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Historiography in French Theory

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Theory and Criticism

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN FRENCH THEORY

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines historical writing by drawing on the works of historians, philosophers, theorists and intellectuals, from antiquity to the contemporary moment. In order to answer the demand for scholarship that assembles insights of the *Annales* historians with other French intellectuals, I treat historians as theorists and theorists as historians. Through the course of my analysis, I examine issues of historical writing such as the scope of historical research and the historian's task and place; I treat theoretical questions of constructivism, potentiality, agency, causality, teleology, and politics. In order to consolidate these issues into a single analysis, my research spans across disciplinary boundaries. Through an engagement with the methodological and political criticisms of Michel Foucault and Jacques Rancière, I argue in favor of an archival research method that avoids the pitfalls of positivistic analysis and the excesses of procedural refinement, which often serve to narrow the scope of historical research.

Keywords

Historiography, Auto-critique, Conflict of the Faculties, *Mentalités,* Method, Philosophy of History, Reconstruction, Archive, History from Below, *Annales*, Foucault, Rancière

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Legend of Abbreviated Titles

AK	The Archeology of Knowledge	Michel Foucault
AME	Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology	Michel Foucault
BC	The Birth of the Clinic	Michel Foucault
CML	Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800	Fernand Braudel
CH	Cultural History Between Practices and Representations	Roger Chartier
DP	Discipline and Punish	Michel Foucault
DPP	Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy	Jacques Rancière
EWF	Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3	Michel Foucault
FP	Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time	Reinhart Koselleck
FRH	French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics	Marc Bloch
HC	The Historian's Craft	Marc Bloch
HDD	History, Discourse, Discontinuity	Michel Foucault
IP	I, Pierre Rivière: A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century	Michel Foucault
IS	The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons	Jacques Rancière
IHSH	Intellectual History or Sociocultural History?	Roger Chartier
MHF	Memory, History, Forgetting	Paul Ricœur
MW	The Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II	Fernand Braudel
NH	The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge	Jacques Rancière
NL	The Nights of Labor	Jacques Rancière
OH	On History	Fernand Braudel
OT	The Order of Things	Michel Foucault
OEC	On the Edge of the Cliff	Roger Chartier
PCH	The Practice of Conceptual History	Reinhart Koselleck
PHST	"Le social": the lost tradition in French Labor history	Jacques Rancière
PK	Power/Knowledge: Selected Writings 1972-1977	Michel Foucault
PL	The Politics of Literature	Jacques Rancière
RC	Religion and Culture	Michel Foucault
RHP	The Reality of the Historical Past	Paul Ricœur
TWC	Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages	Jacques Le Goff

Introduction: History and Theory

The subject of this thesis is historiography: problems that relate to historical writing and satisfactory historical explanation. In so doing, I aimed to avoid the relativistic conclusions of theorists such as Keith Jenkins, and to write about the philosophy of history without focusing on Hegel's system. This thesis contains a conceptual history of "the event," tracing the roots of this concept to a group of historians known as the *Annales.* Further, I claim to develop an analytic using the categories of the philosophy of history to analyze the politics of historiography.

This thesis began as an analysis of 'historical theory,' with the hopes of either encountering or developing a philosophy of history both relevant to political and social problems and conversant with the fashionable lines of contemporary academic inquiry. This hope was quickly tempered, and piece by piece, a research agenda congealed around my readings. Through the course of my analysis, I propose to consolidate the issues raised by disciplinary boundaries that threatened historical research and the self-reflexive auto critique familiar to Anglophone scholars under the heading of "French Theory." Through the course of my analysis, I examine issues of historical writing such as the scope of historical research and the historian's task and place; I treat theoretical questions of constructivism, potentiality, agency, causality, teleology, and politics. Further, through an engagement with the methodological and political criticisms of Michel Foucault and Jacques Rancière, I argue in favor of an archival research method which avoids the pitfalls of positivistic analysis and the excesses of procedural refinement, so that the object of historical research might be given new life through the principles of historical reconstruction.

Two turning points of my research seem especially pertinent. First, as I initially set out to understand historiography as a field that developed from ancient insight and slowly became the modern form we know today, I took the object of my study as the history of historiographic statements from Herodotus onwards. In the first summer of my research, I was struck by the following passage of John Burrow's discussion of Thucydides found in *A History of Histories,* where he writes*:*

> Historians, one is glad to be able to assert, have generally done better than their programmatic formulations of their task have suggested, which is one reason why discussions of the nature of historiography based on such formulations are so inadequate. (Burrow, 49)

In my estimation, this passage undercuts a fair amount of academic commentaries, which focus on the programmatic statements of historians and attempt to judge their merit on these sorts of statements. An example would be Thucydides' commentary on the ancient convention of developing speeches for historical figures in which he claimed "to make the speakers say what, in my opinion, was called for by each situation" (Thucydides, 1.22, p. 47).

Generally speaking, such programmatic statements are more of interest to philosophers than they are to historians. Many analytical philosophers have attempted to demonstrate that historians lacked the epistemic justification for their claims, and these efforts were generally ignored by practicing historians. Often, this is for good reason. A survey of the 1962 Symposium *Philosophy and History,* edited by Sidney Hook, is rife with unflattering portraits. Ernest Negal demonstrates the sort of condescension with which philosophers have regarded historians:

> Like other intellectual workers, professional historians are rarely self-conscious about the organizing concepts of the principles for assessing

> evidence which they habitually employ in their discipline… When historians do express themselves on such issues, they are therefore likely to voice philosophical ideas imbibed by chance during their school days or in their desultory reading, but which they have seldom subjected to rigorous criticism in the light of their own professional experience. (Negal, 76)

As John Zammito, in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, writes, this issue of philosophers asserting the naivety of historians has become somewhat a perennial problem between the disciplines:

> A consideration of the last century shows repeated instances of philosophy coming forward to serve as conceptual warden for historiography, uninvited and unappreciated by historians. In the last decades a similar intervention has arisen from literary "theory," and, again, historiography has been "invited" to construe its disciplinary practice under the auspices of another. (Zammito, 64)

In writing this thesis, I attempted to apply Burrow's *caveat*; I also do not take the programmatic statements of historians at their word, or attempt to develop a "theory" of history that ought to supervise historians at work. Nevertheless, I have strong interests in problems of historical method, and sought to apply these interests within the present work in a fashion more amenable to the practical conditions of writing history, or, in a word, historiography.

I trust that the above controversy is reason enough to explain why I centered the first chapter on the conflict of the faculties within the social sciences and the humanities. Why, however, did I choose to focus almost exclusively on French sources? Here, I must acknowledge a debt to the works of Paul Ricœur.

The most stimulating piece of my early research was Ricœur's Zararoff Lecture for 1978-9, "The Contribution of French Historiography to the Theory of History," not

only due to my nostalgia for the city of spires. I found Ricœur's account rife with references to the primary works of historians, especially of the *Annales,* put into conversation, rather than into opposition, with the works of philosophers such as Robert Mandrou. There I found a model of the scholarship needed within what is known as historical theory, following the suggestive works of scholars such as Reinhardt Koselleck. The scene of Anglophone scholarship, laden with demands for certainty and finality in historical judgement, often contains condescension towards historians that in turn fuels historians' antipathy towards the philosophy of history. Where the Anglophone analytical philosophy of history perpetuated an opposition between historians and philosophers, Parisian intellectuals promoted synthetic and accumulative analyses, in which the distinction between historian and theorist was happily blurred.

While Ricœur alerted me to a wealth of sources, and in that respect, shaped the course of my analysis, I did take pains to ensure that our works did not overlap. Instead, I took my locus to be within the shadow of magisterial analyses such as *Memory, History, Forgetting* and *Time and Narrative.* I found the sections on some theorists, such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Rancière, to be suggestive but in need of narrower and more extensive controversy.

Perhaps, in many respects, this narrowing field of focus resulted in fashioning a pair of blinders in the course of my analyses. In some respects, I cannot doubt that this occurred, and will address these myriad inadequacies in my conclusion. I would like to think that in some instances, the fault lies with the contemporary state of academic conventions, which promotes singular efforts on the part of academics, rather than group or team based research. There is no substitution for well written analyses when one intends to venture deeply into the clefts and secret places of the archive. With the

works of Ricœur I would also add Martin Kusch's *Foucault's Strata and Fields*; the works of Peter Burke, especially *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* and *The French Historical Revolution.* The most stimulating primary sources were the works of Roger Chartier, as well as the collection by Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, which contains a wealth of primary source material for those interested in furthering or surpassing my research. I am indebted to the attention of my superiors, as well as my colleges, as each conversation was precious and enriching.

I ask pardon from my readers for my anecdotes. The above was written in order to elucidate my initial choice of subject material and organization, which might otherwise appear idiosyncratic. This glimpse is not intended to justify my project, though, I must add that the interior resources developed through experience require expression to foster empathy. Without respect and mutual trust, what would a community of scholars be but a "band of thieves"? (*De civitate dei*, IV, 4). By advocating for the relevance of experience, I do not intend to present them in the absence of rigorous conceptual supplement.

Having indicated that Burrow's *caveat* altered the course of my analysis, we now turn to the place of theoretical historiographic observations within Theory and Continental Philosophy. In *Telling the Truth about History,* we read:

> New cultural theories, including postmodernist ones, have helped, like their predecessors, to revitalize discussion about methods, goals and even the foundations of knowledge. Provocative and unsettling, they raise questions that demand some new answers. (Appleby *et al*, 305)

Partially, my agenda was to highlight the unsettling and provocative claims of historians, which, subjected to the cyclic oscillations of intellectual history, have fallen out of academic fashion (Ziolkowski, 199). Readers of Theory and philosophy will be

familiar with the contemporary resurgence of interest of the concept of "the event," for example, in the works of Martin Heidegger or Alain Badiou. Invoking "the event" typically connotes a rupture of temporal continuity, whether this is a prognostic percept or an *ex post facto* excavation. Part of this thesis is a conceptual history of "the event" which traces its prominence to the *Annales* historians, who sought to undermine event-based histories. It must be noted, however, that my analysis is not simply a 'search for origins,' of a fashionable concept. Instead, by analyzing the manner in which historians such as Bloch and Febvre crafted histories that either had no pivotal events or focused on the effects of events which did not occur. For historians, such works inaugurate a shift that can be understood as a movement away from empirically verifiable phenomena in their documented actuality, and towards an architectonic of possibility. This new history reinvigorated old controversies. For example, histories that develop these architectonics of possibility, such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error,* present the reader with a collection of possible configurations as a more or less closed system. Such sections beg the question of *determination*; are these caches deterministic, like laws, or variable generalizations? Here, the distinction between nomothetic and idiographic explanation takes on a new importance. New techniques of historical writing reinvigorate the use of concepts from the philosophy of history as analytic tools.

Within this thesis, concepts from the philosophy of history are generally used as analytics, as I saw fit to limit my analysis to the question of historical writing. Questions of the ontological or epistemic status of the past, the traditional fare of the philosophy of history, were beyond the scope of my analysis. Partially, this choice reflects my own conviction that such questions beg extremes, and for that reason, have little relevance for

historians. Whether the past is absolutely real or irrevocably lost is of little concern to that fact that various text effects have enabled historians to produce works that grant us insight into the remote past. How exactly these effects are possible, and the truth status of these text effects, are both matters of hermeneutics, which would require consolidating the exegetical and speculative methods of philosophy with historical material. While this appeared promising to me at first glance, the idea of a singular theory of history seems to beg many questions best characterized as epistemological in nature, which would center the concerns of philosophers over and against those of historians.

Of course, I do not intend to draw a strict division between philosophical and historical justifications. My reading of the *Annales* demonstrates that while these historians were engaged in the reinvigoration of historical study, they did so by way of philosophical justifications. These justifications were neither epistemological nor ontological, as many positivistic justifications are, but rather methodological and political. Historians such as Braudel offer methodological justifications of historical practice, such as his theory of temporal stratification, which entailed that history takes place at three levels, the short term, the conjunctural and the long term, immobile history of geographic and meteorological change. Such a justification supports a "clear hierarchy of explanation," yet depends on a notion of duration, which becomes the subject of Foucault's critique (Appleby *et al*, 308). Historians such as Jules Michelet and Lucien Febvre offered political justifications for their works, especially in regards to the "history from below," accounts which focus on popular culture, demographic, economic and material realities of subaltern groups.

Subsequent chapters focus on the theoretical contributions of Michel Foucault, and then Jacques Rancière, whom I consider to be historians in their own right. In their own way, these figures enable us to distance our account of historiography from hermeneutic concerns which would resolve in ontological and epistemological statements, in order to promote a more tempered balance between the nomothetic and idiographic aspects of historical inquiry. Their engagement with the methodological and political justifications of the *Annales* enables us to further enquire into the political, as well as the text effects or poetic aspects, of historiography. However, the most direct reason for reading these thinkers together is the fact that neither allows his thought on history to lapse into a unity in the manner characteristic of what is typically invoked by the phrase 'philosophy of history.' To oversimplify the point, each in his own way succeeds in affirming some multiplicity over transcendental unity.

Foucault's archeological method is indebted to the contributions of the *Annales.* He argues in favor of a more radical application of the notion of duration to the concept of event. In doing so, Foucault attempts to suppress a number of historiographic themes and conventions associated with Hegelian dialectics, such as teleology and progressive development. Foucault advocates for a non-teleological historiography, in which the past is not an origin of the present, but a terminus in its own right. Foucault proceeds primarily by detaching historiography from its humanistic commitments, and in doing so, does not develop a convincing account of politics.

Where Foucault's contributions fall short, Rancière's intervention begins. I focus on his interrogation of the political justifications offered by the *Annales.* Rancière's radical critique attempts to subvert the logic of representation, both poetic and political. Where Aristotle's *Poetics* defines poetics as *mimesis*, Rancière advances a non-mimetic

theory of poetics in order to undermine the connection between political representation and political credential. Where the "history from below" is justified by practitioners as an extension of real political representation, Rancière argues that the historian presents the subaltern, specifically the poor, as objects through scientific means such as demography and economics. Rancière's intervention is especially pertinent in that it allows us to connect the issues of historiographic reconstruction with the political currency proposed therein.

In assessing the contributions of Foucault, I argue that we ought to apply the analytic of nomothetic and idiographic concepts. Ultimately I claim that Foucault's archeological method overemphasizes the constraints of law and structure, and has difficulty accounting for diachronic change, due to his abandonment of the logic of causality. In assessing the contributions of Rancière, I argue that his promotion of the voices of the past, *à la* Michelet, risks re-establishing some poetic conventions of positivism.

As it stands, this thesis complements my undergraduate work on the German tradition of the critical philosophy of history. While my interest in learning more about recent and contemporary French historiography was a driving force for my research, this interest cannot provide a justification for my study. My intent for providing these careful readings is therefore to attest to the importance of historical theory for considering theoretical problems such as "the event," potentiality, causality, and political and *mimetic* representation. History, practiced as a tempered balance between nomothetic and idiographic methods, houses unique scenarios of enormous pedagogic worth. It is my conviction that historiography represents what we could call a "minor literature" typically neglected by scholars, even within interdisciplinary fields such as

Theory and Criticism. Renewed interest and attention to these archives will grant new sense and direction to scholars working on similar problems.

Chapter 1: The Historiography of the *Annales* Historians

Part of my agenda in this chapter is to fill the gaps in scholarship about the theoretical contributions of the *Annales*. Scholarship on the theoretical import of the Annales historians has been formalized in its Anglophone reception. Typical accounts focus on an "Annales paradigm" or offer Braudel's ideas of temporal stratification. In such accounts the work of one historian is thought sufficient to explain the work of the group and its affiliates—a reductive approach which fails to contextualize the historiographic theories of the *Annalistes* with other developments of interest to Anglophone scholars.

This chapter presents several trajectories of the Annales School that are pertinent to our discussion of historiography in French Theory, which include the problems of interdisciplinary research, structure, and method. These issues are explored with reference to the antimony between idiographic and nomothetic analysis, the questions raised by (relatively) novel areas of historical research, the controversy between older methods and the incorporation of scientific data, and the fascinating and challenging *histoire des mentalités*. This chapter establishes a number of basic terminological and factual aspects of later chapters, and for that reason, consists of a synthetic survey of a large number of historical works.

The *Methodenstreit* and Positivism

During the 20th century, the French academy underwent a massive reshuffling of the disciplines, resultant from the development of new fields such as anthropology and sociology. Immanuel Wallerstein, in his "Annales: The War on Two Fronts," argues that the *Annales* were engaged in "the *Methodenstreit* … the ostensibly central debate of late nineteenth century social science… the conflict between the so-called nomothetic and

idiographic approaches to the study of man and society" (Wallerstein, 85). During this time, sociology, anthropology, psychology and other emergent fields produced apologetics: texts defining each field's preview within the academy. These texts expound methodological justifications, and often attempt to sequester the various disciplines. I argue that the institutional form of history resulting from these sectarian debates inspired the theoretical innovations of *Annales* historians, who could be credited with a revitalization of the discipline of history in the 20th century. Most *Annales* historians did not explicitly theorize their practice. In this introductory chapter, we will analyze some of the rare and influential theoretical considerations of *Annalistes* in the context of this conflict of the faculties over method.

