

Article

# Foucault and Foucault: Following in Pierre Menard's Footsteps

Riccardo Baldissone

The Westminster Law & Theory Centre, University of Westminster, London W1W 6XH, UK;  
r.baldissone@westminster.ac.uk

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**Abstract:** In his short story *Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote*, Borges describes the extraordinary and paradoxical feat of an imaginary 20th century French writer who recomposes, as it were, part of Cervantes' early modern masterpiece. Borges' duplication of the text of the *Quijote* is meant to give narrative shape to the acknowledgement that a text acquires different meanings in different epochs. This essay first sets Borges' approach to the construction of the past within a lineage of authors, which harks back to Nietzsche and points to Foucauldian genealogies. It then renews the endeavour of Borges' character Menard, as it reproduces significant portions of Foucault's 1971 paper *Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire*. Whilst the selections of the Foucauldian text are not simply rewritten, as they are given a new English translation, they are also recombined and reconsidered in the light of our contemporary cultural and political context, which underwent significant changes during the apparently short span of time that separates us from the composition of Foucault's seminal work.

**Keywords:** Foucault; Borges; Nietzsche; Pierre Menard; genealogy; repetition; history; narrations

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In his short piece *Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote*<sup>1</sup> (Borges 1974), Jorge Luis Borges recalls the feat of an imaginary 20th century French writer who endeavours to write the *Don Quijote*. Of course, Borges does not need to explain to his Argentinian readers that the *Don Quijote* is a novel written by Cervantes in 17th century Spain. However, Borges specifies that Menard "did not want to compose another *Quijote*—which would have been easy—but *the Quijote*" (Borges 1974, p. 446).

Menard himself defines his task as *asombroso*<sup>2</sup> (Borges 1974, p. 447), that is, inspiring awe and commanding respect—and astonishing indeed is the comparison that Menard suggests between his object of interest (the *Quijote*) and the objects of interest of theologians and metaphysicians. Each of these objects, "the objective world, God, causality, universal forms—Menard explains—is no less previous and common than my famed novel"<sup>3</sup> (Borges 1974, p. 447). *Anterior*, previous and *común*, common, are the two unassuming adjectives with which Borges understatedly depicts the shared condition of metaphysical and historical objects, namely, their alleged objectivity.

This shared condition allows Borges to extend his devastating treatment of metaphysical notions also to a historical product, which is nothing less than the masterpiece of Spanish literature. However, this extension requires a change of method.

Narrations allow Borges to put metaphysical ideas such as immortality, infinity, absolute memory, and unlimited knowledge to the test of practices: once actualized in the fictional world of a story, metaphysical ideas produce consequences that are at odds with any possible expectation grounded

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<sup>1</sup> Where not otherwise specified, translations are mine.

<sup>2</sup> "Mi propósito es meramente asombroso."

<sup>3</sup> "El término final de una demostración teológica o metafísica—el mundo externo, Dios, la casualidad, las formas universales—no es menos anterior y común que mi divulgada novela."

on experience. In other words, the narrative actualization of metaphysical ideas exposes their practical untenability.

In dealing with the already fictional text of the *Quijote*, Borges relies instead on the methods of literary criticism. In particular, he analyzes the text in the light of the historical context of its author. Yet, he deploys this analytical tool from within a fiction,<sup>4</sup> which leaves the text of the *Quijote* unchanged, but which moves its date of composition up to the early 20th century. This temporal shift, which would be indefensible in the actual chronology of Spanish literature, allows Borges' differential reading of the same text of the *Quijote* as another text.

Borges quotes twice the same sentence, first from Cervantes' text and then from Menard's: "... truth, whose mother is history, emulous of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, example and adviser to the present, warning for the future"<sup>5</sup> (Borges 1974, p. 449). Though this sentence reads the same in both quotations, Borges understands it in two fairly different ways.

"Written in the seventeenth century, written by the 'lay genius' Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical praise of history"<sup>6</sup> (Borges 1974, p. 449). On the contrary, Borges argues, in Menard's text, the very idea of history as the mother of truth is astounding: "Menard, as a contemporary of William James, does not define history as an inquiry into reality but as its origin. Historical truth, for him, is not what has happened; it is what we judge to have happened"<sup>7</sup> (Borges 1974, p. 449).

By highlighting Menard's technique of deliberate anachronism, Borges makes fiction deliver, so to speak, a powerful illustration of the impermanence of texts, which are constantly subjected to our projective reconstruction. Unfortunately, this acknowledgement is still far from commonsensical: however, it was not completely new in 1939, when Borges' story appeared in print.

A retrospective chain links Borges' fictionalized reflections on textual transformations with a series of texts and authors. Borges is well aware of Eliot's considerations on the reciprocal influence of past and present literature: Eliot contends that "the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past" (Eliot 1920, p. 50). Borges captures this contention in a lapidary sentence: "cada escritor crea a sus precursores" (Borges 1952, p. 90), each writer creates her predecessors.

In turn, young Eliot in Paris is fascinated by Charles Péguy, and he is familiar with Péguy's reversal of historical sequences. In Péguy's account, the very muse of history, namely Clio, claims that the first water-lily painted by Monet repeats the subsequent ones (Péguy 1932). Similarly, in 1915 Benedetto Croce boldly declares that because historical judgment is cast in the present, all history is contemporary history (Croce 1915): this claim is then to reach the English-speaking readership through the work of Collingwood.

As to Péguy, he is strongly influenced by Bergson, but he dies on the Western front in 1914, six years before Bergson's Oxford lecture on possibility as a retroactive projection.<sup>8</sup> I would quote here the core assumption of this presentation, which is not often mentioned in English: "*le possible est l'effet combiné de la réalité une fois apparue et d'un dispositif qui la rejette en arrière*" (Bergson 1934, p. 129), the possible is the combined effect of a reality once it has appeared, and an apparatus that projects it backward.

<sup>4</sup> We may say that Borges put to the test of narrations the theoretical insight of the principle of *als ob*, as put forth by Vaihinger (1924).

<sup>5</sup> "... la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir."

<sup>6</sup> "Redactada en el siglo diecisiete, redactada por el 'ingenio lego' Cervantes, esa enumeración es un mero elogio retórico de la historia."

<sup>7</sup> "Menard, contemporáneo de William James, no define la historia como una indagación de la realidad sino como su origen. La verdad histórica, para él, no es lo que sucedió; es lo que juzgamos que sucedió."

