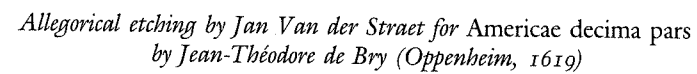


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The Historiographical Operation

WHAT do historians really fabricate when they "make history"? What are they "working on"? What do they produce? Interrupting their erudite perambulations around the rooms of the National Archives, for a moment they detach themselves from the monumental studies that will place them among their peers, and walking out into the street, they ask, "What in God's name is this business? What about the bizarre relation I am keeping with current society and, through the intermediary of my technical activities, with death?"

To be sure, however general or extensive it may be, no thought or reading is capable of effacing the *specificity* of the place, the origin of my speech, or the area in which I am researching. This mark is indelible. Within the discourse in which I am putting global questions on stage, an "idiotism" comes forth: my way of speaking, my patois, represents my relation to a given place.

But the gesture which attaches ideas to places is precisely the historians'

Part of this study, originally entitled "The Historical Operation," was published in Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, eds., *Faire de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 1:3–41. It is presented here in reviewed and corrected form.

gesture. For them, comprehension is tantamount to analyzing the raw data—which every method first establishes according to its own criteria of relevance—in terms of productions whose locality can be determined.¹ When for its practitioners history becomes the very object of their reflection,² can they ever invert the process of comprehension which relates a product to a place? Historians would then be rogues; they would give way to an ideological alibi if, in order to establish the correct status of their work, they were to have recourse to a philosophical *elsewhere*, to a *truth* formed and received outside of the channels through which, in history, every system of thought is referred to "places"—social, economic, cultural, and so on. Such a dichotomy between what they practice and what they preach might, besides, serve the reigning ideology by isolating it from effective praxis. The dichotomy would also relegate the historians' experiments to a theoretical sonambulism. Even more, in history as in other fields, one day or another a practice without theory will necessarily drift into the dogmatism of "eternal values" or into an apology for a "timelessness." Suspicion could never be extended over every theoretical analysis.

In this sector, Serge Moscovici, Michel Foucault, Paul Veyne, and many others point to an epistemological awakening.³ A new urgency is becoming manifest in France. But only a theory which articulates a practice can be accepted, that is, a theory which on the one hand opens the practices to the space of a society, while on the other it organizes the procedures belonging to a given discipline. On a necessarily limited scale, envisaging history as an operation would be equivalent to understanding it as the relation between a *place* (a recruitment, a milieu, a profession or business, etc.), analytical *procedures* (a discipline), and the construction of a *text* (a literature). That would be to admit that it is part of the "reality" with which it deals, and that this reality can be grasped "as a human activity," or "as a practice."⁴ From this perspective I would like to show that the historical operation refers to the combination of a social *place*, "scientific" *practices*,⁵ and *writing*. Such an analysis of the preconditions that its discourse does not take up will allow us to specify the silent laws which organize the space produced as text. Historical writing is constructed as a function of an institution whose organization it apparently throws into upheaval: it effectively obeys its own rules, which demand to be examined for themselves.

A SOCIAL PLACE

ALL historiographical research is articulated over a socioeconomic, political, and cultural place of production. It implies an area of elaboration that peculiar determinations circumscribe: a liberal profession, a position as an observer or a professor, a group of learned people, and so forth. It is therefore ruled by constraints, bound to privileges, and rooted in a particular situation. It is in terms of this place that its methods are established, its topography of interests can be specified, its dossiers and its interrogation of documents are organized.

The Unspoken

FORTY years ago a first critique of "scientism" revealed the relation of "objective" history to a place, that of the subject. In analyzing what Raymond Aron has termed a "dissolution of the object," this critique took from history the privilege in which the discipline had taken so much pride when it claimed to reconstitute the "truth" of events. Moreover, "objective" history upheld with this idea of truth a model derived from a former philosophy, or from a theology dating from an even earlier time. It limited itself to translating truth in terms of historical "facts"—and the happy days of this positivism are over.

Since then an era of suspicion has reigned. It has been shown that all historical interpretation depends upon a system of reference; that this system remains as an implicitly particular "philosophy"; that, seeping into the work of analysis, it organizes the work surreptitiously by referring to an author's "subjectivity." In popularizing the themes of German historicism, Raymond Aron taught an entire generation the art of enumerating the "philosophical decisions" through which the organizations of raw data were ordered, as well as the code of their decipherment and the order of their exposition.⁶ This "critique" represented a theoretical effort. It marked an important step in relation to a French situation where positivistic research prevailed and where there reigned skepticism with regard to German "typologies." It exhumed unadmitted dimensions as well as the philosophical presuppositions of nineteenth-century historiography. It already referred to a circulation of concepts, that is, to the movements which throughout the century had transported philosophical

categories into the underground of history, just as in the cases of exegesis or sociology.

Today, the lesson is at our fingertips. "Historical facts" have already been established through the introduction of a meaning into "objectivity." In the language of analysis, "facts" speak of "choices" which are precedents, and which are therefore not the result of observation—and which are not even verifiable but, thanks to critical examination, are only "falsifiable."⁷ "Historical relativity" thus forms a grid from which, over the background of a totality of history, multiple individual philosophies can be differentiated, especially those of philosophers dressed in historians' garb.

The return to personal "decisions" takes place on the basis of two assumptions. On the one hand, in isolating a philosophical element from the historiographical text, an *autonomy had been presupposed for ideology*: such was the condition of its extraction. An order of ideas was set apart from historical practice. On the other hand (but the two operations go together), while underscoring divergences among "philosophers" discovered in historians' clothing, by referring to the unfathomed dimensions of their rich intuitions, these thinkers were considered as *a group that could be isolated from society* by virtue of their direct relations to reflection. Recourse to personal options short-circuited the role practiced upon ideas by social localizations.⁸ The plurality of these philosophical subjectivities had from that point the discreet effect of retaining a singular position for intellectuals. As questions of meaning had been discussed *among them*, the clarification of their differences of thought came to bestow upon the entire group a privileged relation to ideas. None of the interference of production, of technique, of social constraint, of professional or political position could bother the harmony of this relation: a silence was the postulate of this epistemology.

Raymond Aron granted a reserved status to both the rule of ideas and the kingdom of intellectuals. "Relativity" was at stake only within the closed perimeters of this field. Far from calling the area into question, relativity indeed defended it. Based on the distinction between the scientist and the political figure, one of the weakest links in Weber's theory,⁹ such theses demolished a pretension of knowledge, but they also reinforced the "exempted" power belonging to the knowledgeable. A place was marked "off limits" just when the fragility of what was being produced therein was revealed. The favor taken away from works that could be controlled reverted to a group which could not be controlled.

Even nowadays, the most remarkable works on history seem to be dissociated with great difficulty from the very strong position that Raymond Aron had taken by substituting the silent privilege accorded to a *place* for that—in all of its triumph and controversy—of a *product*. While Michel Foucault denies all reference to the subjectivity or the “thought” of an author, he still takes for granted, at least in his first books, the autonomy of the theoretical *place* where, in its “narrative,” laws are developed according to which scientific discourses form and combine in global systems.¹⁰ In this respect *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) marks a rupture by introducing at once both social conflicts and the techniques of a discipline into the examination of an epistemological structure, notably that of history (which is not by chance). Likewise when Paul Veyne succeeds in destroying within history what Raymond Aron’s passage had still retained as a “causal science”—when in his work interpretive systems crumble into a dust of personal perceptions and personal decisions, leaving nothing subsisting in the way of coherence other than the rules of a literary genre and, as a point of reference, the historian’s pleasure¹¹—it still appears that the presupposition lives on intact. From the theses of 1938 onward that presupposition implicitly withdrew all epistemological relevance from the study of the social function exercised by history, by the group of historians (and more generally by intellectuals), by this group’s practices and laws, by its intervention in the play of public forces, and so on.

The Historical Institution

THIS place left blank or hidden through an analysis which overvalued the relation of individual subjects to their object might be called an *institution of knowledge*. It marks the origin of modern sciences, as shown in the seventeenth century with the assemblies of erudites (for example at Saint-Germain-des-Près); with the networks of correspondences and of travels that were formed by a milieu of the “curious”;¹² or even more clearly in the eighteenth century, with the learned circles and the Academies with which Leibniz was so preoccupied.¹³ The birth of “disciplines” is linked to the creation of such groups.

From this relation between a social institution and the definition of a knowledge, the figure coextends from the time of Bacon or Descartes onward, with what has been termed a “depoliticization” of intellectuals. By that we mean not an exile outside of society,¹⁴ but rather the foun-

dation of professional “bodies,” those of “engineers,” of pensioned needy intellectuals, and so on, at a time when universities fall into sclerosis as they become secluded. Political, erudite, and ecclesiastical institutions become distinctly specialized. We have therefore not an absence, but a particular place in a redistribution of social space. In the fashion of a withdrawal relative to public and religious affairs (which are themselves also organized in particular bodies), a “scientific” place is established. A rupture provides the basis for a social unity which will then become “science.” It is a sign of an ongoing global reclassification. Outside of this break is outlined a place which is connected with others within a new whole, while inside is sketched the foundation of a knowledge that cannot be dissociated from a social institution.

Since that time this originary model has become ubiquitous. It is seen also in the form of subgroups or of schools. Whence the persistence of the gesture which circumscribes a “doctrine” by dint of an “institutional basis.”¹⁵ The social institution (“A Society for the Study of . . .”) provides the ground for a scientific language (the review or the “bulletin,” the inheritor and equivalent of yesterday’s correspondence). From the “Students of Man” of the Enlightenment up to the creation of the sixth section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, thanks to the school of *Annales* (1947), all through the faculties of the nineteenth century, each “discipline” maintains its ambivalence of being at once the law of a group and the law of a field of scientific research.

The institution does more than give a doctrine a social position. It makes it possible and surreptitiously determines it. But it is far from being the case that one could be the cause of the other! The terms could never be easily inverted (the infrastructure becoming the “cause” of ideas) in assuming unchanged between them the type of relation that liberal thinking established at the moment when it allowed doctrines to lead history by the hand. It is necessary rather to challenge the isolation of these terms, and hence the possibility of turning a correlation back into a relation of cause and effect.

The same movement organizes society and the “ideas” that circulate within it. It is parceled into orders of manifestation (economic, social, scientific, and so forth) which make up overlapping but differential functions, in which none can be either the reality or the cause of another. Thus, socioeconomic and symbolic systems combine without being identified or ranked in hierarchies. In this way a social change can be compared to a biological change in the human body: like the biological change,

the social change forms a language which is proportioned to other types of language, such as the verbal. The "medical" isolation of the body results from an interpretive bracketing which does not take into account passages from somatization to symbolization. Inversely, an ideological discourse is proportioned to a social order, just as every individual utterance is produced in relation to silent organizations of the body. That discourse as such can obey its own laws does not impede it from being linked to what it does not say—to the body, which speaks in its own fashion.¹⁶

In history every "doctrine" which represses its relation to society must be regarded as abstract. It denies the very matter with respect to which it is elaborated. Thus it undergoes effects of distortion owing to the elimination of what in fact situates it, but without its either being expressed or brought to consciousness: a power, which has its own logic; a place, which grounds and "maintains" a discipline in its development in successive works, and so forth. "Scientific" discourse which *does not speak* of its relation to the social "body" could never establish a practice. It would no longer be scientific. Here we face a question central to the historian's labors. This relation with the social body is specifically the object of history and could not be taken up without also calling into question the status of historiographical discourse.

In his "General Report" of 1965 on French historiography, Jean Glénisson evoked some of the discreet connections existing between a *knowledge* and a *place*: the supervision of research by some professors who rose to the highest positions in the academic world and who "ruled over others' university careers";¹⁷ the constraint exercised by the social taboo of the monumental doctoral thesis;¹⁸ the link between the weak influence of Marxist theory and the social recruitment of "scholars provided with tenured chairs and presidencies";¹⁹ the effects of a strongly centralized and stratified institution on the scientific evolution of history, which has experienced a remarkable "tranquillity" for three-quarters of a century.²⁰ We must also underscore the interests too exclusively national of a historiography consumed by internal debates (historians fight either for or against Seignobos or Febvre), or circumscribed by the linguistic chauvinism of French culture which favors expeditions to the nearest regions of Latin reference (the Mediterranean world, Spain, Italy, Latin America), and which is limited in addition in its financial means, etc.

Among many others, these traits refer the "state of a science" to a social situation which is its unspoken condition. It is therefore impossible to

analyze historical discourse independently of the institution in respect to which its silence is organized; or to dream of a renewal in the discipline that would be assured by the mere modification of its concepts without an intervening transformation of acquired situations. From this standpoint, as Jürgen Habermas' research has shown, a "repoliticization" of the human sciences is needed: progress may never be measured or attained without a "critical theory" of the current status of these sciences in society.²¹

Moreover, the question at which Habermas' critical sociology is aiming has already been traced in historical discourse. Without waiting for the theoretician's denunciation, the text in itself avows its relation with the institution. For example, the author's "we" refers to a convention (or, as semiotics would cast the formula, it refers to an "enunciative verisimilitude"). In the text, the "we" stages a social contract "among ourselves," in which a plural subject "utters" the discourse. A "we" takes hold of language for itself by virtue of being placed in the speaking subject's position.²² In this way historical discourse takes priority over every particular historiographical work,²³ and so does the relation of this discourse to a social institution. The mediation of this "we" eliminates the alternative, which would attribute history either to an individual (the author, his personal philosophy, etc.) *or* to a global subject (the time, society, etc.). It replaces these subjective pretensions or edifying generalities with the positivity of a *place* over which discourse is articulated, but without the latter being reduced to the former.

The authorial "we" corresponds to that of true readers. The public is not the veritable recipient of the history book, even if it may be its financial and moral support. As the student but lately spoke to his class but had his teacher behind him, a work is valued less by its buyers than by the author's peers or colleagues, who rank it according to scientific criteria different from those of the public, but which are decisive for authors as soon as they wish to write a work of historiography. There are *laws* of the milieu. They circumscribe possibilities whose contents vary, but whose constraints do not. They organize a "police" around the work. If it is not "received" by the group, the book falls into the category of a "popularization" which, considered more or less benevolently, could never qualify a study as being "historiographical." It has to be "accredited" in order to accede to historiographical enunciation. What Foucault calls "the status of individuals who are the only ones to have the formal or traditional, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted right to profess a

discourse of this sort²⁴ depends upon an advanced degree (the *agrégation*) which categorizes the writer's "I" within the "we" of a collective body of work, or which enables a speaking subject to utter historiographical discourse. This discourse—and the group which produces it—*makes* the historian, at the same time that the atomist ideology of a "liberal" profession maintains the fiction of the authorial subject and leads everyone to believe that individual research constructs history.

