



There's History in All Men's Lives

EDITED BY

Gregor Pobežin, Petra Testen Koren



Založba ZRC

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IN LIEU OF PROLOGUE¹

Gregor Pobežin

*There is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased;
The which observed, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intrasured.
Shakespeare, Henry IV*

Biography is, simply speaking, a genre of historiography concerned with representing the lives of individual people.² In very plain terms, a biography is expected to be *written, factual and about a real person*. Not all works assigned to the genre adhered strictly to these principles: many fictionalized substantial portions of *vitae*, sometimes to the extent of the whole text.³ This observation leads to a familiar but persistent question: is biography a legitimate academic enterprise or is it bordering fiction? Critics have long questioned its scholarly value, perhaps most famously Geoffrey Elton, who argued that “even at its best, biography is a poor way of writing history.”⁴ From this perspective, biography fares poorly in comparison to “history

¹ The introductory text in the monograph is the result of work carried out as part of the research programme *The (New) Cultural History of Intellectual Heritage: Slovenian Historical Space in Its European Context* (P6-0440), funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

² Tom Kind, “Biography,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman et al. (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), 42–44.

³ E.g., the so-called “secondary biographies” in the *Historia Augusta*, a late Roman collection of imperial *vitae*.

⁴ Geoffrey R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (New York, 1967), 169.

proper”; isn’t it the case that while history is concerned with large-scale political, social, economic, and intellectual processes far surpassing individual lives, biography does little more than sing praise of illustrious men doomed to be forgotten and dismissed by later generations? While *ideally* history is not only a history of realia, but also a history of concepts and problems, in biography, the central problem concerns experience itself: *whose* experience is narrated, and under what conditions. Yet such objections rest on assumptions that are themselves historically conditioned.

In the time spanning the period between the 4th century BC when biography began to take shape as a distinct genre and the 18th century when the three core criteria listed above were carved into stone, the principles governing the selection and transmission of texts underwent significant change. Classical antiquity had already defined what was to be considered representative and exemplary. The transmission of texts in the intervening period was therefore far from neutral: it was shaped by changing cultural priorities, contingent interests, and the often-uncoordinated interaction of numerous voices.

To recognize exemplarity in an individual required a particular intellectual disposition. Such a disposition emerges clearly, when the Athenian historian Xenophon (ca. 430–354 BC) composed at least three monographic biographies, each of them with a very distinct purpose. The *Memorabilia* offers a partial and non-linear defence of Socrates; the *Cyropaedia*, a partly fictional account of Cyrus the Great, functions as a mirror for princes (and as a source of inspiration for Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*); and the *Agesilaus* portrays a physically unimpressive Spartan king whose influence far exceeded his appearance. In each case, biography aspires to some transcendent and paradigmatic function.

Among ancient models, Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* (Bioi paralleloi) stands out as the most influential example of biographical writing. Their careful preservation of factual detail, interpretive ambition, explicit moral and philosophical framing, and literary refinement ensured their canonical status for later generations; it may well be that one of the many rediscoveries we owe to the Renaissance scholarship is the appreciation for (Plutarch’s) model of writing biography.⁵ A comparable role in the Renaissance was played by Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Artists*, the most significant achievement of early

⁵ Ruth Morse, “Medieval Biography: History as a Branch of Literature,” *The Modern Language Review* 80, no. 2 (1985): 9.

modern biography. Although Plutarch is best known for pairing his subjects, he also devoted individual works to single figures, thereby expanding the genre's formal possibilities. The internal coherence of his corpus, in which biographies illuminate one another through implicit comparison, addresses problems that remain relevant in contemporary situations far beyond dry academic scholarship.

Roman republican culture, by contrast, largely resisted the glorification of individuals in favour of collective ideals: deeds, not persons, were intended to inspire (yet this position developed alongside a flourishing Hellenistic tradition of Alexander biographies, which would later generate the medieval Alexander romances). A revealing instance of a socially meaningful and exemplary *vita* is preserved by Aulus Gellius in his *Noctes Atticae*, drawing on Cato the Elder's *Origines*, now known only in fragments. One such fragment (frgm. 83, book 4) recounts an episode from the First Punic War involving a Roman tribune (whether Quintus Caedicius or Quintus Laberius remains uncertain): when a Roman army finds itself strategically compromised, the tribune proposes sacrificing a single cohort of soldiers to draw the Carthaginian forces away, thereby allowing the main army to escape. The plan succeeds: the cohort is annihilated, but the army survives.

The uncertainty surrounding the tribune's name is telling. The individual, however heroic, was secondary to the function he fulfilled within the collective, yet it is unmistakably true that *collective virtue* is exemplified through an *individual's achievement*. Another point is equally telling, namely the evident shift in narrative emphasis that evolved, quite naturally, in the period spanning Cato and Gellius. While the literary circumstances of the 2nd century BC still favoured the exemplification of collectively recognized cardinal virtues by means of an anonymized individual, the question of *who it actually was* mattered to Gellius in the 2nd century AD.

Suetonius' scrutiny of the lives of twelve emperors (*De vita Caesarum*) and of famous men (*De viris illustribus*) exhibits this fully executed shift, shedding light on the individual not as a (nameless) exemplar of a socially accoladed virtue, but as an individuum interesting *in* and *as* him- or herself. This fundamental shift does not originate in the imperial period; Sallust's narratives, constructed around exemplary individuals and diagnosing the moral decline of the Republic, already show the emergence of new concepts

of individuality in the late Republic. Anyhow, this heightened sense of the importance of the individual *per se* sharpened (literary) interest in personal idiosyncrasies and recurrent traits: Suetonius' *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* at times evoke distinctly Theophrastean reminiscences,⁶ enabling a multifaceted reading experience. A paradigm of biographical writing, as it were, they may be read at face value, appreciated for their piquancies, or as exercises in character analysis, and even as a form of micro-history; from this perspective, the loss of Suetonius' *Lives of Famous Whores* – if such a work ever existed – can only be regretted.

The adaptability of this form explains its enduring appeal. In periods of crisis, Renaissance humanists such as Jean Bodin returned to Roman historians in search of interpretive models. Sallust, in particular, approaches the insight later captured by Shakespeare: that there is (a) history in all men's lives.⁷ His analysis of the Republic's collapse in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* demonstrates how biographical and prosopographical approaches can illuminate structural transformation.

The narrative appeal of chronological and biographical narrative contributed to the popularity of authors such as Plutarch and Suetonius. Suetonius' imperial biographies, though lacking philosophical depth, offered vivid and often unsettling portraits grounded in reliable chronology. Over time, however, the genre gravitated toward increasingly simplified forms, culminating in works such as the *Historia Augusta*, where biography was reduced to a sequence governed primarily by succession; consequently, biography lost much of its earlier complexity. The classical model of Roman historiography remained influential long after it ceased to be synonymous with expansion and conquest. History may have lost much of its philosophical ambition, but it did not relinquish its pragmatism. Though the tradition was clearly destined for gradual decline, enough of it endured to keep the chronologically ordered, text-based model alive – at least for a time. One need only think of Ammianus Marcellinus, capable of producing an almost Tacitean masterpiece mere decades before the collapse of the Western Empire.

⁶ See, for instance, Oliver O'Sullivan, *Drawn from the Life: Literary Techniques and the Representation of Complex Characters in Suetonius' De vita Caesarum*, PhD diss. (National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2019): 42ss.

⁷ The title of this book – *There's History in All Men's Lives* – was suggested by ddr. Igor Grdina.

Biography, however, followed a different path. The nuanced and intertwined narratives of individual lives and events became increasingly difficult to sustain and simpler forms naturally prevailed. In this sense, the development of biography as a genre completed an almost full circle. If historiography had begun with chronicles of kings and queens, biblical patriarchs, and their descendants – largely indifferent to intricate chains of cause and effect – the same can be said of late Roman and early medieval biography; in large measure hagiographical, they returned to highly schematic paradigms. A striking example is Prudentius' *Peristephanon*, a collection of martyr narratives combining lyrical sophistication with graphic violence. Written in a post-Constantinian environment, these texts sought to reconstruct martyrdom for audiences no longer shaped by persecution. The humble martyr was transformed into a heroic figure capable of replacing the exemplars of classical antiquity. Moral education is significantly more pronounced than in classical texts,⁸ which is observable in numerous medieval hagiographies and biographies, some of which even depart from the “usual literary form,” memorializing the life of the individual in verse.

This development highlights a fundamental tension within biography: the relationship between lived experience and exemplary construction – a tension that has accompanied the genre since its beginnings and has invited criticism of the kind mentioned above. The ever-present source of protest against biography's standing “shoulder-to-shoulder” with history – namely, that it is far too open to the narrative fictionalization of lives⁹ – was further compounded by the critical recognition of an ever-shifting understanding of the individual and their role in society. Surely, a vehicle designed for narrating an individual life in the 4th century BC would be entirely obsolete in, say, the 19th century, when European nation-states were abandoning *chanson de geste*-styled narratives about kings and queens and replacing them with role models intended to serve and validate emerging national identities. Furthermore, isn't the 19th-century-styled biography, however academic, itself hopelessly out of date at the beginning of the 21st century, with its radical redefinitions of the individual and national identities? Most recent advances in the genre, which went beyond the benefits of the 19th

⁸ Kind, “Biography,” 43.

⁹ Alice Kessler-Harris, “Why Biography?” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (2009): 625.

century biography, welcome *any* human value that would make a woman or a man stand out, inviting narrative portrayal.

Yet, if even this most recent – and most democratic, one would argue – criterion is abandoned, wouldn't that mean that biography is done for? It was famously quipped – even in popular culture – that when everyone is special, no one really is. Is therefore biography a thing of the past? Is biography still worth academic pursuit?

This is precisely the question this book seeks to address. We are, admittedly, far removed from the criteria by which *virii illustres* – men of merit – once earned their place in a biographical hall of fame, whatever that merit was. Perhaps it is now, more than ever, worth asking quite directly: if biography is to be advocated *as* history,¹⁰ does it not follow that its worth lies not in the establishment of merit or the attribution of human value, but rather in the narrative vehicle itself, the tools it brings and techniques it applies? Is it not, perhaps, the case that its appeal lies in its capacity to “jumpstart” an entirely new area of historical studies?¹¹ Isn't that what makes biography worth a try – even when there's every good reason *not* to write biography?¹²

Perhaps it is not too bold to say that it is undeniably so, which is what the selection of papers in this book aims to show. By asserting that “a new way of writing and thinking about biography was implied by the creation of the State” Jérôme Roudier's essay *Is Biography an Appropriate Tool for Studying the History of Political Ideas?* implies that any new form of social organisation inevitably changes the way relationships between societies and individuals are perceived. The idea, however, doesn't combat the notion of the “elite” which makes the biographical cut; elites operate across many domains. In this respect, Jukka Kortti's paper *Between Private and Public. Biographies about and by the Elite* teaches an important lesson that the

¹⁰ Robert I. Rotberg, “Biography and Historiography: Mutual Evidentiary and Interdisciplinary Considerations,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (2010): 305.

¹¹ Susan Ware, “Writing Women's Lives: One Historian's Perspective,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (2010): 414–416.

¹² Michael Prestwich, “Medieval Biography,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (2010): 327.

composition of “the elite” is not fixed: who counts as elite, and why, shifts over time in response to changing historical contexts.

Three papers by Anja Grebe (*Literary Traditions, Genre Conventions and Author Authority in Early Modern Artists’ Biographies – The Case of Albrecht Dürer*), Ane Ohrvik (*Biography and the History of Knowledge: The Formation of Knowledge Communities through the Life and Work of Peter Christen Asbjørnsen (1812–1885)*) and Neža Zajc (*The Biographical Phenomenon of St Maximus the Greek (ca. 1469–1555/6)*) are essentially about biography as a tool for the production of (new) knowledge. Biographical framework makes it possible to update and rectify heavily slanted (as in the case of Albrecht Dürer – “one of the best documented artists”) or previously obscured knowledge (as in the case of Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and his correspondence); the case-study of Maximus the Greek showcases the painstaking work of digging for new data, however delicate and hard to find, that ultimately contributes to a more complete understanding – not of a biography but a wider historical context.

In 2007 a noteworthy project took off i.e., the *Journal of Historical Biography*, the publishing of which was regrettably discontinued in 2014. The project which saw the publishing of two volumes per year showed that the field of biography – however confused it may be¹³ – shows what we hope is also shown in the papers authored by Filip Hameršak and Nataša Jermen (*Biographical Research and Presentation in the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography: Achievements and Challenges*) and Petra Testen Koren, Barbara Šterbenc Svetina and Martin Grum (*The Path to The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon: The Slovenian Biographical/Lexicographical Tradition*): that this is still a vibrant and energetic academic field.

Or should we say “again a vibrant and energetic academic field”? In their paper *Project InTaVia – Or How to Digitally and Visually Reframe the History of All (Wo)Men’s Life and Work* Eva Mayr and Florian Windhager observe that national biographies – essentially 18th and 19th century projects of compiling, curating and printing large corpora of lives – underwent a major transition with the arrival of computing technology in the late 20th century, which “further enhanced the scope and benefits of national biographical

¹³ Lucy Riall, “The Shallow End of History? The Substance and Future of Political Biography,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (2010): 375.

databases.” Their concluding remarks perfectly and succinctly summarize the gist of this introduction:

*Digital collections, together with digital methods and tools offer new ways for accessing cultural data, for linking and curation and for scalable analysis and communication, but they cannot substitute the traditional, non-digital research on cultural information. They can complement and augment traditional research, but non-digital methods are at least equally important as digital ones. In a postdigital society, digital humanists with their data and tools have to work hand in glove with non-digital cultural heritage experts and the research methods from both sides immensely benefit from productive joint ventures. [...] We consider digital methods to provide a unique opportunity to strengthen the historiographic perspective in modern times, to link those lives to further (re)sources, widen our analysis, and expand our understanding, as well as our communication activities on the biographies of actors we care about.*¹⁴

¹⁴ Mayr, Windhager, “Project InTaVia – Or How to Digitally and Visually Reframe the History of All (Wo)Men’s Life and Work,” 218–219.

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PART I
BIOGRAPHY

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IS BIOGRAPHY AN APPROPRIATE TOOL FOR STUDYING THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL IDEAS?

Jérôme Roudier

INTRODUCTION

Let us initially set the scene: a historian of political ideas relies on the historical biographical work of other researchers.¹ This research on Machiavelli has therefore not consisted of digging through archives and unearthing new documents, but rather in relying on the historical work carried out by eminent fellow historians (Ridolfi,² Vivanti,³ Fournel and Zancarini,⁴ Guidi,⁵ ...) in order to demonstrate the importance of the biographical contribution to understanding Machiavelli's thought in the first instance, and to understand the advent of "modern" political thought in the second one.

Therefore it seems that the characteristic feature of political modernity that can be fully grasped in Machiavelli, and which is entirely intended

¹ The aim of this work is therefore quite different from that of a synthesis of historians' biographies such as that proposed by Giovanni Levi, "Les usages de la biographie," *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 44, no. 6 (1989): 1325–1336, <https://doi.org/10.3406/ahess.1989.283658>.

² Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Niccolò Machiavelli* (Roma: Belardetti, 1954).

³ Corrado Vivanti, *Machiavel ou les temps de la politique* (Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 2007).

⁴ Jean-Louis Fournel and Jean-Claude Zancarini, *Machiavel, une vie en guerres* (Paris: Passés Composés, 2020).

⁵ Andréa Guidi, *Un segretario militante: Politica, diplomazia e armi nel cancelliere Machiavelli* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

by the Florentine, is the programmatic nature of political thought and discourse.⁶ The reduction of its theoretical and universal dimension⁷ clearly takes second place with Machiavelli, who intends to emphasise the place of political discourse in current politics, even if it is also a question of going beyond the purely conjunctural and attempting to think about political action in the medium term.

So, for example, in my next book, I intend to show that *Il principe* [The Prince] and the *Discorsi* [Discourses] do indeed aim first and foremost at Italian unification, along two radically opposed paths that are set out according to the possibilities offered by the Florentine political situation at the time of writing and the audience to which these writings were addressed. In France, there is a tendency to see Machiavelli as a philosopher whose ideas could be understood at any time and who would provide the “keys” to politics. If this is to mean that evil can succeed in politics and that we must either use it or never forget it, the lesson is well known and of little interest.

The problem, then, in understanding Machiavellian thought is to understand the dynamic at work between theory and action. Theory is not philosophical because it is linked to a concrete action that is at least possible, and the action is not purely pragmatic and cynical because it is a part of the historical context to which it intends to bring about a substantial change. Through the Machiavellian case, this reflection aims to draw attention to a wider problem, which is part of the history of the forms of distinction between Antiquity and Modernity. The focus is not on biography per se, but on the importance of biography in the history of political ideas, and ultimately on its significance for our contemporary political systems.

It is easy to see that this is no more than a sketch of a series of hypotheses to aid common reflection, and not the assertion of a definitive thesis. The idea put forward here is to examine the fact that the study of biographies, in our culture, forms a kind of history of the conflict between the individual who acts and whatever resistance they may encounter. This paper is an attempt to suggest a brief history (necessarily oriented and partial) of this question.

⁶ This thesis forms the core of my book *Machiavel par lui-même* (Paris: PUF, 2025).

⁷ Already well highlighted by Marie Gaille, *Machiavel et la tradition philosophique* (Paris: PUF, 2007).

THE “MODERN” REVIVAL OF BIOGRAPHIES FROM ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

Plutarch⁸ is one of the fundamental ancient authors who formed the biographical reading of literary figures from the Renaissance to the 19th century. His *Bioi Paralleloi* [Parallel Lives], in the various editions and translations, and even various extrapolations, literally marked out the readings of these periods. We know that Machiavelli demanded a version in as early as 1503, when he was on a mission and therefore at odds with the actions of Caesar Borgia⁹ and that Bonaparte, who had not read Machiavelli, had a version in his personal library.¹⁰ These two examples illustrate the vital importance of their dissemination in literary and political circles at the time.¹¹ Plutarch's work is that of a moralist. We know that he attempted, through the parallel comparison of two Lives, of a Greek and a Roman, to judge several things: the moral and human quality of Greece versus Rome; the moral and human quality of each individual faced with chance; the meaning of human action in politics in the face of Destiny.

For each life, Plutarch sets out to identify the element of “happiness,” in other words fortune, in the sense of both chance and providence that this term had in pagan antiquity. At that time, Fate was conceived as imposing itself on Zeus himself. The individual's intrinsic merit, i.e. his or her individual moral value, had to be reconciled with the contingencies of life, which could be seen as signs of fate, for good or ill. Thus, in absolute terms, we could

⁸ In his general introduction to the symposium, Gregor Pobežin eloquently recalled the importance of biography in Greco-Roman thought. We refer you to his work for a more complete and erudite vision than our own, see e.g. Gregor Pobežin, “Martyrology, a (Pseudo-)Historical Source: The Case of Prudentius' Hymn in Honour of the Martyr Quirinus,” in *Rzym a Półwysep Iberyjski: Różnorodność Relacji od Starożytności po Współczesność = Roma y la Península Ibérica: Variedad de Relaciones desde la Antigüedad hasta la Contemporaneidad*, ed. Adriana Grzelak-Krzyszczak and Maria Judyta Woźniak (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019), 101–116.

⁹ Cf. letter from Biagio Buonaccorsi to Machiavelli, dated October 21, 1502, in Nicolas Machiavel, *Toutes les lettres officielles et familières de Machiavel, celles de ses Seigneurs, de ses amis et des siens*, ed. and trans. Edmond Barincou, 2 vols. (Paris: NFR, 1955), vol. 1, 216.

¹⁰ See Patrice Gueniffey, *Bonaparte* (Gallimard: Paris, 2013).

¹¹ For military circles, see Frédérique Verrier, *Les armes de Minerve. Humanisme militaire dans l'Italie du XVIème siècle* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1997). His work on *anasurma* is literally punctuated by the presence of Plutarch, who is quoted twenty-one times throughout the work and examined particularly on pages 75–84. Cf. Frédérique Verrier, *Catarina Sforza et Machiavel ou l'origine d'un monde* (Roma: Vecchiarelli Editore, 2010).

have distinguished the best of men even through the worst of misfortune, or the worst of men through insolent luck.

Of course, all this needs to be put into perspective, since in Plutarch's time it would have been unthinkable for the worst of men to benefit from too much divine favour, or for the best and therefore most pious of men to be overburdened. In this respect, the work as a whole was intended to measure who was the best of the Greeks or the Romans, but also to determine the meaning of this divinity of Destiny, whose obvious blindness in certain cases called into question the meaning of human action in politics. The coherence of man's relationship with the gods was certainly not the essential point of any attempt at analysis, which explains why modern readers are perplexed by the paradoxes raised in the tribulations of Ulysses, the Greek tragedies, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or the theoretically more substantial writings that we believe should constitute well-documented biographies.¹²

Of course, Christianity considerably altered both the scope and the form of this questioning, and the rediscovery of Plutarch was first and foremost a pleasure for historians and enthusiasts of antiquity, who were delighted to rediscover real-life heroes pleasantly described by a narrator from their own time. One may also imagine that it served as an alternative to the biographies of saints, whose increasingly fabulous character was becoming difficult to assimilate, and whose inherently hagiographic mode rendered the material unsuitable for critical discussion, for the weighing of political judgment, and for a secular evaluation.

THE RENAISSANCE AND MACHIAVELLI, THE IRRUPTION OF MAN INTO HISTORY, HIS ABILITY TO PRODUCE "NEW" POLITICS

Machiavelli, whose biography forms the core of our work to date, offered a radically new perspective to the study of antiquity and to biography. As he wrote in the *Discourses*,¹³ antiquity, which serves as a model for art and science, must also be taken seriously in political matters. The *Discourses*

¹² On Greco-Roman religiosity, we can only refer to the work of Pierre Hadot.

¹³ Nicolas Machiavel, *Discours sur la première décade de Tite-Live*, trans. Alessandro Fontana and Xavier Tabet (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), book II, foreword, 252, 255.

illustrate this by their use of various historical authors, particularly Livy and Polybius. Machiavelli seeks to recover the Roman sense of civic virtue by, as it were, passing over Christianity, which he regards as apolitical and which, in his view, distorted the political nature of the Italians and hastened their decline through their inability to unite and to avoid becoming the stake of the Italian Wars during which he lived and wrote.¹⁴

In addition, Machiavelli wrote *La vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca* [Life of Castruccio Castracani da Lucca] and numerous other portraits in his histories, which reveal an evolution in the art of biography, not hesitating to visibly falsify actual history.¹⁵ Basically, Machiavelli returns to Plutarch for a fundamental reason, articulated in chapter 25 of *The Prince* on the respective roles of *Virtue* and *Fortune*, mediated by free will. He concludes that everything is held in balance, in an unstable and shifting equilibrium, unpredictable by nature. Machiavelli's operation is indicative of the change in mentality. Through the irruption of Christian free will in this no less than Christian author, Machiavelli stops the Plutarchian moralist and sanctimonious questioning and neutralises it. The question is no longer to assess and judge each man, but to see, in the biographical study, the reasons for his successes and failures in order to learn from them for action in comparable circumstances. Faced with the Greek's philosophical and moralistic questioning, the Florentine inaugurated a political use, in the form of lessons leading more or less to a form of knowledge that was properly political.

This change in attitude is engaging. As moderns, we are careful to distinguish between hagiographies, which we regard as scarcely scientific and hardly very estimable, and biographies, whose purpose is, at least in principle, to consist a man in the spirit of his time in order to distinguish what he really did, and therefore his share of possible merit. But what interests us above all is to understand the relationship between an individual and his time; the choice of the individual therefore allows one, almost automatically,

¹⁴ On these points, see Jérôme Roudier, *Machiavel par lui-même* (Paris: PUF, 2025).

¹⁵ Felix Gilbert mentions in particular that Renaissance historians "had political purposes when discussing historical events and thus consciously constructed a historical myth." See Felix Gilbert, "Guicciardini, Machiavelli, Valori on Lorenzo Magnifico," *News* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1958): 114. The *Life of Castruccio Castracani da Lucca* is absolutely full of deliberate errors in order to draw a parallel with that of Scipio, and is thus full of winks to a readership that cannot be mistaken.

to discern the positioning of the biographer's line of inquiry.¹⁶ Machiavelli, on the other hand, intended to judge the successes and failures of political actions. His portraits aim only to explain the mechanisms of the dynamic struggle that forms the maelstrom in which all the circumstances and all the players play out. His aim, moreover, is not so much to elucidate the past for its own sake as to draw from its lessons for the now. This is the political programme that characterises all Machiavelli's work and thought.

THE TRANSITION FROM ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY IS THAT FROM MORALITY TO EFFICIENCY; BIOGRAPHY IS NO LONGER THE STORY OF MAN'S STRUGGLE AGAINST DESTINY, BUT THAT OF AN INDIVIDUAL CONFRONTED WITH THIS NEW POLITICAL CREATION, THE "STATE"

The use of political biography from Machiavelli to Bonaparte can thus be placed alongside that which culminated in art with the thinking of Jacob Burckhardt and his fusing vision of the prince and the artist, the two united in the same radically creative desire, one for a "state" never before imagined, the other for forms and practices that were totally new.¹⁷ Clearly, the dated and romantic character of these analyses will not suffice here; yet it is worth emphasizing that, in the arts, Vasari already undertook during the Renaissance, through his *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* [The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects], to offer the public a biographical entry point into the history of art – one that presupposes and implements a conception of activity centred on the master craftsman, who is thereby designated as an artist. The same phenomenon, of course, can be observed across all domains of activity in the societies of the period, and Machiavelli's own reflection thus loses some of its originality,

¹⁶ Stephan Zweig's biographies are particularly suited to this type of reading. It goes without saying that the 20th century and the horrors of totalitarianism have radically altered this type of perspective, where the attitude is generally one of "understanding."

¹⁷ Jacob Burckhardt, *La civilisation de Italie au temps de la Renaissance*, vol. 1 (Paris: Le livre de Poche, 1958), in particular vol. 1, "Part I: The State as a Work of Art" followed by "Part II: Development of the Individual," the first chapter of which deals with "The Italian State and the Individual."

becoming instead a point of departure conventionally accepted by his successors in political thought.

At this stage of the argument, it is necessary to point to another phenomenon, in theory independent of biographical activity. In the half-century following Machiavelli's death and the publication of works that would henceforth be regarded as definitive (*The Prince* and the *Discourses*, neither of which he edited during his lifetime), Western Europe – defined by its membership in Christendom – underwent a major rupture that placed its survival and “civilizational” unity in jeopardy: the Reformation. The response to what was perceived as an intolerable division of Western European societies was long and painful and took multiple directions. Yet, schematically speaking, in those countries genuinely traversed by the Wars of Religion, two types of political solution emerged: freedom of worship, or the creation of the state.

This radical novelty is of the utmost interest, since, in retrospect, it is known that the state would become one of the political forms through which political modernity came to name itself. In French, the term carries such a powerful connotation that the title “President of the Republic” is systematically reinforced by that of “head of state,” as though the Republic alone were not enough. Consequently, no Frenchman trembles in the face of a “government” logically perceived as transitory and weak in the face of this “cold monster”¹⁸ constituted by the State.

The State is obviously not a simple reality, but to continue Foucault's reflections on a critique of political reason,¹⁹ it is characterised from the outset by a number of features that give it its impersonal character, both in theory and in practice, in the form of a programme or a definition.

First of all, as a result of the counter-reformation, the State had a duty to go beyond individuals in order to control them better. In Botero's thought²⁰ it may be outlined this is clearly an undertaking linked to the new capacities

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1903). State is “the coldest of cold monsters.”

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, “*Omnes et singulatim*: Towards a Critique of Political Reason,” *Le Débat* 41, no. 4 (1986): 5–36, <https://doi.org/10.3917/deba.041.0005>.

²⁰ Giovanni Botero, *De la raison d'État (1589–1598)*, ed., transl., and with notes by Pierre Benedittini and Romain Descendre, introduction by Romain Descendre (Paris: Gallimard, 2014).

for calculating and understanding the world made possible by importing tools from commercial practices into political analysis.²¹ But it is worth pointing out that this is also the programme of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. In both cases, political invention is significantly tied to rational activity: Botero rightly stresses its connection to calculation, while Hobbes emphasizes its relation to law – a relation whose almost mystical bond with reason has been recognized since Cicero.²²

From this dual origin, and from this dual claim to use reason to get out of the unprecedented and dramatic problem of the Wars of Religion, we can quickly observe two distinct trends in political thought. On the one hand, there was political thought, which could quickly be described as liberal, which was initially built up against Hobbes and attempted to replace the pure force of law or calculation with reasonable coexistence between individuals. These two ways of emphasising the unifying and regulating potential of reason inevitably tend to limit or even suppress the freedom of individuals. This is clear in Hobbes.

Through the use of calculation in human interaction, we arrive at statistics and therefore rational and reasonable forecasts that enable policies to be more effective. Pushed to extremes, as was the case in the scientific political thinking of the late 19th century²³ and in the totalitarian ideological delusions of both the Communists and the Nazis, the State can become an end in itself, totally detached from the diverse social reality it dominates. Confronted with the temptation of unification through reason and the state – which may aim at the ruthless suppression of all differences and minorities – the liberal political tradition seeks to assign to this same political organization, now preferably termed “government,” a different purpose: that of managing differences so as to produce a dynamic and free society.

²¹ Giovanni Botero's *De la raison d'État*, for example, is the result of a synthetic use of both the accounts of merchant ship captains and those of ambassadors to the Republic of Venice. Similarly, the “reason” of State, in his language, refers to the power of calculation [*ratio*] linked to observation to control a territory and its population.

²² Cicero, *De legibus*, where the beginning of the work forms a kind of explanation of the “divine” nature of law through reason: since reason was granted to men by Jupiter, just law must conform to reason and therefore be divine.

²³ Pierre Favre has published *Naissances de la science politique en France, 1970–1914* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), an overview of the birth of political science in France, focusing on the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th and the emergence of “scientific” criteria in political studies and research.

ATTENTION TO INDIVIDUALS OF
NO PRIMARY IMPORTANCE CORRESPONDS
TO A REACTION TO THE FRIGHTENING
DEPLOYMENT OF THE POWER OF THE STATE

In this context, biography provides a useful counterpoint to the weight of administrative and state organisation, which is increasingly prevalent and necessary to manage increasingly complex and multiple societies.

From Plutarch and Voragine, who used biography as a means of moral reflection on the meaning of human action on earth, to Machiavelli, who saw in biography the possibility of understanding the mechanisms of the complexity of political action in order to enlighten an *acteur*, to Bonaparte, a true Machiavellian hero, who wanted to change the political reality of his time, to Burckhardt, who established as fundamental in art as in politics the possibility of creative genius, to Huxley²⁴ and Arendt,²⁵ who saw in biography a means of better understanding the irreversibility of political action in human life for the latter and a reminder of the mystical foundations of our most secularised political organisation for the former, biography is first and foremost a counterweight to our modern political structures, whether we call them “States” or otherwise. The power of calculation and forecasting must, in our culture, be counterbalanced by a reassessment of the place human action holds.

This may be one of the meanings of writing and reading biographies today. Biographical studies, in all its meanings, can be understood as an effort to counterbalance the weight of the state by maximising that of citizens and individuals. Even biographical studies conducted in terms of “micro-histories”²⁶ can hold this meaning, regardless the fact that the biographical study of political actors remains the preferred approach.²⁷

²⁴ Aldous Huxley, *L'éminence grise, études de religion et de politique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2022). This biography focuses on Father Joseph, Richelieu's minister who organised his cynical and mystical foreign policy.

²⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Vies politiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 2019).

²⁶ Carlo Ginzburg's work is exemplary in this respect.

²⁷ Alessandro Barbero, *Le marchand qui voulait gouverner Florence, et autres nouvelles du Moyen-Age* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017), presents a succinct but suggestive biography of Dino Compagni, who was perhaps the predecessor, eclipsed by Machiavelli, of those thinkers of

Biography today, from the point of view of writing, reading or scientific work, remains a way of justifying our present liberal state policy, where the efficiency of the state is identified with maximising the individual potential of its citizens. The counter-examples identified by Federico Zuliani concerning Italian Protestants during the 16th century²⁸ reveal the reality of the contribution made by biographies in establishing the individual in political history in the face of the State. The censorship, explicit or otherwise, of personalities perceived as “undesirable” in the biographical dictionaries of different periods must be identified and commented on for what it is: the stranglehold of a majority on the history of a people. In France, the history of women playwrights is an example of this erasure, which was first deliberately misogynistic and then became an intangible dogma.²⁹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

History permeates everyone’s biography, and biographical study in general consists essentially of measuring the relative proportion of individual quality and the weight of history in each individual, as Patrice Gueniffey has clearly emphasised.³⁰ From this point of view, we return to the classic view from antiquity, brought to its highest point by Plutarch, that a man’s worth is judged by examining his circumstances, whether favourable or not.

Biography in the modern sense, as this paper tries to suggest, places greater emphasis on the weight of history, where the Greek moralist’s primary aim was to judge men and propose models. But in both cases, and particularly in the study of political ideas, biography allows us to assess more accurately, to understand in a sense from the inside, the movement

politics who were also its actors. See Dino Compagni, *Chronique des événements survenant à son époque* (Grenoble: ELLUG, 2002).

²⁸ Federico Zuliani, “Which Place for the Biographies of 16th-Century Religious and Linguistic Minorities in Italian and Swiss Historiographies?” in “*V življenju slednjega od nas je zgodba*”: *dvodnevni mednarodni simpozij na temo biografike in njene vloge ter usode v digitalnem svetu: program simpozija in povzetki referatov* = “*There’s History in All Men’s Lives*”: *A Two-Day International Symposium on the Subject of Biography and Its Role/Future in the Digital World: Conference Programme and Abstract Booklet*, Atrij ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, September 25–26, 2023.

²⁹ Aurore Evain, *En compagnie, histoire d’autrice de l’époque latine à nos jours* (Paris: Ixe, 2019).

³⁰ Patrice Gueniffey, “A biográfia a megújuló politikatörténetben,” *Aetas* 3 (2000): 136–149.

of an author's thought. For, unlike any other form of knowledge, politics is embodied. Machiavelli, through his radical criticism of what we would today call "ideology," i.e. a theory whose concrete realisation we are not concerned with but only its theoretical "truth" (but which?) or rationality (but, again, which?), fundamentally emphasises that the only valid question in politics lies in the realisation of one's ideas.

Without going so far as to accept this point, which is too radical and leads, on principle, to the exclusion of all forms of speculation, it should be emphasised that the course of history in Western Europe since the Italian wars can no longer be the object of idealistic or religious contemplation, or, more precisely, that the modern mind, wishing to have a grip on things and events, consists precisely in refusing, particularly in the social and political domain, a contemplative attitude which would be perceived as passive, even cowardly. From then on, he assigns a truly programmatic, i.e. achievable, perspective to his thinking. And at that point, the history of political thought becomes inseparable from the history of human political action that leads to the study of the State, which completes the approach of the Intavia project: the study of biographies in Slovenia is linked to the creation or promotion of a State.

Biography in the modern sense is thus no longer a work of moral philosophy for measuring the force of destiny and, in turn, the strength of character of the individual, but a way of understanding the possibilities and modalities of human action in history. For the history of political ideas, biography can provide a less disembodied appreciation of the history of political ideas in general, a form of comprehensive perspective based on the anthropological model. I would therefore like to stress the need for a study – inseparably biographical, political and philosophical – of the men who shaped the transition to this new form of political and social relations that constitutes modernity. It seems to me, for example, that we need to carry out in-depth studies of the "senior civil servants," the political experts who emerged during the religious wars and who relied on politics to regulate, curb and halt the horrors of denominational civil wars.³¹

³¹ As Carl Schmidt happily wrote in *Hamlet ou Hécube* (Paris: L'Arche, 1992), 42: "In the person of King James I, a lover of philosophy and theology, was embodied all the dissension of his time, a century of divided faith and denominational civil wars."

The interest in the biography of this new category of political experts, which emerges (it has no doubt always been present through the various forms of “advisors to princes,” of course) through the mastery of bureaucracy, archives, and the bookish and cartographic knowledge that gives a grip on social reality, including ultimately what we will later call the statistical tool, leads to a new field of research, of which Machiavelli is the starting point in spite of himself and which, this time, fully joins the history of political ideas as currents of thought. More generally, in the history of political ideas, a careful study of the intentions and political experience of the authors can help us to better understand the reasons why this history has developed and has had a decisive influence on real political life. Basically, since the end of the Middle Ages, we could also propose to characterise political modernity by the fact that conceptualisation no longer takes place *a posteriori*, as in Greek and Roman antiquity or in the Christian world, but concomitantly with the evolution of political life. It is remarkable, for example, that the concept of the “State” was born precisely at the moment when the State was being established, in a form that Botero ultimately approximated in a highly satisfactory and enlightening way. “State” is not just a new way of naming political power, it is also a programme: “State is solid lordship over peoples.”³²

The great novelty of modern political thought lies in the fact that it is both an effort at description and conceptualisation based on the classical model of the Ancients, but also one of creative imagination. Faced with the wars in Italy, Machiavelli noted the inadequacy of the usual ways of proceeding and sought, in a deliberately disruptive enterprise, to create a new political entity of a size that could meet the strategic challenges of his time. Two generations later, some of the less fanatical Secretaries of societies torn apart by religious infighting turned to his enterprise to draw inspiration from his method, namely to create a new political form capable of curbing denominational civil wars. In order to grasp this truly astounding change in the way we think about and experience politics, where, to paraphrase Arendt, the treasure of tradition is by definition lost because it is immediately considered insufficient, since the present arises from what has never been

³² Giovanni Botero, *De la raison d'État*, 67. Romain Descendre adds in a note that this inaugural passage does not appear until the 1596 edition.

seen before,³³ a biography seems to me to be essential. In my opinion, it is all the more essential if we are to understand the incredible novelty that seized these men in their time: the denominational civil war, which no previous political or religious experience had really preceded.

I'm not sure we're completely rid of this initial problem, where societies unified by a fairly well established and rigid religious dogma were torn apart from within and had to, at the cost of their very survival, invent, for example, the concept of tolerance, which was largely antithetical to the monistic tendencies of each political society, but also the conditions that made it possible to impose it on the members of their own societies; in other words, a political power capable of striking at every individual in society, whoever they were and wherever they were: the State.³⁴

On an even deeper level, it seems to me that the current interest in biography, particularly the lives of individuals who do not belong to the foremost ranks of activities socially valorised by contemporary society, does not apply solely to the analysis of the societies that they help to complete and, in a way, anchor in reality. Thus, while historical work may indeed provide a deeper insight into the spirit of a society through the biographical entry of people who are both revealing and unspectacular, it seems to me that it is above all revealing of our times and of some of its most eminent characteristics.

We live in societies that place excessive value on the individual and individualism – at the very moment when the means of circumventing and controlling them (and thus effectively preventing them from using their free will) are more powerful than ever. Writing biographies, and seeing them as a positive and effective way of understanding the evolution of our own societies (as well as other societies, and in particular the older stages of our societies), is a singular and revealing attitude, especially if it is combined with a re-evaluation of previous biographies, in order to correct past errors and prejudices. The pessimists will say that it remains to correct those of the

³³ Hannah Arendt, *La crise de la culture*, “préface: la brèche entre le passé et le futur” (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

³⁴ In this, I do not believe that a theological-political reality should be assumed. On the contrary, I am more in line with Géraldine Muhlmann's reflection on its fundamental non-existence. The fact remains that what is philosophically false can have multiple and profound effects in political reality. Cf. Géraldine Muhlmann, *L'imposture du théologico-politique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2022).

present. In any case, the leaders of authoritarian or even totalitarian political regimes would doubtless not think of undertaking such critical research.

Within the biographical enterprise inherited from Greco-Roman antiquity, the irreducible antagonism between the individual acting upon the world and the hold exerted by the world (gods, God, religion, politics, the state, society) over the individual is constantly at work. While it is clear that this question runs throughout European culture shaped by the dual Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian tradition, it is no less true that changes in the way the issue is framed through different modes of biographical writing and the selection of biographical subjects considerably alter the interpretation that can be drawn from it.

After Machiavelli, it seems to us that we are entering a period – modernity – of which we are still a part, and which helps us to understand why a recently created state such as Slovenia would decide to propose such a research endeavour. Admittedly, this initiative can be understood as a way for the state to affirm its presence to its own population and to foster forms of national identification through recent and clearly Slovenian reference points. Like other European countries, Slovenia participates in the long-standing logic of state formation commonly described as that of the nation-state – that is, the idea that the ideal state is composed of a single people, understood as a certain historical, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic unity. While the effective reality of the nation-state as such may be questioned, it remains clear that this “political program,” first articulated with particular clarity by Machiavelli, constitutes a key point of reference for recognizing and understanding European political culture since the Renaissance.

To this obvious point others may be added, less visible yet no less compelling, of which at least one deserves emphasis: today, in the wake of the totalitarian phenomena that bloodied Europe in the 20th century, there has emerged the idea (fundamentally liberal in nature) that the state derives its value less from itself than from what it enables the individuals who compose it to achieve. Biography has thus, in a sense, become a sign, a proof, or a model of perfect success, whereby an increasingly dominant and coercively capable state governs and administers its population in the most effective manner by allowing the highest capacities of all its members to be realized. It is, moreover, in its ability genuinely to include each citizen

in their singularity – therefore through its concern for minorities – that the reality of the freedom it affords may be judged; *damnatio memoriae* is absolutely prohibited.

