

The "Heldenplatz" as an Austrian Place of Memory

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Monuments can be understood semiotically as a form of information storage, by which texts (meanings) can be produced with application of a cultural code, which can be decoded through indication (= a circumstance referred directly to other circumstances) and signification (= a symbol is explained with the use of a culturally determined conventional code). Reception of these "texts" is often supported by embodiment in rituals: *"The monuments of a society, like its rituals and codes are bearers of collective memory, which can always be reactivated in the framework of adaptation to changing living conditions"*.¹ A place of memory, important for a society, may also pass through various stages with different coding during its existence. Therefore, historical-analytic decoding, which avoids limitation to the contemporary meaning, can map changes and breaks in the political life of a community, on the basis of changes in the meaning of monuments. The historian also finds himself in the position of an archaeologist, who uncovers various stages of a community, on the basis of various superimposed and partially overlapping strata. The more the layers of meaning, the older the monuments, and the more breaks and damaged identities, the monument's community will have experienced or suffered in the course of its historical existence.

While, for example, the great French research project *Les lieux de mémoire*,² led by Pierre Nora, is almost automatically directed towards the self-assured consciousness of the state-cultural identity of the French nation (although in reality, the history of this nation is certainly not without breaks and traumas, these did not threaten the geographical or perhaps also the moral integrity of the community in a really fundamental way), the Austrian monuments or groups of monuments provide exemplary evidence of the collective traumas and breaks of identity, which this country and its inhabitants have experienced in abundance: from "fall" from the position of a monarchical world power to a crisis shaken republican statelet (1918), through bloody civil war (1934) and four years of domestic dictatorship (1934-1938), to political and moral capitulation before Nazism (1938-1945). Only on the basis of liberation by wartime enemies (1945), which the great majority of contemporaries experienced as defeat, could an independent Republic of Austria rise again. Many specific features of the public or political life of this state, all the efforts of the political elite to achieve harmonization of opposites, and the very clearly expressed dislike of public conflicts of any kind can be at least partially explained by experiences of permanent political disturbance of identity, and collective as well as individual uncertainty. In no other place can the crisis-ridden nature of Austrian identity be so clearly felt as in the Heldenplatz (Heroes' Square) in Vienna, the monumental complex in immediate proximity to the institutional centres of the state (president's office, office of the federal chancellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) between the former imperial residence (Hofburg) and the bourgeois Ringstraße. Although originally conceived as a place dedicated to imperial self-consciousness, the Heldenplatz lives today in the collective consciousness of the Austrians, as a more or less unambiguous symbol of the *Anschluss* - the union of Austria with Hitler's Germany in March 1938, or more precisely of the agreement of a large part of the population with this event.

A great demonstration of the *Anschluss* was held on the Heldenplatz on the morning of 15th March 1938. Adolf Hitler proclaimed the "entry" of his homeland to the German Reich from the balcony of the Hofburg "before the face of history". The documentary newsreel film of this event, with all its partly grotesque, partly horrible ostentation of unleashed emotion, was presented to the Austrian public many times, especially during the so-called memorial year of 1988 - the fiftieth anniversary of the *Anschluss*, and has become part of the visual collective

memory of the Austrians. During the memorial year of 1988, political speeches made the Heldenplatz a direct symbol distinguishing political thinking. "*Those who then stood in the Heldenplatz rejoicing*" were distinguished from "*those who stood aside, and were unfortunately not seen*", which rather apologetically expressed the view that the majority of Austrians had opposed the *Anschluß* with Nazi Germany.

The Nazi propaganda machine carefully thought about the choice of place for the symbolic demonstration of the *Anschluß*. The fact that the Heldenplatz as a large square in the centre of the city, was best suited to the purpose for entirely practical reasons, undoubtedly played a part, but this huge, centrally placed complex originated already thanks to the aim of a conscious symbolic representation of the old Habsburg state. The square was designed as a setting for political-symbolic events, and the Nazis used it for precisely this purpose, with the new overlords deliberately integrating the symbols of the old monarchical power. The use of historical references was a favourite method of Nazi propaganda, as numerous examples show.

