Time, Identity, and History. On the Cognitive Psychology and Figural Practice of Historiography.

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Abstract

This article combines cognitive psychological knowledge of identity and temporal perception with theories of literature and historiography. The main focus is how people receive and adopt written information about the past. I argue that in historiographical accounts, when detached events are translated as metaphors or narratives, the writing process is *not only* guided by a reason and epistemological structure, but also by an attraction to an emotional credibility. In other words, writing history is partly accomplished for the purpose of reconstructing a smooth and coherent temporal order, emerging from a hope to attain an affective confidence which overcomes the absolute alterity of the past. On the other hand, when receiving a written historical narrative, an emotional attunement, a sensation of a connection with the past, helps us to assimilate the substance of that particular history as part of our individual way to perceive temporality and interaction. If historiography is understood on the one hand as an act of articulating the writer's narrative identity with the vocabulary provided by the past events, and on the other hand as a cultural means to strengthen the reader's explanation how 'meaningfulness' can be framed from aimless chronological time, it would be possible to scrutinize not only the 'politics of history' but also the 'culture of writing about the past.'

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Introduction

The focus in analyzing academic historical representations still lies mainly in the epistemological nature of historiography and the 'authentic' way of writing about the past (Pihlainen 2013). Although the epistemological bases, distinct characteristics and different forms of historical writing have been subject to heavy debate, the writing process itself, or the reception of and need for

historical information, has been more or less neglected (Roper 2013, 322–323). This article is based on a view that creating a historical representation is closely connected to establishing a personal identity. Among the tools intended to place one's being firmly among the intentions of others and of unknown future events, academic historiography has achieved a prestigious status on which other ways of elaborating history have tried to base their 'correctness' and effectiveness (Jordanova 2006, 126–127). This position of academic historiography originates not only from its strict obedience to its inner rules or scientific method, but from the conviction of readers and writers that historiography in its endeavor gets closest to a correspondence with 'what really happened'.

In this article I present an interpretation of the literary theory of Erich Auerbach supplemented with a present-day understanding of cognitive mechanisms which create the individual concept of selfhood and historicity. When I deploy cognitive theories in this paper, my attempt is to show that historians craft their 'truth claim' on the basis of their personal view how people interact, and consequently the reader adjusts this truth claim to his or her notion of how a world of chaos becomes a matter of order. I try to elaborate how historiography works as an affective practice (Reckwitz 2012) that connects the worlds of the writer and reader, producing a 'sublime historical experience' (Ankersmit 2005). Historiography makes 'I' more grounded to the world of change and to that of others, not only by producing normative information about the world, but also allowing one to create an emotional coherence to time as a subjective experience.

I shall ignore the question of the epistemic nature of historiography almost completely, and concentrate on what goes beyond it (or comes on top of it): people's desire for a meaningful history as well as the means which are deployed by historians in building such a history to respond to that need. I try to show that the approach articulated in this article can constitute a common base for the research of historical writing in the fragmented field of historiography (see Liakos 2013).

In what follows my object is to show the individual identity's dependence on the shared and acknowledged narrative to which one connects his or her autobiographical understanding of 'I' as a distinct story in infinite time. This argument is pursued by an investigation of the practices, historiography among others, deployed in constructing that joint figural worldview which gives perspective to one's life-story, but is constantly being shadowed by a traumatic possibility of incoherence and dissolution. Thus the affective practice of historiography appears here as both being constructed to mediate emotional coherence and used to achieve one. Finally, I investigate the methods modern historiography uses to confirm its nature as shared figural worldview, built around the emotion of confidence, and the possibilities and challenges it poses to the history of historiography.

Autobiographical memory and narrative self-image: the individual's being-in-time

Some cognitive theories hold that the concept of a human *being*, our understanding of ourselves, is based on memory and response. The self-image of a person consists of a cumulative number of memories, experiences, and learned ways of acting, which are stored and organized in that person's autobiographical memory. This accumulated data about human interaction comprises the person's social agency, the actions and thoughts of which loosely follow a certain pattern. (Berntsen and Rubin 2012). When temporally distinguished but substantially similar events, emotions, senses and behavior are merged as a schema, a personal experience of continuum in time is born. This experience of the temporal means the beginning of a *narrative* self-image (Fivush 2010; Conway 2005, 597). On the basis of their autobiographical identity people not only justify the decisions they make, but also create a predictable script for the future, and anticipate the upcoming interaction to follow the patterns of past experiences. To make it short, we are narrative creatures. The 'self' is a story constructed on the bases of distinguished memories and schemas, where previous experiences

seem to verify one's interpretation of the present and open up new perspectives and possibilities for an individual (Schacter 1999, 182–203; Berntsen and Rubin 2012, 334, 336–341).

