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Source: *Critical Inquiry*, Autumn, 1980, Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative (Autumn, 1980), pp. 5-27

Published by: The University of Chicago Press

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The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality

Hayden White

To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself. So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report of the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent—absent or, as in some domains of contemporary Western intellectual and artistic culture, programmatically refused. As a panglobal fact of culture, narrative and narration are less problems than simply data. As the late (and already profoundly missed) Roland Barthes remarked, narrative "is simply there like life itself . . . international, transhistorical, transcultural."[1] Far from being a problem, then, narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate *knowing* into *telling,*[2] the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific. We may not be able fully to comprehend specific thought patterns of another culture, but we have relatively less difficulty *understanding* a story coming from another culture, however exotic that

1. Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," *Music, Image, Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (New York, 1977), p. 79.

2. The words "narrative," "narration," "to narrate," and so on derive via the Latin *gnārus* ("knowing," "acquainted with," "expert," "skilful," and so forth) and *narrō* ("relate," "tell") from the Sanskrit root *gnâ* ("know"). The same root yields γνώριμος ("knowable," "known"): see Emile Boisacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Heidelberg, 1950), under the entry for this word. My thanks to Ted Morris of Cornell, one of our great etymologists.

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culture may appear to us. As Barthes says, "narrative . . . is *translatable* without fundamental damage" in a way that a lyric poem or a philosophical discourse is not.

This suggests that far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted. Arising, as Barthes says, between our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience in language, narrative "ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted." And it would follow, on this view, that the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning itself.

But what *kind* of meaning is absent or refused? The fortunes of narrative in the history of historical writing give us some insight into this question. Historians do not *have* to report their truths about the real world in narrative form; they may choose other, non-narrative, even anti-narrative, modes of representation, such as the meditation, the anatomy, or the epitome. Tocqueville, Burckhardt, Huizinga, and Braudel,[3] to mention only the most notable masters of modern historiography, refused narrative in certain of their historiographical works, presumably on the assumption that the meaning of the events with which they wished to deal did not lend itself to representation in the narrative mode. They refused to tell a story about the past, or, rather, they did not tell a story with well-marked beginning, middle, and end phases; they did not impose upon the processes that interested them the *form* that we normally associate with storytelling. While they certainly *narrated* their accounts of the reality that they perceived, or thought they perceived, to exist within or behind the evidence they had examined, they did not *narrativize* that reality, did not impose upon it the form of a story. And their example permits us to distinguish between a historical discourse that narrates, on the one side, and a discourse that

3. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Henry Reeve (London, 1838); Jakob Christoph Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy,* trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (London, 1878); Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Dawn of the Renaissance,* trans. F. Hopman (London, 1924); and Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II,* trans. Siân Reynolds (New York, 1972). See also my *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973) and Hans Kellner, "Disorderly Conduct: Braudel's Mediterranean Satire," *History and Theory* 18, no. 2 (May 1979): 197–222.

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narrativizes, on the other; between a discourse that openly adopts a perspective that looks out on the world and reports it and a discourse that feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself *as a story.*

The idea that narrative should be considered less as a *form* of representation than as a *manner of speaking* about events, whether real or imaginary, has been recently elaborated within a discussion of the relationship between "discourse" and "narrative" that has arisen in the wake of structuralism and is associated with the work of Jakobson, Benveniste, Genette, Todorov, and Barthes. Here narrative is regarded as a manner of speaking characterized, as Genette expresses it, "by a certain number of exclusions and restrictive conditions" that the more "open" form of discourse does not impose upon the speaker. According to Genette,

> Benveniste shows that certain grammatical forms like the pronoun "I" (and its implicit reference "thou"), the pronominal "indicators" (certain demonstrative pronouns), the adverbial indicators (like "here," "now," "yesterday," "today," "tomorrow," etc.) and, at least in French, certain verb tenses like the present, the present perfect, and the future, find themselves limited to discourse, while narrative in the strictest sense is distinguished by the exclusive use of the third person and of such forms as the preterit and the pluperfect.[4]

This distinction between discourse and narrative is, of course, based solely on an analysis of the grammatical features of two modes of discourse in which the "objectivity" of the one and the "subjectivity" of the other are definable primarily by a "linguistic order of criteria." The subjectivity of the discourse is given by the presence, explicit or implicit, of an "ego" who can be defined "only as the person who maintains the discourse." By contrast, "the objectivity of narrative is defined by the absence of all reference to the narrator." In the *narrativizing* discourse, then, we can say, with Benveniste, " 'Truly there is no longer a "narrator." The events are chronologically recorded as they appear on the horizon of the story. Here no one speaks. The events seem to tell themselves.' "[5]

4. Gérard Genette, "Boundaries of Narrative," *New Literary History* 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 11. See also Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1975), chap. 9; Philip Pettit, *The Concept of Structuralism: A Critical Analysis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975); Tel Quel [Group], *Théorie d'ensemble* (Paris, 1968), esp. articles by Jean-Louis Baudry, Philippe Sollers, and Julia Kristeva; Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (New Haven, Conn. and London, 1974), chaps. 4–5; Tzvetan Todorov, *Poétique de la prose* (Paris, 1971), chap. 9; and Paul Zumthor, *Langue, texte, énigme* (Paris, 1975), pt. 4.

5. Emile Benveniste as quoted by Genette, "Boundaries of Narrative," p. 9. Cf. Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics,* trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables, Fla. 1971), p. 208.

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What is involved in the production of a discourse in which "events seem to tell themselves," especially when it is a matter of events that are explicitly identified as "real" rather than "imaginary," as in the case of historical representations?[6] In a discourse having to do with manifestly imaginary events, which are the "contents" of fictional discourses, the question poses few problems. For why should not imaginary events be represented as "speaking themselves"? Why should not, in the domain of the imaginary, even the stones themselves speak—like Memnon's column when touched by the rays of the sun? But *real* events should not speak, should not tell themselves. Real events should simply be; they can perfectly well serve as the *referents* of a discourse, can be spoken about, but they should not pose as the *tellers* of a narrative. The lateness of the invention of historical discourse in human history and the difficulty of sustaining it in times of cultural breakdown (as in the early Middle Ages) suggest the *artificiality* of the notion that *real* events could "speak themselves" or be represented as "telling their own story." Such a fiction would have posed no problems before the distinction between real and imaginary events was imposed upon the storyteller; storytelling becomes a problem only *after* two orders of events dispose themselves before him as possible components of his stories and his storytelling is compelled to exfoliate under the injunction to keep the two orders unmixed in his discourse. What we call "mythic" narrative is under no obligation to keep the two orders of events distinct from one another. Narrative becomes a *problem* only when we wish to give to *real* events the *form* of story. It is because real events do not offer themselves as stories that their narrativization is so difficult.

