'Future Past'. Time and Teleology in (Ancient) Historiography[1]

Abstract

The historian's account of the past is strongly shaped by the future of the events narrated. The telos, that is the vantage-point from which the past is envisaged, influences the selection of the material as well as its arrangement. While the telos is past for historian and reader, it is future for historical agents. The term 'future past', coined by Koselleck to highlight the fact that the future was seen differently before the *Sattelzeit*, also lends itself to capturing this asymmetry and elucidating its ramifications for the writing of history. The first part of the essay elaborates on the notion of 'future past': besides considering its significance and pitfalls, I offset it against the perspectivity of historical knowledge and the concept of narrative closure (I). Then the works of two ancient historians, Polybius and Sallust, serve as test-cases that illustrate the intricacies of 'future past'. Neither has received much credit for intellectual sophistication in scholarship, and yet the different narrative strategies deployed by Polybius and Sallust reveal profound reflections on the temporal dynamics of writing history (II). While the issue of 'future past' is particularly pertinent to the strongly narrative historiography of antiquity, the controversy about the end of the Roman Republic demonstrates that it also applies to the works of modern historians (III). Finally I will argue that 'future past' alerts us to an aspect of how we relate to the past that is in danger of being obliterated in the current debate on 'presence' and history. While the past is present in customs, relics and rituals, the historiographic construction of the past is predicated on a complex hermeneutical operation that involves the choice of a telos. The concept of 'future past' also differs from post-structuralist theories through its emphasis on time. Retrospect calms the flow of time, but is unable to arrest it fully, as the openness of the past survives in the form of 'future past' (IV).

Keywords: (ancient) historiography, narrative, time, retrospect, 'future past', 'presence', post-structuralism

It has been claimed 'that, in using the process of historical thinking, historians may inquire into the future in the way we traditionally have inquired into the past.'[2] Whatever the merits of historians as writers of future scenarios, the future is essential to their accounts of the past. It is, however, not their own future, but the future of the

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[1] I wish to thank the editors of *History & Theory* for their helpful suggestions.

[2] Staley 2002: 73. See also Staley 2007 and Bonneuil 2009 for a critical assessment.

very past that historians try to reconstruct. Historians need to take into account the expectations directed at the future by historical agents. As Lucian Hölscher pointed out, a fuller understanding of the past requires consideration of its own temporal horizon.[3] The future of the past is relevant in yet another, more profound way: historiographic works are strongly shaped by the future of the events narrated. Danto's analytical philosophy of history can illuminate this point. Danto observes among historians a predilection for a certain type of sentences that he labels 'narrative sentences': 'Narrative sentences refer to at least two time-separated events, and describe the earlier event.'[4] The statement 'The Thirty Years' War began in 1618',[5] for example, is about an event in 1618 that is seen against the horizon of a later event, the year 1648. Danto limits his analysis to single sentences, but the structure of 'narrative sentences' also defines narratives of the past as a whole: retrospect makes historians view the past in the light of subsequent events. The vantage-points chosen by historians influence the selection of the material as well as its arrangement and thereby give historical narratives their specific character. The later event against which the earlier event is described in Danto's narrative sentences recurs *mutatis mutandis* as the telos in historiographic work.

The temporal dynamics of historiography encapsulated in the idea of narrative sentences writ large can be conceptualized through a term coined by Koselleck: 'vergangene Zukunft', translated as both 'former future(s)' and 'futures past'.[6] While the former translation renders more accurately the usage of the term by Koselleck, the latter is better suited to express the point I wish to make. Koselleck is interested in how humans in the past saw the future. The emergence of a new attitude towards what is to come around 1800, notably the sense that the future is open to unprecedented developments, is at the core of Koselleck's theory of 'Sattelzeit'. However, another meaning lies dormant in 'vergangene Zukunft'. The term can also be marshalled to juxtapose the perspectives of historical agents and historian: what is past for the latter is still future for the former. Now not all events that are future for the historical agents are past for the historian nor are events that are past for the historian necessarily future for the historical agents, but the telos from which history is written is: the vantage-point from which the historian envisages the experiences of the historical

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[3] Hölscher 2003: 52.

[4] Danto 1985: 159.

[5] Cf. Danto 1985: 152.

[6] Koselleck 1979 bears the main title *Vergangene Zukunft* that is rendered as *Futures Past* in the title and as 'former future(s)' in the text of the English translation; cf. the translator's note in Koselleck 1985: xi n. 13.

characters is past for her but future for them. 'Vergangene Zukunft' nicely captures the temporal asymmetry between historian and historical characters that, I contend, is salient for historiography.

The English translation is even richer than the German original if we replace the plural of 'futures past' with the singular of 'future past'. This phrase is ambivalent, as both words can be noun and adjective: a future that is past or a past that is future. Through this oscillation, 'future past' entwines the perspectives of historian and historical agents without privileging either of them. The telos is located in the past of the historian (which is simultaneously future to the historical agents) as well as belonging to the future of the historical agents (which at the same time is past for the historian). The telos is 'future past'.

While also touching on the relevance of the future for historical agents, this essay is mostly concerned with the ramifications of 'future past' for the historian. In the first part, I will elaborate on the notion of 'future past' as a theoretical concept (I). Then the works of two ancient historians, Polybius and Sallust, will serve as test-cases that illustrate the intricacies of retrospect for historiography (II). While the issue of 'future past' is particularly pertinent to the strongly narrative historiography of antiquity, it also applies to the works of modern historians, as the controversial treatment of the end of the Roman Republic demonstrates (III). Finally I will argue that 'future past' draws our attention to an important point that is in danger of being obliterated in the current debate on 'presence' and history (IV).

I. 'Future past'

After highlighting the significance and considering the pitfalls of the telos in historiography, I will sharpen the concept of 'future past' by distinguishing it from the perspectivity of historical knowledge and the notion of narrative closure. This will lead to the question of whether or not 'future past' is specific to historiographic narrative.

A brief thought experiment aptly illustrates the impact that a telos has on the selection and arrangement of historical material. Various histories of Germany in the 1920s are possible: if we choose 1945 as telos, then we get a history which is very different from an account that is given from the perspective of 1930. In the former history, Hitler will play a major role. Given the prominence of Hitler in subsequent years, his activities in the 1920s will be carefully noted. In a history that takes the year 1930 as its telos, however, the Beer Hall Putsch, Hitler's arrest in Landsberg and the publication of 'Mein Kampf', if mentioned at all, will figure as minor incidents in

a period rich in activities of extremists. Shifting the telos results in a very different account of the same period, including not only the emplotment, but also the selection of events. As the different possible histories of the 1920s in Germany show, it is hard to overestimate the significance of the point from which history is envisaged.

