

## *The Necessity of History*

There is no adequate preparation for writing a presidential address. Trying to choose among the many urgent themes that demand attention, one is painfully aware of the wisdom of one's predecessors and one's own limitations. The audience to be addressed is the most critical and important one will ever face: a national audience of colleagues. For a woman, following a long line of male presidents, there is an added responsibility: one wishes to be representative of the profession as a whole and yet not neglectful of those long silenced.

Behind me stands a line of women historians, who practiced their profession and helped to build this organization without enjoying equality in status, economic rewards and representation. Even the most exceptional among them, whose achievements were recognized and honored by the profession, had careers vastly different from their male colleagues. For example, of the leading female academic historians who practiced in the early decades of this century, only one was employed at a major university, four worked in women's colleges, the others in outside institutions. The medievalist Nellie Neilson, president of the American Historical Association in 1943 and to this day the only woman to hold that office, spent her entire career in Mount Holyoke College. Louise Kellogg, president of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in 1930, worked at the Wisconsin State Historical Society. Helen Sumner Woodbury made her major contribution to labor history in the Children's Bureau. Martha Edwards, like Sumner a holder of the Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin, spent her career

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first in the Wisconsin State Historical Society, then as a teacher in the extension division. Florence Robinson, who held an M.A. in history from Wisconsin and earned the Ph.D. there a few years prior to her death, was unable to find a teaching job in history and headed the home economics department of Beloit College during her entire career. It was she who endowed the Robinson-Edwards chair I now hold, in memory of her father "who believes in professional opportunities for women and of my friend Martha Edwards, who deserved such professional opportunities."<sup>1</sup>

They and dozens of others did the best they could under the circumstances, opening the way for later generations. To remember them today is to honor their inspiration and to acknowledge their often distorted and diminished careers.

I would not be standing before you today, if it were not for the vision and perseverance of the 19th-century feminists, who treasured and collected the records and documents of female activity during their time. They laid the foundation for the study of women's history. This field would not have developed as rapidly as it did, if it were not for those determined intellectuals, not connected with any academic institution—Elizabeth Schlesinger, Miriam Holden, Mary Beard, Eugenie Leonard—who understood the need to preserve the record of the past of women in archives and who worked tirelessly for the inclusion of the history of women in academic curricula. The significant contributions to women's history scholarship of nonacademic historians, such as Elisabeth Dexter and Eleanor Flexner, also deserve to be remembered.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to encompass as well the sensibilities and views of the present generation of women historians, who assume equality as their right and who expect to pursue their careers without experiencing economic disadvantaging, patronizing attitudes and other forms of sex discrimination. They are the first generation of women professionals truly freed from the necessity of choosing between career and marriage. Having equal access to training and education at all levels, they enjoy the intellectual support offered by collegiality within their departments and by a network of women sharing common concerns. How am I, who have come from such different experiences, to speak for them?

As a Jewish refugee and an immigrant, I have never been able to take freedom and economic security for granted. As a woman entering ac-

ademic life late, as a second career, I regard access to education as a privilege as well as an obligation. Having been an engaged participant in women's work in society all my life, I could not accept the truncated version of past reality, which described the activities and values of men and called them history, while keeping women invisible or at best marginal. My craft and my profession are inseparable from the road I have come and the life I have led.

You have bestowed upon me the honor of presiding over this organization at a time when the profession is in a crisis. Student interest in history is waning; the academic job market is contracting. A generation of young Ph.D.'s, having completed their education in a period of scarce financial aid and spiraling costs, are competing for too few tenure-leading jobs, while they face years in short-term, revolving-door appointments. Others, unable to see careers in academe, are retooling and using their skills as historians in journalism, business, government, and organizational work. Established academic historians, comparing themselves with their peers in other professions, are painfully aware of their deteriorating status. A recent editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* described the Ph.D. in history as having "low or negative returns" and questioned its worth. Respected senior members of our profession have publicly proclaimed their disillusionment with the state of scholarship, deploring a lack of coherence and unifying vision and what one termed the "disarray of the discipline" and a "dissipation of the core fund of knowledge" through over-specialization.<sup>3</sup>

