

## Commercialised history: popular history magazines in Europe: approaches to a historico-cultural phenomenon as the basis for history teaching

Susanne Popp, Jutta Schumann, Miriam Hannig

### Angaben zur Veröffentlichung / Publication details:

Popp, Susanne, Jutta Schumann, and Miriam Hannig, eds. 2015. *Commercialised history: popular history magazines in Europe: approaches to a historico-cultural phenomenon as the basis for history teaching*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.  
<https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-05253-4>.

Susanne Popp / Jutta Schumann / Miriam Hannig  
(eds.)

# Commercialised History: Popular History Magazines in Europe



PETER LANG  
EDITION

Susanne Popp / Jutta Schumann / Miriam Hannig (eds.)

## **Commercialised History: Popular History Magazines in Europe**

This volume of essays is the result of the EU project 'EHISTO', which dealt with the mediation of history in popular history magazines and explored how history in the commercialised mass media can be used in history teaching in order to develop the media literacy and the trans-cultural competences of young people. The volume offers articles which for the first time address the phenomenon of popular history magazines in Europe and their mediating strategies in a foundational way. The articles are intended as introductory material for teachers and student teachers. The topic also offers an innovative approach in terms of making possible a European cross-country comparison,

in which results based on qualitative and quantitative methods are presented, related to the content focus areas profiled in the national magazines.

### **The Editors**

Susanne Popp is professor of History Didactics at the University of Augsburg (Germany) and chairwoman of the International Society for History Didactics. Together with Jutta Schumann, who works as a research associate at the University of Augsburg, and Miriam Hannig, she managed the EU project EHISTO (2012-2014).

## Commercialised History: Popular History Magazines in Europe



Susanne Popp/Jutta Schumann/Miriam Hannig (eds.)

# Commercialised History: Popular History Magazines in Europe

Approaches to a Historico-Cultural Phenomenon  
as a Basis for History Teaching



PETER LANG  
EDITION

**Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Lifelong  
Learning  
Programme



ISBN 978-3-631-65779-9 (Print)  
E-ISBN 978-3-653-05253-4 (E-Book)  
DOI 10.3726/ 978-3-653-05253-4

© Peter Lang GmbH  
Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften  
Frankfurt am Main 2015  
All rights reserved.  
Peter Lang Edition is an Imprint of Peter Lang GmbH.

Peter Lang – Frankfurt am Main · Bern · Bruxelles · New York ·  
Oxford · Warszawa · Wien

This book is an open access book and available on [www.oapen.org](http://www.oapen.org) and [www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com). It is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial, No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND)



All parts of this publication are protected by copyright. Any utilisation outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to prosecution. This applies in particular to reproductions, translations, microfilming, and storage and processing in electronic retrieval systems.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

[www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com)

The contributions of this volume are peer-reviewed and accepted by the international scientific board:

Prof. Dr. Karl Benziger, Professor of History, Rhode Island College, Providence (USA).

Ao. Univ. Prof. Dr. Alois Ecker, Director of the Subject Didactics Centre for History, Social Studies and Civic Education, University of Vienna (Austria).

Prof. Dr. Takahiro Kondo, Professor of Curriculum Studies, Waseda University (Japan).

Prof. Dr. Elize van Eeden, Professor of History, Northwest University (South Africa), Editor of two accredited journals (*New Contree*, a journal in the human and social sciences, and *Yesterday&Today*, a journal for History Educators).

Dr. Robert Parkes, Senior Lecturer in Curriculum Theory, History Education, and Media Literacy, University of Newcastle (Australia), Convenor of the HERMES History Education Research Group, Founding Editor of *Historical Encounters: A Journal of Historical Consciousness, Historical Cultures, and History Education*.





# Table of contents

Preface	
Susanne Popp/Jutta Schumann/Miriam Hannig.....	9
EHISTO – European History Crossroads as pathways to intercultural and media education – Report about the EU-project Jutta Schumann/Susanne Popp/Miriam Hannig.....	13
Interdisciplinary approaches	
Popular history magazines between transmission of knowledge and entertainment – some theoretical remarks Susanne Popp.....	41
Bygone news. The journalistic formatting of history Fabio Crivellari .....	71
Popular historical writing from a narratological perspective Stephan Jaeger.....	113
Why Napoleon is exciting time after time: media logics and history Susanne Kinnebrock.....	147
Popular knowledge communication in history magazines from a receptional psychology point of view Manuela Glaser.....	165
The Function and use of image documents in German popular history magazines Michael Wobring .....	195
The use of history in popular history magazines. A theoretical approach Marianne Sjöland.....	223

## Exemplary studies from different European countries

Popular history magazines in Germany Claudius Springkart .....	239
History magazines in the UK Terry Haydn.....	275
The use of powerful men, naked women and war to sell. Popular history magazines in Sweden Monika Vinterek .....	295
Perpetrators, victims, heroes – the Second World War and National Socialism in Danish history magazines Katja Gorbahn .....	319
Popular history magazines between information and entertainment. A qualitative study on the expectations of consumers Miriam Hannig .....	335
A case study of the use of popular history magazines in history teaching in England  Terry Haydn.....	353
Summaries.....	371
Authors .....	375

# Preface

This volume is based on the EU project EHISTO – European History Crossroads as pathways to intercultural and media education – which started in November 2013 and lasts two years. The project responded to the increasing significance of a commercialised use of history within the public historical culture and challenged the fact that these representations do not always meet the didactic EU standards for history education in democratic, pluralistic, and multicultural societies. Nevertheless, these representations can have a lasting impact on the young generation's understanding of history. The rationale of the EHISTO project on the one hand was to explore how history in mass media can be critically reflected in history teaching in schools, in the education of history teachers, and in the continuing professional development of teachers in order to enhance the media literacy of young people. On the other hand, the EHISTO project explored how the transnational comparison of different national approaches to history in mass media can contribute to a better understanding of European history (unity in diversity) and strengthen the intercultural competences in history education within and outside of school.

This was to be achieved in particular by creating interactive online modules (Learning Objects) for schools whose aim is to further the development of intercultural and media-critical competences of young people in dealing with the commercial representations of history which they encounter outside of the history classroom. Accordingly, the idea of democratic citizenship and lifelong learning is at the core of the project.

In order to examine the representation of history in mass media in school the EHISTO project particularly focused on the phenomenon of popular history magazines, which have become increasingly popular and available across EU countries. Further reasons why especially history magazines provided a good working basis for the project were that they are subject to commercial conditions, they represent a medium which both pupils and teachers consume, and they feature a curriculum-compatible mediality. Regarding the content, previous studies have shown that on the one hand popular history magazines from different countries in Europe are – in contrast to other

commercially characterised media products – strongly focused on national markets, but on the other hand have many topics in common. However, the common topics naturally take more or less varying perspectives. These features of history magazines were especially important for the project since the analysis of national perspectives on historical topics debated throughout Europe (European History Crossroads) was to be a decisive basis for the Learning Objects.

In this volume the first article gives an account of the EHISTO project and its results as well as especially the Learning Objects for history teaching in the classroom, which have been developed during the project. The other contributions, however, are supposed to reach beyond the framework of these Learning Objects, since the aim of the project was not only to design teaching material for schools: another important objective was to integrate the topics of media literacy, intercultural competences, and the use of history in commercial mass media into the initial and in-service teacher training. Following this general aim, the 13 contributions in this volume are conceptualised as basic information for interested teachers, students of teaching, educators, researchers, policy makers and stakeholders who want to deepen their knowledge about this topic. Thereby, we are especially interested in teacher training: we have come to the conclusion – not least due to evaluations during the course of the project – that the sustainability of the project can be best achieved if the project results are integrated into the education of teachers. Accordingly, it is necessary to provide study material, which shall be supplied by this volume.

Thereby, a double-track approach is pursued in the further course of the book: the first seven articles try to provide basic information from an interdisciplinary point of view. First of all Susanne Popp evaluates the phenomenon of popular history magazines from the point of view of German history didactics and tries to define the very thin line between knowledge and entertainment, which is a determining factor for every history magazine that wants to be successful on the market. Subsequently, the cultural scientist Fabio Crivellari uses a media science approach in his contribution to especially reflect the mediality of popular history magazines and the way of presenting history. He discusses the theoretical findings by drawing on examples from the presentation of the First World War in popular history

magazines. A particularly interesting perspective is offered by the linguist Stephan Jaeger, who especially acknowledges the way in which history magazines ‘tell a story’ and the methods recognizable behind this. A media scientific problem is also discussed by the media expert Susanne Kinnebrock, who asks how history magazines manage to engage today’s readers in the past even though topicality is a central news factor. Manuela Glaser, on the contrary, deals with the effects which popular history magazines can have on the reader and in this way her contribution adds a media psychological point of view to the volume. With pictures being a very important momentum for the popular mediacy of history, the contribution by the history educator Michael Wobring is devoted to some methodological considerations how the use of images in popular media can be evaluated empirically in future research. The first part of the volume concludes with the contribution by the historian Marianne Sjöland, who gives a theoretical introduction to analysing the use of history based on popular history magazines in Sweden and England.

In the second part of the volume, six empirical analyses offer further insight into some European countries and their market of popular history magazines thereby focusing on the topics which are given priority treatment in the magazines. Country-specific studies of this kind are provided by Claudius Springkart (Germany), Terry Haydn (UK) and Monika Vinterek (Sweden). Katja Gorbahn especially focuses on Danish history magazines and the question which point of view they take in dealing with National Socialism and the German occupation of Denmark. Miriam Hannig’s research work is also focused on Germany and provides a study on the consumers’ expectations in regard to their attitudes towards history magazines. The volume is concluded with a further contribution by Terry Haydn that links back to the primary objectives of the EHISTO project and presents a case study on the use of popular history magazines in history teaching in England.

In that way, the 13 contributions provide a broad range of basic analyses and European perspectives on a field that has so far not been taken into consideration by research. The editors hope that this broad approach may facilitate the access to this interesting topic for teachers, teacher educators, students, as well as other educating institutions and may encourage them to integrate this topic into their professional practice, especially

in the initial teacher training of history teachers. Furthermore, this volume wants to promote research on a topic which will gain more and more attention in school practice during the next years.

Susanne Popp, Jutta Schumann, Miriam Hannig

Jutta Schumann/Susanne Popp/Miriam Hannig

## **EHISTO – European History Crossroads as pathways to intercultural and media education. A report about the EU project (2012–2014)**

The EHISTO project deals with the mediation of history in popular (scientific) media and the question of the social and political responsibility of journalists and other mediators of history, especially teachers, in the field of the commercial presentation of history.<sup>1</sup> The project responds to the increasing significance of a commercialised mediation of history within public historical culture and reflects the fact that these representations, which do not always meet the EU standards for history education, can have a lasting impact on the younger generation's understanding of history.

The rationale for the EHISTO project was to explore how history in the mass media can be used for teaching history in schools, in the education of history teachers, and in continuing professional development for teachers, in order to enhance the critical media literacy of young people. This was to be achieved in particular by developing interactive online modules (Learning Objects) for schools whose aim is to further the development of the intercultural and media-critical competence of young people in dealing with commercial representations of history, which they encounter outside the history classroom.

The EHISTO project, which was supported by the EU-LLP, started in November 2013 and lasted two years. The project group consisted of four university experts in history didactics, one expert in media didactics and the FWU (Institute for Film and Pictures in Science and Education) as institute for the creation of educational media.<sup>2</sup> All university partners closely

---

1 Cf. URL: <http://www.european-crossroads.de> (1.8.2014).

2 Besides the Chair of History Didactics at Augsburg University (coordinator) also the Universities of East Anglia (UK), Dalarna (Sweden) and Lodz (Poland), Salamanca (Spain) and the Institute for Film and Images (FWU) in Grünwald, Munich are involved.



cooperated with local ‘EHISTO partner schools’. Eleven history teachers and more than 300 pupils contributed to the creation of the interactive on-line modules (Learning Objects); they also tested and evaluated them with regard to their practical suitability. The group was supported by an international research network reaching from Augsburg to Shanghai as well as by academic advisors and international networks such as e.g. the International Society for History Didactics (ISHD<sup>3</sup>) EUROCLIO (European Association of History Educators<sup>4</sup>) and the DVV International, the Institute for the International Cooperation of the German Association of Adult Education<sup>5</sup>.

The following project report is divided into four parts: the prehistory of the EHISTO project is illustrated in the first part, which contains the current state of research as well as the basic considerations of the EU project. This part will elaborate on the use of popular history magazines as a focus of research, as well as on the basic concept of European History Crossroads (EHC) and the linkage of media-critical competences with intercultural competences (1). The second part introduces the aims and the implementation of the project (2) and the third part presents the project’s central results: learning modules, initial teacher training module and in-service teacher training course whereby the Learning Objects (LOs) on the two EHC ‘Columbus and the “discovery” of the “new world”’ and ‘The “outbreak” of World War One’ conceptualised in the scope of the project form the foundation for teacher training and advanced training courses (3). The report ends with considerations about the long-term practical implementation of the project results (4).

## **1. Prehistory of the project – current state of research and basic considerations**

### **1.1 Popular history magazines as a research object**

In order to examine the representation of history in mass media in school the EHISTO project focused on the phenomenon of popular history

---

3 Cf. URL: <http://www.ishd.co> (1.8.2014).

4 Cf. URL: <http://www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php> (1.8.2014).

5 Cf. URL: [http://www.dvv-international.de/index.php?article\\_id=1405&clang=0](http://www.dvv-international.de/index.php?article_id=1405&clang=0) (1.8.2014).

magazines in particular, which have become increasingly popular and available across EU countries. However, there were further reasons why history magazines provided a good working basis for the project:

- The magazines are subject to commercial conditions. Accordingly, the specific question can be posed – also in comparison to presentations in school books – how ‘history’ is constructed and presented so as to ensure the commercial success of the product.<sup>6</sup>
- They represent a medium that both pupils and teachers consume and that covers manifold topics which are easily connected to the curriculum and which are ‘topical’ (due to their periodicity). In addition, the magazines feature curriculum-compatible mediality (text, image documents, graphics) and are readily available to be used in the classroom.
- The popular history magazines in Europe are – in contrast to other commercially characterised media products (e.g. films, video games, comics) – on the one hand strongly focused on national markets. On the other hand, as has been shown in previous studies (see below), the magazines from different countries have many topics in common (e.g. famous personalities; events with a pan-European impact such as wars, peace settlements, revolutions; transnational phenomena like migration, cultural exchange, religions, social and political movements). These features of history magazines were especially important for the project since the analysis of national perspectives on historical topics debated throughout Europe was to be a decisive basis for the LOs (see below, European History Crossroads).

Even though history magazines are readily available they have attracted comparatively little attention with history and media studies as well as history didactics, although these history journalistic products form a significant part of public history culture.<sup>7</sup> It is striking that the analysis of

---

6 The deconstruction of commercially shaped popular history presentations is supposed to serve as a contribution to the enhancement of so-called ‘genre competences’. Cf. Hans-Jürgen Pandel: *Geschichtsdidaktik. Eine Theorie für die Praxis*. Schwalbach/Ts. 2013, p. 226 ff.

7 Even if the sales figures of the individual magazines are dropping it nevertheless becomes apparent, as our research has shown, that the range of history magazines has continuously expanded in Europe since the beginning of the century.

history magazines in a trans-nationally comparative perspective, which would make the differences and similarities visible in the presentation of history in different countries, has so far not been carried out.

So as to gain first insights, an internationally oriented conference was organised in Amsterdam preceding the project in 2010 that explored popular history magazines from a comparative European perspective and evaluated their potential for the advancement of LL key competences for history teaching.

In order to approach the topic in a useful way a market and cover page analysis was initially carried out by all participants in Amsterdam, which was implemented following a jointly developed catalogue of criteria. The evaluations performed in all countries revealed some informative results, which, however, still have to be confirmed by further research.<sup>8</sup>

It became clear that in all participating countries the biographical approach prevailed: popular presentations of history often work with a ‘great’ – mostly male – personality whose life story is connected to important contemporary events. Thematically, wars and conflicts dominate all history magazines. Even though the First and the Second World Wars surely have to be mentioned as central preoccupations of the magazines, the choice of the conflicts considered, is strongly aligned according to the great moments of the respective national histories. Similarly, this tendency is followed by the epochs to which particular attention is paid.

The insight that national history has a great share in all countries was a decisive criterion in shaping the EHISTO project since the history magazines therewith offered good starting points to compare national perspectives on history with transnational European and global presentations of history (see also the ‘European History Crossroads’ below).

All in all, the conference in Amsterdam made clear that the popular presentation of history in many countries is strongly oriented along the lines of 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography, which exhibits similar areas of focus

---

8 The following countries were involved in the study: Germany, Denmark, England, Sweden, Estonia, Italy, Turkey, Brazil, Russia and the Netherlands. See the German volume: Susanne Popp/Jutta Schumann et al. (eds.): *Geschichte in Magazinen*. Frankfurt/Main et al. 2015 (forthcoming). In this volume also cf. the contributions by Gorbahn, Haydn, Springkart and Vinterek.

thematically, as well as in emphasising ‘great’ men who make history. More recent approaches to history such as the history of mentalities, gender issues or historico-cultural approaches are, in comparison, not entirely ignored, but are far less taken into account.

Besides the results which the conference in Amsterdam has brought about country-specific individual studies primarily existing in Sweden, Germany and France may be mentioned at this stage, which are all, however, from recent years.<sup>9</sup> The international overview of research on popular history magazines has so far revealed that the access is limited in three main ways. The studies (a) merely address one specific point in time in their analysis and neglect a diachronic perspective or (b) they develop a diachronic perspective, but thereby merely deal with one magazine. Lastly, (c) the studies are generally limited to a national market and do not draw an international comparison; moreover, trans-national questions

---

9 Cf. on the medial presentation of World War One in history magazines the excellent study, which was recently published: Fabio Crivellari: *Die Medialität des Krieges. Der Erste Weltkrieg in der populären Erinnerungskultur nach 1945 am Beispiel populärer Geschichtsmagazine*. Konstanz 2014, URL: <http://bit.ly/10df5CJ> (1.8.2014); Cf. Hans Süssmuth: *Erzählte Geschichte in der Massenpresse. Darstellung und Analyse ausgewählter Beispiele*. In: Siegfried Quandt/Hans Süssmuth (eds.): *Historisches Erzählen. Formen und Funktionen*. Göttingen 1982, p. 171–203; Christian Spieß: *Zwischen Wissenschaft und Unterhaltungsanspruch. Aktuelle Geschichtsmagazine im Vergleich*. In: Sabine Horn/Michael Sauer (eds.): *Geschichte und Öffentlichkeit*. Göttingen 2009, p. 169–176; Christian Spieß: *Zeitgeschichte in populären Geschichtsmagazinen*. In: Susanne Popp et al. (eds.): *Zeitgeschichte – Medien – Historische Bildung*. Göttingen 2010, p. 61–76; Christian Spieß: *Zwischen populär und wissenschaftlich: Geschichtsvermittlung in aktuellen Geschichtsmagazinen*. In: Swen Steinberg/Stefan Meißner/Daniel Trepsdorf (eds.): *Vergessenes Erinnern. Medien von Erinnerungskultur und kollektivem Gedächtnis*. Berlin 2009, p. 133–151; Cf. also Achim Landwehr: *Magazinierete Geschichte* (30.12.2013), URL: <http://bit.ly/1rxuMPu> (1.8.2014); Valérie Hannin: *L'Histoire: revue et magazine*. In: *Le Débat* 175 (2013), issue 3, p. 190–197; Claire Blandin: *L'histoire sur papier glacé*. In: *Le Débat* 175 (2013), issue 3, p. 184–189; Laurène Pain Prado: *La Question de L'Histoire Grand Public: Étude Comparée de Deux Magazines D'Histoire: HISTORIA et L'HISTOIRE, 2004–2008*. Grenoble 2010; Marianne Sjöland: *Historia i magasin: en studie av tidskriften Populär historias historieskrivning och av kommersiellt historiebruk*. Lund 2011.

are missing. The EHISTO project is a reaction to this state of research: the analyses and Learning Objects are aimed at an international comparison and the ‘European History Crossroads’ address the trans-national similarities and differences of the national history culture in Europe.

## 1.2 European History Crossroads

The concept of ‘European History Crossroads’<sup>10</sup> first developed by the Council of Europe was also fundamental to the EHISTO project. The concept includes topics of European history that are a part of the national history narrative everywhere in Europe and which are taught at school.

With the ‘European History Crossroads’ the project follows the concept of ‘Shared Histories in Europe’.<sup>11</sup> This assumes that the European states and regions have indeed been involved in manifold trans-regional historical processes and have ‘shared’ them in a way, but thereby, however, have made different historical experiences, which until today are manifested in different, partially controversial interpretations and explanations. It can be deduced from this that the path leading to a European history culture first has to aim at the reciprocal perception and the basic recognition of plural history experiences and interpretations in Europe. This idea can also be found in Jörn Rüsen’s postulate of ‘overcoming Euro-centrism through experiencing difference’<sup>12</sup> as core part of a European identity. It denotes a concept of European identity which is centred on perceiving and

---

10 Robert Stradling: *Crossroads of European histories: Multiple outlooks on five key moments in the history of Europe*. Strasbourg 2006 (Council of Europe).

11 Cf. the e-book as a result of the Council of Europe’s project ‘Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines’ (2010–2014), URL: <http://bit.ly/1ywwRAD> (1.8.2014). EHISTO follows on from the broad spectrum of successful EU projects, which have so far fostered the intercultural dialogue in Europe by developing shared European themes for history teaching and by presenting multi-perspective approaches in terms of intercultural dialogue (e.g. European Council projects like ‘Shared Histories for a Europe Without Dividing Lines’ and ‘The Image of the Other in History Teaching’).

12 Cf. e.g. Jörn Rüsen: *Europäisches Geschichtsbewusstsein als Herausforderung an die Geschichtsdidaktik* [Historical Consciousness in Europe as Challenge for History Didactics]. In: Marko Demantowsky/Bernd Schönemann (eds.): *Neue geschichtsdidaktische Positionen*. Bochum 2002, p. 57–64.

accepting the plurality of historico-cultural identities in Europe as well as the democratic, tolerant and peaceful way of treating differences.

From the point of view of history didactics it has to be stated that history education in Europe, with a few exceptions,<sup>13</sup> still to a great extent neglects the necessary broadening of the national view required to perceive diverging history experiences and interpretational perspectives of other European nations or regions. Likewise, the teaching staff is hardly aware of which topics in the respective national or regional history curricula are and which are not ‘European History Crossroads’.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, obvious steps towards the ‘Europeanisation’ of the national history education and the development of intercultural and historico-cultural<sup>15</sup> competences remain untaken throughout Europe. The project, with its shift towards popular history magazines comes in at this point and with educational material<sup>16</sup> tries to provide practice-oriented suggestions.

### **1.3 The linkage of media-critical competences with intercultural competences**

The potential of EHISTO consists in a close linkage between the awareness of the diversity of the European heritage and of intercultural competences on the one hand with historical media competences (media literacy) on the other hand using the example of ‘European History Crossroads’ in popular history magazines. In order to include the strong influence of the extracurricular historical culture in the reforms of history teaching, EHISTO has put an innovative concept to the test. For the first time this concept has systematically combined intercultural competence with

---

13 Cf. e.g. the – even though bilateral and therewith atypical – German-French history book: Peter Geiss/Daniel Henri/Guillaume Le Quinterec (eds.): *Histoire/Geschichte. Schülerband Sekundarstufe II: Europa und die Welt vom Wiener Kongress bis 1945*. Stuttgart 2007.

14 This also applies to the picture inventory of school books in Europe. The teachers on site usually do not know which image documents are common in school books across Europe. Cf. on this Michael Wobring/Susanne Popp (eds.): *Der europäische Bildersaal. Europa und seine Bilder*. Schwalbach/Ts. 2013.

15 Cf. on the notion of ‘historico-cultural competences’ Hans-Jürgen Pandel: *Geschichtsdidaktik. Eine Theorie für die Praxis*. Schwalbach/Ts. 2013, p. 232 ff.

16 Cf. URL: <https://media.sodis.de/ehisto/de/index.html> (1.8.2014).

media-critical competence in dealing with extracurricular representations of history, so that history lessons become a site to critically reflect on the commercial construction of history. This supplements the foundations for lifelong learning with important elements in the area of history education. Additionally, the comparison between different national representations of the same European historical events seen in mass media encourages the critical analysis of the differences and commonalities, sharpens the awareness for general characteristics of mass media representations of history and facilitates debates and questions concerning the common European identity.

## **2. Objectives and project implementation**

### **2.1 Objectives of the EHISTO project**

The primary goal of the EHISTO project was to link intercultural and media-critical competences in history lessons by using commercial mass media relevant to history. In order to achieve this primary goal the project group developed

- trans-national teaching material (secondary level) with teacher manuals on historical topics that cover the national magazines and syllabi of all partnering countries ('European History Crossroads'). The material consists of content which was history- and media-didactically edited in English (project language) as well as in the national languages of all partners, serving to induce media-critical and intercultural competence. The teacher manuals contain explanations for the LOs along with didactic hand-outs. Throughout Europe they are available free of charge on the project's homepage.
- a project seminar with a module guide to be used for initial teacher training, which integrates the new approach along with activating methods.
- a teacher course with a handbook to be used in in-service teacher training, which puts the project results into classroom practice.
- an interactive project website that presents all project results and working materials (for teaching in the classroom, initial teacher training and in-service teacher training), facilitating the exchange between teachers and pupils.

So as to ensure the sustainability of the project the project results are published combined with this volume of essays, which is designed to make the project known in specialised and associated bodies. Moreover, during the project a network of schools and training institutions was formed in which the project results are further pursued.

## 2.2 Implementation of the project

The implementation of the project followed the main working phases already considered in the application, which were all carried out and implemented without deviation.

During the first step of the project the baseline study was entirely completed. The baseline study was to provide the foundation of the LOs aimed at. The aim of this work was 1) to find out history teachers' opinions and practices regarding the use of popular history magazines, 2) to develop a tool that can be used by teachers and students in order to analyse popular history magazines and 3) to conduct research on the so-called 'European History Crossroads' in order to find out on which two examples of history crossroads the LOs should focus.

The empirical studies recorded the attitudes of history teachers regarding popular history magazines as supplementing educational material in the different countries, collected best-practice-examples and examined the national curricula and history magazines for European History Crossroads. The partners also analysed the national school books with regard to national tendencies in the presentation of the chosen topics (amongst others "The "outbreak" of World War One"). Besides addressing general questions, the instrument for the analysis of popular history magazines, by now available online,<sup>17</sup> particularly focuses on the magazine cover pages, the editorial, the table of contents, picture series and questions about the analysis of articles. It is designed to support the individual development of further topics. Research on the European History Crossroads made clear that the European-wide existing curriculum topics

---

17 Cf. URL: <http://www.european-crossroads.de/outcomes/baselinestudy/analytical-framework/> (1.8.2014).



‘First World War’ and ‘Second World War’ play a very important part in all European, history magazines; further European History Crossroads (according to the expanded EHISTO definition) are e.g. Columbus and the ‘discovery’ of the seaway to America, the spread of Islam, the Crusades, Industrialisation, Absolutism, and the Cold War. In general it can be said that regarding the cover topics of the magazines ‘great men who made history’ play a decisive part such as e.g. Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Charles the Great, Louis XIV, or Napoleon – and (inevitably) also Adolf Hitler.<sup>18</sup> Following the results gained in the baseline study as well as in consultation with the teachers involved in the project, the project partners eventually agreed that the LOs, which were to be conceptualised in the following phase, should deal with the European History Crossroads ‘Columbus and the “discovery” of the “New World”’ and ‘The “outbreak” of World War One’.

The second project phase was the central phase of the project work in which the online materials were developed for history education in secondary schools (Learning Objects), for teacher training (initial teacher training module with module guide) at colleges and universities as well as for further teacher training courses (in-service teacher training course with handbook). By now, the online material was available on the project website in the five project languages. Accompanying the conceptualisation of the online material, introductory teacher workshops were held in all partner countries during this phase so as to be able to test the online material in the following phase.

In the third project phase the online material was evaluated. Thereby a feedback-mechanism was used in close cooperation with the participating schools. The training course for the in-service teacher training was evaluated by the participating teachers (from pilot schools and from other schools); the project seminar at the university (initial teacher training) was tested and evaluated by the participating teacher trainees.<sup>19</sup>

---

18 The results of this examination will be published in an anthology available online on the EHISTO website in autumn 2014.

19 These concepts were tested and evaluated in eleven EHISTO classes, five EHISTO university seminars and five further teacher training seminars; the results were positive without exceptions.

The concluding fourth project phase dealt with the dissemination of the project results. Amongst others, the final publication was written for this purpose, which shall introduce the project, the aims and the products developed in the scope of this project to a wider public.

### **3. The central results of the project: Learning Objects, initial teacher training module and in-service teacher training course**

#### **3.1 The Learning Objects (LOs with teacher manual)**

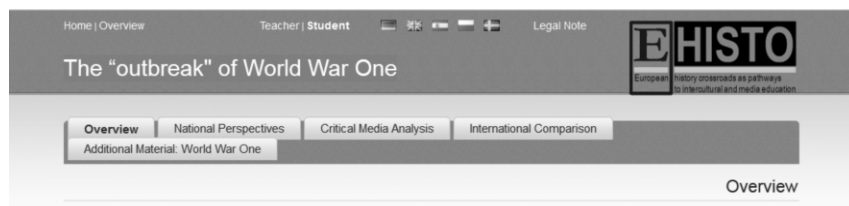
In close cooperation with the partner schools, five LOs about the ‘outbreak’ of World War One and five LOs about Columbus were developed based on the two chosen European History Crossroads. Furthermore, two multinational LOs in five languages, and an additional LO in English about the British Empire were designed. An overview of the LOs with links to each of them can be found on the website’s main page.

Regarding the design of the LOs it was important to the project participants not to provide examples of use which are conceptualised for 45 minute lessons, but to offer a wide range of ideas and suggestions for lessons which can be freely combined based on the material and the questions available. The open design also allows using individual elements of the LOs in higher age and ability classes. The aim of the LOs was to illustrate new innovative ways of mediation, which exemplarily show how media-critical competences can be enhanced in the classroom by means of the chosen European History Crossroads. It corresponds with these objectives that extensive material from the magazines is provided for both topics (‘outbreak’ of the First World War and Columbus) under the heading ‘additional material’, which can be freely combined and used in a supplementary way by teachers.

In terms of structure, all LOs are divided into five categories. All LOs start with an overview outlining the tendencies that influence the topic’s presentation in the relevant national history books. Moreover, experts provide information on common interpretations of the topic from a national point of view so that it becomes apparent in the comparative perspective whether the magazines analysed follow these basic tendencies or emphasise other aspects. The national perspective on the topic follows with questions

designed by each country's popular history material. Under the heading 'critical media analysis' the users find material with questions to encourage critical thinking about the chosen national magazine articles in terms of content and media features. The fourth category deals with the European comparative perspective (international comparison) whereby both the content-wise alignment of the magazines as well as the media-critical aspects are also addressed. Under the heading 'additional material', all the material from five countries is available making it possible for students and teachers to design their own ideas and new approaches for lessons. Users primarily find material on those elements of the magazines which are particularly suited for a comparison such as the cover page, the table of contents, the editor's preface, the picture series at the beginning of a main topic, the leading article about the main topic and the self-portrayal of the magazine.

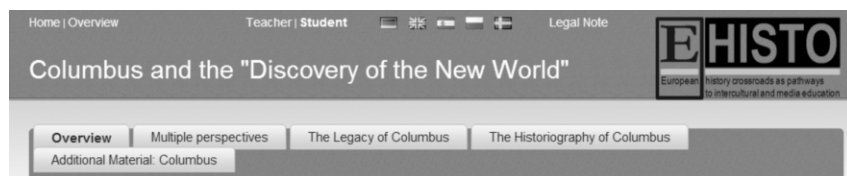
Fig. 1: Outline of the website in one of the LOs on 'The "outbreak" of World War One'.



Each European History Crossroad can be approached nationally and bilaterally. At the same time, the LOs allow teachers and students in every country involved to carry out as many comparative studies as they want – in transnational, media-critical and intercultural ways. Furthermore, the LOs allow teachers and pupils in all participating countries to conduct any number of comparative studies: bilateral, trilateral or multilateral ones. In that way a 'multi-perspective' learning space emerges, in which teachers and pupils can explore Europe's 'shared history' by comparing national magazines and textbooks.

Supplementing the five LOs each designed in this way, two multinational LOs as well as specifically chosen thematic aspects for the multinational approach provide a more general overview of the topic in popular culture.

Fig. 2: Outline of the website in the multinational LO on ‘Columbus and the “Discovery” of the “New World”’.



### 3.1.1 Basic information about the LOs on World War One

When analysing the history magazines from the participating countries<sup>20</sup> and further magazines e.g. from France, Belgium and the Netherlands it became apparent that the assassination of Sarajevo is like no other topic on the World War an integral part of the transnational European popular remembrance of the First World War.<sup>21</sup>

As expected, the assassination of Sarajevo is presented as key event of the immediate prehistory of the beginning of the war. Thereby, two different approaches can be generally discerned in the articles chosen: one narrative stages the ‘height of the fall’ of the event: one single, rather marginal event shaped by manifold ‘almost unbelievable’ coincidences causes the downfall of the entire European pre-war order. The figurative idea is prevalent here that ‘Sarajevo’ was the ‘spark’ that set the ‘fuse’ on fire, which lead the European ‘powder keg’ to explode.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, the happenings between the assassination and the beginning of the war are imagined as having a ‘domino effect’, which straightforwardly and inevitably

20 As a focus magazines from the last ten years (2004–2012) were examined and the results were supplemented by taking contemporary magazines into consideration.

21 Cf. GEO EPOCHE 15 (2004); DAMALS 5 (2004); LA AVENTURA DE LA HISTORIA 69 (2004); G/GESCHICHTE 11 (2007); MUY INTERESANTE HISTORIA 17 (2008); POPULĂR HISTORIA 10 (2008); ALLT OM HISTORIA 9 (2011); HISTORY REVIEW 69 (2011); BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE 11 (2012); SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE 5 (2013); DIE ZEIT GESCHICHTE 1 (2014); GEO EPOCHE 65 (2014); GEO HISTOIRE 13 (2014).

22 Cf. Franz Metzger/Jürgen Wilhelmi: In Europa gehen die Lichter aus. In: G/GESCHICHTE 11 (2007), p. 22–27.

led to the war. The other narrative, in contrast, presents an open development by emphasising important stages of the 'July crisis', discussing action alternatives and reasons as well as consequences of the options chosen.<sup>23</sup>

Thereby it is interesting that the magazines analysed do not indicate any specifically national differences in the perspective of the assassination. Both narratives mentioned, however, can be found in every country; this significant 'historiographical difference in quality' of the magazine types exists everywhere. Those presenting the 'fuse' narrative consistently show a clearly stronger pronounced tendency towards personalisation<sup>24</sup>, emotionalisation, simplification and sensationalism as well as towards the use of insufficiently examined, specified and often also anachronistic<sup>25</sup> image material. The latter can also be discerned for those magazines that historicise and present the 'July crisis' as an open process; however, they are prepared to 'challenge' the audience with controversial presentations, diverging opinions and open questions.

The 'picture canon' of European magazines for the presentation of the First World War has so far not been examined.<sup>26</sup> It is, however, clear that the image documents which are reproduced are used in a purely illustrative way and their potential as sources remains unexploited. No argumentative connection is established here between the pictures and the texts. This lack of rigour in dealing with the image documents is not only apparent regarding the captions, but also in the fact that, for example, staged photographs which were created and distributed by national propaganda machines, or also pictures which were constructed in the dark room are printed without

---

23 Cf. Stig Förster: Die Juli-Krise 1914, Wochen der Entscheidung. In: DAMALS 5 (2004), p. 14–19; Peter Englund: En oundviklig katastrof? In: POPULÄR HISTORIA 10 (2008), p. 24–30.

24 Personalisation here means that the power to shape the historical process is above all assigned to 'great personalities'. Cf. Christian Heuer: s.v. Personalisierung. In: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): Wörterbuch Geschichtsdidaktik. Schwalbach/Ts. 2006, p. 139 f.

25 Instead of contemporary image documents pictures from other epochs are used.

26 Cf. Julius Müller/Andreas Wagner: 'La Grande Guerre iconographique' – Bilder des Ersten Weltkriegs in modernen europäischen Schulgeschichtsbüchern. In: yearbook – jahrbuch – annales. Journal of the International Society of History Didactics 31 (2010), p. 27–42.

further explanatory indications – sometimes even on the cover pages of the magazines.<sup>27</sup> However, this use of pictures, which violates the ethics of conveying history,<sup>28</sup> is discernible not only in history magazines, but also in school history books.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding those magazines which in relation to the beginning of the war primarily focus on the ‘assassination of Sarajevo’ it is particularly interesting to compare the choice of pictures of the individual magazines. Since the amount of picture sources (photographs, illustrations<sup>30</sup>) relating to this event is very limited the same illustrations are found everywhere, which, however, vary in terms of size, basic design and caption depending on the style of the magazine and therewith – especially in a comparative perspective – provide useful information regarding the question about a responsible use of image material. An occasionally still faulty caption thereby stands out which indicates the depicted scene as the ‘arrest of Gavrilo Princip’.<sup>31</sup>

With regard to the evaluated magazine articles on the First World War a specific aspect has to be emphasised in conclusion which equally plays

---

27 Cf. cover page: Die Westfront im Ersten Weltkrieg. In der Hölle von Verdun. In: G/GESCHICHTE 11 (2007), as well as Anton Holzer: „Going Over The Top“. Neue Perspektiven aus dem Schützengraben. In: Gerhard Paul (ed.): Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. Vol. 1: 1900 bis 1949. Göttingen 2009, p. 196–203; Cf. also Brigitte Hamann: Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wahrheit und Lüge in Bildern und Texten. München 2014.

28 Cf. among others: Council of Europe. Committee of Ministers: Recommendation rec (2001) 15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe, URL: <http://bit.ly/1qNy38i> (1.8.2014).

29 Cf. note 30 *passim*.

30 Cf. Illustrations by Felix Schwormstädt for the ‘Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung’ dated 30.6.1914, among others in: Heinrich Jaenecke: Kriegsbeginn 1914. Das Attentat. In: GEO EPOCHE 14 (2004), p. 25; Metzger/Wilhelmi (note 22), p. 23.

31 Cf. Jaenecke (note 30), p. 27; Metzger/Wilhelmi (note 22), p. 22; Søren Aagaard: Mordet som startade ett världskrig. In: ALLT OM HISTORIA 9 (2011), p. 32; and Gerhard Hirschfeld: Sarejevo 1914. Das bilderlose Attentat und die Bildfindungen der Massenpresse. In: Paul (ed.): (note 27), p. 148–155. The photograph by Philipp Rubel, which was further disseminated with the title ‘The arrest of the murder’, shows the arrest of Ferdinand Behr who was accused of helping Gavrilo Princip when he was arrested. Verifiably, Ferdinand Behr had nothing to do with the assassination on 28.6.1914.

a role in all magazine articles: the question about war guilt is always connected to the assassination of Sarajevo and the ‘July crisis’. Other than expected, there were no significant differences in interpretation and meaning to be discerned in the international comparison. The Polish magazines are an exception:<sup>32</sup> Some articles speak of clear ‘guilt’ – without further discussion – and blame the elites of the German Empire. In general, however, the magazines examined endeavour to achieve a differentiated and balanced presentation regarding this topic whereby controversies in research are often referred to, recent works – such as Christopher Clark’s ‘The sleepwalkers’<sup>33</sup> – included and interviews with historians presented.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.1.2 *Basic Information about the LOs on Columbus*

Regarding the topic ‘Columbus’, different directions may be discernible in the coverage. Two of the articles rather provide ‘event reports’, which almost ‘narratively’ report about individual periods of Columbus’s life. Thereby, however, the alignment of both articles is completely different. Whereas the German magazine *G/GESCHICHTE* allows the reader to participate in the moment of the first discovery of land<sup>35</sup> and therewith singles out a rather ‘glorious’ moment in Columbus’s story, the Swedish magazine reports about the decline of the two colonies which Columbus brought into being and therewith about the ‘failure’ of the hero.<sup>36</sup> The Spanish involvement in the New World is thereby evaluated from the

---

32 Cf. Piotr Szlanta: Święto wojny, Społeczeństwa Europy wobec wybuchu pierwszej wojny światowej. In: *MÓWIA WIEKI* 8 (2009), 32–36.

33 Cf. Christopher Clark: *The sleepwalkers. How Europe went to war in 1914*. London 2012.

34 Cf. e.g. Annette Großbongardt/Uwe Klußmann: ‘Es gab keinen Alleinschuldigen’. Der Militärhistoriker Sönke Neitzel über die Totalität des Ersten Weltkriegs, Hypernationalismus und das Versagen der politischen Eliten. In: *SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE* 5 (2013), p. 14–19; Cay Rademacher/Joachim Tegenbüscher: Schuldfrage. Das Versagen der Eliten. Der Historiker Christopher Clark über die Verantwortung der Staatenlenker Europas für den Ausbruch des Weltenbrandes. In: *GEO EPOCHE* 65 (2014), p. 156–160.

35 Cf. Wolfgang Mayer: Kolumbus entdeckt eine neue Welt, Traumland in Sicht. In: *G/GESCHICHTE* 4 (2006), p. 14–16.

36 Cf. Stine Overbye: Columbus koloni blev en katastrof. In: *VÄRLDENS HISTORIA* 16 (2012), p. 36–41.

view of the indigenous population; Columbus's discovery thus leads to the death of more than 400,000 Indians – not only due to the exertion of violence, but also due to new diseases, which the Europeans brought with them – during the first 30 years after the great moment in 1492. In this way, both magazines make it clear in an impressive way how different chosen aspects of the life of the protagonists – but also the change of perspective – may alter the evaluation of historical personalities.

Whereas the different evaluations of Columbus in the case of the German and the Swedish example only become apparent by comparing both articles, a contribution from England illustrates on a considerably higher level the change of the image of Columbus during the course of the centuries within one article<sup>37</sup>. With the contribution titled 'Columbus – Hero or Villain' a central topic for historical education is clarified with the example of Columbus: history is reconstructed from sources and is tied to locations, i.e. the existing sources are adapted to the own world of ideas and to the time-specific leading norms as well as filled with new attributions of meaning according to the epoch and the geographic location. In this way, Columbus was able to mutate from the celebrated discoverer and brave conqueror to the founding father of America, but also to the root of all evil regarding colonialism. The article dealing with this question thereby manages to pass Columbus's entire life in review along the way.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, not only does the reader learn about the change of Columbus's image, but this question serves, as it were, as a vehicle to convey basic knowledge about the person Columbus. In the presentation of the different 'images of Columbus' the magazine follows a 'global' approach, so to speak, which clearly states national appropriation and different evaluations of Columbus in the past and at the same time critically deconstructs the motives standing behind these different perspectives on his person. Therefore, the text is especially suited for higher grades as

---

37 Cf. Felipe Fernández-Armesto: Columbus – hero or villain? In: HISTORY TODAY 42 (1992), p. 4–9.

38 The same line is taken by a second article from England which also addresses the aspect that the person Columbus was 'used' over the centuries to provide a suitable background for their own ideas of the time and their argumentations, cf. David Armitage: Christopher Columbus and the uses of history. In: HISTORY TODAY 42 (1992), p. 50–55.



well as for the teacher training and teacher education module, but can also serve as a descriptive explanation for basic knowledge in history didactics at universities.

The Spanish contribution on Columbus also offers insight into the difficult process of reconstructing history, which is often based on different interpretations.<sup>39</sup> Different theses are discussed here in very detail on the question of the origin of Columbus and on the question in how far Columbus' plan to sail westwards to 'India' is to be evaluated as 'brilliant'. It is thereby apparent how great an effort different countries in individual epochs have still made to appropriate Columbus for their national history. This contribution can be compared with a presentation from a Polish history magazine which also deals with research theses concerning Columbus' possible country of birth<sup>40</sup> whereby the space this question takes in a Spanish and a Polish magazine surely appears somewhat surprising: on the one hand, in times of 'overcome' nationalism, considerations whether Columbus may after all be appropriated for the one or the other country are to be regarded as a rather secondary historical problem. On the other hand, these considerations are also surprising against the backdrop that the person Columbus is by no means positively evaluated without exceptions today, so that from a national perspective it may be rather ambivalent if Columbus is celebrated as a member of a certain country.

Apart from the comparison of the different point of views of the Columbus articles especially the use of images in history magazines can be critically illuminated with the topic. The 'discovery' of America is a 'number one issue', so to speak, in the repertoire of 'great' historical events. According to today's viewing habits, the reader expects that informative picture material is available for such a 'number one issue', which adequately illustrates this great moment of world history. However, there are indeed hardly any contemporary illustrations regarding the 'discovery' of America. A wood cut, which was added to the first

---

39 Cf. Luis Arranz: Un tal Cristóbal Colón, descubridor. In: LA AVENTURA DE LA HISTORIA 91 (2006), p. 58–65.

40 Cf. Rafał Jaworski: Krzysztof Kolumbski czyli bajka o królu Władysławie na wyspie dalekiej. In: MÓWIA WIEKI 2 (2013), p. 22–25.

letter of Columbus, can be regarded as the first known image depiction of the event (1493)<sup>41</sup>. But it also has to be mentioned here that the artist himself did not take part in the discovery expedition and this is therefore a purely fictitious interpretation of the text of Columbus's letters. The likewise widely disseminated (and known also today) picture illustrations by Theodor de Bry (1593), who illustrated Columbus' discovery roughly 100 years after the 'voyage'<sup>42</sup>, are also not based on any kind of participation in the event. Against this backdrop it is informative to analyse how popular history magazines, which as a 'popular' medium are expected to illustrate the events with pictures, deal with this gap in historical heritage. Thereby, the work with the students may take two directions: 1. The timeline included in the German-English comparison, which allows an interactive time-wise categorisation of the picture material used to illustrate the article, can especially show the difference between source and representation of history. It thereby becomes apparent that the pictorial illustration of the article about Columbus often used the emotionalising, visually stunning pictures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which, however, are dated roughly 350 to 400 years after the event. This circumstance can be reflected critically with the pupils and therewith attention can be drawn to a central aspect of a media-critical attitude. 2. Based on the Columbus texts and their images, pupils can in general discuss and critically evaluate whether a chosen picture was appropriately used as illustration. Closely linked to this, the captions have to be included in the analysis, which are sometimes incomplete or faulty or even contain subtexts, which do not necessarily match the content of the article.

In order to analyse the articles in the most interactive way possible the tasks contain innovative approaches: accordingly, in the Spanish module the discussion about Columbus's birth place can be reconstructed with a

---

41 La lettera dellisole che ha trovato nuovamente il Re dispagna, woodcut, Florence 1493 (illustration of a poem of Giuliano Dati based on a letter of Columbus about his discovery).

42 'Columbus, als er in India erstlich angekommen, wird von den Einwohnern aufgenommen und mit grossem Geschenk verehrt und begabet', copperplate engraving by Theodor de Bry, Frankfurt/Main 1593. In: Sammlung von Reisen in das westliche Indien: America, 9. copperplate engraving, 4. book, based on a report of Girolamo Benzoni from 1565.

video whereas the German LO with a focus on ‘media criticism’ invites students to arrange the pictures used in the magazines on an interactive timeline according to their time of origin. It becomes apparent that most of the illustrations of Columbus as well as the ‘discovery’ of America are from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which stimulates further critical questions. The language used is critically considered in the international module: with the help of ‘wordle’ the analysis of texts about Columbus and the discovery is stimulated in that the words are displayed bigger or smaller depending on how often they appear in the text.

The LOs briefly illustrated here exhibit different focuses, which can, however, be further expanded if the entire material available in translation (heading additional material) is used for the conceptualisation of lessons. It is supplemented by additional material for teacher education and teacher training, which is, among others, supposed to introduce the use of the educational material.

### **3.2 Initial teacher training and further teacher training**

The initial teacher training module is another important result of the EHISTO project. It is aimed at experts in initial teacher training who carry out history seminars about EHISTO related topics, modularised in line with the Bologna Process. It comprises fourteen steps each planned for 2x45 minutes. Elements from the resources or the entire package can be used depending on how much teaching time is available to explore the EHISTO project.

Not only does the initial teacher training module provide the general basics concerning the topics ‘transnational history in Europe’, ‘intercultural competences’ and ‘history culture in commercial mass media’, but it also develops seminar structures and describes guidelines for the didactical implementation of the topics within the scope of academic initial teacher training.

The project seminar itself consists of three parts. Part A deals with the topic ‘Diversity and specific forms of history cultures in Europe’, part B is dedicated to the ‘media-critical analysis related to transnational history culture and intercultural history competences’. The central part is the third part of the module (part C) which enables the students to develop their own teaching-/study-material for teaching intercultural and

media-critical competences related to the European History Crossroads (EHC). The three seminar parts follow several learning objectives at the same time: 1. students are enabled to recognise their national perspectives on history and to understand them as a starting point for transnational historical culture and intercultural history competences. 2. They gain a critical understanding of how commercial mass media transform the representation of history for economic success on a growing market. 3. They learn how to convey this knowledge as enduring competences and sustainable skills to pupils in secondary general education schools in Europe.

The initial teacher training module was partially carried out and evaluated by all partners whereby the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Accordingly, the evaluation report states:

‘The feedback suggested that the module guide provided a very thorough and helpful guide to student teacher participants who have been involved in piloting the EHISTO resources and activities. The materials do focus effectively on the stated aims of the project [...]. Another positive outcome from the project was the likelihood that the training and module guide have heightened the profile of popular history magazines and made student teachers aware of their potential for working to improve the critical media literacy of young people.’<sup>43</sup>

The initial teacher training module can thus be regarded as a valuable instrument to integrate the results of the EHISTO project in teacher training on a long-term basis and to ensure the sustainability of the project.

A further effort for implementing the objectives of the EHISTO project in the university practice was the development of a handbook for in-service teacher training. It was intended to be used by teacher instructors in both the university context and local institutions during in-service teacher training. So as to convey the content of the project and at the same time to introduce the use of the LOs a two-part structure was chosen: the first part introduces the reader to the main project outcomes both in terms of the methodology for the development of intercultural and media-critical competences among pupils and in terms of didactical strategies and materials to be used in secondary school history classes. The second part suggests the

---

43 Evaluation of the initial teacher training module of the EHISTO project, unpublished.

structure for a course devoted to secondary school in-service teachers with the aim of providing participants with a framework as well as suggestions for a practical use of the learning material in the EHISTO LOs.

In the scope of the EHISTO project the conceptualisation of the modules for initial teacher training and in-service teacher training seemed central in order to be able to integrate the objectives of the project into initial teacher training and further teacher training on a long-term basis. The project therewith also reacted to the circumstance that in many EU countries specific training elements regarding the ‘mediacy’ of media literacy are still missing. This aspect finally leads to the basic question in how far the two-year project funded by the EU was able to set off important development processes and provide practice-relevant impulses with regard to history lessons. Moreover, it has to be asked in conclusion which suggestions and ideas can be provided for political decision makers and stakeholders based on the experiences with the project work.

#### **4. The long-term practical implementation of the project results**

The EHISTO project aimed at establishing intercultural and media-critical competences in civic and history education in Europe, whereby especially the gap between the scholastically conveyed conception of history and the history culture outside the school walls was supposed to become apparent to the learners. On the one hand, the project wanted to raise awareness for the European History Crossroads and support a multi-perspective approach to history. On the other hand, the comparison between in-school and extracurricular forms of history mediacy serves to enhance the media literacy of learners. This objective aroused great interest within and without the school sector already during the project, whereby it supervened that in choosing the European History Crossroad “‘Outbreak’ of World War One” a currently very topical subject was the focus of the conceptualisation of the learning modules. Therefore, with the ‘International Association for History Didactics’, the ‘DVV international – International Institute of the German Adult Education Association’, ‘L.I.S.A. – The Science Portal of the Gerda Henkel Foundation’ and ‘werkstatt.bpb’ institutions could be gained as associated partners who presented the conceptualised learning material

on their websites or even tested and evaluated it. Also manifold invitations to conferences and talks showed that educational institutions indeed regarded the results of the project as very important for school classes and teacher training.<sup>44</sup>

So as to ensure the long-lasting success of the project an international network operating via important educational platforms was aimed at e.g. the project results are made public on school-related networks such as the German Education Server and the corresponding servers of the different federal states, or on the 'Schulweb', and they are fed into existing and established media databases such as, for example, SODIS. These networks are not only databases but they also function as communication platforms so that the teaching material can be commented upon and provided along with didactical advice and best-practice examples. Together with the implementation of the project results in teacher training (see 3.2) the associations with important institutions of initial and further teacher training mentioned above and also the aimed at future close cooperation with EUROCLIO serve to not only implement the conceptualised learning material and the therewith connected methodically innovative mediating approach on a long-term basis, but also to make it known on a European-wide level.

The successful implementation of the EHISTO project can, however, merely be a first step in achieving the objectives for history lessons regarding

---

44 EHISTO was represented inter alia in the conferences: TEEM conference: First International Conference on Technological Ecosystems for Enhancing Multiculturality: facing multiculturalism from different perspectives (14.-16.11.2013) at Salamanca, Spain, URL: <http://teemconference.eu> (1.8.2014); EUROPEANA conference (30.1.2014) at Berlin, Germany; DIDACTA at the FWU Booth, which is the biggest international trade fair for education and training (26.3.2014) at Stuttgart, Germany; Meeting of the steering group of the history department of the European Council (9.-10.4.2014) Brussels, Belgium; UMEÅ Stanford conference on history education 2014: Challenges in Teaching: Historical Thinking and Digital History (5.-6.5.2014) at UMEÅ University; EERA (European Educational Research Association) conference (2.-5.9.2014) at Porto, Portugal; History and Edutainment, conference of the International Society for History Didactics (8.-10.9.2014) at Wrocław, Poland; HEIRNET (History Educators International Research Network) conference (15.-17.9.2014) at Ljubljana, Slovenia; BERA (British Educational Research conference) (23.-25.9.2014) at London, Great Britain.

the intercultural education and the further development of media literacy of pupils sketched out in the scope of the project. Especially due to the close cooperation with schools and teachers the project partners were able to identify a range of future tasks, which should be supported and enhanced by stakeholders and policy makers in the following years:

1. Teachers who want to include current public commercial presentations of history in their lessons are missing a reliable method in terms of how these products can be used in line with modern multi-perspective history education. The EHISTO project has provided valuable groundwork whereby also the evaluation results have shown that the methodology developed by the project partners is regarded as suitable and very promising by teachers.

As a suggestion for policy makers and stakeholders it has to be mentioned, however, that the groundwork supplied by the project may indeed provide valuable impulses but it nonetheless still has to be based on a far broader foundation.

- 1.1 On the one hand, the tested methodological approach should e.g. be applied to further European History Crossroads (e.g. World War II, migration, Islam) in other projects – maybe also in comparison with non-European regions.

- 1.2 On the other hand, the methodology should also be tested and expanded with a broader range of media and communication devices in a comparative approach (e.g. film, video games, online presentations of history).

2. The basic research conducted in the scope of the project has pointed out deficits in the current practice in schools. Teachers have stated that they find the idea of the project and especially the media-critical aspect extremely important in lessons. At the same time, however, it has become apparent that these matters are not really taught since a) the methodology is unclear (see above), b) these aspects come off badly in teacher training, c) there is a lack of transnational teaching materials and also d) incentives are missing in most curricula. The EHISTO project has laid the foundation particularly for the initial, but also for in-service teacher training with the newly conceptualised material and training courses, but this does by no means suffice.

Policy makers and stakeholders should ensure that

- 2.1 curricula attach more importance to media-critical competences and the integration of public history and history culture into the curriculum.

This is extremely important for the idea of lifelong learning which has to be initiated by the history lessons at school.

2.2 Corresponding features are to be emphasised also in training institutions – particularly in the initial teacher training – so that future teachers can learn at an early stage how these aspects can be integrated into the history lessons in a meaningful way.

3. In the scope of the EHISTO project the conceptualised teaching material was translated into the five project languages (English, German, Swedish, Polish, Spanish).

3.1 An even further-reaching dissemination would be desirable so that teaching material from significantly more European countries could mirror the national view on different European History Crossroads and at the same time more languages would be available than before.

3.2 This would also entail further possibilities for bilingual history teaching and especially for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Accordingly, the implementation of further research and projects with this objective should be supported by policy makers and stakeholders.

4. The empirical glance into school practice has shown that history lessons still prefer the broadening of the national perspective towards the historical experiences and interpretational perspectives of other European nations or regions. There are a number of reasons for this: Firstly, teachers are not aware of the challenges posed by introducing transnational perspectives. So far, there are only some few exemplarily treated European History Crossroads which can be taught in lessons with this viewpoint. Secondly, many history teachers do not even know which topics of their national curriculum are part of a transnationally shared history in Europe. Thirdly, appropriate teaching material is missing which could help teachers overcome this obstacle. It has to be emphasised that history teachers can easily obtain and use history magazines from their own country written in their own language for their lessons. However, they are faced with insurmountable barriers when it comes to magazines from different countries written in foreign languages for a transnational comparison.

4.1 Therefore, policy makers and stakeholders should ensure that further projects pointing out new European History Crossroads are encouraged. Additionally, new teaching material about these Crossroads has to be added that includes practical implementation suggestions for lessons in



order to strengthen the intercultural aspects. This is very important for the educational concept of democracy in history lessons.

5. With regard to the current media landscape it has to be noted that traditional mediating authorities (history studies, educational institutions) are increasingly put into a competing situation with other media and are losing their previous prerogative of interpretation. Commercial popular media are gaining increasing influence and sometimes paint a picture of history that differs from academic and didactic standards of history. In this newly developing pluralism of opinions it is even more important that pupils in school learn how history products can be evaluated critically. Pupils e.g. have to acquire the skills and competences to distinguish quality multi-perspective forms of history presentations from purely bold presentations with a one-dimensional line of argument. Only in this way it can be ensured that learners are able to deal with otherwise presented images of history in a reflective way also later – outside of school – and thereby e.g. critically question a one-sided instrumentalisation of history.

For policy makers and stakeholders it can be noted that the EHISTO project has revealed the great importance of the subject history for the area of media literacy relevant for the future – even though it deals with the past. This results in the suggestion to make greater use of the subject history in this area and to regard the methods and questions developed in the EHISTO project as an important aspect of a media literacy programme, which in the future ought to be taught in an interdisciplinary way.

6. In the scope of the project, first discussions and networks among interested partners have been encouraged regarding the topic of ‘enhancing media literacy in history lessons’, but in general an even broader network would be desirable. In particular, these contacts would have to be aligned in an interdisciplinary way and especially include also associations of journalists and publishers so as to firstly get to know the viewpoints of the producers of commercial products regarding the above mentioned quality standards and secondly to also determine and discuss the question about ‘minimum standards’ in the area of history mediacy, as e.g. proposed by the Council of Europe.

Policy makers and stakeholders should thereby have a supporting effect in order to find ways to facilitate networking and discussions among these diverse experts working on national and international levels and thereby

to share the responsibility of a quality democratic history education in our media society.

7. A significant desideratum is the empirical research on reception. We hardly know anything about the question if, and if so, which short, middle or long term growth of knowledge the readers of popular history magazines gain, and if or how the ‘positivistic’ and ‘historicist’ history approach presented in the magazines effects the historical awareness of the readers. Another question that remains open is which media critical competences do the readers have and how do they apply them while reading – or do they fully indulge in the immersive experience of entertainment. Moreover, also empirical studies on the use of the magazines as learning objects in history education are especially important to history didactics.

Therefore policy makers and stakeholders should ensure that

7.1 empirical studies on the above mentioned questions are encouraged.

7.2 empirical studies on the effects of the EHISTO project are made possible. In particular, these should evaluate if and to what extent the development of trans-national, intercultural, and media critical competences in history education may be achieved with the developed online modules so as to create a basis for optimising the didactic concept and the intercultural, transnational and media-critical approach to history education in Europe.



Susanne Popp

# **Popular history magazines between transmission of knowledge and entertainment – some theoretical remarks**

## **1. Introduction**

Popular accounts of history have reached a new worldwide peak in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Significant factors have played a role in this development, namely the increase of leisure time and with this a correspondingly rising thirst for entertainment as well as (cultural) tourism and other cultural needs. Furthermore, higher standards of education in general and partly a greater amount of disposable income can be mentioned as well as possibly also – particularly in the so called ‘Western societies’ – the demographic development with a growing life expectancy often related to an increasing need for orientation in a more and more dynamically changing world. Last but not least, an increase in mass media representations of history in form of anniversaries and commemorations can be recorded as a medium for political statements through propaganda and as a means to address collective identities and loyalties.

In this context, an international phenomenon can be observed which initially provokes amazement in light of the quantity and diversity of audio-visual offers of popular historical culture in the field of television, film as well as computer and video games – but at the same time it proves the media studies theory that new kinds of media do not automatically replace older ones. A very traditional medium, which in Europe dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup> and has no moving pictures, sound or interactive options, has been on the rise since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: more and more titles of popular history magazines have appeared in increasingly dynamic and

---

1 Cf. e.g. Werner Faulstich: Medienwandel im Industrie- und Massenzeitalter (1830–1900). Göttingen 2004; Rudolf Stöber: Deutsche Pressegeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, 2<sup>nd</sup>, rev. ed. Konstanz 2005; Jürgen Wilke: Grundzüge der Medien- und Kommunikationsgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert. Köln et al. 2000.

internationally networked markets<sup>2</sup> for history magazines,<sup>3</sup> whereby the situation can differ significantly from country to country: while in some countries the magazines have a long tradition<sup>4</sup> and have adapted to modern conditions over time, completely new approaches can be found in other countries due to major political and social changes;<sup>5</sup> then again in other countries – which are not to be neglected on a global scale – the culture of commercial history magazines is barely older than 10 or 20 years.<sup>6</sup>

Even if some newly established magazines – often also as extension lines of established magazines or as imports of other countries' formats<sup>7</sup> – have not been on the market for a long time, the overall conclusion is, however, that media companies are broadening their diverse range of history magazines – which means they assume that a sufficient market demand already exists or they believe that they can at least create it so that the investment will be worthwhile.

Even if the amount of customers and readers of those magazines cannot compete with consumers of TV and other audio-visual media, history magazines appear to be a phenomenon within the international historical culture that deserves attention particularly from the field of history didactics – also because history teachers, pupils and history students are among the readers or buyers. However, until now this medium has not received a

---

2 Cf. e.g. the (independent) French version of the German magazine GEO EPOCHE (Gruner & Jahr, Hamburg); URL: <http://www.geo.fr/> (1.8.2014).

3 Cf. Susanne Popp/Jutta Schumann et al. (eds.): *Geschichte in Magazinen*. Frankfurt/Main et al. 2015 (forthcoming). This includes country-specific studies also on China and Brazil as well as contributions which evaluate the international developments.

4 As far as we can see, the UK has the longest tradition of illustrated history magazines. Cf. the contribution 'History magazines in the UK' by Terry Haydn in this volume.

5 See the Russian market for history magazines; cf. the contribution by Alexander Khodnev in Popp et al. (note 3).

6 See the Brazilian and the Chinese market; cf. the contributions by Oldimar Cardoso (Brazil) and Meng Zhongjie (PR China) in Popp et al. (note 3).

7 Cf. e.g. the contribution by Claudius Springkart in this volume, but also cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1vIATSr> (1.9.2014): 'All about history' is an English popular history magazine that was positioned in the autumn of 2014 in German translation in the German market.

lot of attention, neither from history didactics and research on historical culture and ‘public history’ nor from research on the popularisation of academic knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

- 
- 8 Cf. on popular history magazines e.g. Bodil Axelsson: History in popular magazines. Negotiating masculinities, the low of the popular and the high of history. In: *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012), p. 275–295. Claire Blandin: L’histoire sur papier glacé. In: *Le Débat* 175 (2013), issue 3, p. 184–189. Fabio Crivellari: Die Medialität des Krieges. Der Erste Weltkrieg in der populären Erinnerungskultur nach 1945 am Beispiel populärer Geschichtsmagazine. Konstanz 2014. URL: <http://bit.ly/10df5CJ> (1.8.2014). Ernst Deissinger et al.: P.M. History. Wenn Journalisten über Geschichte schreiben. In: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* [GWU] 54 (2003), p. 82 ff. Valérie Hannin: L’Histoire: revue et magazine. In: *Le Débat* 175 (2013), issue 3, p. 190–197. Marlene Hiller: Der Spagat zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Wissenschaft. Oder: Geschichte schreiben für Liebhaber. In: Sabine Horn/Michael Sauer (eds.): *Geschichte und Öffentlichkeit. Orte – Medien – Institutionen*. Göttingen 2009, p. 161–168. Sven Felix Kellerhoff: Geschichte muss nicht knallen. Zwischen Vermittlung und Vereinfachung. Plädoyer für eine Partnerschaft von Geschichtswissenschaft und Geschichtsjournalismus. In: Michele Barricelli/Julia Hornig (eds.): *Aufklärung, Bildung, ‘Histotainment’? Zeitgeschichte in Unterricht und Gesellschaft heute*. Frankfurt/Main 2008, p. 147–158. Ulrich Kröll (ed.): *Massenmedien und Geschichte*. Presse, Rundfunk und Fernsehen als Geschichtsvermittler. Münster 1989. Laurène Pain Prado: *La Question de L’Histoire Grand Public: Étude Comparée de Deux Magazines D’Histoire: HISTORIA et L’HISTOIRE, 2004–2008*. Grenoble 2010. Marianne Sjöland: *Historia i magasin. En studie av tidskriften Populär historias historieskrivning och av kommersiellt historiebruk*. Lund 2011. Hans Süssmuth: Erzählte Geschichte in der Massenpresse. Darstellung und Analyse ausgewählter Beispiele. In: Siegfried Quandt/Hans Süssmuth (eds.): *Historisches Erzählen. Formen und Funktionen*. Göttingen 1982, p. 171–203. Schörken, Rolf: *Geschichte in der Alltagswelt. Wie uns Geschichte begegnet und was wir mit ihr machen*. Stuttgart 1981. Christian Spieß: Zwischen Wissenschaft und Unterhaltungsanspruch. Aktuelle Geschichtsmagazine im Vergleich. In: Horn/Sauer (note 8), p. 169–176. Christian Spieß: *Zeitgeschichte in populären Geschichtsmagazinen*. In: Susanne Popp et al. (eds.): *Zeitgeschichte – Medien – Historische Bildung*. Göttingen 2010, p. 61–76. Christian Spieß: *Zwischen populär und wissenschaftlich: Geschichtsvermittlung in aktuellen Geschichtsmagazinen*. In: Swen Steinberg/Stefan Meißner/Daniel Trepdorf (eds.): *Vergessenes Erinnern. Medien von Erinnerungskultur und kollektivem Gedächtnis*. Berlin 2009, p. 133–151. – Cf. also Achim Landwehr: *Magazinierte Geschichte* (30.12.2013), URL: <http://bit.ly/1rxuMPu> (1.8.2014).

Popular history magazines are not included in the following (selected) titles about the topics of history journalism, popular history culture, or history in the mass

The following illustrations begin with a classification of the object ‘popular history magazines’ according to different frameworks (2.). This is followed by the discussion of the questions in how far the magazines can be regarded as ‘popular’, what they do ‘popularise’ and how they can be located within the vast field of the popularisation of academic knowledge (3.). This is followed by the question about the shaping tendencies of the presentation of history in this medium (4.) as well as about their evaluation from the point of view of history didactics (5.). A brief outlook on desired research concludes this contribution (6.).

## 2. Popular history magazines

Initially, the object ‘popular history magazines’ shall be contextualised in eight approaches.

In general, history magazines are to be defined as illustrated periodicals (a) addressing a non-expert audience. Illustrations are an integral and constitutive element of the concept, and the amount of illustrations (e.g. paintings, photographs, maps, charts, tables) usually exceeds the amount of text.<sup>9</sup> Compared to other media, popular history magazines feature more text than audio-visual formats and less text than specialised literature or non-fiction. The fact that magazines address a ‘non-expert’ audience does, however, not imply, as mentioned above, that students of history, history teachers or experts from professional fields who deal with the past are not included in the group of buyers and readers of these periodicals.

---

media: Klaus Arnold/Walter Hömberg/Susanne Kinnebrock (eds.): *Geschichtsjournalismus. Zwischen Information und Inszenierung*. Berlin et al. 2010. Wolfgang Hardtwig/Erhard Schütz (eds.): *Geschichte für Leser. Populäre Geschichtsschreibung in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart 2005. Wolfgang Hardtwig/Alexander Schug (eds.): *History Sells! Angewandte Geschichte als Wissenschaft und Markt*. Stuttgart 2009. Barbara Korte/Sylvia Paetschek (eds.): *History Goes Pop. Zur Repräsentation von Geschichte in populären Medien und Genres*. Bielefeld 2009. Barbara Korte/Sylvia Paetschek (eds.): *Popular history now and then. International perspectives*. Bielefeld 2012. Eva Ulrike Pirker et al. (eds.): *Echte Geschichte. Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen*. Bielefeld 2010. Siân, Nicholas: *Reconstructing the past. History in the mass media 1890–2005*. London et. al. 2008.

9 Cf. e.g. the contribution of Michael Wobring in this volume.

Furthermore (b), history magazines are to be understood as a phenomenon of a society's historical culture. They combine – according to the concept of Jörn Rüsen<sup>10</sup> – a cognitive dimension (transfer of knowledge) with an aesthetic and emotional dimension (images with an aesthetic and often emotional effect) as well as a political dimension. The term 'political dimension' does not imply that a direct or indirect ideological alignment or political interference always exists, but emphasises that every historical presentation necessarily unfolds a certain idea of man and a conception of society and therewith also a certain horizon of political values. History magazines are not excluded from this.

Moreover, the magazines can be assigned to the area of historical journalism (c), which has for a long time merely received little attention in media studies.<sup>11</sup> Depending on the quality standards of the magazine either historians, journalists specialised in history or general journalists function as authors of the contributions. Also the qualifications of the permanently employed editors are significant for the particular profile of the magazine. The reasons for the reticence of media studies regarding historical journalism are among others also the fact that addressing history – beyond relevant anniversaries and commemorations – did not seem to comply with the theory of 'news values'<sup>12</sup> which is constitutive for journalism and communication studies and – simply put – explains which criteria or features the journalists ascribe to information that possesses in their eyes 'newsworthiness' and the potential to attract public attention. Since historical presentations refer to the past they seem to have no relation to the concept of 'news' – if considered superficially. The existence of the magazines and many other formats of historical journalism prove that this does not apply since not only can historical topics feature immediate topicality in the sense of having a direct relation to the present, but they also always exhibit other characteristics which are relevant for the so-called

---

10 Cf. e.g. Jörn Rüsen: *Geschichtskultur*. In: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* [GWU] 46 (1995), p. 513–521.

11 Regarding the German speaking countries cf. Arnold/Hömborg/Kinnebrock (note 8).

12 Cf. e.g. Michaela Maier/Karin Stengel/Joachim Marschall: *Nachrichtenwerttheorie*. Baden-Baden 2010. Also cf. the contribution by Susanne Kinnebrock in this volume.



‘newsworthiness’ of information, such as ‘unexpectedness’ or ‘oddity’ (persons, actions, events out of the ordinary), ‘human interest’/‘personalisation’ (historical persons as interesting characters, as powerful actors or tragic figures in the past), ‘reference to elite persons (big names) or elite nations’, ‘proximity’ or ‘nearness’ (e.g. regional or national history; psychological aspects, relation to everyday life) and ‘meaningfulness’ or ‘relevance’ (significance and consequences of past events which affect the reader). That the events presented are in the past is revoked by the fact that the people in the present turn towards the past – in a cognitive, emotional, and often identifying way.

From an etymological point of view (d), the term ‘magazine’ derives from the Arabic word ‘maḳāzin’, which means ‘storeroom’ or ‘storehouse’ and which, borrowing from Italian and French, became an internationally used term for periodicals that collect written articles about different topics. However, in addition to the multi-thematic ‘history magazines’, which combine several primary and secondary topics in one issue, there are nonetheless also mono-thematic magazines: ‘GEO EPOC’ is an internationally known example of this format.

Moreover, a distinction is made (e) between so-called ‘special interest magazines’ that deal with history in general and ‘very special interest magazines’ that focus on specific sub-themes such as certain periods (e.g. ancient times), people (e.g. ethnic or national or other collectives) or objects (e.g. weapons, cars, clocks). A special case are so-called ‘military magazines’ which often blur the line to a more or less right-wing ideology.<sup>13</sup> Those ‘military magazines’ very often deal with the First and Second World War, whereby the presentation of historical events and connections are less important and rather the military and national(istic) ideology, which is projected onto history, is paramount. In this volume – as is also the case in the EHISTO project<sup>14</sup> – the interests focus on the ‘special interest magazines’ exclusively. Even though also in this case the First and

---

13 Some of them are indicated as right-wing by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Also cf. on this the contribution by Claudius Springkart in this volume.

14 Cf. the report about the EHISTO project (URL: <http://www.european-cross-roads.de/>, 1.8.2014) in this volume.

the Second World War are one of the most popular topics on an international level<sup>15</sup> they are presented from a different perspective and different intentions are followed than in ‘military magazines’.

If one turns to specialist journalistic classifications (f) then one finds in the German case the ‘popular history magazines’ either categorised in the field of ‘popular knowledge magazines’ or the areas ‘arts and culture’ or ‘hobby and entertainment’. The considerable differences in quality between the various history magazines are not reflected in any way in this classification. Accordingly, very sophisticated magazines such as the German magazine ‘DAMALS’<sup>16</sup> can be found in line with ‘knowledge magazines’ e.g. on ‘how to build terraria’ or ‘gardening magazines’. This is reminiscent of the British historian John Tosh, who in his book ‘Why history matters’<sup>17</sup> ironically described the ubiquity of history in the entertainment sector (e.g. history channels, re-enactment, videogames, costume parties and not least also magazines) as ‘the new gardening’<sup>18</sup>.

History magazines are also to be considered as commercial products (g) – at least in societies with a market economy. Their primary objective is not the conveyance of history, but the financial sales success.<sup>19</sup> If this goal is not achieved in an adequate way then they disappear from the market.

In general, the magazines contain adverts, which in addition to the price range, the design, and other factors allow conclusions to be drawn about the target group of consumers. Even though reliable run and sales figures are fundamental to the advertising market it is often difficult and sometimes even impossible for outsiders to reliably and comprehensively determine

---

15 Cf. the contributions by Katja Gorbahn and Monika Vinterek in this volume.

16 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1sYXMIQ> (1.8.2014).

17 Cf. John Tosh: *Why history matters*. New York et al. 2008.

18 Cf. John Tosh (URL: <http://bit.ly/YG0pKU>) (1.8.2014): ‘History is tied to heritage, to costume drama on television. The very prominence of history on television channels has led to the notion that history is the “new gardening”’.

19 There are, however, also cases where the state – as in Brazil – buys individual magazine issues and distributes them in schools (cf. the contribution by Oldimar Cardoso in Popp et al. (note 3)) or where the state itself either publishes a magazine or financially supports the publishing. Especially in the PR China it is difficult to determine the economic status of history magazines.

such data. In addition to the lack of transparency perhaps intended by the publishers the fact that many history magazines have websites nowadays also contributes to this since also older issues are distributed online which are no longer available on the retail market. In addition, certain marketing strategies begin to emerge in several cases<sup>20</sup> which aim at selling further products from the own company or business that reach beyond the magazine issue, e.g. books, CDs and DVDs on a topic addressed in an issue. In this way, also educational tourism is also advertised. If the magazines enhance history-related consumption in this way then this could mean a significant commercial surplus – also beyond the specific sales figures.

The relation between the subscriptions and the retail sale<sup>21</sup> in (train station) book stores, kiosks, and in supermarkets is very different when it comes to the individual magazines, whereby considerable fluctuations may occur over time. The largest share of history magazines is bought by individual or impulse buyers, e.g. at the station – as reading material for a journey and waiting times which retains its information value for a long time and can be read over and over again. In this context, illustrated periodicals can be more suitable than books since – thanks to their illustrations and the ‘magazine’ structure – they can be read selectively with reduced concentration while at the same time requiring no technical provisions – in contrast to audio-visual media. The flexible use, which is typical for illustrated periodicals in general, is also an advantage of history magazines.

The design of the cover pages is of paramount importance for impulse buyers. They have the task to direct the attention of the potential buyer to the particular issue – in midst of a very broad range of illustrated periodicals and in competition to other history magazines.<sup>22</sup> In addition to

---

20 Cf. e.g. Axelsson (note 8).

21 In the Lesezirkel market, which provides illustrated periodicals for waiting rooms of hair dressers and medical practices, history magazines – with the possible exception of GEO EPOCHE – are not included in the German case.

22 The analysis of cover pages was the focus at the beginning of our research on European history magazines and also played a major part in the EHISTO project. In this context, an analytical framework was developed to be used in the ‘initial teacher training seminar’. Cf. on this URL: <http://bit.ly/1s3Vq2V> (1.8.2014).

announcing the main topic in headlines and images the magazines in their layouts make statements about their cultural level of aspiration. If only one illustration instead of several is used, if the image depicted originates from the time period which the main topic deals with, if words and colours are used scarcely, but purposefully then – at least this is what the layout suggests – particular attention is paid to a serious presentation of history therewith drawing the line to other formats that fight for attention and customers with more dazzling means – and often also with a cheaper price per issue.

In any case, however, the image of history the magazines convey is shaped commercially: the magazines with the highest sales figures are said to be the most successful and in turn influence the producers' assessment of the success when it comes to deciding on the choice and the design of the topics of the prospective issues.

The focus of the history magazines throughout Europe lies in the national historical culture (h) and emphasises – not least due to the language and the previous knowledge of the customers – the national history. However, an international comparison reveals trans-national convergences: there are certain topics – the First and the Second World War have already been mentioned – which play a part in many national narratives. Regarding European history, one can speak of 'European History Crossroads' (EHC) which reflect Europe's 'shared history': the European regions and states have shared many historical experiences which they have, however, experienced from a different perspective and which they still remember in a different way today.<sup>23</sup>

---

23 Such EHC – this is a finding of the EHISTO project – which are part of the national history syllabi as well as of popular history magazines (PHM) in all EHISTO-partner countries – are the following ones: Columbus and the 'great discoveries', World War One, World War Two, Holocaust, Hitler, Migration. Other EHC, which are part of the national history syllabi as well as of PHM in most of the EHISTO-partner countries, are the following ones: Alexander the Great, Islam, Charlemagne, Reconquista, Crusades, Vikings, Wars of religion in the context of Protestant Reformation, Absolutism (Louis XIV of France), French Revolution, Napoleon, Industrial Revolution (modernization, change of living conditions), Imperialism, Colonialism, Cuban Missile Crisis/Cold War.

### 3. The 'popular' dimension of popular history magazines

Two questions are at the core of the following part: history magazines are to be understood as part of a popular history culture: in which respect can they be categorised as 'popular'? And secondly: the history magazines are to be contextualised in the vast field of the popularisation of scientific or academic knowledge: how can their relation to historical studies and research be described?

The notion of 'the popular' possesses a very large range of meanings in connection to cultural phenomena so that some papers in cultural studies do not define the term at all.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, an attempt shall be made at categorising 'popular history magazines'. To this end, we have focused on a study by Holt N. Parker<sup>25</sup> which differentiates between the following, partially overlapping areas of meaning.

- (a) 'Popular' defined by a quantitative aspect: Cultural products are regarded as 'popular' if they address and/or are received by a very large number of people. The problem of this approach is, on the one hand, that many cultural products produced for mass consumption fail to appeal to a large amount of people; can they, accordingly, be regarded as 'popular' or not? This also applies to popular history magazines – to magazine types as a whole as well as to individual periodicals. On the other hand, the question arises who defines the quantitative distinction line between 'popular' and 'non-popular'.
- (b) 'Popular' defined by the qualitative aspect of a cultural hierarchy: Cultural products are considered 'popular' if they are seen as 'trivial entertainment' and address and/or are received by 'ordinary and non-well-educated people' who do not enjoy 'serious' culture. The problem of this approach is, on the one hand, that many members of cultural elites selectively participate in non-elite culture; they have 'two cultural accesses'. On the other hand, the equation of 'ordinary' with 'non-educated' people and of '(trivial) entertainment' with 'low

---

24 Cf. Holt N. Parker: Toward a definition of popular culture. In: History and Theory 50 (2011), No. 2, p. 147–170, p. 147.

25 Cf. note 23.

- culture' is far too simplistic – since, for instance, not everything beyond the so-called 'low culture' can be classified as 'high culture'.
- (c) 'Popular' defined by the qualitative aspect of a difference between the academic and non-academic (e.g. journalistic) discourses: Cultural products – e.g. history magazines – are regarded as 'popular' if they are seen as the result of a 'translation' and 'mediation' process of scientific concepts and research findings to a non-expert and/or non-academic audience. One problem of this approach is that only some small parts of 'popular culture' can be understood as a result of the 'translation' from the academic to the public. Another problem is that the so-called 'theory of diffusion' of academic knowledge to the non-expert public is too simplistic and is no longer accepted by research as will be shown in this chapter.
  - (d) 'Popular' defined by the qualitative aspect of a commercialised and industrialised 'mass culture' producing 'mass products' for 'mass consumption': Cultural products – and this possibly also applies to the presentation of history in magazines – are regarded as 'popular' in a very pejorative way by, for instance, Horkheimer/Adorno<sup>26</sup>. In their eyes, they only serve for mass consumption and sales success thereby sacrificing their quality, becoming strictly affirmative and do not offer a reasonable support to their audiences to orientation in their real life. One problem of this dichotomist approach is that, on the one hand, it historically limits the origin of 'popular culture' to the time of industrialisation. On the other hand, there is no evidence that cultural products produced for mass consumption in general lack an illuminating function. And lastly, many products of the so-called 'high' or 'serious' culture have become mass products; one may only think of e.g. the composition *Bagatelle No. 25 in A minor* by Ludwig van Beethoven, commonly known as 'Für Elise'.
  - (e) 'Popular' in the sense of 'traditional, folk-like, folksy or folkloristic' (= in general: not modern, not industrialised etc.). One of the problems of this approach can be seen in the fact that many of those

---

26 Cf. e.g. Max Horkheimer/Theodor W. Adorno: *Kulturindustrie. Aufklärung als Massenbetrug*. In: Idem: *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*. 16. ed. Frankfurt/Main 2006, p. 128–176.

‘traditional’ folk-like cultures were and are not really ‘popular’ but live in cultural niches. Another problem is that some of those ‘traditional’ folk-like cultures are ‘inventions’ of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and of later times, which were supposed to ensure social identity, social cohesion and national (or regional or ethnic) pride.<sup>27</sup>

- (f) ‘Popular’ in the sense of the ‘culture of the subordinate’ (e.g. the opposition, protest, and fight of the ‘people’ against the ruling or privileged classes). Cultural products are regarded as ‘popular’ in this political sense by Antônio Gramsci<sup>28</sup>, for instance. They are related to the ‘people’ who resist against repression or discrimination and who fight for their own rights. One of the major problems with this very narrow approach is the difficulty of the term ‘people’ and the problem with defining who is included and who is excluded. Another problem is that this sector does not represent the entire mass culture and popular culture of a society.
- (g) ‘Popular’ in the sense of easily accessible cultural offers for a general non-expert audience and for people with low ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu<sup>29</sup>). This approach aims at neutralising the dichotomy between ‘popular culture’ and ‘high culture’ in that a continuum of more or less available ‘cultural capital’ is set out for producers and consumers of culture. A cultural product is regarded as ‘popular’ if it lowers the access barriers for communication partners with low ‘cultural capital’. In this way, no statement is made about the cultural quality, the political intention or the categorisation of ‘traditional/modern’; furthermore, it is not differentiated whether or not the cultural product derives from the commercial cultural industry.

---

27 Cf. e.g. Eric Hobsbawm/Terence Ranger: *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge 1992. Examples for ‘invented traditions’ are the Scottish kilt, the Greek dance Sirtaki, the South African wind instrument Vuvuzela, or the Olympic Winter Games.

28 Cf. e.g. Antônio Gramsci: *Os Intelectuais e a Organização da Cultura* [The Intellectuals and the Organization of the Culture]. Rio de Janeiro 1984.

29 Cf. e.g. Pierre Bourdieu: *Ökonomisches Kapital – Kulturelles Kapital – Soziales Kapital* [1983]. In: Idem: *Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht*. Hamburg 1992, p. 49–80.

It is apparent that not all of this is relevant to 'popular history magazines' in the same way. Considering our object, especially the removal of socio-cultural access barriers (g) is relevant, which focuses on an expanded social participation in cultural communication. In this way, history magazines lower the threshold for the access to the historical discourse in that their choice of topics (e.g. connection to commonly known topics), their design of the content (e.g. less complex and heavily presuppositional or abstract historical presentation), their language register (e.g. easy words and grammar, no specialist terms), their presentational style (e.g. the characteristic vivid and descriptive narrative, illustrations) and their dissemination strategies (sales at kiosks, train stations and in supermarkets) address those whose 'cultural capital' is limited in this area and promise those who might also turn towards historical specialist literature an accordingly laid-back read.

This concept of 'cultural capital' without doubt has the advantage that it can integrate the existing difference between a 'popular', here: journalistically shaped non-academic, discourse and an 'academic' or specialised discourse while the hierarchy between 'high culture' and 'trivial culture' is avoided. At the same time, 'popular history magazines' point out the limits of the criterion of quantitative dissemination (a) since in comparison to the demand for history presentations in mass media such as films and on TV the demand for history magazines is to be evaluated as relatively moderate. In this way, it can be indeed imagined that the apparent neglect of history magazines in studies on popular history culture and historical journalism indirectly reflects this fact.

Finally, the second question remains to be clarified, namely in how far popular history magazines are to be regarded as 'popularisation' of academic knowledge relevant to research. In line with the emergence of post-industrial societies, which are often referred to as 'knowledge societies', a field of research has also been established that mainly deals with the historical 'popularisation' of academic knowledge, meaning the presentation and mediation of new knowledge – gained by experts using scientific, academic methods – to a broad, non-expert but nonetheless interested audience.<sup>30</sup>

---

30 Cf. about the history of this research field e.g. Andreas W. Daum: *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert. Bürgerliche Kultur, naturwissenschaftliche Bildung und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit, 1848–1914*. München



This strand of research, this has to be mentioned in advance, has from its beginning until today been very strongly geared towards natural-scientific, technical or also medical knowledge; historical knowledge has found little attention so far.

