

## Tudor Chronicler or Sixteenth-Century Diarist? Henry Machyn and the Nature of His Manuscript

[This article was first published in  
*The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 4  
(Winter, 2002), pp. 981-998.]

*The Diary of Henry Machyn (1848) is apparently an eyewitness account of events in London between July 1550 and August 1563, in the style of a chronicle continuation. Historians have rarely made use of its rich detail: its existence poses the problem of whether to presume that the "diary" as a literary model was known and used by a semiliterate merchant tailor, or to look further for a more reliable historical context. Those who choose the latter course are frustrated by the lack of available evidence, have discovered only doubts about the manuscript, and conclude that even the attribution is uncertain. However, newly discovered archival material puts the questions of authorship and the original extent of the manuscript beyond doubt and allows the work to be placed in the context of mid-sixteenth-century chronicle writing as well as in the context of the author's life. It also elaborates on Machyn's connections with antiquarian and heraldic contemporaries, his religious conservatism, and his personal motives for writing the work.*

THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY saw the publication of several sixteenth-century English journals, most of which were accorded a title that describes the text as a "diary." Among the so-called diaries of sixteenth-century individuals already known to historians on account of their other activities, such as those of Simon Forman and John Dee,<sup>1</sup> was that of man known only on account of his journal, one Henry Machyn of London.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Machyn was so obscure that his editor, John Gough Nichols, failed to find any biographical information on him, and relied entirely on the evidence of the journal itself to write his very brief introduction. Despite the obscurity of its author, there was good reason for the manuscript to be published by the Camden Society—then dominant in the field—before those of many more important individuals. For more than a century it had been one of the most important sources for the history of mid-sixteenth-century English politics and religious reform, on account of its quotation by John Strype in his *Annals of the Reformation* and by subsequent historians who referred to Strype's work.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately for Henry Machyn, although his manuscript was treated with respect by his editor, he as an author was not. Nichols declared that, apart from those passages which had already appeared in Strype's *Annals*, nothing else of "high historical importance" could be expected from Machyn's journal. Its value lay entirely in allowing readers to ascertain "the real authority for certain statements of general history" (*Diary*, v). Nichols further declared that Machyn himself was "of no great scholarship or attainments, as his language and cacography plainly testify, sufficiently prejudiced, no doubt, and not capable of any deep views either of religious doctrine or temporal policy." He went on to add, "but the matters of fact which he records would be such as either he witnessed himself, or had learned immediately after their occurrence: and the opinions and sentiments which he expresses would be shared by a large proportion of his fellow-citizens" (*Diary*, v). Rarely has an author been treated so harshly by his editor.

It is of course unfair to judge Nichols by modern standards, and it is hardly necessary to point out the shortcomings of his antiquarian approach. However, in the absence of much detailed work on Machyn since

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Autobiography and Personal Diary of Dr Simon Forman*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London, 1849); *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee, and the Catalogue of His Library of Manuscripts, from the Original Manuscripts in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, and Trinity College Library, Cambridge*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, Camden o.s. 19 (London, 1842).

<sup>2</sup> *The Diary of H. Machyn, Citizen and Merchant Taylor of London, from AD 1550 to AD 1563*, ed. J. G. Nichols, Camden Society 42 (London, 1848), referred to in text as *Diary* followed by page number.

<sup>3</sup> John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and establishment of religion, and other occurrences in the Church of England, during the first twelve years of Queen Elizabeth's reign* (London, 1709 (single volume); 4 vols., London, 1725-31; later edition, Oxford, 1824).

Nichols it is worth quickly summarizing the reasons why Nichols's edition is unsatisfactory for the modern student of English history. In the first part of the quotation Nichols suggests Machyn was not an impartial observer; in the second he states the main value of Machyn's "opinions and sentiments" is that they were popular, although he gives no evidence to the level or extent of their popularity. One's inclination is to suspect Nichols regarded Machyn as a second-rate political and religious commentator merely on account of his poor spelling and handwriting, and labeled him a spokes- man of the vox populi on no stronger evidence than his lack of formal education. Beyond this, and possibly on account of his low regard for the author, Nichols proves unreliable as an editor. Even the most cursory comparison of the original and the printed texts reveals inconsistencies, and there are paleographical errors on every page, as well as editorial errors concerning lost text and mistranscribed names. A third inadequacy of the edition (and arguably the most important one) is the editor's failure to examine the nature of the document fully and to set it in its proper context. He does not explain adequately why the manuscript was written. Even if he understood the conceptual history of early English diary writing, which seems unlikely, he made no attempt to show how this particular "diary" fitted into the pattern of diary writing as it was then understood.

It is to be hoped that a modern historian would not apply the term "diary" to a mid-sixteenth-century document without the most careful consideration. William Matthews, in his bibliography of British diaries, notes two fifteenth-century examples of diplomatic journals and a few sixteenth-century travel journals and impersonal "military diaries" and "public diaries"; but most of the early works he describes have a clear and formal purpose, whether education, duty, or religion.<sup>4</sup> To Machyn's text he gives the epithet "public diary," which is at least an approximate description of its contents. But the generic term "diary" ascribed by Nichols implies an account of days recorded in retrospect regularly by the subject, without obvious purpose or intended readership, and relates to a literary form which had not developed by 1550. By using this term Nichols was admitting he could find no better description, and probably decided to rest his laurels on the fact that several early "diaries" had recently been published.<sup>5</sup>

Historians have had problems with the edition for a number of reasons, most of them stemming from the lack of information about the author. One particular question is Machyn's religious position: whether he was a fervent Catholic or simply pragmatic in his faith, an important point in view of his descriptions of the politically motivated processions of both Mary and Elizabeth. Historiographers also have had difficulties in relating Machyn's manuscript to the tradition of published chronicles. E J. Levy notices it, and refers to it as one of the fullest of the kind in the form of the old city chronicle, but he also notes its alternative status as a diary, and implies that this might be warranted because, although not introspective, "it is highly personal in its choice of what to record." Then he adds: "Since its author had no especial interest in history writing and was in no sense writing or continuing a permanent record, Machyn's Diary is best ignored."<sup>6</sup>

As this article will demonstrate, the document here under consideration is a complex work and probably the earliest instance in England of a poorly educated man consciously taking responsibility for systematically recording the history of his own times. It developed very quickly from an occasional record of his business activities (funeral arrangements) into a gathering of current information, including personal memoranda and public knowledge, with no obvious purpose beyond a desire to join the ranks of those recording events of supposed importance, that is, to play the part of a chronicler. Importantly, it shows the ability of a sixteenth-century man of relatively little formal education to adapt existing literary forms of record to meet his needs. For social historians this provides another layer of evidence in the document; not only is it important for the internal data relating to Machyn's times but the very circumstances of its creation testify to the democratization of authorship and the beginnings of the written expression of identity by the emerging urban middle class. For political historians it strengthens the reliability of Henry Machyn as an observer and a recorder of the religious reforms of the period, rendering the source much more important than Nichols realized.