In our institutions and professional organizations we have sought pragmatically to meet these problems by short-range adaptations—adjusting or contracting graduate programs, embracing new fields of study, extending our definition of the professional historian to include those working outside of the academy. These are constructive measures, but they have not alleviated the malaise many of us feel in our professional lives. This personal crisis may be symptomatic of significant changes that go well beyond individuals and institutions, changes in the way our society relates to the past. And so, speaking from the vantage point of a person long defined as marginal, I would like to address the issues I consider *central*: the necessity of history and the role of the professional historian.

To speak of the necessity of history is to say that history matters *essentially*. Human beings, like animals, propagate, preserve themselves

and their young, seek shelter, and store food. We invent tools, alter the environment, communicate with one another by means of symbols and speculate about our mortality. Once that level of social consciousness has been reached, we become concerned with immortality.<sup>4</sup> The desire of men and women to survive their own death has been the single most important force compelling them to preserve and record the past. History is the means whereby we assert the continuity of human life—its creation is one of the earliest humanizing activities of *Homo sapiens*.

But history is more than collective memory; it is memory formed and shaped so as to have meaning. This process, by which people preserve and interpret the past, and then reinterpret it in light of new questions, is “history-making.” It is not a dispensable intellectual luxury; history-making is a social necessity.

History functions to satisfy a variety of human needs:

1. *History as memory and as a source of personal identity.* As memory, it keeps alive the experiences, deeds, and ideas of people of the past. By locating each individual life as a link between generations and by allowing us to transform the dead into heroes and role models for emulation, history connects past and future and becomes a source of personal identity.
2. *History as collective immortality.* By rooting human beings on a continuum of the human enterprise, history provides each man and woman with a sense of immortality through the creation of a structure in the mind, which extends human life beyond its span.
3. *History as cultural tradition.* A shared body of ideas, values and experiences, which has a coherent shape, becomes a cultural tradition, be it national, ethnic, religious or racial. Such a “symbolic universe” unites diverse groups. It also legitimates those holding power, by rooting its source in a distant past.<sup>5</sup>
4. *History as explanation.* Through an ordering of the past into some larger connectedness and pattern, historical events become “illustrations” of philosophies and of broader inter-

pretative frameworks. Depending on the system of thought represented, the past becomes evidence, model, contrast to the present, symbol or challenge.

Making history means form-giving and meaning-giving. There is no way to extricate the form-giving aspect of history from what we are pleased to call the facts. As Carl Becker said: "Left to themselves, the facts do not speak . . . for all practical purposes there is no fact until someone affirms it. . . . Since history is . . . an imaginative reconstruction of vanished events, its form and substance are inseparable."<sup>6</sup>

Insofar as the historian chooses, evaluates, analyzes evidence and creates models in the mind that enable us to step out of our own time, place and culture into another world, his or her mental activity is akin to that of scientists and mathematicians, who "pop in and out" of different conceptual systems.<sup>7</sup> But the construction of a coherent model of the past partakes of the imagination as well. The model created by the historian must not only conform to the evidence, it must also have the power to capture the imagination of contemporaries, so as to seem real to them. It shares this quality with the work of fiction. For both writer and historian, form is the shape of content.

History-making, then, is a creative enterprise, by means of which we fashion out of fragments of human memory and selected evidence of the past a mental construct of a coherent past world that makes sense to the present.