This research initially followed a hierarchical one-sided linear process model of ‘popularisation’, the so-called ‘diffusion model’ (A. Daum), which implies that special knowledge inaccessible to the general public is delivered in a simplified way by the researchers themselves or by journalists.<sup>31</sup> It has been realised that certain factors are thereby significant, e.g. the contextualisation of the topic, the attribution of relevance, the lowering of language barriers (especially, but not exclusively, in the area of specialised terminology), the use of metaphors and analogies that correspond with the everyday life of the audience and especially the narrativization of the scientific research process.<sup>32</sup> The insight into these factors is significant, but this concept in general has been set against a different, now widely accepted model which describes the popularisation of knowledge as an interactive process that is influenced by the recipients and their interests and that is not solely derived from the academic discourse, but has significance in its own right. In our case, the commercial factor already illustrates that it has to be an interactive process since whatever the customers do not accept is no longer

---

1998, p. 14–29; Angela Schwarz: *Der Schlüssel zur modernen Welt. Wissenschaftspopularisierung in Großbritannien und Deutschland im Übergang zur Moderne* (ca. 1870–1914), Stuttgart 1999, p. 38–47, 95–102.

31 Cf. in extenso about the two concepts e.g. Roger Cooter/Stephen Pumfrey: *Separate spheres and public places. Reflections on the history of sciences. Popularization and science in popular culture*. In: *History of Science* 34 (1994), p. 237–267; Richard Whitley: *Knowledge producers and knowledge acquirers. Popularisation as a relation between scientific fields and their public*. In: Terry Shinn/Idem (eds.): *Expository science. Forms and functions of popularization*. Dordrecht et al. 1985, p. 3–28. Cf. also Carsten Kretschmann: *Wissenschaftspopularisierung – Ansätze und Konzepte*. In: Bernd Hüppauf/Peter Weingart (eds.): *Frosch und Frankenstein. Bilder als Medium der Popularisierung von Wissenschaft*. Bielefeld 2009, p. 79–89.

32 Cf. Jürg Niederhauser: *Das Schreiben populärwissenschaftlicher Texte als Transfer wissenschaftlicher Texte*. In: Eva-Maria Jakobs/Dagmar Knorr (eds.): *Textproduktion in elektronischen Umgebungen*. Frankfurt/Main 1997, p. 107–122. URL: <http://bit.ly/1s0tWLd> (1.8.2014).

produced. It is hard to tell whether the consumer's behaviour or the producer's strategies exert more influence on the magazines. As in many fields of market economy, supply influences demand and demand influences supply: Both sides interact in a specific way.

Following Carsten Kretschmann's notion of 'popularisation' – (a) a striking knowledge divide has to exist between the producers and the recipients, (b) the number of recipients has to be larger than the number of producers and (c) possess relevance for the entire society, (d) the popularisation occurs intentionally and (e) uses mainstreaming media with multiplying effects<sup>33</sup> – then history magazines can also be regarded as strategies of popularisation which process historical knowledge so as to satisfy communicative needs and which are dedicated to generally understandable and entertaining presentations and not to specialised texts.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, if the concept by Andreas Daum<sup>35</sup> is used then (a) the 'popularisation of the use of language', (b) the 'perception' as well as (c) the 'effect' as 'popular' and lastly also (d) the 'popularisation as intention' can be established for history magazines, too.

However, this does not yet answer the question of what history magazines actually popularise. In this respect our research revealed the following: the classic 'popularisation' of new research results and recent research discussions plays a role only in some cases. A recent example is interviews with Christopher Clark, the author of the successful book 'The Sleepwalkers'<sup>36</sup> in history magazines which deal with World War I. But even if many magazines have sections in which they present newly published academic literature – especially about the main articles – the design of the cover pages and the content of the articles show a clear trend to 'popularise the popular'.

This is true in two respects: Firstly, the magazines – especially on their cover pages – offer predominantly topics which the potential consumer

---

33 Cf. Carsten Kretschmann: Einleitung: Wissenspopularisierung. Ein altes neues Forschungsfeld. In: Idem (ed.): Wissenspopularisierung. Konzepte der Wissensverbreitung im Wandel. Berlin 2003, p. 7–22, p. 14.

34 Cf. Daum: (note 30).

35 Cf. Ibid, p. 246.

36 Christopher M. Clark The sleepwalkers. How Europe went to war in 1914. London 2012.

can link to specific previous knowledge, prevalent imaginations and often a specific 'aura' (e.g. power, crime, exceptional fate). The popularity of the topics conveys to the readers the impression of historically very relevant objects. This ascription is supported by the fact that many topics are known from school which again 'authorises' them and that they are very widespread in historical culture (e.g. films, historical novels, exhibitions). This means that the producers' agenda setting relies on a popular established canon of topics and at the same time reproduces it.<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, the popular topics are presented in a 'popularising' way. This refers not so much to illustration, layout, language and the like. It rather is about the fact that in general historical knowledge is presented as 'objectively established' knowledge which supposedly informs about how the past 'really' was and ignores the fact that the historical knowledge is continuously reviewed, critically discussed and often modified for research reasons. Unlike magazines that popularise knowledge in the field of natural science or archaeology, history magazines rarely, if ever, discuss the research process.<sup>38</sup> They neglect to make clear to the reader that historical knowledge continually changes in the process of academic discourse.

The link to historical sciences is obviously weaker in history magazines than that in natural science magazines. The actual focus is not so much historical science but rather popular, often commercialised historical culture with its agenda of commemoration days, popular films and movies, exhibitions and, not least, of cultural tourism destinations. The analysis of cover features revealed that history magazines at best recur to recent phenomena of historical culture and not to recent topics of historical science: Thus, the cover features of all German magazines of the last two decades hardly give clues about the questions that were relevant to German historical science in that period. Moreover, stills taken out of period films which are sometimes used for the cover design, and hints to cultural events with historical themes (e.g. TV, movies, games, exhibitions) underline the

---

37 This does not mean that this 'canon' is unchangeable. In the last two decades, for instance, new academic approaches were in fact partially taken into account in magazines (e.g. women and gender history, social history, environmental and technical history).

38 Cf. Niederhauser (note 32).

magazines' links to recent historical culture. These references assure potential consumers that the magazines' contents have very high historical relevance and are up-to-date<sup>39</sup> and moreover have a high communicative factor: readers deal with topics which allows them – that is the promise – to be in the know if culture and history come up in conversations.

Admittedly, 'popularisation of knowledge' cannot be reduced to 'popularisation of science'. However, given the narrow line between 'history' that is 'popularised' by magazines and 'history' presented by academic literature, there are indications that the presentation of history in the magazines is not to be understood as 'popularised' science but rather as a genre in its own right.<sup>40</sup> Although the producers provide knowledge that in the end once has been scientifically generated, unlike in 'popular science magazines' the concepts of 'scientific progress' and information about 'new' knowledge do not play a constitutive role. It is rather about 'established' knowledge, selected according to (popular) relevance criteria and made accessible in an easily understandable and catchy way.

It is understandable that buyers and readers of history magazines expect correct and verified information, however, the essence is neglected: the constructed character of historiography, the fact that historical questions and answers are bound to place and time, the extent of perspectives that are given in the historical process as well as in the often controversial or plural interpretation processes. The always controversial demarcations between 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' as well as between 'fact' and 'fiction' are largely ignored: Following the argument of publishers and editors of history magazines, the 'objectivist illusion' has to be maintained for the sake of commercial success. In their eyes only those accounts of history seem to be commercially successful which offer room for imagination and are opulently illustrated and above all offer a so-called 'good story'.<sup>41</sup>

---

39 In relation to the prevailing culture of history in the society.

40 Manfred Nissen's analysis of historical non-fiction books had a similar result. Cf. Martin Nissen: *Historische Sachbücher – historische Fachbücher. Der Fall Werner Maser*. In: Korte/Paetschek (note 8), p. 103–119, URL: <http://bit.ly/1s2fV0Z> (1.8.2014).

41 Of course, thereby the history presented by popular magazines diverges from the political and social challenges of the present, in which increasing tensions

Even though the relation to historical science might be very little and especially selective, which makes a classification of history magazines as ‘popularisation of science’ questionable, the rhetorical reference to science plays a decisive role in the magazines’ self-representation, for example in the editorials. The editors assure their readers that the articles are strictly science-driven and the presented historical knowledge is thus authentic and reliable. According to them, the only difference to science is that the magazines depict the past world in a more ‘graphic’ and ‘vivid’ way.<sup>42</sup> That means that readers are promised immersive experiences: an immersion into the depicted world which is enabled by a focus on historical imagination, i.e. the aesthetic function of historical culture, and thereby creating that emotional proximity to a per se distant past that the customers seem to expect.

Interestingly, these editorials rarely use the term ‘entertainment’ which shows that the stereotypical contrasting juxtaposition of ‘light entertainment’ and ‘serious engagement’ is still intact in this area. History, it seems, cannot per se be seen as ‘light entertainment’; due to its significance it is a ‘serious’ topic – although the makers of the magazines leave nothing undone to present history as ‘light entertainment’.

#### **4. Some characteristics of the magazines’ construction of history**

The main question of this chapter is about the concept of history which the magazines prefer. Firstly, it has to be noted that the magazines can show huge quality differences in presenting history.<sup>43</sup> The EHISTO project’s research revealed that for instance in covering the ‘outbreak

---

between nations, cultures and religions are frequently underpinned by historical arguments.

42 This suggests that the transformation of history conducted by popular history magazines is merely a change in the mode of representation. But actually all issues and topics that cannot be represented in this mode are dropped.

43 Cf. the report about the EHISTO project 3.1.2 in this volume: For example the article of Felipe Fernández-Armesto (‘Columbus – hero or villain?’). In: *HISTORY TODAY* 42 (1992), p. 4–9) deals on a very ambitious level and on the basis of historical sources with the change of the image of Columbus during the course of the centuries.

of World War I', differences between the national perspectives on the topic were far less strong than differences in quality standards within the countries. Some magazines for instance dramatise the 'July Crisis' in a sensation-seeking way by depicting the process of the assassination in Sarajevo to the declarations of war as an inevitable catastrophe that turned a relatively minor regional cause into a global disaster. In contrast, other magazines reconstruct the 'July Crisis' in a historically correct way as an open process which took a specific direction as a result of specific conditions and decisions.<sup>44</sup> In other cases, as for example the presentation of Columbus,<sup>45</sup> not only the quality standards differ within the countries, but also the national perspectives on this topic.

The following comments on the concept of history in popular history magazines are not comprehensive but broadly outline the most important trends that characterise the presentation of history in this genre, although there are exceptions in the wide landscape of history magazines in Europe.

To begin with, it should be noted again that historical magazines are illustrated magazines. As stated before, the illustrations play a constitutive role for the magazines' concepts of history. It seems that an article that cannot be illustrated would not be in the magazine. However, the question is if not the magazines could illustrate any topic, as they cultivate a style in which illustrations play a rather independent role even though they supposedly support the presentation of a historical topic. Unlike in academic articles, there are rarely references between illustration and text.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, these illustrations are often not historically adequate as they do not originate from the period the corresponding article covers. Articles about Antiquity, Middle Ages or Early Modern Times are often illustrated with 19<sup>th</sup> century history painting as these depict charismatic persons and dramatic events in an 'illusionist' and emotionalising way that gives the viewer the impression of directly glancing on bygone times through a 'window to the past'.

Magazines also partially use stills taken out of current historical films; those are usually magazines of a low aspiration level – exempt from articles dealing with the historic-cultural reception of a certain topic in the public

---

44 Cf. the report about the EHISTO project 3.1.1 in this volume.

45 Cf. the report about the EHISTO project 3.1.2 in this volume.

46 Cf. Niederhauser (note 32).

history. In most cases the links between images and the historical event are not explained and those illustrations that depict iconic sources of the period of the historical event are not analysed as historical documents. The use of photographs is often careless and inaccurate,<sup>47</sup> and the magazines with low aspiration levels can also be recognised by the fact that they do not refrain from the manipulation of photographs and apparently rely on the readers' inability to discover these interventions. Finally, the captions do not always inform the non-expert reader even about the year of production of the image on display.

The illustrations have a function in their own right. On the one hand, they serve to enhance the vividness of the topic, to emphasise the aspect of entertainment, and to convey a specific historical atmosphere or 'aura'. On the other hand, the iconic presentations of the past suggest or even create the illusion of authenticity of the representation of the past and help to reinforce the illusion of an 'objectively fixed' knowledge of the past. We all know that pictures suggest a rapid, concrete and (seemingly) easily understandable access to historical subjects and in reality are – due to the characteristics of the iconic code – not only more ambiguous than texts, have more requirements for understanding and finally have inherent medium-specific limitations: they can only depict the visible. For the construction of meanings they have to refer to semantic conventions which the interpreter – as mentioned by Panofsky<sup>48</sup> – must in turn deduce mainly from (historical) written documents.

The magazines' use of illustrations tends to ignore these challenges and follows the general line of a representation of history which claims a 'historicistic' and 'positivist' approach to a very 'colourful' historical world and by text and illustration. It supports the magazines' 'disambiguation of historical knowledge': limits of knowledge, different degrees of certainty or research controversies are usually not discussed.<sup>49</sup>

---

47 Cf. the report about the EHISTO project 3.1.1 in this volume about the photograph allegedly presenting Gavrilo Princip at his arrest.

48 Cf. Erwin Panofsky: *Studies in iconology. Humanistic themes in the art of the Renaissance*. New York 1972.

49 However, there is a controversial approach in anti-academic affects of a certain group of sensationalist magazines: they promise to reveal 'truths' which the official historical sciences supposedly conceal or keep secret.

One reason for this might be the fact that a ‘good story’ – a vibrant, vivid, exciting, atmospheric and emotionally appealing ‘narrative’ – is mostly at the centre of the magazine articles’ representation of history and is considered as essential for sales success by all responsible journalists we had interviewed. These narratives are in general of the ‘traditional’ type: the events are depicted mainly chronologically and basically concentrating on ‘persons’, ‘acts’ and ‘events’. Moreover, in most cases there is an omniscient narrator who has the sole power of interpretation<sup>50</sup> and – by nature – does not refer to historical sources and secondary literature and in general does not reflect upon the own point of view. In this respect, it seems quite adequate that the articles come without the apparatus which provides evidence of what the statements are based on.

A central requirement for the narrativisation is, as we know, personalisation. One could bluntly say that what most of the magazines declare as ‘history’ is almost exclusively the depiction of intentionally acting individuals, whereby – again borrowing from historicism – the ‘great men that made history’ set the scene.<sup>51</sup> ‘Personalisation’ in history and political didactics means the biased attribution of responsibility for historical and political changes or the power to effect such changes to individuals, especially to outstanding personalities.

In the narratives of the magazine articles, personalisation is the central factor for the stimulation of the recipient’s emotional proximity to the temporally distant and factually alien world of the past without which an immersive quality of experience would become quite impossible. Furthermore, the positive or negative identification of the recipient with the key figures is only possible if the depicted motivations and intentions – e.g.

---

50 Cf. also Dagmar Stegmüller: Popularisierungsstrategien in Friedrich Christoph Schillers ‘Weltgeschichte für das deutsche Volk’. In: Kretschmann (note 31), p. 197–210.

51 Interestingly, a study about video games dealing with Early Modern Times concludes that the depiction of Early Modern Times is closer to the 19<sup>th</sup> century historicism than to the academic understanding of this period in the present. Cf. Florian Kerschbaumer/Tobias Winnerling: Postmoderne Visionen des Vor-Modernen. Des 19. Jahrhunderts geisterhaftes Echo. In: Idem (eds.): Frühe Neuzeit im Videospiel. Geschichtswissenschaftliche Perspektiven. Bielefeld 2014, p. 11–26.



ambition, courage, envy, lust for power – stay within the familiar frame of the alleged ‘human continuities’. The depicted ‘stories’ offer a very colourful spectrum regarding space and time, peoples and persons, atmosphere and costume, scenery and anecdote. But regarding the depicted action schemes they tend to have a fairly narrow and familiar set of scenarios and plots, patterns and stereotypes, which means that beyond the historical surface a profound historicisation of the events is largely missing.<sup>52</sup>

The central significance of personalisation for narrative representations of history implies that the boundaries between fact and fiction blur. This is especially true for scenic, often dialogical representations of the action that achieves a level of detail which goes far beyond the information the sources can provide. This is even more true – by nature – for the figure-centred indirect speech and the ‘inner monologue’ which is per se not accessible for historians. These ahistorical elements might remain unnoticed if the recipient is intrigued by the action and appeased with various strategies suggesting authenticity<sup>53</sup> – especially by mentioning historical names, accurate details or experts. Finally, strong personalisation allows the reduction of the historical context and the shortening of the cause analysis and, moreover, usually leads to the overemphasis of psychological assumptions about the character, of intentions and motives of the acting persons. At the same time, it conveys a feeling to the reader of being very close to the events.

Lastly, those topics shall be considered which history magazines preferably cover and which the EHISTO project has analysed in great detail based on the title pages.<sup>54</sup> As the cover features of the magazines are often connected to topics known from school or public historical culture, it is not surprising that a great part of the topics cover, as stated above, national history and the familiar cultural area, whereby the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are overrepresented. Especially in Danish and

---

52 John Caughie’s study of the British television drama came in respect to the role of historical dramas to a quite similar result. Cf. John Caughie: *Television drama. Realism, modernism, and British culture*. Oxford et al. 2000. p. 209–215. Cf. the contribution of Stephan Jaeger in this volume.

53 Cf. e.g. Pirker (note 8).

54 Regarding the results of the analysis of German magazines cf. Claudius Springkart’s article in this publication. This article demonstrates the analytical process very well.

Swedish magazines, World War II plays a dominant role and Hitler and the Third Reich are top sellers everywhere. The number of articles about older topics depends on whether certain periods played a crucial role in a country's national history, e.g. as 'golden age' or 'zenith' or the source of national identity. Besides, there are topics which are attractive across nations without necessarily being connected to national history, e.g. the culture of Ancient Egypt, the Vikings, the spread of Islam or the crusades.<sup>55</sup>

In terms of space, in all European magazines the European space of history is clearly dominant and within that the space of the respective national history. It is surprising how little multicultural societies in Europe, the growing mobility of people as well as globalisation are mirrored in the magazine covers.

In terms of topics, historical figures are dominant, often followed by issues related to war; here the importance of the First and Second World War for the magazines becomes apparent. The topics connected to 'myths and mysteries' are not solely but predominantly covered by magazines that prefer a more sensationalist style. These magazines can play a rather strong or marginal role in each country, but they exist everywhere.

The quality of the magazine articles can well be in line with reliable accounts of history, however, there is a tendency towards the spectacular and to depict 'celebrities', whether it is famous persons or well-known events or locations. Invasively approaching the private and advertising with 'sex and crime' or the unveiling of 'mysteries' or thrilling 'secrets', in contrast, characterise only magazines of questionable quality that are not too far from 'tabloids'.

Furthermore, it can be noted that the magazines have a tendency to traditional gender concepts even though this can be more or less strong in different countries and within the countries again in different magazines. Regarding Swedish history magazines, for instance, Monika Vinterek points out that the scheme of 'mighty men and naked women' on cover illustrations is especially striking.<sup>56</sup>

---

55 Cf. note 23 (the list of the 'European History Crossroads' (EHC) in European history magazines).

56 Cf. Monika Vinterek's article in this publication.

Regarding the trend of the cover topics to illustrious (and predominantly male) personalities and acts of war, it becomes clear which price is to pay for the ‘good story’ and an ‘entertaining narrative’ as driving force of commercially successful popular history magazines: All those topics which offer little vividness and have a rather analytical than a narrative character – such as the analysis of basic structures and changes in economy and society, culture and politics – get little or no attention. Consequently, non-expert readers can hardly widen their historical consciousness when reading those magazines: unpopular realms of history or unusual topics are left out as well as recent topics of social and political relevance that are not consensual.

Finally, the historicist approach to ‘popularise’ history, which the magazines – and not only those – follow by strongly emphasising personalisation does not meet the requirements of a democratic concept of history that would make the readers understand that history is not merely made ‘bottom-down’, but always by society itself as well. The history that magazines sell to their readers is not their own history as a part of society; instead, they are made spectators who observe an exciting stage performance.

## **5. Popular history magazines from the point of view of history didactics**

Concerning the evaluation of history magazines from the point of view of history didactics or even from a general view it is a common opinion that it is per se positive that history is prevalent in the public: after all, dealing with history is better than not dealing with it. This opinion is understandable, however, there are limits to that. Implicit views on the world and society conveyed by representations of history in mass media affect the historical consciousness and a general understanding of the present in democratic, pluralistic and multi-cultural societies. This is even more true if non-expert recipients feel well informed by the richness of details of the historical world depicted in the magazines’ articles and do not critically reflect upon the underlying structures of selection, representation and interpretation – whether they are not capable to do this or because it would disturb the immersive experience.

One of our main research result is that the accounts of history portrayed by the magazines – under the pressure of commercial success – often

seriously differs from the postulates about basic standards of history education. These include basal characteristics of a science-oriented representation, which are often ignored by the magazines. Important statements are not supported by references to sources or to other investigations. In many cases the articles do not clearly point out what science does not or not yet know or what cannot be proved.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, basic quality standards of history didactics as expressed for instance by the Council of Europe (CoE) – in the face of numerous political, social and cultural tensions in Europe and the world – are often neglected. Here the top priority is the development of a critical understanding of presentations and interpretations history and of the public use made of it. Along with this CoE-concept of history teaching, pupils for example should understand that the past can be approached and represented from different perspectives, that historical events and personalities can be interpreted in different ways, that ideas and views about the past are time-bound and subject to change, that our knowledge and understanding of the past is often limited and that claims about the past may have differing degrees of certainty or validity.<sup>58</sup> The principles of German history didactics follow the same trend and stress the orientation on historical sources, present relevance, and especially multiperspectivity, controversy and the plurality of presenting and dealing with history.<sup>59</sup>

Even if there is a huge difference in quality between the history magazines, it needs to be noted that the concepts presented are often far off this critical understanding of the construction and societal use of history. At the same time they are commercially successful and influential.

But in the end, this can only mean that from the view of history didactics, it is not about disparaging these magazines and ban them from the history classroom; the focus shall rather be on the imparting of those critical competences with which those ‘edutaining’ or ‘histotaining’ popular

---

57 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1s2gqYM> (1.8.2014).

58 Cf. for example URL: <http://bit.ly/1pGlQD6> (1.8.2014): Recommendation Rec(2001)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe.

59 Cf. the EHISTO-Module Handbook of the Initial Teacher Training, Worksheet 8, p. 40 f. In: URL: <http://bit.ly/ZnS2o9> (1.8.2014).

magazines can be carefully examined and critically evaluated. They can be important learning objects which connect school classes with historical culture outside of school.

Tools created within the EHISTO project give diverse suggestions for the analysis of the magazines.<sup>60</sup> For instance, questions regarding historical sources, the origin and function of illustrations, the roles of person-alisation and of ‘story-telling’, the relation between factual and fictional elements, the question of multi-perspectivity and controversy, the quality of historical explanations and interpretations and especially principles of a democratic understanding of history shall be taken into account. Furthermore, a comparison with texts from schoolbooks can be very revealing concerning the characteristics of each of these two text types: Apropos, it then would turn out that the texts of the schoolbooks – even if they are often not as easily accessible for the students – do not fulfil important standards. Therefore, media skills regarding history didactics can lead to a critical understanding even of school books which many pupils trust blindly.

Not least, national magazines dealing with ‘European History Cross-roads’ have a great potential for the trans-national comparison and the promotion of a European dimension in history classes: Hardly any other popular medium could fulfil this function better.<sup>61</sup> Materials from five countries are at the moment provided on the EHISTO website.<sup>62</sup>

## 6. Prospects for further research

Our primarily comparative and media critical studies from the point of view of history didactics on the international historico-cultural phenomenon of popular history magazines have dealt with selected aspects of the matter which so far have been widely neglected by research. Even if the questions and approaches were necessarily limited the results obtained

---

60 Cf. the EHISTO-Analysis Framework, an instrument for the analysis of popular history magazines URL: <http://bit.ly/ZnSx1t> (1.8.2014). Cf. also the EHISTO-Module ‘Handbook of the Initial Teacher Training’, URL: <http://bit.ly/ZnS2o9> (1.8.2014).

61 The magazine articles can be used in diverse and very flexible ways.

62 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1vFI2Rg> (1.8.2014).

indeed show that this is an expandable and illuminating field of research for history didactics and the (comparative) research on national, international, and trans-national history cultures.

In conclusion, some research desiderates which are urgent in the view of history didactics shall be briefly named here. Accordingly, there is a need for further transnational comparative studies on the topics favoured by popular history magazines. Thereby, not only further European states, but also non-European regions should be included.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, a (comparative) analysis of the national 'profiles' of the popular history magazines that takes into consideration the full range of a national market is important.<sup>64</sup> This aspect has found little attention in our approach which focused on topics dealt with on a European-wide level (EHC – 'European History Crossroads', cf. section 2). However, also conducting research on further EHCs and moreover on internationally important 'History Crossroads' is an important step to further explore trans-national history cultures in the area of commercial advertising in print media. Additionally, also the international integration of the market and especially the gender aspect in the concepts of the history presented should be increasingly addressed.

The largest desideratum is the empirical research on reception.<sup>65</sup> We hardly know anything about, for instance, the motives (e.g. socioeconomic status, gender, nationality, age, values) of the various buyer and reader groups, about the use of the magazines (e.g. typical reading situations, the storage period, the average amount of readers of one issue), the question if, and if so, which short, middle or long term growth of knowledge the readers gain, and if or how the 'positivistic' and 'historicist' history approach presented in the magazines effects the historical consciousness of the readers. A further question that remains open for instance is which media critical competences do the readers have and if they apply them while reading – or if they fully indulge in the immersive experience of entertainment.

---

63 Cf. some studies in note 3.

64 Thereby, also the historically 'disguised' 'military magazines' should be included as well as the market for 'very-special-interest magazines'.

65 Cf., however, the contribution by Miriam Hannig in this volume.

Moreover, also empirical studies on the use of the magazines as learning objects in history education are especially important to history didactics. The EHISTO project particularly aimed at the development of trans-national, intercultural, and media critical competences in history education. If and to what extent these may be achieved with the developed EHISTO-online modules<sup>66</sup> and also with other materials requires thorough examinations so as to create a basis for optimising the didactic concept.

The amount of possible questions appears vast. The analyses could – to name but a few examples – deal with the function of the ‘popular’ historical magazine knowledge in the public culture of history or with the text-image-ratio in the magazines, with the specific strategies of authentication or also with the narrative structures – not least in comparison with films or other media. In conclusion, merely two further topics shall be mentioned here, because they are of special interest to history didactics. Firstly, schoolbook texts and magazine articles should be compared more systematically in regard to the question whether the journalistic style of the historical presentation contains educationally useful suggestions for the optimisation of schoolbook texts in history books. It is commonly known that for most pupils these are neither stimulating nor easily comprehensible, whereas currently new and promising possibilities for a range of differentiated educational offers are presented to the pupils in the context of e-books with hypertext structures<sup>67</sup>. Secondly, the chances for optimising the magazines as part of the public culture of history in a democratic, pluralistic, and multi-cultural society should be examined. In cooperation with media studies and possibly also specialised journalists potential scopes for the optimisation of the presentation of history should be explored in line with the standards of history didactics which do not jeopardize the demand and the commercial success of the magazines – but perhaps even increase it.

It remains to be hoped that this volume, together with the EHISTO project, contributes to strengthening the history educational discussion of

---

66 Cf. the EHISTO-learning objects in: URL: <http://bit.ly/1vFI2Rg> (1.8.2014).

67 Cf. e.g. the Council of Europe’s history-e-book ‘Shared Histories. For a Europe without dividing lines’ (2014): URL: <http://bit.ly/Q5uD5Y> (1.8.2014).

popular history magazines in the initial and further training of history teachers and therewith also to guiding the research interest of history didactics to this significant object of research which can be integrated in various interdisciplinary ways.





Fabio Crivellari

## Bygone news. The journalistic formatting of history<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

A look at the bookshelves in German bookstores on the occasion of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Frederick the Great's birth in 2013 revealed a colourful range of Fredericiana in the expected mixture of kitsch, art and competence. Many of the texts offered for sale are not written by historians who work in academia, but by journalists and publicists: Jens Bisky, Tillmann Bendikowski, Frank Pergande or Ulrich Offenberg – to name but a few – all have in common a predominantly journalistic approach to their objects despite their different subject provenience. Of course, this is not a very original observation<sup>2</sup> and this finding does not reveal anything about the quality of the texts. Rather, the observation leads to a two-part question: how may the fact that journalism decisively shapes the public image of history be systematically described, and what are the consequences for the history presented? This article approaches the question by trying to relate the form and the content of (historical) journalistic presentations to each other and at the same time to establish a reference-frame to the culture of history in the German Federal Republic.

- 
- 1 The aspects of history presentation sketched out here are further illustrated in Fabio Crivellari: *Die Medialität des Krieges. Der Erste Weltkrieg in der populären Erinnerungskultur nach 1945 am Beispiel populärer Geschichtsmagazine*. Konstanz 2014, URL: <http://bit.ly/1vzDbSU> (1.8.2014).
  - 2 The area of history journalism has only recently been examined closer. However, only little can be learned with regard to journalistic narratives in particular, cf. Klaus Arnold/Walter Hömberg/Susanne Kinnebrock (eds.): *Geschichtsjournalismus. Zwischen Information und Inszenierung*. Berlin 2010; cf. the review by Siegfried Quandt in: *Fachjournalist* 2 (2012), p. 40 ff; Andrea Kolpatzik: *Der Spion, der aus dem Internet kam. Geschichtsjournalismus in den neuen Medien*. In: Susanne Popp et al. (eds.): *Zeitgeschichte – Medien – Historische Bildung*. Göttingen 2010, p. 321–338.

‘Our concept is to narrate history by journalistic means. You engage with historical sources and try to tell the respective story as vividly and sensuously as possible, with a very strong narrative undertow.’<sup>3</sup>

With these words Michael Schaper, managing editor of *GEO EPOCHE*, got to the heart of the expectations which the magazine set itself in 1999, the year it was launched.

The topic of ‘engaging with the sources’ was less about heuristic or epistemological interests, but rather – in accordance with the occasion of the speech – about marketing. Indeed, Schaper in his statement combined terms which are relevant both in the practical field of journalism as well as in that of (history) didactics. It is known that sensuousness, presentability and narrativity as well as the controversies about their operationalization are fundamental to Mediacy Studies.<sup>4</sup> And ultimately, also journalism claims to function as a mediating entity that understands how to edit complex matters in a clear and easily comprehensible way for the audience.<sup>5</sup> However, these similarities do not hide the fact that substantial differences exist between both fields. In contrast to journalism – and also to scientific journalism – History Didactics operates with educational intentions, already defined or yet to be defined, which must be accountable for their historical content and historiographic competence. These intentions are based on methodically conducted analyses of educational levels and the learning competences of a nameable target group. History magazines are not interested in the cognitive development of their customers or at least they do not make a corresponding effort to enhance this. Their decisive communicative feedback lies in successful circulation and occasional reader research. The latter, in turn, does not serve to generate or optimise educational aims, but successful coverage. This is due to the fact that journalism as a communication system ensures its existence via

---

3 Ralf Koch: *Reisen ins Vergangene*. In: *Journalist* 7 (1999), p. 34–37, p. 34.

4 *Ibid.*

5 The necessity for news media to reduce complexity is already emphasised by Walter Lippman, who in 1922 discussed the connection between journalism and society and introduced the idea of the news value: Walter Lippmann: *Die öffentliche Meinung*. Bochum 1990 (1922), p. 9.

economic models and has to align its communicative logic accordingly.<sup>6</sup> In accordance with this thesis, in the following text history magazines are not considered as part of the communication system of 'academics' with its differentiation of true/false, but as part of the system of 'journalism', and accordingly as communicators in that economically and journalistically defined market<sup>7</sup> which is called the public. A decisive reason for this approach can be found in the magazines themselves: the effort that history magazines make to process the true/false differentiation is clearly less apparent than the effort which they make to emphasise their relevance for the target-audience. The polarity 'relevant/irrelevant' is seen here as the key differentiation of the journalistic communication system and serves as the starting point for the following considerations.<sup>8</sup> This initial thesis emphasises Niklas Luhmann's hypothesis that the differentiation of the system of mass media is between information/non-information, without

- 
- 6 Klaus-Dieter Altmeppen: *Journalismus und Medien als Organisationen. Leistungen, Strukturen und Management*. Wiesbaden 2006, p. 156 ff, 253 ff.
  - 7 The fundamental distinction of media according to Niklas Luhmann serve communication systems to differentiate themselves. In this way, the system of science is defined as obliged to 'truth', the system of politics creates itself through the term of 'power' etc. cf. Niklas Luhmann: *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt/Main 1992, p. 271–361, p. 273.
  - 8 According to Malik/Weischenberg the adequate differentiation would be 'topicality', which is primarily and immediately evident, since topicality is the business of journalism, cf. Maja Malik/Siegfried Weischenberg: *Journalismus und Wissenschaft. Gemeinsame Sinnhorizonte trotz funktionaler Autonomie?* In: *Soziale Systeme* 11 (2005), issue 1, p. 151–165, p. 153. With regard to the news values illustrated further below, 'topicality' appears in the current specialist literature only as one of several possible selection principles. In contrast, Altmeppen's observation is more plausible, because it can be operationalised in a general way: 'Die Leistung des Journalismus besteht darin, Themen, die zielgruppenspezifisch als informativ und relevant gelten, zu selektieren und zu bearbeiten [...]' ('Journalism's achievement consists in selecting and processing topics, which are informative and relevant to specific target groups [...]'). cf. Altmeppen (note 6), p. 201. The further differentiation between journalism and media made by Altmeppen for this argumentation shall not be further used here. Moreover, it shall be addressed here that the wording 'are [...] relevant' remains rather unclear with regard to the act of selection and neglects its reality creating moment in favour of a medial representational logic.

negating it.<sup>9</sup> Journalism is that part of the system of mass media which publicly supplies information and furnishes it with hierarchies in order to control its acceptance and in this way to actually enable public information.<sup>10</sup> 'The success of mass media throughout society is based on enforcing the acceptance of topics irrespective of taking a positive or negative stand on information, suggestions of meaning, or discernable evaluations. Often, the interest in the topic is initiated by the fact that both stands are possible.'<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, relevance is a claim to hierarchy over potential information, which is established by journalistic actors. The formation of an audience and therewith the increased chance of successful communication, depends on its acceptance,<sup>12</sup> which again enables a public to be sustained. From a journalistic perspective, creating a public is success. This success is tabulated in categories such as reach, quota or circulation and sustainability, i.e. in spatial and temporal expansion or at least measured in the spatial and temporal stability of communication. Measuring the success is existential for the system, because it determines whether an offer is repeated, a magazine continued or soon taken off the market. Not only does this apply

---

9 Niklas Luhmann: *Die Realität der Massenmedien*. 2<sup>nd</sup> exp. ed. Opladen 1996, p. 36.

10 According to this understanding, information is only provided if communication is successful, i.e. if an offer is accepted and further processed (not merely repeated). Only in this way an informational difference is created in the communication system: 'The difference that makes the difference in some later effect' – as the evolutionary theorist Gregory Bateson puts it, on whom also Luhmann's ideas are based. Bateson demonstrates his definition in various texts. For instance, in Gregory Bateson: *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Chicago/London 2000, p. 381. On the presumably first mention of the definition in the year 1964 cf. *ibid.*, p. 271 f.

11 Cf. Luhmann (note 9), p. 29.

12 The idea of successful communication also follows the system-theoretical consideration that successful, i.e. stable communication is far less likely than its failure. One hardly errs if one refers back to every-day experiences instead of theoretical considerations. For a systematic illustration cf. Luhmann (note 9), p. 191 ff, 217 ff, as well as Niklas Luhmann: *Was ist Kommunikation?* In: *Idem: Aufsätze und Reden*. Stuttgart 2001, p. 94–110, p. 97 (originally published in: *Soziologische Aufklärung 6: Die Soziologie und der Mensch*. Opladen 1995, p. 113–124).

to the traditional news market on the radio, television and multi-media, but also to journalistic print media and subsequently also to magazines whose special field of history magazines is to be discussed here.

The leading questions therefore are: what are the consequences which the market orientation of history magazines entails for the history presented? How can this be examined systematically? And what kind of history is created as a consequence? The underlying question here is also how on this basis can the systematically-discrete communication systems of journalism and historiography be related to each other anew? Inferentially, it may be more fruitful (and go beyond the scope of the examination of magazines) to look for the interfaces not on a semantic, but on a narrative level, which again is not only to be observed in the text,<sup>13</sup> but rather brings into play the multi-modality of magazines. First, however, the medial location of history magazines will once more be illustrated against this background.

## 2. The economy of history

It sounds as though efforts and goals are mutually secured if historico-journalistic endeavours merge with institutions committed to education. Since 2007 GEO EPOCHE has been working with the private online portal 'Zentrale für Unterrichtsmedien im Internet e.V.' (ZUM, Centre for teaching tools online), a service which has existed since 1995 and which enjoys great popularity among teachers. The underlying consideration is, at least on the part of the publisher, a pure marketing strategy, because such cooperation in the scope of a multi-channel strategy strengthens

---

13 History magazines have so far been only little examined in research, this project is the first larger context in which they are discussed. Cf. the brief outline by Christian Spieß: *Zwischen Wissenschaft und Unterhaltungsanspruch. Aktuelle Geschichtsmagazine im Vergleich*. In: Sabine Horn/Michael Sauer (eds.): *Geschichte und Öffentlichkeit. Orte – Medien – Institutionen*. Göttingen 2009, p. 169–176; in more detail Christian Spieß: *Zwischen populär und wissenschaftlich: Geschichtsvermittlung in aktuellen Geschichtsmagazinen*. In: Swen Steinberg/Stefan Meißner/Daniel Trepsdorf (eds.): *Vergessenes Erinnern. Medien von Erinnerungskultur und kollektivem Gedächtnis*. Berlin 2009, p. 133–151. Spieß ascertains there that texts are the decisive medium in the mediacy of history in magazines.

general awareness of the services<sup>14</sup> by using different channels to address target groups and disseminators. By working together with partners from the educational sector, mass media are able to label their products not only as entertainment, but also as correct and historically informative in terms of content. In this way, the recurring criticism of historical and educational experts who claim that entertaining history presentations are irrelevant and inadequate can be met. In return, the educational institutions (and their representatives) profit from the professionalization of the coverage revenues of established media authorities.

The German TV channel ZDF follows the same strategy in the production of the TV series 'Die Deutschen' ('The Germans', 2008), for which the Association of German History teachers was won as a cooperating partner, under whose auspices additional teaching material was created and provided on the programme's website.<sup>15</sup> The same association with its chairman also supports the jury of the 'History Award' competition, which is organised by the German spin-off of the American Pay-TV channel 'History Channel' together with the magazine FOCUS SCHULE ONLINE and P.M. HISTORY, and which awards prizes to school projects, amongst other things.<sup>16</sup>

As already mentioned, this effectively places understanding between historians, educationalists and journalists primarily at the service of the marketing strategies of history marketers. For such activities, marketing reserves the term 'Corporate Social Responsibility' in readiness. This describes a form of practice that strategically establishes and communicates the socially relevant behaviour of a company.<sup>17</sup>

---

14 'Multi-channelling' in general means the coordinated, parallel use of various working and communication channels for the dissemination of a product, a service or information. Cf. in general Bernd B. Wirtz: *Multi-Channel-Marketing. Grundlagen – Instrumente – Prozesse*. Wiesbaden 2008, p. 11 ff, p. 238 ff.

15 URL: <http://bit.ly/1tjrDja> (1.8.2014).

16 URL: <http://www.history-award.de/> (1.8.2014).

17 On this still very young research area of Communication Studies cf. Juliana Raupp/Stefan Jarolimek/Friederike Schultz (eds.): *Handbuch CSR. Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Grundlagen, disziplinäre Zugänge und methodische Herausforderungen*. Wiesbaden 2011.

Accordingly, history magazines do not operate randomly, but systematically in the market for magazines. The authentication process of system-spanning cooperation by subject experts does not serve to generate knowledge, but to generate sales.<sup>18</sup>

The products are headed for the magazine market as so-called 'special interest magazines'. These include magazines which stand out against 'general interest magazines' in that they are dedicated to a special topic (in this case 'history'). They differ from 'very special interest magazines' in that they do not further specialise thematically or methodically, as would be the case if they concentrated on the Middle Ages, military history or living history, for instance.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to scientific journals, history magazines operate under the name of audience magazines, which means that their target group does not primarily consume the magazines for professional or functional purposes. They are not an expert audience.<sup>20</sup> This does not exclude the possibility that pupils and students, lecturers and teachers use the content and pictorial material of the magazines for professional purposes. Their thematic design and narrative structure, however, follows neither the system of school curricula nor the principles of specialised manuals, but those of magazines, utilising elements such as picture-text-cover, editorials, disclaimer, letters from readers, picture galleries, features, and many more.

The activities within a huge audience-market most evidently reveal themselves in the fact that the high-circulation publications in Germany appear as so-called 'line extensions' of famous journalistic family brands, such as P.M. HISTORY, SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE, GEO EPOCHE or ZEIT GESCHICHTE.<sup>21</sup> Such 'line extensions' serve to diversify established

---

18 From my own knowledge it can certainly be said that this does not only apply to the supporting volunteers in the educational sector. Generally, it can be asked whether mercantile thinking dominates or serves the educational sector.

19 The boundaries are fluent here, on the problems of classification cf. Heinz Pürer/Johannes Raabe: *Presse in Deutschland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Konstanz 2007, p. 421.

20 This is the reason why educational specialist magazines such as PRAXIS GESCHICHTE or GESCHICHTE LERNEN are not object of this examination, even though they sometimes exhibit similarities to history magazines in layout and design.

21 History magazines differ from each other in their periodicity, run and reach as well as in their content and design concept, from which additional features can be deduced, which will be further addressed in what follows. An important



brands, not only in terms of sales revenues, but also in terms of advertising effects for the entire product family. Although BILD does not (yet) have a history magazine – despite many another extension – the explanation given by the publishing director Christian Nienhaus in an interview with ‘kress report’ in 2003 may nonetheless apply to the entire industry:

‘Our strategic activities of line extension follow the primary aim of supporting, enhancing and expanding the brand “BILD”. [...] The decisive criterion for all these activities is the recognition of the features of our brand “BILD”.’<sup>22</sup>

So as to enhance this, the layout, design and content of these publications are strongly aligned with the corporate design of the family brands. Accordingly, GEO EPOCHE, for instance, presents a basic black frame on the cover page as part of a varying colour code running through the product family. The logo clearly signals affiliation anyway. Similarly, this can also be observed with ZEIT GESCHICHTE, SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY.<sup>23</sup> Cross-media services such as supplementary books, DVDs and CD-ROMs also comply with this strategy, as do other sales formats, for instance the multiple use of contributions in the different branches of a family brand which function as journalistic cross-financing. In this way, additional income is generated, expenses are avoided and the multi-channel effect mentioned already is especially used.

Since these are marketing strategies, they pursue specific communicative aims alongside economic aims. These lie in claiming ‘history’ as a field of competence for publishers and magazines, because the brand values originating from the family brand are a result of their journalistic tradition. Yet

---

characteristic is whether the magazines are designed in a mono or multi-thematic way, i.e. whether they deal exclusively with one topic – apart from possibly differing service sections – or not.

22 Edigna Menhard/Tilo Treede: *Die Zeitschrift. Von der Idee bis zur Vermarktung*. Konstanz 2004, p. 231.

23 DAMALS and G/GESCHICHTE as independent brands are the exception of the large German-language magazines. In a diachronic comparison, they also exhibit the strongest formal variety when it comes to layout, format, cover design as well as the structure of the content. This is due not least to the fact that they also are the oldest still existing German-language magazines, and by now belong to larger publishing houses, but are not bound to a family brand.

none of the best-selling line extensions originate from a publisher whose reputation is based on the publication of historical topics, let alone their research.

This claim to competences in historical presentation shall be further examined in what follows, since it fills the gap between journalistic form and historiographic content. So it becomes possible to relate form and content to each other in the way in which historiography, journalism and the public all do.

In showing their presentational competences, history magazines emphasise their relevance as interpretational and complementary media for a public interested in historical communication. In this way, they present as always a part of the news which they allow to happen; or more precisely, as a part of the communication which they stage. However, they achieve this not only by merely formulating claims, but also by their journalistic performance. The latter is understood here as the formatting of history as narratives of and about events; in other words the establishing of (historical) events in a narrative way. In constituting historical events, historiographic and journalistic procedures meet – or may be differentiated by this.

### 3. History and event

It has long been accepted that in historiography ‘event and presentation converge in history’<sup>24</sup>, but it is only rarely accounted for in practice.<sup>25</sup> With the ‘linguistic turn’ this insight turned into a permanent irritation for cultural studies, which, before and after the turn, took into account the narrative foundations of historiography in various contexts of discussion.<sup>26</sup>

---

24 Reinhart Koselleck: *Historia Magistra Vitae*. Über die Auflösung des Topos im Horizont neuzeitlich bewegter Geschichte. In: Idem: *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Frankfurt/Main 2000, p. 38–66, p. 48. However, Koselleck does not take a position with his statement, but reports the historical context of the term.

25 Hans-Jürgen Goertz: *Unsichere Geschichte. Zur Theorie historischer Referentialität*. Stuttgart 2001, p. 8.

26 This implied, on the one side, the conferences on ‘Poetik und Hermeneutik’ and, on the other hand, the study group ‘Theorie der Geschichte’ partially consisting of the same personnel. There is hardly any secondary literature on either constellation. A research project in Konstanz is working on the academic

In his consideration of the relation between event and structure in historiography Reinhart Koselleck in 1979 by drawing upon the discussion of the research group 'Poetik und Hermeneutik' defines a minimum amount of 'before and after' as the difference which is constitutive for events,<sup>27</sup> i.e. the duty upon historiographical ways of presentation to adhere to the 'obligation of chronological order'.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the before and the after constitute the range of meaning of a narrative. This means the necessity to make the 'sequence of the historical time the guidelines for a presentation' in order to be able to narrate event correlations in the irreversibility of their sequences.<sup>29</sup> In his argumentation Koselleck especially focused on the narrative operations which keep history narratable, and systematically ascertained that "events" can only be told; "structures" can only be described'.<sup>30</sup>

---

history of 'Poetic und Hermeneutik' as a contribution to German contemporary history. Thomas Rathmann: Ereignisse. Konstrukte. Geschichten. In: Idem (ed.): Ereignis. Konzeptionen eines Begriffs in Geschichte, Kunst und Literatur. Köln 2003, p. 1–19, p. 7 ff. On the contemporary discussion cf. Richard Rorty (ed.): The linguistic turn. Essays in philosophical method. Chicago et al. 1967. On the contextualisation in the history of academics cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick: Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften. 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. Reinbeck bei Hamburg 2009, p. 33 ff. Jörn Rüsen has developed four ideal types of historical narration, which primarily differ in their argumentative use of history, time and memory cultures and less with regard to their narrative structure. The latter, in turn, was described by Jakob Krameritsch with regard to hyper-textual narrative patterns, whereby it does not continue Rüsen's typology, but follows a completely different classification. Jörn Rüsen: Historical narration. Foundation. Types. Reason. In: History and Theory 26 (1987), issue 4, supplement 26: The representation of historical events, p. 87–97; Idem: Die vier Typen historischen Erzählens. In: Reinhart Koselleck/Heinrich Lutz/Jörn Rüsen (eds.): Formen der Geschichtsschreibung. München 1982, p. 514–605; Jakob Krameritsch: Die fünf Typen historischen Erzählens – im Zeitalter digitaler Medien. In: Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History, Online-Ausgabe, 6 (2009), issue 3, URL: <http://bit.ly/1uDmFn2> (1.8.2014), printed in Popp et al. (note 2), p. 261–281.

27 Reinhart Koselleck: Darstellung, Ereignis und Struktur. In: Idem: Vergangene Zukunft, p. 144–157, p. 145.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., p. 146.

30 Ibid., p. 144.

In this way, history and journalism share the narrative interest in the event. This becomes observable when journalism and historiography are institutionally interwoven with each other, in history magazines, for example, or in historical documentary films. In this respect, the historical constitution of an event shall first be clarified here, and the journalistic subsequently.

If, in accordance with Koselleck, it is the historiographic access that constitutes the event then the question about the pre-medial reality arises and at the same time is settled in favour of a constructivist solution. This decision is made against the backdrop that in media theory three concepts of the relation between reality and media reality have been established, in this case of event and news.<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, the first concept understands the event as a pre-medial date, which is chosen by mass media and which raises the question about the selection criteria of the media, which will be addressed later. A further concept also assumes an ontologically accessible pre-medial reality, but includes the construction capacity of the media in establishing the news about the event. The third conception negates the idea of a medial representation of the (historical) reality and assumes that media generate events. This basically eliminates the discrepancy between real culture and media culture. In this way, Siegfried J. Schmid drawing on Luhmann's dictum of the conditionality of our knowledge about the world by mass media states:<sup>32</sup>

'The dualism of life reality and media reality, which is nowadays still invoked (and, of course, ontologically interpreted) by many, is rendered obsolete. The construction of every single person's reality as a function of their media socialisation as well as their media environment, and aligned by the meaning-giving programmes of media culture, has long since become a part of media reality, and not only its other.'<sup>33</sup> The current text

---

31 The following illustrations are based on the overview by Cornelia Epping-Jäger: *Zur Rhetorizität von Ereignissen*. In: Irmela Schneider/Christina Bartz (eds.): *Formationen der Mediennutzung I. Medienereignisse*. Bielefeld 2007, p. 25–33, p. 29 ff, whose illustration is explicitly in line with Rathmann (event).

32 Cf. Luhmann (note 9), p. 9.

33 Siegfried J. Schmidt: *Aufmerksamkeit. Die Währung der Medien*. In: Aleida Assmann/Jan Assmann (eds.): *Aufmerksamkeiten. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation VII*. München 2001, p. 183–196, p. 190.

prefers this definition for ontological rather than epistemological reasons, since historical sources do not depict anything other than the remains of medial configurations, i.e. past accesses to the environment or the world and debates with the environment of the world. Therefore, history is also at best the reconstruction of past media configurations based on their traces.

Thus, thanks especially to their constitutive connection to the media cultures, which generate them, events can be read not in terms of a reality which is foreign to them, but with regard to the equally real structures of this medial order. In so doing, media theory would catch up with what Koselleck meant with his statement that structures were only tangible 'in the medium of events in which structures are articulated, which shine through them', because they are narrative structures.<sup>34</sup>

Events are processes of condensed communication. Not only does this apply to their respective (historical) time frame, but also to historiographic recourses. In order to be able to keep history narratable and observable as event, selection processes, which operate along specific differences, are necessary on three essential levels. These are (1) the level of the choice of object, then (2) the level of chronological demarcation, and lastly (3) the level of form of presentation. Every narrative form has to face these choices, as does the journalistic and thus the historico-journalistic form.

These decisions bear consequences in a twofold way. On the one hand they define the object, the boundaries and the course of the respective historical presentation of events. Accordingly, they function to create narrative coherence. On the other hand, by decisionistically establishing historiographic markings outside the text, they influence the field of historical culture, which obtains its structure and form from the data and topics and its logic from the presentations. From a historico-cultural perspective, those developments are considered to be historical events whose eventful nature is affirmed by follow-up communication. Naturally, this works irrespective of historical evaluations or consensus in questions of detail.

---

34 Cf. Koselleck (note 27), p. 149.

In particular, the decisions are initially a selection of content (1), which has to define the object of the historical examination and the historiographic presentation based on this. This decision operates – in a similar way to the journalistic difference – according to the difference relating to what is relevant and irrelevant. As early as 1979 Karlheinz Stierle complained about this: ‘The criterion of the relevance of history, however, which determines the reason for its selection and articulation, arises from the difference of beginning and ending of the narration and the implicit conceptual opposition, which becomes a fact in this difference.’<sup>35</sup>

However, this definition appears too tautological for a productive adaptation regarding the mass media history culture, because it only argues on a textually-immanent basis and thereby determines the relevance of the story as a result of its creation. If, however, relevance is understood as attributed by an author and consequently by an audience that carries out (or refuses) the prize-giving selection of the author in the mass media market, and balances the measurable integrability of this decision in its range and sustainability, then also reference systems outside the text are brought to account in form of discourses, which integrate historiography in society and indicate selection according to relevance as social action. History that operates in a public space shaped by mass media is necessarily oriented according to established attention-strategies and cannot autonomously align its decisions of relevance, but uses the established criteria of the media market. In communication studies, these criteria are known as ‘news values’, and it has to be asked how far news values can be observed as a matrix for the object selection and therewith the constitution of popular history.

Of course, historical objects do not already constitute historical messages. In order to keep historical events or event constellations narratable they must, according to Koselleck, be able to provide a before and after. The chronological selection (2) applies here, which separates events ‘from the infinity of the happenings’ by means of the difference between before and after and which frames the object. In Koselleck’s reading

---

35 Karlheinz Stierle: *Erfahrung und narrative Form. Bemerkungen zu ihrem Zusammenhang in Fiktion und Historiographie*. In: Jürgen Kocka/Thomas Nipperdey (eds.): *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte*. München 1979, p. 85–118, p. 93.

of the historiographic procedure the before and after are given values whose distance constitutes the event in a narrative way. It is, however, surprising that he does not discuss in how far the historiographic constitution of an event does not find this difference a priori, but at the same time creates it, even though his own thesis (namely that the structures become observable only through the presentation of the events) could be splendidly illustrated in this way. It would then become apparent that the chronology, as it were, as 'super-structure' of history is only created with and through events, both collective or individual events, which become speak-able and therewith reflect-able only through chronological milestones (such as public holidays or birthdays) as a third element between before and after. Seen in this way, before and after are turned into the difference of two conditions or as Lorenz Engell emphasises: 'due to the events "before" and "after" become distinguishable – and not vice versa.'<sup>36</sup> Thereby, the notion of event has moved closer to the functional understanding of 'information' described by Gregory Bateson, who, as is well-known, defined this as 'difference that makes a difference in some later event'.<sup>37</sup> The initial and thereby decisive difference is that which does not regard information as condition, but as the result of the difference of two conditions. The advantage of this point of view lies in avoiding container metaphors and the implied media logic in favour of understanding communication as the selection of meaning.

The fact that, additionally, an event-related time structure must be established in the transformation of happenings into history, which in turn can be described as selective act or at least as a construction, was pointed

---

36 Lorenz Engell: *Das Amedium. Grundbegriffe des Fernsehens in Auflösung: Ereignis und Erwartung*. In: *mon-tage/av* 5 (1996), issue 1, p. 129–153, p. 138.

37 Bateson illustrates his definition in various texts. Here in Gregory Bateson: *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Chicago/London 2000, p. 381. On the presumably first mention of the definition in the year 1964 cf. *ibid.*, p. 271 f. The doubling of 'difference' is important here. Accordingly, one can speak of information if it is understood as a message which evokes a difference in the communication system that produces follow-up communication after the excitation by this information, and which puts the system status into the autopoietic dynamics required for its stability. This observation can be understood as the idea of 'news' transferred into system-theoretical terms.

out again by Stierle: 'The events are dissolved from their incalculable synchronic and diachronic interconnection with the entire global context and put into a new diachronic context, which has a beginning and an ending and in which every event receives its place with regard to beginning and ending.'<sup>38</sup>

Beginning and ending are therefore not simply the result of pragmatic decisions, which ensure the communicability of an object by fitting the time narrated into a manageable narration time. Not only do beginning and ending have far-reaching consequences for the internal structure of the narration, but, as part of the collective history, constitute markers which structure the history as unique collective, at least temporarily. All beginnings and endings which are fed into the historico-cultural discourse by an accepted form of presentation, determine dates and facts as points of reference for the historical culture of knowledge and thereby also receive their relevance for the public.

A further and similarly fundamental selection operation serves (3) the inner order of the areas delimited by the chronological selection. So the question concerns how the area separated from the infinity of what happens is organised in a narrative way. These questions were also addressed by the working group 'Poetik und Hermeneutik' and hence the relation between fiction and factuality was fathomed anew. One can say 'anew', because already in the early years of historical hermeneutics these relations were reflected, albeit with a different methodology. This was also ascertained by Hans Robert Jauß who in response to Johann Gustav Droysen sketched out the three fictions of historical narration: 'The first of these fictions is the "illusion of the complete sequence".' Although every historian knew that our historical knowledge always remains incomplete the predominating form of narration inspires 'the illusion and wants to create it as if we had a complete sequence, a cohesive line of events, motives and purposes of the historical things before us'.<sup>39</sup>

---

38 Cf. Stierle (note 35), p. 92.

39 Hans Robert Jauß: *Der Gebrauch der Fiktion in Formen der Anschauung und Darstellung der Geschichte*. In: Koselleck et al. (eds.): *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung*. München 1982, p. 415–451, p. 422. Droysen has further illustrated this amongst others in the context of his own ideas of critical source review.



‘The second fiction of traditional narrative historiography is the “illusion of the first beginning and the definite ending”’, Jauß further says.<sup>40</sup> This statement, which is indirectly tied to Koselleck’s definition of event, expands the difference of the before-and-after functioning as chronological order to a chronological frame, which now also opens and closes the narration.

‘The third fiction of traditional narrative historiography is the “illusion of an objective picture of the past”’.<sup>41</sup> This statement mobilises a whole range of decisions relevant in narrative practice in the constitution of historiographic texts. It is thereby, on the one side, about a narrative attitude which establishes its creditability on the linguistic level by understandable syntagmatics and paradigmatics and which in the film ‘*mutatis mutandis*’ corresponds to the construction principle of ‘continuity’ (which does not mean that it cannot be the aim of other literary-aesthetic procedures to subvert exactly these traditional formulas). Moreover, it is about those relevant authorisation procedures which formally account for the text being scientific and which discursively certify the story. They suggest the correctness of the things presented with regard to an extra-textual referent and thereby again and again confirm the idea of history as representation of the past and not as its creation. They are manifested in the aspects of the narration, which Gerard Genette describes as ‘modus’, for instance with regard to the perspective of the presentation, or also as ‘voice’, with regard to the mediating entity.<sup>42</sup>

A clear difference can be seen here between scientific and journalistic texts: no matter how the specific narrative procedures are laid out they all communicate the characteristics of authorship in factual texts: the sovereignty over the object, i.e. the competence of presentation. Procedures to question the authorial position or even meta-reflexive discussions about authorial access to the topic are unknown to journalistic texts. Even in those cases in which commentary and research is the object and their subjectivity

---

Thereby, he has recognised the constructivist approach of historiography ‘*avant la lettre*’: Johann Gustav Droysen: *Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*. München/Berlin 1943, p. 61 ff.

40 Ibid., p. 423.

41 Ibid., p. 424.

42 Gérard Genette: *Die Erzählung*. 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. München 2010, p. 103 ff. and 137 ff. (cf. the contribution by Stephan Jaeger in this volume).

turns into a part of the rhetoric, they do not question the circumstances as narrative construction. Having doubts about one's own doings undermines the journalistic claim to relevance. The corresponding self-criticism is institutionally outsourced or always affects the others in the coverage, which is indicated, for instance, by the fact that nowadays hardly any newspaper can do without a media section. This mass media self-observation does not function as self-irritation, but self-assurance. Scientific texts, in contrast, shall ideally bear this in mind and reflect on it.<sup>43</sup>

Authentication strategies not only exist within the main text body, but also without, in para-texts such as in annotations, the cover and the blurb or the preface and epilogue in specialist literature. This concept has already to some extent been a fruitful one for media analyses.<sup>44</sup> This may become relevant for history magazines if, for instance, cover design, list of contents, and editorials are analysed. If, for example, *GEO EPOCHE* reassures with a disclaimer in the publication details that while they try to guarantee the authenticity of the pictures by thorough research they cannot always ensure this, then this reassurance is such a para-text, which directly effects the presentation because it immunises a far-reaching use of pictures against alleged criticism even if the main problem of the popular use of pictures is thereby left unaddressed (more on this below). First and foremost, however, this is a claim to competence which signalsises the source-critical use of picture material. The criteria and the methods of examination, however, remain in the dark. Once again the difference from scientific procedures of event construction is indicated, because journalism must not keep the methods of object selection and the form of presentation transparent. It establishes its claim to relevance in a different way – by means of news values.

The important aspect of these statements on the logic of construction of narrations is that events are generally organised and made available

---

43 It is not a counter-argument that a certain distance exists between the practice and ideal-typical claims. Rather, this difference is a necessary prerequisite for both – research and professional criticism.

44 Fundamental, Gérard Genette: *Paratexte. Das Buch vom Beiwerk des Buches*. Frankfurt/Main 1989, on notes *ibid*, p. 304 ff. On the productive expansion of the para-text concept to other media formats cf. Georg Stanitzek: *Texte, Paratexte in Medien: Einleitung*. In: Klaus Kreimeier/Georg Stanitzek (eds.): *Paratexte in Literatur, Film, Fernsehen*. Berlin 2004, p. 3–19, p. 15 ff.

via narrative decisions in the form of describable selection processes. This applies to historical as well as to current events. And it also applies to the present realisation of historical events. The constitution of events not only affects the events, which now as such are in the world, but also their narrative creators who thereby performatively express their event competence and who can apply their topical claim to relevance to themselves as narrative institution – provided the narration is accepted.

#### 4. Journalism and event

Present events made available in mass media according to certain presentational conventions are called news. The aim of this news is to reach maximum coverage, which promises the news-providing institution economic stability. In times of growing competition between manifold medial narrations and, at the same time, high numbers of communicative channels and nonetheless unchanging time-resources on part of the recipients – there are still only 24 hours in a day – the communicative connection is realised by gaining attention. Attention is precarious. It corresponds with everyday experience to say that attention is as quickly lost as aroused. Hardly any valid predictions can be made about the length of attention. The now often mentioned image loop of 11 September 2011 which wanted to perpetuate in a loop the attention-attracting key stimulus, namely the passenger planes crashing into the Twin Towers and the subsequent collapsing towers of the World Trade Centre, showed how even professional media institutions feel their way towards attracting the attention of their customers and at the same time how precarious is that communication established by attention-grabbing, even though talk about attention as resource may plausibly conceal this uncertainty.<sup>45</sup> Siegfried J. Schmidt ascertained at the turn of the millennium in light of an ‘attention boom’ that ‘prognoses about what will arouse attention in whom and to what degree of certainty, strength and duration are so very difficult to make, because the arousal of attention depends on the respective context of perception, the biography

---

45 As background information cf. Alois Hahn: *Aufmerksamkeit*. In: Assmann/Assmann (note 33), p. 25–56.

of the actors, their system of values and preferences, their moods and expectations, and many more factors.<sup>46</sup>

This observation is hardly astounding, but illustrates that the intuitive idea of a stimulus-response-logic according to which certain information and news of a specific kind triggers attention is ambiguous, because it suggests the calculability of communication. This, however, contradicts the assumption mentioned above that successful communication is rather unlikely. Indeed, attention is initially an act of focused perception preceding communication: 'It precedes every observation and is therefore always the foundation of communication', as Florian Rötzer has precisely described the phenomenon.<sup>47</sup> Establishing this contact professionally is based on experience, which is condensed in the estimation of the news value of information. Accordingly, news value can also be described as the assumption based on the historical observation about the probability that public communication is integrable. The perception, i.e. the willingness to engage, is not only directed towards that which can be differentiated from other communicative offers, because this is always the case, but that which follows the paradox to expected to disappoint the expectations of the audience by, on the one hand, being extremely 'unusual', but in so doing, on the other hand, to fail to the logic of news ('man bites dog').<sup>48</sup> The success of such a fragile communicative situation, which due to the mass media structuring of the situation cannot be stabilised ad hoc by readjusting the form of the message, can only then be secured to some degree if the communicative offers and the expectations aroused are synchronised as reliably as possible through experience. This happens via the concept of news values,<sup>49</sup> which claim medial

---

46 Cf. Schmidt (note 33), p. 187.

47 Florian Rötzer: *Aufmerksamkeit als Medium der Öffentlichkeit*. In: Rudolf Maresch/Niels Werber (eds.): *Kommunikation – Medien – Macht*. Frankfurt/Main 1999, p. 35–58, p. 41.

48 Cf. Engell (note 36), p. 139.

49 A brief, but introductory overview of the tradition of news value research is offered by Irmela Schneider: *Nachrichtenfaktoren und Nachrichtenwert*. In: Idem (ed.): *Medienereignisse*. Bielefeld 2007, p. 13–24. Cf. also Christiane Eilders: *Nachrichtenfaktoren und Rezeption. Eine empirische Analyse zur Auswahl und Verarbeitung politischer Information*. Opladen 1997.

offers to be relevant and therewith also indirectly make statements about expected attention potentials.

Experts in this matter know that news never arrives by itself (since this would not comply with the way media function; media simply do not transport an extra-medial reality). News is created: 'Media do not start if something happens; to be able to survive they are tasked with permanently supply – 24 hours a day like CNN, the pioneer of television and the forerunner of web news. They no longer have a date of publication, but want to be permanently in flux.'<sup>50</sup>

This framework, which is linguistically indebted to the transportation metaphor, reverses however its direction: media do not react to a somehow disposed external world, but to their audience and the concomitant market of attention. This market of attention determines the view of the media, the form of their processing the world. If events and news are scarce and the 'news situation' is bad according to the viewpoint of the editors, then there is only one possibility: 'News has to be created.'<sup>51</sup> This scarcely surprising statement also verifies, from the point of view of actors, that news is the event of actively processing content into news value for the public.

In this context, the public is to be thought of as a *modus* of communicative range and not as an ideal developing sphere for a rational collective will.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, the public is to be regarded as structured by the mass media, whereby economic and political dimensions of the media interlock. To use an economic metaphor, the public is a market place of medially formatted information, which is controlled by pluri-medial media constellations whose selling arguments are manifested in news values. This, in turn, does not mean anything other than that there are proven production

---

50 Cf. Rötzer (note 47), p. 56.

51 According to a not further mentioned 'editor-in-chief' of the sports information service (sid). In: Marc Niemeyer/Jürgen Wilke: *Produktion von Sport-Nachrichten. Eine Untersuchung des Sport-Informations-Dienstes (sid) sowie ein Vergleich mit dem Angebot der Deutschen Presse-Agentur*. In: Jürgen Wilke (ed.): *Nachrichtenproduktion im Mediensystem*. Köln et al. 1998, p. 9–53, p. 29.

52 As background information on the various theoretical approaches cf. Michael Beetz: *Die Rationalität der Öffentlichkeit*. Konstanz 2005, p. 13–39, who addresses the history of terms and theories, but excludes the aspect of media economics.

logics of journalism, which are followed by successful or success-oriented media offers.<sup>53</sup> Their socially integrative and therewith political function was expressed by Ina Bertrand when she ascertained that journalism was ‘the sense-making practice of modernity and therefore “the most important textual system in the world”’.<sup>54</sup> The socially integrative function of journalism has been often discussed in Communication Studies. Thereby, however, either primarily semantic or functional operations were dealt with, yet narratives in the sense of structural narration patterns were not.<sup>55</sup>

The prerogative of interpretation of journalistic text systems addressed here does not refer to individual content, but to the relevant success of a certain media format and its relevance for the respective target group. Accordingly, ‘sense-making’ shall not be understood here in the sense of the content of a programme or an article, but in the sense of the propositional logic of a specific communicative practice in media formats, which are to be described as journalistic.

One of the early news value theories dates back to Walter Lippman who in 1922 developed the connection between reality construction, media and the public with manifold examples from the First World War and thereby introduced the term news value<sup>56</sup> as well as observing the operational logic of the press: ‘In the moment it reaches its reader, every newspaper is the end result of a whole range of selection processes that determine which articles are to be published where, with how much space and with which emphasis.’<sup>57</sup>

---

53 Saskia Handro has indicated this for specific productions of television memory culture, but has not consistently expanded the concept to the area of the public. Saskia Handro: „Erinnern Sie sich ...“. Zum Verhältnis von Zeitgeschichte und Fernsehen. In: Popp et al. (note 2), p. 201–218, p. 210.

54 Ina Bertrand: Borders and boundaries. History and television in a postmodern world. In: Tony Barta (ed.): Screening the past. Film and the representation of history. Westport 1998, p. 189–204, p. 190. Cf. also Christiane Eilders: Nachrichtenfaktoren und Rezeption. Eine empirische Analyse zur Auswahl und Verarbeitung politischer Information. Opladen 1997, p. 19 ff.

55 Cf. the overview and discussion by Thomas Hanitzsch: Integration oder Koorientierung? Risiken funktionaler Differenzierung und Journalismustheorie. In: Martin Löffelholz (ed.): Theorien des Journalismus. Ein diskursives Handbuch. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wiesbaden 2004, p. 217–232.

56 Cf. Lippmann (note 5), p. 237.

57 Ibid., p. 241.

In this way, Lippman formulated the famous communication formula established roughly 24 years later by Harold D. Lasswell 'Who Says What In Which Channel to Whom With What Effect'.<sup>58</sup> The starting point of his considerations in the chapter 'External world and internal ideas' was the thesis that the 'real' world overstrains the individual, which is why reductionist procedures are required to enclose this complexity in a communicative and sensuous way.<sup>59</sup> This, in turn, was a basic formula for the news media and modern journalism to claim mediacy: reducing complexity in the service of a mass media audience. Reduction does not only mean reducing the abundance of information, but also reducing its interpretation and its explanatory categorisation.

Thinking about news values has long been characterised by the idea that the selection process in the mass media chooses certain contents from an eventful real world, which thereby creates the reality of the audiences. The list presented in 1965 by Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe<sup>60</sup>, written in technical metaphors, can also be read along these lines. It pointed out eight parameters for the probability that information ('signal') would be perceived. This includes the adaptivity of the event for media formats and their publication frequency, the exceptional nature and extent of the event, the clarity and comprehensibility of the description, the proximity and relevance of the event, its anticipatedness in the sense of integrability with established ideas, its surprise, the awarding of the attribution 'news' and lastly the difference from other news. Thereby, it is striking that the parameters were not systematised with a view to whether they are ascribed to the events or whether they are to be ascribed to the reports about the events; meaning, whether they are modes of journalistic presentation or of journalistic perception. The concomitant issue becomes clear in a list such

---

58 Harold Dwight Lasswell: The structure and function of communication in society. In: Lyman Bryson (ed.): The communication of ideas. New York 1948, p. 37–51, p. 37.

59 Cf. Lippmann (note 5), p. 9 ff, p. 27.

60 Johan Galtung/Mari Holmboe Ruge: The structure of foreign news. The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crisis in four Norwegian newspapers. In: *Journal of Peace Research* 2 (1965), issue 1, p. 64–91; Idem: Structuring and selecting news. In: Stanley Cohen (ed.): The manufacture of news. Social problems, deviance and the mass media. London 1973, p. 62–72.

as Siegfried Weischenberg compiled in 1988 with pragmatic intentions.<sup>61</sup> According to this, the following aspects are decisive for the news value of an event:

- ‘Clarity’ – the event is manageable and understandable; references to other events can be easily established.
- ‘Significance’, ‘proximity’ – this means both the cultural as well as the geographic proximity to the recipient, i.e. being affected by the event.
- ‘Surprise’, ‘curiosity’ – this implies the genuine ‘news’ effect of the event, its rarity, its exceptional character, as well as the argument of topicality.
- ‘Negativism’, ‘conflict’ – the bon mot ‘only bad news is good news’ is closely related to the aspects of conflict and tension.
- ‘Personification’, ‘prominence’ – in this way, events can be attributed to individual figures, stories, and names, which makes it easier to memorise the content.

Further news values are combined under the term ‘human-interest elements’,<sup>62</sup> which add a ‘human touch’ to the stories. This includes a range of elements such as humour, romance, love, empathy, tragedy, drama, but also animals or science. Yet again, the missing distinction between presentation modes and content categories refers to a basic problem in the theories of news values. In view of this, Weischenberg addressed news in its specific double nature: ‘news in general is a message of journalistic value; news as a journalistic presentation form strives to convey information in the most brief, objective way possible.’<sup>63</sup>

It is important here to point out the two communicative procedures of news production: the selection, and the presentation, of messages. Both are selection procedures in the sense of the narrative theorems mentioned above. These selection processes are aligned along two parameters: relevance and

---

61 Siegfried Weischenberg: *Nachrichtenschreiben. Journalistische Praxis zum Studium und Selbststudium*. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. Opladen 1990 (1988), p. 18 ff. Cf. also Lemma news in: Günter Bentele/Hans-Bernd Brosius/Otfried Jarren (eds.): *Lexikon Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft*. Wiesbaden 2006, p. 273 ff; and in: Franco P. Rota/Wolfgang Fuchs (eds.): *Lexikon Public Relations*. München 2007, p. 293 (with reference to Galtung/Ruge).

62 Cf. Weischenberg (note 61), p. 21 f.

63 Ibid., p. 17.



interests of the audience.<sup>64</sup> With this differentiation Weischenberg inexplicitly referred to the question of whether news values originate from the events themselves or are attributed to them. Even if this question may be relevant for the self-conception of journalism in empirical studies, epistemologically it follows the already manifold addressed correspondence or representation model of communication, which consists of sender, mediator, and receiver, and plays off a pre-medial reality against a medial reality. The possibility that it is the news values which actually generate events – not happenings – is not discussed in this context.<sup>65</sup>

The audience in this operation is not to be considered as established personnel that remain full of eager expectation until information is provided. Indeed, audience and the field of the public are permanently constituted anew in the pluri-medial information society according to programme sequences and thematic trends. For the duration of the mutual attention span an anonymous community is then established in the light of a specific programme offer, whose sustainability depends on whether the news values of the topic are accepted on a broad basis.

One of the connection points suitable to stabilise the openness of the public, which is established by the mass media, is the 'nation' as politico-cultural fiction, as symbolic representation of the idea of community by means of which the anonymity of the collective is suggestively and performatively charged with the semantics of the nation. This is especially achieved in an impressive way in the contexts of war and sports, because in this case not only does 'conflict' carry out its job as one of the most powerful news values, but 'nation' as collective actor combines audience and stage and establishes a community of self-observers. This was already insinuated in 1952 by the general director of the Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunk (NWDR), Werner Pleister, when on the occasion of the implementation of a daily programme he announced in the spirit of understanding among nations:

---

64 Ibid., p. 18.

65 Cf. also Schneider (note 49), p. 14 f, p. 21. Historians who epistemologically reflect their use of sources are aware of the constructivist character of their approach to the historical even ('questions create sources') and can emphasise the reciprocity of the research question and the constitution as well as the adjustment of historical events.

‘Through this magic bowl the distance turns into proximity and the space between us and foreign countries will be nullified. The fate of others will in the future be right in our homes and in this way television can render the furthest our nearest.’<sup>66</sup>

The social function of media lies in generating collectives through active participation in the media formats. Such participation here means the pre-selection, the reception and the follow-up communication. In 1999 Stefan Münker described the phenomenon in a visually very powerful way as the ‘bonfire of television’, so that his metaphor is still often used in mass media as indication for the own relevance.<sup>67</sup> Alongside the seemingly tribal ‘bonfire’, the phrase ‘television nation’ is also often heard, in which media audience, political idea, and constitutional nature converge, as invoked by the NWDR general director Aldolf Grimme in 1953 at the opening of the radio, phono and TV exhibition in Düsseldorf: ‘By the way, antique politics! The participation of the entire population enabled by politics back then returns now in the ages of masses in the form of television: the agora, the assembly of the entire people, direct democracy. Of course, it is still only the representatives of the population who actively participate in the sessions of the ‘Bundestag’. But what they decide and how can from now on be experienced by everyone, and in this way we reclaim a slice of direct democracy. Parliament still remains the expression of the representative system, but no longer exclusively. A new version emerges which includes the population: the people are there, too.’<sup>68</sup>

The historically informed rhetoric of progress informing this speech follows the conditions of its occasion in that the connection under public law

---

66 Monika Elsner/Thomas Müller/Peter M. Spangenberg: Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Dispositivs Fernsehen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland der fünfziger Jahre. In: Knut Hickethier (ed.): *Institution, Technik und Programm. Rahmenaspekte der Programmgeschichte des Fernsehens*. München 1993, p. 31–66, p. 42.

67 Stefan Münker: *Epilog zum Fernsehen*. In: Stefan Münker/Alexander Rösler (eds.): *Televisionen*. Frankfurt/Main 1999, p. 220–236, p. 221. Especially the fact that Münker had therewith intended to diagnose the pre-dual television of the old German Federal Republic as extinct proves how much the own claim of relevance belongs to the basics of mass media.

68 Cf. Elsner/Müller/Spangenberg (note 66), p. 43.

between media-technology, public and politics is depicted as a democratic promise. Pointing out the character of the media as one which creates its own public is not merely a promotional routine: it describes the unavoidable constituting logic of the mass media society. Modern media therefore perpetuate what in Early Modern times was described as ‘socialisation among attendees’.<sup>69</sup> This structural integration of mass media is enhanced at the level of content by news values.

Accordingly, it becomes apparent once more that engaging with the content and structure of the mass media takes one deep into the foundations of society.

If events are only communicatively created then those who are decisively involved in their creation are part of the events. The same degree of relevance can be ascribed to them as is ascribed to the events. This can be most clearly seen in connection with so-called ‘media events’, which, in contrast to ‘normal’ events, make the event recede behind the role of their communicators. This is not the place to depict in detail how, in phenomena such as the moon landing, the Vietnam War, the fall of the Berlin wall or 09/11 2001, the mass media were centrally occupied with addressing and performing themselves in the creation of content.<sup>70</sup> Thereby, they were not merely reporters of an eventful moment, but constructors of the temporal expansion of moments, who were to ensure the sustainability of the news value of the event by means of preliminary reports, comments, interpretations and final reports. The communicative operation thereby consisted of establishing their own relevance as the event medium, as complementary medium of the public in the editing and processing of event constellations, which were mostly experienced as dramatic. In this way, the question of what the core of the event might actually have been, and whether it really

---

69 Rudolf Schlögl: Kommunikation und Vergesellschaftung unter Anwesenden. Formen des Sozialen und ihre Transformation in der Frühen Neuzeit. In: GG 34 (2008), p. 155–224, p. 162 ff. and p. 171 ff.

70 On the moon landing and the ‘fall of the wall’ as well as on the basic conceptual operations regarding media events cf. the instructive articles by Engell (note 36); Idem: Das Mondprogramm. Wie das Fernsehen das größte Ereignis aller Zeiten erzeugte und wieder auflöste, um zu seiner Geschichte zu finden. In: Friedrich Lenger/Ansgar Nünning (eds.): Medienereignisse der Moderne. Darmstadt 2008, p. 150–171.

existed, often arises. What is the core event of the moon landing? The moment the shuttle touches the moon, Neil Armstrong's first or second step or the entire event horizon in the context of the Cold War, which in this case always has to be told? The more mass media frames adhere to the event the more unclear – so it seems – is the event itself. One example is the First World War, which in a frightening way became exemplary for the horror of the industrial killing and the meaningless slaughter of masses. It could, therefore, be expected that the mass media reproduced exactly this. However, the reverse is true. No previous war was so intensively accompanied and influenced by media. Millions of soldiers brought their own cameras to the trenches, wrote poems and letters from the front. The latter were, due to a lack of professionalism in those days, further used in local newspapers, so that writing offices emerged, whose personnel, functioning as 'ghost-writers' for the soldiers, drew up letters for publication. The core event, the battle, thereby remained strangely unclear. There are manifold descriptions, but these are subject to the boundaries of the participants' perspective and do not allow an ideally authentic perspective. Overcoming this restriction, and even more influential for the image of the war, was the fictional staging of traditional battle images reaching from artistic accounts to feature and propaganda films. One example of the problem of mediacy was given by the famous Australian war photographer Frank Hurley, who described the fragmentation in the perception of war in the following way: 'I have tried over and over again to capture events in one single negative, but the results were hopeless. Everything happens on a large scale [...] absent-minded people, the atmosphere filled with dense smoke and haze – grenades that just do not explode when they should. All parts of a picture were there, if they could only be comprised and brought together. The battle is in full swing [...]. But when I develop my panels they are a disappointment. They are nothing but the picture of some figures storming out of the trenches and a background of haze. There is nothing that could resemble the battle less.'<sup>71</sup>

---

71 Bernd Hüppauf: *Kriegsfotografie an der Schwelle zum Neuen Sehen. Über einen Aspekt der kollektiven Erinnerung des Ersten Weltkriegs*. In: Bedrich Loewenstein (ed.): *Geschichte und Psychologie. Annäherungsversuche*. Pfaffenweiler 1992, p. 205–232, p. 217.

Hurley it was who also approached this problem by bringing together images from various pictures into a single montage, so as to illustrate his impressions of the war,<sup>72</sup> which resembled the tradition of the panoramic overview and circumspection more than the limitations of seeing and showing under frontline conditions.

It is important to recognise that in the so-called media events the mass media exert their power of disposition considerably over the events, and their ability to frame, enclose and dominate events, and that they thereby create the events in their specific form.

This applied to historical media events. But it also applies to historiographic media events, whether they are documentary films, feature films or history magazines. The selection operations explained above become visible through the medial events, because they are inscribed in the products. This results in the question of whether the source material which remains from historical media events bears this selection logic and passes it on to those modern presentations which do not critically engage with their sources. This shall be examined more closely in an example once its basics have been sketched out.

## 5. Forms of presentation in history magazines

The journalistic requirement to cover a story, to enclose and to frame it, is accordingly always to be listed in the presentation without making it explicit. For this purpose, history magazines use established forms of journalistic presentation, whereby it is neither news nor reports which are paramount, but features, essays and documentaries. Interviews are also presented, but form the exception. The boundaries – and the definitions – between the forms of presentation are very fluid.<sup>73</sup> In this way, editorials may also exhibit documentary elements and features may combine them with stylistic devices familiar from reports such as, for

---

72 Anton Holzer: “Going Over The Top”. Neue Perspektiven aus dem Schützengraben. In: Gerhard Paul (ed.): *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder*. Vol. 1: 1900 bis 1949. Göttingen 2009, p. 196–203.

73 Margreth Lünenborg (ed.): *Journalismus als kultureller Prozess. Zur Bedeutung des Journalismus in der Mediengesellschaft*. Ein Entwurf. Wiesbaden 2005, p. 117 ff.

instance, the narrative present tense. In general, all German-language magazines are dominated by a specific combination of documentaries (collection of facts), features (illustration),<sup>74</sup> reports (immediacy) as well as essayistic elements (assessment and evaluation),<sup>75</sup> which journalism terms ‘magazine story’ or ‘news magazine story’ and which is traditionally very distinctive in the German magazine SPIEGEL.<sup>76</sup>

This hybridisation of journalistic forms at the level of propositional logic corresponds at the narrative level with the formation of independent narratological patterns, which cannot be grasped in that the traditional features of fictional narrations are merely negated (cf. also Stephan Jaeger’s contribution in this volume).<sup>77</sup> These features include the separation of author and narrator, the possibility of internal focalisation (narration from the point of view of one or several characters) or the identity of author and character, the personal perspective, the emphatic or even moral narrative attitude. Because even if academic discourse may require that historiography should make do with less narrativity or narrative variance, it nevertheless becomes apparent in the short overview by Stephan Jaeger on historiographic narration that historiography is always laid out as fictional narration in that it tells about possible (past) worlds.<sup>78</sup>

History magazines as illustrated texts place huge emphasis on the pictures of the stories presented. Their selection, and especially their licensing, make up the majority of their production costs. Usually, the pictures are not obtained from their own or public archives, but from picture agencies such as Ullstein, Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte (AKG), picture archive Preußischer Kulturbesitz (BPK), Corbis, Bridgemand, Süd-deutsche Zeitung Photo (former SV Bilderdienst) and others. The choice

---

74 Claudia Mast et al.: Feature. In: Idem (ed.): ABC des Journalismus. Ein Handbuch. Konstanz 2004, p. 288 ff.

75 Michael Haller (ed.): Die Reportage. Konstanz 2008, p. 71 ff.

76 Heinz Pürer (ed.): Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft. Ein Handbuch. Konstanz 2003, p. 191; Claudia Mast et al.: Magazinstory. In: Idem (note 74), p. 318 ff.

77 Fundamental, Stephan Jaeger: Erzähltheorie und Geschichtswissenschaft. In: Vera Nünning/Ansgar Nünning (eds.): Erzähltheorie transgenerisch, intermediär, interdisziplinär. Trier 2002, p. 237–263, p. 248.

78 Ibid.

is made by the editors or individual picture editors. The text editors occasionally have a right to suggest pictures, but in most cases, they do not participate in the selection of the images. This again means that it is less the expertise of the historians than the chosen editors which generates the picture galleries; editors who for several years now have been able to conduct research independently in the agencies' online catalogues. Previously, picture editors had to rely on suggestions made by agency employees, who created picture lists according to general keywords and then presented or sent them as an assortment. However, picture editors still have to depend on the correctness of the proof of origin and the description of content of the respective pictures recorded in the respective data sets. An examination is only possible with a lot of effort; GEO EPOCHE claims to take on exactly this effort. If this is not done, mistakes are passed on in manifold publications. Accordingly, the cover of *G/GESCHICHTE* 11 (2007) on the topic Verdun shows a black and white cover picture, which depicts a dramatic scene from the war.<sup>79</sup>

A French soldier is shown in the very moment – so it seems – when he is hit by a bullet. The connotation with the famous picture by Frank Capa taken in 1936, which shows a militiaman killed in the Spanish Civil War<sup>80</sup> is apparent and intended.

The cover shows the allegedly dying soldier as 'blow-up', the cover lines partially form a frame. This picture, which was also used in *P.M. HISTORY* and on the cover of the supplement of the five-part ARD series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' from 2004, is, however – as is already mandatorily suggested by the camera position – not a contemporary picture of the battle field, but was taken from the French film 'Verdun, vision d'Histoire' (Léon Poirier) from 1928.<sup>81</sup> The comment on the cover picture in *G/GESCHICHTE* on the editorial page runs as follows: 'Cover picture: the life of the soldiers at the front in the muddy and louse-ridden trenches was miserable enough. But

---

<sup>79</sup> URL: <http://bit.ly/1psvn0c> (1.8.2014).

<sup>80</sup> Irme Schaber: *The Falling Soldier. Eine politische Ikone des 20. Jahrhunderts.* In: Gerhard Paul (ed.): *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. Vol. 1: 1900 bis 1949.* Göttingen 2009, p. 514–523.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. the description and interpretation by Laurant Véray: *Reconstituer la guerre de 1914*, on the internet platform initiated by the state about the educational history in France, URL: <http://bit.ly/1yA2Srd> (1.8.2014).

the “liberation” through an assault mostly caused death or severe injuries (French “poilus” during the battle at the Somme).’<sup>82</sup>

It can certainly be assumed that the picture credits provided by the picture agency were not critically reviewed, because the description in the SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG Photo says: ‘Hit by machine-gun fire, the French lieutenant leading his soldiers collapses during a counter attack on the German positions near Verdun.’<sup>83</sup>

It can more or less be imagined what the machine-gun fire would have done to the photographer and his equipment. This example shows the high priority which the G/GESCHICHTE editors assigned to the ability to be able visually to present and therewith to demonstrate, the event of the moment of death, which is hardly to be surpassed, even though mistrust towards historical pictures was already debated in the industry back then.<sup>84</sup>

The visual design of popular historical offerings has not yet been accounted for in qualitative studies. In particular, the great lengths to which editors go in creatively arranging the variety of narrative elements has not been included so far in the analysis of the presentation. Principally because the editorial structure of a magazine is shaped by the division of labour between author, editors, choice of picture and graphics/layout, the requirement of narrative coherence and authority requires the elements of the presentation to be connected in a logical way. The question of whether and how this may be achieved can only be assessed by including the layout and design, i.e. the arrangement of the elements in the magazine context, in the analysis. This shall be illustrated with an example from the magazine G/GESCHICHTE, and the argument further developed.

