

The Order of Historical Time: The *Longue Durée* and Micro-History

Dale Tomich

Professor in the Department of History at the Binghamton University (Binghamton/EUA) and researcher of the Fernand Braudel Center.
e-mail: dtomich@binghamton.edu

Abstract

This article is concerned with Fernand Braudel's conception of the plural temporality and, above all, the *longue durée* as a practical tool for historical inquiry. Through an examination of the work of Braudel's colleague Ernst Labrousse, it emphasizes the theoretical and methodological assumptions underlying the practice of serial history as the means to reconstruct such "structural temporalities." Finally, it treats the concern for the episodic and short-term that characterizes Italian micro-história as a reaction to the dominance of French serial history which, nonetheless remains in relation to Braudel's conception of plural time. In this way the article seeks to make explicit the relationship between the so-called "second *Annales*" of Braudel and Italian microhistory and to suggest ways the conceptions of temporality might promote dialogue between diverse historiographical approaches.

Keywords

plural temporality, *longue durée*, Fernand Braudel, *Annales*, school, serial history, Ernst Labrousse, Micro-História

Pour moi, l'histoire est la somme de toutes les histoires possibles – une collection de métiers et points de vue, d'hier, d'aujourd'hui, de demain. La seule erreur, à mon avis, serait de choisir l'une de ces histoires à l'exclusion des autres. Ce fût, ce serait l'erreur historisante.

Fernand Braudel.

Introduction: Fernand Braudel and the *Longue Durée*

In his remarks at the conference inaugurating the Fernand Braudel Center at Binghamton University in 1977, Braudel emphasized the practical character of his conception of the *longue durée* and plural time. His intent was not to produce a work of theory or to 'philosophize.' Rather, it was to organize the ideas that he formed while writing *The Mediterranean*.¹ In a similar vein, this chapter is concerned with practical questions of historical inquiry raised by Fernand Braudel's conception of *longue durée*, rather than with attempting to "theorize" either Braudel or "historical temporalities." It examines the *longue durée* as a concept of historical social science and its deployment as a practical tool for constructing historical inquiry and conducting research by specifying the *longue durée* within Braudel's concept of "plural time" and interrogating the critical response of Italian *microhistoria* to the notions of structural time and serial history put forth by Braudel and Ernest Labrousse.

At the outset, I would like to note that Braudel proposes various formulations of *longue durée*. In this chapter, I privilege the historically singular and geophysically specific construction of *longue durée* structures that is most evident in the first part of Braudel's *The Mediterranean*. In my understanding, this temporal movement is produced through very slow, almost geological, societal interaction with geography and environment over the very long-term. It is perhaps what Braudel refers to as the "time of the sages." I emphasize this construction of *longue durée* because it is the longest conceivable historical temporality and most comprehensive ground for historical interpretation. In addition, it opens the way for the integration of geography and environment into historical analysis. At the same time, Braudel puts forth other formulations of *longue durée*, for instance Ernst Robert Curtius' account of the cultural system of Latin civilization from the fall of the Empire to the fourteenth century or Pierre Francastel's treatment of the 'geometric space of Western painting.'² Similarly we may look to Immanuel Wallerstein's conception of world-system as a *longue durée* structure or Ernest Labrousse's construction of the *longue durée* of the Ancien Régime French economy. In each case, the *longue durée* is simply the most stable temporal relation of the longest duration in the problem under consideration. It forms the stabilizing ground against which cyclical variations of other temporal structures are established, and it allows the ordering of historical inquiry.

I wish to emphasize that each of these formulations of the *longue durée* makes use of evidence differently and is constructed according to different criteria. I call attention to these differences not to make the case for a correct interpretation of *longue durée*. It is, in the final analysis, a methodological tool that is constructed for the analysis of particular problems. Rather, the point I wish to emphasize is that these diverse formulations entail constructions of temporality that are quantitatively commensurate and comparable, and at the same time, are qualitatively distinct and based on incommensurate kinds of evidence. These differences

¹ BRAUDEL, Fernand. En guise de conclusion. *Review*, vol.I, n.3/4, p.244-245, 1978.

² BRAUDEL, Fernand. History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*. Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. *Review*, vol.XXXII, n.2, p.179-180.

are consequential and need to be taken into account in the elaboration of other temporalities and the reconstruction and interpretation of the totality of relations under consideration. Ignoring such qualitative differences increases the danger that we reify our conceptual tools and conflate them with the object of our study. We are then left with a classificatory schema ordered by the *longue durée* that easily lapses into functionalist explanations that are ordered a priori by our own analytical categories.

In "*Histoire et Sciences Sociales. La Longue Durée*," Braudel makes the case for a historical social science and a conception of history that is adequate to such an approach. He does this by emphasizing the plurality of historical time and privileging the *longue durée* as the structuring element of this temporal construction. From this perspective, Braudel attacks the linear conception of historical time and emphasis on the event that characterize positivist history. At the same time, through an examination of the conception of historical time in the various social sciences, he argues for the importance of plural temporalities and for the *longue durée* as the methodological ground for a unified historical social science.

Braudel's approach is at once empirically oriented and experimental. On the one hand, he seeks to establish the *longue durée* as a substantive historical relation, and, on the other hand, he proposes it as the methodological scaffolding on which he builds his conception of history. Empirical without being empiricist, he constructs the object of his inquiry through an open-ended approach that moves back and forth between empirical research, methodological reflection, and historical reconstruction in order to make intelligible historical material. The *longue durée* is the key to his historical method.