"Necessity," wrote Leopold von Ranke, "inheres in all that has already been formed and that cannot be undone, which is the basis of all new, emerging activity. What developed in the past constitutes the connection with what is emerging in the present."<sup>8</sup> We learn from our construction of the past what possibilities and choices once existed. Assuming, as Henri Pirenne says, that the actions of the living and those of the dead are comparable, we then draw conclusions about the consequences of our present-day choices.<sup>9</sup> This in turn, enables us to project a vision of the future. It is through history-making that the present is freed from necessity and the past becomes usable.<sup>10</sup>

History as memory and as a source of personal identity is accessible to most people and does not depend on the services of the professional historian. It is the story of one's life and generation; it is autobiography, diary and memoir; it is the story of one's family, one's group of affli-

ation. As Wilhelm Dilthey wrote: "The person who seeks the connecting threads in the history of his life has already . . . created a coherence in that life . . . [which represents] the root of all historical comprehension. . . . The power and breadth of our own lives and the energy with which we reflect on them are the foundation of historical vision."<sup>11</sup>

By tracing one's personal roots and grounding one's identity in some collectivity with a shared past—be that collectivity defined by race, sex, class, ethnicity, religion or nationality—one acquires stability and the basis for community. Recognizing this, conquerors have often destroyed historical monuments and the preserved record of the past of the conquered; sometimes, they have also destroyed the intellectuals who remember too much. Without history, no nation can enjoy legitimacy or command patriotic allegiance.

The necessity of history is deeply rooted in personal psychic need and in the human striving for community. None can testify better to this necessity than members of groups who have been denied a usable past. Slaves, serfs and members of subordinate racial or national groups have all, for longer or shorter periods of time, been denied their history. No group has longer existed in this condition than have women. Groups so deprived have suffered a distortion of self-perception and a sense of inferiority based on the denigration of the communal experience of the group to which they belong. Quite naturally, each of these groups, as it moved closer to a position of sharing power with those ruling society, has asserted its claim to the past. Mythical and real heroes were uncovered; evidence of the group's struggle for rights was collected; neglected sources were made to yield information. In the process, inevitably, the established version of history has been revised. In the American setting, this has been the case in regard to African-American history and Native-American history, both fields that have moved from marginality to the mainstream and have, in the process, transformed and enriched our knowledge of the nation's past.

While at first sight the case for women appears to be similar, it is in fact profoundly different. All the other groups mentioned, except for colonials, although of varying sizes, have been minorities in a larger whole. In the case of colonials, subjects of imperial powers, who often are majorities dominated by powerful minorities, there has always been a legitimate past prior to the conquest from which the oppressed group could draw its identity and historical perspective. Jews, ethnics, African

slaves could look back on a heroic, though distant, past, on the basis of which they could make claims to the future. During the time of being "out of history" oppressed groups have also been "out of power" and therefore have felt solidarity among themselves as victims of oppression.

Women have had a historical experience significantly different from that of men. Women are not a minority, although they have been treated as if they were members of minority groups. Women appear in each class and rank of society, and they share, through the connection they have with males of their family groups, the fate, values and aspirations of their class or race or ethnic group. Therefore, women frequently are divided from other women by interests of class, race and religion. No other subordinate group with a common experience has ever been so thoroughly divided within itself.

Women have participated in civilization building equally with men in a world dominated and defined by men. Thus, women have functioned in a *separate* culture *within* the culture they share with men. Mary Beard wrote in 1932 that women "have never been solely on the side lines observing passively or waiting for men to put them to needed work. In every crisis women have helped to determine the outcome. . . . No story of cultural history is adequate which neglects or minimizes women's power in the world."<sup>12</sup>

Yet women's culture has remained largely unrecorded and unrecognized. It must be stressed that women have been left out of history not because of the evil intent of male historians, but because we have considered history only in male-centered terms. We have missed women and their activities, because we have asked questions of history that are inappropriate to women. To rectify this we must, for a time, focus on a woman-centered inquiry, considering the possibility of the existence of a female culture within the general culture shared by men and women.<sup>13</sup> As we ask new questions and consult formerly neglected sources, we uncover the record of women's unrecognized activities.<sup>14</sup> For example, when we ask the traditional question, "What have women contributed to reform activities, such as the abolition movement?" we assume that male activities are the norm and that women are, at best, marginal to the male-defined movement. In answer to such a question we learn that abolitionist women demanded the right to lecture in public and to hold office in antislavery societies and thereby, in 1840,

