This is a strange book, with an unusual provenance.\(^1\) The plural in the subtitle suggests that the book moves beyond “the historical method” to a discussion of the proliferating methodologies and theories of recent historiography. That impression is reinforced by the presence of a chapter entitled “New Interpretive Approaches,” and a section on “Interdisciplinarity.” Hence, it comes as a surprise to find that the bulk of this slender volume is devoted to an extended summary of “the critical method” as it was set forth in many of the manuals of the late nineteenth century, along with a gargantuan bibliography of the sort that was then de rigueur. To this Rip Van Winkle quality of the project, the authors have added a postmodern spin, emphasizing throughout the book that they do not share their predecessors’ “impossibly naïve” beliefs about truth and objectivity (145).

As expected, the first chapter deals with sources, but as defined narrowly in archaic language: “Sources are artifacts that have been left by the past. They exist either as relics, what we might call remains, or as the testimonies of witnesses to the past” (17). In the next chapter, under the heading of “Clio’s Laboratory,” the authors summarize the “auxiliary sciences” that once were so prominent in traditional handbooks: paleography, diplomatics, sigillography, numismatics, etc. Among the topics treated next are source criticism, the competence and trustworthiness of the observer, comparison of sources, testing for authenticity, and establishing “evidentiary satisfaction.”

At this point it may be well to recall a comment made by Bloch about sixty years ago, to the effect that some authors of manuals entertain “an extraordinarily simplified notion” of the working procedures of historians: First collect the documents, then weigh their authenticity and truthfulness, and finally make use of them. “There is only one trouble with this idea: no historian has ever worked in such a way.”\(^2\)

The discussion of interdisciplinarity, which comes at the beginning of the chapter “New Interpretive Approaches,” does no more than skim the surface of that complex topic. In a ten-page section on the social sciences, the authors devote half the space to a cursory commentary on the influence of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber without reaching the analytical question of the relationship between history and other disciplines. As one example of historians’ “enduring debts to the social sciences,” the authors cite the concept of the “post-capitalist de-

---

\(^1\) The original version of the book under review was Prevenier, *Een overzicht van de geschiedkundige kritiek* (Ghent, 1969). It was republished every year until 1992 when a revised version of the handbook was issued under the title *Uit goede bron: Introductie tot de historische kritiek* (Leuven-Apeldoorn, 1992), of which this book is an adaptation and expansion for American students (vii, 3).

\(^2\) Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft* (New York, 1953), 64.
mocracy of late twentieth century America” (94). Weber’s *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe, 1949), which analyzes the problem of interdisciplinarity with his usual rigor, does not appear, even in the bibliography. One reason that the authors have not been able to come to grips with the problem of interdisciplinarity is that their “research paradigm,” with its emphasis on events and witnesses, presupposes an *histoire événementielle* that does not have much room for other disciplines.

The authors did not allow themselves much space for a final chapter on “The Nature of Historical Knowledge.” A rambling section on causality touches the topic only tangentially. Since the Dutch have been doing such outstanding work in the theory and philosophy of history, the authors ought at least to have mentioned Chris Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit: Eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie* (Köln, 1997), a translation of *De constructie van het verleden* (Amsterdam, 1994).

The book concludes with another variant of its time-warp syndrome. A short section on “History Today” begins with a paragraph on Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, and Paul Valéry, including a comment by the latter on the decline of civilizations (144). Oddly enough, in *Uit goede bron*, Valéry appears in a more pertinent context, represented by a marvelous quotation denouncing history for besotting nations, creating false memories, and justifying whatever one wishes.

Trygve R. Tholfsen
Teachers College, Columbia University


Expanding on his earlier informative work in drug history, Courtwright provides in *Forces of Habit* a compact and superb history of the main psychoactive substances from their initial marketing, through their growing worldwide sale—in the process decisively molding the international marketplace—and finally to the age of concern and restraint. The drugs prompting the psychoactive revolution fall into two groups, the “Big Three”—alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine—and the “Little Three”—opium, cannabis, and coca. Courtwright gives each drug a succinct historical account, and he lucidly traces the power of both groups in commercial development and legislation, beginning in the sixteenth century. He refers to the eventual prominence of these drugs in commerce and legislation as “one of the signal events of world history” (2).

The drugs maintained status with governmental authorities because they were such an easy source of tax revenues. The drugs were esteemed

---
