Historical Narratives as Pictures: On Elective Affinities between Verbal and Pictorial Representations

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Introduction

There are two basic modes to re-present things, events, persons and deeds that are absent because they have already passed: by text and by picture. What is the difference between them? The default answer to this question according to classical tradition says that representation by text is conventional: there is no similarity between words, sentences, texts and the objects represented by them. Representation by picture is based on the similarity between the picture and the objects depicted. Therefore, picture is a more "natural" mode of representation than text.

The history of aesthetics, semiotics and art studies in the twentieth-century is a history of criticism of this classical common place.[1] The leitmotiv of this criticism can be expressed by the thesis: pictures are texts. Texts belong to some specific language and are part of some specific discourse. They are produced and understood via application of some specific code. So, if a researcher looks at pictures following the *Leitmetapher* "pictures are texts," then she looks for rules and conventions that constitute the language of some specific visual art or its style. Accordingly, she considers knowledge of these conventions a precondition of "reading" and un-

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derstanding pictures. Throughout the twentieth-century, this metaphor was immensely fruitful.

But what about the reverse metaphor—"texts are pictures"? What if we invert the metaphor "pictures are texts" and use this inversion as a guide for looking at texts? In the recent literature on pictorial representation one can observe a backlash against the assimilation of pictures and images by "visual semiotics" conceived as a generalized linguistics (Elkins, Jay). This backlash can be considered as the most recent chapter in "the story of a protracted struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic signs" that unfolds in the history of Western culture (Mitchell 43). However, there have been only a few attempts to supplement this defense of the autonomy of the picture by the counteroffensive movement on the lines suggested by the metaphor "texts are pictures," and they are not a part of the field known as narratology (see e.g. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*; Bryson, *Vision and Painting*; Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*).

Of course, visual metaphors play a fundamental, if not a constitutive role in the structuralist narratology. As Mosher and Nelles note, the "points of view" are "a topic at the heart of narratology" (424). The most important advance in the analysis of narrative discourse was Mieke Bal's elaboration and refinement of Gerard Genette's narrative typology,[2] through the more literal interpretation of the "point of view" metaphor in the term "focalization": "the actor, using the acting as his material, creates the story; the focalizer, who selects the actions and chooses the angle from which to present them, with those actions creates the narrative; while the narrator puts narrative into words: with the narrative he creates the narrative text" ("The Narrating" 244–245). The reader "hears" the narrator's "voice" and "sees" the actions in the story with the eyes of an "internal" or "external" focalizer who can be identical or not to the narrator (*Looking* 41–53).

However, the prominence of the visual metaphors in the narratological analysis doesn't derive from the extension of the categories used to analyze the pictorial representation of spatial objects to the description of the ways how narrative texts are constructed as "verbal icons" (Fleischman 95). Rather, this prominence can be attributed to the general preeminence of the visual metaphors in Western culture, with the metaphor of "perspective" taking the central place since the discovery (or invention) of linear

perspective in Renaissance painting (Mitchell 37–40) that was followed by its entrenchment and ensuing "fossilization" (Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective* 217–261) in the modern cultural vocabulary. Although the rise of modernist art brought the demise of linear perspective in the painting, the ongoing visualization of Western culture and the swelling "frenzy of the visible" secured for the linear perspective and the related theory of vision a continuing predominance in the narratological imagination.

So the constitutive visual metaphorics of the present narratological theory remains clustered around the implicit assumption that the linear perspective and the related theory of vision is the only or "natural" way of visual representation. The goal of this paper is to explore the implications of the metaphor "texts are pictures" that are disclosed by dropping this assumption. Since Erwin Panofsky's landmark *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1924–25), linear perspective is considered in art studies as one of the alternative and historically changing "symbolical forms" that can be used as the organizing framework for the depiction of the existents in space. If narrative texts can be considered as "verbal icons", are there any structural homologies between what Goodman calls the "ways of world-making" used to enclose the images of many spatial existents into the same space of picture, and those applied to knit together many temporal events into the same story?[3]

To make my discussion maximally specific, I will limit its scope to one kind of narrative text—"historical narratives." I do not assume the existence of "essential" and ahistorical differences between "fictional" and "nonfictional" narratives; instead I consider these differences as a matter of changing "ontological landscape" (Pavel 136–148), with the same narrative texts (e.g. the texts attributed to Homer or the Bible) being read as "non-fictional" or "historical" ones at one time and being reclassified as "mythical" or "fictional" at another time. However, as time went on, the set of conventions arose in Western culture that described the conditions such that for a narrative text it was necessary (albeit not sufficient) to satisfy them to qualify as "historical narrative." The emergence of these conventions is part of the "rise of historism,"[4] including the birth of scholarly historical writing as its central part.

My central thesis is that the conventions about the narrative representation of the past that were accepted in history writing with the rise of historism are structurally homologous with the rules of linear perspective that

from the Renaissance until the rise of modernism in art were considered as obligatory (as the "true" or "correct" ones) in Western painting. I introduce this thesis in the first section of my paper, locating it in the context of the recent historiographical narratology, and explaining my use of the concepts of historism and historist narrative. In the second, the different methods for the construction of picture space in geometry and painting are described and compared. This description is needed to put both the linear perspective and its historist narrative homologue into a comparative and historical perspective. This is done in the third section, where I trace the structural homologies between the non-linear methods of the construction of picture space and characteristic features of the pre-historist historical narratives. After this comparative discussion of the pre-historist historical narrative and its visual homologues, in the fourth section I conclude with the elaboration of the homologies between the linear perspective and the historist narrative.

The issue of historist narrative in historiographical narratology

Art historians have observed the elective affinities between the emergence of linear perspective and related theory of vision in the Western painting on the one hand and, on the other, the rise of ways to think and to write about the human world that can be called "historism" or "historicism."[5] Wilhelm Worringer claimed in his book *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* that the representation of the "depth relations" endows spatial things with "temporality value" (Worringer 75). Rudolph Arnheim reports in his famous book *Art and Visual Perception* Oswald Spengler's observations about the unique power of modern European art to represent infinity thanks to systematic application of linear perspective (Spengler 218–223, 395-396), and continues in the following way: "finally, it should be observed that central perspective locates infinity in a specific direction. This makes space appear as a pointed flow, entering the picture from the near sides and converging toward a mouth at the distance. The result is a transformation of the simultaneity of space into a happening in time—that is, an irreversible sequence of events. The traditional world of being is redefined as a process of happening. In this way central perspective foreshadows and initiates a fundamental development in the Western conception of

nature" (240). Obviously, Arnheim refers to the origins of the idea of development, which is constitutive for historism.

