

Such perspectives may be confused in experience: if they never were, there would be no point in trying to make theoretical distinctions, in the way I proposed or in some other way. The spectator who shot at an entity which was neither an actor, nor Othello, and yet both, dragged “historicalness into the fictional mode” with a vengeance. The perspective of interpretation of one narrative may hover between false, true, and fictional. Texts labeled “novels” (not to mention “historical novels”) often favor a confusion between an interpretation as history and an interpretation as fiction. This confused perspective may be called the perspective of legend. If I assume Sherlock Holmes to be fictional, I cannot let him roam the streets of the historical London sixty years or so before I did. I interpret “London” as the name of a fictional city similar to the historical city to the extent that topographical details consonant with my concept of the historical London are explicitly given; and the rest of my concept functions as atmospheric background. But the accumulation of details of this sort tends to let the principle of the identity of indiscernibles assert itself over the semantic distinction. Both the city and the character are thus turned into legendary entities.

Bernhard Scholz is quite right in stressing that the types of implicitness I dealt with are far from covering the whole semantic range. I was concerned only with two types of implicitness involved in interpreting a narrative as such, that is to say, as describing events and processes in one spatio-temporal field (*the* historical field, or one fictional field). The preceding paragraph suggests that the examination could extend to other cases of a shift in the status of implicitness as one turns from an interpretation of a narrative as cognitive to an interpretation as fiction. On the other hand, the types of implicitness which Bernhard Scholz mentions (others could be added) do not appear to me to concern narratives specifically.

Whether such considerations are deemed central or peripheral to an understanding of literature depends, of course, on how each of us is pleased to define the term “literature.” Personally, I see nothing wrong with a variety of approaches, hence of definitions, as long as we can tell one from another.

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A Misuse of Statistics in Studying Intellectual History

To the Editor:

The spreading use of statistics in humanistic studies is reflected in Earl Miner’s “Patterns of Stoicism in Thought and Prose Styles, 1530–1700” (*PMLA*, Oct. 1970, pp. 1023–34). On the basis of statistical counts of

certain books, Mr. Miner suggests that “Stoic” writings were neglected in England between 1580 and 1630, but regained popularity after the Restoration. These conclusions, if correct, would force extensive revisions of accepted views of the history of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English thought and prose styles. Mr. Miner says that his statistical “evidence is technically simple,” replaces “surmise” with “fact,” and can be disproved only by “the strongest contrary evidence.” Once some errors in Mr. Miner’s data and methodology are corrected, however, his own compilations will provide the strong “contrary evidence” whose existence he doubts.

A statistical study of the course of Stoic influences in England between 1530 and 1700 can hardly be valid or clear unless its author consistently uses for comparative purposes one well-chosen base period. Since Mr. Miner principally challenges the common belief “that Stoicism in various guises reached the height of its influence in the period from about 1580 to 1630,” his comparisons of the numbers of Stoic publications between 1530 and 1700 should be measured against the single base period 1580–1630. Of the sixteen tables in Mr. Miner’s article, however, only one shows the period 1580–1630 separately, and all sixteen place their main chronological divisions at 1600 and 1660. Furthermore, in discussing individual writers, Mr. Miner often uses additional base periods. In dealing with Seneca’s plays, for example, he uses the periods “1539 to 1585” and “between 1586 and 1659,” which are arbitrary and are based on erroneous dates. The earliest “English *Seneca*” was published in 1559 (*STC* 22227) or, if one admits pseudo-Senecan works, in 1516 (*STC* 17498), but in no case in 1539. The dates 1585 and 1586 are arbitrary and wrong; they are based on misdating *STC* 22217 (*Tragoediae*, 1589) in 1585. Mr. Miner omits from his lists of English Seneca numerous Senecan and pseudo-Senecan works which belong in a study of English Stoicism, including *STC* 17498–502, 18155, and 22229, Aggas’ Senecan selections of ca. 1577, Gager’s additions to *Hippolytus* (*STC* 11515), and lost and unpublished plays translated from Seneca. In addition, Mr. Miner takes little account of allusions, imitations, and other well-known and substantial evidences of Seneca’s influence, nor does he allow for the bibliographical significance of variant imprints and books imported from the Continent. Similar errors appear in Mr. Miner’s treatment of authors other than Seneca; for example, he places the 1594 Lipsius in 1589 and the 1556 Boethius in 1593. One also senses an anachronism in his citation of Sidney against the view that the plays of Kyd and Chapman (all of which can be dated after Sidney’s death) are markedly Senecan. (Sidney’s sister was, in any case, largely responsible for bringing “French Seneca” into England.)