Prominent anthropologists and sociologists, in an attempt to secure the place of their fields within the social sciences, wrote apologetics that expounded methodological justifications. An example of an apologetic attempt to define the field can be found in Lévi-Strauss' *Structural Anthropology*, where Lévi-Strauss opposes history to sociology, presenting sociology as a nomothetic field and history as an idiographic field. Lévi-Strauss argues that historians produce "documentary and functional" observations – not "comparative" studies (Lévi-Strauss, 1). The idiographic view of history privileges political and narrative histories insofar as they study unique historical objects, for example, contingent trains of events. On similar terms, Émile Durkheim writes that

> History can only be a science on condition that it raises itself above the particular, but then it is the case that it ceases to be itself, and becomes a branch of sociology… history can remain a distinct discipline only if it confines itself to the study of each individual nation, taken by itself, and considered at the different moments of its development. (Durkheim, 78)

Exclusive focus on the unique and singular aspects of history denies the incorporation of structural elements into historical accounts. Durkheim considered these structures to be the prerogative of ethnography. If this were so, both Marxist style recourse to economic and social structure, as well as cultural history in the style of Jules Michelet or Fustel de Coulanges would be ousted from the domain of legitimate historical explanation.

At first glance, the difference between the idiographic and nomothetic study would appear to lie in the choice of historical object, but each actually would privilege a different kind of explanation. The former, intent on describing non-repeatable sequences of events, has recourse to the agency of historical actors in explanation. The latter, intent on describing serial and immobile historical structures, has recourse to structural constraints on agents and historical forces. Two competing explanations could be developed for the same event along these lines. Did 'orders arrive late from Madrid because Philip II could not make up his mind what to do' – or – did 'orders arrive late from Madrid because sixteenth century ships took several weeks to cross the Mediterranean' (Burke, 236)? Hopefully, a proper resolution would recognize that both structural and agentic variables are important considerations for historical explanation, and neither could be preferred to the other in all cases[1]. Looked at from the perspective of historical writing, the idiographic-nomothetic antimony results in competing forms of explanation, however, the mutual exclusivity of these forms of explanation ought to be considered an exaggerated result of the conflict of faculties. History as a discipline does not benefit from being pigeonholed in either camp.

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[1] See Giddens, Anthony. "Elements of the Theory of Structuration." *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity, 1984, 1-34.

Given how artificial the nomothetic-idiographic distinction is for historiography, the *Annales* historians fought what Wallerstein referred to as "a war on two fronts." The journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* was a zone of contention and is retrospectively considered to be "the single most important forum for the revitalization of historical studies in the Western world" (Hughes, 19). Whereas the *Annalistes* were famously polemical, and interested in engaging these new debates, other historians attempted to secure the place of academic history by developing it as a science. A codified method for training historians is exemplified by Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos' *Introduction aux études historiques* of 1898 (Revel, 6). The positivistic view of history remains important as a foil against which to situate our observations about *Annales* historiographic theory.

Our treatment of positivism is twofold. First, I will present some aspects of the positivism of Henry Thomas Buckle, whose reflections offer insight into positivism as a historical research agenda. Next, in order to connect our reflections to the French academic scene, we will briefly attend to the *école méthodique* that rose to prominence between 1860 and 1914.

Henry Thomas Buckle's *History of Civilization in England* (1851-1861) begins with an overview of his research agenda, which proposes to apply positivist philosophy to the study of history. Several points of his agenda are relevant to our understanding of positivism as a historical research agenda. Buckle aims to model history on natural science:

> I hope to accomplish for the history of man something equivalent, or at all events analogous, to what has been effected by other inquirers for the different branches of natural science. In regards to nature, events

> apparently the most irregular and capricious have been explained, and have been shown to be in accordance with certain fixed and universal laws. This has been done because men of ability… have studied natural events with the view of discovering their regularity: and if human events were subjected to similar treatment, we have every right to expect similar results. (Buckle, 125)

As a doctrine, historical positivism aims to find order and regularity in the apparent disorder of historical phenomena, development and trends. For this purpose, it adopts the methodology of natural science insofar as this is possible (some aspects of the scientific method, like experimentation, cannot be applied to historical study). It is important for our purposes to recognize that historical positivism, by having a general research method, does not analyze particular problems raised by historical material. By this, I mean to oppose the problem oriented historical research of the *Annales* with the nomothetic research agenda of historical positivism. A further significant difference is found in Buckle's claim that historical "observations are more liable to those causes of error which arise from prejudice and passion" (Buckle 125). In other words, the opinions of the historian ought not to enter into her research, according to Buckle and other positivists.

While Buckle has been useful as a source for the doctrine of historical positivism, his work did not occasion the *Annales* in the manner that French historians did. Further, French historical positivism has notable conceptual differences from English historical positivism. However, the "positivist" label is contested in scholarly research, as it was applied, primarily by the *Annales,* retrospectively to a group of historians. *The Annales School: An Intellectual History* by André Burguière contains a section entitled "Did the Positivist Turn of French Historians Exist?". Burguière demonstrates that the historians

later branded "positivist" were also motivated by the increasing influence of sociology in the French academy, and fought the annexation of history by "laying claim to a risky epistemological singularity, that of being the science of what occurs only once" (Burguière, 62). However, the hegemony of these historians over the entirety of the French academic scene was exaggerated by Febvre and other first generation *Annalistes.*

Isabel Noronha-Divanna, in *Writing History in the Third Republic,* claims that these French "positivists" ought to be known as *école méthodique* historians, which includes Hippolyte Taine, Ernest Renan, Fustel de Coulanges, Gabriel Monod, Ernest Lavisse, Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos (Noronha-Divanna, 3). Historians of the *école méthodique* rose to prominence between 1860 and 1914, and sought a scientific method for history which would eliminate disagreement and promote unity at the national political level (Noronha-Divanna, 29). She writes:

> After 1870, four elements of history-writing in the Third Republic can be seen as key to understanding the new positivistic attitude towards history: a heightened concern for explaining the role of history as an instrument of the state; an effort to secularize education; thirdly, nationalism replacing cosmopolitanism in Parisian academia; fourthly, a rejection of German scholarship in dealing with historical sources and facts. (Noronha-Divanna, 35)

These features of historical positivism were particular to French historians, who, unlike English historians such as Buckle, were at pains to distinguish their methods from sociology, and German historical scholarship. In its French iteration, the *école méthodique* variety of positivism narrowed the scope of historical research, in an attempt to secure ground from sociology. In connecting history with the state, the *école méthodique* contains a political orientation which further narrows the subject matter of history. Along with

narrowing the field of possible research, the *école méthodique* has implications for the role of the historian, which are important for our consideration of the *Annalistes* response.

Carrard, in *Poetics of the New History,* presents a perspective of the positivistic view, which suggests that the role of the historian is to act as an arbiter between documents and facts, given their condemnation of "personal, patriotic, moral or metaphysical considerations" in historical writing (Carrad, 7). In other words, the positivistic historian attempted to refrain from sharing insight or conviction, in order to downplay authorial intrusion. Further, these historians "prescribe the observation of chronological order" as a principle of historiography (Carrad, 7). Such considerations inadvertently narrow the scope of possible historical research to well documented periods and events. While this may seem trivial, the artificial demand for this type of evidence privileges an entire set of historical circumstances – the literacy of the monasteries and upper classes, and the importance of urban places over, for example, rural settings. The *Annales* historians fought in favor of these innovations, though there is no *Annales* manual,[2] some theoretical synthesis of myriad innovations. Instead, throughout the rest of the chapter, I will analyze the theoretical aspects of the work of Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Fernand Braudel, Jacques Le Goff, and Phillippe Ariès.

Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel: Structure and Method

The *oeuvre* of Marc Bloch attests to a set of principles that informed his work. These principles include authorial intervention, an expanded sense of evidence and the use of *ad hoc* hermeneutic methods. In sum, these principles result in a non-positivistic historiography. Where positivist historiography relies on the 'discovery' of historical

[2] Braudel's attempt at a textbook, *A History of Civilization* did not become incorporated into the French academy.

facts, Bloch's work attests to the alternative notion that historical facts are constructed. Further, Bloch's historiography is far from documentary positivism, in that it promotes new areas of research, such as agrarian history. While Bloch never authored an explicitly theoretical text, his reflections on historical writing were recorded in his unfinished *Apologie pour l'historie, ou Métier d'historien,* or in English: *The Historian's Craft.*

In *The Historian's Craft,* Bloch makes no secret of the fact that he considers historians to be more than arbiters of facts; as he puts it, "the historian is not… that rather grumpy examining magistrate whose unfaltering portrait is easily imposed upon the unwary by certain introductory manuals" (HC, 90). Verification of primary sources, as positivists suggest, is only one feature of historical research, which requires an extraneous set of questions in order to be a meaningful exercise. Documentary evidence is not limited to the surface claims of documentary materials. Bloch writes that "because history has tended to make more and more frequent use of unintentional evidence, it can no longer confine itself to weighing the explicit assertions of the documents. It has been necessary to wring from them further confessions which they had never intended to give" (HC, 89). In his *The Judge and the Historian,* Carlo Ginzburg claims that Bloch and Febvre proved, contrary to their positivist contemporaries, that "nonexistent phenomena and falsified documents" are of historical importance. In fact, nonexistent phenomena feature prominently in Bloch's *The Royal Touch.* How could non-existent phenomena be the subject of historical intrigue? Ginzburg writes that "the nonexistence of the bands of brigands renders more significant (because more profound and revealing) the fear that spread among the French peasants in the summer of 1789" (Ginzburg, 17). The methods for exploring possibilities within a specific historical locale will be returned to later in this chapter.

Within Bloch's works the use of evidence is likened to the use of testimony – in all its uncertainties and *heteroglossia* - which Bloch calls the 'dialectic of the criticism of testimony' (HC, 110). Here the applications of techniques perfected by previous scholars are apparent. Were we to search for an Ur-text, Spinoza's biblical exegesis in *Theological-Political Treatise* or Vico's discovery of the true Homer in *The New Science* both use critical documentary analysis on the explicit statements within the texts in question. In either case, the document is submitted to an internal analysis, which Bloch uses the phrase "psychological analysis" to denote. Such psychological analysis of texts "conforms to no mechanical rules," and so cannot be reduced to formulaic method (HC, 111). Whereas the positivistic views that Bloch reacts against attempt to impose a method uniformly across all documentary materials, Bloch himself confirms the importance of hermeneutic approaches to idiographic analysis, performed on the basis of an operative set of questions the historian brings to the document in question. The *ad hoc* method is an example of the historian's authorial intervention into the archive.

Agrarian history is precisely the sort of inquiry which troubled the methodological commitments of positivistic history *qua* documentary analysis. In *French Rural History,* Bloch develops a method suitable to the historical object in question, a regressive method that proceeds from knowns to unknowns:

> When Durkheim was embarking on a course of lectures on the family he once said 'to understand the past one must first leave it'. That is true. But it can also happen that one must first look at the present in order to understand the past… this is the method imposed on agrarian studies by the present state of evidence. (FRH, xxvi)

Agrarian history requires methods which work against the flow of time, and which often work in the absence of documentary evidence. In an informative anecdote, Bloch

refers to a letter to Fustel de Coulanges in which an English historian asked him whether France ever had "the open field system with long furlongs" common to England. Fustel De Coulanges answered in the negative, and incorrectly, Bloch speculates, due to his exclusive reliance on the testimony found in documents. Bloch writes, "it is quite probable that he never took any special notice of the characteristic pattern of plough-lands visible all over northern and eastern France which so irresistibly call to mind the open-fields of England" (FRH, xxvii). In this case, seeking the origin or root cause in ancient documents is a much less effective method than comparing the field structures against English examples, or, as Bloch did, consulting survey officials (FRH, 59). Bloch's expanded sense of suitable evidence for historical inquiry challenges the patient documentary style of history common to traditional historical themes of nation state and politics.

As the anecdote illustrates, Bloch used material evidence as a supplement to documentary evidence. An example of material evidence can be found in *French Rural History*, where Bloch compares two systems: open and enclosed fields. Of the closed fields, he writes, "as in the regions of open-fields, these material manifestations were the outward expression of underlying social realities" (FRH, 57). These underlying social realities are obscure due to the fact that they were scarcely written about. In Bloch's work, material becomes the historian's trace of underlying social realities, which are not chronologically reconstructed - but understood as attesting to structural possibilities within the two regimes, which were governed by distinct attitudes. Bloch's work on agrarian history is an exemplary use of indirect evidence from historical sources. Within the *Annales* trajectory, Bloch's theoretical contributions were practiced without armature, hence relatively unpretentious.

Braudel's contribution to the 'war on two fronts' was backed by a distinct theoretical armature: his theory of temporal stratification. Simply put, Braudel distinguished multiple senses of time, which he differentiated with recourse to temporal duration. Through his theory of temporal stratification, Braudel elaborates a research agenda which seeks to combine both nomothetic and idiographic observation. In doing so, he overcomes the antimony, at least from the perspective of historical writing. He writes in *History and Sociology* that

> History exists at different levels, I would even go as far as to say three levels… on the surface, the history of events works itself out in the short term: it is a sort of microhistory. Halfway down, a history of conjunctures follows a broader, slower rhythm… and over and above the 'recitatif' of the conjuncture, structural history, or the history of the *longue durée* inquires into whole centuries at a time. (*OH,* 74)

Both Braudel's *The Mediterranean* and *Civilization and Capitalism* are divided into three volumes which roughly correspond to the above temporal stratifications. Analysis of the final stratum, the *longue durée*, is akin to structural history, the analysis of repetitive and unchanging elements that structure the agencies and forces that exist at the lower strata.[3] He writes:

> It functions along the border between the moving and the immobile, and because of the long-standing stability of its values, it appears unchanging compared with all the histories which flow and work themselves out more swiftly, and which in the final analysis gravitate around it. (*OH*, 74)

[3] Christopher Lloyd's *The Structures of History* (1993) advocates for socio-historical realism in the face of the relativism implied by strictly idiographic approaches. Immanuel Wallerstein's three part *Modern World System* has aspirations to total history, and continues where Braudel's *Civilization and Capitalism* ends.

There could be nothing further from the traditional chronicles of political events. Within this temporal stratum are the unchanging and stable structural continuities that underlie chronological analysis. Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* begins with an analysis of these immobile structures: the features, resources and dispersion of mountains, hills, plains, seas, coasts and islands, climate, seasons and other natural cycles. Here, historical analysis is seen to be comfortable with a nomothetic approach; or, in Braudel's words, these movements "govern the life of man" (*MW*, v.1, 102).

Braudel considered the idiographic element of history to lie in the shortest time span: that of events. While that may seem uncontroversial, it is not – there is a lack of consensus over what the basic unit of historical analysis is or ought to be. Braudel distinguished two kinds of events, the unique and non-repeatable, and the serial or repetitive event. The former, classically considered by outsiders to be the purview of history, was his target, though he did not deny the allure of unique events. He writes, "Like any historian, I am attracted to the unique event, which blooms for but a single day and then fades, never to be held between one's fingers" (OH, 67). The allure of the event does not justify exclusive attention to it. Braudel instead envisions a history that is not confined to individual events:

> To transcend the event means transcending the short time span in which it is set, the time span of the chronicle, or of journalism—the brief moments of awareness whose traces give us such a vivid sense of the events and lives of the past. It means asking if over and above the passage of events, there is not an unconscious, or rather a more or less conscious, history which to a great extent escapes the awareness of the actors,

> whether victors or victims: they make history, but history bears them along. (OH, 67)

It seems important to note that while his vision incorporates both long term and short term analysis into a single history, Braudel claims that while the scale of history increases, the awareness of historical agents ceases to be of use for the historian. This is a point to which I will return in chapter 3. The merging of distinct time scales into a single model of explanation should also be a claim met with skepticism, as Braudel is often at pains to explain how distinct temporal strata interact. Important to our purposes, however, is the manner in which Braudel claims that both structural and event oriented explanation fall within the purview of history in a single research agenda.

Historie des Mentalités

Through the controversy of nomothetic/idiographic distinction in the context of the *Methodenstreit*, our analysis has primarily straddled the relationship between anthropology, history and sociology. However, an analysis of the *Annales* historians would be incomplete without reference to the relationship of history to another emergent social science, namely, psychology. With this shift in register, we enter the territory of the *Annales*, which is most resistant to the use of laws and structures in historical explanation. As I aim to prove in this section, the historical objects studied within the *historie des mentalités* cannot be explained with recourse to nomothetic principles. I argue that there are two types of inquiry into collective psychology: the synchronic and the serial.

Works within the *histoire des mentalités* seek to understand a past moment as a microcosm, preserving the interior space of a collective. In doing so, *Annales* historians have produced portraits of past peoples with their alterity intact. With that said, among

the *Annales* there is no clear consensus about what *mentalités*, in general, consists. Jacques Le Goff is quick to concede the ambiguity of the term, and there exists Anglophone literature, such as Llyod's *Demystifying Mentalités,* which probes whether or not *mentalités* are explanatorily useful in historical accounts. Le Goff writes, "the primary attraction of the *histoire des mentalités* lies in its vagueness: it can be used to refer to the left-overs, the indefinable residue of historical analysis" ('Constructing the Past,' p. 166). Perhaps the ambiguities are necessary, for the *histoire des mentalités* promised to study aspects of the historical past which were left out of traditional historiography. In some sense, the idea seems akin to Cornelius Castoriadis' 'social imaginaries' – and in my estimation seems an important corollary to intellectual history. Le Goff writes:

> The *histoire des mentalités* operates at the level of the everyday automatisms of behavior. Its object is that which escapes historical individuals because it reveals the impersonal content of their thought: that which is common to Caesar and his most junior legionary, Saint Louis and the peasant on his lands, Christopher Columbus and any one of his sailors. The *histoire des mentalités* is to the history of ideas as the history of material culture is to economic history. ('Constructing the Past,' 169)

Given our framework, the *histoire des mentalités* is the idiographic aspect of a nomothetic corollary: intellectual history or the history of ideas—that which escapes the *nomos* of development, refinement and progress of ideas.

