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The Reliability of “Files” and Collaboration with the Security Service (SB) in Poland: An Attempt at a Methodological Analysis

Over the course of the last decade, the disclosure in Poland of information regarding the secret collaboration of public figures with the Security Services (SB) has triggered emotional discussions on the reliability of the archival records stored in the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). Analysis of these discussions enables one to draw a distinction between two opposing views. According to the first, documents stored in the archives of the IPN are incomplete and devoid of accurate information. According to the second, documents produced by the repressive apparatus of the communist state constitute a new type of historical source and contain reliable information.

However, these discussions concerning the reliability of “files” lack methodological rigor and precision. I consider the reliability of the “files” in the light of Gerard Labuda and Jerzy Topolski’s concepts of historical sources. According to this analysis, the “files” do not constitute a new type of historical source requiring a radical rethinking of existing classifications and new interpretive methods. However, one precondition of an adequate interpretation is the acknowledgment of the purpose for which they were created and the functions they played in the communist state. The repressive apparatus collected, selected and stored information on society if they considered this information useful in the maintenance of political control over society. Ignorance of or failure to acknowledge this specific social praxis (and its different forms: manipulation, disintegration, misinformation, etc.) performed by the secret political police is one of the reasons for methodical and heuristic errors committed by historians: the uncritical application of the vision of social life and processes presented in these sources for the construction of the historical narrative.

Keywords: adaptive interpretation, reliability of the historical sources, Gerard Labuda, Jerzy Topolski, surveillance, Security Service, secret political police

The Issue of the Reliability of “Files” for the First Time: An Analysis of an Example

After 2000, as the Institute of National Remembrance (hereinafter the “IPN”) commenced its activity, sources pertaining to or compiled by the communist apparatus of repression became widely available to researchers who study the history of Poland in 1944–1989. However, as soon as some of the findings

of research conducted on the basis of archival records of the IPN were published, some journalists, ordinary people and professional historians rejected the historiographical credibility of the documentation created by the Security Service (SB) and its related authorities in the times of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL).

A symptomatic opinion was expressed by Antoni Pawlak, an oppositional activist, poet and journalist, at the panel discussion arranged at the Chamber Scene of the “Polski” Theatre in Wrocław:

There is something that as we lived in the 1970s, 1980s and earlier—the times the fundamental rule of which (the rule around which our lives were organized) was a lie—books, press, yearly books, economic reports—I do not understand how we can claim that the only base of truth was the Security Service. It boggles my mind.¹

More systematic charges were formulated by Karol Modzelewski, *nota bene* a prominent historian of the Middle Ages, who claimed that the minimal usefulness of these sources to historians was a result of, first, the incompleteness of the source database.

General Kiszczak and his people were the sole masters of the files for as long as six months and they already knew that they would have to hand over the ministry, together with those documents, to their political opponents. From the very beginning it was naive to believe that they left anything in the files that was not appropriate to be read.²

Second, he emphasized the minimal reliability of the archival documents, “In the mind of a person who would seek to conjure the truth about the agency on the basis of unreliable remnants of documentation experience and logic has been replaced with wishes.”³

On the other hand, historians and researchers who used the archival records of the IPN generally believe that this type of archival resource, which is essential to the study of the recent history of Poland, is quite reliable. Joanna Siedlecka,

1 “Artyści i SB. Aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec środowisk twórczych. Dyskusja panelowa – 19 kwietnia 2007,” in *Artyści a Służba Bezpieczeństwa. Aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec środowisk twórczych*, ed. Robert Klementowski and Sebastian Ligarski (Wrocław: IPN, 2008), 220.

2 Karol Modzelewski, “Dyktatura ciemniaków,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 4, 1992: 12.

3 Modzelewski, “Dyktatura ciemniaków,” 12.

who researched the lives of writers living in the People’s Republic of Poland, made the following observation:

There is a huge and priceless knowledge about writers. After all, the Security Service left us the priceless material. Thanks to it, we know what Herbert said at an author’s meeting in Pcim or in Rzeszów because detailed notes were taken. In my opinion, there are documents, the reliability of which simply cannot be challenged.⁴

Those who support the use of the resources compiled by the apparatus of repression of the People’s Republic of Poland insist on the usefulness of these materials to scholars of the apparatus of repression itself and those parts of the past that were of interest to the authorities and the police forces.⁵ In this context, it is stated, *inter alia*, that it is possible to reconstruct details of many significant events of the political history of the People’s Republic of Poland,⁶ the history of the opposition and of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarność,”⁷ and the process of making decisions by authorities of the People’s Republic of Poland.⁸

This opinion regarding the relatively high reliability of the sources is associated with a warning against a specific vision of the world represented by their authors:

... these archival records have a *specific nature* (my italics K.B.) that reflects the activity of the Security Service. Therefore, the knowledge included in the documentation made by the communist security apparatus is neither a complete nor a reliable image of the People’s Republic of Poland, but rather constitutes only a glimpse at the reality of the

4 “Artyści i SB,” 224.

5 Andrzej Paczkowski, “Archiwa aparatu bezpieczeństwa PRL jako źródło: co już zrobiono, co można zbadać,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1, no. 3 (2003): 11; Paczkowski’s article details topics the reliable study of which requires documents of the apparatus of repression which were exceptionally valuable; they cover almost all fields of private and public life in the People’s Republic of Poland, Paczkowski, “Archiwa,” 20–21.

6 Andrzej Grajewski, “Ankieta historyczna,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1, no. 3 (2003): 36.

7 Sławomir Cenckiewicz, “Znaczenie archiwaliów służb specjalnych PRL w studiach nad dziejami NSZZ ‘Solidarność,’” in *“Solidarność” w imieniu narodu i obywateli*, ed. Marek Latoszek (Kraków: Arcana, 2005), 218, 220.

8 Andrzej Chojnowski’s opinion in the discussion: “Co kryją teczki? O tajnych współpracownikach bezpieki z Andrzejem Chojnowskim, Grzegorzem Majchrzakiem, Zbigniewem Nawrockim i Tadeuszem Ruzikowskim rozmawia Władysław Bulhak,” *Biuletyn IPN* 3 (2005): 19–20.

People's Republic of Poland from the perspective of the interests of the Security Service.⁹

On the other hand, according to Paweł Piotrowski, “We have to realize that this documentation was created for a specific purpose and portrays the image of the world that the authors saw or wanted to see.”¹⁰

The issue of the reliability of the Security Service's sources was broadly discussed by Adam Leszczyński, who in a chapter of a book published in 2006 and entitled “How Did the Authorities Themselves Lie: The Documentation of the Security Service and of the Polish United Workers' Party as a Source on the History of the ‘Solidarność’ Trade Union” makes the following assessment:

The reliability of the written sources created by various institutions of the government and of the party, from the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) to the Security Service, leaves a lot to be desired. Since they distort the reality that they try to describe both at the factual level (their authors frequently and intentionally lie) and at the level of interpretation, they are saturated not only with gobbledygook, but also with a specific type of the party's glimpse of reality.¹¹

Leszczyński refers to the case of the death of the miner Jan Siminiak at the Civic Militia (MO) station in May 1981. In the “Details on Circumstances” cited by the author, the Security Service reported his death as an accident, “At the Civic Militia station, J. Siminiak fought with a Civic Militia officer, fell, and hit his head against the bench. The doctor declared him dead.”¹²

Leszczyński comments on this description in the following way:

It is impossible to state whether the audience of this report really believed this odd explanation (...). In view of this report, the death of Siminiak was a regrettable accident that befell a habitual drunk and troublemaker (...). It is worth emphasizing that the “Details on Circumstances” is an internal and top-secret document, but a Security Service officer was unable to make a less unilateral description of the

9 Filip Musiał, “Zamiast wprowadzenia: archiwalia komunistycznego aparatu represji,” in *Wokół teczek bezpieki-zagadnienia metodologiczno-źródłoznawcze*, ed. Filip Musiał (Kraków: IPN, 2006), 56.

10 Paweł Piotrowski, “Metodologia badania dokumentów dotyczących ‘Solidarności’ wytworzonych przez Służbę Bezpieczeństwa,” in *Wielkopolska ‘Solidarność’ w materiałach aparatu represji (1980–1989)*, ed. Waldemar Handke (Poznań: IPN, 2006), 13.

11 Adam Leszczyński, *Anatomia protestu. Strajki robotnicze w Olsztynie, Sosnowcu i Żyrardowie, sierpień-listopad 1981* (Warsaw: Trio, 2006), 39.

12 *Informacja sytuacyjna*, IPN, BU 185n/16, 97 quoted in Leszczyński, *Anatomia protestu*, 40.

event. He provided exactly the same version propagated by the State’s papers, radio and television.¹³

The document became the basis for a broad assessment of materials made by the Security Service.

This complies with the norm observed by numerous researchers: the Security Service’s documents almost never make mention of any acts committed by their officers that infringed on the law of the People’s Republic of Poland, such as beating or harassing people who were politically inconvenient. These drastic methods are passed over in silence, and when impossible, they are presented in a way that shows the officers in the best light, even if the entire story seems ridiculous.¹⁴

The document is criticized in terms of the postulated ideal historical source that includes any and all information on the topic that has captured the researcher’s interest: supports a “proper” interpretation (i.e. an interpretation that conforms with the researcher’s objectives) and contains no evasive or misleading statements. These expectations are not met by any of the sources created by the Security Service, or by other institutions. Leszczyński himself remarks on this, noting that the documents of the Security Service and the Polish United Workers’ Party exaggerated differences in the internal views of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarność,” whereas trade union documents omitted any mention of these internal divisions.¹⁵

If the contentions contained in a source are knowing lies (as is indicated by the title of the chapter) made to superiors by subordinates, clearly they cannot be regarded as reliable. However, whether or not these statements can be regarded as knowing lies has not been established. A statement can be characterized as a lie when it does not conform to the known details, the person who made the statement was aware of this inconsistency, and he or she intended to mislead the person to whom the statement was addressed. Leszczyński does not support his conjecture with any arguments based on the source data. Yet in order to substantiate the claim that the statements in question were deliberate lies, it would be necessary to prove that the authors of the report on the Siminiak case were aware of inconsistencies with the facts and intended to mislead their

13 Leszczyński, *Anatomia protestu*, 40.

14 *Ibid.*, 40–41.

15 *Ibid.*, 51–54.

superiors. In order to do this, it would be necessary to identify the authors of the report.

In addition, the following sentence is vague, “the Security Service’s documents almost never make mention of any acts committed by officers of the Security Service that infringed on the law of the People’s Republic of Poland, such as beating or harassing people who were politically inconvenient.” It is not clear how the expression “almost never” should be interpreted. Is it a general quantifier or an existential one?

The “Details on Circumstances” cited by Leszczyński was a document made in the Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (hence strictly speaking it was not made by the Security Service, as Leszczyński claims) on the basis of daily reports sent from individual voivodeships and departments of the Ministry, e.g. the Civic Militia, Border Defense Troops (WOP), etc. The key role in the presentation of information was played by a group of people (the so-called distribution list) to whom the reports were sent. If information was addressed to people holding the most prominent positions in the country (a list that came to several dozen names), it referred to general matters. For example, a schedule entitled “Assessments of Establishing the Citizens’ Committee with Lech Wałęsa,” which contained opinions of the “Fighting Solidarity” organization and the Liberal-Democratic Party “Independence,” was addressed to 44 people in the country, including Alfred Miodowicz, whose son Konstanty was an opposition activist of the Freedom and Peace Movement.¹⁶ The “Daily Information” was permanently scheduled with the “Events with the Participation of the Civic Militia Officers,” which generally contained information on violations of the law by employees of the Ministry and members of the uniformed services. This schedule was usually addressed to one person in the State, Władysław Pożoga or Czesław Kiszczak (at least in the late 1980s). It seems (although this would be a matter for further research since Leszczyński omits this question) that the document was addressed to a larger group of people, and hence it contained a description of the event on the basis of generally available information. Schedules exclusively addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs contained information on crimes (or suspicions regarding the commission of a committing crime) committed by the officers of the ministry.

16 *Oceny powołania Komitetu Obywatelskiego przy Lechu Wałęsie. Załącznik do informacji dziennej, 1989-01-05, IPN, BU 1585/2301, 47.*

Example 1: On the 5th day of this month, at around 1:00 a.m., the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Leszno was informed of a burglary of a shop run by citizen Kuczkowska in B. Chrobrego Street. A tracker dog led officers to the flat, where **Paweł Stefański**, age 20, was caught. In the flat the officers found the loot (jackets). The arrested was drunk. It turned out that he was a private of the 6th Company of the Operating Battalion of the Motorized Reserves of the Civic Militia (ZOMO) in Poznań (1st year of service) and was on holiday. He confessed that he had broken into the shop.¹⁷

This following description was included in the “Information on the Present Operational-Political Situation” sent on 20 May, 1982 from Poznań to Warsaw.

Example 2: On 18 May of this year in the hospital in Lutycka Street, a 19-year-old named Piotr Majchrzak, a student of the Secondary Technical School of Gardening in Poznań, died. The mother of the deceased, Teresa Majchrzak, a teacher in kindergarten no. 39, claims that his death resulted from him having been beaten by officers of the Motorized Reserves of the Civic Militia on the 12 May at 12:00 p.m. in Fredry Street near the church. She managed to find witnesses to the incident who claim that the Civic Militia patrol stopped him when he was running towards tram no. 8, which was arriving at the time. They claim that there was a heated exchange between the officers and P. Majchrzak. The officers allegedly clubbed him. The witnesses claim that P. Majchrzak defended himself with karate (he was a member of the “Feniks” karate club). When he lost his consciousness, the officers called the ambulance, which took him to hospital. The witnesses spoke with Majchrzak’s mother and warned that they would not present their version of the event because they were afraid of possible repressions.¹⁸

The Security Service’s documents also contain information on the “harassment of people who were politically inconvenient,” or at least information on plans to do so.

Example 3: In the “Tram Driver” operational verification the following actions were planned to be taken against Jan Lutter, vice-chairman of the Inter-Enterprise Founding Committee “Solidarność” of the Greater Poland Region in 1980: 3) A relevant false story will

17 *Ważniejsze wydarzenia z udziałem funkcjonariuszy MO. Załącznik do informacji dziennej, 1989-01-05, IPN, BU 1585/2301, 48.*

18 *Informacja dot. [ycząca] aktualnej sytuacji operacyjno-politycznej. IPN Po 06/215/14/1, 8.*

be used to talk with selected individuals (...) in order to learn more about a figurehead, his/her contacts (...) and learn about his/her interests, weaknesses and tendencies (...). 6) Check the figurehead in the following available records: the Personal Data Office, general registry, Passport Department, criminal record, Traffic Department, Sobering Station (...) 7) Examine the figurehead's family, his/her past, places of residence and employment in order to determine his or her motives and learn more about his/her personality (...). 9) Use "B" to examine further (...) and document his/her possible hostile activity or situations that discredit him/her (...). 10) By using any and all possible operational measures and possibilities and any and all possible materials that discredit the figurehead, his/her position, among other things, in the workplace and place of residence will be weakened and his/her possible hostile activity will be neutralized.¹⁹

These plans and deeds of the Security Service, plans and deeds that could result in violence against or endangering the life of the people targeted, were enigmatically called "disintegrating actions," "destructive," "harasser," or "special actions" according to a "separate plan" or an "annex to such plans," but such plans could never be made in writing, or if made in writing, they were destroyed.²⁰

The Issue of the Reliability of "Files" for the Second Time, in Light of Jerzy Topolski's Concept of the Dynamic Historical Source

Opponents in the debate regarding the "low" or "high" reliability of the archival records of the apparatus of repression adopt several common assumptions. They implicitly assume that the reliability of documents is a constant property of historical sources and this property is independent of the problem under discussion or the research questions posed. I contend that this assumption is

19 Przemysław Zwiernik, "Rozpracowanie Motorniczego," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1, no. 4 (2003): 347–49.

20 This remark was made by Przemysław Zwiernik, who describes how, as part of "the operating action plan of the Security Service of the Provincial Civic Militia Station in Poznań, aimed at working out and liquidating the existing underground structures of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarność in Poznań,' made in August 1982," an "annex" was added to the plan in which "special operating care" (an expression used by the Security Service) was applied to father Tomasz Alexiewicz and father Honoriusz Stanisław Kowalczyk. The "annex" to the operating action plan has not yet been found. It is worth mentioning that father Honoriusz died in a car accident the circumstances of which remained shrouded in mystery in April 1983; see: Przemysław Zwiernik, "Rozkaz: rozbić podziemie. Działania Służby Bezpieczeństwa wobec poznańskiej opozycji," *Głos Wielkopolski*, January 9, 2007.

unfounded. According to Topolski's concept of the dynamic historical source, "a historical source is (...) any and all sources of historical cognition (direct and indirect), i.e. all information (including theory and information) on the social past, irrespective of its place, together with its communication (channel of communication)."²¹ Moreover, Topolski differentiates between a *potential* source and an *effective* one. He claims that the potential source is everything on the basis of which a historian is able to gain knowledge of the past, whereas the effective source is the group of information that is actually used by a historian.

This manner of apprehending the concept of the historical source implies that its reliability is relative, *id est* it is affected by the research question actually posed by the historian. The same source may be relatively highly reliable in the case of one research question and less reliable in the case of another. It is worth citing Topolski again:

Therefore, one of the keys that shapes the mechanism of the use or interpretation of source information (in other words, the study of a source) is the research question to which the source is supposed to provide an answer. Without such a question, the source does not tell a historian anything. It remains silent, even if a historian is able to read it. By posing these questions, obviously structured by the historian's knowledge, which expands beyond the individual source under scrutiny (and the entire methodological consciousness), the historian preliminary models the reality that is the subject of his/her research.²²

To characterize the information structure of the source, Topolski used the notion apparatus of Jerzy Kmita's theory of a sign.²³ The Polish philosopher of logic and history assumed that a sign is an activity or a product of human activity that is a result of the intentional communication of a given state of affairs. In addition to signs, there are symptoms that can be divided into humanistic and natural. Humanistic symptoms are human activities or products that are not intentionally created for the purpose of communication by their creator. For example, smoke coming from the chimney means that people are at home and they are making a meal, but this message is not the intentional outcome of the dwellers.

21 Jerzy Topolski, *Metodologia historii* (Warsaw: PWN, 1984), 324.

22 Jerzy Topolski, *Teoria wiedzy historycznej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1983), 257.

23 Jerzy Kmita, *Wykłady z logiki i metodologii nauk* (Warsaw: PWN, 1973), 32–33, 210–11.

Topolski distinguished three layers of the source information structure. A surface layer of the information structure of the source is a collection of “information that may be extracted from it in the simplest way, *id est* it is clear without posing questions other than the questions directly included in this collection of information.”²⁴ This refers to the most fundamental questions, such as what, who, where or when. A sign layer of the information structure of the historical source means the possibly intended purpose of the information originally communicated. In contrast, a symptom layer of the information structure contains the possible pieces of information that were not intended to communicate directly with their audience. These pieces of information may reveal the author’s worldview, his/her vision of the social world, or hidden assumptions regarding the political, cultural and economical situation.

Example 4: After October 1956 the Communist party toughened the policy towards the Catholic Church. One of the symptoms of this was the decree of the Ministry of Education of August 1958 that provided for removing crosses from school classes in all schools in Poland. This decision was met with protests of parents and children. In the Zielona Góra voivodeship, such protests were held from 31 August to 15 September 1958 in several dozen rural schools.²⁵ The daily information on protests signed by lieutenant colonel Bolesław Galczewski, 1st security deputy of the commander of the Voivodeship Civic Militia Station, was sent to colonel Marian Janica, a deputy of the director of the Office of the Minister of Internal Affairs. This information included a detailed description of protests in individual places and harsh criticism of the authorities: “what October gave us, September will take,” “we demand religion in schools, we demand crosses, we are not in captivity, Gomulka does not govern himself,” “Poland is a Russian colony,” “What are you doing with this Poland: a Russian republic?” “Gomulka made it but he will be removed as well,” “Crosses were in schools in the time of Hitler, Stalin and Beirut, and now you are removing them.” These statements explicitly show that the conflict was politicized and the protesters’ demands to restore crosses in schools changed into criticism of Gomulka, the system, and Poland’s dependence on the Soviet Union. However, in a collective

24 Topolski, *Teoria*, 263.

25 For further details, see: Krzysztof Brzechczyn, “Protesty przeciwko zdejmowaniu krzyży w szkołach województwa zielonogórskiego w sierpniu-wrześniu 1958 roku,” in *Kultura i społeczeństwo na Środkowym Nadodrzu w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. Przemysław Bartkowiak and Dawid Kotlarek (Zielona Góra: Pro Libris, 2008), 234–43.

report of 17 September, 1958 to the Office of the Minister of Internal Affairs lieutenant colonel Galczewski omitted mention of the size of the protest and claimed that, “by analyzing the Catholic clergy, it is said that priests do not officially partake in conflicts arising in individual gatherings. In addition, outside churches the clergy clearly does not stir up people to manifest and protest against the secularization of schools. (...) We still do not have any indications of any reactionaries who have become active because all previous conflicts in the rural areas involved mostly fanatics and women. Moreover, these conflicts are not clearly hostile because these protests are frequently limited to demands to restore religion and crosses in schools.”²⁶

By posing the question of who protested against the removal of the crosses and also where and how, we come to the surface layer of the information structure of the source, *id est* the aforesaid report. By posing a question regarding what the 1st security deputy of the commander of the Provincial Civic Militia Station in Zielona Góra wished to communicate in his report to the Director of the Office of the Minister of Internal Affairs by omitting mention of the political dimensions of the protests, we come to the sign layer of the information structure of the source. Further on, by posing a question regarding why the 1st security deputy of the commander of the Voivodeship Civic Militia Station in Zielona Góra emphasized that the protesters “were mainly women” (although 3 out of 8 of the people arrested people were men), we come to the symptom layer of the information structure.

One can formulate a preliminary hypothesis that the report omitted the political aspects of the protests in order to communicate to the Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw that the author of the report was in complete control of his territory. On the other hand, the emphasis of the key role of women in the protests might be a symptom of the belief (hypothetically) shared by the author and his superiors that the proper places for women were the private and religious spheres, hence the collective participation of women in the protests proved the non-political character of the acts.²⁷

26 *Informacja nr 61/58, 17 IX 1958, IPN Po 060/44/55, vol. 85, 110.*

27 It is worth citing opinions of female members of the Solidarity underground movement involved in publishing the *Tygodnik Mazowski*, “(...) the Security Service didn’t take us for granted. It didn’t cross their mind that a woman, when it’s dark, won’t be afraid of going across the park or along the cemetery. The stereotype that a woman is less intelligent and won’t be part of the underground movement or have operational concepts, find a radio station, or lead this movement (...) in this case it acted for our benefit.”

The Content of “Files” According to Topolski’s Source Classification

In order to determine more precisely the specificity of the secret collaborator’s denunciation and other operational files, it is necessary to have a more general system of classifying the sources. Topolski accepts the conventional division of historical documents into direct and indirect sources. This division is based on the assumption that direct sources should “directly” reflect the past reality, whereas indirect sources should do it through an informant. This informant can take many forms, such as a chronicler or a diary keeper who informs a historian about a certain fragment of the past reality. The use of indirect sources requires the study of their authenticity and reliability or their internal criticism. As for direct sources, there are no such informants because the direct sources themselves are elements of the historical reality. In this case, only the authenticity of the sources is examined.²⁸ Differences between both types of sources are shown in the following table:²⁹

Direct sources	Indirect sources
(1) direct cognition	indirect cognition
(2) no intermediary	presence of an intermediary
(3) no need to examine their reliability (authenticity must be examined)	necessity of examining the reliability of the informant

Another way of classifying sources is according to the division between *addressed* sources and *non-addressed* sources. The mode of division here is based on the existence of information that directly links the participants of the communication process (type: addressor–information channel–audience), in this case between a source author and a historian (or another recipient). This division does not refer to the material aspect of sources (information carrier), but only to information included in sources.³⁰ Topolski claims that “addressed sources are directly intended as forms of communication, whereas non-addressed

“We had the feeling that we were living in a ‘macho’ state and hence men were caught much more easily, whereas women were beyond all suspicion.”; Ewa Malinowska, “Niekobieca Solidarność,” in *Solidarność*, 141.

28 Topolski, *Metodologia*, 329.; Idem, *Teoria*, 260.

29 Idem, *Metodologia*, 329.

30 Idem, *Teoria*, 260.

sources are not.”³¹ The intention of communicating information implies that addressed sources contain an element of persuasion that is addressed to the audience, whereas the source itself includes the interpretation of information that it carries.³² According to Topolski, this means that, “A historian who wishes to extract information from such sources must have his own interpretation, i.e. he or she interprets the interpretation already included in the source. The examination of the reliability of the informant, that is to say, whether or not he tells the truth in a given situation (...) is not enough here.”³³ In order to extract information on facts from this type of source, a historian must strip the source of its rhetorical, persuasive and interpretative elements.

The addressed sources can be classified into certain categories, depending on whether or not they are addressed to: (1) an audience that is contemporaneous with the source author (e.g. letters, reports, announcements); (2) posterity (funerary inscriptions, documents on a person’s rights); (3) historians (numerous memoirs are kept for this purpose, occasional publications, etc.).³⁴

By combining these two classifications, we obtain the following typology of sources:

Intended or not intended to convey information Existence or non-existence of the informant	Addressed	Non-addressed
Indirect	Indirect addressed (article published in a daily paper)	Indirect non-addressed (intimate diary)
Direct	Direct addressed (Egyptian pyramid)	Direct non-addressed (scaffolding after the pyramid)

In terms of the source classification developed by Topolski, it is possible to detect what the secret collaborator’s denunciations mean: they are indirect addressed sources. The specific nature of this type of source is its narrative structure, which is comprised of *informative*, *rhetoric*, and *ideological-theoretical*

31 Ibid., 260.

32 Idem, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej* (Warsaw: Rytm, 1996), 340.

33 Ibid., 341.

34 Idem, *Teoria*, 260.

layers.³⁵ The ideological-theoretical layer covers the interpretation and/or the explanation of facts presented by the source author. This narrative aspect controls the remaining rhetorical and informative layers as well. This control aims to select and hierarchize information carried by the historical source and adequately to apply rhetorical clues that are intended to convince a potential reader of the document to interpret the reality presented by the author (authors) of the source. This interpreter is the historian, who uses knowledge obtained from other sources and various heuristic procedures to strip the source of the theoretical-ideological and rhetorical layers and obtains information regarding relevant historical facts. Therefore, the so-called source optics comprising, among other things, a specific vision of the world and humankind, is not the specificity of the secret collaborator's denunciations or documents of the Security Service, but rather a general feature of any and all indirect addressed sources.

The secret collaborator's denunciation as an indirect addressed source is included in category (1), which means that it is addressed to an audience that is contemporaneous with the source (information) author. Hence, I have determined the nearest type to which the secret collaborator's denunciation belongs. Now, I am going to identify the specific differences of the collaborator's denunciation. In order to do this, I have to expand Topolski's classification. I divide indirect addressed sources into sources addressed *unlimitedly* and *limitedly*.

An article in a daily newspaper is available to all people who know a given language. However, papers in *Studia Logica*, for example, are in principle available to everyone who completes a form and orders this journal in a relevant library, but it is doubtful whether these articles are equally comprehensible by everyone. The mode of distributing the source of information constitutes another means of limiting the audience. The state documents classified as "top secret" do not distinguish themselves by their sophisticated terminology (they need to be understood by democratically elected authorities), but access to them is strictly restricted.

In the extreme case of a source that is only addressed to its creator (e.g. a personal memoir) represents a non-addressed source. In this case, it is better to replace the dichotomous division (addressed and non-addressed sources) with a gradable division, depending on the number of persons in the audience to which the source (according to its author's intentions) is addressed.

35 Idem, *Jak się pisze*, 346.

Thus we arrive at an understanding of another aspect of the secret collaborator’s denunciation: this is the indirect addressed source addressed to a limited audience. A secret collaborator of the Security Service who made a denunciation, whether handwritten or not, was convinced that his or her cooperation with the Security Service would remain secret and the authorship of the denunciation would remain anonymous to strangers and more specifically to anyone to whom he or she was close or was tied. In an extreme case, the secret collaborator could even be convinced that the information was exclusively provided to the Security Service officer to whom he or she reported. The distinctly outlined group of recipients affected the source language and posed problems with regards to reading the source information (decoding). Topolski distinguished the informant’s ethnic language code, epochal language code (terminological), psychological code and graphical code. The language in the Security Service’s documents pertains to the terminological code: a specific language that needs to be understood and decoded.³⁶ This, however, is not only peculiar to the police denunciation, but a characteristic of all the indirect addressed sources, whether limited or not, including the explicit or implicit ideological vision of the world of its creators.

The question is whether such considerations mean anything concerning the reliability of the denunciation itself and other materials based on it and made by the Security Service. Is an anonymous opinion on Smith expressed by a person who was convinced that Smith would never know its content more reliable than an official opinion on Smith expressed by a person who was aware of the fact that Smith may learn its content?³⁷ It seems that it is impossible to provide general answers to this question. Understanding that Smith will not learn the content of the denunciation of him may affect the conveyance of both misleading information, gossip, and unverified hearsay and reliable information. On the other hand, the possibility of misleading the Security Service by the secret collaborators was limited. As a rule, in a given social environment the

36 Łukasz Kamiński, “Lingua securitas,” in *Wokół teczek bezpieki. Zagadnienia metodologiczno-źródłoznawcze*, ed. Filip Musiał (Krakow: IPN, 2006), 393–98; Andrzej Paczkowski, “Bardzo krótki słownik wywiadu,” in *Wokół teczek bezpieki*, 399–404; Filip Musiał, *Podręcznik bezpieki. Teoria pracy operacyjnej Służby Bezpieczeństwa w świetle wydawnictw resortowych Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych PRL*. (Krakow: IPN, 2007), 325–52.

37 Although a secret collaborator might often have thought that the information he or she passed on was solely for the consumption of the officer to whom he or she reported, about 20 to 30 people in the Ministry had knowledge of the secret collaborator’s registration and access to his or her denunciations; Z. Nawrocki, statements in the discussion: “Co kryją te czki?” *Biuletyn IPN* 3 (2005): 15–16.

Security Service used more than one Security Serviceman. This enabled them to verify the reliability and utility of the information that the agents provided.

The Role of “Files” in the Political Enslavement Practice

Gerard Labuda says that a historical source is

...any psychophysical or social relic that, as a product of human labor and at the same time an object that participates in the development of social life, acquires through this participation the capacity to reflect that development. Because of these properties (i.e. being a product of labor and having the capacity to reflect phenomena), a source is a means of cognition that enables us scientifically to reconstruct social development in all its manifestations.³⁸

Since, according to this concept, “sources are a result of the action of the entire historical process,”³⁹ they should reflect all its fundamental elements, including economic, social, political, and cultural.⁴⁰ A given historical source should reflect those aspects of the historical process that are the most actively involved in its creation “with particular distinctness.” According to the directive provided by Labuda, “in order to understand the role of a document, an analysis conducted with respect to the historical sphere that contributed to its creation is of fundamental significance.”⁴¹

Information collected by the Security Service was used for a certain type of social practice: the political enslavement and enforcement of social control over the whole society. Therefore, the process of recruiting personal sources of information and the collection and selection of knowledge obtained through these sources did not constitute the aim in and of itself. Rather, these processes were used to achieve a certain social practice: the control of individual social milieus. It is worth noting that the forms and methods of this control changed over time. In the early period of the People’s Republic of Poland, open forms of repression were used, including the liquidation of independent civic social

38 Gerard Labuda, “Próba nowej systematyki i nowej interpretacji źródeł historycznych,” *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 1 (1957): 22; in another version of his definition, Labuda referred to the historical source as “a product of (...) natural and social processes.” (Ibid., 22).

39 Ibid., 24.

40 Ibid., 23, 27.

41 Ibid., 33.

environments, whereas in the late period of the People’s Republic of Poland other means were used, as described by Filip Musiał:

not repression, but manipulation, not arrests, but inspiration and disintegration were the fundamental weapons in the Security Service officers’ fight at the close of the People’s Republic of Poland. Therefore, with regards to the activities of the Security Service, a benchmark of success was not the liquidation of a given form or circle of opposition, but rather the acquisition of control over it, either in whole or in part, or the successful dismantling of it. In simple terms, it would be necessary to consider the change that took place in operations of the Security Service as consisting in a shift away from functioning as the “punishing arm” of the Party in the 1940s and 1950s and becoming a specific demiurge whose basic task was to hold all aces behind the scenes on the stage of the Polish opposition in the 1980s. One of the tools that allowed the Security Service to perform these acts was the logistic and informative advantage that resulted from the operation of the informant network. This perspective arises from an analysis of changes in the operational work: we will be able to examine the Security Service’s real effectiveness only on the basis of practical cases, games and combinations.⁴²

It seems that the instructions of the Security Service’s operational work to which Filip Musiał refers were somehow delayed in recording the change that took place in the manner in which social life was controlled in the mid-1970s.⁴³ The core criterion of the recruitment process of the secret collaborators, who operated in various social circles, was first and foremost the ability to exert effective control over them, and not to have broad knowledge of them.

Example 5: A work schedule for the 4th Section of the 3rd Department of the Regional Internal Affairs Office in Wrocław made a plan regarding personal sources of information recruitment consisting of recruiting two secret collaborators in the literary circle, one secret collaborator in the fine arts circle, two secret collaborators in the theatre circle, two secret collaborators in the music circle and two secret collaborators in the culture promotion circle. The section’s work schedule did not,

42 Ibid., 323.

43 Łukasz Kamiński, “Władza wobec opozycji 1976–1989,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1, no. 4 (2003): 9–32, and “Opozycja w działaniach władz PRL. Dyskusja z udziałem Antoniego Dudka, Jerzego Eislera, Andrzeja Friszke, Henryka Głębockiego, Łukasza Kamińskiego i Grzegorza Waligóry,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1, no. 4 (2003): 33–67.

however, stipulate the recruitment of secret collaborators in the Wrocław filmmakers' circle because there were already as many as eight secret collaborators operating in that sphere, which justified the decision: "since the group of filmmakers and people dealing with the production and distribution of films is flooded with personal sources of information who sufficiently control this circle, new recruitments are not scheduled for this year."⁴⁴

As the operational documents of the Security Service demonstrate, there was nothing in which this organization was not interested. The assessments of works by Ryszard Krynicki, which were done, along with similar operations, as part of the "Renegat," "Sosna" and "Lingwista" operating inquiries, offer telling examples.⁴⁵

Example 6: Ryszard Krynicki's political poetry from the early 1970s aroused drew the attention of the Security Service to the poet himself and hence it had to acquaint itself with his poems. In February 1973 the 3rd Department of the Regional Committee of the Civic Militia in Krakow, where Krynicki studied, decided to have an "operating talk" with the poet. In order to prepare for that talk, the Security Service officer who was in charge of the case asked the 3rd Department of the Regional Committee of the Civic Militia in Katowice (previously the poet had lived in the Katowice voivodeship) to describe the poet. The "Opinion," dated 30 January, 1973 read as follows: "The local literary circle considers Ryszard Krynicki one of the best followers of the 'poetic linguistic school, the spiritual father of which was Karpowicz, and this fact was, among other things, depicted in two books of poetry (*Pęd pogoni*, *pęd wieczki*, published in 1968, and *Akt Urodzenia*, published in 1969. Thanks to these books, he was accepted as a member of the Polish Writers Association in June 1971 [...]) However, Krynicki's opinions can be determined primarily by his poems published in the "Odra" monthly, No 10/71, and the "Poezja" monthly, No 12/71, which can be read as anti-party and unmoral.⁴⁶ The application for the operating talk held on 1 March, 1973 contains much stronger characteristics of Krynicki's poetry, which "are mainly depicted in political poems that strike our reality in a anti-party and unmoral way. In March 1972, he wrote the poem 'Podróż pośmiertna,'

44 *Plan pracy Sekcji IV Wydziału III WUSW we Wrocławiu*, AIPN Wr, 054/960, vol. 8. 78, mps.

45 For further details, see Krzysztof Brzechczyn, "Twórczość Ryszarda Krynickiego w dokumentach SB," *Niezależna Gazeta Polska* (October 5, 2007): 7–8.

46 *Opinia*, AIPN Po 08/923, 212.

a lampoon ridiculing the present reality, which he wanted to publish in the press.”⁴⁷ The survey records concerning Krynicki include the following description of his poetry: “He writes poems that hostilely ridicule the present reality and alliance with the Soviet Union. Some of them, the poems, are published abroad, e.g. by the Poets’ and Painters’ Publishing House in London.”⁴⁸

Further assessments of Krynicki’s works were made by Security Service officers from Poznań, to where he moved. The “Information on Ryszard Krynicki” addressed to the Chief of the 3rd Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, dated 28 February, 1974, specifies that poems by Krynicki are “imbued with hatred towards the system, the social and political relationships in the People’s Republic of Poland, and the party apparatus and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.”⁴⁹ The “Notice on poet Ryszard Krynicki,” dated 12 March, 1974 states that the poet, “through his works protests, criticizes, expresses his pessimism, and negates all undeniable achievements of our reality.”⁵⁰ These assessments are repeated and amplified in the “Notice on inspection of the ‘Renegat’ operating inquiry,” dated 30 September, 1974, which states that poems by Krynicki “are imbued with furious hatred towards the system, social and political relationships in the People’s Republic of Poland, the party apparatus, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Soviet Union.”⁵¹

It is noteworthy that expressions repeated in the first part of the opinion such as “can” and “can be read” may be interpreted as a sign of hesitation on the part of the Security Service officers regarding how to qualify the Krynicki case: opposition features in his poems are a display of poetical extravagance or an intentionally chosen political attitude. Further assessments of poems by Krynicki do not express these doubts, and the assessors accused the poet of being extremely hostile towards the system: showing “furious” hatred towards the system, the party, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Soviet Union.

Can these opinions be interesting and useful for a historian of Polish literature or a literary critic? No, or at most with qualifications. However, this

47 *Wniosek o przeprowadzenie rozmowy operacyjnej z obywatelem Krynickim Ryszardem*, 24 II 1973, AIPN Po 08/923, 227.

48 *Kwestionariusz ewidencyjny*, AIPN Po 08/923, 200.

49 *Informacja dotycząca Ryszarda Krynickiego*, AIPN Po 08/923, 115.

50 *Notatka dotycząca literata Krynickiego Ryszarda*, AIPN Po 08/923, 194.

51 *Notatka z kontroli operacyjnego opracowania kryptonim “Renegat”*, 30 IX 1974, AIPN Po 08/923, 271.

is not because of the primitivism of the analyses (or at least this is not the key factor), but rather because of the established objective. In general, two types of interpretation are used in the humanities: historical and adaptive.⁵² Interpretations aim to establish the meaning of a literary work, which is usually regarded as the product of the intentional activity of the author of the work. If the interpretation reveals the purpose of the author of the piece of literature, then it pertains to the historical interpretation. In this case, we ask what the author had in mind (what he wished to achieve) when writing this poem and not another. In turn, when the interpreter attributes a specific meaning to the work based on the socio-cultural background of the author, i.e. his or her voice is interpreted as the expression of certain group interests and thus an expression of an objective adapted by a certain group, then this interpretation is called adaptive. Normally, this is the dividing line between the task of a historian of literature who does historical interpretation and that of a literary critic who performs adaptive interpretation.

If this division is applied, then the analysis on Krynicki's poetry conducted by the Security Service would be rather similar to the adaptive interpretation.⁵³ Their aim was not to seek aesthetical or axiological values of his poems, but to reply to the question as to whether and to what extent they constitute a threat to the system of the People's Republic of Poland. The prepared plan for an operating talk included a question about the possible directions of Krynicki's poems and their aims. During his interrogation, the poet replied to this question and said that he wrote love poetry, but his reply was not approved by a Security Service interlocutor because, as the officer stated, further analyses of his poetry did not follow that path. The Security Service's analysis is useful in a reconstruction of the following: whether and to what extent Krynicki's poetry represented a threat to the service's control over social life in the People's Republic of Poland. The analyses of poetry were only intended to meet this objective.

52 Leszek Nowak, "Remarks on the Christian Model of Man and the Nature of Interpretation," *Social Theory and Practice* 15 (1989): 107–17. Leszek Nowak, "O interpretacji adaptacyjnej," in *Sztuka i jej poznanie*, ed. Janusz Grad and Teresa Kostyrko (Poznań: Bogucki 2008), 230–42.

53 Both types of interpretation are considered correct provided that they comply with some conditions: they contain no self-contradictions, they cover the entire text, etc. These criteria were not met by the interpretation of poetry included in the Security Service activity and focused on one issue, threats to the stabilization of political power in the People's Republic of Poland.

Conclusions: From the Source Optics to the Historian’s Optics: Methodological Remarks

As a result of the massive introduction of sources once produced by the apparatus of repression into scientific circulation following the establishment of the IPN, historians who had access to those sources were tempted to commit “seven deadly file sins” as described by Włodzimierz Suleja, director of the IPN, Wrocław Branch.⁵⁴ The discovery and initial scientific circulation of sources which were hitherto unknown and which in principle allowed historians to challenge previous historiographical findings led to pride. Pride was accompanied by greed, expressed by the willingness to introduce “into scientific circulation newer and newer documents, miscellaneous documents, or articles without proper consideration of critical analysis or skills-based processing.”⁵⁵ There was a certain gluttony in the handling of topics for which a historian is unprepared in terms of his or her skills. This sin was complemented by sloth, i.e. reluctance on the part of the historian to verify findings by consulting sources and the historiography. The formal findings were accompanied by wrath, expressed by giving moral evaluations that undermined the reliability of the findings. When these findings were not accepted by historians, this was met with envy: though wearing a prosecutor’s gown, the historian, subjected to scientific criticism, was forced to prove and still verify his or her findings. This is why, according to Włodzimierz Suleja, history became a field of science subjected to the sin of lust, “scientists take actions to meet political orders so as to use random and partial findings in the utilitarian and short-term power play.”⁵⁶

It may be true that it is difficult to find a historian who had literally committed the aforementioned “deadly file sins,” but this does not mean that Włodzimierz Suleja’s description is completely groundless. If it is considered as an ideal type of the research attitude, this description more or less accurately summarizes the practice of the empirical historians. It is worth wondering what the origin of this practice is and whether it is an escalating phenomenon.

54 Włodzimierz Suleja, “Złudny czar teczek, czyli ‘teczkowe grzechy główne,’” in *Od Piłsudskiego do Wałęsy. Studia z dziejów Polski w XX wieku*, ed. Krzysztof Persak, Antoni Dudek, Andrzej Friszke, Łukasz Kamiński, Paweł Machcewicz, Piotr Osęka, Paweł Sowiński, Dariusz Stola, Marcin Zaremba (Warsaw: IPN/ISP PAN, 2008), 512–16. The global assessment of the historiographical output of the IPN, see: Włodzimierz Suleja, “Miejsce Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w badaniach nad dziejami PRL,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 3 (2010): 81–112.

55 Suleja, “Złudny czar,” 513. Cf. Jerzy Eisler’s opinion in: “Ankieta historyczna,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1, no. 3 (2003): 29.

56 Suleja, “Złudny,” 514.

It seems that one of the reasons behind the commission of these deadly sins is the failure to adhere to the standard rules adopted in the interpretation of historical sources (internal and external criticism, establishment of a list of questions, the use of contextual knowledge, including historiographical findings, etc.). The failure to adhere to these rules in the use of these sources results in the uncritical acceptance of a mode of perceiving the social world as presented exactly by these sources: details concerning facts, the global interpretation of events and processes, the failure to contrast information included in these sources with information drawn from other types of sources and contextual knowledge.

These failures are neither necessarily inscribed in the sources gathered in the IPN nor are they the outcome of a lack of methodological rigor. The IPN's archival records are not defective, whatever their opponents may claim. They are neither worse nor better than sources that have been collected in other archival records. Nor do they constitute a fundamentally new type of source that requires the profound rethinking of conventional classifications of sources. Their only novelty is that they must be understood in terms of their content because they shed light on the backstage of political power: the mechanisms with which the control and surveillance of society was maintained on a massive scale.

The transgressions specified by Włodzimierz Suleja, which have been committed by historians from and outside of the IPN, were intensified through the circulation of new content-based types of sources on a massive scale. First, heuristic rules of interpretation did not develop because as of yet they have been unable to do so. Second, this novelty effect led to the emergence of the erroneous belief according to which the introduction of the sources made by the apparatus of repression of the People's Republic of Poland into circulation within the historiography is in and of itself enough to foment a historiographical revolution. In this respect, Sławomir Cenckiewicz's statement from 2005 is characteristic, "in light of more and more unrestricted access to a new type of source, namely documents of the Security Service, most of the previous studies [about Solidarity – K.B.] (made before 2000) should be considered incomplete, insufficient, outdated or simply unreliable."⁵⁷

57 Cenckiewicz, "Znaczenie archiwaliów," 218. It is also noteworthy that in the aforesaid article this historian contended that the only obstacles that impeded the use of sources made by the apparatus of repression of the People's Republic of Poland were the incompleteness and disorder of archival records maintained by the IPN.

The revolution in historiography, however, is not only a result of the discovery of new types of sources, but needs also to be associated with new interpretations of these sources and a separate explanation of previously known historical facts. In addition, only a relevant accumulation of historiographical works stimulates methodological reflection on the mode of using the sources, construction of the historiographical narration and explanatory rules. The critical discussion between historians and researchers representing other fields of the sciences and having various theoretical opinions also plays an important role.⁵⁸

One can find hope for the future in the growing number of works that were written over the course of the past ten years concerning criticism of the sources held by the Institute of National Remembrance,⁵⁹ and to a lesser extent the methodological and theoretical reflections that have been raised.⁶⁰ As Włodzimierz Suleja observes:

The security services’ materials are specific sources that yield exceptionally little when processed on a critical and analytical basis. To read this symbolic file, it is not enough only to have standard equipment without essential knowledge of the government structure, its people, directions and techniques of operational actions. It is true that as a rule the Security Service did not forge its documents. This however does not mean that the information included in these documents is the truest

58 For example, a journalist of a large daily paper critically evaluated the scientific output of a regional IPN branch in a large city and considered it too “conservative” because employees of the Public Education Regional Office of the Institute of National Remembrance (OBEP IPN) revealed too few security secret collaborators in comparison with other branches. About disputes on the history of the People’s Republic of Poland, see: Rafał Stobiecki, *Historiografia PRL. Ani dobra, ani mądra, ani piękna... ale skomplikowana* (Warsaw: Trio, 2007), 299–345.

59 The following works merit mention in this context: Filip Musiał, ed., *Wokół teczek bezpieczeństwa – zagadnienia metodologiczno-źródłoznawcze* (Kraków: IPN, 2006); Filip Musiał, *Podręcznik bezpieczeństwa. Teoria pracy operacyjnej Służby Bezpieczeństwa w świetle wydawnictw resortowych Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych PRL* (Kraków: IPN, 2007); J. Bednarek, P. Perzyna, ed., *W kręgu teczek. Z badań nad zasobem i funkcjami archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (Łódź–Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2007); Filip Musiał, ed. *Osobowe źródła informacji - zagadnienia metodologiczno-źródłoznawcze* (Kraków: Societas Vistulana, 2008). Critically, on the methodological output of IPN, see: Piotr Witek, “Historyk wobec metodologii,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2 (2012): 79–102.

60 The following works merit mention in this context: Krzysztof Brzechczyn, ed., *Oblicza komunistycznego zniwolenia. Między nauką a literaturą* (Poznań: IPN, 2009); Krzysztof Brzechczyn, ed., *Obrazy PRL. O konceptualizacji realnego socjalizmu w Polsce* (Poznań: IPN, 2008); Sławomir M. Nowinowski, Jan Pomorski, Rafał Stobiecki, eds., *Pamięć i polityka historyczna. Doświadczenia Polski i jej sąsiadów* (Łódź: IPN, 2008), Tomasz Błaszczak, Krzysztof Brzechczyn, Daniel Ciunajcis, Michał Kierzkowski, eds., *Uniknięcia historiografii. Między ideologizacją dziejów a obiektywizmem badawczym* (Poznań: IPN, 2011).

truth. But if the researcher, irrespective of his or her field of expertise or experience, does not have any knowledge of the present objectives of the ministry (these objectives have changed) or the system of values professed in this environment (real, not declared, even during meeting of the POP), if he or she does not break this hermetic language code, this specific kind of the Security Service newspeak, then the researcher will fail.⁶¹

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Maja Gori

Fabricating Identity from Ancient Shards: Memory Construction and Cultural Appropriation in the New Macedonian Question¹

*“Every age has the renaissance of antiquity it deserves”
Aby Warburg*

In the Republic of Macedonia, the use of archaeology to support the construction of national identity is a relatively new phenomenon, but it has been steadily growing since the declaration of independence in 1991. In sharp contrast to the nationbuilding process of the Greeks, Serbians, and Bulgarians, whose main ideological components were drawn from a “glorious past,” Macedonian nationalism in the mid-twentieth century looked to an equally “glorious future.” This paper analyzes the construction of popular archaeology in the Republic of Macedonia, and particularly the creative mechanisms driving it, its relation with the national and international academic world, its spread to a public of non-specialists through new media, its reception by society and its political utilization in constructing the national identity.

