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0521780462 - Reading History in Early Modern England

D. R. Woolf

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This book focuses on the “after-life” of historical texts in the period between the arrival of printing in England and the early eighteenth century.

Whereas previous studies of historical writing during this period have focused on their authors and on their style or methodology, this work examines the history book from a number of other perspectives. The intention is to situate the study of history books within the current literature on the history of the book and the history of print culture.

After discussing the process whereby the inheritance of the medieval chronicle was broken down into a variety of different historical genres during the sixteenth century, the author turns to the questions of how and why history books were read, who owned them, the borrowing and lending of them, their production and printing, and methods for marketing and distributing them.

D. R. WOOLF is Professor of History and Dean of Humanities, McMaster University, Ontario. He is the author of *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* (1990), and coeditor of two volumes, *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England* (1993) and *Rhetorics of Life-Writing in Early Modern Europe* (1995).

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PREFACE

One of the central themes of this study is that historians do not create books on their own but within a social context. In the case of the present book, that social context includes a great number of friends and colleagues who have generously volunteered their thoughts and their time, reading draft chapters, offering references, or providing suggestions. I cannot possibly acknowledge every such debt here, but must mention, among early modern historians and literary scholars in North America and in Great Britain, Robert Tittler, Fritz Levy, David Dean, Sara Mendelson, John Craig, Paul Christianson, Ian Dyck, W. J. Sheils, Zachary Schiffman, Penny Gouk, Melinda Zook, Sears McGee, Gerald Aylmer, Vivienne Larminie, Tom Mayer, Annabel Patterson, Brian Levack, Fiona Black, Lois G. Schwoerer, Ian Maxted, Derek Hirst, Kevin Sharpe (whose own recent book, *Reading Revolutions*, regrettably appeared while this work was at the page proof stage), Gordon Schochet, David Harris Sacks, and John Salmon. Among scholars of the history of the book, some working in libraries or in literature departments, Elisabeth Leedham-Green was generous with her time during a visit to Cambridge in 1992, and R. J. Fehrenbach kindly answered my queries concerning the Private Libraries in Renaissance England project, providing diskettes of information that only space constraints have prevented me from having exploited more fully.

Although I have recently moved to McMaster University (the institution of the late R. M. Wiles, whose study of serialization features prominently in chapter 6), nearly all of the book was researched and written during a dozen years at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I would like to thank my former Dalhousie colleagues in history and other departments, in particular Jack Crowley, Cynthia Neville, Norman Pereira, Jane Parpart, Bertrum MacDonald, Trevor Ross, and Christina Luckyj for their many suggestions and for the opportunity to present some of the materials herein in a variety of forms. I thank also Tina Jones and Mary Wyman-Leblanc for many years of superb secretarial support in History, and Dean Peter Ricketts and his staff in the Faculty of Graduate Studies, where I passed my last two years at Dalhousie most congenially.

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Preface

Chapters 1 and 2 were aired, in earlier forms, at the Sixteenth-Century Studies conference in 1986 and the North American Conference of British Studies in 1993. Portions of chapters 5 and 6 were presented as a lecture at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin in 1994. Material particularly pertaining to the reading habits of women was presented at the 1995 meeting of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing. I am grateful to the audiences and commentators at these events for their insights.

Another theme of the book is the economic constraints on the production of historical knowledge. While I have had no patron like the late Elizabethan historians, nor the gentry income and leisure to study and compose without employment, neither have I been compelled to issue this work serially, or by subscription, in contrast to many of the authors mentioned herein. In a work such as this, that involves travel to a good many archives and libraries, travel support is essential, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge several successive small grants from Dalhousie's Faculty of Graduate Studies Research Development Fund, and two larger research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (1990–93 and 1993–96), which considerably defrayed the cost of travel to and within Britain and the United States; the first of these SSHRCC grants also included a coveted research time stipend that enabled me to spend the two winter terms of 1991 and 1992 free of undergraduate teaching duties; the second included a substantial budget for research assistance that made possible the work represented in appendix B. Short-term fellowships from the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Harry Ransom Center (the latter sojourn sponsored by the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies) enabled me to spend several weeks at each of those libraries, and I thank the staffs of both for their assistance. The Board of Governors of Dalhousie University approved a sabbatical leave in 1993–94 enabling me to take up the Folger and Ransom fellowships and make two further trips to England, during which I several times enjoyed the hospitality of Zena Oster and the late Victor Oster. The Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton provided me with a membership in its School of Historical Studies in 1996–97, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge the assistance of its faculty (in particular Peter Paret and Irving Lavin) and staff (especially Marian Zelazny, Linda Stewart, Elliot Shore and Marsha Tucker) in making that such a wonderful experience, during which the book achieved close to its final form. My colleagues at the Institute that year provided many more good ideas than I have been able to pursue, in particular Donald R. Kelley, Tom Gieryn, Diane Vaughan, Martina Kessel, Harry Liebersohn, Richard Sharpe, Fernando Cervantes, and Deborah Klimburg-Salter.