How can these all-too-general observations be made useful for the field that can be designated as "historiographical narratology" (Cohn 777–779)? First of all, a more specific, narratologically framed concept of historism is needed. The obvious place to search for this desideratum are the writings of the authors such as Hayden White, Frank Ankersmit, Louis Mink, Paul Ricoeur, Jörn Rüsen and other representatives of the "narrativist" philosophy of history (or metahistory; see Ankersmit and Kellner *A New Philosophy of History*). Different from the linguistic and philological narratologists, whose field of interest is configured by the dimensions of "discourse" and "story," the philosophical and historiographical narratologists are mostly interested in the relations between the dimensions of "story" and "reference" that are relatively neglected by the linguistic and philological narratologists because their paradigmatic analytic cases are located in the fictional districts of the contemporary ontological landscape.

Narrativist metahistory was founded by Hayden White's famous theory of historiographical styles in his *Metahistory* (1973). Each style is characterized by particular modes of emplotment, formal explanatory argument, ideological implication, and (most importantly) by the particular trope dominating the historian's creative imagination. This dominant trope serves to prefigure the historical field, initially comprised of singular statements as they are listed in the chronicles. According to White, historical narratives are referential only at the level of singular statements, and other aspects of narrative are constrained only by the peculiarities of the historian's imagination and by the affinities between the master tropes, modes of emplotment, modes of argument, and the ideological implications.

Despite its celebrity, White's theory provides no hints for the search after the structural homologues of the modes of the construction of the picture space in the historical narratives. It is shaped by the metaphorical use of the rhetorical concepts of tropes themselves, and makes no substantial use of visual and optical metaphors. White's theory is focused not on the literary work, but on poetic imagination as a faculty of the author producing that work[6], and the tropes that for White govern the work of poetic imagination are curiously similar to Kantian categories of the understanding that organize human experience. Even more importantly, White provides not a narratology, but a tropology of representation that considers

tropological prefiguration as a universal mechanism of productive imagi-
nation. "By focusing on tropology (and not, for example, on narratology)
White happened to single out precisely that aspect of historical writing
which can be said to be an aspect that history shares with literature *and* the
sciences" (Ankersmit, "Kantian Narrativism" 157).

White presents a strikingly ahistorical view of the changes in historical
writing, conceiving them as the cyclical alternation of historiographical
styles exemplifying the immutable types of creative imagination. Accord-
ing to White, irony tends to be followed by metaphoric Romanticism,
bringing the return to the conviction and vigor that irony denies. Tragedy
is followed by comedy, and that in turn is usually followed by irony. Ac-
cording to White's account, irony was already predominant in late-
Enlightenment historiography (47–59), and came to renewed dominance
by the end of the 19th century.[7] For White, the concepts of historism (or
historicism) are not important for the description of the developments of
historiography in the 19th century, because he considers them as another
round in the incessant alternation of *corso* and *ricorso* on Vico's lines, em-
phasizing instead the *déja vu* quality of these developments.[8]

Important suggestions for the comparative analysis of the methods
used to construct space in pictures, and those to construct historical narra-
tives can be found in the work of Dutch philosopher and history theorist
Frank Ankersmit. Ankersmit proposed the inversion of the traditional
metaphor "pictures are texts" and the ensuing "'*renversement des al-
liances,*' in which not literature but the visual arts function as a model or
metaphor for the study of history'" ("Statements" 238). Like White,
Ankersmit maintains that historical narratives are referential only at the
level of their chronicles. However, the same chronicle can ground differ-
ent narratives, and it is in exploring differences between chronicle and
narrative (most vividly seen when different narratives containing the same
chronicle are compared) that he finds the metaphor "historical narratives
are pictures" most useful. "The study of history is more a 'depiction' than
a 'verbalization' of the past" ("Statements" 239).

According to Ankersmit, the difference between narrative text and pic-
ture appears insurmountable only as long as we do not compare them as
entireties or wholes, comparing their elements instead. The historical text
consists of sentences. Paintings consist of patches left by brush. The sen-
tence is either true or false. The brush patch does not bear the property of

truth. However, consisting of the elements of radically different nature, pictures and narrative representations as wholes are alike in not only providing information about the represented object, but also expressing proposals to look at this object in some specific ways. "The historical narratio is essentially a proposal to look at the past from a certain point of view" ("The Use" 57).[9]

Narratives and pictures possess this quality only as wholes. There is no specific sentence in narrative or some specific brush patch in a picture which could be considered as bearer or locus of this property. "'The point of view' of a narratio is comparable to a belvedere: the scope of the 'point of view' we get access to after having climbed all the steps leading to the top is far wider than just the staircase of the belvedere: from the top we look out over a whole landscape. The statements of a narratio may be seen as instrumental in our attaining a 'point of view' like the steps of the staircase of a belvedere, but what we ultimately see comprises much more of reality than what the statements themselves express" (*Narrative Logic* 223). Importantly, we estimate a painting as good for the ability to show more than what it directly depicts. Similarly, good narrative representation is distinguished by its ability to say as much as possible using as few as possible descriptive sentences. In these respects, such narrative representation resembles good, suggestive, metaphor (220–225, 235–239). Referring to these and other structural homologies between pictures and historical narratives, Ankersmit suggests that history of historical writing can use the concepts from the vocabulary of art studies as models or metaphors for the analysis of the historical text: "my method will be to map the writing of history on the visual arts" (*The Reality Effect* 25).

I will take my lead from Ankersmit and explore whether this method can help to detect structural homologies between the linear depiction of the spatial existents and historist narrating of the past events.[10] However, Ankersmit provides no genetic typology of historical narratives and neglects a feature of narrative that is considered by philological narratologists as part of its definition—representation of the temporal sequences of events: "narrative is the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time" (Abbott 3).[11] He considers narratives as "narrative substances" which he compares to Leibniz's monads, conceived in the framework of subject-predicate logic (in *Narrative Logic*). So he downplays the differences between the texts representing events in time and

other kinds of texts, differences considered by philological and linguistic
narratologists of crucial importance for the demarcation of their field.
"Narrative interpretations are not necessarily of a sequential nature; histor-
ical narratives are only contingently stories with beginning, a middle, and
an end" (*History and Tropology* 33). In both respects, Ankersmit's outline
of the theory of historical narrative can be usefully supplemented and ex-
tended by that of German theorist Jörn Rüsen, who also provides a most
elaborate and useful discussion of historism.