In a more general fashion, a "historical" text (that is to say, a new interpretation, the application of specific methods, the elaboration of other kinds of relevance, a displacement in the definition and use of documents, a characteristic mode of organization, etc.) expresses an operation which is situated within a totality of practices. This aspect is the initial one. It is basic in scientific research. A particular study will be defined by the relation that it upholds with others that are contemporaneous with it, with a "state of the question," with the problematic issues exploited by the group and the strategic points that they constitute, and with the outposts and divergences thus determined or given pertinence in relation to a work in progress. Every individual result is inserted into a network whose elements narrowly depend upon one another, and whose dynamic combination forms history at a certain time.

Finally, what is a "valued work" in history? It is a work recognized as such by peers, a work that can be situated within an operative set, a work that represents some progress in respect to the current status of historical "objects" and methods, and one that, bound to the milieu in which it has been elaborated, in turn makes new research possible. The historical book or article is together a result and a symptom of the group which functions as a laboratory. Akin to a car produced by a factory, the historical study is bound to the complex of a specific and collective fabrication more than it is the effect merely of a personal philosophy or the resurgence of a past "reality." It is the *product* of a *place*.

Historians in Society

ACCORDING to a rather traditional concept among the French intelligentsia since the elitism of the eighteenth century, it is generally agreed that no element relative to practice will enter theory. "Methods" will thus be discussed, but without risking the impudence of evoking their importance as initiation into a group (to be introduced into a group, an individual must learn or practice "good" methods), nor is their relation

to a social force ever expressed (the methods are the means thanks to which the power of an academic or clerical body is defended, differentiated, and made manifest). These methods define the parameters of institutional behavior and the laws of a milieu. They are nonetheless scientific. To suppose that an antinomy exists between a social analysis of science and its interpretation in terms of the history of ideas is the duplicity of those who believe that science is "autonomous." Because of this dichotomy, they also consider the analysis of social determinations as irrelevant, and the constraints it unveils as foreign or accessory.

These constraints are not accidental. They are part of research. Far from representing the shameful and unwarrantable interference of a foreigner in the Saint of saints of intellectual life, they form the texture of scientific process. Labor is based more and more on *teams*, leaders, and financial means, and therefore, too, through the mediation of credits, on favors that social or political proximities bring to this or that study. It is also organized by a *profession* which has its own hierarchies, its centralizing norms, its own type of psychosocial recruitment.²⁵ Despite attempts to break these barriers, the intellectual labor is established within the circle of *writing*: in the history that is being written, by priority the labor ranks the very ones who have written in such a way that the historical work reinforces a sociocultural tautology between its authors (a learned group), its objects (books, manuscripts, etc.), and its (educated) public. This work is attached to a *teaching activity*, hence to the fluctuations of a clientele; to pressures that it exerts while expanding; to the defensive reactions, the acts of authority or of withdrawal, that students' evolution and movements provoke among teachers; to the introduction of mass culture within a diversified university that is no longer an intimate area reserved for exchanges between research and teaching. The professor is pushed toward popularization aimed at "the greater public" (students or no), while the specialist is exiled from circles of consumption. Historical production finds itself shared between the *literary* work which is "authoritative" and the *scientific* esotericism which "produces research."

A social situation changes at once the mode of work and the type of discourse. Can we say that this is "good" or "bad"? First and foremost, it is a fact. It can be discerned everywhere, even where it is unspoken. Hidden connections can be recognized among sectors first assumed to be foreign, when they begin to move or become immobilized together. Is it by chance that we move from "social history" to "economic history" between the two wars,²⁶ around the time of the Great Depression of

1929; or that cultural history wins out at the moment when the social, economic, and political importance of "culture" is felt everywhere through mass media and leisure time? Is it by chance that the "historical atomism" of Langlois and Seignobos, explicitly associated with a sociology based on the figure Tarde called the "initiator" and with a "science of psychic facts" (breaking down the mind into rubrics of "motifs," "impulsions," and "representations"),²⁷ was combined with the liberalism of the reigning bourgeoisie at the end of the nineteenth century? Is it by chance that the dead spots of erudition—those which are neither an object nor a place for research—happen to be, from Lozère to Zambia, underdeveloped regions, but of such kind that economic enrichment creates today historiographical topography and ordering without having either its origin avowed or its relevance assured?

From collecting documents to writing books, historical practice is entirely relative to the structure of society. In the France of a recent past, the existence of firmly constructed social units defined the diverse levels of research: there were archives circumscribed within the events of the group and still close to family papers; a category of patrons or of authorities who signed with their proper names to "protect" a patrimony, clients, and ideals; a recruitment of erudite scholars devoted to a cause and adopting, vis-à-vis their motherland great or small, the motto of the *Monumenta Germaniae: Sanctus amor patriae dat animum*; works "dedicated" to subjects of local interest that furnished a language common to limited but faithful readers, and so on.

Studies on broader subjects do not escape this law, but the social unit on which they depend is no longer of the same sort: it is no longer a locality, but the scholarly, then the university intelligentsia, which distinguishes itself at once from the "petty history" and from provincialism and the common people, before its power enlarges with the centralizing extension of the university and it imposes the norms and codes of lay, liberal, and patriotic evangelism developed in the nineteenth century by the "conquering bourgeois."

And also, when Lucien Febvre between the two world wars stated that he wished to remove from sixteenth-century history the "frock" of former quarrels and take it out of the categories produced by the wars between Catholics and Protestants,²⁸ from the outset he was attesting to the disappearance of those ideological and social struggles which in the nineteenth century bore the flags of religious "parties" in the service of homologous campaigns. In fact, the religious quarrels continued to be waged

for a long time, although not on religious grounds: between republicans and traditionalists, or between the *école publique* and the *école libre*. But these struggles lost their sociopolitical importance after the First World War, when the forces that had been opposed were dispersed into different categories, when "gatherings" or common "fronts" were formed, and when the economy began to organize the language of French life. Only then did it become possible to treat Rabelais as a Christian—that is, as a witness to a *past* time—to withdraw from divisions no longer inscribed within the daily life of a society, and therefore to stop favoring the cause of the Reformation or the Christian Democrats in the political or religious historiography of the academy. This brings neither better nor more objective conceptions, but does indicate a different situation. A social change provides historical distance in relation to what is becoming an entirely past time.

In this way Lucien Febvre follows in the footsteps of his forebears. As presuppositions of their understanding, they adopted the social structure and assumptions of their group, even if it entailed making them undergo a critical deviation. Doesn't the founder of the *Annales* do as much when he promotes a historical quest and *Reconquista* of "Man," the "sovereign" figure at the center of the universe of his bourgeois milieu;²⁹ when he calls "global history" the panorama which is offered to the scrutiny of the regents of a university; when, with "mentality," "collective psychology," and all the equipment of *Zusammenhang*, he founds one more "idealist" structure,³⁰ which functions as the antidote to Marxist analysis and hides under a "cultural" homogeneity the class conflicts in which he, too, is implicated?³¹ However genial and new it may be, his history is no less socially *marked* than those which he rejects, and if he is able to go beyond them, it is only because they correspond to *past* situations, and because another ready-made "frock" is cast over him by the place he fills in the conflicts of his present time.

With or without the fire that burns through Lucien Febvre's books, the same issues are ubiquitously at stake today—even if we leave aside the role of the social and political rifts which extend to publications or nominations, where tacit interdictions are in play. It is doubtless no longer a question of a war between the parties or great bodies of yesterday (the army, the university, the church, etc.): the hemorrhage of their forces has brought with it a folklorizing of their programs, and the true battles are no longer settled there.³² "Neutrality" refers to the metamorphosis of convictions into ideologies, in a technocratic and anonymously produc-

tivist society that can no longer either designate its choices or keep track of its powers (in order to avow or to denounce them). Thus, the colonized university, a body deprived of autonomy in measure with its expansion, is now left open to orders and pressures coming from without. Within it, the scientific expansionism or the "humanistic" crusades of earlier times are replaced by retreats. In matters of options, silence replaces affirmation. Discourse takes on the color of the walls; it is "neutral." It even becomes the means of defending *places* instead of being the statement of "causes" which might express a desire. Discourse can no longer speak of the elements which specify it, a labyrinth of positions to be respected and of patronizing practitioners to be solicited. Here, the *unexpressed* is at once the unavowed dimension of texts that have become pretexts, the exteriority of what is done in relation to what is said, and the disappearance of a place where a force is connected to a certain language. Besides, would this unexpressed not betray the reference of conservative historiography to an "unconscious" both endowed with a magic stability and transformed into a fetish by the need one has, "all the same," to affirm a power that everyone "surely knows" has already vanished?³²

What Permits and What Prohibits: The Place

BEFORE knowing what history says of a society, we have to analyze how history functions within it. The historiographical institution is inscribed within a complex that permits only one kind of production for it and prohibits others. Such is the double function of the place. It makes possible certain researches through the fact of common conjunctures and problematics. But it makes others impossible; it excludes from discourse what is its basis at a given moment; it plays the role of a censor with respect to current—social, economic, political—postulates of analysis. This combination of permission and interdiction is doubtless the blind spot of historical research, and also the reason why it is incompatible with *n'importe quoi*, just anything. It is equally within this combination that work destined to modify it plays its role.

In any event, research is circumscribed by the place that a connection of the possible and impossible defines. If it were envisaged solely as a "saying," *legend* would be reintroduced into history, that is, a non-place, or an imaginary place, would be substituted for the connection of discourse to social places. To the contrary, history is defined entirely by a relation of language to the (social) body, and therefore by its relation to

the limits that the body assigns either in respect to the particular place whence one speaks, or in respect to the other object (past, dead) that is spoken about.

History is entirely shaped by the system within which it is developed. Today as yesterday, it is determined by the fact of a localized fabrication at such and such a point within this system. Therefore, taking account of the place where it is produced only allows historiographical knowledge to escape from the unawareness of a class that would fail to recognize itself as a class in relations of production, and that would likewise fail to recognize the society in which it is inserted. Connecting history to a place is the condition of possibility for any social analysis. It is known for a fact that, in Marxism as in Freudianism, there can be no analysis which does not depend wholly upon the situation created by a social or analytical relation.

To take seriously the site of historiography is still not tantamount to expounding history. Nothing of what is produced in it is yet said about it. But taking the place seriously is the condition that allows something to be stated that is neither legendary (or "edifying") nor atypical (lacking relevance). Denial of the specificity of the place being the very principle of ideology, all theory is excluded. Even more, by moving discourse into a non-place, ideology forbids history from speaking of society and of death—in other words, from being history.

A PRACTICE

"MAKING history" is a practice. From this point of view we can now move to a more programmatic perspective, envisage paths that are opened, and cease to pursue the epistemological situation that thus far a sociology of historiography has been revealing.

Insofar as the university is foreign to practice and to technicalities,³⁴ everything that places history in rapport with techniques is classified as "auxiliary science." Formerly, this meant epigraphy, papyrology, paleography, diplomatics, codicology, etc.; today, musicology, "folklorism," computer science, etc. History would only begin with the "noble speech" of interpretation. It would finally be an art of discourse delicately erasing all traces of labor. In fact, there is a decisive option here: the importance that is accorded to technicalities turns history either in the direction of literature or the direction of science.

If it is true that the organization of history is relative to a place and a time, this is first of all because of its techniques of production. Generally speaking, every society thinks of itself "historically," with the instruments that pertain to it. But the term "instrument" is equivocal. At stake are not only means. Serge Moscovici has most convincingly shown³⁵—although from another perspective—that history is mediated by technique. In this fashion is relativized the privilege invested in social history throughout the nineteenth century, and often enough today. A society's relation with itself, the "becoming other" of the group according to a *human* dialectic, is combined with what is crucial to current scientific activity, the becoming of *nature*, which is "at once a given and a work."³⁶

Research follows along this changing border between the given and the created, and finally between nature and culture. In "life," biology discovers a language spoken before speakers ever appear. Psychoanalysis discerns the articulation of a desire in discourse that is organized in ways other than those expressed through consciousness. In a different field, environmental science modifies the moving combinations of nature and industry, but it can no longer isolate the indefinite extension of *social* constructions from the natural structures that it changes.

This immense work site promotes, as Moscovici has said, a "renewal [of nature], instigated through our intervention."³⁷ It "reunites humanity to matter differently."³⁸ In this way "the social order is marked as a form of the natural order, and not as an entity opposed to it."³⁹ All of this will modify profoundly a history that assumed its "central sector" to be what Labrousse calls "social history, that is, the history of social groups and their relations."⁴⁰ Already history has been directed first toward economy, then toward "mentalities," thus oscillating between the two terms of the relation that research is increasingly honoring: nature and culture. The signs are multiplying. An orientation that was already outlined during the period between the wars, the interest in geography and in a "history of men in their close relations with the earth,"⁴¹ is emphasized with studies on the construction and the combinations of urban spaces,⁴² on the migrations of plants and their socioeconomic effects,⁴³ on the history of techniques,⁴⁴ on mutations of sexuality, on sickness, medicine, and the history of the body, and so forth.⁴⁵

But the fields open to history can never be solely new objects furnished to an unchanged institution. History as such becomes involved in this relation of discourse with the techniques engendering it. We must envisage how it deals with "natural" elements in order to change them into

a cultural *environment*, and how it makes transformations effected within the relation of a society and its nature accede to literary symbolization. From wastes, papers, vegetables, indeed from glaciers and "eternal snows,"⁴⁶ historians *make something different*: they make history. They fashion an artifice of nature. They participate in the work that changes nature into environment, and thus modify the nature of man. Their techniques situate them specifically in this articulation. Placed as we are at the level of this practice, no longer do we face the dichotomy which opposes the *social* to the *natural*, but the connection between a socialization of nature and a "naturalization" (or a materialization) of social relations.

The Nature-Culture Connection

NO doubt it is an overstatement to say that "time" provides the "raw data of historical analysis" or its "specific object." According to their methods, historians deal with the physical objects (papers, stones, images, sounds, and so on) that are distinguished within the continuum of perception through the organization of a society and the systems of relevance which belong to a "science." They work on materials in order to transform them into history. Here they undertake a practice of manipulation which, like others, is subject to rules. A comparable manipulation would be the manufacturing of goods made of already refined matter. First transforming the raw material (a primary source) into a standard product (secondary source), the work of the historian carries it from one region of culture ("curiosities," archives, collections, etc.) to another (history). Historical work participates in the movement through which a society transforms its relation to nature by changing the "natural" into the utilitarian (for example, a forest that is exploited), or into the esthetic (for example, a mountain turned into a landscape), or by making a social institution shift from one status to another (for example, a church that is converted into a museum).

