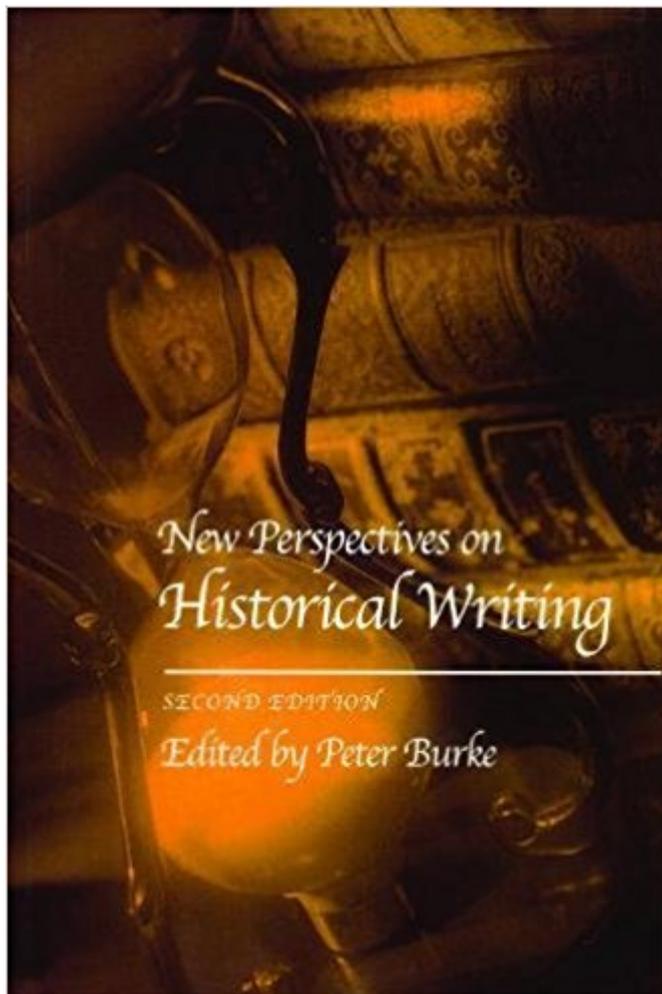


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# New Perspectives On Historical Writing



## Synopsis

A new edition of this best-selling collection of essays by leading experts on historical methodology. Since its first publication in 1992, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* has become a key reference work used by students and researchers interested in the most important developments in the methodology and practice of history. For this new edition, the book has been thoroughly revised and updated and includes an entirely new chapter on environmental history. Peter Burke is joined here by a distinguished group of internationally renowned historians, including Robert Darnton, Ivan Gaskell, Richard Grove, Giovanni Levi, Roy Porter, Gwyn Prins, Joan Scott, Jim Sharpe, Richard Tuck, and Henk Wesseling. The contributions examine a wide range of interdisciplinary areas of historical research, including women's history, history "from below," the history of reading, oral history, the history of the body, microhistory, the history of events, the history of images, and political history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[F]ascinating and exhilarating" — John R. Gillis, *American Historical Review*  
"This stimulating book . . . is made up of theoretical and methodological essays written mainly by European historians of Europe. Still, it may help clarify Americanists' thinking regarding recent historiographical innovations." — Wilfred M. McClay, *Journal of American History*  
"Peter Burke has assembled a collection of well-written, thoughtful, and highly informative historiographical essays. Historians interested in what their peers in other fields

are doing and those who seek to find out *What's doing in history* will find *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* well worth reading. . . . Burke must be applauded for assembling such a variety of first-rate essays in so many fields. *Culturefront* "A must for all historians." Carlo Ginzburg, University of California, Los Angeles

