Toward an Experimental History, or Gay Science

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Translated by David Case

> "What is familiar is what we are used to; and what we are used to is most difficult to 'know'...The great certainty of the natural sciences in comparison with psychology and the critique of the elements of consciousness—one might say, with the unnatural sciences—is due precisely to the fact that they choose for their object what is strange, while it is almost contradictory and absurd to even try to choose for an object what is not strange" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*).1

> Groucho Marx, having become a hotel manager, orders the numbering of the rooms changed. His assistant, bemused: "But think of the confusion!" Groucho, amused: "But think of the fun!" (*A Night in Casablanca*, 1938).

> "...the poet's job is not to report what has happened, but what is likely to happen: that is, what is capable of happening according to the rule of probability or of necessity. Thus the difference between the historian and the poet is not in their utterances being verse or prose...; the difference lies in the fact that the historian speaks of what has happened, the poet of the kind of thing that can happen. Hence also poetry is more philosophical and serious business than history; for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars" (Aristotle, *Poetics*).2

History is constantly torn between science and art. Sometimes, people try to resolve this dilemma by pulling art, and fiction in particular, toward the scientific, sometimes, by stressing the artistic side of science, and, sometimes, by calling it a void argument. But how do we avoid a question inscribed in the ambiguity of the very concept of "history": "investigation"/"recitation." Why avoid, besides, what has turned out often to be seminal in the definition of the field?

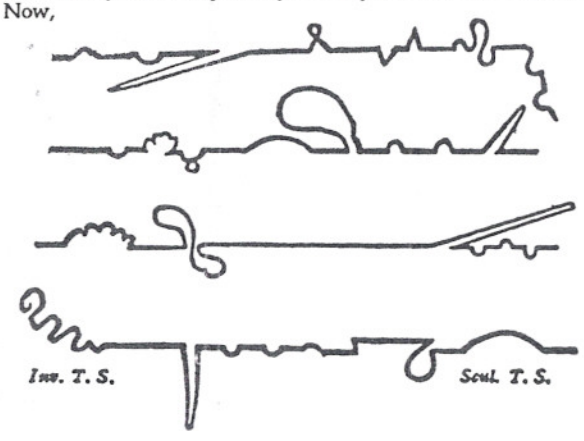
The EXPERIMENTAL has been part of the definition of modern science ever since Galileo. Experimental art is, on the other

hand, a distinctly "twentieth-century" phenomenon. And experimental history? Is it possible, or even desirable? Does it lie closer to the literally, scientifically experimental, or towards the metaphorically and artistically experimental? Instead of choosing, we draw on both these sources, taking on ourselves the contradictions that such a choice involves.

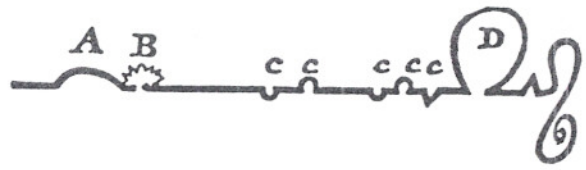
WARNING: The linear character of the following text is deceptive, as are the links between its different parts. Indeed, all order is artificial, all organization, arbitrary. But there is more and less arbitrary. I have never felt what is artificial in the linear character of a text as much as in drawing up this manifesto. To paraphrase Jean-Luc Godard, if I can't avoid a beginning, middle, and end, I can at least warn the reader that she doesn't have to follow them in the order I've put forward. Likewise, this text is neither a sonnet by Petrarch nor a sonate by Beethoven. I'd rather people work this text more as a collage than as a puzzle, nay, more *à la carte* than as a menu. For the pieces assembled here—the term is obviously not gratuitous—I have my own hierarchy; the typography points it out; it concerns no one but me. The reader is free, not only to leap happily from one passage to another, but to skip over one passage and another.

Tristram Shandy and Narrative Linearity

I am now beginning to get fairly into my work; and by the help of a vegetable diet, with a few cold seeds, I make no doubt but I shall be able to go on with my uncle *Toby's* story, and my own, in a tolerable straight line. Now,



These were the four lines I moved in through my first, second, third, and fourth volumes.—In the fifth volume, I have been very good,—the precise line I have described in it being this:



AMONG OTHER THINGS

—Guides: Nietzsche, Groucho Marx, Aristotle
—History torn between science and art? Good!
—Warning: False linearity, false equivalence (more collage than puzzle, more *à la carte* than by menu)
—*Tristram Shandy* and narrative linearity
—The lesson of the laboratory: To do violence to the object. Illustration: the U.S. without trains
—The lesson of the atelier: Estrangement. The Passion Era
—Preliminary stage of the experimental: Comparatism. Claude Lévi-Strauss reclaims surreal comparisons
—Experimental History between "normal" and "extraordinary" science
—"Experiment as a second-order concept"
—Jewish Art without the Bible; "Re-writing"
—Experimental gratuitousness. Georges Perec, *Life: A User's Manual*—Toward a Ludic History—hence extremist and pragmatic. A "possibilist manifesto": *The Man Without Qualities*. Two incompatible views of the "*fin-de-siècle*"
—Absence as histor(iograph)ic fact. Cultural immunity; Who is not talking about the Year 1000?
—Genealogy of interventionism in history: Three hardly compatible scenarios
I. Ignoring contingency, neutralizing intentionality; Horror at the subject's emptiness ... Narcissistic history (Fragment)
II. Max Weber and the ideal type
III. The past as raw material
  A. The opacity of the past. Oblique reading of sources ... When the handicap becomes a tool: Systematic anachronism. The "precursor"
  B. The Number. Books in 18th century France

C. History as problematic activity. Specialization under suspicion

—History: Producing the beautiful with revolved reality; illustration: Impoverishing the sources; "Historical perspective": The past as passive "victim" (M. Nordau)

—Self-imposed ethical restraints (Respect); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, the Iks.

—And the reader?

THE LESSON OF THE LABORATORY: TO DO VIOLENCE TO THE OBJECT

In the 19th century, historians sought obstinately to place their discipline inside the field of science. Science, yes, but what kind? One of the widely-approved solutions followed the principle of classification proposed by Claude Bernard: "... it is on this very possibility of acting, or not acting, on a body that the distinction will exclusively rest between sciences called sciences of *observation* and sciences called *experimental*." History is to be grouped with sciences condemned to practice nothing but observation—the "passive" sciences—with the same label as astronomy, for instance. Against the "passive" sciences, experimental—"active"—sciences, that directly *manipulate* their object: chemistry, physics, laboratory medicine. The passiveness of history is absolute, since the material to be manipulated—the past—is irremediably absent: mankind can travel to the moon, but not to the 13th century.

But what *is* a scientific experiment? Claude Bernard: "We give the name *experimenter* to the man who applies methods of investigation, whether simple or complex, so as to make natural phenomena *vary, or so as to alter them* with some purpose or other to make them present themselves in circumstances or conditions in which nature does not show them."[3] Whence the first principle of this manifesto: *To experiment is to do violence to the object.* It is to submit it to trials which nature has spared it and/or are *a priori* foreign to it, in order to better (or differently) understand the object and the test (for logical simplicity, we suspend the question whether the object pre-exists the experimentation). Similarly, experimental art defines itself by the violating of the material; it proceeds against the grain of the "normal" qualities of the material,

whether in working with marble as if it were wood, metal as if liquid, cooking utensils as if musical instruments, words as if simple graphic forms.

"Experiments are *provoked* observations" is Claude Bernard's definition. We will identify three ways of provoking nature: *adding* to X an element Y which is foreign to it; *removing* from X and element X1 that usually helps constitute it; and *changing the scale*: to observe and analyze X on a scale against which it isn't usually measured.[4]

THE U.S. WITHOUT TRAINS

An axiom: the railroad was essential to American economic development during the 19th century. And if we tore the railroad out of the 19th century, what would the growth then amount to? This is the much discussed and disputed move taken by Robert Fogel in his book/manifesto of the counter-factual method, Railroads and American Economic Growth.[5]

True, the historian will never be able to subject a Breton village of the 17th century to any tests that resemble, from afar, those which guinea-pigs undergo in a lab; but this doesn't mean that he must lock himself into observing this object (absent anyway); the historian avails herself of an entire panoply of means that take off from what is rightly called active science. I will attempt to show here that a comprehensive reading of the notion of experimentation invites us to see an activity of strongly experimental tendencies in the historical practice of our century. But also that, on every occasion, scruples, timidness, opposition, and half-measures ensure that experimentation, in history, is generally rarely accomplished. This "but" will have a strategic role in this *exposé*.

Yet one has much to gain in admitting, in fully *assuming* the active nature of this practice. Consciously, aggressively active. It isn't a matter of submitting to the grids [*les grilles*] through which we perceive reality—which would make an experimental practice of all perception—but of *inventing* them! Experimentation is "a *challenge of the imagination* hurled at facts and at naive or learned images of facts."[6]

THE LESSON OF THE ATELIER: ESTRANGEMENT

Defined this way, science reminds us of avant-garde art, as theorized by the Russian Formalists.[7] In the two, we play with, we play above all against, the "normal context": *experimentation is decontextualizing by definition.* Let's follow Shklovsky in his watershed essay of 1917, "Art as Technique": "*Automatizing* perception devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war." Everything goes this way, since objects seen many times begin to be perceived by recognition: "The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it." The goal of art is thus "to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known."[8] To draw on a familiar example, the man who lives near the sea no longer hears the waves; it is up to the artist to make him listen to them again (Shklovsky even speaks of recovering the "stoneness" of the stone). To do this, the artist uses a whole range of *de-automatizing* techniques. The first, the best-known, is *ostranenie*, "estrangement," making strange the object grown so familiar that we no longer see it. The Formalists thus take up, in theorizing it, an idea whose origin lies in Romanticism: Novalis, in his definition of Romanticism, speaks of two processes: making the strange familiar, and making the familiar strange;[9] this is an opposition illustrated on the one hand by Coleridge, insisting on the "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith," on the other hand by Wordsworth: "To give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the *lethargy of custom*, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the *film of familiarity* and selfish solicitude we have eyes that see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand."[10]

"De-familiarization"—another formalist notion—is gained if one is able to "make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (*zatrudnenie*: to make difficult). Or by giving speech to an unusual witness—a Persian in Montesquieu, a horse in Tolstoy, a moron in Faulkner, a "dwarf" in Grass.