## 6. Duplicated event constitution

‘The lights are going out in Europe’ – this popular phrase was used by the magazine G/GESCHICHTE as the title of an article on the outbreak

---

82 G/GESCHICHTE 11 (2007), p. 3.

83 Corbis correctly refers to the film.

84 In this way, a contribution in SPIEGEL ONLINE dealt with the scepticism towards the pictures three years before, URL: <http://bit.ly/1pHNuys> (1.8.2014).



of the First World War in a special edition from 2008.<sup>85</sup> The title refers to the well-known quote of the British Foreign Minister Edward Grey from 3.8.1914.<sup>86</sup> A dominant grey-scale graphic on the right-hand side of the double page seems visually to confirm the lights going out.

On the left side of the double page the title line in red-brown the main headline 'How the world slid into the great war' is exhibited in addition to the introduction of five and a half lines covering the entire breadth of the page right below. The headline is left-justified and framed by a double line, which runs diagonally across both sides of the magazine and at whose right end the caption of the right side can be found.

On the right next to the headline, title and introduction close to the fold, there is a free-standing picture of two people, which crosses the diagonal double line and which is in turn transparently overlapped by the letters of the introduction. This double portrait with four colours is a contemporary illustration, which shows Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Austrian Kaiser Franz Joseph I in uniform. Both monarchs are depicted from an almost frontal position; Wilhelm is standing facing to the right and Franz Joseph is sitting to his left looking at the viewer. In his right hand he is holding a map and in his left hand the sword lying across his lap. Wilhelm's hand is characteristically placed on the handle of the sword while his right hand with the marshal's baton is pointing at the map. This presentation of the monarch was also highly recognisable for contemporaries: the pose of the (battle) leader with military attributes looking resolutely into the distance can be found in many illustrations. The image's iconic quality makes it equally familiar also today.<sup>87</sup>

---

85 G/GESCHICHTE SPEZIAL 6 (2008), p. 14–19, URL: <http://bit.ly/1uDmN5Y> (1.8.2014).

86 Quite different versions exist of the correct location of the quote: Accordingly, Jay Winter, an experts in the popular history of the wars, thinks the sentence occurred in a 'famous speech in the British House of Commons', whereas, for instance, Martin Schramm presents it as a quote from a conversation between Grey and a journalist: Jay Winter: Lemma 'Grey'. In: Gerhard Hirschfeld/ Gerd Krumeich/Irina Renz (eds.): *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*. Paderborn 2009, p. 534; Martin Schramm: *Das Deutschlandbild in der britischen Presse 1912–1919*. Berlin 2007, p. 280.

87 On the iconicity of pictures cf. Gerhard Paul: „Mushroom Clouds“. Entstehung, Struktur und Funktion einer Medienikone des 20. Jahrhunderts im

Beneath the introduction three columns of further text follow, which are generously introduced by a six-line initial and concluded in the left lower page corner with a two-column black and white picture in horizontal format. It depicts a strongly retouched version of a photograph,<sup>88</sup> which according to the caption shows the ‘capture of the assassin Gavrilo Princip’. On the left side of the initial there is a seven-line marginal note: ‘The fatal alliance between Kaiser Wilhelm II and Kaiser Franz Joseph dragged Germany into the deadly depths of Balkan politics.’

The right side of the double page is fully taken by a black and white graphic. At the right end of the double line coming from the left is a two-line caption: ‘Fatal for old Europe – the shots from Sarajevo’. The picture, which is cropped at the sides, shows an illustration by Felix Schwormstädt of the assassination of the Austrian heir to the throne and his wife from 1914 – like the original – in black and white, or rather greyscale.

The double page features a lot of visual information, which excites attention and suggests diversity by variety. Attention has already been gained through colourful accents in the headline as well as via the colourful double portrait of the emperors, which marks the transition between either side of the double page. This is followed by the comparatively monumental size of the picture of the assassination covering an entire page, as well as the visual illustration of the title by the double line, which connects both pages. Finally, two different fonts are used in eight different font styles and sizes. In this way, layout elements such as headline, title, caption, introduction, marginal note, main text body, heading and subheading feature individual formats respectively. Usually, the differentiation of font types serves to illustrate the hierarchy of information and in this way to indicate relevance within the layout. The variety of creative distinctions and accents used here condenses this differentiation in the small space of one page and so corresponds – intentionally or not – with the content of the story. Accordingly, the introduction runs as follows: ‘The summer

---

interkulturellen Vergleich. In: Idem (ed.): *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch*. Göttingen 2006, p. 243–264, p. 243 f.

88 The retouching consists in the white and grey accentuation of the heights as well as the outlines of the persons and items. In pre-digital times, this was an indeed common practice in picture printing processes of the press.

of 1914 was warm and sunny; economies ran at full blast, cultural life was colourful and creative. But then some shots were fired far away and they were the death sentence for millions of people who had until just now enjoyed the summer.<sup>89</sup>

The reference to the summer atmosphere initially illustrates place and time in a narrative way. Accordingly, the reader gains access to the events presented in that the 'stage' of the happenings is prepared or rather revealed. This is necessary, because the reader presumes a factual presentation and not a fictional one. The zero focalisation establishes the author as historiographic authority who understands how narratively to combine things which are far apart: weather, several economies, cultural life and the events in a yet undefined distance. With the undefined location 'far away', however, the narrator seems to question his own authority and to appoint himself a position far away from the distant events, i.e. a position of contemporaries. Actually, this change is, however, only briefly recognisable, because the anticipation of the 'death sentences for millions of people' leads back to the authority of the presentation.

The climax of 'some' shots leading to 'millions' of dead indeed drastically shortens the cause and effect, but by the elliptic intensification again signals the distance of the narrator from the events, and his authority over the events.

Death in war becomes the destiny in the narrative for those who have previously existed in the disparate colour and creativity of different places and spaces, or at least economies. The fateful alignment of contingency is also alluded to in the text body where it says: 'The direct cause for the multitudinous deaths was the alliance agreement of the European great powers, which constructed a dangerous "domino game": if one stone fell, the entire system was dragged into the war.'<sup>90</sup>

Further textual elements can be found, which are composed of metaphors of directed motion, for instance, when Germany is 'dragged into the deadly depths of the Balkan' as well as when the entire world 'slid' into war.<sup>91</sup>

---

89 G/GESCHICHTE SPEZIAL 6 (2008), p. 14.

90 Ibid.

91 Both *ibid.*

This fate, narratively organised in the text, which deals with the previous history of the outbreak of the war, i.e. in a way with the final, no longer deducible cause, corresponds with the master narrative of the primal catastrophe, which is not carried out by the actors who are capable of decisions, but happens in the almost mystical form of self-development.<sup>92</sup> The difficulties of narratively enclosing such a great event as the First World War can be seen in the inconsistency, so easily overlooked, of no longer differentiating between two causes, namely the shots of Sarajevo and the European system of alliances.

Less fatefully-determined, but much more meticulously planned is, in contrast, the layout of magazines. It is supposed at the same time to structure, order and support content, and guide readers in their perceptions.<sup>93</sup> In this case, this means suggesting a variety of topics and aspects and at the same time establishing references and perspectives. The first of these viewpoints, in the form of the double line, emphasises the common direction of reading from left to right, connects and 'bridges' the text in leading from the coloured title to the likewise coloured double portrait of the emperors to the dramatic assassination scene. The same viewpoint is established by the marginal note at the left, which together with the comparatively large initial visually forms the starting point, but content-wise refers back to Wilhelm II and Franz Josef I. And also the horizontal picture of Princip's arrest leads, due to its position, back to the neighbouring page and there to the starting point of a motional diagonal line, which runs from the bottom left across Princip's shoulder and his stretched arm with the revolver to the 'centre of the event'. Due to these strong compositional lines, the variety of textual elements and accentuations no longer has irritating effects, so that all in all an order is established around the disparate elements.

---

92 There are manifold references for the academic and journalistic use of the terms. A critical discussion of the concept and the term in Aribert Reimann: *Der Erste Weltkrieg – Urkatastrophe oder Katalysator?* In: *APuZ* 29/30 (2004), p. 30–38. However, he is more dedicated to the question about the historical sustainability of the idea than the need for the semantics of such a master-narrative. The fact that this narrative can take on the form of a European founding myth may indeed turn out as impressive on the popular media market in the year 2014.

93 Edigna Menhard/Tilo Treede (note 22), p. 149 ff.

Content and layout in this way communicate in a diverse interplay presentational competence, i.e. the ability to illustrate an event and to make it tell-able, to organise it in a tangible and so comprehensible frame. Along with this goes the ability to have material and content at one's disposal and to make them available. In this case, it is about the assassination of the heir to the throne and his wife on 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo, a date which often serves as starting point for the presentation of the First World War.

To set the starting point of a narration and thereby to prefer it over manifold other possibilities is one of the selection processes described above that especially with regard to the First World War should not pass without comment. This is quite simply because the sequence of declarations of war by some European main actors, starting with Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia (28 July 1914) reaching to Austria-Hungary declaring war on Belgium (28 August 1914), already stretched across one month and was not completed even then. Accordingly, when shall the beginning be placed? As a selection of choices there are long-lasting processes,<sup>94</sup> which are referred to by the article in its references to the politics of alliances and for which even an almost two-page information box with half a page of info graphic is made available on the following page. On the other hand, drastic event constitutions preferably condensed to one point are chosen for the introduction. The latter includes the assassination in Sarajevo,<sup>95</sup> which possibly seems so suitable, because the instantaneousness of a shot (in this case it was two) separates the before and after in a chronological condensation which is hardly to be bettered and as changing point can set in motion narratively highly efficient event dynamics. Stefan Zweig, consciously experienced in the dramaturgical adjustment of history, translated

---

94 Johannes Burkhardt et al.: *Lange und kurze Wege in den Ersten Weltkrieg. Vier Augsburger Beiträge zur Kriegsursachenforschung*. München 1996; Niall Ferguson: *Der falsche Krieg. Der Erste Weltkrieg und das 20. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart 1999; Immanuel Geiss: *Der lange Weg in die Katastrophe. Die Vorgeschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs 1815–1914*. München 1990; Fritz Fischer: *Die Außenpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland und der Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkriegs*. In: Gregor Schöllgen (ed.): *Flucht in den Krieg? Die Außenpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland*. Darmstadt 1990, p. 25–67.

95 Volker R. Berghahn: *Sarajewo, 28. Juni 1914. Der Untergang des alten Europa*. München 1999.

the shots of Sarajevo into a medial wave of resonance in his memoirs, a wave which was triggered by the assassination – medially transformed by telegram placards – in Baden close to Vienna during the summer idyll: ‘I involuntary stopped reading as the music broke off in the middle of the bar [...] I only felt that the music stopped at once. Instinctively, I looked up from my book. Also the masses of people who promenaded as one floating light mass between the trees seemed to change; they also seemed to stop in their up and down. Something must have happened.’<sup>96</sup>

A similar approach despite all the differences was also chosen by the magazine *G/GESCHICHTE* in 2008 in the previously-quoted introduction. The rhetoric of change is also taken up in the main body text to explain the point of change in the historical development. After some introductory words about the shots at the royal couple the text asks a rhetorical question:

‘But what else should happen, particularly as the politicians of the European capitals were just about to go on summer holiday? Six weeks later the shots of Sarajevo had caused the most terrible war that history so far had seen. It drew unimaginable sacrifices and by its end the world looked completely different from before 1914 [...].’<sup>97</sup>

The change of paragraph included in the template marked this changing point at which expectations and result fall apart, and also visually addresses reference histories in a twofold way: firstly, the shots in retrospect, i.e. in historiographic adjustment, unfold their narrative relevance as starting point of the war. This indeed corresponds with the experience of contemporaries, since the attribution as ‘the day on which the First World War began’<sup>98</sup> is only imaginable as retrospective designation and does not correspond with the dominant contemporary perception. It is therewith, however, the narrative translation of contingency into a tragedy-like

---

96 Stefan Zweig: *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers*. Frankfurt/Main 1993 (Orig. 1944), p. 249.

97 *G/GESCHICHTE SPEZIAL* 6 (2008), p. 14.

98 Cf. the non-distanced, popular scientific reconstruction by Wladimir Aichelburg: *Sarajevo – das Attentat*. 28. Juni 1914. Wien 1999, p. 5.

consecutive logic. As retribution for the murder of the archduke nobody in their home country would have spontaneously gone to war:<sup>99</sup> ‘But to give truth the honours: no particular agitation or exasperation was visible on the faces, because the heir to the throne had not been very popular,’<sup>100</sup> Zweig noted – in hindsight, of course.

Secondly, however, the event is only tangible in reconstructions, whose workings are hardly to be overlooked,<sup>101</sup> because it is not photographically documented. The subsequent visualisation, which was already supposed to supply the demand in 1914 for pictorial evidence, was implemented in freely created illustrations and published in newspapers and magazines. Additionally, the picture that covered the title page of the *WIENER BILDER* one week after the deadly shots and shortly after also that of the *HAMBURGER WOCHE* became almost iconic. It was to depict the arrest of the assassin Gavrilo Princip and we encounter it again in *G/GESCHICHTE*.<sup>102</sup> But actually, the picture shows the arrest of someone uninvolved as was to be discovered shortly after the picture was taken. Illustrations as well as the photo, which does not document the actual course of events, refer to the dilemma of visual representation in which expectations of news media and audience on the one hand and image-offers on the other differ, the pictures merely pose approximations, not being able to prove their authenticity for themselves.

The drawings and illustrations of the assassination emerged from pure phantasy, as is also suggested by their different arrangements.<sup>103</sup> However,

---

99 Volker Ullrich: Ein Sommer, der keiner mehr war. Als der Erste Weltkrieg begann. In: Idem: Fünf Schüsse auf Bismarck. Historische Reportagen. München 2003, p. 95–107, p. 95 f; Gary W. Shanafelt: Franz Ferdinand. In: Spencer C. Tucker (ed.): The European powers in the First World War. An encyclopedia. New York et al. 1996, p. 268 ff, p. 269.

100 Cf. Zweig (note 96), p. 250.

101 Cf. for instance, Aichelburg (note 98).

102 On this Gerhard Hirschfeld: Sarajevo. Das bilderlose Attentat und die Bildfindungen der Massenpresse. In: Gerhard Paul (ed.): Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. Vol. 1: 1900 bis 1949. Göttingen 2009, p. 148–156.

103 At least Schwormstädt's employer, the *ILLUSTRIERTE ZEITUNG* in Leipzig, emphasised that the picture was created according to a sketch from an eye witness. Schwormstädt himself, however, was not in Sarajevo. Cf. Lars U. Scholl: Felix Schwormstädt 1870–1938. Maler – Pressezeichner – Illustrator. Herford

they still have some presentational principals in common, which make aesthetic and also thematic statements:<sup>104</sup> In this way, the assassin is mostly depicted standing freely; his hand with the pistol in the moment of shooting is often in the centre of the depiction. The happenings surrounding the centre by means of opposed diagonals enhance the impression of dynamism and chaos, which convey the effect of spontaneity. Frightened faces and wide eyes orchestrate the dramatics of the event. Thereby, the perspective is frequently slightly raised, the view on the event unimpaired. At the same time the drama of the move can claim higher authority – understood here as supposedly un-staged proximity to life – as political genre scenes such as stiff portraits and the permanently repeated encounters of rulers staged according to protocol. The illustrations present the viewer with a graphically clearly framed stage of events, which organises the view as from the middle of the bystanders, even though it was ideally (slight oversight, unrestricted view) arranged. In the case of Schwormstädt's picture, which entirely follows this style to design events in the light of strongly composed constellations of people, the location of the event is symbolised by the hinted at a minaret in the background. A similar function is played by the reproduction of the typical headpieces and other details. In this way, the newspapers and magazines back then illustrated the possibility of eye witnessing as well as the already frequently-mentioned competence of 'storytelling', which lies in making the event vividly experienceable and manageable. Despite the obvious staging, the viewer can cherish the illusion of being made a privileged eye witness and in this way can become part of the event. It can be assumed that the audience was aware, indeed had to be willing, to submit to this attractive illusion in order to consume the media on offer. When in 1914 the assassination of Sarajevo took place, photography had prevailed against illustrations as the more credible

---

1990, p. 32. This is also confirmed by the fact that the archduke's uniform is depicted in the wrong way.

104 An overview of all visual presentations of the assassination does not exist. For this comparison, a total of six contemporary, predominantly undocumented images were used, which were found during research in Getty-Images (3), Bildarchiv-Preußischer Kulturbesitz (1), Bridgeman Art Library (2, but only 1 contemporary image), Bildarchiv der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek (2).



documentary medium. If illustrations were nevertheless still used over and over again then this refers to the crisis of the photo-documentary material, to its absence from the event and in return to the absence of the events in the documentary medium.

In this way the named illustrations and their stylisations of events ensure two things: they make statements about the events and in so doing address their own relevance. This has consequences for the contemporary presentation of history, because this propositional logic is still inscribed in the material as part of its mediating structure.

Since 1914 nothing has changed as regards the material situation; there are still no photographs of the assassination or at least no lost picture documents have been found. This stands in almost diametric contrast to the monumental depiction of the assassination scene in *G/GESCHICHTE* as a striking claim of evidence and eye witnessing, which, as everyone can clearly recognise today, is merely staged. This also applies to the picture of the supposed arrest of the assassin, which has to prove its authenticity against the clearly visible retouching carried out. The fact that it is not Princip who is depicted here, however, requires contextual knowledge, which can only be established outside the present journalistic communicative situation and which may be widely unknown due to the widespread dissemination of the picture under the heading of Princip's arrest. A closer look at the picture reveals two things: firstly, the facial features of the person arrested are hardly identifiable, which is due to the motion blur and the poor illumination as well as the circumstance that the person arrested is looking downwards. Secondly, this appears to be completely irrelevant, because apparently, it is not about the assassin as a person, but about the circumstance that at least one moment classified as relevant can be identified in the context of the event and can be staged as photographically documented. Accordingly, it seems comparatively unimportant whether the things depicted and the things claimed indeed correspond. It is rather about the gesture of evidence as mode of authenticity.

The observations presented here feed the suspicion that contemporary and modern media are, at least in connection with the First World War, closely linked at a specific point, namely in the claim of presentational competences of events. This becomes very apparent here because the event which is narratively to be organised was not communicated or recorded

back then as well as it would have been today in seemingly authentic media such as photography or film. This goes hand in hand with an increased communicativeness, already recognisable via the exemplarily presented double page in its amount of layout elements, which express formatting powers where the evidence of the historical is merely a quote of its absence.

It indeed seems appropriate to speak of signs of a communication crisis here, if the presentability of the war turns out to be as precarious as the presentability of a beginning or outbreak. This is, of course, based on the thesis that structural elements of the initial event are carried along unreflected both on the level of content as well as on the level of media. Taking a closer look poses the question about the authenticity of historico-cultural products anew in that it is not primarily about adherence to the facts, but about a medially adequate critical review of sources of the basic materials, which are necessary to create multi-media narratives.

## 7. Conclusion

This text has attempted first to theoretically correlate the narrative and media procedures of journalism and historiography and to practically apply this reference as an approach to popular history presentations in order to place historico-journalistic single products in the context of mass media and therewith in a social context. The preliminary considerations necessary for this originate from different subject connections. Accordingly, the underlying understanding of communication and media here is based on Luhmann, the news value theory is a genuine field of Communication Studies, the considerations on the historical event configurations were developed in connection with the 'linguistic turn', i.e. the narratological reflexion of historiography. Relating all this together happens against the backdrop of the initial thesis: that journalism has become a decisive structural element of the mass media society. Therewith, public and accordingly popular discourses can always be made apparent with regard to these structures. This includes especially three of the fields of action mentioned here, i.e. firstly, the narrative constitution of and authority over (historical) events, and therewith – secondly – the relevance of journalism as systemically relevant, which is expressed performatively in this competence, and thirdly, the systematisation of the claim to relevance in

the categories of the news values, which in detail shape the mass media's offers of mediacy as presentation principles. Understanding the model as narrative structure moreover has shown the need as well as the possibility not only to map macro and micro analyses onto each other, but also to refuse to restrict the area of investigation to pictures and texts, but to take into account the multi-mediacy of everyday experiences and accordingly proceed in an inter-medial way.

'Can an algorithm write a better news story than a human reporter?'<sup>105</sup> Steven Levy asked in April 2013 in the technology magazine WIRED. In this way, the author, who is an expert in the discourse field of artificial intelligence, reformulated the well-known Turing test with regard to that practical field in which the history magazines are to be situated – journalism.

The background of Levy's report is the writing software of the American company 'Narrative Science', who under the motto 'We transform data into stories and insight',<sup>106</sup> is predominantly used in the fields of finance, sport and economical journalism. That this claim may not be regarded as the usual A.I.-euphoria may be verified by the fact that 'Narrative Science' boasts, amongst others, the economic magazine FORBES among their customers.

This contribution, however, was less about the dystopia of 'robonews', but about operationalising journalism as a communication system for the observation and analysis of popular history presentation. This idea that journalistic techniques of presentation can be standardised in such a way that the complex logic of algorithms can be entrusted with them and that this remains mostly unnoticed, confirms the thesis illustrated above that journalism can be feasible not only as event, but also as structure and this illustrates its social relevance. For a history of public communication, which is the decisive structural principle for the mass media society, this is a fundamental challenge for historians, and offers much space for new perspectives.

---

105 URL: <http://wrd.cm/1vaIOFN> (1.8.2014).

106 URL: <http://www.narrativescience.com/> (1.8.2014).

Stephan Jaeger

## Popular historical writing from a narratological perspective<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

SPIEGEL editor Michael Sontheimer begins the chapter ‘Hitlers Blitzkriege’ in the book ‘Der 2. Weltkrieg. Wendepunkt der deutschen Geschichte’ (The Second World War. Turning point in German history), published by SPIEGEL, with the sentence: ‘It is the afternoon of the 21 of June 1940 when Hitler arrives in Compiègne northeast of Paris.’<sup>2</sup> Sontheimer recounts that on this particular day Adolf Hitler finds a memorial stone commemorating the end of the First World War with a reference to the ‘felonious arrogance’ of the German Empire and his subsequent order to have the stone razed. Following the description of the ceremony of the ceasefire agreement, Hitler’s arrival in Paris is narrated through the words of Hitler’s personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann: ‘Silently and devoutly he stood there in front of Napoleon’s sarcophagus. How was he feeling, what was he thinking? Was he drawing parallels between himself and the man who once ruled Europe?’<sup>3</sup> Sontheimer describes Hitler’s subsequent celebrated return to Berlin in the following words: ‘Almost all Germans stand united behind their “Führer”. He has succeeded in overturning the abhorred Treaty of Versailles, which even followers of the Communists and Social Democrats concede.’<sup>4</sup>

This short introduction to a chapter from a non-fiction book illustrates the most important and fundamental narrative characteristics of popular

---

1 This text is a translation from the German original ‘Populäre Geschichtsschreibung aus narratologischer Perspektive’. All quotations from German-speaking sources have been translated as well.

2 Michael Sontheimer: *Hitlers Blitzkriege*. In: Stephan Burgdorff/Klaus Wiegrefe/Götz Aly (eds.): *Der 2. Weltkrieg. Wendepunkt der deutschen Geschichte*. München 2005, p. 53–69, p. 53.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 54.

historical writing. The historian surveys the events with clear referential truth-claims. The reader is informed factually and objectively about actual events in the history of the Second World War. At the same time, the narrative is scenic in order to create historical presence, and the reader can almost experience attending the historical events in question. The scenic narration can merge into the narration of thoughts of individuals (Hitler) and collectives (the Germans). A possible plurality of historical interpretations at different times and in different groups, as well as the complexity of the connection between history and memory, is, at best, merely hinted at and instantly dismissed in favour of the 'correct' representation.<sup>5</sup> An assessment of historical sources and any methodological reflexion is missing, as is the reflexion of alternative perspectives and diverging analyses of causal connections. The historical knowledge depicted is conveyed primarily by known historical circumstances and is, in addition, supposed to be interestingly written so as to keep the reader's attention while processing the information. The historian's perspective blends into the historical persons' perspectives – the secondary narrative into the primary narrative – in order to achieve historical presence.<sup>6</sup> The historian's knowledge is no longer clearly distinguishable from the historical persons' thoughts or attitudes.

A narratological perspective, however, is less about the text's degree of truthfulness and reflexion, but instead is more concerned with understanding what defines the narrative style of popular historical writing in various genres. Out of this arises the question of how popular historical writing differs, or rather should differ, in narrative terms from academic historical writing, and at the same time in what ways different popular history media

---

5 Sontheimer's representation regarding the encirclement and evacuation of British and French troops in Dunkirk is characteristic for this: 'The rescue from the pocket in Dunkirk was transfigured to a heroic saga in the UK, but in truth the world power was in no way prepared for the war and rarely had to accept such a humiliating defeat' (ibid., p. 64).

6 For instance, the prepositional construction 'inspired by the fast and easy victory over Poland' (ibid., p. 59) could either be the historical conclusion about what Hitler may have thought during summer 1940, or it is the historian's conclusion (or rather the one of his unmentioned historical sources).

and genres deploy similar or differing narrative strategies.<sup>7</sup> In combining scenic narration with the simultaneous overview of historical events, and in constantly varying narrative distance and perspective, it is possible to lead the reader to the specific historical locations of the event. Accordingly, an observational perspective can be simulated, as if the historian-narrator and the reader were actually able to attend the events and sometimes even experience the abstracted train of thoughts of the historical actors. The latter is fundamental since it indicates the complexity of the discussion about the narrativity of historiographic narrative. On the one hand, historical writing cannot merely penetrate the consciousness of individual persons as if it were fiction which has the ability to create the thoughts of its characters.<sup>8</sup> Historical writing can, at best, merely cite statements from primary sources. At the same time, it is possible to simulate individual or collective

- 
- 7 Regarding the traditional differentiation between academic and popular historical writing and the present-day challenges posed by pluralised and international cultures of remembrance cf., for instance, Dirk van Laak: *Zeitgeschichte und populäre Geschichtsschreibung. Einführende Bemerkungen*. In: Jan-Holger Kirsch/Achim Saupe/Katja Stopka (eds.): *Sonderheft Populäre Geschichtsschreibung. Zeithistorische Forschungen* 6 (2009), issue 3, p. 332–346, p. 334 ff. Van Laak observes that popular historical writing can be increasingly seen as a new historicism in which it is important that history skilfully follows the expectations of the culture industry (*ibid.*, p. 336). For the discussion of the term, the genre and the plurality of popular (= non-academic) historical writing, cf. also, with an emphasis on a historical perspective, Wolfgang Hardtwig: *Geschichte für Leser. Populäre Geschichtsschreibung in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert*. In: Wolfgang Hardtwig/Erhard Schütz (eds.): *Geschichte für Leser. Populäre Geschichtsschreibung in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart 2005, p. 11–32. As an example of a historical examination of the historical discourse of popular historical writing, cf. Martin Nissen: *Populärgeschichtsschreibung. Historiker, Verleger und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit (1848–1900)*. Köln/Weimar/Wien 2009.
- 8 Dorrit Cohn: *The distinction of fiction*. Baltimore/London 1999, p. 119. Also cf. Monika Fludernik: *Fiction vs. non-fiction. Narratological differentiations*. In: Jörg Helbig (ed.): *Erzählen und Erzähltheorie im 20. Jahrhundert*. Heidelberg 2001 (*Festschrift für Wilhelm Füger*), p. 85–103, p. 93 f. For a general overview of narratology and historical writing cf. Stephan Jaeger: *Erzählen im historiographischen Diskurs*. In: Christian Klein/Matías Martínez (eds.): *Wirklichkeitserzählungen. Felder, Formen und Funktionen nicht-literarischen Erzählens*. Stuttgart/Weimar 2009, p. 110–135.

perspectives.<sup>9</sup> As illustrated by the example above, popular historical writing increasingly tends to exploit narratological means such as voice, perspective, distance and order. From the perspective of academic historical writing, however, the particular means by which popular historical writing disseminates information are often considered with little differentiation, as purely didactic, informative, entertaining and potentially manipulative with regard to their representational techniques. In other words, narratologists assign a rather low degree of narrativity to historical writing in general as well as to popular historical writing in particular.<sup>10</sup>

This attribution, however, can be questioned if the specifics of historiographic narration are discussed, such as the creation of collective perspectives, the possibilities of simulating historical experientiality, or the possibilities of creating a present space of the past. Accordingly, in the following section the question of what defines narrativity in general, and of how the examination of narrativity is particularly relevant for popular historical writing, is theoretically explored before these specific theoretical guidelines are put to the test in three case studies, through the analysis of different media – one history magazine, two TV documentaries and one historical exhibition.

## 2. On the narrativity of popular historical writing

Narrativity in its most general form is viewed as a number of formal and thematic features which characterise stories or narrative texts and distinguish them from non-narrative texts.<sup>11</sup> In structuralist narratology the narrative element is considered to be a temporally organised sequence of

---

9 For instance, cf. Stephan Jaeger: *Historiographical simulations of war*. In: Elena Baraban/Stephan Jaeger/Adam Muller (eds.): *Fighting words and images: representing war across the disciplines*. Toronto 2012, p. 89–109. Also cf. Axel R  th: *Erz  hlte Geschichte. Narrative Strukturen in der franz  sischen Annales-Geschichtsschreibung*. Berlin/New York 2005, p. 81 f., p. 110.

10 For instance, cf. Fludernik (note 8), p. 93.

11 Ansgar N  nning: *Narrativit  t*. In: Idem (ed.): *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Stuttgart/Weimar 2001, p. 464 f. For a detailed summary of the latest discussions on narrativity, cf. H. Porter Abbott: *Narrativity*. In: Peter H  hn et al. (eds.): *Handbook of narratology*. Berlin/New York 2009, p. 309–328.

actions, and therefore an alteration of a state in time. Franz Stanzel, in contrast, explains the narrative element by the mediacy of the narrative process;<sup>12</sup> a story must be conveyed by a narrator.<sup>13</sup> If this basic understanding of narrativity is applied to narration in the historical discourse then historical discourse is to be understood as a vehicle to create and represent historical knowledge as well as historical explanations.<sup>14</sup> Thereby, the narrative is, as a general rule, considered to be the cognitive link between content (story), i.e. the historical world, and form (discourse), i.e. writing about history in a historiographic text.<sup>15</sup>

Following such a general definition of narrativity, according to which narrativity is regarded as a fixed quality of a narrative, the idea that historical writing is narrative goes uncontested in the works of Roland Barthes, Hayden White, Paul Ricœur and others.<sup>16</sup> In White's work the structuralist narratology is applied to the historiographic discourse so that through the narrative the simple chronicle, the chronological listing of events, is exceeded and transformed into a story and historical narration.<sup>17</sup> Ricœur has also shown that the human experience of time in general – in history as well as in fiction – is only possible through narrative. The configuration of worlds, which Ricœur describes as *Mimesis II*, is particularly fundamental to the discussion of historiographic texts. *Mimesis II* unfolds as interplay between new creations and sedimentation, imagination and tradition.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, historiographic narratives are not only imitative as reconstructive narrative, but also creative.

---

12 Franz K. Stanzel: *Theorie des Erzählens*. Göttingen 1979, p. 15–38.

13 Wolf Schmid: *Elemente der Narratologie*. Berlin/New York 2005, p. 19.

14 Alun Munslow: *Narrative*. In: Idem: *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies*. London/New York 2000, p. 169–174, p. 169.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

16 For an overview cf. Alun Munslow: *Narrative and history*. Basingstoke/New York 2007, p. 1–9, as well as Rüdiger (note 9), p. 16–52.

17 'In historical discourse, the narrative serves to transform into a story a list of historical events that would otherwise be only a chronicle' (Hayden White: *The question of narrative in contemporary historical theory*. In: Idem: *The content of the form. Narrative discourse and historical representation*. Baltimore/London 1987, p. 26–57, p. 43). Also cf. Hayden White: *The value of narrativity in the representation of reality*. In: *Ibid.*, p. 1–25.

18 Paul Ricœur: *Time and Narrative*. 3 vols. Chicago 1984–1985. Vol. I, p. 52–87.



A new world is created by the narration, which would not exist without the historiographic text.

More recent theories of narratology, however, increasingly discuss not only a fixed, but also a scalar model of narrativity.<sup>19</sup> In a continuation of structuralist theory the notion of temporally organized sequences of action is further expanded under the keyword eventfulness. For Wolf Schmid eventfulness is characterised by five criteria: relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility and non-iterativity.<sup>20</sup> The main focus of such discussions based on textual theory is, however, the fictional narrative. Nonetheless, historical events are also incidences which cause narrative change.<sup>21</sup> They contribute to the meaningful formation of a story, which can only be expressed through narrative. In regard to the story level of historical writing, events meet Schmid's criteria in every single narrative: they are historically incidental, relevant through narration, their historical reality is irreversible, and they are permanent in their change. However, the question remains: what is really gained for the understanding of historical writing on the level of the representation of history, i.e. the level of discourse, with such a minimal definition of narrativity?

The idea of scalar narrativity makes it possible to apply structuralist approaches, which operate with a fixed model of narrativity in different genres, to other discourses such as historical writing or every-day storytelling. It has been argued that historical writing exhibits a rather low degree of narrativity;<sup>22</sup> Monika Fludernik explains that the degree of narrativity of academic historical writing is reduced in comparison to fiction as well as to non-fiction everyday storytelling, because its narrative reports about events, arguments, facts, and collective historical experiences, instead of expressing

---

19 Cf. Abbott (note 11), p. 309.

20 Cf. Schmid (note 13), p. 22–27.

21 In the latest discussions about the use of narrative theory, the historical event is particularly important for historians, especially in order to better understand narrative sources at the level of content. In particular, cf. Andreas Suter/Manfred Hettling (eds.): *Struktur und Ereignis*. Special issue 19. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. Göttingen 2001; also cf. Martin Fitzenreiter (ed.): *Das Ereignis. Geschichtsschreibung zwischen Vorfall und Befund*. London 2009.

22 Cf. Fludernik (note 8), p. 93.

experience by means of individual consciousness.<sup>23</sup> Recently, this line of argument has repeatedly been questioned and it has increasingly been shown that historical writing can indeed – in other forms than the modernist stream-of-consciousness novel – express or create experientiality.<sup>24</sup>

However, how proactively academic historians should deal with the insights into the narrativity of historical writing remains disputed. Is it still possible that particularly academic historical writing avoids the emotionality of debates about popular history and memory by means of secured facts and a pathos of sobriety, or is every historical narrative ultimately so strongly shaped by the subjective or ideological influences of the author and their time that history is always subject to a strong relativism?<sup>25</sup> This problem can be illustrated by reflecting on Alun Munslow's differentiation between three forms of historiographic expressions: the reconstructionist, the constructionist and the deconstructionist form.<sup>26</sup> In this way

- 
- 23 Fludernik sees the distinction explained through different kinds of agenthood, since fictional protagonists and quasi-agents in everyday life storytelling constitute text through their consciousness and intentions, whereas historical persons are merely used as part of the argument of historical actions (Monika Fludernik: *Towards a 'natural' narratology*. London/New York 1996, p. 24 f.); Monika Fludernik: *Experience, experientiality and historical narrative. A view from narratology*. In: Thiemo Breyer/Daniel Creutz (eds.): *Erfahrung und Geschichte. Historische Sinnbildung im Pränarrativen*. Berlin/New York 2010, p. 40–72, p. 41 f. In this newer study, Fludernik tries to classify collective experience as non-experiential. This unnecessarily reduces the means of representation of historiography in comparison to fiction, instead of focusing on the specifics of historical writing.
- 24 Stephan Jaeger: *Poetic worlds and experientiality in historiographic narrative*. In: Julia Nitz/Sandra Harbert Petrulionis (eds.): *Towards a historiographic narratology*. Special issue SPIEL 30 (*Siegener Periodicum zur Internationalen Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft*) (2011), issue 1, p. 29–50, p. 34 f.; Jonas Grethlein: *Experientiality and 'narrative reference' with thanks to Thucydides*. In: *History and Theory* 49 (2010), issue 3, p. 315–335; Daniel Fulda: *Why and how 'history' depends on readerly narrativization with the Wehrmachts exhibition as an example*. In: Jan Christoph Meister (ed.): *Narratology beyond literary criticism*. Berlin/New York 2005, p. 173–194.
- 25 For further contextualization of such ideas cf. van Laak (note 7), p. 345; White: *The value of narrativity in the representation of reality* (note 17), p. 11; cf. Munslow (note 16), p. 121 f.
- 26 Cf. Munslow (note 16), p. 10–15.

Munslow takes into consideration academic as well as popular forms of historical writing. Reconstructionist historical writing is predominantly concerned with the referential connection between historical writing and the past and tries to represent the past as realistically, objectively and truthfully as possible. Munslow describes constructionist historical writing as a theory-laden social science approach which proceeds not only empirically, but analytically and in an explanatory way. Unlike reconstructionist historical writing, which often focuses on individual historical persons, constructionist historical writing develops hypotheses about causal explanations of the past.<sup>27</sup> Munslow's third and clearly favoured form of expression is that of deconstructionist historical writing, which allows for continuous reflexion on the relativity of historical knowledge: 'Essentially, the deconstructionist historians hold that past events are explained and acquire their meaning as much by their representation as by

---

27 This can be discussed through the works of Jörn Rüsen, German expert in historical theory, who defines narrativity through a constructivist approach. He is primarily interested in explanatory models of the formation of historical meaning so as to position the narrative in the scope of academic historiography. In his typological description of function, he differentiates between four types of historical writing (traditional, exemplary, critical and genetic), which operate, sometimes jointly, at different times with a varying function of dominance (Jörn Rüsen: *Die vier Typen des historischen Erzählens*. In: Reinhart Koselleck/Heinrich Lutz/Jörn Rüsen (eds.): *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung*. München 1982, p. 514–605). Recently, Jakob Krameritsch has expanded Rüsen's four types with a fifth type – the situative narration – with regard to the 'age of digital media' (Jakob Krameritsch: *Die fünf Typen des historischen Erzählens – im Zeitalter digitaler Medien*. In: Jan-Holger Kirsch/Achim Saupe/Katja Stopka (eds.): *Sonderheft Populäre Geschichtsschreibung*. *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 6 (2009), issue 3, p. 413–432). Accordingly, the space and the range of experiences are continuously and situationally related to each other; identities are thereby described as transitory and non-essentialist. Krameritsch indicates briefly that experimental modes of narration could derive as a possible consequence from a collective and individual loss of meaning (*ibid.*, p. 425). Wulf Kansteiner argues in a similar way (Wulf Kansteiner: *Alternate worlds and invented communities. History and historical consciousness in the age of interactive media*. In: Keith Jenkins/Sue Morgan/Alun Munslow (eds.): *Manifestos for history*. London/New York 2007, p. 131–148). With the primary example of video games, Kansteiner argues that Rüsen's genetic model, which he describes as 'utopian vision dressed up as realistic analysis', was obsolete today (*ibid.*, p. 145).

their “knowable actuality” derived by conventional (empirical-analytical) epistemological means.<sup>28</sup>

For popular historical writing, a simple question arises on the basis of these three forms: is it almost exclusively a type of reconstructionist historical writing which somewhat ‘naively’ tries to depict historical reality, and which therefore lacks the theoretical-analytical complexity of constructionist explanations as well as the self-reflexive potential related to representation, while placing a stronger focus on historical individuals than on structures? This question, however, makes it apparent that neither the discussion about the fictionality of historical writing nor the discussion about its ontological difference or sameness to fiction really leads to new insight into the narrative possibilities of popular historical writing.

If, however, one leaves the discussion about the distinction between fact and fiction behind and instead argues narratologically, then the representational forms of popular historical writing can be more precisely discussed. The basic definition of narrativity – the temporal connection of events and as the mediation of the narrated by a narrator – shows that popular historical writing generally meets the structural criteria for narrativity. However, from non-fiction history books, to history magazines and TV documentaries to permanent exhibitions in history museums, it can be observed that certain individual forms deploy the technique of emplotment more consistently than others.<sup>29</sup> A non-fiction book, written as continuous monographic text, generally exhibits a strong narrative context. This is already weakened in a non-fiction book whose different chapters may be written by different authors. Similarly, a monothematic history magazine is, on the one hand, fragmented due to being structured in individual articles, but on the other hand, capable of strongly spatializing forms of expression by means of image and text arrangements, as well as

---

28 Cf. Munslow (note 16), p. 14.

29 Other forms of popular historical representation include films, documentaries, video games, online articles, websites and online data bases, monuments, radio reports, and re-enactments of history. For a comprehensive survey of different popular forms of historical representation cf. Jerome de Groot: *Consuming history. Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture*. London/New York 2009.

by means of paratexts.<sup>30</sup> This is compounded by the pictorial narrativity, which increases the temporal structure of the narrative in manifold ways.

The TV documentary is also characterized by a combination of text and images. On the one hand, it is similar – in its prototypal form – to the monographic non-fiction book, since it presents a continuous narrative, mostly pertaining to a historical event or a historical person as a hero or villain, with many different facets. On the other hand, the narrator intervenes far more heavily in the creation of the narrativity than in history magazines or most non-fiction books.

The last case-study, that of permanent exhibitions in the historical museum, is of all the examples presented here the genre which exhibits the least amount of narrativity, despite its focus on historical events and chronologically depicted events and phases. An exhibition is aimed at the creation of a spatial encounter between the visitor and historical objects and data. This again poses the question of how the museum creates narrativity.

In what follows, this article analyses these three genres – history magazines, TV documentaries and permanent historical exhibitions – narratologically in order to understand the variations of their representational strategies. A basic dichotomy of historical narration, the relation between argument (history as information) and experience (history which can be experienced in a space for historical actors, individuals and collectives as well as for its recipients), is paramount. Firstly, for the three example genres, narrative techniques of event, emplotment, narrator, character's discourse, perspective, focalization, narrative order and narrative distance are examined. In general, this text-theoretical arsenal is already known in terms of traditional structuralist narratology focused on fictional texts,<sup>31</sup> but in order to meet the specifics of historiographic narration its characteristics and specifics must be adjusted.<sup>32</sup> Secondly, the relation between argument and experientiality in the sense of recent post-classical narratology as well as the creation of a historical space by means of historical narration is carefully

---

30 On the paratextuality of historical writing cf. Julia Nitz: *In fact no fiction. Historiographic paratext*. In: Nitz/Petrulionis (note 24), p. 89–111.

31 For an overview cf. Gérard Genette: *Fictional narrative, factual narrative*. In: *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), p. 755–774.

32 Cf. Jaeger (note 24), p. 46.

examined, so that the narrativity of popular history narration can be more closely determined in the specific sense of scalar popular historical writing.

### 3. On the narrativity of history magazines

The majority of history magazines on the German market are intended for wide dissemination.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, history magazines have a three-fold function: the distribution of information, entertainment, and history education.<sup>34</sup> They put forward clear truth-claims and their contents appear authentic to the reader even though they are strongly constructed. The narrativity of history magazines in the sense of Schmid's five criteria for eventfulness is clearly shown. History magazines are tailored to epochs, nations or other important collectives, historical persons and historical events such as wars or revolutions. The texts are diegetic, i.e. they are conveyed in a narrative way. They generally aim at recounting history in a realistic way. History magazines differ narratively from academic historical writing as well as from popular non-fiction books<sup>35</sup> in that they re-tell the same story

---

33 On the dissemination of popular history magazines (as of the fourth quarter of 2009) cf. Walter Hömberg: *Die Aktualität der Vergangenheit. Konturen des Geschichtsjournalismus*. In: Klaus Arnold/Walter Hömberg/Susanne Kinnebrock (eds.): *Geschichtsjournalismus. Zwischen Information und Inszenierung*. Münster 2010, p. 15–30, p. 20.

34 Christian Spieß: *Zwischen Wissenschaft und Unterhaltungsanspruch. Aktuelle Geschichtsmagazine im Vergleich*. In: Sabine Horn/Michael Sauer (eds.): *Geschichte und Öffentlichkeit. Orte – Medien – Institutionen*. Göttingen 2009, p. 169–176. Spieß is especially interested in how the various contemporary history magazines in Germany position themselves on the German market, establish themselves between research and the public and, if need be, differentiate themselves from other history magazines and history representations. Also cf. Christian Spieß: *Zwischen populär und wissenschaftlich. Geschichtsvermittlung in aktuellen Geschichtsmagazinen*. In: Swen Steinberg/Daniel Trepsdorf/Stefan Meißner (eds.): *Vergessenes Erinnern. Medien von Erinnerungskultur und kollektivem Gedächtnis*. Berlin 2009, p. 132–151. On the connection between the public and research predominantly exemplified by analysing the history magazine *DAMALS* also cf. Marlene P. Hiller: *Der Spagat zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Wissenschaft oder: Geschichte schreiben für Liebhaber*. In: Horn/Sauer (note 34), p. 161–168.

35 It must be noted that history magazines vary in their basic narrative tone between objectivity and subjectivity. Some prefer a traditional, de-emotionalised,

on several narrative levels in several media. The traditional textual narrative is divided into chapters written by different authors and presents the phases or individual stories encapsulated by a general topic. But at the same time, magazines employ a similar temporal structure in their editorial introducing in the issue's topic as well as in the table of contents, which is mostly supported by long subheadings and often by a parallel list of illustrations, which in itself already reveals the essence of each chapter. In addition, history magazines such as *GEO EPOCHE* or *SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE* have their own independent picture narratives with guiding captions, which are inserted between the table of contents and the text chapters like a score. Moreover, further narrative levels exist at the end of the magazine in the form of images, which engage in a dialogue with the respective text chapters, and a timeline or chronicle of the most important historical events.<sup>36</sup> In the end, the combination of these text genres and media does not create multiple perspectives of the narrative,<sup>37</sup> but it creates the perception of a present space of history with multi-media depth.

---

constructivist form of historical writing, which separately employs forms of academic history narration and at the same time in other texts uses a rather subjective representational style as is usually the case in *ZEIT GESCHICHTE*. Others mix both forms of narration as generally is the case in *GEO EPOCHE*.

- 36 Unlike in fictional texts, it is difficult to distinguish between embedded narrative and frame narrative. It is more precise to speak of the simultaneousness of various narrative levels, whose effect strongly depends on each respective reader's behaviour.
- 37 The narratological concept of multiperspectival narrative considers both the story (a multitude of voices) as well as the discourse; with regard to history writing cf. Stephan Jaeger: *Multiperspektivisches Erzählen in der Geschichtsschreibung des ausgehenden zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts. Wissenschaftliche Inszenierungen von Geschichte zwischen Roman und Wirklichkeit*. In: Ansgar Nünning/Vera Nünning (eds.): *Multiperspektivisches Erzählen. Studien zur Theorie und Geschichte der Perspektivenstruktur narrativer Texte im englischen Roman des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts*. Trier 2000, p. 323–346. Multiperspectival narration in the didactics of history is exclusively confined to the level of past events. It therefore describes the representation of history 'where historical topics are illustrated from several, at least two different perspectives of involved and affected historical witnesses, who represent different social positions or interests' (Klaus Bergmann: *Multiperspektivität*. In: Klaus Bergmann et al. (eds.): *Handbuch für Geschichtsdidaktik*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Seelze-Velber 1992, p. 271 ff.). Popular history narration tends to dissolve multiple voices and perspectives on the level of discourse into one unitary structure of perspective.

This is exemplified in the magazine *GEO EPOCHE* 'Otto von Bismarck 1815–1898'.<sup>38</sup> The seven chronologically ordered main chapters are characterized by text and images. They develop the life and work of Bismarck in individual phases, predominantly ranging from the Revolution in 1848 to Bismarck's resignation in 1890 and his death in 1898. Therefore, the editorial marks the current state of knowledge about Bismarck. In the case of the Bismarck magazine, editor in chief Michael Schaper emphasizes the present-day diversity of opinions about Bismarck in his editorial, after various epochs have interpreted Bismarck in different ways.<sup>39</sup> The magazine aims at being documentary and objective, but at the same time the narrative pattern of a positive heroic story (in the sense of a romance) is discernible.<sup>40</sup> This is due to the choice of presentism as an approach, so that in the last chapter ('1890–1898: Bismarck's last years') Bismarck appears as triumphant over Wilhelm II in accordance with Bismarck's appreciation in the public eye of his time.<sup>41</sup> Despite all the emphasis on Bismarck's diverse roles on the various narrative levels of the magazine, today's reader experiences the epoch as well as the life and work of Bismarck as something positive, leading the way into the future and modernity.

The seventeen-page introductory picture chronicle, a representational form often used in contemporary German language history magazines, already exhibits a temporal dimension of modernity. The introductory double page titled 'Anbruch einer neuen Zeit' (Dawn of a new era) is presented as a photograph of the main hall of the Lehrter train station in

---

38 *GEO EPOCHE* 52 (2011) 'Otto von Bismarck 1815–1898'.

39 Bismarck was at the same time seen as civilian, choleric, fervent monarchist, rational and down-to-earth politician, reactionary, warmonger, artful diplomat, master of foreign policy, Socialist hater, and faithful Christian (*ibid.*, p. 3).

40 Cf. Hayden White's basic typology for the emplotment of history (Hayden White: *Metahistory. The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe*. Baltimore/London 1973, p. 7–11, p. 29 ff.).

41 Contribution by Jörg-Uwe Albig, cf. *GEO EPOCHE* 52 (2011), p. 142–155. Yet at the end of the issue an interview with the Hamburger historian Bernd Jürgen Wendt fragments the idea of emplotment as romance again, resulting in a more differentiated categorization of the role and the historical relevance of Bismarck. This includes the various phases of the history of remembrance (*ibid.*, p. 158 f).



Berlin around 1875.<sup>42</sup> A single freight train with four wagons is standing in the sun-drenched deserted and pillared hall. In light of this impressive architecture, the outlook is bright – the presence of individual people would only disrupt this vision of progress. Bismarck is consistently linked to a positive image of progress. The accompanying text consisting of 119 words links Bismarck to a time of change, leading to more democracy and to the German National State. A dialectic image-text narration is thereby prepared which is able to illustrate the social misery caused by the Industrial Revolution without damaging the heroic image of Bismarck. The last image of the picture chronicle, which shows Wilhelm II posing with the crew of a battle ship, carries the title ‘Hybris einer neuen Generation’ (Hubris of a new generation) and is deliberately used as contrast to the more considerate Bismarck,<sup>43</sup> even if at that time, without placing this photograph within the magazine’s particular narrative, it was more likely to be seen as positive advertising for German technological know-how and Germany’s claim to world power.<sup>44</sup>

This use of photographs illustrates how popular historical writing manipulates the narrative in such a way that the representation appears to be authentic and the reader does not doubt the fact that history is told in the ‘right’ way. Primary sources (here the historical photographs) and historical narrative blend into one voice as seen in the introductory example by Sontheimer.<sup>45</sup> The photograph appears to be ideal for the purpose of telling an authentic story, exactly as reflected in the introductory text of

---

42 Ibid., p. 6 f.

43 Ibid., p. 22 f.

44 On related topics on the image between authenticity and performance especially cf. the edited collection Thomas Knieper/Marion G. Müller (eds.): *Authentizität und Inszenierung von Bilderwelten*. Köln 2003; particularly the contributions by Elke Grittmann: *Die Konstruktion von Authentizität. Was ist echt an den Pressefotos im Informationsjournalismus?*, p. 123–149, and Thomas Schierl: *Der Schein der Authentizität. Journalistische Bildproduktion als nachfrageorientierte Produktion scheinbarer Authentizität*, p. 150–167.

45 For an exemplary study which shows how problematic it is to use photographs as ‘authentic sources’ without reflecting on how they were created see Ulrike Pilarczyk: ‘Ostjuden’ im Scheunenviertel. Eine bildanalytische Recherche. In: Jüdisches Museum Berlin (ed.): *Berlin Transit. Jüdische Migranten aus Osteuropa in den 1920er Jahren*. Göttingen/Berlin 2012, p. 65–69.

the picture chronicle: 'The art of photography, which is still young at the middle of the century, captures the people of the Bismarck era and their environment; it documents the effects of great politics as well as the social transformations, and thereby provides the following generations with very vivid snapshots of a country which is undergoing fundamental change'.<sup>46</sup> The magazine does not consider the fact that the images carry out very particular narrative functions in their plot structure as well as through their captions. When looking at the characters of the picture narrative it becomes clear that apart from Bismarck only Wilhelm II is mentioned as a person. All other narrative characters are presented as collectives – the peasants, the military or the navy, the citizens, workers and employees, the city of Hamburg, the poor, German entrepreneurs and the aristocracy – and these have specific functions for the narrative. The navy and Wilhelm II, for example, signal the megalomania of the German Empire and its concomitant decline. Accordingly, the picture story predefines a clear narrative structure for the whole magazine. The reader is primed for the dialectic effects of the Industrial Revolution and while simultaneously seeing Bismarck as the sensible driving force of progress and of the Prussian-German National State.

A glance at the sixth main chapter in Bismarck's life written by Gesa Gottschalk and titled 'Kampf um Hamburg' (Fight for Hamburg) with the overall title '1878–1890: Konflikt mit den Sozialdemokraten' (1878–1890: Conflict with the Social Democrats) can more clearly illustrate the classic narrative methods of a history magazine.<sup>47</sup> Just as has been insinuated already in the picture story, the perspective of prototypical individual persons and especially of collectives is also fundamental to

---

46 Cf. GEO EPOCHE 52 (2011), p. 6 f. (text by Frank Otto).

47 Ibid., p. 118–138. Also the longer text chapters are characterised by simultaneous narratives in images, captions, subheadings and short summaries. In 'Kampf um Hamburg' the basic content of the text is already provided by a three-line text functioning as a summarizing subheading: 'August Bebel calls the metropolis on the river Elbe the "capital of German Socialism": in Hamburg resides the board of the "Socialist Labour Party of Germany" (SAP); the Social Democrats find many voters and members here. But Chancellor Bismarck sees the labour movement as a revolutionary threat – and declares war against them' (ibid., p. 118 f.).

the textual narrative of the history magazine. The beginning of the article 'Kampf um Hamburg' depicts the variety of historical narration used here: of characters, perspectives, focalization, order, and distance. The article begins like a novel, with a close-up:<sup>48</sup> 'In the unheated chamber of an apartment building in the Prussian village Ottensen near Hamburg the cigar worker August Kückelhahn and a Social Democratic comrade tie up small packages in the light of a paraffin lamp on the eve of 25 November 1885.'<sup>49</sup> The text uses the historical present, the narrator is heterodiegetic and covert; he does not appear himself.<sup>50</sup> Initially, the text is externally focalized; the reader seems to attend the scene as an imaginary observer. The reader 'sees' exactly what is happening in the room without having insight into the thoughts of the historical persons.<sup>51</sup> The last part of the paragraph mentions that both people enter 'wrong or invented names of senders in the consignment notes' shifting the text to zero focalisation, since 'wrong and invented' clearly implies knowledge which the observer of the scene cannot possess.<sup>52</sup> This becomes apparent in the second paragraph, which consists of one sentence: 'Actually, the boxes contain a far more dangerous freight'<sup>53</sup>, which creates suspense. Subsequently, the perspective switches back and forth. The narrator provides details about the illegal production of the newspaper DER SOZIALDEMOKRAT (The Social Democrat), but always returns to the specific situation on the night of the 25 November. At the end, the forward-looking introduction turns hypothetical: 'Does he [Kückelhahn] look back when he leaves the house at around 10pm?' The appearance of police superintendent August Engels, a Hamburg based 'Hunter of Socialists', follows. 'In any case, that man in the dark who has already endured the cold for the entire evening escapes

---

48 Later on the reader discovers that this is a flash-forward when the narrator moves back into the 1860s for the actual start of the story.

49 Cf. GEO EPOCHE 52 (2011), p. 120.

50 Cf. RÜTH (note 9), p. 35 and p. 45, on the concepts of overt and covert narration.

51 On the possibilities of external focalization in history writing, for example, cf. RÜTH (note 9), p. 110; on the three basic types of focalization in general cf. Genette (note 31), p. 762.

52 Cf. GEO EPOCHE 52 (2011), p. 120.

53 Ibid.

the notice of the cigar worker.<sup>54</sup> In this way, two prototypes of individual functional representatives are created, a trade unionist operating in the underground and an ambitious representative of the authorities, who almost appear to challenge each other.

Even more essential to the entire article than the confrontation between two exemplary individuals is the unfolding of the historical world between Socialist Law, social problems, and Bismarck's social reforms. In order to illustrate the social reforms, the perspective of collectives must be established: 'The day labourers sit in the pubs at the river Elbe for hours, smoking and drinking. [...] They never know what this day will bring: an old cargo sail ship, a modern steamship? Do they have to carry sacks full of coffee or barrels full of tobacco from the freight compartment?'<sup>55</sup> In this way, a secondary space is created which depicts the working-class of Hamburg around 1878 caught between existential worries, unemployment and the incommensurable and hygienically catastrophic state of the working class districts. On the other narrative levels, this space is multiplied by photographs, captions and highlighted information. For instance, the magazine presents the following message in red ink and capital letters in a framed rectangular square: 'Even in prosperous Hamburg the workers' wages are often not enough to pay for rent and food.'<sup>56</sup> By these means, the history magazine suggests a narrative world and the possibility of empathy with the life of the workers to the reader. The reader is supposed to be able to relate to the imaginative world of the workers which continues to be created in the historical present tense. As in every other abstracted historical narrative this present tense is secondary or simulated, since in reality collective perspectives generally do not exist.

Like all historical writing, the history magazine is a narrative mediated by the narrator, but it is typical for the genre of history magazines that this mediating authority is put in the background so as to narrate in the most present way possible. This allows the reader to gain insight into the perspective of the time: in the example mentioned above into exemplary individuals such as August Kückelhahn or detective inspector August

---

54 Ibid., p. 120 f.

55 Ibid., p. 126.

56 Ibid., p. 122 f.

Engel, into political and public key figures such as the Socialist leader Lassalle or Bismarck, and into historical collectives such as Hamburg's shipyard workers or the Communists.

The interesting aspect of a history magazine is in the end not the fact that it depicts anything new about its topic. It compiles known, partially simplified knowledge and sources with the aim of authentic historical writing, which cannot, however, be verified – at least not by the non-expert. A historical world unfolds before the reader, one which is clearly non-fictional since based on a referential claim to a historical world, and which manipulates the reader in accordance with the truth-claim made through, for instance, the dialogue between text and images.<sup>57</sup> The fact that the narrator imagines himself into a specific historical space in the introductory scene by means of external focalization does not change this claim and its authentic effect on the reader. The reader expects this scene to make sense in the historical world. This works, since Kückelhahn serves as an example for the underground activities of the Socialists. In this way, the article creates a historical experience that is neither methodologically nor epistemologically challenging but simply present, by means of historical narrative, which is made into a coherent historical world through the arrangement of the magazine, images, and other paratextual means.<sup>58</sup>

The notions of 'narrative' and of 'experience', which theorists of history used to see as dichotomy, always come together in history magazines. Since the process of the cognitive understanding of the past is basically considered as a given, history magazines – at least contemporary German history

---

57 Unlike the slightly more academic magazines ZEIT GESCHICHTE and SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE, which to some extent base themselves on an institutional authority by employing university professors as their authors, it is GEO EPOCHE's style to playfully – in this case by a spatial and historical coincidence of the historical topic – emphasize the subjective expert knowledge of its authors. One example reads: 'Gesa Gottschalk, 31, lives in Hamburg and regularly writes for GEO EPOCHE. Her second child was born in Ottensen at the very hour, 120 years after the end of the Socialist Law' (ibid., p. 138).

58 It is typical for the narrative form of a history magazine not to reflect explicitly on the simulated reality – neither on the historical method nor on the form of representation. It is expected that the simulation of reality is based on thorough source criticism and it is decisive that the representation is accepted as truthful and authentic by the reader.

magazines addressing a wide audience – aim at bringing the reader as close as possible to a historical world and its developments.<sup>59</sup> Munslow's critique that popular history magazines 'seem to be neither fish nor fowl. It is not serious academic history and yet it has the aim of being trustworthy', and that such magazines only verify the epistemological status quo, is indeed factually correct, but misses the most interesting narrative aspect of what in Munslow's eyes appears to be a naive-reconstructionist history genre.<sup>60</sup> By means of variations of historical narrative, the reader can experience a certain historical 'reality' as presently simulated in historical spaces and temporal sequences as well as in perspectives of prototypical individual persons and collectives.<sup>61</sup> In this way, history magazines gain narrativity in the sense of the experientiality of history for the reader.

#### 4. On the narrativity of TV documentaries

Historical TV documentaries are examined as the second case-study, since they function in the same diegetic way as history magazines. In documentaries, events are depicted and connected, predominantly chronologically. The five basic criteria for narrativity according to Schmid are fulfilled. Additionally, history and historical events are also clearly mediated by a narrative authority. Unlike TV event films or documentary drama, and unlike documentary films which according to their aesthetic structure object to or strongly reduce the role of an explicit narrator, historical TV documentaries prototypically use a narrator who guides the viewer through the film by raising questions and connecting events and the way

---

59 To sum up the discussion cf. Jaeger (note 24), p. 35 f. The self-reflection that occurs refers – for instance, in *GEO EPOCHE* 'Otto von Bismarck 1815–1898' – to the various roles of Bismarck, which are illustrated in the editorial as today's multi-perspective state of knowledge as well as to individual reflections upon the gaps in historical knowledge, such as the gap that nothing is known about the further fate of August Kückelhahn apart from the possibility that he participated in one of the celebrations on the occasion of the end of the Socialist Law on 1 October 1890 (*ibid.*, p. 138). Probability suffices so as to maintain the narrated world as historically credible.

60 Cf. Munslow (note 16), p. 72.

61 Cf. Jaeger (note 9).

in which various examined aspects interrelate.<sup>62</sup> This especially applies to those history documentaries which in Germany are in the first instance linked to the name of Guido Knopp and his ZDF productions.<sup>63</sup> The voice of the narrator is usually marked as the voice of the historian. Moreover, the voices of historical witnesses are added in contemporary TV documentaries if they are still alive or recordings featuring them exist. This is predominantly the case for TV documentaries which depict the historical time periods starting from the National Socialists' seizure of power in 1933. If no historical witnesses are available the filmmakers increasingly incorporate experts and historians, and highlight the authenticity of objects and locations.<sup>64</sup> In this way, a variety of perspectives and angles is presented to the viewer: by the narrator, the historical witnesses and footage. This

---

62 For instance, cf. Tobias Ebbrecht: Docudramatizing history on TV. German and British docudrama and historical event television in the memorial year 2005. In: *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10 (2007), issue 1, p. 35–53; Stephan Jaeger: *Das Gedächtnis des Bombenkrieges (1940–1945). Inszenierungstechniken zwischen Ideologisierung und Entideologisierung in Historiographie und Dokumentarfilm*. In: Stephan Jaeger/Christer Petersen (eds.): *Zeichen des Krieges in Literatur, Film und den Medien II. Ideologisierung und Entideologisierung*. Kiel 2006, p. 118–141.

63 On a classification of Knopp's representational techniques in the scope of contemporary historical writing cf., amongst others, Judith Keilbach: Mit dokumentarischen Bildern effektiv Geschichte erzählen. Die historischen Aufnahmen in Guido Knopps Geschichtsdokumentationen. In: *Medien + Erziehung* 42 (1998), issue 6, p. 355–361; Wulf Kansteiner: The radicalization of German memory in the age of its commercial reproduction: Hitler and the Third Reich in the TV documentaries of Guido Knopp. In: *In pursuit of German memory: history, television, and politics after Auschwitz*. Athens 2006, p. 154–180; Stefan Brauburger: Fiktionalität oder Fakten? Welche Zukunft hat die zeitgeschichtliche Dokumentation? In: Claudia Cippitelli/Axel Schwanebeck (eds.): *Fernsehen macht Geschichte. Vergangenheit als TV-Ereignis*. Baden-Baden 2008, p. 43–56.

64 Alternatively, there are TV films which re-stage history as such in the form of re-enactment. On the various forms by which historical representation creates authenticity cf. Eva Ulrike Pirker/Mark Rüdiger: Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen. Annäherungen. In: Eva Ulrike Pirker et al. (eds.): *Echte Geschichte. Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen*. Bielefeld 2010, p. 11–30.

ostensive notion of multiple perspectives<sup>65</sup> is, however – just as in history magazines and in non-fiction history books – controlled by the historian.<sup>66</sup> The remembered experiences of historical witnesses are embedded into the overall narrative as short arguments, in a manner similar to the way that images are deployed. An impression of diversity, multiperspectival narration, and authenticity is thereby created, but in fact the voices only substitute for the voice of the narrator within the same line of historical argument. On the level of discourse, this technique dissolves the multiple perspectives that exist on the story level in favour of the dominating view of the author.<sup>67</sup>

A simple example for this is the first episode of the production ‘Hitlers Kinder’ (Hitler’s children, 2000) developed under the supervision of Guido Knopp, entitled ‘Verführung’ (Seduction), which deals with the role of the Hitler Youth in the Third Reich.<sup>68</sup> In this episode, the later author Erich Loest remembers how in 1936 he was symbolically ‘given’ to Hitler on the occasion of his birthday together with all the boys who joined the Hitler Youth in that year. Other witnesses talk about the satisfaction of belonging and of being accepted, as well as about the skills of the National Socialists to seduce the youth step by step into National Socialism and militarism. In the end, the narrator and the film only propose one message, which is that youth were seduced by the magic of the masses. Narrative allows the viewer to experience this proposition so that he can comprehend the

---

65 On the notion of multiple perspectives and multiperspectival narration in narratology and history didactics cf. note 37.

66 History magazines, however, are also able to grant historical witnesses intrinsic value due to their fragmentary and open structure rather than to fully functionalise them in a narrative structure. This can be implemented in separate interviews and texts of remembrance, which function as independent articles, as becomes clear in ZEIT GESCHICHTE 2 (2009) ‘1989. Die geglückte Revolution’. At the same time, eyewitnesses become, similarly to the GEO EPOCHE issue on Bismarck analysed above, acting personae in events which are presented in present tense narrative texts. The statement made by the witness is here directly transferred into the reality of the historiographically explored world.

67 Cf. Jaeger (note 37), p. 323–346.

68 Hitlers Kinder. 5 parts. Co-ordinated by: Guido Knopp. ZDF 2000. Part 1: Verführung. Directed by: Peter Hartl/Anja Geist. ZDF Video DVD 2009.



seduction of an entire generation. Every historical witness, regardless of their political conviction, supports this proposition. Those such as Hans J. Massaquoi (who was of mixed heritage), Jewish children, or children whose parents had prohibited them from joining the Hitler Youth, felt excluded. The narrator is an omniscient narrator – which the academic historian can, of course, never be – who accurately surveys historical events as well as motivations and background circumstances. The witnesses speak as one voice, even though they take on different parts. Thus, it is only consistent that the propaganda material of the National Socialists is continuously used to illustrate the basic proposition of the seduction of the youth.<sup>69</sup> The staged reality in the film proves the claim for emotional mass manipulation, and the use of staged images validates the memories of the manipulated youth.

In the second part of ‘Hitlers Kinder’, ‘Hingabe’ (Devotion), which deals with the role of girls and young women in the Third Reich, the narrator poses a provocative question with regard to documentary photographs of girls ecstatically cheering Hitler and crying from excitement: ‘How representative are such images?’ A historical witness, Gertraude Wortmann, answers that Hitler was seen as the dominant father-figure and that this is no longer understandable today. Further footage follows, accompanied by music chosen by the producers, so as to highlight the emotionality of the devoted reactions as the narrator now asks in the historical present: ‘What drives these girls?’ The answers are again given by two historical witnesses: deep love and the comparison of Hitler to God.<sup>70</sup>

In other words, the messages of the propaganda footage, and brief snapshots of statements by historical witnesses as they remember, reflect the narrator’s level of mediacy. A critical interrogation of how the witnesses’ collective memory was formed does not take place in this present-tense historical writing. Propaganda, memory and history become part

---

69 Cf. Hömberg (note 33), p. 24. Hömberg also refers to the consequences of the channel ZDF’s decision to increasingly give historians a say in its documentary series ‘Die Deutschen’ (2008, second season 2010) so as to mark the difference between historical reality and historical writing (ibid.).

70 *Hitlers Kinder* (note 68) Part 2: *Hingabe*. Directed by: Christian Deick/Mahnas Rassapur.

of a collective experientiality.<sup>71</sup> The TV documentary occasionally adds a dissenting opinion for the viewer to recognise or to highlight pretences, but in the end, the aim of the narrative is to recreate the historical magic of the mass staging. The surface of history is supposed to become present and be experienced as a simulation; deeper historical complexities are not to be understood or problematized.

Thus, historical writing in 'Hitlers Kinder' creates an experiential space. The viewer can 'experience' and thereby seemingly understand the manipulation of the German youth. Just as in history magazines, narrativity poses the risk that history could be presented as unambiguous in the narrative. This is enhanced by the fact that 'Hitlers Kinder' is primarily focused on how history is perceived, and no real differentiation is made between primary narrative – the propaganda images and memories – and the historiographic secondary narrative. In contrast to the history magazine, the narrating and mediating authority remains a kind of 'accomplice' to the propaganda. However, the medium TV does offer possibilities for distantiation in order to highlight the secondary narrative of the historian. For this reason, this article examines a second more recent example, one which tries to subvert the school of Knopp: Ullrich H. Kasten's 2009 Film 'Hitler Stalin. Portrait einer Feindschaft' (Hitler and Stalin. A portrait of enmity).<sup>72</sup> Kasten avoids the suggestive effect of the propaganda by radically renouncing historical witnesses or other expert opinions. The documentary, which was produced in collaboration with, amongst others, the German Historical Museum and the English historian Richard Overy, works on three levels: the voice of the narrator, historical footage (including propaganda film) and coloured present-day footage of historical locations and memorial sites. Additionally, some evocative film recordings are used, such as at the beginning of the film

---

71 For a critique of the use of NS propaganda material and the uncritical implementation of memory fragments of eyewitnesses cf. Horst Walter Blanke: Stichwortgeber. Die Rolle der 'Zeitzeugen' in G. Knopps Fernsehdokumentation. In: Vadim Oswalt/Hans-Jürgen Pandel (eds.): *Geschichtskultur. Die Anwesenheit von Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart*. Schwalbach/Ts. 2009, p. 63–74.

72 *Hitler Stalin. Portrait einer Feindschaft*. Arte in cooperation with Discovery Communications Europe, Luce, Kaleidoscope, Looks, Transit Film and ZDF. Directed by: Ullrich H. Kasten. DVD 2009.

when viewers apparently find themselves in a vehicle passing nocturnal reflections of Moscow and 'enter' with Stalin his country home, right before the German invasion of the Kremlin. Under the aegis of the narrator a contrastive knowledge-set about Hitler and Stalin is developed, about their thoughts, their opinions about each other and their desires and fears, which follows the developments of the war in regular pre-views and flash-backs until the death of Stalin (as well as his continued effect in the Cold War). From the beginning, the fight between the principles of racial hatred and class struggle is suggested, which both, in the end, amount to the same thing. With a few exceptions, the film does not use music; the only two original voices in the footage are speeches by Hitler and Stalin so that the viewer only hears the voice of the narrator, apart from a few suggestive pauses. In comparison to a Knopp production it could be argued that to a wider audience the film appears more monotonous, since it is less emotional.

From a narratological point of view, the film is zero-focalized – the position of the narrator is not to be determined. It exhibits regular flash-backs and flash-forwards to express the duel between Hitler and Stalin; from the basic narrative of the surprised Stalin, the rapid advance of the Germans, its faltering and Russian perseverance, to Hitler's physical deterioration and Stalin's triumph. The perspective is multi-perspectival with a closed structure, since it swings back and forth between the Russian and the German side and is, at the same time, fully controlled by the narrator. Although there are innumerable propaganda images the footage never stands for itself, but is always immediately interpreted and commented upon. Again and again, the narrator gets close to the thoughts of both dictators. These thoughts are represented as knowledge in a historiographically distanced way: this is what Josef Stalin or Adolf Hitler thought or believed. Different interpretations of history are not addressed; what is addressed are merely the gaps should historical knowledge be unable to deduce what was going on in the head of one of the two dictators. Sometimes the film is playful, for instance, when it asks in virtual-history style what would have happened if Hitler and Stalin had actually met in 1913, when they both resided in Vienna and went for walks in the park of Schönbrunn Palace.

Without question, the film displays narrativity in terms of event sequences and mediacy. The more interesting question is whether it also

creates historical experientiality by means of narration. Right at the beginning the narrator says: 'Their duel [Hitler's and Stalin's] tells the cruellest story so far of how ideas can drag everything along, first into enthusiasm, then into death.' The film, however, is not interested in simulating the experience of this captivating effect. The viewer experiences it neither for Hitler nor for Stalin. The viewer is ultimately left somewhat helpless when it comes to actually being able to imagine or understand their motivations. Nor does the viewer experience the captivating effect for either regime or for the war. The viewer guesses that the German soldiers went to war optimistically, that the Russians led an existential and total defensive war, but this appears to be based exclusively on rational conclusions. There is no such thing as historical presence; the coloured images of the places nowadays are, on the one hand, no more than illustrations on a map which indicate that Brest-Litovsk really existed. On the other hand, they are reciprocal points of constant shifts in history: Hitler celebrates himself in Vienna after the annexation of Austria; Stalin seizes Vienna; Stalin is honoured in Vienna with a monument. What Kasten stages to be experienced in his distanced method of representation are abstract principles. The narrator and with him the images, playfully jump from one topic to the next. For instance, the narrator recounts how the weather-beaten and destroyed tableaux of Stalin fuelled Hitler's intention to conquer the world while this is supplemented though footage of Hitler and Mussolini visiting the destroyed fortress of Brest-Litovsk. Mussolini's remark that soon only the moon would remain for Hitler's will to conquer is used by the narrator for one of many plays on words and images. Hitler is shown ascending in a plane; his metaphorical aspirations for the moon are then explicitly linked to the 'lunar landscape' of the destroyed Soviet cities, which Hitler already enjoys, as well as to corresponding images. Whether or not they are always stylistically successful, such plays on associations characterise the film's antagonistic narrative technique. Principles and directions are intercut with each other. These abstract movements are simulated so that the viewer can experience them in an ironic way (i.e. always tied to narrative distance). 'Stalin falls, Hitler rises', says the narrator while a Stalin bust is decapitated. This statement is later reversed accordingly and in the final part of the documentary the construction and erection of a similar Stalin bust dominates the shown footage. The film grants the viewer the

explicit, but at the same time suggestive experience of abstract principles, always filtered so that no doubt arises that this is a historical ‘interpretation’ of a past reality.

Both examples show two extremes of popular representation of history in TV documentaries, which illustrate how differently historical experientiality can be created on various levels. It could indeed be argued that the radical renunciation of historical presence lets the ARTE production by Ullrich H. Kasten stand out from the field of popular history representation with mass appeal. The production ought to address or fascinate a considerably smaller audience than a Knopp production. Due to the suggestive technique of creating a secondary reality of historical knowledge in word plays and image composition, Kasten’s film, however, remains clearly differentiated from a constructionist or even deconstructionist academic form of historical writing. As with the other popular history examples, an abstracted reconstruction of historical events and causalities occurs, which results in ‘one’ story (with some acknowledged gaps) for the viewer.

## 5. On the narrativity of historical museums

Narration in museums does without a doubt count as popular historical representation for large historical museums and their permanent exhibitions as well as their distinctive special exhibitions, at least according to the definition used in this volume which determines popular historical writing as targeting a wide public. However, narration in historical exhibitions is, on the one hand, fundamentally different from the previously discussed methods of narration in non-fiction history books, history magazines, and TV documentaries, since it has a spatial effect and the visitor has direct contact with the objects.<sup>73</sup> The museum exhibits an anti-narrative element, especially if it is focused on exhibits and less aimed at finding a narrative thread through history or a genealogical answer to the development of a story. At the same time, it provides at least the possibility of granting

---

73 Heike Buschmann: *Geschichten im Raum. Erzähltheorie als Museumsanalyse*. In: Joachim Baur (ed.): *Museumsanalyse. Methoden und Konturen eines neuen Forschungsfeldes*. Bielefeld 2010, p. 149–170.

the interpreter more room for interpretation.<sup>74</sup> The criterion of mediacy is far less apparent. On the other hand, a narratological perspective makes it possible to understand how the objects of an exhibition have come together as a story. As with other popular historical media, a historical exhibition usually emphasizes its objectivity and truth-claims very overtly. Many historical exhibitions carefully walk the line between history and memory, which is even more evident than in TV documentaries and their use of the historical witnesses who serve to construct the narrative thread of the film. However, especially in the German-speaking world, it can be noted that state-funded historical museums with their meta-narrative form remain a historiographic medium. A complete-experience 'immersion' of the visitor rarely occurs, or at least to a far lesser extent than, for instance, in Anglo-American museums. Rather, techniques such as installations featuring memories of historical witnesses supplement a predominantly documentary museum, which provides thematic and structural overviews. Experience functions less by means of narration and more by the relations the visitor develops to individual exhibits.

In this article, the Zeitgeschichtliche Forum Leipzig (Forum of Contemporary History), which is part of the Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Foundation (House of History of the Federal Republic of Germany) serves as an example. It contains one of the historical permanent collections in Germany most strongly shaped by collective memory. The Zeitgeschichtliche Forum was opened in 1999 and the exhibition was fundamentally revised in 2007. On the museum's website it reads: 'Join us on a journey through time and experience our tour of the division of Germany after the Second World War, the uprising of 17 June 1953, the construction of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961, the expatriation of the songwriter Wolf Biermann in 1976, the Monday demonstrations and eventually the peaceful revolution in 1989/90 and the fall of the Berlin Wall.'<sup>75</sup> This short description already illustrates two moments of representational technique. On the one hand, the aspect of experience

---

74 Apparently, the average visitor does not perceive the exhibition in its totality, but approaches it selectively. This differentiates them from readers of a book or viewers of a film since here a 'total' perception is more likely to happen.

75 URL: <http://www.hdg.de/leipzig/ausstellungen/dauerausstellung/>.

is highlighted: the visitor is supposed to experience history. On the other hand, history appears as narrative in its very essentials, since the description aims at specific historical events and at the temporal moment of a journey through time, and not merely at presenting structures or collecting exhibits. In contrast to prototypical narratives in history magazines, non-fiction books or films, all of which are secondary history narratives and often only hint at their primary source narratives (or, as exemplified above with 'Hitlers Kinder', blend them with the secondary narrative), the museum contains both levels of narrative. Survey texts, and the selection and arrangement of the texts indicate a clear narrative structure whose events are highlighted accordingly.<sup>76</sup> For instance, the Zeitgeschichtliche Forum emphasizes the foundation of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) or the payment of reparations to the Soviet Union.<sup>77</sup> The museum always narrates contrastively: official documents/exhibits of the authorities stand against 'unofficial' perspectives of citizens of the GDR; the press in the East and the press in the West etc. Consequently, the visitor is always confronted with two perspectives. Two reading corners, opposite each other, enable the visitor to experience the reading of selected press reports in both German countries between 1959 and 1961 (on the Cuba Missile Crisis and on the construction of the Wall). Even if it could be narratologically argued that a mediating narrator hardly exists, or exists only sporadically – via the short survey texts on the introductory panels – nevertheless, a narrator's influence is recognizable, since in the end the entire arrangement of the objects does not let the visitor doubt that the official opinion of the GDR leadership is highly propagandistic. In the complex installation on the uprising

---

76 Some parts of the museum are clearly less narrative and more object-oriented, such as the exhibit on every-day life in the GDR, in which the visitor is confronted with objects and installations that recall the desires of the 1970s and 1980s in an anti-narrative way.

77 At the same time, the chronology and the importance of such historical events is depicted in a circular gallery of panels, each representing one year, which lists events, individually supported by original film recordings screened on video monitors, in the style of a chronicle. This chronicle in itself does not possess narrativity (cf. note 17); with Hayden White it can be argued that it receives narrativity in the permanent exhibition and thereby adds a further narrative structure, similar to the timeline at the end of history magazines.

on 17 June 1953 the perspective of the protesting human beings and of the people as a collective clearly prevails (amongst others in video footage of demonstrators, through historical witnesses, and through weekly newsreels from the GDR and the FRG). The viewer recognizes the GDR's representation of the events on 17 June as fiction; the propagandistic undertones of the Western news coverage can also be seen. A steel construction in the middle of the room lets images and newspaper articles speak for themselves, but three stipulations with slogans such as 'free and secret votes for all Germans', which expand like road signs across the upper end of the construction into the room, clearly map out the interpretations made and directions given by the museum. A spatial crossing of a border, marked by the keyword 'voting with your feet' and the thematic section 'escape' follow, which narratively contextualizes the effect of 17 June.

A museum can narrate in a predominantly documentary way, as does the German Historical Museum in Berlin in its permanent exhibition opened in 2005. As soon as a museum, as is the case in Leipzig, gives the visitor the possibility of engaging with primary narratives the possibility of narrative experientiality of history opens up.<sup>78</sup> This can possibly be classified and assessed through a higher-level narrative structure, but the functionalization of narrative voices can occur far less functionally and ideologically as compared to the prototypical TV film. For instance, in the part of the installation on the immediate post-war period the visitor is confronted with a rape of a Weimar woman by a Russian soldier portrayed in a detailed letter from the woman to her husband. At the same time, official statements by the Soviet government can be seen which emphasise that Russia does not harbour feelings of revenge against the Germans. A Colonel General from the Red Army regards the crimes committed by

---

78 Also individual witnesses can be directly heard at computer stations ('life cycles') distributed among the exhibition. The visitors choose a card similar to a credit card which allows them to choose the gender of 'their' witness and one out of three generations. At each computer station they listen to the sequence of an interview which matches the respective time span in the permanent exhibition. Thereby, exemplary, but subjective narrations of remembrance expand the historiographic narration. In contrast to many TV documentaries, the historical witnesses are not fully functionalised by the narrator so that the narrative maintains its individual value.



the Soviets as petty compared to the crimes committed by the Germans; and a print edition by Lew Kopelew records his testimony of Soviet crimes in besieged Germany, as a result of which – as the accompanying text explains – he was sentenced to ten years in prison. In this arrangement, the primary narratives stand for themselves; only the visitor can create a secondary narrative and decide how these testimonies are to be interpreted historically. With this constructed openness museums can, to a certain extent, transgress the typically closed experientiality of popular historical writing. Hence, the *Zeitgeschichtliche Forum* in Leipzig is particularly interesting with regard to the combination of narration and experience in popular historical writing, because it uses the concept of historical presentism, but at the same time opens it up narratologically. Primary and secondary narrations remain recognizable. The ‘one’ reconstructed reality typical for popular historical writing exists as well as other perspectives and worlds which open up for the active visitor.

## 6. Possible narratological consequences for popular historical writing

To conclude, it is apparent that popular historical narratives are especially characterised by creating historical worlds which are prototypically shaped by one clear interpretation of history. Popular historical narratives tend to simulate historical presence, historical atmosphere, and collective perception. In this article, it was made clear that popular historical narratives deploy familiar narrative means such as voice, perspective or distance in manifold forms. At the same time it becomes apparent that in order to better understand the narrative potential of popular historical writing, narrativity must be determined not only structurally for narrative or historical narrative as such, but specifically for popular historical narratives. The concept of experientiality, applying recent theories in narratology, is therefore as important as the discussion about collective perspectives. The experientiality of historical narratives – for historical individuals as well as for collectives – and at the same time the experientiality of historical narration for the recipient (often connected to the simulation of historical presence) is a decisive means of representation in order to create narrativity in popular historical writing. Traditional

structuralist narratology provides some insight in the representational means of text, which a new interdisciplinary and intermedial narratology needs to utilize, refine, and expand.

What can be learned from the narratological considerations presented here for the practice of popular historical writing? It is particularly striking that the relation between primary and secondary narrative is to be reflected. When can sources speak for themselves? When do they enter into the historiographic discourse without giving the viewer or reader the possibility to differentiate? When can the sources be granted a presence of their own without rendering popular historical writing arbitrary, merely expressing subjective memories? How do historical narratives simulate the perspectives of prototypical individual persons? How do they construct the perspectives of collectives? How do they create a spatial and scenic proximity? How does a narrative allow for distance so that the recipient of a narrative employing the approach of presentism is not manipulated entirely?

The way in which such concepts are evaluated depends of course to an extent on the intention of the writer of popular history. Klaus Arnold therefore has conducted a survey among history journalists. The following representational aims were mentioned most and are listed in descending order: mediate complex topics, convey new perspectives on the past, offer entertainment and relaxation, concentrate on topics which appeal to many, and which educate the audience.<sup>79</sup> The fact that the neutral and precise reconstruction of reality and the 'depiction' of the past – the way it 'really' was – were less important is undoubtedly linked to the high degree of reflexion shown by the interviewees. However, it is narratologically obvious that the reconstructionist form clearly dominates the practice of popular historical writing even though the impossibility of an exact depiction of historical truth is acknowledged by almost every historian.<sup>80</sup>

---

79 Klaus Arnold: *Geschichtsjournalismus – ein Schwellenressort? Arbeitsweisen, Themen und Selbstverständnis von Geschichtsjournalisten in Deutschland*. In: Arnold/Hömborg/Kinnebrock (note 33), p. 87–107, p. 102.

80 Additionally, a mass audience would possibly see its perception of the same historical representations with a very different goal in mind.