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BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC. BIOGRAPHIES ABOUT AND BY THE ELITE

Jukka Kortti

In my works on Finnish intellectual history, biographies have obviously been one of the central sources for my studies. I have conducted three large studies over the last fifteen years, in which the *National Biography of Finland* database has been a major tool in my work.¹ These kinds of digital collections and databases obviously provide many new opportunities for research. New digital tools for data creation, searching, browsing, and analysing, both from the perspective of “distance” and “close reading,” not only provide new tools for historical research but also have the potential to reveal new dimensions out of the past.²

However, although the databases have been available for some time, their use transnationally has been quite difficult due to various restrictions on exploiting the data. Hence, there is a need for creating large European cultural heritage databases, such as for biographies and other intangible language-based accounts. The consortiums, such as In/Tangible European

¹ Jukka Kortti, *Valtaan ja vastavirtaan. Helsingin yliopiston valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta 75 vuotta* [Power and Opposition: 75 Years History of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki] (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2020); Jukka Kortti, *Ylioppilaslehden vuosisata* (Arena of Intelligentsia. The Century of Ylioppilaslehti) (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2013); see also “From Culture to Politics. The Dynamics between the cultural and the political public sphere in Finland in the early twentieth century,” *From Culture to Politics*, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/kortti/research/219-2/>.

² Franco Moretti, “Conjecture on World Literature,” *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 54–68; Jim Mussell, “Doing and Making: History as Digital Practice,” in *History in the Digital Age*, ed. Tomi Weller (London: Routledge, 2012), 79–94; Hannu Salmi, *What is Digital History?* (Cambridge and Medford: Polity Press, 2020).

Heritage: Visual Analysis, Curation and Communication – InTaVia is about to advance this aim. The project is highly important to providing access to cultural and historical data across Europe.

I am currently directing a research project on the one-hundred-year history of the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle. I am also the vice chair of the wider consortium on Yle's history, which includes four universities and three sub-projects.³

Only a year ago, I heard that the National Audiovisual Institute in Helsinki, one of the main tasks of which is to safeguard Finnish broadcasting culture, is updating its Radio and Television Archive database according to the ideas of linked data. I immediately contacted the directors of the archive, and already in early June this year our researchers, including myself and a couple of my students, found ourselves pre-testing the software. The beta version of the database was ready for our use at the end of 2023.

It was evident that these new tools provide new insights into the history of Finnish broadcasting, especially in terms of using the metadata of radio and television programs. Since the institutional history of Yle was written in the 1990s – actually, the first history book was published already in the 1950s – there is a need to find new perspectives on the history of the company.

The new Radio and Television Archive database is based on the system that SeCo, the Semantic Computing Research Group at Aalto University and the University of Helsinki, has been building for some time, the so-called Sampo model. I heard about this new Radio and Television Archive database when professor Eero Hyvönen, whose research group is part of InTaVia, briefly mentioned it when he was introducing their latest Linked Open Data service and the semantic portal *ParlamenttiSampo* about the Finnish Parliament in March this year.

A PANORAMA OF LIFE AND CULTURE?

In addition to presenting these new kinds of digital possibilities for research, the use of artificial intelligence has recently provoked discussion here in academia, as in almost all areas of society, about how we should deal with AI in studies.

³ “Yle 100 Research Program,” Yle 100 Research Program, last modified January 25, 2024, <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/yle-100-tutkimusohjelma/yle-100-research-program/>.

AI has been seen as a problem in terms of ethics, but also as an opportunity. For example, my university, the University of Helsinki, has recently encouraged degree programmes and teachers to use AI in their teaching.⁴

AI can also be utilised in making presentations. So, when I started planning my presentation for the seminar *There's History in All Men's Lives*, I gave ChatGPT the command: "Make a presentation on Finnish biographies." ChatGPT provided a skeletal outline titled *Exploring Finnish Biographies: A Journey Through Remarkable Lives* divided into sixteen slides. They included an introduction, agenda, and contextualization of Finnish history, which, of course, would be well-justified elements if I was going to give a speech on Finnish biographies. That was not the case here, though.

One of the slides was titled *Prominent Finnish Figures* and included the composer Jean Sibelius, architect Alvar Aalto, and artist Tove Jansson. AI mapped and searched databases that included the National Biography of Finland. Concerning its open access English language articles, the website of the National Biography of Finland writes:

This online collection of over one hundred Finnish biographies includes famous national figures, politicians and artists as well as a witch burned at the stake and an 18th-century bear hunter. Together they provide a panorama of Finnish life and culture from medieval times to the present day.

However, although it says that it provides "a panorama of Finnish life and culture," it is worth emphasizing that the online collection mostly "includes famous national figures, politicians and artists." *Biography Sampo*, the Finnish participant in the InTaVia, is based strongly on short biographies published by the Finnish Literature Society.

The websites of *Biography Sampo* include pictures of politicians, musicians, artists, athletes, etc. One could ask, how "a panorama of Finnish life and culture" can be presented if it only consists of a minority stratum?

Yes, I know that *Biography Sampo* was also created within a knowledge network of linked biographies that include War Sampo, Wikipedia, and Geni.

⁴ "Using AI to support learning," University of Helsinki, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://studies.helsinki.fi/instructions/article/using-ai-support-learning>.

com, which include “ordinary people” as well. The website of the Semantic Computing Research Group (SeCo) tells us:

The traditional perspective on great men and women has been expanded nowadays, e.g., to minorities and the so-called “ordinary” individuals to create a more balanced picture. Biographical information is published online in abundance elsewhere, such as Wikipedia.⁵

However, although I do not know the share of “ordinary people” in *Biography Sampo*, I assume “the salt of the earth” is a minority in the database. What I am saying is that the National Biography of Finland, as with so many other national biographies, is about the elite.

For a social historian, this is problematic, but for an intellectual historian, it is more acceptable. Intellectual historians, as well as scholars writing institutional histories, are first and foremost interested in opinion leaders and people in power. Yet, my kind of media historians have also been interested in the social history of media i.e., ordinary media users in recent years, for instance.

WHAT IS ELITE?

According to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (a print version from the 1990s found in my bookshelf), elite means “the richest, most powerful, best educated or most trained group of a society.”⁶ In terms of sociological and political theory, elites hold a position of importance in society: “They accept one another, understand one another, marry one another, tend to work, and to think, if not together at least alike,” as American sociologist Charles Wright Mills stated during the golden age of American social sciences in the 1950s.⁷

⁵ “BiographySampo: Finnish National Biographies on the Semantic Web,” BiographySampo, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://seco.cs.aalto.fi/projects/biografiasampo/en/>.

⁶ *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 448.

⁷ Charles Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York, Oxford University Press 1956), 4–5.

Social scientists were interested – often in terms of class theories – in scrutinizing the high and the mighty during the modern history of industrializing nations in the 20th century. Nevertheless, as Mills states, the networks are crucial to understanding the elite. This not only concerns small young nations with small elite circles such as Finland or Slovenia, but also major European countries such as France, Germany, and Great Britain as well.

However, elites were not a popular subject of research during the latter part of the 20th century, when economic inequalities diminished and the interdependencies between the upper- and lower-class groups were moderated in Western countries. In history studies, new trends, such as the rise of the “history from below” approach in academic history research, decreased interest in elites at the end of the 20th century.

In the 2000s we have seen the rise of a new type of elite research, a case in point being Thomas Piketty’s influential study on wealth and income inequality since the 18th century.⁸ Indeed, one reason for the growing interest in economic elites is globalization, in which the dependency of national economic elites on the working classes and their organizations has weakened.⁹

Nevertheless, elite research is alive and kicking in history research, which can be noted in the European Social Science History Conference (ESSHC), for instance. *Elites and Forerunners* is one of the networks of the ESSHC and, according to my experience as a chair in the network in recent conferences, is rather active and diverse.¹⁰

INTELLECTUALS SERVING THE STATE

The concept of an elite can vary depending on the context and criteria used to define it, but it generally refers to a small, distinguished, and influential segment of a larger population. One elite group that this definition applies to

⁸ Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

⁹ Johan Heilbron, Felix Bühlmann, Johannes Hjellbrekke, Olav Korsnes, and Mike Savage, “Introduction,” in *New Directions in Elite Studies*, ed. Olav Korsnes, Johan Heilbron, Johs. Hjellbrekke, Felix Bühlmann, and Mike Savage (London: Routledge, 2017), 1–2.

¹⁰ See “Networks,” European Social Science History Conference Networks, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://esshc.iisg.amsterdam/en/networks>.

perfectly is the intelligentsia, which I have studied in recent years, especially the university elite.

When intellectual historian Ron Eyerman refers to the “intelligentsia” he means a historically specific stratum: “Intellectuals are first of all that social category which performs the task of making conscious and visible the fundamental notions of a society.”¹¹ Although the link between elites and the stratum of the intelligentsia is not automatic, cultural, political, bureaucratic, and other elites can be conceived of as composing part of a whole called the intelligentsia.¹²

When it comes to biographies, as well as prosopography studies, intellectuals comprise a major share of the databases. In Finland, their role is historically even more important than in many other countries. In particular, the university intellectuals and the state have lived in symbiosis in an extraordinary way. This relationship is illustrated more clearly than perhaps in any other country in the deliberate design of the Helsinki Senate Square; the original university building and the first senate were situated opposite each other in similar buildings, with the only difference being the university’s Ionic colonnade representing Greece and the Senate’s Corinthian colonnade representing Rome.

There are many reasons why the Finnish educated class has traditionally been close to the State. One fundamental reason is the importance of German idealism, as theorized by the Finnish statesman and philosopher Johan Vilhelm Snellman. Finland was a young nation, still part of the Russian empire during the 19th century, when the international rise of nationalism following the Hegelian ideas of *Weltgeist* (the spirit), the superiority of the state, and an overall emphasis on *Bildung* (education) influenced the nation-building project of the intellectual class. For Snellman, a university should educate people for the service of the state. The contribution of the academic elite to nation-making has been even more significant in Finland than in many other

¹¹ Ron Eyerman, *Between Culture and Politics: Intellectuals in Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004), 6.

¹² Peter C. Ludtz, “From Methodological Problems in Comparative Studies of the Intelligentsia,” in *The Intelligentsia and the Intellectuals: Theory, Method and Case Study*, ed. Aleksander Gella (Los Angeles, CA, 1976), 37.

“young” European nations, and the university elite has been subject first and foremost to the state.¹³

AUTOBIOGRAPHY: BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

The biographies written about elites – and usually also those written about “ordinary people” – are public; they are meant to be read by everybody. In academic history research, such biographies are usually not enough to make a coherent account of a person, or a group, not to mention an entire era. In terms of historical method,¹⁴ the data should be more diverse than that from a single source, which often provides a narrow or biased reading of history.

One often-used way to broaden the scope of sources in intellectual history research is to utilize the diaries and letters written by authors, artists, academics, and other opinion leaders. Writing of diaries and letters has its roots in the 17th century, but, along with the privatization of modern bourgeois everyday life, such writing increasingly focused on introspection during the 19th century.¹⁵ As genres of writing, diaries and letters have been loosely defined as being autobiographical. Historically, the boundaries between these two types of writing are vague and shifting.¹⁶

Although diaries and letters are personal and intimate writings, they could also be written knowing that they will be read by a wider audience in the future. This is often the case with politicians and diplomats, whose letters, and also diaries, are part of their communication activity in their work. Indeed, the line between private and public in autobiographical writing is vague. As French micro-historian Alain Corbin has noted, the

¹³ Jukka Korti, “Intellectuals and The State: The Finnish University Intelligentsia and The German Idealist Tradition,” *Modern Intellectual History* 11, no. 3 (2014): 359–384.

¹⁴ By historical method I mean a systematic body of principles and rules critically designed to present a synthesis of the past.

¹⁵ Alain Corbin, “The Secret of the Individual,” in *History of Private Life. IV. From Fires to Revolution to the Great War*, ed. Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 457–547.

¹⁶ Ritva Hapuli and Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, “The public and private worlds of writing,” in *They Do Things Differently There: Essays on Cultural History*, ed. Bruce Johnson and Harri Kiiskinen (Turku: Cultural History 2011), 188.

social and environmental context of a writer is always present in his or her writing as “mute spirits.”¹⁷

Concerning the diaries of politicians, one of the major publications in Finnish political history is the diaries of the former President of Finland (1946–1956) J. K. Paasikivi (1870–1956), published in the mid-1980s.¹⁸ They were kept secret for over a quarter of the century because President Paasikivi revealed his true negative thoughts about the Soviet Union in his diaries, and so their publication was considered politically dangerous during the Cold War.¹⁹ The diaries are still a major source for the Finnish political history of the early Cold War. Nevertheless, when Paasikivi rewrote his diaries from his years as Prime Minister and President before his death, he likely thought of them as potentially publishable in their original form. Indeed, the diaries hardly address his private life at all.²⁰

One of the editors of Paasikivi’s diaries was the historian and public intellectual Matti Klinge (1936–2023), who published his 24-part public diary (1999–2023). In the diaries, he combines, condenses, and experiments with his thoughts, following the classical essay tradition. In addition, Klinge also published a 6-part massive autobiography in 2012–2021. They are excellent sources for the study of Finnish post-war intellectual history, albeit highly biased.

This ambiguous border between private and public has been one of my research interests in studying intellectual history, especially the cultural public sphere. My idea, referring to Jürgen Habermas, but also to the sociologist from the Weimar era, Ernst Manheim, is that the cultural public sphere originated in a closed, more private sphere – that of the salons and associations. In these circles, intellectuals developed themselves morally as humans before they entered the more public, political public sphere.

¹⁷ Corbin, “The Secret of the Individual,” 497–506.

¹⁸ Juho Kusti Paasikivi, Yrjö Blomstedt, and Matti Klinge, *J.K. Paasikiven päiväkirjat 1944–1956*, vol. 1, ed. Yrjö Blomstedt and Matti Klinge (Porvoo: WSOY 1985); Juho Kusti Paasikivi, Yrjö Blomstedt, and Matti Klinge, *J.K. Paasikiven päiväkirjat 1944–1956*, vol. 2, ed. Yrjö Blomstedt and Matti Klinge (Porvoo: WSOY 1986).

¹⁹ The Finnish Cold War era has often been described by the term *Finlandization*, meaning the process by which a small independent country was forced to abide by the politics and policy rules of a larger, more powerful country, namely the Soviet Union.

²⁰ Yrjö Blomstedt and Matti Klinge, “Saatesanat,” in Juho Kusti Paasikivi, Yrjö Blomstedt, and Matti Klinge, *J.K. Paasikiven päiväkirjat 1944–1956*, vol. 1, ed. Yrjö Blomstedt and Matti Klinge (Porvoo: WSOY, 1985), 5–9.

Autobiographical writing, especially letters, was part of this process that intellectuals used to create their philosophies of life, which we were able to read from publications in periodicals, newspapers, essays, short stories, plays, novels, film scripts, etc.²¹

THE FUTURE OF BIOGRAPHY STUDIES?

Unlike printed texts in book and newspaper collections, handwritten materials have been much more difficult to utilize in terms of digital history. However, this situation is changing. For instance, the Recognition and Enrichment of Archival Documents (READ) project funded by Horizon 2020 has its *tranScriptorium* project, which is developing capabilities for computers to read handwritten texts.²² This also provides possibilities to research handwritten texts produced by ordinary people, such as wartime letter collections.²³

Another source to be utilized in biographical research, as well as intellectual history studies more systematically, is obituaries. The culture of writing obituaries varies from country to country, but as a genre of biographical writing, they are a unique source combining the private and public spheres. Thus, the creation of a transnational database on obituaries could also further intellectual history research.

Elites can exist in various domains, including politics, business, academia, sports, and culture, and they may be characterized by their prominence, exclusivity, and often a degree of privilege or advantage over others. Nevertheless, these individuals or entities often possess exceptional skills, knowledge, wealth, power, or influence that sets them apart from most of the population.

However, who we include in “the elite” and what kind of persons we highlight changes over time, and is dependent on the historical context. What is remarkable in both the ChatGPT presentation of Finnish biographies mentioned above, as well as the *Biography Sampo* webpage, is the relatively

²¹ “From Culture to Politics,” From Culture to Politics.

²² “READ-COOP SCE,” European Cooperative Society Read Coop, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://readcoop.eu/>.

²³ See e.g., “DIGIKÄKI – Digital History and Handwritten Sources,” Digikärki, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://www.tuni.fi/en/research/digikaki-digital-history-and-handwritten-sources>.

equal share of accounts about women. In Finland and the Nordic countries, this can be explained by the historical politics of equality between men and women, but it also tells us much about the overall cultural change in how we look at gender issues and the position of women in society and culture, at least in western cultures. The same can be said about the share of texts about immigrants in *Biography Sampo*. In conclusion, not only our ways of studying elites, but also what “the elite” consists of, changes along with the development of our cultures and societies.

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LITERARY TRADITIONS, GENRE CONVENTIONS AND AUTHOR AUTHORITY IN EARLY MODERN ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES – THE CASE OF ALBRECHT DÜRER

Anja Grebe

Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471–1528) is the most frequently mentioned German artist in literature worldwide, both in art historical writings as well as in popular literature.¹ Dürer is outstanding not only in a quantitative but also in a qualitative sense inasmuch as he became a canonical figure in literature already during his lifetime as well as a reference figure for the literary portrayal of other artists. In many respects, the literary “discovery” of Albrecht Dürer and the shaping of his biography ran parallel to the emergence of literary genres and academic discourses in the early modern period, including artist biographies and art literature in the narrower sense.² On the one hand, his reception in literature is a mirror of how the artist was perceived at a certain

¹ The first Dürer bibliography by H. W. Singer already contained 1315 entries: Hans Wolfgang Singer, *Versuch einer Dürer-Bibliographie* (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1903). In 1971, M. Mende listed 10271 publications: Matthias Mende, *Dürer-Bibliographie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1971).

² According to J. Schlosser the notion encompasses art theoretical and art historical sources, including technical, poetical, and historical texts as well as travel literature, see Julius Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur: Ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte* (Vienna: Schroll, 1924), 1. On the history of the genre, see Caecilie Weissert, “Kunstliteratur,” in *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft: Ideen, Methoden, Begriffe*, ed. Ulrich Pfisterer (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2003), 211–14. The editors of the specialized online portal *Fontes* have a broad definition which includes all textual sources and pictorial compendia which contribute to the discourse on art; “Fontes: Text-und Bildquellen zur Kunstgeschichte 1350–1750,” *Arthistoricum.net*, accessed September 3, 2024, <https://www.arthistoricum.net/publizieren/fontes>.

time. On the other hand, it has itself significantly shaped the image of the artist and the perception of his work. While most painters of his time were forgotten over the decades, the written transmission of Dürer's life and work did not cease after his death but even increased and broadened over the centuries.³

Although the Nuremberg painter is one of the best documented artists of his time and has even left some autobiographical writings, many facets about his life remain unknown.⁴ Today's knowledge of the artist's life and work relies on a relatively thin historical source base. Already his contemporaries tended to replace biographical uncertainties by topoi and to model Dürer's vita along established literary traditions in order to shape a favorable image of Dürer's as a German national artist.⁵ Later authors continued and gaps were substituted by legends and stereotypes – be it to praise Dürer or to criticize him.

This process of substituting knowledge with legend is particularly typical of hagiographic literature. In their *Legend of the Artist*, Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz highlighted the connection between the medieval idea of the “Deus Artifex” and the notion of the “Divino Artista” characteristic of early modern artist biographies and described this as part of the “heroization” of the artist.⁶ In Dürer's case, some early modern authors indeed transformed the heroization into a sacralization and mystification of the painter, who is stylized from a national hero to a saint of art.⁷ The literary “canonization” of Dürer did not begin in the Romantic period, as is often assumed, but rather immediately after the artist's death.⁸

³ Anja Grebe, *Dürer: Die Geschichte seines Ruhms* (Petersberg: Imhof Verlag, 2013), esp. chap. 2.

⁴ Florian Windhager et al., “Traveling with Albrecht Dürer: A Case Study for Uncertainty-Aware Biography Visualization,” in *Biographical Data in a Digital World 2022* (BD 2022), 2022, https://doi.org/10.3986/9789610508120_9.

⁵ Jan Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics 1500–1971: Chapters in the History of Ideas Including a Collection of Texts* (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1986); Anja Grebe, “The ‘Other Apelles’ and the ‘Painter with the Bushy Beard’: Dürer as a Subject in German Literature around 1500,” in *The Early Dürer: Exhibition catalogue*, ed. Daniel Hess and Thomas Eser (Nuremberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2012), 78–89.

⁶ Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979; original edition in German, Vienna, 1934); Anja Grebe, “Albrecht Dürer als deutscher Kulturheros und Nationalheld,” in *Künstlerhelden?*, ed. Katharina Helm, Hans Wolfram Hubert, Christina Posselt-Kuhli, and Anna Schreurs-Morét (Merzhausen: ad picturam, 2015), 87–108.

⁷ Grebe, *Dürers Ruhm*, chap. 2; Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics*, 91–143.

⁸ On the Romantic reception of Dürer, see Volker Pirsich, “Die Dürer-Rezeption in der Literatur des beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der*

Dürer's reception in literature, which spans over a period of more than 500 years, ranges from some brief mentions to multi-volume biographies and to free literary adaptations of his life and work in poems, plays and novels. In all categories, there are works of a sometimes strongly interest-driven or even ideological orientation alongside texts in which a factual perspective predominates.⁹ All facets are equally important for the development of Dürer's biographical counterfeit. The abundance of brief mentions, sometimes comprising only a few lines, underlines Dürer's canonical position just as clearly as the multifold references in art literature in the narrower sense.

Until the 19th century, the "knowledge of Dürer" was primarily compiled, processed and passed on in various genres of biographical literature – above all in collections of vitae, in biographical encyclopaedias and, from the 18th century onwards, also in monographs. It was not until the end of the 18th century that separate approaches to his life and oeuvre emerged with the creation of the first *catalogues raisonnés* on the one hand and publications of his biography on the other.¹⁰

A complete survey of all biographical mentions of Dürer does not exist. The most important positions have been gathered by Julius von Schlosser 1924, Hans Rupprich 1956, and Heinz Lüdecke and Susanne Heiland 1955.¹¹ For several years, the virtual research network Duerer.online hosted by the

Stadt Nürnberg 70 (1983): 304–333; Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics*, 189–218, 243–263.

⁹ Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics*, 219–242; Ute Kuhlemann, "The Celebration of Dürer in Germany during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Albrecht Dürer and His Legacy: The Graphic Work of a Renaissance Artist. Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Giulia Bartrum (London: British Museum Press, 2002), 39–59; Anja Grebe, "'Dürer als Führer': Zur Instrumentalisierung Albrecht Dürers in völkischen Kreisen," in *Völkisch und national: Zur Aktualität alter Denkmuster im 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Uwe Puschner and Georg Ulrich Großmann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 379–399; Michael Roth, ed., *Dürer für Berlin: Eine Spurensuche im Kupferstichkabinett. Exhibition catalogue* (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2023).

¹⁰ Anja Grebe, "Zur historischen Genese von Werkverzeichnissen," in *Handbuch Werkverzeichnis – Euvrekatalog – Catalogue raisonné*, ed. Ingrid Pérez de Laborda, Aya Soika, and Eva Wiederkehr Sladeczek (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 36–48. On the first catalogue raisonné of Dürer's engravings, see Gerhard Kölsch, "Vom 'Raisonnierenden Verzeichnis' zum 'Menschen-Spiegel': Zwei wiedergefundene Manuskripte des Dürer-Werkkatalogs von Henrich Sebastian Hüsgen," in *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts* 2020 (2021): 7–75, <https://doi.org/10.46500/83533815-001>.

¹¹ Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*, 179–180, 231–242, 561; Hans Rupprich, ed., *Dürer: Schriftlicher Nachlass*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1956–1969), esp. vol. 1; Heinz Lüdecke and Susanne Heiland, *Dürer und die Nachwelt: Urkunden, Briefe, Dichtungen und wissenschaftliche Betrachtungen aus vier Jahrhunderten* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1955).

University of Heidelberg has offered open access to a wide range of biographical literature and art historical writings on Dürer up to the mid-20th century.¹²

Based on the anthologies of Schlosser and others, scholars began to take an interest in the history of biographical writing on Dürer only a few decades ago with the first monographs on the subject of *Dürer's critics* by Donald B. Kuspit and by Jan Białostocki.¹³ Kuspit's and Białostocki's term "critic" covers the entire range of written reception: "The image of the artist is shaped in history in two ways. First – by scholarly research which attempts at establishing historical facts and relations [...]. But then the image of the artist is also shaped by all that which was ever felt and said about him and his works. [...] Both Dürer-nonsense and Dürer-scholarship belong to the history of ideas [...]."¹⁴ A contextualized approach with regard to the development of literary genres *From vita to artist's biography* is taken by Karin Hellwig who analyses Dürer as one of her core examples.¹⁵ A synthesis of the earlier approaches as well as an extension to unpublished sources and shorter biographical mentions was published as part of the author's monograph on *The history of Dürer's fame* in the early modern age.¹⁶

This paper illuminates the most important steps in the development of biographical writing on Dürer with a special focus on the first two hundred years after his death. It starts with the earliest biographical mentions published during the artist's lifetime which laid the foundation for his later literary reception and ends with the publication of the first biographical monograph in 1728. Special attention is paid to the often interest-driven shaping of Dürer's image as a German national artist between the poles of "knowledge" and "legend," praise and critique, historiography and hagiography.

¹² "Virtuelles Forschungsnetzwerk Albrecht Dürer," Duerer.online, Accessed September 3, 2024, <https://sempub.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/duerer.online/>.

¹³ Donald Burton Kuspit, *Dürer and His Northern Critics, 1502–1572* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1971); Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics*.

¹⁴ Białostocki, *Dürer and his Critics*, 12–14.

¹⁵ Karin Hellwig, *Von der Vita zur Künstlerbiographie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), esp. 23–59.

¹⁶ Grebe, *Dürers Ruhm*, esp. chap. 2.

FIRST BIOGRAPHICAL MENTIONS

The first example of a both strongly topical and interest-driven reference to Dürer is also his very first mention in literature: four epigrams on the artist composed by the German “archhumanist” Conrad Celtis (1459–1508),¹⁷ which Dieter Wuttke discovered in a collection of *One Hundred Epigrams*.¹⁸

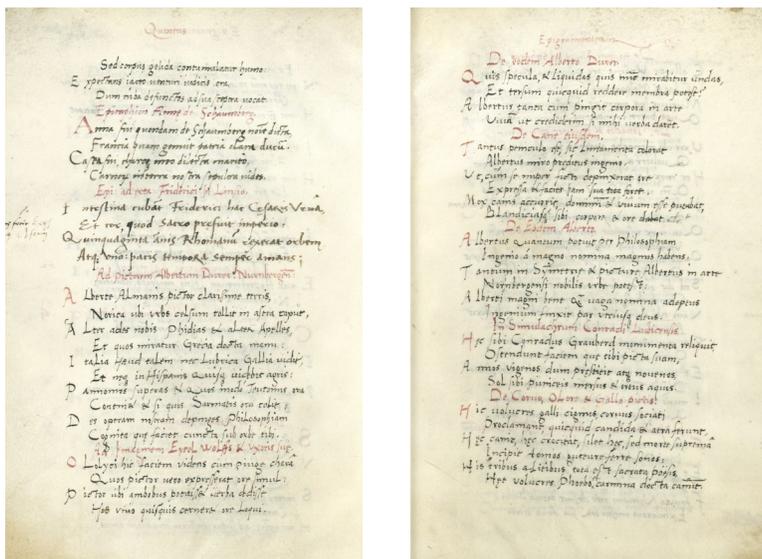


Figure 4.1. Konrad Celtis, Epigrams on Dürer, in *Libri Qvinqve Epigrammatvm*, fol. 69v–70r. Source: Universitätsbibliothek Kassel – Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel, Kassel.

¹⁷ Jörg Robert, “Celtis, Konrad,” in *Verfasserlexikon: Deutscher Humanismus 1480–1520*, vol. 1–2, ed. Franz Josef Worstbrock (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2006), 375–427; Josef Worstbrock, “Konrad Celtis. Zur Konstitution des humanistischen Dichters in Deutschland,” in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 2, ed. Susanne Kölbele and Andreas Kraß (Stuttgart: Hirzel, 2005), 264–289.

¹⁸ Conrad Celtis, *Libri qvinqve epigrammatum*, [Vienna], ca. 1500–1502, 2^o Ms. poet. et roman. 7, fols. 69v–70r, Manuscript, Universitätsbibliothek Kassel – Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel, Kassel; Dieter Wuttke, “Unbekannte Celtis-Epigramme zum Lobe Dürers,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 30 (1967): 321–325; Grebe, *Other Apelles*.

An epigram (ancient Greek “ἐπίγραμμα” = “inscription”) is usually a short, pointed and factual poem.¹⁹ Celtis himself defined the “Poema Epigrammatum” in his verse theory *Ars versificandi et carminum* (1486), as “an inscription on objects, combined with mockery and wit.”²⁰ Although the collection, which was compiled around 1500–1502, remained unpublished, its contents were probably spread among German humanists. Celtis’ poetic praise of the artist formed the nucleus of the “legend of Dürer.” Instead of giving any fact-based details of his early years, Celtis links him to protagonists of art and science from antiquity and the Middle Ages, thus designing an ideal genealogy for Dürer. He positions him in the succession of the ancient Apelles as described, among others, by Pliny and entitles him as both the “new” Apelles and the “new” Albertus Magnus. For Celtis, the thirty-year-old artist becomes the perfecter of both lines of tradition embodied by the ancient artist-hero and the medieval scholar-saint.²¹

Thanks to their prominent author and to their programmatic orientation, the epigrams laid the foundation for Dürer’s reception in the German humanist world.²² The poems also represent one of the earliest pieces of evidence for the elevation of painting to the rank of “ars” and as a part of “philosophia” in German learned discourse.²³ Even if Dürer’s work around 1500 was rather far away from the theoretical aspirations of his later oeuvre; thanks to Celtis’ rhetorical enhancement, German humanists continued to associate his name with the programmatic claim of a “learned art.” The topos that Celtis coined

¹⁹ On the history and definition of the genre, see Peter Hess, *Epigramm* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989).

²⁰ Conrad Celtis, *Ars versificandi et carminum* (Leipzig: Kachelofen, 1486), fol. CIIr; Jörg Robert, *Konrad Celtis und das Projekt der deutschen Dichtung: Studien zur humanistischen Konstitution von Poetik, Philosophie, Nation und Ich* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003), esp. 19–103; Franz Josef Worstbrock, “Die ‘Ars versificandi et carminum’ des Konrad Celtis: Ein Lehrbuch eines Humanisten,” in *Studien zum städtischen Bildungswesen des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit: Bericht über Kolloquien der Kommission zur Erforschung der Kultur des Spätmittelalters, 1978 bis 1981*, ed. Bernd Moeller, Hans Patze, and Karl Stackmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 462–498.

²¹ Jörg Robert, “‘Aemulatio’ und ästhetischer Patriotismus: Dürer-Bilder zwischen Humanismus und Frühromantik,” in *Aemulatio. Kulturen des Wettstreits in Text und Bild (1450–1620)*, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller, Ulrich Pfisterer, Anna Kathrin Bleuler, and Fabian Jonietz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 135–163.

²² Dieter Wuttke, “Dürer und Celtis. Von der Bedeutung des Jahres 1500 für den deutschen Humanismus,” *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 10 (1980): 73–129.

²³ On the humanist concept of the “learned artist,” see Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

of Dürer as the ideal German artist, who was as virtuoso as he was learned, was taken up by subsequent authors. Although other contemporary authors used the Apelles epithet to promote artists in their circles, only in Dürer's case the designation became quasi accepted as a synonym of the artist far beyond the borders of Nuremberg.²⁴

One of Dürer's most prolific, although not disinterested promoters was his fellow citizen Christoph II Scheurl (1481–1542).²⁵ After studying law in Bologna, where he also met Dürer during the artist's trip to Italy in 1506, Scheurl served as rector of Wittenberg University from 1507 to 1511, before successfully applying for the position of a legal advisor of the city of Nuremberg, which he fulfilled from 1512 onwards. As an active member of the Nuremberg humanist circle, he authored numerous books, essays and letters on various legal, religious, and historiographic topics.²⁶ Scheurl was the first to entitle Dürer explicitly as "German Apelles" in a Wittenberg university speech of 1508, in which he compared Dürer to the Greek artist-hero.²⁷ He repeated his programmatic claim several years later in the biographical notes on Dürer inserted in the obituary of the Nuremberg provost and art patron Anton Kress, who died in 1515.²⁸ The passage on the then almost 45-year-old "Germanum Appellem" is the most extensive biographical account of Dürer that was printed during his lifetime. Scheurl gives detailed information on the artist's family background, training period and journeyman's travels, which he had noted

²⁴ Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics*, 15–35; Grebe, *Other Apelles*.

²⁵ Philipp N. Bebb, *Christoph Scheurl's role as legal adviser to the Nürnberg City Council, 1512 to 1525* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1971); Christoph A. Stumpf, "Scheurl, Christoph (II.)," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 22, ed. Otto Graf zu Stolberg-Werningerode (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005), 715–716, accessed September 3, 2024, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118754815.html#ndbcontent>; Franz Fuchs, "Scheurl (Schewrllius, Scheuerleyn), Christoph (II.)," in *Verfasserlexikon: Deutscher Humanismus 1480–1520*, vol. 2, ed. Franz Josef Worstbrock (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 840–877. On Scheurl in Wittenberg, see Maria Grossmann, *Humanism in Wittenberg 1485–1517* (Nieuw-koop: de Graaf, 1975), esp. 44–75.

²⁶ Maria Grossmann, "Bibliographie der Werke Christoph Scheurls," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 10 (1969): 373–395.

²⁷ Christoph Scheurl, *Oratio attingens litterarium praestantiam nec non laudem ecclesiae collegiatae Vittenburgensis* (Leipzig: Martin, 1509). Scheurl gave the original speech on November 16, 1508 in the Wittenberg Castle Church. The *Oratio* was reprinted in the widely spread *Opera* (1610) of Willibald Pirckheimer, where the speech served as a testimony to the life-long friendship between the artist and the humanist.

²⁸ Christoph Scheurl, *Vita Reuerendi patris Dni. Anthonii Kressen [...]* (Nuremberg: Fredericus Peypus, 1515).

down according to alleged reports from the artist. However, Scheurl's account is rather vague and incorrect in many respects and the heroising stylisation of the artist considerably exceeds the documentary content of the passage. Among others, he mentions a certain book by Dürer "on the art and theory of painting" which he compares to the (lost) one written by the ancient Apelles. Scheurl thus created a new legend by suggesting that Dürer's treatise, which only survived in handwritten drafts, was already finished.

Dürer is the only contemporary of Kress to be given more detailed recognition in the obituary, which indirectly underlines the exceptional position that Dürer held in Nuremberg's intellectual and patrician circles at that time. The painter served Scheurl to demonstrate the late provost's interests in art, although no art commission from Kress to Dürer is known. The *Kress Vita* is dedicated to Dürer's closest patrician friends, the Nuremberg aldermen Willibald Pirckheimer and Hieronymus Ebner. It can be assumed that Scheurl intended to use his laud of Dürer to promote himself in the shadow of his famous contemporary.²⁹

Both the example of Celtis' and Scheurl's praise of Dürer show that the mentions of persons close to Dürer must be critically examined with regard to the authors' intentions as well as the respective literary traditions as many details are more topical than fact-based. It is therefore all the more surprising that here, as in most cases, Dürer did not rectify the inaccuracies either directly in his later writings or indirectly through the voice of some befriended humanist.³⁰

POSTHUMOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE DÜRER BIOGRAPHY

After Dürer's death in 1528, the "knowledge of Dürer" was compiled, edited and passed on primarily in various forms of biographical literature. These had to be developed first. A major challenge for the authors laid in the fact that a specific discourse on art and artists did not exist and first had to be generated on the basis of ancient and medieval literature. Albrecht Dürer was one of the

²⁹ Grebe, *Dürers Ruhm*, 122–125.

³⁰ Grebe, *Dürers Ruhm*, 121–122, 125.

few visual artists of his time to be regarded as “worthy of biography” and his biographical records took on a prototypical character.³¹

In 1532, Joachim Camerarius’ (1500–1574) preface to his posthumous Latin translation of Dürer’s *Theory of Proportion* was the first biographical account of the artist not to be integrated as a chapter in another text or book.³² Although the name of the author is not mentioned, Camerarius is unequivocally accepted as the originator.³³

The widely distributed Latin edition made Dürer’s life and work known to an international audience for the first time. Albeit the humanist had known Dürer in Nuremberg during his final years, he took his content largely from previously published Dürer literature or referred to topoi from ancient artist legends. The first independent biography of Dürer should therefore be read less as a realistic than as a metaphorical portrait of the artist. Following the example of panegyric texts, Camerarius begins with a justification of his subject, which quickly turns into a laud of the artist:

*I am also well aware that his merits do not await our praise, especially since his excellent works glorify him with eternal fame; nevertheless, we have considered it appropriate [...] to set down in writing the life and way of thinking of the excellent man so dear to us [...] this should make the skill and unique genius of the artist and man known to the wider public, but also give readers no small pleasure.*³⁴

³¹ Hannes Schweiger, “Biographiewürdigkeit,” in *Handbuch Biographie: Methoden, Traditionen, Theorien*, ed. Christian Klein (Stuttgart, Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2009), 32–36.

³² [Joachim Camerarius], “Aequis et studiosis bonarum artium lectoribus,” in Albrecht Dürer, *De symmetria partium humanorum corporum* (Nuremberg: Agnes Frey [Dürer], 1532), fol. AIIr-AIIIr. On Camerarius, see Frank Baron, ed., *Joachim Camerarius (1550–1574): Beiträge zur Geschichte des Humanismus im Zeitalter der Reformation. Essays on the History of Humanism During the Reformation* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1978); Carol Annette Staswick, *Joachim Camerarius and the Republic of Letters in the Age of the Reformation* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1998); Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich, “Zur Wahrnehmung der Bildenden Kunst durch Literaten im Umfeld Dürers: Eobanus Hessus im Vergleich mit Joachim Camerarius,” in *Künstler und Literat: Schrift- und Buchkultur in der europäischen Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 75–96.

³³ Peter W. Parshall, “Camerarius on Dürer: Humanist Biography as Art Criticism,” in *Joachim Camerarius*, ed. Frank Baron, 11–29.

³⁴ [Camerarius], *Aequis et studiosis*, fol. AIIr (transl. Anja Grebe).

Based on the patterns of ancient and medieval artist vitae, Camerarius continues with an introduction to Dürer's family origins and a description of his pleasant outward appearance and virtuous character, which is allegedly reflected in his works. According to Camerarius, Dürer never painted "indecent" motives, instead, "he always was most conscientious about purity of life and modesty [...] expressed through the grandeur of his paintings that he was undoubtedly aware of his importance, but in such a way that even in his smaller works nothing is to be rejected."³⁵

His praise of the artist's exemplary character is followed by a detailed description of Dürer's virtuoso painting and drawing techniques, enriched by various anecdotes. It is striking that Camerarius' comprehensive introduction to Dürer's life and work does not mention a single specific work of art and he presents the artist's life without a single date.

Camerarius models his description of Dürer's outer appearance and inner nature according to the ancient ideal of the correspondence between body and mind, which one can achieve through study and bring to perfection in art. His literary portrait enables Camerarius to offer Dürer the highest praise as an artist and human being, who was rightly admired at home and abroad for his achievements. By emphasising the virtue and morality of his person and work, Camerarius' biographical preface also provided yet another basis for the posthumous exaltation of the artist. Despite its vagueness and topical modelling, Camerarius' text was read as an authentic portrait of the artist by later biographers such as Karel van Mander or Joachim von Sandrart, who used it as a basis for their own biographies and as well as a guideline for the characterization of Dürer's work.

BIOGRAPHICAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA

At the beginning, the literature on Dürer was almost exclusively in Latin and embedded in the contemporary (German) humanist discourse. Around the middle of the 16th century, new genres of biographical literature like biographical encyclopedia emerged, now also in the vernacular. An early example is Heinrich Pantaleon's (1522–1596) multi-volume *Teutscher*

³⁵ [Camerarius], *Aequis et studiosis*, fol. AIIv (transl. Anja Grebe).

Nation Heldenbuch (1568), whose third part covers the late Middle Ages and the early modern period.³⁶ The volume includes approximately 1700 entries on renowned people written by various authors.

Dürer is the only visual artist who was honored with an entry in the entire *Heldenbuch*. Under the heading *Albertus Dürer maler zu Nürenberg* [Albertus Dürer painter from Nuremberg] the author briefly mentions the key biographical data and continues with a list of the various arts in which Dürer was active, in particular painting and drawing. The largest part is dedicated to Dürer's three theoretical works which are highlighted as his most important achievements. With his artistic genius and his theoretical legacy Dürer substantially contributed to the development of the various arts in Germany: "So it happened that Albrecht made his fatherland / so adorned with many artistic trades / greater through his high understanding / and was in great authority [...]."³⁷

At the end of the article, the abbreviation "Con. Gess." refers to the renowned physician, natural scientist and bibliographer Conrad Gessner (1516–1565) from Basel as Pantaleon's main source. Pantaleon had used Gessner's *Bibliotheca universalis* (1545) – a comprehensive catalogue of all books in Latin, Greek and Hebrew published since 1450 – also as a basis for other entries.³⁸ Gessner's knowledge of Dürer was primarily based on Dürer's theoretical writings and the respective prefaces, especially Camerarius' biographical foreword. Gessner was also familiar with several of Dürer's prints as he had used, among others, Dürer's *Rhinoceros* woodcut of 1515 as a model for the rhinoceros' illustration in the first volume of his *Historia animalium* (1551).³⁹

³⁶ Heinrich Pantaleon, *Der Dritte theil Teutscher Nation Heldenbuch [...]* (Basel: Nicolaus Brylingers Erben, 1568), 157–158; Hans Buscher, *Heinrich Pantaleon und sein Heldenbuch* (Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 26) (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1946).