<sup>8</sup> Bergson writes in the introductory note to the essay *Le Possible et le Réel* (Bergson 1934, p. 115) that the latter is "the development of certain views presented at the opening of the 'philosophical meeting' at Oxford, September 24, 1920." The essay first appears in a Swedish version on the journal *Nordisk Tidskrift*, as a testimony of Bergson's regret at being unable to deliver in person a speech in Stockholm on the occasion of his reception of the Nobel Prize for literature.

However, if I may abuse the mathematical language of calculus,<sup>9</sup> the limit of this series of theoretical contentions seems to be Nietzsche's chaotic construction of reality, which includes the historical past. Nietzsche maintains that our engagement with reality would be better construed as the operation of temporarily ordering chaos.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, we may construct the past as series of ordering activities.

Moreover, we may also consider the previous reflections upon the past as a series of historiographic ordering activities, and if we extend this series in the direction of the future, it would for sure include another text, namely the Foucauldian essay *Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire* (Foucault 1971).

Foucault's paper appears in a 1971 collection of writings in honor of Jean Hyppolite. Forty-seven years after its publication, this Foucauldian text may perhaps appear less surprising to its readers, but it has surely gained a reference status: the essay is not only generally invoked as an introduction to Nietzsche's genealogical approach, but it is also often construed as the Foucauldian endorsement of the genealogical method. Yet, this alleged genealogical method is not even mentioned by Foucault, who stages instead history and genealogy as two veritable characters of a virtual drama.

In Foucault's construction, history and genealogy are the two antagonistic mediators with our past. Though they are not personified entities such as Péguy's Clio, the muse of history, they are nonetheless endowed with features and agency, as it were: in the Foucauldian text, genealogy retrieves, genealogy requires, genealogy demands, genealogy does not oppose itself, genealogy does not pretend, genealogy does not resemble, genealogy is situated, genealogy seeks, genealogy is, genealogy gives rise, and, in the end, genealogy returns.

As we all know, the deployment of abstract notions as sentence subjects is a powerful stylistic tool: it imparts agency and identity on these notions, by making them perform as grammatical subjects. However, in the case of genealogy, this rhetorical strategy may prove counterproductive, as it may suggest that the very notion of genealogy precedes, at least logically, actual genealogical endeavours.

Such a priority would not be too surprising, as it would appear as a particular instance of the still widely accepted priority of theories over practices. This general priority is well established in Western thought: it is first formalized by Aristotle in regard to both biological cycles and human activities. We have to wait for the Young Hegelians to have the priority of theory first questioned, albeit in the name of the rather equivocal notion of praxis.

However, Stirner's bold rejection of concepts (Stirner 2000) opens the way for the Nietzschean emancipation of practices. As already recalled, Nietzsche's construction of a chaotic reality undermines the objectivity of reality's orders. As a consequence, it also undermines the rationale of theory's priority over practice, namely, the supposed ability of theory to represent the order of things.

After Nietzsche, we can no longer naively appeal to the order of things. On the contrary, the appeal to how things stand would be better acknowledged as a theological legacy, as Wittgenstein too realizes in a moment of Spinozian enlightenment, whilst he is fighting on the Russian front: "*Wie sich alles verhält, ist Gott. Gott ist, wie sich alles verhält*" (Wittgenstein 1961, p. 79), how things stand, is God. God is how things stand.

Wittgenstein is notoriously not interested in history, but we may easily extend his equation into the past, and say: "how things happened, god was and still is." Considering that the historiographic endeavour is famously defined by Ranke as the display of the past "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*"<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> I put forth this disclaimer just in case I had Bricmont, Sokal, or one of their epigones among my readers.

<sup>10</sup> "[N]icht 'erkennen', sondern schematisieren, dem Chaos so viel Regularität und Formen auferlegen, als es unserem praktischen Bedürfnis genug thut" (Nietzsche 1888, 14[152]), not "knowing" but schematizing—to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require.

<sup>11</sup> Ranke's *dictum* somewhat restates Thucydides (Thucydides 1942)' definition of the task of the historian in *Historiae* 1.22.4: τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφές σκοπεῖν [*tōn te genomenōn to saphes skopein*], to investigate the certainty of the events. It echoes even more precisely Lucian of Samosata: τοῦ δὴ συγγραφέως ἔργον ἔν—ὡς ἐπράχθη εἰπεῖν [*tou dē syngrapheōs ergon hen—hōs eprakhthē eipein*] (Lucian of Samosata 1959, p. 54), the historian's sole work is to tell how things happened.

([Ranke 1956](#), p. 57), how it really was, a surprising link between historical positivism and theology would emerge.

This link perhaps does not escape the attention of Benjamin, who, possibly hinting at Marx's definition of religion as the opium of the people, rates Ranke's history as "the strongest narcotic of the [19th] century" ([Benjamin 1999](#), p. 463). In particular, if we focus on legal history, we would recognize Ranke's principles at work in the writings of Maitland. And yet, if we were to apply a pharmacological definition to Maitland's work too, we should take into account his specific role as legal historian.

Whilst modern historians can claim a tradition that goes back to Herodotus, legal history is literally an early 19th century German invention. Hugo and Savigny distance themselves from both the mere collation of legal texts and the teleological subsumption of legal material under the transhistorical principle of natural law. Their new historical approach to law has a decisive impact also on English legal history, especially through the influence exerted by Gierke on Maitland.

We may say that legal history as such puts into motion, so to speak, the static horizon of legal studies. Of course, nowadays this role is taken up by legal genealogies—or at least, I like to think so. However, legal histories, unlike positivist history, never have a narcotic effect. Rather, legal historians at the same time let emerge and domesticate the legal past. They make available in the legal field the enormous energies of history, which, according to Benjamin, "are bound up in the 'once upon a time' of classical historiography" ([Benjamin 1999](#), p. 463).

For sure, Maitland's legal history is not soporific. Its cultural functioning may instead be compared, *mutatis mutandis*, to the cultural dynamic of Freud's invention of the unconscious, as construed by Deleuze and Guattari. In *L'Anti-Œdipe*, our authors contend that Freud lets emerge sexual repression, but only in the shape of its Oedipalized recasting ([Deleuze and Guattari 1972](#)). In other words, Freud acknowledges desire, but only within the boundaries of the family novel and its three characters: father, mother, and Oedipus.

