Historia

Historia:

Profiles of the Historical Impulse

By

Frederic Will

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To Bob Sayre

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part III

PREFACE

The following volume deals with the nature of history. It does so from the perspective of the individual *in* history, with the resultant very human disorder. Disorder? The individual *in* history may well think *about* history, but he/she is at the same time *in* the history being thought about. That makes for an occlusion within the thinking subject, and disqualifies history, in the sense of a record of past events, as a freestanding product of the historian's thinking. The occlusive factor is even worse than that, from the viewpoint of objectivity. There is a further implication to the historian's being a *part* of history. For the historian to be part of history, a couple of things follow. One is that the historian is a placeholder for a datum of the historical continuum. The historian is simply one of the facts history must include. The historian is someone who will/could/can be written about/talked about/depicted someday, as part of history. Another thing that follows from the historian's being *in* history is this: the historian is inevitably *interested* in history, in the sense that he has an interest, an investment, in history. We might say that history is a problematic issue for the historian, and not simply a datum. If history is problematic for the historian, he/she will forever be taking up the historical record as a question. He himself will also be in question, as a first-class resident of the condition of historicity, as a being who descends at least from the first existing organic material, and possibly, depending on your speculation about the origins of organic material, from the processes that led from the Big Bang into the following ten billion years, which ushered in the first traces of life on our earth. This problematic historian of ours will also be one whose future will be inscribed in the destiny of the cosmos, and who, as historical, can be studied from as many angles as he himself is various, angles as multiply studyable as he himself is various: a vertical study of his right big toe could be placed on the shelf beside a history of his contributions to the study of aesthetics. Neither of these contributions would be exempt from presence at the last Judgment. The individual is thus no freestanding observer of the historical process about which he writes, but is intimately and inevitably related to that process.

The title of this book means to differentiate the work from an inspection as systematic as those of the philosophy of history. The book is more like a notebook about history; a record of conjoined observations

about the different ways history looks, its profiles, and of the endless impulses that drive the historian to take account of what happened back then.

This notebook first takes up the historical problematic in terms of the way other placeholders have gone about their work, formally—in extended texts—working through their own compromised condition as knowers of the past. As if the "anything goes" conditions of investigation were not crippling enough, in the game of compromises suggested above, the author begins with a fairly random selection of written texts whose overall theme is the history of the Americas. (These texts came to hand, quite literally, as he reached out around him in his study in Ughelli, Nigeria, where he had a restricted library.) All these texts were written in the twentieth, or beginning of the twenty-first, century; all are by Americans; yet the texts made out of inquiry by these five writers could hardly be more diverse.

The inquiry into texts by these five authors is only the first part of our investigative study. This study bridges to a discussion of the way arts and acts other than academic prose address the past. The examples chosen this time are all equally aleatory: a painting by Duerer, the performance of drum music linked to royal Ashanti genealogy, and a renowned archeological intervention into history, in order to reconstruct the vision of an ancient civilization—the project of Sir Arthur Evans.

This loose assortment of past-accessing strategies—by academic pen in the study, by semi-trained eye in the art gallery, by ear in the halls of a West African court, by the *Gesamtkunstwerk* conception of the archeologist on the ground—springs from the author's desire to give play to a variety of ways of naming the elusive past. Vast discrepancies emerge, among these various ways of finding, interpreting, encountering, nudging, and formalizing the past, and one of our notebook's chief arguments is that a total human consciousness-refold, onto the human past, is doomed to rest on a confusingly diverse pattern of strategies. On closer scrutiny, though, the architecture of such a backfold appears to provide some fresh and innovative insight into the nature of what we call "scholarship," the keystone activity of those social clubs called universities, whose signature product is the desire for progress. The driver for modern cultural scholarship, which has its roots in the eighteenth-century notion of progress, and in the social scientific concern with the past of human culture, is the human "longing" to name ourselves and our species-adventure, and thus to acquire a certain social closure in the ambience of truth. The fact on the ground, however, is that the intermeshing components of a global scholarly enterprise fracture on the divergence among "scholars," their theories, their writing styles, so that the

architecture of historical knowledge is shaky at best. (One takes five historians of the American experience in hand, reviews them, and is bewildered by the absence of any masonry that can assure their mutual intersection.) The human project of self-knowing may have to remain a spur rather than a testimony to the ambience of truth.

