

**Vsevolod Chekanov**

V.I. Vernadsky Taurida National University, Ukraine

ORCID 0000-0003-0651-4267

## Two Key Narrative Strategies in Approaching Historiography on the Path of Historians in Space and Time

The subject of the study is the distinctive approaches to the formatting of spatial and temporal structures in historical texts. The main methods for historians belonging to a particular tradition to move through historical space and time in the process of creating discourse are highlighted, affecting a distinctive relationship in the representation of past events and structures, chance and regularity. For the sake of clarity, examples are taken of little-known sites (e.g. the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom of Hellenistic period), for which historians face not only the problem of generalising factual material, but also the problem of incorporating such sites cumulatively, without destroying discourse, into the existing structure of historical knowledge. In line with the opposing approaches developed in both historiographical traditions, the author of this study have outlined and for the first time identified the methods that have been used in these traditions to achieve the objective: the method of frontal approximations (in Soviet historiography) and the 'historian's wings' method (in Western historiography). The study presents examples of applying both methods, identifies their shortcomings and advantages, in accordance with which the specific features inherent in both historiographical traditions are specified, and indicates their significance for an adequate presentation of the historical past.

**Keywords:** discourse, paradigm, spatio-temporal structures, frontal approximations method, 'historian's wings' method, 'route' approach

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyskurs, paradygmat, struktury czasoprzestrzenne, metoda aproksymacji frontalnych, metoda „skrzydeł historyka”, podejście „trasowe”

### Introduction

Historical science is, to a large extent, open to the trends of the times. In some cases, they can become defining – historians at some point begin to feel that up to a certain moment they have been thinking in the wrong way, missing something important. This is how the peak situations of historical knowledge emerge, which can be the result of both non-historical influences (e.g. the perception of Marxist methodology) and the innovative

development of the potentials available in the structure of historical discourse (the methodology of the French Annales School). They are often characterised by maximum changes in the representation of spatio-temporal structures: historians do not so much interpret the subject of their studies in new ways as they see it in new ways. In the case of the perception of Marxism, these changes were the introduction of the formational scheme of the historical process (of five successive socio-economic formations succeeding one another) as opposed to the civilizational one and the introduction of international levels of the historical process (the development of capitalism, the international labour movement, etc.); in the case of the Annales School – they consist the introduction of micro-historical studies, the introduction of new observation perspectives, such as: immovable history, transitional epochs and spaces, frontiers, etc.

But it is not such peak situations in relation to traditional historiography that constitute the statistical majority amongst the situations of the reconstructed past that will further represent this past. The spatial and temporal structures of historical discourse have been, and continue to be, ascendant in the development (selection) of research methods. The purpose of the study is to clarify which methods emerge from these structures' formatting and which are applied in a historiography that functions for socially relevant purposes as a cumulative combination of paradigms.

In the literature, the historian's choice boils down to two possibilities:

- the dichotomy of historical events and structures as incompatible;
- their complementarity.<sup>1</sup>

The first case concerns non-cumulative knowledge and the development of modern trends. The second one is more traditional. In both cases, however, events and structures are autonomous and can be represented through both vertical and horizontal slices of time, depending on whether the emphasis is on the sequential presentation of the phenomenon evolution or on its interaction with synchronous phenomena.<sup>2</sup> In the first case, structures predominate; in the second, events predominate.

Consequently, the representation of past reality has a complex content. According to Reinhart Koselleck, a historian has little dependence on texts; for him or her they become sources that are mere references to history.<sup>3</sup> For the historian, there is always the possibility of telling the story in a different way each time. Where the predecessors saw only events, the historian juxtaposes them, analyses them and identifies the structures: hence the problem to which this exploration is devoted. Writing a story means formulating such a statement that could never have been articulated in a previous period. The moment the problem is posed is constantly a moment of uncertainty.<sup>4</sup>

Structures in their purest form cannot be traced back to any source. In fact, the source texts never include the history that is shaped by their data<sup>5</sup>, because it is shaped by both events and structures. Thus, there is a point of intersection between the possibilities of getting a picture from the data of sources and from the possibilities of science,

1 I.M. Savel'eva, A.V. Poletaev, *Teoriâ istoričeskogo znaniâ: učebnoe posobie*, Sankt-Peterburg 2007, p. 225.

2 Ibidem, p. 315.

3 R. Kozellek, *Časovi plasti. Doslidžennâ z teorij istorij*, Kiiv 2006, p. 210.

4 B. Skarga, *Meži istoričnosti*, Kiiv 2002, p. 110.

5 R. Kozellek, *Časovi plasti*, p. 250.

and because of the competition of different techniques from its arsenal. In the case of competition, there is a polemical rethinking or methodological revision of the picture of the past. At such a point in the discourse, a combination of paradigms is located, making their effective coexistence possible.