provoked a crisis that split and weakened the antislavery movement. What is ignored in this interpretation is the fact that the increased participation of women and their greater activism actually strengthened antislavery ranks. Had we asked the question, "What was women's role in, perception of, and experience in the antislavery movement?" the answers would lend themselves to a somewhat different interpretation. If one looks at the impact of the antislavery movement solely in terms of voting behavior and politics (male activities), the contribution of women may seem unimportant. But reform movements in antebellum America can also be seen as efforts to adjust personal values and public morality to the demands of a rapidly industrializing society. Moral reform, sexual purity, temperance, and abolition became the symbolic issues through which women expressed themselves in the public sphere. Antislavery women's activities—organization building, the spreading of literature, petitioning, participation in slave rescues—helped to create changes in the climate of opinion in the North and West that were essential to the growth of the political antislavery movement. Men and women, even when active in the same social movements, worked in different ways and defined issues differently.<sup>15</sup> As historians are uncovering the record of women's activities and correcting the bias in the interpretation of the past, which has assumed that man is the measure of all that is significant, we are laying the foundation for a new synthesis. Women's History is a tool for allowing us to see the past whole and entire.

Such an enterprise, however, exciting as it is, lies some time ahead. Meanwhile, women must live with the effect of having been deprived of a usable past. As we have noted, history as memory and history as a source of personal identity have presented women with a world in which people like ourselves were, with a few exceptions, invisible in all those activities valued highly as "contributions" to civilization. The actuality—that women, as Mary Beard so confidently asserted, have always been a force in history and have been agents, not subjects, in the process of civilization building—has been obscured.<sup>16</sup> Thus, women have been deprived of heroines and role models and have internalized the idea of their own victimization, passivity and inferiority to men. Men, similarly miseducated through a distorted image of the past, have been reinforced in their culturally created sense of superiority and in



the conviction that a sex-based division of labor justifies male dominance.

Speaking of the psychological tensions under which African-Americans have existed in a white world, W. E. B. DuBois described this "peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. . . . One ever feels his two-ness—An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body."<sup>17</sup> Although in many decisive respects the condition of women cannot be compared with that of African-Americans, all women have partaken of a kind of "double-consciousness," a sense of being central and yet defined as marginal, essential and yet defined as "the Other," at the core of historical events and yet left out of history.<sup>18</sup>

The complexities of the experience of black women, who are subject to discrimination both as women and as members of a racial minority group, cannot be discussed here. All women have in common that their history comes to them refracted through the lens of men's observations and refracted again through a male-centered value system. The historic condition unique to women is that, for over five thousand years, they have been excluded from constructing history as a cultural tradition and from giving it meaning. In the period when written history was being created, shortly after the formation of the archaic states, women were already in a subordinate condition, their roles, their public behavior, and their sexuality defined by men or male-dominated institutions. From that time on, women were educationally deprived and did not significantly participate in the creation of the symbol system by which the world was explained and ordered. Women did not name themselves; they did not, after the Neolithic era, name gods or shape them in their image.<sup>19</sup> Women have not held power over symbols and thus have been truly marginal to one of the essential processes of civilization. Only in the last two hundred years have the societal conditions been created that would afford women equal access to educational opportunity and, later, full participation in the definition of intellectual fields and disciplines. Only in the past two hundred years have groups of women been able, through organized activities and social sharing, to become conscious of their group identity and with it the actuality of their historical experience, which would lead some of us to begin to

reclaim our past. For women, all history up to the twentieth century has truly been prehistory.

If the bringing of women—half the human race—into the center of historical inquiry poses a formidable challenge to historical scholarship, it also offers sustaining energy and a source of strength. With the case of women we can best illustrate that history matters. By contemplating, in the case of women, the consequences of existing without history, we can renew our faith in and commitment to the work of the professional historian.



