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Boundaries of Contemporary History

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Special Editors of the Thematic Issue

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Introduction
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The present issue is the outcome of a conference held at the Péter Pázmány Catholic University on October 21, 2015. The title of the conference was "Boundaries of Contemporary History." It was organized by the Research Group for Social History of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Péter Pázmány Catholic University in Budapest with the aim of bringing together historians interested in questions of theory and method in the study of contemporary history. The complex problem of the present, considered as a specific perspective for historical writing, constitutes a considerable challenge for historians all over Europe. The dangers inherent in the public use of history require a resolute strategy on the part of academic history in defense of its roles. Has the maintenance of some control or at least influence over the excessive and uncritical use of different kinds of memory, which has been one of the consequences of the overwhelming rule of the present over contemporary societies, become one of academic history's main functions, especially given the increasingly palpable need of contemporary societies for various and at times conflicting forms of nostalgia? Or has history itself, as has been claimed by several influential authors, become a form of memory? The inquiry into the boundaries of contemporary history concerns both the specific scientific conceptual framework of the writing of the history of the present and the limits of a period of time in human history formed by social and political factors which are constitutive elements of our present and which cannot be historicized yet as forces of a bygone era (in other words, a period of which we have living memories, not only historical accounts). The studies in this issue examine the peculiarities of this period and the institutional, conceptual framework of a professional history which is compelled to maintain a balance between social demands for memory (and identity) and its own methodological criteria. They also explore questions concerning the status of contemporary history among other branches of historiography and other present-centered social sciences. They seek to further a deeper understanding of the work and roles of historians as members of the community of professional scholars and as citizens who are attempting to orient themselves and their audiences in the maze of the present with the potential help of history.

Present Times Concerning Things Past:
On Recent Conceptions of Memory

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> „Wer nicht von dreitausend Jahren
> Sich weiß Rechenschaft zu geben,
> Bleib im Dunkeln unerfahren,
> Mag von Tag zu Tage leben."
>
> J. W. v. Goethe

After sketching modern experiences and visions of historicity, the present study outlines two fundamental modes of our relationship to present time and memory. In an ideal typical way, two theoretical conceptions are contrasted for this purpose. A radical system theory of time presumes that there has been a rupture in the human temperament, which has opened our understanding of time functionally by focusing in an accelerating manner on the future. The cultural memory paradigm asserts the existence of the individual as a genuine part of remembering communities, who draws orientations from the past. In the terms of the Hegelian philosophy of history, we have here the pragmatic representation of the past for the sake of efficiency on the one hand and the search for an internal order of the most heterogeneous events for the sake of discovering continuity in human activity on the other.

Keywords: philosophy of history, system theory, cultural memory, relation to the past, presentism

In this essay, I pose questions concerning time and, more narrowly, the ways in which, recently, we have come, essentially, to relate to our memories. I begin with a presentation of the modern shift in historical conciousness (1) and then, based on a theoretical design outlined by G.W.F. Hegel in his philosophy of history (2), offer a discussion of two fundamentally different concepts of time and memory which strive to grasp in a consistent ideal-typical way the potentials of the modern era for assessing perspectives of time. Both take the present as their point of departure, but they assign different roles to the past. One presumes that there has been a rupture in the human temperament (3), while the other firmly asserts the existence of the individual as a genuine part of communities (4). Among the ways in which we relate to past, a third possibility also recurringly appears, but it seeks a radical withdrawal from the world of events.

Modern Experiences and Visions of Historicity

In an era marked by a seemingly infinite proliferation of differences which, according to diagnoses based on the most varied approaches, break the inner and outer human world into spheres that seem increasingly independent of one another, a longing for continuity and interconnection among the pieces emerges with renewed strength. In a life-world of "contingency" and "fragmentation", which on a temporal horizon that has been brought into motion both sensually and spiritually strike an era named (without any classification of events based on content) modernity, the search for orientation falters between the present and the past in order to gain perspective for the future, which is regarded as open. But neither the present, which is permanently in motion, nor the past, which is seen as inexhaustible, offers any certainties that seem beyond doubt.[1]

Of course, these empiric and semantic changes of historicity only cause problems of immediate urgency for a manner of relating to the world that seeks to situate itself in time, as it were. Greek antiquity significantly aspired to attain solid models ("ideas" and "forms") considered eternal and therefore worthy of imitation, so that it could realize them in evanescent time. The Judeo-Christian notion of divine "providence" sacralized some of the events of the world into a story of redemption, but it could only give them religious significance with the appeal to faith in the idea that "nothing happens except by the will of God." For the early Christian, the existence of the Roman empire was for the most part an uninteresting contingency: the "heavenly city" was an inner issue.[2] The man of the time did not have a developed sense of the theological significance of the prevailing order of the imperial milieu, much as there was no real recognition of the thought of the broad historical horizon and the fertile social soil as a potential sociological precondition of the spread of the new religion. Anticipations aligned with the presence of the "end of times," which seemed to be prefigured and were indeed institutionally represented. The primary reference points of memory, however, were given by the correlation of the history of the Jewry, which was led by God, to the events of the last days in the life of Jesus as promises fulfilled.

As the Western world becomes increasingly open to purely secular approaches (on the basis in part of its own—political, scientific etc.—efforts

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1   See e.g. Makropoulos, *Modernität und Kontingenz.*
2   Augustine: *De Civitate Dei,* Books XVII–XVIII. Important exceptions include Origen (III) and Orosius (IV–V).

and in part of the gradual consent of religion),[3] for a long time people thought to find valid handholds in time, seeing themselves on the heights of development as they progressed along a path from a rudimentary but clearly identifiable past to a valuable near-future, designated from the outset. The philosophy of history projects of the modern era unfold the large-scale whole that continues to hold together the spheres of the world that function according to independent principles: global economic growth, global political unification attains in the universal world history the consummation of the principles of humanity that are claimed and hoped to be general. History understood in the singular, as the notion of a unity that goes beyond the multitude of separate histories, can develop as the horizon of humanity, rich with meaning.[4]

From a rather formal perspective (in other words beyond geographical, historical, economic, and ideal elements), the birth of "modernity" seems just to begin with the discovery of temporality, understood in the strict sense: the future can be filled with acts that are seen as not bound to the past, in terms of the experience and anticipation of a kind of "never has been before."[5] The logical foundation of this idea and also its philosophical-historical cornerstone is an understanding of the original temporality of human existence. All this attains its fully developed form in the existentialist projects of the "moments" that require life-shaping decisions and personal "life plans," as the task of the person "thrown into the world."

Of course, the rise of a genuine historical consciousness always sees the phenomena of culture either as in an incipient form or in decline and ruin. The search for that what is generally valid is thrown into suspicion afresh by the always possible critique that can on its own terrain attack reason and rationality as the supposedly highest authority. Herder's caution was made at a time when the most ambitious world history projects were forming: "in a certain respect, every human perfection is national, secular, and, if most closely considered, individual."[6] Thus, the questions concerning "essence" are replaced by the question concerning "formation" and "development": metaphysics loses its priority of place to geneaology. The longing for the unified and the unconditional have ever since been washed away again and again by the unpredictable whirlpool of history, from which religious faith, which is increasinly considered irrational

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3   On these processes, see Max Weber's study on Protestant Ethic.

4   See Koselleck, "Historia magistra vitae," 26–42.

5   Koselleck, "*Neuzeit,*" 222–54.

6   Herder, "Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit," 509.

compared to the rationalities of the world, continues to seek a way out, stepping from the familiar relevances of the world of everyday life into other worlds of meaning.[7] Reflection taken to the power of infinity has captured the generalness of principled thinking, and in its cunningness and refinement it is capable of finding—i.e. "reflecting"—everything in everything. The strength of and hope in unity is shattered by plurality, both in the inner and the outer worlds. What was once held to be the unity of reason unravels into a diversity of rationalities, which remain a worthy object of renewed attempts to make rational insights.[8]

The formula offered a century ago by Jacob Burckhardt, who pondered the nature of world history, today is only occasionally overwritten by visions of history garbed in scholarly guise: "history, that is coordination, is not-philosophy, and philosophy, that is subordination, is not-history."[9] Every exit from this circle of thought is "transcedence" in the most original sense of the word. Intellectual efforts to join the various worlds are given new momentum again and again by the human will for comprehensive unity and meaning.

The impossibility of an inner-worldly desertion from time, in other words the impossibility of a perspective that allows for total overview, makes reality accessible only through mediations and furthermore makes knowledge of that what happened a process that can never come to conclusion. Giving up on post-metaphysical aspirations that are bound to theories of knowledge or to the clarifying of the capabilities of human reason, the craft of interpretation, which comes near to the status of an art, gains ground under the label of "hermeneutics". In the process of thinking on thinking, the one-time and present sights of the world appear as "concepts" or "visions" of the world. The relationship between facts and interpretations is increasingly reversed: according to the most logically consistent formula, "there is no such thing as a pure fact" and every fact is an interpretation from the outset.[10] For reason, which itself is becoming a historically situated phenomenon, progressively unfolding world-*understanding* consistently proves to be renewed world-*interpretation*. Knowledge put into human molds is a world-transforming achievement. Thus, sources also do not speak for themselves, but always wait to be called on by the present

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7   Schütz, "On Multiple Realities," 207–59.
8   Schnädelbach, *Vernunft,* 137.
9   Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 17.
10   For the most extreme position, see White, *The Content of the Form.* According to White, the same series of events can be narrated legitimately in the most varied genres, from the satire to the tragedy, the comedy, and the romance.

to speak. Perspectives are offered by our own subjective relevances: setting out from them, the infinite plenitude of events, which in itself is structureless and unbroken, takes form. The way in which one relates to the past is always established in the present, and this makes it impossible, for reasons of principle, for consciousness today to draw a clear line between the two. If now it is not the past—the pure past, as it existed before it was discerned—that survives for the actual present, then the "enigma" of time is centered in the present, instead of the historical-philosohical future, which bore the hypothetical potential of fulfilling everything.

Saint Augustine's famous arguments, which in his thinking still fit in the context of the development of an inner man who maintains a direct relationship with God, preshadow with a force that lasts to the present day our most modern way of relating to time: „But even now it is manifest and clear that there are neither times future nor times past. Thus it is not properly said that there are three times, past, present, and future. Perhaps it might be said rightly that there are three times: a *time present concerning things past;* a *time present concerning things present;* and a *time present concerning things future.* For these three do coexist somehow in the soul, for otherwise I could not see them. The time present of things past is *memory;* the time present of things present is *sight*; the time present of things future is *expectation.*"[11]

According to this understanding, past, present, and future are three aspects of a *present* in which difference has arisen even with regards to itself. If time, as the "expansion of the soul", is an inner matter for man, there is in principle nothing to prevent the internal rift of "time present concerning things present" from becoming deeper, and the reflective-intellectual work of centuries does indeed attain this. The transformation of the idea that everything has an ordained time and that the rhythm of events beats at a consistent tempo, into an eternal-human "form of observation" (Kant) was crowned by the notion of time as a continuously shifting pattern of human relations and our shared simultaneities and non-simultaneities as a well-articulated symbolic order.[12] The present, which had once been regarded as a direct given, thus becomes the present of the "contemporary-world" ("Mitwelt"), invested with meanings, while the past that is suited to the present is a "predecessor-world" ("Vorwelt"), ever more distant in the generational chain and continuously shifting in its significance.[13]

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11 Augustine, *Confessions,* Book XI/20.
12 Cf. Elias, Über die Zeit.
13 Schütz, *Strukturen der Lebenswelt,* 129.

The relationship to the past is humanly nurtured "culture"; the ever shifting manner of dealing with time is a question of "strategy." According to this, the main question concerning our current manner of relating to the past—beyond the idea of mere mapping, which increasingly counts as little more than an illusion—is not the dependency of historical knowledge on point of view, but the actual weight of the present in comparison with what has taken place, or, conversely, the power of historical awareness to shape the present.

A Hegelian Typology of Grasping History

In the introduction to the most broad philosophical world history ever written, Hegel offers an overview of the possible ways of writing history. Thus, "reflexive history" goes beyond the naïve primitiveness of the great masters of history writing, who dissolved in their own present. This reflexive history extends from the simple anachronism through *a pragmatic representation of the past* to the *search for the internal order and unity of events* in a given circle of humanity. The philosophical approach, which supposes a reasonable progression of events, steps up onto the highest rung of history so that its presupposition prove necessarily true in the coherent progression of events and their presentation.

The treatment of the past, which was becoming a matter of scholarship, seeing the a-historical unfairnesses and totalistic consequences of absolute measures, devoted itself increasingly to the partial interconnections of inner-worldly events, and, in the thrall of "pure facts," for a long time it considered the discovery of the "actual" events its primary task. Science, which was more sensitive to differences, ruptures, and ommissions, demonstrates the fictional nature of the intellectual edifices of unity. However, for self-reflective historical consciousness, a reading of the memory traces that have palpably survived increasingly proved a form of reconstructive work done on the basis of the sources. The abstractive gestures of science proceed from the primary constructions of the everyday world, constructions with which the debate community, which is skeptical of everyday evidence, is incapable of breaking entirely, its experience in practical "disinterestedness" notwithstanding.[14] Because of the uninterruptible dialectic of terms and events, history writing that aspires towards universality itself remains in part in the sphere of influence

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14   Ibid., 245–59.

of the retrospective "mastering of the past." Any deposit of the past, whatever form it takes, cannot be definitive.

Regarding the hierarchy of cognizance established by Hegel, the paths to direct accessibility of events and the discernment of their necessity in the meantime have been obstructed. Two possible procedural perspectives remain in the potential spaces of recollection, more narrowly understood: the effectiveness of memories correlated to particular (economic, political, religious, or even artistic) partial presents in the respective environment and, on the other hand, the horizon of meaning of the commemorated past, again and again contoured from the present. Although both projects use the implements of historical criticism, the focus of the first is actuality, which ensures functionality, by excluding memories that are dispensable to this. The focus of the latter is the manifold presence of guarded and concealed pasts, and the derivation of the future from some kind of origin.[15] As we will see, all this is not independent of our possible ways of relating to ourselves either.

According to an originally sociological insight, the sense of acceleration which comes from the proliferation of groups which transect one another in a single individual brings a new rhythm to the succession of events in the past and the succession of events today. The apocalyptic attitude bound the fulfillment of promises to the merciful arrival of the end times and the unexpected curtailing of history. Among the driving forces of the acceleration, which is also self-propelling, the faith in the expedient transformability of a progressive world is intertwined with the intensification of traffic and the proliferation of contacts. The increase in contents of consciousness for a single unit of time and the rapid change in patterns of behavior and associations have brought about an "intensification of sensed-life" and in general a fundamental transformation of human time.[16] In any case, the shocking experience of the compression of the present, which is experienced as something in a continuous state of acceleration, assails with tremendous force the tradition of learning from continuous narratives.[17] History loses its quality and role as teacher: expectations concerning the future cannot be derived on the basis of acquired experiences. The new present—according to the first project, which is becoming more and more dominant—selects the

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15   On the latter thought see Marquard, "Zukunft und Herkunft," 45–58.

16   See Rosa, *Beschleunigung,* 243. Koselleck, "Gibt es eine Beschleunigung der Geschichte?," and idem, "Zeitverkürzung und Beschleunigung," 150–202. Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes,* 696, and idem: "Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben," 227.

17   See Rushkoff, *The Present Shock.* Nyíri, "Historical Consciousness in the Computer Age," 75–83.

requisite accessories of functioning in the spirit of efficacy, if necessary even from the distant past. Our strategic use of time fits well into the frameworks of a manner of relating to the world based on domination—while in the servile dialectic of human and time it is increasinly difficult to find a handhold.

The Forgetful Memory of Efficacy

Let us consider for a moment the first option: systems theory sociologist Niklas Luhmann has provided the most consistent theoretical examination and at the same time self-reflective look at the *pragmatic perspective*. Each of the social system-worlds, which are increasingly separating from one another, is built on a particular distinction: according to a bivalent code, it selects or—more precisely—creates its own elements, events, and borders in its separation from its immeasurable environment. Science selects truth, economics selects the profitable, religion selects the transcendent in the face of falsehood, the unprofitable, and the immanent, and so on and so on in each of the various systems of the system-worlds. In the meantime, communication embraces the systems, which are closed within themselves, i.e. they are "self-referential": the borders of the social world are denoted by the borders of communication. If continuity is thus nothing more than the bearing of the systems on themselves, then the task is the connection of the communicative acts that are just taking place to the previous ones in the interests of maintaining the own system.

The system functionings, however, are no longer structured into a unity by any central ordering project. In Luhmann's model, the systemic place of identity is occupied ever more consistently by difference: the abstract and paradoxical fundamental principle is "the difference of identity and difference".[18] Correspondingly, the divergent motions, which since they were first discerned have been expressed with metaphors of "fragmentariness," "fluidity," and "mobility", find structured theoretical form as "differentiation". The systems, which become independent without any internal relation, live their own, separate times, so to speak, which for the personal experience of the world finds manifestation in the impossibility of harmonizing individually and communally the spheres of life. Various system times of varying pace and rhythm come into being between the cosmic world-time and the personal lifetime, which are of differing scales from the outset. The simultaneous multitide of non-simultaneous

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18   See Luhmann: *Soziale Systeme,* 26.

system presents compete for the inclusion of the communicating participants—i.e. even for their creation as communicational partners. For "psychical systems" (which were once called "consciousnesses"), which also count as independent (because they function within their own spheres of thought), participation in the various projects renders establishing and ordering themselves within the temporal differences of the many kinds of present an increasingly unmanageable task: hindering the dispersion of differentiation, in other words synchronizing the presents, is a challenge that puts the "psychical system" to the test. The increasingly fast-paced differentiation of the systems, which by this time are preoccupied with themselves, place our own observational position (which distinguishes the task immediately to be performed from all tasks that must be neglected) under ever stronger pressure to select. "Not to act is lost time."[19] Complexity, which continues to build with ongoing differentiation, features the omitted selections as postponable. But while the future which belongs to the prevailing present becomes unattainable, as it were (and bears an ever larger quantity of decisions),[20] it contracts and becomes increasingly short because of the increasingly uncertain expectations. The evolutionary logic of the process of variation, selection, and stabilization may imply temporality, but the necessity of maintaining the system does not tolerate delay.

In the present which has become permanent not only the "future cannot begin,"[21] the continuous communicational uncertainties of the continued functioning of the systems make uncertain the status of the past. For the systems, "now", which becomes ever shorter in the difference between "before" and "after", borrows a kind of eternal present tense without duration: the diminuation of the duration of the elements to a point—already ephemeral in their moment of coming into being—is an elementary interest adequate to the irreversibility of time.[22] If the present is now the paradoxical unity of the difference of the past and the future, the possible point of origin of novelty,[23] then for the assurance of functionality the past appears less and less as the present reality of what has taken place. The past which has been chosen by the system as its own (a past which for a long time was called "tradition") thus can reach the present, but its contents, depth, and pace contuinuously change

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19   Idem, "Temporalisierung von Komplexität," 280.

20   Idem, *Soziale Systeme*, 70.

21   Idem, "The Future Cannot Begin," 130–52.

22   See idem, "Temporalisierung von Komplexität," 242, 296.

23   Idem, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft,* 1004.

according to the exigencies of the given present. For the time of the *everyday*, the ever-developing technology of data storage, which is increasingly incapable of forgetting, tends to account for *historical* time, while the appeal to history becomes an incidental question. For the principle of functionality, the *historical-causal* continuity of the past is merely a question of expedience. Because of the inexhaustibleness of causal interconnections, the selection of reasons that would be worthy of being taken into consideration in a given case falls, furthermore, to the incidental observer.[24]

If, however, in the compression of time the present continues to lose its expansure, how does the space for memory take form? The re-use of successful experiences—in other words the selection of what has been selected before, the repetition of tried and tested differentiations—of course is possible anytime under favorable circumstances; in this way, the self-regulating system wins time, so to speak. The intensification of complexity, however, increasingly hampers a purely redundant self-creation. Thus, according to the explanation given by the systems theory sociology of knowledge, instead of a differentiation between the tranquility of eternity and the restlessness of change, a model origin and uncertain transformations, in the historical approach of the modern era a temporalized self-description of society appears and comes to culmination. As we already know, history "comes into being if observation of socially important events is made with consideration of the difference of before and after."[25] Historical consciousness lets the present emerge out of the past, but—paradoxically—it founds the only possible identity on constantly shifting differences. Instead of spatiality, the semantics of temporality corresponds well to the functional differentiations of the social world: the sense for "formations" and the "processes" that gave rise to them (instead of the "essence" of "things") and "originality" (instead of "origin") become information for the present. Memory does not seek orientation simply in historical succession, but rather it makes its way towards an understanding of the past which makes the present visible as a "space for action," in which the novelty of the future can be born of novelties past. The problems of the actual present are none other than the always peculiar differences between the past and the future. Seen from the perspective of systems theory, the demand for continuous rewriting of the past (a demand

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24   Ibid., 1011.
25   Ibid., 573.

striving for originality) stems from the search for novelty hidden in the one-time evolutionary variations, i.e. ruptures.

Given all this, it is hardly coincidental that Luhmann closes his presentation of the eventually timeless evolutionary logic of systems with a discussion of memory.[26] The presentism of system memory that prevails in the name of functionality makes selections from the endless material with consideration of the functioning of the given system: it forgets anything and everything that it doesn't happen to need at the moment and remembers only the one thing that gives continued momentum to communication. Thus, the primary function of memory is, paradoxically, forgetting, even if the self-description of society continues to the present day to be wrong about this. The stakes are not the coherence of events, but rather the consistency of the systems which is open to new impulses and disturbances—a consistency, which in the social world sometimes can even be served by historical coherence. However, with the obstruction of forgetting, the culmination of earlier results into "identity" can lead to the destruction of the system. Recently, the concept of "culture" has been called on, as the horizon of comprehensive comparisons (instead of stable identity), to ensure at least similarity, in spite of every difference. Culture, as a vessel that is formless in and of itself, is supposed to receive world contents, but at most it is capable of duplicating them by their external observation. Today's "culture" of the past is the memory of the social system, which of course is quite aware of its character as memory. This twofold reflection, the consideration of what has been bequeathed as tradition, sheds light on the double contingency of the particular past: that it could have evolved differently, and something else could have been selected. With ordered remembering (for instance the guidance of historical comparisons), culture tries to adapt to the increasingly complex social system-world. Systems thinking instead calls on us to observe "who uses what differentiations in order to offer his past for the future."[27]

In society understood as communication, instead of the bearer of memory, whether personal or group, the media of memory become important.[28] Writing steps past the narrow sphere of oral communication, which is bound to rites and formulas, and the potentials of repetition as means of maintenance. With its tremendous power to record, it makes the improbable probable and ensures

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26   Ibid., 576.

27   Luhmann: "Kultur als historischer Begriff," 41, and idem: *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft,* 587, citation 593.

28   On the undermentioned, Luhmann, *Die Realität der Massenmedien,* and Esposito, *Soziales Vergessen.*

the connection of the communicational events that are just beginning with those that preceded them. If time can no longer be organized by acts committed eye to eye, then "previous" events can be taken from the most distant past if a written trace of them has survived. *Concrete* time, wich comes into being in the duality of events transpiring and events completed, point-like and continuous, and is considered essentially spatial, is succeeded by the *abstraction* of the distance between eternity and temporality: the increasing validity of the increasingly distant texts thus creates transcendence. In the wake, however, of the process by which the revival from the archives of contents that were recorded earlier (in other words memory) becomes increasingly independent of the circumstances of their birth, not only do untouchable canons come into being, but, ever more distant from the sacral centers, the arbitrary application of the written word becomes possible. In recent times, the increasingly independent systems of the mass media have realized this potential, which was always inherent in writing, amidst circumstances of increasingly open access. Since everything that ever happened and is now happening can be present in an accessible manner for anyone in timeless simultaneity, the past counts exclusively as re-presentation. The communications that exist in a continuous present increasingly distinguish the information of "novelty" from the redundancies of that which is "old," which is why it is increasingly difficult for the past to find any settled form.

Naturally, the logic of differences does not leave the *deliberate* observer (the participant in and observer of events) untouched. What was once "man" proves to be a plethora of systems: the internal life of his consciousness separates from his social participation in communicational systems on the basis of principle. Only the self-interpretations of eras that were built on less efficacious differentiations (up/down, us/them, man/world) could cling to the idea of the unified consistency and continuous content of people and groups.

The Committed Remembrance of Significance

Turning now to one of the characteristic recent versions of *some internal order and unity of events*, amidst the newest precepts of thinking concerning the possibilities of cognition, even the project of "cultural memory" can no longer abandon the perspective of the present. In an era of intensifying differences, however, the overview of the present can be ensured not only by the pragmatics of systemic persistence but also by passing the temporal paths that lead to us. By abandoning any unconditional cognition for its own sake, we make the past that

is significant for us the object of our own perspectives. The designated objects are selected by interest that is alleged to be shared from the endless quantity of material. We mold the phenomena that surround us into some kind of unity with regard to their antecedents. In our time, with its eminent interest in history, the things that are thus uncovered also play a role in the memory of the world that lies beyond the scientific world, namely as a story built into the present. The present acts of memory in this approach evoke historical determinations or at least conditions. Jan Assmann opposes his own project of "cultural memory" with the presentism of forgetting, on the basis of the "non-simultaneity of that what is simultaneous".[29]

"Tradition" is one of the antecedents of the search for historical continuity, i.e. the notion of preserving and passing on the bequeathed. The modern project of education and refinement *(Bildung)* as omni-sided self-development establishes as its goal both reception of the broadest register of cultural phenomena and the creative transformation of the world, seeking a balance between the two that is not defined from up close.[30] For philosophical history, which in the end strives to seize the indispensable whole of past, present, and future, "self-conscious rationality" is nothing other than the setting for rational development, "the saint chain that crosses events past." Tradition understood thusly gushes onward across shared material and intellectual/spiritual edifices.[31] However, this totality, though in motion, proved impossible for humankind to carry.

For the doubts concerning the transfer of what has been entrusted to us and the questions of content concerning balance continue to proliferate if transience assails the reliability of the processes of cognition at the roots. The clarification of knowledge, which is to say the movements of the modern era that seek to lay its general foundations, throw into question first and foremost the original prestige of ancientness and the higher value of historical developments, in the midst of the external breaking of the old orders. The fundamental operation of reliable foundations and at the same time free self-determination will be an abstraction increasingly independent of contexts. However, at almost the same time, adherence to transformations characterized as "organic development" and the consciousness of crisis, which because of the uncertainties has come to rule, raises the value of the ideal of tradition. The counter-movement of

29   Assmann, "Nachwort," 400–14.
30   See for instance Friedrich Schiller's letters on Humanism and aesthetic education in: Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education,* 53–57.
31   Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie 1,* 21.

historical Romanticism in the end undertakes the creation of tradition, expecting an artificial stability even from invented traditions.[32] In the end, however, the consequentiality of dehistoricization can unveil every order of historical interconnection as mere construct.

With the reappraisal of the techniques of hermeneutics, a lastly philosophical project came into being that—reckoning with the inaccessibility of "the world as it is in itself"—seeks knowledge amidst the recent conditions of mediatedness. In accordance with the genuine interpretedness of our manner of relating to the world, the interconnections of meaning or "webs of significances" (C. Geertz) end up in the competencies of man analyzing the stock of historical tradition, and himself mirrored in it. The art of hermeneutics, which presupposes ambiguity, developed into a comprehensive interpretive culture. For Gadamer, the last stop of the search for a path in multiplicity, which could be reached by the bypass of "foreignness," was the "fusion of horizons": "even where life changes violently, as in ages of revolution, far more of the old is preserved in the supposed transformation of everything than anyone knows, and combines with the new to create a new value."[33] The culture of hermeneutics, the roots of which lie in the sacred texts of the Western world (and which became a proper way of life because of continuous and inevitable translation work), presents connection with the ever increasing rows of traditions and the bearers of tradition as unavoidable.[34] The fact that even reason becomes first historical and then linguistic shows the enormous power of history over our thinking.

"Narrated" or "remembered" pasts strive ever more to compensate for the present's loss of orientation.[35] Disenchanted history in singular proliferates into histories of meaning. Identity must draw its limited substance from stories that establish a future, at the risk of untranslatability and un-interpretibility. Both anxiety and foresight motivate the manner of relating to the world (which is increasingly resigned, even in despite of any engagement), which takes on the particular having-become as its own past. Time is not a constant category of human reason, but rather a form of meaning with varying rhythm and density

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32   See for instance Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," and idem: "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914," 1–14, and 263–308.

33   Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode,* 286.

34   See Reinhard, "Die hermeneutische Lebensform des Abendlandes," 68.

35   On the notion of compensation see Ritter, "Die Aufgabe der Geisteswissenschaften in der modernen Gesellschaft," 105–40.

which, against the background of intended and unintended events, is formed by common interpretations.[36]

For the memory paradigm of coherence, the adequate manner of relating to the past is a continuous reconstruction of the interconnections of meaning of events bearing on us. According to the memory sociology of Maurice Halbwachs, which became something of a project paradigm itself, this task, which is indispensible from the perspective of the present, was always guided by the prevailing demands of groups. Time, born as social reality, is organized by the present, commonly lived and inhabited by the members of the group: thus everything falls out from it that, lacking meaning, does not settle within the actual referential frameworks of group life. The force of memory derives not from the past, but from the need for belonging. The place won in the community of memory, which is born as a community rooted in common sentiments and dispositions, ensures everyone who belongs to it spatial substance and temporal content.[37]

Jan Assmann regards the past that is embedded in face to face contact, i.e. the vistas of communication that can be seen for three generations, as the broadest possible accessible situation of "culture."[38] The present of cultural memory can relate not only to the recent past of which account is held in immediate social interaction, but also to the "groundwater-deep"[39] past that is preserved (or, even on the contrary, not preserved!) in memory.[40] With the passing of the participants in conversations about things lived as experiences, the process of the condensation of meaning begins, a process that never comes to a close: "there is no such thing as original memory."[41] "Objective" culture, which has been placed in formed configurations (in other words, culture that has been objectified and institutionalized, the historicized successor to the "objective spirit" of philosophical history), is not an unambiguous message, but rather an intricately manifold world of symbols. The ever changing horizon of meaning

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36   See Rüsen: "Was heißt: Sinn der Geschichte, 17–47. Assmann touches on this: Ägypte, 11.

37   Assmann on Halbwachs for instance, "Erinnern, um dazuzugehören. Schrift" 101–23. Halbwachs on time, *La mémoire collective,* Chapter 3.

38   In his last book touching on this Halbwachs also makes this step, which covers some two-thousand years: *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre Sainte.*

39   Cf. Thomas Mann's famous opening sentence in his Joseph-tetralogy: „Tief ist der Brunnen der Vergangenheit."

40   Assmann devoted a separate book to Thomas Mann's religious theory "book of time," *Joseph and his Brothers.*

41   Assmann, *Exodus,* 101. Also Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis,* 40.

of a given life (acts and experiences) comes into new connections again and again with past events in order to nourish the present with (his)stories of origins, i.e. history made into myth by memory. Acts and experiences take place within the frameworks of the historical world of meaning, which are always in motion.

The memory of the most ancient groups, preserved in rituals and linguistic formula, connected experiences to the foundational mythical ancient time with little more than a few mediatory chain links, thus creating and maintaing their ties and engagements.[42] Festive gatherings lend the significant cadence, which is significant because it always returns as common experience. Writing lends true depth to time, which thus passes less and less in the spirit of the eternal and unchangeable repetition of everything. In contrast with the bards, who are interested in memory literally repeated, the faith of the literate man insists not on the unerrability of what is recited, but rather on some kind of meaning in what is written. Instead of volatile words, re-readable writings contain the treasure chest of meaning, which for groups comprised of individuals is opening to be ever more broad: the contents that can be revived, i.e. that are hoped to be alive. The administrative tool of writing, which in all likelihood was created for everyday storage, becomes a tool for orientation in the cosmic world, which is identified with its own world. In other words, it becomes the setting for culture, understood as cultural memory. This is how writing dons the sanctity of a solemnity that goes beyond the everyday.

Regarding the new manner of relating to time, the fact that writing can be resumed, continued, or forgotten and lost of course induces change, and makes us more sensitive to change. In the emerging written culture, a veritable stream of texts begins to flow in the ceaseless rewriting, writing anew, and continued writing towards inundation. While the ever growing distance of what has been recorded makes it possible to step out of the direct bonds, it also sanctifies unmoveable and inviolable canons. In other words, it designates obligatory points of reference for every cultural practice, which then, driven in part by the fear of the passing of the community of its origins, are taken in hand by the activity centered on the cultivation of meaning, which is tailored to the exigencies of the changing present. The sharpness of the borders drawn in the world of the mentality depends mostly on the intensity of the external or internal threats to the culture perceived as one's "own" and the experiences of

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42   On the following see Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis,* 29–160, and idem: "Was ist das 'kulturelle Gedächtnis'?," 11–44.

rupture. Actual conflicts and sharper differentiations can be projected on each other with increasing intensity. And if history begins to become temporal, the counter-realities that are excluded with counter-concepts can be characterized as belonging exclusively to the past, which from time to time degenerates into their expulsion from the present.[43]

In the end, however, it is not the "spirit of writing" that decides our relationship to events. Slowing the pace of change and maintaining momentum are both cultural accomplishments. One of the functions of the Egyptian list of kings was to show that over the course of the millennia that had passed since the end of the era of the gods nothing worthwhile had happened. The need for power to rest on descent or inheritance could find a strong buttress in the notes of the initiated specialists of memory, notes which were intended either to give an impression of timelessness or to serve forgetfulness. In contrast, individualities and particularities that were considered significant gave impetus to the institutionalization of movement: this intellectual attitude, which served essentially as the foundation for historical consciousness, can be tied most adequately to expectations and hopes of oppressed situations.

The newest form of a genuine relationship between memory and identity is the attempts to draw ourselves from historical time: immersion into ourselves is also immersion into histories. Our culture has thus widely become a culture of memory, in which the self-image of the people and collectives remembering is formed by the events that have taken place involving them and the narratives of these events. Historical memory has become the primary forum for self-assertion and self-preservation, which makes historical developments (which always demand reconstruction) internal. It is not simply that "we are what we remember," but rather, according to the consequentiality of the idea of historicity, because of the fundamentally temporal nature of our being, we strive to acquire knowledge of ourselves first and foremost by narrating histories. In the orderly system of narratives, we assure ourselves again and again of "our own roots and goals, truths and dreams."[44]

Historical memory borne in communities of meaning is thus called on to mediate between "facts" and "reconstructions": to create, through rereading, the order of common experiences. Giving up on grand narratives, it strives to look both forwards and backwards in histories that can be narrated, driven by

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43   On the latter idea see Koselleck, "The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts," 155.

44   Assmann, *Exodus,* 10.

the compulsion for ever-changing re-narration. Today, historical scholarship is also taking part in the debates concerning the work of memory, with greater sensitivity to ruptures instead of continuity and plurality instead of unity. This distinctive positive reassessment of history is tied to precursors from cultural Protesantism. Christianity understood as cultural history seeks to convince itself of its own absoluteness in the face of the relativizing force of history: we should become that which the fertile forces of the West enable us to be.[45]

However, according to Assmann's exemplary case study, the more distant socio-cultural precursors of our preeminent culture of memory are to be sought in the biblical narrative: the primal model and foundational story for our historically based culture of memory is the story of the exodus from Egypt.[46] For Israel, the meaningful form of time is determined by the significance-rich stories of the wanderings with God. The anthropological-cultural factor of memory here is filled with significant contents not by the closedness of a cosmic order, but rather by a process guided by the divine. The compactness of culture, in which power and salvation, truth and righteousness come together in a unity that in principle cannot be broken,[47] breaks open in ancient Israel. The plethora of inscriptions recording the behavioral prescriptions in the late Egyptian temple protect the ancient Egyptian regulations of life from change, even in the midst of threats and experiences of foreignness.[48] In contrast with the community that has been anchored in the cosmos and with its self-image, which in the end has become iconographically stabilized, the notion of continuity developing in created and creating time is an achievement of world-historical importance. The narrative books of the biblical redaction draw the bearings of the own essence and proper action not from some unhistorical primal time, but rather from the datable past. The commandment to remember in Deuteronomy is a paradigm of unity and belonging that is drawn from the events of this world (significant time-myths). In the soil of political vicissitudes and historical traumas, in the wake of the unraveling of the framework-precepts of the old order of meaning, they recall the memory of a covenant that was reached with a divine party but

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45   In one of the most determined projects of prevailing over historicism *within* history, theologue Ernst Troeltsch claims to find the indisputable superiority of Christianity in his comparative study of the whole of history. At this point, Christian theology becomes cultural scholarship. See Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte,* and Graf–Hartmut Ruddies, "Ernst Troeltsch: Geschichtsphilosophie in praktischer Absicht," 128.

46   Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis,* 196–228, most recently in idem, *Exodus.*

47   Idem, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten,* 177, and idem, *Herrschaft und Heil.*

48   Idem, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis,* 177.

which in the meantime has been forgotten.[49] God remains faithful to the people led out of the counter-world of Egypt and keeps his promise to its descendants. According to the account, which is of dubious historical credibility, the book of the covenant, which unexpectedly rises from oblivion, prompts the shaken king Josiah to return to Yahweh. The powerful stories of sinfulness and liberation become symbolic figures of memory, which originally were born by a kingdom striving to assert legitimacy and a small monotheistic religious movement. In opposition to the terror of forgetting, it becomes necessary to develop a technology of memory that chisels into the heart.[50] The history is made theology by the counter-stories of figures of commemoration of liberation. The event of the covenant between God and his people demands ceaseless "chiseling into the heart, confirmation, and teaching":[51] the prophets read the twists of fate as consequences of faithlessness; the everyday order of reviving memory is canonized by the continuous editorial work of the priesthood.

At the same time, Assmann performs a backtracking of the memory traces which are often beneath the surface, unconscious, or simply suppressed, by ascribing them to the primary differentiations of our own culture. Thus, light is also cast on their unfortunate consequences, consequences which intellectual attempts were made again and again to interrupt, for instance by appealing to a counter-history. The very influential counter-memory of the cosmo-theist unity set in opposition to the monotheist unity, the figure of the "Egyptian Moses," always reemerges from memory,[52] which then seeks a broader Ecumene than the Mosaic distinction between true and false religion. The outlines of the structural intolerance lurking in monotheism's demand for exclusiveness emerge out of the contrast of a counter-world based on a divergent principle (compactness in the absence of differentiation), the serious precondition of which is that the conquered are willing to correspond to the dominant pantheon, organized according to similar functions.

The theoretical withdrawal from a history highly significant for us (taken backwards in time) leads to a fundamentally different world, the time structure of which presents a different model. For the order of time valid for the world that preceded and surrounded the biblical world (i.e. for the traditional consciousness of time in ancient Egypt), the present was nothing more than the past, present

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49   See for instance Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft,* 257.
50   See Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewisch Memory.*
51   Assmann, *Exodus,* 117, cf. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization.* 79, 196, and 272.
52   Idem, *Moses der Ägypter,* and idem, *Die Mosaische Unterscheidung.*

in the present.[53] In every ruler, the predecessors continued to function in that the ruler kept both the country and the world as a whole in momentum, linking tomorrow to yesterday. The individual human life takes place with its back to the future, gazing towards the past. Gratitude felt for good deeds links it to the community, while with its acts it builds its own monument. According to morality inherent to time, the real sin is not breaking the promise concerning the future, but rather forgetting the past.[54] The distance from the era of mythic ancient images does not grow smaller with the passing of time. A past, strictly understood, is only supported by an unexpected break of what was, until it was ruptured, a whole. For Egypt, the foreign rule of Assyria and Persia meant the intrusion of chaos.

With regards to the aspects of time of the cultural memory of the West, in its biblical framework, the impossibility of ever bringing retrospection to a close implies a past that is always to be understood in the plural. Myth "is renewed together with every shifting present, which wins a new tinge of meaning out of it."[55] Myth wins its uninterrupted renewal from the wealth of versions of memory and counter-memory, since in this wealth old and new, disclosed and obstructed, built and buried, canonical and apocryphal, orthodox and heterodox come into tension with one another.[56] Fundamental dualities run throughout the biblical text itself: the desert in contrast with the city, Israel in contrast with Judea, the state in contrast with religion, prophets in contrast with priests, the exclusiveness of Exodus in contrast with the universality of creation. If the subversive and excluded remain part of memory (which is often beneath the surface), then the articulation of contents bursting from the unconscious and the vanishing of narrative contents into the background never come to an end. "Even that which is new can only appear in the form of the reconstructed past."[57] The alternative past, which creates a contrast with the present, creates non-synchronicity, in which the primary present can be turned out of its corners with "saving" counter-stories.[58]

As a countermove to the overly strong demand for coherence, the work of drawing nigh and distancing is constantly underway: in the process of narrating

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53 On the following see idem, *Steinzeit und Sternzeit*, 261.

54 Idem, *Herrschaft und Heil,* Chapter 7.

55 Idem, *Exodus,* 101.

56 See idem, "Was ist das 'kulturelle Gedächtnis'," 38.

57 Idem, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis,* 42.

58 Ibid, 78, and 222, with reference to the concept-formation of Protestant theologue Gerd Theißen, "contra-present memory".

ourselves, we present ourselves as if in a mirror in a new history again and again. Although the project of "cultural remembering" speaks about and to the person living the present together with others as it unfolds in histories, our validities are always tied to given groups and their narrations of history, which immediately throws their origins into uncertainty. Origin as some kind of "other" who can and should be addressed is always, superfluously, at our disposal, as it were. In this model, this is the legitimate place for the intrusion of novelty. In spite of the openness to the future, this future, which structures itself through memory, is not the future of the promises of progress, but rather the future of conjurings of the past. Here, the weight of presentism rests on the present concerning things past.

The paradigmatic story of Exodus, of course, is also the Western story of the shared search for freedom.[59] The flight from the symbolic space of "Egypt" is the break from the bad order of servitude and the entry into the order of freedom. This revolutionary story, which is always available for retelling, is the tradition of self-liberation, the roots of which lie in tradition.

In front of finitude, commemoration pulls lines of origin towards its plans, which with regards to the handling of time is a strategy of deceleration.[60] The present, which bears histories, can become overburdened at any time, of course: sometimes with the tremendous compulsion of the past, sometimes with the contingency of its handholds. As a possibility that lies outside the inner-worldly transcendence of the past, the step from the changes into a transcendent state above or beyond time remains. This is an allegedly unbounded project with an existentialist self-projection into the future, in a religious or a secular manner.

A Concluding Remark

On the basis of a still usable typology of G.W.F. Hegel concerning the writing of history in modernity, we have discussed two systematic theoretical attitudes to memory with very opposite relations to the past. The first one is centered preferably around forgetting for the sake of a functional efficacy, while the second draws on significant pasts for the sake of creative stability. Both theoretical programs are marked by a high grade of intellectual consistency and can thus serve even empirical investigations into our modern stance, as

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59   See Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution;* Menke, "Die Lehre des Exodus: Der Auszug aus der Knechtschaft," 47–54.

60   See A. Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition.*

consistency, according to Max Weber, "has and always has had power over man, however limited and unstable this power is and always has been in the face of other forces of historical life".[61]

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61   Gert and Mills, ed., *From Max Weber,* 324.

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A Gaze Focused on Itself: On the Perception of Time in the Writing of the History of the Present

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> "Since the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity."
>
> Alexis de Tocqueville: On Democracy in America

Following in the wake of Reinhart Koselleck's analyses of historical time, the study examines the contemporary history's perception of time. Comparing it with the perception of time in earlier classical periods of historiography and looking at problems of historical memory, the analysis comes to the conclusion that, in the recent development of historiography and particularly in the writing of the history of the present, a new presentist perception of time has become dominant which differs radically from the structure of the perception of time based on a horizon determined by experience and expectation, on which history as an academic discipline was established. Therefore, the writing of the history of the present is no longer a continuation of the roughly 200-year-old story of history as an academic discipline, but a new practice, whose internal characteristics and position among other disciplines which study the society of the present from different perspectives (such as sociology, political science, etc.) cannot yet be regarded as fully clarified.

Keywords: history of the present, contemporary history, perception of historical time, memory, Koselleck

Timothy Garton Ash, recalling how he witnessed an event of the Velvet Revolution in Prague, mused that no historian would ever be in a more advantageous position than he to report on the events taking place in front of him, thus enabling him to acquaint himself with them directly, in contrast with historians who would subsequently try to reconstruct the developments based on partial sources.[1] Koselleck, on the other hand, demonstrates with a specific example that in the early nineteenth century, serious historians rejected a proposal to write an extensive work of history going up to the present. According to the counter-arguments, the conditions of the present were changing too quickly, and they were too rudimentary for historians to capture. Furthermore—and this

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1 Ash, „Introduction."

is the essential point—the appropriate perspective for the study of events was lacking and could only be created through the passage of time.[2] The difference between the two approaches is obvious. The example cited by Koselleck is related to the naissance of history as a field of study. The question is whether Timothy Garton Ash's suggestion, representing a contrasting approach, signals the end of the roughly 200-year-old era of history as an academic discipline. In other words: can contemporary history be considered history at all?

The question might sound surprising at first, as one is aware that there are many historians conducting research concerning the history of the present, much as there are many studies of this area in historical periodicals.[3] However, many researchers embarking on the study of the history of the present have encountered uncertainties or crisis symptoms when attempting to identify the characteristics and position of this discipline.[4] The writing of the history of the present seems to be more obviously problematic in Central and Eastern Europe than elsewhere.[5] The fact that the history of the present is somehow weak compared to the various forms of memory and non-academic representations of history is shown by the long list of complaints raised by professional historians against the memory market.[6] There seems to be an endless supply of various forms of remembrance, and the demand for them is also inexhaustible in Central and Eastern European societies.[7] Professional histories of the present often seem lost in the flood of historical memory and popular history.[8] Against an abundance of amateurish historical books, historical television programs, magazines, traditionalist associations and movements, an abundance of state-initiated (or party-initiated) remembrance policy drives, festivals and other

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2   Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft,* 335–36.

3   For an overview of contemporary history by countries see Nützenadel and Schieder, *Zeitgeschichte als Problem.*

4   van Laak, "Zeitgeschichte und populaere Geschichtsschreibung." According to Nützenadel and Schieder: "[es gibt] noch keinen allgemein anerkannten Konsens über die epochale Abgrenzung, thematisches Profil und methodische Grundlagen der Zeitgeschichte." Nützenadel and Schieder, "Einleitende Überlegungen," 8.