Keywords: Macedonia, national identity, archeology, modernity

Introduction

On May 18, 2009, two-hundred² classical scholars sent a letter to the President Barack Obama of the United States asking his intervention in what is today known as the “new Macedonian question”:

Dear President Obama,
We, the undersigned scholars of Graeco-Roman antiquity, respectfully request that you intervene to clean up some of the historical debris left in southeast Europe by the previous U.S. administration.

1 This article stems from my research fellowship in the Historisches Seminar–Arbeitsbereich Osteuropäische Geschichte at the Johannes-Gutenberg University of Mainz. I am extremely grateful to the Thyssen Stiftung for financing this position and to Hans-Christian Maner for his support, comments, and contributions. Great thanks must also go to Filippo Carlà for his help and advice. I am also grateful to the anonymous peer reviewer, who contributed to improve the quality of this paper. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Prof. James Waltson who passed away on Monday May 12, 2014.

2 The number of subscribers on March 24, 2014 reached 374.

The letter proceeds to substantiate its signatories' cause with items of evidence obtained from ancient sources. The closing sentence calls for the direct intervention of Barack Obama in the matter:

We call upon you, Mr. President, to help—in whatever ways you deem appropriate—the government in Skopje to understand that it cannot build a national identity at the expense of *historic truth*. Our common international society cannot survive when history is ignored, much less when history is *fabricated*.³

This paper analyzes the creative mechanisms that stand behind the construction of the archaeological discourse in the new Macedonian question through a comparative analysis of Greece and the Republic of Macedonia.⁴ In particular, it explores the scientific community's role in national identity, aiming to demonstrate that the use and appropriation of archaeological heritage is a complex and articulated process, which is conditioned by more than political agents alone, at both the national and international levels. There is a complicated dialectic between archaeology intended as science, its popularization, the influence exerted by different interest groups, and the different cultural policies of the states involved.

Old and New Macedonian Questions

What is Macedonia? Can Macedonia be considered as a nation? The Macedonian question arose when the European powers signed the treaties of San Stefano (March 1878) and Berlin (July 1878) to resolve the nineteenth-century power vacuum in the Balkans following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. These established new political and territorial borders.⁵ Many ethnic groups embraced the Western idea of the nation-state and its concomitant secular

3 My italics. The letter was published in 2009 on the site <http://macedonia-evidence.org/obama-letter.html>, accessed May 27, 2014, and in hardcopy in 2011. The book is available from Amazon at <http://www.amazon.com/Macedonia-Evidence-Color-Version-Graeco-Roman-documentation/dp/1453732349>, accessed May 27, 2014.

4 The Republic of Macedonia is referred within the UN as “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (FYROM), pending a resolution to the dispute about the country's name.

5 For general accounts of the Macedonian issue see, among others: Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question* (Westport: Praeger, 2002).

identity to replace the Ottoman millet system, which granted collective rights to members of confessional groups.⁶ It is worth remembering that the term “Macedonia” was almost unknown within the Ottoman Empire. Western travelers, cartographers, and politicians, however, regularly used it to refer to the region after the Renaissance, and it was re-adopted for local use by the Greeks in the early nineteenth century.⁷

Following the First and the Second Balkan Wars (1912–13), most of the broader Macedonian territory was divided between Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia. In 1918, after the First World War, the territory of the modern Macedonian state became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In 1944, with the victory of the Partisans over the Bulgarians and the Germans in sight, mass support for the new Partisan movement triggered off a nation-building process. The mobilization efforts and mass responses led to the constitution of the Macedonian republic within the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Communist Party provided the basic preconditions for the “Macedonization” of part of Vardarska Banovina encompassing the whole of today’s Republic of Macedonia, southern parts of Southern and Eastern Serbia and south-eastern parts of Kosovo. It did so by mobilizing large segments of society through political, ideological and national claims that relied mainly on the language as the most important means of identity construction.⁸

Heritage and archaeology did not become an important element within the Macedonian nationalist discourse until the 1970s. Archaeology first came to prominence after the drafting of the 1974 Constitution, which articulated the importance of a specifically ethnic Macedonian identity. In the decades that followed, political and historiographical controversies over Macedonia colored the relationship of SFR Yugoslavia with its neighbors.⁹ In particular, different constructions of the ethnogenesis and formation of the South Slavs

6 Macedonia was part of the “Rum millet.” See Fikret Adanir, *Die Makedonische Frage. Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1908* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1979).

7 Kyril Drezov, “Macedonian Identity: An Overview of the Major Claims,” in *The New Macedonian Question*, ed. James Pettifer (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 55. For an analysis of the dynamics and the political rather than ethnic or cultural character of Greek identity in late nineteenth-century Macedonia and the concept of Macedonian “national mobility,” see Giorgos Agelopoulos, “Greek National Identity in Late Nineteenth – Early Twentieth-Century Macedonia,” *Balkan Studies* 36, no. 2 (1995): 247–63.

8 Stephan Troebst, *Das makedonische Jahrhundert. Von den Anfängen der nationalrevolutionäre Bewegung zum Abkommen von Ohrid 1893–2001* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), 241–48.

9 Stephan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967–1982* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1983).

in the Macedonian region from prehistoric times until the present were made by political propagandists and professional historians in Athens, Belgrade, Sofia, Thessaloniki, and other places. These arguments diverged so fundamentally as to be mutually incompatible.¹⁰

At the same time as a Macedonian nationalist archaeology was emerging, Greek national archaeology also began to take more interest in the subject of Macedonia.¹¹ The sensational finds at the excavation of the Great Tumulus at Vergina in 1977 attracted considerable attention and raised the profile of the Macedonian dynasties of Philip II and Alexander within the Greek nationalist discourse.¹²

The significance of archaeology in the nationalist discourse of Macedonia became even greater after the collapse of Yugoslavia and the establishment of an independent Macedonian state in 1991. This gave rise to a new Macedonian question. Once again, Bulgaria and Greece challenged the legitimacy of Macedonian nationhood, although Bulgaria, unlike Greece, recognized the Republic of Macedonia.¹³ In Greek protests, Alexander the Great was deployed as a kind of “super-Greek”¹⁴ hero against what was regarded as the theft of Greece’s heritage by non-Greek people. The Macedonian king became the symbol of the Greek historical argument summed up in the slogan “Macedonia is Greek, was Greek, and always will be Greek.”

Some scholars see the new Macedonian question as a resurgence of the old one.¹⁵ The role of archaeology and heritage in this new contemporary phase, however, is far greater than it was previously. Indeed, archaeology is absolutely central to the political debates surrounding contemporary Macedonian identity, both within and outside the borders of the independent Republic of Macedonia.

10 Troebst, *Das makedonische Jahrhundert*, 409–24.

11 For a critique of the relation between the modern and ancient Macedonian notions of Hellenic ethnic identity, see Karen Stoppie, “The Macedonians before the Death of Alexander the Great: A People in the Shadow of the Hellenic Ethnos,” in *Constructions of Greek Past: Identity and Historical Consciousness from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Hero Hokwerda (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2003), 47–62.

12 Kostas Kotsakis, “The Past is Ours: Images of Greek Macedonia,” in *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, ed. Linn Meskell (London: Routledge, 1998), 68–86.

13 Milena Mahon, “The Macedonian Question in Bulgaria,” *Nations and Nationalism* 4, no. 3 (1998): 389–407; Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*.

14 Kees Klook, “History and the Conflict over the Name ‘Macedonia’ (1990–1995): Constructing and Using Historical Interpretation,” in *Constructions of Greek Past*, 64.

15 Troebst, *Das makedonische Jahrhundert*, 371.

At international political level, a particularly important focus point is the continuing dispute over the name of the new state. The name “Macedonia” is contested between the Republic of Macedonia and the Greek region of Macedonia. Most other countries continue to use the official name FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) to designate the independent post-1991 state, although the name Republic of Macedonia is being used always more frequently in journalism, sport, etc. The debate has particularly come to the fore since the mid-2000s as a result of accession talks between the Republic of Macedonia, the EU, and NATO. A vocal campaign was launched on the Greek side, making conscious use of archaeology and heritage, with local and international academics joining politicians to support Greece’s claims. The Republic of Macedonia has similarly mobilized archaeology and heritage to pursue a policy of “antiquization”.

Archaeology is also significant in the construction of narratives of national unity and cohesion in the Republic of Macedonia. Despite remaining at peace through the Yugoslav wars, the country was seriously destabilized by the conflict in Kosovo, and there was a subsequent armed clash between Albanians and the Macedonian police in the Albanian-populated areas of the country. The Albanian minority in the Republic of Macedonia represents a substantial 35 percent of the population.¹⁶ Albanian demands in Macedonia range from greater use of the Albanian language in higher education to the secession of regions with high Albanian population. Noteworthy is the increasing importance of Muslim religious affiliation as an identity-marker in the Albanian community, in opposition to the mainstream Macedonian identity, which, although currently constructed primarily on the basis of the archaeological discourse focusing on antiquity and Alexander the Great, also draws on the Orthodox religion.

Archaeology, National Identity, and Modernity

There has been substantial research into the relationship between archaeology and nationalism. Early research into the topic explored the interaction between archaeology and the state. The groundbreaking 1995 volume edited by Kohl and Fawcett demonstrated beyond doubt that archaeology is a politicized discipline.¹⁷

16 Troebst, *Das makedonische Jahrhundert*, 363–72; Athanasios Moulakis, “The Controversial Ethnogenesis of Macedonia,” *European Political Science* 9 (2010): 495–510.

17 Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett, ed., *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

The book focuses on the influence of nationalism on professional standards of behavior and research traditions within the discipline.¹⁸ One of its arguments is that the misuse of archaeological evidence can be avoided by following scholarly standards¹⁹ and that it is absurd to assert that there are no empirical limits to the manner in which archaeologists can responsibly interpret their data.²⁰

An opposite point of view on the relation of nationalism to archaeology is expressed by M. Diaz-Andreu and T. Champion.²¹ They argue that there is no such thing as non-political, value-free archaeology. Archaeologists have underestimated the relationship between nationalism and archaeology. Nationalism stimulated the very creation of archaeology as a science and has informed the organization and infrastructure of archaeological knowledge. The relation is based on the concept of the nation conceived as the natural unit of a human group which by its very nature has the right to constitute a political entity. Diaz-Andreu and Champion argue that the simple existence of nations implies the existence of a past which should be known and propagated, converting de facto the production of nation's history into a patriotic duty.²²

Y. Hamilakis, following Thomas' reflection on archaeology and modernity,²³ refines Champion and Diaz's positions, arguing that the study of the link between archaeology and nationalism is not a study of the abuse of the first by the second but of the development of a device of modernity; and that archaeology as an autonomous discipline serves the needs of the most powerful ideology of that modernity, i.e. the nation-state.²⁴ Hamilakis criticizes Kohl and Fawcett's objectivist position, which sees nationalist readings of the past as distortions from an objective truth and uses concepts like "metahistory" and "usable past" to refer to those segments of history and archaeology that are selectively assembled by modern individuals to weave narratives that support

18 Neil A. Silberman, "Promised Lands and Chosen Peoples: The Politics and Poetics of Archaeological Narratives," in *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology*, 250, original emphasis.

19 Ibid., 249–62.

20 Bruce Trigger, "Romanticism, Nationalism and Archaeology," in *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology*, 263–79.

21 Margerita Diaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion, ed., *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe* (London: UCL press, 1996).

22 Diaz-Andreu and Champion, ed., *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, 3. The same approach is maintained in Margerita Diaz-Andreu, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology: Nationalism, Colonialism and the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

23 Julian Thomas, *Archaeology and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2004).

24 Yannis Hamilakis, *The Nation and Its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 14.

specific political goals.²⁵ He asserts that archaeology has to be viewed as cultural product rather than as the pursuit of truth. The diversity of readings of the past should be seen as a phenomenon which can function as a mirror for the self-reflexive critical reexamination of the discipline as a whole.²⁶ In criticizing the positivist approach, Hamilakis argues that

in the attempt to condemn an ideology of exclusion, new boundaries are reproduced by constructing the knowing subject, the holder of objectified knowledge who condemns the irrational “other”, “orientalizing” thus the producers and the followers of nationalist myths set against the rational and scientific “West”.²⁷

In the modernist view, archaeology are believed to have the potential to reveal profound truths below the surface concerning the origin and history of current nation states.²⁸ Significant concepts like appropriation²⁹ and authenticity³⁰ can be then used to examine the relation of archaeology to identity-building through a constructivist approach, based on Foucault’s argument that the

In the “Western world,” archaeologists perceive themselves as officially entitled by society at large to use archaeological material as resource for

25 K. S. Brown and Yannis Hamilakis, ed. *The Usable Past: Greek Metahistories* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003).

26 Yannis Hamilakis, “Through the Looking Glass: Nationalism, Archaeology and the Politics of Identity,” *Antiquity* 60 (1996): 977.

27 Hamilakis, “Through the Looking Glass,” 978.

28 Cornelius Holtorf and Graham Fairclough, “The New Heritage and Re-shapings of the Past,” in *Reclaiming Archaeology Beyond the Tropes of Modernity*, ed. Alfredo González-Ruibal (London–New York: Routledge, 2013), 197.

29 James O. Young, ed., *Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); esp. George P. Nicholas and Alison Wylie, “Archaeological Finds: Legacies of Appropriation, Modes of Response,” 11–34.

30 Cornelius Holtorf, “On Pastness: A Reconsideration of Materiality in Archaeological Object Authenticity,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 86 (2013): 427–44.

31 Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in *Untying the Text: A Post Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 56.

understanding the cultural past in pursuit of *the truth*. Nicholas and Wyle argue that in their

combined roles of scientists and self-identified stewards of the past, archaeologists have long enjoyed considerable privilege of access and authority in determining how archaeological materials should be used, by whom and for what purposes.³²

Indeed, Nicholas and Wyle's argument demonstrates that archaeology as a discipline is inherently a practice of cultural appropriation, at least in a significant majority of the contexts where it has become established as a professional research enterprise.³³ Even if scholars play an important role in articulating archaeological narratives, however, they have far less control over the patterns of appropriation than they commonly assume.³⁴ The vision of the past that emerges in analyzing the dynamic nature of appropriation of the past as an intentional process whose mechanism affects social change is that uses of the past have to be considered as pointers to competing visions of the future at both individual and group levels.³⁵ Scientific archaeology also adopts such a vision.

Parallel—and apparently opposite—to the concept and mechanisms of appropriation is the move toward a global (and globalized) archaeology.³⁶ The debate on the notion of appropriation and ownership, the role of a globalized scientific archaeology and the impact of archaeological projects on local communities occupy an important place in the relation of archaeology and politics.³⁷ National archaeology and heritage are under pressure through cultural processes of internationalization and globalization and both archaeology and other types of heritage are increasingly regarded as a legacy not of an eternal human

32 Nicholas and Wylie, "Archaeological Finds," 14.

33 Ibid., 12.

34 Ibid., 27.

35 Lynn S. Dodd and Ran Boytner, "Filtering the Past: Archaeology, Politics and Change," in *Controlling the Past, Owning the Future: The Political Uses of Archaeology in the Middle East*, ed. Ran Boytner, Lynn S. Dodd, and Bradley J. Parker (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010), 1–26.

36 On the contradiction between UNESCO's universalist cultural policies and the importance of the nation states within the same organization see Maja Gori, "The Stones of Contention: The Role of Archaeological Heritage in Israeli–Palestinian conflict," *Archaeologies: The Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* 9 (2013): 213–29.

37 Ian Hodder, "Sustainable Time Travel: Toward a Global Politics of the Past," in *The Politics of Archaeology and Identity in a Global Context*, ed. Susan Kane (Boston: Archaeological Institute of America, 2003), 139–47.

experience, but of a certain type of European modernity.³⁸ The phenomenon of globalization and the paradox of monuments being simultaneously of national and global significance³⁹—at least for the Western imagination—are also symptoms of dynamic change in the Western conception of cultural heritage. This conception, however, is rooted in the revival of antiquity that characterized the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment and continued into the nineteenth century, latterly competing with Romanticism.

Memory Constructions in Greece

There is abundant literature devoted to the analysis of archaeology and national identity in Greece. Greece may be considered the European paradigm-state of those cultural and political practices where the construction of national identity had massive recourse to the archaeological narrative.⁴⁰ One of the traits of Greek national identity-building is the relation between global and local cultural dynamics. This has characterized the modern Greek state and its identity construction from its very beginnings. Following Hamilakis, one can distinguish different sets of Hellenisms: the “new Hellenism,” which was imported into Greece in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, and what Hamilakis calls the “Indigenous Hellenism,” the appropriation of Western Hellenism by local societies in Greece in the mid to late nineteenth century and its recasting as a novel and quasi-religious form of imagining time and place, past and present, of producing and reproducing national identities.⁴¹ One of the symbols of this global/local identity process is the Parthenon, which holds a double significance as a national and universal monument. Another example of the double status of ancient Greece as local and global *lieu de memoire* is the holding of the first Olympic games of the modern era in Greece in 1896. The modern Olympic

38 Holtorf and Fairclough, “The New Heritage,” 197; Arjun Appadurai, “The Globalization of Archaeology and Heritage,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 1, no. 1 (2001): 35–49.

39 Hamilakis, *The Nation and Its Ruins*.

40 Among others: John Boardman, *The Archaeology of Nostalgia: How the Greeks Re-created Their Mythical Past* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002); Hokwerda, ed., *Constructions of Greek Past*; Argyro Loukaki, *Living Ruins, Value Conflicts: Heritage, Culture and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Hamilakis, *The Nation and Its Ruins*; Dimitris Damaskos and Dimitris Plantzos, eds., *A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-Century Greece* (Athens: Mouseio Benaki, 2008); Roderick Beaton and David Ricks, eds., *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and The Uses of the Past (1797–1896)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

41 Yannis Hamilakis, “Lives in Ruins: Antiquities and National Imagination in Modern Greece,” in *The Politics of Archaeology and Identity*, 51–78.

Games were conceived as the revival of the ancient games, linking ancient history and classical *topoi* to modern Greece. That event projected Greece into international modernity as the legitimate heir of the classical world,⁴² conceived as the cradle of western culture. This image was proposed again in the opening ceremony of the Olympic games in 2004, when

emphasis on continuity (though with a certain antique bias), a celebration of the all-time classic Greek ideal (albeit in its consummation through art), an allusion to some of the eternal Greek values—such as democracy, the theatre or Christian faith—[were] all suitably packaged for worldwide broadcast and PG audiences throughout [...].⁴³

It is not only in popular depictions of antiquity where modern Greece is represented as the legitimate heir of classical Greece. The website www.macedonia-evidence.org can be regarded as a good example of how this image is also deeply rooted in academia. This website, which is promoted by scholars who support the Greek nationalist position on the new Macedonian question, presents the ancient Macedonians as Greeks, and links ancient and modern Greece through an unbroken line of racial and cultural continuity, concluding that only modern Greeks have the right to identify themselves as Macedonians. The use of the name “Macedonia” is conceived as an act of plagiarism against the Greek people, and by calling themselves “Macedonians” the Slavs are “stealing” a Greek name and “falsifying” Greek history.⁴⁴ The website features the letter to President Obama quoted in the introduction. It claims that the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia

not only abrogated geographic and historic fact, but it also has unleashed a dangerous epidemic of historical revisionism, of which the most obvious symptom is the misappropriation by the government in Skopje of the most famous of Macedonians, Alexander the Great.

The letter goes on to argue that:

42 Vittorio Vidotto, *L'invenzione delle città capitali. Archeologia e spazi pubblici ad Atene e Roma*. <http://dev.dsmc.uniroma1.it/dprs/sites/default/files/464.html>, 2006, accessed May 27, 2014.

43 Dimitris Plantzos, “Archaeology and Hellenic Identity, 1896–2004: The Frustrated Vision,” in *A Singular Antiquity*, 11.

44 Loring M. Danforth, “Ancient Macedonia, Alexander the Great and the Star or Sun of Vergina: National Symbols and the Conflict between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia,” in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, ed. Joseph Roisman and Ian Voththington (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 576.

[...] Macedonia and Macedonian Greeks have been located for at least 2,500 years just where the modern Greek province of Macedonia is. Exactly this same relationship is true for Attica and Athenian Greeks, Argos and Argive Greeks, Corinth and Corinthian Greeks, etc. [...] Alexander the Great was thoroughly and indisputably Greek. [...] Alexander the Great was Greek, not Slavic, and Slavs and their language were nowhere near Alexander or his homeland until 1000 years later. This brings us back to the geographic area known in antiquity as Paionia. Why would the people who live there now call themselves Macedonians and their land Macedonia? Why would they abduct a completely Greek figure and make him their national hero?⁴⁵

Together with documents selected from ancient sources, the letter to President Obama is available both in digital and hardcopy to a larger non-specialist public, with the title “Macedonia-Evidence”. As underlined by Frank Holt in the prologue of the book, featured on the home page of the site, “At the very least, Mr. Presidents and Madam Secretaries and Peoples of the World, please consider carefully the contents of this book and the *credentials* of those who have contributed to it.”⁴⁶

Several scholars responded positively to the plea of Stephen G. Miller, the author of the letter to Obama, and signed it. Among the negative reactions was a short response paper by Andreas Willi. In a counter-answer, Miller concludes

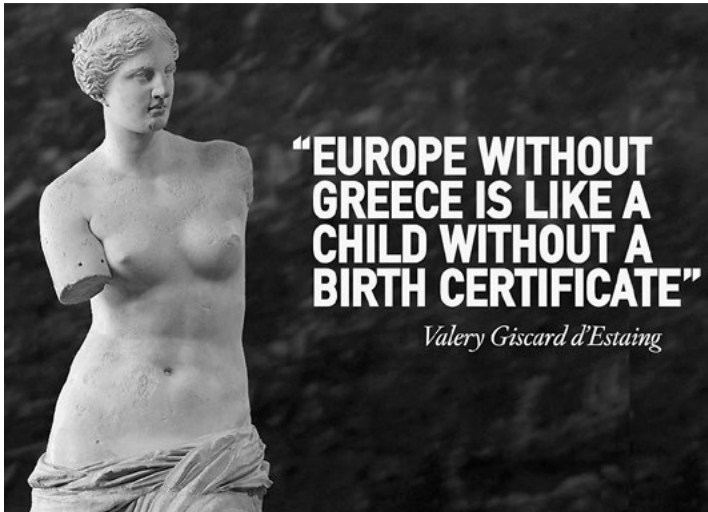


Figure 1: Peter Economides’ “rebranding” campaign to help Greece overcoming economic crisis.

45 <http://macedonia-evidence.org/obama-letter.html>, accessed May 27, 2014.

46 My italics. <http://macedonia-evidence.org/obama-letter.html>, accessed May 27, 2014.

with a bitter criticism of Willi's positions, arguing that “[these] statements are [...] a real threat to the fundamentals of our profession as classical scholars. If historical integrity is not important to our society, then *neither are we*.”⁴⁷

Another—but different—case of direct involvement of the scholarship in the “new Macedonian question” is described by Danforth, who was invited as speaker at the First International Congress on Macedonian Studies held in 1988 at La Trobe University in Melbourne. He described the symposium as “a thinly veiled attempt to provide academic legitimacy to the Greek nationalist position on what is generally known as ‘the Macedonian question’.”⁴⁸

The congress, which was advertised in a Greek Macedonian diaspora publication in clear political terms, attracted to its opening ceremony a huge number of Slav Macedonian demonstrators carrying signs reading pro-Macedonian slogans.⁴⁹

What is relevant to the topic discussed here is not the validity of the scientific conclusions proposed by the scholars, but their *voluntary* or *involuntary* commitment to present political issues. Indeed, it is clear that the position expressed by a significant proportion of Western scholars on the new Macedonian question concerns present Greek and Macedonian identities rather than ancient ones.

On the other hand, cultural policies carried on by the Greek state and the insistence on identifying modern Greece with classical Greece, appropriating an origin so distant in time, are efforts which show how much concern there is to justify the contemporary existence of the state of Greece and its place in the Western World. Indeed, the Greek state has played a fundamental role in national identity construction since the nineteenth century, promoting archaeology above all else as identity-building tool.

This is evident, for example, from an analysis of the narratives of the past reflected in the new Acropolis Museum. These narratives are clearly driven by an ambitious ideological agenda for the nation's past.⁵⁰ The new Acropolis Museum complements the national classicization project still in progress on the Acropolis and acts as its counterpart in a game of mirrors between the past and the present. The modern Greek state, through the systematic creation of “virtual ruins”

47 My italics. <http://macedonia-evidence.org/willi-on-macedonia-response.html>, accessed May 27, 2014.

48 Danforth, “Ancient Macedonia,” 591.

49 Ibid.,” 589–91.

50 Christina Ntaflou, “The New Acropolis Museum and the Dynamics of National Museum Development in Greece,” in *Great Narratives of the Past: Traditions and Revisions in National Museum*, ed. Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstern, and José María Lanzarote Guiral (Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2012), 98, http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=078, accessed May 27, 2014.

such as the Parthenon and the other monuments on the Athenian Acropolis, is attempting the “instrumentalisation of its Classical heritage for the edification of its citizens as well as its visitors.”⁵¹ This is achieved through the kind of classicist agenda as was pursued in the Western world in the nineteenth century. Dimitri Plantzos expresses robust criticism of the new Acropolis Museum, which “ends up being a representation of what modernity ought to look like, or in fact a parody of what modernity actually *is*.”⁵²

The promotion of national narratives of the past in the new Polycentric



Figure 2: Porta Macedonia on Pella Square in Skopje.

Museum of Aigai is of particular relevance to the new Macedonian question. Great effort was put into having Aigai (Vergina), the ancient first capital of the Kingdom of Macedonia, adopted on the World Heritage List.⁵³ Significantly, the site was inscribed in 1996, a few years after the outbreak of the name issue with the then newly born Republic of Macedonia. In the website of the new Polycentric Museum of Aigai, “the royal capital of Macedon,” one can find a wonderful and comprehensive set of information on Ancient Macedonia.⁵⁴ Reinforcing the symbolic importance of Aigai-Vergina in the new Macedonian question is the identification of one of the “royal tombs” in the Great Tumulus

51 Dimitris Plantzos, “Behold the Raking Geison: The New Acropolis Museum and its Context-free Archaeologies,” *Antiquity* 85 (2011): 615.

52 *Ibid.*, 624, emphasis in the original.

53 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/780>, accessed May 27, 2014.

54 <http://www.aigai.gr/en>, accessed May 27, 2014.

as the tomb of Philip II, who conquered all the Greek cities, paving the way for his son Alexander and the expansion of the Hellenistic world.

The presentation of the palace of Aigai “together with the Parthenon” as being “the most significant building of classical Greece” constructs a powerful ideological link between what the present idea of Hellenic identity sees as the two capital cities representative of both ancient and modern Greekness, Aigai and Athens.⁵⁵ The website conveys the spectacular archaeological findings and the museum displays through visual and verbal language that leaves no doubt of the ideology underlying this great narrative of the past.

Memory Constructions in ex-Yugoslavia and the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)

Archaeology and its role in identity construction and political discourse have been the subject of much less analysis in ex-Yugoslavia than they have been in Greece. Some work on the new Macedonian question and the utilization of ancient Macedonian heritage and ancient Macedonian symbols has been published in recent years,⁵⁶ but very little of this deals with the issues from a Macedonian perspective.⁵⁷

In the early 1990s, when many citizens of ex-Yugoslavia perceived the contrast between the accelerating political integration of the European Union and the violent broke up of Yugoslavia in the subsequent war, which culminated in the dreadful “ethnic cleansing”, archaeologists again became interested in the relation of their subject with nationalism, ethnicity, and identity. Competing versions of ethnic and cultural identities were at the basis of competing claims for territorial sovereignty in the Yugoslav conflict. Cultural heritage was presented as evidence of those claims. From the middle of the 1990s, there was a steady proliferation of books and papers devoted to these topics.⁵⁸ Interestingly, in

55 <http://www.aigai.gr/en/explore/museum/palace/aiges/vergina>, accessed May 27, 2014.

56 Kostas Kotsakis, “The Past is Ours: Images of Greek Macedonia,” in *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, ed. Linn Mesckell (London: Routledge, 1998), 68–86; Hamilakis, *The Nation and Its Ruins*, 130–31.

57 K.S. Brown, “Seeing Stars: Character and Identity in the Landscapes of Modern Macedonia,” *Antiquity* 68 (1994): 784–96; Kees Klok, “History and the Conflict over the Name ‘Macedonia’ (1900–1995): Constructing and Using Historical Interpretation,” in *Constructions of Greek Past*, 63–67.

58 Among the others see Brown and Hamilakis, eds., *The Usable Past*; Kane, ed., *The Politics of Archaeology*; Diaz-Andreu, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology*; Timothy Insoll, ed., *The Archaeology of Identities* (London: Routledge, 2007).

discussing the significance of the concept of identity and its application to the past, the authors frequently mention the Yugoslav wars as an emblematic example, but never go into depth on ex-Yugoslavia itself. For example, in the work of P. Graves-Brown, S. Jones, and C. Gamble⁵⁹ ex-Yugoslavia appears throughout the volume as a reference for archaeology and identity issues, mainly in relation to nationalist discourses, ethnicity, and xenophobia,⁶⁰ but no chapter deals specifically with the topic.

Together with Marxist and Soviet approaches, archaeology in ex-Yugoslavia was strongly influenced by the “German School,” a colloquialism which can be used to group different approaches to archaeology in use in German-speaking countries. The Austrian influences which dominated archaeology and antiquities in the western Balkans in the nineteenth century gave way to the imposition of German archaeological scientific standards in the twentieth. This is clearly shown by Predrag Novaković, who has analyzed the background of more than 90% of all archaeologists or archaeological professionals working in western Balkans in the period 1870–1945 to determine who was most influential. Before World War II the striking majority of scholars active in what would become Yugoslavia graduated or received their PhDs in Austrian or German universities. With some simplification, it can be argued that the focus of the “German” approach to archaeology was on two major units of observation: the artifact itself and culture as a particular assemblage of artifacts in time and space, implying a particular socio-cultural (frequently ethnic or ethnic-like) grouping of peoples. Priority was given to those aspects of the archaeological past which were perceived as instrumental for explaining national history and ethnogenesis, or the ethnic history of a specific territory.⁶¹ Even though Yugoslavian archaeology distanced itself from the most extreme theories of the German culture-history approach, the “German School” played an important role in influencing archaeological research.⁶²

59 Paul Graves-Brown, Siân Jones, and Christopher Gamble, eds., *Cultural Identity and Archaeology: The Construction of European Communities* (London: Routledge, 1996).

60 Siân Jones and Paul Graves-Brown, “Introduction: Archaeology and Cultural Identity in Europe,” in *Cultural Identity and Archaeology*, 3.

61 Predrag Novaković, “The ‘German School’ and its Influence on the National Archaeologies of the Western Balkans,” in *SCRIPTA in honorem Bojan Djurić*, ed. Branka Migotti (Ljubljana: Zavod za varstvo kulturne dediščine Slovenije, 2012), 51–72.

62 Božidar Slapšak, “Entangled Histories in South-East Europe: Memory and Archaeology,” in *Multiple Antiquities – Multiple Modernities*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay, Michael Werner, and Ottó Gečser (Frankfurt: Campus, 2011), 419.

The Yugoslav regime supported and promoted archaeology as an instrument for emancipating the Yugoslav nations and promoting the achievements of the new society. It adopted a Marxist approach to archaeology. In this way, the interpretative framework of ethnogenesis in use in Yugoslav archaeology resulted from a mixture of pre-war “German” culture-history and Marxist and Soviet approaches, blended with local backgrounds. For example, “Illyrians” were seen as macro-ethnic group made up of heterogeneous and culturally loosely linked tribes inhabiting Roman Illyricum, whose unification into a single ethnos was prevented by the Roman occupation completed in the early first century CE. The Illyrian past was set up as a parallel with the ideology of socialist federal Yugoslavia, “pervaded by brotherhood-and-unity” and made up of different but akin nations bound by a joint political structure.⁶³ Regional and political issues and conflicts, such as the Serbian–Albanian conflict over Kosovo, were similarly projected into the past through the debate over the ethnic origins of the Dardanians, a people who inhabited the area in antiquity.⁶⁴ However, the early medieval Slavic period, rather than the Iron Age, represented the focal point for archaeological investigation in Yugoslavia, as well as for its nation building policy.⁶⁵

The deconstruction of the Illyrians and of other archaeological discourses which had been shaped by Yugoslav ideology began when the geo-political frame of Yugoslavia started to dissolve in 1970. The decentralized constitution of 1974 and the subsequent disintegration of a compact Yugoslavian identity favored the rise of nationalism in the 1980s.⁶⁶ In some cases, the academic community participated actively in the creation of the nationalist agendas and contributed to the development of new collective identities which would serve what was understood as the “interest of the nation.”⁶⁷ One such case was the backing of Milošević’s nationalistic policy by the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts.⁶⁸

As a member of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Macedonia was regarded as marginal to the archaeological discourse in Yugoslavian ethnogenesis, which concentrated on more central areas. Indeed, the use of archaeology

63 Danijel Dzino, “Deconstructing ‘Illyrians’: Zeitgeist, Changing Perceptions and the Identity of Peoples from Ancient Illyricum,” *Croatian Studies Review* 5 (2008): 45.

64 Slapšak, “Entangled Histories in South-East Europe,” 416.

65 Ibid., 414–15.

66 Dzino, “Deconstructing ‘Illyrians,’” 45.

67 Ibid., 426.

68 See for example Nikola Tasić, *Arheološko blago Kosova I Metohije, Od eneolita do ranog srednjeg veka* (Belgrade: Srpska Akademija nauka I umetnosti Muzej u Prištini, 1998).

to support national identity construction in the Republic of Macedonia is a relatively new phenomenon, but it has steadily increased since the declaration of independence in 1991. In sharp contrast to the nationbuilding process of the Greeks, Serbians, and Bulgarians, whose main ideological components were drawn from a “glorious past,” Macedonian nationalism in the mid-twentieth century looked to an equally “glorious future.”⁶⁹ Only after independence was the birth date of the Macedonian nation moved back from the foundation of IMRO and the 1903 Ilinden uprising to the fourth century BCE. The emphasis on Alexander the Great as the father of the modern Macedonian nation started to be widely used following the victory of VMRO DPMNE in the 2006 general election.⁷⁰

A few years after the 1991 declaration of independence, the Iron Age origins of the Macedonians began to make a strong appearance in scientific literature, thanks largely to the scholarly work of D. Mitrevski.⁷¹ An ethnogenetic and historical interpretation of the Iron Age material culture led E. Petrova to recognize that the Bryges, an ancient ethnos poorly studied by the international academic world, were the direct ancestors of the Paeonians, who were in turn identified as the direct ancestors of the Macedonians.⁷² It is indicative that in the second volume of *Civilizaciji na počvata na Makedonija*,⁷³ the Hellenistic and Roman periods are completely absent, while pre-protohistory and the Middle Ages are thoroughly covered. Scholarly attention to the fifth and fourth centuries BCE has rapidly increased in the last decade, resulting in the increasing preference for the Hellenistic period as the golden age⁷⁴ of the present Macedonian nation.

The Skopje 2014 campaign was launched by the government of the Republic of Macedonia in 2010. This is aimed at giving the city of Skopje a classical style through the construction of new public and governmental buildings. Skopje

69 Troebst, *Das makedonische Jahrhundert*, 257.

70 The Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija – Demokratska partija za makedonsko nacionalno edinstvo (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity), simplified as VMRO-DPMNE, is the leading party in the Republic of Macedonia. VMRO-DPMNE is a Christian-democratic right-oriented party whose “Antiquization” policy has been widely criticized for its nationalist aims.

71 Dragi Mitrevski, *Protoistoriskite zaednici vo Makedonija. Preku pogrebuwanjeto i pogrebnite manifestacii* (Skopje: Kulturno-istorisko nasledstvo na Republika Makedonija, 1997).

72 Eleonora Petrova, *Brigite na centralniot Balkan vo II i I milenium pred n.e.* (Skopje: Muzej na Makedonija, 1996).

73 Georgi Stardelov, ed., *Civilizaciji na počvata na Makedonija. Prilozi za istražuvanje na istorijata na kulturata na počvata na Makedonija* (Skopje: Makedonska Akademija na Naukite i Umetnostite, 1995).

74 Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 191–200.

city center has been adorned with a large number of statues of which the most important is undoubtedly the impressive Vojn na Konj (warrior on a horse), which occupies the ideological and physical center of Ploštad Makedonija (Macedonia square). The old Muzej na Makedonija (Museum of Macedonia) located in the heart of the Stara Čarsija, the old city, has been relocated in a new neoclassical building specifically built on the northern shore of the Vardar River, opposed to Ploštad Makedonija.

The government's antiquization policy, however, does not seem to enjoy the direct support of Macedonian archaeologists and historians, with some significant exceptions. Research conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Skopje University led by K. Kolozova shows that archaeologists, together with other professionals of different disciplines, express a strongly negative opinion on the Skopje 2014 project and the antiquization campaign.⁷⁵

Although the Hellenistic period occupies a prominent part in the nationalistic discourse, there are new excavations and projects to appraise the archaeological heritage as a whole. As well as the new archaeological Museum in Skopje, the last decade has seen the establishment of several new archaeological open-air museums in key sites of the country. The most significant of these, or at least the newest and largest, are Tumba Madžari near Skopje, and Ohrid, where an entire pile-dwelling settlement has been completely reconstructed.

Tumba Madžari is an outstanding Early Neolithic site located in the Gazi Baba municipality of Skopje. There have been several exceptional findings since the first archaeological excavations directed by Vojslav Sanev in 1978. Walking through the open-air museum one can dive into a 8,000-year-old world in four fully-equipped reconstructions of prehistoric huts, where everyday scenes are recreated with life-size mannequins. Throughout the website of Tumba Madžari open-air museum it is stressed that “the settlement of Tumba Madžari is the protogenetic core of today's Skopje.”⁷⁶ It is significant that the “Great Mother,” the terracotta idol which has made Tumba Madžari famous to a worldwide community of specialists, is represented on the frieze decorating Porta Macedonia, a triumphal arch located on Pella Square in Skopje.

The Museum on Water, which opened at Ohrid on December 8, 2008, lies in the suggestive Bay of the Bones and features a reconstruction of a settlement

75 <http://www.isshs.edu.mk/index.php?newsinfo=77>, accessed May 27, 2014.

76 <http://www.tumbamadzari.org.mk/en/the-site/the-site.php>, accessed May 27, 2014.

from the Iron and Bronze ages. It is advertised as “a place where the visitors will be able to travel back in time.” The political importance of the new museum lies in the

valuable archeological and scientific data significant for the functioning of the ethno-genesis, and the beginnings of the formation and recognition of the tribes in ethnical sense [...], between 1200 and 700 BC [the Bryges] left for Asia Minor, forming the state of Phrygia, which is very important for us because in a certain way, we are ethnically connected with them.⁷⁷

Open-air museums, excavations, exhibitions, monuments, and architectural structures connected to antiquity and archaeological heritage are contributing to the shaping of a contemporary Macedonian ideal and physical landscape in assumed continuity with an ancient past, and to bolstering the connection to the land. Open-air museums welcome schoolchildren and the general public and host various activities for bringing people together. Thanks to their powerful “affective”⁷⁸ influence these re-enactments serve as a means for visitors to become part of the millenary Macedonian history. By experiencing a full immersion in an open-air museum, the visitor gets a feeling of authentic and long-lasting emotional connection to the site even if she has been there only for few hours.⁷⁹ This cultural policy, which makes abundant use of archaeological discourse and historicist arguments to construct and foster Macedonian identity, is one of the main causes for the embitterment of the conflict on Macedonian identity at international political level.

Museums and archaeological excavations are widely promoted through the Internet. According to the ITU (International Telecommunication Union), the United Nations agency for information and communication technologies, the internet is used by 51 percent of the population in the Republic of Macedonia, and is therefore an information channel capable of reaching a wide domestic

77 http://uzkn.gov.mk/muzej_en.html, accessed May 27, 2014.

78 On the affective turn, i.e. the collapsing of temporalities and an emphasis on affect, individual experience and daily life rather than historical events, structures and processes, see Vanessa Agnew, “History’s Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and its Work in the Present,” *Rethinking History* 11, no. 3 (2007): 299–312.

79 For an example of the strong link to the land constructed by participating in an excavation, see the example of Masada in Gori, “The Stones of Contention,” 219–20.

audience.⁸⁰ It can also be argued that Macedonian nationalism focusing on the past has grown almost in parallel with the spread of new technologies and new media in the country.

Appropriations of the Past

The following points emerge from the examples discussed here:

– The physicality of archaeology gives an added sense of material reality to the feelings of belonging and continuity that underlie national identity constructions. Archaeological heritage and its display are used to provide tangible proofs of the past and are conceived and interpreted as physical representations of the concept of national identity. However, this use of archaeology by nation-states coexists with approaches to archaeological heritage that point toward shared heritage and “global culture.” Global culture should be conceived less as an alleged homogenizing process and more in terms of the variety and diversity of popular and local discourses.⁸¹

– In both Greece and the Republic of Macedonia, the work of archaeologists and scholars concerned with antiquity actively contributes to the creation of identities. The ideal connection of present-day to ancient Greece through the modern conception of antiquity is present in more than just national narratives and popular archaeology. It is also vividly present in the imagination of many scholars as *lieu de memoire*. This type of Hellenism revives the Romantic idea of Greece as the idealized and preferred locus for academic research and may be regarded as the direct legacy of what Hamilakis has defined as new Hellenism.

Arjun Appadurai’s work on issues of globalization and the relationship between modernity and tradition⁸² reflects on the role of archaeology and its connections to modernity. In an interview on the topic of archaeology and its relation to nationalism he argues that:

Professional archaeology is intimately tied to state institutions, national institutions and the ruling political party; [...] even the question of how archaeology could enter the space of conversation reminded us that

80 On the use of the Internet by political parties in Macedonia see Sali Emruli and Miroslav Bača, “Internet and Political Communication – Macedonian Case,” *International Journal of Computer Science Issues* 8, no. 3 (2011): 154–63.

81 Mike Featherstone, “Global Culture: An Introduction,” in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1990), 1–14.

82 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

archaeology is a key site through which the apparatus of nations can reflect the politics of remembering.

He continues affirming that “in so far as archaeology professionally remains very closely tied in many countries to [...] ‘producing the people’ it remains a critical player in the economy of remembering and forgetting.”⁸³

As contributors to “producing the people” and instruments of soft power,⁸⁴ archaeology and archaeologists play a crucial role in cultural diplomacy and in policies reflecting visions of heritage which derive from specific political visions and historical conditions.

Just like economic development, archaeology needs to be sustainable⁸⁵ and not “predatory,”⁸⁶ and to be capable of exploring different ways of claiming origins without excluding. In the new Macedonian question, the search for origins has direct repercussions for domestic and foreign policy in the states involved. The past has an ambivalent meaning in the western Balkans today: the past and its material traces are the favorite locus for violent fights and preferred symbols of identity struggles,⁸⁷ but the study and preservation of the past are also used by the European Union, through the support of archaeological projects in the new states, to endorse the culture of peace and mutual understanding.⁸⁸ Are these goals really achievable when academics are first of all supporting a “predatory” claim for origins, as in the case of the new Macedonian question?

Considering that the study of classics is declining in the Western world, it may be that scholars “reclaiming” antiquity in the new Macedonian question are

83 Idem, “The Globalization of Archaeology and Heritage,” 37.

84 Christina Luke and Morag M. Kersel, *U.S. Cultural Diplomacy and Archaeology: Soft Power, Hard Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

85 Hodder, “Sustainable Time Travel,” 139–47; Maja Gori, “Who are the Illyrians? The Use and Abuse of Archaeology in the Construction of National and Trans-National Identities in the Southwestern Balkans,” in *Archaeology and the (De) Construction of National and Supra-National Politics*, ed. Catalin N. Popa and Russel Ó Riagáin, *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 27, no. 2 (2012): 81.

86 Appadurai, “The Globalization of Archaeology and Heritage,” 44. “So one of my big concerns now is why certain identities, which are parts of pairs or sets which have been in some form of workable juxtaposition at a certain point in time, become predatory. Why does one of them, or sometimes both, become animated by the idea that there is only room for one of them? When and under what circumstances does this happen?”

87 On Kosovo, see for example Andrew Herscher and Andrés Riedlmayer, “Monument and Crime: The Destruction of Historic Architecture in Kosovo,” *Grey Room* 01 (2000): 108–22.

88 Claske Vos, “Negotiating Serbia’s Europeanness: On The Formation and Appropriation of European Heritage Policy in Serbia,” *History and Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (2011): 221–42.

actually reclaiming their own importance and their role in society.⁸⁹ To regain its place in the contemporary cultural debate, archaeology—like the other branches of the humanities concerned with antiquity—needs an engagement with the present, first of all by acknowledging the political significance of antiquity in present Western societies and thus rejecting the modernist ideal of the archaeologist as a scientist who stands apart from the array of evidence and its political context and offers a definitive interpretation.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, looking at the influence of the modernist approach to archaeology and antiquity on the new Macedonian question, one may question if the “postmodern turn” really has produced a change within the discipline in this sense.⁹¹ A major result of the postmodern critique in archaeology seems to be a further expansion of the scope of the discipline and its role in society, but this expansion seems to have involved only some aspects of the discipline and has overlooked others. Using Friedman’s words, one can argue that the act of identification of the person (the classicist) in a higher project (the pursuit of historical truth) is an act of pure existential authenticity, a “consumption of identity canalized by a negotiation between self-definition and the array of possibilities offered by the capitalist market.”⁹²

The economic recession that started in the late 2000s put the humanities under greater pressure than ever to justify their existence to administrators, policy makers, students, and parents.⁹³ Reclaiming archaeology from modernism, and insisting that all aspects of practice are imbued with power and politics,⁹⁴ may represent an important step to move toward new ways of engagement with the past *and* the present.

89 The political importance of scholars in the new Macedonian question is acknowledged in Kyriacos D. Kentrotis, “The Macedonian Question as Presented in the German Press (1990–1994),” *Balkan Studies* 36, no. 2 (1995): 321, 324.

90 Martin Hall, “Milieux de mémoire” in *Reclaiming Archaeology: Beyond the Tropes of Modernity*, ed. Alfredo González-Ruibal (London: Routledge, 2013), 356.

91 Friedrik Fahlander, “Are We There Yet? Archaeology and the Postmodern in the New Millennium,” *Current Swedish Archaeology* 20 (2012): 109–29.

92 Jonathan Friedman “Being in the World: Globalization and Localization,” in *Global Culture*, 314.

93 Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath, *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom* (New York: Encounter Books, 2001).

94 Hall, “Milieux de mémoire.”

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Zsolt K. Horváth

The Metapolitics of Reality: Documentary Film, Social Science Research and Cognitive Realism in Twentieth-Century Hungary¹

The article explores how, given the absence of a proper public sphere, twentieth-century Hungarian social research began to use the notion of “reality” in populist socio-reports, the documentary films of the 1970s, and sociological debates. These discussions all shared the assumption that contemporary political elites ignored the “real” conditions of society. Thus it was the duty of social research (socio-reports or sociology proper) to reveal these facts in a manner that was free of ideology. Whereas in North America and Western Europe during the 1960s and 1970s the notion of a directly accessible “reality” had been thrown into question, in Hungary scholarship insisted on this kind of cognitive realism because of social and political reasons. As they argued, “reality” was to be interpreted not as a universal epistemological category, but according to particular terms of the sociology of knowledge. This article explores how the detection of “reality” and “facts” became an ethical vocation within these interrogatory frameworks.

