The Historical Journal, 43, 2 (2000), pp. 517–541 Printed in the United Kingdom
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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

WORD *AND* DEED: WHY A *POST*-POSTSTRUCTURAL HISTORY IS NEEDED, AND HOW IT MIGHT LOOK*

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ABSTRACT. *This essay reviews the contribution of Foucauldian poststructural theory to history. It retrieves its origins as a supplement to, not a negation of, the structuralisms of the* Annales. *Histories of discourses influenced by modish (Barthesian, gender, post-colonial, Cultural Studies…) paradigms often overlook this heritage. They take,* 'il n'y a pas hors de texte' *at face value. This essay suggests ways to re-assimilate historical studies of discourses with older historiographies of classes, institutions, social structures, and ideologies. Poststructural historiography today tends to focus only on discourses, confusing coherence with power, meanings with causes. Making use of Giddens's structuration, de Certeau's* reçu *and Bourdieu's* pratique, *I suggest that historians must seek out actions as well as words, looking for sites where discourses they find in one sphere affect another. Only then can historians assess the importance of the discourses they find, above and beyond their mere coherence.*

> In talk, mark carefully what is being said, and when action is afoot, what is being done. In the latter case, look at once to see what is purposed; and in the other, make certain what is meant.
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> Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (170s), bk VII, ch. 4

> Entre l'action et la pensée, il n'est pas de cloison. Il n'est pas de barrière.
>
> Lucien Febvre (1941) in his *Combats pour l'histoire* (Paris, 1953), p. 32

I

Historians have always struggled to reconcile their social science with their story-telling and rhetoric. The point applies as much to treatments of their sources as to their methods. Always claiming to define and describe things past and actual, history cannot agree on what these are or were. The confusion may derive from the fact that, alone among scholarly endeavours shaping our lives, history claims to be the studying and the

* Colleagues helped me by agreeing and disagreeing; Richard Broome, John Cashmere, Inga Clendinnen, Anthony Disney, Alan Frost, Katie Holmes, C. Behan McCullagh, Peter McPhee, Judith Richards, and R. Barrie Rose. I am indebted to Jonathan Steinberg for his insights and patience.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X99001193 Published online by Cambridge University Press

studied, the explainer and the explained, *le signifiant* and *le signifié*.[1] There is confusion about the nature of its actualities and the best of its methods. Is history's 'actual' structure, story or discourse; *une donnée* or *une crée*?[2]

Historians differ on how to solve the problem. One group emphasizes rhetorical forms: after Michel Foucault, they find discourses hidden in the performances of their subjects or, following Clifford Geertz, they tell stories manifested to them by the performances of their subjects.[3] They and their devotees disdain the social structures beloved by the old 'Lego-like' structuralist social sciences.[4] Foucault likened them to 'a globalized description … a game of relationships'.[5] He had the classic developmental sociologies of Marx, Comte, and Weber in mind, with their ongoing trends and interlocking systems of social structures, classes, economics, and ideologies. Foucault's 'Lego-less' sense of the past resembled a lingering smell instead: 'no system, so much as a hard labour of liberty; which had no form, so much as ceaseless effort of a consciousness taking itself in hand and trying to retrieve itself to the very limit of its conditions'.[6] History is then labelled 'cultural', seen as pervaded by the yarns, reflexes, and posturings that are discourses, though they must find material expression.[7] But then

[1] On historico-socio-linguistics adapting the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure: Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris, 1969), Part 3; a translation by A. M. Sheridan-Smith is *The archaeology of knowledge* (London, 1972). On History's dualism: Michel de Certeau, 'Making history: problems of method and problems of meaning', first published in *Recherches de science religieuse*, 58 (1970), pp. 481–520, and trans. T. Conley as *The writing of history* (New York, 1988), ch. 1, pp. 19–56 at p. 21; Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, p. 17.

[2] The debate began and burgeoned in France: first through Foucault for all the social sciences (as trumpeted in '*Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 120–1, 130, 143), then via de Certeau especially for historians, first in his 'L'opération historique', in J. Le Goff and P. Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire* (3 vols., Paris, 1974), I, pp. 3–41, at pp. 16–21 (T. Conley translated a revised version as ch. 2 in de Certeau's *The writing of history*), and then in his *L'invention du quotidien: arts de faire* (1980; 2nd edn, Paris, 1990), Part I (S. Randall's translation is *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley, 1984)). British historians of class relations and class consciousness evinced belated interest: debaters battled in *Social History* with bumptious Albion buzzwords like 'being' and 'knowing', 'decentring' and 'totalizing', 'linguistic determinism' and 'external referents', 'agency' and 'mechanistic materialism' to redefine (discursively) or redefend (structurally) received senses of the 'social' in social history: Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor, then Patrick Joyce, 18(1993), pp. 1–15, 81–5, David Mayfield and Susan Thorne on pp. 219–33; James Vernon in 19 (1994), pp. 81–97, Neville Kirk on pp. 221–40; Joyce again in 20 (1995), pp. 73–91, and finally the editors, Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, on pp. 355–64. Alan Munslow's *Deconstructing history* (London, 1997) is a cogent exposition of the principal standpoints, foreign and domestic.

[3] Classic statements of Geertz's 'ethnographic' approach are his *Interpretation of cultures: selected essays* (New York, 1973), *Local knowledge: further essays in interpretive anthropology* (New York, 1983), and *Negara: the theatre state in nineteenth-century Bali* (Princeton, 1980).

[4] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 9–11, 19–23, 36, 159–60. In Joyce and Vernon's essays, cited in no. 2, such affectations become provocations. In Geertz's early work, however, the socio-economic was as much emphasized as the socio-cultural: *Peddlers and princes: social change and economic modernization in two Indonesian towns* (Chicago, 1963) and *Agricultural involution: the process of ecological change in Indonesia* (Berkeley, 1963).

[5] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 19, 23: 'une description globale … un jeu de relations'.

[6] Ibid., p. 23: 'ne serait pas système, mais dur travail de la liberté; qui ne serait pas forme, mais effort incessant d'une conscience se reprenant elle-même et essayait de se ressaisir jusqu'au plus profond de ses conditions'.

[7] On claims for 'cultural' history: ibid., p. 261; Roger Chartier, 'Introduction' (1988), and 'Intellectual history and the history of *mentalités*: a dual evaluation' (1980), in his *Cultural history: between practices and representations*, trans. L. Cochrane (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 1–16, 19–52; Lynn

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again, it is hard to imagine such ephemeral things as powerful, let alone persistent, in any of the old senses of the 'social' world, the ones shaped by material factors.[8] Emphases on artifice and immateriality in new poststructural historiographies may only reflect our own age, blasé about soundbites, used to fleeting images. The fleeting, hyper-particularized past of this breed of historians is said to have to be understood on its own terms.[9] Their past 'is another country', a 'world we have lost'.[10] They say it cannot occasion arguments about the causes and consequences of anything but itself, not for any other time, not for our present.[11] Recurrence becomes 'a convenient illusion'.[12] Every occurrence is particular. It somehow has to be unique.

For the other group of historians, the past is still a site in which to apply the old social sciences of place, process, structure, and function. Recurrence for them is a convenient fact. Occurrence to them always seems patterned by something more than itself. Some of this second group of historians are zealots: to outdo sociology, they want hesitant historians to develop their own social theories, though usually – it seems – in the illustrious Marxist and Weberian traditions.[13] Others of this group are wary; they are content to adapt and apply received social sciences to history.[14] Either way, both their

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Hunt, 'Introduction', in her *The new cultural history* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 1–22; Gérard Noiriel, 'Foucault and history: lessons of a disillusion', *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), pp. 547–68, at pp. 565–6; C. Behan McCullagh, *The truth of history* (London and New York, 1998), p. 156. On discourses having a material base: Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 131–2, 157.

[8] Kirk in *Social History*, 19 (1994), at p. 226; Gabrielle Spiegel, 'History, historicism and the social logic of the text in the middle ages', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), pp. 59–76, at pp. 63–9.

[9] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 9–28, 205; de Certeau in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 19–20.

[10] David Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country* (Cambridge, 1985); Peter Laslett, *The world we have lost* (London, 1965).

[11] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 12, 19–22, 32, 37, 177, 182–3, 187–8, 198, 213; Patricia O'Brien, 'Foucault's history of culture', in Hunt, ed., *The new cultural history*, pp. 25–46, at p. 43; Chartier, 'Intellectual history', in his *Cultural history*, pp. 23–4, 34; de Certeau, 'Making history', in his *The writing of history*, pp. 22–7.

[12] Rhys Isaac, 'Power and meaning: event and text: history and anthropology', in D. Merwick, ed., *Dangerous liaisons: essays in honour of Greg Dening* (Melbourne, 1994), pp. 297–315 at p. 311.

[13] Gareth Stedman-Jones, 'History: the poverty of empiricism' (1972), in R. Blackburn, ed., *Ideology in social science: readings in critical social theory* (London, 1977), ch. 6, and his 'From historical sociology to theoretial history', *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (1976), pp. 295–305 (and in R. S. Neale, ed., *History and class: essential readings in theory and interpretation* (Oxford, 1983), ch. 5). Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), pp. 547–68, at p. 564, considers this approach is too ambitious for historians.

[14] François Furet, 'Introduction' (1982) and 'From narrative history to problem-oriented history' (1975), in his *In the workshop of history*, trans. J. Mandelbaum and S. Contini (Chicago, 1984), and his 'Histoire et ethnologie: l'histoire et "l'homme sauvage"', in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel* (2 vols., Toulouse, 1973), II: *Méthodologie de l'histoire et des sciences humaines*, pp. 227–33, at pp. 230–2; Emmanuel Le Roi Ladurie, 'L'historien et l'ordinateur' (1968), in his *Le territoire d'historien* (Paris, 1973), pp. 11–12; Charles Tilly, *As sociology meets history* (London, 1981), ch. 1; Michael Hanagan, 'Teaching historical sociology', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 23 (1990), pp. 121–5; Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), at pp. 566–8; Sylvia Thrupp, 'History and sociology: new opportunities for co-operation', *American Journal of Sociology*, 53 (1957), pp. 11–16 (and in R. Grew and N. Steneck, eds., *Society and history: essays by Sylvia Thrupp* (Ann Arbor, 1977)); Neale, 'Afterword', in his *History and class*, ch. 13; Fernand Braudel, *L'identitié de France: espace et histoire* (3 vols., Paris, 1986), I, pp. 8–10. These works exemplify social science histories: Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the absolutist state* (London,

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senses of a past are still structural, even scientific, informed by and informing our present, always postulating, aggregating, correlating, and experimenting. Their past is not self-contained. On the one hand, as methods, their social sciences performed in their present may help to reveal a past. On the other, as social structures, the un- or under-perceived orderings of social sciences in a past – as trends and patterns, processes, and functions – may help to shape that past.

