

PERSPECTIVES ON MASS COMMUNICATION HISTORY

Wm. David Sloan

302.23'0973
56 34 2
1991

Copyright © 1991, by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of the book may be reproduced in any form, by photostat, microform, retrieval system, or any other means, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers
365 Broadway
Hillsdale, New Jersey 07642

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sloan, W. David (William David), 1947-

Perspectives on mass communication history / Wm. David Sloan.
p. cm. -- (Communication textbook series)

Includes index.

ISBN 0-8058-0835-3 (c). -- ISBN 0-8058-0863-9 (p)

1. Mass media--United States--History. I. Title. II. Series.

P92. U5S56 1991

302.23'0973--dc20

91-14957
CIP

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



1991

LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS
Hillsdale, New Jersey Hove and London

1

Perspectives on Mass Communication History

Two pasts exist side by side. One is the real past, the past as it truly occurred. The other is the past as explained by historians.

Let's compare the two. The real past existed as reality and therefore was comprised of concrete, objective facts, dates, people, events, and other hard details. It existed not only in reality but in a specific time. That is, it took place in definite years, days, and hours. The historian's past, on the other hand, is comprised of efforts to present the real past in a comprehensible form. Although it may draw on real facts from the real past and may bear some resemblance to the real past, it exists in the historian's mind rather than in the objective world and occurs in the historian's present rather than in the real time of the real past. It also is molded by the effort of the historian to organize selected details from the past into a coherent and cohesive structure.

X For most of us, historians serve as mediators between us and the real past. Because most of us acquire most of our knowledge of the past from historians' accounts, how they tell history is of utmost importance. What we know of the real past comes mainly from historians' explanations. It is therefore important to us as students of history to understand the approaches that historians take to telling their accounts of history.

The purpose behind serious historical study should be to provide an account that closely resembles the real past. Historical study is foremost a search for truth about the past. To help assure that a historical account provides a reasonably accurate depiction of the past, the field of historical study has developed certain standard practices. These practices are discussed further in Chapter 2. Despite the standards, however, some historians' accounts of the past provide a better resemblance to the past than other historians' accounts do. One reason for the difference is the differing ability or rigor with which historians employ the practices. Some historians, quite honestly, are better at doing the job than others are.

(Even among historians of equal ability, however, contrasting accounts of the past arise. One of the prime reasons is that historians

write from particular points of view. These points of view are called "perspectives," and historians' explanatory frameworks that result from these perspectives can be referred to as "interpretations."

It is clear enough to most students of history that historians do indeed provide differing interpretations. But why, one may ask, do interpretations and reinterpretations occur? There are a number of reasons that one may give in answer to that question. The most obvious is that historians are human beings; and, like other human beings, each one has his or her own, distinctive interests, attitudes, values, and outlooks. So, just as today there are both Republicans and Democrats among voters, there are historians with differing ideas and views. To expect human beings to divest themselves of their distinctive characteristics upon becoming historians would be to ask the magical. Historians, being human and though perhaps trained in the rigorous methods of historical research, bring to their study of the past their own views. It is natural, then, that they sometimes should provide different interpretations of the same subject matter. Although critics are tempted to claim that interpretations are merely artificial devices that distort the past, most historians earnestly think of an interpretation as the most legitimate way of providing a valid explanation of history.

Beyond the personal reasons for interpretations, however, there are others. One of the most important reasons is that new perspectives arise with new generations. Each generation, although it may be influenced by the views of its parents' time, has its own attitudes and outlooks. Each holds to the views distinctive of its own age, the climate of opinion that holds sway in any generation. Those views influence the historians of that generation to look at the past from a particular perspective. Furthermore, each generation thinks it is more knowledgeable or advanced or sophisticated than the previous generation. That sense of superiority results in historians believing that they can provide a better explanation or interpretation of history than their predecessors did.

Other reasons for reinterpretations include the emergence of new research methods and the appearance of new sources of research material. As an example of the former, one may point to the use of statistical devices such as content analysis in media history. Such methods provide new ways to examine the past. As to the second reason, it is a common occurrence for new information to be unearthed that sheds new insight on an old subject. Newly opened private correspondence, for example, may add new details to an editor's views or motivations and thus suggest a reassessment.

Changing interpretations of media history also have resulted periodically from changes within the history profession. The backgrounds and outlooks of historians have varied during different stages, and certain perspectives have been dominant at different

times. Generally speaking, historians have written from three broad categories of perspectives: ideological ones, professional ones, and cultural ones.¹ Within each category, one may identify distinctive schools of interpretation. These schools will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters, but at this point a brief overview of the most prevalent schools will be useful.²

Ideological Perspectives

A number of schools of interpretation have given preeminence to political and social issues and attitudes in explaining mass communication history. Because of journalists' tendency to take an adversarial view of the relationship between the media and government, most ideological historians have been prone to adopt the conflict approach of the Progressive school. At various times, however, other ideological interpretations have been employed.

— *Nationalist School*—The earliest histories of America's mass media were written by Nationalist historians in the 18th century. Deeply patriotic, these historians displayed a strong pride in the accomplishments of the nation and the progress of its free institutions. They believed that the overarching theme in the history of civilization was the advance in human liberty. Contrasting the corrupt political system of Great Britain with that of their own country, they

¹This discussion of schools does not include the "Whig" interpretation; but since students may occasionally come across that term, a brief discussion of it is in order. The first to recognize the existence of the Whig approach was the British historian Herbert Butterfield in *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: Bell and Sons, 1931). He pointed out that most British historians traditionally had written with an implicit preference for classical liberalism and democracy, favoring Whig politics rather than its Tory opposition. They conceived of history as a natural progression toward such modern concepts. The term "Whig" was first applied to American communication history by James Carey in 1974 in his article "The Problem of Journalism History" (*Journalism History* 1 [1974]: 3-5, 27). He used it, however, not in Butterfield's political terms, but more generally to denote journalism historians' assumption that progress was the underlying principle of history. The Whig interpretation, he concluded, provided the basis for most works on American journalism history. Despite Carey's misconstruction of the term—and even though the only interpretation of American communication that came close to a true Whig interpretation was the Nationalist approach of the early 1800s—a number of communication historians adopted Carey's Whig terminology. Despite the fact that such a reference to the diverse interpretations of communication history clearly is erroneous, some historians still occasionally use it when describing the field.