³⁷ Pantaleon, *Der Dritte theil*, 157.

³⁸ Conrad Gessner, *Bibliotheca universalis* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1545). See Buscher, *Heinrich Pantaleon*, 140–141, 279–282; Urs B. Leu and Mylène Ruoss, eds., *Conrad Gessner 1516–2016: Facetten eines Universums* (Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2016); Iris Ritzmann, "Der Stadtarzt als Universalgelehrter. Conrad Gessner als ein Phänomen seiner Zeit?" in *Conrad Gessner (1516–1565): Renaissance der Wissenschaften. The Renaissance of Learning*, ed. Urs Leu and Peter Opitz (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), 323–334, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110499056-017>.

³⁹ Conrad Gessner, *Historia Animalium liber I. de quadrupedibus viviparis* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1551), 953. See Daniel Hess, "Der neue Blick auf die Welt: Natur und Kunst

DÜRER'S RECEPTION IN EUROPEAN ART LITERATURE

The Latin editions of Dürer's theoretical writings published in Paris in 1532–1535 and their respective prefaces and epilogues helped to familiarise an international humanist audience with Dürer's life and work, and they also introduced them to the univocal praise of his artistic achievements by German authors.

Just as in the German humanist texts, certain topoi emerged early on an international level and continued to dominate the image of Dürer in the following centuries. The persistence of these topoi can be explained by the fact that they were often either linked to the names of eminent rulers, like emperor Maximilian, or placed in the mouths of prominent Renaissance artists, like Raphael, and thus had an authoritative status from the outset. The patriotic-to-nationalist rhetoric, which had marked biographical writing on Dürer since the very first mention, also continued at an international level. Authors generally judged the “German Apelles” from the perspective of their country's own artistic tradition. Although most authors acknowledged his artistic and theoretical achievements, they often used Dürer as a contrasting foil to highlight the artistic excellence of their own nation.⁴⁰

This applies, for example, to the Italian “founding father” of artists' biographies, Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), and his account on Dürer in the second edition of his influential *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* [The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects] (1568).⁴¹ Regarding the textual context of the *Vite*, it should be noted that the Nuremberg artist was not granted an own biography, which in principle only Italian artists received. Rather, Dürer's virtuoso prints, which were admired and often imitated by Italian artists, were the immediate reason for Vasari to include a several-page long biography of the German artist as an

von Dürer bis Gessner,” in *Conrad Gessner*, ed. Leu and Ruoss, 30–33; Alex Rübel, “Conrad Gessner als Zoologe,” in *Conrad Gessner*, ed. Leu and Ruoss, 146–47.

⁴⁰ Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics*, 37–72; Grebe, *Dürers Ruhm*, esp. chap. 2.

⁴¹ Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori, scritte e di nuovo ampliate [...] con l'aggiunta delle vite de' vivi e de' morti dall'anno 1550 infino al 1567* (Florence: Giunti, 1568), 295–99; Katja Burzer, Charles Davis, Sabine Feser, and Alessandro Nova, eds., *Le Vite del Vasari: genesi, topoi, ricezione* (Collana del Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max Planck Institut, 14) (Venice: Marsilio, 2010); Thomas Sherrer Ross Boase, *Giorgio Vasari: The Man and the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

insert in the *vita* of the engraver Marcantonio Raimondi. Although physically embedded in Italian art history, the length of Dürer's biography makes it almost equivalent to an independent *vita*.

According to his own statements, Vasari's biographical knowledge of Dürer was based, among others, on information in letters from the Flemish painter Lambert Lombard, who had summarized the German humanist literature for Vasari,⁴² and his contacts with Raphael's pupil Giulio Romano. Just how imprecisely Vasari treats Dürer's life is shown by his classification of Dürer as a Flemish artist from Antwerp, whereas he mentions him as a German in his *vita* of Raphael. Vasari's biography of Dürer is above all a description of his printed oeuvre. He is the first author to extensively comment on Dürer's work and tries to trace his artistic development. However, Vasari himself was only familiar with prints by Dürer, which he also owned personally. He pays unreserved tribute to these for their inventiveness, realism, and technical virtuosity. At the same time, he criticizes their lack of beauty and grace, that was inherent only to Italian artists – as a native Italian, Dürer would have been “the best painter of our country.”⁴³ The imperfection topos became the leitmotif of Vasari's image of Dürer and of many later authors. The almost exclusive knowledge of Dürer's art in the form of his widespread prints reinforced the negative reputation of stylistic harshness, which also found expression in Vasari's corruption of his name as “Alberto Duro.”

Due to its authoritative position, Italian art literature played an opinion-forming role on a European level and also influenced French art literature of the 17th century, for example.⁴⁴ Foreign criticism in turn provoked northern Alpine authors to defend Dürer's merits – such an apologetic attitude can be seen in the biographies composed by Karel van Mander, Joachim von Sandrart, Henrich Conrad Arend, and others.

⁴² See the extract of Lombard's letter of April 27, 1565, in Lüdecke and Heiland, *Dürer und die Nachwelt*, 74–75, 291–292.

⁴³ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 296. See Günter Schweikhart, “Novità e bellezza: Zur frühen Dürer-Rezeption in Italien,” in *Festschrift für Herbert Siebenhüner*, ed. Erich Hubbala and Günter Schweikhart (Würzburg: Schönigh, 1978), 111–136.

⁴⁴ See Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics*, 37–72.

DUTCH AND GERMAN BIOGRAPHIES OF DÜRER

Karel van Mander's (1548–1606) *Schilder-boeck* (1604) comprises the first vita of Dürer to be exclusively dedicated to him.⁴⁵ Van Mander's *Life of Dürer* deliberately sets itself apart from Vasari's picture of the artist, but also from previous German art literature, in that it almost completely dispenses with a direct Italian *paragone*. In contrast, he emphasizes Dürer's merits for the development of the arts north of the Alps and calls him a "guiding star." In terms of facts regarding Dürer's life, his report does not go much further than Vasari's account. However, the Dutch author adds some anecdotes that serve to emphasise Dürer's fame and esteem among princes and artists. In contrast to Vasari, van Mander only deals briefly with Dürer's prints, instead he pays detailed tribute to his paintings and drawings. Van Mander was to know Dürer's painted oeuvre at least partially thanks to his stays in Nuremberg, contacts with artists at the imperial court in Prague and access to Dutch private collections. He was also the first to point out the existence of paintings by Dürer in Italian and Dutch collections.

Despite many inaccuracies, van Mander's Dürer vita continued to be used by later biographers as the basis for their own writings.⁴⁶ This is the case, for example, of the German painter, art theorist and biographer Joachim von Sandrart (1606–1688) who published an extensive chapter on Albrecht Dürer as part of his multi-volume account of German art, *Teutsche Academie* (1675).⁴⁷

Although in some cases he corrected or updated the information given by van Mander, especially when he became aware of new locations of works

⁴⁵ Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the First Edition of the "Schilder-boeck" (1603–1604)*, ed. and transl. Hessel Miedema, 2 vols (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1994–1995), vol. 1, 88–91. On van Mander's sources, see Miedema's commentary in vol. 2, 294–316; Peter Strieder, "Albrecht Dürer in Carel van Manders Schilderboek," in *Festschrift Otto Schäfer zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Manfred von Arnim (Stuttgart: Dr. Ernst Hauswedell & Co., 1987), 11–19.

⁴⁶ Karin Hellwig, "'Vidas' y biografías de Alberto Durero desde Van Mander hasta Thausing," in *El siglo de Durero: Problemas historiográficos*, ed. María del Mar Borobia Guerrero (Madrid: Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, 2008), 57–82.

⁴⁷ Joachim von Sandrart, *L'Academia Todeasca della Architectura, Scultura & Pittura: Oder Teutsche Academie der Edlen Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste*, vols. 2–3 (Nuremberg: Jacob von Sandrart; Frankfurt am Main: Matthäus Merian, 1679), 222–229, accessed September 3, 2024, <http://ta.sandrart.net/de/text/438#idx438.1>.

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Das III. Capitel.			
Albrecht Dürer / Malter / Bildhauer / Kupferstecher und Baumeister von Nürnberg.			
Inhalt.			
<p>XIV. Albrecht Dürer von Nürnberg / Malter / Bildhauer / Kupferstecher und Baumeister: Lernet bey Michael Wolgemut: Seine Kupferstiche in der Jugend: Andere seine Werke / die Tugenden vor Gerichte / und andere köstliche Stück: Ein S. Bartholomäus, der von Venedig nach Prag Kommen: Seine Contrafät. Dieses Künstlers rühmliche Wissenschaften: Sein Ansehen bey denen Römischen Käisern: Unterschiedliche seine Zeichnungen: Seine Gemähde: Andere seine Werke zu Prag / zu Frankfurt / zu Wien / zu München / in dem Sandrartischen Kunst-Buch. Sein ganzes Opus von Holschnit und Kupferstichen / und andere fast unzählbare seine Werke: Unterschiedliche Contrafäte: Besucht die Künstler in Niederland. Seine Tugenden / Grabschrist und Ehren-Lob. Copey etlicher Sendschreiben / welche Albrecht Dürer abgehen lassen: Albrecht Dürers des älttern Herkommen / Leben und Sterben / von ihm selbst Anno 1524. beschrieben / darinnen die ganze Dürerische Familie begiffen. Extract etlicher Episteln Erasmi Rotterodami an Willibald Pirckheimer. Extract eines Schreibens Herrn Georg Hartmanns an Herrn Büchlern.</p>			
<p>X. IV. 21 Albrecht Dürer von Nürnberg Malter / Bildhauer Kupferstecher und Baumeister.</p>		<p>Es nun Italien / durch die Fürstlichkeit unterschiedliche vollkommener Malere / einen so hohen Ruhm erlangt / sienge auch Feurschland an / seine Zinsterme abzulegen / indem es durch ein herrliches großes Licht / welches alle Zeichen- und Maß-Kunst mit seinem Glanz und Fürtrefflichkeit beschienet / ohne daß es anfänglich einige Stralen von den Italiänischen oder Griechischen alten Meistern entlehnet hat / beleuchtet worden / diß geschah bey des fürtrefflichen Albert Dürers Geburt zu Nürnberg Anno 1471. Sein Vater waere ein herrlicher Goldschmid / bey deme Albert / laut seiner hernachfolgenden Hand-Brieffe / in seiner Jugend auch das Goldschmid-Handwerk gelernt / und mithin das Kupferstechen bevriffen / weilm man nicht befindet / daß er in seiner Jugend etwas gemahlet habe / bis / er die Maler-Kunst bey Michael Wolgemut zu Nürnberg / Anno 1486. zu begriffen auf drey Jahr gedinet worden / wie hiervon folgende beglaubte Zeugnisse mit mehrern besättiget / daß also Carl von Mander nicht recht informirt gewesen / indem er gemeldet: Es habe Albrecht bey Martin Schön (den die Niederländer den hüpschen Marten genandt) die Kunst erlernt / dann obßhen er dieses Fürnehmens gewesen / starbe doch Martin vor Alberts Ankunfft / so daß er nachmalen bey erweidtem Wolgemut in die Lehr geschan worden.</p> <p>Als er nun die Lehr-Zahr mit großem Fleiß durchgebracht / hat er sich vier Zahre in Niederland aufgehalten / und nachdem er von dar wieder zu Haus ankommen / unter andern drey oder vier nahefende Frauen in Kupfer gestochen / so etliche für die drey Gracien / sich aber für Heren / gehalten / weil ein Todren-Kopf / Todren-Gebeln / Hölle und Teufels-Gespensier darbey gebildet / die er dem Jraetl von Mecken nachgeschossen haben soll / über diesen Weibern ist eine Kugel mit dem dato 1497. zu welcher Zeit er 26. Jahr alt war / und folgende Buchstaben O. G. H. die von etlichen angeleget werden für: O Gott hüt / uns von Zaubereyn. Sein ältester Mann mit einem Todren-Haupt in den Waffen hat die Zahl von 1503. Sein fürtrefflicher Adam und Eva, 1504. Drey Pferde 1505. Seine Paffions-Kupfer / die sehr artig von Zeichnung und wunder-sauber gestochen / sind von unterschiedlicher Zeit / als 1507. 1508. und 1512. der Herzog von Sachsen von 1524. Melanchthon von 1526. welches Jahr auch das letztere / so man in seinen Werken findet / übrige aber sind unnötzig zu ersehen / weil sie bey den wahren Kunst-liebenden überall genugsam bekannt sind. Er besahe sich / in allen seinen Sachen / dem Leben bäst-möglichst zu folgen / mit großer Sorgfältigkeit das schöne von dem nachschöner und allerhöchsten zu untercheiden / wie auch alle berühmte Antiche gesehen waren / die eben darmit denen Italiänern bey Zeit die Augen gestrichet haben.</p> <p>Es haben sich viele fürtreffliche Künstler über die Vollkommenheit und Sauberkeit unsers Alberts / die er mit seinem Grabstüchel gebrauchet / verzuwendert / danhero auch seiner Manier / so viel sie gekunt / gefolget: Ja es haben viele / und zwar die berühmteste Italiänische Künstler selbst / nicht allein sich seiner ordnanzen / Historien / Kleidungen / Figuren und anderer Zierathen bedienet / sondern wol gar ganze Bilder / und fast völlige Historien / ihre schon oben gedachte worden / nach Albert Dürers Kupferstichen und Holschnitten in ihren Gemähen nachgefolgt / weil diese scharfsinnende Nation, eben wie auch andere / diesen Künstler höher / als alle andre Zeuchte / ætirmirt haben /</p>	<p>Andere feine Arbete.</p>
<p>Kernet des Michael Wolgemut.</p>			
<p>Seine Kupferstiche in der Jugend.</p>			
ben/			

Figure 4.2. Joachim von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie*, 1675, Beginning of the Dürer vita. Source: Photo by Monika Runge. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.

from his own experience, he also repeated his predecessor's errors and topoi regarding Dürer's biography.

Sandrart, who spent many years in Nuremberg, was the first of the Dürer biographers to refer not only to statements by third parties, but also to previously unpublished testimonies by the artist himself or by people close to him, which he printed in the extensive appendix to his description of Dürer's life.⁴⁸ Otherwise, the author does not seem to have made use of the rich Nuremberg local tradition and many works in private ownership in Nuremberg, which would certainly have been accessible with little research effort. Sandrart's biography of Dürer, which at first glance appears more independent, ultimately contains hardly any substantial corrections to van Mander's biography. His account is only seemingly more documentary and suggests a scholarly basis, but in fact, like all his predecessors, Sandrart contributes in many aspects to the propagation of the "legend of Dürer" and his image as founding father of German art and "prince of artists."⁴⁹

THE "ENLIGHTENED" DÜRER – HENRICH CONRAD AREND'S MEMORIAL OF HONOURS

Whereas Sandrart's account of Dürer's life and works still falls within the tradition of *vita* literature, Henrich Conrad Arend's (1692–1736) *Gedechtniß der Ehren [...] Albrecht Dürers* [Memorial of Honours of [...] Albrecht Dürer] is the first Dürer biography in the modern sense.⁵⁰

Published in Goslar in 1728, the 142-page octavo volume is also the first ever printed monograph on a German artist. It contains a dedication to Duke Ludwig Rudolph of Brunswick and Lüneburg, from whom the author Hinrich

⁴⁸ Sandrart, *L'Academia Todesca*, 226–229.

⁴⁹ Title of the epitaph Sandrart had dedicated to Dürer in 1681 and placed on his grave in Nuremberg, see Joachim von Sandrart, *Academia Nobilissimae Artis Pictoriae [...]* (Nuremberg: Froberger/Frankfurt: Michael & Johann Friedrich Endter Erben, 1683), 214.

⁵⁰ Henrich Conrad Arend, *Das gedechtniß der ehren eines derer vollkommnesten künstler seiner und aller nachfolgenden zeiten, Albrecht Dürers, um eben die zeit, als er vor 200. Jahren die welt verlassen, aus besonderer verehrung vor deßen verdinste ans licht gestellet* (Goslar: Joh. Christ. König, 1728); Matthias Mende, "Nachwort," in Henrich Conrad Arend, *Das Gedächtnis der Ehren Albrecht Dürers* (Goslar, 1728; repr., Unterschneidheim: Uhl, 1978), unpaginated; Anja Grebe, "Sammler-Sichten und Wissenstraditionen: Zur Dürer-Rezeption in der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Welfen sammeln Dürer: Exhibition catalogue*, ed. Klaus Niehr and Judith Tralles (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019), 67–89, cat. no. 45.

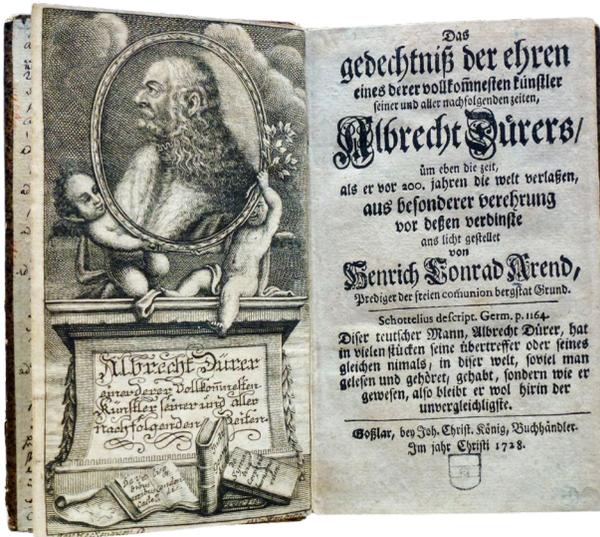


Figure 4.3. Henrich Conrad Arend, *Gedechtniß der Ehren [...] Albrecht Dürers*, 1728. Title page and frontispiece. Source: Photo by Monika Runge. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg

Conrad Arend hoped to obtain a better position. Arend was obviously aware of the novelty of his undertaking. At the beginning of the 18th century, monographic biographies were in principle reserved for persons of rank. Arend justified his endeavour by emphasising Dürer's nobility of virtue and exemplary role as the "most perfect" artist and human being, based on the humanist praise of Dürer also repeated by Sandrart.⁵¹ The textual genre also represents a novelty as to the literature on art and artists. Originally, the "Ehrgedächtnis" as a literary genre of the Baroque period was not a vita or biography in the true sense of the word, but a Christian funeral or memorial sermon written in close proximity to the date of death of the honored person, almost exclusively a prince, noble and person of rank.⁵² The speeches, composed in a superlative style, usually included information on the life, work, social context, illness and death of the honoured person as well as a laudatory description of his or

⁵¹ Arend, *Das gedechtniß der ehren*, § 1.

⁵² Rudolf Lenz, ed., *Studien zur deutschsprachigen Leichenpredigt der frühen Neuzeit* (Marburg: Schwarz-Verlag, 1981).

her virtues and exemplary character. Arend's *Ehrgedächtnis*, however, was no longer a funeral sermon, but a literary monument published on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the artist's death which at the same time claimed validity as an autonomous biography of the artist. The frontispiece designed by the Wolfenbüttel court engraver Jakob Wilhelm Heckenauer, which represents a monumental pedestal with a dedication to Dürer crowned by a self-portrait of the artist held by two putti, pays tribute to this new, expanded meaning of Arend's *Memorial of honours*.

In terms of content, Arend's anecdote-rich account continues the tradition of early modern *vita* literature in many respects. In terms of form, however, he was already on the path to modern artist biography through the balance between life and work as well as his scholarly approach, mirrored, among others, through references in the form of footnotes. Arend did not come up with new sources, but with an extensive annotation apparatus for the first time. The disclosure of sources and explicit reference to conflicting opinions, contradictions, and uncertainties was a novelty that by no means became the standard in subsequent Dürer biographies, including many modern accounts of his life. Arend's *Memorial of Honours* thus occupies a key position in German art literature also beyond the narrower subject of Dürer.

CONCLUSION: DÜRER KNOWLEDGE AND DÜRER LEGEND AS REFLECTED IN LITERATURE

Around fifty years after Arend, the critic Johann Heinrich Merck (1741–1791) published an article entitled *Einige Rettungen für das Andenken Albrecht Dürers gegen die Sage der Kunst-Literatur* [Some rescues for the memory of Albrecht Dürer against the myth of art literature] in the literary journal *Teutscher Merkur* [German Mercury] in 1780.⁵³ The essay is more than a simple apology by the artist against the falsehoods and slander that various, mainly French, authors had levelled against him. Rather, Merck undertakes an extremely lucid analysis of the effect of biographical writing

⁵³ Johann Heinrich Merck, "Einige Rettungen für das Andenken Albrecht Dürers gegen die Sage der Kunst-Literatur," in *Werke*, ed. Arthur Henkel (Frankfurt, Main: Insel-Verlag, 1968), 423–430; Walter Schübler, *Johann Heinrich Merck, 1741–1791: Biographie* (Weimar: Böhlau, 2001).

on the image of Dürer, which is often modelled more on the authors' imaginings and aspirations than fact-based:

[the image of the artist is modeled] according to the archetype which the critics had in mind and to which the merits of the man they wish to characterise should now resemble. In order to make the comparison fitting, they cut off, add, distort and conceal whatever they deem appropriate; and thus the "loci communes" arise. [...] The judgement made by previous authors about a man's merits is so convenient for those who come after him that it is repeated for centuries; or the later authors do not consider it worth the effort to refute it.⁵⁴

Merck's comments refer above all to the classicist critics of Dürer in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who, taking up Vasari's judgment, accused Dürer of having a poor style and taste. Merck attempts to refute them by pointing to a certain, positively connoted contemporary national style (the general character of the age), which also characterised Dürer's work. In addition, he argues that the perception of Dürer's oeuvre had been obscured by numerous copies, which had significantly influenced his stylistic image, particularly with regard to the negative aspects of which he was accused. Together with the literary bias, a lack of connoisseurship had created a false image of Dürer. Merck also clearly identifies the problem of the (auto-)biographical tradition of Dürer: "It is astonishing that we know so little that is actually true about the history of this great man [...]."⁵⁵

At first glance, Merck's analysis, which is now more than 240 years old, seems to correspond exactly with the argument of this paper regarding the literary tradition of Dürer in the early modern period. In his essay, however, Merck only deals with the critical voices and in this way paints himself a false picture of the literary reception of Dürer. However, his comments on the principles of tradition also apply to the positive criticism of Dürer. The latter clearly outweighed the negative voices, as the extensive literature on Dürer from the 16th century up to the modern times shows.

⁵⁴ Merck, "Einige Rettungen," 423 (translation into modern English, AG).

⁵⁵ Merck, "Einige Rettungen," 428.

Two factors were decisive for the continuing literary tradition of Dürer: firstly, the large number and Europe-wide distribution of his prints and, secondly, his theoretical writings and their translations, thanks to which Dürer became an established figure in scientific literature and art literature across all national borders. Among other things, his theoretical publications contributed to Dürer being listed in the “scholars” section of biographical encyclopaedias of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in which visual artists were generally not included.⁵⁶

The “history of knowledge” of Dürer must always be seen as part of the general history of literature and science and especially of (art) historiography. Only in this way can the reception of Dürer in literature be analysed not only in terms of its significance as a source for the respective individual, group- or period-specific perception of Dürer and for its impact on the development of today’s image of the artist, but also regarding its role in art history as a specialized field in general.

From the very beginning, the literary tradition of Dürer was largely determined by *topoi*. In fact, even the texts written by his closest acquaintances paint a picture of the artist that is modelled more on (antique) artist legends than on his actual life circumstances and personality. The texts by Dürer’s contemporaries were considered particularly authentic and their statements on Dürer’s life, work and character were often uncritically adopted by later authors, including modern Dürer biographers. Because early biographers like Christoph Scheurl or Joachim Camerarius also claimed that his works reflected his character, one-sided interpretations of his works were subsequently used by other authors as the basis for their biographies – and vice versa. The double biographical circular reasoning became a basic model of the “invention” of Dürer in literature, which in turn had an impact on the early modern modelling of the “legend of Dürer.”

Literary heroisation played a decisive role in turning Albrecht Dürer from an internationally renowned and esteemed artist into a German national hero during his lifetime and posthumously into a saint of art. With regard to

⁵⁶ For example, see Melchior Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum, qui seculo superiori, et quod excurrit, philosophicis ac humanioribus literis clari floruerunt* (Frankfurt am Main: Nikolaus Hoffmann, 1615), 66–71; Paulus Freher, *Theatrum virorum eruditione clarorum in quo vitae & scripta theologorum, jureconsultorum, medicorum & philosophorum, tam in Germania superiore & inferiore [...]* (Nuremberg: Johannes Hofmann, 1688), 1439–1440.

Dürer's repeatedly emphasised pioneering position, it should be noted that he not only became a founder of modern art in Germany through his artistic work and his writings, but also indirectly contributed to the foundation of art literature as the subject of biographical and art-historiographical literature. His example was used to develop new genres of art historical writing and to elevate artists in Germany to persons worthy of biography in the first place. By turning Dürer into a projection screen for personal and collective goals – as mirrored in nationalist discourses – which sometimes only have a very indirect connection with art, his biography and character are modelled according to these interests.

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BIOGRAPHY AND THE HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE: THE FORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE LIFE AND WORK OF PETER CHRISTEN ASBJØRNSEN (1812–1885)

Ane Ohrvik

The home of legends and fairy tales is the realm of fantasy. It is within this realm that the natural man exists, a figure who in his way of thinking is unable to find solutions to the riddles of life and explanations for the wonders of nature; here he finds an explanation for the hidden and the incomprehensible [...] which dates from a time when these people were in their childhood. The rich fantasy and naivety of this age can thus be seen as a characteristic of all true folktales and fairy tales. Everything in them is insightful and poetic; everywhere, storytelling replaces contemplation. [...] In its own and highly engaging way, the legend often unites a sense of deep moral truth or religious conviction with imaginative poetry.¹

¹ “Fantasiens Rige er Sagnets og Eventyrets Hjem. Derhen tyder naturmennesket, der ei paa Tænknings Vei formaaer at søge Opløsningen paa Livets Gaader og Forklaring over Naturens Undere; der finder han en Forklaring for det Skjulte og Ubegriplige [og] hidhører fra en Tid, da Folket var i sin Barndomsalder. Denne Alders Fantasirigdom og Naivitet er derfor karakteristisk for alle ægte Folkesagn og Eventyr. Alt i dem er anskueligt og poetisk; overalt træder Fortelling i stedet for Betragtning. [...] På en egen og høist indtagende Maade forener Sagnet ofte Erkjendelsen af en dyb moralsk Sandhed eller af en religiøs Overbeviisning, med en fantasifuld Digtning.” See [Peter Christen Asbjørnsen], *Nor: En Billedbog for den norske Ungdom* [...] (Christiania: Guldberg og Dzwonkowski, 1838), 61–62. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this article are those of the present author.

These words are attributed to Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, a prominent Norwegian folklorist, naturalist, and writer, who significantly influenced the cultural and scientific landscape of 19th-century Norway. In the introduction to his inaugural publication in a 1837 yearbook of legends and fairy tales, Asbjørnsen delves into the essence of folk poetry. This reflection is not unique to him; during the first half of the 19th century, writers, artists, and intellectuals across Europe discovered, collected, and published oral traditions such as fairy tales, legends, ballads, and songs. Folk poetry emerged as a wellspring of inspiration for literature and the arts, contributing to national romanticist movements that championed vernacular languages and linguistic nationalism. It became a crucial political tool, shaping shared national identity and fostering collective consciousness.² This was particularly pertinent in Norway, which was under Danish rule until 1814 and subsequently joined Sweden in a personal union until gaining independence in 1905. Despite Asbjørnsen's apparent modesty regarding the political role of fairy tales and legends in the above quote, he recognized their reflection of core values and moral truths, deeming them useful, important, and distinct. For Asbjørnsen, fairy tales represented the people's own poetry, emphasizing the importance of aligning them with the people's language. In contrast, legends were, according to Asbjørnsen, reflections of people's ideas and beliefs, with the content of the narratives holding more importance than the form.³

Peter Christen Asbjørnsen emerged as the most influential Norwegian folklore collector and publisher in the 19th century. Commencing his folklore collection in youth, he continued throughout his life with collecting and publishing folk traditions. His first publication of a folklore collection came with the four volumes of Norwegian folk tales between 1841 and 1844 together with Jørgen Moe (1813–1882). From this time on Asbjørnsen would publish numerous collections and editions, often illustrated by Norwegian artists. Nearly 150 years after his passing he is still the major and iconic reference to

² For more on this, see Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin, eds., *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012); Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006); Joep Leerssen, *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

³ Arne Bugge Amundsen and Anne Eriksen, *Folkloristiske Klassikere 1800–1930*. Norsk Folkeminnelags Skrifter (Trykt Utg.), 47 (Oslo: Norsk folkeminnelag / Aschehoug, 1999), 61.

Norwegian fairy tales and legends in Norway, still having the narratives he collected and published retold to new generations.

This article is based on findings from a vast collection of letters received by Asbjørnsen, testifying to his role as an impressive cultural networker in the 19th century.⁴ This network, comprising artists, authors, academics, politicians, and publishers, significantly influenced Asbjørnsen's engagement with folklore collecting and his work in the natural sciences. The life and work of Asbjørnsen in the 19th century provide important insights into the production, dissemination, interpretation, and development of knowledge during a pivotal period for the emergence of new sciences, academic professionalization, and the formation of national states. Moreover, the study of Asbjørnsen sheds light into the ways in which knowledge actors worked and what they were concerned with. Therefore, the evolution and nature of Asbjørnsen's network may be viewed as specific aspects of the history of knowledge.

As an academic field, the history of knowledge is often likened to a mere extension of the history of science, despite its higher aspirations. According to Dupré and Somsen, it “urges us to ask questions about boundaries, hierarchies, and mutual constitution of different types of knowledge as well as the role and assessment of failure and ignorance in making knowledge.”⁵ Peter Burke stands out as a pioneer in conceptualizing approaches to new “histories” of “knowledges.”⁶ Burke advocates for acknowledging the geographical dimension, emphasizing space and localization, as well as adopting a broad consideration of sociologies of knowledge, which includes the study of the social conditions that produce, legitimise, and circulate knowledge.⁷ This study incorporates both aspects, highlighting the nature of Asbjørnsen's network as a 19th-century *knowledge community*.

⁴ Parts of this study are based on the larger study of Asbjørnsen as an international networker conducted as a part of the European research project The Grimm Ripples, see Ane Ohrvik, “Mapping the Knowledge Network of the Norwegian Folklore Collector Peter Christen Asbjørnsen in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms' Deutsche Sagen in Northern Europe*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 147–184.

⁵ Sven Dupré and Geert Somsen, “The History of Knowledge and the Future of Knowledge Societies,” *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 42, no. 2–3 (2019), 186.

⁶ Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 7. See also Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000); Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

⁷ Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge II*, 187–246.

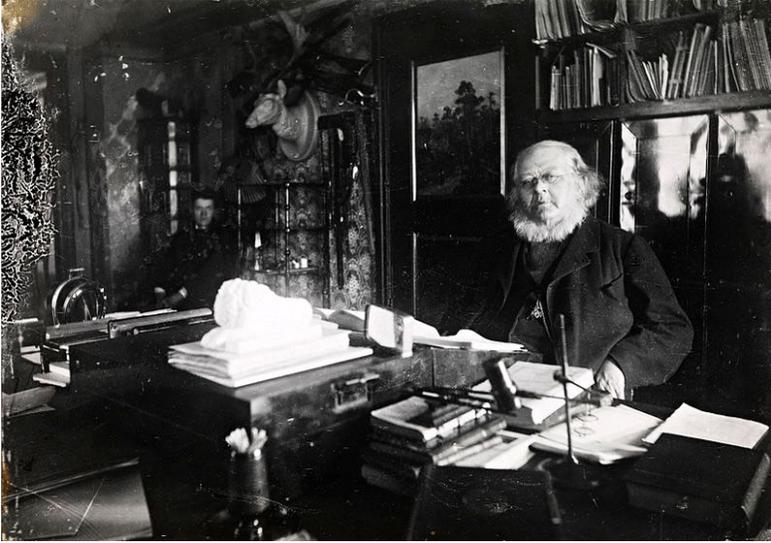


Figure 5.1. Peter Christen Asbjørnsen (1812–1885) in his study in his later years. *Source:* Courtesy of the Norwegian Folklore Archive.

By focusing on Asbjørnsen as a specific *knowledge actor*, this study also foregrounds knowledge production, circulation and interpretation as socially embedded processes.⁸ This approach enables an emphasis on biographies as an important keyhole methodology, shifting attention away from the structural focus on collectives that has characterised historical and sociological studies of knowledge since the 1960s and towards individual actors.⁹ A knowledge actor is therefore understood here as an analytical category consisting of those who “within a given historical context, contributed to the production and/or circulation of knowledge.”¹⁰

The study relies on a substantial collection of letters received by Asbjørnsen during his lifetime to reconstruct his life, passions, and interests.

⁸ Cf. Johan Östling and David Larsson Heidenblad, *The History of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 21.

⁹ Östling and Heidenblad, *The History of Knowledge*, 21.

¹⁰ Johan Östling, David Larsson Heidenblad, and Anna Nilsson Hammar, “Revisiting Agency in the History of Knowledge,” in *Knowledge Actors: Revisiting Agency in the History of Knowledge*, ed. Johan Östling, David Larsson Heidenblad, and Anna Nilsson Hammar (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2023), 12.

His national and international network of communications, evolving from the 1830s until his death in 1885, involved frequent correspondence with individuals who later assumed culturally significant positions domestically and abroad. Notably, Asbjørnsen corresponded with fellow folklore collectors in Northern Europe, including the Grimm brothers, whose work profoundly influenced Asbjørnsen and his collaborator, Jørgen Moe, in Norway. These communications provide insights into Asbjørnsen's role as a cultural conduit during the national romantic period in 19th-century Norway, reflecting the broader history of Norway's emergence as an independent nation within a European context.

PETER CHRISTEN ASBJØRNSEN AND HIS INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

Peter Christen Asbjørnsen was the son of a glazier in Christiania (former name of Oslo) and the daughter of a church minister. Of five siblings, Asbjørnsen was the only one to survive childhood.¹¹ Not much is known about his childhood apart from how he himself reflects on it in retrospect much later in life. In these reflections, he makes a profound connection to and observation of nature and the natural world,¹² likely laying the groundwork for his subsequent studies in natural sciences at the University of Oslo and later in forestry in Tharand, Germany.

Asbjørnsen's early engagement in the collection and publication of Norwegian folk traditions, especially legends and fairy tales, became a lifelong pursuit. He collaborated with Jørgen Moe on four collections of fairy tales from 1841–1844¹³ and published three volumes of legends on

¹¹ Regarding Asbjørnsen's childhood, see, for example, Erik Henning Edvardsen, ed., *En dør til Asbjørnsens verden* (Oslo: Asbjørnsenselskapet / Norsk folkeminnelag / Aschehoug, 2012); Marte Hvam Hult, *Framing a National Narrative: The Legend Collections of Peter Christen Asbjørnsen* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 11–56; Knut Liestøl, *P. Chr. Asbjørnsen: Mannen og livsverket* (Oslo: Tanum-Nordli, 1984), 13–44; Hans Hansen, *P. Chr. Asbjørnsen: Biografi og Karakteristikk* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug og Co, 1932), 9–46; Alfred Larsen, *Peter Christen Asbjørnsen: En literær-biografisk skitse* (Christiania: Chr. Johnsen bogtrykkeri, 1872), 6–7.

¹² Olav Bø, *50 Kroner: Peter Christen Asbjørnsen* (Oslo: Norges bank, Seddeltrykkeriet, 1997), 16. See also Ohrvik, "Mapping the Knowledge Network."

¹³ See Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe, *Norske Folkeeventyr*, 4 vols. (Christiania: Johan Dahl, 1841–1844). In the first decades of Asbjørnsen's work with folklore collecting

his own in 1845, 1847, and 1879.¹⁴ Asbjørnsen followed in the footsteps of early Northern European folklorists like the Danish Just Mathias Thiele (1795–1874), the Norwegian Andreas Faye (1802–1869), and the English Thomas Crofton Croker (1798–1854), all inspired by the German brothers Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859) Grimm’s early works.¹⁵ He became engaged in numerous different activities and different disciplinary studies over the course of his lifetime, especially after Jørgen Moe left their professional companionship, devoting himself increasingly to an early interest in natural science and zoology. Indeed, he wrote articles on subjects as diverse as economics, nutrition, forestry, the cultivation of marshes and handicrafts, marine zoology, even publishing a cookbook at one point.¹⁶ Asbjørnsen would also become the first Norwegian to disseminate the

and publications, he was in companionship with Jørgen Moe. From the early 1850s, Moe left his work with folklore to pursue theological education before going on to serve as a church minister and later as bishop in Kristiansand in the south of Norway for the rest of his life. For more on the life and work of Jørgen Moe, see Ørnulf Hodne, *Jørgen Moe og folkeeventyrene: En studie i nasjonalromantisk folkloristikk* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1979); Ørnulf Hodne, *Jørgen Moe og folkevisene* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 2019); Arne Bugge Amundsen, “Samlere, forskere og folkeminne på 1800-tallet,” in *Etnologi og folkloristikk: En fagkritisk biografi om norsk kulturhistorie*,” ed. Anne Eriksen and Bjarne Rogan (Oslo: Institutt for sammenlignende kulturforskning, Novus forlag, 2013), 39–43.

¹⁴ See Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Norske Huldre-Eventyr og Folkesagn, First collection* (Christiania: Johan Dahl, 1845); Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Norske Huldre-Eventyr og Folkesagn, Second Collection* (Christiania: Johan Dahl, 1848); Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Norske Folke- og Huldre-Eventyr* (København: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag F. Hegel og Søn, 1879). For a detailed study of Asbjørnsen’s various publications and impact on the national and international scene, see Line Esborg, “Treue und Wahrheit: Asbjørnsen and Moe and the Scientification of Folklore in Norway,” in *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms’ Deutsche Sagen in Northern Europe*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 185–221.

¹⁵ For more on the brothers Grimm’s influence in the early stage of folklore collecting and publications, see Terry Gunnell, ed., *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms’ Deutsche Sagen in Northern Europe* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022). It will be discussed further below.

¹⁶ Asbjørnsen published his cookbook under a pseudonym (Clemens Bonifacius), see Clemens Bonifacius (Peter Christen Asbjørnsen), *Fornuftigt Madstel: En Tidsmæssig Kogebog og Husholdningsbog* (Christiania: P. F. Steensballe, 1864). His many books on natural science aimed at children, youth and adults were published under his legal name; see, for example, Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Naturhistorie for Ungdommen*, 6 vols. (Christiania: Guldberg og Dzwonkowski, 1838–1849); Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Lærketræet samt den nyere tyske Bartrædyrkning* (Christiania: Folkevennen, 1855); Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Om Skovene og et ordnet Skovbrug i Norge* (Christiania: Steensballe, 1855); Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Om Skovtørk og Markaat* (Christiania: P. F. Steensballe, 1861); Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Om Kaffeen: Dens Nytte, Værd, rette Behandling og Forfalskning samt de saakaldte Surogater eller Nømidler for samme, saasom Cichorie, Hvedekaffe, Ertepuf, Løvetand m.fl.* (Christiania: P. F. Steensballe, 1861); Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Norsk Landmandsbog for 1868* (Christiania: Jacob Dybwad, 1868).

evolutionist ideas proposed by Charles Darwin (1809–1882) in his *On the Origin of Species* from 1859 in a 13-page long journal article entitled *Darwins nye skabningslære* [Darwin's Doctrine on the Creation] a little over a year after Darwin's publication first appeared.¹⁷

If one considers the fourteen honorary memberships to which Asbjørnsen was elected by various Nordic and European scientific communities as well as several national memberships, it is evident that his standing as a natural and humanistic scientist – a knowledge actor – both inside and outside of the Norwegian borders was considerable.¹⁸ Diplomas and grant letters preserved in the Norwegian Folklore Archive testify to this.¹⁹ In 1852, Asbjørnsen became an honorary member of the Isis Society for the Promotion of Natural History in Dresden (Isis Gesellschaft für Naturkunde in Dresden). In 1858, when he graduated from the Royal Saxon Academy of Forestry (Königlich Sächsischen Akademie für Forstwirtschaft) in Tharand, he became an honorary member of The Society for German Cultural History (Der Verein für Deutsche Kultur-Geschichte) in Weimar. He later became a member of The Society for Special, and in Particular Nationalistic Natural History (Die gesellschaft für spezielle, besonders vaterländische naturgeschichte) and the Saxon Society for the Preservation and Research of National Antiquities (Thüringisch-Sächsische Gesellschaft für Erhaltung und Erforschung des vaterländischen Alterthums) in Leipzig. Later, he was granted membership of The Finnish Literary Society (Det finske litteraturselskapet) in Helsinki (1860); The Imperial-Royal Zoological and Botanical Society (Die Kaiserlich-Königliche-Zoologisch-Botanische Gesellschaft) in Vienna (1863); The Natural Science Society (Der naturwissenschaftliche Verein) in Hamburg (1863); the National Academic Society in Cherbourg (Société imperiale académique de Cherbourg) (1872); The Royal Society of Arts and Sciences (Kungliga vetenskaps och Witterhets samhället) in

¹⁷ Clemens Bonifaci (Peter Christen Asbjørnsen), "Darwins nye skabningslære," *Budstikken* 2–3 (1861): 65–77. See also Liestøl, *P. Chr. Asbjørnsen*, 193–196.