This narrative self is not, however, stable or rigid. Autobiographical memory is malleable in that schemas are constantly being 'forgotten' or redeployed, whenever one needs to adjust to changed circumstances, culture, or information. The narrative self-image is molded in constant interaction with other people, and it in a way comes to life when it is translated into words and shared with others. Our identity is being tested through joint reminiscences with other people, creating a cycle whereby one's personal experience is shaped by others and a joint understanding of such cultural phenomena lives and develops through single interpretations (Hirst, Cuc and Wohl, 2012, 144-157; Habermas 2012, 35-36).In this cycle also emotions, and in a less articulated form, feelings, come into existence as forces shaping one's identity when they belong to a shared linguistic *and emotional* matrix; hence when they are put into words during interaction between people (cf. Kövecses 2000, Cozolino 2010, 207-208; see also Fivush 2012, 237–239).

The electric and chemical dimensions of a human sensory system do not have an automatic reference to language. The naming of bodily and personal reactions to stimulus is based on a cultural contract or mutual agreement on the use of a 'common sensory perception – acknowledged action' code. So when one's bodily senses are turned into language, and shared with others it is also an act of self-understanding (Stolorow 2007, 23-46) In other words, when we state our (affectively colored) opinion about some widely acknowledged phenomenon to other people, the gained response gives us information about the mutually held understanding of that event, but more precisely, it tells us whether our translation of our senses into language is similar to that of others. How compatible when compared to that of others, is my interpretation of the world of affects, or put

differently, how accurate is it when turning my bodily senses into words, do others have the same concepts or symbols for sentiments than I do?

Additionally the negative or positive outside response does not solely result in normative revision of our worldview. Also the ontology of our past might change; newly recollected memories become more influential and immediate to our identity, as some reminiscences, possibly nearer in chronological and measurable time, fade away (Conway 2005, 594–628; Bluck and Habermas 2001, 135-147). In an ongoing negotiation between the subjective, inner world and outside, social dimension, the narrative nature of our identity varies. The possibly hazardous effect that outside stimulus might have on one's identity is thus eased by transforming it to a temporal phenomenon. It is supplemented with a cause and a consequence from the data provided by autobiographical memory, in other words it is being narrated.

This is an essential human ability, since if strong negative sentiments are not verbalized by the cortex and bound to some meaning or narrative, the individual ability to function or work is endangered, resulting in the worst case as a state of dissociation (Roozendaal, McEwen & Chattarji 2009, 430–431; Cozolino 2010, 163–172, 239-245). The emotionally consistent selfhood or coherence between sensory perceptions and actions/causes brings feeling of confidence in one's autobiographical identity, the narrative self-image. But in order to maintain this confidence one needs to have positive outside appraisal (cf. Mumenthaler & Sander 2012). This social appraisal emerges when one succeeds to find congruence between socially appreciated values and his or her autobiographical narrative.

Thus a cycle of autobiographical identity formation does not only consider epistemic or normative features of the outside world, but moreover it is also about compatibility between one's

autobiographical narrative or the internal model of emotions and language, and cultural idea of 'significance' as it displays itself in communication within social occasions and cultural traits (Markus and Kitayma 2010, 421; White S.A., 2001). To say all this in a really short way, it is this *congruence* between confident self-image and socially appreciated meaning that people try to reach in social interaction.

The figural representation of time

In the previous section I elaborated the idea of the fragility of a human identity as a timeless and ahistorical phenomenon. Human identity is built in social situations where one has no affirmative knowledge about the ideas, emotions and thoughts of his or her counterparts. The human ways to achieve compatibility between a personal narrative identity and a historical meaning (publically held master narrative about the nature of the world) in order to achieve confidence over the bases of one's subjectivity, varies depending on culture and place. Becoming a competent subject thus means participating in an ever-evolving network of activities, *practices*, where 'sociality' is not only 'comprised of normative order, rational agents, discourses, intersubjectivity or material structures' but evolving patterns of doings, 'which carry their agents and are at the same time carried (out) by them.' (Reckwitz 2012, 248).

In Western literature, likewise, the search for a moment when the sentiments of an individual are written down and subsequently understood by the reader in a manner that unveils something factual (general truth or *veritas*) about the interrelationship between an agent and the changing outside world is a constant struggle and mission. I am not proposing that Western literature should be interpreted as a 'social practice', but rather that it embeds the same endeavor to define 'social subjectification' than the more clear cut and material social practices.

In his groundbreaking book *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach portrayed writers as equal searchers for 'tragic realism.' This experience is reached when the text transmits an aesthetic intuition of a changing, incomplete, insecure and potentially misunderstanding individual, in the middle of an ever-changing, unknown and irrational tide of time (Auerbach 1959, 25–27, see also 2014b, 197; Porter 2014, xiii–xiv, xxii, xxix). Thus Auerbach's goal was to investigate different styles in our culture to find stability between 'I' and a shared historical meaning given to the world, but he coincidentally sustained as impossible the establishment of a solid or final order between these two. This notion is compatible with our present understanding of the creation of identity, where it seems likely that a cultural master narrative against and according to which the individual constructs his or her personal autobiographical narrative is a psychological necessity for a balanced life in human society. The more stable the communal explanation of the past, present and future is, the more resources the individual has in his or her cognitive capabilities to use for social change (cf. Fivush 2012, 226–227; Brown et al. 2012, 168–177).