In a similar way, Maitland (and most legal historians) acknowledges legal history, but only in the shape of safely distanced historical objectivity. Maitland famously urges to rescue all shreds of legal evidence from the oblivion ([Maitland 1888](#)), but only—as Benjamin would say—at the price of "their 'enshrinement as heritage'" ([Benjamin 1999](#), p. 473). We may recognize in this result the immobilizing power of representation, which, even in its critical version, inevitably reifies its objects.

We may well liken the freezing effect of representation on its objects to a deep narcosis. On the contrary, the effect of the representation of the past *on readers* may even be galvanizing, as it offers them the excitement of dealing with historical facts and events from the safe position of observers. In the case of potential collaborators to the historical enquiry, it even lures them into the interactive game of a safe archival quest, which displays the vestiges of the past at no risk whatsoever.

This engagement with an attenuated version of the past may be compared, within the pharmacological domain, to an immunization. More than 50 years ago, Roland Barthes puts to use this comparison to expose the homeopathic recovery of institutions such as the Army and the Church in cinematographic and theatrical representations<sup>12</sup> ([Barthes 1957](#)). It may well be possible to understand this limited exposure which prevents a wider one as a more general trope of the theatre of representation.

Biological immunization can be induced by inoculating a weakened or dead pathogen, its toxins, or one of its surface proteins. If we continue the analogy, we may similarly understand the effect of representation on its historical objects as a paralysis, a permanent blockage, a desiccation, or a reduction to surface or epiphenomenal occurrences. To counter this effect, we would need to pursue at once the reintegration and the dynamization of historical evidence.

An available tool for both integrating and fluidifying historical notions is modern dialectics. As reconfigured by Hegel, dialectics claims the contradictory nature of each and every entity,

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<sup>12</sup> Barthes considers Fred Zinnemann's movie *From Here to Eternity*, and the plays *Les Cyclones* and *The Living Room* by Jules Roy and Graham Greene respectively.

by internalizing the oppositional structure of the logic of identity.<sup>13</sup> According to Hegel, a necessary inner strife precedes, at least logically, the external ones. However, both inner and outer fissures are the result of the simple partitive operation of negation, which posits an already common logical space.

I already recalled Deleuze and Guattari's construction of Freudian repression. In particular, they insert between Freud's repressor and repressed a third element, which is the Oedipalized subject on whom repression can be exerted. Deleuze and Guattari define this Oedipalized subject as the disfigured or displaced repressed.<sup>14</sup> Such a displacement is needed because of the incommensurability of the repressor and the repressed: in order to be subjected to repression, the repressed has first to be recast according to the perspective of the repressor.<sup>15</sup>

If we try to translate Deleuze and Guattari's threefold dynamic of repression in Hegelian terms, the Oedipalized subject as a displaced repressed may play the role of a nonvanishing mediator between the repressor and the repressed. Unlike the Hegelian mediator, which temporarily engages with its opposite before vanishing (as such) as the effect of sublation, the mediating intervention of the displaced repressed will not cease.

It is then not by chance that the two extremes of the possible negations of human otherness, namely genocide and assimilation, seem to require the previous covering of the other with its substitute image—which is, generally, a dehumanized one. Even a successful reduction of the other, either to nil (genocide) or to self (assimilation), can never completely erase the other if only because of the previous duplication of this very other: and of course, it is up to the genealogist to produce to the court of readership this other's rest, residue, and reminder.<sup>16</sup>

We may even attempt a generalization of the threefold dynamic of repression, and we may extend this dynamic to the wider field of representation. In this case, representation would appear as a unilateral and thus violently reductive intervention of the representing subject upon the object to be represented. This intervention would result in a disfigured or displaced representation of the object: in turn, such representation would substitute the object itself by covering it up, as it were.<sup>17</sup>

This disfiguring effect would not reach its apex in its self-declaring instances, such as, for example, Francis Bacon's paintings. On the contrary, the covering power of representation would be better exerted through the mimetic ability of images. The peak of disfiguration would then be reached when the disfigured representations become indistinguishable from the supposedly represented objects.

We do not need to invoke Baudrillard to recall the terrifying effect of film and television hyperreality: in the regime of actually existing democracies, media better cover up by covering, so to speak. If I may follow Lucian of Samosata in staging another dialogue of the dead, I would have Guy Debord asking Isaiah Berlin why our current human rights legislation does not contemplate the existence, let alone the defence, of a freedom *from* information.

Apparently, these considerations would imply the indictment of repetition as the most vicious tool for manipulating both reality and history. As a consequence, they would also throw a disturbing light upon Kierkegaard's proposal of repetition as an alternative to both Platonic recollection and

<sup>13</sup> More precisely, in the *Science of Logic* Hegel (2010) constructs conceptual entities (including mathematical ones, p. 99) as beginnings, that is, a combination of their determinate being with a likewise determinate negation that produces a higher and richer concept (p. 33). The Hegelian *Science of Logic* is at the same time the exposition of a technique of construction of reality and its application: from a Nietzschean perspective, it works as an ordering machine that cannot be detached from its objects, as they only become objects in the very process of being ordered.

<sup>14</sup> "[L]'image défigurée du refoulé, ce sont les pulsions incestueuses" (Deleuze and Guattari 1972, p. 142).

<sup>15</sup> "C'est dans un même mouvement que la production sociale répressive se fait remplacer par la famille refoulante, et que celle-ci donne de la production désirante une image déplacée qui représente le refoulé comme pulsions familiales incestueuses" (Deleuze and Guattari 1972, p. 142).

<sup>16</sup> I am particularly fond of English legal doublets and triplets, which are themselves a reminder of their role of interface between Law French and its Anglophone milieu.

<sup>17</sup> "[L]e désir réprimé est comme recouvert par l'image déplacée et truquée qu'en suscite le refoulement" (Deleuze and Guattari 1972, p. 142).

