At intervals, historians get to fretting about whether their work is worthwhile or whether it should take a new direction. Each new generation of professionals is like each new generation of young people generally, determined to save the world from the awful mess made by their elders. For several years now, we have been agonizing in one of these intermittent crises of conscience, and I propose now to add my own two cents to the deep thinking.

This article may seem at first merely an ego trip because I use a personal experience as a springboard into larger issues. Admittedly, I pay off an overdue score, but only as an example of widespread fault. If thinking is not based ultimately in personal experience, what good is it? A hut on solid ground is better shelter than a castle in the air.

Let us first dispose of some fantasies. The current situation is marked by frenzied appeals of young writers heavily influenced by the kind of literary critics who pay more attention to theories—especially their own theories—than to events. We have had raids into history from professors of English determined to show us the enlightenment of deconstruction, reconstruction, neoconstruction, etc., ad nauseam.¹ Their theories genuflect to French psychoanalytical philosophers like Michel Foucault. (There is no fashion like one from Paris.) It was bad enough with the Viennese variety of myth handlers. Myth, instead of empirically based history, assails us now from several directions. I shall return to it later in this piece.

Notably, none of the neo-gurus has ever done the drudgery of sifting data from significance, organizing them into credible patterns, and portraying the findings in ways that make sense. Ordinarily they would arouse the same interest as phrenologists, but they have captured the attention of sensation-hungry media that ought to know better (and perhaps do) and their influence now greatly outstrips their merit. They are wrong and misleading in a great many ways.²

The gurus understand the techniques of salesmanship. They get heads nodding by assertions that history, as now written, is sick. Many in the profession have been uneasily aware of problems with its health, but the gurus’ diagnoses and remedies go off in an entirely wrong direction. They blame objectivity (like blaming women for motherhood), yet one of the genuine triumphs of professional historians has been the painstaking development of methods for making statements about factual events confirmable. In that regard, we no longer rely on authority; we demand evidence. The gurus insist that this is all smoke and mirrors, that no one can know what really happened, and therefore their own dreamed-up versions of what did not happen are as legitimate as those of the scholar who searches for the evidence. Contemptible on its face, this nonsense is a sort of voodoo.
Curiously, the gurus compound their offense by accepting a false basic premise that "mainstream" history pretends to be objective in another sense—that is, free of historians' bias. This, too, is nonsense, but it requires exposure of facts and practices.

For instance, many Pennsylvanians will be aware that the Quakers of Bucks County have insisted consistently that their ancestors cooperated with the chicanery of Thomas Penn to cheat Delaware Indians in the so-called Walking Purchase of lands along the Delaware River; in an odd reversal of the usual situation, national historians insisted in contradiction that the Walking Purchase had been fair and honest. I proved the local people right with documentation beyond reasonable dispute, and thereby gained the hostility of some of the national omniscients.\(^3\)

Historian John Shy has produced a hatchet review of my book *Empire of Fortune* with the comment, "We do not have to accept Jenning's questionable opinion."\(^4\) Shy is good at semantics: all my evidence has become merely a "questionable opinion" though he presents not a scintilla of evidence for his contrary opinion. Given such trickery, how can one accept Shy's sanctimonious avowal that "few of us condone the attitudes and behavior that outrage Jennings?" His condoning is right there on the same page. Oddly, though Shy presents himself as a traditional historian, his dismissal of evidence in this instance puts him squarely among the gurus.

Shy's review implied that I had depended heavily "on a limited range of secondary work once outside of Pennsylvania and the Ohio Valley." He had before him my bibliography of "Materials Cited in the Notes" which included manuscripts consulted at the Huntington Library, the Public Record Office of Great Britain, the British Library, the Newberry Library, the Moravian Archives, the John Carter Brown Library, the Virginia State Library, as well as what he slurs as "most" of my sources in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Besides what I had found in that great repository, my sources included manuscripts from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Haverford and Swarthmore Colleges, the American Philosophical Society, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the City's Archives Division, and the Archives of the University of Pennsylvania.\(^5\) Repeat, sources from all these institutions were cited in the notes. In addition to these source manuscripts, twenty-one pages of printed materials were cited, eight of which originated before 1800. All this was Shy's "limited range of secondary work."\(^6\)