¹⁸ For more on Asbjørnsen's honourable membership, see Line Esborg and Ane Ohrvik, "Scientific Societies and the Formation of Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and His Honourable Memberships," in *Good Thoughts on Folklore and Mythology: Festschrift in Honour of Terry Gunnell*, ed. Ingunn Ásdísardóttir, Felix Lummer, Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, Katrín Lísa van der Linde Mikaelisdóttir, and Júlíana Þóra Magnúsdóttir (Budapest: Trivent Publishing).

¹⁹ The archive holds all the original diplomas and grant letters mentioned below.

Göteborg (1873); and the British Scandinavian Society (1876). In addition to this, he received a number of academic prizes and awards. Asbjørnsen was extremely productive, had a genuinely inquisitive outset and had a drive for exploring and learning – something his constant growing network testifies to. In this context, scientific societies functioned as key knowledge institutions that provided him with platforms for collaboration and for the exchange of discoveries, books, and naturalia. These societies played a pivotal role in legitimising and promoting scientific research, particularly in regions such as Norway where formal academic structures were less established.²⁰

The Norwegian Folklore Archive holds approximately 1,621 letters, the majority of them written to Asbjørnsen rather than by him, leaving us with one-sided communications in most cases.²¹ Judging from the letters preserved in the archive, Asbjørnsen's most intense networking periods were between 1854 and 1860 and from 1865 until he passed away in 1885.²² These periods coincide with his most productive years as a writer, scholar, and natural scientist. However, based on carefully annotated notebooks that Asbjørnsen left behind during some of his networking years, it is possible to get a more comprehensive picture of the number of letters received and sent at least for some of these years.²³ The notebooks must have served as a useful tool to keep track of ongoing obligations towards those he communicated with. Covering six years of his networking between 1877 and 1883, the notebooks also make it possible to estimate the discrepancy between the number of letters present in the archive and the actual amount he might have received. Based on calculations, it appears that the letters currently

²⁰ Norway's first university was established in Kristiania in 1811 by King Frederick VI of Denmark–Norway. The country's next university, the University of Bergen, was not founded until 1956.

²¹ For more insight into Asbjørnsen's communications and his responses, see Anders Krogvig, ed., *Til Gerhard Gran, 9. december 1916, fra venner og elever* (Kristiania: Aschehoug); Ernst Schmidt, ed., *Briefwechsel der Gebrüder Grimm mit Nordischen Gelehrten* (Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1885). Together, these works compensate slightly for the lack of letters by Asbjørnsen elsewhere. See also *Sir Edmund Gosse's Correspondence with Scandinavian Writers*, ed. Elias Bredsdorff (London, Melbourne, Toronto: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1960), 55–76, which contains both sides of the communication between Edmund Gosse and Asbjørnsen.

²² I would like to express my gratitude to Anna Karlsson who worked as a research assistant for the Norwegian part of The Grimm Ripples project in 2017, assisting with the sorting of Asbjørnsen's letter collection and the digitalisation of the photographs connected to it.

²³ *Asbjørnsen brev: Notatbok 1879*, Manuscript, NFS, Oslo.

archived represent approximately 27% of the total letters Asbjørnsen might have received during his networking period. This suggests that the overall number of letters received by Asbjørnsen could surpass 6,000 letters. Clearly, Asbjørnsen invested significant time and energy into networking, underscoring its perceived importance for the advancement of his scholarly pursuits.

Asbjørnsen's extensive network comprises nearly 500 individuals and 10 institutions, reflecting a diverse array of professional backgrounds. This diversity aligns with Asbjørnsen's polymathic approach to knowledge, including philologists, historians, folklore collectors, folklorists, natural scientists, artists, illustrators, authors, publishers, diplomats, teachers, politicians, early feminists, church ministers, farmers, and military personnel. Notably, academics form the largest segment of this network, constituting close to 40% of the received communications. Approximately 30% of the letters originate from Norwegian contacts, while an impressive 70% involve individuals from abroad. Germany stands out as the most significant foreign network, contributing 24% to the total collection. Letters from unidentified persons account for 17%, and those from Sweden, Denmark, and England constitute the next largest categories, each ranging from 6–4%. The collection encompasses letters from 21 countries, including contacts in Russia, Malta, and the USA.

While acknowledging that Asbjørnsen's network extended beyond the representation in the Norwegian Folklore Archive's letter collection, the value of this collection lies in providing a comprehensive cross-section of the people, professions, and nationalities he communicated with. This cross-section mirrors Asbjørnsen's curiosity for knowledge, artistic interests, fascination with people and cultures, and, above all, a profound commitment and drive to showcase what he deemed culturally distinctive to Norway.

It is worth noting in this context that Asbjørnsen did not confine himself to exclusively male networks. Despite the limited scholarly attention paid to female actors in Asbjørnsen's life and work, women appear to have occupied a significant position within his intellectual and social milieu. Asbjørnsen's correspondence attests to sustained contact with several dozen women who sought his advice and support and offered the same in return. A preliminary investigation of these women's biographies points to a network of female

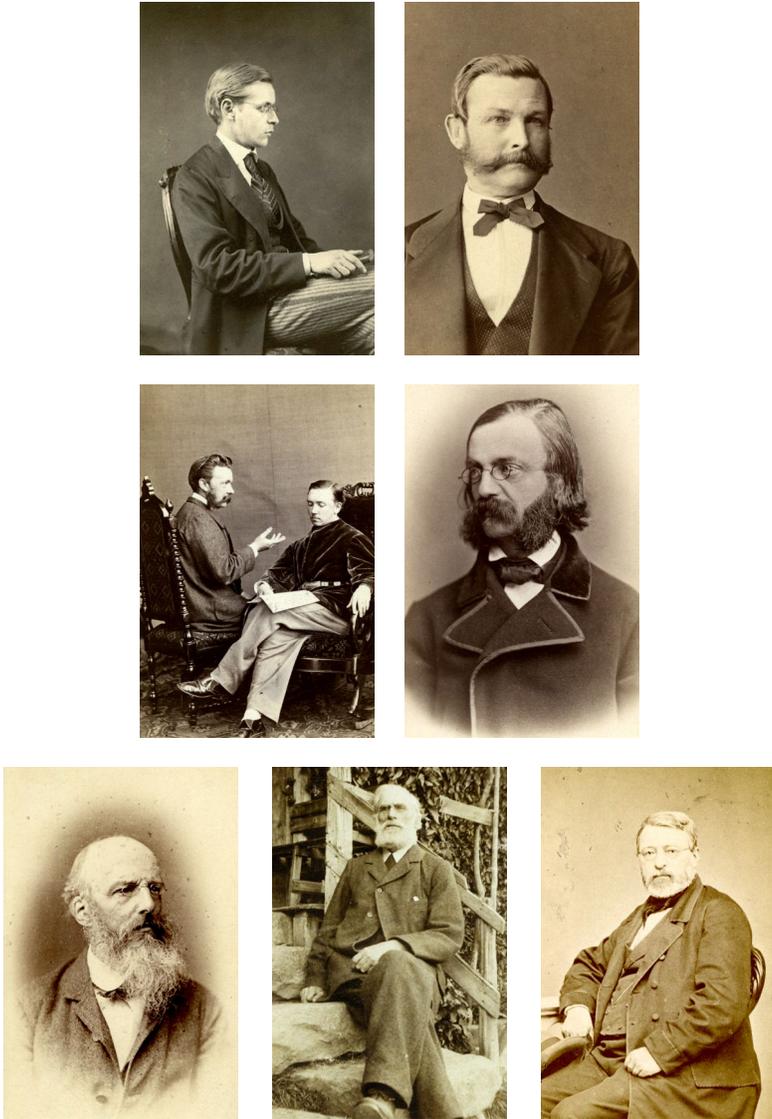


Figure 5.2. In the collection of letters after Asbjørnsen, numerous portraits sent by fellow international folklorists within his network are found. The top rows, left to right, features Edmund Gosse (1849–1928), Felix Liebrecht (1812–1890), Eirikur Magnússon (1833–1913) and George E. J. Powell (1850–1904), and Reinhold Köhler (1830–1902). The bottom row, left to right, features Konrad Maurer (1823–1902), Johannes Skar (1837–1914), and Carl Säve (1812–1876). *Source:* Courtesy of the Norwegian Folklore Archive.



Figure 5.3. Some of the female knowledge actors with whom Asbjørnsen corresponded. Starting from the top left, they are Aasta Hansteen (1824–1908), Camilla Collett (1813–1895), Fredrika Bremer (1801–1865), and Antonine Løchen (1850–1933). The bottom row, from left to right, features Mélanie Borring (1835–?), Thora Storm (1845–1935), Hedevig Rosing (1827–1913) and Eva Wigström (1832–1901). *Source:* Courtesy of the Norwegian Folklore Archive.

pioneers in nineteenth century Norway and Europe.²⁴ These women pursued higher education and advocated women’s right to vote and education, they established and led educational institutions for children and young people, and they worked as authors and managed both large and small enterprises.

The topics covered in the letters as a whole can be broadly classified into two main categories. The first category revolves around the practical aspects of networking, including organizing physical meetings across Europe, providing endorsements for colleagues and friends, exchanging tokens related to shared interests or ambitions (often leading to the exchange of personal portraits), diverse transactions related to publications, drafting agreements

²⁴ Ane Ohrvik, “Conceptualising the Nordic through Nineteenth-Century Women: Examining Peter Christen Asbjørnsen’s (1812–1885) Network of Female Cultural Actors,” unpublished, Åbo, 2025.

for publications, creating sketches for planned publication illustrations, and formal invitations concerning membership in scientific societies. The second category delves more directly into the general exchange of knowledge, ranging from the exchange of books and magazines to the discussion and reception of knowledge and ideas. Within this category, the Brothers Grimm held a prominent position and wielded considerable influence in Asbjørnsen's network.

THE BROTHERS GRIMM, ASBJØRNSEN, AND 19TH CENTURY ROMANTIC NATIONALISM

Terry Gunnell highlights the transformative impact of the publication of *Deutsche Sagen* [German Legends] by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm presented in two volumes in 1816 and 1818. According to Gunnell, it triggered a “Romantic Nationalistic cultural tsunami,” sparking a cascade of publications on legends, fairy tales, and other folk poetry across Europe, particularly in the Northern regions.²⁵ In the introduction to their book, the Grimm brothers recommended it to:

*[...] devotees of German poesie, history and language and hope that it will be welcome to all as purely German fare. For it is our firm belief that nothing is as edifying or as likely to bring more joy than the products of the Fatherland. Indeed, an apparently insignificant, self-occasioning discovery and endeavour in the study of our own indigenous culture can in the end bring more fruit than the most brilliant discovery and cultivation of foreign fields.*²⁶

²⁵ Terry Gunnell, “Introduction,” in *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms' Deutsche Sagen in Northern Europe*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 4. The publication *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms' Deutsche Sagen in Northern Europe* follow suit in this claim assessing the influence and effect Grimm's different writings had on the 19th century cultural movements in Europe, bringing together nineteen European scholars.

²⁶ “den Liebhabern deutscher Poesie, Geschichte und Sprache und Hoffen, es werde ihnen allen, schon als lautere deutsche kost, willkommen sehn, im festen Glauben, dass nichts mehr auferbaue und grössere Freude bei sich habe als das Vaterländische. Ja, eine bedeutungslos sich anlassende Entdeckung und Bemühung in unserer einheimischen Wissenschaft kann leicht am Ende mehr Frucht bringen als die blendendste Bekanntwerdung und Andbauung des Fremden.” See Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1816–1818), vol. 1, xxiv–xxv. The translation is taken from Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *The*

To the Grimms, the legends were a distinct German product reflecting its history and language in specific ways. Folk poetry, to them, unveiled unique cultural traits tied to specific localities and nationalities, embodying the spirit of the people to whom the poetry belonged. To the Grimms,

[T]he fairy tale is more poetic, the legend is more historical; the former exists securely almost in and of itself in its innate blossoming and consummation. The legend, by contrast, is characterized by a lesser variety of colors, yet it represents something special in that it adheres always to that which we are conscious of and know well, such as a locale or a name that has been secured through history. Because of this local confinement, it follows that the legend cannot, like the fairy tale, find its home anywhere. Instead the legend demands certain conditions without which it either cannot exist at all, or can only exist in less perfect form.²⁷

This perspective led the Grimms to position the collection and publication of folklore, including legends, fairy tales and ballads, within a national framework as part of a larger national project.²⁸ In a Nordic context, Jacob Grimm’s call for the collection of folkloric material in his review of *Prøver af Danske Folkesagn* [A Sampler of Danish Folk Legends] by J. M. Thiele (1795–1874), published in 1818, marked the initial expression of this concept. Grimm asserted that such material would hold significant value for the study of German and Scandinavian history:

German Legends of the Brothers Grimm, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Donald Ward (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), vol. 1, 11.

²⁷ “Das Märchen ist poetischer, die Sage historischer; jenes steht beinahe nur in sich selber fest, in seiner angeborenen Blüte und Vollendung; die Sage, von einer geringern Mannichfaltigkeit der Farbe, hat noch das Besondere, daß sie an etwas Bekanntem und Bewußtem hafte, an einem Ort oder einem durch die Geschichte gesicherten Namen. Aus dieser ihrer Gebundenheit folgt, daß sie nicht, gleich dem Märchen, überall zu Hause seyn könne, sondern irgend eine Bedingung voraussetze, ohne welche sie bald gar nicht da, bald nur unvollkommener vorhanden seyn würde.” See Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen* (1816–1818), vol. 1, vi–vii. The translation is taken from Grimm, *The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm*, vol. 1, 1.

²⁸ Ideas about the spirit of the people, of folk, the local and the national had their inspiration in thinkers like Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Adam Ohlenschläger (1779–1850) and others, see Baycroft and Hopkin, eds., *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe*; Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*; Leerssen, ed., *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe*. For more on *Deutsche Sagen* and Grimm’s collection plan, see Holger Ehrhardt, “The Grimm Brothers’ *Deutsche Sagen*: Collection Plan, Sources, Critiques, Reception,” in *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms’ Deutsche Sagen in Northern Europe*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 43–69.

Would it not be fortunate if Norway, Gotland and Sweden also gave some attention to collecting what must have been more faithfully preserved there than anywhere else considering the peaceful, enduring nature of these lands; there is little doubt about what the inseparable German and Nordic histories would gain from such a venture.²⁹

Whether Asbjørnsen ever read this encouraging invitation is uncertain, but we do know that Asbjørnsen's reading of works by the Grimms goes back at least to 2nd December 1832, when the 20-year-old Asbjørnsen is recorded as having borrowed the first volume of Grimms' *Deutsche Grammatik* from the library.³⁰ In the years to follow, the publications by the Grimms would be borrowed regularly from the University Library in Christiania (now Oslo) until a regular correspondence with the Grimm brothers themselves ensured the actual deliverance of the latest publications – and encouragement.³¹

In these letters, the first of which comes from 1844, Asbjørnsen and the Grimms exchange greetings and pass on greetings from others; vouch for people who wish to meet them up or are in need of patrons; exchange books and articles written both by themselves and others; exchange thoughts and reflections on different publications, and, of course, also discuss issues relating to folklore. Encouragement and support – especially from the Grimms themselves – were evidently of great importance to Asbjørnsen as were testimonies of warm approval, something that Jacob Grimm, in particular, seems to have handed out on a regular basis. Associations with dominant figures in knowledge networks, such as that which surrounded the Grimms was naturally highly valuable, not least because patrons and supporters could contribute in ensuring stipends and book contracts and in

²⁹ “Wollte es nun das Glück, daß man in Norwegen, Gothland und Schweden ebenfalls aufmerksam würde und sammelte, was sich in der ruhigen, dauerhaften Natur dieser Länder treuer als irgendwo erhalten haben muß; so wird sich recht deutlich zeigen, welchen Gewinn die unzertrennliche deutsche und nordische Geschichte aus einer solchen Unternehmung ziehen kann.” See Jacob Grimm, “[Rez.] *Prøver af danske folkesagn, samlede af J. M. Thiele* (Kjöbenhavn, 1817), 36 S. in 8°,” *Wünschelrute* 50 (June 22, 1818): 200.

³⁰ Hult, *Framing a National Narrative*, 31.

³¹ The letters between Asbjørnsen and Jacob Grimm confirm a regular sending of books between the two men which goes back to the first documented letter between them in 1844, see *Asbjørnsen brev: Letter from Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe to Jacob Grimm, October 16, 1844*, Manuscript, NFS, Oslo.

helping to build an international reputation, but also for developing your personal standing in a competitive local environment.

In the first extant communication with Jacob Grimm from 1844, Asbjørnsen and his co-writer Moe in a polite and solemn manner deliver the second volume of *Norske Folkeeventyr* [Norwegian Fairy Tales] to Jacob Grimm "... with the hope that our narrative style, which has been blamed for its overly local colour, will not displease you."³² The use of language, and in particular, the Norwegian language, which Asbjørnsen and Moe briefly touch upon in this initial communication, would come to be a dominant theme in the letters between Asbjørnsen and Jacob Grimm in the years that followed. In a letter from Jacob Grimm dated 7th August 1849, the language of the North along with the development of the science of folklore collection is clearly a key theme, as Grimm praises

*[...] the intense scientific work that is being conducted in Norway. How uplifting to see such a blossoming, after Sweden and Denmark have had the lead in this for so long, in the country which was the original seat of the pure Nordic language, where the sense for antiquity seemed to have all but died out. Now you are making up for everything and even handling some things better than the Swedes and Danes could. One is quite aware of how beneficial freedom affects all life. [...] What you have already done for Norwegian legend and poetry deserves the greatest thanks and is highly recognised amongst us. [...] I want to keep both of you convinced that I am eagerly following your extensive discoveries. Few Danish writers seem to handle the Nordic language as completely and cleverly as you can. With great respect. Your most devoted Jacob Grimm.*³³

³² "... med Ønske om, at vor Fortællingsmaade, som man har bebreidet en altfor local Farve, ikke maa mishage Dem." See *Asbjørnsen brev: Letter from Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe to Jacob Grimm, October 16, 1844*, Manuscript, NFS, Oslo.

³³ "...über die rege wissenschaftliche thätigkeit in Norwegen berichtet. Wie erhehend ist dies aufblühen, nachdem so lange zeit Schweden und Dänemark vorausgegangen waren und in dem lande selbst, das der ursprüngliche sitz der reinen nordischen sprache war, der sinn für das alterthum erstorben schien. Jetzt werden Sie alles reichlich nachholen und sogar manches besser anfassen, als es von Schweden und Dänen geschehn konnte. Man gewahrt recht, wie wolthätig die freiheit überall auf das leben einwirkt. [...] Was Sie bereits für norwegische sage und poesie geleistet haben, verdient den grössten dank und wird zumal unter uns anerkannt. [...] halten Sie sich beide überzeugt, dass ich Ihren reichhaltigen entdeckungen eifrig nachfolge. Wenige dänische schriftsteller scheinen die nordische sprache so vollständig und geistreich

Grimm's preoccupation with language, its historicity, and how language served a crucial role in reflecting cultural traits also led him to pass on warnings to Asbjørnsen whenever he saw a potential threat to it. When Asbjørnsen reveals a cooperation with the German Johan Grässe in an international collection of tales entitled *Nord und Süd* from 1858, Jacob Grimm is not overly pleased: "I do not know Grässe personally and consider him a learned, careful man, but do not let your free style be corrupted by him, for he writes somewhat stiffly."³⁴ In the book, Asbjørnsen was responsible for the Nordic tales while Grässe was responsible for those from the other European and Oriental areas. Grimm's criticism focused mainly on the way in which the tales were told in German, but it is clear he is eager for Asbjørnsen to make use of the particular Norwegian style and colour in his writing and storytelling. Language itself and its specific cultural qualities were evidently important features of Asbjørnsen and Grimm's joint scientific and political project in the 19th century.

A 19TH CENTURY KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY

Asbjørnsen's network was a knowledge network sharing many of the characteristics of the network which has been coined the "Republic of Letters" from the early modern period. As a concept, it has been used to refer to the "self-proclaimed metaphysical community of scholars and intellectuals in early modern Europe that exchanged knowledge, viewpoints and perspectives with each other" in various forms of communication from which letter writing dominated that transcended national borders.³⁵ It was a community, to use Anthony Crafton's words, resembling a republic with "no borders, no government, and no capital."³⁶ It was first coined in Latin as "respublica

zu handhaben, wie Sie es vermögen. Ich bin mit grosser hochachtung. Ihr ergebenster Jacob Grimm." Here cited from Krogvig, *Til Gerhard Gran*, 175–176.

³⁴ "ich kenne Grässe nicht persönlich und halte ihn für einen gelehrten, sorgfältigen mann, aber lassen Sie sich Ihren freien stil nicht von ihm verderben, denn er schreibt etwas steif." See Krogvig, *Til Gerhard Gran*, 183–185.

³⁵ Ohrvik, "Mapping the Knowledge Network," 152.

³⁶ Anthony Crafton, *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 9.

literaria” in a letter from the early 15th century.³⁷ The idea of the “Republic of Letters” developed throughout the early modern period and referred to a specific form of knowledge exchange. As journals during the period also received names referring to the republic, they became testimonies of the intellectual communities that lay behind them.³⁸

In most studies of the “Republic of Letters,” modernity is seen as the threshold from which this republic came under pressure from nationalism and later from various forms of intellectual specialization. Indeed, the nature of the knowledge that had characterized it during the early modern period had been based on ideas relating to imperial, linguistic and political hegemony. Evidently, however, the production and exchange of knowledge did not stop in the 19th century, rather it was the focus of the knowledge that shifted.

So, what was characteristic of the knowledge exchange in the 19th century? According to Peter Burke, the active exchange of knowledge, viewpoints and perspectives did not undergo any fundamental change in Europe when entering into the modern period; it was how this knowledge actually travelled that did.³⁹ Although the active exchange of knowledge continued during the 19th century, this small study of Peter Christen Asbjørnsen’s networking in the 19th century shows that the exchanges were now motivated by new ideas and preconditions. New subject fields and academic disciplines were identified and developed, and new groups and networks formed in specific places and localities. These new ideas were dominated by a nationalized cultural consciousness, and artists and

³⁷ The term appears in the letter by Francesco Barbaro (1390–1454) to Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), dated July 6, 1417; see Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, *La République des Lettres* (Paris, Berlin: De Boeck, 1997), 11–13.

³⁸ For more on the journal writings, see the discussions in Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994); Crafton, *Worlds Made by Words*; Ellen Krefting, Aina Nøding, and Mona Ringvej, eds., *Eighteenth-Century Periodicals as Agents of Change: Perspectives on Northern Enlightenment, Library of the Written World*, vol. 42 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015).

³⁹ In his study of the various modes of communication used at different times in “The Republic of Letters,” Burke talks of “the horse-drawn republic” which lasted until 1800; the “steam republic” which lasted from 1800 until 1950; the “fly republic” which lasted from 1950 until 1990; and most recently the “digital republic,” with reference to contemporary society: see Peter Burke, “The Republic of Letters as a Communication System: An Essay in Periodization,” *Media History* (2012): 1–13.

intellectuals exchanged ideas while central concepts such as “folk” and “nation” were under construction and subject to diverse interpretation. These interpretations had significant political and cultural impact on the process of nation-building that took place in Northern Europe during the early and mid-19th century. The knowledge production was now driven by new ideas and preconditions as new subjects were discovered and developed in new places and locations where new groups and networks were formed. Consequently, although the complete conceptual framework of “the Republic” is not fully discernible in nineteenth-century European knowledge networks, this network analysis of Asbjørnsen demonstrates that many of its central mechanisms were nevertheless operative as emerging knowledge actors and networks shaped new disciplinary agendas and pursued cultural-political strategies in a geopolitically transforming Europe.

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THE BIOGRAPHICAL PHENOMENON OF ST. MAXIMUS THE GREEK (CA. 1469–1555/6)¹

Neža Zajc

*The year 2026 marks the 470th anniversary
of the death of Maxim the Greek.*

THE BIOGRAPHICAL COMPLEXITY

It is assumed that a comprehensive account of Maximus the Greek's life has already been provided. A detailed examination, however, reveals that the historical data is questionable. Moreover, there are still lacunae in the historical data. For example, there is a Wiki source with three entries in English, Russian and Italian (treccani.it – Massimo il Greco).² However, these entries differ from one another, *particularly* in terms of the sources cited, reflecting also the purposely oriented scholar's (nationally different) reception and perception.

¹ This chapter in the monograph is the result of work carried out as part of the research program *The (New) Cultural History of Intellectual Heritage: Slovenian Historical Space in Its European Context* (P6-0440), funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

² "Màssimo il Greco," Treccani, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/massimo-il-greco/>. See also Hugh M. Olmsted, "Maxim the Greek, St.," *Encyclopedia.com*, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/maxim-greek-st>; "Maximus the Greek," Wikipedia, accessed February 2, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maximus_the_Greek; "Maxim der Grieche," Wikipedia, accessed February 2, 2026, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxim_der_Grieche, etc.

Maximus the Greek's hybrid personality, which manifested in three distinct biographical periods, each marked by the change of his name, led to a meaningful and informative division of his biography into three characters, each corresponding to a specific geographical and chronological context. Despite the transformation of his name, his awareness of his Greek identity remained consistent. Born as Mikhail Trivolis, he became a monk Maximus, and died as Maksim Grek. A significant accomplishment of establishing a connection between three different persons that would prove historically attested was initially proposed by Belgian scholar Élie Denissoff in his 1943 monograph, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, published in Paris-Louvain.³ During his time at the Athos monastery, Maximus's identity underwent a significant transformation due to the monastic change of his birth name and the rejection of his surname. This was the first trace how to identify the person whose name was changed three times. The third phase of his life was marked by his growing awareness of his authorship, as evidenced in his writings in manuscripts. Therefore, to prevent misinterpretations, it is essential to base the research on his personal manuscripts.

HIGHLIGHTED AND UPDATED BIOGRAPHY OF ST. MAXIMUS THE GREEK

1. BIRTH, EARLIER YOUTH, NORTH ITALY

Maximus the Greek was born as Mikhail (Μιχαήλ) Trivolis, ca. 1469, in the Greek city of Arta, in the territory of Epirus (near Albania), in the Trivolis family, and was baptised with the name Mikhail. According to his manuscript, in which he presented himself impersonally (grammatically: 3p.sg.), his mother's name was Irina and his father's name was Manuel, and the parents "were Christians, Greek, philosophers."⁴

³ Élie Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident* (Paris-Louvain: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1943).

⁴ Maksim Grek, *Works*, Mss. F. 173.I.153, f. unnumbered, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow. The name of his father was documented in the Florentine Monastery of San Marco in 1502, when he entered the monastic community as "brother Mikhail, the son of Emanuil," accepted the protection of the Dominican father Mathew, and this is attested in the *Chronicle of the Monastery*, see Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 95, 96–98; Aleksei Ivanovich Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka. Harakteristika, atribucii, bibliografija* [The

Mikhail Trivolis received domestic education from his relative Demetrius Trivolis, the owner of a rich collection of books and manuscripts,⁵ a copyist of Plato and Plotinus, known also outside Greece for his extensive personal library. At that time, the Greek school in Corfu was a highly renowned institution that drew scholars from Italy and Greece. The overwhelming majority of these individuals originated from Crete and were meticulous in safeguarding the Byzantine tradition. Many of them proceeded to undertake further studies in the Adriatic region of Italy.

In Corfu in 1489, a decree was issued by the Venetian Senate at the explicit urging of the local populace. The reason was that following the Turkish occupation, Venice gave up its right to elect its grand council on an annual basis. Corfiotes subsequently requested, with the authority of the Supreme Council of the Senate of Venice, a re-convening of the Grand Council of Corfu for the purpose of establishing the officers of the community, with age limits in place. In the official report of the elections that took place in 1490 or 1491, in the execution of this decree, Mikhail Trivolis is identified as one of the last candidates, having received 20 votes in favour and 73 against.⁶ It can thus be inferred that Trivolis was born in either 1470 or 1469, indicating the earliest possible date, and he moved to Corfu at the age of nineteen or twenty. There, by Cretan John Moschus, who maintained a strict denial of the overall importance of Latin in the Byzantine Orthodox basis,⁷ Trivolis was guided to examine the original

Literary Heritage of Maksim Grek: The Characteristics, Attribution, Bibliography] (Leningrad: Nauka, 1969), 25.

⁵ The list of the works, preserved in the letter from Janus Laskaris to Demetrius Chalcondyle from Constantinople on July 10, 1491, regarding Laskaris's visit to Dimitrius Trivolis in May 1491 with the aim of collecting manuscript books for the personal library of the Italian mécénat Lorenzo de' Medici, see Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 126.

⁶ *Capitula Corgphoy 1489*, "die ultimo Julii," art. 3. See Kōnstantinos N. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce: Au Moyen Âge*, vol. V (Paris: La Maison des Députés de Grèce, 1884); Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 85–86.

⁷ John Moschus explained his position in his work "The Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father," see Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique ou description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés en grec par des Grecs aux XVe et XVIe siècles*, vol. 1 (Paris: Chambre du Grec, 1885; reprint, Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963), xc; Emmanuel Miller, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque de l'Escorial* (Paris: L'imprimerie nationale, 1848), 290; Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 140, 145.

Greek manuscripts.⁸ In Corfu he met his first teacher in philology, Janus Laskaris, and a peer Marko Musuros from Crete, a Greek scholar (later the Professor of Greek at the University of Padua 1503 and in Venice) with whom they travelled to Italy, passing Croatian islands. The trip led them to Florence in 1492,⁹ where Trivolis resided in Laskaris's Florentine apartment. Trivolis who was most probably also a member of the group tasked with collecting the personal library of the patron Lorenzo de Medici, and involved in the establishment of a Greek school (gymnasium, collegium and a press) with his son, Piero de Medici,¹⁰ was in contacts with Florentine intellectuals (Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano, Augustinus di Nipho) as well. In Florence, Trivolis met Aldo Manuzio, an Italian humanist who would later become famous as the first editor and publisher of printed Greek books ("Aldine"), who was searching for his own printing place. Trivolis started to work as a professional transcriber (copyist) and editor of manuscripts, that were involved in further printing process. It is evident from his letters that he was associated with Paolo de Canale too (the printer from Padua, who printed *Dioscorides* 1475, that Trivolis owned) and Francesco Rosetto from Verona,¹¹ who possibly influenced Manuzio's choice of applying Trivolis's handwriting as a typing model (Druckvorlagen)¹² for Manuzio's edition of Theocritus' *Idylles* in 1495.

⁸ He had his own library of Greek manuscripts, see Hippolyte Noiret, *Lettres inédite de Michel Apostolis publiées d'après les manuscrits du Vatican avec des opuscules inédits* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Écoles française d'Athènes et de Rome, 1889), 132.

⁹ David Speranzi, "Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari. Appunti su copisti e manoscritti greci tra Corfù e Firenze," *Studi Slavistici* VII (2010), 246; Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 148–149.

¹⁰ Evro Layton, "Notes on Some Printers and Publishers of 16th Century Modern Greek Books in Venice," *Thesaurismata* 18 (1981):121; David Speranzi, "Giano Lascari e i suoi copisti. Gli oratori attici minori tra l'Athos e Firenze," *Medioevo e rinascimento* 24, no. 21 (2010): 341–342; David Speranzi, "Massimo il Greco a San Marco. Un nuovo manoscritto," in *Mosty mostite. Studi in onore di Marcello Garzaniti*, ed. Alberto Alberti (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2022), 191.

¹¹ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 210–211, n. 5; cf. Maksim Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Indrik, 2008), 95–97, nn. 7, 10.

¹² The information about the Theocritus's *Idylles*, see Speranzi, "Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari," 280, n. 94; Geri Della Rocca de Candal, "Printing in Greek before Aldus Manutius," in *Printing R-Evolution and Society 1450–1500, Fifty Years that Changed Europe*, ed. Cristina Dondi, *Studi di storia* 13 (2020): 286, 289.

Trivolis's correspondence with his friends and Greek scholars, Scypion Carteromach from Florence¹³ and Janus Grigoropulos¹⁴ provides evidence that he meanwhile resided twice at the Castle Mirandola, where he was a personal secretary, an advisor and a tutor of Greek to Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola.¹⁵ During this period, he reassessed Greek Platonism (by his growing criticism of and a reaction to Aristotelian views in the issues of the ascetical theology) and continued translating Orthodox Church Fathers and Byzantine mystical authors.¹⁶ From Florence he also wrote a letter to the Italian humanist Antonio Urceo Codro,¹⁷ who in 1498 invited Trivolis to Bologna for a lecture and possible professorship of Greek.¹⁸ He also wrote a letter to Nicholas of Tarrse¹⁹ (Canonist of Vercelli, of Greek origin but born in Capo d'Istria, today Koper in Slovenia, which was formerly home to a powerful Greek community),²⁰ from whom Trivolis received another invitation to Bologna university.

Nevertheless, his correspondence reflects his internally depressed condition, Trivolis is thus a profoundly distressed soul.²¹ In one of his letters he urged Carteromach to organise a return to Manuzio's printing house.²² Trivolis's six letters (1489–1504) from Florence and Mirandola were

¹³ Letters from Mihail Trivolis (Mirandola) to Janus Grigoropulos, cited in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 88–97.

¹⁴ Letters from Mihail Trivolis (Florence) to Sypion Carteromach, cited in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 98–101.

¹⁵ Scholar's conclusions regarding that Trivolis was a full follower of Pico's views are, however, not entirely reliable, see Ovanes Akopyan, *Debating the Stars in the Italian Renaissance: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem and its Reception* (Boston: Leiden, 2021), 170.

¹⁶ In that period, he copied *De divinis Nominibus* of Dionysius Areopagite, see Mss. Laur. Conv. Soppr. 104, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence. See also Speranzi, "Massimo il Greco a San Marco," 194–197.

¹⁷ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 89–94. Correspondence, cited in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 88–91.

¹⁸ Therefore, he was invited to Bologna for the possible professorship by two persons: by Ludovicus II Ticianus ("Decianae comes, vicarius imperialis," as Trivolis named him) and by Antonio Urceo Codro. See Boris Leonidovich Fonkich, "Predislovie" [A Preface], in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 88.

¹⁹ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 201.

²⁰ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 86–87.

²¹ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 100.

²² Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 100–101.

addressed to Venice,²³ and they confirm that during his period in Italy he gradually became engaged in the sophisticated and painstaking typographical processes required to convert manuscripts to printed books at the editorial house of Manuzio in Venice. With constant access to Greek manuscripts, and finally in contact with other members (the second wave) of the Greek diaspora in Italy, especially with Greek intellectuals Zacharias Kalliergis, Nikolaos Vlastos, Mikhail Apostolios, Mikhail Souliardos and Nikolaos Sophianos,²⁴ he felt a temporal sense of being appreciated and he might have observed a rare spiritual peace in Venice. In the typographical “laboratory” of Manuzio, Trivolis got an insight into the oldest samples of Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament and the Septuagint, but he was also engaged in the very precise dissection of the canonical biblical content from the Apocrypha.²⁵ Trivolis observed the problems of Manuzio’s unrealised plan of printing Greek Orthodox liturgical books.²⁶ At that time the first Orthodox community was already (in 1494) set up in Venice (The Brotherhood of the Greek Nations, Scuola e Nazione greca).²⁷ Nevertheless, the situation in Venice was far from unaffected by the schism in the Christian consciousness during the Renaissance, which caused a complete moral collapse and the disorientation of the wider human population. His internal anxiety was also indicative of his inability to establish a fixed place of residence.

Trivolis’s pupil Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, a philosopher, man of letters and biographer,²⁸ subsequently employed a similarly complex critique – possibly instructing Mikhail to transcribe a manuscript of Commentaries on Aristotle’s *Ἀναλυτικὰ Πρώτερα* [Prior Analytics] by John

²³ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 88–101. However, only one letter was sent by Trivolis from Mirandola to Nicholas of Tarsse in Vercelli; see Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 86–87.

²⁴ Ihor Ševčenko, “The Four Worlds and the Two Puzzles of Maksim the Greek,” *Paleoslavica* XIX, no. 2 (2011): 296; Evro Layton, *The Sixteenth Century Greek Book in Italy* (Venice: Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, 1994), 460–470.

²⁵ Layton, “Notes on Some Printers and Publishers,” 135.

²⁶ Layton, “Notes on Some Printers and Publishers,” 120.

²⁷ Layton, “Notes on Some Printers and Publishers,” 121.

²⁸ Charles B. Schmitt, “The General Attack on Aristotle,” in *Gianfrancesco Pico Della Mirandola (1469–1533) and His Critique of Aristotle, International Archives of the History of Ideas / Archives Internationales D’Histoire des Idees*, vol. 23 (Dordrecht: Springer, 1963), 63–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-9679-6_4.

Philoponus.²⁹ In Trivolis's letter to Carteromach from Florence (1504), it can be inferred that the Camaldolian monk Pietro Candido had provided him with accommodation in the city after his last stay at the castle of Mirandola. Obviously, he constantly visited Florence, where he attended the rigorous theological sermons of the radical Dominican friar, Girolamo Savonarola, whose anti-intellectual, ascetically oriented preaching left a profound impression on him. In Florence, he firstly created his personal verses in the marginalia of manuscript, including the "three-handed" Commentaries on Hermogenus by Greek rhetoricians, Sirianus, Sopatro³⁰ and Marcellinus, a work decisive for understanding the Byzantine comprehension of the difference between the rhythm in prose and in poetry.³¹ After having become acquainted with Zanobi Acciajouli, a librarian at the Monastery of San Marco,³² Trivolis decided to enter this monastery. There, he received a spiritual guidance of Brother Matteo Marci but he did not fully accept to be a Catholic Dominican monk and remained a novice.³³

2. THE HOLY MOUNT ATHOS

In 1502–1503 Trivolis returned to his native Greece. At Athos, in 1506, he entered the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi (Vatopedi). He was ordained as a monk, under the name Maximus (after St. Maximus the Confessor). He experienced his greatest spiritual fulfilment during his Athonite period, gratified to find that his, acquired in Italy, philological and textual-critical abilities, but also linguistic talent were appreciated. He further developed his considerable experience with manuscripts. Monk Maximus now

²⁹ Dieter Harlfinger, "Codices Cremonenses Graeci (Eine kurze Neusichtung anlässlich)," in *I manoscritti greci tra riflessione e dibattito* (Atti del V Colloquio Intern. di Paleografia Greca, 1998) (Florence: 2000), 769.

³⁰ Janus Laskaris (first Maxim's mentor into handling manuscripts) visited the library of his relative (probably an uncle) Dimitrius Trivolis with an aim to acquire the manuscript of Sopatro. Nevertheless, the bibliophile Dimitrius Trivolis did not own the latter (Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 128); this information could represent a source for the confirmation of the future occupation of Mihail Trivolis with this manuscript.

³¹ Plut. 55.20, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence. On the manuscript, see: Speranzi, "Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari," 276–278; see also Vessela Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium: The Sound of Persuasion* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33.

³² Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 106, 367.

³³ Nina V. Sinitsyna, "Ranee tvorcestvo prepodobnogo Maksima Greka" [The First Period of the Literary Writings of St. Maximus the Greek], in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 25.

concentrated his efforts on sacred (Byzantine) literacy, beginning with a more comprehensive examination of hagiographical, hymnographic and liturgical sources. It is noteworthy that he was entrusted with the analysis of the oldest manuscripts, which date from the 11th century. Furthermore, Athos afforded him access to resources from Old Church Slavonic (OCS) manuscripts written in the Serbian and Bulgarian languages (South Slavonic, West Slavonic). Additionally, he was a close disciple of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Niphon II (his father was Albanian, mother was Greek), and accompanied him (until Niphon's demise in 1508) in Orthodox missionary activities, possibly localized in the regions of Ochrid and Moldo-Wlachia (Moldovia) also among the Slavic peoples.³⁴ Following these missions, he was able to identify the characteristics of spoken languages, as well as their potential use in ecclesiastical, liturgical and missionary contexts. The Orthodox missions led by Patriarch Niphon II were, according to Maximus, entirely Holy Spirit-inspired actions. This reflects the prevailing confusion of heretical religious trends within the Christian world at that time.

At Athos, Maximus began composing his versified liturgical-hymnological works (the most important is *The Supplicatory Canon to the St. John the Baptist*),³⁵ which also demonstrates his awareness of the Slavic sacred lands (evident in the topographical references in a lengthy prayer, a homiletical liturgical service to St. Erasmus³⁶), particularly Ochrid.³⁷ Linguistic research

³⁴ Summarized from Archimandrite Efraim (Kutsu), "Svjatoj Maksim kak vatopedski monah" [St. Maximus as the Monk of the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi], in *Rossija-Afon: tysjacheletie duhovnogo edinstva. Materialy mezhdunarodnoj nauchno-bogoslovskoj konferentsii* (Moscow: Izd. PSTGU, 2006), 292. About the Moldovian Slavic and monastic context, particularly in the case of St. Maximus, see Tereza Sinigalia, "La Liturgie Céleste dans la peinture murale de Moldavie," *Anastasis: Research in Medieval Culture and Art* 2, no. 1 (2015): 28–50; Klimentina Ivanova, "Слово на св. Василиј Велики и на отец Ефрем за светата Литургија, как подобава да се стои в црквата със страх и трепет" [Discourse of St. Basil the Great and Father Ephrem on the Holy Liturgy, How One Should Stand in Church with Fear and Trembling], *Palaeobulgarica* 26, no. 1 (2002): 3–16. However, the research about specifically missionary character of monastic life at the Holy Mount Athos is not yet sufficiently updated.