Hegelian mediation (Kierkegaard 2009). Yet, our good Danish Lutheran would surely agree with his Swabian co-religionist Hölderlin on the close association of danger and salvation.<sup>18</sup>

In the course of modernities, and especially their lower stage, the complaint about the numbing danger of repetition is played as a contrapuntal accompaniment to the praising of innovation. Viktor Sklovskij (1991) even constructs repetition as the ground from which the figure of отстранение [*otstranenie*], estrangement, emerges by contrast.<sup>19</sup> In turn, the notion of estrangement, in its German version of *Verfremdungseffekt*, is deployed by Bertolt Brecht in his struggle with the mimetic power of theatre.<sup>20</sup>

Just like Plato, Brecht warns his audience against theatrical duplication because he himself is under the fascination of representation: and unlike Plato, Brecht can build upon a tradition of self-policing Lutheran consciousness. On the other side of the political spectrum, Schmitt hails the power of real life breaking through “the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by repetition” (Schmitt 1985, p. 15). Freud instead does not target repetition as resistance to change: he rather casts it as an active expression of death drive (Freud 1920), which is, arguably, his defensive rationalization of the otherwise unjustifiable horrors of the First World War.

Of course, we may also detect in the modern despising of repetition more than an echo of the Platonic loathing for φαντάσματα<sup>21</sup> [*phantasmata*], the copies that are bad because they are not directly modelled on the ideas. On the contrary, Deleuze openly claims the reversal of the priority of Platonic ideas over their copies (Deleuze 1966): in their Latin version of *simulacra*, Deleuzean bad copies are no longer subordinated to their Platonic models, but they refer to each other in an infinite chain of differing and deferring, which Derrida previously defines as *différance* (Derrida 1963).

In the understanding of both Deleuze and Derrida, repetition alters. However, whilst both authors forcefully *argue* about the altering power of repetition, we may follow Borges’ example and *play* repetition as an alternative to both representation and its supposed models. Such a practiced alternative to representation and objectivity would be pursued, in the words of Nietzsche, “not in order to refute them—what business is it of mine to refute!—but, as befits a positive mind, to replace the improbable with the more probable and in some circumstances to replace one error with another”<sup>22</sup> (Nietzsche 2006, p. 6). In other words, the practice of repetition may reveal itself as a more productive error than representation and its previous metaphysical avatars.

The borrowing of literary techniques may perhaps appear questionable. Yet, most turning points in Western thought profit from importing, so to speak, tools and equipment from theatrical and literary practice. Whilst Parmenides writes in poetry, Plato invents philosophical dialogue as a transposition of dramatic writing. The narrative form of the gospels then shapes Christian discourse, and the Latin novel of Apuleius prompts Augustine’s autobiographical account. Descartes constructs the modern philosophical subject on the model of Augustine’s *Confessiones*, possibly through the mediation of Abelard’s epistolary persona: for sure, Rousseau endows this modern subject with emotions under the influence of Abelard’s lover and correspondent Héloïse.

As to historical accounts, since Herodotus, they share narrative devices with fiction. Despite Thucydides’ early truth claim, documentary evidence is only explicitly appealed to by Cusanus and

<sup>18</sup> Hölderlin (1966, p. 463) famously writes in his poem *Patmos* (lines 3–4): “Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst/Das Rettende auch.” But where danger is, there grows/the saving power too.

<sup>19</sup> Sklovskij writes of метод[ом] отстранения [*metod(om) otstraneniya*], technique of estrangement, in his 1917 essay *Искусство как Прием* [*Iskusstvo kak Priyem*], *Art as Device*.

<sup>20</sup> “Einen Vorgang oder einen Charakter verfremden heißt zunächst einfach, dem Vorgang oder dem Charakter das Selbstverständliche, Bekannte, Einleuchtende zu nehmen und über ihm Staunen und Neugierde zu erzeugen” (Brecht 1967, p. 301). To defamiliarize [*verfremden*] an event or a character is simply to take what to the event or character is obvious, known, evident and produce surprise and curiosity out of it.

<sup>21</sup> Plato (Plato 1900–1907), *Republic* 599a.

<sup>22</sup> “[N]icht indem ich sie widerlegte—was habe ich mit Widerlegungen zu schaffen!—sondern, wie es einem positiven Geiste zukommt, an Stelle des Unwahrscheinlichen das Wahrscheinlichere setzend, unter Umständen an Stelle eines Irrthums einen andern” (Nietzsche 1887, *Vorrede* 4). Available online: <http://www.nietzschesource.org/?#eKGWB/GM-Vorrede-4>.

Valla in the 15th century<sup>23</sup> (Valla 1517), on the model of religious textual disputes. However, to say it with Foucault, whilst traditional history strives to transform the monuments of the past into documents, “in our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments” (Foucault 1972, p. 8). Though not all contemporary historians would be happy to define their work as the production of historical narrations, most of them would describe their activities as less a deciphering than an ordering of the past.

In this perspective, “the problem is now—again quoting Foucault—to constitute series: to define the elements proper to each series, to fix its boundaries, to reveal its own specific type of relations, to formulate its laws, and, beyond this, to describe the relations between different series” (1972, p. 8).

I have already stretched the notion of series in order to include textual objects that are, at the same time, historical objects and attempts at ordering historical objects. I would add to this series, which goes from Nietzsche’s *Zur Genealogie der Moral* to Foucault’s *Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire*, a further element. More precisely, following the example of Borges’ fictional character Pierre Menard, I will produce this other element as the repetition of Foucault’s essay.

My task is definitively less difficult than Menard’s. Not only a much shorter chronological gap severs me from the previous author of my text: I am also happy to endorse many of the text’s statements, which thus seem to be already mine,<sup>24</sup> so to speak. Moreover, whilst as a reader I will deal with the original text in French, as a writer I will produce its *doppelgänger* in English: and because English is my working language, this will relieve me from the effort required to the Francophone Menard of learning Spanish. I have no doubt that no one would object to this language transfer, considering that the use of quotations in English translation meets universal approval.<sup>25</sup>

I recalled that in Borges’ text, both the (identical) quotations from Cervantes and Menard are followed by their respective interpretation. In my text, I will only include my version,<sup>26</sup> and the interpretation of its 2018 re-composition. Moreover, I will not even attempt to draft the whole text of *Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire*. Such an undertaking would exceed the limits of my essay, just like the recollection of all the events of a whole day by Funes—another Borgesian character—requires another whole day.<sup>27</sup> However, considering that Menard’s exertion does not go beyond the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of the first part of *Don Quixote*, together with a fragment of chapter twenty-two, I will be contented with the partiality of my effort: and following Lucian’s advice on writing history, I will try to order my fragments εἰς καλὸν<sup>28</sup> [*eis kalon*] (Lucian of Samosata 1959, p. 64), that is, as pleasantly as possible. Then let the play begin.