The way in which history is written has changed quite dramatically - so much so that the phrase 'the new history' is now commonly used by historians. But what is the new history and how 'new' is it? Is it a temporary fashion or a long-term trend? Will it - or should it - replace traditional history, or can the two coexist in peace? This second edition of *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* sets out to answer these questions, examining the most exciting and important developments in the methodology and practice of history. Concentrating on some of the more recent movements, it sets out to place these within the context of long-term changes in the writing of history. Peter Burke is joined here by a distinguished group of internationally renowned historians including Robert Darnton, Ivan Gaskell, Richard Grove, Giovanni Levi, Roy Porter, Gwyn Prins, Joan Scott, Jim Sharpe, Richard Tuck and Henk Wesseling. The contributions examine a wide range of interdisciplinary areas of historical research, including women's history, history 'from below', the history of reading, oral history, the history of the body, microhistory, the history of events, the 'new history', the history of images, political history and overseas history. This volume has been thoroughly revised and updated for the second edition, and includes an entirely new chapter on environmental history. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* is a timely and important account of the new approaches to the writing of history. It has become a key reference work and is used by students and researchers in a wide range of disciplines: history and historiography, women's studies, anthropology, sociology, politics and literature. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The essays in this collection are classic expositions of some of the more interesting debates in historical writing from the early 1990s in a largely English (with leanings toward the French *Annalistes* and German *Alltagsgeschichte*) tradition of historical writing. Burke and the contributors can hardly be blamed for being only as good as their areas of expertise and interest, but it is worth bearing in mind that the book was not considered comprehensive by some American critics and was critiqued for neglecting areas such as cliometrics and psychohistory. Nonetheless, some of the pieces are absolute must-reads for theoretical explorations of different approaches. Levi's essay on micro-history, for instance, is masterful and provocative, even if he disclaims any responsibility for

speaking on behalf of all of the Italian practitioners of microhistory. I must say, though, I found Joan W Scott's piece on gender and history to be neither as interesting or provocative as the essays she published in her own volumes, or her classic essay "The Evidence of Experience." Sadly, probably the best essay in the volume, Roy Porter's essay on the history of the body, has been replaced in this new edition, because, as Porter notes, hundreds of historians over the 1990s answered the call to historicize the body. This is a shame because, if the new essay which replaces it is a good overview of work that has been done, the original essay should remain a point of reference for anyone interested not in the history of discourses about the body, but the histories of bodies themselves. Well worth buying and reading carefully, though for the above reason I would seriously consider looking rather for the older edition.

The editor of this comprehensive textbook, Peter Burke (no relation) is a Reader (I think that is a teacher in Britain) of cultural history at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Emmanuel College, where Gwyn Prins is the director of studies in history and is a contributor to this most interesting history perspective study. He studied graffiti of Renaissance Italy, which could be political street culture if on a famous statue or ritual insults when scribbled on the door of an enemy. He wrote *POPULAR CULTURE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE* in 1978. Feminists could not be good historians. Women in history has to show that their presence was required to correct the story. The other female contributor, Joan Scott, is professor of social science at Princeton in America and so is Robert Darnton, a prof of history. The others come from Venice, York, Cambridge and London. A curator of an art museum at Harvard, Ivan Gaskell, is also one of the contributors. Men in history protect the power and resources their dominance gave them. Their resistance to equality between the sexes is a characterization of history. These are just some of the 'new' history writers from a number of fields. We have a local one here who specializes in digging out the old stories from a variable feast of outlaws, visiting dignitaries, and sometimes a native who made it big in this two-buck town. This book is unlike anything else now available on this subject. But it is good to remember that it is merely these few distinguished historians' view. I have read other more recent books on this new "entertaining" history writing, where a little imagination of the author is added to the historical facts. "New" history can never replace traditional history as it is not the story at all, it's about the story. Peter Burke from England gathered these varied, but slanted, versions of what is now known as 'new' history when it is in fact 'historical fiction.' Sometimes fiction is more real than the truth, so why not embellish it a little to make it more readable. It is a change from all of the dull commentary on what really happened and why. It's more like what might have happened and could

be better. This book needs a Glossary as so many esoteric words were used, such as: epistemologically, connoisseurship, iconography, deconstructionists, anachronism, ostensibly, inventiveness, minutiae, fluctuating, disqualification, autoradiography, hypothesis, demystificatory, disparities, historicising, canonical, ideological, taxonomically, elucidate, smokescreen, status quo, manipulation, and micropolitics -- and many such words.

For those insomniacs out there this book will certainly do the trick. Or it makes a good paper weight or door stop.

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