

Introduction

The volume *Historični seminar 13* (Historical Seminar 13) offers a selection of articles that have been “filtered” through the cycle of lectures over the past two years. These nine articles by researchers from Slovenia, Austria, Croatia, and Germany cover various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Alongside all of this diversity, the volume continues to examine its origin in the humanities by looking at history and describing the past, with perspectives that are also directed toward other disciplines: geography, comparative literature, ethnomusicology, and cultural anthropology. However, it always maintains a critical distance, which is especially emphasized in this volume in various ways because many of the articles question previous assumptions of past studies and their subjective points of departure, which always guide individuals in their findings (and, of course, these are found everywhere, but are perhaps simply more apparent in the humanities). In this manner, this volume makes an important contribution to critical thought about scholarship in general and about the future tasks of the humanities in particular, as well as the social sciences. At the same time, it adds an increasingly current ethical touch to much of its material.

Johannes Seidl’s article about the medieval history of the University of Vienna as seen through the profiles of those that studied and taught there (including Slovenians) offers insight into previous studies and material, and it raises important questions and challenges for the future of such research. Ultimately, the medieval history of universities, the school system, and education in general – in terms of material and methods – is also important because to a great degree it laid the foundations for the education system still in place today.

From the Middle Ages, the volume leaps ahead to the recent past: **Bojan Godeša’s** article examines the historiography of the Second World War and its evaluation in Slovenia, which has changed under the influence of political changes and has often been exploited for contemporary political ends. The author thus succeeds in presenting the historiography of the Second World War

as an example of how the influence of various subjective perspectives can cast different historical phenomena and events in different lights.

Verena Perko's article, which is both current and critical, explores why the western world was so hurt by the very recent destruction of Palmyra and why it was Palmyra in particular that was destroyed in the attacks. At the same time, she presents archaeology as a discipline that has always been highly politically marked because it has always served the interests of a particular historiography that has interpreted individual events and phenomena in the context of the story that it wanted to tell. Interpretations of the destruction of various towns throughout history have not been any different. The article also examines how it is possible – which can also be learned from the tragic case of Palmyra – to connect archaeological heritage and museum material in general with the cultural needs and identity of the population that lives with that heritage.

A connection with Slovenian history (in this case, through geography) is made in the article by **Primož Gašperič**, who offers an overview of the history and development of cartography, and in this framework also presents cartographic depictions of Slovenian territory. “Slovenian” cartography – which, based on a given moment in history, is included in one or another broader framework – can be lauded for its many quality achievements. At the same time, the author draws attention to how the various purposes for which the maps were created could have influenced the diversity and varying quality of the final products.

A historical overview is also provided in **Marlena Plavšič's** article, which is dedicated to mental illness. The author examines how the mentally ill and mental illnesses were described in various periods, how they were perceived, and how they were treated or dealt with. Her extensive overview, which starts in antiquity and extends to today, also raises important questions (not least of all including ones of an ethical nature) that will be relevant in the future with regard to providing a better quality of life for all that deal with mental illness as patients, their family members, or society in general.

The article by **Urška Bratož**, which presents the context, establishment, and operations of the Workers' Benefit Society in Koper in the nineteenth century, deals with health (or, in this case, physical health) from a somewhat more specific historical and geographical perspective. It examines this relatively early society that arose following a Trieste model and included not only industrial workers but also craftsmen and farmers. Bratovž also draws attention to the connections between individual professions and specific diseases, and the issue of female laborers or female members of this society (and others), and at the

same time she critically ascertains that certain information in the sources is not sufficiently precise to allow better insight into this period.

A completely different source offering insight into historical developments and contexts is creative and artistic works, whether these are fiction or literature in general, sound recordings, or various artistically marked events. **Erwin Köstler** and **Andrej Leben's** contribution takes a comparative literary approach to discussing various methodological perspectives on the supra-regional space of interaction of modern Carinthian Slovenian literature in Austria during the last quarter century, since Slovenia became independent in 1991. They especially highlight the (non)choice of bilingualism as a changing literary practice among Carinthian Slovenians, which may signify completely different things in different contexts. This study is also the basis for a research project, which is also presented in the article.

Sound recordings are a primary source for otherwise resonant and evasive moments in cultural history and heritage. **Drago Kunej's** ethnomusicological article presents these in the context of the popularization and commercialization of folk music and the developing music industry. At the forefront are especially recordings that stem from the folk tradition and that helped Slovenian immigrants preserve ties to their homeland and their memories of these ties. In both this case and that of other cultures, the music industry was well aware of what would turn a profit, and it also promoted the recording of such music.

The article by **Kornelia Ehrlich**, a cultural anthropologist, offers theoretical and empirical insight into the discourses and practices that include Ljubljana in the concept of a creative city, whether this involves top-down insight into practices (from the perspective of the municipality or other official authorities), or from the bottom up, from the perspective of individual activists and stakeholders that participate in shaping Ljubljana as a creative city. Ehrlich's contribution also completes the historical span of *Historični seminar 13* by bringing it into the present day.

All of these articles, each in their own way, revolve around history, which remains our teacher. Ultimately, this is also appropriate because it is in it, the daughter of time and memory, that we exist, operate, and leave traces. We should also take time now and then to look back at them in order to know how and where we should move forward.

The Editors