PART I

TEXTURA 1

WHAT IS HISTORY?

1

History starts with a marker. You notch a tree. You remind your wife to remind you of x. You hum a song in a certain way so that when you hear it again you will know it.

2

History is thus a regional procedure. A rubbing against, a *textura*. Something local. It is true there are *grand* histories of people made by people, like Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*, and there are *grand* histories of natural objects, like Ross Bell's lifetime articles on the worldwide spread of beetles of the scientific tribe *Rhysodini*. But these grand histories are just accretions of local markers or local notches, or verbal tunes that have been enormously complexified by propagation and additive growth. There are, of course—are there ever—histories that were not written by anyone, but are the unwritten actuality of the universe in which we find ourselves. These histories are *not* regional. These histories are nature's scripts.

3

History (written or recorded history, at least) is not only a textura but is also an *about*, a history *of* something or other. Sometimes, when history reflects on itself, as in the philosophy of history, history is an about an about. That is, it doubles back on itself and asks what kind of a thing it is. This is still history as a local texture, rubbing against itself; as are all those histories we mentioned above, rubbings against, like the rubbings together of the atoms in the world pictures of Lucretius or Democritus. Furthermore, once again, other kinds of history than written history may also be abouts. Their gathering of the past in works of music or art may also be abouts, providing the gathering is reflexive.

4

History is intimate and close-up, and is an about no matter how apart the historian and the historicized. History is also by nature a story, as well as being a rubbing-against, an about. It is natural for us to make history into a narrative. We like to hear stories. We like to tell stories. History will accompany humankind to the end, hugging our desire for stories of time. According to some religious narratives, the story will go on after our deaths and after the end time.

5

Are the stories that make up history always flowing from past to future? Are we ourselves always somewhere at the midpoint of this flow? Looking toward the future?

6

On reflection, and contrary to popular opinion, we may want to say that history is bi-directional. Physicists discount the reality of time, except as a measurement of change. The sense of directionality in our experience of time—whether cosmic time, the time of cultural self-placing, or the lived time of daily life—has long been shown to be double. Take this on the level of cultural self-placing. Western assumptions about futurity and progress, as they were formulated in the nineteenth century, all point to history as a movement into the future, but all these assumptions are matched by the many world-culture viewpoints which postulate a Golden Age *from which* man's present condition is fallen, as though with such cultures time is relegated to a sloping-away from a more perfect past.[1] The future seems to *be* the past. For the physicist or the philosopher, viewing time as a function of quantitative measurement or as a category of the mind, as Kant viewed it, time is a neutral medium. Odd as it may seem, history, robust histories of human culture written so tendentiously from a past-to-future perspective, can be reversed, like Escher drawings, to appear as accounts of how the future, with which they commence, unfolded. From inside us and it, history is streaming in two directions (or no directions) like a life, the death inevitability of which is notoriously incommensurate with whatever personhood means.

7

If history is bi-directional (or even non-directional) then there is a formal history which looks into the past, as histories conventionally do, but there is also a history of the future. The history of the past is like Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*, which assembles data about its topic, puts them into categories, and draws conclusions about them. Needham's book is a vast written act in the mind, accompanied by a language code, disciplined and jungle-rich. Another example of this kind of history is your own history, about which you fill out forms or which you shape into an autobiography for the kids. There's also a history of the future, of which we can say safely that it includes at least all that is going to happen until the end of the world, if there is such an end. The Book of Revelations is such a history. The prophecies of Nostradamus are such a history. Isn't great imaginative literature also such a history, poised as it is between depicting the human condition and permanently forecasting that condition? And that's not all. If there's a history of the history of the past, then there's also a history of the history of the future. Once again we're reminded of the reflexive dimension of history, and provoked to think about what the relationship can be between a history of anything and the history of that history.