Today, what does it mean to be a professional historian?

The world in which we now practice our profession is a vastly different world from that in which our profession was first institutionalized. It might be well to remember that written and interpreted history is, of itself, a historical creation, which arose with the emergence of ruling elites. From the time of the king lists of Babylonia and Assyria on, historians, whether priests, royal servants, clerks and clerics or a professional class of university-trained intellectuals, have usually ordered the past within a frame of reference that supported the values of the ruling elite, of which they themselves were a part. The grand unity of design so evident in the history writing of the past has always been based on the commonly held values of those in power. In Western civilization, for many centuries, Christianity provided the common context for the cultural tradition. Later as nationalism developed, national history provided the needed coherence and legitimizing ideology. A teleological framework, in which history was the working out of God's consciousness, gave way to an evolutionary framework, in which history became a story of progress. For American history, manifest destiny and mission long provided an ordering framework, as did confidence in laissez-faire economics and liberal politics. Other commonly held assumptions, such as white superiority and male supremacy, were implicit in the culture, but unacknowledged.

Recent American historiography has reflected the breakdown of commonly held values in the assertion by previously submerged and invisible groups of their right to be heard and to have their own past recorded and interpreted. New technology, which has produced the tape recorder and the computer, has opened new fields, such as oral

history and cliometrics. New conceptual frameworks, such as those provided by the social sciences and by psychology, have added to differentiation and specialization.

Historical scholarship has never been more sophisticated, more innovative and more interesting. Specialization and a multiplicity of conceptual frameworks have not weakened historical studies. On the contrary, new groups that have hitherto been "out of history" but are now entering historical inquiry as objects and subjects, have invigorated academic life and form a link to new constituencies outside of the academy. Yet many thoughtful observers have noticed the gap between academic historical scholarship and the public's seemingly insatiable appetite for popular history in its various forms. This phenomenon began early in this century with the media revolution—the dramatic change in the way the society related to past and current events due to the technological innovations embodied in the mass media.<sup>20</sup>

Photography as a mass art form, popular journalism, radio, film and television have profoundly affected the relationship of people to the past. This has never been more sharply evident than in recent decades, when the first generation of youths entirely raised in the age of television have begun to enter adulthood and public life. Members of the "TV generation," and probably all generations succeeding it, connect more readily with the visual symbol than with the written or spoken word. They are discouraged from giving sustained and thoughtful attention to the past by being daily exposed to the mass-media way of perceiving the world.<sup>21</sup> The rapid succession of superficial problems instantly solved, which is the mainstay of both television fare and the advertising that sustains it, induces the viewer to assume that there are simple and readily available solutions to every problem. The constant reiteration of "news," presented in flashes and headlines, induces in the public a present-mindedness, which finds reinforcement in the other mass media and in advertisement. The short-range interpretation of events by television pundits and journalists discourages perspective and in-depth analysis. Present-mindedness, a shallow attention to meaning, and contempt for the value of precise definition and critical reasoning are characteristic attitudes produced by mass media culture. All of them run counter to the mind-set of the historian and to the values and perspective historical studies provide.

Yet the beneficial aspects of education by television—the enormous

increase in accessible information, the stimulation and immediacy of entering other lives, the exposure to the variety and richness of human societies and cultures—all feed the public's hunger for a meaningful understanding of the past and for coherent explanations of present-day phenomena. A variety of beneficial historical activities are manifestations of this public interest: genealogy, the vogue for historic spectacles, the popularity of historic-site reconstructions, the search for "roots" through family or ethnic group history. On a shallower level, there is the mass appeal of historical fiction and of new forms that deliberately challenge the boundaries of fact and fiction, such as the docudrama and the docu-film. The public's interest in the past is also reflected in shoddy and surrogate cultural manifestations, such as the nostalgia craze for old records, films and magazines, or in the fashion industry's endless recycling of a past, which it neatly divides into decade-long units. We may deplore the quality of the end product, or we may seek to influence and improve it, but we dare not ignore the concern, interest, enthusiasm of broad new audiences for history.

