

## RICHARD SHARPE

It is no accident that this strong national sentiment emerges during Henry VIII's time, and that it finds expression in the 1530s, the decade when the Act in Restraint of Appeals (1533) invoked 'sundry old authentic histories and chronicles', in which 'it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire'. The theme of national pride dominates the prologue to Bale's *Summarium* (1548), where he lists his international precursors, Jerome, Prosper, Gennadius, Isidore of Seville, Frechulf of Lisieux, Honorius Augustodunensis, Sigebert of Gembloux, and from nearer his own time Jean Trisse of Nîmes, Iohannes Trithemius of Sponheim, Arnold Bostius of Gent, Jacopo Filippo Foresti of Bergamo, referred to simply as Bergomas, and (as recently as 1545) Konrad Gesner of Zurich; when it comes to learned writers:

Neque est in Europa regio (si omnia plene exhiberem) quae particulares et proprios hac in re non habuerit consarcinatores, sola hucusque infoeliciter dormitavit Britannia, eorum licet uberrima tellus.<sup>16</sup>

Nor is there in Europe any area (if I were to set out the facts in full) which has not had its own specialized compilers in this matter; only Britain has unfortunately slept till now, though its land is very fertile in writers.

He refers to the unfinished work of a Carthusian of Lincoln and to that of Leland, before launching his own enterprise. Since only Trithemius wrote a national bibliography, Bale is making a rhetorical point. Elsewhere, in 1553, in his prologue to Leland's *Viri illustres*, Bale took an opposite line, no less rhetorical in its substance, and provided an extended catalogue of those English writers whom he could regard as bibliographers or at least as sources for bibliography: Bede, Honorius Augustodunensis, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, William of Gillingham, the compilers of *Registrum Angliae*, 'Boston of Bury' (the name under which he knew Henry de Kirkestede), John Wheathampstead, John Rous, and 'in suis collectaneis' William Thorne, Robert Ivory, John Capgrave, William Worcestre, and Thomas Gascoigne.<sup>17</sup> The point now is not the dearth of interest but its climax:

Sed hos omnes in hoc scribendi genere longissime superat Joannes Lelandus, tam styli venustate, quam virorum eruditorum numero quos tam in isto quam in maiore suo opere depingit.

But John Leland tops them all in this branch of literature, both as regards the attractiveness of his style and in the number of learned men whom he depicts in this draft and in his larger work.

Leland wrote his *Viri illustres*, as he himself says, 'ne Britanniae nostrae fama tot erudi-

16. John Bale, *Illustrum Maioris Britanniae scriptorum, hoc est, Angliae, Cambriae, ac Scotiae summarium*, Ipswich [recte Wesel], 1548 [cited as Bale, *Summarium*], fol. 1<sup>r-v</sup>.

17. MS Cambridge, Trinity College R. 7. 15 (on which see n. 73 below), fol. 2<sup>r-v</sup>; the draft survives, the revised *opus maius* to which Bale refers may never have been written (below, pp. 101, 110–11 and n. 98). Few of these can be regarded as bibliographers. Honorius of Regensburg's *De luminaribus ecclesie* belongs to the international tradition (though the writer was not English). Bale's knowledge of *Registrum Anglie*, a source he used sparingly, is discussed by R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, *Registrum Anglie de libris doctorum et auctorum veterum*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 2, London, 1991, pp. xlvi–l.