The Peloponnesian War and Thucydides provide us with an actual example that is less dramatic, but equally instructive. Thucydides' work breaks off mid-sentence in the account of the year 410 BCE. We do not know whether he, for whatever reasons, never finished his History of the Peloponnesian War or whether the fragmentary status is due to some incident in the transmission of the text. However, such passages as the appraisal of Pericles and the second proem make it clear that the defeat of Athens in 404 BCE is the vantage-point from which Thucydides views the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides' work has proven so powerful that we take his reconstruction of the Peloponnesian War for granted, but alternative views are possible and have indeed been voiced. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for instance, writing in the first century BCE, takes issue with the ending of Thucydides' work. He ignores its fragmentary status and obviously assumes that 410 BCE is the intended endpoint, and yet his invective illustrates an interpretation of the Peloponnesian War that is at odds with the one we find in Thucydides' work (*Pomp*. 3.10):

'It would have been better, after going through all the events, to end his history with a climax, and one that was most remarkable and especially gratifying to his audience, the return of the exiles from Phyle, which marked the beginning of the city's recovery of freedom.'

Whereas the telos of Thucydides' account creates a sombre picture of Athenian history, the vantage-point favoured by Dionysius would have it end on an up-beat note.[7] Instead of being the story of a mighty polis brought down by a corrupt political system, the Peloponnesian War would reveal the pertinacity of the Athenian democracy through a host of hardships and trials. The shift of the telos would effect a considerably different account.

While historians can choose different telê,[8] with far-reaching consequences as our examples show, it is hard, if not impossible, to shun teleology fully. The teleological tendency of historiography is rooted in hindsight. Historians cannot but envisage the past against the backdrop of later events. Of course, they can try to adopt

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[7] Cf. Marincola 2005: 305; Fromentin 2008: 61.

[8] I use 'telê' as plural of 'telos' instead of the common 'teloi' which makes it look like a noun of the first declension in Greek.

the perspective of eye-witnesses,[9] but entirely suppressing retrospect is a challenge that is hard to meet. This said, the extent to which historians develop teleological trajectories varies considerably. Historians hailing from different camps have taken issue with the indulgence with which their colleagues capitalize on hindsight.[10] Herbert Butterfield and E.P. Thompson are rarely mentioned in the same sentence, the former being a Christian conservative, the latter the doyen of British Marxist historiography. The ideological barrier notwithstanding, both fervently criticize the penchant for teleologies in historiography. Thompson polemicizes against 'the enormous condescension of posteriority'[11] and Herbert Butterfield attacks liberal historians who fail to see the past in its own right and 'produce a scheme of general history which is bound to converge beautifully upon the present'.[12] The benefit of hindsight can become a snare that lets historians disregard the experiences of the historical agents. It is as easy as detrimental to take the actual course of events for granted. Thereby the openness of the past to various developments is lost.

At the same time, the majority of historians consider the gap between themselves and the historical agents as the *condicio sine qua non* of their work. Since Tacitus, historians have not tired of stressing that only temporal distance permits balanced judgement. To quote another British Marxist historian, Eric Hobsbawm called retrospect 'l'arme secrète de l'historien'.[13] Historical explanation in particular hinges on links still invisible to contemporaries: in order to explain the significance of events, the historian needs to know where they are headed. It is also worth noting that the foundation for the perspective of 'future past' is already laid in the world of the historical agents. I noted above that historians need to envisage the past in its own historical horizon. The future as seen by historical agents is an important part of the reconstruction of the past. The historian's retrospect is somehow encapsulated in the expectations and intentions of the protagonists of his history. The telê envisaged by historians are of course different from the goals pursued by acting individuals, but these goals embed in the past an orientation to the future that is homologous to the vantage-point of teleology which is also future to the events described.

We can throw the concept of 'future past' further into relief by distinguishing it from other concepts that, at a superficial glance, may appear to be similar. Since the

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[9] For such attempts in ancient and modern historiography, see Grethlein 2010.

[10] Besides the authors mentioned above, see also Aron 1938; Bernstein 1994; Carr 2001.

[11] Thompson 1966: 12.

[12] Butterfield 1931: 12.

[13] Hobsbawm 1993: 98.

reflections of Chladenius on the 'Sehepunkt' in the middle of the 18th century,[14] the perspectivity of historical knowledge and judgment has become a common sense idea. Even after Historicism has lost much of its credit, it is still widely accepted that the present has a major impact on how we see the past. At first sight, this may seem identical to the concept of 'future past'. And indeed, the historian's present and the telos she chooses for her account can converge, but this is by no means necessary. Take for example Ronald Syme's book 'The Roman Revolution'.[15] Syme's writing is heavily influenced by his experiences with contemporaneous totalitarian regimes. The telos, however, from which he narrates the story of the Roman Republic is Augustus. Syme presents the events of the Republic as leading to the principate. The present shapes the views of historians, but it need not be the telos of their narratives. While still belonging to the general hermeneutics of understanding, the temporal poetics of historical writing are not identical with them.

'Future past' also needs to be set apart from narrative 'closure'. 'Closure', a prominent concept in literary studies for nearly half a decade, has many facets, but at its core are the ending of a narrative and the sense of resolution it creates.[16] In many cases, a historian's telos may be the 'closure' of her narrative: the account ends with the event that serves as the vantage-point from which it is told. The closing position endows the telos with significance. That being said, the telos is not necessarily the end of a historiographic account. Just think again of a history of Germany in the 1920s: The narrative may end in 1930, but the events of this year can still be viewed in light of later events. Hitler may be given the attention that only his election to Reichskanzler in 1933 or WWII would warrant. While often overlapping with narrative closure, 'future past' signifies a distinct issue.

The relationship between 'future past' and narrative 'closure' raises the question as to how specific the dynamics of 'future past' is to historiography. The narrators of fictional narratives, too, present their stories from a specific vantage-point. Chekhov nicely grasps the teleological tendency of narrative when he writes: 'If in the first chapter you say that a gun hung on the wall, in the second or in the third chapter it must without fail be discharged.'[17] The exceptional character of such works as *War and Peace* and the *nouveau roman* proves the general prominence of teleology in fictional narrative. At the same time, the stakes are different in historiography. The

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[14] Chladenius 1969 (1742).

[15] Syme 1939.

[16] Two works were seminal for the concept of closure: Kermode 1967 from a philosophical perspective and Smith 1968 for the technical implications.

[17] Chekhov 1974: 23.

Russian formalists introduced the dichotomy of *fabula-sjuzet*: while the *sjuzet* is the artistic presentation of the story in narrative, the *fabula* is the story in simple chronological and causal sequence.[18] The *fabula*, however, is only hypothetical. It is a powerful heuristic device as it alerts us to the mode of presentation, but it does not exist. While it is notoriously controversial if historians construct or reconstruct, make or find the past, most would agree that in one way or another historiography aims at representing the past. In contrast to fictional narrative, the choice of telos concerns more than the mode of presentation, it implies the question of what the past was. 'Future past' is thus a general narrative feature that gains particular significance for historiography.

