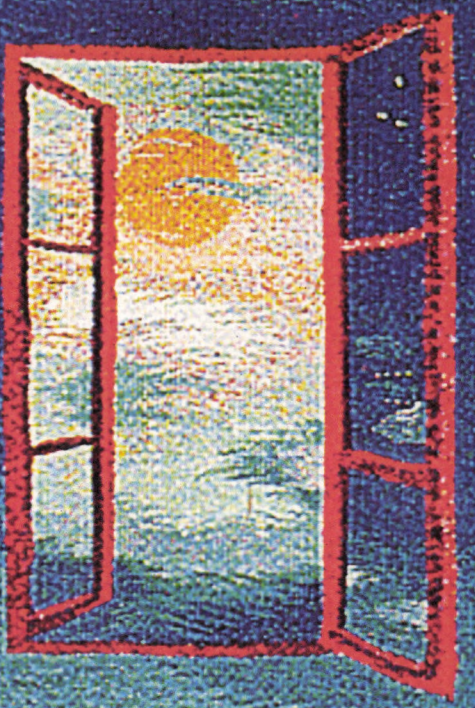
Hungarian Quarterly

Volume 44 • Autumn 2003 • €14.00 / $14.00

171



The Hungarian Quarterly

First published 1936

The Hungarian Quarterly
formerly *The New Hungarian Quarterly*
8 Naphegy tér, Budapest H-1016, Hungary
Telephone: (361) 375-6722 Fax: (361) 318-8297
e-mail: quarterly@mail.datanet.hu
homepage: http://www.hungary.com/hungq/
Published by The Society of the Hungarian Quarterly
Printed in Hungary by AduPRINT, Budapest,
on recycled paper

HU ISSN 1217-2545 Index: 2684

Cover & Design: Roller29 (Péter Nagy)

Annual subscriptions:
$40 ($60 for institutions).
Add $10 postage per year for Europe,
$14 for USA and Canada,
$16 to other destinations and $25 by air
to anywhere in the world.
Sample copies or individual copies of back numbers $12,
postage included.
Payment in $ or equivalent.
Annual subscriptions in Hungary Ft 4,500
Single copy Ft 1200
Send orders to *The Hungarian Quarterly*
P.O. Box 3, Budapest H-1426, Hungary

All export orders should be addressed to
The Hungarian Quarterly

Articles appearing in this journal are indexed in
HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS;
INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE ABSTRACTS;
AMERICA, HISTORY & LIFE; THE MUSIC INDEX;
ARTS & HUMANITIES CITATIONS INDEX;
IBZ (INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF
PERIODICAL LITERATURE);
IBR (INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY
OF BOOK REVIEWS)

NEMZETI KULTURÁLIS ÖRÖKSÉG
MINISZTÉRIUMA

The Hungarian Quarterly is published
with the support of the
Hungarian Ministry of Cultural Heritage

The Hungarian Quarterly • Vol. XLIV • No. 171 • Autumn 2003

Cover design: *Péter Nagy, from* The Sun by Night, the Moon by Day, *1998, a tapestry by Zsuzsa Péreli*

The colour illustrations in this issue were made possible by a grant from the Nemzeti Kulturális Alapprogram (National Cultural Fund).

Péter Esterházy

Reporting from the Moon*

Once upon a time I was Eastern European. Then I was promoted to Central European. Those were the times, even if not for me personally. There was a dream of Central Europe, a vision of its future, debates on what shape this future should take—everything; everything needed for a proper "round table", though that's not entirely fair like this. Then a couple of months ago I became a New European, but before I knew what hit me, before I could get accustomed to it or dissociate myself from it, I became a not-hard-core European, a non-grass-roots European. I felt like the man who lives in Munkács/Mukačevo and who never leaves his native town, but is first a Hungarian, then a Czechoslovak, then a Soviet citizen. In this part of the world, this is how you become a cosmopolitan.

I am sitting in a room in Budapest that is leagues removed from debates on the future of the united Europe. It hardly filters in, although just about everybody who is anybody raises his voice on the matter. Why it is so I don't know; after all, there's the Internet, four or five German TV stations, etc., but it is so.

* On May 31, 2003, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *La Libération* published an essay written by Jürgen Habermas and co-signed by Jacques Derrida under the title "After the War: The Rebirth of Europe." It was the keynote article of Habermas' broader initiative for the promotion of public discussion about Europe's future in the wake of the antiwar demonstrations, the split between "old" and "new" Europe and the resultant breakdown of European foreign policy in the face of the American challenge. Habermas urges closer cooperation and the development of a unified foreign policy to counter the hegemony of the US. This, he argues, can only be achieved if the EU becomes a "multi-speed" organization in which the "core states" act as "engines" of integration. Far from excluding states on the periphery, the vigorous initiative of the "hard core" ought to draw them in. Political and economic integration cannot succeed, however, without a sense of common destiny. The numerous responses include the essay above, published first in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (June 11, 2003) and then in the Budapest weekly *Élet és Irodalom* (June 20, 2003).

***Péter Esterházy**'s major novel,* Celestial Harmonies *(2000), will be published in English translation by Ecco Books, an imprint of Harper-Collins, New York, early next year.*

Furthermore, not only is the debate leagues removed from Budapest, but Budapest, too, is leagues removed from the debate. *"Zunächst in Kerneuropa"*, first and foremost, the hard core—with slight exaggeration, this is as much as we are in the Habermasean chain of thought. Though I can't think of any viable reason not to translate this new classification (hard-core, not-hard-core) into first-class and second-class, I am not speaking from the perspective of our unremitting, one might say customary, Eastern European touchiness.

I can sympathise with the Habermasean reflex. The "first and foremost" is, first and foremost, perfectly logical. It is only sound and sensible to say (and feel) that the new EU members add up to an embarrassment. It is difficult—and will be difficult—to co-operate with the new member states. Though we like to remind the world that we were always European, still, we are—how shall I put it—indubitably marching to a different tune, we notice and appreciate different things, we have different values, we use words in a different way. For instance, by "freedom" we do not mean the healthy equilibrium of checks and balances but a fair chance for survival, an ingenious hide-and-seek with the powers that be—a sort of plodding along. Dictatorship has taught us that the state is our enemy, and we must defraud and double-deal it at every turn, while at the same time we expect it to solve our problems. We had barely just regained our sovereignty, we barely had time to decide what it all meant, and right away, we had to pull in the reins. To us, America was never a great power; she was a dream. An important dream, prince charming on a white horse who would come to our rescue. Alas, she had no intention of doing anything of the sort (e.g. 1956). Still, this has hardly affected its status with us. We didn't have the opportunity to feel the arrogance of that great power directly, even less the heavy burden of received aid. No 1968 for us, no youth movement, no facing up to the past. In a dictatorship there is nothing, just the dictatorship. Plus the people.

Let's take a look at recent events. On February 15 demonstrations against intervention in Iraq attended by hundreds of thousands were held throughout Europe. We had a demonstration, too, a couple of hundred participants who, based on party sympathies, wasted no time in falling out with each other on the spot. We watched the demonstrations on television. This social apathy also has its roots in our experience with dictatorship. How else are we to explain that in Hungary the so-called conservative parties, the far right included, were against the war, while the socialists were for it? Actually, they would have liked to shun decision making altogether, if only they could. This, too, is a Kádárian reflex, this "Oh, let's cross our fingers and hope nothing happens, at least, that can't get us into trouble." But now trouble is in the offing, though that certain letter of those certain eight—as regards Hungary, at least—was prompted less by support for Bush than by inertia and diplomatic inexperience. On the other hand, where is experience to come from? On the basis of what tradition? It simply doesn't exist.

It is as the poet says: Central Europe can be understood only from Central Europe. But being Central European means that we don't understand ourselves.

In short, different is different, and since 1989, hardly anything has changed in this regard. We have done nothing with ourselves, nor has anyone else. When the East broke into the West via the GDR, there was a moment when we could hope that Germany would acknowledge and familiarize itself with this difference. This did not happen. (Which afterwards they tried to compensate for in an impressive variety of ways.)

And now the newly emergent world order is at our heels with a strong America, a hodgepodge Europe, and there isn't even time enough for Derrida to write another essay. Prompt action is the only remedy, and it really is easier with a select team. Apart from absolutism, problems of this type were solved most effectively by enlightened absolutism. "First and foremost" such a turn sits best on the lips of Catherine the Great.

So then, there's this Hardcore Europe, an avantgarde engine with doors flung wide open out of self-interest, so that we, also out of self-interest, may hop aboard. A pleasant and by no means oversimplified picture. The problem, as I see it, is that the tracks have been laid down in advance. In short, Eastern Europe is an embarrassment, but if we think of it only as an embarrassment, a disturbing factor, then what are we talking about? It is not in my interest to ask the following question, but I will ask anyway: Why this whole business of the EU enlargement? Out of altruism? Or good manners?

It is not enough like this, it is nothing. We can't get around ourselves. Eastern Europe must learn to act in a mature manner. It must learn to make real decisions, keeping in mind that decisions have consequences. It must also learn to take responsibility, while for its part, Western Europe can't get around familiarising themselves with the Embarrassing Factor, which is not the same as making certain gestures. (Nor the lack thereof. For instance, think of the matter-of-fact arrogance of the French president, who remarked that the new states did not take advantage of the opportunities inherent in audition. *Bon.* There is nothing in the world I like as much as French arrogance. If it's going to be arrogance, it might as well be French. It's the best that, stylistically speaking, the European spirit has to offer. The Hungarian, *voilá,* is absurd, the German belaboured, while Italian arrogance is strident. Maybe the English, but that's so *fine,* it keeps mum...

From this place, the Moon, the anti-American resentment (*ressentiment* in Hungarian) and, generally, the drive for an American–European equilibrium inherent in the emergent European self-definition seems short-sighted: it is motivated by momentary considerations, whereas this should be neither the goal, nor the starting-point; it should be the outcome. That certain European "common denominator" resists easy definition; it reveals itself rather through certain gestures and reflexes—and through the scale of things. It is as if Bush were

hiding the U.S. from us. I think the U.S. is just like us, except different. But not a different and opposite pole in reference to which we can define ourselves. Besides—how shall I put it—with this sort of reckless "may the best man win" gesture we wouldn't come out looking like a bowl of cherries, to say the least. Once again, what are we talking about?

When listening to the disquisitions about the new European self-awareness, I can't help feeling that what we envision is a new gigantic nation-state, emotional identification and mutual enemies. Special character traits, only Euro-national and not national. (As the old joke goes, What is a Russian dwarf like? Gigantic.) However, a structure like a United States of Europe doesn't seem expedient—we're too varied compared to America. The distance between Kiel and Hamburg is greater than between Boston and San Francisco. And then I haven't even mentioned Hódmezővásárhely yet.

It is as if formerly Europe had been held together by dictatorships, spiritually and otherwise, too. The opposition to dictatorship. But what about the post-'89 years? Where are the think tanks that could produce a holistic vision of Europe? There aren't any. Besides, we have good reasons not to trust visions. If I were apocalyptic in my makeup, I would think of Europe and the European spirit as a corpse, and culture as the growing of the nails. But frightened, I quickly take that back—or if I were to forget, certainly I will on my deathbed.

Habermas writes that the attractive, indeed decidedly irresistible vision of Europe won't land in our laps of its own accord. These days, only the unease (perplexity) over the loss of direction can bring something like this about. Important words. But as things stand, perplexity hasn't made us uneasy, just apathetic. And apathetic perplexity has no content. It can't take us past the hackneyed equation: EU=Euro+Brussels.

Which means that, as the first step, we should start feeling uneasy and start easing into—and accepting—a sense of unease, a commonly shared European unease. ❧

Translated by Judith Sollosy

Sándor Márai

Journals

From 1943–1944 and 1945–1947

1943

Moments when there is such a still—within us, around us—that we believe we discern the secret ticking of the world's structure.

*

No town or landscape has ever truly interested me; in truth it was only ever people who have been of interest. The gist of Florence, for me, is not the Uffizi, nor even the Boboli Garden, but an Englishwoman, or a Tuscan cobbler in one of the narrow streets around the Via de Tornabuoni. If I close my eyes and think of Paris, it is not the streets of the Seine that I see first of all but a human face faintly emerging from the set or the scenery. Of the Suez Canal, all that I remember distinctly and sharply is the cadence of the voice of a Syrian emigrant. Man, it seems, is the sole and true gist of all that we experience. Everything else merely marks, circumscibes and explains man. For me, the cardinal essence of the Stromboli is the voice of R. asking detachedly, whilst leaning over the rails of the ship, "Why is a mountain so restless?" The Stromboli is forgotten now; I could not sketch it. But I have not forgotten R.'s voice. For me, a volcano is nothing; a person—everything.

*

Sándor Márai *(1900–1989) started his journal in Budapest in 1943, when already a highly successful writer, and continued to keep it to the end of his life. The last entry was written in San Diego on 15 January 1989, the day before he shot himself. He wrote his journal for publication and considered it one of his best achievements. The volume published in English as* Memoir of Hungary *(Corvina, Budapest 2000) was a selection from the 1944–48 period. The present selection comes from the 1943–44 and 1945–1957 volumes. Excerpts from his American journals appear in our next issue.*

One hour in the Horváth Garden, on a bench in the sand-strewn children's playground: midget Hitlers, Genghis Khans and Tamerlanes murder one another indefatigably in the sand. Nothing else at all on view, just murderers and victims. A three-year-old, barely able even to walk, close-cropped, round-skulled, with cold Mongol eyes, labours expertly, tirelessly, gravely, sweating, panting, and without a word, at pressing the face of a slightly stupid, blond-haired five-year-old boy into the sand in order to smother him. The parents, seated on the benches, watch this delightful struggle in the dirt and sand entranced. Four youngsters fashioned improvised whistles out of haricot bean pods and, with an infernal racket and screeching, set about persecuting a fleeing little girl. The more stupid ones sit by the side and wait for their torturers to summon them.

What hope is there?...

*

There are too few joys in my life. Yet joy is one of the forms in which truth manifests: I have no right to abstain from it.

I have decided to give up journalism, but for precisely what reason, indeed? Because once he gets to a certain age, beyond a certain stage of development, a writer cannot write for newspapers with impunity. That is the real truth; everything else is merely a pretext. The jabbering, vacuous commentary on phenomena and events into which publicity has become degraded today, when there is no free press, is profoundly humiliating and contagious for a writer. When peace comes, if there is freedom and a press, to write unfettered, as the fancy takes me, about travels, incidents... maybe. But right now I must fall silent, retreat into this journal, my novel, writing as fate, conscience, and the instructional role of the written word dictates. I have no choice. This sacrifice may upset my "civil pattern of life", but there is no task without sacrifice. I was born to be a writer, it is everything to me: one day, it seems, I have to accept this with all its consequences.

*

John Gunther, an American journalist—and he may also have been a bit of a spy in pre-war Europe—collected, in a book published in 1937, all the historical tittle-tattle that was then going the rounds about the mighty men of European politics. Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Blum, the great, the small, the epigones—all found a place in the book.

Everything that he writes about the Spanish Civil war is horribly evocative of Hungarian parallels. There, as here, a democratic middle class was lacking. When its feudal society exploded, the 'new' Spain was able to furnish itself with ministers and diplomats, indeed was even able to drum up democratically voting masses; it was just that democratically thinking district administrators, Guardia Civile officers, village notaries, and lower-level civil servants were in short supply. Just like here. Hungary could furnish itself tomorrow with a democratic government of attractive complexion, could assemble a diplomatic corps of intellectual beaux esprits, but where would be the district administrator to carry out,

and be genuinely willing to carry out, the intentions of that democratic government?... Spain lacked that body of second-tier administrators, and that is why democratic Spain plunged first into Communist-anarchist-syndicalist upheaval, then into Fascism. Wherever centuries of breeding have failed to bring a democratic public administration to fruition, a change in the feudal order always elicits anarchic extremism. Here in Hungary as well, I suspect.

*

A fine day in Eger, in the mayor's cellar, where we search for old barrels of Bull's Blood by candlelight. Around the cellars stand fruit-trees, a whole wood of them: apple-trees laden with three or four hundredweights of Jonathans. The old gent plays the fiddle when dusk falls; we sit out on the verandah, by candlelight, eating cold fried chicken and white bread, drinking red wine, and just listen. The hillside fragrant from the vines and the fruit-trees.

The Russians took Smolensk this morning.

*

A writer's work... How many misunderstandings there are about this notion! I see from curious rural glances that I do not accord with the ideal they have formed about the writer as worker and social being from the pronouncements of poetasters and reporters for the theatrical weeklies. I don't live 'romantically', I don't have a head of flowing locks, and I pay my bills on the dot.

If only they knew how very different was the venture of which they believe they see a shifty reflection on the brows of writers! That venture is none other than a species of forced labour. Scheduling. The strictest daily routine. The regulation of social life, eating, yes, even one's sex life in the service of writing. The time from morning to evening just a preparation for the hour and half or at most two hours when I am able to work. I eat fruit, though I don't like it, in order to be able to work, and don't drink wine, which I do like, also in order to be able to work. A frugality with time, which is finite (whilst the task is infinite), that no one oblivious to the urge can comprehend. A woman is waiting? Let her wait. The world is waiting? It can wait. An abomination. But they know nothing about that.

*

In Pest, seeing the apartment again. I own nothing else except these books in my study. Amongst them are a thousand that I treasure, with which I have something deeply personal in common. If those books were to be destroyed... even then, quite clearly, nothing of consequence would happen to me.

Still, those books also represent a source of energy; without them I am singularly deaf. This is my homeland, this study with the books... In other libraries I cannot make contact with the spirit that speaks to me in this room, out of these books. If a bomb were to destroy this room tomorrow, I would be homeless. That is something that has to be taken note of, but there is no call for complaining. A bomb is drifting about over our heads, somewhere in the air, and

may fall at any time. It will take a true miracle for it not to fall. Just don't count on anyone, place no hopes in anything. Keep quiet and work as long as that is possible. And gaze with grateful happiness at the books, my last friends, as long as that is possible.

*

Evening in church. A profound hush. The altar in gloom. I sense that here too, even here, God is present like someone who keeps reception hours in his ministry, and I wonder at how he also manages to be present in the church when the world is waiting and searching for Him with every atom.

*

Christmas. The first Christmas on which I have not been prey to that onslaught of sentiment which has haunted me since childhood. I am calm, in good spirits, and am delighted at my presents, amongst them a miniature radio, no bigger than a camera, which does not need an aerial and can tune into the world any place where there is an ordinary power socket. This is the marvel of the century —more mysterious and awe-inspiring than an aeroplane. In ten years' time we shall be carrying radios of wristwatch size and form.

Also amongst the presents the great Frazer's *The Golden Bough.* The entire cycle of legends of the Pacific Ocean primitives, the story of witch-doctoring, sorcery and fetishes. I am every bit as delighted with it as a child with a picture book.

I go to bed early, and the good humour does not fade. This year, for the first time in my life, we did not have a Christmas tree, because the war and speculators combined to remove this sentimental article from the market. I have never had such a tranquil, cheery and contented Christmas as this one, with no Christmas tree. It is all quite different.

*

New Year's Eve. Pallid people in the churches. The clock hands make another turn, the time of war is up; this year will bring the change. People, however, do not change; lifestyles—most certainly.

This year brought me a bout of serious illness, and from being ill I learned that I am mortal: I learned that not just intellectually but through my body's self-awareness. Yet there is mercy too.

1944

I have lived through liberalism, communism, the White terror, neo-Baroque democracy, fascism, and National Socialism, and possibly have variants of rose-tinged or red periods still to live through. But I have not lived, nor will I live, under the mark of political or ideological slogans in which the disabled and epileptic did not loathe the healthy, or the untalented and semi-talented did not employ a torrent of mendacious and absurd charges to accuse those whose

talents made them stick out by so much as a centimetre in a profession. Anyone who is unaware of this is just not acquainted with humankind. It is a certainty that has to be reckoned with in the same way as death.

*

Another Hungarian book about Rimbaud—the second within a fortnight. This time, György Rónay has translated the *enfant terrible*'s poems and written a biography... Touching, do you not think? At a moment when the monastery of Monte Cassino is being destroyed through the will of the Germans, young Hungarians are setting up monuments to a wild and bizarre French genius in conscientious and splendid books... These are the signs—the very last—which still give a scintilla of hope that not everything is lost.

*

"Never has a small nation declared war on a great power more impudently than Hungary on the Soviet Union...," writes one of the Swiss newspapers. Small nation? This small nation never declared war on anyone. It was a tiny clique that declared war, without any consultation with the people or parliament; a few purblind or ambitious soldiers and politicians. The people were mutely aghast. In the photograph that captures the chamber of the National Assembly at the moment Bárdossy broke the news of the proclamation of war on Russia, everyone—members of the government included—has his head bowed.

*

The Germans have occupied Hungary.

*

Only a miracle will help. Miracles do happen, but I believe they have to be earned.

*

God grant the Jews the strength to endure their persecution, torture and affliction. Grant them the strength to have the capacity for life and for death.

Then, should they survive the persecutions, grant them the strength not to lose their heads and not to turn into rampaging persecutors. Grant them the strength to have the capacity for human greatness and tolerance. For revenge only gives birth to newer passions. Maybe Huxley and the Oxford pacifists are right to say that an enemy can only be defeated in one way: by enduring him.

*

In Pest. Every ringing has an import: by now I only open the door to the sound of ringing that has an import. I only pick up the telephone receiver if it rings with a certain signal. That is how we live.

Anyone who has not lived with us throughout these times: was not amongst us when everything opened up, came to a head and showed itself in its full reality; does not know what it is to be startled by a ringing, and be long past fearing for one's own life; does not know what it takes before we glance up

unconcernedly on hearing the howl of the air-raid sirens, because our nerves have long since inured us to dangers of that kind in the solvent of bitterer and more dangerous poisons; has not helped at least one child, not given harbour for a homeless wretch; does not know what it is like to be handed in the morning post a card that has been tossed out of a railway truck at some halt by someone who, along with eighty others in that truck, is travelling towards their death—anyone who has not lived with us throughout all this, these last three months, these last five years, these last ten years, should not stand in judgement upon us. Only he who has lived amongst us may pass judgement.

*

How was it? I woke at seven in the morning to the sound of someone prowling quietly in the room (the maid used to prowl quietly like that) and place on the little bedside table a glass of orange and lemon juice, along with the morning newspapers. I woke up, drained the tart-fresh concoction in one gulp (vitamins!), leafed through the papers, then stretched out my hand for the reading-matter that I had started on the previous day and read until nine. At that point, breakfast was wheeled in on a trolley-table: tea, buttered toast, a soft-boiled egg, honey. I got up at ten o'clock and worked until eleven. Already standing before the house by then was the limousine that the garage hand had brought in the morning and parked with carefully locked doors before the front gate. I put on white flannels and sweater, proceeded down to the street with tennis racquet in hand, climbed into my car, went off Margaret Island, played tennis for an hour then showered, had a swim and a massage at the island's swimming pool. On the way home, I stopped before some coffee-house or café where they do a good brew, and there, elbows propped on the counter, sipped a cup of poisonously strong black coffee. Lunch was light and tasty; if the cook did not know her stuff, we would have her replaced after a while. After lunch I had a nap, then worked until five, at which juncture I went off to stretch my legs out in Hűvösvölgy or on Swabian Hill (once again driving the car to where I walked, occasionally fuming that the vehicle was not running perfectly—it'll have to be changed!), then back home after the stroll to change, because in the evening I would have guests at my place or be invited to someone else's. I would try to be home by midnight, if possible, then read for another hour in bed. Before going to sleep, stifling a yawn, one would make up one's mind that the dinner had been poor, the conversation boring, the standard of literary life had slipped, and that living a life like that was truly unbearable.

God knows, maybe it really was.

*

The real charge against Hungary is not what it has done but what it has failed to do. And ultimately, above all else, what it has tolerated.

*

Russian cavalry have reached the Hungarian frontier.

*

Now some mysterious, exciting, distressingly enthralling business is under way: change.

*

The Germans really are magicians. They have contrived the miracle that all decent people look forward with genuine fervour to seeing the Russians, the Bolsheviks, who will be arriving as true liberators. I too look forward to seeing the Russians. We have all come a long way since two days ago... two days, seven months, twenty-five years.

*

The greatest punishment is not poverty, nor even illness, bodily suffering. The greatest punishment is when fate locks you up with common people of vulgar taste and you have to share your days with them. That is the greatest punishment. It is mostly amongst oafs that this sort is to be found.

The poor are generally far more tactful and delicate, more generous in their human relations than oafs.

*

The city is wounded and tattered. Clearance sales of every kind: shoe shops offering leather-soled shoes, and haberdashers—textiles, with no nation cards required. Shop windows are empty; behind the panes of the big grocery stores all that can be seen are a few boxes of insect repellent. In some places there are still carrots to be had, a head of lettuce or a cabbage—otherwise nothing.

I want to drop into a familiar coffee-house: German soldiers are right in the midst of packing up the furniture. Tramcars lumber by that are loaded with hospital equipment. Public transport is paralysed, with tramcars—now that the two main arteries have been cut at Margaret Bridge—idling in dead-end streets. Tanks are rolling over Elizabeth Bridge, arriving from the nearby front line at Soroksár. The sound of artillery in the distance. No one pays any attention now to the air-raid warnings.

There are three hundred thousand terrified people in yellow-star houses; Arrow-Cross youths, striplings of sixteen or eighteen, are looting in the yellow-star houses, herding the inhabitants towards barges and collecting centres. In the November cold, many thousands—women, children, the old—are being marched off silently towards an unknown fate. Pillage and hostage-taking are rife.

Even if every accusation that has ever been shrilled out against the Jews were true, any person who seeks to call himself a person ever again ought to stand by them, because their suffering surpasses all imagination.

*

Whilst the guns thunder, my long-time barber shaves me, apologising that he cannot lather me with Colgate soap as he used to!

*

Like a storm, that's what it is like; indeed that is what it is—a storm. All this with the Russians already in the suburbs. Yet the Magyar Nazis are still mouthing off, looting, making threats. They want to drive off all the adult males. I have not come across a single person in recent days who is not 'skiving off', living outside the law. The police and medical officers are extraordinarily decent; they assist everyone. The split is total: on one side are the Arrow-Cross; on the other, Hungarian society as a whole. Workers, socialists, Communists, Habsburg restorationists, civil parties, Jews, Christians—all are on that other side, facing the scum.

*

At noon, on the second day of the occupation of Leányfalu three Russians roll up. I was just in the middle of shaving; they urge me with a smile not to mind them but carry on lathering. They launch into a chat with the female occupants of the villa; I wipe the soap off and sit down with them in the living room.

All three are young; two of them are officers, 'kapitano', the third is a private, Romanian. The two officers are in warm leather coats, good boots, cossack hats, packing lots of weapons. One of them is from the Caucasus, the other is Ukrainian; the Caucasian is talkative, the other somewhat taciturn. They are making a search of every house in the village, hence ours too, for Germans, so they take a look round all the rooms, upstairs as well; of course, they find no one. Then we sit down in the living room and make an effort to converse, with Z. interpreting.

On hearing that I am a writer, they greet that with interest. They ask what I know about Russian literature. I mention Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekov, and they insist earnestly that they are well acquainted with their literature and pleased that I too have read the works of those writers. I tell them that my French publisher has also put out works by Ilya Ehrenburg. They ask if the villa in which I reside belongs to me, and do I own a car? When they hear that I am just a tenant here and my car was requisitioned by the army, they launch into a fervent lecture. If I were in Russia, they say, I would already have both my own car and a villa, because writers are respected there. They are impassioned, little short of allocating to me one of the mansions in the village; I talk them out of it with a laugh. They enquire what political opinions I hold. I reply that I come from the middle class, no Communist, but no fascist either: I am a citizen and a democrat. They understand that and nod.

The Ukrainian captain is a *politruk,* a political comissar, the Caucasian in the regular army. The Ukrainian says that they are fighting the Germans and will move on into Austria and towards Berlin; Hungary is just a transit area for them; they are obliged to fight the Hungarians, because they resisted, but once they depart "let the Hungarians live as they wish."

Having shaken hands with each of us, they take their leave, though they still wave to us from the gate. What were they like? Very young, enthusiastic.

Foreigners: another world, another race, few memories that are shared with us. One thing for sure is that today I, one of the remnants of a passing culture, encountered for the first time the new people who are aligned to a new culture. The encounter left odd memories—not bad ones, more a sort of confidence that the future is not without hope. Maybe, in a calmer atmosphere, we shall be able mutually to supply one another with something.

*

What was the 'right-wing thinking' that caused Hungary's downfall? Some belief, a cardinal holy principle, a dogmatic conviction? No, it was something else.

*

Once this war is over, an endless series of tasks awaits us: the dead have to be buried, the ruins have to be cleared, the hungry have to be given bread, and some sort of state has to be constructed from the shards that we have been left by that mob of murdering thieves, the greater part of whom have already taken to their heels. But that is just the easy bit. In order for Hungary to become a nation again, a respectable family in the world community, it will be necessary to extirpate from the soul of a certain breed of person the strange entity that goes under the label of 'right-wing thinking', the consciousness that he, being a 'Christian Hungarian', is entitled to a privileged status in this world; that simply for being a 'Christian Hungarian gentleman' he has a right, regardless of talent or knowledge, to live well, put on airs, and look down on everyone who is not a 'Christian Hungarian' or of the 'gentry', to hold out his hand and ask the state, society at large, to pour baksheesh into that hand: a job, decorations, residual Jewish-owned lands, free summer breaks in the Grand Hotel at Galyatető in the Mátra Hills, favouritism in all aspects of life. Because that was the true meaning of 'right-wing thinking'. Moreover, this is a breed that never learns. Anyone over thirty who was brought up in that spirit, in that climate, is beyond hope; maybe he will offer, through gritted teeth, to make a deal, and, being selfish and cowardly, will most likely kowtow to the new order; but in the depths of his heart he will eternally yearn for the return of that 'right-wing, Christian, nationalist' world in which one could so smoothly steal Jewish property, have rivals bumped off, and enjoy a cushy position in some big company, without any qualifications or know-how, or be a 'highly placed civil servant' or an inviolable army officer, shielded by a bullet-proof vest—all without having to give anything in return apart from the fact of one's esteemed existence. That breed will never change; however, Hungary will not be a nation so long as they have any say or influence. Only education that penetrates the souls of children may help.

1945

Buda has fallen. We set off at five in the morning, in the gentle glow of a full moon, in enigmatic twilight. A branch line service of sorts is already operating up to the outskirts of the city.