We need both kinds of history. If we have only the second kind, the social-sciened, we turn history into teleology, finding in the past only what we want to recognize by the sciences and arts of our present.[15] What would happen to our sense of wonder? But if we only have the first kind of history, the rhetoricized, we only recover a past in its otherness, bereft of context. We find it – by a 'post-' something, or with a hip 'new historicism' or via modish 'cultural studies' – as simply a particularity lost to us.[16] Theory-speak and highbrow antiquarianism result.[17] And still, no one can make sense of the plethora of particulars that result when the splinterers' scholarship spurns structures, causes, narratives, and generalizations. Writers and readers are even emboldened to consider novels as better than history in evoking something other and particular in a past.[18]

This review seeks to curb these excesses. It endeavours to do so by reintegrating structuralist social-science perspectives into history's mainstream. Far from rejecting history's 'linguistic turn', however, I seek to complement it.[19] History's resort to new

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1974); Theda Skocpol, *States and social revolutions: a comparative analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge, 1981); Charles Tilly, *The Vendée* (London, 1964); Barrington Moore, *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy* (Boston, 1967); Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), at pp. 564–5, cites the Bielefeld School in Germany (Hans-Ülrich Wehler, Jürgen Kocka). These works assess the nature and methods of social science histories: Theda Skocpol, ed., *Vision and method in historical sociology* (Cambridge, 1984); Reinhard Bendix, 'Concepts and generalizations in comparative sociological studies', *American Sociological Review*, 28 (1963), pp. 532–9 (and in *Embattled reason: essays in social knowledge* (New York, 1970), ch. 7); Victoria Bonnell, 'The uses of theory, concepts and comparison in historical sociology', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22 (1980), pp. 156–73.

[15] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 22, 159; Furet in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, pp. 230–1.

[16] De Certeau, 'Preface to the English translation', in *The practice of everyday life*, p. ix.

[17] Consider Ann Curthoys and John Docker's 'Time, eternity, truth and death: history as allegory', *Humanities Research* (1999), pp. 5–26. In my opinion, this is self-indulgence masquerading as scholarship: if allegory is the new essence of history, why bother with argumentative prose, footnotes, and evidence?

[18] Consider the licence taken by Simon Schama's *Dead certainties: unwarranted speculations* (New York, 1991). Schama is only articulating a submerged trend in contemporary culture. Unlike their nineteenth-century predecessors, most readers today prefer to retrieve the many senses of an Australian interior, for instance, by mining Patrick White and David Malouf, not humdrum historians of settlement and exploration; and they will sip Marguérite Yourcenar and swig Colleen McCullough to recapture ancient-Roman sensibilities, eschewing the footnote-fetished classical historians; and they would prefer to encounter Leninism and Stalinism via Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, not with hackneyed historians of the era of Soviet-speak and of the Cold War. Contrast Richard Evans, *In defence of history* (London, 1997), p. 207.

[19] As distinct from (conservative?) literary scholars, few historians have had the courage to defend the received canons of their discipline against poststructural theories. Most just wish they will go away: Lawrence Stone in *Past and Present*, 131 (1991), pp. 217–18; Geoffrey Elton, *Return to essentials: some reflections on the present state of historical study* (Cambridge, 1991). Keith Windschuttle is one of the few to study the enemy seriously, the better to impugn what he calls the new

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rhetorical ways has created a paradox. The new ways have resurrected old scourges of history: overspecialization and/or gullibility. Historians often read too much about too little (particularism in sources mined or themes traversed) or read too much into too little (untested presumptions of coherence and of power in sources read or the history written). History is all about context. Fixed in place and time both in its performances and by its subjects, history has to go beyond 'seemingnesses' of events. Whereas Herodotus might have made his 'much from little' by the established genres of (Eleusinian) mystery, (Olympian) myth, and (Homeric) epic, he crafted *historia* to retrieve otherness and to explain how things came to be instead.[20] But now these challenges are taken up by anthropology and cultural studies which can also make homage to the garrulous Greek historian from Halicarnassus.[21] As his beguiling work bears witness, the trouble with history has long been that effort put into the spade-work of retrieving otherness (and into the style-work of elaborating it) is sometimes at the expense of framing exacting explanations. Thucydides knew the problem well.[22]

Seventy years ago, the *Annales* also began to criticize these tendencies in histories written in their time. They thought histories then were obsessed by (Thucycidean) minutiae of war, diplomacy, and court politics, and by (Herodotus-like) quests for the origins of ideas, events, and institutions of state. *Les Annalistes* called this 'disincarnated' history: meaning it was disconnected and tunnel-visioned. It was history done for its own sake: 'ideas considered apart from the people who profess them', 'institutions, divorced from those who made them, and who, while upholding them, alter them constantly'.[23] They wanted *l'histoire totale* instead. They strived to show how all things in the past and present were structurally connected as events (*conjonctures*) and trends (*durés*), short and long term. They hoped historians would use any contemporary social science, from econometrics to metereology, and from psychology to numismatics, if it helped show these structural connections.

The *Annales*' criticisms echo eerily in our supposedly postmodern present. The new rhetorical ways of resolving history's classical problem of retrieving a past and explaining it have revived some of the same disincarnated flaws in historiography. Studies of minutiae of utterance have superseded studies of minutiae of an institution, an idea, or an event. Their faults are the same. The new methods narrow the scope and relevance of historical inquiry in the same old ways. By patterning and postulating only from studies of a particular, they eschew context and generalization, treating meanings as if they were causes.[24]

'sophistries': *The killing of history: how a discipline is being murdered by literary critics and social theorists* (Sydney, 1994). Now Richard Evans has entered the lists (*In defence of history*). Posing as a new E. H. Carr – *What is history?* (Trevelyan Lectures at Cambridge, 1961; Penguin, many editions since 1961) – to smite the new smug social sciences, Evans forgets that Carr was one of the first of his compatriots to admire the old smug social sciences.

[20] *The histories*, for example bk I chs. 1–5, bk II chs. 1–23.

[21] Arnaldo Momigliano, *Classical foundations of modern historiography* (Sather Classical lectures, 1961–2; Berkeley, 1990), ch. 4.

[22] *The Peloponnesian war*, bk I, esp. chs. 21–4.

[23] I have adapted Lucien Febvre's critique of the positivism in traditional narrative histories of intellectual thought, politics, institutions, and international relations: 'De 1892 à 1933: examen de conscience d'une histoire et d'un historien' ('From 1892 to 1933: an exploration of history and of an historian', inaugural lecture to the *Collège de France*, 13 December 1933) in his *Combats pour l'histoire* (Paris, 1953), pp. 3–17, at p. 12: 'les idées en dehors des hommes qui les professent … les institutions, séparées de ceux-là qui les font et qui, tous en respectant, les modifiant sans cesse'.

[24] Spiegel in *Speculum*, 65 (1990), at pp. 73–5. Geertzian, Foucauldian, and gender analyses, for

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By contrasting commentaries on history before and after the turn to discourse and anthropological theories, I will reveal how little has been gained when history relies solely on poststructural methods and the discursive sources they privilege. Reading Foucault first hand – avoiding the one-track translations, glib interviews, and anthologies bedevilling contemporary social theory – I show the origins of the linguistic turn and its odd relation to the structuralism of the *Annales* historiography which nurtured it and which it supposedly negated. I also reveal the affinities of Foucauldian poststructuralism with the other great trend in modern historiography, Geertzian symbolic anthropology. I retrieve Foucault's structural preconditions – often overlooked – for the turn to linguistics. His preconditions were meant to curb undue shrinking of the scope of historical analyses after the new avowal of the over-riding importance of texts. In practice, historians seemed to obtain a new licence to succumb to old scourges. Discourse and anthropological approaches seemed to revalidate the narrowing of historical inquiry to a few 'rich' texts or a single 'thick' occurrence.[25] The allure of the new approaches – compared to the *Annales*' daunting *l'histoire totale* – probably derives from their easing of the doctoral, tenure, and promotion imperatives of finding manageable research topics.

For these reasons, historians need to recall the structural preconditions for the use of the new methods. Once they are retrieved, it is apparent that history needs to renew its *structural* attention to the *aggregate effects of actions*. History must find ways to relate words to deeds to overcome this renewed bout of tunnel vision. Studies of the discursive coherence of words cannot address history's other key issues of power and context. The important realms of the mind and culture are too privileged by histories that become 'thick descriptions' or retrievals of a discourse. I conclude by suggesting ways of *testing*, not just presuming, the *scope and coherence* of these discursive realms that we know are so important.

History deals with problems of power. To do so history still needs to find ways of aggregating, not just particularizing, its subjects. It has to assess representations and trace actions writ large. Nowadays this is seldom attempted. The old social science that is supposed to be outmoded called such things social structures, classes, and institutions. These structural ways now seem too tied to old forms of social, institutional, and intellectual history. Yet the new methods treat power as mere functions of presence (being there or otherwise having some material expression) and coherence (seeming to have – ethnographically – some 'thickness' or – discursively – some convergence).[26]

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instance, tend to construe too much from a narrow range of texts: McCullagh, *Truth of history*, ch. 6, at pp. 157–63; Jean-Christophe Agnew, 'History and anthropology: scenes from a marriage', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 3 (1990), pp. 29–50, and Rhys Isaac's reply in ibid., 6 (1993), pp. 217–36, or in Merwick, ed., *Dangerous liaisons*, pp. 297–315; Chartier's review of Robert Darnton's *The great cat massacre and other episodes of French cultural history* (New York, 1984): 'Texts, symbols and Frenchness: historical uses of symbolic archaeology', *Journal of Modern History*, 57 (1985), pp. 682–95 (and in his *Cultural history*, ch. 4, pp. 95–111 at pp. 99, 103–4).

[25] Responding to Spiegel's critique of the effects of postmodernism on historiography (cited in no. 24), Joyce protests that 'the real can be said to exist independently of our representations of it and to effect those representations' provided we always concede that 'the effect is always discursive … that history is never present to us in anything but a discursive form' – *Past and Present*, 133 (1991), pp. 204–9, at p. 208. Joyce fails to address Spiegel's core point about the distortions that arise from the customary preoccupation of practitioners of the new methods with representations made in a narrow range of literary texts.

[26] Isaac, in Merwick, ed., *Dangerous liaisons*.

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Whatever guidance might have been gained for such analyses of the aggregate interrelation of action and utterance from the grand tradition of social science (Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Habermas, etc.) are unfairly rejected as just another meta-narrative.[27] The ensuing scourge of false presumptions drawn from studies of particularities seem to derive from a misreading of *post*structuralism as *anti*structuralism.[28] This was neither Foucault's initial nor his most considered view.[29] The error was perpetuated by literary scholars and their acolytes among historians. These were people with vested interests in anti-canonical studies of the arcane, the alien, and the ambiguous who lauded Derrida's 'gazumping' theory of deconstruction.[30]

Aggregated issues of power, action, and agency must rejoin historians' agendas. New trends in social theory encourage this endeavour. Anthony Giddens's theory of 'structuration' offers ways to distinguish structure from system, the synchronic (at a time) from the diachronic (across time). His social structures are neither Max Weber's phenomenological *Verstehen* (society as an ongoing development of discrete types of participant perspectives) nor Talcott Parson's functionalism (society as a stable system of discrete functions), but rather (using Karl Marx) a praxis (society as an unstable system of socio-eco-structures and ideas put into material action). To Giddens, society is 'a medium and an outcome': so a particular discourse and an aggregate effect must both be studied.[31] Enlarging the scope for human agency in history and social theory, Giddens adds a middling form of consciousness to the (Freudian) unconscious and the (Foucauldian) discursive: the 'tacit' or 'practical'. Giddens is not alone in this.[32] Michel de Certeau, working independently, agrees, calling the same median of consciousness a *consommation*, *reçu*, *usage*, *manipulation*, *opération*, even using a Greek concept, *poiesis*.[33] Pierre Bourdieu too offers a new sense of agency and praxis (called *pratique*), though his arose from the needs of a sociology of education, not from Giddens's effort to revise and revive grand theory, or from de Certeau's to recover meanings in daily life, past and present. Concerned with how people learn, Bourdieu's praxis interplays realms internal *and* external to a discourse and to a self: he offers externalized *construits* (the old social science called them structures and situations), an internalized *habitus* (we would speak of it as a reflex, a supposition; it is de Certeau's *reçu*) and an

[27] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 83, 161–2; Hunt in her *The new cultural history*, p. 22.

