Encounters in Europe’s Southeast
The Habsburg Empire and the Orthodox World in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

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Introduction

Harald Heppner, Eva Posch

The relations between the Habsburg monarchy and the ‘world of the Balkans’ (Orthodoxy, Ottoman empire, and the diverse ethnic groups of south-eastern Europe) can be divided into three different periods. Initially, the cluster of alpine lands dominated by Habsburg authority was only marginally affected by factors that originated in the southeast, especially by the repeated incursions of Ottoman auxiliary troops from Bosnia into Carniola, Gorizia, Carinthia and Styria. Then, from the early sixteenth to the late seventeenth centuries, the Habsburg regents faced another kind of challenge: The aftermath of the battle of Mohács in 1526 meant that not only the hereditary lands had to be provided with sufficient protection. The inheritance of the crowns of the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia also invested new responsibility upon them. This era’s narrative comprises the Habsburg-Ottoman wars with the two sieges of the imperial capital and the Habsburg residence, Vienna, in 1529 and 1683. However, a focus on military tasks alone would be too limited as at that time societal and religious issues also gained prominence with regard to the influx of Christians from the Ottoman-controlled lands, as did cultural impulses which largely originated in the Orient rather than in the Balkans.

Historic phenomena of these centuries include the immigration and integration of the Vlachs (Croats, Serbs and Vlachs from Ottoman territory) into the emerging Military Frontier zone as well as the attempts to persuade the Balkan-Orthodox population of a church union with the Roman Catholic Church. Finally, between the early eighteenth century and the First World War, the monarchy rose to become a European power, facing a popular expansion due to the considerable number of new subjects from the former or – as migrants – the present Ottoman domains, and an involvement in the international network of relations and interests surrounding the Eastern Question. When moving away from the consequences of overcoming the threat of the Ottoman expansion into the core European regions and from a more general perspective on the changes and challenges of the Habsburg expansion into the southeast, a multitude of encounters can be identified between the monarchy and the populations of its south-eastern frontier regions, only possible after the Supreme Porte was gradually retreating into the Balkans. The present volume will explore some aspects of these encounters by means of case studies and detailed observations of the characteristics of these encounters.

The newly acquired access to the southern frontier regions and the areas beyond provided the imperial administration with new opportunities but also proved to be testing in some cases. In his article, Milos Djordjevic provides insight into the establishment of modern administrative institutions in the kingdom of Serbia after its incorporation in the Habsburg empire in 1718 with a focus on the formation of the Customs Head Office to exploit cross-border trade with the Ottoman empire, but also with regards to the methods of exploiting domestic resources in
Dositej Obradović and the Ambivalence of Enlightenment

VLADIMIR FISCHER

Since Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno and, (at the very latest), since Michel Foucault, we have been used to thinking of enlightenment as a highly ambivalent term and phenomenon.1 At the end of World War II, Horkheimer and Adorno wanted "to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new state of barbarism" and, dialectic thinkers that they were, did not expect to find the reason for this in enlightenment having been abandoned, but in its inherent dialectic. This dialectic they thought was turning into the predominance of a utilitarian form of violent domination:

If [enlightenment] voluntarily leaves behind its critical element to become a mere means in the service of an existing order, it involuntarily tends to transform the positive cause it has espoused into something negative and destructive.

Although they did not spell it out in Marxist terms, this critique of utilitarianism was a class critique that sometimes shone through terminologically, too:

Knowledge, which is power, knows no limits. [...] Just as it serves all the purposes of bourgeois economy both in factories and on the battlefield, it is at the disposal of entrepreneurs regardless of their origins. [...] Technology is the essence of this knowledge. [...] Ruthless toward itself, the Enlightenment has eradicated the last remnant of its own self-awareness.2

Although from different starting points, Michel Foucault's famous descriptions of the development of discourses and practices of control in modernity, most notably discourse itself, spaces of control and discipline like army barracks or prisons, and the dispositifs to control sexuality and (mental) health, seemed to respond to Horkheimer's and Adorno's concerns about the destructive side of enlightenment. When the history of the Habsburg monarchy is concerned, the enlightenment period has for a long time been discussed in terms of its so-called delay, with a focus on the reform policies of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, to be followed by a plethora

1 Foucault, whom I am not treating here, not only traced the traditions of domination that are tied to the development of enlightenment thinking, but criticized the very basis of enlightenment thinking, the philosophical subject, as such. This also led to a critical re-evaluation of authority in text production, which is important to my own reading of Obradović, which I have lain out in: Vladimír Fischer, Dositej Obradović als bürgerlicher Kulturheld. Zur Formierung eines serbischen bürgerlichen Selbstbildes durch literarische Kommunikation 1783–1845 (= Studien zur Geschichte Südosteuropas 16. Frankfurt/M. et al. 2007).