The process of automatizing also emphasizes our links to the past. All authorized representations of an event, a group, an era—August 10, 1792, the Franciscans, the "Autumn of the Middle Ages"—constitutes a kind of *Gestalt* through which we see them, "perceived by recognition," to use Shklovsky's words.

THE PASSION ERA

What if we began to reckon time, not from the Circumcision of Christ (1 A.D.), but from his Passion (33 A.D.)?[11] *All dates would then be thrown off by 33 years, the first third of each century thus going to the century before. The 20th century would then be amputated of the October Revolution, the First World War (again called the "Great War"), Albert Einstein, Proust, Kafka, silent film; the 18th century would then become the century of Enlightenment* and *Romanticism; and so forth. This game of historical fiction allows us to problematize the notion of "century," an arbitrary segmentation* par excellence, *but that, thanks to intense automatization, passes today for something natural—or rather something unnoticed. The* reification *of "century" makes itself felt heavily in at least two domains: in the self-definition of contemporaries: one is a Frenchman or Israeli of the 20th century; in our manner of continually conceiving History in systems of coherency and of oppositions: "In France there followed the classical century, the philosophical century, the romantic century, and the modernist century." All of which evidently isn't lacking in repercussions for the institutional organization of the discipline: we are "16th century specialists," we hold chairs in English Literature of the 18th century.*

As with all parallels, those between the scientific, the artistic, and the historical have their limits in pertinence—the definition of "reality" varies from one field to the other. Their respective contracts are, in this area, very different: historians, like scientists, are constrained to treat "things"—or to begin with "things"—as they "really happened" ("*wie es eigentlich gewesen*"), while the artist has the right to speak of "what could have taken place in the order of verisimilitude or of necessity."

—The historian, it has been said, does not dispose of his material as a biologist does bacteria, as the writer does words. He will never be able to "add" Frederick II to the 17th century, in order to confirm the applicability of Elias' model to that of Kantorowicz (cf. *infra*, note 50); he will never be able to tear railroads out of 19th-century American history; he will never

hold in his hands a study of urban life in Paris in 1987 written by Baron Haussman (cf. *infra*, "anachronism as method"). These reservations, however, should not hide the *homology* that exists between science and experimental history on the one hand, and avant-garde art on the other, which rests on decontextualization as a process of discovery: refusing the object its "normal" context to know it better, or differently.

PRELIMINARY STAGE OF THE EXPERIMENTAL: COMPARATISM

A decontextualizing approach by definition which puts side by side, in this ideal, abstract place that is (historical) study, what is not (necessarily) so in reality. Being possible thanks to the exterior status of the comparer, showing its omnipotence in principle, the comparative approach is the matrix of all experimentation—in other words, all experimentation implies comparison. Now it is exactly this omnipotence in principle that is behind all the debates that surround comparatism. *Analogy*. Everyone recognizes its promordial role in the progress of knowledge, since Greek science, "where it acts at once as a method of invention and as a system of explication";[12] and one admits, with Michel Foucault, "its power is immense, for the similitudes it treats are not the visible, substantial ones between things themselves ..."[13] But we recognize also the great risks of tautological and estheticizing slippage that the *arbitrary comparative method* involves: "This play of cultural allusions and analogies endlessly pointing to other analogies, which ... never have to justify themselves by stating the basis of the relating they perform, weaves a complex web of factitious experiences, each reinforcing all the others, which *creates* the enchantment of artistic contemplation."[14]

BUT: The most widely-accepted solution to this problem is scarcely satisfactory. In the name of a vague, nay empty, maxim, "Let us compare comparable things," historians restrict comparatism only to "societies at once neighboring and contemporaneous, influenced the one by the other, subject in their development, precisely because of their proximity and their synchronicity, to the action of the same great causes, and going back, at least partly, to a common source" (Marc Bloch in his seminal essay of 1928, "Toward a Comparative History of

European Societies").[15] Yet it is an extreme impoverishment, this restriction of comparison to surface *neighboring* (temporal and spatial); it is indeed hard to see Charles Darwin developing the Theory of Evolution with this motto as a guide. Bloch himself recognizes the legitimacy of another sort of comparative history: "One picks societies separated in time and space by distances such that the analogies, observed in one part and another, between such and such a phenomenon, can, from all evidence, be explained neither by mutual influences nor by any commonality of origin";[16] which allows the discovery of "the tendency of the human mind to react, in analogous circumstances, in a very nearly similar way"[17]: we would call this tendency a universal.

These two versions of comparatism are fundamentally realistic—one is realistic from the beginning, the other expects to be so upon arrival. There still exists a third that is, *a priori*, indifferent to the existence of whatever real links between the phenomena under comparison. The declared objective of this kind of comparatism is to better understand A by observing it beside B, and vice versa (and if one finds, after all, a real link between A and B, so much the better). From this perspective, all comparison is legitimate—all is comparable—on the condition, however, that one doesn't make it say more than it allows: to infer, for example, in a mechanical way some real links or common origins from formal or structural similarities.

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS ADVOCATES SURREAL PARALLELS

"Like [Max Ernst's] paintings and collages, my work on mythology has been elaborated by means of samples from without—the myths themselves. I have cut them out like so many pictures in old books where I found them, and then arranged them on the pages as they arranged themselves in my mind, but in no conscious or deliberate order. The structuralist method is easily recognized in Max Ernst's definition of 1934, where he extols, 'the bringing together of two or more elements apparently opposite in nature, on a level whose nature is opposite of theirs'."[18]

We others, non-scientific, make a quite heroic idea of experimentation in the natural sciences, an idea according to which the experimenter proceeds only with well-formed hypotheses, with univocal criteria for validation and refutation. Thus, *if the experiment has proof as its goal—*

"observation provoked with the aim of giving birth to an idea," it often cultivates a very different logic: "... physiologists should not be afraid even to act somewhat at random, so as to try—permit me the common expression—fishing in troubled waters. This amounts to saying that, in the midst of the functional disturbances which they produce, they may hope to see some unexpected phenomena emerge which may give direction to their research. Such groping experiments, which are very common in physiology and therapeutics because of the complex and backward state of these sciences, may be called *experiments to see*, because they are intended to make a first observation emerge, unforeseen and undetermined in advance, but whose appearance may suggest an experimental idea and open a path for research."[19]

Considering the backward state of experimental history, it will not be able to avoid, for a length of time hard to determine, privileging "the experiment for seeing/discovering"—"blind" experimentation, if you will.

EXPERIMENTAL HISTORY IN BETWEEN "NORMAL" AND "EXPERIMENTAL" SCIENCE

In science, experimentation is the *norm*, in art, the *exception*. While speaking of non-experimental biology or chemistry would be a matter of nonsense, experimental artists, groups, and works are quite rare: Schoenberg, Berg, Vertov, Godard, Warhol, Dada, Cubism, *Tristram Shandy*, *Finnegans Wake*—the list is short and elective. Indeed, we wouldn't know how to describe the overwhelming majority of artistic productions as "experimental" without the notion's becoming completely tivial. Must we insist on the fact that the history of art doesn't bear out these definitions, or reduce itself to the first third, so agitated, of the 20th century (and still: even then, avant-garde artists made up only a very small minority).[20]

In the history and philosophy of science, the opposition "normal science" vs. "extraordinary science," proposed by Thomas Kuhn, has been debated at length.[21] There is a place for questioning the possibility of speaking of "normal" science in regard to history, "pre-paradigmatic" science (if it was indeed such). Here, we will be content to draw attention to the conflict,

unresolved, between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" practices; maintaining that our experimental history will priviledge the extra-ordinary, rare, *and* carnivalesque.

"EXPERIMENT AS A SECOND ORDER CONCEPT"[22]

While agreeing, with Yehuda Elkana, that experimentation is reflexive by definition, a distinction always emerges, one concerning the object to be experimented on. To put it bluntly, the biologist is also manipulating real phenomena, whereas the avant-garde artist and the experimental historian do violence to habitudes and conceptual automatisms. Thus, in experimental history, the very distinction between history and historiography, between practice and meta-practice, no longer has any justification: it "must always interpret itself, and cannot fail to turn on itself."[23] Decontextualization implies at once another perspective on the object and another, necessarily critical, on the previous manner—grown automatic, hence conventional—of representing it to oneself. *To experiment, in history, is to do yourself violence.*

JEWISH ART WITHOUT THE BIBLE

"Discovered in 1932, the fresco figures that grace the synagogue of Doura-Europos on the Euphrates, a synagogue destroyed with the town in 356, have been studied the classical way: since their appearance, the job of identifying is made with reference, evidently, to the Bible. Yet certain details resist, and people have wanted to explain them with reference to targumic variations. I began by abstracting the biblical texts, as if we had not received them, or as if we had from them only some citations in more or less trustworthy authors. One would then know that there was a certain Moses, a Solomon, belonging to the ancient race of Jews, and not much more. And on this basis I would study the images. There, one sees a naked woman in a stream, holding in her arms a naked baby, without a designated sex: a daughter? This reminds us of Atargatis and Semiramis rather than Moses saved from the Nile. One scene where two female figures, one in black, the other in light, surround a man stretched out on a bed, each of them carrying a child, apparently dead in the arms of the black woman and living in the arms of two others, looks like an ex-voto. What has been identified as the Ark of the Covenant is here a betyl, and there the safety chest for taxes. All the labor of identification depends on the images in their actual, artistic context, and one never again brings oneself to strain the text to make it coincide with the image and vice versa" (A. Rousselle).