[28] Hunt, ed., *The new cultural history*, Part 5, 'Conclusion'; Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), at pp. 549–50, 552–3.

[29] Joyce's 'The return of history: postmodernism and the politics of academic history in Britain', *Past and Present*, 158 (1998), pp. 207–35, relies on glib remarks of the later Foucault in interviews and anthologies.

[30] Evans, *In defence of history*, ch. 4, offers a sound critique. John Sturrock's 'Introduction' in *Structuralism and since: from Lévi-Strauss to Derrida* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 1–18, would agree with my point about mis-attribution, but not with my view of Derrida.

[31] Anthony Giddens, *Central problems in social theory: action, structure and theory in social analysis* (London, 1979), introduction and ch. 1, pp. 1–95. Quotations are from pp. 2, 5, 7. Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundrisse der verstehenden Soziologie*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich, trans. as *Economy and society* (1968) (Berkeley, 1978; 1st edn, 2 vols., 1922–5), I, part 1, ch. 1, s. 1A, at pp. 8, 57, defined this *Verstehen* (as distinct from the everyday unproblematic *aktuelles*) as *erklärendes* or *motivationsmässig* in which the meanings and motives of human actions have to be 'read' in and from their inter- and intra-subjective contexts.

[32] Alain Touraine's social theory of 'return of the actor' should also be mentioned: *The return of the actor: social theory in postindustrial society* (Minneapolis, 1984; repr. 1988), Part 1.

[33] De Certeau, *Arts de faire*, Part 1.

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expressive realm of deliberative action (Bourdieu's *l'exprimant*, *l'acquis*, or *les dispositions*; Foucault's *discours*). The last often become the only focus in poststructural studies of texts.[34]

II

Has historiography repeated itself? In 1938 a great historian, Lucien Febvre, issued a clarion call. The school of history he formed with his associate Marc Bloch, the *Annales*, often issued manifestos.[35] This one posed as a review of Ernst Cassirer, a distinguished German historian of Renaissance and Enlightenment thought. True to form as a historian who wanted history to use the methods and ask the questions of the social sciences, Febvre was against anything a priori, any use of capital-letter concepts in history.[36] He criticized established ways of writing history: 'its generation of concepts as the fruit of disincarnated minds – seen as living their own life outside of time and space, tied together in odd links to loops that are at once unreal and closed'.[37] Though he had intellectual history in mind, other outbursts lambasted the arid hyper-specialism of the institutional and political history of his day, the four-volume histories of the *Parlement* of Paris between 1714 and 1725 and kindred. Febvre cited their 'puerile kind of devotees' respect for "facts"', 'the touchingly naive conviction that the scholar is a man with his eye on the microscope immediately grasping a gamut of facts', seeming 'then to put them to work', but only establishing 'a falsehood', 'a deification of the present by the misuse of the past'.[38] To Lucien Febvre, one result was that 'their history is woven, entirely or nearly so, from events', when really 'all history is choice … the historian created his materials, or, if one prefers it, he re-created them; the historian does not

[34] Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris, 1980), bk 1 (trans. R. Nice as *The logic of practice* (Cambridge, 1992)); de Certeau, *Arts de faire*, Part 2, ch. 4, analysing Bourdieu's *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Geneva, 1972). Chartier cites another *l'habitus*, from Irwin Panofsky's studies in art history: *Cultural history*, pp. 23–4.

[35] On the *Annales*: Traian Stoianovich, *French historical method: the 'Annales'* (Ithaca, NY, 1976); Peter Burke, *The French historical revolution: the 'Annales' school, 1929–89* (Cambridge, 1989); Carole Fink, *Marc Bloch: a life in history* (Cambridge, 1989).

[36] Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 21–5; Furet, *In the workshop of history*, pp. 49–51. Besides Karl Marx's dialectical materialism and Emile Durkheim's *faits sociaux*, Bloch and Febvre's *Annales* was influenced by the specifically historical sociology of Fustel de Coulanges' *La cité antique* (Paris, 1864), whose preface enjoined on p. 3: 'l'histoire … est un témoignage et un example de l'étroite relation qu'il y a toujours entre les idées de l'intelligence humaine et l'état social d'un peuple. Regardez les institutions des anciens sans penser à leurs croyances, vous les trouvez obscures, bizarres, inexplicables.'

[37] 'Leur histoire et la nôtre', *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, 8 (1938), reprinted in his *Combats pour l'histoire*, pp. 276–83, at p. 278: 'ces engendrements de concepts issus d'*intelligences désincarnées* – puis vivant de leur vie propre en dehors de temps et de l'espace, nouent d'étranges chaînes, aux anneaux à la fois irréels et fermés'. See Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, Part 4, chs. 1 and 2; Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 4, 22.

[38] Febvre, 'Vivre l'histoire: propos d'initiation', speech of a pupil of 1899 to current pupils, *Ecole Normale Supérieure* (1941), in his *Combats*, pp. 18–32, at p. 22: 'respect puéril et devotieux du "fait"', 'la conviction naïve et touchante, que le savant était un homme qui mettant l'œil à son microscope, appréhendait aussitôt une brassée de faits'. See Furet, *In the workshop of history*, pp. 48–9.

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roam about through the past searching like a rag-and-bone man, he departs with a plan in his head, a problem to solve, an hypothesis to verify'.[39]

Intelligences désincarnées: disincarnated minds, politics, groups ... The complaint is familiar! Lucien Febvre in the 1920s and 1930s used it to criticize the empirical naïveté of his positivist predecessors: the bunkum annalists who irked Henry Ford, listing one damn event after another, the biographers of lives which had no times, the antiquaries of institutions who could only tell you about their institution. Might we feel the same about so many works of history today, written as studies of particular discourses? Many only pursue framings of class, of race, or of gender, unfree-for-all studies of a narrow band of representations. Studies of a discourse can become an end in themselves. Their readers are left to flounder about how historian A's discourse X might relate to B's Y or C's Z, let alone how X, Y or Z relate to actions and organizations. Questions of power become misconstrued as matters of *intra*-discursive coherence. Posturing is read as performance. Actions and contexts become neglected, even those helping to construe the text; for nothing exists, supposedly, outside the text.[40] The text or, in the ethnographic approach, a theatre of the moment, can become all, but often not for their insight on the subject as for the methods brought to bear.[41] In these ways, generalizations are shunned, if we mean aggregate assessments of structural matters like the scope (as distinct from the nature) of social actions and their power. Then again, other generalizations abound, if we mean the oddity of generalizing from evocative particularities in Geertzian theatres of 'thick' descriptions or in Foucauldian discourses that just 'seem' to cohere.[42] Concerns with balance tend to go out the window – not in an objective sense (as a utopian quest, though one governed by established conventions of source criticism), but in a sampling sense (as an attainable quest, one guided by established rules of statistical analysis). Disincarnated minds have taken over History (again).

If I was a nineteenth-century Russian intellectual I would be asking, 'Who is to blame? What is to be done?' I will suggest an answer: tools fit for new purposes are not necessarily fit for all the old purposes. At one level, Foucault agreed with *Annales*

[39] Febvre (1933) in his *Combats*, pp. 3–13: 'puis les mettre en œuvre', but only establishing 'un dupérie', 'une déification du présent à l'aide du passé'. One result, to Febvre, was that 'leur histoire était tissée, uniquement ou presque, d'événements', when really 'toute histoire est choix ... l'historien crée ses matériaux ou, si l'on veut, les récrée, l'historien, qui ne va pas rôdant au hasard à travers le passé, comme un chiffonier en quête de trouvailles, mais part avec, en tête, un dessein précis, un problème à résoudre, une hypothèse à verifier'. Cf. Marc Bloch's *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier de l'historien* (1940–4), trans. *The historian's craft* (Manchester, 1954); Furet in *Méthodologie de l'histoire*, II, pp. 230–1. In British and US historiography, similar points were made later: Carr, *What is history?*, chs. 1–2; Aydelotte, *Quantification in history*, p. 16; Hofstader in *Sociology and history*, ch. 1; Lawrence Stone, 'History and the social sciences in the twentieth century' (1976), in *The past and the present* (Boston, 1981), ch. 1.

[40] Refer to two exasperated senior social historians, Eley and Nield, in *Social History*, 20 (1995), p. 359 – whom Joyce dubs 'poachers turned gamekeepers' (ibid., p. 80) – who had once tilted at the Namierite political-history establishment, who had helped erect a new social-history establishment of class and class consciousness, whether as a Marx-like structured materialism or an E. P. Thompson-like immaterialism, and who were now besieged by elusive new poststructural theories and by arrogant young theorists. They asked: 'Surely we can [still] see real events occurring behind people's backs without reaffirming the entire conceptual lexicon of problematic structuralism?' They have a point.

[41] Jacques Barzun, 'Culture high and dry' (1984), in his *The culture we deserve* (Middletown, 1989), pp. 3–22.

[42] McCullagh, *Truth of history*, ch. 6.

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historians like Febvre that traditional forms of intellectual, political, and institutional history were hollow.[43] It seemed to Foucault that they read texts as allegories, not artefacts, as *oracles retrospectifs*, looking 'to research some sort of permanency from themes, images and opinions over time', seeking 'to retrieve the utterances – mute, murmured, and loquacious – which inhere in the voice [the intellectual historian] perceives, to re-establish the little unseen elements of the text which crop up between the lines everywhere and which they sometimes jostle'.[44] This view is compatible with the old *Annales*' structural agendas; one has only to elide Foucault's distinction of his *histoire générale* from their *histoires totales* or *globales*, citing hubris perhaps.[45] Yet, on another level, Foucault's 'linguistic turn' hastens the hollowness Febvre and he abhorred.

Practicalities arise amid all the theory. In moments of candour, Foucault had feared they might. When discussing analyses of texts, his *événement énonciatif*, Foucault emphasized going beyond the intentions of authors of utterances to show relations of which authors were unaware.[46] He also admitted that this was difficult to achieve.[47] He recommended a provisional strategy. In other hands, and sometimes in his own, that strategy often became an end in itself, however.

