PETER C. HERMAN

A Short History of Early Modern England

British Literature in Context

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藏书章

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Aims and Acknowledgements

A Short History of Early Modern England: British Literature in Context has a very simple purpose: to provide a survey of the backgrounds necessary to study the literature produced in early modern England. While editing two volumes for the Modern Language Association's *Approaches to Teaching* series, I came across numerous complaints that students arrive in our classrooms innocent of the basic facts of the Tudor–Stuart era, a phenomenon backed up by much anecdotal evidence and studies illustrating the generally parlous state of historical knowledge. This book aims to help remedy this problem by providing a clear narrative of the period's political history along with explanations of the age's religious conflicts. *A Short History of Early Modern England: British Literature in Context* aims to answer such basic questions as who ruled when, what was the English Reformation, what exactly are the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism and between the various subdivisions among Protestants, what are the Wars of the Roses, why were the Elizabethans so obsessed with it, what happened between 1640 and 1660, and why does this period go by so many names? While any number of studies and guides place early modern literature in its historical contexts, these books all assume a fair amount of background knowledge on the reader's part.

A Short History of Early Modern England: British Literature in Context aims to provide that knowledge.

I have tried to stick to the facts, balancing narrative with quotations from primary sources. When I depart from convention, such as my decision to eschew the term, "Puritan," I have made my decisions explicit. I also give brief explanations of the controversies among historians and why they are relevant to students of literature. Periodization is always tricky, since history does not proceed in easily definable segments, and I have been guided by what I hope would be most useful to a literature student. Consequently, the book begins with the deposition of Richard II and the consequences following that act (i.e. the Wars of the Roses), both because the events of this period are so important to the Tudor–Stuart era, and because they are dramatized by William Shakespeare in some of his most popular plays. I have chosen the publication of Milton's final poetic works in 1674 as the endpoint, since that is when most classes in early modern literature conclude.

One point, however, deserves to be explained before going further: this book is largely "history from above" rather than "history from below." My reason for this approach is not that I disagree with the latter or consider the history of working or illiterate people less worthy of note than the doings of kings and parliaments. Rather, I base my approach on my sense that wherever one rests on the social ladder, the monarch constituted the center of the political universe. When, for example, the Elizabethan pamphleteer and proto-novelist, Thomas Deloney, challenges the fundamental social organization of England, he does not imagine doing away with the monarchy altogether, but by having the monarch recognize the superiority of working people over the aristocracy. For a relatively brief period, the Interregnum (1649–60), a few tried to imagine England without a monarchy, but ultimately the experiment failed, and it failed even before the Restoration because Cromwell had to fend off numerous attempts to make him king. To write "history from below" without first taking into account the basic facts of "history from above" would, I think, lead to a warped view of the period's literature.

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Three tools have aided the research for this book immeasurably. First, *Early English Books Online* allows students access to nearly every book, pamphlet, proclamation, and newsbook printed in England between 1485 and 1700. Whenever possible, I have gone back to the original sources rather than relying on quotations in contemporary historians. Second, as a cursory glance at my notes will quickly indicate, I have relied heavily on *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, an extraordinary resource whose articles provide up-to-date, deeply scholarly, and yet entirely accessible biographies that are essential reading for anyone seeking to understand British history. The third source came as a surprise: Google Books and Archive.org. As most people know, Google decided some years ago to try to create a universal library by scanning I do not know how many out-of-print volumes from the major research libraries in North America. Consequently, such essential primary source resources such as Sir John Harington's *Nugae Antiquae* (1804), and John Rushworth's *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State* (1689) are now available to everyone with a web connection.

Finally, I have personal debts that I eagerly and gratefully acknowledge. Heidi Brayman Hackel, Anne Lake Prescott, and Johann P. Sommerville answered what must have seemed like a never-ending stream of queries with patience and learning. Peter Platt, Elizabeth Sauer, and Ronald Simon read and commented on each chapter as I finished it. I am also exceedingly grateful to the advice, enthusiasm, and patience provided by Emma Bennett, Isobel Bainton, and Ben Thatcher. Gillian Andrews was the ideal copy-editor. Finally, I gratefully thank the College of Arts and Letters at San Diego State University for a grant that helped pay for the illustrations. If this book has any merit, they deserve the praise. I gladly accept the blame.

