

Biography and Memory: Karel Gott in Czech Culture of Remembrance

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Karel Gott (1939–2019) was one of the most popular singers and popstars in Czechoslovakia during 20th and 21st century. His autobiography and biographies on his life are very popular and thus they are suitable sources for research on the theories of biography and memory studies. This text compares his autobiography, *Karel Gott: Má cesta za štěstím* (2021) and the biography *Gott: Československý příběh* (2021), written by Pavel Klusák, and focuses primarily on their reception (reviews in mass media and on web platforms for readers). We consider: How do differences in the genres of autobiography and biography influence the reception of certain books? How do these biographies fit into current debates in memory studies? Through answering these questions, this text aims to examine the role of biographical writing in contemporary cultures of remembrance.

Keywords: biography, theory of biography, memory studies, Karel Gott, popular culture

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Karel Gott: Biography and Memory

The relationship between the theories of biography and memory studies is both intense and ambiguous.¹ On the one hand, it is generally accepted that biographies significantly influence memory, and on the other hand, the theory of biography is a field of research that interacts only in a very limited way with the developments in memory studies. The relationship

¹ This publication was supported by the Cooperatio Program provided by Charles University, research area History, implemented at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University.

between biographies and memory are regularly discussed, but it is most often in terms of where individual biographies fall on the hagiography-defamation-rehabilitation axis, or how they relate to a particular community (e.g. nation, profession).² From the point of view of the development of memory studies, it may seem that the theory of biography is still based on memory studies before the transcultural turn.³ In this sense, biographies are understood as significant yet static sites of memory whose meanings change either in response to shifts in research or with changes in political regimes. The latter is all the more relevant in Eastern and Central Europe, where the alternation of democratic regimes and modern dictatorships has brought about repeated politically motivated reassessments of history. A model example of this type of research are texts that assess the changing interpretations of individual protagonists in his (or, exceptionally, her) biographies from death to the present.⁴

The following text draws its theoretical foundations from approaches that have gradually emerged in memory studies since 2010. Their common feature is the need to respond to the emergence of digital technologies, especially Web 2.0 and with it the so-called post-broadcast era. That is, a situation in which the global availability of internet connectivity and mobile devices has enabled the uninterrupted, decentralised participation of individuals in the consumption and creation of historical meanings.⁵ The politics of memory and scholarly research on the past

² ETIENNE BOISSERIE, *Historik a politológ zoči-voči životopisnému žánru: prípad Milan Hodža*, in: *Biografia a historiografia: slovenský, český a francúzsky pohľad*, (ed.) Bohumila Ferenčuhová, Bratislava 2012, p. 139; *Handbuch Biographie: Methoden, Traditionen, Theorien*, (ed.) Christian Klein, Berlin 2022, pp. 79–94.; JANA WOHLMUTH MARKUPOVÁ, *Between 'Creators and Bearers of the Czech National Myth' and an 'Academic Suicide': Czech Biography in the Twenty-First Century*, in: *Different Lives: Global Perspective on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*, (edd.) Hans Renders, David Veltman, Leiden–Boston 2020, pp. 182–196. THOMAS SÖDERQVIST, *The History and Poetics of Scientific Biography*, London 2002.

³ ASTRID ERLI, *Transculturality and the Eco-Logic of Memory*, *Memory Studies Review* 1/2024, no. 1, pp. 20–21. DOI: 10.1163/29498902-20240002

⁴ ANNA ARTWINSKA, *Poetry in the Service of Politics*, Frankfurt am Main 2015.

⁵ ANDREW HOSKINS, *New Memory: Mediating history*, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 21/2001, no. 4, pp. 333–346.; GREGOR FEINDT, et al. *Entangled Memory: Toward a Third Wave in Memory Studies*, *History and Theory* 53/2014, no. 1, pp. 24–44. A. ERLI, *Transculturality and the Eco-Logic of Memory*, pp. 17–35. TEA SINDBÆK ANDERSEN, BARBARA TÖRNQUIST-PLEWA,

that played a central role in earlier approaches have become just one of many cultural practices related to the past.

Of the approaches that conceptualise this “new memory,” I draw most from concepts of the British media theorist, Andrew Hoskins. He has elaborated on the concept of media memory ecology, which responds to the growing influence of digital technologies (specifically social media and the availability of portable devices) on the culture of remembrance.⁶ This “new memory” breaks out of original national and social frameworks and becomes a fluid, ever-evolving archive available for individual and collective (companies, institutions, organisations) users to use and reshape. In relation to the focus of this text, this approach has the consequence that the biographies under study do not simply represent another layer of representations of a particular protagonist, but through their publication enter into multiple interactions with other elements of the culture of remembrance, such as the book market, literary criticism and cultural journalism, book awards, reader websites, memory institutions, or the music industry.

This text aims to explore the place of biographical writing in the media ecology of memory. Following the theorists mentioned above, two aspects of biography’s existence in the culture of remembrance are the focus of this text. The first – intra-medial – focuses on the nature of biographical writing itself. What are the elements of the archive that have been developed over hundreds of years that have shaped the tradition of biographical writing that are still relevant today? By archive, I mean the collection of elements that have emerged during the development of the biographical genre from pre-modern times to the present, i.e. the definition of the genre, narrative practices, the canon of biographical texts, and reader expectations. I understand these elements in accordance with conceptualisations of the relationship between archive and memory, as potentialities, parts of which are activated in the process of biographical writing and the reception of biographical texts.⁷

The Twentieth Century in European Memory: Transcultural Mediation and Reception, Leiden–Boston 2017.

⁶ ANDREW HOSKINS, *Media, Memory, Metaphor: Remembering and the Connective Turn*, *Parallax* 4/17 (2011), pp. 19–31. ANDREW HOSKINS, *Memory ecologies*, *Memory Studies* 94/2016, no. 3, pp. 348–357.

⁷ ALEIDA ASSMANN, *Canon and Archive*, in: *Cultural Memory Studies*, (edd.) Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, Sara B. Young, Berlin 2008, pp. 97–108.

The second level is then an exploration of the connectivity inherent in the media ecology of memory. The connectivity of memory means that to exist as a “site of memory” today is not to have a fixed place in the historical canon administered by institutions, but to circulate in an on-going flow of information.⁸ It is the tracking and attempt to characterise these flows and interactions that this text focuses on.