In responding thus, rather belatedly because I had hoped the trickery would expose itself (and because my wife's terminal illness distracted attention), I have more in mind than personalities. As noted above, a great deal is wrong with the practices and results of American history today, and Shy's techniques of distortion demonstrate part of what is wrong. He did not misrepresent casually; his review breathes of a purpose irrelevant to objectivity. Slurs were needed to mask the nature of his attack which started with this sentence: "'Slanted trash' are the words Francis Jennings chooses to dismiss a useful monograph with which he disagrees, and his choice of words in this case fairly represents the tone of his new book." The "useful" monograph in question has demonstrated by its descent into virtual oblivion.
that it was just what I called it, but it was indeed useful for Shy because it was slanted his way. The main purpose of Shy—a graduate of West Point—was to suppress my exposé of the evils of militarism and racism. He wanted me to depend on works that omitted attention to the ineptitude, poltroonery, and political aggressiveness of Britain’s generals and colonels in the Seven Years’ War—a condition that led colonials to begin thinking of independence. (Any moderately well-informed person could see the relevance of that to our own era.)

I showed instead that pacifist Quakers had negotiated hostile Indians off Pennsylvanians’ backs after the generals had made a literally bloody mess of the frontiers. But Shy was very careful not to mention the word Quakers in a review that appeared in a Pennsylvania journal ordinarily sympathetic toward Quakers. Neat.

A rather different verdict on my book was given by Denys Delage of Ottawa’s Laval University. “Virtually exhaustive research was done into the archives,” he wrote; “this is a magnificent book, and Jennings’ best work yet.”

One more word about John Shy: he expressed horror that I called the much-praised classical historian Francis Parkman a lying racist. Shy made no effort to dispel the charge, nor has anyone else. My sin consisted of saying plainly what had been smothered under slobber. (C. Vann Woodward waved aside “fashionable” criticism of Parkman on the grounds that despite his strong biases he was “touched with greatness. So were his writings.”) After struggling with Parkman more than thirty years, and having to rewrite his work throughout, I felt entitled, indeed duty-bound, to say what the evidence showed him to be—and I gave the evidence. My evidence has been refuted by no one. Surely, the task of dealing with mere polemic should be easy. Instead, Parkman’s idolaters, who share his biases, coped with my charges by rushing into print new mass editions of his fictions called histories.

Like those others, Shy paid no attention to evidence. His review of Empire of Fortune exemplifies the rhetorical trick of attacking tone and style while avoiding consideration of factual content except to invoke Authority.

In this respect, Shy has faithfully followed the example set by Harvard’s Bernard Bailyn who responded to my first book, The Invasion of America, with silence as to its contents and denunciation of its style as “boiling.” What made it so hot was its disproof of myths about Puritan Massachusetts that had been sedulously propagated by Harvard’s Olympians. However, despite the efforts of Bailyn and his cohorts to maintain their myths by suppressing Invasion, the book has survived and prospered. “It has been Jennings more than anyone,” writes Neal Salisbury, “who has moved Indians out of romantic, racist melodrama and into history.”

When Bailyn, rather later, got around to acknowledging the “disarray” of American history—a condition for which he bears much responsibility—he proposed to describe the “early history of the American population” by starting in 1773! Not only Indians and Blacks have almost entirely vanished from his “peopling,” but the Irish, Germans, and French as well. French Canada was part of North America and under British rule, but it vanished from Bailyn’s pages except as a desti-
nation for Englishmen; his geography is as erratic as his demography. The book's razzle dazzle rhetoric won a Pulitzer prize, so the committee may have agreed that style is more important than substance in history; but if my style is boiling, Bailyn's in the Voyagers book is fireworks.

In the course of large dicta about historians, Bailyn once again takes a sideswipe at me as "boilingly polemical" while expressing hope for some younger men who (unacknowledged by him) have worked with me. Maybe he did not know; his ignorance of ethnohistory is immense. Unlike his "peopling," my books do take account of Indians, Blacks, Irish, Germans, Spaniards, and French, as well as English people, and they start the peopling of North America at about 40,000 years ago. This, I suppose, is what makes them boil.

As of this writing, it is now twenty years since The Invasion of America was published, and Harvard's bombasts, despite their attacks on it, have never even tried to refute its documented statements of fact. (They—Bailyn, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Edmund S. Morgan—have sponsored several pathetic efforts about Pequot Indians and King Philip's War in the New England Quarterly, too inadequate to be worth serious rejoinder.) Yet Shy's and Bailyn's biases seem almost tepid compared to Daniel J. Boorstin's. Once a Communist briefly, Boorstin appeared in 1953 as a "friendly witness" before the U.S. House of Representatives' Un-American Activities Committee where he promptly betrayed his former roommates and assured the committee members that his outlook on history was like theirs. This was a truthful statement. "This Committee," he declared, "has not in any way impinged on my academic freedom." As to other scholars, he was silent, but he later assisted in ousting his colleague Jesse Lemisch from the University of Chicago's history faculty. Lemisch's freedom was different from Boorstin's.