What is involved, then, in that finding of the "true story," that discovery of the "real story" within or behind the events that come to us in the chaotic form of "historical records"? What wish is enacted, what desire is gratified, by the fantasy that *real* events are properly represented when they can be shown to display the formal coherency of a story? In the enigma of this wish, this desire, we catch a glimpse of the cultural function of narrativizing discourse in general, an intimation of the psychological impulse behind the apparently universal need not only to narrate but to give to events an aspect of narrativity.

Historiography is an especially good ground on which to consider the nature of narration and narrativity because it is here that our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual. If we view narration and narrativity as the instruments by which the conflicting claims of the imaginary and the real are mediated, arbitrated, or resolved in a discourse, we begin to com-

6. See Louis O. Mink, "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," and Lionel Gossman, "History and Literature," in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison, Wis., 1978), with complete bibliography on the problem of narrative form in historical writing.

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prehend both the appeal of narrative and the grounds for refusing it. If putatively real events are represented in a non-narrative form, what kind of reality is it that offers itself, or is conceived to offer itself, to perception? What would a non-narrative representation of historical reality look like?

Fortunately, we have examples aplenty of representations of historical reality which are non-narrative in form. Indeed, the official wisdom of the modern historiographical establishment has it that there are three basic kinds of historical representation, the imperfect "historicality" of two of which is evidenced in their failure to attain to full narrativity of the events of which they treat. These three kinds are: the annals, the chronicle, and the history proper.[7] Needless to say, it is not narrativity alone which permits the distinction among the three kinds, for it is not enough that an account of events, even of past events, even of past real events, display all of the features of narrativity in order for it to count as a proper history. In addition, professional opinion has it, the account must manifest a proper concern for the judicious handling of evidence, and it must honor the chronological order of the original occurrence of the events of which it treats as a baseline that must not be transgressed in classifying any given event as either a cause or an effect. But by common consent, it is not enough that a historical account deal in real, rather than merely imaginary, events; and it is not enough that the account in its order of discourse represent events according to the chronological sequence in which they originally occurred. The events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do *not* possess as mere sequence.

The annals form, needless to say, completely lacks this narrative component, consisting only of a list of events ordered in chronological sequence. The chronicle, by contrast, often seems to wish to tell a story, aspires to narrativity, but typically fails to achieve it. More specifically, the chronicle usually is marked by a failure to achieve narrative *closure*. It does not so much conclude as simply terminate. It starts out to tell a story but breaks off *in medias res,* in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved or, rather, leaves them unresolved in a story-like way. While annals represent historical reality *as if* real events did not display the form of story, the chronicle represents it *as if* real events appeared to human consciousness in the form of *unfinished* stories.

Official wisdom has it that however objective a historian might be in his reporting of events, however judicious in his assessment of evidence,

7. For purposes of economy, I will use as representative of the conventional view of the history of historical writing Harry Elmer Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing* (New York, 1962), chap. 3, which deals with medieval historiography in the West. See also Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 64, 211.

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however punctilious in his dating of *res gestae,* his account remains something less than a proper history when he has failed to give to reality the form of a story. Where there is no narrative, Croce said, there is no history,[8] and Peter Gay, writing from a perspective that is directly opposed to the relativism of Croce, puts it just as starkly: "Historical narration without analysis is trivial, historical analysis without narration is incomplete."[9] Gay's formulation calls up the Kantian bias of the demand for narration in historical representation, for it suggests, to paraphrase Kant, that historical narratives without analysis are empty, while historical analyses without narrative are blind. So, we may ask, what kind of insight does narrative give into the nature of real events? What kind of blindness with respect to reality does narrativity dispell?

In what follows I will treat the annals and chronicle forms of historical representation not as the "imperfect" histories they are conventionally conceived to be but rather as particular products of possible conceptions of historical reality, conceptions that are alternatives to, rather than failed anticipations of, the fully realized historical discourse that the modern history form is supposed to embody. This procedure will throw light on the problems of both historiography and narration alike and will illuminate what I conceive to be the purely conventional nature of the relationship between them. What will be revealed, I think, is that the very distinction between real and imaginary events, basic to modern discussions of both history and fiction, presupposes a notion of reality in which "the true" is identified with "the real" only insofar as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity.

* * *

When we moderns look at an example of a medieval annals, we cannot but be struck by the apparent naiveté of the annalist; and we are inclined to ascribe this naiveté to the annalist's apparent refusal, inability, or unwillingness to transform the set of events ordered vertically as a file of annual markers into the elements of a linear/horizontal process. In other words, we are likely to be put off by the annalist's apparent failure to see that historical events dispose themselves to the percipient eye as "stories" *waiting to be told,* waiting to be narrated. But surely a genuinely historical interest would require that we ask not how or why the annalist failed to write a "narrative" but rather what kind of notion of reality led him to represent in the *annals form* what, after all, he took to be real events. If we could answer this question, we might be able to understand why, in our own time and cultural condition, we could conceive of narrativity itself as a problem.

8. I discuss Croce in *Metahistory,* pp. 381–85.
9. Peter Gay, *Style in History* (New York, 1974), p. 189.

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Volume one of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica,* series *Scriptores,* contains the text of the *Annals of Saint Gall,* a list of events that occurred in Gaul during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries of our era.[10] Although this text is "referential" and contains a representation of temporality,[11] it possesses none of the attributes that we normally think of as a story: no central subject, no well-marked beginning, middle, and end, no peripeteia, and no identifiable narrative voice. In what are, for us, the theoretically most interesting segments of the text, there is no suggestion of any necessary connection between one event and another. Thus, for the period 709–734, we have the following entries:

709. Hard winter. Duke Gottfried died.
710. Hard year and deficient in crops.
711.
712. Flood everywhere.
713.
714. Pippin, Mayor of the Palace, died.
715. 716. 717.
718. Charles devastated the Saxon with great destruction.
719.
720. Charles fought against the Saxons.
721. Theudo drove the Saracens out of Aquitaine.
722. Great crops.
723.
724.
725. Saracens came for the first time.
726.
727.
728.
729.
730.
731. Blessed Bede, the presbyter, died.
732. Charles fought against the Saracens at Poitiers on Saturday.
733.
734.