As an example of a 'figural world,' which means a culture that has widely adopted a comprehensible explanation that defines the individual's place amidst infinitude, Auerbach (1959) instances 13th-century Western-European culture.[1] The then common understanding of temporality was that everybody and everything happening in this earthly life would reach their true meaning in the afterlife, when people, outside the blurring change of the ordinary world, would receive their judgment from the sovereign authority outside the laws of men (9–27). 'Significance' in history was based on connections between events, whose distance with respect to each other in chronological time was not a matter of importance. This meant that all events in their everyday reality were part of the world historical unity, so that they could be held as concurrent. After all, every deed and individual, no matter what the origin or end they had, would receive their evaluation all together and would continue to live in a timeless afterlife (Auerbach 1938, 65–82). The sense that this

merging of events produced in people was not a matter of development or change, but one of stability and security as it represented time as a script, not as a never-ending play of improvisation.

The deconstruction of the figural world began when the fixed point in medieval temporal perception, the intangible afterlife, through which all the events in earthly life could be evaluated and set up, was no longer outside of human cognition (Auerbach 1952, 118, 1959, 167–194). This meant the deconstruction (a) of the previous ontological space for individuals to perceive their place among other people, (b) of individuals' expectations towards past events and forthcoming episodes, and (c) of meaning as well as the justification of individual actions at this stage of earthly efforts and history. Concurrently, however, the cognitively sustainable explanation for one's life in time, a mandatory fixed point outside the everyday human experience, from where one can evaluate and arrange events in order to give them a historical meaning, was lost (Auerbach 1932, 189–194, 1936, 237–241, 2014b; also Bakker 1999). So the slow erosion of religious authority and its replacement with an earthly worldview, not only revealed possibilities, but also horrors and threats to individual identity, which were later dealt with by many successive writers and scholars.

To sum up, there is no stable ground for 'I,' and it is instead created in constant interaction and molded to fit a changing environment. If surety of its continuity for some reason ceases to exist, the identity of a person is felt to dissolve, since each and every new event will appear to be a challenge to one's identity. The premise for a temporal 'I' is the *certainty* of a capability to create schemas and bind emotions to an autobiographical narrative which gives rise to the understanding, direction and meaning of the 'self' moving in time. (see e. g. Cozolino 2010, 151–161; LaBar and Cabeza 2006, 54-64). Actually it is the certainty of both a personal life-script but also its counterpart, a culturally upheld 'significance' in history, which need to be reached in order to gain individual sense of meaningfulness to a one's story of 'I' among others. (Fivush 2012, 239)

A breach or a blow to a personal ability to create temporal order can be called a trauma.[2] A trauma challenges the presumption of the stability and continuity of one's identity. It shatters the predictable and secure cultural norms of behavior. Thus, it paralyzes the individual skill to bind and divide things into past, present and future. One starts to see its echoes in upcoming events and in interaction, and it corrupts the new phenomena with a feeling of strangeness (*unheimlich*) or uncategorized anxiety (Yehuda 2002; LaCapra 2001).[3]

The explanation given to the world we live in might be strong, but it is built on sand. The collapsing of the order people have adopted for the events which influence their daily routines, otherwise blurred in unrestricted eternity, is a constantly hovering possibility which is evaded by reproducing and strengthening the explanations they have come up with. Auerbach states:

> For whenever and wherever we engage with life in its details, it is undeniable that we and those close to us experience injustice on a daily basis. To be able to bear with equanimity what happens both generally and to us personally we need to have an intimation of a plan for the sake of which and in the light of whose fulfillment chaos becomes a matter of order. (Auerbach 2014a, 11)

The possibility of an all-shattering trauma is however tangible with respect to the collective life as well. The same need for an explanative 'plan' also considers social entities, which also face the futile task of finding solid and sustainable explanations (see e.g. Runia 2010). Rik Peters (2006) finds this 'horror of historicity', in Fascist Italy but also in present modern societies, which are inspired by the changeability of the world, where nothing is absolutely given:

> At the same time, the belief that reality is history is the most uncanny [unheimlich] awareness humans can have. For how can we live in a world in which nothing is given, no principles, no

truths, no fixed points, in a world in which historicity in itself is not given, but always appears as a construction of our own? (373)

How should one compare and evaluate experiences if the order and hierarchy they are given, which distinguishes or merges them into other events, proves to be inaccurate? How can *we* (as a collective) make sense of temporality if everything is in constant change, and more importantly and devastatingly, when no-one is outside this same tide as an observer? (see also Carr 1986). Hayden White concludes on Auerbach's thoughts:

> Indeed, if, in many respects, *Mimesis* is ultimately the story of how Western "literature" came to grasp "historicity" as humanity's distinctive mode of being in the world, this mode of being in the world is represented as one in which individuals, events, institutions, and (obviously) discourses are apprehended as bearing a distinctively "figural" relationship to one another. (White 1996, 137)

To avoid trauma, both collective and personal, at all cost, is a human way to enable basic social life (Giddens 1991, 35–69). To build figural relationships between phenomena distinct in temporal dimension is our way to make the world a more comprehensible and easier space to conduct social action (White 1996, 133–134, 137). They provide the scale and measure for personal earthly tragedies by revealing the absolute *idea* of sacrifice and sorrow. If it is to be removed, a structural ontological similarity between a personal pain and a transcendental model of sorrow vanishes, and some aspects of the cultural sense of being understood and accepted are lost. This absence of a scale with which to measure one's experiences, and consequently the horror of an undirected flow of time, is avoided by cultural means.

Historiography as an affective practice

Of these cultural means or practices to mold temporality in order to find meaning across time, academic historiography is, in the modern world, the most prestigious (Jordanova 2006, 131–134, On modern communalism and historiography see Smith 2003, 166–179). Academic historiography possesses the means, or at least has a reputation for possessing the means, to mold historical representation into an epistemologically positive direction (Bevernage and Lorenz 2013). Its authority brings trust to cultural and individual tools, deployed to find and/or create analogies between phenomena distinct from each other in chronological measure, thus providing a temporal order for unrestricted and unlimited time.

One could say that historiography, among other affective practices deployed to come to terms with temporality, is a means to find certainty or confidence in experienced time, to overcome the otherness of the past. Emily Robinson (2010) vividly expresses how re-enactment and physical presence of historical material produces ambiguous sensation of 'pastness', on the other hand 'unavoidable awareness of its absence', but concurrently 'a feeling of genuineness'. The latter emotion has also been described as 'credibility', 'firm' and 'emotional knowing'. It seems that it is this feeling about 'real historical knowledge' which historians are still after, although the task of writing a totally objective historical representation is widely considered as impossible (504).

To understand the past, it is necessary to translate bygone events and adjust them to our perception of the world. In short, historiography is juxtaposing phenomena from one's time to (allegedly) similar events in the past through language (cf. Tosh 1991, 38–40; Jordanova 2006, 122; Kalela 2012, 94). Despite its scientific ethos, academic historiography is in many ways constituted within a domain of the 'ordinary' interpretation of other people's action. Writing a historical narrative, in order to explain past behavior, is to find and supply the psychological states of a historical agent. That is, to make sense of the circumstances of a particular historical event and derive from them the

psychological effect they had with respect to the historical agent (MacDonald & MacDonald 2009, 137–139). While historiography tries to make the action of others understandable, the writers do not have tools outside those linguistic and cognitive means that originate from a need to negotiate between their own internal sphere and external world. The same 'common sensory perception – acknowledged action' model that is used to fit one's own emotions to an autobiographical narrative provides the possible perspectives of interpretation to the deeds and effects committed by others. Or in other words, historians use the same emotional styles (Gammerl 2012) that they apply in their personal life also to create narratives in and about the past.

Obviously thus, when a historian *writes history*,[4] frames out the temporal experience from time, plots it, and link this historical idea to his/her culture, the writing process from the beginning is a mixture, where 'objective and subjective dimensions are always already intertwined and perpetually interact with each other.' (Gammerl 2012, 168, cf. Ricoeur 1990a, 82–87, 229, 1990b, 92–96). Historians' inclination to cover the artificial essence of their representation (Robinson 2010, 504), only increasingly distances historiography, and its receivers, from the ontology of historical experiences, leaving a gap between 'what really happened' and a historical representation about it.

This constitutive gap in historiography has also been articulated as an incongruity between language and reality or distance between historical experience and writing. The gap can be bridged with the help of linguistic tools, such as metaphor (Ankersmit 2012, 76, 218–219), which however doesn't entirely eradicate epistemological vagueness from historiographical explanation. Nevertheless the philosophical problems do not prevent people still in many occasions base their collective and personal identity on historical representations. The figural practice of historiography, offering both normative and emotional structure to time, is able to mediate affective perspective, (only) when (and because) its users practically appropriate it (Reckwitz 2012, 255). Whether one just trusts its

authoritative position in our society or expects a consistent argument, historiography is considered as authentic information about the relation between people's actions and historical ideas and used as an additional continuum to one's narrative worldview.

