NEHA NEWS
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NEHA MEDIA AWARDS

At its meeting on 22 April 1988, the Executive Committee approved a proposal to make two annual awards for excellence in media presentations. One award will be given to a movie, television program or series, radio program or series, or other non-print media for a significant contribution to public understanding of the past as it is reconstructed and analyzed by professional historians. This award will be accompanied, if possible, by a session which will include participation by the producer, or another individual involved in the production, of the award-winning production. The second award will be given to a historian for professional work on a movie, television program or series, radio program or series, or other non-print media, which made a significant contribution to public understanding of the past. Both awards will be made at NEHA's annual spring meeting. Decisions about the awards will be made by a committee appointed each year by the President and announced at the spring meeting for the following year's awards.

The committee will give preference to productions released and broadcast or shown in the calendar year immediately preceding the year of the Award, but need not limit consideration to such productions. It will not grant awards to productions released in the calendar year the award is given. The committee will not give awards based on productions which have not been released, broadcast, or shown in the U.S. Priority will be given to historians based in New England and to movies, programs, series, and other non-print media made or produced in New England, though awards will not be limited to such historians or productions. The committee will have authority either to withhold an award for a given year, or, in exceptional cases, to give multiple awards. Those interested in a detailed statement of the awards should contact the Executive Secretary.

The University of Hartford will host the annual fall meeting of NEHA on 22 October. The revised program is included in this issue; preregistration forms have been mailed to the membership. Directions to the conference sites and a representative list of local motels were included in the previous mailing.

Vice President Barbara Solow has arranged the program and Professor Bill Brayfield and Don Rogers of the University of Hartford have been in charge of local arrangements. We are very grateful to Professors Solow, Brayfield, and Rogers for their efforts on our behalf.

There will be, as usual, two morning sessions, with three meetings each. The session on Russian history will be held in memory of Robert Hatch McNeal, the distinguished historian of Bolshevism and modern Russia, who was to have delivered a paper at this session but died in an auto accident in June. Please note that, as previously announced, the morning sessions will be held at the Connecticut Historical Association and at the Hartford College for Women, at the junction of Elizabeth and Asylum Streets in Hartford; registration and luncheon will be held at the Historical Association. For the afternoon plenary session, the Association will join with the University of Hartford in co-sponsoring an address entitled "The Constitution and Your Right to Vote". This address will be the second in an eight-part series held at the University of Hartford; the series is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The plenary session will be held in the Millar Auditorium of the Hartt School of Music, on the campus of the University of Hartford.

The annual ENHA elections and the announcement of the NEHA Book Award will take place during the luncheon meeting. Ballots and biographical materials on nominees will be distributed at preregistration and at the meeting.

Members are strongly urged to attend.
News of the Profession

The Oral History Association will hold its 1989 convention in Galveston, Texas, on 19-20 October. The deadline for proposals is 30 October 1988. Contact Michael J. Gillette, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, 2313 Red River, Austin, TX 78705.

"The Land of Nurnbega: A Multidisciplinary Conference on the Exploration and Settlement of Maine and the Northeast" will be held in Portland, Maine, on 2-3 December 1988. The conference is sponsored by the Maine Humanities Council, with an Exemplary Award from NEH, and will be of interest to historians, art historians, and anthropologists. Contact The Maine Humanities Council, P.O. Box 7202, Portland, ME 04112; (207)-775-5051.

The American Culture Association and the Popular Culture Association will hold their annual joint convention at the Clarion Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri, on 5-9 April 1989.

The Folger Institute Center for the History of British and Political Thought will sponsor a conference in Washington on 2-3 December 1988, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Hobbes, The title is "The Political Thought of Thomas Hobbes" and it is being organized by Gordon J. Schochet of Rutgers University, who should be contacted for further information.

George Washington University and the Folger Institute Center for the History of British and Political Thought will sponsor a symposium entitled "The Glorious Revolution, 1688-1689: Changing Perspectives" in Washington on 13-15 April 1989. The symposium will feature an international panel of speakers, with sessions at both sponsoring institutions and at the British Embassy, and an accompanying exhibition on "The Age of William and Mary". The symposium is being organized by Lois E. Schroeder of George Washington University, who should be contacted for further information.