The *longue durée* may appear to be an ambiguous concept that resists hard definition. It is more accessible through description than precise concepts and hypotheses.³ Braudel conceives of the *longue durée* as a real historical structure formed at the interface of human activity with geography and nature in their broadest sense. It is an embracing concept that refers to temporal rhythms so slow and stable that they approximate physical geography. The *longue durée* encompasses and is constituted by singular and non-repeatable phenomena as human society interacts with definite and relatively stable geophysical phenomena across almost unimaginably long historical time.⁴ Those geophysical phenomena that are formative of the *longue durée* have histories that extend beyond human history. As Reinhardt Koselleck argues, they provide the conditions of possibility for human history, but they are not at the disposition of humanity. Humankind can only take advantage of them.⁵ Within the range of possibilities, human societies may respond to these natural conditions in diverse ways. But natural environments are highly resistant to human intervention, and for particular human actors they appear as given. It is no easy task to move mountains or drain seas. Nonetheless, such environments are subject to millennial societal action. Braudel emphasizes persistent and common elements across distinct social formations over virtually infinite generations in order to conceptualize the *longue durée*. Such general collective human interaction with physical nature forms an extremely slow-moving, almost imperceptible temporality – a structure perhaps, but a structure subject to historical mutation.

This conception of *longue durée* is of critical substantive and methodological importance for Braudel's conception of history. Most

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BRAUDEL, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2 Vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, vol. I, 1995, p.23-272.

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Although Braudel is elaborating a concept of structural time (that is historical temporalities beyond direct and immediate human or social intervention) and speaks of the *longue durée* as a structure, it should be stressed here that he is not proposing a structuralism. The *longue durée* is not a structure in the sociological sense of the word, that is a fixed attribute of the social system (as in Parsons' sociology or Althusser's Marxism). Nor is Braudel's historical account a "grand narrative." Rather, the *longue durée* is a more or less stable *historical* relation that allows an open and experimental approach to the theoretical reconstruction of long-term, large-scale world historical change.

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KOSSELLECK, Reinhardt. *Los estratos del tiempo: estudios sobre la historia*. Barcelona: Ediciones Piados, 2001. p.99-100.

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Ibidem, p.96-97.

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In his Preface to the first edition of *The Mediterranean*, Braudel writes: "I could not neglect this almost timeless history, the story of man's contact with the inanimate, neither could I be satisfied with the traditional geographical introduction to history that often figures to little purpose at the beginning of so many books..." (BRAUDEL, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World... Op. Cit.*, vol.I, p.20. Cf. KOSELLECK, Reinhardt. *Los estratos del tiempo: estudios sobre la historia*. Barcelona: Ediciones Piados, 2001. p.96-97.)

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"The resulting picture is one in which all the evidence combines across time and space, to give us a history in slow motion from which permanent values can be detected. Geography in this context is no longer an end in itself but a means to an end. It helps us to rediscover the slow unfolding of structural realities, to see things in the perspective of the very long term. Geography, like history, can answer many questions. Here it helps us to discover the almost imperceptible movement of history, if only we are prepared to follow its lessons and accept its categories and divisions" (BRAUDEL, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World... Op. Cit.*, vol.I, p.23. Cf. KOSELLECK, Reinhardt. *Los estratos del tiempo... Op. Cit.*, p.94).

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BRAUDEL, Fernand. *History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée...Op. Cit.*, p.178-179.

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Editorial. *Tentons l'expérience: Histoire et sciences sociales. Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, vol.44, n.6, p.1319-1320, novembre-décembre, 1989.

historians opt for the priority of time over space with little theoretical foundation. For them history occurs *in* space and *in* time. Yet they regard space and time as formally distinct categories. Space is relegated to the contextual background in which history happens. Time is treated as an empty category that is filled by sequences of events to be ordered and comprehended by means of chronology. In such a conception, historical inquiry is concerned with the unique because sequences of events are regarded as unrepeatable and highly contingent (as classically illustrated by Isaiah Berlin's interpretation of Cleopatra's nose) and thus not given to systematization.⁶

In contrast, Braudel recuperates the complexity of historical temporality by prioritizing geophysical-social space. His conception emphasizes the physical characteristics of the earth, geography, natural resources, material processes and culture as constitutive elements of human history.⁷ The theoretical assumption supporting Braudel's conception is a human history formed *through* the "structures of the *longue durée*." The condition and limit of that history is the finite planet that we all inhabit – a single physical world and twenty-four hours in a day. Here, the geophysical space and historical time of the *longue durée* serve as the mediation between natural and social history.⁸ They are both supports of and obstacles to human action, and they form the social historical limit against and through which human praxis pushes.⁹

In Braudel's conception, the *longue durée* provides the unifying element of human history. Humans make their history *through* space and time. Space creates time: time unifies space. In this way, Braudel discloses a densely textured, multi-layered spatial-temporal world that is unique because it is spatio-temporally singular. Indeed, it is this very density and complexity that makes it susceptible to analysis. Such a conception avoids the illusions of a purely social or cultural conception of history. At the same time, it enriches the possibilities for the development of historical social science by opening the way for environmental history and the history of material life as constituent elements of all history.

It is in this context that I wish to emphasize the methodological importance of Braudel's concept of the *longue durée*. The *longue durée* is a tool for historical cognition and analysis that provides the ground for Braudel's conception of history and of historical social science. It forms a comprehensive social and analytical unit that enables Braudel to construct categories or objects of inquiry through their relation to one another within this shared analytical and practical field. In this flexible, dynamic, and open approach, objects of inquiry are understood not as things with properties, but as ensembles of changing relations forming configurations that are constantly adapting to one another and to the world around them through definite historical processes.¹⁰ Within this framework, the establishment of relational categories– e.g. *longue durée*, *conjuncture*, event, or material life, market economy, capital – and the specification of relations in time and space, are keys to interpretation and analysis.

The *longue durée* is the central analytical category in Braudel's distinctive approach because of its methodological role in articulating his entire conceptual framework and establishing the coherence of his project of *histoire totale*. In his view: "... on the basis of these layers of slow history, one can rethink the totality of history, as though it were located atop an infrastructure. All the stages, all the thousands of explosions

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BRAUDEL, Fernand. History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée...Op. Cit.*, p.181.

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Ibidem, p.198.

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GRENIER, Jean-Yves. Expliquer et comprendre. La construction du temps de l'histoire économique. In: LEPETIT, Bernard (org.). *Les formes de l'expérience: Une autre histoire sociale*. Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1995. p.235 e p.238-242.