8

History in any of the modes *we* can imagine is too small to be global—our maker *is* that history—and clots itself in local sequences. There's a history of your body—its past, its future. There's a history of the Saints, and there are histories of potato cultivation. There's a history (to be written, I think) of the eventual fate of a small language like Urhobo. What will unfold is already being written as what was implicit in what will unfold. The future is in that sense too the text of the past. Our maker's prescience is so distributed that nothing created was not implied as the history of that prescience.

9

For all history except what we are as being here, there must be an historian. There must also be some kind of hearer, whether the fellow Aurignacian at the campfire, the scientist a world apart who reads Bell's history of the coleoptera of Vermont, or the fellow terrorist to whom I relate, in a scrambled email, what went wrong last night in Djibouti. Take

away human auditors/perceivers and the falling oak makes no sound. Take away "historians," humans in their history-making mode, and there is no history, just events succeeding one another, as in Islamic occasionalism or David Hume's empiricism.

10

The mark we leave in the tree, the historical action, helps make us what we are, prisoners and creators of time. At the same time this action is a decisive freeing of us. It is a move to give definition to the anomalous condition of life on the planet, a condition of terror, we may presume, to those who have lived in the earliest shaping stages of human society—let's say to those "paleo Indians," who of course had no such conception as that of themselves, who first moved down the narrow ice-free corridor from northern Canada to what we now call the Lower 48.

11

Exercising this kind of mark on the outer world is the way we sustain ourselves as a species, naked and in many ways weak, but working and working in a context.

12

We have to imagine that the universe we have not subjected to time is there even during our time here giving time. Can we surmise that with us gone the universe will appear as what it is, not time but pure presence? Will time appear then to have been an illusory set of relationships among the *realia* remaining in the universe?

13

Or is space, in which we make the initial mark in the tree, not indissolubly mated with time? So that, as when the *Weltall* opens and closes its sleepy lid, the distance between closings is itself time?

TEXTURA 2

AUTHORIZED BY TIME

1

History is without a valence.

2

It has a past and a future, but no weight in either direction.

3

We give history its weight; are anxious toward the future, nostalgic toward the past. These are examples. Our moods give this weight to history, which has no moods.

4

When we speak of objective written histories, specifically adult human cognitive rational evidential scholarly histories of this or that block of human time, such as the Roman Empire or the Ch'ing Dynasty, we are singling out a huge bolus of "moods," if that is the word. There were many Romans, and each of them had moods. We are writing about them as a group or as fractions of groups—like the Centurions on the Danube frontier in 39 B.C.—and thus we are reducing the number of moods we could impute to ancient Rome, but still we are "generalizing" about the "mood" among a cohort of Romans to whom we impute, thereby, some kind of coherence of feeling—but with slim evidence, which is hard to assemble.

5

In imputing moods to history, we may assume that history has moods. But we have noted that history has no moods. History is a regional

procedure, a rubbing-against, an about, perhaps the intersection of time with space—we only started on that; but even if we advance toward understanding the intersection, could it add to history the capacity to have a mood or tone?—but history itself has no moods.

6

And what then is history? We have just aligned a number of descriptors. They are like metaphors. Can we give a more nearly fundamental response to what history is? Is it like this? *A human effort to organize a non-human platform of time-constitutive events which we can pursue regionally toward some kind of point of origin?*

7

When we have stretched to ontology we withdraw. There are fat mites on my cheeks in the morning, I am told. Each has its history and organic description. The world to account for, if we wish to do so, is a plenitude, as believers in a god with infinite interest in details have long assured us. The turmoil of mere presence is more than enough for us.

8

History is without a valence. We read it with valence. I read Roman history. Humans are drawn to the decline of their fellows as well as to their grandeur. (It gave me a boost when Tom and Elaine started fighting, but I was happy for them when they reconciled.) I find the historians' attitudes: not just *the Romans fell because of this or that*, but, *volens nolens, I think they should have done it this way, they should have done it better*. An example of this systematic finger-waving is the bias of the liberal democrat, Francis Fukuyama, for whom more democracy could have been a palliative against fall.