2 Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments. (= Cultural Memory in the PresentStanford 1988, transl. by Edmund Jephcott). Of course, Horkheimer and Adorno used the Hegelian term "dialectic", but I prefer "ambivalence" in order to embrace a broader body of enlightenment criticism and because I am interested in different issues than the Frankfurt School proponents.
of works on the intellectual and social history of the phenomenon. More recent research, with the Frankfurt School's and the Foucauldian critiques as a backdrop, has targeted many of the darker sides of the 'Age of Light' in the Habsburg monarchy, including eighteenth-century institutional racism, social discipline, witch hunts, mass detention, mass deportations, prison houses, and child abductions by the authorities. This paper is designed to review a series of ambivalences in a specific area of enlightenment discourses in the Habsburg monarchy at the end of the eighteenth century, i.e. the Serb variation of this movement and, more specifically, the central figure in Serbian enlightenment discourses, Dostoj Obradović.

'Dostoj' is one of the most renowned names in modern Serbian intellectual history. His cosmopolitan and 'western' image, as well as the seductive narratives...

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4 The second and even more famous personality was Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1868), ethnographer, language reformer and romanticist. I wrote elsewhere about the relationship between these two heroic figures in the Serb national consciousness, and about the competition between these two and other "cultural heroes". Vladimirs Fischer, Der heilige Savo in serbischem Diskurs. Eine kulturhistorische Annäherung. In: Ostkirchliche Studien 59.2 (2011), 269–89; Iadem, Das 'Licht' in der serbischen Erinnerung. Antworten auf das serbische Geschichtsbewusstsein. In: Iadem, Erinnerungs kulturen im Vergleich. Internationale Konferenz Wien, Mai 2009. (Schriftenreihe der Elias Canetti Gesellschaft 7, St. Ingbert 2011); Iadem, Creating a National Hero. The Changing Symbo...
cumstances in the region are explained in several other contributions to this volume in more detail so, at the beginning, it may suffice to cast a few cursory glances at the historical context.7 Dositej is well known to have been an ardent admirer of the Holy Roman emperor Joseph II during the latter’s lifetime. Why did he not prefer other figures, such as the Russian empress Catherine II, for example? The reason was of course a political one. The potential readers of his books were peppered across the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, i.e. on both sides of the border and actually also inside the border, the Military Frontier. Dositej himself grew up in the Habsburg empire, in Bukovina. The Habsburg Serbs did not live under the same conditions as the Serb population in the Ottoman empire, of course.

Alphabetization, for example, is especially relevant for our topic. As there was no school-system for the common subjects of the sultan, illiteracy was widespread among the Ottoman Serbs. This was not true for the Austrian Serbs to whom primary schooling was available as early as in the 1720s. When Obradović was presumably born in 1748, a school system had already been developed for Serbian children in the Banat and in the neighbouring Habsburg-rulled regions. Schools were accessible to Serb students, beginning with elementary schools, but also included higher education such as the Protestant school in Presburg/Pozsony or those in Austria or Germany. From 1792, a Serbian secondary school (Gymnasium) for the education of the elites also existed in Sremski Karlović/Karlovec, but the Hungarian jegyezumi were open to Serbs as well.9 This difference in terms of educational infrastructure is all too often neglected in the representation of Obradović’s life in the handbooks. There, his alphabetization is often presented as something unusual for Serbs at the time, suggesting that illiteracy was equally common among the Serbs on either side of the border, and it is thus in inappropriate generalization.

It might seem commonplace to mention that there were different conditions in the Ottoman and Habsburg empires but there is ample reason for stressing this in an article on Serb discourses and modernity: the distribution of Serb populations (and of their elites) over both empires, and the fact that there was cross-

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7 See the contributions by Benjamin Landais, Milos Đorđević, Vladimir Simić, Marija Petrović and Nenad Ristić in this volume.