In the remainder of this paper, I will try to elucidate further the idea of 'future past' by considering specific cases from historiography. It is striking that many contributions to debates focusing on the representation of the past operate from the lofty heights of pure abstraction and forgo the inspiration to be received from an engagement with actual representations of the past. The temporal dynamics of historiography are a case in point: here, theoretical reflection can benefit immensely from close reading. Particularly the works of ancient historians, which draw heavily on the means of narrative to create historical meaning, provide thought-provoking material.[19] Inversely, the agenda I just outlined allows us to reconsider works of ancient historians that have been often discussed, albeit without fully grasping their complexities. Polybius and Sallust are much-read historians, but rarely receive credit for intellectual sophistication. While Polybius is rated highly as a source and Sallust is praised for the density of his style, neither is considered to be a profound historical thinker. An investigation of the issue of 'future past' will reveal that both are highly sensitive to the temporal dynamics of historiography and deploy remarkable narrative strategies to do justice to it.

II. Polybius: The telos deferred

Polybius, born around 200 BCE in Megalopolis, served as Hipparch of the Achaean League. When Rome defeated the Achaean League in the Third Macedonian War, he was among the hostages brought to Rome and became part of an influential circle of Roman aristocrats around Scipio the Younger. Inspired by his experiences as

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[18] Compare the distinction 'story-plot' as coined by Forster 1927: 93f., who attributes causality to the level of 'plot'. See Sternberg 1978: 10-13.

[19] Cf. Grethlein 2010 for an attempt to make a reading of Thucydides fruitful for reflections on experience and historiographic narrative.

politician and eyewitness of Roman politics, Polybius pursued the ambitious project of writing world history. In universal historiography, the telos is particularly delicate. While the death of kings and the fall of empires provide historiographic monographs with apt vantage-points, telê are harder to identify in the vast and disparate field of world history. Polybius, however, could consider himself lucky. As he sees it, the course of world history itself requires a teleological account (1.4.1):

For what gives my work its peculiar quality, and what is most remarkable in the present age, is this. Fortune has guided almost all the affairs of the world in one direction and has forced them to incline towards one and the same end (*skopon*); a historian should likewise bring before his readers under one synoptical view (*synopsin*) the operations by which she has accomplished her general purpose.

The visual metaphor deployed in the *skopos* to which 'all the affairs of the world' are 'inclined' helps close the gap between the events and their *synopsis* through the historian. The *skopos* in which all threads come together is the hegemony of Rome (e.g. 1.1.5-6). In diction reminiscent of Aristotle, Polybius claims that this development of history has a recognizable beginning, a limited duration and an uncontroversial end (3.1.4). [20] That being said, neither beginning nor ending of Polybius' *Histories* are clear-cut. He first announces the year 220 BCE as his starting point (1.3.1), but then devotes two full books to the years of 264-220 BCE. Embedded in this so-called *prokataskeue*, we find yet another review, providing a synopsis of the years 386-264 BCE that is intended to clarify why Rome crossed over to Sicily (1.12.5). The instability of the beginning is highlighted by the fact that Polybius alternatively calls 264 and 220 BCE the beginning of his history.[21]

The oscillating starting point is mirrored by the deferral of the endpoint. In the proem, Polybius proclaims the Roman triumph over Macedonia as telos of his Histories. The battle of Pydna in 168 BCE seals Rome's rule over the world. The events up to Pydna, however, fill only the first 30 books; ten more books covering Rome's history till the destruction of Carthage in 146/5 BCE follow. At the beginning of book 3, Polybius muses on this temporal extension of his investigation. His reflections have not been received favourably in modern scholarship. The most

[20] For a comparison of Polybius' reflection and Aristotle's idea of plot, see Grethlein 2013: 227-30.

[21] For 264 BCE, see, e.g., 1.5.1; 1.12.5-6; 39.8.4; for 220 BCE, see, e.g., 1.3.1-4; 2.37.2; 3.5.9. Cf. Rood 2007: 172-3.

prominent Polybius scholar, Walbank, condemns them as 'singularly confused'.[22] The argument, he claims, is muddled and barely conceals Polybius' real motive, namely integrating into his work the material that he collected while accompanying Scipio to Spain and Africa. Walbank even insinuates that Polybius was eager to advertise his own prominent position as member of Scipio's inner circle.

I do not dare to make claims about Polybius' real motives, but a careful reading of the first chapters of book 3 reveals that they are everything but 'singularly confused'. They feature nothing less than a profound reflection on the role of retrospect in historiography. Polybius notes that his *Histories* could have stopped with 168/7 BCE, as initially planned, if an account of Rome's military triumph sufficed as the basis for an evaluation of Rome's hegemony (3.4.4-5):

But judgments regarding either the conquerors or the conquered based purely on performance are by no means final – what is thought to be the greatest success having brought the greatest calamities on many, if they do not make proper use of it, and the most dreadful catastrophes often turning out to the advantage of those who support them bravely …

For this reason, Polybius notes, he has decided to continue and to report the behaviour of the victors, the views of the others and the further efforts of both sides (3.4.6). This will permit contemporaneous readers to decide whether or not to accept Roman rule and later readers to arrive at sound judgments of Roman hegemony, the greatest use that Polybius assigns to his *Histories*. Polybius' reasoning illustrates the political implications that 'future past' can have. The choice of a telos has a huge impact on how we view the *Imperium Romanum* and other empires. It determines whether we see their story as one of success or failure, whether their rule is just or unjust and if it ought to be supported or opposed. The ramifications of the temporal dynamics of writing history reach into the realm of politics.

Polybius also comments on the intentionality of human action in order to justify the extension of his narrative (3.4.10): 'For nobody with reason wages war with his neighbours for the mere sake of defeating the opponents nor does he sail the

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[22] Walbank 1977: 159. Besides the extensive argument in Walbank 1977, see also Walbank 1972: 182-3; 1974: 22-7. It is pleasing to see that Walbank 2002: 21 is inclined to consider Polybius' reasoning as more than a 'smoke-screen' for his desire to integrate his personal story, but Walbank still does not grasp its theoretical significance. Ferrary 1988: 289-90 takes Polybius' reflections seriously, but runs into new problems. For a critique of Walbank's reading along different lines, see Shimron 1979/80: 104-11.

oceans only to traverse them, and he does not acquire arts and crafts only for the ability. All do everything for the sweet, good and useful they derive from the activities.' Polybius here touches on a point that I mentioned in the first section of this paper: the role that 'future past' plays for historiography is encapsulated in the orientation of historical agents towards the future.

