, we are never in the presence of unmediated history, but of history recounted, presented, history as it appeared to someone, as he or she believes it to have been. This has been the nature of the enterprise always, and the folly may be to believe one can resist it.
>
> —RYSZARD KAPUŚCIŃSKI, 2007

In the summer of 1963, the friends, pupils, and colleagues of David Knowles (1896–1974) presented him with a collection of his essays on the occasion of his retirement as Cambridge's Regius Professor of Modern History, one of the most prestigious posts open to a historian. During the second half of the twentieth century Knowles, an ordained priest, was regarded as the foremost recorder of England's religious past and the most formidable scholar since the great legal analyst Frederic William Maitland (d. 1906). He wrote about an astonishingly long period, from around A.D. 800 to the end of the fifteenth century; published twenty-nine books; and enjoyed an awesome reputation both in Britain and abroad—"a poet among historians," "one of the great oaks of the forest, a poet in prose," "unsurpassed ... unequalled."

The Festschrift opens with a summary of his career; how he was born Michael Clive Knowles before being given the monastic name David. Following school at Downside, he immediately entered the monastic community. From 1923 he taught in the school and began his career as a writer. In 1928, at the age of

thirty-two, he was appointed Novice Master, giving him responsibility over those training to be monks. In 1933 he moved to Ealing Priory, an outpost of Downside, where he devoted himself to his major work, *The Monastic Order in England.*

The rest of the biography details an unbroken outflow of books, articles, lectures, teaching assignments, and academic honors. In 1944 he was made a fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and in 1954 Winston Churchill appointed him Regius Professor, making Knowles the first Roman Catholic to be given the post since Lord Acton in 1895 and the first (also the last, one suspects) priest and monk since the Reformation. "It became clear to a wider public that here was a medieval historian of the first rank," continues the summary, written by his Oxford friend and co-medievalist William Abel Pantin.



Dom David Knowles in 1965. In his 1956 novel Anglo-Saxon Attitudes, *Angus Wilson describes the character based on Knowles as having "a distinguished ascetic face which was yet strangely goat-like."*

You may sense a "but" coming—although it is a complicated conjunction. The curriculum vitae makes no mention of the dramatic rebellion Knowles fomented at Downside, nor the most important relationship of his last thirty-five years, with a woman. Rather, the Festschrift memorializes the sanitized version of the life that the abbey had for years been at pains to promote. Yet his years of crisis are at the heart of what made him so redoubtable a historian, and they also illustrate some of

the main themes of this book. I appreciate that, to a modern audience, mid-twentieth-century monasticism may seem an arcane subject, and while Knowles was much honored in his own time he is largely forgotten in ours. Bear with me, though; his story is not only exceptionally dramatic, it also tells how one human being shaped his understanding of the past through the prism of his own beliefs and prejudices, and it will be our compass as we follow historians through the centuries.

I have mentioned how I was introduced to Knowles's writing and was struck by his antagonism toward the religious orders of England in the years before their dissolution, given that he himself was a monk. In March 2010, I wrote to Downside's then abbot, Dom Aidan Bellenger, who had studied medieval history at Cambridge. Had he known Knowles? He emailed that indeed he had: "There's a *lot* I can tell you." Some weeks later Dom Aidan ushered me into his tiny office in the abbey. "I've been thinking about David Knowles over the past two days," he began. "You see, we have his unpublished autobiography here." My unvoiced question hung in the air. "Yes, of course you can read it," he added with a chuckle, and so, secure in the monastery library at a special scholar's desk, read it I did.

Knowles began his autobiography in 1961, when he was sixty-five. Most of the memoir was completed between 1963 and 1967, then frequently revised, so that there are now three versions (the longest is 228 pages), although he was still making changes in 1974, the year he died. Some sections have different drafts, while others have paragraphs scored out, as if too intimate for others' eyes. The three vary in tone and degree of revelation, but together they show the strengths of his published works: a strong sense of place, fine analysis of character, frequent literary allusions, and an unbending religious code.

He was born into a family of nonconformists and ardent Liberals who lived in the largest house in a village near Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire, where his paternal grandfather employed fully half the population. He was an only child and addressed his father as "Sir." Despite this formal note, their relationship was a close one; Harry Knowles introduced his son to a love of the countryside, old buildings, and cricket as well

as his literary enthusiasms. Knowles wrote that his father "had the deepest influence on my mind and character, had been my nearest and dearest friend from nursery days."

Knowles Senior (a prosperous timber merchant who also manufactured the needles for "His Master's Voice" turntables) was much taken by the ideas of Cardinal (later Saint) John Henry Newman, the leading British literary Catholic of the late nineteenth century; in 1897, when his son was a year old, Knowles and his wife converted to Catholicism. He decided that his one offspring should not attend formal school until he was ten. David Knowles grew up isolated in a large house with an overprotective mother, herself in frail health. Once he began to read, it was Scott and Twain, Stevenson's *Black Arrow,* Blackmore's *Lorna Doone;* surprisingly, no Dickens. He knew the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas by heart and also came to love trains, so intimate with their timetables that he delighted in finding a misprint in the schedule for a train to the Isle of Man. He was lonely, intense, and precociously bright. Already there was one certainty:

> I cannot remember when first I knew that I would be a priest. I say "know" because at no time did I ever consider or decide, nor did my father ever express a wish in the matter, but I must have felt certain before my first Communion, for I remember very clearly that I wondered, as I lay in bed that evening, when and where my last Communion would be, and thinking of myself as a priest receiving it.

In 1906 he was sent to West House, a Catholic preparatory school on the outskirts of Birmingham. Four years later he won a scholarship to Downside.

The community (as a gathering of monks is known) descended from a group of English and Welsh monks who in 1606 came together in Douai, then in the Spanish Netherlands, to form the monastery of St. Gregory the Great. In 1795, after a period of imprisonment, they were expelled and settled in England, initially in Shropshire and then in 1814 at Mount Pleasant, set in a countryside of quarries, green fields, and nuggety stone villages, midway between the abbeys of Bath and Glastonbury.

By the 1840s, Downside had become host to more than sixty children, aged nine to nineteen, mainly from upper-middle-class families. In 1909 Michael Clive Knowles arrived at the age of thirteen to join a school that by then had swelled to two hundred. Amid his peers, with, in his words, "their mixture of devilry, conservatism, sensuality, cruelty and emotional idealism," he lived "like a piece of driftwood in a river," susceptible to the influences and temptations of male boarding-school life. In his third year he befriended Gervase de Bless, son of a barrister father and a mother who came from a well-established Catholic family. Gervase was two years younger, well read and well traveled. "Suddenly, unexpectedly," Knowles recorded, "without any experience or forewarning, I found myself caught and entangled in a deep emotion."

In their dormitory, after lights out, they would talk in low voices of everything under the moon:

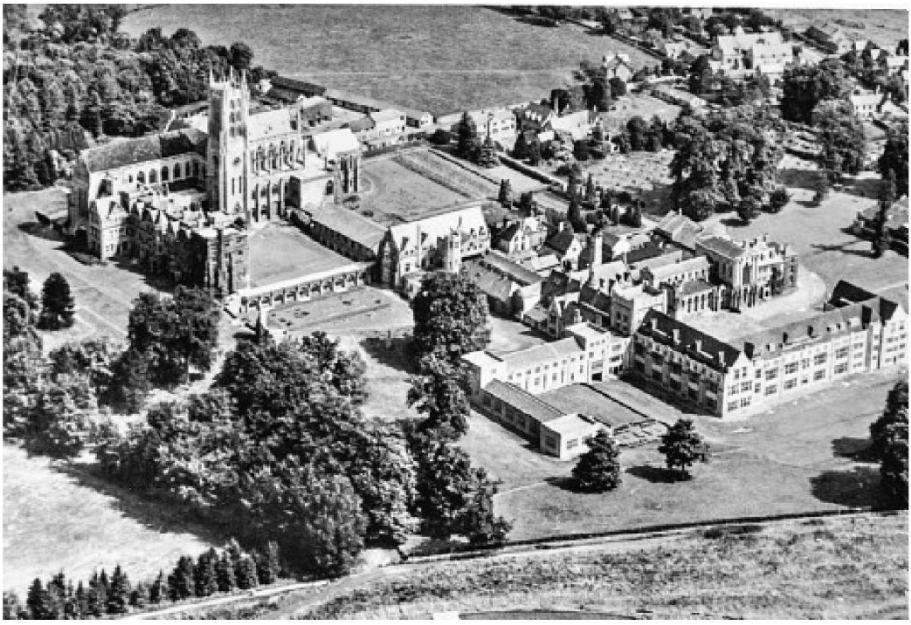
> Above all, and raising the whole of life to a new power for me, was the rich and delightful contact with Gervase's mind and character. I had never before had such an experience, and I felt at the time that it was worth losing all for this, and yet that by allowing it to absorb all my thoughts I was somehow running upon darkness and danger ... the vision of something that would remain forever desirable and yet unattainable.

This friendship continued to delight and torment him, for, as Knowles's memoir attests, de Bless distrusted intimacy and made sure to have other friends. Unwilling to tolerate limits on what they had together, Knowles, behaving like a possessive suitor unsure how best to consummate his longings, ended the friendship. The headmaster took him to one side: "You are behaving like a jealous woman, hurting someone who has done you no harm." In his autobiography, Knowles chastises himself, quoting from A. E. Housman: "Give crowns and pounds and guineas/But not your heart away."

By September 1914 his anguish was extreme: "I had lost my heart to Downside as well as to Gervase; in both cases I had failed to find what I desired." That year was his eighteenth, and his school days were at an end. They had not been unsuccessful. He

was an exceptional student, while in his final term he made the first cricket team, playing "with enthusiasm, if without great skill." He also edited the school magazine and began writing a novel.

Within a few months the First World War erupted. Knowles was old enough for active service, but he had already asked to become a novice and so was exempt. He was now required to observe the Benedictine Rule for a year, after which he would profess "simple vows," then remain in the monastery for a further three years before taking his final oaths. He soon realized that novices were almost completely segregated; under the Rule, he was not allowed to read newspapers, nor any light or secular literature. (This did not stop him from learning *Macbeth* by heart.) The austere regime began at 4:30 A.M. and ended around 11:00 P.M. following Compline and Night Prayers, after which came the Great Silence, when it was forbidden to speak or make unnecessary noise.



Downside Abbey and School from the air, taken in the early 1920s. By then, the monks were set on building a major private academy, expected to educate more than five hundred boys.

Gervase had enlisted as a midshipman. At the end of March 1916 he died aboard the battlecruiser *Revenge,* reportedly from a diabetic seizure brought on by flu. Knowles was devastated (for the next fifty years he would carry in his breviary blue petals from de Bless's graveyard) and was also racked by renewed self-recrimination, made worse by his friend's mother treating him virtually as a second son. Norman Cantor, a Canadian-American medievalist who has written on Knowles's life, notes: "This failure to serve in the war, in which many of his friends died in the mud and slaughter of the Western Front, placed a pressure of guilt upon him and with it the conviction that his service to God as a monk and priest had to be of a very special and burdensome kind to justify his survival."

What should that "very special" service be? For Knowles, being sent out to parishes or to teach in the school was not what he sought:

> I was beginning to be aware of a tension that was to endure, two questions that demanded an answer. The first was, could the life of a monk, the journey to God, be combined with sharing in all the interests of the world in literature, art, travel, games and the rest? The other, peculiar to Downside at that time, [was] could parish work outside the monastery be compatible with a purely monastic vocation?

This paragraph appears in the first draft of his autobiography; in the final version it is crossed out, with some force, in heavy red ink.