Using psychology, however, is not always the best means for historical explanation. The use of psychology in history often commits the historiographic sin of anachronism. It should be noted that the gesture of historical depth, or the admission into the interior of historical spaces is a common trope, but a trope that is difficult to convincingly fake. The necessary distinction is between emic and etic categories, those

'native' to past cultures, rather than 'imposed' on them by the historian (FP, 109). We have, on the one hand, an entire tradition of western thought that attempted to uncover the inner workings of historical forces, whether that meant the *corso* and *ricorso* of dominant civilizations, the *Produktionsweise* which conditioned social and political life, or the drives of the *Unbewusste.* While these general categories can be *applied* as an analytic, the explanation they provide is at the expense of the voices of historical subjects. Each of these theorists, in their own way, posit a lack of transparency to these historical laws, such that individual and collective alike facilitate their action while unaware of their presence. In their daily lives, people have and continue to maintain structures of power and privilege, acting in accordance with 'laws' that determine behavior. In such a schema, the masses are victims of a dominant class that cynically manipulates them by means of 'false consciousness.' The opacity of these laws to social actors is taken as warrant to exclude the voices of the past in favor of the narrative of the historian (a point which I will return to in chapter 3). The *histoire des mentalités*, instead, is assured that individuals understood the limitations and possibilities imposed by structures, whether institutional or mental, and so instead attempts to present the past in its alterity.

From the perspective of the present moment, the reconstruction of the past poses a set of epistemological issues. How we interpret the space between the past and the present, as a bridge, or a gulf, will radically color our views of historical epistemology. In his 1984 Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University, Paul Ricœur argues that the reality of the historical past, as a problem, can be approached either by the similarity of the past to the present or through the difference between the past and the present. In Ricœur's terms, history can be written under the sign of either the Same or the Other. Under the

Same he places the "re-enactment" of the past, following Collingwood and historians who study the past in its likeness to the present (RHP, 5). Under the Other, he discusses the sense of the past's remoteness from the present, the effect of strangeness that a historical account can produce. If we view historiography through this binary, we can accord space to another, more controversial theoretical expression of a historical research agenda, namely, the *histoire des mentalités*.

It should be noted that the *histoire des mentalités* is not reducible to the agendas of intellectual history. Roger Chartier points out that the *histoire des mentalités* "is that of daily life and habits; it is what escapes the individual subjects of history because it reveals the *impersonal content of their thoughts"* (IHSH, 22, emphasis mine). Lucien Febvre wrote compellingly of the European obsession with Witchcraft, and, in doing so, presented a vision of medieval Europe awash with complexities. History often overlooks "revolutions of the intellect which occur noiselessly and which no historian takes the trouble to record" (Febvre, 1973, p. 191). Similar to Bloch's approach to agrarian history, Febvre notes that this area of research suffers from proper documentary evidence. What sort of witness would even be capable of taking the distance necessary in order to present their contemporaries as a microcosm? The *histoire des mentalités* then faces a problem similar to psychology, insofar as it requires the implicit to become explicit. The use of indirect evidence in such circumstances is both warranted and necessary, as contemporaries are unlikely to take notice of the impersonal content of their thought. Chartier writes, "unlike economic or social historians, who reconstitute what was, the historian of *mentalités* or ideas seeks not the real but the ways in which people considered and transposed reality" (CH, 43). Rather than find such information in the

works of metaphysicians, which often contain individual elements of thought, the historian of *mentalités* seeks this information in the collective, and in the material trace.

This does not mean, however, that the works of great thinkers are taboo for these historians. For example, Febvre points out that Jean Bodin, known today for his social, political and historical writings, was also the author of *Traité de la démonomanie des sorciers,* "one of the most depressing works of the age… which had countless editions" (Febvre, 1973, 189). From this we can gather that belief in witchcraft was not, as we might think, mere superstition, as the brightest minds of the Europe were also convinced of the existence of witches. Moreover, the example illustrates one method for restoring the alterity to the past - defamiliarizing the familiar.

In *The Royal Touch,* Bloch traces the belief in the king's ability to heal *Scrofula,* a disease which no longer exists. In the course of his work, he discovers that individuals had no illusions about the ability of the king to heal the disease, yet still for hundreds of years thousands made pilgrimages in order to see the king and be touched by him. If Bloch proposed the royal touch as an example of ideology, he would still be at pains to explain why the tradition lasted so long. Instead, Bloch attempts to demonstrate that people believed that the king did not have this power, and yet went to visit anyway. This example of a study of mentality is infamous in that it demonstrates simultaneous belief and incredulity, a combination that would appear to us as logically inconsistent, yet nonetheless Bloch presents it without intervening or attempting to 'correct' the collective sentiments of medieval Europeans.

Given the influence of Braudel on the research agendas of the *Annales,* many chose to forgo historical accounts which focused exclusively on single events. Burke writes, "radical social historians rejected narrative because they associated it with an

over-emphasis on the great deeds of great men, with the importance of individuals in history and especially the importance of political and military leaders being overestimated at the expense of ordinary men – and women" (CH, 122). Indeed, we could associate such historical methodologies with scholars like Sidney Hook, in his *The Hero in History*. The rejection of narrative is a component of the 'history of below' – histories which focus on the subaltern and the marginalized, or at least histories which are cognizant of the complex interplay of historical structures and human agency.

Now that we have analyzed the justification and analytical object of the *histoire des mentalités*, we will turn to methods for writing. In what remains of this section on *mentalités*, I will analyze two methods: one serial and one synchronic. Histories which fall under the serial method focus on repetitive occurrences and have a non-chronological, yet diachronic method of organization. The synchronic often focuses on a single, aleatory transformation, controversies and discontinuities. Phillippe Ariès uses serial methods to construct *mentalités* in his *Western Attitudes Towards Death.* He studies cultural phenomena which seem to be governed by inertia rather than change. His corresponding methodology must account for changes in what appears to be "a-chronic," writing that "at certain moments, changes occur, usually slow and unnoticed change, but sometimes, as today, more rapid and perceptible ones" (Ariès 1).

Ariès uses indirect evidence, literary evidence, documentary evidence and material evidence; citations of Solzhenitsyn intermingle with John Chrysostom. A striking example of Ariès' use of indirect, material evidence is his analysis of the living to the dead. People were once ambivalent towards where they would be buried and where the dead were kept, as attested to by funeral archeology. Christianity is credited with the development of concern over where remains were kept, first in the form of the

desire to be buried close to martyrs and saints. Churches held remains, and so overturned an ancient practice of burial *extra urbem* (Ariès 16). These developments attest to the fact that individuals had less scruples about proximity to the dead in ancient times. Ariès writes, "the fact that the dead had entered the church and its courtyard did not prevent both from becoming public places" (Ariès 23). In these times, death was collectivized, not faced individually, and cemeteries were public spaces where businesses, sportsmen and entertainers operated, played and performed. Urban cemeteries were a regular feature of European cities until the early modern period, "at the end of the seventeenth century signs of intolerance began to appear, the fact remains that for more than a thousand years people had been perfectly adapted to this promiscuity between the living and the dead" (Ariès 25).

The transformation of death from a collective rite to an individual trial shifted the entire register of what death, as a concept, meant to people. Developments such as literary and artistic depictions of the bedchambers of the dying (Ariès, 33), the fear of decomposition (Ariès 39), and individualization of burial plots and tombs (Ariès 46), reflected a change in religious sensibility about the importance of individual responsibility in the face of the last judgement (Ariès 31). Then, there is the development of "eroticomacabre themes" between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, where death was "increasingly thought of as a transgression" rife with irrational, violent and sublime connotations. Concurrent with the eroticomacabre, is a transformation in the sensibility of death

> In the past death in bed was a solemn event, but also an event as banal as seasonal holidays. People expected it, and when it occurred they follow the rituals laid down by custom. But in the nineteenth century, a new

> passion stirred those present. Emotion shook them, they cried, prayed, gesticulated… henceforth these activities were described as if they had been invented for the first time, spontaneously, inspired by a passionate sorrow which is unique among sorrows. (Ariès 59)

In the 17th century, people developed an intolerance for the collective presence of the dead in cities, in the 18th century, people developed an intolerance for the separation implied by death, the permanent break of familial and kinship bonds.

My interest here is not to reproduce Ariès' study, but rather the way in which it demonstrates a radical shift in the sense of a concept. While the content of death has changed little, if at all, the mentality surrounding death has radically changed, to what Ariès calls forbidden death, the denial of death, or the attempt to hide it from others, especially children. Death is no longer a collective rite, but is rather "a technical phenomenon… a decision of the doctor and the hospital team" (Ariès, 88). The technical event is also free from ritual practices like mourning periods. If it were not for funeral and wake services, there would be little connection with death as experienced in the previous millennia.

Reflecting on Ariès' study, it seems important to note that there is little continuity between the stages, and certainly no overarching rationale which could account for why the changes occur in the way that they did. We are left with the impression of the contingency of each development: religious sensibilities encouraged collective burial sites, urban cemeteries encouraged a new intolerance for death, the alliance of "eroticism in order to express the break with the established order," and finally, the shame and secrecy of death in contemporary treatment (Ariès, 105). Ariès' study is one of the few among the *Annales* which attempts to incorporate historical

information from the recent present. The scale of Ariès' study, which examines change over the long term enables him to fit recent developments into his work.

What of works on *mentalités* that are organized synchronically rather than diachronically? The paradigmatic example is Le Goff's essay *Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Middle Ages*. Within the essay, Le Goff uses both material and textual evidence in order to develop historical facts on the controversy between two senses of time in the Middle Ages. The present moment of writing serves as the final aspect of Le Goff's comparison, in that the idea of time as connected to space and as a functional measure of human activity is still known to us today, whose development was materialized in the development of communal clocks for cities governed by trade (TWC, 35). However, the archaic eschatological sense of time, which connects the minutiae of daily life to the eternity of God's kingdom, is alien to our sense. Le Goff's conceit is that these senses of time are not mutually exclusive, but were transformed by both intellectual/moral controversies and material practices.

Within this schema, each sense of time corresponded to an ethics, and from this basis one can claim that merchant and church time were at odds. Primarily, this controversy concerned the practice of usury, and so concerned the basis of all economic activity in the form of profit over time or credit. Le Goff's essay does not contain an exaggerated sense of importance of intellectual developments. He does note, however, the importance of Hellenistic philosophy in revitalizing a sense of the contingency of time in scholasticism (TWC, 40). This does not mean that Christians ceased to believe in God's dominion over time – however, it does indicate that the sense of this idea transformed from the traditional conception that time is God's and cannot be sold. In order to chart this conjuncture, Le Goff relies on a wide range of indirect evidence from

industrial and commercial documents to works of theologians in order to develop his historical facts.

What is Le Goff's object of analysis? He argues that his analysis does not concern "an abstract collective individual," but rather "men in the West between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries who were in possession of sufficient cultural and mental equipment to reflect on professional problems and their social, moral and religious consequences" (TWC, 29). The gulf between Durkheim's collective representations and Le Goff's concern is apparent. However, some proximity to ethnography is suggested due to the lack of first or second person testimony. The voice of the historian is predominant, and the essay takes the form of exploring the equipment without the interruption of those who utilized it.

It is clear that the essay documents a change in the predominant collective understanding of time. The essay does not, however, proceed through causal explanation characteristic of accounts of historical change. Le Goff indicates that his intent is to "stimulate a more intensive study of a history which raises numerous problems"; this aim is evidently expressed by the lack of an indicated ultimate cause for the transformation (TWC, 41). Why did the Church capitulate? Roughly periodized and disconnected intellectual and economic trends are catalogued, but there are no pivotal events to speak of. The virtue of the essay is the presentation of realms of possibility within either mentality. Where a functional use of time allowed the merchant to engage in compartmentalization, the earlier views of the church were inflexible and would eventually yield to myriad developments.

If each work of history contains an implicit philosophy of history, what can be said of Le Goff's work, or of the *histoire des mentalités* in general? Here, the dynamics of

historical explanation are of unique importance. The essay keenly demonstrates the transformation between church and merchant time as the product of both human agency and intellectual reflection on practice. The capitulation of the church is not presented in irreversible terms: the overall change is described as a shifted "equilibrium" (TWC, 40). There are two merits to this form of non-narrative explanation: first, there is no implicit teleology – the claim that merchants both understood and lived time both piously and functionally eliminates a secularizing narrative. Second, historical structures are shown to be responsive to large-scale changes in industry and human agency. The manner in which *homo faber* is shown to be the result of reflection on changes in practice attests to the use of the essay as a supplement to intellectual history. Presented in this manner, intellectuals are not mistakenly shown to be the primary agents of historical transformation, as is often the case in the history of philosophy or intellectual history in general, but rather practical and intellectual developments are shown to work in concert.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analyzed several research agendas of the *Annales* historians, developing a sense for the myriad trajectories which give the school its infamy. I have suggested that these trajectories should not be read at face value, but as attempts to expand the practice of history beyond sequesters resultant from changes in the 20th century French academy. These trajectories included both large scale, macro historical accounts and small scale micro historical accounts, as well as the pursuit of new historical inquires such as agrarian history or the *histoire des mentalités*, and problem based historical inquiry. These works required methodological innovations. These innovations divorced historiography from artificial organization imposed by either

archives or chronology and developed techniques for analyzing indirect and material evidence.

In the subsequent chapters, I analyze two responses to the Annales trajectories. First, I analyze Foucault's historical-programmatic writings, in the *Order of Discourse* and the *Archeology of Knowledge.* Next, I analyze some works of Rancière, especially the *Names of History* and the analysis of a poetics of knowledge. I propose the following stark difference in the reception of historiographic theory in French theory: the first generally accepts programmatic statements, whereas the latter seeks to undercut or undermine them in favor of an approach with more fidelity to the source material than programmatic concerns.

Chapter 2: Michel Foucault's Archeological Historiography

In the second and third chapter, we shift the orbit of our discussion toward what is known as "French theory," the "polyphonic, coolly critical, obscure, seductive and crafty" works of European intellectuals that, as a feature of the American academy, have become an alternative canon in their own right (Cusset, 277).

As we have seen, in the previous chapter, the *Annales* historians defended their work from an impoverished documentary positivism. These apologetics in turn influenced the auto critical writing in the work of several French theorists. Within Foucault's work, methodological reflection is used as an occasion to offer "retrospective coherence" to his earlier texts (OEC, 58). However, we are concerned here with how Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* purports to demonstrate the shared concerns between the *Annales* historians and philosophers of the history of science and literature. In doing so, Foucault attempts to combine the speculative reflection characteristic of philosophy and the documentary analysis of archival researchers. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the meta-language characteristic of disciplinary apologetics is mobilized for auto-critical purposes. However, many scholars consider *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to be a methodological dead end.[4] How far from the historical concerns of the *Annales* are Foucault's theoretical contributions to historiography?

The introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* begins with a consideration of recent advances in historical analyses of literature and science as well as the *Annales* historians. In his analysis, Foucault differentiates between "traditional histories," which he associates with motifs of total history – chronologically organized series of political

[4] See Dreyfus, Hubert L., Paul Rabinow, and Michel Foucault. "The Methodological Failure of Archaeology." *Michel Foucault, beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1983, 79-103.

and social events that attempt to exhaust their object (AK, 3). He distinguishes these motifs with emergent characteristics of both *Annales* historians and philosophers who study the history of literature and science, such as Bachelard, Canguilhem and Althusser. Foucault "maintained that the opposition between historians concerned with stable structures and historians of literature and science, who emphasize the discontinuous, was but a 'surface effect' of a more fundamental accord" (Bernauer, 101). Reporting on this accord, however, does not mean that Foucault shares an outlook with all *Annales* historians. More substantive analysis is required to establish Foucault's relation to these parties.

David Carroll, in "The Times of History and the Orders of Discourse" from *The Subject in Question,* presents the views of Foucault and the *Annales* school as aligned. He claims that both Braudel and Foucault are interested in "complicat[ing] the form of temporality usually projected onto history" (Carroll, 123). As a result, "the Order and the Time which History was thought to provide are thus replaced by the orders and times of various and conflicting histories and discursive practices" (Carroll, 123). Carroll's analysis merges the vocabulary of Foucault and the *Annales,* presenting both as a challenge to a hegemonic total History. Yet, it should be noted that a more complex analysis is possible, which would account for the differences between *Annalistes,* their research agendas and methodologies.