---

<sup>4</sup> William Matthews, *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written between 1442 and 1942* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> For example: The public diary of Richard Bannatyne was published in 1806 in *Journal of the Transactions in Scotland*; the public diary of the Reverend James Melville was published in 1829; and John Dee's diary was published (also by the Camden Society) in 1842.

<sup>6</sup> F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Publications, 1967), 24.

## THE PROBLEMS OF THE MANUSCRIPT

The "diary" manuscript, which is unique, is today in the British Library.<sup>7</sup> It is in a very uneven hand, in English, and shows a quite remarkable inconsistency of spelling. The top of the document is missing throughout, burnt away in the blaze which damaged the Cottonian Library in 1731, and there is extensive fire damage to both left and right sides of each folio so that no margins survive and most of the marginal headings and maybe as much as a fifth of the text are lost. Parts of the text can be supplied from quotations made by John Strype, who consulted the manuscript at the beginning of the eighteenth century, before the fire, but these account for only a few of the gaps (*Diary*, xiii). There is no introduction, and the beginning and the end of the text are lost. Thus certain key questions are raised by the manuscript itself: How extensive was the original work? Can we be sure that the manuscript is not a copy? And can we be sure of its authorship?

This last question far outweighs the others in importance, and it has nowhere been addressed in print.<sup>8</sup> It clearly bothered Nichols. He did not index appearances of the first person singular under Machyn's name, nor did he draw attention to such biographical details in the introduction.<sup>9</sup> Moreover his vague working title "Diary of a Resident in London" both heads the text of the published volume and forms a running header throughout. In all probability he began working on the manuscript without knowing the author's identity. It is not attributed to any author in either the 1696 or 1802 printed catalogue of the Cottonian manuscripts, or in the manuscript list of the collection compiled about 1631.<sup>10</sup> Strype himself was unaware of the author's identity (*Diary*, xi). After the 1731 fire it lay uncollated in a box, defying all attempts to reconstruct its original foliation, until Sir Frederick Madden oversaw its restoration in 1829. The note left by Madden does not allude to its authorship, and he was almost certainly doubtful as to the writer's identity (*Diary*, xiii).

To Nichols must go the credit for identifying the author. However, his evidence was entirely circumstantial, as he himself was aware. "The Harry Machyn, merchant tailor, mentioned shortly before seems to have been the Diarist himself," he states in the preface (*Diary*, xi). He does not substantiate this claim, probably for the reason that the internal evidence is not conclusive. Nowhere does the author claim to be Machyn, and every reference to one of the Machyn family is in the third person. The author notes the death of Christopher Machyn, brother of Henry Machyn, in 1550; the birth of Henry Machyn's daughter Katherine in 1557; Machyn's attendance at an oyster feast with a group of friends in Anchor Lane in the same year; his spreading of a libellous story about John Veron, a French protestant preacher, for which he did penance at St. Paul's Cross on 23 November 1561; and the obtaining of a license for Christopher Machyn's daughter Kynborowe to marry Edward Gardner in 1562.<sup>11</sup> But that is all. Probably the determining fact for Nichols was that the author makes two references to the age of Henry Machyn, and no one else's age is noted. The only other reference to Henry Machyn by name is the witnessing of the payment of ten pounds in 1557 (*Diary*, 151); but the author here uses the first person singular as well as the name of Henry Machyn, and the contextual link between the author and the merchant tailor is not strong. Moreover, the fact that the two ages given for Henry Machyn on his respective birthdays do not tally weakens that particular piece of evidence. Finally it should be noted that a number of other less significant families are mentioned, such as the Heath family, and that one of these might have provided the author.

---

<sup>7</sup> British Library (BL), Cotton MS, Vitellius, F. v.

<sup>8</sup> The question was brought up and discussed at a Medieval and Tudor London seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, London University, 27 May 1999, after a paper on Machyn by Dr. Gary Gibbs.

<sup>9</sup> See for example *Diary*, 99, 151. In the latter case the index fails to notice the quittance in relation to Machyn.

<sup>10</sup> See T. Smith, *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Cottoniae* (1696), where it is described as "Annals of English history, beginning Anno 4 Edw VI 1554 and ending 5 Elizabeth 1563"; *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, Deposited in the British Museum* (1802), where it is described as "Codex Chartaceus in folio, constans foliis solutis circiter 150, in pixide asservatis, quae rite disponere frustra tentavimus," and which further quotes Smith, adding "but the work appears to be an account of the news of the day: the dates of the months are mentioned but the years can seldom be ascertained" (431); BL Add. MS 36789, fol. 60, where it is described as "Annales proecipue rerum Londinensium ab anno Domini 1550 ad Annum 1563."

<sup>11</sup> The name is transcribed "Kynlure" by Nichols. It is at the end of a line which is damaged in the manuscript, the legible extant letters being "Kynboro...." It also appears as Kenborowe in parish register of St. James Garlickhithe, and Quinborough and Kynborough in Christopher Machyn's will (Commissary Court of London, reg. 12, fol. 65). The wedding took place in the Church of St. Dunstons in the East 12 July 1562, her husband being Edward Garland. London, Guildhall Library, MS 7857/1.

