AHR Exchange
On *The History Manifesto*

Introduction

Exceptions prove rules. Normally the *AHR* only publishes articles that have undergone a rigorous peer-review process. Normally books are considered only in the book review section, and according to explicit guidelines for reviewing protocol. And normally this scholarly journal does not provide a platform for views of a polemical nature or those currently being mooted in more public venues.

But there is much that is exceptional about *The History Manifesto*: the way its authors, David Armitage and Jo Guldi, have made use of social media and other outlets to publicize the book and disseminate their critique; the clarity, timeliness, and passion of their challenge to today's historians; the conditions of the book's release by Cambridge University Press as an open-access publication; the sheer volume of discussion the book has provoked in the press and on the web; and the range of reactions among historians to their manifesto, many of them quite positive, and others, as exemplified in this Exchange by the strongly worded essay by Deborah Cohen and Peter Mandler, decidedly negative. Accordingly, the Editor accepted Cohen and Mandler's offer to submit a critique of *The History Manifesto* to be published in the context of an *AHR* Exchange, which would include a response from its authors.

Cohen and Mandler's critique does not pretend to offer a book review summarizing the content of *The History Manifesto*, so a few words are in order here by way of providing readers a sense of its challenge to historians. It should be noted, of course, that no summary can take the place of reading Armitage and Guldi's clearly argued work. In short, they charge that in the latter decades of the last century, historians retreated from considerations of the long term (*longue durée*)—significant swaths of historical time beyond the biological life span of an individual—a retreat that has had, they claim, deleterious consequences for the role of history both in the university and in public life. To be sure, they acknowledge a return of the *longue durée* approach in recent years, most notably in the emergence of "big data" as a source and method for analyzing a massive range of historical experience. And in this sense, *The History Manifesto* is as much an enthusiastic endorsement of some current trends, most related to the possibilities of digital research, as it is a criticism of recent practices. But Armitage and Guldi's focus on what they call "short-termism" is fairly relentless. It is largely the source, they argue, of the inability of today's historians to grapple with long-term problems such as climate change, persistent economic inequality, and the widespread failure of governance, leaving the field open to econ-

omists, pundits, and others who lack a critical historical sense. Short-term history is linked in their view to short-term thinking. Indeed, their critique conveys an urgent plea to their fellow historians to mine the deep past in order to address present-day concerns—to abandon the ivory tower for the public arena, to combat paralyzing "mythologies," dogmatisms, and intellectual complacency, and to engage in "historical thinking, in public and ethical terms, about the shaping of our shared future." If nothing else, Armitage and Guldi's *Manifesto* aims to foster a history that, in Simon Schama's words (which they cite), will "keep people awake at night."

Wakefulness can take many forms, and Cohen and Mandler's essay clearly exhibits a troubled sleep. Their criticisms of *The History Manifesto* are unsparing in both tone and content. They reject the authors' pivotal claim that "short-termism" characterized historical writing in the late decades of the twentieth century, and that this narrowing of temporal optic represented a departure from earlier practice. And, much like Armitage and Guldi, they offer evidence from a large archive of titles of books, journal articles, and dissertations to support their assertions. It will be up to readers, and perhaps subsequent scholars, to decide the validity of these competing claims. In any case, Cohen and Mandler are confident that when Armitage and Guldi's "supporting evidence" is examined closely, it will fail to confirm their conclusions. They also strongly contest the assumption that long-term approaches are better suited to understanding historical problems and present-day concerns alike. Furthermore, contrary to the *Manifesto*'s claim that historians have retreated into their ivory towers, they point to the various ways in which history today—in fact, more than ever before—plays a role in public life.

Armitage and Guldi are measured and confident in their response, ceding little to the terms of this spirited critique. They acknowledge the "widely divergent" responses elicited by the book, ranging from hearty endorsements to devastating dismissals, but note that it is in the nature of a manifesto to be provocative. They remain unimpressed, however, with Cohen and Mandler's critique: "As an apology for business as usual and a defense of the status quo," they write, "their essay is unimpeachable." This counter-criticism is at the heart of their response: the apparent complacency of Cohen and Mandler, who, they claim, fail even to acknowledge the crisis in the humanities in general, and in the discipline of history in particular. And their wider assertion that our contemporary culture as a whole suffers from "endemic short-termism" can hardly be considered controversial. Among the points Armitage and Guldi emphatically reassert from their manifesto, in the face of Cohen and Mandler's skepticism, is a ringing endorsement of the special skills and insights that historians can—and should—bring to bear on public issues. As its title affirms, *The History Manifesto* is a call to action.

Whether and how historians will heed this call certainly cannot be determined here. But one cannot fail to highlight an interesting feature of this Exchange. Unlike other controversies among historians, especially those that catch the attention of a wider readership, this one is fundamentally about method—about how historians conceive of and shape the past and demarcate their chronological purview. If nothing else, Armitage and Guldi have forced us to think hard about the most basic of our concerns: time. They cite this pithy statement from Fernand Braudel: "time sticks to [the historian's] thinking like soil to a gardener's spade." But the evocation of

Braudel—this master of the *longue durée*—also suggests a problem with much that is at stake in this Exchange. Some of the dispute here is empirical in nature, hinging upon divergent conclusions from "big data" sources of books, dissertations, and journal articles. But how reliable are these—that is, as *titles*—as an indication of the chronological scope of these works? To take one notable example: to go by the title of Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, considered the ur-example of long-term history, its chronological scope was a mere seventy-one years—the life span of the Spanish monarch. There are rewards and pitfalls in the realm of big data.

"Historians are not soldiers; they don't fight on a single front, and . . . they certainly don't need to be led in one direction," write Cohen and Mandler. "[N]or are they sheep," respond Armitage and Guldi. "[T]hey may not want to be led, nor can they be herded. Yet, as in any complex community, the individual choices historians make . . . aggregate behind our backs into discernible patterns, even trends." This Exchange is indeed about these patterns and trends—not only what they are and what they mean, but whether they are in fact discernible. As neither soldiers nor sheep, we are obliged to interrogate what we do, how we do it, and what it means for our times. In the face of the common and understandable reluctance within professions and disciplines to undertake this sort of interrogation, we should be grateful to the participants in this Exchange for helping us, even provoking us, to do just that.

AHR Exchange
The History Manifesto: A Critique

DEBORAH COHEN AND PETER MANDLER

IT IS PROBABLY IN THE NATURE of manifestos to be one-eyed and just a little authoritarian: they are rallying cries to lead soldiers into battle. For that reason, history is a subject almost uniquely ill-suited to manifestos. Historians are not soldiers; they don't fight on a single front, and—at a time when, more than ever before, historians have been operating in an impressive diversity of modes and theaters—they certainly don't need to be led in one direction. In our critique, we do not dispute the validity of Guldi and Armitage's favored modes of historiography.[1] We have both worked in a variety of time scales (long, short, and medium). We view quantitative and digital methods as useful tools in the historian's repertoire and use them in our own practice (as well as in this critique).[2] We are entirely in favor of the social engagement of scholars outside the academy.

What we object to are the arguments (and where they present any, the evidence) that Guldi and Armitage offer in their attempt to persuade everyone else to follow their own chosen path. When the underpinnings of their manifesto are examined, the supporting evidence either is nonexistent or mandates just the opposite conclusion. This is true for each of their major propositions: the retreat of the *longue durée* they posit, the correlation they draw between the length of time a study covers and its significance, the alleged salience of long-term arguments to policymaking, the presumptions about historians' superiority as arbiters of big data, and the crisis of the humanities that requires the cure they are proposing.[3] *The History Manifesto* offers not, as its authors imagine, a bold new frontier, but rather a narrowing of the public role that historians already occupy and a diminution of the audiences they currently enjoy.

[1] Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge, 2014), http://historymanifesto.cambridge.org/read/. The page references in parentheses are to the print/PDF edition.

[2] Our reference points, like Guldi's and Armitage's, are Anglo-American. There is much more to be said about other parts of the world where textual evidence is lacking and the prospects of digitization are more distant.

[3] For a much more satisfying discussion of the gains and losses involved in different time scales, see Sebouh David Aslanian, Joyce E. Chaplin, Kristin Mann, and Ann McGrath, "How Size Matters: The Question of Scale in History," *AHR* Conversation, *American Historical Review* 118, no. 5 (December 2013): 1431–1472. For trenchant responses to *The History Manifesto*, see Modern British Studies at Birmingham's series "Responding to the History Manifesto," https://mbsbham.wordpress.com/responding-to-the-history-manifesto/; Lynn Hunt, "Does History Need a Reset?," forthcoming in *Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales* 70, no. 2 (April–June 2015); and Claire Lemercier, "La longue durée: Une histoire sans histoire?," *Devenir historien-ne: Méthodologie de la recherche, historiographie et épistémologie de l'histoire*, http://devhist.hypotheses.org/2729#more-2729.

At the heart of *The History Manifesto* is a historiographic account that is both simple and deceptive. In the early and mid-twentieth century, Guldi and Armitage argue, historians told "arching stories of scale" that won them the esteem of the public and influence over policymakers (7). Between 1975 and 2005, they contend, "many if not most" professional historians retreated to short-term studies "on biological time-spans of between five and fifty years" and thus "inflicted upon their discipline habits of microscopic attention that culminated in a sense of practical irrelevance" (7, 84). As evidence for this retreat, they cite the historian Benjamin Schmidt's data, asserting, "The compression of time in historical work can be illustrated bluntly by the range covered in doctoral dissertations conducted in the United States" (7–8).

Except that it can't be. Discovering a "transition to the Short Past" in the 1970s requires that Guldi and Armitage ignore the very data they cite (39). Not only does their chart (reproduced here as Figure 1) show nearly the reverse of what they argue, but—improbably—they assign it a meaning contrary to the one that Schmidt himself offers.[4] Since the mid-1960s, there has been a steady rise in the length of time that dissertations cover, measured by either the mean or the median. How Guldi and Armitage manage to convert that expansion into a shrinkage is bewildering.[5] They do no better in characterizing the entire century, asserting that "the average period covered in 1900 was about seventy-five years; by 1975, that had fallen to about thirty years. Only in the twenty-first century did it rebound to between seventy-five and a hundred years" (43). In fact, the mean their chart shows for 1900 is not seventy-five years, but almost exactly fifty years. By 1975, the time period covered was not contracting, but had been on the rise for over a decade. And there has been no rebound in the twenty-first century. According to their chart, the trend has been basically flat since 2000.[6]

For all that Guldi and Armitage exhort their fellow historians to embrace big data in the service of "good, honest history," their own arguments offer no such thing, ignoring numerous readily available sources from which this information could be gathered (116). To test their thesis about a retreat from the *longue durée*, we made a foray into the sort of systematic research they ought (at a bare minimum) to have conducted before generalizing about historians' work over a century. To extend Schmidt's data on dissertations to cover research monographs, we surveyed book reviews published in the *AHR* in eight sample years over a span of eighty years: four

[4] About his own data, Schmidt concludes: "So since about 1965, dissertations have covered longer and longer periods. (The data is sparse, but there's some reason to think there might even be a trend toward more focused dissertations until the 1970s). [Edit—with parsing of decades, this trend is less dramatic but still present. Graphs later]." Ben Schmidt, "What Years Do Historians Write About?," May 9, 2013, *Sapping Attention*, http://sappingattention.blogspot.com/2013/05/what-years-do-historians-write-about.html#more.

