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Ancient Histories of Rome in Sixteenth-Century England: A Reconsideration of Their Printing and Circulation

Freyja Cox Jensen

ABSTRACT This essay addresses the printing and circulation of ancient histories in England before 1600. A detailed case study in the context of wider European printing trends, it focuses on the significance of historians of Rome in particular, drawing on a new statistical analysis of the printing of ancient historians across Europe derived from the Universal Short Title Catalogue. Demonstrating new patterns of print popularity, the essay provides a nuanced understanding of the role histories of Rome played in early modern political culture and aims to facilitate more precise studies of the importance and popularity of individual historians, such as Livy, Plutarch, and Tacitus—both in England and in Europe. **KEYWORDS:** bibliometrics; USTC (Universal Short Title Catalogue); bibliography; statistical analysis; reception of history of Rome; classical historians

☞ **TO UNDERSTAND THE CONNECTIONS** between the reception of ancient Rome and early modern political culture, we first need a sense of the ways in which ideas about Rome reached readers. This essay considers which texts by the classical historians of ancient Rome were in circulation in England by the end of the sixteenth century and which texts English stationers chose to print. Situating its investigation within wider patterns of printing across Europe, it represents the first single-country case study developed from my recent global analysis of European printing, which uses data about books printed in Europe to 1600 derived from the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC).¹ That larger survey provides baseline figures for the printing of histories

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1. Freyja Cox Jensen, “The Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450–1600,” *Historical Journal* 61 (2018): 561–95. The USTC is available at: <http://www.ustc.ac.uk>.

of both Rome and Greece across the entire Continent, in order to facilitate the investigation of particular national or linguistic cultures of the reception of classical histories.

The present essay begins to provide this data for England and to investigate England's relationship to the history of ancient Rome. The significance of national case studies only becomes fully clear when we view them against the backdrop of the broader European scene; in turn, our understanding of the movement of ideas across the Continent is deepened when we compare the patterns of reception of the ancient world in individual countries with one another. Recent work in book history and translation studies has increasingly taken a pan-European approach, highlighting the importance of networks and the permeability of borders and boundaries. The fluid and transnational nature of the European book trade and of European political thought, as well as the interrelation of various national developments, is increasingly being emphasized, often in edited collections that bring together international and interdisciplinary groups of scholars to focus attention on a shared phenomenon.² The reception of the classical world is a field rich in promise for similar enterprises, exhibiting as it does both the depth and power of the shared humanist tradition and the deliberate and conscious attempts of countries and cultures to differentiate themselves through the creation of vernacular translations.

The English case is worthy of study for precisely these reasons: the constructive coexistence of, and simultaneous tension between, a tradition of reception of classical Latin- and Greek-language texts deriving its material almost wholly from the Continent and a vernacular culture of translation and appropriation, demonstrated by a pattern of printing that stands out from the rest of Europe. Unusually, England weighted printing in the vernacular over printing in the ancient languages, and it relied on Continental imports for its Greek and Latin editions; this produced a clearly demarcated difference between the classical and the vernacular, with implications for England's relationship with each. The huge amount of imported classical-language texts sets up this distinction between the "original" (edited though it undoubtedly was) and the innovative more strongly than in countries where this was not the case. Printing in classical languages signaled an engagement in a Continental humanist project well into the seventeenth century; printing in the vernacular, the development of something deliberately and peculiarly culturally English.

2. For example, see *Early Printed Books as Material Objects*, ed. Bettina Wagner and Marcia Reed (Berlin, 2010); *Documenting the Early Modern Book World: Inventories and Catalogues in Manuscript and Print*, ed. Malcolm Walsby and Natasha Constantinidou (Leiden, Netherlands, 2013); *Translation and the Book Trade in Early Modern Europe*, ed. José María Pérez Fernández and Edward Wilson-Lee (Cambridge, 2014); *Specialist Markets in the Early Modern Book World*, ed. Richard Kirwan and Sophie Mullins (Leiden, Netherlands, 2015); *International Exchange in the Early Modern Book World*, ed. Matthew McLean and Sara Barker (Leiden, Netherlands, 2016); *Lost Books: Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. Flavia Bruni and Andrew Pettegree (Leiden, Netherlands, 2016); and *Tacite et le tacitisme en Europe à l'époque moderne*, ed. Alexandra Merle and Alicia Oïffer-Bomsel (Paris, 2017).

☞ Rome in Literary Culture

While the afterlives of both the Greek and the Roman civilizations hold important implications for the history of Europe and North America more generally, Rome and early modern England are the focus of this special issue, and in this essay, they form a case study for examining the relationship between the reception history of classical authors and the history of the book, as a means by which scholars might explore the politics of the age. Understanding the importance of ancient histories in particular is central to grasping the intricacies of England's literary culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as how literary culture in turn interacted with the development of diverse, and increasingly divergent, forms of political culture and the creation of different ideas of English identity.

In England, as across Europe, classical texts—especially in the liberal arts—were a fundamental part of the educated reader's intellectual landscape, whether in grammar school or the university, politics, military life, or leisure, providing him (and occasionally her) with a whole range of ideas and opinions, attitudes and values, from which to build a mental picture of the past.³ But the variety of texts available, as well as individuals' own aims and interests (not to mention their political and moral prejudices or preconceptions), meant that they would necessarily be selective when using and interpreting sources. Ancient histories thus presented early modern readers with an intrinsically authoritative and didactic, but also problematic, guide to the world.

On the one hand, Rome could be used as a distant, antique case study from whose successes and failures the contemporary world could learn, as long as readers chose the right exemplars to emulate or shun. On the other, it could represent the idea that political cycles inevitably repeat themselves, regardless of historical actors' choices. Which of these rang true depended on readers' perception of the Roman past or a writer's attitude to historical exemplars.⁴ In the light of enduring concerns about the instability of constitutions, the ancient world's political upheavals could provide a basis for exploring possible political courses and diplomatic or military strategies or for reflecting on the dangers that ensued from moral laxity and a collapse of public order.⁵ Similarly, different texts could be deployed in support of a wide range of religious and philosophical arguments.

3. Some women in the upper orders of society also received a classical education, including not only the royal princesses but also the daughters of Thomas More, the Cooke sisters, and Mary Sidney, and they interacted with printed Roman histories in ways similar to their male counterparts. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the majority of sixteenth-century readers of Roman history were boys and men who attended the formal, single-sex educational institutions where these texts formed a central part of the curriculum.

4. Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500–1730* (Oxford, 2003), 59–61, 66–67.

5. See especially the essays in this special issue by R. Malcolm Smuts, Paulina Kewes, and Nicholas Popper.

If we are to turn our attention to the reasons for particular choices and interpretations of ancient texts, we must first be able to document the circulation of those texts and their availability to a given reader or community of readers—in this case, early modern England.⁶ The editions and translations available to readers, the languages in which they were printed, and the points at which new offerings entered the marketplace all affected ideas about ancient Rome. The very publication of a classical text or a new, commercial translation was a carefully considered financial venture; as well as any intellectual considerations, it was motivated by practical, political, economic, and social concerns. A new edition or translation appearing at a specific time or in a certain context might affect the way readers and writers perceived a text; therefore, the availability of different editions at different points in time holds significant implications for how individual authors and texts were read.⁷

An overview of the physical distribution of classical histories across Europe is a necessary foundation for accurately understanding the ways in which the classical historical tradition was received in early modern England, with its idiosyncratic mixture of domestic publishing and imports and its burgeoning enthusiasm for vernacular translation. More highly detailed analyses of reception and interpretation—of particular authors, prominent figures, stories and episodes, or ideologies—can then be located within their international context and appraised accordingly. They can, in turn, illuminate our appreciation of wider European developments and the nuances of classical reception in other geopolitical or linguistic cultures. Until recently, the standard source for this approach has been Peter Burke’s “A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450–1700.” A highly influential piece of scholarship, it uses

6. For an early argument about the importance of this approach, see *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries: Annotated Lists and Guides*, vol. 1, ed. F. Edward Cranz, Virginia Brown, and Paul Oskar Kristeller (Washington, D.C., 1960), ix–x.