The biographies whose media memory ecologies I explore focus on Karel Gott (1939–2019). Gott was, and probably still is after his death, the most popular solo singer in Czechoslovak and Czech history. Gott began his musical career in the 1950s. His career continuously grew and extended beyond the borders of Czechoslovakia when he performed in the U.S. and Germany. After August 1968, he became one of the pop culture icons of socialist Czechoslovakia. However, his career continued successfully after the change of political regime in 1989, and Karel Gott died in 2019 as a respected and beloved singer. The Czech government arranged his funeral with state honours, including a memorial service at the Prague Castle. Even at the time of writing this in autumn 2024, it is possible to buy tickets for the concert “Karel Gott, his songs live on,” held in Prague’s largest music venue, the O2 Arena.⁹

At the core of this research are two current treatments of Karel Gott’s life. The first is the singer’s autobiography *My Journey to Happiness*.¹⁰ Although this voluminous book was published posthumously, it was prepared in close collaboration with Gott during his lifetime. The official annotation claims that the author of the text was Gott himself and that the time after his death was devoted to the preparation of a rich pictorial part of the book. In the same year, a second book was published, entitled *Gott: The Czechoslovak Story*, written by the publicist, Pavel Klusák.¹¹ In this case, it is a biography written by an experienced music journalist. The book received the Literary Award for Journalism and the main Book of the Year award at the Magnesia Litera Awards in 2021.¹²

Although the representations associated with Karel Gott’s personality offer themselves as the subject of diverse research in the field of

⁸ A. HOSKINS, *Memory ecologies*, pp. 349–350.

⁹ KAREL GOTT... *jehopísněží dál*, <https://www.o2arena.cz/events/karel-gott-jeho-pisne-ziji-dal/> (accessed on 6 February 2025).

¹⁰ KAREL GOTT, *Má cesta za štěstím*, Praha 2021.

¹¹ PAVEL KLUSÁK, *Gott: československý příběh*, Brno 2022.

¹² MAGNESIA LITERA, *Ročník 2022*, <https://www.magnesia-litera.cz/rocnik/2022/> (accessed on 6 February 2025).

memory studies, the following text focuses primarily on the relationship between biographical treatments and memory. In relation to biographical writing, I am interested in the following issues. How are the genres of autobiography and biography reflected in relation to the publications under study? This question seeks to examine the hypothesis that the differences between the traditionally separate genres of autobiography and biography may not be of much significance outside of scholarly discussion.¹³ The second question – “What notions of biography are associated with the two titles?” – focuses on whether recurring patterns are present in discussions of the two books under study that are indicative of particular expectations of biographical writing in relation to the past.¹⁴ Next, I attempt to describe what other texts or other media the two books connect to within the possibilities afforded by the connectivity of contemporary memory.

This study is a continuation of my previous attempts to connect theory of biography with memory studies, and other research devoted mainly to the Czech culture of remembrance. With regard to linking the exploration of the printed medium of memory and its interaction with digital platforms, the connection with Kamil Činátl's analysis of the literary bestsellers *Bílá Voda* [*White Water*] and *Šikmý kostel* [*The Slanted Church*] is significant.¹⁵ Similar dynamics have been observed in the Czech environment by several other authors.¹⁶ A common feature here is the work with digital platforms that allow users (readers, tourists, locals) to comment on and thus interpret and (re)contextualise specific artefacts or objects associated with the past. Following Hoskins' conceptualisation of the media ecology of memory, the point is not to measure the degree of appropriation of a particular historical narrative, but to identify the diverse interactions between different media of memory. Nor is this study simply about the reception of specific books, as this field has long been

¹³ VÁCLAV SIXTA, *Možnosti historické biografie: teorie biografie a historická věda*, Praha 2023, pp. 124–132.

¹⁴ By using the term “notion of biography” here, I build on my earlier research. V. SIXTA, *Možnosti historické biografie*, p. 62.

¹⁵ KAMIL ČINÁTL, *Jak zacházet s minulostí čtenáři historických bestsellerů? Sonda do recepce Bílé Vody Kateřiny Tučkové*, *Moderní dějiny* 31/2023, no. 2, pp. 79–106.

¹⁶ ČENĚK PÝCHA, *Místa paměti v digitálním prostředí*, *Historie – Otázky – Problémy* 108/2018, no. 1, pp. 32–45. KATEŘINA SIXTOVÁ, *Babičino údolí: krajina paměti v digitálních médiích*, *Dějiny – teorie – kritika* 19/2022, no. 2, pp. 253–282. <https://doi.org/10.14712/24645370.2961>.

developed by, for example, Jiří Trávniček; rather it is a probe into the relationship between memory and a particular genre.¹⁷

Given the focus of the study, the research centres not on the biographical texts themselves, but on the paratexts that surround them. Thus, the sources for the research presented here consist of published reviews and reader ratings on Databáze knih.cz, the Czech Bibliographic Database, and Goodreads.com published up to the beginning of November 2024. The total corpus of comments from reader sites includes 168 comments equally divided between the two books. A total of 83 readers commented on Gott's autobiography and two more on Klusák's book. However, the proportions within some platforms are disproportionate. While *My Journey to Happiness* received 73 comments on the Book Database compared to 59 for *The Czechoslovak Story*, on Goodreads the ratio is 4 to 19 in favour of the biography.

Reviews of both publications from print and online media serve as a reference corpus. Klusák's book was reviewed nine times, while Gott's was reviewed five times. The biography written by Klusák attracted professional reviewers in cultural and literary magazines, while the Gott's autobiography resonated more among book bloggers and mainstream online journals. There is also Klusák's review of Gott's book as a specific text in this corpus. I use content analysis to track recurring statements or patterns that speak to both the expectations associated with the genres of autobiography and biography, and the historical meanings that emerge in relation to both books.

Biography and Autobiography: Genres and Memory

First, we focus on whether and how users of readers' websites associate their expectations and, consequently, ratings of books with their genres. To begin with, only 37 of the total number of reviews explicitly address the question of genre. The way in which the categories of autobiography and biography are present in the comments also differs significantly between the two titles. In the case of Gott's autobiography, there are more users who identify the book as a biography (11) than those who identify it as an autobiography (10).

¹⁷ JIŘÍ TRÁVNÍČEK, MICHAL PŘIBÁŇ, *Česká čtenářská republika: generace, fenomény, životopisy*, Brno–Prague 2017.