9

We love to read history. We love to make history. We love to be friends with history. Hegel figured out how to be the end reporter of the cruel but ultimately benign juggernaut of history. But where did he stand, to see to the standpoint of the observer of the history of history? Did he stand on a little stool? Did he stand on his tippy-toes and crane his neck? The way he did when Napoleon on horse passed through Prussia?

10

History has a past and a future, but no weight. When we are quiet we are in time. It flows in us. It flows until we notice it flow. *O temps suspends ton vol*, says Alfred de Musset. What does he want? An abrupt closure? Wouldn't that be a lethal injection? Imprisonment in segmented time flow, such as caught the tortoise in Zeno's tale of the tortoise and the hare? So that the *vol* is stopped, and we do time piece by piece? Our imprisonment in the flow, of the pulse on our wrist, is surely benign, for from no other source could we possibly expect a lasting exemption from time.

TEXTURA 3

OCCASIONALISM

1

If, like Malebranche, or one stream of conservative Muslim theology, you maintain that God forever sustains the moment, that all creation is at every moment in God's hand, that each instant is a separate creation, and that there is no narrative in human time, you mandate a type of history which is hard to imagine. You imagine an historian afflicted with Tourette's syndrome, hacking out phrases, or, perhaps, a smoothly cynical narrator-historian, who stretches a velvety fabric over the nodular bumps in the flow chart of his brain. Yet there have been persuasive philosophers, apart from theologians, who supported a view like occasionalism. One of them is David Hume, whose skepticism readied a body-blow against interpretation through narrative.

2

Hume is a skeptic when it comes to causality. He denies that because one thing follows another it is the result of another; denies the adage *post hoc ergo propter hoc.* Once this adage is questioned, even for cases which would seem to require the maxim's truth, as when a billiard cue strikes a billiard ball and sends it careening into the pocket, he insists that the notion of causality is an irrelevant addition to any account of the procedure. Not only history, but natural history, the thinking of the physical sciences, in fact the whole edifice of organized cultural thought, seem threatened by the implications of such a skepticism.

3

This potent broadside against common assumptions of thought provoked Immanuel Kant's lifelong response, an effort to give substance to those moves in thought, like *causality* or *substantiality* or *priority* or *effect* by which we organize our phenomenal lives. The substance Kant

attempted to provide was perplexingly "ideal," residing in categories of thought; one has to wonder where it left history. As a category of time, which was a ruling idea of our consciousness, history was preserved among the necessary conditions of our work as conscious. Was that a history which proved itself to be a living response to Hume's skepticism? The restoration of history, not critical history (Kant's) but the robust history of the historians, now transmuted into the record of evolution through time, awaited Hegel, whose phenomenology of spirit overrides Humean skepticism like a freight train over a child's toy. But was Hume that easy to override?

4

Thought clusters like *Taoism*, which stress attention to the moment, like *Buddhism*, which in yoga emphasizes breathing-consciousness as a means of attention to what is right before you and inside you, or ritual prayer repetition, like *novenas*, which oblige the mind to its own identity by repetition of identical phrases: all these hallowed habits of attention share with the Humean a countering of the narrative. While Hume could have cared less about the Tao, he nonetheless gave firm logical ground to the idea that narrative is questionable, and that the moment has unique integrity.

5

But everything we have been saying earlier about history—from the setting up of a tree notch that will undergird a sequence of memories—presumes that history *is* a narrative. In describing history as bi-directional, as flowing in both directions, past to present and future, and future to present and past, we clearly ascribe to history the flow which is the core of narrative. In describing history as without moods, we clearly impute to it a unitary, and not just an occasionalist, presence. Have we, by reminding ourselves of the inveterate narrativizing practice of the mind—indeed of the whole self, as it constitutes its presence in our memory—authorized a discarding of the occasionalist broadsides against history?

6

No. Simply no. We have to have this cake and eat it too, a sense of the atomism of history, plus acceptance of the absolute demand of the narrative.