Without relaxing our standards of accuracy and our commitment to scholarship, we must accept that there are many roads to historical understanding. We must be open to the ways in which people now relate to the past, and we must reach out to communicate with them at their level. We should rejoice at the surfacing of the lost past of women, nonwhite people, and minorities and use every opportunity open to us to encourage members of these groups to participate in the definition of their past with the best skills academic training can provide. In turn, we should allow our own thinking and interpretations to be enriched by the viewpoint and perspective they bring to historical scholarship. We should continue to broaden our definitions of training and accreditation to include applied fields, such as museum and preservation work, train specialists equipped to work as historians in government and business and strive to train biographers and historian/writers, expanding that concept to include writers in the mass media.

A broader understanding of our professional roles is already under way. It is reflected in the increasing participation at all levels of our own organization by historians employed outside of the academy. We may, in time, welcome a new model of professional life in which one can, at various stages of one's career, move freely in between the academic world and the public sector, literary freelance work or business

consultancies. Restructuring careers so as to allow historians to move in and out of academe *by choice* might strengthen and energize us.

As we adapt to changing public needs and explore various modes of communication, we must hold fast to our commitment to scholarly and theoretical work. Most of us have and will continue to spend part or most of our lives as scholars. If society increasingly devalues such work and inadequately understands it, we must reaffirm our dedication to scholarship with increasing confidence and assertiveness. Each of us individually, and through our organizations, must be effective publicly in defense of scholarship and of the priceless archival resources on which it rests. Our nation's heritage and its very future are threatened, when shortsighted political decisions undercut the funding for historic documentary projects, for record preservation, and for the National Archives. Freedom of information for scholars and open access to records of government and bureaucracies are causes we must defend with as much vigor as we defend our right to free speech.

As we examine our relationship to the society at large, we see that insofar as we function as fact finders about the past and as re-creators of past worlds (or model builders), the need of society for our skills is as great as ever. It is our function as interpreters of the past, as meaning givers, that has become most problematical. History as cultural tradition and legitimizing ideology and history as explanation have increasingly come under questioning. Again, the causes are societal and historic. The scientific revolution of the 20th century has undermined the claim of history to being, together with philosophy, the universal field of knowledge for ordering the human experience. The facile slogan of the 1960s, which declared history "irrelevant," reflected a perceived discontinuity between industrial and postindustrial society. The explosion of scientific knowledge and of technical control over the environment has made it possible to envision a future dominated by scientific knowledge and technical expertise. For such a future, it appears, the past cannot serve as a model. In its most pragmatic manifestation, this kind of thinking has led to the substitution of "Social Studies" for history in many American school systems.<sup>22</sup> At a more advanced and theoretical level, this kind of thinking is evident in a debate among sociologists, philosophers and historians, some of whom argue that history has been superseded by science as a means of ordering human experience and orienting the individual within society.<sup>23</sup> Most histori-

ans would answer that, despite great strides in science and technology, human nature has not essentially changed. Historically formed institutions continue to provide the structures within which the new knowledge and technologies are organized. Historically determined political institutions continue to allocate labor and resources to science and technology, so that those holding and organizing "the new knowledge" operate within the constraints of tradition.

Those arguing the irrelevance of history define history too narrowly, by focusing on history as the transmitter of tradition, as the means for legitimizing the status quo, as the ideology of a ruling elite. But history, as we have discussed earlier, has many other than merely legitimizing functions. It is possible that what we now perceive as "the crisis of history" is merely the coming to an end of the function of history as elite ideology.