The fact that Hitler crossed the Austrian-German frontier in immediate proximity to his birthplace of Braunau am Inn, was (in characteristic interweaving of his own biography, stylized as the biography of a political messiah sent by providence,³ with the symbolism of *world history*) part of the programme of political-propagandist staging in Hitler's speech in the Heldenplatz, just like the swearing on the tradition of the "old Reich" of which Vienna had been the capital. The "Ostmark" (Eastern frontier region) had now "again" taken up the function it had before, that of a bulwark and bridge head of German culture against the not more closely defined "eastern" threat. In a certain sense the tourist and cultural guidebooks of the Nazi period⁴ presented the National Socialists as continuers of the old imperial traditions and the city itself as the traditional *gateway to the south-east*. However, at the same time, they did not fail to mention the error of the Habsburg nationality policy, and significantly note that the National Socialists had regained the city for *Deutschum*, and "*removed ... the alien influences in the distinctive life of the city*".⁵ The Baedeker from 1943 does not tell us the method by which this happened, and neither do we find an explanation of how and with what aims they planned to go through the *gateway to the south-east*. In both cases, contemporaries, naturally, were not dependent on information from tourist guidebooks.

The unambiguousness of the association of the meaning "*agreement with the Anschluß*" with the Heldenplatz place of memory, meant that the Heldenplatz could also be used as a poetic metaphor in clearly decodable political commentaries. In 1945, the Austrian writer Ernst Lothar already had his literary argument with National Socialism published by an American publisher, in the form of a novel with the title *Heldenplatz*.⁶ However the poem by Ernst Jandl, first published in 1962, had much greater influence, later also getting into school reading books.

Ernst Jandl: *wien: heldenplatz*

*der glanze heldenplatz zirka
versaggerte in maschenhaftem männchenmeere
drunter auch frauen die ans maskelknie
zu heften heftig sich versuchten, hoffensdick
und brüllzten wesentlich.*

*verwogener stirnscheitelunterschwang
nach nöten nördlich, kechelte
mit zu-nummernder aufs bluten feilzer stimme
hinsensend sämmertliche eigenwäscher.*

*pirsch!
döppelte der gottelbock von Sa-Atz zu Sa-Atz
mit hünig sprenkem stimmstummel.*

*balzerig würmelte es im männechensee
und den weibern ward so pfingstig ums heil
zumahn: wenn ein knie-ender sie hirschelte.*

*the gloryomplete heldenplatz, approximately
refounderd in ablundand manikinmain
'mong them women that on the masculknee
tried to pin themselves fiercly and hopethick
and inheatroared substantially.*

*adoughious foreheadpartingunderswing
needly northly, panted
with a slam-numbering bloody foldsold voice
scything some selfwashers.*

*stalk!
doubolloped the goddygoat from ss-entence to ss-entence
with a giantic speak stump of a voice
it wormed matingly inside the manikinsea
and the females felt so penetrecostal 'round the heil
especianny: when a knee-ender staggged them.*

(The translation is provided by the author of the article in the interest of comprehensibility. It has not been authorized by the author of the poem.)

The unambiguous identifiability of the place of memory in the title of the poem enabled the author to leave out all explicit references in the text itself - he does not mention the date or name - and use sound painting to reproduce his understanding of the declaration of the *Anschluß* as an orgiastic and violent ritual, although not without the comic to grotesque. Thomas Bernhard also used the saturation of this square with historical and moral associations in a similar way, in his theatre play *Heldenplatz*, premiered in the Burgtheater in 1988.⁷ As a sort of semi-official commentary of the Burgtheater on the so-called memorial year of 1988, the premiere caused a cultural scandal of unforeseen extent. The action of the play begins after the funeral of a Jewish intellectual Professor Schuster, who took his own life, because he could no longer bear the depressing similarity between the political situation in Austria in 1988 and in 1938. The dramatic expressions of the similarity include shouts of *Sieg heil!* from the Heldenplatz, which the professor's wife still hears in her mind, in the flat close to the Heldenplatz, to which the family moved after returning from emigration; at the end of the play, the shouts also become audible for the public. Bernhard used this dramatic framework as a rhetorical **Rundumschlag* against "Catholic-fascist", "stupid" Austria. The play can be equally well interpreted as an answer to the celebration of Austria in Grillparzer's *King Ottokar*, one of the constantly successful plays of the Burgtheater, or as a critique of the history of the Burgtheater in the years of National Socialism. This theatre is one of the most important cultural institutions in the country, and its building is situated in immediate proximity to the Heldenplatz, so that the shouts of *Sieg heil!* on 15th March 1938 could also be heard very well here. Although the comparison of the situation in 1988 with the situation in 1938 was basically questionable, during the four weeks before the premiere, public opinion and the published views of Austrian officials - still under the influence of the Waldheim debate - **did not leave unused any opportunity to give an impression that Bernhard's condemnation was justified. The whole political public of the country did not know a more important theme for weeks.*⁸

In a way, use of the "Heldenplatz" as a political metaphor also contributed to restoring the symbolic significance of this square. The square itself, for example, only by its selection as a

place of assembly, could become part of political argumentation. Thus it was no accident that the large concluding demonstration of the *SOS Mitmensch* campaign, aimed against the anti-foreigner policy of Jörg Haider's FPÖ, (*the so-called *Lichtermeer*) was held precisely on the Heldenplatz, since the choice of location for the event already expressed a clear political position.