7

Havelock Ellis' *The Dance of Life* opened the present reader to the essential of inner narrative in the way a human being plays out. The flow of the blood, the interplay of the muscles and joints, the pulsing of life just under the skin, the kind of being-here palpable in Myron's Discobolus: these elements of our presence here are deep, so deep we can forget them. They play out in mind with equally cryptic power. The rhythms of mind, in body, are different in each of us, and different at different times in each of us. Today what wakes with me may demand a good eye-opener of tennis, tomorrow coffee and a burrowing into this textura; but the demand, which creates flow, is omnipresent while life lasts. (Illness, then death, reduce flow's energy, release the carbon, and then replace flow, but not because flow is dispensable. And indeed, as Czikszentmihalyi[2] argues, flow is at its most effectual, flexible, hermeneutic, prescient, when it least forces itself on our awareness.)

8

Books of history are palatable to us when they have a narrative—if it is a good narrative. They don't *have* to have a narrative, for they are not living selves like us, but to speak to living selves like us they *need* a narrative. I've recently read several books on the later Roman Empire. They track, differently, the period from Constantine's conversion to Alaric's "sack of Rome" in 476 A.D. The authors of these books are building out, from their narrative selves, a finale congenial to their own world views mixed with the evidence available to them. These authors were not *obliged* to follow their own narratives—unlike our organic selves, which cannot abrogate our essential rhythms, except in self-killing, which one may be hoping to use as the base for a new narrative. These authors could have introduced, into their accounts, historical details tangential to their narrative.

For example, in discussing the legionnaires' hardships on the Dacian front in 372 A.D. they could have broken off and introduced a new theme from (to them) contemporary Roman history, like the inner struggles of a broadminded late pagan, like Symmachus, who was using his munificence to shore up the condition of public buildings in Rome. My example is of a state of affairs, which was part of Symmachus' dealing with his possibilities as a resisting pagan, which occurred more or less contemporaneously with the legionnaires' efforts to construct a protective berm in the Dacian hills, and to play their role in the legion's military

assignment. For the historian to add Symmachus into his narrative of decline would be arguably irrelevant, until some appropriately flexible rhetorical dance made a space for the new or enriching element.

But suppose the historian really *broke* his narrative, still within the bounds of the Roman theme, but barely. Suppose he went from the Dacian discussion to a discussion of the way Livy treated the Romulus and Remus theme, in his *History of Rome*. Depending on the imagination of the narrative maker, there would be ways of stretching the infinitely flexible aside to cover such a leap. Perhaps Varro's observations on the strict disciplines of early republican fighting men might be taken to springboard a transition in and out of the Dacian discussion, though for how long, and with what audience tolerance, this diversion could last would depend largely on the ploys and strategies of the narrator.

9

We are moving into a theme: what *constitutes* a history? We are already starting to pick away at the comforts of the expected narrative performance of the historian by indicating that the narrative need not be lock-step coherent. We have challenged expected historical coherence by the trivial example of a topical change within the discussion of Roman military affairs. This was a soft challenge to the practice of historical narrative. At the end of the tunnel of this discussion alert readers will already have whiffed starker dangers to due narrative process and its sanities. We may not all be subscribers to postmodernism—some may not, perhaps, because they refuse to throw out the substantial and human properties of the intelligible world for the sake of a theory of language. That minority may prefer to wear the postmodernish lenses already well-established by such thinkers as Friedrich Schlegel or Jean Paul, who turn onto the solemnities of expected language the corrosive of an irony which undercuts reference but at the same time opens language to free-field enrichments, which generate rather than undermine humanity. Whichever postmodernish group does the whiffing, though, will know that the querying of the historian's sequential narrative, as he disposes of soldiers on the Dacian front, immediately triggers implications, and takes its place in the dangerous wild-doggism of questioning language. We are placed in front of the arbitrariness of the conventions that make up language.