Nothing of this is noted by Walbank. He claims that the reflections on changes of fortune do not pertain to Rome and therefore fail as explanation for the extension of the *Histories*. Indeed, there is no downfall, Rome succeeds in sustaining its hegemony. However, Walbank misconceives of Polybius' train of thought: Polybius' argument does not require an actual reversal; its point is an evaluation of Rome's rule. Polybius covers the events subsequent to Pydna not to narrate Rome's loss of its rule but to check whether or not she would lose it. A change of fortune is merely a potential development.

The argument that Walbank considers to be 'singularly confused' is not only fully consistent, it also contains a circumspect discussion of the issue of 'future past' and its significance for historical judgments: The continuous flow of time creates new vantage-points from which the past can be seen in a new light. Were Rome's hegemony to turn out to be unstable, the evaluation of her military triumphs would have to be revised. The impact of the future on how we view the past renders historical judgments notoriously unstable. Every new telos that the course of history generates may bring events to the fore that were ignored before and construe links hitherto invisible. Polybius only notes that the events immediately after Rome's victories may yield perspectives that force us to reconsider the military triumph, but his observation opens up a *regressus ad infinitum*: In the further course of history, the verdict on the aftermath of the victory may have to be revised; this in turn could affect the view on the original triumph and so on. Polybius' *Histories* thus alert us to the precariousness of historical meaning: not only the historical actors, but also the historian is subject to the flux of time.

Most philologists despise Polybius, historians tend to revere him.[23] While Polybius' awkward style makes philologists shudder, historians praise him for his methodological rigour and consider his work an important source for Hellenistic history. However, Polybius is more than an honest but intellectually limited warhorse. He is to be taken seriously as a theoretician of history. In addition to flying the flag of Thucydides' methodological standards, he engages in piercing reflections on the teleological structure of historiography. As the first chapters of book 3 show, the ten book extension of the *Histories* is the product of a keen sensitivity to the temporal

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[23] Cf. McGing 2010: 3-6.

dynamic of writing history. By moving the telos from Pydna to the destruction of Carthage, Polybius tries to do justice to the dependence of historical judgment on the vantage-point. He is fully aware of the instability of historical meaning caused by the flux of time. Does this make Polybius a Derridean *avant-la-lettre*? I postpone the discussion of the relationship between 'future past' and post-structuralism to the final section of this paper.

III. Sallust: Telos without alternative?

Let us now turn to a Roman historian and move from universal historiography to historical monograph. Sallust is another failed statesman turned historian. As a party follower of Caesar he was quaestor, tribune and proconsul of the province Africa nova. After the death of Caesar, he withdrew from politics, and wrote, not without bitterness, several historiographic works. I will concentrate on his first and best known monograph, an account of the conspiracy of Catiline. In 63 BCE, the consul Cicero prevented a *coup d'etat* staged by Catiline and a band of followers. Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* illustrates two points regarding 'future past': first, the choice of a telos defines not only our understanding of the preceding events, but also our view on the event figuring as telos. Second, the account of the *Bellum Catilinae* is far less monolithic than is still widely assumed; it drives home that the same event can be understood differently as part of alternative teleologies.

The influence of Sallust's monograph on the general picture of Catiline is attested already in antiquity.[24] The late antique historian Orosius, for instance, calls the Catilinarian conspiracy '… these things sufficiently known to everybody as they were done by Cicero and described by Sallust.' (6.6.6). Like Cicero, notoriously concerned with securing his fame, Sallust takes pains to attribute weight to the conspiracy. Despite the prominence of both authors, not all ancient historians share their view. Cassius Dio, writing a Roman History in 80 volumes around 200 CE, remarks (37.42.1):

Such was the career of Catiline and such his downfall; but he gained a greater name than his deeds deserved, owing to the reputation of Cicero and the speeches he delivered against him.

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[24] For a handy compilation of the most important sources, see Drexler 1976.

Unfortunately the Catilinarian conspiracy belongs to the lost parts of Livy's work, but its summary in the *Periocha*, a later synopsis of *ab urbe condita*, is worth quoting (102):

After Lucius Catilina had twice suffered defeat in the consular elections, he conspired with Praetor Lentulus, Cethegus, and many others to slaughter the consuls and the senate, set fire to the city, and destroy the commonwealth; an army was also made ready in Etruria. This conspiracy was extirpated by the energy of Marcus Tullius Cicero. Catiline was driven from the city, and the other conspirators were executed.

Needless to say, the account of *ab urbe condita* will have been much more detailed and colourful, but the *periocha* deserves our attention because its sober account prefigures the reconstruction of the conspiracy by many modern historians. While some even doubt that there was a conspiracy at all, a more moderate position prevails:[25] Catiline, scion of an old aristocratic family fails twice in his application for the consulate and then embarks on a coup d'état. He not only attacks the Republic, but, in trying to defend his *dignitas*, is concerned with one of its core values. Ultimately, Catiline's attempted overthrow is not that different from Caesar's decision to cross the Rubicon.[26] He is not so much an evil threat to Rome as a failed politician desperately clinging to a central value of its elite. The historical importance of the Catilinarian conspiracy is not ranked very highly. It is for example not even mentioned in Alfred Heuß' Göttingen inaugural lecture on the decline of the Roman republic and the problem of revolution.[27]

The view of other ancient and of modern historians throws into relief Sallust's extreme position. He makes a footnote, a conspiracy that was uncovered in time, a key moment of Roman history. Teleology is crucial to this take on Catiline: Sallust endows his conspiracy with weight by making it the telos of Rome's decline. While not necessarily the endpoint, Catiline appears as the peak of a deterioration that for Sallust starts with the capture of Carthage in 146 BCE.

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[25] For the radical position, see Waters 1970; for the more moderate assessment of the conspiracy, see, for example, Hoffmann 1959; Schmal 2001: 51-4. Against the tendency to relativize the importance of Catiline, see recently Odahl 2010.

[26] On the central role of *dignitas* for Caesar, see Morstein-Marx 2009: 122-35.

[27] Heuß 1956.

Central to this presentation of Catiline is the so-called archaeology in the chapters 5 to 13, a quick run through Roman history:[28] virtue and discipline pave the way for a rapid rise which is boosted further by the expulsion of the kings and the establishment of a republican constitution. The destruction of Carthage, however, effects a shift. With the disappearance of the threatening enemy, discipline flags while the incoming riches corrupt the virtues. This scenario of Rome's decline is tightly imbricated with the Catilinarian conspiracy. The archaeology is framed by a portrait of Catiline and the introduction of his cronies and their activities. Numerous verbal echoes drive home that the *coniuratio* is part of the development that was triggered by the fall of Carthage. Besides being the central vices of the deterioration (10-11), avarice (*avaritia*) and excessive desire for power (*ambitio*) characterize Catiline (5.8). His capacity for dissimulation and lies (5.4) reinforces the discrepancy between clandestine motives and publicly professed goals after the victory over Carthage (10.5). Particularly trenchant are the parallels that align Catiline with Sulla, the cruel dictator dominating Rome's politics in the first two decades of the first century BCE. Catiline's desire for the goods of others (5.4) and his indulgence in 'civil wars, murder, pillage, and political dissension' (5.2) continue what began under Sulla (11.4): '… all men began to rob and pillage. One coveted a house, another lands; the victors showed neither moderation nor restraint, but shamefully and cruelly wronged their fellow citizens.'