This list immediately locates us in a culture hovering on the brink of dissolution, a society of radical scarcity, a world of human groups threatened by death, devastation, flood, and famine. All of the events are extreme, and the implicit criterion for their selection is their liminal nature. Basic needs—food, security from external enemies, political and

10. *Annales Sangallenses Maiores, dicti Hepidanni,* ed. Idlefonsus ab Arx, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica,* series *Scriptores,* ed. George Heinrich Pertz, 32 vols. (Hanover, 1826), 1:73–85; my translation.

11. This is Oswald Ducrot and Todorov's definition of what can count as narrative. See Ducrot and Todorov, eds., *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language,* trans. Catherine Porter (Baltimore, 1979), pp. 297–99.

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military leadership—and the threat of their failing to be provided are the subjects of concern; but the connection between basic needs and the conditions for their possible satisfaction is not explicitly commented on. *Why* "Charles fought against the Saxons" remains as unexplained as *why* one year yielded "great crops" and another produced "flood[s] everywhere." Social events are apparently as incomprehensible as natural events. They seem to have the same order of importance or unimportance. They seem merely to have *occurred,* and their importance seems to be indistinguishable from the fact that they were recorded. In fact, it seems that their importance consists of nothing other than the fact that they were recorded.

And recorded *by whom,* we have no idea; nor any idea of *when* they were recorded. The entry for 725 ("Saracens came for the first time") suggests that this event at least was recorded *after* the Saracens had come *a second time* and sets up what we might consider to be a genuine narrativist expectation; but the coming of the Saracens and their repulsion is not the subject of this account. Charles' fight "against the Saracens at Poitiers on Saturday" is recorded, but the outcome of the battle is not told. And that "Saturday" is disturbing because the month and day of the battle are not given. There are too many loose ends—no plot in the offing; and this is frustrating, if not disturbing, to the modern reader's story expectations as well as his desire for specific information.

We note further that this account is not really inaugurated. It simply begins with the "title" (if it is a title) *Anni domini,* which stands at the head of two columns, one of dates, the other of events. Visually, at least, this title links the file of dates in the left-hand column with the file of events in the right-hand column in a promise of signification which we might be inclined to take for "mythical" were it not for the fact that "*Anni domini*" refers us both to a cosmological story given in Scripture and to a calendrical convention which historians in the West today still use to mark the units of their histories. We should not too quickly refer the meaning of the text to the mythic framework which it invokes by designating the "years" as being "of the Lord"; for these years have a regularity which the Christian mythos, with its clear hypotactic ordering of the events which make it up (Creation, Fall, Incarnation, Resurrection, Second Coming), does not possess. The regularity of the calendar signals the "realism" of the account, its intention to deal in real rather than imaginary events. The calendar locates events not in the time of eternity, not in *kairotic* time, but in chronological time, in time as it is *humanly* experienced. This time has no high points or low points; it is, we might say, paratactical and endless. It has no gaps. The list of times is full, even if the list of events is not.

Finally, the annals does not *conclude;* it simply terminates. The last entries are the following:

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1045. 1046. 1047. 1048. 1049. 1050. 1051. 1052.
1053. 1054. 1055.
1056. The Emperor Henry died; and his son Henry succeeded to the rule.
1057. 1058. 1059. 1060. 1061. 1062. 1063. 1064.
1065. 1066. 1067. 1068. 1069. 1070. 1071. 1072.

The continuation of the list of years at the end of the account does, to be sure, suggest a continuation of the series ad infinitum or, rather, until the Second Coming. But there is no story conclusion. How could there be, since there is no central subject *about which* a story could be told?

Nonetheless, there must be a story since there is surely a plot—if by "plot" we mean a structure of relationships by which the events contained in the account are endowed with a meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole. By the plot of this story, however, I do not mean the myth of the Fall and Redemption (of the just parts of humankind) contained in the Bible; rather, I am referring to the list of dates given in the left-hand file of the text which confers coherence and fullness on the events by registering them under *the years in which they occurred.* To put it another way, the list of dates can be seen as the signifieds of which the events given in the right-hand column are the signifiers. The "meaning" of the events is their registration in this kind of list. This is why, I presume, the annalist would have felt little of the anxiety which the modern scholar feels when confronted with what appear to be "gaps," "discontinuities," and lack of causal connections between the events recorded in the text. The modern scholar seeks fullness and continuity in an order of events; the annalist has both in the sequence of the years. Which is the more "realistic" expectation?

Recall that we are dealing neither with oneiric nor infantile discourse. It may even be a mistake to call it "discourse" at all, but it has something discursive about it. The text summons up a "substance," operates in the domain of memory rather than of dream or fantasy, and unfolds under the sign of "the real" rather than that of the "imaginary." In fact, it seems eminently rational and, on the face of it, rather prudent in both its manifest desire to record only those events about which there could be little doubt as to their occurrence and its resolve not to interpellate facts on speculative grounds or to advance arguments about how the events are really connected to one another.

Modern commentators have remarked on the fact that the annalist recorded the Battle of Poitiers of 732 but failed to note the Battle of Tours which occurred in the same year and which, as every schoolboy knows, was one of "the ten great battles of world history." But even if the annalist had known of Tours, what principle or rule of meaning would have required him to record it? It is only from *our* knowledge of the

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subsequent history of Western Europe that we can presume to rank events in terms of their world historical significance, and even then that significance is less "world historical" than simply Western European, representing a tendency of modern historians to rank events in the record hierarchically from within a perspective that is culture-specific, not universal at all.

It is this need or impulse to rank events with respect to their significance for the culture or group that is writing its own history that makes a narrative representation of real events possible. It is surely much more "universalistic" simply to record events as they come to notice. And at the minimal level on which the annals unfolds, what gets put into the account is of much greater theoretical importance for the understanding of the nature of narrative than what gets left out. But this does raise the question of the function in this text of the recording of those years in which "nothing happened." For in fact every narrative, however seemingly "full," is constructed on the basis of a set of events which *might have been included but were left out;* and this is as true of imaginary as it is of realistic narratives. This consideration permits us to ask what kind of notion of reality authorizes construction of a narrative account of reality in which continuity rather than discontinuity governs the articulation of the discourse.