Quoting from Early Modern Texts

Every book we read today comes with page numbers, and it seems self-evident that this is how books were organized. If you want to find a particular topic, go to page 32. Or 64. Or 102. But the technology for creating printed books in the early modern period demanded a different organization. Books in this period were printed by a hand press, and a single large sheet of paper would be imprinted on each side with 2, 4, 8 or even more pages of type, depending on the intended size of the book (which roughly correlated with the book's cost). These pages would then be folded in half for a folio, twice for a quarto, four times for an octavo, and so on, and then collected with the other sheets to form a book. To keep track of the correct order of sheets and folds, the print shop identified each fold with a letter of the alphabet, and if the book went beyond the 26th letter, they started over again, using double letters, then triple letters, etc. These are called *signatures*. Because numerical pagination is notoriously unreliable in this period, the convention is to refer to the signature number (the contraction is "sig.") rather than the page number, and to identify the left or right side of the page by adding a "v" for *verso* (the left) or an "r" for *recto* (the right). Consequently, in the notes, readers will find references to such signature numbers as "A2v" or "B4r."

For greater comprehension, I have modernized all quotations, regardless of whether they come from early modern or contemporary editions or books.

Map 0.1 The Countries of England and Wales before 1972.

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England's Rulers
From Richard II to Charles II

Richard II	1377–99
Henry IV	1399–1413
Henry V	1413–22
Henry VI	1422–61 (deposed); 1470–71
Edward IV	1461–1470 (deposed); 1471–83
Richard III	1483–85
Henry VII	1485–1509
Henry VIII	1509–47
Edward VI	1547–1553
Lady Jane Gray	July 10–19, 1553
Mary Tudor	1553–1558
Elizabeth I	1558–1603
James VI/I	1603–25
Charles I	1625–49
Parliament (the Commonwealth)	1649–1654
Oliver Cromwell (Lord Protector)	1654–58
Richard Cromwell (Lord Protector)	1658–59
Charles II	1660–85

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Timeline of Key Events

1377	**Death of Edward III; accession of Richard II**
1381	Peasant's Revolt
1399	Richard resigns the crown to Henry Bolingbroke, who becomes Henry IV
1415	October 25, Battle of Agincourt
1422	Henry VI becomes king after father dies
1440s	Disorder caused by Henry VI's poor rule
1450	Jack Cade Rebellion
1453	Henry VI incapacitated by madness
1455	1st battle of St. Albans, start of War of the Roses
1461	**Henry VI deposed by Edward of York (Edward IV)**
1470	**Edward IV briefly deposed**
1471	**Edward IV re-deposes Henry VI**; 4 May, Battle of Tewkesbury, end of Lancastrian line

1483	**Richard, Duke of Gloucester murders Edward IV's children, crowned on July 6**
1485	**Henry Tudor defeats Richard III on 22 August, the Battle of Bosworth Field, becomes Henry VII and begins the Tudor dynasty**
1509	**Death of Henry VII, accession of Henry VIII**
1530	Fall of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey
1533	Henry VIII divorces Katherine of Aragon, marries Anne Boleyn; Act in Restraint of Appeals passed
1534	Act of Supremacy designating Henry VIII (and all future English monarchs) "Supreme Head" of the Church of England
1535	Execution of Sir Thomas More
1536	Act for dissolution of smaller monasteries; Henry VIII beheads Anne Boleyn, marries Jane Seymour, who dies giving birth to Edward IV; execution of William Tyndale
1536–37	Pilgrimage of Grace
1539	Act of the Six Articles; Act for dissolution of larger monasteries; parishes required to purchase and display "Great Bible"
1540	Henry VIII marries Anna of Cleves, marriage annulled; then marries Catherine Howard; execution of Thomas Cromwell
1542	Catherine Howard beheaded
1543	Henry VIII marries Katherine Parr
1547	**Henry VIII dies, Edward VI crowned**
1549	Kett's Rebellion; first Book of Common Prayer