[5] When challenged about this error by Danny Loss on Twitter (@DannyScL), Guldi and Armitage responded in their blog with a celebration of form—"the great opportunities made possible by online publishing [in] correcting a chart"—rather than by addressing the criticism, the kind of elevation of technique over substance that dogs the entire enterprise. Their "correction" only underscores their original misinterpretation, which they mysteriously repeat in the same blog post: "our figure 2, which shows the shortening of time scales in dissertations," shows nothing of the sort. Guldi and Armitage, "Updating Visualizations and the Power of Open Access Review," November 20, 2014, http://historymanifesto.cambridge.org/blog/2014/11/updating-visualizations-and-power-open-access-review/.

[6] Our thanks to Danny Loss for these observations.

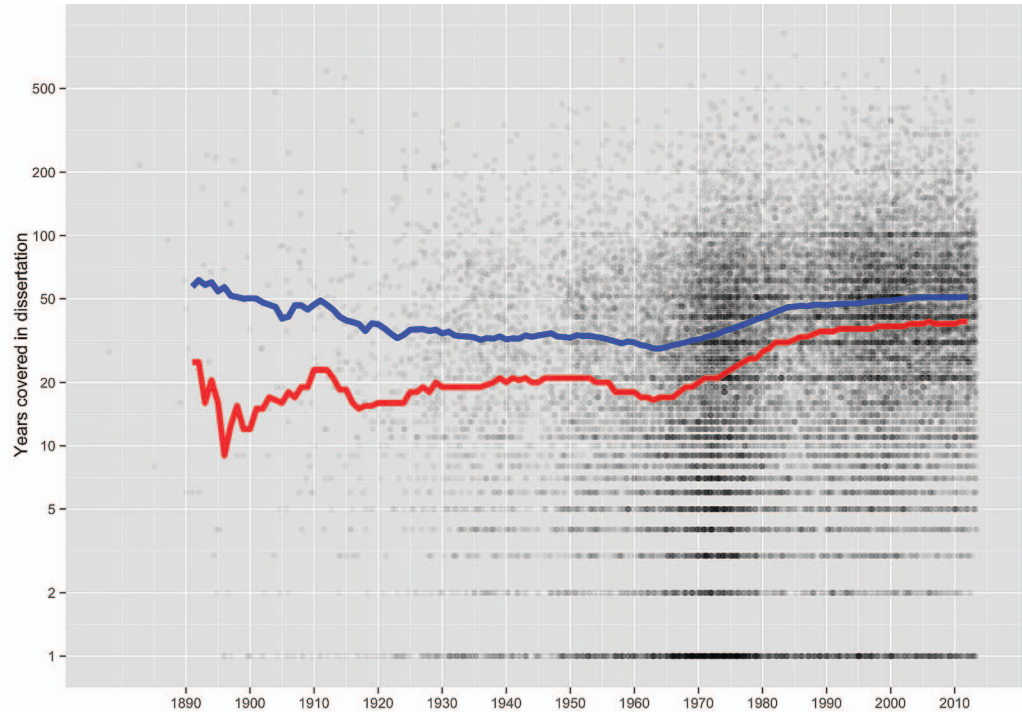

FIGURE 1: Updated visualization, *The History Manifesto*. http://www.historymanifesto.cambridge.org/blog/2014/11/updating-visualizations-and-power-open-access-review/. This figure shows the number of years covered in history dissertations in the U.S. The top line shows the mean, the bottom line the median (mislabeled in the original). Data from Ben Schmidt, "What Years Do Historians Write About?," http://sappingattention.blogspot.com/2013/05/what-years-do-historians-write-about.html#more.

in the period of Guldi and Armitage's purported "long-horizon history" (1926, 1936, 1956, and 1966) and four that encompass books written in the era of their "Short Past" (1976, 1986, 1996, and 2006).[7] Our sample amounts to nearly 1,100 books in total.[8]

Based on our research, Guldi and Armitage have the facts backward, as their own chart should have told them. There is no evidence either that historians concentrated on long-horizon research before 1968 or that there was a fall-off afterward, when the great shrinkage supposedly began. Quite the contrary, the longest time scales came *after* 1975, when the numbers of years covered steadily increased, with the median more than doubling between 1966 and 1986. (See Figure 2.) The point is made even

[7] The books reviewed in the 2006 issues of the *AHR* were published in 2004 and 2005 and, given the number of years it takes to bring a scholarly work to fruition, were likely conceived in the mid- to late 1990s.

[8] The parameters of our study, designed to track Schmidt's sample, are as follows: the works we examined were all by scholars with the Ph.D. in history and/or who were working as academic historians at institutions in North America and Britain; we focused on research monographs, excluding textbooks and national/regional surveys but including biographies; and (like Schmidt) we included only histories of the post-1500 period. We excluded outliers in our sample (chronological time spans of 1,000 years and more), of which there were one in 1926, two in 1966, two in 1976, one in 1996, and four in 2006. Our sample includes all four issues of the *AHR* in 1926, 1936, and 1956; and for 1966–2006, years during which the numbers of books reviewed grew massively and the *AHR* expanded from four to five issues, the first and last issue of each year. This research was conducted by Emily Curtis Walters, a doctoral candidate in the History Department at Northwestern University, who coded each book.

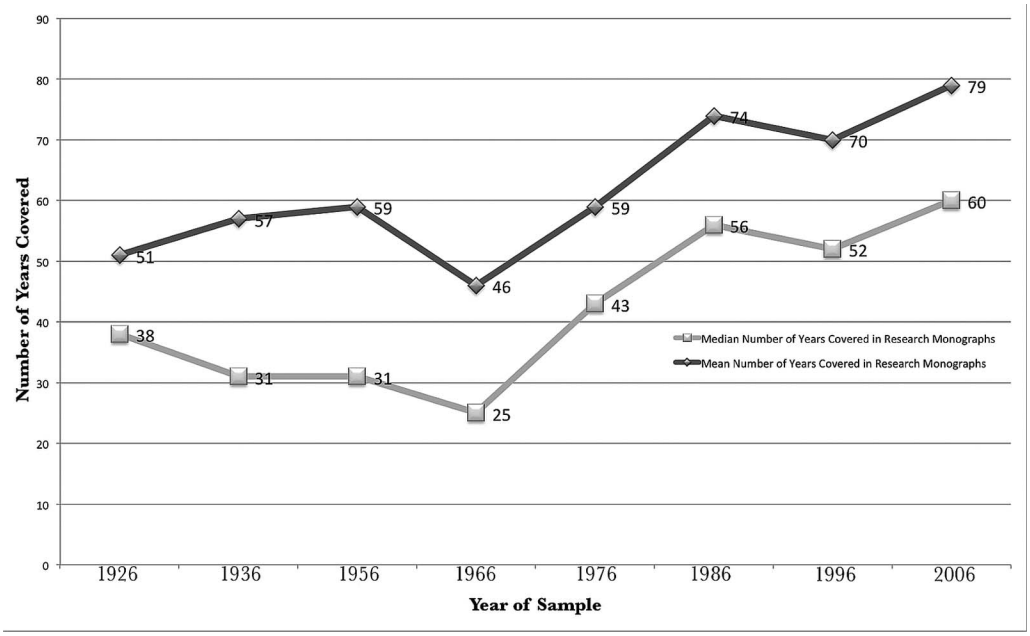

FIGURE 2: Numbers of years covered in research monographs reviewed in the *AHR*, 1926–2006. The top line shows the mean, the bottom line the median.

more graphically with respect to the "biological time-spans" of five to fifty years that Guldi and Armitage see as the hallmark of the historians' retreat. As our Figure 3 shows, the percentage of studies conducted on such "biological" time periods declined significantly between 1926 and 2006. Similarly, short time spans of less than five years were the subject of a larger percentage of the monographs published before 1966 than was the case in the period after 1976—entirely predictable given the predominance of political and diplomatic history in those earlier years.[9] In sum, there is much more continuity than change across the twentieth century, and if anything, longer time scales had become more, not less, common as of 1986.

The qualitative evidence is no kinder to Guldi and Armitage's thesis. The early-twentieth-century champions of long-range history they hold up for emulation frequently worked on different time scales, some exceedingly brief.[10] While it is true that Arthur Schlesinger Sr. and Charles Beard published the "*longue durée* histories of American identity" that Guldi and Armitage cite approvingly, both were textbooks—like the vast majority of textbooks then and now, wide-ranging surveys (25).

[9] Guldi and Armitage seem now to be retooling their arguments to focus not on the trend lines but on the scatterplot, apparently the concentration of chronologically focused dissertations in the 1970s; "Updating Visualizations and the Power of Open Access Review." That escape route, however, is cut off by our data, which shows that the percentage of work taking a span of less than five years as its focus was lower in 1976 than in 1966, and lower again in 1986, 1996, and 2006 than in any of the pre-1976 years. Similarly, the percentage of studies spanning more than a century began to climb in the late 1960s.

[10] In addition, it evinces a particular disregard for context (another of the virtues that Guldi and Armitage think historians have to offer policymakers) to wrench figures such as the Fabian reformers Beatrice and Sidney Webb out of their early-twentieth-century setting and declare them representative of the discipline of history (21). Writing in an era before the explosion of higher education and the further specialization of knowledge, the Webbs omnivorously investigated everything from the constitutional problems of cooperative societies to the decline in the birth rate to the rosy prospects for Soviet Russia.

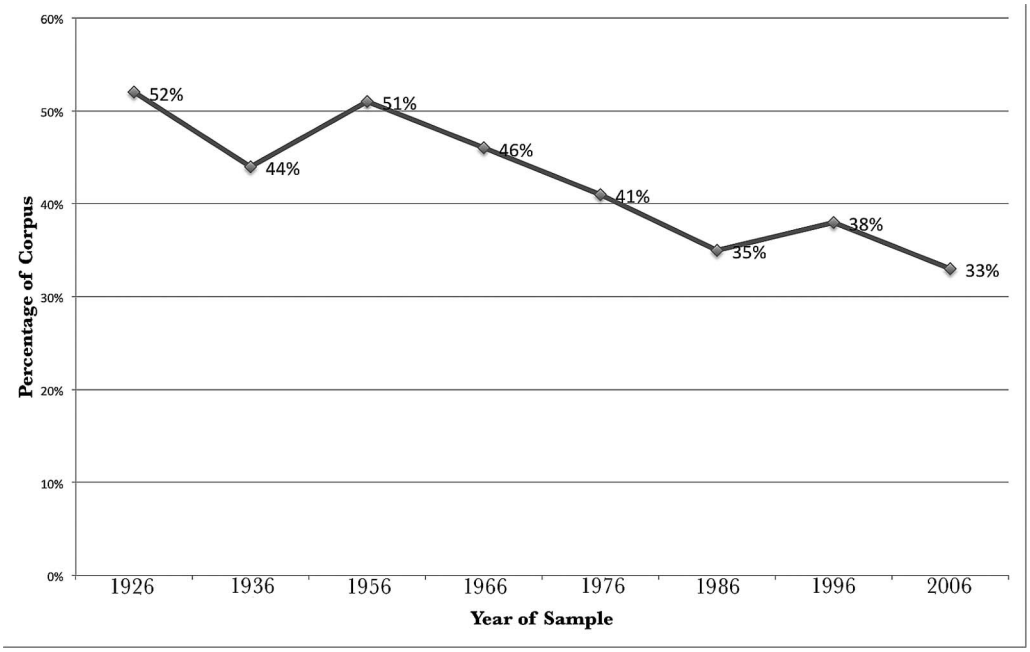

FIGURE 3: Percentage of research monographs reviewed in the *AHR*, 1926–2006, covering "biological timespans" of five to fifty years.