Keywords: social research, sociology, social report, documentary film, Eastern Europe, epistemology, sociology of knowledge, ethical vocation

Introduction

Nullius in verba. The Royal Society of London, established in 1660, adopted this motto (an adaptation of a quote from Horace) to express the learned society’s view that knowledge must be based on empirical research and rational cognition rather than an appeal to authority and a humble trust in someone’s words. Bacon held that science must be based on purely empirical methods, therefore: *hypotheses non fingo*. Science, in this case natural science, “has condemned for centuries any view expressing merely personal faith. By contrast, science itself is often viewed

1 This text was commissioned and first published in BBS 50. A Balázs Béla Stúdió 50 éve (BBS 50. The 50 Years of the Balázs Béla Studio), ed. Gábor Gelencsér (Budapest: Múcsarnok, 2009). It was supported by Magyar Mozgóképek Közalapítvány (Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary), Nemzeti Kulturális Alap (National Cultural Fund of Hungary), Magyar Nemzeti Filmarchívum (Hungarian National Movie Archives), Országos Rádió és Televízió Testület (Hungarian National Radio and Television Authority) and the ERSTE Foundation and was published in parallel with the exhibition Other Voices, Other Rooms – Attempt(s) at Reconstruction. 50 years of Balázs Béla Stúdió, Múcsarnok, Budapest, 2009. The translation was supported by the ERSTE Foundation.

even now as being founded on solid facts.”² The social sciences, which emerged, evolved, and became professionalized in the nineteenth century and which do not limit themselves to hard data and facts, may be an awkward fit for the above motto for two reasons. First, the disciplines emerging at the time suffered from an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the natural sciences and their remarkable achievements, which had made substantial contributions to the technological conditions of modernity. Second, the subject of the social sciences seemed for a long time too directly accessible, tangible and therefore subject to influence (by direct or indirect interests). The Royal Society has always been independent of government, and its motto signals an unqualified disregard for and even rejection of dependence and commitment: their only commitment is to the search for objective, scientific truth.

Clearly, the social sciences and humanities have always lacked this type of independence, and this has been of great consequence, not only for the sociology of science, but also for epistemology. In the case of history, most markedly in the countries in which its nineteenth-century professionalization was the most rapid (Germany) or the most expansive (France), this process was thoroughly intertwined with the cultivation of a cohesive idea of the nation state and, in the latter case, the creation of a new elite of the Third Republic, a cohort of intellectuals who supported the republican government.³ However, what looked like an advantage in the nineteenth century became a serious loss of moral and scientific credibility after the *then* unprecedented devastation caused by World War I. This was particularly the case for history, which had supplied much of the fodder for the cultural logic of nationalism, the ideology under the banner of which so many had marched into battle. War in this case needs to be understood not only in the context of eventual history, but rather in the *longue durée* of intellectual history, more or less the way Jan Patočka came to view it much later: “a vast event conducted by people, yet growing larger than humanity,” “a cosmic occurrence.”⁴ In a famous essay written roughly around the time in question, Paul Valéry makes a point of making the following harsh comment:

2 Károly Polányi, “A tudomány: megfigyelés és hit,” *Polanyiana* 7, no. 1–2 (1998): 65. English translations of quotations are by Katalin Orbán, unless otherwise noted.

3 Cf. Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover–London: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 23–35; Gérard Noiriel, *A történetírás “válsága”* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2001), 77–78.

4 Jan Patočka, “Eretnek esszék a történelem filozófiájáról (1990),” in *Mi a cseh? Esszék és tanulmányok*, ed. Ivan Chvatík (Pozsony: Kalligram, 1996), 349.

History is the most dangerous concoction the chemistry of the mind has produced. Its properties are well known. It sets people dreaming, intoxicates them, engenders false memories, exaggerates their reflexes, keeps old wounds open, torments their leisure, inspires them with megalomania or persecution complex, and makes nations bitter, proud, insufferable and vain.⁵

Valéry thereby radically redraws the relationship between science and the surrounding world, as he claims that this discipline is inexorably a social practice as well, so the knowledge it creates is related to power through the binding force of identity-shaping memory. The very science that, in the spirit of its scientific function and calling, busied itself throughout the nineteenth century with the establishment of “the” methodology (the identification and critical analysis of written documents, etc.) suddenly became an “accomplice” in the devastation of the World War in the eyes of critical intellectuals on account of the social functions it had played. This moral culpability, of course, raises the question of humble trust in words once again and assigns the sphere of cognition as the sole appropriate domain of the sciences.

Over the course of the past several decades, however, the achievements of the social sciences have not been particularly encouraging with regards to the noble challenge of “nullius in verba.” The trends in intellectual inquiry that took hold in the decades following World War II, particularly structuralism and various other schools in its wake, have posed countless challenges to Western empirical social sciences that they have not been entirely able to surmount: the linguistic turn, cultural turn, epistemology, etc. Of these, the most complex issue was the often vexing yet in many ways productive emphasis on epistemological perspective. In history, the earliest experiments in this respect took place in France led first and foremost by Paul Veyne and Michel de Certeau among others. In contrast with the American Hayden White, these two French historians critiqued the profession from the perspective of the historian’s practice of empirical work and its crisis (Veyne’s period was antiquity, while de Certeau studied seventeenth-century ecclesiastic history and mysticism). Moreover their historical-critical work went far beyond a merely linguistic, narrative critique of

5 Paul Valéry, “A történelemről (1931),” in *A történelem anyaga. Francia történelemfilozófia a XX. században*, ed. Ádám Takács (Budapest: L’Harmattan–Atelier, 2004), 23. English translation from Paul Valéry, *Reflections on the World Today*, trans. Francis Scarfe (London: Thames and Hudson, 1951), 36.

history as a discipline.⁶ A Jesuit with a Marxist background, de Certeau was one of the first to probe reality and fiction as irreconcilably distinct qualities for the discipline of history.⁷ From the vantage point of the current Western scientific canon, the significance of the interrogation of concepts such as fact, reality, fiction, and narrative may not seem immensely significant, but in the 1970s these propositions were enough to upset the discipline of history, a discipline that, according to Gérard Noiriel, was always in crisis.⁸ It was essentially a questioning of the former naïve attitude in history according to which reality could be taken for granted as something “out there,” a given that the historian accesses through the discovery and analysis of original sources and documents. Epistemological critique countered this by the proposition that reality, including the reality of the past, is not given and accessible in any such *direct way*, for while we are studying it through contemporary documents, we are also extracting, selecting, and editing it. In other words, the shift consisted in the historian’s constructive relationship to the past, which required a distinction between “data” found and identified, and “facts” selected and analyzed. History has thus given up the positivist legacy of the illusory recapturing of past reality as it really happened (*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*).

However, the relationship between general public opinion, critical reflection, and the practices of the social sciences obviously cannot be described solely on the basis of Western European and American experiences, especially because these experiences are contingent on the context in which they occur and in which their practice is regulated. The political system, the public sphere, and the conditions of the practices of scientific inquiry are interrelated concepts, and it is no wonder that, given the remarkably tumultuous and discontinuous twentieth-century history of Eastern Europe, the cognitive role of the social sciences and especially history in the region was severely limited. Following the political transition, when new generations attempted to bring the new post-Structuralist, text-centered, interpretive etc. theories to the region, the older generation tended to respond with a blanket rejection. This rejection was motivated not by an exaggerated skepticism regarding the content of “recent” theories, but

6 See Paul Veyne, *Comment on écrit l’histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1971); Michel de Certeau, *L’écriture de l’histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

7 Michel de Certeau, “L’histoire, science et fiction,” in *Histoire et psychanalyse entre science et fiction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 53–84.

8 See also Gábor Gyáni, “A történetírás fogalmi alapjairól: tény, magyarázat, elbeszélés,” in *Bevezetés a társadalomtörténetbe: hagyományok, irányzatok, módszerek*, ed. Zsombor Bódy and József Ö. Kovács (Budapest: Osiris, 2003), 11–53.

rather by the conviction that after the political transition one could finally “speak one’s mind.” Researchers no longer had to subordinate their ideas to official ideologies, so why would one need these obscurely worded new theories? Reality, in the primary and somewhat naïve sense of the word, is there, waiting to be discovered without any constraint from political goals and administrative or bureaucratic obstacles. The days of tricky metapolitics were over, so why use a critical metalanguage?

It would be incorrect to draw the tempting conclusion that Hungarian social sciences are *eo ipso* rigid and thus unable to adopt trends from elsewhere. This is merely a symptom, the real causes of which lie in the deep structure of Hungarian political and academic culture, namely the way in which the structure of the concept of the public sphere was shifting in relation to the powers that be. In order for this investigation to be truly productive, it has to engage with the concept of reality in the form of a conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*). According to Reinhart Koselleck, any study of the social history of cultural forms and practices has to take account of changes in the linguistic-conceptual universe used to refer to a constantly changing social reality. If the world around us is constantly changing, so are the linguistic elements and their corresponding meanings and connotations, and the study of the two in their interrelatedness can open up new avenues of knowledge.⁹ I propose that by placing the word “reality” (along with the entire system of references to it) into the conceptual plane of the Hungarian history of ideas, one can yield insights into the function of documentary film and its place in the history of ideas. Moreover, this will also yield insights, in the long term, into the recurring efforts and workshops *outside* the realm of the social sciences that are devoted to discovering reality. This is all the more crucial because, as Wolf Lepenies pointed out in his analysis of British, French, and German examples, literature, film, and journalism (one would do well to update this list with new media today) play as vital a role in a society’s self-representations, as does scientific discourse.¹⁰ Ultimately, one could ask the remarkably simple yet acute question: if there was in fact some social science thinking in Hungary, why were its workshops *outside* the spheres of the social sciences that had reality, fact-finding, and the discovery of reality (whether on paper or celluloid) as their rallying cries?

9 See Reinhart Koselleck, “Sozialgeschichte und Begriffsgeschichte,” in *Sozialgeschichte in Deutschland*, ed. Wolfgang Schieder and Volker Sellin, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 89–109.

10 Wolf Lepenies, *Die drei Kulturen. Soziologie zwischen Literatur und Wissenschaft* (Munich: Hanser, 1985).

Critical Social Research and the Idea of Reality

This is actually a product of the *relationship* between the political plane and those wielding power on the one hand and a (theoretically) independent field of scientific inquiry subject only to the goal of cognition. Dénes Némédi astutely observed that despite the quick, if sporadic, reception of the social sciences in eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Hungary, there is no history of Hungarian sociology in any proper sense (not even a history of the social sciences for that matter), because there was no cohesive, continuous social research in Hungary. In this part of Europe, these forms of learning have had an *episodic structure*. Though various experiments provisionally have served this function, they lack cohesion and a continuity of persons, institutions, and content. The thoroughly modern program of social research was not merely belated, but as a result of its belatedness it took a rather peculiar shape from the moment of its inception, as the journal *Huszadik Század* [Twentieth Century] and its social science studies were taking an initially tacit and veiled but then increasingly outspoken political stance.¹¹ “Sociology! This was the word,” wrote Oszkár Jászi in 1910, “that synthesized our endeavors: our faith in the glorious power of natural sciences, a social science research built on this power, and a politics for the benefit of the people developed on this foundation,” a credo that signals the Eastern-European specificity of their calling by articulating a commitment to the avowedly political goals of cognition.¹²

Although it became impossible to pursue serious sociological inquiry after 1918–1919 in the wake of failed revolutions and the subsequent emigration of those involved in radical politics and progressive sciences, sociology did find a new forum in sociography, a path between empirical social research and literature, where it could once again speak of social reality, even if its specific subjects were perhaps different from the interests of *Huszadik Század*. This brought a discovery and new prominence of the “people,” a time of the exploration and empirical study of a populist thematics. Despite representing a heterogeneous assortment of genres, tones, and methodologies, populist sociography emerged

11 Dénes Némédi, *A népi szociográfia, 1930–1938* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1985), 9–35; József Saád, “Magyar szociológia-történet: minnek a története? Vázlat a magyar társadalomtani-szociológiai gondolkodás 1945 előtti történetéről,” *Replika* 23–24 (1996): 161–71.

12 Jászi is quoted in György Litván, “Bevezetés,” in *A szociológia első magyar műhelye: a Huszadik Század köre*, ed. György Litván and László Szűcs, vol. 1 (Budapest: Gondolat, 1973), 5. See also György Litván, ed., *Magyar munkásszociográfiák, 1888–1945* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1974).

as a sort of master narrative, and it covered a multitude of problems specific to peasants and sharecroppers (the tendency to have a single child, emigration, postwar sects, and life on the Hungarian plain). To sum up, the challenge of discovering reality compensates for the lack of professional sociology and an appropriate public sphere by finding a genre *outside* institutionalized science. This genre, sociography, attempted to be both “scientific” (methodical, systematic) and something more, namely a representative of the voiceless (the “people”), whose living conditions these sociographers set out to improve therapeutically by giving them voice. Their zeal is once again animated by the watchword of social reality to be discovered and revealed. As Miklós Lackó points out, youths in the 1930s were disenchanted with grand ideas for saving the world. Their attitudes were informed by “a common sense that could be reconciled with conservatism, a demand for realism that could accommodate the diversity of modern thought, and on the basis of the former, a demand for reforms.” According to many, including Imre Kovács, Gyula Szekfű, and István Bibó, it was this demand for and sense of reality that became a key motivating force in the ideas and deeds of this generation.¹³

The empirical discovery and study of social conditions was of great interest not only to the interwar generation; the “attraction of reality”¹⁴ (to quote Ernő Gondos) had a hold on those born in the interwar years as well. Their efforts were pooled in the people’s college movement established in 1939 (Bolyai College until 1942, subsequently Györfly College) and expanded after World War II. This existed under the name Nékosz (National Association of People’s Colleges) until 1949.¹⁵ Granted, youth movements had previously played their part in the empirical study of reality (the Scout movement, Pro Christo Students, etc.), but the people’s colleges were something new in that they gave an organizational framework to this inquiry as a specific program, and in fact made knowledge of the country a cornerstone of their *pedagogy*. For lack of space, instead of an exposition and evaluation of Nékosz’s collective experience, communality, social responsibility, support for the gifted, and important role in fostering social mobility, I will merely note that the issue of reality was fundamental to its pedagogical theory. Ferenc Pataki has identified the greatest virtue of the people’s colleges as “their ability to transform” postwar social dynamism and actions aimed at changing society into a “pedagogical movement and educational

13 Cf. Miklós Lackó, *Korszellem és tudomány, 1910–1945* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988), 330.

14 Ernő Gondos, ed., *A valóság vonzásában*, vols. 1–2 (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1963).

15 See Ferenc Erdei, *A falukutatótól a népi kollégiumokig* (Budapest: Múzsák, 1985).

practice: they were able to ride the wave of social changes, and they were also able to translate them into everyday acts of pedagogical practice.”¹⁶ This is why the one-time secretary of Nékosz (later an esteemed psychologist) gave his edited book the emphatic title *A valóság pedagógiája* [The Pedagogy of Reality], noting that “the pedagogy of changing reality” would have been an even more fitting title, as the movement was driven not only by the desire to discover but also to change reality. The National Pedagogical Conference held on 3-6 January, 1947, as part of which both political leaders (László Rajk, József Révai, Ferenc Erdei, József Darvas, and Péter Veres) and professionals (Ferenc Mérei and Ernő Béki) lauded the movement’s role in social politics and its community building and psychological aspirations, was a milestone in the process of the movement’s institutionalization and in the consolidation of its pedagogy.¹⁷ Ferenc Mérei, who played an important role in both politics and pedagogy between 1945–1950, expressed the following view of pedagogical realism in a letter he wrote as director of the National Institute of Pedagogy to Árpád Kiss:

What I gather from your words is that you understand it as the need to adapt previously gained experience and knowledge to the given reality. What I mean by this is rather [...] the need to mine the given reality. To this you retort by asking why should one rediscover what others have discovered before. My response is that this is not about ignoring knowledge and experience gained by others, but rather that instead of adapting that knowledge to my reality, it has to be *measured* against my reality. [...] You become doubtful when a given experience contradicts old wise men, whereas I deferentially move said wise men into the museum and follow the thread of the given experience. Naturally, all of this gains its meaning from concrete matters. I do believe that, no doubt through many errors and corrections, our people’s colleges will bring about the realization of an educational system and methodology that both you and I can only attempt to imagine today.¹⁸

16 Ferenc Pataki, “Bevezető,” in *A valóság pedagógiája. Közösségi nevelés a népi kollégiumokban*, ed. Ferenc Pataki (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1974), 12. The journal founded by the movement in 1945 was also entitled *Valóság* (Reality).

17 *A Népi Kollégiumok Országos Szövetsége első országos nevelésügyi konferenciájának programja, 1947. január 3–9.* Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár (Archive of the Institute of Political History), 302 f. 1/ 221. See also Ferenc Pataki, *A Nékosz-legendák* (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), 277.

18 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (National Archives of Hungary) XXVI–I–1–b, 1. d., 2. tétel (Ferenc Mérei’s letter to Árpád Kiss, May 24, 1948).

Mérei's letter is worth quoting at length because it demonstrates an active, formative concept of reality. In this sense, social reality is both an inherited tradition and something that can be shaped by its tension with a present ready for action. Whether intentionally or not, this brings one back to the 1920s avant-garde notion, expressed most succinctly perhaps by Andor Németh, "reality is not a concept: if you want to get closer to it, *you need to touch it*, you need to act."¹⁹ This attitude posits social reality not as a final, fossilized moment, but a process that can be shaped.

Why did this active attitude to the concept of reality change, and why did social scientists settle with a more traditional, positivist, nineteenth-century notion in the 1960s and 1970s? The claim to shape reality is not an intellectual pastime in a vacuum, as this claim is surrounded by all the norms of the surrounding political, social world. In brief, Mérei's notion of "active experience" (which goes back to Andor Németh) or the attempts of the "bright winds" of the people's college movement to overturn the world can operate if and only if the conditions for action are established. These conditions, however, are not guaranteed unless there is a positive public sphere in which aims, plans, and ambitions can be debated and considered. As I previously noted, the lack of a public sphere is a *structural characteristic* of modern Hungarian political culture, and the period between 1949 and 1956 shows an exceptionally grave deficit in this respect. Though there was no "democratic" turn after the failed uprising of 1956. Melinda Kalmár has rightly shown that the legitimacy-deficient Kádár regime, which rose to power under the shadow of Soviet weapons, made the establishment of a "simulated public sphere" one of its key strategic goals.²⁰ This peculiar, characteristically Kádár-style contrivance served both to condemn the prior fundamental ideological repression of public discourse and to enable the controlled normalization of slightly freer speech. Over the course of a few decades, public sphere became clearly segmented, and this segmentation became a phenomenon. It included the first plane, which was the official, the semi-official plane, and the hidden, samizdat plane. This indirectly created a half public, half hidden plane on which certain particularly important problems that were concealed and repressed in the first public sphere could still be debated.

19 See Andor Németh, "Kommentár (1926)," in *A szélén behajtna. Válogatott írások*, ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Magvető, 1973), 177.

20 Cf. Melinda Kalmár, *Ennivaló és hozomány. A kora kádárizmus ideológiája* (Budapest: Magvető, 1998), 64 passim.

This is why Tibor Kuczi could write in the introduction to *Valóság '70* (Reality '70) that the public sphere sprang forth after 1989 “fully armed” and began to operate in a self-evident manner. If this was indeed the case, he speculates, the public sphere must have had not only forums, media, and places, but also a language, even if this type of publicity (as proven by several examples) tended to “overlay” itself on the concept of the private. In his analysis of the content of the journal *Valóság*, Attila Becskeházi shows that

sociological interpretation meant *reality* to the users of its language, a reality “distorted,” “concealed,” “falsified,” and “silenced” by ideology. This interpretation was popular because of its emphasis on an alternative understanding and structure of reality. [...] So much so [...] that the sociological literature of the 1970s rarely includes reflections on its constructive nature. The reality created as a result of sociological interpretation gains credibility not simply by opposing the other [that is ideology], but by revealing a completely different Hungary through the language it uses.²¹

The realities suggested by official ideology and revealed by social science research were therefore incommensurable. The latter had a surplus that was a consequence not only of its scientific nature, but also its moral stance as a commitment to truth undistorted by ideological clichés. It is a wonderful paradox that such a notion of ideology vs. reality tacitly brings one back to the young Marx’s notion that what one must oppose to ideology is reality as a practice. (This changes with the publication of *Capital*, partly under Engels’s influence, and ideology will be opposed by science rather than reality.) To put it differently, the critique of ideology, like the reversed image in a camera obscura, results in a species of cognitive realism, insofar as it attempts to turn the Hegelian system upside down.²²

Documentary Film

In one of his essays, Ferenc Hammer offers a detailed analysis of the intellectual environment in which, the stylistic and generic diversity of their compositions notwithstanding, the documentary efforts of the Balázs Béla Studio were

21 Tibor Kuczi and Attila Becskeházi, *Valóság '70. Szociológia, ideológia, közbeszéd. Szociológia és társadalomdiskurzus* (Budapest: Scientia Humana, 1992), 119.

22 Cf. Paul Ricœur, *L'idéologie et l'utopie* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 16–17.

connected with social science efforts to discover reality. The Studio, an avant-garde, leftist group of artists with a program of social emancipation, played a crucial role in twentieth-century film in Hungary, often in opposition to official socialism during the 1960s and 1980s. To quote Clifford Geertz, documentary film is a “blurred genre.”²³ Its definition is vague and ambivalent even with respect to its relationship to reality, not to mention the fraught issues of fiction, emplotment, and other methodological and stylistic characteristics, not to mention rhetoric and metaphor.²⁴ What documentary films do have in common is the emphatic social energy and usefulness, Geertz’s “being there,” a commitment to a professionally and ethically authentic “being there, being present.”²⁵ Responding to a question about the documentary film’s *function*, Judit Ember affirms this, saying “we must answer in speech, in writing, and on film too, so as to leave some kind of imprint to our children and grandchildren of how we lived and thought and how we imagined how we were living and thinking.”²⁶ Sociologist Ágnes Losonczi identifies the same attitude in the center of Ember’s oeuvre:

What makes her work so important? You have to see and hear her talk and ask questions. You have to know her exceptional skill in establishing relationships, see how she addresses people, watch how they begin to speak sincerely to her and only to her. Her attention opens up fearfully guarded, ossified memories, loosens the speaker’s tongue, and that exceptional relationship that marks a true documentary filmmaker is being formed.²⁷

Gábor Bódy states in his *Filmiskola* [Film School] that “film is *one mode* of thinking, which can emerge in a variety of social functions.”²⁸ These functions can include business, art, journalism, popular science, science (sociology,

23 Clifford Geertz, “Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought,” in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 19–35.

24 A detailed analysis of the relationships between documentary film, feature film and documentarism as a style can be found in Gábor Gelencsér, *A Titanic zenekara. Stílusok és irányzatok a betvenes évek magyar filmművészetében* (Budapest: Osiris, 2002), 199–276.

25 Clifford Geertz, “Being There: Anthropology and the Scene of Writing,” in *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 1–24.

26 Béla Tarr, “Jelenné tenni a múltat...” in *Az Ember-lépték. Ember Judit portréja*, ed. Vince Zalán (Budapest: Osiris–Kodolányi János Főiskola, 2003), 187.

27 Ágnes Losonczi, “Az igazat, csakis az igazat... s a teljes igazat vallja,” in *Az Ember-lépték*, 7.

28 Gábor Bódy, *Filmiskola*, ed. Miklós Peternák (Budapest: Palatinus, 1998), 25. (My emphasis – Zs. K. H.)

psychology), and they can also be documentation, history, and research. One could say that the documentary film's relationship to reality (like that of sociology earlier on) is important not so much because of its epistemology or rhetoric as it is because of its functional, pragmatic, and even ethical aspects; its creative relationship within social thought.

One finds all the keywords of the notion of *direct cognition*, on which cognitive realism rests, in a conversation between Gyula Gazdag, Ferenc Grünwalsky, László Mihályfy and György Szomjas entitled *A társadalmi folyamatok láthatóvá tétele* [Making Social Processes Visible]. They assert that the processes of reality are graspable “as they are positioned in the structure.”

What documentary film means to us is not a style, not a method of expression, but the visual cognition of reality. [...] Our aim is to make reality “play,” that is expose itself in the film [...] We have false views of simple facts of reality. The facts themselves are in principle known, but what is unknown is their visual face, which is objective in the manner of data.²⁹

The noble idea of reality playing, i. e. exposing itself, and thereby making itself accessible to the “objective” camera, is probably laughable to the contemporary reader in the wake of the umpteenth epistemological turn of the social sciences. However, if one views the past without the glasses of our present-day omniscience and instead tries to reconstruct the aim of documentarism to discover reality in a more long term context, one can once again reveal the distinctive historical-structural characteristics of cognitive realism.

When directors Ferenc Grünwalsky, Dezső Magyar, László Mihályfy, György Pintér, and István Sipos and writers Árpád Ajtony, Gábor Bódy, Péter Dobai, and Csaba Kardos, the authors of the manifesto *Szociológiai filmcsoportot!* [For a Sociological Film Group!] say, if only parenthetically, that “we want to reinvent the wheel,” they seem to be tacitly referring to the sociographic tradition of discovering reality outlined above.³⁰ They identify a “field of research” (a telling phrase!), mention the problem of Hungarian villages and

29 “A társadalmi folyamatok láthatóvá tétele. Beszélgetés a Balázs Béla Stúdió vezetőségével,” *Filmkultúra* 7, no. 5 (1971). Reprinted in *Balázs Béla Stúdió, 1961–1981. Dokumentumok a 20 éves Balázs Béla Stúdió történetéből* (Pécs: Ifjúsági Ház – BBS, 1982), 12–13.

30 Classic sociology flourished (once again) in the 1970s and 1980s: it suffices to mention the work of György Berkovits, Sándor Tar, Zsolt Csalog, János Kőbányai or Miklós Haraszti. A good overview of sociology's relationship with sociophotography is offered in the Special Issue *Peremhelyzetek–Szociográfiák* of *Budapesti Negyed* 35–36 (Spring–Summer 2002), ed. György Németh.

small towns, inadequate knowledge of facts, the terms “information aggregator, data collector,” and the method of participatory observation, all of which underscores the primary objective of direct cognition of social reality, to which all formal experiments in the category of “artistic cognition” are secondary. “Collectors provide the studios with the systematically categorized factual material either in raw, unprocessed form or in the form of ‘literary short story’ or sociography,” they say, while emphasizing that processing is collective and requires collaboration with researchers.³¹ It appears, therefore, that “sociological” or rather sociographic filmmaking, while never explicitly positioning itself as heir to this particular tradition, fits well into the long-term historical structure of Hungarian social studies. Furthermore, it accomplishes the almost obvious medial shift that replaces pen and paper with “camera-pen” and celluloid in the discovery of reality. Of course, the camera’s supplanting of pen and paper was not without consequence; in fact, this is the theoretical juncture where the paths of documentarism proper and the formal experimentation of feature films begin to diverge. One side involves an ethical commitment, which compels the discovery of an unknown reality concealed by ideology to compensate for the lack of a “positive public sphere.”³² Film and documentary film have indeed played an important, if not exclusive, role in debates regarding certain highly significant social issues. Although the documentary filmmaking of the 1960s and 1970s can hardly be equated in terms of their formal language, one can justifiably make the claim that both typically attempted to answer questions neglected by history and sociology that could not be broached in other ways. It was at this time that the notion according to which the camera simply replicates the world began to take hold (a notion that persists to this day, despite its shaky foundations). In the words of Gábor Bódy:

31 “Szociológiai filmsoportot!” *Filmkultúra* 5, no. 3 (1969). Reprinted in *Balázs Béla Stúdió, 1961–1981*, 10–11. A telling difference emerged in the debate on anthropological filmmaking in 1970s. Its concerns were far more theoretical than those of Hungarian writings in the same period. Jay Ruby suggests that anthropological filmmaking never involved this type of epistemological realism. Its practitioners had to be as well versed in major issues of ethnology as in the technical aspects of filmmaking and the theoretical aspects of image construction. See Jay Ruby, “Az antropológiai filmkészítés. Néhány megjegyzés és a lehetséges jövő,” in *A valóság filmjei. Tanulmányok az antropológiai filmről és filmkatalógus*, ed. János Domokos (Budapest: Dialektus, 2004), 75–82.

32 On the concepts of a positive and negative public sphere, see Alain Cottureau, “‘Esprit public’ et capacité de juger. La stabilisation d’un espace public en France aux lendemains de la Révolution,” in *Pouvoir et légitimité. Figures de l’espace public*, ed. Alain Cottureau and Paul Ladrière (Paris: EHESS, 1992), 239–73.

Many looked to sociology and a new type of documentarism, from which they expected direct social effectiveness. This did not eliminate all doubts: what is the relationship between a “reality” addressed by the camera with untroubled informality and the sequence of images rolling on the big or small screen?³³

Clearly, one of the forces driving the greater demand for documentariness was people’s acute loss of trust in the version of reality depicted in the information-deprived world of the official, first public sphere of socialism.³⁴ Documentary films no doubt had a significant ethical role in revealing particular problems and showing that this concealed reality in fact existed. This, however, seems to have somewhat simplified the epistemological relationship between camera and reality. The latter is amply illustrated by the claim that documentary film allegedly had no *raison d’être* after the political transition: what was the point of its existence now that “everything could be said?”³⁵ If revealing particular problems of the present or past is no longer a matter of conflict, does the documentary commitment of a filmmaker make any sense? If one’s relationship to reality were indeed so simple, the political transition and a democratic public sphere theoretically would have made the documentary film genre pointless. With the benefit of twenty years of hindsight, one can clearly see this has not been the case.³⁶

As I mentioned in the introduction, this type of realism in the discipline of history has undergone substantial changes in Western Europe since the early 1970s. A (historical) document is no longer regarded as an unproblematic representation of reality, but is seen rather as part of a selective account of it, informed by a particular value structure and power status. Similarly, the frames photographed by the cinematographer and projected onto the big or small screen (after having been edited) represent not reality, but rather a set

33 Gábor Bódy, “A kinematográfia kreatív nyelve,” in *Végtelen kép. Bódy Gábor írásai*, ed. Miklós Peternák (Budapest: Pesti Szalon, 1996), 266.

34 The documentary *Üzemi baleset* (Factory Accident) wittily demonstrates how the withholding of certain news items considered strategic mobilized the imagination of Hungarian society, which was able to imagine a sensational background behind the most banal occurrence (Judit M. Topits, *Üzemi baleset. Történetek a Kádár-korszak tájékoztatáspolitikájáról* [Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2003]).

35 See Ágnes Losonczi, “Történelmi sasszék,” *Filmvilág* 36, no. 8 (1993): 4–7.

36 Although 1989/1990 was undoubtedly a watershed in the status of documentary film, the transformation of the conditions cannot be fully explained by the question of the public sphere alone. For more detail, see Balázs Varga, “A magyar dokumentumfilm rendszerváltása – a magyar dokumentumfilm a rendszerváltás után,” *Metropolis* 8, no. 2 (2004): 8–36.

of moving images of reality selected by the director and cinematographer. This composition includes an imprint of the creators' political, cultural, ethical and aesthetic attitudes, and the images are often determined by the camera. Its relationship to reality is by no means merely that of a recording. On the contrary, it is highly constitutive. This sheds light on the meaning of Gábor Bódy's statement according to which "documentary film' is the philosophy of film." Documentary film illuminates the complex intellectual relationship between the author and external reality, a relationship that the author maintains through his or her work.³⁷ The epistemological level and ethical commitment are not necessarily tied to each other, something made abundantly clear by the divergent paths of Hungarian documentary and feature films from the early 1980s after their near symbiosis in terms of film language. While the former "increasingly made use of historical interviews," according to András Bálint Kovács, "new feature films give center stage to the creation of subtle narrative and visual effects."³⁸ The most fitting example is the later film theory and feature film oeuvre of Bódy, who earlier had been a signatory of the manifesto *For a Sociological Film Group!*. He became the most effective representative of the deconstructive approach to the former linear, realist relationship between film and reality.

Up to this point, in this discussion of the conceptual history of reality my emphasis has been on documentary films with sociological and social history ambitions. It is also worth examining "historical" documentaries and their notions of reality and the manners in which it can be revealed and presented. If one tries to establish ideal types in the kinds of relationships with reality fostered by historical documentaries, again a number of significant differences emerge. Though it may seem paradoxical at first glance, methodologically it is Péter Forgács's experimental documentary series *Privát Magyarország* [Private Hungary], inspired by Gábor Bódy's experiment *Privát történelem* [Private History; 1978], that is the closest to a classic historical method because he uses contemporary documents. Granted, it is a rather significant difference that while historians rely primarily on written records ("traces" in the terminology of Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos) in their work, Forgács works with amateur and archival newsreel footage, in other words moving images.

37 Gábor Bódy, "Hol a 'valóság'? A dokumentumfilm metodikai útvonalaivalhoz (1977)," in *Végtelen kép*, 57. According to Bódy's interpretation, documentary filmmaking after the 1970s can be divided into three trends: situationist, escalationist, and analytical.

38 Bálint András Kovács, "A játékfilm esete a dokumentumfilmmel," *Filmvilág* 36, no. 12 (1993): 13. See also Yvette Bíró, *Profán mitológia. A film és a mágikus gondolkodás* (Budapest: Magvető, 1990), 166–67.

His work, however, is significantly distinct from fundamentally interview-based “historical documentary films” (also based on the notion of direct cognition) that record the perspective of the present through the social relationships of remembrance.³⁹ Instead of relying on traces, Forgács prefers to learn of the past directly, from the narratives of participants. This is obviously not a qualitative difference, but rather one of cognition, which is nevertheless a highly significant difference in the process of constructing historical reality. Forgács tends to use visual documents as “traces,” even if his visual rhetoric and attribution are exciting precisely because of his constitutive use of the material. His work is always based on accurate research (archives, interviews, etc.), and the phase of execution is naturally governed by artistic goals.

Presented as experimental documentary in 1998 and in 2005 as a multimedia exhibition at the Ludwig Museum, *The Danube Exodus* shows captain Nándor Andrásovits’s amateur film footage taken at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s. On his ship named “Erzsébet Királyné” [Queen Consort Elizabeth], footage from 1939 records the emigration of Jews escaping from Austria after the Anschluss and from Tiso’s Slovakia. The destination is Palestine. The trip will take them down on Danube and through the Black Sea. One year later, the Soviet Union occupies Bessarabia following the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact, as a result of which German settlers of this region have to leave for the territory of the Third Reich. They travel upstream on the Danube until they reach Zimony (today Zemun in Serbia, it is part of the city of Belgrade), and eventually captain Andrásovits’s ship, the “Erzsébet Királyné” delivers them. History is presented on a human scale, while in the background the clashes between the great powers create the context. The footage records the experiences from the perspectives of fugitives escaping downstream and upstream on the Danube, i. e. the everyday lives at the time of Austrian, Slovakian, and Hungarian Jews and German citizens.

As mentioned above, the methodology of Péter Forgács’s documentary film differs from the traditional procedure significantly, in as much as he makes use of contemporary traces, i. e. amateur footage and contemporary photographs, and re-contextualizes them (vis-à-vis the so-called historical documentary that constructs the notion of history retrospectively on the basis of interviews). Forgács’s artistic approach, which is based on pictorial thinking, fundamentally

39 See Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (1898) (Paris: Kimé, 1992); Charles Seignobos, *La méthode historique appliquée aux sciences sociales* (Paris: Alcan, 1901). On their role, see Erzsébet Takács, “Egy vita története. A szociológusok és történészek viszonya a fin-de-siècle Franciaországában,” *Korall* 19–20 (2005): 5–36.

differs from the conventional writing of history. It turns the principle of source criticism, which is dear to traditional historiography, up-side-down using the footage as a *document* on the one hand and as *the object of pictorial rhetoric* on the other.⁴⁰ What is decisive about the film as a conventional historical narrative is that it really happened, while as a visual composition it freely uses found footage, sorts it out, repeats various episodes, modulates, i. e. attributes meaning to the document. These two different uses of historical document create the duality of the series. In preparing the film, the director conducts interviews and selects archival documents. In other words, he pursues regular scientific work preceding the fictionalizing phase of the documents. This is why the play with pictures is not a “simple play,” not the result of daring chance, but deliberate pictorial attribution: enhancement and accentuation, and in the case of Forgács, it is often the deceleration of footage.⁴¹ Beyond this, the pieces of the series *Privát Magyarország* communicate on many levels: the meaning is produced by the found footage, the inscription and the voiceover narration, but at the same time the filmic atmosphere is conjured by the musical inter-medium. Generally, captions of the pictures of *The Danube Exodus* provide the necessary historical background knowledge, while the voice-over narration (mostly the voice of the well-known actor Andor Lukáts) creates an impression of authenticity and the repetitive music by Tibor Szemző conjures the emotional atmosphere. Doubtlessly, Forgács’s use of documents differs from the manner in which traditional historians would treat sources. Nonetheless, his composition remains very historical in the sense of Siegfried Kracauer’s notion of the multiscope level of historical understanding. The German philosopher recommends the cognitive and reality producing techniques of motion pictures to historians, that is to say the alternate usage of close-ups and long shots.⁴²

Nowadays, of course, historians also use oral sources (oral history, narrative interviews, etc.), but let us not forget that what appeared self-evident in documentary films (including the “historical” subcategory), namely someone recounting an event, a moment, or his or her own life, was not recognized as

40 See the website of the research project: <http://www.danube-exodus.hu/index.php3>, accessed June 11, 2014.

41 Cf. Balázs Benedek Vasák, “Határesetek: beszélgetés Forgács Péterrel,” *Metropolis* 3 (Summer 1999): 127. See also Bence Nánay, “Rendet, rendet, műrendet!,” *Filmvilág* 47, no. 4 (2014): 26.

42 Siegfried Kracauer, *History: the Last Things before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

legitimate scientific practice in Western Europe until as late as the 1970s.⁴³ The legitimacy of this form of historical narrative was, in fact, undermined by the tacit acceptance of “nullius in verba” in the scientific tradition, which regarded all verbal communications as steeped in ambitions and power interests and therefore as something to be minimized in the interests of scientific objectivity.⁴⁴ In Hungary, however, a high-minded ideal of science was far from the sole motivation for documentary filmmakers. They were motivated once again by the conditions of the public sphere outlined above. This is why the Holocaust, the Don catastrophe (the losses of the Second Hungarian Army on the Russian front in World War II), virtually any detail of the 1956 uprising, or the labor camps established in the Rákosi era were all off limits for discussion in front of a wider audience.⁴⁵ The beginning of oral history research and the recording of documentary films was thus not merely a means of disclosing reality and representing a past previously repressed in the official public sphere; it became a moral mission to retrieve the memory of the repressed past for the future. “The guarantee for his [the interviewee – editor] sincerity,” says Gyula Kozák of this ambiguous situation, “is that he has promised to tell everything he knows’ (ha ha!) at the beginning of the conversation, and I accepted—what else could I have done? —that *everything* will be as much as he deems fit.”⁴⁶

Conclusions

In the construction of historical knowledge and reality, these epistemological problems are very real. The same difficulties plagued “talking heads” type documentaries as well, and before the political transition the only way of

43 Cf. Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). Oral history has an extensive literature in Hungarian as well; Virág Udvarnoky has edited a special journal issue surveying these findings. See *Replika* 58 (2007). “Elbeszél történelem”-dossier. Another overview is Éva Kovács, “Az élettörténeti emlékezet helye az emlékezetkutatásban,” in *Tükörszilánkok. Kádár-korszakok a személyes emlékezetben*, ed. Éva Kovács (Budapest: MTA Szociológiai Intézet–1956-os Intézet, 2008), 9–40.

44 François Hartog sees historical cognition based on orality and direct experience as a revival of the antique tradition of historiography. See Hartog, “L’œil de l’histoire et la voix de l’histoire,” in *Évidence de l’histoire. Ce que voient les historiens* (Paris: EHESS, 2005), 135–51.

45 See, for example, Virág Udvarnoky, “Történelem és emlékezet dokumentumfilmben. Hortobágy, Kistarcsa, Recsk,” *Metropolis* 8, no. 2 (2004): 50–56.; László Eörsi, “Dokumentumfilmek ’56 (1988–2003). Dokumentumfilmek a szabadság bűvöletében,” *Metropolis* 8, no. 2 (2004): 40–49.

46 Gyula Kozák, “(M)oral history: a szociológus nyomorúsága,” *Beszélő* 2, no. 2 (1997): 64. An overview of Hungarian oral archives is found in András Lénárt, “‘Történetgyűjtés.’ Oral history archívumok Magyarországon,” *Aetas*, 22, no. 2 (2007): 5–30.

testing the veracity of a statement was to ask several people the same question whenever possible (and this is hardly a reassuring method). There is, however, a major difference between the audiences of the two: the video interview, which constitutes a form of oral history, remains in the *status of document* (accessible to researchers in the archives), whereas the documentary film is a product made for a prospective broader public sphere (even if the film about the uprising in 1956 could not be screened until 1988). It is something that is usually considered not to be shown in its raw, unedited, dramatically unstructured form.⁴⁷ After the political transition, when new social science ideas and trends trickled into Hungary and the deficiencies of the public sphere were corrected, sociologists and historians were quick to criticize unquestioning faith in the credibility of oral history and documentary film. It seems symptomatic of the encounter between documentary film and critical theories that, of all possible works, sociologist András Kovács picked Judit Ember's *Menedékjog* [Right of Asylum; 1988] as an example to demonstrate how cognitive realism is eroded by the constitutive social process of remembrance. Focusing on the factual inconsistencies between individual interviews and adapting Frederic Bartlett's theory, Kovács proved that instead of reconstructing the reality of the past, oral narrative constructs it. The reality of the past comes to exist for historical thought through the narrative.⁴⁸

It would not be appropriate, however, to apply retroactively the currently fashionable critical trends as the sole acceptable ones on the basis of which to assess excellent documentary works and oeuvres. This is not my point. What I have tried to show is that sociography and documentary film shared a motivation: a demand for reality and realism in thinking about Hungarian society and history, driven in part by the structural lack of a positive public sphere and in part by the tension of social (and social history) traumas. This problem was not restricted to state socialism, but was present in the long term of Hungarian political culture. "Rebellious" sociography attempted to reveal a set of repressed problems, much like the documentaries of the 1970s, with their sociological and social history ambitions, and the historical documentaries of the 1980s strived to record distorted, concealed fates and events for the future in order to prevent their planned erasure from cultural memory. In this context, Judit Ember's documentaries, which represent attempts to salvage the silent tradition of the

47 Dramaturgical attribution in Judit Ember's film *Pócspetri* (1982) is highlighted in Pál Czirják, "Elbeszélés-kényszer, dokumentumfilm és a történelmi emlékezet konstruálása. Adalékok a történelmi dokumentumfilm és az oral history módszertani összevetéséhez," *Replika* 58 (2007): 91–119.

48 András Kovács, "Szórol szóra," *BUKJSZ* 4 (Spring 1992): 88–94.

crushed 1956 uprising, resonate perfectly with Imre Kovács's *Néma forradalom* [Silent Revolution], which explores the subject of emigration and the single child phenomenon. In this cross section of conceptual history, one can see that the concept of reality is not constant and absolute; at times the system of references to it and the dynamic relationship with it can tell us more about the period in question than any number of archival documents. Ever since Karl Mannheim introduced his concept of incongruence, we know that individuals relate to social reality not merely through participation, but also through the desire to be separate, to be incompatible.⁴⁹ If one is willing to consider cognitive realism as a morally motivated act aimed at counterbalancing and pressuring official ideology, a genre- and medium-blind group language of intellectuals unwilling to fit in, then the changing status of reality is suddenly not an epistemological issue, but one of the sociology of science. In the Hungarian history of thought, the constant, emphatic reference to the direct (i.e. non-ideological) cognition of empirical reality could well be construed as a symbolic act, after Geertz and Kenneth Burke, which however cannot help but be saturated by tropes, like all public discourse.⁵⁰ Recognizing this trope-laden rhetoric of reality, one can grasp the morally charged moments of value creation that aimed to counterbalance political distortion and silencing at any given time. In this sense the status of reality is political. The language and methodology of the revelation of reality was emphatically empirical precisely because reality had to be above any suspicion of ideology; this is why it never became a counter-ideology. The aspiration towards an objectivity above political interests made this pursuit of "reality" a metapolitics (to borrow Miklós Lackó's term) that consciously ignored and rejected ideological distortions.

49 Károly Mannheim, *Ideológia és utópia* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1996). In English: Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. from the German by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936).

50 Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 193–233.

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Péter Apor

Spectacular History: Photography, Film and Exhibitions in Representations of the Hungarian Soviet Republic after 1956

The article explores the implications of communist representations of history as it relates to representation and evidence in historical theory. It investigates the attempts of the party historians to establish a historical connection between the “counterrevolutions” of 1919 and 1956: as they argued, the counterrevolution that had been born in 1919 and ruled the country until 1945 and, subsequently, been forced “underground” by the Soviet Red Army and the new communist power, was able to “resurrect itself” once again in 1956. It examines how they attempted to authenticate this historical abstraction through various historical, mostly visual, records: photography, film and exhibitions. The article argues that an unusual attitude towards evidence prevailed in these historical works. Although communist historians boasted of referring to an abundance of original source material, their narrative frames of representation proved to be fictitious: sources were selected not in order to draw conclusions regarding historical processes, but instead to illustrate various pre-figured abstract constructions of history. The aim of this method was to maintain the separation of the empirical source base and the philosophical-theological imagination surrounding the meanings of history in order to unbind the latter from evidence and tie it to political ideologies and commitments.

Keywords: communist historiography, visual representation, authenticity

Introduction

What makes abstract historical interpretations authentic? What types of techniques, evidence and procedures come to the fore in establishing the authenticity, realism or credibility of various historical representations? What is the role of the historian in producing and making these means available? The following article discusses a special case connected to these broader questions. It examines how communist historical-ideologists, propagandists and historians proper used various visual representations, photographs, films and museum exhibitions as evidence for their historical narrative based on the alleged continuity of the “counterrevolutions” in 1919 following the fall of Béla Kun’s Hungarian Soviet Republic and in 1956 following the anti-Stalinist uprising that overthrew the Rákosi dictatorship. The article explores those intellectual and

political contexts prevailing in János Kádár's post-1956 restoration régime that caused the creators of communist history to believe in the authenticity of their abstract historical construction.¹

The problem of evidence and proof present in the historiography of communist historical writings is due to a remarkably significant extent to typical rather than specific ideological and intellectual backgrounds. During the Cold War, non-communist interpreters of communist historical production were largely interested in deconstructing and dismantling scholarship on the past by authors from Eastern Bloc states that critical historiography had with some justification—though probably too easily—disqualified as falsification and ideological distortion of evidence; consequently it had very little stake in conducting analysis of the modes of dealing with original documents and authentic historical records. As a consequence, this tendency of scholarship could not make sense of the admiration of original historical documents that was so typical of most of official historical production during the period of Eastern European communist dictatorship.² Contrary to the mainstream Cold War inquiries, post-1989 analyses tend to regard communist historiography predominantly as a means of constructing narrative legitimacy. In this perspective, the association of modes of emplotment and generic structures with political and cultural implications seems sufficient to understand the characteristics of communist historical representation. As a consequence, these interpretations risk equating the production of communist historical propaganda with normal historical scholarship and therefore hardly provide any means of carrying out a critical assessment of the ways and extent to which ideological historiography

1 Recently there has been a growing interest in the problems of material and textual evidence and in the possibility of proving historical representations, particularly as the use of visual means is concerned. The problem is aptly illustrated in Suzanne Marchand and Elizabeth Lunbeck, eds., *Proof and Persuasion: Essays on Authority, Objectivity and Evidence* (Princeton–Brepolis: Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, 1996).

2 Matthew P. Gallagher, *The Soviet History of World War II: Myths, Memories, and Realities* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976); John Keep, ed., *Contemporary History in the Soviet Mirror* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964); Nancy Whittier Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA–London: MIT Press, 1971); Michael J. Rura, *Reinterpretation of History as a Method of Furthering Communism in Rumania: A Study in Comparative Historiography* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1961); Samuel H. Barron and Nancy W. Heer, eds., *Windows on the Russian Past: Essays on Soviet Historiography since Stalin* (Columbus: American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, 1977).

deviates from proper historical investigation.³ This article suggests a different path and examines a case in which the appropriation of original historical records, the burden of proof and authenticity played an important role. Through demonstration of the mode of visual narrative emplotment, its moral implications and political context, I will seek to answer how the ideological prescriptions shaped the use and function of evidence in these representations. As a conclusion, I will argue that the eventual failure of party historians to establish a proper evidential paradigm rendered their narrative pre-figurations ineffective and their moral-political implications inauthentic.⁴

Revelations of Photography

The crucial component of the Kádárist myth of political legitimacy was the argument that the revolt in 1956 had represented a “counterrevolution” aimed at overthrowing the popular democracy established in Hungary, restoring capitalist exploitation, leading the country to colonial dependence on Western imperialism and restoring counterrevolutionary White Terror against all democratic and anti-Fascist forces, particularly the communists. Interpretations of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic became the crucial and decisive factor in transforming the anti-Stalinist insurrection in October 1956 into a genuine counterrevolution in communist terms. For communists the most shocking occurrence of 1956 was the siege of the Budapest party headquarters on *Közútársaság tér* (“Republic Square”), where the insurgents mercilessly massacred captured defenders of the building. The communists realized that these radicals had been present as an element of the rebellion from the very beginning, claiming that they had, in fact, organized the uprising and following the occupation of the party headquarters had openly called for the restoration of capitalist dictatorship and the annihilation

3 Georg Iggers, Konrad Jarausch, Matthias Middel, and Martin Sabrow, eds., *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft als Forschungsproblem* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998); Konrad Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, eds., *Die historische Meistererzählung: Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002); Rainer Eckert and Bernd Faulenbach, eds., *Halbherziger Revisionismus: Zum Postkommunistischen Geschichtsbild* (Munich–Landberg am Lech: Olzog–Aktuell GmbH, 1996), esp. 11–23, 69–82; Joachim Hösler, *Die Sowjetische Geschichtswissenschaft 1953 bis 1991: Studien zur Methodologie und Organisationsgeschichte* (Munich: Sagner, 1995).