Passengers seem to be passing not so much through parts of a city as amidst excavations. Some streets one has to piece together: just a few days ago, that mound of rubble on the corner was a five-storey block of flats. Now it's a pile of dust. In places the iron railings of a balcony rear up out of the detritus. The Germans set up an ammunition dump in the cellar of the house; the store blew up, and several hundred people who were in the shelter were killed. In one square are the wrecks of done-for tramcars. Then a vista opens up of the neighbourhood in which I lived for the past twenty years. The sun is shining, the weather is spring-like. In the big square are hundreds of apparently unexploded bombs, amidst them mass graves, civilians and soldiers together, with the feet of corpses poking up from the clods of earth. Everywhere one looks, skeletons of planes and motor vehicles. Joists and bricks plop down from shattered houses at a touch of the spring breeze. People are swarming nimbly around in this heap of rubble. Women dressed in town clothes, some quite smart, trudge along with buckets to fetch water, or bend down in search of a washbasin or scrap of cloth amongst the ruins. One woman is laying bricks in the window of a ground-floor dwelling to replace the smashed panes of glass. From one street corner, I glimpsed the ruins of what remained of the house-block in which my own apartment had been. Through the aperture of a window I can see books, a candelabra. House-block and apartment have been totally destroyed; they should be blown up.

*

In the city. The first signs of life: the postman delivers letters in the street. Under doorways, people are vending cotton thread, candles, smoked sausages, lard, savoury scones. Funeral: two men carrying a coffin on a wooden plank, mourners in their footsteps. The Russians shooing people away from the pontoon bridge; I cross the Danube by rowing boat. Amongst the wreckage of housing, animal carcasses and shallowly covered human corpses stink in the warmth of the spring sunshine. The mass of plodding people, lugging parcels and bundles, seems to be milling around aimlessly, but in reality Pest is fizzling with life. All sorts of things are on sale in improvised shops, under doorways and on the pavements, including articles that we have not seen for years: pork, beef and veal, Chanel perfume, shoe polish, chocolate, real tea and coffee, sugar lumps, dress materials, stockings, shoes... The Jews who managed to escape the ghetto are energetically at work bringing goods; a small number of black marketeers have saved Pest from starvation in recent weeks. Prices are inflationary; probably the only people who are purchasing are those who filched plenty of stuff during the siege. And the hungry, who sell off any remaining belongings so as to be able to eat. We would

have electricity by now, if the Russians would permit it. A *shopping* mood amongst the ruins. Reunions at street corners; people mechanically rattle off their experiences. Everyone with the 'same' story: Arrow-Cross militiamen broke into the house one night, ate up everything, even the jams, and killed grandma. And these grotesquely monotonous recitals are horribly true.

*

End of April. The garden is now like a Japanese festival.

*

In Buda. I extricate two bookcases from the rubble and stack on them all the books that can be fitted. A veritable life-saving operation ensues now. Julien Green begs me not to leave him to perish here, in the rubbish. Bless him! I take pity on Green... What about Wilder? No, Wilder cannot be left either. But what should I do with that gadfly Montherlant? He deserves being left to his own fate: for him life was more important than writing...

True, he proclaimed his heretical beliefs in writing rather than by deeds. In the end, he too gets a place in the lifeboat, but that is now sinking under the burden, there is no more room. Yet am I going to leave old Gerhart Hauptmann, with his four-score years and his six volumes of collected works, in the maelstrom?... I look helplessly at Hauptmann and flee with all those I have managed to rescue.

I bring out to the village by cart what was left of my books and clothing amongst the ruins. I perch on the top of the cart, on a mound of tattered volumes of Goethe and bundles of shellfire-singed bedlinen, and in this manner proceed through the tumble-down city in the balmy vernal sunshine.

With that jolting cart-ride a way of life has come to an end.

*

On the highway, in front of the house, Russians are making their way back home to the Soviet Union. Sometimes they sing, sometimes they halt before a garden and jump over the fence to ask for some fruit, or to slip into the house and hastily filch something.

They are off home because they won the war. This homeward-bound army, which not so long ago I watched hurrying down this same highway straight into the firing line, is a mystery and a riddle. What are they taking back with them? Obviously more than just looted wristwatches. They are taking memories: impressions of Western lifestyles, a memory of and demand for choice and quality. Rumour has it that the armies returning from the West will hasten a democratic transformation of Russia.

It is very hard to make the Russians out. There is no way of telling what impact their experiences here, in Hungary, may have had on them, much less what is planned by their leaders, who are no doubt meticulously calculating the consequences of this Western expedition. For the first time in its history, Russia set its

foot outside the homeland, with all that entails, and stepped onto the world stage. Its writers, Dostoyevsky in particular, have warned against embracing "the corpse of Europe"... What of their faith, their sense of mission, their confidence in *ex oriente lux*—that enlightenment is to be found in the East?... What do they believe in? In world-salvational Bolshevism? Or in a world-salvational Slavic mission? We don't know. Do they believe that they constitute the Third Rome? We don't know that either. Will they become disillusioned on returning home? One cannot predict. Is it possible that Russia, following its encounter with the West, will not only remain Bolshevik—confounding those 'democratic' forecasts—but cleave even more rigidly to the Communist line? All prophecy is irresponsible.

Right now, they are going home, dangling their legs through the guard planks of the trucks and singing. These Slav songs are all melancholic, even when the singer belts them out cheerily at the top of his voice. At night I listen to this singing, mingling into the noise of the speeding trucks, the mournful song of the victors. It is very hard to vanquish. Very hard to be vanquished. Very hard to be a Russian. Very hard to be human.

*

It is my experience that all writers lose literary and moral clout in proportion to the clout of the political role they amass for themselves.

*

The Swabians [ethnic Germans] are being expelled from the country, as the Jews were last year, being driven out in their hundreds of thousands like cattle. Such 'collective punishment', as an international practice, is the most contemptible principle that this century has bestowed on itself. Yesterday the 'Jews', today the 'Swabians', tomorrow the 'middle classes', next the cloth-eared... They herd the guilty and the innocent, children and the senile. This is the demise of the morality of European life. The 'great powers' dispassionately herd human masses who raised high cultures; summarily, on the basis of 'resolutions', herd them like droves of cattle from one country to another. At times like this I am enticed by the temptation to renounce—one way or another—this society. This life.

1946

I wait around for two hours in an icy wind before I am able to set foot on the newly constructed Kossuth Bridge. It is quarter to two in the afternoon, on January the seventeenth. The bridge is still being worked on, but thousands upon thousands of people are already surging across the narrow footways in both directions.

The Danube is full of drift-ice, the green floes floating between the concrete piers of the new bridge. The dreadful spectacle of the destroyed Danube bridges, to the left and to the right, in the fog. I have rarely felt the life-pulse of 'history' so immediately as during these moments whilst I shuffled along in the freezing fog across the first iron bridge to be constructed in Budapest following the siege.

*

A snowy morning in Buda. Renoir pastels: rosy clouds in a pale-blue wintry dawn sky. How beautiful the world is! Small, but mine.

*

What is the reason for this hard-to-master, greedy desire to get away, quickly, one more time, to Rome? I sometimes think I understand the wish. I would like to live there for a while amidst the ruins of a familiar civilisation. Here I live only amidst the ruins of a familiar lack of civilisation—not the same thing.

*

The relation between writing and state power is mysterious. The authorities are impotent without the consent and approval of intellectuals: the trust of the masses is only unconditional if the intellectual, with his peculiar, pagan, shamanistic prestige, attests that whichever régime happens to be in question is a benign power and is worth making sacrifices for. For that reason, a dictatorial authority will go to any lengths, through bribes and threats, in order to secure the intellectual's endorsement. At the same time, the Authority is well aware that this magic prestige loses its credence and value the moment that the bought-off or intimidated writer subscribes to the régime. That is literature's solitary, sad compensation.

*

If I continue to progress with the disembowelling and thinning of my library like this, then towards the end of my life I shall be preserving scarcely any other books in my study than dictionaries and a few collections of poetry. By then, of course, I shall not tolerate even my own books in the study. I am much more fastidious than the books I have written.

*

Zurich, November.—As soon as a person is not being roasted on a spit or rotary-grilled over glowing coals he starts to become bored. Like a drug addict, I am habituated to strong poisons. For me, this peace is like being on a withdrawal cure. Something is continually missing. The danger maybe.

*

The Swiss are apprehensive. They are rich and therefore apprehensive. I too am apprehensive, but in a different fashion. They fear for a way of life, a vast wealth and a squirreling affluence; me only for the fact that there will ensue a moment that is stronger than consciousness when something will drag one towards the maelstrom, the abyss.—I don't think there can be a single native-born individual dwelling in this prosperous city who could comprehend the moment when, on the morning after the 'liberation' of Buda, I entered the street where my home had stood for the past eighteen years and sat down on the kerb opposite the ruins of my home and the block of which it was part... No none here can comprehend that.

*

On Christmas Eve in the afternoon, at Thomas Cook's, I obtain a sleeping-car reservation for the evening express train to Rome.

In the sleeping-car that night, between Bologna and Florence, I took the attendant to task—politely but firmly—because the mineral water that he brought was not cold enough... He apologised remorsefully. At that moment I sensed, for the very first time, that the Second World War had, for me, drawn to a close.

1947

The possibility that man, in his tinkering around with cosmic forces, might blow up the Earth is no longer some wild figment of the imagination. All in all, not such a loss as far as the Earth is concerned: God can make another like it. But human thought was 'made' by man, and if everything that Lao-tzu, Aristotle, Socrates, Pascal and Goethe thought were to perish along with the terrestrial dross, the universe would be more senseless, and it is that—only that—which God is unable to replace. In just the same way as treasures and masterpieces were hauled away from the bombing to underground stores in the rocks, the time has come, if there is a way of doing it, to salvage human Thought from the Earth—into space or some other planet, in some sort of packaging for mental material.

*

I walk about in slush-smirched streets, am jolted along in cram-full tramcars, talk to sickly, threadbare, ragged people here in Budapest, and I discern in myself a growing solidarity with this destitution. Our crimes—yes indeed... But I wonder how that other West, about which I have harboured such nostalgia in recent years, would have shaped up had it been forced to live through and suffer what we experienced.

*

Man showed his true colours during the grievous years of the recent past. There were times when I supposed that I had got to know what he is... and I was aghast. But if I am objective, I have to say that even in the midst of enormities I always came across decency; alongside cruelty benevolence immediately showed its face; alongside sin there bloomed some goodness, a readiness to help. That is the truth of it.

*

The only question is whether what bloomed alongside sin was morality or timidity? I have no answer to that.

*

I have lived in an age when there was no way of telling who was more dangerous, the robber or the cop.

1948

In Hungary, two types of person assumed complete and final form over time: the aristocrat and the peasant. Anyone in between left the stage before being able to don the garb of his historical role.

*

What is the point of that 'English tone' that better typifies the modern English novel than plot and content? That sense of cliquishness through which a writer, his protagonists and the reader simultaneously catch allusions, communicating in the sign language of social complicity. It is the complicity of a standardised level of learning, or in ordinary speech, the sign language of the cultivated.

*

They are pulling down the block of flats in the cellars of which the Germans used to store ammunition. The house blew up. Over two hundred skeletons have been waiting to be brought to light for the last four years. The skeletons, then jewellery and other valuables, are now being turned up; during the days of the siege, the victims took their more prized possessions with them down into the air-raid shelter. All day long, relatives prowl around the huge concrete vault like Egyptian grave-robbers around Pharaonic tombs.

*

[Naples, November] The tropical rainfall drenched Posilippo, and the hillside slid down onto the houses, which are built of limestone bricks. Police and fire brigade have closed off that section of the road; the dead and wounded are being dragged out from under the rubble by the locals. When destiny smites this poor people, all at once they are left curiously alone. Alone against the elements, which here strike man with a more primal and unpitying force than elsewhere. The inhabitants of the district flock together. The dead bodies lie on the sodden roadway. Lorries arrive to gradually carry off the corpses. It all takes place in a strange silence; this breed of people, so chirpily loquacious at other times, is now mute. People moan softly when their loved ones are pulled out of the ruins. This is strangely 'familiar', this moment when I have the sense of having arrived somewhere.

*

The post has delivered to a friend's address a complete set of those of my books which were published back in Hungary and have now been pulped in its Communist paper mills. According to the postal declaration, during my life to date I have written 13.5 kilos' worth—that's what my works weigh in the scales.

That weight sets me thinking. I shall be more cautious in future. I want to write no more than another 150–200 grams altogether: anything more is superfluous. ❧

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

George Szirtes

Poem

Reel

for Clarissa Upchurch

1.

You wake to car sounds, radios, the cold sunlight
Burning holes in windows, and you sense
The missing fabric of the previous night.

The city offers you no evidence
Except the collage of the overheard,
Extended clauses of a broken sentence

Of which you recognise the odd stray word.
A car door slams. Feet scutter down the stairs.
It is the Theatre of the Absurd,

A masquerade in which the company wears
Period dress, their every movement fragile,
Negotiating brittle stools and chairs.

Eclectic, Art Deco, Secession style
Buildings multiply into a capital
Of iron, bronze, glass brick, ceramic tile.

George Szirtes's Selected Poems *(1976–1996) was published by Oxford University Press in 1996. His most recent collection,* An English Apocalypse, *was published by Bloodaxe in 2001.*

A statue balanced on a pedestal
Is leaning over to whisper a close secret.
Two yellow trams clatter in mechanical

Circles. Dull monuments express regret
For what someone has done to them, for crimes
Committed in names they're trying to forget

But can't. Here all the clocks tell different times.
All the statues point different ways. Film crews
Shoot Budapest for Berlin. The city rhymes

With its imperial neighbour, like one bruise
With another. People converge on streets
Where there is never any lack of news.

Here is a square where everybody meets.
Here is a doorway through which troops have pressed.
Here is a yard with women hanging sheets

And corridors where boys in Sunday best
Are waiting for a housekeeper or maid
To join them on a stroll in the soft west

Wind ruffling the embankment trees. Decade
After decade resolves itself in the traffic.
The filming goes on somewhere in the shade.

2.

Once you arrive in the heart of the exotic,
Which is only a transferred idea of home,
Under the crumbling stucco, the faint brick

Of memory appears. Above the lanterned dome
Of the cathedral the familiar sky
Waves back, reflected in the brilliant chrome

Of legions of saloon cars purring by.
It is as if they drove some narrative
Whose visual sub-plot struck your painter's eye

With its peculiar imperative.
Even the light here has grown eloquent,
Its language sparklingly authoritative.

The city glories in its element.
I woke here as a child once in a narrow
Bedroom that served as my Old Testament.

Like a philosopher I watched Time's arrow
Winging towards its target and falling short.
So God is said to note a falling sparrow...

Genesis, Exodus... it was a fishing port,
An English holiday town, time blew me to,
Where I could watch waves, like immortals, sport

With bits of flotsam once the wind was through.
Here I find lost bits of my heart. In these
Dark corridors and courtyards something true

Survives in such obsessive images
As understand the curtains of the soul
Drawing together in the frozen breeze.

And you, born in the Far East, in a bowl
Of China dust, carried in armoured trucks
Along Malaysian roads, and down the coal-

Seamed valleys of Yorkshire, past viaducts
And airports, can now enter through the walls
To haunt the darkest residential blocks.

3.

What hope for rhyme when even childhood calls
On fiction for an echo and completes
Itself in myths, processions, carnivals,

Displays that billow down mysterious streets?
The city is unfixed, its formal maps
Are mere mnenomics where each shape repeats

Its name before some ultimate collapse.
The train shunts in the sidings, cars pull in
By doorways, move off, disappear in gaps

Between the shops. It is like watching skin
Crack and wrinkle. Old words: Andrássy út
And Hal tér. Naming of streets: Tolbuhin,

Münnich... the distant smell of rotting fruit,
Old shredded documents in blackened piles,
Dead trees with squirrels snuffling at the root.

On balmy afternoons you walk for miles
Trying to listen to the architecture.
It mutters continually, waving dusty files

Of unsolved grievances. It wants to lecture
Even while it sings—and how it sings,
When the mood takes it! So you take its picture

And brood upon those mouths and eyes, the wings
Of its cracked angels and draw out the sound
In terms of light which darkens as it rings.

Bells of the city chime, round upon round.
The film rolls on. A car sweeeps round the bend,
Its shadow stripping grey from the pale ground.

4.

Sooner or later roads come to an end.
The tram draws to a stop beside the bridge
Then doubles back. Cogwheel railways descend

To their terminus. You reach the world's edge
To leap off or to turn around and face
The ardours of the tiring homeward trudge.

The beggars in the subway know their place.
The shopgirl yawns. A couple in the square
Seem to be locked in statuesque embrace.

Surely by now the credits should appear.
Our characters, our narratives, our themes
And leitmotifs are hanging in the air

As dusk comes on with the small print of dreams.
We get into the car and cruise away
Negotiating networks of dipped beams.

Everything snores. Even the fine spray
Of rain breathes evenly. The houses close
Their doors to the street. Bedroom curtains sway

And darken. Somewhere in the comatose
Suburbs two people chase each other through
Sequences of courtyards with black windows.

Today is history, only the night is new
And always startling. Slowly the paint flakes
On the wall. Eventually the film-crew

Pack their gear away. The darkness aches
For morning which arrives with bird-calls, gusts
Of wind and traffic just as the reel breaks.

Bernard Adams

As Through the Land of England Once He Passed

Márton Szepsi Csombor and his 1620 Europica Varietas

Csombor, who was born in 1595 in the small town of Szepsi (now Moldava nad Bodvou in southern Slovakia), was the son of parents of whom little is known, though it seems likely that his father was an artisan, member of a guild and citizen of his town. The first solid fact that can be established is that young Márton was at school in Késmárk in 1607, having very likely been sent to the Szepesség (Zips) to learn German. Between 1609 and 1611 he was back in his native Szepsi, and then went on the first of a series of journeys that marked his short life. On this occasion he was accompanied to Transylvania by his tutor, Márton Sámsondi.

He then went to school in Nagybánya (now Baia Mare, Romania), where he studied Poetics, Rhetoric, Logic, Greek and Theology until 1613. On leaving, he took a trip to Máramaros (Maramures), and on his return to Szepsi began to plan other journeys. "My mind was drawn in many directions," he writes, "but principally my heart's desire was that I might be able to see foreign countries". This, however, had to wait while he completed his interrupted studies in Gönc (near the present Slovak frontier, northeast of Miskolc) at the local secondary school, which was where Gáspár Károly (translator and printer in 1590 of the first complete Bible in Hungarian) had begun his working life and Albert Szenci Molnár (translator of the Psalms of David, compiler of dictionaries, another much travelled scholar) too had spent some time. In 1615 he took a post as schoolmaster in Telkibánya (a little to the east of Gönc) in order to accumulate "a few forints" for his travelling expenses, as "coming and going without money is a waste of one's self and of time".

Bernard Adams'

translation of Metamorphosis Transylvaniæ *by Péter Apor was published by Kegan Paul in 2003. He is the translator of* The Letters from Turkey of Kelemen Mikes *(Kegan Paul, 2001) and co-translator, with Kálmán Ruttkay, of József Katona:* The Viceroy *(Budapest, Akadémiai, 2003)*

Finally he was ready, and in 1616, in opposition to the wishes of friends and well-wishers, he set off to study in Danzig, in Prussia. There were commercial connections, largely concerned with the wine trade, between that port and the Kassa (Košice-Kaschau) region in the sixteenth century; these grew stronger under Gábor Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania (1613–29), and Csombor's presumed commercial background would have given him contacts in Danzig. The school had a celebrated teaching staff, one of whom was the famous Keckermann (Professor of Theology at Danzig and later Heidelberg, and author of widely used textbooks), of whom Csombor would certainly have heard, who enhanced the reputation of the establishment. For both these reasons there had been Hungarian students at Danzig before Csombor went there, including János Frölich, headmaster of the Késmárk school between 1601 and 1608, both of whose sons also studied there. It therefore seems at least possible that the idea of eventually studying in Danzig initially occurred to Csombor at an early age. There was also the consideration of cost: Csombor was not a wealthy man, and the universities of the West—Vienna, Heidelberg, etc.—would have been beyond his means, whereas Danzig was not.

And so he spent over a month walking to Danzig, hitching lifts on carts when he could, thereby establishing a habit that stood him in good stead in his later travels. Even at this stage he must have had his tour of Europe in mind—another reason for going to Danzig as a good starting-point. He arrived there in June 1616 and stayed until April 1618, completing the two senior classes of the school, primarily in Philosophy and Theology, with a view to a proposed career in the Church. From there he set off on the journey that enabled him to make his mark in Hungarian letters, arriving back in Szepsi in early August.

Shortly afterwards he was ordained. In December of that year he was offered the post of schoolmaster in Kassa on the recommendation of Péter Alvinci and István Velechi, and took up the position in early February 1619. This was the beginning of the most stirring period in the history of the region, as the Thirty Years War started and the anti-Habsburg policies of Gábor Bethlen began to make themselves felt. The Bohemian Estates had risen in rebellion against the Austrians in 1618, and Bethlen joined them in the autumn of 1619. Elected Prince of Hungary on 21 September 1619 by a Diet that met in Kassa, Bethlen fought a successful campaign in Upper and Western Hungary, formulated the Hungarian part of the Bohemian–Hungarian alliance in January 1620, and held a joint council with the Bohemians in Kassa on 8 March.

While all this was going on, Csombor was at work on the account of his travels of 1618, which he entitled *Europica varietas* and published in the spring or summer of 1620. Its ten chapters open with separate dedications to a total of twenty-six "noble and respected masters", almost all citizens of Kassa prominent in trade or politics. This was the first travelogue to be printed in

Hungarian, and although the author was doubtless aware of earlier works in this genre—mostly in Latin—he seems little if at all influenced by them, and very much dependent on his personal observations. A wide readership was obviously his aim, and the freshness and immediacy of his writing contributed much more to the popularity of the book than material derived from predecessors could have done.

The work forms an intriguing *mélange* of travel diary, personal reaction and reminiscence as Csombor passes in swift succession—urged on, as he tells us, by a rapidly shrinking purse—through a number of towns and regions in Europe, meeting a considerable variety of people and seeing much of lasting interest. This is not an autobiographical work in the sense that the author seeks to explain himself, or to justify what he has done; his clear objective is to inform and entertain with an account of experiences that he has long cherished in anticipation and thoroughly enjoyed in execution.

"As the bee, my noble and respected masters, gathers profit not only in her owner's garden but also goes equally to the land of others, returning with legs laden with sweetness in order to delight only him that cares for her, so many of the ancient Greek philosophers deemed it insufficient to live always in Athens... but left without a qualm for distant foreign lands—Sicily, Italy, Gaul and elsewhere—to see, hear, study and gain understanding"; thus Classical authority too is appealed to in Csombor's *Præfatio.*

"From my childhood I have been driven by an inclination to see strange places" are the opening words of *Occasio itineris,* in which Csombor gives a brief outline of his early life, ending as he leaves Hungary to enter Poland. "Our way into Poland lay over Becked, on which hill are many robbers' caves, and it has been a region fatal to many pious persons. With great trepidation we crossed it..." is followed by an elegiac couplet in Latin describing how he set off into "harsh foreign parts" and wept as he left his native land.

Poland is followed by the province of Masuria, which leads Csombor into Prussia. There his first journey ends, as he stays for almost two years in Danzig. After that *Occasio continuati itineris* sees him off again. "Having reached the year one thousand six hundred and eighteen, I made every effort to leave the city of Danzig that I might see foreign countries and different peoples". On the eve of departure he and his friends sing in his room Psalms 90 and 91, in each of which there are "verses written for the encouragement and cheering of one leaving on a journey", and he leaves by sea for Denmark. From there he moved on to the Netherlands, on the way inserting a brief description of Frisia, although he did not land there. After spending time in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, he moved to Zealand and left from Flushing for England, where, "having sailed with the help of God a day and a night on the *Zelandicus oceanus,* we arrived at the realm of England in the mouth of the Tamesis, where, going up a whole fifteen miles, we arrived in the metropolis of England, Londinum."

His adventures there are told in the chapter that follows this introduction, and he went next via Dover to France, where he made his way from Dieppe (of which he formed a very poor opinion) to Paris, where he arrived on 27 May and was suitably impressed; the chapter on France is by far the longest. In Strasbourg on 19 July, Csombor enrolled, for the sake of appearances, at the university where Albert Szenci Molnár taught, but he did not stay to study. From France he went to Germany—on 24 July he was in Heidelberg for another flying visit to a Western university town—and thence travelled through Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia back to Hungary, arriving home in Szepsi in early August.

Such is the broad outline of Csombor's itinerary. It comes as no surprise to the modern reader to learn that *Europica varietas* was a success. Such is the vitality and sparkle of his intensely personal narrative—he himself is the principal character, though by no means the only one, in the scenes that he portrays—that to this day the book holds a strong appeal. He was not slow either to praise what pleased him or to criticise what did not, doing so in objective, good-humoured fashion. The historian, of course, can learn much from him, though he may pull a face here and there at what seem questionable statements by modern standards—two and a half hours to walk from the Tower of London to Westminster? cherries at seventy pence each in 1618?—while the translator would be grateful for more precise indications of distances and prices—what was the rate of exchange? were *garas* and *pénz* really worth an English penny? One can only admire Csombor's initiative in travelling so far on obviously limited means when even the relatively wealthy Miklós Bethlen had to economise in the West.

The title of the book too is revealing; perhaps "Europe in all its Variety" would be a fair translation, as what interests Csombor most are the differences between the countries and peoples that he visits, their ways of life, and their cultural achievements. There is variety in the text itself, as he lapses not infrequently into verse in both Hungarian and Latin, more often than not of his own composition, and there is a great variety in the people that he meets and describes, and who are almost unfailingly kind and helpful to a young and obviously personable foreigner. He had no need to offer an apologia to those who had opposed his plans: indeed, one senses that such was his self-confidence that the very idea did not cross his mind. Rather it was his intention to share with his fellow countrymen that greatest of all pleasures: the delight in the strangeness of alien things. It is much to be regretted that his death in 1622, when he fell victim to the plague, deprived him of further opportunities for travel and us of the chance to read about them. ❧

Márton Szepsi Csombor

England

To
My right honourable and illustrious masters
Sebestyén Monachi,
János Kalmár of Thúr
and
István Szegedi
May the pure and Christian land of England
bear everywhere their fame, their names
and the honour and respect that are righfully theirs

When the ancient Romans began to conquer the world the people of England had been there long before, but the whereabouts of the country were unknown and it was only rumoured that beyond Normandy on an island there lived giants. When therefore Julius Caesar had subdued the parts of Gaul that are next the sea he could not be satisfied with that, but took his army over into England too and good fortune attended him, for the whole of Britain, which had never known a foreign ruler, fell into his hand.

It was then called Albion or Albania because of the white hills which appear afar off to the arriving traveller, as this country is rich in chalk, alabaster and white marble, and later it was called Britannia after Brutus, son of Silvius, who, forty years after the sack of Troy, was leader of an army and came into this island and cut down to the last man the aboriginal inhabitants thereof. In this country there was of old the forest of Caledonia, from which the island was also later named Caledonia. It has many rivers, many people, many towns and harbours, and on its coasts are many small islands among which that named Monia[1] is very famous, since it has no foundation but goes to and fro as the wind blows it, perhaps as much as sixty *mérföld*[2]. The people in England guard their lineage jealously, and when one speaks with them they take their descent, be it ever so humble, back to a noble or royal generation. There is in their country a very great abundance of inflammable soft and sulphurous stone, and you would be amazed if you heard: beggars often request stones in the name of God.

Those who live there say that England is much better and more moderate of climate than Gaul; there is neither such great cold nor such great heat there. It has wheat, rye and barley aplenty, only the ploughlands are all enclosed, from which it appears that it is costly because the people are many that require it, and there is other fruit too in abundance. It has livestock of many kinds, but chiefly many sheep, from the wool of which all manner of fine cloths are made. Indeed, I declare that the sheep's wool is so fine that one cannot see any outer layer while

it is on them, and would opine that there is on them only skin, but when one can see at close hand they have a plentiful fleece which differs little from white silk. It is said that their sheep have such fine wool because they graze on the herb known as rosemary, which by nature has a costly and moderate temperament, which matter I believe all the more easily because on the meat of the sheep, when it has been butchered, a pleasing and delightful scent is to be detected.

In ancient times iron and copper ore were not to be found in the country, but now there are all kinds of metal. Only their king's coinage is accepted, and no foreign ruler's ever, but if any accepts pure silver or gold it is by weight and he cares not for its form. Their coinage is pure silver and gold and may not be carried out of the country, but is exchanged at the ports into the money of the country to which one means to go.

Not a single wolf is ever to be found in this country, and some say that the nature of the land cannot suffer them, but just as when snakes and other venomous creatures are taken to neighbouring Hybernia, or mice to a certain island close to Denmark, as soon as they are set on the ground they die a dreadful death. But in the *Annalibus Civitatum Angliæ* another reason is stated for there being no wolves, and this is what is said. As in this country the greatest profit comes from the keeping of sheep, in time gone by, since the citizens suffered great loss by wolves, a certain decree went forth from the common government of the country that should a town, as an act of grace and mercy, reprieve a man sentenced to death for his crimes, he would be obliged to produce to the town council within a twelvemonth twelve wolves' heads for his liberty, which being a frequent happening, all the breed of wolves has disappeared from among them, and as [England] is on all sides surrounded by the sea there is no way that they can arise[3]. But however it may have come about it is certain that wolves are found nowhere in England, concerning which a fellow-traveller of mine in Delft, when I spoke of my journey to England, composed the following couplet, in which he lied:

Wolves used in England nowhere to be found,
But wolf-like heretics now there abound!

In ancient times there were not so many sorts of quarries as now, because now chalk, white marble and alabaster are nowhere found better or finer than here. Furthermore, there is that jet-stone, from which those that can use it skilfully can make eternally burning candles, which only oil can extinguish. Another thing is that if one administers the powder of that stone in wine to a maiden or youth it can furnish unquestionable testimony concerning their virginity, for if they are virgin it does not disagree with them, but if not they vomit it forth at once.

There are also in England many hot baths. Their longest day is of nineteen hours, but in summer their nights are so bright that a craftsman can work almost as by daylight, since the sun does not sink entirely below the horizon and

night differs little from day; in winter, on the contrary, when the Sun is in Capricorn, their night lasts four whole days.