More typical of historical monographs of the time, Schlesinger Sr. also published *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763–1776*; *A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875–1900*; and *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764–1776*. Similarly, Beard's other works include *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (an investigation of the property held by the signers of the Constitution) and *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932–1940*.[11]

Why do Guldi and Armitage get the history so wrong? To judge by their disregard for the basic rules of evidence, argument, and proof, they don't seem to have tried very hard to get it right. In the place of cogent intellectual genealogies of the last half-century, they resort to instrumental explanations involving declining job markets, Oedipal crises, and identity politics (42–43, 11). They indulge in irresponsible generalizations that neither a reading of the works cited nor a survey of the historiography can sustain. Thus, they tell us: "With a few exceptions, the classic works of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s concentrated on a particular episode: the identification of a particular disorder within psychology, or the analysis of a particular riot in the labour movement, for instance" (45).[12] They assert that "historians of the

[11] Our thanks to Daniel Immerwahr for these observations.

[12] As "classic" works of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Guldi and Armitage here cite one article (from 1960), two monographs (1983, 1993), and one edited collection (2012), all about eighteenth-century British riots, which together have garnered 301 citations in the years since they were published, according to Google Scholar. By contrast, see the citations of three works that are undeniably classics of the era (but also long-horizon histories): William H. McNeill's *Plagues and Peoples* (1977) has been cited 2,821 times; William Cronon's *Changes in the Land* (1983) has been cited 1,823 times; Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex* (1990) has been cited 3,435 times. Classic works in the genre of microhistory have accrued

Short Past tended to outsource" to European social theorists their long-horizon explanatory frameworks: "From 1968 to approximately 2000, many a researcher in those disciplines was thus temporarily relieved of the obligation of original thinking about the past and its significance for the future" (50, 51). Or: "By the end of the 1970s, the tendency to go long began to look tarnished, something grubby that no self-respecting historian would do" (82, unfootnoted).

In fact, to see the years 1975–2005 as abjuring longer-term narratives and "generalisations about the aggregate" requires that Guldi and Armitage ignore the mass of evidence that doesn't fit: the rise of global history, environmental history, and cultural history, all frequently with long time scales—even the fact that Fernand Braudel's books were translated into English for the first time in the early 1970s, exactly the moment at which Guldi and Armitage identify the collapse of Anglo-American interest in the *longue durée* (51).[13] It neglects the fact that in this same period, 1975–2005, the geographical range of historical work has widened considerably, as U.S. and Canadian departments especially have moved beyond their traditional redoubts of North America and Europe to explore a fuller spectrum of human experiences across time and around the world.[14]

Most tendentiously, it requires that entire subject areas (particularly the histories of race, gender, and class) be reclassified as "micro" and "Histories of the Short Past," whether or not they actually are. Guldi and Armitage's category of "microhistory" includes the genre conventionally known by that name as well as an overflowing grab bag of other sorts of history.[15] Even more bizarre than the criticisms they level at these Short-Pasters are their attempts at characterizing their virtues. The "refinement of the exemplary particular," "the art of looking closely at all the details," the attainment of "heights of sophistication in the constrained inspection of experience in the past," or "the recovery of the subaltern and the patient sifting of the archives": these apparently are the signal virtues of historians ranging from Theodore Porter to Natalie Zemon Davis to David Roediger (36, 57, 120). If their contributions are made to sound pedestrian, that seems to be Guldi and Armitage's point.

Throughout *The History Manifesto*, Guldi and Armitage persistently equate long with significant. Not until the conclusion (and only then in a quotation from Lynn

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fewer citations according to Google Scholar: Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), 525 cites; Robert Darnton's *The Great Cat Massacre* (1984), 1,504 cites; and Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (English trans. 1989), 844 cites.

[13] Explaining the inconvenient fact of Braudel's translation history requires some contortionism: "Almost as soon as the *longue durée* was named, it began to dissipate" (11). On the glancing treatment of global history, see pp. 15, 36.

[14] For somewhat contrasting interpretations, see Robert B. Townsend, "Decline of the West or the Rise of the Rest? Data from 2010 Shows Rebalancing of Field Coverage in Departments," *Perspectives on History*, September 2011, http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2011/decline-of-the-west-or-the-rise-of-the-rest; and Luke Clossey and Nicholas Guyatt, "It's a Small World after All: The Wider World in Historians' Peripheral Vision," *Perspectives on History*, May 2013, http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2013/its-a-small-world-after-all.

[15] On the history of microhistory in both its Italian and North American incarnations, and on its potential for global history, see Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?," *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011), http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0z94n9hq.

Hunt) do they acknowledge the fundamental and obvious point: the time scales that scholars adopt depend on the questions they are asking and the subjects they are investigating (119). In general, the shortest time spans have belonged to political history and thematically to studies of war and revolution, but should it really be otherwise?[16] Who could plausibly claim that a five-hundred-year history of rebellion from the Peasants' War of 1525 to the Occupy Movement obviates the need for a history either of the rise of the German Social Democratic Party from the 1860s to 1914 or of the impact of the baby boom on student and popular radicalism in the 1960s? And who could plausibly deny that the latter two studies might be just as convincing, absorbing, and "useful" (and very often more so) to a wide variety of audiences, including but not limited to policymakers? On this point, Guldi and Armitage dodge and weave. They begin with overheated claims about a woeful retreat from the *longue durée*: "evidence of a moral crisis, an inward-looking retreat from commenting on contemporary global issues and alternative futures" (83–84). But in their conclusion, they end up calling weakly for a union of "micro" and "macro" (119), hardly a proclamation worthy of the manifesto label, a point to which we return at the end.

THERE IS NOTHING NEW ABOUT lamenting the specialization of knowledge, but Guldi and Armitage have erected a fantasy on those age-old foundations.[17] Certainly the world of historical research has grown massively since the 1950s, in large measure due to the dramatic expansion of access to higher education. However, it takes a far-fetched interpretation of the steep rise in history Ph.D.'s from the 1960s and early 1970s to imagine that history became less, not more, relevant in public life as the discipline gained more formally trained practitioners, and a more democratic sense of who gets to have a history and to write it. The expansion of universities led to the proliferation of all kinds of history-writing: the short-termist dissertations that Guldi and Armitage cite and long-term studies as well, thus laying the groundwork for the so-called "history boom" of the 1980s and 1990s.[18]

Far from closing themselves off in their professional ivory towers, historians in

[16] An observation we derive from our own sample, echoed by Lemercier, "La longue durée."

[17] Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970* (Chicago, 2005), chap. 2, offers examples from the 1890s to the 1990s, as well as this sobering conclusion: "So common have criticisms of overspecialization been that their continuing appearance registers a failure of American historians to examine the history of historical practice" (25). And see further his reflections on why historians may be more prone to this kind of self-doubt than other academics (21–22).

[18] The chronology of the expansion of higher education follows different paths in the U.S. and the UK, but in both countries this expansion is roughly paralleled by a growing consumption of history by popular audiences, which suggests to us a connection—rather than a disconnection—between academic and popular history. For a crude measure of the growth of history publishing in the UK, which follows the trajectory of higher education, see Peter Mandler, *History and National Life* (London, 2002), 100–102; and for the U.S., see Robert B. Townsend, "History and the Future of Scholarly Publishing," *Perspectives on History*, October 2003, http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-2003/history-and-the-future-of-scholarly-publishing, fig. 3: "Number of New Book Titles Produced in Select Humanities Fields, 1920 to 1995." To tease apart the respective contributions of this body of publishing to direct popular consumption, to the provision of an essential research base for other forms of history for popular consumption, and to purely academic discourse would require a more forensic analysis, but see Tyrrell, *Historians in Public*, for an argument that in most periods these contributions are mutually supportive.

the last forty years have been reaching larger and ever more diverse publics in a wide array of public theaters: in the classroom, where the number of U.S. humanities students grew rapidly in the supposedly dark days of the "Short Past" from the mid-1970s to the mid-2000s, and where the number of UK humanities students has probably trebled in a period of very rapid expansion; in the media, where in the UK the phenomenon of the "telly don" emerged in precisely this period, and where in the U.S. history programming has been a staple since the 1977 TV miniseries *Roots*; in the new museums devoted to history, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in the U.S. and the wave of Heritage Lottery Fund foundations in the UK, and older history museums reinvigorated, not least by burgeoning research programs that link with academics; in the widening embrace of "public history" and "heritage" by publics and academics alike in both countries; and among the reading public, as history titles have maintained strong sales even while the publishing industry as a whole has struggled.[19] Historians have recruited these new audiences as the range of acceptable subjects has opened out from the realms of politics, international relations, intellectual life, and governing institutions to encompass economic performance, race, class, gender, family, sexuality, art, and science, and latterly the "inner space" of identities and emotions.[20]

All of this activity is passed over in Guldi and Armitage's account of history's "retreat from the public realm," because their own definition of public engagement is very narrow-gauged (79).[21] By and large, their target audience is not millions of their fellow citizens, but very specifically a set of elites: "activists," "entrepreneurs," "CEOs," policymakers, and politicians (4, 12, 78), or, as Armitage put it in the *Harvard Crimson* recently, "somebody very powerful on Wall Street."[22] Their conception of appropriate theaters for engagement is not classrooms or museums or the media or reading, but "legislative committees . . . activist campaigns . . . Silicon Valley start-ups" (114).[23] Their ideas about what historians can do for these policy and business elites are equally narrow-gauged and unsupported by evidence or logic. The big

[19] On the reinvigoration of historical societies, see Robin Pogrebin, "These Fusty Names Are History," *New York Times*, October 26, 2014, F9. On book sales, see the Nielsen figures reported in the *Independent* in 2012: between 2002 and 2011, "sales of history books . . . increased by more than 45% to nearly 5.4 million copies a year—more than double the rate of growth across the publishing industry as a whole." Cahal Milmo, "Young Historians 'Are Damaging Academia' in Their Bid for Stardom," *Independent*, May 9, 2012, http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/history/young-historians-are-damaging-academia-in-their-bid-for-stardom-7723284.html. Although sales figures have contracted in the past two years, "history & military" titles (the Nielsen designation) have maintained their share of the total UK market. E-mails from Hazel Kenyon, Head of Publisher Account Management, Nielsen, December 4, 2014, and from Joanne Kaptanis, Publisher Account Manager, Nielsen, December 5, 2014. Comparable figures for the U.S. were not available from Nielsen without substantial cost. But see Townsend, "History and the Future of Scholarly Publishing," which suggests that academic history has consistently done better than academic publishing in other fields at reaching non-academic markets in the U.S.