The arbitrary periods that Mr. Miner employs in dealing with Seneca's prose are "the half decade [sic] from 1550 to 1599" and "a gap between 1578 and 1614." Both this "gap" and the asserted "complete gap between 1585 and 1613" in Seneca's plays are largely unreal, as they result from omissions, errors in dates, and a failure to recognize that the London booksellers had little incentive to undertake new publications of Seneca while they were selling off the large collections of 1581 and 1589. In evaluating the publications of Seneca's prose, Mr. Miner falls into another statistical error—that of counting works of vastly differing sizes as equal units. Thus, when Mr. Miner says that "in the hypothetically un-Stoic Restoration, there are fourteen publications," he makes no allowance for the fact that they are pamphlets or abstracts, whereas the three publications between 1580 and 1630 include two folios. Evidently the Jacobean welcomed Stoicism in "whole volumes in folio," but the Restoration preferred a "brief abstract" of Seneca's prose.

In an effort to refute the accepted view that English readers turned to the un-Stoic historian Livy earlier than to the Stoic historian Tacitus, Mr. Miner says, "It is obvious that Tacitus (first published in 1585) was printed in England before Livy (first in 1589)." In fact, however, the 1585 Tacitus scarcely merits citation as a landmark in English intellectual history, since it was printed in Italian for export to Italy, and nine volumes containing translations from Livy (*STC* 5718–20, 6578, 19121–25) precede that which Mr. Miner cites as the first. He further biases his comparisons of Tacitus by counting a three-volume octavo Restoration edition as three units, whereas he counts each of seven earlier folios of Tacitus only once. These seven folios disprove his suggestion that there was a "paucity of publications of Tacitus."

Mr. Miner further biases his comparisons by counting only "separate publications" of some authors, while counting works of others even when they appear in collections. Thus, he omits seventeen publications of Marcus Aurelius prior to 1630 from Table H on the grounds that "there was no separate publication before 1634." In fact, however, thirteen of these seventeen editions were separate (*STC* 12436–47), and Mr. Miner does not demonstrate that the four editions which appeared in folio anthologies (*STC* 12427–30) should be omitted from a study of intellectual history. In Table G, on the other hand, Mr. Miner includes ten editions of Epictetus without noting that these ten are parts of collections which also include "Cebes." In Table P, Mr. Miner includes two dozen collections that contain Horace's un-Stoic *Odes*, but in Table D he omits nine collections that contain Cicero's Stoic *De Officiis*.

The validity of Mr. Miner's conclusions may be more fully tested by ascertaining that the number of Stoic publications between 1530 and 1700 that he

tabulated (in Tables A–E, G–I) is 137, of which thirty-four (25%) fall between 1580 and 1630. Since 1580–1630 includes 30% of the total time period, there would not be much evidence that the Stoic publications of 1580–1630 are disproportionately few, even if Mr. Miner's data had to be accepted without weighting or correction. From these eight tables, however, Mr. Miner has omitted nine directly relevant items in the *STC*; and the revised *STC* will reveal further omissions. It is an extraordinary fact that eight folios of Seneca and Tacitus were published between 1580 and 1630, none during the Restoration. Furthermore, a single publication of 1580–1630 is much more significant than a similar one in the Restoration, for the number of short titles recorded for the Restoration (46000) is much greater than for 1580–1630 (13000). When properly weighted, these corrected data amply support the view that the heyday of English Stoicism ran from about 1580 to 1630.

Those who employ statistics in studying intellectual history should acknowledge the full limitations of an approach that does not directly touch the fundamental issues. They should also use correct data; treat as equal units only items which can reasonably be considered as equivalents; and make comparisons on a consistent, valid, and relevant basis. Having done none of these things, Mr. Miner has provided a cautionary example of what can occur when a limited and faulty statistical method is inconsistently applied to complex questions of intellectual history.

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Stoic Reading in Renaissance England

To the Editor :

Without venturing to judge whether the error impugns his conclusions, I feel compelled to protest the fallacy underlying Earl Miner's interesting appraisal of English Stoicism in the October [1970] *PMLA*,¹ namely, the assumption that the Pollard and Redgrave *Short-Title Catalogue of English Books* is an accurate reflection of the reading of educated men in Renaissance England. For English texts the assumption cannot be questioned; for works in the learned and modern languages, whether classics, theology, or science, it is a grave misconception.

Anyone who has spent the past thirty years researching could scarcely be surprised if scholars in the field of the English Renaissance come to be called the People of the Book, their bible being this *Short-Title Catalogue*. But *STC* is one of those fountains where drinking deeply sobers one again. Thorough study will show that for works in Latin and Greek the staple wares of the London bookshops were imports. The unwary