In 1917, allowed a brief furlough from the abbey, Knowles visited a group of Carmelite nuns in north Cornwall and was impressed by their self-denying existence, severed from all human ties. On his return that August, he asked to see Downside's abbot, Cuthbert Butler, a formidable presence who had already influenced his young charge through his own writings on mysticism and spirituality. Knowles revealed that he found the abbey "too easy and too human" and that he "still felt strongly the call to a stricter monastic life." Should he instead join the Carthusians, an order of monks founded in 1084 whose members

were devoted to solitary work and prayer? Butler counseled against a hasty decision, and the two men agreed that Knowles should put off any move for five years. In October 1918, aged twenty-two, Dom David took his solemn vows.

Butler suggested to Knowles that he read up on Cluny, the great French abbey of the Middle Ages and the embodiment of the mainland European monastic tradition. Billeted on the top floor of the abbey at Downside, in a room so deprived of heat that he worked with a dressing gown over his habit, Knowles began to research the history of the Benedictines, but rather than being inspired, his questioning increased:

> It was argued that the monastic vocation differed from the apostolic; that St. Benedict demanded of his monks that they should remain in their monastery till death. The parish life, it was said, differed scarcely at all from that of the secular priesthood; this was contrasted with the community life and rich liturgical service at Downside.

The abbey had originally been a priory of fifteen to twenty men, and over the next few decades it remained roughly the same. But "gradually and silently ... a great change was impending." By the early 1920s the monks were set on building a major private school, with a projected enrollment of more than five hundred boys. To Knowles's dismay, the enterprise demanded more and more of the abbey's resources and seemed a contradiction of St. Benedict's original intentions.

For a while, any personal crisis was put off by another move away from the monastery. From the time of Cuthbert Butler, brighter novices had been sent to Cambridge, most often to Christ's College, with whom the abbey had an understanding, and Knowles was soon a full-time student, taking a normal three-year course. He was determined to get a top degree, and duly did,* but almost immediately after it was awarded, "the first moment of delight was followed by the realization that this was not the goal at which my real self was aiming with such hesitation." The battle between following his intellectual interests and surrendering them to a life of prayer was

intensified by his doubts about whether Downside was the right place for him. In 1922 he returned to the abbey a troubled spirit.

His fellow monks saw little of this inner questioning. His life seemed to be progressing smoothly as he grew in maturity and confidence. While his own reading of the spiritual classics remained heavy, he was teaching twenty-eight classes a week and supervising rugby and cricket in the afternoons. He also filled in at one of the local Mass centers. These were full years, and he was even spoken of as a future abbot.

At last, as a full monk allowed to use the monastery library, he set about working his way through the major English poets and most of the great historians—Macaulay and Gibbon but also the Ancient Greeks and Romans. Four years later, out of the blue, Oxford University Press asked him to write a short life of Robert E. Lee, the American Confederate general, and this totally unexpected commission grew into his first book—a sketch, some two hundred pages, of the entire Civil War. In it, he gives a romantic vision of the industrialized North trampling over the chivalric Old South (he had never visited America), which he invests with the high ideals and gracious ways of life he missed in his community (he credits Lincoln with many of the qualities he sought in an ideal abbot). As with his achievements at Cambridge, he could not accept the book's success and recorded his accomplishment as "a rival to the recollection of a life of prayer ... a negation of the deep and true movement towards God."

Working on the commission had given Knowles an excuse to be away from the abbey, researching in Oxford. His next project was *The Benedictine Centuries* (1927), which would be his blueprint for an ideal monastic community, a gathering of the dedicated who would also be an intellectual elite. It was not hard to see the work as an indirect attack on "the past history and present predicament of Downside," as he put it. Butler had stepped down as abbot shortly after Knowles's ordination, to be replaced by the headmaster, Leander Ramsay, whom Knowles found sympathetic. By the summer of 1928, Downside was planning a new monastery wing and library extension: Knowles opposed both, and the debate spluttered into the following year, when Ramsay

unexpectedly died. Knowles felt his time at the abbey was running out.

He set his sights on a return to Cambridge, to head up Bene't (a contraction of "Benedict") House, a hostel for "black monks," as Benedictines were known, that had been reopened in 1919. But that summer a car he was in crashed into a Nestlé milk truck, and he was nearly killed—flung against the windscreen, suffering a throat hemorrhage and a serious concussion. Two operations followed, and it was feared he might lose the sight of one eye. Although that tragedy was averted, his health was never the same: "My youth has ended," he recorded in his autobiography. Further, according to a memoir by a colleague, the accident upset his whole psyche, and thereafter he exhibited instead "a certain authoritative intransigence."

The convalescent Knowles, now thirty-two, was told that he would spend the next twelve months as temporary Novice Master. When that role had run its course, the new abbot, Dom John Chapman, rather than sending him back to Cambridge, made him Junior Master, in charge of any post-novice not yet a priest. He also became editor of *The Downside Review,* in short order turning it into the leading Catholic journal of serious opinion in England. But he was furious at Chapman for refusing him the chance of university life, and he characterized his spiritual superior as both indecisive and intolerant, a man who "hardened towards critics and never forgot what they had said or done."

The outside world of the 1920s, at least among the well-to-do, was one of pleasure, featuring the new sound of jazz as a release from the years of carnage. Perhaps partly in reaction, Knowles's lifestyle became progressively more austere, his range of sympathies contracting. By 1930 he had given up reading fiction or listening to music, or playing tennis or squash, although he was physically able (even after his accident, he had a sinewy, athletic body and walked quickly, with vigor). Over the rest of his life he would see just six films, all from the silent era; plays not at all. The radio he listened to once a year, when carols were broadcast on Christmas Eve. Television he watched on two occasions, a cricket match and an interview with the breakaway

Rhodesian leader Ian Smith. Letters, which he used to round off "Yours affectionately," he now ended "Yours to Him."

Knowles had always possessed a thin face, almost creaseless, with small eyes, thin lips, sunken cheeks, and a piercing gaze, but these features, framed by steel-gray, close-cropped curly hair, now seemed exaggerated.* His manner suggested a confident determination but also the withdrawn chill of an ascetic.

Abbot Chapman meanwhile was full of new enterprises, most of which Knowles argued strenuously against, on the grounds that they gave priority to the school rather than to the nurturing of monastic life: "monastery," he pointedly recalled, came from the Greek, μόνος, *monos,* "alone." The early part of 1930 he describes as "the most searching six months of my life," and he was soon to find others who agreed that Downside had lost its way. A handful of monks, "the quieter and more studious brethren," mainly novices or juniors who held Knowles in awe, asked if he would lead in pushing for a different form of monastic commitment.

Then that June a project arose that captured Knowles's imagination and seemed to provide a solution. Some years before, Downside had received a generous gift from an Australian who wanted to establish a Benedictine community in his home country. Knowles proposed that, together with his disciples (by this time nine strong), he be put in charge of such an outpost. They set about persuading other monks to join them, but again Knowles had his hopes thwarted by Chapman, and angry letters crossed between the two. For his abbot, Knowles was becoming unreasonable, compulsive, bizarre—a pain under the collar.

Chapman was unwilling to engage in person, writing to Knowles at one point: "I am not suggesting you are not good people—but that you lack the monastic vocation." This was hard to take, since the nub of the rebels' case was that they believed the original aims of St. Benedict had been discarded. The plotting continued, and the group even gave itself a name—the *usque* movement, from the Latin phrase *usquequaque perfectionem,* meaning "towards perfection." By August 1933 Chapman charged

Knowles with causing disturbances and disobedience and characterized his Junior Master as "a storm-centre ... an unreliable and disobedient subject, who has led younger monks astray ... a rival who must be put down."

The would-be radicals were all younger than Knowles by some years; three were still in simple or temporary vows. When they could not get meaningful support from the rest of the community, they had no stomach for further battle and surrendered to their abbot's wishes. Knowles was told he would be sent away to a daughter house governed by Downside, a priory in Ealing, a lower-middle-class suburb of West London. And so to this new home—in Knowles's view "a fourth-rate, unobservant house" of some fourteen monks—this turbulent priest would go.

Still he would not be silenced, filing appeals that he had been treated unjustly. In November, Abbot Chapman died, to be succeeded by Bruno Hicks, whom Knowles, master of the character sketch, described as "cold, neither inviting nor inspiring confidence, fluid as water and fundamentally unreliable." Even so, Hicks suggested Knowles take his case to Rome, to that part of the Vatican supervising religious orders. He did, but in June 1934 his petition was rejected, Pius XI himself sending—in Knowles's words—"a somewhat jejune reply." He was furious: "The Primate has shown himself as a willow, not as an oak." From then on, he largely forsook life at the priory, taking on minimal church duties and a few classes in the school, at mealtimes not speaking unless spoken to, and avoiding visitors. He spent most of his six years there in the British Museum or the London Library, buried in research. Then, one night in 1939, at the age of forty-three, he bundled up a minimum of clothes, a Greek Testament, and the autumn quarter of his breviary—and disappeared.

It took the abbey several weeks to learn what had happened. Some four years before, the prior at Ealing, Benedict Kuypers, had asked Knowles to interview a medical student who had asked for spiritual direction. As Knowles tells it, one evening "I was told that someone in the parlor was waiting to see me. As I entered I saw a lady of thirty or so, in a short fur coat, black skirt

and hat, with hair that appeared to be bobbed, but was in fact set closely to her head. She spoke quietly and in perfect English though with a slightly unusual pronunciation."

The student, Elizabeth Kornerup, turned out to be a Scandinavian psychiatrist in training (she would later work at the prestigious Tavistock Clinic) and a Lutheran convert to Catholicism. Born on Christmas Day 1901 to Danish parents, she had unruly fair hair, wore glasses, had a stammer, and was far from alluring. Despite that, in Denmark, she had received several proposals of marriage and would continue to do so in London. Knowles wrote of her:

> Elizabeth was not at first sight striking in appearance. No one passing her, even when I first knew her in her early thirties, would have thought her remarkably beautiful, still less "pretty." Her facial appearance could vary to an unusual extent, especially in later years. She was always pale, and when tired or ill she could look her age in years, and at times her face, seen in repose, had a lifeless, sallow appearance.

This was the woman with whom he almost immediately became obsessed, seeing her as "a perfect soul and a saint." Above all, she was deeply religious, had taken a vow of chastity, and had originally hoped to be a missionary nun in India. She would spend long hours in prayer, most often at night, while early in her twenties she had taken to carrying, without permission, a consecrated host (the wafer used in Communion). For several months she had attempted to live without food or drink, an endeavor that obviously failed (although some late medieval holy women, the virtuosos of abstinence, allegedly lived for weeks on the Eucharist alone) and had left her a semi-invalid. She would go to confession every day, an extreme practice so frowned upon by the Church that she had to find different confessors for each day of the week—Jesuits, Redemptorists, Passionists, parish priests, whoever. Would Dom David become her confessor? When that same evening he did hear her confession, she announced that ... she had nothing to confess! Knowles asked himself whether his visitor was in fact a "bogus, self-seeking neurotic" but concluded, "I accepted her ...

in the forty years that have passed since that day I have never regretted my decision or doubted its truth."

When they first met, Kornerup was living in a small flat in Pimlico, just south of Victoria Station. She had built up a flourishing private practice while also working as an assistant pathologist at two London hospitals. Knowles took to writing to her daily, telephoning her sometimes twice a day, and paying frequent visits, which would be spent together in silent prayer. His colleagues in Ealing knew nothing of this, imagining Dom David away at a library:

> I was well aware of the difficult position I should find myself in if I were challenged. I realize fully what it was for a priest to go almost daily for hours to the room, and later the house, of one who was an unmarried woman, and then young. But I knew also that it was my spiritual, priestly duty to do so.