But historians are not satisfied with *translating* one cultural language into another, that is, social productions into historical objects. They can change elements into culture that they have extracted from natural areas. From their documentation (in which they include pebbles, sounds, etc.) to their books (where plants, microbes, and glaciers acquire the status of symbolic objects), they proceed to a displacement of the separation between nature and culture. They modify space in the manner of the urban designer who integrates fields into the town's network of transportation,

of the architect who regulates the lake with dams, of Pierre Henry, who changes a squeaking door into a musical motif, or of the poet who completely transforms the relations between a "noise" and a "message." Historians metamorphose the environment through a series of transformations which change the boundaries and the internal topography of culture. They "civilize" nature—which has always meant that they "colonize" and change it.

To be sure, we can observe nowadays that an increasing mass of historical books are becoming novelistic or mythic. Such books no longer produce these transformations in the fields of culture, while in contrast "literature" intends to work upon language and make a "text" stage what Raymond Roussel describes as a "*movement of reorganization*, a mortuary circulation which engenders as it destroys."⁴⁷ In other words, in this form history ceases to be "scientific," while literature becomes more and more so. When historians suppose that a past already given is unveiled in their text, they align themselves all the more with the consumer's behavior. They passively receive objects distributed by producers.

What is "scientific" in history and in other disciplines is the operation that changes the "milieu"—or what makes an organization (whether social, literary, etc.) the condition and place of a *transformation*. In a society, at one of its strategic points, it displaces the connection tying culture to nature. In history, the operation establishes a "government of nature" in a way that concerns the relation of the present to the past—insofar as the latter is not so much a "given" as a product.

From this feature common to all scientific research we can specify precisely those points where technique is marked. Here I do not wish to hark back to historical methods. By means of several probings, I intend only to raise the type of theoretical problem that an examination of its "apparatus" and technical procedures can open in history.

The Establishment of Sources or the Redistribution of Space

IN history everything begins with the gesture of *setting aside*, of putting together, of transforming certain classified objects into "documents." This new cultural distribution is the first task. In reality it consists in *producing* such documents by dint of copying, transcribing, or photographing these objects, simultaneously changing their locus and their status. This gesture consists in "isolating" a body—as in physics—and "denaturing" things

in order to turn them into parts which will fill the lacunae inside an a priori totality. It forms the "collection" of documents. In the words of Jean Baudrillard, it places things in a "marginal system."⁴⁸ It exiles them from practice in order to confer upon them the status of "abstract" objects of knowledge. Far from accepting "data," this gesture forms them. The material is created through concerted actions which delimit it by carving it out from the sphere of use, actions which seek also to know it beyond the limits of use, and which aim at giving it a coherent new use. It becomes the vestige of actions which modify a received order and a social vision.⁴⁹ The establishment of signs offered for specific treatments, this rupture is therefore neither uniquely nor from the first the effect of a "gaze." A technical operation is necessary.

The origins of our National Archives already imply, in effect, the combination of a *group* (the "erudite"), *places* ("libraries"), and *practices* (of copying, printing, communication, classification, etc.). In fine point, they are a token of a technical system which was inaugurated in the West with "collections" assembled in Italy, then in France, from the fifteenth century onward. They were financed by great patrons who wanted to appropriate history for themselves (the Medici family, the dukes of Milan, Charles of Orleans, Louis XII, and so on). In these areas the creation of a new *task* ("collecting") is combined with the satisfaction of new *needs* (justification of recent and familial groups thanks to the establishment of their own traditions, titles, and "property rights") and with the production of new *objects* (documents that are set aside, conserved, and copied) whose meaning is hereafter defined by the relation of every item to the whole set (the collection). The science that is born (the "erudition" of the seventeenth century) inherits with these "establishments of sources"—technical institutions—its basis and rules.

First linked with juridical activity among men of letters, lawyers, bureaucrats, and recorder-keepers, the enterprise expands and conquers as soon as it passes into the hands of specialists.⁵⁰ It is productive and reproductive. It observes the laws of multiplication. From 1470 on, it is allied with printing: the "collection" becomes a "library."⁵¹ "Collecting" for a long time actually means manufacturing objects: copying or printing, binding, classifying—and with the products he multiplies, the collector becomes an agent in the concatenation of a *history to be made* (or remade) according to new intellectual and social relevances. Hence the collection, as it topples the instruments of work, redistributes things, redefines elements of knowledge, and inaugurates a place for a new begin-

ning through the building of what Pierre Chaunu calls a "gigantic machine" that will make an entirely different history possible.

Erudite scholars want to develop into a whole the innumerable "rarities" that the endless trajectories of their curiosity bring back to them; they want to invent languages that will assure their understanding of them. If one can judge from the evolution of their work, from the end of the sixteenth century up to Leibniz through Peiresc and Kircher, these scholars are oriented toward the methodical *invention* of new systems of signs thanks to analytical procedures, especially analysis and synthesis.⁵² They are preoccupied by the dream of a totalizing taxonomy and by the will to create universal instruments proportioned to their passion for comprehensiveness. Through the intermediary of the *cipher*, which plays a central role in this "art of decipherment," homologies between erudition and mathematics are crucially important. To be sure, to the cipher, a code destined to construct an "order," is opposed the symbol. Linked to a received text which refers to a hidden meaning within the figure (allegory, blazon, emblem, etc.), symbol implies the necessity for an *authorized commentary* by whomever is "wise" or profound enough to detect this meaning.⁵³ But on the other side, even if the thresholds and detours are numerous, the systems made possible by the cipher—from the series of "curiosities" to the artificial or universal languages (we might say from Peiresc to Leibniz)—are however inscribed along the line of development that establishes the *construction of a language* and, therefore, the production of techniques and objects proper to it.

Today the establishment of sources requires also a founding gesture, signified, as in former times, by the combination of a place, an "apparatus," and techniques. A first sign of this displacement: there is no task which does not have to use common sources *otherwise* and, for example, change the function of archives formerly defined by a religious or "familial" use.⁵⁴ Accordingly, in the name of new relevance, the work shapes tools, recipes, songs, popular imagery, the layout of farmlands, urban topography, and so forth, into documents. The issue is not only one of bringing these "immense dormant sectors of documentation" to life,⁵⁵ of giving a voice to silence, or of lending currency to a possibility. It means changing something which had its own definite status and role into *something else* which functions differently. And, too, the label "research" cannot be applied to a study that purely and simply adopts former classifications, which sticks to the limits posed for example by series H in the National Archives, and which therefore does not define its own field of

study. A work is "scientific" when it produces a *redistribution* of space and when it consists, first of all, in *ascribing* a place for itself through the "establishment of sources"—that is to say, through an institutionalizing action and through transformational techniques.

Nowadays the institutional procedures raise more fundamental problems than are indicated by these initial signs. For every historical practice establishes its place only thanks to the apparatus which is at once the condition, means, and result of a displacement.⁵⁶ Similar to paleotechnical factories, national or municipal archives formed a segment of the apparatus that formerly determined operations adopted to a system of research. Any change in the use of archives cannot be foreseen without their overall form being changed. The same technical institution prohibits formulation of new answers to different questions. In fact, the situation is the inverse: from now on, other kinds of "apparatus" allow the study of new questions and answers. Certainly, an ideology of "real" or "true" historical "facts" still hovers in the air of our time; it even proliferates in a literature *on* history. Yet this is tantamount to folklorizing former practices: such frozen words outlive battles long ended; they only show the gap between received "ideas" and practices which will change them sooner or later.

The transformation of "archivistic" activity is the point of departure and the condition for a new history. It is destined to play the same role that the erudite "machine" had played in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I will choose only one example, the use of the computer. François Furet has shown several of the effects produced by the "constitution of new archives recorded on perforated tapes": meaning is made only as a function of seriality, and not in relation to a "reality." The objects of investigation can only be those which can be constructed formally before programming takes place, and so on.⁵⁷ Yet this is nothing more than a particular element and, in part, a symptom of a larger scientific institution. Contemporary analysis upsets procedures linked to the "symbolic analysis" which had prevailed since the time of romanticism and which sought to recognize a given and hidden meaning. Analysis regains the confidence in *abstraction* which characterized the classical period—but an abstraction which today is a formal set of relations, or "structure."⁵⁸ Its practice consists in constructing "models" that are posited deliberately, as André Régner says, "replacing the study of concrete phenomena by that of an object shaped through its definition," judging the scientific value of this object according to the "field of questions" to which it al-

lows response and the answers that it furnishes, and, finally, "establishing the limits of the model's range of meaning."⁵⁹

This last point is crucial for history. For if it is true that, in a broad fashion, contemporary scientific analysis aims at *reconstructing* objects from "simulacra" or "scenarios," that is, at providing itself through the relational models and languages (or metalanguages) it produces with the means for multiplying or transforming given systems (whether physical, literary, or biological), history tends to manifest the "limits of the range of meaning" of these models or languages; in this form of a limit relative to models, it meets again what formerly appeared as a past relative to an epistemology of origins or ends. In this way, it seems, history is faithful to its fundamental purpose, which doubtless always remains to be defined—but we must already note that this purpose links history simultaneously to the real and to death.

The specification of its role is not determined by the apparatus itself (for example, the computer) which places history into a network of constraints and possibilities born of the present scientific institution. Elucidation of what is proper to history is marginalized in respect to the apparatus: it flows back into the preparatory time of programming that the use of the apparatus necessitates, and it is rejected at the other end, in the time of exploitation yielded by the obtained results. It is developed in relation to the prohibitions that the machine establishes, through the objects of research that have to be constructed, and in relation to what this machine permits, through a way of dealing with the standard products of the computer. But these two operations are necessarily based on the technical institution which inserts every piece of research into a generalized system.

Libraries of the past also exercised the function of "placing" erudition within a system of research. But it was a regional system. Thus the epistemological moments (of conceptualization, documentation, of treatment or interpretation) that are currently distinguished inside a generalized system could be mixed in the regional system of former erudition. The *establishment* of sources (through the mediation of its current apparatus) therefore involves not only a new delimitation of the relation between reason and the real, or between culture and nature; it is the principle of an epistemological redistribution of the moments of scientific research.

In the seventeenth century, the library of Colbert's design—or its homologues—was the common ground on which the very rules of eru-

dition developed. A science grew around this apparatus, which is still the place where researchers circulate, to which they make reference, and whose ruling they accept. "Going to the archives" is the statement of a tacit law of history. Now another institution is replacing this central locus. It also imposes its law on practice, but a different one. So we ought first of all to account for the technical institution which, like a monument, organizes the locus where from now on all scientific research circulates, before we analyze in depth the operational trajectories that history maps over this new space.

Bringing Forth Differences: From the Model to Its Deviation

THE use of current techniques of information retrieval brings historians to the point of separating what until now was combined in their work: the construction of objects of research and hence also of units of comprehension; the accumulation of "data" (secondary sources, or refined material) and their arrangement in places where they can be categorized and shifted;⁶⁰ the exploitation made possible by the diverse operations to which this material is susceptible.

In this way historical research is staged, strictly speaking, in the relation between the extreme poles of the entire operation: on the one hand, in the construction of models, and on the other, in the attachment of a "degree of meaning" to the results obtained after all of the combinations of processed information have been completed. The most visible form of this relation ultimately consists in granting relevance to *differences* proportioned to the formal units built beforehand; in discovering heterogeneity that can be of technical use. In relation to material produced through the advent of serial constructs and their combinations, former "interpretation" becomes the manifestation of a *deviation relative to these models*.

This schema is probably still quite abstract. Many current studies make the movement and meaning more comprehensible. As an example, historical analysis does not have as an essential result a quantitative relation between the size and the degree of literacy among men drafted into the armed forces from 1819 to 1826, nor even proof of a survival of the ancien régime in postrevolutionary France, but only the unforeseen coincidences, the incoherences, or the unknowns that this inquiry brings forth.⁶¹ What is important is not the combination of series obtained thanks to a preliminary isolation of significant points according to preconceived

models, but, on the one hand, the relation among these models and the limits that their systematic use brings to light, and on the other, the capacity to transform these limits into problems with which available techniques can deal. These two aspects are moreover coordinated, for if the difference is made obvious by virtue of the rigorous extension of constructed models, it is *significant* thanks to the relation that it keeps with them in the form of a deviation—and through this it leads to a return to these models with the aim of correcting them. It might be said that the formalization of research has as its goal precisely the production of “errors”—insufficiencies, lacunae—that may be put to scientific use.

This way of proceeding appears to overturn history as it has been practiced in the past. It customarily began with limited evidence (manuscripts, rarities, etc.), and it took as its task the sponging of all diversity off of them, unifying everything into coherent comprehension.⁶² But the value of this inductive totalization depended then on the quantity of accumulated information. It vacillated when its documentary basis was compromised by the results harvested from new investigations. Research—and its prototype, the thesis—tended to prolong the time of information-gathering indefinitely, in view of deferring the nonetheless inevitable moment when unknown elements would come and demolish its basis. The often monstrous quantitative development of the search for documents had the result of introducing into the interminable process of research the very law that made it obsolete as soon as it was completed. A threshold has been passed, and beyond it this situation is inverted. From quantitative development according to a stable model, history is turning to endless changes of models.

Today, the study is initially developed over units that it has itself defined, insofar as research becomes—and must become—capable of choosing a priori its objects, levels, and taxonomies of analysis. The coherence is initial. With the computer, the quantity of information that can be studied in relation to these norms has become endless. Research has totally changed. Based on formal entities that are deliberately put forward, it is drawn toward the deviations that are revealed through logical combinations of series. It plays on the limits of models. To use a former vocabulary that no longer corresponds to its new trajectory, we might say that research no longer begins with “rarities” (remainders from past time) in order to advance to a synthesis (present understanding), but that it begins from a formalization (a present system) in order to

give occasion to “remainders” (signs of limits and, through this logic, of a “past” which is the product of historical work).

This movement has doubtless been accelerated through the use of the computer. It preceded it—just as a technical organization preceded the computer, which is but one more of its symptoms. A strange phenomenon in contemporary historiography must be observed. The historian is no longer a person who shapes an empire. He or she no longer envisages the paradise of a global history. The historian comes to circulate *around* acquired rationalizations. He or she works in the margins. In this respect the historian becomes a prowler. In a society gifted at generalization, endowed with powerful centralizing strategies, the historian moves in the direction of the frontiers of great regions already exploited. He or she “deviates” by going back to sorcery,⁶³ madness,⁶⁴ festival,⁶⁵ popular literature,⁶⁶ the forgotten world of the peasant,⁶⁷ Occitania,⁶⁸ etc., all these zones of silence.