1552	Execution of Thomas Seymour; John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland becomes Lord Protector; revised Book of Common Prayer
1553	**Edward VI dies, Protestant Lady Jane Grey queen for nine days; Catholic Mary Tudor becomes queen of England;** England shifts from Protestantism to Catholicism
1554	Royal Supremacy repealed; revival of heresy Acts
1555	Protestant "heretics" burned at stake
1558	**Death of Queen Mary, accession of Elizabeth I;** England shifts back to Protestantism
1559	Act of Uniformity, Queen Elizabeth "Supreme Governor" of Church of England
1563	Thirty-Nine Articles (doctrinal formulary for the Elizabethan Settlement)
1562	John Hawkins and Francis Drake start English trade in slaves
1562–98	French wars of Religion
1567–98	Dutch revolt against Spanish rule
1568	Mary, Queen of Scots flees to England
1586	Mary, Queen of Scots executed
1588	Defeat of Spanish Armada
1594–98	Major crop failures, "Crisis of the 1590s"
1598–1603	O'Neill rebellion in Ireland
1601	Essex conspiracy
1603	**Death of Elizabeth I; accession of James VI/I (sixth of that name to rule Scotland; first to rule England)**
1604	Hampton Court Conference

1605	Gunpowder Plot
1606	Bate's Case
1610	Whitehall Speech declaring monarchy the "supremest thing on earth"
1611	King James Bible
1612	Death of Prince Henry, Charles now heir to the throne
1613	Princess Elizabeth marries Frederick, Elector Palatine; Overbury scandal
1614	"Addled" Parliament
1615	Rise of George Villiers, eventually Duke of Buckingham, starts
1618–48	Thirty Years War
1619	Death of James's wife, Anna of Denmark
1620	*Mayflower* sails to New World
1622–23	Charles and Buckingham travel to Spain
1624	England declares war on Spain
1625	**Death of James VI/I; Charles I ascends to throne**
1626–29	War with France, failed naval expeditions
1627	Five Knights' Case
1628	Petition of Right; Buckingham assassinated August 23
1629	Charles dissolves third Parliament, 12 years of "personal rule"; peace with France (1629), peace with Spain (1630)
1633	William Laud made Archbishop of Canterbury
1634	Ship Money imposed

1637	Ship Money Case
1638	Attempt to impose Laudian Protestantism in Scotland; National Covenant in Scotland
1638–39	First Bishop's War
1640	Second Bishop's War; Short Parliament
1640	Long Parliament convenes April 13 (will meet until 1653); Root and Branch petition to end episcopacy; imprisonment of Laud; end of licensing; George Thomason starts collecting books, pamphlets, and newsbooks
1641	Grand Remonstrance; rebellion in Ireland, Protestant settlers slaughtered; impeachment and execution of Strafford
1642	Attempt to arrest Pym; March, Militia Ordinance; August 22, Charles raises standard at Nottingham, Civil Wars begin (Battle of Edgehill); closing of the public theatres
1643	Parliament aligns with Scots (Solemn League and Covenant); Charles I allies with Irish
1644	Royalist defeat at Marston Moor means Charles I lost; Self-Denying Ordinance proposed
1645	Laud executed; New Model Army formed; Parliamentary victory at Naseby
1646	Charles surrenders to Scots; end of First Civil War
1647	Charles delivered to Parliament by Scots; Putney Debates
1648	No Further Addresses to King; Second Civil War; Pride's Purge (remainder of Long Parliament now "The Rump")

1649	Charles I executed; Cromwell goes to Ireland, massacres in Drogheda and Wexford; Digger colonies established
1650	Cromwell returns from Ireland; defeats Scots at Battle of Dunbar; Blasphemy Act
1651	Charles II goes into exile
1652	1st Anglo-Dutch war
1653	Cromwell forcibly dissolves Rump; April–December, Nominated Assembly or "Barbebone's Parliament"; Instrument of Government installs Cromwell as Lord Protector
1655	Penruddick's Rising; rule of Major-Generals; readmission of the Jews
1657	Cromwell offered crown and refuses
1658	Cromwell dies, succeeded by son, Richard
1659	Political chaos
1660	April, declaration of Breda and Restoration of Charles II; theaters re-open; Royal Society established
1661–65	"Clarendon Code" legislation against nonconformists passed
1665	2nd Anglo-Dutch War begins; Great Plague in London
1666	Great Fire of London
1667	2nd Anglo-Dutch War concluded

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