

EDITORIAL

BUILDING CULTURAL MEMORY IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE AT THE EVE OF MODERNITY

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The second issue of the journal *TheMA* is dedicated to the formation of cultural memory through theatre, music and arts in south-eastern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, over a wide geographical and chronological context. The papers consider the process of memory building both *within* the region and *on* the region. Along with the centres of our chosen perspective – Belgrade, Ljubljana, Zagreb, as well as Sarajevo – the focus is broadened to include the imperial spaces among which the given societies constructed their national identities: the Austrian Empire, that is, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary, then the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Italy and its predecessors, the Kingdom of Prussia; even Great Britain was fascinated by entangled Balkan history.

Considered to be a social construction of the past, cultural memory manifests itself through different rituals and ceremonies as a basis of collective identity, articulating the past not only through remembering, but also through forgetting. Since the 1980s, the concept of cultural memory has signified an interdisciplinary research perspective, uniting archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, geographers, and psychologists, as well as historians and theoreticians of the arts. The process of creating a narrative of remembrance or amnesia contributes to the construction, reconstruction or deconstruction of cultural and national identity. The cultural memory of south-eastern Europe necessarily demands (re)considering the intertextuality and cross-referentiality of the Byzantine, Ottoman, Habsburg, and Venetian worlds. According to Pierre Nora, the three coexisting aspects of the *lieux de mémoire* are material, symbolic and functional, and these are embodied in museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments and texts, as well as in theatre plays, films, musical compositions and instruments, photography and other *loci memoriae*. The papers included in this issue of the journal *TheMA* illuminate cultural memory, in and on the region in theatre, music, literature, and arts; its construction through nationalistic cultural policy, arts and historiography; and its contribution to building and (re)defining a national identity.

Memory and history, far from being synonymous, are thus in many respects opposed. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.¹

In these coordinates, cultural memory building is embodied in a journey from Belgrade to Vienna via the Danube and then from Vienna, through Ljubljana and Zagreb via the river Sava, back to Belgrade. This circle will be crossed in order to shed light on the cultural transfers within another imperial context: the Ottoman Empire (Venetian-Hungarian-Ottoman and Bosnian-Ottoman). The cultural memory of south-eastern Europe is marked by shared historical legacies; crucial among these are the Byzantine and the Ottoman.²

The starting point of the journey – presented at the cover page – is Belgrade, the centre of the crossroads between East and West, the battlefield of numerous armies over the centuries. Two rivers permeate the region, passing through Vienna and Budapest (the Danube), Ljubljana and Zagreb (the Sava), and meeting each other in the heart of Belgrade.

Due to its geographical position, the city was conquered many times. As Michael Hüttler shows in his paper, the Sieges of Belgrade from the eleventh and fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, pitting Hungarians or Austrians against the Ottomans, or Hungarians against Bulgarians and Greeks, were elaborated in four theatre plays (by Kisfaludy, Brandt, Cobb, and Kaiser).³ The Ottomans conquering the Balkans and progressing to the north-west threatened the entire European Christian world and was certainly perceived as a trauma in the Austrian/Viennese cultural memory.

Vienna was a centre of south-eastern culture(s), including people whose territories were within the borders of the Habsburg Monarchy (Slovenia, partly Croatia, partly Bosnia and Herzegovina) and outside it (Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria).

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- 1 Pierre Nora: “Between Memory and History: Lieux de Mémoire”, in: *Representations* 26 (1989), p. 8.
 - 2 Maria Todorova: Introduction to *Balkan identities: Nation and Memory*, ed. Maria Todorova. London: Hurst & Company, 2004, p. 12.
 - 3 This paper by Michael Hüttler, as well as the papers by Jernej Weiss and Maximilian Hartmuth, were presented at the interdisciplinary and international conference *Cultural memory and the arts in/on Southeast Europe / Kulturelles Gedächtnis und Kunst in und über Südosteuropa* (<http://www.suedosteuropa.uni-graz.at/en/event/2012/cultural-memory-and-arts-inon-southeast-europe>), organised by the Hertha-Firnberg- und Elise-Richter-Stelleninhaberinnen Zsuzsa Barbarics-Hermanik and Tatjana Marković at the University of Graz on 24–25 May 2012.