The language of the inhabitants too is a mixture of those of such adjacent lands as Hybernia, Gaul and Germany, and their pronunciation is extremely bad, for every 'u' they pronounce as 'ü'[4]. The inhabitants are a handsome white people of moderate physique, and the womenfolk especially are very beautiful, clear and pale of complexion, tall, kind to forigners, whom they greet with kiss *(Perque vias dantur basia perque domos*[5]*)* and curtsey, and it is evident that *Anglæ angelæ,* for they have so angelic an appearance. Their dress is like that of the Gaul, only they delight in low, wide, black hats. The womenfolk, however, have many kinds of dress, some wear high-crowned hats, plaiting their hair above the ears on both sides, some, as with us, wear only kerchieves; they widen their skirts with hoops and all agree in having passed fourteen but not forty, and they display their breasts very finely if they consider that they can stand forth in white and shapely form, into the cleavage whereof they hang a costly cross or Agnus Dei, as they call it. Men and womenfolk alike go on horseback, and so diligent are the girls in horse-racing that they go into the fields for amusement and often surpass their spouses. In this country the fields, not unlike those around Rome in ancient times, are bordered with stones on each of which there are two or three steps, so that should one—chiefly the female estate—dismount from one's horse one may remount by them. Educated men do not use the *milliare* but *passus* or stones, and if someone asks how many *mérföld* it is they say that it is so many *passus,* or *abest tot et tot lapidibus*. As a rule all that are true English are of the Helvetian denomination, but nevertheless bishoprics, canonries, organs, white robes in church and other such paraphernalia are preserved. They have two notable rivers. The Tamesis flows through the city of Londinum, and will carry thither any large ship. The second is the Humbria, which goes towards the city of Eboracum. The two great archdioceses there are those of Cantuaria and Eboracum. There are 19 bishoprics, 50 cities and 136 towns. There are two universities, the one in Cantabridgia, in which the famous Guilhelmus Wittakerus and Perkinsus[6] taught, the other in Oxonium, made famous by János Casus[7]. My travels through this country were as follows:

LONDINUM, where I was amazed above all at the people's ignorance of Latin[8], because I went along three whole streets among merchants, furriers, tailors, etc. and nowhere found a single person that could speak to me in Latin, but after a long time I came upon an Italian on whom I expended the little Italian that I know, and who directed me to the common master of the Italians, saying that there was there a young Hungarian gentleman, at which I was highly delighted and sought him most assiduously, but although he called himself a Hungarian he could not speak a word of Hungarian to me because he was a Czech, and had only wished to give himself a good name in coming from a distant land and therefore had called himself Hungarian.

Going from there I took lodgings at the Fox and Hounds[9] before the great bridge. As I went out to look at Londinum's three streets[10] first of all, which are very handsome and wide, I observed fine paved roads adorned with big houses and countless channels of running water, although the poor contend for the water, taking it in wooden vessels and bearing it from street to street to sell it. Besides these, there are in the big main street very tall stone buildings and pillars with the arms of the city, decorated with amazingly beautiful images, but the other streets are extremely narrow and many are not troubled by the light of the sun. I have seen big cities in the countries where I have been, but never before one like this, because its circumference, not only in their opinion but mine too, is four and a half Hungarian *mérföld.* The bridge over the river Tamesis is big, the third wonder of the land of England, with eighteen arches; it is a veritable town in itself, with a church on it and countless merchants' shops. The royal castle (the court is different[11], of which I shall speak below) is on a high stone wall above the sea, with four towers in a big square with no decoration at all, and was built by Julius Caesar. In front of this castle are 270 big old bronze cannon, which were captured from the Spanish during the sea-battle in the time of Queen Elizabeth of blessed memory, and she triumphed over them, causing her arms to be engraved on each of them, and they are kept here in a heap simply for a memento, as it were. Just near here at the side of a house are two very fine water-channels, at which I was once drinking with great pleasure when a Frenchman, thinking that I was of his nation, reproached me most severely; he held it a disgrace in the eyes of those that lived there that one of his race should drink water, but on learning of my country he embraced me and begged my pardon, and left me honourably. As I went from there by a small gate into the city I encountered a crowd of Saracen girls whom armed robbers had just brought from Ethiopia, and as they were selling them they had dressed them in very fine clothes. Compared to Holland the place is not expensive, but for us it is certainly very dear, because one can eat daily five *garas*[12] worth of bread and vegetables. They mostly drink beer, and after Danish beer I have not tasted another sort as good under Heaven. There is a great quantity of fish, and I saw crayfish[13] so big, I tell no lie, they were no smaller than ten-day-old piglets, and far from eating them the sight of them would have made me feel nauseous for a long time; previously I was amazed, but it is now nothing, at the shell of the crayfish-claw which the late Miklós Szabó of Nagybánya had, which, as I have seen, held a gill[14] of wine, because in these we would find an *icce*[15], and a big crayfish like that sold for three *garas*. To the west is a very fine gate[16], with the king's arms on the outside, a harp, a lily, six lions, a crown, held on one side by a lion and on the other by a unicorn, and beneath is written in letters of gold: *Vivat rex,* and beneath that:

SENATUS POPULUSQUE LONDINENSIS FECIT ANNO 1609

As one goes out by that gate there is on the other side a church and to the left of the church a magnificent grassed garden where the fine London cloth is dried, and the stone walls of these alone have a circumference of half a *mérföld,* and one is amazed at the amount of cloth that may be seen in these gardens. From there to the left is a fine suburban street where there is a little church entirely of carved stone, above the door of which is an inscription: *Cœmiterium hoc inferius a civitate Londinensi huic parochiæ commissum sumptibus eiusdem parochiæ muro latericio septum est 1615*[17]. A very fine gate[18] opens before those coming into the city from there, on which there are statues of a king on the right, a bishop in the middle and Justitia on the left. Going up that street one comes to the Basilica, on the tower of which, before the hour is struck, the statues of two men drag out a bell, and I was reliably informed that both are cast in pure silver, and neither of them is smaller than me[19]. All around here are the many studios of the leading painters. After much going one reaches the church of St Paul, a very old building, which is divided into three aisles, its pavingstones are inordinately large, and the sanctuary, in which there are many tombs of white, red and black marble and alabaster, is twelve steps above the nave; the sanctuary is opened only at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, but looking in at a window I could see the effigy of a bishop carved in black marble; after the natural corruption of his bones they were dug up and placed above him, but there is no inscription otherwise, but this verse in two places:

Disce mori mundo, vivere disce Deo[20]

In the nave are the marble and alabaster tombs of many learned, gallant and statesmanlike persons, who, if I were to record them in full, would perhaps weary and bore the reader. On the left as one emerges from this church is a school with the inscription: *Ingredere ut proficias*.[21] In the time of Queen Elizabeth the master of this school had a fifteen-year-old daughter, who as such wrote to the queen a little book of verses in Latin, Greek and the Jewish language, which now, after her death, has been printed again, and everyone reads it with great pleasure. Beside this school to left, right, front and rear are streets in which only booksellers live, so that the area occupied by bookshops is as great as the town of Szeben in Szepes.

It took me two and a half hours to walk the length of the city from Julius Caesar's castle to Westminster, from which you can easily judge the size of it. Westminster is the upper part of the city and was in times gone by the home of false monks, who kept there the Virgin Mary's milk and St Peter's middle finger, to which people from every country hastened for idolatrous purposes; Erasmus describes every part of this magnificent building in *Peregrinatio religionis ergo suscepta,* where the reader may find it. It has now been made into a great school and the king has some hundreds of scholars therein; I visited all of its halls, but particularly to be seen are the examination rooms of the ordinands, where on

the wall are depicted to the right Hercules *propter magnos labores* and to the left Samson, for his forbearing, and between them Queen Elizabeth together with her crown and a rose and on the other side the arms of the country with the inscription: *Beati pacifici.* Then: *Reges et reginæ erunt nutritii tui,* and furthermore in very ancient letters: *Cor unum, una via.* In another hall I saw: *Non tota, sed pars tamen,* of which many, like myslf, cannot give any explanation. The scholars wear very fine distinguishing garments, and it is easy to recognise even the smallest among the people, unlike in Germany, where one does not know who is what among them, because all wear clothing identical with that of noblemen and master craftsmen. But here the sleeves of their long fringed gowns, which even in summer have a light lining, reach to below the waist. When I went to this school there were six hundred pupils, and forty professors and other persons belonging to the school.

The church of the monastery[22] is huge, and nowadays kings are buried there; the body of Queen Elizabeth of blessed memory too lies here, as does that of her sister Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, the mother of the present King James, whom Elizabeth caused to be beheaded with an axe, as is their custom, for her wicked deeds and buried here. Because of the many fine tombs therein this church is worthily counted one of the three wonders of England.

When one goes up from Westminster towards the king's palace one has to enter through two fine gateways of carved stone decorated with statues, and here as one goes in on the left is a house built in the form of a church; inside are many different amusement-places, and in one they play ball, in another bowls, in another with hoops, in a fourth marbles, beside a fair mill-stream. If you turn to the left from there, through the little gateway above which is an image of Queen Elizabeth and the inscription: *Vivat regina Elizabetha,* and if you enter the garden you will be amazed at its appearance, but chiefly at the fine orderliness of the players, some of whom toss stones, some beams, some wrestle and jump, while others, especially the young womenfolk and tender maidens, contend in singing—seeing all these things you would cast aside the Olympus and Helikon of the poets and marvel at the splendour of this place. A stream flows through the garden, dividing it into two: the one half is for sport and the king's fishpond, in which there are pelicans, ducks, swans and sea-ravens, the other part being a game-garden, but it is such that one can see into it on all sides, and there is much game there, deer, white and black rabbits, bison, roe deer, oxen and the rest. Directly in front of this garden is the king's palace, a building partly of brick, partly of carved stone, and all may enter the courtyards, you are not asked whom you seek or why you have come. On the first day when I went in I saw at once that famous Marcus Antonius to whom, while he held the archbishopric of Spalatum[23] and the prefecture of Dalmatia, the Lord miraculously revealed the truth, and who fled from the spiritual Babylon, leaving his all, and sojourned with the king of England. I tried to glimpse King James too, but I learnt from his

servants that he had at that time not left his house for fourteen days, nor would he admit any on account of his great business. These palaces are enclosed on all sides by pleasure gardens, and apart from these walks and gardens have been planted with countless linden trees, so many that other than Italy, I believe, no country may boast more of its city, and any that has seen the king of England's gardens, the people of his court and his palaces in this city will consider as nothing the oafish diversions of Germany. Seeing the condition of the place to be such I sang of it as follows:

Go look on London, thou whom Fate hath made
A wanderer, for here thou wilt behold
All England's jewels gathered, and perceive
Her throne's possessions; lo, how fortunate
This city truly is, where piety
Dwelleth in palaces, and peace and love,
And true faith riseth to the heaven above.

It is the custom not only of the people of this city but of the whole country to drink of a morning before eating, and to invite their fellow man not to a piece of roast meat but to a drink of beer, concerning which they dispute with the Germans as to which works the better; the English argue their case as follows: When one wishes to cook, first one rinses the pot and then puts in it what one wishes to cook. The Germans, however, say: When one wishes to keep good fresh-tasting water in one's well, first one lays a strong foundation of stone in it. Those people are immoderately weak and effeminate.

When I spoke with a pleasant fellow concerning the fruit of England, he told me: I have seen a single cherry sold in this country for sixty-five *pfennig,* which in Hungary is as many *garas*. That I took in a different sense and thought that he spoke of some costly thing, and asked what sort of cherry that was; he replied that certainly it was such as in any other country, and that if I would tarry two weeks in that city I would see them at seventy English *pfennig*, and not only cherries but any fresh fruit, because the people of England are of such a disposition that when they see some new thing they will buy it at a high price, some for their lovers, some for their husbands, others for their good friends, some simply to hang it on their ears to give themselves airs, and keep it there until it rots.

The people in London are so many that one would consider it every day crowded, and I heard that in addition to persons visiting there are at all times three hundred thousand people to be found there, and, I believe, there must be food for these. I can say with confidence that there is not a week in which a hundred and fifty oxen and a thousand sheep are not slaughtered there, in addition to which how many birds and fish must there be?

After that I gained entry with the schoolmaster, through his great influence, to the sanctuary of St Paul's church, where the things that I saw, the epitaphs

that I read, would take me a long time to describe. There was the tomb of a king named Seba[24], erected in the year of Our Lord 677, that of King Etheldredus (871[25]), and of Plantagrat, King of Castile (1382). I marvelled greatly at the sight of the extremely beautiful tombs of many bishops, because the carved effigy of each was so lifelike that but for the lack of speech and movement nature could not find fault with their features. The burial-place of the kings of this day is either this church or that of the monastery of Westminster.

When a ship comes up the River Tamesis, which is wider than the Bodrog[26], into the city it is the custom for all its cannon to be fired for the king's pleasure, and sometimes one hears two hundred shots in a day, which would often harm the houses if it were on dry land, but as it is on the water it can do no harm. Here in England I observed how greatly it pleases or distresses one who is in a foreign land to see things that in only a tiny respect resemble the things of his homeland, for when I was out walking and feeling very sad I saw three Muscovites dressed in their fashion, which is not greatly different from ours, their high-heeled yellow boots, the one in green, the other two in violet; the sight of them had such an effect on my heart that I assure you I scarcely could tell where I was for my thoughts.

Leaving Londinum I made for Cantuaria, and on the way first I had to ascend a terrible hill[27], but God very soon gave me a pleasant Walloon as travelling-companion who, after going with me three or four *mérföld,* called for a horse to ride and left me, poor foreign fellow. From this terrible hill one can see far and wide, as it were a little province, over the city of Londinum; there is a very large iron lamp at the very top, at which the city has stationed men so that if anything occurs in the hills they shall send news to the nearby villages and towns, and if the people ever see the fire lit they come from all sides ready to rush upon the enemy. From there I observed as far as I could see, a large part of England, in which I wondered at the size rather than the numbers of their cattle, and can surely say that the cows in that country are as big and fat as any oxen in Hungary, and if only you were to see two thousand in a herd, all black, and the oxen as sturdy and fat as the buffalo in Hungary, and the length of their horns while they are on their heads exceeds (together with the head) the span of any man's arms; their horns are exceeding white but they themselves are black. In the meadows rosemary grows almost as plentifully as does wormwood in Hungary, only it is not as mild as the garden variety, but if one wishes to make use of it there too it is planted in gardens. Descending from the hill I ate beside a spring, and carved my name on a tree in the following words:

As through the land of England once he passed,
Here Márton Csombor ate and quenched his thirst.

I went dismally on and on without any companion, and when I had passed a pleasant town called Gravesend and was in the forest beyond, all of a sudden a

great Saracen appeared before me with an axe; I never saw a blacker man in my life, before or since, and he addressed me in English (for he had lived there long) but I could make no reply, but said nonetheless that I was making my way to Cantuarium; I was much afraid of his axe, but God granted that he parted from me with great civility having pointed out the way.

Then I came to Rochester, a nasty little town like an ancient French village but half as big, which formerly had a very hideous high castle, now completely ruinous. I had seen stone bridges larger and smaller, but none hitherto more beautiful than here, because its whole length has been adorned for the sake of decoration with high red-painted ironwork and the arms of the king and the country, also in iron. Here I saw four big galleys and fourteen of the king's ships, finer than which I never saw together either in Prussia, Denmark, Frisia, Holland or Zealand; every one had ports for twenty-four guns. I went into the inn, certainly not for drink, as I was not thirsty at the time, but in order to have something to eat; for the sake of appearances I asked for an *icce* of beer and they, incredibly, set before me three *icces* simply so that I should have more to pay for, and as I was very tired and it was almost six in the evening I wished to stay there, but luck played me false, because the innkeeper's maid, a very hefty person, big of hand and squat of body, came to me as if to pity me in my tiredness and long absence from home and began to squeeze my hand and caress my head and kiss me frequently, to which ceremony I, a Hungarian, was unaccustomed; I understood clearly to what end such caresses were directed, bethought me that I would rather be alone, roused my tired limbs and set off again. Evening drew on, and after going a good way from there I slept in a good inn called the Two Monkeys. Setting out from there next day I came to the famous Cantuarium, which I had taken to be Cantabrigia, where Whittakerus and Perkinsus had taught; it lies in a valley and is not visible from a great distance, and furthermore all its buildings are poor.

CANTUARIUM or Cantuaria, in the English tongue Cantábury, is the greatest place of pilgrimage after St James of Compostella, St Mary of Loretto and the breeches of St Joseph in Aquisgranum (where the ancient Hungarians went to worship an idol), to which people come because of the body of St Thomas the bishop, who was killed by three knights and buried here. When I went in I first met Jacobus Lambe, the archdeacon[28] there, greeted him and when I enquired of him the whereabouts of the grave of the late Whittakerus he replied in these words: *Toto cælo errat dominus studiosus, haec civitas non est Cantabrigia sed Cantuaria*[29], at which I was very distressed because I had wished above all to see that university, but as I had put behind me a whole thirty *mérföld*[30] I was very reluctant to return. The priest saw that I regretted the wasted journey, and said: *Ne pæniteat huc venisse, hic enim videbis primum miraculum Angliæ*[31], and taking me by the hand first of all, before showing me other things, took me to an inn (because they do not hold it a disgrace to eat and drink anywhere)

where both he and I became very merry on English beer, and from there to his house; he sent for the key to the church in which, in papist times, the body of St Thomas of Cantuarium was venerated, opened it and took me everywhere, and a more beautiful building no one ever saw, for which reason it is reckoned one of the three wonders of England.

Never in my life would I have believed that so beautiful a church could be without gold and silver (for the golden vessels and vestments have all been removed thence) in this world. It has two exceedingly big towers outside, and inside it is very high, and on the vaulting are all the coats of arms of the lords of the land; there are countless aisles in it, supported by some hundreds of black marble columns, many picturesque chapels and high and low flights of steps. There are two sanctuaries; the first, in which the everyday prayers and singing take place, is 22 steps above the nave, and there are the episcopal and archiepiscopal seats; the lectern is very big, of pure Venetian brass, on which a great eagle holds the book on its spread wings; the second sanctuary is somewhat higher than the first, and in it lies the body of St Thomas. On all the columns in the nave there are books, exceedingly old, and among them, to show the eternal blindness of the papists, the Gospel of St Nicodemus too is kept, in which there are as many falsehoods as words. There is no plain glass in the windows, but they are decorated with pictures of scenes from the New and Old Testaments; it is an amazing thing that among so many hundreds of columns every corner of the church is so light. A large chapter keeps the church nowadays too, and just as in papist times they sing the psalms in antiphonal manner, and many, young and old alike, put on the monastic cowl and sing in monkish fashion. There are very many tombstones of men of rank in alabaster, marble and Venetian brass; the inscriptions on some I could not read because of their antiquity, but many I could make out and read fully, and I will record just one out of them all:

> *Ottho Severus, qui ob nimiam iustitiam Severi nomen meruit, ex illustri Dacorum prosapia ortus, ex ethnico Christianus factus, ob id a fratribus domo pulsus relicta patria ad Christiani cuiusdam ducis famulatum sese contulit, hominis indole a duce perspecta Graecæ et Latinæ doctis eum docendum tradidit, tandem sacra purgatus unda ob magnam in sacris literis peritiam archiepiscopale munus hic 25 annis gessit, tandem senio confectus rationem suae villicationis redditurus ad cœlos migravit anno post sacrum partum 958*[32].

In addition to this, many tombs of kings are enclosed in chapels. There is a board on which the entire legend of the vision of St John is told in pictures, a marvel to behold.

Around the church on all sides are the palaces of the archbishop, bishop and canons, and a fine school, but principally a cloister, a wonderfully dark and serpentine building, in a word everywhere that one looks in this place one sees *nil nisi stupenda antiquitatis vestigia.*[33] The town is not very big, nor beautiful, neverthe-

less it is flat, has many lapidaria in ruins, fine gates and a decent town hall; bread and wine are expensive there, and the beer is good and tolerable in price.

Having gone all round these things we went to the priest's house and from three to six o'clock kept the company of the beer glasses, and that pious man entertained me heartily because, in my opinon, as he had been to Germany he knew what it was to be away from home. He had been a pupil of Whittakerus.

Even surrounded by so many good things, and although he sought very much to detain me, I did not delay my journey because my purse was becoming very thin in England for two reasons, and by the way that I planned my homeland was still four hundred Hungarian *mérföld* away. My money was running short firstly because in England, as in the countries that I had visited, everything was exceedingly costly. Secondly, because I was given for a gold forint no more than a hundred and sixty *pénz*. I took my leave of Jacobus Lambe, therefore, after he had written his name in my book, and set off for the British ocean sea; in the evening I became lost in a dense forest, where, as I could no longer see to continue my way, I lay down under a thorn bush, and there too I had very good fortune, because when I had laid my drawn sword across me and was very quietly, though certainly fearfully, resting, there came two peasants whispering loudly, each with an axe, intent on stealing wood, I believe; they stopped beside the bush and as it was dark perhaps they could not see me, but I could see them clearly standing by my head, and was terribly afraid in case they were thieves and would catch sight of me and so one would throw or strike at me, for they were so close that they could have struck me, and I would die a terrible death. I grasped my naked rapier in my hand and leapt up and they saw this and retreated, but when I enquired of them for an inn their courage returned and approaching me they said that I had left the right way two whole *mérföld* back, and nevertheless they directed me to an inn which was only a *mérföld* away, but as I was quite worn out I thought that even if I did reach the inn they would not admit one in the night, especially one who did not know their language, and so I looked for another place in the forest and lay there surrounded by the song of nightingales and the doleful cries of owls.

Next morning I rose very early and reached the town of Dover, known as the harbour of England, at seven o'clock. It is a tiny *oppidum* without any wall, but has two bastions, both overlooking the sea, with four cannon on each. It has a strong castle on the hilltop almost like that of Szepes, and its walls extend to the seashore. Here and in the other coastal towns of England, when leaving for a foreign country the sailors dare take no one aboard without a credential. Since, therefore, I wished to go to France I went to the Commissioner and since, from my dress and especially the fact that I always wore boots with yellow uppers on my travels, everyone said that I was a Walloon and took me for such, he began to question me very harshly in that tongue as to where I was going; I replied in Latin, whereupon he spoke to me in German and questioned me further, but

civilly, where was I from and what was my religion? I said that I was a Protestant from the city of Frankfurt ad Oderam in Germany, and he therefore gave me a document in these terms:

Probatæ religionis juvenis, natione Alemanus, Martinus Czombor portum Normandicum Diepæ aggredi conatur, libere, petimus, dimittatur.

Subscripsit Nicolaus Katon, M. Jonas in Dover[34].

I should have paid thirty-five *garas*[35], but the kindly men took not a farthing from me. I lodged in the Plough and Four Oxen, where a dumb girl waited on six of us, cooked, baked, laid the table for us; if I were to so much as see her cooking now certainly I would be sick enough to die, but at the time everything was good, because what the occasion brought we could not alter; she had bulbous, rheumy eyes, crippled legs, loathsome hands, certainly she had not washed once in three weeks, and if one reproved her for anything she gave a terrible scream in wordless fashion so that one's hair all but stood on end at it, and I, when I left her, cursed her for her unbelief, but I thought that even a curse would have no effect on her. In England I never saw a single oven, as in Holland and Zealand likewise. ❧

Translated by Bernard Adams

NOTES

1 ■ It is uncertain whether the reference is to Man or to Anglesey (*Môn* in Welsh), but I have been unable to connect this legend with either.

2 ■ A pre-metric Hungarian unit of 8,354 metres or 5.64 English miles. Csombor's use of the term is inconsistent, and English miles are sometimes clearly meant.

3 ■ The date of the extermination of the wolf in England is not precisely known, but was probably in the region of 1500; in Scotland and Wales perhaps as late as the early 18th century. Csombor's story of twelve wolves' heads as the price of a reprieve seems otherwise unattested.

4 ■ A curious assertion! Csombor did not go to Scotland!

5 ■ Kisses are given in the streets and in the houses.

6 ■ William Perkins (d.1602), theologian and Fellow of Christ College; William Whitaker (1547-95), Regius Professor of Divinity and Master of St John's College.

7 ■ John Case (died 1600), a fellow of St John's College and an authority on Aristotle.

8 ■ In his autobiography (Book I ch. 15) Miklós Bethlen too complains of this during his visit in 1664, with special reference to the professors at Oxford.

9 ■ No such inn can be traced. Csombor's *Verdődött róka* ought to mean 'Hunted Fox', which I approximate.

10 ■ Fish Street, Cannon Street and Cornhill according to Péter Kulcsár, but more likely Cornhill, Cheapside and Gracechurch St., the principal thoroughfares of the day.

11 ■ St James Palace. The Tower of London was started early in the reign of William I (1066–87), and not by Julius Caesar.

12 ■ The *garas* was a copper coin, the value of which varied from 2 to 5 *krajcár*. See also notes 33 and 35.

13 ■ Obviously, these were lobsters, presumably unknown in Hungary.

14 ■ A pre-metric liquid measure, approximately 3 dl., rather less than half an imperial pint.

15 ■ A pre-metric liquid measure, approximately 8 dl. or roughly one imperial pint.

16 ■ The Aldgate, one of the eight gates to the City of London. All were demolished long ago.

17 ■ This lower cemetery was enclosed for the parish with a brick wall in 1615 by the City of London.

18 ■ The Bishopsgate.

19 ■ Neither the 'Basilica' nor the two figures are mentioned by other commentators of the time.

20 ■ Learn to die to the world and to live to God.

21 ■ Enter that thou mayest advance in learning.

22 ■ Westminster Abbey.

23 ■ Split.

24 ■ A king of the East Saxons who became a monk. The tomb was removed to New St Paul's after the fire of 1666.

25 ■ Ethelred I reigned 866–871. The more famous Ethelred II 'The Unready' lived 968–1016.

26 ■ A river in NE Hungary, joining the Tisza at Tokaj.

27 ■ Shooter's Hill.

28 ■ James Lambe was not archdeacon of Canterbury, from 1617–22. He had indeed graduated from King's College, Cambridge, taking his MA in 1615.

29 ■ 'You are entirely mistaken, learned sir, this city is not Cambridge but Canterbury'. Csombor's confusion may have resulted from his lack of English, which leads to his invariable use of Latin names for all English places.

30 ■ From Rochester to Canterbury is almost thirty English miles.

31 ■ Let coming here not grieve you, for here you shall see the first wonder of England.

32 ■ Ottho Severus, who earned the name of The Severe because of his his excessive justness, came from the illustrious race of Dacia, became a Christian (having been a pagan), for which reason he was driven from home by his brothers, left his native land and entered the service of a Christian prince. His ability was perceived by the prince, who sent him to men learned in Greek and Latin to be educated, and at last, as he had been cleansed in holy water and because of his great knowledge of Holy Scripture, he bore the office of archbishop here for 25 years. At length, worn by age, he migrated to Heaven to give an account of his earthly stewardship in the year 958 after the Holy Birth. (Oda the Severe was Archbishop of Canterbury 941–958.)

33 ■ Nothing but huge remains of antiquity.

34 ■ Martin Czombor, a young German of the true faith, wishes to go to the Normandy port of Dieppe. We request that he be allowed to pass at his pleasure.

35 ■ The document with which Csombor was issued was not, of course, a passport but a licence to travel abroad. This would normally be issued by a Secretary of State through the Privy Council, but at this time might be issued by 'Commissioners of the Passage', who in Dover were appointed by the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. Accepting the previous equation of the *garas* with the penny, two shillings and eleven pence seems an odd—and large—amount. Perhaps the fee should have been three shillings and fourpence (forty pence or half a mark), but no information on this is available.

*

I am indebted to Alison Cable (East Kent Archive Centre), Hazel Forsyth (The London Museum), Cressida Annesley (Archivist, Canterbury Cathedral), MER Pearsall (Public Record Office) and Roger Panaman (The Wolf Trust) for their invaluable help.

Gyula Krúdy

How the Prince of Wales Spent his Time at the School of Life in Pest

Back in the days when officers of the Guards still wore scarlet collars, golden buttons and white military coats, not this present pike-grey, began Count Esterházy, who had gone into well-deserved retirement as Colonel of the Guards, it happened that I received an order from the highest authority, directing me to escort the heir to the English throne round Budapest...

...There was a little Viennese coffee-house where the retired colonel would resort with a few other ex-officers for a bite. The arches, the Biedermeier style cash-desk and the vanilla coloured curtains of the café strongly resembled those of the Korona in Budapest where superannuated gentlemen would likewise gather for a chat, and where most of them had their own individual pipe and tobacco kept for them by the lady cashier. The elderly officers were as keen on ritual as was the major of Pendennis, and we may be quite sure that every one of them could have written his own novel for they had all spent longer or shorter periods at the court. (Officers of the Guards always regarded themselves as different from all other officers-at-arms; perhaps only those who had served as military attachés at a major embassy would have been in a position to compete with them in exclusivity.) These old officers would resort to the coffee-house in the afternoon—unfortunately I have forgotten the name of the establishment and only recall that it was near the Votivkirche—and during the war they sat there waiting to hear who were the latest to fall in the various theatres of war, and when, therefore, they might be called into service again. In the meantime they discoursed on the good old days whose helmeted heroes were, by this time, mostly interred in the military cemetery. It was in this coffee-house, and in another one that I will mention later, that I collected my notes regarding the time

---

Gyula Krúdy (1878–1933)

was the most original of Hungarian prose writers of the twentieth century. He published his first story at the age of fourteen. His huge and still uncollected oeuvre consists of dozens of novels, hundreds of short stories and a huge amount of journalism, including this piece.

when Victoria, Queen of England and Empress of India dispatched her heir to Budapest, among other places, to complete his education for life.

What did the Prince of Wales mean to Pest?

His stay represented the gilded youth of Budapest. It was the period that extended from the eighties through to the nineties, from the national exhibition in 85, when Budapest, and indeed all of Hungary, passed the necessary examinations regarding its riches and general readiness for life. It's the time when they start paving Outer Kerepesi Road, which ran roughly from Autumn (nowadays Szentkirályi) Street, though they only got round to the side streets a little later, for Hirsch & Co, the road surfacing company, was making a fortune perfectly happily without them. On hearing of the arrival of the heir to the English throne, Mayor Ráth made a vigilant pedestrian tour of the city to discover potential faults in the paving thereof, for nowadays we can have no idea how important an issue road surfacing was in Pest then. The gentry were already wearing light shoes summer and winter, a fashion introduced by Count István Károlyi, who liked to walk the distance between his palace in Museum Street and his club, the National Casino, if only to exercise his legs a little. So the mayor paid particular attention to the Magnates' Quarter behind the Museum and down Hatvani Street, for, there was no denying, it was the frock-coat brigade (in other words the magnates) that ran Pest, however much Gyula Verhovay, the anti-Semitic newspaper editor might rumble against them.

So the Museum District, extending to the riding school, was just as lovely then as it is now, and indeed no further palatial developments have been required since. And above the palace gardens, the faces of young aristocratic ladies continue to glow in the spicy breeze wafting up from below, much as do the faces of the white-bearded porters beneath. Aged countesses with ancient grooms do their eternal rounds, in carriages which ferry them from one port of call to another... I don't know if there has been any writer in the last fifty years who, given a glimpse, could thoroughly chronicle the true inner life of those palaces behind the Museum. (It is said that the handsome Lajos Kuthy might at one time have succeeded in penetrating as far as the chamber-maids' and nannies' quarters.)

One might think of the district as the Moscow of Hungary, as opposed to St Petersburg-Budapest with its furiously rapid construction. But we know a little of Moscow from the intimate descriptions of Turgenev and Tolstoy who, in their youth, moved in the most exclusive circles. Todays's authors can sigh and roam the streets behind the Museum as much as they like, hoping to uncover fascinating material, but they are wasting their time. No, not even Lenke Bajza, Mrs Beniczky, was properly acquainted with affairs thereabouts, albeit that lady of most dove-like spirit knew Francis Joseph well enough to arouse a pang or two of jealousy in the Empress Elizabeth, with ot without cause.

