

Editor's Notes

As Director of the Center for Austrian Studies and Executive Editor of the *Austrian History Yearbook*, one of my most rewarding annual tasks is writing a short introductory note for the forthcoming issue. As I complete my fifth year in this position, I am reminded once more of the vibrancy and dynamism of Central European studies. This current edition of the *AHY* is particularly impressive for both its chronological and geographical reach. We start this year in the fourteenth century and carry through to the First Republic and the interwar period. Geographically, we move from the Habsburg-Ottoman borderlands of the Balkans to the cabaret and vaudeville theaters of New York City, and for the astute reader there is one particular destination worth noting deep in the heart of Slavonia that creatively brings fact and fiction together. Methodologically and thematically, the edition opens fascinating new territory. I have come to appreciate how the *Yearbook* regularly decenters and reorients our understanding of Central Europe. Our forum this year takes us to the Balkan borderlands of the nineteenth century. Our authors scrutinize the late stage of the long Habsburg-Ottoman confrontation and offer an interpretation of the region that focuses not as much on the dynamics of nationalism as on the impact of imperial rivalries that had such a profound effect shaping this contested territory. We also probe more familiar themes but from a different angle and vantage point. In a thoughtful review essay, Britta McEwen assesses recent literature on Austria's First Republic and asks us to consider this critical interwar moment from a new and less familiar perspective.

This year I was particularly struck by the timeliness of so many of our essays. Our authors are examining themes that, *mutatis mutandis*, are still contested issues today. The growth of the surveillance state, the meaning of citizenship, and the right to bear arms are just a few of the topics that continue to resonate decades if not centuries later. Ambika Natarajan investigates the 1810 servant code, which allowed police greater authority and access to the private lives of the Viennese populace. Claire Morelon explores civic militias and their impact on Austrian society while Mikuláš Zvánovec assesses the impact of educational institutions on the identity politics of Bohemia in the decades prior to World War I. In a more playful mood, there are a number of articles examining the nature and evolution of popular culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In an age of K-pop and other global entertainment phenomena, Alexander Vari reminds us that a century earlier the multicultural world of Central Europe was also a setting for this type of transnational spectacle. Vari parses the politics behind a season of Spanish bullfights staged in 1924 Budapest. Susanne Korbelt, in contrast, carefully traces the export of a distinctly Central European entertainment product with her investigation of vaudeville on both sides of the Atlantic as she considers the impact of mobility on popular culture. Julie Johnson introduces us to the fascinating multidisciplinary artist Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. This pathbreaking woman had studied with Schoenberg, joined a theater troupe, and designed furniture,

all before the age of twenty. Her subsequent career reflected not only a deep engagement with the contemporary art scene but also a courageous political commitment that confronted a growing fascist threat. Finally, there is Karin Schneider who takes us back a century and explores a different type of engagement with the arts. In the deeply conservative age of Emperor Francis I, she highlights an intriguing cultural revival. Historians, dramatists, and poets celebrated Rudolf I, the first of the Habsburgs to rule the Holy Roman Empire. The deeds and legends surrounding Rudolf provided useful material around which to rally patriotic sentiment and bolster Francis's new regime.

This edition also features a grouping of essays that explore three critical moments in the history of the empire. We begin by examining the rhetorical origins of the 1356 Golden Bull, the imperial proclamation that critically defined the constitutional structure of the Holy Roman Empire for the next four centuries. Kevin Lord examines an earlier feud between a Bavarian king and Roman pope that resulted in a set of legal arguments used against the church. This juridical reasoning became the basis of a rhetorical strategy that only a few decades later Emperor Charles IV followed and exploited more fully in the Golden Bull. We move next to the eighteenth century and the monumental figure of Empress Maria Theresa whose leadership in a time of great crisis helped preserve the family. Our 2019 Kann lecturer, the distinguished German historian Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, has long argued that scholars must look closely at symbols and rituals to understand the political and social order of the empire. In the Kann lecture, she turns her attention to the legend of the gracious fairytale princess that quickly developed around Maria Theresa. She explores the ways in which the often aloof and always formal empress masterfully communicated her image as "a universally accessible, impartial and loving mother of the people." Rebecca Gates-Coon follows up on the Kann lecture with an examination of those who surrounded the Habsburgs, the aristocracy of the late eighteenth century. In a thoughtful reassessment of Vienna's noble class, she probes the ideals and ambitions of the city's aristocratic society. The final moment to consider is arguably the most contested issue of Habsburg historiography—why in the early twentieth century did the empire fall? Here the great historian who began his career chronicling the family's rise offers an explanation for its collapse. Former Regius Professor of Modern History R. J. W. Evans investigates a series of "master interpretations" from scholars of the early twentieth century who sought to understand the end of the monarchy. Evans responds to recent work that in his estimation has tended to minimize the corrosive effect of nationalism and offers an alternative model. For those intrigued by my cryptic comment on Slavonia, it may be worth turning to the grande dame of crime fiction, Agatha Christie. Her story about a famous train and the fate of its villain may offer clues to Evans's own argument about the empire's end.

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