If we grant that this discourse unfolds under a sign of a desire for the real, as we must do in order to justify the inclusion of the annals form among the types of historical representation, we must conclude that it is a product of an image of reality in which *the social system,* which alone could provide the diacritical markers for ranking the importance of events, is only minimally present to the consciousness of the writer or, rather, is present as a factor in the composition of the discourse only by virtue of its absence. Everywhere it is the forces of disorder, natural and human, the forces of violence and destruction, which occupy the forefront of attention. The account deals in *qualities* rather than *agents,* figuring forth a world in which things *happen to* people rather than one in which people *do* things. It is the hardness of the winter of 709, the hardness of the year 710 and the deficiency of the crops of that year, the flooding of the waters in 712, and the imminent presence of death which recur with a frequency and regularity that are lacking in the representation of acts of human agency. Reality for this annalist wears the face of adjectives which override the capacity of the nouns they modify to resist their determinacy. Charles does manage to devastate the Saxons, to fight against them, and Theudo even manages to drive the Saracens out of Aquitaine. But these actions appear to belong to the same order of existence as the natural events which bring either "great crops" or "deficient" harvests and are as seemingly incomprehensible.

The absence of a principle for assigning importance or significance to events is signaled above all in the gaps in the list of events in the

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right-hand file, for example in the year 711 in which, so it seems, nothing happened. The overabundance of the waters noted for the year 712 is preceded and followed by years in which also "nothing happened." This puts one in mind of Hegel's remark that periods of human happiness and security are blank pages in history. But the presence of these blank years in the annalist's account permits us to perceive, by way of contrast, the extent to which narrative strains to produce the effect of having filled in all the gaps, to put an image of continuity, coherency, and meaning in place of the fantasies of emptiness, need, and frustrated desire that inhabit our nightmares about the destructive power of time. In fact, the annalist's account calls up a world in which need is everywhere present, in which scarcity is the rule of existence, and in which all of the possible agencies of satisfaction are lacking, absent, or exist under imminent threat of death.

The notion of possible gratification is, however, implicit in the list of dates that make up the left-hand column. The fullness of this list attests to the fullness of time or at least to the fullness of the "years of the Lord." There is no scarcity of years: they descend regularly from their origin, the year of the Incarnation, and roll relentlessly on to their potential end, the Last Judgment. What is lacking in the list of events to give it a similar regularity and fullness is a notion of a social center by which both to locate them with respect to one another and to charge them with ethical or moral significance. It is the absence of any consciousness of a *social* center that prohibits the annalist from ranking the events which he treats as elements of a historical field of occurrence. And it is the absence of such a center that precludes or undercuts any impulse he might have had to work up his discourse into the form of a narrative. Without such a center, Charles' campaigns against the Saxons remain simply "fights," the invasion of the Saracens simply a "coming," and the fact that the Battle of Poitiers was fought on a Saturday as important as the fact that the battle was even fought at all.

All this suggests to me that Hegel was right when he opined that a genuinely historical account had to display not only a certain form, that is, the narrative, but also a certain content, namely, a political-social order. In his introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History,* Hegel wrote:

> In our language the term *History* unites the objective with the subjective side, and denotes quite as much the *historia rerum gestarum,* as the *res gestae* themselves; on the other hand it comprehends not less what has *happened,* than the *narration* of what has happened. This union of the two meanings we must regard as of a higher order than mere outward accident; we must suppose historical narrations to have appeared contemporaneously with historical deeds and events. It is an internal vital principle common to both that pro-

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> duces them synchronously. Family memorials, patriarchal traditions, have an interest confined to the family and the clan. The *uniform course of events* [my italics] which such a condition implies, is no subject of serious remembrance; though distinct transactions or turns of fortune, may rouse Mnemosyne to form conceptions of them—in the same way as love and the religious emotions provoke imagination to give shape to a previously formless impulse. But it is the State which first presents subject-matter that is not only *adapted* to the prose of History, but involves the production of such history in the very progress of its own being. [12]

Hegel goes on to distinguish between the kind of "profound sentiments," such as "love" and "religious intuition and its conceptions," and "that outward existence of a political constitution which is enshrined in . . . rational laws and customs [which] is an *imperfect* Present; and cannot be thoroughly understood without a knowledge of the past." This is why, he concludes, there are periods which, although filled with "revolutions, nomadic wanderings, and the strangest mutations," are destitute of any "*objective* history." And their destitution of an objective history is a function of the fact that they could produce "no *subjective* history, no annals. We need not suppose," he remarks, "that the records of such periods have accidentally perished; rather, because they were not possible, do we find them wanting." And he insists that "only in a State cognizant of Laws, can distinct transactions take place, accompanied by such a clear consciousness of them as supplies the ability and suggests the necessity of an enduring record" (p. 61). When, in short, it is a matter of providing a *narrative* of real events, we must suppose that a subject of the sort that would provide the impulse to record its activities must exist.

Hegel insists that the proper subject of such a record is the state, but the state is to him an abstraction. The reality which lends itself to narrative representation is the *conflict* between desire, on the one side, and the law, on the other. Where there is no rule of law, there can be neither a subject nor the kind of event which lends itself to narrative representation. This proposition could not be empirically verified or falsified, to be sure; it rather enables a presupposition or hypothesis which permits us to imagine how both "historicity" and "narrativity" are possible. It also authorizes us to consider the proposition that neither is possible without some notion of the legal subject which can serve as the agent, agency, and subject of historical narrative in all of its manifestations, from the annals through the chronicle to the historical discourse as we know it in its modern realizations and failures.

The question of the law, legality, or legitimacy does not arise in

12. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History,* trans. J. Sibree (New York, 1956), pp. 60–61; all further references to Hegel's introduction will be cited parenthetically in the text.