Since the edition appeared in 1848, only one other fact has been published about Machyn's life: that he was indeed buried in the autumn of 1563, the last year represented in the diary.<sup>12</sup> The initial source of this information, which was a plaque in the church of St. James Garlickhithe, described him as "Taylor and Clerke of the parishe and Clerke of Trinity the Less." The fact that this discovery was not made by a historian but a student of linguistics explains why the probate registers for London were not immediately searched. Had the student done so, he would have found the key to this manuscript in the official archdeaconry copy of the will of Henry Machyn, which is worth repeating in full:

In the name of god Amen. The viij Daie of November 1563 and in the fyvethe yere of the raigne of our soveraigne Ladie Elizabeth by the grace of god Quene of England ffrance and Ireland defender of the faith &c I Henry Machym Citizen and m'chant Taylor of London whole of mynde but sicke in bodie thankes be vnto god Do make ordaine and declare this my present testament Catayning Herin my last will in manner and forme ffollowing That is to saie first and principallie I commende my soull into the handes of almightie god my maker savio'r and redemer In whome and By the onlye merittes of his most bitter passion without any other meanes or thing is my full and wholl trust and confidence of clere remission and forgyveness of all my synnes And my bodie to be buried within the churche yearde<sup>13</sup> and my verie will and mynde is that all and singuler such Debtes and duties As I owe of Right or in Consciens to any parson or p'sons shalbe in Convenient tyme after my decease by myne Executrix hear vnder named trulie paid or ells ordeined for so to be paid without anye Delaye or contradicton I Do ffreelie And whollie give to my welbe- loved wief Dorathy Machym all singuler my Landes and tenymentes sett lyeing and being in the parishe of Lytell Saynt Barthelomewes in London During her naturall Lief and after her Decease I will they shall remayne to John Machym my son'e and his heires of his bodie Lawfullie begotten for- ever and yf the said John Machym Decease without yssew of his bodie Lawfullie that then I will all the said Landes and Tenementes as aforesaid too Remayne to the next of myne kynne and so from heire to heire Ever after I Do give and Bequeth vnto master Clapenans<sup>14</sup> all my [stocking]<sup>15</sup> skochyns and my Cronacle the rest of all my goodes Catteltes Debtes plate Jewelles Readie money after my Debtes paid my funeralles Discharged and Donne and this my present and Last will in all thinges performid I holley give Bequeth to Doratie my wief whome I make ordaine and name my sole Executrix And of the Execuc'on of the same I make ordaine and name Lancelott heth Citizen and paynter stayner myne oversear and I vterlie revoke & adnull all and everie fformer willes Testamentes Lagaces Bequestes Executors and overseers by me heretofore in anywyse had made willed named bequethed and assigned And my verie will and mynde is that this my present Testament and will Legaces Bequestes Executrice and oversear by me herein named willed and bequeathed and assigned shall stand and abyde for my verie Last will and Testament and none other or other wyse In witnes hereof I the said Henrie Machym to this my present Testament and Last will have sett my hande and and [sic] seale dated the Daie and yere firste above written by me Henry Machym witnesses to this will both at thensealing and Delyvering of ye same Lancelotte heth Wil- liam Draper [Nicholas Hill]<sup>16</sup> uremonger michael Hill m'chanttaylor by me David gyttens wyntenez

Probatum fuit xxviiij Januarij 1563 Juxta computa' Angliae Jurato' Dorathee relict et executricis<sup>17</sup>

It is the word "Cronacle" that leaps off the page. That single word has great implications for the so-called diary, for it carries with it a whole conceptual tradi- tion of which Machyn would have been keenly aware. The question now becomes one of whether we can prove that the extant manuscript and the "Cronacle" are one and the same. The first step to doing this is to establish the authorship of the manuscript. If one lines up what is known of Henry Machyn and compares it with what is known from the document's internal evidence, there can be no doubt that Machyn was indeed its author. We know from external sources that

---

<sup>12</sup> Axel Wijk, *The Orthography and Pronunciation of Henry Machyn, the London Diarist: A Study of the South-East Yorkshire Dialect in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeriaktiebolag, 1937), 12. He mistranscribes the date of Machyn's burial as 11 October.

<sup>13</sup> No churchyard is noted. It seems the clerk missed a line of the original here.

<sup>14</sup> The final letter of Clapenans reads as an extraordinary terminal "s," or possibly an "x."

<sup>15</sup> This word is a scribal deletion.

<sup>16</sup> Name deleted.

<sup>17</sup> Now in the Guildhall Library. Archdeaconry of London, reg. no. 3, fols. 49v-50r.

Henry Machyn was a parish clerk and a merchant tailor and lived in the parish of Trinity the Little.<sup>18</sup> We know furthermore that he owned a "Cronacle" and "skochyns," that his brother Christopher died in 1550, his daughter Katherine was born in 1557, and that he had a niece Kynborowe; we know too that Lancelot Heath, William Draper, and "Daniel"<sup>19</sup> Gytens were Londoners known to him as the witnesses of his will, and that he was buried in 1563.<sup>20</sup> It is stretching the bounds of credibility too far to suggest that he was not the author of a manuscript which ends just before his death, and which was written by a man who was probably a parish clerk (since details are given of the delivery of bills of mortality relating to the sweating sickness in 1551) and probably a resident of Little Trinity parish (*Diary*, 8), which frequently mentions heraldic emblems, heralds, and the Merchant Taylors Company, and which directly refers to Henry Machyn, his family, and his friends. John Heath, a man whose family is noted by the author, was the father of Lancelot Heath; and Dave Gytens and Master Draper are two of the friends of Machyn's who attended the oyster feast in Anchor Lane with him, according to the manuscript, in 1557 (*Diary*, 143).

Having established the authorship of the manuscript, the answers to the other key questions fall into place. With regard to how extensive it was originally: Machyn's death, probably from plague,<sup>21</sup> sets a terminal date. Thus the maximum loss at the end of the manuscript is the three months between the last extant entry (8 August) and the date of the will. As for a start date, Nichols was sure the fragmentary first page was the original first page on account of its faded condition. To this we can add more reliable evidence. Today the manuscript consists of 162 folios, one less than in 1703, suggesting only a single leaf was entirely lost in the 1731 fire.<sup>22</sup> It covers the same years (1550 through 1563) as it did when the list of the Cottonian Library manuscripts was compiled in about 1631, and probably never included earlier material. The author progressively built up his entries from a series of funeral descriptions to events of general interest in London, the first nonfuneral entry being the committal of Bishop Gardiner to the Tower in February 1551, seven months after the first extant entry; no quotations from Machyn earlier than July 1550 have been found in Strype's work. Thus it seems the form of the chronicle developed slowly and through practice, and that what we have today is an almost complete text, albeit a very badly damaged one.

The above argument, of course, rests on the assumption that the manuscript in the British Library is the original and "complete" version and not a partial copy of a lost other which began earlier than 1550. That this is almost certainly the case may be demonstrated as follows. The manuscript is in an early Tudor style, and from the internal evidence was kept on a regular basis.<sup>23</sup> After Machyn's death in 1563 it is highly unlikely that anyone would have copied such a recent manuscript in such an old-fashioned script. It also should be noted that the hand is not a good one. Moreover the spelling is highly inventive and remarkably inconsistent; and it is unthinkable that a copyist would have used such erratic spelling unless it were his own. If he were indeed copying another individual's cacography so precisely (which is itself unknown in the sixteenth century) the manuscript would have been written slowly, with more care and neatness. Lastly, the suggestion that Machyn dictated it is also not supportable, since he would have had to dictate it to the same scribe on a regular basis for thirteen years: an unrealistic postulation when it is known he himself was literate. Thus the writing of the sole extant manuscript can be confidently attributed to Machyn himself.