“Why does the genealogist Nietzsche refuse, at least in certain cases, the quest for origin (*Ursprung*)? First, because this quest strives to recover the exact essence of the thing, its purest possibility, its identity as carefully folded on itself, its form as unmoving and preceding everything external, accidental and successive. The quest for such an origin is the attempt to find ‘that which was already there,’ the ‘precisely that’ of the image which is exactly identical to its object.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Following the argument put forth at the council of Basel (1431 on) by Nicholas of Cusa, for whom he works as a secretary, Lorenzo Valla shows in his 1440 *De Falso Credita et Ementita Constantini Donatione Declamatio* (printed in 1517) that the document of the alleged donation of Constantine is a late forgery, by conducting a philological comparison of this text with surviving documents from the time of Constantine.

<sup>24</sup> This appropriation will reveal soon its projective limits.

<sup>25</sup> Considering at least my own opinion in regard, I should probably rather write “nearly universal approval.”

<sup>26</sup> I will let Foucault speak in the notes.

<sup>27</sup> In *Funes el memorioso*, Borges recalls his character’s feat: “*Dos o tres veces había reconstruido un día entero; no había dudado nunca, pero cada reconstrucción había requerido un día entero*” (Borges 1974, p. 488). Two or three times he reconstructed a whole day: he never had doubts, but each reconstruction required a whole day.

<sup>28</sup> Lucian of Samosata (1959, p. 64) argues that τὸ τοῦ συγγραφέως ἔργον [*to tou syngrapheōs ergon*], the work of the historian, is similar to that of the sculptor, inasmuch as the historian’s task is εἰς καλὸν διαθέσθαι τὰ πεπραγμένα [*eis kalon diathesthai ta pepragmena*], to arrange the events in a beautiful way.

<sup>29</sup> “*Pourquoi Nietzsche généalogiste récuse-t-il, au moins en certaines occasions, la recherche de l’origine (Ursprung)? Parce que d’abord on s’efforce d’y recueillir l’essence exacte de la chose, sa possibilité la plus pure, son identité soigneusement repliée sur elle-même, sa forme immobile et antérieure à tout ce qui est externe, accidentel et successif. Rechercher une telle origine, c’est essayer de retrouver ‘ce qui était déjà’, le ‘cela même’ d’une image exactement adéquate à soi*” (Foucault 1971, p. 148).

Written in 2018, after the spreading of Science and Technology Studies, and especially after Latour's contention that the "out-there-ness" or, in more ordinary terms, the objectivity of scientific facts is the consequence of the scientific work rather than its cause (Latour and Woolgar 1979), these sentences bundle together historical, philosophical, and also *scientific* objectivity.

"And freedom, wouldn't freedom lay at the root of the human being, wouldn't freedom link her to being and truth? Actually, freedom is but 'an invention of the ruling classes'."<sup>30</sup>

After forty years of neoliberal revolution, the Foucauldian reference to Nietzsche's reminder that freedom is a tool of social discrimination would assume a sinister prophetic tone. However, because in my text this quotation appears *post festum*, it rather conveys a double indictment of freedom. On the one side, it underlines the inextricable association between the notions of free market and free individual, and their joint responsibility in our contemporary disasters.<sup>31</sup> On the other side, the modern specificity of this association does not contradict the historical path of freedom as a mark of privilege: and we know that privileges cannot be overcome simply by virtue of their hypothetical (and unlikely) universal redistribution, which would still perpetuate authoritarian constructions of realities.

No doubt, the notion of freedom demands a genealogical approach, which would rescue it from its alleged immutability, but I dealt with it elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> Here, I will give a similar treatment to other concepts. Let's start with truth.

"Truth is a kind of error that cannot be confuted, undoubtedly because it was so hardened by history's long-lasting cooking that it became inalterable. And anyway, the very question of truth, the right, which truth bequeaths to itself, to refuse error and to oppose itself to appearance, the way in which truth was alternately available to wise men, and then it was reserved only to men of piety, and, after that, it was withdrawn to an unattainable world where it played at once the role of consolation and imperative, and at last it was rejected as a useless notion, superfluous and contradicted on all sides, —is it not all this a history, the history of the error called truth?"<sup>33</sup>

Foucault sketches his four-stage history of truth five years after the Derridean depiction of the history of Western thought as a series of substitutions of centre for centre (Derrida 1967): however, I am writing this text also after Lyotard's proposal of a narrative paradigm (Lyotard 1979). Despite his unhappy choice of the prefix "post" before the word "modern," Lyotard's suggestion helps us to make room for rethinking the first three stages of the history of truth without having to substitute them with a fourth one. We may well read the ontology of Greek wise men, the theology of the men of piety, and the naturalism of modern scientists, as steps in the path of onto-theo-physio-logy.<sup>34</sup>

Nowadays, we can construct Western thought as an ontotheophysiological path, insofar as we no longer sever theoretical objects from their processes of production. This severance can instead at last appear as an operation shared by classical philosophers, theologians, and modern scientists alike. We may define this appearance, in Nietzschean terms, as an *Entstehung*, that is, an emergence.

<sup>30</sup> "Et la liberté, serait-elle, à la racine de l'homme, ce qui le lie à l'être et à la vérité? En fait, elle n'est qu'une 'invention des classes dirigeantes'" (Foucault 1971, p. 148). Actually, Nietzsche writes that "the theory of the freedom of the will is an invention of the ruling classes" (Nietzsche 1996, p. 305), my italics. "Die Lehre von der Freiheit des Willens ist eine Erfindung herrschender Stände." (Nietzsche 1878, p. 29). Available online: <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/WS-9>.

<sup>31</sup> Of course, we all know that both the freedom of the market and the freedom of the individual are fictions. Yet, they do act as powerful regulative ideas and measuring sticks for actual practices.

<sup>32</sup> See my monograph *Farewell to Freedom*, which is in print for University of Westminster Press.