Sallust thus charges Catiline's conspiration with significance by carefully presenting it as the telos of a development that reaches far back. His narrative highlights that making an event telos defines our view not only of preceding history but also of the event itself. It gains weight and is strongly defined by the course of events which it caps. A simple example corroborates this observation: The exile of Romulus Augustus in 476 CE was only one deposition among many in an unstable period. If we follow however Marcellinus Comes, as many historians did, and consider the flight of Augustus the end of the Roman Empire, then it becomes a turning point in world history.[29]

Let me move on to the second point that Sallust proves. Despite the strong teleology that I just sketched, the *Bellum Catilinae* demonstrates that the same events can be seen differently from different vantage-points. While Polybius defers the telos of his account, Sallust integrates into his work the seed of an alternative narrative. We

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[28] For a more detailed reading that pays attention to the intricacies of the archaeology, see Grethlein 2013: 270-5.

[29] See the note on the year 476 CE in Marcellinus' chronicle in Croke 1983. For a survey of different approaches to the end of Rome, see Demandt 1984; for more recent contributions, see Marcone 2008.

find this counter-narrative in the speech duel between Caesar and Cato (50.4-53.1). When the first Catilinarians are caught in Rome, the Senate discusses how to proceed with them. The senators initially follow the plea of the first speaker who suggests the 'ultimate sentence', that is the death penalty. Then Caesar, while acknowledging the guilt of the Catilinarians, pleads for clemency. He manages to sway the audience, but only until Cato delivers a speech that insists on execution. Not Caesar, but the great-grandson of the famous Cato Censorius carries the day. Sallust renders the two speeches of Caesar and Cato in direct speech, devoting nearly a quarter of the *BC*'s space to it, and follows them up with an authorial comparison of the two politicians. While most scholarship has focused on where Sallust's sympathies lie,[30] I would like to show that Caesar's speech contains the elements for an alternative take on both Rome's history and the events of 63 CE. Echoes of Sallust's proem and historiographic topoi invite the reader to compare Caesar's speech with Sallust's narrative (51.1-4):[31]

Fathers of the Senate, all men (*omnis homines*) who deliberate upon difficult questions ought to (*decet*) be free from hatred and friendship, anger and pity. When these feelings stand in the way the mind (animus) cannot easily discern the truth (*verum*), and no mortal man has ever served at the same time his passions and his best interests. When you apply your intellect, it prevails; if passion possesses you, it holds sway, and the mind is impotent. I might bring to remembrance (*memorandi*) many occasions …

The phrase 'all men ought to be' (*omnis homines... decet*) verbally cites the beginning of *BC* in which Sallust also muses on the capacity of the mind (*animus*), here opposed to the body (*corpus*). The claim to impartiality and truth are prominent topoi of historiography that figure in the *BC*'s proem too. The verb *memorare* further signals that Caesar moves in the sphere of the historian. The comparison that is provoked by the historiographic and specifically Sallustian colouring yields striking differences. Caesar refers to two corner stones of Sallust's archaeology, to Carthage (51.6) and Sulla (51.32-4), but assigns them an entirely different significance. As we have seen, Sallust constructs a trajectory from the destruction of Carthage and Sulla to the culmination of Rome's debasement with Catiline. Caesar, on the other hand, adduces Carthage and Sulla as two exempla that shed light on the current situation

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[30] Scholarship on the two speeches is abundant: see, e.g., Syme 1964: 103-20; Pöschl 1981; Drummond 1995; Sklenàř 1998; Feldherr 2012. On the *synkrisis*, see especially Batstone 1988.
[31] Cf. Sklenàř 1998: 206-7; Feldherr 2012: 98-102.

without being linked to each other. Carthage is not the beginning of Rome's decline, but a positive example of Roman clemency.[32] The senate should now be merciful with the Catilinarians just as Scipio treated Carthage clemently. Sulla, together with the rule of the Thirty in Athens, serves as a negative paradigm. However, while Sallust portrays Catiline as heir of Sulla, Caesar emphasizes the gap between the current situation and the age of Sulla (51.34-5): '… and the massacre did not end until Sulla glutted all his followers with riches. For my own part, I fear nothing of that kind for Marcus Tullius or for our times …'

Caesar does of course not present a linear account of Rome's history and evokes only select *exempla*. Nonetheless, the historiographic and Sallustian echoes draw our attention to the deviant view on the central events of the archaeology. Caesar's speech encapsulates an alternative panorama of Rome's history, a view that is much more benign than the main scenario in the *BC*. Sallust 'might bring to remembrance the battlefields on which the Romans with a mere handful of men routed great armies of their adversaries, and the cities fortified by nature which they took by assault' (7.7), but he prefers not to do so. Caesar remarks that he (51.4) 'might bring to remembrance many occasions, Fathers of the Senate, when kings and peoples under the influence of wrath or pity have made errors of judgment; but I prefer to remind you of times when our forefathers, resisting the dictates of passion, have acted justly and in order.' Caesar elaborates on the very elements that are glossed over in the main narrative. Where Sallust scents moral depravation and decline, Caesar finds a story of generosity and clemency.

In addition to outlining a deviant history of Rome, Caesar's speech also intimates an alternative view on the Catilinarian conspiracy. We have seen that Sallust assigns importance to Catiline's failed putsch by casting it as the telos of Rome's decline. Caesar, on the other hand, envisages Catiline against the backdrop of later possible developments. His tendency to historicize the present is tangible in his appeal to the senators to concentrate less on their anger than their reputation because who is in power is particularly liable to be judged severely by posteriority (51.7-15). Caesar invokes not only the verdict of future generations, but also the political consequences of the trial. Sulla and the Thirty in Athens are, he points out, instructive examples (51.27):

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[32] On the Carthage *exemplum*, see Levene 2000, who argues for an intricate intertextual engagement: In referencing the destruction of Carthage and the Rhodians, who had betrayed the alliance with Rome in the Perses War, Caesar invokes the two most famous political interventions of Cato Censor whose authority he thereby slyly turns against his great-grandson, the Younger Cato.

All bad precedents have originated in cases which were good; but when the control of the government falls into the hands of men who are incompetent or bad, your new precedent is transferred from those who well deserve and merit such punishment to the undeserving and blameless.

This, Caesar claims, is relevant to the present situation. He does not expect problems with Cicero as consul, but he is worried about how an execution of the Catilinarians could be abused later in a different political constellation (51.36):

It is possible that at another time, when someone else is consul and is likewise in command of an army, some falsehood may be believed to be true. When the consul, with this precedent before him, shall draw the sword in obedience to the senate's decree, who shall limit or restrain him?