---

<sup>18</sup> It is doubtful that Machyn was ever clerk of St. James Garlikhithe. The source quoted by Wijk is much later, after the amalgamation of the two parishes following the great fire.

<sup>19</sup> This seems to be a scribal error for David.

<sup>20</sup> Guildhall Library, Parish register of Trinity the Little, MS 9155.

<sup>21</sup> One of the last entries in the manuscript relates to the plague (*Diary*, 310). A glance at the register of Little Trinity shows that just in this small parish there were twenty-eight burials in September and eighteen in October (the usual figure for a month was two). On 11 September Henry Machyn's servant John Sone was buried. In November, the register reads: "The 11th daie Henrye Macham tayler and Clarck of the parishe church of Trinitie the Lesse was buried."

<sup>22</sup> *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Cottoniae*, with Humphrey Wanley's notes from Sir Robert Harley's copy may be found in the manuscripts reading room of the British Library. A recent English version is *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library 1696*, ed. Colin G. C. Tite (Cambridge: Brewer, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> Machyn does occasionally leave gaps for dates and details to be filled in, but otherwise the work was compiled on a regular basis. Entries such as that of Queen Mary's phantom pregnancy and her supposed delivery of a prince show that Machyn never left the manuscript for long.

## THE BACKGROUND OF HENRY MACHYN

Henry Machyn gives next to no evidence about his origins in his "Cronacle," and what he does give is ambiguous. As mentioned, he gives conflicting dates for his birthday, stating he was fifty-six on 16 May 1554 and sixty-six on 20 May 1562 (*Diary*, 63, 283). These dates both fell on the Wednesday following Whitsun,<sup>24</sup> so he was probably either born on 25 May 1496 or 6 June 1498, or possibly 17 May 1497 if both ages are one year out. However, there is no mention of where he was born, and the very fact that he was over fifty before the earliest surviving entry in his manuscript suggests that it would be prudent to disregard any predominance of place names as indicative of his birthplace. By 1500 families called Machyn, Machon, or Machen were well established in several counties, including Essex, Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, Yorkshire, and Hertfordshire as well as London, and Henry Machyn may have incidentally made contact with people from any or all these areas.

In the absence of any published evidence as to where Machyn came from, orthographic specialists have had carte blanche to expound on his origins. This has had an important result, in that for over sixty years there has been an argument that Henry Machyn was not a native of the capital. Axel Wijk, writing in the 1930s, set out to discuss what he initially thought was the diary of a Londoner but eventually decided was the work of a man brought up in Yorkshire.<sup>25</sup> Wijk's thesis has subsequently been shown to be fundamentally flawed.<sup>26</sup> Besides the linguistic arguments against it, there is also the prima facie case that such analysis depends upon the assumption that Machyn lived long enough in one particular region for it to be reflected in his words and spelling, a matter open to doubt, not least because, as will be shown, Machyn lived in London—the most cosmopolitan city in the country—at least from his teenage years, and did not begin to write until his fifties.

The suggestion that Henry Machyn and his brother Christopher were new arrivals in London, and thus not closely connected with the old established merchant families, is significant, as will be discussed later. It is also probably correct. Enrolled in the Court of Hustings in London is an official copy of a bargain and sale by one John Machin, miller, of "Holbye in the countye of Leicester," dated 1564,<sup>27</sup> which indicates that he had inherited from the recently deceased Kynborowe Machin seven London tenements which she had inherited from her father, Christopher, and which are mentioned in his will.<sup>28</sup> The bargain and sale further states that this John Machyn of "Holbye"—presumably Hoby, northeast of Leicester—was the eldest son of John Machyn, who was the eldest brother of Christopher and thus also of Henry Machyn. The fact that John Machyn junior was a miller in a quiet, agricultural part of the county suggests that he was still living in the general vicinity where the Machyn brothers had been raised.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> C. R. Cheney, *Handbook of Dates* (1945; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Wijk, 'Orthography', passim. His idea has found supporters in contemporary American scholarship, including the collaborators on the electronic Machyn project at the University of Michigan. Arthur Ponsonby, MP, *English Diaries* (1923), 58-59, presumed Machyn was a cockney, and his impression is echoed by H.C. Wyld, *A History of Modern Colloquial English* (1921), 141-47.

<sup>26</sup> R. M. Wilson, "The Orthography and Provenance of Henry Machyn," in *Early English and Norse Studies: Presented to Hugh Smith in Honour of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Arthur Browne and Peter Foote (London: Methuen, 1963), 202-16.

<sup>27</sup> Corporation of London Records Office, Hustings Court roll 252, no. 82.

<sup>28</sup> Guildhall Library, Commissary Court register of wills, no. 12, fol. 65.

<sup>29</sup> Machyn hardly refers to Leicestershire in his manuscript. Nor is the name Machyn generally associated with the region. However, it is supported by a couple of other pieces of evidence. First, the rare name of Henry's niece, Kynborowe. Kyneburga was the name of an Anglo-Saxon saint whose relics were venerated in Peterborough Cathedral, and whose name was particularly associated with that area. This name is also written "Quinborough" in Christopher Machyn's will, which was the name of a place (now Queniborough) about three miles from Hoby. Second, a family called Machyn was settled in north Leicestershire at the close of the fifteenth century. It is noticeable that the only male names recorded for this family are those connected with Henry Machyn's family: i.e. Henry, Christopher, and John. Christopher Machin, a "corvisor," or shoemaker, was admitted to the freedom of the city of Leicester in 1467/8 (Henry Hartopp, *Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1196-1770* [1927], 50), and a generation earlier, in 1440/1, Henry Machon of Barkeston was witness to a grant by William Huntynghdon of land in Barkeston, and John le Machon of Barkeston appears in an undated grant of the same era; see A. Hamilton Thompson, *A Calendar of Charters and Other Documents Belonging to the Hospital of William Wyggeston at Leicester* (Leicester: E. Backus, 1933), 124, 133-34. If these entries and the grant to one Henry Machin of a