Another important strand of 20th-century thought can help us in reorienting history in the modern world. The major upheavals of our time—wars, the Holocaust, the nuclear and cybernetic revolutions, and the threats to the ecological balance—have made us aware of the limited use of rational thought in politics and social planning. Irrationality in political and social behavior may make it more urgent than ever to understand the process of Becoming and the limits placed upon the present by past decisions and choices. Psychoanalysis has directed our attention to the power of the irrational and unconscious in motivating human behavior. Sigmund Freud showed us how the past of the individual, suppressed and made unconscious through faulty interpretation, can exert a coercive force over present behavior. "Healing" of such compulsive behavior occurs through the mental process of bringing past events to awareness and reinterpreting them in light of a new—and better—understanding derived from present circumstances.<sup>24</sup> This process is akin to the work of the historian in reinterpreting past events in light of present questions. The denied past of the group, as well as of the individual, continues to affect the present and to limit the future. We, as historians, might take up the challenge offered by analytic theory and seek to work toward a "healing" of contemporary social pathology, using the tools of our craft imaginatively and with a new sense of direction. We are, after all, not a small group of clerks and mandarins guarding secret knowledge in the service of a ruling ideology, but people with special skills, who translate to others the meaning of the lives

and struggles of their ancestors, so that they may see meaning in their own lives.

We do this best in our function as teachers. Most of us, for much of our professional lives, are teachers; yet this activity is the one we seem least to appreciate in ourselves and in others. Our habitual performance at the lectern has, in some aspects, been superseded by the intervention of printing, and many of us, sensing the basic incongruity of the manner in which we conduct our work, have fallen back on being performers, seeking to catch the reluctant attention of an audience more accustomed to the frenetic entertainment style of the mass media.

In fact, the teacher as performer acts within an ancient and valid tradition. Above all, we seek to tell a story and tell it well—to hold the audience's attention and to seduce it, by one means or another, into suspending disbelief and inattention. We seek to focus concentrated attention upon ourselves and to hold it long enough to allow the students' minds to be directed into unexpected pathways and to perceive new patterns. There is nothing shabby about this performance aspect of the teacher's skill, this trick of the magician and the artist. When we succeed in our performance role as teachers, we extend the learner's thoughts and feelings, so that he or she can move into past worlds and share the thoughts and values of another time and place. We offer the student the excitement of puzzle solving in our search for evidence and the sense of discovery in seeing general design out of the mass of particulars.

Lastly, we also teach, as master craftsmen and craftswomen, imparting particular skills to the uninitiated. The ability to think and write with clarity, the habit of critical analysis, the methodology of history, the painstaking patience of the researcher—all these skills are transmitted by the ancient method of transference from master to apprentice. As we allow students to see the historian at work, we become role models, and if we are so inclined, we lighten the students' task by demystifying our knowledge, sharing its "tricks" and openly acknowledging its shortcomings. The craftsmanship aspect of teaching connects us with the craftsmanship of other workers, those who labor with their hands and those who work with their minds. As teaching and researching historians, we work as did the master stonemasons and woodcarvers on the great medieval cathedrals and the ancient Mayan or Buddhist temples or the women who wove the great Bayeux tapestry:

we do our own particular work, contributing to a vast, ongoing enterprise. In our own performance and in the standards we set for students we can represent dedication to understanding the past for its own sake and in its own light. In an age of alienation we can impart a sense of continuity to the men and women we teach. And we can help them to see the discontinuities in a larger perspective.

The problem of discontinuities has never loomed larger than in this generation, which is the first generation in history forced to consider the possibility of the extinction of humankind in a nuclear war. The possibility of discontinuity on such a vast scale staggers the imagination and reinforces the need of each individual to know his or her place in history. Now, as never before, we need to have a sense of meaning in our lives and assurance of a collective continuity. It is history, the known and ordered past, that enables us to delineate goals and visions for a communal future. Shared values, be they based on consensus or on the recognition and acceptance of many ways of form-giving, link the individual to the collective immortality of the human enterprise.

The historian professes and practices such knowledge and imparts it to others with passion and an abiding confidence in the necessity of history. In these times, more than ever, it is good to be a historian.