10

Whatever precisely those wild-dog implications are, we can be sure that the premises of occasionalism will be there to welcome the downfall of the old narrative edifice, like children gathered around the perimeter of an abandoned and now imploding skyscraper on the streets of Las Vegas. Occasionalism is by nature a narrative-unfriendly perspective, which when viewed from a certain angle can be thought anarchic, as was the atomism of Leucippus and Democritus, on whom Karl Marx wrote his doctoral dissertation. We will be looking closely into the meeting point between the narrative impulse, the flowing history impulse, and the dissective, non-sequential impulse in the playing-out of human events. The author has to admit a lifelong fascination with Zeno's fable of the tortoise and the hare. The smart money says that for Zeno's parable to be valid, for the hare thus til the end of time *not* to catch up with the tortoise, would be possible only if time exists as divisible, whereas time is in reality a flow without "parts." The full argument is engaged right there.

TEXTURA 4

THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN NARRATIVE AND OCCASIONALISM

1

Occasionalism has nothing inherent to do with disorder, let alone chaos. To repeat, occasionalism, as a philosophical lens, is a byproduct of a view that God holds the world in His hand second by second, that there is no narrative implicit in the momentary, and that the only causality operative in the construction of the universe is what we impute to the observed pattern of events. David Hume intersects at one point with this theological/philosophical description, and that is in his radical critique of the notion of causality. He implicitly questions that aspect of narrative thinking, which assumes that the onward flow of events or of accounts of events involves causative sequence. Hume does not ally on the side of atomism or stigmatism or pointillism; he enters as a logician. We wish to "use" Hume here, if we may, to shed some additional light on the geography of the intersection between narrative and occasionalism.

2

Tacitus, the informed and lively narrator of the report on military conditions on the Danube (3:8–9), is cruising at the precise altitude expected by his passengers, demanded by his publisher and colleagues, and congenial to his own sense of rhetorical and intellectual purpose. It will be his business, gladly accepted as part of his work contract and of the common usage contract he establishes in order to qualify as a social player, to *remain* at precisely this altitude. If there is a way in which he wants to "shape" through his work it will lie in an overall valence—a drift, say, toward thinking that the Roman Empire imploded from within, through undertaking too much and satisfying too few. That valence could perhaps be identified at different points in the text, and yet is it not likely, in the end, to prove itself a byproduct of the whole, rather than an

accreting perspectival shading? The last question mark is a genuine question. The issue raised is the first point at which we directly address the intersection between narrative and the units that compose the narrative. Is the whole thrust of a narrative multiply evidenced by discrete points in the rhetoric of the text, or is narrative of a quality that composes its discrete points into it so that they are *not* discrete points when they play out into narrative? We are already, therefore, starting to dissect the intersection point between narratology and occasionalism, and yet we have still withheld the lab experiment designed by occasionalism itself, to see what narrative is composed of.

3

Historically, lab experiments, or thought experiments, begin by reducing wholes to simpler units, which can themselves be studied. (If the whole—of a narrative, of a human body, of a theological belief—cannot be diminished without destruction of the whole, then the whole is truly inviolable as narrative.) In the present Textura we perform a thought experiment. We choose a paragraph from a recent text in American history, Bernard Bailyn's *The Barbarous Years*. Our topic is the Native American bow.

> The craftsmanship in all this weaponry was highly refined, the raw materials subject to what might be called quality control. The favored woods for bows were hickory, ash, and witch hazel; for arrows, elder. The proper felsite or quartz for arrowheads might be brought in lots from distant quarries, to be selected on the basis of reliable knowledge of mineralogy. The bowstrings, made of sinews or twisted strips of deer hide, were strong—and all the joinings—of string to bow, of feathers and projectiles to arrow shafts, of hatchet heads and knife blades to handles—were done with precise windings of fine gut, secured with glue of melted horn.[3]

4

The classical narrative, descriptive-enrichment prose, is on display here, and one initially shrinks at the thought of trying to undo the fine texture of language choice, the confident *Haltung* with which craftsmanship and raw materials are being described. (The construction of the described event seems mimed by the construction of the describing language.) Before reintroducing the sapping operation, by which above we introduced some of the ways we could start to dismember the confidence of a narrative which was targeting the military issue on the Dacian