This point stands out due to the fact that there is a kind of bifurcation caused by the contradiction between the relative immutability of structures and the mutability of events – the engine of all possible revisions and reconsiderations. The literature discusses the possibility of constructing a ‘rupture-stationary concept’ that would combine opposing characteristics in a single discourse.<sup>6</sup> However, bifurcation cannot only be speculative, i.e. not expressed in any way “on the surface” of events. For instance, events may be perceived at different rates, be affected by time compression and vice versa.<sup>7</sup>

Koselleck and Lynn Hunt also noted the phenomenon of ‘accelerating history’; people live ever faster and more intensively.<sup>8</sup> Koselleck argued that acceleration depends on perceptions of the past, the movement of which increases in tempo as one approaches the present moment, as well as on the attitudes of the researcher imposed on him or her by society. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., the concept of ‘present time’, which used to mean ‘presence’, was clarified.

The measurement of time is gradually being removed from human life.<sup>9</sup> This makes it possible to introduce into historical studies long periods that are no longer related to the human coordinates of everyday life. On the other hand, history ceases to be a repository of instructive examples and becomes a sequence of unrepeatable events: having become suitable for new tasks, it loses its suitability for other tasks.<sup>10</sup>

The perception of modernity through acceleration has highlighted the nuances realised in the definition of crises, as well as periods of progressive growth; these periods are not opposing each other, they are interlinked.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the definition of bifurcation is directly linked to the perception of time by contemporaries of events. The historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. tried to connect these periods by complicating the periodisation, which would take into account the constancy of long periods and the variability of crisis periods, the succession of which is, in fact, what history is all about. It was about increasing the number of structures (increasing the number of events in the absence of ‘breakthroughs’ in the source base is not possible). This is how the idea of transition periods emerges.<sup>12</sup> However, the focus on structures has led to an imbalance: not all innovations are agreed by academics, and so the subjective nature of the studies has gradually intensified. Another way to work around the problem was Fernand Braudel’s introduction of levels in which the historical process takes place synchronously, but each at a different speed. Together they form a continuum.

6 I.M. Savel’eva, A.V. Poletaev, *Teoriâ istoričeskogo znaniâ*, p. 337.

7 V. Evans, *The Structure of Time. Language, Meaning and Temporal Cognition*, Philadelphia 2005, p. 79.

8 L. Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History*, New York 2008, p. 67; R. Koselleck, *Minule majbutné. Pro semantiku istoričnogo času*, Kiiv 2005, p. 95.

9 Ibidem, p. 114.

10 L. Hunt, *Measuring Time*, p. 86.

11 R. Koselleck, *Minule majbutné*, p. 128.

12 I.M. Savel’eva, A.V. Poletaev, *Teoriâ istoričeskogo znaniâ*, p. 350.

Koselleck considered the phenomenon of immersing history in time to be responsible for the sense of acceleration that characterises the present.<sup>13</sup> The perception of the future as the unexplored allows for viewing the 'arrow of time' as progress. According to Koselleck, progress is characterised by both the acceleration of time and its unexplored nature.

This is how attempts to supplement the elements of narration look in contemporary theoretical discourse. The researcher's choice of what he or she considers a promising strategy leads to the need to recognise the relativity of cognition.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., in particular Leopold von Ranke, fought against the need to express the historian's self as inevitable in the narrative of the past in order to 'judge and teach'. Then the attitude changed. The role of scientific abstraction has grown in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. (generally speaking, it grows wherever the fragmentation of sources makes the task of the historian more challenging, as the research progresses).<sup>15</sup> Choice arbitrariness is partly determined by external determinants. This leads to certain consequences, which are discussed below.