Carroll's analysis of the *Archaeology of Knowledge* accepts the antagonism between traditional history and the 'new history' as reason enough to claim that Foucault and Braudel are in accord. Here, we should analyze Foucault's claim of an accord between historians of science and literature and the *Annales*, and in our reception, move beyond this shared antagonism to traditional history. In this chapter, we will analyze the

methodological criteria found in the *Archaeology of Knowledge,* the discrepancy between Foucault and the *Annalistes* over the concepts of series and event, and develop an account of how Foucault's method contributes to the historiographical problem of teleology. First, we must develop a sense for Foucault's concepts which are developed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

The Archaeology of Knowledge is a multi-tiered methodological work. In it, Foucault advances his own criteria and abandons *episteme* as an organizing methodological concept. Instead, Foucault introduces an alternative method, that of Archaeology, which he claims "is the analysis of discourse in its archival form" (AME, 289). Not a reconstructive method, as this archive is defined as "the accumulated existence of discourses," and is, therefore, a presentist treatment of historical materials (AME, 289). By calling the approach a presentism, I mean to signal the anachronism built into the method. Here, I follow Hartog's definition: presentism is "the sense that only the present exists, a present characterized at once by the tyranny of the instant and by the treadmill of the unending now" (Hartog, xv). As Michael Roth writes, Foucault's "History of the Present" is an "antihistory attempting to make the present into a past which we leave rather than into a history which we tightly embrace as our own" (Roth, 44). However, this does not mean that the historian uses the present as a means for representing the past. Foucault criticizes Michelet for using this sort of reconstructive technique.[5] In order to produce this effect, the archaeological method takes a distance from familiar categories of historical analysis.

[5] In *The Birth of the Clinic,* Foucault writes: "By means of an illusion widespread in the nineteenth century, and one to which Michelet gave the dimensions of a myth, history painted the end of the Ancien Régime in the colours of the last years of the Middle Ages, confusing the upheavals of the Renaissance with the struggles of the Enlightenment" (BC, 125).

The problems presented by historicity, in the hermeneutic sense, are not of concern here, as Foucault analyses the 'enunciative function' of 'statements' and their 'positionality,' all without reference to a speaker. The problems inherent in historical criticism, observation, and judgment are sidestepped for a neutralizing descriptivism. As Ricœur states, "Foucault has delimited a radially neutral terrain, or rather a costly neutralized one, that of statements without a speaker" (MHF, 202). The philosophically informed archivist of Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge,* inspired by the shortcomings or subjectivism in intellectual history, settles for a new method of rigorous, programmatic description.

The section *Archaeology and the History of Ideas,* contains a term for term opposition between traditional history and Foucault's Archaeological method. Here, the notions of archive, positivity and discursive formation are placed within the domain of statements, enunciative field, and discursive practices, generally (AK, 135). Foucault's concept of archive takes into account material evidence, as well as documentary evidence, so much so that he claims that all documents are considered "monuments" in the historical practices of the *Annales* (AK, 7). Where Bloch defined the object of history as men, Foucault claims that the archaeology of the human sciences shows "man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end" (HC, 27 ; OT, 387). It could be argued that Bloch's regressive method, found especially in *French Rural History,* is a kind of archeological analysis. Like Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge, French Rural History* proceeds backwards from available evidence, the former constructing a method, the latter reconstructing the remote past.

The main differences between the two approaches follow from the differences in scale. In his methodological prelude, Bloch informs us of the danger of granular analysis:

> Factual data capable of definitive interpretation are to be expected only from a field of research prudently tailored to a topographical setting. But this scale is too small to allow the major questions to be posed. For that we need wider perspectives, where there is no danger of losing sight of the main promontories among a confused mass of accidental detail. (FRH, xxiv)

This appeal to wider perspectives entails a search for the continuities general enough to be relevant across the centuries. Foucault's work, however, is well known for contributing to a micro-physics of power, which he states is "diffuse, rarely formulated in continuous, systematic discourse; it is often made up of bits and pieces; it implements a disparate set of tools or methods (DP, 26). Foucault's distance from the human subject allows for this transformation of scale, from the *longue durée* to the microphysics of power. This transformation of scale, however, did not develop in a vacuum, and, as we will see, entails a calculated break from *Annales* historiography.

Period, Series and Event

By now, we see that there is a complex relation between *Annales* historiography and Foucault's archaeology, for several reasons. First, as evinced in the first chapter, *Annales* historiography is not 'of a piece' – there are discrepancies between individual historians, there are multiple incompatible methods, many research agendas. Foucault's archaeology is very distant from the anthropological and humanistic commitments of some *Annalistes,* finding proximity instead to the serial methods developed by Braudel, and the Chaunus. Of this serial method, Foucault has much to say. Our concern in this

chapter are two elements of Foucault's archaeological method: the first, in his assessment of serial history, the concepts of series and event, second, the analytic separation between discourse and practice, specifically the implications this separation has for historiography, teleology and human agency.

Much of Foucault's explicit commentary on contemporary historiography concerned the relationship of events to series.[6] As seen in the first chapter of this thesis, Braudel developed a theory of temporal stratification in an attempt to move historiography beyond listing political and social events in chronological succession. Foucault takes issue with Braudel's approach, which can be read as restricting events to a single temporal plane, defined by their short duration. Foucault, in aligning his method of discontinuity with serial history, argues for a constructivist approach to the development of historical facts.

Foucault establishes his view of the relationship between event and series succinctly in the interview "On the Ways of Writing History" *(1967)*:

> Every periodization carves out in history a certain level of events, and conversely, each layer of events calls for its own periodization. This is a set of delicate problems, since, depending on the level that one selects, one will have to delimit different periodizations, and, depending on the periodization one provides, one will reach different levels. In this way one arrives at the complex methodology of discontinuity. (AME, 281)

In elaborating the methodology of discontinuity, Foucault echoes Braudel's theory of temporal stratification. Foucault argues that traditional histories are focused on documentary criticism, and attempt to fit documents into an already existing structure –

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[6] I am indebted to the discussion of Foucault and the *Annales* found in Dean, Mitchell. *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology*. London: Routledge, 1994, (p. 38) for making the importance of this commentary apparent.

the chronology of events and the succession of political organizations. With the new history, traditional documentary analysis is replaced, and instead historians

> Ha[ve] taken as [their] primary task, not the interpretation of the document, nor the attempt to decide whether it is telling the truth or what is its expressive value, but to work on it from within and to develop it: history now organizes the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unites, describes relations. (AK, 6)

All this to say that historians use documents in a different way. Historians do not find facts, they create them by organizing more basic elements. In terms of facts, the logic of discovery is superseded by the logic of constructivism. Here, events and series are described in a relationship of dependence, each contingent on the other. So far, Foucault does seem to be in an accord with the *Annales,* in regards to the construction of historical facts, distinct layers of temporality, and by attesting to the intervention of the historian into her material. As Martin Kusch claims in *Foucault's Strata and Fields,* both Foucault and the *Annales* share the conviction that traditional historical accounts "took for granted the existence of certain 'natural' series," the greatest of which is chronology (Kusch, 42).

This accord, however, is undermined by Foucault's account of series and events. The relationship of event and series is an important occasion in Foucault's reflection on historical methodology in that it provides an explicit repudiation of Braudel's understanding of events in his theory of temporal stratification. While both thinkers, then, oppose their own method to 'traditional history,' we see that behind this shared antagonism lies a discrepancy. Foucault's understanding of event and series does not

rely on chronology as an external measure, as Braudel's theory of temporal stratification does. Where Braudel argues that events take place only at the third level of temporal stratification, Foucault argues that events take place at multiple strata. This relation between event and series is treated at length in *The Discourse on Language*, where Foucault's distance from Braudel becomes clear.

In *The Discourse on Language,* Foucault states:

> We frequently credit contemporary history with having removed the individual event from its privileged position and with having revealed the more enduring structures of history. That is so. I am not sure, however, that historians have been working in this direction alone. Or, rather, I do not think one can oppose the identification of the individual event to the analysis of long term trends quite so neatly. On the contrary, it seems to me that it is in squeezing the individual event, in directing the resolving power of historical analysis onto official price-lists (*mercuriales*), title deeds, parish registers, to harbor archives analyzed year by year and week by week, that we gradually perceive — beyond battles, decisions, dynasties and assemblies — the emergence of those massive phenomena of secular or multi-secular importance. History, as it is practiced today, does not turn its back on events; on the contrary, it is continually enlarging the field of events, constantly discovering new layers — more superficial as well as more profound — incessantly isolating new ensembles — events, numerous, dense and interchangeable or rare and decisive: from daily price fluctuations to secular inflations. (AK, 230)

Where Braudel argued against histories comprised of events, specifically political events such as wars, revolutions or transfers of power, Foucault presents an expanded sense of events in order to demonstrate the manner in which *Annales* historians have reinvigorated the primacy of events in historiography. While Braudel held trends and

events in analytic tension, Foucault argues that the attention to trends instead offers relief to events which would otherwise not be discernable. He continues:

> What is significant is that history does not consider an event without defining the series to which it belongs, without specifying the method of analysis used, without seeking out the regularity of phenomena and the probable limits of their occurrence, without inquiring about variations, inflexions and the slope of the curve, without desiring to know the conditions on which these depend. History has long since abandoned its attempts to understand events in terms of cause and effect in the formless unity of some great evolutionary process, whether vaguely homogeneous or rigidly hierarchized. It did not do this in order to seek out structures anterior to, alien or hostile to the event. It was rather in order to establish those diverse converging, and sometimes divergent, but never autonomous series that enable us to circumscribe the 'locus' of an event, the limits to its fluidity and the conditions of its emergence. (AK, 230)

Where series once emerged in chronology as a secondary effect, series are now the primary construction of historians. The construction of new series provides a "locus" for events, a relief which provides sense to events as referents. Indeed, the construction of series is described as a primary task of historians in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault claims that the historian's task is "to define the elements proper to each series, to fix its boundaries, to reveal its own specific type of relations, to formulate its laws, and, beyond this, to describe the relations between different series, thus constituting series of series, or 'tables'…" (AK, 8). As the result of a historian's judgment, a range of facts are given an artificial limit. The relations that exist between series also create a new problem for 'total' histories, as series may not converge or culminate. The level of generalizability necessary for a total history cannot be made with the elements of a serial history, as, at some point, series are not relative to each other, given that they are

comprised of heterogeneous elements. For example, demographic trends do not directly correlate to economic trends, as each trend is comprised of distinct units. Nor are series in the history of climate, such as rainfall averages, relative to events in the history of prison and ransom. Such series could all be part of the same history, if it were organized geographically, however.

Foucault argues that both events and the series to which they belong are produced by historians, that neither are given. Implicitly, he seems to suggest that Braudel and similar thinkers maintain the 'event' as a natural unit defined by a short duration, confined to a single temporal strata. There is much in Braudel's writing which suggests as much. In *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II,* Braudel claims that "events are the ephemera of history; they pass across its stage like fire-flies, hardly glimpsed before they settle back into dark and as often as not into oblivion" (MW, 901).

In Foucault's estimation, events do not pre-exist historical writing in some grand chronological movement of time, nor do they comprise a natural unit.[7] Foucault clearly attests to these implications in an interview, where he states that "serial history does not focus on general objects that have been constituted beforehand, such as feudalism or industrial development; serial history defines its object on the basis of an ensemble of documents at its disposal" (AME, 426-7). Braudel, in a similar vein, argues that there is creative space allotted by documentary evidence, but places this on par with the historian's intervention or judgment: "one could say that any event which forms a link in a chain can be considered significant. But even 'serial' history is the result of a

[7] Here Foucault's proximity to Reinhardt Koselleck's view in "Representation, Structure, Event" is worth noting.

selection, made either by the historian or for him by available documentary evidence" (MW, 902). It would be misleading to suggest that Braudel totally breaks with the idea that events have some value prior to their inclusion in a series, whether this value is in terms of importance, consequence, or duration. In other words, where Foucault is comfortable detaching history from chronology, Braudel does not abandon chronology as a means of organizing events.

Causality, Agency and Determinism in Historical Explanation

In *The Discourse on Language,* Foucault states:

> What is significant is that history does not consider an event without defining the series to which it belongs, without specifying the method of analysis used, without seeking out the regularity of phenomena and the probable limits of their occurrence, without inquiring about variations, inflexions and the slope of the curve, *without desiring to know the conditions on which these depend.* (AK (my emphasis), 230)

Foucault's claims here have complex etiological implications worth exploring. Without chronology or causality, how could transitions be explained? Foucault argues that there are logical alternatives to cause and effect:

> As soon as relations of a logical type, like implication, exclusion, transformation are introduced in historical analysis, it is obvious that causality disappears. But we have to rid ourselves of the prejudice that history without causality would no longer be history. (RC, 92)

Foucault appeals to logical criteria, to be preferred over causality by historians. Relations established by the historian occur between documents, or, in other words, is a product made at the moment of writing. Foucault states, "using this method, the historian can reveal events that would not have appeared in any other way" (AME, 427). Within traditional history, the significant events were given, not discovered. The historian's task

required that causes were ascribed to these events in order to elucidate, among other things, their meaning. Foucault takes issue with chronology, in that it naturalizes synchronicity, making it needless to explain synchronic events. He claims "we consider the understanding of the way one event succeeds another as a specifically historical issue, and yet we do not consider as an historical issue one which is in fact equally so: understanding how two events can be contemporaneous" (RC, 92). Here, however, it is not the cause which is hidden and the event which is visible. Rather, it is events which are hidden. In another interview, Foucault claims:

> Serial history makes it possible to bring out different layers of events as it were, some being visible, even immediately knowable by the contemporaries, and then, beneath these events that form the froth of history, so to speak, there are other events that are invisible, imperceptible for the contemporaries, and are of completely different form. (AME, 427-8)

Foucault introduces an important caveat: an indifference to whether or not individuals understood the significance of these events as they occurred. We can conclude then, that Foucault's account does not pivot on whether or not a historian uniquely attests to the importance of a historical event. This is part and parcel of our next topic, Foucault's indifference to the classical categories of subjectivity: experience, agency and intention.

Foucault's analysis also offers insight into his rejection of subjective considerations, like experience. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Foucault states that archaeology "does not try to restore what has been thought, wished, aimed at, experienced, desired by men in the very moment at which they expressed it in discourse" (AK, 139). In this double disavowal, Foucault distances the archeological method from historical reconstruction in general, and the *histoire des mentalités*

specifically. Given our analysis in the previous chapter, we discerned that a theme of the *histoire des mentalités* was to reconstruct the limiting concepts of thought within a certain epoch. This attention to the limiting structures which condition the possibilities of human action within a certain time span seems very similar to Foucault's concept of *episteme.* Archaeology takes a distance from both *episteme* and *mentalités*, in Foucault's rejection of both reconstruction (and attendant issues like chronology, anachronism, cause and effect) and subjectivity. Foucault claims that archaeology "is nothing more than a rewriting: that is, in the preserved form of exteriority, a regulated transformation of what has already been written. It is not a return to the innermost secret of the origin; it is the systematic description of a discourse-object" (AK, 140).

While Foucault's assessment of series and event explains his distance from chronological and etiological concerns, why the disdain for the categories of subjectivity? Why would *mentalités* not factor into "the systematic description of a discourse-object"?

In his commentary in *I, Pierre Rivière: A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century*, Foucault analyzes two events by first troubling their sequence. In the section "Text and Murder" he writes, "In *Rivière*'s behavior memoir and murder were not ranged simply in chronological sequence – crime and then narrative. The text does not relate directly to the deed; a whole web of relations is woven between the one and the other; they support one another and carry one another in ever-changing relations" (IP, 201). While Foucault's commentary is not specifically deemed an 'archaeological account,' there seem to be enough relevant similarities in Foucault's treatment of the *lettres de cachet* found in the *Annales d'hygiène publique et de medicine légale* (Rocha, 193). Foucault indicates the discontinuities between *Rivière*'s confession and his act – and, in doing so

assigns to them distinct agencies *in the present moment*. As Rivière had spent time and care deliberating on the murder, so much so that he considered his confession prior to the act, the text was "drafted in his head beforehand" (IP, 202). It is due to this curious displacement of the confession prior to the act that the text is considered by Foucault to be a factor in the murder, an equivalence between "weapon" and "discourse" (IP, 203). Rather than merging the act and the confession into a whole, like a judge or a journalist interested in using reconstruction to establish motive or intent, the analytic separation of these two successive events is possible only if neither are fully subsumed into each other.

The above case, in refusing a reconstruction of the intention of Rivière, instead describing the text and the act as two distinct and competing functions, demonstrates for us a complex interplay which does not reach closure in a cause and effect sequence. Here, experience is misleading in that it reduces two 'strata' into a single event. As Foucault argues, the narrative has a unique role in making "the transition from the familiar to the remarkable, the everyday to the historical" (IP, 204). The narrative is a crucial element in enlarging the event beyond the scope of the everyday and into historical importance. The relationship between the narrative and the event is one of a transformation of scale, not simply one of chronological succession. Further, Foucault adds that

> the ambiguous existence of these sheets undoubtedly masks the processes of a subterranean battle which continued in the aftermath of the Revolutionary struggles and the Empire's wars around two rights, perhaps less heterogeneous than they seem at first sight – the right to kill and be killed and the right to speak and narrate. (IP, 207)

Foucault's remarks place Rivière's crime into an unusual, if not typically invisible, series, remarking on the proximity between "the 'curious' news items, the 'extraordinary' facts, and the great events and personages of history" (IP, 205).