Rüsen conceives historism as historiographical paradigm which arose
at the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century and dominated
until the middle of the 20th century, marked by the advancement of social
scientific history. According to Rüsen, each historiographical paradigm is
distinguished by (1) specific cognitive interests (interpreted needs for ori-
entation in time), (2) ideas of history (leading views on the experience of
the past), (3) methods (rules of empirical research), (4) forms of represen-
tation, and (5) functions of orientation in life (*Studies in Metahistory*
161–186; Jaeger and Rüsen *Geschichte des Historismus*). In his work,
conceived the modernization of the metahistorical theory—*Historik*
(1937)—delineated by the great German historian Johann G. Droysen,
Rüsen provides the discussion of all these aspects of the historical re-
search and writing.[12]

However, for my purposes, from these 5 components of historiograph-
ical paradigm as a "disciplinary matrix of historical studies" only the
fourth one is of direct interest. The core of Rüsen's theory of representa-
tion forms in historiography is the typology of the forms of narrating[13],
which is also the typology of the narrative sense formation (*Sinnbil-
dung*)[14]. Rüsen grounds this equivalence in his statement that the happen-
ings of the past can be imbued with historical sense only through the
medium of their narrative representation. "For a while historians, espe-
cially those who wanted to be especially modern, cherished the illusion
that these new forms of writing history made obsolete historical narration
not only as a specific form of historiography, but also as a form of think-
ing of the history studies. The metahistory has liberated the self-
consciousness of history studies from this delusion, disclosing in the nar-
ration the logic of the historical sense formation" ("Narrative und Struk-
turgeschichte" 150).

According to Rüsen, only a narrative representation of the past has not

only empirical and normative content, but also "sense content" (*Sinnge-halt*). This "sense content" bestows on the representation of the past the power to overcome the experience of uncertainty, characteristic for *condition humaine* power. This is the power to found and to stabilize human identities. The processes of the formation of this sense content, taking place in the semantic gap between the chronicle of narrative representation and the representation itself, are classified by Rüsen into 4 types: genetic, exemplary, traditional, and critical.

By listing 4 forms of historical narrating, Rüsen's typology is superficially similar to that of White. This similarity is only a superficial one, because there is no substantial correspondence between White's metaphoric, metonymic, synecdochic, and ironic types of historical imagination and Rüsen's types of genetic, exemplary, traditional, and critical narrating. Rüsen draws the distinction between his four forms not according to the tropological foundations of the historical imagination, but depending on how the narrating relates the time of the story (narrated time) to that of implied author (who in the case of historical narrative usually is identical with the narrator) and implied reader. The traditional narrating "eternalizes" (*verewigt*) the narrated time; the exemplary narrative "spatializes" (*verräumlicht*) it by representing the events told as exemplifications of the recurring situations or instances of transtemporally valid rules, the genetic narrating "temporalizes" (*verzeitlicht*) the narrated events by relating and relativizing them inside the encompassing and ongoing happening called History; the critical narrating makes the narrated time accessible to critical judgment (*Zeit wird als Sinn beurteilbar*; Rüsen, *Grundzüge* 56).

The focus on time and temporal relation provides Rüsen's typology with crucial advantage over outlines of historiographical narratology by White and Ankersmit. Unlike White's typology, Rüsen's typology is genetic one, assuming the irreversible change in the "ontological landscape" of Western culture proceeding along the Weberian lines of "rationalization" and "disenchantment", with ensuing change in the dominant forms of historical narration. On Rüsen's view, exemplary and traditional forms of narrative sense formation were predominant in premodern historiography, which had no claims to be recognized as a science (even if only in the weak or soft German sense of science as *Wissenschaft*). "It can be shown in particular that the sequence of the traditional, exemplary, critical and genetic functional types represents a genetic connection <. . .>. So we

have the historical interpretive perspective of a universal-historical analy-
sis of historiography which suggests the hypothetical idea of a world his-
tory of historiography, in which the epochs of the traditional, exemplary
and genetic realization of the universal function of historiography to pro-
vide the life-worldly orientation follow one on top of the other" ("An-
näherung" 48).

Characteristically, Rüsen makes no mention in this citation of the criti-
cal narrating. This is no chance omission. In the German literature, where
Rüsen's typology was broadly accepted, the idea of a "critical" type of
narrating was strongly criticized by fellow historians, exposing many defi-
ciencies in this concept (Blanke 39–40). Rüsen himself stipulates occa-
sionally (*Zeit und Sinn* 217) that critical narrating cannot be related to
some specific epoch in the history of historiography, but is rather a
"medium of transition" from one epoch to another. Therefore, in my at-
tempt to extend Ankersmit's mapping of the history of historiography on
the history of visual arts I will work only with Rüsen 's types of genetic,
exemplary, and traditional narrating and historical sense formation.

Rüsen's theory can be included into the comparative framework where
both the emergence of the linear perspective as a binding norm for the
construction of the picture space and the establishment of genetic narrat-
ing as a "proper" form of historical representation are considered to be dif-
ferent aspects of the Weberian "rationalization," so that the rationalization
of the construction of the picture space by the systematic application of
the linear perspective in the modern European painting can be used as a
model or metaphor for the rationalization of the methods for construction
of the semantic space in the narrative representation of the past, brought
about by historism. In the sections 3–4, I will elaborate this thesis in de-
tail, proceeding from the comparison of the pre-genetic forms of narrating
with the non-linear constructions of the picture's space to the discussion of
the structural homologies between the genetic narrating and central per-
spective. However, for this goal I need to present the concepts used to de-
scribe different constructions of picture space and explain the reasons that
induced art historians of former times to consider linear perspective as a
"rational" one, and lead Max Weber himself in *The Protestant Ethic and
the Spirit of Capitalism* to maintain (15) that its emergence was an integral
part of the rise of "Occidental rationalism."[15]

Linear perspective as a part of the modern Western rationalism

The task of the construction of the picture space arises as we want to represent a three-dimensional spatial object on the two-dimensional plane. This problem is among those solved by the branch of geometry known under the name of "descriptive geometry."[16] Geometricians distinguish two main types of methods for solving this problem, and name them "projection systems": perspective (or central) projection and parallel projection. Parallel projection includes subtypes of orthographic, axonometric, and oblique projections.

If the method of the central projection is used, then representation of the spatial object consists of the traces, which are the points of intersection between the projecting rays (projectors) and the picture plane. All projection rays irradiate from the point on "this" (spectator's) side of the picture surface (plane), called variously "point of sight," "focal point," or the "station point". This point lies at a finite distance from the picture plane. If the picture space is constructed in strict correspondence with the rules of central projection, this point can always be identified. In this case, the so-called "main point" of the picture or the "center of vision" point can be found. This is the point on the picture plane where the projector that irradiates out of the projection center intersects the plane at the straight angle. The complete designation for this method of the picture's space construction is "central direct linear perspective;" its abbreviations are "central perspective" and "linear perspective".