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those parts of the *Annals of Saint Gall* which we have been considering; at least, the question of *human* law does not arise. There is no suggestion that the "coming" of the Saracens represents a transgression of any limit, that it should not have been or might have been otherwise. Since everything that happened, happened apparently in accordance with the divine will, it is sufficient simply to note its happening, to register it under the appropriate "year of the Lord" in which it occurred. The coming of the Saracens is of the same moral significance as Charles' fight against the Saxons. We have no way of knowing whether the annalist would have been impelled to flesh out his list of events and rise to the challenge of a narrative representation of those events if he had written in the consciousness of the threat to a specific social system and the possibility of anarchy against which the legal system might have been erected. But once we have been alerted to the intimate relationship that Hegel suggests exists between law, historicality, and narrativity, we cannot but be struck by the frequency with which narrativity, whether of the fictional or the factual sort, presupposes the existence of a legal system against or on behalf of which the typical agents of a narrative account militate. And this raises the suspicion that narrative in general, from the folktale to the novel, from the annals to the fully realized "history," has to do with the topics of law, legality, legitimacy, or, more generally, *authority*. And indeed, when we look at what is supposed to be the next stage in the evolution of historical representation after the annals form, that is, the chronicle, this suspicion is borne out. The more historically self-conscious the writer of any form of historiography, the more the question of the social system and the law which sustains it, the authority of this law and its justification, and threats to the law occupy his attention. If, as Hegel suggests, historicality as a distinct mode of human existence is unthinkable without the presupposition of a system of law in relation to which a specifically legal subject could be constituted, then historical self-consciousness, the kind of consciousness capable of imagining the need to represent reality as a history, is conceivable only in terms of its interest in law, legality, legitimacy, and so on.

Interest in the social system, which is nothing other than a system of human relationships governed by law, creates the possibility of conceiving the kinds of tensions, conflicts, struggles, and their various kinds of resolutions that we are accustomed to find in any representation of reality presenting itself to us as a history. Perhaps, then, the growth and development of historical consciousness which is attended by a concomitant growth and development of narrative capability (of the sort met with in the chronicle as against the annals form) has something to do with the extent to which the legal system functions as a subject of concern. If every fully realized story, however we define that familiar but conceptually elusive entity, is a kind of allegory, points to a moral, or endows events, whether real or imaginary, with a significance that they do

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not possess as a mere sequence, then it seems possible to conclude that every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to *moralize* the events of which it treats. Where there is ambiguity or ambivalence regarding the status of the legal system, which is the form in which the subject encounters most immediately the social system in which he is enjoined to achieve a full humanity, the ground on which any closure of a story one might wish to tell about a past, whether it be a public or a private past, is lacking. And this suggests that narrativity, certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictional storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to moralize reality, that is, to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine.

The annalist of Saint Gall shows no concern about any system of merely human morality or law. The entry for 1056, "The Emperor Henry died; and his son Henry succeeded to the rule," contains in embryo the elements of a narrative. Indeed, it *is* a narrative, and its narrativity, in spite of the ambiguity of the connection between the first event (Henry's death) and the second (Henry's succession) suggested by the particle "and," achieves closure by its tacit invocation of the legal system: the rule of genealogical succession which the annalist takes for granted as a principle rightly governing the passing of authority from one generation to another. But this small narrative element, this "narreme," floats easily on the sea of dates which figures *succession* itself as a principle of cosmic organization. Those of us who know what was awaiting the younger Henry in his conflicts with his nobles and with the popes during the period of the investiture struggle, in which the issue of precisely *where* final authority on earth was located was fought out, may be irritated by the economy with which the annalist recorded an event so fraught with future moral and legal implications. The years 1057–72, which the annalist simply lists at the end of his record, provided more than enough "events" that prefigured the onset of this struggle, more than enough conflict to warrant a full narrative account of its inception. But the annalist simply ignored them. He apparently felt that he had done his duty solely by listing the dates themselves. What is involved, we might ask, in this refusal to narrate?

To be sure, we can conclude—as Frank Kermode suggested in his remark on this text during our discussion—that the annalist of Saint Gall was just not a very good diarist; and such a commonsensical judgment is manifestly justified. But the incapacity to keep a good diary is not theoretically different from the unwillingness to do so. From the standpoint of an interest in narrative itself, a "bad" narrative can tell us more about narrativity than a good one. If it is true that the annalist of Saint Gall was an untidy or lazy narrator, we must ask what he lacked that would have made him a competent narrator. What is absent from his

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account which, if it had been present, would have permitted him to transform his chronology into a historical narrative?

The vertical ordering of events itself suggests that our annalist did not want in metaphoric or paradigmatic consciousness. He does not suffer from what Roman Jakobson calls "similarity disorder." Indeed, all of the events listed in the right-hand column appear to be considered as the *same kind* of event; they are all metonymies of the general condition of scarcity or overfullness of the "reality" which the annalist is recording. *Difference,* significant variation within similitude, is figured only in the left-hand column, the list of dates. Each of these functions as a metaphor of the fullness and completion of the time of the Lord. The image of orderly succession that this column calls up has no counterpart in the events, natural and human, which are listed on the right-hand side. What the annalist lacked that would have led him to make a narrative out of the set of events he recorded was a capacity to endow *events* with the same kind of "propositionality" that is implicitly present in his representation of the sequence of dates. This lack resembles what Jakobson calls "contiguity disorder," a phenomenon represented in speech by "agrammatism" and in discourse by a dissolution of "the ties of grammatical coordination and subordination" by which "word heaps" can be aggregated into meaningful sentences.[13] Our annalist was not, of course, aphasic—as his capacity to contrive meaningful sentences amply shows. But he lacked the capacity to substitute meanings for one another in chains of semantic metonymies that would transform his list of events into a discourse about the events considered as a totality evolving in time.

Now, the capacity to envision a set of events as belonging to the same order of meaning requires a metaphysical principle by which to translate difference into similarity. In other words, it requires a "subject" common to all of the *referents* of the various sentences that register events as having occurred. If such a subject exists, it is the "Lord" whose "years" are treated as manifestations of His power to cause the events which occur in them. The subject of the account, then, does not exist *in time* and could not therefore function as the subject of a narrative. Does it follow that in order for there to be a narrative, there must be some equivalent of the Lord, some sacral being endowed with the authority and power of the Lord, existing in time? If so, what could such an equivalent be?

The nature of such a being, capable of serving as the central organizing principle of meaning of a discourse that is both realistic and narrative in structure, is called up in the mode of historical representation known as the chronicle. By common consensus among historians of historical writing, the chronicle form is a "higher" form of historical

13. Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague, 1971), pp. 85–86.