4 From various perspectives, numerous authors have argued for incorporating the practice of research back into the description of historical creative work: Paul Ricoeur, “Histoire et rhétorique,” *Diogenes* 168 (October–December 1994): 9–26. See also David Carr, “Die Realität der Geschichte,” in *Historische Sinnbildung*, ed. Klaus E. Müller and Jörn Rüsen (Hamburg: Rowohlt Tb., 1997), 309–28.

of the defenders of the communist régime.⁵ The conclusion that the massacre of communists must be interpreted as a sign of counterrevolution was confirmed by the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, when paramilitaries who called themselves counterrevolutionaries and who aimed to restore the pre-1914 social and political order persecuted, tortured and executed communists, leftists and Jews. For party leaders the two events were strikingly similar. From the communist perspective, the revolution in October 1956 was none other than the revival of the White Terror that took place following the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the second coming of the counterrevolutionaries of 1919.

In this respect, the history of the Kádár era is that of a constant historiographical project focused on the documentation of the counterrevolution and its transformation into an intelligible narrative. The new communist government presented its official interpretation of the 1956 revolution in the so-called “White Books.” This series of five volumes was prepared by the government Information Office in 1956–58 with the purpose of publishing evidence on the “counterrevolutionary nature” of the events that had taken place in Hungary in the fall of 1956. The series was aimed at a broad public: the second edition in 1958 was planned to number 100,000 copies.⁶ The evidence included photographs of the lynching of party members and security officers, alleged biographies of participants linking them to the interwar élite and reports about atrocities or capitalist political programs that were supposedly taken from documents of post-1956 trials. The level of evidence, in reality, was rather uneven: photos documented real events, but they were not immune to various techniques of manipulation and many of the reports were distorted and in some cases simply fictitious. The first volume was issued in December 1956, shortly after the suppression of the revolution.

The evidence that the White Books accumulated soon after the end of the armed revolt contained a large number of photographs among the numerous testimonies and articles. A sizable proportion of them were shot by Western reporters who were in Budapest during the revolution and were published in

5 The standard book on this subject is Ervin Hollós and Vera Lajtai, *Közvélemény és terror 1956* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1974). A standard communist interpretation of 1956 is János Berecz, *Ellenforradalom tollal és fegyverrel. 1956* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1969), although this book provides a somewhat different perspective and presents the revolution of 1956 as a maneuver of Western imperialism.

6 Decision of the party secretariat, 15, March 15, 1958, MNL OL M-KS 288.f. 7/2. ó.e.

leading journals such as *Time*, *Life*, *Paris Match* or *Der Spiegel*.⁷ The photos, which generally followed the generic features of photographic war documentation, concentrated on the crowd, violence, armed groups and the ruins of the city. These photographic images played a great role in constructing for the Western public a revolution, meaning a collective social deed, out of the events of October and November 1956.⁸ The way in which the communist observers who compiled the history of the counterrevolution regarded this documentation is eloquently reflected by the first volume of the White Books.⁹ What dominates the volume even at first sight is the terrifying spectacle of physical violence. Photographs of bodies, beaten, tortured, executed and dismembered, appear one after another. Undoubtedly, one which depicts a young member of the communist political police stripped to the waist and hanged upside down has become one of the most telling.¹⁰ The gaze of the viewer is drawn immediately to the body situated in the vertical axis of the photograph, occupying it completely from top to bottom. Subsequently one notices the figures standing in the background of the illustration. A few people are watching the victim, while others are talking to each other or paying attention to something outside the frame. The chief element of the story is clearly the tortured and hanged body. The event the photograph wants to portray is not the action of lynching, but rather the result, frozen in time: the dismembered body. The cruelty that is made impersonal and atemporal in this way is transformed into a depiction of the barbarity concealed in the depths of human soul, but which on this horrific occasion has erupted onto the surface.

7 István Rév, *Retroactive Justice: Prehistory of Post-Communism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 246–47.

8 Sándor Horváth, “Kollektív erőszak és városi térhasználat 1956-ban: forradalmi terek elbeszélése,” *Múltunk* 51, no. 4 (2006): 281.

9 Seeing, like reading, has its own historicity and is itself a sociocultural product as well. On the historical methodology of examining the act of “seeing,” see Randolph Starn, “Seeing Culture in a Room for a Renaissance Prince,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 205–32; Reinhart Koselleck, “Modernity and the Planes of Historicity,” in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 1985), 3–20; Carlo Ginzburg, “Distance and Perspective: Two Metaphors,” in *Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance* (New York: Verso, 2001), 139–56. A general methodological introduction is provided by Peter Burke, *EyeWitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).

10 *Ellenforradalmi erők a magyar októberi eseményekben*, (Fehér Könyv) vol. 1 (Published by the Information Bureau of the Council of Ministers of the People’s Republic of Hungary. n. d.), 14.

The image of the corpses of fallen political-police officers laid down in a row inflicts similar effects on the observer.¹¹ No other human figure can be seen besides the dead, so the cause of death remains hidden. The subject is not human activity in this case, only its outcome. The photography that depicts the corpses of the executed in a perspectival point of view evokes the image of parallels leading to infinity: the viewer can imagine this spectacle of the dead to continue beyond the frame. The photo represents the impersonal nature of mass devastation and murderous cruelty. The stories told by the images attempt to depict violence in an abstract, allegorical manner, as illustrated by the photograph of a group assaulting a woman lying on the ground.¹² The gaze of the viewer is drawn to the center by the white blouse of the woman, which stands out of the gray-black background. Thus the viewer first encounters the fact of cruelty: the woman's body is surrounded by legs kicking her and hands twisting her arms. The image nonetheless remains impersonal: the faces of neither the woman nor the attackers are visible. In fact, the members of the group committing the atrocity appear below the waist, merely as a mass of bodily appendages directly carrying out the violence. At the same time, the composition is loaded with symbolic meaning related to gender: the woman's white dress evokes concepts of defenseless innocence, whereas the darkly dressed male figures surrounding her represent images of the untamed violence hidden in man. The spectacle of pure cruelty dominates the publication: within its 62 pages, the thin volume features 27 photographs of corpses, executions and other atrocities. Any logic among the photographs besides repetition is hard to detect: each illustration depicts a new instance of cruelty. The recurrent images of violence strengthen the impression of a flood of arbitrary mercilessness; the purposeless, unhindered violence evokes the notion of uncivilized barbarity. The crowd, raging wildly, showed no mercy and "bestially dismembered" its victims: one of the photographs shows a naked upper body with its head and arms removed.¹³

Following the June 1958 trial of Imre Nagy, who served as prime minister during the 1956 revolution, the shocking photographs of the bloodbath on Republic Square published in the first volume of the White Books come into a peculiar relationship with images of other anti-communist violence. The fifth volume of the White Books, which aimed to prove the guilt of the former prime minister, published a few such images. The first examples are placed on adjoining

11 Ibid, 21.

12 Ibid, 13.

13 Ibid, 17. The inscription reads: "A victim whose corpse was bestially dismembered."

pages: the first page contains photographs from 1919, the second from 1956.¹⁴ The photos from 1919 depict when “one of the leaders from the district of Tab was hanged in the main street of the village after the downfall of the Soviet Republic in 1919” and when “White Terrorist officers executed a peasant on the outskirts of the village of Kőröshegy.” The photos taken in 1956 show when “the counterrevolutionaries carried off József Stefkó, a border-guard lieutenant who was lying ill in the hospital, and beat him to death then hanged him upside down.” The photographs taken in 1919 focus on hanged victims placed in the vertical axis of the composition. Framing the images one can see counterrevolutionary officers either posing proudly by their victim or carefully observing the result of their activity. Both compositions thus emphasize the cold, merciless character of the counterrevolutionaries. The picture from 1956, placed next to the earlier ones, creates the impression of similarity by the commensurable composition, highlighting the hanged person in its vertical axis. The center of the image is likewise juxtaposed by a raging crowd, thereby highlighting the contrast between the defenseless victim and the cruel counterrevolutionaries.

The second examples are printed on one page: the upper one depicts the “Communists of Szekszárd in 1919,” who are “awaiting the fatal bullets of Horthy’s White Terrorists with their hands bound behind their back,” whereas the photograph below shows when “the counterrevolutionary bandits shot the surrendered soldiers from behind on Republic Square in October 1956.” Whereas the first photograph focuses on the victims of the forthcoming execution, the second one places the executioners at its center. Nonetheless, the differing compositions have a similar visual effect. The first image shows those awaiting execution—depicted as average ordinary people from all classes of society—in two rows, silently and calmly awaiting death. These two rows occupy the entire photograph, the depicted individuals facing the viewer with no visible sign of the firing squad. This photo thereby manages to emphasize the unarmed, non-violent, defenseless state of the victims, giving also an impression of innocence. The second image taken in 1956 places a group of armed insurgents on the right-hand half of the composition, while the other half is occupied by two figures: a body lying on the ground, apparently dead, and a person seemingly trying to move away with his hands held up and showing his back to the group of insurgents. The gesture of this figure creates the impression that the armed group has already shot the surrendered combatants, which, as in the previous

14 Ibid, vol. 5, 170–71.

photograph, builds its visual message on the contrast of innocence and mercilessness.¹⁵

The photos in the White Books are not illustrations—that is to say, they are not additions to or the direct representations of events described in the texts. They are presented independently, in themselves, even for themselves. Their role is to mediate the allegedly purified reality. Photography was endowed with the particular concept of objectivity during the second half of the nineteenth century. During these years, scientists started to look for methods of observation that could be made independent of the subjective points of view determined by individual value judgment, faith or conviction, and were able to record the phenomena of the world in their pure reality. The mechanical recording of data appeared free of the fallibility of the human subject: machines do not tire, they are able to work continually without breaks and they do not make moral decisions and aesthetic judgments. Images recorded by photographic machines became the authentic representations of reality, free of subjective intervention and independent of human individuality. Photography, hence, is taken as the unquestioned evidence of objective reality: the imprint of truth beyond the human limits of perception.¹⁶ Photographs are thus believed to be able to reveal those aspects of reality that sometimes remain hidden from human eyes.¹⁷ The similarity of the violence revealed something essential about historical continuity for the communist editors.

The cruel, bloodthirsty White Terror in 1956 was preceded by the White Terror of Horthy and his associates. Fascists allied with criminals, former village leaders, gendarme officers, Horthy officers and Arrow Cross men attempted to attack the freedom of the Hungarian people

15 Ibid, vol. 5, 172.

16 Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, “The Image of Objectivity,” *Representations* 40 (Fall 1992): 81–128. For the emergence of photography as means of accurate and cheap recording, see John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). The myth of images made without the touch of human hands as manifestations of the ultimate truth, however, arguably looks back on a longer tradition: “In the Christian tradition this power to produce the visible without any manual technique is attributed to the direct imprint of God on cloth.” See Marie José Mondzain, “The Holy Shroud: How Invisible Hands Weave the Undecidable,” in *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe–Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 324.

17 Thus, the photographs of the Shroud of Turin taken by Secondo Pia in 1898 revealed that the brownish traces on the cloth, hardly perceptible to the eye, showed on the photonegative the positive image of a male body. Peter Geimer, “Searching for Something: On Photographic Revelations” in *Iconoclasm*, 143–45.

and many brave sons of the Hungarian people. Although they felt in 1956 that they were just at the very beginning, the supporters of the fallen Horthy regime could not restrain themselves and tried to “imitate” 1919 with open White Terror.¹⁸

Communist observers thus claimed that the images of similar violence revealed an unbroken historical continuity ranging from 1919 to 1956, as if one could foresee on the photos taken after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic what would occur in 1956.¹⁹ The impressive photos taken as evidence of reality, free of human subjectivity, suggested the inherent homogeneity of the counterrevolution and, thereby, blurred and diminished its actual historical transformation from the White Terror through consolidation, crisis and war, to its eventual collapse and the coming to power of the Arrow Cross. In this context, a strange but largely forgotten history of 1919 obtained new relevance.

History on Propaganda Films

The physical connection between images of 1919 and 1956 directly contributed to the emergence of a genre that represented history in a particular visual way, which was turned into continuous flow of images mostly due to military propaganda movies. The Political Department of the Hungarian People’s Army regularly ordered propaganda films to boost the ethos of military duty by the means of evoking patriotic traditions throughout the entire socialist period. The canonical scheme of these films was the historical tableau that depicted in recurrent chapters the freedom fights of the Hungarian people, such as the peasant rebellion of 1514, Rákóczi’s insurrection in 1703, the war for independence in 1848–49, the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 and the victory of Soviet troops in 1945. This concept of history, which was most of all the visual display of Aladár Mód’s history book *400 év küzdelem az önálló Magyarországért* (400 Years of Struggle for an Independent Hungary),²⁰ was easily recognizable in works recorded after 1956. The message of the film *Szabadságharcos elődeink* (“Our Freedom Fighter

18 *Nagy Imre és bűntársai ellenforradalmi összeesküvése* (Fehér könyv), vol. 5. (Published by the Information Bureau of the Council of Ministers of the People’s Republic of Hungary. n. d.), 139.

19 According to Georges Didi-Huberman, photography was regarded as evidence of events to come. The photographic process, which was more sensitive than human eyes, could detect deep features of the object that foreshadowed future events, e.g., the symptoms of future mental illness in a photo of the insane, the crime to be committed in a portrait of the criminal. See Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (Cambridge, MA–London: MIT Press, 2003), 33.

20 Aladár Mód, *400 év küzdelem az önálló Magyarországért* (Budapest: Szikra, 1951).

Predecessors”) from 1958 was to highlight German imperialism as the main threat against Hungarian freedom. The directors contrasted this menace with the longing for freedom of the people which they supported by showing recurrent episodes of freedom fights. The film focused on the crucial role the people played in these struggles, which it intended to illustrate from historical costume dramas and mass spectacles taken from documentaries recorded in 1919 and 1945.²¹

This tradition was continued by the film titled *Az eskü* (“The Oath”), which was shot in 1962.²² This work is a feature film about the oaths taken by an army unit. The main character in the movie is a captain who has to take over the duty of managing the procedure due to the abrupt departure of his superior. After the commander leaves the barracks, the captain is left to meditate alone in the commander’s office. The camera centers on the officer’s face from a close distance, emphasizing his concentration and his uncertainty about what to say to the troops. The camera moves slowly around the captain, suggesting his state of mind, while the audience hears his thoughts: should he talk about his own life, his childhood, about the bitterness of day labor and privation? The camera then shows the captain from behind, positioning him in the bottom right of the frame, whereas the gaze of the audience is attracted to the portrait of Lenin fixed in the top left. The visual relationship of the soldier turning to Lenin and the Bolshevik leader looking down on the officer evokes the image of the believer asking for help from the source of knowledge.

During this scene, the captain meditates on the importance of the oath for a soldier left to his own devices. The significance of the oath is confirmed by his own example: in the next cut the officer remembers his personal experiences from October 1956. His task was to deliver a freight train to a barracks, however it seems impossible due to the railway workers’ strike. Meanwhile, armed “counterrevolutionaries” gather around the train. While the main character negotiates with the railway workers, the armed men try to get a hold of the train’s load. Nonetheless, the soldiers guarding the wagons defend the train, following the command of their oath, even in the absence of their actual commander.

21 Collection of military propaganda films of the Museum of Military History. HL 10010. OSA VHS no. 66.

22 *Az eskü* (The Oath), 1962. Collection of military propaganda films of the Museum of Military History. HL 10038. OSA VHS no. 39. The following book provided profound assistance in reading cinematic language: James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media and Multimedia: Language, History, Theory* (New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Memories from 1956 provide the moment of enlightenment: in one stroke they elucidate the meaning of the oath—to be faithful to the idea—while at the same time they also reveal the sense of Hungarian history—a continuous struggle between the tyranny of the masters and the oppressed people. The retrospective of 1956 evokes, one after the other, the memories of the historical past. The scene of 1956, by the means of a quick cut, imitating the rhythm of abruptly flashing memories, is followed by a series of graphics from the well-known Hungarian Communist artist Gyula Derkovits depicting György Dózsa, leader of the great peasant revolt in 1514. The film generates the impression of a story occurring in time by the means of images merging into each other and panning the camera within individual frames. The captain's interpretive commentary—as if it is the voice of the person who is remembering—qualifies this visual movement as instances of the antagonism between master and peasant. The process of recollection connects the individual historical events: following the meditation of the officer the spectator learns that Dózsa's downfall in reality represented an alarm signal for Rákóczi's cavalry (anti-Habsburg rebels in the early eighteenth century). The scene depicting Rákóczi's war of independence emphasizes the common descent of the rebels, their reluctance to fight in the service of noble commanders and enthusiasm in the camp for the popular leader Bottyán.

By evoking these memories of history, the captain draws the conclusion that the Hungarian Jacobin conspirators (a small republican conspiracy influenced by the French revolution), although they followed Rákóczi's rebels in the series of popular freedom fights, made one step forward and pursued this struggle for the republic. Memories of Habsburg oppression follow the execution of the Jacobins in the film. Historical scenes depict the sufferings of the people, then the revolutionary crowd in Pest taking an oath of freedom in 1848. The Hungarian Soviet Republic appears in the film as a chapter in these popular freedom fights. Images evoking the event show a popular festival, thus emphasizing the joy felt by the proclamation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which are succeeded by images of battle and speeches exhorting the people to fight. The part that represents the dictatorship of the proletariat corresponds to the tension reflecting the state of mind of the captain: the scene continues with a quick cut to the officer stepping up to the speaker's platform. The period subsequent to the Hungarian Soviet Republic appears as the age of darkness and suffering in the film. The images depicting the Horthy era show the execution of two captive men accompanied by gendarmes. The captain's voice, occupying position of

narrator, calls attention to the idea that during this dark age the power of the people was defended by the communists, who then guaranteed its victory after the Second World War. The concluding message of the film is that it is the task of future generations to defend this power.

Az eskü consists of long scenes and a limited number of cuts: the slow, relaxed tempo of nostalgic recollection provides the rhythm of the film. The captain's role as narrator renders the contemporary perspective of 1956 in order to guarantee the abstract historical framework for memories. The practice of the film in evoking the past apparently follows the method of the historian: following the gathering of data concerning the event under scrutiny, the interpretation of the entire occurrence begins. The apparent purpose of historical investigation is Marxist analysis: to investigate the meaning of history in general based on individual events. The documentary-like moving pictures are meant to guarantee the authenticity of the historical account. These frames provide recognizably distinct spectacles to the visual settings of the overall story: whereas the scenes showing the hesitation of the captain are based on fluid shots typical of the 1960s and a relatively low-key acting performance, the images evoking the past consist of fragmented shots which bring the archaic impressions and expressive acting style to the foreground. Clearly, the film is designed for impact, as if the past has been reconstructed from contemporary sources, like a documentary. In fact, the authorities encouraged the production of films on the period that applied documentary techniques.

The guiding light of the 1963 historical documentary film *Elárult ország* ("Country Betrayed"), which aimed to depict the political élite of the interwar Horthy administration, is provided by portraits of Regent Miklós Horthy and Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös situated next to each other.²³ The narrator explains these images, calling Gömbös the catalyst for the German imperial alliance who subsequently led the country into disaster. Following an abrupt cut, the film continues with Mihály Francia Kiss's trial in 1957. The appearance of this judicial process secures the function of 1956, similarly to *Az eskü*, as the point of departure for historical reconstruction and the fixing of the fall of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic as the turning point in history. The historical conception is similar as well: according to the film, the Hungarian ruling classes

23 *Elárult ország* [Country Betrayed], 1963, dir. László Bokor. Collection of military propaganda films of the Museum of Military History. HL 3058–3060. OSA VHS no. 64.

had been pursuing opportunistic policies due to their fear of the people since 1849, which resulted in the service to German imperialism.

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was depicted as a significant episode of this historical struggle conceived in terms of social conflicts. The documentary titled *Landler Jenő: A forradalom jogásza* (“Jenő Landler: The Lawyer of the Revolution”) attempted to render this statement plausible.²⁴ The work represents Landler’s activity in the labor movement, the culmination of which was his rise to the command of the Hungarian Red Army in 1919, using various photographs instead of contemporary moving images. The film is composed of slowly panning camera movements, which imitate the slow, contemplating gaze of an observer immersed in the surrounding social world. The movement of the camera represents the meticulous scrutiny of society, making it clear that the represented historical processes are to be understood as the result of various social components. According to the film, this societal surrounding is marked by tension and social conflict, illustrated by images of light and darkness. The documentary describes the story of society hastening into revolution by means of photographs depicting striking and demonstrating crowds, making the Hungarian Soviet Republic tangible as a social revolution.

The film *Elárult ország* tries to integrate this narrow historical interpretation into a broader context. The work clearly meets the formal criterion for documentaries to use cuts from various contemporary films. The logic of the visual display evokes the perspective of an objective observer, thereby putting the cinematic documents forward as evidence for investigation.²⁵ The shaping of the Austro–Hungarian and German militarist political alliance is represented by images of military inspection and units from the end of the nineteenth century. The filmmakers believe they have detected the real purpose of war, depicted by images of cavalry troops put into action against workers on strike. This method is featured throughout the entire documentary: images of formal dances and hunting excursions representing the luxurious lifestyle and irresponsible behavior of the political élite and ruling classes are juxtaposed by visual displays of privation and oppression. Shots taken of birth and death registers, intended to demonstrate mortality by means of evoking the concepts of archives and statistics, reinforce the aura of documentary-like historical authenticity.

24 *Landler Jenő: A forradalom jogásza* [Jenő Landler: Lawyer of the Revolution], dir. János Lestár. Collection of military propaganda films of the Museum of Military History. HL 3204–3205. OSA VHS no. 66.

25 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 18–29.

At first sight, there is nothing extraordinary in this practice. As if communist propagandist-historians are interested in the same questions as every other historian: how was the state of his or her point of view formed? What were the historical processes that led to the conditions of the present?²⁶ Communists saw their present determined by the conflict of revolution and counterrevolution. Historians hence behaved as if they were searching for the historical origins of this struggle, believing that they had discovered its archetypal event in the history of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In order to find answers to the question, partisan scholars imitated the method of investigation: they pretended to look for sources that would answer their questions and might reveal the secrets of the past. During their investigation these propagandist-historians acted as if they had been exploiting their sources as clues: based upon these clues researchers pretended to deduce what past occurrences the remnants reflected, creating the impression that it had been the reading of evidence that shaped the narrative.

The ideological framing of the narratives, however, confined historical sources to a curious role in representations of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The editing techniques of *Elárult orszáág* are marked by rapid shifts of sharply cut frames, which make the profound encounter and working with the presented documents barely possible. In fact, by applying this method the film specifically attempts to hinder a comprehensive and profound understanding of history. The short, rapidly changing images and simple narration following this rhythm are aimed at stirring emotions: contrapuntal frames quickly follow each other, leading the audience towards emotional identification with the oppressed. The film is ostensibly a documentary, though is in fact a propaganda work, the primary goal of which is the deconstruction of critical distance from the message, suppressing the voice of contradictory evidence. The real purpose of the procession of images is actually nothing less than to justify emotional proximity and to simultaneously suspend critical distance.

26 The importance of the questions of the historian in shaping the plot and the narrative has been argued by various scholars with many different backgrounds and interests, e.g., Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vols. 1–3 (Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 1984–85), esp. 52–87. See also Ricoeur’s “Narrative Time,” *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 169–90.; and “The Narrative Function,” in *idem, Hermeneutics and The Human Sciences* (Cambridge–Paris: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 274–96. This last piece is basically a summary of the three volumes. See also Christopher R. Browning, “German Memory, Judicial Interrogation, and Historical Reconstruction in Writing Perpetrator History from Postwar Testimony,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the ‘Final Solution,’* ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 31; and also the early piece by Hayden White, “The Burden of History,” *History and Theory* 5 (1966): 111–34.

Elárult ország tells the story of the interwar period by means of corresponding frames on Hungarian politics and German military preparations succeeding one another, which makes it possible to represent these historical events, otherwise lacking sufficient narrative explanation, as being parallel occurrences. A typical example of this practice is the quick, sharp cuts between scenes that depict recordings of the Nuremberg NS Party days and Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös of Hungary in national-style festive costume. The Hungarian foreign policy of the 1930s thereby entered into a direct relationship with the goals of Nazi politics without any particular explanation or justification. Another scene that juxtaposes the Hungarian rearmament program of the 1930s with the German–Austrian *Anschluss* plays a similar role. Corresponding parallel images, thus, integrate contemporary Hungarian politics into the context of German imperial expansion without any profound historical investigation. Images edited next to each other in these Hungarian military propaganda films summon a sense of affinity and elicit particular historical associations. The similarity of spectacle connects the historical events, persons and data depicted by these pictures, while the temporal succession of moving images transforms them into a narrative.

The spectacle of this historical continuity features the memorial exhibition opened on the 40th anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which was organized by the Trade Union of Railway Workers. The workers wanted to install a genuine historical exhibition representing the past by means of original documents. According to this intention, clearly visible on preserved photographs, some boards did not simply show copies of contemporary historical sources, but the actual documents themselves stuck to the boards in their physical entirety. The volume titled *The Establishment of Organizations*, which describes the history of the railway workers' trade unions in between the wars, was put on display to be opened and browsed through by the visitors (Fig. 1).

This direct encounter with the traces of the past, however, concealed the fact that, rather than being an accurate descriptive explanation, the sequence of the display defined the nature of the relationship among these historical documents. The exposition made its objects available for the public in a montage-like arrangement (Fig. 2). Documents of the counterrevolution following the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic can be seen on a background made of graphical works of art. This background is dominated by a gallows tree and the figures of a gendarme and a village notary grasping a whip. These iconic images attempt to establish the existence of a deeper, profound historical continuity, though remains barely explicated. The inscription “Year 1932,” visible on boards

representing the history of the interwar period, is succeeded by an image of the German imperial eagle, and the visual series is completed by a depiction of a Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross armband. The portrait of Hitler situated above the series of images, in turn, appears to reveal the essence of the power dominating the events in reality.²⁷ The exhibition in this way actually represented the historical allegory of counterrevolution, of downfall and continuity replacing genuine historical explanation.

A Look at the Evidence

Apparently, historical representations of the Hungarian Soviet Republic that followed the party line put very little emphasis on the establishment of critical relationships between historical evidence and narrative claims regarding the past. Documentary films commissioned by the authorities in general were not interested in creating particular indexical relationships with reality, where images mediate the authentic sense of being there and of direct experience by means of accurate references to the represented actions and events.²⁸ In a similar vein, historical works in printed media seem to disregard the traditional function of the footnote as a method of critical reflection on the sources of knowledge on the past. Historians ordinarily are expected to go to the archives, dig up sources and reveal their findings, together with the process of investigation, to the public. Hungarian communist-party historians ignored the fact that footnotes does not simply claim that the evidence exists, but also prove that the historian was there, meeting and working with the records, and has drawn conclusions from the direct experience with them. These works on 1919 had no concern for turning footnotes into tools for demonstrating the outcomes of obligatory critical work and testifying to the ability of the historian.²⁹ All these expectations, however, place a peculiar status of uncertainty upon the historian: he or she is required to reach conclusions, make claims and arguments, end the narrative and construct the ending of the plot structure together with its broader moral, political and cultural implications after meticulous engagement with the evidence. Since no pool of sources is entire and no interpretations

27 Historical Photographic Records of the Hungarian National Museum 48. ME/II/B, Box: Culture: Exhibitions 1957–1962. Registry no.: 59.523.

28 Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 108–18.

29 Anthony Grafton, “The Footnote from de Thou to Ranke,” *History and Theory* 33 (December 1994): 53–76; Carlo Ginzburg, “Just One Witness,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation*, 96.

are final, there is always a certain level of uncertainty in the historian's work. Historians are inherently dependent on the contingent collection of archives and the uncertainty of evidence. Historical authenticity rests on the certainty of uncertainty: an accurate description of inaccuracy and absences of evidence and a sincere declaration of the reasons why a particular interpretation is preferred. The intention of demonstrating evidence in these historical representations was not to reflect uncertainty by answering questions: on the contrary, the use of historical records was aimed at illustration of the given certainty of abstract prescribed statements on the past.

In fact, the manipulation of historical authenticity is detectable behind the appearance of authentic historical representation: the evocation of the past in works which call themselves historical documentaries aims to create effects similar to those in historical costume dramas. Obviously, the majority of historical scenes represented by moving images could not be produced according to original documents. In *Az eskeü*, the peasant rebellion of 1514 is depicted by art graphics, while the Rákóczi insurrection of 1703–11 and the war for independence in 1848–49 are shown by frames from a feature film produced in the 1950s.³⁰ The proclamation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the struggles of the Red Army are illustrated by contemporary documentary shots; however, the fall of the dictatorship is depicted by images from a feature film. Historical feature film, however, is a particular genre: it represents the events of the past overwhelmingly via individual fates and trajectories. Individual deeds stand in the focus of historical processes, while social conflicts and ruptures are conceived through individual mental and emotional reactions.³¹ Historical dramas do not present historical evidence for the spectators in order to drive them to consider, come to terms with and perform interpretive work with these proofs. The ability of historical feature films is to encourage emotional identification with abstract, positively depicted forces and values symbolized by the events of the past by means of establishing particular relationships to individual characters.

30 1848 was represented by images taken from the well-known historical drama *Föltámadott a tenger* [The Whole Sea Has Revolted].

31 Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen, Film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History* (Harlem–London: Pearson Education, 2006), 15, 38–48; Leger Grindon, *Shadows on the Past: Studies in the Historical Fiction Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

It is as if the construction of narratives about the past, namely historical interpretation, was the result of an imagination independent of reading the sources. Apparently, historians willing to meet the official expectations of the party considered historical research to be the value- and interpretation-free activity of selecting and collecting facts from an unprocessed historical field that had nothing to do with genuine historical understanding. As if evidence could automatically establish, by the mere virtue of its existence, a relationship with reality. As if historical evidence constituted a positive store of facts, independent of and unchanged by the interpreter, but which was at the historian's disposal to be selected freely according to the needs of demonstration.³²

The most important criterion determining the authenticity of historical interpretations, as György Lukács claims in his treatise on the historical novel published in Russian in 1937 and in Hungarian in 1947, is that they are able to represent the tendencies of development shaping the present. The Marxist philosopher expects historical novels to demonstrate how society developed into its contemporary form and which historical processes determined its contemporary state:

Without a felt relationship to the present, a portrayal of history is impossible. But this relationship, in the case of really great historical art, does not consist in alluding to contemporary events, but in bringing the past to life as the prehistory of the present, in giving poetic life to those historical, social and human forces which, in the course of a long evolution, have made our present-day life what it is and as we experience it.³³

Lukács believes that precisely because the purpose of historical representations is to detect processes leading to the present, many historically relevant tendencies reveal themselves only for the retrospective gaze into the past. Numerous components of the historical development remained hidden for contemporaries, which, nonetheless, became recognizable for succeeding observers. Lukács, however, is searching for more than the relevance of historical explorations as tools to understand the present. The Marxist philosopher is arguing that since the genuine essence of historical reality is made of those

32 On the distinction of narrative interpretation and positive factual historical data in contemporary historical theory, see Martin Jay, "Of Plots, Witnesses, and Judgements," in *Probing the Limits of Representation*, 91–107; Chris Lorenz, "Can Histories Be True?" *History and Theory* 37, no. 3 (1998): 287–309.

33 Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 53.

processes which lead towards the present, this reality becomes accessible through an adequate assessment of the present. The appropriate understanding of the historical process is dependent on the correct moral-political commitment and cultural-ideological consciousness of the observer-interpreter of the past. The purpose of authentic historical representation, thus, is to document the process of historical necessity as understood retrospectively:

Measured against this authentic reproduction of the real components of historical necessity, it matters little whether individual details, individual facts are historically correct or not. [...] Detail is only a means for achieving the historical faithfulness here described, for making concretely clear the historical necessity of a concrete situation.³⁴

To be a faithful representation of reality, one must depict the hidden essence of things, the theory of socialist realism teaches. As its philosophy claims, the hidden, but real essence and meaning of History or Reality reveals itself in its typical manifestations. However, to recognize and understand the typical, one must practice a certain form of self-discipline: one must learn not to trust his or her eyes, since the eyes, according to socialist realist criticism, reflect only objects as they visibly appear, but tell little about the truly important factors of human consciousness and cognition, which is accessible only by thought. For the philosophy of socialist realism, the visible observable qualities of objects—facts—are only part of the truth, more precisely, these are raw material which genuine representation must learn to use and even use creatively in order to discern the inessential and the typical. But how to establish what is important and what is not? The typical, according to the theory of socialist realism, is not marked by its regular appearance or majority. The typical is rather the crucial process which is just emerging to determine the further course and meaning of History. Therefore, reality is to be recognized not by considering the visible and the observable, but by contemplating the yet invisible and hidden. A certain element of prediction and fortune-telling is involved in this process, which could make faithful representation impossible if there was no guiding light in seeing the future. If it is the political center, the party that shapes the future, launches the processes to emerge and defines what the typical is, then true representation must understand, depict and follow political visions and objectives.³⁵

34 Ibid. 59.

35 Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 50–54.

Conclusions

Propagandist-historians regarded the form of historical representation that they constructed as having incorporated evidence into a comprehensive and comprehensible narrative, and thus they saw it as being capable of supporting their political project, effectively representing the “truth” of communism.³⁶ Communist propagandist-historians seemed to consider the authenticity of historical accounts to be the result of the success of representing cultural-philosophical concepts by means of various forms of art. The artificial division of the interpretation of sources and the creative narrative process had convinced them that the validity and credibility of historical interpretation was bound to coherent narratives embedded in a cultural context of narrative tradition. Communist authorities shaping the politics of history tended to believe that the credibility of historical representations was grounded if they acquired meaning as narratives. The validity of historical interpretation was well-founded if it was related to a culturally accessible set of narratives. They expected readers to perceive the correspondence between narrative forms and genres, whereas the form of the particular historical account was to remind them of those kinds of story structures which generally were already available in society.³⁷

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of the abstract history of the Hungarian Soviet Republic remained deeply doubtful. Instead of accurate references to particular individual phenomena, these works referred to general moral and cultural positions in order to draw (political) lessons and provide judgment. As a consequence of this use of evidence to invoke moral judgment, political commitment or ideological notions, the abstract narrative of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was conceived as it really was: a means to cover and conceal the

36 Hayden White assumes that the truth of historical interpretations can be measured according to the effectiveness with which these are able to support various political projects that enhance the security of communities: “The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation,” in *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 58–83.

37 Narrativist historical theory describes genuine historical interpretation as an activity of relating accounts on the past to narrative traditions: Hayden White, “Interpretation in History,” in *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 51–80; Louis O. Mink, “Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument,” in *The Writing of History*, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 143–4. Departing from this point, Hayden White calls the narrative account an inherently figurative account that endows real events with meaning by poetic means: “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” in *The Content of The Form*, 26–57; Frank R. Ankersmit, “Six Theses on Narrativist Philosophy of History,” in *History and Tropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 40–41.

fact that the communist fighters of 1919 had directly or indirectly contributed to the suffering of those people who were opponents or obstructions to their program of political and social transformation.³⁸ These representations of the past appeared to be tools of a particular “rhetoric against the evidence”: the rhetorical means of suppressing evidence.³⁹ Communist representations of the Hungarian Soviet Republic represented no evidential paradigm, no mode of reading the evidence, but realized an artistic modality: fiction that transformed the evocation of reality into aesthetic quality to reflect abstract world views, moral structures or ideological constructions. The mode of uploading evidence into prefigured narrative constructs made the representations of the Hungarian Soviet Republic appear as they really were: fictions exploiting original documents to illustrate the abstract fictive concept of the counterrevolution.

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38 Communist paramilitaries executed several hundred people for “counterrevolutionary” activity. Exact details will probably never be available. Péter Gosztonyi, *A magyar Golgota* (Budapest: Heltai Gáspár Kft., 1993), 24–30; Péter Konok, “Az erőszak kérdései 1919–1920-ban. Vörösteror–fehérterror,” *Múltunk* 55, no. 3 (2010): 72–91; István I. Mócsy, *The Effects of World War I* (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1983), 99, 102; Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970), 24–25. The source of statistics is usually the following two books, which are equally overstated and imprecise: Albert Váry, *A vörös uralom áldozatai Magyarországon* (Budapest: Légrády, 1922); and Vilmos Böhm, *Két forradalom tüzeiben* (Munich: Népszava, 1923).

39 Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric and Proof* (Hanover, NH–London: University Press of New England, 1999), 5.

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Martina Baleva

Revolution in the Darkroom: Nineteenth-Century Portrait Photography as a Visual Discourse of Authenticity in Historiography

Historical photography has always played a crucial role in historiography, in the creation of collective memory, and in the perpetuation of historical traditions. Of all the photographic genres, portrait photography is the most prevalent genre and remains the “vera icon” of illustrated histories. The significance of portrait photography in historiography is amply illustrated by its use in the creation of so-called “Bulgarian national heroes,” historical figures that acquired an almost mythic significance largely through their depictions in photographic portraits. In this article I examine the specific use of this particular photographic genre in Bulgarian illustrated histories and provide analyses of the motifs and symbols of the portraits themselves, both as historical primary sources and as epistemological instruments that have had a decisive and continuous influence on the historical process of the creation of “true” national heroes. My aim is to outline the genesis of these photographic portraits in order to shed light on the process of their framing within the historical imagination as authentic representations.

Keywords: visual history, illustrated histories, April uprising, portrait photography, carte-de-visite, national heroes

In his essay on the constitutive role of photography in the construction of ethnic identity in the nineteenth century, historian of photography Adrian-Silvan Ionescu identifies a genre of photographic portraits as representations of “Bulgarian national heroes”.¹ While Ionescu leaves open the question of whether this category of images can be explained by the ever growing number of photographs of Ottoman Bulgarians in a diverse array of military uniforms, the large number of portrait photographs from the second half of the nineteenth century suggests that this may well have been the case. They are today an integral part of the historical tradition and have become deeply imprinted in the visual memories of generations as “authentic” photographic testimony to and documentation of the national revolution. Not a single history book has failed to include reproductions, and they hang in every school and public building,

1 Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, “Fotografie und Folklore. Zur Ethnografie im Rumänien des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Fotogeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 27 (2007): 47–60.

almost as if an obligatory adornment. Even the uniforms of the National Guard today are influenced by this tradition.

The enormous influence of historical photographs on our conception of history is not a Bulgarian peculiarity, but rather a fundamental phenomenon, for which the photographs of “Bulgarian national heroes” are simply revealing specimens. The example of Bulgaria is particularly appropriate, however, in a discussion of the question of the construction of historical “authenticity” through visual representations, in particular through the use of photography. In spite of or specifically because of the postulated convergence of photography and history,² I would like here to examine their intricate interrelationships with regards to discourses of visual authenticity in the writing of history. In a comparative analysis of both of the subject-specific perspectives on visual “truth”, the historical and the photographic, I would like to discuss the conflicting interpretations of pictures in order to draw attention to the displacements, reallocations, reconfigurations, and new configurations of historical knowledge in photographic images.

Historical Remarks

Most of the national movements of the nineteenth century took place at roughly the same time as the general and rapid spread of portrait photography.³ In the case of Bulgaria, one can in fact date the convergence of national ideology and photographic technique to the year 1867. In the 1860s the global mass production of portrait photographs reached its first historical zenith. At the same time, in the Balkans an anti-Ottoman coalition came into being in the European part of the Ottoman Empire under the leadership of the Serbian

2 On aspects of the tendency to equate photography and history, see Herta Wolf, “Positivismus, Historismus, Fotografie. Zu verschiedenen Aspekten der Gleichsetzung von Geschichte und Fotografie,” *Fotogeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 17 (1997): 31–44.

3 In the course of the constructivist turn, the study of nationalism has shown that the emergence of the concept of the nation is closely linked to modern technology and its market uses, as well as the growing role of public media in society (the formation of media-societies). The technologies that allowed for the reproduction of text, such as book printing and the launch of newspapers, were the most important transmitters of the concept of national belonging. According to historians, the technological innovations that allowed for the reproduction of images, such as the wood engravings (xylography) that were used in the illustrated press, also acquired considerable importance in the creation of imagined communities and the global spread of the notion of the nation state. It is therefore remarkable, to say the least, that a comprehensive study of the relationship between photography and nationalism still remains to be written.

Prince Mihailo Obrenović III. This was to become a decisive impetus for many national movements in the region.

One of the long-term goals of the Serbian Coalition with the Albanians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Montenegrins, and Romanians was to create an alliance and wage war against the Ottomans, the end result of which was to be a confederation of the Balkan peoples. One of the most important parts of the military tactic of the anti-Ottoman coalition was the recruitment and military training of the Christian subjects of the Sultan. They were assembled into armed units that were supposed to launch regular incursions into the Ottoman Empire from the outside (from Serb controlled territories) in order to provoke the Ottomans not simply to react, but to overreact, and in doing so to draw the attention of the rest of Europe to the Balkans and prompt an attack by the European great powers.⁴

In the 1860s, the Serbian government formed a Bulgarian legion in Belgrade, alongside the Bosnian and Herzegovinian legions. It consisted of Bulgarians who had been recruited with the goal of creating armed groups of soldiers with military training which would support the Serbian struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire. The first Bulgarian legion was created in 1862 with the agreement of the Serbian government. The formation of this Bulgarian legion marked the birth of the radical political movement for the creation of a Bulgarian national state. Many of the Bulgarian recruits had been guerrilla fighters before joining the legion. Prominent figures like Ilyo Markov and Panayot Hitov, for instance, who today are two of the best-known persons of the Bulgarian national movement, had been compelled to flee the Ottoman territories because they were wanted for murder, robbery, and armed assault.⁵

Most of the legionaries of 1862, including Vasil Levski (1837–1873), the emblematic Bulgarian national hero, were also part of the Second Legion of

4 On the historical genesis of the guerilla tactics of struggles for national liberation in the Balkans see Stefan Troebst, “Von den Fanarioten zur UÇK: Nationalrevolutionäre Bewegungen auf dem Balkan und die ‘Ressource Weltöffentlichkeit,’” in *Europäische Öffentlichkeit. Transnationale Kommunikation seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jörg Requate and Martin Schulze (Frankfurt–New York: Campus, 2000), 231–49. See also Thomas Scheffler, “‘Wenn hinten weit in der Türkei die Völker aufeinander schlagen...’. Zum Funktionswandel ‘orientalischer’ Gewalt in europäischen Öffentlichkeiten des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts,” *ibid.*, 205–30.

5 In the 1850s, Ilyo Markov (?–1898) and Panayot Hitov (1830–1918) were active as so called “haiduks” in Ottoman territories. Compelled to flee from the authorities, they emigrated, like many others, to Serbia or Romania. Hitov wrote an autobiography that was to be published first in German. It was published by Georg Rosen with the title “Lebensgeschichte des Haidukenführers Panajot Hitow, von ihm selbst beschrieben, nebst Nachrichten über jetzige und frühere Wojwodnen,” in *Die Balkan-Haiduken. Ein Beitrag zur inneren Geschichte des Slawenthums* (Leipzig: F. U. Brockhaus, 1878), 73–261.

1867. It was formed on the basis of the first legion and under the aegis of Mihailo Obrenović III. Most of the first photographic portraits of “Bulgarian national heroes” were photographs of members of this legion, and most of them were taken in Belgrade. The photographic portraits of many of the Bulgarian legionaries were taken by Anastas Stojanović and Anastas Jovanović, who were Obrenović’s court photographers, as well as Pante Ristić.

However, at pressure from the great powers, the Second Bulgarian Legion was quickly dissolved without ever having been involved in any military engagement. The dissolution of the legion led to mass expulsions of the recruits from Serbia. Many of them emigrated to Romania in order to be able to continue to agitate against the Ottoman authorities. The armed bands (“cheta”, from which the word *chetnik* is derived) led by Hadzhi Dimitar (1840–1868) and Stefan Karadzha (1840–1868) consisted exclusively of recruits who had been part of the former legions. These bands became legendary in no small part because of the use of images in the creation of memory and historical narrative.⁶ Before coming to Belgrade, both Hadzhi Dimitar and Karadzha had had careers as outlaws in the Ottoman territories.⁷ In 1868, they led a group of guerilla soldiers for the last time on an incursion from Romania into what today is the northern region of Bulgaria. Hadzhi Dimitar died in the fighting and Karadzha later died of his wounds as a prisoner of war. Like many other Bulgarian emigrants, both had photographs taken of themselves while in Romania by, for instance, Romanian court photographer Carol Popp de Szathmari (in Hungarian, Károly Szathmáry Papp), Franz Duschek, and Babet Engels.

Following the mass emigration to Romania, the former Bulgarian legionnaires of Belgrade founded a revolutionary organization dedicated to Bulgarian national liberation based on the Italian and Polish political coalitions for national independence. Vasil Levski and Lyuben Karavelov (1834–1879) were both prominent leaders in the foundation of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC). The goal of the committee, which functioned in

6 Perhaps the first pictures of a band of Bulgarian insurrectionaries were done by the Polish lithographer Henryk Dembitzky in 1869. They depict “The Oath of the Band of Hadzhi Dimitar and Stefan Karadzha by the Danube River” and “The Second Battle of the Band of Hadzhi Dimitar and Stefan Karadzha in Karapanovo on 8 July, 1868”. They are two of the most frequently reproduced pictures, first and foremost in school textbooks on Bulgarian history.

7 On the seasonal character of the bands of robber in the Balkans see Fikret Adanir, “Heiduckentum und osmanische Herrschaft. Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte der Diskussion um das frühneuzeitliche Räuberwesen in Südosteuropa,” *Südost-Forschungen* 41 (1982): 43–116, and also Karl Kaser, *Hirten, Kämpfer, Stammeshelden. Ursprünge und Gegenwart des balkanischen Patriarchats* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992).

the Romanian capital from 1869 to 1876, was to create a network of secret revolutionary committees in territories of the Ottoman Empire that would prepare the people for a mass uprising against the Ottoman government. After the arrest by the Ottoman police in 1872 of Vasil Levski and other prominent members of the committee, who were identified not least by the photographic portraits that had been taken of them, the organization soon was disbanded.⁸ (Levski was hanged on 18 February, 1873.)

The Bucharest committee was reorganized under the leadership of Hristo Botev in 1875. In the autumn of that year a small-scale uprising against the Ottomans was rapidly crushed. A second uprising in the spring of 1876, referred to in Bulgarian historiography as the April Uprising, was brutally suppressed by irregular Ottoman troops. This reaction of the Ottomans was precisely the “overreaction” that had been hoped for. The “Turkish atrocities” met with public outcry all over the world and led to one of the biggest diplomatic crises of the nineteenth century. The massacre of civilians, which was widely reported in the Western press, was a welcome pretext for Russia to declare war on the Ottoman Empire. At the end of the conflict not only Bulgaria, but also Serbia and Romania were to achieve national independence.

The photographic portraits of “Bulgarian national heroes” that were taken in Belgrade in 1867 had just been published in the press reports on the Bulgarian uprising of 1876. They were first circulated as wood engravings in *Illustrierte Zeitung*, which used the images prominently on the title pages of two issues published in immediate succession. The portraits are of Ilyo Markov und Panayot Hitov, and both were taken in the Belgrade studio of Anastas Stojanović at the time of the Second Bulgarian Legion of 1867. Since the techniques with which images were reproduced did not enable the direct printing of photographs in newspapers at the time, the portraits of both leaders were recreated using wood engravings which were remarkably lifelike. But details of the area around the two figures, such as the carpet and the painted coulisse of the photography studio, were left out and replaced with an imaginary “Balkan” *coulisse nature*.⁹

8 Photography was used by the Ottoman police from the very beginning of portrait photography. The arrests of national activists like Angel Kanchev and Dimtar Obshti, for instance, make this clear. They were all identified in part on the basis of their photographic portraits. For more on this aspect of the use of photographic portraits see Stoyan Zaimov, *Vasil Levski Dyakonat. Kratka biografija, napisana po povod otkrivanje pametnika* (Sofia: Hr. Olchevata Knizharnica, 1895), 145, 172 passim.