²The following discussion borrows heavily from the description of historiographical schools contained in James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*, Chap. 2, "Interpretation in History" (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 19-39.

sensed that America, the cradle of liberty, was destined to lead the world to greater and greater freedom. They believed that the American press and its editors were influential and patriotic figures who contributed to the progress of the nation and its ideals of liberty. Influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on natural rights and the people's preeminent role in government, they nevertheless were generally conservative. Typically gentlemen from prominent New England families, they tended to side with established order and with Federalist and Whig politics against the Republican and Jacksonian opposition.

↗ *Romantic School*—The primary characteristic of Romantic historians in the last half of the 18th century was not ideology. Nevertheless, they held views that were virtually identical to those of the Nationalist historians. Believing history to be the story of the unfolding advance of human liberty and the key player to be the United States, Romantic historians also held to the conservative ideology of their Nationalist predecessors. The distinguishing features of Romantic histories were their narrative style and their emphasis on the role of great men. Under the influence of the Romantic movement in the arts, historians such as James Parton wrote with a literary flair about the lives of individuals; and under their pens, history came to be viewed as a branch of literature.

Progressive School—Reacting to the Nationalist and Romantic view of America as a land of liberty for everyone, Progressive historians began in the early 20th century to substitute a concept of ideological conflict. The change in interpretation resulted in part from a change in the history profession. Replacing the gentlemen historians and amateurs were college-trained educators in the emerging departments of journalism at various universities. Because America's public universities opened their doors to everyone, these new professional historians came from various levels of society. Representing various geographic regions, they began to shift some of the emphasis away from journalism in New York and New England to that in other sections of the country. Influenced by the Progressive reform movement and by Progressive historians from outside mass communication, these educators and many quasi-historians from the ranks of working journalists began to view the past as a struggle in which the liberal press was pitted on the side of freedom, liberty, democracy, and equality against the powerful forces of wealth and class. They argued that the history of America could be found in the conflict between the rich and the poor, the aristocratic and the democratic. The press, sometimes manipulated by America's powerful self-interested conservative forces, was a key instrument in their ability to maintain control. Likewise, Progressive historians claimed, the press had been central to the successful efforts of liberals to bring about reform and progress. They believed the primary

purpose of the media was to crusade for liberal social and economic causes—to fight on the side of the masses of common, working people against the entrenched interests in American business and government. The fulfillment of the American ideal required a struggle against those individuals and groups that had blocked the achievement of a fully democratic system. Progressive historians often placed the conflict in economic terms, with the wealthy class attempting to control the media for its own use. The picture they presented was clearly black-versus-white, good (that is, liberalism) against evil (conservatism). Despite its transparent ideological bent, the Progressive school has provided the premise for more works on mass communication history than has any school other than the Developmental, which is discussed later.

Consensus School—The Consensus interpretation originated just prior to World War II as a direct reaction to the Progressive interpretation. Whereas Progressives emphasized conflict as the key ingredient in American history, Consensus historians argued that history was marked not primarily by conflict but instead by broad agreement among Americans on fundamental principles. Although disagreements existed, they took place within a larger framework of agreement on such essentials as a belief in democracy, freedom, and constitutional law. Within the context of communication history, the Consensus interpretation attempted to refute the Progressive view that a natural animosity should exist between a liberal press and established institutions such as government and religion. Consensus historians argued instead that the media served best when they worked with the other institutions in American society in an effort to solve problems and improve conditions. Because journalists have tended toward liberal ideology and because they have held a conflict view of the media and government, the Consensus interpretation has not been employed as widely in mass communication history as in the broader study of American history. Nevertheless, it has lent itself to numerous studies on particular topics, especially those involving periods of great crises such as wartime.

Along with these major ideological schools, a number of others have provided substantial scholarship on particular topics. Among those worthy of mention are Feminist, Black Militant, Neo-Conservative, Marxist, and Business schools. Each has offered its distinctive assessment of various episodes and issues in mass communication history.

Professional Perspectives

Because most historians of mass communication have come out of a background in the media professions, they have tended to bring professional perspectives to their historical work. These perspectives

have ranged over a wide spectrum, including, for example, libertarian views on freedom of the press, liberal views on political and social issues, and critical assessments of media performance. By far, however, most historical studies written from a professional perspective have employed certain central tenets associated with what are considered "proper" professional practices and outlooks. This perspective has accounted for approximately one-half of all works written about mass communication history and is therefore identifiable as a school to itself. It is the Developmental school, its name deriving from the concept that the key feature of mass communication history has been the origin, performance, and development of those "proper" practices.

Developmental School—The Developmental interpretation originated with Frederic Hudson's 1873 work, *Journalism in the United States, From 1690 to 1872*. The interpretation grew out of changes that had taken place in the newspaper industry. In 1833 Benjamin Day founded the *New York Sun*, America's first successful general-interest penny newspaper. It created a revolution in journalism, in attitudes about what the nature of newspapers should be, and in historians' views about communication history. Following Hudson's reasoning, historians began to think that proper journalism was that type associated with the *Sun* and other penny newspapers. They then reasoned that the history of journalism was essentially the story of how journalism had progressed to reach the point of development embodied in the penny press. Since Hudson's time, the Developmental interpretation has provided the underlying assumptions of the majority of studies of American mass media history. Developmental historians' primary concern was how the press became a journalistic instrument. Like other historians, they tended to view the past in terms of the present; but in contrast to historians from other schools who considered the media in relationship to issues and situations outside the mass communication environment, they attempted to explain and evaluate history by its contributions to present professional standards.

Hudson's *Journalism in the United States* was greatly influenced by the practices of the penny press. Hudson had been managing editor of the *New York Herald*, the newspaper that more than any other of the time emphasized news over opinion as the proper function of newspapers and that had been the most successful mass newspaper in American history. Coming from a news-oriented background and assuming that the *Herald's* characteristics were the appropriate ones for newspapers, he tended to explain earlier journalism in terms of how it performed in accordance with the successful practices of the *Herald* and how those practices had developed in the past.

As mass communication began to professionalize in the late

1800s, interest in its history began to grow. As a result, historical studies increased in number. Although differing on a few particulars, they largely echoed Hudson's themes. Most later historians came out of the mass communication professions, and many in the 20th century taught in professionally oriented college programs in journalism, broadcasting, and advertising. They believed the professional standards that had developed over time to be the appropriate and proper ones, and they began to apply even more universally the concept of professional progress in the history of communication.

The Developmental interpretation had a pervasive impact on historical assumptions because most textbooks for college courses in communication history were cast in terms of the professional framework. With textbooks such as Frank Luther Mott's *American Journalism* (1941), the Developmental interpretation became entrenched in historical thinking. Studied by generations of students and future historians, the textbooks tended to reinforce the explanation that the history of American mass communication was the story of how the media evolved in their professional characteristics. Being generally positive about the professions in mass communication, Developmental textbooks also exercised a major importance by providing a favorable view of the American media and reinforcing a pro-media outlook among communication students and professionals.