8 His year of birth is not entirely clear, but earlier information which claimed that it had been in 1739 has been revised. Cf. Jovan Sekulić, Godina rođenja Dositeja Obradovića. In: Glas Srp- ske akademije znanosti 72, 1986, 165–77; and Andrija Sterković, Život i put Dositeja Obradovića. Od šeštera i kuladžere do filozofa i prosvetitelja i Karadžićevog ministara prosvete (Beograd 1989).


11 Nowadays, the name of Dositej’s birthplace is Ćakova and it is situated in Romania near Timișoara. At the time when Dimitrie Obradovici walked the earth, it was part of the Habsburg empire. This is the reason why it is incorrect to say that Dositej “returned” to Serbia at the end of his life, because he had not been born in Serbia in the first place, but in Habsburg Banat.

and accounted for much of the ambivalence. A coalition between Emperor Joseph II and the newly emerging middle classes of the Habsburg empire against the aristocracy was to be formed – especially non-dominant elites, like the Serb ones, were also trying to take part in this coalition with the enlightened emperor: hence the hymnic adoration in Obradović’s texts for the Holy Roman Kaiser in his public Letter to Haralampije (published in Leipzig in 1783, very probably together with Dositej’s most widely read book Life and Adventures):

When no more are any foods forbidden!
[..]
In eggs children dip bread for their eating
And with lems they frisk over the grass plots.
Serbia’s daughters, young, ready for marriage,
Gather flowers and plait them in garlands,
Adorning their bosoms with roses,
And sing gaily with sweet sounding voices
In praise of the Holy Roman Emperor
Who now rules the broad lands of fair Austria.

All these were good reasons for a Serb, being both a progressive member of the middle classes and an Austrian subject, to support the Holy Roman emperor. On the other hand, however, the Serb elites in the Habsburg empire had come to learn that they were at the mercy of the Crown and could always lose their privileges as had been the case in the various struggles between the Serbian clergy, Maria Theresa and the Court over the cultural-political competences of the Orthodox Church during the 1770s. Besides, the privileged populations in the Military Frontier had to pay a high price for their special status in the form of submitting their abiest men for service as soldiers. They were free, at least nominally, and their obligatory services to the emperor were, in fact, relatively moderate and controllable. During the eighteenth century, a period of severe poverty, the drafts also led to ri-

13 An overview of how these socio-political struggles were characterized by ambivalent interests and often inconsistent strategies can be found in Karl Vöckler, Glianz und Untergang der höfischen Welt. Repräsentation, Reform und Reaktion im habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat, 1699–1815 (= Österreichische Geschichte, Wien 2001).
17 Fr. Vanček, Spezialgeschichte der Militärgrenze, aus Originalquellen und Quellenwerken geschaffen, 4 vols., I (Wien 1875).
18 In the frontier sector, the Ilyriisch-Bosnischen Regiment in 1774 had only 4,638 out of 9,930 male adults who were fit for service. 3,535 men were ‘partially invalid’, 728 were fit only for domestic service, and 629 men were entirely disabled. Insm, Spezialgeschichte der Militärgrenze, aus Originalquellen und Quellenwerken geschaffen, 4 vols., II (Wien 1875).
19 A book that has popularized the notion of a Serbian baroque is Dejan Medarović, Barok kod Srba (Zagreb 1988). More detailed and contextualized information is contained in Vittore Branca, Sante Gracchiotti (eds.), Barocco in Italia e nei paesi slavi del sud (Firenze 1983). One of the yellow robes mentioned is on display in the history exhibition of the Vojvodina Museum in Novi Sad and can be seen on its website as well: http://www.muzejvojvodine.org.rs/hist_st_postarke/istorija_1
20 Obradovic, Life and Adventures.
An Obfuscating Element

As mentioned initially, the role of Đorđe Obradović in Serbian discourse is that of a hero. Numerous authors have made connections between him and other important legendary figures of Serb cultural history. This becomes obvious for instance in the Belgrade cathedral (Svabornica crkva). In its current neo-baroque exterior and interior, it was erected in 1838 to house the bones of the monarch of Serbia, Prince Miloš Obrenović and his family, together with the remains of so eminent a figure as Prince Lazar, who died in the notorious battle at Kosovo polje in 1389. To the left of the main entrance, opposite the graves of the princes, Obradović is buried. His bones had to be transferred to this place in 1838. In 1897, Đositej's grave was joined by the tomb of Vuk Karadžić, whose coffin was transferred from Vienna, although the two intellectuals serve as ideological antipodes in Serbian intellectual history in many points. Moreover, Serb nationalists have created connections between medieval hero-figures and Đositej, for example with the Saint Sava (1173–1236) who is seen as the founder of Serb literature in such a discourse, as can been seen from the preface to the 150th anniversary edition of Đositej's opus:

There are two epochs in the history of Serbian culture: the ancient period - from Saint Sava to Đositej and the modern - from Đositej to our days. Sava is the first Serbian writer, Đositej is the first modern Serbian writer. [...] In the right moment [Đositej] launched a merciless critique of the medieval backwardness and created an extensive long-term program and the first specimens of the new culture, which is a western and a popular culture.

This description of Đositej as a hero who introduced important achievements in the field of culture sounds as if it was taken from an article in an encyclopedia of social anthropology. Especially the narration on how Đositej produced 'the first specimens' of modern Serbian literature, founded first institutions, opened a new era, etc., as cited just above and also further above by Antun Barac, corresponds to the definition of a 'culture hero', which was developed by theological historians.23


Đositej Obradović and the Ambivalence of Enlightenment

Who educates whom?

This kind of hero worship has obfuscated some very obvious points when we consider Đositej as an enlightenment thinker. And this is where the relevance of Horkheimer/Adorno's and Foucault's critiques of enlightenment thinking interlocks with my re-reading of Obradović's writings: of course, his discourse on gender is not about women's liberation; he was surely not an advocate of racial equality; and, most certainly, his was an elitist approach; and all that in contrast to the mythology that has been built around him both by nationalists and communists.

Several such myths about Đositej mistook his plan of "spreading the light of reason even to simple peasants - yes, even to the huts of our herdsmen" for a prefiguration of the nineteenth-century discovery of "the folk."24 Contrary to this, his endeavour was not designed for 'the people' but for the elites - it was them who should, according to Đositej, educate the people. Đositej's language usage reveals that his kind of reason was, to use Horkheimer's and Adorno's words, aimed at controlling and exploiting a patriarchal language that commits violence. This is most obvious in the classical metaphor of light: in his images, light is being spread (from above) into the dwellings of the lower classes. And without hesitating, Đositej explains the conditions on which one will be admitted to the realm of light, when he describes whom he is addressing: "[...] every person who understands our language and who with a pure and honest heart desires to enlighten his mind and to improve his character."

Đositej's message was that the elites should educate or, in his words, "advise and teach" the people and better them. In his text, the following is said by a bishop, who talks to the influential merchant Josip Malenica, a central personality of the Banat elites, who also figures prominently in Benjamin Landais' contribution to this volume. It is a fictitious dialogue that is designed by the author to introduce the elites "out there" into a piece of didactic fiction and, at the same time, to let them - as readers - observe themselves digesting the ideas of enlightenment (the scene takes place at a festive dinner in another merchant's house in Temesvár/Timişoara):

Not so, my dear Malenica; not so! We must have no such ideas of the people, for the people is a large body and we are but few. One must advise and teach the people, not stir it to wrath; by force one can accomplish nothing with it. The people is mild and submissive; if need be it will shed its blood for its elders. [...] Therefore, we should act gently toward the people. [...]25

This example also gives an impression of what I was above referring to with the formulation that Đositej 'negotiated' modernity and enlightenment to the Serb elites. With a narrative device, Obradović delegates the utterance of all the above argues.

25 Ibid., In.
26 OBRADOVIĆ, Život i prikupljanja, 42.
ments to a narrative persona; representing a respectable office, the author formulates his arguments through the bishop. In another scene, he has a sympathetic figure of lesser monastic rank formulate the program of reforming the monasteries and the feast-days. Thus, arguments then put forward by the Vienna court are attributed to narrative representatives of their 'own', i.e. Orthodox clerics by the author. The fact that the entire narration is an autobiography (and the second part an epistolary novel) bolsters the author's claim to reality, although it is clear that many events and characters in the text are inventions.  