This is where the arrival of the English heir was most keenly anticipated. For, finally, after the dull Shah of Persia, or Milan Obrenovic, who was given to consuming passions, a member of the European royalty was to reside in Pest, one who was bound to bring with him the refined manners that English gentlemen back in his island home had had so much time to cultivate from the age of Shakespeare to the present day, manners such as could cheer even the "bored to death" Lady Dedlock "down in Lincolnshire, where the melancholy sky broods and the fog sits sluggish in its place."

Apart from obliging the seamstresses of Pest to sew themselves half-blind at wardrobes preparing for the arrival of the Prince of Wales, it did not occur to any of the Duchesses and Countesses of the district behind the National Museum, to make any closer enquiry concerning his appearance, manner, habits and other qualities. There was only one lady in New World Street (though she was not an appropriate person for fine ladies to know, at most their husbands might have made her acquaintance) who, through her personal grapevine, discovered that the favourite poet of the future King of England was Alfred Lord Tennyson, and had therefore endeavoured to get some of his poems off by heart...

> But, Alice, what an hour was that,
> When after roving in the woods
> ('Twas April then), I came and sat
> Below the chestnuts, when their buds...

Who was this gentlewoman of Pest who so boldly set up in competition with the aristocratic ladies of Pest, not only in their husbands' affections, but—would you believe it?—by daring to cast her eye at the heir to the English throne and greeting the royal personage currently travelling across Europe, not with new dresses, not (as the landlord of the Casino restaurant did) with cuts of the finest bloodiest beef, but with genuine English verses?

If Boz-Dickens could have walked the streets of Pest by night as he once did the streets of London he would not have found much change in the houses of New World Street opposite The Golden Eagle Inn. There was music every night at the Eagle, and the dandies of County Pest exhorted the fiddlers to gallop through their rather risqué repertoire. Her single storey house on the other hand closed its gates as religiously each evening as any convent, although by day the most eligible gentlemen of the country would call, which same gentlemen would later be found at the nearby National Casino, as deadly bored there as Lord Deadlock in Bleak House, nor would it have occurred to them to disturb that most amiable lady, their star, the beloved of the National Casino, for that mortal star tended to follow the healthy peasant habit of calmly resorting to her bed as soon as the Mower's Star appeared in the sky.

But Dickens's old gentleman would also have noticed in the course of his perambulations through the Pest of those times that from the day the Prince of

Wales set foot in Budapest, the lights of the house in New World Street were blazing every night. So there was, after all, someone for whom the lady in question was prepared to give up her beauty sleep.

This lady came from Pilis in County Pest and had made her way to the capital from there. She started as a flower girl in a florists on Szervita Square, where, through her charming manners and rare beauty, but chiefly through her razor-sharp natural wit, she quickly established a reputation with the gallants to be found in the streets of the inner city who would often drop in at the florists, it being the done thing then to sport a cornflower or violet buttonhole matching one's chequered trousers. All it took was a few lessons, a dose of culture, and a few trips abroad for the flowerseller's wit fully to blossom, a process in which the solicitude of Count Albert Apponyi, who still occupied a place in the miserable rank of bachelors, was of inestimable help. In a very short time the wit and grace of the simple girl from Pilis rivalled that of the female characters in French plays that ingenues used to play at the old National Theatre. For that reason she became known as The Lady of the White Camelias, in homage to Dumas' heroine. And, just as the Prince of Wales was due to arrive, lo and behold, it appeared that the one-time grisette was capable not only of catering to the discriminating tastes of Paris, but to the more robustly clad, more substantial, solemn-as-sterling English style too.

And so Albert, heir to the throne of England, often accompanied by Esterházy, the Colonel of the Guards, became a frequenter of Róza's *salon,* long after the aged countesses in the palaces behind the Museum, who had got themselves up as imitations of Queen Victoria, waited in vain for him to call, as did the young countesses who looked to establish their credentials as Anglophiles by perfecting the handshake, a rather masculine gesture, firm and directed downwards, that became fashionable throughout Hungary on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales.

It was not in vain, then, that the lady in New World Street, learned to quote a few verses from 'The Idylls of the King' and 'The Princess'.

But it is not only in the *salons* of Budapest that a high-spirited prince may be educated for life: there are other places worth visiting.

Elemér Batthyány was even then in the curious habit of sending a servant from the National Casino home to his apartment in Badger Street to fetch him something warm to wear, because he would occasionally fancy a little night ramble. (The noble count, I hear, is still liable to indulge himself in this manner.) István Károlyi would never go out in search of entertainment at night, not at least since the trouble with his liver, after which his face had turned a vague tobacco-colour: he was capable, at most, of spending an occasional night at the National Casino as and when necessary, particularly when, as occasionally happened amongst gentlemen, a matter of honour had to be settled. But what will a hospitably minded Hungarian man not do to please the heir to the throne of England? He would certainly join the company if the Prince of Wales fancied

spending the night at the Blaue Katz in King Street. (This place of entertainment should not be confused with the later Red Cat, in which the finickety Janette Waldstein would certainly not set foot, nor the rest of the Viennese lady-artistes, who could only afford a fourth-class railway ticket—for such existed then!—when travelling from the Austrian capital to Pest where they would swank and swagger about with the usual vigour of ladies tearing themselves away from Vienna to visit Budapest.)

What lessons in life did the Prince of Wales, the future King of England, learn at the Blaue Katz? He certainly saw things there he would not have seen in Oxford or Cambridge. He saw bold young swells fighting with powerful coach-drivers and even stronger brewery-boys. He saw tipsy country rakes (from the Hungarian fen-country) signing promissory notes to ever-present money-lenders so that they could carry on having fun. He saw gentlemen of Pest settling to their usual tables, night after night, with such familiarity that you would not think they had anything else to do than spend the night carousing.

It would have been in vain for Baron Üchtritz (who was accounted the wisest man at the National Casino) to explain that these unbounded amusements were all for the sake of the visiting Prince of Wales. The youthful, bustling city had no other way yet of demonstrating its admiration for its rare guest but by putting on a show, somewhat like the clown in Anatole France, who turned somersaults before the image of the Virgin Mary. Pest was young and enthusiastic—smart society did not think it sufficient to name an inner city hat shop in honour of the Prince of Wales, nor was it content that Parisian and Viennese fashions in menswear should, at a blow, yield place to those of London, as if to validate those London noblemen, advisers to the great Empress, who had suggested that she send her son on a continental tour. The appearance of the Prince of Wales in Budapest was really one of the finest advertisements for the city. The peaked canvas caps worn by the English colonial regiments came into such fashion that even the gentry, who in deference to Francis Joseph had

Emperor Francis Joseph with the Prince of Wales behind him to the left, during manoeuvres. Drawing by Lajos Goró. Vasárnapi Ujság, *1888.*

adopted the kaiser-hut of Graz instead of the top hat wore them. The tailors of Crownprince Street quickly removed from their window-displays the starched and crossed neckties invented by some Austrian industrialist in order to help those who were not always fastidious about the condition of their shirts. The cobblers of Paris Street rapidly learned to stitch thick-soled shoes lined with cork, as if Budapest suffered from the same damp climate as London. Haberdashers' shelves were suddenly laden with tartan Scotch material that its wearers would still be sporting twenty years later in order to show that they had had their garments made of such when the Prince of Wales visited Pest... It was indeed a far from idle visit from industry and commerce's point of view, even if the English embassy in Vienna reported little to London of the Prince of Wales's sojourn, bar the fact that every night the heir was drawing lots at the Blaue Katz. (It is to be hoped that the embassy did not inform the somewhat prudish Victoria of what went on in the side-rooms once the lottery-master had packed up and been shown out.)

Every royal visitor introduced a range of fashion items to Budapest but no range was as profitable as that introduced by Albert of Wales. A true gentleman in Pest would at that time clad himself, head to foot, in such outer apparel that you'd think he'd stepped out of one of Thackeray's novels, fresh from the meadow at Epsom where gentlemen in top hats watch the Derby, dressed in a manner appropriate to that special equestrian occasion. And rural Hungary (the "country") had likewise to bend the knee before fashions from England. Only the most ancient of hunters now dressed as Turgenev's novels had once taught them to. Drivers of coaches and riders drove their horses with English whips, wearing English riding gloves. Skins, saddles, hunting bags, all the colour of autumn leaves, are daily expected from London. Anglomania! declare the chroniclers of the time. Those making elegant journeys by train travel with such enormous English cases you'd think they were on their way to India rather than Debrecen. Gentry everywhere dispose of the narrow, close-fitting trousers in which the various Hungarian Jorrocks and Allworthies had hunted and adopt baggy britches, tight about the knees, such as pictured in English fashion-plates, along with all the other country gentlemen, even when they are only going to their clubs.

No-one nowadays has the opportunity of gaping at such wonders, for Hungarian men's fashions have changed since the visit of the heir to the English throne. But some of us have seen old men who clung to their tobacco-coloured, braided Atilla coats and their Hungarian military-style pants with ribbons, rather than sporting britches: as they grew older their coat-tails might have grown a little longer but their trouser-legs remained tight right until they kicked the bucket. Ah, those times, when the goatskin tobacco-pouch was being replaced by the English rubber version, and the short-stemmed pipe ousted the long-stemmed one! Everything, from door-lock to stable-roof, went English in Hungary then, when the Prince of Wales amused himself with us, and enjoyed as

good companionship and fortune at the National Casino as at the dives in King Street and the brightly lit house in Grid Street.

But the simple anecdotes of a few ancestors are insufficient for us to grasp the significance of the Prince of Wales and his stay in Budapest. The visit had serious commercial consequences. The City of London could not have entrusted a better man to represent its interests over the channel than the heir to the throne. Eventually, the London traders also noticed the increase in orders from Hungary. In Vienna, however, they took a decidedly poor view of the fact that their foppish patchwork colours, round straw-hats, chamois-beard hats, and the entire *Wiener Mode* went into almost permanent decline following the visit of Welsh royalty. Compared to the remarkable results achieved by the Prince, the entertainment in Budapest of ex-king Milan produced nothing worthy of note. (The turbaned ornamental head that every gentlemen pinned to his tie when the Shah paid a visit proved to be a short-lived fad.) The unfortunate King Milan might as well have been representing the makers of Egyptian cigarettes as the producers of his own forsaken country. Back at home, in the land of commerce, the Prince of Wales had no reason whatever to be embarassed by his adventures in Budapest, not even once, adopting the name Edward, his own likeness began to appear on the golden sovereigns. Róza P., Janette Waldau and the rest of his female acquaintance failed to find a place in the gazette in which the affairs of English kings are summarised. On the other hand, the commercial outcome of the future king's visit to a hardly-known country far in the east somewhere, received generous mention. Who knows, who could know, why the current heir to the English throne undertakes his various international tours?

After the visit of the Prince of Wales, the unbounded energy of Budapest nightlife, both its gilded youth and its older, age-resisting element, entered a quieter phase, as if it had, for a while at least, amused itself to exhaustion. Viennese lady artistes, the daughters of suburban janitors, discovered occasional local rivals who could waltz as well as they did. The Blaue Katz closed down because the strong coachmen and the loud-mouthed guests drifted off to another dive, one owned by a man called Somosy, who replaced the then fashionable atmosphere of the tap-room with a certain European ambience in his orpheum. Nevertheless, looking back at those days, it seems as though there was less partying in Pest after the Prince's departure, or, at any rate, that the parties were quieter... There is less need for hair-of-the-dog, morning-after treatment in Hungary, the English steel blade begins to rival the popularity of the fisherman's pocket-knife produced in Szeged. Cecilia Carola, the new star of Budapest nightlife, is less prone than her predecessors to pour champagne into her slipper so that her gallant admirers may drink from it. ❧

(1925)

Translated by George Szirtes

Géza Buzinkay

The Prince of Wales Incognito

When the Prince of Wales was in Budapest...

To measure time in this fashion, though increasingly rare, was not unusual with the older generation. The reference was to the man who, as Edward VIII, later sat briefly on the British throne and then abdicated, who dared to challenge the traditions and rigid etiquette of the British royal family, and who favoured Mrs Simpson, the American divorcée, over the British crown. They came twice to Budapest together in the mid-1930s, which made their romantic story appear all the more appealing to the Hungarian public and press.

There was, however, an earlier Prince of Wales who visited Hungary and who became the stuff of legends, due in no small part to the enchanting Hungarian novelist Gyula Krúdy. Krúdy's novel *Velszi herceg* (Prince of Wales)[1] was published in 1925. It is set in late-nineteenth-century Budapest and its characters include the one-time "Dame aux Camélias of Budapest" and the two men who changed her life, the "Prince of Wales" and the penniless, bohemian poet. The plot of the novel, well known to lovers of Hungarian literature, is pure fiction, although it uses actual people and settings. The "Prince of Wales" largely appears simply "to provide an occasion for someone to resemble him."[2] The real "...Prince of Wales, who appeared in Europe, which meant Budapest too, as a fashion dictator, gained extraordinary popularity by his personal presence and his exquisitely shocking revelry. Soon there were princes of Wales all over town."[3]

What a strange situation—a legendary figure about whom imaginary stories are told, and hardly a detail that corresponds to reality. And he is not an imaginary character at all! The fabricated events fit the Prince's personality, or at least the personality that the people who knew him personally imagined him to have.

Géza Buzinkay

is Senior Research Consultant at The Budapest History Museum. He has authored nine books on the history of journalism, cultural history and museology. He is Editor of the quarterly Magyar Média/Hungarian Media.

This Prince of Wales was Albert Edward, the son and heir of Queen Victoria, who reigned as Edward VII from 1901 until 1910. In England and elsewhere in Europe his enthralling and unaffected personality made him immensely popular. "With manhood he increasingly developed an accessibility and charm of manner, a curiosity about people, a quickness of observation and a love of keeping up with the latest news. He took genuine pleasure in the lighter social amusements and gave them every encouragement. [...] There was a democratic and a cosmopolitan breadth about his circle of companions", wrote his official biographer, Sir Sidney Lee.[4] A character of this sort was not at all the way Hungarians imagined kings to be, but it was quite in line with the rather ambiguous picture they had of Crown Prince Rudolph, the son of the Emperor Francis Joseph. Many regarded Rudolph as the "Hungarian Prince", even referring to him pointedly by the Hungarian version of his name, Rezső. After acquiring a doctorate in philosophy, writing a number of books, launching a great book series to explore the Austro-Hungarian empire from many aspects, and publishing articles in the liberal papers in Vienna almost with the regularity of a journalist, he was esteemed as a rare intellectual in the Habsburg family, of whom great things were expected. (Not, of course, by everyone, since the opinion of the Opposition who favoured independence was exactly the reverse, and it was they in particular who criticised his dissipated lifestyle and his depressive temperament.) To say that the Prince of Wales and Rudolph were friends[5] would probably be an exaggeration, if only because of the seventeen-year age difference. Presumably, though, the two felt an affinity towards one another and thought alike about many things in life. The Prince looked upon Rudolph as a prospective royal partner.

As Prince of Wales, he visited Hungary five times between 1873 and 1891. He always came incognito, but an incognito that was intended only for Great Britain, where Hungarian papers were read rarely, if at all.

The visits raise a number of questions: How did the Prince of Wales come into contact with Hungary? What brought him here, and why did he come back several times? Hungary was beyond the horizon for Victorian England. Only now and then did an English merchant or diplomat make his way to this marginal country. Following the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution in 1848/49, quite a few exiles of note had been welcomed in England for a time (even the leader of the revolution, Lajos Kossuth, was offered a tour to raise support for the Hungarian cause), and the Hungarian public continued to be grateful to England even after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise was concluded in 1867. A few refugees, like Ferenc Pulszky, came into contact with England's social and scientific elite.[6] Pulszky had come to London as an envoy during the revolution, hoping to convince Lord Palmerston to back Hungary's bid for independence. He spent a decade in the English capital as an archaeologist, historian, art collector and political writer. Following the conclusion of the Austro-Hungarian Com-

promise, he returned to Hungary and became a respected liberal politician and the director of the Hungarian National Museum.

Supporting Hungarian refugees may have seemed of consequence to the Hungarians, but for England this was standard behaviour, in spite of the occasional political complications posed by the choice of almost all leaders and influential theoreticians of Europe's repressed revolutions of the 1850s to settle in London. In short, whatever personal or business ties there were between Englishmen and Hungarians, such relations were incidental and never attained political significance for the U.K. Consequently, Britain's heir to the throne could not go to Budapest in the same way that he went to Paris or Berlin, or to India or Canada. The politicians, and especially the Hungarian press, who commented on the Prince's visits, believed that he came back to this country because he had grown fond of the Hungarians and because they felt that their love for the English was reciprocated. Essentially as a result of Count István Széchenyi's reform programme, from the 1830s the English political system, the public administration structure and some areas of civilisation became models for the Hungarian political elite. Based on English examples, Széchenyi established horse racing to stimulate horse breeding; founded the National Casino patterned after English clubs; sought to advance the capital-weak Hungarian economy by creating financial sources of credit as in England; and even introduced the English style of dress. Hungary was a friend of all things English and welcomed the Prince accordingly. However, the idea that he came because he could revel here to his heart's content and—as Krúdy would have it—call on particular ladies, belonged to the realm of legends and their literary treatment.

One of these ladies was Róza Pilisy, whom the Prince of Wales purportedly called "the Rose of Pest". Róza was an orphan, who worked in a florists on Szervita Square in the city, where fine local and foreign gentlemen would buy flowers for their lapels according to the fashion of the time. Her original name was Róza Schumayer, but she took the name Pilisi after the village of her birth, and sometimes replaced the final i in her name with a y so as to appear of noble standing. She soon rented a flat on nearby Újvilág (New World, now Semmelweis) Street, facing the Arany Sas (Golden Eagle) Hotel, favoured by landed gentlemen from the provinces and famous for its fine cuisine and the talented Gypsy musicians who provided entertainment in its dining room.[7] Her flat was paid for by the owner of the Golden Eagle, who even had Róza study languages and good manners. Before long she was acting as hostess to every aristocrat and visiting foreigner of note, and occasionally even travelled abroad with them. "In a few years Róza had become a woman of the world...," Krúdy went on.[8] Róza made her fortune and bought a house on elegant Magyar Street, with a balcony overlooking Károlyi Gardens, which she ran like a "stock company", drawing her guests' attention to the fact that they could purchase shares. Her furniture was

designed by the city's most eminent cabinet maker, Endre Thék, who also designed the interior of the new Parliament building. "The kings who enjoyed their incognito in Pest were able to enter the house by the good offices of the *'Nachtmeisters'*, who were assigned to escort them", Krúdy wrote. Count Esterházy, "who in his time as Colonel of the Guards was often assigned to attend royal personalities", escorted to Róza's house the Prince of Wales, the Persian Shah, and, according to Krúdy, every prestigious sovereign who visited Budapest.[9]

Róza (Schumayer) Pilisi really existed and was "an interesting woman... who was well known in Budapest in the society of the *viveurs*..."[10] She counted many poets and writers, including Gyula Krúdy, among her regular guests, and herself wrote essays inspired by her own life. She even wrote regularly for the press under the pseudonyms "Klarisz" and "Gentlewoman".[11] But there is scarcely any truth to what Krúdy made up about her. The real Róza owned a fashion shop in New World Street (Újvilág utca)in the early 1880s, and did indeed become a "woman of private means" in 1888, but not in Magyar Street in the city (where all houses were privately owned at the time and not by companies), but in Bodzafa (later Rökk Szilárd) Street in the less elegant Joseph Town. In the early 1890s she disappeared from the Budapest directories,[12] although she lived until 1930. Presumably, Róza's stories were only partly the products of Krúdy's imagination; he possibly heard them from Róza, who loved to recall her life's great conquests and embellish them in her tales.[13]

This is not to say, of course, that the Prince of Wales could not have called on the "Rose of Pest". According to Edward VII's official biographer, Sir Sidney Lee, there were rumours abroad about the Prince's "fashionable frivolity" and his fondness for associating with people below his station—which would correspond to the episodes described by Krúdy—but, asserted Lee, "The rumours were greatly exaggerated."[14] Whatever the truth, Krúdy, who was born a long way from the capital in 1878 and moved there only in 1896, must have immortalised the Prince of Wales as the rumours in Budapest had painted him.[15] Indeed, he referred to another relationship in his novel *Primadonna,* in which the Prince is supposed to have had a liaison in London with the Hungarian operetta star Ilka Pálmai.

In spite—or perhaps because—of the exquisite literary treatment of the legends surrounding the Prince, it is not easy to be sure of the exact times and itineraries of his visits to Hungary. They are not mentioned in the historical chronicles; *Révai nagy lexikona* (Révai's Great Encyclopaedia) of 1911 notes only three visits to Budapest (with two incorrect dates)[16], and even László Siklóssy's essay series about Edward's visits to Hungary[17], which, in addition to contemporary press reports, used Sir Sidney Lee's two-volume biography[18], speaks of only four visits, one less than the actual number. To some extent it must have been this mist enshrouding the Hungarian sojourns that gave rise to, and sustained, the legends about him.

The Prince of Wales' personal relationship with Hungary began in the 1860s. In 1867 he met the Hungarian orientalist Ármin Vámbéry at the Cosmopolitan Club in London, and they remained in close touch.[19] He then met the painter Mihály Zichy, who was employed by the Russian court at the time, and invited him to Balmoral. Zichy stayed there twice, in 1871 and again in 1874, and produced paintings for the Castle. In between he went home and wrote newspaper articles about his experiences and the hunting parties there. Zichy's daughter Olga translated the articles for the Prince, who, on his first Budapest visit, thanked her with a "precious brooch".[20]

The Vienna World Fair in 1873 provided the occasion for the Prince's first visit to Budapest. As president of the Royal Commission which organised the British section of the fair, the Prince of Wales was staying in Vienna when, like other heads of state and internationally known personalities, he made an excursion to Budapest. He had previously visited the Hungarian section of the fair with his brother Arthur. They were fascinated by the opal jewelry from the mines of Dubnik (now in Slovakia), and the Prince of Wales was interested in the flasks exhibited on a stand from Brassó (Kronstadt-Braşov, now in Romania). He did not recognise what they were for, but when told he bought six of them, each with a saying written on them.[21]

The Prince and his brother arrived in Budapest at 9 o'clock in the evening on 11 May 1873 on the steamer *Ariadne*. In the entourage was William Howard Russel, perhaps the most famous English journalist of the time and a reporter on *The Times,* who was visiting Budapest for the second time (the first occasion had been for the coronation of Francis Joseph in 1867). They had reserved rooms at the Hotel Hungária (originally for two nights, although they stayed longer), which was very close to where the ship docked. However, they were forced to make a detour due to the huge crowds that welcomed them. The newspaper *Vasárnapi Ujság* speaks of twenty thousand onlookers[22]—which certainly calls into question the seriousness of the Prince's desire to travel incognito.

It should be noted that none of the papers describe his attire at any time during his visit, even though the "fashion tsar" had a reputation for dressing in an individual, informal style. During his later visits they mention only once or twice that he appeared in "simple, middle-class attire"[23] or that he wore a tail-coat, which can only mean that there was nothing particular to be said about it. Rather, it must have been the Prince of Wales' relaxed attitude that struck those who saw him, and which is noted much more frequently. "...The two princes appeared everywhere perfectly at ease, they conversed with everyone, and they shook hands", noted the newspaper *Ellenőr.*[24] The brothers' beards also struck observers. The young liberals' paper *Reform* remarked ironically, "It may surprise... our gentlemen that while they like to sport English sideburns and shaven chins, the English Crown Prince and his brother appear to fancy mustachios and full beards. If they were Hungarians they would surely shave them off."[25]

From the moment they arrived they were treated to what amounted at times almost to official hospitality and entertainment. On their first evening they dined at the National Casino, the following morning they received government and town-hall delegates, then the Prince of Wales called on Archduke Joseph of Habsburg and together they took a boat to Margaret Island, where they had breakfast to Gypsy music. At three in the afternoon the Prince of Wales received a delegation of Hungarian Freemasons (he, too, was a Freemason and became a Grand Master two years later), then at five he watched a Danube regatta followed by dinner at the Casino, where he enjoyed the Gypsy violin playing of Lajos Berkes so much that he invited him to London. After dinner the company went to see Ferenc Erkel's opera *Hunyadi László* at the National Theatre (the organisers doubtless deemed the regicide in Erkel's *Bánk bán* to be discourteous and changed the programme accordingly), then returned to the Casino for supper.

Only two blocks separated the old National Theatre and the National Casino, a distance that the Prince would usually have covered on foot. "In Hatvani [today's Kossuth Lajos] Street a large crowd had gathered to get a look at England's future monarch. "Such interest in the heir to the throne should be no surprise, his youth is somewhat like that of Henry V, which, considering his great intellectual gifts, only adds to his popularity", gushed one newspaper. "Besides, in our own political life and society our fondness for things English is so pronounced that it is only natural for people to show such great interest."[26] The reference to his resemblance to Henry V, established after Shakespeare, indicates that reports about the Prince of Wales' "extravagant" lifestyle were familiar to Hungarian journalists. The comparison resurfaced later from time to time, never with negative overtones but rather as a positive quality that set him apart from the stiff, ceremonious German princes. "He is made in a different mould than your usual prince," wrote the novelist Kálmán Mikszáth, "and is truly the living embodiment of gallant Sir Falstaff's light-hearted Prince Henry, a friend, intrepid adventurer, in short a man who burns, and who is not a royal prince but a 'young man', the sort who becomes a 'real man' when he is king."[27]

At midnight the princes walked over to the Hungária Hotel on the Danube bank where a ball had been arranged in their honour by young aristocrats. "...After supper they quickly moved the tables aside, the Gypsies struck up a dance tune, the young people took to the floor, and the cheerful young noble ladies even got Prince Arthur to dance in the Hungarian fashion."[28]

Although they only got to bed in the early hours, the Prince of Wales' schedule was no lighter the following day. At the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, under the guidance of its president, Count Menyhért Lónyay, he met prominent Hungarian scholars and writers. He asked the poet János Arany how he came to write his ballad *Walesi bárdok* (Welsh Bards), and greeted Pál Hunfalvy, Ferenc Pulszky and Ármin Vámbéry as old acquaintances. "The Prince stood for some time before the portrait of István Széchenyi, and called it an exquisite face."

Ferenc Pulszky, the director of the National Museum, showed him around the Esterházy Gallery, "...The Prince was surprised that Prince Esterházy had sold the collection instead of giving it to the nation. But he considered that it should have been sold for a higher price."[29] Most of the papers reported these remarks without commentary.

In the afternoon the Prince of Wales went to the races and was said to have offered a prize of three thousand forints, although it was to be run for only on the next occasion. During dinner at the Casino there were a number of toasts, and in the evening the Prince was entertained by a firemen's parade. He had made a particular request for this to his earlier acquaintance, Count Béla Széchenyi, whose brother Edmund (Ödön) had established the Budapest fire brigade. "The parade of firemen, as they marched with lamps and torches, was a truly splendid sight," reported the *Vasárnapi Ujság.*[30] At eleven o'clock that night the company proceeded to a ball at the renowned Hotel Európa, which lasted until five in the morning.

The following morning at ten the Prince and his entourage left for Vienna to the playing of the Berkes band. "The princes took with them fond memories, so they said, but they also left fond memories behind; with their relaxed and unaffected manner they have utterly conquered the people of Budapest." The Prince of Wales promised to return the following autumn to hunt foxes.[31]

It would be eight years before he came again.

In the 1880s he stayed longer and visited not only Budapest. On those occasions, however, the schedule remained just as tight and was similar in content to his first visit. Hungarian journalism was changing rapidly, and there is more—though not necessarily more accurate—information available about the Prince's visits. At the time of the 1873 visit, the only news gatherers were the lithographically produced *Österreichische Correspondenz,* the *Pester Correspondenz,* and the *Országgyűlési Értesítő* (Parliament Bulletin), among which the Austrian paper served as the primary source for foreign newspapers. In the following decade the situation changed. In 1881 the Hungarian News Agency, MTI, was establish-ed, and it provided subscribers with a wire service of domestic news. In 1875 the lithographically produced newspaper *Budapester Correspondenz* was founded, and soon there was also a Hungarian version.[32] The papers now had their own reporters, who, like the men who worked for the news agencies, recorded the speeches they heard in shorthand. This was probably also the case for personal names, many of them unfamiliar to those who took them down, which were thus reproduced—in shorthand and subsequently in longhand—in a variety of garbled spellings. This was particularly true in the case of English names, which are sometimes impossible to identify from their appearance in the Hungarian press, although the haste with which notes were taken and the way words were misheard has left many Hungarian names similarly unrecognizable. However, there were now more reports, and articles were more

Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, in the uniform of his Hungarian Hussar regiment.
Vasárnapi Ujság, *1888.*

detailed than before. The papers printed the entire guest lists of receptions, dinners, soirées and balls, recorded the table settings and the menus, described the furniture in the hotel rooms, suites and ball rooms visited by the Prince of Wales, and thus give a fascinating glimpse into the social environment in which he found himself.

The people who surrounded the Prince in Hungary were almost exclusively members of the aristocracy, in part because he was in constant and close contact with Count István Károlyi, the popular president of the National Casino, and Count Tasziló Festetics, who, in 1880, married Lady Mary Hamilton, the sister of one of the Prince of Wales's great friends (who would accompany him to Budapest the following year).[33] Joining them during the 1888 visit was Colonel of the Hussars Lajos Esterházy (perhaps the Count to whom Gyula Krúdy referred in his stories about Róza). The noblemen with whom the Prince associated belonged to that landed aristocracy which, in the second half of the nineteenth century, continued to exert its public influence and demand a political role. Even those who cultivated their Hungarian identity were nonetheless cosmopolitan. Theirs was a colourful and opulent lifestyle. The Prince, who was always smiling and turning graciously towards everyone in his company, seems nevertheless to have known what to think about Hungarian aristocrats. This is evident from a comment he made, which the press presented as a *bon mot,* while being shown round the vast cellars of wine merchant Ferenc Jálics on King (Király) Street (the other location other than the Town Hall where a number of non-aristocrats was present). On hear-

The Prince of Wales being entertained by Gypsy musicians. Drawing by János Jankó.
Borsszem Jankó, *1888.*

ing that the cellars covered an area of exactly one acre, he exclaimed, "Look here, this respectable gentleman is quite able to make a living from one acre of land while you, sirs, with your income from forty or fifty thousand acres, like to complain that you are not able to make ends meet."[34]

In the 1880s the Prince of Wales came to Hungary on three occasions, and each time he spent a few days in Budapest. Between 12 and 16 May 1881 he stayed at the Európa Hotel. Four years later, from 28 September to 4 October 1885, he was the guest of Count Tasziló Festetics in Somogy county, went shooting in Berzence, made a short visit to Festetics's Keszthely Palace, and finally travelled to Budapest, where he stayed until 12 October as the guest of Count Alajos Károlyi, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Great Britain, in his palace near the National Riding School (today No. 3 Pollack Mihály Square). His most extensive stay in Hungary, and his shortest visit to Budapest, took place in 1888. After Francis Joseph had presented the Prince of Wales with the 12th Hussar regiment (made him Honorary Colonel) the Prince participated in the autumn military exercises and, donning his Hussar colonel's uniform, visited his regiment, which was stationed in Miskolc. The 12th Hussar regiment was known as the "Palatine Hussars", because until 1848 the honorary colonel had always been the Palatine of Hungary. The regiment had earned a reputation for bravery in the Napoleonic Wars. As it was returning from Bohemia to join the 1848 revolution, it was repeatedly forced to engage those who pursued it. It lost half its men, but its patriotism and fighting spirit remained intact.[35] The Prince grew fond of his Hussar colonel's uniform; in 1891, for example, he wore it to a gala performance at the Opera during the visit of the German Emperor William II, to London.[36]

During the 1888 visit to Hungary the Prince of Wales went shooting with Francis Joseph at the royal palace in Gödöllő and also with Count Tasziló Festetics in Keszthely, and he went on a bear hunt with Crown Prince Rudolph in Görgény in Transylvania. Before his stay in Transylvania he went down to Bucharest and Sinaia for four days, at the invitation of the new king of Romania. That left him with only a day or two for Budapest, just long enough to pass through. On 12 October he bade what was to be his final farewell to Budapest in the royal waiting room at the Western Railway Station. After a few days in Vienna, he boarded the Orient Express on 18 October for his journey home.