The argument behind this article is that historical narratives and metaphors, 'the bridging tools' deployed inside the practice of historiography are not only linguistic structures, but cognitive means in conceptualizing the world of experiences in order to make it shareable and accessible to other people, in a way which mediates emotional coherence and continuity, *confidence*, instead of incoherence (cf. Gibbs 2008, 3). Thus Hayden White (1996) considers the figural worldview as a preconfiguration of temporality, allowing one to build a narrative order to history where previous actions and intentions seem to reach their 'fulfillment' in the later events of history (also Hovind 2012, 264). Emplotment or narrating is 'executing' in historical writing this idea of a connection between chronologically distant phenomena. Narratives and metaphors are means to express history as a meaningful and substantive part of people's lives.

Frank Ankersmit (2012) argues that a historical representation is like metaphor in its three-step reference to the past. What differentiates a *historical* metaphor from other rhetorical concepts is that a historian's representation does not only construct a narrow analogy of a text and reality, but a metaphorical connection in history envelops the whole reality around the sources and subject matter deployed by the historian (68–69, 103). Hence Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie's *Montaillou* is a representation of *life* in a distant Occitanian village. Anyone reading *Montaillou* can confirm that it is truly this meaning that is dealt with in that book, although 'life' is crafted from partial textual sources and onto a text. Similarly, the reality on the other end of the historical metaphor, for example the 'reality' of a village called Montaillou, is a figural world. It is already someone else's interpretation of 'reality'. It is a world of order, of fulfillment, and its parts are connected to each

other. So a historical metaphor is always created in relation to this figural world. It is an interpretation of an interpretation (cf. Hovind 2012, 265, White 1996, 130).

Ankersmit's historical metaphor goes quite close to *conceptual metaphor* as defined by Zoltan Kövecses (2010), where an abstract conceptual domain (for example 'real life') is understood through another coherent, more concrete, organization of experience. A conceptual metaphor (such as 'life is a journey') is distinguished from other, smaller linguistic metaphors ('He is without direction in life') which map and make use of this more comprehensive discourse in language (4–8). Moreover, a historical representation often includes emotional language. That is, descriptions of emotions whether in a reporting manner when their appearance in certain time or place is just noticed or in a metaphorical way, when some events are articulated with words that depict emotions. When this occurs, it is easy to agree with Kövecses that in language (and in a text) 'emotions are forces,' (Kövecses 2000, 61–62) because in the figural world of historiography emotions do not appear in a detached form, but always indicate the existence of a thought or opinion relating to some 'concrete' historical change. The figural 'past domain' of the historical metaphor is an aesthetic dimension where emotions have been arranged and linked to individuals, structures and objects of that respective time in a coherent way. There might be outbursts of rage, joy or sorrow in the aesthetic domain of historiography, but unlike in presence, their causes, nature or consequences will never stay intangible or uncertain.

In this article I distinguish *figura* from conceptual metaphor, based on the former's ability to depict continuity in time outside chronological measure. Figura as a linguistic (and emotional) tool has a temporal dimension, which produces an affective perspective to history, enabling one to evade 'horror of historicity' and deal with past events like they were personal experiences. Originally, Erich Auerbach derived the concept of figura from religious texts and interpretation of the world, as

discussed briefly in the earlier pages of this paper. It is important to see this 'transcendental dimension' in its original concept. Figural interpretation withheld the idea of reading a script, of seeing the continuity and connection in time and achieving truth. Although figural relationships revealed only a partial truth about the world, they were found and constructed in the hope of uncovering a general ontological truth about the world people live in (Auerbach 1938, 72–74). Obviously, the figuras used in Hebraic texts represented this dimension, but Auerbach seems to add it even to its modern deployment.[5] To explain history as figurally fulfilling for the interpreter conducting it, contained an idea of his or her 'fixed point' outside the stream of time, from which the world could be commented on 'seriously' or with 'high style' (Auerbach 1959, 547, Hovind 2012).[6]

Historiographical examples. The horror of historicity and the emotional bond through time

In order to provide evidence for the previous statements, I shall analyze excerpts from the works of Fernand Braudel and Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie. My aim is to show that while these historians represented history, they also, like all historiographers, created a temporal order and a fixed point in time in a way that is totally distinct from the epistemological and scientific merits of their works.

I will not deal with the epistemic problems of historiography, or the conscious temptation to write too 'subjectively' about the past in order to emphasize some ideology or political view. However, I do agree that this subjective historiography is a consequence of a 'sloppy' (Ankersmit 2012) use of language when the degree between historical representations and true depictions of the past is eroded (80–81). I consider that in most cases this 'accidental' misuse of historical tools, that is primarily the misuse of language, is not an accident at all, but nor is it an attempt to consciously bend history to back up some present phenomenon. Furthermore, the personal need to find an emotionally resilient past is a vital necessity for our collective and personal identity. Thus, the

process of writing history, the constant selections and evaluations between sources, meanings and references in order to come up with a consistent historical narrative, cannot be conducted without any emotional influence (Kalela 2012, 82–97; cf. Roper 2013, 315–316, 323).