Using parallel projection, the image of an object is produced by the traces left on the picture plane by the projecting rays that all run strictly parallel together. Geometers say that in this case the focal point is at an infinite distance from the picture plane. There are three variations of the parallel projection: the orthographic, the axonometric, and the oblique projection (French 91). In the orthographic projection, the projectors run strictly perpendicular to the picture surface and to the surface of the depicted object. In the axonometric projection, the projectors are perpendicular to the picture plane, but the depicted object is turned—so that all three of its surfaces show. In the oblique projection, one of the surfaces of the depicted object is parallel to picture plane, but parallel projectors are oblique to the picture plane (run at an angle different from 90°). There are many sub-sub-types of axonometric and oblique projections. The first includes isometric,
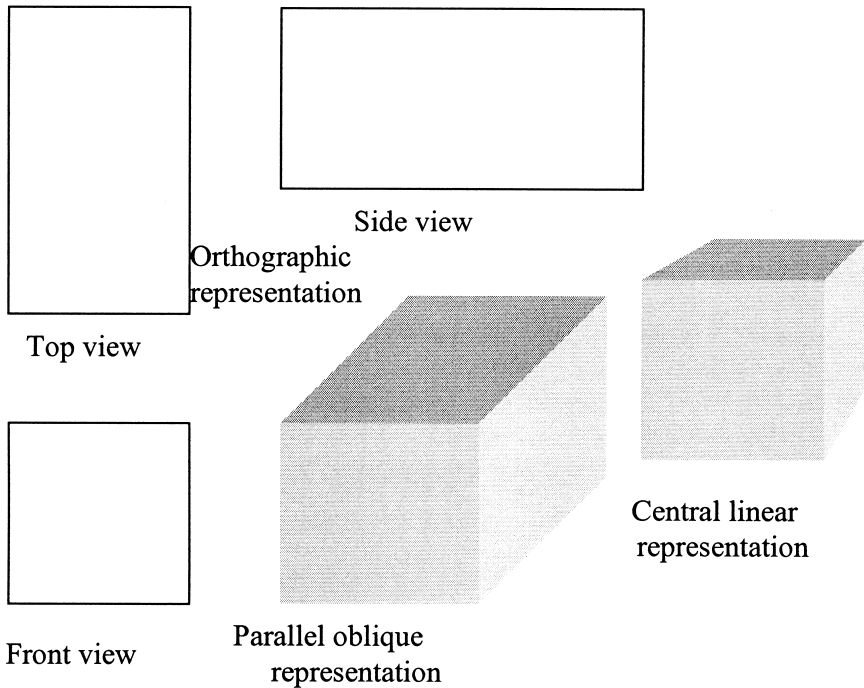
Fig. 1: Representation systems in comparison. Drawing by the author.

dimetric, and trimetric projection, and two most popular versions of oblique projection are cavalier and cabinet projection (French 459–472).

A fleeting comparison of pictures of the same spatial object constructed using different systems of construction of picture space is sufficient in order to obtain insight into their characteristic differences (see Fig. 1). The most important difference between linear and parallel projection is displayed by the representation of the parallel edges running from the spectator into the depth of the space before her. In parallel projection, parallel lines represent them. In central projection, the converging lines represent them. Their unmistakable mark of representations is their non-pictorial quality, because each orthogonal image is either top view (plane), front view, or side view.

As is commonly known, European painting used the linear perspective from the Renaissance until the 20th century in an unexceptional manner.

Because orthographic projection cannot make the three-dimensionality of the spatial objects visible, visual artists normally don't use this projection in their work.[17] However, parallel axonometric and oblique projections prevailed in Asian art, especially in ancient China and Japan. It is sometimes even called by art historians the "Chinese perspective" (see Fig. 2).
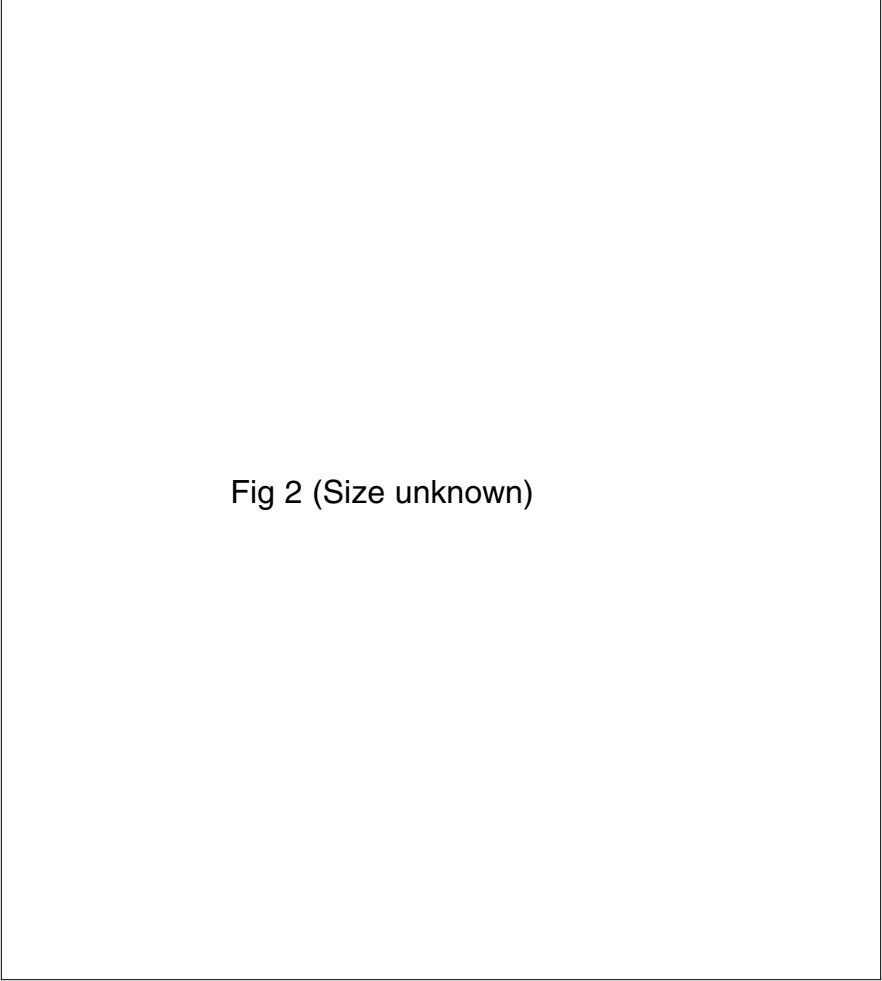
Fig 2 (Size unknown)

Fig. 2: Parallel oblique space construction in the traditional Chinese painting. *Along the River during the Ch'ing-ming Festival*. Ch'ing Dynasty, court painters, detail. By permission of National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China.

This projection was also used in ancient Greek and Roman art, which also knew the linear perspective. However, it was only used to represent individual things in the space, not to represent the space as a whole or the picture plane.