After World War II, several events contributed to the expansion of the professional concept of the news media as entities that ideally should be autonomous from outside authority and independent of other parts of society. Influenced much by the media's role in such episodes as the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate political scandal, Developmental historians—though retaining the concept of professional progress—sometimes viewed history as a clash between the media and established institutions such as government, religion, the military, big business, and the White racial majority. Thus, whereas Progressive historians, for example, had emphasized the media as a means of working within society to achieve social and political change, Developmental historians tended to emphasize such historical trends as press freedom and media-government relations in which the media confronted other units of society.

Cultural Perspectives

In the early 1900s, a handful of historians began to react to the approaches of the Romantic and Developmental schools that emphasized the role of individuals as key factors in advances in the media. Influenced greatly by the thinking from the University of Chicago's prestigious School of Sociology, these historians argued

that attention should be focused not on individuals but on impersonal social forces. Within the last 20 years, historians operating from such concepts have come to constitute the largest group among communication historians. Their fundamental premise is that the media operated in a close interrelationship with their environment. The forces that acted on the media included such as the geographic environment and political ideology, to which historians devoted a number of studies. Of most interest to historians, however, were three specific factors: sociological forces, economics, and technology. Those three received such an amount of attention that each could constitute a school by itself. Because, however, of their adherence to the basic principle of environment-media interrelationship, historians taking such an approach are considered to comprise one large school, that of Cultural history.

Cultural School—The impetus for the Cultural interpretation may be traced to a work on urban sociology by Robert E. Park of the University of Chicago. In "The Natural History of the Newspaper," published in 1925, Park argued that the evolution of American journalism resulted from its interaction with the surrounding culture. The press, he said, was "the outcome of a historic process in which many individuals participated without foreseeing what the ultimate product of their labors was to be. The newspaper, like the modern city, is not wholly a rational product. No one sought to make it just what it is. In spite of all the efforts of individual men and generations of men to control it and make it something after their own heart, it has continued to grow and change in its own incalculable ways."³ The primary factors in determining the nature of the newspaper, Park stated, were the conditions of the society and the system in which the press operated.

Although some historians in other schools had attempted to explain the media as institutions somewhat separate from society, Cultural historians considered the media as a part of society and therefore influenced by various factors outside the media themselves. Whereas most historians had assumed the media had a major influence on society, Cultural historians were interested in the reverse effect: the impact of society on the media.

This perspective accounted for a major change in historical outlook. Until the 1950s media influence was so widely accepted that historians often based their studies on the concept of influence. With behavioral research studies in the 1950s beginning to suggest that the persuasive power of the mass media was limited, historians largely downplayed the idea of direct persuasive media influence

³Robert Park, "The Natural History of the Newspaper," in Robert Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Robert D. McKenzie, *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), 88.

on society and substituted for it the concept that the media themselves were a product of social influences.

The changed perspective on influence had other effects. One result was a virtual disappearance of the "great man" explanation of communication history. Rarely did Cultural historians frame their studies around the role that an individual had played in affecting the media. More and more studies also shifted their focus from the media giants in the northeast to journalists on the frontier and in other sections of the nation. Although some of the shift in interest was caused by the emergence in the Midwest of the major doctoral programs in journalism education, followed by other programs in the South and West, the frontier studies placed an emphasis on the environmental conditions in which the media operated and their effect on the media.

Symbolic-Meaning School—A notable impetus in encouraging studies from a particular kind of cultural perspective was provided in 1974 by publication of James Carey's article "The Problem of Journalism History" in the inaugural issue of the journal *Journalism History*. Carey limited his definition of "cultural" history to the relationship between the media and human "consciousness" and stated that historians studying journalism should be concerned principally with the "way in which men in the past have grasped reality." The role the press played historically in that process of grasping reality, he said, is the key to journalism history.⁴ Historians who have tried to apply Carey's approach frequently have used the term *symbolic meaning* to describe it.

The strongest arguments for using Carey's approach have been made by his former students at the universities of Iowa and Illinois. Trained in philosophical and sociological approaches to studying mass communication, rather than in historical research, they have tended to rely on theory more than on historical documentation as the basis for their argument. As a result, they have provided little historical evidence to substantiate the media-reality theory. Still, Carey's proposal has exercised considerable influence in encouraging theory-oriented historians to look at the media from that perspective.

The Value of Interpretation

The proper purpose of historical study is to determine the truth about the past. Interpretation, one could argue, actually distorts that purpose because it imposes the historian's view on the past. Even, however, if one grants for the sake of argument the validity of that objection, interpretation still holds considerable value in the study of

⁴James Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," *Journalism History* 1 (1974): 3-5, 27.

history. Its benefits are, indeed, multifaceted.

First, interpretation serves as an organizing principle. The entire past is made up of innumerable items ranging from dates to names to episodes and to anything else one may think of. We could say that the past is simply a massive hodgepodge of details that may or may not have been related to one another. The human mind, however, seeks organization. It looks for relationships. In studying and explaining the past, historians serve this human characteristic by attempting to bring a structure to the details of the past. An interpretive framework is one of the most useful devices they employ. It serves to provide a core concept around which details can be arranged.

Interpretation also is useful as a technique for attempting to explain the fundamental factors that operated during particular historical times. Along with describing the past, the key task of the historian is to explain why the past was as it was. Without such explanation, the telling of history would tend to be a bare recitation of data. Interpretation acts as a primary explanatory principle. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most historians do not simplistically consider their interpretive perspective an artificial device but earnestly think of it as the most legitimate way of providing a valid explanation of history. The reason most historians adhere to a particular interpretation is that they honestly believe it is the most valid way to make sense of the past. Without an interpretive framework, a historian would have little means by which to provide an underlying explanation or an organizational perspective. Interpretation helps the historian to make sense of a vast array of details and complicated relationships.

A final value of interpretation is that it provides a means by which historians can reveal the relevance of the past to their own generation. If we did not see any pertinence that the past holds for us today, most of us probably would have little interest in history's old, distant details. History gains much of its meaning and interest for us when the historian can explain its relevance to today. Since one of the reasons that new interpretations arise is the climate of opinion in the historian's own time, new interpretations help assure a continuing freshness and relevance to history. They make it possible for us to look at history from the perspective of today.⁵

The Problems of Interpretation

Despite the obvious value of interpretation, it nevertheless can give

rise to problems. Generally, the problems arise when a historian gives interpretation preeminence over the factual substance of the past. There are, to be sure, some "historians" who are so confident that their theories and philosophies are correct that they have no need of historical evidence to support them. One must be suspicious anytime a writer makes or implies such a statement. Furthermore, the student should be extremely cautious about accepting an interpretation—or, for that matter, even an explanation—unless the historian provides adequate evidence to justify it.

