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**THE DOUBLE-HEADED EAGLE LANDED: THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MEDIA, LITERARY AND CULTURAL HISTORY AT THE TURN OF THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES IN WESTERN HUNGARY**  
 (Ágnes Dóbék, Gábor Mészáros and Gábor Vaderna (Eds.) 2019: *Media and Literature in Multilingual Hungary 1770-1820*. Budapest, Reciti Conference Vols. 3. p. 285 <https://www.reciti.hu/2019/5169>)

One can admire the noteworthy display of a curtain and drapery shop window at the foot of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. The burgundy velvet background and the golden pelmet highlight the majestic coat of arms of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy with the double-headed eagle. A historical age is over but its memory still haunts us in this shop window. The presence of the coat of arms in a hidden corner of the square, among other things, points back to a historical age in which the lives of the people of the multilingual Pannonian Plain are closely linked. The volume titled *Media and Literature in Multilingual Hungary 1770-1820* containing English and German essays takes the cultural and literary relationships into account.

In his introductory study, Gábor Vaderna not only introduces the core question of the volume but he also revises a research project which defines the goals of Hungarian history-writing. The primary aim is to publish critical editions of Hungarian media products, to create digital databases and to analyze the information obtained from the databases. The volume is considered to be the first step for future work. On the one hand, the central aim of the research is to define the importance and role of the Western Hungarian region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the other hand, the authors aimed to scrutinize the structure and network of Central-European media press (and to explore lesser-known examples in Hungarian cases). As a result, the essays of

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the volume are not only interesting from a literary historical viewpoint but can also be put into a broader perspective, such as social, economic, or political history.

What is Western Hungary? Of course, it is an artificial concept: instead of geographical boundaries, it is defined by cultural ones. According to Vaderna, this region as a geographical notion encompassed all districts in the Kingdom of Hungary on the west side of the Danube at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The approximation seems simple at first glance, as if only the map defines our historical consciousness. However, the region was multicultural and included several ethnic groups and religious denominations. The language of public administration (and of local politics) was still Latin at the time, with Hungarian, Slovak, German, Croatian, and Vendian (Slovenian) communities in the area. Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and within certain limits, Jews had the right to establish churches. Ethnic groups of different languages and religions lived closely together, and although there were trends (Slovaks lived in the north, Croats in the south, Hungarians in the central areas, and Germans in the cities), there were several ethnicities and religions in most settlements. Neither the great narrative of the history of tolerance, nor the great narrative of the structural change of the public sphere can accurately describe the situation of this region. Nevertheless, media history in which political communication was transferred to the public sphere started in this micro-region of Hungary. There may be several reasons for this.

The role of Vienna, Vaderna adds, cannot be omitted from such a story. Literary intellectuals from all regions of the monarchy gathered here. Viennese cultural life served as an example to be followed for Pressburg (now: Bratislava), Zagreb, Buda and Pest, as the cities bordered the region. This region deserves special attention in the cultural history of the Habsburg monarchy, because the rival elites increased their cultural activities. The schools for the Protestants and Catholics, the castles of catholic aristocrats and the mansions of the Protestants became cultural spaces. Joseph Haydn composed his famous symphonies here as the house conductor of Prince Nicoalus Esterházy; the first upper-level, private agricultural school (the Georgicon in Keszthely) was founded here; an aristocrat (Count Franz Széchenyi) sent his private collection to Pest to establish the national museum and library. Schools, printing houses mushroomed here; and this is where most contemporary newspapers were established. In the interpretation of Vaderna, not only did the social strata of intellectuals change due to the altering way of life and new editing and writing practices, but this process itself also opened up new chances to publish newspapers, books, and other prints. This intersection can be analyzed by means of social history, cultural anthropology, and media history – all in one story.