frontier, we can point out some sustaining trademarks of the academic narrative, trademarks which can readily be viewed as concessions made to felicity rather than moves in establishing or generating the object. Consider: "all this weaponry," "might be brought in lots from distant quarries," "on the basis of reliable knowledge of mineralogy." We needn't emerge here with W. C. Williams' "no thoughts but in things," but it is fair game to see that these general terms and hypotheticals are the window dressing of history's mood music. We know what "reliable knowledge of mineralogy" means, because we have seen both Native Americans and mineralogists scraping and carving at stones. But the sentence-fit of "reliable knowledge of mineralogy," as language, is here very loose; high academic verbiage fluttering loosely around the ruthlessly practical experience of stone chips in nature. We know that the sentence introduced by "the bowstrings" targets ideal cases, exemplary skill performances, and presents them as though they repeated themselves on that level with regularity, instead of being idealized cases. Without being Mr. Nasty, and without forgetting our own complicity in the looseness of language, we must say that the prettified harmonies of the foregoing Bailyn paragraph are in all probability as far from situations on the ground as lipstick from a pig.

5

That said, one could at any point infiltrate/undermine Bailyn's (or yours or my) "orderly" historical text with any number of proposals about language usage, which boil down to the suggestion that the maintenance of the language machine on socially prescribed tracks is an arbitrary convention; a convention drawn from one certified way society decides to evaluate high-talk. This infiltration could assume the most diverse forms. (There is an element of discovery play in this strategy; only discovery play will loosen up the texture of orthodox history writing, or history-thinking or history-enactment, because the production habits within history writing are congenital to us.) One could remove the odd sentence. (*Remember, this is play.*) One could reverse the sentence syntax here and there. One could insert a foreign language for a small portion of the "original." (Again, why one would be doing this, the large picture in which these texture pryings and incisions would find their place, has more than one answer: in short form, to give us a moment of that space, between the self and the language act, in which we are in the refreshment of making, and once again, as in childhood, of world-discovery.) And so to work (or play):

i. *The craftsmanship in all this weaponry was highly refined, the raw materials subject to what might be called quality control*. (Author intrusion: Remove *the raw materials subject to what might be called quality control!* Is anything lost but the rhetoric? Maybe we *are* back to "no thoughts but in things.")

ii. *The proper felsite or quartz for arrowheads might be brought in lots from distant quarries, to be selected on the basis of reliable knowledge of mineralogy*. (Reverse syntax. Try the following. *From distant quarries might be brought in lots the proper felsite.*... Again we seem to be doing little more than the schoolteacher inside us requires, reminding ourselves that syntactical habits have their own back story, and that one can move back, with some tolerance, into a linguistic mid-past where history did in fact consecrate other usages. We have not rocked the terrain of language making history, only loosened the soil. We *can* go old-fashioned on our English.)

iii. *The bowstrings, made of sinews or twisted strips of deer hide, were strong—and all the joinings—of string to bow, of feathers and projectiles to arrow shafts, of hatchet heads and knife blades to handles—were done with precise windings of fine gut, secured with glue of melted horn.* (F. W. again: try a different language. *Et toutes les jointures…étaient fabriquées de…*Yes, insert it in the middle. This is just a game but look out, the slope is getting slippery. To a degree one may say that French and English are in-law languages, with a kinship inclination. To a certain point one might say that Bailyn, or the x or y behind the "bowstrings" sentence above, with its French, is laying a—not quite clear—valence onto his language, himself playing. It's a possible form of Bailyn. Were the language of intrusion Urhobo, a Niger-Congo language with no Western interface except a few loan words, one would have to say that a rogue insulting voice had pre-empted Bailyn's scholarly tone. Review "and all the joinings." *Obo ra ogborhe ne jobi kogbe* would do violence to Bailyn's tone, and could not, like the insertion of French, imaginably be taken for Bailyn the arch, the player. The point is extreme, of course. Language *is* convention, and Bailyn's text, like any explanatory expressive text, obeys the requirements of the tribe. No matter how far we go with the present intrusion experiment—I mean Bailyn could have written the whole history book in iambic pentameters; after all Lucretius composed his metaphysic in hexameters—the fact will remain that to do history in a rationalized high-culture print environment has to involve writing to specs, honoring the grammar as given. That "honoring" includes carefully currying the