Henry Machyn was probably in London by 1519. In order to serve an apprenticeship he would have had to be between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, according to the customs of the City.<sup>30</sup> If he was born in 1498, the latest he could have commenced serving would have been 1519. By 1530 he was a freeman of the City, having been admitted to the Company of Merchant Taylors, purportedly in that year.<sup>31</sup> It is likely that his brother Christopher was slightly younger, since the Merchant Taylors' register notes his admittance lower down the chronological list, sometime between 1532 and 1537. Christopher Machyn settled in the parish of St. James Garlickhithe<sup>32</sup> and Henry in the adjacent parish of Little Trinity.<sup>33</sup>

The two brothers appear to have been moderately prosperous. Henry, as a merchant tailor, provided material for funerals for the wealthy, and as a parish clerk sang at these funerals, experiencing a steady demand for both his services in the period covered by the manuscript. The wills of both brothers record that they owned land in the parish of St. Bartholomew the Less, and Henry had at least one servant at the time of his last illness.<sup>34</sup> The bargain and sale of John Machyn mentioned above shows that the land owned by Christopher in particular amounted to "Seven messuages or Tenements ... with the Shoppes Celleres Sollares yardes backromes easiments ... within ... Black alley." These had been purchased from "Sir John Peryent knight & Thomas Reve gentleman by the name of nyne messuages or Tenements ... as by a deede thereof ... bearinge date the xxiiiijth Daye of December in the Thirde yeare of the Raigne of Kinge Edwarde the Syxte" (1549). It is not known how extensive was Henry Machyn's land in this parish but it is quite possible that the two messuages which did not pass to John Machyn were Henry's.

Regarding his family, in May 1548 Henry had three children living: Jane, John, and William. On the eighth of that month William was buried. Later that year, in August, his wife Jone died in childbirth.<sup>35</sup> On 18 January 1549 Henry married Dorothy Lawe or Lowe of the parish of "St. Dennys in ffanchurch Street" according to the register and by her had a daughter, Mary, baptized on 26 March 1550. Later that year his brother Christopher died, leaving "my gowne of yron grey furred with Islande fox my Dublet of satten cutt and lyned with sarcenett and my best Packett" to Henry, and small sums of money to his wife and children, but nothing to the Machyn family in Leicestershire.<sup>36</sup> On 24 October 1551 Mary Machyn was buried, aged eighteen months. Henry's two other daughters by Dorothy, Katherine and Awdrey, also both died in infancy.<sup>37</sup> Of all these events, only the death of his brother Christopher and the birth of his daughter Katherine are mentioned in the manuscript.

---

messuage and croft in Sewstern on the Leicestershire/Lincolnshire border in 1381 (The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, DG40/196) are connected, then it would appear that a Machyn family using the same pattern of names had been established in the north Leicestershire region for more than a century.

<sup>30</sup> Evans Austin, *The Law relating to Apprentices* (1890), 108.

<sup>31</sup> Guildhall Library, Merchants Taylors records, vol. 15. The register was drawn up in 1607 and contains no earlier admissions than 1530.

<sup>32</sup> The St. James Garlickhithe register begins in 1535. Unfortunately, although it mentions a number of members of the Machyn family, it does not describe their relationships to one another. There were three Machyn children christened in the period 1535-48: Alice (12 September 1538), Margaret (8 January 1542), and Kenborowe (6 October 1544); and five burials: Jone (31 July 1536), Jone (11 December 1541), Elyzabeth (13 December 1543), Tomas (19 January 1544), and Mary (23 October 1544). Only one of the children christened—Kenborowe—appears in the will of Christopher Machyn, she being his sole surviving child. The burials of five members of the family who appear not to have been born in the parish post-1535 suggests that other members of the family had moved to London either to be with the Machyn brothers or had migrated to the city previously.

<sup>33</sup> Guildhall Library MS 9155.

<sup>34</sup> See n. 21 above.

<sup>35</sup> Jone Macham, Henry's daughter, was buried on the same day she was christened, 3 August 1548, and Jone Macham, Henry's wife, two days later. Whether Jone was the mother of Henry's three elder children is not known: one Henry Machyn married Joan Shape at St. Mary Orgar and St. Clement Eastcheap on 8 May 1547, but there is no evidence that this was the chronicler.

<sup>36</sup> Guildhall Library, Commissary Court register of wills no. 12, fol. 65.

<sup>37</sup> Katherine—whose birth is mentioned in the chronicle—was baptized 27 March 1557 and buried 5 May 1558. Awdrey—whose baptism was wrongly copied from the original register as Awdrew, daughter of Thomas Machim—was baptized 12 May 1560 and buried on 12 [?] 1561, correctly described as the daughter of Henry Machyn. Thus of a family of at least seven children only two survived him: Jane, who married John Browne of the parish of Great All Hallows in Thames Street on 10 January 1563, and his son John.

### THE NATURE OF MACHYN'S *CRONACLE*

The decades in which Machyn wrote have been described as the height of English chronicle writing.<sup>38</sup> It would be foolish, however, to assume that Machyn's description of his own work automatically sets it wholly within this tradition. The mid-sixteenth-century chronicles were themselves amalgamations of influences and styles, continuing some of the tradition of monastic annals in the form of private additions to published and manuscript copies of Brut and the old city chronicles. The influence of Polydore Vergil had added to these older models the concept of constructing an argued debate for a purpose, a legacy best exemplified in the *Vnion of the Two noble Houses...* of Edward Hall, published by Grafton in 1547.<sup>39</sup> Gary Gibbs has suggested that Machyn's chronicle is in fact a continuation of Hall's work, and cites Machyn's reference to the burial of Hall's mother and note on Hall's chronicle as evidence of his readership.<sup>40</sup> This would accord with the generally accepted pattern of fifteenth-century manuscript chronicle writing put forward by Levy: "some merchant had a chronicle copied by a professional scribe, and this copy would itself include some of the continuations of the original ... then the merchant would keep his copy more or less up to date until, later, it too might serve as the basis for a new copy for someone else."<sup>41</sup> In Machyn's case, however, he would have been tacking his addition on to the end of a printed copy of Hall's or someone else's work.