[20] A point that Laurel Thatcher Ulrich makes in *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (New York, 2008), 39; and see Tyrrell, *Historians in Public*, 254, on "the democratic potential of the newer forms of specialized history," which he sees as combining since the 1990s with other forms of public outreach.

[21] On this issue, see Matt Houlbrook, "Big Histories, Small Minds," http://mbsbham.wordpress.com/responding-to-the-history-manifesto/matt-houlbrook-big-histories-small-minds/.

[22] Gabrielle M. Williams, "Professors Make Case for 'Long-Term' History," *Harvard Crimson*, November 24, 2014, http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2014/11/24/long-term-history-event/.

[23] The emphasis on historians' unique (expert) analytical capacities and on their usefulness in elite job markets sits uneasily alongside occasional outbursts of populism such as can be found on pp. 30, 117, and 119.

questions that should grip these policy and business elites are, they argue, questions of the *longue durée*, and the answers can be supplied by the assembly of big data. Here is an explanation for their forced arguments about the short-termism of academic history: they needed to invent a crisis of short-termism in the discipline in order to point clearly toward the advantages of the *longue durée*.

Yet why should policy and business elites be interested in the *longue durée*? It is true that some of the pressing problems of our time are long-term problems—climate change being the obvious one, and the subject of a large portion of *The History Manifesto*'s chapter 3. But even some of the problems cited by Guldi and Armitage as intrinsically *longue durée* strike us as benefiting from "Short Past" answers: the rise of income inequality in the West, for example, a phenomenon of the last thirty-five years and requiring surely as many new studies of neoliberalism, global political economy, and inequality in the "Short Past" as longer-term studies such as Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. And most of the problems that beset policy and business elites today are probably best couched in the five-to-fifty-year "biological time-span" about which Guldi and Armitage are so scornful. We see no evidence (either in *The History Manifesto* or in the real world) that "five hundred years [is] better than five months or five years as a planning horizon," the slogan emblazoned on the book's print cover.

Indeed, Guldi and Armitage don't offer a single example from the past few decades to prove that there is any correlation whatsoever between the time scale of a study and its significance to public policy. Given that initiatives that seek to bring historians and social scientists in contact with policymakers (such as History & Policy in the UK or the Scholars Strategy Network in the U.S., neither of which is mentioned in *The History Manifesto*) have by now accumulated years of experience on the subject, wouldn't it be useful to consider how expertise has been brought to bear—and what sorts of obstacles such efforts have faced? Sociologists and political scientists, never mind economists (despised and cartoonish in Guldi and Armitage's treatment), have, they acknowledge, decades of experience in this realm. By ignoring other social scientists' efforts to influence policymaking, *The History Manifesto*'s central arguments appear all the more oddly blind to the real constraints of politics, either to historians' ideas being taken up or to the very complex sorts of problems that global warming or disintegrating states pose.

At the same time, Guldi and Armitage omit any discussion of historians who have had a demonstrable influence on policy, perhaps because these examples have little to do with the sort of history they favor. Here, too, the record contradicts their portrait of a profession's turn to insularity and irrelevance beginning in the 1970s. It was in the 1980s that historians in the U.S. first undertook to file their own *amicus* briefs, intervening in judicial proceedings to influence court decisions.[24] A prime example is the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), overturning the country's remaining sodomy laws, where the historians' *amicus* brief

[24] Michael Grossberg, "Friends of the Court: A New Role for Historians," *Perspectives on History*, November 2010, http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2010/friends-of-the-court-a-new-role-for-historians; Laura Kalman, *The Strange Career of Legal Liberalism* (New Haven, Conn., 1996).

proved pivotal.[25] That brief represented the type of identity history that Guldi and Armitage disparage as "the documenting of the victim under mainstream society" and also involved relatively *longue durée* generalizations (34). Much the same could be said of the *Sears* case, where historian witnesses on both sides dueled over the significance of the past fifty years' history of women's work.[26] In Europe, a string of legal and political disputes since the 1980s have drawn on the expertise of historians, almost entirely for the "Short History" skills discounted by Guldi and Armitage: forensic analysis of documentary evidence, arbitrage not of "big data" but of very intense human conflicts, "speaking truth to power" not about the last five hundred years but more often about the last five or fifty. The only case we know of in which a historical commission brought down a government came in 2002, when a group of historians of the Second World War (six years' duration) reported against the Dutch military's conduct in the massacre at Srebrenica (a few days' duration, a few years previously).[27]

Let us suppose, though, that the five-hundred-year "planning horizon" that Guldi and Armitage advocate were desirable. Why should historians be uniquely anointed to command it? There may be *a few* very long-term (unchanging or consistently changing) factors in human history, though most of the obvious ones Guldi and Armitage are rightly chary of embracing, and they don't seem particularly congenial to historians—evolutionary psychology, for example, which posits some invariable human traits fixed for all time in the Pleistocene (3, 71, 109), or modernization theory (27–29), which Guldi and Armitage themselves dub "the dirty *longue durée*" (28), without considering its power as a counterexample of historians' courtship of policymakers gone wrong.[28] We share Guldi and Armitage's view that historians' most practical contribution here has been to challenge theories based on invariance or consistent variance, by identifying conjunctures (often unpredictable) that disrupt patterns or introduce novel factors, but then this seems a quintessentially "Short Past" task. Churchill may have said, "The longer you can look back the further you can look forward" (cited approvingly, 14), but how many historians believe this?

Guldi and Armitage have a near-mystic faith in historians' singular talent for looking into the future. Apparently history, unlike all of the other disciplines, is devoted to "facts" rather than "theories" (3). Alternatively, only historians know, based on the facts, when one theory—apparently applicable for some period of time—has become outmoded and requires replacement by another theory (109). At

[25] *Lawrence v. Texas* (02-102), 539 U.S. 558 (2003) 41 S. W. 3d 349, reversed and remanded; http://findlawimages.com/efile/supreme/briefs/02-102/02-102.mer.ami.hist.pdf. On the tensions between scholarship and legal advocacy, see Estelle B. Freedman, *Feminism, Sexuality and Politics: Essays* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006), chap. 10.

[26] *EEOC v. Sears, Roebuck & Co.,* 628F. Supp. 1264, 1278 (N.D. Ill. 1986), aff'd, 839 F.2d 302 (7th Circ. 1988); Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York, 1998), 502–510.

[27] Hans Blom, "Historical Research Where Scholarship and Politics Meet: The Case of Srebrenica," in Harriet Jones, Kjell Östberg, and Nico Randeraad, eds., *Contemporary History on Trial: Europe since 1989 and the Role of the Expert Historian* (Manchester, 2007), 104–122. Most of the other cases in this volume draw on the same set of "Short Past" problems and skills: the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, Bloody Sunday, the Algerian War, and so forth.

[28] Guldi and Armitage conveniently exculpate historians from the misadventures of the "dirty *longue durée*," though of course the economic historian and modernization theorist Walt Rostow (neither mentioned nor cited in *The History Manifesto*) is an obvious example of a historian who used *longue durée* narratives not to speak truth to power but to propagandize for it.

times, history becomes nearly personified as an absolute arbiter, giving clear "directives" based on its "longer perspectives" (70). The facts seem to speak for themselves, and only historians can wrangle them. Thus it has been a failure to properly assemble and analyze the facts about climate change—"the purview of neither science nor economics but of history"—that has explained the failure of climate-change politics (64). Similarly, it was a failure to consult the facts of history regarding the effects of regulation and taxation on economic growth that led to "the policy stalemate of the 1990s," a stalemate that is "no longer tenable" "because of the evidence about long-term processes amassed by historians" (71).

What accounts for historians' special predictive powers is that they are somehow, by definition, the preeminent data-handlers, better qualified than anyone else to manipulate huge reservoirs of quantitative or quantifiable evidence. *The History Manifesto* is brimful of contempt for everyone else who seeks to address complex problems, including (or especially) by means of recourse to big data. "Information scientists, environmentalists, and even financial analysts" need us to tell them where their data comes from—they never think about that themselves, apparently (12). Only historians can make expert "claims about causality" (64–65). Only historians can "work with big data that were accrued by human institutions working over time" (105).[29] Or perhaps other specialists can marshal their own data, but only historians have the breadth of vision to do "arbitration" between discrete bodies of data (105, 107). In arbitrating the coming "war between the experts," "the History departments of major research universities will almost certainly take a lead; it requires talents and training which no other discipline possesses" (107).

Not if Guldi and Armitage's own displays are any indication. Their debacle with Schmidt's data on the time span of dissertations is a case in point. So is their travesty of the complex arguments made by economists and economic historians. To say that "the economists conclude that the nineteenth century led to gains in equality, opportunity, and nutrition" is an absurd distortion, given the vociferous debates about these issues in the field (57–58).[30] Furthermore, they misrepresent specific studies even as they attack the field of economics as a whole.[31] Guldi and Armitage can certainly lament the rise of economics as a master discipline in the past half-century. They would land more fearsome blows, though, if they could prove that they understood what they had read, and if they acknowledged that economists' predom-

[29] The example given is of a paper by geographers who searched a scientific database for keywords to assess changing public opinion over time, which "would never pass muster in a history journal" (105), but the example cited is no more risible than G&A's own Google n-gram search for "more and more about less" (49, fig. 3). What does an n-gram that demonstrates that the phrase "more and more about less [and less]" reached its high point in 1942, sloping steadily downward thereafter, prove about specialization throughout the twentieth century?

[30] For a review of the state of the field, see Brian A'Hearn, "The British Industrial Revolution in a European Mirror," in Roderick Floud, Jane Humphries, and Paul Johnson, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, new ed., vol. 1: *1700–1870* (Cambridge, 2014), 1–52.

[31] In particular, see their discussion on pp. 57–59 and the mischaracterization of Joel Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* (Princeton, N.J., 2002), and Paul Johnson and Stephen Nicholas, "Male and Female Living Standards in England and Wales, 1812–1857: Evidence from Criminal Height Records," *Economic History Review* 48, no. 3 (1995): 470–481. For an accounting of these errors and others, see "Jo Guldi's Curiouser & Curiouser Footnotes," November 10, 2014, *Pseudoerasmus*, http://pseudoerasmus.com/2014/11/10/history-manifesto-errors/. The anonymous economics blogger Pseudoerasmus attributes these mistakes to Guldi, but Armitage obviously shares responsibility.

inance not only owes to their discipline's proximity to the powerful but also reflects the growing sophistication of their data-handling techniques.