Vaderna confronts the description of the structural transformation of the public sphere by Jürgen Habermas with other great cultural-historical narratives, like those of Michael Foucault, Niklas Luhmann, Friedrich Kittler and Peter Burke. Their basic points explain the birth of modern society, while they correct each other at the same

time. What these narratives have in common is that they ignore the history of Central and Eastern Europe. This is only natural and not necessarily a defect of these descriptions. Mostly, the reasons for this were linguistic obstacles. Vaderna suggests that we should add examples from Central Europe to these narratives, so that the specificities of the region can become more visible. We can add that if we look at the Hungarian aspect of the process, it is possible to detail the problem of changing national concepts and language reforms which go hand in hand. Vaderna mentions two aspects thereof: first, the so-called “Hungary-consciousness”, which is based on a complex territorial, historical, but not ethnic identity; and second, the language regulation of Joseph II, by which the ruler tried to create a common administrative structure for his Empire. However, Vaderna does not pay sufficient attention to the fact that several national concepts existed in parallel – depending on who declared themselves to belong to which ethnic group and social class – or that Hungarian language did not play a significant role in the language concept of “Hungary-consciousness” at the turn of the century. I assume that Herder’s theory of the idea of language and nation as well as the productive capacity of the Hungarian reform of language reinforced the connection between growing nationalism and language. It was certainly intentional, but Herder’s name only appears in one essay (by Béla Hegedüs). This shortcoming happens despite the fact that Herder’s philosophy was a standard for both contemporaries and Hungarian secondary literature.

Multilingual is another key word of this volume. István Fried explains the term in his text (*Mehrsprachigkeit in den ersten Jahrzehnten der ungarischen Zeitschriftenliteratur*, p. 19.). As he writes, “the literary and cultural history written from ‘a narrower national sense’ produced problematic ‘results’ not only because they almost entirely neglected the necessary comparative approach, but rather because they presented the Central European national movements in the second half of the eighteenth century as if they were uniform and teleological.” The notion of a nation as an “imagined community”, namely the self-interpreting and self-understanding attitude of national character, neglected both multilingualism as well as multiculturalism; and it highlighted such national efforts in history as the foundation of native institutes. They were tied to such cult figures as Count Franz Széchényi and Count György Festetics, who were multilingual themselves. Without taking this into account, the question of national, local culture, Fried adds, is closely related to the support of the “Bildung” of the homeland, i.e. the care of the mother tongue and the creation of a standard literary language.

Fried also points out that multilingualism was fundamentally characteristic of mixed-population small and large towns in Western Hungary. The language was used differently in these towns: a different language was used at home than in academic life, or even outside on the street. I would like to add that this weakens the argument that the same was, of course, typical of Eastern Hungary or Transylvania too. For example, one

of the well-known figures of Hungarian literature, Ferenc Kazinczy and his wife, Count Sophie Török used formal German during the day and informal Hungarian after sunset. The author of the first Hungarian literary history (also known as “the father of Hungarian literary history”), Ferenc Toldy was originally named Franz Schedel as he was a native German. Multilingualism was also an important part of his identity: in line with the fashion of the age, his parents taught him Hungarian at the age of 8-9, and later sent him to Košice to learn Slovak as well.

The list of examples could go on and on, but it is already clear that multilingualism was part of everyday life at the time, so, it is not surprising that one of the biggest issues of newspapers established in Hungary was the language of publication, which depended on the social composition of the audience. On the one hand, there was an attempt to publish newspapers in vernacular language, so that all readers could access information in the way that was most understandable and usable. This practice became part of the addition of new words to the vernacular language and the refinement of its expressive power. On the other hand, the practice of reading non-vernacular press persisted for a longer time. Fried argues that the reasons for the survival of the media not published in the mother tongue (in Latin and German) were that until 1817, neither the Hungarian nor the Slavic press had any institutional framework in Hungary. Thus, transforming the audience into a community was at stake, but the newspapers published in the mediating languages were expected to have readers who were interested not only in their own mother tongue and culture, but in culture and ethnic groups in other nations as a whole. Therefore, using another language was not a disadvantage; on the contrary, it was a part of a social identity constructed in several languages at the same time.