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BRAUDEL, Fernand. History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée...Op. Cit.*, p.198.

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Ibidem, p.182.

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Braudel's conception of plural and structured historical time resolves the conceptual dilemma presented by event history. If event is the only temporal category at our disposition, we have no way to talk about diverse and complex temporal phenomena of varying duration and the relations comprising them. The French Revolution is often described as an event. The storming of the Bastille, the flight of the king to Varennes, and the Tennis Court Oath are also events. If the Revolution is regarded as an event, it has the same logical structure as its constituent elements. All are events, defined simply by having the property of a definite beginning and a definite end, a "minimal 'before' and 'after' that constitutes their unity" (KOSELLECK, Reinhardt. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985. p.106). They are "timeless" except through reference to an external chronology. The Revolution may perhaps then be seen as an event of events, in which case, its temporal structure is established by the summing up of its parts. It is at once constituted and explained by narrating (contingent) sequences of events with arbitrary beginnings and ends. From such a perspective, the Revolution has no structure, and the tools available for explaining it extremely limited at best.

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"Clearly there are different kinds of structure just as there are different kinds of conjuncture, and the duration of either structure or conjuncture may vary. History accepts and discovers multidimensional explanations, reaching, as it were, vertically from one temporal plane to another. And on every plane there are also horizontal relationships and connections" (BRAUDEL, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World... Op. Cit.*, vol.I, p.16).

of historical time can be understood from these depths, from this semi-immobility. Everything gravitates around it".¹¹ For Braudel the task of the historian is to divide and then to reassemble time. Methodologically, he proceeds by differentiating within a unity rather than integrating dualities. He reminds us that, "In fact, the temporalities that we differentiate are bound together. It is not so much duration that is the creation of our mind, but the splitting up of this duration".¹²

The unifying historical structures of the *longue durée* provide the point of departure for Braudel's differentiation of social-historical time. He elaborates other temporal structures of shorter duration through their relation to the *longue durée*. At the same time the *longue durée* provides the unifying element that orders the plurality of social times in relation to one another and constructs the relational whole. Although Braudel's approach encourages inquiry into the great diversity of historical temporalities, he constructs his model of plural time in terms of three temporalities – the *longue durée*; cyclical time or the *conjoncture*, a structural time of intermediate duration; and the event, or more properly the (very) short term – as a guide to historical analysis and reconstruction. Each of these three temporalities is conceived in relation to the others, not only in terms of duration, but also in terms of the processes that constitute it, its structure and coherence, and its centrality for historical analysis. Taken together, they form a framework that allows examination of temporally complex historical phenomena.¹³

This conceptual approach discloses complex, heterogeneous, hierarchically structured, and historically shifting temporal totalities: "... these fragments come together again at the end of our work. The *longue durée*, cyclical phases (*conjoncture*), and events fit together easily, for they are all measurements on the same scale. Hence, to enter into one of these temporalities is to be part of all of them".¹⁴ According to Braudel "... if one wants to understand the world, one has to determine the hierarchy of forces, currents, and individual movements, and then put them together to form an overall constellation. Throughout, one must distinguish between long-term movements, and momentary pressures, finding the immediate sources of the latter and the long-term thrust of the former".¹⁵ This conception of plural temporalities is clearly opposed to the homogeneous, linear, and empty time of event history.¹⁶ It at once permits and requires Braudel to specify phenomena in time and space and to establish the relations between them. It thereby allows theoretical comprehension of spatially and temporally complex historical phenomena.¹⁷

Thus, the *longue durée* implies a distinctive methodological approach and logic of explanation that redefines the intellectual heritage handed down from the nineteenth century. In contrast to more conventional social science logics based on formal comparison of commensurate units with common properties or the infinite repetition of individual actions, the assumption here is that analysis is grounded in a single spatially-temporally differentiated and complex unit subject to multiple determinations. From this perspective, phenomena do not repeat themselves. World economies, cities, markets, etc. are conceived as constituent parts of a more encompassing whole. None is like any other. Each is singular in time and space and in relation to other phenomena. Hence, the basic concepts of historical social science recognize the historical uniqueness of the phenomena under examination. It is a science

of the singular. Its object of investigation is a unified, but spatially-temporally complex historical whole and the focus of analysis is the formation and reformation of relations through diverse spatial-temporal scales. From this perspective, the assumptions of conventional social science do not obtain. Rather, it is necessary to elaborate new procedures on the basis of different assumptions.

Focusing on the methodological rather than substantive historical role of the *longue durée* discloses a tension within Braudel's "*Histoire et Sciences Sociales. La Longue Durée*." Conventionally, this article is viewed as a sort of manifesto for structural time – the *longue durée* and the *conjoncture*. In it, "events" appear to receive short shrift. They are "explosive." They "blind the eye with clouds of smoke." Braudel would prefer to speak of the "short term" rather than the "event," but even this is the "most capricious and deceptive form of time." The "event history" (*histoire événementielle*) that he is criticizing is "totally lacking in time density".¹⁸ Indeed, serial history, the *longue durée*, and conjunctural history are generally regarded as the characteristic features of Braudel's scholarship and that of the *Annales* during its "second period."

However, a closer reading of "*Histoire et Sciences Sociales*" reveals a more nuanced appreciation of the event or short term. "Nothing, in our opinion," writes Braudel, "comes closer to the heart of social reality than this lively, intimate, constantly recurring opposition between the instant and the long-term".¹⁹ In the midst of his discussion of the exceptional importance of the *longue durée*, Braudel recovers the event or the short-term. This openness to the event is nowhere expressed more clearly than in *The Mediterranean* itself:

Events are the ephemera of history; they pass across its stage like fireflies, hardly glimpsed before they settle back into darkness and as often as not into oblivion. Every event, however brief, has to be sure, a contribution to make, lights up some dark corner or even some wide vista of history. Nor is it only political history which benefits most, for every historical landscape – political, economic social, even geographical – is illumined by the intermittent flare of the event.... I am by no means the sworn enemy of the event".²⁰