Guldi and Armitage have seized upon big data and historians' expertise as the solution not just to the world's problems but to the troubles they see for the discipline of history. *The History Manifesto* is a book in a panic—its authors gripped by a "crisis of the humanities" and grasping desperately at solutions. Once again, Benjamin Schmidt's data on humanities degrees across the U.S. does not support this conclusion. History and the humanities in general have done well to hold their position for the last thirty years, and a similar stability over an even longer period has been evident in the UK, though in the short term the humanities tend not to do well in periods of economic downturn.[32] In this respect, Guldi and Armitage's alarmism smacks of the very short-term thinking they purport to deplore. Worse, by portraying much of the work of historians over the past half-century as irrelevant, even worthless—misrepresentations of the historiography seemingly pitched more to the public than to the profession—they risk contributing to the decline of the humanities they claim to fear.

Since the publication of *The History Manifesto*, Guldi and Armitage have insisted that their purpose was simply to add another tool to the historians' toolbox. That is an ambition no one could fault, though were it their aim, much more useful would have been a tough-minded assessment of big data as a new platform for historical analysis, taking into account the risks and costs, something other than the unqualified encomium to its possibilities now on offer.[33] But such an ecumenical program is not in fact the book's point, and that is not how Armitage and Guldi have characterized their position in the articles they have published since its launch.[34]

If Guldi and Armitage are no longer arguing that long-range histories have particular "moral stakes" that impose a "mandate" upon historians and can claim an *a priori* superiority in policymaking different from studies of other durations (84–85);

[32] Humanities degrees from U.S. universities have retained a stable share of about 17 percent of all degrees since 1970, with a dip in the 1980s and recovery in the 1990s. See National Center for Educational Statistics, Table 289: "Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's Degrees Conferred by Degree-Granting Institutions, by Field of Study: Selected Years, 1970–71 through 2009–10," *Digest of Education Statistics*, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_289.asp; and cf. Benjamin Schmidt's statistics, using different categories and a longer time scale, but again showing considerable stability over the last thirty years: Schmidt, "A Crisis in the Humanities?," *Chronicle Blog Network*, http://chronicle.com/blognetwork/edgeofthewest/2013/06/10/the-humanities-crisis/. A similar story can be told about UK universities, where the humanities broadly defined have retained a stable share of about 21 percent of all degrees over the same period. See Peter Mandler, "The Two Cultures Revisited: The Humanities in British Universities since 1945," Ben Pimlott Memorial Lecture 2014, *Twentieth-Century British History* (forthcoming 2015; available as this article went to press through advance access, http://tcbh.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2015/02/17/tcbh.hwu068.full). As Schmidt points out, thanks to university expansion, the proportion of the college-age population holding humanities degrees has of course increased greatly.

[33] See the roundtable that was held at Columbia University on November 17, 2014: Heyman Center for the Humanities, "A Roundtable on *The History Manifesto*: The Role of History and the Humanities in a Digital Age," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAfkRj4nwd4. For more on the event, see http://heymancenter.org/events/a-roundtable-on-the-history-manifesto-the-role-of-history-and-the-humanitie/. For a thought-provoking assessment, see Tim Hitchcock, "Big Data, Small Data and Meaning," November 9, 2014, Historyonics, http://historyonics.blogspot.com/2014/11/big-data-small-data-and-meaning_9.html.

[34] For example, see Armitage and Guldi, "Bonfire of the Humanities: Public Debate Is Afflicted by Short-Term Thinking—How Did History Abdicate Its Role of Inspiring the Longer View?," *Aeon*, http://aeon.co/magazine/society/how-history-forgot-its-role-in-public-debate/: "Why not toss all those introverted but highly competent monographs and journals articles onto a bonfire of the humanities?"

if they no longer assert that the discipline of history as a whole took a wrong turn in the years 1975–2005; if they recognize that big data are not the only "future of the university," let alone the only ethical future (115–116, 119); if they acknowledge that the discipline of history has been capacious to its profit and will not benefit from being herded in a single direction: we are wondering what exactly it is they have to say. Our points are simple, and until *The History Manifesto*, we hardly would have thought they needed articulation. Superb history, influential either in academic circles or more broadly in public life, can be conducted on any time scale, from a single day to thousands of years. It is precisely the diversity of our discipline, its rich, humane traditions that speak to multiple audiences on all the scales in which humans feel and think, that have made us an indispensable part of the educational and cultural landscape over the past generation. Nurturing and, where necessary, defending these traditions is "the future of the university," and the job for us all.

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AHR Exchange
The History Manifesto: A Reply to Deborah Cohen and Peter Mandler

DAVID ARMITAGE AND JO GULDI

IT IS IN THE NATURE OF MANIFESTOS to be hopeful, forward-looking, and somewhat provocative. As the name suggests, manifestos strive to be open, to make evident what might otherwise be obscure. Ever since Marx and Engels irreversibly reconfigured the genre's authoritative, sovereign form in the mid-nineteenth century, manifestos have been both rhetorical and practical, diagnostic as well as reformative: they discern problems and offer sometimes utopian solutions. They generally try to rise above perceived divisions to mobilize a community or conjure one where it had not existed before. Because they are not meant to sustain the status quo but rather to imagine new possibilities, they are generally exhortatory in tone.[1] Often short, punchy, and direct, such manifestations can be unsettling. Any manifesto worth its salt will likely invigorate many readers only at the cost of disturbing others. That has not deterred revolutionaries or artists from writing manifestos; when the time is ripe, even historians have been known to produce them.[2]

The History Manifesto deliberately adopts many of the features of the genre. The book is literally open, in the sense that it is available through open access for free download—a first for its publisher, Cambridge University Press—with the aim of reaching the widest possible readership, both academic and non-academic.[3] It diagnoses a crisis of the humanities in general, and for history in particular. It then proposes one set of solutions that draws upon new possibilities for researching, writing, and disseminating history, not least by using digital methods and data. The book concentrates on what joins all historians together—what our shared and distinctive practices are and how they might be extended—rather than on the distinctions be-

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[1] Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, N.J., 2006).

[2] For example, and to take only nominal instances, Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow, eds., *Manifestos for History* (London, 2007); Ivan Jablonka, *L'histoire est une littérature contemporaine: Manifeste pour les sciences sociales* (Paris, 2014).

[3] Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge, 2014), http://historymanifesto.cambridge.org. Cambridge University Press's second open-access monograph makes the broader case for open-access publication in the humanities: Martin Paul Eve, *Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies and the Future* (Cambridge, 2014), http://ebooks.cambridge.org/ebook.jsf?bid=CBO9781316161012.

tween various subfields. It has some of the rhetorical urgency that is suited to the genre, if still rather uncommon in professional historical writing. It has already elicited widely divergent reactions around the world, from Chile to Pakistan, and across the critical spectrum, from the wildly enthusiastic to the devastatingly dismissive.[4] The book came out within weeks of two other Anglophone efforts to survey the past, present, and future of historical writing and its place in the world, by Lynn Hunt and Hayden White.[5] One historical manifesto may be regarded as an event; three look like a movement.[6]

Deborah Cohen and Peter Mandler's vigorous response to *The History Manifesto* is among the most negative the book has received so far. By using language such as "deceptive," "irresponsible," "overheated," "a fantasy," "blind," "mystic," "debacle," "travesty," and "a book in a panic," Cohen and Mandler suspend their interpretive charity. They write as hanging judges, not recording angels. If this were a regularly commissioned book review in the *AHR*, Cohen and Mandler would have been expected to "explain the basic argument of [the] book, assess its strengths *and* weaknesses, and place the work in historiographical context."[7] However, because this is an unsolicited "critique," and not a review, they have not been held to the journal's strict guidelines. It may be worth recalling here R. H. Tawney's famous admonition: "An erring colleague is not an Amalekite to be smitten hip and thigh. My correction of some . . . misconceptions has, I trust, been free from the needless and unpleasing asperity into which criticism, to the injury of its cause, is liable on occasion to lapse."[8] Cohen and Mandler cite only other negative reviews of *The History Manifesto*, but not any of the more balanced or positive scholarly assessments that variously judge it to be "ambitious," "stunning," "big, bold, [and] visionary," "concise, impassioned and readable," "feisty and suggestive," "exciting," "irrefutable . . . compelling," and "enormously timely . . . excellent."[9]

[4] A full list of reviews and responses can be found at http://scholar.harvard.edu/armitage/publications/history-manifesto.

[5] Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York, 2014); Hayden White, *The Practical Past* (Evanston, Ill., 2014). See also Jablonka, *L'histoire est une littérature contemporaine*; Serge Gruzinski, *L'histoire, pour quoi faire?* (Paris, 2015).

[6] Samuel Moyn, "Bonfire of the Humanities," *The Nation* 300, no. 6 (February 9, 2015): 27–32, http://www.thenation.com/article/195553/bonfire-humanities.

[7] "Book Reviewing in the *AHR*," http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/american-historical-review/book-review-guide, emphasis added.

[8] R. H. Tawney, "The Rise of the Gentry: A Postscript," *Economic History Review* 7, no. 1 (1954): 91–97, here 97.

[9] David Abulafia, "Lucky Jim and La Longue Durée," *Standpoint* 67 (November 2014), http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/5784/full; Judith A. Bennett, review for the *Journal of Pacific History* 50, no. 1 (March 2015): 98–99; Virginia Berridge, review for *E-International Relations*, January 18, 2015, http://www.e-ir.info/2015/01/18/review-the-history-manifesto/; Richard Blakemore, "Some Thoughts on *The History Manifesto*," *historywomble*, October 14, 2014, http://historywomble.wordpress.com/2014/10/14/some-thoughts-on-the-history-manifesto/; Tom Cutterham, "Historians Getting Things Done," *Oxonian Review* 26, no. 2 (October 27, 2014), http://www.oxonianreview.org/wp/historians-getting-things-done/; Dan Edelstein, "Intellectual History and Digital Humanities," *Modern Intellectual History* 12 (January 21, 2015), http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1479244314000833; James Everest, "The Return of the *Longue Durée*," *Review 31*, January 21, 2015, http://review31.co.uk/article/view/299/the-return-of-the-longue-duree; Paul Lay, "Return of the Narrative," *Literary Review* 425 (October 2014): 1, http://www.exacteditions.com/browse/327/342/40262/3/3; Scott McLemee, "The History Manifesto," *Inside Higher Ed*, September 17, 2014, https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2014/09/17/review-jo-guldi-and-david-armitage-history-manifesto; Moyn, "Bonfire of the Humanities"; Garrett Dash Nelson, "Taking the Long View," *Edge Effects*, November 20, 2014, http://edgeeffects.net/taking-the-long-view/; Yvonne Perkins, review for

Because Cohen and Mandler's is the longest and most wide-ranging reply to date, it is the closest to a counter-manifesto the book has yet inspired.[10] As an apology for business as usual and a defense of the status quo, their essay is unimpeachable. They highlight diversity rather than commonality, perceive no need for change, and foresee few, if any, new directions for our profession. But does this place sufficient faith in historians' ability to speak to multiple publics, within and beyond the academy? And is it an adequate response to both the pressures and the opportunities facing historians in the early twenty-first century?