These new objects of research attest to a movement which has been clearly visible for several years in the strategies of history. Thus Fernand Braudel has shown how studies on “cultural areas” benefit when being situated in places of transit, where “borderline,” “borrowed,” or “rejected” phenomena can be perceived.⁶⁹ The scientific interest of these works consists of the relation that they keep with supposed or posited totalities—“a coherence in space,” “a permanence in time”—and to the corrective that they allow to be brought to them. No doubt we must envisage in this perspective many types of current research. Even biography plays a role of a distance and a margin proportioned to global constructions. Research ascribes objects for itself that take the shape of its practice: they furnish it with the means of *bringing forth differences* relative to continuities or to elements from which analysis proceeds.

Research on the Borderlines

THIS strategy of historical practice prepares it for a theorization that conforms better to the possibilities offered by the sciences of information. It could be that more and more this strategy specifies not only the methods but also the function of history within the totality of sciences today. Its methods no longer consist in providing knowledge with “authentic” objects; its social role is no longer—except in specular literature, which is to say popularizations—one of supplying society with global repre-

sentations of its genesis. History no longer occupies as it did in the nineteenth century this central locus organized by an epistemology that, losing reality as an ontological substance, sought to rediscover it in the form of historical force, *Zeitgeist* and the future hidden inside the social body. It no longer has the totalizing function which consisted in taking the place of philosophy in its role of stating sense and meaning.

History now intervenes in the mode of a critical experimentation with sociological, economic, psychological, or cultural models. It is said, to quote Pierre Vilar, that it uses "borrowed tools." This is true. But to be precise, it *tests* these tools by transferring them to different areas, in the same way that a touring car is "tested" by being driven on racetracks, at speeds and in conditions which exceed the norms. History becomes a place of "control." In it a "function of falsification" is put to work.⁷⁰ In it the limits of what might be significant can be made obvious relative to models which, in turn, are "essayed" by history in areas foreign to that of their elaboration.

This functioning can be shown, by virtue of example, in two of its essential moments: one aims at the relation with the real in the mode of the historical fact; the other, at the use of received "models" and hence the relation of history to a contemporary form of reason. The former deals with the internal organization of historical procedures, while the latter takes up the connection of these procedures with different scientific fields.

Facts have found their champion in Paul Veyne, a marvelous butcher of abstract heads. As is always the case, he raises the flag of a movement that has preceded him—not just because every true historian is a poet of meticulous detail who plays, as does the esthetician, on the thousand harmonic levels that a rare piece awakens within a broad network of knowledge, but also because, nowadays, many formalisms can furnish new relevance for the *exceptional detail*. Put otherwise, such a return to facts cannot be recruited into a campaign against the structuralist "monster," nor can it be pressed into the service of a regression toward former ideologies and practices. To the contrary, it is inscribed in the line of structural analysis, but as a development. For the "fact" hereafter in question is not the one which offered to an observer's knowledge the emergence of a reality. Combined with a constructed model, it assumes the form of a *difference*. The historian is therefore not faced with the choice of "your money or your life"—the "law" or the "fact" (two concepts that are, moreover, effaced from contemporary epistemology).⁷¹ Historians find in

their models a means to make deviations visible. If, for some time, they hoped for a "totalization" and believed that they could reconcile diverse systems of interpretation in a fashion accounting for all of their information,⁷² by priority historians are now concerned with the complex manifestations of these differences. In this way the area in which they are settling can still, by analogy, bear the venerable name of the "fact": the fact, such is the difference.

And, too, the relation with the real becomes a relation among the terms of an operation. Fernand Braudel has already given an entirely functional meaning to the analysis of borderline phenomena. The objects that he proposed for research were determined in relation to an operation to be undertaken (not to a reality to be rejoined), and in respect to existing models.⁷³ A result of this enterprise, the "fact" is the designation of a relation. The "event" can also in this way recover its definition of being a caesura. To be sure, it no longer cuts through the thickness of a reality whose ground we would see across a transparency of language, or which would rise to the surface of our knowledge in the form of fragments. The event pertains entirely to combinatory relations of rationally isolated series within which it serves to *mark* in turn crossing points, conditions of possibility, and the limits of validity.⁷⁴

This already implies a "historical" way of using models that are taken from other sciences, and of situating a function of history in respect to these sciences. One of Pierre Vilar's studies helps to make the principle explicit. Apropos of the work of J. Marczewski and J.-C. Toutain, Vilar has shown the errors that would be encountered with the systematic "application" of our contemporary economic concepts and models to the ancien régime. But the problem is much more vast. For Marczewski, the economist is characterized by the "construction of a system of references," and the historian is the individual "who uses economic theory." To say this is to pose a problematic which makes one science into the instrument of another, and which can be inverted infinitely: finally, who indeed is "using" whom? Pierre Vilar shifts a similar conception. In his opinion, history has assigned itself the task of analyzing the "conditions" in which these models are valid and, for example, specifying the "exact limits of possibility" of a "retrospective econometrics." History manifests a *heterogeneity* relative to the *homogenous* wholes established by each discipline. It also might put into dynamic relation the limits proper to every system or "level" of analysis (economic, social, and so forth).⁷⁵ In consequence, history becomes an "auxiliary," in the words of Pierre Chaunu,⁷⁶ not that

it is "in the service" of economy, but the relation that it maintains with diverse sciences allows it to hold, in respect to each of them, a necessary critical function. This relation also suggests the purpose of connecting the limits thus made obvious.

In other sectors the same complementarity is also found. In urban studies, Choay remarks that history might be able "to have us comprehend, through *difference*, the specificity of the space that we have reason to require of contemporary developers"; to permit "a radical critique of the operative concepts of urbanism"; and, inversely, in respect to the models of a new spatial organization, to give an account of social *resistances* through analysis of "deep structures with slow evolution."⁷⁷ A tactic of deviation would specify the intervention of history. From its standpoint, the epistemology of sciences begins with a present theory (in biology, for example) and meets history in the fashion of *what was not* clarified, or thought possible, or even formerly articulated.⁷⁸ The past surges up first as "what lacks." Intelligence of history is linked to the capacity of organizing differences or absences that are pertinent, that can be ranked, because they are relative to current scientific formalizations.

One of Georges Canguilhem's remarks about the history of science can be generalized to give breadth to this "auxiliary" position.⁷⁹ In effect, history seems to have a fluctuating *object* whose determination comes less from an autonomous decision than from its interest and importance for other sciences. Scientific interest exterior to history defines the objects that the discipline ascribes for itself and the areas to which it is successively drawn, according to the fields (sociological, economic, demographic, cultural, psychoanalytical, etc.) which have in turn become the most decisive ones, and in conformity to the problematics which organize them. But historians accept responsibility for this interest as a task belonging to the greater entity of Research. Thus they create laboratories of epistemological experimentation.⁸⁰ Certainly they can give an objective form to these investigations only by combining the models with other sectors of their documentation about a society. Whence their paradox: they put *scientific* formalizations into play in order to test them, using the nonscientific objects with which they practice such testing. History thus continues to maintain no less than ever the function that it has exercised over the centuries in regard to many different "reasons," which concerns each of the established sciences: namely, its function as a form of criticism.

Criticism and History

WORK on the limits could be located elsewhere, and not exclusively where there is recourse to historical "facts" or a treatment of theoretical "models." If they are accepted, however, already these few indications direct us toward a definition of research as a whole. The strategy of historical practice implies a status of history. So it is hardly surprising to note that the nature of a science is the presupposition which must be exhumed from its effective procedures, and that this is the means to make these procedures more precise. Without this, every discipline would be associated with an essence that presumably exists within its successive technical incarnations, that outlives each of them (somewhere) and that keeps a merely accidental relation with practice.

A brief study of historical practice seems to allow three connected aspects to be specified: the mutation of "meaning" or of the "real" in the production of *significant deviations*; the position of a particular event as a *limit of what can be thought*; and the composition of a place which establishes within present time the *ambivalent figuration of the past and future*.

The first aspect presupposes a sudden change in historical knowledge in the last century. One hundred years ago, history represented a society as a collection and recollection of its entire development. It is true that history was fragmented into a plurality of histories (biological, economic, linguistic, and so on).⁸¹ But among these scattered positivities, as among the differentiated cycles that characterized each one of them, historical knowledge restored the *same* through their common ground of an *evolution*. It sewed all of these discontinuities together by running through them as if they were the successive or coexisting figures of a same meaning—that is, of an orientation—and by evincing in a more or less teleological writing the interior unity of a direction or a development.⁸²

Currently, history is judged rather according to its capacity to measure *deviations* exactly—not only of a quantitative nature (statistics of population, salary, or publication) but also qualitative (structural) differences—in relation to current formal constructs. In other words, the conclusion of history is what used to take the form of the *incipit* in former historical narratives: "In times past, life was not the way it is today."

Cultivated methodically, this distance ("life was not. . .") has become the result of research, instead of being its postulate and question. Thus, through hypothesis, "meaning" is eliminated from scientific fields all the while that they are being established. Historical knowledge does not reveal a meaning, but rather the exceptions that the application of economic, demographic, or sociological models uncovers from various areas of documentation. Research consists in producing significant negative factors. It specializes in forging pertinent differences which increased rigor in programming and its systematic exploitation allow it to "bring out."

In proximity to this first aspect, the second involves the element which has rightfully established the historical discipline: the *particular* (what G. R. Elton correctly distinguishes from the "individual"). If it is true that the particular designates at once both historical scrutiny and research, this is not insofar as it is an object actually thought, but rather because it is, to the contrary, the limit of what can be thought. Only universal issues are thought. The historian settles on the frontier where the law of an intelligibility meets its limit in the form of what it must endlessly overcome through its own movement, and what it endlessly meets again in new and different shapes. If historical "comprehension" is not enclosed within the tautology of legend or has not taken flight into ideology, its primary characteristic is not making series of selected data understandable (although that may be its "basis"), but rather *never denying* the relation that these "regularities" keep with "particularities" which escape them. Biographical detail, an aberrant toponymy, a local drop in salary, and so forth: all these forms of exception, symbolized in history by the importance of the proper name, renew the tension between systems of explanation and the always unexplained "that." To designate the "that" as a "fact" is only a way of naming what cannot be understood; it is a *Meinen* and not a *Verstehen*. But it is also tantamount to maintaining as necessary what is still unthought.⁸³

Certainly this experience must be attached to the pragmatism that lives in all historians, and that drives them to turn theory into ridicule so quickly. But it would be illusory to believe that the mere mention of "that's a fact" or "it happened" is equivalent to an understanding. Chronicle or erudition limited to collecting particular information only ignores the law which organizes it. Like that of hagiography or news items,⁸⁴ such discourse only illustrates in a thousand variants the general antinomies that belong to a rhetoric of the exceptional. It falls into the platitude of rep-

etition. In reality, particularities have as their jurisdiction a play over the base of an explicit formalization; they function by investing it with interrogation; they signify by referring back to acts, to persons, and to everything that remains outside of both knowledge and discourse.

The place that history creates by combining the model with its deviations—or by playing on the borderlines of regularity—represents a third aspect of its definition. More important than reference to the past is the introduction of the past by way of an assumed distance. A gap is folded into the scientific coherence of a present time, and how could this be, effectively, unless through something that can be objectified, the past, whose function is to indicate alterity? Even if ethnology has partially relieved history in this task of establishing a staging of the other in present time—the reason why these two disciplines have been in intimate rapport—the past is first of all the means of *representing a difference*. The historical operation consists in classifying the given according to a present law that is distinguished from its "other" (the past), in assuming a distance in respect to an acquired situation, and thus in marking through a discourse the effective change that precipitated this distancing.

This operation has a double-edged effect. On the one hand, it historicizes current time. Properly speaking, it stages the present time of a lived situation. It necessitates clarification of the relation of dominant forms of reasoning to a proper *place* which, in opposition to a "past," becomes the present. A reciprocal relation between the law and its limit simultaneously engenders the differentiation of a present from a past time.

But on the other hand, the figure of the past keeps its primary value of representing *what is lacking*. With a material which in order to be objective is necessarily *there*, but which connotes a past insofar as it refers first of all to an absence, this figure also introduces the rift of a future. It is well known that a group can express what it faces—what is still lacking—only through a redistribution of its past. Thus history is always ambivalent: the locus that it carves for the past is equally a fashion of *making a place for a future*. As it vacillates between exoticism and criticism through a staging of the other, it oscillates between conservatism and utopianism through its function of signifying a lack. In these extreme forms it becomes, in the first case, either legendary or polemical; in the second, it becomes reactionary or revolutionary. But these excesses could never allow us to forget what is written in its most rigorous practice, that of *symbolizing limits* and thus of enabling us to *go beyond those limits*. The old slogan about "the lessons of history" acquires new meaning in this

perspective, if, as we leave an ideology of inheritors aside, we can identify the "moral of history" with this interstice created within the events of the day through the representation of differences.

A WRITING

REPRESENTATION—literary staging—is "historical" only if it can be articulated within a social place of scientific operation, and only if linked both institutionally and technically to a practice of deviation in respect to contemporary theoretical or cultural models. There is no historical narrative where the relation to a social body and an institution of knowledge is not made explicit. Nonetheless there has to be a form of "representation." A space of figuration must be composed. Even if we cast aside everything that deals, properly speaking, with a structural analysis of historical discourse,⁸⁵ we still must envision the operation that turns the practice of investigation into writing.

Scriptural Inversion

WRITING, or the construction of an *écriture* (in the broad meaning of the organization of signifiers), is an uncanny sort of passage.⁸⁶ It leads from practice to text. A transformation assures the passage from the unlimited field of research to what Marrou calls the "servitude" of writing⁸⁷—"servitude" because, in effect, the foundation of a textual space carries with it a series of distortions in respect to analytical procedures. With discourse a law contrary to the rules of practice is seemingly imposed.

The first constraint of discourse consists in prescribing for beginnings what is in reality a point of arrival, and even what would be a vanishing point in research. While the latter begins in the currency of a certain social place and a certain conceptual or institutional apparatus, the exposition follows a chronological order. It takes the oldest point as its beginning. In becoming a text, history conforms to a second constraint. The priority that practice gives to a tactic of deviation (in respect to the base furnished by models) appears to be contradicted by the closure of the book or article. While research is interminable, the text must have an ending, and this structure of finality bends back upon the introduction, which is already organized by the need to finish. Thus the whole is pre-

The Historiographical Operation

sented as a stable architecture of elements, rules, and historical concepts which form a system among themselves, and whose coherence is owing to a unity designated by the author's proper name. Finally, in order to maintain itself by means of some few examples, scriptural representation becomes "full"; it fills or obliterates the lacunae that are to the contrary the very principle of research, for research is always sharpened through lack. Put otherwise, the text makes *present*, it represents through an ensemble of figures, stories, and proper names, what practice seizes as its limit, as exception or as difference, as past. The "servitude" that discourse imposes on research is measured with these few features—the inversion of the order, the closure of the text, and the substitution of a presence of meaning where lacunae were at work.