5   See the studies in Apor and Sarkisova, *Past for the Eyes.*

6   Gérard Noiriel complains that certain institutions of contemporary history research the history of large companies on behalf of the corporations, and the companies use the results in their own internal training to create loyalty among employees. Obviously, this does not reflect the strength of the autonomy of science. Noiriel, *Sur la "crise" de l'histoire.*

7   While in East-Central Europe the political challenges seem to be more severe, in Western Europe the economic challenges—or temptations—seem to be dangerous. See: Kühberger and Pudlat, *Vergangenheitsbewirtschaftung.*

8   Korte and Paletschek, *Popular History Now and Then.*

programs organized as part of historical and cultural tourism, the publications written by professional historians seem pale and ineffective. Furthermore, they reach a far narrower audience.[9] Why does history—and in particular the history of the present—sound like a faint voice in the current polyphony of the study and representation of the recent past? I contend that there are two interrelated reasons for the fact that the history of the present is weak and lacks authority. One of these lies in external (cultural, market-based, and political) challenges which have a particularly strong impact on the history of the present in Central and Eastern Europe. The variety of challenges faced by professional historians raises the question of the status of memory in contemporary history and other questions, such as how testimony puts pressure on other types of historical sources, to what extent historiography as academic practice is counter-memory, and how new media have changed the power relations of memory-related and scholarly discourses.[10] It would also be worthwhile to analyze methodically changes in the position of professional historiography in the academic and cultural/political sphere. I cannot embark on such an enterprise of the sociology of science here, I would note that in the twentieth century, historiography played a role outside of the academic sphere considerably larger than the role it has at the present. Both before 1945 and in the socialist era, in Hungary, people in leading positions among professional historians were in many cases influential politicians as well. Kúnó Klebelsberg in the 1920s and Erik Molnár in the 1950s actually guided the work of talented young historians as ministers, guiding them to pursue various fields of research which they considered as important. This would be inconceivable today. Professional historians were often involved in political tasks in the twentieth century, e.g. in areas of cultural policy and undertaking background work for foreign policy during World War II. They also determined or at least influenced the topics of public discourse, and in many cases they simply became politicians. One could cite numerous examples of this from period of the 1989/90 change of regime. Meanwhile, the discourses of history remained strictly academic according to their own norms, and this included the exclusion of texts that did not fulfill the criteria of the discipline from the academic register. Today, in contrast, the borders between historical and political discourses seem to be sadly permeable, primarily from the direction

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9   This fact induces many historians to embark on enterprises on the new market create by the demand for history. See: Hardtwig and Schug, *History sells!*

10   These questions are discussed by the studies in Takács, *Mémoire, Contre-mémoire, pratique historique*. See "Présentation" by Takács.

of the latter. Politicians play significant roles in the inner world of academic historiography, for example founding new institutions the function of which is to shape the picture of the past, while historians play hardly any role in politics or in the public sphere.[11]

But beyond these questions of external challenges, which a reflective history of the present has to face, the main internal reason for the weakness of the writing of the history of the present lies in the implicit premises of history of the present, primarily in its perception of historical time, and in its—actually paradoxical—academic self-definition.[12] Although the problems of the history of the present may be particularly obvious in Central and Eastern Europe, where political actors have often tried to shape the field of the history of the present more directly than in other countries, these internal reasons are of a universal nature and not tied to this region.

Looking through the history of historiography, one finds several key paradoxes. In the nineteenth century and even later, for instance, historiography considered itself an objective academic discipline while at the same time it was one of the implements of the project of nation-building. These paradoxes can actually have a seminal and incentive effect.[13] However, the paradox on which contemporary history is based leads to a misunderstanding which in the current cultural-political constellation makes it ineffective compared to other forms of studying and presenting the recent past. This misunderstanding is related to the foundations on which the history of the present wants to build its authority outside of the narrower circle of professional historians. In this sense, the weakness of contemporary history is not the internal weakness of scholarly production. The history of the present can undoubtedly boast a number of excellent, innovative research projects, and there are productive debates going on within the profession, for instance at conferences and in journals. However, this research and these debates have a very modest authority, persuasive power,

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11   Looking at the conditions of contemporary history specifically, János M. Rainer believes that the profession is unable to earn more room for maneuver for itself on its own unless the social and cultural/political environment changes. Rainer, "…az emlékezet is konfrontálódott a történetírás múltképével …." General overview: Berger, "Professional and popular."

12   Jaap den Hollander expressed the paradoxical epistemology problem of contemporary history as follows: "Can we describe our own Zeitgeist, or would that amount to a kind of bootstrapping à la von Münchhausen?" Hollander, "Contemporary History," 52.

13   Berger, *The Past as History*, 140–224.

or transmissibility to a wider audience.[14] But the crucial point is quite simply that the various players studying and representing the past don't seem to be willing to accept the claim of professional contemporary history to be the judge of the validity of knowledge of the recent past. In certain countries (for example, in Germany), professional contemporary historians seem to hold stronger positions, but elsewhere, they seem to be as weak as their Central European counterparts. In France, according to the diagnosis established by Pierre Nora, history is on the brink of collapse against the flood of the various forms of remembrance.[15] Francois Hartog speaks about the impotence of history replacing the former omnipotence of history.[16] We believe that the root of the problem lies in the transformation of the perception of historical time, which has removed the earlier foundations—a certain structure of historical temporality—to which contemporary history refers, while still defining itself as part of history as an academic discipline.

Perception of Time, Scholarly History, and Contemporary History

Contemporary history as a historical discipline is a relatively recent phenomenon. Nora notes that when he was studying at university, you couldn't write a dissertation on a post-1918 topic.[17] Gérard Noiriel said that in England, before World War I, no scholarly historical works were written on topics from the period after 1837, the year of the first electoral reform. Historical research on the French revolution began in roughly 1889, a century after it broke out. Although the concept and era of contemporary history—which in France still actually started with 1789 and in the United Kingdom originally with 1837—has existed since the beginning of the twentieth century, historians initially were rather reluctant to write about the present, which has been understood as an era the contemporaries of which are still alive.[18] Then, beginning in the 1970s

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14   For a summary of the problems of historiography with respect to memory and the political utilization of the past, see Gyáni, "Történelem, vagy csupán emlékezet." Although Gyáni considers the internal changes of historiography necessary if it is going to prove able to respond to the challenge of memory, on the whole he remains optimistic with regards to its potentials.

15   Nora: "L'histoire au péril de la politique." In Nora's interpretation, the political use of the past is not only associated with politicians, but includes references to the past by civil movements.

16   Hartog, *Croire*, 29.

17   Nora, *L'histoire au péril de la politique*. Jaap den Hollander also notes that in the early 1960s, he was not taught about the preceding fifty years at school. Hollander, "Contemporary History," 55.

18   Noiriel, *Sur la "crise" de l'histoire*, 45–47.

(although not without some precursory works), research on the present era spread very quickly among historians, simultaneously with the rapid expansion of the concept and practices of historical memory. Today, it is no longer surprising if someone writes a historical study about a topic from 20–25 or even only 10 years ago. Memory studies have almost grown into an independent discipline.[19] To understand the reasons and nature for the emergence of contemporary history and the trend of memory, we need first to consider why historiography was earlier reluctant to approach the study of the present.

It is obvious, even on the basis of only superficial knowledge of the historiographers of earlier periods, that historians were not always reluctant to study contemporary events. On the contrary, as Koselleck, who is admirably knowledgeable about the classical authors, demonstrates, historians, from Herodotus to the historians of the eighteenth century, for the most part studied the events of their own eras. This was due primarily to methodological reasons. The present was directly accessible, as the historian himself was an eyewitness or at least could rely on eyewitnesses. If handled with the appropriate caution, eyewitness testimony was considered more reliable than fragmented old documents, which were easy to forge.[20] By the end of the eighteenth century, a contrary approach had taken predominance. As shown by the example cited by Koselleck, by then, historiography had become the discipline of the study of the completed past. Of course, contemporary history continued to exist in the nineteenth century, but only as an inferior field of endeavor in the shadow of history as an academic discipline. It was practiced by journalists and publicists, who, while wanting to take a position amid the complications of the present, also ventured to make forecasts about the future, in an obviously unscientific manner.[21] Historiography, which regarded itself as an academic discipline, considered it impossible to study the present.

It was in the spirit of this (now outdated) perception of history that Nora, the prestigious initiator of research on historical memory, declared in the 1970s that history of the present does not exist. For him, this is history "sans objet, sans statut et sans définition."[22] Nora's statement cannot be ignored, as it is

19   Keszei, "Az emlékezet rétegei."
20   See Lessing's famous formula: "Überhaupt aber glaube ich, dass der Name eines wahren Geschichtschreibers nur demjenigen zukömmt, der die Geschichte seiner Zeiten und seines Landes beschreibt. Denn nur der kann selbst als Zeuge auftreten." Quoted by Hollander, ibid., 55.
21   Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*. 335–36.
22   "Tant qu'il n'est d'histoire que du passé, il n'y a pas d'histoire contemporaine. C'est une contradiction dans les termes" Nora, "Présent," 467.

based on a definition of historiography that was valid for a long time. Historians moved beyond Nora's objection without considering its real weight, i.e. without assessing the change that the emergence of contemporary history brought by disrupting the earlier order of historiography and the perception of historical time. So far, the epistemology of contemporary history has hardly been made a subject of methical study.[23]

Historians who reflect on and write the history of the present tend to define their discipline as one of the branches of historiography, but they must also consider their place alongside other disciplines concerned with the study of the present, such as political studies, sociology, and ethnology. Furthermore, they must address and at the same time differentiate themselves from non-scientific representations of the recent past, often grouped under the term "memory."[24] These definitions of the history of the present implicitly continue to consider as valid the older premises of historiography, on which history as a discipline was established. The strange situation arises because, while the study of the history of historiography has long historicized these premises, i.e. it has explored their origins and analyzed their time-bound operation, whenever these premises are not the subject of study, they are still—half-explained or implicitly—considered the foundations of professional historiography.[25]

There is essentially a consensus that the self-definition of academic, professional historiography in the nineteenth century was based on four interrelated premises. The most important one was the presumption of the reality of history as a linear process in time which can be scientifically examined. The second one was the presumption of a dividing line between past and present. The concept of the fundamental difference between past and present was based on the linear perception of time, in which development—or at least change—makes the earlier conditions obsolete and creates a different present, which in turn is open towards a future as yet unknown. From the perspective of the present, the past—since it has already passed—can only be understood through a methical processing of the sources remaining from earlier times. The third was the assumption that there is a methodology which enables the historian to bridge the distance between present and past by deciphering the sources originating in the past. The fourth premise was that historiography was

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23   According to Jaap den Hollander "the theoretical status of contemporary history [is] enigmatic" and "deserves more theoretical reflection than it has received up to now." Ibid., 51–52.

24   Metzler, "Zeitgeschichte."

25   Iggers, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*. Koselleck, *Vergange Zukunft*.

born as a national science, and this premise provided a fundamental frame of reference or range of interpretation for the findings of historians.[26]

Of these premises, the first and the second are obviously the most interesting from the point of view of the perception of the history of the present. We know from Koselleck's analysis of the space of experience and expectation that the "temporalization" of history took place around the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This created a perception of past, present, and future that made it possible to look at historical time in a linear perspective. It also created the possibility of the idea of progress; as expectations for the future were based on the conviction that the future can be different, the future has to be different to what has been experienced in the past. However, from the point of view of this discussion, the way in which this influences historical cognition is more important.[27] The idea that events appear different to historians from different perspectives has been well-known since the sixteenth century. Now, the idea of perspective has gained a temporal dimension. A theory and practice of historical cognition has been created in which temporal distance is a decisive factor, which makes cognition possible.[28] This was only possible if historiography placed itself at least partly outside of history, or rather at a point beyond the past. Assuming a gap between past and present—the second premise—ensured that the past subjects of study had an existence independent from the present. Phases of history which were already completed could exist as external objects for the historian's scrutinizing gaze in the present. The distance between the historian's present and the fundamentally different past was required for the historian's methodology to work.

It followed from the fundamental difference between past and present as perceived by historiography that the future was also open to change. The present, as the past future of an earlier period, was also unforeseeable once, just as it is impossible to predict the future from the present. This belief in historical change, in which the horizon of expectations for the future was put at a distance from the space of experience, was lacking from the earlier perception of time, which did not expect the ongoing events to bring qualitative changes into the

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26   On the foundations of historiography see Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft,* 9–10, and Etzemüller, "Ich sehe das, was Du nicht siehst." On the nation as a frame of reference see Berger, *The Past as History.*

27   "Die Lehre von der geschichtlichen Perspektiven legitimiert den historischen Erkenntniswandel, indem sie der Zeitfolge eine erkenntisstiftende Funktion zuweist. Geschichtliche Wahrheiten wurden kraft ihrer Verzeitlichung zu überlegenen Wahrheiten." Koselleck, *Vergange Zukunft,* 336.

28   In the words of Michel de Certeau, time has become object and measurement tool at the same time for historians. de Certeau, *Histoire et psychanalyse*, 89.

world of people and things.[29] Only at the end of the eighteenth century, as people started to experience the present as radically different from their earlier experiences and had expectations for a future that would be different from the present, could historiography emerge as a discipline of change, which studied the completed past, which was therefore unalterable, dividing it into periods and interpreting it from a perspective of the present that was external to the past. This historiography could not embark on a historical analysis of the present, as its gaze was only suitable for the study of the completed past.[30] As Arthur C. Danto expressed, especially in response to the complaint that historians couldn't experience the events they are studying, "the whole point of history is *not* to know about actions as witnesses might, but as historians do, in connection with later events and as parts of temporal wholes."[31]

However, in the emergence of historiography, it was not only the relationship between past and present that mattered from the triple structure of past, present, and future. Expectations for the future made the evolution of historiography possible not simply because without them the dissimilarity between past and present would have been inconceivable. The study of the past was not independent from the horizon of expectations, because the gaze of the historian studying the past was directed by expectations concerning the future. This is not to say that expectations for the future were always fulfilled, in fact, they were rarely met, nevertheless, according to Koselleck, the horizon of the future still contributed to determining the present and thereby also to determining what event of the past seemed worthy of study to the historian in the present. However, the future was capable of orienting the historian's work not as a general future, but as the future of something, specifically of the community to which the historian belonged and whose past he was researching. The concept of history would have been inconceivable without the subject of history, and it was most often the nation which had a history. If the historian's gaze had a wider scope, then it was the history of the West.[32]

The practice of contemporary history, I contend, is not based on the four abovementioned premises of classical historiography or the triple time structure of past, present, and future. Its emergence—along with the memory boom—means precisely that this time perception and these premises have

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29   See for example Danto's analyses of Thucydides' perception of time, *Analytical Philosophy*, 22–23.
30   See Etzemüller op. cit. and Jung: "Das Neue der Neuzeit ist ihre Zeit."
31   Danto, *Analytical Philosophy*, 183.
32   Berger, "Introduction."

become outdated. It is therefore possible, however, that history of the present misunderstands itself when it perceives itself as a subdiscipline of history and places its own activity in the line of the history writing founded in the early eighteenth century. The emergence of contemporary history "in a sense ... meant a rehabilitation of the tradition from before 1800." [33]

From this point of view, it is questionable, whether the old historiography itself, in which history was based on the connection between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation described by Koselleck, has by now lost some of its persuasive power. Has it not become increasingly meaningless for today's audiences because the validity of the perception of time on which it was based has become highly questionable? Even more questionable—and this is the focus of this discussion—is whether the history of the present was ever related to the earlier triple time structure which served as the foundation for historiography.

This question is important in the cultural landscape of today, because several defenders of history criticize—in the name of contemporary history, which they still perceive as part of classical historiography—the unprofessional treatment of history, and they continue to attempt to create the legitimate foundations of this criticism by citing their own methodical procedures. On the part of professional historians, the lack of appropriate methodology remains the most important criticism of unprofessional historical representations. Unprofessional museum displays, monuments which evoke the wrong context, distorting documentaries, pathetic ceremonial speeches which draw their expressive force from references to (what is alleged to be) history, and weak historical novels are all criticized for lacking the methodology to create an appropriate context for the recalled elements of the past.[34] But is this an effective way of defending professional history against the challenges of non-professional uses of the past? On what is this defense based, when the foundations of the methodology (which is based on the perception of time and which once made professional historiography able to interpret the phenomena of the past) are also questionable or, rather, according to several diagnoses, have become history and belong to the past? The rise of memory and the more recent studies of historiography make this question unavoidable.

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33   "[C]ontemporary History finally became an academic subdiscipline, complete with its own chairs, journals, and research institutes. In a sense, this meant a rehabilitation of the tradition from before 1800." Hollander, "Contemporary History," 55.

34   For example, Apor, "Hitelesség és hitetlenség."

The Expansion of the Memory Market and the Reactions of Historians

It is worth dwelling on the issue of the trend of memory for a while because it is one of the phenomena which shows how the classical concept of history has become questionable. There have been numerous studies of the evolution of the concepts of historical memory—and historical heritage—and the related phenomena, which spread particularly beginning with the end of the 1970s, and they are usually considered a kind of phenomenon of crisis.[35] There are also numerous analyses describing the trend of remembrance using images of disease, abuse, and natural disasters, such as flooding. These analyses definitely tend to characterize the increased demand for historical memory as a danger for professional history, or they consider it one result of the crisis of professional historiography.[36] This is a very old contrast; Halbwachs, one of the founders of memory studies, contrasted history with memory, primarily based on their different relationship to time. The latter is always related to the living human community, while the former stands outside of all possible communities, and its job is not to remember, but to analyze.[37] Memory maintains an experience of time through which the remembering community lived, while the historian's task, according to Halbwachs, is to reconstruct the temporality of the past, which is independent from any experienced time and from the present as well. Halbwachs believes that if the historian strays into the territory of memory, he will cease to be a historian.[38] Thus, the conflict between historiography and memory was already expressed in the first analyses between the two world wars, and the problem was rediscovered again around the turn of the millennium.

Historiography fundamentally responded in two ways to the memory boom. It either entered the memory market, widening its audience and, naturally, giving its activity a slightly new direction, or it adopted a defensive position. The negative position underlined the fact that the questions of history writing are not

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[35] On heritage, see Sonkoly, *Bolyhos tájaink*, 17–33. On heritage in Central Europe, see Erdősi and Sonkoly, "Levels of National Heritage Building."

[36] Gyáni, "Történelem, vagy csupán emlékezet" ; Rainer, "…az emlékezet is konfrontálódott a történetírás múltképével…"; K. Horváth, *Az emlékezet betegei*; Todorov, *Les abus de la mémoire ;* Revel, "Le fardeau de la mémoire."

[37] According to Pierre Nora, the turnaround whereby historiography abandoned its functions of memory and assumed a critical function—basically associated with the emergence of the Annales school—took place precisely during the period when Halbwachs's analyses concerning memory were being written. Nora, "Pour une histoire contemporaine."

[38] Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, 122–35.

asked by politicians, communities expressing their own needs of remembrance, or the media. If historians settle for positions as servants of the memory market, this might well compel them to abandon their academic principles, even though they appear to gain in terms of the size of their audiences and access to research funding. These views, which are critical of memory, criticize forms of remembrance—such as expositions, rites, memorials, texts, etc.—which seem inaccurate and unreliable from the point of view of academic historiography. There are numerous negative reactions of this kind, representing different attitudes, but similarly conservative in their approach to history as an academic discipline.[39] Péter Apor very clearly pointed out certain characteristics of the concept and cult of memory from the theoretical point of view. He highlighted the tendency of memory studies to lead often to a circulus vitiosus. According to the general approach borrowed primarily from anthropology, the identity of a community is determined by its collective memory, while memory in turn depends on identity itself.[40] Other authors—in accordance with Nora—consider academic historiography merely a kind of remembrance,[41] which, under given cultural constellations which are in the process of vanishing, enjoyed a leading role for a while in shaping the image of the past. From this point of view, the vanishing of the conceptual foundations of classical historiography is not a loss from the perspective of our understanding of the past. Apor, however, disagrees with the idea that any form of memory could represent a more authentic relationship to the past than historiography based on analysis, methodical source criticism, and rational evidence, and he emphasizes that the questions addressed in the historiography do not originate directly in the needs of social communities or contemporaries' interpretations of past experiences. He continues to insist on the scholarly ideals of source criticism, rational verification, and the interpretation of documents in the correct context, which would not retain a secure position in historiography considered as a form of social memory.[42]

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39   Romsics, "Új tendenciák" ; idem, *A múlt arcai*; Apor, "Hitelesség és hitetlenség."

40   Ibid., 164–66.

41   Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, 40–59.

42   Apor wants to enforce the evidence-based methodology supported by rational source criticism, on the basis of which historiography can judge the authenticity of representations of the past falling in the category of non-academic historiography. Apor, "Hitelesség és hitetlenség." But from the point of view of the sociology of knowledge, we can state that there is no rationality or epistemology independent from space and time. The earlier scientific point of view did not come into being in a vacuum; it is not an embodiment of an abstract rationality. So, the validity of this epistemology may not be considered as self-evident in other historical situations than the one in which it was born.

Placing emphasis on the latter scientific approach to history, which assigns a critical role to historiography based on the procedures of traditional methodology, proves ineffective in itself against the demands of memory. As Gábor Gyáni points out, source criticism and other scholarly procedures are not sufficient assurances of authenticity. For our knowledge of the past to be valid, the present must be able to accept it as its own knowledge, which means that it must meet demands from outside the professional community.[43] The space in which the voice of professional contemporary history needs to assert itself and the knowledge generated by historiography needs to have itself accepted as authentic is constituted by representations of what is known as experiences of historical agency and the discursive practices related to the past maintained by the multiplayer memory market.[44] The contemporary history of eyewitnesses and memory takes no interest in the premises and lacks the perception of time on which academic historiography is based.[45] This presents a challenge to contemporary history, which cannot be surmounted simply with insistence on the academic conception of history. But it is also not clear whether contemporary history resting on scholarly foundations moves in the dynamics of past, present, and future, in which professional history once moved, or this time structure has lost its validity even in professional contemporary history. If so, the classical perception of time and the methodology on which it is based no longer provide a reliable foundation for historical knowledge, in which case one may well ask why the historical methodology would ensure a base for the defense of professional history against the memory market.

Has the Past Come to an End?

Renowned historians and thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Reinhard Koselleck, and Francois Hartog have all diagnosed a fracture in historical time and time perception. In a study analyzing the relationship between past and present, Arendt made the following statement about the loss of the continuity of historical time: "[W]ithout tradition—which selects and names, which hands down and preserves, which indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is—there seems to be no willed continuity in time and hence, humanly speaking, neither past nor future, only sempiternal change of the world and

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43   Gyáni, "Miről szól a történelem?."
44   Frank, *Der Mauer um die Wette gedenken.*
45   Wieviorka, *L'ere du témoin.*

the biological cycle of living creatures in it."[46] Her statements made an impact among historians several decades later, after Koselleck's works drew attention to the time structures on which historiography is based. On the basis of Koselleck's initiative, Francois Hartog embarked on an exploration of the various orders of historical temporality (regimes d'historicité). Researching the history of experience and expectation horizons—although the scope of his inquiry extended over more distant ages and geographical areas as well—he primarily explored the changes which took place in the perception of historical time in the twentieth century. Hartog concludes that as long as the relationship between the horizons of experience and expectations is maintained through the present by the subjects of history possessing an identity, and thus what could be seen from the past was what the future of the "nation", "society", "country", or "the West" (or possibly the "proletariat" or the "race") threw its light upon, there was a space for historiography. Although expectations for the future rarely shaped the future efficiently—and then mostly only as self-fulfilling prophecies—still they substantially contributed to shaping the intellectual/cultural landscape of the present and thereby to the study of the past as well. However, by the last decades of the twentieth century, the horizons of experience and expectation permanently began to diverge, eliminating the time structure which constituted the conditions for historiography. Hartog says this resulted in an expanded, eternal, and directionless present, which has nothing to do with the past and is not clearly oriented towards any future.[47] We might add to this—and Hartog does not emphasize this—that at the same time the categories which earlier had functioned as the subjects of history have also disintegrated. If today we want to examine the past of the "nation" or the "West" or the "working class" or the "bourgeoisie," we keep running into question marks: what is it we want to examine? These categories have been broken down by historical analysis, and their constructed nature has been exposed by conceptual history studies. Thus, if somebody wants to look into his or her future, all one can see on the horizon is obscurity, as the existence of these concepts has also become questionable in a constructivist approach. Historiography has often shown that they are unsuitable as a framework for analyses, and historiography has tended first to transcend the history of any nation by allegedly crafting a European history or a transnational history, and then to transcend European histories by narrating

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46   Arendt, "The Gap Between Past and Future," 5.

47   Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité*.

global histories.[48] The often-cited disintegration of the "grand narratives" actually results from the disintegration of their subjects as the actors of history. At the very least, the "nation," "society," and various social groups (and more recently the frequently mentioned "West" itself) no longer function as subjects which could organize historical narratives and secure the unity of historical time through their existence, pointing from the past towards the future.[49]

This disintegration of the subjects of history and of historical time is partly the result of historiography itself. It has become clear partly from the works of Foucault that historical cognition has become an activity, in which research on the origins of phenomena destroys the picture of a uniform past.[50] Genealogy—the method of understanding which approaches phenomena in their historical aspects, by exploring their origins—exposes as false the origin stories on which the existence of the subjects of history is based, and thereby the "grand narratives" of which they were the subjects also fall apart.[51] Earlier, this genealogical approach as historical method of understanding did not necessarily involve the disintegration of uniform history. Exposing certain origin stories served precisely to allow the events of genuinely foundational importance to stand clear or to create opportunities for new foundations. However, these applications of genealogy definitely had some kind of vision and expectation horizon.[52] Only after the horizon of the future became obscure in recent decades

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48   Buruma and Margalit, *Occidentalism*.

49   As K. Horváth points out, just as Hartog, Niklas Luhman also emphasizes, there can be no continuity or even chronology without identity. K. Horváth, "Betegségek, pszichopatológiák és időstruktúrák." On the end of the "grand narratives," see: Takács, "A történelem vége."

50   Bódy, "Michel Foucault: A szexualitás története." Burke said that in foundation myths, unintended consequences of past actions are considered conscious aims of the one-time actors. It is the duty of historiography to destroy these myths and thereby to remind us of the fragmented nature of history. Burke's examples are Durkheim and Weber, as the founders of sociology, and Luther, as the father of Reformation. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, 58–59. Thus, according to Burke, historiography in a critical sense will itself perform a remembrance function, although what constitutes the foundation for this remains unexplained in Burke's works.

51   Ádám Takács pointed out that it is not history that ends with the end of the "grand narratives," but only the more or less clearly outlined social/political alternatives. Takács, "A történelem vége." Translating this into Kosellecki's terminology, we could say that it was these alternatives that were earlier outlined on the horizon of expectation, and historical time was moving in their direction.

52   As Schwendtner shows, even the Nietzschean genealogy had an orientation towards the future in this sense. It analyzed what originated from the past precisely in order to open a path towards the future. It is even more true of the genealogy perception of Husserl and Heidegger that they also aimed to lay the foundations for new identities or recreate the foundations of old ones, and at the same time to exit the present and create new, future opportunities by examining past events that were of foundational

did it begin to seem—not independently of the impact of Foucault's works, but as a consequence of probably far broader changes—that no genealogy is possible other than the kind that destroys uniform history, and only then did it begin to seem that, at the same time, the continuity and unity of historical time also cease to exist. Efforts to reinstate history into its earlier position and recreate the dynamic space of experience and expectations, in which historical time can again move from the past towards the future, are therefore seeking categories which could help transcend the postmodern state and create "grand narratives" again.[53] However, it is not obvious that it is possible to recreate a teleological history or to have some kind of philosophy of history generally accepted. Teleology cannot be established intentionally, i.e. with the intention of creating teleology. The last such theories relating to the end of history— late reflections of Hegel's philosophy of history—were spectacularly short of persuasive power. Fukuyama's concept seems to want to rescue the West as the subject of history by stopping historical time. If history comes to an end, the West remains unchanged, and its identity is no longer questionable.[54] It is not in this sense that the often-diagnosed predominance of the present means the end of history. Instead, it delegitimizes and even eliminates the idea of history so far, rather than completing the process of history. We could say that the expansion of the present puts an end not to history, but to the past. More precisely, it dissolves the past in the present.[55]

Consequences: Contemporary History in the Present

In light of this evolution of present-centeredness, the rise of contemporary history is an entirely logical development; in fact, it is an adequate response from historiography to the changes in historical time structures. After all, amid the

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importance from the perspective of the present—while thereby relativizing their own present. Foundation or connecting with foundations were definitely considered possible. Schwendtner, *Eljövendő múlt.*

53   Baschet, "L'histoire face au présent perpétuel."

54   Fukuyama, *The End of History.*

55   One could say that from this point of view that all of the past has been dissolved in the present and thus the problem of historical distance does not exist and never existed. "The past only ever appears in our present beliefs; it is never given at a distance," Mark Bevir confidently declares, as if he thereby transcended earlier errors related to this. Bevir, "Why historical distance is not a problem," 25. Bevir here does not acknowledge the fact that the idea of a past independent from the present was at least as real in the beliefs of the one-time presents, as real as today's post-foundational ideas. See Gumbrecht's analyses of the "chronotopes" and, among them, a description of the "historicist" chronotope, which lost its validity around the 1970s to give place to our broad present. Gumbrecht, *Unsere breite Gegenwart.*

fading of historical time, it is increasingly difficult to write about the history of earlier periods in a manner that allows narratives of the past to be interpreted in the light of the present or in a way that suggests that past phenomena throw light on the present. The growing interest in the contemporary is shown by the fact that H-Net, a central website for the humanities and social sciences, offers 6,811 findings for the search expression "medieval," which was once the main territory of historical research, in contrast with the 22,365 search results for "contemporary."[56] In fact, it is the legitimacy of the history writing of earlier periods that is gradually being called into question.[57] More precisely, outside of professional circles, events of earlier periods can only be interpreted as exampla for the present—not as part of a continuity—in the sense described by Koselleck as the operation of the "Historia est magistra vitae" principle, which was eliminated precisely by the emergence of academic historiography at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[58] We can see traces of the return of the exemplum whenever present phenomena are interpreted through past events without the existence of any causal relationship or more distant, but content-based connection between the two. The past is often recalled in this manner in politicians' speeches and newspaper articles in order to throw light on current processes, from global politics to local events.

Thus, amid this present-centeredness, it is no wonder that many historians turn towards the study of the present, where the legitimacy, meaningfulness, and importance of research topics is not called into question, and which also meets with far more interest among far wider audiences. However, the present-centeredness of contemporary history means that most of the premises defining historiography in the classical way fail in this case. The necessity of the historical methodology is not self-evident, because there are other ways to access the recent past. If one still wishes to apply the historical method, this requires special explanation, because—unlike in the case of earlier periods—the historical methodology is only one of several possible alternatives. But perhaps most importantly, the classical modern concept of history, in which past, present, and future were simultaneously connected and separated by the

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56   While for the search expression "middle age," 1,671 items appear on the web-site H-Net, the search term "contemporary history" yielded 2,577 findings, and in addition, one can find another 246 items for "present time." The French expression "moyen age" yields only 104 results, while the French world "contemporain" yields 420. (These searches were done on May 15, 2017.)

57   Hochmut stated, for example, that "*Public History* in den Berliner Museen ist vor allem *Public Contemporary History*." Hochmut, "HisTourismus" 177.

58   Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft.*

linear flow of time, has become empty and lost its meaning. Once the notion has gained currency that the existence of a history in this sense is a question of belief, this history ceases to be a certainty.[59] The place of the past as a linear process, which can be observed from the present and scientifically analyzed and understood, has been taken, as is well known, by the concepts of memory and heritage. The dominance of the concepts of memory and heritage means that rather than analyzing—based on historical methodology—the process of historical time considered as real, the past is becoming only accessible for the present as heritage or through memory. Hence, one must be faithful to heritage and preserve memory.[60]

Modern historiography was born in a somewhat autonomous system of academic institutions in the sociological sense, which was also the medium upholding the system of rules on the basis of which a specialist work is classified as good or bad. In the classical period of historiography, historiography was connected to non-academic spheres by the teleological approach and the national frame of reference, which also shared these ideas. Today, this is no longer the case. Nation as a frame of reference does not work consensually. Nowadays, though history exists within autonomous academic institutions which function on the basis of certain professional rules, the communication between the historical profession and the broader public sphere is hindered not only by the fact that, outside of this medium, the rules governing the sciences do not apply, but also by the absence of a commonly shared teleological approach or national thinking. This should not be misunderstood as an appeal to bring nation back in the form that in which it used to operate, nor indeed would this be possible. Furthermore, historians cannot artificially create a new teleology, which would go from the past to the future through the present. The potential subjects of such a history (not only the "nation" but also the "West" as subjects of history) were also deconstructed with the emergence of a transnational global history.[61] Hence, it is no use wishing for a return of

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59   So believes Francois Hartog, who thinks that for our current thinking, only the ever-wandering present remains, and the past can only be interpreted as recollection and heritage, rather than as history. Hartog, *Croire en l'histoire,* 281–82.

60   Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade,* 1–30.

61   On the website H-Net, the expression "global History" yields 2,415 items and "transnational history" yields 1,449. These two numbers indicate the popularity of these research fields. (These searches were done on May 15, 2017.) However, transfers, interactions, networking, and other key concepts of transnational history are not suitable as historical subjects, or at least not as subjects with which readers can identify. Wehler, "Transnational Geschichte"; Conrad, *What is Global History*, 185–203.

the earlier methods of cognition in the absence of the foundations and wider intellectual framework on which they were based. Thus, using an argument drawn from the sociology of knowledge, we can say in this case that what was classified as rational methodology—proposed for example by Apor[62]—within the earlier framework and of classical historiography has lost its foundations and, hence, its persuasive power. As can be seen, alternative approaches are highly attractive.

So, historiography is only one of several possible alternative approaches to the study of the present, and the application of its methods is no longer self-evident. But furthermore, its tools do not seem strong compared to those of its competitors. Why would there be any need for the use of historical methods in connection with a period for which the issue is not the interpretation of the remaining sources, but what eyewitnesses can remember of it? The sources are not part of a remote past, which is only accessible through the use of special methods. Rather, they have meanings which are considered self-evident for people living today. Why should professional historians—practitioners of a specific methodology—alone be competent as interpreters of the history of the present, when this present (or at least the sources to which it has given rise) is still accessible in our everyday culture?[63] It is obviously impossible to understand events or processes which took place two hundred years ago without special preliminary training. This is basically accepted by everyone interested in history as non-professionals. This is the consequence of the principle of the historical perspectivity, on which historiography was based. However, in connection with periods from which there are still living eyewitnesses or which still have a living collective memory, this is not self-evident. Of course, professional history possesses an analytical force compared to everyday thinking. But anthropology, fictional literature, films, journalistic works, exhibitions, etc. can be just as competent as interpretations of various phenomena of the present as historiography. Literary works such as Péter Esterházy's *Harmonia Caelestis* (*Celestial Harmonies*, available in English translation by Judith Sollosy) and *Javított kiadás* ("Revised Edition") are arguably important works in Hungary for readers interested in the socialist era, even though by genre they are novels. One could also mention Péter Nádas's *Egy családregény vége* (*The End of a Family Story*,

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62   Apor, "Hitelesség és hitetlenség."

63   This is also essentially the direction in which the arguments of Timothy Garton Ash point when he questions the privilege of professional historiography in researching the history of the present and undertakes to defend his own journalistic methods and writing. Ash, "Introduction."

available in English translation by Imre Goldstein), not to mention numerous other authors of works of fiction of lower quality but some significance.

As a consequence of the absence of the earlier dynamics of past, present, and future from the study of contemporary history, the history of the present stands in many ways closer to literary fiction or film on the one hand and, on the other, to other contemporary studies than it does to the historiography which is focused on earlier periods.[64] Of the contemporary disciplines, it is currently obviously closest to anthropology, although, in theory, it could well move closer to sociology or political science, but for the moment there are no signs of this. In any event, the history of the present thus communicates more with other ways of thinking directed at the recent past than it does with the historiography of earlier periods. This is reflected, for instance, by the extent to which many historians of the present are unable or unwilling to connect the phenomena they are studying with events preceding them in time, and they hesitate to place them into context as part of a longer (for example, mid-term) continuity. This mainly happens in the culturalist versions of histories of the present. In Hungary, there are hardly any historians who research both periods before and after 1945, and it may well be true that in most Central and Eastern European countries historians are split into two distinct groups, those studying eras before 1945 and those pursuing research on the post-1945 era, without knowing much more than the educated non-professional about earlier periods.[65]

Of course, the history of the present is a meaningful intellectual activity, which can apply various cultural techniques, but it seems questionable how much it is indeed a continuation of historiography when the premises which once defined historiography are now lacking. At the same time, of course, the history of the present can be pursued well or badly. But the difference between a good work of history on the present or a good exhibition on the history of the present and a bad one does not necessarily lie in the fact that one applies the scientific methodology of historiography well and the other one does not. Nobody would argue with Esterházy in the name of scientific rigor about the fate of the aristocracy after 1945 or the work of the secret service of the party state as portrayed in his literary account of his father's activity as an agent. His

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64   See for example the Sándor Horváths' work *Feljelentés*, which offers a detailed historical account of the life of a totally insignificant agent of the Hungarian political police, which throws more light on the history of the state socialism than any analyses of the social and political structure of the era.

65   The problem is diagnosed and the need to examine continuities across the boundary of 1945 is suggested by Bódy and Horváth, "1945 és a háború társadalma," 7–12.

novel and similar fictional accounts are very good books of their own kind. A historian of the present can enter into a dialogue with these works precisely because—although they are specifically not works of historiography—they are intellectual efforts directed at the same object with which the historian is dealing. However, if the historian of the present does not criticize good writers from the point of view of science, then bad writers and poor museum exhibitions should not be criticized from a so-called scientific point of view either.

It follows from this that the criticism by good historians of the present of poor representations of memory, poor museologists, and the designers of bad monuments should not be legitimized with the academic authority of historiography. Calls for adequate source criticism or appropriate contextualization, which cite the old methodology of historiography, are ineffective in themselves. Contemporary history cannot successfully defend itself against these challenges in this manner. In spite of its internal colorfulness, the voice of contemporary history is lost in the polyphony of other contemporary studies, the memory market, and political uses of the past because it tries to base its position and authority on something which one can hardly expect to be appreciated in the present-centered present. In this sense, the history of the present may not be what it claims to be. However assiduously it applies new concepts (for instance transnationality, which has been prominent in the past two decades), it often makes no impact on other contemporary studies or the wider public, and it is often unable to connect with the demand for forms of remembrance. Thus, in the current intellectual sphere, historians of the present are not in the same privileged position as historians dealing with earlier periods which are clearly divided from the present. They argue in vain that they are more competent than others thanks to their use of a historical methodology. The historical perspective, which legitimizes the historical methodology in research on the earlier past, does not provide a solid base for research which is focused on the present, and it definitely does not provide a position of authority which would give historiography a special role among other forms of reflection directed at the present.[66] Thus, in the absence of the dynamics of time, the history of the present is in fact based on the paradox of the gaze looking at itself, which makes it weak compared to other approaches to the study of the present, which do not draw their analytical power from the temporal perspective. This paradox also leaves the history of the present devoid of tools in comparison with remembrance, from

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66   Nora believes that the historian's function regarding the present time is ground down against journalism and contemporary studies such as sociology, anthropology, economics, and geography. Nora, "Présent," 471.

which it does not effectively differ, since, through the latter, the person who remembers can also project himself into the events recalled.

Historians of the present who are doing a good job from the intellectual point of view should reflect on what their activity comprises and the foundations on which it is based. They should also consider the criteria on which any distinction between good and bad history of the present could be made, or between a good exhibition or historical monument and a bad one. They should work out the foundations on the basis of which contemporary history communicates with other academic and non-academic forms of understanding the present, and they should also reflect on and articulate the premises on which they base assertions of the validity of their own procedures. According to Nora's proposition, the first step in this direction should be to acknowledge that contemporary history is not a temporal appendix at the end of the long process of history. In fact, it is not even history. More precisely, he believes it is a history which differs from the notion of history as it is normally understood (a means of seizing an understanding of earlier periods).[67] History as a discipline established on the basis of a linear notion of time was based precisely on the exclusion of the present.[68] Thus, the history of the present can only be constructed on foundations which differ from those of classical historiography, and which give rise to different rules. This construction would be necessary to provide effective protection against a flood of low-quality works and against the memory market, where according to the dominant view everyone has his or her own memory and his or her own history, which is immune to criticism, if one relies solely on the old rules of historiography. This is why it would be urgent to find a definition of a history of the present which preserves the values of historiography upheld by the professional community and still holds meaning for non-historians, i.e. is still able to communicate—on the basis of some kind of new foundations— with other social spheres. Of course, the question Nora asked forty years ago concerning the historians of the future who will write on their present remains open: "Mais faut-il encore l'appeler historien?"[69]

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67 "[L]'histoire contemporaine … n'est pas le simple appendice temporel d'une histoire sure d'elle-meme, mais un histoire *autre* et que l'exclusion du contemporain hors du champ de l'histoire est précisément ce qui lui donne sa spécificité." Ibid., 467.

68 Ibid.

69 Nora, "Présent," 472.

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Social Demand and the Social Purpose of History:

What is Missing from Alun Munslow's Classification of Historiography?[1]

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Alun Munslow proposed a threefold classification of historians' approaches to the writing of history. According to Munslow, every historian is either a reconstructionist, constructionist, or deconstructionist, depending on his/her fundamental epistemological/ontological beliefs concerning the possibilities of studying and representing the "past" in the form of narrative. I suggest that the category of constructionism as defined by Munslow is based on a priori presumptions about historians' alleged beliefs in the ontic nature of the "before now" and its knowability. The actual practice of scholarly history writing allows for a more nuanced typology. I argue for a looser association of formal and methodological criteria with the basic ontological/epistemological positions of historians. I also argue that Munslow's category of constructionism should be split into two ideal-typical categories: constructionism-proper and constructionism-improper. His deep insight into the formal aspects of history representation notwithstanding, Munslow's theory fails to explain why there are such diverse and completely contradictory epistemologies within a single discipline. Neither does it explain the seemingly paradoxical continued domination of (in Munslow's view) two fallacious epistemologies: the reconstructionist and the constructionist. Why has reconstructionism, the most obsolete of the three epistemological positions, not vanished after many decades of intense criticism? I suggest that we should look for answers in the extra-disciplinary domain of the social functions of history. I argue that the social purpose of the knowledge produced by historians and the interaction between historians and the public have a decisive formative influence on both the theory and the practice of the discipline. Historians who fit into the epistemological categories of reconstructionism and constructionism-improper are able to provide accounts that legitimize social institutions, political regimes, economical systems, social orders, etc. Even more importantly, the histories constructed by this kind of historian often serve to anchor narratives (of self-identification) connected to referential social

groups and categories. I suggest that reconstructionist and constructionist-improper historians can serve these societal functions because their accounts are based on realist-empiricist epistemologies congruent with naïve perceptions of the "past." Furthermore, the constructionist-proper and deconstructionist historians not only do not offer legitimizing or identification narratives, their narratives of history are based on counterintuitive epistemology informed by constructivist social scientific theory. Their analyses often deconstruct the very notions upon which legitimizing and anchoring discourses are based. I suggest that the social functions of historical knowledge are thus an aspect that must be incorporated into epistemological studies of history and historiography.

Keywords: Social functions of history, Alun Munslow, epistemology, reconstructionism, constructionism, deconstructionism, self-identification, anchoring

In his works,[3] philosopher of history and historian Alun Munslow has masterfully introduced the main themes of the philosophy of history in the past half-century. Taking first and foremost the ideas of postmodernist and narrativist philosophers of history as his point of departure, he argues coherently against the tenets of traditional historiography concerning the object of historical studies, the practice of historical research, and the results of the scientific practices of historians. He proposes a threefold classification of epistemological approaches which should be applicable everywhere where the European model of history writing functions in an institutionalized form. In Munslow's view, each and every historian follows either the *reconstructionist, constructionist*, or *deconstructionist* approach to the study of the past and the writing of history.

Like any classification or typology, Munslow's has been subjected to various critical assessments. Munslow's classification does indeed have weak points. However, the gravity of these weaknesses depends on the perspective from which we approach his typology of historiographical epistemologies and the purposes to which we wish to use it. Several authors, approaching it from the perspective of the philosophy of history, ontology, and epistemology, have expressed objections. I will briefly mention one of them. These objections concern definitional problems with the category of *constructionism*, and they in no way belittle Munslow's work. They merely amend it.

However, Munslow aspires to do more than merely contribute to the philosophy of history. His main goal is to promote the deconstructionist approach

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3   Munslow, *Deconstructing History*; idem, *The Routledge Companion*; idem, *The New History*; Jenkins and Munslow, *The Nature of History*.

to pursuing research on the past and the writing of history. The reconstructionist/constructionist epistemology in his view has fundamental problems. Historians falling into these categories are, according to Munslow, living in an illusion according to which they (and historiography in general) are producing truthful scholarly knowledge. Munslow (and he is far from being alone) thinks that the writers of history and history writing in general need to disabuse themselves of this delusion.[4] Thus, his threefold classification is meant to be more than a mere disinterested taxonomy; it is supposed to be used as an analytical tool to help achieve this goal. From this perspective, I think his classification suffers from several deficiencies and omissions which are much weightier. Though I agree with major parts of his reasoning, I am skeptical about the analytical strength and potential of his threefold classification. The first weak point in this respect is the same as the shortcoming mentioned above: the category of constructionism is based on mistaken definitional premises. Moreover, to speak only about *constructionism* is an oversimplification. One can conceptualize at least two ideal-typical versions of constructionism, both on epistemological and on practical bases. The second weak point is that Munslow uses a rather narrow conception of epistemology. He makes the central reference point of his classification the question of the ontic status of the past and historians' presumed belief in or skepticism concerning its objective form.