We have in the example of Pierre Rivière an instance where the subjective categories of experience, intention, and motive are rejected in order to hold the closure of several events at a distance. This is not the only place where Foucault argues that experience can be historiographically misleading. In an interview, Foucault offers an illuminating example:

> The fact that Europe's demographic curve, which was pretty much stationary in the course of the eighteenth century, rose abruptly at the end of the eighteenth century and continued to rise in the nineteenth is, in part, what made possible the industrial development of Europe in the nineteenth century, but no one experience this event in the way that one might have lived through the revolutions of 1848. (AME, 428)

Here, Foucault's point hinges on the fact that experience may be misleading. Certainly contemporaries often misjudge or mistake the importance of events, or events fall beyond their perception in ways that archival research can recover. Also, Foucault's archaeological method attempts to replace, term for term, problematic elements of the history of ideas, which often uses subjective categories, such as influence, in order to describe the transmission of information *between* subjects. Such language, from the standpoint of systematic description, attributes mental capacity to history itself.

Let's analyze the problem of anthropomorphic history. In the section *Change and Transformations,* Foucault criticizes two models of history which offers more insight into his rejection of the categories of subjectivity. He claims that history has been presented in "the model of the stream of consciousness whose presence always eludes itself in its

openness to the future and its retention of the past" (AK, 169). Two concerns are present here. First, there is the problem of presenting intellectual transmission as synchronic: one thinker 'influences' another – despite the fact that they were not contemporaries and, in the final analysis, thought in different ways. Next, there is the "retention of the past" found in etiological description, progressive succession, *Aufhebung*. Here, chronological order (or, in Foucault's terms, "the thread of an original calendar") implies the retention of the past, even in absence of some vector of material transmission or preservation (AK, 169). Ultimately, anthropomorphic characterizations of history found in the history of ideas either insert teleological agency into historical explanation, or cover over discontinuities. Foucault claims that

> Anyone envisaging the analysis of discourse solely in terms of temporal continuity would inevitably be led to approach and analyze it like the internal transformation of an individual consciousness. Which would lead to his erecting a great collective consciousness as the scene of events. (PK, 69)

Foucault instead suggests that concepts like influence do not describe change, but are forgotten metaphors or substitutes for adequate explanations of change and transformation. He claims that "discourse… is not a consciousness that embodies its project in the external form of language; it is not a language, plus a subject to speak it. It is a practice that has its own forms of sequence and succession" (AK, 169). We will return to the point that discourse has unique forms of transformation, but first it is important to evaluate the account of agential change found in the *Archeology*.

Could Foucault, in his early writings, be accused of diminishing the force of agentic power? Insofar as the agentic possibilities require relay through the archeologist's description, it does appear that this is the case. For example, Foucault

writes that "the description of the archive deploys its possibilities" granting a sort of revitalizing power to description (AK, 131). Further, this power is described as that of ruptures and breaks, it "deprives us of our continuities; it dissipates the temporal identity… it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies… bursts open the other, and the outside" (AK, 131). In each case, the 'deployment of possibilities' seems to result in the same negative agency, an aleatory eruption resulting from the description of the archive. In this sense, the question of agency is evaded insofar as the locus of concern remains the archive's meaning for the present, and not a reconstruction of past events. Put otherwise, Foucault's 'method of discontinuity' seems to reduce the complex varieties of agential change to a single model of disruption.

What use is the method of discontinuity for describing change if it abandons the logic of cause and effect? Foucault's works typically do not contain the causal closure which is demanded from historical accounts. Changes appear, the magnitude of which is attested to, but seldom are reasons offered for these changes. We have seen that Foucault's archaeological method lacks etiology in two respects: first, in terms of chronological succession, and second, in terms of subjectivity, experience, and human agency. While, as in the case of Pierre Rivière, this opens up the space for alternative explanations, it is not clear that the method of discontinuity is a preferable historiographical method. In fact, the rejection of these two forms of etiology only corresponds to problems that are found within the description of knowledge – a revised history of ideas. However, discontinuity in historical writing has important applications to the problem of teleology in historiography.

Teleology in Historiography

The dependence of events on series promotes general, rather than total histories, eliminating the issue of teleological extra-historical forces, like providence, from historical accounts. Foucault's introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* reports the movement away from theories which posit a single unity, like total histories, from those which accept a multiplicity of singularities, like general histories. Of total histories, Foucault writes that

> the project of a total history is one that seeks to reconstitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle – material or spiritual- of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion – what is called metaphorically the 'face' of a period. (AK, 9)

Total history is contrasted with general history, of which Foucault writes: "The task of a general history is to determine what form of relation may be legitimately described between these different series; *what vertical system they are capable of forming*…" (AK, 10, my emphasis). Here, Foucault attributes *possible form* to the vertical relations of a general history, indicating that these general histories are largely destabilizing with regard to vertical hierarchies. I argue that this specific attribute is in response to Braudel's theory of temporal stratification, which assigns a "clear hierarchy of explanation" not to each stratum, but all stratums as a whole (Appleby *et al*, 308).

Foucault clearly promotes general history over total history, however, it is unclear how proponents of general histories would cease to make the same sort of claims to epistemic truth that total histories are charged with. The scale is clearly a point of distinction; however, this distinction only makes sense insofar as total histories continue to circulate. In this way, Foucault's advocacy for general history consists of a

deeply relativizing gesture meant to ward off truth claims. In *The Need for Theory in History,* Koselleck observes that "*all* metahistorical categories will change into *historical statements*" (PCH, 3). In the case of general versus total history, the latter's metahistorical claims are just as historical as the former's, despite appearances or claims to the contrary. While the dispersive effect of general histories might contradict the unifying effects of total histories, this is due to the fact that the former *replaces* the latter.

Discontinuity in history does not, however, eliminate the possibility of teleological readings of historical events. To borrow an example from the French historian Roger Chartier, we can consider the fact that all 'events' organized in relation to the French revolution risk being read as necessary developments spurred on by the progress of enlightenment reason. By this I mean to indicate that the general theme which is used to organize events runs the risk of providing an exhaustive explanation for them, presenting the outcome as an inevitable consequence of contingent events.

Is the discontinuous method a substitute for teleological historiographic accounts? Foucault admits as much. He writes that "rupture is the name given to transformations that bear on the general rules of one or several discursive formations. Thus the French Revolution – since up to now all archaeological analyses have been centered on it – does not play the role of an event exterior to discourse, whose divisive effect one is under some kind of obligation to discover in all discourses" (AK, 177). Here, repetition wearing down the term 'discourse' risks obscuring the specificity of Foucault's point. The French Revolution is not exterior to discourse; Jacobin ideology competes with other discourses at the time. Concepts like the 'enlightenment' risk coloring our reading of this period, making political or, of special interest to Foucault, clinical developments seem irreversible. However, writing histories of the period known

as the French Revolution without specific mention of the name is disorienting. While it makes retrospective sense to think of *The History of Madness, The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things,* as counter-histories of the French Revolution, and the Enlightenment more generally, such a realization takes place at a level of generalization beyond the subject matter of any of these texts.

Viewed historiographically, these archaeological works tend towards nomothetic description. A passage from Gilles Deleuze's *Foucault* reads:

> But if it is true that the conditions are no more general or constant than the conditioned element, it is none the less the conditions that interest Foucault. This is why he calls his work historical research and not the work of a historian. He does not write a *histoire des mentalités* but the conditions governing everything that has a mental existence, namely statements and the system of language. He does not write a history of behavior but of the conditions governing everything that has a visible existence, namely a system of light. He does not write a history of institutions but of the conditions governing their integration of different relations between forces, at the limits of a social field. He does not write a history of private life but of the conditions governing the way in which the relation to oneself constitutes a private life. He does not write a history of subjects but of processes of subjectivation, governed by the foldings operating in the ontological as much as the social field. (Deleuze, 116)

Deleuze observes that Foucault's histories are not descriptions of events as they transpired (or, in other terms, his works are not reconstructive). Foucault's histories describe elements in terms of conditions, rules, and laws. What archaeological analyses purport to show, then, are a set of rules or laws detached from their speakers and situations. In examples, Foucault lends these rules or laws troubling proscriptive agency:

> It is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say – and to itself, the object of our discourse – its modes of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity, and disappearance. (AK, 130)

The archaeologist, while promising a novel methodology, denounces the idea that the insight gained thereby is enough to be used as leverage against constraints and conditioning rules. The archaeologist is described as bound within an inexhaustible archive whose possibilities exceeds the archaeologist's descriptive abilities. While such a situation may make descriptive sense *retrospectively*, that is, from a third standpoint which is beyond both the archive and the archivist, it makes little sense to adopt this as a description of the self-same subject conducting the archaeologist analysis. As in many other examples found in Foucault's work, the powerlessness of the archaeologist in the face of the archive-as-law remains unconvincing due to the manner that creative human agency is evacuated. The inertia which the archeologist faces indicates that archaeology shares similitude with the history of ideas far more than with history proper. While the *Archeology of Knowledge* depends on the methodological and terminological innovations of the *Annales* historians, it does not thereby become a full-fledged theory of history.

Does it make *retrospective* sense to describe researchers as constrained by the limits of their documentary evidence – their archive? Yes, but such a position would need to rely on the principles of historical reconstruction, which would in turn entail some hermeneutic depth in regards to the status of the past. What is the past in retrospection? Is it a projection of memory coupled with a projection of the present into a future scenario, as some thinkers such as Heidegger, Gadamer and Koselleck suggest?

I argue that Foucault's view is divergent from the aforementioned for two reasons. First, Foucault's account does not utilize mnemotechnic categories, as it does not hinge on an "anthropology," as is found, for example, in the work of Koselleck:

> The categories 'experience' and 'expectation' claim a higher, or perhaps the highest, degree of generality, but they also claim an indispensable application. Here they resemble, as historical categories, those of time and space. (FP, 257)

In contrast, Foucauldian statements have unmediated spatial and temporal consequences, for example:

> A total description draws all phenomena around a single centre – a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape; a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space of a dispersion. (AK, 10)

Here, agency has no anthropological mediation, and the categories of time and space do not undergo an anthropocentric re-rendering.

Second, Foucault repeatedly denounces the trope of past-as-origin, which is best expressed by Leibniz, who claimed the study of history allows access to "the origins of things present which are to be found in things past; for a reality is never better understood than through its causes" (quoted in HC, 35). Instead, Foucault often refers to the past as a terminus in its own right, by highlighting the myriad discontinuous aspects of the past. Of great difficulty would be the attempt to reconstruct, from the set of rules and laws which make up the archaeology of a discourse, the basic units, elements and specific features of that discourse, without making these separate entities appear the same. As we have seen from his disavowal of the *histoire des mentalités*, Foucault has a great distrust of reconstructive methods.

This distrust is not confined to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, but is also found in other works. For example, in *Lives of Infamous Men,* Foucault states that:

> All those lives destined to pass beneath any discourse and disappear without ever having been told were able to leave traces – brief, incisive, often enigmatic- only at the point of their instantaneousness contact with power. So that is doubtless impossible to ever grasp them again in themselves, as they might have been 'in a free state'; they can no longer be separated out from the declamations, the tactical biases, the obligatory lies that power games and power relations presuppose. (EWF, 6)

Here it does appear that Foucault claims there is access to non-discursive elements of the past in traces. Such an admission is crucial for the description of transformation and change, which requires more than the succession or co-existence of limits described in terms of rules and laws. However, as demonstrated in the above quote, Foucault considers these lives to be inseparable from their constraints. Roger Chartier advocates for the analytic separation of practices from discursive practices in *The Chimera of the Origin: Archaeology of Knowledge, Cultural History, and the French Revolution*. He writes:

> Recognizing that access to such non-discursive practices is possible only by deciphering the texts that describe them, prescribe them, prohibit them, and so on does not in itself imply equating the logic that commands them or the 'rationality' that informs them with the practices governing the production of discourse. (OEC, 59)

Chartier offers an example wherein the formal element of practice is retained through a discontinuity in discursive practice. His example is from a work of Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Régime and the French Revolution,* focusing on the transition between the aristocracy and the Jacobins. De Tocqueville's thesis supports Chartier's idea of "the Enlightenment as a sheaf of practices without discourse – in any event, of practices irreducible to the ideological affirmations intended to justify them" (OEC, 60). Here, the

practices of the centralized power completed the revolutionary education of the masses. De Tocqueville argues that "the government itself had long worked to make several ideas, since called revolutionary, enter and become fixed in the minds of the masses, ideas hostile to the individual, contrary to private rights, and friendly to violence" (de Tocqueville, 230). De Tocqueville argues that Louis XV taught the masses that "there is nothing so old that it must be respected, nor so new that it may not be tried" (de Tocqueville, 230). When the government sought to create roads, it "did not make any difficulty about taking all the land it needed for its projects, and knocking down all the houses that got in its way" (de Tocqueville, 231). By doing so, de Tocqueville argues that the government taught future revolutionaries "the little regard which individual rights merited when public interest required that they be violated, a doctrine which [they] took care not to forget when the time came to apply it to others" (de Tocqueville, 232). Here, it makes little sense to suggest that either revolutionary ideology was a clean break from the practices of the *Ancien Régime*, or that the *Ancien Régime* is totally continuous with the revolutionary government. Instead, a discontinuity in ideology is coupled with a continuity in practice. A complex example, to be sure, but one which affirms Foucault's concern with rigorous attention to the particularities of historical transformations, one of the many types of "discontinuities" to which Foucault attests (HDD, 231). Tocqueville's writings support Chartier's thesis in this section alone. It should be noted that the teleology of enlightenment reason is supported in a subsequent section, which is titled "How the Revolution *Came Naturally from What Preceded it*" (de Tocqueville, 241, my emphasis).

In Foucault's commentary on the *Annales* historians, we can see a deep seriousness assigned to the methodological statements of historians, which he sees as an

aspect of the "methodological renewal of history in general" ('Live', 47). Given Foucault's interest in rules, laws, or, in my terms, the nomothetic aspects of historiography, it makes sense that so much of his intervention in the field of history concerns problems of method. So much so, that Foucault uncovered hidden implications in the methodological statements of Braudel and Chaunu, criticized and altered the understanding of the twin concepts of series and event. More radically, when thinking of knowledge in terms of law or condition, Foucault demonstrated "that there is no need to pass through the subject, through man as subject, in order to analyze the history of knowledge" ('Live', 49). In other words, through the two problems of history as a stage of consciousness, and the juridical apparatus surrounding problems of intent and motive, Foucault diagnosed an issue pertinent to historiography, which is best conceptualized in terms of teleological agency. While Foucault's method of discontinuity does advance us toward a solution to teleology in historical writing, he does so at the expense of both individual and collective subjects, whose creative agency, caught in an entanglement of laws, rules and other *noetic* constraints remains unclear. If we follow Chartier in understanding the influence of these rules which govern discursive systems as non-causal, then we still only have half of a dialogue, so to speak.

It could be said that my treatment of Foucault has focused on his attention to methodological claims, and in doing so, has failed to develop a more apt comparison. Perhaps it is the case that Foucault's methodological statements are not mirrors of his historical scholarship. How would Foucault's treatment of a historical event compare to a member of the *Annales*? Luckily, there are some events which are treated by both. For example, there is Foucault's piece *The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century,* which is comparable to Braudel's "The Eighteenth Century: Watershed of Biological Regimes" in

Capitalism and Material Life. I found this example fitting, as both Foucault and Braudel's concept of 'event' privileges those sorts of transformations which are difficult for contemporaries to detect. The European 18th century is just such an occasion, as we will see through the course of this analysis.

Braudel heralds the 18th century as the end of a brutally restrictive *Ancien Régime*, during which death and life were kept in a precarious balance. Reflecting on demographic statistics, he writes that "only in the eighteenth century did births gain over deaths, and this was to be the pattern regularly thereafter" (CML, 73). This triumph, however, is quickly tempered by its tragic pedigree, the history of famine and epidemic. He writes:

> These then are the facts that go to make up the biological *Ancien Régime* we are discussing: a number of deaths roughly equivalent to the number of births; very high infant mortality, famine; chronic under-nourishment; and formidable epidemics. These pressures hardly relaxed even with the advances made in the eighteenth century, and then at different rates in different places of course. Only a certain section of Europe, and not even all of Western Europe, began to break free of them. (CML, 91)

Braudel's tempered optimism entails that the 18th century marks a *conjuncture,* a medium term transformation of a number of structural constants. It seems important to note, however, that Braudel's explanation of the 18th century is a retrospective comparison. While the section endeavors to explain the 18th century, Braudel does so by reference to the period of 1400 to 1800. Hence, his analysis is meant to establish causal connections between remote times and places.

Given what we know of Foucault's estimation of causal explanations, his analysis of the 18th century ought to be remarkably different. Indeed, *The Politics of Health in the*

Eighteenth Century opens by disparaging the effectiveness of a causal explanation of the period:

> *No doubt it is scarcely fruitful to look for a relation of anteriority or dependence between the two terms* of a private, 'liberal' medicine subject to the mechanisms of individual initiative and laws of the market, and a medical politics drawing support from structures of power and concerning itself with the health of a collectivity. (PK, 166. Emphasis added)

Instead of a *de facto* casual analysis, Foucault frames the transition as *de jure*. He claims that here "is the emergence of the health and physical well-being of the population in general as one of the essential objectives of political power. Here it is not a matter of offering support to a particularly fragile, troubled and troublesome margin of the population, but of how to raise the level of health of the social body as a whole" (PK, 170). Foucault sees the transformation as a consolidation of power, and the end of informal means of care.