It may be worth considering whether popular historical narratives can indeed create an open structure of perspectives, which allows for contradictions and multiperspectival narration, without endangering the aim of informing and entertaining a wide audience. Especially if the presence and experientiality of history are paramount, then it will not be unlikely that the reality of a police inspector and that of an underground labour leader are not fully compatible. This is where Munslow's insistence on deconstructionist self-reflexive historical writing is especially relevant.<sup>81</sup> In all genres prototypical popular historical writing allows the narrator to control a narrative reality. But there are always multiple perceptions of the past. The perception of the majority, which by means of manipulation and ideologization has often entered collective memory as 'true' history, does not exclude the many other passive or contradictory perceptions. In this way, narratological perspectives on popular historical writing can help prevent popular historical narratives from being seen automatically as having a low degree of complexity with an unambiguous idea of historical truth, merely aimed at providing information. Popular historical narratives certainly tend to adopt a reconstructionist method of historical narration, but information and emotionality, entertainment and education, truth-claims and manipulation often overlap. These overlaps in particular allow for manifold forms of narration. Instead of castigating this as hardly academic history, and as offering a problematic insight into knowledge, the diversity of popular historical narratives can be analysed by narratology – as well as by cognitive science and other theories related to representation. At the same time, historians can reflect more precisely on their means of narration and on the construction of historical narrative: both those that narratology has shown for fictional narratives and those specific to (popular) history writing. In the end, such reflexion on self-presentation leads to a more precise utilisation of popular historiography's representational and narrative possibilities, as well as to the differentiation of the often-made comparison to academic historical writing, in which popular historical writing by its very nature can nothing but lose regarding its degree of truth or truthfulness and as well as its standards of objectivity

---

81 Cf. Munslow (note 16), p. 14 f.

and knowledge.<sup>82</sup> Narrative experientiality (including the representational self-reflexion of the simulated and constructed character of history depiction) does, however, allow to take the distinctive aspect of popular historical writing seriously.

---

82 An interesting example is the special exhibition 'Berlin Transit. Jüdische Migranten aus Osteuropa in den 1920er Jahren', which was to be seen from 23.03.2012 to 15.07.2012 in the Jewish Museum in Berlin. At first glance, the exhibition seems to allow for a 'real' experience of the Berliner Scheunenviertel of the 1920s through photographs of the time and via a video installation. However, when taking a closer look it becomes apparent that the exhibition at the same time addresses the construction mechanisms of the pictorial memory of the past and its effect on the present-day visitor. The visitor gains an impression in the present, which is, however, at the same time deconstructed by a meta-reflection of the representational means of the historical sources.



Susanne Kinnebrock

## Why Napoleon is exciting time after time: media logics and history

At first glance, a history magazine seems to be a self-contradiction from the point of view of journalism, since the journalist is committed to observing events which are current and not past. Accordingly, the continuing and internationally-evident 'history boom in the media'<sup>1</sup> as well as the range of media-offerings that are supposed to satisfy the 'longing for the past'<sup>2</sup> whether through TV documentaries, films, historical events or extensive anniversary reports, may be surprising at first. The diverse range of mass media also includes that segment of the market devoted to popular history magazines, a segment which seems to be growing and whose range appears to be diversifying.<sup>3</sup>

History magazines can firstly be regarded as commercial media products which primarily follow the logic of the market and the presumed interests of the audience (see also the contribution by Fabio Crivellari in this volume). If one wants to devote more attention to their recurring topics, their content-related focus and their patterns of presentation, it

- 
- 1 Cf. Barbara Korte/Sylvia Paetschek: Geschichte in populären Medien und Genres: Vom Historischen Roman zum Computerspiel. In: Idem (eds.): *History Goes Pop. Zur Repräsentation von Geschichte in populären Medien und Genres*. Bielefeld 2009, p. 9–60, p. 10; Günter Hockerts: Zugänge zur Zeitgeschichte. Primärerfahrung, Erinnerungskultur, Geschichtswissenschaft. In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 51 (2001), issue 28, p. 15–30, p. 21.
  - 2 According to the director of the Centre for Contemporary History Research (ZZF) Martin Sabrow in an interview in 2009. See the documentation of the interview by the Goethe-Institute, URL: <http://bit.ly/10Eyr42> (1.8.2014).
  - 3 Cf. with a reference to the German-speaking countries Walter Hömberg: Die Aktualität der Vergangenheit. Konturen des Geschichtsjournalismus. In: Klaus Arnold/Walter Hömberg/Susanne Kinnebrock (eds.): *Geschichtsjournalismus. Zwischen Information und Inszenierung*. 2<sup>nd</sup>ed. Münster 2012, p. 15–30, p. 21. On the content-related profiles of German-language history magazines see further Christian Spieß: *Zeitgeschichte in populären Geschichtsmagazinen*. In: Susanne Popp et al. (eds.): *Zeitgeschichte, Medien, Historische Bildung*. Göttingen 2010, p. 61–76.

seems advisable additionally to consider these popular magazines from the perspective of journalism and communication studies. The question then arises by what logic inherent to journalism do history magazines continually select or construct historical topics and events?

It is the aim of this chapter to unfold those media logics which are generally followed by journalistic coverage (that is, irrespective of the actual topic) and in this way to deduce systematically possible explanations for the content-related design of popular history magazines. This also includes the question of how far can history, a subject which deals with the past, nonetheless meet journalism's central criteria of relevance, namely topicality.

## 1. Media logics

A central feature of popular history magazines is their periodicity.<sup>4</sup> They are published at regular intervals. They have this in common with other products of journalism and therefore permanently have to address new topics, inherent in every new issue is the promise to present a new topic (or at least an aspect of the topic which has so far not been dealt with) or to incorporate the latest historical insight. This also distinguishes history magazines from non-periodically published printed works such as popular historical biographies in book form. It may well be expected that such books include the latest research, but eventually the search for the topic of the book is at some point finished; there is no compelling need permanently to find new topics, i.e. to write follow-up books and continuously highlight their topicality.

Due to their periodicity, popular history magazines are subject to pressures similar to topical journalism. From a multitude of imaginable historical topics or of possible events in the world, those most suitable have to be identified. In journalism certain work routines have been developed to do this. The established editorial selection and construction programmes (according to which events are chosen over and over again as well as being systematically processed) include in particular news factors, frames, and established narrative strategies, so-called narrativity factors.

---

4 On the characteristic features of mass media and periodicity see the communication theory classic by Otto Groth: *Die Zeitung. Ein System der Zeitungskunde* (Journalistik), vol. 1–4. Mannheim et al. 1928–1930.

## 1.1 News factors

Not all events<sup>5</sup> are suited to be picked up by news coverage in the same way. News value (that is, the extent of the worthiness of coverage) plays a decisive role here.<sup>6</sup> Events with an immanently high news value seem to be more worthy of coverage and usually find their way into the media; events without news value, however, are ignored most of the time. If the news is analysed systematically in terms of content, then certain features of events can be identified which are regularly found in media coverage: so-called news factors.<sup>7</sup> These are the elements of the overall news value, which is formed of their sum. The more traceable the news factors and the more distinctive the individual factors, the higher the news value of the event.<sup>8</sup> This can be measured empirically since the events with a higher news value are more prominently placed (e.g. as lead or top story) or more extensively covered.

Not only do news factors determine the content of today's coverage, they also shaped that of past times. This was shown for example in a study

- 
- 5 The problem of theoretically defining an event shall not be further addressed here (cf. on this the chapter by Fabio Crivellari in this volume). Since in empirical news research the individual (short) media article is the common unit of analysis, empirical news studies often deal with merely manageable individual events and thus are not at a loss having to define larger event complexes or even historical processes. Indications for the definition of events are usually offered by the titles of media articles.
  - 6 Already in 1922 the US American journalist Walter Lippmann coined the term 'news value' for this and has therewith laid the foundation for the news value theory. Cf. Walter Lippmann: *Public opinion*. New York 1922.
  - 7 See the overview by Christiane Eilders: *News factors and news decisions. Theoretical and methodological advances in Germany*. In: *Communications* 31 (2006), issue 1, p. 5–24.
  - 8 This is implied by the selectivity and additivity hypothesis by Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge. Also the complementarity hypothesis may be mentioned here in this connection, according to which the lack of individual news factors can be compensated by the pronounced existence of other ones. Cf. Johan Galtung/Mari Holmboe Ruge: *The structure of foreign news. The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crisis in four Norwegian newspapers*. In: *Journal of Peace Research* 2 (1965), issue 1, p. 64–91. On the interaction and evaluation of news factors cf. Benjamin Fretwurst: *Nachrichten im Interesse der Zuschauer. Eine konzeptionelle und empirische Neubestimmung der Nachrichtenwerttheorie*. Konstanz 2008.



by Jürgen Wilke in which he systematically evaluated the overall picture of the news of four different centuries.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, news factors can be demonstrated in various cultural circles. Early assumptions about their clear cultural dependence<sup>10</sup> are regarded as disproved; The news value theory is today considered to be universally valid.<sup>11</sup>

The individual news factors refer to different aspects of an event – to actors and localities as well as to the specificities and background circumstances of the event. Lastly, news factors specify the five classic W-questions of journalism: ‘who?’ (actor), ‘where?’ (location), ‘what?’ (specifics of the event), ‘when?’ (time span), ‘why?’ (background circumstances).

According to the often-quoted catalogue of news factors drawn up by Winfried Schulz,<sup>12</sup> which is also the basis of my illustrations, the following actor attributes are specified as factors: ‘personal influence’, ‘prominence’, ‘ethnocentricity’ and ‘personification’. Comparatively, we hear a lot about influential politicians – such as the president of the USA – in the mass media, sometimes even hearing about their private affairs. They are deemed more worthy of being covered than are less powerful politicians or even people from everyday life. However, for the media to report it can often suffice to be prominent in any way whatsoever: one has only to think about celebrities such as the current US American hotel heiress Paris Hilton or, historically, the Irish author Oscar Wilde. Neither has or had a huge political influence, but they still are or were prominent figures in their times and the presentation of their private lives was or is met with great medial response.

Furthermore, those events are especially interesting in which fellow countrymen and women are involved. Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge have coined the term ‘ethnocentrism’ for this phenomenon.<sup>13</sup>

---

9 Cf. Jürgen Wilke: *Nachrichtenauswahl und Medienrealität in vier Jahrhunderten. Eine Modellstudie zur Verbindung von historischer und empirischer Publizistikwissenschaft*. Berlin/New York 1984.

10 Cf. Galtung/Holmboe Ruge (note 8).

11 Cf. Urs Dahinden: *Framing. Eine integrative Theorie der Massenkommunikation*. Konstanz 2006, p. 71.

12 Cf. Winfried Schulz: *Die Konstruktion von Realität in den Nachrichtenmedien. Analyse der aktuellen Berichterstattung*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Freiburg/München 1990.

13 Cf. Galtung/Holmboe Ruge (note 8).

Accordingly, it is preferable to report misfortunes abroad if one's fellow countrymen or women have come to harm: French media report about French victims, German media about German victims etc. This also applies to historical events, which are addressed in connection to anniversaries and jubilees. In dealing with internationally relevant events (e.g. both World Wars) the preferred perspective taken is that of one's respective fellow countrymen or women.

Finally, mass media tend to simplify complex matters in that they depict abstract events as individual actions and ascribe the responsibility to a specific person (= news factor 'personification'). Accordingly, international conflicts which are difficult to untangle are presented as the result of an individual warmonger, or the problems of complex economic and social systems are illustrated by striking individual cases of hardship. Journalists prefer to choose events that can be personalised; abstract events are systematically personalised through the work of the journalistic process.

However, the events themselves, and not just those which include people, are of interest to the media. If an event is 'relevant' to many, connected to 'damage', 'success', 'crime' and 'conflict' as well as if it happens unexpectedly (= news factor 'surprise') then it is more likely to be in the media.

In news factor research 'relevance' is ascribed to an event that firstly has a broad appeal (i.e. concerns a large number of people) and secondly leads to long-lasting existential consequences.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, if it is a question of life and death it is always news worthy. In this way, media extensively report environmental disasters or epidemics, especially if their long-lasting negative effects menace people. This applies to current as well as to historical catastrophes. The earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 was a huge media event that received international attention.<sup>15</sup>

Relevance and 'damage' are often connected. However, the media prefer to record not only the negative, but also the positive aspects, especially 'success'. One may think about success in sports, academia or arts such as winning the World Cup, making ground-breaking discoveries or

---

14 Cf. Schulz (note 12), p. 42.

15 See Jürgen Wilke: Das Erdbeben von Lissabon als Medienereignis. In: Gerhard Lauer/Thorsten Unger (eds.): Das Erdbeben von Lissabon und der Katastrophendiskurs im 18. Jahrhundert. Göttingen 2008, p. 75–95.

the Oscar awards. Moreover, 'crime', especially if it is linked to the profound violation of a moral norm, is another factor that turns the event into a media story. As historical examples, early single-sided news-sheets (so-called 'Newe Zeytungen') may be mentioned. These already extensively reported violent crime such as homicide and sexual offences.<sup>16</sup> The widely read daily police report, or the elaborate bulletin about spectacular crimes, (something which especially characterises the tabloid press), may also be named here.

The media are additionally interested in various 'conflicts'. Whether it be verbal controversies between the government and the opposition or even violent conflicts such as war, the news is sure to follow them. This also applies to historical conflicts as is illustrated by the manifold media contributions about the First World War in the summer of 2014. Lastly, the media preferentially address unexpected events (= news factor 'unexpectedness'). It has to be considered, though, that only those events can be identified as surprising which are still somehow within the scope of the expected. Unexpected events beyond the expected are not within the radar of the media, i.e. they are usually not noticed.<sup>17</sup>

The 'proximity' between the location of coverage and the location of the event plays a central part in the question of where an event has to take place in order to be of great news value and so be noticed by the media. This proximity is not only defined geographically. If foreign countries exhibit a certain political proximity (e.g. they are also democracies), are economically similar, i.e. also market-economically structured, if there are many trade relations and an intensive cultural exchange exists, the

---

16 Cf. Jürgen Wilke: *Grundzüge der Medien- und Kommunikationsgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert.* Köln et al. 2000, p. 22–24.

17 Especially Galtung and Ruge have referred to this connection between expectation and surprise in formulating the news factor 'consonance' (with the expectations), cf. Galtung/Ruge (note 8). However, this factor was dropped again in later studies of news research, because expectations cannot be recorded news-immanently, i.e. the news factor consonance as well as the factor surprise is hardly to be operationalised empirically on the level of news. They can only be determined by a distinct contextualisation, i.e. by means of further sources, cf. Schulz 1990 (note 12).

media interest in these 'close' countries is disproportionately high (= news factors 'geographic', 'political', 'economic' and 'cultural proximity').

The extent to which proximity influences the coverage of foreign affairs is illustrated in a study by Jürgen Wilke and Dagmar Schmidt.<sup>18</sup> They systematically evaluated the world news covered by the large German TV channels and newspapers and found that in 1995 almost 23% of the German coverage of foreign affairs dealt with Western EU states, i.e. states that are geographically, economically, politically, and to an extent also culturally, comparatively close to Germany. This also applies to the USA, the leading economic power, to which roughly 11% of the world news referred. Besides these countries, (arguably, in view of their surface area and total population, overrepresented), some regions of the world are clearly underrepresented in German news coverage. For instance, it is striking that the German media lack interest in Sub-Saharan Africa, to which merely 2% of the German foreign coverage was dedicated, as well as in the CIS states (excluding Russia), with which in 1995 less than 1% of the German world news dealt. The latter can only partially be explained by geographic, cultural, political and economic proximity. Additionally, the political, military and economic power of a nation plays a part when it comes to the coverage of foreign affairs. In this way defined 'elite nations'<sup>19</sup>, like Russia and the USA, are disproportionately covered.

The news factor of proximity is, however, not only applicable to the news coverage of foreign affairs. It also holds for coverage of internal affairs, where events which take place close to the location of the medium are of greater interest than events in regions further away. The coverage of local and regional affairs is based on this principle. Furthermore, it is remarkable that there are certain centres (political centres such as capitals, but also established media cities such as e.g. Milan for Italy, Hamburg for Germany or Zürich for Switzerland) from where and about which the

---

18 Cf. Jürgen Wilke/Dagmar Schmidt: Die Darstellung des Auslands in den deutschen Medien: Ergebnisse einer Inhaltsanalyse 1995. In: Siegfried Quandt/Wolfgang Gast (eds.): Deutschland im Dialog der Kulturen. Medien, Images, Verständigung. Konstanz 1998, p. 167–181.

19 Cf. Galtung/Ruge (note 8).

news coverage is disproportionate. The news factor 'regional centrality' describes this phenomenon.

Moreover, media preferentially take up short completed events. Covering long-term complex processes is clearly more demanding for them. Media that have a short rhythm of publication – newspapers daily, news magazines weekly – find it difficult to continually document long-lasting processes. They prefer short-term events, which are ideally completed between two issues (= news factor 'duration'). Consequently, societal processes such as the current demographic change or the developments of the labour market are rather selectively addressed, as when for example the latest unemployment rate is announced monthly at a press conference or if a new study on age structure is publicly presented. As regards history, the factor of duration also explains why mass media concentrate on anniversaries and jubilees when turning towards processes of the past.<sup>20</sup>

The 'connection to established topics' can be identified as the final time-and-culture-spanning news factor. If a topic exceeds the medial attention threshold then subsequent events are also usually reported. This phenomenon can be discerned for historical topics. For example, the July crisis in the run-up to World War I was extensively covered in July 2014, and German mass media also illustrated aspects such as the story of the difficult relation between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Without previously addressing the July crisis, however, such profound historical media contributions could probably not have been possible, especially because they would presumably have remained unconnected and therefore incomprehensible for the mass audience, which only has an average interest in history.

The news factors mentioned are not only a phenomenon of our times. They also pervade the news coverage of past times and therefore must have already been set as rules for the selection and construction of media realities in past centuries. Furthermore, they are used, as illustrated with the example of World War I, when it comes to covering history in mass media today. Nonetheless, the catalogue of factors, with its very strong

---

20 Furthermore, the planning and predictability of the coverage about anniversaries and jubilees ensures that history is often journalistically processed in this way. Cf. Horst Pöttker: *Gegenwartsbezüge. Über die Qualität von Geschichtsjournalismus*. In: Arnold/Hömborg/Kinnebrock (note 3), p. 31–44, p. 38 ff.

orientation along the lines of the journalistic W-questions presented here, also reaches its limits. On its own it cannot sufficiently explain the structure and design of coverage. This is empirically shown by regressions and variance analyses, which tried to measure the causal effect of the news factors on the placement (as prominent as possible) and the extent of the coverage (amount of lines or broadcasting minutes) and by doing so encountered high values of unexplained variance.<sup>21</sup> This means that news factors alone do not determine the extent and the placement of single articles; there are further factors which explain the overall picture of the news. Therefore, framing, i.e. the connection to established public discourses and interpretational patterns, as well as narrativity factors, shall be addressed here.

## 1.2 Framing

The underlying assumption of framing states that events are categorised according to existing 'frames'. Frames are interpretational frameworks that last for a longer period of time and are used in order to make sense out of events (which are otherwise difficult to categorise). A frame includes the definition of a problem, the attribution of guilt and the reference to a possible solution for the problem. Frames differ according to how long they are effective.<sup>22</sup>

The way a short frame functions can be illustrated by means of the example of bus accidents: if a great disaster happens then smaller accidents are also more likely to make it into the media. In this way, problems are looked for (e.g. overtired bus drivers) and culprits identified (e.g. overly profit-oriented bus companies). Such frames are, however, at best effective for some weeks.

Additionally, there are interpretational patterns which are relevant in the medium-term and are usually connected to the current social situation

---

21 Cf. Christiane Eilders: *Nachrichtenfaktoren und Rezeption. Eine empirische Analyse zur Auswahl und Verarbeitung politischer Information*. Opladen 1997.

22 This definition of framing leads back to Robert M. Entman: *Framing. Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm*. In: *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993), issue 4, p. 51–58.

a country faces. For instance, unemployment is a problem that has been covered over and over again in Europe for several years, even decades. Other events – such as the reduction of environmentally harmful industries – are then likely to be perceived within this frame. This in turn means that the implications the notional ameliorating measures have for the (local) labour market becomes a central question for the media. Medium-term frames are usually effective for several months or even several years.

And lastly, the media refer to so-called meta-frames, i.e. temporally widely consistent interpretational patterns irrespective of the topic, such as ‘progress vs. regression’, ‘bad vs. evil’ or also ‘harmful vs. useful for the community’.<sup>23</sup> Meta-frames also include stereotypes and myths. They are well-known and are the cornerstones, so to speak, of collectively shared knowledge. The media can safely refer back to stereotypes and myths if they want to process information for their audience in a way that will be generally understandable. What the audience already knows does not have to be explained again.

Whereas stereotypes are characterised by incredible stability, but are changeable from generation to generation,<sup>24</sup> myths, in contrast, exhibit an even greater consistency throughout time. As narratives handed down over centuries or even millennia they report how the present is based in the past, and describe for example the origin of the gods, the humans and the universe. Patterns can be derived from this to reveal how an event will be carried out over and over again or which moral principles exist. Accordingly, myths importantly assist if we try to make recent actual events understandable or try to fit such events into our horizon of meaning.

---

23 The terms for ‘meta-frames’ vary. Jürgen Gerhards and Dieter Rucht talk about ‘master frames’ and thereby mean, above all, ideologies; Urs Dahinden, however, talks about content-independent ‘basic frames’ and in addition to the above mentioned ‘progress, moral and profitability frames’ includes also personalisation and conflict, which were, however, introduced in the context of news factors here. Cf. Jürgen Gerhards/Dieter Rucht: *Mesomobilization. Organizing and framing in two protest campaigns in West Germany*. In: *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1992), p. 555–595; Dahinden (note 11), p. 108.

24 Cf. the latest overview of stereotype research by Martina Thiele: *Medien und Stereotype. Konturen eines Forschungsfeldes*. Habilitationsschrift. Universität Salzburg 2013.

### 1.3 Narrative logics: narrativity factors

As the existence of myths suggests, there is a basic form that we use to explain the world, namely the form of stories.<sup>25</sup> Usually, people like good, thrilling stories and can easily understand them.<sup>26</sup> Well-told stories exhibit identifiable features, so-called narrativity factors, i.e. factors immanent to the narrative, which make a text a ‘real’ story.<sup>27</sup>

Not all narrativity factors can be mentioned here, especially since they partially overlap with the news factors.<sup>28</sup> However, three main factors shall be emphasised: ‘good’ stories are firstly characterised by an arranged ‘protagonist-antagonist structure’. This not only entails pure accentuation of the persons’ actions similar to what transpires through the news factor of personification. It also involves the elaboration of the interaction between two persons: details of how a protagonist and an antagonist interact, how the figures develop emotionally and, above all, how the relation between them changes over time.

Furthermore, a ‘good’ narrative adheres to the narrative arc as already described by Aristotle. At the beginning in the so-called exposition: the world we find ourselves in is described, as well as the central conflict. This conflict develops and mounts to the climax in which the conflict is

---

25 Cf. Walter R. Fisher: *Human communication as narration. Toward a philosophy of reason, value and action*. Columbia 1987.

26 Cf. on the reception of narrations Manuela Glaser/Bärbel Garsoffky/Stephan Schwan: *Narrative-based learning: Possible benefits and problems*. In: *Communications* 34 (2009), issue 4, p. 429–447; Helena Bilandzic/Rick Busselle: *Narrative persuasion*. In: James P. Dillard/Lijiang Shen (eds.): *The SAGE handbook of persuasion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Los Angeles et al. 2013, p. 200–219.

27 Cf. on the derivation of operational narrativity factors from neo-classical narratology and on narrativity factors in general: Susanne Kinnebrock/Helena Bilandzic: *How to make a story work: Introducing the concept of narrativity into narrative persuasion*. Open access research paper. RWTH Aachen 2011, URL: <http://bit.ly/1s2AHgR> (1.8.2014).

28 Cf. Susanne Kinnebrock/Helena Bilandzic (2010): *Boulevardisierung der politischen Berichterstattung? Konstanz und Wandel von Nachrichtenfaktoren und Narrativitätsfaktoren in der politischen Berichterstattung*. In: Klaus Arnold et al. (eds.): *Von der Politisierung der Medien zur Medialisierung des Politischen? Zum Verhältnis von Medien, Öffentlichkeit und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert*. Leipzig 2010, p. 347–362.



somehow resolved, and the story usually ends with a moral message. Not only fairy tales, which end with the words ‘and the moral of the story is’, but films<sup>29</sup> as well, and even news<sup>30</sup>, carry such moral messages<sup>31</sup>.

Lastly, there are very specific strategies of ‘emotionalisation’. Stories create proximity, enable us to identify with the protagonists and intensively understand their emotions and experiences.<sup>32</sup> Crying for no reason at the pictures is a fitting example. Also mass media use emotionalisation in their coverage if dramatic individual tragedies are described and the presentation of emotions is deliberately aimed at. The explicit description of feelings of happiness, mortal fear or deep sorrow in texts can be mentioned as an example as well as the targeted use of pictures to generate these emotional states (e.g. by zooming in on children’s tears). However, it must be emphasised that in the end journalists decide whether and to what extent an event is presented in an emotionalised way. Emotionalisation is mostly the product of medial processing<sup>33</sup>, and only rarely a genuine aspect of the event.

---

29 Cf. Helena Bilandzic/Freya Sukalla/Susanne Kinnebrock: ‘Die Moral von der Geschichte’. Das methodische Problem der Medienanalyse. In: Joachim von Gottberg/Elizabeth Prommer (eds.): *Verlorene Werte? Medien und die Entwicklung von Ethik und Moral*. Konstanz 2008, p. 245–258.

30 Cf. Kinnebrock/Bilandzic (note 28).

31 The US American linguist William Labov termed these moral messages ‘evaluations’. Cf. William Labov: *The transformation of experience in narrative syntax*. In: Idem (eds.): *Language in the inner city. Studies in the black English vernacular*. Oxford: Blackwell 1977, p. 354–396.

32 Cf. on the processes of reception in detail Bilandzic/Busselle (note 26).

33 Some essays on news theory define ‘emotionalisation’ as individual news factors. Cf. the overviews by Michaela Maier/Katrin Stengel/Joachim Marschall: *Nachrichtenwerttheorie*. Baden-Baden 2010; Eilders 1997 (note 21) and Eilders 2006 (note 7). Since emotionalisation is less a feature of an event than a certain form of processing and presenting it which especially characterises narrations, emotionalisation was mentioned here as ‘narrativity logic’. In a similar way, this also applies to the factor ‘drama’. It denotes the gradual implementation of a narrative (affect) structure or a narrative arc. Accordingly, it is also rather to be seen as a (narrative) processing routine and less as an event-immanent selection factor.

### 1.4. Summary media logics

The synopsis results in the following content-related criteria, which play a part in the selection decision, but above all in the processing of media content:

Media logics for the processing of reality	
news factors	specifics of actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal influence</li> <li>• prominence</li> <li>• ethnocentricity</li> <li>• personification</li> </ul> specifics of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relevance</li> <li>• damage</li> <li>• success</li> <li>• crime</li> <li>• conflict</li> <li>• unexpectedness</li> </ul> specifics of the location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• geographic proximity</li> <li>• political proximity</li> <li>• cultural proximity</li> <li>• economic proximity</li> <li>• elite nations</li> <li>• national centrality</li> <li>• regional centrality</li> </ul> specifics of time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• duration of the event</li> <li>• reference to previously established topics</li> </ul>
frames	short-term topics/interpretational frames medium-term interpretational frames long-term interpretational frames <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• valuation: progress or regression?</li> <li>• valuation: good or evil?</li> <li>• valuation: useful or harmful?</li> <li>• stereotypes</li> <li>• myths</li> </ul>
narrativity factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protagonist-antagonist structure</li> <li>• narrative arc/affect structure</li> <li>• emotionalisation</li> </ul>

Naturally, the composition of media logics derived from different research traditions cannot claim to be exhaustive. Further specification may be advisable depending on the focus of the research. Similarly, certain factors overlap and are features of the concepts news value, framing and narrativity at the same time; the relation between these three concepts still remains to be theorised. Moreover, this contribution does not explain the basic question of whether news factors are immanent to the event or are the product of an editing process even though the set-up of the empirical studies, on which news research is based, tends towards the latter. After all, it is not the selection processes which are examined, but the results of the journalistic process: the media contents. And last, but not least, in focusing on the output, i.e. the overall picture of the news, the development conditions and the contexts such as the general news situations are also not taken into consideration.

Despite all these limitations the compilation of the relevant media logics may be an instrument which could be used in further studies to examine popular history magazines systematically. Content analyses can make their specific selection and construction mechanisms transparent and in this way questionable. From the perspective of history studies the main focus of history magazines on a few potentates (e.g. Henry VIII, Napoleon I and Hitler), on gruesome world wars and on the own nation may be lamented – and the cultivation of a narrow view on the part of the audience may be feared. However, such focuses correspond to common media logics. And the question which kind of history journalism would be desirable should not be considered without having thought about existing media logics, since the consideration of this set of rules makes it possible to develop alternative modes of presentation. According to the complementarity hypothesis<sup>34</sup> the lack of certain news factors may be compensated for by highlighting others. This implies that the same factors do not always have to be accentuated: taking a pass on great ruling figures may be counterbalanced, for example, by a successful narrative arc; and it is not only negative aspects, but also great success which is interesting. In short, only knowledge about media logics allows their confident handling; and popular history presentation

---

34 Cf. Galtung/Holmboe Ruge (note 8).

that equally meets the expectations of the media as well as history studies is indeed possible.

## 2. Topicality

So far the focus has been on the choice of events. But historical topics are also often addressed from a journalistic perspective and processed in a similar way. A specific feature of journalism, which affects the structure of popular history magazines, has thus been given too little attention: the reference to topicality. According to system-theoretical descriptions of society, topicality is the central criterion according to which journalism as a social system processes its environment.<sup>35</sup> So history has somehow to be topical in order to be interesting to periodical mass media.

During the 1920s the communication theorist Otto Groth had already distinguished two dimensions of topicality – a temporal and a social one. Hence topicality not only includes reflection of the latest current events, but also provision of information relevant for the people living in the immediate present.<sup>36</sup> Horst Pöttker has underscored this with his remark: ‘not what happens today, but what is important today is topical! Important to the audience [...]’<sup>37</sup>. Consequently, events in the past may also be important to today’s audience and indeed topical. With regard to journalistic logic, however, this requires a connection between the present and the past.<sup>38</sup> According to Pöttker’s argument history functions as a reservoir of potential knowledge which enables (re)orientation in the present. Thereby, (historical) journalism may generally establish references of topicality in three different ways: [...] “critically”, in rejecting the past from a present standpoint or the present from a past standpoint, “analogically”, in

---

35 Cf. Bernd Blöbaum: *Journalismus als soziales System. Geschichte, Ausdifferenzierung und Verselbständigung*. Opladen 1994.

36 Cf. Groth (note 4).

37 Horst Pöttker: *Verstehen durch Vergangenheit. Warum der Journalismus in der Mediengesellschaft Geschichte als Themenfeld braucht*. In: Linda Erker et al. (eds.): *Geschichtsvermittlung und -didaktik in der Mediengesellschaft*. Köln 2013, p. 178–199, p. 178. The article was also published in English titled ‘A reservoir of understanding. Why journalism needs history as a thematic field’. In: *Journalism Practice* 5 (2011), issue 5, p. 520–537.

38 Cf. Pöttker (note 37).

searching for similarities, or “genetically”, in interpreting the past as the origin of the present, the present as a consequence of the past.’<sup>39</sup>

Even if in general all three approaches are able to establish references of topicality for historical items, certain processing methods nonetheless appear to be more suitable for some types of events. Critical references of topicality seem to be particularly useful when it comes to blatant violations of human rights. This also explains why they are especially made use of in Germany to cover the NS period. However, the avowedly critical updating mode blinds us to possible lines of continuity which link present to past.<sup>40</sup> These are emphasised via the genetic narrative mode in particular. This updating mode seems especially suited for processing the recent past, i.e. for contemporary history. Earlier epochs, however, are especially accessible when the references of topicality are established in an analogous way.

It is remarkable that establishing references of topicality does indeed seem to be conducive to the understanding of journalistic presentations of history. At least, Pöttker was able to prove in an experiment that emphases on references of topicality evoke distinctively better learning effects than operating with the usual stimulants such as ‘sex & crime’ beloved of tabloid journalism.<sup>41</sup>

---

39 Pöttker (note 20), p. 33. Emphasis in the original. Pöttker reverts to Friedrich Nietzsche’s ‘Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen. Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben’ (1874) and to Jörn Rüsen’s four types of historical narration, in: Jörn Rüsen: *Zeit und Sinn. Strategien des historischen Denkens*. Frankfurt/Main 1990.

40 Cf. Pöttker (note 37), p. 186 ff.

41 In the experiment, German senior pupils were presented with two versions of one press article about the Staufan emperor Frederick II. In the first version, the unchanged passage with the historical information followed after a paragraph that established an (analogous) reference of topicality, in the second version it followed a paragraph with reference to sex and crime in the surroundings of Frederick II. The comparison of the knowledge (MC test) before and after reading the journalistic text resulted in a greater knowledge increase when using references of topicality. Cf. Pöttker (note 20), p. 35–38.

### 3. Conclusion

These findings suggest two things. Firstly, that the consideration of journalistic routines of selection and construction may be fruitful for the development of advanced history journalism (see 1), and also for the deliberate use of strategies of topicality (see 2). Secondly, the findings point towards a greater gap in the field of history journalism: studies of reception. We know little about what people actually read in history magazines; how they process it in their heads on a cognitive, but also on an emotional, level; what they subsequently remember; and how they connect this to their existing knowledge. Initial studies from the field of television (which, however, have merely dealt with the motives of use) suggest that interest in history programmes is based on needs related to the present: the self-reassurance of one's own identity; the hope for orientation, that is establishing a clear time line that meaningfully connects the past, the present and the future; the wish for entertainment; and lastly the understanding of emotions.<sup>42</sup> There is much to suggest that similar needs also determine the reception of popular history magazines, and little reason why it should not be examined in further research.

---

42 Cf. Michael Meyen/Senta Pfaff: Rezeption von Geschichte im Fernsehen. Eine qualitative Studie zu Nutzungsmotiven, Zuschauererwartungen und zur Bewertung einzelner Darstellungsformen. In: *Media Perspektiven* (2006), issue 2, p. 102–106. Similar results were reached by surveys of history journalists. See Manuela Lonitz: Radio-Geschichte(n): Geschichtsjournalismus in ARD-Hörfunk. In: *Fernsehinformationen* 51 (2000), issue 8, p. 10–15; Klaus Arnold: Geschichtsjournalismus – ein Schwellenressort. Arbeitsweisen, Themen und Selbstverständnis von Geschichtsjournalisten in Deutschland. In: Arnold/Hömborg/Kinnebrock: (note 3), p. 87–108.



Manuela Glaser

## **Popular knowledge communication in history magazines from a receptional psychology point of view**

Psychological studies of the reception of media deal with the cognitive and affective processes during reception. These depend on the properties and the design of the respective medium as well as on the conditions of the recipient. However, the underlying psychological principles of reception are examined independent of the content. Therefore in order to examine, from the point of view of receptional psychology, the psychological process which occurs when reading history magazines, it is necessary to consider the properties and design of the medium more closely. Furthermore, the question arises whether there are additional content-specific aspects which have to be taken into consideration when examining the reception of historical content such as that found in history magazines.

### **1. Structure of history magazines**

On the one hand, those magazines available in Germany which are about historical topics (e.g. P.M. HISTORY, G/GESCHICHTE, GEO EPOCHE), including those which focus specifically on archaeological topics (EPOC, ANTIKE WELT), exhibit a range of similarities in their structure. On the other hand they also differ from each other, particularly as regards the use of 'entertaining' elements. Among the things they all have in common is the use of certain formal elements. Individual texts are supplemented with a diversity of visual content, including photographs (ranging from historical snapshots to pictures of researchers, found objects and current excavation sites), paintings and illustrations as well as (historical) maps and modern satellite pictures. Additionally, explanatory diagrams and tables, floor plans and reconstruction attempts (ranging from sketches and models to computer-based representations) are meant to support the reader with the work of processing historical information and procedures.



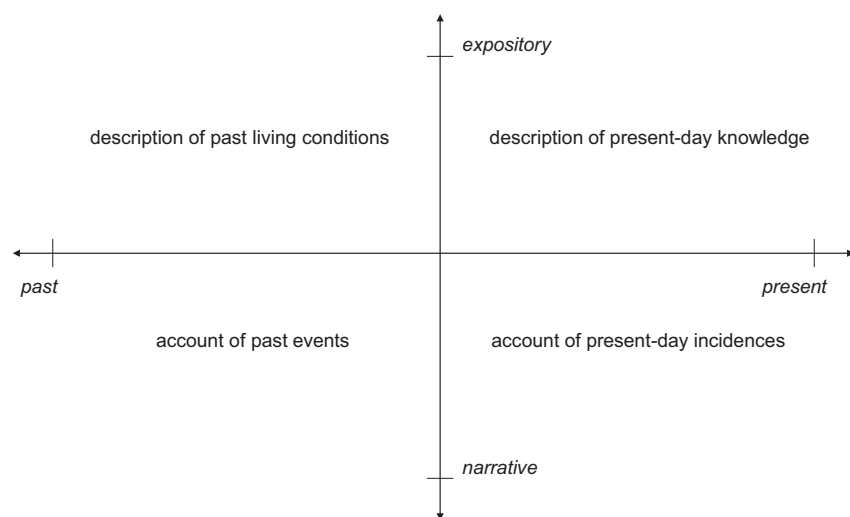
We know from multi-media research that the arrangement of text and pictorial material, as well as the choice of visualised content, follows certain rules when it comes to optimising the processes of learning and understanding.<sup>1</sup> The multi-media principle implies that learners learn 'better' through a combination of written and pictorial material than through exclusively written material. History magazines furnish their authors' articles with pictures and graphics not only for entertaining purposes, but also for reasons based on learning theories. In this way, the readers can generate a verbal as well as a pictorial mental model of the educational content, integrate both models and thus dually code the content in memory. Based on the spatial continuity principle, related image and text information should be presented as closely together as possible so as to allow the recipients to save the cognitive resources which they would otherwise use to retain the textual information during their search for the corresponding image (or vice versa). However, positive effects on learning with multimedia presentations are only gained if the pictures are of relevance for textual understanding. Otherwise, the pictures lead to a 'seductive details effect', i.e. the distraction of attention away from the educational contents toward the irrelevant picture resulting in a poorer learning outcome.<sup>2</sup>

The texts themselves can be divided into different types according to content and style criteria. For this purpose, I would like to establish two dimensions to which the texts taken from history magazines can be assigned (cf. table 1), namely a stylistic dimension with the endpoints 'expository' and 'narrative' and a content dimension with the endpoints 'past' and 'present'. The texts in history magazines rarely exist in the purest form assigned to one of the endpoints. Combinations are often found, which can be allocated within the four quadrants according to their main focus. Accordingly, one

- 
- 1 Richard E. Mayer: *Multimedia learning*. Cambridge 2001; Idem: *The Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning*. Cambridge 2005.
  - 2 Shannon F. Harp/Richard E. Mayer: The role of interest in learning from scientific text and illustrations. On the distinction between emotional interest and cognitive interest. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology* 89 (1997), issue 1, p. 92–102; Christopher A. Sanchez/Jennifer Wiley: An examination of the seductive details effect in terms of working memory capacity. In: *Memory & Cognition* 34 (2006), issue 2, p. 344–355.

article does not have to be homogenous, but as regards content and style may consist of multiple parts, which can be allocated to different quadrants. In this way, expository text parts may be found that describe past living conditions, but also present-day knowledge (e.g. excavations, discoveries, exhibitions). In addition, there are narrative texts which in turn recount past or present events (e.g. the work of researchers).

Table 1: Categorisation of style and content of textual contributions in history magazines



In addressing the stylistic dimension, studies in receptional psychology have already compared the cognitive processing of expository and narrative texts and were able to ascertain significant differences. Readers of expository texts (in which content is hierarchically structured and thematically described) extract the underlying propositional structure, transfer the structure into a mental model and connect it to already existing prior knowledge structures. But the processing of narrative texts, in which connected events are recounted, occurs in a more focused way.<sup>3</sup> As regards

3 H. Porter Abbott: *The Cambridge introduction to narrative*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge 2008; Peter B. Mosenthal: *Defining the expository discourse continuum*. Towards

narrative processing, particular attention is paid to the content which is relevant for the progress of the story and without which the story could not be understood. According to Rolf A. Zwaan, Marc C. Langston and Arthur C. Graesser this holds true for information about places, times, protagonists, causalities and intentions. This information is extracted and continually updated by the reader so that a dynamic situation model emerges as the cognitive representation of the story.<sup>4</sup> With regard to the reception of narrative texts, a psychological phenomenon may occur which is exclusive to the processing of narratives: the phenomenon of transportation. Transportation arises from the creation of the situation model of a story and is defined as ‘a convergent process, where all of the person’s mental systems and capacities become focused on the events occurring in the narrative’<sup>5</sup>. As a consequence, the recipients feel fully immersed in the world of the story, show participatory responses (e.g. sharing in the thrills with a character), are less critical of the content presented and blank out the real world around them.<sup>6</sup>

---

a taxonomy of expository text types. In: *Poetics* 14 (1985), p. 387–414; Wolfgang Schnotz: An integrated model of text and picture comprehension. In: Richard E. Mayer (ed.): *The Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning*. Cambridge 2005, p. 49–69.

- 4 Rolf A. Zwaan/Marc C. Langston/Arthur C. Graesser: The construction of situation models in narrative comprehension. An event-indexing model. In: *Psychological Science* 6 (1995), issue 5, p. 292–297.
- 5 Melanie C. Green/Timothy Brock: In the mind’s eye. Transportation-imagery model of narrative persuasion. In: Melanie C. Green/Jeffrey J. Strange/Timothy C. Brock (eds.): *Narrative impact. Social and cognitive foundations*. Mahwah 2002, p. 315–341, p. 324; cf. Rick Busselle/Helena Bilandzic: Fictionality and perceived realism in experiencing stories. A model of narrative comprehension and engagement. In: *Communication Theory* 18 (2008), p. 255–280.
- 6 Melanie C. Green/Timothy C. Brock: The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (2000), p. 701–721; Richard J. Gerrig: *Experiencing narrative worlds: On the psychological activities of reading*. New Haven 1993.

## 2. Entertaining elements in history magazines

Transportation as described here is a psychological phenomenon which is perceived as extremely entertaining by recipients.<sup>7</sup> This is one among a multitude of reasons why for some time many media have been striving where possible to narrate their journalistic and documentary content in the form of a thrilling story.<sup>8</sup> But why do recipients find the combination of informative and entertaining elements particularly attractive? This question can be answered with the 'uses-and-gratifications' approach as developed in media psychology.<sup>9</sup> According to this approach, recipients only engage with media presentations if these satisfy their needs. The three most important needs in this connection are (1) the need for information, (2) the need for entertainment and (3) the need for interpersonal usefulness. These needs are similar to several of the motives which history educationalist Rolf Schörken regards as reasons for a reader's intentional involvement with historical content: the motive of orientation (as the need for knowledge, for the positioning of the own self in time and for the clarification of future perspectives), the motive of the expansion of one's own life possibilities (e.g. in form of touristic experiences, escapism, curiosity and grief over former greatness and past beauty) as well as the motive of self-discovery and reflection (in the sense of identification processes, to justify one's own thinking and acting, to increase security and self-esteem by belonging to a group, for social stabilization and social prestige).<sup>10</sup>

- 
- 7 Peter Vorderer/Christoph Klimmt/Ute Ritterfeld: Enjoyment. At the heart of media entertainment. In: *Communication Theory* 14 (2004), issue 4, p. 388–408.
  - 8 Edgar Lersch/Reinhold Viehoff: Geschichte im Fernsehen. Eine Untersuchung zur Entwicklung des Genres und der Gattungsästhetik geschichtlicher Darstellungen im Fernsehen 1995 bis 2003. In: *Landesanstalt für Medien Nordrhein-Westfalen (LfM)* (ed.): *Schriftenreihe Medienforschung der LfM* vol. 54. Berlin 2007.
  - 9 Elihu Katz/Jay G. Blumler/Michael Gurevitch: Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In: Jay G. Blumler/Elihu Katz (eds.): *The uses of mass communications. Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills 1974, p. 19–32; Denis McQuail: *Mass communication theory. An introduction*. London 1983.
  - 10 Rolf Schörken: *Geschichte in der Alltagswelt. Wie uns Geschichte begegnet und was wir mit ihr machen*. Stuttgart 1981.

Since hybrid formats also address the motive of entertainment and the motive of interpersonal usefulness in addition to the motive of information, they have an advantage over other media and therefore appeal to a wider range of recipients. Information media address the need for entertainment and for interpersonal usefulness by using elements which are particularly employed in the entertainment industry. Information is embedded in a thrilling story, dramatized, emotionally enhanced, personalized and related to present-day recipients or enriched with fictional content. The following sections will show how the strategies mentioned here are implemented in history magazines. It will be apparent that it is not unusual for authors, in conveying historical content, to resort to that form of narrative as a medium which is viewed critically, and which finds itself rejected in history didactics because of its frequent recourse to fictional content and its one-dimensional reading of historical events.

## 2.1 Dramatisation

Information can be dramatized in different ways. One possibility is by incorporating narrative anecdotes, which, according to Shannon F. Harp and Richard E. Mayer, may cause a 'seductive details effect'. Use of these narrative anecdotes leads to the reader's being distracted from the text's important information.<sup>11</sup> Other forms of dramatisation consist of embedding information in a story or arranging narrative information (which is often the case with historical content) in such a way that it sparks the recipient's curiosity and excitement. Whether curiosity or excitement is triggered depends on the sequence of the presented events.<sup>12</sup> If the recipients are confronted with dangers, for instance, which threaten the character (e.g. a historical person) they will, given sympathy with the character, find the remainder of the chronological storyline exciting, because they wish the best for the protagonists. If, on the other hand, an extraordinary event is presented to the recipients at the beginning, this sparks their

---

11 Cf. Harp/Mayer (note 2).

12 William F. Brewer/Edward H. Lichtenstein: Event schemas, story schemas, and story grammars. In: John Long/Alan Baddeley (eds.): *Attention and performance IX*. Hillsdale 1981, p. 363–379.

curiosity and they will ask themselves what circumstances could have led to this event. Excitement and curiosity motivate the recipients to stay engaged for a longer period. They are perceived as entertaining, and are especially appreciated.<sup>13</sup> In history magazines which focus on archaeology, such dramatizing structures are often mobilised in the form of detective, treasure hunt or adventure stories in which present-day researchers – and with them the readers of the magazine – set out to discover more about past events. It is also frequently the case that historical circumstances may themselves be portrayed as adventure stories; more often than not these culminate in an extraordinary set of events, and in extreme cases with the decline of an entire culture. The following text, taken from the magazine *GEO EPOCHE*, is an excerpt from an article about a body preserved in marshland and serves as an example of how history magazines attempt to trigger the reader's excitement and curiosity. Around a 'core' of scientifically attestable facts (a male body found in a raised bog in Holstein, and its approximate age) a fictional scenario is created which promises the reader an 'adventure story'.

'The men's steps are absorbed by the soft soil of the bog. Carefully, they place one foot after the other in the moss, because they are familiar with the treachery of the terrain. On that day some hundred years after the beginning of the Christian era, they venture forward over this unstable ground of the raised bog in Holstein. It is clear they have no other choice. One of them will not return.'<sup>14</sup>

As is the case in the last sentence of this excerpt, the climax of the adventure story is often insinuated already in the intro text or at the beginning of the main text of an article so as to incite curiosity. The following example from the magazine *GEO EPOCHE* is the intro text of an article on the migration of the Cimbri and Teutons<sup>15</sup>:

'As of the sixth century B.C. the nucleus of the Germanic peoples had started to develop between the river Weser and the Baltic Sea. For a long

---

13 Hans Hoeken/Mario van Vliet: Suspense, curiosity, and surprise. How discourse structure influences the affective and cognitive processing of a story. In: *Poetics* 26 (2000), p. 277–286.

14 Anja Herold: Tod im Nebelland. In: *GEO EPOCHE* 34 (2008), p. 54.

15 All quotations from German-speaking sources have been translated.

time, little was known about this new culture until several tribes left their home in 120 B.C. and moved south – leading the Roman Empire to the brink of collapse'.<sup>16</sup>

Undoubtedly, embedding information in exciting stories is entertaining. But how does this dramatisation of information affect the process of knowledge acquisition? In his 'Capacity Model of Children's Comprehension of Educational Content on Television' Shalom M. Fisch assumes that stories and educational content are simultaneously processed when combined (i.e. in so-called hybrid forms) and therefore compete for the limited capacities of the working memory. Fisch postulates that under the circumstances of limited capacities more resources are used for the processing of the story than for the processing of the educational content ('narrative dominance'). Accordingly, recipients are better at learning the educational contents which are closely connected to the central theme of the story than the more distant educational contents. This is a phenomenon which Fisch calls the 'narrative distance effect'. Regarding recipients exhibiting the motive of information this narrative dominance is, however, reduced so that a larger proportion of the working memory's resources may be (voluntarily) used for more distant educational content.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, a shift may occur from a narrative to an expository processing, which may be further enhanced in the case of combined receptive motives.

Empirical studies show that the embedding of information in stories in fact leads to a predominantly narrative processing. Educational content is thereby more efficiently acquired the more important it is for the development of the story.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the embedding of educational content in

---

16 Frank Otto: Die Krieger aus dem Norden. In: GEO EPOCHE 34 (2008), p. 20.

17 Shalom M. Fisch: A capacity model of children's comprehension of educational content on television. In: Media Psychology 2 (2000), p. 63–91.

18 Manuela Glaser/Bärbel Garsoffky/Stephan Schwan: What do we learn from docutainment? Processing hybrid television documentaries. In: Learning and Instruction 22 (2012), p. 37–46; Jean M. Mandler: Categorical and schematic organization in memory. In: C. Richard Puff (ed.): Memory organization and structure. New York 1979; Jean M. Mandler/Nancy S. Johnson: Remembrance of things passed: Story structure and recall. In: Cognitive Psychology 9 (1977), p. 111–151.

a story improves problem solving and knowledge transfer.<sup>19</sup> According to Michael B. W. Wolfe and Joseph A. Mienko less prior knowledge about the educational content is required for knowledge acquisition through stories compared to knowledge acquisition through expository learning material since it simply does not have to tie in with the existing knowledge structures, but can be understood, memorized and remembered in connection with the story.<sup>20</sup>

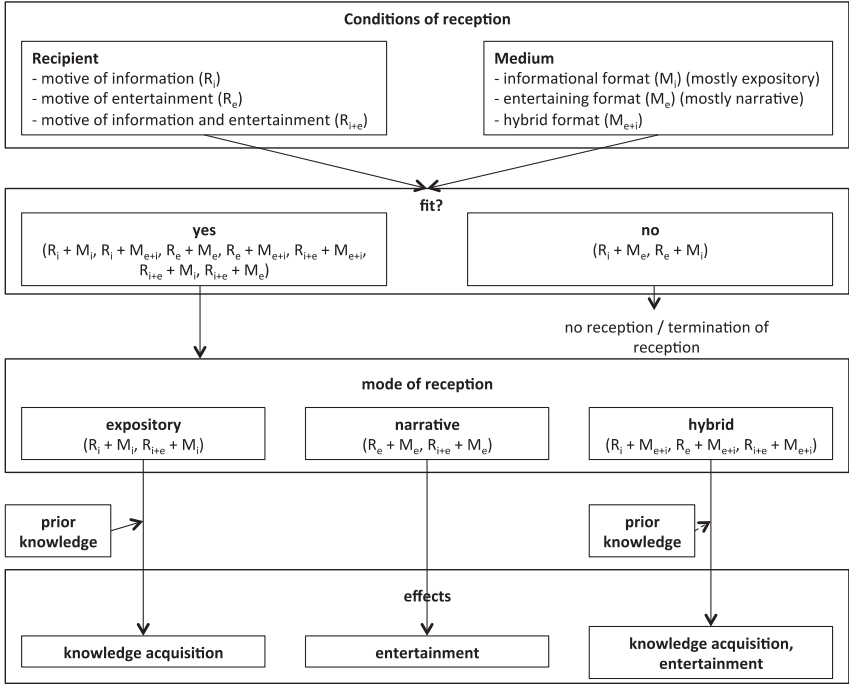
Highly non-chronological narrative structures can, however, impair the acquisition of event sequences,<sup>21</sup> which is why over-complex, unreliable and metaleptic narrative structures – such as found in so-called ‘mind-bender films’ (e.g. ‘Pulp Fiction’ (1994), ‘Fight Club’ (1999))<sup>22</sup> – should not be used in information media. The model of reception presented below is intended to illustrate which form of cognitive processing takes place under which conditions of reception with regard to recipient and media properties, and which effects these have on knowledge acquisition and entertainment (table 2).

According to the ‘uses-and-gratifications’ approach, media content is only consumed if the recipients expect their needs to be satisfied more

- 
- 19 Daniel T. Hickey/Allison L. Moore/James W. Pellegrino: The motivational and academic consequences of elementary mathematics environments: Do constructivist innovations and reforms make a difference? In: *American Educational Research Journal* 38 (2001), p. 611–652; James van Haneghan et al.: The Jasper series. An experiment with new ways to enhance mathematical thinking. In: Diane F. Halpern (ed.): *Enhancing thinking skills in the science and mathematics*. Hillsdale 1992, p. 15–38.
  - 20 Michael B. W. Wolfe/Joseph A. Mienko: Learning and memory of factual content from narrative and expository text. In: *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 77 (2007), p. 541–564.
  - 21 Paul S. Cowen: Manipulating montage. Effects on film comprehension, recall, person perception, and aesthetic responses. In: *Empirical Studies of the Arts* 6 (1988), issue 2, p. 97–115; Phillip J. Lowe/Kevin Durkin: The effect of flash-back on children’s understanding of television crime content. In: *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 43 (1999), issue 1, p. 83–97.
  - 22 Jan-Noël Thon: Mind-Bender. Zur Popularisierung komplexer narrativer Strukturen im amerikanischen Kino der 1990er Jahre. In: Sophia Komor/Rebekka Rohleder (eds.): *Post-Coca-Colanization. Zurück zur Vielfalt?* Frankfurt/Main 2009, p. 171–188.



Table. 2: Model of reception



comprehensively or more easily by the medium and its content than by other alternatives. For reasons of simplification, I will limit the model to the motive of information and the motive of entertainment whereby both motives may occur individually, as well as in combination as ‘hybrid motives’.

The motive of information may be satisfied by (predominantly expository) information formats as well as by hybrid formats, which combine informational and entertaining elements. The motive of entertainment may be satisfied via entertaining and hybrid formats. Hybrid motives, however, can only be fully satisfied by hybrid formats. Hybrid motives can only be partially satisfied by purely informational formats or purely entertaining formats. With all other motive-format-combinations no reception occurs or, respectively, the reception is terminated when the recipient becomes aware of the combination’s unsuitability.

The mode in which the media content is processed during successful reception corresponds to the combination of reception motive and media format. Accordingly, in combination with the motive of information, the content of informational formats is processed in a purely expository way, and in combination with the motive of entertainment the content of entertaining formats is processed in a purely narrative way. When it comes to hybrid motives and a pure media format, the media format determines the mode of reception. For instance, in the case of a pure informational format the processing mode is expository even when it meets with hybrid motives. In the case of a pure entertaining format the processing mode is, however, narrative. In the case of hybrid motives and a hybrid media format a hybrid form of processing occurs, i.e. the processing mode is both expository as well as narrative. If a hybrid media format is met with a pure motive of information, the processing mode is predominantly expository; however, the entertaining elements cause the recipient to process the information in a narrative way too. If a hybrid media format meets with the pure motive of entertainment, the processing mode is predominantly narrative. The expository processing mode is also possible, but the narrative dominance renders this possibility rather unlikely.

Moreover, when processing in different modes of reception the recipients depend on expository prior knowledge to varying degrees. This is especially the case with the expository mode of reception since the media content is better understood with existing prior knowledge and can only be memorized by relating to these prior knowledge structures. With hybrid modes of reception the prior knowledge is only relevant for the stages of the expository processing, whereas in the narrative stages it is not decisive for knowledge acquisition since the educational content is understood, memorized and tied to prior episodic memory structures (e.g. personal stories) in connection to the story.

The narrative mode of reception with entertaining formats predominantly leads to entertainment and not to knowledge acquisition. Even though pure entertaining formats are not intended for knowledge acquisition this does not mean, however, that nothing is learned during the reception of such formats.

An empirical verification of the model of reception illustrated in table 2 and described here is yet to be carried out.

## 2.2 Emotionalisation

A further means of presenting historical content in an entertaining way is emotionalisation. Emotionalisation in history magazines can be found in written texts as well as in visual material. In texts, content can be additionally emotionalized by an appropriate choice of words. Not only do wordings such as ‘March to perdition’ (with regard to the Varus Battle), ‘Stones full of secrets’ (for runes carved in stone), ‘Death in the land of fog’ (regarding Germanic rituals of sacrifice), ‘Legendary metropolis’ (with regard to the city of Babylon), ‘Magical Egypt’, ‘Glittering treasure from dark times’ (about art works from the Middle Ages), ‘Sensational discoveries’ or ‘Under the spell of the great wall’ (about the Chinese Wall) suggest a preference for potentially spectacular topics, but they also testify to the practice of depicting historical and archaeological topics in an especially emotional and spectacular way by the use of promising superlatives.

Texts can moreover contribute to the emotionalisation of historical topics if they describe situations, events or processes in a particularly detailed way so that the readers get the impression of being able to ‘feel’ the historical atmosphere or the emotions of historical persons. The following excerpt taken from the magazine *GEO EPOCHE* about the Varus Battle (also: ‘Battle of the Teutoburg Forest’, dated 9 B.C.) clearly shows the attempt at creating a historical atmosphere by means of detailed description:

‘That is why the Romans have a baggage train carrying huge tents for banquets and gatherings as well as chaises longues, arm chairs, carpets, tables, jars and cups, valuable tableware and polished glasses. They also carry dozens of amphorae filled with selected wines, with olives, oil, asparagus, nuts, spices, and sauces: all foods for their own supply as well as for meals to demonstrate their cooking skills to the Germanic people. Moreover, the mules carry containers with armaments and pompous weapons, with jewellery and valuable ceramics: presents for the chieftains.’<sup>23</sup>

A further example (taken from the magazine *P.M. HISTORY SPECIAL*) of a text about Bishop Augustinus (354–430) makes clear how the emotionalisation of the content is to be achieved by providing insight into the (alleged) emotional state of historical persons:

---

23 Ralf-Peter Martin: Marsch ins Verderben. In: *GEO EPOCHE* 34 (2008), p. 28.

‘Surely, after having read the letter, Augustinus first gave a loud groan. New worries were the last thing he needed now, as if there wasn’t already enough on his daily agenda. Besides the daily masses and sermons he had to deliver he was constantly busy with counselling. And then there were the never-ending confrontations with the sectarians.’<sup>24</sup>

Historical content may also be emotionalised with images. Not only can especially emotional content thereby be visualised, but pictures can also create atmosphere and thence different associations. Furthermore, pictures can depict historical content more or less convincingly based on the degree of authenticity assigned by the recipient to the pictures. Whereas photographs are granted a relatively high degree of authenticity, comic drawings apparently appear less convincing to the recipient.

Regarding knowledge acquisition with regard to emotional and emotionalised information, a difference has to be acknowledged between the quality of the emotion (e.g. joy, fear, anger, grief or disgust) and the psychological arousal of the recipient, i.e. the intensity with which the recipient experiences the respective emotion. Stronger emotional information is usually better consolidated than emotional information which is less intense.<sup>25</sup> However, when emotionalising information, it is important to avoid overloading the recipient emotionally, to prevent them from being so heavily engaged with their own emotions that they can no longer concentrate on information which is vital for comprehension, or from terminating their reception in order to protect themselves from the overload.<sup>26</sup> In order to ensure the recipient’s best possible learning process, an intermediate level of emotional arousal, which avoids boredom as well as emotional overload, is therefore the aspiration. It should further be taken into consideration

---

24 P. J. Blumenthal: Der lebensfrohe Kirchenvater aus Nordafrika. In: P.M. HISTORY SPECIAL 3 (2010), p. 35.

25 John A. Robinson: Affect and retrieval of personal memories. In: *Motivation and Emotion* 4 (1980), issue 2, p. 149–174; Kordelia Spies: Einfluss von emotionalem Gehalt und Ichbezug des Lernmaterials auf die Behaltensleistung. In: *Zeitschrift für experimentelle und angewandte Psychologie* 41 (1994), issue 4, p. 617–630.

26 Karl-Ernst Jeismann/Wolfgang Jacobmeyer/Bernd Schönemann: *Geschichte und Bildung. Beiträge zur Geschichtsdidaktik und zur Historischen Bildungsforschung*. Paderborn 2000.

(where the emotionalisation of information is concerned) that recipients with positive emotions can be more open to new information and experiences, whereas recipients with negative emotions have a more restricted focus of attention on that information which caused the negative emotions.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.3 Personalisation and present-day relevance

One can speak of the personalisation (or in receptive psychology: ‘personification’) of history in those cases where historical content is illustrated via the example of historical actors whose actions and experiences are supposed to be representative of a social group.<sup>28</sup> In the following excerpt (taken from the magazine *P.M. HISTORY SPECIAL*) the author creates in his narrative an encounter between a Germanic girl and a Roman boy which is supposed to provide the reader with insight into the actions and experiences of the two peoples involved in the historical events – in this case Romans and Teutons:

‘Why is the blonde girl crying? The dark-haired boy is looking around the corner curiously. His father is the innkeeper here in Biriciana [today’s Weißenburg in Bavaria] on the northern border of the Roman Empire. The border line made of stone, the Limes, is only a few metres away from the inn. Behind that wall, the dark “Hercynian Forest” starts stretching out. The son of the Roman innkeeper has already heard a lot about these forests, but no good things... It is supposed to be uncanny there. His father once even told him that the Teutons who dwell there in the north destroyed three Roman legions under the command of Varus more than 200 years ago! The boy cannot even begin to imagine. [...] And now there is this Germanic girl, sitting there and crying. The boy knows how to say a few words in her language and he approaches her. The girl starts to talk falteringly. Her Roman friend doesn’t understand everything, but gets the

---

27 Barbara L. Fredrickson: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. In: *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 356 (2004), p. 1367–1377; Thomas H. Kramer/Robert Buckhout/Paul Eugenio: Weapon focus, arousal, and eyewitness memory. In: *Law and Human Behavior* 14 (1990), p. 167–184.

28 In the research field of history didactics the concepts of ‘personalization’ and ‘personification’ mean something different; cf. for example Christian Heuer: *Personalisierung*. In: Ulrich Mayer et al. (eds.): *Wörterbuch Geschichtsdidaktik*. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. and exp. ed. Schwalbach/Ts. 2009, p. 153 f.

gist: the harvests in the girl's former country were poor. There was no bread, she had to starve. [...] The young Teuton tells her Roman peer about their fruitless attempts to cross the Limes.<sup>29</sup>

From this short passage the recipients can already derive an impression of the living conditions attributed by the author to that period. They can identify with the protagonists and – as described in the passage above about narrative processing – in this way immerse themselves in the world of the past. The felt proximity to the people depicted can be influenced furthermore by the tense used in the text. Using the present tense as an alternative to the past tense can, as exemplified above, contribute to reducing the distance between the narrated events and the recipient (simultaneous narration). Also the narrative form influences the proximity felt by the recipient: the (extradiegetic-heterodiegetic) narrator in the exemplary text above possesses insight into the psyche of the Roman boy (internal focalisation), can recount his wishes ('curious') and thoughts ('The boy cannot even begin to imagine'). The proximity between the narrator and the character is so close that it cannot always be clearly determined whether the boy's thoughts are presented as 'autonomous interior monologue' or whether the narrator comments on the events as 'uninvolved observer' ('Why is the blond girl crying?', 'And now there is this Germanic girl sitting there and crying'). In this way, the recipients can engage with the seemingly-authentic thoughts and emotions of the boy, take on his perspective and accept the narrator's descriptions, at the same time as taking on 'first hand' information. The applied personalisation of historical content in such a narration can be additionally enhanced by illustrations such as portraits or photographs of historical people, and by other kinds. On the one hand, personalisation has the advantage that the recipients can better identify with the characters and people presented and locate themselves in the world of the past. On the other hand, however, personalisation is a subjective and mono-perspectival presentation whose acceptance can impede an objective and multi-perspectival point of view of historical content. Over-emphasising interpersonal topics carries the risk of directing the recipient's attention towards these 'human

---

29 Martin Bernstein: Die Grenzen des Imperiums. In: P.M. HISTORY SPECIAL 3 (2010), p. 13.

interest stories' while relegating the historical content to a mere 'setting'. It is therefore advisable not to elaborate too much on the interpersonal story or else to closely connect it to important historical content.

Besides personalisation, present-day relevance (in receptual psychology: 'personalisation') may also serve to reduce the distance to the historical topic felt by the recipient. Comparisons between historical and present-day conditions and events establish a connection to the recipient's life-world.

A special stylistic device used to connect historical events to present times is anachronism. In employing modern-day terms to describe historical actors, objects and events (e.g. 'Hermann superstar' to highlight the importance of Arminius or 'Roman spa' to illustrate the Romans' bathing facilities) the recipient should recognise aspects of their life-world in the past. Even though anachronisms may aid the recipient with imagining a past life-world, their use is nevertheless viewed critically in history didactics because of the risk of projecting ahistorically the recipients' own present-day world of experiences onto the historical topic.

Apart from relating contexts to each other, proximity can be created by integrating interviews with contemporary witnesses or experts. In both cases the interviewees function as a 'link' to the past (the contemporary witness as observer 'in' history; the expert who in his or her area of expertise professionally and scientifically writes 'about' history and makes research results available to a wider public). Recipients may attribute a high level of authenticity to such 'first-hand information'. A particular case is that in which experts and even the author appear in the article – as in the following example taken from an article about Angkor Wat in the magazine ABENTEUER ARCHÄOLOGIE (as of 12/2007 EPOC) –:

"Within a mere 37 years the Khmer built the temple at Angkor Wat", says Hans Leisen [expert]. The reliefs on the temple walls provide indications as to how these unique constructions were possible. We [the authors of this article and the expert] are standing in front of a wall painting on which men can be seen splitting the rocks with long poles. "In this way, they have managed to chisel up to 25 tons of heavy sandstone blocks from rock plateaus up to sixty kilometres away", Leisen explains."<sup>30</sup>

---

30 Wolfgang Richter/Monika Wimmer: Bedrohtes Lächeln. In: ABENTEUER ARCHÄOLOGIE 1 (2005), p. 13.

Further possibilities for reducing the distance between recipient and historical content can be found at the stylistic level of the text. Thus, readers can be addressed directly with pronouns or a sense of community can be created (via the first person plural). Such a 'conversational style', through which recipients can seemingly communicate with historical persons, authors, experts or contemporary witnesses, has been empirically proven (by Richard E. Mayer and his colleagues as well as by Roxana Moreno and Mayer<sup>31</sup>) to enhance learning in comparison to a formal style.

## 2.4 Fictionalisation

The transition from dramatisation, emotionalisation, personalisation and present-day relevance to fictionalisation is often fluid – for instance when attitudes, thoughts and motives of historical persons or figures are depicted. The mental world of historical actors cannot be reconstructed reliably, since, in addition to the frequently-occurring lack of historical sources, present-day researchers, journalists and recipients always insert their own knowledge of the world, opinions and attitudes into the process of reconstruction. Scientifically proven historical facts 'can' indeed be enriched in history magazines by fictional content in order to tell a 'good story', which is plausibly motivated by the protagonists' thoughts and emotions so that the recipients identify as strongly as possible with the actors and immerse themselves in the past world. Often, however, – and especially in history narrations – the fictional content is not made apparent. Only rarely are historical sources or secondary literature referred to within an article. Accordingly, it is not always clear to the reader if, and how profoundly, the interpretations are documented and which content is depicted in a fictional or at least a distorted way. This, however, can and should be made transparent in history magazines by referring to historical

---

31 Richard E. Mayer et al.: A personalization effect in multimedia learning. Students learn better when words are in conversational style rather than formal style. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology* 96 (2004), issue 2, p. 389–395; Roxana Moreno/Richard E. Mayer: Engaging students in active learning. The case for personalized multimedia messages. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology* 92 (2000), issue 4, p. 724–733; Roxana Moreno/Richard E. Mayer: Personalized messages that promote science learning in virtual environments. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology* 96 (2004), issue 1, p. 165–173.



sources (which have been critically assessed) and secondary literature, and openly addressing the extent of fictionalisation by the author. The following excerpt (taken from the magazine *P.M. HISTORY SPECIAL*) from an article about Alarich, King of the Visigoths, shows what the critical assessment of a source may look like in history magazines:

‘The more confused the reality, the more those who narrate history tend toward literary exaggeration to make a better story. The cannibalism which was soon to rage in besieged Rome, and Hieronymus’ report about a mother who supposedly ate her baby, are simply dramaturgically effective patterns of narration, to which almost every besieged city in history falls victim. It is exactly this maelstrom of the narrative which has overstated the plundering of Rome and Alarich’s role in it far beyond our actual knowledge, and which often leads us to talk erroneously about “the fall of Rome” even now. And more often than not, delight in literary distortion was characterized by tangible political interests.’<sup>32</sup>

As long as historical situations and connections cannot be supported by empirical evidence their presentation remains mere speculation. In this manner, conspiracy theories (for instance) are created, which are – understandably – very exciting for the recipients, but in the end are of a fictional character most of the time. In history magazines we furthermore encounter fictionalisation in the form of reconstructed historical objects, buildings or events. This may involve illustrations or photographed models, diorama, computer-based reconstructions or even pictures of replica, ‘Living History’ (in which the past living conditions of a selected group of people are reconstructed by present-day people as authentically as possible) or ‘Re-enactments’ (attempts at re-enacting individual past events in a way which is historically correct).<sup>33</sup> Since, however, every reconstruction is merely a ‘possibility’ of reconstruction, there is always a certain hint of fictionality in them even though they are built on a scientific basis to the best of current knowledge and belief.

As regards knowledge acquisition, extreme care must be taken when using fictionalisation to narrate an exciting story, since, as explained

---

32 Andreas Séché: Alarich, die Goten und das Ende eines Weltreichs. In: *P.M. HISTORY SPECIAL* 3 (2010), p. 31.

33 Andreas Wunsch: Living History. In: Mayer et al. (note 28), p. 133 f.

above, the recipients memorize the exciting and emotionally charged fictional content particularly well, so that after some time its origin can no longer be classified as either 'reliable' or 'unreliable' due to the so-called 'sleeper effect'.<sup>34</sup> According to this idea, content which was initially recognized as 'fictional' can instead be remembered later as 'factual' – unless the recipients have, by using a history specific processing strategy (such as those described in the following chapter) paid particular attention to the (un-)reliability of the cited historical sources and secondary literature in the text. In the case of fictionalisation in the form of reconstruction, an impression of the past world can be visually exemplified for the recipients through which they are relieved of their own 'imaginative work'. This, in return, releases cognitive capacities to process the other content.<sup>35</sup> Through visual presentation the information (as already described under point 1) can be dually coded in the memory of the recipients, i.e. represented both verbally and pictorially. This dual coding implies a stronger anchoring in the memory, and a readier availability of information from it.<sup>36</sup> The reconstructions of objects and buildings or the 'Re-enactments' depicted in history magazines are, however, merely one of many possible versions of reconstruction – which may not always be apparent to many recipients. Depending on the development of the epistemological beliefs of the recipients, they accept the presented reconstructions as true and assume that these show 'how it really was'. Even though this problem applies to every presentation of history, it is even more questionable with regard to such specific images – and especially with photo-realistic com-

- 
- 34 Carl I. Hovland/Walter Weiss: The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. In: *Public Opinion Quarterly* 15 (1951), issue 4, p. 635–650.
- 35 Detlev Leutner/Claudia Leopold/Elke Sumfleth: Cognitive load and science text comprehension. Effects of drawing and mentally imagining text content. In: *Computers in Human Behavior* 25 (2009), p. 284–289.
- 36 Hans-Bernd Brosius/Wolfgang Donsbach/Monika Birk: How do text-picture relations affect the informational effectiveness of television newscasts? In: *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 40 (1996), p. 180–195; Dan G. Drew/Stephen D. Reese: Children's learning from a television newscast. In: *Journalism Quarterly* 61 (1984), p. 83–88; Juliette H. Walma van der Molen/Tom H. A. van der Voort: The impact of television, print, and audio on children's recall of the news. In: *Human Communication Research* 26 (2000), issue 1, p. 3–26.

puter reconstructions – since people tend to believe in what they see with their own eyes. The question of how recipients deal with the various versions of reconstruction is still unexamined.

### 3. History specific reception

The general phenomena which are explored by media psychology can also be applied to specific content. As described above, the general motives, for example, which are mentioned in the ‘uses-and-gratifications’ approach, align to a large extent with the motives for the reception of historical content.<sup>37</sup> Using an interdisciplinary approach, one which in addition to the general psychological processes and phenomena also takes into consideration the subject specific content, can however explore and describe the motives of reception, the processing procedures and the effects far more specific and in more detail like it is apparent from the presentation of history related motivation in Rolf Schörken.<sup>38</sup> If you want to explore specific situations of reception such as the processing of historical content in history magazines it is, in my opinion, essential to take into account content specific aspects of reception. Regarding historical content, this particularly applies to the epistemological beliefs of the recipients as well as their use of historical competencies. Since such competencies especially include critical engagement with various sources and presentations, which can overlap, complement and contradict each other, the processing of multiple documents is of great significance for the reception of historical content.

Epistemological beliefs are conceptions about the nature of historical knowledge, and according to Kaya Yilmaz conceptions of the certainty, source, justification, acquisition, and structure of that knowledge. Yilmaz defines a mature understanding of the nature of history as interpretative, tentative (or subject to change), subjective, empirically based, literary based as well as socially and culturally embedded.<sup>39</sup> Having highly developed epistemological beliefs regarding historical knowledge means,

---

37 Cf. Schörken (note 10).

38 Ibid.

39 Kaya Yilmaz: Social studies teachers’ conceptions of history: calling on historiography. In: *The Journal on Educational Research* 101 (2008), issue 3, p. 158–175.

according to Philippe Haeberli, having a 'constructivist' view compared to a 'realistic' view of history.<sup>40</sup> A realistic view features an objective, linear and deterministic understanding of history. To acquire knowledge about the past means, for those holding this view, to get to know facts. On the other hand, people with a constructivist view of history pay attention to different perspectives and the determining circumstances which have an effect on the construction of historical knowledge – such as, for instance, the context and the position of the historians. They assume that there is not 'one true' past, but different interpretations of the past, which may all have a different justification. History magazines can contribute to a constructivist understanding of history by depicting different perspectives of one historical situation, and by pointing out the factors involved in the formation of that perspectives. Controversy<sup>41</sup> (perspectivity on the level of the observer of historical topics) can be found, for instance, at the beginning of an article in the magazine EPOC about Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642). Not only did the cardinal himself have vested interests in establishing a myth around his person, but he was seen and evaluated differently by various groups of people in different centuries<sup>42</sup>:

'During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, things were indeed seen differently in France and the rest of Europe. Even though the French Revolution of 1789, which still influences France until today, rejected the monarchy shaped by Richelieu, the French nationalists nevertheless appreciated him as co-founder of a strong nation and for his services to French language and culture. From a German point of view, other aspects stood at the centre of attention: Richelieu's foreign policy battle aimed at the House of Habsburg, i.e. the Roman-German Kaiser and the King of Spain, who at the same time reigned over the Spanish Netherlands, today's Belgium. German nationalists accused Richelieu of having weakened Germany and of having enhanced by his political stance its fragmentation into individual states. Additionally, they saw in Richelieu

---

40 Philippe Haeberli: Relating to history. An empirical typology. In: *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* 5 (2005), issue 1; online at: URL: <http://bit.ly/10EwWTv> (1.8.2014).

41 Melanie Salewski: Multiperspektivität. In: Mayer et al. (note 28), p. 143 f., p. 143.

42 Anuschka Tischer: Der inszenierte Kardinal. In: EPOC 3 (2010), p. 56–63.

the initiator of systematic expansion to the Rhine. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this image of the enemy reached its horrible climax in the propaganda of National Socialism. The cardinal was then stylized as the author of a master plan through which France had for three centuries attempted to bring Germany to its knees. Propagandists argued as if the war against France was about defeating the long deceased cardinal. However, Richelieu had, in fact, intended to secure France against the threat from Habsburg – an aim with which many German noblemen in those days had in fact sympathized.<sup>43</sup>

Having contrasted different historical interpretations, the fact that the author undermines the principle of controversy by presenting her interpretation as ‘the be-all and end-all’, and the one which alone can claim validity (‘in fact’) and prevail over the preceding interpretations, may be attributed to an intention to arouse the reader’s interest to read further into the explanations for these re-evaluations in the article. Also in the above-mentioned article taken from the magazine *P.M. HISTORY SPECIAL* about the Gothic King Alarich, the constructivist character of history is emphasised. In this case the perspective of present-day interpretations is particularly addressed and problematized:

‘In this way, the conquest of Rome by the Goth Alarich was from the very beginning stripped down to the bare facts, which could ideally be fleshed out according to needs and disposition. Sometimes the barbarian brought death and decay upon the Romans, sometimes he brought religious salvation, and sometimes he officially seized Rome as a general on behalf of Honorius in order to suppress a revolt against the emperor. [...] But it is also the case that today our interpretations are not devoid of sentiment arising out of current experiences. It is not surprising that Alarich is now increasingly depicted ‘as a person striving for integration’, Meier explains. Now that we encounter weak countries requesting involvement in greater structures (for instance, entry to the EU), we promptly and frequently interpret Alarich as someone who wanted to include his Goths in the community of the Imperium Romanum.’<sup>44</sup>

According to Jannet van Drie and Carla van Boxtel, historical thinking not only means the active acquisition of knowledge about historical

---

43 Ibid., p. 57.

44 Séché (note 32), p. 32 f.

content, but also the interpretation of historical and present-day phenomena. This includes describing, comparing and explaining phenomena and requires specific competences, such as, for instance, being able to pose historical questions, use sources, contextualise and reason, as well as use specialist terms and meta-concepts.<sup>45</sup> Waltraud Schreiber and her colleagues describe, in their competence-structure-model on historical thinking, similar aspects and add another important aspect, namely the deconstruction of presentations of historical content.<sup>46</sup> Deconstruction implies capturing the presentation of historical content in regard to its surface structure and analysing this for subjacent structures. In this way, construction patterns and the underlying intentions of authors are revealed and critically assessed with regard to their validity. The development of such 'deconstruction competences' may be closely related to the development of the epistemological beliefs of the recipient regarding the topic of history, since both approaches assume a constructivist character of history. History magazines are able to enhance the historical competencies of their readers by actively implementing these within their pages, and thereby functioning as a role model for the reader. In the texts, historical questions can be directly formulated and different sources can be named as well as compared. On this basis, presenting different interpretations can be favoured. Furthermore, comparisons can be drawn to present-day living conditions and contemporary events or to other eras or countries. Specialist terms and meta-concepts can be introduced and explained even as they are presented.

The following excerpt from an article in the magazine *GEO EPOCHE* about the Norwegian King Harald III. ('Hard Ruler') (1015–1066) is an example of how a history magazine tries to provide answers for a historical question:

'Military historians are still uncertain why the Viking king chooses such a tactic at this moment, because it appears to be very imprudent. On the one hand, the protective wall has until then been maintained reliably, it

---

45 Jannet van Drie/Carla van Boxtel: Historical reasoning. Towards a framework for analyzing students' reasoning about the past. In: *Educational Psychology Review* 20 (2008), p. 87–110.

46 Waltraud Schreiber et al.: *Historisches Denken. Ein Kompetenz-Strukturmodell*. Neuried 2006.

has forced the enemy into new, tiring and frustrating attacks. On the other hand, Harald can indeed expect support from the ships to arrive and prospects to improve soon. But perhaps the king wants by any means to benefit from the element of surprise. Perhaps he thinks that with this unexpected attack he can turn the fortunes of war in his favour and achieve a sudden victory. However, this decision is presumably not based on rational thinking. At this moment, Harald may possibly have been in a state which the Scandinavians call *berserkgangr*: in the feared blood frenzy of the war (the German word 'Berserker' is derived from this).<sup>47</sup>

It is striking that the author presents the reader with arguments as to why the Norwegian king's tactic appears to be 'very imprudent', but subsequently presents two purely speculative explanatory models. As the author himself has realised ('perhaps', 'presumably') the general motives or actual considerations engaging Harald can only be guessed at. All the more peculiar then that he ties himself to a non-rational explanation ('presumably') which names a delusional 'state of mind' as the reason for the king's actions, i.e. the 'feared blood frenzy of war', and one in which the modern topos of the murdering and pillaging Viking is expressed.

The examples mentioned above show that some authors do try to demonstrate different perspectives on historical content. But how do recipients of history magazines deal with the views presented within one article or in various history magazines? As regards the handling of multiple documents, reasoning 'about' documents and reasoning 'with' documents can be differentiated.<sup>48</sup> Reasoning 'about' different documents implies that the kinds of documents (e.g. history magazines or historical sources) as well as the information conveyed is assessed critically, and the origin and transmission, authorial perspective and resulting foci, distortions and falsifications (intentional or unintentional) questioned. Reasoning 'with' documents, by contrast, implies the ability to use information from different documents to find an answer to a historical question on that basis. So, different information has to be structured and put into relation, which is particularly difficult if it is contradictory. However, as Jean-Francois Rouet and his colleagues

---

47 Jens-Rainer Berg: *Der letzte Wikinger*. In: *GEO EPOCHE* 53 (2012), p. 166.

48 Jean-François Rouet et al.: Using multiple sources of evidence to reason about history. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology* 88 (1996), issue 3, p. 478–493.

were able to show, students are indeed capable of differentiating between the specific properties of different kinds of documents, and to take into consideration their respective characteristics when working on historical questions.<sup>49</sup> Cognitive representations may overlap. The content of a cognitively represented document may be a part of the situation model of another document, or the situation models may be incompatible. Therefore, M. Anne Britt and colleagues postulate that when learning with multiple documents additional levels of representations are generated: local argument models and a global argument model.<sup>50</sup> The local argument models may be regarded as connections between the situation models of the individual documents and the global argument model. Local argument models contain information on the kind of document, its basic message(s) as well as the arguments and evidence which give reasons for the basic message(s). The global argument model, on the other hand, contains controversial aspects of the topic, different claims and the respective kind of document they came from, their evidence as well as their relation to each other. In this way, even contradictory statements can be represented coherently. The reader can then evaluate the contents of the global argument model with regard to their neutrality (neutral or biased) or priority (in the field of history, for instance, primary or secondary sources, historical novels or scientific presentation etc.). As regards history magazines, the processing of multiple documents not only involves the integration of the individual magazine contribution into already existing knowledge from other documents, but (for example) the integration of magazine contributions by different authors within one thematic issue. Opposing views presented by different documents, and their various interpretations of historical events, can also be explicitly pointed out in history magazines so as to enhance the historical competencies of readers. An especially obvious example for the comparison of two documents with contrary evaluations of the common historical topic is presented in the following excerpt from an article in the magazine EPOC with the title: 'Rommel's treasure: the Nazi raid in North Africa'.

---

49 Ibid.

50 M. Anne Britt et al.: Learning from history texts: from causal analysis to argument models. In: Gaea Leinhardt et al. (eds.): Teaching and learning in history. Hillsdale 1994, p. 47–84.



‘Was the German Africa Corps also involved in looting? Rumours circulating the internet seem to exculpate the Wehrmacht. It would seem that the legend about the treasure may refer to roughly 211 tons of refined gold which Belgian, Luxembourgish, and French banks sent from Paris to French West Africa (today’s Senegal) in June 1940 in order to preserve them from the approaching Germans. However, in 1997, micro-films were found among the files of the German Reichsbank, which show: within one month of having invaded Paris, Hitler gave the Vichy regime the order [...] to bring back the precious metal [...].’<sup>51</sup>

The fact that the author in the example above juxtaposes unspecified ‘rumours circulating the internet’ with ‘micro-films of files’ which invalidate the attempt to exculpating the Wehrmacht or the Third Reich, would seem at this point intended to undermine the credibility of revisionist interpretations of history in advance. In as much as it is obvious that the reader will evaluate the truthfulness of both documents (rumours circulating the internet vs. recordings on microfilm) and give preference to the ‘microfilm’, it is challenging for the recipient to critically assess information in the field of, for instance, historical sources (keywords: ‘tradition’ and ‘remains’). The same rules that apply to the evaluation of testimonies from the past in particular also apply in general to the assessment of the medium ‘history magazine’. If history magazines point out the levels of validity of different documents, and the evaluation criteria of historians, then the reader can assess the level of validity of the present medium in a more competent and so more realistic way. In the case of history magazines, the aim of historical competence goes hand in hand with the general aim of media competence.

#### **4. Research outlook: Hybrid processing and affective aspects of the reception of historical content**

Research about learning has scarcely taken into consideration what was described at the outset of this article as the popularisation of historical and other information by means of ‘entertaining’ elements. Presentations which address the motive of entertainment and the recipient’s need for

---

51 Jean-Christoph Caron: *Rommels Schatz. Der Nazi-Raubzug in Nordafrika*. In: *EPOC* 1 (2008), p. 24 f.

what they find to be interpersonally useful, in addition to the mediation of historical information, require hybrid processing procedures. In specific way, they also address the recipient on a 'non-cognitive', affective and personal level, and so open up alternative access points to historical content. However, reception research has so far mostly dealt with the cognitive processes which occur during knowledge acquisition via purely expository formats or with purely fictional stories. Hybrid formats and affective components of knowledge acquisition have rarely been taken into account. But with historical content in particular, and in informal learning contexts (e.g. in museums or memorial sites), hybrid processing and affective aspects of knowledge acquisition seem to play a decisive part – not least thanks to the evolutionary biological background of 'learning with stories'.

In the areas of dramatisation, emotionalisation, personalisation and present-day relevance, as well as fictionalisation, only a handful of empirical results so far exist with regard to the processing of entertaining information formats ('Edutainment'), of the kind that can also be found among history magazines. For the analysis of 'edutainment formats' an overriding framework model is missing, which might depict interaction between the different aspects and by means of which the processing of 'edutainment formats' can be examined. In this way, different modes of reception could be investigated, along with those effects which depend on the emphasis placed on informative and entertaining aspects of history magazines. Suggestions for re-designing entertaining history magazines to meet particular aims – such as enhancing historical competences – could be forthcoming. A further question would be how the development of recipients' epistemological beliefs, critical thinking, and deconstruction competences can be enhanced by the design of entertaining history magazines. Ways to do this might include highlighting fictional elements, implementing multi-perspective views or foregrounding controversy, as well as making the formation of historical knowledge apparent.

The hybrid mode of processing historical content, where educational content presented in a narrative way is supposedly learned by alternating between narrative and expository modes of processing, is also of great significance. Hardly any empirical research regarding the hybrid mode of processing exists. One possible approach might be to examine the hybrid processing of historical presentations not only 'after' reception (offline)

with the help of the narrative distance effect, as is the case of the study by the author and Bärbel Garsoffky and Stephan Schwan, but also ‘during’ reception (online), so as to precisely prove the alternation between narrative and expository modes of reception in relation to the reception aims.<sup>52</sup> Online measures adequate to this task remain to be developed. Furthermore, the question arises whether, (and if so, how) both cognitive representations, which derive from two different processing procedures, are linked. Given this connection, the advantages of both forms of representation could be used. The situation model based on narration would illustrate and exemplify the historical educational content and open up affective and personal access to the historical educational content, whereas the mental model which was generated by expository processing, would represent historical learning topics in a more condensed, and thus more economical as well as more abstract, way, all the better to mobilise transfer tasks.