Consequently, the construction of their national identities was inevitably connected with Vienna, as it was explicated with Slovenian (musical) culture. Through the case study of the “German” Philharmonic Society in Ljubljana, Jernej Weiss explores the shift in national self-representation, from belonging to the empire to forging a national identity outside of it, starting with music historiography.

Historiography was a means of national-identity construction in another Habsburg province: Croatia, along with Slavonia and Dalmatia. Croatian identity assumed influences from Austria, Hungary and Italy/Veneto, prompting Maximilian Hartmuth to consider how one of the most significant art historians and lexicographers, Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, aimed to build national cultural memory through his “Croatisation” of the artists of Italian origin. The “Croatian Vasari” (Hartmuth) hence proclaimed the Italian artist Giulio Clovio for a Croatian Julio Klovio. This and many other known cases of appropriation of Italian, German or Czech artists, authors and musicians is a result of self-presentation: Croatian historiographers used to equate the contemporary territory with the national identity. Hartmuth also refers to the case of the fifteenth-century architect and sculptor Niccolò Di Giovanni Fiorentino alias Nikola Firentinac.

These aspects of Croatian-Italian cultural appropriation are connected to the following Hungarian-Croatian cultural transfer by a line that crosses along the region and presents the complex network between Venetian, Ottoman and Hungarian cultures through the majolica ceramics “Candiana” prior to the period in focus. This type of majolica was produced in Veneto between the end of the sixteenth and the first decades of the eighteenth centuries. It remained, however, atypical of the Italian productions. Federica Broilo points out that, while close to the ceramic art known as “Haban ware” in Habsburg Hungary after the sixteenth century, it is most probably an interpretation of Ottoman tiles produced at Iznik.

Continuing on the journey leads us back to Zagreb and Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, whose contribution to national appropriation was in the area of theatre too. A national drama was established and developed in many so-called peripheral cultures through the nationalization of foreign theatre plays, and the works of August von Kotzebue had a very significant role in this process. Ana Mitić witnesses how Sakcinski not only translated, but also adapted Kotzebue’s theatre play *Bela’s Flucht* (1813) – depicting the medieval Hungarian king Béla, the defeat of his army by the Mongols, and his escape to Dalmatia – as the drama *Stjepko Šubić ili Bela IV. u Horvatskoj* (1841), referring to the historical medieval Battle of Grobnik between Croats and Mongols within an Illyrian ideological and nationalistic framework.

Zagreb was also a hometown of numerous Serbian artists, musicians and composers, who defined their national program through their own institutions.

Among them was the Akademsko pjevačko društvo *Balkan* (Academic Choral Society 'Balkan'). Srđan Atanasovski places the performances of the displaced Serbian Choral Society on the regional map, showing how one music society implemented national policy, defined by the Srpska samostalna stranka (Serbian Independent Party) in Habsburg Croatia. The guest performances of the Choral Society *Balkan* were held in all areas where dispersed Serbs lived, including Serbia proper and Belgrade, the point at which this circular journey finishes.

One other line crosses the closed circle, illuminating Sarajevo and/as the Ottoman heritage. Presenting Ottoman architecture through the public buildings and mosques of Sarajevo in his publication from 1913, the Bosnian Sheikh Kemura mapped his (Ottoman) "homeland". In this way Maximilian Hartmuth confirms the power of historiography.

The cultural memory of south-eastern Europe – centers such as Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana, as well as Sarajevo – is considered in two ways, from inside and from outside, through imperial contexts and multi-levelled inter-communication and cultural transfers. The lengthy dominance of south-eastern European countries by one or more empires resulted in a unique cultural memory expressed in literature, theatre, music and the history of arts, as well as in languages, scholarship, law, medicine and cuisine. As these papers explicate, the nationalistic cultural memory is based on (self-)presentation through the past in order to provide continuity through artistic practices and historiography. "The quest for historic continuities is to be located especially in those places and at those times in which a national identity emerges and crystalizes",⁴ as was the case with the considered south-eastern European societies' collective cultural memories at the eve of modernity.

4 Monika Baár: *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 66.