7. Peter Burke, “Translating Histories,” in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge, 2007), 125–41 at 133–39. Recent scholarship exploring the relationships between classical literature, translation, the book trade, and the development of early modern intellectual culture includes Julian Roberts, “The Latin Trade,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4, 1557–1695, ed. John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, and Maureen Bell (Cambridge, 2002), 141–73; Ian MacLean, *Learning and the Market Place: Essays in the History of the Early Modern Book* (Leiden, Netherlands, 2009); Nicholas Barker, “Editing the Past: Classical and Historical Scholarship,” in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4, ed. Barnard, McKenzie, and Bell, 206–27; Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven, Conn., 2010); *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. 2, 1550–1660, ed. Gordon Braden, Robert Cummings, and Stuart Gillespie (Oxford, 2010); Stuart Gillespie, *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History* (Oxford, 2011); James Raven, “Classical Transports: Latin and Greek Texts in North and Central America before 1800,” in *Books between Europe and the Americas: Connections and Communities, 1620–1860*, ed. Leslie Howsam and James Raven (Basingstoke, U.K., 2011), 157–86; *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, vol. 2, *The Renaissance: 1558–1660*, ed. Patrick Cheney and Philip Hardie (Oxford, 2015).

bibliographical resources dating from 1830 to 1834 and argues for the relative importance of certain ancient historians compared with others.⁸

For many years, Burke's essay has been the starting point for a whole tradition of scholarship on the printed book and the classical world. The essay furnishes a survey of the historical texts written by Greek and Roman authors in the ancient world that were printed across the whole of Europe up to 1700 and were circulating in the original Latin or Greek, in vernacular translation, and, in the case of some Greek texts, in new Latin translations. Using bibliometric statistics, Burke draws conclusions about the kinds of ancient histories that were most popular in different phases of this period; he also addresses the question of audience or, perhaps more accurately, readership, before providing a series of brief case studies of several ancient authors of works we might broadly call historical—Plutarch, Polybius, Livy, and Tacitus—and attempting to explain the reasons for their popularity or changes in popularity. As Burke points out, ancient historians were not all equally popular in the early modern world, and of course, ancient historians were not popular to the same extent in the various countries of early modern Europe. Nor did their relative popularities remain constant during the period Burke surveyed; rather, they varied with time, owing to the changing circumstances in which they were read and the changing contexts within which the ideas contained in the texts were received.

Since the publication of Burke's essay (and indeed even earlier), scholars in many fields have engaged with questions of popularity and reception and the uses to which ancient histories and ancient historians have been put. The published volumes of the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum* have devoted several articles to both the manuscript and print transmission of translations and commentaries on the major historians of the ancient world and their *fortuna* from antiquity among both learned and popular audiences, including Livy, Caesar, Tacitus, Xenophon, Thucydides, and Sallust, along with the writer of historical exempla Valerius Maximus and the first author of a natural history, Pliny the Elder.

Encyclopedias and other reference works, including *The Classical Tradition* and *Die Rezeption der antiken Literature*, include entries on classical historiography and historians, while more specialized studies in scholarly journals and monographs address particular aspects or periods of an author's reception—for example, Sallust in Renaissance political thought and conspiracy histories, Plutarch in fifteenth-century Italian humanist circles, Livy and Tacitus in the marginalia of late sixteenth-century English readers, and Lucretius in the revolutionary context

8. Peter Burke, "A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450–1700," *History and Theory* 5 (1966): 135–52. Work drawing on Burke includes Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1995), 124–26; Patricia J. Osmond, "Princeps Historiae Romanae: Sallust in Renaissance Political Thought," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 40 (1995): 101–43; Eric Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge, 2004), 68–69; and Warren L. Cherniak, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge, 2011), 31, 33.

of mid-seventeenth-century England.⁹ A major study by J. W. Binns is devoted to the special field of neo-Latin literature in early modern England, and a considerable body of work now argues that Tacitus emerged as the ancient historian of choice in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period.¹⁰

Historians in other areas, such as the history of education in England, also engage with ideas about the popularity of certain ancient authors. Epitomes of history and case studies of historical events, such as those by Florus and Sallust, were particularly popular and were printed in vast quantities, because they were so useful in schools' Latin curricula.¹¹ And, of course, scholars looking at the sources used by prominent literary authors, such as Shakespeare, have drawn connections between the publication and translation of certain classical works and early modern literature. The complete text of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* was first made available in English in 1579, in the monumental edition translated by Thomas North, for example, and Shakespeare used this text as source material for his Roman plays.¹²

9. *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); *Die Rezeption der antiken Literatur: Kulturhistorisches Werklexikon*, Der Neue Pauly–Supplemente 7, ed. Christine Walde and Brigitte Egger (Stuttgart, Germany, 2010), trans. and ed. Duncan Smart and Matthijs H. Wibier as *The Reception of Classical Literature* (Leiden, Netherlands, 2012); Osmond, "Princeps Historiae Romanae," 102; Marianne Pade, *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Copenhagen, 2007); Joel Davis, "Robert Sidney's Marginal Comments on Tacitus and the English Campaigns in the Low Countries," *Sidney Journal* 24 (2006): 1–21; Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," *Past and Present*, no. 129 (1990): 30–78; *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, vol. 1, *The Translation of Lucretius*, ed. Reid Barbour and David Norbrook, with Latin text by Maria Cristina Zerbino (Oxford, 2012).

10. J. W. Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Latin Writings of the Age* (Leeds, U.K., 1990); Alan T. Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism and the 'Utility' of Tacitus," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46 (1983): 127–55; Peter Burke, "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie (Cambridge, 1991), 479–98; Malcolm Smuts, "Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c.1590–1630," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (London, 1994), 21–44; Paulina Kewes, "Henry Savile's Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74 (2011): 515–51; Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford, 2012).

11. See, for example, Fred Schurink, "Education and Reading in Jacobean England" (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2004); and Demmy Verbeke, "Cato in England: Translating Latin Sayings for Moral and Linguistic Instruction," in *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads: Translation, Print and Culture in Britain, 1473–1640*, ed. Sara K. Barker and Brenda M. Hosington (Leiden, Netherlands, 2013), 139–55.

12. Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. Thomas North (London, 1579; STC 20065); Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sources* (London and New York, 2004), 428–32. It is impossible to tell exactly which edition of North's translation Shakespeare used. As Gillespie notes, "The playwright may have worked from any or indeed all of the first three editions of 1579, 1595 and 1603 at one time or another" (429). See also *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor (Cambridge, 2004); and *Shakespeare and the Classical Tradition: An Annotated Bibliography 1961–1991*, ed. Lewis Walker (Abingdon, U.K., 2002).

But the world of scholarship has changed considerably since Burke's survey first appeared. There are tools available today to which Burke never had access, tools that can greatly improve our understanding of how printed material was circulating and the impact it might have had on the exchange and development of ideas within the early modern world. Numerous initiatives across Europe have resulted, for instance, in national catalogues of printed material and digital databases detailing a wide variety of textual attributes of most of the known printed works.