The annual national meeting of the Renaissance Society of America will be held at Harvard University on 30 March-1 April 1989. The conference will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the New England Renaissance Conference. Contact Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., Department of Art, Williams College, Williamston, MA 01670.
At the Sessions

GENDER AND REFORM

Deborah Van Broeckhoven, "Property in Female Antislavery Petitioning: Ambiguities of Citizenship in the American Public, 1834-1860." Letters of abolitionists in southern New England reveal that petitioning, more than other antislavery activities, caused women more stress. This paper explores the three kinds of ambiguities women experienced when petitioning. First, the actual procedure was new and unfamiliar to most of them. The attorneys have discussions with leaders and the myriad deviations from the published procedure made by grassroots signers indicate that there was no clear consensus on proper methods for circulations and signing such petitions. Second, women found signing petitions difficult because many considered such activity as male, political activity, outside the domestic and moral sphere in which women operated, despite abolitionist claims that women petitioners were merely acting in traditional ways, prayers as subordinate women for help from their literal and metaphoric fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. Third, this kind of mass petitioning by women seemed to indicate a broadening of the franchise strengthened the link between voting and notions of male citizenship but heightened the ambiguity surrounding women's role as citizens. Confusion and the broadening of the franchise strengthened the link between voting and notions of male citizenship but heightened the ambiguity surrounding women's role as citizens. Confusion and the broadening of the franchise strengthened the link between voting and notions of male citizenship but heightened the ambiguity surrounding women's role as citizens.

Call for Papers

Those with proposals for papers or sessions for the spring meeting should contact the Vice President, who is presently working up the program.

Professor Barbara Solow
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Members are again reminded that the spring meeting in Lowell will be a two day meeting.

movement of the 1840s, and why did women offer varying responses to the appeal when it was given? One of the most important reasons for the presence of women in labor reform was to do with the growing prominence of Protestant religion and moral reform ideology in the New England labor movement of the 1840s. However, the moral reform ideology varied from one town to another, and the demands of housewives and morality and at other times stressing individual morality. In the Fall River labor movement, the basic moral unit in the rhetoric of the ten labor meetings were viewed as the moral subordinates of men. Wives of artisans joined, but independent wage earners at the Fall River Lowell, individual morality was stressed in the labor movement and wage earning women joined in large numbers. Female workers such as the women of Lowell talked about the way in which they were joined with male workers in the labor movement, they did so as their moral equals, not as subordinates.

John Brooke, "Comment". The common denominator of these two papers is the close examination of the contexts and circumstances surrounding the signing of petitions—from slavery and in favor of the ten-hour day—through the anti-slavery movement in the 1830s and 1840s. Van Broeckhoven and Murphy are both concerned with the social and ideological cross-pressures which conditioned the notion of citizenship in the public arena. The imperatives of natural right and evangelical religion drew women into the antislavery and labor movements, but the inherited structures of family and hierarchy—reinforcing a male-defined republican tradition of virtue and independence— inhibited this mobilization. Brooke suggests that the petitioning drives of the 1830s and 1840s ought to be seen in a broad context of transformation hinging on the Revolution. 18th-century petitions on public affairs—in Massachusetts at least—were corporat in character, produced in town meetings and signed by the town-clerk or the selectmen. But women who contested elections in the 1780s and 1790s, petitioned their corporat counterpart, and were signed by ordinary individuals acting in voluntary associations, not to promote a particular interest. I suggest that women's petitioning ought to be placed in this Lockean context, that it exposed women to a literal manifestation of the nature of the
Hieronymus Bosch. However, Bosch does not limit his attack upon the recidivist in his painting. He repeatedly assaults The Unconverted Other; The Jew, or any other who would challenge even a smirch of belief. Bosch's favorites are the Saints who overcame the Devil to gain salvation. In his "Temptation of Saint Anthony" in Brussels is a pig-sowd man who wears the owl costume on his head. The owl cannot see in the day, only at night. It is believed, and is a symbol for those who, in the presence of True Light cannot see the Truth. The figure in the "Magi" in Madrid is the emblematic figure standing in the doorway represents the Jewish Anti-Christ and the donkey in the ruined shed represents not the docile animals of the traditional Nativity, but the dorney-headed idol worshiped by the Jews, a calumnious calumny ascribed to the religious romances. He singled out by Bosch for attack. The "Tem- tation of St. Anthony" triptych in Brussels and the "Ship of Fools" in the Louvre both display the Devil lurked in the corners as the symbols of evil. In the "Christ Carrying the Cross" in Ghent, the Brute is juxtaposed to the powerful head of Jesus. He is the native African. The donkey represents all savagery and who is first to Bosch simply the next infidel to threaten the stability of the Christian West.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
Robert Patterson argues that the Whigs and Tories lived in a world where the range of possible actions were defined by the limits of political discourse. The Whigs and Tories were caught in a debates and discussions that were often wild and passionate. The Whigs and Tories were caught in a debates and discussions that were often wild and passionate. The Whigs and Tories were caught in a debates and discussions that were often wild and passionate. The Whigs and Tories were caught in a debates and discussions that were often wild and passionate.