In the making of a book that in large measure concerns libraries of the

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past, those of the present have played a significant role. The staffs of the several libraries and record offices whose holdings form the bedrock of this study assisted in a variety of ways, both in answering queries promptly, and in assisting me while I was finding my way around their resources. I wish to acknowledge the kind permission of His Grace the Duke of Beaufort to quote from the Berkeley papers in his possession, and similarly the permission of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to quote a number of their manuscripts on deposit at the Northumberland Record Office. Above all in this category, I pay tribute to the staff of the Killam Memorial Library at Dalhousie (in particular Karen Smith, Oriel MacLennan, Gwyn Pace, Phyllis Ross and Holly Melanson) whose labours on behalf of scholarship and teaching, in the face of interminable cutbacks, have been herculean. Carl Spadoni and the staff of the Mills Memorial Library at McMaster have been equally generous to a newcomer, not least in assisting me with the reproduction of illustrations at short notice.

Although the last two chapters are replete with war stories of authors' conflicts and negotiations with their publishers, my experience with Cambridge University Press has been a very happy one. I thank the series editors, John Morrill, Anthony Fletcher and John Guy, for their careful reading of the manuscript and their suggestions, and William Davies, Hilary Hammond, and Michelle Williams for shepherding the work through the press. Much of chapter 1 appeared, in an earlier version, as "Genre into Artifact: the Decline of the English Chronicle in the Sixteenth Century," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (1988), 321–54, and the opening section of chapter 2 contains matter that appeared in "Speech, Text, and Time: The Sense of Hearing and the Sense of the Past in Renaissance England," *Albion*, 18 (1986), 159–93. I am grateful to the editors of both journals for permission to reprint this material in revised form.

I had the pleasure at Dalhousie of a great number of extremely perceptive students. In particular I would like to acknowledge my former undergraduate student David Adams, and past and present graduate students Aki Beam, Lorraine Gallant, Ruth McClelland-Nugent, Krista Kesselring (who assisted in the subscription list analysis in chapter 6), Greg Bak (who graciously assisted me in the identification of many of the works listed in appendix B) and Kathryn Brammall. Several of these students participated in my 1994 graduate seminar on print culture in England, during which many of my own ideas were put to the test. My debt to Susan Hunter and Paula MacKinnon, the two graduate library science students who were full collaborators in the study summarized in appendix B, is more fully acknowledged there.

During the long period of research and writing, I should also like to thank

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my parents for their continued interest in matters historiographical, and for their many years of personal support. The book is dedicated to my three children, Sarah, Sam and David, none of whom was born when I began the project, but all of whom are now quite happily reading books of their own.

ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTE ON THE TEXT

<i>Alum. Cant.</i>	<i>Alumni Cantabrigienses: a biographical list of all known students, graduates and holders of office at the University of Cambridge, from the earliest times to 1900, compiled by John Venn and J. A. Venn, 2 parts in 10 vols. (Cambridge, 1922–54)</i>
Borth.	Borthwick Institute, York
BL	British Library
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Camden Soc.	Camden Society
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies
CUL	Cambridge University Library
CWE	<i>Collected Works of Erasmus</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
EETS	Early English Text Society
ESTC	<i>Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue</i>
Folger	Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC
Hist. MSS Comm.	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HRC	Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, Austin, Texas
MLGB	N. R. Ker, <i>Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: a list of surviving books</i> , 2nd edn (1964)
MMBL	N. R. Ker and A. J. Piper, <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i> , 4 vols. (Oxford, 1969–92)
NUC	<i>National Union Catalogue, Pre-1956 Imprints</i>
Pepys, <i>Diary</i>	<i>The Diary of Samuel Pepys</i> , ed. R. Latham and W. Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970–82)
Plomer, i	R. B. McKerrow, H. R. Plomer <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers who were at Work in England Scotland and Ireland from 1475–1640</i>

xvi	<i>Abbreviations and note on the text</i>
Plomer, ii	H. R. Plomer <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers who were at Work in England Scotland and Ireland from 1641–1667</i>
Plomer, iii	H. R. Plomer <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers who were at Work in England Scotland and Ireland from 1668–1725</i>
Plomer, iv	H. R. Plomer <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers who were at Work in England Scotland and Ireland from 1726–1775</i>
PRO	Public Record Office
RO	Record Office
SAL	Society of Antiquaries, London
STC	<i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640</i> , compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave (2nd edn revised and enlarged, begun by W. A. Jackson and F. S. Ferguson and completed by Katharine F. Pantzer, London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91)
Surtees Soc.	Surtees Society
TC	<i>The Term Catalogues</i> , ed. Edward Arber, 3 vols. (1905)
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
Wing	Donald Wing, <i>Short-Title Catalogue . . . 1641–1700</i>

Contractions from manuscript sources have been modernized unless the precise text is needed (for instance to notebook annotations). Spelling is otherwise as in original. Dates are Old Style, but the year is calculated from 1 January. On occasion, where clarity requires it, dates are written 1687/88. Place of publication in bibliographical footnote references is London unless otherwise stated.