From philosophical point of view, this might be legitimate and unobjectionable, but if the goal is to study and understand the professional (scholarly) history writing in its complexity, some other aspects need to be taken into consideration. For instance, Munslow's classification cannot explain why there are within one discipline such diverse and completely contradictory epistemologies—a rather unique occurrence even within the humanities, let alone the social sciences. Nor can it explain the seemingly paradoxical continued domination of (in Munslow's view) two fallacious epistemologies: the reconstructionist and the constructionist. And particularly, it fails to explain why reconstructionism, the most obsolete of the three epistemological positions, did not vanish after many decades of intense and plausible criticism

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4   It has been half a century since Hayden White gave historians the following warning in one of his famous early studies: "[One] must be prepared to entertain the notion that history, as currently conceived, is a kind of historical accident, a product of a specific historical situation, and that, with the passing of the misunderstandings that produced that situation, history itself may lose its status as an autonomous and self-authenticating mode of thought." White, "The Burden of History," 29. Reader edited by Keith Jenkins offers a useful overview of similar positions: Jenkins, *The Postmodern History*.

coming not only from philosophers of history, but also from historians themselves.

In the case of the humanities and particularly historiography, the social purpose of the knowledge produced by scholars and the interaction between scholars and the public have a decisive formative influence on both the theory and the practice of the discipline. The purpose and social functioning of historical knowledge is thus an aspect that must be incorporated into the epistemological studies of history and historiography. Munslow's classification is useful because, even if with some flaws, it comprehensively identifies what we are dealing with when we speak about the fundamentals of history writing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Munslow reveals the problems and offers remedies, but he is not paying adequate attention to the question "why?" Munslow's classification fails to offer any explanation (nor does it attempt to offer any explanation) of why the "problematic epistemology" (i.e. reconstructionism) remains dominant, despite decades of persuasive critiques of the premises on which it rests. Thus, it remains little more than an inspiring but imaginative and exceedingly ideal-typical typology with a rather limited potential as an instrument in the analyses of historiographical practice past and present.

The most elementary question of the epistemology of history is ontological: What is the object of historical study and how does it exist? If the object of historians' interest is the "past," or, more specifically, "the connections between events and human intention or agency in the past," how does this past exist in the present?[5] There is a consensus that the "past" (what happened "before now") is non-existent in any present, however, there are material remnants in the form of sources. This consensus, nevertheless, begins to show fissures when the following questions are raised: is the past in any way objectively structured? Are historians really studying the "past," or are they "merely" studying people's ideas about what happened? What about chronological ordering, historical fact, and historical event? Are these natural "building blocks" of the "past," i.e. manifestations through which one can shed light on its otherwise hidden structuring? Or they are rather the constructs of historians? Are the sources repositories of truth about the past? Is there an objective, i.e. observer-independent truth which can be discovered by historians and told (narrated) to others? Is there a direct correspondence between the events of the past and the narratives (i.e. history) about them? Is the language used by historians a

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5   Munslow, *Deconstructing History,* 4.

transparent tool for conveying information, or does it have a formative influence, whether historians are conscious of it or not? Does the way the narrative is told have any formative impact on its meaning? Does the subjectivity of historians (the social, cultural, educational, and psychological determinants) influence their narratives of the past? If so, is it possible (or necessary, or desirable) to eliminate or at least regulate these determinants and influences?

These are some of the questions that have preoccupied philosophers of history over the course of the past half-century. The answers historians have given to these questions place them into one of Munslow's three categories (or genres) of history writing. In the following, I will offer a brief outline of Munslow's threefold classification and some of his main points.

Reconstructionist historians presume (usually implicitly) that what happened in the past had a given form which is discoverable and can be truthfully represented through narratives. In principle, if the conditions are right (i.e. if there are sufficient sources and the researchers are skilled and adequately trained), historians should be able to uncover and reconstruct the course of events and narrate them objectively "as they actually happened." Munslow characterizes the reconstructionists as hard-core empiricists and (naïve) realists. The former means that reconstructionist historians consider the sources remnants and specimens of the past which contain self-evident facts about the past. Historians merely use their talents and abilities to extract and process these facts, putting them into the correct order and thus arriving at a disinterested and truthful interpretation of what actually happened. The absolute primacy of the study of sources is informed by a realist vision of the past: "Realists … [are saying that] … the past must exist regardless of whether there are any historians just as mountains exist regardless of whether there are mountaineers or geographers."[6] In other words, reconstructionist historians, whether consciously or unconsciously, are objectifying/reifying the "past." They tend to think about "historical events" as if they were objective entities, unique and fixed, observable and describable. It should come as no surprise, then, that reconstructionists endorse a concept of truth that is congruent with the correspondence theories of truth, meaning, and knowledge. Reconstructionist historians also look with suspicion on interdisciplinary imports into the workings of historiography. Social theories used in historical research are viewed as deviations which artificially try to force "structures," "regularities," or "laws" upon the past. The use of theories leads to

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6   Munslow, *The New History*, 9.

violation of the past "reality," deformations of heuristics and interpretation, and eventually the ideologization of history.[7]

Theory, or no theory? The answer given to this question is what differentiates the constructionist historians from reconstructionist historians the most. According to constructionists, human acts and behavior in the past are too complex to be interpreted correctly without a proper conceptual apparatus and theoretical background. The Annalistes, the Marxist/neo-Marxist schools, and the various schools inspired by theories of modernization are, according to Munslow, constructionists.[8] Constructionist historians, in contrast with reconstructionists, do not endorse the correspondence theory a-critically: "Constructionists generally are aware that their narratives do not automatically mirror the reality of the past and that objectivity (at least as understood by reconstructionists) is impossible."[9] Yet, there is a crucial point on which constructionists are in agreement with their reconstructionist "cousins," as Munslow labels them,[10] and that is the belief in the objectivity of the past. In other words, even if constructionists admit that we might never know "wie es eigentlich gewesen," they insist there is one ultimate truth about the past. According to Munslow constructionists believe in the existence of objective structures and patterns which can be studied and revealed with the help of social theories and models. This very much reminds one of the reconstructionist objectification/reification of the "historical facts" and "historical events." Similarly, the constructionist understanding of the ontology and epistemic value of the sources resembles the reconstructionist views. In fact, Munslow often treats both categories as fundamentally one: "reconstructionist/constructionist."[11]

Deconstructionists pay much more attention to the person of the historian and the factors which determine him/her. There is no inherent meaning hidden in the sources, nor is there a truth about the past. Historians do not observe and reconstruct the events of the past. On the contrary, they construct narratives about events or aspects of events which took place in the past. The writing

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7   Munslow, *Deconstructing History,* 39–60.

8   Munslow categorizes several well-known historians (sociologist-historians and anthropologist-historians) as constructionists: Norbert Elias, Robert Darnton, Marshal Sahlins, Perry Anderson, E. P. Thompson, and even Anthony Giddens. Munslow, *Deconstructing History,* 21. For exemplification of reconstructionist, constructionist, and deconstructionist historians see also Jenkins and Munslow, *The Nature of History Reader.*

9   Munslow, *The New History*, 15.

10   Idem, *Deconstructing History,* 25; idem, *The New History*, 6.

11   Idem, *Deconstructing History,* 39–60.

of history is essentially a process of literary representation, not an unbiased objective description of how things actually happened. This does not mean that the deconstructionists would deny that there is information in the sources. The deconstructionist "argument is that knowing what happened does not tell you what it means."[12] And it is in the process of giving meaning, i.e. representing, that the subjective, contingent, ideological, and fictive elements enter the narrative of history. "The point of deconstructionist history is the challenge it throws down to the idea, which reaches its ultimate expression in hard-core constructionism, especially of the statistical variety, that there are essential (true) patterns 'out there' to be discovered in the past."[13] According to this view, the past can be best understood as an inherently meaningless unbounded heterogeneous stream of happening within which human action unfolded.

The historical facts are far from having an inherent true meaning decipherable on the basis of the sources. Nor are "historical events" the natural constituents of the past, as the reconstructionists and partly constructionists prefer to see them. Both facts and events are constructions, parts of the history discourse, not real and observer-independent entities. However, the most significant argument of deconstructionists and the one that is still provoking bitter responses from practicing historians concerns the language and the form in which history is represented. With the exception of very traditional reconstructionists, most of the actors in the discipline to some extent acknowledge the subjectivity (i.e. bias stemming from social, cultural, ideological, and other determinations) of the historian as a formative factor in the writing of history. The deconstructionists go further in their claim that, in addition to the preconceptions, prejudices, and biases as influences which can never be entirely eliminated, the language and the particular rhetorical mode predominantly used by historians to represent the past (the narrative) exerts its own influence on the meanings of these representations, an influence which is beyond the control of historians. At this point Munslow, draws heavily on the works of philosophers of history Hayden White, Frank Ankersmit, Hans Kellner, Jörn Rüsen, Keith Jenkins, Louis Mink, Paul Ricoeur, and their followers. The way in which historians arrange the facts and thus create an emplotment for the story (the historical representation) bestows the narrative with meanings at a very fundamental level. According to Hayden White there

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12 Ibid., *Deconstructing History*, 83.
13 Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 70.

are four elementary kinds of emplotment: romantic, comic, tragic, and satiric.[14] Thus, the histories written by historians are, as far as the form of the narrative is concerned, either romance, comedy, tragedy, or satire. In theory, every past event can be emploted (narrated) in each of the four ways. The question of which is used is most often not the conscious choice of the historian, but rather the outcome of other discursive determinants.[15]

This is one of the strongest arguments of the deconstructionists in favor of the relativist, non-objectivist, non-empiricist epistemology of history, yet it is also one of the most misunderstood and ignored by historians. The human act is in itself valueless. It is neither tragic nor comic. It can be viewed as such only from a certain perspective. Every historian speaking about past events is doing so from a particular position which is determined and influenced by many discursive and non-discursive factors.[16] The truthfulness of various interpretations is relative to the "regimes of truth" within which they come into being. Thus, it is not merely correspondence with the facts in the first place that serves as the basis for deciding whether a narrative is true, but the ideological background, preconceptions, and, as I will argue, the purpose the narrative of history is intended to serve.

In his *Deconstructing History* (first published in 1997), Munslow did not offer any concrete examples of deconstructionist historical writings. He did so seven years later in the reader *The Nature of History*, which he co-edited with Keith Jenkins.[17] There are excerpts from the works of ten authors. Two selections are from the writings of philosophers (Hayden White and Jacques Derrida), while the remaining eight examples (from works by Greg Dening, Walter Benjamin, Richard Price, Robert A. Rosenstone, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Sven Lindquist, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Iain Chambers) differ in style and form, but they are similar in the conspicuous absence of fluent linear narrative (this does not mean, however, that they are non-narrative) and stylistic experimentation. As the editors put it, the chosen excerpts are "texts which undercut the idea of the

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14 White, *Metahistory*. The narrativist argument was further developed (partially independently, partially following White) by other authors as well, most notably Paul Ricoeur, Hans Kellner, and Frank Ankersmit.

15 In White's view, the mode of emplotment the form of the historians' explanation (formist, organicist, mechanistic, and contextualist), and the *ideological dimension* of a historical account (anarchist, conservative, radical, and liberal) are predetermined by the tropological prefiguration of the text (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony). White, *Metahistory*, 7–38. For an accessible introduction into White's thinking see Paul, *Hayden White*.

16 Munslow, *Deconstructing History,* 61–81.

17 Jenkins and Munslow, *The Nature of History*, 115–239.

narrator as nobody and stress the author's creative role. Dispensing with linear narratives in favor of multi-voiced, multi-perspectival, multi-levelled, fragmented arrangements… [these authors play] …with the possibility of creating new ways of representing and figuring 'the before now'."[18]

Obviously, Munslow's "reconstructionists," "constructionists," and "deconstructionists" should be perceived as ideal-typical categories. As such, they are utopias, and they can hardly be found in their pristine form in reality.[19] Nevertheless, if ideal types are to be properly operable in the work of analyses, they need to be plausibly constructed. In the following, I argue that Munslow makes several assumptions which render his threefold classification problematic, especially for analytical use in the study of historiographical practice. I draw attention to some of the weak points of Munslow's definitional approach, and I then suggest a redefinition and split of his category of constructionism into two subcategories.

Munslow places considerable emphasis on the ontic status of the past as perceived by historians, making it a sort of primary epistemological reference point of his classification. This is his most decisive criterion, through which he defines the two opposing camps: reconstructionist/constructionist vs. deconstructionist. At the same time, he downplays the importance of other factors and categorical attributes (such as research practice, methods, and approaches), reducing them to mere secondary features. For Munslow, the methods of research and the ways of acquiring knowledge serve merely as secondary "markers" with which to identify the primary epistemological feature. This is particularly noticeable in his definition of constructionism. Munslow simply assumes that historians working with theories and concepts from the social sciences believe in the objective past, much as reconstructionists do. The

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18   Ibid., 115. Despite what has been said, the narrative form is dominantly present in the cited writings of the authors listed above. The use of figurative language, the tendency to quote primary (i.e. archival, iconographical etc.) sources, and the relative lack of systematic analyses resembling analyses in the social sciences make them appear at first sight closer to the reconstructionist "style" as characterized by Munslow. On the other hand, most of the authors characterized in Jenkins and Munslow's reader as deconstructionist are evidently well-acquainted with critical social and culture theories and accept works by social theorists and consider constructionist historians as plausible (quotable) sources of knowledge, which draws them much closer to the constructionist "camp" (e.g. compare with the articles and books by Greg Dening, Richard Price, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Sven Lindqvist, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Iain Chambers cited in the reader; Jenkins and Munslow, *The Nature of History*, 117–34, 142–55, 171–81, 182–90, 191–97, 214–24 respectively).

19   I borrow the designation of ideal-types as utopias from the creator of the concept himself; see Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 90.

only easily identifiable attribute that distinguishes Munslow's constructionists from the reconstructionists is the former's use of social theories. At the same time, the principal feature which differentiates the constructionists from the deconstructionists is the constructionists' alleged belief in the existence of objective (i.e. discoverable) social, economic, cultural, political, etc. patterns in the past.

For Munslow, the fact that someone conceptualizes of him or herself as a social historian who works with sociological, anthropological, psychological, and other theories to gain knowledge about various aspects of human life in the past, simply in itself serves as a decisive defining marker of the historian's epistemological/ontological belief about the nature of the past and its knowability. The definitional tying together of these features, making one the indicator of the other, is aprioristic and exceedingly reductionist.

Another problematic aspect of Munslow's strict classificatory approach concerns the manner in which he singles out and overemphasizes a narrowly defined criterion. Historians' ideas regarding the ontic status of the past (past events, social phenomena etc.) often cannot be conclusively identified. Undoubtedly there are cases in which an author's epistemological position can be safely inferred from his/her textual output. But in many cases, unless a historian makes an explicit statement about his/her standing as far as the knowability of past events is concerned, an inference will remain just a guess. Thus, it is not at all surprising that most of the authors whose writings Munslow (and Jenkins) uses as examples of reconstructionist, constructionist, and deconstructionist historical accounts made their epistemological stance explicitly clear either in the texts quoted or somewhere else.[20] Only few practicing historians make an explicit statement about their epistemological points of departure, particularly concerning the very issues Munslow make a decisive definitional factor. The search for answers to such elementary ontological/epistemological questions still does not belong to the mainstream theoretical and methodological principles of the discipline. Most practicing historians do not consider raising and answering these questions a necessary prerequisite of good historical scholarship.

One might therefore have doubts about the general validity of Munslow's three epistemological positions (genres), since their construction is based on limited and specific empirical material: the writings of historians who, by the very virtue of the fact that they have made their claims about the ontic status of

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20   See the reader Jenkins and Munslow, *The Nature of History*.

the past and its knowability explicit, represent a rather rare kind. One might ask whether the validity of Munslow's threefold classification isn't indeed limited to the historians whose writings he analyzes. Though in the same breath I must add that my skepticism does not go that far.

Arguably it is safe to presume that most of the traditional style historical accounts which indeed are narrative (or at least largely narrative) and which deal with national histories, important figures of national history, and so on can be safely categorized as reconstructionist. The same cannot be said, however, about the histories which are informed by social theories, even if they are partly or even in large part narrative. For Munslow, such histories are constructionist and thus based on objectivist epistemological premises, very much like the histories of reconstructionists. But many historians who fit into Munslow's category of constructionism simply because they use social theory, adopt with the theoretical body they borrow from sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, and colleagues from other disciplines, very strong social constructivist epistemological propositions which are in stark opposition to naïve realism and acritical empiricism of the sort that Munslow ascribes to reconstructionists and constructionists. Philosopher of history Eugen Zeleňák makes a similar point and proposes an elegant solution to the contradictions stemming from Munslow's rigorous definitional approach.

Zeleňák[21] considers Munslow's a priori judgement about constructionism as "essentially a subspecies of reconstructionism"[22] untenable, since he finds it difficult to justify such a close association of constructionists who use social scientific concepts, theories, and hypotheses with a-theoretical reconstructionism. He points out that many historians working with critical social theories and an analytical conceptual apparatus are aware that they are working with constructions which are not derived from the past but, on the contrary, are *applied to* (or in Munslow's words, *imposed on*) the evidence.[23] Following Munslow's own argumentation and examples, Zeleňák suggests that Munslow is in fact speaking about at least two types of constructionism, one which indeed is close to reconstructionism (constructionism-I) and another which is much closer to the deconstructionist ideas about the ontic status of the past and the possibilities of knowing about the past (constructionism-

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21 Zeleňák, "Modifying."
22 Munslow, *Deconstructing History,* 24.
23 Zeleňák, "Modifying," 529.

II).[24] Were the classification strictly based on general epistemological and ontological assumptions, Zeleňák claims, it would be more adequate to reduce the three categories to two basic epistemological types which he labels *direct realism* and *impositionalism*. Reconstructionists and *constructionists-I* are direct realists, since their epistemological fundaments are based on the idea that they are discovering the objective (i.e. observer independent) knowledge about past events. Deconstructionists and *constructionists-II* are impositionalists because they deliberately and, in accordance with the rules of scholarly conduct, impose concepts, theories and models on the information about past happenings which they are able to derive from sources, thus creating knowledge about particular aspects of past phenomena. Impositionalists do not consider this knowledge a mirror image of past events "as they actually happened." They are aware that what they write is in many ways contingent and dependent on perspective.[25]

Though Zeleňák's reduced epistemological classification might seem too general, simplicity is its advantage. If we keep the secondary "markers" of Munslow's classification,[26] strip it of its unsubstantiated assumptive aprioristic ontological/epistemological primary definitional criteria, and replace it with Zeleňák's basic twofold categorization, we get the skeleton of a much more workable ideal-type classification.

Consequently, a readjustment of Munslow's classification in this vein must include a reassessment of his category of constructionism/constructionist historians. If this category is to be salvaged as an analytical concept which also refers to the scholarly practices of historians, it needs to be split into at least two types, as has been already suggested. Not every historian working with social scientific concepts and theories does so in a competent way. To infer the epistemic position of a historian on the basis of a simple presence of sociological, psychological, etc. terminology or references and allusions to grand theories of social sciences in his/her writing would merely be another aprioristic mistake. In other words, some of the historians who use social scientific terminology have not adequately mastered the theory itself, let alone the episteme upon which the given theory rests. I label this category of historian *constructionist-improper*

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24   Ibid., 527–30. The labels *constructionism I* and *constructionism II* are mine. I introduce them here for the sake of the clarity of the later argumentation.

25   Ibid., 530–35.

26   These secondary markers are the following: (1.) the form (whether a historical writing is narrative, partially narrative, or non-narrative, descriptive, or analytical, etc.); and (2.) the research practice and methodology adopted by the authors (whether the historian's interpretations are informed by social theory or are a-theoretical, etc.).

historians. I will return to this category later. First, let us examine the second type of constructionism, which I label *constructionism-proper*, in greater detail.

As already stated, *constructionist-proper historians* are full-fledged *social constructivists.* These historians usually recognize the difference between ontological and epistemological objectivity and the subjectivity of facts and observations, and they are aware of the constructed nature of social reality and the specific ontic status of social and institutional facts. They reject the Rankean "wie es eigentlich gewesen" kind of (direct realist) creed and are aware that their accounts are but contingent representations constructed from a certain perspective. At the same time, however, this kind of historian accepts the reality of cause and effect, the reality of human action and institutional agency, and the reality of social relations in the past. These things may not exist now, but they existed once. And even if it is nonsensical to think that there can be a "true reconstruction" of these events, this does not mean we cannot attain valid knowledge about social phenomena in the past by studying sources. In fact, accounts of this kind by constructionist historians are not histories in the traditional sense anymore. It is more appropriate to look at them as forms of historical sociology, historical anthropology, historical economy, historical political science, etc., as is reflected in the names of some of the historical schools and subdisciplines.

When I propose the adoption of the term *constructionist-improper historians* to denote a category of historians one of whose defining features is a relative inability (in no way permanent or inherent) to work properly with social constructivist theories and to grasp fully the epistemic bases of such theories, I do not mean to suggest any lack of intellectual capacity. Historians themselves never independently developed theories of social life that would become transdisciplinary because they never had to. Professional institutionalized scholarly history writing started in the nineteenth century as a discipline the primary function of which was to "discover" and "describe" the past of "nations" and the deeds of the great men, leaders, representatives of nations, etc. It was not the goal of historians to study psychological, social psychological, social, cultural, economic, political, or other general human-related phenomena. Thus, historiography did not manage to evolve into discipline that would inspire sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, etc. in their research strategies and agenda. It was, rather, the other way around. Some historians adopted or were inspired by concepts, theories, and methods used in other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. However, this process of drawing inspiration from and/or adopting approaches, theories, concepts, and research strategies from

other disciplines never became a general feature of historians' training. Often, a historian develops an ability to work properly with theories and concepts from other disciplines only because of his or her determination and study. In many cases, historians who accept (or have been socialized into) the constructionist idea according to which past human phenomena are too complex to be correctly interpreted without a proper conceptual apparatus and theoretical background are for various reasons not able to work properly with social theories.

Perhaps surprisingly, this phenomenon is not unique to historiography. In the early 2000s, sociologist Rogers Brubaker critically remarked that the social scientific discourse about ethnicity, race, nationalism, and identity is plagued with an "intellectual slackness" which he labels "complacent and clichéd constructivism."[27] The most characteristic feature of clichéd constructivism is intuitive and superficial use of complex concepts and theories (e.g. that of "social identity"),[28] which very often leads to serious fallacies, notably essentialism and reification. In historiography, in particular the concepts of ethnicity, ethnic and national identity, ethnic group, nation and nationalism, race and racism, social group and collective action, and collective memory (to mention only a few) often fall prey to clichéd constructivism. Naturally, one can distinguish various degrees of inadequate and uninformed use of scholarly (social scientific) concepts, from the most vulgar, when historians blatantly essentialize for instance "ethnic" or "national identity" (i.e. either explicitly or implicitly they treat "identity" as an inherent feature of a historical actor or entire aggregates of the population) and/or reify social groups, categories, or classes (i.e. they endow them with ontological objectivity, speak about them as acting entities, and treat them as natural, not social, phenomena) to more sophisticated cases, when analyses which are informed by essentialist and reifying presumptions and misconceptions are concealed behind a constructivist rhetoric. I label this practice of pretended constructivism "constructionism-improper."[29]

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27   Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups,* 3 and 38. Ian Hacking voiced similar criticism of the devaluation of the concept of social construction in his: Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?.*

28   Brubaker, "Beyond 'Identity'."

29   Obviously even this split of Munslow's homogeneous category of constructionism might seem insufficient. Several other subcategories could be delineated. For instance, there are historians whose use of critical social theory concepts is not flawed, incompetent, or "clichéd," but also is not consequential or thorough. To put it metaphorically, for various reasons these historians merely scratch the surface and do not fully realize the potential (at least from social scientific point of view) of their data, sources, and hypotheses in the context of the theoretical background from which they depart or to which they refer. Certainly, a handful of subcategories of this sort could be (and as a result of empirical research should be)

As I implied above, from an ontological/epistemological point of view each of the two categories of constructionism suggested by me is congruent with Zeleňák's dichotomy of direct realism and impositionalism. Constructionist-improper historians will probably though certainly not exclusively be direct realists, while constructionist-proper historians will probably be impositionalists.[30]

So far, I have argued that if Munslow had merely typified various epistemological positions currently prevailing in historiography, his classification would count as (perhaps with some amendments, such as the one made by Zeleňák) a valuable contribution to the epistemology of history. However, since Munslow's ambition has been to propose a general classification of the historiographical practice with special regard to elementary epistemological positions of historians, he included and aprioristically tied together features such as the use of theory in the works of historical interpretation and methods of research. I pointed to the problematic aspects of this approach, and I deconstructed the category of constructionism, splitting it into two ideal-type subcategories. Now I turn to the last question I have asked in the introduction of this paper: why did the direct realist (reconstructionist/constructionist-improper) epistemological position not vanish after many decades of intense and justified criticism, and indeed why does it arguably remain, this criticism notwithstanding, the mainstream episteme within history writing globally?

Well-known historians from renowned schools such as the Annales, Begriffsgeschichte, the Cambridge school of the history of political ideas, Marxist/neo-Marxist schools in Great Britain, France and elsewhere, Microhistory, and New cultural history, to mention only a few, are perceived as the elite of the discipline, at least within the European and transatlantic Anglophone historiographies. These historians are cited and referred to far more

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pinned down. I propose splitting Munslow's original concept of constructionism into "merely" two types (based not so much on Munslow's primary epistemological/ontological criterion as on the methods of attaining knowledge) to make Munslow's classification more concrete, yet at the same time general enough for broader analytical application.

30   Though here I would like to repeat the point I made earlier about the complexity of determining the epistemological positions of historians concerning the ontic status of the "past" and "history." There are cases in which even Zeleňák's general dichotomy (direct realist vs. impositionalist) needs to be applied cautiously. Presumably, every historian departs, whether intuitively or consciously, from a certain epistemological/ontological position, but this theoretical stance is not always identifiable beyond all doubt in his or her written or spoken output. In some cases, it is not possible to decide conclusively without further focused investigation (e.g. by interviewing the historian) whether the author believes in the objectivity of the "past" and the existence of an ultimate truth about past events or not.

frequently than most.[31] Nevertheless, though they have existed for decades and have undergone a process of progressive development, the schools represented by these historians (and some other schools) remain in the position of an avant-garde. The ways of thinking and working adopted by these historians, i.e. their impositionalist epistemological points of departure have not been incorporated into the discipline's general theoretical and methodological framework, and this is also true of their methods, theories, and the themes of their research. Why have respected authors, whose scholarship and work is highly esteemed, petrified in the position of a special elite sub-genre? Why did the constructionist-proper and deconstructionist approaches to research and history writing not become (or became only to a limited extent) integral parts of the standard training of history students?

Obviously, there is no simple answer to these questions. Several closely related determinants—of a cognitive, social-psychological and social, political, cultural (ideological), economic, and institutional nature—are at play. But factors such as the outdated history education system, structural peculiarities of personal reproduction within the academic sphere, lack of resources, political/ideological influence and limitations on freedom of research etc. are secondary (not in importance, but in effect) to cognitive, social-psychological/social, and power-related (political/ideological) determinants, or to put it in other words, to the social functions and purposes of professional history writing (historiography). I contend that we should start to look for new understandings of and explanations for epistemic positions in historiography in the domain of the functionality of historical knowledge in society.

So far, following Munslow's threefold categorization, I have been paying attention to professional historians: their ideas about the past and its knowability, their scholarly practice, and the outcomes of this practice in the form of written histories. Now, we need to turn our attention to the consumers of history, in particular the non-professional public. I believe it is relevant to ask why people need history, why it makes sense to read and remember history, why is important to teach histories in an institutionalized and controlled manner. In the following, I consider the functions of history in modern societies. I argue that it is important

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31   At this point, I would like to emphasize that I am speaking strictly about the intra-disciplinary status of the leading historians of the schools listed. It is important to distinguish between the image of influence based on scientometric data (which might have relevance in an intra-disciplinary context) and the actual social impact (which is very difficult to quantify in objective terms and for which the data provided by scientometrics has little or no relevance).

to consider both the epistemological/ontological positions of historians and the intuitive (pre-theoretical) epistemological/ontological assumptions of lay readers, listeners, and viewers of history when studying the practice of history writing. Both the social purpose of historiographies and to a considerable extent the practice of the discipline as such is determined by the social functioning of the socially relevant narratives about the past, which is in turn largely determined by the cognitive modalities of perception of the "before now" by human beings, at least in modern societies.

There are many conceptualizations and typologies of the functions of history in everyday social life. For instance, G. E. R. Lloyd identifies eleven aims or agendas which historians set for themselves: (1) entertainment, (2) memorializing or commemorating, (3) glorification/vilification or celebration/ denigration, (4) legitimization of regimes, (5) justifying past actions and policies, (6) explaining why things happened as they did, (7) offering instruction on the basis of past experience, (8) providing records for administrative use, (9) warning, admonishing on moral or prudential grounds, (10) criticizing others' interpretations, and (11) "just" recording the past, saying how it was.[32] John Tosh or Enrique Florescano propose similar lists of the "uses" and social functions of history.[33]

I reduce Lloyd's points to three general functionalities.[34]

The first of these is the *Historia magistra vitae est* function (which, I admit, is perhaps not the most fortunate label to use in this context). History, or more precisely, knowledge about some aspects of past human phenomena serves as a source of learning for present practical purposes. Niccolò Machiavelli's *Il Principe* might be mentioned as one of the early prototypical examples. Machiavelli referred to particular deeds and strategies of past rulers, conquerors, commanders, and

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32 Lloyd, *Disciplines in the Making,* 60.

33 Tosh, "The Uses of History," 29–57; Florescano, "The Social Function of History," 41–49; Florescano, *La función social de la historia.* Also see older but still relevant studies by Hobsbawm, "The Social Function of the Past"; Mommsen, "Social Conditioning"; Schieder, "The Role of Historical Consciousness"; Faber, "The Use of History"; Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History.* Also see an inspiring article by A. Dirk Moses on the possible implications of Hayden White's views on the purpose of history for the study of nationalist conflicts and the utilization of history in them. Moses, "Hayden White."

34 I have no ambition to propose an exhausting overview of the public uses of history. I omit some of Lloyd's points—particularly (8), (10), and (11) —that primarily do not refer to the social functions of knowledge about the past. Also, given the spatial limitations of this inquiry, I am not paying particular attention to phenomena like "public history," "living history," or history reenactments, which, however, can be considered via the three general categories of history's social functionality that I am proposing.

politicians to provide examples in support of his own observations regarding the nature of domination and power. Machiavelli's approach was purely utilitarian; he analyzed past events and actors (causes and factors) in order to suggest the best course of action or a strategy for the present and future. On the other end of the spectrum are the modern scholarly works, which study past social, political, economic, etc. phenomena in order to gain critical knowledge for a better understanding of present processes and developments. Very often, these kinds of historical accounts are also intended to serve as an admonishment or warning. Not surprisingly, this tendency is most apparent in the contemporary history writings dealing with non-democratic regimes, power and domination, stereotyping and discrimination, war and genocide, crisis and collapses, etc. However, any kind of practical learning from accounts of past events and the deeds of historical actors fit under this deliberately broadly defined category, including learning about ethics and morality, social norms, etc.

The second general functionality is the *legitimizing* function. When speaking about legitimization through history, most informed people think first and foremost of political ideologies and the historiographies of non-democratic regimes in the first place. Marxist-Leninist, national socialist, fascist, or traditional nationalist historiographies are but the overtly explicit forms of history writing with the purpose of legitimizing. A great deal has been written about the entanglement of historiographies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (and even in earlier periods) with ideologies, regimes, and social and political movements.[35] However, legitimization is not necessarily (even if it is frequently) ideological in the traditional political sense of the word. There are much subtler forms through which historical accounts legitimize or delegitimize ideas, ways of thinking and living, political regimes, economic systems, policies, reforms, wars, borders, claims for individual or collective rights, claims for territories, and so on.[36] Theological modes of narration, reification of social concepts and

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35   Berger and Lorenz, *Nationalizing the Past*; Berger, *Writing the Nation*; Ferro, *The Use and Abuse of History*; Davison, *The use and Abuse of Australian History*; for premodern periods see an inspiring volume Hen and Innes, *The Uses of the Past*; and Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy*. Recent social psychological research also offers crucial insights into this functionality of discourses on the past. See a very useful introductory study to the thematic issue of the journal *Culture & Psychology* by de Saint-Laurent et al., "Collective Memory and Social Sciences"; Obradović, "Whose Memory and Why."
36   I am referring to Hayden White's concept of the "ideological implication" of historical narratives White, *Metahistory*, 5–7, 22–29, passim. For a lucid overview introducing the wider context of White's thinking concerning ideology and history see Paul, *Hayden White*, 22–24, 69–74, 116–127. Also see Stråth, "Ideology and History."

categories, essentialist social stereotypes and naïve theories about motivations and conditions, common sense assertions concerning necessity, inevitability, the beneficial or deleterious effects of an act, an event, or an actor or groups or entire categories and aggregates of population (to mention just a few) are semantic constituents which serve in historical narratives as vehicles of justificatory and legitimizing meanings.

The third functionality is the *anchoring* function. Most people, including historians, have a tendency to "anchor" themselves in (identify with) historical narratives (usually reduced to simplified stories or bits of stories) about referential groups of which they consider themselves members. Obviously, most often the historicized referential group is a "nation" or "ethnic" or "racial" group. However, this should be considered a universal cognitive phenomenon that forms an important part of the process of an individual's practices of identification with social or categorical groups in general.[37] This social function of history was heavily institutionalized in the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, and it became an important factor in the processes of secondary socialization. Most of the fallacies and misconceptions (which the constructionist-proper and deconstructionist historians try so hard to deconstruct) occur in writings which serve this function, whether intentionally or not.

The legitimizing and anchoring functionalities of history (knowledge about past) seem to be indispensable and permanently present in social life. Both functions are best viewed as epiphenomena of the political and social organization of modern societies. Studies on collective memory and remembrance and studies on the politics of memory deal primarily with these two social functions of history.

An important specification needs to be added concerning the three point typology of social functionality of history proposed above. Not all the writings of historians and probably not even the majority of them actually function in the sphere of social life in one or more of the above outlined ways. There are history studies and books which will probably never have a readership larger than a few dozen or perhaps a few hundred readers. And there are studies and even books

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37   Indeed, not only social groups but any social entities in the most general meaning of the word (i.e. also communities, towns and cities, institutions, and organizations, including firms and companies). Histories of towns, companies etc., are often not written by historians out of scholarly interest, but rather in response to an initiative or a call issued by the representatives of the "entity" which desires "a history" as an indispensable part of its "identity." Linde, *Working the Past*; also see Zerubavel, *Time Maps*.

that most probably will be read exclusively by fellow scholars. Several factors determine what kinds of histories and historians will reach a larger public. Formal criteria are obvious: an accessible narrative form and socially relevant or in some other way appealing topic are probably necessary attributes of a text if it is going to reach a wider readership and audience. Other factors (closely related to the aforementioned) include institutional backing and market determinants. There is, however, another indispensable precondition to the writing of a historian ever reaching a large readership: in order to reach "the masses," a history (whether in form of written text or vocal or visual performance or artifact) must be at least on a basic level compatible with the epistemological and ontological preconceptions of (non-professional) consumers.

In the Introduction to his *The New History* (2003), Munslow remarks that it is widely assumed that the reconstructionist direct realist epistemology is in fact congruent with the "common sense" approach to understandings of reality: "it is seen in the popular imagination as the only way to re-animate the past and, therefore, know what it means."[38] However, Munslow is dismissive of this idea. In his view, there is nothing natural or inevitable in the realist-empiricist epistemology. He might be right; nevertheless there seems to be strong evidence suggesting that, at least in Western cultures, people's thinking about the past is naïvely realist, acritically empiricist, and formally narrative.[39] Individual memory and remembering and the processes of construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of biographical self-narratives are based on an objectifying/reifying realist perception of past: "Memories may be the result of many retranscriptions over time, but at any given time the rememberer typically experiences them as unproblematic structures or as facts, and as external to the rememberer."[40] Individuals acquire and process semantic memories (or "reported events," of which histories are a form) through the same cognitive operations and following

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38   Munslow, *The New History*, 5.

39   On the narrative structure of autobiographical and narrative (i.e. collective) memory and the cognitive and cultural aspects of their construction see Brunner, "Life as Narrative"; Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory,* 51–75 and 87–143; Nelson, "Narrative and Self, Myth and Memory", 3–28; McAdams, "Identity and the Life Story"; Fleisher Feldman, "Narratives of National Identity"; also see the recent research by de Saint-Laurent, "Personal Trajectories, Collective Memories."

40   Quote from Prager, *Presenting the Past*, 215; for further elaboration of this point also see King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity*, 2–7 and Chapters 1 and 2; and Gergen, "Mind, Text, and Society."

the same epistemological and ontological presumptions through which they acquire and process episodic memories (or "experienced events").[41]

Indeed, what Munslow calls hard-core realism-empiricism (i.e. a position characteristic of reconstructionist historians) is in my understanding nothing but an intuitive commonsense approach to thinking about "before now." Thus, put in a somewhat simplified manner, probably most future historians begin their study of history at a university as direct realists (reconstructionists). They bring to their studies an intuitive commonsense "epistemology." Whether in their future careers they tend towards an impositionalist position and became constructionists-proper or deconstructionist historians or remain reconstructionists or constructionists-improper depends on many factors.

At this point, we need to keep in mind that cognitive fallacies and specifically cognitive fallacies typical of the reconstructionist and constructionist-improper type of history writing are indispensable features of everyday social practice. It is a well-documented phenomenon that the human mind has an intuitive capacity to reify (i.e. objectify) particular (socially important) abstractions, social relations, and institutions. Nations, races, classes, religious denominations, and other categorically defined aggregates of people are among the most reified social entities. In the realm of the scholarly (social scientific) production of knowledge, reification and other cognitive modalities of dealing with the complexities of human societies and everyday social practice, such as essentialism, stereotyping, and entitativism, are regarded as serious mistakes and methodological failures. However, as cognitive and social psychological research suggests, these cognitive biases are practically inevitable in and indispensable to everyday social practice.[42]

The idea of nation as a deep historical egalitarian community of shared language, territory, customs, and culture and of a common fate would be impossible without the capacity for essentialist and reifying thought. A reifying concept of nation as an objective historical entity, an essentialist concept of nationality/ethnicity/race, and what Munslow calls a hard-core empiricist-realist

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41 There are differences in how well this information is remembered and operationalized in social life. Larsen, "Remembering without Experiencing"; Neisser, "What is Ordinary Memory the Memory of?"

42 For basic information about reification see Fenichel Pitkin, "Rethinking Reification"; also see the classic Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 88–92. On essentialism see: Gelman, *The Essential Child*; Gelman, Coley and Gottfried, "Essentialist Beliefs in Children"; Hirschfeld, *Race in the Making*.

On stereotyping and entitativity see: Lickel et al., "Varieties of Groups"; Yzerbyt, Corneille and Estrada, "The Interplay of Subjective Essentialism and Entitativity"; Crump et al. "Group Entitativity and Similarity"; Sherman and Percy, "The Psychology of Collective Responsibility."

vision of the past and history are all necessary components of national histories which enable them to function effectively and "naturally" as referential frames of self-identification. In other words, both cognitive fallacy and the propensity to think about the past in the same way (in the same terms and categories) as the present are necessary to bring about a sense of the fundamental realness of the historically represented past.

Constructionist-proper historians design their methodological measures and adopt critical social theories to eliminate reifying and essentialist conceptions and stereotypical notions and naïve theories from their history writing. In other words, they deconstruct the cognitive fallacies that are indispensable to the legitimizing and anchoring functionality of history. This renders the writings of many impositionalist historians difficult to read and understand to the non-professional or uninformed consumer of history. Constructionist-proper and deconstructionist historiographies are (unlike reconstructionist history writing) quite counterintuitive, and they require prior familiarity with philosophical and social scientific theoretical knowledge if one seeks to understand them fully. This usually also means that the histories written by constructionist-proper and deconstructionist historians operate outside and even in opposition to the historical discourses that fulfil (or at least have the potential to fulfil) the legitimization and anchoring functions of history.[43] Reconstructionist and to a varying extent inadvertently also constructionist-improper historians serve a purpose that constructionist-proper and deconstructionist historians cannot.[44]

In this paper, I have argued that Munslow's threefold classification suffers from a priori presumptions about the elementary ontological/epistemological positions of historians. This is most evident in his category of constructionism. Munslow defines each of his three historical epistemologies or genres very narrowly on the basis of historians' alleged beliefs about the ontic nature of

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43 It is not hard to see the correlations between the functionalities outlined above and the epistemological positions of historians. Presumably, the legitimizing and anchoring function is dominantly fulfilled by the output of reconstructionist/constructionist-improper historians. The constructionist-proper/deconstructionist histories dominantly fit into the category of *Historia magistra vitae est* functionality of history.

44 For instance the monumental *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (vols. 1–8, 1972–1997) by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck and their colleagues, like Quentin Skinner's *Liberty before Liberalism* (1998), Lynn Hunt's *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (1984), or the classic by Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1977), not only do not offer legitimizing or identification narratives, but on the contrary analyze the contingent nature of social concepts and categories, the functionings of power, identity politics and construction of identity discourses, and legitimizing discourses.

the "before now" and its knowability. He proposes several secondary criteria (most notably the use of critical social theories by constructionist historians) that would indicate the belonging of a historical text and its author to one of the three epistemological types. I argue for a looser association of formal and methodological criteria with basic ontological/epistemological positions of historians. Furthermore, I argue for a more flexible approach to defining those positions, in which respect I find the solution proposed by Eugen Zeleňák (two rather general categories: direct realism vs. impositionalism) more workable.

It is necessary to differentiate between historians whose accounts are almost entirely narrative or partially narrative and analytic or entirely non-narrative or narrative, but in an atypical, experimental way; between historians whose interpretations are a-theoretical and historians who use social theories. However, it is also important to draw distinctions between the ways in which historians operate with theories. The depth to which historians acquaint themselves with social theories (and their epistemic background) and the degree of adequate operationalization of theoretical and conceptual apparatuses in the writing of history are, in my assessment, relatively robust epistemological definitional criteria that cannot be ignored. Following this line of reasoning, I propose split Munslow's category of constructionism into two types. Constructionism-improper is characterized by an inadequate mastering of theories and the "contamination" of these theories through cognitive fallacies such as reification, essentialism, entitativism, stereotyping, misleading generalizing, etc. This usually goes hand in hand with a failure to adopt social constructivist epistemological points of departure that inform most of the current critical social theory. Presumably, most of the constructionist-improper historians will be direct realists. Constructionism-proper is in fact formally congruent with the category of constructionism as Munslow originally defined it, but with an important distinction as far as the elementary ontological/epistemological position of historians falling into this category is concerned. The successful adoption of critical social theory alongside social constructivist epistemological presuppositions would indicate an impositionalist epistemological position. To put it metaphorically, a constructionist-improper historian is someone who abandons the reconstructionist positions and sets out to become a constructionist-proper type of historian, but who for some reason gets stuck somewhere on the road.

I realize that this seems an arbitrary split, and perhaps several other subcategories of constructionism could be delineated. I also admit that, like

Munslow's categories, at first sight my categories might also seem too ideal-typical for analytical purposes. Their full potential reveals itself when another important factor, which Munslow omitted altogether, is considered: the social functions of history. I argue that particular functionalities of knowledge about the past (of which historians are the primary producers and, in principle, the guarantors of its truthfulness) in the social lives of modern societies are dependent on naïve realist and acritical empiricist (direct realist in Zeleňák's terms) thinking. Moreover, I argue that national histories in the traditional sense necessarily must be narrative, since narrative is the "natural" form through which people are inclined to make sense of their being in the past, present, and future. Furthermore, to function as natural frames of self-identification, national histories need to be based on (among other things) a reifying concept of nation and an essentialist concept of nationality, ethnicity, race, and other related social categorizations. I suggest that there is a direct connection between the social functionalities of history and the continued prevalence of the direct realist, i.e. reconstructionist and constructionist-improper modes of history writing. By including in our studies of epistemology in historiography in connection with the practice of scholarly history writing the non-professional person as a consumer of history and the social functionalities of history (and the institutionalized modes of realizing these functionalities), we can potentially gain entirely new perspectives on certain intra-disciplinary phenomena, such as the continued thriving of an obsolete epistemology despite decades of intense and plausible criticism.

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Memory and the Contemporary Relevance of the Past

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As products that can be sold and bought, elements of the recent and more distant past become more and more important from the point of view of consumption, a process which adheres to the logic of commercial culture. At the same time, academic history is becoming less relevant as a source of authentic images of the past. As a result of the arbitrary selection of sources for different purposes and needs, the past has moved into our neighborhood (i.e. it has become an omnipresent part of the jumbled image repertoire of our everyday lives), and as a consequence, we find ourselves surrounded by a rather eclectic type of history. The past has become a commodity, and it has acquired a new valence as a source of collective and personal identity. Societies relate to their own pasts through the mechanisms of memory. Collective memory, as a source of social and personal identity, is partly a kind of history appropriated by the different groups of contemporary society. The manner in which this appropriation is effected highlights the potential role of academic history as a critical observer of relevant social processes in the past (and present).

Keywords: contemporary history, appropriation of the past, collective memory, social and personal identity

> The past is made into history – constructed into analysis, narrated into interpretation, fashioned into stories, made serviceable as assumptions and ideas, which are then released into public circulation – in many different ways, only some of which remain susceptible to the professional historian's influence or control. Indeed, the legitimacy of the latter's authority has arguably become far less secure and generally acknowledged than before. As images of the recent and more distant past teem ever more chaotically across the public sphere, emanating from all manner of sites of cultural production (for example from television, advertising, magazines, museums, cinema, exhibitions, reenactments), which only rarely include universities, then the academic historian's particular voice easily becomes drowned out, a fate which the performative successes of a few celebrity exceptions tend only to confirm.[1]

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1   Eley, "The Past Under Erasure?" 555.

In 2011, the British historian Geoff Eley published an article in *The Journal of Contemporary History* on the changing relationship of history, memory, and the contemporary. Summing up the essence of these changes, he arrived at the conclusion cited above. According to his rather pessimistic opinion, history as a discipline can do little to prevent the commodification of the past. Seen as products that can be sold and bought, elements of the recent and more distant past become more and more important from the point of view of consumption, a process which adheres to the logic of commercial culture. The role of academic history is becoming less relevant as a source of authentic images of the past.[2] Together with the changes that are taking place in the nature and sources of public culture, the use of the past to suit particular needs is a widely observable and experienced practice in an era in which the alleged validity and authenticity of history is used to secure value for an array of products. The past, not so much in the form of professional history but rather as something resulting from the arbitrary selection of sources for different purposes and needs, has moved into our neighborhood, and as a consequence we found ourselves surrounded by a rather eclectic type of history. There were of course significant variations in the aforementioned changes depending on the history of different countries.