Even though principles regarding the necessity of evidence have been practiced in historical study for generations, and even though the dangers in the simplistic application of theory and interpretation to history are well known, one still finds occasional historians disregarding the principles and repeating the errors. Their most common misuses of interpretation have been the following:

*Giving interpretation, or theory, preeminence over fact. Interpretation should not be predetermined. Good historians do not set out with a theory and marshal facts to fit it. Interpretation should arise implicitly from discovered facts.

*Ignoring evidence. This error is similar to the previous one. However, whereas the first error is involved primarily in the conceptual approach to history, this second one is involved in the actual practice of researching history. Some historians have been so ardently committed to their particular interpretation that they failed to use evidence adequately. There have been several types of failure. One has been to make broad assumptions from scanty evidence. Another has been the questionable explanation of the meaning of particular evidence. Another has been the use of inadequate types of sources, that is, mainly, secondary rather than primary sources. All of those errors can be found in numerous works written by historians more strongly committed to their perspective than to evidence. In communication, the errors have been especially noticeable among historians writing from the Progressive and symbolic-meaning perspectives. The fact that such errors have occurred so frequently among those historians should alert the student to be especially aware of the possibility of their showing up in any historical work.

*Over-simplifying the past so that actions are explained by single, monolithic causes. This error may be referred to as both reductionism and determinism. Reductionism is the practice of reducing a number of possibly subtle and complex causes to a single cause. Determinism is its handmaiden. It assumes that a force or combination of forces mechanistically determines attitude, human behavior, or any of various types of actions. Most historians are unconvinced of single causes and by deterministic explanations. Determinism, as a form of reductionism, forces historians to be too se-

⁵Contemporary perspective should not be confused with the historical error of present-mindedness. The latter is the tendency of historians to examine the past with the concepts unique to the present and judge it by today's standards rather than on its own terms.

lective, even manipulative, in choosing supporting evidence in a manner that fails to correspond to the great diversity of human reality. Historians are skeptical about the determinist's assumption that the key to human experience lies in a mechanistic force that lies beyond human control. The determinist, they believe, imposes an inevitability on history that never existed.⁶

Discussion

Although serious potential problems exist in the application of interpretation to history, it still occupies an important and valuable place in historical study. We noted previously its value to the historian. It also should be noted that a knowledge of interpretation is of critical value to the student as well. It is essential to gaining a proper understanding of historical work and, thus, ultimately an understanding of history. The following chapters will introduce the student to the most important interpretations that historians have employed to explain the major topics in American communication history. Before embarking on a study of the various interpretations, however, in Chapter 2 we will examine the relationship of interpretation to truth in history.

As you study the various interpretations, ask yourself several questions about them.

1. To what extent does a particular interpretation offer what appears to be a reasonable explanation of a topic?
2. Does the use of interpretation help or hinder the historian's ability to offer a reasonable explanation?
3. Does the historian offer satisfactory evidence to justify the interpretation?
4. What types of evidence could a historian use to make a stronger case?
5. Does a historian seem more interested in arguing for an interpretation or in presenting a truthful account of the past?
6. What appear to you to be the major strengths and weaknesses of each interpretation?
7. To what extent are interpretations based on "present-mindedness," that is, the error of applying present-day values and ideas to the past?
8. Would the telling of history be done better without the use of interpretations?
9. Is it possible for history to be told without the use of interpretation?

⁶For more detailed discussion of this issue, see Startt and Sloan, Chap. 7, "Explanation in History," 141-155.

Readings

- ✓ Carey, James, "The Problem of Journalism History," *Journalism History* 1 (1974): 3-5, 27.
- Eason, David L., "The New Social History of the Newspaper," *Communication Review* 11 (January 1984): 141-151.
- Grob, Gerald N., and George Athan Billias, eds., Ch. 1, "Introduction," pp. 1-17, *Interpretations of American History*, Vol. 1. New York: Free Press, 1967.
- Higham, John, Ch. 1, "The Construction of American History," pp. 9-24, *The Reconstruction of American History*. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1962.
- ✓ Kobre, Sidney, "The Sociological Approach in Research in Newspaper History," *Journalism Quarterly* 22 (1945): 12-22.
- Nevins, Allan, "American Journalism and Its Historical Treatment," *Journalism Quarterly* 36 (1959): 411-422.
- Nevins, Allan, "New Lamps for Old in History," *American Archivist* 17 (January 1954): 4-12.
- Park, Robert E., Ch. 4, "The Natural History of the Newspaper," pp. 80-98, Park, Ernest W. Burgess and Robert D. McKenzie, *The City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925.
- Sloan, Wm. David, "Introduction," pp. 1-9, *American Journalism History: An Annotated Bibliography*. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1989.
- Startt, James D., and Wm. David Sloan, Ch. 2, "Interpretation in History," pp. 19-39, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989.

2

The Study of History: Interpretation or Truth?

Let us begin with a statement of fact: The study of history is one of the most important dimensions of modern thought. It provides the framework for so much else and is the best guarantee available for the integrity of knowledge about the past. Naturally, it can be proven easily that history has been abused at times. Personal and national interests, popular whim and emotionalism, and the fogs of romantic misperception have distorted it. Propagandists and the entertainment industry have exploited it. Sometimes it has been employed for purposes harmful to society. It is worth remembering, however, that the scholarship associated with it is among the best and most vigorous of any field of learning and that it contributes to the well-being of contemporary life.