9 Details on this form of photographic reproduction in the illustrated press of the nineteenth century and on each of these two portraits in Martina Baleva, *Bulgarien im Bild. Die Erfindung von Nationen auf dem Balkan in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), 84 passim., and Figs. 31–34.

Portrait Photography in Historiography

The use of photographic portraits in historiography can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century. The photographic portraits that a century later were characterized by Adrian-Silvan Ionescu as representations of “Bulgarian national heroes” were among the first photographs (half-tone prints, so-called autotypes¹⁰) that were reproduced in histories of Bulgaria. Dimitar Strashimirov’s 1907 *Istoriya na Aprilskoto vastanie* (History of the April Uprising), one of the first history books in Bulgarian, which used a rich selection of illustrations, is a good example.¹¹ The three-volume work contains a total of 59 portraits of figures (all of whom are male) of the national movement. They were reproduced using lithographs, wood engravings, and autotypes. The captions contain only the names of the people depicted. The text contains nothing concerning the images themselves. Only in the appendix to the third volume does one find an index of the “artists who made some of the published portraits (on the basis of the photographs).”¹² This index of artists is a rarity in the historiography, as is the remark according to which the images were selected by a jury (the names of the members of which are given). At the same time, the index contains no information regarding the photographic portraits, the places where they were taken, or the dates on which they were taken. In this regard, little has changed since.

Illustrated Histories and the Use of Portrait Photography in Historiography

Since the 1950s, illustrated history albums have become an established genre in Bulgarian historiography. They offer excellent examples of the ways in which photographs came to be used in historiography in general. Full-body portraits and group pictures are found alongside portraits of people’s faces, depictions of various historical sites, pictures of significant buildings, facsimiles of handwritten and printed documents, and images of military items, such as flags,

10 I am specifically not referring to the reproduction of photographic materials with the use of wood engravings, which became the most popular form of reproduction of photographs soon after it was patented in the 1840s, but rather to the reproduction of photographs using the autotype, the first process of reproduction, which as of the 1880s made possible the direct printing of photographs for journals and letterpress printing.

11 Dimitar Strashimirov, *Istoriya na Aprilskoto vastanie*, 3 vols. (Plovdiv: Plovdivska Okrazhna Postoyanna Komisiya, 1907).

12 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. XII of the register in the appendix to the book.

weapons, and similar objects. These pictures were taken in very different periods of time and their quality is also very uneven. They include photographs from the second half of the nineteenth century as well as photographs that were taken more recently. Usually the older photographs are studio portraits, while the newer ones are images of important *lieux de mémoire*, such as the homes in which significant figures of history were born, architectural monuments, and landscapes. The formats of the pictures are as mixed as the motifs and the dates of their creation. Photographs that took up an entire page, half of a page, or quarter of a page are found alongside photographic portraits the size of a stamp or photographs of landscapes that take up two adjacent pages. Sometimes the same photograph is put to several uses in a single volume, for instance first as a full-body image and later as a detail of the person's face. However, the photographic portrait remained the dominant genre, and most of the images were full-figure images of men.

In the second half of the 1970s the use of photographs in historiography reached a kind of momentary high point, not so much from the perspective of any qualitative assessment as simply in the quantitative accumulation of visual materials. A few dozen illustrated scholarly works were published, including a series of lavishly designed picture albums published on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the April Uprising of 1876 against the Ottomans and the foundation of the Bulgarian state in 1878. The jubilee album *Aprilskoto vastanie 1876* (The April-Uprising 1876), an elaborately designed work which included a preface by Todor Zhivkov, the First Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party, is an excellent example of the insatiable interest of historians for historical photographs.¹³ The album, which is a bit more than 260 pages long, includes 359 photographs, among them the whole spectrum of the photographs of “Bulgarian national heroes”.

The textual commentary of the book, which spans some 30 pages, concerns not so much the pictures themselves as it does the events of history. However, the narrative does contain some general reflections on historical photography that give some insight into the perceived function of images in historiography:

The task of this album is to provide the reader with a different kind of documentation and record of this extraordinary national event [the April Uprising]—the documentary photographs of the leaders and the insurgents. [...] The documentary photographic material [...],

13 Doyno Doynov and Christo Yonkov, *Aprilskoto vastanie 1876* (Sofia: Septemvri, 1976).

although limited as a vessel of scholarly information in comparison with archival documents, has its own scholarly significance and value. The photographs record certain aspects of the conditions, they show the place and time of a deed or a sojourn, they give an impression of attire, weaponry, etc. Their emotional value, however, is far more important. They reveal the physical characteristics of our forebears and in doing so complement their psychological characteristics and allow us to return to the atmosphere of the epoch, bringing us into more direct and real communication with the historical facts.¹⁴

Texts First

From the perspective of historiography, photography has a more “limited” scholarly worth than text, but it nonetheless possesses a documentary-like character and quality. This has a kind of authenticity that is different from the authenticity of the archival document. Namely, it is “pure” recording, since the photograph captures the moment, detached from the flow of events, and in doing so records only external circumstances, such as place, clothing and physiognomy. The advantage of the photographic document over text, however, lies in its power to prompt an emotional response, due to the immediacy of the image and its closeness to the “reality” of the past. Indeed photography makes it possible for one to return or immerse oneself in historical reality. While a textual narrative is, according to this view, a matter-of-fact document, the photograph is an emotional testimony that gives the rational, scholarly narrative a sensual quality and thereby also greater authenticity.

This conception of the role of photography in historiography is evident in the handling of images in illustrated publications. The structure of visual material always follows the chronology of the historical events, with no consideration of the history of the individual pictures themselves. Photographs that were taken at completely different times and under completely different circumstances, or for completely different purposes are presented alongside one another, creating a “relationship between representational objects that otherwise were very distant.”¹⁵ Images are always organized according to the historical narrative, and this in turn creates groupings according to chronological periods. This division of images according to historical episodes not only generates a specific structure

14 Ibid., 8.

15 André Malraux, *Das imaginäre Museum* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1987), 16.

for the heterogeneous images themselves, but also gives them a chronological and therefore historical coherence. This organization of photographs according to episodes of history created groupings through which a particular historical genealogy was fashioned. A glance at several of illustrated works of history, encyclopedias, school books or even publicly exhibited portraits suffices to reveal that the arrangements and sequences of photographs according to the chronology of historical events created a rigid “image order,” with its own iconography, visual hierarchy, and system of interrelationships.

The portraits of Hadzhi Dimitar and Stefan Karadzha, in which both men are heavily armed, constitute one such rigid, unquestionable iconographical unity. The portraits are always reproduced as a pair, although from the perspective of the circumstances of their creation they have nothing to do with each other, since the one of Hadzhi Dimitar was taken in Bucharest in 1866 and the one of Karadzha in Belgrade in 1868.¹⁶ In the jubilee album published in commemoration of the April Uprising the portraits are included as black-and-white, full-page images on two facing pages and the captions indicate only the names of the men.¹⁷ One finds the images set in the same way in every historiographical publication, including the fourteen-volume *Istoriya na Balgariya* (History of Bulgaria), which is richly illustrated with images in color. The famous photographs of the Bulgarian insurgents, however, were deliberately reproduced in black and white and, as always, placed on two facing pages.¹⁸

In the maintenance of the iconographical hierarchy of the ensembles of historical photographs, the reproduction techniques and, more specifically, the use of black and white continues even today to play an important role. The use of black and white lends the images a historicity in order to cast a homogenizing veil over photographs of very different provenance and also in a very different state of conservation, thereby concealing any visible differences. Thanks to the

16 The studio portrait of Hadzhi Dimitar is incorrectly attributed to Carol Popp de Szathmari. My own inquiry has showed, that the portrait was taken by Franz Duschek, Full-body portrait of Hadzhi Dimitar, Bucharest, around 1866, carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6 cm), Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij,” Sofia, signed НБКМ-БИА С 1151; Pante Ristich: Full-body portrait of Stefan Karadzha, Belgrad, around 1868, Carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6 cm), Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij,” Sofia, signed НБКМ-БИА С 41.

17 Doynov and Yonkov, *Aprilskoto vastanie*, Fig. 19 und 20.

18 Krumka Sharova et al., ed., *Balgarsko vazrazhdane 1856–1878*, vol. 6 of *Istoriya na Balgariya* (Sofia: Balgarska Akademiya na Naukite, 1987), 256–57. It is noteworthy that the captions contain, in addition to the names and functions of each of the two men depicted (who held the title of “voivode,” or warlord), the technique, the place, the date of creation, and the place where both portraits are held.

monochrome nature of the black-and-white images, the gaze of the reader glides over the images from page to page with no surprises and without ever stumbling across any irregularities. Differences in date of creation, aesthetics, motifs, color, format, size and the state of original image are all concealed with the use of black and white and transformed into a homogenous, generalized photographic ensemble. The images thereby seem all to have come from the same cast. Any specific qualities, such as distinctive aesthetic features, stylistic differences, or the varying states of preservation of the images are rendered indiscernible in order to create a visual impression of the forward flow of history, merging through the use of shades of black and white the many visual differences into a harmonious, “authentic” historical whole.

Transcendent Images

In spite of or perhaps precisely because of the avid thirst of historiography for photography, regarding the titles of photographic images the historiography is sparse. When portrait photography in the historiography is accompanied by title, it usually contains only the name of the person depicted. Sometimes it includes brief descriptions of the historical role and concrete mission of the person or explanatory or suggestive formulas, such as “Kaiser Napoleon III with his family” or “Hajduk Todor and his sons, who fought heroically in the uprising.” Brief narrative elements underline the documentary quality of the photographs and emphasize the historical objectivity and objectifying force of a photographic image. It is therefore hardly surprising that the captions only rarely include information regarding the date or the place of creation, and even more rarely include the name of the photographer, the dimensions of the picture, the technique, or the place where the original is held. This is why, in general, illustrated works of Bulgarian history have no picture credits.

The absence of information on the origins or the sources of images that are used alongside the textual narratives turns historical photographs into almost transcendent images, regardless of their alleged documentary value and historical accuracy. The people and objects depicted in historical photographs seem to have been captured only because of the natural laws of chemistry on which photography is based. Photographs are presented as pure technical images, which exist independent of time and place. Nor does the historical narrative, which usually lends the visual material its temporal structure, change this abstract character of photographs as timeless images. And the lack of information on

the photographers implies that photographic portraits are not the works of individual artists, but rather merely the products of a purely mechanical process involving only the technical apparatus and the lantern slide. Thus the impression is created that historical photographs were taken without any intervention at all, with a natural delayed release and according to a natural and entirely self-evident approach to portrayal, i.e. purely natural images. The almost incessant reproduction of the same photographic portraits with the same titles helps the apparently “natural” image acquire an incontestable status. Thus the reader of an illustrated historical narrative usually does not put any question regarding the actual circumstances of the creation of the image. One thus has the impression that the historical photographs were intended specifically for later generations, and that they were taken with no other purpose than later to become part of the eventual picture gallery of historical narrative.

Historiography of Portrait Photography

Let us invert this logic, and let the pictures determine the historical narrative, which does not only change the historiographical understanding of historical photographic portraits as natural pictures, but also the conception of historical “truth”. Thus we should analyze the frequently reproduced portraits of “Bulgarian national heroes” from the perspective of the history of images. One important question is whether and how knowledge of the pictures structured historical “truth.” Any reorganization or critical reordering of the material is beset with preconditions, so this critical inquiry is done on two levels. The first involves the creation of the photographic portraits, in other words the conditions under which they were produced. The second examines the circulation of the images and their social use, as well as the communicative potential of historical photographic portraits. Thus I consider two aspects of the “fabrication” of historical “truth” that historiography usually overlooks, namely the technology involved in the creation of the images and the social functions of historical photographic portraits.

Carte-de-visite: Early History of Portrait Photography

The photographs of “Bulgarian national heroes” are all so-called carte-de-visite photographs. The original images all have the same modest dimensions, on average 9 × 5.5 centimeters, mounted on cardboards that are 10 × 6.5 centimeters.

Usually underneath the portrait the name of the photographer and the site of the studio are written on the cardboard, but this is almost always omitted from the reproductions. The spread of the use of *carte-de-visite* photographs began in the late 1850s and constituted a worldwide phenomenon. An inexpensive method of creating series of photographic portraits, the *carte-de-visite* made it possible for the first time in history for simple men and women to have portraits made of themselves.¹⁹ Photographer André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri, who patented the *carte-de-visite* in Paris in 1854, found a way of taking eight images on a single plate, thereby drastically reducing the cost. From then on painting, drawing, sculpture, and the daguerreotype, the techniques with which the social elites had had their likenesses immortalized, competed with a new, more widely available method of creating portraits. We have this photographic technique to thank for the rise in the visibility of the common man and the common woman. As Helmut Gernsheim comments, the *carte-de-visite* photographs created the first “picture gallery of the small man.”²⁰

This invention, even if referred to pejoratively as the “proletarian form of portraiture,”²¹ triggered a momentous mass phenomenon known as “cardomania,” which spread throughout Europe and then America and the world.²² The influence of cardomania crossed social, cultural, and linguistic borders. Napoleon III, African American slaves in the United States, and Hajduks in the Balkans all found their way, sooner or later, into the ateliers of the photographers and thereby became part of a massive and entirely new business in photographs of human subjects.²³ This historically novel method of “seeing oneself”²⁴ in pictures had far-reaching consequences for culture and a decisive influence on our concept of historical images.

19 For a short introduction to the history of the *carte-de-visite* see Helmut Gernsheim, *Geschichte der Photographie. Die ersten hundert Jahre*, trans. Matthias Fienbork (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein/Propyläen, 1983), Chapter 24, “Das Visitenkartenporträt”, 355–68. For a detailed study see Elizabeth A. McCauley, *A. A. E. Disdéri and the Carte de Visite Portrait Photography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) and William C. Darrah, *Cartes de Visite in Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Gettysburg, PA: W. C. Darrah, Publisher, 1981).

20 Gernsheim, *Geschichte*, 366.

21 McCauley, *Disdéri*, 30.

22 Gernsheim writes of a “*carte-de-visite* fever” and a “*carte-mania*.” *Geschichte*, 358, 360.

23 In the larger photograph ateliers of European cities the average number of *carte-de-visite* that were produced over the course of six months added up to half a million. See the statistical data in Gernsheim, *Geschichte*, 361.

24 Roland Barthes, *Die belle Kammer. Bemerkungen zur Photographie*, trans. Dietrich Leube (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuchverlag, 1989), 21. According to Barthes, inexpensive portrait photography led to a “cultural disruption.”

The standardized format of the *carte-de-visite* photograph, which made possible the rationalized and optimized production of portraits, and the standardized poses and accoutrements of the photographic portrait had a homogenizing effect on the social circles in which they circulated. The portraits, which were passed down innumerable times, articulated a unified formula of depiction that was rapidly institutionalized, regardless of place. This is why *carte-de-visite* photographs from all over the world are so strikingly similar that they can be easily confused. Apart from minor dissimilarities in national motifs, clothing, or symbols, *carte-de-visite* portraits from even the most far-flung regions of the world hardly differ from one another. It is hardly by chance that the invention of the *carte-de-visite* photograph and its rapid spread coincided with the rise of national movements. Deborah Poole draws parallels between the market in *carte-de-visite* portraits as a part of visual capitalism and the role of “print capitalism,” as it is referred to by Benedict Anderson, who characterizes the print media as the motor of national ideology.²⁵ According to Poole, the market in *carte-de-visite* images strengthened the sense of community among the middle classes and their identity (“sameness”) all over the world, from the bourgeoisie of large urban centers to the ambitious merchants of the provinces and the upper and middle classes of the colonies.²⁶ She writes, “[t]he worldwide rush to purchase *carte-de-visite* photographs [...] reflects the extent to which these small, circulating images of self answered the shared desires and sentiments of what was rapidly emerging as a global class.”²⁷

Images on the March

Within a short period of time, the *carte-de-visite* photograph had become a constitutive part and expression of the modern lifestyle, progressive thinking, and social prestige. Anyone who regarded himself or herself as part of modern life and “with the times” could not do without the obligatory dozen *carte-de-visite* with his or her likeness. The possession of one’s own portrait was “a legitimization of identity and proof of a certain social standing.”²⁸ Portraits of family members,

25 Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 112. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

26 Poole, *Vision*, 112.

27 Ibid.

28 McCauley, *Disidéri*, 30.

relatives, acquaintances, and friends were hung on the wall or placed on chests of drawers or in albums, becoming objects of private devotion. Portraits of family members, friends, or influential visitors were not only dutifully kept, but were also shown to guests as evidence of the prestige of the family and its social contacts.²⁹

The ideal of earlier photography had been “vérité,”³⁰ in other words truth. The truth of the carte-de-visite photograph was closely intertwined with self-showmanship, theater, and the fashion plate,³¹ in other words with all the areas of life that involved spectacles and staging, and had little to do with the everyday. It is hardly coincidental that Roland Barthes derives a constitutive part of photographic practice, which he designates with the term *spectrum*, from “spectacles.”³² Like the fashion plate, the carte-de-visite was made “to sell a figure’s good looks and publicly display him to an anonymous viewer.”³³ Finally, this was the epoch in which Gottfried Keller wrote his story “Kleider machen Leute”³⁴ (“Clothes Make the Man”), an epoch “in which clothes were the man, and character was evaluated on the basis of external appearances.”³⁵ This display of the self and the act of posing prompted Barthes to characterize photographic portraits as “imposture.”³⁶

Staged Images

Early photographic portraiture was an important part of everyday life, but the actual act of having oneself photographed was an unusual and even bothersome, wearying experience. In the nineteenth century, the photographer’s atelier was more than a mere commercial undertaking. In many respects it was comparable to the theater. The place where the subject posed resembled a stage, the photographer was the director, and the act of taking the photograph was momentous, almost something of a ritual. In a studio in which carte-de-visite photographs were taken, one found all the accoutrements of the theater,

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 25.

31 Ibid., 23 and 36.

32 Barthes distinguishes three roles in the creation and consumption of a photograph, that of the operator (the photographer who discerns and fashions the image), the spectrum (the object or referent of the photograph), and the spectator (the viewer). Barthes, *Die helle Kammer*, passim.

33 McCauley, *Disdéri*, 36.

34 The short stories of Gottfried Keller, “Kleider machen Leute,” were first published in *Die Leute von Seldnyla* (Leipzig: G. J. Göschen’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1873–1875).

35 McCauley, *Disdéri*, 36.

36 Barthes, *Die helle Kammer*, 22.

including coulisses and various accessories for a wide array of tastes, such as rugs, consoles, balustrades, furniture, rocks made of papier mâché, painted backgrounds, bookshelves, musical instruments, weapons, and so on. These were not actual furnishings, but rather elements of décor made specifically for the photographic portrait industry. They had to be light and easy to use, so that the photographer would be able to rearrange them quickly if necessary. The studios also had a wide array of costumes to choose from in order to suit the tastes of their customers.³⁷

From the technical perspective the photographic studio resembled a torture chamber, to borrow a comparison made by Honoré Daumier in his caricature of contemporary photographic portraiture. The many problems of early photography included long exposure times and the lower sensitivity of the photographic plates to light. The ateliers were therefore vitreous for the most part, like green houses, and photographs could only be taken when the sun was shining, which meant that, as Barthes notes, “the subject had to assume long poses under a glass roof in bright sunlight.”³⁸ In order to provide some assistance for the person posing, who sometimes had to remain completely motionless for several seconds to a minute, so called head or body rests were invented.³⁹ This photographic “prosthetic”⁴⁰ was a stand with movable poles that could be adjusted with the use of screws and clamps for the waist and neck. The customer was placed into these clamps and adjustments were made for size and pose. Although the clamps were not supposed to be visible in the photograph, in most of them (and in particular in the depictions of men) the lower poles and the heavy base of the head rest can almost always be seen between the legs of the person posing. But this is merely one, if perhaps the most amusing, of many of the visible signs of the historical “truth” of the photographic portrait of the nineteenth century.

37 On the architecture and the technical and theatrical furnishings of a photograph studio for carte-de-visite portraits see Hermann Wilhelm Vogel, *Lehrbuch der Photographie. Theorie, Praxis und Kunst der Photographie* (Berlin: Oppenheim, 1870), 238 passim. Otto Buehler, *Atelier und Apparat des Photographen* (Weimar: Voigt, 1869).

38 Barthes, *Die belle Kammer*, 21.

39 There were various models of head rests. The best-known was an invention by the British photographer Olivier Saron. His brother, Napoleon Saron, who by the late 1860s had become one of the most famous photographers of New York, had a portrait of himself made in the style of the “Bulgarian national heroes” but with a fairly uncommon Ottoman fez. It was to become his most famous self-portrait. An autographed print of this self-portrait was recently auctioned on liveauctioneers.com. The image can be seen here: http://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/17996160_napoleon-saron-autographed-self-portrait, accessed March 18, 2014. Different models of head clamps are depicted in Vogel, *Lehrbuch*, 242.

40 Barthes, *Die belle Kammer*, 21.

Revolution in the Darkroom

The depictions of “Bulgarian national heroes” provide examples of visible signs of the circumstances of the actual creation of the carte-de-visite portraits. Their notorious passion for striking “heroic” poses in front of the camera was brought into connection with theatrical practice only on the margins, but was therefore understood all the more as a national drive.⁴¹ According to historian Christo Yonkov, author and photo editor of most of the Bulgarian-language historical picture albums, “the apostles of Bulgarian freedom,” in their “heroic poses, garbed in the most unusual, ‘insurrectionary’ uniforms of the theatrical props in studios [...], their theatrical poses and attired with an array of weapons,” merit our sincerest adoration, as most of them would have given “their heads without hesitation for the liberation” of the country.⁴² A critical glance at the portraits, however, suffices to reveal that the often extolled national revolution of the Bulgarian nation that we know from the picture albums had little to do with the realities of everyday life. The revolution presented in pictures took place primarily in the darkrooms of the photographers’ studios.

Disguise

Lyuben Karavelov and Vasil Levski, intellectual leaders of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement who were clearly happy to be photographed in “European” suits and not as “military men,” did on occasion pose in those military-style and “national hero” costumes. Karavelov, a publicist and the initiator of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee, had his picture taken by Belgrade court photographer Anastas Stojanović wearing an otherwise indefinable uniform of caftan, boots, and white Ottoman fez.⁴³ Levski, who was indisputably the first and greatest national hero of the Bulgarians,⁴⁴ was also the first and greatest poser for the camera. A wider array of photographic portraits was taken of him than of any other “Bulgarian national hero.” In works of

41 Christo Yonkov, “Kade se e snimal balgarinat prez Vazrazhdaneto,” *Balgarsko Foto* 5 (1978): 7–11, and idem, “Fotografski portreti na aprilci,” *Balgarsko foto* 2 (1976): 6–8.

42 Yonkov, “Fotografski portreti,” 6.

43 Anastas Stojanović, Full-body portrait of Lyuben Karavelov, Belgrade, 1876 (?), Carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6.5 cm), Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia, signed НБКМ-БИЛ С 668.

44 For a new and in-depth account of Vasil Levski as a Bulgarian national hero see Maria Todorova, *Bones of Contention: The Living Archive of Vasil Levski and the Making of Bulgaria’s National Hero* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009).

Bulgarian history, the caption next to his best-known portrait usually says, “Vasil Levski in the uniform of the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade, 1862.”⁴⁵

In the photograph, Levski is wearing a uniform that has come to be seen, both in the historiography and in popular imagination, as the uniform of the First Bulgarian legion in Belgrade (Fig. 1). Levski had his photograph taken not in the Serbian capital, but rather in Bucharest in the studio of the most famous photographer in Romania at the time, Carol Popp de Szathmari.⁴⁶ Thus the photograph could have been taken at the earliest in 1868, six years after the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade. The white uniform, with dark linings on the collar and the sleeves and lace fastenings on the chest, sleeves, and pants, is an imitation of Hungarian alterations to the uniforms of the Hussars of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy. Complete with leather boots and the Hussar’s fur cap, to which a feather has been added, on the balustrade against which leans a rifle, it looks deceptively authentic.

Other, less well-known men, for instance Branislav Veleshki (1934–1919), had photographs taken of themselves wearing the same uniform as the one seen in the photograph of Levski, though they used different attributes and coulisses and were ultimately less convincing.⁴⁷ Veleshki had himself photographed in the same “Hussar’s” uniform, but as an infantryman with all the accoutrements, including a knapsack and of course the obligatory *opanci* (traditional peasant shoes commonly worn at the time in southeastern Europe), with a painted landscape in the background and a seemingly misplaced balustrade (Fig. 2). Dimitar Nikolov (1833–1868) also had himself photographed by Szathmari, but he chose a more “Ottoman” uniform, though with a painting of a somber landscape (a park) in the background, identical with the one in the portrait of Veleshki, and the same saber and rifle that figure in the depiction of Levski as a “Legionnaire.”⁴⁸

45 The original is not accessible to the public and is held in the National Archives in Sofia.

46 Krumka Sharova, one of the most prominent scholars on Levski, entitled the picture “Vasil Levski in the *so-called* uniform of the First Bulgarian Legion, Bucharest, 1868–1869” (my italics). In a footnote to this title, however, she makes the following remark: “Actually the uniform is a Hungarian type and probably one of the props in Szathmari’s studio.” See Krumka Sharova et al., *Vasil Levski. Dokumenti, avtografi, diktuvani tekstove i dokumenti, sastaveni s ucbastieto na Levski, prepisi, fotokopija, publikatsii i snimki*, 2 vols. (Sofia: Obshtobulgarski komitet “Vasil Levski”/Narodna Biblioteka “Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodij”, 2000–2009), vol. 1, 658, document number 250.

47 According to the Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia the photograph dates to 1862, but this is highly unlikely.

48 Carol Pop de Szathmari, Full-body portrait of Dimitar Nikolov, Bucharest, undated, Carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6 cm), Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia, Signed НБКМ-БИА С 51.



Figure 1: Carol Pop de Szathmari, Full-body portrait of Vasil Levski, Bucharest, 1868/69 (?), Cabinet card, size unknown (ca. 16.5 × 11.5 cm). National Archives, Sofia, Signature unknown.

Pose

Along with garb and various props, pose was another crucial element of the staging of the subject for the camera. The poses were determined to a large extent by the head rest, which was used in order to enable the subject to remain still for the exposure, and the subject had to adjust himself to it. This explains why, from the perspective of the poses, there is hardly any difference between the various carte-de-visite portraits. The only surviving portrait of Nikola Vojvodov (1842–1867) depicts the young man (who was killed by the Ottoman police) in a Hussar uniform in front of a painted coulisse and grandiose draperies (Fig. 3). Vojvodov is facing the camera, his gaze is somber and earnest, his right arm is leaning on a console over which a heavy curtain has been thrown. He ostentatiously shows the rings on the fingers of his right hand, in which he is



Figure 2: Carol Pop de Szathmari, Full-body portrait of Branislav Veleshki, Bucharest, undated, Carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6 cm), Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia, Signature НБКМ-БИА С 14.

holding a telescope, while in his left hand he is holding a saber. The cockade on his cap is disproportionately large, and the boots are not real, rather spats have been put over the shoes in order to make them resemble riding boots. The lush ornamentation of the curtain, with the two heavy tassels, clashes a bit with the painted landscape in the background, but at the same time harmonizes aesthetically with the richly decorated hussar uniform, which is also adorned with tassels. The bare wooden floor and the stiff pose stand in sharp contrast to the landscape, the draperies, and the fancy clothing. The picture seems to strive to take its place in the tradition of depictions of the ruling class as a portrayal of a great commander, but given the theatricalness of the image the composition leans towards the kitschy and the trivial.

Karadzha also had himself photographed in the same pose and wearing the same uniform (Fig. 4). Unlike Voyvodov, however, Karadzha dispensed with the gaudy drapery, the telescope, the rings, and the additional ornamental clothing and spats. The other details of the portrayal, however, are identical, including the console, the landscape-coulisse, and the wooden floor, not to mention the uniform and the pose. Karadzha faces the camera, his right hand is placed on the console, and his fist is clenched. In his left hand he is holding the same ceremonial saber as that of his compatriot, and his left leg (like Voyvodov's left leg) is placed a little bit in front and to the side of his right leg in order to hide the apparatus that is helping him maintain his pose for the duration of the exposure. Only the differing states of the two photographs prompt one to discern the differences, instead of the similarities, between them. They were made in the atelier of photographer Franz Dushek in Bucharest. On the basis of the clothing and the fact that both men died in 1868, they must have been taken either in 1867 or 1868. Both men must have gone to the atelier in preparation for the armed acts of resistance in order to have themselves immortalized in their future role as commanders.

Uniform Series

Thus entire uniform series came into being. These portrayal series offer insights not only into the theatrical modes of portrait photography, but also into the preferences and the self-conceptions, ambitions, and agenda of an entire social group. If one thinks of Pierre Bourdieu's thesis regarding the social uses of photography, the series of photographs of the Bulgarian national heroes garbed in uniforms constitutes a "veritable sociogram"⁴⁹ of an entire milieu, together with the visual culture that created it. A glance at the carte-de-visite portraits of some of the more popular "Bulgarian national heroes" who all had themselves photographed in the same uniform in the atelier of Theodorovits & Hitrow in Bucharest suffices to give one an impression of the "revolutionary" tastes of the Bulgarians of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century (Fig. 5). In the 1970s, Christo Yonkov identified a highly pertinent problem, "The April revolutionaries listed here had themselves photographed in the same uniform, which looks different on each of

49 Pierre Bourdieu, "Kult der Einheit und kultivierte Unterschiede," in *Eine illegitime Kunst. Die sozialen Gebrauchsweisen der Photographie*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 25–84. The English translation of the essay is: Pierre Bourdieu, "The Cult of Unity and Cultivated Differences," in *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu et al. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 13–72.



Figure 3: Franz Duschek: Full-body portrait of Nikola Voyvodov, Bucharest, before 1867, Carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6.5 cm), Copy of the original, Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia, Signature HBKM-БИА С 75.

them depending on the sizes of their bodies. [...]”⁵⁰ The three portraits of figures wearing an officer’s uniform are convincing because of the cavalry boots, which give the staging a touch of elegance, even if the embellishments on the pant-legs were added later as drawings by hand. In contrast, the three men who are posing in opanci are a bit comic, since the jackets and pants are visibly too big for them. Also, in almost all of the photographs in this series the foot of the apparatus used to hold the body motionless is clearly visible.⁵¹

The observation that a group of “Bulgarian national heroes” had photographs taken of themselves wearing the same uniform and in the same

50 Yonkov, “Fotografski portreti,” 6.

51 The whole series is published *ibid.*



Figure 4: Franz Duschek: Full-body portrait of Stefan Karadzha, Bucharest, before 1868, Carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6.5 cm), later colorized, Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia, Signature НБКМ-БИЛ С 657.

pose should prompt even the most patriotic historian to question the “truth” of historical photographic portraits. In this case, the series of portrayals of “heroes” wearing the same uniform makes it clear that the military garb of the Romanian border soldiers was particularly popular among the men who belonged to the clientele of Theodorovits & Hitrow in Bucharest in the 1870s, as were the weapons. At least this is indicated by a remark written on the back of one of the photographs.⁵² Whether or not they went on their own or as a

52 See the reverse side of the portrait of Nikola Obretenov (1849–1939) by Theodorovits & Hitrow, Bucharest, 1875–76 (?), Carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6.5 cm), Photo Archive of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia, Signed НБКМ-БИЛ С 84. As in the case of the furnishings, the costumes, and first and foremost the military uniforms, were not real garments, but rather costumes made for a photographer’s studio.



Figure 5: Theodorovits & Hitrov: Full-body portrait of Georgi Apostolov, Bucharest, Carte-de-visite (10.5 × 6.5 cm), Photo Archives of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia, Signature НБКМ-БИА С 142.

group to have themselves immortalized in the role of a Romanian border soldier remains an open question.

We do know, however, that the carte-de-visite portraits should be understood as a pictorial expression and indeed assertion of a certain social prestige that the person depicted had achieved, or at least so the portrayal would suggest. The most visible sign of this prestige in the petty bourgeois circles of the cities in the European territories of the Ottoman Empire was the military uniform. “Sabers, epaulette, and feather caps”⁵³ were among the signs of modern statehood, a rational social system, and discipline and order. The “foreign” uniforms gave

53 Zahari Stoyanov, *Christo Botyor. Opit za biografiya* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BZNS, 1976), 8.

the figures in the portraits, who were subjects of the Ottoman Empire, an air of importance, and they ensured that the people wearing them would be admired, attracting the gaze of the viewer with their shimmer. Zahari Stoyanov, the first chronicler of the April Uprising, offers a lovely description of the enchanting charm of even the simplest school uniform: “The heroes of the day were the people who returned from the school of medicine in Bucharest or Constantinople, or the School of Commerce in Vienna, or any kind of school that had a uniform, two or three gold buttons, a cap with flourishes.”⁵⁴ A uniform was a clear sign of success and social advancement. The uniform filled the person who wore it with pride and won him the respect of others. It was a symbol of power and a forward-looking attitude, a sign of a “new era [and a new] time, in which even a Bulgarian carries a saber.”⁵⁵ The carte-de-visite portrait was the perfect representation of the vision of a subject of the Ottoman Empire who sought to portray himself as a modern man. It provided a visual delineation of this masculine fantasy and, because of the apparent reliability of the photograph as a documentary image, invested it with authenticity.

The Facebook of Nineteenth Century or an Attempt at a Conclusion

The carte-de-visite portraits represented an important implement in modern communication and social networking. The relatively inexpensive photographs were referred to as carte-de-visite for a reason. They served as useful tools when people sought to present themselves and establish their places in various social contexts and hierarchies. In addition to this practical use, they also had what could be referred to as an exchange value. As they fit easily into someone’s pocket, carte-de-visite portraits were predestined to be traded, and they thereby acquired an important social function and an equally important role in the expression and communication of status. The portraits circulated through a wide array of channels. They were sent by mail, exchanged, given as gifts, and even collected. People used them to introduce themselves or to court a beloved, or they simply dedicated them to friends. The circulation of a portrait guaranteed recognition and membership in certain social circles and groups. The carte-de-visite rapidly became a meaningful social medium, without which one could hardly hope to participate in the social life of the time. It was the precursor to the social networking tool of our time, a kind of Facebook of the nineteenth century.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 9.

In addition to their function as representations of uniformed masculinity, the portraits of the “Bulgarian national heroes” had significance as a medium of communication that must not be underestimated. This is indicated by the dedications on the backs of the portraits, elegant calligraphy written in ink with a quill. Like many of his contemporaries, Toma Kardzhiev (1850–1887), a teacher and the organizer of a local revolutionary committee, wrote a dedication on his portrait to Dimitar Gorov, a Bulgarian entrepreneur in Romania and a patron of radical Bulgarian national circles: “To my friend D. Gorov as a sign of *truthfulness*.”⁵⁶ From the perspective of elegance and imagination, Kardzhiev’s portrait could hardly have been outdone. He is garbed in a hussar’s uniform, with saber and gun, and is standing on a checkered rug in front of a neutral background. The dedication is dated 14 May, 1876, just after the bloody suppression of the April Uprising, in which Kardzhiev participated only indirectly. He was photographed in Bucharest by Babet Engels.

The function of the portraits of “Bulgarian national heroes” was certainly by no means limited to their role as a mediator to the social network of radical nationalistic circles or a tool in the maintenance of ties to people who shared their ideas. The portraits were clearly also central components of the logistics of insurgency. The circulation of the portraits went far beyond the private sphere or the narrow social network. As Poole observes, “As a form of social currency [...] the *carte de visite* circulated through channels much broader than the immediate network of friends and acquaintances [...]”⁵⁷ The photographs of “Bulgarian national heroes” were intended to saturate all the layers of society with the ideology that they embodied in a manner that, at the time, was entirely new. Vasil Levski, who had considerable experience in the art of self-invention through photography, recognized the potential of the *carte-de-visite* portrait, which could be easily and inexpensively reproduced, in the efforts to kindle agitation. He put the *carte-de-visite* portrait to use in order to attract and recruit comrades-in-arms. In his letters he often instructed his fellow-fighters to have portraits of him wearing “legionnaire” uniform circulated among the people.⁵⁸ Clearly he assumed that the everyday “man on the street” could be convinced to join the armed uprising by

56 See the back of the portrait of Toma Kardzhiev by Babet Engels, Bucharest, 1876 (?), *Carte-de-visite* (10.5 × 6.5 cm), Photo Archive of the National Library “Kiril i Metodij”, Sofia, Signed НБКМ-БИА С 99. My italics.

57 Poole, *Vision*, 112.

58 According to the founder of the digital photo archives “Lostbulgaria” (<http://www.lostbulgaria.com/>), Peyo Kolev, “Levski’s moustache is painted,” *24 chasa* (February 16, 2013). Accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=1775136>.

the depictions of “Bulgarian national heroes.” Finally, the carte-de-visite enabled the national revolutionaries to widen their spheres of influence and extend the revolutionary network beyond cultural, social and linguistic borders.

Once set in motion, the circulation of the portraits of the “Bulgarian national heroes” did not necessarily prompt the observer to take action, but it did prompt many observers to follow suit. This explains the striking rise in the number of photographic portraits that were done in the widest array of military uniforms, photographs that are stored by the hundreds in the Bulgarian archives. Paraphrasing Roland Barthes, the photograph invests the subject, depicted in a military uniform, with at least a metaphorical existence as a “national hero.” And it was the uniform that allowed the historical portraits to become part of historiography, and through historiography they became part of culture, immortalized one more time in photograph albums, this time as “genuine” national heroes.⁵⁹ In the end, the iconographic and aesthetic similarities of the portraits, for instance the ubiquitous uniform, created a welcome occasion for historiography to craft a homogenous collective image in order to create the impression today of a self-contained, unified military movement for national liberation. The pictures were dislodged from their original “authentic” context in order to ascribe a different “truth” to them, and thereby also a different interpretation that in the end integrated these innumerable uniform portraits in a homogenous image of history as the embodiments of an “authentic” national body.

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⁵⁹ Compare with Barthes, who regards any picture that has been included in an album as having passed through the filter of culture. *Die helle Kammer*, 25.

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Translated from German by Thomas Cooper



Łukasz Sommer

Historical Linguistics Applied: Finno-Ugric Narratives in Finland and Estonia

Finno-Ugricity is one of the linguistic concepts whose meaning and usage have been extended beyond the boundaries of linguistics and applied in identity-building projects. The geographically and historically related cases of Finland and Estonia provide a good illustration of the uses of linguistic scholarship in the service of nationalism. More elusive than ties of “Slavic kinship” and not as easily translatable into a pan-ethnic ideology, the concept of Finno-Ugric kinship has nevertheless had a steady presence in the development of Finnish and Estonian identities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, entangling the two countries’ linguistic traditions in a web of national engagements. In both cases, the original idea of linguistic kinship was subject to non-linguistic interpretations so as to highlight and contextualize various aspects of the Finnish and Estonian self-images, notions of collective past, and cultural heritage. In both cases, the concept proved highly flexible.

Keywords: Finland, Estonia, Finno-Ugric studies, historical linguistics, ethnicity, nationalism

What is Finno-Ugric?

In an article published in 2009, Stefan Troebst notices the problematic nature of “Slavic studies” as a unitary field of research. As he points out, there are two academically institutionalized areas of study with strong links to the “Slavic world”; however, he goes on, “while the historical field of East European history has [...] emancipated itself from the ‘Slavic world’ as a framework of reference, Slavic philology remains chained to it.” He then quotes German Slavist Norbert Franz, who suggests that one sensible way of integrating the field would be to focus on the “discourse of Slavicity” [*Slawen-Diskurs*].¹

That philology’s connection to its titular language(s) should be perceived as “enchainment” is not obvious. After all, language affiliation is what defines a philology in the academic taxonomy of departmentalized fields. If anything, it seems that Slavic philology lends itself to this kind of criticism particularly easily because of the relative geographical consistency of its titular language

1 Stefan Troebst, “Slavizität,” *Osteuropa* 59, no. 12 (2009): 12–13.

area. The overlapping of “Slavic” and “East European” is extensive and easy to take for granted, while the discrepancies (i.e. the non-Slavic-speaking parts of Eastern Europe) may easily come to be seen as proof of the insufficiency of the “Slavic” label, a notion reflected by the frequent use of the combination “Slavic and East European.” Originally, however, it results from the assumption that the language-based concept of “Slavicity” encompasses so much more than language that it should work just as fine as a name for a whole region.

Paradoxically, in the case of “Slavicity” this assumption is perhaps more accurate or usefully descriptive than in most other cases. The problem discussed by Troebst, it seems, does not concern Slavic studies in particular, but the very notion of “philology”: an area of study defined by language and therefore expected to combine linguistics and literary studies as parts of one field; expected, at the same time, to focus on language and/or literature, and yet somehow to transcend them, covering other spheres of knowledge concerning a geographical or cultural area. It rests on the old Humboldtian idea that language, in all its diversity, is so central to “mankind’s spiritual development” that it should form the fundamental criterion in the classification of the human world—cultures, ethnicities, nations, parts of the world or trends in world history. The Slavic case is relatively unproblematic in this respect; there are other philologically defined areas of study whose linguistic foundations have a much more limiting effect than in the Slavic case.

Finno-Ugric studies is a case of an institutionalized field in which the Humboldtian glottocentrism (i.e. the notion of language as the ultimate core of human nature and linguistics as the ultimate core of any human science) proves poignantly inadequate in providing extralinguistic frameworks. The name refers to a family of languages, divided into several subgroups and scattered across Northeastern Europe (parts of Scandinavia, the east-Baltic coast, Russia between the Volga and the Urals), Central Europe and Western Siberia. They are geographically dispersed and their mutual affinity is close only within particular branches, especially when it coincides with territorial proximity—as in the case of Finnish and Estonian. The same pattern applies to communities of speakers, who represent a variety of ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations. Even the oldest elements of their cultural heritage tend neither to cover the entire language group nor be exclusively “Finno-Ugric.” The distant nature of linguistic kinship combined with the lack of any non-linguistic bonds that would encompass all speaker communities arguably make the Finno-Ugric family more like the Indo-European, another broad, highly diverse group that includes e.g. German, Rumanian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Greek, Welsh, Sanskrit and Persian,

all bound by a reconstructed proto-language. In fact, the linguistic concept of Finno-Ugric kinship was established at about the same time as the notion of an Indo-European proto-language, i.e. late in the eighteenth century, along with the rise of comparative and historical linguistics. This parallelism, however, is not reflected in the two groups' institutional academic status. Indo-European studies have a distinct identity: they belong to the field of historical linguistics, devoted to the study of the common origins of the Indo-European language family. The academic position of Finno-Ugric studies as a field with departments of its own makes it more of a traditional "philology," parallel to Slavic, Germanic or Romance studies. The proto-Finno-Ugric linguistic heritage may be the core area of interests, but the name is also used as an umbrella term that covers the study of particular languages of the group, as well as Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian literatures, and, to some extent, the ethnography of Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples. The linguistic connection thus serves as the basis for lumping together a number of largely unrelated research areas, suggesting an extralinguistic community that in fact hardly exists.²

There is one aspect of "Finno-Ugricity," however, where the concept convincingly transcends linguistics and acquires a historical and cultural dimension. Compared with the periods of time involved in the inquiries of historical linguists, it is a relatively recent phenomenon, because it has to do with the emergence of modern nationalism and the growth of linguistics as a science. Starting in the eighteenth century, the discovery of a linguistic affinity between Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian, Sámi (Lapp) and a number of indigenous languages of Russia³ has been elaborated upon by nationalist-minded intellectuals of the three countries in order to develop and reinforce concepts of pan-ethnic kinship. Constructed as they may have been, these concepts did

2 This popular misapplication of linguistic terms and of the kinship metaphor beyond historical linguistics accounts for some of the resistance to Fenno-Ugricity in the Hungarian tradition as well as for some forms of Fenno-Ugric enthusiasm elsewhere. See Johanna Laakso, "Interpretations and misinterpretations of Finno-Ugric language relatedness" (paper presented at the 45th Annual Meeting of Societas Linguistica Europaea in Stockholm, 30.08.2012, available at https://www.academia.edu/1896628/Interpretations_and_misinterpretations_of_Finno-Ugric_language_relatedness, accessed July 2, 2014) for a concise, sober discussion of both phenomena.

3 The less known Finno-Ugric languages include Karelian, Votian, Livonian, Vepsian, (closely related to Finnish and Estonian and used in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea), Komi, Udmurt/Votyak, Mari/Cheremis, Erzya, Moksha (between the Volga and the Urals), Khanti/Ostyak and Mansi/Vogul (West Siberia). Together with the Samoyed languages of Northwestern Siberia (e.g. Nenets, Nganasan), the Finno-Ugric languages form a greater Uralic family. Some linguists classify the Samoyed languages as part of the Finno-Ugric group, thus treating the terms "Finno-Ugric" and "Uralic" as synonyms.

affect collective self-images and, to some extent, actual policies of the emergent national movements. The ways in which the notion of Finno-Ugric kinship stimulated the collective imagination bears some resemblance to the better known and more effectively politicized ideologies of Slavicity. The direction proposed by Franz and Troebst for Slavic studies, focusing on the “discourse of Slavicity,” seems at least as sensible for the Finno-Ugric equivalent.

Origins of the Concept

The Pan-Slavic movement was in fact a point of reference for the early Finnish proponents of Finno-Ugricity. In 1844 the young intellectual Zacharias Topelius, later known as one of the grand old men of the “Fennoman” movement and the person who introduced the notion of “national history” to the wider public, published an essay on “Finnish Literature and its Future,” in which he made the following remark:

Two hundred years ago few would have believed that the Slavic tribe would attain the prominent (and constantly growing) position it enjoys nowadays in the history of culture. What if one day the Finnish tribe, which occupies a territory almost as vast, were to play a greater role on the world scene than one could expect nowadays? [...] Today people speak of Pan-Slavism; one day they may talk of Pan-Fennicism, or Pan-Suomism. Within such a Pan-Finnic community, the Finnish nation should hold the leading position because of its cultural seniority [...].⁴

The boldness of the Pan-Slavic parallel makes Topelius’ statement rather unprecedented, but as it so happens it sprung from a tradition that was about a quarter of a century old at the time, i.e. about as old as Finnish nationalism and national discourse.

The linguistic kinship itself had been recognized somewhat longer. The idea formed gradually in the course of the eighteenth century and came to be solidly established by its last third. According to most of the early concepts, Finnish was a central point of reference for other related languages, and the family was usually referred to as “Finnic.” This terminological tradition continues in today’s term “Finno-Ugric,” which has been in use since the 1860s and reflects the fact that

4 Zacharias Topelius, “Den Finska Literaturen och dess Framtid,” *Helsingfors Tidningar* 40 (May 22, 1844): 2.

the foundations of modern Finno-Ugric studies were laid by demonstrating the common origins of the already recognized “Finnic” language group *and* Hungarian.

Despite the Finno-centric terminology, the early period of Finno-Ugric language studies was marked by the absence of Finnish scholars. For a long time, due to the peripheral position of the country and of its only academic center, the Royal Academy of Åbo (Turku), Finns played virtually no role in the field. Throughout the eighteenth century, most significant works were published in Stockholm, Göttingen and St. Petersburg. Meanwhile, some Finnish scholars still produced old-fashioned studies based on supposed affinities between Finnish and Hebrew or Finnish and Greek. Outside the academia, there had always been some popular awareness of linguistic affinities between the closely related Baltic Finnic dialects spoken in Finland, Estonia, Russian Karelia or Ingria, especially in the border regions, where language contact was frequent. The scientific concept of linguistic kinship, however, had to be brought from abroad. Until 1883, when the Helsinki-based Finno-Ugric Society was founded, the most important center of Finno-Ugric research was the Imperial Academy in Petersburg. The polyhistor H. G. Porthan, the most distinguished figure of the Finnish Enlightenment, was a useful source of knowledge about Finland and its language for foreign scholars, particularly A. L. Schlözer. His contribution to Finno-Ugric studies, however, was of local importance. It consisted of making use of the knowledge of the Finno-Ugric language family in his historical works and thus making it accessible to the local educated public. This in itself was not without significance. Through Porthan’s works, the notion of Finno-Ugric kinship played a role in shaping the early Finnish historiography, serving as a point of reference in the reconstruction of the country’s distant past before Swedish rule.⁵

After 1809, when Finland became part of the Russian Empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy, a national movement began to emerge and language acquired new significance. Spoken by the majority but marginalized by Swedish in the spheres of high culture, administration, science and education (beyond the most elementary), Finnish was now endorsed as a foundation of national identity. Starting in the second decade of the century, the Fennomen, many of whom spoke Swedish as their mother tongue, stressed the symbolic value of Finnish and strived to elevate its social and cultural position. The growing

5 Henrik Gabriel Porthan, “Paavali Juustenin Suomen piispain kronikka huomautuksin ja asiakirjoin valaistuna” in *Valitut teokset*, transl. from Latin by Iiro Kajanto (Helsinki: SKS, 1982), 155–60; Günter Johannes Stipa, *Finnisch-ugrische Sprachforschung von der Renaissance bis zum Neupositivismus* (Helsinki: Suomalais-ugrilainen Seura, 1990), 226–28.

importance of Finnish stimulated the development of linguistic studies in Finland, including the study of languages related to Finnish.