By 1937, Kornerup had moved into a larger flat in Gloucester Street, also part of Pimlico, and singlemindedly set about ousting the middle-aged woman who lived in the apartment below. On August 28, 1939, she asked Knowles to move in. "I will come," he told her. "Shakespeare's line passed through my mind: 'There is a tide in the affairs of men,' and I felt a deep joy that I had taken it at the flood." He and "Sister Bridget," as he dubbed her, would be inseparable for the rest of his life; she would die a year after he.* Knowles came to believe that his primary duty as a priest was to protect her; she in turn held that her mission was to assist him in all his endeavors. "Her life," he wrote, "gave my life its purpose." She was "an exhibit, a marvel, who showed all the textbook signs of holiness" and even "resembled Our Lord."

Following Kornerup's advice, Knowles severed all external contacts, including any communication with Downside. By 1938, Bruno Hicks had resigned as abbot, possibly suffering a mental breakdown (he was an active homosexual at a time when to be so was a criminal offense). He was succeeded by the long-serving headmaster, Dom Sigebert Trafford, who, despite all the ructions within the community, had always regarded Knowles sympathetically and even as a possible successor. Urged on by a

Rome anxious to avoid scandal, Trafford made several journeys to London to meet Knowles, only to be turned away at the door.

For the two years after his flight, any message to Knowles had to go through Kornerup, who said he was suffering from mild schizophrenia and had to be handled with the utmost care. "Elizabeth had decided that our best policy now was to create the impression that I had had a breakdown," he wrote. This way, he might remain where he was without losing his position as a monk. There is no firm evidence either way on whether he was ever mentally ill. Adrian Morey believed that he "would have ended in a mental home had she not taken him in." On one occasion when Trafford arrived in Gloucester Street, bringing with him a longtime Downside physician named Dr. Bradley, Kornerup threatened to call the police. Knowles eventually agreed to be examined by two psychiatrists. One asked questions "suggesting that Elizabeth had won my confidence by minor sexual gratifications." The other recommended electric-shock treatment. "There was an element of the ridiculous," Knowles acknowledged, "that I think we both appreciated." And more than an element of dissembling, for as early as 1939, the two made inquiries about a civil marriage in case Kornerup was to be deported as an alien; many years later, when she entered the hospital for a serious operation, Knowles stayed overnight in her room posing as her husband, and indeed during the years that they lived in south London they were known locally as Mr. and Mrs. Knowles.* Nobody knows for sure the nature of their partnership. There are letters at Downside from Knowles to the authorities in Rome stating that he was physically incapable of a full sexual relationship.

At the monastery under Trafford, there was great compassion for its former brilliant member—all this amid the outbreak of the Second World War. Yet Knowles posed a problem; by canon law, his conduct meant automatic suspension as both monk and priest and ipso facto excommunication from the Church, which included no longer being allowed to celebrate Mass. He refused outright to accept these penalties, continuing to hold that he had been treated unjustly. When in a spirit of compromise Abbot Trafford wrote asking if he wished exclaustration (whereby a

monk may live for a limited time away from his abbey, usually with a view to deciding whether to depart definitively) or remain a member of the community with permission to live outside the monastery, he received the reply: "Downside does not observe the Rule either in the letter or the spirit, still less the Gospel teaching upon which the Rule depends.... I cannot in conscience ask for absolution from faults which I am not conscious of having committed." Eventually, around 1944, he was given permission again to celebrate Mass, but this was made contingent on his making a brief annual visit to Downside. He refused, while also turning down any other solution.

There was a further dimension to the problem. During all this time, despite the upheavals and the enormous tension he was under, Knowles had been extraordinarily productive. In June 1940 *The Monastic Order in England: A History of Its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 940–1216* was published. At around six hundred pages (even then Knowles had had to cut a hundred pages from his initial draft, as there was a wartime paper shortage), the book was expensive to set, and he accepted a profit-sharing arrangement in lieu of royalties. Cambridge University Press seemed to have little expectation of success, printing only five hundred copies (at the then-high price of forty-five shillings, even though Knowles's father paid £200—in modern currency, about $6,000—toward the cost of production) and immediately broke up the type, preventing any easy reprint.*

Despite such a modest beginning, the book was hailed as a masterwork. Downside was stymied. How could the abbey admit that this "great Catholic medievalist," who with a single publication had resurrected the history of monastic life in England, was a monk on the run, a renegade priest? Either way, the career of David Knowles, celebrated medieval historian, was born.

The Monastic Order in England was to be the first of four books on his chosen subject. It tells how monastic life in England developed from the Norman Conquest to the thirteenth century in prose at once beautifully clear, full of literary allusion, and possessed of a narrative power that recalls two of Knowles's heroes, Macaulay

and Trevelyan. The depth and breadth of his scholarship still inspire, while the sheer readability of his prose, over the decades, has had commentators reaching for superlatives. "Had Cicero written on monasticism he could hardly have written with greater elegance" is a typical example. Others praise his "novelist's skill" and "quiet humor."

The criticisms would come. In the century of Marxism, Knowles shows little interest in economics; for all the book's length, not until page 105 is there mention of a price expressed in actual monetary units (his 1952 work, *Monastic Sites from the Air,* on the other hand, shows considerable understanding of economics). Knowles could also be naïve, several times relying on medieval texts that scholars have since determined to be forgeries. He has the casual anti-Semitism of his class and time; hardly mentions female religious, seeing no trace of "any saintly or commanding figure of a woman" worthy of study; and exhibits a prejudice against smaller monastic or preaching associations. That last led to a distortion: Cistercians, Augustinians, and friars such as Franciscans and Dominicans are largely ignored. Knowles was an elitist with a sometimes self-conscious literary style, aping Thucydides one moment and quoting in European languages the next.

His writing was in part a counterblast against a pioneering contemporary, G. G. Coulton, three of the four volumes of whose *Five Centuries of Religion* were already in print. Coulton was an Anglican deacon who had lost his faith and become a preparatory schoolmaster before returning to Cambridge. Until Knowles appeared he was viewed as the world's leading authority on English medieval monks, but Knowles believed that Coulton "knew little of Catholic spirituality" and belittled him by giving him a single footnote—yet it was his rival's remark, in a 1929 volume, that the history of monasticism in England had yet to be written that inspired him to fill that gap.

Much that has been published on medieval religious practice is predicated upon the foundations laid by Knowles. Throughout the 1930s, readers had been served only by Coulton's viciously anti-Catholic interpretation. The only different discourse on monasticism was to be found in the work of European scholars,

which was slowly becoming available in translation. Knowles seemed daring—and new. If historians resented the insertion into history of Christian presupposition, it was that very insertion that made his project unique. His Peterhouse colleague Maurice Cowling sums up that achievement: "He came nearer than any 20th-century English historian had come to finding a language through which to insert into the structure of a major work of scholarship conceptions of the reality of God, religion and eternal life.... That makes his historical writing one of the most compelling Christian productions to have been published in England in [the twentieth] century."

This was not a small canvas. The monasteries held a central place in medieval life, with by the late 1530s nearly nine hundred religious houses in England and some twelve thousand men and women in orders. Yet by 1540 every monastery had been swept away during Henry VIII's concerted attack on them. Until the 1880s, the Church showed scant interest in the period, and no adequate account of British monasticism existed. But Knowles was far from done. The first volume of his survey, *The Religious Orders in England,* appeared in 1948 (covering the period 1216–1340), the second in 1955 (1340 to about 1500), and the third in 1959, the final, magisterial volume being subtitled "The Tudor Age" and extending from 1485 until 1620 with the reestablishment of the English Benedictine congregation. The whole work runs to more than two thousand pages. It is a huge undertaking, covering more than six hundred years not just of religion but of British cultural history. Further, at a time when the historical profession was being transformed in the pursuit of "scientific" research, Knowles reminded his colleagues of the appeal of—and the need for—a clear and unequivocally argued narrative case. Kenneth Clark, narrator of the BBC's *Civilisation* series, writing in 1977, called *The Religious Orders* "one of the historical masterpieces of this century."

Knowles shows how even great writers can ignore "objective" history, selecting what suits the agenda they have chosen to pursue; in the battle between any duty he had as a historian and the demands of his chosen creed, he told the truth as he saw it, because it was *his* truth. He came to historical research as a

reader himself, and like any reader he selected from it according to his tastes. Writing of *The Monastic Order* and the first volume of *The Religious Orders,* Norman Cantor states bluntly:

> These two books were written out of despair, anger, yearning for revenge, internal resourcefulness, a sense of personal calling that make them, chapter after chapter and especially in their discussions of religious leaders and the overall cultural and ecclesiastical ambience, works of forceful passion and imaginative power that have very rarely been equaled in writing about the Middle Ages or the history of the Catholic Church.

Knowles's dissatisfaction with the Benedictines of his time infects not only *The Monastic Order* (of which whole sections can be described as individual or group biography—with each abbot or religious figure getting a trenchant end-of-term report) but all his histories. He deals harshly with any abbot who in his view fails to serve as a true spiritual father to his monks or whose tyranny attains such proportions that he must be disobeyed. Whereas his longtime nemesis, Abbot Chapman, had argued that sanctity could never be an obligation but only a goal, for Knowles, on the page as in his life, the monastic vocation included the clear duty to strive toward such a state. He quotes Aquinas's belief that the zeal for souls most acceptable to God is that through which a man "devotes his own soul or that of another" to "contemplation" rather than to "action." Then again, in his epilogue to the final volume, he returns to his theme of the nemesis of sanctity:

> When once a religious house or a religious order ceases to direct its sons to the abandonment of all that is not God, and ceases to show them the rigours of the narrow way that leads to the imitation of Christ in His Love, it sinks to the level of a purely human institution, and whatever its works may be, they are the work of time and not of eternity. The true monk, in whatever century he is found, looks not to the changing ways around him or to his own mean condition, but to the unchanging everlasting God, and his trust is in the everlasting arms that hold him.

The irony is that, had his abbots not opposed his wishes to start a new community, be it in Australia, India, Kenya, or the north of England (all were mooted at one time or another), he would never have written the books he did. His issues with Downside gave his judgments focus and conviction. It is the further great irony of writing about the past that any author is the prisoner of their character and circumstances yet often they are the making of him. So it was with Michael Clive Knowles.

After leaving for the priory at Ealing, he returned to Downside only once, for the funeral of Cuthbert Butler in 1934. Yet, at his death, Knowles was reconciled with the abbey and given the prayers and dues of a deceased monk. He was buried, like any true Benedictine, in his cowl.

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* That is to say, he received a First. The classification system used throughout Britain since 1918 has first-class honors awarded typically for 70 percent or higher; second-class honors divided between an upper division (known as 2:1) of 60 to 69 percent and a lower division (2:2) of 50 to 59 percent; and third-class honors (3rd) of 40 to 49 percent. At Cambridge, if a student is awarded first-class honors in two different parts of his or her degree course, this is judged a "double First." Some courses are awarded a "starred First," for examination scripts that "consistently exhibit the qualities of first class answers to an exceptional degree." Knowles was given a First in both philosophy and classics.

* He would be satirized as "the great Benedictine scholar" Father Lavenham in Angus Wilson's 1956 novel *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes,* "a small clerical figure" with "a distinguished ascetic face which was yet strangely goat-like." Knowles never read the novel; just as well.

* In a letter to Dom Adrian Morey of January 29, 1977, Christopher Brooke, Knowles's close friend and literary executor, states that people in Cambridge did not even know of her existence until 1963; she appeared in public with Knowles only in his very last years. "After his death ... she was pathetic and lost.... As I knew her, she was evidently a very able, sharp-witted, intelligent, yet also sweet and romantic person.... She was certainly the serpent and the dove," he wrote, his last phrase repeating Knowles's own description of his lifetime companion.