<sup>33</sup> "La vérité, sorte d'erreur qui a pour elle de ne pouvoir être réfutée, sans doute parce que la longue cuisson de l'histoire l'a rendue inaltérable. Et d'ailleurs la question même de la vérité, le droit qu'elle se donne de réfuter l'erreur ou de s'opposer à l'apparence, la manière dont tour à tour elle fut accessible aux sages, puis réservée aux seuls hommes de piété, ensuite retirée dans un monde hors d'atteinte où elle joua à la fois le rôle de la consolation et de l'impératif, rejetée enfin comme idée inutile, superflue, partout contredite, —tout cela n'est-ce pas une histoire, l'histoire d'une erreur qui a nom vérité?" (Foucault 1971, p. 149–50).

<sup>34</sup> The term "ontotheology" is probably a Kantian coin: Heidegger turns it into a description of the metaphysical double concern with *theos*, god or ultimate reality, and *onta*, beings. I rather read it as a genealogical recapitulation of the two first major stages of Western philosophy, namely the ontological stage, which is centred on being, and the theological one, which is centred on the Christian god. Yet, this definition misses to quote the third and current stage, which is centred on the scientific notion of nature: my suggested term "onto-theo-physio-logy" thus accounts also for *physis*, that is, nature in Greek.

“Emergence is always produced within a specific state of forces. ( . . . ) Whilst descent designates the quality of an instinct, its degree or its failure, and the mark it leaves on a body, emergence designates a place of confrontation; we should still refrain from imagining it as a closed battleground where a struggle takes place, a field where the opponents would be equal; it rather is—the example of good and bad ones proves it—a ‘non-place,’ a pure distance, the fact that the opponents do not belong to the same space.”<sup>35</sup>

I write after Marc Augé’s deployment of the term “non-places” as the definition of spaces of transience, such as motorways, airports, and concentration camps (Augé 1997). Yet, this is neither Foucault’s use of the expression “non-place,” nor mine. On the model of Foucault’s neologism *hétérotopie* (Foucault 1984), heterotopy, I would rather call such interstitial non-place a diatopy, that is, a place in-between.

I also write after Donna Haraway’s agglutination of the categories of “nature” and “culture” into the term “naturecultures,”<sup>36</sup> which names the multiplicity of ontological realities that includes, but also exceeds, modern nature as defined by Western sciences (Haraway 2003). For example, colonial (and postcolonial) confrontations would be better construed as multiversal clashes of naturecultures, whose opposing parties neither belong to the same space nor to the same universe.

A less visible lack of common ground is hinted to by Lyotard with his recovery of the French legal term *differénd* (Lyotard 1983). A *differénd* is a case of conflict that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of an encompassing rule of judgement. Lyotard argues for the generalization of the notion of *differénd*, to which he intends to bear witness. The mention of the non-place bears witness at once of incommensurability and disproportion within confrontations: it is a reminder of the double character of domination.

“The relation of domination is a ‘relation’ no more than the place where it is exerted is a place. And that’s precisely why in each moment of history domination fixes itself in a ritual; it imposes obligations and rights; it constitutes careful procedures. It establishes marks, it engraves memories on things and even on bodies; it accounts for debt. It is a universe of rules that is not intended to soften, but instead to satisfy violence.”<sup>37</sup>

Similarly to the considerations on freedom, these spine-chilling depictions of debt, as written in 2018, are more a picture of the present than the memory of a barbaric past. They evoke the neoliberal hegemonic idiom of accountancy as codified violence, which engraves its memories and expectations on human bodies. Nevertheless, this is not yet enough. Neither rituals nor mathematical procedures could work as systems of rules without interpretations.<sup>38</sup>

“But if interpreting means appropriating, by violence or subreption, a system of rules that by itself has no essential meaning, and imposing upon it a direction, bending it under a new will, making it enter another game and submitting it to explanatory rules, then the becoming of humanity is a series of interpretations. And genealogy should be its history: a history of morals, of ideals, of metaphysical

<sup>35</sup> “L’émergence se produit toujours dans un certain état des forces. ( . . . ) Alors que la provenance désigne la qualité d’un instinct, son degré ou sa défaillance, et la marque qu’il laisse dans un corps, l’émergence désigne un lieu d’affrontement; encore faut-il se garder de l’imaginer comme un champ clos où se déroulerait une lutte, un plan où les adversaires seraient à égalité; c’est plutôt—l’exemple des bons et des mauvais le prouve—un ‘non-lieu’, une pure distance, le fait que les adversaires n’appartiennent pas au même espace” (Foucault 1971, p. 155–56).

<sup>36</sup> Haraway’s notion of natureculture also transcends the boundaries of species: “A dog and handler discover happiness together in the labor of training. That is an example of emergent naturecultures” (Haraway 2003, p. 52).

<sup>37</sup> “Le rapport de domination n’est pas plus un ‘rapport’ que le lieu où elle s’exerce n’est un lieu. Et c’est pour cela précisément qu’en chaque moment de l’histoire elle se fixe dans un rituel; elle impose des obligations et des droits; elle constitue de soigneuses procédures. Elle établit des marques, grave des souvenirs dans les choses et jusque dans les corps; elle se fait comptable des dettes. Univers de règles qui n’est point destiné à adoucir, mais au contraire à satisfaire la violence” (Foucault 1971, p. 157).

<sup>38</sup> The same Galileo, who inaugurates the modern world by endowing the traditional book of nature with an original mathematical language, does not forget to pay respect to the necessary interpreting mediation of the alphabetical language.

concepts, a history of the concept of freedom or of the ascetic life as emergences of different interpretations. It's a matter of making these emergences appear as events in the theatre of procedures."<sup>39</sup>

These considerations on the violent or malicious nature of interpretation also apply to the operations of which they are the result. In other words, they aptly describe my own operation of translating the Foucauldian text, as well as the operation of producing it anew, as I am claiming here. In both cases, I cannot deny that I am imposing upon Foucault's text a direction, that I am bending it under a new will, and that I am making it enter another game. Nevertheless, more in general, similar admissions should also be made whenever we *quote* a text: in this case, though we simply "produce the evidence," as the legal expression goes, at the same time we also somewhat fabricate the proof. It is then not surprising that these admissions make historians feel very uneasy.