> One needs a preliminary approximation, taking a provisional cut: a first field that the analysis will overturn and reorganize if need be … a choice of a domain in which the various forces seem numerous, thick and relatively easy to describe … [though] the choice of this field cannot of itself be considered definitive, nor as absolutely valid.[48]

For Foucault, these were just ways of putting first things first. But it was easy to let first also be last.[49] Foucault often overlooked his own injunction.[50]

Thus word came to supersede deed. Espousing of the importance of words, Foucault sometimes also overlooked his *modalités* for the discourse-power he emphasized.[51] *Modalités* were a discourse's norms of empowerment, their institutional *emplacements*: the hospital and clinic for discourses of social healing, for instance, the rack and prison for social disciplining.[52] With these *modalités* in mind, setting aside the wilder theorizing,

[43] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 83, 158–9, 264, and Part 4, chs. 1–3.

[44] Ibid., pp. 182, 158, quotations pp. 51, 39–40: 'de rechercher la permanence des thèmes, des images et des opinions à travers le temps', and seeking 'de retrouver la parole muette, murmurante, intarissable qui anime de l'intérieur de la voix qu'on entend, de rétablir la texte menu et invisible qui parcourt l'interstice des lignes écrits et parfois les bouscule'.

[45] Ibid., p. 17.

[46] Ibid., pp. 160–1.

[47] Ibid., pp. 120–6.

[48] Ibid., pp. 42–3: 'Il faut en première approximation accepter un découpage provisoire: une region initiale, que l'analyse bouleversa et réorganisera si besoin est … choisir un domain où les relations risquent d'être nombreuses, denses, et relativement faciles à décrire', though 'la découpe de ce domaine lui-même ne peut pas être considerée comme définitive, ni comme valable absolument'.

[49] De Certeau, *Arts de faire*, pp. xxxviii–ix.

[50] For example, Foucault's injunction (*Archéologie du savoir*, p. 143) that discourse analyses 'can only focus on verbal performances for which there is material at an elemental level: describing things said precisely as they had been said' is often honoured in the breach.

[51] Evans, *In defence of history*, pp. 82, 184. Lynn Hunt wonders 'where will we be when every practice, be it economic, intellectual, social or political, has been shown to be culturally conditioned?', then fails to answer: *The new cultural history*, p. 10. Noiriel thinks the misinterpretation arose because historians misunderstood Foucault's 'panoptic' (p. 550), philosophical-epistemological, not practical-historical, agenda: *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), at pp. 548–53.

[52] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 68–74, 140–3. The examples are elaborated in Foucault's *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris, 1975), and his *Les mots et choses: une archéologie des sciences*

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Foucault's discourses were not meant to be construed apart from the deeds and settings limiting and empowering them. Commenting on his genealogical method, Foucault noted:

> when it elaborates a particular discourse … this is meant to enable its contrast with its chronological parameters; and in conformity with these chronological limits and in correlation with them, it is also meant to describe a sphere of institutions, an ensemble of events, of praxises, of political decisions, and a sequence of economic processes, in which some reckoning is made of technologies, the needs of labour and the differing levels of unemployment etc.[53]

Here was another filial gesture to the structuralism of the old *Annales*. Foucault's framing of the 'social' in social history still assimilated the ethereal to the material. His realm of discourses was to be contrasted with the realms of power and institutions, class and economic forces. He wanted *comparaisons*:

> The archaeological elucidation of discourses takes place within the rubric of a general history; it examines all those domains of institutions, economic processes, and social contacts on which a discursive formation is able to articulate itself; it tries to show how the autonomy of the discourse and its particularity are *not* granted to it as if by some law of pure ideality or of total historical independence; what it wishes to establish is the particular level at which History can isolate different types of discourses, which each have with their own historicity, and which are in relation to all the others are an ensemble of diverse historicities.[54]

Foucault called that assimilation 'a muddle of inter-positivities'. A *positivity* was an inherently incomplete ensemble of discourses.[55]

Foucault also wrote of another important and neglected a priori in history and its relation to his theory of discourses. He called it an *archive*, 'the means of actualizing the utterance itself …, the system of its functioning …, that which differentiates the discourses in their many guises and sets their duration'. He defined the archive 'as a praxis making a plethora of utterances crop up as so many regular occurrences, as so many things open to treatment or manipulation'; they form 'the general system of the formation and transformation of utterances'.[56]

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humaines (Paris, 1966). English editions exist as *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (New York, 1977), and *The order of things; an archaeology of the human sciences* (London and New York, 1970).

[53] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 212, 260, 262, quotation p. 205: 'Lorsqu'elle s'adresse à un type singulier de discours … c'est pour établir par comparaison les bornes chronologiques; c'est aussi de décrire, en même temps qu'eux et en corrélation avec eux, un champ institutionnel, un ensemble d'événements, de pratiques, de décisions politiques, un enchaînement de procéssus économiques où figurent des oscillations démographiques, des techniques d'assistance, des besoins de main-œuvre, des niveaux différents de chômage etc.'

[54] Ibid., p. 215: 'la description archéologique des discours se déploie dans le dimension d'une histoire générale; elle cherche à découvrir tout ce domaine des institutions, des processus économiques, des rapports sociaux sur lesquels peut s'articuler une formation discursive; elle essaie de montrer comment l'autonomie du discours et sa specificité ne lui donnent pas pour autant un statute de pure idealité et de totale indépendence historique; ce qu'elle veut mettre en jour, c'est ce niveau singulier où l'histoire peut donner lieu à des types définis du discours, qui ont eux-mêmes leur type propre d'historicité, et qui sont en relation avec tout un ensemble d'historicités diverses'.

[55] Ibid., p. 208: 'enchevêtrement d'interpositivités'. On *positivités*: ibid., pp. 164, 261.

[56] Ibid., p. 171: 'le mode d'actualité de l'énoncé-chose …, le système de son fonctionnement …, ce qui differencie les discours dans leur existence multiple et les spécifié dans leur durée propre'. He defined the archive as 'une pratique qui fait surgir une multiplicité des énoncés comme autant d'événements réguliers, comme autant de choses offertes au traitement et à la manipulation'; they form 'le system général de la formation et transformation des énoncés'.

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These concessions may surprise many eager devotees of discourse theory who take *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte* seriously. For these reasons, Foucault did not present his muddles of positivities as the old *Annales* might as *une histoire totale*, though he conceded it might be possible![57] I am not as pessimistic. By privileging studies of actions in the aggregate, by starting with but then moving beyond poststructural studies of evocative particularities in history, one can sort through the muddles to test and to evaluate the scope and coherence of models of a renewed historiographical sense of a *totale*. The new way can improve on the structuralism of old *Annales* because it encompasses the important new discursive senses of the 'social' in social history.[58]

These external contexts – the *modalités* (sitings), *comparaisons* (upshots), and the *archives* (voicings) – are important in halting the hollow words-only history that arises when scholars take Foucault's *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte* literally. The common thread is Foucault's use of the Marxists' and structuralists' concept of praxis (*pratique*), of thoughts put into action. It unites his *modalités*, *comparaisons*, and *archives*. We have seen how it influenced Giddens, Bourdieu, and de Certeau. Yet they are neglected in much of the particularizing historiography practised under the poststructuralist banners of discourse, ethno- or cultural hsitory.[59]

The same problem arose when questions of power were raised. The difficulty then as now was extending notions of people's discursive orderings of a world (a measure of Foucault's achievement is that we can readily envisage that now!) to notions of that ordering as sovereign, of also being able to administer that world and others as well (a leap of faith that is harder to envisage without proofs involving more than a presumption of coherence arising from coincident discourses). If the new methods excel in showing new and often submerged aspects of the nature of things, they still cannot show their scope and tempo, and hence their importance. They only show a kind of coherence. Power is left out of the analysis. The omission reflects the hubris of the academic wordsmiths who shaped it: in their scholarly world of tongues poked out at reality, describing is perceived as the same as controlling.

Emphasizing actions, in the aggregate, rather than utterances, in the particular, seems the best way of resolving the difficulty. Only they can supply the benchmark against which to assess the scope and power of discourses. Foucault might have grasped this, had he not sometimes been seduced by the wild joy of founding a new epistemology.[60] His *modalités*, *comparaisons*, and *archives* have only to be enlarged to emphasize actions thence over words within. For Foucault considered that words achieved their purposes, not 'by the act of synthesizing a consciousness underlying itself, mute and yet preceding all speech acts, but by the specificity of a discursive *praxis*'.[61]

[57] Ibid., pp. 164, 208, 211–12; Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), at pp. 565–6.

[58] Witness the determinism in Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde Méditerranéan à l'époque du Philippe II* (1949) (revised edn, 2 vols., Paris, 1966), or in his *L'identité de la France* (Paris, 1986).

[59] For instance, while Larry Wolff's influential *Inventing Eastern Europe: the map of civilization on the mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994) shows Western European travellers and *lumières*' pejorative constructions of (Ottoman and Slav) Eastern Europe as a barbarian 'other', he ignores the central place of the multi-national empires of Eastern Europe in the state system of the age. Old-fashioned (?) studies of actions (in this case, of diplomacy) would have shown the limits of his discourse of 'other-ness'. Eastern Europe was more 'in' Europe than he avers. The poststructural methods frame his subject narrowly. Everything is not 'invented'.

[60] Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), at pp. 548–51, citing Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris, 1986), trans. by Sean Hand (London and Minneapolis, 1988).

[61] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, p. 74: 'par l'activité synthétique d'une conscience identique à

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The burden is lifted if we conceive social praxis as more than a cluster of utterances. Foucault even confided, '*everything* is not articulated (*tout ne jamais dit*)'.[62] He then tried to trace the discourses promoting certain utterances and precluding others. Actions do the same. They too are important in shaping the public world of material forces, institutions, and classes. We need to find ways to aggregate and then test hypotheses of power drawn from analyses of the coherence of discourses. The best way assesses consequences. It attends to the aggregated forms of power disclosed whenever a discourse becomes a praxis, that is, whenever it is put into action in the wider world.

Foucault's *tout ne jamais dit* seems an odd thing to say after fifty years of *Annales*' histories of *durés* (trends, cycles; in the macro) and *conjonctures* (events, happenings; in the micro). Did the elaborate structuralisms of Bloch, Febvre, and Braudel count for nothing? If we follow Derrida, Lyotard, or Foucault's *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte* we might believe so. We would be mistaken. They err by overlooking *modalités* (sitings), *comparaisons* (upshots), and *archives* (voicings), and their 'links to a whole ensemble of diverse historicities'.[63]

III

How and why did the new methods arise? It seems odd that the 'linguistic turn' emerged out of the structuralism of the old *Annales*; now the new methods seem (erroneously) its antithesis. The new ways arose in the 1970s as a focus on structural socio- and psycho-linguistics – a *grammaire générative*, on *acculturations internes* – a finding of a 'third' plane (*niveau*) for structural analyses, after the socio-economic, demographic, and political planes privileged by the original *Annalistes* (Bloch, Febvre, and Braudel). It was as if the next generation of *Annalistes* had found a piece of the jigsaw that had fallen to the floor. A lost element in history's structure was added; its sociological-conjunctural tableau was now seen as complete.[64] The new level was *l'affectif*, a plane of *mentalités*, of forms of collective consciousness.[65] Still part of *une histoire structurelle*, the

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soi, muette et préalable à toute parole, mais par la specificité d'une *pratique* discursive' (my emphasis).