The Universal Short Title Catalogue, hosted by the University of St. Andrews, is of untold value to anyone wanting to know about printed items in the early modern world. The database aspires to encompass all books printed in Europe from the birth of the handpress era onward, incorporating new research undertaken by the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded team across Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, France, and the Low Countries, as well as the established ISTC (Incunabula Short Title Catalogue) and data from existing national bibliographical studies on Britain, Germany, and Italy. Fully searchable online and giving all available bibliographic details as well as links to digital editions and to the online catalogues of institutions that hold physical copies, the USTC is by far the most comprehensive and accurate survey of early modern printing to date, despite some inevitable imperfections, and it continues to be refined in order to provide users with the best possible source of bibliographical information.¹³

As this special issue goes to press, the USTC has recently been updated and expanded in several significant ways, including a complete redesign of the website; the incorporation of records from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia; new search features; and more links to associated bibliographies and digital copies. The number of records has been doubled by the recent expansion of the database to a new end date, 1650; comprehensive data may now be searched for the first half of the seventeenth century. Work on the project continues, aiming to provide an outline survey to the end of the century within the next two years.

At the time of writing, however, the USTC provided full coverage only to 1600, and the recent changes have come too late to allow a full revision of the content under consideration here. The English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) has excellent data for English printing in subsequent decades, but for reasons of comparability and in order to consider England in the light of printing and publishing elsewhere in Europe, the present focus remains the period before the close of the sixteenth century. A hasty initial glance at some of the data for the years 1600–1650, snatched in the final days before publication, is appended in the closing pages of this essay: a look forward to what it might be possible to discern in the next stages of research.

13. For a consideration of the methodological challenges posed by the USTC, see Cox Jensen, "Popularity of Ancient Historians," 571–74.

☞ The European Context

When exploring the circulation of Roman histories in England, it is necessary to place sufficient weight on the wider European context. It is clear that the English scholarly reader relied on the output of the European presses for Latin or Greek editions of classical histories. England printed very few of its own Latin or Greek editions until well into the seventeenth century and instead imported them. Andrew Pettegree has shown that English presses produced less than 5 percent of the total European output of printed material during the sixteenth century, not nearly enough to satisfy the literate population of the country. And while most of Europe printed roughly the same number of titles in Latin as in the vernacular, England printed over five times as many English translations as Latin titles, chiefly owing to the commercial monopolization of printing in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew resulting from the granting of privileges.¹⁴

Table 1 shows the most popular classical histories of ancient Rome, as Burke has identified them, according to the number of editions throughout Europe between 1450 and 1700. Burke's original table also included historians of ancient Greece—namely, Curtius, Xenophon, Herodotus, and Thucydides—but since their works are concerned with matters Greek, not Roman, they have been omitted here.

Sallust is ranked at the top of the list by a very considerable margin. Although Burke does not comment directly on why this might be, subsequent scholarship has identified several reasons for his popularity, including his distinctive style and manner (he was celebrated for his brevity and conciseness) and the compact scope of the works, making them easier to produce, cheaper to buy, and quicker to read. We know, moreover, that early modern readers also approached history as a source of moral and political wisdom. Sallust's *Catiline* and *Jugurtha*, for example, both contain an explicit message directed especially at statesmen—namely, that the unrestrained ambition and avarice among the Roman governing class over the preceding century or more had led to perennial factionalism, civil war, and the breakdown of the republic.

Next on Burke's list are Valerius Maximus and Caesar, and again, the reasons for their popularity are relatively clear. Neither the *Memorable Words and Deeds* nor the *Commentaries* is particularly long, nor are they grand narratives. Valerius Maximus, in particular, was ideally suited to a culture of commonplacing, as his work contained numerous useful snippets of information that could be either recorded for moralizing purposes or used in conversation and composition. Both Valerius and Caesar were also recommended by educators as particularly suitable for use in

14. Andrew Pettegree, "Centre and Periphery in the European Book World," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (2008): 101–28 at 106, 118; Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Stationers' Company and the Printers of London, 1501–1557*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2013), 2:606–7.

TABLE 1. Burke's figures for the number of editions of classical historians of Rome published in Europe to 1700

Author	Work	Number of editions
Sallust	<i>Catiline</i>	282
Sallust	<i>Jugurtha</i>	271
Valerius	<i>Words and Deeds</i>	198
Caesar	<i>Commentaries</i>	189
Tacitus	<i>Germany</i>	164
Livy	<i>Decades</i>	160
Suetonius	<i>Twelve Caesars</i>	155
Tacitus	<i>Annals and Histories</i>	152
Florus	<i>Epitome</i>	147
Josephus	<i>Antiquities</i>	73
Josephus	<i>Jewish War</i>	68
Plutarch	<i>Parallel Lives</i>	62
Polybius	<i>Histories</i>	36
Dio	<i>Roman History</i>	25
Diodorus	<i>Historical Library</i>	25

Source: Burke, "Survey of the Popularity," 136.

schools, for precisely those same reasons, and Caesar found popularity not only as an example of elegant Latin prose style but also as a source for military science.¹⁵

15. On the uses to which Caesar's works were put in the Renaissance, see, among a wealth of work, Carol Clark, "Some Renaissance Caesars," in *A Companion to Julius Caesar*, ed. Miriam Griffin (Chichester, U.K., 2009), 356–70; Emily O'Brien, "Arms and Letters: Julius Caesar, the *Commentaries* of Pope Pius II, and the Politicization of Papal Imagery," *Renaissance Quarterly* 62 (2009): 1057–97; and Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford, 2001), 9. On Valerius Maximus, see W. Martin Bloomer, *Valerius Maximus and the Rhetoric of the New Nobility* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1992); Clive Skidmore, *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen: The Works of Valerius Maximus* (Exeter, U.K., 1996); and Rebecca Langlands, "Roman *Exempla* and Situation Ethics: Valerius Maximus and Cicero *de Officiis*," *Journal of Roman Studies* 101 (2011): 100–122.

The new data gathered from the USTC, however, present a slightly different reality and offer an instructive corrective to those published by Burke.

TABLE 2. Cox Jensen’s figures for the number of USTC items by classical historians of Rome printed in Europe to 1599

Author	Number of USTC items
Sallust	427
Livy	362
Plutarch	330
Valerius	294
Josephus	271
Caesar	265
Suetonius	209
Florus	170
Tacitus	149
Diodorus	56
Eutropius	52
Dio	52
Polybius	48

Source: Cox Jensen, “Popularity of Ancient Historians,” 577.

As a guide to the absolute number of USTC items¹⁶ printed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the data are highly illuminating.¹⁷ It is clear that the number of USTC items far exceeds those Burke synthesized; the sheer size of the industry producing classical books was very much larger than previously believed. Despite this increase in the overall figures, it seems that the focus on German books in F. L. A. Schweiger’s *Handbuch der classischen Bibliographie* (on which Burke based his count) reflects universal trends in European taste and interest. As far as production until the seventeenth century is concerned, many of the relative popularities identified

16. I have counted as a separate entity every item that has been given an individual USTC number, which identifies each bibliographically distinct state of every work; an edition of a work may have been issued in several states. For details on my procedures, see Cox Jensen, “Popularity of Ancient Historians,” 566–67.

17. For a more detailed consideration of these findings, especially in the wider European context, see Cox Jensen, “Popularity of Ancient Historians,” 577–85.

by Burke and subsequent studies still hold true.¹⁸ Sallust, Livy, Caesar, and Valerius were all prominent authors in the sixteenth century, whereas Dio and Polybius were more minor, and Tacitus began to be published in substantial quantities only toward the end of the century.