The purpose motivating that scholarship is varied. Curiosity moves some people to undertake it; the sharpening of identity encourages others. In the case of the former the simple but timeless desire to know about significant past events and personalities or how things of the present came to be provides sufficient reason for serious study. The latter serves as a type of collective memory for understanding self and society, or some group or institution within society. Others embrace the study for the broad background it provides for comprehending the present and engaging the future. Some turn to it seeking knowledge of change; others, of continuity, tradition, and human nature. In the opinion of some people, there is an ethical value in history. They might claim that history fosters a sense of humility, stimulates an awareness of other people and cultures, encourages consideration of humanistic (if not eternal) values, and increases appreciation of certain social responsibilities that concern all humankind. In this essay we shall assume that the study has abundant and worthy purpose and proceed to the central concern of the study itself—the search for historical truth. The search for

truth in its metaphysical or absolute sense is the task of theologians and philosophers. When historians refer to truth in history, they mean the state of a proposition being in accord with the facts upon which it rests. They mean that the expressed proposition is as accurate a representation of an appropriate past reality as it is possible to achieve.¹ It would appear to be a simple task to articulate the truth in this manner, but that which appears easy is, in fact, deceptive and complicated. The end sought can never be achieved in full. In their reconstruction of some part of the past, historians can only approach complete truth. Because it is imperative that this approach be made for the sake of civilization and culture, we shall examine first a sampling of the problems that impair the effort and then basic guidelines that can make it as viable as possible.

Obstacles to Truth in History

Common sense leads us to recognize the vastness and complexity of history. Curiosity about the past, David Hume once said, “excites a regret that the history of remote ages should always be so much involved in obscurity, uncertainty, and contradiction.”² His reflection can apply to the near as well as the distant past, for everything that has happened soon becomes unknowable to some degree. All past events occur in relationship to various personal and impersonal forces. Who can know, much less express, them all in their endless variety? Everyone who inquires into history, moreover, is part of the present and is in some way bound by its social and cultural standards. Complete detachment is impossible and probably would be undesirable at any rate. The record of a past event is never perfect, nor is the vision of the beholder of that record. Indeed, obstacles of many sorts abound to fetter the cause of truth in history. Imperfect records or poorly understood records can impair knowledge of the people and events of the past. The same can be said of personal prejudice and racial, class, national, and occupational biases. For the purpose of discussion we shall consider some obstacles to truth created by poor construction and then some related to faulty generalization.

The burden of proof in history is the responsibility of historians. They must locate and study the evidence, and the quality of the evidence directly relates to the quality of interpretation. “The first test by which any historical work must be judged,” one authority on historical methodology observes, “is how far its interpretation of the

By James D. Startt
Valparaiso University

¹See, for example, Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1979), 118, and Lester D. Stephens, *Probing the Past: A Guide to the Study and Teaching of History* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974), 52.

²David Hume, *The History of England*, 6 vols. (1754-1762; new ed., Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1776), Vol. 1: 25.

past is consistent with all the available evidence."³ One of the basic rules of research is that interpretation must be based on an examination of the full record. Yet, publications continue to appear based on inadequate sources. Despite the many excellent studies by historians in our time, there appears to have been a lowering of standards regarding sources and documentation of sources. Too often media historians have failed to resist this tendency. Sound history, however, rests on an imaginative and comprehensive search for all available evidence pertaining to the inquiry. In most cases, that search should go back to primary sources. Also, since the time of Leopold von Ranke, historians have recognized the rule that all interpretation is supposed to stand on fact. This has not always been the case.

At times some historians have elevated interpretation over fact. A case in point is the work of certain of the revisionist historians who concerned themselves with the origins of the Cold War. In a probing evaluation of their work in 1973, Robert J. Maddox drew attention to the fact that their work contained numerous rudimentary errors. He demonstrated that their work stood on "practices such as splicing together diverse statements to produce fictitious speeches and conversations, altering the meaning of sentences through the use of ellipses, and wrenching phrases out of time sequences and contexts, among other things."⁴ Other historians soon confirmed his findings. Yet the revisionists continued in their work and even found scholarly support for it. It would appear that only interpretation counted, not documentation. Consequently, such history little serves the cause of truth, and it gives bite to the statement of the British historian D. C. Watt when he remarked that "American historiography of the Cold War tells us very little of the Cold War, much of the American intellectual history in the 1960s and 1970s."⁵ History of this sort is only pseudo-history because it contains flawed craftsmanship.

Some fallacies that mar history are less intentional than the preceding case of faulty interpretation. Again consider the records of history. They are of many sorts, but a general rule of research is this: Trace a point to its best source. In many cases this is a primary source, and in some cases a primary source is an original source.⁶

³John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (London: Longman, 1986), 29.

⁴Robert J. Maddox, "The Rise and Fall of Cold War Revisionism," *History* 73 (May 1984): 423. For the complete version of his critique, see his *The New Left and the Origins of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

⁵Quoted in Maddox, "The Rise and Fall of Cold War Revisionism," p. 416.

⁶For a discussion of the distinction between primary, original, and secondary sources see James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, *Historical Methods*

Too often writers use secondary sources for the raw material of their works, and thus rely on information gathered by other people for other purposes.

Too frequently also writers violate another rule of research regarding sources. Historians are supposed to have mastered the art of distinguishing between the types and authoritativeness of sources used. The newspaper as an historical source can serve as an example in this instance. Do historians make adequate allowance for the variation found among newspapers? In many cases they do, but too often they fail to make the proper differentiation. There was, for instance, a great difference in the early 20th-century British press between "popular" and "quality" papers in terms of size, purpose, and readership. Nevertheless, historical accounts involving the British press at that time often fail to make the distinction. There are, of course, also many differences among newspapers published in the United States. They vary not only in terms of type and tone but also in terms of character, which, in the case of an individual paper, might change in the course of time. The *New York Times*, for instance, did not always possess the prestige it enjoys in the 20th century. In her classic study of newspapers as historical sources, Lucy Salmon wrote many years ago: "The historian cannot evade responsibility of at least attempting to understand the personality of the newspaper if he is to make use of it as historical material, for upon the personality of the newspaper as a whole depends its power for good or for evil."⁷ Historians who wish to avoid indiscriminate references to sources that weaken the validity of text will find her advice as relevant today as when those lines were written.

Regarding the authoritativeness of sources, the *New York Times* is again illustrative. It is frequently cited as a newspaper of record and a publication known for its trustworthy news. In many respects, it deserves that reputation. Years ago, however, Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz proved that the *Times*' reporting of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath was full of inaccuracies.⁸ If the *Times*' reports of such a great event were flawed, it stands to reason that those of other papers probably were too. How often must a newspaper as an historical record be questioned? In fact, there are many reasons why newspaper accounts of events might be flawed, and the time factor in making those reports is only the most obvious one. The newspaper is typical of other historical records. Conditions of creation and preserving of record must be considered in any use

in *Mass Communication* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 114-117.

⁷Lucy Maynard Salmon, *The Newspaper and the Historian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), 74.

⁸Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, "A Test of the News," *New Republic* (4 August 1920), 1-42.

of these materials. Historians must, therefore, always examine these records with another rule of research in mind: "When looking at this document, what else can be seen?" Truth demands such attention.

