that happened that the author answers by implication, but seldom by
direct analysis, the question of "why" this or that happened.

Less satisfactory than Miss Wedgwood's brilliant accounts of the
battles of Edgehill, Marston Moor, and Naseby is her handling of the
religious question. Although the distinction between Presbyterian and
Independent is correctly stressed, the reader does not receive a clear
picture of just who the Independents were. They are not defined as
the group most concerned with religious toleration but instead are
identified with decreasing accuracy as the dominant body in the New
Model Army, the political party known as the Levellers, and the majority
in the House of Commons. On this last group, the Independents cannot
be said to have had a majority in the Commons until Pride's Purge of the
Presbyterians in December, 1648. But this is a minor criticism of a
work whose author is unsurpassed in her knowledge of the source mate-
rials and whose style of writing is both engaging and scholarly.

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Leo F. Solt


Historians have many weaknesses, but among the most common is
a tendency to set up straw men in order to accomplish their destruction
more impressively. Herbert Butterfield, Master of Peterhouse, Cam-
bridge University, has done just this in his recent book George III and
the Historians. The straw man in this case is the Namier school of
historians, a group whose flaws are grotesquely exaggerated by Professor
Butterfield in overzealous efforts to discredit his colleagues.

First published two years ago in England, George III and the
Historians now appears in a slightly revised American edition. But
apart from increasing the book's availability, there seems little justifica-
tion for transporting an unhappy and tasteless controversy from its
native English shores. Perhaps attacking each other has become the
favorite pastime of British historians; Hugh Trevor-Roper's savage
indictment of Toynbee's alleged pretensions to divinity is one recent sample
of the acerbity with which English scholars can write of each other.
While Professor Butterfield never quite attains the level of Trevor-
Roper's invective, his prose waxes warm in treating the Namier school
as "the most powerfully organized squadron in our historical world,"
developing "so formidable an orthodoxy as to check the free play of
criticism" (p. 10). Suffice it to note that Butterfield's criticism enjoys
an impressive freedom of play.

Here then is a controversial book. If it served to explore the nature
of its own controversy some useful purpose would be served. But
instead Butterfield supplies an extraordinarily obscure and allusive study
of the historiography of eighteenth-century England with the primary
objective of minimizing the contributions of the Namier group of histo-
rians. In short, Butterfield seems to be fearful of historical empire-
building by Sir Lewis Namier, who just thirty years ago published his
famous study of The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George
III. Here Namier provided a detailed examination of the personnel of
the House of Commons, demonstrating the absence of any modern con-
cept of a political party and proving that the prevailing notions of
Whigs and Tories would have to be modified substantially. He followed
this work with *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (1930),
in which he argued that George III was constitutional in his conduct and
had little choice other than to select his ministers in the absence of a
party system, even though this very action became a political issue upon
which a Whig party developed. Namier’s careful research disclosed that
the old ideas of the omnipotent monarch were baseless, that George III
had in fact a highly limited Civil List and Secret Service Fund, and
that his patronage potential was relatively confined. Like Butterfield,
Namier has made many brilliant excursions away from the eighteenth
century, but returned to the fold in 1952 with the excellent “Monarchy
He is currently undertaking a revision of his earlier work as part of a
series which he is directing, titled *England in the Age of the American
Revolution*. Among the historians who have followed Namier’s technique
and arguments, Butterfield has singled out Romney Sedgwick, John
Brooke, and J. B. Owen, who seem to comprise the menacing historical
fleet so much to be feared.

The real basis for such a fear is hard to ascertain. Butterfield him-
self shares wide areas of agreement with Namier—indeed, it would be
difficult to do otherwise. But Butterfield does argue for the existence of
more of a party system than Namier would concede. And Butterfield
does justly rebuke John Brooke for a species of one-upmanship—Brooke
fails to cite secondary works which he must have used and so suggests an
unreal originality of material and thought. On the other hand, Stephen
Potter himself would be proud to point to Butterfield’s assumptive and
obscurantist performance as a superlative example of one-upmanship in
reviewing. *George III and the Historians* is in essence just a long
and rather ill-contrived book review with little of the charm, urbanity,
and insight usually associated with Herbert Butterfield. The only en-
joyable section of what seems an awfully long book is the excellent open-
ing essay, “The Historian and His Evidence,” which should be required
reading for all would-be historians.

Butterfield’s American publishers concede that here is a book “of
special interest to professional historians,” but this reviewer would
suggest that amateur ranks will swell suspiciously if this is to be a
test of status. Stephen Potter would enjoy it, but for vastly different
reasons.

*Indiana University*

H. Trevor Colbourn

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*The Canal Builders: The Story of Canal Engineers Through the Ages.*


Like a summer tourist scurrying around Europe, Mr. Payne’s
superficial story gallops through more than five thousand years of