[62] Ibid., p. 156 (his emphasis).

[63] Ibid., p. 215: 'relation[s] avec tout un ensemble d'historicités diverses'.

[64] Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 5–6, 22–4, 46; Furet in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, pp. 231–2; Duby, 'Histoire sociale et idéologies des sociétés', and Le Goff, 'Les mentalités: une histoire ambiguë', in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 147–8, III, p. 79; Le Roi Ladurie, 'La révolution quantitative et les historiens français: bilan d'une génération (1932–68)', in his *La territoire de l'historien*, pp. 15–22; Chaunu, 'Une nouveau champ pour l'histoire sérielle: le quantatif au troisième niveau', in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, pp. 105–25.

[65] Chaunu, 'Une nouveau champ pour L'histoire sérielle'; Furet, 'Histoire et ethnologie: l'histoire et "l'homme sauvage"', and Le Goff, 'L'historien et l'homme quotidien', respectively in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, pp. 105–25, 227–43 (quotations on pp. 108, 242); Duby and Chaunu, 'L'économie: dépassement et prospective', Jean-Claude Chevalier, 'La langue: linguistique et histoire', and Le Goff, 'Les mentalités', respectively in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 147–68, II, pp. 50–73, 95–114, III, pp. 76–94; Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 27–30; *Niveaux de culture et groupes sociaux: actes du colloque réuni du 7 au 9 mai 1966 au Ecole Normale Supérieure* (Paris, 1967). The novelty of the resort is questionable, however. If we recall Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie* (1936), Walter Benjamin's *Schriften* (1955), Marc Bloch's *La société féodale* (1939–40) or *Les rois thaumaturges* (1924), or Lucien Febvre's *Problème de l'incroyance* (1942), rather than, say, Fernand Braudel's *La Meditérranée* or Bloch's *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale*

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new *Annales*' history of affect and effect now examined 'tensions arising from disparities of development' as an 'historiography of links and catchings-up'.[66] History was still seen as synchronic and syncretist. There were just new 'combinations of elements issuing from different cultures, giving rise to a new system shaped by principles differing from their originating systems'.[67] One such neo-structure was now seen as a discourse,'as a formal grammar conceived like an amalgam of analogous and complementary elements … insofar as they can be welded little by little to confer meaning'. It worked reflexively, Janus-like, as 'a denotative oriented to truth, a connotative orienting truth to the people speaking and communicating'.[68]

Here, in the late-*Annales* of the 1970s, we enter the world of discourses-as-power associated today with Michel Foucault. Here too, in its *Annaliste* structuralist pre-incarnation, the core problem of the method is also clear: then too the power in the discourse was presumed to arise from nothing more than the coherence it seemed to exhibit.[69] Thereafter, under the influence of the two Michels, Foucault and de Certeau, and of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, the focus and locus of discourse analyses swapped *Annales*-esque synchronies for 'postmodern' diachronies, moving from the conjunctural to the representational, from the structural to the poststructural.[70] One symptom was weariness with the structuralisms of the young Marx, and with the re-workings by the Frankfurt School and Althusser of Marx's notion of dialectical links between an economic base and ideological and institutional super-structures. Studies of the reception of ideas seemed more important.[71] Events in Algeria since 1958 and in the

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française (1931) we would question claims to novelty of these sixties and seventies studies of *mentalités*.

[66] Chaunu in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, p. 107: 'tensions nées des disparités du développement' as an 'historiographie du rattapage'. See Furet, *In the workshop of history*, p. 49.

[67] Nathan Wachtel, 'L'acculturation', in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 124–46, at p. 132: 'combinaisons d'éléments issus de cultures différents, mais qui donnent naissance à un nouveau système, ordonné selon des principes distincts de ceux qui régissaient les systèmes d'origine'.

[68] Chevalier in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, III, pp. 99, 101: 'grammaire formelle conçue comme l'assemblage d'éléments analogues et complementaires … dans la mésure où ils peuvent être emboîtés de proche en proche pour former de sens'. It worked reflexively, Janus-like, as a 'dénotatif tourné vers la verité, connotatif tournant la verité vers les personnes qui parlent et se parlent'.

[69] Stedman Jones, 'From historical sociology to theoretical history' (1976), and Neale, 'Afterword', in Neale, ed., *History and class*, ch. 5 at p. 82, and ch. 13 at p. 276, venture similar ideas in passing.

[70] Besides Foucault and de Certeau, Chartier's *Cultural history*, and Le Goff in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, pp. 242–3, are key texts. Of the many fields that might be cited, consider the alteration of our sense of the origins of the French Revolution: Robert Darnton, 'The high Englightenment and the low-life literaure in pre-revolutionary France', *Past and Present*, 51 (1971), his 'Reading, writing and publishing in eighteenth-century France: a case study in the sociology of literature', *Dædalus* (1971), pp. 214–56, and his 'In search of the Enlightenment: recent attempts to create a social history of ideas', *Journal of Modern History*, 43 (1971), pp. 113–32; Chartier, *The cultural origins of the French Revolution*, trans. L. Cochrane (Durham, S.C., 1991); Arlette Farge, *Dire et mal dire: l'opinion publique au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1992) (available as *Subversive words: public opinion in eighteenth-century France* (Cambridge, 1994)).

[71] Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx* (Paris, 1965), and trans. B. Brewster as *For Marx* (London, 1969). On the reception of Althusser among historians: *positive phase*: Duby in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 149, 158; Braudel, *L'identité de France*, I, p. 21; Stedman Jones in Blackburn, ed.,

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spring and summer of 1968 in Washington, Paris, and Prague promoted a new paradigm for social engagement and historical inquiry: the play of race, gender, and desire over function, structure, and context was lauded by Herbert Marcuse, Germaine Greer, Michel Foucault, and Milan Kundera alike.[72] Nothing seemed due to progress and process. In the pantheon of demi-gods of social science, Nietzsche, Freud, Malinowski, and Benjamin supplanted Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Jigsaws of *durés*, *conjonctures*, and *niveaux* (levels) seemed obsolete.[73] Scholars attended to the 'irreducible specificity' of will 'o the wisp discourses, *mœurs*, and metaphors that might even be independent.[74] Studies were now of intercultural relations (*acculturations*), for their study 'enables a better fix on the anthropological compared to the historical. Above all what interests the historian is knowing the extent to which and conditions by which the terms and questions of anthropological analyses can be applied to the study of a society's internal inter-cultural relations.'[75]

If Saussurian-Foucauldian ideas were one source of the change, so was the American symbolic anthropology of Clifford Geertz, as promoted by Rhys Isaac, Robert Darnton, and Roger Chartier.[76] Afterwards, among Marxisms, only E. P. Thompson's atheoretical historicism or Lukács's or Gramsci's ideologized structuralism remained: all disdained analyses of context and process, privileging studies of particularized webs of place, culture, and discourse instead.[77] June Philipp thus lauded Thompson's defiant definition of history as a 'discipline of context' and yet still justified analyses using contemporary social science concepts in history if they were fixed on studies of particular 'meanings-in-context … the recovery, partial though it must be, of the lived reality of the people in the past'.[78] A whole could be read in and from a part.[79]

Comparisons were now discouraged. Every case had to be different. And simplicity

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Ideology in social science, pp. 113–14; *negative phase*: de Certeau, 'Making history', in his *The writing of history*, pp. 28–36; Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 4, 11–13, 34–7, 44–7.

[72] De Certeau and Chaunu respectively in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 11–16, III, p. 110; de Certeau, 'Making history', in his *The writing of history*, p. 21; Chartier, *Cultural history*, p. 2.

[73] De Certeau, *The writing of history*, pp. 28–9; Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 29–36.

[74] Le Goff in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, III, p. 76, and in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, p. 233; Chartier, *Cultural history*, p. 3, and quoting from p. 25.

[75] Le Goff in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, p. 242: 'doit permettre de mieux situer l'éthnologique par rapport à l'historique. Ce que intéressa surtout l'historien, c'est de savoir dans quelle mesure et à quelles conditions le vocabulaire et la problematique de l'*acculturation* pourra être étendu à l'étude des *acculturations internes* à une société.'

[76] Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 1–52; Darnton, *The great cat massacre*; Rabb in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (1983), pp. 594–5.

[77] E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (Harmondsworth, 1963), esp. ch. 16 on 'Class consciousness' and his *Poverty of theory and other essays* (London, 1978); Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere* (written 1926–37, first published 1947), 2 vols., trans. J. Buttigieg as *Prison notebooks* (New York, 1992–7); György Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusststein* (1923), trans. R. Livingstone as *History and class consciousness: studies in Marxist dialectics* (London and Cambridge, 1971). Perry Anderson's brilliant structural comparative histories, *Passages from antiquity to feudalism* (London, 1975) and *Lineages of the absolutist state* (London, 1974), are an exception proving the rule; they were relatively uninfluential among historians and sociologists.

[78] June Philipp, 'Traditional historical narrative and action-oriented (or ethnographic) history', *Historical Studies of Australia and New Zealand*, 20 (1983), pp. 339–52, at pp. 352, 351, citing Thompson in *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (1976). Cf. McCullagh, *Truth of history*, ch. 6.

[79] Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 10–11, 25, 45–6.

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and clarity were seldom prized.[80] History was now rhetoricized. Sampling theory and generalization were abandoned. Typicality was supposedly never again to be a question. History's truths were to be evoked from and by rhetoric, not from aggregated analyses of social structures. And history no longer had social science problems to solve. There was instead a quest to capture 'inorganic multiplicity of the ascertainable'.[81] All sense of history's aspiration to show a *totale* external to a self or to a particular moment in time now seemed hollow.[82] As de Certeau wrote: 'The historian is no longer the person to conjure an empire. He no longer glimpses the paradise of a total history. He is now circulating *around* the received rationalizations of his subjects. He works at the margins. In this respect, he has become a prowler.' Historians became snooping snippeters. They were supposed to find 'a margin *proportioned* by these totalities', but no way was suggested of testing the nexus asserted so blithely. History was said instead to have found 'ways to *go beyond the differences* arising from the continuities or unities from which the analysis set out'.[83] Everything was now relative, though the bases for the comparisons implicit in the idea of a relation were seldom articulated. Quantification became *passé*, even embarrassing.[84] Blasé presumptions were promoted instead. As Lucien Goldmann claimed:

> it is in the singularity of [the] texts that shared ideas are revealed most clearly and completely … Numerical collection of the superficial, the banal and the routine is not representative, and the collective consciousness of the group (which is for the greater number a collective 'unconsciousness') can be interpreted only in the imaginative or conceptual work of the few authors who carry it to its highest degree of coherence and transparency.[85]

Wishful thinking. Aside from the sampling problems in the historian-rhetorician's choice of 'high-degree' texts, no one wondered how to verify whether these concepts

[80] Contrast Jacques Barzun's and Robert Dessaix's concern with arcane academic discourse – respectively in *The culture we deserve*, pp. 3–22, and 'Loitering with intent: reflections on the demise of the dilletante', *Australian Book Review*, 188 (1997), pp. 36–40 – with de Certeau's view that it is a welcome and necessary consequence of modernity's divorce of production from consumption – 'Making history', in his *The writing of history*, pp. 21, 43n2; *Arts de faire*, pp. 19–21.