Here Braudel's treatment of the event draws our attention to the plurality of social time rather than the *longue durée* in itself. Outside of plural time, the event "blinds us with clouds of smoke." But within the plurality of social time, it finds its place, if only a limited one, through its relation to the changing totality of temporalities. In Braudel's words: "Each 'current reality' is the conjoining together of movements with different origins and rhythms. The time of today is composed simultaneously of yesterday, of the day before yesterday, and of bygone days".²¹ From this perspective, the "exceptional value" of the *longue durée* is its role in conceptually and practically ordering the relation among diverse temporalities within the totality of social time. Indeed, in his discussion of Sartre's biographical analyses of Tintoretto and Flaubert, Braudel suggests that the study of a specific case can lead from the surface to the depths of history. He comments that Sartre's inquiries would better parallel his own "... if the hour-glass were turned in the two directions, from the event to the structure and then from the structures and models back to the event".²²

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BRAUDEL, Fernand. History and the Social Sciences. In: BURKE, Peter Burke (ed.). *Economy and Society in Early Modern Europe: Essays from Annales*. New York: Harper, 1972. p.14–15.

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Ibidem, p.13.

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BRAUDEL, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World... Op. Cit.*, vol.II, p.901.

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Idem. History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée...Op. Cit.*, p.182.

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BRAUDEL, Fernand. *Histoire et sciences sociales. La longue durée. Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, vol.13, n.4, p.751, 1958.

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AGUIRRE ROJAS, Carlos Antonio. *La Escuela de los Annales: Ayer, Hoy, Mañana*. Barcelona: Montesinos, 1999. p.141-170.

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Pierre Chaunu defines serial history as "a history that is concerned less with the individual fact (the political fact, naturally, but also the cultural or economic fact) than with the repeated element [that is], therefore integrable into a homogeneous series, and immediately susceptible to being the object of classical analytical procedures of mathematics, susceptible, above all, of being linked up with the series habitually utilized by the other sciences of man (CHAUNU, Pierre. *Historia cuantitativa, historial serial*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987).

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KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985. p.107. GRENIER, Jean-Yves. Expliquer et comprendre... *Op. Cit.*, p.239.

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POMIAN, Krzysztof. *L'Ordre du temps*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1984. p.76.

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LABROUSSE, Ernest. *Esquisse du mouvement des prix et des revenus en France au XVIII^e siècle*. 2 Vols. Paris: Librairie Dalloz / Repr. Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines, 1933 (repr. 1984). Idem. *La crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Revolution*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1944 (repr. 1990).

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BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse: Genèse d'un modèle d'histoire économique*. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2005. POMIAN, Krzysztof. *L'Ordre du temps...* *Op. Cit.*, p.83-92. GRENIER, Jean-Yves. Expliquer et comprendre... *Op. Cit.*, p.235-243.

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GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. L'expérience historique: Sur C.-E. Labrousse. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, vol.44, n.6, p.1344, novembro-dezembro, 1989.

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BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse...* *Op. Cit.*, p.138-153.

Plural Time and Serial History: Ernest Labrousse.

Under the influence of *The Mediterranean*, Braudel's conception of plural time dominated French historiography during the period of the "second Annales" from 1956-1968 and was closely associated with the practice of serial history.²³ In Braudel's tripartite temporal scheme, the problem that serial history presents is most evident at the level of the *conjuncture*. Whereas the *longue durée* focuses on unique phenomena, serial history is a strongly quantitative approach that is concerned with repetition, regularity, and quantity. It selects and constructs series of phenomena, often through statistical operations, as a function of their repetitive character in order to identify stable spatial-temporal relationships and establish causal relations between them.²⁴ Such structural relations are regarded as integral entities, not as the sum of individual events. Despite the differences between *longue durée* and conjunctural phenomena, both may be regarded as instances of what Koselleck refers to as structural time, that is, "temporal aspects of relations which do not enter into the strict sequence of events that have been the subject of experience."²⁵ By focusing on repeatable phenomena and stable regularities, serial history emphasizes the social and economic over the political, and breaks with practices of arbitrarily determined periodization.²⁶

The methodological issues posed by serial history are perhaps most clearly expressed in the work of Ernest Labrousse.²⁷ Labrousse was interested in the history of France and, above all, the French Revolution. However, he advocated a scientific approach to history through the statistical reconstruction of series of economic and social data, and he sought to explain the origins of the French Revolution through analysis of the economic cycles of the eighteenth century and their consequences. Labrousse was closely associated with Braudel in many respects, although there were also significant differences between their approaches. Labrousse's innovative approach to the history of economic cycles influenced Braudel strongly and is incorporated into the latter's model at the level of the *conjuncture*.²⁸

Labrousse's purpose was not to reproduce an objectively true historical past through documentary criticism, but rather to develop plausible causal explanations for particular historical phenomena, in his case the French Revolution. His experimental approach to economic and social history rested upon empirical observation and description of historical materials. However, it depended not on the interpretation of individual documents but on the establishment of regular relations between repetitive facts expressed in series of related documents in order to construct explanatory models. Labrousse thus privileges the repetitive over the singular, and the efficacy of his approach derives from the reduction of multiple observations to a descriptively invariable type.²⁹

The elaboration of explanatory models required Labrousse to construct a new object of inquiry and to utilize new sources in order to do so.³⁰ Rather than using actual business records and the prices that obtained in real transactions, he went against convention and used the data compiled by the French state in *mercuriales*, or market price lists. Economic historians disparaged the use of *mercuriales* as a source of evidence because they did not reflect the actual activities of economic actors. However, Labrousse argued that the procedures and the checks and balances entailed in the compilation of the *mercuriales* were sufficient to make them a valid

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Labrousse argues that only the *mercuriale*, "based on a considerable mass of transactions, drawn up at least from week to week or from fair to fair, by market professionals [*professionnels du marché*] using identical qualities and following identical procedures, supervised by competing interests, largely purged of minor errors with which it teems by the law of large numbers, can express the price trend in the full elasticity of the market being considered and permits the calculation of a monthly or annual average price. By means of it and it alone can one find, after employing controls and elaborations, ... representative averages, representative of the ensemble of transactions during the ensemble of months during the year as a whole. Account books often only provide episodes of this history" LABROUSSE, Ernest. *La crise de l'économie française...* *Op. Cit.*, p.12-13. POMIAN, Krzysztof. *L'Ordre du temps...* *Op. Cit.*, p.77-78. GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. *L'expérience historique...* *Op. Cit.*, p.1342, 1350.