Could writing therefore be the inverted image of practice? It would have the merit of mirror writing,⁸⁸ as in all cryptographies, in children's games, or in counterfeiters' imitations of coins, fictions forging deceit and secrets, tracing the sign of a silence through the inversion of a normative practice and its social coding. This is the case for the "mirrors of history." To be sure, they hide their relation to practices that are no longer historical but now political and commercial; but in using a past in order to deny the present that they repeat, they set apart something foreign to current social relations, they *produce secrets* within language; their games designate a withdrawal that can be told in legends inverting the normal channels of research and superseding them. Mirror writing is serious because of what it does—it states something other through the inversion of the code of practice; it is illusory only insofar as, not realizing what it is doing, one takes its secret to be what it puts into language, and not what it subtracts from it.

In fact, historical writing—or historiography—has been controlled by the practices from which it results; even more, it is itself a social practice which establishes a well-determined place for readers by redistributing the space of symbolic references and by thus impressing a "lesson" upon them; it is didactic and magisterial. Yet at the same time, it functions as an inverted image; it gives way to lack and yet hides it; it creates these narratives of the past which are the equivalent of cemeteries within cities; it exorcises and confesses a presence of death amidst the living. Playing on both sides, at once contractual and legendary, both performative writing (discussed in the final two sections of this chapter) and mirror writing, historiography has the ambivalent status of "producing history" (as Jean-Pierre Faye has shown),⁸⁹ and also of "telling stories"—that is, it imposes

the constraints of a power, and it provides loopholes. It edifies as it amuses, so to speak. By specifying a few aspects of historiographical construction, we can better clarify the relations of difference and continuity that writing keeps with the discipline of research,⁹¹ and also its social function as a practice.

In effect, by being dissociated from the daily work, the gaps in logic, the conflicts, and the combinations of microdecisions that characterize concrete research, discourse is located outside of the experience that gives it credibility; it is separated from *passing time*, oblivious to the flow of everyday labor, in order to furnish models within the fictional cadre of *past time*. What is arbitrary in this construction has been shown. This is a general problem. Thus, Claude Bernard's *Cahier rouge* (1850–1860) represents a chronicle that is already distinct from the actual experimentation in his laboratory, and his theory, the *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale* (1865), is in its turn a simplification, out of touch and reductive in respect to the *Cahier*.⁹¹ Among a thousand other examples, this one shows the passage from practice to chronicle and from chronicle to a didactics. Only a distortion allows the introduction of "experiment" into another practice equally social but symbolic, scriptural, which substitutes the authority of a knowledge for the labor of a given research. What do historians *fabricate* when they become writers? Their very discourse ought to betray what they are doing.

Chronology, or the Masked Law

THE results of research are clarified according to a chronological order. To be sure, the composition of series, the isolation of global "conjunctures," just like narrative or cinematic techniques, have made this order more flexible, permitting the innovation of synchronic tables and renewing the traditional means of putting different moments into play with one another. Nonetheless, every historiography puts forward a *time of things* as the counterpoint and condition of a *discursive time* (discourse "advances" at different speeds, slowing down or rushing ahead). By means of this referential time, it can condense or stretch its own time,⁹² produce effects of meaning, redistribute and codify the uniformity of flowing time. This difference already takes the form of a splitting in two. It allows for play and furnishes an area of knowledge with the possibility of being produced in a "discursive" time (or a "diegetic" time, as Gérard Genette

says) placed at a distance from "real" time. The service that allusion to this referential time renders to historiography can be envisaged under three diverse aspects.

The first (which can also be located in other forms) is one of *making oppositions compatible*. A simple example: we can say that "the weather is good" or "the weather is bad." These two propositions cannot be maintained at the same time, but only one or the other. In contrast, if we introduce temporal difference so as to transform the propositions into "yesterday, the weather was good," and "today, the weather is bad," it is now legitimate to maintain them together. Contraries are therefore compatible within the same text under the condition that it is *narrative*. Temporalization creates the possibility of making coherent an order and its "heteroclite," its irregularity. In respect to the flat space of a system, narrativization creates a "depth" which allows the contrary or the remainder of the system to be placed *near* it. Historical perspective therefore authorizes the operation which, from the same place and within the same text, substitutes conjunction for disjunction, holds contrary statements together, and, more broadly, overcomes the difference between an order and what it leaves aside. Thus it is the instrument par excellence of all discourse that aims to "understand" antinomial positions (it suffices that one of the terms of conflict be classified as past), to "reduce" the aberrant element (it becomes a "particular" case which is marked as a positive detail within a narrative), or to maintain as "lacking" (pertaining to another period) what does not fit into a present system and therefore acquires an uncanny appearance.

But this temporalization, skittering away as it does from rigorously imposed limits, creating a stage on which incompatible elements can be put into play together, indeed has to be paid for with its counterpart. Narrative can keep only the appearance of syllogism; where it explicates, it is enthymematic,⁹³ it "pretends" to be reasoning. To be sure, in maintaining the relation of a rationality with what takes place outside of it, on its borderlines, narrative preserves the possibility of a science or a philosophy (it is heuristic); but, as such, it occupies their place and hides their absence. We can therefore wonder what authorizes historiography to be synthesized from contraries, if this is not a rational stricture. In fact, if we adopt Benveniste's distinctions between "discourse" and "narrative,"⁹⁴ it is a narrative that functions as a discourse organized by the locus of "interlocutors" and based on what the "author" ascribes for himself in respect to his readers. It is the locus whence the text is being

produced that authorizes it, and before any other sign, the recourse to chronology avows it.

Chronology indicates a second aspect of the service that time renders to history. It is the condition that allows a classification by periods. But, in the geometric sense, it applies the inverted image of time upon the text, an image that in research proceeds from the present to the past. Chronology follows this path in reverse. Historical exposition supposes the choice of a new "vector space" which transforms the direction of the path marked by the temporal vector and inverts its orientation. This reversal alone appears to make the connection of practice and writing possible. If it indicates an ambivalence of time,⁹⁵ it posits first of all the problem of a *re-commencement*: where does writing begin? Where is it established so that historiography can exist?

At first sight writing leads time toward the moment of the individual receiver. It thus constructs the locus of readers in 1988. From the depths of the ages, it comes to them. Whether or not it participates in a thematic of progress, whether it drains long durations or relates a succession of *epistémès*, no matter what its content may be, historiography attempts to rejoin a present which is the end of a more or less protracted course along a chronological trajectory (the history of a century, of a period, or of a series of cycles). The present, the postulate of discourse, becomes the *profit* of the scriptural operation: the place of the production of the text is transformed into a place produced by the text.

The narrative, however, has its duplicity. The chronology of the historical work is only a limited segment (for example, we describe the evolution of Languedoc from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century), set apart first on a longer axis that exceeds it on one end and the other. (figure 2.1). On one side, chronology aims at the present moment across a distance—the right half of the line left blank, defined only in its origin (from the eighteenth century up to contemporary times). On the other, it presupposes a finite series whose terms are always uncertain; it ultimately postulates recourse to the empty and necessary concept of a zero-point, an origin (of time), indispensable for any orientation.⁹⁶ The narrative therefore masks this initial and unassignable reference, the absolute condition for any possibility of its historicization, on the entire surface of its organization. By allowing the present to be "situated" in time and, finally, to be symbolized, narrative posits it within a necessary relation to a "beginning" which is *nothing*, or which serves merely as a limit. The anchoring of the narrative conveys everywhere a tacit relation

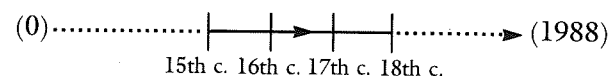
to something which cannot have a place in history—an originary non-place—without which, however, there would be no historiography. Writing disperses through its chronological staging the reference of the entire narrative to something unspoken that is its postulate.

This non-place marks the interstice between practice and writing. The qualitative gap between one and the other is doubtless manifested through the fact that writing de-natures and inverts the time of practice. But only a silent passage to the borderline effectively poses their difference. A zero-point in time connects one to the other. It is the threshold which leads from the fabrication of the object to the construction of the sign.

This initial nothing traces out the disguised return of an uncanny past. It could be said that it is myth transformed into a chronological postulate—at once erased from the narrative but everywhere presupposed in it, impossible to eliminate. A necessary relation to the other, to this mythic "zero," is still inscribed in the narrative content with all the transformations of genealogy, with all the modulations of dynastic or familial histories concerning politics, economy, or mentalities. In order for the narrative to "come down" to present time, it must be authorized by this higher "nothing" whose formula the *Odyssey* has already provided: "No one knows by himself who his father really is."⁹⁷ Expulsed from knowledge, a ghost insinuates itself into historiography and determines its organization: it is what we do not know, what is not endowed with a proper name. In the form of a past which has no locus that can be designated—but which cannot be eliminated—it is *the law of the other*.⁹⁸

"Law always takes advantage of what is written," Maurice Blanchot has said.⁹⁹ If it results from a current and localized operation, insofar as it is writing historiography reiterates another beginning, one that is impossible to date or to represent, a beginning presupposed by the deployment of chronology, a deployment which at first sight appears to be very simple.¹⁰⁰ Historiography doubles the gratifying time—the time which comes toward you, the readers, and which valorizes your position—with the shadow of a forbidden time. The absence through which all literature begins inverts—and allows—the manner by which narrative is filled with meaning, and by which discourse establishes a position for the reader. The two are combined, and we can see that historiography acquires its

FIGURE 2.1



force by transforming genealogy into a message and by being situated "higher" than the reader, simply because it is nearer to that which authorizes. The text holds together the contradictions of this unstable time. It discreetly restores its ambivalence. It secretly betrays the contrary of "meaning" by which the present time claims to understand the past. Indeed, unlike what it does when it assumes itself as its object, this writing does not acknowledge that it is the "labor of negation." Yet it does witness to it. The construction of meaning is built upon its contrary. Here too, as Blanchot remarks, the language of the writer "does not present by rendering present what he is showing, but in showing it behind everything, as both the meaning and the absence of that everything."¹⁰¹

When it becomes historical, narrative nevertheless resists the seduction of beginning; it does not yield to the Eros of the origin. Unlike myth, it does not assume as its goal the staging of a necessary and lost authority in the guise of an event that never took place.¹⁰² It does not state what it presupposes, for its objective is one of making room for a *labor*. The law is conveyed only through a particular study, whose organization assures the relation among the terms (the origin, the present time) left out of view.

Split Constructions

AMONG the problems related to narrative envisioned as a discursive form,¹⁰³ there are a number that have to do specifically with the construction of historiography. They concern a *will* for which temporalization provides a frame, allowing a sum of contradictions to be held together without the need for resolving them. This "globalizing" purpose is at work everywhere in the historiographical work. It ultimately refers to a political will to manage conflicts and to regulate them from a single point of view. This purpose literally produces texts which, in various ways, have the double quality of combining a *semanticization* (the edification of a system of meaning) with a *selection* (a sorting having its basis in the place where a present is separated from a past), and of directing an *intelligibility* toward a *normativity*. The mixed function of historiography can be specified by several features that deal first of all with its status in a typology of discourses, and second, with the organization of its contents.

In developing a general typology of discourse, a first approximation concerns the mode through which every discourse organizes the relation

between its "content" and its "expansion." In narrative both refer to an order of succession; in exposition, referential time (a series of moments cast as A, B, C, D, E, etc.) can be subject to omissions and inversions capable of producing effects of meaning (for example, literary or cinematic narrative will offer an order of E, E, A, B, etc.). In logical discourse, content is defined by the status of truth (and/or of verifiability) that can be assigned to statements, and it implies syllogistic (or "legal") relations between statements which determine the mode of the exposition (induction and deduction). Now historical discourse claims to provide a true content (which pertains to verifiability) but in the form of a narration (figure 2.2).

Combining heteroclite systems, this mixed discourse (made of two others and situated between them) can be fashioned according to two contrary movements: a *narrativization* makes content move in the direction of its expansion, from nonchronological models to a chronologization, from a doctrine to a manifestation of a narrative type; inversely, a *semanticization* of raw data makes descriptive elements move toward a syntagmatic linkage of utterances and an establishment of programmed historical sequences. But these generative procedures of the text cannot entirely conceal the *metaphorical* slippage where, following Aristotle's definition, the "passage from one genre to another" is effected. As a sign of this mixed discourse, metaphor is omnipresent. It brings to historical explanation an enthymematic character. It carries causality off in the direction of successivity (*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*). It takes relations of coexistence

FIGURE 2.2

	content	expansion
narration	temporal series (A, B, C, D . . .)	temporal sequence (E, C, A, D . . .)
historical discourse	"truth"	temporal sequence
logical discourse	truth of propositions	syllogism (induction, deduction)

as coherence, and so forth. The likelihood of statements is constantly substituted for their verifiability. Whence the authority which historical discourse needs in order to uphold itself: what it loses in rigor must be compensated for by an increase in reliability.

Another form of splitting can be linked to this need for reliability. We admit as historiographical discourse that can "include" its other—chronicle, archive, document—in other words, discourse that is organized in a *laminated* text in which one continuous half is based on another disseminated half. The former is thus allowed to state what the latter is unknowingly signifying. Through "quotations," references, notes, and the whole mechanism of permanent references to a prime language (what Michelet called the "chronicle"),¹⁰⁴ historiographical discourse is constructed as a *knowledge of the other*. It is constructed according to a problematic of procedure and trial, or of *citation*, that can at the same time "subpoena" a referential language that acts therein as reality, and judge it in the name of knowledge. Moreover, the convocation of raw data obeys the jurisdiction which is pronounced upon it in the historiographical staging. This stratification of discourse does not assume the form of a "dialogue" or a "collage." Into the singular it combines knowledge citing the plural of the documents that are quoted. In this play, the basic tenet and limit of the decomposition of raw data (through analysis or division) is the *uniqueness* of a textual recomposition. The role of quoted language is thus one of accrediting discourse. With its referential function, it introduces into the text an effect of reality; and through its crumbling, it discreetly refers to a locus of authority. From this angle, the split structure of discourse functions like a machinery that extracts from the citation a verisimilitude of narrative and a validation of knowledge. It produces a sense of reliability.