There are, however, several new findings worthy of note. The first, and perhaps the most significant, is the number of USTC items of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. According to Burke's source, *Lives* was not particularly popular in the early modern period, and only sixty-two editions of the text were produced right across the Continent to 1700. The USTC now indicates that *Plutarch's Lives* was in fact one of the most frequently published works of Roman history.¹⁹ Analysis of the country of production reveals this to be a peculiarly French phenomenon: almost half of all USTC items were printed in France in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

A second finding is most clearly visible when expressed in a more visual format and similarly relates to northwestern Europe. Whereas Burke identified large fluctuations in the numbers of editions published within each half century, figures taken from the USTC show less variation in these northwesternmost parts of Europe. Modeled on Burke's analysis by fifty-year period, the following graph (fig. 1) shows the production frequency of the various works of classical historians of Rome in England, France, and the Low Countries, in all languages, in each half century.

The printing of Sallust in these countries declined substantially in the second half of the sixteenth century. The large increase in the printing of Tacitus in the same period is well documented, but Appian, too, was far more frequently printed from 1550 onward.²⁰ Perhaps the most outstanding exception is Plutarch's *Lives*, the printing of which increased dramatically in the second half of the sixteenth century to the extent that it was the most-printed work of Roman history, outstripping even the works of Sallust. Such an unprecedented number of new printed books containing Plutarch's biographies of prominent ancient Greek and Roman men undoubtedly changed the way that readers were interacting with the classical past, if for no other

18. Burke notes that Schweiger is likely to be biased in favor of German editions, "as [he] gleaned most carefully in that field." See Burke, "Survey of the Popularity," 135. For later studies, see, for example, Osmond, "*Princeps Historiae Romanae*," 134.

19. The other author whose works now appear to have been far more popular than Burke's estimation is Josephus, and this is discussed in Cox Jensen, "Popularity of Ancient Historians," 586–90. Tallying publications of Josephus in England is complicated by the prevalence of works by pseudo-Josephus; for this reason, Josephus is omitted from the discussion in this essay, but a closer exploration of the circulation of his work in the English context may be found in Freyja Cox Jensen, "What Was Thomas Lodge's Josephus in Early Modern England," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 49 (2018): 3–24.

20. See Jan Waszink's introduction to his translation of *Justus Lipsius, Politica. Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction*, ed. and trans. Waszink (Assen, Netherlands, 2004). See also Kenneth C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (Chicago, 1976); and Burke, "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State," 479–98.

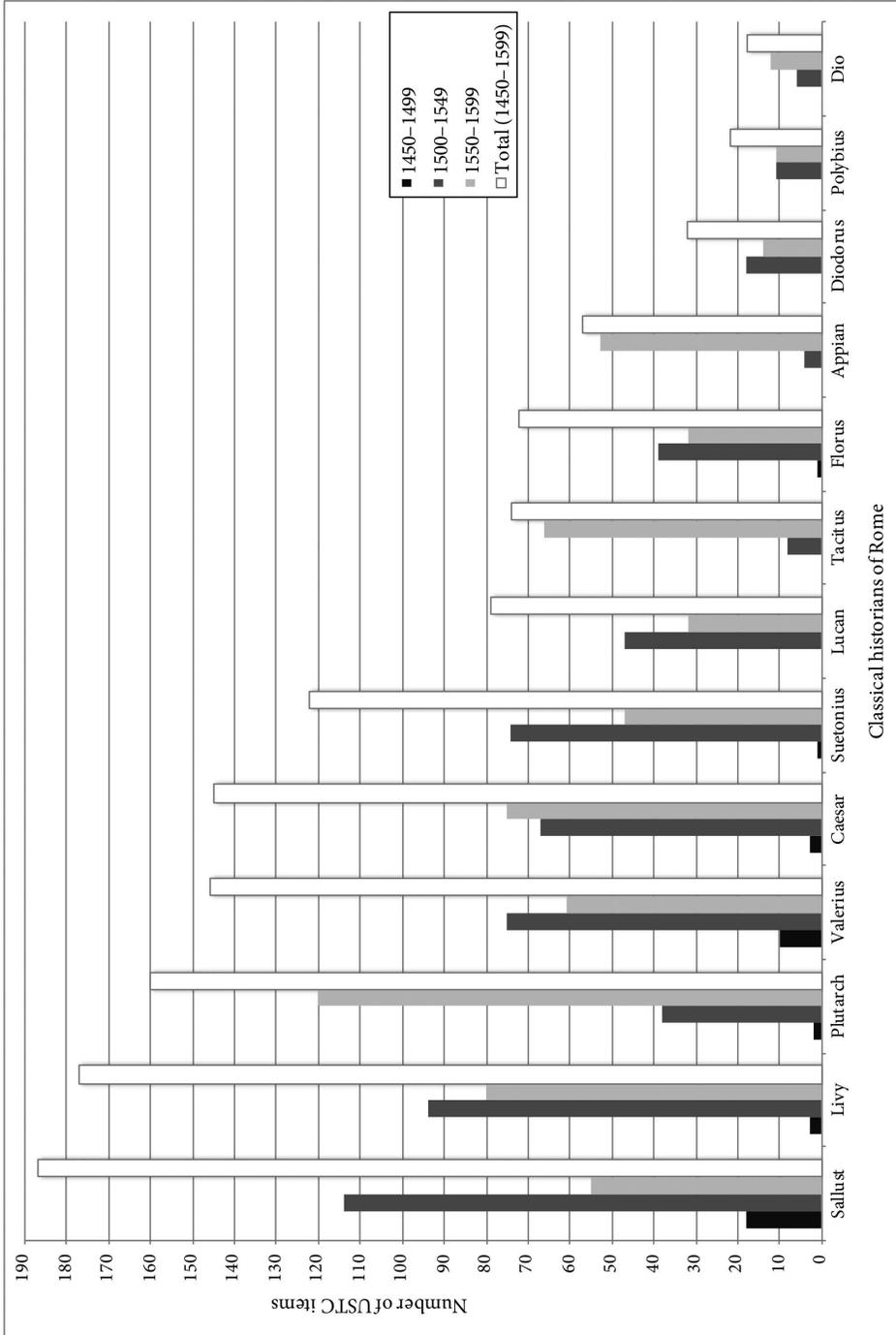


FIGURE 1. Numbers of USTC items by classical historians of Rome printed in England, France, and the Low Countries to 1599.

reason than that large numbers of men and women now owned a copy of the *Lives*. Further thoughts on this are offered in the conclusion.

It is also important to note the popularity of some ancient authors who were not included in Burke's survey but whose works might reasonably be thought relevant: namely Lucan's *Pharsalia*, with its poetic account of the civil wars, and Appian's *Roman History*. Both texts were produced in greater numbers than several of the works in the original survey, which is why I have provided them here, and their inclusion affects the overall order of popularity. While Sallust, Livy, and Plutarch were by far the most frequently published historians of Roman matters, Appian was far from neglected, and Lucan was printed in more USTC items than roughly half the other authors represented. Again, this appears to be a particularly Atlantic trend, with 89 percent of USTC items of the *Pharsalia* printed in France, England, Iberia, and the Low Countries.