Some claim that privileging historiography too often ends in a certain "de-referentialization" of history, now become a matter for historians, and historians alone.[24] Let us recall, in the guise of a response, that the permanent dialogue between experiments in the natural sciences has not in the least led to any self-perpetuating tautology. Whoever says experimental history inevitably says *reflexive* history.

"REWRITING"

By "re-writing," one means to re-make an extant historic work, going over the traces of a route to the extent that it is still visible: the text. Not in the trivial sense of the term, according to which we are all following the tracks of others, nor in the Borgesian sense, Pierre Menard re-writing *Don Quixote*, but in the strong sense, which is at first that of *critical repetition*.

In the natural sciences, experiments are above all repetitions of earlier experiments: "happiness, for a biologist, consists in perfecting a very complex experiment and repeating it every day while changing just one detail."[25] In history, on the other hand, repetition is non-existent. True, one might (occasionally) go about checking an author's sources. Experimental repetition wouldn't limit itself to this kind of exercise. To "re-write" *The Mediterranean* would imply revisiting Braudel's sources; in order to examine the implications of a slight displacement of the contours of that object (or its center of gravity).

American historians have re-traced the steps of Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engermann's *Time on the Cross*;[26] Roger Chartier proposes a "re-make" of Daniel Mornet's *The Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution*.[27] But as long as critical repetition in history doesn't become institutionally profitable, as is already the case in the natural sciences, it will remain a sheer virtuality.

EXPERIMENTAL GRATUITOUSNESS

> "To love *science* without thinking of its utility! But maybe it is a way of making man an artist in an unheard-of sense! Until then it must serve. A series of beautiful experiments constitutes one of the highest theatrical pleasures."[28]

> "The scholars [studying the Talmud] don't worry about pragmatic matters, because their objective is not to solve human problems but study for its own sake."[29]

> But also: "Even were history obliged to be eternally indifferent to homo faber or to homo politicus, it would be sufficiently justified by its necessity for the full flowering of homo sapiens."[30]

For in the sciences and in art one valorizes play. To be sure, art is no stranger to hostility directed against the *beau geste* in itself. Didn't the Twenties, while being the most Avant-gardist of decades in artistic history, also see the growth of functionalist thinking, of which Bauhaus remains emblematic? Hence, exactly during the Twenties, Shklovsky's insistence that art must take on the role of redemptor of the real. Actually, however, the Formalists were more interested in esthetics than in ontology. A form grown automatic ceases to be art; the true artist will re-discover it. This explains Shklovsky's interest in parody—see his analyses of *Tristram Shandy* and *Don Quixote*[31]—as a means for laying bare artistic procedures, and thus of renovating the genres.

Bertolt Brecht, who owed it to himself to put ethics above esthetics, admits to having based his "*Verfremdung*" on formalist "*ostranenie*": "During my previous stay in Moscow, I had the chance to speak with comrade Tretiakov and his friends the literary critics. I learned then that Soviet theorists have found an idea applicable to the new esthetics that should replace Aristotle's old esthetics. This idea is called in Russian, excuse my pronunciation, "*ostranenie*." We have, in the new German theater, ventured the term "*Verfremdung*" or "distancing," thus changing a bit the content of the Russian idea ... Russian theorists have always emphasized the capacity of art to create the feeling of liberty by subverting habits and automatized perceptions that, anyway, quickly hardens itself to the new, and, once again, requires a new 'de-automatizing'."[32]

GEORGES PEREC, LIFE: A USER'S MANUAL

"Let us imagine a man...who wishes...to describe, and to exhaust not the whole world—merely to state such an ambition is enough to invalidate it—but a constituted fragment of the world: in the face of the inextricable incoherence of things, he will set out to execute a

(necessarily limited) programme right the way through, in all its irreducible intact entirety. In other words, Bartlebooth resolved one day that his whole life would be organized around a single project, an arbitrarily constrained programme with no purpose outside its own completion...useless, since gratuitousness was the sole guarantor of its rigor, and would destroy itself as it proceeded; its perfection would be circular: a series of events when concatenated nullify each other: starting from nothing, passing through precise operations on finished objects, Bartlebooth would end up with nothing."

—"*To preserve health and heal illnesses*: such is the problem that medicine has posed since its origin and for which it still pursues the scientific solution"—thus does Claude Bernard begin his *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine.* A century later, Jaques Monod is more lucid: "The sole aim, the supreme value, the 'sovereign good' of the ethics of understanding is not, let us admit, the happiness of mankind, much less its comfort ... it is objective knowledge itself" with, revealingly, two allusions to Nietzsche: "An ethics of conquest and, in some respects, Nietzschean, since it is an example of the Will to Power: but of power uniquely in the realm of knowledge."[33]

In "science for science's sake," more important things are at stake in the game. That research is triggered, indeed sometimes commanded, that solutions are judged, and sometimes rejected, by reality and its contingencies, goes without saying. But in its experimental phase, science fits wonderfully into the famous Kantian definition of esthetic experience: *purposiveness without purpose.*

In history, although less threatening to the common good, nothing is related to the Dadaist science Paul Feyerabend proposes in *Against Method*: "A Dadaist is prepared to initiate *joyful* experiments even in those domains where change and experimentation seem to be out of the question."[34] "Anything goes" is the Feyerabendian motto. And if the growth of knowledge isn't always ensured by this strategy—in that, it hardly differs from its alternatives—the liberating gayety will make up for this handicap; the alternatives could not claim as much. What if we were to practice *la gaya historia*?

TOWARD A LUDIC—HENCE EXTREMIST AND POSSIBILISTIC—HISTORY

Yes, all historical study has something experimental about it, which involves decontextualization, provokes the past—but timidly, while excusing itself. To speak of it in a manner at once non-trifling and distinguished from other possible readings, one must include in its definition, besides the violence to which one knowingly submits the object, the ludic spirit that directs truly experimental practices. For to experiment is to play, in the most serious sense of the term—Johan Huizinga, in his famous *Homo Ludens*, has removed, once and for all, the opposition between play and seriousness,[35] for two essential reasons:

Experimentalism constitutes a melange, at first sight contradictory, of "extremism" and "possibilism", or, in the words of Feyerabend, a dialectic between tenacity and proliferation.[36] One explores to the end a hypothesis, a model, a literary genre, in order to know, by exploiting them, their limits . Paul Valery: "Regarding the rules of a game, no skepticism is possible." But at the same time one is cruelly aware that it is only a matter of an approach, of one game among many possible others—Huizinga: "the idea of the *game* carries in itself the best synthesis of belief and disbelief."[37]

The possible is indeed constitutive of experimental practice which would have to allow the making of the history of the possible inscribed every moment in reality, but that History tends to cover up, which makes necessary the concretized, the non-concretized im-, or at least half-, probable.

THE MAN WITHOUT QUALITIES

"For very obvious reasons every generation treats the life it finds waiting for it as something definitely established, except to the few things it is interested in changing. This is useful, but mistaken. For the world could at any moment be changed in all directions or at any rate in any given one. It has it, so to speak, in its bones. And so it would be an original way of living if one were to try, for once, not to behave as a definite person in a definite world, in which, one might say, only a few buttons need shifting —the thing one calls evolution—but starting out as a man born to change and surrounded by a world created for change, in other words, pretty much like a drop of water in a cloud."[38]

It is evidently not a question of taking Musil's words literally, but of making them historiographically operational. Indeed, if the world "could be transformed at every moment in every direction, or in *any*," there would be nothing left for the historian to do. Although the field of possibilities at a given historical moment is infinite, it is never unlimited. It is thus up to the historian to reconstitute these limits, that is, to define the impossible for this given moment; to re-construct the passage from what is possible to what is actual, in other words, the "choice" or the "sorting out," of a new source of possibilities; answering thus the challenge Aristotle threw out, that history treats only what actually happens, leaving poetry and philosophy to conceive of the possible and the necessary.

It is also up to the historian to trace the process of re-writing the possible in deterministic terms, which is a universal tendency: *the possible aspires to the inevitable—to escape from randomness.* This is the way one would have to interpret the conter-factual route (see also *supra*, "The United States Without Trains"), which proves, if it needs proving, that "possibilism" isn't the birthright of fiction. Robert Fogel conceives of *Railroads and American Economic Growth* as "a critical evaluation of the proposition by which the railroad was indispensable for the growth of the American economy in the 19th century. The crucial aspect of the axiom [of indispensability] is not what it says about the railroad, but what it says about everything else."[39] "In the articulation of historical judgments, isn't there often an unreal conditional implied? If I affirm that railroads were indispensable to the economic growth of the U.S. in the 19th century, isn't it the equivalent of a sentence like: 'if the U.S. didn't have railroads in the 19th century, their GNP would have been lower'?"