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GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. *L'expérience historique...* *Op. Cit.*, p.1345-1346.

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LABROUSSE, Ernest. *Esquisse du mouvement des prix...* *Op. Cit.*, esp. vol.II, p.640-642. POMIAN, Krzysztof. *L'Ordre du temps...* *Op. Cit.*, p.80-82. BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse...* *Op. Cit.*, p.209-270.

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BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse...* *Op. Cit.*, p.150, p.186-187 e p.190. GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. *L'expérience historique...* *Op. Cit.*, p.1351.

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GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. *L'expérience historique...* *Op. Cit.*, p.1351.

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Ibidem.

reflection of average prices.³¹ He then statistically manipulated the data in the *mercuriales* in order to construct stable, homogeneous, 'pure' facts by removing all accidental variations and intervening factors. He was thereby able to constitute homogeneous series of facts that are directly commensurate with one another. Such series allowed him to trace the movement of prices and other economic data, and to distinguish economic factors from other intervening factors.³² The resultant curves were directly comparable with one another, and the relations between them could be rationally ordered to disclose explanatory factors and specify the conditions accounting for particular historical situations.

In his two major works, *Esquisse du mouvement des prix et des revenus en France au XVIII^e siècle* (1933) and *La crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Revolution* (1944), Labrousse analyzes the movements of prices and revenues in eighteenth century French economy and provides the classic account of cyclical crises of the Ancien Régime. In these works, he meticulously reconstructs the fluctuations of the price of wheat and other subsistence goods of the mass of the population, as well as of rents and wages during the eighteenth century. He is able to differentiate between a long-term movement, cyclical oscillations, and seasonal movements. However, his analysis is not only economic. He also analyzes the consequences of these price movements for different social categories – nobles, ecclesiastics, bourgeois, and above all peasants. Each movement has a social effect specific to it, while taken together they modify the position of the different social categories. Thus, Labrousse seeks to establish causal relations among the price movements and their effects on various social categories. His analytical procedure identifies the mechanisms that create the crises typical of the Ancien Régime agrarian economy and demonstrates the economic and social origins of the French Revolution in a specific conjuncture of long term and intermediate cycles together with short-term agricultural cycles.³³ This violent conjuncture put pressure on popular, above all peasant, subsistence and incomes as it drove proprietors, Church and State to increase exactions on the populace.

For Labrousse temporality is at once an instrument of research and an organizing principle of historical processes. It is an analytically powerful tool that enables him to reconstruct temporal movements and economic cycles and to identify ruptures, accelerations and reversals. However, his close identification of the conceptual and the real creates tension in his approach. A statistical tool – the average – is the link between the reality of things and the constructed representation produced by scientific discourse. His statistical construction of the "real" movement should result in an analysis capable of grasping representative economic mechanisms.³⁴ According to Labrousse: "Statistical knowledge – with its elaborations of averages and averages of averages, at once as close to the concrete and as representative as possible – is in its way conceptualization of the real" (*Le prix du froment en France au temps de la monnaie stable (1726-1913)*). Réédition de grands tableaux statistiques. Introductions et notes, par E. Labrousse, R. Romano, F.G. Dreyfus. Paris: 1970, XLV, cited in Jean-Yves Grenier e Bernard Lepetit).³⁵ Grenier and Lepetit argue that this perspective creates a degree of ambiguity in Labrousse's work. At times, he treats the average as if it is at once an abstraction and an effective reality.³⁶

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BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse... Op. Cit.*, p.121.

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Ibidem, p.191-193.

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Ibidem, p.193-194. GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. *L'expérience historique... Op. Cit.*, p.1352-1355.

40
LABROUSSE, Ernest. *Esquisse du mouvement des prix... Op. Cit.*, vol.II, p.640-641.

The close identification of the real and the conceptual in Labrousse's approach creates two sets of difficulties for historical analysis. Labrousse's methodological procedure entails the construction of stable facts, elaboration of the object of inquiry, and analysis of explanatory factors. He constructs a model of the interaction of prices, production, profits and salaries not to establish universal causal laws, but to causally analyze the particular effects of specific economic movements.³⁷ By privileging price, Labrousse successfully identifies price movements of various durations and amplitudes and constructs temporalities. He seeks to determine the distinct economic significance and particular mechanisms of action of each temporal movement and then reconstitute the relations among the particular movements.³⁸ In the statistical manipulation of data to construct the object of inquiry, cyclical movements are constituted in relation to the movement of the *longue durée*. Likewise, social variables are constituted in relation to price through categories of revenues, wages, etc.

Thus, Labrousse's model is unilaterally oriented toward prices movements, above all that of the *longue durée*. However, the first difficulty derives from the fact that price has no explanatory power in this scheme. Rather, it is taken as the result of supply and demand that is itself presumed as given and remains unanalyzed as an historical relation. The model treats the effects of price, but what produces price beyond simple supply and demand is eliminated from consideration. Because the social is constructed as the effect of the economic, the articulation of the economic and the social is one-sided and loses its explanatory value. The temporality specific to the social disappears, and economic relations themselves are treated unilaterally without regard to social determinations. As the model so closely approximates the real it is difficult to evaluate the data. The danger in this procedure is that the order of causality and structure of dependency may be constituted a priori in the formulation of the object of inquiry. In such a case, the various movements are functionally integrated around the *longue durée*, which assumes causal primacy. Thus, there is a tendency towards tautology. Both the approach and its temporal categories may be reified. Causal explanations then risk being reduced to descriptions of the mechanisms revealed by the series themselves.³⁹