The History Manifesto argues that it is not. The book presents two broad arguments to suggest a need for change and the potential for innovation. The first treats the challenges facing history departments as part of a wider "crisis of the humanities" and of an endemic institutional short-termism in our culture beyond the university that is now widely diagnosed and debated.[11] The second examines the possibilities for new kinds of research opened up by the availability of digital data, the tools to analyze it, and the methods of communicating that analysis. On the first set of questions, Cohen and Mandler are upbeat to the point of complacency. They dismiss the "crisis of the humanities" in barely a sentence, yet do so only shortly after the American Historical Association presented evidence of a "seven-year slide" in undergraduate enrollments in history.[12] Their insouciance on this point hardly does justice to the widespread concerns and animated debates about declining enrollments, pressures from public funders, the corporatization of the university, the instrumentalization of humanities disciplines, and a host of other factors that have put fellow historians and humanists on the defensive from Australia to Mexico as well as in the United States and the United Kingdom.[13]

To bolster confidence about our field, Cohen and Mandler highlight a range of

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Stumbling through the Past, November 27, 2014, http://stumblingpast.wordpress.com/2014/11/27/review-the-history-manifesto/; David Reynolds, "The Return of Big History: The Long Past Is the Antidote to Short-Termism," *New Statesman* 5246 (January 23–29, 2015): 36–38, http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/01/return-big-history-long-past-antidote-short-termism; John Tosh, review for *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 19 (February 13, 2015), http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2015.1005377; Rowan Williams, "Books of the Year: NS Friends and Contributors Choose Their Favourite Reading of 2014," *New Statesman* 5236 (November 14–20, 2014): 42, http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/11/books-year-ns-friends-and-contributors-choose-their-favourite-reading-2014.

[10] See also the critical dossier by Lynn Hunt, Christian Lamouroux, Claire Lemercier, Claudia Moatti, and Francesca Trivellato on David Armitage and Jo Guldi, "Le retour de la longue durée: Une perspective anglo-saxonne," forthcoming in *Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales* 70, no. 2 (April–June 2015), with reply: Armitage and Guldi, "Pour une 'histoire ambitieuse,'" ibid., http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/armitage/files/annales_reply.pdf.

[11] See, for example, Alfred Rappaport, *Saving Capitalism from Short-Termism: How to Build Long-Term Value and Take Back Our Financial Future* (New York, 2011); Pascal Lamy et al., *Now for the Long Term: The Report of the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations* (Oxford, 2013); Schumpeter, "The Tyranny of the Long Term," *Economist*, November 22, 2014, http://www.economist.com/news/business/21633805-lets-not-get-carried-away-bashing-short-termism-tyranny-long-term.

[12] Allen Mikaelian, "Drilling Down into the Latest Undergraduate Data: History Bachelors Decline, but Several Upward Trends Persist," *AHA Perspectives*, November 2014, http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2014/drilling-down-into-the-latest-undergraduate-data.

[13] See, among many recent works, Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracies Need the Humanities* (Princeton, N.J., 2010); Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education* (London, 2013); Ben Etherington, "Universities and the Block," *Sydney Review of Books*, May 23, 2014, http://www.sydneyreviewofbooks.com/universities-and-the-block/; Erika Pani, "Soft Science: The Humanities in Mexico" (unpublished paper).

areas where historians have been more publicly engaged since the 1970s. Yet to show that history has become more popular in some circles—however reassuring and even inspiring that might be—fails to address one of *The History Manifesto*'s central contentions: that the major institutions that shape most people's lives, most of the time—governments, corporations, NGOs, international agencies, and the like—often lack a sense of history and do not engage the expertise of historians as they gather information, formulate policy, or make far-reaching decisions. The contribution of historians to legal processes (noted by Cohen and Mandler), whether as expert witnesses or as the signatories of *amicus* briefs, runs counter to this trend. Indeed, this is one of the areas where longer histories have effected major change, for example, in the deliberations of the Waitangi Tribunal in New Zealand and similar discussions of indigenous land claims in Australia and Canada. Such historical interventions were more common in the age of Tawney and Lewis Mumford, for example. They are now relatively rare, perhaps because the experience of historians who did not speak truth to power but were instead co-opted served to inoculate others against engagement that informs democratic decision-making.

Whatever the reasons, the prominence of historians in the worlds of museums, media, and publishing still hardly matches the daily influence of other academics, most notably economists but also political scientists and lawyers, in the practices of modern governance.[14] It was not ever thus. *The History Manifesto* argues that historians retreated from this broader public conversation. More recent data from the *New York Times* partly confirms this hypothesis. Citations of historians in the newspaper's pages consistently outnumbered those of economists until the mid-1960s, when citations from economists took off. There was a brief resurgence among historians in the early 2000s, but in the aftermath of the financial crisis, economists have returned to prominence.[15] (See Figure 1.) This data drawn from a single source in a single country is clearly more indicative than definitive. What it indicates probably says more about the success of economists in riding the waves of economic cycles than it does about any failure by historians to move with the times.

The History Manifesto's confidence in history and historians was addressed just as much to "fellow citizens" as to any alleged "set of elites" (an odd assemblage that for Cohen and Mandler includes activists as well as CEOs). Cohen and Mandler are correct not to underestimate the difficulties of bringing history to bear in the workings of those institutions. Nonetheless, as Virginia Berridge, a leading British figure at the intersection of history and policy, has recently written, "Statistics and long-term trends do convince policy makers." Historians adept at the analysis of data and the presentation of longer trends therefore have an opportunity to address "future policy agendas; they have the ideal combination of evidence and skills to do so."[16] Cohen and Mandler might still brand this as elitist, but few readers of the *AHR* are

[14] Marion Fourcade, Étienne Ollion, and Yann Algan, "The Superiority of Economists," MaxPo Discussion Paper 14/3, Max Planck Sciences Po Center on Coping with Instability in Market Societies, November 2014, http://www.maxpo.eu/pub/maxpo_dp/maxpodp14-3.pdf.

[15] Justin Wolfers, "How Economists Came to Dominate the Conversation," *The Upshot*, *New York Times*, January 23, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/01/24/upshot/how-economists-came-to-dominate-the-conversation.html.

[16] Berridge, review of *The History Manifesto*. See also Virginia Berridge, "History Matters? History's Role in Health Policy Making," *Medical History* 52, no. 3 (July 2008): 311–326; Ann McGrath, "Is History Good Medicine?," *Journal of Australian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2014): 396–414; Alix Green, "History as

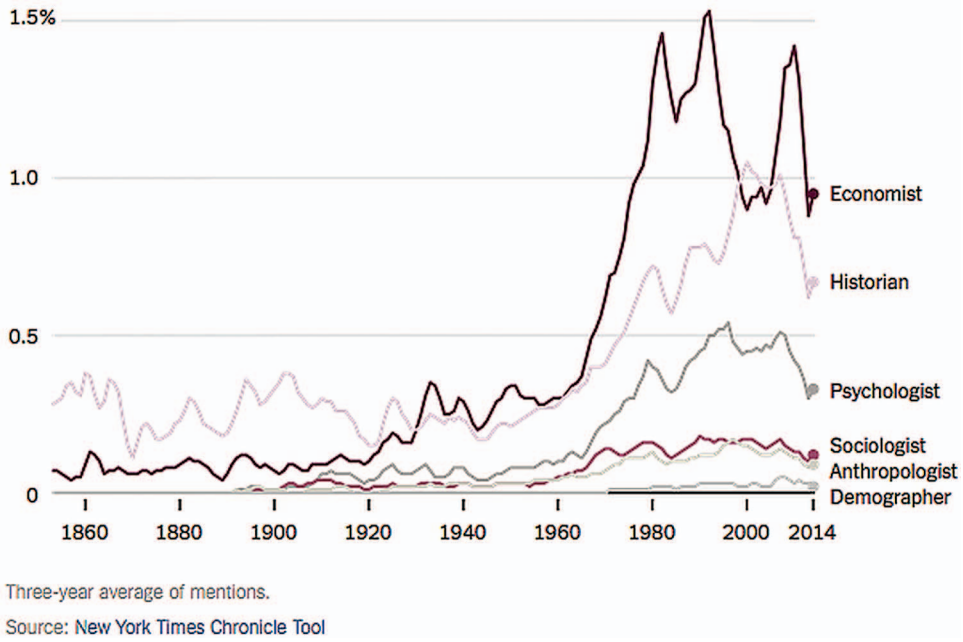

FIGURE 1: Three-year average of mentions of economists, historians, and other social scientists in the *New York Times*, 1851–2014. Interest in what economists have to say rises and falls with the economy. As measured by mentions in the *NYT*, other professions are not as notable.

likely to recommend that less history, rather than more, be brought to bear upon the world's most pressing problems. *The History Manifesto* endorses the more generous conception of what John Tosh has recently called "critical public history": that is, "knowledge about the past which is made freely available on the widest possible terms" by historians as citizen scholars and not solely directed toward fellow academics.[17]

Cohen and Mandler do not share *The History Manifesto*'s confidence that historians could be critical arbiters of the data deluge all around us. They are almost silent on the potential of new sources of data and the digital methods used to analyze them beyond finding them merely "useful." They seem content to cede control and assessment of that data to almost anybody other than historians and scorn the idea that we might have skills we can transfer from traditional sources to new forms of evidence, in greater volume and on longer time scales. Indeed, they mock the notion that we have any special capacities at all, finding such self-confidence in our profession a "near-mystic faith," even though Mandler himself has written elsewhere

Expertise and the Influence of Political Culture on Advice for Policy since Fulton," *Contemporary British History* 29, no. 1 (January 2015): 27–50.

[17] John Tosh, "Public History, Civic Engagement and the Historical Profession in Britain," *History* 99, no. 335 (April 2014): 191–212, here 192–193, 194. See also James Grossman and Jason Steinhauer, "Historians and Public Culture: Widening the Circle of Advocacy," *AHA Perspectives*, November 2014, http://historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2014/historians-and-public-culture.

about historians' "unique set of skills—forensic and investigative, interdisciplinary, evaluative and interpretive."[18]

The History Manifesto argues that historians' distinctive techniques can now be extended and supplemented by digital tools and methods, as historians apply their strengths in handling sources critically, parsing causation and correlation, drawing on multiple methodologies, and appraising evidence in novel ways. Distant reading, data visualization, and digital tools designed specifically to answer historical questions can extend our grasp of the past in ways that supplement rather than supplant the traditional capacities of historians.[19] As Mandler's own judgment of those skills as "unique" implies, confidence in the peculiar capacities of historians is hardly mystical. That is true even when they are applied not just to the past but also to the future. "The future is not my period," Sir Tom Devine quipped during the debate on the Scottish independence referendum last year: that might sum up the current attitude of most professional historians.[20] However, as Hayden White, Reinhart Koselleck, and other historians of historiography have amply documented, the future was part of Western historians' purview until the discipline narrowed its ethical ambit to the past alone over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[21]

When seen over the *longue durée* in this way, it is hardly absurd to suggest that historians might once again extend their ethical commitments forward in time. Of course, we have no privileged access to the future. However, with a becoming sense of modesty, we might still make better futurists than others precisely because we are used to determining constraints for plausible explanations, dealing with information deficits (as well as information overloads), and engaging in complex and multicausal analysis along overlapping time scales.[22] In these regards, historians are well-equipped to imagine futures that are open but not infinitely so, that emerge from the present, and that are shaped but not determined by history. As Richard Neustadt and Ernest May classically put it in *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (1986), "the future has no place to come from but the past."[23] Those who study the past may accordingly be more reliable guides to determining which futures are plausibly imaginable and which are not.