TWO INCOMPATIBLE VIEWS OF THE "FIN-DE-SIECLE"

Between 1880 and 1895, cultural history has it, Europe employed a kind of synonym unique in its genre: "fin-de-siècle"="*decadence.*" Degeneration: *such was the title of one of the notable works of the era, by Max Nordau (1894), of which the first section is called* "Fin-de-siècle" *(a section composed of the following chapters: "Twilight of the Races," "Symptoms," "Diagnosis," "Etiology"). In 1886, an author describes a young man of fashion: "For two years he was a* decadent; *last season he was a* degenerate; *today he is* fin-de-siècle."[40] *My interpretation of this era oscillates between two poles, which one could, quite summarily, call "they believed in it" vs. "they didn't believe in it at all"; between a realistic perspective, i.e., that contemporaries saw decadence, and a functionalist perspective, i.e., that decadence was a rhetorical figure that served the interests of those who propagated it. Instead of converging these perspectives, I propose to separate them, at least analytically, in stressing their very traits, with the aim of observing texts and types of behavior in turn one against the other; thus following the logic of Max Weber's ideal type: "The more the ideal type is clean and univocal, the more it is in this sense strange to the real world, and the more it serves terminology, classification, and the heuristic."*

—To make an experiment useful, it is crucial to articulate its rules: to codify the arbitrary. So whoever speaks of playing, speaks of gaining *or* losing. In other words, the experiment makes sense only if it can go awry. "Einstein used to say that nature says 'no' to most of the questions it is asked, and occasionally 'perhaps'."[41] You see the difference here with "reconstitutive" history, where the historian is more or less condemned to succeed, as all incursion into the past brings back with it perforce a "reconstituted" fragment. Anyone who has played quantitative history knows how rare the grids of variables are that produce knowledge—"positive" knowledge, one should say, because the set-back is also for him a bearer of understanding (which encourages us to set up the rubric "Dead Ends").

ABSENCE AS HISTOR(IOGRAPH)IC FACT

History, the study of what really happened, excluding the "if," what could (or should) have happened," excludes absence *a fortiori*, "what did not happen." The study of absence as meaningful fact, as bearer of intelligibility, is in some way the complement of possibilism: one simulates absence (of railroads, for example), the other makes it its token (its source?).

Two hardly avant-garde historians, Charles V. Langlois and Charles Seignobos, have already proposed a timorous version of this: "Negative reasoning, also called "argument by silence" [by which] from a fact's not being mentioned in any document, one infers that it did not exist, because "if it happened, one would know about it."[42] John Lange: "If the event E had taken place, a document would probably have taken it into account."[43]

Absence can be more talkative. Let us follow Michael Baxandall's idea of *cultural immunity*. His point of departure is denouncing the notion of "influence." By saying "A influenced B," we attribute the active role to A, the passive role to B; whereas, really, the actor isn't A, but B. Influence is then the result of a *choice* that, although rarely conscious or explicit, is always revealing. The same goes with an absence of influence (= resistance to influence). Baxandall has thus employed the almost total absence of David's neo-classicism in German art of the 1790's—a fact much more remarkable considering that German artists, writers, and philosophers flocked to Revolutionary Paris, where David was, as we know, unavoidable—as its defining characteristic.[44]

One easily sees the trap this course implies. The study of an influence, like the study of a contamination, to take up Baxandall's image, starts from a positive observation, the traits common to two or more phenomena. It is a different matter with the study of the absence of influence (or contagion). Not all absence is meaningful—since the absences are of an infinite number. He who has not contracted the virus is immunized against it only if the virus has infested everybody around. Likewise, to *prove* the pertinence of an absence of influence on B by A does not suffice to certify it; one must still show that it is *presence* which would have been normal.

WHO DIDN'T TALK ABOUT THE YEAR 1000?[45]

The anxiety of the year 1000 never took place; there is no more doubt about it since its definitive refutation by scholars in the late 19th century. We know even the place (text) of birth for this legend: the Ecclesiastical Annals *of Cardinal Cesare Barnoius (c. 1600). The year 1000 hence is not a medieval "moment," but a modern "historiographic moment." At the start, I was interested only in the authors who referred to it. Their small number—nine between 1600 and 1800—led me to look for those who did not. For in some circumstances the myth "took," in others it didn't. The problem of resistance was then posed clearly. The first factor: Raoul Glaber. To speak about the year 1000, one must have read the* Histories *of this Burgundian monk, the only "contemporary witness" who speaks of it, and at length. It follows that the absence of the year 1000 in authors not having read him is non-pertinent: one cannot speak, in their case, of immunity to the myth. It is pertinent on the other hand in many historians who did read Glaber, who even* edited *him, in the case of the Benedictines of Saint-Maur, translated, in Guizot's case, but for whom the year 1000 is curiously absent. It is there, according to my hypothesis, that other factors intervene: the chopping up of history into centuries, the French Revolution. The centuries made the number 1000 visible. The French Revolution made the equation "turn of the century = turn of History" plausible, and by projection, "turn of Millenium = turn of History".*

GENEALOGY OF HISTORICAL INTERVENTIONISM: THREE SCARCELY COMPATIBLE SCENARIOS

As in O. Henry's story "Roads of Destiny," where the three trails chosen in succession by the hero–to the right, to the left, and backward–all carry him to the same point, the experimental spirit in history is as inscribed in mutually exclusive approaches. "To the right," structuralism and the neutralization of intentionality; "to the left," Max Weber, who, by methodological individualism, arrives at the Ideal Type; staying in place, the conjunction of historical studies for a half century.

I. Exceeding (ignoring?) contingency, neutralizing the subject

> "The 'universal' in this case is what kind of person is likely to do or say certain kinds of things, according to probabiliity or necessity; that is what poetry aims at, although it gives its particualr names afterward; while the 'particular' is what Alcibiades did or what happened to him" (Aristotle, *Poetics*).[46]

> "Carlyle wrote somewhere something like this: 'Facts alone are meaningful; John Lackland passed by here, *that* is admirable, *that* is a reality for which I would give all the hypotheses in the world.' Carlyle was a compatriot of Bacon; like Bacon he tended to promote his cult 'for the God of Things as they are' [Poincaré quotes this in English], but Bacon wouldn't have said that. That is the language of a historian. A physician would say rather: John Lackland passed by; that is all the same to me, since he will never come back here" (Henri Poincaré, *Science and Hypothesis*).[47]

> "History has been assigned the mission of judging the past and informing the present for the good of the future. Our endeavor sets up no such pretensions. It aspires solely to show how it really happened (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)" (Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Roman and Germanic Peoples*).[48]

Contemporary historical practice shares with other disciplines an obvious mistrust toward the "surface," the common word that "super-structure," "events," "speech," "performance" lurk behind. Marx, obviously, and, in our century, Labrousse and Braudel, to mention only two exponents of structuralist history, just as Saussure, Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, and Chomsky ignore the surface because of its *contingency*. The contingent is "that which can either occur or not occur"; it is hence scientifically uninteresting, since science, whether we like it or not, should have as a mission the discovery of laws. Between Aristotle and Ranke, structuralism has made a clear choice.

If History is governed by long-abiding mechanisms, men submit to it more than they make it. It is asserted with pride, that modern history has refused the monopoly of historical action to the world's "great" men; it would be more exact to say that it has denied it to all people, whether they be Great or small. The teachings of the *Annales* school follows a tradition whose origin is curiously the stance of counter-revolutionary parties. De Maistre: "No great institution comes from deliberation"; de Barante: "... individuals are less important, and their action goes unnoticed. One may then conclude that it is not up to the will or conduct of certain people to exert a lively and decisive influence on their country and their times"; Fustel de Coulanges: "Political institutions are never the work of one man's will; the will even of an entire people does not suffice to create them."[49] And if institutions do not depend on the will of men, still less do economic, demographic, climatic, or mental processes.

The primacy of structures, in history, is the twin of the emptying, or at least the neutralizing, of the subject/agent. It leads, in practice, to an accrued indifference to the consciousness of protagonists. Whether they are conscious or not of structures discovered by the scholar does not in any case confirm or deny those structures (at most this awareness could corroborate, never invalidate them). This trend is shown in systems in other ways quite different. Michel Foucault—who yet called himself an adept of surfaces—with whom the set-up and codification of social control depends only in a partial, contingent way on those who practice them and profit from them. Or the model proposed by Norbert Elias in *The Dynamics of the Occident* where, once the process leading to absolutism gets underway, it depends no more, or very little, on the determination of the monarch; which would explain a phenomenon paradoxical *a priori*, that royal power was consolidated even in the reigns of so-called "weak" rulers.[50]

The center of gravity in verification has thus been displaced from the historical subject to the historian-subject, the historian being the one who makes the rules for it. Which reminds us of the evolution of contemporary literary theory. "Authorial intention" has always been at once what one must find and the ultimate justification for a textual analysis. But, in the last forty years, the biographical author of a text has been stripped of his rights, giving way to a theoretical construct, "the implied author," who is none other than the internal logic of the work. The art of interpretation has thus become a matter for professional readers, between authorized specialists and the text; the author rests in peace. I would always see a qualitative difference between "better understanding the author," where going beyond intentionality is only an instrument, and "better understanding the text," where the neutralizing of intentionality is a regulating principle.[51]

From this tableau of contemporary historical practice, quickly, too quickly sketched, the personage of the historian emerges, and there is nothing passive about him. One would even be tempted to say that she appoints herself as the sole complete desire on the histori(ographi)c scene. Of course, the *segue* from the subject Phillip II to the subject Fernand Braudel is philosophically impossible, which brings up what is called a categorical mistake. The mind still doesn't tolerate the vacuum of the subject, and the space formerly occupied by the historical subject thus seems beseiged by the historian/subject. If not omnipotent, she is at least omnipresent, the one who no longer has the right to hide herself (the verb isn't too strong) behind a pretended reconstitution of the past. It is up to her to constitute her sources, up to her to imagine the methods of treatment. And it is the historian alone who effects, constantly and systematically, the passage between surface and structure, between disorder and order, between contingency and coherence.