Despite these tensions and ambiguities, Labrousse's statistical manipulation of repeatable facts enables him to establish regular and stable economic and temporal relations and to indicate the structural causes and conditions of the revolution. However, it also creates the second difficulty. The very assumptions of his approach necessarily produce a residue of unstable and non-repetitive facts that are external to the explanatory categories. This residue can only be accounted for as sequences of accidental and highly contingent events that cannot be integrated into his model and must be explained by other means. This duality between regularities and irregularities, structures and events is evident in Labrousse's account of his analysis of the French Revolution:

... the general characteristics of the crises under the economic ancien régime, the solidarity through which they are manifested, their aggravation in 1789 [which is] attributable to the violence of the cyclical movement and the movement of the *longue durée*, permit us to better evaluate the pressure exerted by the economic milieu on events.⁴⁰

Here the structural relations between economic cycles account for the revolutionary crisis. The events of the Revolution are removed to the second plane. In their critical evaluation of Labrousse's work, Grenier and Lepetit note that: "accidental causality does not appear as an element that is outside of the explanatory rationality. Rather it is a necessary complement to the determination of regularities. This form of endogenization is the mark of a causal insufficiency.... The event loses its creative novelty and change is no longer a category to be thought." In their view, the functional causality of regularity is opposed to accidental causality. The event is thought by means of the event and the singular is reintroduced as an element of the interpretation.⁴¹

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GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. L'expérience historique... *Op. Cit.*, p.1354-1355. BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse... Op. Cit.*, p.196-197.

42

DUMOULIN, Olivier. Aux origines de l'histoire des prix. *Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, n.2, p.507-522, 1990. BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse... Op. Cit.*, p.147-153.

43

HAUSER, Henri. *Recherches et documents sur l'histoire des prix en France de 1500 à 1800*. Paris: Slatkine Reprints, 1936 (repr. 1985). p.37-45.

44

Ibidem, p.1-2 e p.71-72. GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. L'expérience historique... *Op. Cit.*, p.1342. BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse... Op. Cit.*, p.152.

45

HAUSER, Henri. *Recherches et documents... Op. Cit.*, p.72.

46

Ibidem, p.71. GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. L'expérience historique... *Op. Cit.*, p.1342. POMIAN, Krzysztof. *L'Ordre du temps... Op. Cit.*, p.77.

47

LABROUSSE, Ernest. *La crise de l'économie française...Op. Cit.*, p.171. GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. L'expérience historique... *Op. Cit.*, p.1351. POMIAN, Krzysztof. *L'Ordre du temps... Op. Cit.*, p.78.

The appearance of Labrousse's *Esquisse du mouvement des prix* in 1933 provoked sharp criticism by Henri Hauser, France's preeminent economic historian. The debate took place between 1936 and 1939 in the context of the meetings of the *Comité international pour l'histoire des prix*, an international project for the study of price history under the direction of economists Sir William Beveridge and Edwin F. Gay.⁴² It pitted an older positivist and ideographic event history against Labrousse's innovative structural and statistical approach to historical interpretation.

Hauser, director of the French section of the *Comité international*, challenged both Labrousse's sources and their role in historical interpretation. He rejected Labrousse's use of *mercuriales* and argued that private documents – registers and account books of actual enterprises – were superior to them as sources for economic history. Further, Hauser defended a traditional approach to the critical examination of individual documents as against Labrousse's statistical and nomothetic approach.⁴³ For Hauser, the purpose of price history was to illuminate social conditions and ultimately to describe the type of life of individuals.⁴⁴ More specifically he argued that:

... at least in the times before the generalization of industrial civilization, it is the accidental, of place or of time, that dominates the reality of economic life. Man does not live by averages or by variations of the *longue durée*; he lives by real bread, sold at such a price for such a weight at such a moment. Consequently we will give all the curves in the world for the humble chronicle where the clerk of the tribunal, the parish priest, the noble landowner has inscribed week by week the price of grain, of wine, of meat. The infinite detail of these entries, the sharp and multiple variations that they register, reveal the general facts to us, that is, during epochs of bad communications, empirical agriculture, and submission to meteorological accidents and finally political insecurity, the same *setier* of wheat varies enormously from one year to another, sometimes from one month to another, and from one parish to a neighboring parish.⁴⁵

"In history," Hauser emphasized, "the only science is of the particular".⁴⁶

In response, Labrousse insisted on the value of the repetitive fact, his statistical approach, and the new perspectives that it provided for economic and social history: "... here the repetitive has more human value than the accidental. In economic history, differently from what is observed in other branches of history, all that is important is repeated".⁴⁷ In the course of the debate, Labrousse's approach was validated. Hauser and an older event history were never able to fully confront in their own terms the new methods or the new interpretive framework put forward by

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PARIS, Erato. *La genèse intellectuelle de l'oeuvre de Fernand Braudel: La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II (1923-1947)*. Athens: Institut de recherches néohelléniques, Fondation national de la recherche de Grèce, 1999. BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse... Op. Cit.*, p.150.

49

BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse... Op. Cit.*, p.170-180 e p.200-203. GRENIER, Jean-Yves. *Expliquer et comprendre... Op. Cit.*, p.227.

50

GRENDI, Edoardo. *Repenser la microhistoire?*. In: REVEL, Jacques (org.). *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996. p.233.

51

The dialogue between structural time and microhistory, of course, continues with the initiatives for a "fourth *Annales*" associated with Jacques Revel, Jean-Yves Grenier and the late Bernard Lepetit (*Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. n.44, novembre-décembre, 1989; AGUIRRE ROJAS, Carlos Antonio. *La Escuela de los Annales... Op. Cit.*, p.190-212). GINZBURG, Carlo e PONI, Carlo. *The Name of the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historical Marketplace*. In: MUIR, Edward and RUGGIERO, Guido. *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. p.1-10. GINZBURG, Carlo. *Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It. Critical Inquiry*, vol.20, n.1, p.10-35, 1993. LIMA, Enrique Espada. *A micro-história italiana. Escalas, indícios e singularidades*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2006. p.64-85.