On the other hand, we can trace different evaluations of Klusák's book connected with ideas about the requirements of a particular genre. While nine comments describe *The Czechoslovak Story* as an example of a quality biography, five users explicitly claim that it is not a biography. The reasons vary. Most often it was because of the incompleteness of the book. Readers pointed to the lack of content on the singer's private life or the poorly-described post-revolutionary years after 1989. Alternatively, they describe the book as "journalistic" and thus not biographical. For example, a user with the nickname "jaroiva" concludes her comprehensive review with the claim: "So I listened to it, got it 'right' politically, and now I would like to see some biography."¹⁸ In addition to the above list, there are two other assessments of Klusák's book, one claiming that it is the "life and work" of the protagonist and the other claiming that it is a "corrected memoirs." While these formulations do not explicitly use genre names, they do use characteristics often associated with them.

It is clear that most users, while not using the genre label to express their evaluation, still formulate their evaluations with unstated expectations or assumptions. In the case of Gott's autobiography, thirty-five (out of eighty-three) ratings can be identified in this way, and in the case of Klusák's book it is even sixty ratings out of eighty-five. I derive expectations from individual evaluations by an inductive process from passages that express satisfaction, disappointment, or general appreciation of the book in question. I do not distinguish whether the expectation was met or not, but I try to capture its characteristics. In addition, I compare these expectations with the notions of biography that I have proposed in my previous work on the subject, which are based on both scholarly discussion and research on current biographical production.¹⁹ I have identified the following notions in the overall corpus.

"Before reading it, I was expecting a slightly tabloid insight into K. Gott's life, and I was especially looking forward to seeing him dethroned from the completely absurd pedestal that many female fans put him on."²⁰ In his review, a user with the nickname Metuje uses the phrase "dethronement from the pedestal," which is one of the typical features of

¹⁸ I provide links to quotes from reader platforms as follows. The abbreviations indicate each platform, followed by the user's nickname and then the date the comment was published. CBDB, jaroiva, 28 June 2023.

¹⁹ V. SIXTA, *Možnosti historické biografie*.

²⁰ Metuje, DTBK, 22 June 2024.

the notion of biography as a trial. This judgement is expressed in various more or less metaphorical terms such as “hagiography”, “dishonesty”, “defamation”, “adoration”, “repainting a rosy picture”, “vindication”, and “de-flagging Karel Gott”. In these contributions, the readership associates biography or autobiography with the expectation of passing an imaginary trial on the protagonist. These (even within a broader framework than this study) move along the axis of hagiography, defamation, then rehabilitation.²¹ The protagonist is judged in terms of his “historical legacy.” While in traditional historical biographies the main framework has been the relationship to national history and contributions to the national community, in the case of Karel Gott, the subject of the trial is rather whether his privileged position in Czech pop culture is deserved or not. Judgments explicitly linked to political history are rather rare and consist exclusively of a few condemnatory comments linked to Gott’s support of the so-called 1977 Anti-charter.

If we look at the stratification of “judicial” motifs according to the particular genres, it is clear that this is a concept mainly associated with biography. In relation to Klusák’s book, forty commentaries can be identified in this way, and in the case of Gott’s autobiography, only thirteen. In the case of Gott’s *My Journey to Happiness*, the predominant number of comments (7 occurrences) are those criticising it as unreliable. In August 2023, user Kackac77 wrote: “Sometimes I like to read biographies about famous people, I find them inspiring. But in this book, it seems to me like Karel Gott wants to paint his whole life pink. It’s all so ‘likeable’.”²² The comment illustrates well the connection of expectation for an evaluation of the protagonist’s life in direct relation to the genre of biography. Ironically, this is one of the posts that does not distinguish between biography and autobiography. To sum up, the notion of biography as a trial is manifested by the presence of motifs signalling the need to evaluate and judge the protagonist according to some implicitly or explicitly formulated values.

“The book is written very readably. You feel as if you have travelled the world with Karel Gott, as if you were one of his close friends. Karel Gott doesn’t hide anything and yet he doesn’t want to be tabloid, which they attribute to the positive.”²³ Here, user Pepa0216 describes

²¹ E. BOISSERIE, *Historik a politológ zoči-vôči životopisnému žánru*.

²² Kackac77, DTBK, 3 August 2023.

²³ Pepa0216, DTBK, 18 January 2023.

his reading experience as getting close to Karel Gott. We could find ten more similar comments in the whole set. This is not a large number quantitatively, but in terms of expectations of the autobiography genre, it is an essential characteristic. Readers feel as if they have met the singer directly, travelled the world with him, become close to him. They also often mention the form of the book, such as parts written in handwriting, or listening to an audiobook where parts are narrated by an artificial intelligence in a voice imitating the voice of the protagonist.²⁴ Thus, alongside the notion of a judgment, we can identify an expectation that I call “personal testimony,” of which the main features are the effect of immediacy and the strengthening of the relationship between the reader and the protagonist. As sceptical as the humanities – after the linguistic turn, including biography theory – are about the possibility of achieving such immediacy, it is a widespread mode of reception among readers.

Similarly, another characteristic is the desire for completeness. Here, too, it is clear that there can be no “complete” biography or autobiography. At the same time, in our corpus, the assessment of whether the book captures everything essential or contains some gaps appears very often for both publications. For Gott’s autobiography, twelve evaluations can be identified in this way, and for *The Czechoslovak Story*, twenty-nine. The user michal0133 writes: “A very carefully crafted book charting the life of Karel Gott from the beginning of his career to a few years after the revolution. Lots of interesting facts. Respectively nothing that a fan wouldn’t know roughly, but this time in detail and in context, with an attempt to describe the events historically accurately.”²⁵ With the most common manifestation of the desire for completeness being users pointing out missing information, Klusák’s book received a number of positive reviews in this regard. Gott’s autobiography is also repeatedly evaluated positively in this sense. However, with regard to its relationship to the genre of autobiography, the following excerpt is significant: “I like biography books, but I didn’t enjoy this one very much, although the book is nicely illustrated with photos, but I doubt that K.G. had that much memory for some of the detailed recollections.”²⁶ The readers’

²⁴ For the audiobook, see MUJROZHLAS, *Karel Gott: Má cesta za štěstím – Nové příběhy. Knižní bestseller v unikátní zvukové podobě*, <https://www.mujirozhlaz.cz/cetba-na-pokracovani/karel-gott-ma-cesta-za-stestim-nove-pribehy-knizni-bestseller-v-unikatni> (accessed on 6 February 2025)

²⁵ michal0133, DTBK, 23 March 2022.

²⁶ Jirinamac, DTBK, 13 August 2023.

expectations on the subjectivity of autobiography is, in this case, in tension with the breadth of *My Journey to Happiness*.

