more likely to stress the conservatism of these two movements... Their emphasis tends instead to fall on... 'the Scientific Revolution'.

By this is meant above all the imaginative achievements associated with the names of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton... Within the space of a century and a half a revolution had occurred in the way in which men regarded the universe. Most of this was made possible by the application of mathematics to the problems of the natural world...

All this is by now well known... though many of the details are still to be worked out... What is not clear is how it all came about...

(Kearney, introduction, p. xi)

In a word, the Book of Nature underwent the same radical levelling as the Book of Scripture, and was reduced to mathematics. Nowhere, however, does Professor Eisenstein discuss the four levels (in either causality or hermeneutics) and their fortunes in the protracted battles of Ancients (grammar) vs. Moderns (dialectic method).

Professor Eisenstein derives an almost aesthetic thrill out of her meditations on "Technical literature goes to press" (page 520). On page 572 she says,

Here as elsewhere, the transitory and incomplete revivals that had occurred under the auspices of particular colleges during the middle ages ought to be compared with the permanent, total process of recovery that occurred after printers set to work.

Here are the thrills of the archivist who obtains an impressive document in substantial form.

There is a class of writer who is not a scientist and yet a writer of highly specialized variety, who is more privileged, however, on quasi-scientific grounds than the novelist. I refer to the historian. The historian's title to quasi-scientific status may well be of assistance in framing a claim on behalf of the man of letters to great political indulgence and greater latitude as a social historian or critic. Professor Eisenstein has won her claim to quasi-scientific status in her study of *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*.

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This book is a contribution to something that is apparently becoming a colossal historical enterprise: relating the traditional great themes of constitutional crisis and change to the actualities of regional society. It is thus, perhaps it may be thought, an enterprise of a peculiarly English kind, enabling those engaged in it to be constitutional historians and social historians at the same time, at the cost of writing two books in one. The task of relating national and provincial developments has certainly
required Peter Clark to write a very long book — approaching a quarter of a million words — and it is daunting to think that fifty or so like it will be needed before England is covered.

Kent is already covered for the revolutionary years themselves by A.M. Everitt’s *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-60*, the book that more than any other began the enterprise referred to; there is also F.R.H. Du Boulay’s work on the medieval background and C.W. Chalklin on the social and economic background. This plus an abundance of sources (and family origin) determined Clark’s choice of Kent. T.G. Barnes on Somerset, Anthony Fletcher on Sussex and perhaps R.W. Ketton-Cremer on Norfolk may be mentioned as works that not only deal with county history in the appropriate period but do so with a similar perspective.

This perspective, which unites Clark to Everitt while it separates him from Chalklin, is that of the governing orders, the county élite, or what a later age would have no hesitation in simply calling “the county”. Everitt had no hesitation in calling it “the Community of Kent,” though what he had to chronicle was, indeed, the dilution of the gentry ranks under the stress of revolution, and Clark himself in his much longer period shows a widening in what he includes in the term “society,” though it continues to exclude the great majority both of Men of Kent and of Kentish Men. (I believe — Clark does not explain the distinction — that these come, respectively, from East and West of the Medway.)

This “county,” or society or community of the county — none of these terms was probably in use with fixed meanings at the time, but all stand for something historians feel the need to express somehow — is thus rather like that “community of the realm” that at one point of the thirteenth century meant all the barons and only the barons, but then had to be stretched to include their more important followers, knights or citizens. The central process that these studies aim to document is the shaping of a “political county,” a microcosm of the “political nation,” and the shaping includes dawning awareness — chorographically, of the county as “country,” — increasing, and increasingly burdensome involvement in the local levels of national affairs, and, because of the burden apart from any other possible reasons, expansion of numbers.

The same process was happening in almost every county. When it comes to details, particularly of the expansion of numbers, it may well be that Kent is a typical. It tended to have far more J.P.’s than any other county except Essex, and this presumably reflects a fact about Kent that was familiar, even proverbial, to contemporaries — the large number of petty proprietors and lack or unimportance of major magnates. There were, indeed, old county families, and Clark shows that for most of his period they had things pretty much their own way. This modifies Lambarde’s assertion (applicable to himself) that the county was full of new, London-made gentry. It would also modify any vision we might have of the sturdy yeomanry, secure in the law of Gavelkind, rising to county office such as J.P., which they did not rise to, at any rate, until Everitt’s period. To the petty gentry, who might rise, Gavelkind was not a security but a problem. It was not universal in Kent, but it was one of the things that made the county different.

How different Kent was will have to wait until more counties have been studied this way. Very likely the similarities will prove more striking in the end. We do know the sorts of ways in which Kent differed, and these differences may make
specially acute here what is a problem for any study of this kind: who are the gentry, and how do you distinguish between “upper” and “lower” gentry? Arguments about this distinction can sometimes appear circular: the kind of people who became J.P.’s and Deputy Lieutenants were the kind of people who became J.P.’s and Deputy Lieutenants. Clark uses terms that have been used by others, such as “parochial gentry” (as against the county kind) and “pseudo-gentry”, (coined I think by Everitt), and introduces the “middling gentry” as well. I am very dubious about these. “Pseudo-gentry” I think particularly unfortunate; it refers to people who were “gentlemen” by any contemporary standard, including those of the heralds or of professional snobs like John Ferne (The Blazon of Gentry), but who were not the inheritors of large landed estates. The way Joan Thirk and others define the parish gentry they do not seem at all different from the marginal or precarious gentry; to Clark, they are people who held about two hundred acres, plus leaseholds, belonged to old county families and only occasionally held county office. He does stress the difficulty of definitions and also the fact that local consequence was not simply a matter of freehold acres. Once again, this may well be truer of Kent than elsewhere, though it was surely true everywhere. Clark points out that there was “no critical financial or economic cut-off point” (p. 129) between his “county governors” and his “middling gentry.” By “county governors” he means the habitual office-holders, a group he numbers about nine at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign and fifteen at its end. In the same period the number of J.P.’s in Kent rose from (roughly) sixty to a hundred; and Clark estimates that about a thousand people called themselves gentry in Kent. Some people might feel that his “middling gentry” were fairly near the top, and his “parochial gentry” somewhere in the middle. Of course, many of the thousand who called themselves gentry should not have done so. That fact, at least, is one thing about the English social system that everybody, then and now, from Sir Thomas Smith to the Cambrigde Group, can feel sure about. Nobody called themselves “middling”, let alone “parochial” or “pseudo”, and I wonder if we should. When Clark shows us his middling group rising at the expense of others, I think he is defining them as the rising ones.

This is not to deny the value of Clark’s very solid work. It is a mine of information, too vast for criticisms of detail. I will just mention “Velerandum Pollanus” (p. 74) which cannot be right, and what is wrong with “Valérand Poullain?” Clark is less fair to the tithing clergy (p. 369) than Christopher Hill; agricultural diversification was less a “golden opportunity” than a threat to the recipients of tithe, whose position was very vulnerable anyway. One further point — any possible reader who is attracted by the picture of a murder (of Arden of Faversham) on the dust jacket should be warned that there is practically nothing about it inside.

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Memoria individuale e costruzione biografica is an unusual book. It is not an investigation of the life of Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542) but a study of the earliest,