³⁵ Ἀγίου Μαξίμου Γρακοῦ, *Λόγοι*. Τόμος Δ'. Χαρτόδετο (Ἅγιον Ὄρος: Ἱερὰ Μεγίστη Μονὴ Βατοπαίδου, 2017) [Saint Maximus the Greek, *Works*, vol. IV (Mount Athos: The Holy Great Monastery of Vatopaidi)], 341–351.

³⁶ Ἀγίου Μαξίμου Γρακοῦ [Saint Maximus the Greek], *Λόγοι*, vol. IV, 329–341.

³⁷ See also Emilia Crvenkovska, "Првобитниот словенски комплекс на богослужбени книги по византиски обред ('корпусот на Климент') и формирањето на македонската редакција на црковнословенскиот ('корпусот на Климент') и формирањето на македонската редакција на црковнословенскиот" [The Primary Slavic Complex of Liturgical Books of the Byzantine Rite

has revealed that Maximus had been in regular contact with Slavic-speaking countries long before his journey to Russia.

In 1516, at Vatopaidi, Maximus received the invitation from the Russian Grand Prince, who had sought a monk to edit Russian church books and translate scriptures from Greek. Consequently, he took responsibility and accepted the monastic duty to temporarily leave the Athonite community.

3. MUSCOVITE RUSSIA

The journey from Mount Athos to Russia is estimated to have taken approximately a year and a half. Maximus was accompanied by seven other monks from Athos, two of whom were likely members of the Russian Athonite monastery of Penteilemon.³⁸ There is a high probability that this route passed through Constantinople and potentially Venice, where Maximus could have obtained copies of the first printed Greek books. On March 5, 1518, he reached Muscovite Russia, where he was called Maksim Grek (Максим Грек). He promptly commenced translating ecclesiastical texts in Greek (i.e., intended for liturgical, hagiographical use), and began reviewing previous OCS translations of such texts by Russians. His first translation was the *Exegetical Psalter* (with twenty-four commentators),³⁹ which is considered the inaugural such translation in Russia (cca. 1061 pages). Also, he translated and revised many texts from Greek originals and on the basis of comparison with Greek originals, among them the Psalter with biblical Odes (1552).⁴⁰ Furthermore, he translated Commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles, and The Commentaries on Gospel of St. Matthew by John Chrysostom,⁴¹ a parts of the Greek *Nomokanon* of Constantinopolitan Patriarch Photios⁴² and Photios's texts (epistles) against

(“Clement’s corpus”) and the Formation of the Macedonian Redaction of Church Slavonic], *Slověne*, no. 2 (2016): 198–230; Emilie Bláhová and Zoe Hauptová, *Strumički (Makedonski) apostol: Kirilski spomenik ot XIII vek* (Skopje: Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, 1990).

³⁸ Sinitsyna, “Ranee tvorcestvo,” 28.

³⁹ *Exegetical Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, Shchuk. 4, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; cf. Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 41.

⁴⁰ Inna V. Verner, ed., *Интерлинейная славяно-греческая Псалтырь 1552 г.: в переводе Максима Грека* [Inter-linear Slavic-Greek Psalter of 1552: In the Translation of Maksim Grek] (Moscow: Indrik, 2019).

⁴¹ Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 162.

⁴² Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 51; Anton Pavlov, *Istoricheskij ocherk sekularizacii v cerkovnyh zemelj Rusii* [Historical Description of the Secularisation of the Russian Church Lands] (Odessa: Tipografija Ulrich and Schultze, 1871), 78, n.1.

Latins.⁴³ He continued to translate individual chapters from the *Menologion* of the Hagiographical collections by Symeon Metaphrastes (Logothetos).⁴⁴ Additionally, he translated some works of the Byzantine Church Fathers, including the writings of St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory of Nazianzen and St. John of Damascus among others. Furthermore, he translated some chapters of the Byzantine Lexicon *Suidas*.⁴⁵ He frequently incorporated fragments of his (biblical⁴⁶ and other) translations into his own writings, providing personal explanations or philologically-theologically oriented commentary. Hence, his original author's works in manuscripts, edited by his own hand, are worthy of special attention.

In 1525, he was convicted by a church council of heretical errors in translation, in particular in the existing Russian translation of *Creed*.⁴⁷ In fact, he modified the Slavonic aorist to the perfect tense, insisting that he did not perceive those expressions of perfect tense "to be" in contradiction with the concept of the "eternal being" of Christ at the right hand of God the Father.⁴⁸ The crux of the issue for Maximus was that he was accused of employing orthodox theologically controversial terms in a deliberately heretical manner, with direct implications for the definition of Christ's temporal existence. During the trial, Maximus explicitly stated that the translation process had been carried out by two or three Russian translators (Ignat Vlasov, Dmitri Gerasimov, Mikhail Medovartsev) via Latin into Russian redaction of OCS, because during his first years of his residence in Muscovite Russia, he was

⁴³ Dmitrii Mihailovich Bulanin, *Perevody i poslania Maksima Greka* (Leningrad: Akademija nauk SSSR, 1984), 82–84.

⁴⁴ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 42.

⁴⁵ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 42; Bulanin, *Perevody i poslania*, 128–173.

⁴⁶ Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 66.

⁴⁷ About that process Maximus reported in his text, see Maksim Grek, *O ispovedanii pravoslavnoi very* [About the Confession of the Orthodox Faith], Mss. Slave 123, fols. 16–19, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris. On the linguistic background of the particular accusation, see Varvara Andreevna Romodanovskaia, "'Sede odesnuiu Otsa' ili 'sidel esi'? K voprosu o grammaticheskoi pravke Maksima Greka" ['He Sat on the Right Side of the Father' or 'He Is Sitting'? To the Question about the Grammatical Correction of Maksim Grek], in *Problemy istorii russkoi knizhnosti, kul'tury i obshchestvennogo soznaniia. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Novosibirsk: Institut istorii RAN – Sibirskii khronograf, 2000), 232–238.

⁴⁸ Nikolai N. Pokrovskii and Sigurd O. Schmidt, eds., *Sudnye spiski Maksima Greka i Isaka Sobaki* [The Reports from the Trials against Maksim Grek and Isaac Sobaka] (Moscow: Tipografija GAU pri SM SSSR, 1971), 110.

not fully certain of the precise meaning of every term in the Russian version of OCS. However, he defended and utilised such verbal usage also in his own writings. The latest linguistic research proves that he was acquainted with the OCS and Slavic even before his arrival in Russia, and it is essential to acknowledge his will, which confirms that his use of OCS was continually fully conscious.⁴⁹ In Moscow he was afterwards sentenced to solitary confinement in the dark, without permission to communicate, write, or read, and was also forbidden from attending church services and receiving Holy Communion, which was the most difficult and irreputable condition for the Orthodox monk. The impetus for this action against him was his refusal to translate Theodoret of Cyrhus' *Ecclesiastical History*⁵⁰ that he had been commissioned to do by Metropolitan Daniil of Russia, and what Maximus had also mentioned in the letter to Metropolitan Daniil.⁵¹ Maximus justified this decision on the grounds that the book contains certain controversial passages that could be theologically misguided, potentially leading the uninformed Orthodox Russians to erroneous beliefs.

In 1531, a new church council was convened against him (perhaps because of the letter that had been recently received in Moscow with the request for his freedom from the Protos⁵² Anphimius of the Holy Mount Athos,⁵³ who was at the time of Maximus's leaving to Russia the Hegumen of the Monastery of Vatopaidi and who had blessed Maximus at his departure from Athos). He was acquitted of the previous charges, but new ones were also brought

⁴⁹ The research by the author of the present chapter that partially addresses this issue is forthcoming in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* (January 2027).

⁵⁰ Maksim Grek, *Works*, MS Slave 123, fols. 100v–101r, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris; Liudmila Ivanovna Zhurova, *Avtorskii tekst Maksima Greka (rukopisnaia i literaturnaia traditsii)* [Author's Text of Maksim Grek – Manuscript and Literary Traditions], vol. 2 (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo sibirskogo otdelenia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk, 2011), 140.

⁵¹ Cited in Zhurova, *Avtorskii tekst Maksima Greka*, vol. 2, 136–145.

⁵² A term of honor, given to the monk who is the head of the monastic governing (an administrative role, usually for one year) of Mount Athos, located in Karyes, see *A Pilgrim's Guide to the Holy Great Monastery of Vatopedi* (Mount Athos: The Holy Great Monastery of Vatopedi, 2025), 100.

⁵³ The archival record of the letter of “the Protos of Holy Mount Athos, Anphimius to Grand Prince Vasili III” about the release of Maximus the Greek in 1531, see Boris Vasil'evich Pal'tsov and Sigurd O. Schmit, eds., *Opis' arhiva Posol'skogo prikaza 1626 g.* [Description of the Archive of the Ambassadorship Legality for the Year 1626] (Moscow, 1977), 71; Sinitsyna, “Rannee tvorcestvo,” 30–31. About the circumstances see Liudmila Ivanovna Zhurova, *Avtorskii tekst Maksima Greka (rukopisnaia i literaturnaia traditsii)* [Author's Text of Maksim Grek – Manuscript and Literary Traditions], vol. 1 (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo sibirskogo otdelenia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk, 2008), 344–345.

forth. The new accusations included the charge of heretical translations in the *Life of the Holy Virgin* from the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes⁵⁴ (which he had translated already in 1521).⁵⁵ Additionally, he was accused of espionage for the Turkish court and of engaging in witchcraft.⁵⁶ During both interrogations (in 1525 and 1531), the Russian Emperors (Grand Prince Vasili III., Tsar Ivan IV) were present, which reflects a significant interest held by both ecclesiastical and government authorities in the fate of Maximus the Greek.⁵⁷

However, during his permission to speak openly Maximus was vehemently opposed to the growing and robust tendencies of the Russian Church towards its autocephaly among Orthodox Patriarchate. He demanded not only that the Russian Metropolitans be enthroned by Constantinople (he did reiterate his position openly and without fear during the Church process against him),⁵⁸ but also the respect for the See of Constantinople, together with the traditions of the Greek Church and Byzantine ecclesiastical literacy, even if it was from 1453 under the Islamic yoke. Moreover, he clearly advocated for an asceticism with a silent contemplation on sacred texts (which, though similar, are not fully adequate with hesychasm), encouraging the cultivation of both, the spiritual and intellectual dimensions.⁵⁹ Furthermore, he supported the monasticism that eschewed the accumulation of material possessions and was defined by a set of core ethical values, including modesty, generosity, humility, and poverty as an expression of inner continence, chastity, and the capacity to assist others in the common activities, recognised

⁵⁴ Vladimir V. Latyshev, ed., *Menologii anonymi Byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt. Fasciculos duos sumptibus Caesareae Academiae Scientiarum e Codice Mosquensi 376* (Moskva, 1912; Leipzig, 1970) [*Subsidia Byzantina lucis ope iterata*, 12], 374–383.

⁵⁵ Nina V. Sinitysna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii* [Maksim Grek in Russia] (Moskva: Nauka, 1977), 61.

⁵⁶ The detailed manuscript about that rigged trial against Maximus the Greek (and also Isaac Sobaka), was found only in the second half of the 20th century, see Pokrovskii and Shmidt, eds., *Sudnye spiski*.

⁵⁷ Nikolai N. Pokrovski, “Zamechanija o rukopisi sudnyh spiskov Maksima Greka i Isaka Sobaki” [Notes on the manuscripts of the trials against Maksim Grek and Isaac Sobaka], *TODRL*, 36, (1981), 83.

⁵⁸ Pokrovski, “Zamechanija o rukopisi sudnyh spiskov,” 90.

⁵⁹ Cf. *The Hagiography of Gregory from Sinai*: Maximus’s corrections in the manuscript were made by his own hand, see Boris Leonidovich Fonkich, “Novyj avtograph Maksima Greka” [The New Autograph of Maksim Grek], *Byzantinoslavica*, no. 1 (1969): 81–82.

in the community of Athonite Lavra.⁶⁰ Despite being aware of the benefits of the Athonite approach⁶¹ (having witnessed the semi-coenobitic way of life particularly in the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi)⁶² to the common ownership of monastic property, which also entailed responsibilities and labour according to each person's capabilities, he remained unwavering in his support for a strict nonpossessive position (in Russia that controversy lasted from the mid-15th century: between the supporters of monastery property and the opponents).

As a result, Maximus was sentenced to further punishment and subsequently transferred from the dungeon cell of the Joseph-Volokolamsk monastery to the Otroch monastery in Tver. He remained incarcerated, but in 1536 the conditions of his imprisonment were sufficiently relaxed to permit him to engage in writing. Consequently, he produced a substantial corpus of original writings, which he also attempted to collate into collected works during his lifetime.⁶³ However, he was not granted the right to receive Holy Communion and remained imprisoned until 1552, when he was transported to the monastery of the Holy Trinity of the Lavra of St. Sergius of Radonezh. At this point, he was permitted a certain degree of liberty. However, he continued to rely exclusively on his Athonite prayer practice. Although three official requests were sent to Moscow by Church authorities from Athos and Constantinople for his release to Athonite Monastery Vatopaidi, where obviously his memory and efforts were cherished, the Moscow ecclesiastical authorities did not allow him to leave Russia. In fact, already in 1521, soon after his first prominent translation of *Exegetical Psalter* he kindly asked Vasili Ivanovich III for the permission to return to his homeland Greece.⁶⁴ After already mentioned letter from the Athonite Protos Anphimios in 1531, also in 1545, after 20 years of his imprisonment, the Patriarch of Alexandria Ioachim sent a letter of request for the release

⁶⁰ Lavra: clusters of small cenobitic ascetic communities around central church and monastery, gathered for the church service and the Divine Liturgy, see *A Pilgrim's Guide*, 99.

⁶¹ For Maximus's work "The Letter to Grand Prince of Moscow, Vasili III about the Athonite Monasteries," see Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 119–133.

⁶² *A Pilgrim's Guide*, 23.

⁶³ Maksim Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Rukopis'nye pamjatniki Drevnej Rusi, 2014), 20.

⁶⁴ Viacheslav F. Rzhiga, "Opyty po istorii russkoj publicistiky XVI v. Maksim Grek kak publicist" [The Research on History of Russian Social Writings in 16th Century: Maksim Grek as the Social Writer], *TODRL* 1 (1934): 115.

of the Athonite monk Maximus.⁶⁵ A year later, in June 1546, the Constantinople Patriarch Dionisius II sent an even officially stronger letter with a firm request for the final release of Maximus the Greek (in Moscow they received it in the beginning of 1547).⁶⁶ That letter was signed by fifteen prominent Greek Orthodox authorities.⁶⁷

Following his demise, the official narrative of his role in Russia underwent a series of unintended alterations, all in the service of the Russian Church and Government (of the court of the Great Prince Vasili III, and consequently, the Tsar Ivan IV). Moreover, the Russian ecclesiastical and historical legitimacy in many respects based their so-called Old Russian direction on his strict Orthodox theological views. This continued throughout the following centuries, with the most prominent manifestation of the so-called Russian original theology and spiritual philosophy being the loudest national conceptualisation in the 19th century. In fact, they constructed what they considered to be the Russian national mentality on the basis of Maxim the Greek's theological and philosophical views, both the grammatical frameworks of the literary language and the structure of what they regarded as the original Russian philosophy and Orthodox thought.

Despite being highly respected by Moscow dignitaries from both Church and government circles, and having become venerated in his final years for his life of a saint (i.e., a man of profound learning and genuine wisdom endowed with the Holy Spirit), he was not recognized as a martyr by the Russian Church until the 20th century. He died on December 12, 1555 in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity of Lavra as Maksim Grek. Following the 40-day Orthodox period of mourning for his death, January 21, 1556 was established as the day of his passing. However, he was not officially proclaimed a saint by the Russian Church until 1988, when his feast day as Saint Maximus was set on January 21.

⁶⁵ Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, fols. 94r–95r, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris.

⁶⁶ Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii*, 152.

⁶⁷ The document was accompanied with signatures of the fifteen actual Orthodox Patriarchs and Metropolitans, see Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, fols. 97r–98v, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris. Maximus translated both letters from Greek and included them in his life-time edited collections of manuscripts.

CASE-STUDY

One must consider whether the formula “three faces of one person” is an appropriate and applicable concept. Is the chronological disintegration of a person’s biographical trajectory a sufficient reason for the further separation of the integrity of the personality?

Research on the life and work of Maximus the Greek requires exceptional caution, as much of the accepted biographical and interpretative framework is based on secondary, often biased scholarship, particularly within Russian-oriented traditions (often narrow, solely linguistic approach)⁶⁸ and also corresponding reception.⁶⁹ Many so-called established facts rest on unverified claims and interpretations that are not directly supported by Maximus’s own words and his personal (world)view. Consequently, such reconstructions cannot be considered fully reliable.

This study therefore prioritizes Maximus’s own lifetime manuscripts as the primary and most authentic sources. These texts are examined through careful palaeographic and linguistic analysis, limiting the corpus

⁶⁸ These studies appear to be remarkably consistent in terms of linguistic treatment; however, they are one-sided, relativising the work and life of Maximus the Greek similarly to the historical situation of his condemnation and profound misinterpretation in Russia. Moreover, they do lack a complex multidisciplinary approach that simultaneously includes different perspectives and contexts of his life and work, which is essential in a thorough understanding of the cultural historical value of Maximus the Greek. See, for example, Inna V. Verner, “Grammaticheskaja sprava Maksima Greka v Psaltyri 1552 g.” [Grammatical Corrections of Slavic-Greek Psalter of 1552 by Maksim Grek], in *Pismennost', literature, fol'klor slavjanskih narodov. Istorija slavistiki. XV mezhdunarodnyj s'ezd slavistov*, ed. Aleksandr M. Moldovan et al. (Moskva: Drevlehranilishe, 2013), 104–127; Catherine Mary MacRobert, “Maksim Grek in linguistic context,” in *Latinas in the Slavonic world*, ed. Vittorio Springfield Tomelleri and Inna V. Verner (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018) 173–205.

⁶⁹ Dmitrii Mihailovich Bulanin, “Grecheski pisatel' ili moskovski knizhnik,” *Studia Slavica e Balcanica Petropolitana* 2, no. 22 (2017): 87–98; Marcello Garzaniti, “Svidetel'stvo Maksima Greka na sudebnyh processah 1525, 1531 gg.: novoe prochtenie v ključe biblejskogo profetizma” [The Witnessing of Maksim Grek at the Trials of 1525 and 1531: A New Reading in the Key of Biblical Prophetism], in *Istochnikovedenie literatury i jazyka (arkheografiia, tekstologiiia, poetika)* (Novosibirsk: GPNTB RAN, 2022), 46–60; Marcello Garzaniti, “Антилатинские послания Максима Грека и русская публицистика первой половины XVI в. К вопросу о контекстуализации” [Anti-Latin Letters of Maksim Grek and Russian Publicistic Writings in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century: On the Question of Contextualization], *TODRL* 69 (2022): 84–96; Francesca Romoli, *Massimo il Greco e gli ordini religiosi dell'Occidente* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2021).

to manuscripts written during his lifetime or before the end of the 16th century,⁷⁰ prior to later ideological alterations, introduced in the 17th century. Therefore, the specific textual approach focuses on reconstructing Maximus's voice, will, and personal Slavonic idiolect, which was frequently misunderstood in previous scholarship.

By treating these manuscripts as elements of Maximus's personal archive rather than purely literary or apologetic texts, the research seeks to access his intellectual and spiritual "laboratory" and to enter the historical reality in which he lived. This methodology is essential for understanding both his opposition to Russian autocephaly and the reasons for his persecution, imprisonment, and delayed canonization. Ultimately, Maximus's case remains significant not only historically but also as a universal example of intellectual integrity and resistance to ideological and political coercion.

Following his first trial in 1525, Maximus was not allowed to read, to write and to communicate. By 1531 (after the second trial), the conditions of the imprisonment eased, allowing him to resume writing, and in 1536 he began collecting his texts. He revised his work multiple times to refine arguments and defend his positions. Three manuscript "editions" of the works of Maximus the Greek are known: Ioasafovskoe, Khludovskoe, and

⁷⁰ Some of the manuscripts that we are constantly working with include: Some of the manuscripts that we are constantly working with include: Maksim Grek, *Works* (Rumjantskovskoe), Ms. F. 256, Rum. 264, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Psalter* (15th century), annotated by Maksim Grek, Ms. Troic. 315, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Works* (Ioasafovskoe), f. 173.III. MDA 138, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Works* (Ioasafovskoe), f. 173. MDA 42, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Works* (Ioasafovskoe), f. 173. MAD, fund. 153, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Selected Works*, Ms. f. 247, Rogozh. 302, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; *Exegetical Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, Shchuk. 4, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Selected Works*, Sin. 491, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Liturgical Psalter*, 1552, Uvar. 85/14, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Works* (Ioasafovskoe), Uvar. 309, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; *Greek Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, 1540, Mss. Sof. 78, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; Symeon Metaphrastes, *Menologion*, translated by Maksim Grek, Ms. Sof. 1498, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; *Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, late 16th century, Sol. 753/862, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; *Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, late 16th century, Sol. 752/862, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; *Greek Apostol*, translated by Maksim Grek, 16th century, Kirill.-Beloz. 120/125, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris.

Rumjantsovskoe.⁷¹ The National Library in Paris holds a significant collection, showing his evolving drafts and final corrections, likely completed at the Monastery of St. Sergius of Trinity.⁷² Not a single page of Slavonic manuscript written entirely by Greek had survived; all were copied or dictated. Some Greek and even Latin autographs exist, including his own Greek Psalterium,⁷³ his Greek Apostol (1542)⁷⁴ and the works from his Italian period. His manuscripts are dispersed across Europe, including libraries in London,⁷⁵ Florence,⁷⁶ Rome,⁷⁷ Milan,⁷⁸ Cremona,⁷⁹ Vienna,⁸⁰ Paris,⁸¹ and Mount Athos,⁸² showing his work's transnational character.

It is important to note that Maxim's personal Slavonic script was not entirely uniform. In addition to Slavic letters, it incorporated Greek letters

⁷¹ Sinit'syna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii*, 223–262.

⁷² Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris.

⁷³ *Greek Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, 1540, Ms. Sof. 78, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg.

⁷⁴ *Greek Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, 1540, Ms. Sof. 78, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; *Greek Apostol*, translated by Maksim Grek, 16th century, Kirill.-Beloz. 120/125, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg. It contains the Acts of Apostles, 7 Apostolic Letters: James, John, Peter, Juda, and 13 Letters of Apostle Paul, see Aleksei Ivanovich Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 215.

⁷⁵ Theodoret of Cyrhus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, Can. Gr. 27, Manuscript, Bodleian Library, Oxford. See also Speranzi, "Giano Lascari e i suoi copisti," 341–342; Speranzi, "Massimo il Greco a San Marco," 191.

⁷⁶ Dionysius Areopagite, *De divinis Nominibus*, Laur. Conv Soppr. 104, Manuscript, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence; *Liber Vestitionum*; *Spoglio generale*, Manuscripts, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence.

⁷⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, Vat. Barb. 100, Manuscript, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome; Theocritus, *Idylls*, Vat. Gr. 1379, fols. 1–24, Manuscript, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome; Strabo, *Geographia*, Vat. Reg. 83, fols. 157–245, Manuscript, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome.

⁷⁸ *Epigram to Manuil*, the rhetor, Ms. Ambrosiana N.234, sup., Manuscript, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan; *Epitaph to the Constantinople Patriarch Ioachim I*; *Epitaph to Constantinople Patriarch Niphon II*, Ms. Ambros. I. N. 115 sup., fols. 504r–504v, Manuscript, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.

⁷⁹ John Philoponus, *Commentaries on Aristotle's Analytica Priora*, Cod. Crem. 177, Manuscript, Cremona.

⁸⁰ *Vindobonensis hist. gr. 122*, Manuscript, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

⁸¹ *Geoponica*, Par. Gr. 1994, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris; Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris.

⁸² *Liturgical Service to St. Erasmus*. Cod. 198, fols. 579–588. Manuscript. Monastery of Vatopaidi, Mount Athos; *Supplicatory Canon to St. John the Baptist*. Cod. 1016, fol. 32r–35v. Manuscript. Monastery of Vatopaidi, Mount Athos.

(ī, ž, v̄, ω), as well as ligatures and word joints, the features also found in the first printed Greek books, along with stress marks that later influenced Slavic orthography. Interestingly, his script occasionally used Latin characters for certain Slavic letters (I, N for Cyrillic H; B for Cyrillic Б), which is relatively uncommon. This reflects not only his exposure to the Latin script during his time in Italy but also the possibility that he was aware of the practice of writing Slavic languages with Latin letters – a convention common in the South Slavic regions bordering Italy, particularly the Venetian State (corresponding to present-day Slovenian and Croatian territories). As a result, his manuscripts present a complex mixture of Greek, Latin, and Slavic (Cyrillic) features – not limited to Old or modern Russian – demonstrating a uniquely multifaceted linguistic and scriptural approach.

Maxim's Slavonic idiolect exhibits a wide range of forms derived from various OCS redactions, reflecting disparate temporal, spatial, and social contexts.⁸³ Moreover, it provides evidence of his proficiency in editing and proofreading Slavonic manuscripts, encompassing textual criticism of variant words, semantic and stylistic nuances, and formally distinct elements (such as homonyms) used in the service of emendation or the personal typification of language. A detailed study of his manuscripts, from his arrival in Russia until the end of his life, confirms his continuous use of different Slavonic varieties and linguistic forms, deliberately selected to advocate for a particular form of OCS that, in his view, corresponded most closely to the Greek Church tradition.

To recognize the structure of differences within his Slavonic idiolect, it is necessary to acknowledge the multifaceted chronological and geographical foundations, as well as the diverse sources, that shaped the formation of Maxim's Slavic proficiency and his personal Slavic expression. Research has shown that, more than Russian Slavonic, Western and/or South Slavic languages played a decisive role in shaping his linguistic consciousness before his first contact with Russia. In particular, South Slavic languages (especially Macedonian and Serbian), spoken in and around Maximus's birthplace of Arta, exerted a significant influence. This is reflected in the

⁸³ Neža Zajc, "Some Notes on the Life and Works of Maxim the Greek (Michael Trivolis, ca. 1470 – Maksim Grek, 1555/1556). Part 2: Maxim the Greek's Slavic Idiolect," *Scrinium* 12 (2016): 375–382.

lexical layer of words he used, drawn from colloquial everyday speech with frequent stable verbal forms, as well as in archaic features of his native Greek, which may sporadically preserve echoes of the Macedonian dialect.

Secondly, the spoken Slavic vernaculars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in regions bordering the Venetian Republic – namely Slovenian and Croatian territories – partially, yet crucially, contributed to the initial formation of his understanding of Slavic languages. Finally, vernaculars encountered in both liturgical contexts and daily life, which he experienced deeply during his Athonite Orthodox missions, left significant traces of Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Romanian (Moldo-Wallachian) lexicon. These influences affected his semantic word formation, a process also visually reinforced through his work with Slavonic Athonite manuscripts – particularly Serbian⁸⁴ and Bulgarian liturgical typika, hagiography, and hymnography. Moreover, during his journey to Moscow, Maximus was accompanied by a Serbian, a Bulgarian and possibly also two Russian monks, further enabling Slavic verbal (and monastically impacted) linguistic influences.

Conversely, the study of Maximus's manuscripts and his language – which also attests to his remarkable mnemohistory – aligns closely with his apologetic attitude toward his own authorship.

During his formative years in Italy, Maximus had already sought to assert his identity, albeit inconsistently, through the dynamic use of nicknames rather than literary pseudonyms, all reflecting his Greek heritage. He referred to himself as the Lacedemonian (Greek: ὁ ἐκ Σπάρτης Λακεδαιμόνιος; transl. “someone of Spartan origin”) and Dorileos (Δωρίλειος; referencing his Dorian roots),⁸⁵ both names emphasizing his Greek origins⁸⁶ and characterizing his Italian period.

⁸⁴ For possible Serbian linguistic features of the language of Maximus the Greek, see Galina A. Kazimova, “О возможном сербском компоненте в связи с меной генитива и локатива мн.ч. существительных в славянском тексте гомилий Василия Великого на псалмы и некоторых других святоотеческих текстах (ГИМ, Син-238, лл. 456–786), считающихся переводами Максима Грека” [About the Possible Componential Change in the Nouns between Genitive and Locative Plural: The Case of the Slavic Homily of Basil the Great on Psalms and Some Other Patristic Works (GIM, Sin. 238, fol. 456–786), considered as the translations of Maksim Grek], *Crkvene studije* XVI, no. 2 (2019): 659–673.

⁸⁵ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 45; Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 94, 97.

⁸⁶ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 91.

His self-image in personal writings and correspondence, particularly during the painful periods of his life in Italy and Muscovy, often evokes the metaphor of a storm-tossed ship: a soul buffeted by wind and waves, unable to find a calm harbor, or resembling a ship without an anchor. This imagery reflects his sense of having no true homeland. In this context, his interpretation of Aldo Manuzio's signature – the anchor – acquires symbolic significance, suggesting the capacity to safeguard souls, akin to a secure haven.

Despite his periods of displacement, Maximus remained steadfastly attached to Greece until his final days. He ultimately achieved spiritual and intellectual fulfillment on Mount Athos through his monastic ordination at the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, an environment that most closely aligned with his inner mission, both personal and religious.

EPILOGUE

In 1552, four years before his death, Maxim the Greek finally regained a degree of personal freedom. In the same year, he translated two of his own works – *On Repentance* and *Against Hellenistic Knowledge* – from Slavonic into Greek.⁸⁷ These two Greek poems, written by a scribe, described as “a Greek who could have worked in Greece as well as outside that country,” were only recently attributed to Maxim following their discovery in the National Library in Vienna. The texts are preserved together with a “Letter of Presentation,” which states that the poems were sent “from the city of Moscow, the reigning city of all the northernmost Rosia” in 1551/1552.⁸⁸ The two poems were found as part of a Greek manuscript which also contains the works of Sopatro,⁸⁹ whose manuscript Maxim copied during his Italian period.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ In fact, these two Greek poems were Maxim's own translations of his texts from Slavic to Greek, see Ihor Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output of Maksim Grek,” *Byzantinoslavica* 58 (1997), 9).

⁸⁸ Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output,” 40–41.

⁸⁹ Herbert Hunger, *Studien zur griechischen Paläographie* (Wien: Brüder Hollinek, 1954), 313.

⁹⁰ His Florentine copy of the “three-handed” Commentaries on Hermogenus by Greek rhetoricians, Sirianus, Sopatro and Marcellinus, see Mss. Laur. Plut. 55, 20, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence; Speranzi, “Giano Lascari e i suoi copisti.” 337–377; Speranzi, “Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari,” 276–278. This manuscript displays not only his own verses, but also an

Maxim sent the aforementioned letter, containing the two poems, in the hope that it would reach the appropriate addressee somewhere in central Europe, having a specific European audience in mind. In both poems Maxim presents an account of the monastic and Orthodox response to the European Renaissance. His awareness of the continued influence of Hellenistic doctrines demonstrates his acute comprehension of the prevailing European intellectual climate. Yet he felt obliged to warn his audience of the potentially harmful influence of ancient content (the second poem) and to call for repentance (the first poem). His perspective can be understood as a Christian reception of humanistic endeavours. Consequently, he sought to caution his addressee against certain classical ideas – popular in Renaissance Italy – that he deemed incompatible with spiritual growth, advocating instead a return to humility by the strict self-repentance practice.⁹¹ Importantly, these poems, sent in the form of a personal letter, suggest that even while imprisoned in a monastery in Muscovite Russia, Maxim maintained a degree of contact with the outside world. This, in turn, indicates that he was able either to restore previously established connections or to maintain existing ones – or, less likely, to establish new contacts – primarily with Europe rather than with Greece.

“The Letter of Presentation” also contains a noteworthy self-identification, in which Maxim employs a quasi-geographical, ancient reference to describe himself as a Hyperborean:

To Macrobius, who is loudly known as the lover of all holy wisdom, Minimos, rather than Maximos, the one who was once a Helladian and is now a Hyperborean, salutations in the Lord. When you receive this little work of love, correct it in all its imperfections. And when you have corrected it, do not let it fall into the depths of oblivion, but make it known to other lovers of the truth, as it deserves. And if not all, at least some of them will be taken out of the immeasurable furious affection by the Hellenistic

ornamented monokondyilion with a shape, corresponding to his father’s name Manuil, see Speranzi, “Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari,” 266; Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l’Occident*, 136. At that time in Florence Maxim also copied *De divinis Nominibus of Dionysius Areopagite*, see Dionysius Areopagite, *De divinis Nominibus*, Laur. Conv Soppr. 104, Manuscript, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence; Speranzi, “Massimo il Greco a San Marco,” 191.

⁹¹ There are several other Maxim’s texts on repentance, which are primarily addressed to the Russians and their monastic reality.

*delusion of which they are so helplessly sick. Farewell, beloved companion and brother in the Lord.*⁹²

In this short letter, Maximus the Greek clearly defines his biography by providing the former indication (a Helladian)⁹³ and the acquainted, a distinctive adjective that is historically complex but already classical and quasi-national, perhaps demonym, a Hyperborean.⁹⁴ He was confident about his addressee understanding his final self-identification.

To conclude, scholars have thus far failed to identify any historically attested 16th-century individual bearing the name *Macrobius*,⁹⁵ whether as a personal name, a nickname (Ševčenko), or a literary pseudonym (Bushkovich). There is, however, broad scholarly agreement that he was most likely “a Western man or a Greek with a Western education.”⁹⁶

The identity of the individual referred to as “Macrobius” in the 16th century, as well as the rationale behind Maximus’s choice of this cognomen, remains obscure. A full clarification of the enigma surrounding this “last trusted” addressee of Maximus the Greek lies beyond the scope of the present chapter.

⁹² Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output,” 40–41.

⁹³ A hapax in the meaning of inhabitant of Hellas was attested as a proper name in the Anth. Pal. (8: 151, 2); Gregory of Nazianzus (153, 3) and in Lexicon Suidas (its content Maximus closely knew). Laskaris used “Elladikos,” see Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output,” 40, no. 2.

⁹⁴ This word was attested in Strabo’s Geography (Maxim in Italy copied this manuscript).

⁹⁵ Macrobius should be considered a “nickname, to be understood among the initiates,” see Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output,” 41.

⁹⁶ Paul Bushkovich, “Maksim Grek – poet ‘giperboreec’” [Maksim Grek – a Poet ‘Hyperborean’], *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы* (ТОДРЛ) 47 (1993): 218.

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PART II
LEXICOGRAPHY

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BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH AND PRESENTATION IN THE MIROSLAV KRLEŽA INSTITUTE OF LEXICOGRAPHY: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Filip Hameršak and Nataša Jerman

Founded in 1950 by the Federal Government of Yugoslavia, the Institute of Lexicography in Zagreb, later named after erudite Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža, its initiator and first director, is one of the key places for biographical research in Croatia.¹

Nevertheless, interest in biography, and even interest in biographical dictionaries of a sort, is of much older date, if we consider the territory of what is today the Republic of Croatia.² For instance, already in 1518, a poet and philosopher from Split, Marko Marulić, compiled a manuscript *De Veteris instrumenti viris illustribus commentarium* containing biographies

¹ “Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža,” *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013–2024), accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/leksikografski-zavod-miroslav-krleza>; see also *Radovi Leksikografskoga zavoda Miroslav Krleža* 10 (2001), special issue on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Institute, accessed February 8, 2024, https://www.lzmk.hr/images/RadoviLZMK/LZMK_radovi_10.html.

² The starting point for this review was “Biografske zbirke i leksikoni u Hrvata” by Žarko Domljan published in *Forum* 27, no. 5–6 (1988): 474–484, but we also drew the data from the prefaces and content of individual editions as well as from other sources that we refer to. See also Igor Gostl, “Od glagolskih lucidarija do ‘Hrvatske enciklopedije,’” *Radovi Leksikografskoga zavoda “Miroslav Krleža”* 4 (1995): 81–94, accessed February 9, 2024, https://www.lzmk.hr/images/RadoviLZMK/LZMK_radovi_4.html; Aleksandar Stipčević, *Priča o Hrvatskom biografskom leksikonu: pokušaj ubojstva jedne knjige* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1997), 9–15.

of Old Testament personalities (printed only in 1979).³ In 1541, a Dominican priest from Dubrovnik, Ambroz Ranjina, published almost two dozen short biographies of the Dominican friars of the Dubrovnik region, at that time an independent city-state, now a part of southern Croatia.⁴ In 1605, a Dubrovnik polymath and bishop Ambroz Gučetić, followed suit, publishing a volume with biographies of 790 Dominican friars from all around the world who were noted for their literary work, sixteen of them being from Dubrovnik and another six from historic Dalmatia, i.e. southern Croatia.⁵

In the 17th and 18th centuries, this was followed by several authors making their own collections of short biographies of men-of-letters and other notable individuals from Dubrovnik, Split or Dalmatia, but most of them were printed only in the 19th century or later, save for the volume published in 1767 by a Dubrovnik theologian and writer Sebastijan Slade Dolci, which consisted of 272 biographies of Dubrovnik writers.⁶ A bit later, since the mid-18th century, similar endeavours were undertaken by north-Croatian scholars such as historian, theologian and jurist Baltazar Adam Krčelić,⁷ Latinist, bibliophile and polymath Adam Alojzij Baričević,⁸ and writer, translator and publisher

³ Bratislav Lučin, “Manulić, Marko,” *Hrvatski biografski leksikon, mrežno izdanje* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2024), accessed February 9, 2024, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/manulic-marko>.

⁴ Ambroz Ranjina, “Epistola,” in Klement Ranjina, *Quodlibet declamatorium* (Venetiis: arte necnon perugili diligentia ad ipsius correctionem probi viri Nicolai Bascarini, Sumptibus illustrium dominorum Ragusi, 1541).

⁵ Ambroz Gučetić, *Catalogus virorum ex familia Praedicatorum in litteris insignium* (Venetiis: apud Franciscum Barilettum, 1605); cf. Stjepan Krasić, “Gučetić, Ambroz,” in *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 5 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2002), 285–286, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/gucetic-ambroz>.

⁶ Sebastijan Slade Dolci, *Fasti litterario-ragusini* (Venetiis: excudebat Gaspar Storti Praesidium Facultate, 1767); cf. “Slade Dolci, Sebastijan,” *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013–2024), accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/slade-dolci-sebastijan>.

⁷ Baltazar Adam Krčelić, *Historiarum cathedralis ecclesiae Zagrabienensis partis primae tomus I* (Zagrabiae: typis Antonii Jandera, 1769); Baltazar Adam Krčelić, *Scriptorum ex regno Slavoniae a seculo XIV. usque ad XVII. inclusive collectio* (Varasdini: typis Joan. Thomae nobilis de Trattnern, 1774). Cf. Teodora Shek Brnardić, “Krčelić, Baltazar Adam,” in *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 8 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013), 91–95, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/krcelic-baltazar-adam>.

⁸ Adam Alojzij Baričević, *De scriptoribus Pannoniae Saviae. Collectanea*, manuscript R4292, Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica u Zagrebu, Zagreb; cf. Elizabeta Palanović, “Baričević, Adam Alojzij,” in *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 1 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1983), 460–462, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/baricevic-adam-alojzij>.

Tomaš Mikloušić,⁹ ever increasingly taking into account not only local and regional clergymen but also lay writers.

The early 19th century was marked by biographical compendiums of historian, philologist and poet Franjo Marija Appendini,¹⁰ a Piedmont-born citizen of Dubrovnik, and of horticulturist and publicist Mihal (Mihovil) von Kunič,¹¹ a Slovakian-born citizen of Zagreb, Varaždin and Karlovac. The first one published mostly in Italian, on Dalmatian writers, and the latter mostly in German, on illustrious people from all over the Habsburg Monarchy, including those from Croatian lands. In fact, Kunič's work was later recognised as a direct precursor to the renowned Wurzbach's biographical lexicon,¹² the first volume of which was published in 1856.¹³ In addition, in the 1820s, historian Petar Matija Stanković published a three-volume biographical dictionary entitled *Biography of Distinguished Men of Istria*.¹⁴

Exposed to conquests for centuries and brought together only in the early 19th century under Habsburg rule, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and Istria were in many ways behind the development trends in Western and Northern Europe, where multivolume encyclopedias and dictionaries had often been printed already in the 18th century. Still, despite the more or less pronounced

⁹ Tomaš Mikloušić, *Izbor dugoványh vszakoverztnéh za haszen, y razveszelénye szluséchéh* (Zagreb: Pritzkan vu Novoszszelzokoj Szlovarnicze, 1821); cf. "Mikloušić, Tomaš," *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013–2024), accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/miklousic-tomas>.

¹⁰ Franjo Marija Appendini, *Notizie storico-critiche sulle antichità, storia e letteratura de' Ragusei*, 2 vols. (Ragusa: dalle stampe di Antonio Martecchini. Con licenza de' superiori, 1802–1803); Franjo Marija Appendini, *Memorie spettanti ad alcuni uomini illustri di Cattaro* (Ragusa: presso Antonio Martecchini, nella stamperia privilegiata, 1811). Cf. Miljenko Foretić, "Appendini, Franjo Marija," in *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 1 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1983), 213–215, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/appendini-franjo-marija>.

¹¹ Mihal von Kunič, *Biographien merkwürdiger Männer der österreichischen Monarchie*, 6 vols. (Grätz: gedruckt bey den Gebrüder Tanzer, 1805–1812); cf. Iva Mandušić, "Kunič, Mihal von," in *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 8 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013), 393, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/kunic-mihal-von>.