As is well-known, Sigmund Freud was one of the Austrians who had to flee from his country, as a result of the *Anschluss*. A relevant comparison for our problem is found in one place in his extensive works. In *Vorlesungen über die Psychoanalyse* from 1909, Freud described the symptoms of hysteria as "remnants and memory symbols for certain traumatic experiences"⁹ and compares them with the monuments and reminders of collective memory in a city. As an example, he mentions London, naming the Gothic column of Charing Cross as a strange sign of memory from the 13th century and the so-called "Monument" marking the place where the great fire, which destroyed London in 1666, broke out in a bakery. "These monuments are, therefore, memory symbols like symptoms of hysteria."¹⁰ In our context, we have the possibility to take Freud's comparison literally: is the Heldenplatz a symbol of memory of a (collective) traumatizing experience? Undoubtedly! Is it a symptom of hysteria? When a person, after some years analyses the individual cases of public disturbance on the occasion of the premiere of Thomas Bernhard's play *Heldenplatz*, he is inclined to agree.

If we want to fully understand the symbolic expressive force of the choice of the Heldenplatz as a place for declaring the *Anschluss*, it is essential to have before our eyes, the methods and resources by which the Habsburgs conceived this square as the symbolic centre of a multinational state, in which all the threads of political and administrative power came together in a figurative sense. The Hofburg (castle), to the area of which the Heldenplatz belongs, was not originally built as a splendid residence, but as part of the city's fortifications, and its interior was so small that guests of the emperor usually had to be accommodated in neighbouring town houses. Because of extreme shortage of space inside the city wall, the two reconstructions of the castle in the 16th and 17th centuries were mostly limited to impressive details, such as decoration of facades, and since the castle remained part of the fortifications (it also fulfilled this role during the second siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683) they were naturally directed towards the inside of the city. This became a problem in 1809, when Napoleon's retreating army blew up part of the city wall and a gate adjoining the Hofburg. This exposed to view the less impressive back wall of the castle. Since complete restoration of the fortifications did not make much sense, because of the development of military technology, the area was transformed into a new "Äußere Burgplatz" (Outer Castle Square), popularly known as the "Promenadeplatz", accessible to the public, while new buildings had to clearly and visibly document the renewal of the architectural integrity and identity of the capital and imperial residence city, after its disturbance by the enemy.

A symbolic vocabulary, which was not difficult for contemporaries to understand, and which was also clearly explained in public declarations and newspaper articles, was used for this purpose. Central importance was attributed to the new Burgtor (Castle Gate) and the Theseus-Tempel, a copy of the Thesaion in Athens. The temple was built especially for a monumental sculpture by the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova (1757-1822), depicting Theseus slaying the Centaur. The political meaning of this aesthetically not very interesting sculpture, now exhibited in the Kunsthistorische Museum, is revealed by the history of its origin. Napoleon ordered it for the Corso in Milan, and it was supposed to embody the victory of the Revolution, of which Napoleon considered himself the heir, over the Ancien Régime. For its new function in the area of the imperial castle in Vienna, this symbolism was simply turned upside down. Theseus was unambiguously identified with the legitimate order, and the dying centaur with the supposedly permanently overcome revolution. The symbolic text on the neo-classical Burgtor from 1824, was conceived in a still more complex way. It was built according to the "Roman method", entirely by soldiers, so that it would commemorate the Austrian army, which triumphed over Napoleon. "All the buildings were erected by the army, and so the same army,

which struggled for the Fatherland against the enemy during more than twenty years of war, after winning peace, contributed to the most beautiful works of peace."¹¹ The gate received five passage ways framed by Doric columns, which, in a complex way, were supposed to symbolize both social inequality and social equality. The central passage remained closed to ordinary people, and was reserved exclusively for the Emperor. At the same time, the completely identical design of the gate passages was supposed to symbolize the idea that personal ability means a route to social advancement. The gate was officially opened on the eleventh anniversary of the victory over Napoleon in that so-called Battle of the Nations at Leipzig. This was intended to underline the function of the gate as victory monument, as the inscription on it indicates. The so-called outer Burgtor - later sometimes also called the "Heldentor" (Heroes' Gate) - both a monument to absolutism and a memorial to the victory over Napoleon, seen as an unlawful usurper of power - survived not only the demolition of the fortifications, which deprived it of its original function as a gate, but also all later attempts to demolish it or replace it with something different. Through its change into the *Österreichische Heldendenkmal* (Austrian Heroes' Monument) (1933-1934) it acquired an additional level of meaning in political symbolism.