The trend was characteristic of its time: the political relevance of language and comparative and historical linguistics were intellectually backed and stimulated by the Herderian concept of language as organically interwoven with the mind, simultaneously reflecting and affecting the speaker's perceptions and thoughts, both individually and collectively. This concept made language the most reliable marker of nationhood, and it was easily extended into the belief that the common origins of two or more languages establish a natural bond between the nations who speak them. The discovery of the relationship of most European languages to Sanskrit gave powerful impetus to the emergent Indo-European studies and the whole field of comparative and historical linguistics. Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, it also stimulated the imagination of many European intellectuals, giving rise to new ways of thinking about history, cultural and spiritual heritage, national identity and race. Finnish nationalism was quick to follow the trend, integrating linguistics into its agenda. With the eastern border open, the Russian interior became accessible to Finnish scholars, allowing field studies on Finno-Ugric languages and their speakers. The authorities in St. Petersburg were eager to support scientific exploration of the Empire's vast but still largely unexplored natural and cultural resources. The Finns' interest in Finno-Ugricity was also a welcome trend in that it seemed to strengthen Finland's eastern bond, while distancing it from Sweden. With financial and organizational support from the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Finnish expeditions into Russia were undertaken starting in the 1820s. The pioneers Anders Johan Sjögren (1794–1855), Matthias Alexander Castrén (1813–1852) and August Ahlqvist (1826–1889) established a research tradition before it was fully institutionalized with the founding of the Finno-Ugric Society in Helsinki in 1883. By that time, Finno-Ugric studies were tightly interwoven with the Finnish national project, and the concepts of “kindred languages” and “kindred peoples” were part of its discourse.

The Pros and Cons of the Eastern Connection

What was the attraction of Finno-Ugricity to the aspiring national movement? To a large degree, it was welcome as a linguistic, cultural and historical alternative to the Swedish heritage. Having decided, as the popular slogan has it, to be Finns rather than remain Swedes or turn into Russians, and having chosen language as

the common denominator to consolidate Finnishness *in statu nascendi*, Finland's patriots had to face the challenge of evaluating the Swedish legacy. The 1809 treaty kept most of it intact, with Swedish as the official language, though now, within the new borders, it clearly had become a minority language, spoken by little more than 10 percent of the population. Before 1809, its usage had been steadily rising for several centuries, but it was a slow process that involved some migration from "Sweden proper" and the very limited upward mobility of pre-modern society. It is not clear how the language situation in Finland would have developed had the country not been cut off from Sweden. Some scholars believe the nineteenth century would have brought top-down linguistic assimilation of the Finnish-speaking majority.⁶ By 1809, in any case, no coordinated top-down attempts at assimilation had yet begun, but sociolinguistic hierarchies had solidified and Finland's cultural and intellectual life were nearly monopolized by Swedish. Even in the changed political situation, it took a century to reverse this trend. In 1844, when Topelius was formulating his Pan-Finnic vision, Finnish was just beginning to transcend its traditional position of a spoken vernacular which was seldom used in written form which beyond the church. National literature written in Finnish was still a theoretical postulate rather than a cultural fact, and it would remain so for another quarter of a century, despite all the symbolic significance of the national epos *Kalevala* (first edition in 1835, second in 1849). The first Finnish-language high school was opened in 1858. Five years later, an imperial decree stated that Finnish would be raised to the status of state language alongside Swedish within two decades. In practice, overcoming the social and cultural supremacy of Swedish took about twice that time. The Finno-Ugric kinship was thus a useful emblem of the Finns' distinct identity: a unique, ancient heritage that was neither Swedish nor Russian. At the same time, it was a suitably eastern connection, linking the Finns with other peoples of the Empire, and therefore acceptable to the Russian authorities.

One might argue there was also a distinct attraction inherent in the very idea of belonging to a greater family of nations. Early in the nineteenth century, it provided Finno-Ugricity with some prestigious parallels. First and foremost, there was the Indo-European language family, a discovery still relatively fresh that fascinated some of the greatest minds of the European academies and made linguistics a trendy, rapidly developing, intellectually dynamic branch of

6 Michael C. Coleman, "You Might All Be Speaking Swedish Today: Language Change in Nineteenth-Century Finland and Ireland," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 35, no. 1 (2010): 44–64.

science. There were also the increasingly visible Pan-Slavic and Scandinavian trends, a sign that linguistic affinity can acquire more direct political relevance. The link between academic linguistics and the national cause can be seen in a letter written by M. A. Castrén in 1844 to Johan Vilhelm Snellman, philosopher, journalist, statesman, and probably the most influential theoretician of the Fennoman movement. Convinced as he was that Finnish had to be studied, standardized and developed as a language of high culture, Snellman had serious doubts about the relevance of Castrén's far-ranging comparative research to the objectives of the national movement. Reproached for his supposed escapism, Castrén replied:

I am determined to show the Finnish nation that we are not a solitary people from the bog, living in isolation from the world and from universal history, but are in fact related to at least one-sixth of mankind. Writing grammars is not my main goal, but without the grammars that goal cannot be attained.⁷

Castrén classified the Finno-Ugric group as part of an even broader Ural-Altaic family, together with the Mongol, Turkic (e.g. Turkish, Tatar, Kirghiz) and Tungusic (e.g. Manchu, Evenki) languages, a popular notion among nineteenth-century linguists, supported by Rasmus Rask, Wilhelm Schott and Max Müller.⁸ In a public lecture made in 1849, he pointed to the Altai as “the cradle of the Finnish people,” elaborating on the alleged cultural affinities between the peoples of this great family.⁹ By placing the Finns' uniqueness in a supranational constellation, language kinship lent itself to a somewhat Hegelian reading and could be seen as a means of gaining legitimate access to “universal history.”

Historicity was indeed a challenge for the theoreticians of Finnish nationalism. Attempts to create a glorious image of the Finnish past dated back to earlier times. As early as 1700 the local patriot Daniel Juslenius adapted some concepts of Swedish antiquarianism in order to craft an image of the Finns as an ethnic group that was related to a number of renowned ancient tribes (i.e. the Vandals),

7 Letter from October 18, 1844 in Johan Vilhelm Snellman, *Snellmanin kootut teokset. Osa 7: elokuu 1844 – toukokuu 1845*. (Helsinki: Edita Oyj, 2002), 142.

8 Nowadays the Uralo-Altaic family is an obsolete concept. In fact, even the idea of Turkic, Mongol and Tungusic languages (according to some versions, also Korean and Japanese) forming one Altaic family is not universally accepted.

9 Mathias Alexander Castrén, “Über die Ursitze des finnischen Volkes (Vortrag in der litterarischen Soirée am 9. November 1849)” in idem, *Kleinere Schriften* (St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1862), 107–22.

claiming they had once created a great civilization that had been destroyed by the Swedes. He went so far as to produce a list of Finnish kings who had ruled before the Swedish conquest. Over a century later, when the need for a historical self-image became much more urgent than it had been in Juslenius' times, this kind of uncritical attitude was no longer an option. In his controversial lecture of 1843, Zacharias Topelius stated that before 1809, the Finns had had no history of their own, but had been part of Swedish history. Starting with Yrjö Koskinen, a new ethnocentric Finnish historiography was born, in which *Suomen kansa*, "the Finnish people" (meaning nation), was presented as an independent historical subject rather than part of Swedish history. Indeed, its distinctly non-Swedish, "Turanian" origins were mentioned at the outset.¹⁰ To claim the status of a historically distinct entity, a nation which had only recently won some degree of political independence needed other criteria of historicity than the political. The search for a past of one's own affected the making and the early readings of the *Kalevala*. Consciously hovering between the roles of an erudite folklorist and self-styled national poet, Elias Lönnrot, heir to the illiterate epic singers, produced a monument of the oral poetic tradition that was simultaneously genuine and forged. He selected, reworked and rearranged his primary material into a national mythology that could be referred to as a vision of the Finnish past—prehistoric, pre-political, but nevertheless distinctly Finnish in its splendor.¹¹ The nationalist message that he labored to convey in the epic lacked a specific Finno-Ugric dimension, but the archaic nature of the poetry and the ancient setting suggested a heritage going all the way back to the common origins of the Finno-Ugric peoples and thus transcending "Finnishness" defined by political borders. Indeed, much of the material was collected in the White Sea Karelia, outside the Grand

10 In the nineteenth and early twentieth century the term "Turanian" was applied to various non-Indo-European languages (and their speakers) of Eurasia, often acquiring a racial meaning; in this case, as in the case of the manner in which it was used by Max Müller, it is synonymous with the equally obsolete term "Uralo-Altaic." Yrjö-Koskinen [Yrjö Sakari], *Oppikirja Suomen kansan historiassa* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran kirjapainossa, 1869), 1–4. Otherwise, Yrjö-Koskinen's interests in the Finnish people's past were largely limited to the administrative territory of Finland. The "Turanian" opening served mainly to make a sharp distinction between the Finns and the Swedes as "peoples." Cf. Matti Klinge, *A History both Finnish and European: History and the Culture of Historical Writing in Finland during the Imperial Period*, transl. from Finnish by Malcolm Hicks (Sastamala: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 2012), 194–95, 210–16; Timo Salminen, *Aatteen tiede. Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura 1883–2008* (Helsinki: SKS, 2008), 16–17.

11 The romantic interpretation of the *Kalevala* as a depiction of distant historical events and proof that the Finns had had a heroic period of history like the Greeks was subject to dispute among the Fennomen, opposed by the Hegelian J. V. Snellman. More on the discussion in Pentti Karkama, *J. V. Snellmanin kirjallisuuspolitiikka* (Helsinki: SKS, 1989), 19–20, 138–45.

Duchy of Finland, and the form and style of the songs itself was not exclusively Finnish, but part of the cultural heritage of most Baltic Finnic peoples: the Karelians, the Estonians, the Votes. The Finno-Ugric kinship was part of the linguistic-ethnographic packet that provided the Finnish claims to historicity with handy references.

On the other hand, the concept had its drawbacks. Unlike the Indo-European heritage, which had links to the ancient traditions of India, Persia, Greece and Rome, Finno-Ugricity had very little to offer in terms of cultural and historical prestige. To some degree the comparative-historical linguistic approach could be seen as emancipatory: with the philosophical foundations provided by Herder, the Schlegels, Humboldt et al., it seemed to liberate the perspectives on Finnish from traditional cultural hierarchies, allowing it to be analyzed and described in strictly linguistic terms as a language among other languages, on equal grounds with Latin, Greek or Hebrew. However, even the strictly linguistic perspective was not judgment-free, and in particular, it was not free from Indo-Euro-centric bias. The concept of language and thought as an inseparable whole was elaborated into hierarchic typologies in which certain types of grammatical structures were seen as particularly effective in stimulating intellectual development, and therefore superior. Abundant in organic metaphors, the linguistic discourse of the period showed a strong tendency to favor the “organic” over the “mechanical”: internal transformation of stems over suffixation, inflection as a whole over agglutination, synthetic structures over analytical. Finnish had some allies among the comparativist greats: Rask praised the aesthetic quality of its structures and sounds, and Schott spoke with great reverence about all “Tataric” (i.e. Altaic and Finno-Ugric) languages. The dominant tendency, however, was to situate the heavily inflected Indo-European languages as the highest language-making achievement in the history of mankind. Sanskrit, Greek and Latin featured particularly high in this scheme, closely followed by German, while the characteristically agglutinative Finno-Ugric structures were deemed intellectually and/or aesthetically inferior, a result of the mechanical assembly of separate elements, a poorly made mosaic,¹² a failed attempt at inflection, indicating weaknesses of the nation’s “inwardly organizing sense of language.”¹³

12 Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861), 278–79.

13 Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: On the Diversity of the Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, transl. from German by Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 106–07.

On the whole, it was not a very favorable approach to Finnish, especially given that the criteria of evaluation were not free of extra-linguistic considerations. Despite all the internal rigors of the comparative method, one of its main attractions was that linguistic genealogies and reconstructed proto-language forms promised to offer new analytical perspectives on the history of peoples. The development of linguistics was closely followed by that of physical anthropology, and it was common for linguistic classifications to be interpreted as simultaneously ethnic or, indeed, racial. Already in the previous centuries, scholars had tended to associate the Finns with (depending on the currently dominant spatial images of Europe) the barbarian North or the barbarian East. In the growingly racialized nineteenth-century scientific discourse this “Scythian” image of the Finns was acquiring “Mongol” features, and this called their European credentials into question.¹⁴ Some Finnish scholars were painfully aware of this unfavorable bias inherent in the intellectual school which inspired them so profoundly as linguists and patriots. The Orientalist Herman Kellgren, very Fennoman-minded and at the same time a follower of Humboldt’s language philosophy, addressed some of the sensitive issues head-on, analyzing Finnish from a Humboldtian perspective and arguing that Finnish was in fact an inflected language and therefore perfectly able to meet the requirements of the Humboldtian language ideal.¹⁵ Castrén, though convinced of the importance of linguistic bonds, was aware that the emphasis on allegedly kinships carried some inconvenient implications. In his lecture about the Altaic “cradle,” he mentions the chilly reception of the Finno-Ugric idea in Hungary:

This is hardly surprising, for the idea of being related to the Lapps and the Samoyeds stirs us up, too. That same feeling—the commendable desire to have distinguished and splendid ancestors—has driven some of our scholars to seek our cradle in Greece or in the Holy Land. We must, however, give up all possible kinship with the Hellenes, with the ten tribes of Israel, with great and privileged nations in general, and console ourselves with the notion that “everyone is heir to his own deeds” and that real nobility has to be achieved with one’s own skill. Whether the Finnish nation will manage to make itself a name in

14 Aira Kemiläinen, *Finns in the Shadow of the “Aryans”: Race Theories and Racism* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 1998), 46–50, 59–95; Anssi Halmesvirta, *The British Conception of the Finnish “Race,” Nation and Culture, 1760–1918* (Helsinki: SHS, 1990).

15 Herman Kellgren, “I hvad mån uppfyller Finska språket fordringarne af ett språkideal?” in *Fosterländskt album II* (Helsingfors: A. C. Öhman, 1845), 118–88; Herman Kellgren, *Die Grundzüge der finnischen Sprache mit Rücksicht auf den ural-altäischen Sprachstamm* (Berlin: F. Schneider & Comp, 1847), 45–47.

history is uncertain; what is certain is that the generations to come will judge us by our own achievements and not by those of our ancestors.¹⁶

In a letter to Snellman, he also argued that linguistic kinship does not imply racial affiliation:

As the results of my current expedition are going to prove that the Finnic languages are related to the Samoyedic and that the Finns are evidently related to the Turks and the Tatars, the next task for linguistics will be to demonstrate, through the Samoyedic languages, the Finns' affinity with the Tunguses. From the Tunguses we are led all the way to the Manchu, and all roads lead us to the Mongols, because they are believed to be related to the Turks, the Samoyed, the Tunguses and the Manchu. We should then start getting used to the idea that we are descendants of those despised Mongols, but with the view to the future we can also ask ourselves: is there really a noticeable difference between the Caucasian and the Mongolic race? I think not. The naturalists may say all they like about the differences between Caucasian and Mongolic skulls, but what matters is that a European Finn has Caucasian features while an Asiatic Finn has Mongolic features; that Turks look European in Europe and Asiatic in Asia.¹⁷

Behind these issues of historical, linguistic or racial prestige, there was also the question of civilizational affiliation. Finnish nationalism owed its initial impetus to the great transition of 1809; it was separation from Sweden and autonomy within Russia that made Finland a sharply delineated territory and a single administrative unit, stimulating the development of Finnishness as a cultural and political concept. On the other hand, there was the Swedish legacy of self-definitions, in which Russia figured as the political archenemy and the cultural other. Embracing autonomy, Finland's elites accepted the new political loyalties, but the cultural estrangement was harder to overcome. A poem written in 1809, dedicated and recited to Alexander I at the Diet of Porvoo by the poet and history professor Frans

16 Castrén, "Über die Ursitze des finnischen Volkes," 122. See Tiborc Fazekas, "Die Rolle der soziologischen und ideologischen Komponenten in der Entstehung der ungarischen Finnougristik 1850–1892" in *History and Historiography of Linguistics*, vol. 2, ed. Hans Josef Niederehe, Konrad Koerner (Amsterdam–New York: John Benjamins Series, 1990), 747–57.; László Kontler, "The Lappon, the Scythian and the Hungarian, or Our Former Selves as Others: Philosophical History in Eighteenth-Century Hungary," *Cromohls – Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 16 (2011): 131–45, and Stipa, *Finnisch-ugrische Sprachforschung*, 255–56, 331–32; for more information about the Hungarian reception of the discovery of Finno-Ugric kinship.

17 Letter from March 17, 1846 in Snellman, *Snellmanin kootut teokset*, 419.

Michael Franzén, can be seen as an early symbolic attempt to tackle this confusion. The Emperor is welcomed and thanked as a benefactor of the “orphaned” Finns, while Finland is referred to as a “child of the East,” who has spent its childhood years under Sweden’s civilizing rule, but now is returning home.¹⁸ Franzén was a disciple and close collaborator of Porthan’s, and indeed the whole formula seems to be an adaptation of Porthanian concepts on Finnish history—those of Finns as a people with eastern origins (as demonstrated by linguistic evidence), who owe their enlightenment to their contact with Scandinavians. The language kinship, though unmentioned in the poem, is an important part of this concept; thus already in 1809, it was referred to with the aim of helping the Finns accept the new situation and open up to the east.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Finnish nationalism struggled to keep equal distance from Sweden and Russia, and much of its focus was on overcoming the cultural domination of Swedish. At the same time, however—the debt of the Finnish nationalists to Russia and their anti-Swedish stance notwithstanding—the Finnish national movement remained deeply conditioned by the pre-nationalist identity of Finland’s elites and by the *long durée* legacy of Swedish rule. This included public institutions, traditions of social order, the relatively strong position of peasants, Lutheranism as the official religion, and, last but not least, the high literacy rate in Swedish *and* in Finnish.¹⁹ All this contributed to a social landscape very different from Russian, which had formed the pre-nationalist identities of Finland’s elites and which was on the whole favorable to the development of the national movement. For all the urgency of the new tasks, such as linguistic emancipation or the recreation of the historical narrative, the emergent notions of Finnishness remained culturally tied to Scandinavia, and this fundamental orientation was ultimately something the Fennomen had no intention of abandoning, even if some of the anti-Swedish rhetoric would suggest otherwise.

The concept of Finno-Ugricity did little to change this orientation, and indeed sometimes it had the opposite effect, as it brought cultural contradictions to the surface. In 1844, Snellman wrote to Castrén, “It is a great fortune in our misfortune that the power which is suppressing the Finns’ national awareness

18 Frans Michael Franzén, “Untitled [“Prins! hwars dygd, stöd för jordens halfway klot...”],” *Åbo Tidning* 27 (5 April 1809): 2–3; cf. Klinge, *A History both Finnish and European*, 20.

19 Even the sociolinguistic hierarchies were not as sharp and exclusive as in some of the neighboring areas, where most of the linguistic majority was subject to serfdom (as in the German-dominated Estonia) or where the religious tradition did not favor literacy (as in Russian Karelia).

is not the same as that which blocks them from political independence.” As Finno-Ugric studies in Finland developed, more scholars had the opportunity to travel to East Karelia, the Urals or Siberia, and encounter the “kindred peoples” whose political and cultural lives were determined by one and the same power—and their impressions were not always enticing or encouraging. Facing Finno-Ugricity in the field had an alienating effect.

One of the more characteristic examples was August Ahlqvist, who started his career as an enthusiast of romanticized Finno-Ugricity, but soon turned into a hard-headed Scandinavian Occidentalizer, despite his unchanged commitment to the Finnish language. He made his debut in 1847 with “Fairy Tale, or an Ethnographic Dream,” in which the Castrénian concept of the Altaic cradle becomes a folk legend, which the narrator, an ethnographer, hears from an old Karelian. The sisters’ names allude to Finno-Ugric peoples. Their initials, if put together, spell the word VAPAUS “freedom,” and, as in Topelius’ Pan-Finnic vision, the sister representing Finland plays the leading role.²⁰ In the 1850s, after several research expeditions to East Karelia, the Volga Region and Siberia, Ahlqvist’s attitude began to change. The poverty, backwardness, low social position and weak sense of ethnic identity among the Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples of Russia are recurrent themes in his travel reports. Over time, he increasingly perceived the Finns’ position within the Finno-Ugric family as unique and privileged because of their close ties to the cultural heritage of Western Europe, Northern, Germanic and Protestant in particular.²¹ In one of his best known linguistic works, he argued that much of the Finnish “cultural vocabulary” consists of old Germanic and Baltic loanwords.²² In 1875, in a speech delivered at the quadricentennial celebration of the (Swedish-made) fortress of Olavilinna, he spoke of a Finnish “debt of gratitude” towards Sweden, whose rule had saved the Finns from the misfortune of their linguistic relatives who ended up in Russia. This phrase

20 August Ahlqvist, “Satu. Kansantieteellinen unelma kirjoitettu v. 1847,” *Suometar* nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (1847).

21 This approach also affected Ahlqvist’s attitude towards Hungary, the one Finno-Ugric-speaking country with state traditions and a vibrant national culture at the time. Although he remained in close contact with a number of Hungarian intellectuals, Ahlqvist considered Hungary too distant, geographically and culturally, to be a model from which Finland could benefit. Tuomo Lahdelma (“August Ahlqvist ja Unkarin kulttuuri” in *Kulttuurin Unkari*, ed. Jaana Janhila (Jyväskylä: Atena Kustannus, 1991), 9–41, 25–45) points out that Ahlqvist’s perception of Hungary as provincial and peripheral was a logical corollary of view of the Protestant Germanic North as the core of European culture.

22 August Ahlqvist, *Die Kulturwörter der westfinnischen Sprachen. Ein Beitrag zu der älteren Kulturgeschichte der Finnen* (Helsingfors: Voss, 1875).

antagonized much of the Fennoman milieu.²³ From an unreserved enthusiasm regarding panethnic kinship anchored in language, his views evolved towards an appreciation of cultural bonds. The Occidentalist development can also be traced in some of Ahlqvist's poems (published under the penname Oksanen). In *Suomen valta* ("The Finnish Realm"), which was published in 1860, he presented the image of a Finland that transcended the boundaries of the Grand Duchy, one defined by the community of "Finnish speech and Finnish mind" and encompassing the territory between *Äänisjärvi, Pohjanlahti/Auran rannat, Vienan suu* (Onega Lake, The Gulf of Bothnia, Aura's shores, Viena's delta), i.e. all of Karelia.²⁴ By 1868, his concept of Finnishness had shifted westward, as shown in the poem "Meidän vieraisa-käynnit" ("Our visit-making"), in which the Finns' neighbors are characterized as peoples one might visit. The kind-hearted Lapp is dismissed as too uncivilized, the Ingrian is in fact Russian and therefore alien, and the food they both serve (the Lapp's reindeer hearts and kidneys, the Ingrian's sauerkraut) scare the Finn off. The Estonian, a close kinsman, is an object of pity: enslaved in his own country, he does not even get to speak in the poem. The "German knight" speaks instead, telling the Finn to back off from the shore. Only Sweden remains a proper place to visit, praised as "Finland's source of light" and, indeed, "Finland's great mother."²⁵

23 August Ahlqvist, "Olavinlinnan 400-vuotisessa juhlassa 29 p. Heinäk. v. 1875" in *Suomalaisia puhe-kokeita* (Helsinki–Porvoo: Werner Söderström, 1889), 1–14.; Rafael Koskimies, *Nuijamieliseksi luotu. Yrjö Koskisen elämä ja toiminta vuosina 1860–82* (Helsinki: Otava, 1968), 196–205.

24 August Oksanen [Ahlqvist], *Säkeniä. Kokous runoutta – ensimmäinen parvi* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1860), 4–5. The poem is also interesting for its double debt to the German nationalist tradition. Its overall concept, i.e. the poetic vision of "the real Finland" as defined by language, bears strong resemblance to *Des Deutschen Vaterland* (1813) by Ernst Moritz Arndt, while the form and meter were modelled on *Das Lied der Deutschen* (1841), better known as the national anthem of Germany, and indeed the poem was sung to the same melody by Joseph Haydn. The territorial definition of the "Finnish realm" by four natural borders, too, is an echo of the German song.

25 August Oksanen [Ahlqvist], *Säkeniä. Kokous runoelmia – toinen parvi* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1868), 65–73. Like the reference to the Finnish "debt of gratitude," the poem was controversial among Fennomen. It even provoked a polemic in verse from the self-taught Ingrian peasant poet Jaakko Räikkönen, who stood in defense not only of his own home province, but also of the Estonians, the Lapps and a number of Finno-Ugric peoples, criticizing Ahlqvist for having abandoned his kin and "made friends with Swedish, an alien tongue," – "Suomelle" in Kustavi Grotenfelt, ed., *Kahdeksantoista runoniekkeä. Valikoima Korhosen, Lyytisen, Makkosen, Kymäläisen, Puhakan, Räikkösen y.m. runoja ja lauluja* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1899). Ahlqvist's literary activities also reflected this westward trend. He rejected the notion that Finnish poetry should remain faithful to the archaic folk tradition embodied by the Kalevala. Instead, he made a point of following European forms, e.g. writing the first Finnish sonnet and introducing hitherto unfamiliar metric forms into Finnish verse.

Panfennicism – Finnocentricism – Greater Finland

One element that remains stable in Ahlqvist's thought, from the romantic visions of 1847 to his late praise of the Swedish legacy, is his view of the Finns' special position within the Finno-Ugric family. This conviction formed the core of his changing notions of Finno-Ugricity, which he shared with Topelius and many other Fennomen, and indeed, it indicates one of the main attractions of the Finno-Ugric idea. Unprestigious as a source of historical and cultural references, it nevertheless provided Finnish ascendant nationalism with a context in which the Finns could see themselves as a civilizational avant-garde, the best educated, most thoroughly modernized, most "European" member of the family, as well as the one with the most thoroughly developed national culture. It was not so much Ahlqvist's disdain for the less fortunate kindred peoples which made his statements controversial as his growingly outspoken view of Finland as having been civilized by external force. The idea that the Finns themselves would naturally qualify as civilizers and awakers of other Finno-Ugrians was not contested; on the contrary, the notion of language kinship was consistently used to construct an imagined community in which the Finns were naturally predestined to lead. Ahlqvist's youthful tale of the five sisters is one of those acts of construction, as was Topelius' prediction of Pan-Fennicism under Finnish leadership. The concept found additional support in the traditional ethnolinguistic nomenclature, which favored the Finns and their language. The contemporary term "Finno-Ugric" became widespread only in the second half of the nineteenth century, "Ugric" being the new element, whereas in most of the earlier taxonomies the group figured as "Finnish" or "Finnic" (even if it was classified as a branch of a larger "Turanian" or "Altaic" family). The basic terminology used by the Fennomen thus seemed to legitimize their claims to tribal eldership. Thirty years after his Pan-Finnic vision, Topelius published the famous *Boken om vårt land* or *Maamme kirja* ("The Book of our Country"), a school textbook of Finland's geography, history and cultural traditions. There, he stated that "the Finnish language does not belong to any of those (i.e. Romance, Germanic or Slavic languages), but stands *in the forefront of its own great department* of Finnic languages (italics mine – ŁS)."²⁶ The perception of eastern Finno-Ugrians as poor relatives endangered by Russification rather than material for Pan-Fennicism did not weaken the

26 Sakari [= Zacharias] Topelius, *Maamme kirja. Lukukirja alimmaisille oppilaitoksille Suomessa*, transl. from Swedish by Johan Bäckwall (Helsinki: G. W. Edlund, 1876), 152.

Fennomen's sense of mission: the founders of the Finno-Ugric Society in 1883 were strongly motivated by the notion of Finns being naturally predisposed and in fact obliged to form the main center of Finno-Ugric research; voices were raised that emphasized the national responsibility of Finnish scholars to support and educate kindred peoples and help save their languages from extinction. According to some, the imminent assimilation of Finno-Ugric peoples in Russia would make Finns the rightful heirs of their cultural legacy.²⁷

The Fennomen's belief in the Finns' special position in the Finno-Ugric group was particularly suggestive and politically potent when it involved the areas near Finland where Baltic Finnic languages or dialects were spoken. In this case, proximity, border changes and long traditions of cross-border contacts coincided with close linguistic affinity, comparable to Slavic or Scandinavian linguistic bonds. However, unlike in the cases of the Slavic and Scandinavian languages, Finnish nationalism had no serious rivals in the area. This, combined with the Finno-centric terminological tradition mentioned above, made the area prone to be included in the still forming and therefore expandable spatial images of Finland and Finnishness. The line between Finnish dialects and closely related Finnic languages was fuzzy, much like the one between a regional branch of the Finnish nation and a separate kindred people. This was particularly true of Karelia, which for centuries had been divided, culturally as well as politically, between Russian and Swedish zones of influence. The religious divide (Lutheran vs. Orthodox) reinforced the political, giving a double meaning to the word "Karelian": in the Swedish part, Karelians became one of the ethnic subgroups of the Finns (along with the Finns Proper from the southwest and the Tavastians from the center of the country), while in Russia they remained more of a separate people. There were also linguistic divisions with various degrees of similarity to Finnish. After 1812, the once Swedish part of Karelia became a province of Finland, but the Russian part also became an object of interest to some of the Fennomen. As a distant and backward periphery, it was a gold mine for folklorists, including Elias Lönnrot, who created the *Kalevala*. The high status of the *Kalevala* in the canons of Finnish culture strengthened the perception of all Karelia, and its eastern parts in particular, as an ur-Finnish land of ancient songs. Ahlqvist's broad outline of Finland's "spiritual" borders in *Suomen valta* was a reflection of this concept.

27 Salminen Timo, "In between Research, the Ideology of Ethnic Affinity and Foreign Policy: The Finno-Ugrian Society and Russia from the 1880s to the 1940s," in *The Quasiquincentennial of the Finno-Ugrian Society*, ed. Jussi Ylikoski (Helsinki: Societé Finno-Ougrienne, 2009), 227; Salminen, *Aatteen tie*, 24.

Other linguistic and national borderlines in the Baltic Finnic area also proved flexible. Several years before *Suomen valta*, in one of his travel reports from Russian Karelia Ahlqvist characterized Ingrian Finns, all Karelians, Votians, Estonians, Livonians and Vepsians as “Finns living in Russia, outside the borders of Finland,” and this broad definition of Finnishness was not without political overtones:

Most of these Finns, together making up about one-million people, live in territorial continuity with Finland, and *even separate from Finland (or better still together with it) they could form a small state* (italics mine - LS), although one must note that there is a gulf of several centuries between most of these peoples and the Finns from Finland in terms of education and culture.²⁸

The notion of all Karelians being part of the greater Finnish nation was not left uncultivated. Throughout the nineteenth century, Karelia was an object of growing fascination to many Finnish intellectuals and artists; it occupied a special place in the Finnish self-image as a territory that was somewhat exotic and different from mainstream Finnishness yet at the same time represented its ancient source. In the twentieth century, cultural Karelianism acquired a political dimension, and in the first years of independence Finland made a number of unsuccessful attempts to annex Russian Karelia. Despite interwar Finland’s policy of restoring ties with Scandinavia and reaffirming its position as part of the emergent Nordic community, the idea of a Greater Finland lingered on in politically influential milieus, e.g. the Academic Karelian Society, and it was briefly realized during World War II, when Finnish troops advanced all the way to Petrozavodsk.²⁹ Following the military defeat in 1944, the notion of Greater Finland collapsed, as did the entire culture of politicized Pan-Fennicism; Finno-Ugric studies retreated to the academia and kept a rather low profile throughout the Cold War.

The Unequal Brotherhood

More complex was Finland’s relation with Estonia, a territory clearly distinct from Finland and the only Finno-Ugric nation in the region with a well developed national movement. In this case, Pan-Finnic aspirations met a dynamic national ideology with its own self-images and its own readings of the linguistic bond.

28 August Ahlqvist, *Muistelmia matkoilta Wenäjällä 1845–1858* (Hämeenlinna: Karisto, 1986), 59–60.

29 Mauno Jääskeläinen, *Itä-Karjalan kysymys. Kansallisen laajennusohjelman synty ja sen toteuttamisyriytykset Suomen ulkopoliitikassa vuosina 1918–1920* (Porvoo–Helsinki: Helsingin Yliopiston, 1961).

Separated from Finland by the sea, Estonia in the nineteenth century was in many ways culturally closer to Finland than Russian Karelia. It was predominantly Lutheran, relatively modern and economically more developed than most of the Russian Empire, with high literacy and an old, if feeble, literary tradition in the local language. Unlike the Orthodox Karelians, Vepsians or Votes, the Estonians were not exposed to massive assimilatory trends. In the nineteenth century, they became one of the three Finno-Ugric communities to be integrated and mobilized by the nationalist message. Estonian nationalism emerged later than Finnish nationalism, and its development was slowed down by unfavorable socio-historical circumstances. Finnish nationalism was launched by members of the Swedish-speaking elite, who were determined to “be Finns” and attempted to appeal to the Finnish-speaking majority, while in Estonia the local German elite was not motivated to embrace Estonian identity or support the national movement. From on the outset, Estonian activists were keen to watch their more successful “linguistic relatives,” and Finland was present in the Estonian-language press as early as the 1820s. Starting in the 1840s, Finnish activists began to visit Estonia, and prominent representatives of the two national milieus were in regular contact.³⁰ The interest was thus mutual, but not symmetrical. The Finns were perceived as more advanced in the pursuit of their national goals, but also as more successful in retaining their original national uniqueness. Meanwhile, Finnish reports and comments on Estonian affairs, though generally sympathetic towards the kindred nation and its struggle for its cause, were not free from patronizing accents. Ahlqvist’s *Meidän vieraisa-käynnit* is a good example. Some Fennomen were skeptical about the Estonians’ potential as an aspiring nation, finding them too small and the dominant German culture too powerful.³¹ Even linguistic works were affected by this attitude. One example is the frequent classification of Estonian as genetically or otherwise subordinate to

30 Kari Alenius, *Abkeruus, edistys, ylimielisyys. Virolaisten Suomi-kuva kansallisen heräämisen ajasta tsaarimallan päättymiseen (n. 1850–1917)* (Oulu: Pohjoinen, 1996), 47–50.

31 E.g. Yrjö-Koskinen, one of the most ardent fighters for the advancement of Finnish in Finland, expressed deep skepticism about the potential of analogous options for Estonian. He predicted that German would have to remain the dominant language of cultural and intellectual life even among patriotic Estonians, or else it might be replaced by Finnish: “Many Estonians believe Finnish would be the most agreeable tool of higher education [...] In fact, Finnish grammar is the source from which the Estonian language derives its rules of correctness.” (Yrjö-Koskinen [Yrjö Sakari], “Wiron kirjallisuutta,” *Kirjallinen kuukauslehti* 7 (1868): 179–83, see also Marko Lehti, “Suomi Viron isoveljenä. Suomalais-virolaisten suhteiden kääntöpuoli,” in *Suomi ja Viro yhdessä ja erikseen*, ed. Kari Immonen and Tapio Onnela (Turku: Turun yliopiston historian laitoksen julkaisuja, 1998), 85–91.

Finnish.³² In Finland this was a tradition going back to the eighteenth century,³³ but now it was adopted on both shores of the Gulf of Finland and reflected in language planning policies. Some Finnish scholars suggested linguistic cooperation to bring the two literary languages closer to each other. In 1822, the journal *Beiträge zur genauern Kenntniss der estnischen Sprache* published an article by the influential Finnish activist I. A. Arwidsson in which he advised Estonians to reform their orthography according to the Finnish model,³⁴ while August Ahlqvist considered, as a young man, the possibility of creating one common literary language for Finns and Estonians. The idea was rather eccentric and Ahlqvist abandoned it as soon as he learned more about Estonia's linguistic realities.³⁵ Otherwise, cooperation did develop, but the results were unilateral. Estonian language planners were keen to follow inspirations from Finland, but Estonian influence in Finnish was hardly noticeable. This trend continued for well over a century.³⁶ In 1917–1919, when Estonia was struggling for political independence, the ephemeric concept of political integration with Finland had supporters among influential statesmen of both countries.³⁷

32 The Estonian linguist and orthography reformer Eduard Ahrens characterized the Estonian language as a “daughter of Finnish.” In his view, it was a language that could not be properly learned without knowledge of Finnish (Eduard Ahrens, *Grammatik der Estnischen Sprache Revalschen Dialektes* (Reval: Laakman, 1853), 1). Early in the twentieth century, the Estonian ethnographer Mathias Johann Eisen stressed the secondary position of Estonian even more emphatically in his *Eestlaste sugu* (“The Estonian Kin”) which was, incidentally, the first popular-scientific presentation of the Finno-Ugric languages and peoples in Estonia. In it, he divided the Finno-Ugric languages into seven “main languages” rather than sub-groups, and made Finnish one of them. “Finnish is the largest in the (Baltic-Finnic) group, hence the entire family is called Finnic or Common Finnic (*Ühis-Soome*). Science thus does not put Estonian, but Finnish in the forefront, because it is used by a larger group of people.” M. J. Eisen, *Eestlaste sugu* (Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2008), 23–24.

33 In 1700, Daniel Juslenius (*Aboa vetus et nova/Vanha ja uusi Turku/Åbo förr och nu/Turku Old and New* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2005), 45) referred to Finnish as the “parent language” (*mater*) of Estonian, Permic and Lapp. Porthan (“Paavali Juustenien Suomen,” 161) characterized Finnish and Estonian as “dialects of the same language.”

34 Adolf Ivar Arwidsson, “Über die estnische Orthographie. Von einem Finnländer,” *Beiträge zur genauern Kenntniss der estnischen Sprache* 15 (1822): 124–30.

35 August Ahlqvist, *Kirjeet. Kielmiehen ja kaukomatkailijan viestejä 1845–1889* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1982), 26–27; Eemil Saarimaa, “Ahlqvistin ja Lönnrotin kirjeenvaihtoa suomen ja viron kirjakielen yhdistämisestä,” *Virtutäjä*, no. 8 (1910): 131–33.

36 Kari Alenius, “Kieli kulttuurivaikutusten ilmentäjänä. Suomen ja Viron tapaus” in *Suomi ja Viro yhdessä ja erikseen*, ed. Kari Immonen and Tapio Onnela (Turku: Turun yliopiston historian laitoksen julkaisuja, 1998), 144–47.

37 Seppo Zetterberg, *Suomi ja Viro 1917–1919. Poliittiset suhteet syksystä 1917 remuvaltiopoliittikan alkuun* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1977), 35–49; Marko Lehti, “Suomi Viron isoveljenä. Suomalais-virolaisten suhteiden käänköpuoli” in *Suomi ja Viro yhdessä ja erikseen*, 104–09.

Among many other aspects of national image-building, this tradition of unequal brotherhood affected Estonian perspectives on the Finno-Ugric heritage. Finnish nationalism made Finno-Ugricity part of its message early on, whereas in the case of Estonian nationalism it was adopted at a later stage and, again, the Finnish model played an important role. The Estonians' role in the nineteenth-century development of Finno-Ugric research was insignificant. Before independence, they carried out practically no field research of their own, at least not beyond the borders of the Baltic Provinces.³⁸ While Finnish scholars tended to perceive their nation as central to the whole concept of Finno-Ugricity, their Estonian colleagues largely adopted the Finnocentric perspective, acknowledging their own position as secondary. It took political independence and the Estonization of the University of Tartu for the Estonians to develop Finno-Ugric studies of their own and simultaneously integrate Finno-Ugricity into their canons of national self-image.³⁹

Epilogue: Memory, Survival and Nation Branding

As the idea of Finno-Ugricity seemed to be in retreat in Finland, it began to acquire new meanings in Soviet Estonia. Apart from the fact that Estonian scholars had easier access to Finno-Ugric territories in Russia than scholars from Finland, language kinship again became a historical and cultural point of reference and provided politically acceptable forms with which to convey national-minded messages, or more acceptable, at least, than the Baltic or Scandinavian links that interwar Estonia used to highlight in its unsuccessful attempts to join the emergent Nordic community.⁴⁰ The ethnographic films by Lennart Meri, which were directed between 1970 and 1988, provide an interesting example of Finno-

38 Sirikka Saarinen, "The Myth of a Finno-Ugric Community in Practice," *Nationalities Papers* 29, no. 1 (2001): 44; Eduard Vääri, "Eestlaste tutvumine hõimurahvastega ja nende keeltega kuni 1918. aastani" in *Hõimused. Fenno-Ugria 70. aastapäeva album* (Tallinn: Fenno-Ugria, 1997); trükkis ilmumata, <http://www.suri.ee/hs/vaari.html>, accessed June 30, 2014.

39 Ergo-Hart Västriik, "Archiving Tradition in a Changing Political Order: From Nationalism to Pan-Finno-Ugricism in the Estonian Folklore Archives" (Paper prepared for the conference "Culture Archives and the State: Between Nationalism, Socialism, and the Global Market," May 3–5, 2007, Mershon Center, Ohio State University, USA), 6–7. http://kb.osu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/1811/46903/FolkloreCntr_2007conference_Vaatrik7.pdf?sequence=1, accessed June 30, 2014.

40 More on these attempts in Marko Lehti, "Non-reciprocal Region-building: Baltoscandia as a National Coordinate for the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians," *NORDEUROPAforum*, no. 2 (1998): 19–47; Vahur Made, "Estonia and Europe: A Common Identity or an Identity Crisis?" in *Post-Cold War Identity Politics: Northern and Baltic Experiences*, ed. Marko Lehti and David J. Smith (London: Frank Cass, 2003);

Ugricity used to articulate politically delicate statements on the Estonian identity and its current condition. Better known to the world as the first post-Soviet president of independent Estonia (1992–2001), in the Soviet times Meri was a popular author of travel books in which he frequently transcended reportage to venture out into idiosyncratic, erudite, highly imaginative historical meditations. In his films, later collectively retitled “The Film Encyclopaedia of Finno-Ugric Peoples,” he explores the notion of Finno-Ugricity as a common spiritual heritage, reflected in the most archaic layers of language and culture. Memory is a recurrent theme, featuring alternately as a reliable safeguard of identity, operating deep beneath the conscious (e.g. through the old vocabulary or folk superstitions), and as a vulnerable resource that requires deliberate cultivation and therefore relies on individual responsibility for the collective heritage; in both variants, it is tightly bound to the no less prominent theme of survival. Meri’s narrative can be seen as a continuation of the nineteenth-century tradition of romanticized ethnography and linguistics, but it gradually shifts towards the indigenous peoples’ perspective. Through a series of cautious signals, Finno-Ugricity is reinterpreted: from a bond of an imagined ancient past it becomes a modern bond of common experiences: foreign domination, dispossession, and endangerment.⁴¹

At the same time, the Finno-Ugric bond had other meanings, too, the most tangible of which was the mass following of Finnish television, after its signals began to reach northern Estonia in 1971. This was indeed one of the rare situations when the core linguistic dimension of Finno-Ugricity became a real cultural asset for the Estonians, bringing virtual access to the physically inaccessible world on the other side of the iron curtain. The tradition of Nordic yearnings returned to Estonia’s public discourse as soon as the country reclaimed independence; the concept of Estonia as a Nordic rather than a Baltic or East European country was propagated steadily throughout the 1990s as part of the official cultural policy. President Meri himself was active in promoting this trend, but it was the Foreign Minister (and currently President) Toomas Hendrik Ilves who proved to be particularly inventive. In 1999, he proposed the concept of “Yuleland,” a region spreading across the north of Europe, from the British Isles to Finland and Estonia (but not to Latvia), a community of “Protestant, high-tech oriented countries form[ing] a Huntingtonian sub-civilization, different

Lukasz Sommer, “Ugrofińskie pogranicza nordyckości,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, no. 1 (2012): 73–83. Mart Kuldkepp, “The Scandinavian Connection in Early Estonian Nationalism,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, no. 3 (2013): 313–38.

41 Lennart Meri, *Soome-ugri rahvaste filmientsüklopeedia*, DVD Eesti Rahvusringhääling ([1970–1997] 2009).

from both its southern and eastern neighbors” with a shared cultural heritage symbolized by the common word for winter solstice (*yule, jul, jol, joulu, jõul*).⁴²

For all its focus on modernity and economic success, Ilves’ prehistoric references and his implicit belief in the political relevance of philology bring his arguments close to the rhetoric Meri employed back in the 1970s and 1980s. But the Finno-Ugric link was even more directly present in his Nordic campaign. In 1998, Ilves argued at a public forum that Finland was an example of successful national rebranding which should be just as available to Estonia: “Finland marketed itself into a Scandinavian country. (...) Why should Finland be more of a Scandinavian country than Estonia? We’re all the same Finno-Ugric sort of swamp people. But the point is that they turned themselves into Scandinavians. [...] My vision of Estonia is doing the same thing.”⁴³

In the Estonian nation branding campaign, one might argue, Finno-Ugricity has proven to be a highly rotatable category in the construction of identities and historical affiliations. Originally established to help Finnish nationalism achieve symbolic emancipation from Sweden, it became attractive to the Estonians as a link to the more successful Finland, and then, with Finland’s Nordic identity reaffirmed, as a direct passage to Scandinavia.

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42 Toomas Hendrik Ilves, “Estonia as a Nordic Country,” Speech by Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Swedish Institute for International Affairs, (14 December 1999), <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/3489>, accessed June 10, 2014, presently not available.

43 Quoted in Julia Keil, “Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia: a Baltic Union? About the Cooperation Between the Three Baltic States” in *Estland, Lettland, Litauen – drei Länder, eine Einheit?* ed. Antje Bruns, Susanne Dähler and Konstantin Kreiser (Berlin: Geographisches Institut Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2002), 113.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Abolish the Past Once and for All.

A kommunista aszketizmus esztétikája [The Aesthetic of Communist Asceticism]. By Dávid Szolláth. Budapest: Balassi, 2011. 288 pp.

While the literary and cultural history of the socialist period has begun in recent years to reemerge as an important field of research, one nonetheless cannot help but sense a certain failing if one examines the works dealing with this era. Interestingly enough, in spite of the fact that there is a clear desire to reassess the literature of this time, which was the longest period of twentieth-century Hungarian history and therefore also a period that left perhaps the deepest marks on the cultural landscape of the country, the essays that deal with the era often seem to adopt very similar perspectives. In general, they first offer at most a short sketch of the cultural and political context and then turn their attention entirely to works of the period before the change of regimes in 1989 that are still widely read today. Other works (of which there are many to say the least) are relegated to the realm of the “deservedly forgotten” or the “interesting at most from a historical point of view.” This is not necessarily a problem, of course, since clearly the works of the era that are less interesting today from an ideological or poetical perspective will be given less emphasis in narratives of literary history. What remains problematic, however, is that often we too easily dismiss compositions of the era with the contention that they belong not to literary history but rather to cultural or social history. It is perhaps not an overstatement to claim that with very few exceptions the most interesting articles to be published over the course of the last two decades dealing with the literary and cultural history of the past half-century were written not by literary historians, but rather by historians and sociologists, and for the moment the literary history of the communist era still waits to be written.

Dávid Szolláth’s new book seeks in part to address this hiatus. As the author indicates in the introductory chapter, he has two principal aims. Building in part on the recent debates regarding literature, he examines the potentials of literary history, focusing precisely on a period that scholars of literary studies have in recent years neglected. Furthermore, as he demonstrates, this period obliges us to formulate some of the basic aesthetic and methodological questions and rethink some of the fundamental principles of our approach to the study of

literature and our overview of literature itself. The book explicitly examines works by authors who, in simple terms, are no longer part of the canon, such as Tibor Déry or Erzsébet Galgóczi, or works by authors that are not part of an individual author's canonized oeuvre, such as the labor movement poems or by people who are peripheral at this point of our notion of literary history (or they completely fell out from our literary canon).