A NARCISSISTIC HISTORY (FRAGMENT)

To know the past, or to know ourselves? What indeed is the final object of experimental history? What is the place of the historical—taken in the broad sense—in this project? For if one speaks of "raw material," in reference to the past under study, if one speaks of one's disrespect, it proves improbable to accord it priority in the process of intelligibility the experimental historian engages in. This question was tossed out by Nietzsche in an essay haughtily ignored by historians: *Of the Uses and Abuses of History for Life* (1874); but see Michel Foucault, who, in order to impose his convictions, went so far as to manipulate his 19th century sources.[52]

II. Max Weber and the Ideal Type

What has just been said in the descriptive, almost normative, mode, should rather be said in the critical mode. What is, moreover, the status of these notions, so easily reified, so often reified: "structure/surface," "order/contingency",[53] in the name of which one eliminates a quantitatively imposing part of human reality?

Hence the interest of Max Weber, to whom one owes the notion of "methodological individualism."[54] Like so many in his time, Weber takes off from the difference between natural and social (cultural) sciences. The Neo-Kantian philosophy with which it is impregnated evidently forbids basing this difference on the opposition "active/passive sciences." Weber followed the thought of Heinrich Rickert, according to which, to say it very quickly, there are general and particular sciences, those that search for laws, and those that seek to analyze a given reality in its singularity. History is obviously part of this second category where "the knowledge of the laws of causality [knowledge which Weber doesn't really believe in] isn't capable of being the *goal* but only the *means* of research." Thus his frankly anti-structuralist attitude, which denounces those who seek to deprive reality of the "accidental" and "contingent", which sees in this reality a pollution of "pure" structures, "the historically singular development as a sort of fall into the concrete."

But if structures are sometimes useful in the analysis of reality, the very idea of neutralizing intentionality would have seemed total nonsense to Weber. According to him, in fact, there is no "socio-cultural fact" other than what is tied to a consciousness of social agents; likewise, there is no historical fact other than what "agrees with ideas of cultural value with which we arrive at concrete reality."

Yet from these anti-structuralist premises, Weber arrives at the the ideal type, an experimental method as it were: "We can make the *characteristic* features of this relationship pragmatically *clear* and *understandable* by referance to an *ideal type*."[55] "An ideal type is formed by the *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent, concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct (*Gedankenbild*). In its conceptual purity, this mental construct (*Gedankenbild*) cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia* (p. 90); one can work the 'idea' of 'handicraft' into a utopia by arranging certain traits, actually found in an unclear, confused state in the industrial enterprises of the most diverse epochs and countries, into a consistent ideal-construct by an accentuation of their essential tendencies."[56] Thus, and refuting the idea we have of it generally, the ideal type is neither normative nor descriptive, neither means or medium, but a logical construct whose sole justification is heuristic. As Weber clarifies it: "And, in fact, *whether* we are dealing simply with a conceptual game or with scientifically fruitful method of conceptualizaiton and *theory*-constructuion can never be decided *a priori*" (p. 92).

III. The past as raw material

The historian is invited to practice experimenting for a series of circumstantial tendencies marking contemporary history. I'll cite three of them: the consciousness, getting sharper and sharper, of the alterity of the past; the impact of quantitative methods; the explosion of the history "market," that goes hand-in-hand with the definition of history as a problematic activity rather than a thematic one. Three trends (there are others) that should drive the historian to treat the past in a way ever

more related to that of his scientific and artistic colleagues. BUT, each time, one encounters the same refusal of an open radicality, the refusal to take on handicaps and experiences.

A. The otherness, nay opacity, of the past

"The degree of the historical sense of any age may be inferred from the manner in which this age makes translations *and tries to absorb former ages and books. In the age of Corneille and even of the Revolution, the French took possession of Roman antiquity in a way for which we no longer have courage enough—thanks to our more highly developed historical sense."*[57]

To believe the argument, a masterly one, of Erwin Panofsky,[58] the "discovery" of otherness would belong to the 14th-century Renaissance—the true one—when men realized the insurmountable gulf separating them from Antiquity; whereas the men of the so-called "Carolingian Renaissance" and "12th-century Renaissance" experienced a quasi-organic continuity with Rome and Greece. Obviously, this "organicity" that Panofsky attributes to people of the Middle Ages is in every way relative. As a rule, one tends to attribute organicity to the other, to oneself/ourselves, fragmentation, even alienation. The example of ethnology is quite eloquent in this respect, the group observed always being more "organic" than the group the observer comes from. Yet never, it seems, has the distance between historian and past been lived in such a strong way as in the last 50 years. We recall the effects of *Verfremdung* created by Marc Bloch's ideas on "the vast indifference to time" of people in the Middle Ages.[59] Pierre Vidal-Naquet sums up this state of mind when writing: "A century of Hellenic studies has succeeded to a great extent in moving Greece farther away from us rather than bringing it closer."[60]

OBLIQUE READING OF SOURCES

A banal fact, but loaded with consequence: the historian does not have the past at her disposal, but its traces. To schematize greatly, the accent has recently been displaced from the *incomplete* [*partiel*] character of sources, poor relics of the past, involving authentification, dating, and attribution of documents, to their *otherness*, their *partisanship* [*partialité*]. A text, in the accepted sense, is doubly conditioned. It is so by what Lucien Febvre has called "the mental equipment" of an

era, a milieu; it is so by the effects it seeks to produce on its audience.

To see past the double screen of otherness and partiality, the historian adopts three complementary tactics, all three having as common denominator the neutralizing of the intentionality of the producers of these sources, hence the accrued role of the historian as reader/manipulator. The first two are the direct products, the third indirect and otherwise more radical, of our "age of suspicion," thus christened by Michel Foucault in "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx"[61]:

—**Analysis of the margins of discourse.** "First of all, the suspicion that language doesn't say exactly what it says. The sense that one grasps, and that is immediately manifested, may really be only a minor sense, that protects, encloses, and in spite of everything transmits another sense. More than her direct and conscious testimony, one privileges what the 'witness' says *in spite of herself*."[62] Quirks of language, parallels scarcely obvious to us, repetitions, gaps, classifications, in short, all that seemed 'natural' to her but to us so 'conventional' works to build (and not to rebuild) the logic directing this textual surface. In *A Childhood Memory of Leonardo da Vinci* (1910), Sigmund Freud drew a parallel between the barriers that separated the analyst from the patient's childhood and those that separate the historian from "childhood," that is from the past of the society that she studies. Both must start from present vestiges, the only ones available, to reconstitute the past. So if he insists on the duty of the power to reconstitute the *true* past, Freud denies that patient or society could do it on their own.

—**The broadening of the notion of "source":** "On the other hand language gives birth to this other suspicion: that it would spill out of its properly verbal form, and that there are many other things in the world that speak, and that are not language." Images, madness, nature, body, death, ritual, brawling, all "speak," all are open to decoding.

—**The manipulation of sources:** In distancing oneself from the hermeneutics Foucault speaks of, one nears—some would say dangerously—the violence that, according to him, preserves great names from suspicion. Take quantitative history: to

submit sources to the rude test of numbers is to be indifferent, by definition, to what their producers could know and understand; it leads even to a kind of "anonymization" of social agents.[63]

BUT: The weight of the subject/historian in the historiographic enterprise would have to grow in direct correlation with the decline of "internalism." Has it been abandoned, for all that? Not in the least. It remains, for many, the horizon to which one must aspire. For if everybody accepts the principle of the historian's exteriority, in practice this position is tough to live out. Which does not fail to produce an ambiguous discourse: the historian admitting her exteriority, all the while trying to put herself "inside" the reality under study—as if she were straining to vanish, to dissolve within the object.

In the same year, 1927, Werner Heisenberg formulated the Uncertainty Principle, and Niels Bohr, the Law of Complementarity, a law that introduces the subject/physicist into the scientific experiment: "To the question 'What is light?' we must answer: the observer, his various tools and instruments, his experiments, his theories, and his models of interpretation, all of which could fill a room that would otherwise be empty, when we let the light shine. Light is all of that at the same time."[64]

To this permanent and almost uncontrolled slippage—but is it really controllable?—there exists a whole gamut of remedies. One consists of *rethinking* the reconstitutive horizon in history without denying its principles, "to find out what the devil they think they are up to."[65] It is significant that in this attempt at rehabilitation, history takes anthropology as its model. But for all the legitimacy, above all, the fecundity, of this perspective, we don't want to defend it here. There is another, much more radical one, that consists of taking "externalism" to its logical conclusion, with all the violence such an attitude implies. FULLY ASSUMING THE EXTERIOR STATUS OF THE HISTORIAN MEANS THAT ONE WILL NOT BE INTIMIDATED BY THE PAST THAT ONE IS STUDYING, THAT ONE WILL NOT LOOK OBSTINATELY, AT ANY COST, TO ANCHOR THE QUESTIONS ONE ASKS IN THIS PAST. AND THIS, WITH WHAT ONLY SEEMS A PARADOX, TO APPREHEND *IT* BETTER.

WHEN THE HANDICAP BECOMES A TOOL: METHODOLOGICAL ANACHRONISM

To the otherness of the past, we answer by making of it an instrument of discovery. And if anachronism has already been the chief and indispensable procedure for historical understanding?

Let's take Thomas Huxley, the proponent of Darwinism, as our guide.[66] Huxley distinguishes between *prospective* sciences—chemistry, physics—where explication proceeds from cause to effect, and *retrospective* sciences—geology, astronomy, evolutionary biology, history—where explication proceeds from effect to a re-discovery of the cause (one sees the affinity with Claude Bernard's model). The two types of science involve perforce two types of causality. Prospective sciences propose *necessary* explanations: if A—B—while retrospective sciences can propose only *possible explanations*: if B—A1 v. A2 v, etc. As Yehuda Elkana shows, there are two historiographic paradigms: one deterministic, History as a Greek tragedy, the other possibilistic, history as epic theater.[67] Why be astonished if point of arrival C leads to "causes" A3, A4, or Am? Methodological anachronism is thus related to the possibilistic history.