* Knowles's decision to live with Kornerup caused a temporary rupture with his father. His mother had died in 1930, and the widower had moved

first into a small house in the village of Chilcompton, just two miles from Downside, then into a home some hundred yards from the abbey, so that he could be close to his son. Before long he had become an alcoholic. But he eventually came to accept his son's new partner and gave Kornerup a £200 annuity, which for some time was the couple's main source of income. The elder Knowles died in 1944.

* In the Benedictine Order, all theological books had to be submitted for censorship, but works of history didn't, so although written by a priest, the book appeared without the usual "Nihil Obstat" ecclesiastical imprimatur to certify that nothing in it was offensive to faith or morals, nor did his later works carry this stamp. Even so, Knowles's dispute with the Church rumbled on for years. In October 1952, the Roman Congregation of Religious officially exclaustrated him but did not excommunicate him or deny him "spiritual privileges." Unbowed, he replied that the whole order was invalid but nevertheless delayed saying Mass again until January 1, 1957, in the hope that his abbot would somehow relent and also because he didn't want people to feel that his position had been "regularized"—that he might have admitted any original fault. To the end of his life he regarded himself as a monk.

CHAPTER 1

THE DAWNING OF HISTORY

Herodotus or Thucydides?

The conversion of legend-writing into the science of history was not native to the Greek mind, it was a fifth-century invention, and Herodotus was the man who invented it.

—R. G. COLLINGWOOD

Exiled Thucydides knew
All that a speech can say
About Democracy,
And what dictators do,
The elderly rubbish they talk
To an apathetic grave;
Analysed all in his book.

—W. H. AUDEN, "SEPTEMBER 1, 1939"

No one knows for sure the dates of Herodotus's own story. He was probably born c. 485 B.C. and lived into the 420s, since he refers to events early in the Peloponnesian War of 431–404. He was part of an intellectual world that included early medical investigations and creative speculation of all kinds. Among his contemporaries or near-contemporaries were Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.), Aristophanes (c. 448–c. 380 B.C.), Euripides (c. 484–c. 408 B.C.), Pindar (522–c. 443 B.C.), Plato (c. 429–347 B.C.), and Sophocles (496–406 B.C.), who composed a poem in his honor.

Most records before Herodotus are dry chronicles, even those that evince a rudimentary attempt at narrative. There is no

evidence of "history" as a concept, although the Hebrew words *toledot* (genealogies) and *divre hayyamin* (the matter of those days) suggest at least some interest in tracking the past. Homer, best treated as a plural noun, a group effort that produced *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey,* provided a way station on the road to writing history. As Adam Nicolson puts it in *Why Homer Matters:* "Epic, which was invented after memory and before history, occupies a third space in the human desire to connect the present to the past: it is the attempt to extend the qualities of memory over the reach of time embraced by history." He dates the oral creation of both poems to c. 1800 B.C., their being written down to around 700 B.C.

The Greeks knew something of their past from these oral traditions, often versified, but anything that occurred more than three generations distant would be only loosely remembered if not forgotten altogether. Oral customs tend to avoid stories that an audience doesn't want to hear. In 492, when Phrynikhos, one of Aeschylus's rivals, presented his play *The Fall of Miletus* on that city's destruction by the Persians, "the audience burst into tears, fined him 1,000 drachmas for reminding them of their own evils, and ordered that no one should ever perform this play again." Herodotus would have known that poets from a previous age were primarily there to please those who had come to hear them and so often made things up, even if they protested that they never did such things.

Of those previous poets, Hesiod (active c. 700 B.C.) had introduced the idea of a succession of declining ages. Hecataeus of Miletus (550–476 B.C.), whose *Journey Round the World* was built on his travels around the Mediterranean, is otherwise the most significant predecessor. Among other notable writers, Hellanicus of Lesbos (c. 490–405 B.C.) wrote long parallel chronologies, listing not just a single line of rulers, and Philistus, Theopompus, and Xenophon, all of whom flourished in the fourth century B.C., wrote accounts of real value.

This line of historians encompassed a revolution. Between 2000 and 1200 B.C., the unnamed people whom we retrospectively call Indo-Hittites burst over Europe and South Asia, and one of these invading tribes raised a group of small settlements around

the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. When this hyper-dynamic culture came into contact with another of a similar nature, a new consciousness began to grow. These years saw substantial advances in abstract reasoning, and people began to connect with the past in a new way. (It is worth bearing in mind that the Inca, that most ordered of preliterate cultures, had four versions of history, ranging from secret to popular, all propagated under the empire's strict control.)

An 1814 imagining of Homer and his audience. In the sixth century B.C., a popular poem had spoken of "the sweetest of all singers," identifying him as "a blind man and he makes his home in rocky Chios." This "evidence" was enough for Thucydides to declare, a century on, that Homer was the author alluded to.

Some historians argue that the victory at Marathon in 490 B.C. during the first Persian invasion of Greece marked East and West as different cultural entities and so was a turning point. The Greek golden age possibly coincided with a surge of abundance, akin to that which preceded the Industrial Revolution in Britain, with higher rates of food production, capital investment, and a leap in population. But the resultant cultural explosion was matched only once in history, by the Renaissance in Europe, and

although "history" was not at any one point in time a *necessary* development, certain discoveries are requisite if a civilization is to evolve, and a sense of the past is one of them.

Although writing had begun in Sumeria (southern Iraq) by the third millennium B.C., it was Herodotus who authored the oldest surviving book-length work of prose on any subject. He wrote the first account in the Western tradition that is recognizably a work of history as we might now define it, covering the recent human past and not concentrating on myth and legend (although not by any means passing over them, either; he would likely have agreed with Plato's declaration in the *Republic* that myth is "the noble lie" or pious fiction that binds society together). He is also the first to provide a sustained record of past occurrences along with self-conscious discussions about how to obtain knowledge of days gone by and the first to ponder why particular events happened in the first place. Above all, he asks questions. He is the world's first travel writer, investigative reporter, and foreign correspondent. He covers ethnography (which existed as a literary genre prior to history, so its incorporation into *The Histories* is not surprising), military and local history, biography, poetry, philology, genealogy, mythography, anthropology, geology, botany, zoology, and architecture, while at the same time he is, to use Ryszard Kapuściński's description in his *Travels with Herodotus,* "a typical wanderer ... a pilgrim ... the first to discover the world's multicultural nature. The first to argue that each culture requires acceptance and understanding, and that to understand it, one must first come to know it."

The immediate impression on reading even a few of his pages is that he finds everything of interest. Sometimes he offers a judgment, at others just reports; his approach characterized by *opsis* ("seeing"), from which we get a word more associated with crime novels—*autopsy,* "seeing for oneself." Much of his knowledge comes from the voyages that Greeks, Egyptians, and Phoenicians had been making both around the Mediterranean and outside it, but it is likely he traveled extensively, not only throughout the Greek states but to Egypt, Phoenicia (roughly, modern Lebanon and Syria), Babylon (Iraq), Arabia, Thrace

(Bulgaria and the European section of Turkey), and up through modern Romania, Ukraine, southern Russia, and Georgia.

Most of these journeys were formidable undertakings. To get to what is modern Odessa, for instance, he would have had to voyage along the western and northern shores of the Aegean; then through the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara, and the Bosporus; and last, along the western shore of the Black Sea, past the mouth of the Danube to that of the Dnieper: with fair winds and no mishaps, a voyage likely to have taken three months—and that was just one of many trips. The two most powerful Greek cities of the time were Athens—its citizen population just 100,000—and Sparta, to the south. (The latter's citizens were called *Spartiatai,* but an alternative form was *Lakon,* from which comes "laconic": Spartans were known for their terse speech, hence when in c. 338 B.C. Philip of Macedon told them, "If I invade your territory, I will destroy you," they sent back a one-word reply: "If.")

Herodotus's home city of Anatolian Halicarnassus was on the edge of what was then the vast cultural space of the ancient Near East, a Greek colony that in about 545 B.C. had been absorbed into the Persian Empire along with Lydia (covering much of what is now western Turkey). Caught between two worlds, the city had a non-Greek native population—known as Carians—and drifted away from its close relations with its Dorian neighbors to help pioneer Greek trade with Egypt, which was becoming an internationally-minded port.

Because of an uncle's fondness for political intrigue, Herodotus found his family put under a cloud and himself, at the age of around thirty, sent away from Halicarnassus (today's Bodrum, a small city on the southwest coast of Turkey). For much of the next five years he traveled, landing in Athens in c. 447 B.C., already armed with a rich store of notes about the eastern Mediterranean. He originally began his history of the area with the Persian attack on the city in 490 B.C., then expanded it to cover Persia's invasion of the whole peninsula ten years later—the defining event of his boyhood. One story, likely a myth, has Herodotus as a child standing on the quay at Halicarnassus as

the defeated ships returned from the Battle of Salamis and asking, "Mother, what did they fight each other for?"

In 499 B.C. the Carians had joined with the Greek coastal towns in revolting against Persia; by the time Herodotus left on his travels, his family, one of the noblest (and most politically involved) of the city, would likely have had connections in other parts of the Persian kingdom that would have made his researches easier. *Xenía,* the Greek word for the concept of courtesy shown to those far from home, is generally translated as "guest-friendship" because the ways in which hospitality was exercised created a reciprocal relationship between guest and host. In addition, Herodotus, although he spoke only Greek comfortably, would have enjoyed the institution of the *proxenos,* "the guest's friend," a type of consul who voluntarily or for a fee cared for visitors from his native city. Finally, no one could be sure of new arrivals whether they were merely human or gods in human form: best to be hospitable.

Possibly Herodotus began as a sea captain and merchant. His knowledge of geography is well ahead of that of his known predecessors, and he takes for granted climate, topography, and access to resources. Before him, there is scant evidence that anyone was interested in preserving knowledge of the causes of recent events; Greek states had no state archives or even lists of magistrates to help construct a chronology. Athens, remarkable for its concern for commemoration, lacked a central archive until the end of the fifth century.

Herodotus planned both to instill a sense of the past and to leave a record, but he also gave his curiosity full rein. His book contains, to borrow one recent biographer's list, "illicit eroticism, sex, love, violence, crime, strange customs of foreign peoples, imagined scenes in royal bedrooms, flashbacks, dream sequences, political theory, philosophical debate, encounters with oracles, geographical speculation, natural history, short stories and Greek myths." Herodotus notes, with typical fascination, that Egyptians eat in the street and relieve themselves indoors; their men urinate sitting down, their women standing up (2.35, 2–3), whereas in the Greek world the reverse applied. Ethiopians, he observes blithely, speak a

language unlike any other, squeaking like bats (4.183) or twittering like birds (2.57). He loves to report strange deeds of all kinds, to "seek out side issues" (4.30). Aristophanes satirized his opening line of inquiry as "look at the women" or, as we might joshingly put it, *Cherchez la femme,* for he is evidently fascinated by sexual conventions. Thus, of Libyan customs: "When a Nasamonian man marries for the first time, it is customary for his bride to have intercourse with all the guests at the feast in succession, and for each of these guests to then present a gift he has brought." Among another Libyan tribe, the Gindanes, the women "wear many leather ankle bracelets. It is said that they put on one of these for every man with whom they have had intercourse, and the woman who wears the most is considered to be the best, since she has won affection from the most men" (4.172, 4.176). His handling of the telling detail can take one's breath away: when in 479 B.C. the Athenians held a prolonged siege of Sestos, on the Hellespont, "within the city wall, the people by now were reduced to utter misery, even to the point of boiling the leather straps of their beds and eating them" (9.118). One wonders how Herodotus knew this.