52

FURET, François e LE GOFF, Jacques. *Histoire et ethnologie*. In: *Méthodologie de l'histoire et des sciences humaines*. Vol.2 of *Mélanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel*. Toulouse, 1973. p.231, cited in GINZBURG, Carlo. *Microhistory... Op. Cit.*, p.18 e p.21; GRENIER, Jean-Yves e LEPETIT, Bernard. *L'expérience historique... Op. Cit.*

53

LEVI, Giovanni. *On Microhistory*. In: BURKE, Peter (org.). *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991. p.109.

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Ibidem, p.95-97.

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Levi continues: "The reduction in scale is an experimental operation precisely because of this fact, that it assumes that the delineations of context and its coherence are apparent and it brings out those contradictions which only appear when the scale is altered. This clarification can also occur, incidentally, as Jacques Revel has rightly observed, by enlarging the scale. The choice of micro dimensions arose as a direct result of the traditional preponderance of macro contextual interpretation, in view of which it was the only possible direction to take". *Ibidem*, p.107.

Labrousse.⁴⁸ Labrousse's work introduced the new nomothetic approach of serial history. This approach not only influenced Braudel, but also dominated "second *Annales*" from the 1950s to the 1970s.⁴⁹

Italian Microhistory and the Reinvention of the Short-term

Within the context of this emphasis on plural time, serial history, and the methodological significance of the *longue durée*, I would like to turn to the short term and particularly Italian *microhistoria*, associated with such figures as Carlo Ginzburg, Giovanni Levi, Edoardo Grendi, and Carlo Poni. Not a school or a systemic approach, what has come to be known as *microhistoria* in Italy is described by one of its main practitioners as a "community of style".⁵⁰ It developed as a response to serial history as practiced by Fernand Braudel and the French *Annales* school, with which it has maintained a complex relation even while following an independent and, in a certain sense, opposite path of development.⁵¹

Italian microhistory may be seen as an attempt at renewal in response to what was seen as the ossification and exhaustion of serial history in the 1970s. Central to the formation of the microhistorian's project was their critical engagement with the *Annales* school, and especially the conceptions evidence and documentary interpretation, causality, and the construction of temporality that characterize the practice of serial history. Through what Carlo Ginzburg refers to as a process of "equalization of individuals," serial history disregards particulars and cognitively recognizes only what is homogenous and comparable.⁵² In the eyes of the microhistorians, such a procedure with its concern for regularities implies, at least tacitly, a homogeneous conception of time and causality that produces continuity between levels. Plural time could be interpreted as a stable hierarchy where each temporality simply unfolds on the axis formed by the one superior to it. In which case the whole approach risks producing a functionalist account of historical change, a history of structures and structural transformations.⁵³

In response, Italian microhistorians have engaged a highly experimental and, indeed, eclectic set of historiographical practices whose common thread is a self-conscious reduction in the scale of observation. They embrace the singular, the peculiar, the out of series, the anomalous, and engage in close analysis of highly circumscribed phenomena such as a village community, a group of families, or an individual person, event, or object. However, their concern with reduction in scale is not a preoccupation with the local and small-scale systems. As Giovanni Levi writes, "... it becomes immediately obvious that even the apparently minutest action of, say somebody going to buy a loaf of bread, actually encompasses the far wider system of the whole world's grain markets." Rather, reduction in scale is an experimental and analytical procedure whose purpose is to reveal previously unobserved factors.⁵⁴

Thus microhistorical practice entails intense methodological and historiographical experimentation with the short-term, the local, and the particular. It is as if the microhistorians are intentionally looking through the wrong end of the telescope. The radical reversal of perspective and reduction in scale illuminates otherwise undisclosed relations and processes. Microhistory seeks to discover "the social context in which an apparently anomalous or insignificant fact assumes meaning when the hidden incoherences of an apparently unified order are revealed".⁵⁵

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Ibidem, p.94. Histoire et sciences sociales. Un tournant critique. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, p.1320, 1989.

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LEVI, Giovanni. On Microhistory... *Op. Cit.*, p.94.

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GINZBURG, Carlo. Microhistory... *Op. Cit.*, p.96-125, esp. p.105-107.

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"It seems to me that microhistory moves more firmly towards the non-quantitative branches of mathematics in order to furnish *more realistic* and less mechanistic representations, thus broadening the field of indeterminacy without necessarily rejecting formalized elaborations" (LEVI, Giovanni. On Microhistory... *Op. Cit.*, p.109, my emphasis).

By analyzing the contradictions within prescriptive and an oppressive normative systems, microhistory seeks a more realistic account of social action. There is no automatic mechanism through which actors align themselves with structural transformations and shifts. Rather, "all social action is seen to be the result of an individual's constant negotiation, manipulation, choices and decisions in the face of a normative reality, which though pervasive, nevertheless offers many possibilities for personal interpretations and freedoms".⁵⁶ Individual and collective strategies, choices, and negotiation are interpreted in close relation to their contexts but cannot be reduced to them. Microhistorical approaches are concerned with the exercise of relative freedom "beyond, though not outside, the constraints of normative systems."⁵⁷ This individualizing perspective produces results that possess what Ginzburg describes as an "unsuppressible speculative margin".⁵⁸

Conclusion: Ordering Historical Time

Within the interpretation that I am proposing, the results of microhistorical research may be seen as the world historical individual. Each microhistorical site or instance is necessarily different from the others and none can be reduced to the general conditions. Such instances are spatially and temporally dense, complex, and multifaceted points of convergence, confluence and concentration of multiple temporalities. Here we may perhaps see Braudel's rationale for wanting to encapsulate the event in the complex and volatile structure of the short term. The microhistorians have taken us far beyond the understanding of the event as simply a temporal structure with a distinct beginning and end, which is interpreted through narration. Rather, we may see in the work of the microhistorians what Reinhardt Koselleck refers to as the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous. This perspective leads to a radical redefinition of "context." Rather than the external "background" against which the short-term unfolds, the *longue durée* and *conjoncture* are actively present as structuring agencies shaping constraints and possibilities.