Later, in partial demonstration of his philosophy and methods of work Boorstin attacked Quaker conduct in the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania. He wrote, "The minority of die-hard Quakers which controlled the [Pennsylvania] Assembly would not budge from its traditional pacifism though the whole border might burn for it." This bit of bigotry was absolutely contradictory to documented fact. The pacifist Quakers resigned from the Assembly which thereafter was dominated by Benjamin Franklin, who organized the province's defense against the Indians and was chosen by the militia's vote to be their colonel. At every step, the greatest obstructions to Franklin's work were created by Proprietor Thomas Penn and his henchmen.

For effusions similar to this, Boorstin was bucked up the right-wing patronage ladder to be Librarian of Congress in which position he posed as one of America's most eminent intellectuals. Boorstin's books, like Bailyn's, are on the open shelves in most bookstores across the country. My exposures of their fallacies and falsehoods appear rarely. This situation, it seems to me, is opposed to objectivity in both the writings of texts and the means of distributing them. Boorstin's falsehoods are
acclaimed as history, written by an eminent practitioner; the proofs of their falsity are dismissed as "controversial" revisionism. Here is truly history with smoke and mirrors, but its remedy is not psychoanalytical raving; rather it calls for more attention to available evidence and a more equitable system for bringing it to public attention.

Beyond my personal involvement, I have given these examples to demonstrate that strong bias, amounting to mythology, permeates much or most of the accepted histories of the United States. Racism, nationalism, and religious bigotry are omnipresent. Underlying them all are the assumptions of Social Darwinism, the direct, secularized descendant of the Chosen People concept. This theory has come down to us from Olympus on the Charles, and is fiercely perpetuated there to the present day.21

Among other examples of such biases, Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., mentions "such critically-acclaimed works as Perry Miller's two volumes on the New England mind in the seventeenth century, with scarcely a mention that Indians were present to influence the Puritans, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s Pulitzer Prize-winning The Age of Jackson, which included not a single word on the removal of the Southeastern tribes, the Trail of Tears, or John Marshall's Worcester case decision."22

As an unexamined assumption, Social Darwinism closes the minds of standard historians so that they not only refuse to read contradictory evidence, but actively try to suppress it. Let James H. Merrell testify regarding the refusal to read.

Those studies published in recent years that should have included native Americans too often neglected to do so, apparently because their authors had not read (or had not profited from reading) the scholarship on Indians . . . the research on Indians, far from overturning long-held notions about America's colonial age, has done little to change the cast of mind that frames—and, by framing, limits—our view.23

In 1984, Frederick E. Hoxie surveyed thirteen college history textbooks and found that they "simply ignore new information."24 In 1993, Daniel K. Richter mourned that "apparently the perspectives on native peoples and their relationships with European colonizers developed since the 1970s belong only to a tiny sect within the already small scholarly priesthood of early Americanists."25

Bernard Bailyn has remarked (in 1985) that "we know as yet relatively little" about the movements "of either of the two non-Caucasian peoples—the Native Americans and the Africans."26 It is a revealing phrase. He should have said non-European peoples, and he should have said also that he knows almost nothing about them. That ignorance, however, is not because of his excuse that information is unavailable.27 There is far more than Bailyn has bothered to read.

Bailyn seems to have become uncomfortable with what he sees as history's state of "disarray," and to have embarked on a crash course to set all to rights. It will be harder than he thinks, but his new awareness is to be welcomed. In this respect he is ahead of John Higham, the retired eminent historian of Johns Hopkins University,
who has published "The Future of American History" without an Indian in it in March 1994.28

Authorities with particular casts of mind quite naturally resist challengers with other orientations. The methods by which they defend their turfs distinguish totally authoritarian countries from those that permit more freedom of discussion. Unlike the hamhanded techniques of former Soviets and Nazis, American authorities generally use subtler methods to suppress dissent. Generally does not mean always.

As Jonathan M. Wiener has observed, "The history profession as a community of scholars draws the line separating history from non-history and exercises sanctions over those who do not conform to its definition." 29 [Emphasis added.] Though every member of the profession is well aware of this fact, overt mention of it is one of our taboos, the weight of which is especially heavy in regard to Social Darwinism. Yes, much-esteemed Richard Hofstadter wrote the important book Social Darwinism in American Thought, but one must look rather closely at how he wrote it. He had much to say about the blatherings of lightweight John Fiske, but he carefully stopped short of mentioning Francis Parkman who had taught Fiske all he knew. Parkman demonstrated all the Social Darwinian racial concepts and some of the phrases (such as survival of the fittest). Hofstadter's omission of Parkman from his book on Social Darwinism seems on its surface to have been a matter of prudence at least, perhaps pressure also. Hofstadter's book originally was published by the American Historical Association for which Fiske was expendable but Parkman untouchable.30

How well such an incident demonstrates democratic institutions may be open to question, but it pales into insignificance when compared with the times not long ago when the nation's power elite stepped in to draw the line separating history from non-history and made its sanctions painfully clear.