A few users also express the belief that Gott is not the only author of the book. These comments reflect the common practice of celebrity autobiographies having a strong co-author or being written predominantly by a ghost-writer. In the case of *My Journey to Happiness*, the book is declared to be Gott's text, with the images and production taken over by his wife Ivana after his passing. This is also what most commentaries work with, using formulations such as "Mr. Gott writes," "Mr. Gott wrote the book well," "Gott talks about his life here," "Karel Gott is very honest," or "the book was written by the Master himself." However, comments expressing doubt about Gott's exclusive authorship do not see this fact as a reason to question the book's quality or credibility. For example, user Vevericka.eva writes: "But Mr. Gott was obviously a good writer too (or someone very talented helped him with that, because everything sounds very authentic)."²⁷ Similarly, other users accept the presumed co-authorship. Thus, it seems that for them the authenticity of the autobiography lies not in the certainty of Karel Gott's authorship, but rather in the quality of the text and the book's design.

Overall, three areas can be identified on reader sites that represent frameworks in which readers formulate their expectations of particular genres. These are judgment, the desire for completeness, and personal testimony. These three themes overlap with concepts identified in other segments of the biographical production.²⁸ From the explicit references to both genres it can be inferred that, in the case of Gott's autobiography, the uncertainty about genre is greater; readers often confuse it with biography, comparing it with other biographies and so on. Klusák's book, on the other hand, is stably rated either as a biography or more generally as non-fiction. Given the symmetrical distribution of individual concepts for both books – most often judgment, then completeness, and personal testimony only in *My Journey to Happiness* – it can be said that the genre distinction is not a key consideration for users of reader sites in their judgement of a book. More important is the more generally understood focus on a specific historical figure and his or her fate than the correct identification of genre. This can be confirmed by the fact that, in terms

²⁷ Vevericka.eva, DTBK, 21 December 2021.

²⁸ V. SIXTA, *Možnosti historické biografie*, pp. 124–132.

of determining the genre, it is not disputed among users, while all three concepts were subject to controversy among readers.

Looking at reviews, it is evident that for professional critics, genre is by contrast the central framework for evaluating books. Thus, for autobiography, the main object of evaluation is the degree of its authenticity or subjectivity. This is well captured by the highlighted sentence – “The text may not be entirely objective, but it is honest” – which appeared in a review on the *Budiž kniha* [*Be a Book*] blog.²⁹ Most reviews in this vein approach the construction of authenticity in Gott’s book. Only Jindřich Göth critically points out moments that undermine the authenticity of the text. He enumerates a number of internal contradictions and banal assertions that serve as a kind of glitch in an otherwise smoothly functioning recollection machine.³⁰

With Klusák’s book, the question of genre is a little less clear. Many professional reviewers do not characterise the genre at all, or use descriptive terms such as “life story” (Petr A. Bílek).³¹ Petr Zídek explicitly mentions in his review that it is not a biography because the book deals with only a part of the singer’s entire life.³² The book’s apparent lack of individual aspects or contemporary context is one of the most frequent criticisms of the publication. Following the reader reviews, it can be said that reviewers and readers share the need to address the extent and legitimacy of the judgments passed on the protagonist, as well as the desire for as complete a treatment as possible. The latter is reflected in the reviews which contain lists of factual errors. What is new, on the other hand, is the demand by some reviewers for a deeper and more conceptual

²⁹ BUDIŽ KNIHA, *KAREL GOTT a jeho velká knižní tečka: Má cesta za štěstím*, <https://www.budizkniha.cz/2021/09/karel-gott-jeho-velka-knizni-tecka-ma.html> (accessed on 6 February 2025).

³⁰ JINDŘICH GÖTH, *RECENZE: Karel Gott si v knize Má cesta za štěstím vystavěl pomník*, https://www.idnes.cz/kultura/literatura/karel-gott-pameti-ma-cesta-za-stestim-ivana-gottova.A210718_121208_literatura_spm, https://www.idnes.cz/kultura/literatura/karel-gott-pameti-ma-cesta-za-stestim-ivana-gottova.A210718_121208_literatura_spm? (accessed on 6 February 2025).

³¹ PETR A. BÍLEK, *Recenze: Chybí víc o hudbě. Klusák se pokusil přebírat hrách a popel Gottova příběhu*, <https://magazin.aktualne.cz/kultura/hudba/recenze-chybi-vic-o-hudbe-klusak-gott-ceskoslovensky-pribeh/r~c362fc266d4711ec98380cc47ab5f122/> (accessed on 6 February 2025).

³² PETR ZÍDEK, *Karel Gott a tíže našich dějin*, <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/kultura-karel-gott-a-tize-nasich-dejin-40384960> (accessed on 6 February 2025). The book covers the life of Karel Gott from the late 1950s to mid 1990s.

treatment of the relationship between the individual and power in normalised Czechoslovakia. In these cases, biography – explicitly named here – is meant to be an analysis of a more general phenomenon.

Motifs

In the following section, I focus on the themes and patterns that recur across the books' evaluations. Through this inventory, we observe how readers' ideas about biographical writing and history interact with the texts about Karel Gott. It is clear that Gott's life is so intertwined with the development of Czechoslovak and Czech society in the second half of the 20th century that potential themes abound, but only a few are dominant.

Fandom

A very specific rhetorical strategy often chosen by readers is to share their own relationship to Gott's artistic career. Thus, users often write in their posts that they were not fans but have read Gott's autobiography, or, on the contrary, because they are fans, they defend Gott in the discussion or describe the feelings of loss they have associated with the singer's passing. The most frequent (20) figure is the declaration of "non-fanhood" but at the same time appreciation of the autobiography or its protagonist: "I am not the target group of Karel Gott's songs, but I read this book with pleasure. I respect people who have worked their way up through their own diligence, and the singer was certainly one of them."³³ Users praise the singer's diligence, talent, or authentic treatment of the book. At the same time, it should be noted that some reviews include descriptions of activities that could be attributes of fandom, such as attending a funeral, owning a music recording, or attending shows.

The second important figure is the designation of the autobiography as a book for fans (11). The book is intended to serve as a tool for recalling memories of listening to Karel Gott's music and adding new information from his private life or from the beginning of his career. On the other hand, Klusák's book is perceived (5) as a book not for fans because it

³³ DTBK, Iki1, 22 November 2023.

may disturb their idealised ideas about their idol: “The only book about Karel Gott that is not on ‘demand’. Definitely worth reading. Even if uncritical fans are likely to disparage it.”³⁴ However, it is just as often cited as a book that is interesting even if you don’t care about its protagonist because it provides a general insight into popular culture of the time.