At one point in his account of Xerxes's campaigns, the ruthless, all-mighty ruler of the vast Persian empire, the largest realm the world had ever seen, is surveying the great host of men he has called up to overwhelm the Greeks:

> As Xerxes looked over the whole Hellespont, whose water was completely hidden by all his ships, and at all the shores and the plains of Abydos, now so full of people, he congratulated himself for being so blessed. But then he suddenly burst into tears....

When one of his officers asks what has caused such sorrow, Xerxes replies: "I was overcome by pity as I considered the brevity of human life, since not one of all these people here will be alive one hundred years from now" (7.46). The Persian monarch is not always so compassionate. Herodotus, who tends to invest Persians with the characteristics that the Greeks most despised, notes that just a few weeks later, Xerxes was forced to beat a hasty retreat back home. A storm threatened his ship:

> The King fell into a panic and shouted to the helmsman, asking if there was any way they could be saved. The helmsman replied, "My Lord, there is none, unless we rid ourselves of these many men on board." Upon hearing this, Xerxes said, "Men of Persia, it is now the time for you to prove your care for your king. For in you, it seems, lies my safety." After he had said this, his men prostrated themselves, leapt out into the sea, and the now lightened ship sailed safely to Asia. As soon as Xerxes stepped safely onto shore, he gave the helmsman a gift of a golden crown in return for saving his life, but then, because he had been responsible for the death of so many Persians, he had his head cut off. (8.118)

Herodotus several times writes that he does not believe this or other stories he tells but feels he must repeat them because they are too good to leave out. Talking of livestock in Scythia, he suddenly says, "a remarkable fact occurs to me (I need not apologize for the digression—it has been my plan throughout this work)." After the powerful anecdote of the boatswain, he adds that readers should not regard it as a historical fact (8.118–19); the tale is included because it embodies how a tyrant exercises "justice," and its ideological significance outweighs, for him, its likely historical falsehood. Furnishing evidence for his wilder claims doesn't interest him.

The world as Herodotus saw it. In 499–498 B.C., Aristagoras, tyrant of Miletus, made a tour of mainland Greece, taking with him what Herodotus calls "a bronze tablet with an engraving of a map of the whole world, with all its rivers and seas."

rhetoricians busied themselves establishing principles for how best to express thoughts in the new medium. Although it might be easier to commit a thousand lines of poetry to memory than a hundred of prose, once it was possible to carry around rolls of writing the ability to create long narrative passages was an obvious advantage, while the old techniques were no longer up to holding in one's mind the more complex thoughts that people were now entertaining.*

Herodotus himself was no stranger to prose exposition, having grown up enjoying intellectual connections with the nearby cultural hothouse of Miletus. As for the noun *history,* the term had a skeptical connotation in Ionia, where Herodotus grew up. He himself preferred "to inquire or investigate" to describe what he was writing, and one effect is that the original meanings have been swallowed up. Possibly because, in Homer, a *histor* is "a good judge," who gives his opinion based on the facts resulting from an investigation, *historie* became an all-encompassing term, indeed one that Herodotus employs twenty-three times.

His general approach had its downside. He not only passed on doubtful information; he also invented material, even how he obtained it. Cicero (106–43 B.C.), who wanted to define history as a branch of rhetoric, while acclaiming Herodotus as the "father of history," bracketed him with Theopompus (d. 320 B.C.), author of a twelve-volume history of Greece but a notorious liar, and refers slightingly to his "innumerable tales." Aristotle weighed in by noting Herodotus's "string-along style" and mentions his being a storyteller in a pejorative sense. Other ancients were similarly dismissive, and soon Cicero's sobriquet was joined to Plutarch's famous putdown, "father of lies." As it was, Herodotus was charged with consciously creating an illusion of accuracy by mentioning specific details around stories that he well knew were made up. "Herodotus seems to be dancing away the truth, and saying, 'I could hardly care less,'" commented Plutarch (c. A.D. 46–120) in an unbridled attack openly titled "On the Malice of Herodotus."

Investigate and select as Herodotus might—and there are 1,086 examples of his self-recorded presence as eyewitness or investigator—he still found room for most local beliefs, legends,

and folktales, only occasionally making comment. When Arion of Methymna is described as being carried on the back of a dolphin, Herodotus concludes: "I have my own opinion about these claims" (2.56)—but nothing more, a prime example of his paralipsis—a useful word meaning the pretense of leaving things to one side. In telling Egypt's history, he compresses ten thousand years (and three hundred kings) into a single paragraph. Generally he employs a broad brush for dates and times—"at this time," "after this," "up to my day," "still now" are typical—but then he probably lacked access to more precise information. "Very few things happen at the right time, and the rest do not happen at all," he says. He is conscientious about readability, not accuracy.

His inexactness is particularly evident in the way he exaggerates the size, equipment, tactical acumen, and leadership of the Persian forces in order to show the Greeks triumphing against overwhelming odds. He describes an army so enormous that it bankrupted cities that attempted to feed it for even a single day. We are told that all previous military expeditions added together paled against the size of Xerxes's forces. But were his suspiciously precise figure of 5,283,220 men true, a column marching in file would have stretched two thousand miles, with its head reaching Thermopylae in eastern central Greece at the same time as its tail was leaving western Iran. In those days, it took some four weeks for an army to cover three hundred or so kilometers. The Persian march would have lasted months.

Herodotus's dimensions may frequently be incorrect, as are his measurements generally, but in his time no universal standards for units of distance, currency, or capacity existed. It was an age that was inexact about dates, distances, and times, so his reports may well have been above the usual standards of accuracy. As the great Italian historian Arnaldo Momigliano has written, "If we had to give an *a priori* estimate of the chances of success in writing history by Herodotus' method, we should probably shake our heads in sheer despondency."

In the end, Herodotus's failings pale beside his achievements. Early in Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient,* Hana, who is

nursing a mysterious burn victim in a grand, empty house, "picks up the notebook that lies on the small table beside his bed. It is the book he brought with him through the fire—a copy of *The Histories* by Herodotus that he has added to, cutting and gluing in pages from other books or writing in his own observations—so they all are cradled within the text of Herodotus," one solitary book forming the matrix for a new way of seeing.

But of course there were to be other ways. Thucydides (c. 460–c. 395 B.C.) wrote a generation after Herodotus and in contrast approached writing about the past through the lens of a high-ranking citizen-soldier—as he himself was—someone who had endured plagues (particularly the typhoid epidemic that struck Athens in 430 B.C., killing two-thirds of its residents) and witnessed shocking military defeats.

He was born in Halimous, a southwestern suburb of Athens, his father a rich landowner and his mother a Thracian aristocrat. In 424 B.C., aged about thirty-six, he was elected general, one of ten men who served as the foremost military and political leaders in Athens, then chosen to be the second of two admiral-cum-generals (a naval commander would also lead his men on land) in charge of seven warships dispatched to protect a vital stronghold in Thrace. When he lost to the dynamic Spartan Brasidas in the first decade of the Peloponnesian War, he suffered the full brunt of popular indignation—he was removed from his post and exiled for a minimum twenty years. He spent this time traveling—especially in the Peloponnesus, the mountain peninsula of southern Greece—interviewing, researching records, and collecting eyewitness accounts: "I had leisure to observe affairs more closely," he tells us curtly. He probably died in his late sixties, leaving his account in mid-sentence.

His great work *The History of the Peloponnesian Wars* records the fifth-century-B.C. struggle between Sparta and Athens, each supported by a number of smaller states, and is the first surviving example of political as well as military history. Taking up 552 pages in its 1996 English translation (edited by Robert B. Strassler and published by the Free Press), it is divided into

eight books. Part I frames the first ten years of the war, from 431 to 421 B.C., and Part II, following a brief phony peace, the next decade, which saw the political weakening of democratic Athens. Seven years are left unrecorded, the work breaking off amid the disorder of the events of the twenty-first year.

In reading him, one has to get used to his impersonal high style, often involved and overwrought—"in almost impossibly difficult Greek," complains the classicist Mary Beard. "His dry parts," noted Thomas Babington Macaulay, "are dreadfully dry." Yet he can be tensely vivid. He considers causes, developments, and results, often speaking as an eyewitness, his technique in essence like a modern journalist's. For stylistic reasons, ancient historians did not commonly include these elements in their texts, but in several instances Thucydides does. A stickler for accuracy, he admits the dangers to which a historian is regularly exposed—moral bias and failures of memory, but also heedlessness and insufficient observation. The ethicist and philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), the first to translate the *History* into English directly from the Greek, commented that while Herodotus might "delight more the ear with fabulous narrations,"

> Thucydides is one, who, though he never digress to read a lecture, moral or political, upon his own text, nor enter into men's hearts further than the acts themselves evidently guide him: is yet accounted the most politic historiographer that ever writ.

The great and the good have added to this praise. Rousseau, Jefferson, and Nietzsche were admirers, Nietzsche judging him "the grand summation, the last manifestation of that strong, stern, hard matter-of-factness instinctive to the older Hellenes." Simon Schama, in a 2010 essay, writes how Thucydides was "analytically concentrated, critically sharp; unapologetic about history as the origins of the contemporary; unsurpassed as a narrative craftsman and rhetorician." The famed Athenian orator Demosthenes (384–322 B.C.) copied out the entire *History* eight times, so that he might emulate its prose.

Thucydides seems to have developed the art of war reporting almost overnight. The first four books, covering the period

before his exile, are particularly powerful and contain almost two-thirds of some forty speeches by important participants (all of them made up by Thucydides but sticking, he contends, as closely as possible to what was actually said).* These orations account for approximately a quarter of the *History*'s contents and are vital to his purpose, although there is actually more hard information in any daily edition of *The New York Times* (reckoned to contain 150,000 words, excluding advertisements) than in the entire 153,260 words that he set down.

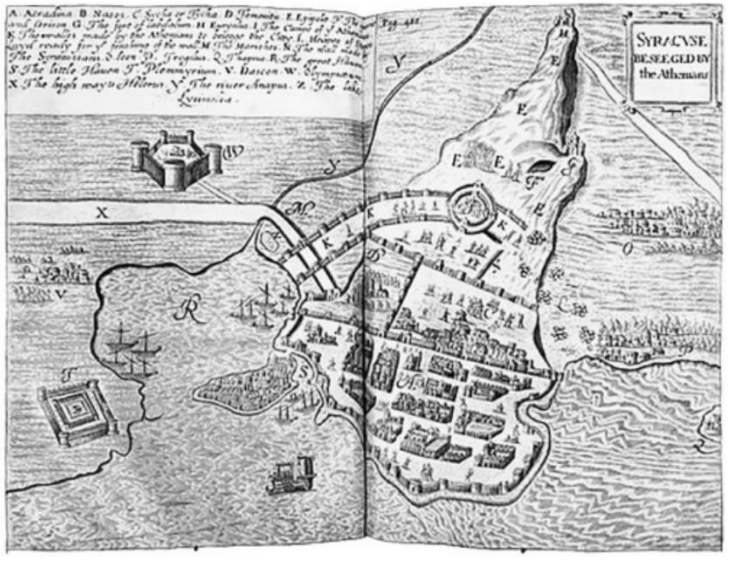
His approach also owes something to medical treatises of the time—it is likely that he knew the principal work of Hippocrates of Kos (c. 460–c. 370 B.C.), *The Complicated Body,* remarkable for its precise observation of symptoms. Thucydides would be equally detailed, as in his account of the plagues of 430 and 427 B.C., which carried off Pericles and fully a third of his fellow Athenians:

> Externally the body was not very hot to the touch, nor pale in its appearance, but reddish, livid, and breaking out into small pustules and ulcers. But internally it burned so that the patient could not bear to have on him clothing or linen even of the very lightest description; or indeed to be otherwise than stark naked. What they would have liked best would have been to throw themselves into cold water; as indeed was done by some of the neglected sick, who plunged into the rain tanks in their agonies of unquenchable thirst; though it made no difference whether they drank little or much.... All the birds and beasts that prey upon human bodies either abstained from touching them (though there were many lying unburied), or died after tasting them.* (2.49–50)

Thucydides's military life ended in such disappointment that we can only imagine what he suffered in terms of pain and disillusion; several commentators have speculated that he died of a broken heart (possibly like his great admirer Lord Macaulay). He saw himself as uniquely positioned to record the main events of his time and was writing in part from "that experience which is learnt in the school of danger" (1.18.27), showing the perspective of an able young company commander who cannot quite come to terms with what has happened to his

than in catching the attention of their public, whose authorities cannot be checked, and whose subject-matter ... is mostly lost in the unreliable streams of mythology" (1.21). But then a literary convention existed among ancient historians that each should pose as in some way superior to his predecessors. Maybe it still does.