By these divided texts a particular epistemological and literary functioning is also implied. On the one hand, to use Karl Popper's categories, the question here is one of "interpretation" rather than "explication." Insofar as historical discourse acquires from its internal relation with "chronicle" its status of being the knowledge of this chronicle, it is built upon a certain number of epistemological presuppositions: the need for a referential semanticization which comes to it from culture; the possibility of transcribing the already coded languages which it interprets; the possibility of fashioning a metalanguage through the very language of the documents it uses. In these diverse forms, quotation introduces a necessary outer text within the text. And reciprocally, quotation is the

means of attaching the text to its semantic outer surface, of letting it appear to play a role in culture, and of thus giving it the stamp of referential credibility. In this respect, quotation is only a particular instance of the rule that necessitates, for all production of "realistic illusion," the multiplication of proper names, descriptions, and deictics.¹⁰⁵ Thus, to take just one example, proper names already play the role of quotation in this discourse. From all outer appearances, they are reliable. While the novel must slowly fill with predicates the proper names (such as "Julien Sorel"), that it poses at its beginning, historiography receives proper names already filled (for example, "Robespierre") and is satisfied with working on a referential language.¹⁰⁶ Yet this external condition of a knowledge of the other, or of a heterology,¹⁰⁷ has as its corollary the possibility of discourse itself being the equivalent of a semiotics, a metalanguage of natural languages, and therefore a text which presupposes and manifests the transcriptibility of different codifications. In fact, this metalanguage is developed in the very lexicon of the documents it decodes; it is not formally distinguished (in exception to what is the case in every science) from the language it interprets. Therefore it cannot control the distance that it claims to maintain from the level of analysis, nor establish in its own field and univocally the concepts that organize it. It is narrated *in* the language of its other. It plays with it. The status of metalanguage is thus the postulate of a "will to understand." At stake is an *a priori* rather than a product. Interpretation has the characteristic of reproducing inside of its split discourse the relation between a place of knowledge and its exteriority.

As it quotes, this discourse transforms every quoted element into a source of reliability and the lexicon of a knowledge. But in this way it places the reader in the position of what is quoted; it introduces the reader into the relation between a knowledge and a non-knowledge. In other words, this discourse produces an enunciative contract between the sender and the receiver. It functions as a didactic discourse, and does so all the more as it dissimulates the place whence it speaks (it erases the "I" of the author), as it presents in the form of a referential language (it is the "real" that is addressing you), as it narrates more than it reasons (one does not debate a story), and as it takes hold of its readers right where they are (it speaks their language, though otherwise and better than they do). This discourse has no openings: it is semantically saturated (there are no gaps in intelligibility), "pressed" (thanks to a "maximum shortening of the passage and of the distance between two functional

focal points of narration"),¹⁰⁸ and tightly organized (a network of cataphoras and anaphoras assures endless reference of the text to itself as an oriented totality). The structure inherent to the discourse produces both chicanery and a certain type of reader: that is, a receiver cited, identified, and taught by the very fact of being placed in the situation of the chronicle that stands before a knowledge. In organizing textual space, the structure establishes a contract and also orders social space. In this respect, the discourse does what it says. It is performative. The ruse of historiography consists in creating what Barthes describes as "a fake performative discourse in which the apparent declarative element is in fact no more than the signifier of the speech-act taken to be an act of authority."¹⁰⁹

A third aspect of splitting concerns neither the degree of mixture nor the stratification of discourse but, rather, the problematic of its manifestation, or the relation between the *event* and the *fact*. On a very debated subject I shall make but one point relative to the construction of writing. From this perspective, the event is that which must *delimit*, if there is to be intelligibility; the historical fact is that which must *fill*, if there is to be meaningful statement. The former conditions the organization of discourse, while the latter provides the signifiers intended to form a series of significant elements in the mode of narrative. In sum, the former defines, and the latter spells out.

In effect, what is an event if not what must be presupposed, in order for an organization of documents to be possible? The event is the means thanks to which disorder is turned into order. The event does not explain, but permits an intelligibility. It is the postulate and the point of departure—but also the blind spot—of comprehension. "Something must have taken place" right *there*, by means of which one can construct a series of facts, or transport them from one regularity to another. Far from being the base or the substantial landmark on which information would be founded, the event is the hypothetical support for an ordering along a chronological axis; that is, the condition of a classification. Sometimes it is no more than a simple localization of disorder: in that instance, an event names what cannot be understood.

In providing the uncanny with a place *useful* for a discourse of intelligibility, by exorcising what is not understood in order to make of it a means of comprehension, historiography nevertheless does not avoid the surreptitious return of what it effaces from manifestation. We can doubtless recognize this return in the process of erosion that never stops un-

dermining concepts built by this discourse. To be sure, it works there as a secret movement within the text, nonetheless constant, like a slow hemorrhage of knowledge. We apprehend it, for example, in relation to the order shown by an organization of historical units. The scriptural staging is assured by a certain number of semantic choices. François Châtelet gives the name of "concept" to these units, but these are concepts "which we can call, through analogy with the epistemology of natural sciences, *historical categories*."¹¹⁰ They are of many diverse types: thus the "period," the "century," etc., but also the "mentality," the "social class," the "economic conjuncture," or the "family," the "city," the "region," the "people," the "nation," the "civilization," or even the "war," the "heresy," the "festival," the "plague," the "book," etc., not to speak of notions such as "antiquity," the "ancien régime," the "Enlightenment," etc. These units often convey stereotypical combinations. A predictable montage offers the familiar patterns: the life—the work—the doctrine; or its collective equivalent: economic life—social life—intellectual life. "Levels" are piled up. Concepts are packaged. Every code has its logic.

The question here is hardly one of going back over the social constraints (see "A Social Place," above) or the theoretical and practical programming necessities (see "A Practice") that intervene in the determination of these units; rather, it is one of grasping their scriptural function. Occasionally it is said that the organization of these concepts is almost automatically triggered by the very title of the text, and that it is in sum only a frame, more or less artificial (finally, it matters little!), where treasures of information are amassed. According to this conception, the units make up the checkerboard of a display in which every square must be filled. In the last resort, these concepts are indifferent to the riches they bear: in the storehouse of history, only content counts, never presentation (provided that it is clear and classical). But this is to make (or to believe) historiographical composition inert, as if it simply arrested research in order to replace it with the moment of addition and to proceed to the summation of acquired capital. Writing would consist in "coming to an end." In reality, it is nothing of the sort from the moment historical discourse exists. The writing imposes rules which obviously are not those of practice; different and complementary, they are the rules of a text which organizes places in view of a production.

Historical writing indeed assembles a coherent set of great units into a structure analogous to the architecture of places and characters in a tragedy. But the system of this drama is the space where the *movement*

of documentation, that is, of smaller units, sows disorder within this order, escapes from established divisions, and brings about a slow erosion of organizing concepts. In approximate terms, we might say that the text is the place where a labor of "content" is exacted upon the "form." To take the more precise words of Raymond Roussel, it "*produces* as it *destroys*." Through the moving and complex mass that it throws into historiographical delimitation and which stirs things up there, information appears to involve a *wearing out* of the classificatory divisions that cement the foundation of the textual system. And indeed, discourse no longer "stands up" if the structural organization falls apart, but it is historical insofar as a labor jostles and corrodes the conceptual apparatus that is nonetheless necessary for the formation of the space which welcomes this movement.

Following this procedure, which allows the arranging of the unknown within a blank square prepared for it ahead of time and named "event," a "reason" of history becomes thinkable. A full and saturating semanticization is then possible: the "facts" enunciate this semanticization by accrediting it with a referential language; the event obfuscates its gaps with a proper name that is added to the continuous narrative and masks its ruptures. In other words, the serial architecture plays upon what contradicts it, namely events, as if upon a limit that it *also* names in order to turn itself into a didactic discourse which suffers neither interruption nor lapsus from erudite authority. These two elements are necessary to one another: a strange reciprocity admits each of them only in relation to the other. But the text *at once* admits the fulfillment of meaning and its condition; it conjoins and levels them within the expansion of discourse. In this way it is global, but only at the expense of camouflaging this difference, and thanks to the system that establishes beforehand, by virtue of an acquired place, an authority capable of "understanding" the relation between an organization of meaning (of "facts") and its limit (the "event").

A construction and erosion of units: all historical writing combines these two operations. An economic or demographic architecture must be posited so that the stirrings that soften it, move it, and ultimately refer to another grouping (whether social or cultural) can appear. A geographic unit (regional or national) must be delimited so that all which cannot be enclosed becomes manifest. The organization of conceptual "bodies" through a delimitation is at once the cause and the means of a slow hemorrhage. The structure of a composition does not retain what

it represents, but it must "hold" enough so that, with this escape, the past, the real, or the death of which the text speaks can be truly staged—"produced." Thus is symbolized the relation of discourse with what it designates through losing it; that is, its relation with the past which it is not—but which could never be conceived without writing, which articulates "compositions of place" over an erosion of these places.

The combination of *breakages* (macro-units) and *erosions* (displacements of concepts) is, to be sure, only an abstract schema. Besides, it does not deal with the structure of discourse itself, but only describes one movement of writing, one intended to produce meaning authorized by knowledge. Yet it can be recognized in the most important texts of contemporary French historiography.

In order to explain the apparition of a national consciousness in Catalonia—a problem that a socioeconomic study of this region "brings forth"—Pierre Vilar argues for the connection between mercantilism (to which the formation of a dominant class is linked) and nationalism (an instrument used by this class with the goal of establishing a political dominion). An economic "place" is the base for a very rich analysis. But certain outer elements penetrate it: thus, the observation that nationalism grows with the unhappy consciousness of a threatened nation.¹¹¹ This intervention of a heterogenous element does not inaugurate another conceptual delimitation and certainly not a "global" history. It shifts the initial drama of the text. This is one example among hundreds showing the process of erosion which works on a strongly erected composition, and precisely because it is not an inert framework.

Erosion is also the movement that shifts the unit of "the Beauvais region" so firmly traced in Pierre Goubert's "regional study," and which then lets it run toward Beauce, or toward Picardy.¹¹² In the text, the labor which moves the place and mixes what had been excluded back into it sketches within the text a disappearance (never total) of concepts, as if the study led its representation (always, however, upheld as long as there is a text) to the borderline of the absence that it outlines.

The Place of the Dead and the Place of the Reader

A THIRD paradox of history: writing places a population of the dead on stage—characters, mentalities, or prizes. In different fashions and with different contents, it remains linked to its archeology of the beginning of the seventeenth century ("one of the zero-points in the history of France,"

notes Philippe Ariès,¹¹³ as the "gallery of history," as can still be seen in the Beauregard château:¹¹⁴ a line of portraits, effigies, or emblems painted on the wall before being described by the text organizes the relation between a space (the museum) and a route (the guided visit). Historiography has this same structure, of painting linked together through a trajectory. It represents the dead along a narrative itinerary.

Many signs in history attest to this "gallery" structure; for example, the multiplication of proper names (personages, localities, coins, etc.), and their duplication in the "Index of Proper Names." Thus what proliferates in historical discourse are elements "below which nothing more can be done except display,"¹¹⁵ and through which *saying* reaches its limit, as near as possible to *showing*. With these proper names the signifying system is grossly expanded on its extreme deictic border, as if the very absence it studied made it turn in the direction where "showing" tended to stand for "signifying." But there are many other indications: the role of maps, of figures, or of graphics; the importance of panoramic views and recapitulative "conclusions," of countrysides which the book stakes out, etc. These are foreign elements in the treatise of sociology or of physics.

Must we again recognize in these qualities a literary inversion of procedures belonging to research? Practice in effect discovers the past through a relevant deviation from current models. In reality, the specific function of writing is not contrary to that of practice, but different and complementary to it. Writing can be specified under two rubrics. On the one hand, writing plays the role of a burial rite, in the ethnological and quasi-religious meaning of the term; it exorcises death by inserting it into discourse. On the other hand, it possesses a symbolizing function; it allows a society to situate itself by giving itself a past through language, and it thus opens to the present a space of its own. "To mark" a past is to make a place for the dead, but also to redistribute the space of possibility, to determine negatively what *must be done*, and consequently to use the narrativity that buries the dead as a way of establishing a place for the living. The ordering of what is absent is the inverse of a normativity which aims at the living reader and which establishes a didactic relation between the sender and the receiver.

The past occupies the place of the subject-king in the text. A scriptural conversion is effected. Where research had brought about a critique of current models, writing constructs a *tombeau* for the dead.¹¹⁶ The locus ascribed to the past thus plays, here and there, upon two different types

of operation, one technical and the other scriptural. Only across this difference of functioning can an analogy be discovered between the two positions of the past—within the technique of research and within the representation of the text.

Writing speaks of the past only in order to inter it. Writing is a tomb in the double sense of the word in that, in the very same text, it both honors and eliminates. Here the function of language is to introduce through *saying* what can no longer be *done*. Language exorcises death and arranges it in the narrative that pedagogically replaces it with something that the reader must believe and do. This process is repeated in other unscientific ways, from the funeral eulogy in the streets to burial ceremonies. But unlike other artistic or social "tombs," here taking the dead or the past back to a symbolic place is connected to the labor aimed at creating in the present a place (past or future) to be filled, a "something that must be done." Writing gathers together the products of this labor. In this way it liberates the present without having to name it. Thus it can be said that writing makes the dead so that the living can exist elsewhere. More exactly, it receives the dead that a social change has produced, so that the space opened by this past can be marked, and so that it will still be possible to connect what appears with what disappears. Naming the absent of the household and inserting them into the language of the scriptural gallery is equivalent to liberating the apartment for the living, through an act of communication which combines the absence of the living in language with the absence of the dead in the household. A society furnishes itself with a present time by virtue of historical writing. The literary founding of this space thus rejoins the labors that historical practice had brought about.

As a substitute for the absent being, an enclosure of the evil genius of death, the historical text plays a performative role. Language allows a practice to be situated in respect to its *other*, the past. In fact, in itself it is a practice. Historiography uses death in order to articulate a law (of the present). It does not describe the silent practices that construct it, but it effects a new distribution of already semanticized practices. It is an operation of an order other than that of research. Through its narrativity, historiography furnishes death with a representation that, in placing the lack within language, outside of existence, has the value of an exorcism against anguish. But, through its performativity, historiography fills the lacuna that it represents; it uses this locus to impose upon the receiver a will, a wisdom, and a lesson. In sum, narrativity, the metaphor

of performative discourse, finds its support precisely in what it hides: the dead of which it speaks become the vocabulary of a task to be undertaken. Such is the ambivalence of historiography: it is the condition of a process and the denial of an absence; by turns it acts as the discourse of a law (historical saying opens a present to be made) and as an alibi, a realistic illusion (the realistic effect creates the fiction of another history). It oscillates between "producing history" and "telling stories," but without being reducible to either one or the other. No doubt we can recognize the same splitting in another form which completes the simultaneously critical and constructive historical operation: writing follows a path between blasphemy and curiosity; between what it eliminates in establishing it as past, and what it organizes from the present; between the privation or dispossession that it postulates, and the social normativity that it imposes on the unknowing reader. Through all these aspects combined in the literary drama, writing symbolizes the desire that constitutes the relation with the other. It is the mark of this law.