Thomas Paine, "Common Sense", Professor Michael presents examples of insidious anti-Jewish theories offered by popular imagery in the Middle Ages. One of the most popular images to those of us in the Middle Ages is the image of the rich and famous, are the didactic paintings of

rights doctrine espoused by the Garrisonians leading women's rights advocates.

Murphy's paper moves us toward a gendered geography of the Middle Ages. I suggest that the temperature in the Middle Ages was a precondition to the emergence of women's labor activism: the involvement of women in petitions in support of William Law in 1839 was overwhelming in Lowell, moderate in Fall River, and totally absent in Lynn. Similarly, I suggest that the broader political cultures of the Middle Ages played a role in inhibiting or facilitating women's involvement in the ten hour drive. Suggestively, Lynn and Fall River were strongly Democratic in the late 1800s, while Lowell was firmly Whig. Did the male-centered chauvinism of Democratic political culture restrict the social platform upon which women's mobilization was built?

ART AND ITHOLOGY
Robert Michael, "The Image of Jews in the Art of the Middle Ages". Aside from work-of-mouch and the sermon, artistic representation was the most important form of communication in the late Middle Ages. Although there were a few realistic portrayals of Jews during the period, most depictions were based on the predominant Christian theological vision of the Jew, that he was the prodigal of Jesus who regarded Judaism as superseded by Christianity; and that Jews were inferior beings, slaves even devils who must suffer at the hands of Christians.

Christian medieval art clearly reflected this perspective. Some of the subordinate themes were (1) the murder of the infant Jesus in the Gospel stories to exculpate the Romans and to involve all the Jews right up to the present in the rejection, torture, and murder of Jesus Christ. (2) the contempt for the Jews represented by a triumphant Ecclesia and a defeated Synagogue. (3) The Jews associated with the Devil and Talmud with the obscene excesses of the female pig. (4) Other artistic motifs defined Jews as responsible for ritual murder and desecration of the Host.

There were themes repeated during the National-Socialist regime of the 20th century, and Nazi propaganda was found most effective when it built upon or coincided with these motifs.

Thomas Pusey, "Comment", Professor Michael presents examples of insidious anti-Semitic theories offered by popular imagery in the Middle Ages. One of the most popular images to those of us in the Middle Ages is the image of the rich and famous, are the didactic paintings of
the medical community of Spa, a watering and
and a fishing resort located in the Ardennes forest
within the Bishopric-Principality of Liège.