East-Central European communist regimes strictly controlled publicness and the production of historical knowledge. On the basis of the dominant ideology, renderings of the past primarily emphasized "progressive" elements of national history which proved adaptable to relevant political needs and self-images. Control over the past was exercised through institutions which filtered the content of the history that was offered to the public. After the change of regimes, the newly established democracy, with its economic equivalent (a market economy), opened the public sphere to reevaluations of history, and alongside the clearly positive ones (removing former ideological constraints) this had some negative consequences as well. No longer under the supervision or even influence of academic history, the past suddenly began to appear in various forms and according to various, sometimes clearly biased interpretations. From the point of view of memory studies what happened came as no surprise. It was the logical result of the liberation of the past for the purpose of identification. Free access to the public sphere created a wide range of newly rediscovered elements and narratives of history for different Hungarian social groups. Instead of being the product of scientific study, theories, and methods, the past became a

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2   Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting,* 396–97.

commodity, and it received a new valence as the source of collective and personal identity.[3] Knowing for instance Hungarian society's general indifference to and ignorance of its own past, we could add: at least for those who cared about grounding their identities in the past. Yet, although not in an explicit way, when defining themselves as members of groups (nations, confessions, ethnicities, or other kinds of social groups, for example the middle class) people always use elements taken from their collective past, known as history.[4] There are important questions yet to be answered. How do people inform themselves or learn of (or devise or refashion) parts of the past that are relevant to them? Are there any specific institutions and mechanisms that help provide historical knowledge for a wider public? What kinds of roles does memory play in this process? And finally, how can we interpret the relationship of memory, history, and the contemporary in light of the problem of identity and identification in an ever-changing present? Before I try to formulate answers, I will turn to the general conditions of history and memory.

According to literary theorist Andreas Huyssen (whose opinion is very similar to that of Pierre Nora), as a necessary consequence of modernization the dissolution of the culture of unified common memory has changed the way in which people relate to the past.[5] The general speeding up of life, the flow of information, and the growing frequency of motion (vertical and horizontal mobility) has increased our distance from the past, which we could consider our own, as a dimension in which we could easily navigate. Broadening the horizon of the present paradoxically has meant tightening it at the same time.[6] Modern techniques can bring different parts of the world close to one another at a very rapid pace, creating a kind of synchronicity. The ever expanding horizon of the present is changing more and more quickly in accordance with the needs of the

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3 About the past being "improved" for present purposes, see: Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country – Revisited,* 497–584.

4 The most seminal works on the relationship between social groups and memory are of course Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire and the posthumous La Mémoire Collective by Maurice Halbwachs. Based on Halbwachs' notion of social memory (but stressing mainly the role of long term cultural memories and, from this perspective, the relationship between social groups, memory, and identity), see Assmann, "Globalization, Universalism, and the Erosion of Cultural Memory," 123. On the significance of the interpretation of memories as a dynamic process and the entangled, relational nature of remembering, see: Feindt et al., "Entangled Memory," 27.

5 Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* 1–29; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, "Introduction," 6–8; Csáky, "Die Mehrdeutigkeit von Gedächtnis," 2; Nora, "Between Memory and History"; Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity.*

6 Huyssen, *Present Pasts,* 22–24.

news industry and show business.[7] Modern life is changing so quickly that we can hardly realize it, and the moment is over, it has become past.[8] Because of this incertitude, people turn to the harmonic unity of a past allegedly governed by traditions, which does not necessarily correspond to any historical reality, though this is not really important from the point of view of the psychological need for security. A second relevant factor here is the consequence of modern urbanization. As Paul Connerton claims in a recent book, the production of urban space produces cultural amnesia. Spaces and places in modern cities are becoming more and more homogeneous and less memorable as a consequence. It is hard to anchor memories that could preserve (or be used to fashion the illusion of) stable identities in spaces in which functional requirements of traffic and dwelling prevail. Change, speed, and the deeply human psychological need of attachment to place and the preservation of identity with the help of memories—all these factors are relevant when we try to maintain an appropriate relationship with the past. As Pierre Nora observed more than 30 years ago, there are no longer milieus, which is why we need to create lieux of memory.[9]

First, one must consider basic differences between history and memory, as they are of particular relevance here.

Community, Emotions, Identity

Much as individuals construct their identities in the form of autobiographical memory through narratives, communities also construct narratives of self-interpretation.[10] To maintain continuity and coherence, collective identity needs effective preservers and mediators.[11] Because of our innate group instinct and our constant need of reliable attachments, we can consider culture as a chance to belong somewhere and not as a burden, as has been claimed by Nietzsche and Freud.[12] The emotional character of memories can be partly explained by the successes and failures of the human striving to achieve appreciation, attention,

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7   Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity,* 113.

8   Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets,* 139.

9   Nora, "Between Memory and History." This meant an explicitly presentist view of history, as reflected in the writings of Nora and the series *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, see: Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity,* 141.

10   Williams and Conway, "Networks of Autobiographical Memory," 41–46; Wertsch, "Collective Memory," 132–35.

11   For a social level application of Conway's self-memory-system: Wessel and Moulds, "How Many Types of Forgetting?," 290–91.

12   Assmann, *Religion,* 6.

and attachment. To a considerable extent, the aims and plans of our working selves concern these goals to realize a kind of social embeddedness. At the birth of communicative memory, the emotional valence of relations among individuals plays a very important role.[13] Feelings of love, the longing for attachment, hate, anger, distrust, pain, shame, and guilt are inseparable from memory— indeed they are defined by memories. The role of emotions is supported by empirical results concerning autobiographical and more particularly flashbulb memory: memories accompanied by strong emotions are likely to remain more vivid than more general and less emotional memories.[14] We cannot remember everything, recollection is guided by emotional relationships concerning past events. Emotional relevance creates the structure of communicative memory in the case of images and narratives.[15] The desire to belong somewhere makes the individual participate in an identity mediated by collective memory. Social values and norms are written into the minds of the members of society, producing a super ego which controls their acts, constantly confronting them with social obligations.[16]

Extending to three generations and approximately 80 years, communicative memory survives with the help of social relationships, mediated and provided with means of preservation by society. Socialization is both the cause and effect of memory according to Assmann. However, on the long run and for larger communities it is not enough. They need a more durable form of memory on which to base their identities, namely cultural memory, which mediates the contents of the official canon.[17] In this case, society reaches back to a "reality" beyond communicational memory, a "reality" that is not necessarily a truthful one, because "truth" could make identification problematic. Compared to the relativistic view of history, taking into consideration different perspectives on the past, myths, legends, and only partly true renderings of the past in the form of memory, they have basically only one valid interpretation, namely, how

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13   Pennebaker and Gonzales, "Making History," 185–91; Lambert et al., "How Does Collective Memory Create a Sense of the Collective?," 198–99; Assmann, *Religion,* 3–4.

14   Christiansen and Safer, "Emotional events," 223, 238; Robinson, "Perspective, meaning," 199–200. Barclay, "Autobiographical remembering," 123: "Life is meaningful when experiences can be tied to functional affects and emotions, and one's self is sensed as coherent when there is a useful temporal-spatial system for organizing, interpreting, and explaining life events."

15   Assmann, *Religion,* 3.

16   Ibid., 6–7.

17   Assmann, "Canon and Archive," 104–05.

emotional loading and identification can connect to each other.[18] Memory has only one valid perspective on the past. It cannot bear multiple interpretations.[19] Usually, we choose exemplary, patriotic ancestors with which to identify. Recalling the past as cultural heritage has the aim of promoting identification instead of the impartial study of the national past. The national past as common heritage serves present centered purposes: to convince, to strengthen and to mobilize.[20] Memories of historical events may generate strong emotions, whether or not these memories are connected to personal experience. A couple of days after the assassination of president Kennedy as it could be reconstructed from the conversation between Lyndon Johnson and Martin Luther King, the time had come to have the Civil Rights Act (supported by Kennedy) accepted in the context of collective national mourning.[21] Emotional reaction can serve as a dangerous weapon in the hands of political manipulation. The politics of identity can use history to produce an emotionally affected or manipulated community. We use our original essentialism, that is to say our innate disposition to attribute some unchangeable inner essence to individuals and groups.[22] Considering the inner essence as a kind of an innate core can lead to a perspective from which other groups are easily be seen as so closed and strange that this perception precludes any kind of possible cooperation. There is no need to warn against the potential dangers of an identity politics based on essentialism after the tragic events of the 20th century. These dangers are all too familiar. Totalitarian regimes often used exclusion based on essentialist ideology in order to maintain the feeling and image of coherence. Whether the narrative trying to produce this coherence functions according to racial, ethnic, or class ideology is of secondary importance. The stranger is essentially a stranger by his/her race, ethnicity, or class. In the 1950s, exclusion from the working class meant a secondary social status.[23] The events of 1956 could serve as very effective counter-memories of the victory and betrayal of truth and freedom. Myths of cultural memory function differently in closed, dictatorial systems and in open, democratic societies. The relationship between the archive and the canon can change with time, the former being the passive contents of cultural memory, the latter the

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18   Nora, "Between Memory and History"; Assmann, "Transformations," 65.

19   Winter, "Historians," 267; Wertsch, "Collective Memory," 126–27.

20   Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade,* 88–172.

21   Lambert et al., "How Does Collective Memory Create a Sense of the Collective?," 213.

22   Haslam, "Natural Kinds"; Gil-White, "Are Ethnic Groups Biological 'Species'"; Mahalingam, "Essentialism."

23   Standeisky, "A kommunista polgárellenesség."

actual cultural memory.[24] Every system needs stability, which is partly provided by regularly held commemorative ceremonies (according to the calendar of national celebrations). The content of the canon, that is to say the actual cultural memory, depends on the prevailing ideology and character of the political system.[25] Commemoration can be considered successful if it strengthens the feeling of collective belonging.[26] Society too is able to remember, and practices of commemoration have important roles in maintaining continuity with the past and strengthening a sense (or illusion) of community, which is the main source of identity for the individual.

The Birth of History

Will an event become a chapter or only a footnote in future books on history? Spectacular events sometimes survive as chapters and sometimes only as footnotes. Why and how are they preserved (or rather fashioned as artefact, commodity, or political implement) by posterity?[27] How can social memory influence the writing of history? The transmission of tradition once cultivated as living memory became more and more problematic due to radical social changes initiated by industrialization and urbanization. Society became separated from its own (vision of the) past, which returned in the form of national memory and history. The two were often intermingled in the service of identity politics. As Nora claims, with the proliferation of lieux de mémoire and communities of memory, the canon of a unified national past disintegrated.[28] According to Ágnes Heller, it is due to its versatility and rejection of orthodoxy that modern civil society cannot have real cultural memory. Following the logic of identity politics, the state is trying to appropriate particular events from the past.[29] Since

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24   Assmann, "Canon and Archive," 101–02.

25   Connerton, *How Societies Remember,* 83–88. Connerton used the notion of "habitual memory" when analyzing rites in society. Memory is written into the body so to speak. It is most effective when there is other communal, family relevance as well. See e.g. July 1 reminding people of the losses of World War I: Winter, "Historians," 266.

26   Assmann, *Religion,* 11.

27   Emphasizing the role of media: Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning," 189–95. We can formulate the following question: how would collected memories become collective memory? The emphasis is on its processual nature See: Olick, "From Collective Memory," 155–59; Wertsch and Roediger, "Collective Memory," 319–20.

28   Nora, "Between Memory and History."

29   Heller, "A Tentative Answer." E. Esposito holds a similar opinion concerning collective memory in the more and more complex societies: Esposito, "Social Forgetting," 183–84.

it has become a national holiday in Hungary, October 23 (1956) has ceased to be a counter-memory. It has lost its oppositional value and people are much less aware of what they are celebrating. The more real communities there are in society, the more complicated it is for the official national canon to integrate the common past into a unified cultural memory. Professional historians have a choice: either they stay within their own territory and continue to render impartial, objective accounts of the past (or least accounts that are as impartial as their institutionalized positions as the proprietors of scientific discourse allow), or they serve memory.[30] The historian is guided by the past, more precisely a certain memory of the past. He or she cannot get rid of his or her own past, in which socialization took place, neither can he/she remain unaffected by questions of identity. Even the most objective historical works attest these influences, as one immediately sees when one considers the questions and research topics which are accorded the status of "relevant." As far as the choice of the professional historians is concerned, certainly we cannot speak of total independence or isolation from the context of national identity. However we can expect a historian to reflect on her/his own position, method, and narratives.[31]

History as preserved in memory can easily serve ideology and identity politics, which is why we should take a closer look at the selection of past events. Perhaps there are events that prove more significant for society as a whole.[32] Even the historian is picking elements from the past in a selective way, keeping in mind the relevance of the past for the present and the future. In Hungary, for example, the tragic fall of the Hungarian State in the battle of Mohács against the Ottoman Empire in 1526 was reevaluated after World War I and the Treaty of Trianon, which was a comparable loss. However, the history of the multiethnic Hungarian kingdom can easily connect the two events, because the consequences of the first, which included changes in the ethnic structure of society, clearly contributed to the second.[33] We cannot separate ourselves from the present or from those elements of the past that in the course of history became relevant for society as a whole. The need for identity both at the collective and the individual (which are interrelated) levels necessitates memory. Individual identity is always

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30   In Hungary Gábor Gyáni wrote about the phenomenon. See: Gyáni, *Az elveszíthető múlt,* 68–84; 85–102.

31   See e.g. Wilson, "A Critical Portrait," 34–35; Jenkins, "Introduction."

32   Pennebaker and Gonzales, "Making History," 172–75; Blatz and Ross, "Historical Memories," 226.

33   On the tragic image of Mohács: Gyáni, *Az elveszíthető múlt,* 117–33.

part of a greater group-level identity.[34] Although perhaps not in the form of a unified, closed system of cultural memory (as Heller pointed out), but modern societies and historians as members of these societies can still have a "stock" of common memories that can be considered the basis of identification in some way or another. From the point of view of national history, the narrative positing a connection between the battle of Mohács and Trianon is partly the result of an actual widespread self-interpretation (Hungarians have endured great losses), which was supported and even fueled by the prevailing political power.

How can society select from among different historical events? What meanings will be attributed to September 11 a few decades from now? Will it be a main chapter in the books on the history of the 21st century or only a footnote? According to the findings of research concerning events of the past, there is a kind of social dynamics working in communities which make memories durable.[35] Generally, we can better recall unexpected, spectacular, shocking events, but only events which remain relevant endure as memories because they brought about significant changes in people's lives and they have been used in the fashioning of a positive image of the community.[36] According to the results of a follow up study in the US, in the future September 11th is more likely to be considered an important chapter in history than the Gulf War, which did not prove to be that significant after all, despite the overall effect of the media coverage of the war. The streets of American cities were empty because people stayed home and watched the war on TV. In the beginning, it seemed (at least according to the official rhetoric) that an international coalition emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union which would fight for freedom, justice, and democracy. One year later, however, the troops returned home, Saddam Hussein was still in power in Iraq, and there was no consensus on the part of the democratic powers about the aim of the war. Were they fighting for oil or democracy? To sum up, as far as its consequences were concerned this war was not significant.[37] At the same time September 11th, in addition to being directly relevant to many people, produced very strong negative emotions, fear, worry, and incertitude in American society. Based on the analysis of 75,000 blogs, scholars claimed that after the first shock people were seeking the company of family and friends and tried to share their experiences in order to distance themselves from the experience. As a result, it

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34   Somers, "The Narrative Constitution."

35   Erdelyi, "Forgetting and Remembering," 276.

36   Pennebaker and Gonzales, "Making History," 171–93.

37   Ibid., 172.

became a shared, collectively formed, and later collectively recalled common memory, thus more and more a real collective memory.[38] Switching to a "we mode", people more frequently used the personal noun "we", and they were more attentive to each other. Conversely, we have ample evidence of the fact that the lack of mutual support after a tragic event produced negative effects, for instance in Chicago after the 1871 fire or in Dallas after the assassination of Kennedy, events which were followed by a significantly higher death rate. For those who were directly affected by a shocking event it was more difficult to get over it. They faced the difficulty of finding an appropriate form of communication for traumatic memory. I would make one last point concerning the audience. If there is a compassionate, attentive audience then it is always easier to communicate shocking experiences as memory narratives.[39]

According to psychological research, past events can be best integrated into memory between the ages of 13 and 25. Adolescence and early adulthood are particularly important from the point of view of identity formation.[40] We retain significantly more memories from this period than from other periods. For those who experienced World War II as young adults, September 11, 2001 was less significant than it was for younger generations. There are differences concerning possible future communicative memories as they have been theorized by Halbwachs and Assmann. They are not equally suitable as potential cultural memories. Events and celebrated personalities once considered significant might loose their appeal for society. Some of them become marginal, since they cease to be the source of consensus because they are highly disputed. Instead of symbols, they are rather seen as burdens. One could take Christopher Columbus as an example. First, he was celebrated as a hero. Then, his fame was overshadowed by new discoveries, but in the mid-16th century he began to become popular again. In the 18th century, he was considered a national hero in the United States, but by the end of the 19th century he was simply associated with important discoveries. At the same time, in France Columbus was seen as one of the greatest Christian missionaries. By the middle of the 20th century, however when the colonial past had become a burden for democratic societies, his name was frequently used in the context of imperialism and even genocide. No surprise that the 500th

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38   Ibid., 179–83.

39   Ricoeur, *History, Memory, Forgetting,* 505; Heller, *Trauma,* 14; Erős, *Trauma,* 23–26.

40   Pennebaker and Gonzales, "Making History," 173.

anniversary of his arrival in the Americas was not really celebrated and indeed was almost ignored.[41]

The same events can be remembered in different ways. World War II is generally evaluated negatively by Poles and neutrally or positively by Russians (mainly members of the older generations). According to the American psychologist James Wertsch, there are schematic narrative templates which represent a general view of history and guide the interpretation of national history without going into details. Russian history, for example, is represented in the minds of ordinary Russian people according to the following simple schema: Russia was always a peaceful country, which was suddenly invaded by foreign powers and suffered huge losses; through heroic fights, Russia finally triumphed over its enemies. We can discover elements of academic history in this scheme, though in a very simplified form. The public use of history reminds one of the functioning of memory: it is constructed by the needs of identity. The Hungarian version of the schematic narrative template reflects another narrative deep structure of collective memory which is centered around losses and inevitable failure. Collective identity is strengthened by mourning, which can be dangerous if a society has not worked through earlier experiences. Continuous reliving of the past can produce an inflexible identity firmly attached to the past. What is the relevance of the schematic structure when we try to concentrate on memory, history, and the contemporary?

For me, the schema represents the contemporary intersection of history and memory in the service of identity. Professional history, in addition to producing and reconstructing data and facts in a scientific way and establishing the interrelationships among facts, perhaps in a less scientific manner often provides a kind of a raw material for the public. In order to be applicable to the purpose of identity construction, history is used in a highly selective way. The source of selection is identity. The collective self-image of societies and of respective social groups cannot do without reliable historical material because to some extent it has to be anchored in real events and places. The meaning of these events and places is not determined by history alone, it can change according to eventual identity claims. Contemporary relevance necessarily results in oversimplification. Objective, impartial accounts of the past are problematic because they cannot always be easily integrated into personal and collective identity, which are better adapted to the schematic interpretations of history.

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41   Ibid., 187–88.

As I mentioned earlier, identity as a multi-layered phenomenon has more facets. The historical layer, which become manifest in the form of narratives, is the eminent source of identity as a collective entity. This collective identity seeks a favorable self-image and, as a result, has a highly selective, perspectival character, playing down aggression, for example, on behalf of the state and community. A narrative deep layer of Hungarian history's collective memory emphasizes pointless struggle and inevitable failure.[42] Considering the great endeavors in Hungarian history, this picture is not unrealistic. Collective identity can be mainly strengthened on the basis of common mourning for the past 500 years. Again, if a society has not worked through its past, excessive mourning can lead to ceaseless reliving and to an inflexible identity that rigidly adheres to the past.[43]

20th-century history is a huge repository of traumatic events. There is much to mourn. In Hungary (as in many other countries, especially in those of the multi-ethnic region of Central Europe), there are hardly any social groups which did not suffer considerable losses over the course of the previous century: wars, genocide, executions, the Treaty of Trianon, deportations, population exchange, violent collectivization – mainly as a result of political regimes based on ideologies. Ethnic, confessional, and social groups of a great variety fell victim to these powers and ideologies.[44] As many 20th-century biographies indicate, losses and traumas are here to stay in the aloof and isolated victims and in their offspring.[45]

For the time being, traumatic experiences have more real consequences at the level of personal traumas. In an atmosphere of mistrust, they cannot become common cultural traumas which are widely admitted in society after the act of self-inspection, which potentially can lead to a clearer social conscience, stronger social solidarity, and perhaps even the transformation of collective identity. This is not an easy task, however, because it is often hard to find an impartial "third side" that would create the necessary condition for the social interrogation of

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42   The social psychologist Ferenc Pataki about the deep layer of hungarian memory in a wertschian manner, stressing the role of inevitable failure. Pataki, "Kollektív emlékezet."

43   Ricoeur, *History, Memory, Forgetting,* 79. Erős, *Trauma,* 17–20: About the consequences of collective traumas.

44   See e.g.: Argejó, "A hatalomnak alávetett test"; Bögre, *Asszonysorsok*; Braham, *A népirtás politikája*; Matuska, *A megtorlás napjai;* Ö. Kovács, "'Ekkora gyűlölet még nem volt a falunkban, mint most'"; Pető, "Budapest ostroma"; Saád, *Telepessors*; Standeisky, "A kommunista polgárellenesség"; Szederjesi, *Megtorlások évszázada*; Tóth, *Hazatértek.*

45   Losonczi, *Sorsba fordult történelem,* 294; Erős, *Az identitás,* 117–18.

the traumatic events by providing objective information on these events for a wider public.[46]

Groups, Pasts, and Relevance

With the changing relationship between history and "truth," academic history has become merely one version among many, and it is less and less suitable for the purpose of identity politics. Fueled by the singular emotional perspective of collective memory, identity can renew itself also on the basis of losses and mourning. As society is broken up into several memory groups, macro level inquiries are likely to give way to micro level investigations. With the increasingly widespread confession and recognition of sufferings and losses, and with their increasingly central role in history and international relations, the micro level gains ascendency over the super-individual, and this makes it possible for professional history to connect individual and collective history with the mediation of microhistory.[47] This is increasingly seen as a moral duty for academic history.

The real significance of an event taking place in a society unfolds only afterwards, depending on whether or not it has the potential to change society as a widespread communicative memory. It is also important to know how a given community is characterized by the memories that anchor our collective identity. Flashbulb memories, identified in the late 1970s by researchers, are the consequences of the very exact and detailed recollection of extraordinary events. These types of memories are particularly vivid regarding the time and circumstances of certain events, events that were extremely important for the subject even in the moment in which they happened, as if someone actually had turned a light on to see things better. Flashbulb memories, however, do not have equal relevance for each social group. As it turned out in the 1970s, when this type of memory was discovered, the assassination of Martin Luther King was much more of a flashbulb memory for African Americans than it was for others. The same applies to September 11, 2001 in an international context: US citizens were much more affected than others. [48] Being closed within their ingroups, people react differently, and they are prone to overlook the faults of

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46   Giesen, "Social Trauma."

47   Gabriel, "Introduction," 4. About the danger of leaving history to non professional historians and history serving the purpose of identity, eventually the marginalization of academic history: Levi, "Historians," 85–86.

48   Roediger, Zaromb, and Butler, "The Role of Repeated Retrieval," 150–53.

the members of their groups more easily than they will overlook the faults of members of so-called outgroups.[49] Given this bias, one of the most important social functions of memory would be to remind us to our duties, which we can construe as obligations which provide us with what we as communities tend to allege as moral character. [50] As we have seen, alongside notions of past glory, tragedies can also be subjects of social memories. The result is more or less the same in both cases: strengthening group solidarity, emphasizing the mutual commitments of members and the outlines of the group itself. Our victories and our sufferings are construed as unique, and they belong only to us, no one else can possibly understand them.[51] Recently, the growing wave of apologies on the international scene directs our attention to the potentially positive consequences of giving up rigid "ingroup positions" and emphasizing the importance of a notion of the mutually accepted common fate of the international community.[52] In order to create peaceful relations, we surely have to begin working through our (real or imagined) grievances. It is not clear, however, whether our incorporated conscience (which has a deep social origin in the form of common rules) would be willing to undergo an overall self- inspection, or only a limited one relating to the past of its own society.

<p align="center">*</p>

The interrelated nature of memory, history and identity is one of the most important phenomena for every past and present society and consequently also for those studying social groups in the present and the past. As for the future, this interrelation seems to be so deeply rooted in human nature that we are hardly able to get rid of it. It is an interrelation which is highly relevant both for the social sciences and the humanities. Using the results of psychological and anthropological research, we can better understand the role memory and identity have played in historical processes both at the national and the international level. Interdisciplinary cooperation of the social sciences (above all psychology and anthropology) and history can help us make sense of the way people as members of groups relate to one another in time by the means of memory and through identification.

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49   Blatz and Ross, "Historical Memories," 227–29.
50   Poole, "Memory, History," 162–63.
51   Blatz and Ross, "Historical Memories," 230.
52   Ibid., 230–34; Gyáni, *Az elveszíthető múlt,* 373–74.

After these general statements, I should return to the problems I originally raised, namely the relationship between history (historical writing) and memory (individual, collective and cultural). Following a functional approach, one can identify one of the main tasks of memory as providing a tool with which to travel, mentally, in time, i.e. a means of summoning (or crafting while appearing to summon) information from the past.[53] Past knowledge can serve many practical purposes in our everyday lives, but humans have one particular need that we cannot do without as individuals living in societies: identities. Some information from the past is only relevant for us because it concerns who we are. Self-definition and self-image have more than a merely decorative role here. In order to be able to live in society, we need to have a coherent self consisting of more or less reliable self-knowledge provided by our memories of ourselves in earlier times.[54] This view can be considered general among psychologists. As it was formulated by neuroscientists:

> We are not who we are simply because we think. We are who we are because we can remember what we have thought about. ... Memory is the glue that binds our mental life, the scaffolding that holds our personal history and that makes it possible to grow and change throughout life. When memory is lost, as in Alzheimer's disease, we lose the ability to recreate our past, and as a result, we lose our connection with ourselves and with others.[55]

If memory is so important in the life of the individual it surely has some significance in the lives of social groups as well. The overlap of personal and collective, historical, cultural memories in the course of self-definition, for example in the case of defining ourselves as individual members of a national and/or a religious community, highlights the interconnected nature of individual and collective identity as a result of their common supra-individual sources for identification, consisting of history and, broadly speaking, cultural memory. [56]

Considering the issue from the perspective of history writing and, more particularly, contemporary history, one is prompted to ask whether or not there are any relevant consequences. The notion of the present as having a constantly

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53   For the functional approach and the need to study memory in an interdisciplinary way, see: Boyer, "What are Memories for?"
54   Conway, "Memory and the Self," 597.
55   Squire and Kandel, *Memory*, IX.
56   See e.g. Assmann, *Religion*, 6; Wertsch, "Collective Memory."

moving horizon can lead to definitional problems and eventually to impasses.[57] Either we live in the eternal present or, seen from the opposite extreme position, there are only vanishing seconds for the present between past and future. Accepting a realist view of time, with duration and succession, we can attempt to conceptualize and reconstruct past, present, and future. We can speak about past pasts, presents, and futures, present pasts, presents, and futures, and of course of future pasts, presents, and futures as well, based on the mutual relationship among these time dimensions.[58] Using this conceptual tool, we can avoid the traps of the eternal presentism of our own time without losing the advantage of being able to study every historical period as contemporary history with possible perspectives from the past and the future. The problem, however, with the actual present in which we live and the contemporary history of this present is its unsettled, unfinished character, which makes it very difficult to interpret in clear cut time dimensions. So the question—and it is a very troubling question indeed—is whether or not we can identify our present position. I think that the functional approach to memory both at the individual and the social level can help solve this problem. If we take the general human need for self-consistency into consideration, the interconnectedness of memory and identity shed light on the overall context of historical writing. Actual self-definition and future planning serve as the basis of society's interpretation of its own past. However, society in itself cannot produce these interpretations without historical contents formulated by the science of history. Political forces and influential intellectuals exert a kind of distortion when they use the "raw material" of academic history for the purpose of strengthening identity and feelings of belonging. Professional historians, mainly those who research the recent past, often feel obliged to react to out-of-context interpretations and distortions in order to defend their position as the legitimate producers of historical knowledge. Since history in its scientific form is less appropriate for identity purposes, we can claim that there is a necessary inconsistency between the two.[59] The actual present helps orient people with the support of common historical, cultural memories. It provides a kind of anchor for definitions of the present through memories and a point of departure towards the future. The context of contemporary history is heavily influenced by the past in the form of memories, both for the wider public and

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57   Koselleck, *Zeitschichten*, 247–48.

58   Ibid., 249.

59   See e.g. Wertsch, "Collective Memory and Narrative Templates," comparing history and memory.

for historians. The influence is manifold, for it reflects social needs and political aspirations, as well as the research areas of the study of history.

These interrelationships notwithstanding, there are significant differences between public and scientific interpretations of the past. Defined by the brokered memories of professional historians, history is expected to be reflective at least, i.e. to reflect on its own topics, methods, and narratives, as well as its position and functions within society. With the help of social scientific concepts and methods, which are especially relevant in the case of contemporary research, history can strengthen its position as a practice of critical observation of social processes and production of scientific knowledge.

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Contemporary History as Pre-history of the Present:
Analysing the Austrian Media Discourse about Investment Opportunities in the East

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In its first part the essay reflects about the concept and practice of contemporary history. Taking the transformation of Europe since 1989 as a starting point it finally advocates a genealogical reconstruction of the past as pre-history of the present. In its second, empirical part the essay discusses examples from print media that belong to a discourse about Austrian companies 'going East'. The analysis focuses on images that without providing numbers nor technical arguments suggested investments in the former socialist countries as a huge opportunity. It discerns two narratives built on these images: the return of the Habsburg Monarchy and Western (Austrian) companies as conquerors of the East. The essay thus contributes to a critical media history of the transformation of Central Europe.

Keywords: business magazines, discourse analysis, transformation, Central Eastern Europe

What is Contemporary History And How Are Historians to Write about It?

What is the meaning of contemporary history, which period does it cover and which methods do we need to investigate it? These are relevant concerns for any historian who is fascinated by those stretches of history that link up to our present and that are so close to our current problems, predilections, and confusions that we sometimes even hesitate to designate them history proper. I will briefly discuss such questions on a general level but with regard to a major rupture in living memory that often is considered as marking the end of the short twentieth century. It sometimes is even considered as marking the end of contemporary history as legitimate field of historical research.[1] I am of course talking about the events of 1989, the ensuing socio-economic transformation and the dissolution of the communist bloc. In the second, empirical part of my essay I will approach this seismic shift in European history from an Austrian vantage asking a highly specific question: How did Austrian business journals

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1 Sabrow, *Die Zeit der Zeitgeschichte*, 8.

frame their reporting on the opening up of Central Eastern Europe? How did they reconfigure a former niche activity, the trade with the 'East' ("Osthandel"), into 'a huge chance' for Austrian companies? As an answer I will analyse images from business journals about the perspectives that were presenting itself to Western investors.

Philipp Ther's book from 2014 "Die neue Ordnung auf dem alten Kontinent" [The new order on the old continent] has been widely praised as an account of the changes that Europe underwent since 1989.[2] Ther lays his focus on the former socialist countries but emphasizes the co-transformation of Western societies. He observes that significant change in regions of the "old Europe" was connected to the transformation of the "new" Europe farther to the east. This makes his book a useful reference for my own more limited undertaking. Austrian politicians like to flatter themselves as having played a significant role in the removal of the iron curtain (the famous photograph of the Austrian and Hungarian foreign ministers Alois Mock and Gyula Horn comes to mind[3]), but Austria, much like the other Western countries, was a bystander of the most consequential political changes in a long time.[4] However, with some reason Austrian society hoped to benefit from these unexpected political developments in neighbouring countries. Austrians acted less as bystanders when it came to trade and doing business with the reforming countries. Companies operating from Austria were rather among the first to seek profits in the newly open markets. This is one reason why the transition in Eastern Europe had a large impact on Austrian society. It contributed to a period of growth that lasted from the early 1990s to the financial crisis of 2008.

In the introductory chapter of his book Ther discusses what it means to historicize the recent past since 1989: "At which point does a given period become part of history, when does it become historical?"[5] He then refers readers to Hans Rothfels' influential characterization of contemporary history as "the epoch of those living"[6] but proceeds to invert this definition by using the death of famous

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2   Ther, *Die neue Ordnung auf dem alten Kontinent*.

3   However, Helmut Wohnut claims that Mock's media coup "massively accelerated" the disintegration of the GDR: Wohnut, "Vom Durchschneiden des Eisernen Vorhangs bis zur Anerkennung Sloweniens und Kroatiens."

4   Tony Judt put it bluntly: Western European politicians "were content to live with Communism so long as it left them alone". As for the US, it "played a remarkably small part in the dramas of 1989". Judt, *Postwar,* 631.

5   Ther, *Neue Ordnung*, 17. (the translation is mine), for the following: 17–22.

6   Rothfels, "Zeitgeschichte als Aufgabe."

protagonists as his yardstick. Prominent figures like Václav Havel, Tadeusz Mazowiecki are not among the living any more, hence 1989 by now must be history. Ther names two more indicators for the present passing into history: when the 'young' have mostly been born after its signature moments (e.g. the fall of the Berlin wall) and when active memory dies or pales. These observations again play on the basic insight encapsulated in Rothfels' dictum of contemporary history as the "epoch of those living". There are still people who remember but those who do not or had not yet been born already play an active and growing role in society. Ther also observes that public discourse about 1989 has acquired "the style of historical debate". This last point is tautological. An event becomes historical when historians enter the debate because they consider the topic historical.

Ther deploys three methodological strategies in order to enhance our understanding of the "history of neoliberal Europe", as the subtitle of his book reads. First he takes a comparative stance in order to overcome the limitations of national histories. Secondly he makes ample use of findings and concepts from the social sciences and bolsters his narrative of transnational comparison with the help of statistical data from sources such as the World Bank, OECD, and the IMF. Thirdly he analyses expert discourses and media, seeking two connect both levels of discourse. This is all very well and as the response to the book has shown it forms the base for a convincing narrative. However, we have to be alert to the challenges these methodological options pose. Internationally or transnationally comparative history easily becomes yet another grand narrative. Historians thus must be cautious not to use historical material as building blocks for a philosophy of history. Historians also need to escape an unhealthy dependence on ready-made insights that the social sciences of the investigated period often seem to provide. Otherwise the historian's brief vis-à-vis sociologists and economists consists of nothing more than an unimaginative renarration of past findings for a contemporary audience. If history as an academic endeavour overlaps with the social sciences, it also competes with historical narratives that mass media draw up. Lots of journalists dabble in history. This at least is how professional historians like to think of media people invading their home turf. With the proliferation of history magazines and TV programmes they do so ever more often.

We might be tempted to follow the lead of the British historian Peter Catterall who twenty years ago asked in a slightly desperate fashion: "What (if anything) is distinctive about contemporary history?"[7] Catterall proposed that

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7   Catterall, "What (if anything) Is Distinctive about Contemporary History?"

the distinguishing mark of historians should be their ability to take a wider view than journalists who suffer from "editorial pressures [that] dictate the primacy of the story in hand over analysis of its roots or the placing of it in context, the sensationalizing of material or even the perpetuation of myth"[8]. This argument has a lot going for it, especially since the resources of print journalism have not stopped dwindling. It is an advantage that academics are less constrained by the need to produce text for immediate consumption. However, having more time on their hands – in not just one sense – does not guarantee historians that their work keeps its distance from the political pressures and ideological preferences of the day. When Catterall wrote his essay, the end of history, the definitive victory of capitalism and liberal democracy, seemed a persuasive claim. Historians who did not subscribe to this Hegelian worldview, which Francis Fukuyama had updated for post-communist times, fought some sort of rear-guard action against the zeitgeist. Tellingly, Catterall used a military metaphor when he underlined that contemporary history needed a "hinterland". He argued that it is necessary to take into account longer periods of time beyond the immediate and recent past. Again, making use of a 'hinterland' is no safeguard against the "perpetuation of myth". Fukuyama, for example, did take into consideration long stretches of time. While he was no professional historian, there is little reason to think that it is different with historians. Historical writing has never been immune against self-serving narratives of the Whiggish kind.

In a more recent introduction into contemporary history Gabriele Metzler highlights the shrinking relevance of established disciplinary boundaries and a tendency towards organizing research according to the issues it investigates, not time periods.[9] She advocates engaging with methods from other sciences, especially the social sciences and recommends espousing a transnational and comparative perspective. These ideas are not entirely new: When in the 1970s Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Jürgen Kocka promoted social history as an historical social science, they put forward the same notions. They directed them against the historicist tradition and its preference for political history as the history of great men.[10] Metzler's assessment of the current state of the subdiscipline and of the challenges that lie ahead sounds as if the practice of contemporary history today could still profit from incorporating the concerns of social history. I would argue that Ther's account of the "new order on the old continent" is indeed indebted

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8   Ibid., 450.
9   Metzler, "Zeitgeschichte: Begriff – Disziplin – Problem."
10   Nathaus, "Sozialgeschichte und Historische Sozialwissenschaft."

with Wehler's Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Admittedly, there are important respects in which social history in the mould of Wehler does not offer a useful model to emulate. This pertains above all to its metaphysical core, which modernization theory provided. Wehler's Gesellschaftsgeschichte betrayed a conviction (or at least the hope) that German history had finally found the right way of coping with modernity when it progressed towards liberal democracy and a social market economy. This looks a rather dubious premise today when the certainties of the post-war decades have long worn off. Therefore we also need a more modest concept of critique, which does not make its claims against the backdrop of universalist pretensions. Michel Foucault's concept of problematization offers a useful starting point for reflecting about the possibilities of critical inquiry into the past.[11] It emphasizes the complexities and contingencies of how a society comes to discuss something as problematic and to act upon it accordingly.

For some ten years now German historiography has turned to investigate the changes that entailed the end of the post-war boom since the 1970s.[12] The discussion has focused on Germany and the 'West' and has spared little attention for Eastern Europe and how the transformation in the (former) socialist countries interacted with developments in Western Europe. However, the aim of writing a problem-oriented pre-history of the present has brought into sharp relief the necessity and the difficulties of cooperating with the social sciences. The "scientization of the social"[13] since the late 19th century and especially the surge of social research since 1945 make available a wealth of intriguing findings and persuasive concepts. On the one hand, a practitioner of contemporary history would ignore them at his/her own peril, on the other hand this material comes with strings attached. Already in the 1950s social researchers like Helmut Schelksy were aware that suggestive notions such as the "sceptical generation" or the "levelled middle class society" exerted an influence beyond the conceptual sphere and shaped political practices and perceptions of contemporary elites as well as ordinary citizens.[14] Social science helped to shape the reality it reflected upon. Furthermore, most historians are neither formally trained economists nor do they have a thorough knowledge of the intricacies of quantitative social research in its many guises. This harbours the danger of making them gullible consumers of sociological and economic diagnosis. While historians cannot

11   Scott, "History-writing as Critique."
12   Doering-Manteuffel and Raphael, *Nach dem Boom*, 3.
13   Raphael, "Embedding the Human and Social Sciences in Western Societies, 1880–1980."
14   Albrecht, "Reflexionsdefizit der Sozialstrukturanalyse?"

aspire to become experts for everything, there exist remedies closer to home against the danger of becoming a conceptual prisoner of past social science. A genealogical reconstruction of scientific knowledge can help to avoid falling prey to naïve truth claims. It rather elucidates how the diagnosis is part of discursive strategies, power relations, institutional settings – vast networks of material and discursive relations.[15]

Contemporary history not only depends on concepts and results from the social sciences, it also has to incorporate mass media artefacts. Where archival sources are unavailable, they offer almost the only way to accede past processes apart from retrospective sources such as autobiographical writing and oral history interviews. Again, if one should not simply adopt what social sciences tell us about the past, this holds equally true for journalistic accounts. Contemporary history cannot do without critical discourse analysis that investigates how discourses staged social reality. This amounts to a "history of the second degree" to use the term that Pierre Nora coined for the goals of his multivolume editorial project about French sites of memory. He stated to be "less interested in 'what actually happened' than in its perpetual re-use and misuse, its influence on successive presents".[16] I am aware that many if not most practitioners of contemporary history prefer to learn how it really was but I am sceptical about any neat separation of the real and the discursive, which Nora's description implies. In societies where all people consume mass media on a daily basis, media discourse is in itself an important event of the quotidian and forms part of what "actually happened". We have to look at the narratives that media provided to make sense of the flux of events, at the metaphors they put in circulation, the frames they offered for to shape actions. This of course is far from being a one-way-street. Contemporary history to an important degree has to be media history,[17] and this is the perspective I will pursue in the second part of my essay.

What should contemporary history do?	As different from
critique without Truth or teleology (modernization theory)	'old' social history since the 1970s
genealogical reconstruction of problematizations	present-oriented social sciences
"history of the second degree" (Nora) Analysing established narratives	contemporary mass media

Table 1. The role of contemporary history

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15 Cf. Graf and Priemel, "Zeitgeschichte in der Welt der Sozialwissenschaften."

16 Nora, *Realms of Memory,* vol. 1, XXIV, quoted in Tai, "Remembered Realms," 907.

17 Bösch and Vowinckel, "Mediengeschichte."

Conceptualizing the 'East' as an Investment Opportunity, 1988–1992

In the empirical part of my essay I will investigate the representation of the "Ostöffnung", the "opening-up of Eastern Europe", in Austrian print media, mainly business journals. Among the German speaking countries "Ostöffnung" is a notion peculiar to Austrian discourse. Germany had its reunification and Switzerland was not particularly focussed on the European east. Therefore, German or Swiss media only wrote about the "Ostöffnung" when referring to Austria and Austrian investments in the CEE-countries. In a first section I will use salient examples from business magazines. I have drawn these examples from a corpus of 400 articles about Central Eastern Europe that seven Austrian business magazines published between 1988–92.[18] I will take a look at two interrelated narratives that tried to put the new investment opportunities in the CEE-countries into a perspective beyond the realm of the commercial. The first narrative can be called 'back to an imperial future'. The second narrative showed Austrian companies as conquerors of the 'East', again drawing on an historic imaginary of Austrian expertise in ruling and 'civilizing' this region. The story of the food retail company Julius Meinl lent itself perfectly to be staged in this way. Meinl was one of the earliest 'Western' firms making direct investments in the CEE countries, setting up shop in Budapest in the mid-1980s. Meinl is the first of two cases of individual companies to which I will dedicate some space. The second one is Henkel Austria. Just like Meinl, that company was among the pioneering investors in the CEE countries, also starting in Hungary.

My discussion of exemplary visual and verbal items will be informed by an eclectic mix of tools from linguistics and social semiotics.[19] Although my paper can contribute to a media history of business journalism, its principal goal lies elsewhere. It offers a glimpse into the manufacturing and circulation of concepts about the "Ostöffnung" at the intersection of business and the public sphere. Apart from business magazines, then, my sources include bits from print media that are related to the realm of business but do not qualify as "business magazines" as the term is commonly understood. A study such as this, which combines discourse theory and the history of journalism, has to navigate an underlying tension between the two approaches. Discourse analysis deals with

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18   Kühschelm, "'Goldener Osten'. Die Ostöffnung in österreichischen Wirtschaftsmagazinen."

19   Among the literature that I have found useful for the analysis of verbal and visual discourse I want to highlight the work of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen: Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading images;* van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics.*

statements (énoncés),[20] which are not bound to any one medium or media type. They are an essentially transmedial phenomenon. However, it is important to keep in view the specifics of different types of media. Therefore, I will briefly outline the main characteristics of the print media that I use in my analysis.

Business magazines count on a readership from the upper middle classes that is sympathetic to a corporate perspective on economic, social, and political issues. According to 1992 survey data from *Trend*, the most renowned business magazine on the Austrian market, it reached about a fifth of Austrians from the highest income bracket and a third of those with a degree from an institution of higher education. Considering the population at large, business magazines were not widely read, but they typically boasted about their reputation among 'decision-makers'. Another survey from the early 1990s found that 39 percent of Austrians who qualified as decision-makers read *Trend* and 29 percent read *Gewinn*, its most important competitor.[21]

The relation between business media and company actors can take many different forms. In their reporting, business journalists depend on access to key actors; hence, the latter have means of influencing the former. Although business journalists often have a background in economics, their articles centre less on technicalities and more on creating stories that a broader public can relate to. It is hard to pin down exactly where these stories originate, whether with journalists or with actors from companies. They are certainly the result of a cooperative interaction. *Trend* often published long, well-researched stories and sought to maintain a critical distance to its informants. Other business magazines, however, mixed reporting, promotion, and self-promotion of business actors in a less discerning manner. This applies for example to *Gewinn*. Founded in 1982, the journal was a decade younger than *Trend*. While the latter was fashioned as a general interest magazine that cultivated a business focus, *Gewinn* emphasized the perspective of personal gain. While *Trend* informed readers about business, *Gewinn* exhorted them to participate as investors. The quality of *Gewinn*'s reporting was no match for *Trend*; instead, it played on the increasing allure of the stock exchange that had been dormant in post-war Austria. For all their differences, the magazines shared some characteristics, such as a colloquial and sometimes irreverent tone. This distinguished them from the expert discourse of institutions such as the Wiener Institut für Internationale

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20 Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*.

21 I use the figures from a self-advertising of the business magazine *a3 eco*, which came third in this ranking: Das lesen Österreichs Manager, *a3 eco*, no. 8–9, 1992.

Wirtschaftsbeziehungen, which published the most serious economic research on trade with the socialist countries.