¹² Karl Glossy, "Wurzbach, Constantin von," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 55 (Leipzig: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1910), 135–138, accessed February 10, 2024, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119532522.html#adbcontent>.

¹³ Constant von Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, 60 vols. (Wien: Verlag der Universitäts-Buchdruckerei von L. C. Zamarski, 1856–1891).

¹⁴ Petar Matija Stanković, *Biographia degli uomini distinti dell'Istria*, 3 vols. (Trieste: presso Gio. Marenigh tipografo, 1828–1829), accessed February 10, 2024, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/search?filter=volumes%3A%22bsb10071011%22FBV001686954%22>.

expressions of the hegemonic strivings of Vienna and Pest, from the 1830s the legalist insistence on centuries-long state continuity became increasingly intertwined with broader cultural-political activity, which, in the sense of national integration, continued to be linked to the real, though sometimes disputed, subjectivity of the Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia and the symbolic subjectivity of the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia until the end of World War I. There were also thoughts about expanding this Croatian core into a broader “Illyrian” or, later, “Yugoslav” integration as well as about winning over the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims.¹⁵

Besides newspapers and journals financed through relatively small but well-established subscriber circles, who were, along with patronage, the main source of new civil associations such as the Matica hrvatska (Matrix Croatica), and the Society of St Jerome, there was a strengthening of state institutions such as the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, the University of Zagreb, and gymnasiums (high schools), especially after the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement of 1868.

Within the frame of such increased interest in a national identity-based conception of the past, already in the 1850s and 1860s, historians Šime Ljubić and Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski published biographical compendiums of limited extent: *Biographical Dictionary of the Renowned People of Dalmatia*,¹⁶ *Dictionary of Yugoslav Artists*,¹⁷ and *Famous Croats of the Past Centuries*.¹⁸

Speaking of Dalmatia, we should also mention poet and librarian Giuseppe Ferrari-Cupilli and his son Simeone, both natives of Zadar, who authored several biographical works, the most notable one being *Biographical Notes of Some Illustrious Men in Dalmatia*.¹⁹

¹⁵ Filip Hameršak, “Moderna hrvatska enciklopedika između struke, države i društva,” *Studia lexicographica* 14, no. 27 (2020): 9–14, accessed February 10, 2024, <https://studialexicographica.lzmk.hr/sl/article/view/329>.

¹⁶ Šime Ljubić, *Dizionario biografico degli uomini illustri della Dalmazia* (Vienna: Rod. Lechner Librajo dell’I. R. Università; Zara: Battara e Abelich Libraj, 1856).

¹⁷ Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, *Slovník umjetnikah jugoslavenskih*, 5 vols. (Zagreb: tiskom Narodne tiskarne Dra. Ljudevita Gaja, 1858–1860).

¹⁸ Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, *Glasoviti Hrvati prošlih vjekova* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1886).

¹⁹ Simeone Ferrari-Cupilli, *Cenni biografici di alcuni uomini illustri della Dalmazia* (Zara: Tip. edit. S. Artale, 1887), accessed February 10, 2024, <https://www.openstarts.units.it/entities/publication/f2f330e9-a8b5-46d4-ad33-0ac8e37908a2/details>; cf. Ivan Pederin and Editorial Board, “Ferrari Cupilli, Giuseppe,” in *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 4 (Zagreb:

In the late 1890s, journalist and writer Milan Grlović compiled an impressive *Album of Worthy Croats of the 19th Century*²⁰ for a private publisher in Zagreb, containing 150 biographies, sometimes written in a rather free style, but covering the entire area of the Triune Kingdom, with much data and politically balanced, including even the biography of Eugen Kvaternik, a rebel against the then ruler, Francis Joseph I. Almost at the same time, also in Zagreb, historian Andra Gavrilović published a similar volume on 216 renowned Serbs of the same period.²¹

During the initial years of the 20th century, librarian Velimir Deželić, Sr started collecting data for a *Croatian Biographical Dictionary* (Hrvatski biografički rječnik). In addition to publishing some biographies in the popular press, he strived for wider support, but following the generous donation of retired general Marko Crljen, the Zagreb seated Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts opted instead for a national encyclopedia that would also include Slovenian, Serbian and Bulgarian topics, and was supposed to have been made in cooperation with the respective national academies or matrices. However, the plan was abandoned because of the Second Balkan War and World War I, and work on the *Croatian Biographical Dictionary* was continued under the auspices of the Yugoslav Academy until early 1920s, when it was finally stopped, most probably because of the political situation in the newly formed Yugoslav state.

Consequently, in 1925, on the occasion of the thousandth anniversary of the founding of the Croatian kingdom, most of the Deželić's material was included in one huge, privately published volume, *Famous and Meritorious Croats and Noteworthy Figures in Croatian History from 925 to 1925*,²² the first Croatian large-scale national biographical lexicon, consisting of approximately 2200 entries. The introductory historical overview was critical towards the way in which the common South Slav state had been established, but also optimistic because Stjepan Radić, the leading Croatian politician of the time, had recently recognised the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty. A significant part

Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1998), 184–185, accessed February 10, 2024, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/ferrari-cupilli-giuseppe>.

²⁰ Milan Grlović, *Album zaslužnih Hrvata XIX. stoljeća* (Zagreb: Naklada i tisak Matičevog litografskog zavoda, 1898–1900).

²¹ Andra Gavrilović, *Znameniti Srbi XIX. veka* (Zagreb: Naklada Srpske štamparije, 1903).

²² *Znameniti i zaslužni Hrvati te pomena vrijedna lica u Hrvatskoj povijesti od 925–1925* (Zagreb: Odbor za izdanje knjige “Znameniti i zaslužni Hrvati 925–1925,” 1925).

of the introduction was devoted to Istria, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the publication included a number of Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims. The author of these entries, orientalist and poet Safvet Bey Bašagić, published his own biographical dictionary in Zagreb in 1931, entitled *Famous Bosnian and Herzegovinian Croats in the Turkish Empire*.²³

From the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s, several general- or national-type encyclopaedias or lexicons were published, also covering topics involving Croatian themes, including biographies that are well worth analysing, especially in the terms of their, so to say, positivistic objectivity in spite of the wider social and political context. From 1925 to 1929, Serbian historian Stanoje Stanojević published four volumes of the *Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian National Encyclopedia*²⁴ in Zagreb. This encyclopedia included, for example, neutral biographies of Austrian-Hungarian generals who fought against Serbia and Montenegro. *Lexicon Minerva*²⁵ was published in 1936 by Minerva publishing bookstore (under the editorship of the Germanist Gustav Šamšalović); it represented the first general-type lexicon in the Croatian language also covering “scientific and cultural workers” from the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Lexicographer and publicist Mate Ujević, director of the Croatian Publishing and Bibliographic Institute (Hrvatski izdavalačko-bibliografski zavod), was the initiator and editor-in-chief of the *Croatian Encyclopedia* (1941–1945), the first modern Croatian national and general encyclopedia, which was originally planned in twelve volumes but, due to wartime circumstances, only five were ultimately published.²⁶ The *Encyclopedia* was largely unaffected by wartime propaganda and included neutral biographies of Allied political and military leaders (e.g. Winston Churchill and Dwight Eisenhower), in spite of the pro-Axis alignment of the Independent State of Croatia.²⁷

²³ Safvet-beg Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u turskoj carevini* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1931).

²⁴ Stanoje Stanojević, *Narodna enciklopedija srpsko-hrvatsko-slovenačka*, 4 vols. (Zagreb: Bibliografski zavod d.d., 1925–1929).

²⁵ *Leksikon Minerva: praktični priručnik za modernog čovjeka u jednom svesku* (Zagreb: Minerva nakladna knjižara, 1936).

²⁶ *Hrvatska enciklopedija*, 5 vols. (Zagreb: Naklada konzorcija Hrvatske enciklopedije (vol. 1); Naklada Hrvatskog izdavačkog bibliografskog zavoda (vol. 2–5), 1941–1945), accessed February 10, 2024, <https://hemu.lzmk.hr/>.

²⁷ Cf. Mladen Švab, “Iz povijesti hrvatske enciklopedike – Hrvatska enciklopedija,” *Radovi Leksikografskoga zavoda “Miroslav Krleža”* 1 (1991): 79–83, accessed February 10, 2024, https://www.lzmk.hr/images/RadoviLZMK/LZMK_radovi_1.html; Mladen Švab, “Mate

When founded in 1950, the Institute of Lexicography in Zagreb got the official primary task to publish a multivolume *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, which was achieved from 1955 to 1971.²⁸ Some of the included larger biographies were grounded in dedicated research and remained basic reference sources for decades. Some combined research or at least general information with Yugoslav-Marxist ideological verdicts that were later abandoned or revised even before the fall of communism. However, albeit on a limited scale, even so-called negative historical personalities were included.

In the 1950s, a more neutral bibliographical project was also completed, giving a long-lasting basis for biographical research.²⁹ By effort of around 700 hundred contributors and a very skilled editorial staff, led by Ujević – at the time Krleža’s deputy – practically all available South Slavic (less-Bulgarian) periodicals, including newspapers, from the late 18th century to 1945 were processed, excerpting approximately 2.2 million units of reference, that were later copied onto 10 million cards (Catalogue of the Retrospective Bibliography of Articles).^{30,31} Therefore, every unit or text could be found according to its author, thematic keyword, or field or genre. Some 100 000 authors have thus been discerned, while the anonymous texts were listed according to title. In order to identify authors hidden behind pseudonyms and codes many of the still living pre-1945 newspaper editors and other intellectuals were consulted, although some of them were blacklisted by the Communist authorities.³²

Ujević, utemeljitelj suvremene hrvatske enciklopedike,” *Radovi Leksikografskoga zavoda “Miroslav Krleža”* 2 (1992): 9–73, accessed February 10, 2024, https://www.lzmk.hr/images/RadoviLZMK/LZMK_radovi_2.html.

²⁸ *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, 1st ed., 8 vols. (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ (vol. 1–5) / Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod (vol. 6–8), 1955–1971); *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, 2nd ed., 6 vols. (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod (vol. 1–3) / Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod “Miroslav Krleža” (vol. 4–6), 1980–1990).

²⁹ Jasna Ivančić, “Katalog retrospektivne bibliografije članaka Leksikografskoga zavoda Miroslav Krleža: ustroj i povijest nastanka,” *Studia lexicographica* 1, no. 1 (2007): 129–150, accessed February 10, 2024, <https://studialexicographica.lzmk.hr/sl/article/view/13/12>.

³⁰ Mate Ujević, *Bibliographie rétrospective des études, des articles et des belles-lettres parus dans la presse périodique yougoslave* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1957).

³¹ Charles Jelavich, “The importance of the Leksikografski zavod to the Scholar,” *Slavic Review* 21, no. 2 (1962): 330–335.

³² Digitised Authors’ catalogue and Catalogue of resolved pseudonyms, codes and initials are available online: “Digitalizirani katalog,” Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, accessed February 10, 2024, <https://katalog.lzmk.hr/>.

As a result, mostly devoid of any ideologically driven selection key, many lesser-known individuals were saved from oblivion thanks to this virtually unique project, while more complete corpuses were established for the better-known ones, including texts about them, reviews, and biographical contributions, from which basic data such as occupation and dates of birth and death were also recorded. Between 1956 and 2004, a select 20 percent of these units of reference, up to the year 1940, were published in 16 volumes on various fields.³³

During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, biographical entries were also present in other publications of the Institute of Lexicography, in a way analogous to the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*, but generally in a shorter form. Some of these biographies, especially those in the multivolume *Maritime Encyclopaedia*³⁴ and the *Encyclopaedia of Music*,³⁵ also had a research component. Moreover, in 1955 Ujević prepared a single 860-page volume containing only quotations on various matters from the works of famous Croatian writer Antun Gustav Matoš.³⁶

Not willing to renounce his support for the *Declaration on the Name and Status of the Croatian Literary Language*, in 1967, Krleža resigned from the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia, and his public presence was reduced to a certain degree.³⁷ Although Krleža did not overtly participate in the Croatian Spring movement, it seems that at that time he became more and more wary about the possibility of the so-called Yugoslav synthesis. In 1972, the finances of the Institute of the Lexicography were relegated from the federal to the Croatian republican level. Also, in

³³ *Bibliografija rasprava, članaka i književnih radova*, 14 vols. (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ (vol. 1–6) / Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod (vol. 7–12) / Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod “Miroslav Krleža” (vol. 13–14), 1956–1986); *Bibliografija rasprava i članaka – Kazalište u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini 1826–1945*, 2 vols. (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2004).

³⁴ *Pomorska enciklopedija*, 1st ed., 8 vols. (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ (vol. 1–7) / Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod (vol. 8), 1954–1964); *Pomorska enciklopedija*, 2nd ed., 8 vols. (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1972–1989).

³⁵ *Muzička enciklopedija*, 1st ed., 2 vols. (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ (vol. 1) / Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod (vol. 2), 1958–1963); *Muzička enciklopedija*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1971–1977).

³⁶ Mate Ujević, *Misli i pogledi A. G. Matoša* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1955).

³⁷ Velimir Visković, “Životopis,” in *Krležijana*, vol. 2 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1999), 586, accessed February 10, 2024, <https://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/clanak/zivotopis>.

that year Director Krleža publicly spoke to Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito about the aforementioned 10 million bibliographical cards, stating that they would be a great basis for a “bibliographical dictionary.”³⁸

Obviously following Krleža’s instructions, already in 1973 philologist and philosopher Kruno Krstić, one of the leading experts of the Institute, prepared a plan for a multivolume Croatian biographical i.e. bibliographical lexicon. Arguably by no accident, it was the first and only project of the Institute until the 1990s that held the attribute “Croatian” and covered only Croatia-related topics. Initially, eight volumes were nominally planned, but soon it became obvious that a dozen or more would be more realistic, especially following the idea of both Krleža and Krstić that many of the so-called “little people” should also be included, and that the so-called “negative persons” were not to be excluded.

In 1977, the first editor-in-chief, literary historian Nikica Kolumbić, was appointed, refining the general concept, article content and structure, and leading a group of employees that searched through around 300 published sources as well as library catalogues, thus preparing a list of approximately 25,000 individuals. During this preparatory phase, the project was known as the *Biobibliographical Lexicon of Croatia*, and it was also decided that living persons were to be included, if born earlier than 1946. Also, around 2000 entries and questionnaires for the terminated 1916 *Croatian Biographical Dictionary* were acquired from the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts as a good starting point.³⁹

In 1978, a well-prepared and well-attended consultative meeting was held, attended by respected members from the political and cultural scene. Every participant was given extensive written explanations, lists of sources etc., and there were no objections recorded. After that, work intensified, including 20 or more permanent staff members and 273 contributors.

As a result, the first volume, covering the letters from A to Bi, including 1763 articles on 800 pages, was published in December 1983, under the title

³⁸ Vlaho Bogišić, “Ujević, Mate,” in *Krležijana*, vol. 2 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1999), 462–463, accessed February 10, 2024, <https://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/clanak/ujevic-mate>.

³⁹ The early phase of this project is well-covered by various documents stored in the archives of the Institute of Lexicography. See also Stipčević, *Priča o Hrvatskom biografskom leksikonu*, 16–25.

Croatian Biographical Lexicon (CBL).⁴⁰ Dying in 1981, Director Krleža was in no position either to approve or disapprove of its final content. Be it as it may, in the foreword, the scope of the dictionary was defined to include “prominent Croats (individuals and families) or people of Croatian origin, living and acting all around the globe, prominent members of other nations and nationalities born on the territory of the Socialist Republic of Croatia as well as foreigners that lived and acted on this soil.”⁴¹ Although not stated in the foreword, as a practical rule, the earliest persons included were those who lived in post-Migration Period (early Middle Ages) and, apart from some exceptions, neither the individuals nor the families were explicitly described in terms of their ethnicity.

However, soon after the book launch, serious attacks started in the press. The first blow was given by writer Goran Babić who stated that such a pro-right and clerical book such as the CBL could have been published only because Krleža was dead. The Praxis-school philosopher Milan Kangrga followed suit, stating that it would be unacceptable for him to be included in the same volume as some negative personalities.⁴² Other authors objected to having too many clergymen and too few workers or revolutionaries, that not stating ethnicity equates the role of Croatian Serbs to that of Italians or Hungarians, that the language editing was too archaic and even too puristic, reminiscent of that used in the Independent State of Croatia. One of the most common, but also one of the most unclear objections was that the dictionary is not Marxist enough. On the other hand, direct allegations of Croatian nationalism were rare, and practically reserved for radicals such as Babić, who in fact himself wrote at least one rather nationalistic poem during the Croatian Spring. To be sure, some of the more technical remarks were founded to a certain degree, and soon it became obvious that the core of the state and Communist Party officials did not really want the volume to be banned. In mid-1984, a round table discussion was organised by the League of Communists of Croatia Centre for Ideational and Theoretical

⁴⁰ *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 1 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1983).

⁴¹ Editorial foreword to *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 1, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, accessed February 10, 2024, https://media.lzmk.hr/hbl/PDF/HBL_1%20predgovor.pdf.

⁴² Bibliographic references for these and other critical texts are given in Stipčević, *Priča o Hrvatskom biografskom leksikonu*, 38–56.

Work, resulting in a curious publication named *Aporias of the Croatian Biographical Dictionary*.⁴³

Conclusively, the work on the second volume was continued, with a new foreword, and under the supervision or, perhaps more likely, a covering body of respected scholars, called the Council. Under the new editor-in-chief, archaeologist and librarian Aleksandar Stipčević, the list of persons was revised, and enlarged with a number of minor communist political workers and Yugoslav People's Army officers, resulting in a total of 1829 articles, which were supposed to be ready for print in mid-1988. However, according to Stipčević, who later wrote an entire (previously already cited) book on the subject, afraid of another scandal, the management of the Institute decided to stall with its printing, which was over only in December 1989, in the wake of the introduction of political pluralism.^{44, 45}

After that, from the third volume, published in 1993, to the eighth volume, published in 2013, work was continued under the third editor-in-chief, historian Trpimir Macan, in more stable circumstances.⁴⁶ Macan's vision of the CBL rightly put more emphasis on the research and interpretative components, requiring, for instance, the contributors to read, record and retell as many works authored by the subjects as possible, to note the location of their manuscripts and letters, any controversial opinions about them, and even their possible reception in arts, such as literary works, paintings, medals and so on. As a result, the standard number of entries per volume fell from 1700 or even 1800 to 1200, individual articles being longer and more time-consuming to write. All in all, those planned 25,000 articles, including possible supplements, will need around 20 volumes, and a time span of another 40 years to be published, which is the price to be paid for such a dense biographical covering of the past population of Croatia. For instance, the *Biographical Lexicon of Italians*,⁴⁷ published from 1960 to

⁴³ *Aporije hrvatskog biografskog leksikona* (Zagreb: Centar za idejno-teorijski rad GK SKH Zagreb, 1984).

⁴⁴ Stipčević, *Priča o Hrvatskom biografskom leksikonu*, 82–181.

⁴⁵ *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 2 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod "Miroslav Krleža," 1989).

⁴⁶ *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 3–8 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1993–2013).

⁴⁷ *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 100 vols. (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–2020), accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.treccani.it/biografico/>.

2020 includes some 40,000 biographies, while the online British *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*⁴⁸ has around 60,000 articles. Given the proportions, i.e. relative size of the population and the history of literacy, a Croatian biographical dictionary of a similar type should have no more than 3000 articles.

Moreover, Macan was the head of the Institute's multidisciplinary research project "Croatian Biobibliographic Heritage," funded by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports from 2001 to 2006, whose research results were implemented in the CBL as well as in the project's collected papers *Biobibliographica*.⁴⁹

During those twenty years of Macan's leadership only three or four negative appraisals were recorded, the one in 2003 closely resembling the discourse of Babić and Kangrga. In that case, all members of the editorial staff were called out by name for not including one film director and one actress on the grounds of not being good enough Croats, while on the other hand Ustasha leaders were given space.⁵⁰ The appraisal also criticised the Croatian government for financing such projects. However, having later been warned that the real reason for not including those two was the 1945 birthyear limit,⁵¹ as stated in the foreword, this author reacted with a sincere apology.⁵²

Available on the Internet since 2008,⁵³ the CBL has continued to publish new articles, reaching a total number of 12,547 with its ninth volume (Lo-Marj), printed in 2021 under the fourth editor-in-chief, Nikša Lučić, also a historian, and additional 104 online-only biographies (Mark-Ž).⁵⁴ During this time, the key challenges have also changed. First of all, general public interest in such publications has fallen, even if they are available online. Many CBL articles were used by the Croatian Wikipedia, but often altered without permission, or at least without proper attribution. Borrowing whole

⁴⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/>.

⁴⁹ *Biobibliographica: zbornik znanstveno-istraživačkoga projekta Hrvatska bio-bibliografska baština*, 4 vols. (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2003–2014).

⁵⁰ *Feral Tribune*, February 22, 2003, 4.

⁵¹ *Feral Tribune*, March 1, 2003, 4.

⁵² *Feral Tribune*, March 15, 2003, 4.

⁵³ *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr>.

⁵⁴ *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. 9 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021).

sentences without specifying the source is regular practice of Google info panels, not to mention ChatGPT and other AI systems. Secondly, digitisation projects were of uneven scope and quality, opening vast but hardly searchable material on the one hand, and on the other hand not eliminating the need to physically go to archives or libraries, where material could be unavailable due to being sent to the outsourced digitisation company, or simply because it is in too bad a condition. Furthermore, some fields, especially medicine and natural and technical sciences have limited interest for their past and earlier developments, which makes contributors hard to find. Even in the fields of history and literary science, biographical and bibliographical research remains a kind of unattended foster child, the term biographical turn hasn't yet been heard of. Having also in mind that contributors' fees have for years been almost symbolically small (one cent per one character), their average number per volume has dropped to 200, while the permanent staff has grown to around 24 editors and associates.

However, in terms of approach, Macan's vision is still being realised, albeit with one difference. Because the leadership of the Institute thought the project to be too slow and not visible enough, in 2013 it was decided to make an Internet only supplement that will include one hundred of the most prominent biographies all the way to the letter Ž. It was a bold move, not yet completely realised, having also a side-effect of slowing the work on the ninth volume for at least two years.

Furthermore, the CBL and the Institute joined several digital biographical projects such as Znameniti.hr. – a thematic portal containing digital material on the leaders of Croatian culture, science, arts and public life from different collections/repositories,⁵⁵ a DARIAH-ERIC project Cooperation Framework of Digital Infrastructure in the Region: Opportunities and Needs in the Case of Material Concerning Famous People in Science and Culture, and a Horizon 2020 project In/Tangible European Heritage: Visual Analysis, Curation and Communication – InTaVia, one of whose goals is to develop a methodology for harmonising, structuring, and integrating data from European national biographical databases.⁵⁶ Also, in order to

⁵⁵ "Znameniti.hr," accessed February 14, 2024, <https://znameniti.hr/>.

⁵⁶ INTAVIA: In/ Tangible European Heritage: Visual Analysis, Curation and Communication, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://intavia.eu/>.

foster future research, an even larger Croatian Personal Database has been in development since 2001, containing 52,000 notable persons without any limit regarding their year of birth.

The newest challenge is certainly the General Data Protection Regulation, which gave some persons ideas to try to forbid anyone writing about them in a way they do not approve of, though it is still a moot point how far can this right go until some balance is reached.

At last, it is worth mentioning that several monographs and collected papers were published at the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography on the margins of the CBL, treating the themes of biography in a more extensive way or publishing manuscripts that were found during research.⁵⁷ In addition, the Institute's scientific periodical *Studia lexicographica*⁵⁸ is preparing an issue dedicated to biography (foreseen for 2024). Also, in the last 20 years or so, several so-called personal encyclopedias were published, dedicated to Krleža,⁵⁹ Matoš,⁶⁰ the 16th century writer Marin Držić⁶¹ and the 18th century scientist Ruđer Bošković.⁶²

⁵⁷ "Bibliografija izdanja Leksikografskoga zavoda Miroslav Krleža," Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://bibliografija.lzmk.hr/>.

⁵⁸ *Studia lexicographica*, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://studialexicographica.lzmk.hr/sl>.

⁵⁹ *Krležijana*, 2 vols. (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1993–1999), accessed February 14, 2024, <https://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/>; *Bibliografija Miroslava Krleže*, vol. 3 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1999).

⁶⁰ *Leksikon Antuna Gustava Matoša* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2015).

⁶¹ *Leksikon Marina Držića* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2009), accessed February 14, 2024, <https://leksikon.muzej-marindržic.eu/>; *Marin Držić: bibliografija, literatura* (Zagreb: Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica u Zagrebu; Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2009).

⁶² *Leksikon Ruđera Boškovića* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2011).

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THE PATH TO THE NEW SLOVENIAN BIOGRAPHICAL LEXICON: THE SLOVENIAN BIOGRAPHICAL/ LEXICOGRAPHICAL TRADITION¹

Petra Testen Koren, Barbara Šterbenc Svetina,
and Martin Grum

Historiography, like literature and art, has been concerned with biographies since antiquity. They have been described according to the extent to which they shed light on historical deeds and events. On the other hand, those who have written biographies of selected personalities have been primarily concerned with the extent to which and the manner in which these biographies portray the character of the protagonist. Such narratives are intended to appeal to the reader as an example of good or bad behaviour in the pursuit of his or her own moral perfection.² Much time has passed since antiquity, and the criteria for selecting personalities worthy of historical memory, as well as the methods and rules for writing biographies, have changed. Records of individuals have found their way to the reader through short, concise biographies (obituary, laudatio, lexicon article), biographical essays or other larger, more extensive works such as historical accounts, studies of individuals, but also autobiographies,

¹ This chapter in the monograph is the result of work carried out as part of the research program *The (New) Cultural History of Intellectual Heritage: Slovenian Historical Space in Its European Context* (P6-0440), funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

² Oto Luthar, Marjeta Šašel Kos, Nada Grošelj, and Gregor Pobežin, *Zgodovina historične misli* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2006), 265.

memoirs and biographical novels.³ Today, the term “biography” is used to refer to, among other things, a major literary, artistic or scientific account of a life.

The basic feature of biographical lexicons is the selection of personalities (who to include and who not to include), the second step, the evaluation, is to decide how much space to devote to each personality, and finally the content of the entry itself, what to include and what information not to include in the lexicon. This is all part of the lexicon’s editorial policy and requires a specific approach based primarily on biography. The Slovenian biographical tradition has a long history, and *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (NSBL, 2013–), which continues and builds on the work of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (SBL, 1925–1991) and, as its name suggests, is the first Slovenian biographical lexicon to have been published during most of the last century, comes at the end of the period covered by the present text, i.e. in the present day. In fact, serious work on the first volume began as early as 1922, with the publication of a glossary, specimen biographical entries and several articles outlining the purpose/guiding principle of the lexicon, which is basically still valid today, in the following words:

*... to describe the life and work of people who have made any significant contribution to science, culture and national development from remote times to the present day ... i.e., to give reliably the essential biographical and bibliographical facts, the more important literature and a concise assessment of the creative output, where this is possible.*⁴

In addition to the (updated) content and purpose of the two lexicons, there are also several fundamental points of contact. In order to base the biographical entries on up-to-date information, the editors of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* began sending questionnaires to living (public) personalities as early as the 1920s. This was the first material to be stored in the then established Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (1922), which was later supplemented by material collected by the authors of the biographical entries for the Lexicon and by documents obtained in the process of editing the entries.

³ Irena Avsenik Nabergoj, “Biografija v literarni zgodovini,” in *Biografija na prehodu v digitalnost*, ed. Mateja Ratej (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2019), 66.

⁴ *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, Book IV, vol. XV (Ljubljana: SAZU, 1991), V, from the concluding text to the fourth book).

themselves in one way or another, the community in which they lived has generally ensured that their memory has been preserved. In many cases, the individuals themselves have also ensured their legacy. But as much as we love to tell and listen to stories about life and work (achievements, feats, heroics, tragic fates, etc.), they are also the legacies of the past. It is also thanks to those who have written down these stories, thus preserving the memory of outstanding individuals, that collections of biographies have been created, followed by biographical lexicons and other lexical and/or encyclopaedic works, of which biographical entries are an essential part, alongside the encyclopaedic ones.

In the following, we will give an overview of biographical records in Slovenia from the 16th century to the present day, from the first fragments of printed biographies and their traces to the systematic records of data-organised biographical entries that can be read today. We will be interested in what these records have in common, what guided the writers in their writing (choices, decisions and working processes) and which elements stand out.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PRINTED WORD IN CARNIOLA IN THE 16TH CENTURY

An overview of biography in Slovenia begins in 1575, when a printer and bookseller Janž Mandelc⁶ opened a printing house in Ljubljana and printed, among other things, several biographical works. This does not mean, of course, that there were no records of people and their achievements before then. For example, *Die Chronik der Grafen von Cilli* [The Chronicle of the Counts of Celje], which was written in the 15th century “in honour and memory of the noble lord Count Herman of Celje,”⁷ as an anonymous author wrote in the introduction to the text, is an important document for the Slovenian region – today an important text not only for Slovenian but also for European history and for the common region itself. But it was

⁶ “Mandelc, Janez (?–after 1605),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi345933/>.

⁷ Ludovik Modest Golia, trans. and ed., *Kronika grofov Celjskih* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1972), translation and adaptation of the work, author unknown; originally published in Franz Krones, *Die Freien von Saneck und ihre Chronik als Grafen von Cilli, Teil I; Die Cillier Chronik, Teil 2* (Graz: Leuschner & Lubensky, 1883); scientific critical edition by Franz Krones.

Gutenberg's invention of movable-type printing in the 15th century that made it possible for works about outstanding people to reach a wide public. Today, this revolutionary invention can be compared to the emergence of the digital world, which with modern devices is within reach of everyone and which offers unimaginable possibilities for humanity.

In the Slovenian region, the 16th century is therefore the time when the written word reached a wider circle of people through the printing press. It is in this environment that biography finds its place. For example, two works about Herbard von Auersperg (1528–1575),⁸ the governor and warlord of Carniola, were published in 1575. In that year, during the battle of Budačko, the soldiers of the Ottoman Army, then referred to simply as Turks, shot the warlord's horse, pulled him from the saddle, murdered him and beheaded him. The spearhead, together with the head of Auersperg's relative, Frederik of Višnja Gora, was taken in procession to Istanbul, where it was embalmed and later sold to his relatives for a staggering 20,000 gold coins (according to some sources even 25,000 gold coins). The warlord's tragic death prompted the future regional administrator and viceregent of Carniola, Jurij Khisl (1558–1605),⁹ to write a more extensive eulogy. He entitled it:

*The glory of the most splendid achievements in peace and war of Herbard Auersperg, the most excellent Baron, etc., his life and his glorious death for the salvation and for the benefit of his homeland, achieved on the extreme borders of Croatia, at Budačko, on September 22, 1575, in the battle against the Turks, the most cruel attackers of the welfare of Christians that history has ever known.*¹⁰

It is a biographical account of the 16th century in the form of a laudatory text, which became the first secular bestseller to be published in Carniola. It was dedicated to an important figure, the governor and warlord of Carniola,

⁸ "Auersperg, Herbard, baron (1528–1575)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1000980/>.

⁹ "Khisl, Janez, pl. (1530–around 1593)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi273187/>.

¹⁰ Jurij Khisl, *Herbardi Aurspergy baronis etc. rerum domi militiaeque praeclarè gestarum gloria praestantissimi, vita et mors: ad salutem et commodum patriae transacta, et in Coruatiæ extremis finibus ad Budatschkum X. Calend. Oct. in proelio aduersus Turcas, omnis memoriae crudeliss. Christianorum salutis oppugnatores, gloriosissimè oppetita* (Labaci, 1575).

who contributed to the well-being of his homeland not only in times of peace – according to the author of his biography, Khisl, who recognised and appreciated the protagonist’s potential – but also in times of war, when he took part in one of the battles against the notorious and unchristian Turks. He died a horrible death, as we have just written, and his head was carried in a procession of victors to the heart of the enemy territory, after which it was embalmed and purchased with an unimaginable sum of gold coins for the people. If the beheading and its aftermath were still the custom of the victors of the time and not so unusual for the proverbially cruel Turks in the imagination of the rest of the world, the second part of the story in particular testifies not only to the importance of the people involved, but also to the attractiveness of the subject matter, which appealed to the wider masses. The impact of the story is evidenced by the two printed editions of 1575 in Latin and the German translation of 1576.¹¹

The second work on Herbard von Auersperg, printed in 1575, is no less than a funeral sermon by a Ljubljana protestant preacher Krištof Spindler¹² on the occasion of the funeral of the famous warlord, i.e. on the occasion of the typical farewell ritual to the deceased, also because it was printed. In the sermon, the speaker remembered the deceased with biographical information, which ultimately completed the picture of the bestseller published that year, but also left another biographical trace of the depiction of individuals in the spoken (sermon) and printed word.¹³

¹¹ Jurij Khisl, *Hörwarden Freyherrn zu Aursperg, etc. warhafftige, ritterliche, ansehnliche Thaten: wie er die zeit seines lebens seinem lieben Vaterland in politischen, auch ansehnlichen Kriegsbeuelchen gedient, dessen Wolfart aygnem leben fürgezogen, vnnnd auff den 22. Tag Septemb: des 75. Jars, von den Türcken bey Wudatschcki vnuersehens vberfallen, vbermant, vnd nach mit eygner hand von den Feinden genom[m]nen rach ...* (Laybach, 1576).

¹² “Spindler, Krištof (1546–1591),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi597637/>.

¹³ Krištof Spindler, *Ain christliche Leichpredig: bey der Begrebnus, weyland des Wolgebornen Herr, Herrn Hörwarden, freyherrn zu Auersperg ...* (Laybach, 1575). Only one copy of this work survives, which is damaged.

THE 17TH CENTURY AND THE GREAT WORK BY VALVASOR, THE GLORY OF THE DUCHY OF CARNIOLA

The first collection of biographies in Slovenia was compiled by a polyhistor, draughtsman, collector and publisher Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641–1693)¹⁴ under the title *Anhang deß Sechsten Buchs, welcher eine Anzahl gelehrter Scribenten begreiff, so aus Crain bürtig gewest* [An appendix to the sixth book, which contains a number of learned writers native to Carniola], he published it in 1689 as an appendix to the sixth book of his monumental work *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*.¹⁵

Valvasor conceived the collection with the ambition of introducing the reader to all the important writers of Carniola. The information for the biographical entries came partly from the people he presented in the book, half of whom were his contemporaries, and partly from the books they had written. In a short introduction he explains the chronological order of the biographies:

*However, since this appendix cannot be neatly grouped into clear chapters, the very names of the authors from Carniola, whom we intend to mention here together with their writings, should help us to classify this material. We would like to divide it up according to the sciences and disciplines in which [the authors] wrote, when not too many of them dealt with more than one science or art, both with this or that discipline and with the matter belonging to a main discipline. For this reason, we shall not follow any other order than that which is dictated by the time in which [the works] were written.*¹⁶

¹⁴ “Janez Vajkard Valvasor, baron (1641–1693),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi759993/>.

¹⁵ *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*, written in New High German, is an encyclopaedia published in Nuremberg in 1689 by the polymath Janez Vajkard Valvasor. It is the most important work on his homeland, the Duchy of Carniola, the central part of present-day Slovenia, see Janez Vajkard Valvasor, *Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain, das ist, Wahre, gründliche, und recht eigentliche Belegen- und Beschaffenheit dieses ... Römisch-Keysyerlichen herrlichen Erblandes* (Nürnberg, 1689), appendix in vol. 2, VI, 343–370.

¹⁶ Janez Vajkard Valvasor, *Slava vojvodine Kranjske*, compiled, trans. and ed. Mirko Rupel (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1977), 147–154.



Figure 8.2. Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641–1693), polyhistor, draughtsman, collector and publisher. *Source:* Digital Library of Slovenia.

The text consists of fifty-seven numbered biographical entries, each usually describing one author. Two exceptions are: the first entry on Sts. Cyril and Methodius, who are considered to be the initiators and leaders of Byzantine missionary activity among the Slavs in Moravia and Lower Pannonia in the second half of the 9th century, translators of the Bible and liturgical books into Old Church Slavic, and founders of Slavic literature. Of course, they were not born “in Slovenian territory,” nor did they fit Valvasor’s label of “writers at home in Carniola,” but he included them in his collection because of their influence and merits for the culture of the area. Another exception is the fifty-sixth entry, where the names of nine personalities from Carniola can be found who had their theses printed during their studies. The fifth entry is missing due to a numbering error.

The biographical entries are therefore arranged chronologically from Saints Cyril and Methodius to Valvasor himself, who is presented in the 57th entry. The biography of Valvasor, presumably written by the author himself and attributed to the co-author of *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*, a

German jurist and polymath Erasmus Franciscus (1627–1694),¹⁷ is entitled *The Contribution of Erasmus Franciscus to the Miscellaneous Writings of the Gentleman Himself, the Main Author of That Work*. It is also the only titled entry in the set. Interestingly, the fact that Franciscus was Valvasor's collaborator and co-author on his monumental work – of which the appendix, the first Slovenian biography collection, is an integral part – has been lost in Slovenian collective memory.

That the first printed writings with biographical elements were the basis for later collections of biographies, the forerunners of biographical dictionaries, and that the writers (and preachers) also experienced “eternal glory” and their reputation (and that of the protagonists of their biographies) was preserved over time, is proved by VIII. and IX. Valvasor's biographical entries on Krištof Spindler and Jurij Khisl, who, as the two prominent authors of biographical texts on Herbard von Auersperg in the second half of the 16th century, are the starting point of our survey of the biographical origins on the Slovenian territory. From the point of view of the criteria for inclusion in the set of selected biographies, it is interesting to note that Auersperg is not included in the set of selected biographies, since Valvasor's collection of biographies of authors from Carniola did not provide for non-writing personalities.

VIII.

Christophorus Spindler [Krištof Spindler], *the superintendent of the evangelical preachers in Carniola, had a funeral sermon in German published in Ljubljana in 1576 by Janez Mandelc, the new print master, which he delivered publicly at the funeral of the Baron Herbard von Auersperg (who had been beheaded by the Turks at Budačko) in the Church of St Elisabeth in Ljubljana. He spoke with such moving and heart-rending words that many eyes teared up and hardly anyone returned from the church unmourned.*

IX.

Georgius Kisel von Kaltenbrunn [Jurij Khisl of Fužine], *the Baron of Carniola, has very beautifully described in Latin and put into print the*

¹⁷ “Francisci, Erasmus (1627–1694),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi191508/>.

*life and death of the just-mentioned Herbard von Auersperg, who sacrificed his life in a valiant struggle for his homeland at the aforementioned Budačko, and who is very worthy of posthumous glory after having cut down many Turks with his own hand. This beautiful and readable oration (necrology) was printed in 1577 in Ljubljana in a quarto, and a manuscript copy is still available in the Auersperg Library in Ljubljana.*¹⁸

A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL WORK BIBLIOTHECA LABACENSIS PUBLICA ... AT THE TURN OF THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

The manuscript from the beginning of the 18th century entitled *The Ljubljana Public Library of the Charles College of Nobles: An Outline of the Ljubljana Public Library*, which, in keeping with the spirit of the times, bears the date “1715 from the birth of the Virgin.”¹⁹ It is the work of Janez Gregor Dolničar (1655–1719),²⁰ a lawyer, scholar of ancient inscriptions, chronicler and historian who, among other things, presented the life and work of the cultural, scientific and artistic creators of the Carniola region. Dolničar included 191 personalities in his collection and divided them into twenty-one groups by discipline, providing some biographical information on each one, as well as the titles of their printed and manuscript works (a two-part structure). Unlike Valvasor’s work, it does not follow a chronological order:

¹⁸ Janez Vajkard Valvasor, “Christophorus Spindler,” and “Georgius Kisel von Kaltenbrunn,” in *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, ed. Luka Vidmar (Ljubljana: SAZU, 2009), 53 (original), 124 (Slovenian translation).

¹⁹ Janez Gregor Dolničar, *Bibliotheca Labacensis publicae Collegii Carolini Nobilium seu De scriptoribus Carniolis, qui tum vetera, tum recentiora saecula illustrarunt, notitia locuples, qua non solum auctorum, qui ad haec usque tempora scripserunt, codices excussi vel manuscripti adnotantur, verum etiam eorum patria, aetas, professio, munia, dignitates, memoranda et obitus recensentur* (Ectypon Bibliothecae publicae Labacensis ... Studio et opere Ioannis Fortunati Mengini Labacensis, Anno a Partu Virginis 1715), on page 3, more extensive title and appendix; manuscript kept in the Seminary library in Ljubljana, sign. št. 14; Ioannes Fortunatus Menginus Labacensis is pseudonym of Janez Gregor Dolničar.

²⁰ “Dolničar pl. Thalberg, Janez Gregor (1655–1719),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi696804/>.



Figure 8.3. Janez Gregor Dolničar (1655–1719), jurist, scholar of ancient inscriptions, chronicler and historian. *Source:* Digital Library of Slovenia.

