From the question of ‘what’ to the question of ‘how’ or how to write about the lives of others?

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Under history, memory and forgetting
Under memory and forgetting, life.
But writing a life is another story.
Incompletion

(Ricoeur, Memory, History, Forgetting, 506)
What is narrative?

What do narratives do?

How have they emerged and historically constituted?

What are the possibilities of becoming other?
Interrogating the triangle of sequence – meaning - representation

from the ontology of what is
to the historical ontology of how it has emerged and historically constituted,
further moving to the ontogenesis of how it works, with what effects and what are its possibilities of becoming other.
From sequence
Narratives as Events
To process

The world is full of stories, of events and occurrences and strange happenings, which wait only to be told, and the reason why they usually remain untold is […] lack of imagination

(Men in Dark Times, 97)

Hannah Arendt
‘action as narration and narration as action are the only things that can partake in the most “specifically human” aspects of life’

( Life is a Narrative, 41)

Julia Kristeva
"Portraits of moments"
Rahel Varnhagen 1771-1883
Narrative moments

“the story reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain the unbearable sequence of sheer happenings.”

(Men in Dark Times, 104)

“the art of narrative resides in the ability to condense the action into an exemplary moment, to extract it from the continuous flow of time, and reveal a who.”

(Life is a Narrative, 16)
Narrative meaning

“storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it.”

(*Men in Dark Times*, 105)

creating communities of remembrance
‘instead of a psychological analysis, [Arendt] proposes a turn outward, to the mimetic gesture … she addresses the notion of action and speaks of the public self in terms of performance.’

(Weissberg in Rahel Varnhagen, 19)
On Portraits

‘I want a letter to be the portrait of a moment: that in which it is written’.

(Varnhagen, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 11)

‘My portrait therefore follows as closely as possible Rahel’s own reflections upon herself.’

(Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 82)
The portrait opens up a performative scene, a dialogic space wherein the subject, the researcher and the reader meet, interact and negotiate meaning about subjects and their world.

’It is thus a third person, the narrative persona that says “I” in the polyphonic narratives that comprise [my] genealogical archive, allowing me as an author and as a narrative researcher to keep a distance from the narrators and indeed their narratives.

(Tamboukou, In the Fold, 180-181)
a) a mask disguising an actor in the theatre but allowing the voice of the actor to sound through
b) a legal personality, a right-and-duty bearing person (a Roman citizen)

(See Arendt, *On Revolution*, 106-107)
Narrative personae
References