In this essay, we can observe a curious reversal of Braudel's claims. Where Braudel was confident to ascribe a number of technological, scientific and agrarian factors to the population increase, Foucault instead frames the issue in reverse order. He writes that "the sudden importance assumed by medicine… arguably concerns the economico-political effects of the accumulation of men" (PK, 171). Foucault offers the term *noso-politics* to describe this new form of knowledge, wherein

> the biological traits of a population become relevant factors for economic management, and it becomes necessary to organize around them an apparatus which will ensure not only their subjection but the constant increase of their utility. (PK, 172)

Between Foucault and Braudel, which is the relevant development of the 18th century? Is it the increase in population, or the intent to develop around this population an economic apparatus to manage disease? If we attempt to mediate this conflict, we might find recourse to distinct historiographic principles useful. Where Braudel's intents are largely rationalist, Foucault's commitments are more obscure. A pertinent difference lies in Braudel's liberal use of what might be considered anachronistic terminology. For example, Foucault hastens to inform his readers that institutional developments mirror conceptual ones, where he writes that "the emergence of 'population' [and] its bio-medical variables of longevity and health" are products of 18th century institutions (PK, 177).

In a sense, this divergence stems from more than just distinct historiographic commitments, but entails political differences as well. Our reading of Braudel and Foucault, therefore, leads us to a juncture wherein we must apply our historiographic question: is history the study of people, or should such inquiry cede to the "antihumanist reading" of history (Cronin, 211)? Braudel, while he disparages the "overfed rich," lists "regular invasions… not purely by beggars… but by positive armies of the poor" among the perennial dangers of the period (CML, 73;75). Yet can Foucault's work, an unflattering ventriloquism of alarmists and reactionaries, really be said to have greater political currency? In my assessment, neither historian offers a preferable politics, unless we are willing to risk the notion that there is no gap between history as product of the intelligentsia, and organized political resistance.

However, my appeal to this gap is temporary, as it is the subject of the next chapter. Our analysis of the works of Foucault has left some unanswered questions. What are we to make of the political claims of historians? Further, if we reject Foucault's

antihumanist historiography, can we write histories of individuals without falling to the Scylla of a subject-centered historical account, rife with the rip-tides of providence, teleology and progress, or the Charybdis of structuralist inertia? It is possible to write a history wherein the programmatic concerns of the historian do not override either the evidence of her sources, *à la* Foucault, nor the diachronic dynamism of the source material, *à la* Braudel?

Chapter 3: Jacques Rancière: Politics, Poetics and the People in Historical Reconstruction

The previous chapter discussed how Foucault, one of the protagonists of French Theory, draws from but also distinguishes himself from the *Annales* Historians, introducing specific questions, both methodological and philosophical, relevant for historiography and methodologies of history. In this chapter, we shift our focus to another French theorist, Jacques Rancière. Here we are concerned with Rancière's theoretical contributions to historiography, with special attention to those which follow from the course of our previous analysis. First, a word about Rancière's *oeuvre*. His historical works include *The Names of History, Le concept d'anachronisme et la vérité de l'historien, Nights of Labor* and *La Parole Ouvrière*, co-authored with the historian Alain Faure. This chapter focuses on *The Names of History,* especially those sections which concern the *Annales* School. Rancière's dual criticism focuses on the political acumen of the *Annalistes* through a close analysis of the textual strategies contained within select histories. So far our analysis has suffered from a lack of attention on politics, partly due to the focus on thinkers such as Foucault, who failed to formally attend to the political stakes of historical writing, at least in the works treated in this thesis. With our analysis of Rancière's *Names of History,* we return the problem encountered at the end of the previous chapter, the gap between histories as material product and political struggle. Where an empirical assessment of this problem may resolve in the postulate that histories *represent* political struggles, Rancière's detour through the concept of *mimesis* leads to a non-mimetic theory of poetics wherein political representation and political credential can be squared. I conclude that Rancière contributes to our understanding of the politics of historiography through his criticism of 'history from below.' However, it is also the case that some problems raised by Rancière's historiography, such as those of

place, as well as the role of the historian, are also characteristic problems of the positivist historiography we explored in the first chapter.

Discussion of Rancière's pertinent critiques will require some prior engagement with Rancière's political works. Political critiques of historiography found in these texts bear traces of Rancière's 'axiom of equality' which states that "the same intelligence is at work in all the acts of the human spirit" (IS 18). Put otherwise, "people generally understand what they are doing and don't need someone else to think for them" (Kritzman, 642). In matters of politics and philosophy, the consequences of this axiom seem straightforward and desirable. But what about matters of historiography? Much contemporary historiographical theory figures the historian as a sort of mediator between the reader and the voices of the past. At a glance, this axiom of equality seems to threaten the dominant mode in which history is written. Instead of studying the past through indirect testimony relayed by a historian, how would it be possible to have a history that upholds the idea that people generally understand what they are doing? The retrospective coherence and insight offered by historians into past events, transitions and long-term structures would be abandoned in favor of auto-ethnographic accounts. On the one hand, such a demand seems close to the *histoire des mentalités* studied in the first chapter. On the other hand, a competition between the historian's voice and the voice of her subject calls into question the political currency of the history from below.[8]

[8] In this chapter, I use the phrase 'history from below' as a catch-all term for social, cultural and political histories that take as their primary subject subaltern, marginalized and impoverished individuals or groups. The phrase 'history from below' comes from Lucien Febvre, and was popularized by E.P. Thompson in a 1966 review of the same name.

Old and New

First, we must orient ourselves to Rancière's theoretical work on historiography. In *The Names of History,* Rancière focuses on the *Annales* historians for the first two chapters. His concern is twofold, first, a comparison between the poetics of the 'old' and 'new history' – analyzing the language of Braudel's Mediterranean, with the aim of separating the voices of the past from the historian's ventriloquism. Here, Rancière cuts to the heart of the political stakes of 'the history from below,' developing a critique of historiographic representation of impoverished classes and marginalized voices. Known to scholars as the 'history from below,' this genre of historical writing focuses on ordinary people, rather than the subjects of traditional history. The early *Annales* historians, such as Febvre and Bloch, pioneered the "*histoire vue d'en bas*" in areas such as rural history and the history of popular belief (Febvre, 1932, p. 576).

First, Rancière reports of the break between the "old tradition of chronicling" and the new history endowed with "the rigor of a science" (NH, 1). Rancière conceives of this break as an attempt by the new historians of the *Annales* to give a new rigor to the old equivocations and indeterminacies of traditional historical accounts. As we analyzed in our first chapter, the *Annales* historians did attempt to build new foundations for history; these included research agendas, methodological criticism and interdisciplinary inquires. Some of these research agendas entailed a break with what we might call literary aspects of historiography, what Foucault opposed with discontinuity. Insofar as the 'new history,' variously advocated for problem-centered approaches to history, these historians distanced their own accounts from a literary procedure that had been disguised as an unassailable principle of historiography: chronology. In Rancière's terms, the *Annales* situated themselves beyond the homonymy

which indexes "lived experience, its faithful narrative, its lying fiction and its knowledgeable explanation all by the same name" (NH, 3). Henceforth, the Annales would transform history into a reinvigorated science, but, as Rancière claims: "the difference between history as science and history as narrative was necessarily produced in the heart of narrative, with the latter's words and use of words" (NH, 3). Rancière introduces an important distinction between history as a science and history as narrative. Through the course of our analysis, we have encountered philosophers, historians and theorists who would place themselves on either side of this division. In a Kantian vein, Rancière proposes that the literary functions of history undergird and support the possibility of this distinction, insofar as it is the case that this distinction is directly supported by the adoption of an alternative set of vocabulary, writing conventions and styles. Scientific history, dissatisfied with the indeterminacy involved in narrative, sought to use the conventions of the social sciences to validate historical inquiry, as attested to in the works of *Annales* historians such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, François Furet and the Chaunus. Much of Rancière's historiographic criticism focuses on the manner in which history requires indeterminacy, whether this means borrowing literary conventions developed in fictional works, or relying on testimony whose factual content is in question.

Rancière's guiding question in the beginning of *The Names of History* could be restated as: What purpose does the 'old history' serve for the inauguration of the 'new history'? While the new history appears to abandon the conventions of the old history, it ought to be noted that in its various guises 'traditional history' or 'old history' is a retrospective term at best. While the *Annales* agendas variously break with older conventions, this break is not complete, as evinced by the historians to which *Annalistes*

pointed as their precursors. Rancière presses even further into this debt, indicating that the new objects and methods of the *Annales* intermix with the objects and methods of the old history, namely, great historical figures, great historical events and the literary conventions of historiography. In order to analyze how the *Annales* managed this transition, Rancière proposes "a study of the set of literary procedures by which a discourse escapes literature, gives itself the status of a science, and signifies this status" (NH 8). The first chapters of *The Names of History* are textual analyses of the *Annales* historians, represented by Braudel's *Mediterranean*. Perhaps Rancière intended to criticize François Furet, who, before infamously announcing that the French Revolution never took place, famously proposed that historians attempt to "define the specificity of historical knowledge in relation to the social sciences in general" (*Constructing the Past*, 12). In other words, Furet argued that not only could history be practiced as a science, but that historians ought to "give up being satisfied with the immense indeterminacy of their knowledge" (quoted in Kritzman, 13). What is meant by knowledge here? Is it ambiguity in the historian's mind or in the historian's object?

Let us further analyze the ambiguity of historical facts. Historians have methods for removing ambiguity, but in order to do so, they must rely on the scientific conventions of other disciplines. As seen in our first chapter, the nomothetic and idiographic antimony developed around this disciplinary dilemma. The division between singular fact and general law is, for Rancière, a matter of which discipline histories lean on. He writes that histories are either

> … a 'factual' history, clinging to what the poetic and rhetorical tradition designates as characters and actions worthy of interest. Or, to escape this tradition, it has to devote itself to the search for the laws of history, which

> are in fact that laws of other science: theology one upon a time, sociology or economics in the modern era. (PL, 175)

Rancière introduces literature as the third term of this either/or. As stated in *The Names of History,* story and history are both *histoire* in French. While modern histories, like those exempla from the *Annales,* use conventions of sociology and economics in order to give scientific legitimacy to these works, histories informed by literary conventions "take on the risk of a certain intermin[acy]" (PL, 182). For example, Rancière points out that "biography does not happen without a certain indistinguishability between reality and fiction" (PL, 182). The locus of this interminacy, Rancière argues, is variable, as it corresponds to the infinite complexity of human lives. He writes that individuals relate their life to writing

> … as a testimony to a certain relationship between life and writing. It also means dealing with texts whose factual content is partly indeterminate. The stories workers tell of embarking on writing are themselves exemplary tales that refer to each other and repeat certain pre-existing models. They tell of the meeting between life and writing, not in the accuracy of the facts they relate, but in their very 'falseness': not in their inaccuracy, but in the way they are borrowed and displaced, attesting to the shifting of one mode of experience of language and life to another mode. (PL, 182)

The final sentence attests to a motif in Rancière's critical writings, the transition of conventions from one field to another. This transitive principle is used to argue against mono-casual and teleological versions of history. The fact that conventions are transitive between genres, styles, social groups, etc. is important for understanding Rancière's position on the 'old' and 'new' history, and we will return to it in our discussion of *historia magistra vitae.* For now, it is sufficient to state that Rancière attests to

anachronistic appropriation as a kind of critical potential for revolutionary politics. For example, in *The Names of History,* Rancière argues that the Roman historian Tacitus

> … creates a model of subversive eloquence for the orators and simple soldiers of the future. The latter will henceforth not repeat Percennius, whose voice has been lost, but Tacitus, who states the reasons of all those like Percennius better than they do. And when the language of Tacitus has, as a dead language, taken on a new life, when it has become the language of the other, the language whose appropriation procures a new identity, the overly talented students in the schools and seminaries will fashion, in their own language and in the direct style, new harangues; the self-taught will in their turn take these as models, competing with the evangelical narrative and the imprecation of the prophets. All those who have no place to speak will take hold of these words and phrases, those argumentations and maxims, subversively constituting a new body of writing. (NH, 30)

Tacitus is an interesting example, as it is unclear what if any impact he had on his contemporaries, whether politically or historiographically. His works were rediscovered and given new importance both by Catholic dogmatists —as Tacitus contains one of the few flattering contemporary accounts of Christ (Tacitus, xiv) — and Renaissance thinkers, who turned to his work for his political insights (Tacitus famously argued against constitutions of a mixed type). This example, like the use of the Roman term *proletarian* by Blanqui shows an affinity between anachronism and radical political transformation (NH, 93).

Politics, Poetics and the People

These aforementioned features of Rancière's work: the incomplete transition from the old to the new history, the homonymy which indexes the similitude between literature and history, the allowance for ambiguity, and the transitivity of characteristic

conventions are all unique demands that Rancière places on a 'new' historiography. However, it is so far unclear how features of Rancière's political thought influence his historiographic thought. I propose to clarify this relationship with reference to two works, the first of which is *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy.* In this work, Rancière positions "politics" and "equality" as antimonies, insofar as equality is *represented* to people through the law (DPP, 61). Equality, therefore, is not a statement of affairs, but a logic which can be used to analyze and declare its own absence (the norm and scandal) from the state of affairs known as politics (or 'the police' in Rancière's terminology). Politics, within Rancière's lexicon, indicates an "activity antagonistic to policing" whereby those who have no part in the 'police order' find community in the injustice of their exclusion.

How do we apply thoughts which orbit political philosophy to historiography? Rancière states that "politics is always at work on the gap that makes equality consist solely in the figure of the wrong" (DPP, 62). Hence, the problem of representation is doubly involved in politics, insofar as "the gap" is the result of the continuing failure of political representation; and insofar as equality finds sole representation in "the figure" of those who are deprived by this failure. Rancière's thoughts on political philosophy find application to historiography also around these problems of representation. The short essay "*'Le Social': The Lost Tradition in French Labour History*" focuses on the gap between working class movements and social histories of mass movements. As Rancière states, "it is not evident that working-class militants felt the need for their own history" (PHST, 268). Rather, it seems to be a false assumption that the history of a movement is primarily intended to be read by the proponents of those movements. This is another version of the 'dominant ideology thesis,' which, when applied to historiography,

results in the (common) thought that histories are written in order to provide insights which escaped those individuals who are the subject of that history. Rancière's political maxim of the equality of speakers finds its application in decoupling social history as an intellectual product from organized working-class movements. Historians, such as Le Roy Ladurie, who were once members of the communist party, produced "static" histories, which Rancière claims "succeeded in taking the place of historical materialism. It produced an ideology… denying any real change from below" (PHST, 272). We find the "politics" of historiography, not in similitude with the actions represented therein, but rather, at a distance from this representation, and in the gap between these histories and the movements with which they share a simulated acumen.

Now, we can continue with our reading of *The Names of History*. First, we will analyze and assess Rancière's analytic of poetics. Next, we will analyze Rancière's critique of the politics of historiography.

Roland Barthes' *The Discourse of History* demonstrates a technique for the rhetorical analysis of historiography. In the course of his analysis, Barthes demonstrates that several techniques used in literature are also found in the work of classical historians. The discourse analyst looks for "the *shifters* (in Jakobson's sense of the term), which assure the transition from the utterance to the act of uttering;" of which he mentions two types ('Comparative Criticism,' 7). The first, listening, is signaled by phrases "of the type as *as I have heard,* or *to my knowledge*" signaling the intervention of the historian or author into the event reported. The second is a catch-all category for the historian's explicit signs of organization; "the second type of shifter comprises all the explicit signs whereby the utterer – in this case, the historian – organizes his own discourse, taking up the thread or modifying his approach in some way in the course of

narration" ('Comparative Criticism,' 8). Barthes argues that in classical histories, historians use these shifters for several reasons. They allow a historian to signal their own voice and differentiate various aspects of temporal sequence; they lend contours to narrative and allow historians to break from a totally linear sequence of events. Shifters function to temporally align the reader with the historian. For example, Barthes writes that

> This type of discourse – though linear in its material form – when it is face to face with historical time, undertakes the role of amplifying the depth of that time. We become aware of what we might call a zig-zag or saw-toothed history. A good example is Herodotus, who turns back to the ancestors of a newcomer, and then returns to his point of departure to proceed a little further – and then starts the whole process all over again with the next newcomer. ('Comparative Criticism,' 9)

Readers understand *turns back*, *proceed* and *return* not in the spatial register, but in the temporal register. These text effects are the same convention in literature or in history. We should note that Barthes' reflections are based on classical historical accounts, such that his observations about the regularities of historical discourse may not apply if we were to analyze the *Annales* historians.