[81] De Certeau, 'The black sun of language: Foucault' (1969, 1973), in *Heterologies: discourse on the other*, trans. B. Massumi (Manchester, 1986), ch. 12, at p. 172.

[82] De Certeau, in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 27–8, 31; Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 11, 30; Joyce or Vernon in *Social History*, 18 (1993) at p. 80, 19 (1994) at p. 85, 20 (1995) at pp. 75, 88; Joyce in *Past and Present*, 133 (1991) at p. 208.

[83] De Certeau, in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, p. 32, quotations p. 27: 'L'historien n'est plus homme à constituer un empire. Il ne vise plus de paradis d'une histoire globale. Il en vient à circuler *autour* des rationalisations acquises. Il travaille dans les marges. A cet égard, il devient un rôdeur' … 'une marge *proportionées* à des constructions globales' … 'le moyen *de faire sortir des différences* relatives aux continuités ou aux unités d'où part analyse' (de Certeau's emphases). See Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 32–3. On presumed proportionality: Kirk in *Social History*, 19 (1994) at p. 227; McCullagh, *Truth of history*, pp. 156–63.

[84] On its reception among historians: *positive phase*: Duby and Le Goff in Le Goff and Nora, eds., Faire l'histoire, I, pp. 157, III, p. 79; Chaunu in *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*, II, pp. 105–25; Braudel, *L'identité de la France*, I, intro and ch. 1; *negative phase*: de Certeau, *Arts de faire*, p. xlv; Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 29–35, 47.

[85] Chartier, *Cultural history*, p. 33, citing Lucien Goldmann's *Der christliche Burger und die Aufklärung* (written 1960, published 1968), trans. H. Maas as *The philosophy of the Enlightenment: the Christian burgess and the Enlightenment* (London, 1973).

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and imaginations really cohered. Their seeming 'coherence and transparency' supposedly suggested their power. Yet these may derive more from our idea of them, than from them about themselves.

How the wheel has turned. The first *Annales* historians also complained about the profession's obsession with texts.[86] But now it is not the subjects of the texts which are being abused by 'a deification of the present with the aid of the past'; this time the same abuse is based rather in a new 'postmodern' tendency to resort exclusively to methods of analysing texts which reflect our ephemeral, blasé, and super-specialized present.[87] Sins of transferring a present-minded *telos* to a past have been superseded by other sins that are as bad: postulating a professionals' pure-and-precious past, a *non-lieu*, and presuming and elaborating that past as other, as a full *alterity*.[88] This suits scholars in the contemporary – 'downsized' and apolitical – university:

> Discourse analysis takes the 'neutral' aspect and colour of a wall. It even serves as a means to defend *positions* instead of being an expression of 'causes' which could articulate a need or desire. Discourse analysis no longer refers to something determining something … In the university at present, the *unsaid* is at one and the same time the undisclosed element in texts that have become pretexts, the thing left out when what is said is contrasted with what is done, the befogging of the place in which social forces connect up with the language.[89]

This is our contemporary context for discourse analyses. Michel de Certeau calls them 'limits of the thinkable'. They are its praxis: as *modalités*, *comparaisons*, and *archives*. Let him sum up:

> research is delineated by the sphere defining the connection of the possible to the impossible. If we were to envisage that sphere only as an 'articulation' we would import *the legendary* into history, meaning that we would substitute studies of a non-place or an imagined place for studies of how discourses are articulated in a social setting. On the contrary, writing history is nothing but a *contrast of a discourse with a social order*; history thereby must relate to the *limits* that setting imposes, be they the mode of the particular place where it is articulated [now], or be they the manner of the otherness (gone, dead) related in it.[90]

[86] Febvre, 'De 1892 à 1933' (1933), in his *Combats pour l'histoire*, pp. 5, 13.

[87] Ibid., p. 9: 'une déification du présent à l'aide du passé'. See Tilly, *As sociology meets history*, p. 21.

[88] On the *telos* in the old *histoire événementielle*: Furet, *In the workshop of history*, pp. 48–9. On the new construction of a functional *alterity*: de Certeau in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 11, 20–31, and *The writing of history*, pp. 29–31; Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 4–14, 31, 40–4.

[89] De Certeau in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, p. 15: 'Le discours prend une couleur muraille "neutre". Il devient même le moyen de défendre des *places* au lieu d'être l'énoncé des "causes" capables d'articulier un désir. Il ne peut plus de ce qui détermine … Içi, le *non-dit* est à la fois l'inavoué de textes devenus des prétextes, l'extérioricité de ce qu'on fait par rapport à ce qu'on dit, et l'évanouissement d'un lieu où une force s'articule sur un langage.'

[90] Ibid., pp. 23–4, 32, quotation p. 16: 'la recherche est circonscrite par la place que définit une connexion du possible et de l'impossible. A l'envisager seulement comme un "dire", on réintroduirait dans l'histoire *la légende*, c'est-à-dire la substitution d'un non-lieu, ou d'un lieu imaginaire, à l'articulation du discours sur un lieu social. Au contraire, l'histoire se définit toute entière par *un rapport du langage au corps* (social) et donc aussi par son rapport au *limites* que pose le corps, soit sur le mode de la place particulière d'où parle, soit sur le mode de l'objet autre (passé, mort) dont on parle'. See 'Making history' in his *The writing of history*, p. 20; Chartier, *Cultural history*, p. 5.

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IV

History as a form of rhetoric is ascendant nowadays. History's new Foucauldian (discursive) and Geertzian (ethnographic) forms shape its methods, subjects, and sources alike.[91] Discourses and tropes, dramas and 'thick' descriptions are the rage: devotees of these mysteries eagerly follow every effusion of their gurus of theory.[92] Some claim that history itself and history's subjects are only ever discourses; 'there is nothing beneath the text'.[93] Let Foucault elaborate, even if his views would seem absurd to any scientist:

> I would like to show that 'discourses' such as one can discern them, such as one can read them in the guise of texts, are not … a pure and simple inter-twining of words and things … not a thin plane of contact or confrontation between a language and a reality … but rather they are praxises which systematically shape the very things of which they speak.[94]

There are perils in history's fruitful fling with rhetorical forms in discourses and dramas. Like history's flirtation with quantification and psychology, things go awry if taken to extremes.[95] In its new forms as discourse and drama, the past becomes a time, a one-off, an efflorescence. The past is seldom envisaged as a product of any conjuncture external to whatever is taken to be itself.[96] But consider: these particularizing methods could not produce a coherent history of a lighted match: for the match's spent residues, only few of which persist, and the actions of its striker cannot, of themselves, account for the marvel of its combustion.

My argument is influenced by Michel de Certeau. He was a Jesuit and a historian of religious life in early modern France. His earlier work was within the mainstream of intellectual history, but he was drawn into historiographical theory by Foucault. It is

[91] Spiegel in *Speculum*, 65 (1990), at pp. 59–69, offers an excellent summary of the trend, and touches on its affinities with historiographies influenced by symbolic anthropology.

[92] See Mark Poster's *Cultural history and postmodernity: disciplinary readings and challenges* (New York, 1997).

[93] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, p. 157: 'il n'y a pas de texte d'en dessous'; Joyce in *Past and Present*, 133 (1991), at p. 208. On claiming too much in academic life in general: Jacques Barzun, 'The fallacy of the single cause' (1985), in his *The culture we deserve*, pp. 129–42; and in this case in particular: Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), at pp. 552, 565–6.

[94] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, p. 215, quoting pp. 66–7: 'je voudrais montrer que les "discours" tels qu'on peut les entendre, tels qu'on peut les lire dans leur forme de textes, ne sont pas … un pur et simple entrecroissement de choses et mots … n'est pas une mince surface de contact, ou d'affrontement, entre une langue et une réalité … mais comme des pratiques qui forment systématiquement les objets dont ils parlent'.

[95] Barzun, *Clio and the doctors: psycho-history, quanto-history and history* (Chicago, 1974). On quantitative history, there is as rich a reservoir of folly: François Furet, 'Quantitative history' (1971), trans. J. Mandelbaum, in Furet's *In the workshop of history*, ch. 2 (and in F. Gilbert and S. Graubard, eds., *Historical studies today* (New York, 1972)); Val Lorwin and Jacob Price, eds., *Dimensions of the past: materials, problems and opportunities for quantitative history* (New Haven, 1972); Richard Hofstadter, 'History and sociology in the United States', and Stephan Thernstrom, 'Quantitative methods in history', in S. M. Lipset and R. Hofstadter, eds., *Sociology and history: methods* (New York, 1968), chs. 1 and 3. And there are judicious appraisals: Theodore Rabb, 'The development of quantification in historical research', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (1983), pp. 591–601; William O. Aydelotte, *Quantification in history* (Reading, Mass., 1971), chs. 1–2.

[96] On time without conjunctures: de Certeau, 'Making history', in his *The writing of history*, pp. 21, 27–30, 35–7, and in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, 1, p. 15; Chartier, *Cultural history*, p. 43; McCullagh, *Truth of history*, ch. 6.

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not that de Certeau abhorred Foucault's methods: he admired them, though not uncritically. As soon as a subject in history becomes just a discourse, of no place in particular, a *non-lieu*, de Certeau argued, it descended to anthropological exoticism. A false divide was erected between nature and culture, a split alien to biology or psychology. Keeping faith with Herodotus, de Certeau thought instead that history's job was to socialize nature and naturalize society. History should not particularize things to a point where they could explain nothing (else).[97] To de Certeau, writing history meant showing how discourses arose from a particular social formation (a context), functioning as a question in and of it, and signifying actions. It also meant showing how those discourses and actions added up to something else (an aggregate).[98]

Meanwhile, proponents of new methods claim that the theatre of a past is all. '*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*', they intone. 'Recurrence is an illusion.' Foucault maintained one 'works on [a document] from within' – genealogically and exegetically – 'elaborating it from there', like an archaeologist does with 'lifeless remains, objects without any contexts' to conduct 'an intrinsic description of the artefact'.[99] This is like the 'thick' description evoked by Geertz's symbolic anthropology. It works – phenomenologically and ethnographically – as June Philipp averred, 'to get inside episodes', focusing on actions, on 'expressive behaviour' to find 'patterns made by the actual inter-relationships of people in the past and their inter-subjective worlds of common meanings and expectations'.[100] Words or deeds are taken as construing everything as 'a geomorphic unity' by nothing other than 'an actuality in knowing … of internal coherences, of axioms, of chains of deduction, of compatibilities'.[101] Their power is presumed, whether it is viewed either as a Weberian-ethnographic *Verstehen* of participants' somehow-sovereign shared understandings or as a Saussurian-Foucauldian discourse. In the former, the referent is the 'action description'.[102] In the latter, the referents are just words:

[97] De Certeau in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, pp. 6, 16–20.