Fernand Braudel writes in *The Wheels of Commerce* (1982) about the development of the early market society:

> The Greek City even had experience of the large-scale urban market, drawing in supplies from a wide radius. Indeed how could it have managed without one? A city, once it reached a certain size was unable to live off the immediate neighborhood, usually dry, stony and infertile. It became necessary to look further afield, as the Italian city-states were already doing by the twelfth century and even earlier. Who was to feed Venice, since the city had never had more than a few poor gardens reclaimed from the sands? Later, in order to master the circuits of long-distance trade, the merchant cities of Italy went beyond the stage of the large market and created a new and effective mechanism, the almost daily meetings of wealthy merchants. (228)

This is a textbook example of a historical narrative which sets past events in an order that conveys the idea of historical continuity through chronological time. Braudel emphasizes and prefers some phenomenon rather than another, thus showing us the story behind what he calls "the problem of capitalism" (458). The highly complex problem of presence could be solved by tracing its historical roots (458, 554–555, 600–601). Braudel denies other possible paths of development, and even with the help of rhetorical questions makes their existence impossible. In fact, he circles such questions as if they were a taboo one would be inclined to avoid. Thus his account emerges as a natural, organic development not only as a text, but it reflects this continuity also to the past. It is not his narrative, which connects historical events, but the denial or ignoring of other possibilities that gives a somehow natural, rather than (re)constructed and man-made, appearance to his historical account. I argue that this example is not an arbitrary one; it is a description of the dialectics of

timeless *aporia* and human experience, and illustrates how language and cognition are deployed to overcome it (cf. Ricoeur 1990a, 7–9). Augustine's induction that the human understanding of time as expressed in language grows out of and is shadowed by nothingness, molds the historical account (16–30). When the diversity and openness of a historical event is represented instead as coherence, other possibilities in history are 'silenced' and the only remaining path is represented as 'obviously true.'

This is not done only for the purpose of clarifying the past, but also to simplify the 'problem of capitalism'. By excluding some historical events and their connections to each other, *Braudel's world* and the problematic it confronts become clearer. Later Braudel compares Werner Sombart's and Max Weber's ideas of capitalism to that of his own:

> Perhaps what makes it [Sombart's and Weber's view of history] seem faraway and foreign to us is our own historical experience. It was perfectly normal for Max Weber in 1904 and Werner Sombart in 1912 to feel that Europe was the necessary centre of the world, of science, reason and logic. But we have lost that old self-assurance and superiority complex … To Max Weber, capitalism appeared as a culmination, the promised land of economic development, the final stage of progress. … Today the death, or at any rate series of mutations in what we call capitalism, no longer seems so improbable. We can see them taking place in front of our eyes. Capitalism at any rate 'no longer appears to us to be the last word in historical evolution'. (1982, 581)

In this account, history changes according to the experiences *Braudel* faces and according to his *feelings* about them. Although previously Braudel was eager to deny plurality and the variety of possibilities in history, he now explicitly shows that an experience of a writer (since the *changes* Braudel is talking about are not yet clear to him in their meaning and effects) can drastically alter history. These experiences precede a linguistic explanation of history (cf. Ankersmit 2013). The

events 'taking place in front of our eyes,' the events Braudel first sensed and then interpreted, gave rise to a new direction in history. Thus when writing this historical study and solving the 'problem of capitalism,' Braudel put into words and connected to previous structures of knowledge this *experience of change*. Braudel had experienced phenomena that made previous historical descriptions feel 'faraway and strange.' As much as he was making true depictions about the past, he concurrently put into words and gave meaning to an undefined emotion of strangeness. Braudel's intuition, that he needed to sort out the challenges of the present by tracking and formulating the history of those phenomena, led to the categorizing of time in a new way. This created a sense of clarity not only about the past, but about present and also the future, where he anticipated historical development to continue according to the lines he found and constructed from the past.

So, writing the history of 'the problem of capitalism,' establishing a historical metaphor between economically influential phenomena in the European past and that dilemma, was not only interpreting the connection between events in history, but creating a concept which defined Braudel's world in a more precise way. The *confidence* about historical change that Braudel's interpretation introduces emerged out of this satisfying verbal depiction of feelings from a fixed point, from where the 'strangeness' of history could be 'seen,' with regard to his predecessors, in a much more farsighted way.

