Peter Burke. *The Renaissance Sense of the Past (Documents of Modern History)*. London: Edward Arnold; Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1969. Pp. 154. Cloth \$4.80. Paper \$2.95.

This book summarizes the received wisdom of positivist history on Renaissance historiography. It is primarily for students. The book consists of brief selections – from a paragraph to two pages – from historical works of the 14th to the 17th century. Selections include writings from Petrarch, Bruni, Valla, Vasari, Bacon, Sarpi, Clarendon. The selections are all placed in the context of a thesis about Renaissance historiography. Sources do not stand bewilderingly naked and alone. For all their brevity they take on meaning in the light of the author's thesis. This seems a useful principle. Unless that is, we believe that we are offering the student an opportunity to be 'his own historian' by serving up a two-page snippet of Machiavelli free of editorializing. In this work the student gets both a conceptual framework and something of the writings of the times.

I found myself though, quarreling with the conceptual framework of the book for its narrow positivist viewpoint. The argument of the book, for which all the sources serve as examples, is that our modern 'sense of history' began to develop during the Renaissance. This sense of history consists of three elements: (1) the sense of anachronism – the notion that periods differ from one another in fundamental ways: (2) the awareness of evidence, or a critical attitude to historical sources: (3) the interest in causation or 'middle-range explanations' of events in terms of 'social structure, or the climate of opinion, the spirit of the age, or the state of the economy' (77).

It is not a good historical procedure to examine past ideas in terms of what seeds of the future they harbored – it tears them out of context. What we lose in this work is all sense for the 'wholeness' of Renaissance historiography, for what it stood for in its own right. Renaissance historical works get divided artificially into elements that point to the past, and elements that contain the germs of the future. We get no living re-creation of what was most important about history to Petrarch himself. By isolating out 'modern' elements from Renaissance historiography, the author can then see the historical consciousness of the 19th century as 'a continuation, an intensification' of Renaissance historiography (144). But are not the differences between the two viewpoints on history infinitely more important and striking than the similarities?

I suppose all this is inevitable if you believe that past humanity existed as a bridge to the higher man in the present (Nietzsche: *Use and Abuse of History*). The higher man, of course, is us, who no longer can be fooled by anything, liberated as we are from superstitious beliefs about Saints and Providence. For us history is science – not elevated literature or humanist rhetoric about models, heroism or senseless tragedy. For us reflection on effects must give way to the investigation of causes. Thus the great break-throughs to the future come when Paolo Sarpi and Hobbes introduces self-interest as the all-pervasive motive of human action, buried beneath a thicket of ideological rationalizations. Never mind that Hobbes was notorious for not understanding the religious fervor of the Puritans on its own terms. Apparently the more trivial the causes, the more we are on to 'real' history.

Everywhere in this little book we see the grand march of modernism. The rise of the skeptical spirit, the demystification of reality, the shattering of the teleological view of being and the triumph of the scientific attitude – all are reflected in historiography. In this modernist perspective the Middle Ages and those aspects of Renaissance Humanism

that did not bear the seeds of the future, are discussed in the same manner that Freud discussed woman, in terms of what she lacked – taking man as the normative human being. So; ‘Medieval history writing is full of myths, secular and religious. (I define myth as fiction passing as fact)’ (7). Poor Adam and Eve, reduced to the ontological status of Batman and Robin. We learn that, ‘Villani has his eyes on the ground more than Otto of Freising’ (16). Poor Bishop Otto, floating on clouds of wish fantasies. Forgive him St. Sherlock, for believing that the City of Man is an endless cycle of pride and greed. What bad history to begin the story of the City of Man with the blow of Cain.

So, too, the relevance and depth of Humanist history, so important in Renaissance historiography, disappears in the face of what it lacks in real history. The elevated style, the educational ideal of emulating models of heroism and character, is seen as a slavish copying of stereotypes.

In short we have here a view of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance such as Voltaire might have held. But since then we have also lived through the mixed blessings of the scientific enlightenment.

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Elmer M. Blistein, ed. *The Drama of the Renaissance: Essays for Leicester Bradner*. Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1970. Pp. xiii, 199. \$7.

This handsome volume contains ten excellent articles. One half of them deal with Shakespeare, and the wide range of interests of the man honoured is reflected in the variety of themes treated, in English, Italian, and Spanish literatures.

Roy W. Battenhouse, of Indiana University, writes convincingly on ‘The Significance of Hamlet’s Advice to Players,’ taking that advice as Hamlet’s, and not necessarily Shakespeare’s. ‘The play as a whole – states Mr. Battenhouse – implies a criticism of Hamlet’s taste and theorizing.’ ‘Hamlet’s theories – the reasonable conclusion is – through their outcome in action, are being placed and tested within the orbit of the play’s total story. And that test, interestingly, makes double irony of Hamlet’s advice to players. For on the one hand, we watch a Hamlet who violates his own rules, and on the other hand, we realize what intolerable drama we would be stuck with if he didn’t. Shakespeare’s play, if it obeyed Hamlet’s advice theory, might be as lifeless as *Sejanus*.’

The other essays on Shakespeare are ‘Theme and Structure in *King Henry IV*, Part I,’ by Fredson Bowers, University of Virginia; ‘Iago’s “if”: An Essay on the Syntax of *Othello*,’ by Madeleine Doran, University of Wisconsin; ‘Shakespeare’s Dark Vocabulary,’ by Paul A. Jorgensen, University of California, Los Angeles; ‘Shakespeare the Ignoramus,’ by S. Schoenbaum, Northwestern University; and ‘The Comic View of Life in Shakespeare’s Comedies,’ by M. A. Shaaber, University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Bowers re-reads, very carefully and very closely, a play which has been read very frequently, and comes forth with new and fruitful conclusions; Miss Doran successfully analyses the conjunction ‘if’ to conclude that ‘syntax is the most intimate way to show movement of mind; it is the dramatist’s most refined tool in shaping monologue or dialogue’; Mr. Jorgensen stresses vocabulary to help us understand a play, and taking *Macbeth* as a salient example, concludes that ‘the dark vocabulary does ... make us more nearly adequate to appreciating fully Shake-