"Start the story as far back as it properly goes," Neustadt and May urged those

[18] Peter Mandler, "The Responsibility of the Historian," in Harriet Jones, Kjell Östberg, and Nico Randeraad, eds., *Contemporary History on Trial: Europe since 1989 and the Role of the Expert Historian* (Manchester, 2007), 12–26, here 24.

[19] Emma Rothschild, "The Future of History," in Karl Grandin, ed., *Going Digital: Evolutionary and Revolutionary Aspects of Digitization* (Stockholm, 2011), 280–294; Edelstein, "Intellectual History and Digital Humanities."

[20] Tom Devine, "Today Is the Most Important Date since 1707 Act of Union," *Scotsman*, October 15, 2014, http://www.scotsman.com/news/tom-devine-today-is-the-most-important-date-since-1707-act-of-union-1-2576105.

[21] Hayden V. White, "The Burden of History," *History and Theory* 5, no. 2 (1966): 111–134; Reinhart Koselleck, "Historia Magistra Vitae: The Dissolution of the Topos into the Perspective of a Modernized Historical Process," in Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York, 2004), 26–42. See also the essays by David C. Engerman, Jenny Andersson, Matthew Connelly, Matt Fay, Giulia Ferrini, Micki Kaufman, Will Leonard, Harrison Monsky, Ryan Musto, Taunton Paine, Nicholas Standish, Lydia Walker, and Manu Goswami in the *AHR* Forum "Histories of the Future," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 5 (December 2012): 1402–1485.

[22] David J. Staley, *History and Future: Using Historical Thinking to Imagine the Future* (Lanham, Md., 2007).

[23] Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York, 1986), 251.

who rely on history; do not "foreshorten this history in ways that may distort it."[24] Their focus was on particular kinds of strategic decisions, and not so much on the "megatrends" that now overshadow most short-term calculations.[25] *The History Manifesto* isolated three problems of this kind—climate change, economic inequality, and global governance—though there are plenty of other examples that could be adduced: public health crises, resource scarcity, the challenges of urbanization, aging populations, and declining tax bases, to name only a few—that would be susceptible to historical analysis. In the three cases emphasized in the book (chap. 3), starting the story demanded going back centuries rather than decades, to reconstruct unfolding processes rather than more bounded events or crises, *longue durées* rather than short pasts.

The History Manifesto celebrates the achievements and virtues of microhistory and argues that "short-term analysis and the long-term overview should work together to produce a more intense, sensitive, and ethical synthesis of data" (130). Cohen and Mandler manage to misread these affirmations as "pedestrian" and "weak." But there is surely a greater danger in going too short rather than too long, of stopping one's "history too early" when the problem at hand demands reconstruction of long-range connections, tracing tangled chains of causality, and juggling multiple temporalities.[26] Historians will naturally pursue different kinds of projects at different points in their careers, as the examples of Arthur Schlesinger Sr. and Charles Beard, cited both in *The History Manifesto* and by Cohen and Mandler, show. The main thrust of the book was nonetheless to affirm the greater possibilities that are now emerging for writing such extensive histories earlier rather than later in historians' careers. The aim was accordingly not to constrain ambition but to encourage it, and not to truncate historical inquiries—particularly by younger researchers—when they require pursuit over larger expanses of time or space.

The return of the *longue durée* is a palpable and welcome feature of contemporary historical writing. Determining exactly when the rebound began, and whether it has been the work of years or decades, depends on which data—and which parts of that data—the historian focuses on. A much bigger sample than Cohen and Mandler's, drawing on date ranges in the titles of roughly 68,000 history doctoral dissertations in ProQuest, as well as in 80,000 historical articles and reviews of historical monographs published in journals from 1920 to 2014 and available through JSTOR, does suggest that those spans began to expand in the 1970s. They still reached a median range of about seventy-five years by the late 1990s, with a slight uptick only in the current decade. (See Figure 2.) Date ranges in 15,000 articles and book reviews published in the *AHR* in the same period are consistent with this broad tendency.[27] (See Figure 3.) Most striking of all is the contraction of time scales visible in history doctoral dissertations from the U.S. between 1920 and 2014. (See Figure 4.) The median date range for history dissertations in the 1920s reached as high as eighty years before falling to closer to thirty in the 1960s. It began to rise again in the 1970s,

[24] Ibid., 236.

[25] Lamy et al., *Now for the Long Term*; Bjørn Lomborg, ed., *Global Problems, Smart Solutions: Costs and Benefits* (Cambridge, 2013).

[26] David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York, 2013), 5.

[27] We are very grateful to Zachary Davis for his invaluable assistance in compiling and visualizing this data.

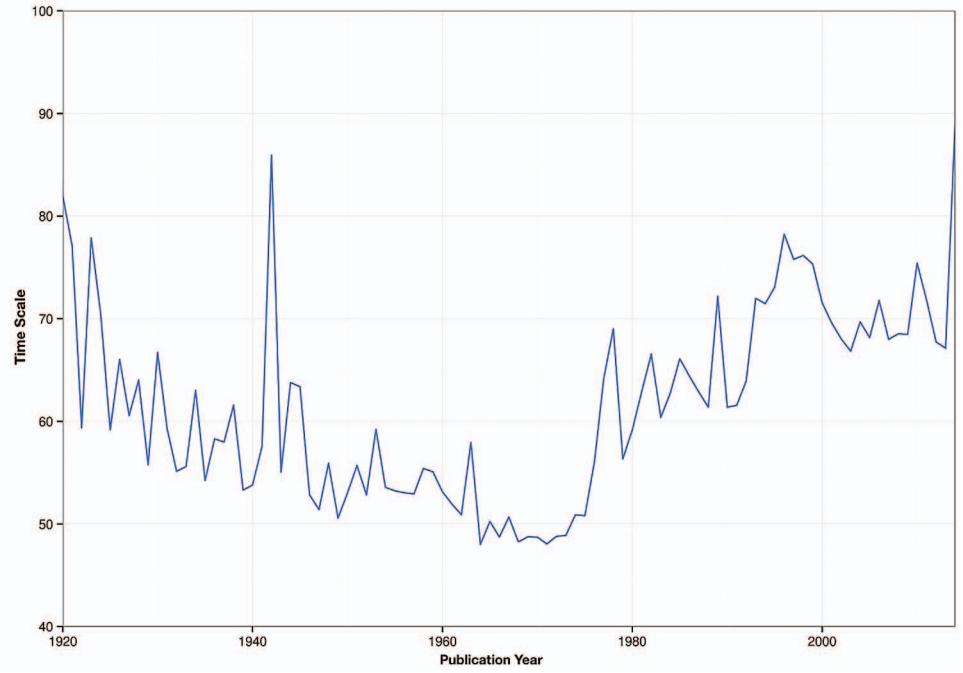

FIGURE 2: Time scales covered in JSTOR articles + JSTOR book reviews + ProQuest dissertations, 1920–2014.

with a peak around sixty years in the late 1990s. Only in the last few years has it breached a median of eighty years again.

The increasing inclination to go long is even more pronounced in the articles and books reviewed in historical journals in JSTOR. The average biological time span of roughly seventy-five years was breached only in the late 1980s, but it has been climbing ever since, with a more dramatic expansion of temporal horizons in the last five years. (See Figure 5.) As we point out in the book (40–51), some kinds of evidence—historians' memoirs, handbooks of historical practice, protests against overspecialization—indicated an inflection point for the "Short Past" around 1968. These larger datasets suggest an alternative chronology but an identical morphology. Time scales contracted and have since widened, with their greatest expansion in the last few years, just as *The History Manifesto* observed. The central question, then, is not *whether* the *longue durée* returned, but exactly *when* it started to come back.

There is also more than one possible interpretation of Benjamin Schmidt's data on the time spans covered by dissertations in history in the United States. Using Cohen and Mandler's logic that more humanities degrees mean more historians, even as the relative number of history undergraduates has declined, one can argue that the explosion in the number of history dissertations meant that in absolute, if not in relative, terms, there were simply more covering short *durées* after the 1970s. As Schmidt himself has noted, writers of dissertations treating earlier periods covered longer time spans: "Dissertations about the late middle ages typically cover a century . . . the lengths are possibly a bit longer around 1000, and they drop dramatically immediately after the renaissance, where they plateau at about 60 years for

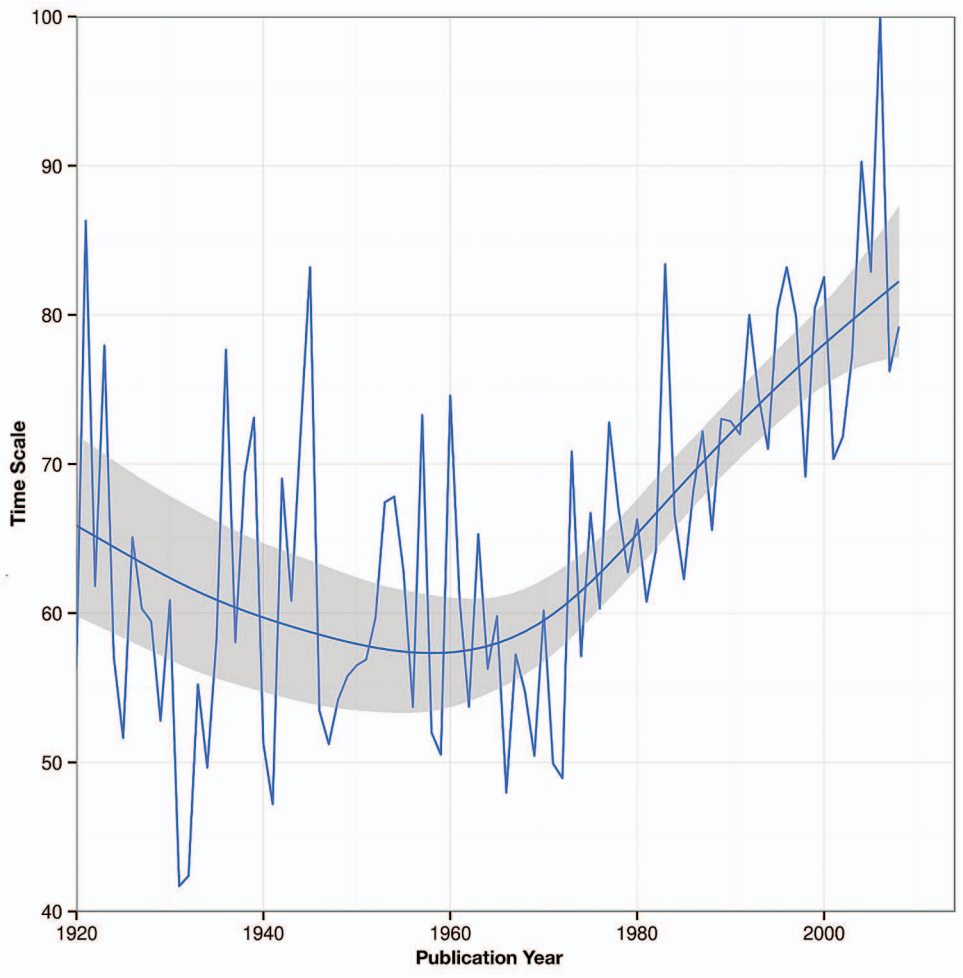

FIGURE 3: Time scales covered by articles and book reviews in the *American Historical Review*, 1920–2014. Jagged line = mean time range for a given year. Straight line = smoothed mean. Gray area: margin of error.