Another rule of research deserves consideration in order to avoid faulty construction of argument. Simply stated, it is that context must inform text, but in practice it receives too little attention. The word *race* can serve as a case in point. It must be understood in the context in which it is used. References to *race* appear frequently in the 19th-century press; and on into the 20th, public figures used the word proudly in speeches. But what did it mean? Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge used it interchangeably with *nation*. In other cases at that time it may have had an anthropological, cultural, or even biological meaning. Distinctions must be made. The same can be said for many other terms (e.g., propaganda, public opinion, etc.) that find their way into the records of history. This need to decipher past terminology reminds us that interpretation of the human past requires the ability to interpret its record. Failure to develop the necessary skills to accomplish that task can impair truth in history.

If the cause of truth can be hindered by the failure to locate, employ, and interpret the record in a proper manner, it can also be hampered by certain tendencies of projecting the present back into the past. These present-minded fallacies can take many forms, some more popular than others. In a sense it can be said that any unexamined popular historical generalization blurs the search for truth about the past. Too often such a popular generalization fails to reflect the true past and becomes an expression of a fixed idea. Consider, for instance, how present definitions are projected back into the past with popular usage of terms such as *imperialism*, *the people*, and *the state*. Such terms have experienced dramatic change over time. David Hackett Fischer provides the following example of how the static idea of a democratic society had influenced popular perceptions of three centuries of American history:

The result is a historiographical equivalent of the Dance of the Seven Veils, featuring the damsel Democracy herself, and a half dozen willing helpers. First, Roger Williams helps her out of a sombre shroud of Puritan black. Then Benjamin Franklin rends a red coat with his lightning rod, and Thomas Jefferson tugs off a covering of Hamiltonian buff and blue, to expose an earthy homespun of Old Hickory brown. The rude garment falls to pieces, revealing a cloak of Confederate gray, which Lincoln removes with magnanimous gestures. Next there is a gilded robe, embroidered with Black Fridays and costly touches of Tweed, which miraculously yields to a checkered cloth of Pop-

ulist red and Progressive lily white, with a free-silver lining. The last veil finally falls away, and beauteous Columbia stands revealed, with a blue eagle tattooed on her belly.⁹

At least that projects the idea through the 1930s. Beyond that we shall have to imagine what garment would suit "damsel Democracy" in World War II and the Cold War, or during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1990s.

G. Kitson Clark labeled a particular type of the fixed idea fallacy "generic statements."¹⁰ He used that term in reference to popular, present generalizations about groups of people that can find their way into history. The groups may be based on race, creed, class, nationality, political preferences, and so on. Thus in history, as in mass communication, many tidy references to "the Germans," "the protestants," "the lower class," and "the media" can be found when in fact the group delineated was far more complex than the image conveyed by the word. The same can be said of many other generic groupings. Think of almost any social, political, or economic grouping. Are proper distinctions made between "conservatives" and "reactionaries," between "liberals" and "radicals," or even between "Fascists" and "Nazis"? Can we refer to the South and Southerners? Or, are there really many Souths and, consequently, many Southerners? Do not terms like *medieval* or *Victorian* lose much of their meaning when measured against the great variety of life they cover? When we read that a nation wanted this or that, what are we reading? Germany wanted an empire in the 1880s, wanted war in 1914, and wanted revenge after the Versailles Settlement of 1919. Who actually wanted these things, and why did they want them? These popular, unexamined generic references lack the necessary precision to be convincing. On the other hand, any generalization about such large entities might be uncertain due to its very nature. Readers, however, can expect two things of historians in these matters: (a) that they themselves have a clear idea of what they mean by collective references, and (b) that their generic descriptions rest on evidence.¹¹ Present generalizations will always exist and penetrate back into the past. It is the job of historians to make them as truthful as possible.

Historians are also expected to recognize national myths for what they are and to explain them accordingly. They are intuitive by nature and come out of a shared or imagined historical experience. Historians and journalists help to perpetuate them. Although

⁹David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1970), 153.

¹⁰G. Kitson Clark, *The Critical Historian* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), Chap. 11.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 160.

they may serve a national purpose (e.g., they explain confusion, inspire a people, and rationalize policies), they also can outdistance truth. The Puritan Myth, the New (American) World Myth, the Manifest Destiny Myth, and others have at times been a powerful force working on national sentiment. They should be presented in that manner and submitted to the same scrutiny that historians are supposed to give to all large ideas. It should be remembered too that national myths can become self-fulfilling prophecies, and at the very least they tend to encourage reductionist thinking. The latter can lead to an unreal conversion of complex into simple issues. It can produce "good vs. bad," "saints vs. sinners," and "heroes vs. villains" thinking. Such emotional reductionism represents a serious impediment to truth in history.

But all reductionism is not of the emotional variety. Some is based on reason. Consider the problems of causation in history. The effort to isolate causes, locate "the cause," or measure causes can distort reality. "Every attempt in historical writing," Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff explain, "to formalize causal description or make a show of exactitude by assigning one 'paramount' cause and several 'contributory' causes ends in self-stultification."¹² This often neglected advice should be a basic rule of historical methodology. What caused the spread of Christianity or the passing of Rome in the West? Did capitalism cause Protestantism, or was the reverse true? What or who caused the brutalization of the freed Black people after the Civil War? Or, in the case of mass communication, why did the patriot press denounce King George III in the years before the American Revolution? Why did the penny press appear when and as it did? Who or what was responsible for yellow journalism or for the performance of network television coverage of recent presidential elections? Problems of causation do not yield simple quantifiable answers. They deal with conditions in time and should be a matter of explanation rather than artificial delineation.

Or, consider the case of determinism and related instances of the use of theory to explain history. Without entering into a lengthy discussion of history and theory, it can be said that historians in general have hesitations about using theory to explain the past and insist that it be used with care. Art, politics, race, religion, industry, and war are some of the variables of the mainstream of human history just as government control, technology, commerce, conviction, and passion are some of the variables of mass communication history. All the variables associated with any past act must be taken into account, and it is a precariously formed generalization that al-

¹²Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, 4th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 189.

lows either a single variable or an outside speculation to determine the nature of an object under investigation. Sometimes, for instance, the economic factor is considered the most important in explaining human institutions. That thesis cannot be supported beyond doubt. Human activity is never free of religious, cultural, and psychological influences. Does the "great-man" theory explain the workings of the 19th-century penny press as is sometimes suggested? Theories both grand and specific are valuable. They contain insights that can help to unlock past mysteries. They must not be allowed, however, to negate the basic rule that history is multidimensional. It occurs in time and space, and it occurs in relation to many human conditions.

