

# *Introduction*

## **Milestones in the Historical Seminar**

This milestone tenth volume in the Historical Seminar series saw the light of day by pure coincidence during the milestone twentieth year of the Historical Seminar lecture cycle. On this occasion it seems appropriate that we “measure the length and breadth of the heavens” to get our bearings, as the poet Oton Župančič put it, and at the same time evaluate the path we have traveled—so that, as one of the Historical Seminar volumes states, we will know where we are and how to move forward.

The path that the ZRC SAZU Historical Seminar has traveled, from its conceptual foundation to a regular lecture cycle with accompanying events, was initially like the path of many good ideas. Much strength of will and enthusiasm is needed to realize an idea, and even more for it to truly come to life and maintain its mission. The founders of the Historical Seminar preserved this initial impulse by also giving the cycle a book format, the first volume of which was *Pot na grmado* (The Path to the Pyre). Thus Oto Luthar, Neda Pagon, Alenka Koren, Milojka Žalik Huzjan, Vojislav Likar, and Sonja Likar opened the door to the wider world, beyond the ZRC SAZU framework, for the Historical Seminar. The provocative title of the first volume promised that it would deal with topics that strict disciplines had somehow marginalized because the general public was engaged with them so enthusiastically and also more or less professionally. The Historical Seminar strove to move beyond the line of thinking that scholarship must be something complex and unintelligible for the uninitiated masses, whose education was not specialized enough to be able to make sense of it. The Historical Seminar sought to “make the lonely writing of papers more entertaining” for scholars, to be interdisciplinary and interesting to them and to the general public, to exceed the level of institutional research in the form of a seminar, to obtain feedback in sometimes extremely heated debates, and to avoid any kind of deceit of the “emperor’s new clothes” type without sacrificing its own professionalism. It was believed that every scholarly finding can become a story, and that every such story—only if it is told in the right way—can be interesting. Indeed, not

every one of its stories could have the same narrative power, but the ones that the Historical Seminar succeeded in imbuing with this power are the ones that count and remain.

Initially the lectures were held at irregular intervals, but later the Historical Seminar obtained an increasingly fixed form, like it has today: it became a cycle of invited lectures. The Coordinating Committee was (and still is) responsible for ensuring that the lectures went smoothly, that the invitations and announcements were always prompt, that presenters could also travel from afar, and, thus, that the seminar could flourish. Regular meetings, proposals, invitations, incentives for new presenters at institutes and elsewhere, setting up a website, and, not least of all, publications have enabled the Historical Seminar to survive and experience a full twenty years. Special attention should be drawn to the selfless work of the chairs or coordinators of the Coordinating Committee, first of all Oto Luthar and Metoda Kokole, and in the last three years Katarina Keber and Luka Vidmar. An enormous amount of work was also contributed by the advisors and other board members.

In twenty years, over two hundred talks have been scheduled and delivered, and in addition the Historical Seminar has arranged roundtables, a conference, a discussion evening, and even a concert. The presenters have come from all corners of Slovenia and from abroad: in addition to guests from neighboring countries (Austria, Hungary, Italy, and Croatia), there have also been presenters from France, the UK, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Finland, Ireland, Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, and Kosovo. A few presenters have also come from other continents (U.S., Canada, Mexico, Russia, China, and Australia). They covered topics from a wide variety of disciplines: history, ethnology, sociology, cultural studies, philosophy, art history, musicology, literary history, geography, linguistics, psychology, archaeology, biology, and political science, to mention only the broadest ones. At the same time, many interesting talks have often encompassed multiple disciplines, led to interdisciplinary discussions, and connected the humanities with other disciplines. Not infrequently, the Historical Seminar launched a new methodological premise among those attending or surprised them with an original point of view.

In twenty years a full 121 articles have been published in eleven volumes (10 “regular” Historical Seminar volumes and a special volume). Initially the publications contained articles written based on talks delivered over the course of several years, but recently one publication per year has become the norm. Approximately two-thirds of the material previously presented at the Historical Seminar lectures is included in the publication. At the same time, the publications of the Historical Seminar have recently become available in both print and electronic format, and so their varied content can find its way to the greatest diversity of readers through different routes. This diversity is a

great strength of the Historical Seminar: not only that it must tell stories, but that these stories must also differ. Regardless of whether the “truth” is composed of all of these stories or whether all of these stories are only different faces of that truth, this diversity enriches us.

This volume features contributions by nine researchers. Two historical articles address the past economic history of Slovenia. Karla Oder’s article is about the Ravne Steelworks, its development, and its good managers that guided it to a leading position in Yugoslavia at that time. The factory was more than a workplace; it was a “mother” that also looked after its workers, including welfare, social activities, and culture. Aleksander Lorenčič’s article deals with the more recent history of Slovenia, explaining and evaluating its economic development and the transition to capitalism during the two decades of Slovenian independence. Enriketa Papa-Pandelejmoni examines some aspects of the historical developments during the Second World War and the reasons for Albanian Prime Minister Mustafa Merlika Kruja’s collaboration during the Italian occupation. Špela Ledinek Lozej’s article presents the special features of open-hearth kitchens, which were common among the primarily rural farming population in the Vipava Valley from the nineteenth century up to the introduction of kitchens with stoves in the mid-twentieth century. Metoda Kemperl’s article is dedicated to the poorly researched master architect Franz Grein Sr., who was active during the first half of the nineteenth century and participated in planning and building many religious buildings in the Celje area. Patrizia Farinelli’s article uses the case of Tabucchi and his story *I pomeriggi del sabato* (Saturday Afternoons) to shed light on certain elements of the fantastic in works by twentieth-century Italian authors. Jernej Habjan uses Doyle’s still-popular Sherlock Holmes stories as a “black box,” especially with the help of a structural analysis of *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, to explain why Moretti remained silent about his contemporaries’ reasons for classifying the subgenre of the “detective story with a key” in the literary canon. Mija Michelizza’s article shows how the basic characteristics of the World Wide Web influence language and linguistics, and places those phenomena that are ordinarily treated as self-evident in a group of broader processes with which our language develops and changes. Tatjana Novak and Barbara Dolenc’s article examines the issue of recognizing bipolar disorder and describes how psychoeducation makes a higher-quality life possible for people affected by this disorder.

This tenth volume therefore features a diverse selection of stories that offer something for everyone. To return to the beginning and somewhat paraphrase (and, for our current need, to semantically change or reevaluate) the title of the first volume: the original planners of the Historical Seminar could not have known that their pyre would be burning even more brightly, and that it would not be used for destruction and incineration. New presentations and

words are, first and foremost, tempered in its heat. We will continue adding to this fire, and each time a live, glowing thought will be taken from it.

*The editor*

I would like to thank Katarina Keber, Metoda Kokole, and Alenka Koren for their assistance in evaluating the path that the Historical Seminar has covered over these two decades.