"Historians seek as much as possible to erase that which can betray, in their knowledge, the place from which they watch, the moment in which they are, the position that they take, and that which is inevitable in their passion."<sup>40</sup>

I am aware that by authoring this sentence in 2018, I am running the risk of tarring all historians with the same brush. During the last nearly fifty years—I may be reminded—many a historian made more than a step towards embracing a perspectival view.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the multiple erasures of place, time, and desire simply cannot be addressed as an epistemological issue. Epistemology, if any, is an outcome of the reduction of the processes of production of knowledge to standard knowing procedures. This transition is witnessed by the semantic shift of the Greek word μέθοδος [*methodos*], from the path of the enquiry to its modus operandi.<sup>42</sup> More in general, the construction of the objectivity of the various objects of knowledge involves the erasure of the traces of their production.

Platonic forms, Aristotelian essences, the various versions of the Christian god, and modern nature all profit from this erasure, which allow them to be always already there.<sup>43</sup> Though the "already-there-ness" of the historical past may appear as a mere truism, it is inextricably intertwined with the "already-there-ness" of these metaphysical objects. To put it bluntly, objectivity is the articulation of history and metaphysics.

"In appearance, or rather according to the mask it wears, historical consciousness is neutral, stripped of all passion, and committed solely to truth. But if it asks itself and, more generally, if it interrogates all scientific consciousness in its history, it discovers the forms and transformations of the will to know which is instinct, passion, inquisitorial relentlessness, cruel refinement, malice; it discovers the violence of bias: bias against ignorant happiness, against the vigorous illusions by which humankind protects itself, bias against all that which is dangerous in the enquiry and disquieting in the discovery. The historical analysis of this great will to know that runs through humankind thus shows both that there is no knowledge that is not based on injustice (that within knowledge itself, there is no right to truth or a foundation for truth), and that the instinct of knowing is wicked (that there is something murderous in it, and that it neither can, nor wants to do anything for the happiness of humans)."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> "Mais si interpréter, c'est s'emparer, par violence ou subreption, d'un système de règles qui n'a pas en soi de signification essentielle, et lui imposer une direction, le ployer à une volonté nouvelle, le faire entrer dans un autre jeu et le soumettre à des règles secondes, alors le devenir de l'humanité est une série d'interprétations. Et la généalogie doit en être l'histoire: histoire des morales, des idéaux, des concepts métaphysiques, histoire du concept de liberté ou de la vie ascétique, comme émergences d'interprétations différentes. Il s'agit de les faire apparaître comme des événements au théâtre des procédures" (Foucault 1971, p. 158).

<sup>40</sup> "Les historiens cherchent dans toute la mesure du possible à effacer ce qui peut trahir, dans leur savoir, le lieu d'où ils regardent, le moment où ils sont, le parti qu'ils prennent,—l'incontournable de leur passion" (Foucault 1971, p. 163).

<sup>41</sup> For example, we may consider the likes of Jenkins, Munslow, Southgate, Bunzl and McCullagh.

<sup>42</sup> This shift happens in Plato's dialogues, between the *Phaedo* and the *Sophist*.

<sup>43</sup> We may say that classical philosophers, Christian theologians and modern scientists all play similar games: they produce their objects—forms, being, god, nature—and they erase this production, so that each of these objects becomes, in the words of Borges, *anterior y común*, previous and common. Classical philosophers, Christian theologians and modern scientists then appeal to the alleged objectivity of their products in order to legitimate themselves as interpreters.

<sup>44</sup> "En apparence, ou plutôt selon le masque qu'elle porte, la conscience historique est neutre, dépouillée de toute passion, acharnée seulement à la vérité. Mais, si elle s'interroge elle-même et si d'une façon plus générale elle interroge toute conscience scientifique

Though this unsparing attack on the will to know may seem excessively pessimistic, it just shows the dark side of knowledge as a self-standing endeavour. This ambivalence is first detected in a specific technique of knowledge, namely writing, by Plato himself. Plato borrows the Homeric term φάρμακα [*pharmaka*], which defines both poisonous and healing herbal drugs,<sup>45</sup> in order to bestow these contradictory effects upon writing.<sup>46</sup> Derrida (Derrida 1967–1968), and after him Stiegler (2010), generalize this ambivalence to cultural techniques at large. The resulting pharmacology of cultural practices knows of no antidote, but of healing paths that work by giving back users the role of producers. A similar shift may be seen at work in Nietzsche's writing trajectory.

"The Untimely spoke of the critical use of history: it was a matter of dragging the past to court, of cutting its roots with the knife, of wiping off the traditional veneration, of freeing man and not leaving him with no other origin than the one he wants to acknowledge. Nietzsche reproached such critical history for detaching us from our real sources and for sacrificing the very movement of life to the exclusive concern for truth. ( . . . ) In a way, genealogy comes back to the three modalities of history that Nietzsche recognized in 1874. Genealogy returns to these modalities beyond the objections that Nietzsche was then raising against them in the name of life, of its power to affirm and create. But genealogy is back to these modalities by transforming them: the veneration of monuments becomes parody; the respect for old continuities becomes systematic dissociation; the criticism of past injustices in the name of the truth that we hold now, becomes the destruction of the subject of knowledge at the hands of the injustice of the will to know."<sup>47</sup>

Writing in 2018, Nietzsche's trajectory, which escapes the blind alley of critique through the openings of production, becomes more easily recognizable in its recent further developments. Let's briefly recapitulate this path. Nietzsche's early rejection of critical rejection, as it were, gives way to a more productive engagement with his objects. And whilst the destructivity of the unbridled will to know is still at work—albeit against itself and its very subject—parody and dissociation bypass the confrontational impasse of the critical approach, and they instead multiply the intervention options. In 1980, this multiplication takes off again in a renewed shape. Following Serres (1977), Deleuze and Guattari (1980) advocate the addition of a minor science: this non-canonical history of knowledge lays close to the core of the Western canon, of which nonetheless it would escape the apparatus of capture. A further step in this path, heralded by Feyerabend's scathing treatment of the so-called scientific method (Feyerabend 1975), is Latour's joint construction of past and present health science, together with his proposal of a Nietzsche-inspired theory of ontologically productive relations (Latour 1984): and even more relevant to this trajectory is Latour's evocation of a parliament with things (Latour 1991).