THE "PRECURSOR"

Alexander Koyre admittedly is right to denounce the anachronism that all research on "precursors" implies: "The notion of a 'forerunner' is a very dangerous one for the historian...It is quite obvious (or should be) that no one has ever regarded himself as the 'forerunner' of someone else, nor been able to do so. Consequently, to regard anyone in this light is the best way of preventing oneself from understanding him."[68]

After having made a sort of inventory of Kafka's "precursors," Borges writes: "Kafka's idiosyncrasy, in greater or lesser degree, is present in each of these writings, but if Kafka had not written we would not perceive it, that is to say, it would not exist...The fact is that each writer creates his precursors."[69] *Or, to use less realistic language, the historian—here Borges—reconstitutes, for his object, a line of precursors who reflect the point where he is situated and, on another level, his very conception of history. And, need one emphasize? The choice of Kafka as point of arrival is in this respect decisive. What is true from an internalist perspective is not so from a perspective that desires to be, at least at the first, purely externalist. Studying*

Hieronimus Bosch as a precursor of surrealism, for example, gives us one more way of understanding him, precisely with the help of a view that is foreign to him by definition. One could say that the angle of the precursor, like all anachronism, is an a-realistic comparative *method.*

Seen this way, anachronism is easily translatable into another notion, much more often cited in history: *historical perspective.* For what is it to step back for (temporal) perspective, if not to look at July 14 against August 10, Thermidor, *les Trois Glorieuses,* indeed 1871 or 1917?

We lack, for now, the studies that would answer the needs of an anachronism at once militant and systematic—with the exception, perhaps, of Marxist thought, so much shaped by the 19th century, but that one applies indifferently to "medieval" Japan or Ancient Greece. I have found but one example of it, very unfinished: the "*project*" of Adeline Daumard in building, starting with *Code of Socio-professional Categories of the I.N.S.E.E.,* a statistical grid for ancient societies: "Classification is also a means of investigation: reconstituting the structures of the past by using current terms of classification is *making an experimentation,* the only one that may be within the historian's reach."[70]

B. The Number

The number has been present in social description and analysis since the 17th century, with the birth of political arithmetic in England and Germany.[71] In the 19th century, this encounter gave birth to "moral statistics." But the meeting of history and the number belongs only to the 20th century. In the last forty years, few historians have escaped it.

In history, the quantitative has become the experimental practice *par excellence.*[72] In no other practice do the structuralizing, formalizing, modelling, and neutralizing of intentionality go as far. Quantitative history is above all paradigmatic in the manipulation of sources (which, moreover, it most often fabricates). The arbitrary historian is omnipresent, at all stages of the method. From the start the historian delimits criteria for the constitution of the *series.* "Constitution," not "re-constitution"; one would like it to be the equivalent of the mathematical group or the zoological species,

but the historical series never pre-dates their constitution; for, as Michel Foucault says, "where could they ever meet, except in the immaterial sound of the voice pronouncing their enumeration, or on the page transcribing it?"[73] Then, the historian applies a *grid of variables* to the series—children who died in August, French conscripts with blue eyes—a perfect illustration of the creative powers of the arbitrary historian. At last, the historian goes on to a *juxtaposition of variables* to establish, eventually, significant parallels: between height and alphabetizing, for example, or between the number of doors and windows and the number of bastards.[74]

It is not hard to exaggerate the epistemological rupture the quantitative involves. *In serializing the past, the past becomes a kind of raw material.* For even if one goes back to the singular, to the individual, to measure the departures from the rule, for example, the objectifying, I would even say *dehumanizing,* of the past is, to an extent, irremediable. In the serial phase, provisional for some, definitive for others, human society comes close to other objects that science statistically observes, *experimentally* observes.

BUT (I): Everything invites the quantitative historian to a great creative liberty. Yet, in his practice, he wants too often to be realistic, to escape the arbitrary that for him is constitutive. This observation concerns only very partially the traditionally quantitative disciplines like demographic history or economics. One goes even so far as to distinguish between what "lends itself" to quantification, population, for example, and what "does not lend itself to it," (high) culture, for example. Whence the interest in quantifiying culture, in what is our perspective here: to submit opera, Goethe, ancient sculpture to the rude ordeal of number is to deny them their "natural context."[75]

BOOKS IN 18TH-CENTURY FRANCE

Under Furet's impulsion, and largely in his direction, people have submitted to the test of numbers monopolies, tacit agreements, editorial production in the provinces, private journals, magazines, correspondence, libraries, printing presses, and book stores. This ensemble is unique at once in its number and in its methodological homogeneity: virtually every study adopts the same grid of literary categories. Here is the justification Furet offers for this grid: "The classification of works has been set up according to the criteria of the

age. *The Bibliothèque nationale is rich in catalogs of private book collections of the 18th century, where the books are divided into the five broad categories* of the time*: theology and religion, law and jurisprudence, history, arts and sciences,* belles-lettres."[76]

One sees the contestable aspect of the "realism" of this division, as if there were only one, and hidden at that; thus Daniel Mornet, studying private libraries in the 18th century, proposes a grid of ten literary categories.[77] *But why work only with the "contemporary" classification? Or, in what would perhaps be a more exact way of posing the problem: why does François Furet, a veritable pioneer in quantifying (high) culture, look for a realistic basis for a method he knows to be a-realistic by definition? True, a contemporary grid has its place in investigating the constituted series. But isn't it precisely the advantage of the quantitative, among all experimental practices, that it subjects the given reality to views that are* a priori *foreign to it?*

BUT (II): We have said that experimental violence in history applies above all to the habits of historians. Thus, quantitative history, perhaps because it is experimental in the first degree, falls too often into a disciplinary automatism. Questionnaires, tables, cross-referenced parallels in quantitative studies, in demographic history, for example, hardly bring out this dialectic of tenacity and possibilism that would have to characterize all experimentation. For one cannot repeat it too often, the more she violates the object, the experimental historian must do violence to *herself.*

C. History as problematic activity

In the last fifty or so years, history has adopted the problematic *ideal* (which it owes mostly to the natural sciences). If personal penchant plays a part in the choice of a period, space, or group, the center of gravity is shifted toward the matrices one applies to them. It is in fact fashionable not to define oneself by affinity with the object, but by affinity with the questions one asks about it. One is a "specialist" in 18th-century Paris, of 17th-century Turin, "by accident," of the birth of public opinion, of social mobility, because these questions deserve to be asked (*fragwürdig*). An *instrumentalization* of the past results inevitably from this.

BUT: Looking closely at the historical scene, a great doubt arises. Journals, professorships, colloquia, prizes, juries—the

widely-used classifications give rise to an organization of the field that doesn't have much of a problematic ideal. Historians continue to think in terms of eras and areas rather than questions and obsessions.

Whence the formula imagined for experimental historians: to ask of history questions coming from elsewhere, to ask historically questions that the division of labor has traditionally left for philosophy, for the novel, for ethics. We have, thus, invited historians to work with *metaphor*: metaphors of historians as metaphors of historical agents, metaphors of anthropologists, and also metaphors of novelists.[78] It is in this same spirit that our next projects unfold: "Possible," "Applied Utopia," "Musil/Kafka," "Fetishism/Nietzsche," "Style"—another way of re-thinking the interdisciplinary.

Specialization under suspicion

A dozen social scientists were invited to find an opening in two sources that were distant to them, indeed foreign *and* strange *to them: the autobiographies of Saint Ignatius Loyola and of Glückel von Hameln. No one among the twelve could call herself a "specialist," i.e., someone able to set themselves up as an authority on European religious history of the 16th century, or on the history of 17th-century German Jews. The impossibility of resorting to the Pavlovian reflexes of the discipline, we hoped, would have the double result, first of all, of examining differently these oft-analyzed documents, then of better defining these very mechanical reactions. The results, mitigated, include "Muslim," "Confucian," "medieval," and "chivalrous" readings of the Jesuit saint; and "demographic," "cinematographic, and "semiotic" treatments of the merchant.*[79]

But in what does one specialize in history, in the social sciences generally, in what above all should one specialize?

HISTORY: PRODUCING THE BEAUTIFUL WITH REVOLVED REALITY

Beauty, according to Kant, is the greatest unity within the greatest variety; Huizinga: "Play creates order, it is order. It achieves, in the world's imperfection and life's confusion, a temporary and limited perfection."

Of all the social sciences, history, curiously, has most to do with the stuff that best lends itself, in the first place, to experimentation, and in the second to the production of coherence. In view of the constitutionally heterogeneous nature of the real, and the consequently artificial nature of coherence, the real question to ask is that of the *resistance* of the real to its unification. In sociology, ethnology, linguistics, socio-economics, and other fields, the actors can, and most often do, practice active obstruction to all attempts at coherence, perceived as a violation, as a betrayal of the infinite richness of *their* reality; not to mention the inevitable gap between the experience of the sociologist, of the linguist, and what she cannot help but feel to be a reduction of her own experiences.

IMPOVERISHING THE SOURCES

People have often said: without Gregory of Tours' History of the Franks, *the "French" 6th century would be lost; without the Venerable Bede's* Ecclesiastical History of the English People, *no "English" 7th century; Herodotus, Thucydides, and Flavius Joseph literally rescued whole periods, if not from oblivion, then at least from confusion (which is worse). And if we decided that, for 18th-century France, one of the most richly documented of periods, we would rely only on Edmond Barbier's* Chronicle of the Regency and of the Reign of Louis XV (1718-1763) *and on Louis-Sebastien Mercier's* Tableau of Paris? *In other words, and as in the case of Gregory and Bede, these two works would constitute the only source structuring all the rest, each "discovered" element having to integrate the coherence of an era of which they would be the sole proprietors.*

Compared to her colleagues, the historian has this curious advantage—which she has long shared with the anthropologist—that her victims cannot defend themselves ... Reality irrevocably revolved becomes language; and, against the historian, historical agents can no more protest than words can complain about the poet. Resistance, if there is any, can come only from the same level: historian-peers in the first place, the speaking subjects in the second. What one is pleased to call "historical perspective" indeed comes down to this passivity of the material.