[98] Ibid., pp. 19, 31–3, and his 'Making history' in his *The writing of history*, pp. 21, 49n3; Chartier, *Cultural history*, p. 38. Cf. Jerome Bruner's interesting and new concept of 'normativeness': 'The narrative construction of reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 13 (1991), pp. 1–21, at pp. 15–16. I am indebted to Rhys Isaac for this reference.

[99] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 83, 157, 173, 182–3, and quotations pp. 14, 15: 'de le travailler de l'intérieur et de l'élaborer', like an archaeologist making do with 'des traces inertes, des objets sans contexte' to conduct 'la description intrinsèque du monument'.

[100] Philipp in *Historical Studies*, 20 (1983), pp. 339–52, quotations pp. 349, 342, 350. See Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 6–9, 96–104. Philipp is aligned with a 'Melbourne School' of historians, whom Geertz (in 'History and anthropology', *New Literary History*, 21 (1989–90), pp. 321–55) acknowledges as fruitfully applying his symbolic anthropology to history. For their work and methods: Rhys Isaac's *The transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982), note his 'Discourse on method', pp. 323–57; Greg Dening's *History's anthropology: the death of William Gooch* (Lanham, 1988), and some of his *Performances* (Melbourne, 1996); Inga Clendinnen's *Ambivalent conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517–1570* (Cambridge, 1987), and *Aztecs: an interpretation* (Cambridge, 1989). Though I share their interest in actions, mine is not just in studies of their particularity (to frame quasi-anthropological understandings of a 'lost' theatre of the past – see Isaac in Merwick, ed., *Dangerous liaisons*, pp. 297–315), but in their generality in helping us to test and assess questions of power and causation in history.

[101] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, p. 157, quotation p. 12: 'unité architectonique' by nothing other than 'l'actualité du savoir … des cohérances internes, des axiomes, des chaînes deductives, des compatibités'.

[102] Philipp in *Historical Studies*, 20 (1983), p. 350.

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not made up from 'things', from 'facts', from 'realities', … but from the laws of the possible, from the rules of existence of all the items so named …, from the social relations thereby affirmed or denied. The utterance's referent forms … the state of things and social relations which are brought into play *by the utterance itself*.[103]

Historians take note: in and from the utterance there is, supposedly, everything! Presumptions of coherence and of something like a system arise when discourse and ethnographic theories are applied to history.[104] As de Certeau explains, history and history's subjects can become a 'reflex endowed with a magical stability that became a fetish'. He suspects the reason is that historians '"still" yearn to assert the very forms of personal authority [over their subjects] that they "well know" have disappeared long ago'.[105]

There are two ways of framing and presenting these word-ly histories. One way preserves the idea of an event, but presents the past as a kind of theatre. Historical actors share and shape the world in their present-and-togetherness.[106] Though this form of presenting a past is always of a particular happening, its rhetoricizing of history still discusses causes and trends.[107] These explanations are derived ethnographically: as Geertzian 'thick descriptions', they arise from studies of a particularity.[108] By contrast, the other (Foucauldian) way emphasizes 'le système vertical', the labyrinthine (*enchevêtré*) orders, un- or under-seen, made by discourses and arising as 'single linguistic instances' in 'a similar system of dispersion' as 'an order of correlations'.[109] Foucault's way keeps the same sense of society and history as a particularity, but dispenses with a sense of the past as theatre. And still registering an odd affinity with *Annales* historiography (as a Foucauldian *histoire générale* not their *histoire totale*), it also dispenses with the idea of a historical event.[110] A discourse is not subsumed by a happening. These framings of history as a form of rhetoric in action are alike in confining studies of a past to particularities: 'comprehending the utterance in the strict singularity of its

[103] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 212, 215, quotation pp. 120–1: the referent 'n'est point constitué de "choses", de "faits", de "réalités", … mais des lois de possibilité, de règles d'existence pour les objets qui s'y trouvent nommés, … pour les relations qui s'y trouvent affirmées ou niées. La réferentiel de l'énoncé forme … des états de choses et des relations qui sont mises en jeu par *l'énoncé lui-même*' (my emphasis). [104] Giddens, *Central problems in social theory*, pp. 1–95.

[105] De Certeau in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, p. 15: '"inconscient" doté d'une stabilité magique et mué en fétiche par le besoin qu'on a "quand même" d'affirmer un pouvoir propre dont on "sait bien" déjà disparu'. [106] Chartier, *Cultural history*, p. 8.

[107] Inga Clendinnen's *Aztecs* or *Ambivalent conquests* or Rhys Issac's *Transformation of Virginia*, for instance.

[108] The French and Americans tend to call this 'cultural history'; their champions are Roger Chartier, Mona Ozouf, Natalie Davis, and Robert Darnton. Australians prefer the label 'ethnographic history'; Rhys Isaac, Inga Clendinnen, and Greg Dening are acknowledged doyen(ne)s. British historiography (and Australians working in the British tradition) seem less affected by these new methods, preferring, in the case of studies of modern France, to develop an older, but still very fruitful, tradition of social history shaped by agendas set by Edward Thompson, Georges Lefebvre, and Albert Soboul: thus Richard Cobb took his peerless path of archive-centrism; Barrie Rose, Peter McPhee, and George Rudé (and the 'Rudé school': Alan Forrest, Colin Jones, etc.) worked on 'moral economies' of regions, underclasses, crowds, and *journées*; Alfred Cobban's, Norman Hampson's, Colin Lucas's, and William Doyle's 'revisionism' attended to the 'moral economy' of elites.

[109] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 114–15, quotations pp. 18, 39, 53, 83: 'seules séquences linguistiques', 'un pareil système de dispersion', 'un ordre des corrélations'.

[110] Ibid., pp. 1–28, 164, 205, 208–9, 215; O'Brien in Hunt, ed., *The new cultural history*, pp. 33–6; Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), at pp. 552–66.

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articulation'.[111] Generalization seems too risky, too external, too mechanical. The new framings both see their role as recovering 'lost' cultural representations, 'to reconstitute … the past from which the documents arise and which now lies veiled behind them'.[112] But they can also make history antiquarian. By relativizing everything, they surrender claims to explain how the present came to be.[113]

From misreadings of the powerful, provocative, and precocious work of Foucault, history has often come to be practised and presented as just a particular product of postures, cultures, tropes, and discourses.[114] An odd faith has arisen: showing how things were represented is often considered the same as showing how things were. Although endeavours to find and describe trends and outcomes often persist among historians – for irrespective of its inconsistency with the particularizing theory espoused, everyone still wants to say something 'important'! – these are generally inferred nowadays. Foucault thought they arose from 'the structure integral to a performance', from 'the internal structure, from the islets of coherence' as presumed coherences either within (a poststructuralist's) discourse or by (an enthnographer's) reading of the general in a particular.[115] Michel de Certeau wrote of a need to broaden the semioticians' narrow concept of an '*act of speech* by which a speaker fulfils and uses the discourse in a particular situation of interaction … with the wider culture by similarities between the ('enunciative') *procedures* expressing those interventions'.[116]

The false presumption works as follows. First one has to 'describe the pattern of the field of utterances in the place where they arose and circulated'.[117] This 'enables the delineation of a cluster of concepts'.[118] It patterns by presumption: drawing '*inferences* from implied sequences and from engenderings by ways of thinking, from the patterns which generalize things or from the patterns which develop the ongoing specificities to which they conform, and from the spatial distributions which they imbue'.[119] Foucault thought a would-be discourse had four key features: *présence* (material expression),

[111] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, p. 159, quotation p. 40: 'de saisir l'énoncé dans l'étroitesse et la singularité de son événement'.

[112] Ibid., p. 14: 'reconstituer … le passé dont [documents] émanent et qui s'est évanoui maintenant derrière eux'.

[113] Ibid., pp. 184ff; O'Brien in Hunt, ed., *The new cultural history*, p. 26, identifies the dangers, but dismisses them.

[114] For similar views in the historiographical literature: Noiriel in *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), Kirk in *Social History*, 19 (1994), McCullagh, *Truth of history*, pp. 156–63, and Evans, *In defence of history*, pp. 109, 114, 200, 219; and for examples in one specialist area critiquing a 'New Revisionist Orthodoxy': Colin Jones, 'Bourgeois revolution revivified: 1789 and social change', in Colin Lucas, ed., *Rewriting the French Revolution: the Andrew Browning lectures, 1989* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 69–117, at pp. 69–78.

[115] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 198, 203, quotations pp. 12, 53: 'la structure propre à une œuvre', from 'la structure interne, des îlots de cohérance'. Chartier's critique is in *Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1985). McCullagh, *Truth of history*, p. 163, sees this as an error of 'hermeneutic circularity'.

[116] De Certeau, *Arts de faire*, p. 36: '*acte de parole* par lequel un locuteur réalise et s'approprié la langue dans une situation particulière d'échange … à l'ensemble de la culture au titre des similitudes entre les *procédures* ("énonciatives") qui articulent les interventions' (de Certeau's emphasis of Saussure's concepts).

[117] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, p. 75: 'décrire l'organisation du champ d'énoncés où ils apparaissent et circulent'. [118] Ibid., p. 80: 'permet de délimiter la groupe des concepts'.

[119] Ibid., p. 76: as '*inferences*, des implications successives et des raisonnements demonstratives, les schèmes de généralisation ou de spécification progressive auquels elles obéissent, les distributions spatiales qu'elles parcourent' (my emphasis).

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concomitance (affinities, analogies), *mémoire* (a sense of origin), and *techniques à re-écrire* (an ability to change itself). The field of presence arose as a presumption when one 'assimilates all the utterances already formed elsewhere and all those re-appropriated into a discourse as a truth through [their] exact description, through [their] established ways of thinking or through [their] necessary presuppostions'.[120]

Big claims. One is reminded of the sect claiming to discern the face of Christ in melting snow, in a pile of leaves, in any clutch of objects. One is supposed to accept that these linguo-systems are not being imposed from without, rather 'it is a matter then of defining, from the group which serves as a sample, the rules which eventually enable other utterances to be constructed from that group'.[121] One thereby infers 'according to what rules such and such an utterance has been constructed, and in consequence, according to what rules other comparable utterances could be constructed'.[122] The discourse itself is said to order its world.[123] Actors are supposedly authors too.[124]

No way is offered of testing the scope of the connections suggested.[125] They arise from an observer's sense of a connection. It is one thing, discursively, to order things: it is another, discursively, to administer something else, to establish praxis (thoughts put into action). Few advertisements, for example, however coherent they may be, achieve that kind of power; yet discourse analyses tend to presume it. We need evidence of a discourse's scope. Its power may differ from its coherence. Foucault's particularized, assimilating-and-administrating, discursive social power centres on prose, puffs, and posturing, beyond the contingent world structured in aggregated actions. The power in a discourse is just seen as sovereign and non-contingent: 'the field of utterances is entirely of itself … a place belonging to itself'.[126]

What proof is there of this sovereignty of postures and framings? Its presumed connection might issue from the observer rather than the observed. Why downplay context, that aggregation of the scope of discourses put out and put into action? To concede that analyses of the patterns of enunciation that make up discourses must examine historical particularities in depth is not also to renounce measuring and testing them as generalities.[127] How else can one assess their scope and importance above and beyond the level of mere comprehension? As Kirk has remarked: 'Shifting languages and discourses circulate and sometimes overlap, but any real external (i.e. empirical)

[120] Ibid., pp. 76–7: 'tous les énoncés déjà formulés ailleurs et qui sont repris dans un discours à titre de verité admise, de description exacte, de raisonnement fondé ou de présupposé nécessaire'.