Although “fandom” does not have a fixed meaning among users of reader sites, it plays an important role in characterising both books. It allows a positive assessment of the autobiography and, by extension, Gott’s life to be expressed, along with a certain distance (“I am not a fan”). It is also impossible not to notice that the emphasis on the “fan-singer” relationship is, according to Klusák, a key building block of Gott’s success.³⁵ Thus, in the environment of reader reviews, his thesis seems to be confirmed. For the topic of the relationship between biography and memory, it should be underlined that this “acknowledgement of position” is not entirely usual. For example, it is hardly conceivable that it would be common in a discussion of the period of the so-called normalisation in Czechoslovakia for the discussants to share their political views and strategies of coexistence with the regime at the time.

Family and Personal Memories of Readers

Since most adult readers experienced at least part of Gott’s career, the question arises whether reading the book triggered the need to share their own memories of Gott or situations related to the singer. Perhaps the most specific, but not very typical memory, is shared by a user with the nickname BARBARRKA: “What did I resent him for? He sent me to do my homework when I barged into his dressing room. Well, I was fifteen, I looked twelve, so thumbs up:-).”³⁶ More frequent motifs are listening to Gott’s songs. However, users do not report, for example, that they played recordings of his music themselves, but rather that they heard his music on the radio, on television, on community broadcasts, in shops, or at petrol stations. “I used to hear Karel Gott from the radio and television as a child, then as a teenager, and then on and on, for many decades, and even if one no longer sought out his songs, one could not completely

³⁴ DTBK, Knihomura 20 March 2023.

³⁵ P. KLUSÁK, *Gott*, pp. 402–407.

³⁶ DTBK, BARBARRKA, 27 July 2022.

displace them, they were always there, like the image of the emperor...”³⁷ The important common denominators here are, in particular, the passive roles of the authors of the commentaries. These users were present when Gott’s music was playing, but they themselves did not actively seek him out, i.e. they only perceived his omnipresence. The second important level is the apolitical nature of these memories. They are all set in the sphere of leisure or private space.

The second significant phenomenon that is associated with the readers’ memories is the motif of family. This is linked to personal memories, which are often linked to family life, as illustrated, for example, by the comment by user Mindy: “I still have a vivid memory of when I was a kid and his song was playing on the radio and I shouted, ‘Quiet! Kája is singing.’ And the whole family had to be quiet until the song was over.”³⁸ Other users mention that they bought Gott’s autobiography for their grandmother or borrowed it from their grandmother. Many readers appreciate the book as an excellent gift they received from their relatives.

But it’s not just about the families of the readers. Gott’s family is also part of the books’ reflections. For one thing, readers uniformly often appreciate new information about the Gott family. A recurring motif here is the positive assessment of the cohesion of Gott’s family, where it is often pointed out that Gott did not want to leave his family in 1968, but also that his family was supportive of his singing career. A specific motif is the references to Gott’s daughters. For example, a reader with the nickname Mateo67 writes: “And I, like probably most of the nation, was affected by his death. Strongly, even considering the young age of his daughters.”³⁹ The strong values associated with family are also contained in the user Nefer’s review: “Watching the video clip of *Srdce nehasnou* (Hearts Don’t Die Out), it was clear to me that the song was full of: respect, humility, hope in her daughter, and that there won’t be another one... that’s how I felt about her. I believe Charlotte will follow in his footsteps – she

³⁷ DTBK, Rade, 04 March 2022.

³⁸ DTBK, Mindy, 14 November 2021. “Kája” is another variant of the singer’s first name.

³⁹ DTBK, Mateo67, 27 August 2023. Karel Gott had four daughters: Dominika Gottová (born 1973), Lucie Kolářová (born 1987), Charlotte Ella Gottová (born 2006), Nelly Sofie Gottová (born 2008). The comment therefore refers to the youngest two daughters.

has the voice for it.”⁴⁰ Many readers seem to bring their perspective to that of the singer’s descendants or relate the singer’s family relationships to their own.

The family motifs described above appear most often in connection with Gott’s autobiography. It seems that the genre of autobiography is symbiotically connected with family memory, in which memories of the famous singer circulate. This is particularly interesting in the context of the fact that the family was one of the important building blocks of both the ideology of normalisation and the memory of this period.⁴¹

Historical Events

What historical events do users’ comments refer to? Although family, leisure, and popular culture are a full-bodied part of contemporary historical research, in this section we focus on whether users associate any of the books with specific historical events and processes from the years of Gott’s life.

Clearly, the most quoted historical event is Gott’s speech during the so-called Anti-charter campaign against the Charter 77 initiative. Gott was one of the main speakers at the event, which was organised by the state to demonstrate the rejection of the Charter 77 declaration, which drew attention to human rights violations in Czechoslovakia. While Charter 77 became the epicentre of opposition to communist power in the years that followed, Anti-charter became a symbol of collaboration with that power.⁴²

All references to this event follow the same pattern, differing only in their evaluation. On the one hand, there are readers who condemn Gott for his performance in the campaign and declare their distrust of

⁴⁰ DTBK, Nefer, 31 July 2021. The song “Srdce nehasnou” (Hearts Don’t Die Out) was recorded by Karel Gott with his daughter Charlotte in 2019.

⁴¹ IVO MOŽNÝ, *Proč tak snadno: některé rodinné důvody sametové revoluce*, Prague 2022; PAULINA BREN, *The greengrocer and his TV: the culture of communism after the 1968 Prague Spring*, Ithaca 2010; KAMIL ČINÁTL, *Naše české minulosti aneb jak vzpomínáme*, Praha 2014; JAROSLAV PINKAS, *Jak vzpomínáme na normalizaci: obrazy normalizační minulosti ve filmu*, Prague 2021.