most of the early modern period."[28] The major shift was toward more contemporary topics. Such presentism is its own form of short-termism. It need not entail a shortening of the period under study, but it is certainly a contraction of the historian's temporal horizon to the more recent past. The perspective of the *longue durée* can help to ameliorate or overcome that particular form of historical myopia.

Historians are not soldiers, nor are they sheep: they may not want to be led, nor can they be herded. Yet, as in any complex community, the individual choices historians make—about the questions they tackle, the debates into which they intervene, the sources they deploy, and the tools they employ—aggregate behind our backs into discernible patterns, even trends. Like transnational history, transtemporal history—the movement toward longer time scales—is one of those trends.[29]

[28] Ben Schmidt, "What Years Do Historians Write About?," *Sapping Attention*, May 9, 2013, http://sappingattention.blogspot.com/2013/05/what-years-do-historians-write-about.html#more.

[29] C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed,

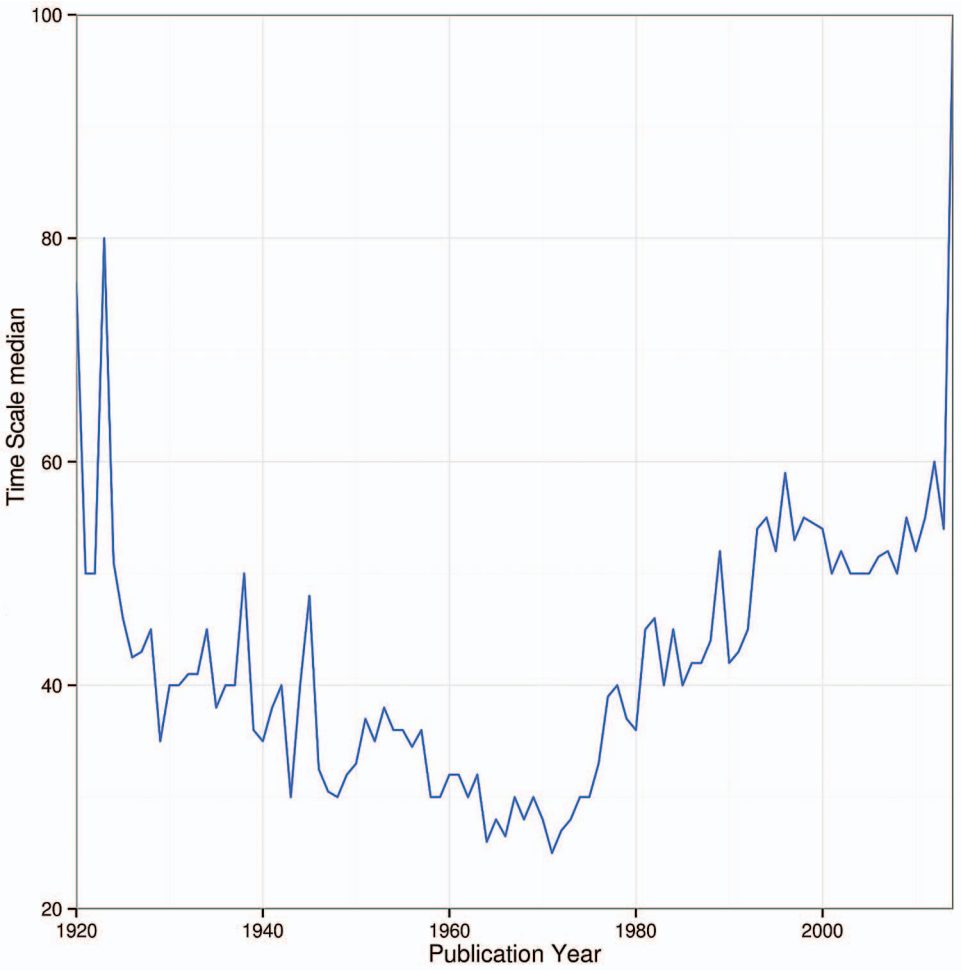

FIGURE 4: Median time scales covered by approximately 68,000 U.S. doctoral dissertations in history, 1920–2014.

It is not entirely novel—it is more of a return than a turn, in the classic historiographical sense—but it is cumulative, it is ongoing, and it shows little sign of abating.[30] It also is not confined to history departments, as the response to Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2013) across the social sciences intimates.[31]

Superb works of history on increasingly *longue durées* are appearing in almost every field, on subjects ranging from copyright to climate change, from property to philology, and from Native American history to sustainability.[32] *The History Man-*

"On Transnational History," *AHR* Conversation, *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 2006): 1441–1464; Sebouh David Aslanian, Joyce E. Chaplin, Kristin Mann, and Ann McGrath, "How Size Matters: The Question of Scale in History," *AHR* Conversation, *American Historical Review* 118, no. 5 (December 2013): 1431–1472.

[30] Armitage and Guldi, "Le retour de la longue durée."

[31] Mike Savage, "Piketty's Challenge for Sociology," *British Journal of Sociology* 65, no. 4 (December 2014): 591–606.

[32] To the works we cite in *The History Manifesto*, 85–86, add now Peter Baldwin, *The Copyright Wars:*

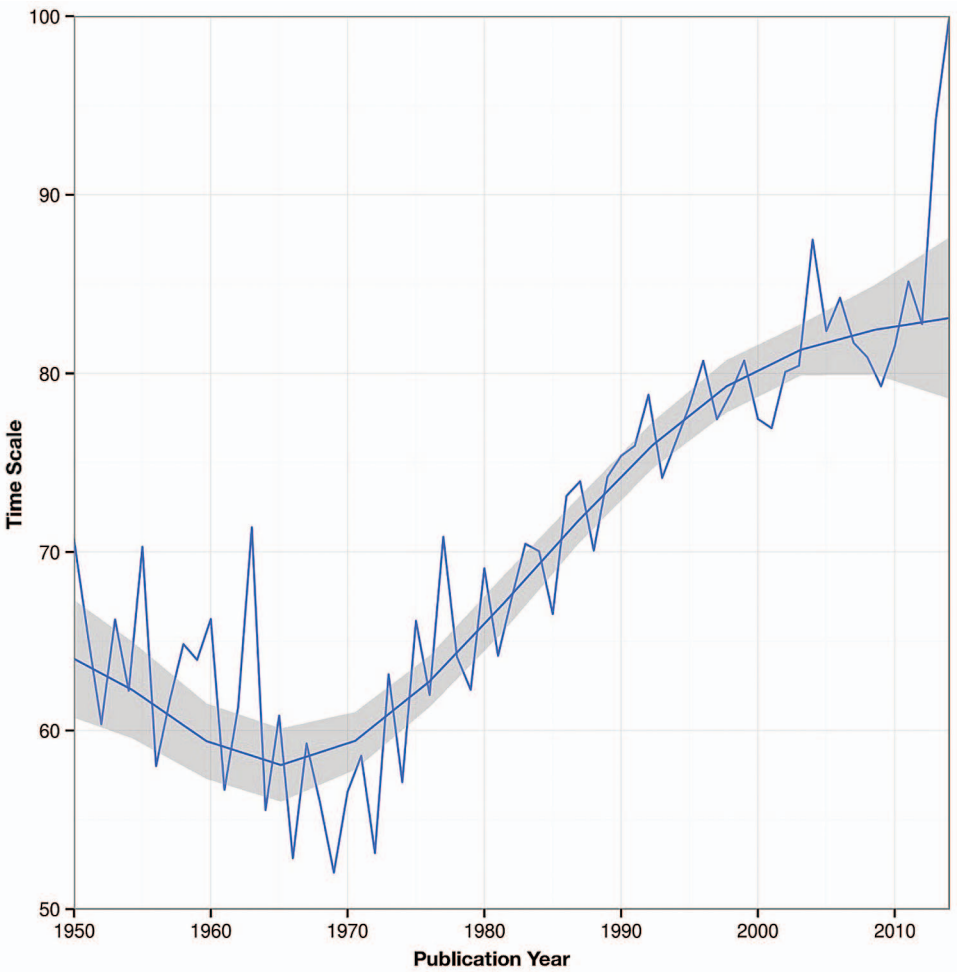

FIGURE 5: Time scales covered in JSTOR articles and book reviews, 1950–2014. Jagged line = mean time range for a given year. Straight line = smoothed mean. Grey area: margin of error.

ifesto firmly encourages more research along these lines, but not by telling historians to do something they are not already doing or by urging the impossible. Instead, the book discerns an optimistic and creative tendency, aims to give it more energy, and affirms the new directions emerging in our field. That is both continuous with current practice and true to some of the most enduring traditions of historical writing. It also runs with the grain of our larger ethical commitments as historians to multiple publics, living as well as dead, and to the deep past rather than just to the immediate present. For, as one distinguished historian—indeed, a contributor to this *AHR* Ex-

Three Centuries of Trans-Atlantic Battle (Princeton, N.J., 2014); John L. Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey* (Cambridge, 2014); Jeremy L. Caradonna, *Sustainability: A History* (Oxford, 2014); Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500–2000* (Cambridge, 2014); James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton, N.J., 2014); Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2014), among many other examples.

change—has bracingly asserted against the short-termism of our times, "There can be no higher responsibility for the historian than to remember the long term."[33]

[33] "Each time a politician or a lobbyist or a journalist comes to us, seeking to borrow our authority, our time and resources for a campaign on the grounds that the public is—today, in the short-term—clamouring for it, we have to try to remember that the greater public interest is in the long term integrity of our craft. There can be no higher responsibility for the historian than to remember the long term." Mandler, "The Responsibility of the Historian," 25.

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