From an evolutionary biological point of view, the two styles of processing are from different ages. Whereas the narrative mode of processing may presumably be the first of all forms of knowledge acquisition, the expository processing represents a more developed, more specific and organized form of knowledge acquisition. In formal learning contexts (e.g. in school) we predominantly learn with non-fictional books, which for reasons of efficiency mostly present educational content organized in an expository way. The subject history may be an exception since the educational content is inherently narrative and therefore to a certain extent requires also a narrative processing.

Stories as narration are a culture-spanning phenomenon and, according to Michelle Scalise Sugiyama, developed roughly 30,000 to 100,000 years ago.<sup>53</sup> Mediating and understanding information, which, for instance, was vital in searching out food, offered early humans an advantage in survival. Stories function as virtual reality, which allows people to acquire essential survival knowledge (e.g. about poisonous plants) based on affects without having to run the risks and costs of a first-hand experience. By means

---

52 Cf. Glaser/Garsoffky/Schwan (note 18).

53 Michelle Scalise Sugiyama: Food, foragers, and folklore. The role of narrative in human subsistence. In: *Evolution and Human Behavior* 22 (2001), p. 221–240.

of stories of the past and their affective components this knowledge was passed on from generation to generation. Like our ancestors, we too can use our past to learn for the future by communicating our past in historical presentations. This involves our everyday life as well as our learning in informal settings (e.g. museums or memorial sites) where we engage with our cultural heritage and, restrictedly, also learning in formal environments (e.g. schools).

Whether due to evolutionary biological views, our 'everyday learning' and the engagement with our cultural heritage ('culture of remembrance'), or the increasing amalgamation of formats in media, learning from and with history plays a decisive part in our lives. In order to address this important topic adequately, learning research should in future intensify its engagement with hybrid processing procedures and with affective and motivational aspects of knowledge acquisition. So far as specific subject content is concerned, interdisciplinary cooperation appears reasonable for researching this topic. Receptual psychology could isolate single aspects by means of inferential statistics and research these without reference to their content, whereas history didactics could proceed in a content specific way by means of qualitative methods. Thus the topic 'popular knowledge mediation' could be understood comprehensively and in detail, with regard not only to history magazines, but beyond that field, and could take in other content and special edutainment formats.



Michael Wobring

## The function and use of image documents in German popular history magazines

This contribution will consider, with particular emphasis on methodology, the diverse image inventory of popular history magazines, in order to analyse and understand such imagery and to offer examples of its use. Analytical approaches and categories will be developed (grounded in examples taken from German magazine culture) which can capture and categorise what lies behind the use of popular images in relation to the presentation of history in such magazines. Analytical examples, sketched here, may offer possibilities for further comparative analyses of images in popular history magazines.

History didactics is alive to the relevance of the visual aspects and impacts of popular magazines (henceforth 'history magazines'). These includes many more design elements than the mere reproduction of pictures in the iconic sense. Such elements affect the way content is presented and understood, with consequent advantages and drawbacks for conveying history to a broad lay-audience, as we shall see. Additionally, this contribution will consider how the image inventory of individual magazine issues or entire series may be understood and analysed. However, the manifold possibilities by which these inventories might be generally accounted for and analysed stretch methodological approaches to the limit, given both the variety of picture types and also the number of pictures used. The main focus of this contribution is therefore to carry out an exemplary analysis of the use of images in history magazines, and to formulate statements about the 'quality' of the use of images, from the point of view of history didactics. This is grounded in common categories of historical work with image sources in order to formulate standards for the use of pictures in the respective magazine-domain.<sup>1</sup> Additionally and in conclusion, this

---

1 Cf. exemplarily on this: Brigitte Tolkemitt/Rainer Wohlfeil (eds.): *Historische Bildkunde. Probleme – Wege – Beispiele*. Berlin 1991; Heike Talkenberger: *Von der Illustration zur Interpretation. Das Bild als historische Quelle*.

contribution will consider what effects the basic structure of the respective magazine type, its size, and the function of its magazine elements, may have on the featured images. Analysis is carried out on the basis of a limited sample of four popular history magazines in Germany, which have been on the market for a long time, DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE, GEO EPOCHE and P.M. HISTORY.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. The relevance of the visual design of popular scientific magazines

Whereas academic transmission of specialist historical knowledge occurs via specialist publications and professional journals in what has traditionally been rather an 'image-hostile' way (as well as a predominantly text and language-based one), popular conveyance of such matters is strongly underpinned by pictures, which are in the broadest sense used illustratively. As regards the use of images, the academic or academically-oriented presentation of history generally distinguishes between the use of a picture functioning as a 'source' and its illustrative use as 'presentation'. Firstly, and regardless of the meaning which can be attributed to the use of pictures for the presentation and the transmission of history in popular magazines, the comprehensive and basic function of the complex visual design of the magazines has to be pointed out.

The magazine's visual design comprises every form of graphic and typographic design in addition to the image documents used, (which are the focus of the following examination), as well as the visual appearance

---

Methodische Überlegungen zur Historischen Bildkunde. In: Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung 21 (1994), p. 289–313; Hans-Jürgen Pandel: Bildinterpretation. Die Bildquelle im Geschichtsunterricht. Bildinterpretation I. Schwalbach/Ts. 2008; Michael Wobring/Susanne Popp (eds.): Der europäische Bildersaal. Europa und seine Bilder. Schwalbach/Ts. 2014.

2 The choice of the magazine issues was made incidentally without taking into account the thematic main focus. Object of the analysis are the issues DAMALS 4 (2008) 'Würfeln, Wetten, Kartenspielen', G/GESCHICHTE 4 (2008) 'Kaiser Friedrich II.', GEO EPOCHE 4 (2006) 'Preußen' and P.M. HISTORY 5 (2008) 'Die Sieben Weltwunder und ihre Geheimnisse'.

of the printing substrate and the technical processing of the magazine. Together, their interaction results in the overall aesthetic effect.<sup>3</sup> These design elements, it is generally understood, decisively underpin how the topic is conveyed to the audience and influence the audience's decision about whether or not to be interested in the magazine, and to buy or consume it. History didactics characterises this overall effect (which is achieved by different design elements and which invests a historical topic) as the aesthetic dimension of a historico-cultural phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

Popular history magazines have to hold their own in a highly competitive and permanently changing market for the popular transmission and presentation of history, which also takes in other popular history services including a diverse event culture.<sup>5</sup> Rivalry between different history magazines is permanently deepened through fierce competition with the presentation of history in other media formats, especially TV documentaries, films, websites and the non-fiction culture. In addition, new history magazines often enter the market as offshoots of established publication institutions with more or less permanent success. Besides history magazines, popular magazines can also be found which are connected to other

---

3 Regarding the basics of magazine design cf. Hubert Blana: *Die Herstellung. Ein Handbuch für die Gestaltung. Technik und Kalkulation von Buch, Zeitschrift und Zeitung*, p. 134 f.

4 Jörn Rüsen characterises historico-cultural phenomena with three dimensions, namely the aesthetic, the political and the cognitive dimension. The aesthetic dimension in general also features non-visual characteristics. Cf. Jörn Rüsen: *Geschichtskultur*. In: Klaus Bergmann et al. (eds.): *Handbuch der Geschichts-didaktik*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Seelze 1997, p. 38–41.

5 Regarding the situation of magazines on the current market cf.: Michael Hallemann: *Was Zeitschriften besonders gut können. Die spezifischen Funktionen und Qualitäten von Print in seiner sich verändernden Medienlandschaft*. In: Sven Dierks (ed.): *Quo vadis Zeitschriften? Änderung der Medienlandschaft und Auswirkungen auf die Pressekäufer*. Wiesbaden 2009, p. 113–122, p. 113 f.; Edigna Menhard/Tilo Treede: *Die Zeitschrift. Von der Idee bis zur Vermarktung*. Konstanz 2004, p. 27 f.; Markus Reiter/Eva-Maria Waas: *Der Relaunch. Zeitung – Zeitschrift – Internet*. Konstanz 2009, p. 15 f.



research areas.<sup>6</sup> What all these media have in common is their intensive use of images and other visual design elements.

As well as generating a vivid illusion and a powerful affective response, pictures seem to make possible the easy capture of complex matters. This gives them a central role in history magazines.<sup>7</sup> Images and visual design elements take on an indispensable mediating function for the audience, which may outweigh the impact of the subject-matter. The visual features of the magazine, along with the choice of topic, are crucial for establishing and maintaining the magazine in the market for popular history products. A glance at the magazine retail industry shows that the impact of an individual magazine, and its differentiation from competing products, is not possible without a target-group-focused image culture and a visual aesthetics which is responsive to the culture, expectations and habits of the viewing audience, which thereby influences and shapes the magazine. Consequently, the target-group-focused design of the cover page has a crucial function.

This fact carries opportunities and drawbacks in relation to the presentation of history to a lay-audience. In principle, pictures communicate faster than text. They seem to be more quickly accessible and to affect the recipient prior to the interpretation of the text.<sup>8</sup> Pictures shape the first impression and are thus influential since they are easily associated with

---

6 The popular scientific offers are linked on various levels. Some of the history magazines are aligned to products of the same family and their house-style of appearance: the history magazine GEO EPOCHE is an offshoot of the geography magazine GEO and P.M. HISTORY is an offshoot of the technically and physically oriented magazine P.M. These relations are shown in the choice of content, the presentation of topics, but also in the culture of image use and the overall visual aesthetics. On the history of the magazine market and on the rise of the popular scientific magazines since the late 1970s cf. Clemens Zimmermann: *Die Zeitschrift – Medium der Moderne. Publikumszeitschriften im 20. Jahrhundert*. In: Clemens Zimmermann/Manfred Schmeling (eds.): *Die Zeitschrift – Medium der Moderne. Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich*. Bielefeld 2006, p. 15–42, p. 34.

7 On the specific characteristics of image media cf. Klaus Sachs-Hombach/Jörg R. J. Schirra: *Medientheorie, visuelle Kultur und Bildanthropologie*. In: Klaus Sachs-Hombach (ed.): *Bildtheorien – Anthropologische und kulturelle Grundlagen des Visualistic Turn*. Frankfurt/Main 2009, p. 393–426, p. 410 f.

8 *Ibid* p. 412 f.

and linked to, pictures remembered from other contexts.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, they also bring with them modes of response related to specific topics or historical periods and, some say, the 'aura' or 'aesthetics' of a historical event or topic. Since these features have a decisive effect on the purchase decision, magazine producers look to utilise them. Matters which do not have any relation to image-presentation, e.g. theories, processes, constitutions or orders, are less suitable for this conceptualisation and accordingly less often found in history magazines.

In general, however, images and their effect on the viewer cannot be fully controlled. These characteristics of image documents, which are not seen as unproblematic by history didactics, have led to the establishment of rules and standards for the use of images in research and teaching.<sup>10</sup> Not only do these rules address the referencing, verifiability and provability of a document, (matters to be discussed at a later stage), but also their choice and use in the given context. In this way, either the image's function as a source, or its function as a representative illustration of the subject-matter, has to be taken into consideration when choosing an image document. Furthermore, pictures used for illustration cannot replace explanation or argument in the text, or be used in their stead.

Knowledge about rules and standards relating to appropriate picture-use cannot be assumed in the broad audience for popular magazines or in the interested layperson. Additionally, this audience is unlikely to notice when these standards go unobserved by editors or when they are applied inappropriately, partially or in a merely cosmetic way. From the point of view of history didactics, the issue is how far standards have been observed when it comes to deploying pictures in popular history magazines in order to provide the viewer with the possibility for evaluating and assessing such usage. This has resulted in a framework of criteria for understanding image inventories and the assessment of the picture presentation in the respective magazines, as will be illustrated in what follows.

---

9 On cross-media image perception cf. Manfred Behr: Visuelle Argumentationen: Schlüsselbilder im Selbstverständnis von Kulturen. In: *Jahrbuch Medienpädagogik* 3 (2003), p. 83–104; George Lakoff/Mark Johnson: *Leben in Metaphern. Konstruktion und Gebrauch von Sprachbildern*. Heidelberg 2000.

10 Cf. note 1.

## **2. Recording and analysing the picture inventory of popular scientific history magazines**

When taking into account history magazine illustrations, the variety and multitude of images present poses a problem for every methodological approach which aims at reaching generally applicable conclusions regarding the magazines' illustrative culture. For instance, a single issue of the magazine GEO EPOCHE may contain more than 140 individual pictures. Each picture can be categorised and analysed in various ways. In addition to the sheer number of pictures there is also the variety of kinds of picture reproduced from all epochs, which in general include all forms of, and techniques for, creating pictures. Depictions of mobile or immobile objects of every kind form a large part. Moreover, there are photographic depictions of text documents from all epochs, which may include all possible forms of text creation or reproduction. Pictures which do not reflect historical originals or objects, but are artefacts created photographically for illustrative purposes when the magazine was produced, form their own group. These include e.g. animal photography, or photos of plants or landscapes. They do not introduce additional material regarding a particular event, location or era. A further area is that of didactic material, which may include e.g. reproductions of thematic maps, graphical formatting of data, information charts of any kind and (scientific) illustrations.

The aim of this discussion of the picture inventory is, first of all, to arrive at conclusions about the 'quality' of the popular use of images in magazines. Among the wide range of possible quantitative and qualitative surveys, pictures are categorised here according to features which will be further introduced and analysed when considering aspects of history didactics. In order to reach conclusions about the culture of image use, standards are formulated based on history didactics. In this way the picture inventory shall be linked to the historical events. In particular, pictures are analysed according to their degree of compliance with the standards of technically-correct usage of image documents (which will be explained below). Recording the pictures deployed in a magazine thus means classifying every single depiction of an issue according to a given set of features.

Irrespective of the main area of analysis focused on for the evaluation of the culture of image use from the perspective of history didactics as

chosen here, analyses of pictures may also engage with a number of other areas, e.g. the image creation techniques, the genres of the depictions or the specific contents of the individual pictures. Depending on the level of epistemological interest shown, these surveys may also be linked to other areas of examination, e.g. one aimed at the magazine contents, its topics, the design of the cover pages, the textual and linguistic design, or the behaviour of recipients.<sup>11</sup>

A survey of the individual pictures in an issue of a magazine may be based for example on the sum of pictures in an article. The number of such pictures used is determined according to how many meet the individual features of a predetermined catalogue of criteria. The pictures of an article are categorised and counted multiple times and considered in relation to this catalogue. In what follows, possible focus areas of the survey (in line with a data base structure carried out in 'tables') and the concomitant survey criteria are sketched out.

One survey ('table 1') records the pictures and their temporal connection to the depicted historical event. Contemporary pictures, which coincide with the historical event dealt with, are clearly to be discerned from the pictures created afterwards. The time frame is consequently set by the topic of the article.<sup>12</sup> Regarding the time frame in which the magazine was produced, one can differentiate between historicised pictures, i.e. those technically or artistically formed to match the time dealt with, and contemporary pictures, often photographs, which were especially made for the magazine issue. Photographic depictions of historical objects form their own subcategory, which may include depictions of book pages or other text documents in separate categories. The didactical material, maps, information graphics, diagrams, etc., which originate from the time in which the magazine was produced, would also have to be classified separately.

---

11 The manifold possibilities of quantitative and qualitative image analyses could be carried out meaningfully in a database structure and recorded in individual tables, whereby it would be possible to connect other surveys depending on the requirements.

12 If the topic of an article spans time periods and epochs then the individual picture is to be classified according to the respective temporal context of use.

In a further survey ('table 2') the number of pictures in an article is related to the way history is mediated. This evaluation deals with the observance of necessary standards of source work, which enable the examination of individual documents. This survey in particular provides information about the use of pictures in popular culture, something which is to be further illustrated. This survey records the number of pictures presented and used as 'source-material' due to their complying with standards, in contrast to others, whose use is prevented. These standards include e.g. a list of references as well as indications of whether the complete picture or only a detail was displayed, possible interference with the content of the picture, or manipulative retouching or colour changes, such as the black-and-white reproduction of a coloured original or the later colouring of a black-and-white picture.

Pictures whose use is illustrative have to be further distinguished. Subject-relevant illustrations, whose use is valuable for historical understanding, can be differentiated from subject-irrelevant illustrations, in which a connection to the historical topic and to the mediacy of history is (from a didactical point of view) missing. Subject-relevant illustrations are documents which for example cannot be used as 'sources' due to missing proof, but which are suitable for the illustration of the topic. For instance, a contemporary portrait photograph of a historical person, which is not further documented or explained, may illustrate the topic dealt with in an adequate way.

Subject-irrelevant illustrations, however, are not useful for developing historical understanding from the point of view of history didactics. The standards described were not considered in the choice and the editing of the document. In the choice and use of manifold kinds of pictures considered here the emotional potential of the documents is paramount, such as for example the assumed atmosphere of a historical event, the aura of a lifeworld or an epoch's attitude towards life. Some pictures are often used to entertain, to create amusement, suspense, drama or other moods. These pictures include stills from modern films used instead of contemporary picture sources, pictures of details from historical paintings which go without explanation, picture montages or modern historicised picture creations. (In the following, this variety of image use is summarised under the category 'entertainment' for simplification purposes).

From the point of view of history didactics such use of images does not contribute to historical understanding, but poses new problems. It enables

supposedly conclusive (but frequently erroneous) knowledge about past events to be conveyed in an unhistorical way. Pictures add atmosphere or aesthetics to the events depicted, of a kind which the historian in fact cannot be certain of and often cannot reconstruct. Moreover, this form of presentation mingles with documents that can certifiably be used as sources, and with subject-relevant illustrations. The interested layperson can neither recognise this culture of image use nor differentiate it without expert knowledge.

Further studies which are aimed at recording picture types and picture contents shall not be undertaken for this analysis, because they are relatively less significant with regard to the culture of use of the image inventory. However, as they may be helpful for further comparative analyses of the way images and texts are used in history magazines, they shall be addressed. Such surveys can be linked to the previous surveys (table 1 and 2) depending on the focus of the analysis.

Due to the wide range of picture types, the image inventory will be classified based on the underlying image creation techniques. In practice, depictions within popular magazines exhibit the entire range of techniques used to create and edit images, from all cultures and epochs, from prehistoric cave paintings to present-day graphics, which are created digitally. Techniques to create and edit images have multiplied continuously since Early Modern Times,<sup>13</sup> but so has the amount of historical picture material which has survived.

A further categorisation can be carried out according to the respective image media in which the picture was used or disseminated at its time of creation. The amount of media in which pictures were used has increased since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in particular. Traditional, established (text) media, such as books, magazines or newspapers have become increasingly illustrated. Text-picture-arrangements can also be found in placards and postcards, which have become popular since that time.

A further, yet very laborious analysis, of the picture inventory would aim at the iconographic recording of picture contents. In this kind of study it is necessary to record the picture content of each individual

---

13 Fons van der Linden: *DuMont's Handbuch der graphischen Techniken*. Köln 1990.

document according to several categories or subcategories. Terms and notions thereby have to be expanded and differentiated depending on the main focus area of the history magazine's topic. Recording data in this way might also follow the established subject indexing systems of museums. The most widespread subject indexing system internationally is classification according to the system 'Iconclass' operated from the Netherlands.<sup>14</sup> A classification of the picture inventory according to this system would enable links to international collections and picture databases, and thereby open up manifold research and examination possibilities.

By recording specific picture contents, features of the culture of image use in the respective magazine-fields may emerge. The picture inventory of individual magazines could use certain genres, for example, or spectacular picture presentations of turmoil or battles, to create suspense more frequently than is the case in other magazines.

The analysis of the use of pictures in the respective magazines requires standards, which facilitate reaching general conclusions about the history-didactical 'quality' of the use of the image.<sup>15</sup> Criteria are necessary for the evaluation of the popular use of images according to defined quality levels. In line with the basic purpose of the history magazines, the underlying criteria start with the question of the extent to which picture material aims at conveying history. In this way quality levels may be formulated for the culture of image use as variously enacted, i.e. the choice of documents and the mode of presentation.

The highest quality in terms of indication, (one, however, not striven for by popular scientific culture and thus unable to be used as the standard) is the scientific standard employed by historians in dealing with image

---

14 Iconclass, URL: <http://www.iconclass.nl/home> (1.8.2014).

15 On the complex problem of determining the quality and evaluating media cf. Siegfried Weischenberg: Medienqualitäten: Zur Einführung in den kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Diskurs über Maßstäbe und Methoden zur Bewertung öffentlicher Kommunikation. In: Siegfried Weischenberg/Wiebke Loosen/Michael Beuthner (eds.): Medien-Qualitäten. Öffentliche Kommunikation zwischen ökonomischem Kalkül und Sozialverantwortung. Konstanz 2006, p. 9–36.

documents<sup>16</sup> following the general rules of source studies.<sup>17</sup> Representatively chosen image documents may, for instance, be used as proof of hypotheses or, in relation to certain issues, for scientifically-required purposes of illustration. The image document itself may be the object of research and extensive examination in terms of creation, picture content, use, effect and historical tradition. Similarly, the circumstances of the publication, its dissemination, reception and effect, are often the object of scientific analyses. A scientific presentation of image documents aimed at this requires corresponding information on verifiability. The origin of the reproduced original has to be indicated, as well as the location where the document is stored. As a matter of principle, information on authorship, the time of origin, the picture creation technique, the sizes of the originals as well as indications to do with any change of size of the reproduced image (through cropping or other kinds of manipulation of the image content) is required. In general, every transmitted piece of knowledge regarding the creation, use, dissemination and reception of the picture may be relevant to a scientific use. Despite this differentiation of the methodological standards, in expert practice they are not always stringently adhered to.

Popular culture does not strive to comply with these extensive scientific standards completely. Editors of magazines may not even be aware of these standards, and their relevance for a scientific perspective. Already the choice of pictures in the magazine may not meet the representativeness required from a scientific point of view. An image culture which is in line with the target group's ideas about the topics, or in agreement with the visual style of the magazine, generally seems more important to the magazine producers. In this context, a scientific labelling of the documents by means of detailed references and additional information may create confusion, or have an over-tax the audience. Moreover, for most historical

---

16 Cf. exemplarily: Peter Burke: *Augenzeugenschaft. Bilder als historische Quellen*. Berlin 2003; Rainer Wohlfeil: *Methodische Reflexionen zur Historischen Bildkunde*. In: Tolkemitt/Wohlfeil (note 1), p. 17–35; Bernd Roeck: *Das historische Auge. Kunstwerke als Zeugen ihrer Zeit. Von der Renaissance zur Revolution*. Göttingen 2004; Talkenberger (note 1).

17 Cf. note 1.



topics which date back to before the Early Modern Period, contemporary picture material is scarcely if at all available.

Quality levels can be described grounded in these considerations for the analysis of the use of images in popular history magazines. In general, these magazines do not address the subject expert, but an audience of interested lay-readers. The genuine mediating intention of the respective popular magazine shall not be considered initially. The criteria are again described from the point of view of history didactics.

From this perspective, it would be reasonable to expect a 'scientifically oriented' use of image. Image documents addressing a lay audience are supposed to support the mediacy of history in an appropriate way. So any documentary feature of the pictures should be considered in terms of source studies.

The choice and editing of an image document would have to take into account the extent to which the document is thematically related to and representative of the subject matter. The topic has to stand in a causal relation to the content of the text. It would have to exhibit a geographic and temporal proximity to the historical event (as long as it is not about reception-historical perspectives), and feature indications of origin, time of creation and the originator. In this way, the interested layperson could verify the document. The content would have to be accessible and understandable for the layperson's independent use without expert knowledge.

The choice and editing of the documents would have to be clearly distinguished from the pictures which are used in the same context, but which cannot encompass source features for the historical event, e.g. a scene from a historical film or a present-day photo montage. Likewise, compensating some topics' lack of picture sources through the use of images created later, e.g. historical paintings or film images, would be impermissible. Alternatively, didactical picture material could be used. These aspects already meet essential criteria which should constitute a good popular scientific use of images from the point of view of history didactics.

Individual features here named can be determined by the presentation of the pictures and recorded for the individual magazines in a comparative way. If the images in a magazine are edited in a different way than that described by one of these criteria, or if features appear which run contrary to this approach, then corresponding quality levels can be formulated.

Eventually, the use of images merges into an area which has to be indicated as 'remote from scientific research' or 'unscientific'. In such cases the standards described are partially or completely disregarded. This becomes apparent in e.g. an anachronistic choice of images such as those often found to illustrate medieval topics, for example film images or 19<sup>th</sup> century historical paintings.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, it is frequently found that picture details are used without proper indication. Additionally, other features may include incomplete or absent references regarding the subject matter, or the geographic and temporal categorisation of the documents, which hinders the reader from verifying the documents. Instead, the seeming authenticity of the images (created by the supposedly realistic and – in the narrative of the image – reasonably implemented presentation of historical events) leads the reader to perceive them as evidence for the historical topic dealt with.

The transition to a 'quasi scientific' presentation, a further quality level of the use of images (usually in connection with a corresponding presentation of the topic), can be fluent. It is a characteristic that the habitus of academia – observing the methods and standards – is merely sought for the sake of appearance. So for instance picture montages can be found which mix reality and fiction.<sup>19</sup>

From the point of view of history didactics, presenting image documents in this way does not have any value for the conveyance of history in relation to the depicted historical topic. The choice of pictures and their use are frequently informed by the pursuit of different aims. These picture presentations, often highly emotive, primarily serve the purpose of entertainment

---

18 One chapter of the magazine P.M. HISTORY, for instance, which deals with the fight of the Scots against the English at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was illustrated with scenes from the film 'Braveheart' from 1995. This is the production of a director working 680 years after the event. The connection to the mediacy of history remains a problematic construct. The emotional substance of the picture, however, the battle of the weak against the strong, primitively armed peasants against heavily armed knights and soldiers, offers great potential for identification. Cf. Das Wunder von Bannockburn. In: P.M. HISTORY 5 (2008), p. 10 f.

19 P.M. HISTORY 10 (2006) shows a picture montage on the cover page in which the sky disc of Nebra, the Bronze Age discovery from the year 1999, is directly connected to the fictional novel and film character Gandalf by the Author John R. R. Tolkien.

or dramatisation. The magazine producers do not have to be aware of the problems which such a use of history or historical documents entails.

### 3. Comparative considerations on the image inventory and on the culture of the use of image documents

In what follows, evaluations of four German history magazines are exemplarily compared.<sup>20</sup> The aim of the analysis is to substantiate conclusions about the culture of image use in the respective magazine concepts and to categorise them from the point of view of history didactics according to evaluation criteria as previously described. With the exception of GEO EPOCHE, these magazines contain topics from other epochs in addition to the cover topic. Consequently the available image repertoire to which editors could have reverted is vast. The chosen issue of GEO EPOCHE focuses on a topic, 'Prussia', which does not lack image sources.

The sum of all illustrations of each magazine (equals 100%, see cart 1, pillar 1) acts as the foundation. Consequently, the temporal reference to the historical event presented was recorded (see 'table 1' above) as well as the image document's connection to the mediacy of history (see 'table 2' above). Each magazine article was recorded separately and added to the total amount of the magazines.<sup>21</sup>

For this purpose, the amount of contemporary presentations, in line with the topic of the respective article (pillar 2), was recorded.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the

---

20 The objects of the examination are the issues DAMALS 4 (2008) 'Würfeln, Wetten, Kartenspielen', G/GESCHICHTE 4 (2008) 'Kaiser Friedrich II.', GEO EPOCHE 4 (2006) 'Preußen' and P.M. HISTORY 5 (2008) 'Die Sieben Weltwunder und ihre Geheimnisse'. Due to the ongoing debate, the quality of the mediacy of history in the magazines examined by means of images may be somewhat different in more modern issues. This, however, does not affect the methodology presented here.

21 In general, it is possible also to record a larger amount of issues of a magazine and sum up the data in this way. Fluctuations would occur in the enumerations if a magazine features a dominating thematic focus area, such as e.g. GEO EPOCHE, provided this focus area regards an epoch without contemporary images. This special case, however, does not occur with regards to the random choice of the magazines at hand.

22 Contributions on the history of reception were not included in the magazines examined.

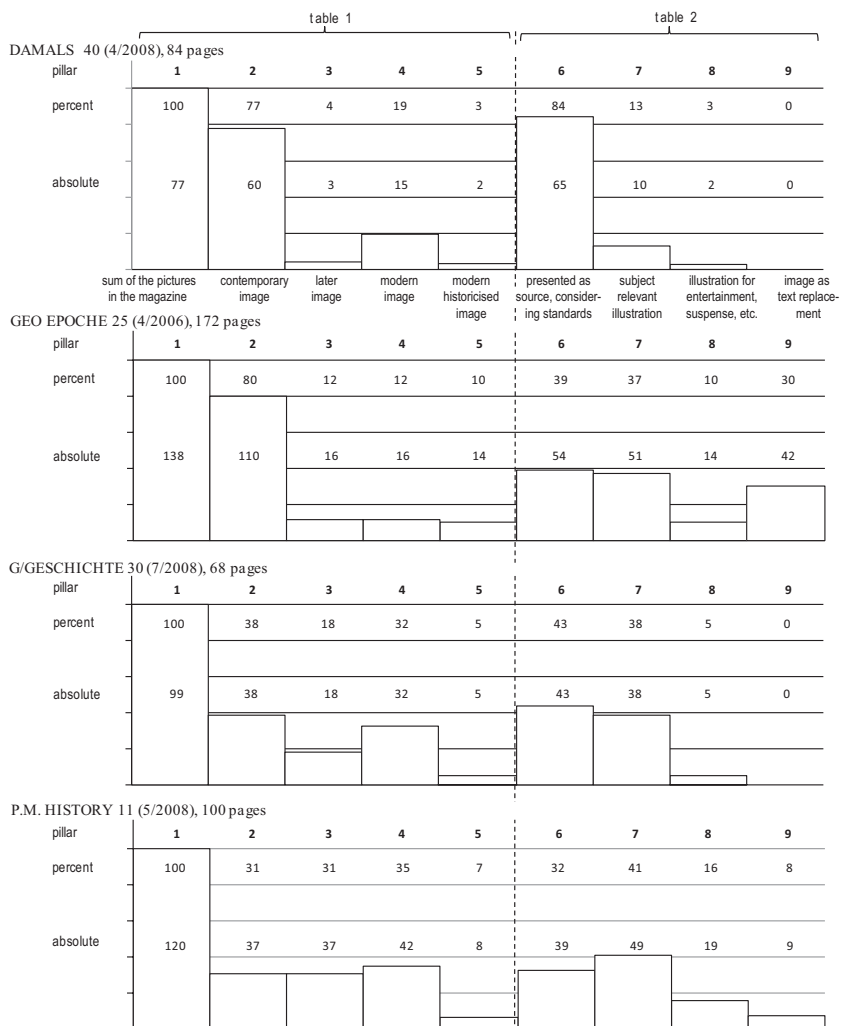
pictures which were created later and which are not from the time period of the historical event, were recorded separately (pillar 3). The modern pictures which were created at the time in which the magazine was produced are also differentiated (pillar 4). Likewise, those illustrations were recorded which are from the present, but artificially historicised to meet the temporal proximity of the topics dealt with (pillar 5). Even before taking into account the image presentation required for the evaluation of the profile of the inventory, this category has to be considered with great attention. The number of modern, but artificially historicised, pictures can be regarded as problematic from the point of view of history didactics (as long as it is not the object of attention), since such picture creations cannot have any source connection to the historical event.

From the point of view of history didactics, the analysis of the choice and editing of the document with regard to the conveyance of history is decisive for the classification of the image use. So the amount of those pictures which are presented as sources is recorded, i.e. those which observe the minimal indication of geographic, topical and temporal categorisation as well as source references. A further criterion is that a possible change to the image (for example by manipulative retouching or cropping) is indicated. Likewise, the image has to be reproduced in a sufficient size so that all picture elements, especially the details, can be recognised (pillar 6). This is distinguished from the illustrative or presentational use of pictures (pillar 7). This kind of use exhibits history didactical value if it contributes to the subject-relevant mediacy of the topic. A portrait picture of the person focused on in the topic, for instance, which is not presented as source due to lacking the minimal standards listed, can contribute to the mediacy of the topic in an illustrative way.

In a further category, those pictures are recorded whose illustrative use has no connection to the conveyance of the chapter's topic, or which even runs counter to it from the point of view of history didactics (pillar 8). This kind of picture serves entertainment purposes due to its content and emotional substance, as already outlined. A further category is the illustrative use of pictures as text replacement (pillar 9). In such cases, a choice or a connected series of aligned pictures follows the topic title. These pictures may cover several pages or even the entire chapter with merely a minimal amount of explanation, or with none. The aesthetic effect of the pictures

on the recipient shapes the impression of the subject matter, an impression unresourced by any text able to influence it through structure, explanation or comment.

Chart 1: Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the picture inventory of individual magazine issues [in percent]



The issue of DAMALS which was examined contained 77 illustrations on 84 magazine pages. Its profile indicates that predominantly contemporary image material (DAMALS, column 2, 77%) is included, with hardly any later-created illustrations (column 3, 4%). The issue comprises 15 present-day modern illustrations (column 4, 19%) and two modern historicised picture presentations (column 5). The largest part of the image inventory was almost completely processed in relation to the necessary standards and could function as source-material in the presented form (column 6, 84%). Only 10 pictures were used for the thematically oriented illustration of the subject matter dealt with (column 7, 13%). Two pictures merely were used without subject reference (column 8). None of the pictures in this issue was used without explanation, as related to the category-function of completely serving as replacement for text (column 9).

With 172 magazine pages and 138 pictures the issue of GEO EPOCHE is almost double the size of DAMALS. The largest part of the picture repertoire (GEO EPOCHE, 110 items, 80%) is contemporary (column 2). Later and modern images occur 16 times each in this issue (columns 3 and 4, 12%). 14 modern historicised depictions are contained (column 5, 10%). Furthermore, a mere 54 pictures, i.e. less than half, can be used as source-material in accordance with the standards (column 6, 39%). An almost comparable proportional share is illustrative (column 7, 37%). 14 pictures serve as illustrations to create atmosphere and for entertaining purposes (column 8, 10%). It is striking that the remaining inventory, comprising 42 items of mostly large-scale reproduced pictures, operated as text replacement according to the definition established previously (column 9, 30%).

The reason for the relatively small share of pictures which can be used as source-material due to their presentation lies in the lack of compliance with the standards.<sup>23</sup> In this issue of GEO EPOCHE source references are often missing. The magazine does contain information on where the original documents are stored, but this, however, is no source-reference in the sense used in historical source studies. Pictures created later (column 3) are

---

23 Source references are often missing in this issue of GEO EPOCHE. In the appendix of the issue the magazine does record indications of the location from which printing modules were received, but these are not source references in the sense recognised by historical source studies.

often not indicated as such. The number of modern historicised pictures (column 5) is also problematic. The use of picture-details often goes unindicated. Furthermore, individual pictures are printed in far too small a size despite the large page format, so that they cannot be used as sources.

If issues of the magazines *P.M. HISTORY* and *G/GESCHICHTE* are also considered, it becomes apparent that fewer contemporary materials are used in the two magazines, but each has approximately the same share of modern picture material (columns 2 and 4). From the 120 pictures in *P.M. HISTORY* fewer than 40 pictures are contemporary (column 2, 31%). 42 pictures are modern depictions from the time the magazine was produced. Furthermore it is striking that in this issue only about one-third of the pictures can be used as source-material (column 6, 32%). Far more pictures are used for illustrative purposes (column 7, 41%). In comparison to the other magazines *P.M. HISTORY* has the largest share of pictures (19 pictures, 16%) which are illustrative, or used for entertaining purposes and for the creation of suspense (column 8). Regarding the use of pictures without a connection to the text, *P.M. HISTORY*, with 9 pictures, lags far behind *GEO EPOCHE* (column 9, 8%). However the issue of *G/GESCHICHTE* contains no pictures that serve as text replacement (column 9). The same is true of *DAMALS*.

The magazine-profiles examined enable the use of pictures to be interpreted. So far there is no indication that an expansion of the amount of data in studies of further issues of the same magazines would consolidate the profile of the columns. Whereas in the first part of the study (table 1, columns 1 to 5) a profile of the picture inventory emerges, the second part (table 2, columns 6 to 9) delineates a profile of the culture of the editorial use of images, which is established for a magazine. It also seems to be the case that a decline in the number of pictures presented as sources (column 6 each) leads to the growth of the other three columns (columns 7 to 9).

In general, the appearance of modern historicised pictures (column 5) is problematic in the repertoire if they are not themselves the object of the discussion and their problematic nature goes unexamined. Modern historicised picture creations subvert basic assumptions of historical documents and scientific source work. High values in the columns 8 and 9 are also indicative of a problematic culture of image use from the perspective of history didactics. Regarding the use of different picture types as examined

here, the emotional potential of the documents is paramount in both cases. Such usage supposedly conveys the moods of an event, or the aura of a lifeworld or an epoch even though we are not familiar with it.

If the magazine issues which have been examined are categorised based on these findings then it follows that the history magazine DAMALS represents a high quality level of popular image use as regards the choice and presentation of the documents. The approach is clearly scientifically oriented, aimed at the mediacy of history, and to a great extent meets the criteria of history didactics.

Based on the features described, the magazines GEO EPOCHE and G/GESCHICHTE are to be classified on an evidently lower level of quality of image use. In both magazines modern historicised pictures are used. In GEO EPOCHE this share is, at 10%, comparatively the highest. Similarly high and likewise at 10% is the share of pictures used in an illustrative way and employed for entertainment purposes. In this respect, GEO EPOCHE is only superseded by P.M. HISTORY. GEO EPOCHE also stands out regarding its use of pictures without connection to the text. This phenomenon shall be examined more closely later. DAMALS and G/GESCHICHTE, in contrast, do not use any pictures in this way. Moreover, the share of modern historicised pictures in G/GESCHICHTE is, at 5%, only half as large compared to GEO EPOCHE. The profile of the picture culture of G/GESCHICHTE is in this specific case to be regarded as on a higher level from the point of view of history didactics than that of GEO EPOCHE. P.M. HISTORY's comparatively most prominent use of pictures for entertainment purposes is problematic. Additionally, the magazine strikingly often reverts to presentations of pictures created later and to modern present-day images (columns 3 and 4). P.M. HISTORY exceeds the other three magazines in this area too.

#### **4. The effects of the magazine structure on the use of images**

The functions of the picture inventory of history magazines (as well as those of other visual design elements) can basically be described as twofold. Firstly the picture inventory serves to convey 'history'. Secondly illustration and design fulfil their function in the respective magazine concept by acquiring the target group, whose expectations and habits have, if possible, to be met



continuously. Furnishing a magazine with thematic content materialised via texts and pictures generally follows a prescribed structure and is based on rules which are closely connected to the respective magazine type.<sup>24</sup>

This basic structure is also aimed at the reception and interpretation of the respective magazine type by the consumer. The reading behaviour and the reading environment can be very diverse for magazine perusal.<sup>25</sup> Each issue of the magazine generally adhered to this structure and at best merely modified it slightly. The structure of the magazine must be regarded as part of its nature. Fundamental changes in the structure of an established concept may run contrary to the habits of the established audience and have an influence on the market success of a magazine.<sup>26</sup> Structural types which can be found in the four magazine examples are established in the magazine culture in general and have not emerged in the format of history magazines in particular. They were simply adopted by editors or, in the case of GEO EPOCHE and P.M. HISTORY, adapted from the core magazine and decked out with historical topics.

The framework structure of the magazines also results in specifications about the choice and use of the pictorial material. This concerns, depending on the size of the magazine, the number of pictures in the entire repertoire of the magazine and the relation of pictorial and textual elements. The structural specifications, however, also result in whether it is possible to print pictures on a full or double page or to have space available for the reproduction of picture series and long picture galleries. Regarding the illustration of shorter articles, however, the topics have to be continuously advertised with expressive pictures. In this way the basic structure of the magazine can determine the culture of image use.

In the following section, concise structural elements of the magazines under examination are considered with regard to their use of images. Since the structures of the magazines P.M. HISTORY, G/GESCHICHTE and DAMALS are generally similar, the magazines DAMALS and GEO EPOCHE shall be foregrounded.

---

24 Menhard/Treede (note 5), p. 182 f.

25 Cf. Hallemann (note 5), p. 116 f.

26 On the different structural models of the magazines cf. Menhard/Treede (note 5), p. 97 f.; Reiter/Waas (note 5), p. 145 f.

The organising structure of a magazine can be illustrated and considered in different ways. The layout, the design of all pages of a magazine in numerical sequence, and the relation between the text and the picture can all be recorded. Text and picture elements are thereby considered in relation to the page surface and (such as in the analysis of school books) calculated proportionately.

The extent of individual contributions and their positioning in the magazine in relation to the scope of the main topic complies with a prescribed structure. The same applies to marginal topics, less central elements, e.g. reviews, as well as additional features such as riddles, advertisements and other elements.

The extent of the chapters and the paragraphs can also be illustrated in the form of a 'dramaturgic profile' (see chart 2 and 3). Thereby, the main topic of the magazine (category 1) and its distribution across the issue pagewise is the focus of attention. The marginal topics and less central elements of the issue are presented in relation to the main topic of the magazine in gradations accordingly. The marginal topics can be differentiated in various categories according to their thematic connection to the main topic (in this analysis in two levels). In this way the topics of the second category exhibit a thematic connection to the main topic of the issue whereas the third category is thematically removed.

The magazine DAMALS (chart 2) exhibits (as do G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY) a so-called 'mantle structure'. The cover story, which takes up the first half of the magazine, forms the core and covers roughly 47% of the issue. Whereas this proportion is echoed in P.M. HISTORY, it rises to roughly 60% in G/GESCHICHTE. All three magazine-concepts have in common that a new chapter is introduced on full or double pages. The relation between text and image is balanced in all three magazines in the passages of category 1 with a roughly even split. Deviating from this, a sequence of seven pages can be found in P.M. HISTORY<sup>27</sup> at the beginning of the main topic in which the text-picture-ratio is 30% to 70%. G/GESCHICHTE also shows a further idiosyncrasy. The structure of this magazine exhibits the peculiarity that the main part (category 1) consists

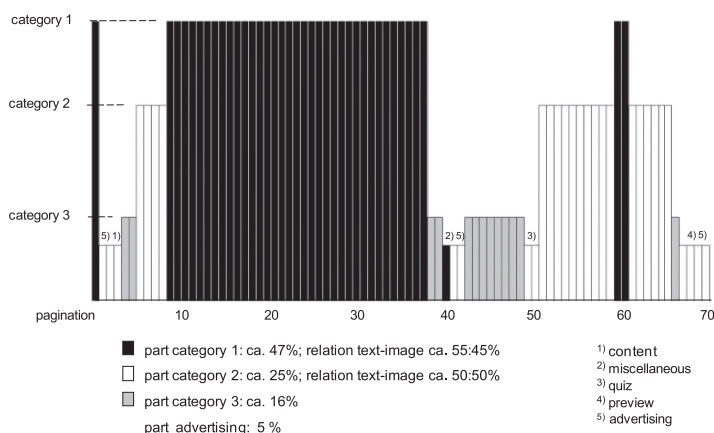
---

27 The history magazine P.M. HISTORY has recently changed its layout and structure, which is not taken into account here.

of two sequences, which are very short and sometimes only comprise one to two pages.

Regarding the illustration of these initial pages of a sequence, the editors increasingly revert to so-called ‘reference images’. These are pictures which, due to their strong (historico-cultural) presence, can symbolically stand for the focal event as a whole, be associated at once with the topic and, from the editors’ point of view, are well-fitted to win the reader over to a topic quickly. Depending on the claims of the magazine, pictures may indeed be considered which have been chosen due to their emotional substance, but which are problematic from the point of view of history didactics, e.g. modern historicised pictures, picture montages or film images from modern films. It follows that the short chapters found in *G/GESCHICHTE* each have to be introduced anew using relevant pictures.

Chart 2: Dramaturgical profile of the magazine *DAMALS*, issue 4/2008  
„Würfeln, Wetten, Karten spielen“



M. Wobring, 2014

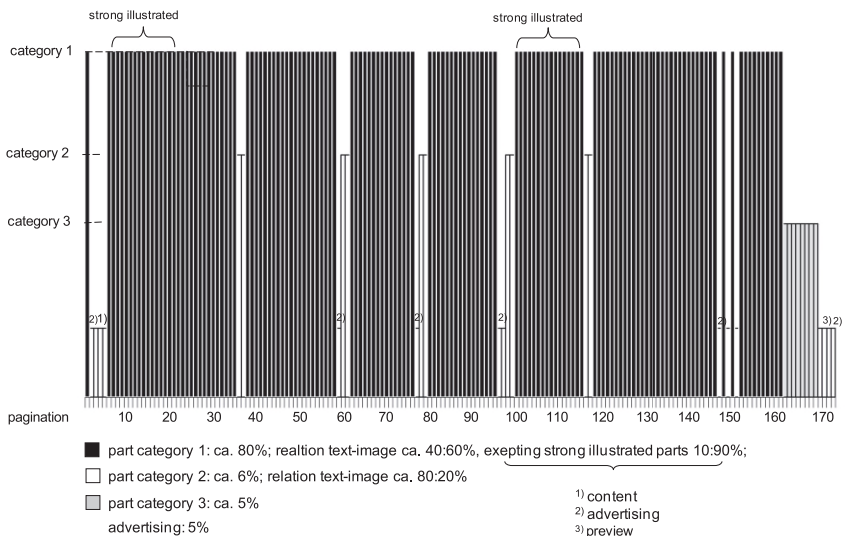
In comparison to the other three formats, the magazine *GEO EPOCHE* (chart 3) adopts a structure which is 80% dominated by the main topic (139 pages). This dominance is interrupted in the course of the magazine only at individual stages by short insertions of category 2. The text-picture-ratio in

large parts of the main sequence is 40% to 60%. Two sequences of 16 pages each form an exception, in which the text-picture-ratio is 10% to 90%. The first sequence is at the beginning of the magazine. The second picture series, which begins on page 100, forms the prelude to the final third of the issue.

In the few sequences of category 2 (10 pages, 6%), which only count individual pages, the text-picture-ratio is 80% to 20%. It is nonetheless characteristic that individual chapters of the issue are very long and sometimes cover 16 to 20 pages. The continuously dominating use of pictures is striking. In the two long sequences, which are 90% covered with pictures, these serve as text replacement.

The way in which pictures are used in GEO EPOCHE would not be possible within the structural design of the three other magazines. Given the dominance of one subject topic and the large scope in general, a diverse and extensive range of pictures can be reproduced. In the long picture-galleries, entire series of aesthetically similar pictures can be presented in large-size formats and in an effective way.

Chart 3: Dramaturgical profile of the magazine GEO EPOCHE, issue 4/2006 „Preußen“.



Magazines designed according to the principle of the mantle structure try to address larger target groups, which may also be reached via inclusion of marginal topics. The greater the number of marginal topics (which are advertised in a box or via a headline on the cover page), the broader the target group aimed at by the magazine. Every individual topic has to be advertised by relevant expressive pictures. The number of pictures which can be used per topic is consequently limited. It follows that the subject matter of the pictures is heterogeneous. The need to employ reference images, as mentioned above, is relatively strong.

A magazine of the type exemplified by GEO EPOCHE, in contrast, addresses relatively small target groups with special topic interests. When purchasing such a comparatively expensive magazine the buyer has already decided in favour of the cover story and does not have to be won over for new subject matter time and again while reading. Such a design-concept allows a fundamentally different use of images. Long picture series are a characteristic. These stretch out across many pages and address a different form of reader-attention than does the mantle structures examined above. This aesthetically sophisticated culture of picture use, in which full-page pictures can develop their effect, corresponds with the use of high-quality paper and an intricate finish recognisable even to the layperson. Moreover, entire picture series can be put together which are similar in style and content. The use of reference images, which sketch out a topic in a sudden and appealing way, is not necessarily required in this approach.

The comparative view on the dramaturgical profile of the magazines shows that the prescribed structure of a magazine influences the choice and use of pictures to a certain extent. The prescribed framework limits the number of pictures used, determines the presentational possibilities and occasionally even influences the types of pictures deployed in individual sections of the magazine. It becomes apparent that besides mediating 'history' the pictures in the respective magazine-designs function in relation to the acquisition of target audiences. Even in magazines whose scrutinised design-structures are similar, as is the case with the issues of DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY, this influence is expressed in a stronger way in G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY.

In this connection, GEO EPOCHE is significant. Even though possibilities for decision-making about the number and choice of pictures are

relatively liberal in comparison to the other magazines, the prescribed structure confirms features which have already attracted negative attention during the analysis of the image use. The long picture series, which make use of image documents as text replacement, exhibit a function which needs to be viewed critically in a twofold way. The magazine structure deliberately aims at creating iconographically- and aesthetically-conveyed moods through which the subject matter of the issue is to be perceived. At the same time, the premium design of the magazine suggests 'quality'. From the point of view of history didactics, these features are not unproblematic since they cannot be recognised by lay-people.

## Conclusion

As is the case with all illustrated magazines on the market, for history magazines the use of images is of central significance. Despite the wide range and diversity of the image documents presented, conclusions about the culture of image use in the respective magazine-design can be drawn within a clearly defined framework. From the point of view of history didactics, differences in the quality of the cultures of image use can be discerned and substantiated according to the conceptualisation of the respective magazine.

The choice and presentation of image documents is subject to the ideas and concepts of 'history' and 'history mediation' which inform the thinking of authors and editors. Image presentation moreover follows market and target group interests. The basic structure of the magazine also influences the use and presentation of images.

The analysis of image inventories from the perspective of history didactics leads to very different results. Among the four examples examined, the use of images in the magazine DAMALS can be evaluated as the most favourable from the point of view of history didactics, since the majority of the picture inventory is contemporary and can be used as source-material thanks to adequate attention having been given to historiographical standards. The illustrative use of image documents is also in the main subject-relevant and contributes to the mediacy of history in a didactical sense. Accordingly, the magazine represents a sophisticated culture of popular

scientific mediacy of history, where history didactical standards are editorially considered when image documents are used. The documents presented can be verified by the interested lay-reader.

Results for the magazines P.M. HISTORY, G/GESCHICHTE and GEO EPOCHÉ are clearly weaker in this analysis. The editors of P.M. HISTORY and G/GESCHICHTE use far fewer examples of contemporary image material than DAMALS, but far more modern image material from the time in which the magazine was produced. In both magazines, the illustrative use of images plays a strikingly large part; in P.M. HISTORY this usage even exceeds the number of pictures deployed as source-material. Additionally, P.M. HISTORY displays the largest proportion of pictures which in the broadest sense were chosen and presented for entertainment purposes. Especially striking is the culture of image use in GEO EPOCHÉ. A mere 38% of the images can be used as source-material in the way they are presented. The issue reverts to modern historicised image material, which is problematic from the point of view of history didactics. The proportion of pictures presented for entertainment purposes is also comparatively large. GEO EPOCHÉ may thus be unusual since its high-quality processing and the quality of its paper may create a different impression at first glance.<sup>28</sup> This outward impression makes it more difficult for the layperson to recognise how weak is the culture of image use presented here.

Furthermore, this analysis has shown that the broad magazine culture is also reflected in the culture of image use. The long picture series used in GEO EPOCHÉ's design-concept was especially noteworthy. It clearly functioned as a way to imbue the reception of the main focus topic with iconographically and aesthetically conveyed atmosphere. A mantle structure, however, with short chapters about the cover story, as found in G/GESCHICHTE, requires the increased use of reference images in order to rekindle the attention of the recipient over and over again.

The comparative consideration of the culture of images in the given magazines was carried out on the basis of the choice, presentation and

---

28 The image this creates, and the comparatively expensive price of the magazine, addresses a high-income target group. Cf. on this Erich Staßner: *Zeitschriften*. Tübingen 1997, p. 34.

significance of the magazine structure. However, the specific picture contents of the picture inventories deployed were not considered. While these could be recorded in the form presented here, their specific effect on the recipient, (which may differ from the effect intended by editors) poses a challenge for the consideration of the contents of the inventory.<sup>29</sup> Due to its emotional substance the same picture may fulfil different or even contradictory functions for various viewers. Methodological limitations (e.g. with regard to individual topics and surveys of recipients) would come into play in such an investigation.

From the perspective of history didactics, magazine producers face the problem of how a market- and target-group oriented culture may be meshed with a culture which observes history didactical standards, if indeed such standards are desired to be met. Rolf Schörken pointed out in the 1980s that engaging with history in the public arena also serves needs beyond those related to educational interest.<sup>30</sup> This perspective is very informative, especially for an understanding of many manifestations of the popular mediacy of history.<sup>31</sup> If such mediacy includes needs such as entertainment, escape from everyday life, and the search for meaning and orientation in history (i.e. to use history as a surface on which to present present-day wishes and needs), then these categories are also more or less specifically addressed and provided for by history magazines. The didactical implementation of the culture of image-use is likely to differ from the needs of these target groups. Nonetheless, to explore whether and how an approach which values critical and scientific quality might be better balanced against an orientation to the market would make for an important challenge.

---

29 On the phenomenon of image documentation cf. Sachs-Hombach/Schirra (note 7), p. 412–417.

30 Rolf Schörken: *Geschichte in der Alltagswelt. Wie uns Geschichte begegnet und was wir mit ihr machen*. Stuttgart 1981.

31 In principal, it has to be mentioned that the purely scientific engagement with history is likewise not entirely free of the psycho-social categories described. However, these are more prominent in the field of popular culture.





Marianne Sjöland

# The use of history in popular history magazines. A theoretical approach<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The Presence of History

We meet history everywhere: in the education system, in movies, in discussions with friends and family, at memorial sites etcetera. All these seemingly different situations have something in common; they are expressions of human needs for and uses of history.

We use the past, not only in order to educate ourselves, but also to tackle current situations and to find guidelines for the future. Sometimes these processes concern questions about our identity and roots, and sometimes we seek anchor in the past in reaction to the current rapid pace of change in the world, which has disturbed the previous security of our worldview.<sup>2</sup> Thus, history provides us with answers, but these can be of very different kinds, not only depending on the type of question but also on the context and purpose. This means that uses of history are multifaceted phenomena, which can be difficult to identify and, not least, to analyze.

This chapter examines how the use of history is reflected in an internationally popular medium, namely two popular history magazines, the Swedish POPULÄR HISTORIA and the British HISTORY TODAY. The latter is a monthly magazine and was founded 1951 by Brendan Bracken, Minister of Information during the Second World War and publisher of THE FINANCIAL TIMES. The aim of the magazine was, and still is, to provide a general public with popularized well-written articles by leading scholars, covering all different kinds of historical themes. Today the

---

1 This chapter is partly based on my licentiate thesis, Marianne Sjöland: *Historia i magasin: en studie av tidskriften 'Populär Historia' historieskrivning och av kommersiellt historiebruk*. Lund 2011, and partly on my on-going dissertation project.

2 Jörn Rüsen: *Berättande och förnuft: historieteoretiska texter*. Göteborg 2004, p. 61 f.

magazine is owned by a trust.<sup>3</sup> According to the website of HISTORY TODAY the number of readers is 50 000.<sup>4</sup> The Swedish counterpart, POPULÄR HISTORIA, was first published in 1991 by the journalist Erik Osvalds, the photographer Björn Andersson and the archeologist Sven Rosborn. Since 2003, POPULÄR HISTORIA is a monthly magazine, owned by a publishing house, LRF Media. The amount of readers are currently 175.000.<sup>5</sup>

Just like HISTORY TODAY the Swedish magazine looks to a general public with an interest in history, but, compared to the English magazine, the editorial emphasizes the combination of educational and entertaining aspects of the popular historiography a little more.<sup>6</sup>

I chose those publications as objects for my ongoing doctoral thesis as they are widespread and likely to affect the perception of history of a significant number of people, and thus also will affect the present and the future. One way to gain knowledge of the historiography of the genre is to apply a theoretical approach on the uses of history in the magazines to find out what functions the past fulfills within. This functional perspective needs to be related to structural aspects, in this case historical cultural contexts, which highlight a sort of general societal idea of what history is and what kind of history is valued as important, or, respectively as less important. My study consequently belongs within the research field of history didactic with a focus on popular history.

## 2. Formation of Historical Culture Through History

The concept of historical culture is seen in this article as having an overall contextual and theoretical function. Historical culture is defined here as how the human historical consciousness, through various artifacts, is expressed publicly or privately. Together, these manifestations create some kind of consensus in a society on how the past is to be understood

---

3 Paul Lay, editor of HISTORY TODAY, in an interview 23 October 2013.

4 URL: <http://bit.ly/1q2IGUD> (1.8.2014).

5 URL: <http://bit.ly/1n64XWC> (1.8.2014).

6 Magnus Bergsten, editor of POPULÄR HISTORIA, in an interview 26 March 2009.

and handled.<sup>7</sup> The concept of historical consciousness accommodates the human capacity to create a connection between the interpretation of the past, the understanding of the present and the expectations for the future.<sup>8</sup> This means that historical consciousness is not primarily about knowledge of history, but about an awareness of that we, through our narrative ability, both are history and make history.<sup>9</sup> Although expressions of historical consciousness are very difficult to examine, it is an indispensable dimension in the research of historical culture.

Before presenting the empirical analysis, I want to highlight a few important prerequisites for the understanding of studies of historical cultures. First, they do not primarily treat production and consumption of history as a science, but rather history as a common and overarching framework in society.<sup>10</sup> Second, historical culture is to be understood as a kind of communicative context in which history is produced and consumed. In this study, the historical-cultural communication is shaped by the following: editorial, writers, magazine – and readers. Presented in this mode historical culture is similar to a chain of communication, which means that the editorial, the writers and the readers shape the historical writing of the magazines together. The question is how this complex process can be captured and described. I mean that an analysis of the various players' uses of history will open up an operationalization of the concept of historical culture, and simultaneously relate the magazines to wider contexts, such as historical cultural traditions and contemporary structures of society.

The historian Klas-Göran Karlsson means that communicating history corresponds to specific needs or interest of the users and therefore must be analyzed in a temporal context: 'An historical product should be analytically understood as a live topic.'<sup>11</sup> With inspiration from Friedrich Nietzsche's categorization of how we master and are mastered by history, Karlsson has developed a typology of different ways of using history in

---

7 Cf. Rüsen (note 2), p. 152; Klas-Göran Karlsson/Ulf Zander (eds.): *Historien är nu: en introduktion till historiedidaktiken*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Lund 2009, p. 40 f.

8 Bernhard Eric Jensen: *Historie – livsverden og fag*. København 2003, p. 59 f.; cf. Rüsen (note 2), p. 151; Karlsson (note 7), p. 47 f.

9 Cf. Jensen (note 8), p. 58–60.

10 Cf. Rüsen (note 2), p. 150.

11 Cf. Karlsson (note 7), p. 39.

societal contexts.<sup>12</sup> The model was primarily developed to analyze the uses of history in the Russian and Soviet societies. Then it contained five types, in comparison with the seven accepted today. In this study I will use this typology as an instrument for analyzing the uses of history in articles in *POPULÄR HISTORIA* and *HISTORY TODAY*, which mainly are attributed to the editorials and writers' needs and interest in history.<sup>13</sup> In order to create an overall picture of the typology, the various meanings of the seven categories will first be described in a rather schematic way.<sup>14</sup> Later on, in connection with the analysis of the articles, different categories will be further problematized.

The scholarly-scientific use of history is mainly used by historians and history teachers. It aims to assess the veracity of historical materials and to scientifically interpret, contextualize and communicate the results of the interpretations. This approach to history most of us have faced in the school-system and at university, but also in some media such as in historical documentaries on television and film. This scholarly-scientific use of history is based on a need to discover new facts about the past. Since the present and past, in a scientific use of history, are seldom integrated, the past mainly serves as background to the present. This creates a prospective time movement, from then until 'now'.

In an existential use of history the direction of time is the opposite; people turn to history in order to orient and anchor themselves due to contemporary major changes or crises in society, or in a private context. The means whereby this occurs are, both publicly and privately, memories and sometimes even absence of memory. Genealogy (i.e. family history), however, is an example of an existential use of history that does not need to be preceded by traumatic events. Instead, genealogy is associated with more personal issues, for instance questions of identity or relationships,

---

12 Friedrich Nietzsche's uses of history are divided into three methods: the monumental method where history is used as a 'magistra vitae'; the antiquarian method in which history is admired and preserved; the critical method which bring the past to justice. Nietzsche discusses these uses of history in: Friedrich Nietzsche: On the use and abuse of history for life [1874]. Gloucester 2008.

13 The readers' impact on the content and form of the magazines should not be underestimated, but those aspects are not in focus in this article.

14 Main part of this section is built on Karlsson/Zander (note 7), p. 56–69.

but the results of this kind of research are often related to larger contexts in order to make sense.<sup>15</sup>

A moral use of history aims to bring to light immoral acts in the past which for various reasons have been deliberately hidden by authorities over time. Classic examples are genocide and discrimination which have been recognized by later generations for providing victim restitution and bringing the guilty to justice.

An ideological use of history means that practitioners, such as politicians, are using the past to provide historical facts with new meaning and thus justify actions and reinforce positions of power. Often, the history in question is commoditized and explicitly introduced to support the purpose and ideology of the users. A decision not to use history can either mean that the past itself has little or no value, or that some parts of history are consciously repressed to promote contemporary ideals. This emerges from the idea that modern humans have nothing to benefit from the past. Instead they should engage in issues concerning the present and the future. A decision not to use history can be quite difficult to pin down by its very nature.

A politico-pedagogical use of history emphasizes similarities between the past and the present in order to, among other things, achieve political success. The rhetorical means consist of metaphors, symbols and analogies that support the user's simplification of the relationship between different time periods. The user often takes a pedagogical approach with the use of historical examples. In this way a politician, for example, will often lead people towards a particular standpoint as a teacher might seek to lead a class to a particular view.

The commercial use of history is the last in this typology. The use appears mainly in artifacts such as film, magazines, literature and advertising. The producers are driven by interests of profit, which, through the

---

15 Klas-Göran Karlsson: Processing time – On the manifestations and activations of historical consciousness. In: Helle Bjerg/Claudia Lenz/Erik Thorstensen (eds.): *Historicizing the uses of the past: Scandinavian perspectives on history culture, historical consciousness and didactics of history related to World War II*. Bielefeld 2011, p. 138.

commercialization, increases the value of history.<sup>16</sup> This use of history reaches many consumers and will consequently have a widespread impact on people's view of history, but also of the present and the future. Karlsson points out the relevant question: 'What happens to the past in the popular culture? Could it be that even the Holocaust, when it reaches Hollywood, might be Americanized by the inclusion of American and commercial values, which sometimes could be difficult to even imagine, such as a happy ending?'<sup>17</sup> He continues: 'The commercial use of history has similarities to the politico-pedagogical use of history in that a historical phenomenon with great emotional luminosity is particularly useful.'<sup>18</sup> As implied, it is crucial for producers of commercial history to select and create history which attracts numerous of consumers. The interesting question that follows is: What kind of history has 'luminosity' and what kind of history is considered to lack the phenomenon and therefore may never be considered in commercial products, such as *POPULÄR HISTORIA* and *HISTORY TODAY*?

Finally, I want to emphasize that the categories presented above should not be seen as isolated, but rather as overlapping or parallel forms. Despite this ambiguity the typology can provide an important tool for describing and problematizing the historiography of the magazines. In the next section the categories are applied on an empirical material included in my ongoing thesis. The selected articles focus on the medieval Crusades.

### 3. The Medieval Crusades in History Magazines

The medieval Crusades have a long and strong presence in popular culture. A well-known example from British literary history is Walter Scott's adventure novel from 1820, 'Ivanhoe', which during the Twentieth Century was adapted for the screen several times. From a Swedish point of view, Jan Guillou's novels from the late 1990s, about the medieval Templar Arn, have gained great popularity, largely depending on the film versions of the books. If the context is widened, the Crusades' significance for our time

---

16 Cf. Karlsson/Zander (note 7), p. 59.

17 Ibid., p. 68.

18 Ibid., p. 67.

also attributes to the international conflicts between the USA, in alliance with a number of Western countries, and Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran. From a historical cultural perspective the tensions have activated various uses of history and created new meanings to the history of the Crusades. Amongst other, such perspectives will be presented in the analysis of two articles in *HISTORY TODAY* 9 (2012) and *POPULÄR HISTORIA* 12 (2007).

Peter Frankopan, historian and author, has written the British article, 'The View from the East'. The purpose is to describe the First Crusade from a Byzantine perspective. The widespread perception in the West is that this crusade was under the total control of the Crusaders, but the author claims that the Eastern Roman sources expose a different picture. For example, the 12<sup>th</sup> centurial text, 'Alexiad', reveals that it was not in Clermont in 1095 that the expedition to liberate Jerusalem was initiated, but in Constantinople. Neither was it the pope, Urban II, who made plans for the Crusades, but the Byzantine Emperor, Alexios I Komnenos.<sup>19</sup> This challenge to previously enduring views of history is typical both for the historiography of *HISTORY TODAY* and for the scholarly-scientific use of history, which, among other things, aims to discover new historical facts and through these questions previous research.<sup>20</sup> But this does not mean that the history mediation of the magazine is entirely comparable to a modern scientific uses of history. *HISTORY TODAY* turns primarily, just as *POPULÄR HISTORIA*, to people with a general interest in history. Many readers seem however to appreciate a historiography that is close to a traditional academic use of history. The question is how such a use of history is expressed in the magazines. I have chosen to start with something that at first reading may appear as a deviation from a scholarly-scientific use of history; Frankopan's article is marked by several narrative components, for example, in the introduction: 'On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1099 the knights of the First Crusade reached the imposing walls of Jerusalem, the holiest city in Christendom. The journey had been long and painful. A vast force had set out for the east nearly three years earlier, roused by a passionate call to arms by Pope Urban II, who spent months criss-crossing France

---

19 Peter Frankopan: The view from the east. In: *HISTORY TODAY* 9 (2012), p. 41.

20 Cf. Karlsson/Zander (note 7), p. 69.



to galvanise support for a massive expedition to liberate the place where Jesus Christ had lived and was crucified.’<sup>21</sup>

Similar traits appear in the article of POPULÄR HISTORIA, ‘Påvens elitsoldater’ (‘The Pope’s elite soldiers’), about the Nordic Templars. The topic of the article was raised by the Swedish film ‘Arn – Tempelriddaren’ (‘Arn – The Knight Templar’), which premiered the same year as the text was published, 2007. The article is written by Sören Wibeck, journalist and author, whose aim is to tell the real story behind the film. Just as Frankopan, Wibeck occasionally uses classic storytelling to create empathy and a sense of being close to the past. Here, he describes the atmosphere when the Christian army commander had been captured by the Muslim hero, Saladin: ‘He drank but shook with fear, convinced that he would lose his head. Saladin reassured him: “A king does not kill a king.” But he did not intend to save the knights of the military orders.’<sup>22</sup>

The emotive elements of the citations above are prominent, and although the authors are careful to specify facts, such as time and participants, focus is on the seriousness of the situations. It may be worth pausing to reflect on the status of those elements in a scholarly-scientific use of history.

I suggest that the narrative elements can be seen as expressions of both a traditional and a modern variety of scholarly-scientific use of history. Before history became a science, in the 1800s, narratives like the above were the accepted way in which history was retold.<sup>23</sup> With the entry of source criticism the narrative form was discounted in favour of analysis, since the former was considered to be built on myth, thus perpetuating fictional history. The postmodern and hermeneutic influences, particularly from theorists as Hayden White, have, by contrast, led to the resurrection of power for narrative within the science of history. This is mainly due to that scientific history writing is regarded as narrative in the sense that it is constructed, similar to other analyses, with a clear introduction, discussion of points and end. Within this framework appear specific patterns of

---

21 Cf. Frankopan (note 19), p. 38.

22 Sören Wibeck: Påvens elitsoldater. In: POPULÄR HISTORIA 12 (2007), p. 30.

23 Stefan Berger/Chris Lorenz/Billie Melman (eds.): Popularizing national pasts: 1800 to the present. New York 2012, p. 7 f.

narrative which give the text a certain meaning and moral.<sup>24</sup> I have some sympathy with this way of looking upon scientific history, indeed upon most forms of historical communication, but in this analysis I have chosen instead to understand the narrative elements as a stylistic technique which aim to create 'emotional luminosity'. Such characteristics are typical of a commercial use of history, and thus of several popular historical genres, especially history on film.<sup>25</sup> However, this kind of dramatic narrative does not usually have a strong position in *POPULÄR HISTORIA* and *HISTORY TODAY*, which why the above quotations may be viewed as exceptions.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps they can be explained by the time period that is focused upon which these articles focus. Sometimes older epochs, such as the medieval, are surrounded by myths and tales to a greater extent than modern history.<sup>27</sup> However, the narrative approach can also be understood in terms of new developments in scientific historiography. In the following section, I will discuss this perspective.

The influence of postmodernism and the linguistic turn of phrase must be seen as the most obvious answer to the question about the cause of the aestheticizing of the scientific language. The historians' increased attention to the significance of language in source material may have led to a greater awareness of their own writing. The historian Eva Österberg argues that the historians' more audience-centric way of writing is a major reason for the growing interest in history among the general public. In this context Österberg mentions the historian Peter Englund's novels about the wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These books are considered especially important for the public interest in history during the last twenty years.<sup>28</sup> I agree with her to some extent, but I also see this trickle-down theory as a unilateral explanation, which needs to be supplemented by reference to the perspective of the beneficiary of such an approach. More and more

---

24 Callum G. Brown: *Postmodernism for historians*. Harlow 2005, p. 103–105.

25 Ulf Zander: *Clio på bio: om amerikansk film, historia och identitet*. Lund 2006, p. 26.

26 Cf. Sjöland (note 1), p. 82.

27 Cecilia Trenter: *I mötet med minnet – historiekultur i Skandinavien*. In: *Historisk Tidskrift* 2 (2002), issue 122, p. 289–291.

28 Eva Österberg: *Kultur, genus och samtiden*. In: Gunnar Artéus/Klas Åmark (eds.): *Historieskrivningen i Sverige*. Lund 2012, p. 202.

historians want to reach readers outside of academic circles, and this demands linguistic adaptations to scientific literature. Thus, the linguistic change could not be understood as initiated only by the authors, but also as a result of an interaction between authors and readers. This is on one hand about a popular historical impact on scholarly-scientific use of history; but on the other hand the influences can be seen to go in the opposite direction. For example, the popular history magazines are gaining confidence and readers by mediated history writing reminiscent of an academic use of history. We must return to the articles of the Crusades in order to study how this manifests itself.

This genetic perspective is a common trait for the historiography of both the magazines. This means that history is mediated in a forward movement, from 'then' to 'now', in order to explain a contemporary phenomenon. In the Swedish article, this becomes clear since the aim is to tell the true story of the Crusades and Templars taking the opportunity of looking at the fictional base of a newly published film. In the British article the genetic perspective builds upon a new interest in Eastern Roman medieval sources and the consequences of new interpretations which follow the finds. In this way the Byzantine sources, despite their age, gain 'newsworthy' status.<sup>29</sup> As a result the genetic perspective interacts with the scientific requirement of revisionism. Frankopan refers several times to misunderstanding and neglect of Eastern Roman sources, and also to the over emphasis of western success during the age of the Crusades. The latter is, according to the author, based only on the extremely short European siege of Jerusalem in 1099 and later interpretations of this event: 'Popular images of the Crusade – the brave knight, the devout soldier driven by his faith, the struggle against adversity – owe much to that first, extraordinary adventure that saw men from western Europe break through the defences of the Holy City in July 1099. When politicians, social campaigners and demonstrators use the word "crusade" to contextualise and explain their views, what they are talking about is not the Crusades as a whole, but

---

29 For example, all illustrations in the article show medieval Byzantine sources, which reinforce the author's argument about the value of the Byzantine material in the historiography of the Crusades.

specifically the successful and dramatic expedition unleashed at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup>

The author has identified a distorted picture of a well-known episode in European history, an episode which is used as well in contemporary popular cultural contexts. His interest lies in correcting and giving a true picture of the origin and courses of the Crusade, and these are typical motivations for scholarly-scientific use of history. However Frankopan is not as critical of his own interpretations as to the research of others when discussing the Byzantine emperor's ability to rule: 'This picture, however, is wrong and is based on erratic handling of the plentiful primary material. For example, although the "Alexiad" talks of chaos in the east at the start of Alexios' reign, reporting bands of Turks advancing to the Bosphorus itself and taking control of most of Asia Minor, the reality was very different. As coin finds and lead seals from this period attest, the civil and military administration of the empire's eastern provinces continued to function properly well after 1081. Moreover, far from facing a bleak position in the east, the new emperor took several bold steps in the first months after taking power to strengthen his hand in Anatolia.'<sup>31</sup>

The importance of reality is interesting for several reasons, partly because the author believes it possible to reconstruct an event in the past 'wie es eigentlich gewesen' ('as it had actually been') – an approach that is associated with a more traditional scholarly-scientific use of history, partly since Wibeck has a similar aim with his article. The Swedish text contains criticism of the fictional character of the film, 'Arn – The Knight Templar', for example in one of the captions, which describes an image of a scene in the film: 'There is no evidence for any Swedish Templars having existed.'<sup>32</sup> However, other illustrations are not subjected to similar criticisms based on sources, such as an 19<sup>th</sup> century painting depicting Templar knights in battle: 'King Baiduin IV incites his forces during the battle against the Muslims at fort Mont Gisard in November 1177.'<sup>33</sup> Even though the painting is made about 650 years after the battle, nothing is commented on the

---

30 Cf. Frankopan (note 19), p. 39.

31 Ibid., p. 42.

32 Cf. Wibeck (note 22), p. 27.

33 Ibid., p. 28.

time difference or the relationship between fiction and reality, such as the remarks made about the film. In general, images of artwork are often used in *POPULÄR HISTORIA* and *HISTORY TODAY* as evidence of events in the past. This is one of several features which are significant for the version of scholarly-scientific use of history which regularly appears in the magazines.

When focusing on other tendencies in the British article, a clear admiration emerges for the Byzantine Empire, Emperor Alexios I and Constantinople, which was a dynamic and cosmopolitan city during the High Middle Ages.<sup>34</sup> By adding this positive image to the revelations of other researchers' incorrect interpretations of the West European Crusades, Frankopan is highlighting the contrast between his new truths and earlier established beliefs.<sup>35</sup> In addition to a scholarly-scientific use of history this is also an example of the moralizing use of history, in the sense that the author, in the end of the article, reveals what critical damage the Crusaders caused the Byzantine Empire: 'What is perhaps harder to understand, however, is how it has taken so long to see that the western "success" brought other costs. In the first instance those included the breakdown of the churches; but in the long run it sowed the seeds that led to the devastation of Constantinople in 1204 and, ultimately, the death of the eastern Roman Empire.'<sup>36</sup>

The underlying message is that history is written by those who ultimately gained power, namely the West European powers. This has led to a neglect of the fate of the Byzantine Empire. The moral use of history here is therefore about restoring the memory of the Eastern Roman Empire and crushing the myth of the Pope's major influence and the successes of the Crusaders. The far-reaching effects of the Crusades on the relations between the West and the Muslim world are not mentioned at all, which in a contemporary point of view can seem rather strange. But it is not the fate of Muslims Frankopan wants to highlight; it is the neglected Byzantine perspective.

---

34 Cf. Frankopan (note 19), p. 41.

35 Sören Wibeck's article fits well with the image of the Crusades that Peter Frankopan claims is incorrect.

36 Cf. Frankopan (note 19), p. 45.

In the article of *POPULÄR HISTORIA*, the Muslims are present, but they are portrayed as perpetrators in contrast to the Crusaders' victimized characters. Also in this context it may be worth to consider the impact of the scholarly-scientific use of history on the moral use of history. In this article 'the truth' about the Templars includes, among other things, focus on Muslim injustices: 'Beha-al-Din tells us that a single Muslim had captured thirty fugitive Franks and tied them together with a rope. They were so terrified that they dared not resist.'<sup>37</sup> Wibeck continues: 'A band of fanatic Sufis wanted nothing more than to kill the Templars. They carried out the executions with relish.'<sup>38</sup> The author's moral use of history emerges by showing the Templars' 'real' suffering caused by the Muslims' actions. The film version, where Muslims are given more nuanced roles, is working as a contrast to the 'true story' of the article. In a broadened perspective Wibeck's moral sting can be seen as directed against those who have illustrated the Christian Templar's reality in another way. Guillou, the author of the novels of the Northern Knights Templars, has repeatedly expressed his disapproval of the unilateral negative image of Muslims that appears in the media. The Arn-novels are, according to the novelist, a result of this dissatisfaction. By writing about the first Crusades, he wanted to give a background to contemporary conflicts and stereotypical images of the Christian's enemies.<sup>39</sup> Wibeck's article might in this context be understood as a statement against the novelist's perception and thus as an ideological use of history. The function here is to rationalize the history in order to contrast it to Guillou's versions. In this respect the article risks being perceived as politically incorrect by some readers, since it conveys a negative image of Muslims.

In a previous issue of *POPULÄR HISTORIA*, in 2002, Wibeck wrote about another Middle East subject, namely the establishment of the state of Israel. A major part of the text is about the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, and his role in the formation of the state. Considering the subject it would be reasonable to expect a mention of the conflicts between Israel and its neighbor states after 1948, but in fact nothing is

---

37 Cf. Wibeck (note 22), p. 30.

38 Ibid.

39 URL: <http://bit.ly/1uQpqS5> (29.5.2014).

said about these significant conflicts. The story ends in May 1948. Perhaps this choice of end-date depends on the specific niche at which the article is aimed. There is a much greater risk that an article on the history of the State of Israel would be perceived as politically contentious, more so than an article on the truth behind a historical cultural artifact, such as that on the film 'Arn – The Knight Templar'. Possibly it is such editorial considerations that make popularized historiography popular and the commercial use of history functional.

#### 4. Summary and Conclusions

The use of history in the popular historical articles on the medieval Crusades can be summarized based on the following observations:

- In the scholarly-scientific use of history truth about the Crusades takes central stage. The authors take position against other research results – respectively those based on popularly accepted historical positions, and present their own interpretations as realities. The key words here are then 'revision' and 'verification'.
- The Swedish article does not revise the history of the Crusades in the same way as in the British article, whilst the scholarly-scientific use of history can be seen as more modified in the former than in the latter. In other words; the article in *POPULÄR HISTORIA* seems to be more obviously adapted to a popular context.
- Narrative as stylistic feature can be identified in both articles, which underlines their popular historical context, despite the scientific character of, especially, *HISTORY TODAY*.
- Authors' attentions on neglected perspective and memories can be classified as a moral use of history. In these cases the scholarly-scientific use of history has a reinforcing role, notably by interpreting of the sources as objective statements about injustices, losses and victories. In the British article the myth of the Western Roman Church's ascendancy is crushed. In the Swedish article the Templar's suffering and the enemy's atrocities are enhanced.

This is how the uses of history in the two articles above can be described. However one important aspect remains to be discussed: the category of the commercial use of history. Can the articles on the medieval Crusades, and

ultimately the historiography of POPULÄR HISTORIA and HISTORY TODAY, be categorized as a commercial use of history? A quick answer is: yes, in the sense that the magazines are popular commercial products with historical focus. But to be satisfied with such an explanation would be to ignore the multiple results in the analysis above. Therefore I must express reservations and answer both 'yes' and 'no' to the question above. For example, we have notified different categories of uses of history in the articles, such as a scholarly-scientific, a moral and even an ideological use of history. These are based on needs to discover, rehabilitate and debate, and even if they appear in a commercial context it is problematic to define them as typical for a commercial use of history. This must mean that the commercial use of history differs in several ways from other categories in Karlsson's typology. For example, a scientific use of history can be functional without the support of other uses of history, but a commercial use of history cannot exist without support from other uses of history. Therefore the commercial use of history, in greater degree than the other categories, must be regarded as a hybrid. We might go even further and say that the roots of this phenomenon cannot mainly be found in the need for strong history, but in a need of economic earnings. Despite this prerequisite, I still believe it important to investigate popularized and commercialized history, not at least to identify any possible national differences or, conversely, if this kind of historiography has a more general character. This, I hope to develop further in the final chapters of my thesis.





Claudius Springkart\*

## Popular history magazines in Germany

### 1. History magazines in Germany: crisis or boom?

‘Rarely have history magazines been so weak’ – this is how Jens Schröder headlined the ‘top story’ of the online media platform ‘MEEDIA’ in October 2008. The success of the multi-part TV documentary ‘Die Deutschen’ (‘The Germans’ 2008; 2010) produced by the German TV channel ZDF prompted the author closely to examine the latest statistics on the quarterly circulation of the hitherto market-leading German history magazines GEO EPOCHE, G/GESCHICHTE, P.M. HISTORY and DAMALS, published by the ‘IVW’ (‘Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern e.V.’)<sup>1</sup>. He concluded: ‘At any rate, history remains a marginal topic at the kiosk, and one which seems to excite fewer and fewer people.’<sup>2</sup> A look at the sales figures of the years 2010 to 2013 (fourth quarter) seems to confirm this impression.

After a short upward trend for GEO EPOCHE (2012), P.M. HISTORY (2010) and G/GESCHICHTE (2011) the magazines soon recorded yet another decline in sales figures: the table shows stagnation at a relatively low level for 2013.

If, however, one includes the broad range of history magazines available at the kiosk in addition to the established magazines, the result is less decisive. Losses are juxtaposed against the expansion of the market, which throws up a growing range of magazines with historical content. The reader interested in this supposedly ‘marginal topic’ is currently offered up to 19 magazines at the kiosk – even if those areas are excluded

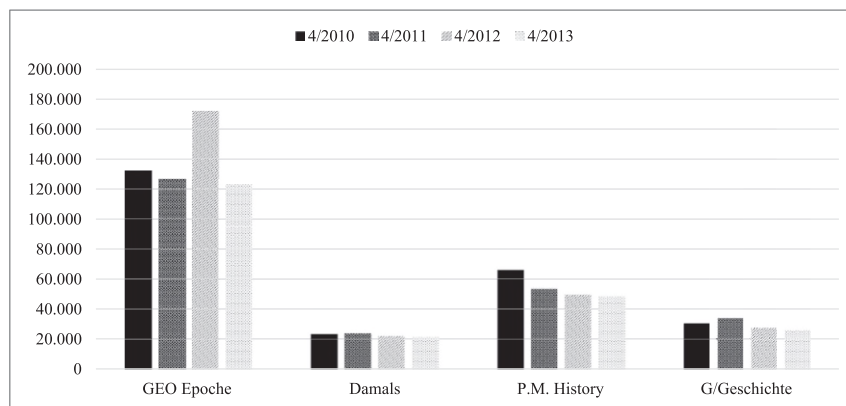
---

\* The updated version was prepared with the assistance of Ms Daniela Wolf. She especially conducted the extensive research for the magazines and calculated the new tables.

1 URL: <http://www.ivw.eu/> (1.8.2014).

2 Jens Schröder: Nach der Quotensensation für „Die Deutschen“. Geschichtsmagazine so schwach wie selten. ‘MEEDIA’-Topstory dated 28.10.2008, URL: <http://bit.ly/1uw9tjG> (1.8.2014).

Table 1: Comparison of the sales figures of GEO EPOCHE, DAMALS, P.M. HISTORY and G/GESCHICHTE from the last quarters of the years 2010–2013 (official numbers of the IVW)



which undoubtedly also mobilise historical interest, such as the history of motor vehicles (e.g. AUTO CLASSIC), the history of prominent lives (P.M. BIOGRAFIE) or the magazine WELT UND UMWELT DER BIBEL ('the world of the bible and its surroundings') which primarily addresses religious readers. At the beginning of this century, two financially-powerful major publishers, i.e. 'ZEIT-Verlag' and 'SPIEGEL-Gruppe' discovered the potential of the market and have contributed to increase the competition with their line extensions (ZEIT GESCHICHTE and SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE resp.). All the more surprising, then, that the year 2010 saw five further magazines appear, a veritable flood of new releases. According to the publishers, the market for popular history magazines at that time did not appear saturated. However, this subsided too quickly.

How far, then, do possibilities remain for the many representatives of that special-interest sector 'History' to win interested readers to their own project? Besides the differences in magazine price and size, selection and presentation of topics can also be regarded as decisive criteria for the reader's decision to buy. After a short presentation of the market situation (current range, prices, sales figures) the results of a front cover analysis which adheres to the evaluation catalogue developed at Augsburg University will

be presented in what follows.<sup>3</sup> An examination of history magazine covers revealed how far formats differ with regard to their choice of topic (time, place, subject matter) and presentational methods (use of pictures and text elements). Besides profiling specific magazines, general tendencies within the German market are also recorded.

## 2. The current range of popular history magazines

Since the complex object of popular history magazines has yet not been defined in a satisfactory way either by History Didactics or by Media Studies itself, representatives of such specialised areas as archaeology and military history, as well as magazines dealing with the cultural-historical phenomena of 're-enactment' and 'living history' ('very-special-interest magazines'), are included in the following overview of the market, alongside thematically unspecified history magazines ('special-interest magazines'). The claim that the range presented is exhaustive cannot and should not be raised in light of the fast moving magazine market.\*

Nine out of 19 magazines listed here can be assigned to the group of special-interest magazines (DAMALS; G/GESCHICHTE; P.M. HISTORY; GEO EPOCHE; ZEIT GESCHICHTE; SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE; GESCHICHTE & WISSEN. KOMPAKT ERKLÄRT; HISTORY ILLUSTRATED\*\*; GEO

---

3 So as to ensure the comparability of the national cover page analysis an evaluation catalogue was composed in advance, which explains the mandatory (time, place, topic) and the facultative (pictures and titles) aspects of analysis. The partly similar, partly considerably different evaluation criteria in the analysis by Laurène Pain Prado were unknown at the time of the conceptualisation of our instruments of analysis. Cf. Laurène Pain Prado: *La question de l'histoire grand public. Étude comparée de deux magazines d'histoire: Historia et L'Histoire. 2004–2008.* Grenoble 2010, URL: <http://bit.ly/1mDslKM> (1.8.2014).

\*\* That the market is fast-moving as addressed above has already been shown, for instance, with the above mentioned history magazine HISTORY ILLUSTRATED, which was supposed to be published quarterly and apparently was discontinued after the first issue in autumn 2010. This failed attempt was led by the Swedish publisher 'Bonnier', which cooperated with the German publisher 'Family Media', and published the history magazine as line extension to the successfully established magazine SCIENCE ILLUSTRATED, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1pzBSO3> (1.8.2014). HISTORY ILLUSTRATED is thereby not the only magazine mentioned which is no longer available at the publication of this

EPOCHE PANORAMA), four magazines deal with military history in particular (MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE; DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE; DMZ [=Deutsche Militärzeitschrift (German military magazine)]; CLAUSEWITZ) and three magazines respectively deal with the areas archaeology (EPOC\*\*; AID [= Archäologie in Deutschland (archaeology in Germany)]; ANTIKE WELT) and re-enactment/living history (KARFUNKEL; MIROQUE; AFAKTOR), partly with a clear emphasis on medieval history.