There was, however, one more visit to Hungary, in very different company than previously, and unknown even to the press. Between 6 and 18 October 1891, the Prince of Wales was invited by Baron Moritz Hirsch to a shoot at Szentjános in Pozsony county (now in Slovakia).

Baron Hirsch was the second richest man of his time, after Baron Rothschild. He had made a huge fortune from building railways in Turkey and in financial speculations, and he spent it on Jewish charitable causes all over the world. He was a friend (and generous financial benefactor) of Crown Prince Rudolph,[37]

who may have introduced him to the Prince of Wales. However, the notion that the Prince lost interest in visiting Hungary because of Rudolph's death cannot be corroborated.[38]

There is every indication that the Prince of Wales enjoyed his visits to Hungary, and that he had more interest in, and affinity towards, this country than what would have been required simply by good form. The feeling was mutual, as the Hungarian press repeatedly shows. "The Prince is quite an amiable figure", wrote *Pesti Hírlap*, "his face reminds one of familiar Hungarian faces... one feels almost tempted to address him in Hungarian."[39] Kálmán Mikszáth, the rising star of Hungarian journalism and *belles lettres,* put it similarly when he said, "It is wonderful how the Prince of Wales has that Hungarian quality about him, and the mysterious force that draws him here and binds us, as it were, is apparent everywhere. Because he can really have no interest in coming here other than personal inclination. Even the cleverest man could find no other reason."[40]

The Prince of Wales often made comments that his hosts could easily take as compliments, saying the same things with reservations elsewhere lends a certain authenticity even to the compliments. Even Ármin Vámbéry, who was dissatisfied with conditions and society in Hungary, relates how the Prince once said to him, "There is no country in Europe in which I feel more at home than here."[41] In *Vasárnapi Ujság* an old acquaintance related the Prince's words, "Heaven knows why I am so fond of Hungary. I am always happy to come, and I leave with a heavy heart. It seems to me that I can find many of the pleasant traits in the Hungarian nation that so captivated me during my travels to India with the gallant Radoputana people [the Sikhs], but here the Eastern characteristics are combined with more than one splendid aspect of Western culture, all the more captivating to strangers."[42]

It seems that the more familiar the Prince grew with Hungary, the more he liked it. Hungarian music, or rather popular tunes, which he encountered when he bought those flasks in 1873, delighted him so much that he appointed first Lajos Berkes, and later his son Béla, and their band almost as court musicians, taking them with him wherever he went and inviting them to his court in England. He even had his own favourite Hungarian tunes. There were times when he went daily to opera performances at the National Theatre, the Opera House or the People's Theatre, and of course he paid his respects to the star of the Hungarian musical stage, Lujza Blaha, "the nation's nightingale". On 13 May 1881 it was at his special request that the People's Theatre performed Ferenc Csepreghy's successful folk operetta *Piros bugyelláris* (The Red Purse), starring Lujza Blaha. Although he arrived only in the middle of the first act, "after the first act, Mrs Blaha, on the arm of Count István Károlyi, came to the lobby of the Prince's box where the Prince personally offered her a large bouquet of white roses and

lilies-of-the-valley, bound with a wide, dark red and purple ribbon."[43] There is no mention in the press reports of the Prince's visits to Ilka Pálmai, the prima donna of the People's Theatre, whom Krúdy referred to as a close acquaintance of the Prince of Wales.

The Prince also showed an interest in Hungarian literature, expressing surprise about the many Hungarian translations of English works and conversing about literature with János Arany, Antal Csengery, Ferenc Toldy, Mór Jókai and Count Béla Széchenyi.[44] He showed a keen interest in Hungarian art. In 1873 he visited the gallery of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Esterházy Gallery; in 1881 Count Jenő Zichy, president of the National Industrial Society and a connoisseur and collector, guided him through the Spring Exhibition at the Műcsarnok Art Gallery, where he bought a "splendid copy in deluxe edition" of the *Faust* drawings by Sándor Liezen-Mayer.[45] In 1888, on special request, the painter Károly Telepy, secretary of the Society of Fine Arts, took him to see the Autumn Exhibition prior to its opening, where he spent an hour and a half. Gyula Benczúr's portrait of Crown Prince Rudolph captivated him, so much so that he went to visit the painter the following day, on 30 September, even though he was in Budapest for just two days altogether.[46] At the National Exhibition in 1885, the Prince of Wales spent a considerable sum on numerous objets d'art. They included several pieces of Herend and fewer pieces of Zsolnay china; then in the home crafts hall he bought rugs as well as several of Gyula Jungfer's wrought iron candlesticks and lamps, and placed an order for an iron gate.[47]

In his stately homes the Prince of Wales was surrounded by numerous Hungarian objets d'art. Mihály Zichy produced paintings for Balmoral Castle,[48] and for Sandringham church he had Joseph Edgar Böhm, a Hungarian by origin, create a commemorative marble plaque featuring the portrait of his sister.[49] Also of Hungarian origin was Heinrich von Angeli, a professor at the Wiener Akademie, who painted a full, life-size picture of the Prince of Wales, which the Prince gave to the National Casino in 1888,[50] having been made an honorary member.[51] He also took to England the three ceremonial outfits (one in brown, one dark blue and one light yellow) trimmed with "genuine precious stones", which were made for him in 1881,[52] as well as the Hussar's uniform, which he sometimes sported in London.[53]

Besides art, the Prince of Wales was interested in everything to do with Hungarian civilisation. In 1873 he visited the Hungarian pavilion at the Vienna World Fair, and in 1885 he spent several hours each day for a week at the Hungarian National Exhibition, carefully perusing the industrial hall, the trade and ethnographic sections, and the horse breeding exhibitions. Finally, even during his short 1888 visit to Budapest, he inserted into his schedule visits to the museum of trade and the wine exhibition. Of course, during each of his visits he went to horse shows and the races, dogs and horses being his first passion. He even went to the races on Sunday, something that Queen Victoria, the aus-

tere guardian of Protestant virtues, opposed. The Prince's Budapest hosts were eager to supply good excuses for it[54], while at the same time trying to keep it secret; a handful of papers reported the news, nevertheless.[55] In 1881 he bought a splendid carriage and four from Count Béla Zichy.[56]

Moreover, the Prince of Wales began to explore the Hungarian language. As a child he had learned several languages and never felt inhibited in Hungarian company, since everyone in his circle spoke German, French and English. Still, he mentioned more than once that he would like to learn Hungarian. Although he was a little apprehensive about the difficulties of this language, he included some Hungarian phrases in his toasts. Ármin Vámbéry recounted how, in 1885, "... he remembered several Hungarian phases he had read at the exhibition, and repeated them to Vámbéry as a display of his Hungarian proficiency."[57]

Nevertheless, the Prince of Wales could not simply be a private person, nor just an aristocrat with a passion for travelling—he was the heir to a throne. Although Queen Victoria kept him away from public affairs and domestic politics, he was allowed to show interest in diplomacy, especially during Lord Salisbury's term in office as foreign secretary between 1885 and 1892 with whom he was on friendly terms.[58] Whether or not this was the reason, the fact is that although the Prince's 1888 journey was supposed to be a private

The bear shooting party in Görgény. Standing from the left, Count István Károlyi, Crown Prince Rudolph, Prince Alajos Esterházy, and a little to the front, the Prince of Wales.
Vasárnapi Ujság, *1888.*
The party never as much as sighted a bear.

visit, and although he was travelling incognito, the trip included a number of official events befitting a ruler or crown prince. Such events included Francis Joseph presenting him with a Hussar regiment; his taking part in military manoeuvres; his troop inspections; his special invitation to a hunt at the palace of the emperor and king in Gödöllő; and his hour-long conversations with Ármin Vámbéry about particularly important issues regarding the British Empire's Turkish or Indian policies. And sentiments of "good friendship" must have given way to political considerations vis-à-vis an agreeable country which, nevertheless, was part of an Austro-Hungarian Empire sliding into an ever closer alliance with Germany. Presumably, the Prince must have grown tired of socialising with Hungarian aristocrats, no matter how colourful, easygoing and cosmopolitan they may have been. He was too democratic and open in spirit[59] to be satisfied with the social isolation in which they lived, and perhaps he drew his own—political—conclusions from this. By 1888 it should have become clear that the Hungarians' hopes, expressed in 1881, of enjoying an enduring friendship and the patronage of a major power, were dissolving in the mist of illusion.

Following the Prince of Wales' departure on 16 May 1881, the paper of the governing party, *A Hon,* whose editor-in-chief was the novelist Mór Jókai, wrote,

It is safe to say that the English Crown Prince's amusements in Budapest leave a more effective legacy than merely the memories of a time pleasantly spent here. The prospective ruler of the world's most powerful empire has come to know the Hungarian nation first-hand, a nation which, twenty years ago, a monarch who governed general opinion called 'anonymous'. He saw for himself that 'we exist'. We showed ourselves as no better and no worse, no smaller and no larger, than we are. We did not unearth any of our rarities just to dazzle him, nor did we parade before him in assumed splendour; what he saw here was our daily life. And that is what he grew to love. For Hungary, his fondness shall one day prove to be a blessing.[60]

Jenő Rákosi, a prolific author and journalist, the most influential press baron of the following decades and a man of more emotional temperament, put it this way,

When you leave we cry after you with a sigh, if only we had a Prince such as you!

May God be with you, magnificent Prince, may you live happily in your happy country and may good fortune follow you your whole life through! Once the crown weighs heavy on your brow and you ponder the fate of your great Empire, you must know that there is a nation beyond your borders, small in number but strong of heart, which loves you.

You have captivated it.

Do not take back the affection which you have bestowed on us, it would pain us dearly.

God bless you, Prince of Wales![61]

As king, it was Edward VII who helped create the Entente Cordiale with France in 1904, joined a few years later by Russia, an alliance that a few years later forever settled the fate of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Hungary. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ Krúdy wrote his *Velszi herceg* (Prince of Wales) in 1920; the first edition (*Krúdy Gyula munkái* [The Works of Gyula Krúdy] Vol. X, Budapest 1925, Athenaeum Rt.) was reprinted twice, the last time in 1968 (in *Bukfenc, Velszi herceg, Primadonna* [Somersault, Prince of Wales, Prima Donna], Budapest 1968, Szépirodalmi).

2 ■ Anna Fábri, *Ciprus és jegenye. Sors, kaland és szerep Krúdy Gyula műveiben* (Cyprus and Poplar. Fate, Adventure and Roles in the Works of Gyula Krúdy), Budapest 1978, Magvető, p. 217.

3 ■ Fábri ibid.

4 ■ Sidney Lee, Edward VII (1841–1910). In: *Dictionary of National Biography.* Suppl. 1901–1910. Ed. by Sidney Lee. Vol. I. Oxford University Press, (1920), pp. 262–263.

5 ■ László Siklóssy, King Edward VII and Hungary. *The Hungarian Quarterly,* 1938, Vol. IV. No 2. p. 263.

6 ■ Thomas Kabdebo, *Diplomat in Exile. Francis Pulszky's Political Activities in England, 1848–1860.* New York, 1979, East European Quarterly, Boulder.

7 ■ Imre Gundel and Judit Harmath, *A vendéglátás emlékei* (Old Eating Places), Budapest 1979, Közgazdasági és Jogi, pp. 81–83.

8 ■ Gyula Krúdy, "'Pest rózsája'. Pilisy Róza legragyogóbb élete, öreges hanyatlása és remete halála" ("The Rose of Pest". Róza Pilisy's Most Splendid Life, Decline in Old Age, and Solitary Death). In: *Régi pesti históriák. Színes írások* (Old Histories from Pest. Colourful Writings), Budapest

1967, Magvető, p. 581 (The piece was originally published in *A Reggel* [The Morning], 20 July 1931).

9 ■ Idem. p. 582.

10 ■ *Budapesti Hírlap,* 1894 No. 72, cited by József Szinnyei, *Magyar írók élete és munkái* (The Life and Work of Hungarian Writers), Vol. X. Budapest 1905. Hornyánszky, p. 1161.

11 ■ Ref. in more detail: Szinnyei ibid. pp. 1161–1162.

12 ■ Ref. the *Budapesti czim- és lakjegyzék* (Budapest address and residential directories) of 1882, 1885/86, 1888 and 1891/92.

13 ■ Ref. her two letters to Krúdy in Zsuzsa Krúdy, *Apám, Szindbád* (My Father, Sindbad), Budapest 1975, Magvető, pp. 10–11.

14 ■ S. Lee idem p. 567.

15 ■ In addition to the quotes see also Gyula Krúdy, "Régi pesti történetek. Az igazi szívtipró, aki utoljára Pesten járt" (Old Stories from Pest. The Real Breaker of Hearts Who Last Came to Pest), *Pesti Napló,* 15 January 1933, p. 35.

16 ■ *Révai nagy lexikona* (Révai's Great Encyclopædia) Vol. III. Budapest 1911, Révai Testvérek, p. 160

17 ■ László Siklóssy, King Edward VII and Hungary, *The Hungarian Quarterly* 1938, Vol. IV, No. 2, pp. 255–267; No. 4, pp. 730–743; 1939 Vol. V, No. 1, pp. 61–77; No. 3, pp. 517–525.

18 ■ Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII.* 2 vols. London 1925–1927, Macmillan.

19 ■ S. Lee in *Dictionary of National Biography,* idem p. 563.

20 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 11 May 1873, Vol. XX, No. 19, p. 230.

21 ■ *Ellenőr,* 10 May 1873, Vol. V, No. 108. p. 3.

22 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 18 May 1873, Vol. XX, No. 20, pp. 241–242.

23 ■ *A Hon,* 13 May 1881, morning edition, p. 2.

24 ■ *Ellenőr,* 15 May 1873, Vol. V, No. 112, p. 1.

25 ■ *Reform,* 14 May 1873, Vol. IV, No. 132. p. 2.

26 ■ *Reform* ibid.

27 ■ (Kálmán Mikszáth) M-th K-n, "A walesi herczeg" (The Prince of Wales), *Függetlenség,* 14 May 1881, p. 3.

28 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 18 May 1873, Vol. XX, No. 20, p. 241.

29 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* ibid.

30 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 18 May 1873, Vol. XX, No. 20, p. 242.

31 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* ibid.

32 ■ Sándor Pirityi, *A nemzeti hírügynökség története 1880–1996* (The History of the National News Agency 1880–1996), Budapest 1996, MTI, pp. 32–33.

33 ■ About family relationship see Béla Kempelen, *Magyar nemes családok* (Hungarian Noble Families), Vol. IV, Budapest 1911, Grill, p. 118 (Table IV); and János József Gudenus, *A magyarországi főnemesség XX. századi genealógiája* (The 20th-Century Genealogy of the Hungarian Aristocracy), Vol. I, Budapest 1990, Natura, pp. 275, 398.

34 ■ *Pesti Hírlap,* 17 May 1881, No. 135. Supplement (p. 9).

35 ■ Zoltán Barcy and Győző Somogyi, *A szabadságharc hadserege* (The Army of the War of Liberation), Budapest 1986, Corvina, pp. 39, 58–59; Zoltán Barcy and Győző Somogyi, *Huszárok* (Hussars), Budapest 1987, Móra, pp. 52–57.

36 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 30 July 1891, Vol. XXXVI-II, No. 30, pp. 484–485.

37 ■ John T. Salvendy, *Egy lázadó Habsburg lélektani tükörben* (Royal Rebel. A Psychological Portrait of Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria-Hungary), Budapest 1988, Közgazdasági és Jogi, pp. 229–230.

38 ■ As claimed by Siklóssy, idem, *The Hungarian Quarterly* 1938, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 263

39 ■ *Pesti Hírlap,* 17 May 1881, Supplement (p. 9).

40 ■ Kálmán Mikszáth, ibid.

41 ■ "Vámbéry a velszi hercegnél" (Vámbéry at the Prince of Wales'), *Budapesti Hírlap,* 7 October 1885, No. 275, p. 5.

42 ■ A walesi herczegről (On the Prince of Wales), *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 14 October 1888, Vol. XXXV, No. 42, p. 684.

43 ■ *Pesti Napló,* 14 May1881, morning edition, p. 2.

44 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 18 May 1873, Vol. XX, No. 20, p. 241; *A Hon,* 16 May 1881, Vol. 19, No. 134, evening edition, p. 1.

45 ■ *Pesti Napló,* 15 May 1881, morning edition, p. 2.

46 ■ *Pesti Hírlap,* 30 September 1888, Vol. X, No. 269, p. 8; *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 7 October 1888, Vol. XXXV, No. 41, p. 677.

47 ■ "V-r." A kiállítás vásárlói (Buyers at the Exhibition). *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 18 October 1885, Vol. XXXII, No. 42, pp. 677–678.

48 ■ The pictures are also published by Siklóssy

in *The Hungarian Quarterly,* 1938, Vol. IV, No. 2, supplements between pp. 255–267.

49 ■ (Ármin Vámbéry?) V., Edvárd VII (Edward VII), *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 27 January 1901, Vol. 48, No. 58.

50 ■ Siklóssy in *The Hungarian Quarterly* 1939, Vol. V, No. 1, pp. 66–67 shows a copy of the picture in the supplement with the subtext, "It is of interest to note that the picture remained in its place during the whole of the Great War."

51 ■ *A Nemzeti Casino tagjainak névsora 1885-ben* (Directory of the members of the National Casino in 1885), Budapest 1885, p. 1.

52 ■ *A Hon,* 14 May 1881, evening edition, p. 1.

53 ■ *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 26 July 1891, Vol. XXXVI-II, No. 30, pp. 484–485.

54 ■ *Pesti Napló,* 15 May 1881, morning edition, p. 2.

55 ■ (Géza Andrássy?) Count A.G., A walesi herczeg (The Prince of Wales), *Ország-Világ,* 10 October 1885, p. 667.

56 ■ *A Hon,* 14 May 1881, evening edition, p. 1.

57 ■ "Vámbéry a velszi hercegnél" (Vámbéry at the Prince of Wales'), *Budapesti Hírlap,* 7 October 1885, No. 275, p. 5.

58 ■ S. Lee in *Dictionary of National Biography,* idem p. 562.

59 ■ Ármin Vámbéry emphasises this in "Az angol trónörökös" (The English Crown Prince), *Vasárnapi Ujság,* 18 October 1885, Vol. XXXII, No. 42, pp. 669–670.

60 ■ *A Hon,* 16 May 1881, Vol. 19, No. 134, evening edition p. 1.

61 ■ "Isten hozzád Walesi herceg!" (God Bless You, Prince of Wales!), *Pesti Hírlap,* 16 May 1881, Vol. III. No. 134, p. 1.

Tibor Frank

To Comply with English Taste

The Making of *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 1934–1944

The foreign policy of interwar Hungary was built upon the idea of revisionism. The peace treaty of Trianon (1920) cut off more than two-thirds of historical Hungary, forcing over 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians to live across the borders in the neighbouring countries of newly created Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, as well as a much-aggrandized Romania.[1]

The response to these changes was overwhelming in Hungary. For the entire period between 1920 and the Second World War there was nothing more vital and urgent on the political agenda of subsequent Hungarian governments than treaty revision. Friends and foes of the country were selected on the basis of whether or not they supported or indeed opposed Hungary's bid for a reconsideration of the terms of the peace treaty. Almost everything that was planned or done by the governments of the newly established independent kingdom of Hungary was geared towards influencing the major powers of Europe to change their minds concerning Hungary's borders.

It seems natural that Trianon generated a major propaganda campaign in Hungary that lasted for decades. For the "children of Trianon" the "peacemaking was above all a triumph of propaganda".[2] They agreed with Harold Nicolson that the Paris Peace Conference was driven by an "emotional impulse", as he put it in his *Peacemaking 1919,* where

1 ■ For a succinct and very informative summary of Trianon, see Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina–Osiris, 1999), pp. 117–125.

2 ■ Stephen Borsody, "Hungary's Road To Trianon: Peacemaking and Propaganda", in Béla K. Király, Peter Pastor and Ivan Sanders, eds., *Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking, A Case Study on Trianon* (Social Science Monographs, Brooklyn College Press; Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 26.

Tibor Frank
is Professor of History at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest and recipient of the Humboldt Research Award for 2002.

> the new Serbia, the new Greece, the new Bohemia, the new Poland...made our hearts sing hymns at heaven's gate. This angle of emotional approach is very significant... one which will not be apparent from the documents in the case. ...Bias there was, and prejudice. But they proceeded, not from any revengeful desire to subjugate and penalise our late enemies, but from a fervent aspiration to create and fortify the new nations whom we regarded, with maternal instinct, as the justification of our sufferings and of our victory.[3]

The fundamental principle of the Foreign Office in 1918 was indeed not to be unfair when dealing with the losers but "to carry through a disinterested policy which has sought the best interest of all."[4] As time went by, however, not everybody felt in Britain like Harold Nicolson. Prime Minister David Lloyd George warned "that the creation of large Hungarian irredentas constituted an apparent injustice that could create a very unstable situation in Danubian Europe", and "urged his counterparts on the Allied Supreme Council to study the peace terms with a view to making possible concessions to Hungary".[5]

Yet the tone of Czech, Romanian, Serbian and indeed French propaganda was feverishly anti-Habsburg and anti-Hungarian. The overall mood was best expressed by Edvard Beneš's famous wartime pamphlet *Détruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie!*[6]

Though some of the relevant points in anti-Hungarian propaganda were justified—Hungary was not a democratic country, it oppressed its national minorities and it supported Germany's war efforts—the tremendous penalty for all this seemed unacceptable for most if not all Hungarians. The ensuing waves of Hungarian propaganda were therefore a response partly to British historian R. W. Seton-Watson and his journal *The New Europe,* partly to *The Times*'s Vienna correspondent Henry Wickham Steed, and partly to the terms of the peace treaty itself.

Post-First World War Hungarian propaganda came close to a national effort and it took many and varied forms. "Justice for Hungary" became the national slogan and a wide variety of books, pamphlets, tracts, articles and maps were produced in several languages to convince public opinion primarily in the countries that defeated the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the First World War. Those in opposition to the emerging Horthy regime who reminded Hungary and the world of the country's own responsibilities, urging introspection and self-doubt as to the internal causes of Trianon, were silenced and forced to emigrate. Primarily, the propaganda war used the material that was produced by and for the peace delegation Hungary sent to Paris, a group that included distinguished experts such as cartographer Count Pál Teleki, a prospective prime minister.

3 ■ Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965), p. 33.

4 ■ Unsigned Foreign Office memo dated 13 Dec. 1918, Public Record Office, Cab 29/2, no. 52. Quoted by Thomas L. Sakmyster, "Great Britain and the Making of The Treaty of Trianon", in Béla K. Király, Peter Pastor and Ivan Sanders, eds., *op. cit.,* p. 107. Cf. Miklós Lojkó, ed., *British Policy on Hungary 1918–1919* (London: SSEES, 1995), pp. 25–38.

5 ■ *Ibid.*

6 ■ Stephen Borsody, *op. cit.,* pp. 28–29.

Efforts to redraw the map of Danubian Europe continued through the 1920s and early 1930s. They included the activity of Lord Rothermere, who expressed great interest in "Hungary's Place in the Sun" in his *Daily Mail* in 1927, as well as those of the British House of Commons, where two members, Sir Robert Gower and Frederick Llewellyn-Jones started a movement to reopen the case of the peace treaties in a new spirit.[7] Most of these endeavours were fuelled by Hungarian initiatives through the 1920s, though a more systematic attempt to win over British public opinion was yet to follow.

The early 1930s seemed more appropriate to try and convince Britain. Attempts to influence American common opinion were scant before the Second World War. In comparison to Britain, the U.S. was less appreciated as a power affecting Hungarian treaty revision and foreign policy. Hopes centered around Britain.

Probably the most talented and influential Hungarian statesman of interwar Hungary, Count István Bethlen made a number of important steps to influence foreign public opinion through articles, lectures abroad and other initiatives even after resigning his long tenure as prime minister in 1931. Bethlen was tireless in his arguments for the restoration of the integrity of "historical" Hungary and would not want to limit the country to the ethnic borders alone. Bethlen already had a functioning French review, *La Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie,* when he visited Britain in 1933. He gave a series of lectures that were to be published in London the following year as *The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace*.[8] Bethlen's visit contributed to the speedy publication of *A History of the Roumanians: From Roman Times to the Completion of the Unity* by R. W. Seton-Watson, an influential scholarly supporter of Romanian claims to Transylvania.[9]

Bethlen was quick to realise the potential dangers of a publication such as Seton-Watson's *History,* and his response was prompt. Soon after returning from London he made arrangements for a meeting with the leading figures in Hungarian economics, politics and scholarship, mostly personal friends and political allies with close ties to Britain. In an apparent effort to influence Britain in particular, he proposed two ventures on 3 July 1934:[10] *The Hungarian Quarterly,* a periodical in English, as well as *A History of Hungary,* in both English and French.

7 ■ Emil Nagy, *londoni levelei* (E.N.'s Letters from London) (Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1936), pp. 216–219. Cf. *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament,* Vol. III, 1919–1945 (Sussex: The Harvester Press; New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979), pp. 132, 210. Both MPs received high Hungarian decorations for their support of Hungary.

8 ■ Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874–1946* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs; New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 312–317. Cf. Count Stephen Bethlen, *The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace* (London–New York–Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1934).

9 ■ Ignác Romsics, *op. cit.,* p. 319. Cf. R. W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians: From Roman Times to the Completion of the Unity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1934).

10 ■ Further conferences followed on 12 February 1935 and 3 January 1936.

The *Quarterly* was to serve the same purpose as Bethlen's *Nouvelle Revue* in the Francophone world, "to introduce Hungary and Hungarian topics of interest to an Anglo-Saxon[11] readership. Moreover, it would be an important tool to win over leading personalities in the English-speaking world, both by seeking articles from them, which we would, of course, compensate in an adequate fashion, and by provoking argument in the British press on different topics, with reference to the H. Qu."[12] Trying to make his new review convincing in Britain, Bethlen thought of both content and form: "As regards the type and contents of the periodical, the great English-language ideals, the American *Foreign Affairs* and the British *Round Table* may be used as models."[13] Bethlen's emphasis was not only on impeccable English, he also expected the treatment of Hungarian subjects in a genuinely British nature and spirit. "It goes without saying that the lay-out of the periodical has carefully to comply with English taste: its make-up has to be equal to that of the best British periodicals."[14] The former prime minister set the standard very high: "The entire periodical, constructed in this fashion, would be in the service not of vulgarising and of cheap sensation hunting or propaganda, but would speak exclusively to the most educated in the Anglo-Saxon countries: to Parliaments, to universities, to the leading figures in economic and social life."[15]

Closely connected with *The Hungarian Quarterly,* Bethlen's other idea was a direct reaction to Seton-Watson's *A History of the Roumanians.* As chairman of the *Magyar Szemle Társaság,* an influential think tank of the interwar era, Bethlen initiated *A History of Hungary,* first in one volume, as that alone "can stand a chance when it comes to promotion".[16] By November 1934 a new idea had come up: to publish an abridged, two-volume edition of *Magyar Történet* by Bálint Hóman and Gyula Szekfű, which had just been concluded in Hungarian in eight volumes (1929–1933). Oxford University Press or Macmillan were designated as publishers, and it was planned to print some two thousand copies. Most of volume 1 was supposed to contain Hóman's original text, abridged and revised by József Deér, and the rest of the volume and the whole of volume 2 were to be (re)written by Professor Szekfű. The intention to match Seton-Watson's *History of the Roumanians* was so strong that even advance royalties were estimated on the basis of Seton-Watson's Cambridge University Press publication.[17]

11 ■ "Anglo-Saxon" in the vocabulary of the period meant "English-speaking".

12 ■ Memorandum, 3 July 1934. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Kézirattára (OSzK), József Balogh Papers: Litteræ Originales (Litt. Orig.), Fond 1/1525.

13 ■ *Ibid.*

14 ■ *Ibid.*

15 ■ *Ibid.*

16 ■ *Magyar Történet* in English and French, 1 November 1934 [?], OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/75/475.

17 ■ *Magyar Történet* in English and French, 1 November 1934 [?], OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/75/475–476. See Tibor Frank, "Luring the English Speaking World: Hungarian History Diverted", *The Slavonic and East European Review,* vol. 69, no. 1, January 1991, pp. 60–80.

The cost of starting the twin ventures of the *Quarterly* and the *History* was estimated at the very considerable sum of 100,000 pengős. Towards the end of 1934, Bethlen persuaded Hungary's ministers to Britain and the U.S., Count László Széchenyi and János Pelényi, to put forward to the Hungarian ministry of foreign affairs as their own idea the plan to launch the *Quarterly.* Thus Bethlen was able to secure some 60 per cent of the money from government funds. By February 1935, the former prime minister convened a meeting to discuss the rest of the finances of the *Quarterly* and the *History of Hungary.* Those present at the meeting included some of Hungary's richest and most influential people: industrialists such as Ferenc Chorin, Baron Móric Kornfeld, Pál Bíró and Pál Fellner, as well as financiers and bankers such as Béla Imrédy, Baron Frigyes Korányi, Baron Marcell Madarassy-Beck, Lajos Reményi-Schneller, Tibor Scitovszky, Fülöp Weiss and others. Leaders of the Hungarian National Bank (MNB), the Association of Savings Depositories and Banks (TÉBE) and the Organisation of Industrialists (GyOSz) instantly proposed to secure the lacking 40,000 pengős by 1938. Even so, as prospective co-editor, József Balogh noted that the double venture meant such a heavy reliance on Hungary's governmental resources "that it required an entire year of hard work as well as Count István Bethlen's considerable personal support" to provide all the necessary finances.