Over the course of the 18th century, the Spadois
hydropathists faced two major theoretical
problems in developing explanations for the cura-
tive power of the local waters. At the dawn of
the 18th century, in the absence of empirical evi-
dence, it was appropriate that the healing effects
of the springs be attributed to the miraculous
beneficence of God. In introducing naturalis-
tic, rationalist explanations, the physicians
did have to be careful not to deny the thera-
murical powers of the springs. Over the course
of the century, however, the balance shifted
severely in favor of greater acceptance of
naturalistic and rationalistic explanation.
Part of this process was the conversion of the
Vernet de Spa, a religious retreat in a
booming recreational site. In the 1770s and 1800s,
Spa attracted hundreds of visiting tourists
yearly, including Joseph II, the brothers
of Frederick the Great and Louis XVI, the abbé
Raynal, and dozens of gouty English nobles.
Some of the guests came not only to bathe in
and drink from the ferruginous springs, but also
to gain the benefits of the climate of the area.
The success of the resort presented a new
problem for the doctors—they had to be careful not
to introduce any scientific explanation for
the powers of the springs that might undercut
the financial success of Spa. Local hydro-
analysis thus became an object lesson in how
the scientists of a supposedly scientific medical theory
could serve the crass financial ambitions of a rising
social profession.

Joanne H. Phillips, "Comment." A major area
of medical historical research in Europe
scholarship is Medieval and Renaissance Euro-
pean medicine. Certain developments central
to the intellectual, scientific, and technical
histories of these medical circles and their
outlines. The diversity of focus is examined wit
an illustration: what Greek and Latin medical
texts were available at different times and
how did the medical men use them? The degree
is the considerable attention currently given
to the social and cultural context of medicine
with emphasis on the relations of practitioner
and patient, the particular regimes of each
setting, the social profile of the entire
medical profession from folk healers to the
university trained elite, and finally the
medicinal ideas. It is in this context that German
vernacular plague treatises of the Renaissance
are examined.

The most important indication of medical bathing
in Antiquity can now be traced to the 5th
century B.C. By the time of the early Empire,
the therapeutic action of bathing in different
natural mineral waters is well recognized and
documented. Because of the many experi-
ments of Pliny the Elder (d. 79 A.D.) on the
Fons Tauronum (HN 31.12), which may well pos-
tibly be the local of 18th century Spa, the
subject of this paper is an interesting one of the
USRH OF HISTORY AT THE END OF
THE 19TH CENTURY
Theodore H. Von Laue (with Mary Johnson
and Douglas Little). The session dealt with
questions of the second half of the 19th century.
(ABH, Newsletter, January 1988): To historians
---or care about the world in which we live
so as to help our students---and the public in
general, is an essentially meaningful face the
past to the foreseeable future? Or do we
practice "What?" history in esoteric little
itches of specialization that have little
bearing on the complex problems facing the
living generations?

The world in which we live represents an
entirely new age. For the first time in human
experience all people worldwide of the
19th century's cultural experience, of
the profound differences of their languages,
religions, and ways of life, are compressed
into inescapable interaction and interdepen-
dence. Do historians realize that this new age
is for new perspectives and new ways of histo-
rical analysis?
We have neither the necessary time nor energy
to carry with us our entire past and at the
same time face the future. But we must find
the essential and to abstract the essentials into useful
generalizations. At the same time they must help to expand our cultural awareness to the
world as a whole. National history has been ol-
iated by the course of events. No statesman
or revolutionary leader, no event in domestic
or foreign affairs, can be understood except in
the worldwide context. And more, if historians
want to make sense of events, they must learn
to think holistically, looking at reality with
the help of all social sciences combined, and
with all their human sensibilities.

Living responsibly in the present age imposes
challenging tasks indeed upon historians.
the histoire des mentalités venture, I will
point out some of the central conceptualproblems
about method and uses that it offered in the revived
intellectual history. This will involve a
brief look at literary criticism and a fuller
elaboration of some of the main themes, especially
those that were the contribution of J.G.A. Pocock
to this effort. Finally, I will attempt a
modest reconstruction of the new intellectual history
and its claim to be an important subtext; thereby I hope to suggest
its meaning and possible impact both within and
beyond the ken of formal historiography.