Arguing that an execution may be abused as precedent, Caesar views the trial in anticipated retrospect; he historicizes the present. Commentators have found here an allusion to actual later events. Besides Antonius, particularly Octavian with the proscriptions in 42 BCE has been discussed as the target of Sallust's veiled critique, but it has also been noted that the latter case does not exactly match the prediction.[33] While it is hard to find a single event that makes Caesar's concern a prediction, it cannot fail to adumbrate in general the extreme violence and abuse of power under the triumvirate and already in the preceding years. Here the political implications of 'future past', which I commented on in the discussion of Polybius, are in the spotlight once again. In evoking the proscriptions, Sallust comes very close to his own present. Prompted to project the Catilinarian Conspiracy against the backdrop of *Zeitgeschichte*, Sallust's Roman reader can also be tempted to see inversely the present appear on the horizon of the past narrated in the *BC*. This can obviously give rise to uncomfortable, even disconcerting questions about the current state of affairs...

To my interpretation, the shift of perspective, the anticipation of retrospect, is crucial. By not viewing Catiline as the telos of Rome's decline but by projecting him against the backdrop of future developments, Caesar arrives at a very different picture of 63 CE. In the main narrative, Catiline is the climax of Rome's deterioration that

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[33] For a critique of Antonius, see Havas 1990: 220-1; of Octavian, see Syme 1964: 121-3; Vretska 1976: 552; Pöschl 1981: 385; of both, Perl 1969: 204. Against the critique of a specific person, see Drummond 1995: 33-6, who suggests a reference to the 'violent atmosphere of 44-3' (35), and Levene 2000: 189-90, who persuasively lists transgressions from the 40s before the triumvirate that resonate with Caesar's warning.

starts with the capture of Carthage. For Caesar, however, a senatorial verdict that ignores the exemplary clemency towards Carthage leads to the excesses of violence against citizens in the 40s. In this scenario the heir of Sulla is not Catiline, but Cicero, who pushes the door open for the proscriptions.[34]

The main narrative of *BC* and the alternative history that is encapsulated in Caesar's speech are not mutually exclusive. While the former puts the conspiracy centre stage, the latter focuses on the execution of the conspirators. We can consider the conspiracy as a result of Sulla's policy and simultaneously align the execution of the Catilinarians with Sulla's proscriptions and the violence of the triumvirs. And yet, the difference between the two story lines is glaring and highlights to what extent our understanding of the past hinges on our vantage-point. Catiline's coup d'état looks very different when seen against the foil of later civil war or as telos of Rome's decline.

The subtle play with historical perspective shows us a new facet of Sallust who is generally considered a bitter and less than original author grumbling about moral decay. A few scholars, though, have started elucidating the complexity of Sallust's moralism.[35] Far from being maverick thinking in black and white, Sallust gives us a nuanced portrait of Roman society. My reading ties in well with such attempts to reconsider Sallust. The presentation of Rome's history in the *BC* is less monolithic than it may seem at first sight. There is place for more than one version. The archaeology sketches the development after 146 BCE as decline, but the alternative version embedded in Caesar's speech undercuts this narrative. For sure, the decline narrative is the main story line, which, however, I hasten to add, does not go unchallenged. Crucial for this historiographic form of polyphony is Sallust's take on 'future past'. As Polybius, Sallust is highly sensitive to the significance of the historian's vantage-point. While Polybius responds to the instability of historical meaning by deferring the telos and extending his narrative, Sallust introduces an alternative telos that opens up an alternative view to the perspective of the major story line.

The *Bellum Catilinae* illustrates that historians can deploy multiple telê in order to shed light on the same event from various angles. Multiple telê are also an apt

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[34] Such a view may be surprising at first sight, it is not unattested though in antiquity. See the attack of Fufius Calenus against Cicero in Cassius Dio 46.20 and the (Pseudo-)Sallustian invective against Cicero which blames Cicero for the proscriptions and explicitly compares him with Sulla (5-6). Unfortunately we do not have Antonius' *suada* against the consulate of Cicero from September 19, but Cicero's second *Philippica* indicates that Antonius voiced just such a critique (11-20).

[35] Cf. Batstone 1988; Gunderson 2000; Levene 2000.

response to a phenomenon that has been repeatedly tackled by Reinhard Koselleck. In *Vergangene Zukunft*, first published in 1979, Koselleck comments on the capacity of conceptual history ('Begriffsgeschichte') to account for the 'simultaneity of the non-simultaneous' ('Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen'). History harbours parallel processes that, while possibly linked to each other, progress at different speeds and can have different extensions.[36] In his later work, Koselleck introduces the metaphor of 'Zeit*schichten*' that lines up nicely with the German word for history if understood as 'Ge-*schichte*'.[37] It allows Koselleck to evade the problematic dichotomy of linear vs. circular time and to conceptualize the 'simultaneity of the non-simultaneous': the image of different geological strata that are layered on top of each other, partly separate, partly entangled with each other, is well-suited to express the multitude of times which come together in history: natural history, *longue durée*, micro-histories etc. What, however, if we move from the handy spatial metaphor to the temporal form of narrative, if we shift the focus from abstract reflection to the pragmatics of writing history? Here the example of Sallust proves illuminating: his deployment of more than one telos illustrates how the historian can represent disparate processes. A single telos is not capable of doing justice to processes that are simultaneous and non-simultaneous at the same time. Multiple telê, on the other hand, in addition to shedding light on the same event from various angles and thereby embracing the instability of historical knowledge, lend themselves to respecting and expressing the different speed and extension of contemporaneous processes.

IV. 'Future past' in modern historiography

Arnaldo Momigliano's verdict on the *Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* notwithstanding, the gap that separates modern historians from their ancient predecessors is considerable.[38] Nicole Loraux aptly pronounced: 'Thucydide n'est pas un collegue'.[39] One difference beside many others is that narrative is less prominent in the work of modern historians. Narrative remains a salient form of presenting the reconstruction of the past and some contemporary historians make

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[36] Koselleck 1979: esp. 132, 323-8. Zammito 2004 and Jordheim 2012 offer a re-appraisal of Koselleck's work as a theory of multiple temporalities.
[37] Koselleck 2000: esp. 9-26.
[38] Momigliano 1990.
[39] Loraux 1980.

conscious use of its devices,[40] and yet the critical discussion of sources, the analysis of data and the employment of graphs and maps have introduced strong non-narrative elements into historiography. Nonetheless, the issue of 'future past' is also pertinent to modern historiography. In this section, I will touch on the debate about the end of the Roman Republic which illustrates its unbroken relevance.