Chapter I Introduction to the Public Library of the Ljubljana College of Nobles

Chapter II Equipment and Monuments of the Library

Chapter III Theologians

Chapter IV Canonists

Chapter V. Preachers

Chapter VI Ascetics

Chapter VII Historians

Chapter VIII Genealogists

Chapter IX Lawyers

Chapter X Doctors

Chapter XI Chemists

Chapter XII Philosophers

Chapter XIII Mathematicians

Chapter Surveyors

Chapter XIV Astrologers

Chapter Arithmeticians

Chapter XV Musicians

Chapter XVI Painters, sculptors and architects

Chapter XVII Politicians

Chapter XVIII Speakers

Chapter XIX Poets

Chapter XX Philologists

[Dolničar forgot the chapter on surveyors, which should have been numbered XIV. In addition, he did not number the chapters on surveyors and arithmeticians. In fact, the total number of chapters he completed is twenty-three.]²¹

Of particular interest is the introduction to Dolničar's work, in which he was one of the first in the Slovenian territory to ask the fundamental lexicographical question: Who should be included in the set? There is a problem with access to documents, a lack of available information, etc.:

Dear reader! I wanted to briefly inform you about the purpose of this institution before you start to get to know it better. We shall endeavour, by our diligence, to preserve from decay and human oblivion the merits of the local literary men whom we recognise as excellent and immortal. When we honour their names, we also honour our homeland, because we owe a debt of gratitude to it. For, as Plutarch says, the homeland has a greater right to us than our parents. We shall leave the foreign [literary] writers to be treated by foreigners ...

[...]

Finally, we recognise that there are many famous men whom we have not attracted to this humble work. Nor have we included all the achievements or writings that [the writers] are to be honoured, as more detailed accounts were not available. In due course there will be someone who will describe more extensively what is desirable. In the meantime, you accept the booklet graciously and enjoy our experiment for what it is.²²

²¹ Vidmar, ed., *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, 290–291 (original), 391–392 (Slovenian translation).

²² Vidmar, ed., *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, 187 (original), 301 (Slovenian translation).

He summarised the purpose of the work and the criteria that guided his choice of personalities in an alternative title to the text: “About the writers of Carniola who have enlightened both older and newer eras. A reliable report, which not only records the printed books or manuscripts of writers who have worked up to the present day, but also their homeland, age, profession, official duties, dignity, memorable achievements and death.”²³

It is interesting to note that Dolničar also counted his son Aleš Žiga Dolničar (1685–1708),²⁴ of whom he was very proud, among the important writers from Carniola. In order to avoid any accusation of bias, he concealed his relationship with him. In his biographical entry, he omitted his real surname and the details of his parents. The biographical entry, like all the other entries in the manuscript, is also interesting from a formal point of view, mainly because the two-part structure is already clearly visible – the form thus also defines the structuring of the data: in the case of Aleš Žiga Dolničar’s entry, the first part contains information about birth and death, education, creative work or the reason for the person’s inclusion in the set, while the second part lists his works – what he published and what remains in the manuscripts:

Aleš Žiga Tolij [Dolničar]. *He came into the world on August 5, 1685 in Ljubljana. He had honest habits from childhood. He was constantly devoted to the appreciation of science and the liberal arts. When he was educated in lower and higher schools, he won every Paladin’s crown. At the Gregorian College of Perugia he took up law. Being an excellent orator, he received applause for his speech on the day of the patron saint of the place, and was the winner during the celebration of the Saturnalia. When he joined the Academy of Eccentrics and took on the task of debating, he was considered a prophet. Even as a young man, he devoted himself to work night and day. He was given permission by his superiors to attend the Drawing Academy. To this noble study he naturally inclined with such success that he easily took the palm of all his rivals. In 1707 he went to Rome to continue his studies. He stayed there for a whole year.*

²³ Vidmar, ed., *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, 187 (original), 301 (Slovenian translation).

²⁴ “Dolničar pl. Thalberg, Aleš Žiga (1685–1708),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi696296/>.

He devoted the time left over from his normal studies to visiting public libraries, drawing and the other arts of architecture and graphics. Since he had excelled in the literary palette, on the recommendation of Mario Crescimbeni, a canon of St Stephen's and the highly renowned founder of the Academy of the Arcadians, he was admitted to the same [academy] under the assumed name of Gliko. On September 10, 1708 he set off to visit Naples, where he would see the sights in eight days. He was seized by a severe fever. After lying down for eleven days, he died. He was buried in the church of St Catherine alle Fornelle of the Dominican Fathers. He died on October 6, 1708, aged 22.

He published:

Hymn to Peasant Life, in Venice in 1713.

Manuscripts:

A profusion of miscellaneous learning.

A Treatise on the Priority of Requests.

A description of the most noble city of Venice.

Antiquities of Oquileia.

Description of the city of Padua.

The description of the sublime Perugia.

The sights of the beneficent city of Rome.²⁵

FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE 19TH CENTURY: WURZBACH'S LEXICON AT THE HEART OF THE MANY BIOGRAPHIES

Enlightenment ideas came to the Slovenian territory late, in the last decades of the 18th century, and attracted mainly a small circle of educated people. Marko Pohlin (1735–1801)²⁶ is considered to be the founder of the Enlightenment in Slovenia, and the publication of his work *Kranjska gramatika*

²⁵ “Aleš Žiga Tolij,” in *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, ed. Vidmar, 262–263 (original), 368–369 (Slovenian translation). This text has been translated according to the Slovenian translation.

²⁶ “Pohlin, Marko (1735–1801),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi443704>.

(1768)²⁷ is considered to be the turning point that triggered the first or early era of the modern national movement, the national awakening. At the same time as the Slovenian national movement was gaining strength, the idea of collecting and presenting in an orderly manner basic information about the life and work (and later also the evaluation of this work) of Slovenian and Slovenian-related personalities who actively contributed to the cultural, scientific, artistic, political, economic and general development of the nation was gaining momentum. At his death, Pohlin left behind a large manuscript lexicon of Carniolan writers entitled *Bibliotheca Carnioliae* [Carniolan Library].²⁸ The work, in which he included some authors from places other than Carniola, is basically a baroque collection of diverse information.

In the first quarter of the 19th century, a polyhistor and historian Heinrich Georg Hoff (1739–1809),²⁹ a librarian and the author of the literary history of Carniola Anton Rožič (1791–1837),³⁰ a collector of antiquities and works of art, cultural historian and patron Jožef Kalasanc Erberg (1771–1843)³¹ and other authors of manuscript polyhistoric surveys of the culture and grammar of Carniola, also remained faithful imitators of Valvasor's *Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. With the advent of the printing press in the first half of the 19th century, a few biographies of prominent Slovenians were already published in German, but they were uncritical and mostly written in a celebratory tone. Two biographies are particularly important: that of Žiga Zois (1820),³² written by a historian, topographer, writer and editor

²⁷ Marko Pohlin, *Kraynska grammatika, das ist: Die crainerische Grammatik, oder Kunst die crainerische Sprach regelrichtig zu reden, und zu schreiben* (Laybach, 1768).

²⁸ Marko Pohlin, *Kraynska grammatika; Bibliotheca Carnioliae* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2003), critical edition by Jože Faganel and Luka Vidmar, 317–432 (facsimile), 433–548 (critical translation into Slovene).

²⁹ "Hoff, Heinrich Georg (around 1739–1809)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi234277/>.

³⁰ "Rožič, Anton (1791–1837)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi522788/>.

³¹ "Erberg, Jožef Kalasanc, baron (1771–1843)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi182495/>.

³² Franz Xaver Richter, *Sigismund Zois. Freiherr v. Edelstein* (Laibach, 1820).

Franz Xaver Richter (1783–1856),³³ and that of Valentin Vodnik (1824),³⁴ written by a religious writer František Ksaverij Andrioli (1792–1851).³⁵

The first prominent biography in Slovenian, entitled *Kratko shivljenje Leopolda Volkmera* [The Short Life of Leopold Volkmer],³⁶ was published in 1836 by a grammarian and lexicographer Anton Janez Murko (1809–1871).³⁷ The first collection of a large number of biographies in Slovenian was published between 1847 and 1862 in the almanac *Drobtinice* [Breadcrumbs].³⁸ This publication also included biographies, usually in a special section with descriptive titles that changed over time: *The Mirror of Famous Slovenians and "Others"*; *The Mirror of Famous Natives, to the Dead in Praiseful Memory, to the Living in Handsome Imitation*; *The Mirror of Blessed Men and Women, to the Former in Memory, to the Present in Imitation*. One of the most important biographers was the founder of *Drobtinice*, the bishop, poet and national awakener Anton Martin Slomšek (1800–1862),³⁹ who was also an editor for two years and one of the main contributors to this annual collection until his death in 1862.⁴⁰

Among the Slovenian biographers of the second half of the 19th century, it is worth mentioning at least a poet, writer and politician Radoslav Razlag (1826–1880),⁴¹ who published 34 biographies in the almanac *Zora*

³³ "Richter, Franz Xaver Johann (1783–1856)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi506711/>.

³⁴ Frančišek Ksaverij Andrioli, "Valentin Vodnik," *Carinthia: ein Wochenblatt zum Nutzen und Vergnügen*, vol. 14, nos. 13–14, 1824.

³⁵ "Andrioli, Frančišek Ksaverij, pl. (1792–1851)" *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi129930/>.

³⁶ Anton Janez Murko, "Kratko shivljenje Leopolda Volkmera," in *Leopolda Volkmera, pokojnega duhovnika Sekavske shofije Fabule ino Pésmi*, ed. Anton Janez Murko (Graz, 1836), VII–XVI.

³⁷ "Murko, Anton (1809–1871)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi380348/>.

³⁸ *Drobtince*, V Celovci [etc.], 1846–1901.

³⁹ "Slomšek, Anton Martin (1800–1862)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi584693/>.

⁴⁰ Martin Grum, "Slovenski biografski leksikon: od združne gospodarske banke do Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti," in *Sedemdeset let Biblioteke SAZU*, ed. Marija Fabjančič, Dušan Koman (editor-in-chief), Dušan Merhar, and Drago Samec (Ljubljana: SAZU, 2008), 272–273.

⁴¹ "Razlag, Radoslav (1826–1880)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi492134/>.

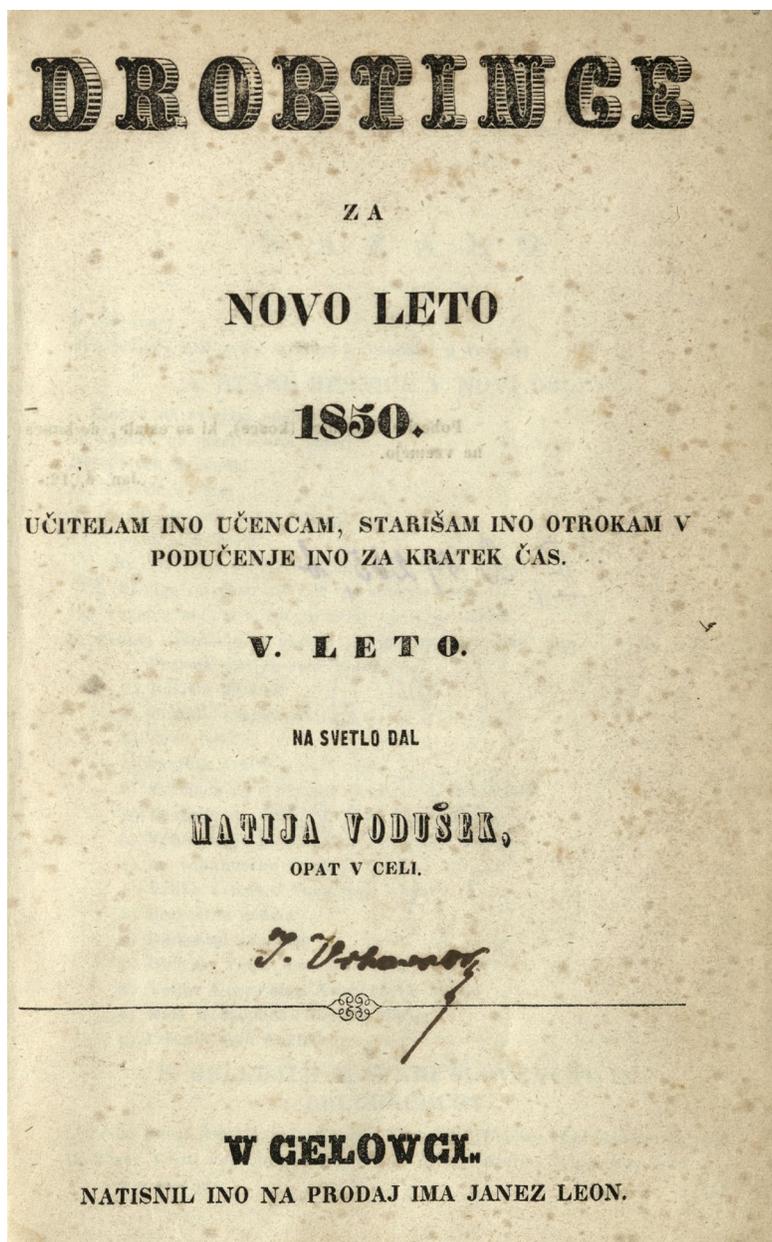


Figure 8.4. *Drobtinice* [Breadcrumbs], 1847–1862. Source: Digital Library of Slovenia.

[Dawn] (1852),⁴² a zoologist, politician, editor, columnist and newspaperman Janez Bleiweis (1808–1881)⁴³ with several biographies in the *Koledarčik slovenski* [Slovene Calendar] (1852–1856),⁴⁴ furthermore a schoolteacher, newspaperman and literary historian Josip Marn (1832–1893),⁴⁵ who was the most prolific writer with 338 biographies – all published in the *Jezičnik* [The Tongue – “expert in literature and language”] between 1863 and 1892.⁴⁶ In 1863, a biographical monograph on Anton Martin Slomšek⁴⁷ was published by a writer and patriot Franc Kosar (1823–1894),⁴⁸ and in 1869, a historian and social organiser Leon Vončina (1826–1874)⁴⁹ wrote the first biographical monograph on the most prominent Slovenian missionary, Friderik Baraga, in the Slovenian language.⁵⁰ Many other authors have occasionally undertaken biographical work, among them Dragutin Dežman (1821–1889),⁵¹ a museologist, politician, archaeologist, natural scientist, poet and publicist, Ivan Navratil (1825–1896),⁵² an editor, linguist and ethnologist, Davorin Trstenjak (1817–1890),⁵³ a writer, ethnologist, historian and publicist, Andrej Praprotnik (1827–1895),⁵⁴ a schoolmaster, poet and

⁴² Radoslav Razlag, “Životopisi,” *Zora: jugoslavenski zabavnik za godinu 1852*, vol. 1 (1852), 127–165.

⁴³ “Bleiweis vitez Trsteniški, Janez (1808–1881),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi143644/>.

⁴⁴ Prim. Janez Bleiweis, “Baron Žiga Zois,” in *Koledarčik slovenski za navadno leto 1855* (V Ljubljani, [1854]), 17–26.

⁴⁵ “Marn, Josip (1832–1893),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi349863/>.

⁴⁶ Josip Marn, *Jezičnik* (Ljubljana, 1863–1892).

⁴⁷ Franc Kosar, *Anton Martin Slomšek, Fürst-Bischof von Lavant* (Marburg: E. Janschitz, 1863).

⁴⁸ “Kosar, Franc (1823–1894),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi292572/>.

⁴⁹ “Vončina, Leon Stanislav (1826–1874),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi811412/>.

⁵⁰ Leon Vončina, *Friderik Baraga, prvi kranjski apostolski misijonar in škof med Indijani v Ameriki* ([V Celovcu]: Družba sv. Mohora, 1869).

⁵¹ “Dežman, Karel (1821–1889),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi172598/>.

⁵² “Navratil, Ivan (1825–1896),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi385781/>.

⁵³ “Trstenjak, Davorin (1817–1890),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi727223/>.

⁵⁴ “Praprotnik, Andrej (1827–1895),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi455111/>.



Figure 8.5. Konstantin Wurzbach Knight Tannenberg (1818–1893). *Source:* National and University Library. Manuscripts Department.

writer, Viljem Urbas (1831–1900),⁵⁵ an ethnologist and natural scientist, Franc Kosar (1823–1894),⁵⁶ a writer and patriot, and others.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Slovenian biography took the form of a scientific study. A literary historian, editor and scholar Fran Levec (1846–1916)⁵⁷ wrote more than 50 exemplary biographies of Slovenian artists, mainly poets and writers. Among the many monographic biographies, the first scientific biography of the linguist Vatroslav Oblak⁵⁸ by a comparative historian and ethnologist Matija Murko (1861–1952)⁵⁹ is worth mentioning.

⁵⁵ “Urbas, Viljem (1831–1900),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi749618/>.

⁵⁶ “Kosar, Franc (1823–1894),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi292572/>.

⁵⁷ “Levec, Fran (1846–1916),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi325754/>.

⁵⁸ Matija Murko, *Dr. Vatroslav Oblak* (V Ljubljani: Slovenska matica, 1900).

⁵⁹ “Murko, Matija (1861–1952),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi380810/>.

In the 19th century, the so-called *Wurzbach Lexicon*⁶⁰ took centre stage. This remarkable work, the *Biographical Lexicon of the Austrian Empire*, which was important for all the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including the Slovenians, came to life in the middle of the 19th century. The lexicon is also associated with the Slovenians through Ljubljana-born Konstantin Wurzbach Knight Tannenberg (1818–1893),⁶¹ an outstanding organiser, systematist, collector, poet and polyglot, who conceived the lexicon, edited it to the last volume and compiled almost all of the entries. The comprehensive lexicon, which was monumental for the time and on a global scale, contained 24,254 biographies of personalities from the Austrian Empire, published in sixty volumes between 1856 and 1891. Among them are also many personalities (more than 2,000) from the then Carniola, Carinthia, Lower Styria and Primorska. Although the lexicon mainly favoured the German (noble) elite of the Monarchy, it also provided the Slovenians with the first large, fairly complete and objective encyclopaedic presentation of both literary and non-literary authors and other personalities and (mainly noble) families. The lexicon had a strong influence on later Slovenian, Croatian and other biographical lexicons.⁶²

THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE SLOVENIAN BIOGRAPHICAL LEXICON

The first plans directly related to the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* project date back to the period before the First World War. In the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the so-called *Yugoslav Encyclopaedia* was planned to be published jointly by “Yugoslav academies and learned societies.” It was initiated by the retired Croatian general Marko Crljen, who in 1909 donated 20,000 crowns to the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts for the

⁶⁰ Constant Wurzbach von Tannenberg, ed., *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaisertums Österreich enthaltend die Lebensskizzen der denkwürdigen Personen, welche seit 1750 bis 1850 im Kaiserstaate und in seinen Kronländern gelebt haben* (Wein: L. C. Zamarski, Kaiserlich-königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1856–1891).

⁶¹ “Wurzbach vitez Tannenberg, Konstantin (1818–1893),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi847671/>.

⁶² The section on biographies from the 19th century is largely based on Martin Grum’s “Biographical Heritage,” see Grum, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 271–280.

Biographisches Lexikon

des

Kaiserthums Oesterreich,

enthaltend

die Lebensskizzen der denkwürdigen Personen, welche 1750 bis 1850
im Kaiserstaate und in seinen Kronländern gelebt haben.

Von

Dr. Constant v. Wurzbach.

Erster Theil.

A — Slumenthal.



(Mit Vorbehalt der Uebersetzung in fremde Sprachen und Verwahrung gegen unrechtmäßigen Nachdruck.)

Wien, 1856.

Verlag der Universitäts-Buchdruckerei von F. C. Zarnarški

(vormals J. P. Sollinger).

Figure 8.6. Cover of the first volume of the “Wurzbach’s Lexicon.” *Source:* Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.

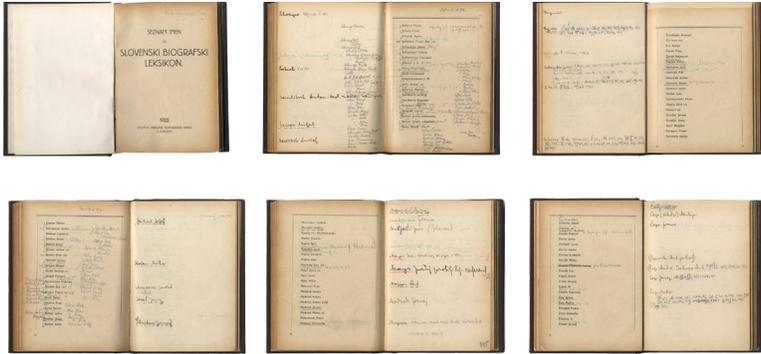


Figure 8.7. List of names for the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (1922) – a few pages of a copy of the booklet owned by France Kidrič (1880–1950), one of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*’s collaborators and for some time also its Editor-in-Chief, with his annotations. The list was compiled on the basis of material including the *Abecedary* for the unrealised *Yugoslav Encyclopaedia*. Source: Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.

publication of the *Yugoslav Encyclopaedia*, “which would represent the pinnacle of contemporary science and describe the past and present of the lands inhabited by Croats, Serbs, Slovenians and Bulgarians.”⁶³ Slovenian cultural workers were also involved in the preparation of this encyclopaedia. The First World War put an end to this plan. During the war, the original plan was reduced to the *Croatian Biographical Lexicon* (Hrvatski biografski riječnik), the tentative and only volume of which was published in 1916.⁶⁴ The work done for this encyclopaedia, especially the glossary, was later used in the preparation of *The Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.

In 1921, representatives of the “Czech and Yugoslav academies and learned societies” met in Zagreb to discuss the project of a “Yugoslav encyclopaedia.” It turned out that, despite the great need, such an extensive work was not feasible at the present time. At the same time, “that it be left to individuals to publish in their own district the parts of this future ‘Yugoslav Encyclopaedia.’”⁶⁵ A librarian, lexicographer and translator

⁶³ “Crljen, Marko,” *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, accessed May 27, 2025, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/crljen-marko>.

⁶⁴ Cf. Igor Gosti, “Dvije tisuće hrvatskih životopisa,” *Vjesnik*, May 21, 1999; Joža Glonar, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” *Jugoslavija*, July 9, 1922, 2–3.

⁶⁵ Glonar, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 2–3.

Joža Glonar (1885–1946),⁶⁶ who also reported on the meeting in the daily political newspaper *Jugoslavija*, published in Ljubljana, wrote that this gave Slovenians the right and the duty “to roll up our sleeves and do what we can ourselves.”⁶⁷ The idea of a Slovenian lexicon had been circulating in literary circles for a long time. A decisive turning point came with the initiative of a lawyer, historian and banker Ivan Slokar (1884–1970),⁶⁸ who, shortly after the Zagreb meeting, entrusted the organisation and implementation of the lexicographical and encyclopaedic work to an art historian, publicist and later diplomat Izidor Cankar (1886–1978).⁶⁹ Slokar, who was the director of the Cooperative Economic Bank in Ljubljana, thus provided financial support for a Slovenian conversational lexicon modeled after the German *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* (1796–1808).⁷⁰ In addition to Cankar, the first editorial board consisted of Glonar, a literary historian and member and for some years president of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts France Kidrič (1880–1950),⁷¹ and a bibliographer, lexicographer and literary historian Janko Šlebinger (1876–1951).⁷² It soon became clear that the conditions for a Slovenian general lexicon containing both biographical and encyclopaedic entries did not (yet) exist. It was proposed that a Slovenian biographical lexicon be prepared first, to be followed later by an encyclopaedic lexicon. Slokar seconded the motion.

As early as 1922, Šlebinger and his colleagues had already prepared a list of 2,335 names of people important in various fields of “work or creation,” the so-called *List of Names for the Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, which was based on Šlebinger’s material, including the *Abecedary* for the

⁶⁶ “Glonar, Joža (1885–1946),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi203102/>.

⁶⁷ Glonar, “Slovenski biografski leksikon.” 2–3.

⁶⁸ “Slokar, Ivan (1884–1970),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi584468/>.

⁶⁹ “Cankar, Izidor (1886–1958),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi155611/>.

⁷⁰ In 1920, *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* was reprinted for the 14th time. Last print edition 2005–2006, see “Brockhaus Enzyklopädie,” *Britannica*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Brockhaus-Enzyklopädie>.

⁷¹ “Kidrič, Franc (1880–1950),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi273316/>.

⁷² “Šlebinger, Janko (1876–1951),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi659324/>.

aforementioned *Yugoslav Encyclopaedia*.⁷³ At the same time, the basic aim of the planned work was defined, which today would be considered one of the basic guidelines:

*The Slovenian Biographical Lexicon should give as accurate picture as possible of the Slovenian cultural life in the past and present in the biographies of cultural workers; it should include all personalities of any importance for the cultural development of Slovenia who are of Slovenian origin or were born in Slovenia and have worked at home or abroad, as well as personalities of foreign origin who have influenced Slovenian cultural life through their work among Slovenians; biographies should be provided with a note on what has been written about the personalities and their work, where to look for unprinted sources, where they are located, whether pictures have been published. In short: the Slovenian Biographical Lexicon should be a reliable signpost for everyone's orientation, and an aid to the scholar for further research.*⁷⁴

The *Slovenian biographical lexicon* should contain two essential qualities: data (biographical data, subjective and objective personal bibliography, archival and other sources) and an assessment of the creative work. Inclusion in the lexicon was in itself an assessment par excellence.⁷⁵ The authors of the entries included the leading Slovenian scientists and cultural figures of the time, and the entries in the lexicon were based on data collected – as we noted at the beginning – by means of questionnaires distributed among living personalities. Thus, in 1925, the first volume of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* was published. By the First World War, a total of six volumes had been published, all of them by the Cooperative Economic Bank in Ljubljana:⁷⁶

⁷³ Janko Šlebinger and Izidor Cankar, *Seznam imen za slovenski biografski leksikon* (V Ljubljani: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1922); Grum, "Slovenski biografski leksikon," 276; Oto Luthar and Barbara Šterbenc Svetina, "Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon – prvo dejanje . . .," in *Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon*, ed. Barbara Šterbenc Svetina (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2013), 5–6.

⁷⁴ Uredništvo, "Za uvod," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, Book I, vols. 1–4, 1925–1932 (Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1932), V.

⁷⁵ Grum, "Slovenski biografski leksikon," 275.

⁷⁶ *Fond Komisija za likvidacijo kreditnih zadrug, AS 12*, Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Ljubljana.

Book I

Vol. 1: Abraham–Erberg, 1925, pp. 1–160

Vol. 2: Erberg–Hinterlechner, 1926, pp. 161–320

Vol. 3: Hinterlechner–Kocen, 1928, pp. 321–480

Vol. 4: Kocen–Lužar, 1932, pp. 481–688 + VI

Book II

Vol. 5: Maas–Mrkun, 1933, pp. 1–160

Vol. 6: Mrkun–Petejan, 1935, pp. 161–320

Vol. 7: Peterlin–Pregelj, 1949, pp. 321–480

Vol. 8: Pregelj–Qualle, 1952, pp. 481–611 + VIII

Book III

Vol. 9: Raab–Schmidt, 1960, pp. 1–224

Vol. 10: Schmidt–Steklasa, 1967, pp. 255–464

Vol. 1: Stelč–Švikaršič, 1971, pp. 225–742 + XXXII

Book IV

Vol. 12: Tábornská–Trtnik, 1980, pp. 1–204

Vol. 13: Trubar–Vodaine, 1982, pp. 205–500

Vol. 14: Vode–Zdešar, 1986, pp. 501–780

Vol. 15: Zdolšek–Žvanut, 1991, pp. 781–1049 + XXXII

Personal Index, 1991, 245 pp.

The first three volumes were edited by Izidor Cankar, the first two in collaboration with Joža Glonar, Franc Kidrič and Janko Šlebinger, and the third in collaboration with Joža Glonar and Janko Šlebinger. The next three volumes were edited by Franc Ksaver Lukman (1880–1958),⁷⁷ who continued his excellent work after the Second World War, in collaboration with the editorial board. The publication of each volume was well received by the public, and despite comments on the selection of entries and the individual articles, the writings were very favourable to the work. The lexicon reflected a unified Slovenian cultural space, uniting Slovenes at home, abroad and around the world, and was also open to members of other nations that were important for Slovenian history.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ “Lukman, Franc Ksaver (1880–1958),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi336060/>.

⁷⁸ Grum, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 276–277.

In the course of the editorial process, the contributors to the lexicon also had to deal with the (mis)representation of certain fields of work, which was also the result of the professional orientation of the members of the editorial board and the authors of the individual groups of entries in the lexicon. One of the main reasons for the under-representation of natural scientists in the lexicon was the poorly developed history of the natural sciences and, as a consequence, a small number of authors who could write entries on creators in the natural sciences and medicine. The second editor of the lexicon, France Ksaver Lukman, was the first to point out the imbalance of the lexicon's content.⁷⁹

After the Second World War, which was something of a turning point, important figures from the recent war were included in a new, expanded and modified selection, alongside personalities from overlooked areas of creativity. But even here there was a selection. The censors, appointed by the interested officials of the new authorities, excluded all those who were alleged to have collaborated with the occupation authorities, and the biographies of the few individuals who made it into the selection were scrutinised with particular care.⁸⁰

The Cooperative Economic Bank, the publisher of the Lexicon, was liquidated after the Second World War – as were all pre-war banks. After 1946, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU) took over the care of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.⁸¹ Immediately after the war, France Kidrič was appointed editor-in-chief, and he prepared the 7th volume of the Lexicon (published in 1949), while the 8th volume was published for the last time under the editorship of Fran Ksaver Lukman (1952). The latter represents a unique turning point in the consistently favourable and positive reviews of the lexicon throughout its existence. Under the telling headline *Indians, Priests and Patriots*,⁸² Rudi Janhuba,⁸³ then an important political functionary and director of the *Slovenski poročevalec* [Slovenian Reporter],

⁷⁹ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, "Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon," 6.

⁸⁰ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, "Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon," 6.

⁸¹ Fran Ramovš, "Poročilo podano na svečani seji Glavne skupščine dne 8. februarja 1946," in *Letopis Akademije znanosti in umetnosti v Ljubljani*, Book II, 1943–1947 (Ljubljana: Akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1947), 142.

⁸² Rudi Janhuba, "Indijanci, farji in rodoljubi," *Slovenski poročevalec*, August 31, 1952.

⁸³ "Janhuba, Rudi (1914–1976)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1012590/>.

published a devastating critique. He questioned both the selection of the personalities discussed (over-representation of priests, under-representation of political workers) and the content of the individual contributions. A literary and theatre critic, playwright, translator, essayist and politician Josip Vidmar (1895–1992), who became president of SAZU in 1952, came out strongly in defence of the lexicon, replying to the challenger in the *Slovenski poročevalec* that the criticism of all things ecclesiastical had been greatly exaggerated and that, as far as the lack of content was concerned, “despite all its shortcomings, the lexicon is the result of a conscientious and long-term scientific effort.”⁸⁴

In the post-war period, the choice of personalities and some of the content was not so much a matter of editorial policy as of everyday politicisation, the tone of which was dictated in the 1950s by the then Minister of Science and Culture, Boris Zihelr (1910–1976),⁸⁵ who did not even stop at the weighty words of the president of the SAZU, Josip Vidmar. The biographies of the theologians were therefore the most frequent target of criticism, but conceptual issues caused additional problems. The inclusion of the heroes of the national liberation struggle and other more or less important companions of post-war politics once again upset the balance of the lexicon, which could no longer be defended in an argumentative sense. For this reason, the painstaking work of the editor and his closest collaborators, who, in addition to the tenacious authors of the articles, deserve special praise for the professional consistency and integrity of the texts of the second volume as a whole (1952), but also of the rest of the lexicon.⁸⁶

After the polemic, the long-time editor Lukman was replaced by a literary historian and librarian Alfonz Gspan (1904–1977).⁸⁷ The lexicon underwent some significant changes in the following years. The range of personalities covered was widened, and areas outside the humanities were included to a greater extent. The lexicon was opened up to younger personalities

⁸⁴ Josip Vidmar, “O Slovenskem biografskem leksikonu,” *Slovenski poročevalec*, September 16, 1952.

⁸⁵ “Zihelr, Boris (1910–1976),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi868215/>.

⁸⁶ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, “Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 7.

⁸⁷ “Gspan, Alfonz, avtor člankov,” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/avtor/Gpn/>.



Figure 8.8. *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (1925–1991) – Editors-in-Chief: Izidor Cankar (Vols. 1–3), Franc Ksaver Lukman (Vols. 4–6 and 8), France Kidrič (Vol. 7), Alfonz Gspan (Vols. 9–13), Fran Petre (Vols. 12–13), and Jože Munda (Vols. 12–16). Source: Digital Library of Slovenia; *Delo*, 31. 3. 2018.

who could not be included in the original 1922 list. The biographical and bibliographical processing of the data was deepened, and the articles were revised and supplemented. The Lexicon has become a widely consulted work for both researchers and occasional writers. Since the first volumes were no longer available, the first two volumes were reprinted abroad in 1976, which was a kind of recognition for the lexicon. After Gspan's death in 1977, a literary historian Fran Petre (1906–1978)⁸⁸ took over the editorship for a short period, followed by a lexicographer, bibliographer and literary

⁸⁸ "Kolofon Slovenski biografski leksikon," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/kolofon/sbl/>.

historian Jože Munda (1930–2018),⁸⁹ who first arranged for the printing of the already largely prepared volumes 12 and 13, and then of the last two volumes and the connecting personal index for the entire lexicon.⁹⁰

THE NEW SLOVENIAN BIOGRAPHICAL LEXICON

Jože Munda, the last editor of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, successfully opposed the idea of merging the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* with the *Encyclopaedia of Slovenia* at the end of the 1980s. Munda convinced Darko Dolinar (1942–2022),⁹¹ the then head of the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Sciences, under which the lexicon was published, that the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* should be preserved in its original form. This decision, taken at the beginning of the 1990s, was the basis for the subsequent transformation of the Section for Biography, Bibliography and Documentation of the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Sciences into the Institute of Biography and Bibliography, which was founded in September 1999 and began its work in 2000. In 2005, the Institute was renamed the Institute of Cultural History of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU) in order to pursue a more ambitious research orientation and to increase the visibility of its work both in academic circles and among the general public.⁹²

In 2006, in cooperation with SAZU, the Expert Council of the new *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* was established, which developed the basis for the new edition of the Lexicon. Based on the suggestions of the members of the Council and the extracts from the Slovenian bio-bibliographical database, designed by Martin Grum at the Institute of Cultural History, a proposed glossary was drawn up, which was the starting point for the selection of the personalities presented in the first volume of *The New*

⁸⁹ “Munda, Jože, avtor člankov,” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/avtor/Munda/>; “Jože Munda (1930–2018),” ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturno zgodovino, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://ikz.zrc-sazu.si/sl/vsebinsa/joze-munda>.

⁹⁰ Grum, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 278.

⁹¹ “Dolinar, Darko (1942–2022),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1025540/>.

⁹² “About our institute,” ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturno zgodovino, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://ikz.zrc-sazu.si/en/predstavitev>.

Slovenian Biographical Lexicon. The selection, as in the first *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, mainly reflects the fields represented by the members of the Expert Council of the new lexicon, with the addition of the field editors.

In 2008, the Expert Council of *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* decided to publish the first dictionary in electronic form, which was organised by Petra Vide Ogrin and her colleagues at the SAZU Library, and in 2009 the Slovenian Biographical Clearinghouse was conceived. The efforts to present the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* online have resulted in a new Slovenian online biographical portal,⁹³ which accompanies the printed version of *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*. The web portal brings together the entries of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* and the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon of Primorska Region* (Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon), as well as from *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*. The total number of articles written for *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* that are publicly available online is currently 1,454 personalities (1,229 men and 225 women) and 32 families. In addition to these, the Slovenian Biography portal also publishes 4,527 articles from the *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon* (published in 20 volumes from 1974 to 1994) and all the articles from the first *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*. On the Slovenian Biography portal, users can read one or more articles on around 9,000 personalities and 141 families.⁹⁴ It is hoped that the biographical entries in the online version will gradually become more richly illustrated with pictures and other material (portraits, works, musical performances, maps, etc.), and that the cross-references and search facilities will also reveal aspects of a person's life and work that are more difficult for the reader to extract from the printed version.

⁹³ *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/>.

⁹⁴ Data accessed May 15, 2025.



Figure 8.9. *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*

Vol. 1: A (2013); 189 biographical entries

Vol. 2: B–Bla (2017); 257 biographical entries

Vol. 3: Ble–By (2018); 277 biographical entries

Vol. 4: C (2022); 152 biographical entries

Vol. 5: Č (2022), 116 biographical entries

Total printed biographical entries: 991

Source: Photo by Marko Zaplatil, ZRC SAZU. Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.

The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon is the Slovenian national biographical lexicon and today one of the main projects of ZRC SAZU, which, together with the Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* and the Database of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (PZSBL), is housed at the Institute of Cultural History of ZRC SAZU. It continues and builds on the work of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, which was published from 1925–1991. In extended descriptions, it presents the most prominent Slovenian and Slovenian-related personalities from all historical periods up to the present day. The lexicon’s authors follow the established research approach in the field of biographical studies. The result is a set of entries based on verified facts and a structure comparable to the Central European tradition of the biographical lexicon. Alongside detailed factual information on birth, schooling and occupation, the glossary entries provide a cultural and historical setting of the personality in space and time. The authors are experts in the fields of activity of the personalities included in *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, which allows for a credible evaluation of

their work. In addition to the categorisation of entries (A, B, C and D) and various recommendations, the guidelines for selecting personalities for the lexicon, which – like the questionnaires and the instructions to the writers of the entries – are available on the website of the Institute of Cultural History,⁹⁵ also set out the central guideline for their acceptance into the lexicon:

*The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon welcomes all personalities of Slovenian origin or born in Slovenia and who have worked at home or abroad, as well as personalities of foreign origin who are in any way important for the development and influence in the Slovenian territory in the fields of culture, science, art, economy, politics and society, and in other areas of importance for national identity, and who have contributed to the recognition and promotion of Slovenia in the world through their work among Slovenians and through their achievements in the field of culture, science, art, economy, politics and society, and in other areas of importance for national self-determination and national self-determination.*⁹⁶

The century-long tradition of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* has in many ways shaped the guidelines and work of *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, and as we have seen, a valuable archive was founded 100 years ago, which is still alive today. Since the conception of the first edition of the lexicon in the 1920s and the last volume being published in 1991, more than half a century later, the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* has truly reflected a century of Slovenian history. Readers will find in it not only political, social and linguistic changes, but also the methodological development of the various humanities.⁹⁷ *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* is not just a more or less arbitrarily designed collection of biographies, as the project leader and director of ZRC SAZU, Oto Luthar, and the long-standing editor-in-chief, Barbara Šterbenc Svetina,

⁹⁵ “The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon (NSBL),” ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturno zgodovino, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://ikz.zrc-sazu.si/en/strani/the-new-slovenian-biographical-lexicon-nsbl>.

⁹⁶ “Smernice za izbor osebnosti v NSBL,” ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturno zgodovino, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://ikz.zrc-sazu.si/sites/default/files/SMERNICE%20za%20izbor%20osebnosti%20v%20NSBL.pdf>.

⁹⁷ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, “Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 5.

pointed out in the introductory chapter to the first volume, but a Slovenian national biographical lexicon, which, to use the words of Jože Munda, contains “comprehensive and documented articles on prominent Slovenians and others who are important to Slovenians in some way,”⁹⁸ following the temporal and spatial guidelines of its predecessor, the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (1925–1991), while also reflecting the specifics of the time in which it was itself created.⁹⁹

Although *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* is firmly rooted in the tradition of the still relevant *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, it has encountered a number of new challenges with the expansion of the fields covered and the process of digitisation. The history of the natural sciences, in particular, has been underrepresented, as reflected in the number of entries in these fields. For living personalities, the law on the protection of personal data poses a challenge, which could result in the lexicon containing less data. Sometimes individuals do not wish to be included in the lexicon, often for complex reasons. Despite all these issues, it is undeniable that *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* remains the most relevant source for biographical research, and readers’ comments on online entries also contribute significantly to its creation.

⁹⁸ Jože Munda, “Enciklopedija,” in *Enciklopedija Slovenije*, ed. Marjan Javornik (editor-in-chief) (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1989), 40.

⁹⁹ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, “Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 5.

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PART III
IN/TANGIBLE
EUROPEAN HERITAGE –
DIGITISATION AND
VISUALISATION OF
BIOGRAPHIES

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PROJECT INTAVIA – OR HOW TO DIGITALLY AND VISUALLY REFRAME THE HISTORY OF ALL (WO)MEN’S LIFE AND WORK¹

Eva Mayr and Florian Windhager

Biographical texts on the lives of notable men and (much less frequently) women have a long and multifaceted history, deeply rooted in the culture and literature of our present-day societies. Precursors for biographical texts can be found in inscriptions on Egyptian tombs and monuments, such as the Pyramid Texts, to glorify the lives and deeds of noble individuals. In Greek literature, Herodotus’ *Histories*, Homer’s *Odyssey*, and Xenophon’s *Anabasis* continued this work by interweaving biographical and mythological narrative perspectives. Looking beyond individual biographies, Plutarch (ca. 46–120 AD) wrote the famous *Parallel Lives*, which compared the lives of famous Greeks and Romans.

The rediscovery of ancient texts and the interest in the potential of individual human beings fostered the creation of the first early modern biographical texts in the European Renaissance. As a collection of artists’ biographies, Giorgio Vasari’s *Le Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* [The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects] is known as the foundational work for this genre. By focusing on groups of people sharing common professional or social characteristics, he also laid the foundations for the development of prosopographical studies.

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The collection and curation of “national biographies” (i.e., as compilations and lexica) led to a significant advancement in the organization, documentation and dissemination of biographical information on a national scale. These collections compiled standardized biographical texts about notable individuals from a specific country, making them available for historians, educators, and the general public. This idea of systematically compiling biographical information on prominent individuals within a nation began to take shape in the 18th and 19th century and resulted in printed editions of biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias.