## 2.1 Inception and frequency of publication of popular history magazines

Besides the oldest currently available magazine DAMALS (first published in 1969) only three of the 19 magazines (ANTIKE WELT; G/GESCHICHTE; AID) have a tradition dating back over the 1990s. Whereas G/GESCHICHTE was initially conceptualised as an educational supplement for pupils and teachers and was restructured for a wider audience in the 1980s, the popular(-scientific) redesign of the format ANTIKE WELT did not appear until 2004. In visual terms, the magazine resembled an academic specialist journal up to that point. Moreover, stages of development are not specifically mentioned for the magazines P.M. HISTORY and EPOC\*\*, which operated under a different name during their first years

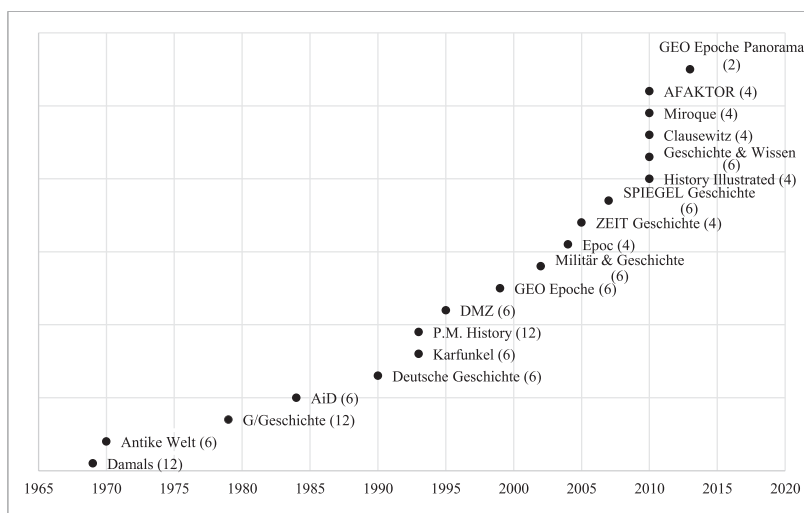
---

volume: also the magazine EPOC\*\* by the publisher 'Spektrum der Wissenschaft' was discontinued by the end of 2013 – after the unsuccessful attempt to align the magazine in a mono-thematic way in early 2012. The publisher apparently saw that the time had come for a new start and since early 2013 has quarterly published the follow-up magazine SPEKTRUM SPEZIAL: ARCHÄOLOGIE, GESCHICHTE, KULTUR, cf. URL: <http://www.epoc.de/> (1.8.2014). Therefore, HISTORY ILLUSTRATED and EPOC are marked with a \*\*-sign.

At the same time, however, new history magazines have appeared on the market between 2011 and 2013; in February 2013 the first issue of GEO EPOCHE PANORAMA was published, a subsidiary magazine of the special-interest magazine of the same name, which, as is already indicated by the subtitle 'history in pictures', focuses on the image to convey history, cf. also the interview with the developing team at: URL: <http://bit.ly/1uK4OrU> (1.8.2014). And also the group of magazines from the area of re-enactment and living history has seen growth towards the end of the year 2010: ZILLO MEDIEVAL, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1rCsVJx> (1.8.2014) is published quarterly as 'magazine for the Middle Ages and music' and presents its readership with 'history and stories', URL: <http://bit.ly/YyCPQh> (1.8.2014).

(P.M. – DAS HISTORISCHE EREIGNIS (1993–1997) resp. ABENTEUER ARCHÄOLOGIE (2004–2007)). However, without this differentiation it also becomes clear that the majority of history magazines tried to gain access to the market during the last two decades. The year 2010 stands out thanks to the five new releases, as mentioned above.

Table 2: Market increase of special-interest and very-special-interest history magazines available in Germany until 2013 (in brackets: issues per year)

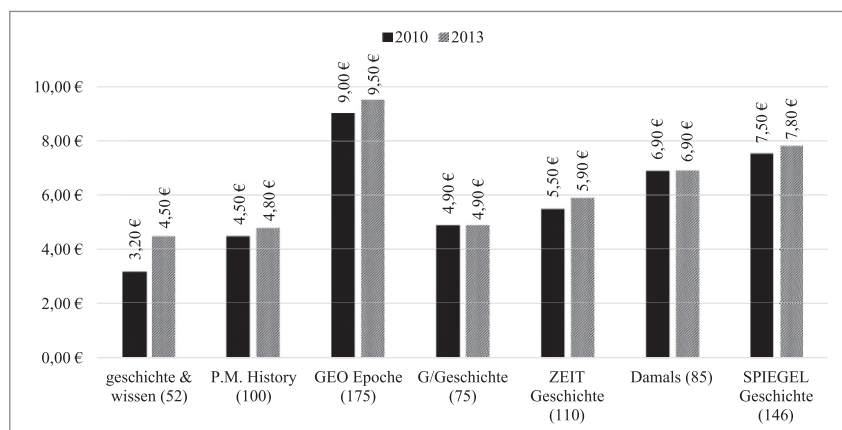


The frequency of publication of the magazines varies from monthly to quarterly. Particularly newcomers start with a lower frequency, one which can be increased if successful. The fact that the well-established and distinguished formats GEO EPOCHE, SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE and ZEIT GESCHICHTE are only published six (GEO EPOCHE, SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE) or four (ZEIT GESCHICHTE) times a year may be explained by their mono-thematic alignment. Whereas other special-interest magazines offer the reader a title or focus topic alongside a more or less broad range of historical topics, which do not necessarily have to be connected, the three magazines named suggest to the buyer that a historical topic is examined exhaustively and in detail. This manifests itself in the greater number of pages, which may be responsible for the increased workload and, in relation to this, for the comparatively high price.

## 2.2 Sales price and size of the issue

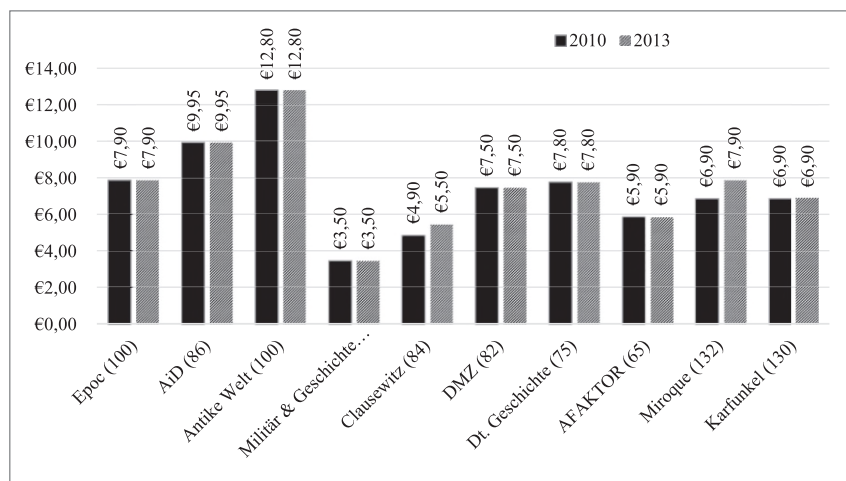
Size and price of the mono- and multi-thematic magazines differ from each other greatly. Within these subgroups a diverse range is discernible as well.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the multi-thematic special-interest formats range between a maximum of 6.90€ for roughly 85 pages (DAMALS) and the inexpensive offer of 4.80€ for roughly 100 pages (P.M. HISTORY). Whereas the re-enactment magazines show a more or less similar price-range, the sales price of military magazines differ from each other a lot. In addition, with a relatively high sales price of 7.90€ (EPOC\*\*), 9.95€ (AID) and 12.80€ (ANTIKE WELT) the group of archaeological magazines stands out. It may be assumed that besides their targeted marketing as ‘premium products’, their comparatively low sales figures explain the price formation.

Table 3: Sales prices of special-interest magazines in comparison: autumn 2010 and autumn 2013 (in brackets: average amount of pages)



4 In order to ensure the comparison of the international magazine prices, the price of bread was provided as the country-specific comparative value for the national price. The average price per kilo for bread in Germany in the year 2011 was 2.11€ according to the statistics published by the Zentralverband des Deutschen Bäckerhandwerks, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1rv3dGA> (1.8.2014).

Table 4: Sales prices of the very-special-interest magazines in autumn 2013 in comparison to 2010, in brackets: average amount of pages



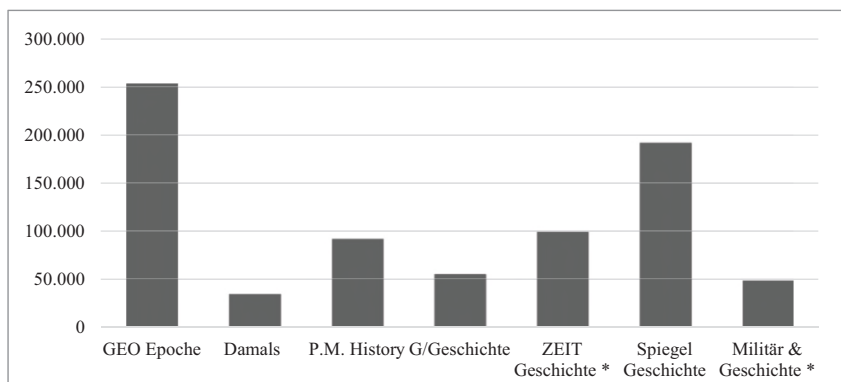
The fact that the circulation figures of the very-special-interest magazines are clearly below those of the special-interest magazines is not surprising considering the readership with a ‘very special interest’. In general, however, it is difficult to make comparison between the circulation figures. Although official numbers are available for four of the 19 magazines from the ‘IVW’ (‘Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern e.V.’)<sup>5</sup> one has to make do with the information provided by the publishers in the other cases. Even though this may not necessarily give rise to suspicion, in case of the sales figures a rather ‘optimistic’ depiction of their own results– with regards to advertising revenue – cannot be ruled out.

Figures for the print run may differ widely from numbers of copies actually sold. SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE is published with a print run of 192.000 copies; at the same time the ‘paid circulation’ is given as 55.815 issues. Promotional handling of the numbers claimed for their own magazine may be regarded as questionable: under the title ‘Quality pays off’ the print runs of the market-leading magazines GEO EPOCHE (~254.000),

5 URL: <http://www.ivw.eu/> (1.8.2014).



Table 5: Print run in autumn 2013 (fourth quarter), data taken from the IVW and – marked with \*\* – from the media information on the publisher’s website



P.M. HISTORY (~93.000) and ZEIT GESCHICHTE (~100.000) are contrasted in a comparative way, but it remains unclear to what extent the print run is indeed sold or read.<sup>6</sup> Difficulties of comparison become apparent when taking a closer look at the numbers for the magazine ZEIT GESCHICHTE: in this case, a print run of 100.000 copies (autumn 2013) is confronted with a sales figure of 50.000 copies.<sup>7</sup>

Besides print and sales volumes there is also the ‘distributed circulation’, which usually includes the sum of the copies sold as well as the copies that have reached the public in a different way (so-called ‘free copies’, e.g. handed out for free as a bonus or sent out in a trial subscription).<sup>8</sup> Figures for the magazine DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE, which indicate that 50.000 readers were reached in 2010, are even more unclear. Information that does not indicate the underlying statistical projection factor (if this exists) has no conclusive validity. For some magazines, finally, no circulation could be traced at all.

6 URL: <http://bit.ly/1yvFo6t> (1.8.2014).

7 URL: <http://bit.ly/1uTKIdP> (1.8.2014).

8 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1rthKkD> (1.8.2014).

### 2.3 History in very-special-interest magazines

Military magazines occupy a special position, and not only by dint of lack of transparency regarding circulation. In light of the openly displayed right-wing nationalist to neo-fascist alignment of the magazine *DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE*<sup>9</sup> and the tendencies to rewrite history at least discernable below the surface of the *DEUTSCHE MILITÄRZEITSCHRIFT* (DMZ)<sup>10</sup> and the magazine *MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE*<sup>11</sup>, the question arises whether this group fits the scheme of the popular history magazines at all.

Even though military magazines may sometimes clearly differ from the ‘classic’ popular history magazines in their contents, it is easy to find similarities, especially when the focus is placed on marketing strategies. Accordingly, the producers claim the official seal of scientifically

---

9 Cf. the article by Elmar Vieregge: *Zeitschriftenporträt: Deutsche Geschichte*. In: *Jahrbuch Extremismus & Demokratie*, 18 (2006), p. 238–256. The author reaches the conclusion that the producers of the magazine seek to combine latent right-wing extremist statements with a minimalist and marketable external presentation.

10 A glance inside the magazines was able to confirm the impression of the German Federal Government from 2006, which stated: ‘The “*Deutsche Militärzeitschrift*” (DMZ) is closely linked to the right-wing extremist publisher “Arndt-Verlag”. [...] Contributions can be found in the editorial part of DMZ which address the Second World War uncritically and partly with historically revisionist tendencies’ (Drucksache 16/1282 dated 25.04.2006 (‘Antwort der Bundesregierung’), p. 7, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1mDtbqX> (1.8.2014).

11 Besides an evident romanticising and transfiguring depiction of war for a militaristically interested audience, the processing of individual topics presents Germany as the victim in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The one-dimensional and mono-perspectival presentation is incompatible with the knowledge of an objective and neutrally-evaluative History Studies. An example is a general anti-French tendency in one of the latest articles by Maximilian Bunk, who claims to disclose ‘the true reasons’ for the occupation of the Ruhr and finally establishes a causal connection to ‘the National Socialists’ politics of revenge’ (‘Revanchepolitik [sic!] der Nationalsozialisten’) (Maximilian Bunk: *Frankreichs Griff nach dem Ruhrgebiet*. In: *Militär & Geschichte* 55 (2011), p. 20–27). For illustration purposes the central motif of the political poster ‘Hände weg vom Ruhrgebiet!’ (‘Hands off the Ruhr!’) (Theo Matejko, colour lithography, 1923) is used without critical reflexion of the source: a demonised and oversized ‘Marianne’ visualises the ‘arch enemy’ France, who reaches out for German property, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1rCtu5Y> (1.8.2014).

proven historical information for their own product – a practice of self-advertisement which can be found to a varying extent in all popular history magazines. Even though one cannot speak of scientific, critical and neutral working methods in the case of military history magazines, these formats nonetheless adopt the inconspicuous appearance of popular publications on the outside, and therefore should not be disregarded when examining this object, provided one is mindful of the potential threat to an unbiased and uncritical recipient. Similar problems of too narrow a definition also apply to the other two groups of the very-special-interest area. Whereas the focus of the re-enactment magazines clearly centres on the presentation of historical topics illustrated via their entertaining function and with a view to leisure activities, in case of the archaeological magazines *ANTIKE WELT* and *AID*, the boundaries between popular history magazines and specialist academic magazines are fluid. The results of the military magazines can be applied in reverse to this group. The outer appearance of archaeological magazines has adapted to the look of history magazines during the past few years. An increasingly non-academic target group is apparently to be addressed via ‘modernised’ layouts and design.

## **2.4 The seal of ‘popular scientific’ as a collective whole with nuances**

How far popular history magazines generally use the label ‘scientific’ for advertising purposes can be illustrated by looking at the respective websites of the publishers or the editorials of the individual magazines. On the one hand their own accounts about their product always mention that contributions are based on a scientific foundation, and this is secured by the qualifications of the individual authors or the formation of an ‘academic advisory council’ or ‘verification editors’ (*GEO EPOCHE*). On the other hand, producers point out to prospective customers and advertisers that historical issues are presented in a popular way, meaning an exciting and emotionally appealing one. From time to time special categories of the magazines can be discerned as providing a special interface between popular culture and academia. Some magazines feature fixed categories about recent research news or excavation reports (e.g. *HISTORY ILLUSTRATED\*\**, *EPOC\*\**, *AID*). Other formats point out concert dates in event calendars (*KARFUNKEL*), offer regular history quizzes (*G/GESCHICHTE*; *P.M. HISTORY*) or introduce exhibitions (*DAMALS*).

Even though the aspects described allow an initial estimation to be made regarding the categorisation of the various formats, a further characterisation shall be omitted at this stage. On the one hand, a comprehensive presentation of the relevant publishers, editors and online presences would go beyond the scope of this contribution; on the other hand, any image sketched out in this way would necessarily have to be regarded in relation to the magazines' contents so as to ensure a substantial classification.<sup>12</sup>

Instead, the results of a cover page analysis to be presented in the following, provide an initial insight into the extent to which the group of popular history magazines differs with regard to the choice and presentation of the cover-topics. Even if only some of the 19 magazines named have been examined for this study, and even if the evaluation of the cover pages is at best a first step towards a comprehensive discussion of the individual magazines, such a comparison nonetheless offers the chance to make profiles visible and to reveal similarities which arise in the German market.

### 3. The results of the cover page analysis

In order to combine the results of the quantitative analysis into one general tendency, it was necessary to examine both groups, the special-interest and very-special-interest magazines, separately. Since the examination categories of 'time', 'place' and 'topic' are to a certain extent already predetermined in the case of the very-special-interest formats, the inclusion of these values would have created, for example, an extremely distorted image of the generally featured cover-topics. In order to highlight the significant differences between both subgroups, one representative each of archaeology and of military history was used as a sort of control group. From among military magazines *MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE* was chosen as the least negatively biased magazine as regards glorification of war and the depiction of historical revisionism. The evaluation of the cover pages of *EPOC*<sup>\*\*</sup> was supposed to show to what extent the 'magazine for archaeology and history' differed from history magazines open to all topics.

---

12 The presentation of the publishers and internet presences was carried out by the author in his degree thesis (Claudius Springkart: *Geschichte am Kiosk: Wie populärwissenschaftliche Geschichtsmagazine Geschichte verkaufen – Marktüberblick und Titelblattanalyse*. Augsburg 2011, unpublished).

The selection criteria<sup>13</sup> determined in line with international comparability entailed that the magazines HISTORY ILLUSTRATED\*\* and GESCHICHTE & WISSEN, which only entered the market in 2010, and also the series SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE, which only began in 2007, could not be taken into consideration. On the other hand, the cover pages from the past eight years of the multi-thematic special-interest magazines DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE, and P.M. HISTORY were able to be analysed. Since the mono-thematically designed magazines ZEIT GESCHICHTE and GEO EPOCHE are published less often, and hence fewer individual issues were available for the period of examination, the issues from the year 2005 were also considered.

In total, the covers of 96 issues each of G/GESCHICHTE, DAMALS and P.M. HISTORY, 50 covers of GEO EPOCHE<sup>14</sup> and 36 of ZEIT GESCHICHTE were analysed. Adding up 38 cover pages of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 cover pages of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE<sup>15</sup> (2006–2013) from the very-special-interest area, 461 cover pages were evaluated in total.

### 3.1 The category ‘time’<sup>16</sup>

The evaluation of the category ‘time’ reveals that the periods of time which can be termed ‘Middle Ages’ (800–1500) and ‘Antiquity’ (750 BC–500) hardly differ from each other regarding their attractiveness in the multi-thematically designed magazines. Both epochs hardly seem to be able to measure up to the modern topics (from 1500), one reason for which may be the fact that historical knowledge increases with the topic’s growing proximity to the present. This entails a wide range of possible topics and therefore offers the publisher a very colourful and diverse spectrum

---

13 To complete the national cover page analysis, history magazines were chosen that have been on the market for at least five years from the time of publication, and that do not specialise in a specific area of history, in contrast to the very-special-interest magazines. The issues analysed here are from the years 2005–2013.

14 No. 16 to No. 64 plus the ‘extended reissue’ from June 2005.

15 No. 24 to No. 72.

16 On the categories ‘time’, ‘place’, ‘topic’, ‘pictures’ and ‘titles’ dealt with in the following cf. the evaluation catalogue (cf. note 3).

Table 6: Chronological categorisation of the cover topics of the multi-thematic special-interest magazines P.M. HISTORY, G/GESCHICHTE and DAMALS (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages each from the years 2006–2013); ‘special interest’: average value

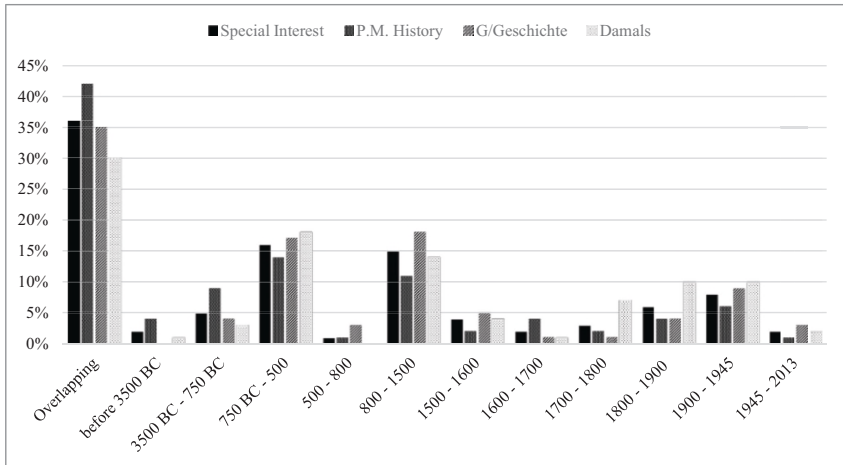


Table 7: Chronological categorisation of the cover topics of the mono-thematic special-interest magazines GEO EPOCHE and ZEIT GESCHICHTE (specification in percent; n=50 cover pages of GEO EPOCHE and 36 of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013); ‘special interest’: average value

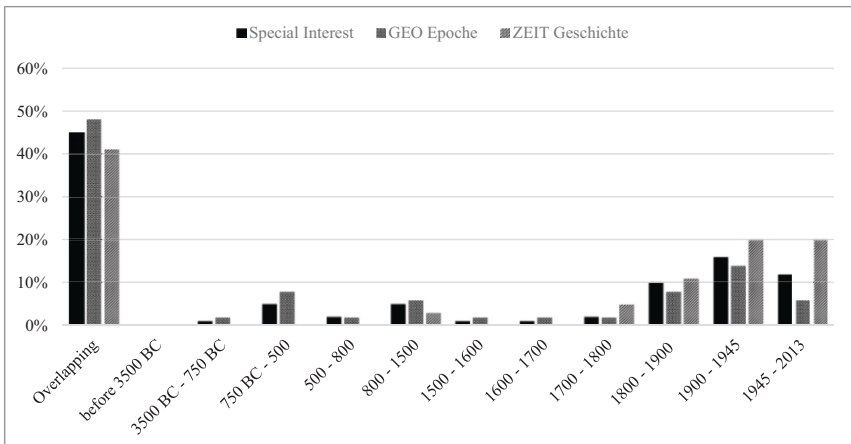
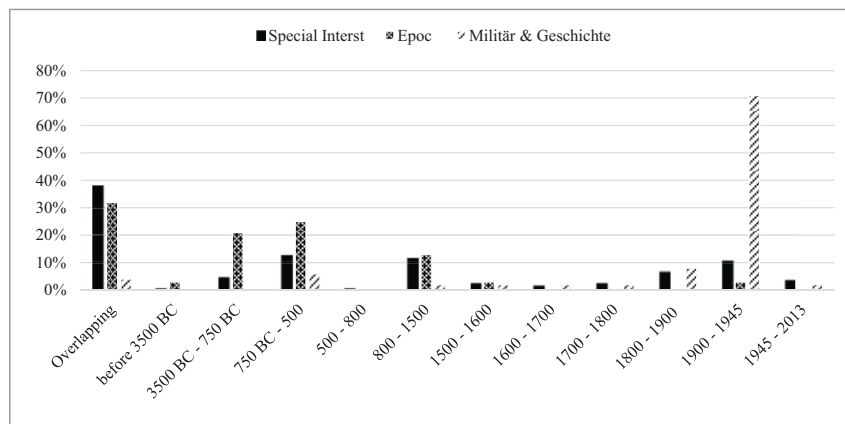


Table 8: Chronological categorisation of the cover topics of the very-special-interest magazines EPOC\*\* and MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (specification in percent; n=38 cover pages of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 cover pages of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (2006–2013); ‘special interest’: average value



of issues. However, the frequency of period-spanning topics is surprising. One reason for this must surely lie in the provisions of the category underlying this evaluation. Besides the linearly designed topics whose dates simply break the set ‘epoch boundaries’, historical phenomena can be found, which can be processed and presented in a kind of diachronic longitudinal section (e.g. DAMALS 4/2008: ‘The history of gambling’). Whereas the cover topics in the former case simply did not fit the fixed historical time frames (themselves contestable, but not random), in the latter case the producers aimed at giving a historical overview as a kind of ‘journey through time’, which already conceptually excluded the possibility of a temporal categorisation.

It is further indicated that contemporary history since the end of the Second World War is in general of little importance to the history magazines. Apparently, editors are convinced that readers who are interested in historical material expect a certain historical distance, one which should at least go beyond the history that they have witnessed themselves.

Within the special-interest magazines certain emphases are partially discernable. P.M. HISTORY shows a relatively high percentage of cover topics which overlap the time frames, and only an unusually small part of this can be allocated to the time period between 1500 and 2013. In P.M. HISTORY the aforementioned diachronic longitudinal sections can be increasingly found.

In the magazine G/GESCHICHTE the time period from 1900 to 1945 in particular can be seen as a further emphasis along with the areas 'Antiquity' and 'Middle Ages' and period-spanning topics – each of the four time periods is clearly more distinctively pronounced than the average distribution.

As already seen in the other magazines the preponderance of topics from the 'popular' areas Antiquity and Middle Ages is very clearly illustrated in the magazine DAMALS. A further particularity is the comparatively high number of cover topics on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A look at the mono-thematic special-interest magazines shows that they clearly differ from the multi-thematically designed magazines in the choice of time periods for their covers. In GEO EPOCHE period-spanning topics are dominant, whereas the time period between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century is almost completely neglected. A mere three issues can be found looking at the time before the Middle Ages. The 20<sup>th</sup> century can be identified as the time-period most emphasised. This applies even more to the magazine ZEIT GESCHICHTE. Apart from a single title on the Middle Ages, topics begin with the 18<sup>th</sup> century and become more frequent with every following period of time. Apparently, the editors take literally the pun in the magazine's name and present the reader with topics from contemporary history more often than do all other formats.

In contrast to the special-interest magazines, period-spanning topics play a minor part in the construction of cover pages of the very-special-interest formats. Whereas for EPOC\*\* 32% of the issues could not be assigned to a fixed period of time, this only applied to two of the 42 examined covers (roughly 4%) of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE. Modern topics are a rarity in EPOC\*\* as might have been expected from its specialisation in the areas of archaeology and cultural history. With the exception of one single issue (EPOC 6/2008: 'The Weimar Republic. Why the first German democracy had to fail'), all cover topics reach back to at least the Middle



Ages. Antiquity and the time of early civilisations from around 3500 BC to 500 AD form a clear main focus: in this respect, more than twice as many counts could be recorded as for the special-interest magazines. The ‘magazine for archaeology and history’ first and foremost offers information about times ‘long gone’ and seems intended, in accordance with a readership interested in archaeology, to bring to light hidden cultural treasures or forgotten cultures.

In stark contrast to this, the topics of pre-history and ancient history – as well as the Middle Ages – are almost completely excluded by the producers of *MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE*. The lack of these epochs on the cover pages raises questions. Why do producers of the magazine neglect epochal topics such as the campaign of Alexander the Great or the crusades, which appear particularly interesting from a military perspective? Besides the great wars and battles, the field of weapon technology might offer a range of exciting individual topics – like the history of gunpowder or Leonardo da Vinci’s war machines. However, in 69% of the issues of *MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE*, the time period between 1900 and 1945 is the centre of attention on the cover pages. Consequently, the First and the Second World War are dominant. Apparently, the two biggest wars of the past century appear to be especially fascinating for the readership or the designers of the magazine. Detailed examination even reveals that it is the Second World War in particular that is preferably ‘processed’ (59%): the ‘spectrum of issues covering almost 5.000 years of international military history’<sup>17</sup> advertised by the publisher turns out to be a hollow promise. Inevitably, the ‘Wehrmacht’ and – inseparably linked to it – the time of National Socialism are made the main focus of the magazine. The audience’s affinity for war or the military seems in fact to be fixed primarily on the Second World War and the ‘Third Reich’. Even though this analysis does not go beyond the cover pages of the magazine, *MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE*’s specialisation on one time period is striking, particularly in combination with the historico-revisionist tendencies of some of their articles already mentioned above.

---

17 URL: <http://bit.ly/1t84i3I> (1.8.2014).

### 3.2 The category 'place'

#### 3.2.1 *Continents or major areas*

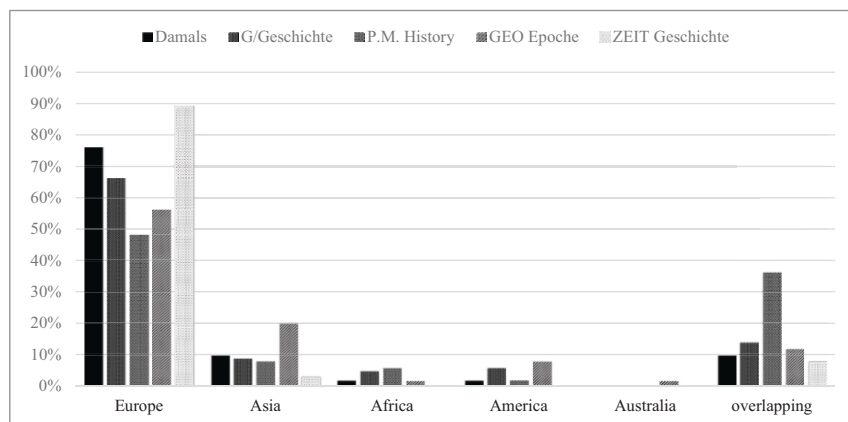
As can be expected from history magazines published in Germany<sup>18</sup> the majority of special-interest magazines (64%) deal with topics from the European area. The second largest category is 'overlapping' and includes, besides issues concerning the entire world, titles that take up an aspect which refers to at least two continents (e.g. DAMALS 9/2008: 'A place in the sun. German colonies in the South Pacific'). Third place, held by Asia (10%) in the overall statistics, can primarily be traced back to the fact that the Near East is the region where the world religions have developed as well as the setting for former advanced cultures. Furthermore it is worth mentioning that this contribution includes Russia as a disputable 'border-line case' in the Asian (instead of the European) area.

African topics are dominated by the thematic complex named 'Egypt' to an even further extent than is the case with Asia – Near East. Titles about the 'land of the pharaohs' obscure the fact that this continent is otherwise largely neglected on the cover pages. Surprisingly, the same holds true for the American area although the history of the USA, which is omnipresent in today's media, would offer a wide range of topics

---

18 In a pilot study by the communication researchers Georg Ruhrmann and Roland Göbbel a 'German participation' of 'leading news editors from German TV, radio, print, online and agency editorial departments' was described as the currently second most important news factor. Also 'spatial proximity to Germany' can be found at least among the top 10 factors (cf. Georg Ruhrmann/Roland Göbbel: Veränderung der Nachrichtenfaktoren und Auswirkungen auf die journalistische Praxis in Deutschland. Abschlussbericht für netzwerk recherche e.V. April 2007. In: URL: <http://bit.ly/1vojZ9Q> (1.8.2014), p. 39 ff.). In a content analysis of the category 'Zeitläufe', which is regularly published in the weekly newspaper 'Die Zeit', Jürgen Wilke has additionally examined the (primary) reference to countries of 208 articles on historical topics: With 49% of the counts Germany ranks first, followed by the USA (8%) at a great distance as well as Italy and France (5% each). The author concludes that regarding the ranking of the countries, among others, those news factors become apparent in historical journalism which are generally valid for a journalistic coverage. Cf. Jürgen Wilke: Journalismus und Geschichtsschreibung. In: Klaus Arnold/Walter Hömberg/Susanne Kinnebrock (eds.): Geschichtsjournalismus. Zwischen Information und Inszenierung. Berlin 2010, p. 127–147.

Table 9: Geographical categorisation of the cover topics of multi- and mono-thematic special-interest magazines – rough categorisation according to continents (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages each from DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY from the years 2006–2013 as well as 50 cover pages of GEO EPOCHE and 36 cover pages of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013)

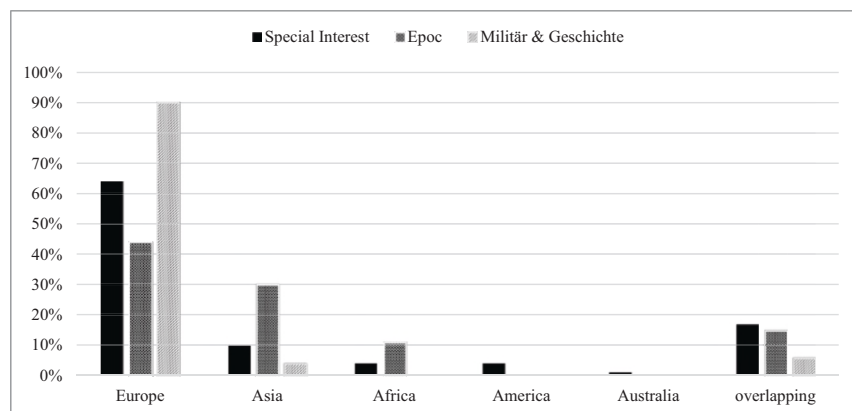


commonly known and regarded as popular and would also seem attractive enough for a cover design. One need only think of the area ‘Wild West’, which is ubiquitous on TV, in books and children’s rooms, of the War of Independence and the Civil War or of fields such as the history of technology and space travel.

Distribution within the special-interest magazines shows a heterogeneous picture. Whereas ZEIT GESCHICHTE deals exclusively with topics from the European area (with the exception of one geographically overlapping issue), inter-continental issues are more present in P.M. HISTORY. The only magazine among those presented above that covers the previously distinguished major areas with at least one issue each in the time frame examined is GEO EPOCHE.

In the case of very-special-interest formats a clear profiling of the magazines becomes apparent. EPOC\*\* is predominantly dedicated to past cultures outside Europe – topics from the Asian area come second (30%) right after Europe (44%) – MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE is, with a few exceptions, limited to (war) settings on the European continent.

Table 10: Geographical categorisation of the cover topics of the very-special-interest magazines EPOC\*\* and MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE – rough categorisation according to continents (specification in percent; n=38 cover pages of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 cover pages of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (2006–2013); ‘special interest’: average value

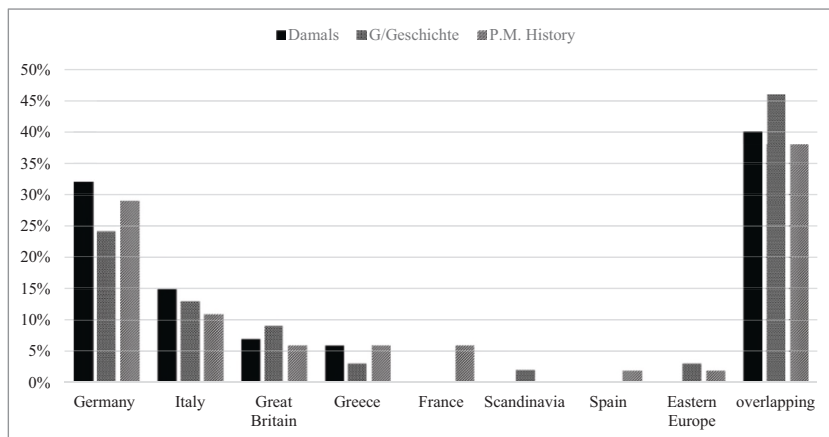


### 3.2.2 *Countries within Europe*

Examining history magazines produced in Germany immediately suggests taking a closer look at the European area. Discernable tendencies are on display. Germany (34%) ranks first within Europe in special-interest-magazines, as is to be expected. Italy (12%) follows at a distance. This can be explained primarily by the topics of ancient history – roughly half of the title-counts are about the Roman Empire. Somewhat surprisingly, third place is occupied by Great Britain (7%), in which topics from the field of ‘myths and legends’ particularly appear. Apparently these play an essential part in the attractiveness of the British Isles in popular magazine culture. Finally Greece (4%), which owes its position among the ‘top 5’ to the Greek Antiquity, and France (2%) follow.

Within the group of special-interest formats it can be determined for ZEIT GESCHICHTE that 63% of the titles on European history are dedicated to Germany alone. All other issues deal with country-spanning phenomena. Only MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE reaches a similar concentration with 74% of the European cover topics referring especially to Germany. This may at first be surprising. Closer examination of the

Table 11: Geographical categorisation of the cover topics within Europe of the multi-thematic special-interest magazines (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages each of DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY from the years 2006–2013)



individual topics, however, indicates that ZEIT GESCHICHTE follows the aim of showing the reader the politico-cultural steps and changing points of German history. It appears that audiences will come to an understanding of the development of today's society and of the German Federal Republic by means of a chronological series. Accordingly, four issues traverse Germany's 'fateful years' of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the 'series' ranges from the year of revolution in 1918 (ZEIT GESCHICHTE 3/2008) to the year of the 'Reichspogromnacht' in 1938 on the 'eve' of the Second World War (4/2008), subsequently followed by the year 1949 in which the German Federal Republic and the GDR were founded (1/2009), before it ends with the year of the 'fall of the Berlin Wall' in 1989 (2/2009).

EPOC\*\* magazine shows a generally contradictory tendency within the distribution. Of 17 issues on the European area a mere three explicitly deal with Germany. What has been indicated in the distribution of the different continents is re-affirmed within Europe: the foreign, the exotic and the hitherto unknown seem to have a special appeal for an audience interested in archaeology. Archaeology as a subject is (as is ancient history) structurally trans-cultural – and this impression is highlighted by the thematic emphases of the magazine.

Table 12: Geographical categorisation of the cover topics within Europe of the mono-thematic special-interest magazines (specification in percent; n=50 cover pages of GEO EPOCHE and 36 cover pages of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013)

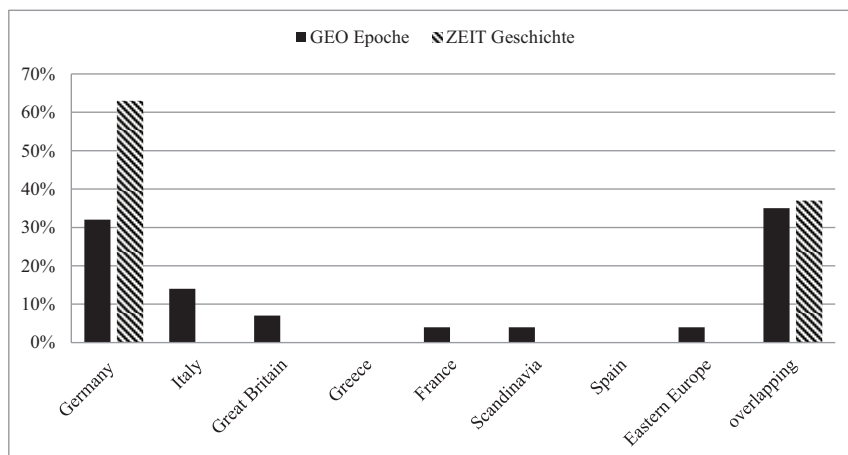
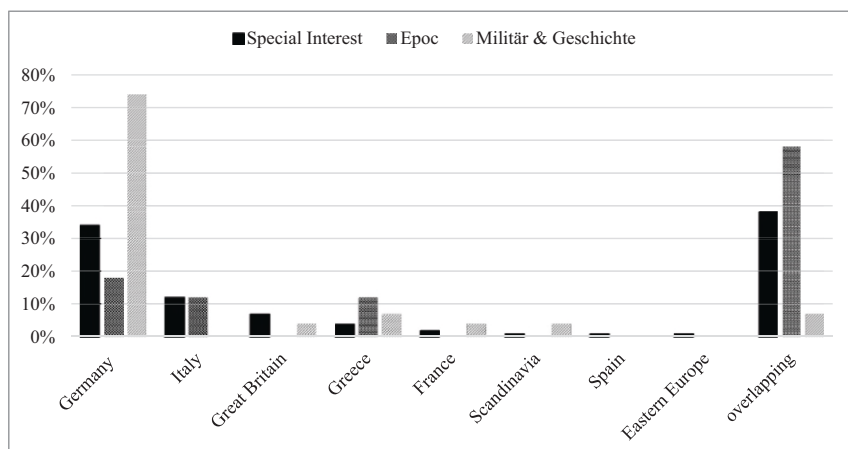
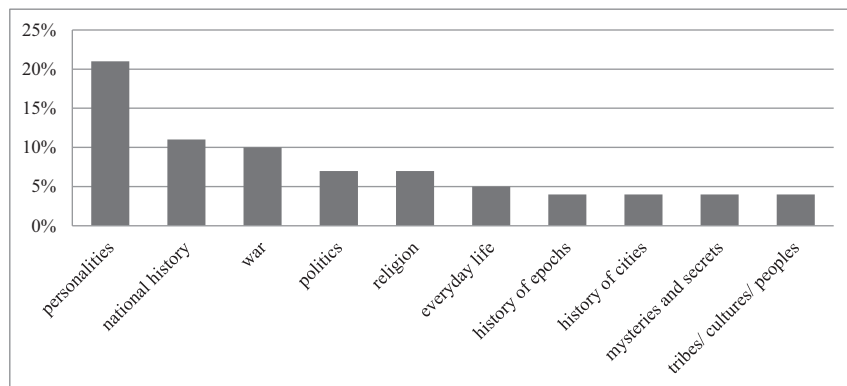


Table 13: Geographical categorisation of the cover topics within Europe of the very-special-interest magazines EPOC\*\* and MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (specification in percent; n=38 cover pages of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 cover pages of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (2006–2013); 'special interest': average value)



### 3.3 The category ‘topic’

Table 14: Thematic categorisation of the cover pages – top 10 topics on the covers of the special-interest magazines<sup>19</sup> (specifications in percent; n=96 cover pages each of DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY from the years 2006–2013 as well as 50 cover pages of GEO EPOCHE and 36 cover pages of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013)



Prior to presenting the distribution of the topics in the individual magazines the special-interest magazines as a whole shall be considered. It is instantly apparent that magazines dealing with a historical personality hold a special position. More than one in every five issues is dedicated to the life (or a period of the life) of a single person. It can therefore be assumed that ‘personalisation’<sup>20</sup> is ‘the’ form of presentation of history in popular magazines.<sup>21</sup> In this way, the group of magazines employs a

19 For each cover page three counts were distributed, which could be accumulated or split. Cf. the evaluation catalogue (cf. note 3).

20 Cf. on the notion of ‘personalisation’ Klaus Bergmann: *Personalisierung und Personifizierung*. In: Idem: *Geschichtsdidaktik. Beiträge zu einer Theorie historischen Lernens*. Klaus Bergmann zum 60. Geburtstag (ed. by Ulrich Mayer). Schwalbach/Ts. 2000, p. 158: ‘In the area of historical thinking personalisation means the interpretation and depiction of historical events with the help of great, usually male personalities and from the perspective of great personalities’.

21 The great number of titles on individual personalities may be regarded as an indication of the personalisation of history – especially if it is about the effect of the

means of presentation favoured during 'historicism', an approach increasingly criticised due to its simplified depiction of historical procedures in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> Even though in History Studies, with the introduction of 'new biographics', the individual person seems to have gained ground again recently in comparison to consideration of structures, nothing has changed with regard to the rejection of the personalisation of history.<sup>23</sup> Especially in the field of historical education, personalisation is strictly rejected in

---

cover pages on the observer – but does not necessarily entail this. Cf. Wolfgang Hardtwig: *Personalisierung als Darstellungsprinzip*. In: Guido Knopp/Siegfried Quandt (eds.): *Geschichte im Fernsehen. Ein Handbuch*. Darmstadt 1988, p. 237: 'Personalisation accordingly does not necessarily have to mean concentrating on great personalities. Nonetheless, a certain inclination of the presentational means of personalisation for the depiction of history focused on a person indeed exists – but the one does not necessarily result in the other.'

- 22 The result does not only apply to the genre of popular scientific magazines. In this way, Bergmann (note 20), p. 159 in referring to the article by Hardtwig (note 21) constitutes personalisation in general as 'a clearly and uncritically favoured means of presenting history in the mass media'.
- 23 On the presentation of a renewed biographics cf., e.g., Udo Wengst: *Machen Männer wieder Geschichte? Der Stellenwert von Politikerbiografien in der Geschichtsschreibung über die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. In: Klaus Hildebrand/Udo Wengst/Andreas Wirsching (eds.): *Geschichtswissenschaft und Zeiterkenntnis. Von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Horst Möller*. München 2008, p. 627–639. The author initially poses the question 'whether the dictum by Heinrich von Treitschke "Men make history" is again valid and also the historiography of the present derives its judgment from the analysis of the actions of "great men"' (p. 627). Towards the end of his illustrations (p. 638) Wengst, however, concludes: 'Despite the great amount of biographies about politicians of the German Federal Republic the initially posed question "if men again make history" has to be negated with regard to the German Federal Republic. Even the great politicians in the German Federal Republic [...] were [...] not only constructors of political processes, but in manifold ways dependent of contextual circumstances which they were able to change only in a limited way.' The 'renaissance of the political biography' rather depends, according to Wengst, on the knowledge, 'that historical processes can only be understood and explained if the people are included as acting (and suffering) actors. [...] On this basis the claim emerged for a "renewed biography"', 'which no longer dissolves the historical person from their social structures, in which they have lived, which have shaped them and which they have shaped on their part, but in contrast analyses this reciprocal relation in a "systematic way"'.



history lessons ‘from an educational perspective because, as a form of history presentation and interpretation, it raises particular concerns’.<sup>24</sup>

‘Great men write history’ – even though a glance inside the magazine shows whether the image of historical events splashed across the cover pages is indeed made good in the content, the question still arises why magazines employ this method of history presentation at least outwardly; a method which has itself become ‘historical’. If the impression created by the cover is confirmed in the magazine content, then there is an obligation to consider these circumstances in any discussion of the medium – not least in relation to a classroom-practice alert to issues of critical reception.

Nonetheless, this (rightly) critical stance towards History Didactics has to be complemented with a journalistic and commercial perspective. History magazines are first and foremost journalistic products which follow the laws of the magazine market or the mass media. Their covers are supposed to excite great interest in the viewer – and in this respect the combination of event and person and the recourse to prominent people seems to have proven a success as ‘commercial driving force’. This is no surprise since Communication Studies consider prominence and personalisation<sup>25</sup> to be relevant news factors<sup>26</sup>, which, according to a pilot study by Georg Ruhrmann and Roland Göbbel, are being ascribed increasing importance by leading news editors (TV, radio, print, online

---

24 Bergmann (note 20), p. 160. The possible negative effects on the historical awareness (cf. p. 159), which Bergmann emphasises, are: (1) encouraging political apathy; (2) favouring pre-democratic, authoritarian attitudes and fixation on ‘over-powering subjects’; (3) preventing the knowledge that the historical process is a connection of human actions, non-actions and sufferings and that the objective prerequisites extremely limit the possibilities for action and change; (4) embedding success as criterion of greatness while excluding useful, but failed alternatives; (5) the lack of objects of identification, experience and learning through excluding human everyday experience.

25 The communication researchers Georg Ruhrmann and Roland Göbbel (note 18) explain the news factor personalisation in the following way: ‘people are – irrespective of their possible function – presented as an individual person. It is therefore about the meaning which is assigned to the individual persons in an event.’

26 Cf. also the contribution by Fabio Crivellari in this volume.

editors).<sup>27</sup> Jürgen Wilke, who seems to apply similar news factors to historical journalism as to journalistic news coverage, states: 'The preference for the history of personalities corresponds to the important news factor personalisation'.<sup>28</sup>

If one asks which personality is featured most in the cover topics, a curious picture emerges. Next to the predictable mention of Napoleon, Hitler and Jesus (though it remains unclear whether the magazines here present a 'historical Jesus' or the 'son of God') one encounters the mythological, historically unverified figures of King Arthur and Robin Hood. The search for 'great women' of history reveals – unsurprisingly – that occasionally there are cover topics on female rulers such as Cleopatra, Mary Stuart and Nefertiti, but the high-profile history that sells is in general regarded as being dependent on male protagonists.

In second place, trailing the top thematic complex of 'personalities' at some distance, is the category 'national history' (11%). Since this category was not limited to the area of German history, this does not automatically imply a one-sided nationally centred alignment of history magazines. A great part of the total is given over to those issues of the national history of Germany in the magazine *ZEIT GESCHICHTE* which we have already addressed.

In third place the area of 'war' (10%) has already been established as a staple part of today's entertainment industry in for example film or computer games, which is why it is hardly surprising that the producers of magazines also regard war as a topic to make history attractive, entertaining and exciting – and there would seem to be a demand for it on the part of the audience.<sup>29</sup>

---

27 Cf. Ruhrmann/Göbbel (note 18), p. 40–43. The change of meaning of the various news factors thereby is based on a subjective assessment by means of experience in practice.

28 Wilke (note 18), p. 147.

29 In a detailed analysis the historical topic 'war' may be examined for congruities with journalistic news factors (thereby especially the news factors 'violence/aggression', 'negative consequences/damages/failure', 'positive consequences/benefits/success' or also 'German participation' presented by Ruhrmann/Göbbel (note 18), p. 41 may be considered).

Table 15: Top 5 cover topics on the covers of P.M. HISTORY (specifications in percent, n=96 cover pages from the years 2006–2013)

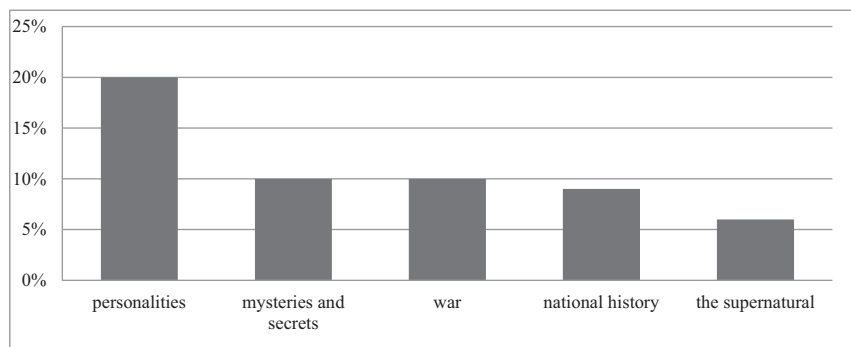
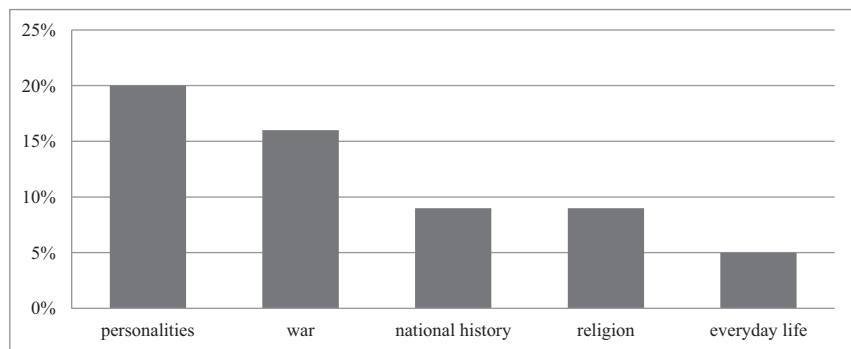
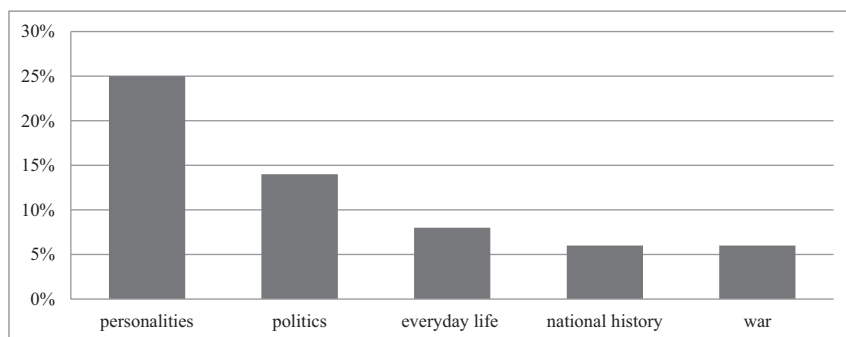


Table 16: Top 5 cover topics on the covers of G/GESCHICHTE (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages from the years 2006–2013)



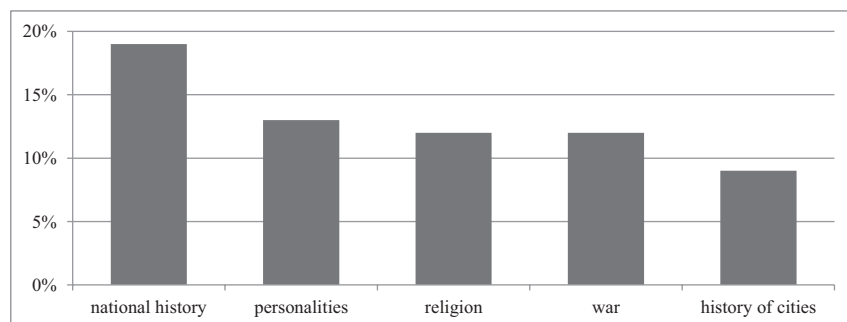
The focus on the most popular topics is to be followed by some further distinctions. In the statistics, the small number of issues that present historical material from the area ‘love and sexuality’ does not appear. Nevertheless it should be mentioned that these title topics are limited almost exclusively to the magazines G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY. Moreover, the producers of P.M. HISTORY use supernatural phenomena as the focus of the cover topic in roughly 6% of the issues, which is why this format stands out from all other magazines. Although this trend has clearly been declining since 2012/2013, until then the boundaries on

Table 17: Top 5 cover topics on the covers of DAMALS (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages from the years 2006–2013)



the covers between reality and superstition or horror stories had been breached occasionally with ‘historical’ protagonists such as ‘witches, devils and demons’ (P.M. HISTORY 11/2006) or ‘vampires, werewolves and children of the night’ (P.M. HISTORY 7/2010) and have put to the test the readership’s ‘awareness of reality’<sup>30</sup> (‘Wirklichkeitsbewusstsein’) termed by Pandel.

Table 18: Top 5 cover topics on the covers of GEO EPOCHE (specification in percent; n=50 cover pages from the years 2005–2013)



30 Cf. Hans-Jürgen Pandel: Dimensionen des Geschichtsbewusstseins. Ein Versuch, seine Struktur für Empirie und Pragmatik diskutierbar zu machen. In: Geschichtsdidaktik 12 (1987), issue 2, p. 130–142.

Table 18: Top 5 cover topics on the covers of GEO EPOCHE (specification in percent; n=50 cover pages from the years 2005–2013)

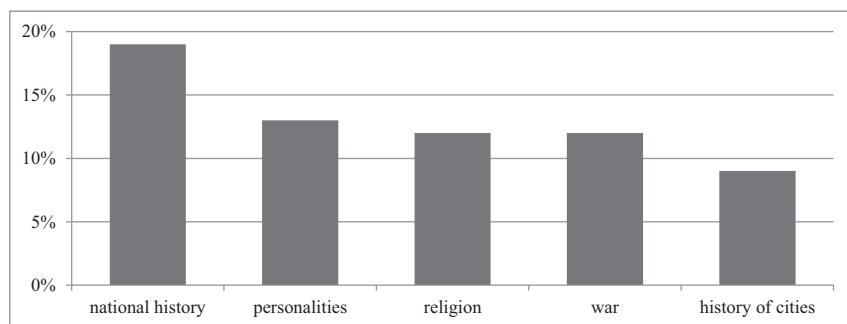
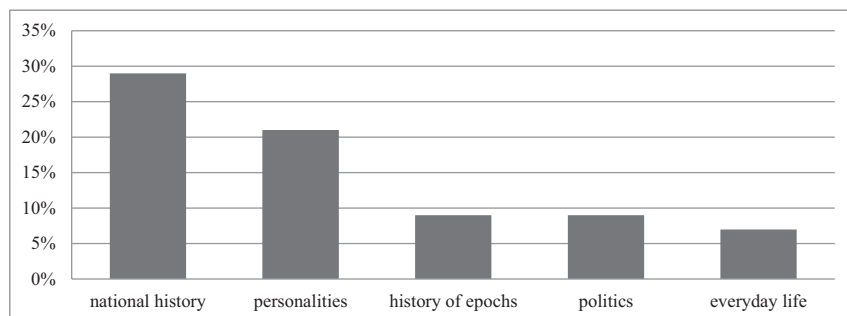


Table 19: Top 5 cover topics on the covers of ZEIT GESCHICHTE (specification in percent; n=36 cover pages from the years 2005–2013)



Although the category ‘personalities’ – variously manifested – was the feature which was recorded most throughout multi-thematic formats, titles on national history and the history of epochs can be found next to the topic ‘personalities’ in the mono-thematic magazines. In view of the way the magazine is conceptualised, the idea of an ‘era’ may offer the welcome possibility of a broad and indeed diverse overview.

Distribution of topics in the very-special-interest formats holds few surprises and in general confirms the special position in comparison to the special-interest group. Whereas roughly 76% of the issues of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE deal with war topics (weapons, battles, strategies, etc.),

Table 20: Top 3 cover topics on the covers of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (specification in percent; n=49 cover pages from the years 2006–2013)

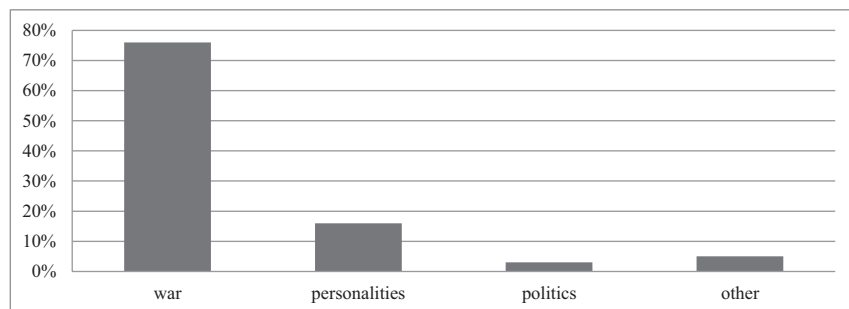
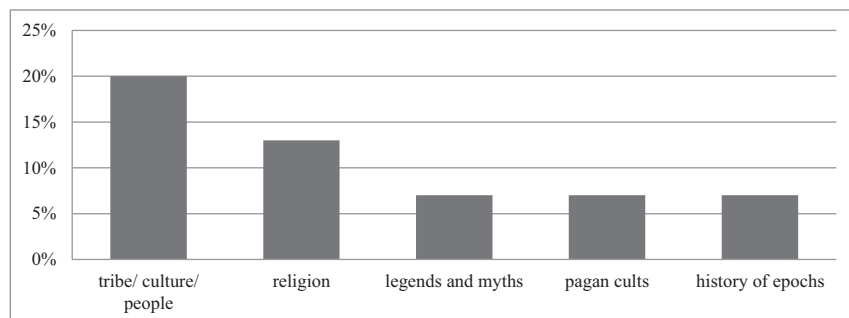


Table 21: Top 5 cover topics on the covers of EPOC\*\* (specification in percent; n=38 cover pages from the years 2006–2012)



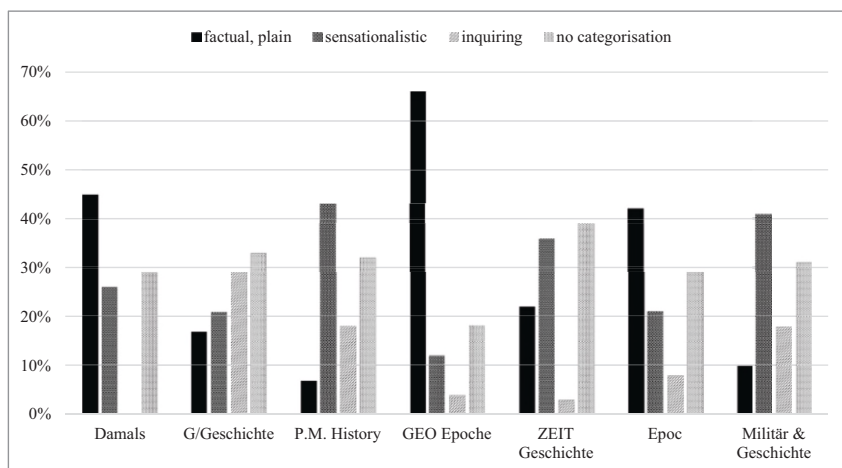
the top 5 topics of culture, religion, pagan cults, legends and myths as well as the history of epochs, are closely linked in EPOC\*\* and can together be categorised in the major area of ‘past peoples and cultures’. If these values were to be included in the overall statistics then it would noticeably distort the image given of the range of topics of popular history magazines.

### 3.4 The category ‘title’

How are historical topics staged by the producers of magazines? As an initial criterion for examination, the style of the titles placed on the cover

pages is presented here. It has to be noted in advance that, especially in the categorisation of the titles, unambiguity was not always achieved in an optimal way. Sometimes multi-part titles or additional subheadings aggravated the allocation to the categories, which were determined in the evaluation catalogue.<sup>31</sup>

Table 22: Style of the titles on the covers (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages each of DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY from the years 2006–2013 as well as 50 of GEO EPOCHE, 36 of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013; 38 of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (2006–2013))



This led to multiple counts, but also to certain cases which went uncategorised. The special-interest formats show a heterogeneous distribution, which cannot be linked to the mono- or multi-thematic concept. Parallels are most likely to be seen between DAMALS and GEO EPOCHE: the producers of both magazines try to formulate the majority of their titles in a ‘factual, plain’ way. P.M. HISTORY stands out with a share of 43% in ti-

<sup>31</sup> Title and subtitle thereby may summarise the central aspects of the cover page topic as fully formulated sentences in the style of ‘leads’ and extend across an entire paragraph.

tles classified as 'sensational', and clearly exceeds the result for ZEIT GESCHICHTE and G/GESCHICHTE. The producers of G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY, in contrast, offer the reader an 'inquiring' start to the topic comparatively often. For P.M. HISTORY this can be traced back to a preference for the 'secrets' and 'mysteries' of history: therefore, the title 'In the wonderland of the pharaohs. Searching for the hidden knowledge of the old Egyptians' (P.M. HISTORY 3/2009) enriches the subject matter with stylistic devices making it an esoteric topic.

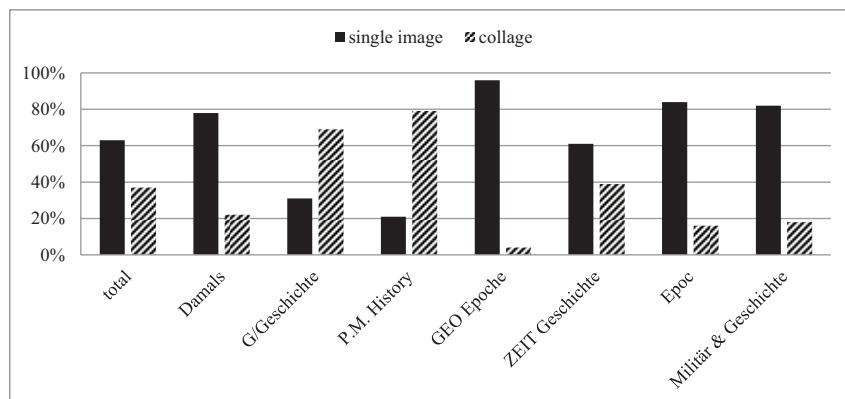
Also in the case of the very-special-interest magazines characteristics have become clear which, however, accord with previous expectations. On 41% of the cover pages of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE the titles have a 'sensational' style, which is achieved by figurative language, a martial and sometimes mythical choice of words or the use of superlatives (e.g. MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE issue 45 (2009): 'Kamikaze. Deadly winds of gods: suicide operations of Japanese naval pilots in World War II' or issue 57 (2011): 'Verdun – Somme – Skagerrak. The largest battles during First World War'). The texts on the cover pages of EPOC\*\* stand in great contrast, and are predominantly classified as 'factual, plain' or 'inquiring'. The latter category is a speciality of the 'magazine for archaeology and history', which is connected to the thematic complex of 'past cultures' and the role of archaeological excavations.

### 3.5 The category 'pictures'

Very distinct differences between the history magazines eventually become apparent in the last aspect examined: use of pictures on the cover pages. Whereas the statistics for DAMALS, ZEIT GESCHICHTE, EPOC\*\* and MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE show the cover pages to be dominated by a single image, the producers of GEO EPOCHE almost exclusively (96%) use this kind of design. A contrasting distribution is revealed for the other formats: whereas the producers of G/GESCHICHTE already illustrate almost two thirds of their issues with a picture collage, 79% of P.M. HISTORY's cover pages consist of at least two cover images. Even if the possibility of picture collages to construct new picture messages may not be generally contested, the compilations presented nonetheless create the general impression that they aim primarily at a very colourful, dynamic and surprising overall effect.



Table 23: Percentage of cover pages with single images or collages<sup>32</sup> (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages each of DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY from the years 2006–2013 as well as 50 of GEO EPOCHE, 36 of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013; 38 of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (2006–2013))



In specialising in collage P.M. HISTORY leads the statistics on image frequency with an average of more than three pictures per cover page. This is clearly ahead of G/GESCHICHTE in second place. The difference between the individual magazines is, however, not only to be traced back to the choice between collage and single image, but also to the number of pictures used to design one collage.

32 Illustrations which are not connected to the cover page topic, but announce further magazine contents, were not counted.

Table 24: Average amount of images used to present a cover topic on the cover<sup>33</sup> (n=96 cover pages each of DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY from the years 2006–2013, 50 cover pages of GEO EPOCHE, 36 of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013; 38 of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (2006–2013))

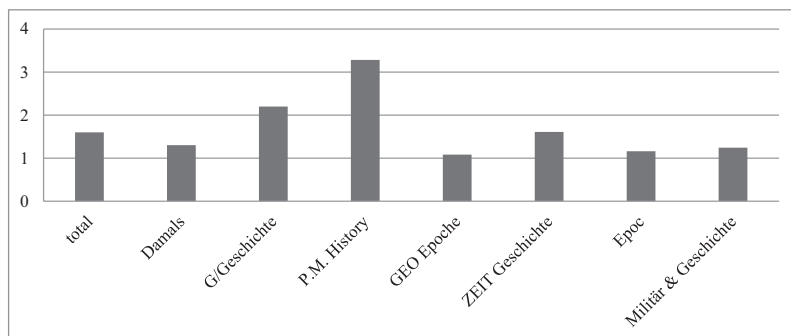
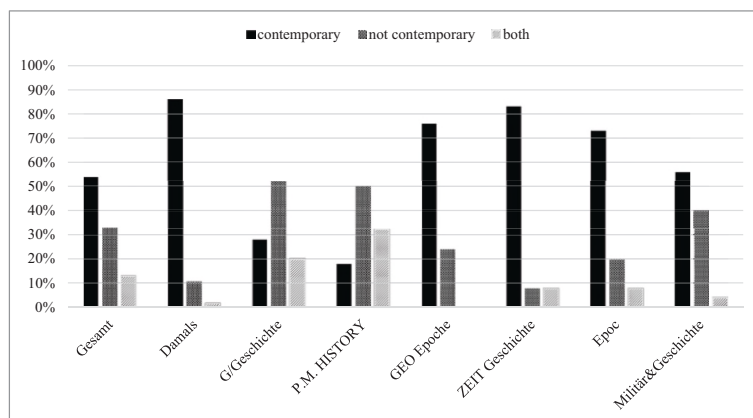
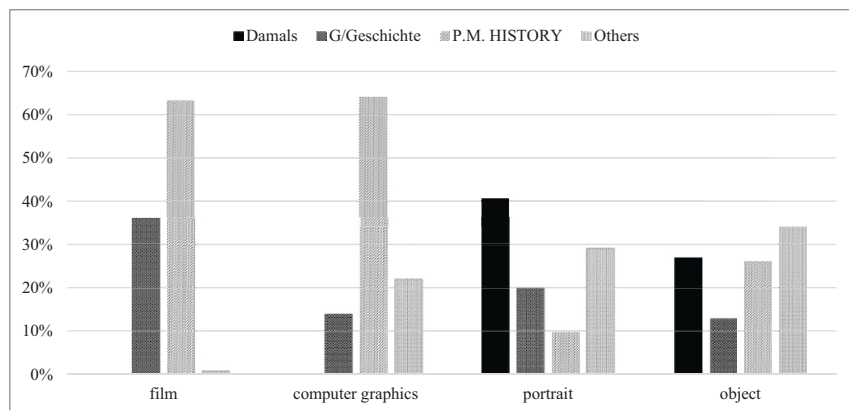


Table 25: Share of cover pages with historical contemporary or historical non-contemporary picture material (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages each of DAMALS, G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY from the years 2006–2013, 50 cover pages of GEO EPOCHE and 36 of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013; 38 of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (2006–2013); parallel mentioning possible)



33 Illustrations which are not connected to the cover page topic, but announce further magazine contents, were not counted.

Table 26: Distribution of the image types ‘film’, ‘computer graphics’, ‘portrait’ and ‘item’ to all history magazines (specification in percent; n=96 cover pages each of DAMALS; G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY from the years 2006–2013; 50 cover pages of GEO EPOCHE and 36 of ZEIT GESCHICHTE from the years 2005–2013; 38 of EPOC\*\* (2006–2012) and 49 of MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE (2006–2013))



A special position is also held by the magazines P.M. HISTORY and G/GESCHICHTE in the choice of picture material. Here pictures dominate which were taken at a clear temporal distance from the depicted historical event and are accordingly to be classified as useless with regard to their source value for the event depicted (assuming the History Studies' notion of source) and thus have a purely illustrative purpose. In this way, it is not surprising that in the categories 'film' and 'computer' usually two 'non-contemporary' image types can be exclusively or almost exclusively found on the cover of P.M. HISTORY and G/GESCHICHTE. So the formats use an extreme form of evidently popular and 'unhistorical' means of design, one apparently rejected by all other special-interest formats. Whereas the cover pages of DAMALS primarily show contemporary portraits, paintings and (photographed) items, ZEIT GESCHICHTE and GEO EPOCHE above all revert to the depiction of photographs.

A glance at special cover picture impulses confirms the results so far and completes the picture of the magazines examined. Producers of G/GESCHICHTE and P.M. HISTORY employ picture elements such as 'fire', 'eroticism' or 'monsters' as a hook, to win the interest of the

observer. A multitude of extremely spectacular and tantalising motifs in combination with the titles presented above leads in extreme cases to a kind of 'sensory overload', which lends the magazines features characteristic of the tabloid press.

#### 4. Conclusion

The examination results for the categories 'title' and 'pictures' provide clear indications of heterogeneous working methods and sales practices within the group of popular magazines. Whereas a section of the magazines seems to have derived a binding prerequisite from the academic orientation claimed for the use of text and picture material by the entire field, the producers of *G/GESCHICHTE*, and especially those of *P.M. HISTORY* (until 2012 in particular) proceed according to the motto: 'In the battle to win a historically interested readership everything is allowed'. It seems that 'heavy resort' to the 'journalistic bag of tricks', as Schörken states,<sup>34</sup> in particular relating to magazines for 'young' readers, does not coincide with the open conceptual alignment of the magazines. All the same, spectacular appearance together with comparatively low sales figures may be an indication of this, especially since in *P.M. HISTORY* a multitude of linguistic, textual and visual borrowings from youth culture can be found. However, a temporary 'boom' in the supernatural cannot be discerned only in youth literature. It exists in literature and TV in general irrespective of the age of the consumer.

In any case, besides the age-related difference of the target group, an entirely different expectation on the part of the readership should be assumed. Whereas the magazines *P.M. HISTORY* and *G/GESCHICHTE*, aimed at a great variety of audience interests, may sometimes appear strange to a historically informed reader who may even be familiar with academic standards, the cover pages of *GEO EPOCHE*, *ZEIT GESCHICHTE* and especially also *DAMALS* indicate a (according to the standards of History Studies and History Didactics) high-quality alternative programme. The buyer or observer who feels addressed by the spectacular design of the history magazines does

---

34 Cf. Rolf Schörken: *Geschichte in der Alltagswelt. Wie uns Geschichte begegnet und was wir mit ihr machen*. Stuttgart 1981, p. 192.

not expect the kind of history which can satisfy his need for entertainment and 'action' in the factual and informative formats.

This overview has been intended to show that the German market offers the historically interested reader a differentiated range of various formats. Looking at the very-special-interest magazines *MILITÄR & GESCHICHTE* and *EPOCH*\*\* the cover page analysis has illustrated their thematic specialisation and confirmed the assumption that consumers are conceived as an individual interest and target group.

It also appears that within the special-interest group a distinct profiling of individual titles is dominant, despite some overall tendencies. It can be concluded from the results of the cover page analysis that the magazines *DAMALS* and *P.M. HISTORY* embody two poles of the spectrum of history magazines conceptualised for a broad readership. In all likelihood magazines not considered in the cover page analysis could be positioned between these poles. In any case, the approximation so far can only be regarded as a first step in the examination of popular scientific history magazines. The content of the magazines still poses a multitude of issues for further research in History Didactics.

Terry Haydn

# History magazines in the UK

## 1. Background: Media history culture in the UK

The proliferation of history magazines in the UK, and the increasing circulation of many of them over the past decade have occurred in a context where there has been widespread concern about the place and function of history in schools and in society as a whole. It has been suggested that whilst history in schools is moribund, with 70% of pupils choosing to drop the subject at the age of 13 or 14<sup>1</sup>, outside the formal education system, there is unprecedented popular interest in the past, with history being described as ‘the new rock and roll’<sup>2</sup>. A survey by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority found that approximately half of pupils aged between 11–14 had an interest in history outside school<sup>3</sup>, and in addition to the burgeoning choice of history magazines in bookshops and history internet sites, history programmes on television started to attract massive audiences, with ‘celebrity’ historians such as David Starkey, Simon Schama and Niall Ferguson attracting higher viewing figures than quiz shows and national football matches, and the celebrity genealogy programme ‘Who do you think you are?’ regularly attracting over seven million viewers.<sup>4</sup>

The high media profile of history has been accompanied by ‘knowledge panic’ headlines expressing concern about how little young people appear to learn about the national past in the history they encounter at school, and the very limited ‘breadth’ of history they encounter at school,

---

1 Office for Standard in Education: History in the balance. London 2007.

2 John Willis: Past is perfect. In: Media Guardian of 29.10.2001, p. 2, URL: <http://bit.ly/1E3IC1g> (1.8.2014).

3 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority: Pupil perceptions of history at key stage 3. London 2005.

4 David Starkey: History on television. Keynote lecture. Televising history conference. University of Lincoln 22.7.2009.

with over-concentration on ‘Hitler and the Henrys’<sup>5</sup>. Concern has also been expressed about the ‘dumbing-down’ tendencies and characteristics of modern society, including accusations that the internet, magazines and changes to the ‘alphabet-icon ratio’ in many communication formats has led to a culture of ‘junk learning’<sup>6</sup> and a reduction in the concentration span of young people.<sup>7</sup> Janet Street-Porter goes as far as to suggest that concern over ‘the digital divide’ is misplaced and that the ‘privileged’ are ‘the unplugged’, reliant on the high-quality resource of books, rather than magazine articles, TV sound bites and internet browsing.<sup>8</sup> (A quick perusal of the first images to arise from a Google images search on ‘The Tudors’ is one demonstration of this point).

The uneasy paradox of a society that at one level seems to engage in a wide variety of activities related to the past, and yet which does not necessarily demonstrate sophisticated levels of historical consciousness is described by historian John Tosh: ‘Has not history become a staple of the TV channels, and is not an increasing proportion of people’s leisure time taken up by family history, visits to historic sites, and more variants of collecting than have yet been documented? Should not historians be grateful that their subject has become “the new gardening”? The problem is that – with the exception of a few TV programmes – none of these activities brings historical perspectives to bear on issues of topical importance. Indeed, their very popularity diminishes the public space that is available for that kind of analysis. We are confronted by the paradox of a society which is immersed in the past and yet detached from it.’<sup>9</sup>

Tosh is particularly critical of the rise of ‘Heritage History’ in the UK – a strand of history that constitutes a significant section of the history magazine market in the UK: ‘It plays on a recoil from the less pleasant aspects

---

5 Derek Matthews: The strange death of history teaching. University of Cardiff 2009; Richard Garner: Is it time for Hitler and Henry to make way for Cromwell? In: *The Independent* of 30.7.2010, URL: <http://ind.pn/1rGQXla> (1.8.2014).

6 Alan C. Kay: Computers, networks and education. In: *Scientific American* 265 (1991), issue 3, p. 148–155.

7 Susan Greenfield: Is the web changing our brains? In: *The Virtual Revolution Blog* 2010, URL: <http://bbc.in/1rGQYpd> (1.8.2014).

8 Janet Street-Porter: *Technonerds*. Channel 4 of 19.3.1996.

9 John Tosh: *Why history matters*. Basingstoke 2008, p. 5 f.

of the present and encourages an escape into a more stable past, when society was governed by the “traditional” values whose hold is so tenuous today [...] encouraging a view of the past which is superficial, nostalgic and conformist; they are not so much a means of education as an adjunct to tourism.’<sup>10</sup>

Does the rise of the history magazine therefore represent a backwards step in terms of the development of a healthy and critical historical consciousness amongst the population as a whole, and an escape from ‘serious’ and ‘proper’ history? Are history magazines a form of ‘history-lite’, for people who lack the commitment or sustained concentration to read books about history or is the fact that thousands of people pay money and devote their time to learning about aspects of the past through history magazines a healthy signifier of interest in the past?

## 2. Research approach

In addition to surveys of public libraries and railway/airport/city centre bookshops and newsagents, to see which history magazines were widely available to the public in hard copy form, without subscription, internet searches revealed a further tranche of history magazines which were not generally available for high street purchase. In addition to ascertaining the founding date of the magazines, frequency of publication, circulation and readership figures, interviews and e-mail correspondence with ten editors of UK based history magazines elicited further information about readership and factors influencing take-up. In addition, a small scale survey of history student teachers’ use of history magazines was undertaken, to explore which magazines they read, what influence they had on their teaching, and the comparative influence of internet sites and history magazines on their practice. Finally, a content analysis survey was done on a hundred front page covers of the biggest selling history magazine in the UK, BBC HISTORY, in order to ascertain what facets, types and periods of history dominated the magazine, and how the magazine attempted to ‘sell’ history to the UK public.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 11.



### 3. A survey of various types of history magazine in the UK

Some UK history magazines are long established: *THE HISTORIAN* dates back to 1938, *HISTORY TODAY* was first printed in 1951; and *TEACHING HISTORY*, a magazine/journal specifically for teachers of history was first published in 1969. However, the past decade has seen a proliferation of new titles, which address different facets of the past and which vary considerably in terms of circulation, focus and audience. This section of the paper, whilst not guaranteeing to have incorporated every single history magazine publicly available in the UK, attempts to provide a guide to the main types of history magazines available.

#### 3.1 History magazines in the field of 'hobby' and 'leisure'

These magazines cater for people who have an interest in a particular facet of the past which manifests itself as a leisure interest or hobby (such as, for example, *VINTAGE TRACTOR MAGAZINE*, and *LOCAL HISTORY*). With two other examples of this genre of history magazine, extracts from e-mail correspondence with the authors provide some insight into the rationale for the magazine, the audience, and some of the factors influencing sales.

*SOCCKER HISTORY* is an example of the way that magazines can cater for 'niche' markets. The editor was keen to stress the role which the internet played in contributing to the survival of the magazine, in spite of its very small circulation. The internet also provides an active 'blog' for subscribers, as was the case with many other magazines.

'We sell (over time) in the region of 500 copies of *SOCCKER HISTORY* [...]. We are still selling around 10–15 copies of each issue going back to issue 1 (which is now almost sold out). The majority of our readers are aged 50+ (the readers under 25 are almost all history students and I suspect many are pensioners on fixed incomes). Perhaps the main issue for small magazines like *SOCCKER HISTORY* is the lack of outlets which will take copies. Until around 5 years ago there were specialist sports book shops in London and Manchester which sold around 50 copies of each issue, but these shops have now closed. WH Smiths is beyond us simply because of the high percentage of the sale price they demand and their insistence that unsold copies are thrown out rather than returned.

However, we now pick up sales through the website and also through posting on one or two select internet forums which cover football history. Our readers are most likely to read broadsheet newspapers and somewhere in the region of 30% are either published authors or engaged in their own research projects on football history.’<sup>11</sup>

The second ‘specialist’ magazine was SKIRMISH, a magazine for people who participate in historical re-enactments (in England, the most famous of these groups is the ‘Sealed Knot’ Society, which re-enacts battles from the English Civil War). The magazine has been going for 10 years, is published monthly, and has a circulation of 39,449, with a claimed readership of 98,623. Although the magazine is published in the UK, it has a global readership and the following figures which were furnished by the editor provide an interesting insight into where historical re-enactments are most popular, and which battles and events are re-enacted (see tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Breakdown of subscriptions to SKIRMISH by location

United Kingdom	36%
USA	33%
Europe	22%
Canada	5%
Australia	3%
Rest of World	1%

Table 2: What events do they re-enact? Percentage of coverage as of March 2010

American Revolution	1%
Vikings	1%
Medieval	2%
Napoleonic Wars	5%
Roman	10%
English Civil War	16%
American Civil War	18%
World War One	23%
World War Two	24%

---

<sup>11</sup> E-mail correspondence with the editor.

### 3.2 Particular ‘strands’ of history

The magazine BLACK HERITAGE TODAY was started as a ‘free’ magazine, arising out of the recently introduced custom of a ‘Black History’ month, where many schools and institutions would (for one month of the year) place particular emphasis on ‘Black History’. In 2003 it became a hard copy subscription magazine with associated website<sup>12</sup> consisting of one issue annually, with the last version published in 2009.

HERSTORIA was founded in 2009 and is a quarterly magazine, which can be subscribed to via its website.<sup>13</sup> Like many other comparatively small circulation magazines, it is not available for purchase on the high street and is reliant on its internet presence to reach its audience. Its mission as explained in its associated website is: ‘To discover how the other half lived, telling the story of ordinary – and extraordinary – women. We bring you opinions about the “female sex” from across the centuries, and investigate the ways in which women responded and lived their lives. Debate the issues that influence the way history is made: Are women making themselves heard on the radio and TV? Are young historians in school learning about women’s history? Are women given an equal voice in popular and highbrow history? Do museums and heritage centres provide a balanced view of history? Are our public memorials fair to women? Do we forget our heroines too easily?’<sup>14</sup>

E-mail correspondence with the editor makes the point that the magazine ‘market’ on the high street militates against smaller circulation magazines: ‘I’m not sure if our situation would endorse any idea that “history sells”! We are a tiny (but glossy and professionally produced) independent magazine, set up in Spring 2009, to bring the fascinating research in women’s history going on in the universities to a wider, popular audience. We have a print run, for the last issue, of 2500 and with that had a limited launch in the shops. We are, perhaps, not a good example as we have no money for advertising and cannot afford the costs of being stocked by the

---

12 URL: <http://www.blackheritagetodayuk.com> (1.8.2014).

13 URL: <http://www.herstoria.com/about.html> (1.8.2014).

14 The address of the HERSTORIA homepage is: URL: <http://www.herstoria.com> (1.8.2014).

likes of WH Smiths; instead we rely on web subs and independents. We have grown by word of mouth and our circulation has gone from nothing to 2500 since our first issue in Spring 2009.’<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3 ‘Heritage’ magazines

These magazines focus explicitly on aspects of British heritage, with articles featuring famous homes and gardens, British institutions (such as ‘The Royal Society’), areas of outstanding beauty, museums and excavations. The largest selling such magazine, HERITAGE, published bi-monthly, has been established for 26 years and has a circulation of 48.167, with a claimed readership of 165.000.

An interesting addition to the genre is BEST OF BRITISH: NOSTALGIA MAGAZINE, founded in 1994, published monthly and with a claimed readership of 100.000. The mission of the magazine as articulated on the associated website and blog explicitly highlights the ‘nostalgia’ element of the magazine: ‘The only publication combining affectionate glimpses of yesteryear with all that is special about this country today. BEST OF BRITISH magazine is packed with stories and pictures guaranteed to bring so many memories flooding back [...] covers every aspect of life from the 1930s through to today, recording the way it once was and demonstrating what makes Britain so special [...] a monthly celebration of everything British – from the past through to the present. Packed with nostalgic stories and pictures every month, many from our own readers. Remembering all our yesterdays – the music, the schooldays, the holidays, the transport and the shops of the Forties, Fifties and Sixties. Readers’ tales guaranteed to stir so many memories – what we wore, where we worked, how we were entertained. Enjoy the traditions of Britain that have stood the test of time – the foods, the trades, the customs and the crafts. Featuring the best events and places to visit each month.’<sup>16</sup>

---

15 E-mail correspondence with the editor of HERSTORIA.

16 Taken from the homepage of the magazine: BEST OF BRITISH: NOSTALGIA MAGAZINE, URL: <http://www.bestofbritishmag.co.uk> (1.8.2014).

### 3.4 Magazines on family history and genealogy

This has been an area of particular growth in the light of recent television programmes about family history, most spectacularly ‘Who do you think you are?’, featuring celebrities tracing their family roots, and achieving multi-million figure audiences. This has become contested territory as the following e-mail response from the editor of one UK genealogy magazine demonstrates. It again demonstrates the advantages of ‘the big battalions’ such as the BBC, with its advertising power, brand presence and web services: ‘FAMILY HISTORY MONTHLY is celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary next month, and in that time circulation has dropped significantly. When we started out we were only the second genealogy magazine on the market and we would sell upwards of 20.000 issues off the shelves alone, but now there are 6 titles and the market is hugely over-saturated. Sadly, the BBC’s magazine particularly has wiped the floor with a lot of the smaller ones, and one has already gone under (ANCESTORS, which was produced by “The National Archives”), with another one on the brink. However, our circulation is still at about 23.000 and we are now sold in shops in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. We have seen a slight rise in subscriber numbers recently and we are really pushing for more business overseas (although we already have quite a large overseas readership), focusing especially on Australia.’<sup>17</sup>

### 3.5 History education magazines

This section of the market is dominated by the Historical Association’s magazine, TEACHING HISTORY, founded in 1969 and now published quarterly, although in many respects it might be considered as a professional journal rather than a magazine. Its circulation has increased substantially from the 1998 figure of 1.700 and now stands at 3.250.<sup>18</sup> Although its circulation figures are quite modest, its influence transcends these figures and it is the magazine which has the most significant influence on the teaching of history in UK schools, by both student teachers and

---

17 E-mail correspondence with the editor of FAMILY HISTORY MONTHLY.

18 E-mail from the Chief Executive Officer of the Historical Association dated 3.7.2013.

experienced teachers (see concluding section). A senior Historical Association executive attributed the increase in the magazine's circulation and influence to a change of editor, a clear vision for the journal and the high quality of the editorial team. The magazine attempts to combine practical guidance and advice on the teaching of particular aspects of history with a highly rigorous and research-informed approach. As well as articles on particular aspects of teaching history, with focus, for instance, on the teaching of second order concepts<sup>19</sup>, or the teaching of controversial issues, the magazine contains a range of well established 'features' ('Mummy, Mummy', 'Move me on', 'Nutshell', 'Polychronicon', 'Cunning plan', 'Triumphs'), which have given the magazine iconic status amongst the history education community in the UK. Another interesting aspect of the magazine is the cover illustration, which almost invariably eschews focusing on a particular historical event or personality (one exception to this was a themed issue on 'The Holocaust').

