

# Against History: Hašek and the Problem of Historiography

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“We will not work with such vulgar literature that has as its aim to raise a nation of ruffians and louts instead of intelligent men... this is literature only for communists and not for a Czech person.”

“Great times call for great men. There are unknown heroes who are modest, with none of the historical (*historie*) glamour of a Napoleon. If you analysed their character you would find that it eclipsed even the glory of Alexander the Great. Today you can meet in the streets of Prague a shabbily dressed man who is not even himself aware of his significance in the history (*historie*) of the great new era. He goes modestly on his way without bothering anyone. Nor is he bothered by journalists asking for an interview. If you asked him his name he would answer you simply and unassumingly: ‘I am Švejk...’

“And this quiet, unassuming, shabbily dressed man is indeed that heroic and valiant good old soldier Švejk. In Austrian times his name was once on the lips of all the citizens of the Kingdom of Bohemia, and in the Republic his glory will not fade either.

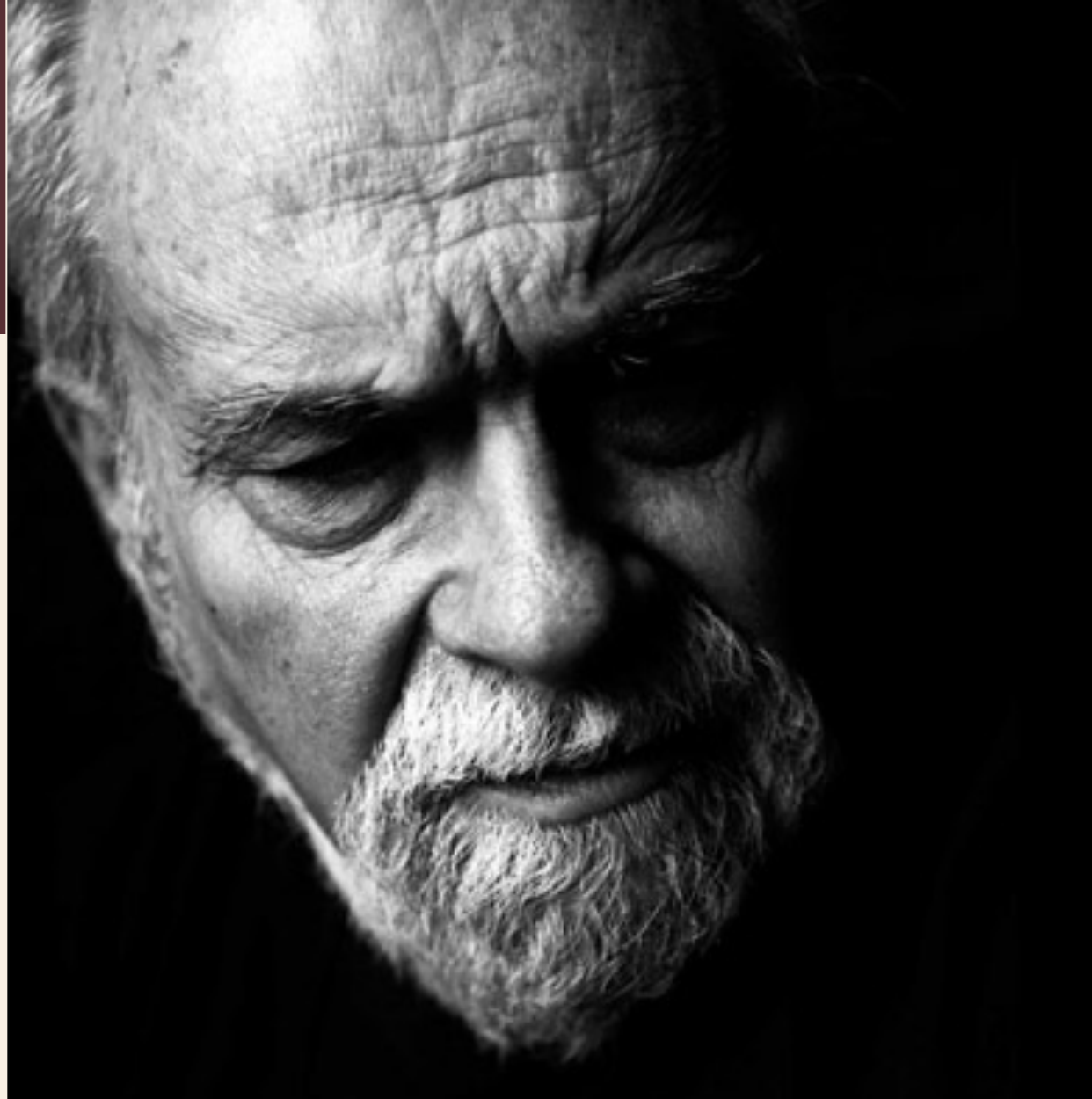
“I am very fond of the good soldier Švejk and in relating his adventures during the world war I am convinced that this modest, anonymous hero will win the sympathy of all of you. Unlike that stupid fellow Herostrates he did not set fire to the temple of the Goddess in Ephesus just to get himself into the newspapers and school books.

“And that is enough.”

# Arthur C. Danto

\*“Each narrative would ideally want to include only those things relevant to some other events, or significant to them.” (*Analytical Philosophy of History*, 132)

\*“bad [narratives] contain some amount of insignificant detail” (ibid)



# John Gatt-Rutter

- \* “microhistory subverts the rules and effects of conventional historical or narrative discourse.”
- \* “transvaluation [of macrohistory and microhistory] —is central to [Hašek’s] intent.”
- \* “we are bound to look for a budding positive Metahistory in the book.. [such as] movement from the political structure of the Habsburg State towards a new potentiality of populist solidarity and in the embedded narratives as a movement away from history as negative experience of the past and towards history as forward-looking project for the future.”

## On the Anecdote

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“a *historeme*, i.e., as the smallest minimal unit of the historiographic fact.”  
Joel Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote,” 57.

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“the term ‘anecdote was widely used... to designate a species of historical writing that deliberately eschewed large-scale ‘narrativization’ to borrow Hayden White’s useful term.” Lionel Grossman, “Anecdote and History,” 150.





Thank you!