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conceptualization and represents a mode of historiographical representation superior to the annals form.[14] Its superiority consists, it is agreed, in its greater comprehensiveness, its organization of materials "by topics and reigns," and its greater narrative coherency. The chronicle also has a central subject, the life of an individual, town, or region, some great undertaking, such as a war or crusade, or some institution, such as a monarchy, episcopacy, or monastery. The link of the chronicle with the annals is perceived in the perseverance of the chronology as the organizing principle of the discourse, and, so we are told, this is what makes the chronicle something less than a fully realized "history." Moreover, the chronicle, like the annals but unlike the history, does not so much "conclude" as simply terminate; typically it lacks closure, that summing up of the "meaning" of the chain of events with which it deals that we normally expect from the well-made story. The chronicle typically promises closure but does not provide it—which is one of the reasons that the nineteenth-century editors of the medieval chronicles denied them the status of genuine histories.

Suppose that we look at the matter differently. Suppose that we do not grant that the chronicle is a "higher" or more sophisticated representation of reality than the annals but is merely a *different* kind of representation, marked by a desire for a kind of order and fullness in an account of reality that remains theoretically unjustified, a desire that is, until shown otherwise, purely gratuitous. What is involved in the imposition of this order and the provision of this fullness (of detail) which mark the differences between the annals and the chronicle?

I take as an example of the chronicle type of historical representation the *History of France* of Richerus of Reims, written on the eve of the year A.D. 1000 (ca. 998).[15] We have no difficulty recognizing this text as a narrative: it has a central subject ("the conflicts of the French" [1:3]); it has a proper geographical center (Gaul) and a proper social center (the archiepiscopal see of Reims, beset by a dispute over which of two claimants to the office of archbishop is the legitimate occupant of it); and it has a proper beginning in time (given in a synoptic version of the history of the world from the Incarnation down to the time and place of Richerus' own writing of his account). But the work fails as a "proper" history, at least according to the opinion of later commentators, by virtue of two considerations. First, the order of the discourse follows the order of chronology; it presents events in the order of their occurrence and cannot, therefore, offer the kind of meaning that a narratologically governed account can be said to provide. Second, and this is probably a consequence of the "annalistic" order of the discourse, the account does

14. See Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing,* pp. 65–68.

15. Richer, *Histoire de France, 888–995,* ed. and trans. Robert Latouche, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930–37); all further references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text; my translations.

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not so much *conclude* as simply *terminate;* it merely "breaks off" with the flight of one of the disputants for the office of archbishop and throws on the reader the burden of retrospectively reflecting on the linkages between the beginning of the account and its ending. The account comes down to the writer's own "yesterday," adds one more fact to the series which began with the Incarnation, and then simply ceases. As a result, all of the normal narratological expectations of the reader (this reader) remain unfulfilled. The work appears to be unfolding a plot but then belies its own appearance by merely stopping *in medias res,* with a cryptic notation: "Pope Gregory authorizes Arnulfus to assume provisionally the episcopal functions, while awaiting the legal decision that would either confer these upon him or withdraw the right to them" (2:133).

And yet Richerus is a self-conscious narrator. He explicitly says at the outset of his account that he proposes "especially to preserve in writing [ad memoriam reducere scripto specialiter propositum est]" the "wars," "troubles," and "affairs" of the French and, moreover, to write them up in a manner superior to other accounts, especially that of one Flodoard, an earlier scribe of Reims who had written an annals on which Richerus has drawn for information. Richerus notes that he has drawn freely on Flodoard's work but that he has often "put other words" in place of the original ones and "modified completely the style of the presentation [pro aliis longe diversissimo orationis scemate disposuisse]" (1:4). He also situates himself in a tradition of historical writing by citing such classics as Caesar, Orosius, Jerome, and Isidore as authorities for the early history of Gaul and suggests that his own personal observations gave him insight into the facts he is recounting that no one else could claim. All of this suggests a certain distance from his own discourse which is manifestly lacking in the writer of the *Annals of Saint Gall.* Richerus' discourse is a *fashioned* discourse, the narrativity of which, in comparison to that of the annalist, is a function of the self-consciousness with which this fashioning activity is entered upon.

Paradoxically, however, it is this self-conscious fashioning activity, an activity which gives to Richerus' work the aspect of a historical *narrative,* that decreases its "objectivity" as a *historical* account—or so the consensus of modern analysts of the text has it. For example, a modern editor of the text, Robert Latouche, indicts Richerus' pride in the originality of his style as the cause of his failure to write a proper history. "Ultimately," Latouche notes, "the *History* of Richer is not properly speaking [*proprement parler*] a history, but a work of rhetoric composed by a monk . . . who sought to imitate the techniques of Salluste." And he adds, "what interested him was not the material [*matière*] which he molded to fit his fancy, but the form" (1:xi).

Latouche is certainly right in his characterization of Richerus' failings *as a historian* supposedly interested in the "facts" of a certain period of history but is just as surely wrong in his suggestion that the work fails

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as a history because of the writer's interest in "form" rather than "matter." By *"matière,"* of course, Latouche means the referents of the discourse, the events taken individually as objects of representation. But Richerus is interested in "the conflicts of the French [Gallorum congressibus in volumine regerendis]" (1:2), especially the conflict in which his patron, Gerbert, archbishop of Reims, was currently involved for control of the see. Far from being interested primarily in form rather than matter or content, Richerus was only interested in the latter; for this conflict was one in which his own future was entailed. Where *authority* lay for the direction of affairs in the see of Reims was the question which Richerus hoped to help resolve by the composition of his narrative. We can legitimately suppose that his impulse to write a narrative of this conflict was in some way connected with a desire on his part to represent (both in the sense of writing about and in the sense of acting as an agent of) an authority whose legitimacy hinged upon the establishment of "facts" that were of a specifically historical order.