⁴² KEVIN MCDERMOTT, *Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945–89: a political and social history*, London–New York 2015, pp. 152–181.; JONATHAN BOLTON, *Worlds of dissent: Charter 77, the Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech culture under communism*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 152–200.

his self-advocacy in his autobiography. On the other side, we find contributions that defend him – most often pointing out that the majority of the population had to agree to some degree of cooperation with the authorities of the time. Illustrative of this is a post by a user with the nickname Marekh: “I can’t agree with n.ezn.amy’s profile comment regarding Anti-charter. No one had it easy during the normalisation period, including pop star Karel Gott, although at first glance it would seem that he had no worries and was in agreement with the regime and took notes with the communist cadres, something he was much blamed for after 1989. He had to find common language with the Communist Party, and there were countless such artists if they wanted to continue to work in the artistic sphere in Czechoslovakia during the normalisation period. I think that Karel Gott has explained this topic sufficiently and it certainly belongs in the book, because he had a lot to say on the subject and explained it in a broader context. Karel Gott could have stayed in West Germany and avoided all the trouble with the Communist Party. In West Germany, he released one album after another, he had countless concerts, he would not have missed anything, but he did not want to disappoint our fans, he did not want to leave his family, and therefore he decided to stay in Czechoslovakia, which is good.”⁴³

This extensive commentary responds to the previous review: “Karel Gott was an excellent singer, but also a man who was beholden to every regime. I remember very well his speech at the Anti-charter and then here in this book it will be written about his persecution by the communist regime? But come on, there are still video recordings of his speech available to watch, so defending Karel Gott in this book is completely silly and pointless.”⁴⁴ Other reviews on this topic no longer bring any new themes. The central theme here is the question of the moral evaluation of Gott’s performance. The reviews, however, do not reflect the discussion of the interpretation of the period of the so-called normalisation in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁵ Readers implicitly agree in their negative assessment of this period. Similarly, the themes of the artist’s responsibility towards

⁴³ DTBK, Marekh, 22 November 2021. The author of the commentary mentions the fact that Gott was on tour in the Federal Republic of Germany during the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops on August 21, 1968.

⁴⁴ DTBK, n.ezn.amy, 20 November 2021.

⁴⁵ *Podoby československé normalizace: dějiny v diskuzi*, (edd.) Kamil Činátl, Jan Mervart, Jaroslav Najbert, Praha 2017.

the public, which Klusák's book opens up in several places, do not resonate among readers.

In addition to the so-called Anti-charter, Gott's "mock emigration" after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies is also mentioned several times. Readers here take the title of a chapter from Klusák's book. In all cases, however, they interpret it in the same framework as the Anti-charter. That is, as a moment in which an unwritten "contract" between the power and the singer was created. Only once is the joint singing of the national anthem with Karel Kryl in 1989 mentioned.⁴⁶

It is clear from the above that neither of the books are read like a history book in the sense that they refer to historical processes and events within the framework of classical historicism – that is, the attempt to interpret history as a linear story of a particular community in an attempt to understand its meaning. Although biographical writing has always been part of the great historical narratives of progress or national emancipation, this is not the case here.⁴⁷ The singer may fail or succeed in the circumstances – in this case, the coming normalisation – but readers do not attribute to him the possibility of changing or influencing history.

Intertextuality and Connectivity

Although the basic framework to produce the texts under review is the evaluation of a particular title, many readers use comparisons with other biographies and autobiographies to express their reading experience. Thus, a separate layer of references to other texts emerges in the corpus of commentaries, which completes the picture of the ideal or model biography. No doubt this is also enhanced by the fact that these are websites

⁴⁶ CBDB, maillard, 29 May 2022. Karel Kryl was a Czechoslovak songwriter who became famous for his many protests against the Soviet occupation after 1968 and for his criticism of the communist power. In 1969, he emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany, where he remained until 1989. During the 1989 revolution, Kryl sang the national anthem with Karel Gott at a demonstration in Prague on 4 December 1989. The symbolic significance of this event lay in the fusion of Gott, who collaborated with the regime, and Kryl, who was one of its critics.

⁴⁷ LENKA ŘEZNÍKOVÁ, *Biografie jako textová a sociální praxe ke konjunktuře žánru na prahu moderny*. Dějiny – teorie – kritika 12/2015, no. 1, pp. 93–117. <https://doi.org/10.14712/24645370.2715>.

for readers (and not, say, reviews on an e-shop), where the presentation of one's own readership can be of high value within a community of users. I consider intertextual references in this case to be both mentions of specific titles and more general references to the work of a particular author. Conversely, I omit here the comparison between the two titles under examination, which I have addressed above.

In the case of Gott's autobiography, there are significantly fewer intertextual references. Most of them (8) are references to the audiobook produced by Czech Radio. One commentary refers to the title of one of the published reviews, which describes the autobiography as a "monument." The author of the commentary understands this comparison – unlike the author of the review – in a positive sense and welcomes it. One reader was prompted to read *My Journey to Happiness* by Martina Forman's autobiographical prose *The Composer of Fragrant Linen*, in which the author describes her relationship with Gott.⁴⁸ In one case, the author praises Gott's autobiography as better than Phil Collins' biography – a typical example of the mixing of genres described above. For the author of the review, it is irrelevant whether the life story is written in biographical or autobiographical form. The important values here are "breadth of information and knowledge, depth, humanity and humility."⁴⁹

In terms of intertextuality and connectivity, Klusák's book is of greater explanatory value. As with Gott's autobiography, readers often mention some form of the use of digital platforms: reading with ongoing internet searches, listening to the songs mentioned, or directly listening to the podcast *Gott'ák*, which Pavel Klusák introduced in connection with *The Czechoslovak Story*. The Magnesia Litera Prize award is also importantly referenced.

Most important for the subject of this study, however, is the book's comparison with two other biographies: the biography of Ivan Martin Jirous, a Czech poet and one of the leaders of Czech underground movement during the so-called normalisation period, written by the journalist Marek Švehla, and the biography of Czech and French novelist Milan Kundera, by the writer Jan Novák.⁵⁰ In particular, references to Švehla's book always have positive connotations; for example, a user with the

⁴⁸ MARTINA FORMANOVÁ, *Skladatelka voňavého prádla*, Praha 2018.

⁴⁹ DTBK, Hoper14, 31 October 2021.

⁵⁰ MAREK ŠVEHLA, *Magor a jeho doba: život Ivana M. Jirouse*, Praha 2017. JAN NOVÁK, *Kundera: český život a doba*, Praha 2020.

nickname janamaluveckova writes: “This is how one should write about pop-music. Gott is set in a broad socio-political context, like Švehla’s Magor.”⁵¹ The same is also the case with Novák’s book: “It reminds me of Novák’s Kundera – both excellent.”⁵² The irony of these references is that, although they are associated with a positive assessment of *The Czechoslovak Story*, they refer to two of the most criticised biographies of recent years.⁵³ Both authors of these biographies have often been accused of an uncritical and selective approach to their use of sources. In Kundera’s case, this connection is further layered on a historical level. Three readers recall that in the 1970s Kundera referred to Gott as “the idiot of music” in relation to his relationship with the normalising authorities.⁵⁴

In one aspect, the two books are not different; they are part of a dense network of interconnected elements. The books connect to an audiobook, a podcast, a literary prize, other commentaries, or other biographies or autobiographies. It is only in this microscopic media ecology of memory that the image of Gott’s life, of Czechoslovak contemporary history, and, of course, of ideas of what a proper biography or autobiography should look like, are formed. On the level of its relation

⁵¹ DTBK, janamaluveckova, 1 February 2022.