Rancière's analysis is indebted to Barthes' focus on the use of shifters. In *The Names of History,* he writes that in the new history,

> The casting of the narrative in the present tense renders its powers of assertion analogous to those of discourse. The event and its explanation, the law and its illustration, are given in the same system of the present. (NH, 14)

In other words, Rancière claims that within the new history, the old poetics of shifters are abandoned, or, at least all occurrences are held to be synchronic. There are no

linguistic indications of a temporal shift. As an example, he offers a passage from Braudel's *Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800:*

> 'There is another rule with no exceptions: epidemics *jump* from one human mass to another. Alonso Montecuccoli, whom the Grand Duke of Tuscany *sends* to England, ... *will cross* from Boulogne and not from Calais, where the English plague ... *has* just arrived.' The tense of the rule is identical to the tense of the event. And this identity goes along with another, that of the literal and the figurative: the ambassador who crosses the Channel and the epidemic that jumps have the same modality of existence. (NH, 15)

Within this passage, there is a noticeable lack of those shifters which Barthes indicated are so central to expressing complex temporal relationships. From the standpoint of a poetic analysis of the text, this new equivocation produces a novel kind of indiscernibility than those found in 'the old history.' Rancière writes:

> The new history aims to assure the primacy of things over words and to circumscribe the possibilities of each time period. But this discernment of the weight of things and the specificity of tenses can function only on the basis of a poetical principle of indiscernibility. The true discourse on the advance of the epidemics and the fictitious narrative of the meeting between the king and the historian stem from the same syntax and the same ontology. The literal and the figurative are seemingly indiscernible here, and the present in which the king receives the historian responds to the future past of the ambassador's voyage. (NH, 15)

In attempting to distance their accounts from the 'old history's' focus on events, the *Annales* historians did attempt to describe time periods in terms of their possibilities: whether this meant describing structural material constraints or *mentalités.* Within this subjunctive register, the historian 'enters' into the scene in the sense that there are no explicit linguistic indications of a temporal division between the king and the historian.

Hence, the old ambiguities of *histoire* resurface within the *Annales,* such that the historian's intervention becomes the historian's testimony.

How does Braudel fare as a historical witness? Rancière playfully compares him to a near contemporary of Phillipe – Thomas Hobbes. Rancière focuses on Hobbes' accounts of the causes of sedition found in *De cive* and *Leviathan*. In Rancière's account of Hobbes, the words of the poor are given revolutionary agency, and are portrayed as an object of fear, primarily in the form of sedition. Rancière remarks:

> The theoretical and political evil, for Hobbes and the tradition he opens, may be identified in this way: the proliferation of borrowed names, of names that do not resemble any reality, and that kill because they are poorly used, used by people who should not handle them, who have torn from their context to apply them in a situation that has nothing to do with their context. (NH, 21)

Like in his analysis of Tactius, Rancière emphasizes the revolutionary agency found in appropriating names.[9]

[9] Sylvain Lazarus, in *L'anthropologie du nom*, raises similar issues which concern the stakes of names in the study of history. Lazarus indicates the importance of adding a third term to the objects and subjects of history: the space of the name. In doing so, Lazarus reserves an agency in the loci of names, similar to Rancière's attestation of the agency of words (*mots*). In each, we find a space of possibility between the objective and ossified categories which engulf unique events, and the experience of those events. However, Lazarus proposes names as the basic unit of history, which places him at odds with both Foucault and Rancière, who propose no basic units of history (Badiou, 2012, p. 87). An account of Lazarus' *L'anthropologie du nom* can be found in Badiou's *Metapolitics* (2005, p. 27-55.) A careful assessment of Lazarus, including an analysis of Lazarus and Bloch on the problem of *Time and Politics* (p. 19-26) can be found in Calcagno, A. (2007) "Abolishing Time and History: Lazarus and the Possibility of Thinking Political Events Outside Time" *Journal of French Philosophy* 17(2), 13-36. *L'anthropologie du nom* will be available in English translation in September, 2015. It would be interesting to determine whether Lazarus' concept of historical sequence is like or unlike Rancière's attestation to the appropriation of names *à la* his discussion of Tacitus.

While Braudel underplays the significance of the words of the poor, both explicitly and by omission, the works of Hobbes prove that contemporaries feared the multiplicity of voices, that they were active political agents. This sort of agency reaches its height in declaring a new legitimate force in politics: "the same illusion, then, assigns the body of the king an empty name (despot) and gives the multitude a name that fits only the sovereign body, the name people" (NH, 20). The French Revolution consolidates this inauguration of a new sovereign body, the people. However, historiography represents this new sovereign body through abstract personification, "the subject of history became an object, or rather, a place, among other places, for objects of history" (NH, 95). Whether this abstract personification is the nation of France, the Mediterranean Sea, or the not otherwise specified archive, the subject of the new historiography, from Michelet to the *Annales*, becomes a place.

In Rancière's terms, the subject-as-place places the new history at odds with the modern revolution. He writes:

> The modern revolution, whose birth Hobbes is witnessing, could be defined as follows: the revolution of the children of the Book, of the poor who are 'eager to write, to talk of themselves and others,' the proliferation of speakers who are outside their place and outside the truth, gathering the properties of the two great bodies of writing lingering within their reach, prophetic epilepsy and mimetic hydrophobia. It is a revolution of paperwork in which royal legitimacy and the principle of political legitimacy find themselves defeated, fragmented in the multiplication of speech and speakers who come to enact another legitimacy – the fantastical legitimacy of a people that has arisen between the lines of ancient history and of biblical writing. (NH, 20)

Rancière's description of the French Revolution is essentially a transfer of names from ancient texts to modern groups. In terms of names, the transition takes place between the "proper names of chronicling" to the "common names of science" (NH, 96). This a way of discussing the French revolution as a 'text effect,' and the transfer of conventions of ancient history (specifically names like *proletarian,* the wretched of the earth, etc.) and prophetic, universalistic tone of oracular biblical writing found in documents like the declaration of the rights of man, and the declaration of independence. This transition reaches a dramatic height at the end of Braudel's *Mediterranean.*

In Braudel's *Mediterranean*, the death of king Philip II is written as a metonymy. Rancière writes that "the displaced death of Philip II metaphorizes the death of a certain type of history, that of events and kings. The theoretical event on which this book closes is this: that the death of the king no longer constitutes an event. The death of the king signifies that kings are dead as centers and forces of history" (NH, 11). But does the 'new history' correspond with this political revolution? Certainly the 'new history' signals a transition away from the old objects of history: kings and the political elite. But does the 'new history' also change the subject of history from the elites?

What role should people play in historiography? Some analysis of this problem in the philosophy of history will help. At a glance, Rancière's axiom of equality, which asks us to posit that "the same intelligence is at work in all the acts of the human spirit" has striking similarity to a principle from Vico which states that "*verum et factum convertuntur* [the true and the factual are interchangeable]." With these remarks, Vico influenced an entire lineage of Marxist historiography, insofar as the object of history was thought to be human action. Georg Lukács, in *History and Class Consciousness, writes*

> Marx has recalled, in a quite different context, Vico's remark to the effect that 'the history of man is to be distinguished from the history of nature by the fact that we have made the one but not the other.' … The object of cognition can be known by us for the reason that, and to the degree in which, it has been created by ourselves. (Lukács, 112)

In this Marxist lineage, *homo faber* boasts a unique intelligibility as a historical object. Such declarations would make sense to Marc Bloch, who claimed that history was the "science of men in time" (HC, 27). Indeed, an entire section of the *Annales,* inspired by historians such as Michelet, would promote similar ideas through histories of mass movements, peasant life, and rural history.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Foucault, in heralding the 'death of man,' considers "man" to be "a face dawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (OT, 387). While there was a strong connection to more humanistic analysis among the *Annales,* it is important to note that Foucault's ideas did gain currency with some historians. For example, Le Roy Ladurie writes against "anthropocentric prejudice" (Le Roy Ladurie, 17). Further, he states that "it is mutilating the historian to make him into no more than a specialist of humanity" (Le Roy Ladurie, 20). Le Roy Ladurie, however, does not think that history will completely abandon anthropocentric prejudice; the historian "can and still most of the time will be Bloch's charming anthropophagous ogre" (Le Roy Ladurie, 20). However, it should be noted that those historians who cling to Foucault's anti-humanism tend towards scientistic histories. In either case, the issue of the proper object of historical analysis is still contested by historians, and tends to define disciplinary affiliations.

We can separate the previous problem, people as a unique historical object, with the problem of people as a unique historical subject. Foucault had many reasons, in the

previous chapter, for dismissing a generalized human subject, as did the *Annalistes* studying the *histoire des mentalités* in the first chapter. As it stands, these dissenting views point out a lack of consensus among the *Annales* historians and the theorists inspired by their work. We should note, however, that the latter problem as political currency, unlike the former. Various movements such as *Alltagsgeschichte,* feminist history, postcolonialism, and subaltern studies have stakes in the politics of historical representation, insofar as they attempt to account for contributions made by people who were ignored by earlier forms of historiography.[10]

Each contemporary historiographic movement from below disrupts the *Ancien Régime*'s historico-didactic paradigm of *historia magistra vitae.* As Koselleck writes in *Futures Past, historia magistra vitae* held that "history can instruct its contemporaries or their descendants on how to become more prudent or relatively better, but only as long as the given assumptions and conditions are fundamentally the same" (FP, 28). With such a philosophy of history, the past was considered "a continuous space of potential experience," which could be used for didactic purposes (FP, 28). Here, the subject and object of history coincided, with an elitist political register. Machiavelli's *Discourses* open by invoking the didactic function of history, stating that his commentary on Livy "will comprise what I have arrived at by comparing ancient with modern events, and think necessary for the better understanding of them, so that those who read what I have to say may the more easily draw those practical lessons which one should seek to obtain from the study of history" (Machiavelli, 206).

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[10] An example is Ranajit Guha's *'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India,' Subaltern Studies I, Oxford University Press (New Delhi), 1981,* wherein he writes that earlier historiographies of India "fails to acknowledge, far less interpret, the contribution made by the people *on their own,* that is, *independently of the elite*" (Guha, 2).

Of course, histories of elite politics leave many gaps, as Brecht expressed in *Question From a Worker who Reads:*

> Who built Thebes of the 7 gates?
> In the books you will read the names of kings.
> Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?

Within the 19th and 20th centuries, these gaps in knowledge were filled, partly in thanks to the *Annales*. However, the new 'history from below' emphasizes the agency of the historian over the agency of the historically represented. E.P. Thompson, in *Making of the English Working Class,* wrote: "I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded followers of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity" ('English Working Class', 12). In the transition to the 'history from below' conventions from the heroic individual paradigm are applied to the historian, resulting in a sort of soteriological philosophy of history, whereby people from the past await the intervention of the historian. The new 'history from below' represents an incomplete transformation from the paradigm of the *Ancien Régime*, *historia magistra vitae.*

Rancière works with an alternative model of historical reconstruction. Here, it is again necessary to turn to the works of Roland Barthes. In his *Michelet,* Barthes offers a version of historical practice which seems to align with Rancière's. Barthes writes:

> For Michelet the historical mass is not a puzzle to reconstitute, it is a body to embrace. The historian exists only to recognize a warmth… the roots of historical truth are therefore the documents as voices, not as witnesses. Michelet considers in tem, exclusively, that quality of having been an attribute of life, the privileged object of which clings a kind of residual memory of past bodies. Thus, the closer the document comes to a voice,

> the less it departs from the warmth which has produced it, and the more it is the true foundation of historical credibility. ('Michelet', 81)

Instead of, like Furet, claiming that historians need to eliminate the ambiguity of their source material, or, like Ginzberg, highlighting the connection between the judge and the historian, who both interrogate and mediate, Rancière, in attempting to embrace the "excess of words" seems to be advocating a position closer to auto-ethnography than historiography (NH, 24). The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to this problem, which can be identified as a competition between the historian and the voices of the past.

In the *Names of History,* Rancière takes a unique stance on this problem by developing a criticism of Braudel. The passage which incited Rancière reads as follows:

> We must learn to distrust this history with its still burning passions, as it was felt, described and lived by contemporaries whose lives were as short and as short-sighted as ours. It has the dimensions of their anger, dreams or illusions. In the sixteenth century, after the true Renaissance, came the Renaissance of the poor, the humble, eager to write, to talk of themselves and of others. This precious mass of paper distorts, filling up the lost hours and assuming a false importance. The historian who takes a seat in Philip II's chair and reads his papers finds himself transported into a strange one-dimensional world, a world of strong passions certainly, blind like any other living world, our own included, and unconscious of the deeper realities of history, of the running waters on which our frail barks are tossed like cockleshells. (quoted in NH, 17)

In this methodological preface, Braudel expresses his distrust of those 'eager to write,' stating that this 'precious mass of paper' assumes a 'false importance.' Further, Braudel ascribes to the poor an ignorance of their own position, a historiographical version of a dominant ideology thesis. Armed with the tragic insight of posterity, Braudel asserts

that this world, like all others, is blind to circumstance. Clearly, he has in mind the categories of the *longue durée,* which escape the notice of all individuals caught up within them. However, it is important to note that this passage is not accompanied by sufficient evidence to scientifically support Braudel's claims. Rather, the passage takes the form of a narrative. Rancière advances a criticism of Braudel couched in the language of Platonic categories, the *mythos* of the poor against the *logos* of the historian.[11] He notes:

> What the historian here seems to propose to us, outside all determined reference, is a fable that unites the literal and the figurative of the amphibology: something like a Platonic *muthos* where the poor do not represent any defined social category but rather an essential relation with non-truth. (NH, 18)

Braudel argues that the 'mass of paper,' while 'precious' works as a sort of red herring. However, Braudel's methodological exposition is presented as a story, and so, Rancière argues, the conventions of literature are used to back the legitimacy of history. All of the aspects which are part of the historian's judgement are left out of the narrative. It is also interesting to note the manner in which Braudel describes the writing of the poor, as eager *speech*.

The Archive's Pulse

Rancière argues that the *Annales* do not portray words as active agents, when contemporaries, such as Hobbes, feared them. Testimonial information does not enter into a 'history from below.' Instead, Rancière portrays the *Annales* historian as a mediator, stating that "to pass from the history of events to that of structures, one must

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[11] These are also Vico's categories in the chapter entitled "poetic logic:" "The word logic comes from Greek *logos,* which at first properly meant fable, or *fabula* in Latin, which later changed into Italian *favela*, speech. In Greek, a fable was also called *mythos,* myth, from which is derived Latin *mutus,* mute" (New Science, Section 401, p. 157). It is interesting to note that Vico's discussion claims that *logos* is dependent on narrative, which seems to be Rancière's main conceit.

separate the masses from their non-truth" (NH, 22). Hence, within Rancière's criticism, the poor and the masses are held in analytic tension. He writes that "the poor, in the allegory of the science of historical study, represent the obverse of the 'good' object of knowledge, the masses" (NH, 18).

The renaissance of the poor, which ought to be indicated by the new mass of paper, is instead substituted for the Mediterranean. If we accept Rancière's view, that the nation, once represented by the land, is instead represented by the people, that the *Annales* history regresses in portraying the Mediterranean as the main subject. (Hans Kellner in *Disorderly Conduct: Braudel's Mediterranean Satire* choses to read the work as a satire for precisely these reasons.) The political and poetic elements of Rancière's criticism demonstrate that within *Annales* historiography, the masses are represented as objects through scientific means like demography. This retrospective version of history evacuates the critical potential found in the appropriation of names, in order to secure the historian's epistemic certainty.

Rancière's rejoinder entails listening to the past as it is spoken - much like Barthes' version of Michelet. However, the revival of the voices of the past borders between the two extremes of fiction and auto-ethnography. Ricœur observes:

> This granting of speech is particularly ineluctable in the case of the 'poor,' the anonymous, even when grievances, records lend support. The substituted discoursed is basically antimimetic; it does not exist, it produces the hidden: it says what these others might say. (MHF, 342)

While, in Rancière's view, Braudel's historiography of the poor is bound to a number of Platonic categories bound to mimetic representation, the "anti-mimetic" history is relegated to the subjunctive register. History *as if,* not history *as it was.*

Rancière's *Nights of Labor*, with the exception of the preface, contains a Benevistian separation between discourse and self-attestation. The narration takes the third person: "His name is Armand Hennequin, aged twenty-seven; born in Belgium of a French father, the chief customs collector there" (NL, 137). Self-attestation, primarily found in the use of "I" phrases, is found only in quoted excerpts of worker's writings, as in "I have already told you: I no longer have faith in time. I no longer believe in its organic missions. My existence is too twisted by its subversions" (NL, 232).

There is a subjunctive reconstruction of the past present; "In this month of September 1841" (3). There is also the use of shifters within discourse to produce the 'zigzag or sawtooth' effect to which Barthes did attest:

> *When* a caste of masters was not making him spend time in prison, individual masters employing him *would* assure him earnings of 2,000 to 2,400 francs a year and *readily* entrust the management of their workshops to a man who cast such a spell on their workers. In the last prison he *would* enter, which the government of the bourgeois caste *would* let him leave only as a dying man, he *would* again ask his wife to send him "the illustrated Gospels my boss gave me as a present that fortnight when I went to so much trouble for his big order. That privileged relationship certainly *put* him in the best position *to lead* the battle for the recognition of those workers without anything to offer in the struggle except the risk of combat itself. (NL, 43)

Further, the use of first person pronouns is restricted to quotes from the archived materials. In this sense, the 'subject' of the work remains the workers. Largely, the historian fades into the background.