THE PAST AS PASSIVE VICTIM (MAX NORDAU)

"Let a historian even venture to record the events of the present or very recent past, and he finds himself assailed by passionate objections, not all inspired by party feelings, by a storm of justification not confined to those concerned in their concealment of truths painful to their vanity or interest...Certainly no such storm was roused by Grote, Mommsen, or Maspero. At the most some unexpected inscriptions will roguishly emerge and scatter to the winds pages or even whole sections of their narrative. But Alcibiades and Themistocles, Marius and Sulla, Rameses and Psammetichus hold their peace whatever is said of them. They are wise. Could they express an opinion, they would, like the living, utterly fail to recognize themselves in the pictures drawn by their historians."[80]

Contrary to received ideas, contemporary history doesn't owe its weaknesses to those who produce it, but to those who consume it. It is wrong to say that one cannot be at once actor and observer; everyday reality refutes this. The truth is the one cannot make the actors fit into the schemes that their observations commonly belie.

SELF-IMPOSED ETHICAL RESTRICTIONS (RESPECT)

Speaking of "raw material" doesn't in the least imply putting *reality* in quotation marks or parentheses, nor any sort of de-referentialization of history, greatly to the contrary. The real question is: To what kind of ordeals one can *submit* this reality without quotation marks? It is a matter of respecting the past or being disrespectful to it.

And it happens that a past "commands respect," which resists experimentation, for reasons that are primarily ethical. Let's take two exemplary instances:

—The conflict, which he felt cruelly, between Pierre Vidal-Naquet the historian of Ancient Greece, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet the historian of torture in Algeria, and then of "revisionism." On the one hand, a highly experimental historian of antiquity, who hesitates not in the least to violate the object that, anyway, he has created himself: this leads to the landmark work *The Black Hunter*;[81] on the other hand, a historian who, in his own words, "was struggling doggedly to establish facts, verifiable and yet rejected facts."[82] Between the two, a text on the Holocaust that opens with an ancient precedent, the extermination of the Helots by the Spartans.[83]

—The confrontation between two anthropologists, one white, Colin Turnbull, the other black, Joseph Towles, both "specialists" on the Iks.[84] It is a society that, pushed by extremely harsh living conditions, develops behavior that "Judeo-Christian" ethics describes as cruel, nay sadistic. The question put to both anthropologists: "How do you stay objective when faced with the unbearable?" Turnbull: "The great advantage of the Iks is that their situation is so strange for us that we are compelled to go deeper, past the emotional state of judging"; Towles: "Because I'm black and because it was my first stay in Africa, I felt very much a concern for their suffering. That is, for me they suffered genuinely, and everything that allowed me to help them was a good thing." And being an anthropologist in a Nazi concentration camp? Turnbull: "The problem for me is parallel to the one Joseph Towles found in Africa: in a way, with the Nazis I would be in a culture like my own, Western culture. Hence, the temptation to employ my own values would be too great, but *it would limit me right from the start*." Towles: "It's time for anthropologists to recognize that strictly objective and empirical research, if it is possible, disadvantages the ethnologist"; Jean Malaurie: "it would be, in this respect, a new Hippocratic Oath to which scientists are made to subscribe."

For whom the entire past commands respect ("one must respect the dead"), for whom there is no qualitative difference between Helots and Jews, for whom the strangeness of the Other is but an alibi for manipulating it as one pleases[85]—the experimental is definitively excluded.

AND THE READER? (FRAGMENT)

We have pre-supposed, for the historian, a neutral addressee, or, which turns out to be the same thing, and addressee who perfectly resembles the historian ... "Happily," one should say, *historical communication* is much more complex. To produce "truth," "reality," "sense," "verisimilitude," "causality," "coherence," the historian plays with habits of adhesion to "truth," to "reality," following the principle of horizons of differentiated expectation.[86] The historian herself only partly participates in a single method for making connections. This implies that her writing, and before that, more decisively, her research, are ordered by *differential rhetorics*, sometimes converging, most often hard to reconcile.[87]

The reference to avant-garde art makes itself felt. Whether it concerns *Don Quixote, Tristram Shandy, Mist*, "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," or *Pierrot le fou*, experimental works are characterized by their way of re-thinking relations with the public, reinventing their public. Other artists—say, Dostoyevsky, Chaplin, and Hitchcock—have built their works on the heterogeneity of the public, on the co-existence of incompatible levels of "reading": "At one moment or another, the viewer fails in his decoding. And even if he doesn't fail, there will always remain something to decipher, an unapproachable surplus of intermediate senses, partially reunited and partially missed."[88] As Baron Pierre de Coubertin said, in the Olympic Games, the important thing isn't winning, but participating.

Notes

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 301-2.

[2] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. with an introd. and notes by Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 1986), sect. [9], p. 32.

[3] Claude Bernard, *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*, trans. Henry Copley Greene (New York: MacMillan Co., 1927), p. 9. See esp. "Observers and Experimenters; the Sciences of Observation and of Experiments," pp. 15-19.

[4] Ibid., p. 15. See also Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New dialogue with Nature* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 5.

[5] Robert Fogel, *Railroads and American Economic Growth: Essays in Econometric History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), p. 10.

[6] Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron and Jean-Claude Chamboredon, *Le métier du sociologue* (Paris: Mouton/Bordas, 1968), pp. 77-78.

[7] On the links between the Formalists and the avant-garde, see Renato Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968 [1962]); and *Le Formalisme et le Futurisme russes devant le Marxisme*, trans., commentary, and prefaces by Gerard Conio (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1975 [1924]).

[8] In *Russian Formalist Criticism*, trans. and with an introd. by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 3-24 (the citations are on pp. 12, 13).

[9] Cf. Hayden White, who establishes a descent of estrangement, from Novalis to Nietzsche to Foucault, "Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground," in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 230-260.

10 Samuel Taylor Coleridge records his conversations with William Wordsworth in 1797-1798 in *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter xiv.

11 On this experimentation and its manifold repercussions, see my book *Trahir le temps (histoire)* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1991).

12 Francois Hartog, *Le miroir de Herodote* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), "La comparaison et l'analogie," pp. 237-242.

13 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 21.

14 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Jugement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 53.

15 Reprinted in Marc Bloch, *Mélanges historiques*, Vol. I (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1963 [1928]), pp. 16-40 (citation p. 19).

16 Ibid., p. 18.

17 Marc Bloch, "Comparaison," *Bulletin du Centre international de Synthese*, No. 9 (June 1930), pp. 31-39.

18 Claude Lévi-Strauss, "A Meditative Painter," in *The View from Afar*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1985), pp. 243-247 (quote is from pp. 243-4).

19 Claude Bernard, *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*, p. 20.

20 Daniel S. Milo, "The Culinary Character of Cinematic Language," *Semiotica* 58, No. 1: 2 (1986), pp. 83-99.

21 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962, [1970]); and Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambirdge University Press, 1970), where many philosophers, among them Popper, Lakatos, Feyerabend, Watkins and Masterman contest the existence and/or the legitimacy of a "normal" science.

22 Yehuda Elkana, "Experiment as a Second-Order Concept," *Science in Context* II, No. 1 (1988), pp. 177-196.

23 Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," in *Nietzsche. Colloque de Royaumont, July 4-8 1964* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), pp. 183-192, (citations p. 192).

24 Hayden White has been reproached for this more than anyone else. See *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination of the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

25 Al Hershey, quoted by Francois Jacob, *La statue intérieure* (Paris: Odile Jacob/Seuil, 1986), p. 263.

26 Herman G. Gutman, *Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of* Time on the Cross (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1975); P.A. David, H.G. Gutman, R. Sutch, P. Temin and G. Wright, with an introd. by K.M. Stampp, *Reckoning with Slavery: A Critical Study of the Quantitative History of American Negro Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

27 Roger Chartier, *Les Origines culturelles de la Revolution française* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

28 Nietzsche, *Fragments posthumes* 1881 (Paris: Gallimard, 1982) § 11 (24).

29 Adin Steinsalz, *Introduction au Talmud* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1987 [1976]), p. 268.

30 Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Joseph R. Strayer, preface by Peter Putnam (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 10.

31 See Victor Shklovsky, *O teorii prozy* (Moscow, 1925 and 1929) or "The Novel as Parody: Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*," and "The Making of *Don Quichotte*," the first novel, and already the best parody of the romance genre, in *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher with an introd. by Gerald R. Burns (Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), pp. 147-170 and 72-100 respectively.

32 In "Les apprentis sorciers," a report on the discussion that took place in Moscow, April 14, 1935, with among others, Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, Tretiakov, Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Eisenstein, Craig, Piscator, Brecht, Alf Sjoberg. There is an account by Lars Kleberg in *Lettre internationale* (Summer 1988), pp. 62-68 (quotes from p. 66).

33 Paris, Collège de France, 1968 (November 3, 1967), p. 31 (the other reference to Nietzsche is on p. 30).

34 Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1987 [1975]), p. 21.

35 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962).

36 Paul Feyerabend, "Consolations for the Specialists," in Lakatos and Musgrave, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, pp. 197-230.

37 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 52.

38 Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Pan Books, 1979 [1930]), p. 324-5.

39 Fogel, *Railroads and Economic Growth*, p. 10.

40 L. Serizier, *Le Voltaire* du 4 mai 1886.

41 Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*, p. 43.

42 Charles-V. Langlois and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1898), p. 220.

43 John Lange, "The Argument from Silence," *History and Theory* V, (1966), pp. 288-301.

44 Michael Baxandall, Conference held at the EHESS, Paris, in January of 1985; and "Excursus against influence," *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 58-62.