Apart from business magazines, I have consulted the company magazines of Henkel Austria and Julius Meinl. These magazines were rooted in the tradition of industrial welfare. They targeted employees in order to strengthen their identification with the company. In the case of Julius Meinl, the firm's magazine also addressed regular customers of the company's shops and supermarkets. The *West-Ost-Journal* was yet another of my sources that involved business but does not qualify as a business magazine *strictu sensu*. It was published by the Donaueuropäisches Institut, an association that was founded in 1947 to promote business contacts in Danubian Europe.[22] The label "Donaueuropa" was an obvious attempt to avoid making a controversial claim to the legacy of the Habsburg Empire and to the dominant position that Vienna had held in it. Although the Cold War soon complicated the mission of the Donaueuropäisches Institut, it succeeded in establishing itself as a venue for commercial diplomacy across the Iron Curtain. Therefore, the *West-Ost-Journal* showed the characteristics of diplomatic discourse, including a penchant for grandiloquence and platitudes that emphasize cooperation but avoid concrete commitment. The association claimed for its journal an elite readership in embassies, chambers of commerce, and organisations that generally dealt with economic relations between East and West. It boasted that it had more than 100,000 readers all over the world. This figure, though, would have exceeded the circulation numbers for *Trend* in the 1980s. It is beyond doubt that this was an enormous exaggeration.

All these sources have in common that they do not document internal processes of decision making. They stage investments in the CEE countries as a media topic. However, I propose that the narratives and metaphors detected by my research in media discourse should be regarded as a recontextualization of business practices. While the exact relation between discourse and practices cannot be determined from media sources alone, in line with Critical Discourse Theory I assume that they should not be treated as though divorced from one another.[23] The representation of investment practices in the media links them to concerns that go beyond the business sphere. It thus establishes consequential relations between the varying spheres of discourse and action. A conspicuous role is played by conceptual metaphors. Cognitive linguistics, a booming strand

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22   Kühschelm, "Den 'Osten' öffnen."

23   On discourse as recontextualization of social practices: van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice.*

of linguistic research, stresses that metaphors are not mere rhetorical devices. Instead, they shape processes of understanding that are fundamental for the capacity to act upon the world.[24] This suggests that if business magazines use forceful conceptual metaphors, analysis should not reduce them to an epiphenomenon of the linguistic surface, something that merely represents business practices in an attention-grabbing manner. They are rather visual and verbal realizations of cognitive processes and should be considered as a way to transform social imaginaries into real-world practices and hence as potential elements of business practices themselves. Although my article will not be able to furnish empirical proof of this thesis, it does formulate a crucial question for future research.

The Economic Context

In the first years after the end of World War II Austrian politicians and businessmen harboured some hope for revived economic cooperation in "Danubian Europe" as they liked to call it. With the onset of the Cold War these illusions turned out to be just that: illusions. Cooperation could be achieved only on a much reduced scale some time later.[25] In the 1980s a rhetoric that dwelt on the idea of Central Europe experienced a renaissance in Austria, more precisely among intellectuals and politicians with a Christian-Democratic outlook.[26] However, this rhetoric focused more on cultural ties while the economy was a different matter.

Since the 1960s, Austrian companies again increasingly engaged in trade with Eastern Europe. Commercial exchange with the socialist bloc gained far more economic weight then elsewhere in the OECD with the exception of Finland.[27] In 1980 14 percent of Austrian exports were directed to socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.[28] Admittedly, the so-called successor states of the Habsburg monarchy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, were far from being the important trade partners they had still been in the interwar period. In the 1980s trade with the socialist bloc even lost some of its significance due to the indebtedness of these countries and their mounting economic troubles. Although the grave problems of the centrally

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24 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*; Kövecses, *Metaphor*.
25 Resch, "Der österreichische Osthandel im Spannungsfeld der Blöcke."
26 Marjanović, *Die Mitteleuropa-Idee und die Mitteleuropa-Politik Österreichs 1945–1995*.
27 Breuss, *Österreichs Außenwirtschaft 1945–1982*, 139.
28 Butschek, *Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 402 (Table 76).

planned economies could not be overlooked, the implosion of the socialist bloc came as a surprise. This was an unexpected turn of fortunes for Austrian businesses, which were well placed to profit from the economic transition. Since the 1970s Austrian banks had established a service infrastructure that enabled commercial transactions with the region. Early on Austrian companies started to make direct investments, initially as joint ventures and especially in neighbouring Hungary, but soon in many (formerly) socialist countries.

The opening up of Central Eastern Europe contributed significantly to the growth of the Austrian economy, which during the 1990s outperformed that of the other member states of the European Union (EU 15). The economist Fritz Breuss estimates that the opening up can be credited with an increase in real GDP of 0,2 percent per year in the past two decades.[29] Austria had long been more a destination of foreign direct investment than the place where cross border investments originated. Now the investments of Austrian companies abroad were increasing sharply. While in 1990 outward FDI amounted to only 2,9 percent of GDP, in 2004 they reached 23,3 percent.[30] In 2003 for the first time the stock of active direct investments exceeded the stock of passive investments. This development was largely due to the expansion of Austrian companies in Central Eastern Europe, which had become the main destination of foreign investments. In 1990 11 percent of FDI had gone into this region. Ten years later the figure was 30 percent, and in 2006 it climbed to 46. More investments now went to Central Eastern Europe than to its Western parts.[31]

While trade with Central Eastern European countries had been relevant for Austria before, the development in the 1990s was not only a difference in degree but of kind. This also holds true from the vantage point of the receiving countries. During the Cold War Austrian companies had been bit players even if from an Austrian angle their role looked important enough. In the 1990s Austrian companies really acquired a disproportionate prominence as investors or as a means of channelling corporate resources from Western – above all German – companies to the region. In many Central and Eastern European states Austria was among the most important countries of origin of foreign capital. At different moments Austrian investments corresponded to well over

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29   Breuss, "EU-Mitgliedschaft Österreichs."
30   Sieber, "Direktinvestitionen österreichischer Unternehmen," 614.
31   Obernhuber, "Auslandserfolg österreichischer Unternehmen in Zentral- und Osteuropa."

a quarter of the stock of foreign direct investments in Hungary, Slovenia, and Slovakia.[32]

It is no exaggeration to say that from the perspective of the Austrian national economy the transformation of Central Eastern Europe has been a roaring success. Still, qualifications in this assessment are needed: It is clear that Austria has profited from the opening up of Central Eastern Europe. If seen from the so-called reforming states, the balance of the transition looks more mixed.[33] Furthermore, overall growth does not exclude that there are winners *and* losers, (workers in Austrian textile industries could serve as an instance of the latter). It also does not imply an equal distribution of the spoils. Austria has proved no exception to the general dynamics of income distribution in Western societies: Real wages have stagnated since the 1990s, and the share of salaried workers in the national income has declined.[34]

Narratives: Stories of conquest and the return of the Habsburg Empire

As Austrian companies went East, Austrian business magazines had something to tell. In magazines having something to tell also means having something to show. Photographs, illustrations, diagrams, etc. play a vital part in communicating the story. Comprehensive articles often start with images that stretch across the whole page or even extend across the spread. The most salient image is the cover-illustration, which tries to attract consumers to buying and reading the magazine. Therefore, from an analytical point of view cover-illustrations deserve special attention. I will begin with briefly discussing one of them: the cover of the Austrian business magazine *Cash-Flow* from April 1990 (Figure 1).

Here we face the emperor Franz Joseph sitting in a chair and giving us a benevolent look. The cover refers us to a story about Austrian companies that have successfully expanded into the transition countries. Are we meant to think of the sudden activity by Austrian companies as some sort of déjà-vu because what we observe is "the comeback of Austrian companies in the Crown lands" as the sub header has it? The headline asks a question that implies an even more sweeping claim about the meaning of all this: "Back to the Monarchy?"

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32 Sieber, "Direktinvestitionen," 617.

33 Orenstein, "What Happened in East European (Political) Economies?"; Ther, *Neue Ordnung*.

34 Arbeiterkammer Oberösterreich, "Aktuelle Daten zur Einkommens- und Vermögensverteilung, Stand September 2011."

Figure 1: Cover photo by Götz Schrage. *Cash-Flow* 7, no. 4 (1990). © Cash-Flow/mh medienberatung + management e. U./Götz Schrage.

Showcasing Frances Joseph might point to monarchist nostalgia but the cover story is really about asserting entrepreneurship. It is accompanied by an article that tells the history of the Habsburgs rather irreverently as one of money making. 700 hundred years of rule are seen as the business venture of an extended family. About a century earlier the article would have been a remarkable expression of bourgeois self-confidence. In 1990 it might just have been what was to be expected in a business magazine that recycled the past in order to talk about the present. Another hint towards playful ambivalence is the fact that the cover does not actually show Frances Joseph but an actor who impersonates the emperor. A note on the last pages of the magazine tells about the difficulties that had to be overcome in order to plausibly fake the emperor for the photograph. This suggests that the question "back to the Monarchy" is not to be taken literally; nor is it to be taken seriously, or is it? I think it is indeed if we look at it from a different angle. The cover refers us to a geographic space, to the question who is in charge in this territory, and to a past that is assimilated to the needs of converting present business activities into an object of national pride.

While in early 1990 most articles revelled in what promised to be "a brave new world"[35] full of business opportunities, already in autumn of the same year

35   Riffert, "Schöne neue Welt."

journalists paid increasing attention to the flip side of this coin, the many risks that went along with the new. Shorthand for addressing this situation was the imagery of the "Wild East". This was a conceptual metaphor that provided recipients with an understanding of what doing business in the CEE-countries meant. According to cognitive linguistics metaphors are not mere figures of speech but powerful engines of cognition. This clearly applies to a metaphor that uses the Wild West as a source concept that it projects onto Eastern Europe. It is a curious turn in a long tradition of "inventing Eastern Europe"[36] to satisfy the needs and obsessions of the 'West'.

Let us turn to two illustrations based on this conceptual metaphor. One is an illustration from *Trend*,[37] arguably the most influential Austrian business magazine (Figure 2). Without doubt it was the most carefully crafted. This kind of illustrations, spreading across two pages, was typical for the magazine's style. We see a businessman climbing ruins in the jungle. The ruins refer us both to

Figure 2: Illustration by Frank Gerhardt. *Trend* 22, no. 4 (1991): 244–45. © Wirtschaftsmagazin trend/Frank Gerhardt.

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36   Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.
37   Riffert, "Lotsen durch den wilden Osten."

the idea of an ancient temple in a tropical rainforest and to Communism. They have the shape of an oversized hammer and sickle. This decrepit temple did not serve the purpose of venerating pre-Columbian gods but Marx and Lenin, whose busts are part of the pseudo-archaeological site. The illustration conveys the message that El Dorado is a dangerous place. The businessman therefore needs a helping hand: an Indiana-Jones-type adventurer pulls him up with a rope. In real life Indiana Jones is a consulter or rather an institution because the article recommends the services of private and parastatal organisations that had been established during the Cold War to promote trade with the Communist countries: the Eastern Department (Osteuropareferat) of the Chamber of Commerce and her trade representatives in the CEE-region, the registry for international trade (Evidenzbüro für Außenhandelsgeschäfte) and the Institute for Danubian Europe (Donaueuropäisches Institut). These organisations were supposed to guide companies through "the tricky business adventure land between Vladivostok and Tirana". The title of the article reads: "Guides through the Wild East" (Lotsen durch den Wilden Osten). The imaginary of the "Wild East" could also emphasize the profits, which this vast territory held in store for businesspeople who did not fear its dangers (Figure 3).[38] The title of the respective article reads: "Let's go to the Golden East". The illustration blends elements from two different mental domains: One is the "Wild West" – we immediately recognise many paraphernalia of this mass cultural phenomenon. The other domain consists of an idea of riches waiting in the East. Its embodiment seems to be Russia, which in turn is represented by the famous silhouette of the Kremlin as a visual metonymy.

The three images we have seen communicate the two narratives I want to focus my paper on: on the one hand the revival of the Habsburg Monarchy and on the other hand the conquest of the East, which is related to an imaginary of exploration into foreign lands. There is another important difference between the first representation and the other two: The image of Frances Joseph bears an inextricable relation to Austrian history, whereas the images of the Wild West and the tropical jungle are drawn from the symbolic resources of Western consumer culture. If the latter images can be regarded as realising the conceptual metaphor of conquest, it is also important to remark that the concept itself is very common in business discourse.[39] Companies are said to conquer markets

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38   Folkes, "Auf in den goldenen Osten."

39   Koller, "Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Cognition."

Figure 3: Illustration by Stefan Stratil. *Trend* 21, goldener trend (1990): 206-07.
© Wirtschaftsmagazin trend/Stefan Stratil.

while others defend their place, etc. The concept of conquest and the visual and verbal realisations we have encountered in our examples could be used in much the same way almost anywhere. The discourse about opening up the East moves between collective symbols of Western consumer culture and capitalist business culture and a layer of more specifically Austrian concepts.

Part of the imaginary was not conceived to tell the story of Austrian businesses investing in transition economies and is not linked in any meaningful way to Austrian society and its history. Still, an alluring story about entrepreneurship can be built around those elements. It has its appeal for the journalists who write it, for the broader public, and probably also for a highly coveted target group: the 'decision makers', among them entrepreneurs. However, local flavour makes the story more convincing or more inviting to the local recipient. This is the point where references to the Austrian past and Austrian mentalities came in. Therefore the discourse oscillated between a local/national and a broadly Western horizon.

The narratives of conquest and of the Habsburg past can be used separately but it is easy to connect them, which was often done. I will have a brief look on another illustration taken from the article "Let's Go to the Golden East": It

Figure 4: Illustration by Walter Grösel. *Trend* 21, goldener trend (1990): 210. ©
Wirtschaftsmagazin trend/Walter Grösel.

shows a map that is titled "deployment plan" (Aufmarschplan), a notion with
obvious military connotations (Figure 4). It is worth noting that in Eastern
Europe Austrians had last been occupiers in a literal sense during World War II.
In the late 1980s the generation of Wehrmacht soldiers had only just ceased to
hold dominant positions in Austrian society. The Waldheim affair had brought
into the open some of the tacit understandings about the Austrian mission in the
East and on the Balkans. Therefore the concept of a deployment plan applied to
a map of Eastern Europe is not free of connotations that lead us back to Nazi
imperialism. The sub header adds a different meaning. It informs: "Austrian
banks are determined to resume the role they had played in the [Habsburg]
monarchy".[40] Not only the media often make this connection but also bankers
themselves. However, looking on the map one realizes that it stretches the
concept: Habsburg territory for example did never include the "former GDR".
This might seem a trivial observation but it points us to what metaphoric
projections are used for: They lend intuitive plausibility to complex issues, which
in this case is the investment of Austrian banks in countries that were about to
plunge their economies in an all-out transformation with uncertain results.

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40   Folkes, "Auf in den goldenen Osten," 210.

I argue that the narratives of conquest and of the Habsburg past play an important role for how the opening up of the East was perceived and hence for how it was acted upon. However, this does not mean that each and every magazine article that dealt with investments in Central Eastern Europe was steeped in these narratives. Rather they appear in certain contexts. Generally, a perspective that centres on the national economy without arriving at economic analysis with all its technicalities is prone to using grand narratives. It is worth remembering that the term "national economy" (Nationalökonomie/Volkswirtschaft) betrays a relation to nationalism, one of the most powerful political, cultural, and economic narratives of modernity.[41]

When did the media insinuate the return to a status quo ante that was loosely identified with the Habsburg Monarchy? First, the narrative came in handy when a company actually had existed in those times and played a superregional role. Secondly, the narrative was a valuable journalistic asset when the article did not focus on individual careers or the business performance of a given company but tried to paint a larger picture instead.

When dealing with the investments of Austrian banks, these factors merged into an incentive for recurring to imagery connected with the Danubian Monarchy. The nature of the financial business draws it near to expert discourses centred on the national economy and all the big players in contemporary Austrian banking have roots that go back to the 19th century. During the interwar years Austrian banks had tried to keep their influence in the successor states, which did not end well. After 1989 they gave it another go, this time with a more enduring success; or so it seemed before in 2008 the global financial crisis cast doubt on their Eastern strategy. Therefore, to explore the interaction of media representation and business history we could centre on the Austrian banks. I will forgo this option and draw instead on two cases from trade and industry respectively.

Julius Meinl International

The Julius Meinl Company was founded in Vienna in the 1860s. It was a retail store that sold coffee. It started to offer roasted beans, which relieved consumers from an arduous task. This turned out to be a good business idea and the founder of the company, Julius I., became an affluent man. In the 1880s the

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41 On the relation between nationalism and capitalism see Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism;* Speich Chassé, "Nation."

company started to outgrow the dimensions of small business, and his son Julius II. transformed it into a trust that integrated many economic activities related to the production and trade of foods. The company now possessed chain stores in all the important cities of the Habsburg Empire. The boom years around the turn of the century facilitated this success story but it did not stop with the disintegration of the Empire and the loss of a large interior market. On the contrary, when before Meinl had been an important company, it now became a huge international corporation. Tariff barriers were circumvented by establishing production facilities in the successor states of the Monarchy (a process that had already begun before World War I but became a necessity afterwards), which in turn exerted pressure towards increasing the number of stores. It was only in the aftermath of World War II that the company lost most of its Central European possessions and limited its business activities to the small Austrian market. In the late 1940s Julius III., the grandson of the founder, took over and steered the company for several decades. He embodied bourgeois traditions that became the object of nostalgia but ceased to provide a secure base for retail profits. In the first half of the 20th century the Julius Meinl company had been highly innovative and fiercely competitive, while in its second half a company that started out as the biggest player in Austrian retail managed to squander all its advantages over younger competitors. In the 1980s it became ever more obvious that the company was moving on a downhill slope.[42]

In many respects the Julius Meinl Company diverges from the common narrative about Austria's economy. It did not suffer through a disastrous interwar period to enter en era of remarkable success in the 1950s. This explains in part why the business history of Meinl has entered Austrian cultural memory in a distorted fashion. In the second half of the 20th century its traditionalist appeal caused the Julius Meinl Company to become closely associated with Habsburg nostalgia. In contemporary Austrian media culture, references to Meinl help to create period atmosphere if the period in question is the 19th century,[43] which has long receded from living memory into the mythological good old times. But already in the interwar years the company built an image that represented it as an empire onto itself. Not only did the Meinl family carefully observe the dynastic principle: the eldest son bore the name Julius and inherited the throne; the company was what remained of Austrian dominance in a region that had

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42   Kühschelm, "Julius Meinl."
43   For example, Julius Meinl was mentioned in the first episode of the popular 1970's TV-series "Ringstraßenpalais".

fragmented into several independent states. The Meinl company staged itself as a benevolent coloniser in the name of (upper) middle class consumption. It thus appeared as the legitimate heir of the defunct Habsburg empire.

Since the 1960s the company sought to establish commercial links with the Communist countries. Julius Meinl participated in the food fair in Plzen and on the occasion of the Budapest Fair of 1967 the company magazine informed about the "new contact with old friends". In November 1981, Meinl opened a Viennese café in the hotel Forum in Budapest. The following year, the company began to collaborate with the Hungarian food chain Csemege, which after 1945 had taken over 45 former Meinl stores. Some Csemege shops now began to offer Meinl products. In 1989 Julius Meinl took the next step and founded a joint company with Csemege. The Austrian partner at first held only a minority of the shares but eventually owned the whole company. In 1996 Meinl operated 110 supermarkets, 70 discount stores, and five wholesale stores in Hungary. Meinl also moved quickly into the markets of Czechoslovakia and Poland. Consequently Julius Meinl International developed into the most valuable part of the Meinl retail empire.

In view of the company's history it is small wonder that business media framed its investments in Central Eastern Europe as a *return* into the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. The Meinl family and company of course actively collaborated in the creation of this image. When the journal *Gewinn* asked for the reasons of their expansion into Central Eastern Europe, Thomas Meinl, the younger son of Julius III. and brother of the company's president Julius IV., named three reasons but emphasized above all "historic sentimentality"[44]: "We have the feeling that we have a certain mission in the lands of the former Monarchy, which were our original field of activity."[45]

We could dismiss such a claim as mere talking, which the media eagerly took up. Possibly it was only public relations that did not have much in common with 'real' motivations and served to hide the overriding profit-seeking motive built into the DNA of capitalist enterprise. However, there is one strange thing about the Meinl Company. Since the 1950s it had missed every single trend in retail and shown itself as more risk averse than advisable even under the favourable conditions of post-war Austria. But this one they got absolutely right: They jumped to the opportunity of moving into Central Eastern Europe before most

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44 "historisch-sentimentaler [Grund]".
45 Waldstein, "Der Mohr in Budapest und Preßburg," 28.

of their competitors considered the step. The swiftness of the action calls for an explanation. It lies in a corporate culture that never forgot about the fall from grace after World War II when the company lost its properties in countries behind the "Iron Curtain". It lies in an owner family whose head, Julius III., thought of himself as a fatherly ruler. Admittedly, his empire consisted of chain stores but it was above the mere selling of goods.

Henkel Austria

The headline of a 1992 article in *Gewinn* sees "the White Giant on the tracks of the Habsburgs". The top-head adds another aspect: "How Henkel Austria is conquering South East Europe".[46] The article's author was Georg Waldstein, who had co-founded the business magazine *Gewinn*. He also had roots in the nobility of the empire. If the "on the tracks of the Habsburgs"-line was how a business journalist chose to frame the expansion of Henkel, how did the managers in charge talk about their investment policy? Was the Habsburg analogy thrust upon them by some secretly nostalgic journalist? Not at all. As in the case of Meinl important actors within the company could not resist staging their investments with reminiscences to the past.

In 1987 Franz Kafka, the general manager of Henkel Austria, introduced the readers of the *West-Ost-Journal* to his "personal vision" for the future of his company: It consisted of "opening up additional markets in the successor states".[47] Kafka pursued this goal with a lot of consequence in order to enhance the position of the Austrian branch of the Henkel group. Some years earlier it had been renamed Henkel Austria and it enjoyed certain autonomy vis-à-vis the Düsseldorf headquarters. The Austrian market alone did not carry enough weight to make Henkel Austria important but in 1984 it had been entrusted with working the markets of the COMECON. At first this probably was not that huge a deal but Henkel Austria strove to broaden the scope of its activities in the socialist countries. In 1987 it created a sales organisation in Hungary as a joint venture, and soon it also established footholds in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

The article in the *West-Ost-Journal* thus celebrated an investment policy, which was on the verge of becoming an impressive success story. The title of the article

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46   Waldstein, "Der weiße Riese auf den Spuren der Habsburger".
47   Kafka, "Henkel jetzt in Österreich-Ungarn," 42.

read: "Henkel now in Austria-Hungary". One could read the title as indicating direction: from Austria to Hungary. But it also evoked historical connotations and conveyed a sense of revival. Another instance of the same discursive strategy is an article from the employee magazine about the joint venture. Such magazines are an interesting source because they serve to communicate the mission of the company to its employees. While these magazines will not publish business secrets or anything that is unfit for the ears of outsiders, who might possibly get hold of a copy, they represent the company talking to itself.[48] The article that here deserves our interest carries the headline: "Henkel für Österreich-Ungarn"[49]. In German the pronoun "für" allows different connotations. The headline can be translated as "Henkel on behalf of Austria-Hungary" or "Henkel in favour of Austria-Hungary". The article told the story of the day when the Henkel management signed the contract for the joint venture: "In the early morning hours a stately delegation from Henkel Austria boarded the train to travel to Budapest, to walk on nostalgic k.u.k. tracks and at the same time march unerringly into the future". The concept clearly was: back to the future. The article finishes by mentioning that the Habsburg Monarchy stretched beyond Hungary: "Prague surely is a very beautiful city too." There was more territory to bring under Henkel rule.

The references to the Habsburg Monarchy were embedded in a corporate culture which included the organisation of conferences that connected the world of Henkel to a broader discourse about Central Europe (Mitteleuropa) or South East Europe: Austria and Austrians had exerted large influence in this region and should resume doing so in the present. In 1989 Henkel Austria held a "South East Europe Symposium" in the Hungarian town Eger: Among the participants were the Austrian Minister of Economic Affairs Wolfgang Schüssel, the Hungarian Finance Minister Tamas Beck, and the prominent Austrian journalist Paul Lendvai, an emigrant from Hungary.[50] Not incidentally such practices resembled public diplomacy. If the Julius Meinl Company depicted itself as an empire, the corporate culture of Henkel Austria apparently was also cast in the mould of statehood. General Director Franz Kafka clearly strove to craft his role as statesmanship. When he died in 1990, prematurely and unexpectedly, the company magazine emphasized in its obituary that Kafka's

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48   For company magazines as a media form see Heller, "Company Magazines 1880–1940."
49   N. N., "Henkel für Österreich-Ungarn," 6 f.
50   N. N., "Südosteuropa Symposium," 5 f.

arena had been the "mutual interrelations of business, economic policy, society, politics and the public".[51]

Henkel Austria preferred to present itself as an Austrian firm, which in some respects it really was. However, from a capital point of view it was the subsidiary of a German corporation. The not so openly advertised part of the narrative consisted of Austria's role (once again) as junior partner of a possible German dominance over Central Europe.[52]

What Is The Relevance of Grand Narratives about Business in the CEE-region?

The increase in foreign direct investments flowing into Central Eastern Europe was an economic process. Why pay attention to how it was staged in business media? To answer this question it is first necessary to sketch their role in public discourse.[53] Business magazines such as *Trend* offered economic and business information in an accessible form but their avowed goal was to address opinion leaders on economic and political matters. They typically vaunted their relevance for social elites,[54] which was a strategy to both attract advertising and to capture a larger audience that identified with a pro-business stance. According to a survey data from 1992 *Trend* reached 25 percent of Austrians from the highest social stratum.[55]

Business magazines articulate hegemonic stances on questions regarding business and politics.[56] In the late 1980s Austrian elites were reframing the national narrative. The long post-war boom had offered a high degree of stability and the perspective of steadily growing wealth. Austrians came to regard their country as an "island of the blessed". But as elsewhere in Europe the 1980s were a period of crisis, which gave rise to doubts regarding the relatively closed, state centred economy and society of the post-war era. Austria again seemed in need of finding a role in some larger story that transcended the dimensions of

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51   N. N., "Wir trauern um Gen. Dir. KR Prof. Franz Kafka," 2.

52   In the interwar years an important part of the Austrian elites saw this as the best chance for Austria and particularly for Vienna: Freytag, *Deutschlands 'Drang nach Südosten'*.

53   Business journalism is an underresearched topic, all the more so in a historical perspective. Regarding its development in Scandinavia: Kjær and Slaatta, *Mediating Business*.

54   Leeb, *Das Wirtschaftsmagazin trend,* 30.

55   Verein Arbeitsgemeinschaft Media-Analysen, Media Analyse, 59.

56   A discourse analytical approach to the Gramscian concept of hegemony: Nonhoff, *Diskurs—radikale Demokratie—Hegemonie;* idem, *Politischer Diskurs und Hegemonie.*

a small nation state. As the decade neared its close, two narratives gained shape: one was the integration into Europe, the European Economic Community that is. In 1989 the Austrian government filed for membership. The other narrative proposed the renewal of ties with the CEE-countries. While "Mitteleuropa" had gained currency as a nostalgic dream for some time, in 1989 Central Eastern Europe all of a sudden acquired a new economic potential. The breakdown of communist regimes held the promise of business for Austrian companies that were looking for their niche as exporters and investors in foreign markets. This implied attractive phantasies of power for the elites of a country that had once been the centre of an imperial state.

But did these phantasies have a bearing on business decisions? Maybe media only add an ideological superstructure or some entertaining narratives to what is really happening. Maybe it would be best to turn to economists for an accurate picture of this reality. Maybe it is very simple: Companies have to seek profits, East Central European markets were underexploited, and businessmen from Austria, a neighbouring country, got the news first. End of story. I would not deny that this has to form part of an explanation, but I do not consider it sufficient. In a market economy companies cannot thrive without profits but there are always many options of seeking them. It is by no means evident that the best way of achieving a reasonable return on investment is carrying money and expertise to countries whose power structure has been built on precluding private ownership of any means of productions that go significantly beyond a vegetable garden. Even if the political system of these countries is radically changing, this does not guarantee profitable results. Dramatic political change more often than not ushers a country in prolonged periods of instability with unpredictable outcomes.

Of course, taking risks, jumping to chances, trying new combinations defines entrepreneurship. At least these are aspects on which many theoretical approaches to the role of the entrepreneur converge. A Schumpeterian entrepreneur for example is not an accountant and whereas the latter can be replaced by a calculating machine, the former plays his role in situations where the outcome is not easily predictable.[57] While we do not need to agree with a heroic image of entrepreneurship, we have to concede that there is a hiatus between run of the mill economic calculation and business success in an environment

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[57] Schumpeter, *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung*; an introductory overview about theories of entrepreneurship: Berghoff, *Moderne Unternehmensgeschichte,* 31–41.

with many unknowns. In the late 1980s, even after the revolutions of 1989, nobody could be sure that it really was a good idea to invest in Hungary, Poland, or Yugoslavia – the latter country soon proved to be more of a dangerous place than a promising market.

The assumption that stories of conquest and of the return of the Habsburg Monarchy played a significant role for business people is in line with theoretical developments and empirical research in economic sociology. Ruben Dost points to media discourses on the rise of China as a crucial influence on German managers who decided about relocating production facilities to the Far East.[58] Geny Piotti found that in interviews managers described their decision making process referring to the "Gold Rush in America".[59] This is yet another example of how this conceptual frame, to which historical novels and movies have given wide currency, enters the realm of business discourse. Jens Beckert has introduced the notion of "fictional expectations" as a mode of explaining how economic actors decide in situations of fundamental uncertainty.[60] Fictional narratives complement or substitute the calculation of optimal choices, which is how mainstream economics analyses the decision-making of economic actors. Referring to Schumpeter's emphasis on innovation, Beckert argues that fictional expectations are not a peripheral phenomenon in modern capitalism but at the heart of its dynamics.

The imaginaries of conquest and Habsburg rule encapsulated a long-standing claim to expertise in governing the territories of Eastern and South Eastern Europa. It came with institutional networks and a specific regime of subjectification. The economist Gustav Stolper observed in the aftermath of World War I: "Among the peoples of the former Monarchy the German-speaking Austrian was effectively the 'bourgeois'".[61] This observation concerned above all the Viennese elites, who after 1918 were unsure about their future role. To an important extent they hoped being able to uphold their economic sway over the countries that were "Neuausland", the new abroad.[62] The corresponding (post-)imperial habitus did never entirely disappear, not even in the decades after 1945

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58   Dost, *Produktionsverlagerungen deutscher Unternehmen nach China.*

59   Piotti, *German Companies Engaging in China,* 23.

60   Beckert, "Capitalism as a System of Expectations."; idem, "Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations in the Economy"; idem, *Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics.* On the role of economic narratives see also: McCloskey, *If You're so Smart*; idem, "Storytelling in Economics."

61   Stolper, *Deutschösterreich als Sozial- und Wirtschaftsproblem*, 115: "Der Deutschösterreicher ist unter den Völkern der früheren Monarchie gewissermaßen der 'Bourgeois' gewesen."

62   Matis, "Wirtschaftliche Mitteleuropa-Konzeptionen in der Zwischenkriegszeit."

when Austrian elites pursued a more inward-looking and West-oriented focus, concentrating on nation building and on integrating the "island of the blessed" into the capitalist world. When the socialist countries transformed into market economies, it came 'natural' to Austrian business elites to picture themselves as foreign investors guiding this process and benefitting from it. They also could rely on a network of private, parastatal and government organizations that for many decades had been dealing with export promotion, cultural and diplomatic exchange, as well as knowledge formation about Eastern Europe.

Conclusion

As even a brief glimpse into content from business magazines, company magazines, and the *West-Ost-Journal* shows, it was possible to manufacture compelling stories and attractive metaphors that helped to make the case for going "East". These media took an active part in this process. While internal decision-making processes of the companies remain largely obscure, semi-public practices and discourses that are accessible indicate that one should not dismiss grand narratives as inconsequential pretexts. For whatever one thinks about Habsburg reminiscences and metaphors of conquest, it seems a reasonable assumption that they played their part in the recent economic history of Austria and its neighbours in Central Eastern Europe. This of course is a hypothesis that warrants further empirical research and must go beyond the analysis of business media. It has to include investigation into institutional networks and regimes of subjectification.[63] It has to adapt sociological and anthropological approaches for the historical reconstruction of business practices.[64] In short, dealing with media discourse must form part of a broad genealogical reconstruction of the "opening-up of the East".

The term "Ostöffnung" signified a process that was beneficial for Austrian companies and the Austrian economy. By now it also refers to a closed period that ended with the onset of the financial crisis in 2008. It is important to show it as pre-history of the present in the Foucauldian sense. The analysis of media discourse is one way of contributing to contemporary history as a critical endeavour.

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63   In the line of governmentality studies inspired by the work of Michel Foucault: Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke, *Governmentality*.

64   Carrier, *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*; Hann and Hart, *Economic anthropology*; Callon, *The Laws of the Markets*; Carrier and Miller, *Virtualism*.

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The Heads and the Walls. From Professional Commitment to Oppositional Attitude in Hungarian Sociology in the 1960–1970s:

The Cases of András Hegedüs, István Kemény, and Iván Szelényi

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In most of the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe, sociology remained a perpetual source of ideological quarrels from the beginning of the 1960s to the mid-1980s. With this context in mind, this paper offers an analysis of some of the decisive aspects of the development of Hungarian sociology from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s. In particular, the discussion focuses on three central figures, András Hegedüs (1922–99), István Kemény (1925–2008), and Iván Szelényi (1939), and their intellectual developments from committed and professional sociological work to the adoption of a deeply critical attitude towards socialist social development. An examination of the similarities in their intellectual development, especially as far as their political confrontation with the regime is concerned, offers a context for a discussion of some of the topical issues of the professional, institutional, and ideological aspects of academic work in state socialist Hungary and the ways in which genuine scholarly achievements could give rise to oppositional attitudes and social dissidence.

Keywords: Kádár era, Sociology, Social Criticism, Oppositional Attitudes, András Hegedüs, István Kemény, Iván Szelényi

In most of the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe, sociology remained a perpetual source of ideological quarrels from the beginning of the 1960s up to the mid-1980s. Even if party and state authorities often recognized the usefulness of sociology for their purposes, especially in periods when economic and social reforms were on the agenda, the sociological approach to the study of society never ceased to be regarded as a challenge to Marxist-Leninist ideology. The critical potential of sociology lay precisely in the fact that concrete and empirically grounded research devoted to the social facts of labor conditions, housing, lifestyle, healthcare, education, poverty, etc. tended to reveal the less familiar and gloomy side of the building of socialism. At the same time, sociology could also challenge communist ideology on its own level, namely by calling into question the social model which had been officially proposed under the label of "advanced socialist society". By adopting sociological perspectives in their

critical work on social conditions, social scientists started to discover and examine networks of relationships among social forms, stratifications, and developments which until then had gone largely unnoticed, as well as hierarchical relations of particular social strata existing and acting within the conditions prevailing under socialism. In doing so, they not only sought to rearticulate, if not explicitly to call into question, the Marxist conception of class system, but also to reconsider the Marxist-Leninist economic and social principles of the socialist model in the name of new strategies of social modernization. Thus, by the end of the 1960s, progressive Marxist sociologists in several Warsaw Pact countries, supported by reform-communist circles, tended to envisage themselves as the genuine mediators in the regime-society relationship. By taking as their starting point the empirical analysis of the given social reality, they were advocating a critical reappraisal of the ideological principles of the sate socialist regime itself.[1]

With this context in mind, I aim in this paper to provide an analysis of some of the decisive aspects of the development of Hungarian sociology from the early 1960 to the mid-1970s. In particular, I focus on three central figures: András Hegedüs (1922–99); István Kemény (1925–2008); and Iván Szelényi (1939). Their otherwise somewhat disparate intellectual trajectories from committed and professional sociological work to the adoption of a deeply critical attitude towards various elements of sate socialist social development and politics played fundamental roles in the subsequent formation of the profile of the cultural and political opposition, both within and beyond the social sciences in Hungary.[2] I offer a comparative study of the work and careers of these scholars, whose critical attitudes towards the regime were acknowledge by the mid-1970s at a minimum with their dismissal from their academic jobs. What makes this subject worth studying is also the fact that, unlike other groups of scholars who played decisive roles in the newly forming democratic opposition in Hungary (for instance members of the "Lukács school" in the 1960–70s[3] or the so-called "reformist economists" of the 1980s[4]), the sociologists in question never in fact formed a group. Rather, they had different backgrounds, different academic affiliations, and often contradicting views on the role and design of sociological

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1   On these questions, see the essays in the volume edited by Keen and Mucha, *Eastern Europe in Transformation*, as well as the autobiographical collection of essays written by sociologists living in Central and Eastern Europe in this period, Keen and Mucha, *Autobiographies of Transformation*.

2   On the role played by Hegedüs, Kemény, and Szelényi in the formation of the Hungarian democratic opposition, see Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék*, 25–29, 72–77, 145–48.

3   Cf. ibid.*,* 19–25, 29–33.

4   Cf. ibid., 169–70.

research. Yet there were also striking similarities in their intellectual development, especially as far as their political confrontation with the regime is concerned. A comparative study of their careers and contributions, thus, offers a perspective from which to examine (1) the modes by which professional, institutional, and political aspects of academic work could play formative roles in the development of a social critical approach to state socialism; (2) the ways in which genuine scholarly achievements could influence the birth of oppositional attitudes and social dissidence; (3) the forms of comportment among party authorities, with regards to which the limits of political tolerance and the effectiveness of reprisals were always dependent on a certain ideological flexibility adapted to academic situations and on a network of formal and informal institutional and personal relations.

From Reformism to Revisionism: The Case of András Hegedüs

In the interviews he gave in the 1980s, András Hegedüs often described his political and scientific attitude in the period following his return from Moscow in 1958 as entirely "apologetic."[5] To be sure, after being prime minister in the last eighteen months of the Hungarian Stalinist regime marked by the dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi, Hegedüs hardly seemed like someone who would have this attitude. In fact, as he reaffirmed in his memoirs, he was apologetic not only toward the socialist system that came in the wake of the events of 1956 in Hungary, but also toward the new political line represented by the Kádár regime itself. This apologetic attitude was certainly facilitated by the fact that, unlike most of the Rákosi regime's political leaders, Hegedüs was neither expelled from the communist Party nor subjected to any disciplinary proceedings. There are reasons to believe that Kádár and his inner circle considered Hegedüs a possible ally in the fight against the revisionist tendencies within the Party, represented by the remaining followers of Imre Nagy. In 1961, Hegedüs was offered the position of Vice-President at the Central Statistical Office. It would be difficult to interpret this transfer as anything other than a reward for his loyal attitude toward the new regime. As a matter of fact, this attitude found clear expression in his post 1956 publications.[6] Nevertheless, instead of taking the position, Hegedüs expressed his desire to devote himself to full-time scientific work and,

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5 Cf. Hegedüs, *Élet egy eszme árnyékában,* 329; "Beszélgetés Hegedüs Andrással," 13, 25.

6 Idem, *A munkásbérezés rendszere iparunkban*; idem, *A modern polgári szociológia és a társadalmi valóság*; idem, *Műszaki fejlesztés a szocializmusban.*

more specifically, to sociology. His request received the full support of some prominent party members, including György Péter, the head of the Statistical Office, and Hegedüs was given the mandate to organize and lead the Sociological Research Group to be set up under the auspices of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences beginning in March 1963.

In the secondary literature based on the memoirs of many others in the field, Hegedüs' name is inseparable from the rehabilitation and re-institutionalization of sociology in Hungary.[7] In fact, the Sociological Research Group of the Academy was the first, and for quite some time the only, independent institute in socialist Hungary in which advanced research in the field of sociology could be carried out. Even more importantly, Hegedüs himself appeared to have been convinced at this point that sociology ought to be part of an "enlightenment process" the impact of which should spill over the barriers of even Marxist philosophy and ideology.[8] Thus, by late 1963, Hegedüs' intellectual position appeared fairly secure, and it seemed as if, over time, it would solidify even further. He was invited by the party leadership to take over the position as editor-in-chief of the political-cultural monthly *Valóság* [Reality], which, in line with an earlier decision of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) Politburo, was to be turned into a journal with a "comprehensive and scientific profile."[9] Due to his new function, Hegedüs also became a member of the "Theoretical Working Group" of the HSWP, which functioned alongside the Central Committee. This move seemed a sign of an increasing political trust in him.[10]

This tendency, however, did not last long. One year later, at the "Nationwide Ideological Conference" of the HSWP, the journal *Valóság* was condemned for its ostentatious attitude and lack of self-criticism.[11] Also, an important document entitled "Some Current Ideological Tasks of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party: Guidelines by the Central Committee," which was approved by the Central Committee in March 1965, harshly criticized sociological research in Hungary for its "abstract reasoning" and its "uncritical borrowings from the dubious achievements of bourgeois sociology."[12] The Guidelines also condemned

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7 Cf. Kemény and László, eds. *XXX. 1963-ban alakult meg a Szociológiai Kutatócsoport;* Szántó, *A magyar szociológia újjászervezése a hatvanas években*, 174–82, 199–211.

8 Hegedüs, "A marxista szociológia tárgyáról és helyéről a társadalomtudományok rendszerében."

9 MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 304. ö.e., 24.

10 Szántó, *A magyar szociológia újjászervezése a hatvanas években*, 166.

11 Cf. MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 345 ö.e., 42.

12 "A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt néhány időszerű ideológiai feladata. A Központi Bizottság irányelvei," 151.

Valóság for its "erroneous views," "incorrect, bourgeois attitude," "oppositional tendencies," and "decadent approach."[13] These acts earned Hegedüs the label of "revisionist" for the first time and eventually triggered his removal from his position at the journal in June 1965.

For a time, however, Hegedüs' dismissal from *Valóság* brought about no drastic change in the course of his intellectual career. On the contrary, his critical behavior had in fact channeled him towards the reformist party circles within the HSWP leadership, whose importance happened to be on the rise due their role in preparing the new economic reforms to be launched in January 1968. In 1965, Hegedüs was invited to take part in the work of the "Preparatory Committee for the Reform," run under the auspice of the Economic Board operating next to the Central Committee. Hegedüs was asked to organize and oversee one of the eleven workgroups designed to assist the Preparatory Committee. His group was tasked with investigating "interaction between economic and social relations."[14] In this period, with respect to his own scientific work, Hegedüs continued to both extend and sharpen his theoretical sociological research. On the one hand, he devoted himself to critical analyses of socialist society from a structural point of view.[15] On the other, he pushed the limits of critical analysis to new levels concerning the place and role of sociology within the system of Marxist social sciences, as well as concerning sociology's claim to tackle some of the most vital social problems related to the building of advanced socialist society in general, and in Hungary in particular.[16]

Without doubt, the emphasis on sociology's task of providing scientific self-knowledge for socialist society sums up the credo of Hegedüs' vision of Marxist sociology. But it is also clear that his radical reformist endorsement of the critical function Marxist sociology could play in socialist society is separated, if at all, by only a thin line from the promotion of truly "revisionist" ideas. After all, Hegedüs' Marxism seemed ready to jettison the classic Marxist theses on social development the moment the sociological analysis of the concrete social realities proved them false. At this point, however, he also believed that his ideas had essentially been confirmed by recent political and social developments and especially by the new economic reforms under preparation in both Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In an essay published in 1967 in the Hungarian

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13   Ibid., 161.
14   Nyers, "Emlékeim Hegedüs András pályafutásának három korszakáról," 262.
15   Hegedüs, *A szocialista társadalom struktúrájáról*.
16   Idem, *A szociológiáról*.

literature monthly *Kortárs* [Contemporary] entitled "Reality and Necessity: The 'Self-Criticism' of Socialist Society as a Reality and a Necessity,"[17] he went so far as to assert the "historical necessity" of the emergence in socialist society of a new type of critical attitude designed to reshape the relationship between the party and society.

The fact that in August 1968 it was not sociologists, but Warsaw Pact troops who readjusted the regime-society relationship in Czechoslovakia ultimately triggered the escalation of Hegedüs' situation within his party. On August 21, along with the Hungarian sociologists and philosophers protesting in Korčula, the Party members of the Sociological Research Group condemned the intervention and Hegedüs addressed a petition to the Central Committee on the issue. In its report to the Politburo on this case, the Scientific, Educational and Cultural Board of the Central Committee made it clear that the protest issued by Hegedüs and his comrades against the intervention in Czechoslovakia was in reality only the most recent chapter in a far-reaching story. The document noted that since 1966, the Agitprop Committee had brought up the issue of the "negative tendencies" manifested in "Hegedüs' theoretically and ideologically dubious ideas" several times. In conclusion, and as a way to solve the situation, the report proposed the removal of Hegedüs from the leadership of the Sociological Research Group.[18]

After 1968, Hegedüs' research activity in sociology underwent a reorientation. In a somewhat programmatic study entitled "For the Healthy Development of Marxist Sociology," which Hegedüs wrote right after his removal from the Sociological Research Group and which was published in the *Társadalmi Szemle* [Social Review], the theoretical monthly of the HSWP,[19] he urged the continuation and even intensification of sociological research on social structures and social stratification under socialism. Hegedüs nevertheless did not entirely abandon the idea of advocating a radical "reformist position" when it came to sociological issues related to socialist development. This ambition, for example, was clearly manifest in the studies he devoted in this period to the sociological analysis of the question of "bureaucracy" under socialist conditions.[20] Also, his views on "social progress" under socialist circumstances soon came under ideological

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17   Hegedüs, "Realitás és szükségszerűség," 1011–19.

18   MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 476. ö.e., 131.

19   Hegedüs, "A marxista szociológia egészséges fejlődéséért!," 93–99.

20   The collection of these studies was published in a book that has never been published in Hungarian: Hegedüs, *Socialism and Bureaucracy.*

attack.[21] To be sure, it was precisely with reference to these lines of research that the accusations of revisionism against Hegedüs could be relaunched, accusations which eventually would lead to his expulsion from the party and his exclusion from academic and cultural life in general.

After all, by the end of 1972, the Kádárist party leadership had come increasingly under pressure from both its own hardliners and Moscow, each of which were demanding a revision of the allegedly overly liberal economic policies of the party.[22] Under these circumstances, Kádár was all too keen to demonstrate, to those inside and outside of his party, that the reform of the Hungarian economy and society was firmly under the control of the HSWP and that no deviation from the official Marxist-Leninist dogmas would be tolerated. As a result, there was a sudden change in the ideological climate and in the line that divided what could be tolerated as a legitimate Marxist "discussion" of the questions of existing socialism and what was to be rejected on the grounds of its assumed anti-Marxist content. Not surprisingly, the ideas defended by Hegedüs, along with those promoted by the members of the Lukácsian Budapest School, fell soon prey to this ideological fervor, which sought to cleanse Hungarian Marxism of its new leftist wildings.