The inclusion of Lucan is perhaps a contentious decision; after all, if poetry is to be counted as a source from which readers might draw an understanding of Roman history, arguments can also be made for the historical value of Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Silius Italicus, among others. In the early modern world, ideas of what constituted history were far more fluid and far less generically fixed than they became in later ages, and a comparative analysis of the different kinds of texts containing historical "stories" might illuminate which sorts of history were most popular or most influential. In any event, because it is so explicitly a historical epic about a major turning point in Rome's constitutional evolution written to make clear the significance of the events for Roman society, the *Pharsalia* has been included here.²¹ Lucan's motivation seems much the same as that of Sallust: to use historical events to illustrate the perils of moral collapse. After all, history, like other branches of literature and moral philosophy in the early modern world, aimed to provide moral lessons and examples. Pliny's "natural history" comprised history, geography, and a host of other disciplines. Valerius Maximus's collection of *Memorable Words and Deeds* was a storehouse of anecdotes about historical events and figures, intended as a kind of commonplace book for writers and orators of the first century CE. And, strictly speaking, Suetonius and Plutarch wrote biography rather than history: profiles of the lives of famous and notable figures interspersed with moral commentary. Lucan's *Pharsalia* thus seems equally apt for inclusion in this survey, which is undertaken as an attempt to understand when and where early modern readers came into contact with ideas about ancient Rome.²²

21. The extent to which the ancients treated the poem as "versified history" is discussed in Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin Literature: A History* (Baltimore and London, 1994), 441–43.

22. Conte, *Latin Literature*, 1–3. See also Blair Worden, "Historians and Poets," in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino, Calif., 2006), 69–90; J. H. M. Salmon, "Precept, Example and Truth: Degory Wheare and the *Ars Historica*," in *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric and Fiction, 1500–1800*, ed. Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (Cambridge, 1997), 11–36.

☞ The English Example

Because this special issue is principally concerned with the place of ancient Rome in later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, let us now turn specifically to the reception of classical historians of Rome in England and the northwestern countries of Europe. Using data from the USTC to analyze the printing of ancient historians of Rome, in all languages, in the northwestern parts of the Continent, we see the relatively undeveloped state of classical-book production in England compared with its nearest neighbors.

The figures show quite clearly how slow England was to print classical texts, even when one takes into consideration the country's relatively small size. It is worth noting that although table 3 includes all classical histories of Rome produced from the mid-fifteenth century onward, nothing relevant was printed in England in the incunabular period. While production increased gradually over the early modern age and all the historians of Rome were published in England at some point before 1700, it took many years for England to reach the levels of production seen across the Channel. The earlier sixteenth century saw the printing of only a few of the standard works recommended by pedagogues, moralists, and statesmen: those of Sallust, Livy, and Caesar. As time passed, however, Plutarch became more popular, along with Florus and Suetonius. And, although it did not achieve great popularity in the sixteenth century, the work of Roman history printed most frequently in the early 1600s was Lucan's *Pharsalia*, bearing out the claims for its significance made by David Norbrook and Edward Paleit, among others.²³

Care must be taken in assuming a direct correlation between the number of USTC items printed in a particular location and the popularity of that author in the same location. Indeed, classical histories' circulation and transmission are complex processes that cannot be explained by a purely bibliometric approach. Assessing popularity based on print production is made more problematic by the fact that histories were also reproduced (and thus "published") in manuscript as well as in a variety of other printed forms (excerpted and reproduced in compendia, transformed into other genres, and so on) and that readers could thus interact with them in multiple formats.²⁴ Moreover, selling a book was not the only way in which that book could be distributed, and there is a fundamental difficulty in correlating printing statistics with popularity.

23. David Norbrook, "Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Republican Literary Culture," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Sharpe and Lake, 45–66. More recently, Edward Paleit has explored the numerous and nuanced responses to this text, which he sees as symptomatic of a troubled political age, in his *War, Liberty, and Caesar: Responses to Lucan's "Bellum Ciuile," ca. 1580–1650* (Oxford, 2013).

24. For a fuller exploration of the limitations of bibliometric analysis of printing as a measure of popularity, see Cox Jensen, "Popularity of Ancient Historians," 564–66.

TABLE 3. Number of USTC items by classical historians of Rome printed in England compared with France and the Low Countries to 1599

Author	No. USTC items printed in England	No. USTC items printed in France and the Netherlands
Sallust	4	282
Livy	9	271
Plutarch	5	198
Valerius	0	189
Caesar	6	164
Suetonius	0	160
Lucan	3	155
Tacitus	4	152
Florus	5	147
Appian	2	73
Diodorus	1	68
Polybius	1	36
Dio	0	25

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw flourishing markets in second-, third-, and fourth-hand books.²⁵ This applied not only to individual, private readers but also to institutional libraries. Catalogues from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge show that even in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, colleges were actively acquiring editions of classical texts that had been published on the Continent in the early sixteenth century.²⁶ Books were still moving in and out of

25. Philip Gaskell, "Books Bought by Whitgift's Pupils in the 1570s," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographic Society* 7 (1979): 284–93; N. R. Ker, "The Provision of Books," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 3, *The Collegiate University*, ed. James McConica (Oxford, 1986), 441–520, esp. 467–72.

26. For example, when Sir Walter Mildmay founded the library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1584, one of his founding donations was a copy of Livy printed at Basel in 1535. See Sargent Bush Jr. and Carl J. Rasmussen, *The Library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge 1584–1637* (Cambridge, 1986), 10–11. Similarly, when Bishop Williams donated his library to St. John's College, Cambridge in 1638, he gave a two-volume edition of Caesar's *Commentaries* published at Frankfurt in 1575. See the "Catalogue of books given to St John's by Bishop John Williams, 1638," MS U5, St. John's College, Cambridge.

collections many decades after they were first printed, a fact often occluded by focusing on the production of new editions.

Then, too, there are practical difficulties in tracing the relationship between the place of production and the final destination of early modern books; for many years, such problems have been perpetuated by political and institutional pressures that resulted in bibliographical studies' being largely confined within the boundaries of individual nation-states. Attempts are now in place, in the form of projects such as the USTC, to broaden the possibilities for the analysis of transnational distribution, but even these are working against centuries of rather insular national conventions.

The English case is the perfect example of the limitations of a nationally oriented approach to the history of the book and the history of reading: although physically separated from the Continent by the Channel, scholarly readers of early modern England relied very heavily on the output of the European presses for their Latin or Greek editions of ancient histories. Precisely because so many of the Roman histories consumed in England originated on the Continent, it is necessary to consider European printing of these works. Most of the editions of Roman history found in private and institutional catalogues and inventories, at least those of the sixteenth century, are Continental, primarily from France and the Netherlands. For example, while no edition of Valerius Maximus's *Facta et dicta memorabilia* was printed in England until after 1600, numerous references to the work appear in English notebooks and commonplace books, and it is frequently found in inventories.²⁷

We therefore have to extrapolate from the European records to imagine which books were being read or bought. These texts passed readily across regional and national borders, circulating in the shared international languages of scholarship: Greek but predominantly Latin. Respected editions by prominent scholars found their way into the collections of individuals and institutions across Europe regardless of their place of production. Perhaps it was partly the availability of scholarly Continental editions, as well as the restriction of printing privileges, that deterred the English presses from printing as many histories of Rome as did Continental presses.