The problem of multilingualism also draws attention to issues such as the everyday use of language and the spreading of reading culture. According to Fried, early newspapers such as *Sokféle* [*Variety*, in Hungarian], *Magyar Hirmondó* [*Hungarian Herald*, in Hungarian], *Ungrische Magazine* [in German], *Presspürské nowiny* [*Pressburg News*, in Slovak], and the *Pressbuger Zeitung* [in German] conveyed Hungarian scientific, linguistic, and literary projects, even if this was not their original intention. However, we do not have much information about how the public reacted, nor do we know how many readers or how many subscribers paid for the product. While the first public libraries and reading circles were established in Western Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, due to the raging “reading revolution”, increased book production and the proliferation of media press in Hungary, the structure of the eighteenth-century reading culture and the demand for books are bright sides in history-writing. The essays in this volume cannot answer these questions in detail (who could?), and fail to take a wide angle shot but manage to narrate at least some micronarratives. Meanwhile, the connections between different languages and cultures are reconstructed.

The studies of the volume can be broken down into three topics. First, we have the network of the media under scrutiny: histories of different newspapers and magazines, printing press, the propaganda of the Habsburg court at the age of Napoleonic wars. The essays on these topics present the Western Hungarian media history from a comparative viewpoint. On the one hand, we can look at the subject from a broader perspective of the European media and press history; on the other, we can do so by comparing it to different provinces of the Habsburg Empire. A great achievement of these studies is that they show similar features of the cultural history of areas that are now located in different countries (in Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, and Croatia). Suzana Coša's contribution (*History of Journalism in the Croatian Lands from the Beginnings until the Croatian National Revival*) is worth highlighting: she argues that the knowledge transfer developed similarly in different areas of the monarchy; and public opinion came into existence from publishing news.

Second, there are essays on specific cases. Several studies focus on figures who edited the media products. For instance, the editor of the first Hungarian-language newspaper, Mathias Rát, had a dual program: he passed on the news of foreign newspapers and set up an extensive correspondence network, with the help of which he could collect material from all over Hungary; Nicolaus Révai, a Piarist monk, seized the opportunity to take advantage of the new media to move forward and establish an academy; a Hungarian nobleman, István Sándor published a series of books of different cultural and scientific news to impart encyclopedic knowledge; Ludwig Schedius, a professor at the university of Pest, built intercultural relations between German and Hungarian culture in the press while writing aesthetic studies in Latin. Another group of essays examines a specific journal or concept in the context of social and political history, such as the image of Transylvania published and formed in Western Hungarian media press; the complexity of the concept of "urbanitas" in the periodical *Mindenek Gyűjtemény* [*Miscellaneous Collection*]. All of these provide an interpretive framework towards an interdisciplinary research.

Third, some essays cross the boundaries of history, literary history, and the media history. The ones on the advertisements of popular sequels of novels published in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in the press; on the appearance of theater criticism in Western Hungary, and on the contexts of accounts of events in European publishing culture and the echo of Catholic-Protestant union plans.

The volume proves that the involvement of several disciplines, be it literary history or social history, is essential for the media history analysis of the Enlightenment. Pierre Bourdieu's field theory can provide a great way forward for a mixed-perspective research. Thus, it would also be possible to examine the same media product from several perspectives, as these are magazines and journals with "mixed" content. Of course, we should review more than one periodical, but we should also use the opportunities offered by comparative analysis, opening up new doors to the future.

However, we must not forget the basic concepts of the history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as language reformation, without which the history of the era is not complete. After this volume, it would be worth rethinking the narratives used to describe Central European history so far. Each essay deserves a separate and thorough analysis. By their inspiring questions, they update the need for research on the cultural history of the Enlightenment, confirming the fact that the source material is virtually inexhaustible.

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