In January 1973, speaking before the Nationwide Ideological Conference in Budapest, György Aczél, the Agitprop Secretary of the Central Committee, left no doubt about who was to blame for "denying the existing socialist practices." He named Hegedüs among others, and he accused him of "calling into question the fundamental theses of Marxism."[23] As a consequence, during a debate held in March 1973 under the auspices of the Cultural Political Work Collective the severely "anti-Marxist platform" of several social scientists and philosophers, including Hegedüs, Mária Márkus, Mihály Vajda, Ágnes Heller, György Márkus, György Bencze, and János Kis, was unanimously condemned.[24] On the basis of this report, the Central Committee of the HSWP prepared a proposal for the Politburo. The Politburo accepted the proposal and decided to publish a final resolution on the case.[25] It also ordered the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to take several measures against the scholars in question. Hegedüs, Vajda, and Kis

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21   Hegedüs, "A társadalmi fejlődés alternatíváiról," 843–54.

22   On this issue, see Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution,* 102–04.

23   Aczél, "Az ideológiai és kulturális élet néhány időszerű kérdése," 200–01.

24   "Az MSZMP Központi Bizottsága mellett működő Kultúrpolitikai Munkaközösség állásfoglalása néhány társadalomkutató anti-marxista nézeteiről," 37.

25   It is worth mentioning that János Kádár reserved for himself the right to make the final adjustments to both documents, MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 610. ö.e., 81.

was expelled from the HSWP, and all the scholars involved were dismissed from their academic jobs on the grounds of their "incapability for scientific work." (They were offered lowering-rank positions as scientists or research assistants.)

Since none of the social researchers in question accepted the new jobs offered by the Academy of Sciences, their academic carriers in socialist Hungary were definitively over. As far as Hegedüs was concerned, after having accepted various advisory positions in large communist companies and after having been quickly dismissed from them at the order of party authorities, he retired in 1976.[26] His sporadic collaboration with the increasingly significant democratic opposition movements in Hungary during the 1970 and 1980s had often been hindered by his unbroken belief in the possibility of a pluralistic socialist society without the implementation of a pluralistic political party system. But his role as critical sociologist and his vision of the enlightened moderation of the society-regime relationship in communist Hungary were doomed to be relegated, at least until the end the socialist period, to the realm of academic folklore. In a volume published in English on Hungarian sociology in 1978 and edited by his successors at the Sociology Institute of the Academy of Sciences, the main text of the brief introductory study devoted to an assessment of recent sociological research in Hungary made not a single mention of his name.[27]

The Empirical and the Illusionary: The Critical Sociology of István Kemény

One could characterize the sociological career of István Kemény as that of a strong character who was recurrently compelled to do empirical analyses of delicate topics—social stratification, poverty, the conditions of working class, the behavior of economic leaders, the problems faced by the Roma populations—related to the first two decades of the socialist reality in Hungary under Kádár. The unusual nature of his career was determined by the very historical event that served as the alpha point for both his career and the regime itself, namely the 1956 revolution. Having originally been sentenced to four years in prison for allegedly having participated in a "seditious conspiracy" during the revolutionary events, Kemény was released from prison in 1959.[28] Between 1960 and 1969, he worked as librarian at the National Széchenyi Library in Budapest. In 1963, he was asked to join as assistant a newly launched group research project conducted

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26 Hegedüs, *Élet egy eszme árnyékában,* 366–67.
27 Cf. Huszár et al, *Hungarian Society and Marxist Sociology in the Nineteen-Seventies*, 5–15.
28 "Interview with István Kemény on his Career," 138.

by the Central Statistical Office on the question of "social stratification" in Hungary. By accepting this invitation, Kemény succeeded in part in adopting sociology as his main profession and became involved in one of the most instructive and challenging empirical sociological research projects in Hungary at the time.[29] Since it used the term "stratification" ("rétegződés") as one of its keywords, the 1963 survey challenged the view according to which the tendency of socialist society to lose gradually its original class structure should necessarily be understood as an improvement towards social homogeneity. In fact, as the project demonstrated, the loosening of class constraints had led to a more differentiated and not less imperious system of social stratification.[30]

In 1969, Kemény was asked to join the Sociological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as a full-time research fellow. This change of status meant that Kemény immediately became involved in several empirically based research projects initiated and run by different institutes. One of the most interesting among them was devoted to the so-called "low income population" in Hungary. This research was run in effect by a work group within the Central Statistical Office. According to Kemény's memoirs, the interest in the study of "poverty" in socialist Hungary was already present in the 1963 national survey, but György Péter, the president of the office, firmly opposed this idea, since he believed that if the Office as state institute "started to study poverty, this would suggest that it [socialist Hungary] was a system in which poor people could be found."[31]

Kemény's participation in the survey and the attention he devoted to the living conditions of the "low income" population became the foundation for his reputation. It can be said that this was one of the groundbreaking research initiatives in which he proved himself as a sociologist working with statistical means, but willing to go beyond the simply descriptive level of survey data to analysis of what these findings reveal about the living conditions under state socialism. Kemény's task of translating the statistical category of "low income" into terms of the people's real living conditions, and especially the living conditions of blue-collar workers, revealed hitherto unnoticed—or rather denied—aspects of socialist reality. Even before this research project officially terminated in 1972, he had an opportunity to give a lecture in 1970 on the topic at one of the annual sessions of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in which

29   Mód et al, *Társadalmi rétegződés Magyarországon.*
30   Cf. Kemény, "Restratification of the Working Class," 26–37.
31   "Interview with István Kemény on his Career," 147.

he did not hesitate to talk about the phenomenon of "poverty" in socialist Hungary. In fact, he was in all likelihood the first social scientist to use this term openly in an academic speech in the post-1956 period in Hungary.

In his talk, Kemény claimed that it was misleading to draw a strict limit based on a minimum income per head in a household, as was proposed by the Central Statistical Office, in order to define a person or a family as belonging to the "low income" category. Instead, he argued that the descriptive use of the "low income" category should include consideration of concrete living and housing conditions, including family composition, cost of transportation, whether someone lived in or had a sublet, whether someone lived in an urban or rural setting, etc. According to Kemény, this would enable a more nuanced understanding of the poor as people "who were not able to live like others do."[32] With this definition in mind, Kemény was keen to demonstrate new social inequalities in the socialist reality in Hungary. According to him, poverty as a real condition affected the lifestyle, social habits, educational standards, and everyday practices of those concerned.[33]

Not surprisingly, Kemény's talk at the Academy created instant havoc in the Party headquarters. Although initially both *Népszabadság* [People's Liberty] and *Társadalmi Szemle* published positive overviews of Kemény's talk (which, however, failed to mention the term "poverty" in their account), more drastic consequences soon followed.[34] Kálmán Kulcsár, the head of the Sociological Institute at the time, was immediately ordered to dismiss Kemény from the Institute. Kulcsár did as he was told, but since Kemény had already been conducting another ongoing survey in the Institute concerning the Hungarian Roma populations, the Party headquarters was contacted again in order to determine what to do. Finally, the decision was made to allow Kemény to keep his job on a monthly basis, i.e. by "signing on the first day of each month a work contract which would last to the last day of the month" and repeating this until the survey was completed.[35] Kemény finished his survey on the Roma in late 1972, after which his status at the Institute was terminated.

The aim of the 1971 survey on the Roma population was to offer a comprehensive view of the social situation of Roma in Hungary, including their "linguistic and ethnic composition, settlement types, regional distribution,

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32   Kemény, "A szegénységről," 80.
33   Cf. idem, "Poverty in Hungary," 247–67.
34   Cf. *Népszabadság*, November 15, 1970; Herceg: "A szocialista elosztás néhány kérdése," 69.
35   "Interview with István Kemény on his Career," 148.

housing conditions, family size, number of children and live births, education, the effects of industrialization in the 1950s and 1960s, employment, and income levels."[36] Nonetheless, the research carried out under Kemény's leadership between 1970 and 1971 was new and unusual in several respects. Most importantly, in setting up the basic analytical categories of the project, Kemény refused to attribute particular importance to the ethnic character of the population under study. As he stated, "in our research we classified as Roma all people whom the surrounding non-Roma community considered Roma."[37] The enabled him and his team to sidestep the task of providing a scholarly (chimerical) definition of who was Roma and who was not, but perhaps more importantly, it allowed them to focus their efforts on what they considered the essential sociological aspects of the population under study. "The Roma question is fundamentally not an ethnic question, but a question of social strata," the study concluded in the summary of its findings.[38] This indicated that Kemény's sociological approach to the Roma followed in the footsteps of his earlier survey on poverty in that he privileged questions of social stratification over questions of social segregation or ethnic identity. Also, Kemény was far from sharing the optimism of some of the communist leadership, who considered the rapid transformation of the working and living conditions of the Hungarian Roma population as an unqualified form of progress towards social assimilation. Although the 1971 survey confirmed the facts related to the drastic changes in employment and to some extent the amelioration of living conditions, in other areas (especially in housing and schooling practices) it noted severe drawbacks.

If the 1971 survey on the Roma population did not cause a political scandal, this was due primarily to its accuracy and the indisputably scientific nature of its methods, but also to the fact that the circumstances of the Roma communities were far from being in the forefront of academic or social debates in Hungary at the time. Nevertheless, the whole body of the research material was released only in 1977 as an internal bulletin published by the Sociological Institute of the Academy, and it had no table of contents and no ISBN number.

By the time the Roma survey had been completed at the end of 1972, Kemény's monthly based contract at the Sociological Institute had expired and had not been extended. Meanwhile, the historian Miklós Laczkó, who at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences was given the task of preparing

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36   Kemény and Janky, "The Roma Population in Hungary 1971–2003," 70.

37   Kemény, ed., *Beszámoló a magyarországi cigányok helyzetével foglalkozó 1971-ben végzett kutatásról*, 9.

38   Ibid., 14.

a research project on the Hungarian working class, contacted Kemény and asked him to do a survey on Hungarian workers.[39] The Institute of History itself was asked by the Scientific Board of the Central Committee to carry out this research, and the director of the Institute, Zsigmond Pál Pach, was convinced by Laczkó to employ Kemény for this task. To be sure, this choice was not unfounded, since Kemény's earlier research on the working class had even drawn some attention in broader public forums.[40] But a closer look at this situation reveals very well the inherently contradictory and unstable processes through which, in an academic environment, communist functionaries sought to assess the party's ideological expectations. In fact, the research initiated at the History Institute on members of the working class had already clearly indicated the changing ideological circumstances which, in the short run, had brought to a standstill the economic reforms and triggered the official political rehabilitation of the doctrine of the "leading role of the working class" in Hungary. Under these circumstances, Kemény, with his 1956 legacy and bad academic reputation, did not in principle have a chance to return. But precisely because ideological and scientific expectations were suddenly and inextricably mixed, informal ties gained increasing significance. Pach was undoubtedly a loyal party functionary, but he could be convinced to take the risk of reinterpreting the meaning of "ideologically sound" as a characterization of potential colleague in light of an alleged need of expertise. And in doing so, he was clearly ignoring the fact that Kemény had already been prohibited from carrying out academic research in another scientific Institute belonging to the same establishment.

The survey on the Hungarian workers began on September 1972 and was finished by the end of 1973. In part, Kemény used most of the descriptive categories developed in his earlier research on social stratification, the working class, poverty, and the Roma populations, applying these categories to workers.[41] One of the most striking aspects of Kemény's descriptive study on the working class was the strong emphasis on the forms of social cohesion, which correlating closely with workers' morale. Workers showed significant shared commitment to common concerns, including mutual recognition of expertise, solidarity in struggles for better earning and working conditions, and a shared interest in technological improvement. However, in light of Kemény's survey (which was based on interviews), these forms of cohesion were delineated as forms of

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39   "Interview with István Kemény on his Career," 148.

40   Cf. Kemény, "Az úton lévők hatalmas tábora," *Népszava*, October 17, 1969.

41   Cf. idem, *Velük nevelkedett a gép*.

common strategies of negotiation and tactics of circumvention directed against the various forms of administrative power represented by the management and directors of the factory or the party. In the preface to the French edition of his book on workers, Kemény described the general strategy followed by the Hungarian working class as one of "permanent resistance," according to which they sought "to obey the instructions in appearance only."[42]

In 1973 the Scientific, Educational and Cultural Board of the Central Committee organized a debate at Institute of History on Kemény's manuscript. The text was harshly criticized by leading Hungarian historians, such as Iván Berend T. and György Ránki.[43] This was followed by a series of events which adhered to a well-known political logic. First, Kemény's manuscript on the Hungarian working class was rejected for publication. Then, in March 1974, the Institute of History was ordered to terminate his contract, and virtually at the same time Kemény was prohibited by the Party authorities from participating in any research or publication initiatives. In 1975, the National Educational Institute led by Iván Vitányi tried unsuccessfully to hire Kemény to take part in a research project.[44] After this, Kemény attempted to engage in various research initiatives using his colleagues as cover, but in January 1977, he decided the situation was hopeless and resolved to leave Hungary for France.

Iván Szelényi and the "Immanent Critique" of Socialist Society

In a recent essay written on the development of Hungarian sociology in the 1960s, Iván Szelényi argued that between 1966 and 1968, Hungarian sociologists began to realize that empirical research in itself does not necessarily lead to value-free or apologetic results. Empirically grounded sociological investigations were increasingly perceived as having the potential to provide critical insights into the social determinants of socialist society.[45] According to Szelényi, by the end of 1960s, there were two general but not mutually exclusive trends that provided the impetus and the intuitive backdrop to these critical approaches. On the one hand, there was an approach which aspired to offer an "ideological

42   Idem, *Ouvriers hongrois*, 16.
43   "Interview with István Kemény on his Career," 151.
44   Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék*, 171.
45   Szelényi, "Nosztalgikus jegyzetek a hatvanas évekről," 13.

critique of socialist society." This approach was influenced by György Lukács[46] and his school, and it was championed by Hegedüs. It sought to contrast the reality of established social conditions in existing socialism with the Marxist ideals. A different approach, on the other hand, was advocated by more empirically-minded sociologists, such as Szelényi himself, who were carrying out a "critique of socialist ideology." This approach focused on some of the internal inequalities and contradictions of socialist society, which reflected the regime's ideological blind spots and therefore favored the elaboration of an "immanent" critique of socialist ideology and social reality.[47]

Szelényi's account of this topic is worthy of consideration from a historical point of view in part because in some of his writings published in the early 1970s he had already made clear his position on the critical function of sociology. In fact, in the methodological part of his dissertation *Settlement System and Social Structure,* submitted in 1972 for the degree of "candidate of science" (*kandidátus*, the equivalent of a PhD degree), he outlined the principles of social criticism in sociology in terms very similar to those presented in his more recent writings. In his dissertation, Szelényi drew a sharp distinction between "social critique" and "critique of ideology," and he argued that, unlike the former approach, which appeals to transcendent values in order to influence collective will and prompt action allegedly needed to build a better society, the latter seeks to analyze ideology critically as a social product serving actual interests.[48]

Szelényi joined the Sociological Research Group of the Academy in 1963 at the invitation of Hegedüs, first as a part-time research fellow and then, from 1967, as a full-time research fellow. His first work on housing conditions in one of the slum-areas in Budapest (coauthored with Ferenc Nemes) marked his entry into the field of sociology.[49] In 1968, Hegedüs was forced, for political reasons, to resign from the leadership of the Sociology Group, and his position was taken over by Kálmán Kulcsár. At the time, Szelényi was tasked with the part-time supervision of the newly established "Sociological Laboratory" at the Social Science Institute, working under the Central Committee of the Party. A year later, he published his work (coauthored with György Konrád) on the sociological problems faced by the communities living in the new housing

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46   György Lukács also went by the names Georg Lukács and George Lukács over the course of his career.

47   Ibid., 14.

48   Szelényi, *Városi társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek,* 29.

49   Nemes and Szelényi, *Lakóhely és közösség.*

projects in Hungary,[50] and shortly after this, he also took over the direction of the regional sociological department at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences. Simultaneously, Szelényi also began a teaching career at the Karl Marx University of Economics in Budapest, and he similarly was given a teaching position in sociology at the Political Academy of the party.[51] Thus, when Szelényi was appointed to serve as one of the editors-in-chief of the newly established sociological monthly *Szociológia* in 1972, his career seemed to be on a fast track to ultimate recognition. As a matter of fact, at that point in time he was undoubtedly one of the highest-ranking social scientists in Hungary who was not a member of the HSWP.

To be sure, Szelényi's success was influenced by the fact that he kept his distance from sensitive political matters. For instance, unlike many of his prominent colleagues (including Hegedüs), he refused to denounce publicly or through official Party channels the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and he also remained reserved with regards to the Lukácsian-Marxist social critical attitude widespread in the Sociology Group. As he later remarked, not only did his empirical mindset save him, for the time being, from getting into political trouble, but he also managed to benefit, in his career, from the overall intellectual and political situation.[52] Nevertheless, one should note that the topics he chose and the approaches he followed in his research allowed him to move in directions that were far from any simple value-free empirical position. In fact, in a study published in 1969 on the role of sociology, Szelényi argued that the empirical orientation in sociology had the genuine potential to foster normative interpretations in social policy or open up alternatives for social services.[53]

In a way, in their 1969 book *Az új lakótelepek szociológiai problémái* [Sociological Problems of the New Housing Developments], Konrád and Szelényi had already gone beyond a mere descriptive account of the case under study. Without doubt, some of the concrete findings of their investigations were truly shocking.[54] Most notably, statistical evidence showed that, quite contrary to what was expected, apartments in newly built housing developments in Budapest and other major cities appeared to be systematically allocated to people belonging to social groups with higher incomes, mostly to the educated middle and upper

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50   Konrád and Szelényi, *Az új lakótelepek szociológiai problémái*.
51   Szelényi, "Nosztalgikus jegyzetek a hatvanas évekről," 16.
52   Idem, "Utószó. Jegyzetek egy szellemi önéletrajzhoz." 443.
53   Idem, "Empíria és szociológia," 14–26.
54   Cf. idem, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism*, 6.

middle class. On the base of these findings, Szelényi and Konrád revealed the de-privileged status of low-income earners and the working class as such and concluded that "as a whole, the construction of new housing developments cannot be characterized as social or communal house-building" in Hungary.[55] Furthermore, they called attention to the "exceptionally grave consequences" which these developments were about to create in a metropolitan environment in terms of "social segregation."[56]

Between 1970 and 1973, Szelényi and Konrád extended and deepened their analysis of the Hungarian housing system. In 1972, Szelényi submitted a manuscript entitled "Settlement System and Social Structure: Sociological Elements for an Analysis of the Hungarian Housing System and Urban Structure" to obtain a PhD degree.[57] The text provided a more radical assessment of the problems related to the housing issue in Hungary, and it also embedded these problems in a larger socio-historical and structural analytical framework. Sociological problems concerning housing were thus found to be representative of other major forms of socio-economic inequalities under socialism, and this called for further investigations. Also, one of the novelties of the new analyses was their emphasis on the evaluative and critical importance of sociological analyses addressing the urban housing and planning system. As Szelényi stated in the methodological part of his dissertation, an immanent "ideological-critical" approach defined as "sociology of planning" was necessary in order to reveal and assess the "social relations of interest" underlying the processes of socialist social planning.[58]

In 1972, *Társadalmi Szemle* published an article, which was strongly critical in tone and in content of a paper published by Szelényi and György Konrád a few months earlier on various sociological and historical aspects of Hungarian urban development.[59] The vehemence of the article was hardly surprising if one takes into account the purpose and arguments of the paper it was targeting. In a nutshell, by labeling urban development in Hungary "retarded" or "lagging," Konrád Szelényi managed to blame the socialist economic policy of the previous two decades for its neglect of proper urban infrastructural developments, criticize

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55   Konrád and Szelényi, *Az új lakótelepek szociológiai problémái*, 138.

56   Ibid., 146–47.

57   Cf. Szelényi, *Városi társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek*, 16–141.

58   Ibid., 29–31.

59   Apró, "Mi késleltette a magyar városfejlődést?," 28.

its insensitively administered social-policies, and point out some current "social conflicts" which had been consequences of these wrong-headed policies.[60]

In one of his late interviews, Szelényi characterized this ill-received writing as the best he had ever written with Konrád.[61] Whatever the case may be, it is certain that in the beginning of the 1970s, with the rise of anti-reform sentiments and the new anti-reform ideological offensive in the making, the critical approaches and orientations advocated by the Konrád and Szelényi tended to fall short of meeting the new prerequisites set forth for a "legitimate" Marxist way of doing social scientific research. Apart from the growing pressure to reinstate a noticeably more orthodox Marxist ideological approach to both theoretical and empirical issues, political approval (and disapproval) began to play an important role in shaping sociological research topics and activities. Even the ambition to exert more straightforward political control over the sociological research apparatus appeared on the agenda, as demonstrated for instance by an Agitprop party document from 1973 which proposed subjecting sociological surveys to "central authorization" in order to prevent them from being used to draw "false" or "ideologically hostile" conclusions.[62]

In principle, given his leading positions at various research institutions and the fact that he had been elected to serve on the editorial committee of the newly established revue *Szociológia*, Szelényi seemed to have little to worry about. Yet, in a way, it was precisely his personal inclination towards professional solidarity and his belief in the pursuit of sociology as an independent critical science that would soon bring him close to the end of his prosperous career in Hungary.

In 1973, Szelényi was among the few intellectuals who protested against the denunciation and removal from their academic positions of some of the closest disciples of Lukács and sociologists like Hegedüs and Maria Márkus. The next political event in which Szelényi took an important part was the trial of Miklós Haraszti. Haraszti, at this time an ultra-leftist poet and writer, was arrested in May 1973 on charges of having distributed mimeographed copies of his work entitled "Darabbér" ("Piecework"), which had not been given approval for publication. In the trial, Szelényi agreed to testify that as a journal editor, he intended to publish parts of Haraszti's text in the revue *Szociológia* because he considered it a valuable and realistic analysis of factory life and workers' lives in

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60   Konrád and Szelényi, "A késleltetett városfejlődés társadalmi konfliktusai," 19–35.
61   "Beszélgetés Szelényi Ivánnal," 179.
62   MNL OL M-KS 288-41. 161 ö.e. 2.

Hungary.[63] To be sure, this statement was not entirely true. Nevertheless, due to the appropriate strategy chosen by the defense and the solidarity campaign that surrounded the case, Haraszti, although found guilty on the charges brought against him, was sentenced to serve only eight months in prison, a sentence which was suspended on condition that Haraszti spend three years on probation. But the trial had other consequences as well. Because of his involvement is the case, Szelényi was removed from the positions he held at the Institute of Social Sciences and at *Szociológia*. He was also temporarily prohibited from publishing, but more importantly, his reputation as a critical but reliable non-party member academic was severely damaged.

Interestingly enough, by the time they got involved in the Haraszti trial, Konrád and Szelényi had already embarked down a path to challenge the regime in power directly. At Konrád's initiative, they had started to compile a scholarly manuscript which Szelényi envisaged as their critical-sociological masterpiece. To be sure, they were well aware from the very beginning that the task was politically impossible, meaning that the text would never be published in Hungary. As Szelényi later remarked, they were consciously preparing themselves to "commit scholarly suicide."[64] Their manuscript was thus meant from the outset to be a *samizdat* in its format, which makes it one of the very first examples of this genre in socialist Hungary.[65] Not surprisingly, the police, which had been keeping Konrád and Szelényi under constant surveillance since the Haraszti trial, was well informed about their activities and waited for the moment to confiscate the manuscript and arrest its authors. The two men were detained on October 22, 1973 on charges of incitement, and they remained in custody for seven days.

The major argument of Konrád and Szelényi's samizdat book *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* was that under Eastern European state socialism, the intelligentsia was in the process, for the first time in history, of forming a dominant class. With this context in mind, the authors sought to adopt a reflexive critical position, which, like in Szelényi's earlier sociological works, aimed to provide an immanent "critique of ideology."[66] According to Konrád and Szelényi, the class dominance of intellectuals in state socialism manifested itself in their increasingly crucial position (and allegedly experts) as "planners" and "redistributors" within this system. In other words, they argued that a constant

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63   Szelényi, "Egy kézirat története," 6.
64   Konrád and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, xvii.
65   Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék*, 73.
66   Konrád and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, 251.

intellectual materialization of certain "teleological" knowledge about long-term public interests in socialist society, embodied in the intellectuals' bureaucratic class position, not only played a functional role in sustaining the regime, but was a fundamental element without which the socialist mode of production itself would have lost its distinctive features.

Without a doubt, Konrád and Szelényi's book was a clear attempt to call into question some of the most crucial ideological cornerstones of existing socialist regimes: the tenet of the leading role of the working class and the ideological benevolence of the party. As a matter of fact, this point was clearly stressed in a report submitted to the Politburo of the HSWP about the case.[67] The document also informed its readers of the outcome of this "unlawful activity": after seven days of detention, the two suspects acknowledged authorship of the manuscript, and the case was closed with a "prosecutor's warning." At the same time, as a result of the case, Szelényi immediately lost his remaining jobs at the Institute of Sociology and the University of Economics, and his career in sociology and in the academic life in general was definitely over. The only reasonable option for him was to accept the at offer made by the interior affairs authorities, which at the time was rather exceptional, to leave the country.[68]

Conclusion: From Professional Commitment to Oppositional Attitude

The most striking aspect in the careers of István Hegedüs, István Kemény, and Iván Szelényi is not simply that, even with their different intellectual and political backgrounds, fields of interest, and academic contributions, they were all sidelined by the mid-1970s for political reasons. Even more remarkable than this is the fact that their involvements in politically contentious situations were triggered by the adoption of a similar intellectual attitude. Nevertheless, the formation of their noticeably analogous way of perceiving and reacting to certain scholarly situations seems to imply more than mere discontent with certain ideological expectations in Hungarian academia. It stemmed rather from their engagement in a complex setting of professional, institutional, and disciplinary practices and relations that gradually shaped their personal experiences and scholarly strategies in a similar way.

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67   MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 650 ö.e. 163–64.

68   Konrád and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, xviii.

From this point of view, the decisive impact of two institutions (the Central Statistical Office and the Sociology Research Group) on the development of the intellectual profile of Hegedüs, Kemény and Szelényi should be highlighted. Although the forms and lengths of their engagement in the work of these institutions varied greatly, similarities are also apparent. Contact with the pioneering sociological work carried out at the Statistical Office constituted an important milestone in the career of all three of them. It certainly made them appreciate the role of a specific institutional environment and a diverse academic body in the development of an effective and relatively free research agenda. Hegedüs seemed to have been fully aware of this when he was given the green light in 1963 to establish his Research Group at the Academy of Sciences, where he also hired Szelényi. At the same time, as Kemény has remarked, the Sociology Research Group represented a trend similar to that of the more empirically minded sociological cluster of the Statistical Office led by Zsuzsa Ferge insofar as both institutions "wanted something that was hitherto forbidden" in Hungarian sociology.[69]

It should be noted that this took place during the subsequent period (1968–72), when the multiplication of institutions and research opportunities allowed for an increasing flexibility in sociological research and teaching. This was illustrated for instance by the case of Szelényi, who divided his time between the Sociological Research Group and the Institute of Social Science of the Central Committee, while he also held various teaching positions. The emergence of this new situation within the sociological profession in the early 1970s was certainly fostered by the central administration's growing interest in and demand for accurate social knowledge relevant to various policy and economic issues. For example, Kemény's research on the Roma population and the working class and Szelényi and Konrád's work on the housing conditions in Budapest and other cities clearly reflected this tendency. This conjuncture in sociology has led to the proliferation of research institutions and even the introduction of a certain division of labor between them, and it has also created a need to implement forms of professional training to ensure further reinforcement. At the same time, this new situation has also changed the ways in which institutions in the academic sphere are used by sociologists to adopt and pursue their research agenda. Kemény's pursuit of various research projects in different institutions between 1969 and 1973 demonstrated significant flexibility in this regard. To be

69   "Interview with István Kemény on his career," 147.

sure, the growth in the available resources (including financial resources) and the reliance on project-oriented institutional backing have created significantly more options for research, much as they have also enabled people working in the discipline to pursue their efforts with a greater degree of professional commitment and have made it easier to overlook built-in ideological safety mechanisms in research.

Apart from the institutional factors, the variety of topical interests and approaches in sociological research and the ways in which the image of Hungarian society was altered over the course of the 1960s in sociological debates have clearly shown a strong vivacity and an openness within the discipline. In this context, both the more social critical approach taken by Hegedüs and the empirically driven orientation developed by Kemény and later Szelényi shared the conviction that society was made up of critically important factors which have their own particular functions and modes of development. The focus on social stratification on the one hand and the mesmerizing effects of discovering and analyzing social inequality on the other also constituted a common element in their works. Thus, Hegedüs' strong insistence on the function of sociology as the most direct scientific instrument in the pursuit of critical knowledge of society has not essentially contradicted the more empirically grounded approaches adopted by Kemény and Szelényi. The differences between their approaches were, rather, strategic, insofar as Hegedüs insisted on the fact that the importance of sociological research should lie in ushering academic discourse towards an explicitly social critical, if not political role—something which Kemény and Szelényi were less ready to embrace if it was propagated in the name of a normative, let alone Marxist perception of society. For them, the realistic tone of sociology implied in and of itself a sufficient stance in order to approach social reality in critical terms.

This strategic difference was also reflected in the different ways in which Hegedüs, Kemény, and Szelényi appealed to and used Marxism in their works. Although they all seemed to agree fundamentally that orthodox Marxist-Leninist categories were totally inadequate for a sociological analysis of social structures and development, they nevertheless manifested different rationales in their precepts on which their rejections were based. In the case of Hegedüs, his adherence to the idea of socialism remained unbroken throughout his career. It was precisely this idea that fueled his criticism both of the Stalinist vision of society and the more technocratic agenda of building socialism. For him, redefining socialist reality in terms of domination, subordination, alienation

etc., and thus challenging the received doctrines of Marxism-Leninism, was a necessary consequence of the perception of sociology as the ongoing critical examination of the course of socialist construction in which the drive towards "optimal" economic and social development should be counterweighted by a particularly strong focus on processes of "humanization."[70] Thus, for Hegedüs the constructive use of Marxism in the search for a "leftist" normative view of society remained a cornerstone of his sociological approach. Kemény's manifest rebuff of Marxism followed a different path. In his case, it was more the result of a pragmatic rejection expressed in neutrality towards, neglect of, and cavalier disregard for Marxist categories. However, this sociologically orchestrated disinterestedness was grounded in the very methodology he employed in most of his research. The combination of social-statistical quantification with deep interviewing offered empirical findings and a foundation for social categorization which were substantial proof of the purely apologetic nature and scientific inadequacy of official Marxism-Leninism. In Szelényi's case, the motivations for overlooking Marxism were different in nature. His stance was based on a predominantly theoretical rejection, manifested in a strategy of almost complete neglect of Marxist terminology in his earlier writings, which has accompanied an increasingly subtle search for empirical confirmation. In other words, for Szelényi, the inadequacy of the Marxist approach has relied primarily on its incapacity to address and frame phenomena of social structure, stratification, mobility, inequality, etc. in the study of which other Western sociological theories (for example the Weberian or Polányian approaches) have proven more conclusive. Nevertheless, it was precisely the fact that his rejection was theoretical in its design, and not purely political or empirical, that allowed him to return in a certain way to Marxist categorizations in his *The Intellectuals on the Road Class Power.*

Nevertheless, it would certainly be misleading to characterize the series of events that led to the exclusion of the three sociologists in question from Hungarian academic life by the mid-1970s as a cumulative process which could not have gone another direction and ended in a different scenario. Although there are always underlying reasons for ideological climate changes (and in this case, they usually accurately reflected the actual orientations and power struggles in which policy was rooted, especially in the academic sphere), ideology as such was far from a coherent and all-powerful system of norms providing direct

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70   Cf. Hegedüs, "Optimalizálás és humanizálás," 17–32.

support for the eventual implementation of administrative measures. Ideological intervention had to be channeled through institutions and forums of scholarly communication within which formal and informal relationships, political pedigree, and personal stamina often played roles as important as the role of the attitudes of the party's cultural or agitprop bodies. But this also means that the escalation of an academic affair usually was fueled by a certain stubbornness or hard-minded attitude on the part of those who were targeted by the party authorities for political reasons. This kind of stubbornness certainly played a vital role in the case of Hegedüs, Kemény, and Szelényi. Yet their work was hardly intended initially as an immediate challenge to ideological or political barriers. Their dogged determination stemmed rather from their professional commitment to the value of sociological research, which, due to the more and more unsound and ambiguous standards of scholarly performance introduced for ideological reasons, gradually morphed into the adoption of a stance which could rightly be called oppositional, although in each case with a different connotation.

The fact that the revitalization of sociological research and the launch of empirical investigations were closely connected to economic reform drives from the mid-1960s had some serious consequences for the fate of sociology as a discipline in Hungary. First of all, as was made explicit by the case of Hegedüs, the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact countries in 1968 and the subsequent halt of the reforms were perceived by many as a defeat and as a consequent shrinking of scholarly opportunities. Yet what really counted was not necessarily the political face-value of these events. It was, rather, the lack of a positive model under these circumstances for valuable and pioneering sociological research which affected negatively the academic performance and vision of progressive sociologists. Whereas the Guidelines on Scientific Policy issued by the Central Committee of the party in 1969 accorded unlimited liberty to research in social science, it also called for "prudence and responsibility" (i.e. self-censorship) in making scientific results available to the public.[71] But the nature of empirical findings in sociological research and the flexible and institutionally different understanding of scientific responsibility rapidly revealed the ideological frailty of these claims. Especially in sociology, in which scientific truth is supposedly founded on the critical observation of social facts, any demand for self-control and self-limitation could produce utterly counterproductive if

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71　Cf. *Az MSZMP Központi Bizottságának Tudománypolitikai Irányelvei*, 37–67.

not false results. Combined with the conviction that politics can discover in sociology something which it cannot discover by any other means, sociological responsibility in principle overtly fostered the emergence of a critical attitude.

Thus, one can understand why Hegedüs, even after his many conflict-ridden entanglements with the political world in Hungary, kept stubbornly challenging the prevailing view on socialist development in Hungary, arguing that the return to market conditions was in fact a false turn, because it intensified social stratification and inequality. The adoption of a political stance in this case was clearly motivated by sociological insight into society and its amalgamation and a belief in the idea of a genuinely socialist democratization of human relations. Similarly, Kemény's uncompromising excavation of delicate social facts was linked to his belief in the unconditional value of the empirical study of social reality, even if it had regularly culminated in sociological analyses touching critically on some basic ideological tenets. Finally, Szelényi's increasingly radical approach to sociology as a critique of ideology originated in and was founded on his perception of the discrepancy between certain empirically detected social tendencies which fostered inequality and a particular set of socio-politically promoted interests in society which supported them. In each of these cases, the only legitimate option offered by the academic establishment for sociological work consisted of keeping a low profile from the perspective of critical attitude and promoting the very social status quo the shortcomings of which had been revealed by sociological means. No wonder that for each of the three scholars irritation and disappointment with this situation, which was also for them a sociologically reflected disposition, called for a radical response: the emergence of an oppositional attitude both in their scholarly work and in the ways in which they were more and more ready to take serious political risks.

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Genocide in the Carpathians: War, Social Breakdown, and Mass Violence, 1914–1945. By Raz Segal. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. 211 pp.

Most of the characters of this drama were poor Ruthenians and Jews who survived through hard labor in remote villages isolated in the thick forests on the slopes of the mountains in Subcarpathian Ruthenia, a northeastern boundary region of the old Kingdom of Hungary at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Life against this backdrop may not have been idyllic, but there was a practice of peaceful coexistence in which ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity was viewed as natural and in which the lives of Jews and non-Jews were connected by a thousand threads in their everyday struggles. This is the picture Raz Segal draws at the beginning of his narrative, which is then followed by an account of how this world fell to pieces as it was caught in the maelstrom of global wars, changes of regime, and ethnic persecution and mass violence perpetrated as part of drives for nation and state building.

The threadwork of the social fabric of Subcarpathian Ruthenia began to unravel after World War I, when the region was transferred from Hungary to the new state of Czechoslovakia, the nationalizing policies of which (along with the national ideologies which were largely exported to the region) caused the local ethnic communities to feel for the first time that their collective interests were inherently in conflict. Carpathian Ruthenians and Jews, finally alienated from each other in the tempest of the new border changes and the next (the coming) world war, were faced simultaneously, but not side by side, with the oppressive measures and acts of the new Hungarian rulers, who launched an ethnic reengineering of the region in order to (re)integrate it as part of an ethno-national "Greater Hungary." By the time the storm of war had subsided, the material and social world of the region lay in ruins. The greatest losses were suffered by the Jewish community, who were, first, in 1941, victims of mass massacres near the city of Kamianets-Podilskyi. Three years later, in the spring of 1944, following the German occupation of Hungary, nearly all of the surviving members of this Jewish community were deported to death camps and murdered.

What distinguishes Segal's narrative from more traditional accounts of the Holocaust in Hungary is that he does not focus mostly or exclusively on

the destruction of the Subcarpathian Jewry. Instead, he presents an integrated analysis of the multilayered ethnic discrimination and persecution that culminated during the period in which this region was under Hungary's rule. To this end, he follows recent trends in Holocaust scholarship that shift the focus from German genocidal plans and practices to the Nazi-allied countries' endeavors to build their own ethno-national states in accordance with and in the broader context of German ambitions. These policies were often most pronounced in the multiethnic wartime borderlands of these countries, where they formed a complex system of violence against all ethnic groups which were seen as obstacles to the creation of a society structured according to a strict ethnic hierarchy and were ultimately meant to be shaped into parts of an ethnically homogeneous state.

Though the body of secondary literature that deals, in one way or another, with the history of the multiethnic border regions that were a bone of contention between Hungary and its neighboring states is vast and rich, in Hungarian historiography, and especially in Hungarian(-related) Holocaust literature, the integrated approach used by Segal has few predecessors; from this viewpoint, Genocide in the Carpathians is clearly a pioneering work. Segal's general effort to delineate the initiatives taken by the Hungarian state in the ethnic persecution and genocide against peoples living in its extended wartime territory is also praiseworthy. However, one of his foremost goals is based on a serious misperception. I am thinking of his effort to urge historians to rethink what he perceives as the established narrative about the Holocaust in Hungary, which, he claims, portrays the country as a mere collaborator in German genocidal politics. According to Segal, "Scholarship on the Holocaust in Hungary (…) ascribes mass violence in Hungary mostly to German influence and, after March 1944, German policies, while portraying pre-1944 mass atrocities as anomalies to a general atmosphere that provided Jews with safety, even as they faced stigmatization and a whole host of restrictions and discriminatory measures" (p.15).

It is a sad fact that the recognition of Hungary's responsibility has been a neuralgic point in public discourses on the events of the Holocaust, and since the current right-wing Hungarian government's official memory policy promotes a nationalistic and apologetic interpretation of the past, the problem has become even more acute in recent years. It is similarly disturbing that some figures in Hungarian public life who claim to be historians have aimed to reinforce these kinds of interpretations and omissions. This viewpoint, however, is simply not shared by established researchers on the Holocaust in Hungary, and it is

indeed difficult to understand how Segal came to this conclusion, unless the explanation lies in his clearly limited use of the secondary literature in Hungarian or his misreading of works by Hungarian scholars, like László Karsai, Zoltán Vági, Gábor Kádár, and László Csősz, whose writings have been published in international languages.

In connection with the above, Segal's other main goal is to integrate the extreme policies adopted against Jews and other ethnic minorities in Subcarpathian Rus and Hungary's other multiethnic wartime borderlands into the whole of Hungary's anti-Jewish policies and, more generally, the country's ethnopolitics. While such an effort could yield seminal results, Segal's overall narrative leaves one with the impression that he has not studied these issues in a comprehensive manner. Rather, he has examined them through the magnifying glass of events in Subcarpathian Rus; he effectively suggests that the mass atrocities which were committed in the border regions were generally and inherently characteristic of the nature of Hungary's anti-Jewish policies as such. This interpretation leads to a conclusion which is as misleading as the portrayal of these extreme acts as anomalies that were somehow alien to Hungary's general anti-Jewish policies.

Hungary's Jewish (ethno-)policies were a complex and dynamic system of ideas and acts shaped by various and often conflicting domestic and foreign political, social, and economic interests, expectations, and goals. An examination of these policies cannot neglect the fact that they were by no means straightforward or evenly unfolding processes: they were pursued by different governments under changing circumstances. These policies were further influenced by the choices made by decision-makers and executors at various levels of administration and by the interplay between central decisions and local and regional initiatives. It is clear that the extreme atrocities committed in the border regions were integral elements of Hungary's anti-Jewish policies, yet it is also clear that overall these kinds of measures were not dominant throughout Hungary before the spring of 1944 and, from the spring of 1942 until the spring of 1944 (i.e. under the administration of Miklós Kállay), they were atypical even in the border regions. No serious scholar claims that Hungary was a "safe haven" for Jews before the country's occupation by Germany, but it is similarly indisputable that the situation was more stable for the majority of Jews in Hungary prior to 1944 than it was for Jews in many other places in Nazi-ruled Europe. Many of the Jewish inhabitants of the (re-)occupied territories believed that mass atrocities would not be committed by the Hungarian state: their tragic experiences soon showed just how mistaken they were. Still, in general, Jews in Trianon Hungary

could with some justification continue to feel safer long into the war years. If *Genocide in the Carpathians* had more thoroughly exposed the structural and other factors that help explain this, it would have brought us much closer to an understanding of the mechanism of the Holocaust in Hungary.

The most remarkable parts of the book include those in which Segal analyzes the changes in ethnic relations between Carpathian Ruthenians and Jews. Disturbances arose first between the two World Wars in what until then had been a generally conflict-free coexistence. Over the course of the interwar years, ever more Carpathian Ruthenians began to strive for the development of a national-ethnic communal identity, while Jews also faced new dilemmas. Many Carpathian Ruthenians, who were developing a Ukranophile orientation and were increasingly frustrated by Prague's refusal to grant the region the autonomy which had been promised, observed with a sense of betrayal that Jews seemed to switch loyalties from their Carpathian Ruthenian neighbors to the new Czechoslovak state. For many, Jews came to be seen as agents of the state's "Czech-ification" efforts, who thus helped thwart the collective aspirations of the Carpathian Ruthenians. During the short existence of an independent Carpathian Ukraine between October 1938 and March 1939, Carpathian Ruthenians committed anti-Semitic atrocities. This was one of the key reasons why many Jews greeted the entry of the Hungarian Army into the region as the harbinger of their salvation (they were clinging, as it quickly turned out, to false hopes) and why they remained passive witnesses to the violence committed against Carpathian Ruthenians by the Hungarian troops. Although the Carpatho-Ruthenians in Subcarpathian Rus were themselves victims of discrimination, their limited agency was not the only, perhaps not even the main reason that the majority of them – although they shared a rather similar fate to the Jews – were unwilling to express solidarity or to cooperate with the latter against Hungarian oppression. Segal argues that it was rather anti-Jewish resentment growing out of the specific conjunctures of the two ethnic groups' shared past during, first and foremost, the Czechoslovak era that eventually made most Carpathian Ruthenians choose to avert their gaze and prompted some of them to express malice towards Jews and even a willingness to collaborate when their Jewish neighbors faced the violence of the Hungarian state (esp. pp.45–50, 84–85, 104–08).

With these analyses, Segal contributes to a growing body of scholarship which urges us to look beyond the literal meaning of the word "bystanders" and its misleading implication of lack of engagement and action when trying to understand behaviors and motives of people who were neither victims

nor perpetrators of mass violence. Instead, as Segal points out, only a close examination of the circumstances, contexts, and collective histories of the people involved furthers a nuanced understanding of why they acted in the ways they did, including in situations in which failing to act can and should be interpreted as an active choice (see also: pp.9–13).

Segal poses a similar challenge to the concept of anti-Semitism. As he observes, this catch-all term tends to obscure rather than illuminate why people turned against their Jewish neighbors during the Holocaust (and at other times in history), especially because it is so commonly associated with hatred. Instead of accepting "anti-Semitism," a term which tends to imply an abstract and timeless emotional-ideological position, as an explanation, Segal suggests the examination of specific motivations, attitudes, and patterns of behavior, including or even especially those in which hatred does not play a central role. Applying methodologies and findings from the study of emotions, he concludes that the term "resentment" is more fitting as a characterization of the sentiments of Carpathian Ruthenians towards Jews, a resentment which arose primarily as a response to the failure of the attempts of Carpathian Ruthenians to gain autonomy and the real or perceived roles played by Jews in this.

Segal's suggestion may add to our understanding of the phenomenon, but it is not entirely convincing. He is undoubtedly right to point out that the concept of anti-Semitism should be applied to concrete social phenomena and processes in a nuanced way if we wish to grasp their true nature and the actual motivations behind them. Many scholars fail to do this, even if the simple and direct association of the term with hatred is perhaps not as widespread in historical scholarship as Segal suggests. While the term "bystanders" bears the connotations of passivity and indifference and thus ought to be used with reservations, the term anti-Semitism appears more neutral and does not come with clear-cut explanations of its meaning(s), much less its causes: thus, it may allow less simplistic scholarly elaborations. If we use "anti-Semitism" as a summary and descriptive term which covers various expressions of anti-Jewish sentiment and practice (emotions, attitudes, acts, and policies) and we do not use it as if it were self-explanatory, then we might arrive at a more multi-dimensional and multi-layered understanding of its nature than if we simply reject the term altogether, not least of all since in the scholarly debates, the term "anti-Semitism" is more widely known, used, and recognized.

I would also add that Segal ends up using the term "resentment" in much the same way in which he claims others use "anti-Semitism": that is, as a general

concept to explain motivations for effectively all sorts of anti-Jewish social practices and acts. In the end, we may get a more accurate portrayal of the dominant emotional-attitudinal position in the Carpatho-Ruthenian community, but all other presumably existing positions remain hidden.

Segal also fails to make a similar effort to clarify the attitudes of ethnic Hungarians towards Jews. Ironically, he seems largely satisfied to characterize these attitudes with the term "anti-Semitism" or even simply hatred. Does he really believe that the anti-Jewish sentiments of ethnic Hungarians, in contrast to those of Carpathian Ruthenians, were driven simply or primarily by hatred? If so, what are the historical-political-social reasons for this difference?

Presumably, however, he has neglected the whole issue. Indeed, one of the most unfortunate deficiencies of the book is that it fails to provide an analysis of social relations between ethnic Hungarians (or for that matter Czechs, or any ethnic group other than Carpathian Ruthenians) and Jews in Subcarpathian Rus.