We may come closer to understanding which histories of Rome were popular in England by examining the languages in which they were produced. Burke's "Survey" and subsequent studies such as Patricia J. Osmond's "*Princeps Historiae Romanae*: Sallust in Renaissance Political Thought," compare production levels of ancient

27. For example, Samuel Fox, "Commonplace book," Lansdowne MS 679, fol. 76, British Library; and "Commonplace book," MS R.16.7, fol. 198v, Trinity College, Cambridge. Eighteen copies are listed in Cambridge inventories between 1585 and 1614, while five appear in Oxford inventories from the same period. See Elisabeth S. Leedham-Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories: Book Lists from Vice-Chancellor's Court Probate Inventories in the Tudor and Stuart Periods* (Cambridge, 1986); and Walter Mitchell, "Alphabetical transcript of Oxford University Chancellor's Court Inventories containing references to books," Oxford University Archives.

histories in the original language with those in vernacular languages.²⁸ Implicit in such an analysis is the assumption that it might be possible to draw conclusions about vernacular publication and the popularity of the classics in specific geographical areas. In the case of English, a language very sparsely read outside England, this is probably a relatively safe assumption; it is certainly unlikely that English-language editions found a significant market outside England.²⁹

The paucity of Latin editions of classical histories of Rome printed in England clearly indicates the strength of the book import trade (see table 4). Only eight USTC items of such histories in Latin were produced in England before 1600; these were works by five authors: Caesar, Sallust, Livy, Florus, and Lucan. Of these few Latin publications, all except the Lucan were standard textbooks used in schools or for private study. Furthermore, sixteenth-century England did not produce large numbers of vernacular editions, either; the numbers are modest compared with France and Germany, for example, since England discovered its passion for translation rather later than mainland Europe. So, for example, it was not until the 1630s that Velleius Paterculus became available in English. Moreover, many translations were made via intermediary French texts; North's Plutarch was just one such work.³⁰

But the figures make it abundantly clear that English presses primarily printed English translations. By the end of the sixteenth century, as a growing appetite for texts about Rome drove a range of literary endeavors, English translators were busily rendering classical histories of ancient Rome into English for a hungry print market.³¹ This might explain why some English-language histories printed in England did not appear in Burke's survey. In their specific vernacular translations, they were important to an English audience, but they may have been less so to readers elsewhere in Europe, who were consuming the texts in other languages.

Appian's history, for example, was both translated and extended by William Barker in 1578, because, as the subtitle states, "that parte of *Appian* is not extant, from the death of *Sextus Pompeius*, second sonne to *Pompey* the Great, till the overthrow of *Antonie* and *Cleopatra*."³² Something in Appian spoke to Barker and induced him to supply English readers with the rest of this prominent and popular episode in the

28. Osmond, "Princeps Historiae Romanae," reprinted in a partially revised and updated version in *Sallust*, ed. William W. Batstone and Andrew Feldherr, Oxford Readings in Classical Studies (Oxford, 2020), 400–444, esp. the appendix.

29. Burke, "Survey of the Popularity," 141.

30. On early modern English translations from the Latin and Greek, see Gillespie, *English Translation and Classical Reception*, 2–15; and Robert Cummings and Stuart Gillespie, "Translations from Greek and Latin Classics 1550–1700: A Revised Bibliography," *Translation and Literature* 18 (2009): 1–42.

31. See Kewes, "Henry Savile's Tacitus," 517–21, for an account of the range of plays on Roman topics and new accounts of the Roman past that were being penned in England and translated from Continental sources.

32. Appian, *An Auncient Historie and exquisite Chronicle of the Romanes warres*, trans. William Barker (London, 1578; STC 713.5).

TABLE 4. Number of USTC items by classical historians of Rome printed in England to 1599, by language

Author ^a	Work	No. USTC items printed in England ^b		
		In English ^c	In Latin ^c	
Livy	<i>Decades</i>	9	5	4
Sallust	<i>Jugurtha</i>	6	3	6
Caesar	<i>Commentaries</i>	6	4	3
Plutarch	<i>Parallel Lives</i>	5	5	0
Florus	<i>Epitome</i>	5	1	4
Sallust	<i>Catiline</i>	3	0	3
Lucan	<i>Pharsalia</i>	3	2	1
Appian	<i>Roman History</i>	2	2	0
Polybius	<i>Histories</i>	1	1	0
Diodorus	<i>Historical Library</i>	1	1	0

a. Authors not printed in England during this period have been omitted. Neither Appian nor Plutarch, both of whom originally wrote in Greek, was printed in the Greek original in sixteenth-century England. Indeed, both Appian and Plutarch were printed in Latin translation long before the first printed Greek editions appeared. The Latin translation of Appian by Petrus Candidus was the first printed edition, made in Venice in 1472; Carolus Stephanus was responsible for the first Greek edition, printed in Paris in 1551. Plutarch's *Lives* first appeared outside Italy in 1470, printed in Strasbourg in Latin translation, while the Greek *editio princeps* was printed in Florence in 1517.

b. This table covers the number of editions published in England to 1599 inclusive; 1600 was the end date of the USTC when this table was prepared. It includes adaptations and translations from intermediary Continental sources, such as Thomas Paynell's translation (London, 1541 and 1557) of Costanzo Felici's early sixteenth-century version of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinam*.

c. Some volumes contain parallel columns of English and Latin text; they have been counted twice, since the availability of a text in a particular language is of interest here, rather than an absolute number of editions.

story of Rome's civil wars. The moral and political relevance of Antony and Cleopatra's demise for Elizabethan England, for instance, is widely attested by the focus on the story in drama of the time.³³ Lucan, too, was not only translated into English in

33. William Shakespeare's Jacobean *Antony and Cleopatra* had several Elizabethan antecedents, including Mary Sidney's *The Tragedie of Antonie*, first published (as *Antonius*) in London in 1592 with her translation of Philippe de Mornay's *A Discourse of Life and Death* and then published on its own (London, 1595; STC 11623); Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, written as a companion piece to *Antonie*, and first published in Daniel's *Delia and Rosamond*

the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century but also transposed into a particularly relevant political context.

Several of the earlier translations of classical histories of Rome produced in England are printed in parallel format, with both languages on every page. Alexander Barclay's translation of Sallust's *Jugurtha*, published in 1522, took this form, as did the second edition of 1525.³⁴ The 1530 translation of excerpts from books 4 and 5 of Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars* likewise provided the reader with both English and Latin in parallel columns, a feature that can scarcely have been intended to explicate the source of the English translation itself, since that was in fact made from the French.³⁵ These simultaneous texts mirrored the methods used to teach schoolboys how to read and write Latin; like the parallel translation used in the grammar schools, they allowed a comparison between the original, printed in smaller type on the outside of the page, and the larger, more prominent English, which filled most of the inner page. They also obviated the need for complex paratextual material explaining why a particular word had been translated in a certain way or how a phrase should be read. Such annotations were found in the large, scholarly Continental Latin editions, which glossed and explained the text to an extraordinary degree, hampering the flow of the prose.

Parallel translations were also common for the Continental editions of Greek texts such as Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* translated into Latin, which made their way into English libraries. Some Continental editions printed both Latin and Greek on the same page. While it is impossible to draw broad conclusions about how English readers used these parallel translations, some copies display marginalia attached to the Latin text but not the Greek, suggesting that the reader engaged more closely with the former. Other editions printed the languages consecutively. The thirteen octavo volumes of the 1572 Geneva edition of the collected works of Plutarch, for example, begin with the Greek text, then present the Latin translation beginning in the seventh volume.³⁶

augmented. Cleopatra (London, 1594; STC 6243.4), before subsequently appearing in several revised versions; and Fulke Greville's play *Antony and Cleopatra*, which he supposedly destroyed for fear that parallels might be drawn with Elizabeth and Essex. See Paulina Kewes, "A Fit Memorial for the Times to Come: Admonition and Topical Application in Mary Sidney's *Antonius* and Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra*," *Review of English Studies* 63 (2012): 243–64. See also *Sir Fulke Greville's Life of Sir Philip Sidney etc. First published 1652 with an introduction by Nowell Smith* (Oxford, 1907), 155–56; and Samuel Brandon's closet drama on Antony's abandoned wife, Octavia, *The Tragicomoedi of the vertuous Octavia* (London, 1598; STC 3544).