In my discussion of Sallust, I contrasted the *Bellum Catilinae* with the accounts of modern historians. Sallust envisions the turmoil of 63 BCE as a culmination of Rome's decline starting in the second century BCE and thereby endows Catiline with a significance that he does not have in most modern accounts. At the same time, the dominant modern views of the crisis of the Roman Republic parallel in many regards Sallust's larger trajectory. While not phrasing the development in moral terms, modern scholars are inclined to trace the end of the Republic back to the first half of the first and the second half of the second centuries BCE. Aspects noted by Sallust such as Rome's rapid expansion, the alarming increase of debts and an erosion of the political consensus figure prominently in discussions of the crisis of the Republic. The history of the Republic in the second and first centuries BCE is routinely envisaged in the light of its end. A case in point is Peter Brunt's *Social Conflicts in the Roman Republic,* which, together with his later papers on the topic, still form the standard view in anglophone scholarship.[41] Brunt singles out the emergence of strong interests of social groups that conflicted with each other and chipped away at the political consensus necessary for a society. Particularly the senate lost much of its authority. The horizon against which Brunt sees this process is the fall of the Republic that was replaced by the Principate.

German scholarship on the late Republic has been dominated by an account that, while different in many regards, shares with Brunt's the emphatically teleological underpinnings. In *Res publica amissa*, still a landmark, Christian Meier diagnoses a 'crisis without alternative'.[42] For him the history of the late Republic is a tragic process: despite the avalanche of troubles, nobody was able to recognize the underlying institutional problems. Paradoxically, all social and political groups clung to the traditional system and thereby brought about its end. While for Brunt the political system lost its credit in the first century BCE, Meier argues that all groups

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[40] A prominent example is Schama 1989, a narrative account of the French Revolution that is consciously set against attempts to understand the French Revolution mainly in terms of social and economic structures.

[41] Brunt 1971; 1988. For a succinct survey of approaches to the fall of the Roman Republic, see Morstein-Marx/ Rosenstein 2006. See also the more recent contributions by Walter 2009 and Jehne 2009.

[42] Meier 1966.

tried to preserve it. Both however share common ground in envisaging the history of the first half of the first century BCE in the light of the end of the Republic.

This view has not remained unchallenged. In *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, Eric Gruen vehemently argues that Brunt's and Meier's accounts are distorted by teleology, a general vice of historiography: 'The writing of history is forever plagued by the temptations of hindsight. Knowledge of the issue invariably, if unconsciously, becomes the starting point of the search of precedents.'[43] Gruen argues that Brunt, Meier and others wrongly infer the idea of a long and paralysing crisis of the Republic through the telos of their accounts. Viewing the late Republic from the vantage-point of its end, they give undue weight to problems and conflicts. Against this, Gruen aims at reconstructing its history from the viewpoint of the historical agents. The institutions of the Republic and its political conventions, he claims, fully functioned until Caesar's civil war. Sulla's legislation largely endured and sustained a strong oligarchic establishment. Gruen analyses the power of the great families, the social composition of the senate as well as the claims of the plebs and criminal trials in order to demonstrate that the fall of the Republic was by no means inevitable: 'Civil War caused the fall of the Republic – not vice versa.'[44]

Gruen's book throws into relief to what extent our views on the past hinge on the telos chosen. His take on the late Republic as a vigorous period is utterly different from the scenario of the profound crisis of a dysfunctional society which we encounter in the works of Brunt and Meier.[45] Not only the narratives of ancient historians, but also the reconstructions of the past in modern historiography are strongly shaped by the horizon against which the events are projected. Even if historians capitalize on non-narrative forms of representation such as the exegesis of data, they have to choose a vantage-point from which to envisage the period under consideration. The debate on the end of the Roman Republic also drives home that 'future past' identifies a point that is different from the Historicist insight into the relevance of the present for how we view the past. Gruen writes more or less at the same time as Brunt and Meier. His critique of their approach is not indebted to the perspective of the present, but questions the telos they have chosen for their accounts.

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[43] Gruen 1974: 449. See also the preface to the paperback edition (1995) in which Gruen contextualizes his emphasis on continuity in his experiences in the 60s and 70s: despite the revolutionary climate, felt with particular force in Berkeley, the political and social order proved stable.

[44] Gruen 1974: 504.

[45] For another discussion of the issue of teleology and the end of the Roman Republic, see Badian's polemical review (1990) of Meier's Caesar biography.

Gruen's intervention is even more radical. It is directed not only against a specific telos, but takes issue with any teleology. However, the idea that the historian ought to forgo the benefits of hindsight and see the past solely on its own terms goes against deeply ingrained creeds of the discipline as the responses to *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* reveal.[46] In a review entitled 'Hamlet without the Prince', Crawford notes:

Gruen persistently warns against the dangers of hindsight; this can of course be abused; but it is precisely the possession of hindsight which is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the historian. It is only in the light of what happened and in the course of an attempt to explain what happened that some earlier events emerge as important and some as trivial.[47]

Similarly, another reviewer insists: 'Yet wisdom after the event is something which historians ought to exercise.'[48] It is undoubtedly important to see the past in light of its own temporal horizon and not to distort our picture of it by projecting backwards, and yet the perspective of the historical agents offers ground that is less solid than it may seem at first. To start with, there is not a single perspective in the past, but numerous diverging vantage-points. A Roman senator, an urban Plebeian and a farmer living in the African provinces will have perceived quite differently what is conveniently labelled the crisis of the Republic. As I have already noted, the future of 'future past' is encapsulated in its past: with their expectations and intentions, the historical protagonists reach out to the future. Another point, made by Crawford, is that historical explanation needs to take into account where events are going. Finally, some of the appeal of the past consists in retrospect. In our lives we have to grapple with the insecurity of an open future. Looking back, we are freed from this insecurity. Hindsight lets us overcome the contingency to which we are exposed in the present.

The perspective of historical agents hence does not offer an easy way around the instability of historical meaning. Golo Mann's preface to the English edition of his *Wallenstein* nicely captures that historiography needs to straddle both the experiences of the historical protagonists and the larger lines visible only in retrospect: 'The historian has always to try to do two different things simultaneously. He must swim

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[46] The reception of *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* was mixed: While Gruen's book has certainly not captured 'the citadel of *communis opinio*' (Shackleton-Bailey 1975: 437), some of his points have been taken up by other scholars; see the literature listed by Hölkeskamp 2009: 2 n. 5.

[47] Crawford 1976: 214.

