The article departs from the difference between two types of historical writings, one narrating stories about actors and the other trying to bring about evidence that justify claims to know certain things about specific aspects of the past. From the Iliad and the Odyssey, telling stories have been a common way of presenting past events. Inscriptions and annals, as well as graves and monuments, urged to present posterity with evidence for acts and occurrences.

Storytelling was always more popular than searching for evidence. In the 19th century, historians began to systematise their doubts about the truth of many stories. This source criticism has been refuted by many “historical theorists” in the late 20th and the early 21st centuries with the argument that claims that it is impossible to bring truth about the past and that all history is to be regarded as a kind of literature with, at best, symbolic “truth”. I want to reject this standpoint as based only on an internal “theory of history”-discourse and ask for analyses of actual historical research, which claims to produce new historical knowledge.

**Abstract**

The article departs from the difference between two types of historical writings, one narrating stories about actors and the other trying to bring about evidence that justify claims to know certain things about specific aspects of the past. From the Iliad and the Odyssey, telling stories have been a common way of presenting past events. Inscriptions and annals, as well as graves and monuments, urged to present posterity with evidence for acts and occurrences.

Storytelling was always more popular than searching for evidence. In the 19th century, historians began to systematise their doubts about the truth of many stories. This source criticism has been refuted by many “historical theorists” in the late 20th and the early 21st centuries with the argument that claims that it is impossible to bring truth about the past and that all history is to be regarded as a kind of literature with, at best, symbolic “truth”. I want to reject this standpoint as based only on an internal “theory of history”-discourse and ask for analyses of actual historical research, which claims to produce new historical knowledge.

**Keywords:** narration, telling, evidence, inference, theory of history, philosophy of history, historiography, representation, construction, memory, source criticism, postmodernism
References

1. Ankersmit F. Introduction: History and truth. Journal of the Philosophy of History, 2013, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 257–265. doi: 10.1163/18722636-12341253.
2. Ankersmit F.R. Narrative logic. A semantic analysis of the historian’s language. Doct. Philos. Diss. Univ. of Groningen, 1981. 241 p.
3. Paul H. Hayden White: The making of a philosopher of history. Journal of the Philosophy of History, 2011, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 131–145. doi: 10.1163/187226311X555491.
4. Paul H. A loosely knit network: Philosophy of history after Hayden White. Journal of the Philosophy of History, 2019, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 3–20. doi: 10.1163/18722636-12341413.
5. Boedeker D. Early Greek poetry as/and history. In: Feldherr A., Hardy G. (Eds.) The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Vol. 1: Beginnings to AD 600. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2011, pp. 122–147.
6. Foote S. Annals and chronicles in Western Europe. In: Foot S., Robinson Ch.F. (Eds.) The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Vol. 2: 400–1400. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2012, pp. 346–367.
7. Grell Ch. History and historians in France, from the Great Italian Wars to the death of Louis XIV. In: Rabasa J., Sato M., Tortarolo E., Woolf D. (Eds.) The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Vol. 3: 1400–1800. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2012, pp. 384–405.
8. Article on Madame de Sévigné. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_de_Rabutin-Chantal,_marquise_de_S%C3%A9vign%C3%A9.
9. Article on Madame de Staël. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germaine_de_Sta%C3%ABl.
10. Article on Mary Wollstonecraft. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Wollstonecraft.
11. Rühs F. Entwurf einer Propädeutik des historischen Studiums. Berlin, Realschulbuchhandlung, 1811. 274 S. (In German)
12. Blanke H.W. Historiographiegeschichte als Historik. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1991. 809 S. (In German)
13. Torstendahl R. The Rise and Propagation of Historical Professionalism. New York, Abingdon, UK, Routledge, 2015. 258 p.
14. Marx K. Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. (Rohentwurf) 1857–1858. Anhang g 1850–1859. Berlin, Dietz, 1953, xvi, 1102 S. (In German)
15. Marx K. Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Bd. 1–3 (1867–1883). Berlin, Dietz, 1958–1959. (In German)
16. Spengler O. Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte. München, Beck, 1918. Bd. 1: 572 S; Bd. 2: 652 S. (In German)
17. Toynbee A.J. A Study of History. Vol. 1–12. London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1934–1961. 576 p.
18. Lyotard J.-F. La condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir. Paris, Minuit, 1979. 109 p. (In French)
19. Torstendahl R. Den historiografiska revolutionen 1960–1990. Lund, Studentlitteratur, 2017. 206 s. (In Swedish)
20. Wallerstein I. The Modern World System. Vol. 1. New York, Acad. Press, 1974. xiv, 410 p.
21. Torstendahl R. Historiography and theory. In: Mankov A.E., Dubovitskaya M.O. (Eds.) S liubov’yu k nauke. K jubileyu T.A. Toştendal’-Salychevoi [With Devotion to Scholarship. For Tamara Torstendahl Salycheva on Her 75th Anniversary]. Moscow, RGGU, 2021, pp. 84–101. (In Russian)
22. Torstendahl R. What is the objective of “theory of history”? Filosofiya. Zhurnal Vysshei Shkoly Ekonomiki, 2020, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 93–112. doi: 10.17323/2587-8719-2020-3-93-112. (In Russian)