34. Sallust, *Here begynneth the famous cronycle of the warre, which the romayns had against Iugurth vsurper of the kyngdome of Numidy*, trans. Alexander Barclay. First edition London, [1622], STC 21626; second edition London, [1625], STC 21627.

35. *Iulius Cesars commentaryes, newly translatyd owte of laten in to englyssh, as much as col[n]cernyth thys realm of England sumtyme callyd Brytayne* (London, 1530; STC 4337).

36. *Πλουταρχου Χαιρωνεως τα σωζομενα συγγραμματα: Plutarchi Chaeronensis quae extant opera, cum Latine interpretatione*, trans. Henri Estienne, 13 vols. ([Geneva], 1572).

We can say with some certainty that the Latin-language classical histories of Rome produced in England were designed to be used. Often appearing and feeling cheaper than some of their Continental counterparts, they were not produced for display but were small and functional. All the Latin editions printed in England were octavo or sextodecimo in format. Any English-printed Latin book on the market would have had to compete with the imports from Continental Europe, and it was clearly not worth it for an English printer to produce expensive, large-format editions when these were already amply supplied by the European presses. It is most likely that the Latin histories printed in England were intended for the academic market and perhaps for use in the grammar schools, the largest consumer of cheap “textbook” editions.

The vernacular translations, however, were for a much more limited market, found almost nowhere else on the Continent, and English-language classical histories of Rome were produced in a larger format than the few domestic Latin copies. First editions, including the first-ever translations of a particular text into the English vernacular, were usually produced in folio; most then appeared in quarto in their second and third editions. North’s Plutarch and Philemon Holland’s Livy are two notable exceptions; these were lengthy, often running to well over one thousand pages, and continued to be produced in folio size in subsequent editions.³⁷

Evidence about the retail price of books is sparse, but the little that survives can indicate the kind of customers who might have bought new English editions of classical histories of Rome from the booksellers. Book prices remained fairly stable during the Elizabethan period, despite the steady rise of commodity prices in general. While the inventories of deceased university scholars rarely valued the used Continental editions of histories of Rome at more than a few pence, new, English translations cost a little more, even in smaller sizes.³⁸ The Edinburgh bookseller Thomas Bassandyne was selling Arthur Golding’s translation of Caesar’s *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*, published in octavo in 1565, for 1s. 10d. in the 1570s; in the mid-1580s, Robert Gurlaw and Thomas Chard sold the 1584 quarto edition of Golding’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* for 2s. and 1s. 10d., respectively.³⁹

These need not have been beyond the reach of the humbler reader, but the same cannot be said of the majority of the English editions of classical histories of Rome. Sir William More bought his bound copy of Thucydides’s *History*, translated by Thomas Nicolls and published in folio in 1550, for 3s. 4d., while another purchaser paid 5s. The longer works, such as Plutarch’s *Lives*, sold for much more. According to

37. Plutarch, *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (1579; further editions 1595, 1603); *The Romane Historie Written by T. Livius of Padua*, trans. Philemon Holland (London, 1600; further editions 1659 and 1686).

38. Mitchell, “Alphabetical transcript of . . . Inventories containing references to books”; Francis R. Johnson, “Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1550–1640,” *Library* 5 (1950): 83–112 at 89.

39. Johnson, “Notes on English Retail Book-Prices,” 107.

a Cambridge physician's library catalogue, the price of North's translation was 14s., while Philemon Holland's 1601 translation of Pliny's *Natural History*, a folio work of comparable stature, cost one of its purchasers 13s. in its unbound state.⁴⁰

These, then, were large, weighty, prestigious books, most probably bought by men who wished to be seen to be learned and to be participating in the intellectual culture of their time, regardless of whether they had the benefit of a university education. These were books to be seen as well as read. The folio translations provided a shortcut to Latinate learning for men who lacked the time or inclination to employ their linguistic skills, although doubtless many would have been able to read the Latin or Greek originals, had they cared to do so. But they also represented solid, physical proof that their owners knew and understood the importance of ancient history in learned society; anyone wishing to advertise erudition, real or otherwise, could do so by displaying one of these immense volumes.

Conclusions

Despite these sizable examples of the adaptation of histories of Rome by English writers for an English market, perhaps the clearest and least surprising conclusion to be drawn from this preliminary foray into the circulation of classical histories of Rome in the sixteenth (and early seventeenth) century is that England was indeed primarily an importer of Latin and Greek texts in the early modern period. This may be little more than a matter of economics. With flourishing production centers in Continental Europe already publishing many editions of Latin and Greek works, strong commercial networks bringing them into the country, and restrictions on Latin printing on English soil, it might simply have seemed financially impractical to print homemade Latin- or Greek-language histories, even for the holders of the printing privileges, despite the strong market.

When English presses did produce Latin editions, they appear to have been satisfying a demand for something different from what the Continental printers were offering or for textbooks for the schools and universities, which may not have been adequately supplied by existing trade networks. Certainly, the academic market was a very significant consumer of histories of Rome, and on the very infrequent occasions that English stationers printed Caesar or Sallust in Latin, they did so in a form that was aimed at the grammar schools or the university market—in small formats, with cheap paper and printing. But the amount of overlap between books produced specifically for the school or university consumer and books bought and read by private adult individuals is not entirely clear. The role of women readers, largely excluded from the formal educational system, may prove instructive here. More work is needed to understand whether various audiences consumed the wisdom found in Roman history in the same book formats or particular kinds of reader read only certain book

40. H. S. Bennett, "Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1480–1560," *Library* 5 (1950): 172–78; and Johnson, "Notes on English Retail Book-Prices," 108.

formats—and how distinct reading audiences may have affected the interpretation and use of this history.⁴¹

Closer interrogation of the patterns emerging from the data presented here might reveal much that is new and important about the way that early modern England engaged with ancient Rome. For example, the significance of Plutarch's *Lives* indicated by the number of USTC items is, as yet, unexplained in the English context; neither has it been fully explored for the Continent. There are several possible reasons for this phenomenon, and further bibliographical and textual analysis of the individual USTC items and the circumstances of their production and reception is now needed, although a few provisional hypotheses may be advanced.

Data from the USTC demonstrate that Plutarch was printed in a far greater number of editions in Europe than we previously believed, and this appears traceable to northern Atlantic publishing; statistics for publishing in Germany and Italy do not indicate the same strong vogue for Plutarch. It would seem reasonable to suppose that Jacques Amyot's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* into French (1559) lies behind this. Amyot is the source for North's English Plutarch, and vernacular translations of Plutarch form a major proportion of the total number of USTC items of classical histories of Rome published in France in the later sixteenth century.⁴²

The apparent popularity of Plutarch in France and England in particular may also result from the nature of the book as an object, rather than as a text. Many of the USTC items of Plutarch produced in England, at least, were impressive folios, which were desirable for their appearance—and for the status they conferred on their owner—as much as for their contents. Other USTC items published in Europe but imported into England contained only a few selected lives and were cheap octavo or duodecimo volumes. A brief search in the USTC shows that Plutarch's *Moralia* was similarly produced in huge quantities; in the sixteenth century, France, Iberia, and the Netherlands printed more Plutarch than either Livy or Sallust, and the number of USTC items of his works is second only to Cicero.

Clearly, the place of Plutarch in early modern England and neighboring countries is a subject deserving of further study.⁴³ Perhaps, too, it might pay to expand our notion of history, in order not to miss the political significance of Roman history in other forms, such as the epic poetry of Lucan. Readers in early modern England used

41. Paulina Kewes begins to do this work with her consideration of the formats, prefaces, and paratexts of three late Elizabethan engagements with Roman history in her "Roman History, Essex, and Late Elizabethan Political Culture," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Age of Shakespeare*, ed. Malcolm Smuts (Oxford, 2016), 250–68.