Nor was it money alone that was needed for the undertaking. The *Quarterly* was in fact an English-language offspring of *Magyar Szemle,* a quality review, nationalist in spirit, published for the educated middle class in post-war Hungary, accompanied by different series of informative books. Under the chairmanship of Count Bethlen and within *Magyar Szemle Társaság* a "Society for *The Hungarian Quarterly*" was founded, consisting of prominent people with strong ties to Britain or the United States. Apart from most of the people whose money helped launch the *Quarterly,* the list included Habsburg Archduke Albrecht, aristocrats such as Count György Apponyi, Prince György Festetics, Count Béla Hadik, Count József Mailáth, Jr., Counts János and Pál Teleki, Countesses Albert Apponyi and Rafael Zichy, Budapest university professors Gyula Szekfű and Arthur B. Yolland, the minister of cult and education Bálint Hóman, the ex-foreign minister Gusztáv Gratz, the renowned scholar and parliamentarian Gyula Kornis, the Calvinist Bishop László Ravasz, the internationally known orientalist Sir Aurel Stein, and the popular authors Zsolt Harsányi, Cecile Tormay and Lajos Zilahy. A highly conservative list indeed. Advisory boards were set up in London and Washington, D.C., again in a rather conservative spirit. As the new review was considered pre-eminently a "periodical addressed to Britain", the "Anglo-Hungarian Society" was revitalised, with Lord Londonderry as chair. The "Anglo-Hungarian Society" was especially active in trying to solicit subscribers for the *Quarterly,* first and foremost among the British aristocracy.

Right from the beginning, *The Hungarian Quarterly* was considered a joint, semi-official publication of the circle around Count Bethlen and the foreign

ministry. As the editor put it in 1941, "the HQ is not a mouthpiece of official Hungarian foreign policy, but a social endowment, and as such, a synthesis of national foreign policy."[18] Balogh regarded only the prime minister, the foreign minister, Count Bethlen and co-editor György Ottlik as those who were to instruct him in delicate political matters.[19] Yet the opinion expressed by Bethlen's reviews was regarded as that of the Hungarian government. Bethlen's leadership was no formality: all through the short life of the review the former prime minister provided instructions "in matters political, administrative and budgetary".[20] Just like other supporters of the *Quarterly,* such as Baron Móric Kornfeld, he wrote for the review, entertained and provided information to its potential British and American authors, and wrote articles himself.

József Balogh (1893–1944) became first co-editor, later editor of the *Quarterly.* He was the offspring of a Jewish-Hungarian family with a learned father and a highly educated background. He converted to Catholicism and studied classical philology, becoming a translator of Saint Augustine and a scholar of Hungary's Christian heritage. Balogh was a student of Greek and Latin, but he also spoke German, French, English and Italian fluently. His father was a tutor in the Weiss and Kornfeld families, and young József soon became friends with Baron Móric Kornfeld, a patron of Count Bethlen's reviews. This explains his privileged position as editor, and his influence, all the way up to early 1944, in the select circle of Count Bethlen.[21]

Balogh deeply believed that the *Quarterly* could make a much bigger impact if using a voice familiar to the British public. He requested his Hungarian authors to keep "simple, Anglo-Saxon and Diltheyan thinking" in mind and repeatedly said that he preferred those "who stood close to Anglo-Saxon thinking".[22] He made every effort to request articles from reputable British authors, whom he carefully monitored and kept in touch with. The editor went out of his way to recruit, both personally every year and through his gigantic correspondence, influential British public figures, members of both houses of Parliament, writers, journalists and scholars, to contribute to *The Hungarian Quarterly.*

Balogh in fact wrote several of the "British" articles himself: he was tireless in preparing "briefs" for prospective British authors, supplying material for their

18 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, 6 March 1941. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/322.

19 ■ József Balogh to László Bárdossy (as minister to Bucharest), 18 April 1939. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/212.

20 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, 20 October 1936. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/322/3196.

21 ■ Tibor Frank, "Editing as Politics: József Balogh and *The Hungarian Quarterly", The Hungarian Quarterly.* Vol. 34, No. 129, Spring 1993, pp. 5–13 and, completed with notes, in Tibor Frank, *Ethnicity, Propaganda, Myth-Making: Studies on Hungarian Connections to Britain and America* 1848–1945 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999), pp. 265–275.

22 ■ József Balogh to Dezső Keresztury, 4 October 1935, József Balogh to Lajos Zilahy, 12 June 1940. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/1742 and 3373.

much-wanted articles.[23] In a letter of early 1937, Balogh was so successful in persuading the Labour politician Lord Allen of Hurtwood (Reginald Clifford Allen) to write an article for the *Quarterly* on "Hungarian minorities in the detached territories" that he accepted Balogh's text making few revisions only. As the editor put it:

> The relation between the League of Nations and the national minorities are of paramount importance for us, as we have three and a half millions of Hungarian minority subjects in the Succession States.
>
> Hungary has always nourished the hope that the minority procedure might be improved, and since the reform of the Covenant has become a tangible possibility, the question has gained actuality. But so far we have not seen it discussed in the English Press.
>
> The paper contains no proposals for a possible reform, as we believe that to be a different question needing separate treatment.[24]

Lord Allen noticed some of the problematic sentences only in proof stage.

> I have not had time to check up carefully your very emphatic statement about the Czech promises to the Ruthenians, but I should like the sentence to be deleted not because I believe it to be inaccurate, but because I am so anxious that the general line of argument in the article should be sympathetically received in all quarters. We do not want to arouse hostility if we can help it, and I do not think we weaken the argument by removing this illustration.[25]

"The League of Nations' Reform and the Minorities" by Lord Allen of Hurtwood was published as the leading article of the *Quarterly* in the summer of 1937. Balogh acknowledged the fact that the article was actually signed only by its titular author.

Balogh tried to get an article or two from leading British personalities for possibly every one of his numbers. He was a snob and thought in terms of the titled rather than the professional. In fact his tables of contents look a bit like a Central European combination of Burke's *Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage* and Dodd's *Parliamentary Companion.* Thus he convinced, among others, the Marquess of Londonderry, Lord Newton, Earl Winterton, the Duchess of Atholl,[26] Sir John Fisher Williams, Sir John Marriott, Lord Queenborough, G. P. Gooch, Lord Stamp, Sir Charles Petrie, the Countess of Listowel, Sir Arthur Willert, Lord Elton, Lord Davies, Vice Admiral C. V. Usborne, Sir Arnold Wilson, Col. Sir Thomas Cunninghame, Sir Thomas Hohler, Adm. Mark Kerr, Lord Gorell, and Viscountess Snowden to contribute to the *Quarterly.* Sometimes, of course, he received flat re-

23 ■ Editors of the *Quarterly* prepared the material for an article on Regent Horthy to be written by American journalist George Creel for *Collier's Magazine.* See Tibor Frank, ed., *Discussing Hitler: Advisers of U.S. Diplomacy in Central Europe 1934–1941* (Budapest—New York: CEU Press, 2003), p. 60.
24 ■ József Balogh to Lord Allen of Hurtwood, 8 January 1937. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/39/233.
25 ■ Lord Allen of Hurtwood to József Balogh [?], 26 April 1937. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/39/238.
26 ■ For Balogh's letter to "Her Grace The Duchess of Atholl, O.B.E., M.P.", asking her to write on "British Opinion and the League", see OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/127. Cf. *The Hungarian Quarterly,* 1936/3.

fusals. Lord Addison, for example, was unwilling to write for the Hungarian review as "I am at present engaged in political work with a view to entering political life and it would probably be unwise for me to express in any publication views which in public life require to be toned down."[27] Bethlen approached William Somerset Maugham and asked him to write a book on Hungary, modelled on his book on Spain, *Don Fernando*. He was instantly refused: "...Don Fernando was the result not only of an acquaintance with Spain lasting over thirty years intensive work. I am too old now, and have besides too much work on my hands, to enter upon so large a subject as Hungary. I am sure you will understand my feeling. It is no good doing a thing unless you think you can do it really well."[28]

Some of Balogh's British contacts noticed his mistaken editorial intentions and the prospective propagandistic nature of the *Quarterly* even before the first number was published. Not only was L. S. Amery unwilling to write an article on the "Danubian situation", but he cautioned the editor not to agitate for treaty revision.

> Nor am I sure, if I did, that the article would give great satisfaction in Hungary, for though I have great sympathy for that delightful people, I doubt whether it is any good their agitating for the restoration of even a portion of their old territories, and would advise them to make the best of the status quo by working for the creation of a general Danubian, and eventually European, confederation. Also, I am all for this country leaving Europe to settle its own affairs.[29]

When the first number was finally out, Balogh's closer friends voiced their concern emphatically. Though he became a frequent contributor for several years himself, Vernon Duckworth Barker was openly disapproving of the partisan nature of the review.

> Thank you for the copy of "Quarterly" which reached me here some time ago. I read it carefully and with interest, but I have the feeling that it has still far to go before it will be up to the level of the N[ouvelle] R[evue de] H[ongrie]. Too much of the new review looks to me like veiled propaganda and there seems to my way of thinking a far too frequent repetition of the clichés about Hungary's historical mission and divine call, which cut very little ice with the kind of people you need to reach in England. I am not sure that the policy of having so many articles by peeresses and other titled commentators or non-professional writers is a wise one. Perhaps this was forced on you by private considerations. I have a very strong feeling that in its present form the "Quarterly" will tend most to please its contributors in England and its readers in Hungary.[30]

Barker gave a negative assessment of the potential impact of the *Quarterly* upon the British reading public.

27 ■ Lord (Christopher) Addison to József Balogh, 22 December 1938. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/13/63.
28 ■ William Somerset Maugham to József Balogh, 1 September 1937. OSzK: Litt. Orig. Fond 1/2210.
29 ■ L. S. Amery to the editor, London, 18 September 1935. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/62/329.
30 ■ Vernon Duckworth Barker to József Balogh, 28 November 1936. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/221.

> ...I...feel that the review at present seems rather remote from the really vital interests of the more progressive public in England. You have in some ways an uphill fight to attract the serious attention of liberal-minded intellectuals—who unquestionably represent the best of English thought at this moment—through a review which strikes me as being obviously anxious not to risk offending Fascist powers. I think one has to keep in mind that an English reader starts from a view-point which is quite peculiar to him. The kind of arguments which may impress a Hungarian or an Italian will often fail to make the same appeal to him. We still think democracy incomparably better than Fascism of any brand, and if a review like the "Quarterly" seems to lean rather obviously to the Right, I think your problem of attracting the kind of sympathy Hungary needs becomes much harder.[31]

Barker was perhaps the very first who tried to bring home to Balogh that it was impossible to court the British while remaining dedicated to the Fascist powers, a double loyalty maintained in the hope of regaining lost territories. Circles around Counts István Bethlen and Pál Teleki tried cautiously to uphold this hopelessly contradictory policy quite until the Second World War actually reached Hungary.

> Such an article as the one stressing the similarity between Hungarian institutions and the "Corporation" system might, I think, do a certain amount of harm to the reputation which should be won for Hungarian culture—not with the Society guests of the Legation (who know Hungary already in most cases), but with the writers, publicists, scholars and men of affairs who are either indifferent now or influenced by liberal publicists (who do not aim at Society) to look upon Hungary with some suspicion. Mayfair and Belgravia are as Conservative now as ever and from them I have no doubt that all the "Quarterly" articles would win golden opinions, but what do they really amount to at the present time? It is an incontrovertible fact that the best minds of the country tend at this period away from the extreme Right, and dislike of Fascism will turn them against any publication which seems anxious to propitiate forces that are felt to be alien to the English mind even by most Conservatives. I believe that the "Quarterly" would do better in the long run to become a purely scientific and non-political publication than to attempt to favour both British and Fascist traditions, for fear of alienating either.[32]

The intricacies of this political "double-bind" were also felt on the other side. Sometimes it was the Hungarian government that refrained from giving permission to publish a British article. A case in point was the article by the military expert Basil (subsequently Sir Basil) Liddell Hart, which was not recommended for publication by Rudolf Andorka, then head of Section 2 of the Chief of Staff's Office. "The author wants to exert a decisive influence on the course of Hungarian foreign policy", Andorka wrote to Balogh, and the Foreign Ministry supported his opinion. The case of Liddell Hart's article showed how close the *Quarterly* was to the Hungarian government and how far the review could go with its British schemes.

31 ■ *Ibid.*
32 ■ *Ibid.*

Barker's warnings did not change Balogh's mind and he continued to adorn all subsequent numbers of the *Quarterly* with some of the most illustrious names of the British aristocracy. His snobbery and antiquated priorities prevailed, whether in Hungary or in Britain: he was in love with the nobility. His Jewish origins and known homosexuality cast him into a double minority status which may have played a role in his strong attachment to title, rank and prestige.

Aristocratic patrons were indeed needed for Balogh, who was in a very precarious situation all through the years of the existence of the *Quarterly*. When publishing an article by U.S. university professor Michael T. Florinski on "The Lesson of the Saar", he unwillingly hurt the sensitivity of Sir Geoffrey Knox, formerly attached to the League of Nations but by then British minister to Hungary. Balogh immediately offered to apologise to Sir Geoffrey or even tender his resignation. In a position which was always "in between", he often got into trouble when trying to balance between serving the government and upholding the political sovereignty of his review, working for increasingly anti-Semitic Hungary and hiding his Jewish origins, and, most dangerously, maintaining an equilibrium, both official and personal, between Hungarian foreign policy towards Germany and Britain.

Though the *Quarterly* was driven by Dr. Balogh, it was powered by Count Bethlen. Representing political Hungary, Bethlen presided over the "Society for *The Hungarian Quarterly*", and the Transylvanian aristocrat took this job very seriously. As a confidante of Regent Admiral Horthy and a former prime minister, Count Bethlen's involvement meant high-level representation of official Hungary as well as a certain amount of independence. Bethlen gave a major reception in honour of Professor and Mrs. Arnold Toynbee, who visited Budapest in May 1937.[33] On subsequent occasions Dr. Balogh routinely asked Bethlen to receive in person distinguished visitors, such as American journalist and former propaganda chief George Creel in late 1936, as well as Lord Derwent, who came to Hungary in early 1939 with his wife, daughter of the Romanian chief of staff.[34] In June 1939 Bethlen acted as host to the new British minister to Belgrade.[35]

Bethlen's authority was also needed vis-à-vis Hungarian society. When the first issue of *The Hungarian Quarterly* was ready to appear, co-editor György Ottlik reverentially requested Bethlen

> to ask the editors-in-chief of the papers to give worthy attention to this new organ that demanded so much material and sacrifice of work at the moment when it enters the world stage. ...[T]he attention of the editors-in-chief could not be secured for the review in any other way but through the personality of Your Excellency. [...] If you revealed the significance of Anglo-Hungarian friendship, [and] the purpose of the re-

33 ■ József Balogh to Baron Móric Kornfeld, 28 April 1937. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/1826.

34 ■ Tibor Frank, ed., *Discussing Hitler:* op. cit., pp. 58–62; Emlékeztető feljegyzés Bethlen gróf Őexcellenciája számára (Memorandum for His Excellency Count Bethlen), Budapest, 13 January 1939. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/322.

35 ■ József Balogh to Baron György Bakach-Bessenyey, 30 May 1939. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/150.

view, we could then give information on its history and the first issue [...] I think it is not quite immaterial from the viewpoint of foreign policy either that England's attention should be focused on Hungary through your person when an English periodical is being published. Let me add: editors-in-chief would not come at my invitation and not even at that of [Professor] Kornis; should Eckhardt send out the invitations the papers would not even send a correspondent. Only your invitation would exert a significant and authoritative propaganda influence, both domestic and foreign.[36]

The new review was generally recognised as Bethlen's "own English-language foreign policy review".[37] When one of his articles was published by the *Danubian Review,* the periodical of the Hungarian Revisionist League (Magyar Revíziós Liga), he was immediately approached by the editors of the *Quarterly,* politely asking him to publish his articles in English "in his own review" alone. This gesture shows the remarkable turn in Hungarian propaganda that tried to find new avenues, new methods and a new style in the mid-1930s when approaching Britain in the matters of treaty revision. "You have used the right tone for England in the leading article of the first issue of the Quarterly; a coarser voice is now to be heard in the Danubian Review", Professor Kornis, representing the editors, confronted him in September 1936. "We request you, if you agree with us, to contain this double presence in England by requesting the editors of the Danubian Review not to translate and publish your Hungarian articles in any other way but in accordance with us."[38] Professor Kornis also questioned the necessity of the *Danubian Review:*

There will be articles, which could be allowed to be published without the Danubian Review doing any moral harm to the Hungarian cause and the H. Qu., if that periodical is to be maintained in its present form at all. [...] There will be others, which we shall suggest to be transferred into our review from the very first moment. Finally, there will be articles whose presentation in England we shall deem desirable neither in our own review nor in the Danubian Review, precisely in the interest of the national cause.[39]

Soon Bethlen became quite convinced that the *Quarterly* and the Society attached to it were the only desirable tools also for Anglophile propaganda in Hungary. When Archduke József Ferenc,[40] one of the several Habsburgs who resided in Hungary, suggested the foundation of an Anglo-Hungarian Society, Bethlen immediately raised his voice in defense of his own institution. "The Society of *The Hungarian Quarterly*", he wrote to His Highness,

36 ■ György Ottlik to József Balogh, Budapest, 13 March 1936. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/2440.

37 ■ Gyula Kornis to Count István Bethlen, Budapest, 24 September 1936. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/322.

38 ■ *Ibid.*

39 ■ *Ibid.*

40 ■ "Hungarian Habsburgs" were given the Hungarian title "Royal Prince/ss" instead of the Austrian term "Archduke/Archduchess."

aims not only at presenting Hungary in England, but—for the moment and in a modest way—it serves the purposes of Anglophile propaganda also in Hungary. To this end [the Society] organised in the last year alone 10 lectures in English in Budapest. The success of its work is shown by the steady growth of the audiences at these lectures. Some 500 people attended the lecture of Hugh Ruttledge, 400 were present at the recent lecture of Sir Ronald Storrs.

According to the agreement with the British Council, which works under the auspices of the Foreign Office and co-operates with us, we founded the Anglo-Hungarian circle in Szeged as its local branch with Professor Tivadar Surányi-Unger as president. For the opening ceremony we expect Sir Richard Winn Livingstone, president of Corpus Christi College, to be present on the occasion of the inauguration (3 April). [...]

It would be a pleasure for our Society if the aims of a new association to be initiated eventually by your Royal Highness could be co-ordinated [...] as the incomplete national forces ought to be increasingly co-ordinated, both spiritually and materially.[41]

Bethlen occasionally shared his social responsibilities with Baron Móric Kornfeld, who joined him in inviting important British guests to his townhouse at Lendvay utca or his country estate at Felsőireg in Tolna county. Kornfeld's British guests included Arnold Toynbee, Sir Reginald Storrs and Horsfall Carter.[42] Baron Kornfeld was a member of the Weiss family, owners of Hungary's giant industrial plant at Csepel Island outside Budapest, and thus represented big business indeed. An intimate of Balogh, he was well informed of most confidential matters connected with the *Quarterly,* such as the correspondence with the editor of *The Round Table,* the British ideal of the Hungarian review, who was close to the circle of Lord Lothian.[43]

In a more modest way, Dr. Balogh himself imitated his aristocratic or industrialist patrons, inviting British visitors such as newspaper publisher W. B. Morrell and his father for dinner at home.[44]

It was in January 1939 when the editor first asked Count Bethlen to discuss the eventual transfer of the *Quarterly* to London and the *Revue* to Paris. "It is no longer possible to get articles from prominent politicians and journalists abroad that could completely avoid polite and fair criticism of Germany, when discussing Central or East European questions", Balogh complained. He compiled a long list of burning issues that were jeopardised by the volatile political situation in the continent of Europe, including Hungarian revision, the Polish–Hungarian border,

41 ■ Count István Bethlen to Royal Prince József Ferenc [draft, n.d.], attached to József Balogh to Gyula Kornis, 15 February 1938. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/1828.

42 ■ József Balogh to Baron Móric Kornfeld, 28 April 1937, 20 January 1938, 29 April 1938. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/1826. I am grateful to Ms. Ágnes Széchenyi for sharing her research with reference to Baron Móric Kornfeld, to be published in her upcoming volume on Kornfeld.

43 ■ József Balogh to Baron Móric Kornfeld, 2 April 1938. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/1826.

44 ■ József Balogh to Count Kálmán Almásy, 12 September 1938. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/45/262.

Hungarian economic sovereignty vis-à-vis Germany and Hungarian independence in general, the minority problems of Hungary including German-Hungarians, and the co-operation of South-East European small states. He also asked Bethlen to discuss his own personal problems in the light of Hungary's Jew Bill.[45]

Nevertheless, the situation during the Teleki government (1939–1941) remained largely unchanged. Hungary effectively balanced between the Axis Powers and the West in a desperate effort to survive, to preserve her neutrality and to secure treaty revision all at the same time.[46] The editors and publishers of the *Quarterly* knew full well, of course, how precarious their position had become. "It strikes me", Balogh wrote to Bethlen in December 1940, "that the HQ may at any time be seriously endangered by Central European political necessities, and we have been perfectly aware for years that, at the behest of the government, we might possibly be compelled to cease publication. Your Excellency's opinion, however, was invariably that we ourselves must not, under any circumstances, precipitate the process; the most we can do is to defer to the fiat."[47] This was precisely the moment when Prime Minister Pál Teleki commissioned young historian Domokos Kosáry to publish his one-volume *A History of Hungary* in the U.S. in order to spread reliable historical information before it was too late.[48]

But it was too late. By April 1941 Prime Minister Count Teleki and his cautious policy of neutrality were dead, by June Hungary was at war with the Soviet Union. By November 1941 it became obvious that the war would no longer tolerate *The Hungarian Quarterly.* A letter by Count Bethlen to Prime Minister László Bárdossy might serve as an epitaph to this tragically hopeless venture.

> I understand from the report of the secretary-general of our Society that Antal Ullein-Reviczky summoned him on the 5th inst. and disclosed to him the Government's desire that The Hungarian Quarterly, which has been produced by our Society for six years, should discontinue its publication with the December issue of this year. [...]
>
> On behalf of the Society, which was founded by myself and a few others in 1934, and which has since accomplished salutary work, acknowledged by many, in respect of the enlightening of the two Anglo-Saxon empires, I must solicit you to reconsider this decision of your Cabinet. In my view nothing can warrant such dispositions at present when no proclamation of war has ensued between the United States and the Axis Powers, and diplomatic relations also continue to be maintained. It is not to be questioned that the discontinuing of The Hungarian Quarterly will, in the Anglo-Saxon

45 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, 12 January 1939. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/322. See the memorandum prepared and attached by Balogh for Bethlen's discussions with the foreign minister.
46 ■ Cf. Tibor Frank, "Treaty Revision and Doublespeak: Hungarian Neutrality, 1939–1941", in Neville Wylie, ed., *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 150–173.
47 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, 19 December 1940. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/322.
48 ■ Dominic G. Kosáry, *A History of Hungary* (Cleveland and New York: Benjamin Franklin Bibliophile Society, 1941). Cf. Tibor Frank, "Luring the English-Speaking World", op. cit., pp. 76–78.

quarters in which we are interested, elicit unfavourable comment. The interpretation given to this government measure will be that, of its own accord and ostentatiously, it wishes to adopt a completely biased tendency vis-à-vis the United States or, being no longer in possession of its own free will, it was compelled to sacrifice this organ. In both cases, they will draw far-reaching inferences from this fact.

The reprieve and further maintenance of The Hungarian Quarterly, so long as our diplomatic relations with the United States continue to exist, are, in my judgment, so much the easier because, as far as I know, no outside criticism of its publications has been pronounced as yet. Of late we have kept the paper at a distance from politics and are treating mainly historical and cultural themes of a scholarly nature. We may look with a certain self-pride upon this paper, the match of which has not been maintained by any single small European nation, which is the sole remaining English publication on the continent, and which has been pronounced by critics to be the equal of British and American reviews of the highest standing.

All these merits of The Hungarian Quarterly we wished to turn to account at a later date; our assumption was well grounded that, maintaining the paper until the end of the war, its existence and unblemished past will, at the time of the conclusion of peace, be put to the credit of the Magyars. The disappearance of The Hungarian Quarterly would frustrate this hope of ours, depriving us at the same time of the forum from which we could have taken up the fight with the increasingly active publicist activities of Czech and Hungarian emigrants.[49]

In December 1941 Hungary was to declare a state of war with both Britain and the United States. The *Quarterly* was to be discontinued. Nevertheless, Balogh and his associates did not stop working altogether. They compiled, as the 1942 volume of the *Quarterly, A Companion to Hungarian Studies,* a thick handbook with ample information on Hungary in good English, actually still published by "The Society of *The Hungarian Quarterly*" in 1943 and prefaced by Count Bethlen. A *Companion II* was also in the making but could not be published. A single number of the *Quarterly* would appear in early 1944. Then the war reached Hungary. Balogh was killed by the Nazis in 1944, and Bethlen was captured by the Soviets and taken possibly to Moscow, where he most probably died in 1946. None of the members of the "Society for *The Hungarian Quarterly*" were given any credit for what they were trying to do and were usually judged unfairly and treated badly after the war. Their futile efforts deserve to be remembered kindly.[50]

49 ■ Count István Bethlen to László Bárdossy, 6 November 1941. OSzK: Litt. Orig., Fond 1/212.

50 ■ I have made use of my own earlier papers on *The Hungarian Quarterly,* József Balogh and *Hungarian History* as republished in Tibor Frank, *Ethnicity, op. cit.,* pp. 265–308. All translations from Hungarian by the author.

Gabriella Kernács

Between Heaven and Earth

The Tapestries of Zsuzsa Péreli

Ever since Babel, the great dream of a universal idiom has been haunting our fragmented, multilingual world, intent, with varying success, on recreating a paradise of mutual understanding. We long for the mythical land of "one language and one speech", described in the eleventh chapter of Genesis. Art, too, can be seen as attempts at such re-creation, differing from age to age, and Zsuzsa Péreli's tapestries are certainly encompassed by that world language of our dreams. Their idiom can be understood best of all by the "men of goodwill" of the Christmas carol, though they find ever less peace on earth.

Péreli is an unusual artist with a unique personality. What she represents is becoming rarer in the world. I myself witnessed in October 2001 how visitors to the Musée de la Tapisserie in Aubusson stood stock-still before her works—silent, smiling, transfigured, as if they had entered an enchanted Watteau garden where rare birds sang and players concealed in the shrubberies strummed soft music.

The artist's appearance at Aubusson—whose workshops, which have existed since the Middle Ages, have earned it the rank of capital of tapestry—was an honour equivalent to a poet laureateship. She was following practitioners as eminent as Watteau, Braque, Picasso, and the founder of modern French tapestry, Jean Lurcat.

Opening her exhibition *Entre Ciel et Terre* at the Aubusson museum in October 2001, curator Michèle Giffault described as "fantastic" the way Zsuzsa Péreli herself designs and weaves her works.

> This was never the custom at Aubusson, where hangings would be woven by the weavers from scaled tapestry designs supplied by the artists. Zsuzsa, on the other hand, is a painter and tapestry weaver in one, which is a phenomenon so unusual that I wanted at all costs to present her at Aubusson. Zsuzsa Péreli is the first foreign artist

---

Gabriella Kernács

is an art historian on the staff of Hungarian Television. In 1998 she was awarded the Hungarian Heritage Prize jointly with the director Tamás B. Farkas "for a multitude of films that presented modern arts and crafts".

ever invited here for a solo exhibition. It is not by chance that we have given it the title "Between Heaven and Earth". Thereabouts, I think, is where her works are to be found.

Zsuzsa Péreli lives in Tahitótfalu, a village on the Danube not far from Budapest, as an ethereal, fairy figure in a delightful garden. Hawk-moths flutter above her tulips and roses. She grows basil, sage, thyme, rosemary and lemon balm, which she dries and ties in bunches. Animals tame and wild obey her, and meanwhile she works at her loom from dawn until dusk with an industry to equal that of any medieval weaver. As Péreli puts it,

> I cannot imagine not being involved in every centimetre of my work. So I weave my own tapestries and I don't usually make cartoons for them at all. The design is usually in my mind instead, and I don't think I could tell anyone else what colours were around or where they appeared in that picture. Nor would I be ready to surrender the joy of weaving to someone else, above all because of its spiritual character. It's like occupational therapy: whatever state or mood I'm in when I sit down to weave, fifteen minutes later I'm focused entirely on my work. I'm inside the picture as I weave it. If I'm weaving a pillar, I'm a pillar; if a cloud, I'm a cloud; if a bird, I'm a bird. The difficulty of weaving is another reason why I like it. It seems to me that we're living in an age when works of art are created very quickly, on a sudden whim, and often quite irresponsibly. Quality gets forgotten somewhere. I tie myself to the loom to make sure I won't make concessions, and so I won't be carried off in the stream. I think this medieval art form has to withstand the pace and pushiness of the twenty-first century. All the effort, and the mental state that that effort engenders, must, I feel, enter my works and enter people's souls, just where I intend it. I can't imagine a work of art without a soul. Most of my tapestries take six months or a year to make. During that time my life may be steam rollered or it may be blessed by the passing of a white dove, but when I sit down to the loom, I feel neither. And yet, it is a summary of my life, and my life is there in the weaving.

It is as if Zsuzsa Péreli were painting old masters, although her tapestries are searingly contemporary and blend the approaches of modern textile art. One of her early works shows a star of the silent films, an eye-shadowed Asta Nielsen, nodding towards us, the gathers at the waist of her dress sewn into the tapestry, black with white spots, and with real, trembling guinea-fowl feathers (*Asta Nielsen,* 1978).

Often Zsuzsa Péreli draws a delicate Surrealism from the repertoire of modern art. The double-sided tapestry *Amnesia* (1980) uses a wittily simple trick. There are portraits of a man and a woman in nineteenth-century-style dress. On one side, the woman is coupled with the reverse of the man's portrait, the face concealed by the dangling tapestry strands. On the other side, the man's portrait appears and the woman's vanishes into the tangle.

The Musicians Are Back (1982) conjures up the atmosphere of old photographs. The village players have floppy hats, beards and moustaches. Where have the barefoot bass player and sad-eyed fiddlers come from, and where are they bound? Around them one can almost hear the words of a Hungarian folk tune *("Off, I'm off on a long hard journey / Donning the dust of the long hard road")* and, at the

same time, Chagall's remark: "The country I keep in my mind's eye is mine alone. Its inhabitants stray in the air, seeking a home. They dwell in my soul."

Péreli's Madonnas are curious figures. *The Blessed Virgin,* with its round-faced peasant Madonna, is reminiscent of a votive picture from a village church, sewn in gold. Around her hang other little tapestry pictures of hands, feet and eyes in gold thread, representing the diseases suffered by hopeful supplicants. One little picture hanging on the right by a red, white and green ribbon shows a little gold-sewn map of Hungary. The year is 1987, three years before the collapse of the East European dictatorships, just before the change of system, and following a period of national sickness lasting several decades: a prayer for recovery.