A 'companion' magazine to TEACHING HISTORY, PRIMARY HISTORY, has suffered contrasting fortunes, with the circulation plummeting from over 2000 to 649, as a result of the marginalisation of history in the primary curriculum and the very heavy emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy in primary schools.<sup>20</sup>

There is also a magazine aimed at pupils studying history at examination level in schools, now titled HISTORY REVIEW, published three times a year and with a circulation of approximately 20,000. As well as articles on particular historical events and personalities, the magazine includes advice on how to tackle examination questions and coursework. Correspondence with publishers suggested that take-up of the magazine was dominated by schools in the independent sector, with some schools ordering multiple copies of the magazines so as to give it to all pupils studying for the Advanced level examination in history.

---

19 'Second order concepts' are concepts which are acquired by the students and which allow them to process first order data (e.g. names, dates, facts) [editor's note].

20 E-mail from the Chief Executive Officer of the Historical Association dated 3.7.2013.

### 3.6 General interest history magazines

The oldest of these, *THE HISTORIAN*, published under the aegis of the Historical Association, dates back to 1938, but has declined in terms of circulation in recent years. Whether this is due to the comparatively serious and 'heavy' text based nature of the magazine, in comparison to the 'lighter' and more image/colour oriented alternatives which have emerged more recently, or the age profile of its audience is difficult to say but a Historical Association spokesperson offered the following suggestions to explain this decline in circulation: 'A large number of subscribers (over 1000) are retired. The Historian was affected when the Historical Association allowed members to chose a different journal for membership. Initially, it held up reasonably, but since 2000 it has had a steeply declining subscriber base. Partly because if you are retired, or not professionally involved with history we offer very little for membership and its cheaper to buy BBC HISTORY or HISTORY TODAY on an ad hoc basis from Smiths'<sup>21</sup> (UK High Street chain of Newsagents).

HISTORY TODAY is a monthly publication which dates back to 1951 and has a circulation of 23.500.<sup>22</sup> It positions itself as 'more serious and authoritative' in relation to its more recently established competitor BBC HISTORY: 'We're not really in the same market [...] they are more popular in approach, with shorter, pithier articles [...] we present serious history to the general market [...] nearly all our articles are written by serious academic historians, with very few written by journalists and most of our articles are around 3000 words in length.'<sup>23</sup>

As the overwhelming proportion of readers had subscriptions to the magazine, rather than purchasing individual copies, it was not felt necessary to agonise over what features and illustrations to put on the front cover of the magazine in order to boost sales.

The biggest selling 'general' history magazine in the UK is BBC HISTORY, with a circulation of 70.000 (with 40.000 subscribers) and an estimated readership of 265.000. In terms of the demography of its

---

21 Interview with the Chief Executive Officer of the Historical Association in May 2010.

22 URL: <http://bit.ly/1BBfD0S> (1.8.2011).

23 Interview with the editor of HISTORY TODAY.

readership it is perhaps interesting to note that it is estimated that 61% of readers are males (and 76% fall into social class A, B or C<sup>24</sup>, leading to an advertising charge of £3755 for a full page advertisement, as opposed to £495 for a page in *TEACHING HISTORY* or *THE HISTORIAN*) (BBC Magazines, 2011).<sup>25</sup>

Although all the magazines have now developed sophisticated websites to accompany the magazine, the BBC History magazine perhaps had the most advanced and extensive site, with, for instance, podcast downloads estimated at over 250.000 per podcast, and easy access to the full range of the BBC's online resources for history.

## 4. How do British history magazines sell 'history'?

### 4.1 Estimates on the part of the editors

One of the most striking developments is the upsurge of interest in family and genealogy history over the past decade, with a range of titles in this area, often in the wake of television series about aspects of family history. 'Heritage' style magazines, often based on nostalgic and celebratory interpretations of British history and features profiling famous buildings, gardens, museums and 'historical days out' have also increased in popularity.

In terms of what 'sort' of history was of most interest to the UK public, several of the editors acknowledged that modern British history and traditionally famous British personalities (Henry VIII, Oliver Cromwell, Elizabeth I) and iconic events (1066, the Battle of Waterloo, D-Day) were popular with readers. One editor acknowledged that although he had reservations about the amount of attention which focused on Hitler and the Nazis, a cover with Hitler on the front cover would generally sell particularly well. Another described modern British history, and in particular, something about World War One or Two as 'the safest bet', adding that it often helped to have a picture of a particular person on the front page, often 'a king or queen, or one of the Tutors or Stuarts, or Oliver Cromwell'. Another editor echoed these sentiments, stating that 'the majority like modernish British history'.

---

24 An explanation of the demographic categories can be found at URL: <http://www.abc1demographic.co.uk> (1.8.2014).

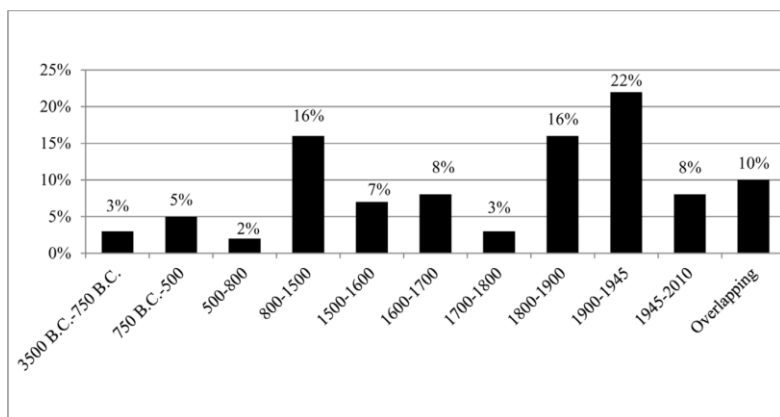
25 BBC Magazines, as of 2011, URL: <http://bit.ly/1pHZd00> (1.8.2011).



## 4.2 The results of the front cover analysis

Content analysis of 100 issues of BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE (the biggest circulation general history magazine in the UK) revealed that the front page often featured anniversaries of famous events in British history, ‘revisionist’ views raised by new research or publications on controversial issues (for instance, an unflattering biography of Henry V). It was also interesting to note that front covers often presented topics as a form of ‘enquiry question’ mirroring the approach to historical topics now widely used in history teaching in UK schools<sup>26</sup>, such as ‘Were the Suffragettes terrorists or freedom fighters?’, ‘Was Cromwell a hero or a war criminal?’ It was interesting to note the influence of recent television polls about history (one of the most high profile being a BBC series about the ‘top 100’ Britons), with features on ‘Which was the worst year in British History?’, and ‘Who were the 10 worst Britons?’

Table 3: Chronological classification of the front cover topics of BBC HISTORY (value in percent, n=100 front covers of BBC HISTORY from 2002 to 2010)



26 Michael Riley: Into the key stage 3 history garden: choosing and planting your enquiry questions. In: Teaching History 99 (2000), p. 8–13.

In order to ensure the comparability of the front cover analyses, an evaluation catalogue was compiled at Augsburg University in advance, which explains the obligatory (time, space, topic) and the optional (images and titles) points of analysis [editor's note].

Table 4: Geographical classification of the front cover topics of BBC HISTORY – rough overview (value in percent; n=100 front covers of BBC HISTORY from 2002 to 2010)

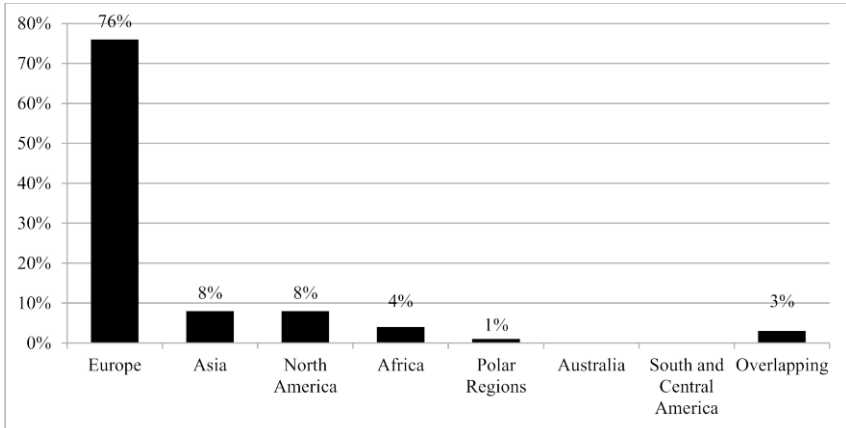


Table 5: Geographical classification of the front cover topics of BBC HISTORY – precise classification Europe (value in percent; n=100 front covers of BBC HISTORY from 2002 to 2010) (2% others)

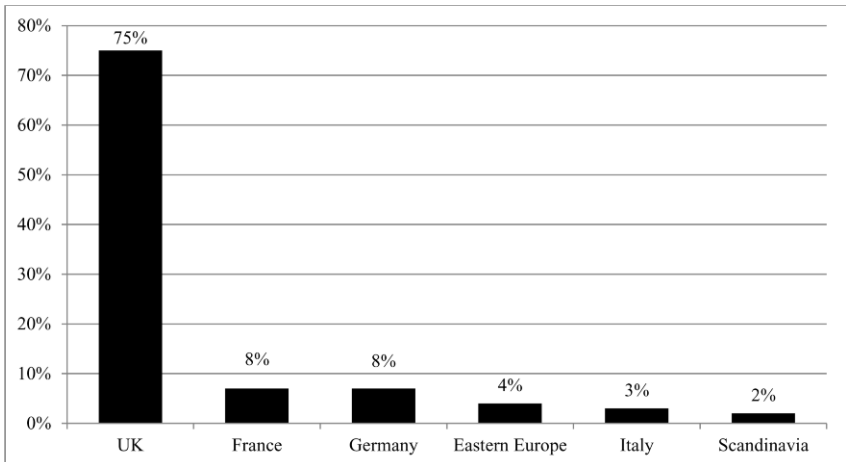
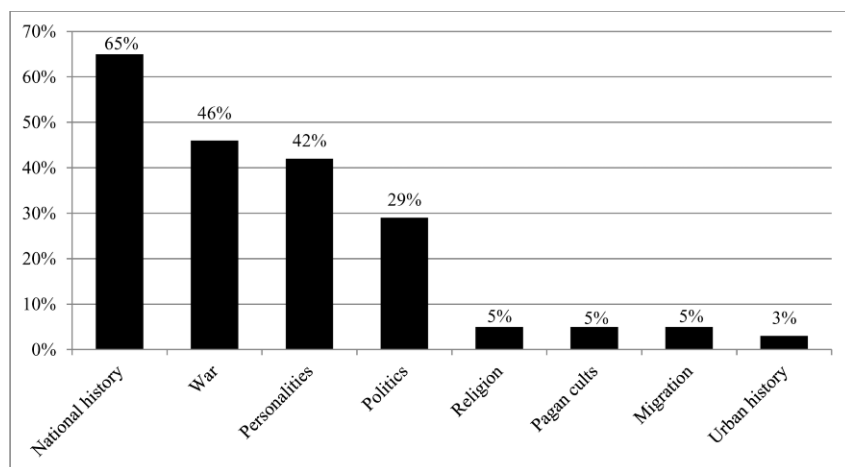


Table 6: Thematic classification of the front cover topics of BBC HISTORY (value in percent; n=100 front covers of BBC HISTORY between 2002 to 2010; multiple mentioning possible)



Content analysis of the front page cover of the largest selling history magazine reveals the dominance of European themes and topics, and overwhelmingly, the story of the national past, considered primarily in political, military and imperial terms. From the 100 cover pages analysed, 65 issues focused on elements of the UK's national story. Where Asia and Africa featured, it was most commonly as a result of being part of Britain's imperial past. South America and Australia did not feature on any of the covers analysed, although the recent global dominance of the United States was reflected in the content of the magazine, with eight out of a hundred covers featuring coverage of U.S. history.

In terms of the 'type' of history featured on the front covers which were presumably designed to 'sell' history to the public, there was a preoccupation with the grand political narrative of the UK. Out of the 100 front covers that were considered, 46 contained images that were about wars in which the UK had participated, with 19 focused on the World Wars of the twentieth century, and 14 focused on some aspect of the British Empire. There was also a tendency for history to be told or portrayed through the foregrounding of iconic or 'heroic' individuals, with just under half (47%)

of the covers featuring 'Great Britons', or personalities such as Adolf Hitler or Josef Stalin. Out of eight BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE front covers featuring sixteenth century England, five contained a portrait of Henry VIII. History as mediated by this magazine (which was not untypical in terms of the front cover) also remained a predominantly male concern. Only three covers featured women (Cleopatra, the Suffragettes, and the role of women in twentieth century warfare), and there was also limited consideration afforded to cultural, social and economic history. Only five covers featured religious issues, four issues highlighted voyages of exploration, and art, literature and architecture also received very little attention (featured in under 5% of the issues surveyed).

In terms of periods of history, 30 of the 100 front pages considered focused on twentieth century history, with 22 out of the 30 'headline' stories relating to history between 1900 and 1945, and a heavy emphasis on the two World Wars and the dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin. The nineteenth century accounted for a further 15 front covers, with the Napoleonic Wars and Empire dominating in terms of topics. The 18<sup>th</sup> century constituted something of a 'black hole', with only 3 issues featuring this century on the front cover, and the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries received roughly equal coverage, with several articles on the reigns of Henry VIII and Charles I respectively. A further 15 covers focused on medieval history, mainly dealing with the reigns of monarchs in the post 1066 era. It was perhaps surprising to see only two covers featuring the history of Rome (given the heavy emphasis that this has traditionally had in school history and on television), and the handful of issues which dealt with pre-Roman times dwelt mainly on Ancient Egypt. Ten issues covered broad swathes of time, covering themes as disparate as 'Ten worst Britons?', 'The worst year in British history?', 'How trains win wars', 'The British Empire (good or bad)?', 'The British Monarchy', and 'Newspapers in history'. Most covers (9%) featured a single main image, generally an image of a famous individual from history (in 47 cases), with the next most common type of image being a scene from a battle.

## **5. The influence and impact of history magazines in the UK**

The past decade has seen a significant increase in the market for history magazines, both in terms of the number of titles available, and the

circulation figures for the major titles, with the circulation figures for the biggest selling magazine (BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE) reaching 70,000 per month<sup>27</sup> at the time of writing this article. One facet of the changing landscape of history magazines in the UK is the massive rise in the popularity of history magazines focusing on the tracing of family histories, as a direct result of the popularity of the television series 'Who do you think you are?'.

But what impact have history magazines had on the historical consciousness of the UK population, or at least, the section of the population that buys these magazines; and what influence has the upsurge of history magazine sales had on people's ideas about 'what history is for'?

The famous British literary critic Frank Raymond Leavis saw the rise of magazine culture as a form of 'dumbing down', with people reduced to reading snippets and bits and pieces instead of attacking the great works of literature and history available in book form.<sup>28</sup> More recently the British historian, John Tosh has questioned whether the rise of 'heritage' history has deflected attention from more serious, critical and worthwhile engagement with the past.<sup>29</sup> Does the growing popularity of history magazines represent a move away from 'serious' history, as represented in books, monographs and journal articles, or is it a complement to those activities?

Analysis of the 'alphabet-icon' ratio<sup>30</sup> in UK history magazines reveals substantial differences in the proportion of text to pictures, cartoons and diagrams. Some history magazines contain quite long articles written by academic historians, others have a larger number of short features, quizzes, 'what's on?' guides and might reasonably be regarded as 'lighter' (or more superficial) in approach. Table 7 gives an analysis of the outcomes of an 'alphabet-icon' content analysis<sup>31</sup> of ten copies of several of the leading history magazines in the UK.

---

27 As of July 2013, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1sOyJSv> (1.8.2014).

28 Frank Raymond Leavis: The relationship between literature and journalism. University of Cambridge 1924, Unpublished PhD thesis.

29 Cf. Tosh (note 10).

30 Sue Barnes: The educational implications of the computer. A media ecology critique. In: *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 4 (1996), issue 2, p. 180–208.

31 Ten issues of each magazine were chosen. The free page margins were not taken into account for the rough estimate of the image/text ratio.

Table 7: The image/text ratio of British history magazines (n=10 issues each)

THE HISTORIAN	80–90% text; some pages just text.
HISTORY REVIEW	70–75% text (but wide use of text box highlights. No pages of just plain text).
TEACHING HISTORY	85–90% text but substantial use of diagrams and tables, about 33% ‘just text’.
HISTORY TODAY	60–70% text, under 10% ‘just text’ (use of text box highlights on many pages)
BBC HISTORY	Roughly 50/50 text/pictures, mainly pictures rather than diagrams, no pages without pictures.

Although some magazines have a more austere lay-out, with longer sections of text, and fewer illustrations, even the BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE, which contains the highest proportion of illustration to text of the magazines detailed in table 7, regularly contains articles by leading historians, often providing two to five page summaries of their most recent book or area of research. Each issue also provides a review of a range of recently published books, a guide to forthcoming history programmes on television and radio, a podcast by a leading historian, links to major internet history sites and in some recent issues, a section on ‘History and policy’, outlining the ways in which historical perspectives shed light on current issues and controversies in the field of politics and social policy. There are quizzes, crosswords and ‘my historical hero’ features, but it cannot reasonably be claimed that the magazine is devoid of serious and scholarly history. Moreover, a recent market research survey conducted by the magazine revealed that subscribers to the magazine purchased on average nine books a year. Although there is clearly room for further research in this area, it is possible that people who buy history magazines also pursue their interest in the past via other avenues, including books, television history and history on the internet. It could be argued that it is better that people exhibit some interest in the past, even if it is ‘history-lite’, than that they are indifferent to the past, or regard the past as an irrelevance. It might be added that the cost of history magazines is not inconsequential: BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE, the market

leader sells for £3.80<sup>32</sup> (the cost of approximately four loaves of bread in UK terms). There are large numbers of people in the UK who care sufficiently about history to spend money on it.

A survey of history magazines in the UK reveals that there are a range of histories available to people who have an interest in some aspect of the past. Although major titles which have access to high street stores, airports and railway stations have major advantages in terms of public profile, the internet has made possible 'niche' markets which make it possible for magazines with quite small circulations to survive, so people whose interest is in battle re-enactment, the history of football clubs, women's history or 'Black History' can have access to a magazine which caters for their particular interest.

The survey also shows that public interest in the past is not limited to the national past, in spite of the high profile of national political and military events in general history magazines. As well as the increasing popularity of 'heritage' history magazines which are in part based on engagement with historical sites and museums as a leisure interest, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people interested in tracing their family history.

In terms of their contribution to historical consciousness, history magazines may play a less significant role than television history. 'Celebrity historian' (that is to say, a historian who presents television series) Starkey makes the point that whereas best selling history books might sell up to 100,000 copies, history programmes on television regularly attract an audience of several million viewers.<sup>33</sup> A small survey of 29 of my history student teachers revealed that 28 out of 29 spent more time on history internet sites than on reading the history magazines which they subscribed to. There is also the question of what proportion of magazines that are purchased are read; several of the students admitted that they often did not find time to read the magazines that they had purchased as the following testimony indicates:

---

32 So as to allow the comparison of the international magazine prices, the price of bread was provided as the country-specific comparative value for the national price. The selling price of £3.80 approximately corresponds – as of 2010 – to four loaves of bread (cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1ubQmLA> (1.8.2014)) [editor's note].

33 Cf. Starkey (note 4).

- ‘But there was no time to read them.’
- ‘But haven’t read it.’
- ‘I have a subscription but I cannot lie. Haven’t had time to read any of them.’
- ‘Subscribed but haven’t read them yet. Simply not enough time. Maybe next year.’
- ‘Would love to read BBC HISTORY but finding the time is the main issue.’

A final point which might be made is that there is no necessary correlation between the circulation or readership of a magazine and its influence on history education. The survey of student teachers revealed that without exception, TEACHING HISTORY had a major influence on their planning and teaching. TEACHING HISTORY and BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE were by some way the most widely purchased magazines (all but one of the 29 students subscribed to TEACHING HISTORY), but whereas BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE was used mainly as ‘background reading’ or ‘to consolidate my subject knowledge a bit’, TEACHING HISTORY appeared to have a profound influence on the way that student teachers conceptualised the business of teaching history, with an emphasis on the development of pupils’ understanding of history as a form of knowledge as well as a body of knowledge, development of their own subject pedagogy, and use of many of the ideas and activities contained in the magazine (one student reported that ‘I think it makes me a better teacher.’)

Much of the recent media and policy interest in history in the UK has focused on what history students learn in schools and how much of that history they remember.<sup>34</sup> Far less is known about what use people make of the history that they encounter, and why they choose to engage with history outside formal education. Further research into people’s use of history magazines would be one way of developing insight into historical consciousness in modern societies and the question of ‘why history matters’.

---

34 For example: Nick Gibb: Speech to the reform conference. London 1.7.2012, URL: <http://bit.ly/1rLT7Bk> (1.8.2014); or cf. Matthews (note 5).





Monika Vinterek

# **The use of powerful men, naked women and war to sell. Popular history magazines in Sweden**

## **1. Introduction**

In the last decade, there seems to have been a boom in the marketing of popular history magazines in Sweden. At the turn of the millennium, there was only one such magazine; now more than ten can be found in news-stands and stores. This raises many interesting questions, for instance, how history is presented to lay-people under commercial conditions, and what particular didactic means and strategies are used to make the content of the magazines appealing to the reader. There is no doubt that strategies used in these magazines seem to be successful to some extent, judging from the growing number of history magazines on the market and the number of copies sold.

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the history magazine market in Sweden, with a closer look at the two biggest magazines that were the first on the Swedish market to have a content devoted entirely to history. Popular and typical historical subjects on the front cover will be examined in order to find out the kind of content that seems to be central and important for each magazine. The interpreted meaning will be analysed further by means of a comparison with the image presented by the magazines themselves. Hopefully this will facilitate an understanding of the selection of topics and design of the front covers and help us raise new questions that can be analysed further in a future study.

## **2. Overview of the popular history magazine market in Sweden**

POPULÄR HISTORIA (Popular History) appeared on the Swedish market in 1991. It was the first of a number of history magazines that aspire to present history to lay-people under commercial conditions. Twenty years later, there are twelve such magazines. But it is not only the number of magazines

that has increased. The number of issues sold each year for each magazine has also risen tremendously even though there are signs that this development seems to be slowing down and maybe even dropping to a lower level for some of the magazines. Looking at the two oldest magazines to focus entirely on history, the circulation of each has increased rapidly during the whole period. POPULÄR HISTORIA sold 22.300 copies in 2000 and more than 33.000 copies ten years later.<sup>1</sup> ALLT OM HISTORIA (All about History) was first released in 2005. The number of issues sold grew from 22.000 in 2007 to 34.100 in 2010, a 50% increase in three years.<sup>2</sup> A closer look at POPULÄR HISTORIA shows a decline in the number of copies sold during the last three or four years but the number of readers reached has continued to grow.

VÄRLDENS HISTORIA (World History) is a magazine published in Norway but distributed on the Swedish market too. It also shows an increase in the number of copies sold from the start in 2005 up to 2008 but then the figures start to go down. The number of readers reached by VÄRLDENS HISTORIA is also still increasing.

These tendencies should be understood in the light of what is happening in the newspaper and magazine market as a whole. Reading this type of media seems to be becoming less popular.<sup>3</sup> The 25 biggest newspapers in Sweden sold fewer copies in 2010 while among magazines, only one category in ten showed a positive result compared with earlier years, and the rise was only 1.9%.<sup>4</sup> More than half of the other categories of

---

1 TS. Upplage- och räckviddsutveckling 2001–2010, p. 197, URL: <http://bit.ly/YMn9JM> (13.6.2011). TS is an abbreviation for 'Tidningsstatistik' which means 'statistics on newspapers and magazines'.

2 TS. TS-reviderade siffror 2008 sammandrag, URL: <http://bit.ly/10lkO9M> (13.06.2011). TS, TS-reviderade siffror 2010 sammandrag, URL: <http://bit.ly/1vx6O8t> (13.6.2011). TS. Upplage- och räckviddsutveckling 2001–2010 (note 1), p. 197.

3 TS. TS-reviderade siffror 2010 sammandrag, p. 39, URL: <http://bit.ly/1vx6O8t> (13.6.2011).

4 The category that is growing is 'Caravan and camping'. The other magazine categories are 'Family', 'Male', 'Female', 'Youth', 'Children and parents', 'Economy, Technology and Hobby', 'Film, Photo and TV', 'Home, House and Garden', 'Health Sport and Outdoor Pursuit'.

magazines suffered a loss that ranged from minus 5% to about minus 10%.<sup>5</sup>

Considering this fact, it is highly interesting that the magazine ALLT OM HISTORIA is one of the top ten magazines to have succeeded in increasing the number of its subscribers in 2010.<sup>6</sup> The number of new history magazines and the increase in the number of people who read this kind of magazine are an indication that there has been a change in people's interest in history. It is perhaps too early to say whether the slight decline in the number of copies sold for some of the history magazines is a reversal of the trend, but it is still a fact that history seems to appeal to more people than before, at least among magazine readers. The known figures for copies of history magazines sold in 2010 amount to 149.100 copies and the same figures for reading rates amount to 541.000.<sup>7</sup> If this is compared with the number of people living in Sweden, which was 9.415.570 inhabitants on 31 December 2010, it can be seen that rather a large proportion of the population buy and read history magazines.<sup>8</sup> The figure is almost 6% if the calculation is done on the basis of reader rates, and about 1% if it is only the known sale figures for some magazines which are included in the calculation. However, these figures also include infants and young children who cannot read, and therefore the proportion of readers among those who can read a magazine is a lot higher than one to 6%. Since only five of the twelve magazines are included in this rough estimate, the figures can be considered to be low compared with the actual proportion of people who are interested in history in this way. But this indication that history is a subject that attracts many people also raises questions, such as what kind of history appeals to the group of people who choose to read about historical matters, and who are they? For some of the older magazines, the 'Who?' question can be answered when it comes to gender. It seems to be that about twice as many men as women read this type of magazine.

---

5 TS. TS-reviderade siffror 2010 sammandrag (note 3), p. 38 f.

6 TS. Mediefakta, URL: <http://bit.ly/1nKNCmF> (13.6.2011).

7 Sales figures and readers rates: POPULÄR HISTORIA 33.100/191.000; ALLT OM HISTORIA 34.100/186.000; VÄRLDENS HISTORIA 53.700/164.000; MINNENAS JOURNAL 28.200/- = 149.100/541.000.

8 SCB. Sveriges folkmängd (The population of Sweden), 31.12.2010, URL: <http://bit.ly/1rHfacd> (1.8.2014).

Most of the readers are urbanites, comprising between 55% and 77% of the readers of the three magazines for which there are statistics. These are the biggest and oldest popular history magazines, POPULÄR HISTORIA, ALLT OM HISTORIA, and ILLUSTRERAD VETENSKAP VÄRLDENS HISTORIA. But those figures have to be related to the Swedish population as a whole, of whom 85% live in urban areas.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1: Size and structure of the readership of Swedish history magazines in the year 2009 (source: Medieregistret<sup>13</sup>; in brackets: percentage of the magazine's readership)

Magazine	Readers	Men	Women	Urbanites
Populär Historia <sup>10</sup>	179.000	115.000 (64%)	64.000 (36%)	78.000 (64%)
Allt om Historia <sup>11</sup>	161.000	104.000 (65%)	57.000 (35%)	63.000 (77%)
Väldens Historia <sup>12</sup>	147.000	99.000 (67%)	47.000 (32%)	52.000 (55%)

## 2.1 Popular History Magazines in Sweden

There are twelve magazines that present popular history in Sweden. In the 'Medieregistret' all these magazines are classified in the media code segment 'History/Science' except for the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SVERIGE, which is classified in the media code segment 'Activity/Recreation' and BIOGRAFI (Biography) which is classified in the media code segment 'Society'. Below, these magazines are listed in the order they were first released on the Swedish market:

9 SCB: Startside>Hitta statistik>Statistik efter ämne>Miljö>Tätorter; arealer, befolkning>Tätorter 2010, arealer, befolkning (korrigerat 20.6.2011), URL: <http://bit.ly/1vwKvPl> (27.6.2011).

10 Medieregistret, POPULÄR HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1pFIScd> (1.8.2014).

11 Medieregistret, ALLT OM HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1nKMnnB> (1.8.2014).

12 Medieregistret, VÄRLDENS HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1mQaPTL> (1.8.2014).

13 Cf. URL: <http://www.medieregistret.se/> (1.8.2014); 'Medieregistret' is a register that covers all newspapers, magazines and journals published in Sweden.

Table 2: Overview in tabular form – popular history magazines in Sweden (as of June 2011)

Magazine	Publisher <sup>14</sup>	Year of first issue	Sales figures 2010 <sup>15</sup>	Reader rates 2010 <sup>16</sup>	Number of issues/year	Price SEK <sup>17</sup>
Populär Historia	LRF Media*	1991	33.100	191.000	12	60
Svensk Historia	Web magazine	2000	–	–	**	
National Geographic Sverige	Bonnier	2000	25.900	228.000	15	64
BBC History***	First Publishing	2000	–	–	6	99
Allt om Historia	LRF Media*	2005	34.100	186.000	12	50
Illustrerad Vetenskap Världens Historia	Bonnier	2005	53.700	164.000	18	58
Militär Historia	LRF Media*	2009	–	–	12	60
Vetenskap & Historia	LRF Media	2010	–	–	10	60
Minnenas Journal	LRF Media	2010	28.200	–	6	50
Levande Historia	Schibsted Förlagen AB	2010	–	–	12	39
Biografi	LRF Media****	2010	–	–	6	60
Allt om Vetenskap Historia	LRF Media	2011	–	–	6	69

\* Before 13 May 2010, the publisher was Historiska Media

\*\* Updated 4–5 times a week

\*\*\* As of 2010, the magazine is in Swedish and has changed its name to BBC HISTORIA

\*\*\*\* The development of the magazine was started by Historiska Media.

14 Medieregistrert, BBC HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1pFJ0IR> (1.8.2014).

15 TS. Mediefakta TS upplaga/helår, URL: <http://bit.ly/1mQbdBL> (13.6.2011).  
The total TS-edition for 2010 is 21.817.700 copies.

16 TS. Mediefakta, URL: <http://bit.ly/1mQbdBL> (13.6.2011).

17 Rounded values, exchange rate from 1.8.2014: 1 Swedish Krona (SEK) = 0.108 Euro (EUR); Source: European Central Bank, quoted from: URL: <http://bit.ly/1BBp0NZ> [editor's note].

Eleven of these twelve magazines can be found in newsstands and in stores. The web magazine SVENSK HISTORIA (Swedish History) is only published on the Internet but seems to be produced under commercial conditions.

The oldest of these twelve magazines is POPULÄR HISTORIA, produced in Sweden primarily for a Swedish market. It was the only one of its kind until 2005 when ALLT OM HISTORIA and VÄRLDENS HISTORIA started. The web magazine SVENSK HISTORIA started in 2000, the same year as BBC HISTORY and NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC were launched in Sweden. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC is available in many countries but the Swedish version has the additional word 'SVERIGE' (Sweden) in its title. This magazine is not devoted entirely to history but history is one of the fields covered. Two years ago, one more magazine joined 'the history magazine family', namely, MILITÄR HISTORIA (Military History) which started up in July 2009. Since the beginning of 2010, six new magazines have been released and five are still on the market: VETENSKAP & HISTORIA (Science and History) and MINNENAS JOURNAL (The Journal of Memories), LEVANDE HISTORIA (History Alive) and BIOGRAFI.

In Sweden the market is dominated by the publisher 'LRF Media' after it took over 'Historiska Media' on 13 May 2010. 'Historiska Media' had been the biggest publisher in the field until then.<sup>18</sup> Today, 'LRF' publishes seven of the above-mentioned magazines. 'Bonnier Publication' publishes two and 'First Publishing' one. LEVANDE HISTORIA, which started at the end of August 2010, is published by 'Schibsted Förlagen AB' but the magazine is produced by AFTONBLADET, which is one of Sweden's biggest newspapers. This is something new on the Swedish market. The magazine comes out once a month. Since May 2011 it has also been available through an app for iPad, which made it the first interactive history magazine for iPad in Sweden and probably one of the first in the world. Many of the popular history magazines began within the framework of a larger established magazine or paper such as ILLUSTRERAD VETENSKAP, ALLT OM VETENSKAP, HEMMETS JOURNAL and AFTONBLADET.

---

18 Ove Gustafsson: En historisk affär, URL: <http://bit.ly/1rFIn6b> (1.8.2014).

All of the magazines are written in Swedish and most of them cost about the same as two or three loaves of bread. The magazines cost between 50 and 99 SEK to be compared with the prices of two kilos of wheat flour (10.40 SEK), 400 g of crisp bread (9.5 SEK) and a 350 g of long-shaped bun (23.3 SEK) in 2010.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.2 The magazines' presentations of themselves

The magazines will be presented below, in the order they appeared on the Swedish market. The presentation here is based on how the magazines advertise themselves on the Internet in picture and text.

POPULÄR HISTORIA<sup>20</sup> was first released in 1991 by 'LRF media'.<sup>21</sup> POPULÄR HISTORIA is advertised on its homepage as being Sweden's leading magazine on history.<sup>22</sup> In the magazine, there are a dozen extended articles in addition to reviews, expert answers to reader questions, cross-words, etc. It is stressed that each issue contains 'several great articles on everything from ancient times to the 1900s'<sup>23</sup>. It also points out its editorial ambition to contribute to popular education. Experts are hired in by the magazine and in 2004 it was voted 'The Magazine of the Year'.<sup>24</sup>

SVENSK HISTORIA is an online magazine with news about Swedish history. The magazine has been on the web since 2000 and it is updated 4–5 times a week. On the Internet page, you can read about new literature and current research in history. The magazine also writes about museum exhibitions and it publishes op-eds. The magazine has a newsletter, sent to 2300 subscribers, which may give some indication of how many people view the online magazine on a regular basis. In 2004, SVENSK HISTORIA

---

19 Cf. Statistiska centralbyrån. Jordbruksstatistisk årsbok. Tabell 19.1 'Average yearly retail prices for selected foods 2011', p. 317.

20 For a cover example see URL: <http://bit.ly/1oDP0m8> (1.8.2014).

21 POPULÄR HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1tjRnvN> (15.6.2011).

22 All quotations in this chapter have been translated by me from Swedish into English. POPULÄR HISTORIA, Om populär Historia, URL: <http://bit.ly/1BBp6Fv> (13.6.2011/1.8.2014).

23 Cf. *ibid.*

24 'The Magazine of the Year' is a prize awarded by the trade association 'Sveriges Tidskrifter'.



received the 'Knowledge Prize', which is awarded by the Swedish encyclopedia NATIONALENCYKLOPEDIN.<sup>25</sup>

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SVERIGE<sup>26</sup> is an international popular magazine and it presents itself as the world-leading scientific magazine written in Swedish.<sup>27</sup> NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SVERIGE was first released in Sweden in 2000. It claims to bring people from the whole world to the reader. The reader also has the opportunity to learn the latest scientific news. The historical aspects are said to be about events that have affected us all. It also states that the magazine covers major global issues.

BBC HISTORIA<sup>28</sup> is produced for an international market but there has been a Swedish version since 2000. The producers of the magazine say they write about important and interesting events and people 'so we can better understand the world of today'<sup>29</sup>. BBC HISTORIA also points out that its employees are world-leading historians and journalists. The magazine can be read on iPad.

ALLT OM HISTORIA<sup>30</sup> has been on the market since 2005. Excitement and dramatic events are highlighted in both text and pictures in the magazine's presentation of itself. It is described as containing good stories and up to date research. It is also pointed out that the magazine's layout includes many pictures, maps and other illustrations.<sup>31</sup> The magazine consists of articles, book recommendations, a historical quiz, historical news and communication between the magazine and its readers via questions and answers. The writers are said to be among the best journalists and researchers in Sweden.<sup>32</sup>

---

25 SVENSK HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1ryZmJN> (1.8.2014).

26 For a cover example see URL: <http://bit.ly/1BBpeEV> (1.8.2014).

27 Tidningskungen, Prenumerera, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SVERIGE, URL: <http://bit.ly/1DZJALU> (1.8.2014). Tidningsbutiken, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SVERIGE, URL: <http://bit.ly/1rupKo1> (1.8.2014).

28 For a cover example see URL: <http://bit.ly/1pFJDSx> (1.8.2014).

29 Cf. Tidningskungen, Prenumerera, BBC HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1yz4bqi> (1.8.2014).

30 For a cover example see URL: <http://bit.ly/1ozjZzB> (1.8.2014).

31 Tidningskungen, Prenumerera, ALLT OM HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1sN1Zcf> (1.8.2014).

32 ALLT OM HISTORIA, URL: <http://www.alltomhistoria.se/om/> (1.8.2014).

ILLUSTRERAD VETENSKAP VÄRLDENS HISTORIA<sup>33</sup> is a Nordic magazine produced in Copenhagen but modified by local editors where it is also translated into each country's language.<sup>34</sup> It has been on the Swedish market since 2005. The magazine's editors try to point out what they think makes VÄRLDENS HISTORIA special. They emphasize that they have a new way of conveying history which includes topics that go beyond 'lists of kings and the Punic Wars'<sup>35</sup>. This magazine also mentions its illustrations and describes itself as being 'visually innovative'<sup>36</sup> and that its pictures come from all over the world. The magazine claims it is about 'great wars, great discoveries, great technological achievements - and also major works of art or construction.'<sup>37</sup> ILLUSTRERAD VETENSKAP VÄRLDENS HISTORIA considers itself to be the biggest history magazine.<sup>38</sup>

MILITÄR HISTORIA<sup>39</sup> is a magazine that specialises in military history and it declares it is for people who are interested in the history of wars.<sup>40</sup> It was the first magazine in Sweden to specialize in a certain kind of history. The articles consist of reports from battlefields and give both overviews and personal perspectives. It deals with both dramatic events and complex situations. The magazine promises stories that the reader will never find anywhere else and also unique images and richly illustrated explanations. The writers are said to be leading experts on war and conflicts.<sup>41</sup> The editor himself has a military background and is an author of books on military history. The magazine has contact with other experts in and outside Sweden.

---

33 For a cover example see URL: <http://bit.ly/1vwLGxX> (1.8.2014).

34 Niklas Sessler: En rolig historia, Bonnier publications, 1.7.2009, URL: <http://bit.ly/1qVMNSA> (17.6.2011).

35 URL: <http://bit.ly/1vbUIV6> (1.8.2014).

36 Tidningskungen, Prenumerera, ILLUSTRERAD VETENSKAP VÄRLDENS HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1vbUIV6> (17.6.2011).

37 Cf. Sessler (note 34).

38 Tidningskungen, Prenumerera, ILLUSTRERAD VETENSKAP VÄRLDENS HISTORIA (note 36).

39 For a cover example see URL: <http://bit.ly/1uDkmvu> (1.8.2014).

40 MILITÄR HISTORIA, URL: <http://www.militarhistoria.se/om/> (13.6.2011).

41 Tidningskungen, Prenumerera, MILITÄR HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/10mjPWU> (13.6.2011).

VETENSKAP & HISTORIA<sup>42</sup> presents itself as being an interdisciplinary magazine, published for the first time in 2010. It claims to contain both popular science and history. It describes itself as being up to date, entertaining and informative. It also promises its readers an exciting read.<sup>43</sup>

MINNENAS JOURNAL<sup>44</sup> is the first magazine on the Swedish market which is about the history of everyday life in Sweden.<sup>45</sup> It was released in 2010. The readers are asked to 'read, enjoy and remember'. It focuses on 'family, love, ancestors, people, work, food, leisure, entertainment and traditions of the past'<sup>46</sup>. The magazine writes about famous people such as artists and royals as well as old appliances, cars and tractors. There are also recipes from the past and crafts and landscape traditions included in the magazine. The experts that are mentioned are experts in genealogy who can give the readers advice.

LEVANDE HISTORIA is a magazine produced by AFTONBLADET, which is one of Sweden's largest daily newspapers. It came on the market in 2010 and offers articles 'on everything from dramatic events to famous people'<sup>47</sup>. LEVANDE HISTORIA also deals with the history of science. Some of the writers are among 'Sweden's best known and most knowledgeable historian profiles'<sup>48</sup>. The magazine emphasizes that it works with innovative graphics and that readers will benefit from rarely viewed photographs.

As its name suggests, BIOGRAFI specializes in biographies and it has been on the market since 2010. It writes about famous and less well-known people who all have one thing in common: they are people who have 'shaped our history'<sup>49</sup> in one way or another. These persons are said

---

42 For a cover example see URL: <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/> (1.8.2014).

43 LRF Media, VETENSKAP HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/YUryKt> (29.6.2011).

44 For a cover example see URL: <http://bit.ly/1E0COWi> (1.8.2014).

45 LRF Media, MINNENAS JOURNAL, URL: <http://bit.ly/1x2kA1Z> (1.8.2014).

46 Ibid.

47 Tidningskungen, Prenumerera, Levande Historia, URL: <http://bit.ly/1vAfECc> (1.8.2014).

48 Ibid.

49 Cf. BIOGRAFI, URL: <http://www.magasinetbiografi.se/om/> (1.8.2014).

to be exciting well-known people. They may be ‘performers, adventurers, writers, politicians, artists, scientists, fashion designers, explorers and generals’<sup>50</sup>. The stories are described as being incredible life stories about the most influential Swedish and international people in the 1900s.<sup>51</sup> BIOGRAFI collaborates with what they refer to as Sweden’s leading historical magazine, POPULÄR HISTORIA. The rich images with unique photographs are said to be an important part of the magazine.

ALLT OM VETENSKAP HISTORIA started out as a few thematic editions of the well-established magazine ALLT OM VETENSKAP. This was a success and in 2011 it was decided to start a magazine with its own title, ALLT OM VETENSKAP HISTORIA. In this new magazine, the readers will be given a good read but there is also an ambition to provide the readers with knowledge and a perspective on what is happening today. The editor claims to achieve this by offering articles about ‘war and dramatic battles, forgotten events, developments in technology and much more’ in their magazine.<sup>52</sup>

In 2010, there was one more popular history magazine, VI BIOGRAFI<sup>53</sup> (We Biography). It was launched by the publisher of AB MAGAZINE in September 2010 but was short-lived. Only four issues were published before it was announced that the magazine would cease in March 2011.<sup>54</sup> The ambition had been to write about people who affect people’s lives. The title of the press release read as follows ‘They wrote our history – now we write theirs’<sup>55</sup>. The editor-in-chief said that ‘behind every great event and dates there are human driving forces such as hate, love, revenge and shame’<sup>56</sup>. This statement may also have been intended to give an indication of the kind of history that the magazine wanted to present.

---

50 Ibid.

51 Mediahyllan, URL: <http://bit.ly/YSDf4A> (17.6.2011).

52 Tidningskungen, Prenumerera, ALLT OM VETENSKAP HISTORIA, URL: <http://bit.ly/1uDKBXf> (10.6.2011).

53 For a cover example see URL: <http://bit.ly/1BBpTWZ> (1.8.2014).

54 My New Desk, URL: <http://bit.ly/1BBpTWZ> (1.8.2014).

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

### 2.3 Summary and interpretation of the magazines' presentations of themselves

An examination of the popular history magazines' own presentations reveals many similarities. For example, there are a few specific areas and expressions that occur in many of these short descriptions. Four of the magazines examined claim that they are the leading magazine in some way and one magazine refers to its links to the leading magazine in history. Actuality is emphasized by several of the magazines; being up to date on news and historical research seems to be important. In the same way, it seems essential to mention the use of experts. This occurs in several of the magazines. Layout and the way the magazine is illustrated are two more aspects that are frequently stressed. Dramatic events, excitement, fun and entertainment are the sort of words used to express what some of the magazines want to give the reader. This can also be interpreted as being a ground for selection as regards what the magazines write about. This is expressed more explicitly when magazines say, as a couple of those examined here do, that they write about events and persons that have affected us all in some way or another. But it is rare to find more specific descriptions of what kind of history the magazines are going to write about. MINNENAS JOURNAL and BIOGRAFI stand out a bit when it comes to this. BIOGRAFI describes in more detail what kind of person will be portrayed and MINNENAS JOURNAL also explains in more detail what they mean by the everyday life they write about.

## 3. Title page analysis

### 3.1 Aims and method: selection of the studied magazines – criteria and categories

One of the aims of the international project 'History sells'<sup>57</sup>, of which this paper is a part, is to be able to make comparisons and reflections

---

57 "History Sells" – The popular presentation of history in national and international history magazines' was the name of the EHISTO project conference organised in Amsterdam from 19 to 21 August 2010, which was funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation (cf. the conference report at URL: <http://bit.ly/1BqtCGE>). On the EHISTO project cf. URL: <http://www.european-crossroads.de/> (1.8.2014) as well as the introduction in this volume [editor's note].

on a global level. To make this possible it was decided that the researchers would follow certain standards. We had to study all published issues for two magazines<sup>58</sup> across five years for each prospective country, and describe and analyse the cover page on the basis of three criteria: those of time, place and main topics. We all used the same criteria.<sup>59</sup> It was decided that for 'time', the main headlines would be categorized into different time periods. For 'place', the headings would be categorized in accordance with the continent referred to. The main headlines were categorized into a long list of different topics. For each cover page/main headline, three classification marks were made. They could be three of the same or three different ones. For instance: the headline 'Napoleon and the politics behind the battle of Waterloo' would be given one mark for personalities, one for politics and one for war. Another cover with a picture from a battle and a headline that only says something about war would perhaps be given three marks in the war category.

In the analysis, we attempted to find out what kind of content appears to be central and important for each magazine by analysing different aspects of time, place and main topics and then comparing them further with the magazine's own statements about targeting.

As we have seen, there were twelve popular history magazines in Sweden in June 2011. I had to select two of those for the cover page analysis. As these had to be magazines on the market for at least five years, possibilities were narrowed down. I wanted to concentrate on magazines that were solely about history, that could be found in newsstands and in stores, and that were mainly produced in Sweden in Swedish during the whole period and primarily for Swedish readers. These criteria left me with the two magazines *POPULÄR HISTORIA* and *ALLT OM HISTORIA*. The main headline and the main picture on the cover page have been the basis for all analyses since these headings are the first to

---

58 For the national cover page analysis history magazines were chosen that as special-interest magazines do not specialise in a specific area of history, in contrast to the very-special-interest magazines, and which, if possible, have been on the market for at least five years at the time of analysis. The issues analysed here are from the years 2005–2010 [editor's note].

59 Cf. the contribution by Claudius Springkart in this volume [editor's note].

catch the reader's eye. In both magazines, one dominating picture filled most of the space on the front cover and also one big headline text across the centre part of that page. But since the two magazines also used other headlines in addition to the main one, those have also been checked and used as a control when it comes to the categories of time and place. This was done by analysing whether they gave support to, or contradicted, the impression based on the analysis of the main headline. The criterion for selecting other headlines was that they had an accompanying illustration/picture. Where a headline has been illustrated, it has been interpreted as being of more importance to the magazine than headlines without any pictures.

### 3.2 The design of the front cover (text and pictures)

Looking at the design of the front cover, both magazines have a similar design with a main picture taking up most of the space and dominating the page. When compared with the pictures of the front cover for all the magazines it can be noticed that they also have a similar design. With the exception of this main picture, the magazines vary in the number of other pictures displayed on the front cover. POPULÄR HISTORIA has only one other picture on the front in just over a third of the numbers studied. These are always very small pictures inset somewhere on the bottom part or along the side of the page. ALLT OM HISTORIA uses more pictures. They always place three headlines illustrated by smaller pictures on a background contrasting to the background of the main picture. The two magazines selected for this study use a main headline which is placed some way down from the middle of the page, usually with a few words that are conspicuous because of the size of the text. The text is often of a different colour and sometimes is capitalized. Related to these words there is always some other text which gives more specific information about what the article presented by these words is about. For example 'The Cold War. Power struggle between East and West'<sup>60</sup>.

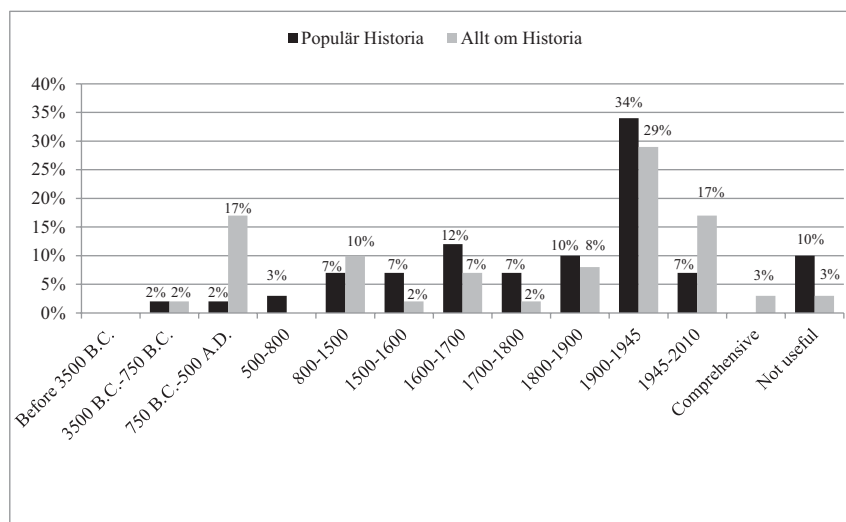
---

60 ALLT OM HISTORIA 11 (2006).

### 3.3 The category 'time'

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is by far and away the most popular period of interest for the magazines. The first half of the 1900s seems to be of most interest and a closer examination shows that the Second World War period is the predominant topic. No other period in the 1900s comes anywhere near this level of interest, other periods mostly not exceeding levels of around 10%. The levels of the numbers of headings categorised for each time period are almost the same for both of the magazines with a few exceptions. The most striking difference is the high level (17%) of main headlines for the period of 750 B.C.-500 in ALLT OM HISTORIA compared to POPULÄR HISTORIA where it is less than 2%. The interest in the 1500s and the 1700s also seems to differ with a greater interest in the 1500s and the 1700s for POPULÄR HISTORIA.

Chart 1: Chronological categorisation of the main illustrated cover topics of POPULÄR HISTORIA and ALLT OM HISTORIA (specification in percent; n=59 cover pages each from the years 2006–2010)<sup>61</sup>



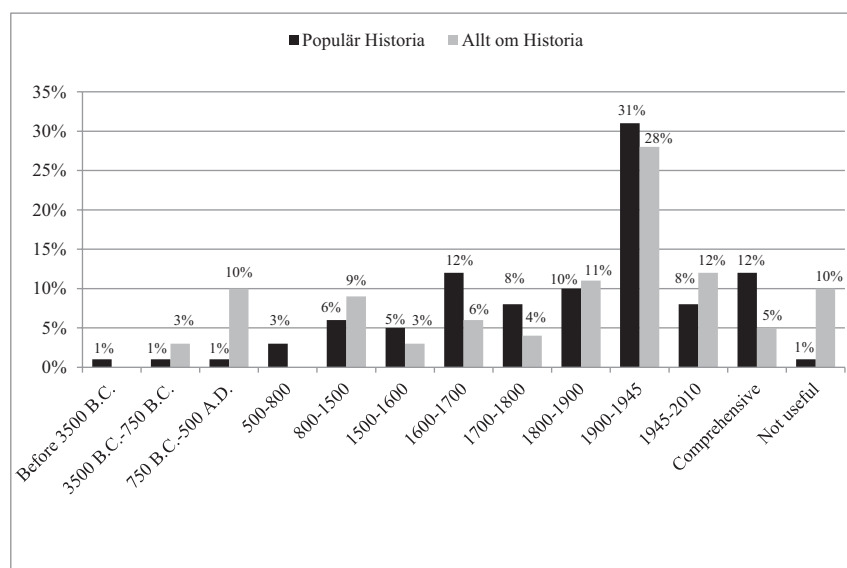
61 The figures are rounded which can cause a sum more or less than one hundred percent when all the figures are summed up.



None of the magazines have a main headline with a topic from the period before 3500 B.C. and ALLT OM HISTORIA does not have any main headline linked to the period 500 A.D.–800 A.D.

When all headlines with an accompanying picture were taken into consideration, the impression was still that the 1900s is the most popular period to write about. This impression was reinforced, as was the whole pattern derived from the examination of the main headlines, when more headlines were included in the analysis.

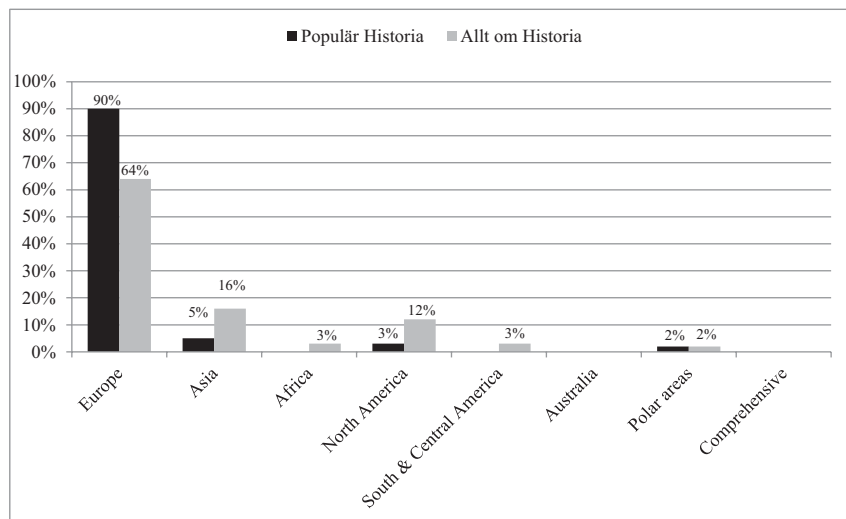
Chart 2: Chronological categorisation of the cover topics of POPULÄR HISTORIA and ALLT OM HISTORIA taking into account all illustrated topic announcements (specification in percent; n=59 cover pages each from the years 2006–2010)<sup>62</sup>



<sup>62</sup> The figures are rounded which can cause a sum more or less than one hundred percent when all the figures are summed up.

### 3.4 The category 'place'

Chart 3: Geographic categorisation of the main illustrated cover topics of POPULÄR HISTORIA and ALLT OM HISTORIA – rough categorisation according to continents (specification in percent; n=59 cover pages each from the years 2006–2010)<sup>63</sup>

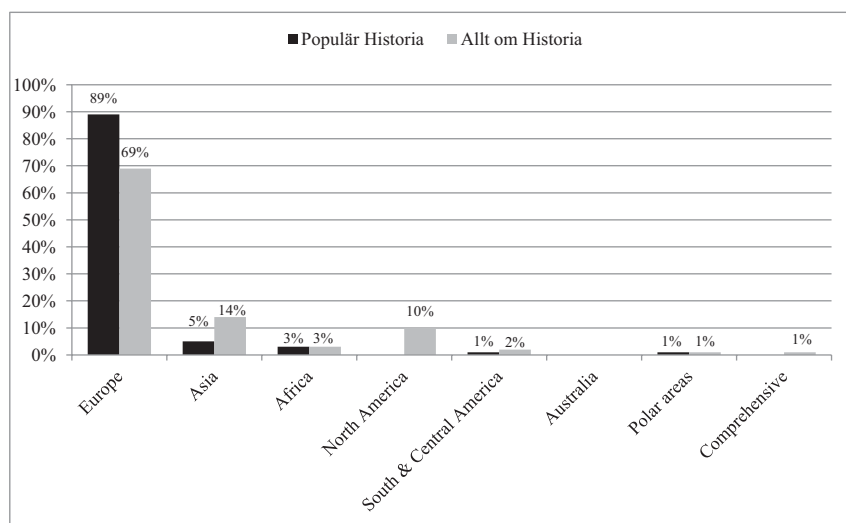


Europe completely dominates as regards which continents are represented in the main headlines. In POPULÄR HISTORIA 90% of the main headlines are related to Europe. The figure is not as high for ALLT OM HISTORIA but it is still a very high proportion, almost 64%. The other 10% of the main headlines in POPULÄR HISTORIA are related to Asia, North America and the Polar areas, the latter comprising only slightly more than 1% of these ten. The way the continents are represented is similar in POPULÄR HISTORIA but Asia and North America are represented in some more headlines: just over 10% each. In this magazine there are also headlines which refer to Africa, even if the percentage of the total number is not more than a few percent.

<sup>63</sup> The figures are rounded which can cause a sum more or less than one hundred percent when all the figures are summed up.

The overall picture for these magazines stays almost the same when all headlines with an accompanying picture are included in the statistics. Europe dominates, and Australia is not represented at all. If one takes a closer look at Europe in order to understand what parts or countries are mostly represented, the picture is a bit more differentiated.

Chart 4: Geographic categorisation of the cover topics of POPULÄR HISTORIA and ALLT OM HISTORIA taking into account all illustrated topic announcements – rough categorisation according to continents (specification in percent; n=59 cover pages each from the years 2006–2010)<sup>64</sup>



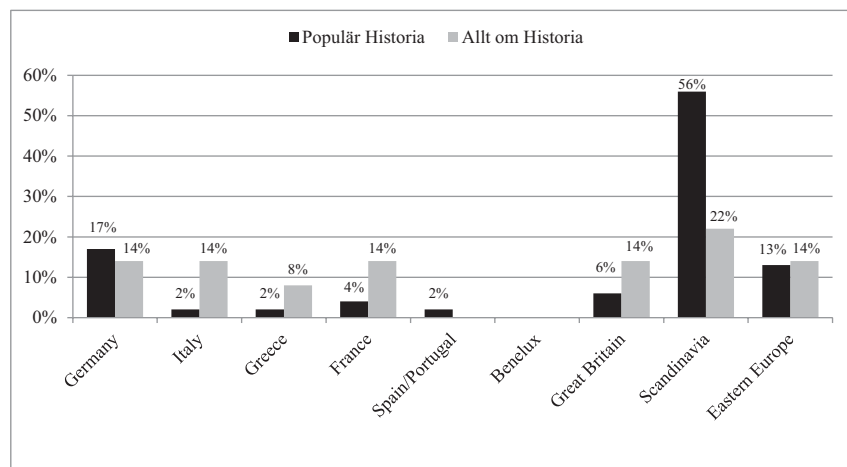
POPULÄR HISTORIA is characterised by its strong focus on Scandinavia, with more than 55% of the main headlines associated with this part of Europe, and it is striking that most of these headings, more than 42%, were connected to something relating to Sweden. Germany is the other individual country that sticks out from the rest when it comes to the level

<sup>64</sup> The figures are rounded which can cause a sum more or less than one hundred percent when all the figures are summed up.

of representation, about 17%, which is partially due to the strength of the topic 'Second World War'. Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece and France do not occur so often in the main headlines. Benelux was not mentioned at all. Eastern European countries were represented in just over 10% of the main headings of the total number of issues.

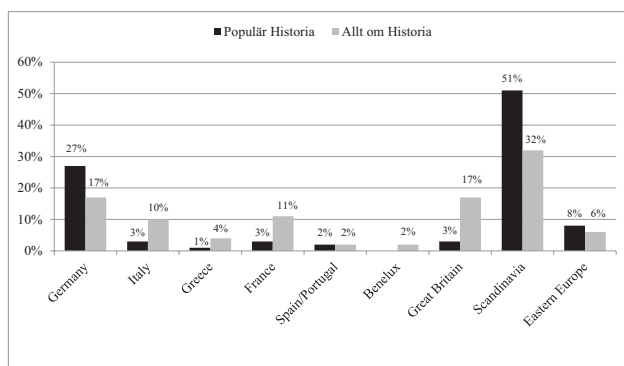
In ALLT OM HISTORIA there is a more even spread between the above-mentioned countries, although Scandinavia is top of the list here too with a figure of 22%, most of those headlines being linked to Sweden. The overall representation pattern does not differ when all other headlines are included in the statistics even if some of the missing countries are now also mentioned or referred to in these headlines.

Chart 5: Geographic categorisation of the main illustrated cover topics of POPULÄR HISTORIA and ALLT OM HISTORIA – refined classification Europe (specification in percent; n=59 cover pages each from the years 2006–2010)<sup>65</sup>



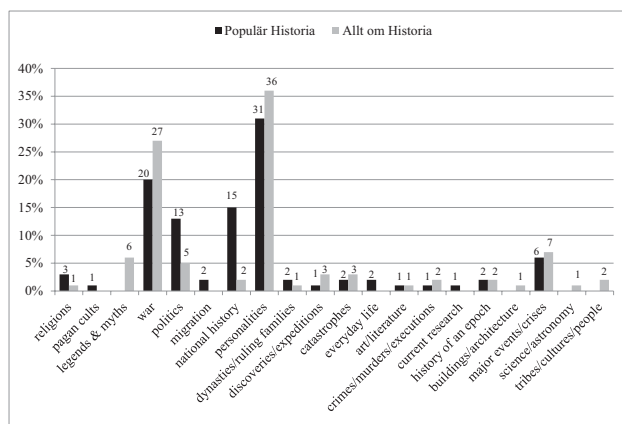
<sup>65</sup> The figures are rounded which can cause a sum more or less than one hundred percent when all the figures are summed up.

Chart 6: Geographic categorisation of the cover topics of POPULĂR HISTORIA and ALLT OM HISTORIA taking into account all illustrated topic announcements – refined classification Europe (specification in percent; n=59 cover pages each from the years 2006–2010)<sup>66</sup>



### 3.5 The category ‘topic’

Chart 7: Thematic categorisation of all illustrated cover topics of POPULĂR HISTORIA and ALLT OM HISTORIA (specification in percent; n=59 cover pages each from the years 2006–2010)<sup>67</sup>



<sup>66</sup> The figures are rounded which can cause a sum more or less than one hundred percent when all the figures are summed up.

<sup>67</sup> The figures are rounded which can cause a sum more or less than one hundred percent when all the figures are summed up.

The two categories of topics that heavily dominate the main headlines are personalities and war.

Politics and national history were also relatively large categories in POPULÄR HISTORIA. The emphasis on national history in POPULÄR HISTORIA was also shown earlier when the selection of European countries was examined.

### 3.6 Personalities and men and women on the front cover

It is possible to look more closely into the biggest of these categories, personalities, to see who these persons are and if they make up any definite category. A gender perspective can also be used in the analysis.

Looking at the 118 front covers examined, 56 showed a person in the main picture who could be classified as a personality. These pictures mostly showed a king, emperor or ruler of some kind. It is obvious that powerful men are very popular, with Adolf Hitler being the number one favourite. Other big names are Napoleon Bonaparte, Josef Stalin and Benito Mussolini. Adolf Hitler is shown in four pictures and mentioned in two more headlines. Most of the other personalities only occur once but the majority of them can be put in a category that could be named powerful people. Five of the main pictures in the personalities category were of women: the Swedish queen Kristina, Elisabeth I, Victoria I, Cleopatra and Joan of Arc, which makes up about 9% of all the pictures in the personalities category. Of all the 59 front covers examined in POPULÄR HISTORIA, 41 show only men compared with four depicting only women. Of the 79 pictures portraying people, women can be found in 18 of them. In ALLT OM HISTORIA 16 of the 59 title pages examined showed only men and none of the front covers showed only women. 198 pictures with people are shown on the front covers of ALLT OM HISTORIA and 44 of those included women. It can also be seen that of these 62 pictures of women, seven show naked or partially naked women. That is more than 10% of the pictures with women. Some of these images are also used in such a way that pictures of naked female breasts come in direct focus. This use of pictures with naked women has to be compared with the 277 pictures of men where no such images are found.

#### 4. Evaluation and interpretation of the front cover page analysis

The analysis of the front cover pages reveals some clear trends. It is the history of Europe, the 1900s, the history of war and powerful men that dominate the overall impression in Swedish history magazines. This is true for both of the examined magazines; they do not differ from each other very much. ALLT OM HISTORIA might be described as being somewhat less Eurocentric but its focus is still on this part of the world. POPULÄR HISTORIA pays more attention to Scandinavia than ALT OM HISTORIA does, even if both magazines devote more than 30% of their main headlines concerning Europe to their own country and its neighbours. For POPULÄR HISTORIA this proportion is as high as 50%. A closer examination of the headlines concerning Scandinavia reveals that only a few of the headlines do not refer to Sweden. In the light of this fact, these two Swedish magazines seem to be very nationalistic in their choice of what events and people to write about, at least when it comes to choice of front cover picture.

A quantitative analysis of the selection of topics cannot be discussed without considering the magazines' own intentions. It would be no surprise were a history magazine that says it is dedicated to military history to contain many articles and pictures related to war and conflicts. But the magazines examined here did not have such an explicit specialization; and yet, war was still one of the major topics in both magazines.

Looking back at the magazines' presentation of themselves, some other interesting things can be noticed. For example, POPULÄR HISTORIA stressed that each issue would contain articles on everything from ancient times to the 1900s which gives the impression of a magazine with an ambition to be very broad when it comes to the time periods to be covered. But as has already been pointed out, that is not the impression one gets when looking at their front cover where the 1900s and the period after 1945 dominate strongly. If one considers that POPULÄR HISTORIA aspires to contribute to popular education, it is interesting to find out what kind of education one will get by reading their magazine. Clearly the material presented is very restricted both concerning period of time and geographical area. The topics and kinds of perspective chosen were also shown to be

very narrow. It was dominated by war and powerful men. This was also the case for ALLT OM HISTORIA.

In ALLT OM HISTORIA's self-characterization, excitement and dramatic events were stressed in both text and pictures. We can also ask what kind of excitement the reader will meet in their articles. This collection of magazines and sample articles which aims to give presumptive subscribers an idea of the magazine's content is one example of this, found on the magazine's homepage.

The open magazines depict war and powerful men and – naturally – Hitler. The excitement of cutting the heads off men and woman – something that brought together hundreds of people in the past – is also used here to exemplify what readers might find exciting in ALLT OM HISTORIA.<sup>68</sup>

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

Some of the magazines stress how important they feel it is to explain events of the past and to put things in perspective, in order to make us understand both the past and the present. This raises a number of questions: what is seen as being important to explain, what kind of explanation should one be looking for, and what is meant by perspective? Whose perspective? Some of the answers signalled by the front covers of the examined magazines are battles and powerful European men. Whether this is true of the written text inside the magazines is something that still has to be investigated.

It is interesting to note that more specialized history magazines have been introduced to the Swedish market lately, one on military history and two on biographies. It may probably become apparent here just which specific 'news factors'<sup>69</sup> (here: conflict, prominence) have proven interesting to the masses.

Judging from the result of the cover pages analysis, it is not surprising to find that these two topics (military history and biographies) are now the subject of magazines of their own. Hitler and war, and very often the

---

68 URL: <http://www.alltomhistoria.se/om/> (1.8.2014).

69 For the news factors cf. the article by Fabio Crivellari in this volume [editor's note].



Second World War, seem to be topics that magazines choose in order to sell. Such topics and images of the same also seemed to be frequently used by other popular history magazines. This view could perhaps be confirmed by Sebastian Relster, editor of the Nordic editions of *ILLUSTRERAD VETENSKAP VÄRLDENS HISTORIA*, when he said in an interview: 'In particular, World War II is always interesting [...]'<sup>70</sup>.

Assuming that the magazines conform to what is going to sell and that this controls the content and choice of headlines, the question of why these topics sell remains. It would be interesting to try to understand this in the light of the proportion of male and female readers, the number of men being twice as large as the number of women although the number of women who read these magazines is still high. This could be analysed in a deeper way with the help of gender theories and perhaps theories of culture and identity. Such theories could also be applied to the use of nude pictures of women but not men, something that should also be illuminated from an ethical perspective.

We know that a large number of Swedes read popular history magazines. It may be supposed that many of the popular history magazines choose the same kind of topics and images as do those examined, an impression which is also supported by the pictures of front pages used to advertise other popular history magazines.<sup>71</sup> This raises important questions from an educational perspective. One of the early questions asked by the 'History Sells'<sup>72</sup> project was if there was anything we could learn from these magazines in a school context. But after seeing the results of this initial study, we should perhaps ask ourselves instead: What do we learn and what can we learn from these magazines and how does this learning correspond with the goals expressed in national policy documents for school? We must assume that the use of powerful men, naked women and war to sell popular history magazines also teaches the reader something.

---

<sup>70</sup> Sessler (note 34).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. the web links in section 2.2 'The self-presentation of the Swedish history magazines'.

<sup>72</sup> Name of the conference of the EHISTO project organised in Amsterdam (cf. note 57).

Katja Gorbahn

## Perpetrators, victims, heroes – the Second World War and National Socialism in Danish history magazines

“The growing interest in history has long been reflected in films, documentaries, literature, history societies and now also in the world of magazines: “The range of choices at magazine kiosks clearly shows that history magazines such as ours gain more and more ground, and all TV viewers know that historical documentaries – especially those about World War II – take up a lot of broadcasting time [...]. History has firmly established itself in the use of media to the same extent as cooking or crime,” Sebastian Relster says. In particular, topics related to World War II are a sure bet. [...]. “The Second World War is undeniably one of the most popular historical topics. Apparently, the war has captured us, even though only a few have experienced it themselves.”<sup>1</sup>

In this excerpt from a press release authored by the publishing house ‘Bonnier’, in which the Danish history magazine HISTORIE – ILLUSTRERET VIDENSKAB<sup>2</sup> introduces itself, editor-in-chief Relster attributes considerable relevance for the conception of the magazine to the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, when flicking through the magazine, the

---

1 Press release Bonnier Publications A/S, URL: <http://bit.ly/1rGUZda> (1.8.2014); Quotes, also in the following, translated from Danish by the author.

2 In the following in short HISTORIE, URL: <http://historienet.dk> (1.8.2014).

3 The Second World War is in general of immense significance to popular history culture. This is not only apparent in films and computer games. The Second World War has become a hobby for many people to which they devote themselves through model making, collecting devotional objects or in extreme cases in reconstructing historical battles. Cf. on this e.g. Eva Kingsepp: Hitler as our devil? Nazi Germany in mainstream media. In: Sara Buttsworth/Maartje M. Abbenhuis (eds.): *Monsters in the mirror. Representations of nazism in post-war popular culture*. Santa Barbara, Calif. 2010, p. 29–52; Jenny Thompson: *War games. Inside the world of 20<sup>th</sup>-century war reenactors*. Washington, DC 2010. On a study according to which the Second World War was classified as the most important event of world history by respondents in 12 states

great importance of the Second World War and of topics connected to the war becomes apparent not only in HISTORIE, but also in the competing magazine ALT OM HISTORIE. Very often, the topic for the cover page is the military history of the Second World War. Adolf Hitler is mentioned in almost every issue, often in different contexts. The Holocaust, likewise, is continually touched upon. This article examines the presentation of National Socialism and the Second World War in both magazines. It is based on analysis of 172 issues from the years 2005 to 2011. The data is still being evaluated, but important results can already be summarised.<sup>4</sup>

## 1. HISTORIE and ALT OM HISTORIE

The magazines HISTORIE and ALT OM HISTORIE are published in Danish and dominate the Danish market for history magazines.<sup>5</sup> In every issue they offer a variety of articles on various historical epochs and topics. Both magazines have existed since 2005 and have been represented on the Danish market since their inception. Furthermore, they are distributed in different Northern European countries in translated and adapted versions. ALT OM HISTORIE and HISTORIE contain articles which are written for Denmark in particular. However, the majority of the articles are not designed with a national focus, and are translated into the target language.

---

(6 Asian and 6 Western) cf. James H. Liu et al.: Social representations of events and people in world history across 12 cultures. In: *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 36 (2005), p. 171–191.

- 4 All issues from 2005 to 2011 were analysed (with the exception of two issues of ALT OM HISTORIE, which were not accessible), altogether 100 issues of HISTORIE (in the following abbreviated with H when indicating specific issues) and 72 issues of ALT OM HISTORIE (translates as ‘Everything about history’, AOH in the following). Methodologically, the study employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The material is coded with the help of the QDA software ‘atlas.ti’. The codes are developed via both inductive and deductive processes, on the one hand starting from the material itself, on the other hand based on the categories ‘perpetrators’, ‘heroes’, ‘victims’.
- 5 The history magazine NOSTALGI & HISTORIE especially tailored to women was published in 2010 as a one-time only issue and so far has not been continued. The magazine MILITÆRHISTORIE, the sister magazine of ALT OM HISTORIE and still on the market in Sweden, was discontinued in Denmark in 2011.

HISTORIE emerged from the magazine ILLUSTRERET VIDENSKAB, and is published by the media company 'Bonnier Publications', which is situated in Denmark and belongs to the Swedish media concern 'Bonnier'. According to the publisher, HISTORIE is published in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, the Baltic States and the Netherlands.<sup>6</sup> The magazine is produced in Copenhagen; local editors translate the texts and add their own material. ALT OM HISTORIE belongs to the Swedish company 'LRF Media' situated in Stockholm and is published in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland.<sup>7</sup> In the information it supplies for advertising-customers, the magazine indicates that roughly 10 of the 68 total pages are especially designed for Danish readers and concern topics of Danish history. HISTORIE publishes 18 issues a year, ALT OM HISTORIE increased the number of issues from 12 to 14 in 2012. For HISTORIE, the larger magazine, controlled circulation figures exist, as well as studies on the readership.<sup>8</sup> According to these figures the magazine is published in a run of ca. 30.000 copies<sup>9</sup> and had ca. 184.000 readers in the year 2010<sup>10</sup>, of whom 64% were male and 36% female. Readers are about equally distributed among the different age groups. Persons under 30 years are however somewhat better represented; the older age groups, especially those above 60 years, less so. Members of different income and professional groups as well as people from different educational backgrounds can be found among the readership.

In describing its own editorial profile HISTORIE presents itself as an 'entertaining, competent and enthusiastic guide, who takes the reader on an exciting travel through time' and carries him/her back 'to the decisive turning points of world history'. Not least among the promises made for

---

6 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1CHfV8I> (1.8.2014).

7 Cf. URL: [www.lrfmedia.com](http://www.lrfmedia.com) (1.8.2014).

8 There is no comparative data for ALT OM HISTORIE, but the run may be significantly smaller.

9 The current numbers can be viewed on the website of 'Dansk Oplagskontrol' (The Danish Audit Bureau of Circulation), URL: [www.do.dk](http://www.do.dk) (1.8.2014).

10 This would be the equivalent of ca. 3.3% of the entire Danish population. The information about the readership here and in the following originates from: Danske Dagblades Forening et al.: Index Danmark/Gallup 2010, Copenhagen n.y. It is based on a telephone survey of 24.752 people older than 12 years.

this journey, which leads to the ‘most dramatic battles on the battle field’, the ‘most daring discovery expeditions’, the ‘biggest achievements of engineers’ as well as the ‘world’s best masterpieces of art’, is the provision of a new perspective on the present.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the preference for superlatives and for dramatic situations, as well as the claim to combine entertainment and information, are central features of HISTORIE as well as of ALT OM HISTORIE.

An important thematic focus for both magazines is military history. To a considerable extent their narratives are shaped by war and violence, masculinity and power<sup>12</sup> – i.e. by perspectives which can be particularly highlighted via the history of National Socialism and the Second World War. In general, great interest is taken in the achievement of – male – individuals, especially in the military or the technical domain. At the same time, the magazines regularly refer to other media of public history, especially to films, and claim to depict ‘actual’ historical events in a more adequate way.

## 2. Analysis

An analysis of the rich magazine content connected to the Second World War presents itself as valuable for various reasons. On the one hand, it allows access to a core area of the magazines. On the other hand, such analysis contributes to expanding and deepening our understanding of the presentation in popular history culture of National Socialism, the Second World War and the Holocaust.<sup>13</sup>

---

11 Quotes from ‘Historie Mediekit 2013’, URL: <http://bit.ly/1x2sgBg> (8.2.2013). For a similar profile description of ALT OM HISTORIE cf. URL: <http://www.altomhistorie.dk/om/> (1.8.2014).

12 This is clearly reflected in the cover pages. Marianne Sjöland (Marianne Sjöland: *Historia i magasin. En studie av tidskriften Populär Historias historieskrivning och av kommersiellt historiebruk*. Lund/Malmö 2011) and Bodil Axelsson (Bodil Axelsson: *History in popular magazines: Negotiating masculinities, the low of the popular and the high of history*. In: *Culture Unbound. Journal of Current Cultural Research* 4 (2012), p. 275–295) reach similar results for the Swedish magazine POPULÄR HISTORIA. Axelsson refers to the central role of the ‘nexus of masculinity, power and war’ (p. 276).

13 Research efforts on the popular presentation of the Second World War, National Socialism and the Holocaust have especially focused on the medium of film

The immensely rich research on the memory of the Second World War, National Socialism and the Holocaust cannot be discussed in detail here. Some fundamental aspects of the development since 1945 will, however, be outlined. In the Danish post-war consensus, both the cooperation policy of the Danish government towards the German occupying forces and actions of the resistance movement were interpreted as an expression of coherent national actions of benefit to the occupied country.<sup>14</sup> Memory culture after 1945 was based on identification with a partially glorified and heroicised resistance, emphasizing the unity of the Danish nation, and on the distinctiveness of the Germans as a nation of villains. In the past decades this master narrative has been continually challenged. Since the 1990s in particular, many aspects of the period of occupation which question a simplified black and white picture have been advanced. However, simplified and affirmative national patterns of interpretation have not vanished from history culture.

Despite all national specificities, developments in Denmark have to be seen against the backdrop of inter- and transnational trends. In Europe and the world, the Second World War and the Holocaust have frequently played, and still play, a central part in the national tradition. After 1945, patriotic master narratives which followed a pattern similar to the Danish

---

as well as on – mostly fictional – literature, whereas history magazines have, as far as I can see, not attracted attention.

- 14 The history of the German occupation of Denmark and of how it is remembered cannot be discussed in detail. Neither can the other Scandinavian or Northern countries be addressed. Cf. e.g. Arnd Bauerkämper: *Das umstrittene Gedächtnis. Die Erinnerung an Nationalsozialismus, Faschismus und Krieg in Europa seit 1945*. Paderborn 2012; Monika Flacke (ed.): *Mythen der Nationen. 1945 – Arena der Erinnerungen. Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Historischen Museums. Begleitbände zur Ausstellung 2. Oktober 2004 bis 27. Februar 2005*. Berlin 2004; Mirja Österberg/Johan Östling/Henrik Stenius (eds.): *Nordic narratives of the Second World War. National historiographies revisited*. Lund 2011; Claus Bryld: 'The five accursed years'. Danish perception and usage of the period of the German occupation, with a wider view to Norway and Sweden. In: *Scandinavian Journal of History* 32 (2007), p. 86–115; Helle Bjerg/Claudia Lenz/Erik Thorstensen (eds.): *Historicizing the uses of the past. Scandinavian perspectives on history culture, historical consciousness and didactics of history related to World War II*. Bielefeld 2011.

example were dominant in many countries.<sup>15</sup> In the course of the post-war period, these national master narratives have been challenged in many states. Moreover, the general ‘transition from a “patriotic memory” to a “memory of genocide”’<sup>16</sup> gave rise to an inter- and trans-nationalisation of the debate about the politics of memory. A striking example is the so-called ‘universalisation of Auschwitz’.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, approaches that examine national memory from a transnational perspective and consider processes of entanglement have gained importance in memory research.<sup>18</sup> Such transnational research perspectives on popular history are all the more relevant and important as popular history is produced and distributed in an increasingly transnational media system.

This article will contribute to this field of research by focusing on the following questions:

- (1) ‘Perpetrators’, ‘heroes’ and ‘victims’ are important categories in the interpretation of the Second World War and National Socialism. How are these roles shaped in the magazines?
- (2) Does the fact that the magazines are media which convey history in a popular way have an effect?
- (3) What role do national categories play? How are ‘the Germans’ portrayed, i.e. the ‘others’ in the traditional Danish master narrative? How are processes of transnationalisation reflected?

---

15 Etienne François: *Meistererzählungen und Dammbrüche: Die Erinnerung an den Zweiten Weltkrieg zwischen Nationalisierung und Universalisierung*. In: Flacke (note 14), p. 13–28.

16 François (note 15), p. 19.

17 Ibid. In the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, the Holocaust is understood as a warning to all nations to prevent genocides in advance, URL: <http://bit.ly/1pIjmTK> (1.8.2014). On the Stockholm process, to which Denmark was also committed, as well as the concept of the cosmopolitan memory, Daniel Levy/Natan Sznaider: *Memory unbound*. In: *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2002), p. 87–106. See also Idem: *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*. Frankfurt/Main 2001.

18 Cf. e.g. Aleida Assmann/Sebastian Conrad: *Memory in a global age. Discourses, practices and trajectories*. Basingstoke 2010; Sebastian Conrad: *Entangled memories: Versions of the past in Germany and Japan, 1945–2001*. In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 38 (2003), p. 85–99.

## 2.1 Perpetrators

The magazines' interest in perpetrators is undoubtedly huge and concentrates on the main representatives of National Socialism. Hitler, in particular, is one of the figures scarcely any issue fails to mention. Hitler is ever-present, on cover pages, in titles, detailed articles or short comments, as well as in adverts such as those for books or films, and not least in numerous pictures.<sup>19</sup> Addressed demonstrably less often but equally regularly are known National Socialists such as Joseph Goebbels and Hermann Göring, along with Heinrich Himmler, Adolf Eichmann, Josef Mengele and Reinhard Heydrich – individuals closely linked to the SS and the atrocities in the concentration camps.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1970s Susan Sontag discussed the attraction of National Socialism and especially of the SS in popular culture in her essay 'Fascinating Fascism' and explained it as arising from, among others causes, fantasies of community, order, identity, and competence, as well as the legitimate exertion of violence and authority. HISTORIE and ALT OM HISTORIE revert to the tradition of presentation described by Sontag, as when for example members of the SS are depicted as both cruel and attractive.<sup>21</sup> It

---

19 The counting of the word 'Hitler' showed that only in 3 of the 172 issues Hitler was not mentioned. A letter to the editor printed in HISTORIE (H 12 (2009), p. 4) expresses great amazement at the enormous presence of Hitler in the magazine. In HISTORIE Hitler's name is on average mentioned ca. 22 times per issue, in the somewhat less comprehensive ALT OM HISTORIE ca. 18 times. Numbers are based on the results of automatic text recognition, which is not completely free of mistakes. The automatized counting furthermore does not distinguish between editorial texts and advertising texts, e.g. for books or travels. However, the counting provides informative starting points.

20 Himmler (61 issues, overall 295 mentions) and Goebbels (54 issues, 211 mentions) are named most often and most regularly. The name Göring was recorded in 43 issues (total 188 times). Heydrich (17 issues, 147 mentions), Mengele (19 issues, 202 mentions) and Eichmann (26 issues, 172 mentions) are less regularly, but still repetitively, dealt with. Only in one of the 172 issues are none of the above names recorded.

21 Cf. Susan Sontag: Fascinating fascism. In: The New York Review of Books (6.2.1975), URL: <http://bit.ly/1lMq2Vo> (1.8.2014). The beginning of an article about Mengele quite clearly corresponds with the presentation pattern described by Sontag: 'The man in the SS uniform is standing there with shining, polished riding boots, the legs somewhat apart. One hand is resting on the belt;



is also striking that propaganda pictures of leading National Socialists are continually used in a purely illustrative way.<sup>22</sup>

The interest in NS villains fits in well with the interest in violence, and in perpetrators of violence, which can be observed in other areas of popular culture. The fact that serial killers often have the status of celebrities makes clear that the phenomenon of celebrity cannot be explained merely by the need for positive identification.<sup>23</sup> Instead, attraction and rejection often seem to be rather closely linked. This applies also to the magazines' presentation of Hitler. The authors leave no doubt about the fact that they strongly condemn the actions of the National Socialists. Nonetheless, the figure of Hitler appears to be highly attractive despite all the condemnation. How else explain the frequent references to Hitler? In many cases these references primarily serve to arouse interest. Besides, a whole range of articles merely seems to want to feed a certain craving for sensation as well as to meet the need to be able to 'experience' Hitler closely and in private.<sup>24</sup> It can therefore be assumed that Hitler, who is one of the most famous, if not the most famous individual in world history, is treated as

---

the other is holding a riding crop. Every time he is presented with one of the prisoners, who are paralyzed with terror, he casually points his crop: the strong ones fit for work to the right, the weak ones to the left.' (H 2 (2009), p. 43).

22 A propaganda picture of Hitler is illustratively used e.g. in an article about the Danish resistance (AOH 1 (2011), p. 24). The picture is based on a painting of Heinrich Knirr (presumably in a photographic version by Heinrich Hoffmann, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1tjWDzk> (1.8.2014) or URL: <http://bit.ly/10mlrjj> (1.8.2014)), which was also used for propaganda posters. Likewise, a photograph by Heinrich Hoffmann is often reproduced which shows Adolf Eichmann as a comparatively young man in uniform, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1r1lztL> (1.8.2014), printed in H 6 (2006), H 10 (2006), H 16 (2011), AOH 6 (2011), AOH 10 (2011), AOH 11 (2011).

23 On this phenomenon cf. e.g. Ruth Penfold-Mounce: *Celebrity culture and crime. The joy of transgression*. Basingstoke 2009 or David Schmid: *Natural born celebrities: Serial killers in American culture*. Chicago 2005. The discussion about possible reasons for this fascination cannot be addressed in detail here.

24 E.g. if the readers are invited in the title of a travel-guide-style article about Obersalzberg and the Kehlsteinhaus to have dinner in Hitler's 'Eagle's Nest' (H 1 (2007), p. 74).

a 'dark celebrity' in the history magazines.<sup>25</sup> The presentation of the perpetrators is partially shaped by popular cultural patterns that are by no means specific to history.

## 2.2 Heroes

The story about the hero who has to overcome obstacles and dangers in order to fulfil an important task represents one of the oldest and most widespread of narrative patterns. It is present in popular culture in numerous variants<sup>26</sup> and can be mobilised to strengthen the cohesion of – for example – a nationally defined group, not least by reverting to the figure of the self-sacrificing tragic hero.<sup>27</sup> The heroisation of resistance fighters and soldiers is therefore an important part of traditional national master narratives about the Second World War. The heroic narrative pattern also plays a very important part in the magazines. In their heroic narrations, authors try to make history 'experienceable' by illustrating dramatic situations in colourful ways or by narrating from the perspective of an individual person.