We are in the midst of a rethinking of "how" the
historicism or a new wave of historicism—take your
pick. The eagerness with which scholars are
labeling themselves as "historical" is really extraordinary. Time was, to be
called a "historicist" was no compliment. That
label suggested the belief that the present
was the key to the past or that this present
was the only possible one given that past.
Narrative history at least was in exercise in
finding that which could be said to have contributed
to the construction of the present, and everythng else was to be ignored or thrown out.
But worst of all, the historicist posi-
tion seemed to lead inevitably to a constant
repetitiveness of the same kind of impli-
cation, to wit: the living, sons and daughters of
their particular age or social setting, had little or no
choice in their lives, swept along as they
were in the overpowering current of history.
As we shall see, historicism in its more
recent usage differs from this approach to the past and in its assessment of the
possibilities of human self-definition in
the face of historical forces.

So pervasive is the new historicism becoming
that one can no longer discern who the
historians are or were. Practitioners in at
least three fields that had been heavily analyti-
cal and ahistorical, literature, art history, and
liberalist criticism, philosophy, and political
textbooks—have now perilously studied
history. Thus, the question of what
innovation in the fictional of the somewhat older social
history, finds itself with a strong
rival in the field. This will be played out
symbolically through a 1936 contest for
President-elect of the AHA between
David Herlihy and J.G.A. Pocock.

I found White noted several years ago that "social
history" with its claims for historical
analysis has temporarily at least, reached a
limit in its incapacity to speak meaningfully
about what might be called "consciousness." He
go on to take note of a new generation of
historiclographical hermeneutics resting in
phenomenology, analytical philosophy, speech-
act theory, deconstruction and discourse
analysis. It is difficult to quarrel with White's claim that the growing
influence of the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer,
Jurgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Jacques
Derrida, and Roland Barthes on historians.
In this attempt at a modest reconstruction of the
national project, the Amalies historian Roger
Chartier claims that difficulties arose because of
methodological reductions and assimilations about the nature of intellectual
activity. Too often, according to Chartier,
social historians using essentially quantita-
tive methods "cannot escape the "social" lives of their subjects to what
they called the "third level" of derivation,
derigarded and controlled by economic arrange-
ments and social structures. On the level of
assumptions, three distinctions or, better
said, "binary oppositions"—the learned and
the popular, the creation and consumption, and
reality and fiction—have been widely and
uncritically accepted. Chartier concludes
that these methods and assumptions have served to
bifurcate the date field artificially to
extreme modern and extreme experience.
To Dominick LaCapra, an important proponent
of the new historicism, perhaps the most
unfortunate consequence of what Chartier
historicism has been the predisposition to
distinguish too sharply between "documents," e.g.,
sources assumed to convey the factual or literal meaning, and the less
reliable "works," which tend to add to or
subtract from empirical reality [the
reality-fiction exclusion identified by
Chartier].

LaCapra tries to make such an approach, if it consistently leads to
the devaluing of "works," essentially excludes
the contemporary, the contingent, the creative,
and the fundamentally historical context.
[Think of the intellectual
historians of the 22nd century attempting to
understand Western perception. In the 20th
century, there is an overlap of the novels of
Pynchon, Murdoch, or Kundera.]

In a similar vein, David M. Ricci, in his
book The Novel as a Work of History, makes the
fact that not only has the quest for a
science of politics failed, the very pursuit
of that goal by means of "descriptive
empiricism" has led to a disciplinary separation
from the intangible issues like ethics, rights,
obligations, and expectations which, taken
all together, are crucial to the life and success of
democratic politics.

With the views of Chartier, LaCapra, and
Ricci in mind, I cannot resist invoking Henry
Bergson, who, in his Creative Evolution (1907)
excerpted what he regarded as the
stultifying scintillations of his age. He insisted that only by
supplementing intellect, the instrument of scienti-
and limiting the life of cognition, to
what we can life be comprehended, can communication
be established "between us and the rest of the
living." This joining of intellect and symp-
pathy, of understanding and empathy, of scien-
tific seriousness and "introduces us into life's own
domain, which is reciprocal interpretation,
endlessly continued creation.