If Braudel offers an example of the process that shapes the work of a historian, Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie's work exemplifies the other side of the coin, namely the reception and adoption of historical information. Technically, historiography represents the past in the form of a metaphor, but it does it in a style that persuades us to adopt its analogy as *figura*. It does not juxtapose 'true' phenomena in a loose way, but instead emphasizes the genuine bond and similar essence between 'real' objects. The whole arsenal of scientific writing is utilized to verify the sustainable nature of

this connection between temporally distinct phenomena. But the technical sides of historical writing are not the only tools deployed in bridging the gap between language and reality. Historiography also uses emotional means when it manipulates time and gives us the feeling of continuity amidst infinitude. Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie ends his book *Montaillou* (1984) as follows:

> Today Catharism is no more than a dead star, whose cold but fascinating light reaches us now after an eclipse of more than a half a millennium. But Montaillou itself is much more than a courageous but fleeting deviation. It is the factual history of ordinary people; It is Pierre and Béatrice and their love; It is Pierre Maury and his flock; it is the breath of life restored through a repressive Latin register that is a monument of Occitanian literature. Montaillou is the physical warmth of the *ostal*, together with the ever-recurring promise of a peasant heaven. (338–339)

In the linguistic metaphors LeRoy Ladurie places within the text, the elusive feelings of warmth, love and communality, which seem to emerge in the 'factual' history of this Occitanian village, are embodied and articulated. He has succeeded in connecting and explaining the affective traces in his subject matter, hence the textual sources left from that time, in a manner that appears in coherence with the material, economical and ideological structures, objects and agents in the 'reality' of the village. LeRoy Ladurie suggests that in the text of *Montaillou* human emotions are translated into action and they emerge as 'naturally' placed in this written history within their correct premises and conclusions. The presupposition is that when one reads *Montaillou* one can share and embody those emotions by observing the actions of past people. LeRoy Ladurie is ready to promise this, because that has been his experience when he has empathized with and interpreted this strange, bygone culture (On academic historiography's commitment to empathize with 'strange culture' see Ricouer 1990a, 49, LaCapra 2001, Chapter 1)

It is those emotions, connected and interpreted as a part of larger cause-effect entity, that link us to the metaphor of Ladurie's book. The writer's emotions, which participated and awoke during the

writing process, are transferred to the reader through linguistic tools. His representation can arouse an experience in the reader: 'Think about those people, so distant in time but still so recognizable in their being!' Hence the representation of the history of Montaillou, is actually conceived as a conceptual metaphor; the life in the village of Montaillou was like our life. This verbalization of the reader's undefined senses is something that Paul Ricoeur calls 'the pleasure of recognition'(1990a, 42). Then the 'purged emotions' of the reader and the context of a textual narrative (including its affective dimension) are in congruence and can create a mimetic reproduction of a cultural material (51, see also 70–71). Empathizing with a historical text is an act of self-understanding; it is a comparison of the 'action – emotion' chain that the historian has articulated in the text to one's own autobiographical ordering of the world. *How compatible when compared to that of others, is my interpretation of the world of affects, or put differently, do others have the same concepts or symbols for sentiments than I do? How accurate is it when turning my bodily senses to words that depict existence?*

 I argue that the emotion which Ricoeur labels as 'pleasure' can result a subsequent feeling of 'confidence' in reader. A recognition of similarity, of a congruence between emotional narratives of the historiographical text and autobiographical identity of the reader, not just between detached emotions or cause-effect sequences, will occur as 'emotional knowledge' (Robinson 2010). Like Tillman Habermas (2012) states, subjectivity and meaning in a temporal world, which seemingly lacks any direction, are constituted through 'motive-consequence links that give a *sense* of agency and direction to a life and help bridge change and development in the individual' (37 emphasis mine).

Followed by this sense of confidence a conceptual metaphor of historiography, a representation, becomes more than a rhetorical trick; it turns into a *figura*. A connection between historical events

acquires a 'transcendental dimension', which means that is more sensed and acknowledged than rationally deducted out of reasonably durable proof. Academic historiography still needs to have and has its reference to actual events, it is established around true depictions about the past, but as a figura it negotiates with motives beyond or on top of normative prescriptions about the world. A written event of the past continues to live in a reader's personal world of experiences, it is supplemented, and it reaches its fulfillment, in one's narrative identity, where similar experiences and memories, schemas, are recollected to support the proposed temporal order (cf. Runia 2007, 319, 323).

The emotions inside a historical text, often handled simply as a useless surplus awakened during the academic writing process, a process whose prior goal is to clarify the past, can then complete the inevitable manipulation of time. The emotions that are received from a historical text connect one to the past, and temporally distant phenomena become immediately present, enabling the strengthening of the direction and control over infinitude.

Conclusion

I have tried to show that modern historiography can be seen as an affective practice to build a figural worldview. Within this practice historian's experience and explanation of the temporal becomes a shareable historical idea. As a text, historiography, it becomes 'a natural truth,' which covers and evades the irrationality and detachedness of a temporal experience. The rules and conventions guiding the writing process in academic historiography shape the representation of the past into a form of a metaphor or a narrative, as an understandable poetic reconstruction. In his or her representation historian's endeavor is to produce an epistemologically resilient claim but also an emotionally coherent one.

The affective or emotional coherence in a historiographical text is reached when in the aesthetic dimension of 'the past', as depicted by a historian, emotions have become 'forces'. Thus in his or her narrative, feelings, either the ones embodied by the past agents or the ones s/he experiences during the writing process, find satisfying causes and consequences inside the constructed historical metaphor. That occurs for example when the 'strangeness' caused by present social changes can be explained through a narrative of European economic history, or when the introvert communalism of the past Occitanian people becomes the 'warmth' of their home and concurrent positive stance towards the future in their action is the 'ever-recurring hope'.