⁵² DTBK, VendulaB, 29 June 2023.

⁵³ For example, see BARBORA ČIHÁKOVÁ, „Óda na žurnalismus“, Bubínek revol-veru, 22 January 2018; MATĚJ METELEC, *Zpráva o jednom selhání aneb proč se Švehlovi nepovedl Magor*, A2larm.cz, 28 February 2018; MARTIN MACHOVEC, *Švehlova monografie o I. M. Jirousovi – zmařená šance*, Slovo a smysl 29/2018, pp. 235–246; PETR FISCHER, *Kunderův prokurátor. Petr Fischer nad knihou Jana Nováka*, https://www.novinky.cz/kultura/salon/clanek/kunderuv-prokurator-petr-fischer-nad-knihou-jana-novaka-40328714?fbclid=IwAR3AbLg1xB5v-wgoxkNW7_4YP8LnIr3_MmhbzvF4E8RcEWNi4y_2nDOvyUI (accessed on 6 February 2025); PETR A. BÍLEK, Recenze: Novák je diletant, o Kunderovi a literatuře tak vůbec má chabou představu, <https://magazin.aktualne.cz/kultura/literatura/recenze-novak-je-diletant-kundera-cesky-zivot-a-doba-recenze/r~5c552c94bc7111ea8b230cc47ab5f122/> (accessed on 6 February 2025); DANIEL MUKNER, *Předpojatost, naivní čtení, moralizování. Jan Novák vytáhl do boje proti Kunderovi s pochybným arzenálem*, <https://art.ceskatelevize.cz/360/predpojatost-naivni-cteni-moralizovani-jan-novak-vytahl-do-boje-proti-kunderovi-s-pochybnym-arzenalem-YXsFS> (accessed on 6 February 2025); ONDŘEJ SLACÁLEK, *Zločinná Státní bezpečnost a její věrný spolupracovník Jan Novák*, <https://a2larm.cz/2020/06/zlocinna-statni-bezpecnost-a-jeji-verny-spolupracovnik-jan-novak/> (accessed on 6 February 2025).

⁵⁴ DTBK, Hary, 30 July 2022. DTBK, kristleko, 22 January 2022. GR, Marián Takovič, 31 July 2022.

to other texts, it is essential to emphasise that the connection of Klusák's book with the two aforementioned biographies places his book alongside books that adhere much more closely to the traditional biographical form. Thus, it seems that here too the genre definition does not play a significant role, and the general presentation of the protagonist's life story is more important.

Biography, Memory, and Popular Culture

Let us now see whether the previous partial findings contribute to answering the questions posed in the introduction of this study. First, I address the question of genre, where I hypothesise that the distinction between the genres of biography, autobiography, and memoir is gradually diminishing in importance. This is only partially confirmed by the data collected in relation to the two books. It was particularly confirmed in the context of readers platforms, where it became clear that for many readers it is not essential to distinguish between genres. Gott's book was even misidentified by more users as a biography than as an autobiography. Yet, among the reviews that disregard or misidentify genres, it is possible to identify some common expectations, which can be broadly termed as either *personal story* or *life story*. Alternatively, the term *life-writing* can also be used, the broader definition of which is precisely that it is more important to convey a personal perspective on a more general phenomenon (e.g. history, popular culture) than to identify a precise genre.⁵⁵

On the other hand, it should be emphasised that professional reviewers work with genres on a regular basis, and for them the determination of genre is one of the essential starting points for reflection. This should also include, for example, the reluctance to label Klusák's book as biography because, according to some professional reviewers, it does not meet the requirements of the genre. The difference between the milieu of readers' websites and professional reviewers (publicists, literary bloggers, academics) does not necessarily mean only the different expertise of individuals. The fact that some readers do not feel the need to work with genre definitions but emphasise other values can also be seen as a leaning towards a certain kind of perspective. The "life story" can be

⁵⁵ BARBARA CAINE, *Biography and history*, Basingstoke–New York 2010, p. 66.

seen as a type of biographical writing concept that expects a treatment that above all credibly conveys a personal perspective with which the reader can identify. In the language of literary theory, we might thus speak of a tendency to prefer the eyewitness narrator to the “histor” kind of narrator.⁵⁶

At the same time, however, it cannot be overlooked that even among reader reviews there are many that usually implicitly link specific expectations to particular genres. The most important and frequent of these is the notion of biography as an imaginary trial. This appears in both books and is associated with expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the way the book handles the evaluation of the protagonist’s actions. In the case of Gott, it is most often either about whether his position at the top of Czech pop culture is deserved or about his strategies of coexistence with communist power. The need for this judgment goes back at least as far as the nineteenth century in the tradition of biographical writing, when the degree of contribution or damage to a national or otherwise defined community became the main object of assessment.⁵⁷

The imaginary trial was thus most often associated with the idea of the history of the community and its future. It is precisely the “community” and its “history” that is missing in our case. Judgment has been turned into a moral evaluation of the individual, but one that does not affect society as a whole. The notion that Gott wielded significant power in the late 1960s is completely beyond the scope of evaluation on all the reading platforms analysed. This is true, even though Klusák’s book contains passages that point to this aspect. However, in user reviews, socialist Czechoslovakia is a rather impersonal backdrop against which the singer’s life story unfolds.

In the evaluation of Karel Gott’s life, two different understandings of his career coexist. The more sympathetic one emphasises that Gott shared the same difficulties as his fellow citizens during the normalisation period, only more intensely and visibly because of his profession. The other, on the other hand, sees him critically as an opportunist who was willing to cooperate with any regime as long as it benefited him. We can describe the chronology of the development of the relationship to

⁵⁶ GEORGE LAKOFF, MARK JOHNSON, *Metaphors we live by: with a new afterword*, Chicago 2011.

⁵⁷ B. CAINE, *Biography and history*, pp. 50–53.

the singer's life as follows. With his funeral with state honours and the publication of his autobiography, the phase of hagiography culminates. Klusák's book then brings a certain distance to Gott's image, which certainly cannot be called defamation. However, the readers' evaluations prove that readers do not consume the hagiographic image uncritically either, and express varying degrees of disapproval or non-acceptance of Gott's self-representation.