Christmas 1989 evokes the Romanian revolution. Real objects have been applied to a tapestry background of gold and silver: the metal parts of an Orthodox icon of the Blessed Virgin, with haloes and relief outlines of Virgin and Child but black, empty voids where their faces should be. The accompanying saints have no faces, either. Around them hang empty cartridges, old keys, Romanian coins, and even part of a listening bug—a grotesque emblem of Ceausescu's dictatorship, when bugs were ubiquitous in public buildings, schools, hotels and the homes of perceived enemies of the regime.

Péreli often makes use of such *objets trouvés.* Above and below on *Landscape, End of the 20th Century* (1990) swim pieces of refuse retrieved from the dump: dented plastic containers, bits of tubing, scraps of paper, broken plastic toys and cigarette packets. The ominous bands of refuse seem to press up against the calm landscape of green hills and trees, and down on the blue sky with its fluffy clouds.

Every picture of Péreli's contains calm: defending, protective, thought-provoking calm in a strident world. *Looking Out from the Credible* (1993) depicts two figures on a terrace paved with the kind of black and white tiles familiar from the Dutch masters. They are leaning on a gold balustrade and gazing into blue, moonlit infinity. In most of her tapestries there is a pure, spiritual area that is yearned for. *Anthem* (1996), one of her most important works, depicts blue arches and vaults, like a starry cathedral in the air. It is one of eight works produced by different tapestry designers and inspired by the Hungarian national anthem, but it might equally be a hymn to mankind. It is encouraging us to look up to the sky from our homes, gardens, flocks and earthly lives, to seek a road, a light before which we may bow our heads and pray for someone, or something.

Angels form an important motif in Péreli's works. Below in *Poor Angel* (1997) is a scene of devastation, apparently after an atomic explosion and reminiscent of something out of Tarkovsky's film *Stalker.* We see an iron-grey ghost town of prefabricated blocks and rows of empty windows. Above floats a bedraggled, dispirited silvery-grey angel, his posture echoing the Crucifixion, or perhaps that of a bat pinned to the door out of superstition. His attire is formed from the coins of many countries, which cling to him like oil to the feathers of a doomed seabird, weighing him down so that he can no longer soar in the sky. Has he as-

sumed all our sins? It was after seeing this work in the catalogue of the Lódz triennial in 1998 that Michèle Giffault invited Péreli to Aubusson, to take part in the exhibition 'Divinity in Tapestry' in 1999. The effect created in this work is enhanced by the freely hanging vertical threads that represent the sky, with only the town and the angel sewn onto them as tapestry pictures.

The same spatial approach appears in her tapestry *Æquilibrium* (2000). In a translucent space created from vertical gold threads hangs an airy moth-angel between sky and earth, linking the hills below and an even band of clouds above. As the artist explains,

> Equilibrium is something everyone longs for. If I want to raise something to the level of holiness I resort to the traditional colour of gold, and I thought in this case the gold threads should make the vertical lines leading upwards. I hadn't realised what a dreadful task I was setting myself, because it is extremely difficult to sew gold thread. I put myself through a great deal of suffering and several times it seemed that the whole work would fall apart and I wouldn't be able to complete it. In the end, the suffering produced in me a very strong spiritual harmony. It really does seem as if things we haven't worked for have less value for us. What I wanted was someone to link earthly and heavenly harmony, at least in one picture. Who should that someone be? I thought of my first invitation to Aubusson, when my tapestry *Poor Angel* forged a link between that town and Tahitótfalu, where I live. So there should be an angel holding the balance in his hand. But not a sad one. We've had enough of being sad in the last millennium, especially we Hungarians. This angel was being created in honour of the year 2000, so it had to be an angel in which there was equilibrium, and he should know how to hold the strand that ties heaven and earth. I wanted the earth to be a landscape on which the linking gold threads would shine—a dawn landscape gilded with sunlight, with no hint of a human hand upon it. This would be the earthly equivalent of the sky. I wanted the angel scarcely to be corporeal, more like the wings of a dragonfly. Nor was his personality to be too significant, since the important thing was the link. Just at that time I was sent some wonderful silk thread by some Japanese friends of mine, and I used it to sew the angel's garment. So, I was given some earthly assistance to clothe the angel.

All Zsuzsa Péreli's works glint like the gold strand between landscape and clouds in *Æquilibrium,* displaying a subtle, absurd humour, a quiet irony that places even the most exalted topic in quotation marks. This is to be expected, since Péreli is a passionate collector of strange jumble-sale objects: embroidered hangings to protect the wall, porcelain teacups painted with angels, faded brown photographs, old dance cards and anything else she finds amusing. *Sentinella* (2000), which appears to be a self-portrait, shows pieces of old carpet in various colours, on which sits a woman in a blue dress, her empty palms turned inwards in a gesture that says, "I am unarmed". She sits like an old village crone, guarding her bits of tradition—with a good measure of self-mockery, of course. And what springs inevitably to mind is a passage from Psalm 37, 10–11: "Yet a little while, and the ungodly shall be clean gone; thou shalt look after his place, and he shall be away. But the meekspirited shall possess the earth; and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace." ❧

Zsuzsa Péreli: Sarah Bernhard, *1977. Tapestry. Wool and lace. 90 x 42 cm.*

Zsuzsa Péreli: Amnesia, *1980.*
Double-side tapestry. Wool, silk and gold thread. 100 x 150 cm.

Zsuzsa Péreli: The Musicians Are Back, *1982. Tapestry. Wool and silk. 120 x 150 cm.*

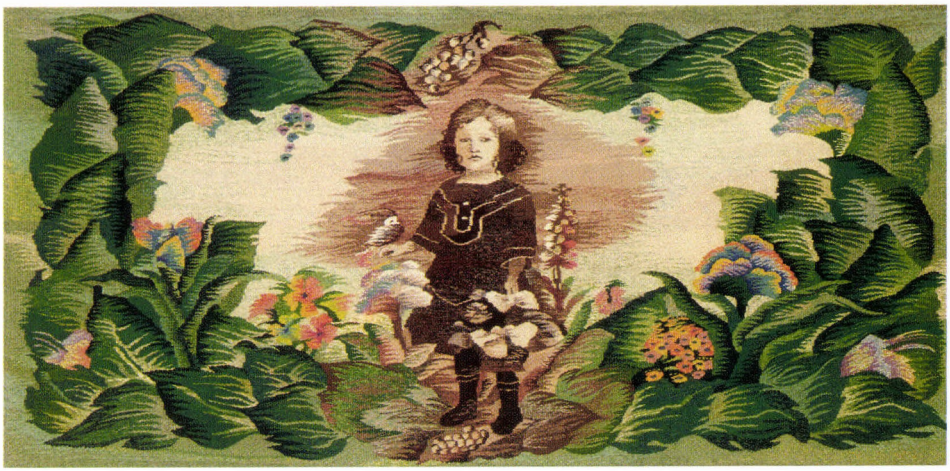
Zsuzsa Péreli: List of Tenants, *1986. Tapestry and old wooden frame. Wool, warping yarn, 80 x 74 cm. Ferenczy Museum, Szentendre*

Zsuzsa Péreli: Skating with Angelic Assistance, *1990.*
Tapestry. Wool, cotton and silk. 100 x 170 cm.

Zsuzsa Péreli: Christmas, 1989.
1989–90. Special techniques.
Wool, gold and silver thread,
nails, cartridges, keys, chocolate
mould, listening bug, etc.
80 x 65 cm.
Museum of Applied Arts,
Budapest.

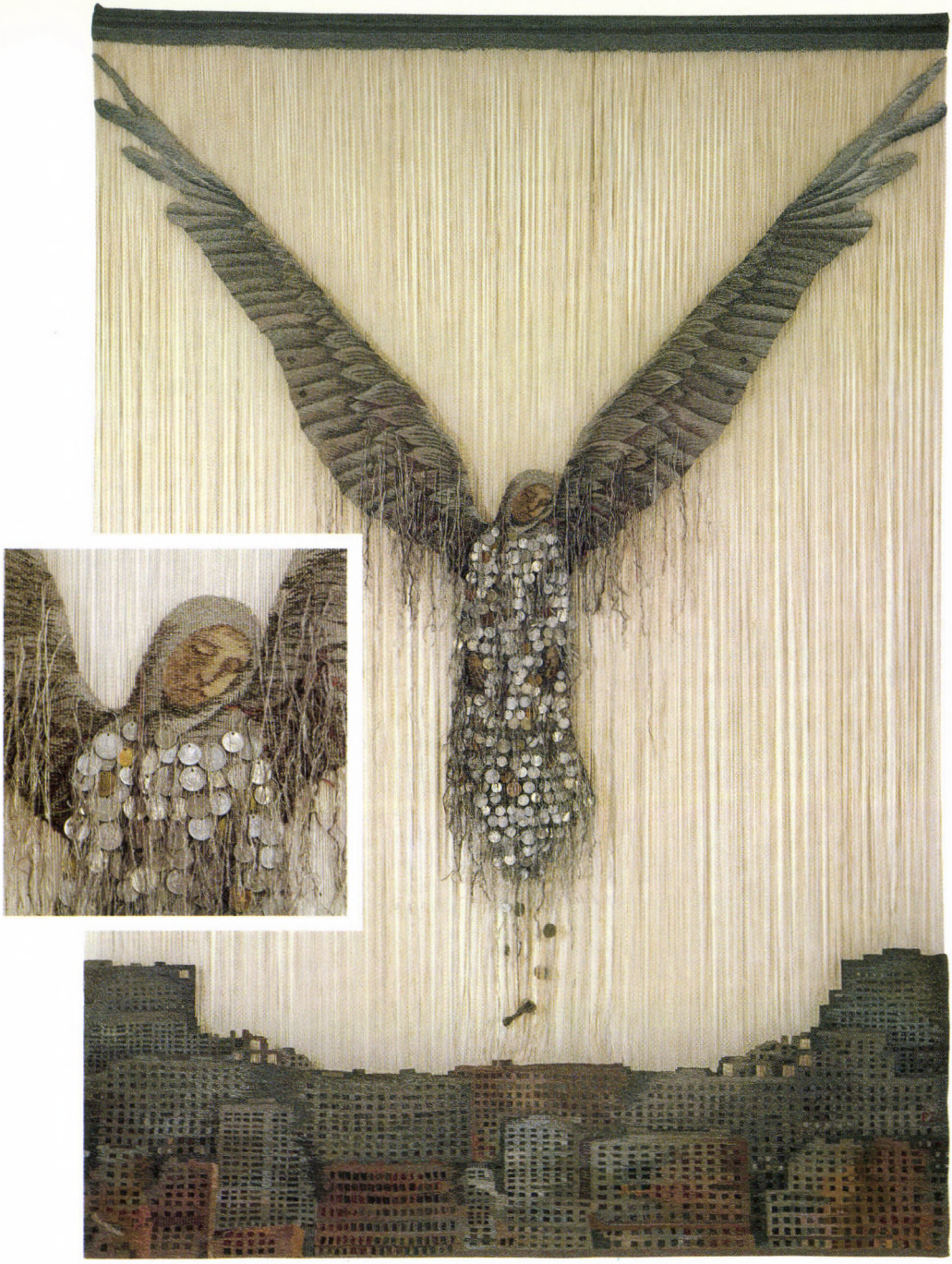
Zsuzsa Péreli: Landscape, End of the 20th Century, *1990. Tapestry and special techniques. Wool, rags, plastic film, municipal waste, syringe, etc. 245 x 170 cm.*

Zsuzsa Péreli: Anthem, *1996. Tapestry. Wool, silk and cotton. 24 x 160 cm. Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest.*



Zsuzsa Péreli: Childhood, *1977. Tapesrty. Wool and silk. 80 x 70 cm.*

Zsuzsa Péreli: Asta Nielsen, *1978.*
Tapestry and special techniques. Wool, cotton, silk and feather. 80 x 65 cm.



© HUNGART

Zsuzsa Péreli: Poor Angel (and detail), *1997. Tapestry and special techniques. Wool, silver thread, silk and coins. 236 x 165 cm.*

Miklós Vajda

"If Any Harm Comes of This, I'll Kill You!"

The True Story of Six Hungarian Poets' Grand Tour of Britain in 1980

In memoriam János Pilinszky

I can't pretend that we were close, but we were on friendly terms. I first made the acquaintance of János Pilinszky, who was some ten years older than I and already had a name as a poet, at the house of Béni Ferenczy during the mid-Fifties. Along with friends we had in common, poets and writers, we both often dropped in there, because the Danube-bank studio of that master sculptor and, for all of us, paternal friend was a blissful island of sage cheer, calm and true art in those abominable times. János, who like so many other poets was barred from being published on ideological grounds, was then working as an outside proof-reader for Szépirodalmi Kiadó, the largest of the state-owned publishing houses, where I myself was employed as an editor. A decade later, when I became literary editor of *The New Hungarian Quarterly* (as it was called then), János would occasionally drop in for a chat at the editorial offices on Rákóczi út. Over time, I had managed to persuade a number of English and American poets to produce their versions of modern Hungarian poems from 'roughs' prepared by Hungarian-born translators, and had published decent translations of a fair number of Pilinszky's works done by the likes of the outstanding American poets, William Jay Smith and Daniel Hoffman, even before Ted Hughes was prompted and assisted by János Csokits to produce the volume of *Selected Poems* put out by Carcanet New Press in 1976. Though Pilinszky did not speak English, he was still interested in the fate of his poems beyond the linguistic barrier. He would scrutinise and savour the English texts, somewhat in the manner of a composer who listens closely to one of his works being played in the far distance because he wishes to know how it sounds.

A while later, a body of the translated poems that had first appeared in the *Quarterly* were collected in a single volume, *Modern Hungarian Poetry,* edited by

---

Miklós Vajda,
an essayist and translator of British, American and German fiction and drama, is the Editor of The Hungarian Quarterly.

myself, that was jointly published, to considerable acclaim, by Columbia University Press in New York and Corvina Press in Budapest. As a result, through Smith's initiative, the US PEN Club and State Department invited four Hungarian poets to undertake a big tour to give a series of bilingual readings in America in the autumn of 1977. Whilst that counted as sensational back here in Hungary, over there, in the States, it was at best a curiosity. The four elect were Sándor Weöres and his poet wife Amy Károlyi, along with István Vas and Ferenc Juhász. This was followed three years later, in the spring of 1980, by an invitation from the British Council to undertake an English tour. Six poets were invited: the same four again plus Gyula Illyés and Pilinszky, but Illyés then had to cry off due to illness and so, after lengthy persuasion, Ágnes Nemes Nagy agreed to take his place. The destinations were to be London, Glasgow and Bangor, that wonderful little university town in Wales, with a total of seven readings scheduled over the twelve days of the trip. My own job, as it had been in America, was to provide a short introductory talk and present the poets at the readings.

Let no one be taken in by Goethe's sunny account of his Italian journey. Poets are bad travellers—especially in a group, as I shall testify here. Sensitivities, overwrought at the best of times, may be wound up still further when they are abroad, and may reach hysteria pitch when you least expect it. As we shall see, they also seem to be prey to mishaps, possibly bizarre but turning out well. Even as they strapped on the safety belts on the aircraft, these huge but volatile egos were no doubt pondering how they were going to stand the company of a second, let alone a third member of the party, to say nothing of the fourth, in a civilised and, indeed, convivial fashion whilst they were locked in together during the long, long trip. They vie with one another even in their dreams, and even chatter that looks to be all smiles is haunted by undying memories of gifts of personally signed books for which no thank-you letter was returned, or rude comments that had been relayed to their ears, with unvoiced jealous passions and twinges of conscience shooting about in the charged atmosphere. They can hardly wait to grab a private word with someone who stands outside this vanity fair—in this case myself—to spill their views about this or that statement made by one or another member of the party (the unvarnished notes that I made about this each evening I would never publish, out of the love or respect which I hold for each of them). A not entirely innocuous quadrille seemed to be constantly on the go within the group, with each member forming a temporary alliance with this, that and a third, on the strength of a part-stifled sardonic smile or comment, against the fourth or the others, with the fronts shifting all the time. Capping all that was the circumstance that not only were we travelling abroad, but these were not just any old places but the very bastions of the evil imperialists, and with the consent of higher party-state organs moreover, and so we constituted a delegation. We were representing not just ourselves, Hungarian lit-

erature, our homeland, but in the eyes of the public, whether we liked it or not, also the very régime—that supposedly happiest barracks of the Socialist bloc behind the Iron Curtain—which each of us individually had a thousand and one reasons for hating and despising from the bottom of our hearts. So even though we were now outside, on official leave, we were still inside that place which we were always trying to remain on the outside of.

Sándor Weöres alone held himself far aloof from all this. He totally lacked even a drop of vanity, jealousy, grievance or any other base passion, despite the fact that he too had been unable to publish for a substantial period. He was not terribly interested in where he happened to be, or with whom, at any given moment, which is not to say that he did not notice, and sometimes comment on, the things that were going on. He was uniformly pleasant and courteous with everyone at all times. Many was the occasion, each and every day, that I would be taken aback, on reaching for a cigarette, to see him smartly hasten over, and always get there, sometimes almost at a trot, even from the furthest corner of whatever place we were in, simply in order to offer me a match—he, the greatest genius whom I have been privileged to know up close—before I, a nobody in comparison, had a chance to get out my lighter. Of course, I was not the only one to be accorded that and many similar gestures of solicitude, for he was the same with everyone else. Weöres was seemingly unconcerned about the success and fate of his work. It is apparent from his poems that he was fully aware of his poetic greatness, but he looked on his own person as merely the vehicle, the insignificant channel, of that greatness. It was his wife, Amy Károlyi, who kept him tethered to earth; without her, it is more than likely that Weöres would have just taken wing or forgotten to eat and died of starvation, though possibly not before drinking himself to death. It is perhaps the most considerable of Amy's merits, greater even than that of her delicate, intimately feminine lyric verse, that she was able to keep this impish sprite of a man in a fit state to be able to compose one of the most scintillating of all poetic oeuvres of the twentieth century, so immense in its scope, depth an variety.

Pilinszky, too, was a being who hovered a span or two above the ground, but unlike Weöres he did not just contemplate existence, he suffered from it, envisaging a Christ-like fate for himself. His poetry was the distilled essence, matchless in its heft and compactness, of tragedies, tortures, crimes and punishments, failures, loneliness, desperate faith and hopelessness in a desolate, dismal, devastated world. There is not a single spark of hope in the monumental doomsday vision of *Apocrypha,* one of the supreme and most enigmatic compositions in the whole of modern Hungarian poetry. He wrote the poem in 1952, and it took several weeks. He said later in an interview that "I had the feeling that I am holding a discus and am spinning with it and it's almost tearing my arm off but I must not let it fly, because then it would fly in the wrong direction. In general, a poem is good when, like a discus, you suddenly let it go and it flies

away into freedom." Even his profound faith carried a sense of guilt: "We are God's crucifixion," he wrote in one of his notebooks, "My existence crucifies God." This solitary soul, bowed under the burden of this huge crime, puritanical and prone to mysticism though he may have been, was nevertheless also fond of success and company whenever he happened not to be under the cloud of depression, loving at these times to talk, laugh and revel in the limelight. He was easily hurt, naïve and wise all at once; on his good days an inquisitive and captivating mind, gentle and yet domineering in his own way; and always a law unto himself, and thus totally unpredictable.

István Vas was the real doyen of the group. An emotional, yet staunchly rationalistic lyric poet who, after the avant-garde and Communist detours of his younger years, cultivated a traditional poetry of experiences, in fixed, often song-like forms and at a very high standard. Vas worshipped women and travelling, lapped up European culture of all kinds, and loved to be surrounded by young writers. He penned a brilliant autobiography and shrewdly observed essays, whilst his wide-ranging work as a translator, slightly irritating though it could sometimes be due to the traces it bore of the Germanically tinged language of Hungary's assimilated Jews, was more notable for its brilliance of execution (this is also discernible as an intriguingly individual seasoning in his original work). He was the object of constant leg-pulling and good-natured chivvying on account of his long-standing friendship with György Aczél, the supreme guardian and omnipotent manipulator of culture and ideology in Hungary, second only to János Kádár in the Communist Party command—a tie that he dared not, could not, and did not even wish to repudiate, for in the terrible autumn of 1944, when the terror unleashed by the home-grown Nazi militias of the Arrow Cross Party was reaching its horrific pitch, it was Aczél who, though a Jew himself, had donned an Arrow Cross uniform to pull Vas and a number of other friends out of forced-labour brigades and thereby undoubtedly saved the life of this epicurean poet, totally unfitted as he was for physical work, starvation and bodily suffering. In my own mind, I had classified Vas as a weak and, I dare say, cowardly man, yet still a person whom I was fond of and respected even so, until the day that I learned that he was, to the best of my knowledge, the sole person who in 1950, when the Stalinist reign of terror in Hungary—the next nadir in the country's modern history—was at its most ferocious, had had the guts to stand up in a party meeting and announce that he was leaving the party because he could not agree with its policy. To do such a thing then was quite unthinkable, truly tempting Providence, comparable, let us say, to someone standing up in church and reviling God during the time of the Inquisition. In the horror-stricken silence that had followed this statement, Vas had laid his party membership book on the table and left the room. That cost him an enforced silence that lasted several years, but he could be happy that he got away with his skin in one piece, for in those days a person could land a lengthy prison sentence for much lesser

crimes—a political joke, say, or listening to the BBC's broadcasts. (My own mother was doing time in prison at that very time on utterly ridiculous trumped-up charges).

By the time of the American trip, or in other words by the latter half of the 1970s, Ferenc Juhász could already be said to have been a historical monument of himself. The only one of the group that made the two tours, aside from me, who is still alive, he is now a living monument on which severe damage has been wrought not by time but by his own hand. His is a strange and tragic story. The massive social mobilisation that followed Hungary's defeat in the Second World War, directed as it was by the authorities on high and soon made part of the Communist Party's power politics, assisted him to rise out of his simple rural artisan family background. His early poems, with their fresh-voiced, naïve praise of the new world that was being inaugurated, showed considerable talent. As the Communist dictatorship showed its true face after the takeover of power in 1948, with the glaring incongruity between the propaganda and reality becoming ever more obvious in every sphere of life, Juhász turned his back on politics and, withstanding the pressure, and indeed blackmail, that was exerted on him by his party to write poetry that fulfilled its socialist-realist agitation purposes, proclaimed a wholly innovatory mythico-metaphorical approach in which large-scale poems welded devices borrowed from folk poetry to a prodigious fantasy for modern imagery with a searing, pathos-laden emotional charge to portray the world in a cosmic setting. That was both Juhász's individual take on the world as well as that of mid-twentieth-century man and a nation wallowing in the squalid purgatory of Socialism. On both the reading tours, each time that the dramatic passages of his monumental ballad *The Boy Changed into a Stag Cries out at the Gate of Secrets* (1956) were sounded, the very air in the auditorium would stand still as the audience held its collective breath listening to this poet and member of first-generation intelligentsia read out his epochal paean to the hard-won glory and tragedy of a disappearing ancient rural way of life and the birth pains of the nascent modern world, based as it is on the same ancient Romanian folk ballad from which Bartók had earlier drawn the text for his *Cantata Profana:* the efforts by the sons who have been changed into stags to respond to their mother's call to return home are in vain, as the span of their antlers prevents them from passing through the door to the family hearth. When W. H. Auden read the translation of it that the Canadian poet Kenneth McRobbie had made for an impending anthology, he noted in the preface that he wrote for the volume: "I am convinced that *The Boy Changed into a Stag Cries out at the Gate of Secrets* by Ferenc Juhász is one of the greatest poems written in my time." The eternal, impassive processes of Nature, and more particularly, the unending cycle of destruction and its attendant suffering, death, decomposition, and the regeneration which sprang from that, was a subject that had greatly

preoccupied Juhász even in his earlier poetry. After 1956, he developed that vision into the vast compositions that he himself called epic poems although, speaking as they do about his parents, his youth, his love, even about flowers or flying, they are more gigantic lyrical outpourings, lists, catalogues, litanies or jeremiads than true epic poems. With their matchless linguistic fertility and the flood of enthrallingly precise, detailed images gained by elevating the knowledge of micro- and macrocosms achieved by modern physics, astronomy and biology into the vocabulary of poetry, they lay out the same things before us, over and over again, with a near-manic intensity. In time, the torrential abundance of the not uncommonly somewhat sado-masochistic imagery broke through the frameworks of the grand constructions to begin living a life of its own. Juhász's unique poetry overflowed its own possibilities and, from the latter half of the 1960s, switched increasingly into self-repetition, later verging on self-parody. Above all for Mr and Mrs Vas and myself within the group, who had once been close friends of his, this was accompanied by a distressing change in personality as Juhász reached a point where, incapable of renewing his inspiration, he sought refuge from his critics in the party's embrace. György Aczél recognised the great opportunity that this gave to bind the widely admired poet to the party once and for all: he issued an edict that the media would not be permitted to carry any adverse criticism of Juhász. That protection and holy-cow status lasted to the very end of the régime and was the final nail in his remaining credence. Juhász is now a forgotten poet, despite the fact that his pre-1965 work unarguably ranks amongst the greatest.

Ágnes Nemes Nagy was fairly close to Weöres and, particularly, Pilinszky; she was forever arguing, as a tease, with Vas, but she loathed Juhász as an ex-Communist and folk poet of dubious character, a pathological windbag and Aczél protégé, and she did not take much trouble to hide her opinion. With her authoritative but straight-talking demeanour, cool intellect, and schoolmarmish punctiliousness, she was the easiest of my travelling companions. She, like Pilinszky, had started publishing whilst the war was still going, then after it, under the flag of the magazine *Újhold* (New Moon) that was started in 1946 by her husband, the essayist Balázs Lengyel, she pulled together that generation of promising young writers (Pilinszky amongst them) who looked on literature not as a political terrain but as an artistic opportunity for dissecting the predicaments of human existence. The magazine came under fire from the outset as the prime target of György Lukács, the Marxist philosopher, who had recently settled back in Budapest after more than a decade of exile in Moscow, and who regarded literature in the spirit of Lenin's dictum that saw literature as "part and parcel of universal party work". Attacks in that vein were sustained right up until the magazine was finally banned in 1948, which at one and the same time marked a long-term muzzling for both Nemes Nagy and her husband. "I daily struggle with existence," wrote this famous beauty in one of her early poems. She thought that the task of

the twentieth-century poet is "to explore and incorporate into poetry those contents of the human consciousness that remained hitherto unknown or untapped." For her, poetry was a delight as well as a craft. *"Craft of mine, and delight, / how you sustain me / between morality / and dread, dark and light"* ("To My Craft", tr. Hugh Maxton), and, when the dread had set in, she firmly stuck to morality and never compromised. By the start of the 1980s, when we went to London, that daily struggle with existence had given rise to a body of work that, relatively slight though it may have been in quantity, was all the more impressive in its weight and significance, masterpieces of objective lyric verse that created a new school which had a regenerative effect on Hungarian poetry. Despite her much-cited statement that "every poem is inexplicable", striving to give expression to "unnamed emotions", her essays and the marvellous analyses of poems that she produced, based in part on her own experience, now constitute obligatory reading for anyone interested in the subject.

So much, then, by way of a necessary preamble to a fuller understanding of what actually happened on that 1980 tour of Britain. It is, perhaps, already apparent that the group which set off on the trip was no ordinary collection of poets, but each was a world unto himself or herself, spinning around its own axis, with its own climate and past. If Illyés too had been able to make the journey, then the full spectrum of contemporary Hungarian poetry would have gained a platform in Britain through its leading representatives. By then, all of them could count on published English translations, the majority exceptionally good, of a fair number of poems, primarily through the offices of *The New Hungarian Quarterly* and later the aforementioned Columbia UP anthology, though Weöres and Juhász had also shared a 1970 volume, *Selected Poems,* in the Penguin *Modern European Poets* series, which also included the likes of Prévert, Apollinaire, Rilke, Akhmatova, Zbigniew Herbert and Enzensberger. The literary editor, who had a big share in achieving this, after many years of work, and who was now simultaneously functioning as friend, organiser, route master, interpreter, M.C. and general psychological crutch, could take a certain pride in having made the right decision, enduring countless affronted protests, to reject, once and for all, the translation efforts that were offered in patriotic zeal by enthusiastic Hungarian-born dilettantes who were domiciled outside the country, in favour of publishing only the work of reputed Anglo-American poets, produced from rough translations. Poetry translations can only ever be done by a poet, and into his or her native tongue—that was, and remains to this day, this editor's unshakeable conviction. The exchanges of air-mail letters and international phone calls, and the occasional personal meetings that this protracted labour involved, even attracted the attention of the secret police, and in the course of an attempt to recruit him, the editor received dazzling offers of scholarships, financial support, even lengthy stays abroad, in return for supplying certain bits of intelligence... My widowed

mother, who had only been set free on a suspension, fled to America in 1956, and, as they controlled the licence to mutual visits, I was an easy target for blackmail—of which they did not fail to remind me. Only intervention by the editor-in-chief, who had friends in the highest quarters, rescued me from the fate of having to sacrifice my honour on the altar of poetry.

In the end, this trip to Great Britain turned out to be a veritable small triumphal procession for Hungarian poetry, even though the group was afflicted by a series of unexpected blows, absurd accidents and grotesque episodes. The most serious of these came on the very first evening and befell Pilinszky, who was mugged in a London street. This left its mark on the remainder of the tour, badly upsetting everyone to the point of frank hysterics. The next morning, István Vas, with whom I had been friendly for decades, and who was by no means the sort of man whom one would associate with physical violence, stepped up to me in the hotel lobby and, grabbing me by the lapels with astonishing ferocity, literally hoisted me off the ground with one arm as he hissed, "If any harm comes of this, I'll kill you!" He then tossed me aside like a rag and stalked off like the hero in some action film. I was so stunned that I couldn't get a word out. Later on, I realised that he was actually concerned for his wife, Piroska, who was accompanying him whilst still recovering from a heart attack. It looks as if I'm going to be held responsible even for blood clots forming, I thought to myself. Piroska, who was not only a first-rate painter who had more recently shown herself to be a witty writer into the bargain, but who also proved extremely effective as an author and purveyor of gossip, was right now playing both sides against the middle in the said quadrille, keeping the shifting alliances in constant motion.

Vas himself was the next victim. On the night before our appearance at the Riverside Studios in London, seen by all as the high spot of the tour, he slipped and fell whilst making his way to the bathroom, hitting his head on the corner of the wardrobe so badly that it was necessary to call a doctor at once. The nasty, heavily bleeding gash that he had received required several stitches, and the poet was ordered not to go on the stage the following day. That obliged Juhász to take his place in reading out Vas's poems in the original Hungarian.

The following day it was the turn of the Weöreses. In the middle of the night I was awoken by Amy's terrified voice on the phone. Three total strangers had broken into their room and were searching under the bed. "For God's sake do something right away!" By the time I reached the room the strangers had disappeared. This was repeated twice over, and only in the morning did I discover that whilst we had been away in Scotland and Wales, the hotel had, by mistake, double-booked the room to members of an Irish hurling team, who, in a blind-drunk state, had been looking in vain for a bag under the Weöreses' bed.