Of course these names might prompt one to raise the question with (false) ingenuity, why should we deal with works and authors who are peripheral (or perhaps not?) at this point to our notion of literary history? Why should we have to read the texts of the communist era, the better part of which are dull and uninteresting today? Does it not suffice to familiarize ourselves with the philosophical and aesthetic ideas of the young Lukács? Why should we have to have penetrating discussions about his later theory of Realism or (spare us) his theses regarding Social Realism, which, let's confess, are not the most engaging part of his oeuvre? Not many people read the novels of Social Realist writers today (and that is as it should be). These questions, of course, are deliberately (falsely) ingenuous, and in addition to the fact that the very engaging analyses offered in the book demonstrate quite clearly the relevance of the themes, the author alludes to several thought-provoking principles underlying the importance of the study. According to Szolláth, following the change of regimes, a narrative of literary history emerged that essentially adopts the presuppositions, with regards to aesthetics and literary history, of the *Nyugat* generation (the generation of writers that published in *Nyugat*, the leading literary journal of the first half of the twentieth century), and today this narrative has become not only pervasive but even dominant. With the "rereadings" that became fashionable in the 1990s, this narrative has conserved these presuppositions, or, more precisely, adapted them to today's literary tastes and poetic references. While Szolláth does not make this explicit (and I imagine this may well have been intentional on his part), I cannot help but wonder if the polemical tone of the introductory chapter is in response to the literary-history narrative of Ernő Kulcsár Szabó and the notion of "interrupted continuity." According to this concept, which has been promulgated to great effect by Kulcsár Szabó and his students, in 1948 there was a rupture in the history of Hungarian literature, when literary tendencies, which until then had been developing in an "organic" manner, were suddenly silenced by the forces of power politics. The repressed poetics of Hungarian literature, thus severed from its past, emerged again sporadically in the 1960s, and the Postmodern turn essentially can be seen as the organic resumption of

these tendencies.¹ Szolláth criticizes not so much the relevance of this notion as its exclusiveness. He suggests that it is in part due to this narrative that the works of the 1950s have essentially disappeared from Hungarian literary history and, moreover, even the compositions of the 1960s are seen as relevant only to the extent that they can be understood as forerunners of the prose turn (authors such as Géza Ottlik, Miklós Mészöly, or György Konrád) or as representatives of a Realist, mimesis-based literature on the other side of the spectrum (p.13).

This is problematic from several perspectives. I myself have been surprised, for instance, to notice that in university courses on the Hungarian literature of the 1960s and 1970s my students have not responded to the works according to values and preferences that to me seemed self-evident. For instance, they did not always enjoy Ottlik, and only rarely enjoyed the early Péter Esterházy. In contrast, Ferenc Sánta or Galgóczi were often met with interest and enthusiasm among the students, at least at first reading. In addition, it can be difficult, to say the least, to speak of the contextual aspects of Esterházy's novel *Termelési regény* ("A Novel of Production") or *Kis magyar pornográfia* (*Little Hungarian Pornography*, translated by Judith Sollosy) if one has no knowledge whatsoever of the various constituents of a production novel genre or the origins of the metaphor "the writer is the engineer of the soul" (a statement attributed to Joseph Stalin). Of course we can bewail the alleged lack of taste or erudition of younger generations, or perhaps in the best case scenario we could speak knowingly of the need for more education in aesthetics. Or we could think about the relativity of the canon today. We could consider the possibility that there is more than one narrative of twentieth-century Hungarian literary history, and that various texts will mean different things to various interpretive communities. Indeed, works that are considered significant today may have been interpreted quite differently at the time they were written.

There is another possibility—or trap—as well, what I would refer to as "spasmodic re-canonization." Fortunately, the book avoids this. Szolláth does not strive to create an alternative canon. He does not wish to demonstrate that the forgotten works of the communist era were in fact masterpieces. He argues, rather, that aesthetic standards are historical constructs, and that literary historians should not presume to found their inquiries on a given notion of "literature," but rather should remind themselves that "literature" is a living,

1 See Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, *A magyar irodalom története 1945–1991* [The History of Hungarian Literature, 1945–1991] (Budapest: Argumentum, 1993).

functional concept (to use Terry Eagleton's term).² In other words, much as it is not the task of the historian to analyze the past as if it were some kind of prologue to the present and project the preferences of the present onto the past, but rather to approach the events of the past as a stranger, at least to the extent possible, the scholars of the literature of the twentieth century should not regard the works or tendencies of earlier times as a prologue to the prose turn or the Postmodern. Rather they should attempt to write the history of the shifting phenomenon to which we refer as "literature." As Szolláth emphasizes at one point, one does at times have the impression that historians of twentieth-century Hungarian literature seem hesitant (sometimes almost proudly so) to make use of tools from other, related fields of inquiry (such as branches of the history of science, philology, etc.) the use of which would have been self-evident and accepted for scholars of literature in centuries past (p.13). Thus most of the historians of the literature of the twentieth century actually study not literary history, but rather the history of contemporary literature. The past is relevant to them only to the extent that it can be tied to the recent literary tendencies.

This is particularly important and problematic if the field of inquiry itself seems to require us to set aside the aesthetic approach. And for the most part this is the case with regards to the subject of the book, the literature of communism, when literature had a specific function and the notion of aesthetics was very clearly subordinated to political, historical, and ideological "grand narratives." In other words, if we are studying the history of the functions of literature, in the case of communism it does not suffice to speak of the subordination of art to power (nor is this a simple matter), since the texts are not merely "aesthetic" objects, but rather acts that have certain social functions. From this perspective, knowledge of context can add a great deal to the interpretation of the texts. Indeed, it can bring to the foreground the importance of the study of the history of the uses of literature, an approach suggested by József Takáts. According to this approach, one addresses questions regarding when literature was used, under what circumstances, by whom, and in the service of what aims, as well as the functions of these uses (which often were not aesthetic, or at least not only aesthetic) in the given context.³ As one of the most interesting and most original essays demonstrates (an earlier version of which Takáts cited

2 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 8.

3 József Takáts, *A használati történet = Thomka-symposion. Ünnepi kötet Thomka Beáta köszöntésére* [The History of Use = Thomka Symposium. A Commemorative Volume to Beáta Thomka], ed. Tamás Kisantal, János D. Mekis, Péter P. Müller, and Dávid Szolláth (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2009), 398–406.

as an example of the history of the uses of literature), in order to interpret some of the labor movement poems of the 1930s, we must be familiar with the (sub)cultural political rituals in which they emerged and in which they were used. These verses were created not “simply” as poems, but rather as texts that acquired some kind of specific functions (agitation, emboldening, ritualistic) and were often given voice by a speaking chorus. Here the author examines not only and not even primarily the propaganda poems of the workers’ poets of yesterday, but rather authors who occupy a prominent place in today’s canon as well. For instance, Sándor Petőfi’s poem *Föltámadott a tenger* (*The Whole Sea Has Revolted*, translated by George Scirts) acquires a different meaning when recited by a speaking chorus, and some of Attila József’s poems, such as *Tömeg* (“The Masses”) and *Munkások kórusa* (“Workers Chorus”) were composed precisely for such presentations. Szolláth argues that some knowledge of the circumstances of a poem’s composition at the very least has the potential to enable us, in addition to having some grasp of the broader interconnections of direct and contemporary poetic tendencies in the case of the poetry of Attila József (for instance), to understand more thoroughly the entire system in which the poems came into being, a system which is both social and aesthetic. A sketch of the context under communism can offer a significant interpretive framework, particularly if one takes into consideration the fact that the essays in the book cover a very long period of time. Some of them deal with the workers’ literature of the 1930s (for instance analyses of the aforementioned essay on the speaking chorus or Déry’s novel *A befejezetlen mondat*, “The Unfinished Sentence”), while others offer more comprehensive case studies of the oeuvre, stretching over a period of several decades, of a given author (such as the essay on Lukács’s theory of critical Realism and canon formation or the thorough analysis of the private and public roles that Galgóczi attempted to represent). Szolláth chose to adopt an admirably prudent approach that avoids making the context overly broad. He interprets “communism” not in the traditional sense as an ideological or political movement or an event in the history of ideas, but rather as a particular practice of persuading or compelling individuals to develop self-reform techniques. This is necessary because this is the sphere in which, according to the author, one can find the common components in the communist visions and practices of different eras, components which in the case of an inquiry into the history of mentalities either become too homogenizing (such as in the case of Hannah Arendt’s conception of totalitarianism, as Szolláth notes) or are too divergent.

In adopting this approach to communism as a system of self-reform and self-control of the individual, Szolláth recalls the late works of Michel Foucault. He uses the methodology of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* in his analysis of communism as an ensemble of power discourses and practices that was at work simultaneously on the social and individual level. In the case of the latter, the socialist ideology and conception of history can only be adopted on the individual level if the individual is able to exert control over him or herself and maintain oversight over his or her own instinctive spheres. Thus the adoption (as a personal view) of communism as an ideology or belief system can be thought of as a history of salvation or initiation. The individual joins the Party (he or she converts), and from then on his or her new life is one of asceticism. The new "Communist Man" exercises ethical control over himself. He is willing to forego the many advantages of his earlier life and sacrifice his earthly happiness for the final victory of the proletariat and the Utopia of a classless society.⁴ This asceticism is paired with a distinctive approach to literature as well. The new "Communist Man" does not simply bring his desires and personal well-being under the oversight of his vigilant consciousness (since—especially in the 1930s—membership in the party was illegal, and therefore clearly compelled the individual to sacrifice his or her carefree life to the movement and accept in its stead tough work and persecution), but also his personal tastes. Literature becomes one of the tools of the struggle and one of the implements of social engineering. In this struggle, aesthetic taste as understood in the traditional sense is not the guiding principle. The "Communist Man" prefers not the "beautiful," but rather the "useful." This is particularly interesting when there is something personal at stake. The "heroes" of the book for the most part are transitional figures who stand on both sides at once, figures who deliberately try to renounce the determining features of their earlier selves in order to live a genuinely ascetic life. In other words, what is truly interesting to Szolláth is not so much the "pure" functioning of communism, but rather the transitional figures, the individuals who stood at the border of the two worlds. This is palpable primarily in the essay on Lukács, since the history of his life clearly exemplifies the domination of

4 The asceticism of communism is perhaps the most spectacularly embodied in Béla Biszku, one of the characters of the recent novel *Igazságos Kádár János* ["János Kádár the Just?"] by Vilmos Csaplár. Biszku is a stern, humorless communist who lives on kefir and dry bread in order to hasten the coming of the "World Revolution." The book elegantly presents the strange memory of the Kádár era. Asceticism has become lunacy and is in stark contrast with the indulgences of the hedonistic petty monarchs, who carouse and hunt with machine guns.

ideological and power oriented self-control over the aesthetic sphere. Following the Hegelian and Marxist turns, the messianic aesthetic ideology of the young Lukács, which drew on German Romanticism, Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, and other influences, became an ideological aesthetic, which first sought its place in the theory of classical Realism (giving up on Dostoyevsky and Flaubert as the first great “renunciations” of ascetics in favor of Tolstoy and Balzac) only later to flow into the self-renunciation of critical (Socialist) Realism through the ritual of self-criticism, which was prompted by the Lukács debate and the influence of power pressures. Aesthetic asceticism thus can only function in cases of figures who know the other side as well, who form the art of the new era while in some way being aware of the values of the “bourgeois,” “Western” canon—and possibly, heaven forbid, the greater value of this canon (a short section, but a very chatty digression makes reference to a later literary historian and theorist, Pál Pándi, who as one of the powerful scholars of the Kádár era and the editor-in-chief of *Kritika* disparaged tendencies in contemporary Hungarian and global literature with such conviction that one cannot help but presume he himself was very aware of their merits).

In addition to ascetic aesthetics, the book also examines the aesthetics of asceticism, in other words, the works of authors that were created out of this attitude and conduct of self-formation and self-control. The chapter on Galgóczi is perhaps the most interesting in this regard. Szolláth emphasizes the conflict between the role that the writer forces on herself as a representative and the efforts to meet the expectations created by this model. Another far more evident form of asceticism emerges here. As Galgóczi’s correspondence makes clear, she expressed her own lesbianism in the discourse of the class struggle and with the language of the ideology of power. It is perhaps particularly interesting to note that Galgóczi regarded her homosexuality not as some external stamp, but rather as the failure of her very own communist self, as a “bourgeois, decadent inclination.” Prompted by this diagnosis, Galgóczi abandoned her role as a writer who represented the party and the people and in the 1970s gradually came to figure in the role of the critical, peripheral intellectual, for instance in *Törvényen belül* (“Within the Law”) or *Vidravas* (“Otter-Iron” – a plate-shaped implement used to kill small wild animals that pose a danger to house pets and domesticated animals).

The case studies in the book examine certain fundamental phenomena of communism as a mode of self-formation. The clever and penetrating analyses offer a system of perspectives from which one can rethink the art of

one of the dominant ideologies of the past century. This rethinking, however, its inventiveness notwithstanding, sometimes yields debatable results. The analyses complement the theoretical framework well, but in my view from time to time the author falls into the trap that he himself criticizes with regards to “rereadings.” However much he may emphasize the contextualization of the texts and the relativity of aesthetic judgment, he tacitly and sometimes explicitly shows certain aesthetic preferences, and he passes, however subtly, aesthetic judgment. In other words, his efforts notwithstanding, he too represents the aesthetic approach of the present moment, if, however, in a much more nuanced manner than those he takes to task. The finest works of the “heroes” of the narrative are those that “go beyond their context.” They were created (allegedly) not in conformity with their original context, but rather in conflict with it. More precisely, “decontextualization is not just a concomitant of their survival and their attainment of universality, but a precondition” (p.257). In other words, aestheticism is present, if in parentheses. One cannot read without it. Here too the value judgments of the present inevitably overwrite the original context. I should note, I mention this not as a flaw of the book, but rather as a fact of the writing of literary history, a fact that we may not be able to surmount. The author shares a great deal with the approach to literature that he criticizes, an approach that is oriented to the present. Of course there are many differences of degree, and sometimes they are striking. For instance, in the case of Attila József Szolláth persuasively demonstrates, with reference to the original context, that some recent interpretations, however legitimate as readings, may have little relevance from the perspective of literary history, since they function only as decontextualizing readings that transform the poet into a contemporary of the reader. In other words, the author, as a literary historian with good taste (or to use terms that would be more palatable in the study of literary history, sharing contemporary literary tastes and values), reads within the framework of a decontextualized, aestheticizing canon of masterpieces, though he recontextualizes these works and searches for their literary place.

I also have the impression that the aforementioned problem of contextual value may arise in part due to the scope of the essays. The distance in time of the themes of some of the chapters sometimes creates confusion. Following the aesthetic-political debates of the 1930s and 1940s, in the chapter on Galgóczi the book radically changes context. In the discussion of the socialist discourse after the 1950s more emphasis is given to the similarities to the earlier period than the (often highly notable) differences. One can argue for and against

the essay collection as a structure. In the case of this book, the fact that the methodological and theoretical unity is coupled with an impressive thematic diversity is an argument for it (in addition to the aforementioned works and authors, at the beginning of the book the reader is provided with a short analysis of some of the films of the 1980s that criticized the asceticism of communism). However, some of the themes and the span of the oeuvres of some of the authors are an argument against it. At least two of the four longer chapters, the one on Lukács and the one on Galgóczi, resemble preliminary studies for a monograph, their cogency notwithstanding. In addition, in order to situate properly the important works (those that somehow go beyond the context in which they were composed), perhaps it would have been worthwhile to have dealt a bit more with the “average” works. The “great” works of Socialist Realism are mentioned only as examples, without any actual discussion or presentation. Alexander Ignatyevich Tarasov-Rodionov’s 1922 novel *Chocolate*, which was a kind of parable of ascetic conduct in the 1930s, is given the most attention. The virtues and vices which for the party faithfuls of the time were of primary importance, are exemplified by this work, but we are given no real insight into the nature of its actual influence, beyond its ideological and messianic poses. Why was it read by so many people, and why did it become a kind of illegal bestseller? This is what gives rise to the fragmentary nature of the collection, which the author addresses at the end of the book. It is not, he observes, a monograph on the asceticism of communism, but rather “merely” an analysis of some careers, authors, and viewpoints and an attempt to put them in proper context. By no means does it aspire to offer a complete image of the era. The book “merely” offers an example of the use of an impressive methodology alongside persuasive analyses in a field that today is rarely made the subject of inquiry, or when it is, then with debatable results. One can only hope that the nuanced analyses, which exemplify an important approach and system of perspectives, will find readers and perhaps prompt more thorough study of the literary history of the socialist era.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Tamás Kisantal

Tudomány és ideológia között. Tanulmányok az 1945 utáni történetírás történetéről [Between Scholarship and Ideology. Essays on the History of the post-1945 Historiography]. By Vilmos Erős and Ádám Takács. Budapest: Eötvös Kiadó, 2012. 169 pp.

A collection of essays that provides methodologically and theoretically complex analyses of the history of Hungarian historiography of the postwar period, *Tudomány és ideológia között* (Between Scholarship and Ideology) helps address a lacuna in the scholarship that remains painful to this day. At the time of the conference on historiography on which this collection is based, a work by Ignác Romsics was already available as a kind of fundamental study on the topic.¹ Romsics followed a traditional concept of synthesis that handles historiography itself, as the “protagonist” of the inquiry, as an intact problem of the calling of the historian, regardless of the historical era. His analysis tells little about the era-specific conditions of the practices of writing history. Accordingly it does not provide satisfying explanation of the historical context concerning institutional, ideological and socio-cultural factors, which could make clear the reasons for the prominence of careers and works.

The lack of such examination is particularly problematic with regard to the analysis of the Socialist period. Romsics demonstrates the expectations of the Socialist system with regard to historical scholarship, but he does not examine how this was translated into practice. He cites statements made by historians, but because his analysis provides no era-specific problematization of the subject, it reveals little about the ideological stakes of the discourse and the actual substance of these statements of historians addressed to an (also unanalyzed) “public.” Romsics presents the prominent historians, but he does not explain how their work or their stances might offer insights into the prevailing circumstances of the time or how exactly the terms and conceptual frameworks within which they articulated the questions of their profession should be understood. The voices and historical moments to which he refers remain incidental. Within the framework of his synthesis, Romsics proves unable to find proper analytical tools to uncover their message. When he lists the array of topics with which historians concerned themselves, the contextual body of knowledge remains

¹ Ignác Romsics, *Clio bűvöletében: Magyar történetírás a 19-20. században* [Enchanted by Clio: Hungarian Historiography in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries] (Budapest: Osiris, 2011).

stuck within the system of objects and facts. Thus for a university student today, the book offers little grasp of what it actually meant to write history in the recent past, and yet the book is intended precisely for this audience.

The volume of essays, which was edited by the conference organizers, Ádám Takács and Vilmos Erős, adopts an entirely different approach. With regard to the post-1945 period, the title suggests that we turn our attention to historiography in the shared spaces of scholarship and ideology. This perspective, which places emphasis on the importance of approaching both fields of inquiry with the same sensitivity, creates the potential for analyses from a variety of approaches, such as the history of ideas, social history, or the history of mentalities. As the analyses clearly illustrate, the study of the nature of historiography after 1945 also represents an occasion for self-reflection. It prompts us to address the question of “what shapes us, as historians.”

The conference volume is not a hodgepodge collection about the historiography of the era. The majority of essays provide the reader with a kind of distinctive constant of the postwar period from the perspective of the practices of history writing. Furthermore, some of the authors (Ádám Takács, Zsolt K. Horváth, Vilmos Erős and Holger Fischer come to mind) offer strategic suggestions based on their own research for comprehensive analysis of the nature of the era. Regarding the overlapping terrain of scholarship and ideology, the essays examine the study of history in their social context and highlight the importance of social institutions in its analysis. They place emphasis on dependencies, compulsions, and socio-cultural factors involved in the study of history as a profession that determined the development of the “discipline.” The volume demonstrates first and foremost that the questions and problems of historiography shed light on the era and the mental determinants of living with particular force. I will examine how the individual essays address this question. Do they manage (and if so, how) to make the era more accessible to interpretation from the perspective of the manner in which historiography was pursued?

Perhaps the most successful essays in this regard are those that deal with the historiography of the Socialist era. This is unquestionably due to the constant and carefully guided presence of ideology in the Socialist period. In this case, ideology is understood as something that cannot be separated from the cultural system of everyday practices. Ideology is also something the nature of which changes over time, but which nonetheless is present in the functioning of society as a whole and extends beyond the borders of individual periods of history. One

therefore cannot avoid—and the historian in particular cannot avoid—dealing with the social institutions in which it finds form.

The essay by Holger Fischer, which is the first of the collection, presents the shifting nature of ideology with the division of post-1945 historiography into periods. His goal is to systematize the manner in which political-historical eras appear in the evolution of the study of history and individual fields within the discipline. At the beginning of the essay, Fischer asks the question, what tasks did the party assign to the discipline of history? As this question makes clear, any analysis of the period must address the peculiar system of conditions of the scholarly study of history. According to Fischer, the historian enjoyed more freedom in Hungary than in any of the other Socialist countries. He often speaks of the absence of ideology in the historiography, while at the same time he displays, at the apex of this historiography, the synthesis entitled *Magyarország története* (“The History of Hungary”),² which complied with both scholarly criteria and the official ideological function of historical narratives. Thus in the professional context, it would be appropriate to speak not of freedom from ideology, but rather of scholarship that developed within era-specific limitations, even if this “scholarship” is not defined analytically in Fischer’s essay.

The essays that follow concentrate more forcefully on the practices of history writing. They do not attempt to define the essence of historiography on the basis of a priori political-historical shifts, but rather examine the politicized countenance of the era from the perspective of the practices of writing history. These analyses actually throw into question the necessity of explicit periodization, for while they “contextualize” historiography and examine it in its normative space (which is also determined by the flexible nature of ideology), they also indicate connections and interrelationships that can be discerned over longer periods of time and even *form* mentality. What are the practices that the authors make the focus of their inquiry?

Boldizsár Vörös examines the strategies according to which historians attempted to meet the expectations of the public over the course of the entire Socialist period. He is interested in part in the mechanisms of self-censorship and in part in the concrete steps that historians took in order to convey ideas that were “problematic from the perspective of power” (p.71) (for instance by adhering for the better part of a text to the party rhetoric, but then inserting

2 The authoritative work of late socialist historiography in Hungary, the so-called “ten-volume” history of Hungary. Zsigmond Pál Pach, ed., *Magyarország története tíz kötetben* [The History of Hungary in Ten Volumes] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976–1989).

statements that undermined this rhetoric). The legitimate problems of scholarly endeavors led to the spread of the characteristic practices of the era.

The essay by Károly Halmos offers a glimpse into a complementary process. He does not ask how scholarship becomes a politically viable product, but rather how the political is made into the scholarly, drawing on the example of Ferenc Erdei's theory of a dual society. He mentions some of the decisive features with which Erdei's system of views is integrated into the historian's store of implements. Halmos calls attention to strivings to renew and revivify historiography and the increasingly palpable craving for alternative theories in the Socialist period. This is in part a story of the reinterpretation of the meaning of scholarship, which could only satisfy its craving for renewal by drawing on a realm the scholarly content of which only seemed justifiable within the framework of the political and social conditions that prevailed at the time.

György Kövér examines the mechanisms of the writing of economic history in the early years of Socialism, i.e. the beginning of the 1950s. His analysis offers insights into the milieu of the discipline of history at the Academy. As his sources amply illustrate, ideology was closely tied to cultural practices and representations, and it was adapted through these practices to academic life. The "planned economy" nature of scholarship and the practices of debate culture and self-criticism in the new interpretation of the science of history clearly reveal the influence of the models of party life at the beginning of the 1950s.

Zsolt K. Horváth sheds light on practices in the writing of history in connection with the "canonization" of the workers' movement. Of the various implements in the (particularly sensitive) historiography of the party and the workers' movement, the practice of selection seems to have been one of the most important. The ability to select judiciously from among the historical sources presupposed the internalization of the ideological system of perspectives and the capacity to create a kind of "scholarship" that was based on a distinctive understanding of the term. The ability to select judiciously, however, was characteristic not only of historians who dealt with questions of political history. Rather, it was a skill every professional historian had to master.

Csaba Lévai examines reception as a practice in the development of the historiography in the Socialist period, drawing on the example of the responses to the work of Charles A. Beard and Carl L. Becker, whose theory of "subjectivist-relativist-presentism" gradually become part of the discussions among historians in Hungary. Because of the ideological filters under Socialism, reception was an actively used and controlled practice in the shaping of historiography. Lévai

calls attention to the fact that the notion introduced by these two authors “was immediately elevated into the political and ideological context. In other words, the opinions that were formed of them in Hungary not only reveal a great deal about them as historians, but also reveal a great deal about the functioning of the system (p.113).”

In his analysis, Vilmos Erős deals first and foremost with the professional legacy of the historians of the interwar period. He examines how it was present in the historiography after 1945. While the previous two essays shed light on the ideological functions of reception and selection as tools in the writing, according to Erős the identification and control of the institutionalized forms of historiography originated in the interwar period, the intellectual heritage of the so-called *civic* historiography, and the convictions of the profession were part of the practices that were aiming to transform the writing of history into a substantially ideological activity.

In contrast with the other authors, Ádám Takács switches the perspectives by reading the party resolutions as discursive sources. The author examines how the party ideology circumscribed the practices of historical research. Thus he offers an answer to the question of what this scholarship that found a place within the system of conditions of the Socialist era, actually was. The Party directives defined the practice of academic research as the “discovery of reality” which in principle transcends the ideological functions of scholarship in the “formation of socialist conscience”. In turn, this “discovery of reality” was the domain that seemed to promise for the study of history an autonomous field of inquiry. However, historical research nonetheless remained within the confines of ideological conditions (including institutional and socio-cultural factors). Thus the notion of “autonomy” should be understood in relative terms. According to Takács, the historians’ debate, for instance, was never allowed to evolve beyond anything more than an “evocation” of “the atmosphere of a genuine scholarly debate (p.97)”. This also meant that in certain areas the possibility increasingly existed to fashion intellectual products identified by Takács as “postideological (p.100),” in other words products that, from a peculiar perspective, could be regarded as comparable with scholarship.

Because of their focus or the approach adopted by the author, three essays in the collection do not examine how the practices of the historian shed light on the era in which they were used. They each survey a corpus of materials that has been assembled in a specific field of research. Judit Pál examines works of Hungarian social history in Transylvania after 1945. The isolation that the

authors of these works have faced (and still face) is symptomatic of Hungarian and Romanian historiography, but this study does not explain the development of this isolation or the development of the Transylvanian institutions of historiography. In another essay of the volume, István M. Szíjártó establishes international parallels in order to further interpretations of Hungarian works of microhistory. He does not, however, shed much light on the practices of the era, such as the processes of reception or the circumstances of the early development of microhistory. The essay by Éva Standeisky can also be classified as such. She examines endeavors that were made after 1989 to situate the so-called “coalition times” between 1945 and 1950 within historical periods. Standeisky also does not devote any attention to the question of what the methods with which this period is discussed might reveal about the 1990s or possibly even the first decade of this century. In all likelihood, there is little or no examination or elucidation of the era in these essays because the authors, in their discussions of the given corpuses, are not analyzing practices the evolution of which could be tied to ideological expectations or in any specific way to the Socialist era. In the case of the other essays, the functioning of the ideology of the Socialist era constitutes the curious feature that enables scholars today to examine the broader horizon of an era on the basis of an analysis of the workings of a discipline.

In addition to furthering our understanding of an era (and perhaps the Socialist era in particular), the study of the history of historiography offers an occasion for reflection on the discipline. The authors of this collection took advantage of this opportunity. Some of them even included their observations regarding the present in their essays. The questions addressed in *Tudomány és ideológia között* call our attention to the historical question of the influence exerted on historiography by the political. According to these essays, any analysis of the post-1945 historiography (and indeed any contemporary self-interpretations) must address the question of the place of ideological horizons in scholarly practices. The statement made in the preface to the collection is worth pondering, “historical discourse is the only discourse that can establish a critical standard by which to assess the possible social and political uses of history (p.7).”

In this respect, an assessment of the legacy of the discipline must go beyond a mere examination of how ideological discourses become an integral part of institutional scholarly life. As a subject of further reflection, one could consider the state of affairs that developed parallel with this, a state of affairs characterized by Erős in his essay with the simple observation that “the interest in theoretical questions (...) was fundamentally tepid (p.162).” This diagnosis

is thought-provoking, even if Erős was comparing the situation in Hungary at the end of the Socialist period with the situation in the countries of Western Europe, where theoretical innovation found fertile ground. The challenges that characterize the effectiveness of scholarly historical writing on the social stage today call our attention to the shakiness of the theoretical preparedness of historiography in some of the areas of the discipline. The position of theory could be strengthened in the practices of history writing if the study of the history of historiography were seen by historians as a useful implement in this undertaking.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Anna Birkás

The Holocaust in Hungary: Evolution of a Genocide. By Zoltán Vági, László Csósz, and Gábor Kádár. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013. LXVII, 442 pp.

Part of the *Documenting Life and Destruction: Holocaust Sources in Context* series, which presents “original historical documents on the Holocaust within an explanatory narrative” (p.xi), this important publication by leading Hungarian Holocaust historians Zoltán Vági, László Csósz, and Gábor Kádár offers penetrating analyses of “how [the Holocaust in Hungary] came about, what drove it, and what it meant for those who were targeted” (p.xxx). It features selected sources many of which are made available in English for the first time.¹ Characterizing the Holocaust in Hungary as “not only the final major chapter of the Nazi genocide but also the peak of its evolution” (p.xxx), the volume consists of a substantial introduction and ten chapters that have been organized thematically and chronologically. It also contains a selected bibliography, a substantial glossary and a chronology, as well as a few maps and tables. The only thing missing as an appendix is a list of primary sources.

In their introduction, Vági, Csósz, and Kádár discuss the interactive decision making process involving both Germans and Hungarians that resulted in the plan of complete deportation in the spring 1944.² They highlight the widespread and willing cooperation of the Hungarian authorities, which was essential for the barbarously efficient implementation of this large-scale plan. The introduction also presents several crucial specific features of the Holocaust in Hungary, such as its special timing and unprecedented rapidity. Following the German occupation of Hungary on 19 March, 1944, a mere fifty-six days were adequate for the preparations and another fifty-six proved sufficient for the deportation of 437,402 Jewish individuals. Apart from some 15,000, all of those deported arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau and over 300,000 were immediately murdered there. Hungarian Jews thereby ended up constituting the single largest group of victims of the most infamous Nazi camp complex. In fact, it was this

1 Zoltán Vági is member of the Social Conflicts Research Center of ELTE Budapest, László Csósz works as researcher at the Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest, Gábor Kádár is currently employed at the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe.

2 This process is explored in greater detail in Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *A végső döntés. Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944* [The Final Decision: Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944] (Budapest: Jaffa, 2013).

unprecedented campaign that made Auschwitz a synonym for the annihilation of European Jewry.

Individual chapters of the book present central issues, such as the consequences of Hungary's anti-Jewish laws prior to 1944, Jewish and non-Jewish reactions to persecution, the complete disenfranchisement and physical isolation of Hungarian Jews in 1944, their horrific experiences in the Nazi camp universe, and the expropriation of Jews and subsequent fate of Jewish property. The first chapter examines the series of anti-Jewish laws adopted in Hungary as of the late 1930s and provides an account of their primary consequences. Vági, Csósz, and Kádár explain that these Hungarian laws not only caused major material losses for Hungarian Jews and increasingly meant severe intrusions into the most intimate spheres of their lives, but also fostered nepotism and corruption and only escalated tensions and hatred. The second chapter also covers developments in the years prior to 1944, focusing on local anti-Semitic measures, the so called "Labor Service," the first mass murders, and German–Hungarian negotiations regarding the "Jewish question." Studying interactions between various levels of state power, the authors discuss how anti-Semitic initiatives originating at the lower levels often violated the harsh discriminatory laws in place ("illegal anti-Semitism") and how a host of regulations with anti-Semitic effects were implemented ("bureaucratic anti-Semitism"). Moreover, this chapter also explores the particularly severe policies applied in territories Hungary had re-annexed between 1938 and 1941, highlighting that the mass deportation of Jews from Carpatho-Ruthenia in particular, which emerged as an aspiration of officials at the highest echelons of the Hungarian state as early as 1941.

In their chapter on the disenfranchisement of Hungary's Jews and their physical isolation in ghettos and collection camps, Vági, Csósz, and Kádár explain that local authorities and sometimes even civilian populations could substantially influence the specifics of ghettoization. As a result, various models of segregation emerged. Conditions in the short-lived Hungarian ghettos varied greatly, although radical manners of implementation clearly predominated. Furthermore, the chapter focuses on the extreme brutality of the deportations, symbolized by the humiliating body searches as well as the fact that some 6,000 to 7,000 Jews had already died by the time their trains arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau (p.217). Chapter seven examines the specifics of the Nazi camp universe, following the trails of the deported into Auschwitz-Birkenau and other major Nazi camps, such as Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald and

Mauthausen, while also highlighting that Jews from Hungary ended up in a total of about 600 concentration and forced labor camps, factories, and production plants scattered across Europe.

The book also carefully contextualizes Horthy's decision to halt the deportations, documenting Hungarian intentions to continue them beyond July 1944 and arguing that changes in the military situation proved to be the decisive factor. However, deportations resumed following the assumption of rule by the Arrow Cross party in mid-October 1944. In November and December, the Arrow Cross authorities herded about 50,000 people westwards, many of them on foot. As the authors highlight, international protests played a major role in persuading Ferenc Szálasi to stop the deadly marches and organize two large ghettos in Budapest instead, the fate of whose Jewish inhabitants increasingly rested in the hands of lower level representatives of the Arrow Cross party.

The particularly insightful chapter on the material side of 1944 explains that “no independent budget existed for the plunder, ghettoization, and deportation” (p.190), and the genocide against Hungarian Jews was “self-financing: the victims paid the costs of their own murder” (p.178).³ Illuminating the key measures, agencies, and beneficiaries of robbery, Vági, Csősz, and Kádár show that Hungarian authorities may have prepared hundreds of thousands of inventories of property and assets, but they ultimately proved overwhelmed by their involvement in genocide: they “managed neither to store properly nor to distribute this massive amount of plunder, lacking the time and personnel” (p.208). At the same time, the cynical vileness of some decision makers could hardly have been greater, as the state not only aimed to seize the last spoon and wineglass from every Jew, but also collected their taxes for the whole year of 1944 in advance (p.189).

The chapter on non-Jewish reactions highlights that the vast majority of the Hungarian population passively observed and widely accepted the persecution of Jews. The authors clarify that Hungarians may have murdered less than 10 percent of the more than 500,000 victims of the Holocaust in Hungary, but, in some way or another, hundreds of thousands of them took part in the massive “de-Jewification” campaign. In addition to clarifying that no vacuum of state

3 This part closely relates to innovative previous works of Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Self-Financing Genocide: The Gold Train, the Becher Case and the Wealth of Hungarian Jews* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004). See, in Hungarian, Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Aranyvonat* [Golden Train] (Budapest: Osiris, 2001) and Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Hullarablás. A magyar zsidók gazdasági megsemmisítése* [Robbing a Corpse: The Economic Destruction of Hungarian Jewry] (Budapest: Jaffa, 2005).

power existed and no “popular” anti-Semitic outbursts were unleashed during the deportations, the chapter explores the controversial role of the Christian Churches and the impressive rescue attempts initiated by the neutral diplomatic corps. Toward the end of the war, and triggered, above all, by the open brutality of the Arrow Cross, a host of civilians and even some members of the police took an active part in coordinated rescue operations that brought assistance to tens of thousands.

The chapter on Jewish responses to persecution confirms a long-accepted view according to which in Hungary most attempts at survival involved unarmed resistance. It contests, however, the image of complete Hungarian Jewish passivity, noting the ways in which regional and temporal differences affected people’s ability and inclination to resist. While the traditional Jewish leaders of Hungary notoriously proved largely incapable of reassessing their relationship with the authorities in 1944, tens of thousands of Jews in the capital city chose the path of “illegal” opposition during the Arrow Cross era. The last chapter sketches the situation of Jews and the memory of the Holocaust in the postwar period, covering developments into the early twenty-first century. Vági, Csósz, and Kádár argue that while the legal rehabilitation of Jews was partly achieved, there was no real economic or financial compensation or restitution, and Jews were not effectively protected from postwar anti-Semitism (p.342). Nevertheless, the closing pages of the book reiterate the ascent, catastrophe, and revival narrative of modern Hungarian Jewish history (p.365).

In sum, *The Holocaust in Hungary* provides an up-to-date overview of its subject and constitutes a substantial addition to the English-language literature on this major chapter of the Holocaust, which has been relatively inadequately researched. The volume also includes a wide variety of documents and traces the various life trajectories of their authors to great effect. It reveals the specificities of the Holocaust in Hungary and shows parallels with events in a host of other countries. Still, it remains essentially a national narrative in which relevant developments outside Hungary, particularly those in Nazi Germany, tend to be hinted at rather than systematically explored. The authors are entirely correct to emphasize that the radicalization of Hungarian anti-Semitism was largely an internal process. Still, the chronology of this radicalization strongly suggests the relevance of transnational trends that researchers still need to explore in detail. Second, while gender aspects are recurrently highlighted in this volume, gender could have been made a major theme to considerable effect. Last but not least, the book is characterized by a restrained and largely analytical tone. It shows

acute awareness of moral issues and stakes, but without exploring in detail the peculiar moral notions behind anti-Semitic persecution in Hungary, another potentially fruitful avenue for future researchers, who will certainly build on this impressive achievement.

Ferenc Laczó

Gendered Artistic Positions and Social Voices: Politics, Cinema and the Visual Arts in State-Socialist and Post-Socialist Hungary.

By Beata Hock. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013. 284 pp.

Although the title aptly describes the content of the book, it does not represent a conventional historical account of the changes surrounding the social and cultural opportunities of women who have entered the field of art in Hungary since 1945. It is clear already from the outset that the book has a manifest feminist agenda: it seeks to explore possible ways of undoing conventional patriarchal hierarchies that seem to prevail in all areas of modern Western society and are particularly visible in the field of arts. However, Hock also wants to challenge the dominant master narratives of feminist thinking created in the West that focus on individual self-care through equal opportunities in the workplace and the family.

Hock's approach has been shaped by somewhat different concerns. The book has emerged as a PhD dissertation at the Central European University in Budapest, which exposes its students to a radically destabilizing effect of a multinational and interdisciplinary milieu. As Beata Hock stresses, such an environment encouraged her to deconstruct dominant cultural positions, including Eurocentrism, as well as to seek approaches beyond the disciplinary boundaries of conventional feminist studies. The book argues for a "situated feminism," which should take the actual social and historical experiences of women and men (the constructions of gender) of the societies under scrutiny into greater consideration and, thus, should be able to actualize otherwise abstract tenets of feminist politics.

Such concerns raise interesting and challenging methodological problems. It seems clear that East-Central Europe, the region with a postwar experience of state socialism, differs significantly from the historical trajectories of liberal capitalism in Western Europe and North America. Although the state in these societies doubtlessly limited personal autonomy as well as the ways of expressing subjectivities and repressed ideas of citizenship based on individual rights over one's own body, it did induce certain programs of emancipation, which transformed the lives of women. Such transformations, however, were divergent from mainstream Western development. The benefits of the communist welfare states, particularly the broad opportunities of permanent salaried jobs and relatively long periods of paid maternity leave as well as the possibilities of legal

abortion in many countries of Eastern Europe, made the experiences of socialist women very different than those of their Western counterparts.

If the master narrative of Western feminism is challenged by divergent historical conditions of Eastern European societies, how is it possible to deconstruct it? Hock has similar doubts with the application of post-colonial critique, the major global challenger of Western emancipation discourses. Postcolonial criticism, argues Hock, which claims that Western liberal individualist emancipation makes global normative demands and, hence, relates the historical experiences of non-European societies as backward and marginal to the European one, is equally misleading in the context of Eastern Europe. Although Eastern Europe is also marginalized by such normative discourses, its societies have long been inherent parts of the same Eurocentric world, where criticism, that which would radically oppose such culture, makes little sense.

Hock's book instead suggests a way to apply the categories of mainstream feminist critique, which reflect the general cultural and political expectations of women all over Europe, together with a careful localization of such concepts into the conditions and legacies that state socialist systems created in Eastern Europe. The book chooses art, film, photography and contemporary new media, since besides illustrating political and social opportunities of women for entering public spheres, it shows in sharp contrasts the strategies of developing subjectivities, which have long been in the focus of feminist studies in order to analyze the dismantling of patriarchal orders.

Whereas the first three chapters in Part I of the book deal with clarifying the theoretical and methodological implications of such concerns, Parts II, III and IV examine the political and social background of producing art by women and the actual work of women visual artists since 1945. Part II concerns the aspect of the political, which Hock understands in this book as programs of élites aimed at social transformation and the ways they communicated such goals towards target groups in society. Clearly, postwar élites put great stress on equal rights, which was visibly reflected by the legislation of both the democratic and the post-1949 communist governments. The enfranchisement in 1945, the new labour and higher education law in 1946 and the family law in 1953 dismantled the legally sanctioned privileges men had previously enjoyed in Hungarian society. Nonetheless, as Hock highlights, in the context of state socialism, which in general denied political rights, these legal frames meant little in practice. As a partial consequence, the ways in which public spheres were generated after 1989

likewise turned the superior access of men to symbolic and social capital during socialism into visible overrepresentation in public politics.

Hock observes similar tendencies in education as well. She claims that while state socialism provided broad opportunities for women to enter higher education and other forms of training, a clear gender division prevailed, which also continued to exist after 1989. Certain professions have been feminized, particularly teaching and many subjects in the humanities, whereas sciences and economic-management positions are still dominated by men. Women have remained overrepresented in undergraduate studies and lower- or mid-level management positions. Hock is not, however, unaware of the complexities of such political programs. The book reminds the reader that the major intention of communist emancipation was not the democratic participation of women, but rather the creation of a reliable and predictable workforce. Besides, a visible anti-feminist political culture, which denied civic and individual initiatives and endorsed only centralized state interventions, remained in force. Likely more importantly, the mentalities and attitudes have not changed significantly since 1945 that have largely confined the role of women inside conventional frameworks. It is also noteworthy that new social movements like feminism or queer movements appeared or started to make a broader impact in Hungary only after 1989.

Political programs of state socialism have a paradoxical legacy. Although the communist governments never really fulfilled the promises they made about emancipation, they did generate progressive, new individual types of female subjectivities. In the post-1989 decades, the expectations of those who saw the opportunities to finally realize such progressive goals often collided harshly with the ideas of those who identified these progressive visions as “communist” and offered instead within the post-communist context new types of conventional conservative gender roles.

Parts III and IV discuss the role of women and opportunities in cinema and visual arts in Hungary. As Part III highlights, women directors made their entry in the Hungarian film industry around the mid-1960s. Although since then their numbers have constantly increased, this fact conceals important structural inequalities, as Hock argues. There was only one female director, Márta Mészáros, who was able to build up an extensive individual oeuvre consisting of 21 films up to 2005, greatly superior in number to other women directors with their 5-8 works up to that year. Women directors of the late 1960s, and particularly Mészáros, explored the opportunities of constructing women’s subjectivities

independently of men. Their protagonists were ready to refuse unwanted attention and were developing lives in the absence of men.

Such concerns were also developed by other films of the period. The 1950s recognized the transformations which led to new female types independent of men. However, in general, Hungarian cinema in the 1950s, as Hock reminds the audience, represented such women as agents of the official policy of emancipation. They usually appeared as members of a category and were linked to the state as a consequence. Besides, romantic films reproduced conventional patriarchal meanings and depicted the ideal type of woman—beautiful but prudish and thus being able to tame her sexual appeal. In the 1960s, such openly sexist positions were rare, Beata Hock points out. Films of this period concentrated rather on the problems of living without men. The 1970s and 1980s were much more concerned with troubles of private and everyday life. Films recognized the loss of values and orientations, which was reflected by their choice of women protagonists. Directors were attracted to non-conventional female actors and characters, thus illustrating the demise of certainty surrounding gender categories and the trust in conventional gender types. Nonetheless, the use of women to highlight broader social problems meant also a feminization of criticism, as Hock's book claims. By linking critical voices to women in films, socio-political criticism was made private and, therefore, appeared potentially less dangerous. After 1989, however, even this particularly disguised feminist criticism disappeared or decreased to great extent. The changing structures of film production and of financing benefited men as well as topics of conventional patriarchal culture.

Lastly, Part IV turns to the analysis of gendered positions in visual arts in Hungary since 1945. Hock draws similar conclusion here as in the previous chapter. She claims that there were a few individual women who could pursue a career in art from the 1960s in Hungary, particularly Dóra Maurer and Katalin Ladik. However, as the book clarifies, their presence was far from a genuine breakthrough of women's special perspectives and role in contemporary art. Probably because of the fragmented nature of female art in late socialism, the attitude of artist towards feminism was rather special. Maurer mediated between international and domestic art since she was living partly in Vienna during that period and also transmitted contemporary feminist ideas to Hungarian fellow artists. Ladik transformed the female body in her performances from the object of gaze to the subject of speaking. Despite their visible feminist implications, these artists were nevertheless reluctant to openly engage themselves with such socio-political movements that they could not identify as art.

Due to the relative absence of feminism as a social movement and civic cultural criticism in late socialism, 1989 signified an opportunity for many young women artists to pursue more manifest programmatic feminist art. The artists of the younger generation—Hock highlights the work of Ágnes Szépfalvi (1965), Emese Benczúr (1969), Eszter Radák (1971) and Kriszta Nagy (1972)—consciously used art to express specific female experiences and also to construct visible and often provocative female subjectivities in public. However, as the book observes, they conspicuously refuse to engage themselves with broader social issues like poverty, exploitation or unequal opportunities beyond the implications these factors have on individual female experience.

Beata Hock's book is an original combination of the adaptation of Western social science and the analysis of Eastern European experiences. Due to her sensitivity to the connection of development of state socialism with their legacies after 1989, however, she avoids the trap of constructing Eastern Europe as a fundamental other of Western modernity. This book rather makes the complexities of answers to a pressing question comprehensible. Reading this book, it becomes more conceivable that the answers that élites and societies in various regions of Europe give to the challenges of the emergence of women's voices, female subjectivities and the dismantling of patriarchal hierarchies run rather convoluted roads: sometimes parallel and converging, sometime diverging and separate.

Péter Apor

Vezércsel. Kádár János mindennapjai
[King's Gambit. The Everyday Life of János Kádár].
By György Majtényi. Budapest: Libri Kiadó, 2012. 212 pp.

Historian and college professor György Majtényi has been conducting research connected to post-1945 social and cultural history in Hungary for many years. He has published the results of this research in books regarding social mobility as well as the socialist-era elite, among others. Majtényi's latest book provides the reader with a glimpse of longtime Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party General Secretary János Kádár—one of the most significant leaders in twentieth-century Hungarian history—not at meetings of the Central Committee or Political Committee, but at his home, among his “friends,” in his office, on vacation or while hunting. In doing so, the author is attempting to understand and transform the established image of Kádár (p.8). This image is composed of three main components: working-class origin; torture suffered in Rákosi's prison; and the myth of the hard-working, puritan leader. Majtényi does not take an explicit position with regard to the question of whether the popular image of Kádár was the product of conscious cult building or of “mere” cult creation/establishment. The author seems to suspect the latter case to be more likely, because, as he states, it is not a single person, but the surrounding social milieu that produces the cult (pp.10–11, 116). Majtényi does not, however, leave any doubt that one can speak of a cult surrounding the personality of János Kádár, even if it was not as robust as that previously connected to Mátyás Rákosi.

The author's objective is therefore to dismantle this cultic image and to expose the legend surrounding the reality (p.13). The use of scientific method to uncover popular myth is, in fact, the “classical” mission of the historian. Although there exists a perspective from which science itself represents just one discourse among many,¹ thus, in the present case as well, one could speak only of competing myths, determining the degree to which the exposure of legend is compatible with the historical objectives connected to an understanding of the phenomenon represents a much more significant question. In the opinion of the reviewer, the author manages to harmonize the two endeavors in such a way as to endow the book with (at least) two means of interpretation.

1 See at length Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge* (London: New Left Books, 1975); in brief: idem, “Theses on Anarchism,” in Imre Lakatos and Paul Feyerabend, *For and Against Method*, ed. Matteo Motterlini (Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 113–8.