As the foregoing examples indicate, there are many obstacles to truth in history. The first step to take in avoiding them is to recognize their existence. There exists, moreover, a canon of criticism to guide historians in their pursuit of the truth about past realities. This large body of criticism varies somewhat according to the subject of an inquiry, but certain of its general features need to be comprehended regardless of the particularities of a given study. We now turn to a discussion of these general features.

The Critical Method

When the renowned Dutch historian Pieter Geyl returned to the lecture hall in 1945, five years after his arrest by the Germans who occupied his country, the first thing he addressed for his students was the value of criticism. He said it was the "first duty of independent scholarship" and claimed that it was a bulwark of Western Civilization.¹³ Accordingly, he reminds us that careful evaluation lies at the core of the study of history. If it is true, as Carl Becker once said, that everyone is his or her own historian, it is also true that people involved in history must be their own critics. The canon of criticism they recognize begins with an appreciation of self in history.

The past may be infinite and immutable, but historians are fallible and live in a changing present. In recapturing a part of the past, they can never be free of the present. Consequently, there is a subjective side to all history. The word *subjectivity*, as Trygve Tholfsen reminds us, "no longer holds the same terror for us that it did for the theorists of scientific history. For them, 'subjectivity' was a demon to be exorcised, in order to produce knowledge of pristine 'objectivity.'"¹⁴ Today historians still value the ideal of objectivity

¹³Pieter Geyl, *Use and Abuse of History* (1955; reprint ed., Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970), 72.

¹⁴Trygve R. Tholfsen, *Historical Thinking: An Introduction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 225.

and desire to discover how things really were, and no one wants history to be shaped by unguarded subjectivity or unrestricted relativity. How do they deal with the subjective factor? They try to see themselves in the longer perspective they apply to the object of their study and to recognize their own presuppositions and values and to place them in a critical framework. Barzun and Graff cite this ability to "see around themselves" or "self-awareness" as one of the qualities historians most need to develop.¹⁵ Construed in this way, "subjectivity" is far removed from "bias." It should be considered as part of historians' judgment, much in the manner that honesty and accuracy are part of that judgment. "An objective judgment," Barzun and Graff observe, "is one made by testing in all ways possible one's subjective impressions, so as to arrive at a knowledge of objects."¹⁶

"Made by testing" is the key idea. It runs all through historical methodology. Historians begin by submitting the materials of the past to testing. No type of evidence is more important to historians than primary materials. They provide not only information but also a feel for that information. They can offer an intimate appreciation of the formation of policy and opinion, of how events occurred, and of how institutions operated. The primary record is vast, and the subject of inquiry determines its type (e.g., written, visual, oral, or physical). The most common source is the written record, which may also be called a document, and the critical method associated with it is also applicable for many other types of records. In this case, historians first determine the exact type of document they are examining. Was it a statement of background information or one of command? Was it a public document like a newspaper or a speech? If it were, it must be understood as a public record and judged accordingly. Many documents like the various journalistic publications have numerous parts. Each must be understood on its own grounds. A given newspaper, for instance, may have had a limited news coverage or editorials that attracted little notice, but it may have had excellent drama reviews or business reports. Once historians establish a document's type, they then submit it to tests of external (when necessary) and internal textual criticism. The former, which applies mainly to original records, establishes authenticity; the latter, credibility. Such testing becomes automatic and is part of the continuous effort to discover the truth about the human past.

A body of secondary literature also exists to aid historians in that effort. It too must be scrutinized. No present historical inquiry should be drawn from the work of other historians, yet old and

¹⁵Barzun and Graff, *Modern Researcher*, 58.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 184.

newer authorities must be studied.¹⁷ Therein current researchers may find chronological data and contextual information. In some cases they may acquire a keen appreciation of ideas and forces active in the past. Some secondary literature contains suggestive descriptions, interpretations, and even theories that could be useful. It can provide a means for testing conclusions reached in a present inquiry. This literature represents a valuable resource for contemporary historians, but it can only be used when weighed against the content of the appropriate primary records. "Every historian," wrote Oscar Handlin, "must . . . be his own reviewer and assimilate into his own fund of knowledge the old works of enduring value as well as the new. That demands the application of rigorous standards of critical evaluation and assessment."¹⁸

The critical process continues when historians proceed to interpret information drawn from historical sources. Interpretation of materials, in this sense, occurs at several levels. First it takes place at the level of finding the meaning of specific objects and then at the broader level of explaining larger and sometimes cumulative objects. Both of these types of objects can be called "facts" of history. A third level of interpretation exists, that of grand conceptualization of all human experience such as Arnold Toynbee, Karl Marx, and others attempted. It can be suggestive, particularly in terms of theoretical explanation, and it should be studied both in its cyclical and progressive versions. But it really represents a type of metahistorical speculation. We shall concentrate on the first two levels, for they represent the realm in which most historians operate.

Consider first the interpretation of a specific object of limited historical presence. Facts of this sort may be an item, an event, a person, or even an idea, but they should not be confused with data, which might be defined as uncontested routine information. Facts do not stand alone; they have images attached to them. Historians interpret them. To state that Ida Tarbell died in 1944 tells us little. It is data. But to discuss her career and work as a muckraker requires interpretation and provides a historical fact. Understanding a historical fact is one of the most difficult tasks historians face. All such facts are, as we have already seen, multidimensional. In an effort to understand them, historians employ a variety of analyses when appropriate (e.g., content analysis, quantitative analysis, psychoanalysis, etc.). They use the tools of chronology, comparison, and corroboration. They design questions to provide answers about the what, how, and why of a fact. Finally, in reaching conclusions about this fact, they ask several master questions about it and of

¹⁷G. R. Elton, *Political History: Principles and Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 74.

¹⁸Handlin, *Truth in History*, 115.

themselves: Do I understand the nature of this fact? Do I understand its vital relations to associated human, cultural, institutional, and physical factors? Do I understand all of the forces that acted upon it? Have I made allowance for the constraints to human thought and action that affected it? What authority do I have for making this statement about it? Some of the facts encountered at this level are larger and more complicated than others, and as a study proceeds so grows the need to deal with ones of yet larger scope.