Indeed, once we note the presence of the theme of *authority* in this text, we also perceive the extent to which the truth claims of the narrative and indeed the very *right* to narrate hinges upon a certain relationship to authority per se. The first authority invoked by the author is that of his patron, Gerbert; it is by his authority that the account is composed (". . . imperii tui, pater santissime G[erbert], auctoritas seminarium dedit" [1:2]). Then there are those "authorities" represented by the classic texts on which he draws for his construction of the early history of the French (Caesar, Orosius, Jerome, etc.). There is the "authority" of his predecessor as a historian of the see of Reims, Flodoard, an authority with whom he contests as narrator and on whose style he professes to improve. It is on his own authority that Richerus effects this improvement, by putting "other words" in place of Flodoard's and modifying "completely the style of the presentation." There is, finally, not only the the authority of the Heavenly Father, who is invoked as the ultimate cause of everything that happens, but the authority of Richerus' own father (referred to throughout the manuscript as "p. m." [*pater meus*] who figures as a central subject of a segment of the work and as the witness on whose authority the account in this segment is based.

The problem of authority pervades the text written by Richerus in a way that cannot be ascribed to the text written by the annalist of Saint Gall. For the annalist, there is no need to claim the authority to narrate events since there is nothing problematical about their status as manifestations of a reality that is being contested. Since there is no "contest," there is nothing to narrativize, no need for them to "speak themselves" or be represented *as if* they could "tell their own story." It is necessary only to record them in the order that they come to notice, for since there is no contest, there is no story to tell. It is because there was a contest that

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there is something to narrativize for Richerus. But it is not because the contest was not resolved that the quasi narrative produced by Richerus has no closure; for the contest was in fact resolved—by the flight of Gerbert to the court of King Otto and the installation of Arnulfus as archbishop of Reims by Pope Gregory. What was lacking for a proper discursive resolution, a narrativizing resolution, was the moral principle in light of which Richerus might have judged the resolution as either just or unjust. Reality itself has judged the resolution by resolving it as it has done. To be sure, there is the suggestion that a kind of justice was provided for Gerbert by King Otto who, "having recognized Gerbert's learning and genius, installs him as bishop of Ravenna." But that justice is located at another place and is disposed by another authority, another king. The end of the discourse does not cast its light back over the events originally recorded in order to redistribute the force of a meaning that was immanent in all of the events from the beginning. There is no justice, only force; or rather only an authority that presents itself as different kinds of forces.

I wish to stress that I do not offer these reflections on the relationship between historiography and narrative as anything other than an attempt to illuminate the distinction between story elements and plot elements in the historical discourse. Common opinion has it that the plot of a narrative imposes a meaning on the events that comprise its story level by revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events *all along*. What I am trying to establish is the nature of this immanence in any narrative account of *real* events, the kind of events that are offered as the proper content of historical discourse. The reality of these events does not consist in the fact that they occurred but that, first of all, they were remembered and, second, that they are capable of finding a place in a chronologically ordered sequence.

In order for an account of the events to be considered a historical account, however, it is not enough that they be recorded in the order of their original occurrence. It is the fact that they *can* be recorded otherwise, in an order of narrative, that makes them at once questionable as to their authenticity and susceptible to being considered tokens of reality. In order to qualify as "historical," an event must be susceptible to at least two narrations of its occurrence. Unless at least two versions of the same set of events can be imagined, there is no reason for the historian to take upon himself the authority of giving the true account of what really happened. The authority of the historical narrative is the authority of reality itself; the historical account endows this reality with form and thereby makes it desirable, imposing upon its processes the formal coherency that only stories possess.

The history, then, belongs to the category of what might be called the "discourse of the real," as against the "discourse of the imaginary" or the "discourse of desire." The formulation is Lacanian, obviously, but I

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do not wish to push the Lacanian aspects of it too far. I merely wish to suggest that we can comprehend the appeal of historical discourse by recognizing the extent to which it makes the real desirable, makes the real into an object of desire, and does so by its imposition, upon events that are represented as real, of the formal coherency that stories possess. Unlike the annals, the reality that is represented in the historical narrative, in "speaking itself," speaks *to* us, summons us from afar (this "afar" is the land of forms), and displays to us a formal coherency that we ourselves lack. The historical narrative, as against the chronicle, reveals to us a world that is putatively "finished," done with, over, and yet not dissolved, not falling apart. In this world, reality wears the mask of a meaning, the completeness and fullness of which we can only *imagine,* never experience. Insofar as historical stories can be completed, can be given narrative closure, can be shown to have had a *plot* all along, they give to reality the odor of the *ideal.* This is why the plot of a historical narrative is always an embarrassment and has to be presented as "found" in the events rather than put there by narrative techniques.

The embarrassment of plot to historical narrative is reflected in the all but universal disdain with which modern historians regard the "philosophy of history," of which Hegel provides the modern paradigm. This (fourth) form of historical representation is condemned because it consists of nothing but plot; its story elements exist only as manifestations, epiphenomena, of the plot structure, in the service of which its discourse is disposed. Here reality wears a face of such regularity, order, and coherence that it leaves no room for human agency, presenting an aspect of such wholeness and completeness that it intimidates rather than invites to imaginative identification. But in the plot of the philosophy of history, the various plots of the various histories which tell us of merely regional happenings in the past are revealed for what they really are: images of that authority which summons us to participation in a moral universe that, but for its story form, would have no appeal at all.

This puts us close to a possible characterization of the demand for closure in the history, for the want of which the chronicle form is adjudged to be deficient as a narrative. The demand for closure in the historical story is a demand, I suggest, for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a *moral* drama. Has any historical narrative ever been written that was not informed not only by moral awareness but specifically by the moral authority of the narrator? It is difficult to think of any historical work produced during the nineteenth century, the classic age of historical narrative, that was not given the force of a moral judgment on the events it related.

But we do not have to prejudge the matter by looking at historical texts composed in the nineteenth century; we can perceive the operations of moral consciousness in the achievement of narrative fullness in an example of late medieval historiography, the *Cronica* of Dino Com-

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pagni, written between 1310 and 1312 and generally recognized as a proper historical narrative.[16] Dino's work not only "fills in the gaps" which might have been left in an annalistic handling of its subject matter (the struggles between the Black and White factions of the dominant Guelf party in Florence between 1280 and 1312) and organizes its story according to a well-marked ternary plot structure; it also achieves narrative fullness by explicitly invoking the idea of a social system to serve as a fixed reference point by which the flow of ephemeral events can be endowed with specifically moral meaning. In this respect, the *Cronica* clearly displays the extent to which the chronicle must approach the form of an allegory, moral or anagogical as the case may be, in order to achieve *both* narrativity and historicality.