Dositej's elitist program becomes even more obvious when it comes to modern middle class values, such as industriousness and property. This is where we learn that although Dositej advises to be gentle with the rural folk, there are strict limits to tolerance. Dositej aggressively propagates bourgeois work ethics (industriousness, improvement, labour) and fiercely combats religious condescension towards money, business and success, much in the way Horkheimer and Adorno had described as utilitarian. Most obvious is Dositej's elite agenda in his descriptions of "wicked" individuals (later termed "dangerous classes") in London, his tirades against homeless people in his Letter XI:  

Before I describe the new acquaintances, so important for myself, to whom I have alluded, I wish to make the following remark. Those men who have not the money requisite for their needs and who do not know how to earn it or for some reason or other are incapable of doing so [...] men who walk about in tattered and unclean raiment, who sleep on rags and live in places that have not been cleaned, and who, instead of being ashamed and grieved on this account, are even proud of the fact, imagining that they gain a certain dignity thereby; [...] men who make such heroes of themselves that they mock at persons capable of earning money and of living not only in peace and quiet but in a beautiful fashion — such men, as everybody may observe, have some screw loose in their heads.  

Here, the reverberations of the late seventeenth-century Reformation of Manners Campaign of London are clearly perceptible. For instance, in 1697 the reform propagandist Josiah Woodward — in a similar vein as Dositej did ninety years later — was stating that "idle people [...] perplex the business of the more diligent, disturb their quiet, [and] piller their goods [...]" When Dositej was in London, there were already nearly 2,000 poorhouses existing in England. These are the traits of 'enlightened despots' that made Horkheimer and Adorno conclude that, on the one hand, "Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters" but on the other, "Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them."  

Stigma  

This leads to the 'at' and central point of this article: it is of course again an ambivalence caused by the promise of enlightenment discourse to free oneself from traditional restrictions, on the one hand, and it's imperative to comply with certain standards dictated by 'rationality', on the other. As has been argued especially by more recent authors, these standards were of course defined in the north-western centres. The dilemma of the Serb elites was this exclusivist attitude, designed to make them proud of themselves, though actually simultaneously instigating a special kind of stigma that has been typical of Serbian discourses since then: the stigma of being a 'backward' nation, a not so well developed bourgeoisie, a nation with an especially backward populace (I have described elsewhere how in the later nineteenth century this stigma was paired with romanticist concepts). It was in the late eighteenth century that this dilemma of a nascent 'Serbian' middle class started circulating in emerging semi-public discourses. The dilemma was that, on the one hand, the Serbian merchants, officers, and notables wanted to see themselves as equal with other European — often spe-
Dositej Obradović and the Ambivalence of Enlightenment

ers in Prussia. Again, he went to great lengths not to openly attack traditional monastic learnedness as such but to castigate the aberrations of some church leaders and contrast them to an Orthodox Serbian common sense that, as he suggested, was, at any rate, sympathetic towards universal rational ideas of enlightenment. This diplomatic solution of the dilemma was achieved by crafting a narrative persona, namely the abbot of the monastery he had himself lived in, as an unwitting proponent of such a reformed Serbian Orthodoxy, basically supporting the pro-Josephinist currents in the Habsburg-Serb Orthodox Church. To conclude, Dositej’s enlightenment-inspired hierarchical model of progress, as well communicated as it was, brought with it a major problem for Serbian nostalgics. As Dositej had pointed out again and again, the Serb elites should abandon the populace to improve in order to comply with ‘Western’ standards. By this, Serb discourses got trapped in the Western history model, a chronotopos with historical sations in the eternal present and those, who allegedly have less or even no history living in an eternal past. To the non-central actors in discourse, this evolutionism: trap generates a constant pressure to prove one’s worthiness towards the models of French political history, English colonial history, and Italian art history, today maybe towards North American film and economic history, etc. In other words, the communication process instigated by Dositej also carried itself the seed of a stigma: the stigma of Otherness. As the European history model excludes practically all histories that are not Western, those are, by definition, marked as different. Once an elite decides to follow the imperatives of enlightenment thinking, they become aware of the mark of being ‘the other’, the stigma of not being western, which becomes visible as in the original meaning of stigma, which was a branding on the forehead, once one looks into the mirror. And a mirror is what Obradovic was lending the Serbian elites when he published his autobiographical narratives.