This is the liberal argument, but Bergson
should be considered a forerunner of the new
historicism, it is clear as we see that that
broadly the agenda of the movement, if not at the very top, is the commitment
published a more supple, more protean, more dialogic
encounter with the mental life of the past
than has hitherto been the case, the result of mentalities or by the old intellectual
historical
in Jacob Burckhardt, Perry Miller, or
A.O. Lovejoy.

Perhaps the currently three historical set-
tings or areas of study in which the new
historicism is being applied with particular
energy and fruitful results: the literary
renaissance of Modern times, the modernity
and fin de siecle aesthetics and conscious-
ness. The first and the last of the three
moments are seen by the historici-
texts as neutral spaces between
chronologies; thus they are presumed to "resonate"
with our paradigmless post-modern, post-
modern" philosophy because we are
"living inside a gap in history." This
compels Howard and other historicist literary
critics to reconstruct the Renaissance as
"hermeneutically oppressive" and, as a boundary
or liminal space between two more monolithic
periods where one can see acted out a clash of
myths and ideologies, a playfulness with
signifying that may be simultaneously, and self-consciousness about the tumultuous solidity
of human identity.

In a certain vein, I hear in this echo of
Stephen Greenblatt's landmark study, Renna-
sance Self-Fashioning: More to Shakespeare.
Greenblatt focused of the lives and work of
Wyclif, Erasmus, More, Marlowe, and
Shakespeare. Acknowledging throughout his
deft to Clifford Geertz and numerous others of
an anthropological turn of mind, as well as to
the insights of 20th century perception from Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud to Elkins, Foucault, and Habermas,
Greenblatt's method "anthropological
criticism," "sustains the "social" culture that would investigate both the "social
presence to the world of the literary text and the
presence of the world in the literary text." Different as Greenblatt's subjects are,
each embodies a "profound mobility," whether
tories, geographies, or political
gical, and is affected in some way by
the momentous shift from the "consensus fidelium
embodied in the universal catholic church to
the "anti-body Politique and the
"King," Under Greenblatt's dialectic probing
within a pair of triads: More versus Syn-
dale, reconciled in Wyatt; Spencer versus Mar-
lowe, reconciled in the "conspiration
to the "King.

Thought has been holding annual international
meetings in which, regardless of the particu-
lar issues or theme, the interplay of the text, the
present, and the future of political
historicism is ever a prominent leitmotiv. In 1974
Cambridge University Press began publication of an
historicism, with the general editorship of Rich-
A.J. Schniewind, and Quentin Skinner. We
learn much about the purposes of the new historicism
from the statement of the series offered by its editors: The books in the
series are told
"will discuss the emergence of intel-
lectual traditions and of related
disciplines. The procedures, aims and vocabularies that were
generated will be set in the context of
alternatives available within the contemporary framework of ideas and institutions. Through
discussion of the consequences of such traditions and the modi-
fication by different audiences, it is hoped that a new picture will form of the way in
which ideas are shaped in their
contemporary contexts. By means of these means, it is possible to
artificially conceive
of the history of ideas, the
political, and of literature
may be seen to dissolve.

Much has been made of Shakespeare's Renaissance
Self-Fashioning, heralded the arrival of the
new historicological criticism in Renaissance studying:
Pocock's The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the"House of
Renaissance Republic" (Princeton, 1975), announced the
new historicological political theory and has remained not
its most impressive exemplar. In this work of prodigious learning and virtuous insight, Pocock explores the moment of civil self-consciousness in seventeenth-century Florence, brought on by the attempt to revive the Aristotelian ideal of active citizenship in a Christianized temporar setting which denied the possibility of a secular human fulfillment. Thus, the virtue of the citizen was assumed to be contending with the caprice of fortune and the ubiquity of corruption. Machiavelli did much to ennoble this field of conflictive political languages. What emerged was a republican discourse which incorporated "concepts of balanced governments and human fulfillment and property in shaping civic personality." According to Pocock, this discourse was in turn appropriated by James Harrington in seventeenth-century England and through him became accessible to and embedded in Anglo-American political tradition.