It is not surprising that something other than destiny or the possibility of an "objective science" is in question here. Insofar as our relation with language is always a relation with death, historical discourse is the favored representation, in Jacques Lacan's words, of a "science of the subject," and of the subject "taken in a constituent division"¹¹⁷—but with a staging of the relations that a social body keeps with its language.

NOTES

1. If, as Paul Veyne has shown in *Comment on écrit l'histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 258–73—available in English as *Writing History: Essay on Epistemology* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984)—historical research is characterized by the determination of relevant places, that is, by a topical arrangement, it does not so much refuse to inscribe units of meaning (or "facts") determined as such into relations of productions, as it aims at showing the relations between *products* and *places* of production.

2. At once and for all of the following I would like to specify that I am using the word "history" in the sense of "historiography." In other words, by "history" I mean a practice (a discipline), its results (a discourse), and the relation between them. See chapter 1, "Making History."

3. See Serge Moscovici, *Essai sur l'histoire humaine de la nature* (Paris: Flammarion, 1968); Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969),

available in English as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972); and Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire*.

4. See Karl Marx, the first of his *Theses on Feuerbach*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, L. S. Feuer, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

5. However suspect it may be within the ensemble of the "human sciences," the term "scientific" (where it is replaced by the term "analytical"), is no less so in the field of the so-called exact sciences, at least insofar as it would refer to "laws." With this term we can nonetheless define the possibility of conceiving an ensemble of *rules* allowing control of operations adapted to the production of specific objects or ends.

6. See Raymond Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire: Essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (Paris: Vrin, 1938); and his *La Philosophie critique de l'histoire* (Paris: Vrin, 1938; reissued in 1969). On the theses of Raymond Aron, see Pierre Vilar's critique "Marxisme et histoire dans le développement des sciences humaines," *Studi storici* (1960), 1(5):1008–43, especially pp. 1011–19.

7. On the "principle of falsification," see Karl Popper, *Logik der Forschung* (Vienna, 1934); or the quite expanded and reviewed English translation, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), the basic work concerning "critical rationalism."

8. See Antonio Gramsci, *Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1949), pp. 6–38.

9. Returning to the Weberian thesis according to which "scientific elaboration begins with a choice whose only justification is subjective" in his *Les Étapes de la pensée sociologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), p. 510, Raymond Aron once again underlines the crisscrossing of "subjective choice" and the rational system of "causal" explanation in Weber's work (pp. 500–22). In that way he obliterates the influence on intellectuals of their place in society, and once again holds Weber in the position of the anti-Marx.

10. See in particular Michel Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), available in English as *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage, 1970), whose purpose has since been specified and situated (notably in Foucault's remarkable introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 3–17). See also my "Le Noir soleil du langage: Michel Foucault," in *L'Absent de l'histoire* (Paris: Mame, 1973), pp. 115–32.

11. See my "Une épistémologie de transition: Paul Veyne," *Annales E.S.C.* (1972), 27:1317–27.

12. See Philippe Ariès, *Le Temps de l'histoire* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1954), p. 224 [reissued in 1986 by Editions Gallimard, Paris—Tr.]; and Pierre Chaunu, *La Civilisation de l'Europe classique* (Paris: Arthaud, 1966), pp. 404–9, on "the establishment of a small world of research throughout Europe." Many others have noted this situation. But only detail can show to what point this social "establishment" marks an epistemological break. For example, there is a strong tie between a delimitation of correspondents (or of travels) and the development of an erudite language among them; on these correspondences, see Baudouin de

Gaiffier, *Religion, érudition, et critique à la fin du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: PUF, 1968), pp. 2–9. There is also a tie between the Wednesday “assemblies” at the Bibliothèque Colbertine from 1675 to 1751 and the elaboration of historical research; on these meetings, see Léopold Delisle, *Le Cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: 1868), 1:476–77.

13. Daniel Roche illustrates the close connection between encyclopedism (a “complex of ideas”) and these institutions, which are the Parisian or provincial academies; see “Encyclopédistes et académiciens,” in *Livre et société dans la France du XVIII^e siècle* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 2:73–92. Similarly, Sergio Moravia links the birth of ethnology to the constitution of the group of the “Students of Man,” in *La Scienza dell'uomo nel settecento* (Bari, Italy: Laterza, 1970), pp. 151–72. Examples could be multiplied.

14. Despite Gaston Bachelard, who in *Le Rationalisme appliqué* (Paris: PUF, 1966) says, “The scientific citadel is built along the borders of social society” (p. 23); see also his *La Formation de l'esprit scientifique* (Paris: Vrin, 1972), pp. 32–34. Alexandre Koyré takes up the same thesis, but in order to sustain “a life of its own, an immanent history” of science which “can only be understood in relation to its own problems, to its own history”; see “Perspectives sur l'histoire des sciences,” in *Etudes d'histoire de la pensée scientifique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 399. It seems that here there is, following Max Weber, a confusion between differentiation and isolation, as if the establishment of a “proper” place were not linked to a general redistribution and, therefore, to reciprocal redefinitions; and a conception of the “history of ideas” which withdraws all relevance from social partitions, while epistemological divisions are at once social and intellectual.

15. See Jean Glénisson, “L'Historiographie française contemporaine,” in *Vingt-cinq ans de recherche historique en France* (Paris: CNRS, 1965), p. xxiv, n. 3, with respect to the *Annales*.

16. Psychoanalysis would even say that speech hides and that the body speaks.

17. Glénisson, “L'Historiographie,” p. xxvi.

18. *Ibid.*, p. xxiv. On these two points, see Terry N. and Priscilla P. Clark, “Le Patron et son cercle: Clef de l'Université française,” *Revue française de sociologie* (1971), 12:19–39, a perspicacious study that only “outside observers” were capable of writing. The authors define the “system” through four essential elements: centralization of control, the monopolistic character of the system, the restricted number of important positions, and the multiplication of the patron's functions.

19. Glénisson, “L'Historiographie,” pp. xxii–xxiii.

20. *Ibid.*, p. xl.

21. In sociological theories (we could add: historical theories) of a purely technical and “gnoseological” type, Jürgen Habermas criticizes in particular the presupposition of neutrality in respect to values postulated at the epistemological beginnings of research; see his “Analytische Wissenschaftstheorie und Dialektik,” in *Zeugnisse: Theodor W. Adorno zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963), pp. 500–1. See also the basic works, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967) and *Technik und Wissenschaft als Ideologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968).

22. On the role and meaning of “I” or of “we,” the locus marked in language for the speaker who “appropriates” it for himself as speaking subject, see Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 258–66. Available in English as *Problems in General Linguistics* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971).

23. By “discourse” I mean the historical genre itself or, rather, in Foucault's perspective, “a discursive practice”—“the group of rules that characterize a discursive practice” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 55 and 127).

24. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 54, apropos of medical discourse.

25. Unfortunately, there does not exist concerning the recruitment of historians the equivalent of Monique de Saint Martin's *Les Fonctions sociales de l'enseignement scientifique* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

26. Here the essential date is that of George Lefebvre's thesis *Payans du nord de la France pendant la Révolution*, 1924. But a whole plethora of historians mark this turning point: Hauser, Sée, Simiand, etc.

27. *Introduction aux études historiques* (1898) is still the great work of a historiography, even if today the book is no longer what it had been for an entire epoch: the statue of the Commander. Lo and behold, it can still be read with great interest. Its clarity is admirable, especially in ch. 8 of book 2 and chs. 1–4 of book 3, all thanks to Seignobos, who explains the authors' scientific references.

28. Lucien Febvre, *Au coeur religieux du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Sevpén, 1957), p. 146.

29. “Everything that belongs to man depends on man, serves man, expresses man, signifies the presence, activity, the tastes and fashions of man's being,” Febvre declares in *Combats pour l'histoire* (Paris: Colin, 1953), p. 428. Since that time the figure created by this conquering optimism has lost much of its credibility.

30. Already in 1920 Henri Berr pointed to the “idealist” character of history in Febvre's work, in the *Revue de synthèse historique* (1920), 30:15.

31. On the fluctuating and rich “theory of *Zusammenhang*” in Febvre's work, see Hans-Dieter Mann, *Lucien Febvre: La Pensée vivante d'un historien* (Paris: Colin, 1971), pp. 93–119. Febvre refers to “class” in order to explain the sixteenth century—see for example *Pour une histoire à part et entière* (Paris: Service d'Édition et de vente des publications de l'Éducation nationale, 1963), pp. 350–60, on the bourgeoisie—even if he does so with a good deal of reticence (see pp. 185–99). But he does not introduce the problem of his own social localization when he analyzes his own historical practice and concepts. His anti-Marxism surfaces, for example, in his review of Daniel Guérin's work (in *Combats pour l'histoire*, pp. 109–13), in which the convergence of Michelet and Marx is, in Febvre's view, “incestuous.”

32. See “Les Révolutions du croyable” in my *Culture au pluriel* (Paris: Union Générale des Éditions, 1974), pp. 11–34.

33. See Octave Mannoni, “Je sais bien, mais quand même,” in *Clefs pour l'imaginaire, ou l'Autre Scène* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 9–33.

34. See Frédéric Bon and Michel-Antoine Burnier, *Les Nouveaux Intellectuels*

(Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 180, and my "Les Universités devant la culture de masse," in *La Culture au pluriel*, pp. 111–37.

35. Serge Moscovici, *Essai sur l'histoire humaine de la nature* (Paris: Flammarion, 1968).

36. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 7 and 21.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 590.

40. Ernest Labrousse, introduction, in *L'Histoire sociale* (Paris: PUF, 1967), p. 2.

41. The expression is Fernand Braudel's, in his *Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France* (Paris: Annuaire du Collège de France, 1950). In *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne* (Paris: Sevpén, 1962), 1:12, Pierre Vilar reminds us that between the two world wars, "the great questions, whose dominance of our century we could divine more or less clearly, were scarcely put before us, unless through the lessons of our geography teachers."

42. See in particular Françoise Choay, "L'Histoire et la méthode en urbanisme," *Annales E.S.C.* (1970), a special issue on "History and Urbanization," 25:1143–54; and Stephan Thernstrom, "Reflections on the New Urban History," *Daedalus* (Spring 1971), pp. 359–76. *L'Enquête sur le bâtiment* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), edited by Pierre Chaunu, is also a fine example of the new interest brought to spatial organizations.

43. See for example the chapter on "vegetal civilization" in Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Les Paysans de Languedoc* (Paris: Sevpén, 1966), pp. 53–76. This very original study on the "biological fundaments" of rural life shows that vegetables are "objects of history" by "the very fact of their plasticity, of the unending changes that man has brought to them." The paperback edition (Paris: Flammarion, 1969) unfortunately does not include this chapter. [Nor does the English edition—see ch. 1, n. 44—which was translated from the paperback.—Tr.]

44. See the great *Histoire générale des techniques*, Maurice Daumas, ed., 4 vols. (Paris: PUF, 1963–1968), or the works of Bertrand Gille, such as *Les Ingénieurs de la Renaissance* (Paris: Herman, 1964).

45. See for example the special issue of *Annales E.S.C.* (November–December 1969), vol. 24, entitled "Biological History and Society"; Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique* (Paris: PUF, 1963), available in English as *The Birth of the Clinic* (New York: Vintage, 1973); and Jean-Pierre Peter, "Le Corps du délit," *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* (1971), no. 3, pp. 71–108.

46. See Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire du climat depuis l'an mil* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967).

47. Raymond Roussel, *Impressions d'Afrique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 209. [My translation, but available in English as *Impressions of Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).—Tr.] See also Julia Kristeva, "La Productivité dite texte," in *Séméiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 208–45; in English, "The Bounded Text," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 36–63.

48. Jean Baudrillard, "La Collection," in *Le Système des objets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), pp. 120–50.

49. Seen from this angle, historical "documents" can be assimilated into "iconic signs" whose organization Umberto Eco analyzes in noting how they "reproduce some conditions of common perception on the basis of normal perceptive codes"; See "Sémiologie des messages visuels," *Communications* (1970), no. 15, pp. 11–51. From this perspective we can add that scientific work is found where there are changes in the "codes of recognition" and in the "systems of expectation."

50. See Ariès, *Le Temps de l'histoire*, pp. 214–18.

51. See Gilbert Ouy, "Les Bibliothèques," in *L'Histoire et ses méthodes: Encyclopédie de la Pléiade* (Paris: Gallimard, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade, 1961), p. 1066, on the agreement passed between Guillaume Fichet and three German printers aimed toward founding the typographical workshop of the Sorbonne and relaying copies of manuscripts that Fichet himself partially assured for its library.

52. Since, for the erudite scholar, his "library" was what he *constituted* (and not what he *received*, as will later be the case for the "curators" of the great libraries created before them), we can detect a continuity on the grounds of writing, between the production of the collection of texts and the production of ciphers destined to decode them.

53. See Madeleine V.-David, *Le Débat sur les écritures et l'hiéroglyphe aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Sevpén, 1965), pp. 19–30.

54. Thus, in his *Guide des archives diocésaines françaises* (Lyon: Centre d'Histoire du Catholicisme, 1971), Jacques Gadille underscores "the value of these archives for historical research" by noting that they allow for the constitution of new "series" valuable for both an economic history and a history of mentalities (pp. 7–14).

55. François Furet, "L'Histoire quantitative et la construction du fait historique," in Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, eds., *Faire de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 1:49.

56. By "historical practice" we must understand not methods particular to a given historian but, as in the exact sciences, the *complex of procedures* that characterizes a period or a sector of research.

57. Furet, "L'Histoire quantitative," pp. 47–48.

58. On this subject, see Michel Serres' pointed reflections in *Hermès ou la communication* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1968), 1:26–35; in English, *Hermès: Literature, Science, Philosophy*, Josué Harari and David Bell, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 16–28.

59. André Régner, "Mathématiser les sciences de l'Homme?" in P. Richard and R. Jaulin, *Anthropologie et calcul* (Paris: Union Générale des Editions, 1971), pp. 13–37.

60. Insofar as it is linked to the use of the computer, information science, between "input" and "output," organizes arrangements of symbols in reserved sites within a memory and transfers them to agreed-upon addresses according to instructions that can be programmed. It orders placements and displacements in a space of information which is not without analogy to the libraries of the past.