A further stage of construction of the "Äußere Burgplatz" began only after more than six decades, and was a result of the expansion of the city, which began in 1857 as a reaction to the explosive growth of the population. The first measure of this expansion was the demolition of the fortifications and building on the clear area outside them (the Glacis). The original conception for the development of the Glacis, originating in the absolutist period, supposed an enlargement of the inner city and its aristocratic palaces and churches. Thus, building of the Votivkirche began in 1856, as the first project, even before the issuing of the decree on enlargement of the city. As the garrison church, it was intended to commemorate the failure of an attempt to assassinate the Emperor Franz Joseph. It clearly documented the union of throne and altar, on which absolutism rested. The decline of the absolutist form of government caused by the military defeats of 1859 (against France) and 1866 (against Prussia) also led in the Habsburg Monarchy - late, and as it later turned out not permanently - to the political rise of the liberal higher bourgeoisie. This political change is clearly documented in the architectural development of the former Glacis into the higher bourgeois Ringstraße, which developed into a symbolic expression of the bourgeois self-image to such a degree that the new leading political class of the economically active bourgeoisie was explicitly designated the *Ringstraßengesellschaft* (Ringstraße Society). "*No palaces, fortresses and churches ruled the Ringstraße, but the centres of a constitutional government and an enlightened culture*".¹² These centres of politically and culturally defined bourgeois self-image are found everywhere on the Ringstraße, and in connection with this the buildings are always decorated in an architectonic style, which was considered especially appropriate for the specific institution. The Kunsthistorische (Art History) and Naturhistorische (Natural History) Museums were given the feeling of dome-crowned church buildings, the Parliament building, with its classical style, recalls Athens the cradle of democracy, for the Rathaus they chose a mixture of Neo-Gothic and Renaissance elements, which document the conscious identification of the new bourgeoisie with the culture of the medieval burgers, while the university as an institution where the sons of the bourgeoisie could gain knowledge, which would qualify them as a new functionally defined elite refers with its Renaissance style to the roots of the modern rational culture in the "rebirth" of secular learning at the beginning of Modern times.

The formal encircling of the inner city, the centre of the "old" order, with the institutions and symbols of enlightened bourgeois culture, naturally provoked a reaction. This was the origin of a plan to make the part of the Glacis next to the Hofburg into an imperial sacred area, following the example of the ancient imperial fora in Rome. The orientation towards the example of the Roman imperial fora - especially Trajan's Forum¹³ - pursued two aims: Firstly, the return to the dignity of the Roman emperors, of whom the Habsburgs were the legal successors until 1806, was understood as an attempt to maintain the claim of the ruling dynasty to absolutist power

at least symbolically, which naturally tended towards an effort to "*architecturally replace, that which was unattainable in terms of real politics.*"¹⁴ Secondly, the adoption of ancient Roman symbolism also recalled a political conception: Just as in the ancient Imperium Romanum, the participation of the individual in political life was supposed to be determined not by his membership of a linguistically defined nationality, but by his position as a citizen, a member of the civil community of the state (*cives*).¹⁵In other words, the imperial forum was supposed to document the imperial claims of the Habsburg dynasty, and the *supra-national identity* of the multi-national state.