Overall, history – especially in the sense of political history – is almost absent from readers' reflections. An exception is Gott's support for the so-called Anti-charter and his negotiations with the regime in connection with the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies that caught him abroad. It seems, therefore, that although both books reflect the political developments in Czechoslovakia, they do not lead to significant reflection among readers. Readers only generally declare a negative assessment of the period of so-called normalisation in the first years after the invasion. They then differ only in the degree of friendliness in their assessment of Gott's actions.

The characteristics described above also indicate how readers work with the concept of agency. The tendency to understand both texts as life stories is probably related to the little attention paid to the possibilities of action and strategies that Gott might have pursued during his life. In fact, readers agree on the description of his actions: Gott managed to develop his career under different political regimes. In the ways he achieved this, whether he may have chosen alternative strategies, or how significant his social capital was at different stages of his life, is not the subject of debate in the paratexts examined.

Biography, Archive, and Connectivity: Conclusions

For the relationship between biography and memory, the phenomena described above are linked by two common points. The low importance of the genre categorisation of the text, the weak relation to the historical processes and events, and the emphasis on the individual perspective or "personal story" can be interpreted as symptoms of a general transformation of temporality and relation to the past. At the time of the emergence of biography as a genre, the main frame of reference was most often a national historical narrative moving from the past towards a vision of a prosperous collective future. Today, the frame of reference is

the individual's perspective and memory in the sense of a shared image of the protagonist, which is, however, disconnected from political history, let alone from shared visions of the future.⁵⁸ This corresponds to the theses of Francois Hartog, who refers to this process as the emergence of presentism.⁵⁹

This is complemented by the changed media situation. Both biography and autobiography established themselves as genres in their present form in the print era as the main medium, distributed and controlled primarily by institutions for – with increasing literacy gradually expanding – readership. This one-to-many hierarchy was supported by the very technology behind book production. Expensive machines could produce more and more identical copies of the same text, which became more and more accessible over time.⁶⁰ Printing and biographical writing became one of the tools of individualisation and the emergence of cultural and political elites, as Lenka Řezníková has documented in the Czech context as well.⁶¹

The interconnected processes of temporality and mediality transformation then invite an examination of how biographical writing is implemented in the contemporary ecology of memory. In it, the two books form a pair that is compared with each other. Readers argue with each other or attribute diverse and often contradictory attributes to the books. This situation mutually reinforces the position of both books in the ecology of memory; that is, the mutual references, (dis)recommendations, and criticisms make both works visible and confirm them as functional media of memory, despite their differences in genre, approach, and relationship to the protagonist. Klusák, the author of one of these works, also worked purposefully with this aspect when he published a review of

⁵⁸ BENEDICT R. ANDERSON, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London–New York 1991; L. ŘEZŇÍKOVÁ, *Biografie jako textová a sociální praxe*; MIROSLAV HROCH, *European nations: explaining their formation*, London 2015; B. CAINE, *Biography and history*, pp. 50–53; *Handbuch Biographie*, pp. 243–249.

⁵⁹ FRANCOIS HARTOG, *Na cestě k nové historické situaci*, *Slovo a smysl* 27/2017, pp. 239–250.

⁶⁰ ELIZABETH L. EISENSTEIN, *The printing press as an agent of change: communications and cultural transformations in early modern Europe, volumes I and II*. Cambridge 2013.

⁶¹ L. ŘEZŇÍKOVÁ, *Biografie jako textová a sociální praxe*.

Gott's book, which in many ways anticipates the conclusions of his own publication.⁶²

The second way in which both publications interact with the media ecology of memory is that they activate an archive of diverse sources and representations related to the singer's life and work. We have evidence that reading either book activates this archive from the dozens of comments on reading platforms. We can recall just a few examples, including listening to Karel Gott's music while reading, listening to the audiobook, comparing it with other biographies and autobiographies, and, finally, writing one's own review of the book on a publicly accessible website. Through these acts, readers emerge from the text itself and enter a complicated hypertext of the ecology of memory. This in itself would be consistent with the assumptions that emerge from the theoretical underpinnings of this text. However, is there any specific significance of the fact that users enter media ecology through the reading of a biographical text?

There is a contradiction related to this question, which I have so far addressed only marginally. Klusák's book offers some new possible readings of Gott's life that remain unreflected in readers' evaluations. How do we explain that Gott's life story remains read by the readers outside of historical perspective as one of many individual careers with no connection to political, economic, and social history, even though the intention to point out these connections is repeated in the book? Even though Klusák's book opens up such possibilities in specific places, the evaluations are almost exclusively concerned with 1968, the Anti-charter, and the merit of Gott's success.

The answer probably lies in the fact that biography is most often associated with expectations, which I have named "judgement." It is as if users are accessing the archive with glasses of "judgement" on their eyes. This is why themes of fandom, moral evaluation of the singer's actions, or family cohesion are so important; these are values for which (non-)observance must be judged. It would seem, then, that the notion of biography as a trial is determinative of the reading of the entire archive if readers enter it by reading a biography or autobiography. This perspec-

⁶² PAVEL KLUSÁK, *Recenze: Hvězda si smí vymýšlet, domníval se Gott. Kde ve své knize mlží a překrucuje*, <https://magazin.aktualne.cz/kultura/hudba/kde-karel-gott-v-autobiografii-mlzi-cesta-za-stestim-recenze/r~987a6146eaf911eba7d3ac1f6b220ee8/> (accessed on 6 February 2025).

tive is also supported by the interconnectedness of the two books, which are repeatedly placed in opposition with each other on reading platforms.

What does this hypothesis say about the relationship between biographical writing and the contemporary media ecology of memory? First, that biographical writing is an integral part of this ecology. Even the relatively limited sample of data, obtained in the context of only two books, allowed us to describe the diverse interactions and transformations in this ecology. However, it also seems that biographical writing can introduce specific dynamics into this ecology, which come from the tradition of biographical writing. As a result, the expectations associated with biographical texts, built up over decades, can trigger interactions with the memory archive that would otherwise not have occurred or would have been less distinct. In this light, biography or autobiography seems, on the one hand, an important “connection point” into the ecology of memory. On the other hand, it is a connection that also carries with it very strong pre-conceptions that significantly influence the shape of interactions with the media ecology of memory.

The aspects of the relationship between memory and biographical writing described above may also provide inspiration for the theory of biography. If we are to understand the role of biographical writing better and more powerfully in the formation of memory, it is necessary to look not only at biographical texts and their narratives themselves, but also to include in research the memory practices that take place outside of traditional memory institutions and professional production. This can provide more detailed information about the frames of reference within which these texts are read and interpreted.