During the great witch hunts of the 1950s, the year 1952 saw 100 firings of academics in California alone through close cooperation between university officials and the FBI, with something like 200 new appointments prevented.31 This was the decade when Richard M. Nixon drew the line between history and non-history. If not for the chance occurrence of Watergate, where would the line be now?

There is no way even to estimate how many careers were blasted and how many ideas were aborted by the secret blacklisting conducted by philosopher Sidney Hook and his rabidly anti-Communist associates. Trial was impossible in their court; suspicion guaranteed conviction.32

This activity had to be secret, not only because of its contemptibility, but because the New Deal had outlawed blacklisting by private persons and institutions. Such kangaroo courts were illegal. But government blacklists were omitted from the ban; and, as a consequence of "loyalty" proceedings and the published listings of "hostile witnesses" by Congressional and State committees—not to speak of the Red Squads established by police in every large city—historians who dissented from official myth were hounded and suppressed. What omnipresent machinery of oppression this all amounted to! We are not entirely free of it yet. Those blacklists still exist and
are still consulted, though not as powerfully as during the Cold War. Quite naturally, writers, including historians, look over their shoulders before dissenting from the “line” laid down from on high. In these circumstances, standard mythology is impervious to challenge, no matter how false to fact.33

It cannot be doubted that scholarship in all fields must be disciplined, and the proper persons to do this are the scholars’ peers. Is it legitimate, however, to conduct peer review secretly? This method of anonymous reviewing of manuscripts offers too many opportunities for the stab in the back. (My files show it.) “Anonymous” means that the referee’s identity is kept secret from the author being critiqued. Thus the author cannot tell when a critique has emanated from a personal or professional enemy, and is disabled from exposing its bias.

A small step forward has been made in recent years by also keeping the manuscript author’s identity secret, but an experienced critic understands the ideological tendency of the paper before him, and he can sometimes guess who wrote it because specialists in a field become acquainted with each other. In any case, the critic certainly knows what the manuscript says, and he praises or disparages it—secretly. Since editors cannot possibly have a background in all the subjects submitted to them, they usually accept a referee’s recommendation to publish or reject. Sometimes they consult several critics.

This system is favored by most editors because they think it assures a referee’s candor. They are apt to gloss over its encouragement of secrecy for hatchet work. An unstated assumption is that history is a gentleman’s vocation, and gentlemen are honorable. But history has become a profession, a means of making a living rather than a dignified way for gentlemen with independent incomes to spend time. Professionals protect their sources of income by whatever means seem necessary. (As we have seen above.) In any case, it is hardly news that gentlemen have been known to stray from the path of honor.

On the positive side, the secrecy system is alleviated by our usually free market which contains many publishers of both books and periodicals. If a writer is stubborn enough, he can sometimes drudge along from one rejection to another until a favorable response is met. Usually, not invariably. The outstanding exception that comes to mind was historical novelist Howard Fast. Tainted as a Communist, he was forced to publish privately because J. Edgar Hoover sent emissaries to threaten publishers and film makers. After Fast left the Communists publicly, commercial publishers accepted his work again.34

I have benefited personally from the opportunity to struggle from one rejection to another, but I can testify that it is hard on morale and wasting of much time. The three publishers who rejected my first book, The Invasion of America, made me wonder seriously whether it was really any good. No question intruded of pro-Communism or any modern political philosophy; The Invasion stuck to historical sources and themes, but it took the wrong sides and got some secret critiques of the manuscript from persons who thought I should not have exposed Puritan misdoings
that Harvard's faculty regarded as the epitome of virtue. The rejections hurt. Morale depleted, I was almost ready to give up. I wonder how many writers have indeed given up after being rebuffed by secret critics. (The merit of those secret rejections is demonstrated by *Invasion's* sale figures, now approaching 40,000 copies and still selling 1,500 to 2,000 copies per year, twenty years after publication, despite being defied shelf room in bookshops.)