### The first narrative strategy

The representation of objects that are considered in an abstract way, therefore, contrary to stereotypes, requires additional justification. It is therefore accompanied by a ramified presentation directly in the text of the scientific apparatus, sometimes quite complex. In relation to remote eras, an important part of it is the representation of objects as 'poorly explored'.<sup>16</sup>

The temporal structures within which such objects exist are often inconsistent with the general temporal structures of the era. The stages of rise and decline may not coincide in different regions, and this is also reflected in the flow of historical time.<sup>17</sup> In relation to them, the small number of related facts makes it impossible to detail them without applying blocks of information belonging to other disciplines (archaeology, epigraphy, sphragistics, historiography, etc.). Such objects have no probable chronology. This determines the type of formatting of such an object.

Without a chronological link, the author of the study are unable to place it along the historical timeline as a sequence of events (the order of the events is uncertain). Accordingly, it is self-evident to reformat such an object into a kind of square, the conventional 'sides' of which represent content headings that can be attached to adjacent objects, depending on whether the attachment to them in space or time is more or less suitable for their coverage.

The 'sides' are formed by distributing known facts between chains of events (where possible) and structures (where data are lacking or their sequence is not crucial).<sup>18</sup> In such

13 R. Koselleck, *Minule majbutnê*, p. 58.

14 Ibidem, p. 75.

15 M.A. Barg, *Kategorii i metody istoričeskoj nauki*, Moskva 1984, p. 39.

16 V. Čekanov, *Fennij lad u Vizantii v istoriografii: problema "malodoslidženosti"*, "Kiivs'ka starovina" 2010, no 3, p. 86.

17 M.A. Barg, *Kategorii i metody*, p. 42.

18 I.M. Savel'eva, A.V. Poletaev, *Istoriâ i vremâ. V poiskah utračennogo*, Moskva 1997, p. 114.

a method, used in summary monographs and textbooks, mainly in the Soviet historical tradition with its love of seeing patterns everywhere, the contradiction between linearity and systematicity, between events and structures, is successfully removed.

This needs to be explained with an example. For instance, in the history of Hellenistic times there are both factually and chronologically well-resourced objects (the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms, etc.) and objects on the periphery of the Hellenistic world (Greco-Bactria, the Kushan Empire). There is no possibility of cross-correcting the dates of the history of such objects. Therefore, it has become traditional in historiography to represent them using numismatic data. They are the principal sources on the issue.

A certain sequence is formed from the known facts, but this is insufficient to turn it into history proper: the sources present practically no meaningful characteristics of the resulting sequence, they do not contain the cause-effect relations that would present this sequence as history.<sup>19</sup> The number of facts is insufficient to provide context. Accordingly, in order to locate them in history, it is customary to create this context through powerful inversions of data (including discussion data) from ancillary disciplines that do not require their specific historical representation with references to the significance of events by introducing notions of consequences, conclusions, etc. On the other hand, numismatic data may be sufficient to draw conclusions about origins, influences, etc., meaning that some historical categories are still overlaid by them.

These data are sufficient for the location in historical space and time of, for example, the Greco-Bactria site, but they are unsatisfactory in relation to its coverage. The location of an object does not yet ensure its understanding, it may be sufficient for historical chronology,<sup>20</sup> but it cannot become so for history.

To avoid the difficulties, historians arrange the available facts in such a way that the context can be reproduced by the method of explaining the unknown through the known. I identify this method as specific to primitive and ancient history and will hereafter refer to it as the method of frontal approximations. I use the square described above to explain it.

Numismatic information usually refers to economic history (contents of gold or silver, weight of the coin, its 'spoilage', etc.) but also to ethnic history (portraits and names minted on the obverse can clarify issues of ethnic or racial affiliation of rulers), religious history (symbols on the reverse of the coin) and to some extent political history (the frequency of finds, especially hidden treasure, can clarify the security situation, political affiliation of a certain land, assuming that coins were mainly circulated within 'their' state). The artistic qualities of the coinage, the perfection of the metal work or the image performance show the level of civilisation as a whole and refer back to the history of culture and art.

So, for contextual coverage of Greco-Bactrian history, historians already have sides of the square in addition to the numismatic data itself. Each of them becomes a front separating it from a similar side of an adjacent square (e.g. the Seleucid Empire). Because of its 'little-explored' nature, Greco-Bactria for us does not border the Seleucid Empire along the state border line, as it did for contemporaries – they are now delineated by the sides of squares.