[48] Stockton 1977: 216.

with the stream of events, allowing himself to be carried along as though he had been present. He must from outside converge on his subject from various directions, a later, better-informed observer, and catechize it, yet never quite have it in the hollow of his hand.'[49] David Carr's agenda for the historian at work integrates both perspectives and puts them into a sequential order: in a first step historians ought to retrieve the events as experienced by the historical agents. Then they should compare the experiences of various characters and finally incorporate them in a new story from their own elevated point of view.[50]

V. 'Future past', 'presence' and post-structuralism

In conclusion I would like to show that reflecting on the telos alerts us to an aspect of how we engage with the past that is in danger of being obliterated by the current infatuation with 'presence'. Across disciplinary boundaries, scholars have become disenchanted with the paradigms of signification and meaning on which such divergent approaches as hermeneutics, semiotics and (post-)structuralism are premised. [51] Besides 'presence', the notions of experience, embodiment and materiality are drawn on to conceptualize our relation to the world beyond interpretation. In the theory of history, this trend is represented in particular by Runia who argues for a metonymical relationship to the past.[52] Runia makes a powerful case that such phenomena as memory, *lieux de memoire* and trauma reveal the shortcomings of White's representationalism. The focus on meaning fails to account for the 'presence' of the past which can be grasped with the concept of metonymy: '...in those faintly glowing metonymies... historical reality itself is 'absently present'... One might say that historical reality travels with historiography not as a paying passenger but as a stowaway. As a stowaway the past 'survives' the text.'[53]

Runia gives the growing discomfort with the linguistic turn and post-structuralism a distinct and eloquent voice in the theory of history. That being said, as thought-provoking as his intervention is, it is open to challenge. To tackle just one

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[49] Mann 1976: 7.

[50] Carr 2006: 135.

[51] Gumbrecht is one of the most prominent advocates of this trend. For a programmatic pamphlet, see Gumbrecht 2004.

[52] For a succinct presentation of Runia's notion of 'presence', see Runia 2006. His influence in the theory of history can be gleaned from the forum on 'presence' in *H&T* 2006; Domanska 2007; Bevernage 2008; Kasabova 2008; Jenkins 2010; Froeymann 2012. For an alternative challenge to the sway of emplotment, see Ankersmit 2005.

[53] Runia 2006: 26-7.

point: Runia's concept of metonymy is disturbingly confused. He slides from metonymy as a figure 'in which the name of an attribute or adjunct is substituted for that of the thing meant'[54] to a mode of linking text to reality. Runia starts by arguing - wrongly I think, but this need not concern us here - for the prominence of metonymies in historiography where such phrases as 'After Stalingrad' and 'Napoleon invaded Russia' abound. Without noticing the shift, he then claims that 'the words and phrases that have been woven into the texture of the text are metonymically connected to the places that are left behind - all the way down to the point where names have been substituted for reality.'[55] An unproven thesis about how one word is substituted for another results in a claim about how words relate to world. An embarrassing misrepresentation of Jakobsen's concept of metonymy and contiguity paves the way for this shift: The 'syntagmatic' pole does not, as Runia has it, 'connect language to the prelinguistic world of events and impressions'. It is about the combination of signs: 'any sign is made up of constituent signs and/or occurs only in combination with other signs.'[56]

While Runia's notion of metonymy is disconcerting, it is hard to deny that the concept of 'presence' identifies a salient aspect of how we relate to the past. The question though is how far the notion of 'presence' goes. The past is indeed present: it is tangible in material relics, it shapes identities and sediments in customs. At the same time, however, the past is narrated. In historiographical narratives, it is not simply present, but envisaged from a perspective that entwines past and future in the way outlined above. Instead of offering unmediated access to the past, the narrative construction of the past[57] is defined essentially by the choice of a telos or telê. The telos shapes not only the 'emplotment', but also what even Hayden White considers to be historical facts and data.

Runia's tendency to conflate the levels of *res gestae* and *historia rerum gestarum*[58] bypasses the temporal dynamics of narrating the past. Despite the current enthusiasm about leaving the linguistic turn behind, it is important to keep this dynamics in mind. We relate to the past through the 'future past' in narrative as well

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[54] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* s.v.

[55] Runia 2006: 26.

[56] Jakobsen 1990: 119 (1956).

[57] On the construction of the past, cf. recently Roth 2012 who couches a rejection of past in the singular in the vocabulary of analytical philosophy.

[58] Cf. Jenkins 2010: 245: 'Runia constantly elides the ontological (and analytically essential) distinction between *res gestae* and *historia rerum gestarum* he himself points to, as if his thought on the former apply to the latter... It is the failure to register fully this distinction that probably suggests to Runia that 'history' can be understood direct and unmediated...'

as through its 'presence'. Both modes are entwined with each other in multiple ways. Relics, for example, may trigger stories. Narratives, on the other hand, can generate identities and attitudes that then become embodied.

My plea for the significance of 'future past' may at first sight look like a return to the agenda of post-structuralism, but there is an important difference (that does not entail *différance*).[59] Derrida and other post-structuralist theoreticians emphasize the floating of *signifiants* along the chain of *signifiés*. There is no stable point that allows for fixed meaning; all we have is an endless *trace* lacking origin. While deconstruction is primarily concerned with language as sign-system, 'future past' homes in on the specific situation of writing about the past. Instability is here encapsulated in the flux of time which proliferates new vantage-points yielding alternative views of the past. Instead of applying reflections on linguistic representation in general to historiography, 'future past' alerts us specifically to its temporal dynamics.[60] Polybius for one, while being aware of the problems inherent in the attempt to evaluate the past, was not a post-structuralist *avant-la-lettre*.

The focus on time is crucial for historiography, I contend, can be fruitfully seen as an engagement with temporality. As mentioned above, life confronts us with an open future. What will be depends on many factors that are beyond our control. The past, however, is free of this insecurity. Looking back, we see the sway of time over humans without being exposed to it ourselves. Retrospect lets us overcome contingency to which we are subject in the everyday world. Unlike historical agents we know where history is headed and can see the past in the light of its future. Hindsight lets us replace the fragility of our lives with sovereignty. And yet, even when we look at the seemingly closed past, the destabilizing force of time makes itself felt. The works of Polybius and Sallust reflect the continuous proliferation of new vantage-points that let us see the past anew. Viewed from the telos of Roman hegemony, the events of the third and second centuries BCE yield a coherent picture, but what remains of this picture once the rule of Rome crumbles? Seen as the peak of Roman decadence, Catiline's *coup d'état* appears as the ultimate threat to the Republic, but the proscriptions of the 40s let us reconsider the execution of the Catilinarians as the trigger of even greater evil. As narrators of the past, we are able to

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[59] For a recent survey of deconstruction and what it has to offer to the theory of history, see Kleinberg 2007.

[60] This does not mean that post-structuralists have to be insensitive to the issue of time in historiography. See, for example, Kleinberg 2012: 132-5, who suggests linking the idea of deconstruction to the notion of multiple temporalities as developed by Koselleck. Kleinberg thus sketches a post-structuralist position that would be predicated on the specific temporal dynamics of writing history.

control time in a manner not possible in our own lives, and yet this control is not without limits. The openness of the future that makes our lives so hard to control survives in the form of 'future past', in the significance of the future of the past for our understanding of the past. The flux of time to which historians as well as historical agents are subject precludes historical meaning from being stable. Historiography calms the flow of time, but is unable to arrest it fully.

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