Writing in a completely different part of the world, Benedict Anderson used the metaphor of the spectre of comparison in order to describe the quintessence of his interest in the history of nationalism in Southeast Asia, without actually explaining the metaphor or consequently applying it. He describes it as a double vi-

36 OBRADOVIĆ, Life and Adventures.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.

39 On the sources of Dositej’s philosophical views, see Andrija STOIKOVIĆ, Filozofski pogledi Dositeja Obradovića (=Publikacije Univerzitetske Biblioteke ‘Svetoar Marković’ 8, Beograd 1980).
40 See Marija Petrović’s contribution on Josephinist reforms of the church calendar of the Habsburg Serbs in this volume.
42 On stigma, see EVELINE GOFFMAN, Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity (New York 1974).
ation, an experience of seeing a landscape or country or event simultaneously close up and from afar.43 This could also be a good description of the experience when reading Dostie’s *Life and Adventures*, which, as I have shown, views the Habsburg Serbs simultaneously from Halle, from London, from Istanbul, etc. – and from the Serb inhabited lands of the monastery. There are many examples in Dostie’s texts of horrifying comparisons, for instance, in a scene set in Halle (Germany) when the author compares this place of enlightenment and reading “with beautiful but poor and barbarous Albania, and with Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, which were lands worthy of even greater compassion because they were dearer and more precious to me”; and the reaction is that “I often sighed and shed bitter tears, saying to myself: ‘When will there ever be in those fair lands schools like this? When will their young men drink in their sciences?’”44 The London scenes contain similar exclamations as does the already cited dialogue with the fictitious friend Zilotti-je when he is lamenting the backwardness of his fellow-Serbs. In his later career, Obradović also made comparisons with other elites than the Western ones, most notably the Greeks.45

The ambivalence of enlightenment in a Serb context is, to a great extent, a stigmatic experience. This stigmatic experience can be traced in any Serbian discourse up to now, be it on politics, sanitation, public transport, non-Serbian ethnic identifications, or popular culture, to name but a few.46 It seems logical that in terms of the argument of Horkheimer and Adorno, the reactions to the stigmatic experience could and can also either lean more towards control and exploitation or towards critical enlightenment reason or even self-reflection. In order to dispel spectres of comparison, scholars of the enlightenment in the Habsburg monarchy might want to consider avoiding variations of the metaphor of light that is shining from above (and from the West) and ‘rather develop a careful self-reflective language usage and terminology, in order not to fall into the dictum of the sources.


44 Obradović, *Life and Adventures*.


46 See for some examples: Fischer, Das ‚Loch‘ in der serioten Erinnerung.

Clocks, Watches and Time Perception in the Balkans

Studying a Case of Cultural Transfer

ANDREAS LYBERATOS

In December 1871, Mosko Poptonev Dobrinov, a schoolteacher in the Bulgarian town of Gorna Oriahovitsa, published a short story entitled, *On the discovery of the pocket watches* in the journal *Cicalite* of the Bulgarian Reading Club of Constantinople.1 Dobrinov reproduced, most probably from a German source, the legend of Peter Gele [Henlein or Henle], the old craftsman who allegedly invented the first pocket watch, the so-called ‘egg of Nürnberg (Nuremberg)’, around the year 1500. The story conveys a moral message against superstition, in the first place: the significant invention was delayed by the old craftsman’s son-in-law, the tailor Willbald [Willibald], who had destroyed an almost finished pocket watch believing that the tick-tack of this lifeless wooden bullet (gululence) was caused by Satan. Moreover, Dobrinov wished to exalt in the eyes of his fellow nationals the significance of hard work, persistence and devotion to one’s goals, the qualities personified by the inventor Peter Gele. Even if not initially and partially conveying these main messages, the story alludes to the significance of the invention itself. Peter Gele, citizen of the ‘glorious city of Nürnberg (Nuremberg)’, explains:

> From now on everybody will know when the sun, the moon and the stars rise and fall, the hard-working worker will know how to make use of his time; the sick man to count and organize the time until the day of his cure; the schoolboy when to do his homework; the teacher when to start his lecture, the civil servant the time for his duties, and the dying man the approach of death.2

Albeit with a certain degree of exaggeration, these words describe the deep socio-cultural transformation enabled by the new device, which allowed the ‘privatization’, i.e. the personal control and tracking of time, anytime and at will.

The consequences of the invention of the mechanical clock and the gradual diffusion of the use of clocks and watches have been extensively studied by historians and other social scientists, who have pointed to the great significance time-keeping devices have for the transformation of late medieval and early modern European society as well as for the achievement of European technological superiority and hegemony in the modern world.3 A series of masterly composed and theoretically intriguing works concerned with the cultural and social significance of

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2 Ibid., 314f.