Microanalysis thus gives access to the highly particular and local conditions and environments in which agencies are formed and strategies for social action are deployed. It allows us to contextualize acting subjects at the intersection of multiple spatial and temporal levels and establish the specific conditions and relations that form actors and actions. It thereby gives specific content to Marx's dictum that men make history but only such history as it is possible for them to make. But, with apologies to Giovanni Levi and the microhistorians, the microhistorical is no more "real" than other levels of spatial temporal analysis.⁵⁹ It too is a reconstruction. It is simply capable of greater degrees of complexity (at the expense of its range of applicability) and is more adequate for certain problems.

The microhistorical project discloses the discontinuity and heterogeneity that is necessarily a part of plural time. The microanalytical, the *temps courte*, maintains its individuality. The results of fragmentary and singular microhistorical analysis cannot automatically be transferred to the more general structural spheres and vice versa. (Though they are necessarily produced through one another.) If we were to stop here, we would achieve the theoretical reconstruction of specific historical complexes, the reproduction of the world historical individual as the concentration of many determinations. Such historical reconstruction is

necessarily a part of world historical social science – the concrete analysis of the concrete situation as one twentieth-century thinker put it.

But particularization is not the point. Within the methodological assumptions of world historical social science, of a world systems perspective, we gain knowledge by the continual movement back and forth between the general and the specific, the macro and the micro, repetition and difference. What the microhistorians have yet to do is, in Braudel's phrase, to turn the hour-glass over the second time, that is to say, to reverse the methodological procedure and examine the *longue durée* and structural time through the lens of the short-term, the local, the particular, to do what Michael Zeuske calls microhistory as "world history from the perspective of the individual".⁶⁰

Such a procedure recalls Terence Hopkins' discussion of the ground and figure movement. Reflecting on the methodological approach of world-systems analysis, Hopkins writes:

I have in mind the figure-ground movement, where if one refocuses what was figure becomes ground and when one refocuses again, what was ground becomes figure. For us, the figure-ground movement seems to take place between social relations and agencies of action, between role and relation. I think that the methodological relation with which we work is that our acting units or agencies can only be thought of as *formed*, and continually re-formed, by the relations between them. Perversely, we often think of the relations as only going between the end points, the units or acting agencies, as if the latter made the relations instead of the relations making the units. Relations, generally, are our units and acting agencies are our backgrounds. At certain points in conducting analysis, it is of course indispensable to shift about and focus on acting agencies; but I think we too often forget what we have done and fail to shift the focus back again.⁶¹

In contrast to Hopkins' world-system approach and other "structural" histories, long-term structures are commonly treated as ground and short-term structures and acting agencies are taken as figure. However, differences in scale are methodological differences, not ontological differences. Reversal of this treatment of the relationship between ground and figure is both possible and necessary if we are to comprehend the multi-layered and asymmetrical spatial-temporal relations forming units and acting agencies. (Indeed, in these terms, we may think of Braudel's innovation as just such a reversal – taking the *longue durée* as figure rather than ground.) The microhistorical approach itself seems to hold open such a possibility.⁶²

Nonetheless, as Hopkins cautions, it is important not to reify the units and agents and treat them outside of the relations through which they are formed. Insofar as we view temporal units of observation quantitatively, that is, as units of homogeneous time of varying duration, such units are commensurate with one another and therefore comparable. At the same time, we must keep in mind that there are qualitative differences between such units. They are constituted differently and embody different explanatory logics. Consequently, they cannot be simply transposed or substituted for one another. Rather, we must take into account both similarity and difference as we shift ground-figure relations and continually move back and forth between different analytical levels in order to grasp the complexly structured spatial-temporal relations constituting the social historical world.⁶³

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ZEUSKE, Michael. *Skaven und Sklaverei in den Welt des Atlantiks, 1400-1940: Umriss, Anfänge, Akteure, Vergleichsfelder und Bibliographien*. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006. p.9.

61

HOPKINS, Terence K. World-Systems analysis: Methodological Issues. In: HOPKINS, Terence K. e WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel (org.). *World-Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982. p.149.

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Carlo Ginzburg contends: "Though pretensions to systematic knowledge may appear more and more far-fetched, the idea of totality does not necessarily need to be abandoned. On the contrary, the existence of a deeply rooted relationship that explains superficial phenomena is confirmed the very moment it is stated that direct knowledge of such a connection is not possible. Though reality may seem to be opaque, there are privileged zones – signs, clues – which allow us to penetrate it" (GINZBURG, Carlo. *Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm*. In: *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989. p.123).

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BORGHETTI, Maria Novella. *L'Oeuvre d'Ernest Labrousse... Op. Cit.*, p.167.

Such a reversal of procedure yields insight into the complex, highly mediated, historically uneven character of world historical processes. They reveal how structural and cyclical temporalities do not produce uniform results, but local difference and global heterogeneity, even results that run counter to the general trend. They are simultaneously unifying and differentiating processes.

Turning the hour-glass the second time allows us to move back to the world historical whole, reconstituting it through the complex historical interrelation of phenomena. The perspective of the *longue durée* and world historical analysis allows us to systematically move back and forth between specific and general relations and, taking as our point of renewed departure the concrete relation, the historical interrelation, interdependence and mutual formation of specific complexes of relations within the world historical whole. Here, methodological hierarchy does not imply a causal hierarchy. There is no fixed causal structure. Such a back and forth movement entails the manipulation of spatial and temporal scales and the deployment diverse analytical and interpretive strategies within the framework provided by the *longue durée* in relation to the particular problem at hand.⁶⁴ Such procedures entail a double movement. They allow us to specify particular historical relations and processes in time and space as we reconstitute the spatial temporal complexity of the world historical whole. In this way we may reconstitute the world economy as a concrete historical whole and, by incorporating unity and world historically produced difference, reconstruct the highly mediated and historically uneven relations of world historical processes as we live them.

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AGUIRRE ROJAS, Carlos Antonio. *La Escuela de los Annales... Op. Cit.*, p.200.