When one reads the treatises of the art historians, the terminological peculiarity that distinguishes their terminology from the mode of expression used in the mathematical theory of perspective, attracts attention. Mathematicians use the expression "projection system" as the generic name for the methods of mapping the plane. By the expression "system of perspective" they refer to central projection system, the "theory of perspective" means for them theory of central direct linear projection, and "picture in perspective" means a picture where the spatial object is depicted according to the rules of the central direct linear perspective. However, in art studies the expression "system of perspective" is used as a generic term.[18] In this case, the linear perspective is understood as one of the many methods for construction of picture space. Probably this difference in terminology is conditional on the existence in art history of the method of space construction, which is not discussed in textbooks of projective geometry and engineering drawing. These textbooks are silent regarding the "system of perspective," which is known to art historians as "reverse perspective."[19]

The reversely perspectivizing pictures can be recognized from the way in which recessing parallel lines are represented. In linear perspective, they are represented on the picture plane by converging lines. In the reverse perspective, diverging lines represent them. In the linear perspective, farther away figures of equal magnitude are represented as smaller in comparison with those that are at a lesser distance from the spectator, but they are represented as larger in the reverse perspective. Pictures with reverse perspective can be found in Western European medieval paintings, but generally, this perspective is particular to the Russian icon painting—including the contemporary icon painters who are still following ancient canonical prototypes (see Fig. 3 and Fig 4). Oskar Wulff referred to this method of representation "inner perspective," because in his opinion it brings the view to expression, which is that of the persons in the picture, who are looking at the "outer" spectator of the picture.

The linear perspective in art history writing of 19th century was called a "rational" or "scientific" system of the perspective. With the following
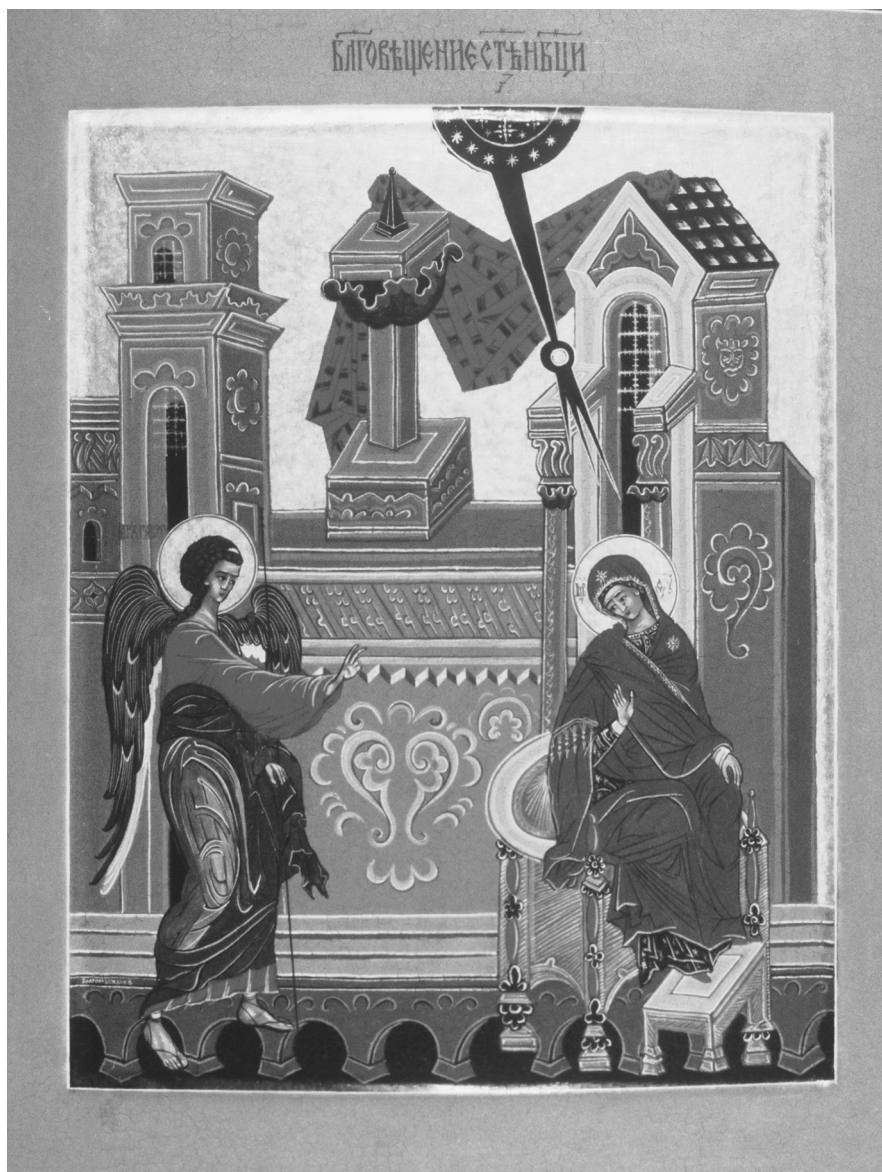
Fig. 3: Reverse perspective in the Russian icon painting.
The Annunciation. This icon written by the hand of Iconographer Vladimir Blago-nadezhdin.[xx] By permission of the painter.

Fig. 4: Reverse perspective in the Russian icon painting.
The Miracle of Florus and Lavrus. This icon written by the hand of Iconographer Vladimir Blagonadezhdin.[21] By permission of the painter.

justification: the artist, who constructs linear perspectival picture space, uses as rules for his work the laws describing how our eyes work, producing the retinal images of the observed objects. Art historians in the 18th and 19th centuries maintained that painters of the older times were simply inept at "correct" representation of the visually observed objects at the picture plane, because they didn't yet know the optical laws of visual perception. The knowledge of these laws is necessary to produce a perfect *trompe l'oeil*—the image that is different as little as possible from the outlook, that we have seeing through the window. Another argument in favor of distinctive "rationality" of linear perspective goes as follows: "unlike medieval and Renaissance pseudoperspectives—such as herringbone, polyfocal, inverted, and axial 'perspectives'—the authentic methods could be brought into accord with each other and with a single, simplest version: or so our account might run" (Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective* 9–10).

Since Panofsky's famous essay the opinion prevails that pre-Renaissance and non-Western cultures painters most probably had no goal to produce *trompe l'oeil* representations. Panofsky argued that different versions of perspective are expressions or symbols of the cultures that invented them. The goal of the painters working with non-linear perspectives was to represent individual objects in the space, not the seen space as a whole. For this goal, the parallel axonometric and oblique projection suits equally well. The famous American analytical philosopher Nelson Goodman remarks incidentally that the reverse perspective also suits this task perfectly well (Goodman, *Of Mind* 10–11).