According to the plans of the Habsburg imperial forum, submitted in 1869 by Gottfried Semper (1803-1879), the whole area of the Äußere Burgplatz up to the Ringstraße would be enclosed by two externally curved wings of the new Hofburg and two gigantic triumphal arches, curving over the street would create a further connection with the already planned museum buildings, extending the architectural complex up to the Palace Mews (the present Exhibition Palace). The whole enclosed area would be more than twice as big as the present Heldenplatz, as well as which, a domed throne and ceremonial hall was foreseen as the architectural centre of the complex. For some time the replacement of the Burgtor with a gigantic *Apotheosis of the Emperor Franz Joseph* was also considered. This scheme, with its gigantomania rather atypical of Habsburg building activity, did not go beyond the production of some parts, but these fragments enable us to guess the impressive strength of the original overall conception. After more than thirty years of building activity, the south-east wing of the new Hofburg was completed in 1913, that is a year before the outbreak of the First World War. By the way, the new owner - the Austrian Republic - later attempted to sensibly use this architectural monster, which did not satisfy the technical standards of the time, in spite of its impressive facade, by placing the Austrian National Library and several museums in it. Construction of the building planned for the other side of the square never started, which is why the Heldenplatz still has a strange asymmetrical form, and lacks clear architectonic definition towards the Ballhausplatz and Volksgarten. While the Austrian Republic, understandably had no interest in continuing an expensive interrupted building project promoting imperial grandeur, the Nazis planned to reconstruct the Heldenplatz as a central fascist ceremonial square, with partial regard for Semper's plans. The orientation of the complex would be turned by 90 degrees, so that the balcony, from which Hitler gave his speech on 15th March 1938, would become the central point. However the war prevented the implementation of these plans. (An interesting marginal detail is that the young Hitler, who esteemed Semper as his artistic idol, produced sketches for the transformation of the Heldenplatz, during his time in Vienna in the years 1907-1913!)¹⁶

It is a strange irony of history that from the time of its conception, until the eve of the disintegration of the Monarchy, the planned imperial forum was nothing more than a huge building site. Therefore, the effort at symbolic representation in the area of the Hofburg had to be satisfied for a long time with other less imposing monuments. Two equestrian statues - of Archduke and Prince Eugene - which already existed at the time the imperial forum was planned, proved to be especially appropriate for this purpose. These two monuments to heroes also gave the stimulus for the "Äußere Burgplatz" being officially renamed the "Heldenplatz" in 1878. It was a name which gained acceptance only slowly (use of the old name can be traced until the turn of the century). The two monuments are a significant expression of the time of their origin, and can be interpreted as a summary of the political claims and aims of the Habsburg dynasty at the time.

Production of the two statues was entrusted to Anton Dominik Fernkorn (1813-1878), a pupil of Ludwig Schwanthaler, and a sort of state artist of the Monarchy in the 1850s-60s. They always turned to him, when it was necessary to erect a monument with state-political significance. Apart from the equestrian statues in the Heldenplatz, his works include the bronze lion commemorating the Battle of Aspern in the church of St. Martin there (1850), a portrait bust of the young Emperor Franz Joseph (1853) and the equestrian statue of the Banus Josip Jelacic in the centre of Zagreb (1866).¹⁷

The aim of the erection of political symbols is to document specific claims, according to the circumstances, but in connection with this, the potential variety of meaning of a symbol opens the possibility of freely declaring only part of the actual intentions, while leaving other more important or controversial aspects to resound only implicitly. In this situation, a causal argumenting analysis on the basis of programme sources always remains problematic and inevitably fragmentary. Often it is possible to document various mainly debatable levels of meaning much better on the basis of the critical comments of political opponents. Thus the commentaries of the liberal newspapers on the inaugurations of the two statues in the Heldenplatz enable better conclusions about the various levels of their symbolic-political meanings.

For the monument to Archduke Karl, unveiled in 1860, five potential levels of meaning can be hypothetically decoded:

1/ The statue, conceived as a memorial to one of the military successes of Austria, was a gesture to the army, which, not least for security reasons (it was only a few years after the revolutionary year of 1848), was opposed to the demolition of the fortifications and the construction of a large area for military parades in immediate proximity to the Hofburg.

2/ The monument can be interpreted as an embodiment of the victory of the Habsburg dynasty over revolution. In 1809, at Aspern, Archduke Karl inflicted on Napoleon (not incorrectly understood as the historical heir of the revolution) his first military defeat. The Battle of Aspern was only an episode in the course of the war against Napoleon, but after the war it began to be interpreted as a military triumph of the highest importance. The story of the battle was given in detail in history textbooks under the Monarchy, and in connection with this, the scene regarded as the dramatic climax of the battle was depicted on the monument. Later editions of the textbook explicitly referred to the monument.¹⁸

3/ The statue can be generally interpreted as an embodiment of the power and absolutist claims of the Habsburg dynasty (Casa d'Austria), to which Karl belonged. The heroic pose of the Archduke, leading a cavalry attack, can be easily understood: the Habsburg dynasty as attacking, active and victorious.