Thucydides may well have been the first Western author to address himself to posterity—unlike Herodotus, he is aware of a readership extending beyond his own time. He is also the first to proclaim that history should be *useful;* he wants present and future politicians to learn from what he recorded. Perhaps in reaction to Herodotus, he mentions virtually no informants, no divergent views. His mind stands aloof and distant, telling us nothing of life in the cities, or of social institutions, or women, or any work of art. There are no private motivations or illustrative digressions. "The absence of romance in my history," he writes, "will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest" (1.22.4).*



Syracuse as besieged by Athens in 414–13 B.C., which led to the total defeat of the Athenian army. During the siege there was a spate of counterwalling, the Athenians trying to wall the Syracusans in and the Syracusans building counterwalls.

In recent years, classical historians have reviewed his writing anew and concluded that, far from being a cool and distanced historian, he had a clear agenda, shaping his material so that readers would fall in with his version of events. Among his most formidable commentators is the Yale classicist Donald Kagan, who in a 2009 study argued that Thucydides goes out of his way to deny that Periclean Athens was a democracy—against widespread contemporary opinion—and deliberately stacks the evidence against Cleon, the Athenian general who came to power after Pericles's death, whom he paints as a reckless and lucky madman rather than the shrewd and daring leader that events suggest he was. He claims to know what is in the minds of others (particularly the entire Athenian populace) and commonly omits such important facts as the position of leading figures in significant debates. In his handling of Nicias (c. 470–413 B.C.), the elderly general finally responsible for the disastrous Sicilian campaign, he unconvincingly paints as a hero a man whom the Athenians regarded as a cowardly ditherer.

Thucydides believed in democracy, but only when well managed, as it was when it had Pericles at the helm, a dictator in all but name. He backed the ultimate supremacy of Athens but wanted it to fight a more limited war. Once the city had embarked on its fateful clash with Syracuse, he felt that the ruling group in Athens had made fateful decisions and that Nicias was the wrong leader. He was a passionate man trying to write soberly, torn between what he wanted to believe and what he knew had taken place; yet his respect for the evidence means that one can see where his judgments go astray, by using the very accounts that he himself provides. He cannot stop himself being the accurate reporter, even when events prove him mistaken. It is a strangely conflicted performance, one that R. G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History* (1946) attributes to a bad conscience.

One consequence of Thucydides's convoluted single-mindedness is that there is a temptation to see him as a literary Octavian to Herodotus's Antony, responsible manager to risk-taking adventurer. In fact, the two historians had much in common. Both were outsiders, Herodotus's hometown being a

Greek settlement that had been overrun, and Thucydides being an ex-army officer who had had to come to terms with life outside his beloved Athens. Whereas Herodotus, a born cosmopolitan, never felt that he had adequate room in an occupied city, Thucydides found himself driven into exile by his own people. Each had private means—Herodotus from his merchant father, Thucydides from family-owned gold mines in Thrace. Not only did each spend years in exile; as recorders of the recent past they faced common problems.

How, for instance, did they take in such a multitude of facts and experiences or write them down—with what, on what—lacking the help of aids they could not even name—pens, notepaper, encyclopedias, a universal calendar, almanacs? Finally, how did they garner any kind of reputation for their work?

We can answer at least some of these questions. In the West, as for the world generally, for thousands of years simply writing anything down was far from easy. The Greeks worshipped memory—literally. They had a goddess of remembering, Mnemosyne, said to have been the mother of the (usually) nine muses who inspired epic poetry, love poetry, hymns, dance, comedy, tragedy, music, astronomy—and, pertinently, history. The ordering and retention of knowledge was a vital instrument; thus learning to memorize was a way of strengthening a person's character. The Athenian statesman Themistocles supposedly learned by heart the names of twenty thousand of his fellow citizens; a contemporary of Socrates boasted of having memorized the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* nearly forty thousand lines; and prisoners in Syracuse incarcerated following the Athenian expedition were allegedly rewarded with their freedom if they could sing any passage from a chorus of Euripides (one of the first writers known to have condemned slavery). Several are said to have done so, then made their way back to Athens to thank the playwright for saving their lives.

We can only guess, but Herodotus (more than Thucydides, who did not find note-taking a problem) would have been affected by these traditions, causing him to develop a memory far better than we possess today. Possibly he carried—or had an

accompanying slave carry—rolls of papyrus, clay tablets, brushes, ink, although we do not know. But when he mentions by name more than 940 individuals or provides in precise detail aspects of Egypt's cultural life or the many different groups, styles of dress, and weapons of war that made up Xerxes's army, his powers of recall seem formidable.*

Herodotus settled in Thurii, in modern-day Calabria (southern Italy), Thucydides on his Thracian estate, where he "had great influence" among the leading men of the region (4.105.1), paying soldiers from Sparta and Athens out of his own deep pockets to give him details about the war. Once either man started to draft his work, areas were set aside in which the person dictating (not necessarily the author) would read aloud to a number of scribes—certain manuscripts have repetitions in the text suggesting that the lector stammered. Thucydides wanted his words to be copied as often as possible, to gain the widest readership—although it was scholars of a much later period who decided that it would be the histories of Thucydides and Herodotus they would keep on copying. One should also remember that around 480 B.C. only at most 5 percent of Greeks could read.*

The Greek alphabet had a democratizing element in that, unlike many other scripts, no special scribe was needed to compose or read it. Dramatic works were almost impossible without it (the earliest surviving Greek tragedy, *The Persians,* by Aeschylus, composed in 472 B.C., is also the sole drama of that period based on a historical event). Greek theater flourished only when literacy was firmly established. Writing allowed prose to happen.

Then there were the implements of authorship. The Egyptians moved from prehistory to history by creating a written language and by developing a medium other than stone, brass, copper, or leaves to transcribe upon. Homer's works had been inscribed on serpent intestines; Thucydides wrote on clay fragments of wine jars. The Egyptians realized they could find a new use for the stem of the papyrus plant, a triangular reed that grew almost exclusively around the Nile delta. Its deployment goes back at least as far as the First Dynasty (3150 B.C. to 2890 B.C.), but from

the fifth century B.C. on it served throughout the Mediterranean for building furniture as well as for baskets, boxes, rope, sandals, and boats. Now it became the prime surface for writing down what one wanted to say.

Papyrus originally meant "that which belongs to the house," its varieties and sizes often named in honor of emperors or officials. The Greeks called the plant *biblos,* from Byblos, the Phoenician seaport through which papyrus mainly passed, and which in time led to the English word *book.* Herodotus is said to have given public readings at Olympia, maybe during one of the city's festivals, but he first made a reputation in Athens, giving a series of public readings there for ten talents (the equivalent of 570 pounds of silver), probably in the agora, the gathering place that was the civic center of any Greek polis. Notices of performances were posted in public places, and the readings themselves required skill. They were recited in roofless spaces, so one had to project considerably.

It is recorded that Thucydides decided to write history after listening to Herodotus declaim (in his distinctive Ionic dialect) and when his own time came delighted in performing the speeches of his major characters; Plato's approval of these readings helped Thucydides gain posthumous celebrity, while later writers such as Quintilian and Dionysius all remarked on the dramatic power of his prose. Cicero had little time for his rhetoric, as "these famous speeches contain so many obscure and impenetrable sentences as to be scarcely intelligible, which is a cardinal sin in a public oration," but he still praised him as someone who "surpasses everyone else in dexterity of composition."*

Herodotus the traveler, who cannot resist gilding the lily, interested in everything; Thucydides the didact, who restricts his remit to a case study in war and high politics: the transformation of history tacks sometimes in the direction of one, sometimes the other. "It was once common to contrast Herodotus as a poetic tale-teller with Thucydides as scientific historian," writes the classical scholar Andrew Ford. "The difference between the mind of Herodotus and that of Thucydides is almost the difference between adolescence and

you which words it passed through on every page." See Joshua Foer, *Moonwalking with Einstein: The Art and Science of Remembering Everything* (New York: Penguin, 2011). In our own time, truck drivers struck in traffic play "air chess," while London cabbies-in-waiting must spend up to four years memorizing "The Knowledge," encompassing the locations of all twenty-five thousand streets in their city. Studies of London taxi drivers found that the navigation parts of their brains were larger than normal and contain more gray matter in the region of the hippocampus responsible for complex special representation than the brains of London bus drivers. Brain-scan results from retired drivers suggest that the volume of gray matter decreases when this ability is no longer required.

* The development of script had other advantages, although in the West, at least, in some cases it took centuries for them to show themselves. Dante, pitching it high, says in his time (1265–1321) a thousand forms of Italian existed in Italy; while William Caxton (1422–91) commented on how difficult it was to buy eggs in England, as there were so many different words for the product. Printed script stabilized language—but only to an extent. The Homilies of Aelred had to be rewritten twice in a hundred years, as so few people were literate that the "freezing" effects of written language did not operate. Of all scripts, Chinese changed least. Whether one speaks Cantonese or Mandarin, one has to write them the same even while speaking them differently. Only about 6 percent of the thousands of languages spoken in human history has ever been written down.

* Thucydides's Greek was famously difficult to digest, even in his own time. So it has been down the ages. In one Sherlock Holmes story, Arthur Conan Doyle has an Oxford scholarship paper consist of a half-chapter of Thucydides, and it takes the presiding examiner fully an hour and a half just to proofread the printed sheet. See Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Three Students," *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Geoffrey Newnes, 1905), p. 227. And in Evelyn Waugh's post–World War II novella, *Scott-King's Modern Europe,* Scott-King, the graying classical master at Grantchester School, is trying to interest his charges in the Peloponnesian Wars. "After Latin gerunds they stumbled through half a page of Thucydides. He said: 'These last episodes of the siege have been described as tolling like a great bell,' at which a chorus rose from the back bench—'The bell? Did you say it was the bell, sir?' and books were noisily shut. 'There are another twenty minutes to go. I said the book tolled like a bell.'" Too late, too late. See Evelyn Waugh, *Scott-King's Modern Europe* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1949), pp. 11–12.

CHAPTER 2

THE GLORY THAT WAS ROME

From Polybius to Suetonius

One may think him bold in his relations; as where he [Tacitus] tells us, that a soldier carrying a burden of wood, his hands were so frozen and so stuck to the load that they there remained closed and dead, being severed from his arms. I always in such things bow to the authority of so great witnesses.

—MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE, 1588

Thucydides had no real successor, and would not till the days of Polybius some two centuries later. Why such a gap? Perhaps recording the past seemed an exercise in humiliation: after the disasters of the Peloponnesian War, the Greeks had a sense of catastrophic unfulfilled promise. They had no wish for reminders.

Aristotle would never have called himself a historian and is explicit that, because history is empirically unverifiable, it has no proper place among the most rigorous branches of knowledge. Yet in the *Poetics* he states that writing about the past must adhere to certain aesthetic principles and carefully separates history from poetry:

> The distinction ... is not in the one writing prose and the other verse —you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver

import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars.