It is interesting to observe that as the chronicle form is displaced by the proper history, certain of the features of the former disappear. First of all, no explicit patron is invoked: Dino's narrative does not unfold under the authority of a specific patron, as Richerus' does; instead, Dino simply asserts his right to recount notable events *(cose notevoli)* which he has "seen and heard" on the basis of a superior capacity of foresight. "No one saw these events in their beginnings [*principi*] more certainly than I," he says. His prospective audience is not, then, a specific ideal reader, as Gerbert was for Richerus, but rather a *group* that is conceived to share his perspective on the true nature of all events: those citizens of Florence who are capable, as he puts it, of recognizing "the benefits of God, who rules and governs for all time." At the same time, he speaks to another group, the depraved citizens of Florence, those who are responsible for the "conflicts" *(discordie)* that had wracked the city for some three decades. To the former, his narrative is intended to hold out the hope of deliverance from these conflicts; to the latter, it is intended as an admonition and a threat of retribution. The chaos of the last ten years is contrasted with more "prosperous" years to come, after the emperor Henry VII has descended on Florence in order to punish a people whose "evil customs and false profits" have "corrupted and spoiled the whole world."[17] What Kermode calls "the weight of meaning" of the events recounted is "thrown forward" onto a future just beyond the immediate present, a future fraught with moral judgment and punishment for the wicked.[18]

The jeremiad with which Dino's work closes marks it as belonging to a period before which a genuine historical "objectivity," which is to say, a secularist ideology, had been established—so the commentators tell us.

16. *La cronica di Dino Compagni delle cose occorrenti ne'tempi suoi e La canzone morale Del Pregio dello stesso autore,* ed. Isidoro Del Lungo, 4th ed. rev. (Florence, 1902). Cf. Barnes, pp. 80–81.

17. Ibid., p. 5; my translations.

18. See Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford, 1967), chap. 1.

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But it is difficult to see how the kind of narrative fullness for which Dino is praised could have been attained without the implicit invocation of the moral standard that he uses to distinguish between those real events worthy of being recorded and those unworthy of it. The events that are actually recorded in the narrative appear "real" precisely insofar as they belong to an order of moral existence, just as they derive their meaning from their placement in this order. It is because the events described conduce to the establishment of social order or fail to do so that they find a place in the narrative attesting to their reality. Only the contrast between the governance of God and the anarchy of the current social situation in Florence could justify the apocalyptical tone and narrative function of the final paragraph, with its image of the emperor who will come to chasten those "who brought evil into the world through [their] bad habits." And only a moral authority could justify the turn in the narrative which permits it to come to an *end.* Dino explicitly identifies the end of his narrative with a "turn" in the moral order of the world: "The world is beginning now to turn over once more [Ora vi si ricomincia il mondo a rivolgere addosso] . . . : the Emperor is coming to take you and despoil you, by land and by sea."[19]

It is this moralistic ending which keeps Dino's *Cronica* from meeting the standard of a modern, "objective" historical account. Yet it is this moralism which alone permits the work to end or, rather, to *conclude* in a way different from the way that the annals and the chronicle forms do. But on what other grounds could a narrative of real events *possibly* conclude? When it is a matter of recounting the concourse of real events, what other "ending" could a given sequence of such events have than a "moralizing" ending? What else could narrative closure consist of than the *passage* from one moral order to another? I confess that I cannot think of any other way of "concluding" an account of *real* events; for we cannot say, surely, that any sequence of real events actually comes to an end, that reality itself disappears, that events *of the order of the real* have ceased to happen. Such events could only have seemed to have ceased to happen when meaning is shifted, and shifted by narrative means, from one physical or social space to another. Where moral sensitivity is lacking, as it seems to be in an annalistic account of reality, or is only potentially present, as it appears to be in a chronicle, not only meaning but the means to track such shifts of meaning, that is, narrativity, appears to be lacking also. Where, in any account of reality, narrativity is present, we can be sure that morality or a moralizing impulse is present too. There is no other way that reality can be endowed with the kind of meaning that both displays itself in its consummation and withholds itself by its displacement to another story "waiting to be told" just beyond the confines of "the end."

What I have been working around to is the question of the *value*

19. Compagni, pp. 209–10.

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attached to narrativity itself, especially in representations of reality of the sort which historical discourse embodies. It may be thought that I have stacked the cards in favor of my thesis (that narrativizing discourse serves the purpose of moralizing judgments) by my use of exclusively medieval materials. And perhaps I have; but it is the modern historiographical community which has distinguished between annals, chronicle, and history forms of discourse on the basis of their attainment of narrative fullness or failure to attain it. And this same scholarly establishment has yet to account for the fact that just when, by its own account, historiography was transformed into a so-called objective discipline, it was the narrativity of the historical discourse that was celebrated as one of the signs of historiography's maturation as a science—a science of a special sort, but a science nonetheless. It is the historians themselves who have transformed narrativity from a manner of speaking into a paradigm of the form which reality itself displays to a "realistic" consciousness. It is they who have made narrativity into a value, the presence of which in a discourse having to do with real events signals at once its objectivity, its seriousness, and its realism.

I have sought to suggest that this value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary. The notion that sequences of real events possess the formal attributes of the stories we tell about imaginary events could only have its origin in wishes, daydreams, reveries. Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see "the end" in every beginning? Or does it present itself more in the forms that the annals and chronicle suggest, either as mere sequence without beginning or end or as sequences of beginnings that only terminate and never conclude? And does the world, even the social world, ever really come to us as already narrativized, already "speaking itself" from beyond the horizon of our capacity to make scientific sense of it? Or is the fiction of such a world, a world capable of speaking itself and of displaying itself as a form of a story, necessary for the establishment of that moral authority without which the notion of a specifically social reality would be unthinkable? If it were only a matter of realism in representation, one could make a pretty good case for both the annals and chronicle forms as paradigms of ways that reality offers itself to perception. Is it possible that their supposed want of objectivity, manifested in their failure to narrativize reality adequately, has nothing to do with the modes of perception which they presuppose but with their failure to represent the *moral* under the aspect of the *aesthetic?* And could we answer that question without giving a narrative account of the history of objectivity itself, an account that would already prejudice the outcome of the story we would tell in favor of the *moral* in general? Could we ever narrativize *without* moralizing?

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