

David Armitage and Jo GuldiThe Return of the *Longue Durée*: An Anglo-American Perspective

Since the 1970s, most historians in the anglophone world have worked on time-scales of between five and fifty years. This narrow focus represented a retreat from the longer periods generally covered before the late twentieth century and served not only to cut them off from wider reading publics but also to deprive them of the influence on public policy and global governance they had once had. This article surveys the causes and the consequences of this retreat and proposes a solution for the crisis of confidence and of relevance it has created. A return to what Fernand Braudel classically termed the *longue durée* in the *Annales* in 1958 is now both imperative and feasible: imperative, in order to restore history's place as a critical social science; feasible, due to the increased availability of large amounts of historical data and the digital tools necessary to analyze them.

Lynn Hunt

Does History Need a Reset?

David Armitage and Jo Guldi's arguments about the crisis of history depend on assertions that have little or no factual basis; they misread their own data. Since the nature of the crisis is in doubt, it follows that the authors' narrative of its causes must also come into question. Armitage and Guldi confuse microhistory with cultural history and mischaracterize the work of cultural historians. An alternative to their misreading and mischaracterization is to look at previous moments of perceived "crisis": historians have been worrying about similar issues for nearly a century. To understand the distinctiveness of the present crisis, it would be useful to consider the effects of the relentless democratization of higher education rather than to blame certain historians for pushing history off course.

Claudia Moatti*E-Story*, or the New Hollywood Myth

David Armitage and Jo Guldi's *History Manifesto* has sparked an important debate in the United States. This article criticizes three specific aspects of their work. First, it takes issue with their description of a "moral crisis" of history, which they postulate without any

discussion of serious epistemological and political issues. Second, it calls into question their enthusiasm for technological solutions, an ideological stance highlighted by their call for a return to long-term history and large-scale syntheses relying on the crunching of vast quantities of digitized data. Finally, it interrogates their conception of the utility of history, a notion that reveals serious confusion between research, teaching, and popularization and supports their unquestioning acceptance of the direction taken by institutions of higher learning. Although the scientism and positivism expressed in their manifesto illuminate their lack of attention to, and perhaps simply awareness of, the slow construction and transmission of accumulated knowledge, they do reflect the prevailing intellectual nonchalance and philosophical regression. The authors' vision would see the replacement of "history" by "e-story," the dissolution of historicity and scholarly critique and their substitution by techno-chronology and marketing.

Francesca Trivellato

A New Battle For History in the Twenty-First Century?

This article engages with some of the questions raised by David Armitage and Jo Guldi's "The Return of the *Longue Durée*: An Anglo-American Perspective" and their resonance among readers of the *Annales*. In particular, it challenges the authors' classification of a variety of different historical studies of short periods of time under the rubric of "micro-history." It also questions their argument that such studies are evidence of a "moral crisis" that supposedly dominated anglophone historiography from the cultural revolution of 1968 to the global financial crisis of 2008. Furthermore, the article contrasts the less conventional meanings that Fernand Braudel originally attributed to the *longue durée* with the ways that Armitage and Guldi interpret this expression. Finally, it asks how, in practice, historians are supposed to follow the authors' invitation to move beyond specialized training and knowledge to produce sweeping new and original interpretations of millennia of human history.

Claire Lemerrier

A History Without the Social Sciences?

According to David Armitage and Jo Guldi, digitized sources and quantification almost naturally lead to the sort of *longue durée* history that they seek to promote. This article questions that assertion on the basis of the long tradition of quantitative history, open to exchanges with the social sciences and revived, not annihilated, by microhistory. The digitization of numerous historical sources does not call for less caution in our analyses—quite the contrary, as it creates new biases. More importantly, it does not solve the crucial question of controlled anachronism, that is, the need for carefully constructed categories in any quantification based on the *longue durée*. The article also addresses the implications of choosing the *longue durée* as the exclusive basis for reflections on historical processes and causality. Is the *longue durée* purely a scale for description? If not, can it escape a simplistic vision, a mono-causal path dependency? If we are to avoid such pitfalls, the wider debates within all the social sciences on time-scales and causality must be taken into account.

Christian Lamouroux

Chronological Depths and the *Longue Durée*

This short contribution seeks to place David Armitage and Jo Guldi’s article within a broader historiographical context, enlarged to include the history of China. From the outset, Fernand Braudel was careful to link his vision of the *longue durée* with the new “area studies” exploring international cultures. By studying social and economic history and more generally by using approaches drawn from the social sciences, European and American specialists of China have deconstructed the overly *longue durée* of Chinese history and shed light on its dynamism, previously repressed and concealed by the notion of a so-called “civilization.” This process facilitated a successful specialization, which can today be supported by the “big data” being compiled in circles close to the two authors.

David Armitage and Jo Guldi

For an “Ambitious History”: A Reply to Our Critics

This article responds to a variety of criticisms of our thesis that the *longue durée* is returning after a period of retreat, and that this return provides a necessary means to revive the discipline of history as a critical human science. We argue that the *longue durée* has different meanings in distinct historical traditions and that its importance for non-academic audiences will not be the same as for an academic readership. We also suggest that the *longue durée* should be combined with other historical time-scales (including those covered by microhistory), and that this combination can help us all to better understand the present in light of the past and then orient ourselves toward the future. In sum, we argue that the revenant *longue durée* can be one means, among others, to address the widespread “crisis of the humanities” that has been discerned by scholars around the world.

Antonella Romano

Making the History of Early Modern Science: Reflections on a Discipline in the Age of Globalization

What kind of history is the history of science? To what extent does the academic research labeled as such delineate a homogeneous field? What are the current challenges that it faces? The recent translation of Simon Schaffer’s works into French, along with the publication of his 2014 Marc Bloch Lecture in the *Annales*, provides the framework for this article’s historiographical reflection on the profound changes that have taken place within the discipline over the last thirty years, particularly within a French context. The analysis is twofold. First, it aims to trace how new approaches to the sociology and anthropology of science have reconfigured the boundaries of the discipline. Second, it considers the effect of the abandonment of one of its major historiographical paradigms by most of the scholars currently working on early modern science: the scientific revolution as the rise of scientific modernity, underpinned by a Eurocentric vision of the production of knowledge. Although most research on the early modern period now strives to distance itself from this narrative, it must also face new challenges and questions—in particular the role of science in the processes of globalization and the multiplicity of sites and social configurations that participate in this change of scale. These challenges point towards new methods and styles in the history of science and, more broadly, the social sciences.

Simon Schaffer**Ceremonies of Measurement: Rethinking the World History of Science**

The practices of measurement have long been taken as authoritative technologies that travel unusually well and easily across cultural boundaries, and as a sign and cause of the apparent dominance of Western modes of science. Attention to the rituals of measurement and to the emergence of the forms of knowledge that accompanied measurement, notably the sciences of metrology, helps challenge these assumptions. Stories of the silent trade, often located in western Africa, and of the ritual origins of measurement, developed within anthropology and conjectural history, can be used to explore how measurement practices traveled and changed. In particular, the work of Marc Bloch as the preeminent historian of ceremony and power can help illuminate the relation between the historical geography of metrology and the scope of the sciences. His brilliant analysis of the royal ritual of “cramp rings” and its fate provides an important example and precedent for comparably ceremonial and culturally significant episodes in the long history of the science of measurement.