It is possible that this downgrading had its effects. A young reporter from *Newsweek* not long ago asked a Columbia University professor, "When did historians stop relating facts and start all this revising of interpretations of the past?" Around the time of Thucydides, he told her. Maybe; yet after Thucydides, while there were those who wrote about the past, the work that has survived is by lightweights. It is estimated that fewer than 20 percent of the major Greek classical writings have come down to us.

The ancient Romans fared no better. The work of Virgil's friend Gaius Asinius Pollio (d. A.D. 4) has disappeared entirely; of Sallust we have just his minor works; while what survives of both Livy and Tacitus is a fraction. The pages bearing the 116 poems of Catullus (84–54 B.C.) were saved (in part) because they had been compressed to make a plug for a wine barrel that was found in Verona during the fourteenth century. *De Architectura,* the one surviving major work on the subject, written by Vitruvius (c. 75–15 B.C.), and the only source we have for certain key battles and sieges of the period, was found on the shelf of a Swiss monastery in 1414. We know about as much of the ancient world as we might gain, say, from a badly bombed record office (this effective if unusual simile comes from the classicist A. R. Burn, writing shortly after the end of the Second World War).

There is one exception to this roster of also-rans: Xenophon (c. 430–c. 354 B.C.).* He wrote several minor works, including *Hellenica,* a history of Greece that begins at the point where Thucydides breaks off, in 411 B.C. (after Thucydides's death a rash of "continuations" and imitations broke out, a little like the Star Wars franchise), but it is disappointingly partisan and unreliable. His one masterpiece is *Anabasis* (the term refers to any expedition from a coastline into the interior, thus the alternative title *The March Upcountry,* or, in some translations, *The Persian Expedition*). Born into the Athenian gentry, Xenophon as a young man took part in the two-year (401–399 B.C.) campaign of

the Persian prince Cyrus the Younger against his brother, Artaxerxes II. *Anabasis* recounts his time as a soldier.

The whole venture failed catastrophically when Cyrus was killed. His ten-thousand-strong army was stranded in enemy territory (modern Turkey and Iraq) and had to fight its way back to the sea. John Burrow, in his chronicle of historical writing, is rhapsodic over the adventure, describing it as "a military man's vindication of his own conduct and that of the force to which he belonged. It is an enthrallingly detailed, first-hand account.... Xenophon is his own hero." The moment when the troops reach the Black Sea coast at Trebizond (in northeast Turkey) is justly famous:

> When the men in front reached the summit and caught sight of the sea there was great shouting. Xenophon and the rearguard heard it and thought there were some more enemies attacking the front, since there were natives of the country they had ravaged following them up behind, and the rearguard had killed some of them and made prisoners of others in an ambush, and had captured about twenty raw ox-hide shields, with the hair on. However, when the shouting got louder and drew nearer, and those who were constantly going forward started running towards the men in front who kept on shouting, and the more there were of them the more shouting there was, it looked then as though this was something of considerable importance. So Xenophon mounted his horse and, taking Lycus and the cavalry with him, rode forward to give support, and, quite soon, they heard soldiers shouting out *Thálatta! Thálatta!* [The sea! The sea!] ... and when they had all got to the top, the soldiers, with tears in their eyes, embraced each other and their generals and captains.

However, fine writing though this is, much of the account is special pleading. Xenophon was writing in response to two similar criticisms: that of his fellow adventurers, who questioned his motives and, after his return home, that of his peers, who charged that he had enlisted as a mercenary rather than for the rightness of the cause. Aristocrats did not fight for money; so Xenophon emphasizes his incorruptibility by distinguishing between hospitality presents—a legitimate part of *xenía*—and *dôra* (bribes). To his principal patron, Seuthes, he writes: "I have

neither received anything from you that was intended for the soldiers, nor have ever asked what was theirs for my private use, nor demanded from you what you had promised me; and I swear to you that even if you had offered to pay what was due to me, I should not have accepted it unless the soldiers also were at the same time to recover what was due to them." One of the great adventure stories of the ancient world was set down as an impassioned attempt at self-justification.*

Legend has it that Rome was settled in 753 B.C., when the infant twins Romulus and Remus were rescued by a she-wolf. Romulus went on to erect the first walls of the so-called Roma Quadrata, or "four-square Rome" (a transliteration of the Greek word for "strength"). Just possibly something like this may have happened, but tales of exposed infants who go on to great deeds are common in ancient mythology. *Lupa* means "she-wolf" but is also slang for "prostitute"; anyway, once they were adults the brothers quarreled, and (according to Livy) Romulus struck Remus dead, went on to found his city (*-ulus* was the Etruscan suffix denoting a founder), became increasingly autocratic, and abruptly exited history during the thirty-seventh year of his reign, swept up by a storm cloud and simply disappearing.

The Romulus and Remus myth has its parallel in the story of the wandering hero Aeneas, son of a mortal father and the goddess Venus, who was said to have founded Rome around 1184 B.C. "In order to fill the long time gap," writes the classical expert Anthony Everitt, "a catalog of totally imaginary kings ... was cooked up to link the two legends.... Rome's historians ... did not regard themselves as professional scholars but ... tended to be unemployed members of the ruling class." They wanted to be true to the essential truths of their history, but when "handicapped by a lack of facts they accepted legends and were not beyond filling gaps with what they felt must, even should, have happened." As the Italian saying has it, *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*—maybe it's not true, it's still a good story.

Roman citizens daily life was still a battle for survival and holidays were often working days, but for the privileged few there were leisure hours that gave plenty of time for writing.

Rome's historians were nearly all high achievers. To list just the eight generally taken to be the leading among them: Polybius (c. 208–c. 116 B.C.) was the son of a Greek politician and became a cavalry general. Sallust (c. 86–35 B.C.) was a tribune, provincial governor, and senator. Julius Caesar (102/100–44 B.C.) claimed descent from one of the oldest families in Rome. Livy (59 B.C.–A.D. 17) was friendly with the Julio-Claudian clan and in later life was as famous as a rock star, becoming so celebrated that one enthusiast traveled all the way from Cadiz to Rome just to see him. Josephus (37–100) was a friend of Vespasian's son Titus, while Tacitus (c. 56–c. 117) was a senator. Plutarch (46–120) became mayor of his hometown and enjoyed the rank of a former consul. Suetonius (69/75–c. 130) was favored both by Trajan, under whom he was director of the imperial archives, and Hadrian, serving as his secretary. None had to sing for their supper.

Polybius is the first on this literary map. In *The Histories,* or, as it is often titled, *The Rise of the Roman Empire,* he charted Rome's ascent over 120 years from 264 B.C., when Romans first crossed the sea, to Sicily, where they came into conflict with the Carthaginians, to the destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C.* However, the period to 241 B.C. is little more than a preamble. His real subject is the half century from the outbreak of the Second Punic War (218–202 B.C.), and one of his principal motives was to educate his fellow Greeks in the new world order, the decline of his homeland, and Rome's rise to power. He knew there were lands beyond the western Mediterranean, but as John Burrow says, "for him Asia had been, as we should say, 'done.' Rome, and Rome's expansion south and east, was where world history was now in the making."

Polybius had reason to know. He was among a thousand Greek gentry taken to Rome after the Battle of Pydna in 168 B.C. as hostages and kept there without trial for sixteen years (167–150 B.C.). Finding a common interest in books, he struck up a

friendship with Publius Scipio, the son of the commander of the Roman forces at Pydna, and unlike his fellow detainees was allowed to stay on in the capital. Still exiled from the country of his birth (as were Thucydides, Xenophon, and, later, the Jewish historian Josephus), he was yet popular in Greece for mediating between his countrymen and their new masters, and when he died statues were erected in his honor in at least six cities. He perished from a fall from his horse at the age of eighty-two. Of his many works, which included a biography of a Greek statesman, a work on military tactics, and a short history of his time serving under Scipio Africanus in the twenty-year war in Spain, all that survive are from *The Histories,* his forty-volume account of the Roman Republic from 264 to 146 B.C. They include the first five books, much of Book VI, and fragments of the remaining thirty-four—but still, in translation, a healthy five hundred pages. The original work must have been four to five times longer than Herodotus's—history had grown. But that so little has survived is not surprising when every copy had to be laboriously made by hand and writing materials were expensive.

As a recorder of the past, Polybius was a stickler for what he conceived of as the rules of his craft. "It is not a historian's business to startle his readers with sensational descriptions," he insisted. "Nor should he try as the tragic poets do, to represent speeches which might have been delivered [Take that, Thucydides!].... It is his task first and foremost to record with fidelity what actually happened." Works of history should be useful and not entertaining; Polybius rebukes previous chroniclers for exaggeration, indecent language, picaresque embellishments, "gossipy chatter," playing to the reader's prejudices (Theopompus, in describing the dissolute court of Macedon), bias (Fabius and Philinus, toward Rome and Carthage, respectively), or limiting the narrative to a single theme; and since world history now had a central subject, the rise of Rome in roughly fifty-three years (220–167 B.C.), any work unrelated to that topic was petty and parochial. Not by accident, Thucydides is mentioned once, Herodotus not at all. "What difference is there between us and the worst kind of scribbler?" Polybius asks.

"Readers should be very attentive to and critical of historians and constantly on their guard."

He does not start with the foundation of Rome, taking its earliest years for granted, and centers on just the last century, and here unwittingly sets himself up as the chief rival of Livy, who came more than fifty years later and wrote about much the same time span. For Polybius, history goes in predictable cycles of power, a view he inherited from the Hellenic theorists, and he argues that there are three types of polity: monarchy (which is not the same as kingship, although closely allied), aristocracy, and democracy. These in time will decay into, respectively, tyranny, oligarchy, and mob rule—a reading that was to inform Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Gibbon, and even the Whig interpreters of history, all of whom believed in historical cycles. The most stable constitution is one that mixes all three in healthy balance, but that balance will always be subject to change.

Polybius shares his cyclical view of history with a number of leading commentators, including the Islamic historian Ibn Khaldūn, the early-twentieth-century German philosopher Oswald Spengler, and several Confucian thinkers. He is preoccupied with what causes events (he is particularly good on weaponry and its influence on military outcomes).* To these he adds the lessons of experience and the influence of fortune (in the form of the Greek goddess Tyche, or "Luck," who governed the destiny of cities), which he groups together under the heading "Pragmatic History." Thus the historian should teach lessons and also honor "the dignity of history."

Luckily for us, this austere vision of his calling does not prevent Polybius from including dramatic episodes; thus when Hannibal's army crosses the Alps we read about avalanches, pack animals falling over precipices, mules and horses stuck in snowdrifts, and the waywardness of elephants. At one point, he describes Hannibal blasting away a wall of solid rock by heating it with fires and then dashing onto it gallons of raw wine. He can be ambivalent toward Rome, and in recording events he gives a full account of his own achievements and the great deeds of his friend and patron, Publius Scipio. His style derives from the

courts of the Greek states and can be ploddingly correct. He may also at points be carping, repetitive, or numbingly sententious, but at his best he is a thrilling narrative historian.

Polybius insists that, while documentary sources have their place, to write the history of recent events one needs the testimony of "those who have played some part in affairs themselves." Telling the truth is all-important, even if it may be tempered by patriotism: "I would admit that authors should show partiality towards their own country, but they should not make statements about it that are false." The conscientious historian should be familiar with cities, districts, rivers, harbors, and geographical features generally (the beginning of a vital tradition in the writing of history); have experience of political life (which includes warfare); and must generally be a seasoned traveler. He himself ventured widely, "through Africa, Spain and Gaul, and voyages on the sea which adjoins these countries on their western side." Invited to join Scipio in North Africa, on his way back to Rome he made a detour through the Alps "to obtain first-hand information and evidence" about Hannibal's crossing seventy years before.