It is of course quite possible that Machyn owned a copy of Hall's chronicle or a similar work, and therefore this model ought to be considered. The first thing one can say is that, as Machyn's manuscript seems always to have lacked an introduction, a possible reason was that it needed none, being an addition to an existing work. Second, one can state that many of Machyn's entries follow the pattern of earlier chronicles in recording executions, punishments, and political events, as well as the election of mayors and aldermen. But the list of comparable points quickly peters out, and doubts as to whether Machyn's manuscript really is a chronicle continuation set in. First, the assumption that Machyn's use of the word "Cronacle" implies a specific form is dubious, since it is clear that the word was used generically in Machyn's time for any historical writing. Machyn himself calls Hall's work by its popular name--Hall's chronicle--despite the word's not being in the proper title.<sup>42</sup> Second, Machyn's work developed significantly in form over the course of its first year, 1550-51. He began by noting only details of heraldic funerals, and seven months passed before he noted an event which was not a funeral; only in March 1551 did regular entries relating to local events begin. If Machyn was merely continuing an existing chronicle he would have begun in the same style as the model left off. Thirdly, there is the matter of the amount of personal information in the chronicle. Not even Nichols realized how personal the manuscript was to Machyn, despite the former's use of the word "diary" to describe it. Although Machyn refers to himself most of the time in the third person, "with all the dignity of an old chronicler" (*Diary*, x), one must count in addition all the references to his friends and family: for example, those mentioned as witnesses to his will, the other members of the Heath family, all the references to his and his brother's local parishes (Little Trinity, St. Bartholomew the Less, St. James Garlichithe, Queenhithe), all the references to the Merchant Taylors' and Parish Clerks' companies, and every reference to the herald William Hervey with whom Machyn was clearly acquainted (see below). Just on these points there are several hundred personal references in the chronicle, hardly a page of the published version is without one of them. Lastly and perhaps most significantly, a number of entries are in the nature of memoranda, lacking the personal pronoun. For example, after the christening of Hervey's daughter at St.

---

<sup>38</sup> Daniel R. Woolf, "Genre into Artefact: The Decline of the English Chronicle in the Sixteenth Century," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 (1988): 341-43.

<sup>39</sup> On the question of tradition in English chronicle writing also see: Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, vol. 2, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, and May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>40</sup> Gary Gibbs, Roanoke College, Virginia, "Mary I, Henry Machyn, and the Return of a 'Goodly' Sermon," paper given at a Medieval and Tudor London seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, London University, 27 May 1999.

<sup>41</sup> Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Hall, *The vnion of the two noble and illustrefamilies of Lancastre [and] Yorke, beyng long in continuall discension for the croune of this noble realme...* (London, 1550). Machyn calls this "Halle cronaculle" (*Diary*, 139).

Brides, Machyn lists the godparents and states "and after unto master Clarenshux, and there was a grett bankett as I have sene, and wass[ail, of] epocras, Frenche wyne, gaskyn wyne, and Reynys [wine] with grett plente, and all ther ser- vandes had a bankett in the hall with dyvers dyssys" (*Diary*, 288-89). From his use of the expression "as I have sene," and the details, there seems little doubt that Machyn was present at this banquet, and at many other events which he describes in the same abbreviated fashion. The style is also used of business functions in Machyn's career, such as that described on 3 September 1562: "The same day begane to make rede for the good lade contess of Bedford a grett baner of armes and vi grett baner-rolles and ... skochyns of armes of sylke, and of paper-ryalle vij doshen skochyons of armes" (*Diary*, 291). That this entry relates to Machyn's own work is made more likely by the next entry which states that the same day "they" began to make the heraldic trappings for "my lord Mordaunt in Bedfordshire," and by a faint scribbled note on the first folio of the manuscript which relates to a bill for supplying arms and a hearse (*Diary*, xiii), showing this was exactly Machyn's line of work.<sup>43</sup> Thus what we have in Machyn's manuscript is partly an old-style chron- icle and partly a journal of personal and business memoranda.

There is another form of historical writing which provides an alternative model for Machyn's chronicle, and it is one with which he would undoubtedly have been familiar. As a parish clerk he would have had joint or sole responsibility for keeping the parish register. Unfortunately the extant register for Little Trinity is a later sixteenth-century copy,<sup>44</sup> so the handwriting and spelling bear no resem- blance to Machyn's version. But even so, he can be shown to have kept the original. The evidence lies in the entry referring to the marriage of Henry Machyn and Dorothy Lawe or Lowe in 1548. At first sight this seems to be regular, and has been copied by the later scribe like all the other entries. But it took place in the bride's parish of St. Dionis Backchurch, on 20 January (as opposed to 18 January, as recorded in the copied register of Little Trinity).<sup>45</sup> The only reason for its appearance in the Little Trinity register was because Machyn himself wrote it there. Furthermore, there are several very chronicle-like entries in the extant register. The following are the most striking:

[January 1553] The iiijth daie Jone Smith the daughter of Thomas Smith Sargeant a Crissom Childe the first that had a Crosse borne before it & that had tapers borne before it [was] Buried

[December 1554] The Third daie Hughe Griffin yeoman for the Queene's [?month] of her gracious privie Bakehouse [was] Buried

[February 1555] the viith daie William Writh Blacksmith died of the fluxe died Churchwarden and Warden of his company & was buried

the same daie Jane Delawar the daughter of the Lord Delawar The God-father Sir Henry Husse Knighte, the Godmothers the Lady Jane Se[illegi-ble] the daughter of the Duke of Somerset & the Lady Uxenbridge the other of this parish Xristened

[May 1556] he viith daie Elizabeth [?four] died in Childebed whoe should have been married unto John Yonge the latter daie after she died [and was] Buried

[March 1557] The xxth daie Alice Meleche the daughter of Melech [chris-tened] beinge the daie that Kinge Phillipp came from beyond the seas & landed at Greenwich at five a clock att night

Not only do these entries sound like Machyn they also refer to people likely to have been in his circle. Thomas Smith here noted was one of the overseers of the will of John Heath, the painter stainer who died in 1553 and whom Machyn mentions in his manuscript.<sup>46</sup> Regarding the Writh entry, the possibility of a

---

<sup>43</sup> See also R. M. Wilson, "The Orthography and Provenance of Henry Machyn," in *Early English and Norse Studies*, ed. Browne and Foote, 202.

<sup>44</sup> The register is written in a clear late-mid- to late-sixteenth-century hand on parchment, with no deletions, and in a structured form and consistent ink, which could not have been been written on a day-to-day basis.

<sup>45</sup> Guildhall Library, Register of St. Dionis Backchurch, MS 17602.