The very limited amount of secondary literature on the role of "bystanders" in the Hungarian Holocaust has dealt almost exclusively with ethnic Hungarians, and so Segal's study of Carpathian Ruthenians as "bystanders" is of unquestionable value. However, the reason he gives for limiting his inquiry to relations between Jews and Carpathian Ruthenians (that is, because they were the only two ethnic groups present throughout the region and that many settlements were inhabited solely by them) is problematic (p.137). In Hungarian-occupied Subcarpathian Rus, ethnic Hungarians constituted around 10 percent of the population, though in some larger towns their proportions were around 25-30 percent. Independently of their sheer numbers though, Hungarians composed the politically dominant ethnic group, and they enjoyed a privileged status as the main beneficiary of the state's "re-Magyarizing" efforts and the associated discriminatory practices and policies against Jews, Carpathian Ruthenians and others. Thus, ethnic Hungarians could take the most advantage of the oppression of ethnic minorities, but also had the greatest ability to help the persecuted in some way. Moreover, Segal explains the attitudes of Carpathian Ruthenians towards Jews with reference to developments in interwar Czechoslovakia, but he ignores the fact that the communal history of Subcarpathia's Hungarians as members of an ethnic minority in interwar Czechoslovakia could also have exerted a decisive influence on their social relations with Jews. These circumstances surely produced regionally-specific "bystander" attitudes and actions among ethnic Hungarians, which would merit further study. One of the author's primary aims was allegedly

to study the region in its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural entirety. He has failed, however, to do this and so the picture he drew of it remained two-dimensional.

In contrast, one of the book's strengths lies in the sections focusing on the experiences and reactions of Subcarpathian Jews facing discrimination and violence (esp. pp.81–85, and 98–100). However, it would have been nice to have found a more systematic analysis here too, that goes beyond the Jewish participation in the small-scale communist resistance (p.84) and presents the various coping, survival, and resistance strategies adopted by Jews. Regardless of how "successful" these strategies were or how much opportunity there was to pursue them, a more detailed description of them would have provided a way to see the victims in a less passive position. Apart from this, Segal introduces his general conclusion in a convincing manner, and here his local examples are in harmony with phenomena described in the broader secondary literature: his finding is that most of the Jewish community was unable to grasp the reality of mass murder, deportations, and death camps, despite the warnings they had been given and the information they had received. Most of them were overwhelmed and paralyzed by the persecution and violence they had experienced, which resulted in internal and external crises, a denial of incomprehensible realities, and a tendency to grasp for false hopes instead of taking action. Additionally, active resistance and self-rescue could not become widespread, because most Jews who faced deportation belonged to the more vulnerable strata (women, children, and the elderly), since most of the men had been pressed into forced military labor. In the generally indifferent or even hostile social environment surrounding them, an environment which included both ethnic Hungarians and Carpathian Ruthenians, very few of them could have counted on effective help in any case. Chances to escape or hide were drastically reduced in the spring of 1944, when, with the advance of the Red Army, the Jews of Subcarpathian Rus were rushed into ghettos and deported before all the other Jewish communities in Hungary (pp.81–85, 98–101).

Last but not least, while Segal briefly deals with the issues of the theft and redistribution of Jewish property before and after the German occupation (pp.67–70, 96–98), he generally downplays the significance of the economic aspects of ethnic discrimination and persecution. In these policies, the interrelationships between economic, socio-political, and ethno-national factors composed such a coherent system that neglect of any of these factors, or emphasis on one of them at the expense of others, can only lead to misunderstanding. For example, Segal claims that the confiscation of Jewish lands "probably affected most

Jews in the region in a rather minor way. The significance of this anti-Jewish legislation, however, lay in the political, not the economic, realm: like the change of street names, it attempted to realign space according to ethnonational criteria" (pp.69–70). The second part of this statement is indisputable. But it is not clear, in a country in which the issue of land distribution was one of the most acute problems, how the economic and social significance of such measures could be secondary, or how such a policy could have had only minor effects on the Jews of a region in which their percentage in agriculture was uniquely high. Segal dispenses with the issue of Carpathian Ruthenians as beneficiaries and profiteers of the theft of Jewish belongings with the simple claim that since Hungarian authorities did not intend to provide Carpathian Ruthenians with property seized from Jews, the Carpathian Ruthenians did not substantially benefit from the plunder of their Jewish neighbors (pp.109, 187–88). The fact that Carpathian Ruthenians did not get more or did not get much, however, does not mean they did not try to do so. As the earlier secondary literature shows (esp. by Kinga Frojimovics), non-Jews in Subcarpathian Rus, regardless of ethnicity, tried to take advantage of the possibilities offered by the Hungarian state; in certain places, most of the people who made requests for "Jewish land" were not ethnic Hungarians, but rather Carpathian Ruthenians.

Notwithstanding its occasional shortcomings and controversial claims, Raz Segal's concise study offers an innovative and insightful summary of international, state-level, and regional policies, as well as some of the social interactions and ethnic conflicts in the history of the Subcarpathian region in the first half of the twentieth century. The book's integrated analysis, which puts anti-Jewish persecution and genocide into their broader contexts of nation and state-building, ethnic re-engineering, and multilayered violence, will hopefully serve as inspiration for similar research efforts in Hungary and beyond.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Az első 300 év Magyarországon és Európában: A Domonkos-rend a középkorban [The first 300 years in Hungary and Europe: The Dominican Order in the Middle Ages]. Edited by József Csurgai Horváth. Székesfehérvár: Alba Civitas Történeti Alapítvány, 2017.

In 2016, the Dominican Order celebrated the 800th anniversary of its papal confirmation. For this occasion, two scholarly conferences were held in Hungary, one of which dealt with the medieval history of the Order. The 16 papers which were held at the conference have been published in a collection edited by József Csurgai Horváth, the director of the Municipal Archives of Székesfehérvár. Since the papers are very different in geographical range (which spanned from Italy to Central Asia), time (from the beginnings to the middle of the sixteenth century), and topic, I review them according to theme.

The study by Balázs Kertész, entitled "The Settlement of the Mendicant Orders in the 'Middle of the Country'," presents the appearance of the four mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinian Hermits, and Carmelites) in the central part of Hungary in the thirteenth century. Kertész examines the early history of 22 cloisters and notes the important role of the towns in this region.

The following six papers deal with hagiography (half of them focus on Saint Margaret of Hungary). Thus, they reveal the most important tendencies of the Hungarian historiography on the Dominicans. In her article "Saint Margaret of Hungary and the Medieval Lay Piety," Viktória Hedvig Deák analyses the connection between Margaret and the medieval lay piety by examining prayers. Using the Legenda Vetus and the canonization report of 1276, she points out that the piety of the Hungarian princess went beyond the usual requirements of her age. Ildikó Csepregi also uses the canonization report to study the miracles performed by Margaret in her article, entitled "The Miracles of Margaret of Hungary." She adopts a very modern typology according to which she groups the miracles: 1. unique miracles; 2. timeless miracles; 3. miracles of the New Testament and early Christian period; 4. miracles with theological problems; and 5. miracles that were characteristic of the region and the age. Finally, in his article "King Matthias and Margaret of Hungary," Bence Péterfi examines Margaret from a different perspective: during his reign, King Matthias tried to prevail on

the Church to canonized the princess. Péterfi has found a hitherto unknown group of sources in Rome regarding this effort, some of which are included in the appendix of this volume. As he points, the canonization of Margaret was nearly successful, but ultimately it was delayed until 1943 due to quarrels inside the Dominican Order in the second half of the fifteenth century.

In his contribution, entitled "Blessed Helen of Hungary and the Medieval Dominican Stigmatics," Gábor Klaniczay deals with the stigmatization of another Dominican nun, Blessed Helen. He emphasizes that the case of Helen was just an act of the medieval Franciscan–Dominican dispute about the stigmas, and her legend was compiled only in the fourteenth century to promote the canonization of Catherine of Siena. In her article, entitled "Saint Catherine of Siena in Hungarian Codices," Eszter Konrád examines the cult of Saint Catherine in Hungary. Using two Latin and two Hungarian late medieval codices, she reveals that the veneration of Catherine was brought to Hungary mainly by the Dominican observance practices in the fifteenth century.

In the last paper with a hagiographical topic, Ottó Gecser deals with the problems of the canonization of Saint Elisabeth of Hungary ("Cult and Identity. Saint Elisabeth of Hungary and the Dominicans in the 13th Century"). The princess, who during her life was attracted rather to the Franciscans, was canonized in the Dominican Convent of Perugia by Pope Gregory IX. Gecser examines the unusual circumstances: why Perugia and why the Dominicans? The Pope spent a year in Perugia because of his argument with the Roman city council, so this was accidental. The Dominicans, who went to Perugia only very recently, were chosen because within the Franciscan Order there were several quarrels about the third order. Furthermore, through the relationship of Elisabeth and Konrad von Marburg, Gregory could connect her person with the Inquisition and the proselytization in Germany led by the Dominicans.

The next thematic group of four papers addresses the question of literacy. The study and catalogue by Balázs Zágorhídi Czigány, entitled "The Charters and Seals of the Medieval Hungarian Dominican Provincials," analyses the 27 surviving charters of the Dominican provincials of Hungary from the point of view of the content and 16 seals showing a very conservative manner of use because of the early settlement of the Order. Since the legal documents concerning the life of the Hungarian Dominicans did not survive, in "The First Period of the Dominican Literacy," Kornél Szovák examines the literary heritage of the Dominicans in the country, who had a very significant intellectual background. As he points out, the era was characterized by a diversity of

genres, including university and cannon law notes through Paulus Hungarus, geographical and ethnological works thanks to the missions of friars Riccardus and Julianus, the Vitas of Blessed Helen and Saint Margaret, and finally a history of the order.

While the contributions by Zágorhídi and Szovák deal mainly with the source materials, the subsequent studies enrich our knowledge of the Dominicans with examinations of specific sources. In an article entitled "Use of the Language and Vernacular Literature in the Hungarian Dominican Reform. The Readings of the Hungarian Dominican Nuns," Sándor Lázs examines 16 codices in Hungarian owned by the Convent of the Island of Rabbits, on the basis of which he draws conclusions concerning the literacy of the nuns. He connects the phenomenon of the spread of vernacular literature in the middle of the fifteenth century with the Dominican observance practices which were brought to Hungary from the German territories, and he points out that these kinds of books were intended not only for the nuns but for the wider public. The contribution by Adrien Quéret-Podesta, entitled "Blessed Paul the Hungarian in the "De ordine predicatorum de Tolosa in Dacia," offers an analysis of a short Danish-Swedish-Estonian chronicle as evidence of how Paulus Hungarus attracted the attention and admiration of someone in the far north.

Two of the last five papers deal with the missions of the Dominicans, while the other three deal with the general history of the order. Bálint Ternovácz examines the Dominican missions of Bosnia between 1230 and 1330 in an article entitled "Dominicans in Bosnia from the Settlement of the Order until the Middle of the Fourteenth Century." Through an examination of the careers of the bishops, Ternovácz points out why the Dominicans' strategy was unsuccessful in this region: they treated the population as heretics, but the locals were simply ignorant of the message of the Church. Szilvia Kovács takes the reader all the way to Chagatai Ulus in Central Asia, where an almost total ecclesiastical hierarchy formed thanks to the positive remarks of the Dominican missionaries ("Dominicans in the Central Asian Chagatai Ulus at the Turn of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries").

Of the papers dealing with the general history of the order, Mária Lupescu Makó's contribution, entitled "Benedict, the First Professed Bishop of Transylvania," deals with the career of Benedict, who was the bishop of Transylvania of the Dominican Order in the early fourteenth century. The essay by Beatrix Romhányi, entitled "A Non-Mendicant Mendicant Order: The Dominicans in the Late Medieval Hungary," examines how the Hungarian

Dominicans flourished economically after 1475 thanks to the observance practices. The author draws attention to the ways in which the Order, which was already officially not a mendicant order, how could finance its operations and how it mixed traditional activities with more modern tendencies. Romhányi also emphasizes the shadows which were cast over the prospering community.

The paper by Radu Lupescu, entitled "Utriusque ordinis expulsi sunt. Kolozsvár, March 15, 1556," examines the end of the order. Since the mendicant orders, which settled in Kolozsvár in the age of the Hunyadis, became part of the society of the town, the evolving Reformation roused hostility among the local population against them. First the cloisters were sacked, and in 1556 the town council expelled the Franciscans and Dominicans.

In conclusion, this collection of essays constitutes a useful volume on the medieval history of the Dominican Order in Hungary, which will be of interest to readers curious to learn more about Church history, hagiography, and vernacular literature.

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Hatalom, adó, jog: Gazdaságtörténeti tanulmányok a magyar középkorról [Power, tax, law: Studies on the economic history of medieval Hungary]. Edited by István Kádas and Boglárka Weisz. Budapest: MTA BTK Történettudományi Intézet, 2017. 601 pp.

The book under review is the second collection of essays published by the Economic History of Medieval Hungary Research Group (allocated to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities), which was founded in 2015 under the leadership of Boglárka Weisz. The essays are primarily the "customary" papers delivered at the conference held the previous year, which have been published now in an impressively voluminous tome. Like the previous collection, the work includes essays which are based on historical approaches and studies which are written from the perspectives of archeology and art history. Most of the essays share close affinities, since they tend to focus on the cities of the Hungarian Kingdom.

In his essay, Tibor Neumann addresses the question of royal taxation in the free royal cities of the Hungarian Kingdom at the end of the fifteenth century, both from "above" and from "below," i.e. from the perspective of specific cities (Pozsony [Bratislava] and Bártfa [Bardejov], today both in Slovakia). He examines the extent to which the rulers' taxation policies could be characterized as consistent, how much room for maneuver the cities had, and how constant the sums paid in taxes were. Years in which taxes were high were generally followed by milder years, and the royal taxes which were imposed were not carved in stone. In other words, there were always opportunities for haggling. In total, the urban burgesses paid surprisingly little in taxes per capita.

Judit Gál and Katalin Szende approach the question of the relationship between the cities and the king from above. Gál compares the royal and ducal privileges and gifts that were given to the Dalmatian cities and churches and the consolidation of these gifts and privileges. While earlier these two favored groups may have had very similar significance from the perspective of their numbers, by the end of the thirteenth century, far fewer gifts were bestowed on the churches. In the earlier period, the support of the church was necessary in order to maintain control over the city. By the end of the century, this was no longer the case, in part because of conflicts between the church and the city. This shift is reflected in the drop in the number of gifts bestowed on the churches. Szende examines the history of trade in the second half of the fourteenth

century and the permissions that were given to cities to allow large multitudes to live within their boundaries (these permissions were first given under the reign of King Louis the Great of Hungary, who ruled from 1342 to 1382). As Szende shows, these permissions, which were given in part at the initiative of private landowners and in larger part at the initiative of the royal court, were part of a deliberate trade policy. The king's primary goal may have been to strengthen foreign trade. It led to rearrangements in the social structures of the affected cities, and the rise of long-distance trade had an effect on the numbers and kinds of buildings in the cities.

In her generously illustrated essay, Judit Benda examines the sites at which local and long-distance (from London to Cracow, or from Lübeck to Florence) trade took place. She divides the buildings up into different groups on the basis of their form (from the small merchants' stalls to the large market halls), and she makes a catalogue of them. The region in which the types of buildings she is seeking are found can be very clearly demarcated. The best parallels are found in central Europe, or more precisely, in the German cultural sphere or the cultural sphere strongly influenced by it.

Katalin Gönczi's article on the role of the so-called Saxon-Magdeburg rights in the Hungarian Kingdom can be considered the other angle from which to approach this topic. Gönczi examines the various factors one by one, including the way in which the Magdeburg rights came to Hungary (in the form of legal transfer) and the spheres and milieus in which they gained relevance, as well as the influences they had among the Saxons of the Zips region (Szepes in Hungarian and Spiš in Slovak) and on the so-called *Ofner Stadtrecht*, a book of laws written in Middle High German in the beginning of the fifteenth century and used in Buda. It is particularly interesting to compare these organizational measures with the developments in the Polish territories. In the Kingdom of Hungary, the legal system did not lose its foreign ties, though with regards to questions of the dispensation of justice, the authorities customarily turned not to the city of Magdeburg, but rather to the master of the treasury (*magister tavernicorum*). The explanation for this lies in the strongly centralized power of the Hungarian king.

Matching nicely to the remarks of Katalin Göncz, Renáta Skorka offers an explanation, in connection with the conflict between the tanners and cobblers of Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt in German, today Sibiu in Romania), of why the city of Buda played a prominent role in the court of the master of the treasury and the administration of justice in connection with the cities of Hungary. She also works with the assumption that the systematic summarizing of rights in

Buda in all likelihood played an important role in the emergence of the city's leading role.

István Kádas examines the relationship between county society and two free royal towns, namely Sáros County and the towns of Bártfa and Eperjes (today Bardejov and Prešov, both in Slovakia), from "below." While the county did not have any authority over the royal towns, the burghers and the nobility of the county had innumerable ties, and many of them profited from these ties, as Kádas illustrates with several revealing examples. Closely tied to this is Adrian Andrei Rusu's article on the material culture and financial relationships of the nobility of "eastern Hungary." Rusu examines the opportunities the nobility had (in farming, mining, commerce, etc.), and Kádas' conclusions and examples also offer answers to some of the questions he raises.

Dorottya Uhrin uses a wide variety of source materials in order to shed light on the cults of Saint Catherine of Alexandria and Saint Barbara in the mining cities of Upper Hungary (what today is Slovakia). She examines the possible thirteenth-century origins of the veneration of the two saints and then considers the various physical artifacts which can be tied to the cults (the mining city seals, coats-of-arms, churches, and altarpieces). In cases in which the cult of the saint was tied to a city seal (the cities of Körmöcbánya [Kremnica] and Szomolnok [Smolník] in Slovakia), she also clarifies, for the sake of thoroughness, the uses of the seal in the given city in the Middle Ages.

The book also includes three valuable archeological essays on medieval settlements and materials, which are important and revealing from the perspective of the economic history of the Middle Ages. Szabolcs Rosta presents the hand scales which were found in the course of the excavation of the former settlement of Pétermonostora in southern Hungary, as it so happens in remarkably large numbers. The spread of this implement, which clearly is a sign of vibrant commerce, was by no means restricted to the important economic centers of the country. We should also expect to find them in settlements of regional significance (such as Pétermonostora some 120 kms south of Budapest). The Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241/42 was a genuine caesura in the life of the Árpád-era settlement, and it was probably then that the hand scales ended up underground. György V. Székely and Csaba Tóth examine the weights that were used with the Pétermonostora scales in a separate essay. They identify the three divisions of weights that were used (one half, one fifth, and one twelfth). The standard unit matches the unit used in Buda almost exactly. Since the weights, like the hand scales, were also hidden during the Mongol invasion and the first

reliable mention of the Buda mark is from 1271, the question of the precise relationship between the two is a task that still awaits an answer. Ágnes Kolláth and Péter Tomka add to the number (and our understanding of the relevance of) the weights and scales with their presentation of the findings of excavations currently underway on the main square of the city of Győr in western Hungary. The most interesting aspect of their article, however, is perhaps not the findings, which are indeed significant from the perspective of economic history, or even the archeological materials, but rather the fact that they offer answers to old topographical questions. Certain signs suggest that the irregular network of roads may have existed as early as the thirteenth century. In other words, historians who have contended that the urban planning which took place in the settlement was undertaken in the sixteenth century are mistaken.

The volume also includes essays that are less directly related to the urban economy. The contribution by Boglárka Weisz on the so-called Jazygian people, one of the peoples which settled in the Hungarian Kingdom in the Middle Ages about which we know the least, adds more to our knowledge of economic history than it does to urban history. Until now, historians have remained uncertain as to what kinds of taxes and sums the Jazygian people had to pay to the king. Weisz uses the cases of other, similar peoples (for instance the Cumans and the Saxons) who settled in the Hungarian Kingdom as analogies and arrives at a methodical grasp of the taxation system in Hungary in the late Middle Ages. Along with her fellow contributor, Renáta Skorka, Weisz uses newly discovered charters to examine the careers of two people in Hungary who played roles in the chambers in the cities of Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia) and Körmöcbánya in the 1420s and 1430s. Presumably, they both came from Thorn (today Toruń, Poland), a city found in the territory under the control of the Teutonic Order. Weisz and Skorka use the existing secondary literature and sources newly discovered in and outside of Hungary to dispel persistent misconceptions and shed light on the roles of the two men.

Two essays deal with the topic of customs, transportation, and trade routes, which are particularly important in the study of economic history. Magdolna Szilágyi offers a general overview. She shows a particular interest in the routes that were used between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries and, to a lesser extent, the people who used them. She approaches the question less from the perspective of an archeologist and more from the perspective of historians. She draws on a broad base of secondary and primary sources in her discussion of the protections that were used for the routes and the people who traveled

on them and the measures that were taken by the king in connection with the travel routes. Viktória Kovács examines how the Roman legal principle 'qui prior est tempore, potior est iure' was used in fourteenth-century trials concerning customs duties. This kind of reasoning was used in other types of cases in the 1300s. By the first quarter of the fifteenth century, it was found in judgement letters and royal command letters. In other words, by that time it must have become familiar in wider circles.

I left the ambitious essay by Pál Lővei, which is the most loosely tied to the subject of the book, to the end of my review. Lővei offers a detailed examination of the activities and products of a stone masonry workshop in Buda over the course of several generations. The most distinctive works created in the workshop were the gravestones which were ordered by individuals or families who were members of the Order of the Dragon established in 1408 by King Sigismund of Luxemburg. Lővei demonstrates that, because of certain parallels with Salzburg, the store and stock of the Buda workshop was later probably refreshed.

In sum, the value of the individual essays as innovative or new contributions to the secondary literature varies, but the book itself nonetheless addresses a significant need, since it makes an attempt—hopefully successful—to restore and even popularize a discipline which has vanished almost entirely from the secondary literature in Hungarian today. One can only hope that this effort will prove enduring (in the form of additional works of scholarship) and even contagious and will inspire other ambitious researchers to pursue further study of the subject.

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The Noble Elite in the County of Körös (Križevci) 1400–1526.
By Tamás Pálosfalvi. MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont
Történettudományi Intézet, 2014. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek:
Értekezések.) 526 pp.

Since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of works by Hungarian historians
on the history of the lands we think of today as Croatia. As the many Croatian-
Hungarian conferences (which have become almost a regular fixture in academic
life), the research projects involving the region from the Árpád era until the era
of national awakenings, and the many collections of essays by Hungarian and
Croatian historians make vividly clear, a vibrant and productive relationship has
developed between the historians of the two nations. The new book by Tamás
Pálosfalvi, a seasoned scholar at the Institute of History of the Hungarian
Academy of Sciences, is part of this trend, and from the perspective of its depth
and focus, it is an outstanding part.

Pálosfalvi's book is essentially an edited version of his dissertation, which
he defended in 2012 at Central European University in Budapest. The scholarly
work on which it is based, however, stretches back to the beginnings of his
academic career. Even in his earliest articles, Pálosfalvi wrote on the problems
of government and governance in Slavonia in the late Middle Ages, and thus he
began to study "noble elite," to use the term used in the title of the book, of
Körös (or Križevci in Croatian) County.

This ambitious book consists of four long chapters and appendixes
with carefully organized data that will help the reader get her bearings. In the
introduction, Pálosfalvi begins by clarifying what he means by "noble elite." In
the secondary literature in Hungarian, one finds a variety of ideas concerning the
nature and characteristic features of the nobility, but these ideas and concepts
create a very broad framework within which the group most frequently referred
to in the sources as "egregius" moves. For the sake of precision, Pálosfalvi
excludes baronial families from his inquiry. From the perspective of upward
mobility in this hierarchy (i.e. seen from "below"), the border was much more
flexible, and in Pálosfalvi's enquiry a mere mention did not suffice to put
someone in the group examined. With regards to the individuals mentioned in
the sources, Pálosfalvi only considers them "egregius" if this status is confirmed
several times. Pálosfalvi needed to draw this clear distinction, because even with
this limitation there were still some 100 families or individuals belonging to

the "noble elite," which constitutes a larger number than in other parts of the country. As his discussion makes clear, the "egregius" worked in the service of aristocratic families and families of the court. Their estates were somewhere between 50 and 500 tax-paying plots, but this did not actually determine whether or not they belonged to the noble elite of the county.

In the Middle Ages, Körös County was one of the largest and most developed counties in the country. Before Pálosfalvi's book, we knew almost nothing about noble society in the county. Given the family ties and the county officers presented in the book, however, one cannot help but wonder if perhaps it would have made sense to include the neighboring Zagreb County in the discussion, since the local families of Körös had innumerable ties to Zagreb County. Considering the nature of the sources, however, Pálosfalvi's decision was entirely justified, for in the absence of written sources from the county level, he was compelled to examine the structure of the noble society on the basis of family and local archives.

The second chapter (pp.25–307), which contains biographies of the individual families, constitutes the bulk of the book. First, Pálosfalvi explains the criteria he used in order to decide whether or not to include a given family. This is followed by the biographies of the families or individuals in alphabetical order. The reader is given more than 250 pages of detailed narratives of families' "lives," as it were, beginning with the first ancestors who are mentioned in the sources or who moved to the region from other parts of the kingdom. Pálosfalvi then gives an overview of the most important family ties, in some cases information concerning schooling and education, and services performed in the courts of aristocrats or the king. As his overview illustrates, almost all of the individuals who occupied positions of influence at the beginning of the sixteenth century began their careers in the court of John Corvin, natural son of King Matthias, and claimant to the Hungarian throne after his father's death. One might think, for instance, of members of the Alapi, Gersei Pető, or Batthyány families. The other major patrons of the "egregius" were the bishops of Zagreb, which makes it clear why the Catholic Church was able to maintain its influence in the region even after the defeat of the Hungarian army by the Ottomans at the Battle of Mohács in 1526. It is also clear from the narrative that Pálosfalvi used almost exclusively primary sources, and the data he provides offer a good portrait of everyday life in the province.

The next chapter contains a social examination of the landed gentry (pp.307–415). Pálosfalvi divides the individual figures and families into groups

on the basis of their ancestry, and he explains the ways in which they are mentioned in the sources. As his inquiry makes clear, most of them began to rise to prominence in the fifteenth century. Their rise was due less to the patronage of the king or titles bestowed by the royal court and more to their ties to the aristocracy. People who relocated to the region came for the most part from other parts of the Kingdom of Hungary. Only three people are mentioned in the sources from Croatia and Bosnia. Similarly interesting is the question of which families were in possession of the individual market towns, manor houses, and castles in the period under discussion. As far as one can tell from the sources, each family had at least one "castellum," and the wealthiest families had considerably more estates. Nonetheless, very few of them actually managed to make it into the circles of barons. Even if they held baronial titles (for instance, the title of palatine), once they left office they were again denoted as "egregius." It might have been preferable, instead of offering a study of social ascent, to have considered the question at hand in a longer timeframe. For as it so happens, in the sixteenth century, many of the families did manage to acquire the title of baron, for instance the Kerecsény family (1559), the Ráttkay family (1559), the Dersffy family (1564), the Kasztellánffy family (1569), the Alapi family (before 1582), and the Túróci family (1599). They won this recognition through service in the court and in the military. Thus, it seems that for a few decades—precisely at the time when Slavonia was becoming a genuine "regnum"—some of the Slavonian "egregius" families successfully adapted to the new situation.

It is interesting and worth noting that for these families a career in the Church was less of a goal, though the large chapter of Zagreb and the influential chapter of Csázma (or Čazma, to use the Croatian name) would have offered promising opportunities. It is true that no member of this group ever managed to hold the position of bishop of Zagreb until the middle of the sixteenth century, when Farkas Gyulai and Pál Gregorjánci were given this distinction. Later, however, the familiar system was restored, and the bishop of Zagreb was usually someone from one of the lower social strata. Careers in the Church did indeed offer poorer members of the lesser nobility a promising alternative. János Csezmicei and István Brodarics, for instance, who were both members of this social stratum, were both given titles as bishops after they had completed studies in Italy.

The book contains several appendixes, a kind of registry of the nobility, and an archontology of palatines and vice palatines, as well as family trees which provide a good overview of the family ties discussed in the book.

In the case of a monograph like this, one makes critical remarks only because of the obligations one has as a reviewer. In all likelihood, the use of English versions of the proper names detracted from instead of adding to the value of the book. Since the readership will consist first and foremost of Hungarians and Croatians, it might have been preferable to have used the Latin versions of the names (and the foreseeable readership might have preferred this). It is not immediately obvious why Pálosfalvi included the map at the end of the book. It is tremendously useful to the reader on the one hand, but on the other, it is quite difficult to find some of the settlements on it. It would have been considerably more useful if it had been made in color and it had included the granges and estate centers of the noble families. The almost innumerable small settlements, alas, do not further an easier or more subtle understanding of the text, and the title of the map is a bit misleading too ("Körös County in the Fifteenth Century"), since most of the market towns indicated on the map were only mentioned in the sources at the very end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth.

These minor shortcomings detract in no way from the value of the book. A good book does not need a preface or an afterword, and Tamás Pálosfalvi's book is encumbered by neither. It will undoubtedly be cited innumerable times in upcoming decades by scholars of Hungarian and Croatian history, and it will be indispensable to the next generation of scholars.

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Keresztesekből lázadók: Tanulmányok 1514 Magyarországáról [From crusaders to rebels: Studies on Hungary in 1514]. Edited by Norbert C. Tóth and Tibor Neumann. Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, Történettudományi Intézet, 2015. 376 pp.

The rebellion known in historical scholarship as the peasant war of György Dózsa (May–July 1514) has, despite its brevity, long been thought to have played a crucial role in shaping late medieval Hungarian history. Before 1945, emphasis was put on the consequences of the revolt: the supposed general ban on the freedom of movement of the peasantry, which would have led to the emergence of a so-called "second serfdom," and the prohibition forbidding peasants from bearing arms, which contributed, it was claimed, to the quick and definitive military breakdown of Hungary between 1521 and 1526. After 1945, attention inevitably shifted to the social roots of the movement, and the Hungarian peasant war quickly took its place among the great "anti-feudal" revolts of late medieval Europe. Ironically, it was a "fictive anniversary," officially created to commemorate the supposed birth of Dózsa in 1472, which (partly undermining the very intentions of the communist regime) yielded the scientific findings which have since framed all approaches to the issue: a meticulous reconstruction of events based on the overwhelming majority of the surviving source material; the realisation that the social basis of the revolt was not constituted by the destitute masses of the landless peasantry oppressed by their lords, but rather the economically most active tenants of market towns, whose commercial activities were being blocked by the rival interests of the nobility; and an equally thorough reconstruction of the ideological background of the movement, with the observant Franciscans and their ideas of social justice taking center stage.

    After 1990, the 1514 peasant war quickly lost its ideological connotations, retaining only, before all in non-scholarly public circles, its pivotal role as a symptom of the corruption and internal decomposition of Jagiello Hungary, especially when compared to the vitality and military might of Matthias Corvinus's Central European "empire." Another memorial year, however, this time commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the revolt itself, has recently revitalized the languishing interest in Dózsa and his crusader peasants, and it has produced a set of essays which claim to undermine several of the assumptions which have been widely shared elements of the "Dózsa problem" since the 1970s.

The essays in the volume reviewed here all contribute to reassessment and demystification. In the first paper, Árpád Nógrády argues, on the basis of evidence exclusively from the western fringes of Hungary, that if crisis there was, it was certainly caused not by economic depression but, on the contrary, by a land hunger effected by a marked agrarian boom and the parallel increase, within the peasants' landed assets, of the proportion of leased lands as opposed to customary seigneurial tenements, and the consequent decrease of the number of "tenant" peasants in the traditional sense as compared to the swelling ranks of "landless peasants" (*inquilini*). Examining the evidence from Slavonia, Szabolcs Varga questions the key role now traditionally attributed to the market towns and the Franciscans in triggering the revolt of 1514: the fact that the region between the Drava and Sava Rivers, which was densely spotted with market towns and was certainly sufficiently populated by Franciscan friaries, remained completely immune to the rebellion certainly calls for a revision of the prevailing understanding of its social roots.

Apart from these two, rather short, papers, no effort is made in the book to examine the social background and potential causes of the peasant war. The two papers authored by Norbert C. Tóth endeavor to reexamine the origins of the crusade initiated by archbishop Tamás Bakóc and the political and military events that led to the first major encounter between the rebel troops and their noble opponents. In addition to examining the composition of and the decisions taken by the hitherto unknown diet held in the spring of 1514, he also seeks new answers to the questions of why the crusade was eventually proclaimed despite the serious misgivings voiced by some of the Hungarian political elite, as well as what its original aims may have been, why it deviated from the original idea, and why the would-be rebels took the route which finally led them to the crossing of the Maros River at Apátfalva. The long paper by Tibor Neumann examines the events of the peasant war in Transylvania and the neighboring regions, with a clear focus on the young voivode of Transylvania, János Szapolyai. He proposes a radically new and very convincing interpretation of events, arguing, among other things, that the revolt left the whole of Southern Transylvania intact. He also emphasizes the unprecedented level to which taxation had been brought in the years immediately preceding the revolt, though these tax increases were not accompanied by any parallel military achievements against the Ottomans, thereby drawing attention to a possible reason for discontent which has not been considered so far. In a paper consisting of a chain of case studies, Richárd Horváth refutes the long-held view according to which the peasant armies

successfully besieged major fortifications, proving that the fortified sites that were taken by the rebels were in fact either abandoned by their defenders or opened through voluntary collaboration, or, in some cases, the siege story itself was construed by noblemen who tried to profit from the troubles to consolidate their contested lordship.

The remaining papers in the volume address themes which are only indirectly connected to the history of the peasant war itself. Bálint Lakatos examines the circulation of news in connection with the events in Hungary, establishing an extremely careful typology according to form, source of information, and news communicated. He also contributes to the establishment of a better chronology of events in some cases. He reconstructs the international network within which the news from Hungary was received, transformed, and eventually transmitted, drawing into focus a great number of hitherto unused documents. Gábor Mikó, the author of two essays in the volume, explores the process through which the decrees accepted by the postwar diet gained their final formulation. This is a sensitive issue, given the supposed consequences of the punitive measures taken against the peasantry. Comparing all the extant copies, Mikó convincingly argues that the "official" ratification of the dietary decrees was preceded by heated debates and frequent alterations to the text, a process that went on long after the diet itself had been dissolved. He also highlights and accounts for the conspicuous antagonism which can be observed between the two notorious passages dealing with the ban on the peasants' freedom of movement, one apparently proclaiming a general prohibition, the other limiting punishment to tenants who had been convicted of participation in the revolt. The closing paper, by Bence Péterfi, examines the peasant war that ravaged the Inner Austrian provinces in 1515 and looks for possible connections and influences, essentially in vain, for, as he argues, neither did the Austrian rebels refer to the Hungarian example nor did the neighboring Hungarian territories, which had not been affected by the revolt led by Dózsa, show any sign of sympathy with their Austrian fellows.

As emphasized in the preface, this volume is not a comprehensive history of the Dózsa revolt, but a collection of studies the authors of which, depending on their respective fields of research, examined various aspects of a complex problem. This accounts for the occasional contradictions between the individual contributions. For instance, whereas C. Tóth opines that originally the crusade was intended as an essentially defensive operation, with the participation of both crusaders and regular forces in anticipation of a major Ottoman attack (e.g. p.71), Neumann calculates with an offensive plan designed to restore the Ottoman–

Hungarian border to its pre-1512 state (p.117). The problem obviously concerns the contested issue of the Ottoman–Hungarian truce and the reasons for the quick foray of voivode Szapolyai into Ottoman Bulgaria just before the outbreak of the revolt. These problems certainly need further inquiry. I would raise at least two questions. First, if an offensive campaign was indeed considered, why did the Hungarian government publicize the Ottoman–Hungarian truce officially as early as May, thereby risking popular indignation, instead of using the gathering forces to accomplish the original plan, at least in a more modest version, before the agreement with the distant sultan was officially confirmed? And, second, if the crusade was initially conceived as a defensive move, why did Szapolyai venture into Bulgaria, only to return two weeks later, without even waiting for the other troops and the crusaders to gather? And why did he attack at all if his fellow commanders (István Bátori and Péter Beriszló) were apparently ordered to stay put and wait for reinforcements? Was his campaign really part of the planned operations?

While the great majority of new interpretations and reassessments offered by the contributors to the volume are persuasive and thoroughly documented, and the achievements of a previous generation of scholars (especially those of Gábor Barta, who was forced to complete his monograph in a hurry in preparation for the commemorations of 1472) are repeatedly emphasized, in some instances the rejection of earlier views and approaches seems unwarranted. It is certainly somewhat presumptuous to relegate the ideas of Jenő Szűcs about the potential role of the Observant Franciscans in forging the crusaders' ideology to "the realm of legends" in a single footnote (p.89), especially since several of the regions known to have been affected by the revolt are not even examined in the book. After all, Szűcs himself never argued that this supposed ideology was created *ex nihilo* during the six weeks of the revolt.

These critical remarks by no means detract from the merits of this volume, which has successfully reopened an issue which seemed settled for more than four decades. The essays, which are accompanied by excellent maps, tables, and occasionally source publications, have broken new ground and raised questions which need to be addressed. Each aspect of the peasant war, including its aims, the events themselves, the ideology which may have shaped it, and the terminology with which it is described, has to be revisited by applying the exemplary methodology used by the authors in the volume. Only then will it be possible to offer a new history of this tragic year and its consequences. For, regardless of the term with which we refer to it and quite independently of the

actual number of rebels (which we will never know exactly) or their (in)ability to seize fortified sites, a rebellion broke out in 1514 which ravaged considerable sections of Hungary. A bishop was impaled, tax collectors were killed and robbed, and noble residences were devastated and burned down. Obviously, this cannot be "relegated to the realm of legends."

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The Teutonic Order in Prussia and Livonia: The Political and Ecclesiastical Structures 13th–16th C. Edited by Roman Czaja and Andrzej Radzimiński. Cologne–Weimar–Vienna–Toruń: Böhlau Verlag / Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2016. 423 pp.

This work is dedicated primarily to a description of the organization and internal structure of the territorial authority wielded by the Teutonic Knights in Prussia and Livonia. The book is a collection of essays written by Polish and German historians and art historians from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and translated into English.

In order to give a broad overview of the power of the Teutonic Knights, the authors approach the topic from different points of view and discuss a wide range of topics. These topics include the formation of political borders, administrative divisions, defensive architecture, the urbanization of the country, and ecclesiastical structure and divisions.

The work is basically divided into three main parts. The first describes the internal structure and territorial authority in Prussia, and the second is devoted entirely to Livonia. The second part is especially valuable, since most of the existing German and English literature on this topic deals with Teutonic Prussia, and in most cases Livonia is neglected. The third and final main part of the book contains lists of different dignitaries and officials in Prussia and Livonia. The first chapter of the third part enumerates dignitaries and officials (including *vogt*s, procurators, and commanders) of the Teutonic Order between the end of the twelfth century and the sixteenth century (it was compiled by Bernhart Jähnig). The second chapter deals with these positions in Livonia starting with the time of The Brothers of the Sword and concluding with the end of Teutonic rule (it was compiled by Klaus Militzer). In the last chapter of the third part, one finds a collection of names of archbishops, bishops, and episcopal *vogt*s (compiled by Andrzej Radzimiński).

The essays on varying topics are included in the first two parts of the book. In most cases, articles dealing with a given topic both in Prussia and Livonia were written by the same author. For example, Janusz Tandecki examines the administrative divisions of the state of the Teutonic Order both in Prussia and Livonia, and Andrzej Radzimiński considers church divisions in Prussia in the first main part and the same topic in Livonia in the second one. The only exception is Marian Biskup who wrote about two different topics. Biskup

examines parishes in the state of the Teutonic Knights in the first main part, but in the second he writes about territorial governance in Livonia. This general structure of the book furthers a comparative understanding of the political and ecclesiastical systems in Prussia and Livonia. This is one of the most important merits of this work. Given the limits of this and any review, I would like to call attention only to two important lessons provided by the different chapters on the parallels and differences in developments in Livonia and Prussia.

Marian Arszyński highlights the main features of fortification architecture of Teutonic Prussia and Livonia. He argues that, since the Teutonic Order exercised absolute territorial sovereignty from the outset, it was the only agent in the development of castles and strongholds. The Order decided on their functions, forms, and territorial distribution. In contrast, in Livonia one had to take different political entities into consideration, from the bishoprics and the archbishopric of Riga (who exercised or usurped territorial self-government) to The Brothers of the Sword (1202–37), not to mention the Danes (1219–1364), who held the northern part of Estonia. As a result, numerous autonomous construction projects took place in Livonia led by different entities. It is also worth emphasizing the significance of local Cistercians and the secular vassal knights who made no contribution to fortified masonry architecture in Prussia.

Another interesting topic is the comparison of the urban networks in these two territories by Roman Czaja. As Czaja shows, the most important difference was the lower degree of urbanization of Livonia in comparison with Prussia. In Prussia, there was one town for every 700 km², though they were very unevenly distributed, as most towns were located along the Vistula River and in the western and central part of Prussia proper (75 of the total 96). However, in Livonia, by the mid-sixteenth century there were still only 19 towns in total, which was one for every 6,000 km². An interesting phenomenon was the importance of the small Livonian towns in the great Baltic trade. It should be noted, however, that their commercial role was limited to local trade, and they acted mostly as intermediaries between producers and large towns (Riga, Reval, and Dorpat). It is remarkable that until the mid-fourteenth century these large towns had closer connections to other Hanseatic towns than to one another. Only after 1350 were there signs of cooperation among the large Livonian cities, when local conventions became common. These conventions served rarely for debates regarding internal matters concerning Livonia. Rather, they were forums for the discussion of maritime trade and the election of delegates who would represent Livonian interest at the Hanseatic conventions.

As was the case in Prussia, where 93 percent of the cities were under 10 hectares in territory, the Livonian towns were also mostly confined to small areas. The biggest ones did not exceed 30 hectares, and smaller ones covered an area ranging between 5 and 8 hectares and had only about 80 plots on average within their boundaries. Regarding the residents of these towns, while roughly 8,000 people lived in Riga in the fifteenth century, and Reval and Dorpat also had a population of around 5,000, most of the towns were inhabited by only a few hundred people. In contrast, the population of the largest Prussian towns could well reach 10,000 people. The ethnic diversity of Livonian towns was characteristic of urban development. By analyzing local tax lists, Czaja showed that in spite of the dominance of the Germans in larger cities (in Riga more than 50 percent of the population, and in Reval more than 40 percent), the indigenous population formed a considerable share of the population (Livs and mostly Latvians made up 33 percent of the population of Riga and Estonians made up 41 percent of the population of Reval). Furthermore, the smaller towns, with the exceptions of Alt and Neu Pernau, were dominated by indigenous population and even by Ruthenians. However, the high proportions of the native residents as a percentage of the total population did not correspond to a similarly proportional share of power, since the Germans constituted the richest layer of the society because of their prominent role in trade. Most of the locals (hired laborers and craftsmen) hailed from the middle or the poorest layers of the society. Rich Livs, Estonians, and Latvians who tried to increase their influence in urban affairs met with strong opposition from the Germans as of the end of the fourteenth century (in Reval, only as of the beginning of the sixteenth century). The leading circle of Germans tried to hinder or even forbid the "Undeutsche" from acquiring property in the cities or entering merchant guilds by issuing discriminative statues. In Prussia, Germans dominated in the ruling groups and the middle classes, but the cities were also inhabited by many Prussians and Slavs, especially in cities near the Polish border. By 1450, in Kulm and Thorn their proportions reached 23–27 percent of the population within the city walls and 52 percent in the suburbs.

It is regrettable that the book does not include detailed footnotes, so in some cases it is a bit hard to find the original source to which an author is referring. However, each article is followed by an extensive and excellent bibliography, which makes up for this shortcoming. Nevertheless, this book will be of great interest to anyone curious to glean comparative insight into the territorial authority of the Teutonic Order in Prussia and Livonia.

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Alchemy and Rudolf II: Exploring the Secrets of Nature in Central Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Edited by Ivo Purš and Vladimír Karpenko. Prague: Artefactum, 2016. 870 pp.

This lavish volume makes a striking first impression with its sheer dimensions and weight, and the cover, which features the painting "Allegory" by the Dutch master Hendrick Goltzius (in which Hermes offers Pandora to King Epimetheus), further suggests something rich and meaningful. The sensory experience continues when one opens the book and browses through the nearly six hundred beautiful illustrations, many of which are color illustrations from contemporary manuscripts. The sumptuousness of this volume befits its subject, Emperor Rudolf II, and the various ways in which he and quite a few his subjects in Central Europe delved into alchemy. The editors, Ivo Purš and Vladimír Karpenko (who also authored many of the articles in the volume), have dedicated decades to the research on this subject, and they invited some of the best-known scholars of the history of alchemy in the Early Modern era to contribute. This edition is the English translation of the Czech original published in 2011 with only one new article and some additional bibliographical notes.

The result is a rich collection of articles indeed, covering the widest range of subjects while also acknowledging that there is always room for further research and never aiming to have the last word. Still, what is immediately clear about this book is that it is a work of love, or, as Purš puts it, "a humble homage to the philosophers 'per ignem'," (p.13) i.e. the men, including the emperor himself, and a few women who devoted much of their time and money to exploring the secrets of nature in *laboratoria* set up in households, workshops, or any suitable space.

With a subject so vast, complex, and often elusive, the volume had to be structured around four main topics. The first part offers a more general overview of alchemy in Central Europe and imperial Prague. The introduction by Karpenko aims to provide an up-to-date definition of what alchemy is. Karpenko accepts Maurice Crosland's 1962 formulation, according to which "alchemy may be viewed as a lengthy experiment that compares human abilities to natural processes, with the former attempting to surpass the latter" as closest to grasping the essence of it. The article he coauthored with Purš in this section and the one by Purš look at the fortunes of alchemy in the lands of the Bohemian crown,

from the interest of the Habsburg rulers to the involvement of their aristocratic subjects. The timeline of alchemical interests in these territories shows that in Bohemia alchemy was known and practiced as early as the fourteenth century. One could mention Konrad Kyeser, for instance, the author of *Bellifortis* and the personal physician to Wenceslas IV, or Jan of Láz, who published the first alchemical treatise in Czech in 1457. As is noted in the introductory articles, Rudolf II was not the first Habsburg to take an interest in alchemical medicine. His grandfather Ferdinand I probably met Paracelsus in person, and he was open to the new medicine propagated by the Swiss physician. Alchemy thus had strong roots both in Bohemia and Moravia, and in the Habsburg family itself.