Although in the historian's armory he rates such practical experience above the study of documents, it is clear that he had access to memoirs and records besides archives and inscriptions, through which we know he diligently combed. In the years when he was writing, there were libraries in more than a hundred cities throughout Italy. No one can say for certain when they originated, although archives—collections of records, rather than of written works per se—existed in both Egypt and Babylon before 3000 B.C. and institutions that we would call libraries before 2000 B.C. As Mary Beard notes, such places

> are not simply the storehouses of books. They are the means of organizing knowledge and ... of controlling that knowledge and restricting access to it. They are symbols of intellectual and political power, and the far from innocent focus of conflict and opposition. It is hardly for reasons of security that so many of our great libraries are built on the model of fortresses.

What is taken into libraries and what gets kept there are political even more than literary decisions. By Polybius's time, Rome had a considerable literature; its first public library was created in 39 B.C. Augustus built two more, while controlling their contents—he removed the works of Julius Caesar and Ovid. Later, Caligula banned Virgil and Livy from all public book collections, simply because he didn't like them. By the fourth century Rome had eleven public baths, twenty-eight libraries—and forty-six brothels.

Because literary texts could be copied without penalty (the first copyright law in any country was the British Statute of Anne in 1710), corrupted texts often circulated more readily than originals. All this was important for historians, since writing tends to canonize knowledge. Even allowing that in the ancient world a "book" roughly corresponded to a chapter in a modern volume, for centuries no private citizen had more than a small library.* Dancing through the centuries, we know that Chaucer (1343–1400) owned just forty books and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) thirty-seven, although Ben Jonson (1572–1637) had some two hundred. In Rome, one went to the large public collections or one borrowed. In short, Polybius might have had to cast around, but most of what he wanted to read was available to him.

> Why would the historian who is following faithfully every least detail of the account that was given to him be guilty? Is it his fault if the characters, seduced by passions which he does not share, unfortunately for him, lapse into profoundly immoral actions?

This is not Sallust but Stendhal, in *The Charterhouse of Parma.* The sentiments of the two men are identical, and Sallust could well have written them. Caius Sallustius Crispus—Sallust—is the first known Roman whose works about the past survive: two extended essays on near-contemporary history, *The Conspiracy of Catiline* (about the attempted overthrow of the government by the demagogic ruined aristocrat in 63 B.C.) and *The Jugurthine War* (covering the corrupt late Republic's war against Numidia—roughly modern-day northern Algeria—from 112 to 106 B.C.), and

quarter, ends in 167 B.C., over a hundred years before Livy's birth. The missing volumes would have covered the first Punic War, the troubled times of the Gracchi, the days of Cato and the third Punic War, as well as the wars of Pompey, Caesar, Anthony, and Augustus—major subjects, so a major loss.*

However, what remains confirms how far the writing of history had evolved: It was now a narrative of the past, remote or recent, and increasingly with a focus on the political and military. Unlike Sallust or Cicero, Livy was writing at the climax of Rome's transformation from republic to center of an empire, and he believed implicitly in its own greatness. Unusually for a Roman historian, he was not active in politics. He viewed one-man rule as a necessary evil and was capable of criticizing Augustus ("the one to be revered"), although he withheld publication of the books that dealt with the civil wars and Augustus's rise to power until after the emperor's death, a wise move.

A crucial goal was to contrast the greatness of early Rome with the moral decline he saw about him—not so different from others who chronicled the city's past. Livy drew on a wide range of sources without being particularly concerned about their accuracy, just as he concentrated on key speeches of his main protagonists, often making up the words he gave them (although, unlike Thucydides, he tried to ensure that the orations reflected the character of the speaker). He relied entirely on the work of other historians, confident that he could write his story better and to greater purpose. He composed the definitive history of Rome in a way that no one before him had quite managed while also supplying a repertoire of folklore, from the she-wolf's suckling of Romulus and Remus on to the Rape of the Sabine Women and Horatius at the Bridge, almost as rich a line of legends as Greek mythology or the Bible.

We get nearly all our human-interest stories of Rome's early days from Livy: legendary tales of Roman patriotic heroism and self-sacrifice. Accounts of prodigies and supernatural occurrences appear repeatedly; he takes note of (even as he withholds belief in) weeping statues; downpours of blood, stones, or meat; monstrous births; and a talking cow. Livy is part tabloid

journalist, and an unrepentant one: "So much license we concede to antiquity by mingling human agency with divine to render the foundation stories of cities more venerable."

Exceptional events aside, he was essentially a literary artist applying himself to history, not a formal scholar—the Spanish rhetorician Quintilian (A.D. 35–100) would characterize his prose as exhibiting *lacteal ubertas*—"milky richness"—so for instance in describing the war with Hannibal, while leaning heavily on Polybius, he writes up what took place in just that picturesque way his predecessor hated. Sometimes he puts down events, one feels, just because they are there in the record book, as if he were only an annalist, but it is rarely long before we are in the midst of some action-filled story. Here are Hannibal's men, making their way on the Apennines, facing the elements:

> Heavy rain and a violent wind right in their faces made progress impossible; they could not hold their weapons, and, if they tried to struggle on, the wind spun them round and flung them off their feet. The strength of it made it impossible to breathe, so all they could do was to turn their backs to it, crouching on the ground. Then the sky seemed to burst in a roar of sound, and between the horrific thunderclaps lightning flashed. They were blinded and deafened and benumbed with terror. (12.58)

In his preface Livy says he wants, even more than historical accuracy, to instruct his readers about the conduct and men they should imitate. The symptoms of decay he inveighs against range from foreign luxuries to the lack of respect shown to parents but also take in bedspreads and sideboards and female lute players, while "the cook, who had been to the ancient Romans the least valuable of slaves, and had been priced and treated accordingly, began to be highly valued, and what had been a mere service came to be regarded as an art" (39.6). He makes it clear that his purpose is not only to set down Rome's history:

> Here are the questions to which I should have every reader give his close attention: what life and morals were like; through what men and by which policies, in peace and in war, the empire was established and enlarged. Then let him note how, with the gradual

these years rival the horrors depicted by other historians of earlier savagery among the ancients.

Part of Josephus's motivation was to refute the charge that he was a collaborator and to explain that he had simply made the best of his chances. He portrays himself as a fearless and effective general whose capture by the Romans was generally regarded as a national disaster. But he is also keen to explain his people's laws and customs to the Greek-speaking part of the Roman Empire (*The Jewish War* was first written in Aramaic, his own language, and only later translated into Greek). Josephus says little about Jesus or the early Christians (so little, in fact, that Christian scribes later inserted passages to supply details they thought should be included), but he does provide a valuable supplementary history to the events of the New Testament.

Flavius Josephus, originally the Jewish rebel leader Yosef ben Matityahu, kneeling before the Emperor Vespasian, who is about to grant him his freedom. Had he not made one of history's luckiest guesses, providing the future Roman emperor a patina of legitimacy, he would have been shipped off to Nero, and almost certain death.

When in the summer of 2013 I visited Jerusalem for the first time, the writings of Josephus were everywhere—on museum captions and stone signs, in local handouts and in all the history books. I toured the fortress of Masada, site of another of the

governor of Britain (the earliest reference to London by name is by Tacitus), and the *Germania,* a treatise of some thirty pages on the Germanic peoples that catered to the tastes of educated Romans, who at the time were keenly interested in the independent tribes of Germany and their army's campaigns against them. For Tacitus the books were good first subjects on which to hone his writing skills. Agricola himself never comes entirely to life, there is little anecdotal material, and the military campaigns are roughly drawn—Tacitus, who probably never visited Germany, has often been described as an unmilitary historian. But the incisive judgment that distinguishes his later work is there already; after outlining Agricola's measures to promote the Romanization of Britain, Tacitus comments: "Our style of dress was admired and the toga became fashionable. Little by little they lapsed into those allurements to vice, the public lounge, the bath, the eloquent banquet. In their ignorance they called it culture, when it was part of their enslavement." With his father-in-law in mind he gives us this epigram: "Even under bad rulers there can be great men." And the words put into the mouth of a British chieftain about his Roman occupiers famously read: "They rob, kill and plunder all under the deceiving name of Roman Rule. They make a desert and call it peace."

Tacitus went on to write much more polished works: a treatise on rhetoric, *Dialogus de Oratoribus; The Histories,* from the fall of Nero in A.D. 68 and the accession of Tiberius through the "Year of the Four Emperors" (A.D. 68–69: Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian), ending with the death of Domitian in A.D. 96; and, more than a decade later, a history that has been known since the sixteenth century as *The Annals,* from the death of Augustus to Claudius, breaking off mid-sentence in A.D. 66. Overall, more than half *The Annals* has been lost, including the middle section that deals with the mad emperor Caligula.

As with Livy, Tacitus is keen to provide moral lessons:

> It is no part of my purpose to set forth every motion that was made in the Senate, but only such as were either honorable or especially disgraceful in their character. For I deem it to be the chief function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available

431 **"cutting off your fingernails":** *Speaking for Themselves: The Personal Letters of Winston and Clementine Churchill,* ed. Mary Soames (New York: Doubleday, 1998), p. 433.

432 **"as he might one day":** Churchill Papers, CHAR 1/398B/107; see also Allen Packwood, "Churchill and Napoleon," private paper, September 2011.

432 **"the greatest man of action":** Churchill, *Second World War,* vol. 3, *The Age of Revolution,* Book 9.

433 **"It's one more":** Andrew Roberts, *The Holy Fox: A Life of Lord Halifax* (London: Weidenfeld, 1991), pp. 204–6.

433 **"Of course I realize":** *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters,* vol. 4, *The Downing Street Years, 1934–1940,* ed. Robert Self (London: Ashgate, 2005), p. 448.

433 **"For Churchill, writing history":** Roberts, *Churchill,* p. 373.

433 **"Whatever Churchill said":** Johnson, *Churchill Factor,* p. 66.

434 **"How difficult it will be":** John Colville, *The Fringes of Power* (London: Hodder, 1985), p. 553.

434 **"What for shorthand":** Reynolds, *In Command of History,* p. 75 and ff.

434 **"I do not describe it":** Churchill, *Second World War,* vol. 1, p. iv.

434 **"I'm not writing a book":** A. H. Booth, *The True Story of Winston Churchill* (Chicago, 1958), pp. 135–36.

434 **"Did you cook the whole banquet":** Denis Kelly, TS memoirs (1985), ch. 3, p. 3; see also Reynolds, *In Command of History,* pp. 502, 437.

435 **"was like watching":** Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 2005) p. 822.

435 **"Churchill the historian":** A.J.P. Taylor, *Churchill: Four Faces and the Man* (London: Allen Lane, 1969), p. 149.

435 **"It is said that journalism":** Roberts, *Churchill,* p. 357.

435 **"I have followed":** Churchill, *Second World War,* vol. 1, p. iii.

435 **key documents were frequently cut out:** Reynolds, *In Command of History,* pp. 78, 173.

436 **the word *memoirs* was off-putting:** Reynolds, *In Command of History,* p. 81.

436 **"One wonders whether":** Lord Moran, *Winston Churchill: The Struggle for Survival, 1940–1965* (London: Constable, 1966), pp. 830–31.

436 **"immensely":** See, for instance, Max Hastings, "Big Man to Uncle Joe," *London Review of Books,* 22 November 2018, p. 35.

436 **"The longer you can look back":** Roberts, *Churchill,* p. 688.

437 **he received the news:** Anthony Montague Browne, *Long Sunset* (London: Podkin Press, 2009), p. 133.

437 **Churchill's deepest objective:** Reynolds, *In Command of History,* pp. 507, 440–42, 467.

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