<sup>46</sup> London, Public Record Office (PRO), PROB 11 25 Bucke. Regarding a possible family conection with the Heaths, note how carefully Machyn describes the date of the burial of Annes, Heath's wife, which led the old Dictionary of National Biography to suggest Annes was Machyn's sister. Although this is probably not the case

link between this family and Machyn's is suggested by the burial of another Kenborowe, Kenborowe Write, in St. James Garlickhithe on 13 April 1543. Lastly, the other John Heath mentioned in the chronicle, who died in 1551, was also an officer of the king's bakehouse. Here it seems we have not just a register kept by Machyn but a record of contemporary local events kept by him at least until 1557, albeit within the constraints of an official document.

Machyn's register is not the only example of a parish clerk's combining his statutory duties with an unofficial record of local events. A much more striking example is that kept by the clerks of St. Botolph without Aldgate, who kept a parish chronicle-register from 1558, including details of illnesses and morals of parishioners as well as local events.<sup>47</sup> This, however, remained a strictly impersonal and parochial document; it bears none of the hallmarks of personal involvement which Machyn's manuscript carries. Moreover, it was a merger of the official and the unofficial, and although we cannot say whether Machyn's original parish register was more elaborate in local detail than the extant copy, his digressions from the standard register form are few. Machyn seems to have differed from other chronicler-clerks in drawing a distinction between his chronicle (whose entries he selected) and his duty as a registrar (whose entries he had to make). In this matter he can be viewed in the light of an honest officer of the parish, rather than the corrupter of an official record.

The identification of examples and categories which might have served as models for Machyn's writing can only be tentative suggestions. The same is true of the complementary issue of why he initially set pen to paper. Most chronicles at this time are judged for their political or religious motivation, but Machyn's manuscript displays none of the former and very little of the latter. Although it is possible to view Machyn as biased towards the old religion, his leaning is far from fanatical and he himself seems not to have been an overly zealous man. Furthermore, his Catholic preferences seem to stem largely from business opportunities arising from the elaborate funerals of the old religion, and the subsequent Protestant attitude towards the Clerks' Company. Machyn's condemnation of "Chestur the resewyver" for taking the clerks' hall and Machyn's subsequent curse on him ("I pray God gyff ym ylle sped") is a good example: Machyn makes this curse not on account of Catholicism itself but because "of the pore men and women and other that yff they had falne to a [sudden] poverté ther they wher sure of a onest lyvyng..." (*Diary*, 5). On the question of motivation one cannot see money as a possible lure, as it was for contemporary chronicler-stationers, since Machyn's script would have been laughed at by any stationer for its lack of literary skill. Even if he had hoped at some point that it might be published he would have been cautious before proceeding, even in the early years of Elizabeth's reign (when a greater religious toleration was pursued in historical writing), on account of his Catholic bias.<sup>48</sup> Despite these two impediments he continued as assiduously as ever to record the funerals and other events of the capital.

Lacking any obvious motive explicit within the manuscript itself, one is forced to turn to the milieu in which Machyn spoke and thought for possible incentives for his writing. In this respect it is not only the kings of arms, heralds, and chroniclers with whom he may have had contact who are important but the entire merchant class of London, which, as Levy has noted, "in most cases not only read chronicles but also wrote them."<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately there is no evidence that Machyn showed his manuscript to anyone prior to his death. If he did, it might be possible to view his recording London events from the point of view of a man trying to confirm his family's credentials as an established London merchant family. It must be remembered that Machyn's words and spelling have led people to suspect he was not a native Londoner. Nor was he ever elected to any office, and he was quite possibly looked down on as a newcomer to the City or as uneducated. By writing the chronicle he was perhaps seeking to imitate members of the more established merchant families, which included a large number of the chroniclers of London, and to shake off his provincial origins.

---

(Christopher Machyn does not make any reference to her in his will), it should be noted Machyn appointed John Heath's son and heir, Lancelot, to be overseer of his own will.

<sup>47</sup> Chronicle from Aldgate, ed. Thomas Rogers Forbes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971). The original manuscript is now in the Guildhall Library.

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of censorship of English chronicles in this period see Marcia Lee Metzger, "Controversy and 'Correctness': English Chronicles and the Chroniclers, 1553-1568," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996): 437-51.

<sup>49</sup> Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, 17.

This theory is difficult to elaborate further, and is hard to sustain as a driving motive in view of the fact that Machyn seems not to have started his manuscript until past the age of fifty, and then not wholly in line with other chronicle continuations. However, it is possible to say more about the suggestion that Machyn wrote with an awareness of a wider historical readership, through his association with contemporaries interested in heraldry and history.

The first piece of evidence tentatively suggests that Machyn belonged to a group of peers with an antiquarian interest. It is to be found in the will of John Heath, the painter stainer whose funeral Machyn records on 22 March 1553 (*Diary*, 32). This will does not mention Machyn personally but makes a bequest "to the knightes of the Rounde table if I do it not by my life tyme twentie shyllinges to be spente at myle ende."<sup>50</sup> This dinner at Mile End is also recorded in Machyn's manuscript. Recording Heath's funeral, he states "and ther wher a grett dener and ther wher the cumpene of Panters and the Clarkes and ys cumpony had xxs to make mere with-alle at the tavarne" (*Diary*, 32). Whether or not Machyn was present at this dinner, it is clear he was associated with one who was both a heraldic painter and a member of a company named after the Arthurian tradition, which quite possibly had an antiquarian element to their association.

Stronger evidence that Machyn was part of a company of historically minded individuals lies in his relationship with the waxchandler Thomas Greenhill, and with William Hervey, Norroy king of arms until 1557, and afterwards Clarenceux king of arms, or "Master Clarenshux." There are many more references to Hervey than anyone else in Machyn's writing, which is in itself significant, since he was a man clearly identified with antiquarian interests.<sup>51</sup> That Machyn knew him is apparent from the many meetings they had and which Machyn recorded several times, including his visiting Hervey's house on a few occasions.<sup>52</sup> Greenhill was of sufficient standing in the heraldic community to entertain all the heralds after the death of the previous Clarenceux in 1557. Greenhill is mentioned at least seven times by Machyn, and stood as godfather to Machyn's daughter Katherine in 1557. Lastly it is quite likely that Machyn was also acquainted with Richard Grafton, the printer and the man who continued Hall's chronicle, whom he notes several times, although their relationship does not seem close.