The magazines' heroes of the Second World War are usually men who have to fulfil an important task and who often carry out a specific plan. The implementation of this task requires courage, and frequently also cunning and audacity. Additionally, it often demands sacrifice. The role of the hero is played for example by members of the resistance: Danish or Scandinavian<sup>28</sup>, but also the Jewish<sup>29</sup> or German<sup>30</sup>. Military heroes appear

---

25 On the perception of Hitler as the most influential individual of world history cf. Liu et al. (note 3). Staging Hitler as celebrity is satirised by the magazine *Titanic* in one of its many Hitler cover pages, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1x2rtAr> (1.8.2014).

26 Cf. John G. Cawelti: *Adventure, mystery, and romance: Formula stories as art and popular culture*. Chicago 1976, p. 39 ff.

27 Cf. e.g. René Schilling: „Kriegshelden“: Deutungsmuster heroischer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1813–1945. Paderborn 2002.

28 E.g. AOH 1 (2001). It needs to be pointed out, however, that the period of the German occupation is not generally presented within a heroic narrative. The magazines also publish contributions which take up the discourse from recent years and reflect critical perspectives.

29 E.g. in connection with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (H 7 (2010)).

30 E.g. in an article about Stauffenberg (AOH 2 (2009)).

very frequently – in line with the magazines' focus on military history. Featured among them are not only famous personalities but also ordinary soldiers. Moreover, while allied troops can function as military heroes, so can Germans, whose efficiency is often emphasised. In some cases this even includes those who are unequivocal National Socialists. For instance, one article about the British destruction of the German-occupied dry docks in St Nazaire makes use of a narrative pattern which is almost identical to that of an article about the sinking by a German U-boat of a British battleship in Scapa Flow.<sup>31</sup> The German U-boat commander, Günther Prien, is the hero of the latter article and the regret about the death of many hundreds of British soldiers expressed in the article does not in the least detract from the clear admiration for Prien's competence and brazen courage. The fact that a product of NS propaganda is presented in an almost unfiltered and affirmative way can hardly be linked to any corresponding political sympathies on the part of the editors. Rather, the magazines seem to choose – quite haphazardly – stories which allow the deployment of a specific narrative pattern and ideal of masculinity.<sup>32</sup>

### 2.3 Victims

In connection with the Second World War, different groups of victims are addressed. The Holocaust for instance is regularly and at times extensively dealt with.<sup>33</sup> However, in articles about the Holocaust the main interest

---

31 Article on the so-called St Nazaire Raid or Operation Chariot in 1942: H 7 (2007). Article on the German attack on the Royal Navy's primary base, Scapa Flow, under the command of Günther Prien in 1939: H 8 (2008).

32 In the magazine article Prien's memoirs, which were published in Danish translation in 1942, are mentioned as reference. The topic of the article might have been provided by an English private history website, which is mentioned as reference, URL: [www.u47.org/](http://www.u47.org/) (1.8.2014). On Prien cf. Hans Wagener: Günther Prien, der „Stier von Scapa Flow“. Selbststilisierung, Heldenkult und Legendengründung um einen U-Boot-Kommandanten. In: Thomas F. Schneider (ed.): *Kriegserlebnis und Legendengründung*. Vol. 2: *Der Zweite Weltkrieg, westliche Perspektiven, östliche Perspektiven, Mythen, Nachkrieg*. Osnabrück 1999, p. 651–672.

33 The terms 'Auschwitz' or 'Holocaust' were recorded in 78 of the 172 issues. The Holocaust is the title topic in H 2 (2011).

does not necessarily lie with the victims themselves.<sup>34</sup> Frequently articles concentrate on the perpetrators, e.g. on Mengele, Himmler or Heydrich, or on the deeds themselves. If many gruesome details are to be revealed then HISTORIE often alerts readers via an eye-catching warning stamp, which may be assumed to function among other things as a means of arousing curiosity. This kind of interest in gruesome crimes is well known from popular culture, for example from the true crime genre.<sup>35</sup>

The sufferings of the Soviet civilian population are addressed in, for example, articles about the occupation of Leningrad.<sup>36</sup> Another central victim figure is the suffering soldier. The battle of Stalingrad, treatment of which is very prevalent in the magazines,<sup>37</sup> can be staged as a tragedy of the simple soldier caught in an almost apocalyptic conflict between two dictators. The perspective of the German soldiers is often emphasised,<sup>38</sup> since the battle at Stalingrad is predominantly projected as a German defeat. Accordingly, it is described as 'catastrophe', 'hell' and 'nightmare' and to some extent mythologized.<sup>39</sup> Suffering, desperate, and grieving

---

34 The perspective of the victim is most visible in articles about Anne Frank: she is the 'best-known victim of the Holocaust' (AOH 1 (2008), p. 5).

35 The true crime genre addresses actual crimes, and in particular gruesome murders. Perpetrators generate special interest. Truman Capote's 'In cold blood' (1966) was very influential. Cf. Jean Murley: *The rise of true crime. Twentieth century murder and American popular culture*. Westport, Conn. 2008.

36 H 13 (2008), AOH 5 (2007).

37 The battle of Stalingrad is a cover topic twice (AOH 1 (2009), H 1 (2005)) and is dealt with moreover in a long article in H 17 (2010). The term 'Stalingrad' was recorded in 67 of 172 issues (on the counting of words cf. note 19).

38 In AOH 1 (2009), p. 25 ff. for example, where the letters of a German soldier (who was later killed) to his fiancée play a decisive role in the narrative strategy of the article. On Stalingrad and the Soviet and German memory culture cf. Bernd Wegner: *Der Mythos „Stalingrad“* (19. November 1942 - 2. Februar 1943). In: Gerd Krumeich/Susanne Brandt (eds.): *Schlachtenmythen*. Köln/Weimar/Wien 2003, p. 183–197.

39 See for example AOH 1 (2009), p. 25 ff.: 'It was a desperate battle, a nightmare, which has given the name Stalingrad an almost mythological status in the history of war – like Waterloo, Cannae or Verdun. Stalingrad is the symbol for the turning point, for intransigence and barbarity, for tremendous destruction and at the same time also for a kind of epic greatness. The soldiers and commanders of both sides were fully aware of this back then.' In H 12 (2009), p. 4, in the editors' answer to a letter regarding the strong presence of Hitler,

German soldiers appear in numerous photographs and are an important element of the visualization of the battles at the Eastern front.

Germans are likewise presented as victims in other contexts: there are articles about the bombing of Dresden, about the flight and expulsion of Germans or about the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff*.<sup>40</sup> Parallels to the German memory discourse since the 1990s, which has been described as a new discourse of victimization, are striking. In some cases the direct influence of German history culture is quite obvious.<sup>41</sup> This is an interesting phenomenon, which raises questions. So far, German victim stories have been interpreted within a national framework. But in what ways do such narratives hold interest for Danish or Scandinavian readers? What shifts in meaning do they undergo when they are transferred into a different memory culture?

### 3. Discussion of the results

In conclusion it can be stated that the magazines are not limited to a simplified good – bad schema according to national categories. Germans are not reduced to the role of perpetrators, but function also as victims and

---

the battle of Stalingrad is put on one level with the Holocaust: 'Even today names such as Stalingrad or Auschwitz seem strong and laden with destiny'.

40 Bombing of Dresden: H 14 (2001); Flight and expulsion: H 12 (2007); Sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff*: H 16 (2010).

41 On the German discourse cf. e.g. Elke Heckner: *Televising tainted history: Recent TV docudrama (Dresden, March of Millions, Die Gustloff) and the charge of revisionism*. In: *New German Critique* 38 (2011), p. 65–84 or Christoph Kleßmann: *1945 – welthistorische Zäsur und „Stunde Null“*. Version: 1.0. In: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 15.10.2010, URL: <http://bit.ly/1nR9ywz> (1.8.2014). The influence of the German discourse is e.g. apparent if German books or websites are indicated as further reading suggestions (Flight and expulsion, H 12 (2007); *Gustloff*, H 16 (2010)). Guido Knopp (some of whose books have been translated into Danish) is mentioned several times. The broadcast of the TV two-part film 'Die Gustloff' on one of the main German channels, ZDF, is announced on one full page (H 2 (2008), ZDF can be received in many Danish households; many films have Danish subtitles). Film suggestions on the Second World War and National Socialism include films such as 'Das Boot', 'Downfall' ('Der Untergang') or Vilsmaiers 'Stalingrad' (AOH 4 (2008); AOH 2 (2001)).

heroes. I would like to suggest three explanatory approaches to this observation, which are closely interconnected:

- (1) 'Criticism of a specific, simplified interpretational pattern'. In popular culture, an interpretational pattern has been prevalent which contrasts evil Nazis with their heroic antagonists.<sup>42</sup> By including stories about German victims or German heroes the magazines claim to offer a broader range of interpretation than a simple black and white confrontation of nationally defined 'good' and 'evil'. This assumption is supported by the results of a study in Sweden.<sup>43</sup> Participants in the study had a particularly strong interest in National Socialism and the Second World War. They often expressed a negative attitude towards an interpretational pattern that they characterized as 'mainstream' and linked to 'Hollywood'. They especially criticised the way in which glorified allies and indisputably negatively-depicted Germans were simplistically juxtaposed. German Films, however, such as 'Das Boot' (Wolfgang Petersen, 1981), 'Stalingrad' (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1993) or 'Downfall' (German 'Der Untergang', Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004) were highly esteemed and viewed as more objective.<sup>44</sup> The participants believed that their access to history was less biased than a simplified good vs. evil narrative, and they were proud of their stance. It can be assumed that ALT OM HISTORIE and HISTORIE also cater to this interest in their readers. These challenges to a specific, simplified interpretational pattern correlate with the claim of the magazines to convey history in a serious and informative way.
- (2) 'Masculinity'. Men are the focus of the magazines' approach to history. They are presented in various roles – as perpetrators, victims and heroes.<sup>45</sup> In particular, the magazines serve and promote an interest in a concept of militarized masculinity, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> and

---

42 Cf. Maartje Abbenhuis/Sara Buttsworth: Introduction: The mundanity of evil: Everyday nazism in post-war popular culture. In: Idem (note 3), p. XIII–XL, p. XIX ff.

43 Cf. Kingsepp (note 3), p. 40 ff.

44 These films are also part of film suggestions in ALT OM HISTORIE (cf. note 41).

45 On these categories in the context of masculinity research cf. Anthony Synnott: Re-thinking men: Heroes, villains and victims. Burlington 2009.

early 20<sup>th</sup> century functioned as a central feature of hegemonic notions of masculinity. This concept was radicalized by the National Socialists and lost its dominance after 1945.<sup>46</sup> However, the fact that it is still attractive is demonstrated by phenomena such as the re-enactments of Second World War battles, where history may provide a possibility for acting out specific fantasies of masculinity. In such events, German soldiers not only function as Germans, but also as soldiers and men, and as such in the view of participants deserve respect.<sup>47</sup> Similar mechanisms are not only effective in re-enactment, but in other popular adaptations of the Second World War and National Socialism. It seems that the militarized and radicalized conception of masculinity connected to National Socialism and the Second World War exerts a fascination and even offers a model for identification. After all, it is striking that a keen interest in World War II is, as far as we know, strongly gender specific.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, a gender-oriented analytic perspective can contribute to a better understanding of the fascination exerted by Hitler and other leading National Socialists. They are staged as very masculine and embody, albeit in a perverted way, male power.

- (3) 'Popular cultural patterns'. The magazines' editors and authors often claim to convey information in an objective way. However, the articles' narrative strategy is by no means shaped by scholarliness, but rather functions as entertainment. It makes use of popular cultural patterns taken from the world of modern media and which are not specifically

---

46 Cf. Wolfgang Schmale: *Geschichte der Männlichkeit in Europa (1450–2000)*. Köln 2003. On the concept of hegemonic masculinity cf. Raewyn W. Connell: *Masculinities*. Cambridge 1995. On the concept of masculinity of soldiers in national socialism cf. Frank Werner: „Hart müssen wir hier draußen sein“. Soldatische Männlichkeit im Vernichtungskrieg 1941–1944. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 34 (2008), p. 5–40.

47 Cf. Thompson (note 3). Many of the (American) participants described in Thompson's study stage themselves as members of the Wehrmacht or SS. They do so at significant financial cost and in time-consuming ways.

48 That men are overrepresented amongst Second World War enthusiasts is e.g. suggested by the results of the studies by Thompson (note 3) and Kingsepp (note 3). This does not exclude the possibility that women may also find such concepts of masculinity fascinating.

connected to history. History magazines have their – dark – celebrities, tell historical adventure stories or present true crime stories in all their gruesome details. In the press release from the magazine HISTORIE quoted above, this is expressed in the following way: ‘Many associated the word “history” with the school subject History, meaning an endless enumeration of dates, footnotes and lists of kings. But the genie is now out of the bottle. These days it is acceptable to make history lively and to convey drama, human destinies, everyday life – everything that history actually is: a true gold mine of exciting stories.’<sup>49</sup>

To some extent, history in the magazines becomes the material for entertaining, exciting and often violent stories, which frequently correspond to popular cultural patterns and continually invite identification with the protagonists. In order to find adequate material the authors use a broad range of stories with a certain eclecticism of approach. The national affiliation of the protagonists can retreat into the background. Their narrative function is often the more decisive factor.

Therefore an important task for future research on popular presentations of history may lie in identifying relevant narrative patterns, describing them in detail, defining their functions and examining their effects on the formation of historical meaning. As a starting point for the analysis of history magazines work by James Wertsch and James Cawelti are particularly suitable. Inspired by the folklorist Vladimir Propp, who analysed the narrative structure of fairy tales, Wertsch demonstrated how narrative templates impact collective memory.<sup>50</sup> Cawelti distinguished the concept of ‘formula’ for the study of popular literature. Already in 1976, Cawelti suspected ‘that there are also formulas in the nonfictional literary forms of popular culture such as news, documentaries, and popular history and philosophy’<sup>51</sup>.

---

49 Press release Bonnier Publications A/S (note 1).

50 E.g. James V. Wertsch: Collective memory and narrative templates. In: *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 75 (2008), p. 133–156.

51 Cawelti (note 26), p. 297. The term ‘formula’ is defined by Cawelti in the following way: ‘As we have seen, the world of formula can be described as an archetypal story pattern embodied in the images, symbols, themes, and myths of a particular culture. As shaped by the imperatives of the experience of escape,



That national categories can retreat behind specific narrative patterns, the category of masculinity, or the wish for a certain degree of multiperspectivity, does not mean, however, that they entirely lose their meaning. Rather, we face a complex interaction of national and transnational factors. On the one hand, the magazines act within a transnationally oriented media culture, as do other media, e.g. films, to which the magazines often refer. They are produced for transnational markets, and use patterns of popular culture which have spread globally. They become bearers of a certain dynamic in memory culture by transporting narrations into other national discourses. On the other hand, the national component remains present, not least because many of the articles are structured around a nationally-connoted 'us' – 'them' opposition. Moreover, the magazines have to compete on national markets and relate to national memory discourses. It can be assumed that identical narrations do not unfold the same meaning in the context of different basic narratives: a picture of a suffering German soldier in Stalingrad could in the context of the German memory discourse be understood as an exculpatory self-victimisation. In the Danish context, however, it may be perceived as a universal symbol for the suffering of humankind. It is therefore a complex question whether the phenomenon and products of transnationalization contribute to harmonization in memory culture or pave the way for misunderstanding.<sup>52</sup> In order to answer this question further research – not least of an empirical kind – will be necessary.

---

these formulaic worlds are constructions that can be described as moral fantasies constituting an imaginary world in which the audience can encounter a maximum of excitement without being confronted with an overpowering sense of the insecurity and danger that accompany such forms of excitement in reality [...]. Three of the literary devices most often used by formulaic writers of all kinds can serve as an illustration of this sort of artistic skill: suspense, identification, and the creating of a slightly removed, imaginary world.' (p. 16 ff.) Archetypal patterns which are realised in formula include, according to Cawelti, e.g. 'adventure', 'mystery' and 'melodrama'.

- 52 Phenomena of 'cosmopolitization' (Ulrich Beck) have so far been discussed particularly in connection with Holocaust memory, cf. above note 17. On the relation between the concepts of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism cf. Victor Roudometof: Transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and glocalization. In: *Current Sociology* 53 (2005), p. 113–135.

Miriam Hannig

# Popular history magazines between information and entertainment. A qualitative study on the expectations of consumers

## 1. Introduction

In the year 2014, hundred years after the ‘great seminal catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’ (George F. Kennan), the periodical racks in supermarkets, kiosks and station bookshops throughout Europe paint a similar picture: cover pages showing battle scenes, trenches, prominent political actors such as the German Kaiser Wilhelm II, or also the assassination of Sarajevo are supposed to attract the buying interest of potential customers to the corresponding history magazine. But who are these ‘potential customers’? And which one of them actually turns towards the magazine and therewith gets out their wallet? Which considerations and attitudes influence the purchase decision for a specific magazine?

So far, relatively little can be said about this,<sup>1</sup> since popular history magazines have only recently attracted the attention of historians and history

---

1 In contrast to research on the reception of history programmes on TV, where some few studies were published during the past years (cf. Michael Meyer/Senta Pfaff: *Rezeption von Geschichte im Fernsehen. Eine qualitative Studie zu Nutzungsmotiven, Zuschauererwartungen und zur Bewertung einzelner Darstellungsformen*. In: *Media Perspektiven* 2 (2006), p. 102–106; as well as: Michael Meyen: *Was wollen die Zuschauer sehen? Erwartungen des Publikums an Geschichtsformate im Fernsehen*. In: Albert Drews (eds.): *Zeitgeschichte als TV-Event. Erinnerungsarbeit und Geschichtsvermittlung im deutschen Fernsehfilm*. Rehburg-Loccum 2008 (Loccumer Protokolle, vol. 31), p. 55–74; cf. an expansion of the study in: Senta Pfaff-Rüdiger/Claudia Riesmeyer/Michael Meyen: *Deutungsmacht des Fernsehens? Das Selbstverständnis von Geschichtsjournalisten zwischen normativen Ansprüchen und Publikumswünschen*. In: Klaus Arnold/Walter Hömberg/Susanne Kinnebrock (eds.): *Geschichtsjournalismus. Zwischen Information und Inszenierung*. Berlin 2010, p. 109–126), only the information on the recipients published by the magazines themselves is available so far to address advertising customers. Cf. Marlene Hiller: *Der Spagat zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Wissenschaft. Oder: Geschichte schreiben für Liebhaber*. In: Sabine Horn/Michael Sauer (eds.): *Geschichte und Öffentlichkeit. Orte – Medien – Institutionen*. Göttingen 2009, p. 161–168.

education experts,<sup>2</sup> of researchers in the field of communication and media. In this context it is not surprising that empirical research on the recipients of the magazines has so far not been carried out. This article shall be a first contribution to empirical considerations on the recipients of popular history magazines. The aim is to get to know the audience of the magazines and learn more about their motivation to 'consume' history magazines, about their reading behaviour, the favoured topics and preferred magazines. Moreover, since 65% of the survey's participants are or were students training to be teachers it is interesting whether and how the consumers of the magazines could imagine them being used in school. Empirically, this study is based on group discussions, which were held at Augsburg University – with readers of history magazines – in August 2014.

In the following, the methodology and the participants will first be addressed before the results of the group discussion are illustrated. In the concluding considerations starting points for further research in this area will be presented.

## 2. Methodology

In order to outline the recipients and their demands on the magazines, it does not suffice to merely consider the data on the buyers published by the publishers, which most of the time only mirror the subscribers. It became apparent in the study that many recipients of the magazines are not also buyers at the same time. The magazines are passed on, lent out or given away especially among students and young professionals, who formed the majority of the participants. All these recipients are not depicted in the magazines' own collection of data, which aims at presenting the magazine to the advertising customers in a highly profitable way.

In order to also include these recipients, readers of history magazines were found in the university courses offered by the Chair of History Didactics who would be prepared to participate in a roughly 50 minute group discussion. Since the students were also asked to find further readers in

---

2 A first inventory was provided on this by the international conference 'History sells', which was held in Amsterdam from 19–21 August 2010 upon the invitation of Susanne Popp (Augsburg University).

their circle of friends, 20 people could be gathered for three group discussions in August this year: two groups, one with six and the other one with seven participants, consisted of persons who study or have studied history and/or history didactics: eight of the participants study history as a fourth subject, five of the participants with a main focus on didactics.<sup>3</sup> The youngest participant was born in 1994, the oldest participant in 1984.

A third group with seven participants was formed with further readers with professional backgrounds in all areas. Accordingly, a student of mathematics (born in 1990), a graphic designer (born in 1985), and a physiotherapist (born in 1956) took part in the survey. In this group, the age structure reached from participants born in 1990 to participants born in 1955. In contrast to the magazines' analysis, where the gender ratio among the readers is roughly 62% male and 38% female buyers,<sup>4</sup> the survey here was balanced. Ten men and ten women volunteered to participate in the discussion.

A qualitative structure was chosen for the study due to the knowledge interest. The aim of the study was to offer the recipients the possibility to freely talk about their reading habits and opinions about magazines so as to express their motives of use, their expectations, evaluations and their self-conception. This is enabled by a qualitative approach since it is – when it comes to the aims mentioned above – superior to the standardised quantitative methods. Of course, it has to be considered in this respect that the results at hand have emerged in the scope of a very small group of discussion participants and have to be further verified. However, this contribution

- 
- 3 Four participants study – or have studied – history to become secondary school teachers. One of them is already a teacher trainee and another one has additionally obtained a Master's degree in History Studies. Three participants study primary school teaching with history as a teaching subject, one participant studies history as a third subject for primary school and two for comprehensive school. One of them studies for a Master's degree in Mediating Culture, a further participant studies history as teaching subject for comprehensive schools and is also enrolled in the Master's degree programme Mediating Culture. One participant each is only enrolled in the Master's degree course Mediating Culture or in the Master's degree programme Historical Studies respectively.
  - 4 Average result of the readers' gender regarding the magazines DAMALS (URL: <http://bit.ly/1r1Xnft>, 1.8.2014), P.M. HISTORY (URL: <http://bit.ly/1u3vKoF>, 1.8.2014) and GEO EPOCHE (URL: <http://bit.ly/1mhXO52>, 1.8.2014).

may pose a useful starting point as a first approach to the actual recipients of history magazines.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Results

Each group was questioned about their 'consumer behaviour' regarding popular history magazines, their favoured topics, the further use after having read the history magazines as well as their assessment of the use of popular history magazines in school. Additionally, the participants were presented with six magazines on the topic 'World War One' on which the participants were supposed to comment. Thereby, possible unconscious attitudes towards the magazines, personal preferences and dislikes were supposed to be recorded. A further aspect of discussion was the extent to which very-special-interest magazines are familiar and whether their partially ideological alignment is known or rather suspected. Furthermore, two Brazilian magazines were presented and the participants were asked about the impressions they made on them.

#### 3.1 Consumer behaviour: when and where are popular history magazines bought?

Already at the age of 12 three students received a subscription of *G/GESCHICHTE*, whereby the parents of two participants have already cancelled the subscription. For one student the subscription is still active (born in 1988 and now a father himself) his mother is still paying for it. Two further participants bought a subscription (*GEO EPOCHE* and

---

5 The empirical study is based on a study by Michael Meyen and Senta Pfaff-Rüdiger (Munich University, Institute for communication studies and media research), who examined the reception of history on television in 2005. In cooperation with the media research of the 'Bayerischer Rundfunk' the qualitative study examined the motives of use, the expectations of the viewers and the evaluations of individual forms of history presentations on TV from the perspective of the recipients. The answers to this question are based on group discussions, which were held in May 2005 with 31 persons in total: five students and 13 persons each from the age groups '30 to 49 years' as well as '50 years and older'. Cf. (note 1). In the following, I refer to the study from the year 2006.

G/GESCHICHTE respectively) during their studies, whereby one subscription has already been cancelled 'since it is more economical to buy the issues individually instead of receiving twelve issues per year, when, in the end, I don't read them all'<sup>6</sup>. A further participant mentioned that she intensively read P.M. HISTORY during her school years, because the history presented by the magazine was processed in an interesting way and was far more exciting than the school book. In her opinion, the magazines have now become 'too expensive and too popular scientific' and for her taste contain 'too much Hitler'.

The expense factor is of importance in all statements: in general, the magazines are read with pleasure, but the participants are not always willing to or cannot always afford this. They cancel the subscriptions or their parents are still paying for them, they borrow the magazines from libraries or receive them in form of 'class reading material'. Accordingly, one participant (born in 1994) stated that popular history magazines were the foundation of her higher level history class at school: the presentation of different historical events in various magazines, films and the school book were analysed and compared.

Furthermore, the history students also reported that they often received popular history magazines from relatives and acquaintances. The parents think 'that it is useful' to provide them with the magazines and in this way the magazines end up on their desks 'because, after all, it is history'. The magazines are also borrowed and passed on among the participants since most of the participants find it too expensive to regularly purchase the magazines. If they themselves buy a magazine, then this often happens at the airport, the train station or motorway service stations, i.e. just before a longer journey, as 'reading material for the trip'. Moreover, the choice of history magazines is much broader at e.g. airports than at the place of residence. The participants buy the magazine themselves if it deals with topics which are currently of particular relevance and in this way appealing to them. For instance, if the magazine is about the history of the holiday destination, if the topic is relevant for the final exams or for a planned lesson at school, or if it deals with the favourite epoch.

---

6 All German quotations have been translated.

### 3.2 Preferred topics: which topics are favoured in popular history magazines?

Regarding the preferred topics, two groups emerge: whereas the history students prefer topics which they know nothing or only little about, the ‘non-historian’-group mentions mainly topics as starting points which they were already interested in during their school time.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, this group is mainly interested in event history and less in epochs or regions. Time-wise, they rather tend towards contemporary history and only little can be noticed from the ‘NS fatigue’, which is evident in statements made by the ‘history group’ such as ‘that by now everything is known about Hitler, even his slippers’. Rather, the contrary is the case: the NS period is described as interesting by the discussion participants, because they think that ‘more’ statements by contemporary witnesses and sources are available for this topic. One participant furthermore stated that he knew enough about this topic so as to be able to easily follow the presentations in the magazines. A further participant added that the magazines were so very interesting because they – other than classes at school – ‘encourage finding one’s own topic and you can reach beyond the material covered at school, the school book knowledge and the “prescribed dismay” and you [can] rather explore the background circumstances’. Especially global connections and not only the German perspective are interesting to the participants. One participant added that she is ‘still expecting to understand at some point why this all happened’. These comments explain partly why so often well-known leading NS figures ‘decorate’ the magazine covers.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to this, the history group was especially interested in topics which they regarded as rather ‘marginal topics’, i.e. topics which are less covered in school and at university. Accordingly, Asia or South America were mentioned as regions, but also topics which have managed to be on the cover page for anniversaries, but which are otherwise lesser known such

---

7 Both students of the Master’s degree programme ‘Historical Studies’ are an exception. They are mainly or exclusively interested in their subject and, for instance, in a magazine with the topic ‘pirates’ only read the contributions about pirates regarding their respective epoch.

8 Cf. the results of the cover analysis in Sweden (Vinterek), England (Haydn), Denmark (Gorbahn) and Germany (Springkart) in this volume.

as e.g. ‘The Council of Constance’<sup>9</sup> or ‘The House of Welf on England’s Throne’<sup>10</sup>. It can be assumed that the students try to fill supposed ‘knowledge gaps’ by buying the magazines. Accordingly, some state that they have bought magazines with cover topics which they knew little about. This would also comply with the statement that some buy the magazines as a starting point for exam preparations if the relevant topic is the main topic in the magazine and also that some of the magazines are revisited during exam preparations in order to make proper use of the bus ride to university, for example.

### 3.3 Exemplary comparison of the magazines on the same topic: how are the different magazines seen?

Which opinions and attitudes do the participants have towards the individual history magazines? Which one would they actually buy – irrespective of the cover topic and corresponding preferences?

For the study, the discussion participants were presented with six German history magazines, special-interest magazines, which are most widely disseminated in Germany.<sup>11</sup> Since the preference for the topic was not to distract from the layout and the associated magazine attribution the last issue each published on the topic ‘World War One’ was chosen. This included:

- P.M. HISTORY 11 (2013): ‘Der Erste Weltkrieg’<sup>12</sup>
- GEO EPOCHE 14 (2004): ‘Der Erste Weltkrieg’<sup>13</sup>
- SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE 5 (2013): ‘Der Erste Weltkrieg’<sup>14</sup>
- ZEIT GESCHICHTE 1 (2014): ‘Der Erste Weltkrieg’<sup>15</sup>

---

9 Cf. DAMALS 2 (2014): ‘Konstanzer Konzil’, URL: <http://bit.ly/1tnd4Pc> (1.8.2014); G/GESCHICHTE 4 (2014): ‘Ketzer, Kaiser, Päpste: Das Konzil zu Konstanz’, URL: <http://bit.ly/1p2j8aJ> (1.8.2014).

10 Cf. DAMALS 5 (2014): ‘Welfen auf Englands Thron’, URL: <http://bit.ly/1qhl4U> (1.8.2014); SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE 4 (2014): ‘Britanniens Krone’, URL: <http://bit.ly/1qCauil> (1.8.2014).

11 Cf. the contribution of Springkart in this volume.

12 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1r3BhrN> (1.8.2014).

13 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1reS2C7> (1.8.2014).

14 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/YV0qvB> (1.8.2014).

15 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1r3zoLR> (1.8.2014).



- G/GESCHICHTE 11 (2013): ‘Der erste Weltkrieg – Als die Welt in Flammen aufging’<sup>16</sup>
- DAMALS 3 (2014): ‘Alptraum Erster Weltkrieg 1914–1918’<sup>17</sup>

Especially the aesthetic dimension<sup>18</sup> of the history culture – i.e. the dimension which is decisive for the presentation of history to actually reach the consumer by attracting their attention – plays an important part here. Of course, it is not only the aesthetic dimension that effects the buyers, also the attributions which are ascribed to the publishers ZEIT, SPIEGEL, GEO or P.M. affect the subjective evaluation and therewith the purchase decision. Accordingly, it is a widespread opinion about P.M. HISTORY that the ‘added value’ of other magazines is higher, the headlines are constantly sensational and the magazine tries to transport emotions rather than scientific knowledge. Only one participant said that she finds the coloured cover pages appealing and interesting and that they are – in comparison to the other black-and-white cover pages – an eye-catcher. The fact that P.M. HISTORY is a multi-thematic magazine is also the reason why the participants would decide for or against the magazine: three participants found the combination of the topics dinosaurs, World War One and Japanese emperors interesting and they would buy the magazine if they were only looking for ‘amusing entertainment’. Others in particular regarded this as an impossible combination in a history magazine.

Similarly, the announcement of diary passages on the cover pages is received in a differing way. For one part of the participants this is very interesting and partially the trigger to buy the particular magazine. The history trainee teacher participating in the discussion stated that it was ‘worth a lot since several lessons could be “crafted” from this as it stands’. For one participant from the ‘non-historian group’ this is ‘yet another diary reporting about personal fates’. According to her own statements she rather values ‘facts’ and connections instead of the presentation of individual fates.

---

16 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1sujbgs> (1.8.2014).

17 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1BPMMy> (1.8.2014).

18 Cf. Jörn Rüsen: Die fünf Dimensionen der Geschichtskultur. In: Jacqueline Nießer/Juliane Tomann (eds.): *Angewandte Geschichte. Neue Perspektiven auf Geschichte in der Öffentlichkeit*. Paderborn 2014, p. 46–57, p. 48.

Besides the presentation of diaries, especially pictures are relevant to future teachers. Accordingly, it is not surprising that several participants tend towards GEO EPOCHE, the magazine which ‘tells stories about history’<sup>19</sup> and features a high share of images. Several participants are ‘convinced of the proven GEO quality’ and would buy this magazine if they were interested in the topic. Otherwise, the magazine would be too expensive for them. SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE and ZEIT GESCHICHTE receive positive feedback from the SPIEGEL and the ZEIT readers, whereby all participants would describe the cover page of ZEIT GESCHICHTE as very appealing: the special format of the magazine, the individually depicted soldier who is looking into the camera – ‘I have the feeling he wants to tell me something’ – and who is not depicted engaged in battle actions at the front as is the case in the other magazines. The reserved layout is not least mentioned as a further reason for this. However, the categorisation of G/GESCHICHTE is especially interesting, which just as P.M. HISTORY and DAMALS is a multi-thematic magazine and was originally published as a pupils’ magazine, but has ‘grown up’ during the last 35 years even if history is still to be conveyed in an informative and entertaining way.<sup>20</sup> The case is different for DAMALS, the magazine for ‘people with great interest in history, arts and culture, politics and social issues’, for which ‘distinguished historians [write] in an exciting, understandable and entertaining way’<sup>21</sup>. Both covers show a black-and-white scene with one or several soldiers at the front. Whereas in DAMALS there is a person who almost fills the entire cover, in G/GESCHICHTE there are several soldiers in front of barbed wire fences; one of them is shouting something towards the camera. Further soldiers are storming towards the frontline while explosions, smoke and airplanes can be seen in the sky. Both cover pages are assessed as conventional and as belonging to subject-specific magazines ‘for people who are really into history’. This discourages most of the participants. Additionally, both magazines appear to be ‘somehow outdated’ in the view of the discussion participants. Moreover, for one participant (economist, born in 1988) DAMALS sparks associations to propaganda pictures.

---

19 Self-portrayal of GEO EPOCHE, URL: <http://bit.ly/1uK4OrU> (1.8.2014).

20 Self-portrayal of G/GESCHICHTE, URL: <http://bit.ly/1wHCJ7Q> (1.8.2014).

21 Self-portrayal of DAMALS, URL: <http://bit.ly/XnJpbX> (1.8.2014).

This is interesting insofar as these tendencies and connections sparked by DAMALS and G/GESCHICHTE would surely not have been associated with the regular cover pictures of G/GESCHICHTE,<sup>22</sup> since regarding the cover pages so far it has been apparent that the pictures are collages e.g. from several individual pictures, as is also the case with the issue at hand. Accordingly, the cover page is comprised of at least three individual images: one photograph which shows soldiers in the image foreground, one photograph which was partially doubled and shows a German thrust troop in its 'own barbed wire enclosure'<sup>23</sup> as well as a further picture showing an explosion<sup>24</sup>, which was also doubled for the cover page. Additionally, a further image showing airplanes must have been included. However, this was not named by the publisher upon request – in contrast to the three pictures mentioned above. Additionally, it can be assumed that the images may possibly be film scenes.<sup>25</sup> In this case, however, the manipulation of the picture was not recognised as such even by the historians and history students asked. It can be said that with this picture manipulation on the cover page of G/GESCHICHTE the magazine gained a higher reputation regarding the subject knowledge, but at the same time this has contributed to the fact that the participants would rather shy away from buying the magazine.

### 3.4 Very-special-interest magazines: are ideological subtexts expected?

Besides the magazines mentioned above, which are special-interest magazines since they exclusively deal with the topic 'history', there are, moreover, so-called 'very-special-interest magazines', which address a specific group of buyers with specific topics. Representatives of both magazine types can be found in well-sorted newsagents, but also at the kiosk around the corner. If the consumers are asked which magazine they read or would

---

22 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1pkrw4k> (1.8.2014).

23 Cf. picture agency Interfoto, image number: 00494085.

24 Cf. picture agency getty images, image number: 3286484, URL: <http://bit.ly/ZrpGty> (1.8.2014).

25 Cf. picture agency Bridgeman, image number: SZP 355510, URL: <http://bit.ly/1o5Hksp> (1.8.2014), also picture agency SZ Photo, image number: 00059582, URL: <http://bit.ly/1ud8alH> (1.8.2014).

buy on the topic 'World War One' the market of the very-special-interest magazines has to be considered: several of these magazines have specialised in military history and some represent a revisionist image of history, which only becomes apparent when critically examining the articles. In how far this is known or whether the subject group is already sensitised was supposed to be determined by presenting the subject group with the two very-special-interest magazines – DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE and HUSAR – indicating that both are pure military magazines bought at the local station kiosk. DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE<sup>26</sup> is a history magazine which can be situated in the right-wing of the political spectrum and is specialised in revisionist German military history. However, the magazine published by Gerd Sudholt at the publishing house Druffel & Vowinckel<sup>27</sup> aims at a larger segment of buyers, which is why most of the time the ideological alignment is not explicitly presented on the cover page.<sup>28</sup> The magazine chosen for the survey was a special issue with the title '1914 – The Prelude to Destruction'<sup>29</sup>. Besides the title, the indication of the price (14.80€ in Germany and 15.90€ in Austria) and the logo of DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE no further information can be found on the cover page. The 'glossy cover' is illustrated with a collage of historical paintings: the German military on horseback is shown in the background, in the lower third of the page the Russian Tsar Nicholas II<sup>30</sup>, the German Emperor Wilhelm II, and the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph are lined up at the lower end of the magazine.

---

26 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1mfoTq4> (1.8.2014).

27 Amongst others, the publishing house mentioned also publishes the biography 'Mein Leben mit Reinhard' written by Lina Heydrich about her husband in which she captures 'very personal memories of her husband, his life, his work, and his achievements' as well as the 'first and so far only biography about the entire life' of Adolf Hitler's sister Paula. Cf. Lina Heydrich: *Mein Leben mit Reinhard. Die persönliche Biographie*. Stegen am Ammersee 2012; as well as Alfred Läßle: *Paula Hitler – Die Schwester. Ein Leben in der Zeitenwende*. Stegen am Ammersee 2005, URL: <http://bit.ly/1uKquVK> (1.8.2014).

28 For a comparison of several magazine covers of special issues cf: URL: <http://bit.ly/1uKquVK> (1.8.2014).

29 DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE, special issue 1 (2014): '1914 – Auftakt zum Untergang'.

30 Detail of the oil painting by Earnest Lippgart around 1900.

The second magazine HUSAR 'is entirely apolitical and supports no political option. We are only interested in military history alone without any prejudices whatsoever'<sup>31</sup>, as can be read on the magazine homepage. Published in Croatia since 2007, the 'illustrated magazine for military history and militaria HUSAR' has positioned itself also on the German market since November 2013. At a price of 5€ it is one of the cheaper magazines. The cover page of the first magazine advertises with the topics 'Rommel in Africa 1912–42. His strategy. His greatest successes' as well as 'Germany's history until 1914: War plans. War games' and acknowledged in the name: 'The Hussars. Horsemen with furs and feathers'. The cover page shows an illustration of Rommel standing in front of a tank and wearing a uniform.

'Have you already noticed such magazines?' or 'have you already purchased such magazines or would you be encouraged to buy them?' These were the questions according to which the participants positioned themselves.

Surprisingly, only one of the participants has already noticed such kind of magazines at the kiosk or in the supermarket. The participants in the survey agreed that they would not buy such magazines due to a lack of interest in military history. Some stated that DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE may be for experts and explained this assumption with a reference to the price of 15.90€ and the size of the magazine. Regarding the 'biased presentation of history' only one of the participants said that the HUSAR appeared as a 'magazine for military interest groups', but thereby referred to the strong technical alignment and less to the possible subliminally conveyed mind-set, which could enter the articles. This result makes clear that the participants in the survey are not aware of the idea that commercialised presentations of history, which they encounter in every-day life, may indeed contain political messages that follow a right-wing nationalist to neo-fascist alignment as is discernible in DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE. Naturally, this does not apply to all military magazines, but a generally more critical approach to presentations of history would be, however, desirable – which was not the case with the participants here.

---

31 Self-portrayal of HUSAR, URL: <http://bit.ly/1uKsCwX> (1.8.2014).

### 3.5 Brazilian history magazines: 'childish' or different viewing habits?

In a further step the participants were shown two issues of the Brazilian history magazine *AVENTURAS NA HISTÓRIA*.<sup>32</sup> The specialty of these magazines is that they strongly back on drawn illustrations in contrast to the history magazines most widely disseminated in Germany or Middle-Europe.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, both issues at hand feature drawn figures – Napoleon Bonaparte<sup>34</sup> and praying Muslims<sup>35</sup> respectively – on their cover pages. The participants were supposed to look at the cover pages of the magazines and freely express their thoughts on the layout. Additionally, the participants were given the information that the magazines were Brazilian magazines.

In all groups, the participants expressed associations with 'fairy tale magazines for primary school pupils', 'Mickey Mouse' and 'Yps comics'<sup>36</sup>

---

32 Cf. URL: <http://abr.ai/1m1RXvb> (1.8.2014).

33 An exception will be the popular history magazine *ALL ABOUT HISTORY*, originally from England and available on the German magazine market as of October 2014, cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1rLLPw5> (23.9.2014) and also URL: <http://bit.ly/1BFI65A> (23.9.2014). The multi-thematic magazine 'represents an innovative approach to exploring the past and offers an energizing alternative to the academic style of existing titles. The key focus of *ALL ABOUT HISTORY* is to tell the wonderful, fascinating and engrossing stories that make up the world's history and inspire new interest and joy in a subject so often presented as dry and dusty. Using stunning illustrations and infographics throughout, this is a brand that strives to deliver knowledge in the form of visually and mentally stimulating entertainment.' (Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1rbOWcM> (23.9.2014)). As described in the advertising text to the English edition, the magazine relies excessively on specially designed graphics and illustrations. It remains to be seen if this magazine can take root on the German magazine market in the long run or if it remains a single publication like the multi-thematic popular history magazine *ILLUSTRATED HISTORY* (cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1pzBSO3> (1.8.2014)).

34 *AVENTURAS NA HISTÓRIA* 49 (2007), cf. URL: <http://abr.ai/1reM97J> (1.8.2014).

35 *AVENTURAS NA HISTÓRIA* 48 (2007): The cover page depicts a detail of Jean-Léon Gérôme's (1865) 'Prayer in Cairo', cf. URL: <http://abr.ai/1sxZv1g> (1.8.2014).

36 The 'Yps magazine' is a comic with joke articles included as gimmicks, which was published for children from 1975–2000 and 2005–2006; since 2012 the magazine has been published as comic for 30–45 year olds, who grew up with

or similar magazines addressing the target groups young children and youths ('target group aged 8–12 years').<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, in both 'history groups' the cover page of the 'Islam issue' encouraged comparisons with children's bibles or the design of the Jehovah's witnesses' magazine 'The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom'. On the other hand, it was emphasised that the Middle-European viewing habits may be the reason why the drawings are right away linked to children ('it is drawn, it is for children'). Both groups of history students agreed that the magazines were aimed at children; that it was indeed 'nice to have something drawn', but that the recipients would 'miss the seriousness which a photograph would convey'. One reader assumed that the pictures were especially drawn for the magazine for illustrative purposes, which would discourage him from buying the magazine. A further reader also questioned the seriousness of the magazine due to the drawings: 'You don't really know whether they are serious'. Overall, the history students had the impression of not being taken seriously due to the layout of both magazines and especially due to the use of drawings. In comparison to this, the statements of the 'non-historians' are interesting. Also in this group statements were made which described the pictures as 'inadequate' or as 'belittling' the topic. However, there were also two participants who stated that this could indeed make sense 'because not everything can be proven by pictures'. The graphic designer was aware of this and regarded drawings as a possible way. The history students indeed like the use of illustrations, but they have to be either 'true' or info-graphics. The participants were unaware of the possibility that especially with regard to the topic area 'World War One' many propaganda pictures are not indicated as such, that photographs are not per se 'true', that the supposed original which is presented on the cover page of G/GESCHICHTE consists of at least three individual pictures of

---

the magazine. Cf. Maximilian Kloes: Das 'Yps'-Heft kehrt zurück. FOCUS-Online, URL: <http://bit.ly/1uK381F> (1.8.2014).

37 The fact that the magazines here address an adult readership is made clear by the title of the Napoleon issue, which no one of the participants, however, was able to translate from Portuguese: 'Napoleon, the great conqueror. The great emperor seen from a new perspective: underneath the sheets of his mistress'.

which at least one was doubled.<sup>38</sup> In the contrary: this picture suggested seriousness and scholarliness to the participants.

### **3.6 To what extent do the ‘history groups’ think that their expectations of popular history magazines are different from the expectations of the broad readership?**

How do those readers of history magazines who study or have studied history and/or history didactics at university assess their expectations of popular history magazines in comparison to the wishes of the broad readership? Do they differentiate between a broad, popular readership, their expectations and scientific magazines? The survey revealed: this is mostly the case and the participants at the same time indicated that the change in their way of thinking only started with studying history. Accordingly, a student training to become a teacher said ‘before studying, we paid attention to different things and not to the fact that historians are involved in the writing; I also wouldn’t consider the sources before; I do think that we take a different perspective, because we rather deal with history’. A history student states that he enjoyed watching documentaries during his school years, but by now after the ‘indoctrination of the university’s ways of working’ these documentaries make his ‘toes curl’. However, at the same time he acknowledges that the magazines are not professional journals and that consequently other standards would have to be expected from such a magazine. Another student of teaching emphasises this in recalling that it is the claim of some magazines to already engage 12-year-olds in history and deterrents, such as footnotes for instance, would not be conducive to this. Only one student candidly states that if he merely wants ‘to kill time – in the waiting room of a doctor, for example’ – he is less interested in specialist and academic working methods. He negates the question of a fellow student asking whether he could not

---

38 Cf. Anton Holzer: „Going Over The Top“. Neue Perspektiven aus dem Schützengraben. In: Gerhard Paul (ed.): *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder*. Vol. 1: 1900 bis 1949. Göttingen 2009, p. 196–203; Thomas Knieper/Marion G. Müller (eds.): *Authentizität und Inszenierung von Bilderwelten*. Köln/Halem 2003; Stefan Leifert: *Bildethik. Theorie und Moral im Bildjournalismus der Massenmedien*. München 2007; Gerhard Paul: *Bilder des Krieges. Krieg der Bilder. Die Visualisierung des modernen Krieges*. Paderborn 2004.



read other magazines instead by referring to the fact that he is not interested in the topics of other magazines.

### **3.7 After the reading or what happens to the magazines after they have been read?**

‘You’ve bought it because you were interested and you usually don’t lose your interest just because you’ve read it and maybe know it now. Normally, you don’t read such a thing back to front, meaning there are always aspects which you haven’t dealt with so that it may be possible that I might have the time to deal with it again.’ This quote by a student of teaching applies to almost all participants. Only one stated that he generally disposes of the magazines after reading them ‘in an orderly way’. Three others said that they would discard the magazine ‘if it is bad and the world has to be protected from it’ or that the interesting pages are removed and kept. The remaining 17 persons fully agree that they keep the magazines since they are ‘far too expensive to be thrown away’. More than 50% of the participants further said that they pass on the magazines to friends and acquaintances. All students of teaching additionally stated that they keep the magazines so as to occasionally use them to prepare lessons.

### **3.8 History magazines in school: potential and limits**

All participants agreed on this question: yes, history magazines are suitable for the use in schools, even with some limitations at times. The participants of the ‘non-historian group’ expressed concern in that the magazines may possibly be designed in a too ‘commercialised’ way and, accordingly, the look is more important than the content. Indeed, ‘stories’ too were entitled to be part of history lessons so as to e.g. create motivation for a topic. However, it should be clear whether or not they are fictitious. Besides the concerns regarding the ‘commercialisation’ the magazines were presumed to have a political alignment. After all, ZEIT GESCHICHTE and SPIEGEL GESCHICHTE are two magazines that are published by large German weekly newspapers or news magazines and are sometimes described as ‘leading medium’<sup>39</sup>. At the same time, however, this was also

---

39 Cf. URL: <http://bit.ly/1r1YlID> (1.8.2014).

recognised as a learning opportunity: the participants suggested comparing the different ways of presenting one topic in different popular history magazines – also internationally if possible – in order to reveal potential tendencies and differences in the presentation and also to determine ‘that not everything is true only because it is printed’.<sup>40</sup> This suggestion was also brought forward by the group of history students, whereby the suggestion was expanded with the comparison of further media, e.g. the school book or TV documentaries. Concerns were aired regarding the time required for the preparation and implementation as well as the problem in coming by some foreign magazines so as to realise this idea for lessons.<sup>41</sup> As further advantages, the ‘historian group’ named the present-day references of magazines which e.g. react to anniversaries and the latest state of research as well as the wide range of topics dealt with. Working with the magazines is especially useful when starting a new topic, but also for group work and to enhance media literacy.

#### 4. Desiderata and prospects

As already mentioned at the beginning, this study, which had to work with a very small number of participants, can only be regarded as a first step to further in-depth studies on recipients. Firstly, the amount of participants would have to be increased and secondly, it further has to be considered that not only subscribers are taken into account, but that also the wider field of recipients is included who are not buyers themselves. Besides broadening the quantitative aspect within the market of German-language history magazines, it would be especially interesting to include European or international studies on recipients. With regard to the global sales market of the magazines in particular and the wide dissemination of

---

40 That this is a very important learning objective and that learning opportunities in the area of media literacy should indeed be given to pupils is shown e.g. by: Jamie Bartlett/Carl Miller: *Truth, lies and the internet. A report into young people’s digital fluency*. London 2011; URL: <http://bit.ly/1yk7DCy> (1.8.2014).

41 Cf. the EHISTO homepage, where extracts from Spanish, Polish, English, German and Swedish magazines as well as prepared tasks – all in the languages mentioned – can be downloaded free of charge, URL: <https://media.sodis.de/ehisto/en/index.html> (1.8.2014).

individual publishers, such as e.g. GEO EPOCHE or G/GESCHICHTE, which are also distributed in other countries, the views of the recipients would be interesting. The World War One centenary therefore offers the best prerequisites since almost every magazine has produced an issue with a corresponding cover page and related contents.

A further so far completely neglected area is the question about the learning progress made with popular history magazines. Besides the contents the ability to deconstruct history should also always be a learning objective, which goes hand in hand with the enhancement of media literacy and intercultural learning. Especially the results of the study on recipients at hand regarding the uncritical observation of the military magazines and the categorisation of the G/GESCHICHTE cover page as a 'true' and 'serious' depiction should stimulate further prompt engagement with this topic.

Terry Haydn

## Using popular history magazines in history teaching: a case study

### Context of the case study

As in other European countries, the past decade has seen a proliferation of popular history magazines in England, with an increase in the variety of titles on sale, the types of history covered, and the circulation and readership of popular history magazines.<sup>1</sup> The circulation of the biggest selling popular history magazine in England, BBC HISTORY Magazine, is up year on year over the past five years, by over 7%, and has now reached over 75,000 sales per issue. HISTORY TODAY has a circulation of over 28,000 copies per issue, and the popular children's history magazine, HORRIBLE HISTORIES, based on the cult television series and paperback books, has a circulation of over 46,000 per issue. This explosion of popular interest in history in magazine form is not unique to England, and is mirrored in many other European countries. Given the very rapid growth in popular history magazines as a cultural artefact, the EHISTO project aimed to explore the ways in which these magazines might be used in history education in schools, and as part of this, to explore their potential for the development of critical media literacy and intercultural understanding in young people.<sup>2</sup>

However, an interesting paradox emerged from the baseline study which was conducted in the first few months of the project. A survey of 85 history teachers across the five countries involved in the project suggested that history magazines were not widely or frequently used in history education in many schools, in spite of the fact that nearly all respondents believed that the use of history magazines would improve

---

1 Terry Haydn: History magazines in the UK. In: yearbook – jahrbuch – annales. Journal of the International Society of History Didactics 34 (2013), p. 191–206.

2 Cf. URL: <http://www.european-crossroads.de/project/> (1.8.2014) for a fuller explanation of the rationale for the project.

the quality of history education, especially in the field of critical and media literacy.<sup>3</sup>

It should be stressed that it was not assumed that an increase in the extent to which history magazines were used in history classrooms would necessarily be ‘a good thing’ or that it would necessarily lead to improved pupil learning (or improved intercultural understanding and critical media skills). History magazines are not without their critics (see, for example, Monika Vinterek’s article in this volume). Some English historians have expressed reservations about some of the popular history magazines which have become fashionable in recent years. John Tosh warns of the danger of ‘heritage’ type popular history, ‘encouraging a view of the past which is superficial, nostalgic and conformist.... Not so much a means of education as an adjunct to tourism’.<sup>4</sup> One of the research questions explored in the study was to find out whether history teachers and student teachers considered the use of popular history magazines (and the EHISTO website and Learning Objects) to be helpful and worthwhile, both in general terms, and in terms of their potential for improving pupils’ intercultural and critical media understanding.

The English strand of the baseline study involved 20 history teachers and five interviews. This is clearly a very small sample and caution must be used in generalising from such a sample; however, the outcomes suggested that the rapid growth of popular history magazines as part of popular culture outside the classroom was not being translated into the use of these magazines inside schools. As tables 1 to 3 show, very few of the history teachers surveyed were regular readers of popular history magazines, none of them made regular use of them in their teaching (regular defined as more than once a month), and the teachers either did not think that many pupils read popular history magazines, or acknowledged that they did not know whether they read them or not.

---

3 The baseline study detailing the findings can be accessed at URL: <http://www.european-crossroads.de/outcomes/baselinestudy> (1.8.2014).

4 John Tosh: *Why history matters*. Basingstoke 2008, p. 11.

Table 1: Do you ever read popular history magazines? (by popular, we mean on sale at W.H. Smith, stations, airports etc – e.g., BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE, HISTORY TODAY etc)

a) Yes – quite often (at least once a month)	4
b) Yes – sometimes ( a few times a year)	6
c) Yes – Occasionally (perhaps once or twice a year)	5
d) No – I never read them	5
Other response?	

Table 2: Do any of your pupils read popular history magazines?

a) Yes, quite a lot of pupils do	0
b) Yes, a few pupils do	3
c) Hardly any pupils do	9
d) None do	0
e) I don't really know (haven't asked/question has not arisen)	8
Any comment?	
I asked but only one or two had	

Table 3: Do you ever use extracts/articles from popular history magazines in your teaching?

a) Yes, quite often (more than once a month)	0
b) Yes, from time to time (a few times a year)	5
c) Yes, occasionally (once or twice a year)	7
d) No, I don't ever use them	8
Any Comment?	
Simply because of lack of availability with the department or time to organise myself.	

## The aims of the case study

The aim of the case study was to explore the extent to which, and the ways in which popular history magazines might be usefully integrated into history lessons in high schools in order to improve learning outcomes generally, and in particular, to see if they could be used to develop pupils' understanding of multiperspectivity in history, their intercultural understanding, and their critical and media literacy.

There were three groups within the case study; the first group was the history department which was directly involved in the EHISTO project.

By UK standards, it is a large department with 6 teachers working in the history department. The second group involved was the 2013–4 cohort of student history teachers at the University of East Anglia. This group of 15 students undertake a 36 week course to become trained as history teachers, having already completed their undergraduate history degrees. The third group of teachers involved were the history teachers who act as supervising mentors for the UEA student teachers, over the course of their two school placements. There were approximately 25 mentors involved (sometimes, more than one teacher in the department is involved in mentoring students, and more than 15 departments are involved in working with UEA students over the course of the two placements).

The baseline study revealed that at the start of the project (autumn 2012), very few history teachers were making use of popular history magazines, and a group interview with the student teachers in the first weeks on the course revealed that very few on them were regular readers of history magazines. In conducting the research we were mindful of the difficulties involved in attempting to change teacher pedagogy and practice. In the words of Tony Edwards, ‘It is the hubris of policymakers to overrate their power to reshape practice by underrating the power of practitioners to subvert initiatives, or to simply carry on as before’.<sup>5</sup> Michael Fullan also notes the tendency of many teachers to stick to ‘tried and tested’ teaching approaches, rather than be enthusiasts and ‘early adapters’ of new pedagogical strategies and resources.<sup>6</sup> Our involvement in a previous research project involving schools linked to the university had made us aware that even with schools directly involved in the research, the impact of the project was ‘patchy’, and that there were some schools where there were teachers who were not aware that their school was involved in the research.<sup>7</sup> Given the plethora of other issues and priorities which schools are obliged to attend to, we were aware that

---

5 Tony Edwards: A change for the better. In: The Times Educational Supplement of 27.1.1995, p. 11.

6 Michael Fullan: The new meaning of educational change. London 1991.

7 The Norwich Area Schools Consortium project on the curriculum dimensions of pupil disaffection, URL: [http://www.uea.ac.uk/care/nasc/NASC\\_home.htm](http://www.uea.ac.uk/care/nasc/NASC_home.htm) (1.8.2014).

teachers and student teachers had many other concerns to attend to, and that there were difficult judgement calls to be made in terms of how much time could be allocated to EHISTO.

## Research approach

The intervention was structured around the promotion of popular history magazines in teaching sessions at the university, and at the three per year mentor meetings over the course of the project. This consisted of photocopying and circulating copies of particular magazine articles, and modelling the use of the EHISTO website as the Learning Objects were developed.<sup>8</sup> In the case of the student teachers, some teaching sessions, for example the session on the ‘outbreak’ of World War One, were partly based around the materials on the EHISTO website, two sessions were devoted to ‘modelling’ activities and materials available on the website, and students spent some time exploring the website. It should perhaps be noted that pressure to cover all the required elements of the teacher education course placed some time limitations on the amount of time, which could be spent exploring the site and the materials developed. It was not, for example, possible to spend time on all the modules which had been developed in the handbooks for student and in-service teachers.<sup>9</sup> Data was obtained through a combination of questionnaires individual interviews, and group interviews.

The main research questions were:

- to see whether exposure to the EHISTO website and Learning Objects (and the use of other popular magazine articles) would increase teachers’ and student teachers’ use of popular history magazines;
- to find out the ways in which history teachers and student teachers made use of popular history magazines and EHISTO resources;

---

8 The Learning Objects developed on the project can be accessed at URL: <http://bit.ly/1vFI2Rg> (1.8.2014).

9 For the initial teacher education handbook, see URL: <http://www.european-crossroads.de/outcomes/initialteachertraining> (1.8.2014), for the in-service handbook see URL: <http://www.european-crossroads.de/outcomes/in-service-teacher> (1.8.2014).



- to explore the views of history teachers and student teachers on the age range of students with whom popular history magazines could be used as a teaching resource;
- to find out what factors either encouraged or discouraged the use of popular history magazines as a teaching resource;

## Findings

How much did involvement in the EHISTO project influence the extent to which teachers and student teachers read popular history magazines?

The baseline study which was conducted in early 2014 established that neither history teachers nor student teachers were regular readers of popular history magazines. Only 20% of history teachers described themselves as regular readers of history magazines (defined as reading at least one magazine per month). Although this was based on a small sample, the figure was in line with an earlier survey of the use of popular history magazines<sup>10</sup>. Many of the student teachers had become members of the Historical Association, which gave them access to the association's journal *TEACHING HISTORY*, but this would be more accurately described as a professional rather than popular publication. As in previous years, a small minority of students reported that they sometimes purchased popular history magazines, but even within this section of the cohort, some of these students acknowledged that due to pressures of time and the general 'busy-ness' of the course, they often didn't have time to read any extracts from the popular history magazines they had purchased.<sup>11</sup>

Within the department which was directly involved with the EHISTO project as a partnership school, interviews with the teachers in the department suggested that none of the members of department regarded themselves as 'regular' readers of popular history magazines, and even the teachers who had a subscription to a popular history magazine acknowledged that the magazines were not read in a systematic or routine way – 'I'd say it's quite uneven. I get the BBC HISTORY magazine and I flick through it every month and I put aside a pile of them.' Another member of the

---

<sup>10</sup> Haydn (note 1).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

department flatly stated that ‘I don’t use them – and I’d be surprised if my pupils even knew the names of any popular history magazines.’ The responses suggested that the teachers were not in any way hostile to popular history magazines, or that they believed them to be ‘a bad thing’, the feedback suggested that it was rather that reading them was something of a luxury, given the imperatives of having to prepare and teach fifteen to twenty lessons a week for their pupils.

Involvement in the project inevitably led to greater immersion in the world of popular history magazines. The teachers in the department agreed to devise Learning Objects based on popular magazine articles, and to explore the use of popular history magazines with their pupils. As an incentive, and in order to improve access to some of the magazines, the department was given funding to subscribe to two of the bestselling popular history magazines in the UK, BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE, and HISTORY TODAY. Later in the project, the department was also provided with a subscription for HORRIBLE HISTORIES, a popular history magazine for young pupils, based on a popular television series.

There is no question that involvement in the EHISTO project (unsurprisingly) had an influence on the extent to which members of the department read popular history magazines. Towards the end of the project (July 2014), a second series of interviews was conducted, and all five of the teachers interviewed reported that they read more popular history magazines than previously. In response to the question ‘About how many history magazine articles would you say you had read over the last year?’, these were the responses:

‘I subscribe to BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE so I read it regularly although not from cover to cover and I am a bit behind as I’m still reading June’s issue. I would guess that I read about four or five articles per month so that would be 60 articles a year which, now I’ve worked it out, surprises me a little.’

‘It’s certainly one or more a week.’

‘Roughly? About ten. Nothing compared to X. But I’ve searched more. I’ve flicked back through about ten. I’ve been searching for different topics like Crusades or General Strike.’

‘As a result of the school’s work with the EHISTO project I have used popular history magazines more, though not as much as I would have liked.’

'I currently have a personal subscription to the BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE, and have recently started to purchase the ALL ABOUT HISTORY magazine. These are both magazines that I enjoy reading on a personal level.'

When asked to estimate how many popular magazine articles the student teachers had read between September 2014 and June 2015, the responses were as follows (see table 4):

Table 4: Student teacher estimates of the number of popular history magazine articles they had read over the 9 months of the course

Student 1	10–15 – those that were relevant to the topics I teach.
Student 2	I read many articles regularly – 100+.
Student 3	30 ish.
Student 4	5–10.
Student 5	Not sure how many articles I've read but have filed them for future reference.
Student 6	5–6.
Student 7	5–6.
Student 8	50+.
Student 9	Probably between 5 and 10.
Student 10	I have not read many of the articles given out but I have read every magazine article in BBC history magazine over last 12 months.
Student 11	5–7.
Student 12	10–15.
Student 13	A few – 4–6.
Student 14	10–15.

(Student 15 was not present on the day of the review).

Two points are worth noting. One is the substantial difference between students in terms of the number of magazine articles they had read – in spite of the fact that all student had the same 'input' in terms of prescribed reading, and exposure to the training in the use of EHISTO resources. The other is that the reading of popular history magazines was not always a matter of choice – the course handbook contained several references to popular history magazine articles as compulsory reading, and all students undertook the training in the use of the EHISTO website and resources.

This means that those students who reported reading only a handful of magazine articles may well have only read those that were prescribed as compulsory reading, and not opted to read anything beyond these prescribed readings.

How did involvement in the EHISTO project influence the ways in which history teachers and student teachers made use of popular history magazines in their teaching?

The outcomes of the baseline study (Spring 2014) suggested that most history teachers and student teachers either did not use popular history magazines in their teaching, or used them primarily to augment their subject knowledge of the topics which they had to teach. In the questionnaire survey of 20 history teachers, there were no teachers who reported that they regularly used history magazines in their teaching (defined as more than once a month), and only 5 who reported using them 'from time to time' (defined as a few times a year). Of the teachers in the department participating directly in the project as a partnership school, in answer to the question, 'Do you use popular history magazines in your teaching?', the responses were as follows:

'The answer would be no.'

'Not really, occasionally, but very rarely.'

'I don't use them.'

'I'd say it's quite uneven. I get the BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE and I flick through it every month and I put aside a pile of them and I quite often refer back to them, but more often than using articles, I'll just use pieces of information from them.'

In terms of the reasons given for not using popular history magazines as a teaching resource, teachers pointed to accessibility problems (the department did not subscribe to any popular history magazines at that time), the reading level demanded of pupils – most teachers in the department thought that the magazines would be very challenging for younger pupils in terms of their reading abilities, and the belief that the 'audience' for such magazines was adults (and mainly well-educated adults rather than school pupils). It was generally felt that text books and the internet provided materials which were more tailored to students' needs. The following extracts from teacher testimony exemplify these points:

'It's not that I've never used them. I use them extremely rarely, I'd say. I think there are so many other resources out there that are perhaps more accessible

and easier and so in some ways magazines would be the last choice, rather than the first and by the time you've got to the magazine, you've already found the resources that are good enough that you need.'

'Mainly it's access to them. I don't subscribe to one. If I come across an article it's quite random. My husband buys them and I pinch his magazine and perhaps come across things. The audience, the number of students who could actually access it is quite limited; our sixth formers could and GCSE students could, but the articles are a bit too dense for the majority of the Key Stage 3 (11–14 year old students). So that's an issue. I feel they're aimed actually for an older audience than we're actually dealing with. So as extension work they're good, but actually for day-to-day, for your bread and butter teaching, the text books are actually at a better level and we use the Internet quite a lot too, rather than, if we need to get the magazine.'

With regard to the history student teachers' use of popular history magazines, it should be noted that they would be working in history departments which were not making extensive or regular use of history magazines (with the exception of the school which was part of the EHISTO project), and so would be unlikely to 'absorb' the use of history magazines in their practice through observation and working in the departments in question. However, the teaching sessions at the university, and the reading prescribed by the course handbook did make extensive and regular use of history magazines, and included two workshop sessions on the use of the EHISTO website and materials, so there was some pressure on them to consider the use of history magazines, and some modelling of the practice of integrating the use of history magazines into classroom practice.

The students were asked about their use of popular history magazines in the last month of their course of training (June 2014). As table 5 indicates, most of the students had made use of history magazines in their teaching (12 out of the 14 students who responded), but often, this was principally in the form of strengthening their substantive subject knowledge of the topics they were teaching, although eight of the students had used them as teaching resources in at least some of their lessons.

Table 5: student teachers' use of popular history magazines in their teaching

Student 1	Good for my subject knowledge – too hard for KS3 – I did use them for controlled assessment A* students –department very glad.
Student 2	Useful more for myself plus some A level – behind the scenes rather than overt.

Student 3	Generally for my own knowledge but didn't go back to them during placement. Hope to use them more, especially for KS5 (16–18 year old pupils) to encourage research.
Student 4	To build my knowledge.
Student 5	Find them very useful for SK and for teaching resources.
Student 6	Good for own knowledge but that was all I used them for. I would hope to use magazine articles to stretch high achieving pupils and gifted and talented pupils.
Student 7	I have referred back to a couple when I had to teach topics e.g. workhouses. Good for my subject knowledge.
Student 8	Very helpful for subject knowledge.
Student 9	It depended on whether the subject grabbed me or not! Very helpful for subject knowledge.
Student 10	Very useful – sessions taught me how to use them well.
Student 11	A level lessons = used them for my pupils to read sections of.
Student 12	I used the Mao one in lessons.
Student 13	Subject knowledge –brilliant. Optional homeworks for KS4/5 pupils (14–18 year olds).
Student 14	Helpful for SK, some used as extension tasks and homework.

The outcomes of the survey of student teachers suggested that almost all of them had integrated the use of history magazines into their regular classroom practice, and read articles from history magazines to develop their subject knowledge of the topics they had to teach. However, they had not generally explored a wide range of different approaches to using history magazines in their lessons, and use tended to be limited to the setting of homework or extension work for older or more able pupils. This was in contrast to the ways in which teachers in the school directly linked to the EHISTO project used the magazines, with much more extensive trialling and experimentation with the use of magazines, and the use of the EHISTO website.

Several teachers in the department made use of the online adjuncts to popular history magazines – the search function, which enabled them to track down particular articles from the magazines' archives, the podcast feature, and the 'apps' associated with some magazines. The following list gives an idea of some of the ways in which the department made use of history magazines in their teaching:

- ‘And it was an online thing ... I also get the BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE on my iPad and I’d like to do more of that.’
- ‘I have a regular ‘History in the News’ news feature on the wall outside of my classroom, which includes short snippets from both BBC HISTORY and ALL ABOUT HISTORY.’
- ‘The March issue had an article on Henry VIII’s wives: ‘A witness to the six wives’, which I used to update an information hunt for my Y7s. Also the June issue had a discussion about ‘D-Day Tragedy or Triumph?’ which inspired me to create an enquiry lesson for Y9.’
- ‘I have asked Y9s to create magazine pages using ICT and I have brought in a selection of magazines so students can flick through to look at examples of how articles are set out and to encourage the students to think about how they are going to use headlines, pictures, captions etc in their work.’
- ‘For the Sixth Form, I’ve given them useful articles to look at for just extension-work and revision.’
- ‘And we’ve also got now a magazine-rack in the class with all kinds of history-related magazines.’
- ‘Yesterday ... a boy from Year 7 ... The lowest set in Year 7. He wanted harder work, so I gave him a magazine, which was what I had to hand! I asked him simply to read an excerpt from it on Anne Boleyn and try to pick out what kind of character she had from that section. It was very simple but he looked up words in the thesaurus, ‘astute’ was the word he looked up, so ....’
- ‘We’re trying to develop things, to get a bit of a library of extension-texts so I think as we have more extension-texts in books, we’ll also use magazines.’
- ‘I like the idea of having a folder of articles from magazines for them to access easily. Because as much as I say “go online, there’s this subscription” I don’t know how regularly they do that. So I’d prefer almost to have it printed out, in front of them.’
- ‘I’ve used the letters page with them... it’s where all the controversies are, and arguments.’

It was clear that the department had developed a number of methods of exploring the use of popular history magazines, including groupwork

exercises and ways of working with history magazines with younger pupils. In the baseline study most teachers had felt that history magazines were mainly appropriate for use with A level pupils (16–18 year olds) and as extension work for more able Key Stage 4 pupils (14–16 year olds), but this perception shifted slightly over the course of the project. There were however still some teachers in the department who felt that the extent to which history magazines could be used with younger pupils was limited by considerations of literacy levels.

The wider group of history mentors working in the regional initial teacher education partnership, who attended the mentor meetings and Eastern Regional Seminar where EHISTO was modelled and explained, and who were provided with a number of magazines articles from the EHISTO site and articles on other ‘European History Crossroads’ topics, said in a group interview in May 2014 that they had found the magazines and materials useful, and either had used or planned to use the EHISTO site in their teaching. However, individual interviews to try to ascertain more precisely the extent of use, which elements of the site were most useful, and the ways in which history magazines were used have not yet been conducted. It was felt that in terms of sustainability issues, it will be more helpful to enquire about EHISTO use and practice in the autumn term, 2014.

In terms of the student teachers’ views on the extent to which popular history magazines and EHISTO had been used on the course, it was interesting to note that when asked whether they should be used ‘more’, ‘less’ or ‘about the same’, 11 of the 14 respondents felt that the resources should be use ‘about the same’ amount with next year’s student teachers (3 students did not respond to this question directly).

To what extent and in what ways were the EHISTO materials used by the teachers and student teachers involved in the project?

In terms of student teachers’ use of EHISTO resources and materials, some students said that they had made use of the site and resources, but a larger proportion of students indicated that they had not had chance to use it in their lessons, but intended to use it next year as qualified teachers. Some students mentioned that the school they were working at did not teach ‘Columbus’ or ‘World War One’ during the period on which they were on placement. The students’ responses are shown in table 6:



Table 6: Did you make any use of the EHISTO website and materials on your second teaching placement?

Student 1	Yes – shared EHISTO with the department.
Student 2	Honestly – no, but should like to use when less pressed. I think they are a mature resource to encourage independent learning in older students.
Student 3	Looked back on it – details weren't overly relevant to the topics I was teaching.
Student 4	No. However, I will use them in the future.
Student 5	Have looked at EHISTO but not deployed it in classroom yet.
Student 6	Haven't accessed EHISTO since our session but would like to.
Student 7	No.
Student 8	I intended to but forgot but I will use it next year as I thought it was great!
Student 9	Will want to implement them a lot more with KS4-5 next year.
Student 10	Not used EHISTO.
Student 11	No.
Student 12	I didn't but would like to.
Student 13	Looked at once or twice for ideas.
Student 14	No.

Unsurprisingly, the closer and more intense and ongoing involvement of the partnership school which was part of the EHISTO project resulted in more extensive use and trialling of the EHISTO resources as the following extracts from the July 2014 interviews with members of the department illustrate:

'As a result of the schools work with the EHISTO project I have used popular history magazines more, though not as much as I would have liked. Previously I had not used them at all but now use them as a different way of looking at controversies/concepts etc and show how history is presented in different ways. It is useful to have shorter articles to use with students. In year 9 in particular I have done activities about the causes of ww1 and using an article to look at causal factors and comparing these to textbook information. I have also used the website with my pgce student and compared some of the questions on there as well to compare with what questions students would want to ask.'

'I am aware of EHISTO and we have discussed it on several occasions in department meetings. I can't say I have personally made use of the website as yet but I know there are some useful materials which we will be using in an upcoming collapsed curriculum day on World War One.'

'In April, X asked me to lead a series of lessons for the EHISTO project with my top set year 9 groups. Prior to the lessons, I read the materials and articles she provided. However, I have not used the materials with any of my other groups. I have also not accessed the website since completing the short series of lessons.' 'One thing the students were really interested in was what the Swedish students thought about the articles and one of my comments about the feedback was they kept saying well what do they think about this and that was something I didn't really expect. They knew that students in Sweden were doing exactly the same questions and that's what engaged them.' 'The pupils were really interested in the idea that pupils in other countries had a very different 'take' on World War One.'

The teachers were keen to stress that they would have liked to have explored the EHISTO website and materials more extensively, but time to do this was constrained by other exigencies. In a sense, the exploration of EHISTO was 'a luxury', and other commitments had to be given priority:

'Because there' is so much curriculum change going on. We've got new Key Stage 3 we're starting to teach next year, the new A Levels, that's going to be massive, we've been implementing a new Controlled Assessment since Easter, it's been... and also increased pressure on results ... the time, even trying to organise next Tuesday... there's no time.'

## Conclusions and lessons learned

Perhaps the single most important outcome of the case study was that all the three groups involved (student teachers, mentors and the history department directly involved in the project) had found popular history magazines to be a useful resource for history teaching, and had integrated their use into classroom practice to a much greater extent than at the time of the baseline study (Spring 2014). Moreover, this use in many cases went beyond reading magazines to augment subject knowledge, and extended to the use of history magazines with pupils, in a range of ways. Although not all the teachers and student teachers involved had made use of the EHISTO site and resources, they were very positive about the potential of the materials, and welcomed the focus on both European perspectives and critical media literacy.

In terms of sustainability, there were indications that the EHISTO project would impact on practice beyond the life of the project:

'This next academic year we're going to try and do something with Germany and Sweden and I think that's got a lot of scope a bit like the World Maths Day model I don't know if you're aware of that where they play ... they really enjoy it they play students from you know you are up against four others and some are in America and some are in Portugal and they really love that and they have the picture of the icon of the person they're up against and I think that sort of thing as an organisation EHISTO could have a huge amount of impact through their website and just having access to students across Europe.'

'As a department with our new Year 9 we're planning to have an EHISTO unit – an EHISTO based one and a school based one.'

Although history teachers were generally positive about the potential of popular history magazines for enhancing teaching, some concerns were expressed about the language and reading level difficulties involved in using some of the magazine articles with pupils, particularly younger pupils. Subsequent piloting of some of the materials with 16 year old pupils revealed that one of the Columbus articles selected proved to be quite challenging, and had a negative influence on the motivation and engagement of pupils – an unintended outcome of the experiment. This raises questions about the choice of articles for focus – there is sometimes a tension between which magazine articles have the most potential for developing the critical media literacy of students, and which articles are better in terms of 'readability'. In the UK, there is a significant difference between the length and difficulty of articles in *HISTORY TODAY* (longer and more academic in register) and *BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE* (shorter and 'easier' articles, and therefore perhaps more appropriate for school aged readers).

Other lessons learned from the experiment were the importance of giving students sufficient time to read and make notes on the popular magazine articles, given the volume of reading involved. If insufficient time is provided, there is the danger that students don't have time to fully 'take on board' the new information which they glean from the articles, with the possibility that they cling more than they otherwise might do to the ideas which they held about the causes of the 'outbreak' of war before studying the magazine articles. This might include building in some 'flipped' learning, where the students read the articles before the lessons, in their own time, rather than doing all the required reading during the taught sessions. The English teachers also felt that one of the 'collateral benefits' of getting students to work with popular history magazines was that it got them used

to reading longer pieces of text than they were used to in 'traditional' text book based classrooms, and this was helpful preparation for further study in the sixth form (16 to 18 years) and at undergraduate level. In England, significant attention has been given to developing students' abilities to do extended writing (essay work), but less attention has focused on getting them to get better at 'extended reading'.

Feedback from the respondents also made the point that history magazines were in competition with other very rich sources of materials, such as the internet and newspaper archives, so care was needed in 'filtering' the very best and most useful magazine articles. Time to fully explore history magazines and the EHISTO site was also thought to be an issue – often, teachers were very keen on the articles and the resources, but struggled to find time to fit them into classroom practice. It remains to be seen whether teachers will develop Learning Objects on other 'European History Crossroads' topics. It will also be interesting to explore the extent to which the Learning Objectives which have been devised are adapted and changed so suit particular classes and contexts – again time is an issue here:

'There could have perhaps been a bit more variation in the format of tasks; quite a lot of them involved reading the resources and then doing written answers. This could be a bit 'dry'; it would be nice if we could find time to adapt some of the materials and resources to work in more debate and discussion work and we hope to do this next year when we build in an EHISTO unit in year 9, but time is always an issue... And remember the teachers' feedback really at Lodz was keep this simpler and shorter don't complicate it too much.'

It was clear that the history department which was closely involved with the project as an EHISTO partnership school had really enjoyed their involvement with EHISTO and thought that it had been a very helpful and worthwhile experience:

'I think it's really good we've been involved and I think [going to] Poland was great just talking to people from other countries that was fantastic.'  
'And I think the potential there was very good I think... whether it is working as it was intended to work where you just go to the website and pull off the task I still think there's issues with that and there always will be because people have different lengths of lessons or amounts of time that they can allocate to things so it's not going to be a perfect system.'  
'There are resources there you can do something with, or a network you can do something with, that could be really powerful I think.'

However, whether the EHISTO project will have a powerful impact over a longer period of time, beyond the duration of the project, remains to be seen. Will history teachers use the project to develop their own Learning Objects on other topics which are 'European (or world) History Cross-roads', will history teachers across Europe routinely integrate popular history magazines into their classroom practices to develop students' critical media literacy? In the words of Chou en Lai, it is too early to say.<sup>12</sup>

---

12 Chou en Lai's alleged response to a question about the significance of the French Revolution of 1789. It has been argued that he was actually indicating the French protests of 1968, in: Richard McGregor: Zhou's cryptic caution lost in translation. In: Financial Times of 10.6.2011.

# Summaries

Fabio Crivellari: Bygone news. The journalistic formatting of history  
Illustrating history in a plain way by highlighting news values and journalistic rhetoric history magazines are treating the past as a journalistic subject. The article claims to look at journalism as the major narrative in mass media society and therefore in popular history products as well.

Manuela Glaser: Popular knowledge communication in history magazines from a receptional psychology point of view.  
History magazines present historical information in a more or less entertaining way. The present article analyses these strategies of presentation, discusses how they influence the recipients' psychological processing, and describes history-specific aspects of knowledge acquisition.

Katja Gorbahn: Perpetrators, victims, heroes – the Second World War and National Socialism in Danish history magazines  
The article examines the presentation of the Second World War and National Socialism in Danish history magazines. The analysis demonstrates that the magazines both support and challenge a national master narrative. A concept of militarized masculinity is prevalent and popular cultural patterns have a strong impact.

Miriam Hannig: Popular history magazines between information and entertainment. A qualitative study on the expectations of consumers  
Since popular history magazines have only recently attracted the attention of historians and history education experts, of researchers in the field of communication and media, relatively little can be said about the recipients of magazines. This article shall be a first contribution to empirical considerations on the recipients of popular history magazines.

Terry Haydn: History magazines in the UK  
The paper details the recent development of the cultural phenomenon of popular history magazines in the UK and considers some of the implications

of this development for history education, both in terms of public history, and history in schools. The research revealed rapid growth in the popular consumption of a wide range of popular history magazines, from hobbies, heritage and family history, to magazines focusing on quite 'serious' and scholarly recent historical research.

Terry Haydn: Using popular history magazines in history teaching: a case study

The paper details an experiment in promoting the use of popular history magazines in secondary history teaching, drawing on a baseline study which indicated that although many teachers felt that popular history magazines had the potential to be useful resources for teaching history, very few teachers made use of them.

Stephan Jaeger: Popular historical writing from a narratological perspective

The chapter analyzes the degrees of narrativity that can be found in popular historical representations by analyzing examples from popular historical books, history magazines, documentary films, and the historical museum. It discusses narrative devices such as experientiality, the simulation of historical presence, and the focalization of collectives that are particularly relevant for popular historical writing.

Susanne Kinnebrock: Why Napoleon is exciting time after time: media logics and history

The article presents different media logics (news value, framing and narrativity) which explain the selection and structure of news. It argues that these logics are also applicable to popular history magazines being also periodical publications. Furthermore it discusses strategies how to accentuate topicality.

Susanne Popp: Popular history magazines between transmission of knowledge and entertainment – some theoretical remarks

The article begins with a brief classification of 'popular history magazines' followed by the question in how far this medium can be regarded as 'popular' and as popular mediator of academic knowledge. Questions join about the defining features of the history concept and about the history didactical

evaluation of this, before an outlook on further research concludes this contribution.

Marianne Sjöland: The use of history in popular history magazines. A theoretical approach

A couple of articles on the medieval crusades in the history magazines, *Populär Historia* and *History Today*, are analysed on the basis of a history didactic theory which focuses on different uses and needs of history. The main purpose is to discuss which functions history fulfils in popular history magazines and ultimately what might characterize the historiography of the genre.

Claudius Springkart: Popular history magazines in Germany

The contribution provides an overview of the current supply on the market for popular history magazines in Germany and outlines its basic structures. The results of a cover analysis show which historical topics have been in great demand at German newspaper kiosks over the last seven years and in what ways these magazines differ from each other in their methods of presenting history in an entertaining manner.

Monika Vinterek: The use of powerful men, naked women and war to sell. Popular history magazines in Sweden

An overview of the popular history magazine market in Sweden from 1991 to 2011 is presented with a closer look at the two biggest magazines. The front covers of issues from five years have been analysed. The history of Europe, the 1900s, dominates the overall impression. Hitler, war and nude women seem to be strategies which magazines choose in order to sell.

Michael Wobring: The function and use of image documents in German popular history magazines

The object of this contribution is the methodical consideration and examples of use to understand and analyse the diverse image inventory of popular history magazines. By means of examples of the German magazine culture examination possibilities and categories are developed which are able to capture and categorise the intention of the popular use of images in magazines regarding the presentation and conveyance of history.





# Authors

Fabio Crivellari, Dr. phil., lecturer on history and media, University of Constance, Germany. Exhibitions and media projects esp. for educational purposes, several publications on media history and public history. Main research interests: the medial logic of historical narratives, history politics, history/heritage marketing; e-mail: [fabio.crivellari@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:fabio.crivellari@uni-konstanz.de)

Manuela Glaser, Dr. rer. nat., psychologist and research scientist, Institut für Wissensmedien/Knowledge Media Research Center in Tübingen, Germany. Main research interests: learning with uncertain information in historical reconstructions, edutainment, and informal learning in museums; e-mail: [m.glaser@iwm-kmrc.de](mailto:m.glaser@iwm-kmrc.de)

Katja Gorbahn, Dr. phil., assistant professor at the Department of Aesthetics and Communication at Aarhus University (Denmark). Main research interests: memory studies, textbook analysis, social identity constructions in history teaching, Germany in Danish history culture, content and language integrated learning; e-mail: [germkg@dac.au.dk](mailto:germkg@dac.au.dk)

Miriam Hannig, Research assistant, project leader of the EHISTO project; Department of History Didactics at the University of Augsburg, Germany. Main research interests: history in the commercialised mass media (co-ordinator of the EU-Comenius project 'EHISTO' 2012–2014), museum development and museum education; history teaching in primary school; e-mail: [miriam.hannig@phil.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:miriam.hannig@phil.uni-augsburg.de)

Terry Haydn, Professor of Education, University of East Anglia, England. Main research interests: history education and the use of new technology in history education; e-mail: [t.haydn@uea.ac.uk](mailto:t.haydn@uea.ac.uk)

Stephan Jaeger, Full Professor of German Studies, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada. Extensive publications, including two monographs

and five co-edited books, on historiographical narratology, history and literature, documentary history in historiography, film, and the museum, representations of war, and romantic and modern poetry; e-mail: [stephan.jaeger@umanitoba.ca](mailto:stephan.jaeger@umanitoba.ca)

Susanne Kinnebrock, Dr. phil., professor of public communication, University of Augsburg, Germany. Main research interests: European media and communication history, history of journalism, narrative journalism, gender media studies; e-mail: [susanne.kinnebrock@phil.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:susanne.kinnebrock@phil.uni-augsburg.de)

Susanne Popp, Prof. Dr. phil., Didactics of History, University of Augsburg, Germany. President of the International Society of History Didactics. Main research interests: European and global perspectives in national history teaching and history museums (co-ordinator of the EU-Culture-project 'EMEE'; 2012–2016), visual literacy in history magazines in Europe (co-ordinator of the EU-Comenius projects 'EHISTO'; 2012–2014), international comparison of textbooks; e-mail: [susanne.popp@phil.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:susanne.popp@phil.uni-augsburg.de)

Jutta Schumann, Dr. phil., lecturer on History Didactics, University of Augsburg, Germany. Main research interests: museum development and museum education, gender issues in history learning, historical culture, textbook analysis; e-mail: [jutta.schumann@phil.uni-augsburg.de](mailto:jutta.schumann@phil.uni-augsburg.de)

Marianne Sjöland, Licentiate of Arts, PhD student at the department of History, Lund University, Sweden. Main research interests: history didactics, popular history, history magazines; e-mail: [marianne.sjoland@hist.lu.se](mailto:marianne.sjoland@hist.lu.se)

Claudius Springkart, M.A., student teacher for History and German at the Dossenberger Gymnasium Günzburg, Germany. Main research interests: didactics of history (popular history magazines), didactics of German language and literature; e-mail: [claudius.springkart@yahoo.de](mailto:claudius.springkart@yahoo.de)

Monika Vinterek, Professor in Educational Work and Research Director of Education and Learning, Dalarna University and Visiting Professor at Department of Applied Educational Science, Umeå University, Sweden. Main research interests: General Didactics and History Didactics, teaching and learning in the area of educational practice; e-mail: [mvn@du.se](mailto:mvn@du.se)

Michael Wobring, Dr. phil, research associate at the Chair of History Didactics, University of Augsburg, Germany. Main research interests: didactics of history, history of technology, history of globalization (history of telecommunication and traffic), history of photography and print media, historical cartography; e-mail: michael.wobring@phil.uni-augsburg.de