After this overview of antecedents, William Eamon's article also looks at beginnings as Eamon redraws the picture of Rudolf's education at the Spanish court and its long-term effects on his personality. In contrast to the earlier scholarship, he emphasizes the rich cultural milieu that surrounded the young Habsburg prince in Madrid and the positive influences to which he may have been exposed, given the scientific projects supported by Phillip II. These projects included a search for a panacea and attempts to manufacture "Lullian" quintessences, which may very well have fueled Rudolf's later interest in Lull's works. Purš's last contribution in this section is a massive overview of Rudolf II's patronage of the "natural sciences," which meant support for the stars of the show, Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler, but also lesser-known but highly important figures in the emperor's circle, such as Johann Anton Barvitius and Johannes Matthias Wacker, who were friends of Kepler. Purš even gives some clues as to where the *laboratoria* in Rudolf's time might have been in the Prague castle.

Rudolf Werner Soukup continues this line of research into the material evidence of alchemical experimentation in his article. Soukup considers the actual (chemical) processes that were carried out in the emperor's circle. Drawing in part on reports from the Imperial *laboratorium* in Prague, Soukup depicts a very vivid image of the type of experiments, characters, and promises (some of them naive, others simply false) surrounding Rudolf II. In the subsequent study, Karpenko provides an analysis of the sixteenth-century processes, and especially transmutation, from the point of view of modern chemistry.

The second part of the volume contains a series of individual case studies, each focusing on a particular personality and his work: Michael Sendivogius, Michael Maier, Oswald Croll, Matthias Erbinäus von Brandau, Tadeáš Hájek, Tycho Brahe, Erdward Kelly, Anselm Boëthius de Boodt, Martin Ruland (both

the Elder and the Younger), Simon Thadeas Budek, and Cornelius Drebbel. It also includes an article on how the First Chamber Servants of Rudolf II encountered alchemy.

The third part of the book contains four studies on various aspects of science and economy in Rudolf's time. John Norris looks at the highly successful developments in the Jáchymov and Kutná Hora silver mines and the way metallic transmutation and the mercury-sulfur theory of metallic composition (generally associated with alchemical literature) found their way into sixteenth-century mining treatises. Pavel Drábek's contribution deals with pharmacy and the growing popularity of chemically prepared medicine from the second half of the sixteenth century on. The fourth and last part of the volume focuses on the period that followed Rudolf II's loss of the throne. Karpenko dedicates an article to Daniel Stolcius and his emblematic alchemy, and Josef Smolka's study deals with Joannes Marcus Marci, an outstanding and highly influential scholar in the second half of the seventeenth century. In conclusion, the editors sum up, once again, what they deem important about the beginnings of alchemical interest in Bohemia, the key figures surrounding Rudolf II, and the generation that followed, i.e. those whose work built on this legacy.

The book is a beautifully presented and important contribution to our knowledge of the science of alchemy under Rudolf II's reign which sheds light on both the precursors to the developments in this science and its aftermath in the lands of the Bohemian crown. It can almost be read as a picture book which tells the story through allegorical and technical illustrations from alchemical literature, but the texts also deliver topnotch scholarship in which every reader can find something new and intriguing.

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'Das Fluidum der Stadt…' Urbane Lebenswelten in Kassa/Košice/
Kaschau zwischen Sprachenvielfalt und Magyarisierung 1867–1918. By
Frank Henschel. (Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, Band
137.) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017. 360 pp.

"The spirit of the town was Hungarian, but after dinner, in slippers and without
their jackets, even the gentlefolk switched to German." This remark is among
the recollections of writer Sándor Márai of the language situation in the city
of Košice (Kassa in Hungarian, Kaschau in German) in the early twentieth
century. Until now, shifts in the ethnic composition of the multilingual and
multi-confessional city in the eastern part of what today is Slovakia have mainly
attracted the attention of Hungarian historians, as Košice is a significant site of
memory in the Hungarian national narrative. Only a few Slovak and German
scholars have taken much interest in this topic. Recently, Frank Henschel, a
researcher at the University of Kiel, began dealing with the spheres of urban
life "between linguistic diversity and Magyarization" at the time of the Dual
Monarchy. The book under review contains his reworked doctoral thesis, which
he defended at the University of Leipzig in 2014.

Henschel examines the agents and tools of ethnic and nationalist practice
and the penetration of national patterns into the "Lebenswelten" (i.e. specific
areas of everyday life) in Košice, where individuals and institutions formulated,
negotiated, and used national and non-national semantic schemes. He offers
a detailed examination of the ways in which the inhabitants and institutions
bordered one another in the specific "Lebenswelten," for instance in local
politics and elections, the local theater, cultural and social societies, churches,
public schools, economic and labor unions, public remembrance culture, and
the politics of identity.

Henschel considers the main result of his research to be a confirmation
of the hypothesis that Magyarization (the promotion of the exclusive use of
the Hungarian language in public and private life and the creation of individual
emotional bonds to the Hungarian nation) was never fully successful in Košice.
In Košice, traditional dynamics and characteristics endured in spite of the efforts
of the Hungarian state before 1914 to craft policies that would ensure the use of
Hungarian in almost all spheres of public life, and the communities within the
city, which as noted were linguistically, culturally, and denominationally diverse,
did not allowed themselves to be "magyarized" or completely integrated into the

state narrative of national loyalty. Even by the time of the outbreak of World War I, most of the inhabitants of the city had not begun to structure their everyday lives around ethnic or national classifications. (p.306). Henschel's conclusions concerning the lack of success of Magyarization in the territory of present-day Slovakia are not new. Slovak ethnocentric historians have emphasized the violence of the policies implemented by the Hungarian state on the one hand and, on the other, the ineffectiveness of these policies, each of which, they often contend, contributed to the rapid Slovakization of the public sphere after 1918. Hungarian historians, in contrast, have concentrated on different factors, specifically migration, the allegedly voluntary and spontaneous nature of assimilation, models of social prestige, and the processes of linguistic homogenization before the onset of violent Magyarization. In recent decades, more scientific works have appeared which move beyond the ethnocentric dichotomy of the "perpetrator and victim of violent nationalization." They analyze the overlap of language-cultural urban spaces and interpret the transformation of ethnic identification or loyalties through the concepts of situational and hybrid identities and national indifference. The most recent review of this secondary literature (including an evaluation of it) is found in the dissertation by Ondrej Ficeri, defended in Košice in 2017.

Henschel's work is of great importance because it analyses, in depth and in its entirety, the process of the nationalization of the cities in what, before 1918, was known as Upper Hungary. Henschel's study examines this process many of the spheres of everyday practice, and without the construction of limited ethnic groups. He consistently writes about "Germans," "Magyars," and "Slovaks" and the German speakers, the Hungarian speakers, and the Slovak speakers. He comments that the local political institutions were neither ethnically nor religiously segregated, and that by the 1890s the town published its official decrees in three languages. Municipal politics were the exclusive domain of the townsmen (burghers or the Bürgertum). When modernizing the infrastructure, they preferred the town center at the expense of the suburbs, which were inhabited by the socially inferior, predominantly Slovak-speaking classes, so local politics had features of social discrimination enriched by ethnic categories. In municipal elections, importance was given to competence, professionalism, and pragmatism. In parliamentary elections, most of the candidates were elected according to party affiliation, not nationality.

The theater, which served as an important arena for culture and communication for the Bürgertum, was dominated by the Hungarian language. The theater committee did not allow performances in other languages beginning

in 1877. Henschel devotes considerable attention to voluntary associations. After the publication of his work, Nikoleta Lattová defended her dissertation thesis, in which she essentially confirmed Henschel's conclusions and empirically documented them on an even wider scale (although she refined his estimate of the number of voluntary associations from more than 50 societies at the beginning of the century to 77 in 1910 and 88 in 1913). In principle, the social societies (especially the casinos) of the Košice upper class were not the primary arenas of Magyarization, because the nationalist models and Hungarian language habits had already been integrated into the Bürgertum's everyday life in the public arenas. The parallel functioning of three Magyar Educational Societies was counter-productive. They competed with one another, they were also financially overburdened and their administration and activities were time-consuming. State and county activists were members of numerous societies, so they constituted an integral part of civil society. In most societies, however, despite the nationalist rhetoric, the traditions of non-national perception and practice prevailed, and the societies preferred to meet the cultural, religious, and social needs of members with their activities.

While the followers of ethno-national models in communal politics and cultural institutions primarily interacted with one another, larger and more heterogeneous audiences met in non-elite societies, churches, and public educational areas. These more open and less exclusive spheres could therefore remain multilingual despite political and social pressure throughout the Dual Monarchy. Basically, campaigns for economic nationalism in Hungary notwithstanding, the economic unions and labor movement essentially maintained a similar character. The ethnic labeling of economic activists and social groups gradually changed. At the turn of the century, "guardians of the nation" focused on the displacement of the German language and criticized "Germanizing" businessmen and middle-class traders. Henschel does not deal with the reasons why German-speaking inhabitants were willing to recognize Hungarian supremacy in public life. However, he notes that the German language did not disappear and that it continued to be an important means of social distinction between the townsmen and the members of the lower classes. After 1900, Hungarian national activists focused more on disrespecting Slovak as the language of day laborers and servants, and they labeled Slovak-speaking salesmen and workers collaborators with the "Pan-Slavic" movement.

For the promotion of Hungarian as a measure of national loyalty, the Hungarian national ideal was important as a representation of unity within

the (for the present) multilingual and multi-ethnic political nation. Since this idea was based in part on an assertion of its legitimacy through a particular interpretation of history, in the public reminders of the Revolution of 1848/49, the Hungarian millennium of 1896, the rule of Emperor Franz Joseph and his wife Elizabeth, and the celebration of the central cult of Ferenc II Rákóczi in Košice, promoters of the Hungarian nationalist ideal did not seek examples of segregation, but rather strove to produce evidence of former cooperation in the struggle against a common enemy. In her 2015 book on public festivities, Alica Kurhajcová, who has studied the celebration of opposing traditions (anti-Habsburg or "*kuruc*" and pro-Habsburg or "*labanc*") in two "Slovak" towns in Upper Hungary (Banská Bystrica and Zvolen) and two "Hungarian" towns (Lučenec and Rimavská Sobota), reaches similar conclusions. Although Košice was stylized as a "*kuruc* town," the figure of the king crowned with the sacred Crown of Saint Stephen and the presence of the imperial and royal garrison required the reconciliation of conflicting memorial narratives. The extensive Magyarization of street and square names came relatively late, in 1912. Henschel examines the results of the politics of identity on the basis of a census, the results of which he does not consider representative, and changes made to family names.

Unlike in the Cisleithanian towns, in Košice, a variety of separate, competing movements, camps, or milieus based on national stereotypes never emerged. As Henschel convincingly points out, through solid historical analyses of the specific "Lebenswelten" of this medium-sized town, a policy of Magyarization existed, but it was a townsmen project for townsmen, and most of the inhabitants remained indifferent to national classifications in everyday life. This approach may help scholars move beyond historiographical disputes about the "ethnic" character of Košice before and after 1918.

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A Modern History of the Balkans: Nationalism and Identity in Southeast Europe. By Thanos Veremis. London–New York: I. B. Tauris, 2017. 188 pp.

Thanos Veremis's new history of the Balkans attempts, in the words of its author, "to pursue the pervasive nationalist theme that went hand in hand with other significant Western influences in the Balkans" (p.vii). His short book is concerned, in essence, with modernity's impact on the region, assessed primarily through the prism of nationalism, irredentism, and state-building processes since the early nineteenth century.

The book is organized into three parts. Part I ("The Balkans from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century: The Building and Dismantling of Nation States," pp.3–92) is by far the longest, with ten chapters, which are largely historical in nature and account for half of the book. Part II ("The Balkans in Comparative Perspective," pp.95–138) has four chapters which are thematically structured and look at identity politics, economic development, the role of the army in Balkan politics, and "Western Amateurs and the End of History." This last chapter (chapter 14 in the book) examines Western misconceptions of the region and appears to be based on one of Veremis' previously published articles. Part III ("Unfinished Business," pp.141–81) has three chapters, which examine the current problematic status and possible futures of Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. An epilogue ("The Chances of Post-Modernity in the Balkans," pp.182–88) serves as a conclusion of sorts.

This short book is by no means a conventional history of the nation state in the Balkans, but rather combines a narrative (or chronological) account in Part I with a more thematic discussion in Parts II and III. For the most part, the conventional historical sections are concise, and they also provide a cursory assessment of the broader historical trends over the past two centuries. There is very little in the way of detailed analysis of the political and socioeconomic trends in any of the individual Balkan states, while the discussion is often somewhat imbalanced from one Balkan state to the next. The author undoubtedly knows Greece best, and his discussion of Greek domestic and foreign policies is well-informed and often incisive. But here too his discussion is often imbalanced and has serious omissions. For instance, in chapter 13 ("The Army in Politics"), Veremis provides an overview of the military's role in Balkan politics, but he focusses almost entirely on the communist states during the Cold War. There is oddly no reference to the army's significant role in Greece in the twentieth

century, most recently during the so-called Regime of the Colonels (1967–74). And while Veremis treats the post-communist dissolution of Yugoslavia at length and puts substantial blame on Western pressures and underlying economic causes (e.g. p.107), there is no discussion of the origins of the Greek sovereign debt crisis which has loomed large over the region over the last decade. Nor is there a section on the European Union's role in the consolidation of the post-authoritarian transitions in the Balkans after 1989 or in Greece after 1974.

The book is based largely on English-language secondary sources, although several Greek-language publications are cited. The bibliography is by no means exhaustive, however, and it is highly selective on most topics with several important gaps. Furthermore, many proper names (mainly South Slavic and Albanian) are misspelled (e.g. pp.35, 65, 153, 157) and there are some factual errors. Emir Kusturica would surely be surprised to see that he has been characterized as a Bosnian Muslim (p.138), and the Croat politicians Franjo Rački and Josip Juraj Strossmayer did not advocate "the creation on the ruins of the Habsburg monarchy of a federal south-Slavic state that would include Serbia and Montenegro" (p.35). Similarly, the discussion of some contemporary problems in the Balkans lacks appropriate balance and historiographical nuance. While I do not agree with some of Veremis's interpretations, notably concerning the causes of the former Yugoslavia's demise, his discussion of the Macedonian Question in particular is largely consistent with the official Greek narrative. Veremis is highly critical of the Republic of Macedonia's allegedly irredentist and implicitly expansionist positions, which imperil Greek borders, but allows no room for the existence of a Macedonian Slavic minority in Greece, to which he refers to simply as "slavophone Greeks" (e.g., p.70) or people of "alleged 'Macedonian' ethnicity" (p.73). The characterizations represent views which most scholars outside of Greece regard as inconsistent with the facts and the historical record.

The book is well-written and interesting, and it raises legitimate and occasionally provocative questions about the inconsistent role of the international community in the Balkans over the last two hundred years and especially since the collapse of the communism. Veremis is correct when he concludes that the resolution of the region's remaining issues, whether in Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Kosovo, "will not depend entirely on foreign priorities. Self-determination is a powerful medicine that should be applied equitably. To attain post-modernity states must first resolve their modern conflicts" (p.188).

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Staatskunst oder Kulturstaat? Staatliche Kunstpolitik in Österreich 1848–1914. By Andreas Gottsmann. Vienna: Böhlau, 2017. 245 pp.

The entanglement of the Habsburg dynasty in the creative work of artists, composers, and writers in the late nineteenth century has been discussed seemingly endlessly. Carl Schorske's groundbreaking studies published some fifty years ago focused on the disaffection this caused: Viennese modernism was a kind of revolt against the stifling effects of the imperial court. Surprisingly, however, there have been very few analyses of the attitudes of the court and government to culture and the arts. This important topic is the focus of this book. It asks some fundamental questions: to what extent can the imperial government in Vienna be said to have had a policy towards the arts? What was this policy and what were its aims? There was certainly no shortage of government or court support for the arts, but to what end? Based on extensive archival research, Gottsmann attempts to answer these questions by examining policy papers of government ministries.

As Gottsmann declares, this is very much a *top-down* inquiry, focusing on the reasoning and motivations of officials in Vienna-based ministries. The book is particularly useful because of the examinations it provides of the attempts by Count Leo Thun, Minister of Culture and Education in the 1850s, to initiate a coherent policy towards the arts. Central to this was reform of the key institutions: the art academies in Vienna and Milan, which had singularly failed to train Austrian artists to a standard comparable with those in France or even in major German centers, such as Munich and Düsseldorf.

This focus on institutions characterizes the basic approach of the book as a whole, and it provides useful summaries of the founding and early histories of important organizations, such as the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, the School of Design, the Modern Gallery (later the Austrian State Gallery), and the Central Commission for Monuments. The book also examines support for the artworld in all the crownlands, and it provides valuable information on government funding for theaters, academies, and museums in, for example, Bohemia, Tyrol, Galicia, and Moravia. Although financial subventions were provided only sporadically, evidence suggests that officials in the central administration in Vienna took seriously the notion of supporting institutions and artists in the various crownlands in order to create a common Austrian cultural landscape and identity.

There is much to admire about this book. Its focus on policy-making, rather than on art world actors at a local level, provides a valuable additional layer of insight into the workings of the cultural landscape. Yet it is difficult to ignore the questions raised by its approach. Commendably, the book covers the whole of Habsburg Austria, but this makes it all the more baffling that all the sources on which it is based are in German. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that the focus is on policy making in Vienna, but then the absence of other voices makes it difficult to assess the successes or failures of these policies; we are offered a view of the crownlands as seen through a telescope from the imperial capital. It is also a pity that virtually no reference is made to Hungary, except to a now outdated opposition between a cosmopolitan Austria and a Hungarian administration concerned with imposing a unitary Magyar national identity. Yet we know that the debate was much more nuanced than this simple duality suggests; institutions such as the Hungarian National Museum were far more than an expression or instrument of a narrow nationalist ideology. At the very least, proper comparison of Hungarian and Austrian cultural policy might have brought the specificities of Austrian policy into sharper relief, as might comparison with other European states. Rudolf Eitelberger, who was influential in cultural policy from the 1850s to the 1870s, saw France as the model, even though it was a major competitor. He also envied the centralized power of the French government over cultural affairs.

The focus on ministerial papers ensures the book is underpinned by impressive source material, but it lacks a compelling narrative or framework that might allow for more probing and self-reflective scrutiny. We learn that Thun's first objective was to improve the quality of the arts, but to what end? And what did that *mean*? The Museum of Art and Industry, for example, was founded to improve the competitiveness of Austrian design, but Eitelberger understood this purely in terms of taste, whereas others, such as Wilhelm Exner, argued that the priority should be embracing the latest technology. Likewise, the desire to improve artistic prestige could be read in different ways. Long ago, the Marxist critic Herbert Marcuse talked about the affirmative function of art; in other words, it provided an imaginary resolution of social problems and acted as a kind of safety valve. The Habsburg cultivation of the arts has often been seen in a similar light, for it is only a short step to the embrace of the theatricality of which many contemporaries were so skeptical. This issue is implicit in the book's subtitle: *Staatskunst oder Kulturstaat?* which promises a debate that is never held. The meaning of this opposition is thus not properly explored. Liberalism

is mentioned, but its pertinence also requires analysis. There was a remarkable convergence of the ideas of Conservatives such as Thun and the ideas of Liberals such as Eitelberger, and this surely deserves some kind of comment. Similarly, Liberal attitudes towards the question of national identity informed cultural policy making, and also ensured its limitations, but there is little discussion of this issue here.

This book addresses an important topic, but it tries to cover too much material in too little space. To do justice to such a major topic would require a considerably larger study, but due to its length, this book offers a schematic account with little interpretative depth. It should be seen as providing valuable preliminary work, and in this sense, it is of unquestionable value, but its omissions and self-imposed limitations mean that analysis of the successes, failures, and significance of cultural policy in the Habsburg domains still remains to be done.

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Dealing with Dictators: The United States, Hungary, and East Central Europe, 1942–1989. By László Borhi. Translated by Jason Vincz. Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016. 548 pp.

László Borhi's thoroughly researched *Dealing with Dictators* is based on evidence drawn from various Hungarian archives, the U.S. National Archives, U.S. presidential libraries, the Library of Congress, published documents, interviews with U.S. and Hungarian diplomats and policy-makers, and a wide range of secondary sources in several languages.

The book can be read, to great advantage, on two levels. Its declared focus is U.S.–Hungarian relations. Starting in 1942, perhaps the darkest year of World War II, it moves steadily from the Nazi occupation through the Communist takeover of postwar Hungary, the revolt in 1956, the harsh return of pro-Soviet orthodoxy, and the slow but steady domestic liberalization under the surprisingly shrewd János Kádár to the implosion of the Communist system in 1989. In addition to discussing these comparatively familiar events, it delves into a number of less well-known but important episodes, such as the case of Cardinal József Mindszenty, the István Deák affair, and the return of the Crown of St. Stephen to Budapest.

But Borhi offers much more than an overview of nearly five decades of the asymmetrical relationship between Washington and Budapest. He paints a larger picture of the U.S. (and also British) attitude toward Eastern Europe, addressing parallel events in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia. The recurring theme here is that the United States and other Western powers preferred to keep Eastern Europe stable and quiet, even if it amounted to *de facto* acceptance of the Red Army occupation, which they occasionally denied for the record. This is not to say that Washington and its allies did not exploit fissures in the Eastern "bloc." But when they did, as Borhi shows, they tended to offer enticing benefits to the wrong recipients, most notoriously to the tyrannical Elena and Nicolae Ceausescu.

Borhi knows well that these observations are not altogether new, but he strengthens our understanding of the matter by providing original insights and valuable details. His book demonstrates that Washington came to regard Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe as permanent and irreversible. Some U.S. policy-makers went further and began to construe it as a cause of the region's "unprecedented stability" (p.184). This attitude was strongly promoted by,

among others, Henry Kissinger and Helmut Sonnenfeldt. Borhi quotes the latter as telling a shocked Romanian official in 1976, "Countries have areas of national interest. . . . One cannot change geography . . . the USSR cannot help but have an interest in you" (p.292). It is precisely this sort of "geographic" argument that was used by the Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš, who had to defend himself in Washington in late 1943 against accusations of being pro-Soviet. By the 1970s, the view that "the map trumps everything" had been adopted by State Department officials.

This sort of prudent pragmatism was practiced in Washington even by those who were later given laurels as alleged liberators of Eastern Europe from communism (Ronald Reagan) or who falsely claimed them for themselves (George H. W. Bush, Helmut Kohl, and Margaret Thatcher). When Reagan talked about the "crusade for freedom," when he sent Marxism-Leninism to the "ash heap of history," and when he invited Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall," he presented his "ultimate vision," not "immediate goals," according to John Whitehead, deputy secretary of state (p.356). Borhi quotes another source who confirmed that Reagan had "absolutely no intention of detaching the states of Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union" (p.326). It is a curious paradox that, as Borhi notes, Reagan took the declaration of martial law in Poland in December 1981 "as a personal affront" (p.339). This is quite possible. But what is still missing from the historical record is an explanation of why the Reagan team did nothing with the detailed, accurate, and actionable intelligence it had obtained from Colonel Ryszard Kukliński regarding the imminent assault on Solidarity—intelligence it had possessed since the colonel's arrival in the U.S. thirty-one days before the imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981? The chasm between the Reagan administration's sense of affront and their twiddling their thumbs at a time when Solidarity activists could have been warned was symptomatic of Washington's ambivalent attitude toward Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

As Borhi notes, the super-pragmatic George H. W. Bush went further than his predecessor and repeatedly praised Kádár (formerly known as the Butcher of Budapest) for Hungary's "human rights record" (p.398). Wojciech Jaruzelski, the man who had worked in the service of the Soviet occupation of Poland his whole life and had imposed the martial law that had so offended Reagan, could hardly have imagined that he would one day receive a personal letter from president Bush praising him for "advancing the cause of democracy in Poland" (p.398). One understands the requirements of diplomatic comity, but this probably seems surreal to many Poles who lived under the general's regime.

The book begins in 1942, when Miklós Horthy's Hungary secretly approached the Allies to explore the possibility of withdrawing Hungarian troops from the front, improving the conditions of Jews, and discussing terms of surrender. U.S. Intelligence, which was already devising methods to separate the satellites from the Third Reich, was interested. The OSS sensed that Hungary would accept "unconditional surrender" in return for being treated as "a liberated country, like Austria, and not to be saddled with a government unsupported by popular will" (p.41). In the spring of 1944, the allies were focused on the impending invasion of occupied France. In March, the United States launched Operation Sparrow, headed by Colonel Florimond Duke, who came to Hungary to discuss armistice terms. Only three days later, Hitler invaded Hungary, one of the few places in Europe where close to one million Jews had been relatively safe, beyond the reach of the Nazis.

Borhi states that, after the war, Duke speculated that, possibly, "his mission had been designed to provoke the Germans' invasion of Hungary," thus removing from the battlefields in France some of the Wehrmacht divisions Hitler had to deploy to occupy Hungary. Borhi makes clear that there is no direct evidence to support this theory but, he notes, "such a response [by Hitler] had to have been foreseeable" (p.45). The occupation of Hungary was followed by the near-annihilation of the Jewish community, cost the lives of countless Hungarian civilians, and brought about the destruction of Budapest. Borhi concludes that Hungarian politicians were tragically unrealistic if they thought they could simultaneously satisfy the demands of the Allies and avoid Hitler's brutal reaction to their clandestine contacts with the enemy.

The rest of Borhi's story is better known but no less tragic. The book covers the imposition of a communist dictatorship in postwar Hungary and follows the more than four decades of U.S. policy toward Hungary under its Communist rulers and Eastern Europe in general. As Joseph Stalin continued to build his empire, America was initially passive and confused. This evolved into an "'explosive and dynamic' policy of liberation," which was followed by the policy of "gradual transformation" (p.110). Eventually there came acceptance, even appreciation that the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe contributed to stability and predictability on the international scene. In the fall of 1989, as multitudes celebrated the fall of Communism, undersecretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger confessed his nostalgia for the "remarkably stable and predictable atmosphere of the Cold War" (p.397). Members of Thatcher's cabinet shared this view and said so at the time.

I found very few factual misstatements in this book, which is impressive if only because it is more than 500 pages long. Borhi says that Czechoslovakia received back the gold that had been seized after the war by the United States in the "mid-seventies" (p.64), but this in fact took place in 1982. Vladimir Kazan-Komarek was most definitely not an agent of U.S. Intelligence. He was recruited by and carried out missions for the French Deuxième Bureau. He could not have been "sent back from the United States [to Czechoslovakia] in 1948 to organize an anticommunist resistance network" (p.103), since his first trip to the U.S. took place in 1953. William E. Griffith was not "president of Radio Free Europe" (p.225). Rather, he was its senior political advisor. When writing about the spy-ring that the Hungarian Communist intelligence services ran in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, Borhi states that U.S. authorities learned of its existence from István Belovai, the former Hungarian military attaché in London (p.361). This is quite likely, but I doubt that Belovai's cooperation with the U.S. was then revealed to the Communists by Aldrich Ames, as Borhi claims, because Ames started his treasonous contacts with the KGB in April 1985, while Belovai was arrested in 1984.

Although László Borhi's new book is scholarly in every respect, it reads like a fine novel, and I enjoyed it immensely. His detailed study of U.S.-Hungarian relations will be informative even for specialists, while his treatment of Washington's attitude toward Eastern Europe overturns the self-serving and misleading record established post factum by several Washington policy-makers.

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A magyar sajtó és újságírás története a kezdetektől a rendszerváltásig [The history of the Hungarian press and journalism from the early years to the political transition]. By Géza Buzinkay. Budapest: Wolters Kluwer, 2016. 548 pp.

Over the course of the past two decades, several attempts have been made to renew the study of the history of the media. An increasing number of monographs with a strong focus on methodological questions have been published, and they have sparked discussions and led to a restructuring and novel rethinking of our existing knowledge. Media historians have started using models borrowed from cultural studies, political science, and media studies/communication sciences. For example, the 2015 conference of the Communication History Section of the European Communication Research and Educational Association in Venice concentrated on this interdisciplinary challenge. This tendency resulted in the increasingly prominent discussion of new and exciting topics, such as historical audience research (Wagner et al, "Historische Rezipient innenforschung," 2017).

The new book by Géza Buzinkay is linked to these efforts aimed at the reform of media history, while at the same time it is also a traditional, so-called first-generation work on media history. With regard to the latter aspect, the book discusses the history of journalism and the press chronologically, presenting the main editorial offices and media outlets and offering glimpses of the great journalists of the given period. The periodization is essentially traditional, with two exceptions: the period between 1918 and 1921 is discussed as a separate era (pp.319–30), and the decades between 1945 and 1989 are treated as one single period (pp.391–447). Neither solution is fully warranted. First, from the perspective of the history of journalism and the media, the disparity is too large between the 1918 democratic regime and the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, or even between the 1945–47 period and the Stalinist dictatorship. Furthermore, in the latter case, the periodization is based on the efforts of two actors, the Communist Party and the Soviet Union ("pre-Stalinization"), while the other players (other parties, journalists, publishers, readers) are simply ignored. Second, this solution disregards continuities, for example, the fact that 1945 cannot be considered a "year zero" from the perspective of media history.

Buzinkay's work belongs to the newer strands of media historiography in the sense that the most important aspect of the narrative is the history of the journalistic profession in Hungary. This is basically a "modernized" history of journalism, in the sense that the author examines the "evolution" of the profession

in a broader context: the book is an example of the application of journalism's sociology model (McNair, *The Sociology of Journalism,* 1998), although Buzinkay does not state this. Yet this is precisely what he practices by recurrently covering the economic, legal, political, cultural, and social circumstances which influenced the work of journalists. And although Géza Buzinkay does not focus on readers (reading newspapers), they nonetheless play a major role in the narrative, as the popularity and circulation of certain types of papers are frequently analyzed.

The perspective chosen by the author has a great advantage and one drawback. The advantage is that the book's clearly-stated central issue (the history of journalism) narrows down the possible topics in a justifiable way and along straightforward lines. For example, the non-Hungarian press is only important if it influenced journalism, the journalistic profession, and the development of the journalism sector in Hungary. Thus, some German-language outlets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are mentioned (*Pester Lloyd* is presented in detail, for instance), but minority journals are ignored, and in the chapters on the twentieth century, there is practically no mention of German-language papers. One might nonetheless come to believe that Buzinkay's narrative is ethnocentric, since he writes about the minority Hungarian press in the neighboring countries in two subchapters without actually discussing the organs of this press from the main perspective of his inquiry. Readers are left wondering how the Hungarian press in Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, or the Soviet Union is linked to the major trends of journalism in Hungary.

With regard to the drawback of Buzinkay's choice, one shortcoming stands out. It is hard to justify the fact that the book includes practically no mention of the radio or television, or, to be more precise, if the book's narrative revolves around the history of journalism, radio and television should have been included in the chapters on the years following 1945, since they shaped journalism, too. (The absence of any discussion of radio, the cinema, and newsreels in the Horthy era is perhaps justified, since the intermedial conditions that could be observed in Great Britain by the 1930s had not yet emerged in Hungary.) Radio and television shaped journalism the same way as it did the visual elements of newspapers, from layout to illustrations, and these elements are mentioned in the presentation of the individual papers. However, even here, visual elements are not given sufficient emphasis: in the chapter "The periphery of politics: Humor Magazines and Caricatures," the discussion is detailed (pp.297–300), but more of the descriptions of the picture weeklies and magazines from the turn of the century or the Horthy era is devoted to the writings than to the pictures (pp.300–04, 374–77).

Of course, one cannot expect a book presenting the complete history of the Hungarian press and journalism to cover all aspects of this history with equal thoroughness. And as there is only one author, it would be even less fair to expect this. This is particularly true in the case of this book, since the analysis of pictures requires a different methodology than that of texts, and these kinds of differences in analyses make it difficult to write a uniform history of the media: one only has to consider the fact that historians of film and historians of the press regard different issues as relevant, so it is extremely difficult to develop a uniform methodology. I mentioned the lack of discussion of the visual elements of newspapers not only because only one product is discussed (so more attention to the topic would have been easily justifiable), but also because Buzinkay has published scholarship on the history of visual communication (Buzinkay, *Borsszem Jankó és társai: Magyar élclapok és karikatúrák a XIX. század második felében* [*Borsszem Jankó* et al.: Hungarian humor magazines and caricatures in the second half of the nineteenth century], 1983; Buzinkay, ed., *Mokány Berczi és Spitzig Itzig, Göre Gábor mög a többiek... A magyar társadalom figurái az élclapokban 1860 és 1918 között* [Berczi Mokány and Itzig Spitzig, Gábor Göre and the others… Figures from Hungarian society in humor magazines between 1860 and 1918], 1988).

Géza Buzinkay's work is basically a handbook which summarizes the research results of others, adding conclusions from Buzinkay's studies. This raises the question of whether a single author is able to provide a nuanced overview of such a large and complex topic. In the case this book, the answer is a resounding yes. One reason for the success of the volume is Buzinkay's work as a teacher (he is a professor of journalism and the history of the press at the Eszterházy Károly University of Eger) and his many "preliminary studies" (Kókay and Buzinkay, *A magyar sajtó története I: A kezdetektől a fordulat évéig* [The history of the Hungarian press I: From the early years to the year of the transition], 2005; Buzinkay, *Magyar hírlaptörténet 1848–1918* [History of Hungarian newspapers 1848–1918], 2008; Buzinkay, *Hírharang, vezércikk, szenzációs riport* [Newsmonger, editorial, sensational report], 2008; *Magyar sajtótörténeti antológia 1780–1956* [Anthology of the history of the press in Hungary 1780–1956], 2009). This does not mean that scholars of a specific period might not find an error or a debatable contention in the book, but this work will provide new information and insights for all readers, both experts on the subject and the wider public.

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Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversations on War, Genocide and Political Violence. Edited by Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető. London–New York: Routledge, 2016. 300 pp.

A methodologically versatile volume with a broad variety of case studies encompassing a wide array of materials and geopolitical locations, *Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversations on War, Genocide and Political Violence* emerges as a concise, focused book. The focus falls on the thus far only sporadically explored interconnections between memory studies and military and war studies, which the volume investigates through a feminist analytical lens. In doing so, it touches on delicate subjects, such as militarized sexual violence, repressed and sanctioned memorializations of gendered wartime experiences, and the instrumentalization of victim-narratives for present-day political purposes. A laudable feature of the book is that most of the papers go beyond the methodological preparedness and courage necessary for any serious discussion of such difficult questions and show a resolute commitment to creating an increasingly complex and inclusive discursive arena. This inclusivity and the readiness to challenge disciplinary, methodological, and political confines marks the agenda of the editors, Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető.

The volume aims to offer cutting-edge feminist insights into the overlapping—and thus for mainstream analyses often obscure or downright invisible—areas of gender, memory, and war research, and it does so with the adoption of editorial solutions which also make it accessible to the wider academic audiences. One such solution is the inclusion of expert commentaries at the beginning of each of the four main sections of the book. Each of these sections—*Sexual violence: silence, narration, resistance; Gendering memories of war, soldiering and resistance; Fictionalizing and visualizing gendered memories; Feminist reimaginings*—is comprised of case study-oriented papers, most of which, while digging deep into their specific topic, also show an awareness of and offer reflection on the state of research in their respective field or subfield. The expert commentaries help the reader orient him or herself among the various layers, e.g. past and present research agendas, debates, commonly held views, and radical alternatives from many ends of the spectrum, thereby furthering a more nuanced understanding of the disciplinary and political conditions and circumstances with which the papers deal. Furthermore, the expert commentaries also bring to the fore the common aspects of the papers within each section, so the transversal interconnections

among texts discussing geographically and temporally distant events and their effects become more apparent.

For instance, the common denominator of the section on militarized sexual violence (Part I) is resistance to the temptation to use ready-made dichotomies, such as dichotomies, which place victims into the categories of honorable or dishonorable or their stories into the told or the untold. The case studies engage with sexual violence against Jewish women during World War II, the atrocities against women in Japanese-occupied Hong Kong, and narratives of torture in incarceration during the Greek (1967–74) and the Turkish (1980–83) military juntas. However, the essays all manifest an aspiration to reach beyond dichotomies in order to reveal the factors that influenced sexual violence in these instances and address the questions of who broached the topic, with what intentions, and to what effect. The recurring theme of Part II, which focuses on how women's militarized subjectivities were constructed in a range of settings, such as the Warsaw Uprising, Mussolini's Italy, and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, is an attempt to address a perceived deficiency in the existing scholarship. According to these papers, most conceptions of women's military service fail to take into consideration a great variety of factors which may have affected an individual's decision to join or abandon the armed forces.

The third part of the book, which deals with fictional and visual accounts of gendered wartime and conflict-zone experiences (accounts found, for instance, in memoirs on the Spanish Civil War, photographs of female perpetrators convicted by the people's tribunals in post-World War II Hungary, and art installations in the service of conflict reconstruction in Aceh, Indonesia), takes as its leading thread reflections on the meanings of absence, lack, and silence in the sources. Papers in the final part of the book, while engaging in longitudinal studies of intergenerational and intercultural accounts of violent experiences, also address the limits of such explorations. Dealing with deeply traumatized communities (Armenian women survivors of the genocide and women peace activists in Northern Ireland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Palestine, respectively), the two closing papers consider the sometimes unavoidable failure to make meaning and the knowledge—or perhaps wisdom—which may arise as a result.

As this brief overview of the four sections suggests, the volume is characterized by a relentless complexification of the issues at hand and a constant alertness of the researcher's own positioning. This is mainly because, as noted in the book's editorial "Introduction," two classic feminist conceptual grids are at the forefront of the book's methodological choices. Intersectionality

theory defines the way in which the authors of the volume aim to approach their subjects; and awareness of the situatedness of knowledge production practices (in other words, a reflection on one's own positionality) marks how the researchers approach themselves while approaching their subjects. Thinking intersectionally incites constant attention to detail, even more so if it shakes up the existing, entrenched views on a subject. On the other hand, awareness of the situatedness of knowledge production and its effects entails a continuous dialogue with oneself, with one's material, and with one's fellow researchers. The editors of this volume used both of these techniques, resulting in a book which—though it consists of semi-autonomous units—reads as an engaging, often subversive, and almost always thought-provoking exchange among expert partners. The subtitle of the book, *Feminist Conversations*, could not be more fitting.

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Jeanssozialismus: Konsum und Mode im staatssozialistischen Ungarn
[Jeans socialism: Consumption and fashion in state socialist Hungary].
By Fruzsina Müller. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017. 277 pp.

Fruzsina Müller's *Jeanssozialismus: Konsum und Mode im staatssozialistischen Ungarn* is the first cultural historical monograph on the history of consumption in socialist Hungary which enquires into the politically stabilizing role of fashion. Based on the author's dissertation submitted at the University of Leipzig and winner of the award for junior researchers of the Southeast Europe Association (SOG) in 2017, the book draws not only on archival sources of state and factory records but also on oral history interviews with central actors within the state bureaucracy and the producing entities, as well as on published sources in professional magazines and to a lesser extent on literary sources. It is somewhat surprising that a monograph on this subject was only published nearly thirty years after the political changes, especially since the case of Hungary is in many ways unusual within the socialist bloc. Taking both legal and informal forms of purchase into consideration, Müller characterizes Hungary as a "consumer paradise" (p.9), and the country indeed offered a more colorful, diverse and Western world of consumption to its citizens than any other country in the Soviet sphere.

Those acquainted with the contemporary self-description and identity-shaping categories of "Goulash Communism" and "Fridge Socialism" in Hungary might think that Müller is trying to coin a comparable third category with the introduction of the term "Jeans Socialism" into academic discourse. However, she actually emphasizes that "Jeans Socialism" is not meant as an analytical category, but should merely be understood as a play on words. Nonetheless, she underlines the importance of jeans as both a clothing and a fashion item which was practically as central in the rise of consumerism as food and household durables (p.12). This particular commodity is surely a good choice as a marker for a consumer society which by the beginning of the 1970s was experiencing a relatively stable provision of everyday goods, while prestigious fashion items, pieces of furniture, and the purchase or construction of properties were becoming much more central to the lives of Hungarian citizens. The importance of jeans throughout all strata of society, but especially among members of the younger generations, and the changing nature of jeans due to fashion trends also serve as an excellent indicator of how the regime and the population were engaged in negotiations. At the same time, as Müller emphasizes, the shift towards a progressive consumption policy after the uprising

of 1956 was calculated in order to secure the political power of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party (*Herrschaftssicherung*) (p.20).

The author rightly points to the growing economic difficulties in the 1970s, especially in the context of two global oil crises in 1973 and 1979. Nonetheless it is noteworthy that individual consumption was continuously on the rise and that the economic crisis started to affect Hungarians in a more tangible way only towards the end of the decade. Therefore, Müller asserts, the 1970s witnessed a loss of faith in the communist utopia, and the party strove to compensate for this with new techniques of domination (*Herrschaftstechniken*), including a further stress on consumption (p.17).

However, this statement might be a simplification of what was in fact a more intricate picture. We could equally raise the question as to whether the shift in policies to consumption played a role in the loss of the vision of a communist utopia, while nonetheless taking into consideration the fact that consumption was an integral part of how the socialist party imagined a communist utopia. Müller would have done well to have examined the relationship between the projected utopia and actual policymaking in a more complex manner and striven for a more nuanced understanding of the role of consumption in the legitimation of the party state.

Müller's book is divided into two major parts: the first deals with the official discourse on consumption and fashion and the second focuses on the agents and their space for manoeuver. Müller first examines the perceptions of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party of consumption and fashion, including in relation to growing Western influences. In the subsequent chapter, she analyzes the "lifestyle" debates of the 1960s as pursued in the official media about the degree to which consumption was encouraging petty-bourgeois behavior in opposition to collectivist values. Müller highlights these debates as self-legitimizing strategies of the party state which in her assessment had only a marginal impact on the population (p.74). Chapter three in turn is devoted to the specific consumer group of teenagers. The state attached importance to gaining the support of the younger generations by responding to their articulated needs, which they used to distance themselves from the generation of their parents.

In chapter four, blue jeans are discussed in depth as a key part of these articulated needs. At first a controversial and marginalized clothing item in Hungary, jeans finally gained acceptance during the 1970s. According to Müller's analysis, the party state managed to neutralize the symbolic but also political and ideological value of blue jeans by depoliticizing them (p.116). Thanks to this strategy, jeans

could finally become a ubiquitous fashion item in a socialist society. In the final chapter of the first part of the book, Müller deals with various consumption practices, such as queuing, shopping tourism, black market activities, and "virtual shopping," such as visiting consumer fairs and browsing catalogues and magazines from the West. She points to the legitimizing role of informal shopping practices as they enriched the consumer world in a command economy (p.133).

The second part of the monograph describes the agents within the state and the fashion industry. Whereas chapter one of this part introduces the major economic reforms of 1968 as having a positive effect on the fashion industry, chapter two concentrates on state and later cooperative-based retail spaces, like the *Skála* department store, and private initiatives, such as fashion boutiques, which began to spread mainly in the 1980s. As Müller shows, the mix of retail outlets was, especially from the mid-1970s, beneficial for the development of a more competitive and up-to-date fashion industry. Focusing more specifically on the development of a jeans industry, the subsequent chapter addresses the conditions of socialist jeans production while aiming to assert the role of political will. As blue jeans became a notable economic factor, many different production sites started to be inspired by them, and they likewise applied modern (and Western) means of marketing and advertisement; the socialist brand *Trapper* became a landmark of domestic jeans production.

In chapters four and five Müller explores the concrete examples of cooperation with Western brands like Levi's and the sport shoe producer Adidas, and in this context she also discusses the conditions for the establishment of brands in the 1970s. Interestingly, by then, Hungary was already committed to legal protection of consumer brands. Although socialist brands were very successful in establishing themselves on the domestic and broader socialist market, as Müller points out, they never attained the same popularity as their Western counterparts; Levi's jeans and Adidas sport shoes were considered state of the art both during and after socialism. Nonetheless, in the context of nostalgic tendencies, certain socialist brands grew in popularity again after 2000.

In her conclusion, Müller highlights the often contradictory standpoints of the Hungarian party state, which at the same time promoted and rejected consumption, and with it also fashion, something that became obvious in the public debates of the 1960s and 1970s. Likewise, Müller considers the Hungarian case revealing as part of an Eastern European history of consumption, and she also makes the point that Hungary was relatively successful at providing for its population (p.247). Widespread and identity-shaping practices such as shopping

tourism, smuggling, and black-market activities were as central for Hungary as they were for the other socialist countries.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that Hungary was the only socialist country producing authentic jeans fabric. In this context, Müller shows how fashion was promoted as beneficial to the economic performance of the country after the introduction of reforms in 1968 with a stress on teenagers as an important group of emerging consumers. Throughout the book, Müller argues for the cultural and communicative importance of blue jeans in a socialist society. However, for a more precise assessment of the socialist characteristics, she would have needed to offer a more detailed contextualization of the Western youth movements.

Müller states in her conclusion that the distribution of Western fashion items and international trends led to the downfall of the socialist regime after having maintained that the consumption policy of the party state helped the regime secure its hold on power (p.241). This argumentation is not entirely convincing, as she does not provide any deeper explanation as to how Western products undermined the legitimacy of socialist rule. Furthermore, she is very right when pointing to growing social inequalities, especially in the 1980s, which meant increasingly vast differences in the participation of different strata of the population in the world of consumerism (p.247). However, her argumentation should have examined how growing social inequality affected individual perceptions of opportunities for consumption and what this implied for the stability of a socialist society. Similarly, the book would have benefited had Müller drawn on more recent English publications on socialist consumption, e.g. the pioneering volume *Communism Unwrapped*, edited by Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger.

Although Müller remains somewhat vague about broader questions concerning socialist consumer culture, through the example of blue jeans she provides an insightful and highly readable account of the mechanisms of how fashion was produced, communicated, used, and interpreted during socialism. She manages to shed new light on the question of how command economies adapted to meet the various demands of their citizenry. The Hungarian example is one which to a certain degree challenges the famous characterization of the Soviet-dominated party states as "dictatorships over needs," to borrow the term from the title of the 1981 book by Ferenc Fehér, Ágnes Heller, and György Márkus. In sum, Müller's book is a must-read for all those who wish to understand better the cultural and political relevance of consumption in socialist countries.

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