4/ By pointing to the role of Austria in the so-called War of Liberation, the monument confirmed Austria's claim to a leading role, at a time when Austria's power in the German Confederation was under increasing pressure from Prussia. (Six years after the construction of the monument, Austria had to leave the German Confederation, after the defeat at Königgrätz.) The inscription on the base of the statue especially emphasizes this: *"The Emperor Franz Joseph to Archduke Karl of Austria 1859 / To the steadfast fighter for Germany's honour / To the heroic leader of the Austrian Army"*. It is hardly surprising that the middle part of this inscription was quoted with pleasure in almost all the artistic and tourist guides to Vienna, published in the Nazi period.

5/ At a time when the war with France was still fully present in the collective memory, as a result of still living witnesses, the statue could be simply and directly interpreted as a homage to a military commander, who had served his people and Fatherland - a "hero" in the sense of the name of the Heldenplatz. The circumstances of the official unveiling of the monument already clearly document the degree of divergence between symbolic claims and the real situation. It was originally planned for the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Aspern, but the ceremony had to be postponed for a year, because of the defeats at Magenta and Solferino.

Five years after the unveiling of the monument to Archduke Karl, the heavier, less artistically valuable equestrian statue of Prince Eugene was erected on the opposite side of the square. At the time of its unveiling - 18th October 1865, the 202nd anniversary of the birth of the Prince - tension with Prussia over Schleswig-Holstein was culminating, and the liberal newspapers were publishing poisonous editorials about the fact that "today's" Austria unfortunately did

not have a military leader of such a calibre. The malicious point of the criticism was directed against the person of the Emperor, who had led the army to a disastrous defeat at Solferino six years before.

Various symbolic levels of meaning can also be decoded in the case of the Prince. Firstly, a monument to a victorious military leader from the *heroic age of Austria* - the Turkish wars were placed under this chapter heading in the history textbooks - could be interpreted as an embodiment of the union of the people with the army. Secondly, the erection of the statue may also have been understood as an answer to the political claims of the nationalities of the Monarchy, especially of the Hungarians. A large part of the Kingdom of Hungary was liberated from Turkish overlordship and united with the Habsburg Empire thanks to the military successes of Eugene. In 1900, that is also at a time when the whole political system was paralyzed by national disputes, a monument to Prince Eugene was erected in front of the Royal Palace in Budapest, to remind the obstinate Hungarians of this Habsburg achievement. The military leader was significantly placed looking towards the south-east, that is towards the territories he liberated. A depiction of a leader who conquered extensive areas of south-east Europe from the Moslim Ottomans could naturally also be interpreted as an embodiment of the *apostolic* function of the Habsburg dynasty as defenders of the Christian faith.

In the last years of the Monarchy, especially during the First World War, Prince Eugene was made into a secular patron of the country and a *mythical protective spirit of the Fatherland*.¹⁹ The propagandist mobilization of Eugene of Savoy was partly curious, but partly rather unpleasant. The book for children *Princ Eugen* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1915) with its unconcealed war-mongering tendency, is an especially repugnant example.²⁰ After the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, there was a direct competition between Austria and Germany for the monopoly on the symbolic interpretation of Prince Eugene. For the Austrian side - especially in 1933 in connection with the anniversary of the defeat of the Turks and on the bi-centenary of his death (1936) - Eugene became the ideal figure of the Austrian, interpreted as the better form of German, and the monument in the Heldenplatz was given special importance in the course of the various celebrations. On the German national side, Eugene was, in contrast, proclaimed a hero of the old Reich and a forerunner of the national socialist policy of conquest in the east. The great majority of the 22 (!) novels about Prince Eugene, published in German in the period 1932-1941, more or less corresponded to this tendency. When the Nazi propaganda machine attempted to strengthen elements of the "Ostmark" in the naming of military units after the *Anschluß* with Austria, it was again Prince Eugene who was chosen as the patron, after whom a heavy battle cruiser of the German navy (1938), an SS division recruited in 1942 from the German minorities of south-east Europe and a radio station for south-east Europe were named. After 1945, the bronze horseman in the Heldenplatz - like many of his contemporaries of flesh and blood - in novels, exhibitions and ceremonies, changed back into a good Austrian. In 1963, the climax of the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Prince Eugene was, (how could it be different), a ceremony in front of the monument in the Heldenplatz.