The relationship with Hervey is particularly interesting, not least because it offers an explanation of the identity of the mysterious "master Clapenans" to whom Machyn bequeathed his manuscript. "Clapenans" is without doubt a miscopying by the court scribe. The word he was probably trying to read was Clarenceux, or rather "Clarenshux." The reasoning behind this is as follows. There is no such name as "Clapenans" or anything like it on the International Genealogical Index; nor does the name appear in the sixteenth-century indexes of wills in the London Archdeaconry Court registers or the Commissary Court registers. The name does not appear in the records of the Merchant Taylors or in the name index held at the Guildhall. The scribe clearly had difficulty reading Machyn's handwriting, which is not easy at the best of times and which was probably worse than usual if Machyn was actually dying. In addition, the scribe was unfamiliar with heraldic terms since he misread "skochyns" as "stocking" before realizing his mistake. Machyn occasionally uses a long r in spelling Clarenceux or "Clarenshux," and he always refers to Hervey as Master Norroy or Master Clarenceux/Clarenshux. If Machyn actually wrote "Clarenceux" with a long medieval r it is quite plausible that a young clerk of the court unfamiliar with early Tudor hands read the r as a p the ce as an a, the u as an n. This seems to have been the case, for he then transcribes the final x as an overelaborate s, realizing that "Clapenans" could not be a correct reading. Alternatively, if Machyn wrote "Clarenshux," the appearance of the sh together, with a heavily angled downstroke on the secretary hand h could have been misread as an a. With this in mind it is interesting that John Strype is quoted by Nichols as stating that Machyn's manuscript was the "journal of one who was a member of the College of Heralds" before it entered the Cottonian Library (*Diary*, xi).<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> PRO, PROB 11/E8.Tashe. Several writers besides Nichols have noted that Machyn records a number of details about the Heath or Heth family. Suggestions that Machyn was related to them by marriage are strengthened by the fact John Heath and his son Lancelot (a witness of Machyn's will) were resident in the same parish as Machyn's wife, Dorothy (St. Denny's in Fenchurch St.).

<sup>51</sup> See Louise Campbell and Francis Steer, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the College of Arms' Collections* (London: College of Arms, 1988).

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, *Diary*, 289, 297.

<sup>53</sup> It is not possible to say for certain what happened to Machyn's chronicle after the death of William Hervey in 1567. Possibly it was sold by Hervey's heirs, or passed into the nascent library of the College of Arms. On the evidence of John Strype given above, the latter is more likely. It does not appear to have been in the Cottonian

The identification of "Clapenans" with Clarenceux suggests perhaps the most convincing explanation of Machyn's motivation: that he was writing for posterity. He believed he was writing a chronicle in the old sense of the word, and he developed his own form of chronicle. He was anxious for it to be about the London he personally knew, in order to stress his place within it. He and his brother had come from the country and made good, and he wanted their achievement to be remembered. Thus the many instances of name-dropping which appear in the work are there partly to reinforce the validity of the chronicle as a public document and partly to reflect glory on Machyn and his associates. Hence, with regard to his own activities, only those that show his active involvement are mentioned: his wife of fifteen years does not appear except in a shadowy scene in giving birth to Katherine Machyn in 1557, and then only because of the attendance of the queen's own surgeon. As a result of its being so closely bound up with his social ambition and the way he wanted to be remembered, the manuscript was of great importance to him and formed his only specific bequest. Finally, by bequeathing it to a man advanced in the one profession familiar with looking after manuscripts of a historical nature, Machyn ensured that his work would be preserved and the chances of its being used for a history of his time maximized.

Henry Machyn's chronicle is a truly innovative work. It might have begun as a record of his professional activities but within a year it had developed into a journal interleaved and overlapping with a traditional chronicle, capable of being presented as a record of public events as well as a personal memorandum book, a business memorandum book, and a self-advertisement to future generations of the author's status. Of all its contemporary works it is most comparable with the journal of the young King Edward VI, who could not help but set himself at the center of his own personal chronicle by virtue of his position. Like the king, Henry Machyn, living within earshot if not sight of events which were worthy of including in a traditional chronicle, was able to reconcile both the public and the personal (in an indirect way) in one document. That he did this without great religious or political bias is remarkable for the time. Ironically it is due to his relatively poor education, low status, and lack of publication that he escaped the historical revisionism which characterized the chronicle tradition in Elizabeth's reign.

Historians will make of Machyn what they will, particularly so in view of the lack of a political or religious agenda for his work. Those concerned with Machyn's depiction of religious processions will find in Machyn as impartial an observer as they are likely to find. Historians of funerals will have to wrestle with the question of whether Machyn's descriptions of noble funeral ceremonies relate to his professional interest or reflect a genuine sense of the noble funeral as an important event in the eyes of the populace. However, it is in the area of literary forms that Machyn's context is likely to have the greatest impact. While it would be wrong to say current opinion on the chronicle tradition needs revision in light of this one example, Machyn's chronicle raises questions over the way sixteenth-century chronicles are seen. First, the motivations for chronicle writing should be widened to take into account the reflections on status that the authorship of a chronicle affords. In addition to reasons of political and religious propaganda and revisionism and financial reward, the motive of social acceptability should be taken into account. Second, there is Machyn's actual status to be considered: history writing clearly mattered even to groups of individuals who were not well educated, and not simply in the sense that they were hungry for information. Machyn could have bought a published chronicle but this clearly would not have satisfied his urge to record events for himself. Nor was it sufficient just to keep a local register. Third, the influence of the parish register on historical writing has not been sufficiently stressed, although Marcia Lee Metzger has noted how Elizabethan revisionism took advantage of a wide variety of time-based documents for propaganda purposes.<sup>54</sup>

Lastly, there is the question of what sort of document Machyn was creating, whether consciously or unconsciously. It is clear that even with what one must call a relatively low level of literary ability he was capable of adapting existing models and improvising a form to suit his needs. But this does not make his manuscript a "diary." While the "diaries" of Henry Machyn and the young king may be compared in terms of innovation, creativity, and contemporary reference, they do not constitute a literary form. Indeed in terms of motivation the two works may easily be distinguished: Machyn's is a work of urban middle-class ambition,

---

Library in 1618 (BL Harleian MS 6018) but had been accessioned by 1631 (BL Add. MS 36789, fol. 60). As for his escutcheons, bequeathed to Hervey along with the chronicle, no volume in the College of Arms Library today shows any sign of Machyn's ownership.

<sup>54</sup> Metzger, "Controversy and 'Correctness'"; cf. n. 48 above.

based at least in part on parish registers and the chronicle tradition, and compiled despite his lack of education; the king's journal is a memorandum book concerned largely with his official obligations, and probably arising from his education. Thus Machyn's work is best not pigeonholed as a particular type of document but regarded as an example of a literary form in transition, from an individual whose class was just beginning to write with a consciousness of its growing power.

Ian Mortimer