19 I.M. D'âkonov, *Starovavilonskoe obšestvo*, [in:] *Istoriâ drevnego mira*, ed. by I.M. D'âkonov, V.D. Neronova, I.S. Svencickaâ, Moskva 1983, p. 96.

20 È. Bikerman, *Hronologiâ drevnego mira. Bližnij Vostok i antičnost'*, Moskva 1975, p. 48.

The use of the frontal approximation method leads to a representation that does not distinguish a little-known object from others. They are also presented as squares with similarly labelled sides: economic, ethnic, political, religious, cultural history. More information on a particular object is placed inside the square, increasing the volume of material under the relevant heading, but without affecting its structure. It becomes an invariant of describing all objects bordering in space and time. The structure of the sections in the scientific work on Hellenism, in this example, became stereotypical for all the states, despite the fact that the substantive content of each differs due to the varying state of the sources. As a result, all the constructed squares are bordered by thematically identical headings.

This method of historical writing contributes to the unification of the representation of different segments of space and time in the overall fabric of historical narrative and thus enables the formation of modern world history as an integrated form of their representation. The objects turned into squares of a coordinate grid, which was superimposed by the researcher on a historical continuum. As a result, the historical narrative was no longer simply moving along a time vector, but moved from square to square, gradually revealing the substantive side of each. In this way, the description of each object has taken the form of a representation: from the geographical conditions and populations to socio-economic, then political history and finally to culture.

### The second narrative strategy

The method described above has come to play a significant role in covering the history of objects about which there is little or no information, or it is so fragmented that they cannot be reconciled within a single text. A striking example is the representation of the history of the so-called Ancient Kingdom in Egypt, namely the reign of the third dynasty king Djoser (2778–2723 BC), famous for possessing the oldest pyramid in Egyptian history. The circumstances and reasons for its construction are unknown, because Egyptian sources are unidentified, and the only non-Egyptian source – the historical work of Herodotus – connects the construction of the pyramids with the king of the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty, Khufu (Cheops),<sup>21</sup> and besides, it is impossible to assess the reliability of the facts given by the ‘father of history’.

Scientific Egyptology has gradually established a tradition of representing this period that would allow it to avoid the gaps in present knowledge. The amount of data is not enough to present it as a continuum – there are not enough contexts. The period of dynasties 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> is examined as a whole, in which the reigns of the key kings – Djoser, Sneferu, Khufu, Khafr and Menkaur – are not shown as a sequence (such a sequence could only be chronological), but are seen in the only known context of pyramid construction. The parts of the representation, unfolded in chronological order, correspond not so much to the vector of time, as to the gradual increase in the height of the pyramids (these

21 Herodotus, *Historiae*, 2, 124, quoted after: Gerodot, *Istoriã v devãti knigah*, transl. by G.A. Stratanovskij, Leningrad 1972, p. 31.

data are necessarily cited in Egyptological works).<sup>22</sup> The final part of the representation is devoted to explaining the probable reasons for the refusal to build the pyramids, considering the possible impact on the Egyptian economy – with obligatory reference to Herodotus.

The problem itself is well-known in historiography and is explained by other examples (the history of Byzantium cannot be told without the context of the imperial court, the history of Venice – without the context of foreign trade, etc.).<sup>23</sup> The problem arising from there is characterised as the emergence of ‘autonomous rhythms’ of regional history that do not coincide with the rhythms of the era. From the perspective of the author of the study, this is an insufficient explanation.

Despite the small amount of available information about the period, even it contains components that still cannot be included in the square of the description of the period in question. For instance, the information about the aforementioned Djoser is fragmentary about his ritual running<sup>24</sup>. This information is still missing in the general historical representation of the period, since historical science has not found a way to put this information into at least some context. If it is seen as the meaningful content of a square side, what would be the identifier of that side, what is it bordered by? Unique, incomparable information cannot be adequately reflected, because it is necessary to typify different objects and to find invariants that form common sides for two or more of the squares they border. It is not the ‘marginality’ of some social manifestations, but the fact that they sometimes do not fit into any context due to a lack of data. For instance, the killing of cats can be traced back to ancient times up to and including the 18<sup>th</sup> c. and ‘has its own history’,<sup>25</sup> although it is difficult to incorporate it into any picture of the past.