Because the survey of the methods of the construction of picture space has been instrumental for my goals, I would go astray if I further pursued the ways that the discussion of perspective in art studies have gone since the publication of Panofsky's essay. James Elkins, who wrote the most up-to-date survey of the state of art in this field (*The Poetics of Perspective*), is quite explicit in his recognition of the remaining centrality of Panofsky's contribution.[22] I will limit myself to several points that are of crucial importance for the parallel between the problem of coherent depiction of objects in space and that of the coherent narration of events in time that I will draw and elaborate into comparison in the further sections of my paper.

The problem, which can be solved only by using linear perspective, arises if a painter sets for himself the task to represent not only individual

objects in the space, but also the system of spatial relations between these objects. To solve this problem, i.e. to represent individual objects coherently contextualized by each other in the space, axonometric, oblique, and reverse projections are unhelpful. Painters working with these "systems of the perspective," are always in danger of committing geometric absurdities like those that the Dutch artist Escher intentionally constructs in his famous drawings.

This danger is especially formidable if a painter works with the reverse perspective. For example, if he paints two objects in the reverse perspective side by side, then the gap between these objects portrays itself so to speak automatically in the direct perspective. Characteristically, the medieval painters (especially the Russian ones) did not even make attempts to avoid or to conceal these geometric inconsistencies or absurdities. They concentrated themselves on the representation of the individual objects filling out the center of meaning in their pictures, without making attempt to bind them into the spatial context. The "central object" of the picture was not bound into the picture space, but was removed from it, possessing the priority over space.

Scissors and paste in the painting and in the historiography

The observer, who knows the characteristic features of the reversely perspectivizing picture, can read them as descriptions of the traits that are attributed by Rüsen to traditional sense formation in traditional narrating. The paradigms of traditional narration are mythological and mythologizing narratives. In the reversely perspectivizing picture space, the bigger the objects are represented, the farther away they are. This is a good metaphor for the traditionalistic view of time and traditional narrating, which is about to bring us to the "origins of world orders and life forms" (Rüsen, *Grundzüge* 56), and assesses these world orders and life forms according to their age. The value of these orders and forms is the function of their distance from now to the past, and of their proximity to the time of their ostensible origin. So in traditional narrating "time gains the sense of eternity" (*Historical Narration* 7). In this way, "the disgruntling unrest of temporal changes in the human condition becomes tamed through the idea of the supertemporally valid and empirically efficient principles of order, which are working in the depth or at the origin of times" (*Grundzüge* 44).

In the semantic space of the traditional narrative, the later generations always come to representation as dwarfs dwelling in the shadow of the giants of the past. Most visibly represented is the most distant row of the giants, which are cosmological giants and by their colossal shapes are drawing the boundary between the meaningful order of the world and the chaos in the background. "In mythical thought, chronology is unessential. Mythical reality is timeless; it is, or was, before all times, 'in the beginning', as well actual, and present. Though timeless, it can always be represented here and now" (Gonda 25).

In the indifference of the reversely perspectivizing space construction towards the geometrical inconsistencies, one can recognize the indifference of the traditional narrating towards the formal chronology, the geographic and causal coherence of the narrated stories. Importantly, this indifference is essential for the traditional sense formation: the ancient Greek mythological and the Christian Biblical traditions were fully alive as sources of meaning only as long as nobody was embarrassed by the chronological, geographical and causal coherence in them. Therefore, one can assign to traditional narrating the name of reversely perspectivizing narrating. Such a name recommends itself also because of the following circumstance: it was the same traditional sense formation which found its expression in the two symbolic media—in the medium of the representation of the spatially and temporally absent objects by picture, and in the medium of the representation of the spatially and temporally absent objects by narrative. This common source of reversely perspectivizing visual representations and traditional verbal narrative representations grounds remarkable elective affinities among them.

The exemplary sense formation is the posttraditional and at the same time the pregenetic way to represent the past narratively. In the exemplary narrating, the uppermost object of the representation are "cases which demonstrate applications of general rules of conduct" (Rüsen, "Historical Narration" 8). Such rules, which are posited and perceived as supertemporally valid, serve as guidelines for the representation of the past. The history writers, producing exemplary narratives, want to provide "philosophy teaching by example." The paradigms of exemplary narratives are provided by the so-called pragmatic historiography, which was the dominant form of the narrative representation of the past before the rise of historicism. Pragmatic historians, who have worked under the motto *historia*

magistra vitae, were primarily interested in the writing history of their own lived time (*Zeitgeschichte*). Their foremost goal was to create a kind of literary monument or memorial for their own time, substituting moral distance for lacking temporal distance from the events under report. Robin George Collingwood emphasizes in his famous book *The Idea of History* that pragmatic history had no methodical means to disclose the distant past, because pragmatic historians managed to ground their narratives by research only as far as they could cross-examine the still living witness of the past to be represented (25–28). Working with the more remote past, they proceeded by applying the "scissors and paste method," so famously called by Collingwood in *The Idea of History* (33, 257–261, 277–278). Although contemporary metahistorical theory in many respects moved behind Collingwood's Neo-Hegelian account, to my knowledge nobody has contested this particular historiographical observation of the British historian and philosopher (see e.g. Burke 5–6).

Limitations in the research basis of pragmatic history manifest themselves in the design of the semantic space of exemplary narratives. If a piece of narrative representation of this kind tries to reach the distant past at all, it can barely avoid discrepancies between the representation of the older time and that of the recent time. This discrepancy exists between the chronological and causal coherence in the representation of the older times on the one side, and respective coherences in the representation of younger times. This discrepancy arises because a historian is able to represent the distant past only by using the ill-famed "scissors and paste" method.

Describing this discrepancy by terms proposed by Leon Goldstein in his *Historical Knowing* (141–142), one could say that the semantic space enclosing the superstructure of the exemplary narrative representation is split into two parts. Only one of them has a rational infrastructure built by methodical research work. Not having a structure-constituting center in itself, this semantic space is held together only by rules of conduct, which are posited as transcendent with respect to this space. When pragmatic historians compiled the narrations about the times behind the threshold of recent history, using as their sources the works of former historians, they could not avoid taking over also their assumptions and prejudices as well. Therefore, in the compilative parts of the work by pragmatic historians

different objects of representation were represented from different directions and different points of view.