42. Plutarch, *Vies des hommes illustres grecs et romains*, trans. Jacques Amyot (Paris, 1559). I am very grateful to Malcolm Walsby, cofounder of the USTC project, for his thoughts on the significance of Plutarch in the French vernacular.

43. Existing scholarship on topics unrelated to Shakespeare is comparatively limited, but see, for example, Fred Schurink, "Print, Patronage, and Occasion: Translations of Plutarch's *Moralia* in Tudor England," *Yearbook of English Studies* 38 (2008): 86–101. On Amyot and Plutarch, see Robert Aulotte, *Amyot et Plutarque: La tradition des "moralia" au XVI^e siècle* (Geneva, 1965).

a wide variety of sources for the same purposes as they did the more traditional “histories.” Morals and sententiae from Horace, Ovid, and, of course, Cicero appear in the very same commonplace books and notebooks as excerpts from Livy, Caesar, and Sallust, in the very same sections, and under the very same headings. The most fruitful approach might therefore be to leave behind modern understandings of genre and look more closely at the distribution and circulation of a more diverse range of texts about Rome in order to reach a closer understanding of how early modern readers experienced ancient history.

☞ Coda: Toward the Seventeenth Century

The new tranche of data available in the USTC now makes it possible to peer tentatively into the seventeenth century and sketch out a rough picture of some global European publishing trends to 1650, as far as the historians of Rome are concerned. Hastily compiled in the days before this essay itself heads to the printing house, and supplied here with several caveats, the initial and highly approximate “headline” figures for the least complicated authors seem to indicate interesting avenues for more detailed analysis, particularly in terms of the popularity of Livy compared with Tacitus:

TABLE 5. Approximate number of USTC items by selected classical historians of Rome printed in Europe to 1650

Author	Number of USTC items
Sallust	510
Livy	454
Caesar	342
Tacitus	318
Suetonius	273
Polybius	65
Eutropius	62
Diodorus	60
Dio	57

Note: Owing to the timing of the release of data and the publishing schedule for this essay, no metadata have been checked for these results in the USTC, something usually necessary to avoid the inclusion of rogue or misleading entries in the figures. None of the usual comparison searches have been run, and no additional searches have been conducted except those for the most common variant spellings. These totals are simply arrived at by searching for the author in the appropriate date ranges and eliminating only the immediately obvious irrelevant or “false” results; they are therefore not to be relied on and represent only the first steps toward reappraising Burke’s 1966 data for the seventeenth century. Moreover, searches have only been performed for selected authors, where there is little or no ambiguity about which work might be in a given edition.

Although the total number of USTC items of Tacitus still falls far short of the traditional “top three” classical historians of ancient Rome over the first two centuries of the printed book, a breakdown of printing frequency that separates activity in the seventeenth century from the prior period reveals a huge increase in the publication of Tacitus after 1600, compared with all other authors. This is in line with the generally accepted view that his popularity increased greatly toward the end of the sixteenth century and thereafter, while other historical narratives became less influential.

TABLE 6. Comparison of numbers of USTC items by selected classical historians of Rome printed in Europe by period

Author	No. USTC items to 1599	No. USTC items 1600–1650 (approx.)
Sallust	427	83
Livy	363	91
Caesar	265	77
Suetonius	209	64
Tacitus	149	169
Diodorus	56	4
Eutropius	52	10
Dio	52	5
Polybius	48	14

A glance at the number of USTC items in European vernaculars reveals some suggestive differences in approach to the two authors (table 7). German and Dutch editions of Livy easily outnumber those of Tacitus in each language in the first half of the seventeenth century, while the numbers of French, Spanish, and Italian translations of Tacitus are strikingly large compared with vernacular editions of Livy in the same language during the same period. This may not be wholly unexpected, but it certainly provides additional evidence of cultural differences in the way these two authors were received and deployed, and suggests potential understandings of their histories that were, to some degree, linguistically constructed. Recent scholarship on Livy in seventeenth-century England demonstrates the continued relevance of the *Ab urbe condita* long after the vogue for Tacitus had taken hold, and details the ways in which Livy could be read in ways that were as radical politically as interpretations of Tacitus;⁴⁴ we might also speculate that a reevaluation of the comparative reception

44. John-Mark Philo, *“An Ocean Untouched and Untried”: The Tudor Translations of Livy* (Oxford, 2020), 5, 142–63.

of the two authors across Europe might offer new insights into the “Livy > Tacitus” question.⁴⁵

TABLE 7. Approximate number of USTC items by Tacitus and Livy printed in Europe, 1600–1650, for the most commonly occurring languages

Language	No. USTC items of Tacitus	No. USTC items of Livy
Latin	82	53
French	39	6
Spanish	16	0
Italian	14	0
Dutch	5	11
English	4	1
German	1	6
Swedish	0	1

The editions produced in England before 1650 are still so small in number as to make the statistical identification of any wider trends a futile exercise; English printers produced small numbers of Latin books for education purposes, while for most of the English-language cases, several editions in a few years account for the totals for each author.

TABLE 8. Comparison of numbers of USTC items by selected classical historians of Rome printed in England, by period

Author	No. USTC items to 1599	No. USTC items 1600–1650 (approx.)
Sallust	4	5
Livy	9	1
Caesar	6	2
Suetonius	0	4
Tacitus	4	4
Polybius	1	4

45. An early voice in the debate is J. H. Whitfield, “Livy > Tacitus,” in *Classical Influences on European Culture, A.D. 1500–1700*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge, 1976), 281–93.

The few editions of Caesar and Sallust continued to include small, cheap, Latin texts; the four USTC items of Suetonius were all Philemon Holland's vernacular translation of 1606, printed in folio by Humphrey Lownes and George Snowden for Matthew Lownes; and Edward Grimstone's English translation of Polybius was the sole text, produced in four editions, printed in 1633, twice in 1634, and in 1635.⁴⁶ If publication of an edition stands as a proxy for enthusiasm or interest, then the appetite for Tacitus in England was more sustained over time than that for most other authors; the editions of Tacitus were all Richard Greneway's English translation, printed in folio at regular intervals: in 1605, 1612, 1622, and 1640. Continental Latin books were, however, also providing English readers with his work in original-language editions; further research on the consumption as well as the production of these texts is needed to elucidate more fully the relationship between the reading of Tacitus in Latin in England and in various, competing Continental traditions.

Certainly, there are difficulties in using numbers of USTC items to represent the complexities of the history of the book and the history of histories. Book history alone is not sufficient to explain the circulation of ideas in early modern England or Europe. It must be integrated with the history of reading; books are only meaningful when studied in relation to the world within which they exist, and this is, necessarily, a world of people experiencing texts. But numbers are absolutely vital if we are ever to gain an understanding of the bigger picture that shows the place of Roman history in the early modern world.

If we are to discern patterns and trace changes over time—beyond the experience of one reader, through one text, at one moment—we need statistics. For all their problems, they can help us to overcome other distortions in our perception that have been created, for example, by literary canons that privilege certain works over others, for often-anachronistic reasons. The figures can at least serve as a starting point for investigating what Roman history meant to the early modern reader in England and, by extension, where England stood in relation to the rest of Europe. And they certainly demonstrate that the history of Rome was a central contemporary concern; the study of the classical world was a flourishing field in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as indeed it is today.

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46. A copy of Grimstone's Polybius, apparently printed in 1648, appears in ESTC, and a copy survives in Worcester College Library, Oxford, but this edition is not listed in the USTC and has therefore not been included in this purely USTC-based, unmoderated search.