We see at once two important points of inquiry in Pocock's work: the moment itself; and its subsequent appropriation and tradition. We must keep these two foci in mind as we attempt to understand his practice of the new historicism.

Pocock has maintained that, while a political philosopher is and should be an "intensely historical animal," it is possible to ensure that historical understanding does not "take over the enterprise as a whole." Political philosophers, he argues, must be able to engage not only with history in the broadest sense, but also with the education of future political philosophers. As is typical with Pocock, his argument embraces both broad and narrow perspectives. His central point is that political discourse, like any discourse no matter where or when it is spoken or written, must be understood to be part of a larger whole of language and history. This tradition is "compounded of material from many sources and available to many users in such a way that no one of them has unlimited power over all of the others, as is the case in domains of dominant quality to political discourse; the languages of politics belong to all mankind. And since no single political thinker can claim 'completeness' of a language of political discourse, the messages he either receives or transmits, there is an element of perpetual refinement and change; a tradition is never finished. Neverthe less, in the expectation of political discourse, the political speech act requires one to enter this variegated, ever-incomplete tradition, to absorb its forms and assumptions, to operate within it, and to create through it. The political acts are 'necessary and possible,' writes Pocock, only within a context and a tradition.

It is interesting to note that the literacy historians have been least interested in the textual and semantic problems present in his treatment of identity crafting: that activity has meaning only if it is done against a background repertoire of available identities that speak to the person speaking to oneself to. In Pocock's turn of phrase, there 'must be a river before you can swim upstream.' Pocock's river, it is important to note, is like Heraclitus'; it is constantly changing. The encounter with it is always fresh yet ever rich with possibilities. And, virtually any linguistic relation between persons, whether it is speaking as historians or as citizens or as political actors, is a political discourse in nature. This is so for no other reason than encounters of either kind are impossible without immersion in the on-going, public transaction of language, whether that public discourse is the political, the historical, to communicate or act politically.

Since political discourse takes place only in the historical realm, we have no choice but to study it historically. Thus, Pocock characterizes political philosophy as a 'confrontation with a tradition,' a 'dialogue' going on in time, and [it] is historical activity in the sense that it possesses a historical dimension. Yet, he escanys the convention that "Allam Bloom and William Godwin seem to be making that we must read a canon of great thinkers--without taking special care to mediate between our particular context and theirs--because they crafted our tradition or the questions they raised are the perennially important ones. Besides his methodological definition of political philosophy, he offers another rationale for Pocock the question of whether we could slide into banality is both more stark and less open to question; the answer is, if we plan to keep on being human, then it is simply "no human resource which [we] can afford to neglect." In his commitment to make use of the political, the historical, the political philos- ophy to cultivate a more thoughtfully contemporary consciousness, Pocock shares much with Michael Walzer, Sheldon Wolin, Donald Workin, Judith Sklar, and, I presume, most of us as well.

Allow me to conclude with an impressivist reconstruction of the new historicism to suggest an important subtext and what this might portend.

As to the subtext, my own involvement in this mode of historical thinking is the result of reading and talking with others convinced as that the healthy determination is driving the new his- toricism it is to bring humanities sources and, even more so, humanities questions back into the mainstream of historical studies, to restore them to the centers of methodological and data fields of the social sciences. This brings us back to the 'houses in the mansion' issue that I raised at the beginning, and my take on de-historicize texts, to open the past to the question of the present and thereby to expand and enrich the dialogue by means of which we define our social and political possibilities and promote human solidarity across time as well as across dis-
ciples and cultures. Yes, this is clearly a soft-headed agenda. But, as people already committed to the historical enterprise, can we really hope for a more promising outcome from our joint endeavors than this? Can we really afford to do anything less than to nurture it?

NOTES

1. For a valuable review of several important contributions to this developing historiography, see: John E. Tooms, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience", ANR (October 1987), 89ff.


The New England Historical Association is a comprehensive organization for historians of all disciplines and fields. Membership is open to all persons or organizations interested in the study, teaching, or writing of history. It is not restricted to New England or American studies. The Association is affiliated with the American Historical Association.

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