It should be taken into account that this method is common in historiographies associated with a ‘pan-economic’ Marxist discourse, which tends to view the past as a system in which factors of progressive change have been naturally shaped and grown.<sup>26</sup> In Western historiography, however, a different method is used to represent the past, whose signs can be seen in the works of Herodotus, Edward Gibbon, etc. The author of the study, on the other hand, define it by Alexandre Dumas’ term from his novel *The Forty-Five Guardsmen* – the ‘historian’s wings’ method.

It is the opposite of the method of frontal approximations, as it is based on the technique of ‘transferring’ consideration, the historian’s attention between segments of past reality regardless of their genre specifics – for example, from the predominantly political history of the Seleucid Empire to the predominantly cultural history of Greco-Bactria. There will be no disharmony between the segments if the two states are not placed on the same development scale.

If history is a representation rather than an explanation,<sup>27</sup> what matters is the completeness of the final picture, not its uniformity and symmetry with respect to the previous one. They are neighbours, not as squares, but in the way that debris of walls,

22 B.K. Afanasyeva, *Šumerskaâ literatura*, [in:] *Istoriâ drevnego mira*, p. 120.

23 M.A. Barg, *Kategorii i metody*, p. 135.

24 L. Kun, *Vseobšaa istoriâ fizičeskoj kul'tury i sporta*, Moskva 1982, p. 91.

25 J.H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2000, p. 23.

26 E. Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval & Modern*, Chicago 1994, p. 187.

27 F.R. Ankersmit, *Historical Representation*, Stanford 2001, p. 55.

pagan temples rebuilt into churches and surviving triumphal arches of emperors are neighbours in the Roman Forum: they share the same space and no one raises the issue of their unification.<sup>28</sup>

What is the basis of this method? Firstly, it is an approach to history as filling in the gaps by means of a synthesis of the surviving material from which a story emerges.<sup>29</sup> Synthesising can take place by means of 'concealment' of some of the material. For instance, a story focused on the causes of events will look different than one focused on the flow of events; each will be a 'true story' and yet none will be complete.<sup>30</sup> They would simply be two evenly possible narrative trajectories.

Secondly, it is an approach to history as a route through an array of material. This was the basis of Herodotus' approach, whose narrative moved between countries and regions on the trajectory of the subject disclosure – elucidating the origins of the Greco-Persian wars.

Returning to the Greco-Bactrian story, it is worth examining how it is covered in the Western historiographical tradition – using the 'historian's wings' method. Using the example of the authoritative Cambridge Ancient History, it is easy to ascertain the presence of a synthesis that brings together neighbouring sections on the Seleucids and on the Greeks in Bactria and India.<sup>31</sup> In the Soviet and post-Soviet traditions such a combination is impossible, because the Seleucids (dynasty) and Greeks (ethnic group) are located on different levels of perception, there is no common side of the square between them. In the Western tradition, however, one moves between the two historical regions without unifying the narrative: although there is ample socio-economic information about the Seleucids, the material seems to focus on military and political events as the core (which allows side stories about neighbouring Galatia, Cappadocia, Pergamum to be introduced).<sup>32</sup>

The story of Pergamum is accompanied by an interpolation of an excursion into the history of Pergamon art, while the conclusion about the strengthening of Macedonia allows interpolation of the story of Macedonian coins dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC.<sup>33</sup> The effectiveness of the method lies in the fact that meaningfully different stories are not united by the thematic correspondence embodied by the square, but are connected as a route through time. The texture of the material is constantly changing, resembling polyphonic music.

When looking at the scheme of the next section, the more complex to cover, of the Cambridge Ancient History of Greco-Bactria, it has a completely different principle of composition (the sections are written by different authors, the general editing does not smooth out the difference).<sup>34</sup> The route approach is no longer possible here. Because of the almost complete absence of narrative information, the narration is dominated by an account

28 M.O. Lakatoš, *Istoriografija problemi rozvitku višoi agrarnoi osviti Ukraïni (seredina XX st.–počatok XXI st.)*, "Naukovij visnik Mukačivs'kogo deržavnogo universitetu. Serija «Pedagogika ta psihologija»" 2018, vol. 4, no 1, p. 33–38.

29 J.H. Arnold, *History*, p. 39.

30 *Ibidem*, p. 47.

31 F.W. Walbank, A.E. Astin, M.W. Frederiksen, R.M. Ogilvie, *The Cambridge Ancient History. The Hellenistic World*, Cambridge 2008, p. 151.