The objective of the author, as demonstrated in the book's subtitle, is to present the reader with an impression of the everyday life of János Kádár. The main title of the work makes it clear that it is not about the everyday life of an average person, but of a leader. As a consequence, the focus of the book is on the years after 1945, particularly the period after 1956. Majtényi tells three stories about Kádár that show how the party leader conducted himself at three major locations of his everyday life: his home, his office and "outside". The author concentrates on one component of the cult surrounding János Kádár in his attempt to destroy it—the image of the hard-working, puritan, moderate leader—and in doing so devotes much less attention to the other two aspects of the cult: Kádár's working-class origin and the suffering he endured in Rákosi's prison. Majtényi takes care of the latter aspect of the cult in just a couple of pages, asserting that there is no evidence to corroborate the widely publicized incidents in which Kádár's prison tormentors tore out his fingernails and urinated in his mouth (pp.121–4). The author's choice to place the section of the book dealing with Kádár's prison years in the chapter entitled "Outside" is totally incomprehensible (and reveals some degree of cynicism). Although Kádár certainly resided outside the sphere of power at this time, this type of "outside" was of a totally different quality than that he experienced while hunting, on the football pitch or playing chess as the holder of political power. (Examination of the post-1956 reprisals, particularly Kádár's role in the execution of Imre Nagy (pp.133–7), occur in this chapter as well, which is even less justifiable in the opinion of the reviewer.)

For János Kádár (and his wife), home was the villa located at Cserje Street 21 in the distinguished *Rózsadomb* ("Rose Hill") section of Budapest. Kádár, who as an operative in Hungary's illegal communist parties before 1945 had faced persecution and difficult living circumstances, evidently felt following the "liberation" that he deserved a nice home. Although this sentiment was typical of high-ranking communist functionaries, Kádár's case was unique in that evidence suggests that he acquired his villa through an agreement with its owner, National Assembly representative István Vértés, at the end of 1948. According to Majtényi, Vértés was compelled to sell his villa to Kádár because he had to flee Hungary. However, Vértés apparently remained in Hungary after selling the house: not only is his name in the Budapest telephone book published at the end of 1949, but it also appears that same year on the electoral ballot of the communist-dominated Hungarian Independence People's Front (which is not surprising considering that Vértés had been a member of the

collaborationist, Father István Balogh-led Independent Hungarian Democratic Party). Considering, furthermore, that Vértess died while serving as a National Assembly representative in 1951, the question arises: when did he emigrate to Great Britain, as Majtényi claims he did (pp.20–21)?

Regardless of how Kádár acquired his villa, had made his definitive “arrival,” becoming a full-fledged member of the supreme leadership. Not only did Kádár rise rapidly within the official hierarchy, becoming minister of the interior in August 1948, but he also took up residence in the same area as other communist leaders. The couple did not live in their new abode for even three years before losing it (as well) following Kádár’s arrest in 1951. Mr. and Mrs. Kádár did not get the villa back following his release from prison in 1954, though they were visibly much attached to it. Kádár subsequently reacquired the villa as the leader of the newly formed Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party in 1957. Kádár was similarly attached to his work office, which he got back as well in 1957 after the party headquarters moved into the former Ministry of the Interior (and State Protection Authority political-police) building. Thus in 1956–1957, Kádár “took back” everything that he had possessed at the end of the 1940s and which he considered to be his rightful property. It is certainly not an accident that Kádár wanted to return to these places, which he considered to be home. One would dare say that the Rózsadomb villa and the Ministry of the Interior office represented the defining locations of Kádár’s self-identity.² Majtényi naturally points out that the most important place for Kádár was that of power (pp.94–99, 107).

Following his release from prison in 1954, János Kádár was depicted as a victim of the Rákosi régime, whether he wanted to be portrayed as such or not. Kádár was initially reluctant to play this role, because he remained faithful to Rákosi and did not gravitate toward the internal party opposition. Kádár was extremely cautious and continually accommodated himself to the prevailing locus of power: if necessary to Rákosi, if necessary to Imre Nagy (in October 1956) and if necessary to the Soviets (beginning in November 1956). Thanks to this strategy, he attained positions of increasing power and was able to hold on to them, leading Hungary for over three decades after becoming the highest-

2 See, for example, Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff, “Place-Identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self,” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3, no. 1 (1983): 57–83; Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, “Defining Place Attachment: a Tripartite Organizing Framework,” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, no. 1 (2010): 1–10; and Maria Lewicka, “Place Attachment: How Far Have We Come in the Last 40 Years?” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 31, no. 3 (2011): 207–30.

ranking communist official in the country following the 1956 revolution. Both Hungary and the system named after Kádár naturally changed continually (and greatly), although his personal life apparently remained static. The communist leader's age obviously had something to do with this: perhaps not incidentally, by the middle of the 1970s, when he had entered his sixties, Kádár's daily and weekly routine became entrenched (strict work schedule, swimming, barber, doctor, Friday-evening cinema etc.) (pp.90–93).

Kádár gradually lost his personal connections at this time and became quite solitary. Contrary to the popular image, he did not go out among others, appearing among “the people” only in the course of ceremonial events. As a member of the *élite*, Kádár spent his leisure time away from the masses at party resorts and on hunting trips. (Beginning in the 1970s, Kádár did not even go to the theater anymore, though he continued to go to the movies with his wife on Friday afternoons.) It is characteristic of his increasing reclusiveness that although football could have drawn Kádár closer to the people, he watched matches at the *Népstadion* (“People’s Stadium”) from the private box seats and very rarely attended the games of his beloved Vasas club. It was perhaps only through chess that Kádár could come close to common people: he frequently went to play the game at the chess-federation building, where “ordinary” players could challenge him to matches. Kádár became increasingly isolated within the ruling *élite* as well: his circle of friends broke up in the 1960s, after which the atmosphere within the political leadership was often cold and formality began to rule social relations between its members (on hunting trips, for example). Kádár behaved in a reserved manner, which encouraged others to adopt this demeanor as well, thus creating a stiff and uneasy mood. Kádár was equally as aloof at work, using either the formal form of “you” (*maga*) or the term “comrade” to refer to his colleagues and even to fellow former underground party activists. Kádár's isolation culminated in the spring of 1989, when he was dismissed from all of his offices and remained completely alone. It was symbolic that after his dismissal, Kádár left party headquarters walking arm in arm with his wife, the only person with whom he had maintained confidential relations over the previous decades (pp.163–4).

The reviewer regards the primary importance of György Majtényi's book to be the means it provides the reader for rethinking the nature of power, dictatorship and the terms “communist” and “socialist” through an insight into the everyday life of a person of supreme authority. In the foreword, the author himself states: “The contradictions between cult and everyday life can

help to understand the inner logic of the system and even enables us to draw conclusions regarding the norms, regulations and structure of society at that time” (p.12). It would be difficult based on a reading of the book to assert that the political system and society of the Kádár era were socialist. The large library that Kádár maintained at his Cserje Street villa included very few ideological works, while evidence suggests that the well-read, continually self-educating party general-secretary gravitated toward classical bourgeois culture. (Although Kádár did make room in his library for a few obligatory Marxist works, these could have appeared on the bookshelves of any cultured citizen.) Kádár’s dress, manner and leisure-time activities were all suggestive of a conservative spirit and personality. Communist cultural chief György Aczél characterized the party leader as an explicitly conservative person. Kádár’s consciously built proletarian image appeared only in the public and semi-public domain, such as his office, which contained much more austere furnishings than his home and made conspicuous display of the symbolism of the workers’ movement.

(Kádár on several occasions had to face the fact that the workers did not necessarily support Hungary’s Communist parties, not only in 1956, but previously as well. Majtényi cites as an example an instance in which party officials sent Kádár to the town of Szentes in southeastern Hungary in order to placate miners who were angry about the murder of the anti-communist local police chief (p.68). But why did the miners find themselves in the middle of the Great Hungarian Plain?! Only as a result of the inattention of the author, who mixed up two incidents mentioned by Roger Gough: Kádár was, in fact, sent to the city of Miskolc in northeastern Hungary in 1946 to attend to matters related to a communist-organized protest of miners against the black market and price increases that had degenerated into an anti-Semitic pogrom.)³

János Kádár, the holder of power, was not a proletarian leader, but a bourgeois political official: this assertion seems bold, but considering that in technical terms the system was not socialist (since the forces of production were not in public ownership), then one should not be surprised. Kádár stood at the head of an administrative apparatus, not a movement, and as the leader of a state-capitalist régime, a party-state possessing the means of production (as “aggregate capitalist”) i.e. as a quasi bourgeois, he naturally followed bourgeois models. (Just consider the privileges, the hunting trips or the special train that

3 The work cited by Majtényi is Roger Gough, *Kádár János, a jó elvtárs?*, trans. Richárd Rákócza (Budapest: J LX, 2006), 65; for the original English version see Roger Gough, *A Good Comrade: János Kádár, Communism and Hungary* (London–New York: IB Tauris, 2006), 30–1.

he treated as his own.) The worker's image served to preserve the myth that Kádár was the leader of a workers' state (a proletarian dictatorship). Seen from this perspective, the fresco-secco *Munkásállam* ("Workers' State") located at the headquarters of the state party can be regarded as symbolic (pp.104–5): the régime did not create a workers' state, but merely had one painted for itself.

The author's use of a great number and variety of source materials (archival documents, memoirs, oral history, interviews, press articles) to underpin his portrayal of the everyday life of János Kádár represents a commendable historical approach to his subject. György Majtényi did not attempt to show how Kádár *really* was, but rather that he was *different* than he *appeared* to be during the decades of his rule. It is for this reason that the reviewer, contrary to the author, would not characterize this image as false: as Majtényi himself suggests in the book, everybody plays some kind of social role that is nearly all that others are able to see of the given personality (pp.169–70). The role of spectacle in modern societies should not be underestimated;⁴ nor should it be underestimated in connection to the subject at hand, since, as the author states, "Paradoxes surrounding the cult and personality of Kádár are not primarily characteristic of the general secretary himself. The public image of the dictator was a product of compromises and attempts among his contemporaries to find a way to cope successfully with the prevailing circumstances" (pp.103–4).

(The reviewer notes that the author occasionally deviates from the historical approach described above, appearing to suggest that he knows who Kádár really was. For example, Kádár's secretary indicated that the party leader worked at his office until 10 p.m.; Majtényi refutes this assertion based on his examination of evidence on table calendars (pp.78–79), though subsequently states as fact that "available sources" show that he quit working at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. (p.110). However, the table calendars actually only display events not connected to daily routine and undoubtedly do not show times of arrival and departure. Memories cannot, naturally, be regarded as "the truth," because the myth of the hard-working Kádár exercised an impact on these recollections as well—it is precisely for this reason, and not in order to correct its "factual" errors, that the text is worthy of attention.)

The author does not devote much effort to substantiating the premise that there really was a cult surrounding Kádár (which is understandable inasmuch as this does not represent the theme of his book) and the evidence he presents

4 Cf. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

is not too convincing. According to Majtényi, the following circumstances represented elements of the Kádár cult: praise appearing for published collections of Kádár's speeches and writings in the party's theoretical review, *Társadalmi Szemle* ("Social Review"); greetings on his birthday (primarily from school children); postcards he received from Hungarian athletes competing abroad; and the party leader's strict observance of protocol and formality (pp.116–7).

Cult building is aimed at occupying public space; its two fundamental vehicles are the cultic manner of speech and practice, that is, praise and ritual.⁵ The greetings sent to Kádár were not, however, collected and published in representative albums, thus they did not appear in the public space. The praise published in *Társadalmi Szemle* can be interpreted as a ritual act, though the publication had minimal impact on the masses, to say the least. And it is an exaggeration to state that calling into question the protocol-dictated seating arrangement of government members was tantamount to calling into question "the absolute rule of the paramount leader." (A minor correction: Gyula Kállai's proposal to this effect and Kádár's annoyed response did not take place at the November 17, 1961 meeting of the Central Committee, but at the November 14, 1961 meeting of the Political Committee of the Communist party.) Neither did portraits of Kádár appear regularly in public and semi-public spaces: only at the time of the annual May 1 parades did such portraits turn up on the streets, and even then only in the company of other state leaders (the Council of Ministers Chairman and the Presidential Council Chairman).

The Kádár cult, supposing that such a cult existed whatsoever, occupied public spaces to only a limited degree and was hardly even perceptible in comparison to that built around the person of Mátyás Rákosi. (Portraits and busts of the Stalinist leader inundated Hungary, factories and institutions were named after him, "spontaneous" workers' assemblies were called to discuss his published writings, the mere mention of his name elicited rhythmic applause, etc.) It was not only in comparison to Rákosi that Kádár can be characterized,

5 Balázs Apór, "Spatial Aspects of the Communist Leader Cult: The Case of Mátyás Rákosi in Hungary," in *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period*, ed. Balázs Apór, Péter Apór, and E. A. Rees (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 149–70; Balázs Apór, "Communist Leader Cults in Eastern Europe: Concepts and Recent Debates," in *Cultic Revelations: Studies in Modern Historical Cult Personalities and Phenomena (Spectrum Hungarologicum 4)*, ed. Anssi Halmesvirta (Jyväskylä–Pécs: University of Jyväskylä, 2010), 37–62; Cf. Jan Plamper, "Introduction: Modern Personality Cults," in *Personality Cults in Stalinism – Personenkulte im Stalinismus*, ed. Klaus Heller and Jan Plamper (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2004), 13–42.

to use the words of János M. Rainer, as “a person without a cult.” Following the Soviet model, though drawing lessons from his experiences in Hungary, János Kádár decided based on political considerations not to have a cult built around him as Rákosi had prior to 1956.⁶

Translated by Sean Lambert

Tibor Takács

⁶ János M. Rainer, “A kultusz nélküli ember” [The Person without a Cult], in *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba* [Introduction to Kádárism] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet–L’Harmattan, 2011), 200–14.

Politikai rendőrség a Rákosi-korszakban [Political Police in the Rákosi Era]. By Rolf Müller. Budapest: Jaffa, 2012. 240 pp.

Although the history of the political police in the 1950s remains a topic of intense interest, new archival findings struggle to find their way to the wider public and academic history books are seldom easily comprehensible, especially those that examine the organizational structures of governmental bodies. Belonging to the younger generation of Hungarian historians, *Rolf Müller* set out to write a volume regarding the political police in the Rákosi era summarizing the results of his research over the past 14 years on the history of the infamous organization. An employee of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, Müller has published several books and articles on the topic, though the present volume from the Jaffa Publishing House is designed and written in a youthful style to reach a wider audience. The challenge was complex: to publish a book about a contested era that is informal in style and has no footnotes in it, but at the same time remains authentic; and also to write the history of the political police precisely from the archival material they produced.

The author decided to choose well-known or interesting topics and episodes to serve as the main links for the structure: the problem of the exact name of the organization, the person of its notorious leader, Gábor Péter, and such *lieux de mémoire* as the Golden Team (the famous Hungarian football team in the 1950s featuring Ferenc Puskás), the White House (the notorious Interior Ministry building along the Danube in Budapest) and the dreaded black automobiles of the police. Throughout the book, Müller depicts the topic with flashes of frames, giving impressions rather than over-explaining. What is also detectable is the rich archival material that forms the background of the seemingly easy-going descriptions.

In the first part of the book the backdrop is depicted by listing the organizational transformations of the political police, and the reader is surprised to find that even the history of an organization can be both interesting and enjoyable. The genealogy traces back to (and even before) the end of the Second World War, as the author is firm in his opinion that “with respect to the political police, the Rákosi era started in January 1945”.

Having its origins in the political-police squads formed at the end of 1944 in the parts of Hungary controlled by the Soviet army, the Hungarian Communist Party exercised decisive influence from the very beginning over the political police,

which began its work in Budapest in the party's headquarters located on Kálmán Tisza Square (later renamed Republic Square, the location of the notoriously bloody events during the 1956 revolution). Ironically, when the squad arrived to Budapest under the leadership of András Tömpe following its formation in the city of Debrecen, it encountered at the Kálmán Tisza Square headquarters a rival organization under the command of Gábor Péter. Among the first prisoners arrested by the two branches of the political police were the underground leaders of the previously illegal communist party (e.g., Pál Demény and János Dobos), who had quite soon become uncomfortable for the Muscovite communist élite.

The chaotic situation was settled by May 1945, when two political security departments (*politikai rendészeti osztály*, or PRO) were established: one to operate in Budapest (headed by Péter); and the other outside the capital city with Tömpe as its leader.

Organizational transformations are portrayed in parallel with the most important political trials in the first part of the book. The two political security departments were merged into the State Protection Department (*Államvédelmi Osztály*, or ÁVO) in October 1946, a few months before launching the arrests in preparation for the first big political trial (that of the “Hungarian Fraternity”) used to suppress the Smallholder’s Party rivalling the communists. From then on, in the words of a political police leader, “the emphasis shifted from the past to the present”—from the sins of the past to unveiling alleged conspiracies against the “democratic state order.” In November 1948, the task of economic law-enforcement was likewise assigned to the political police, reorganized two months earlier as the State Protection Authority of the Ministry of the Interior (*belügyminisztérium államvédelmi hatósága*, or BM ÁVH). From then on a wave of political show-trials started against commercial companies, the most prominent being the MAORT (Hungarian–American Oil Company) trial. It was not until the beginning of the year 1950 that an independent State Security Authority (*államvédelmi hatóság*, or ÁVH) had been established by merging the former organization with the military border guards. One month later, in February 1950, the military-intelligence service was also attached to the State Protection Authority. Thus a quasi state-security ministry was formed that was directly subordinated to the Council of Ministers. The three years until Péter’s arrest at the beginning of 1953 signaled the height of the ÁVH’s power and one of the darkest periods for the Hungarian population, characterized by state terror and purges that affected even communists, the most well-known instance being the trial and execution of former communist minister László Rajk.

In February of the same year, military counter-intelligence was also integrated into the State Protection Authority, although ÁVH leader Béla Janikovszky, who had acted as Rajk's interrogator, was obliged to report to the minister of defense. With these transformations, the organization increased exponentially in number of personnel: the staff grew from about 500 members in 1946 to almost 2,000 in two years, while its successor, the BM ÁVH, worked just more than 5,000 personnel in January 1949, though rose to 9,000 employees by the end of the year. By adding the border guards and other sections that formerly belonged to the Ministry of Defense, the ÁVH gathered information about 1.2 million people, functioning with a staff of between 35,000 and 45,000. It sought to control all parts of public and everyday life and was especially active and effective in prominent areas, one of them being academic life for example, where the political police was actively involved in granting academic degrees. The author refers to a letter written in 1952 confirming that even doctoral or (the roughly equivalent) "candidate" degrees were awarded with the consent of not only the Administrative Department of the Communist Party Politburo and the ministry concerned, but with that of the ÁVH as well.

Similarly, special attention was turned to sports, especially to football, which was at its zenith in Hungary in the 1950s, and the author devotes a chapter to the ÁVH operations lurking behind the football achievements of the legendary Golden Team. If the advice of the ÁVH had been taken, six footballers out of the starting eleven would not have been allowed to play at the Helsinki Olympic Games in 1952, including team captain Ferenc Puskás, as the political police commented on the composition of sport teams travelling abroad as well. Furthermore, out of the entire 1952 Olympic team, almost fifty members were found problematic in the first round of examination. The criticized athletes then won five gold medals, one silver medal and one bronze medal of the forty-two Hungarian medals, thus contributing to Hungary's biggest success in the history of the Olympic Games.

Against the backdrop of this organizational structure, the main characters are portrayed in the next chapters with detailed biographies of the leaders and gray eminences. Starting with the protagonist, Gábor Péter, unfolding his life story from his birth in a distant region of Hungary as Benjamin Eisenberger at the beginning of the twentieth century, through the start of his career as a tailor's apprentice, finding his way to the communist movement and gaining a key position after 1945, until his spectacular fall and his sentence to life in prison following Stalin's death. Thus the outbreak of the 1956 revolution found Péter

in prison, right in the middle of an interrogation. After crushing the revolution, prison life continued for him unchanged, but in the years of the early Kádár era, Péter and his fellows sailed with the new political wind and his earlier sentence was mitigated to 14 years. Péter was then released in January 1959 and lived happily until his death in 1993, outliving Rákosi, Kádár and the communist régime itself. The techniques of the Péter-led organization, by which it was able to gain information on practically the entire society, are discussed in detail in the fourth part of the book.

The strength of the volume lies in the rich details and episodes that are collected in the third and the last parts. Here scenes from the functioning of the political police and the whole milieu of the 1950s are listed, with outstanding chapters about the contradictory attitude of the Rákosi régime towards the veterans of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic, as well as the way leaders of the ÁVH, especially Péter, communicated with their superiors on slips of paper, and a remarkable section on the logistics of the political police, the real estate and car fleet that served to maintain the terror. Another positive feature is that the author maintains distance from his subject and from the archival material he uses, carefully considering the credibility of his sources.

Rolf Müller's book on this key area of Hungary's recent history represents a successful attempt to bridge the gap between academic and popular writing, conveying heavy content in a light package.

Éva Tulipán

Trianon Again and Again

Rozpad Uhorska a Trianonská mierová zmluva. K politikám pamäti na Slovensku a v Maďarsku. [The Disintegration of Historical Hungary and the Trianon Peace Treaty. Politics of Memory in Slovakia and Hungary.] Edited by Miroslav Michela and László Vörös. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2013. 336 pp.¹

Issues related to the so-called “Trianon complex”—preoccupation with the disintegration of historical Hungary, the peace treaty that sanctified it and the consequences thereof—represent the subject of public discourse in some form or another in both Hungary and its neighboring countries. Moreover, these issues not only engage the attention of historians, intellectuals and, occasionally, political officials, but filter into everyday discourse as well (albeit often under the influence of opinion makers). The events themselves—the collapse of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, the political reorganization of the territory of the former dualist state and the new foundations underpinning relations between Hungarians and their neighbors—have been examined rather comprehensively, therefore the authors of the volume under consideration chose rather to investigate how Hungarians and Slovaks have remembered and continue to remember the Treaty of Trianon.² That is, how do we interpret the treaty, how do we experience it, how do we recall it and think about it, how do we construct it and, finally, how do we pass this complex phenomenon on to subsequent generations? How does an event build itself into our lives that affects many

1 <http://www.forumhistoriae.sk/documents/10180/286159/trianon.pdf>, accessed June 09, 2014. The reviewer must disclose that he served as one of the professional editors of the book and thus should not be expected to voice heavy criticism of it.

2 Several works of significantly varying quality have been published in Hungarian on this subject. Noteworthy among them are Ignác Romsics, ed., *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás 1920–1953* [Trianon and Hungarian Political Thinking 1920–1953] (Budapest: Osiris, 1998); Archimédész Szidiropulosz, ed., *Trianon utóélete. A magyar társadalom Trianon-képe az ezredfordulón* [The Afterlife of Trianon: The Image of Trianon in Hungarian Society at the Turn of the Century] (Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó, n.d.); Miklós Zeidler, ed., *Trianon* (Budapest: Osiris, 2003); Gergely Romsics, *Mítosz és emlékezet. A Habsburg Birodalom felbomlása az osztrák és a magyar politikai elit emlékirat-irodalmában* [Myth and Memory: The Collapse of the Habsburg Empire in the Memoirs of the Austrian and Hungarian Political Elite] (Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2004); Miklós György Száraz, ed., *Fájó Trianon. A Trianon-jelenség* [The Pain of Trianon: The Trianon Phenomenon] (Budapest: M-érték Kiadó Kft., 2011); and, finally, the periodical launched in 2009 and devoted specifically to the subject of Trianon, *Trianoni Szemle*.

people only distantly or indirectly and, furthermore, continues to draw farther away from us year by year, thus making our knowledge of it increasingly derivative?

The Disintegration of Historical Hungary signifies the conclusion of a multi-year Slovak–Hungarian project. Much of the content of the book is based on presentations held at a conference organized by the editors in Nové Zámky (Érsekújvár), Slovakia with the support of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian–Slovak Historians’ Mixed Committee in 2010. Some of these presentations have already been published in Hungarian,³ although *The Disintegration of Historical Hungary* in its present form is the product of long and thorough editorial process that has provided the Slovak reading public with a truly mature work. The composition of the authors in terms of nationality, age and academic discipline already provides an indication of the diversity of the book’s content: in addition to Slovaks, Hungarians and members of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia, there is a French historian among the contributors, which include both the relatively young and well-known researchers as well as representatives from several subject areas—history, political science, sociology and didactics. Interdisciplinarity characterizes the entire volume; its contributors frequently show that they are not afraid to step out of their narrowly defined academic disciplines in order to utilize the methods and results of related fields of study. From the historian’s viewpoint, perhaps the most exciting aspect of the book is that it contains several approaches to the theme in question, varying from the “national” to the “analytical.” It is a tribute to the editors that this heterogeneity does not have a disturbing effect on the reader and does not pull the volume apart—the texts complement one another well and, in the end, present an organic unity. The final product cannot, however, be regarded as a monolithic whole, thereby more accurately reflecting reality in all its paradoxical aspects.

The decision of the editors to juxtapose presentations of popular Slovak and Hungarian attitudes toward Trianon is exemplary from several perspectives. For one, it directs attention to the issue of the degree to which we (do not) understand one another, showing how Slovaks, Romanians and citizens of other countries surrounding Hungary comprehend the “Trianon complex” of the Hungarians and how the latter perceive the grievances of their neighbors and how aware we all are of our *own* traumas. The overall impression emerging

3 *Limes* 23, no. 4 (2010) and 24, no. 1 (2011).

from the book is not exactly encouraging: it appears that people are preoccupied with their own problems and are not even aware of the problems of others (and often seem to not even care)(p.290, 302). This is, unfortunately, not too surprising, just as the obvious incompatibility of the two “national viewpoints” represents nothing out of the ordinary.

The two editors of the book, Miroslav Michela and László Vörös, belong to the young generation of historians from Slovakia that is actively conducting research of high academic quality regarding the common Hungarian–Slovak past, frequently in close cooperation with historians and social scientists from Hungary. Michela and Vörös are well suited for the job of editing the book not only because they are comfortable working with sources in both Slovak and Hungarian (and other languages as well), but because they maintain a proper distance from ethnocentric or explicitly nationalist schools of thought and are not afraid to enter into disagreement with the “mainstream” representatives of the traditional “national” approach to the issue of Trianon.

The Disintegration of Historical Hungary provides an answer to the frequently posed question: is there any reason at all to deal with Trianon? Does keeping the issue of Trianon on the agenda merely serve to intensify the trauma surrounding the treaty, to rub salt in unhealed wounds, often for concrete political purposes? Although the authors of the various chapters in the book express divergent opinions in this regard, in general they appear to believe that the scientific thematization of the issue of Trianon and “talking through” problems connected to the treaty could encourage more constructive dialogue between Hungarians and their neighbors and raise the level of self-awareness among all concerned, thus alleviating tension stemming from the injuries of Trianon. Contributors to the book emphasize the importance of approaching the issue of Trianon with the objective of understanding the opinion of others or presenting the cultured expression of one’s own viewpoint rather than placing the subject in its trauma-enhancing nationalist context. It is also important to continue dialogue surrounding Trianon as it pertains to relations between Hungarians and their neighbors because the majority nations of the states surrounding Hungary regard the Treaty of Trianon as a symbol of their self-determination and the foundation of their national statehood. Members of these nations widely consider Trianon to have been a “rightful decision” representing “historical justice” (p.285, 290)⁴ judgments that have solidified into a dogma of sorts within their

4 Trianon was portrayed in this way in Czech and Slovak history textbooks as well. See Slávka Otčenášová,

national identities and thus immediately provoke charges of “Greater Hungarian nationalism” and “irredentism” if questioned in any regard. The intelligentsia of the majority nations in the countries neighboring Hungary has in this way used Trianon (particularly before 1989) as a means of legitimizing often heavily discriminatory minority policy, which may be a comfortable position, though is untenable from a professional standpoint. Seen from the latter perspective, the objective of conducting critical—and unbiased—analysis of the “Trianon status quo” is just as legitimate as the examination of previous conditions.

Not including the introduction and the concluding text, *The Disintegration of Historical Hungary* is composed of five parts, each with different chapters covering a distinct subject area: “Historical Perspectives” by László Vörös and Etienne Boisserie; “The Treaty of Trianon in Political Discourse” by Ignác Romsics, Štefan Šutaj, Attila Simon, Roman Holec and Peter Macho; “Education, Textbooks and Didactics of History” by György Jakab, Viliam Kratochvíl and Barnabás Vajda; “The Ritualisation of Public Remembering” by Miklós Zeidler, Balázs Ablonczy, József Demmel and Miroslav Michela; and “The End of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Treaty of Trianon as a Cultural Trauma” by Éva Kovács, Dagmar Kusá and Miroslav Michela.

The chapters of the book touch upon important themes that cannot be introduced within the scope of the present text. The reviewer will thus examine issues that arise primarily in the chapters by László Vörös and Éva Kovács, though surface to a greater and lesser degree elsewhere as well. Both Vörös and Kovács object to the use of the “language of trauma” in discourse surrounding Trianon as well as the “nationalization” of this discourse stemming from the national (or nationalist) perspective of the majority of participants. Although this observation is valid in several regards, it would nevertheless be worthwhile to first separate historiography from public discourse in order to analyze them separately.

If we take a look at Hungarian historiography, one sees that the most prominent Hungarian historians, including those who live outside Hungary, abandoned the national-ethnocentric (“nation-building”) approach decades ago (pp.38–41) (though serious academic and political debate continues to take place in this regard). The nationalist perspective exercises considerable force only on the Hungarian historiographical periphery, where it strengthens and weakens in waves; this perspective is, however, characteristic of mainstream Slovak

Schválená minulosť. Kolektívna identita v československých a slovenských učebniciach dejepisu (1918–1989) [Approved Past: Collective Identity in Czechoslovak and Slovak History Textbooks (1918–1989)] (Košice: Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, 2010), 52.

historiography as well (p.50). The particularly important “nation-building” and legitimization function that historiography performs for the Slovak political and cultural élite, one which implicitly limits self-reflection, obviously plays a major role in this phenomenon. This applies as well to the “language of trauma,” which a considerable proportion of active Slovak historians utilize in connection to Slovak national grievances (dualism, the First Vienna Award, etc.) rather than to Trianon. The ethnocentric perspective and use of the “language of trauma” are strongly characteristic of both Hungarian and Slovak public discourse in a broadly defined sense. Therefore it would be necessary to use increasingly prudent and precise language in order to avoid the “traumatization” of discourse pertaining to Trianon, particularly, though not exclusively, among Hungarian participants. However, approaching the issue of Trianon from a *national* point of view is not in itself tantamount to the acceptance of the *nationalistic-ethnocentric* perspective; it merely indicates the use of a certain—in the present case “national”—interpretative framework. This framework has become increasingly relevant with the spread of the national idea (and nationalism) over the last century and a half and continues to hold up strong with a foundation of support in the form of the nation state. Viewing history through the “national prism” does not necessarily distort an understanding of past events, whereas such distortion is a natural product of the “nationalist-ethnocentric” approach and thus represents an inherent infringement upon professional standards. Debate regarding the use and validity of the “national” interpretive framework is naturally necessary, though it is important to keep in mind that the total omission of this structure can lead to the same dead end as its absolute, uncritical use. Instead of summarily rejecting this framework, it would perhaps be better to consider the degree to which the nationalist perspective influences the discourse in question while maintaining the expectations of consistency, precise and objective phraseology and avoidance of double standards.

If one accepts the legitimacy of the national interpretive framework, then the appraisal of Trianon as a “national catastrophe” is indeed valid from the Hungarian (national) viewpoint. This approach cannot be regarded as either “nationalist” or “traumatizing”: it merely expresses the fact that the Treaty of Trianon represented a heavy blow to the Hungarian national concept and the nationality-based Hungarian community (as well as the Hungarian national consciousness).⁵ This is true even if the construction of the Hungarian nation-

5 In more detail see Csaba Zahorán, “A trianoni labirintus. A Trianon-jelenség és okai a mai magyar

state often occurred to the detriment of non-Hungarian nationalities and ethnicities until the end of 1918. Criticism, expressed most prominently by Éva Kovács, of the language of trauma and the national approach within discourse regarding Trianon seems to miss the target because it focuses on consequences of rather than causes. The issue of Trianon has remained active not as a result of the actual historical events that culminated in the conclusion of the treaty in 1920, but due to the disorder that continues to surround the situation of Hungarian minorities living in the countries surrounding Hungary. The “resentful” Hungarian discourse serving to “traumatize” discourse pertaining to Trianon to which some of the contributors voice objection can frequently be interpreted as a reaction to the national/nation-state mechanism that often serves to harm the interests of Hungarians living in these countries and not simply as the manifestation of a nostalgic or frustrated yearning for the former “Hungarian empire.” As long as Romania and Slovakia, just to mention the two countries with the largest Hungarian national-minority populations,⁶ continue to operate as (nation) states aiming to achieve the integration of minorities through assimilation (just as historical Hungary did before 1918), attempts to neutralize discourse surrounding Trianon from a national perspective will fail. These efforts can succeed only if minority policies in states neighboring Hungary also become neutral in national terms; that is, if the majority élites in these countries discontinue their efforts to “nationalize” their countries.

The Disintegration of Historical Hungary is also valuable because it presents the various trends *within* Hungarian and Slovak historiography, from the classical “national” (though not nationalist) narrative to the “analytical” orientation calling into question the national interpretive framework.⁷ Slovak readers will encounter in the book evidence of the diversity of the “Hungarian viewpoint,” which is often considered to be homogenous. Éva Kovács’s chapter rejecting the traumatization of Trianon from a rigorously academic perspective provides an excellent example of this diversity (though this viewpoint is naturally subject to

közgondolkodásban” [The Trianon Labyrinth: The Causes of the Trianon Phenomenon in Contemporary Hungarian Thought], in *A nemzeti mítoszok szerkezete és funkciója Kelet-Európában* [The Structure and Function of National Myth in Eastern Europe], ed. László Szalai (Budapest: L’Harmattan–ELTE BTK Kelet-Európa Története Tanszék, 2013), 9–54.

6 According to census data from the year 2011, there are nearly 460,000 Hungarians living in Slovakia and 1.24 million Hungarians living in Romania.

7 See László Vörös, “How to Define a ‘Nation?’ A Thing, a Group, or a Category?” in *Overcoming the Old Borders: Beyond the Paradigm of Slovak National History*, ed. Adam Hudek et al. (Bratislava: Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences in Prodama, 2013), 11–23.

debate, as can be seen in the polemics regarding the treaty and its consequences that took place within the Hungarian periodical *Élet és Irodalom* a few years ago).⁸ *The Disintegration of Historical Hungary* also provides demonstration of the more subtle nuances within Slovak discourse regarding Trianon.

Although the editors and publisher of *The Disintegration of Historical Hungary* are from Slovakia, one can still consider the book to be a joint Hungarian–Slovak enterprise (especially if one takes the 2010 conference into account) that fits into the process of multi-faceted cooperation between Hungarian and Slovak historians and social scientists. One can only welcome the book’s message that it is worthwhile to extend research related to Trianon (and ethnicity in general) to other levels and domains, such as the history of everyday life (p.63).⁹ However, the focus of *The Disintegration of Historical Hungary* on the “analytical” approach directs attention to those methods that are capable of providing momentum and, in certain instances, totally new foundations for Hungarian–Slovak professional dialogue, which occasionally falters as a result of the exclusivity of national truths.

The Disintegration of Historical Hungary has only a few minor shortcomings. Some of the chapters contain redundancies, such as the examinations of the origins of the Slovak historical canon in the chapters by László Vörös and Dagmar Kusá and Miroslav Michela. The theoretical portion of the chapter by the latter authors, moreover, seems to be somewhat overstated. The chapter by György Jakab and Viliam Kratochvíl could have placed greater emphasis on Trianon itself, thereby providing practical assistance to those who teach the history of the treaty and its consequences.¹⁰ The chapter by Ignác Romsics is distinctly terse in light of the fact that he is one of the most highly recognized authorities on the issue of Trianon of Hungary;¹¹ Slovak readers, especially, would have been

8 See Éva Kovács, “Jeder Nachkrieg ist ein Vorkrieg – Trianon traumatikus emlékezetéről” [Every Postwar is a Prewar – The Traumatic Memory of Trianon], *Élet és Irodalom* 54 (2010): 39; Krisztián Ungváry, “A meg nem értett Trianon” [The Misunderstood Trianon], *Élet és Irodalom* 54 (2010): 49; Éva Kovács, “Csak azért is: neurózis” [Just for the Sake of It: Neurosis], *Élet és Irodalom* 55 (2011): 4; Krisztián Ungváry, Egy hitelrontás ellenében [In Return for Ruined Credit], *Élet és Irodalom* 55 (2011): 10; Éva Kovács, “Az a konok okság” [That Stubborn Causality], *Élet és Irodalom* 55 (2011): 12; and Pál Tamás, “A Trianon-vitához” [With Regard to the Trianon Debate], *Élet és Irodalom* 55 (2011): 17.

9 See Gábor Egry, “Navigating the Straits: Changing Borders, Changing Rules and Practices of Ethnicity and Loyalty in Romania after 1918,” *The Hungarian Historical Review* 2, no. 3 (2013): 449–76.

10 See <http://www.tte.hu/toertenelemtanitas/egyvezzenk-ki-a-multtal/6630-trianon-8211-tortenelemora>, accessed June 10, 2014.

11 See Ignác Romsics, *Dismantling of Historic Hungary: the Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2002).

interested in a more detailed treatment of the theme from the noted Hungarian historian. Géza Boros's article would have served as an appropriate supplement to Miklós Zeidler's essay on the current situation with regard to Trianon memorials.¹² Several recently published works have, additionally, contributed to the continually growing discourse surrounding Trianon:¹³ in connection to Hungarian–Slovak relations, it would be worth noting another work from Roman Holec examining recent developments in Hungarian historiography and public discourse in a critical, polemic tone¹⁴ (which elicited two published responses) or Slovak film director Dušan Trancík's excellent documentary film *Hodina dejepisu* [History Lesson].¹⁵

Perhaps it is not too naive to believe—or perhaps to hope—that *The Disintegration of Historical Hungary* will promote development in Slovak and Hungarian thought connected to Trianon, thus increasing awareness of the fact that the disintegration of historical Hungary did not resolve national-nationality problems in the Carpathian Basin, but simply moved them beyond the borders of Hungary. A (positive) solution to these problems has yet to arrive.

Translated by Sean Lambert

Csaba Zahorán

12 Géza Boros, “Trianon köztéri revíziója 1990–2002” [The Revision of Trianon in Public Spaces], *Mozgó Világ* 29, no. 2 (2003): 3–21.

13 See Péter György, *Allatkert Kolozsváron – Képzelt Erdély* [Zoo in Kolozsvár—Imagined Transylvania] (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 2013); and Margit Feischmidt, “Populáris emlékezetpolitikák és az újnacionalizmus: a Trianon-kultusz társadalmi alapjai” [Popular Politics of Memory and the New Nationalism: the Social Foundations of the Trianon Cult], in *Nemzet a mindennapokban. Az újnacionalizmus populáris kultúrája* [Nation in Everyday Life: The Popular Culture of the New Nationalism], ed. idem (Budapest: L'Harmattan–MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont, 2014), 51–81.

14 Roman Holec, “Trianon Rituals or Considerations of Some Features of Hungarian Historiography,” *Historical Journal Issue Supplement* 59 (2011): 25–48.

15 <http://www.filmpark.sk/production/production/the-lesson-of-history/>, accessed June 10, 2014. Review of the film in Hungarian: http://indafilm.blog.hu/2013/12/30/mit_keresnek_itt_a_magyarok, accessed June 10, 2014.

Rozpad Uhorska a Trianonská mierová zmluva. K politikám pamäti na Slovensku a v Maďarsku. [The Disintegration of Historical Hungary and the Trianon Peace Treaty. Politics of Memory in Slovakia and Hungary.] Edited by Miroslav Michela and László Vörös. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2013. 336 pp.

“National narratives usually deal with acts of aggression, hostile neighbors and international conflicts across borders, and present history as a national suffering and victories. Major victories for one nation are invariably tragedies for the others. Thus, what nations set out to accomplish creates a European map of conflicting and often overlapping narratives, the (re)representation of the national past(s) and the reciprocal harm done by nations and nation-states to one another.”¹

This quote points out the essential problem that one has to tackle when trying to reconcile conflicting ethnocentric narratives based on adversarial interpretations of the “common past.”

The authors of the book *The Disintegration of the Historic Hungary and the Treaty of Trianon* are well aware of the implications of this problem. Their assumption, according to which mutual understanding is impossible unless both Slovak and Hungarian historiographies (and societies as a whole) break out from their closed ethnocentric narratives, is explicitly or implicitly present in all of the articles of the publication.

The book is divided into five main chapters: *Historical Perspectives, Political Discourse, Education, Textbooks and Didactics of History, Ritualisation of Cultural Memory and Cultural Trauma*. The main finding of the first chapter is that the debates regarding Trianon in both countries are highly uneven, and the comparison is very asymmetrical. The first article offers a comparison of Slovak and Hungarian historiographical production dealing with Trianon. The well-written text by László Vörös accentuates several important facts regarding the different understanding and significance of Trianon in Slovak and Hungarian national narratives. While in the Hungarian narrative, the concept of Trianon involves the events of 1918–1920 and represents the crucial trauma of twentieth-century national history, in the Slovak narrative it is merely a historical fact connected solely with the peace treaty signed on 4 July, 1920, and it has no significant place

1 Tibor Frank and Frank Hadler, “Nations, Borders and the Historical Profession: On the Complexity of Historical Overlaps in Europe,” in *Disputed Territories and Shared Pasts: Overlapping National Histories in Modern Europe*, ed. Tibor Frank and Frank Hadler (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3.

in the national narrative. As the article by Peter Macho demonstrates, this Slovak “disinterest” can be dated back to the 1920s. In his article, Etienne Boisserie questions the traditional Slovak assertion according to which the year 1918 represents a radical break in every direction of Slovak political life. He writes about continuity in discontinuity in the sense that many “Hungarian patterns” survived the border changes and continued to influence Slovak developments. While this notion is not entirely new, it is still marginal in Slovak historiography.

Despite the qualities of Vörös’s writing, there are a few minor inaccuracies in his text. The continuity of the Slovak Marxist narrative of the 1950s with the “bourgeois” interpretation of the past was not as smooth as he indicates (he makes this assessment based on the contrast with radical discontinuity in the case of the “bourgeois” and Marxist narratives in Hungary). For example, much as Hungarian historians had to reinterpret Trianon, their Slovak colleagues rewrote the narrative about Slovak participation in the 1848 revolution. What had been characterized as a heroic event became a damnable struggle against the allegedly progressive Hungarian revolution. Even the formally existing concept of the Slovak nation was nearly completely overshadowed by the idea of the Czechoslovak working class. Only the resurgence of national identity-building master-narratives in the late 1960s² enabled the partial return of pre-Marxist nationalist patterns, both in Slovakia and Hungary.

It is perhaps symptomatic of the Hungarian–Slovak discussions about Trianon that even in a book criticizing the hegemony of political history, the chapter on political discourse is the longest. It consists of five articles. Ignác Romsics deals with the presence of Trianon in Hungarian political thought. For a Hungarian reader, his text would probably be just a collection of well-known facts; but a Slovak reader in all likelihood is far less informed on this topic. At the end of his article, Romsics suggests that a significant number of Hungarians still could not handle the dissolution of “historical Hungary,” and there is little hope of changing these sentiments in the near future (p.96).

The situation seems different in Slovakia. According to surveys presented in the article about Trianon in the collective memory in Slovakia by Štefan Šutaj, the vast majority of Hungarians in Slovakia regard the Beneš decrees (and not Trianon) as their biggest “historical trauma.” This seems logical, in part because there are still many people who have direct experiences with the

2 Bogdan Cristian Iacob, “Stalinism, Historians and the Nation: History-Production under Communism in Romania 1955–1966.” (PhD diss., Central European University, 2011), 524.

postwar developments, but no one has first-hand memory of Trianon anymore. However, these findings regarding the purported relative insignificance of the Trianon trauma among Hungarians in Slovakia in comparison with the key role of this topic in Hungary deserve more elaborate analysis than they are given here.

The article by Attila Simon about “loyalist Hungarians” in interwar Czechoslovakia also deconstructs the generalizing topoi of Trianon as the national trauma. The author emphasizes that the traditional closed agrarian communities were affected to a significantly smaller extent than the Hungarian elites in the cities (p.118). However, the attitudes of representatives of the political left among the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia would constitute an even more interesting factor, and while Simon makes mention of this, he does not give it adequate analysis. Their opinions represented a unique approach to the solution of the post-Trianon problems, an approach that differed strikingly from the visions of the ruling elite in both Budapest and Prague.

Roman Holec presents the image of Trianon in Slovak fiction, offering the reader yet another perspective on perceptions of the period between 1918 and 1920. The analysis of contemporary Slovak novels confirms the assumption that the concepts of national identity in twentieth-century Central Europe were very flexible, especially among local elites.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the three articles in the chapter dealing with the teaching of history reach fairly similar conclusions. The authors (György Jakab, Viliam Kratochvíl and Barnabás Vajda) criticize the anachronistic system of history teaching, which is designed to produce citizens educated in the national canon. According to the experts, students should learn to “comprehend differences,” be empathetic with so-called “others,” and be able to analyze different primary sources. However, the “progressive” history teaching of the Anglo-Saxon countries highlighted by György Jakab should not be regarded as the ideal solution to all the problems of the teaching of Central European history, without mentioning the existing criticism of the concept and practice of “progressive teaching”.³

In the chapter dealing with the ritualization of public memory, Miklós Zeidler offers an excellent analysis of the interwar public manifestations of Hungarian irredentism. Zeidler’s concluding remarks regarding irredentism

3 See: Tony Judt and Timothy Snyder, *Rethinking the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 265–6.

(and nationalism) as a form of “therapy for traumatized society” based on a “mistaken diagnosis” that only leads to greater frustration and political blunders (p.232) is clearly pertinent to both the Slovak and the Hungarian situation today. The equally interesting article by Balázs Ablonczy handles the development of five Hungarian refugee associations during the interwar period. According to the author, these organizations were unable to process the Treaty of Trianon in interwar Hungary, but at the same time their histories can offer answers to the question regarding how to speak about “traumas of the past” correctly (p.243). A local case study on the history of the János Tuba memorial in Komárno authored by József Demmel and Miroslav Michela analyzes the connection between local and national interest in a town with a Hungarian-speaking majority that found itself outside the borders of the “mother state.”

The last chapter deals with Trianon as a cultural trauma. The essay by Éva Kovács entitled *On the Traumatic Memory of Trianon* is an accurate, highly critical analysis of the Trianon discourse in both Hungary and Slovakia today, as well as the stereotypes and modes of thinking on which this discourse rests, including essentialism, ethnocentrism, unacceptable generalizations, and disinterest in the findings of the “other” historiography. Kovács raises fundamental questions regarding the term “Trianon trauma”: is it even legitimate to use such a psychological term? How can a heterogeneous “imagined society” be unanimously traumatized? Can we speak about a collective Trianon trauma when we know very little about individual reactions to this event?

The second article of the last chapter, which was written by Dagmar Kusá and M. Michela, offers a general, comparative analysis regarding the Slovak and Hungarian national narratives, politics of memory, instrumentalization of history and concepts of cultural trauma. This text provides a well-written methodological and theoretical overview regarding the abovementioned ideas, which are utilized in the majority of articles in this publication. In fact, this text should have been put right after the introduction. It is a little bit difficult to understand why it was made the last article of the book.

One could conclude by asking the question raised by Ablonczy, “What are the results of all of this” (p.243)? In general, the Trianon discourse is still an ideological and often politically shaped one. Historians are largely responsible for the emergence and persistence of a situation in which the word Trianon triggers a stream of associations instead of useful knowledge. As Timothy Snyder comments with regards to the trope of victimhood, “the debate had shifted to contentious claims and counter-claims: who suffered, at whose hands and

how much? Who had a bigger trauma?”⁴ Both Slovak and Hungarian narratives vividly accentuate national suffering while strongly rejecting the possibility that the “victimized nation” might have caused suffering to others (the Holocaust discourse is a striking example).

One of the results is the specific language of the “national tragedy and trauma,” which is also used in academic texts, even in the texts published in this book. However, its authors recognize that it is not a homogenous publication, and it can be only a first step towards mutual understanding between two discourses. This could be only done through comparative research on historiography and national historical cultures, with the emphasis on social history (p.307). On the other hand, is the mission of the historian to mediate “national reconciliation”? First and foremost, history should bring information about the past to light and explain why people made particular decisions in the context of the dilemmas faced. If a historian manages to do this without resorting to nationalist bias or discourses of competitive suffering, a more nuanced understanding of “others” should be the natural outcome of his or her work. There is no need to moralize over justice or injustice. However, meaningful discussion of the alleged traumas is possible only outside the paradigm of ethnocentric narratives. Without doubt, this publication provides several useful examples to learn from.

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4 Judt and Snyder, *Rethinking the Twentieth Century*, 322. For more on the problem of victimhood see Włodzimierz Borodziej, “Geschichtspolitik und ‘Konkurrenz der Opfer’” in *Geschichtspolitik in Europa seit 1989*, ed. Etienne François, Kornelia Kończal, and Stefan Troebst (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2013), 159–68.