The fact that Prince Eugene was more suitable for symbolic mobilization by the the Nazis, than the *steadfast fighter for Germany's honour* Archduke Karl, becomes obvious when we realize that Karl as a member of the supranational, Catholic, Arch-House of Habsburg, was scarcely predestined as a German nationalist identification figure. But Prince Eugene, who came from a French aristocratic family, commanded an army composed of the members of the most varied nationalities, preferred Italian in private life, and used three languages when signing his name (*Eugenio von Savoy*) could become a German national hero only if he was first deprived of all his historical individuality, and recast in a predetermined form, according to the universal canon of archetypes. He had to be fixed as the eternal conqueror of the Turks and mystical noble knight, as he is still present in the collective memory of the Austrians, through the mediation of the still popular soldiers' song "*Prinz Eugenius, der edle Ritter*" (*Prince Eugene, the noble knight*).²¹ Knowledge of important historical details get in the way of the symbolic

"loading" and use of a historical figure. Therefore, analytically oriented historical *science* should preserve an ideologically critical character in such cases.

From the end of the twenties to the *Anschluß*, a bitter struggle was carried on, not only over the monopoly on the symbolic interpretation of Prince Eugene, but also over control of the political demonstration area of the Heldenplatz. Until the NSDAP was banned in Austria, the Nazis marched to the Heldenplatz, whenever Nazi politicians from Germany visited their like-minded comrades in Austria. The Austrian government countered this with great gatherings such as the Mass during the Pan-German Catholic Congress of 1933, or the already mentioned commemoration of Prince Eugene in 1936. However, the most serious attempt at a symbolic occupation was the construction of the *Österreichische Heldengedenkstätte* (Austrian Heroes' Monument) inside the Burgtor. The democratic republic already ordered the transformation of the interior of the gate into a monument to members of the Imperial and Royal Army who fell in the First World War. Its central feature is the *grave of the unknown soldier* in the crypt. At the time of the official opening of the monument on 9th September 1934, the democratic constitution was already invalid, and the solemn dedication became a self-representation of the authoritarian *corporate state*, which presented itself not only as a "better" German state, but, with a consciously close connection between the political elite and the Catholic Church, also as the continuer of Habsburg traditions. This was emphasized not only by the participation of members of the former imperial family in the solemn dedication, but also by means of two additions to the monument - commemorating Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne assassinated in Sarajevo, and the Emperor Karl, who died "in exile", as the stone inscription says. About three and a half years later, the national socialists changed the function of the monument in their own way. Hitler, who liked, at public presentations of himself, to point to the fact that he served in the First World War as a "simple corporal", laid a wreath to the fallen in the World War, in a special ceremony in front of the Burgtor, on the same day as the great demonstration in the Heldenplatz (15th March 1938). After 1945, the resurrected independent Austria simply had the dates 1939-1945 added to the inscription on the grave of the unknown soldier with the dates 1914-1918, as happened with many other war memorials in Austria. Finally, in 1965, a special memorial stone for Austrians who lost their lives in the struggle against Nazism was added to the *Heroes' Monument*.

Today, care for the monument is the duty of the Austrian Federal Army, and representatives of the Republic lay wreaths on it every year. This monument, where the Republic of Austria honours such different identification figures without distinction, may be ironically regarded as an expression of the specifically Austrian elasticity of views. But in fact this place of memory is a characteristic embodiment of the above mentioned continual damage to national and political identity, which is characteristic of Austrian history in the 20th century. The real irony lies more in the fact that the actual existence of this monument is entirely unknown to the great majority of present-day Austrians.

We can read the Heldenplatz in Vienna, with its numerous symbols and historical references, as a comprehensive "text" on the history of Austria over the last 150 years. Here, "text" must be understood in the sense of the etymological origin of the word (in its relationship with "textile") from Latin *textus* = woven textile. Every present-day intervention in this symbolically saturated square is a further addition to this textile, a further addition (or perhaps rewriting or overwriting) to the text, and must accordingly look back at its previous meanings. Perhaps this is the reason, why the Second Austrian Republic, even today - after more than half a century of unbroken democratic development - has not ventured to erect a permanent symbol of the Republic, against the powerful memory of March 1938. No monument of the Second Republic stands in the Heldenplatz.