[121] Ibid., pp. 155–6, 211–12, 215, quotation p. 39: 'il s'agit alors de définir, à partir de cet ensemble qui a valeur d'enchantillon, des règles qui permettent de construire éventuellement d'autres énoncés que ceux-là'.

[122] Ibid., p. 39: 'selon quelles règles tel énoncé a-t-il construit, et par conséquent selon quelles règles d'autres énoncés semblables pourraient-ils être construits'.

[123] Ibid., p. 158.

[124] De Certeau, *Arts de faire*, pp. 37–40, 50–7, 310n17.

[125] McCullagh, *Truth of history*, pp. 156, 163, 168.

[126] Foucault, *Archéologie du savoir*, p. 157: 'la domaine énonciatif est tout entier à sa propre surface … une place qui n'appartient qu'à lui'.

[127] My work on imperial Russia suggests, for instance, that while one may discover a coherent discourse (in my case, there were three – two intelligentsia ones and another of repartitioning peasants – about the meaning and fate of Russian rural life) one may yet find that that discourse, far from shaping the material world, was shaped by it. In my case, all three discourses were so hide-bound by the relative cultural and material immobility of late imperial Russian village society that only a savage resort to second serfdom in 1929 could rend it: *Late-imperial Russia: an interpretation: three visions, two cultures, one peasantry* (Berne, 1997).

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controls are conspicuous by their … absence. Circularity and self-confirmation become the … norm. There is no way off this discursive merry-go-round, apart from the option of making and breaking concepts against complex evidence.'[128] Apart from defining the nature of a discourse, nothing can be presumed about it from analyses of its particularity alone.[129] Every meaning is not a cause.

Discourses also require analysis as actions taken at large and as meanings received beyond. They are not just representations scripted by their historian-observer as a theatre of meanings-in-common: the presumption then is that the synchrony observed is a 'real' form of togetherness.[130] To rely on a derived discourse alone is like writing diplomatic history without troubling to find out how one side's representations – let alone actions – 'went over' with its other. Accidents happen. Actions and interactions do not necessarily synchronize. The synchrony in discourse analyses is often based on what de Certeau considered was a Foucauldian 'regressive history' of auto-suggestion, fruits of 'observational techno-strategies and contemporary disciplinarities' themselves creating 'the striking coherence of the practices that [they] select and examine'.[131]

V

Whither history? After its fruitful but fractious and frustrating 'linguistic turn', we know that history cannot go back to the positivism and structuralism of the old *Annales*. We also know that we must find ways of recapturing something of the *totale* lost in the vogue for deriving a whole from presumptive readings of a part. These poststructural ways 'disincarnated' history again, making it endure a second bout of professionalizing obsessions with texts. The first bout was Rankean and positivist; the *Annales* reacted against it. The new particularizing obsession is Foucauldian and poststructural; it also needs a corrective. After the two Michels, there can be no question of history rejecting discursive framings of 'the actual'. But nor should history ignore old social science notions of 'the actual' as structural, residual, contextual. Who is to say, and how can we know, that the rhetorics, tropes, theatres, and imaginations of the new senses of 'the actual' are not just puff and posturing (*Meinen*) rather than the supposedly sovereign sharings of participant meaning-making (*Verstehen*) they are made out it be?[132]

Only a *supplementary* historical focus on actions can resolve the question. It reintroduces important old social science concepts of power, scope, and typicality into historical analyses.[133] Attending to praxis over and above posturing thwarts the petty particularism and presumptions of coherence which blight the new historiography,

[128] *Social History*, 19 (1994), at p. 237.

[129] Evans, *In defence of history*, pp. 82, 183–6, 200. In his path-breaking theory of the 'Narrative construction of reality', the renowned psychologist, Jerome Bruner, elaborates a concept of 'hermeneutic composability' as an element in all story-telling: tales must 'pass muster' with others. Though still pertaining to the study of texts, Bruner's contrasting concept of the social coherence in the words of those observed seems not as fraught with observer auto-suggestion as Foucauldian discourse theory or Geertzian ethnographic history: *Critical Inquiry*, 13 (1991), at pp. 7–9.

[130] Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 8–9.

[131] De Certeau, *Arts de faire*, p. 79: 'histoire régressive', fruits of 'la technologie observatrice et disciplinaire contemporaine' itself creating 'l'impressionante cohérance des pratiques qu'il sélectionne et qu'il examine'.

[132] De Certeau in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, p. 33.

[133] *Society and history: essays by Sylvia Thrupp*, p. 295.

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making it repeat old errors of disincarnation. The presumptions often arise as inductions drawn from skewed samples.[134]

> In reality, the particularity can be conceived as a thing in itself; but when one turns to its functioning, it just raises questions; and when one looks to its meaning, one is thrown back to studies of actions, of persons, and of all those things which still remain external to the knowledge of it as a discourse.[135]

Only studies of actions, not words alone, can show a discourse's 'limits of [and to] meaning', tracing 'the changes of "sensibility" or of "reality" engendering the *gulfs of meaning-making*' which are a focus of History.[136]

But only certain kinds of studies of actions can play this role. The actions must somehow be aggregated. The analysis of actions must proceed from one particular to another, such that one can test a discourse's power. The ethnographic historians' quest to recapture, in a 'thick' description, the un- or under-perceived theatres of participants' shared observations, and the poststructuralists' to unearth un- or under-perceived discourses underlying words and deeds, are insufficient in themselves. They cannot assimilate the key external aspects of questions of power. These particularized views posit power as a function of posturing and display.[137] They derive it from a seeming coherence, from an observers' conviction of a *Verstehen*, no more, no less. They hardly ever test their presumptions *cross-culturally* and *cross-sectorally* in the worlds beyond their theatre of a hyper-particularized past and of their professionalism in a hyper-specialized present.

The old social sciences of structure and function must re-enter history's equations. We need to move from studies of a theatre of a particularized past to studies of contingent spheres in which a discourse has to encounter another. Then only can we assess its scope, coherence, and, above all, its power. The two forms of history are not alternatives; they complement each other, each overcoming the other's weaknesses. Ethno-discursive studies of a historical particularity are needed to establish rounded hypotheses about the nature of 'the actual'. The *Annales*' strictly structural social science history left too much out. But the new methods cannot supersede every other method. They arise, like prophecy in the Old Testament, from an observer's reified sense of the coherence of a particular: the hypotheses that result are often as presumptive, disincarnated, and unverifiable as they may be suggestive. It has always been hard to know what to do with them, what they might 'add up to'.[138]

Imagine I have just researched a topic about the bodies of Balkan peasants, or about the parlour conversations of French aristocrats, or about the English and their gardens – the kinds of topics that have proliferated under the new methods. I will proceed to frame hypotheses of meaning about these things by a 'thick' description of some 'texts'. No doubt, I will derive a discourse, however I choose to label it. That

[134] Frank Lewins, *Social science methodology* (Melbourne, 1992), p. 16.

[135] De Certeau in Le Goff and Nora, eds., *Faire l'histoire*, I, p. 33: 'En realité, la particularité a pour ressort de jouer sur le fond d'une formation explicite; pour fonction, d'y introduire une interrogation; pour signification de renvoyer à des actes, à des personnes, et à tout ce qui reste encore extérieur au savoir comme au discours.'

[136] Ibid., pp. 24, 31: 'les "limites de significabilité"' … 'la mutation du "sens" ou du "réel" en la production d'*écarts significatifs*' (his emphases).

[137] For example, Chartier, *Cultural history*, pp. 6–9, 32–3.

[138] Joyce's unmappable labyrinth of 'postmodern' theories in *Past and Present*, 158 (1998), pp. 207–35, unintentionally illustrates the problem.

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discourse will likely be made out to be a cause of something. After all, it has to be important. But the truth is that I cannot know its significance unless I seek out its praxis(es) – another time(s), place(s), and gender where the meanings in those texts might also be expected to have arisen, been put into action, and had the effect I anticipate. Till then, I have only a presumption. I cannot know whether, how, or indeed why, the discourse I saw in those texts affects anything beyond those texts. Perhaps my test should be a *comparaison* (upshot) in, say, vendettas of Balkan peasants' body-mindedness, or it may be an *archive* (voicing) in, say, *Parlementaire* remonstances of French aristocrats' parlour values, or it could be a *modalité* (siting) in, say, patterns of preference in English men and women's purchases of plants. You might suggest other *comparaisons*, *archives*, and *modalités* for these projects. This is as it should be. Too often, however, it is not.

The new historiography presents us with the same particularizing challenges which confronted the first generation of *Annales*. We would do well to learn again from their example. Their old social science history excelled in dealing with vital, aggregating questions of scope, tempo, and power. Its fault was its slender sense of what might make a social structure, its materialism. If we could have more studies of actions in the aggregate, not just studies of particular discourses or occurrences – political, social, economic, *and* cultural in their origin and nature, structural in their design and elaboration – we could test hypotheses drawn from well-rounded studies of the material and the immaterial, the theatres of a particular.[139] There is no other way to resolve problems of presumption, disincarnation, and verifiability in the new methods. Ethno-discursive studies of a particular will work thus to establish hypotheses. Assessments of their significance must await aggregating analyses. The aggregating task could proceed by mounting structured *Annales*-esque comparisons across ethno-discursive studies of particularities – in sequences either of studies of different particularities, or of experiments to test hypotheses.[140] These comparisons should seek out deeds arising from words. This is to avoid presuming a discourse has power just from an observer's and/or its authors' conviction that it coheres. Only measures of aggregate actions in the contingent social world beyond a self or a speech community can show that power. The actions furnish what words and gestures per se cannot: the 'equivalent units' of analysis enabling historians again to compare like with like, to discern causes and consequences, and to re-establish all manner of important historical generalities as 'independent variables that serve to explain common or contrasting patterns of occurrences'.[141]

It may be possible then to re-enable generalizations (quantitative and qualitative) and perhaps re-validate History's lost traditions of 'master' narratives. Something of what History has lost in the wider culture may be regained. For the new approaches have nurtured too many absurd-antiquarian, pseudo-precise, jargon-ridden, and precious-professional illusions to succour history long term.

[139] Consider my 'Towards a new structural theory of revolution: universalism and community in the French and Russian revolutions', *English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), pp. 862–900, and 'For a new Weberian sociology of law: competing ideas of the "self" in Russian self-determination, past and present', *Law in Context*, 12 (1994), pp. 1–19.

[140] Isaac's *Transformation of Virginia* is an example of the former, and my *Late-imperial Russia* of the latter.

[141] Bonnell in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22 (1980), at p. 164.

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