At this point, a number of similarities between positivist historiography and Rancière's revisionist historiography are apparent. First, there is the recourse to the subjunctive, found in Seignobos' *La méthode historique appliquée aux sciences sociales:*

> The condition for understanding a social fact is that one represent to oneself the man or group of men who are its author; and that one be able to link it to a psychological state, very vaguely defined, perhaps, but sufficiently known to allow us to understand it – the motive for the act. (quoted in NH, p108n)

Where the *Annales* developed an entire theoretical apparatus devoted to studying feelings, sentiments and interior states, committed as they were against the anachronism of positivistic historiography, the reconstruction of motive relies on a subjunctive space, an *as if* terrain in which to play out the past scene in question. Put another way, where the problem of historical place is given fresh reconsideration by the *Annales,* such that they virtually abandon the "non-place" found in the old histories, Rancière, by promoting this "non-place" as the privileged site of the marginalized and the voiceless, inherits the conceptual baggage which the specification of place sought to avoid outright.

Second, and more importantly, there is the positivistic distain for the historian's intervention or entrance to the scene of events. Rancière's solution, as outlined in this chapter, is to lend the historian's voice to those who were previously visible, but mute. What then, of the historian? Ought the historian to become invisible, as the discussion of Braudel's interlope on Phillippe II might suggest? It seems important to note here that the issue encountered in Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* concerning the place of the archaeologist is also present in Rancière's *Names of History.*

While Foucault's *Archeology* did not directly address the political stakes of historiography, Rancière's *Names of History* does offer us two forms of political closure. First, his critique of the 'history from below' current informs us of the gap between histories as intellectual products, and those represented through those histories. Second, his anti-mimetic theory of poetics promises to secure the voice of the past in writing, which found application in *Nights of Labor.* From these two points, it follows that the political currency of historiography may be challenged by squaring the gap between a history as a material product and those whom it represents. Unlike Foucault's *Archaeology,* Rancière's criticisms do seem to allow for application. However, it is troubling that both accounts fail to offer an account of the historian which is neither a methodological regression nor an oversight.

By way of a conclusion, let's take note that Rancière offers us none. The interlaced discussion, which has offered us insight into poetics and discourse analysis, politics and historiography, concludes with what many other theorists of history have noticed: that the past remains open. Open to interrogation, open to appropriation, inconclusive and indeterminate. No science or archeology is bound to radically transform that circumstance. Historiography, however, continues to amass insights in its transformations, methodological digressions and regressions. Our second order reflections on the 'third level' here draw to a close, without the aid of a fitting metaphor or didactic supplement.

Conclusion

The first chapter was largely expository, insofar as it attempted to establish a number of conceptual, factual and historical bases necessary to acquaint the reader with my subject of research. Through an analysis of the conflict of the faculties, we found that the *Annales* historians were engaged in a reinvigoration of historical study, and did so by way of political and methodological justifications for their work. These historians decried the positivism, nationalism and documentary fidelity of previous historical approaches in order to develop a myriad of research agendas that stressed the importance of the historian's intervention, used methods of social sciences, and sought explanation of phenomena previously ignored in history. For the purpose of our analysis, it was important to have this account in order to assess some aspects of Foucault and Rancière's work which could be considered methodological regressions to positivism. Primarily, the problem of the place of the historian is resolved by neither thinker.

Within the first chapter, we first raised the issue of the "event," which raised two interrelated problems. The *Annales* historians first found issue with events as the 'emic unit' of historical study, the result of an unspoken consensus of earlier historians. Their problematization of the event was radicalized in the work of Foucault, who arguably attempted to raise discursive statements to the level of an emic unit of his archaeological method. As we have seen, the issue at stake is the question of duration in the construction of historical works, and whether the duration unit ought to correspond to the faculties of human perception. Braudel's *longue durée,* Rancière's *mot* and Foucault's *énoncé* each vie to establish a new elementary unit of historical study. As I am myself of the conviction that there are no basic units of historical study, it would be interesting to

explore these issues in a seminar setting. For this purpose, I have included a model syllabus as an appendix [See appendix A].

Opposite to the problem of the basic unit of historical study is the old problem of philosophy of history regarding the status of laws. The *Annales* historians use of *mentalités* assailed the previously unassailable law of historical writing, chronology. The analysis of church time and merchant time in the middle ages, found in Jacques Le Goff's *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (29-42), is an especially pertinent example. There are also the achronological studies of Braudel.

Foucault issued a radical challenge to the use of cause and effect, which ought to be considered the other unassailable law of historical writing. Roger Chartier's *On the Edge of the Cliff* (esp. 57-60), treated in the second chapter of my thesis, contains the most well thought exposition of the matter I encountered in my readings, and his conclusion is worthy of reproduction:

> Thinking of the Enlightenment as a sheaf of practices without discourse (or outside discourse)--- in any event, of practices irreducible to the ideological affirmations intended to justify them—is perhaps the surest way to avoid teleological readings of the French eighteenth century (which are more persistent than one might think) that view if from the standpoint of its necessary end point, the Revolution, and retain in it only what led to that supposedly necessary outcome: the Enlightenment. (OEC, 60)

While we found the evidence to support Chartier's claim that De Tocqueville's *The Old Regime and the Revolution* is an example of such a non-teleological reading impartial at best, it is clear that the sections of Braudel's *Civilization and Capitalism* analyzed in the second chapter suffer from teleological tailoring. However, it is unclear if Foucault's *The*

Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century is a preferable alternative, in that it merely reverses the two elements found in a cause and effect relationship in other scholarship.

A sub-analysis of this problem is at work in *The Names of History,* where Rancière repurposes Michelet. I would restate this problem as whether or not people can be said to be retrospectively bound to structures and trends. Rancière clearly advocates for a sort of historical reconstruction which preserves the agency of the past, rather than merely protecting the past from condescension *à la* E.P. Thompson. Within Rancière's work, this issue is bound to the difference between text and voice, an issue familiar to students of philosophy from Plato to Derrida. Rancière's position is better stated by Barthes, who said

> The closer the document comes to a voice, the less it departs from the warmth which has produced it, and the more it is the true foundation of historical credibility. ('Michelet', 81)

Where historical credibility was once founded on documentary criticism, Michelet sought to restore historical credibility back to *vie.* Where the legacy of Michelet is concerned, we find some similarities between Rancière and Febvre. Where Fevbre called for a history of psychological states, sentiments and emotions, which found application in the *histoire des mentalités,* Rancière saw fit instead to restore the place of the *mot* without scaffolding. There is a connection to be found between Foucault's advocacy for a direct reading of archival statements, and Rancière's restoration of the *mot.* While it is my position that the *histoire des mentalités* answered the concerns of Michelet more directly, there is something to be said for the rigor of both Foucault and Rancière in proposing alternatives to this paradigm.

Attempt at a Self-Criticism

Now that the findings of my research have been condensed and stated, it is time to point out the issues contained therein.

The first and most obvious concern to raise is the number of authors left out or given a marginal role in my work. In terms of theorists, why did I not include Michel de Certeau, Pierre Nora, Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Bourdieu and François Hartog? Each of these thinkers are natural fits for the subject material, and in many cases, more obvious choices than those thinkers I did choose to analyze. I now recognize places where these theorists would have enabled me to say more with less. Their exclusion was not calculated, but simply a logistical oversight of catching my reading up to my writing.

The same can be said of my selection of historians. I regret at this late hour not including more of the works of Natalie Zemon Davis, as I originally planned to include the figure of Jean de Coras from *The Return of Martin Guerre* (p. 94 - 103) as a case study for my third chapter. The exclusion of Ernest Labrousse, the Chaunus, Michel Vovelle and Georges Duby was to conserve space, as I found I could explain similar ideas with other authors. Finally, I chose not to write on the generation of thinkers prior to the *Annales,* such as Henri Pirenne, François Simiand, Henri Berr, and Paul Vidal de la Blache, in order to give some chronological boundary to the scope of my research. I never intended to write an exhaustive history of the *Annales* movement, as better sources than I could hope to produce already exist.

An apt criticism to raise is that the concepts explored in this work are not relevant enough to the dominant interests or trends of academic history as it is practiced today. Why did I study a set of Eurocentric thinkers? Why did I not see fit to include

more feminist, queer and postcolonial criticism? In historical study, luminaries who anticipate future consensus are exceptions, not the rule. It is difficult to find fault with the past for not containing the innovations of the present. I now realize that I might have counter-acted these gaps by including more contemporary scholars. While I did manage to find the works of Sanjay Subrahmanya and Ranajit Guha, who applied *Annales* concepts to India, I do not consider myself well versed on the international reception history of the school. These concerns would have been difficult to integrate, although subaltern, feminist and/or queer theorists might find something of value in my third chapter.

There are also the external constraints to consider. Theses at the Centre for Theory and Criticism are required to contain "formal statements of theory" and as such are required to reference the work of a small canon of authors. This is primarily the reason for the attention paid to Michel Foucault. Further, Theses in the Centre are required to meet a certain standard of interdisciplinary research. While I consider it a bit of a catachresis to call an individual's effort interdisciplinary (rather than reserving the term to describe the research of a group on a particular problem), this standard was also formative for the course of my research, insofar as meeting it required some breadth.

One unique aspect of my research is that I assembled and discussed the texts in which historiography is engaged by Foucault and Rancière, but also other "French theorists" like Roland Barthes and Paul Ricœur. While there are similar themes in these engagements, like causality, agency and representation, each have particular topics. While Ricœur, reflecting on the *Annales* and other French historians, figures them as a contribution to a theory of history, Foucault drew from the serial historians of the *Annales* in order to support his method of discontinuity. Foucault transformed some of

the *Annales* concepts in his own applications, such as the concept of 'event.' The impetus to theorize this concept clearly comes from the *Annales* historians, in their attempt to distance their own histories from positivistic chronicles. Further applications of this concept ought to take this impetus into account. Rancière, while perhaps engaging Furet above the other *Annalistes,* primarily reads the *Annales* in order to criticize their political claims, and their claims to scientific legitimacy. Rancière's reflections on the politics of historiography have wider implications, which are beyond the scope of this research. We also find that Rancière's criticisms did find application in his own historical works, like *The Nights of Labor,* which created a history from partial evidence, and which features the voices of those who make up those histories. I included analyses of the historical works of the *Annales*, Foucault and also Rancière in order to demonstrate that their historiographic reflections were not idle, and found applications which demonstrate their strengths and weaknesses in a more accessible manner.

Coda: The Antimony of Surface and Depth, a Sketch

Throughout the course of my research, I was often occasioned to reflect on the differences I have found between the approaches of a group of scholars I studied in my first thesis, primarily German philosophers and theorists on the subject of history, and the theorists and historians of this work.

The German authors I have studied tended to pay more attention to the figure of the historian, whether Benjamin's *Flâneur* reflecting on the similitude of appearances, Nietzsche's portraits of the monumental, antiquarian and critical historians, or Siegfried Kracauer's historian in the waiting room. Further, these authors were primarily concerned with the direct political effects of history, whether they found it lacking, as in the case of Nietzsche, or deeply troubling, *à la* Benjamin and Koselleck. As such, they supplement a lack of concern with the place, position and figure of the historian in French thought.

In contrast, the French authors tended to pay far more attention to deep stratum of the historical past, often without direct relevance for the present. Often, this was an intentional gesture, as in the case of the *histoire des mentalités,* Foucault's rejection of past-as-origin, or Rancière's mass of paper. Between German and French thinkers, each assumes a *locui* of history, whether the archive or the public square. I consider this difference to represent an antimony in 20th century historical thought, the antimony of surface and depth. Admittedly, these are general contours likely to admit of exception. However, it would be interesting to engage these differences in the course of further research, and satisfying to soothe my impulse to revise my earlier work and temper some of its more excessive claims.

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Appendix A: Model Syllabus
History and Theory: The Problem of Historiographic Determinism

This seminar aims explore the tension between history and theory through three interwoven controversies. The main theme explored in these controversies is determinism in history. Do descriptions of structures and trends having binding status on the individuals and groups contained therein? How can historians realistically demonstrate human agency in their work? Is it possible to write the history of a problem, rather than the history of a period? In order to give sense to these questions, we will relate this overarching problem to three modules throughout the course.
First, we will study the *Annales* historians, by exploring the controversy surrounding the research agenda known as *l'histoire des mentalités.* In this research agenda, and its applications, we encounter some new imperatives of 20th century historical scholarship: how to faithfully represent very remote historical periods as autonomous units? How to analyze phenomena through indirect historical evidence, such as emotion and sentiment? Can these insights enable us understand the present?

Second, we will examine how the problem of causality found new applications in the work of Fernand Braudel and Michel Foucault. We will compare their research agendas, and then compare these agendas with historical works from both thinkers that describe the same events. Between these authors, we encounter two novel solutions to etiological problems raised by *l'histoire des mentalités.* Can we avoid causal determinism in historical writing through a description of structures and trends? How then, to describe changes and transformations in these structures? Is it possible to reconcile historical experience with historical transition?

Third, we will read the theoretical work of Jacques Rancière. In doing so, we will apply our earlier findings to the questions of agency, trace and reconstruction found in *The Names of History*. Here, Rancière proposes a model of historical reconstruction based on of the impartial appropriation of the past for revolutionary means. Is it possible to reconstruct the past through impartial evidence? What does this tell us about the historical development of historiography? We will explore these issues by reading a work of historical reconstruction, *The Return of Martin Guerre,* by Natalie Zemon Davis, with special attention to the sections on our witness to the events, Jean De Coras.

1: Introduction: Does History Need Theory?

Koselleck, Reinhart. "The Need for Theory in the Discipline of History." Trans. Kerstin Behnke. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Ed. Todd Samuel Presner. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. 1-19.

Novack, George. "Major Theories of History from the Greeks to Marxism" in *Understanding History* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/novack/works/history/ch04.htm>

2: Survey of Literature

Ricœur, Paul. *The Contribution of French Historiography to the Theory of History*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980.

<u>Module I – Mentalités and determinism</u>

3: *Mentalités as Research Agenda*

Febvre, Lucien. "Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the past" & "Witchcraft: nonsense or a mental revolution?" *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre*. Trans. Peter Burke. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973. 12-26; 185-192.

4: *Mentalités; Applied Agenda*

Ariès, Philippe. *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*. Trans. Patricia M. Ranum. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.

Barthes, Roland. "For a Psychosociology of the Contemporary Diet." *Histories: French Constructions of the past*. Ed. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt. New York: New, 1998. 90-98

Goff, Jacques Le. "Merchants Time and Church's Time in the Middle Ages." *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1980. 29-42.

5: *Mentalités and determinism*

"Mentalities: A History of Ambiguities." *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology*. Ed. Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985. 166-80.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Ed. Bernard Williams. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001. 34-35; 175. (§§ 7, 308) 'Something for the industrious' & 'The history of everyday'

Recommended:

Ricœur, Paul. "Promoting the History of Mentalities." *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2004. 188-200.

Module II- Method, Structure and Causality

6: Research Agendas of Braudel and Foucault

Braudel, Fernand. "The Longue Durée." *On History*. Trans. Sarah Matthews. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1980. 25-54.

Foucault, Michel. "Introduction" & "Archaeology and the History of Ideas." *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon, 1972. 3-17; 135-140.

Recommended:

Chartier, Roger. "The Chimera of the Origin: Archaeology of Knowledge, Cultural History, and the French Revolution." Trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997. 51-71.

7: Foucault and Braudel on Health in the 18th Century

Braudel, Fernand. "The Eighteenth Century: Watershed of Biological Regimes." *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th-18th Century: The Structures of Everyday Life*. Trans. Siân Reynolds. Vol. 1. London: Collins, 1984. 70-91.

Foucault, Michel. "The Politics of Health in the 18th Century." *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980. 166-82.

8: History from Below and the Politics of Historiography

Hobsbawm, E. J. "On History from Below." *On History*. New York: New, 1997. 201-16.

Rancière, Jacques. '"Le social": the lost tradition in French Labour history,' in *People's History and Socialist Theory,* ed. Raphael Samuel. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 267-72.

Recommended:

Lüdtke, Alf. "What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners." *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1995. 3-30.

Badiou, Alain. "Rancière and the Community of Equals Rancière and Apolitics." *Metapolitics*. Trans. Jason Barker. London: Verso, 2005. 107-23.

Module III – Agency, Trace and Reconstruction

9: Rancière: The Appropriation of Names

Rancière, Jacques. "A Secular Battle"& "the Dead King" *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*. Trans. Hassan Melehy. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota, 1994. 1-23.

Supplement:

Tacitus. *The Annals of Imperial Rome.* 1.16.

Hobbes. *The Leviathan.* Ch. 17. / *De cive* V.5

10: Rancière: Historiographic Representation

Rancière, Jacques. "The Excess of Words" & " The Founding Narrative" *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*. Trans. Hassan Melehy. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota, 1994. 24-60.

Supplement:

Aristotle. *Poetics*. 1447a.

11: Rancière: Historiographic Reconstruction

Rancière, Jacques. "A Heretical History" *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*. Trans. Hassan Melehy. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota, 1994. 88-103.

Supplement:

Barthes, Roland. "Death-as-sleep and Death-as-sun." *Michelet*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1987. 81-97.

12: Case Study; the role of Jean de Coras

Davis, Natalie Zemon. *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983. *esp:* 94-122.

Supplement:

Foucault, Michel. "Lives of Infamous Men." *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*. Ed. James D. Faubion. London: Penguin, 2002. 157-75.

Curriculum Vitae

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Publications:

Guzzi, Eric. (2015). Book Review [Nietzsche and the Drama of Historiobiography by Roberto Alejandro]. *Foucault Studies, no 19, 241-243.*

Guzzi, Eric *et al,* eds. *Chiasma: A Site for Thought* 2 (2015)

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