Quotations

1 Roland POSNER: Kultur als Zeichensystem. Zur semiotischen Explikation kulturwissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe. In: Aleida Assmann - Dietrich Harth (Ed.): Kultur als Lebenswelt und Monument. Frankfurt a. M., Fischer 1991, p. 66 and following. 2 Pierre NORA (Ed.): Les lieux de mémoire. Paris, Gallimard 1984 and following; compare also Pierre NORA: Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis: Die Gedächtnisorte. In: Pierre Nora: Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis. Berlin, Wagenbach 1990, p. 11-33. 3 Compare Adolf HITLER: Mein Kampf. München, Zentralverlag der NSDAP 1939, p. 410 and following. 4 Compare e.g. Georg DEHIO: Wien und Niederdonau (= Handbuch der deutschen Kunstdenkmäler in der Ostmark 1, Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft), edited by Richard Kurt Donin - Eberhardt Hempel - Justus Schmidt. Berlin-Wien, Deutscher Kunstverlag - Anton Schroll&Co. 1941; Karl BAEDEKER: Wien und Niederdonau. Reisehandbuch, Leipzig, Baedeker 1943. 5 BAEDEKER, see note 4, p. 10. 6 Ernst LOTHAR: Heldenplatz. Cambridge/Massachusetts, Schoenhof 1945. 7 Thomas BERNHARD: Heldenplatz. Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp 1988. 8 Heldenplatz. Eine Dokumentation. Ed. Dramaturgie des Burgtheaters. Wien, Eigenverlag des Wiener Burgtheaters 1989. 9 Sigmund FREUD: Über Psychoanalyse. Fünf Vorlesungen, gehalten zur zwanzigjährigen Gründungsfeier der Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, September 1909. In: Sigmund Freud: Werke aus den Jahren 1909 bis 1913. (=Gesammelte Werke. Chronologisch geordnet 8.) London, Imago Publishers 1948, p. 11. 10 Ibid, p. 12. 11 Österreichisch Kaiserliche privilegierte Wiener Zeitung, 16. 10. 1824, pages not numbered. 12 Carl E. SCHORSKE: Die Ringstraße, ihre Kritiker und die Idee der modernen Stadt. In: Carl E. Schorske: Wien. Geist und Gesellschaft im Fin de siècle. München-Zürich, Piper 1994, p. 31. 13 Compare Karl von LÜTZOW: Die Wiener Architektur des XIX. Jahrhunderts. In: Wien und Niederösterreich (=Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild 1. Auf Anregung und unter Mitwirkung seiner kaiserlichen und königlichen Hoheit des durchlauchtigsten Kronprinzen Erzherzog Rudolf. Abtheilung: Wien). Wien, K. k. Staatsdruckerei Hölder 1886, p. 82. 14 Gottfried FLIEDL: Vom Kaiserforum zum Heldenplatz. Szenarien der Macht von den Habsburgern zur Zweiten Republik. In: Renate Banik-Schweitzer (Ed.): Wien wirklich. Ein Stadtführer durch den Alltag und seine Geschichte. Wien, Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik 1983, p. 40. 15 Compare e.g. Josef Alexander HELFERT: Über Nationalgeschichte und den gegenwärtigen Stand ihrer Pflege in Österreich. Prag, J. G. Calve 1853, p. 1. 16 Compare Brigitte HAMANN: Hitlers Wien. Lehrjahre eines Diktators. München-Zürich, Piper 1996, p. 167. 17 The history of the monument to Jelacic in Zagreb is an excellent example of the multiple meanings of monuments. After being removed by the communists in 1945, it was put back after Croatia regained her independence, but with a significant change compared to its original position. While before 1945, Jelacic's raised hand holding a drawn sabre pointed towards Hungary, today it points south, towards the regions which Croatia claimed during the Yugoslav war. 18 Compare e.g. Johann LOSERTH: Die Neuzeit. (=Grundriß der Allgemeinen Geschichte für Obergymnasien, Oberrealschulen und Handelsakademien 3). Wien, Manz 1902, p. 164. 19 Konrad MAUTHNER: Über Prinz Eugen Lieder. In: Historisches Konzert am 12. Jänner 1918 im großen Saale des Wiener Konzerthauses veranstaltet von der Musikhistorischen Zentrale des k. u. k. Kriegs-Ministeriums zu Gunsten der Witwen und Waisen österreichischer und ungarischer Soldaten. Wien, Universaledition 1918, p. 55. 20 (Hugo von HOFMANNSTHAL): Prinz Eugen der edle Ritter. Sein Leben in Bildern, erzählt von Hugo von Hofmannsthal. 12 Originallitographien von Franz Wacik. Wien, Seidel&Sohn 1915. 21 On the function of "archetypes" in collective memory compare Mircea ELIADE: Kosmos und Geschichte. Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr. Reinbek, Rowohlt 1966, p. 34-45.