The art historians tell that painters also used the "scissors and paste" method. Namely, they did this as they pictured individual objects in axonometric, oblique, or linear ways and thereafter wanted to stick them all together—so that the total view does not make the impression of the utter geometrical incoherence. This problem is the easiest to solve by limiting picture space—so that only near objects are represented. One can carry out this limitation by painting objects before the background of the wall, building or curtain (these "technical tricks" are widely used especially in the portrait painting). Another possibility is to choose the direction of such a way, that one escapes the task of representing the outlying area and especially the horizon line, for which there is no place in the picture space constructed according to the rules of parallel projection. This solution was widely used in Japanese and Chinese painting, preferring the viewpoint from above (see Fig. 2 again). As a kind of "scissors and paste" method Panofsky describes in *Perspective as Symbolic Form* "the fishbone perspective," used by the ancient Greek and Roman painters, as they painted the scenes in the interior (39). Differently from central perspective, which confirms to the principle of a single vanishing point, in the "fishbone perspective" orthogonals converge at several different points on a single vertical axis. One of the Chinese versions of the scissors and paste method, which was widely used in the landscape painting, is exemplified by Fig. 5. In this case, the seams which arise when local axonometric pictures of individual objects are pasted together, are disguised by the separation of the close plane and the distant plane. At the "joint" between them, the fog or clouds are painted. If the viewpoint from above is not used (as in Fig. 2), the mountains are painted at the background (as in Fig. 5)—not to allow picture space to recess to horizon line.

Whatever convincing power the outlook provided by the agglutinated picture space has, art scholars recognize unmistakably the application of the scissors and paste method for the construction of this space from the lack of the unitary focal point. One cannot infer from the picture, at which distance the pictured scene was from the eyes of the painter. The analyst can detect only one or more directions of the vision, from which the individual spatial objects were painted. While the picture space, which was constructed in strict correspondence with the rules of linear perspective is

Fig. 5: Scissors and paste in the traditional Chinese painting.
Autumn Morning. Zhao Zuo 1615. Permission of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, Sweden, NMOK 266.

a "systematic space", the "agglutinated" picture space remains an "aggregate space" (Panofsky 42). The same is applicable also to the semantic space of the narrative that is constructed method by the scissors and paste "method." Rhetorical tricks in the exemplary narrative can be considered as functional equivalents to painter's "tricks" used to disguise the seams at junctions of the pictorial representations of individual objects glued together to build the picture space.

In the case of the parallel projection, one can say that focal point is at an infinite distance from picture plane. This provides some art scholars with the reason to claim that Chinese landscape painters painted landscapes "as if seen" from infinite distance (Mochalov 56–57, 64). This peculiarity of the parallel projecting construction of the picture space—at an infinite distance of the focal point from the picture plane—provides us with a model for the characteristic of exemplary narrating, which is foregrounded by Rüsen: it is guided by the rules, which are posited and perceived as supertemporally valid. This ostensible supertemporal validity can be interpreted as the infinite distance between the represented events and the focal center of exemplary sense formation. The point of sight of moralizing history lies in the infinitely distant future—there, where reality and the ideal coincide. This point is the ideal of the perfect social order. This focal point irradiates the projectors of moral appraisal, which transmit the outlines of the occurrences of the recent time into the semantic space of the exemplary narrative.

Central perspective, genetic narrating, and historism

If the picture space is constructed according to the rules of the central perspective, one can identify the center of vision or main point of the picture at the picture plane. This point "is the orthogonal projection of the point of sight at the picture surface" (Baryshnikov 20). It lies on the picture plane in the top view and on the horizon in the front view. At the same time, the main point of the picture is the vanishing point of all parallel lines that are perpendicular to the picture surface. Therefore, this point is the central vanishing point in the picture space. According to the rules of composition, which were accepted in European painting until the 20th century, this point was also the center of the composition (especially while

representing the scenes in the interior). The main point of the picture is the representative of the eye point of the painter in the picture.

Although this eye point is not represented in the picture itself, it is indirectly visible nevertheless. This point transforms the picture space from an "aggregate space" into the "system space". From the Renaissance until the 20th century, the organization of the picture space by the uniform projecting center was the categorical imperative in the Western painting. Trespassing against this norm put the professionalism of an artist into the question. Similar changes were brought in the historiography by the rise of the genetic narrative. Different from anonymous traditional narrating, which did not know the idea of the individual authorship and the epistemic commitments implied by it, and different from exemplary narrating, which aggregated the perspectives of the sources in mechanical way, a genetically narrating historian was under categorical obligation to offer consistent interpretation of the represented events.

If he transgresses against this rule, then the right to belong to a professional historians' guild is put under question in the same way, in which the "mistakes" (i. e. transgressions against the rules of linear perspective) committed in construction of the picture space were considered as the evidence of the lack of the professional skills in the European painting of the 15th–19th centuries. The "pragmatic" historian considered himself as a servant of eternal morality or justice, and was eager to lay bare his precarious relations with reality presenting a collection of examples of case stories taken from the vast "magazine called history" (Voltaire). The genetic or historicist historian was under obligation to present new original representation providing evidence of the unconventionality of his individual power of insight.

The power of centrally perspectivizing construction of picture space to co-represent the space on "this" (spectator's) side of the picture plane through the mutual implications of the projecting center and main point of the picture is a metaphor for the dialectic of the reference to the past and reference to the present in the genetic representation of the past. According to Rüsen, the ideas (*Leitvorstellungen*) of the process, the evolution, and especially of the development were constitutive for the genetic sense formation (Rüsen, *Grundzüge* 53). Obviously, the application of the idea of an evolution or a development is impossible without fixing a certain state in the past as the central vanishing point of the narrative representa-

tion. This gives the main point in the semantic space of the representation, from which this space is endowed with the structure. The location of this point provides the premises to infer the present, where the eye point of the narrative representation is located.

This important point is worthy to be emphasized again: with central projecting, picture space is always constructed in such way that the standpoint of the painter is co-represented as belonging to picture space—not as transcending it by its infinite distance from it, as is the case in parallel projecting. Another important feature of this picture space construction, making for its elective affinities with genetic narrating, is that the space "on the other side" of picture space ("inside the picture"), which is not represented directly (transcending its frame and recessing beyond the horizon line), is implicitly co-represented nevertheless, because directly represented space is represented only as a cut-out of open and infinite space. In this Rudolf Arnheim sees the important difference between the linear "agglutinating" space construction in the modern and e. g. medieval painting: "in medieval paintings there are arrangements of objects, frequently closed off by mountains or walls, that although three-dimensional, also point in no way beyond the spatial relationships within the scene" (240).

These peculiarities of the construction of the picture space through the central perspective tally with important features of the construction of the semantic space in the genetic representation of the past. The projecting center (the station point) of the narrative representation of the past comes to co-representation as part of the future of the represented past—as lying at a finite distance, time-bound and immanent to history. The genetic representation features as a representation of some chunk of the past—as a monographic "middle range narrative" (not as a "grand narrative").[23] By its vanishing points it refers to the encompassing in time and space of history, without trying to get to its last origins—such an attempt being the distinguishing feature of traditional narrative. Panofsky writes that in the linearly perspectivizing construction of the picture space "bodies and the gaps between them" are represented only as "differentiations or modifications of a continuum of higher order" (41). *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds for the representation of the historical events in the semantic space of the genetic narrative.