Humans and nonhumans would seat side by side in this metaphorical deliberative organ, which allows Latour to redesign at once knowledge and politics. The constitutive enmeshment of humans

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*dans son histoire, elle découvre alors les formes et les transformations de la volonté de savoir qui est instinct, passion, acharnement inquisiteur, raffinement cruel, méchanceté; elle découvre la violence des partis pris: parti pris contre le bonheur ignorant, contre les illusions vigoureuses par lesquelles l'humanité se protège, parti pris pour tout ce qu'il y a de périlleux dans la recherche et d'inquiétant dans la découverte. L'analyse historique de ce grand vouloir-savoir qui parcourt l'humanité fait donc apparaître à la fois qu'il n'y a pas de connaissance qui ne repose sur l'injustice (qu'il n'y a donc pas, dans la connaissance même, un droit à la vérité ou un fondement du vrai) et que l'instinct de connaissance est mauvais (qu'il y a en lui quelque chose de meurtrier, et qu'il ne peut, qu'il ne veut rien pour le bonheur des hommes)" (Foucault 1971, p. 170).*

<sup>45</sup> φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμιγμένα πολλὰ δὲ λυγρὰ [*pharmaka, polla men esthla memigmēna polla de lygra*], drugs, many that are healing when mixed, and many that are poisonous. Homer (Homer 1920), *Odyssey* 4.230.

<sup>46</sup> Plato (Plato 1900–1907), *Phaedrus* 274e–275b.

<sup>47</sup> "Les Intempestives parlaient de l'usage critique de l'histoire: il s'agissait de traîner le passé en justice, de couper ses racines au couteau, d'effacer les vénération traditionnelles, afin de libérer l'homme et de ne lui laisser d'autre origine que celle où il veut bien se reconnaître. À cette histoire critique, Nietzsche reprochait de nous détacher de toutes nos sources réelles et de sacrifier le mouvement même de la vie au seul souci de la vérité. ( . . . ) En un sens la généalogie revient aux trois modalités de l'histoire que Nietzsche reconnaissait en 1874. Elle y revient par-delà les objections qu'il leur faisait alors au nom de la vie, de son pouvoir d'affirmer et de créer. Mais elle y revient en les métamorphosant: la vénération des monuments devient parodie; le respect des anciennes continuités devient dissociation systématique; la critique des injustices du passé par la vérité que l'homme détient aujourd'hui devient destruction du sujet de connaissance par l'injustice propre [à] la volonté de savoir" (Foucault 1971, p. 172).

and things would allow nonhumans to speak through their human representatives, which include all scientists. However, despite his productive incursions in the history of science, Latour does not consider a role for historians in his enlarged assembly: I would then suggest that historians, especially in their Nietzschean and Foucauldian improved version of genealogists, could give a decisive contribution to the deliberations of the Latourian parliament.

Whilst in this renewed body scientists act as essential mouthpieces of things (albeit not the only ones), historians may perform another crucial mediation. This would require nothing else than ratifying what historians have always done: in Western culture, historians are in charge of communicating with the dead. More precisely, historians do not speak to the dead, but rather they make the dead speak. This is not just a ventriloquist's trick, because historians do engage with the deeds of the dead through things.

An immense and expanding hybrid network links the dead, the things, their living orderers and variously integrating, overlapping, and even conflicting ordering techniques. Such a network includes a huge amount and variety of internal connections, which also perform as cross checks. The vastness and the complexity of this network dwarf and ridicule the debates on historical objectivity. Even regardless of its metaphysical implications, the simplistic notion of historical objectivity is but a fig-leave, which covers the obscene reduction of the work of the historian to the assembling of a jigsaw puzzle.

However, other reductions set the course of historiography, such as the shortcut of historical underlying structures, from Thucydides' cycles to Eusebius' heading towards the final judgement, and from Vico's spiralling ascent to the happily convergent evolution of Whig history. Last, but not least, Marx's construction of social conflict as the hidden cypher of history takes also the shape of a historical series of modes of production. Paradoxically, Marx's dynamic view of history turns itself into a confirmation of the historical objectivity (albeit temporary) of the categories of the supposed current mode of production. This reversal not only confirms history's autochthonous and thus most resilient structure, that is, periodization: it also renders even more difficult for us the task of rescuing current categories from the eternal present of neoliberal detemporalization.

Let's consider, for example, the notion of property. Any good legal historian would relieve this category from a banal form of repetition, which is the assimilation of the past to present views. A good legal historian would easily show both continuities and discontinuities in the various historical deployments of the notion of property, provided that these uses would be safely confined within chronological boundaries. Marx himself does not transcend these boundaries, and he only detects in previous stages of the notion of property the anticipation of its subsequent evolution.<sup>48</sup>

On the contrary, a genealogist would detect a more subtle repetition, in which the various reconstructed pasts repeat their various images as construed in the present. In other words, a genealogist would recognize historical reconstructions as differentiating projections onto the past. This recognition would surely improve the epistemic horizon of modern historiography: yet, it would still not transcend this horizon. A genealogist only crosses the cognitive threshold when she acknowledges her own investment in the past, without hiding herself behind the finger of historiographic refinement.

I admit that the choice of synecdochic representatives—the legal historian, the genealogist—is no less risky than Foucault's grammatical subjectivation of genealogy and Péguy's personification of history. In my case, the grammatical individuality of the synecdochic genealogist may make appear (somewhat misleadingly) her investment in the past as the result of individual psychological motivations. I would instead restate the Nietzschean sidestepping of both subject and will, in order to focus on deeds.

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<sup>48</sup> However, it is fair to recall that in the letter to the editorial board of the Russian journal *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, written presumably in November 1877, Marx underlines that the key to economic phenomena cannot be arrived at 'by employing the all-purpose formula of a general historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical' (Marx and Engels 2010, p. 201).

Deeds, and in this case, genealogies in the plural—rather than a genealogist in the singular—should be then the proper grammatical subjects of my previous sentences. Moreover, genealogies as constellations of deeds would not connect individual subjects, but rather sub-individual and transindividual singularities. However, if one feels uncomfortable with these neologisms devised by Simondon (1989), genealogies' investment in the past may be tentatively expressed in this general form: some parts of us want some of the dead to speak about something.

It is up to us whether the dead will or will not be silenced. However, our intervention well exceeds the sphere of duty: the investment in the past always grants huge returns. The repetition of the past, be it more or less imaginary, never ceases to provide us with a powerful leverage to transform the present.

We rescue the dead not only because they are in danger, as Benjamin anxiously denounces, but also for not losing their precious alliance. Nietzsche knows it well: the dead allows him to speak in the plural, despite his companions are far yet to come. I often do the same, and this paper is no exception.

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