Historiographies of Early Modern Southeast Europe (HEMSEE)

The Vienna-based project HEMSEE (financed by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation) intends to produce a source-based handbook showing the challenges and opportunities of working with the historiographic texts of Early Modern Southeast Europe. Operating with thematic clusters, we will explore both familiar and uncharted territories and thereby analyze excerpts from both mainstream and “minor” sources.

Life Writing and History Writing

The Early Modern period witnessed a remarkable increase in literacy including various forms of personal narratives. According to recent research by historians, literary and religious scholars, writing about the self (or the other’s self) was not geographically confined to Western Europe, but can also be found for example in the Ottoman realm. However, ego documents, self-narratives, or Selbstzeugnisse (testimonies to the self) form Southeast Europe – to mention but a few terms coined to denote life writing – have largely remained under the radar in academia.

The second workshop organized within the framework of the HEMSEE handbook project intends to build upon extant literature and to discuss life writing in the light of changing historiographic practices. We suggest to operate with a flexible concept that considers the field’s diversity. Open and inclusive, the term life writing “encompasses the writing of one’s own or another’s life” (JOLLY 2001), both in schematic and elaborate forms. Our aim is to reflect, from a cultural-historical perspective, on the potential and limits of the concept for the study of Early Modern Southeast Europe. Where, when, and why do life writings emerge? What form do they take? Who produces them? Taking into consideration traditional and hybrid genres, as well as likely and unlikely “documents,” we address the intricate relationship between life writing and history writing.

CONVENORS:
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CAVEAT:
In case of force majeure, the workshop will be held virtually via Zoom.
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

10:00–10:45  INTRODUCTORY SESSION
Opening Remarks
Konrad Petrovszky

Ovidiu Olar
Edifying Histories: The Strange Case of Giulio Mancinelli SJ († 1618)

10:45–11:00  COFFEE & COOKIES BREAK

11:00–12:30  FIRST SESSION
Mariya Kiprovska
Texts Within Texts: Reassembling the Lost Gazavatnames (Books of Holy Wars) of the Ottoman Frontier Lords

Marian Coman
Wandering Princes of an Ill-Fated Realm: The Wallachian Pretenders’ Self-Narratives (16th C.)

Maria Shusharova
The Duty of Remembering: An Orthodox Artisan Accounting Self, Family and Home Place in the Ottoman Periphery (Late 18th Century)

12:30–14:30  LUNCH BREAK

14:30–15:30  SECOND SESSION
Marija Vasiljević
Between Life Writing and History Writing: Serbian Hagiographies from the 15th to the 17th Century

Nikolas Pissis
On the Greek Biographies of Peter the Great

15:30–15:45  COFFEE & COOKIES BREAK

15:45–17:15  THIRD SESSION
Nadezhda Alexandrova
Critical Uncertainties: Sofroniy Vrachanski’s Autobiography and Sense of Authorship

Tatjana Paić-Vukić
Records of Natural Disasters and Extreme Events from a 18th Century Bosnian Personal Notebook, Mecmua (Zoom)

Olga Borovaya
Rabbi Moses Almosnino in Search of a Genre: Writing the First Ladino History of Ottoman Sultans for the Empire’s New Subjects (Zoom)

19:00  Dinner

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1ST

9:30–11:30  FOURTH SESSION
Dimiter Peev
Paisiy of Hilendar between Middle Ages and the Modernity

Wladimir Fischer
The Two Lives and Adventures of Dimitrije Obradović. Narrative Strategies in Život i priključenija vs. Basne

Liviu Bordas
“To morrow thou wilt again be nothing, as thou hast been”: Elias Habesci’s Striving to Be and His (Mis)Fortune around the World

Marijana Mišević
Fashioning Oneself as a Letter Writer During a Great Revolt: Mateja Nenadović of Serbia (1777–1854) and His Memoirs

11:30–11:45  COFFEE & COOKIES BREAK

11:45–12:45  FINAL SESSION
Tijana Kristić
Ottoman Prince, Emperor in the East, or King of Illyria? – Making Sense of Yahya Sultan’s (d. 1649) Life

Discussions