61. See Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and P. Dumont, "Quantitative and Car-

tographical Exploitation of French Military Archives, 1819–1826," *Daedalus* (Spring 1971), pp. 397–441; and also Le Roy Ladurie, *Le Territoire de l'historien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 38–87.

62. In reality, the "synthesis" was not terminal; it was elaborated in the course of the manipulation of documents. Already too, it deviated finally in relation to the preconceived ideas that the practice of texts had been unveiling and shifting in the course of operations themselves set up by an institutional discipline.

63. See Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1968), and the abundant historical literature on the topic.

64. This is especially so since Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961; new edition, Gallimard, 1972); available in English as *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Pantheon, 1965).

65. See in particular Mona Ozouf, "De Thermidor à Brumaire: Les Discours de la Révolution sur elle-même," *Au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Sevpen, 1970), pp. 157–87, and "Le Cortège et la ville: Les Itinéraires parisiens des fêtes révolutionnaires," *Annales E.S.C.* (1971), 26:889–916.

66. See Paul Delarue, *Le Conte populaire français* (Paris: Erasme, 1957); Robert Mandrou, *De la culture populaire en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Stock, 1964); Geneviève Bollème, *Les Almanachs populaires aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969); Marie-Louise Tenèze, "Introduction à l'étude de la littérature orale: Le Conte," *Annales E.S.C.* (1969), 24:1104–20; not to mention the more "literary" works by Marc Soriano, *Les Contes de Perrault* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), or Mikhaïl Bakhtine, *L'Oeuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Âge et sous la Renaissance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), available in English as *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968).

67. On peasants, above all see the entire work of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie cited above; on the poor, see the works of Jacques Le Goff and, in the last two decades, the research on the poor and poverty in the Middle Ages directed by Michel Mollat. [See especially his *Les Pauvres au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Hachette, 1978).—Tr.]

68. See Robert Lafont, *Renaissance du Sud* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), and also André Larzac, "Décoloniser l'histoire occitane," *Les Temps modernes* (November 1971), 676–96.

69. "L'Histoire des civilisations: Le Passé explique le présent," one of Fernand Braudel's most important methodological works, is reprinted in *Écrits sur l'histoire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), pp. 255–314 (see especially pp. 292–96).

70. See note 7 above.

71. Adopting a rather shopworn conception of the exact sciences ("Physics is a body of laws," he writes), Paul Veyne opposes it to a history that would be a "body of facts" (*Writing History: Essays on Epistemology*, pp. 21–22).

72. Since Henri Berr in his conception of history combined the comparative method, the primacy of the "social," and the "permanent taste for general ideas," this "totalization" has represented a return to the spirit of *synthesis* and a reaction against the erudite, exhausting crumbling of "atomist history," rather than a pretension of establishing a universal historical discourse. After Mauss, Durkheim, Vidal de La Blache, the idea of organization tends to prevail over that of "fact"

or of "event." See Mann, *Lucien Febvre*, pp. 73–92. In "Théorie et pratique de l'histoire," in *Revue historique* (1965), 89:139–70, Henri-Irénée Marrou takes up the idea of a "general history" which resists the specialization of methods and the diversification of chronologies according to levels. He wishes for a "total history which would be forced to grasp the tangled skein of these particular histories in all its complexity" (p. 169).

73. In Braudel's work the object of study acquires the meaning of being a "touchstone," a tactical operation relative to a situation of research, and proportioned to a "definition" (of civilization), itself posited not as the truest but as "the easiest to handle in order to pursue our work in the best ways." *Écrits sur l'histoire*, pp. 288–94 (my emphasis).

74. It appears to me that apropos of Paul Bois' *Les Paysans de l'Ouest* (The Hague: Mouton, 1960; paperback edition, Paris: Flammarion, 1971), Le Roy Ladurie argues for a closely related issue in what he calls "eventual-structural" history; see his "Événement et longue durée dans l'histoire sociale: L'Exemple chouan," in *Le Territoire de l'historien*, pp. 169–86. In my opinion, the event seems to be at once the *question posited by the relation* between two more rigorously isolated series (the economic infrastructure of La Sarthe and the mental structure that divides the country into two political groups) and the *means to respond by articulating them* (in order for the relation among them to change, something has to happen). In the form of the "moment" of the years 1790–1799, the event serves to designate a difference in their relation. For Bois, the more systematic delimitation of both series has the double effect of on the one hand, "bringing forth" (as a question) a difference of relation, and on the other, establishing in this intersection the locus of *what*, in the discourse, assumes the historical figure of the event.

75. See Pierre Vilar, "Pour une meilleure compréhension entre économistes et historiens," *Revue historique* (1965), 233:293–312.

76. Pierre Chaunu, "Histoire quantitative et histoire sérielle," *Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto* (Geneva: Droz, 1964), 3:165–75, or *Histoire science sociale* (Paris: SEDES, 1974), p. 61.

77. Choay, "L'Histoire et la méthode en urbanisme," pp. 1151–53 (my emphasis). As Christopher Alexander, in *De la synthèse de la forme* (Paris: Dunod, 1971), pp. 6–9, suggests from his standpoint, it is precisely thanks to logical explanation, to the current *construction* of "structures of totalities," and therefore to a "loss" of their intuitive "innocence," that specialists in urban problems discover a relevance in historical differences—either in order to distinguish themselves from past conceptions, to make their own conceptions more relative, or even to bind them to complex situations which resist the rigor of a theoretical model.

78. Thus Foucault: "Up to the end of the eighteenth century, in fact, life does not exist: only living beings" (*The Order of Things*, p. 160); or, see François Jacob on the "inexistence of the idea of life" up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, in *La Logique du vivant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 103; available in English as *The Logic of Life: A History of Heredity* (New York: Pantheon, 1974). These are but two examples among thousands.

79. Georges Canguilhem, *Etudes d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences* (Paris: Vrin, 1968), p. 18. See also Michel Fichant's remarks in *Sur l'histoire des sciences* (Paris: Maspéro, 1969), p. 55.

80. "A field of epistemological inquiry," Gordon Leff calls it, in *History and Social Theory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1969), p. 1. A typical and probably excessively methodological example is John McLeish's original study, *Evangelical Religion and Popular Education* (London: Methuen, 1969), which "essays" successively diverse theories (Marx, Malinowski, Freud, Parsons). From the historical problem (the school campaigns of Griffith Jones and Hannah More in the eighteenth century), he produces a case study method (p. 165), the means for verifying the validity and the limits proper to each of these theories.

81. See Foucault's closely related reflections on "History" in *The Order of Things*, (pp. 367–73), dealing with the link between the division of History into particular positive histories (of nature, of riches, or of language) and their common grounds of possibility—historicity or the finite nature of man.

82. For a long time, American historians and theoreticians have shown their reticence concerning the "dangerous" use of the notions of "meaning" or "significance" in history. See Patrick Gardiner, *Theories of History* (New York: Free Press, 1959; reprinted 1967), pp. 7–8; and Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 7–9.

83. See my *Absent de l'histoire* (Paris: Mame, 1973), especially "Altérations," pp. 171ff.

84. See Roland Barthes, "Structure du fait-divers," in *Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), available in English in *Critical Essays* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1972); see also chapter 7 below, "Hagio-graphical Edification."

85. On this subject, see also Roland Barthes, "Le Discours de l'histoire," *Social Science Information* (1967), 6(4):65–75, reprinted in *Le Bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), pp. 153–66; Erhardt Gütgemans, "Texte et histoire, catégories fondamentales d'une Poétique générative," *Linguistica Biblica* (Bonn) (1972), no. 11; and note 103 below.

86. In *The Practice of History* (New York: Crowell, 1970), pp. 88–141, G. R. Elton dedicates the central part of his analysis to *écriture*—Writing.

87. Henri-Irénée Marrou, *De la connaissance historique* (Paris: Seuil, 1954), p. 279.

88. See J. M. Lévy, "L'Écriture en miroir des petits écoliers," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* (1935), 32:443–54, and especially J. de Ajuriaguerra, R. Diatkine, and H. de Gobineau, "L'Écriture en miroir," *La Semaine des hôpitaux de Paris* (1956), no. 2, pp. 80–86.

89. See Jean-Pierre Faye, *Langages totalitaires, et Théorie du récit* (Paris: Hermann, 1972).

90. See Roberto Minguez, "Le Récit historique: Légalité et signification," *Semiotica* (1971), 3(1):20–36; and the same author's *Sujet et histoire* (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université, 1973).

91. See M. D. Grmek, *Raisonnement expérimental et recherches toxicologiques chez Claude Bernard* (Geneva: Droz, 1973). This highly detailed study—whose

interest goes far beyond the individual case of Claude Bernard—allows us to grasp immediately the distances that generate movement from *experiment* (here as it is controlled) to *chronicle*, and from chronicle to *didactic* discourse—theory or "history."

92. From this standpoint, historiography would do well to draw on the technical means refined by cinema. See as an interesting example Gilbert Rouget's "Une expérience de cinéma synchrone au ralenti," *L'Homme* (1971), 11(2):113–17, on the *Zeitregler*, or "distender of time" (or "stretcher"), which allows sonorous time to be expanded or contracted without deformation, and hence to slow down or accelerate the image. See also Pierre Schaeffer, *Traité des objets musicaux* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 425–26, on these accelerations and decelerations that are part of a traditional process in history.

93. Barthes has noted this in "Le Discours de l'histoire," pp. 71–72. See also, especially, C. G. Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," *Journal of Philosophy* (1942), vol. 39, on the explanatory sketches that historiography furnishes. This is still the basic reference on the subject.

94. See Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*. In discourse, he says, the "instance is in the *hic* and *nunc* of interlocutors . . . in their act of speech" (we say: the chief of police left *yesterday*); in narrative, the instance is made from the "terms . . . which refer to 'real' objects . . . to 'historical' times and places" (pp. 253–54). [My translation.—TR.]

95. See, for example, André Viel's remarks in "Du chronique au chronologique," *Histoire de notre image* (Mont-Blanc, 1965), pp. 109–41, on "nonoriented time and ambivalence."

96. From this point of view there is, within the Greek *epistēmē*, a link between the absence of zero in mathematics and the absence of a history which thinks of the past as a difference. On the "concept" of zero, see Frege's remarks in *Les Fondements de l'arithmétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), paragraphs 8 and especially 64.

97. *The Odyssey*, Rhapsody 1. [In Leconte de Lisle's translation used above, the text reads, "Nul ne sait par lui-même qui est son père."—TR.]

98. On this topic, see Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, "Fantasme originaire, fantasme des origines, origine du fantasme," *Les Temps modernes* (1964), 19:1832–68. This study on the "staging of desire" in sequences of images also enlightens the problems broached by historical discourse. "The subject can be in a desubjectified form, that is to say, in the very syntax of the sequence in question," the authors write; "Desire is voiced in the phrase of the phantasm which is the elected place of the most primitive defensive operations, such as the return against oneself, the reversal into contraries, projection, denial" (p. 1868). Akin to a staged drama, the historical narrative also presents these aspects of phantasm.

99. Maurice Blanchot, *L'Entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 625. See also Henri Meschonnic, "Maurice Blanchot ou l'écriture hors langage," *Les Cahiers du chemin* (January 15, 1974), no. 20, pp. 79–116.

100. Philip Rieff has especially emphasized recommencement and repetition, which characterize the Freudian "model of time"; see "The Authority of the Past," in *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer* (New York: Viking, 1959), and his "The

Meaning of History and Religion in Freud's Thought," in Bruce Mazlish, ed., *Psychoanalysis and History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 23-44.

101. See Maurice Blanchot, "Le Règne animal de l'esprit," *Critique* (1947), no. 18, pp. 387-405, and "La Littérature et le droit à la mort," *Critique* (1948), no. 20, pp. 30-47. [I have translated the remark quoted in the text, but the articles cited here are available in English in Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1981).—TR.]

102. On this conception of myth, see Claude Rabant, "Le Mythe à l'avenir (re)commence," *Esprit* (April 1971), pp. 631-43.

103. On this point, see Harald Weinrich, "Narrative Strukturen in der Geschichtsschreibung," in R. Koselleck and W. D. Stempel, eds., *Geschichte. Ereignis und Erzählung* (Munich: W. Fink, 1973), pp. 519-23.

104. This discourse—a montage of other discourses—is produced by virtue of quite varied mechanisms: indirect style (historiography states that someone else stated that . . .), quotation marks, illustrations, etc. It can be said that the represented "past" is the effect of the manner in which the discourse conducts its relations with the "chronicle." From this standpoint, the "chronicle" may be more or less ground to pieces. There are many ways of dealing with it, from the "outline" which reduces it to a series of "facts," to the extraction of data usable for a serial history.

105. See for example J.-L. Bachelier's remarks on the "Sur-Nom," *Communications* (1972), no. 19; and Philippe Hamon, "Un discours contraint," *Poétique* (1973), 16:426-27. Inversely, the "I," the essential mark of fantastic discourse, must be avoided; it would erase all nomination. See Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*; in English, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975). Thus the "lack of name creates a serious deflation of the realistic illusion," notes Roland Barthes in *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 95; see p. 102 in the French edition (Paris: Seuil, 1970).

106. The proper name allows a double effect. On the one hand, it signifies: "Robespierre," you know what that is." It is *believable*. On the other, it is the object of a didactic difference: "Robespierre," that is something other than what you know, so I am going to have you learn about it." It is the evidence of a bonus of knowledge that is accredited with a *competence*.

107. See my *Absent de l'histoire*, pp. 173ff.

108. Hamon, "Un discours contraint," pp. 440-41.

109. Barthes, "Le Discours de l'histoire," p. 74.

110. François Châtelet, *La Naissance de l'histoire* (Paris: Minuit, 1962), p. 115. On this topic, see also Chaim Perelman in *Les Catégories en histoire* (Brussels: Editions de l'Institut de Sociologie, 1969), pp. 11-16.

111. Vilar, *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne*, vol. 1, pp. 29-38.

112. See Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730* (Paris: Sevpén, 1960), especially pp. 123-38 and 413-19.

113. Ariès, *Le Temps de l'histoire*, p. 255.

114. See *ibid.*, pp. 195-214, on these "galleries of history" or collections of historical portraits.

115. Claude Lévi-Strauss, apropos of proper names, in *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 215; see p. 285 in the French, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962).

116. The "tombeau" is a literary and musical commemorative genre dating to the seventeenth century. The historiographical narrative also belongs to this genre.

117. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 857. "There are no human sciences because there exists only the subject, but not the man, of science" (p. 859).