32 *Ibidem*, p. 173.

33 *Ibidem*, p. 189.

34 O.B. Oniško, *Osoblivosti realizacii prava na ipoteku na teritorijah shidnoi Galičini ta zahidnoi Volini u skladi Pol'si (1919–1939 rr.)*, "Social'no-pravovi studii" 2019, vol. 2, no 4, p. 103–109.



of institutions, provided mainly by numismatic data or a reinterpretation of part of the Seleucid narrative.<sup>35</sup> For lack of sources, the story is covered in much the same way as in domestic historiography. The innovation here lies not in the recomposition, but in the combination of stories with different methods of coverage. In domestic historiography, this composition strategy is also present in collective monographs, although not in all of them.<sup>36</sup>

### Other historiographic narrative strategies

Hayden White is one of the most important and influential literary theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. He is most known for his contribution to the field of historiography and his theories on the rhetorical nature of historical writing. White believes that historical records are the product of latent rhetorical processes, and that the study of history should take into account these processes in order to gain a fuller understanding of the past. White's approach to historiography is both linguistic and philosophical. He argues that the way in which historical documents are written, structured, and organized are not just random acts, but instead are the product of conscious choices on the part of the writer. He suggests that any historian, regardless of their disciplinary background, must take into consideration the rhetorical strategies and techniques employed by the author when interpreting a given document.<sup>37</sup>

White highlights that texts are not a neutral product, but instead are created by people with a particular purpose and intent. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the intentions of the author and how they shape the argument and analysis found in historical texts. White also stresses the idea of 'cultural discourse' when discussing historiography. He claims that history can only be understood in the context of the culture and the ideas contained within it. By understanding the ideas of a given culture, the historian can gain a better understanding of the experiences and values of the people during that period of time. Finally, White suggests that historians should not limit themselves to conventional historical sources, such as texts, but also consider archaeological evidence, visual postcards, and other material artifacts.

In sum, White's historiographical approach offers a new way of viewing the past. The focus on rhetoric and culture allows for a more nuanced understanding of history and the people who experienced it. By looking at the intentions of the author, the context of the source, and the culture of the period, historians can gain a more complex and accurate view of history.<sup>38</sup>

Paul Roth and Jerzy Topolski,<sup>39</sup> are two of the most important figures in the field of historiographical narrative. Both scholars were highly influential in constructing a new set of research perspectives regarding the historical sources in which narratives of the past were built upon. Roth's work on narrative approaches to the study of history focused on

35 Ibidem, p. 108.

36 I.M. D'ákonov, *Vavilonskaâ literatura*, [in:] *Istoriâ drevnego mira*, p. 135.

37 K. Brzechczyn, *Between Science and Literature: The Debate on the Status of History*, [in:] *Idealization XIII: Modeling in History*, ed. by K. Brzechczyn, Amsterdam, New York 2009, p. 7–30.

38 Ibidem.

39 Idem, *How Do Narratives Explain? A Comment from the Point of View of Poznań School of Methodology*, [in:] *Towards a Revival of Analytical Philosophy of History. Around Paul A. Roth's Vision of Historical Sciences*, ed. by K. Brzechczyn, Leiden, Boston 2018, p. 148–165.

‘the ways in which accounts of the past are constructed, performed, and interpreted.’<sup>40</sup> He argued that historians should be aware of the variety of stories that emerge from different sources, as many of these stories ‘have been constructed and re-constituted over time.’<sup>41</sup> Coincidentally, Topolski’s own research on this same field of narrative theory in history was remarkably similar. He asserted that the development of historical accounts should be assessed in terms of

the meaningfulness of narrative structure, the adoption of particular sources, the dynamics of the narrative discourse, and the ways in which historical sources are reworked and interpreted by narrators and readers.<sup>42</sup>

Both Roth and Topolski’s approach acknowledge the ongoing evolution of historiography, as they agreed that the narratives constructed by different sources can be traced, measured, and interpreted in a critical fashion. Furthermore, both argued that it was essential to employ an analytic methodology that drew on both textual and social sources in order to fully capture the complexities of past events. The notion of narrative historiography has become increasingly popular in modern understandings of narrative theory, as the works of Paul Roth and Jerzy Topolski have served as both pioneering and influential contributions to the field.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusions

So, in the parallel traditions of historical writing in the academic paradigm, one can see the coexistence of at least two effective methods of presenting the past on the basis of quantitatively limited data. Sometimes a combination of different narrative strategies can be used in the same section. This is usually the case for lesser-known eras. For instance, the *Cambridge History of the Middle Ages*, in its account of the ‘barbarian kingdoms’ (for example, the section on the Suebi and Visigoths in Spain), makes extensive use of the late Roman narrative, for it exceeds the volume of the ‘barbarian’ chronicles proper (events, even internal ones, are shown from the perspective of the Romans). In doing so, the problems begun by modern science and covered in the same section (the Hispanisation of the Visigoths, the consolidation of their kingdom) are covered with greater use of epigraphic, numismatic and linguistic data, and legal monuments. The Kingdom of the Suebi, of which little is known, is covered indirectly, in the context of its annexation by the Visigoths. Synthesised representation is not possible here, so the authors have applied a route approach.

Thus, both methods have their disadvantages and advantages. The shortcomings of the method of frontal approximations derive from the redundancy of viewing history as a space where regularities are manifested: in such a representation, randomness as a factor becomes surprisingly irrelevant; human beings also virtually disappear from it. Only structures and abstractions interact. The advantage is the unification of consideration –

40 P. Roth, *How Narratives Explain*, “Social Research” 1989, vol. 56, no 2, p. 449–478.

41 Ibidem, p. 466.

42 J. Topolski, *Conditions of Truth of Historical Narratives*, “History and Theory” 1981, vol. 20, no 1, p. 47–60.

43 K. Brzechczyn, *How Do Narratives Explain?*

even for little-known research objects, this method provides a format that makes a decent representation of them possible. The 'historian's wings' method, in turn, absolutises randomness; behind the twists and turns of events it is often difficult to see the structure forming, it is impossible to understand whether these events are regular or not. However, this does not lose that sense of unfathomable reality which characterises not the study of history as a 'cabinet' science, but inhabiting it as everyday life.

After the collapse of the socialist system and the disappearance of the USSR, coverage of the past by the standards of Western historiography took precedence. However, how regular is this? To what extent is it due to the interference of non-historical, political factors? Throughout this study it has been possible to observe the ambiguity of history, embodied in the impossibility of definitively choosing a single approach (just as it is impossible to choose between events and structures). There can also be two answers to the last question, and it can always be said that the reason for this is the cumulative combination of scientific and non-scientific factors of influence, basically inherent in the functioning of historical discourse in democratic societies.

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**Vsevolod Chekanov**, PhD in Historical Sciences, Senior Lecturer of Department of Philosophy and History in V.I. Vernadsky Taurida National University.  
e-mail: chekanov.vesvolod@ukr.net

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## **Dwie kluczowe strategie narracyjne w podejściu do historiografii na ścieżce historyków w czasie i przestrzeni**

Przedmiotem opracowania są wyróżniające się podejścia do formatowania struktur przestrzennych i czasowych w tekstach historycznych. Zwrócono uwagę na główne metody poruszania się historyków należących do określonej tradycji w czasie i przestrzeni historycznej w procesie tworzenia dyskursu, wpływające na odrębną relację w reprezentacji minionych wydarzeń i struktur, przypadek i prawidłowość. Dla jasności podano przykłady mało znanych stanowisk (np. królestwo grecko-baktryjskie okresu hellenistycznego), dla których historycy stają nie tylko przed problemem uogólnienia materiału faktograficznego, lecz także z problemem włączania takich stanowisk bez niszczenia dyskursu w zastaną strukturę wiedzy historycznej. Zgodnie z przeciwstawnymi podejściami wypracowanymi w obu tradycjach historyograficznych autor niniejszego opracowania nakreślił i po raz pierwszy zidentyfikował metody, które były stosowane w tych tradycjach do osiągnięcia celu: metoda przybliżeń frontalnych (w historiografii sowieckiej) oraz metoda „skrzydeł historyka” (w historiografii zachodniej). W opracowaniu przedstawiono przykłady zastosowania obu metod, zidentyfikowano ich wady i zalety, zgodnie z którymi określono specyfikę obu tradycji historyograficznych oraz wskazano ich znaczenie dla adekwatnego przedstawienia przeszłości historycznej.