This coherence enables one to emotionally attune to the past and opens up a possibility to a moment of a 'tragic realism' transmitted by the text; a historical account can be assimilated into one's narrative identity and utilized as a proof of a correct interaction between people and their culture. Historiography will work as an affective practice providing feasible congruence of the subjective autobiographical identity and a historical meaning.

Obviously historiography possesses other, equally important dimensions, which serve the needs of constructing a modern society. But if written history is analyzed only as a normative truth claim, and its evaluation considers exclusively the epistemic bases and 'rational' connections it has to its contemporary society, some constitutive parts in its essence are neglected. How could one, then, explain the feeling of 'depressing vanity of historical meaning' (Munslow 2012) which seems to take place when historiography's possibility to reach objective past becomes more and more questionable? Why in a time of crisis and blurred collective values 'history rushes in' (Peters 2006)?

Acknowledging that to narrate, to historicize, is inevitable with respect to the stability or dissolution of one's identity, and studying the ways in which this narratorial urge is transferred into a text, is a possible approach to acquire a deeper understanding of a historiographical act. A historiographical inquiry could be based on the notion of the sameness of 'them' and 'us', especially with respect to the similar attempt of 'us' and 'them' to cope with infinite time.[7] The sorrow one faces in everyday life is inevitable, and so is the need to set it within a temporal context. But concurrently it is impossible to find unchangeable historically derived arguments to justify the order set upon infinite time. This contemporaneous necessity and impossibility of temporal order in one's life is what makes us the same as other people and it is on this ground that the analysis of the ways to write about the past could be based (cf. Auerbach 1959, 281–296, 2014a).[8]

If the historiographical analysis focuses on the tools which the historian deploys to cover the artificial nature of his or her account when he or she fits infinitude into a temporal frame and acknowledges the need to fill the gap between historical representation and historical experience, it is possible to achieve a fresh and ethical view of historical writing. In other words, I believe concentrating on the process of sensing, adjusting and finally representing an understanding of temporality, the *need to compare 'us' with people in the past and find a direction in time,* can make sense of the fragmentation of the field of historiography.

Notes

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[1] Obviously 13th century was not an uncompromised 'figural' era for the people living it. It appears such only in our simplifying historical view and with respect to our own time. I think this is what Jill Robbins meant when she wrote that in Auerbach's interpretation "there is one figure too many" (1991, 8). However in the context of this article relevant, and still plausible, are the cultural means that in Auerbach's thought

construct the established and shared configuration of time, and on the other hand the consequences that emerge when such a figural worldview is being eroded.

[2] I am using the concept of 'trauma' in a broad sense. A traumatic situation can be a flow of unpleasant events, an accumulated collection of smaller accidents or a catastrophe which devastates all that used to be familiar in an instance. See Cozolino (2010, 265–268).

[3] For Robert Stolorow (2007), a trauma is a change in one's worldview or Weltanschauung; It turns the familiar into something strange and threatening (13–16). He uses Freud's (1919) concept of *unheimlich*, as does Dominick LaCapra (2009, 85-89).

[4] Some scholars distinguish between *researching* and *writing* history, where the latter is more a task of adjusting, choosing and deciding about source material and putting one's experience and vision to words, see Ankersmit (2012, 59–64), Roper (2013, 315–316) and Kalela (2012, 132–145).

[5] Auerbach doesn't state that structuring the world history figurally should reveal any universal history or a model that would unveil also future. Rather through figural interpretation one could see the general ontological order (veritas) in particular truth (certum). The figural interpretation of the connection between two events was at first a spiritual act, linked to the God's meaning, and later a mode of close reading, with confidence about the "true nature" of the fulfillment [erfüllung] (Auerbach 1938).

[6] In the words of Fernand Braudel (1982): 'To describe, analyze, compare and explain usually means standing aside from historical narrative: it means ignoring or willfully chopping up the continuous flow of history' (23).

[7] Auerbach (1959) quotes Michel Montaigne when he attempts to clarify the human need for historicity which is to be found in every individual 'I describe ordinary and

humble life; but it doesn't mean anything; in the most common life is the humanity in its entirety.' (281)

[8] Robert D. Stolorow puts this idea in words better than I probably ever will in his book's (2007) chapter named 'Siblings in the same darkness': 'Just as finitude is fundamental to our existential constitution, so too is it constitutive of our existence that we meet each other as "brothers and sisters in the same dark night", deeply connected with one another in virtue of our common finitude. Thus, although the possibility of emotional trauma is ever present, so too is the possibility of forming bonds of deep emotional attunement within which devastating emotional pain can be held, rendered more tolerable, and hopefully, eventually integrated.' (49), emphasis original.

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