Americans have little cause for complacency in regard to the practices and effects of censorship. On the one hand, as shown above, we have both subtle and rough means of suppression. They do not create a vacuum. Rushing in to supplant works of critical intelligence is the tidal wave of "tumultuous romances" that now dominate commercial publishing as soap opera and game shows dominate television. (Compare the ads and reviews in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review.* Gresham's Law has never been clearer. Contemporary history's "serious books" are overshadowed by blockbusters from Henry Kissinger, Richard M. Nixon, and their like. The implications are appalling.

Romantic and political fantasies direct attention away from the clear and present necessity of subjecting American history's mythology to a stem-to-stern overhauling. It will be a hard task because the ship's officers are opposed. At Stanford University, Professor Carl N. Degler insists "that Americans are different from other people, that their culture is unique," a position that he buttresses by strategic omissions of large chunks of history; e.g., robber barons, American Indians, seventeenth-century colonization. Degler reminds me of the lecture I once heard given by a judge at Allentown, Pennsylvania, who proved that American history was marked throughout by consensus. As the Civil War might have been a little awkward, he omitted it from his discourse.

Degler is confident that all is right with the historical world. It is interesting, considering what has been reported in this article, that Degler has asked, "Is opposition to new ideas, then, a serious problem among historians? I rather doubt it."

The situation is not wholly hopeless. Here and there, one of the Establishment types shows signs of unease. But the majority seems obdurate against considering the findings of scholars not certified as orthodox, no matter the evidence. That evidence is still piling up and sooner or later it must reach critical mass. Meantime, we shall do well to follow the guidance of Daniel K. Richter "to construct a larger vision of both native and Euro-American experiences (and, indeed, of the experiences of all the peoples who have shaped North American society) that is inclusive and empowering, rather than imperialistic and dominating."
Notes

5. See n.3 above.
14. Bailyn, Peopling, 140, n. 15. Further in the same note, he remarks that “only recently . . . has there been a systematic effort to correct the old and entirely misleading estimates of the size of the New England native population made originally by James Mooney and updated by A. L. Kroeber.” He does not acknowledge that this is one of the things that my “boiling” sought to “stand everything assumed to be true about the subject on its head.” See Jennings, Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), ch. 2.
16. The New England Quarterly (hereafter NEQ) articles are as follows: Philip Ranlet, “Another Look at the Causes of King Philip’s War,” NEQ 61 (1988), 79-100. Ranlet accuses me of being “the leading New Left scholar in the field whose bias has been pointed out by Bernard Bailyn, et al” (79n.2). Leftists, Old and New, will affirm that I go my own way regardless of theirs, but Ranlet has picked up the next way to curse a writer as beyond the pale. Rather precocious for a graduate student. Surprisingly, he concludes, as I had done, that King Philip did not launch the war as accused by Puritan propagandists: “Some circumstances suggest that the timing of the war was not Philip’s” (p. 100). Mealy-mouthed, but did he know what he was saying?

Steven T. Katz, “The Pequot War Reconsidered,” NEQ 64 (1991), 206-224. Katz, oddly, was professor of Near Eastern Studies (Judaica) at Cornell University. See his way with statistics: “Before the Pequots capitulated, many of their tribe had died, but the number killed probably totaled less than half the entire tribe” (p. 222). Imagine his comment if Indians had merely killed “less than half” of Boston’s people.

Alfred A. Cave, “The Pequot Invasion of Southern New England: A Reassessment of the Evidence,” NEQ 62 (1989), 27-44. Cave accused me of accepting the Rev. William Hubbard’s fabrication that the Pequots had invaded New England from the west. Mea culpa. That should teach me to trust a Puritan source. Cave remarked that “the Pequot invasion story was a belated embellishment to the Puritan propaganda of the Pequot War” (p. 43). Actually he strengthens my book’s indictment of “Puritan propaganda.”

17. Thirty Years of Treason; Excerpts from Hearings before the House Committee on Un-American


20. Jon Wiener, "The Odyssey of Daniel Boorstin," The Nation 245 (26 Sept. 1987), 305-307. As Librarian, Boorstin ordered demonstrators banned from using the Library; his action was denounced and rescinded by Judge Harold Greene as "utterly unconstitutional."


26. Bailyn, Peopling, 20. In 1965, Bailyn noticed that political factions in New York were based respectively on Indian trade retailers in tribal territories, and wholesalers between Albany and Montreal. Only colonials, no Indians, were mentioned; and except for this, no issues concerning Indians or Indian affairs were noticed in The Origins of American Politics, orig. pub. in Perspectives in American History by the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History 1,


35. Cited n. 14 above. I here pay tribute to Norman Fiering and Wilcomb E. Washburn for their support of the book.