45 Daniel Milo, "L'An Mil: Un problème d'historiographie moderne," *History and Theory* XXVII, No. 3 (1988), pp. 261-281.

46 *Poetics*, sect. [9], p. 33.

47 Henri Poincaré, *Science and Hypothesis* (Paris: 1902), pp. 168-169.

48 Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Volker von 1494 bis 1514* (1824), p. vii.

49 Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France* (Paris: Garnier, 1980 [London, 1797]), p. 67; Prosper de Barante, *Tableau littéraire de la France au dix-huitième siècle*, Préface de L'édition de 1822, p. 23. Numa-Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France* , Vol. I (Paris: Hactette, 1975), p. 2.

50 See, on the one hand, the strengthening of royal power in the reigns of James I and Charles I in Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); and on the other hand, the case of the emperor Frederick II, masterfully analyzed by Ernst H. Kantorowicz in *Frederick the Second, 1194-1250*, trans. E. O. Lorimer (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1931 [1927]). Here, a "strong" monarch applies all the ingredients of the absolutist model, in the 13th century at that; but when his death came, the formidable edifice that he built up fell apart within months, as if the time was not "ripe" for this kind of experiment...

51 W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* LIV (1946), pp. 468-488; Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961), an idea that has its complement in the "ideal reader" of the Tel Aviv School (see the works of Benjamin Hrushovsky, Meir Sternberg and Menachem Perry), and in the "super-reader" of Michel Rifaterre

[52] Daniel Milo, "Dire la discontinuité: La machine(rie) métaphorique de Surveiller et punir," in *Trahir le temps (histoire)*, pp. 147-178.

[53] Gerald Holton, *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Kepler to Einstein* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), develops the idea of the existence of antinomian themes, such as simplicity/complexity, continuity/discontinuity, that serve at once as constraints and as catalysts in research and theorizing.

[54] See Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. and ed. by Eduard A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1949) esp. "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" and "Critical Studies in the Logic of the Cultural Sciences".

[55] Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 90.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, sect. 83, "Translations," pp 136-137.

[58] Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiskell, 1960).

[59] Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A. Manyon, foreword by T.S. Brown (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 118; a jugement since refined by Jacques Le Goff, *La Civilisation de l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982, [1964]), pp. 148-151. See also David S. Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), where one learns that this "indifference" was entirely relative, when compared to that of non-occidental civilizations.

[60] Pierre Vidal-Naquet,*The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World*, trans. Andre Szegedy-Maszak, foreword by Bernard Knox (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986 [1967]), p. 252; a feeling that the title of Paul Veyne's *Les Grecs ont-ils cru a leurs mythes?* (Paris: Seuil/Travaux, 1983) also illustrates.

[61] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," p. 183.

[62] Carlo Ginzburg goes so far as to make of this the paradigm of "retrospective" sciences. See "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," in *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 96-195.

[63] "The re-integration of the lower classes in history could only take place under the aegis of the number and of anonymity." François Furet, "Pour une définition des classes inférieures a l'époque moderne," *Annales, E.S.C.* XVIII (1963), p. 459. It is precisely from this silence that microhistory tries to rescue them.

[64] Gerald Holton, "Les racines de la complementarite," in *L'imaginaire scientifique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981 [1970]), pp. 74-129 (the quote is from p. 81).

[65] Clifford Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983 [1974]), pp. 54-70 (the quote is from p. 58).

[66] Thomas Huxley, "On the Method Zadig: Retrospective Prophecy as a Function of Science," in *Science and Culture* (London, 1881), pp. 128-148.

[67] Yehuda Elkana, "The Myth of Simplicity," in G. Holton and Y. Elkana, eds., *Albert Einstein: Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 205-251, and *Anthropologie der Erkenntnis: Die Entwicklung des Wissens als episches Theater einer listigen Vernuft* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkam, 1986).

[68] Alexandre Koyré, *The Astronomical Revolution: Copernicus, Kepler, Borelli*, trans. R.E.W. Maddison, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973 [1961]), p. 77, footnote 3.

[69] Jorge Luis Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors," in *Other Inquisitions 1937-1952*, trans. Ruth L.C. Simms, introd. by James E. Irby (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1964), p. 108.

[70] Adéline Daumard, "Une référence pour l'étude des sociétés urbaines en France aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles: Projet de code socio-professionnel," *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine* TX (1964), pp. 185-210 (the quotes that follow are from pp. 185-186).

[71] Cf. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "Notes on the History of Quantification in Sociology—Trends, Sources and Problems," in *Quantification: A History of the Meaning of Measurement in the Natural and Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, ed. Harry Woolf (Indianapolis, NY: Bobs-Merrill, 1961), pp. 147-203.

[72] See Daniel S. Milo, "La rencontre, insolite mais édifiante, du quantitatif et du cuturel," *Histoire et mesure* II, No. 2 (1987), pp. 7-37.

[73] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xvi.

[74] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Michel Demonet, "Alphabétisation et stature," *Annales, E.S.C.*, 35th Year, No. 6 (November/December 1980), pp. 1329-1332; Daniel Milo, "La rencontre..," where I suggested, based on some maps of "moral statistics" of Adolphe d'Angeville, *Essai sur la statistique de la population française, considérée sous quelque suns de ses rapports physiques et moraux* (Paris, 1836), this bizarre hypothesis: "the fewer exterior entrances, the fewer illegitimate children..."

[75] Pierre Chaunu, "Un nouveau champ pour l'histoire sérielle: le quantitatif au troisième niveau," *Histoire quantitative, histoire sérielle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1978 [1973]), pp. 216-230. My thesis, *Aspects de la survie culturelle* (Paris: EHESS, 1985), especially "La bourse mondiale de la traduction: un baromètre culturel?" *Annales, E.S.C.* XXXI, No. I (January/February 1984), pp. 93-116; "Le phoenix culturel: De la résurrection dans l'histoire de l'art: L'exemple des peintres français (1650-1750)," *Revue française de Sociologie* XXVII, No. 3 (July/September 1986), pp. 481-504.

[76] Françios Furet, *Livre et société dans la France du XVIIIe siècle*, Vol. I (Paris: Mouton, 1965), pp. 3-32. I analyzed this dossier in detail in "La rencontre..."

[77] Daniel Mornet, "Les enseignements des bibliothèques privées (1750-1780)," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* XVII (1910), pp. 449-496.

[78] Dossier "Métaphore" in Daniel S. Milo and Alain Boureau, *Alter Histoire: Essais d'histoire expérimentale* (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1991).

[79] Dossier "Dépaysement" in Milo and Boureau, *Alter Histoire*; and Mario Biagioli, "The Knight, the Virgin, and the Pilgrim," in this issue of *Strategies*.

[80] Max Nordau, *The Interpretation of History*, trans. M.A. Hamilton (New Yark: Willey Book Co., c1910), p. 8.

[81] Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*.

[82] Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Lettre," in "Michel de Certeau," *Cahiers pour un Temps*, No. 12 (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1987), pp. 71-74.

[83] Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Les assassins de la mémoire," in *Les assassins de la mémoire* (Paris: La Découverte, 1987), pp. 134-187.

[84] *Les Iks: Survivre par la cruauté. Nord-Ouganda.* Along with the Iks, by Peter Brook and J.-C. Carriere, a note by Jean Malaurie (quote on p. 332), and the testimony of Joseph Towles (Paris: Plon, "Terre humaine," 1987 [1972]), as well as Philippe Romon, "Regard froid sur les Iks," *Le Nouvel Observateur* (September 25-October 1 1987).

[85] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

86 I intend to come elsewhere to two conceptual pairs of which the homology underlies my reasoning: "croyance/conviction-adhésion" and "cohérence-cohésion."

87 Gerald Holton, *The Scientific Imagination*, and above all Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979 [1935]).

88 Christian Jouhaud, "Imprimer l'événement: La Rochelle à Paris," in *Les usages de l'imprimé*, under the direction of Roger Chartier (Paris: Fayard, 1987), pp. 381-438 (quote from p. 430).

The Knight, the Virgin, the Pilgrim

Mario Biagioli

Hosted by Giovanni Levi at the University of Viterbo in May 1988, a group of historians participated in a historiographical experiment proposed by Daniel Milo. Daniel asked the group to explore what he called the de-familiarization of the writing of history. The experiment consisted of producing a context-free interpretation of two historical texts: the autobiographies of Ignatius of Loyola and Glückel Von Hameln. The underlying assumption was that, in certain ways, contextualization had a normalizing effect on the type and range of possible interpretations of historical evidence. What follows is the direct result of that experiment.

From knight to pilgrim via the Virgin Mary

Gonçalves, the Jesuit father to whom Ignatius dictated the story of his life, presented the *Autobiography* as a monument to the Society of Jesus itself and not just as the account of Ignatius' conversion and of his early efforts to establish the Society (17).* According to Gonçalves, it was the Jesuit fathers themselves who asked Ignatius to speak his life so that it could be inscribed for the edification of future members of the Society. Therefore, Ignatius' *Autobiography* resembles what anthropologists call a myth of origins—a narrative that framed both the origins of the Society of Jesus and the corporate identity of its members.

Quite appropriately, the *Autobiography* is structured as a pageant of self-fashioning that unfolds as Ignatius moves from Pamplona to Jerusalem and, finally, to Rome. By the end of the trip he is no longer a secular warrior but a knight of Christ. Like a pageant, the narrative of Ignatius' self-fashioning pauses at the specific nodes and then proceeds after appropriate rites of passage. I will analyze one set of them.

*The numbers in parentheses refer to the page numbers of the English translation of Ignatius' autobiography; J. F. Callaghan (trans.), J. C. Olin (ed.), *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).