The absence of efforts in the ancient painting to relate spatial properties of things to the common denominator of an encompassing space is re-

lated by Panofsky to the peculiarities of the ancient idea of space as a set of heterogeneous places, different from the modern idea of space as unified and homogeneous *quantum continuum* (43–44). In the similar way, the differences of genetic narrating from its ancestors can be attributed to the emergence of the new conception of time drawn from Newtonian physics. That conception assumes that "everyone's time is the same, that is a universal continuum experienced by all people in the same fashion" (Appleby, Hunt and Jacob 53). This conception is indispensable for the view of each particular historical narrative as a contribution to a single Grand Story.

This view remains a constitutive assumption of the "normal historical practice" (Berkhofer) since its institution by historist historical writing. Importantly, this conception of time owes its status of the common sense truth not only to the cultural authority of the Newtonian physics, but also to the new forms of the imagining social world that appeared in early modern times—the novel and the newspaper (Anderson 9–36). "Whether reading alone or in groups (as with early newspapers), readers of novels and newspapers knew that they were reading what many other people were also reading at the same time and reading about people acting in their time frame (unlike the prophetic time frame of the Bible). Thus the very act of reading novels and newspapers established a new kind of mental community based on a version of Newtonian time" (Appleby, Hunt and Jacob 53). These social roots of the new conception of time can explain why historist conventions of historical narration remain in place even after the Newtonian conception of time was abandoned in the physics, and after all postmodernist criticisms directed against the foundational presuppositions of the "normal historical practice."[24]

Conclusion

I conclude with 4 statements which summarize my consideration and probably can be useful as points of reference for further discussion.

(1) The rationalization of the construction of the picture space by the systematic application of the linear perspective in the modern European painting is a metaphor or model for the rationalization of the methods for construction of the semantic space in the narrative representation of the past, brought about by historicism by the genetic narrative.

(2) The construction of the picture space by the linear perspective is a metaphor or a model for the construction of the semantic space of the narrative representation characteristic for genetic narrative.

(3) The reversely perspectivizing method of construction of picture space is electively affine with traditional narrating.

(4) The picture spaces that are constructed by the agglutination of the locally axonometric, oblique, and linear representations of individual spatial objects can serve as metaphors or models for the construction of the semantic space between the chronicle and narrative in the exemplary narrative representation of the past.

Notes

1. See Nelson Goodman, Flint Schier, Kendall Walton. On the classical ideas about relations between language and picture see Emil Angehrn.

2.   Gennette's formulation can be found in *Narrative Discourse* 185–198 and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 72–74.

3. For many inspiring examples of comparative historical work in search for structural homologies and analogies see Egmond Florike and Peter Mason, *The Mammoth and the Mouse* (1997). The disclosure of structural analogies and homologies plays paramount role in the practice of "new historicism".

4. I prefer the term "historism" to "historicism" to avoid pervasive and confusing connotations that were imparted to "historicism" by Karl Raimund Popper. I specify below (in the 2nd section) my use of "historism" in detail.

5. I am using the concept of "elective affinity" in Max Weber's sense. See Howe "Max Weber's Elective Affinities."

6. White means the "real" author, not an implied one who is the only subject of interest in the structuralist narratology. The puzzling question is how White's theory could be applied to the co-authored works that are not uncommon in the contemporary historiography.

7. "Although contemporary academic historiography remains locked within the Ironic perspective that produced the crisis of historicism in the late nineteenth century" (433), White sees no insurmountable obstacles for the reemergence of formist (metaphorical) historiography.

8. Basically, White's theory can be described as a modernized version of Vico's rhetoric theory of history. Structuralism is not one of White's sources of inspiration.

9. "Narratio" is Ankersmit's preferred word to designate the object of his discussion.

10. Ankersmit's "*The Reality Effect in the Writing History*" (1985) is an historiographical essay where this idea is applied. Ankersmit limits his discussion to the structural homology between the frame of picture and the frame of historical narrative that he discovers using his method.

11. See also Bal, *Narratology* 7–8, Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 33–85, Prince, *Narratology* 4 et al..

12. See also Allan Megill.

13. In using "narrating" instead of "narration", I am following Rüsen who distinguishes between " erzählen" and "Erzählung".

14. See Rüsen "Historical Narration", "Annäherung", "Grundzüge", *Zeit und Sinn* 153–230.

15. Jean Gebser goes even farther, arguing that linear perspective was the core of the modern ("perspectival") worldview.

16. See e. g. Thomas E. French, Rudolf Schmidt.

17. A partial exception is visual art of ancient Egypt.

18. See e. g. books by Lev Mochalov and Boris Raushenbakh.

19. The study of reverse perspective in visual arts goes back to Oskar Wulff.

20. After the prototype by Pskov school, 15th century.

21. After the prototype by Novgorod school, 15th century.

22. Panofsky's text remains "central to our sense of perspective because it wrestles the longest and goes the farthest" (Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective* 216). See also Hu-

bert Damisch. However, Elkins did not take into consideration the work of Russian mathematician, physicist, philosopher and art historian Boris Raushenbakh that in my opinion belongs to the most advanced and sophisticated in the field. Other important works on perspective in Russian icon painting are written by Boris Uspenskii and Pavel Florenskii. See also Fred Dubery and John Willats.

23. Cp. Droysen's *Historik* (240).

24. As compared with narrative fiction and painting, history writing is stunningly conservative in its narrative code. Even the historians who define themselves as "new" or "multiculturalist," usually follow traditional ways of the history narration. Really, "postmodernist history seems more argued in theory than demonstrated in practice" (Berkhofer, "Self-Reflections" 366). The grip of traditional historist perspectival metaphors is vividly attested by the fact that in their widely read and acclaimed (among historians) book Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob offer the following solution for the "problem of objectivity" in writing history, calling it "a new theory of objectivity": "historians' interpretations can be mutually exclusive, but their differing perspectives are not. If one sees event from a slave's point of view, that rendering does not obliterate the perspective of the slaveholder; it only complicates the task of interpretation. Taking the metaphor of perception literally helps make the point. Perspective does not mean opinion; it refers to point of view—literally, point from which something, an object outside the mind is viewed. Let's imagine witnesses to a violent argument arrayed around the room where it took place. The sum of their vantage points would give a fuller picture, but the action they were witnessing would not be changed because there were many people watching it. Unless they were standing in each other's way, the perspectives would not be mutually exclusive; nor could the multiplication of perspectives affect the viewers. The validity of each reconstruction would depend upon the accuracy and completeness of the observations, not on the perspective itself. Objectivity remains with the object" (256–257). It is exactly the way in which early historists reasoned (see e. g. Johann Chladenius, "Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft" 237–248).

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