The transition from printed dictionaries to digital databases began in the late 20th century with the advent of computing technology and its global interconnection. Databases and related software tools enabled historians to handle ever larger amounts of information, making it easier to search and analyze biographical data and identify patterns and relationships within. The integration of digital humanities tools and methods has further enhanced the scope and benefits of national biographical databases. Techniques such as data visualization, network analysis, and geographic information systems (GIS) allow researchers to explore distributions, connections and trends within the data in innovative ways. Projects like Mapping the Republic of Letters, which traces the correspondences of Enlightenment thinkers, demonstrated how cultural objects (such as letters) can help to redraw the history-making interactions between individuals and ideas and thus show the potential of analyzing work and lives from a synoptic perspective.

In this context, the H2020 project InTaVia was conceived as a Research and Innovation Action funded by the European commission from 2020 to 2023. In this chapter, we will introduce this collaborative research project (section 1), before we provide an overview of the underlying data and its translation into the InTaVia knowledge graph (section 2). For the curation, analysis, and communication of these data, a tripartite frontend has been developed (section 3). We conclude this chapter with the discussion of challenges and insights generated in the InTaVia context (section 4).

1. IN/TANGIBLE EUROPEAN HERITAGE: VISUAL ANALYSIS, CURATION, AND COMMUNICATION

In modern societies, cultural information is available in a great variety of forms and formats, from tangible objects, collected by galleries, museums and libraries, to documents on “intangible” cultural heritage, such as the (hi)stories of important cultural actors. In contrast to material objects, biographical documents are commonly collected by archives or research institutions in written form. After digitizing material object collections, this data is mostly stored in type-specific, local databases, created and hosted by individual GLAM institutions. Even though projects like Europeana started to aggregate the content of individual object databases and allow for search across all of them, the objects within remain largely unconnected. Related cultural information, such as biographical texts about cultural actors and object creators (e.g., artists, authors, or inventors) remain mostly absent, as they have been commonly digitized by other heritage institutions and stored in different databases. This lack of links between biographical and object information is aggravated by missing standards between local data formats and database projects and a lack of (machine) readability and visibility of local data collections. Thus, they are difficult to use for experts and even less suited for offering and conveying a better understanding of cultural-historical topics to the interested public.

Against this background, the H2020 project InTaVia² pursued the goal of linking cultural object data and biographical information projects to generate a more synoptic picture of the lives and works of European cultural actors – and to make them available for further curation, analysis and communication. To this end, the consortium harmonized and integrated

² INTAVIA: In/ Tangible European Heritage: Visual Analysis, Curation and Communication, accessed June 26, 2024, <https://intavia.eu>.

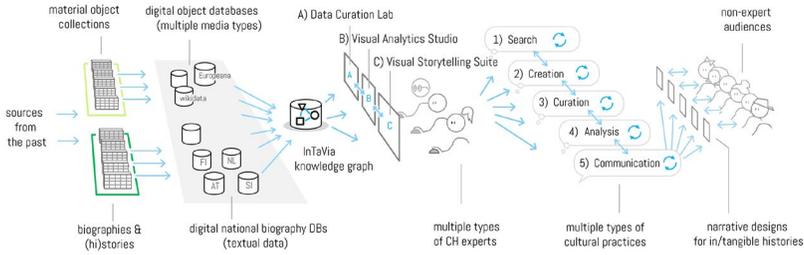


Figure 9.1. InTaVia project architecture: digitized object and person data are integrated into the InTaVia knowledge graph, which cultural heritage experts and researchers can use in a visualization-based interface for searching, curating, analysis, and communication. *Source:* authors.

national biographical databases from Slovenia,³ Austria,⁴ Finland,⁵ and the Netherlands⁶ and linked them with related cultural objects from Europeana and Wikidata in a comprehensive *cultural knowledge graph*. To enable access to this rich resource collection, the project developed an *information portal for the visual analysis, curation and communication* of this cultural data at multiple levels of aggregation. This overall project architecture is depicted in Figure 1.

2. THE INTAVIA KNOWLEDGE GRAPH

The InTaVia Knowledge Graph (IKG) was conceived and set up as a central knowledge base, in which the data from the various biography and object

³ *Slovenska biografija*, see Tomaž Erjavec, Joh Dokler, and Petra V. Ogrin, “Slovenian Biography,” in *Biographical Data in a Digital World*, ed. Antske Fokkens et al. (Linz: CEUR, 2017), 16–21, accessed June 26, 2024, <https://ceur-ws.org/Vol-2119/paper3.pdf>.

⁴ Austrian Prosopographical Information System (APIS), see Matthias Schlögl and Katalin Lejtovicz, “A Prosopographical Information System (APIS),” in *Biographical Data in a Digital World*, ed. Antske Fokkens et al. (Linz: CEUR, 2017), 53–58, accessed June 26, 2024, <https://ceur-ws.org/Vol-2119/paper9.pdf>.

⁵ BiographySampo, see Eero Hyvönen et al., “BiographySampo—Publishing and Enriching Biographies on the Semantic Web for Digital Humanities Research,” in *European Semantic Web Conference* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 574–589.

⁶ BiographyNet, see Antske Fokkens et al., “BiographyNet: Extracting Relations between People and Events,” in *Europa baut auf Biographien: Aspekte, Bausteine, Normen und Standards für eine europäische Biographik*, ed. Ágoston Z. Bernád, Christine Gruber, and Matthias Schlögl (Wien: new academic press, 2017), 193–224, accessed June 26, 2024, <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1801.07073.pdf>.

databases were merged and linked. This knowledge graph enabled the querying, further enrichment, harmonization and linking of data, while preserving relevant provenance information.

While a Blazegraph triplestore provided a flexible and performative basis, we developed the InTaVia Data Model IDM-RDF⁷ as an ontology, based on CIDOC CRM⁸ (version 7.1.1) and the BioCRM extension.⁹ Furthermore, the graph implemented an adapted version of the proxy model from the Object Reuse and Exchange Ontology¹⁰ for linking individual entities. The IKG also provides a RestAPI for simplified access to the data.¹¹

For the enrichment, harmonization and linking of the data, the IKG relies on ETL pipelines that run in a Kubernetes cluster. Various Prefect v1¹² pipelines import and update person entities, convert them to IDM-RDF and enrich them with object entities. To improve this workflow, a SHACL validation of the data has been added, before the data is loaded into the triplestore. These pipelines allow for the ingestion of further biographical databases in the future and their enrichment with related cultural objects from Wikidata and Europeana.

At the end of the project, the IKG contained 24,588,310 triples¹³ describing and connecting more than 165,960 persons,¹⁴ 24,446 places¹⁵ and 230,068

⁷ For documentation, see Carla Ebel et al., *InTaVia Data Model (IDM-RDF)*. Deliverable within the H2020 Project InTaVia, 2021; see “idm-rdf: Intavia Data Model for RDF data,” InTaVia, GitHub repository, last modified December 7, 2023, <https://github.com/InTaVia/idm-rdf>.

⁸ Martin Doerr, “The CIDOC Conceptual Reference Module – An Ontological Approach to Semantic Interoperability of Metadata,” *AI Magazine* 24, no. 3 (2003): 75, accessed July 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1609/aimag.v24i3.1720>.

⁹ Jouni Tuominen, Eero Hyvönen, and Petri Leskinen, “Bio CRM: A Data Model for Representing Biographical Data for Prosopographical Research,” in *Biographical Data in a Digital World*, ed. Antske Fokkens et al. (Linz: CEUR, 2017), 59–66, accessed June 26, 2024, <https://ceur-ws.org/Vol-2119/paper10.pdf>.

¹⁰ Lagoze, Carl, Herbert Van de Sompel, Pete Johnston, Michael Nelson, Robert Sanderson, and Simeon Warner, eds, “ORE Specification – Abstract Data Model,” *Open Archives Initiative*, accessed June 26, 2024, <http://www.openarchives.org/ore/1.0/datamodel>.

¹¹ “InTaVia IDM-Json Backend.” InTaVia, API Documentation. accessed June 26, 2024, <https://intavia-backend.acdh-dev.oew.ac.at/v2/docs>.

¹² “Prefect Docs,” *Prefect Technologies, Prefect 1*, accessed June 26, 2024, <https://docs-v1.prefect.io/>.

¹³ Triples are structured statements connecting two entities, for example, “Carla was born in Amsterdam” or “Oskar created Carla’s portrait in 1897.”

¹⁴ These are represented by approximately 230,000 person proxies, as for some persons multiple biographies exist.

¹⁵ These are again represented by approximately 36,000 place proxies, representing different wordings of the same place.

cultural heritage objects from Europeana, as well as 160,239 from Wikidata (see Figure 2). The majority of documented biographical events (including events of object creations) stretch out through the 19th and 20th centuries. A critical evaluation of this knowledge graph uncovered several development challenges:¹⁶

1. The number of inter-entity relations turned out to be quite unbalanced. Two main clusters can be seen in figure 2, while several unrelated actors remain at the periphery of the graph.
2. In addition, the person data is clearly skewed: The IKG covers not only fewer women than men; but also reproduces the well-known elite bias of national biographies and their hagiographic tendencies.
3. Finally, many biographical entities in the InTaVia knowledge consist of a disappointingly low number of biographical events: oftentimes, no information is available beyond the birth and death of a person, or the creation of the most famous objects.

The critical evaluation of the knowledge graph thus clearly showed the need for the further enrichment of the original data collection. Within the InTaVia project, we explored several approaches, how the density of events could be increased:¹⁷

1. NLP-pipelines are available for all of the languages within the InTaVia project. To improve their performance, we developed approaches to resolve abbreviations, which are frequently used in biographical texts.

¹⁶ Matthias Schlögl et al., *The InTaVia Knowledge Graph – Publishing European National Biographical and Cultural Heritage Object Data*, submitted to *Semantic Web Journal*, 2025, accessed February 25, 2026, <https://semantic-web-journal.net/system/files/swj3851.pdf>.

¹⁷ Angel Daza, Antske Fokkens, and Tomaž Erjavec, “Dealing with Abbreviations in the Slovenian Biographical Lexicon,” in *Proceedings of the 2022 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*, ed. Yoav Goldberg et al. (Abu Dhabi: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2022), 8715–8720, accessed July 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2022.emnlp-main.596>.

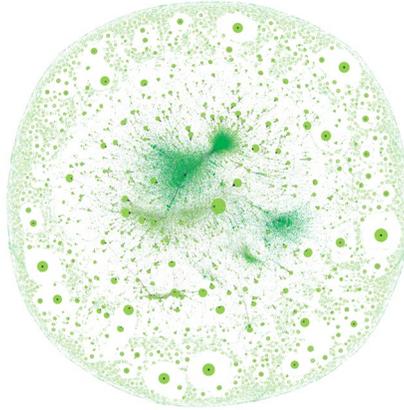


Figure 9.2. Network visualization of the InTaVia knowledge graph generated with Cosmograph.¹⁸ Nodes in dark green correspond to person entities, nodes in light green to object entities. *Source:* authors.

2. Recent developments in Artificial Intelligence also offer novel opportunities for data enrichment¹⁹ and the identification of novel relations.²⁰
3. Another option for data enrichment is the extraction of further resources. For example, a novel NLP pipeline has been developed to extract events from Wikipedia texts on entities.²¹
4. Finally, we decided to support the upload of further datasets and the manual curation of object and biography data within the InTaVia frontend.

¹⁸ Nikita Rokotyan, Olya Stukova, D. Kolmakova, and D. Ovsyannikov, *Cosmograph: GPU-accelerated Force Graph Layout and Rendering* [Computer software] (2022), accessed June 24, 2024, <https://cosmograph.app/>.

¹⁹ Lea Krause et al., “Confidently Wrong: Exploring the Calibration and Expression of (Un) Certainty of Large Language Models in a Multilingual Setting,” in *Proceedings of the Workshop on Multimodal, Multilingual Natural Language Generation and Multilingual WebNLG Challenge (MM-NLG 2023)*, ed. Albert Gatt et al. (Prague: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2023), 1–9.

²⁰ Heikki Rantala, Petri Leskinen, Lilli Peura, and Eero Hyvönen, *Searching Interesting Relations in Cultural Heritage Knowledge Graphs* (Manuscript under review, 2024), accessed June 24, 2024, <https://seco.cs.aalto.fi/publications/2024/rantala-et-al-searching-interesting-relations-2024.pdf>.

²¹ Daza Arévalo and José Angel, “Generating Structured Data from Wikipedia Biographies,” in *There’s History in All Men’s Lives* (Ljubljana: Zenodo, September 26, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10040678>.

3. THE INTAVIA FRONTEND

The InTaVia frontend can be reached at <https://intavia.acdh-dev.oeaw.ac.at/> (accessed June 26, 2024). It consists of three interconnected main modules for (1) search and curation (Data Curation Lab), (2) visualization and analysis (Visual Analytics Studio), and (3) communication and storytelling (Storytelling Suite).

To ensure the platform's usefulness for digital humanities scholars and cultural heritage experts as well as its usability, the development of the InTaVia platform followed a user-centered design approach. More than 40 cultural heritage experts and GLAM practitioners were involved in three workshops to identify relevant user practices and define user requirements at the outset of the project.²² During the development, expert users gave feedback on the state of the platform development during several workshops or individual test sessions in three iterations.

3.1. DATA CURATION LAB

The Data Curation Lab is the user's entry point to the InTaVia Knowledge Graph. It provides the means to search, inspect, collect, and curate cultural information on persons, objects, institutions, and places (see figure 3).

Users can access the knowledge graph through *queries*, which can be customized based on specific parameters like text labels, entity types, or relations to specific entities. This allows for targeted searches and retrieval of relevant cultural entities. Query results are first shown in a list (Figure 3b) where each entry provides a summary of the respective entity, such as its label, type, and number of related events. To manage retrieved entities and reuse them across all platform modules, users have to add selected entities or the whole query result set to collections (Figure 3c). *Collections* are used throughout the InTaVia frontend as user-defined sets of entities for visualization, analysis and communication.

For close reading, all information available on an entity is presented on a *detail page* that includes network, map, and timeline views on their

²² Eva Mayr et al., "The Multiple Faces of Cultural Heritage: Towards an Integrated Visualization Platform for Tangible and Intangible Cultural Assets," in *2022 IEEE 7th Workshop on Visualization for the Digital Humanities (VIS4DH)* (Oklahoma City: IEEE, 2022), 13–18, <https://doi.org/10.1109/VIS4DH57440.2022.00008>.

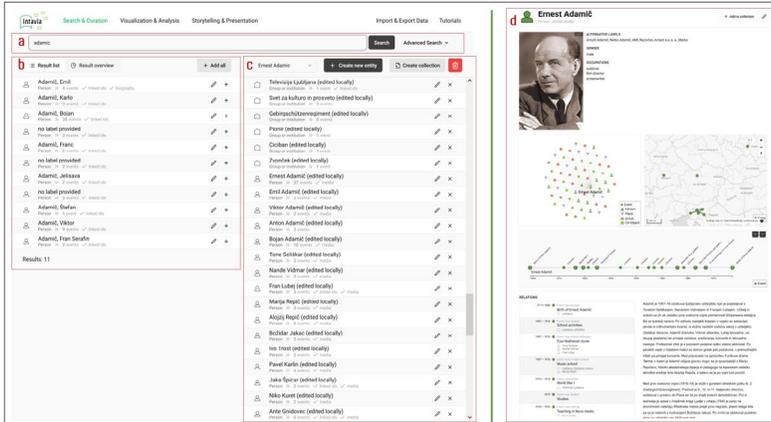


Figure 9.3. Overview of the Data Curation Lab containing search options (a), a result list (b) and a personal data collection (c). Selecting an entity opens the detail view (d) with related sources and IDs, a network, map, and time visualization, an event list, and a biographical text. *Source:* authors.

related entities and events, in addition to media files and a biographical text (Figure 3d).

To go beyond the data within the InTaVia Knowledge Graph (and also counteract existing imbalances and gaps within the data), the Data Curation Lab allows the local *import* of a user's own local data from different sources like Excel sheets or JSON files. It is important to note that these data are not shared with the IKG, nor is the IKG updated when entities are locally edited.

Furthermore, users can create and *curate* data within the Data Curation Lab. This functionality allows manually correcting and enriching the data from the knowledge graph or merging it with locally imported data. In addition to curating basic entity information like labels, linked URLs, and occupations, users can also enrich an entity's events and relations to other entities. Additionally, they can create new entities not represented in the knowledge graph. These rich curation features give users complete control over their data used for analysis and storytelling in the subsequent steps.

3.2. VISUAL ANALYTICS STUDIO

The data on cultural objects and biographies stored in the IKG encompass a variety of facets and dimensions that can be of interest to historians and cultural scientists and can be explored in new ways using visual-analytical

means:²³ the geographical position of biographical or artistic events, various events or cultural entities (objects or people), relationships between people and/or objects and chronological sequences of events. These aspects can be relevant for various questions at different levels of aggregation – from historical individuals to diverse groupings.

Consequently, the Visual Analytics Studio module of the InTaVia platform provides temporal, spatial, and relational perspectives on cultural heritage information²⁴ (see Figure 4). Users can create coordinated visualizations in flexible workspaces with adaptable multi-panel layouts that provide synoptic views with several perspectives on the selected data simultaneously. The three visualization types supported by the VA Studio are *maps* (including a space-time cube option), *network graphs*, and *timelines*. Visualizations can be customized to fit the current information-seeking needs. Multiple options for color encoding (e.g., by entity type or by time) enable different perspectives on the data. Various visual aggregation methods, such as donut charts or bee swarm clusters, prevent occlusion and visual clutter in analysis scenarios with many events in close spatial or temporal proximity. In addition, features like visualizing life paths with trajectories on maps or in space-time cubes support historians' analysis tasks. These visual analytics tools help digital humanities scholars and cultural heritage experts understand the connections and patterns within their data collections and develop and consolidate insights.

Figure 4 shows the multi-perspective interface for the visual analysis of life and work using an example of Ernest Adamič.²⁵ It contains a list of events (a), a timeline visualization which compares his life with the life of Bojan Adamič (b), a visualization of their network showing related persons, places, groups and cultural objects (c), and a map showing important places

²³ Florian Windhager, Eva Mayr, Matthias Schlögl, and Maximilian Kaiser, "Visuelle Analyse und Kuratierung von Biographiedaten," in *Digital History: Konzepte, Methoden und Kritiken Digitaler Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Karoline D. Döring et al. (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2022), 137–150, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110757101-008>; Florian Windhager et al., "Visualization of cultural heritage collection data: State of the art and future challenges," *IEEE transactions on visualization and computer graphics* 25 (2018): 2311–2330, <https://doi.org/10.1109/TVCG.2018.2830759>.

²⁴ Eva Mayr et al., "The multiple faces," 13–18.

²⁵ Ahac Meden, "Adamič, Ernest (1898–1977)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed June 23, 2024, <http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1000070/#novi-slovenski-biografski-leksikon>.

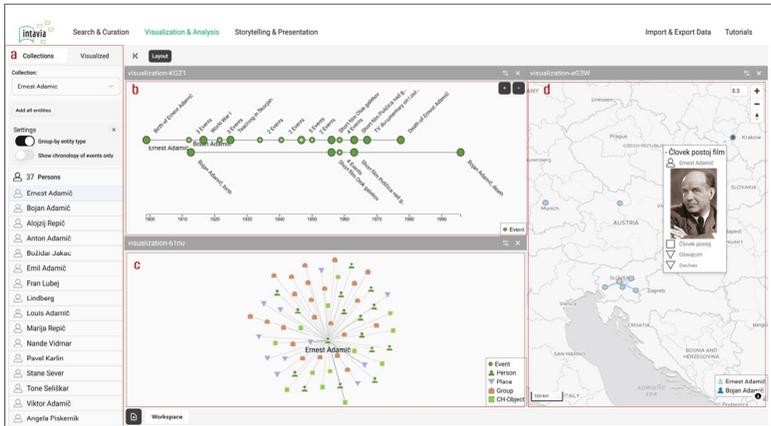


Figure 9.4. Visual Analytics Studio with an overview on the entities in the collection (a), which can be added to timelines (b), network visualizations (c), and maps (d). *Source:* authors.

in their lives (d). If a user moves the mouse over an event, it is also highlighted in the other views and a detailed preview is displayed. Clicking on the object opens a detailed view with further information and visualizations.

For communication purposes, the visualizations created in the VA Studio can be re-used in the final stage of the workflow by incorporating them into visual stories.

3.3. STORYTELLING SUITE

Narrative techniques of visualization-based storytelling open up a new, lower-threshold access to cultural heritage data – especially for interested laypersons and the general public.²⁶ However, the creation of such data – and visualization-based stories is very time-consuming without suitable tools. The InTaVia platform therefore offers the possibility of enriching selected data from the InTaVia Knowledge Graph and visualizations from the Visual Analytics Studio with explanatory texts, media, and interactive elements and linking them narratively.²⁷

²⁶ Jakob Kusnick, et al., *Report on narrative visualization techniques for OPDB data*, deliverable, InTaVia project, 2021, accessed July 10, 2023, <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/documents/downloadPublic?documentIds=080166e5e47d9524&appId=PPGMS>.

²⁷ Jakob Kusnick et al., “Every Thing Can Be a Hero! Narrative Visualization of Person, Object, and Other Biographies,” *Informatics* 11, no. 2 (2024): 26, <https://doi.org/10.3390/>

The *Story Creator*, as the first component of the Visual Storytelling Suite, integrates several features to intuitively create stories on cultural actors (see Figure 5). Users can create and organize their content visually in slides. It allows combining novel or pre-existing visualizations from the VA Studio with other media into unique layouts (see Figure 5b). When designing a story, experts decide which visualizations to use, which event data to highlight and which representation to offer for interactive exploration by the target audience. Transitions between individual stages of the story on maps or timelines are animated later on and thus made intuitively comprehensible. All visualizations can be enriched and combined with various multimedia content, such as images, videos, 3D models, text blocks, and HTML (see Figure 5c). Interactive elements such as quiz games, external media, and 3D renderings can further raise narrative engagement and user experience.

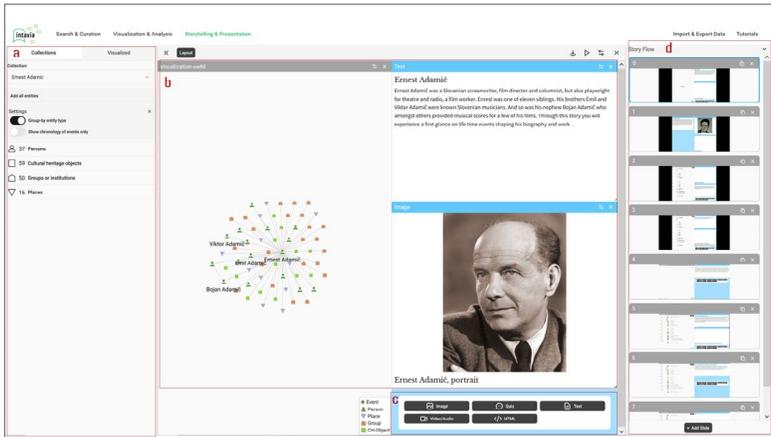


Figure 9.5. Story Creator using the collection panel for entity selection (a), a workspace for the creation of slides (b) with visualizations and further media elements (c), as well as an overview panel for all slides (d). *Source:* authors.

The *Story Viewer*, as the second major component of the Storytelling Suite, provides the missing link to story audiences and fosters the interactive reception of stories developed with the Story Creator, as well as sharing them

informatics11020026; Johannes Liem et al., “A Workflow Approach to Visualization-Based Storytelling with Cultural Heritage Data,” in *2023 IEEE 8th Workshop on Visualization for the Digital Humanities (VIS4DH)* (Melbourne: IEEE, 2023), 13–17, <https://doi.org/10.1109/VIS4DH60378.2023.00008>.

via unique URLs. It brings stories to life through dynamic visual elements, ensures smooth transitions between slides, and delivers high-quality visual renderings in a responsive manner to support mobile devices (see Figure 6). Additionally, it incorporates interactive features that aim to enhance user engagement and provide an immersive storytelling experience. Its design focuses on maintaining user interest and involvement, thus setting a new standard for visualization-based storytelling technology.

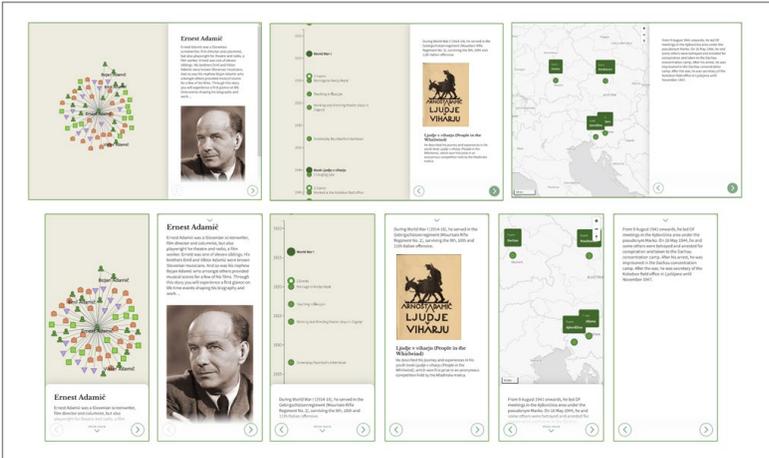


Figure 9.6. Three selected slides from a story on the life of Ernest Adamič²⁸ for desktop (top) and mobile devices (bottom), which combine network, time, or map visualizations with text and other media. *Source:* authors.

4. GOING BEYOND DATA SILOS – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Based on our experiences and discussions within InTaVia, but also with scholars working on related questions,²⁹ we want to summarize our expe-

²⁸ Ahac Meden, “Adamič, Ernest (1898–1977),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed June 23, 2024, <http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1000070/#novi-slovenski-biografski-leksikon>.

²⁹ In two events, we discussed our results with a community of interested researchers and scholars: Next to the conference *There is History in All Men's Lives*, we organized the symposium *Smashing the Silos! The Future of Cultural Heritage Information and Visualization* as a pre-event to DH2023, see “Smashing the Silos! The Future of Cultural Heritage Information and Visualization,” InTaVia, accessed June 23, 2024, www.intavia.eu/dh2023.

riences with ten theses for the work with cultural data, as a unique type of digital information:

- 1. Most cultural data is scattered and siloed.** Currently, digitized information on the lives of cultural actors and on cultural objects are scattered and siloed. By collecting and digitizing them in an unrelated fashion across separated institutions, historically relevant relations have been either broken or never made explicit or visible. InTaVia made a first attempt to reconnect cultural actors and objects and, thereby, enable the contextual analysis of cultural objects with a synoptic historic dimension. >> *To overcome fragmented perspectives, it is relevant to link cultural databases!*
- 2. Most cultural data is not human readable.** Data formats like CIDOC CRM, EDM, TEI, but also IDM RDF cannot be easily understood by non-data-experts, nor can they be readily used. Novel interfaces are required, which build upon more intuitive forms of representation and human cognition. InTaVia developed visualization-based interfaces which make use of human visual faculties, and combined them with a narrative presentation, a very intuitive form of human communication and thinking. >> *To foster general utilization and understanding, it is relevant to develop intuitive interfaces to cultural data!*
- 3. Cultural data is potentially big and rich in detail.** Over the course of centuries, a lot of cultural heritage information has been collected – and recently also digitized. Therefore, it has become difficult or even impossible to gain high-level overviews on the available information with conventional means. In InTaVia, we aimed for the creation of both: tools to gain an overview on cultural big data (via the Visual Analytics Studio) as well as tools for detailed inspection of individual entities (via detail pages). >> *In the cultural heritage field, the development of scalable reading techniques is an omnipresent challenge, to intertwine the exploration and analysis of big data sets with the attentive study and interpretation of details – and all possible scales in between!*

- 4. Cultural data is oftentimes scarily scarce.** When it comes to structured cultural data, we frequently experienced their structure to be worryingly scarce and sparse. Most entities within the InTaVia knowledge graph have only few events attached: Birth, death, and creation events are most frequent. But also the unstructured texts of national biographies often lack details. Here, existing biases also become obvious: Actors and objects which are regarded as more important have more detailed descriptions than the majority of entries. In InTaVia, we developed several mitigation strategies to enrich such data stumps. On the digital side, NLP and AI allow the retrieval of structured data from other sources (like Wikipedia or correspondence networks). On the expert's side, the interface allows for manual data input, curation, and upload of additional local data. >> *It is relevant to develop novel solutions for automatic and manual data enrichment.*
- 5. Cultural data is often uncertain and contested.** Historical sources are rarely conclusive, complete, or uncontested. Frequently, integrating multiple data sources also results in inconsistencies as manifestations of different historiographical conclusions or assumptions. Furthermore, more ancient cultural topics and entities are less well documented than recent eras. Such uncertainties and ambiguities need to be made transparent – together with the available information on the provenance of the data. Therefore, the InTaVia knowledge graph contains multiple proxies for contested entities or events, representing different information sources for persons, places, or objects. In the frontend, these information pieces are represented next to each other, while the sources are made transparent to the user. Visual representation of incomplete or uncertain information is an important challenge for the visualization of cultural information.³⁰ >> *It is relevant to preserve and document uncertainties and ambiguities*

³⁰ Windhager et al., “Visualization of Cultural Heritage Collection Data: State of the Art and Future Challenges,” *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics* 25 (2018): 2311–2330, <https://doi.org/10.1109/TVCG.2018.2830759>; Florian Windhager, Saminu Salisu, and Eva Mayr, “Exhibiting Uncertainty: Visualizing Data Quality Indicators for Cultural Collections,” *Informatics* 6, no. 3 (2019): 29, <https://doi.org/10.1109/TVCG.2018.2830759>.

in cultural data, to make the oftentimes contested bigger pictures of historical research transparent.

6. **Cultural data is frequently biased.** Cultural databases often contain various biases. National biographies focus more frequently and more extensively on men than women, cultural objects of minority cultures or classes are less often represented in collections. In addition, the digitization processes – as an ongoing activity over a longer time period – did not start with a random collection of cultural information, but with those, which are regarded most important. As such, the InTaVia knowledge graph is an accumulation of biased data sources. Still, by integrating different data sources, it contains multiple (biased) perspectives, which can complement one another. Also, we developed open ingestion and enrichment pipelines, which allow to integrate further databases in the future and to update the data within the InTaVia Knowledge Graph, as digitization of cultural information progresses. >> *It is relevant to be aware of existing biases in cultural data and to strive for their compensation by integrating multiple sources.*

7. **Cultural data is autotelic.** By definition, cultural objects are known to be collected due to their high “aesthetic, historic, scientific, or social value,”³¹ which contributes to their inherent attraction power. As such, an interface to these objects has to match, but also freely show and properly frame their beauty and appeal. In InTaVia, we included URLs to related media representations in the knowledge graph, wherever possible, i.e., for all entities. On the frontend side, we showed these related media materials in several instances: on the detail page for each entity, as a small preview upon mouse-over in the visualizations for each event, and as a preview for each entity in the collection panel of the Visual Analytics Studio and Story Editor. Thereby, we can also increase the user experience of the InTaVia platform and attract the interest of users for specific cultural actors or objects with related media representations. >> *It is relevant to*

³¹ International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), *Historic gardens (The Florence charter)* (Florence, 1982).

integrate close-up views of cultural objects saliently in an interface, but also to build attractive interfaces with high user experience.

- 8. Cultural data is different for different users.** Different users come with different needs and different levels of prior knowledge – which also influences their needs and wishes for a cultural information portal. Whitelaw³² coined the term “generous interfaces for cultural collections” to put emphasis on the fact that multiple entry points should serve the requirements of different user groups. In InTaVia, we defined ten personas³³ with specific information needs, prior knowledge, and user practices around cultural information (Figure 7). Based on their characteristic user profiles, we developed an interface, which allows for open exploration of data, for directed analysis, and for storytelling – supported by visualization. In addition, open APIs give access to the backend for re-use with other tools and allow to ingest novel databases, as well as to import own data to the frontend. >> *It is relevant to provide multi-purpose tools (e.g. exploratory, analytic, and narrative) for different types of users, but also open APIs for re-use by cultural heritage experts.*



Figure 9.7. Ten personas with distinct user profiles, which have been defined in InTaVia. *Source:* authors.

³² Mitchell Whitelaw, “Generous interfaces for digital cultural collections,” *Digital humanities quarterly* 9, no. 1 (2015): 1–16.

³³ Eva Mayr, et al., “The multiple faces,” 13–18.

9. **Cultural data and tools are non-neutral.** Cultural data and tools are influenced by several factors: Collection strategies and biases, national policies and identities, technological constraints, knowledge and skills of the people involved, and several others. As such, we should not encourage trusting the data and the tools in the first place, but offer avenues for their critical inspection, comparison, and discussion. In InTaVia, we involved experts on cultural heritage and digital humanities in multiple phases to collect their feedback and adjust our developments. In addition, we did inspect and discuss the data and tools within the project team on several occasions to bring in different perspectives. Still, we are aware that the project's data and tools are influenced and constrained by, the project aims, individual and organizational agendas, time constraints, and several other factors. >> *It is relevant to critically reflect on the data and tools in digital humanities in general, but especially for cultural and historical information.*

10. **Cultural data and digital tools are (only) sometimes relevant.** Digital collections, together with digital methods and tools offer new ways for accessing cultural data, for linking and curation and for scalable analysis and communication, but they cannot substitute the traditional, non-digital research on cultural information. They can complement and augment traditional research, but non-digital methods are at least equally important as digital ones. In a postdigital society, digital humanists with their data and tools have to work hand in glove with non-digital cultural heritage experts and the research methods from both sides immensely benefit from productive joint ventures. >> *It is relevant to complement digital and non-digital methods and tools for research and practices around cultural information.*

The InTaVia project explored novel opportunities which digital technologies offer for research and practice around cultural heritage. The resulting knowledge graph and the InTaVia information portal for visual analysis, curation, and communication thus showcase how digital technologies can influence the digital representation and work with cultural heritage. Yes, there is history in all (wo)men's lives – forming them and being formed by them.

We consider digital methods to provide a unique opportunity to strengthen the historiographic perspective in modern times, to link those lives to further (re)sources, widen our analysis, and expand our understanding, as well as our communication activities on the biographies of actors we care about.

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CHAPTER ABSTRACTS

Is Biography an Appropriate Tool for Studying
the History of Political Ideas?

JÉRÔME ROUDIER

Biography, in Antiquity, aimed to measure the relationship between man and destiny. As such, it dealt primarily with “great men,” culminating of course in the lives of the Roman Emperors. The review of exact historical facts ultimately constituted less his primary purpose than the establishment, by the biographer, of a moral judgment. From this point of view, biography during the Christian Middle Ages is similar to this moralizing problem. Scientific modernity obviously no longer accommodates this type of justification. Since the moral edification of readers cannot be the object of a scientific enterprise, we can ask ourselves the question of why, since the Renaissance, have we continued to write biographies?

Without delving into the idea of “genius” invented by the Renaissance and systematically theorized in the 19th century, we believe that a new kind of biography has been created to allow, above all, to understand the new relationship between societies and their population. The creation of “State,” this new way of naming political organizations since the counter-reformation, involves, it seems to us, a new way of writing and thinking about biography.

Between Private and Public. Biographies about
and by the Elite

JUKKA KORTTI

This chapter approaches biographies as a source for studies on intellectual history. First, it briefly reviews, via an example, what new digital history

tools, such as the semantic web, can provide for the pursuit of institutional history. Secondly, it discusses how biographies are usually about the elite: the richest, most powerful, best educated, or most thoroughly trained groups of a society. On the other hand, in addition to biographies, autobiographies are also a core body of data in writing and analysing the histories of universities, associations, companies, organizations, philanthropic institutions, or other prosopography clusters. By combining these kinds of writings, we may be able to reveal the lives that lie between the private and public spheres.

Dürer Literary Traditions, Genre Conventions and Author Authority in Early Modern Artists' Biographies – The Case of Albrecht Dürer

ANJA GREBE

Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) is the most frequently mentioned German artist in literature worldwide, both in art historical writings as well as in popular literature and biographical lexica. Ultimately, today's knowledge of Dürer's life and work relies on an extremely thin historical source base. Many facts of his life fell into oblivion, and gaps and uncertainties were continuously replaced with legends and topoi which were also used to shape Dürer's image as a national artist. On the one hand, Dürer's biography mirrors the perception of his life and work at a certain period of time, on the other hand, it has itself significantly modeled the image of the artist, the knowledge of or about Dürer and thus the reception and impact of his person and work. The chapter illuminates the most important steps in the development of biographical writing on Dürer with a special focus on the Early Modern Age. One challenge for the authors was that independent art literature practically did not exist at the beginning of the 16th century. The various forms of discourse on art and artists first had to be developed on the basis of ancient art and medieval literature. As Albrecht Dürer was one of the few visual artists of his time to be regarded as "worthy of biography," his biographies took on a prototypical character. In this way, Dürer had a decisive influence on the development of artist biographies in Germany.

Biography and the History of Knowledge:
The Formation of Knowledge Communities through
the Life and Work of Peter Christen Asbjørnsen
(1812–1885)

ANE OHRVIK

Peter Christen Asbjørnsen (1812–1885) was a Norwegian natural scientist, folklorist, and author who significantly influenced the cultural and scientific landscape of 19th-century Norway. During his lifetime, he developed and maintained an extensive international network that contributed to the production, dissemination, interpretation, and advancement of knowledge at a pivotal moment marked by the emergence of new sciences, academic professionalization, and the formation of nation-states. By examining Asbjørnsen's life and work, this article positions him as a distinct knowledge actor within 19th-century Europe.

The Biographical Phenomenon of St. Maximus
the Greek (ca. 1469–1555/6)

NEŽA ZAJC

The chapter is a critical reception of the biographical part of the life and work of St Maximus the Greek (born as Mikhail Trivolis, ca. 1469 – died 1555/6). Firstly, it presents a detailed and up-to-date biography of the erudite Greek Athonite monk who, with his youthful experience in Renaissance Italy, inscribed his life in a multicultural and therefore multilinguistic destiny, between Greece, Italy (Europe) and Russia (Eastern Europe). Indeed, Maximus had been involved among humanistic Christian tendencies (Orthodox and Catholic); however, it should be noted that he inadvertently became integrated into the Slavic literary and religious traditions (theological) culture. However, a scholarship reception of national traditions is often entirely inadequate to the personal situation and monastic position of Maximus the Greek. Moreover, the author provides a thorough exposition of the linguistic and contextual difficulties, involved in managing his manuscript legacy. As is implicitly yet persistently indicated throughout this discourse, the fundamental objective is to delineate Maximus the Greek's personal self-identification in his personal language. This could, in principle, facilitate a more profound comprehension of both his individual destiny and his cultural and historical significance.

Biographical Research and Presentation in the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography: Achievements and Challenges

FILIP HAMERŠAK, NATAŠA JERMEN

Founded in 1950, the Institute of Lexicography in Zagreb, later named after erudite Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža, its initiator and the first director, is one of the key places for biographical research in Croatia. Central project and also central edition in the field is *Hrvatski biografski leksikon* [Croatian Biographical Lexicon; CBL], started in mid-1970s, and from 1983 to 2021 resulting in nine printed volumes (letters A–Marj) with 12 547 articles, and also in the on-line edition since 2015, containing the printed articles and additional 104 online-only biographies in the Mark–Ž range. The chapter outlines general starting idea and base infrastructure, the conception and the (somewhat) varying realisation of the CBL, its practical achievements and challenges and its position in the changing broader context, including similar projects of the Institute, such as *Katalog retrospektivne bibliografije članaka* [Catalogue of the Retrospective Bibliography of Articles] and *Hrvatski osobnik* [Croatian Personal Database]. Moreover, the chapter gives an overview of biographical editions in the territory of nowadays Croatia since the 16th century.

The Path to *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*: The Slovenian Biographical/Lexicographical Tradition

PETRA TESTEN KOREN, BARBARA ŠTERBENC SVETINA,
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Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon [The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon] (2013–2023) is the Slovenian national biographical lexicon and one of the central projects of the ZRC SAZU and the Institute of Cultural History ZRC SAZU. Building primarily on the work of the *Slovenski biografski leksikon* [Slovenian Biographical Lexicon] (1925–1991; four books, fifteen volumes, Personal Index), it continues that project. It presents expanded descriptions of the most prominent Slovenian and Slovenian-related personalities from all historical periods up to the present day. Since its launch five volumes have been published: Volume 1: A (2013), Volume 2: B–Bla

(2017), Volume 3: Ble-By (2018), Volume 4: C (2022) and Volume 5: Č (2022). Two more volumes on the letter D are scheduled for publication in 2026. Since 2009, *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* has also been available on the Slovenian Biography web portal.

The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon also draws on a centuries-old heritage. A brief overview of the history of biography in the Slovenian territory reveals parallels and differences, as well as fundamental questions and problems that have arisen and persisted over time.

Project InTaVia – Or How to Digitally and Visually Reframe the History of All (Wo)Men’s Life and Work

EVA MAYR, FLORIAN WINDHAGER

The digitization of cultural-historical materials and efforts to interlink related data collections have opened up new possibilities for biographical research. The H2020 project “InTaVia” (InTangible European Heritage Visual Analysis, Curation & Communication, <https://intavia.eu>) drew together cultural object data and structured biographical data from several countries into a transnational knowledge graph. To improve the accessibility of this rich information resource, InTaVia developed a frontend with various visualization-based views (including maps, networks, and timelines) that support practices of querying, curating, exploring, analyzing and communicating. This chapter presents the results of the project and critically discusses its implications for research on and the handling of cultural heritage data. It closes with ten theses on challenges and opportunities related to this specific type of data.

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There is a history in all men's lives
Figuring the natures of the times deceased;
The which observed, a man may prophesy
With a near aim of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life ...

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