At this point a "fact" can become an object of immense scope. It might be the American Revolution, or the Cold War, or, in terms of mass communication history, the New Journalism. These facts are cumulative because they include, like the pieces of a puzzle, many facts of lesser scope. How do they fit together? In answering that question, the preceding criteria for evaluating specific facts still apply. But now the relationship between the specific facts and overall perception of the larger puzzle calls for additional judgment. A fact's purpose, nature, meaning, and sometimes matters of its causation deserve attention at this point. Gaps have to be closed, inferences made. That being the case, it is necessary to recall that all historical generalization must derive from evidence and reflect context. Interpretations at this level should convey indications of the spirit of the times of the object studied. Inferences must be reasonable and based on probability, and because of the inferential element in these interpretations, the inferences should be properly loose and qualified. They should not, however, contain questionable or easily refutable conclusions. Beware also of "too-perfect" explanations.¹⁹ They probably are imposed on the materials of history from the outside and are apt to be suspect. At this point, more than at any other in implementing methodology, historians need to take their audiences into their confidence. They need to explain how they resolved particular problems of explanation and how their conclusions reflect representative evidence. They must persuade audiences that knowledge of what real people did in the past is not only knowable but also worth knowing. That calls for careful and reflective interaction between historians and their materials.

The use of critical methodology, however, in gathering, deciphering, and explaining historical material cannot guarantee truth in history. The perils of faulty composition remain. Proper composition requires disciplined attention as much as any other element of history. It has its own critical apparatus. Vocabulary needs to be examined and reexamined. Does the language employed have the controls needed to avoid rhetorical excess and misrepresentation? Does it sharpen the outlines of reality? Ordinary events should not become "amazing," and qualities of greatness should not be at-

tributed to ordinary people, or even to most major historical figures. When the exceptional figure who deserves to be discussed in terms of possible greatness does appear, the discussion should be a balance of reasons why such a claim can be advanced for that individual and of his or her mortal flaws. Believability and accuracy should be the hallmarks of the vocabulary of historical compositions. The exact noun must be found to convey the connotation intended; the exact verb, to describe its movement.

Moreover, because people should expect both clarity and freshness in the history they read, it must be free of jargon, clichés, and slang. There are yet other hallmarks of writing to acknowledge. A logical and natural sense of order should shape the composition and a reasonable tone permeate it. It must have the necessary evidences of documentation (e.g., quotations, footnotes, etc.), and they must be well-crafted. To make matters more difficult, a historical composition is supposed to have style enough to save it from dullness and to invite the contemplation of others. It has often been said that historians are in part artists, and any historical narrative that overcomes the perils of composition while remaining committed to the real past proves the point.

Discussion

Validity can still be found in the old saying that truth is the beginning of wisdom. That idea applies to history, which is committed to finding the truth in the past, and to the idea that present wisdom can benefit from knowledge of it. The objective is not an overarching truth to explain all things, but an aggregate of many truths. About these truths historians will continue to speculate and interpretation will follow interpretation. That obstacles to truth in history should be avoided whenever possible, and critical methodology employed is the least that people can expect of historians. Interpretations of the deeds of men and women in the past that fail in these respects will receive the little attention they deserve. The consideration of the relationship between interpretation and truth raises a number of questions.

1. Which interpretations deserve continued attention?
2. What makes one interpretation better than another?
3. The answer to Question 2 involves the commitment to the search for truthfulness that makes good history reliable and gives it integrity of character. Yet despite the need for truth in history, can it be argued that more than truthfulness is involved in the study of history?
4. On the other hand, does a study of history without truthfulness deserve the name "history"?

¹⁹Ibid., p. 125.

Readings

Barzun, Jacques, and Henry F. Graff, Ch. 8, "Pattern, Bias, and the Great System," pp. 193-216, *The Modern Researcher*, 4th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985.

Boorstin, Daniel J., Ch. 1, "From News Gathering to News Making: A Flood of Pseudo-Events," pp. 7-44, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Atheneum, 1961; repr. 1987.

Clark, G. Kitson, Ch. 2, "The Dangers of History and Their Cure," pp. 4-12, *The Critical Historian*. New York: Basic Books, 1967.

Conkin, Paul K., and Roland N. Stromberg, Ch. 10, "Causation," pp. 174-196, *The Heritage and Challenge of History*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1971.

Davidson, James West, and Mark Hamilton Lytle, Ch. 13, "From Rosie to Lucy: The Mass Media and Images of Women in the 1950s," pp. 364-394, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, 2nd ed. New York: Knopf, 1986.

Elton, G.R., Ch. 4, "Explanation and Cause," pp. 112-155, *Political History: Principles and Practice*. New York: Basic Books, 1970.

Fischer, David Hackett, Ch. 6, "Fallacies and Causation," pp. 187-215, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1970.

Gottschalk, Louis, Ch. 1, "The Evaluation of Historical Writing," pp. 3-25, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method*. New York: Knopf, 1950; repr. 1966.

Gustavson, Carl B., Part 4, "Basic Historical Processes," pp. 97-176, *The Mansion of History*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.

Handlin, Oscar, Ch. 5, "Historical Criticism," pp. 111-144, *Truth in History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1979.

Himmelfarb, Gertrude, Ch. 9, "History and the Idea of Progress," pp. 155-170, *The New History and the Old*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1987.

Isenberg, Michael T., Ch. 8, "History and the Individual," pp. 125-141, *Puzzles of the Past: An Introduction to Thinking About History*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1985.

Nevins, Allan, Ch. 9, "Ideas in History," pp. 261-300, *The Gateway to History*, rev. ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1962.

Robinson, James Oliver, Part 4, Ch. 3, "We Are All Progressives," pp. 295-307, *American Myth, American Reality*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.

Salmon, Lucy Maynard, Ch. 17, "How Far Can the Past Be Reconstructed from the Press?" pp. 468-492, *The Newspaper and the Historian*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1923.

Startt, James D., and Wm. David Sloan, Ch. 6, "Historical Sources and Their Evaluation," pp. 113-140, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989.

Stephens, Lester D., Ch. 4, "Explanation and History," pp. 61-77, *Probing the Past: A Guide to the Study and Teaching of History*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974.

Stone, Gerald, Ch. 1, "What Has Been Written and Why," pp. 13-19, *Examining Newspapers: What Research Reveals About America's Newspapers*. SAGE Comm Text Series, Vol. 20. Newbury Park, CA: 1987.

Taft, William H., Ch. 6, "Merger of the Historian and the Journalist," pp. 67-78, *Newspapers as Tools for Historians*. Columbia, MO: Lucas Brothers, 1970.

Tholfsen, Trygve R., Ch. 9, "The Historical Approach," pp. 241-260, *Historical Thinking: An Introduction*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.

Tosh, John, Ch. 8, "History and Theory," pp. 127-151, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*. London: Longman, 1986.