On the final evening we dined at the home of the extraordinarily helpful and kindly Hungarian cultural attaché, who had accompanied us throughout the trip. "I've heard so much from all of you," this truly decent man announced after the

meal, "that I should like you to hear a little something from us." Whereupon he and his equally delightful Russian wife produced a guitar, or maybe it was a balalaika, and set about singing a string of sentimental Soviet songs in Russian. So it was that a group of the giants of modern Hungarian poetry, doing all they could to avoid catching one another's eye, coughing and spluttering from suppressed laughter, came to be serenaded, in a scene worthy of the pen of a Mrožek or Örkény, slap bang in the middle of London's elegant Belgravia.

Later that night, Ferenc Juhász was roused from a sleeping pill-induced stupor by a loud banging on the door. Staggering to open it, he was confronted by two drunken Englishmen, who linked arms with him and, with shouts of glee, began to drag the protesting, pyjama-clad poet towards the lift. Juhász, who did not speak a word of English, said in the morning that it had taken every ounce of his strength to shake them off. I subsequently found out that a national convention of waste-paper dealers was being held in the hotel, and two tipsy dealers who were looking for a drinking companion had obviously mistaken the room number. I shall refrain from adding the obvious remark. Let it suffice to say that this episode was an appropriately surrealistic note on which to end the tour.

But to go back to that very first night: I was awakened at around two o'clock in the morning by a knocking on the door of my hotel room. A clearly shaken János Pilinszky, white as a sheet and trembling all over, stumbled in. "I've been robbed!", he muttered several times over, and then slumped onto the bed. Only with the greatest difficulty was I able to drag out of him what had happened. Following the big reception that had been thrown in our honour, Pilinszky had been taken by the poet Peter Jay, his publisher and one of his translators, to have a meal in Soho, then still a rather seedy district, full of bars, peepshows and porn-flick joints, as well as many decent little restaurants. They had to converse in French as János did not speak any English. Around midnight, Jay, who lived in Greenwich, suddenly leapt to his feet and, with a cry of "I'm going to miss the last train!", rushed off, leaving János, who had no idea where he was, to his own devices. He paid the bill, then left the restaurant to look for a taxi. From that point onwards, all he remembered was coming to on the pavement between two parked cars. What had happened—whether he had been struck or had just passed out—and how long he had lain on the ground, he couldn't say. He had hailed a taxicab, which had brought him back to the hotel, the name of which, fortunately, had lodged in his memory, but when he had come to pay the fare, he discovered that the more than six hundred pounds in cash he had brought with him from Hungary was missing from his wallet. The daily allowance that our hosts, the British Council, were giving us was still in his trouser pocket, so he had been able to pay the taxi driver. Nevertheless, by the time he reached this point in the story, tears were flooding from his eyes.

He was unable to account for the fact that the wallet had been placed back in the inside pocket of his jacket—a courtesy one does not usually associate with muggers. There was no obvious sign of violence on his body, so it seemed unlikely he had been knocked down. He did not know the name of either the restaurant or the street. There was a receipt for the six hundred pounds that he had purchased back home, so it was all above board, because he had been intending to buy for himself a hi-fi system and a large number of recordings of J. S. Bach's music. It was not so much the loss of the money that mortified him, he explained, more the brutal manner in which he had been stripped of it, an innocent made victim, and the stark reality of human nastiness.

"I need to phone my wife in Paris right away," he said suddenly (this was when he happened to be in his second marriage), and immediately picked up the receiver to ask the hotel switchboard, in French, to put him through to the number in Paris. I did not listen to the conversation as I went out into the corridor. Lines from Pilinszky's poems were running through my head, imagery of shocking power that conveys his horror of physical contact. And the two-liner "For Life": *"The bed is common. The pillow is not."* By the time I returned to the room, he was lying on my bed, somewhat calmer, in the foetal position.

"My love life, you know," he said in a near-whisper, with a sadly dismissive wave of the hand, "is a desert. A big nothing." That irresistibly put me in mind of the close of his great poem "The Desert of Love": *"And hope / is like a tin-cup toppled into the straw."* I sat down beside him and tried to console him. At this point he interrupted me in a reedy, high-pitched, almost childlike wailing tone to ask something extremely simple and touching: "Dear Miklós, would you be so kind as to stroke my head?" And then he closed his eyes.

I have to admit that this moved me almost to the point of bringing tears to my own eyes. I began stroking Pilinszky's head, but even in the midst of the emotions of the moment I could not help perceiving the situation in all its bizarreness. It crossed my mind that the last time I had stroked anyone's head, it had been that of my retriever, Zsuzsi, who had died ten years or so before; for her, too, a person could not give more. I grasped at once the pitch of suffering that he must have reached, the extremity of loneliness, for someone to yearn for an elemental human touch like that, for him to feel the need for comfort even from a not particularly close friend like myself. I was also well aware that had anyone else been in my place, János would have made the same request.

I don't know any grown-up man, myself included, who would be capable of that same degree of extreme self-revelation and unashamedness in *any* state of distress or moment of desperation or helplessness. At whatever cost, most of us maintain a sense of our own dignity, the carefully cultivated face that we turn to the outside world, to other people, until the day we die. This unforgettably weird and poignant moment suddenly also cast a new light on Pilinszky's poems. Their incomparable power derives from that same vulnerability of totally exposed frailty.

For a few minutes we remained there, wordless, on the hotel bed as I stroked János Pilinszky's head. Then the poet suddenly raised himself, grasped my hand and pressed it as he gazed at me with eyes closed. That's right, gazed at me. It was one of his habits to signal his thanks with his eyes closed and a silent play of his features, all accompanied by a slight, wry smile and a rapid series of tiny nods of the head. With that, he left the room.

The next morning I found a completely different Pilinszky down in the hotel lobby. He was relating his adventure to the others, with expansive gestures and almost laughing at himself. The Hungarian embassy had already been informed about the incident, whilst the consul had put in a call to the police. They interviewed János and took statements. For us it was then off to Glasgow, where we had a reading arranged for the following evening. On the train, János, who hardly ate anything but rather chain-smoked and drank one coffee after another, was soon sozzled. He was taking strong antidepressant medication, but we were unable to dissuade him from drinking. The whisky made him euphoric, and he looked as if he felt on top of the world, telling stories and chattering the entire journey, taking full benefit of everyone's wish to go easy on him and protect him.

Three days later, on returning to the hotel after the banquet that had been put on in Bangor following the reading there, our escort in Wales, as a parting gesture, handed over an envelope to János. She explained that the London newspapers had written up the incident in Soho, and the restaurant's staff, scandalised to hear about it, had made a collection in order to provide at least some slight compensation for the amount stolen from the Hungarian poet. There was £15 in the envelope. In Wales at that time, then undergoing a wave of renascent nationalism, it was not unusual for holiday cottages that had English owners to be targets for arson attacks. The restaurant's upright waiters and cooks, it appeared, were expressing solidarity with the sons of another suppressed small nation. János, somewhat tipsy again, was all but carried away by his feelings of deep gratitude and, seeing it as a message from Christ, stuffed the envelope in his pocket.

At breakfast the next day, Ágnes Nemes Nagy, who up till then had been the one rock of sobriety and sage calm amidst the upheavals going on within the group, informed János that he must return the gift.

"What are these Welsh going to think," she said, "if a Hungarian poet who is travelling with six compatriots, and with an official from the embassy on hand as well, feels obliged to accept financial assistance from them? That we couldn't do anything to help you? You must thank them for the handsome gesture, but you are going to give the money back—and straight away," she declared with a sternness that brooked no argument.

János leapt to his feet, white as a sheet.

"You want to drum up a kangaroo court over me!" he screeched. "A new Rajk trial! I protest! That money was given out of the best of intentions! For me to

hand it back would cut them to the quick, in just the same way as I was cut to the quick by the robbery!"

Ágnes was not one to be so readily deflected.

"Well, we all know that you, my angel, imagine you are Jesus Christ personified and think you can do anything you please. We are in a foreign country now, however." She called everyone who was close to her "my angel", it was a pet phrase with her. Having said which, she turned to the rest of us:

"We should vote on it. Everyone should speak their mind, because this affects each one of us. You start," and she pointed to Vas.

I have rarely heard such a pile of hot air and prevarication as then ensued from one mouth after the other. János did not even pay any attention, sunk as he was in his misery. Ágnes was right, of course, but everyone felt sorry for János, and no one had the heart to force him to return the money, but then again no one dared or wished to say that out loud and clear.

Ágnes understood this perfectly well from all the cavilling. She cast a withering look around at us and got up from the table.

On the train back to London, where five appearances had been lined up for us, János was again the worse for drink. He asked me to tell the British Council representative that he did not wish to have any part in the remainder of the tour and was going to fly back to Budapest the next day. Meanwhile, would they arrange to send a psychiatrist to see him in the hotel that evening. Shortly after that, he added that as soon as we reached London he was going to put in a call to Aczél and inform him that he was not going to accept the Kossuth Prize that he had been awarded. That was the only means of protest he could think of: to deprive himself of a great satisfaction.

Needless to say, I did not comply with his request. I did not pass on his message. I guess he did not put in that call to Aczél either; at any rate, he did accept the Kossuth Prize. Once we were back in London, he was again caught up by the urge to appear in public and its attendant delights. On each occasion he was entirely transfigured; the irresistible manner in which he delivered his poems, rough as it may have been at the edges, and the indefinable aura that radiated from his personality were a huge hit with audiences, even amongst those who did not understand a word of the poems in their original language.

I do not know if he left any written record of that bizarre journey, which in his own mind, of course, he immediately assimilated as yet another station on his personal calvary. He died one year later, just as he was preparing to travel to London again to take part in an international poetry festival. Maybe this time, struggling with another poem, he just could not let the discus go, and flew away holding on to it. ❧

Lajos Koncz

Ted Hughes and János Pilinszky

In the 1960s as a medical student in Munich, Germany, I befriended two talented young Hungarian poets living in exile: Gábor Bikich and János Csokits. On one occasion in late 1967, Csokits and Bikich were discussing the problems of translating poetry, critiquing a book of Dylan Thomas' poems translated into Hungarian. During the conversation Csokits mentioned an English poet by the name of Ted Hughes who has expressed interest in translating contemporary Hungarian poetry and asked him (János Csokits) to aquaint him with the works of some young Hungarian poets. The name of János Pilinszky was among them. Csokits regarded this as a major breakthrough in trying to break the linguistic isolation of Hungarian poetry in the English speaking world. His point was that only a great poet can translate poetry written in another language.

In those days in Germany I was not familiar with the name of Ted Hughes, and Pilinszky's name was just beginning to be known to Hungarians living outside Hungary. Only after I was transplanted to the United States did I learn that Ted Hughes was indeed well known, also as being the husband of Sylvia Plath. In the meantime, the Communist repression was eased and books published in Hungary could be purchased in the West. It was in Boston that I bought books of Pilinszky's poetry such as *Rekviem* (Requiem) and *Nagyvárosi ikonok* (Metropolitan Icons).

In 1972 a group of Hungarian-American students and intellectuals at Harvard University formed a cultural society later called Harvard Circle, with the purpose of inviting Hungarian lecturers in arts and sciences. It was my task to organize presentations, and in 1974 I invited my friend from Munich, János Csokits, to share his poetry with us. He was in the process of moving to London and he could not fit in a trip to America. He suggested that I invite Pilinszky instead and offered to speak to him. He did, and Pilinszky accepted the invitation.

Lajos Koncz

is a physician and community leader, living near Boston, Mass. He has published articles on Hungartian literature, music and 20th-century history.

At that time, WGBH, one of Boston's Public Radio stations, had a weekly programme featuring poetry in translation. Poems were read in the original language, followed by the English translation. We were preparing a programme of Hungarian poetry and I remembered the project I heard of in Munich: Ted Hughes translating János Pilinszky. I asked János Csokits where the project stood and whether Pilinszky could bring some translations with him, if they existed. Indeed it turned out that the project was nearing completion, but neither Pilinszky nor Csokits had any of the completed poems. Csokits promised that he will try to get the translations to Boston by Pilinszky's arrival.

In his book published in 1992 in Budapest[1], János Csokits gave an account of his friendship with both Pilinszky and Ted Hughes. He described how he met Ted and Sylvia Hughes in 1960, and how subsequently Ted Hughes told him of his plan to start a journal with contemporary poetry in translation. In January 1967 Hughes and Csokits decided to compile a Hungarian volume in the series "Modern Poetry in Translation". Csokits was supposed to do the "raw" translations, and he started out with the poems of Pilinszky.

János Csokits met Pilinszky later that same year in Paris. They spent much time compiling a list of poems Pilinszky wanted to include in the anthology. Later they could only meet or correspond when Pilinszky travelled to the West. To correspond from behind the Iron Curtain with an emigrée poet like Csokits, who was in the employ of Radio Free Europe and later the BBC, was dangerous.

During a visit to England in 1970 Pilinszky met Ted Hughes and together they read poems in the original and in English at an international literary event. In 1971 Hughes showed the first few "finished products" to Csokits and told him about his plan to publish a book of Pilinszky's English poems with Carcanet Press.[2] Ted Hughes was fascinated with Pilinszky's poetry and while the idea of a Hungarian anthology as part of MPT became stranded forever, Hughes continued to press Csokits for more and more accurate, word for word translations. Finally in 1974 it seemed the Pilinszky volume was in sight. Ted Hughes felt that most translations were final and he and Csokits focused on the Introduction to the book. After so many years, János Pilinszky, however, was loosing faith. "I don't even dare to ask any more what the status of my book is", he wrote to János Csokits in his letter in which he is asking him for the translations of Ted Hughes one month before his trip to America.

A few days after János Pilinszky arrived in Boston, a big envelope came in the mail from Ted Hughes with 22 poems and a long letter in which Hughes gave a personal account of the labour and love that is behind the translations. It also

1 ■ Csokits János: *Pilinszky Nyugaton. A költő 32 levelével* (Pilinszky in the West. With 32 letters of the poet), Századvég, 1992.

2 ■ János Pilinszky: *Selected Poems,* translated by Ted Hughes & János Csokits, Carcanet New Press, Manchester, appeared in 1976 with 44 poems.

documented to me what an important role János Csokits had played in transmitting "the peculiar qualities and tensions of [Pilinszky's] language, and his technical form", based on which Hughes created these English poems.

2nd April 75

Court Green
North Tawton
Devon

Dear Dr Koncz,

I understand Janos Pilinszky is coming to stay with you toward the end of this month. He asked me, through Janos Csokits who now lives in London, to send you some of the English translations we have made of a selection of his poems. Here they are.

As you will see, they are pretty literal. In fact my co-translator, Janos Csokits, has let me get away with very little. He insisted on the closest verbal accuracy. This was very much to my own taste. We have tinkered with most of them for nearly eight years. Quite a few of them now satisfy me completely as English poems. I am extremely pleased with them. Others—particularly the longer ones, French Prisoner, Frankfurt 1945—are at least accurate and effective, though I feel I could go on altering and adjusting my versions of them forever. Aprocrypha [sic!], which seems to me the very greatest, and certainly the most crucial poem in the group we have tackled, is beyond translation. However, the vision in it is somehow so powerful that any reader perceives immediately what a great and beautiful statement it is—even in the roughest word for word crib.

According to Pilinszky's request, I am sending you what seem to me the best translations. There is no point in reading to American listeners translations which are simply poor, and the Hungarian listeners can appreciate the originals. Later on, when the book comes out, I will see you get a copy. There seems a good possibility of getting the book published in the States, later on.

Everything about this book has been delayed, year after year. But in the end that has been an advantage. It's only during this last year that I've got the best into a final form.

The real excellences of Pilinszky—the peculiar qualities and tensions of his language, and his technical form—of which I have acquired a very strong impression, even though I know no Hungarian, are beyond me, naturally, and obviously cannot be approximated. What I concentrated on was his overall tone, as I understand it, and the vision which the poems transmit so clearly and strongly, and which seem to me unique. I am aware, even in the shorter poems, that Janos Pilinszky has touched an unusual sort of greatness—one which seems to touch me very closely.

Please give him my love. I hope we shall see him soon.

Yours
Ted Hughes

p.s. Do you know Agatha Fassett?
If you do, please give her my love too.[3]

The poems were carbon copies of the typed manuscript, numbered according to their sequence as they later appeared in the book, each poem on a separate

3 ■ Friend of Béla and Ditta Bartók. Author of an excellent account of Béla Bartók's American years: *The Naked Face of Genius.* She was still alive but confined to a nursing home in Brookline, Massachusetts.

page. Each page bears the inscription: Translated by Janos Csokits and Ted Hughes (in that order).

The poems were: (3) Under the Winter Sky; (4) Harbach 1944; (6) What Underground Struggle; (7) Sin; (8) World Grown Cold; (13) Passion of Ravensbück; (15) Impromtu; (16) The Desert of Love; (17) Revelations VIII. 7.; (20) Under a Portrait; (22) Unfinished Past; (24) Epilogue; (25) Fable; (26) Introitus; (27) Van Gogh; (28) The Passion; (29) As I Was; (30) Crime and Punishment; (31) Exhortation; (33) My Coat of Arms; (35) Enough; (36) Straight Labyrinth.

I well remember how extatic Pilinszky was seeing his poetry in English. Although he did not speak a word of English, he considered the English translations as far outweighing in importance any other translations (including those of Pierre Emmanuel). One of the reasons was his admiration of the sheer number of people who speak English on this earth. "Half the world speaks English"; he used to say.

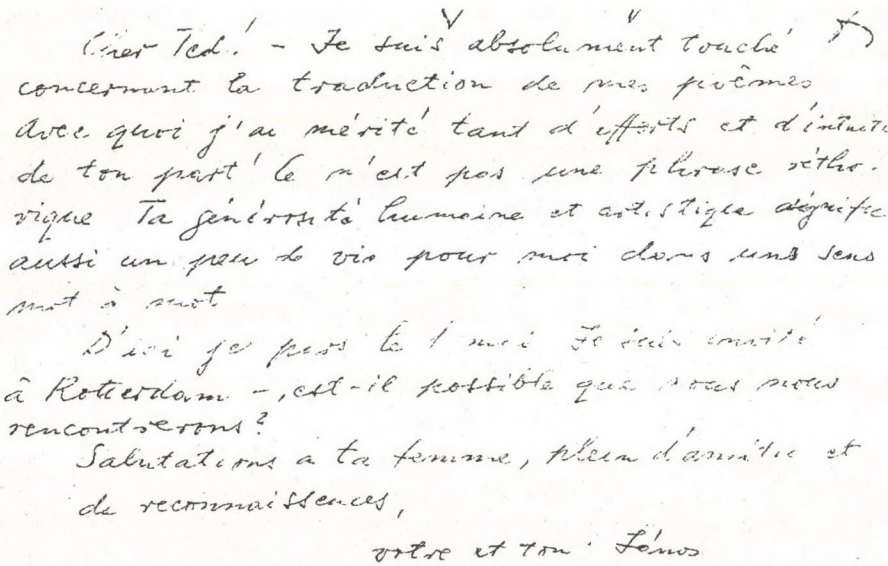
He asked us repeatedly to read the English rendition aloud and questioned us about the wider meaning of one word or another. In a handwritten note I thanked Hughes for his letter and the translations. Pilinszky joined me on the same paper with a few words of thanks of his own:

Cher Ted!—Je suis absolument touché concernant la traduction de mes poèmes. Avec quoi j'ai mérité tant d'efforts et d'intuition de ton part! Ce n'est pas une phrase réthorique. Ta générosité humaine et artistique dignifie aussi un peu de vie pour moi dans un sens mot à mot.

D'ici je pars le 1 mai. Je suis invité à Rotterdam—, est-il possible que nous nous rencontrerons?

Salutations à ta femme, plein d'amitié et de reconnaissences,

votre et ton: János


Cher Ted! - Je suis absolument touché
concernant la traduction de mes poèmes
avec quoi j'ai mérité tant d'efforts et d'intuition
de ton part! Ce n'est pas une phrase réthorique
Ta générosité humaine et artistique dignifie
aussi un peu de vie pour moi dans un sens
mot à mot
D'ici je pars le 1 mai. Je suis invité
à Rotterdam -, est-il possible que nous nous
rencontrerons?
Salutations à ta femme, plein d'amitié et
de reconnaissences,
votre et ton: János

Ágnes R. Várkonyi

The Common Cause of Europe

Ferenc Rákóczi II's War of Independence

Early in May 1703, Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676–1735), Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, and Count Miklós Bercsényi (1665–1725), High Sheriff of the County of Ung, issued a general order from the castle of Brezan in Poland, informing the people of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania that they were launching a war of independence in order to regain national independence from the Habsburg monarchs, who had integrated the country into their empire and who were keeping it under military occupation. A copy of the manifesto in Latin is in the Public Records Office in London. This was obtained by George Stepney (1663–1707), the English Ambassador to Vienna, who sent it, with a report dated 22 June, to the English court. At that time the situation in Hungary was still insecure; the nobility had locked themselves in their castles; the Imperial garrisons had received orders to put down the "rebellion". But London was well informed: in June 1703, Number 14 of the *Post Man* reported that the inscription on the flags was "With God, for Country and Liberty!" All Europe took notice of the events in Hungary in 1703.

Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II issued a manifesto early in 1704 informing foreign countries that the population of Hungary had taken up arms in order to gain the right to self-determination. The manifesto was addressed to *Universis Orbis Christiani principibus et respublicis*—to all the princes and commonwealths of the Christian world—that is, Rákóczi laid the cause of Hungary on the common table of Europe. It is less well known that, at the same time, the Prince specified his objective as a service rendered by independent Hungary to the cause of Europe. In his own words: "We are exerting ourselves so that, by regaining the

---

Ágnes R. Várkonyi

is Professor Emeritus at the Department of Mediaeval and Early Modern History at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Her many publications include books on Transylvania in the 17–18th centuries, on the Turkish occupation in Hungary and on Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II.

freedom of our country, we shall be able to serve not only our own nation, but the common cause of Europe as well."

The Hungarian war of independence was a determining factor in the European military power relations at the time of the War of the Spanish Succession. It kept some 20 to 40,000 men of the Habsburg Empire's armed forces for eight years in Hungary. With some exaggeration, perhaps, the French historian Pierre Chaunu said that Rákóczi's war of independence "saved France from complete destruction". Nor was Karl Otmar von Aretin, a German authority on the period, of a different opinion when he declared that "the allies failed, and ultimately France got out of the war unscathed". It is the more surprising that Rakóczi spoke of something more important, the common cause and interest of Europe.

The notion of the common interest of Europe can be well elucidated by two opinions, formed at two extreme points of Europe. In the summer of 1700, on the threshold of the War of the Spanish Succession, Rákóczi's impression was that "whether the French or the Habsburgs win this present war, the European balance of power will be upset." In the very same year, Daniel Defoe not only indicated a political tendency, but summed up past experience when he declared that "a just Balance of Power is the Life of Peace."

The balance of power became a guiding principle of political practice in the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The mutual relations of large empires and small countries were to be settled in a way that allowed the peoples of Europe to live in peace and to trade with one another undisturbed. *Pax sit Christiana, Universalis et Perpetua*—this was the Westphalian principle to be cited in the peace treaty of Utrecht concluding the War of the Spanish Succession, also cited, more than once, by the Prince.

In several respects the Peace of Westphalia was of historic importance to Hungary, then still divided into three. On the one hand, the Principality of Transylvania was allotted a place in the Treaty of Westphalia. It was used as an argument by Ferenc Rákóczi II and his diplomats, in the context of international law, that the Principality, as an ally of France and Sweden in the Thirty Years' War, was included in the universal European peace treaty, and this fact was recognised by Ferdinand III, King of Hungary (the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II). Transylvania, then still a protectorate of the Ottoman Empire, established its diplomatic and cultural relations with the Christian world very systematically, it gave shelter to all persecuted peoples and denominations, was tolerant in its religious policies, and could handle the Ottoman problem, consequently it was regarded as a stabilizing factor in the area.

On the other hand, 1648 was of decisive significance in the history of Hungary, since the Peace of Westphalia made it possible for Christendom to unite its material and spiritual resources and push back the frontier of the Ottoman Empire half a century later from the middle of Hungary to the threshold of the Balkans. However, there was a most vulnerable spot in the peace treaty, namely, the area

now called Central Europe. Bohemia was an absolute loser, Poland lived under constant threat, the Eastern region, bordering on the Ottoman Empire, formed a critical zone ranging from the Ukraine to Croatia, with focal points of social and political tension and occasional outbreaks of armed conflict. What was generally expected of the Treaty of Westphalia all over Europe was that the Christian countries would make up their differences and, uniting their forces, would turn against the Ottomans. However, there was no agreement between the Hungarian political élite and the policy makers of the Habsburg Empire with regard to the Turkish war. In the interest of Hungary and Transylvania, it was desirable to get rid of the Turks in the area. At the price of enormous sacrifices, Miklós Zrínyi (1620–1664), Ban of Croatia, and his circle managed to form an international alliance including Leopold, the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary, and in 1663–1664 an offensive was launched with the participation of French auxiliary forces. A powerful group at the Habsburg court, however, opposed this scheme and insisted on maintaining the status quo, concluding a peace treaty behind the backs of the allies. Since the Treaty of Westphalia had limited the power of the Holy Roman Emperor over the German principalities, the Habsburgs, in the spirit of absolutism, fortified their positions, building up an integrated empire in keeping with raison d'état, *ragion di stato* notions. The Turkish–Habsburg trade agreement concluded after the Peace of Vasvár (Eisenburg), the establishment of the Orientalische Handelscompagnie, the Wiener Kommerzkollegium, the standing army, the bureaucracy, the regulated diplomacy, the forms of the monarch's self-expression, and the Baroque pomp of representation all served the formation of a strong, great power. As Jean Béranger pointed out, "public revenue rose from a yearly 4 million to 16 Rhenish florins", and the "dance of the millions" began only in the course of the Turkish campaign that followed the siege of Vienna.

Two wasted decades and the establishment of Habsburg absolutism created what a contemporary Hungarian writer called a labyrinth. Trying to find ways out, and fighting for survival, the country suffered immense damage, but it did not collapse. It profited from the European situation and the possibilities inherent in the politically divided state of the élite, it made compromises, and very consistently used its opportunities in trading; the demand for salt, copper, wine and cattle did not diminish, and prices were rising. What the country sacrificed in wealth and men in the war for the recapture of Turkish-occupied territories was out of all proportion to the number of its inhabitants, estimated at roughly 4 million. Under the terms of a secret agreement, the Principality of Transylvania supplied Hungary with considerable sums of money and provisions to help the country to free itself from the Oriental despot, whose rule had been established a century and a half earlier. The dwindling of the European influence of Ottoman power affected not only Hungary but Poland, Moldavia, Wallachia, Russia, and even Sweden, and changed the power relations in the area. It became evident that the negotiatiors of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia had failed to ask what

was going to happen to the Eastern region of Central Europe after the expulsion of the Turks. This, together with the fact that the King of Spain made the grandchild of Louis XIV heir to his empire, produced new conditions for the interpretation of the balance of power and speeded up the reshuffling of power relations. It was in the interests of establishing a balance of power that England and the Netherlands decided to side not with France but with the Casa Austriaca in the all-European War of the Spanish Succession.

At this time Hungary was facing two historic challenges. One was the arrangements that had to be made after the expulsion of the Turks, and the other was the place the country would occupy in the new Europe.

One solution was the Habsburg scheme. Neglecting many well-known facts, I focus on two circumstances only. One was the integration of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania into the Habsburg Empire. The national and local secular and ecclesiastic, civil and military institutions of self-determination were abolished. The economic and intellectual bases of independence were eliminated. The constitution was altered. The elective monarchy was changed into a hereditary monarchy of the Casa Austriaca in an agreement with the chief estates of the land, according to which the King was to put the Hungarians in charge of reorganising the country reconquered from the Turks. However, the royal word was not kept. Governmental organisations of long historical standing, such as the counties, the municipal magistracies, the high dignitaries of the Kingdom, and the Chancellery of Transylvania were attached to the policy-making central offices of the Empire. Hungarians were excluded from the peace negotiations at Karlowitz (1698–1699), in spite of laws to the contrary (1662, 1681, 1687). Sir Willam Paget, the English envoy and the mediator of the negotiations, was intent on getting the right to national self-determination registered for the Principality of Transylvania in the text of the peace treaty, as the Emperor Leopold had guaranteed several times (1687, 1690, 1691). Nevertheless, the document of the peace treaty declared the Principality to be the Emperor's by right of arms. Rákóczi's manifesto spoke of the Peace of Karlowitz saying *"sine nobis de nobis concluduntur"*: a decision has been taken concerning us, but without us.

Another consequence of Habsburg rule was that, in spite of all its good intentions, the central power was unable to secure domestic peace and the functioning of the state. The civil and military sectors of government took mutually contradictory decisions; as a result of trade monopolies, taxes raised to two, and later four million Rhenish florins, and military tyranny, substantial sections of the population were marginalised and social differences came to be intensified excessively. Anarchy became the rule, and smaller and bigger riots broke out, for the handling of which the government could find no other means than the force of arms. Violence, repression, the gallows, prison, the scaffold—all these produced a situation close to civil war. What the Peace of Karlowitz had settled on

an international level appeared to be put into practice in the War of the Spanish Succession: the Imperial regiments sent to the Rhine were brought up to full strength by soldiers recruited in Hungary. Hungary was no longer present in Europe as a state in its own right, while its material resources and manpower were used in support of a great power.

The other solution was to create Hungarian national independence, or, in the language of the period "the freedom of the Hungarian nation". Rákóczi and his circle, noblemen and aristocrats educated at universities in Western Europe, and burghers from the towns engaged in trade and other enterprises, had to act under pressure. They faced a genuine problem, one that affected the existence of the country. What ideas they had in mind can be seen from Rákóczi's and Bercsényi's memoranda. Their plans, presented between 1700 and 1702 to the kings of France and Poland, show that they were intent on getting the rights of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania to self-determination included in the peace treaty that was to conclude the European war. France and Poland were to form an alliance with the new government of Hungary, which was to be included in the general peace. A legitimate government could be set up only after the liberation of the country from the Imperial forces occupying it. When the scheme was uncovered, Bercsényi fled to Poland, where he was joined by Rákóczi, who had managed to escape from prison in Wiener Neustadt. There they lived in hiding, unable to get money, to recruit soldiers, or to gain diplomatic support.

One single opportunity offered itself in the spring of 1703, when Tamás Esze (?–1708), a former serf engaged in the salt trade, Albert Kis (?–1704), a deserter wanted as a highwayman, and a few men of the lesser nobility called on Rákóczi and informed him that in the North-Eastern part of Hungary, in the Upper Tisza region, an uprising was in preparation: "Rural folk were ready, all they needed was a leader." Rákóczi was fully aware of the risk he was taking. Here are a few of his phrases illustrating his position: "I have done something that is against all reason", and yet he crossed "the borderline of reason", just as "Caesar crossed the Rubicon". The essence of his act is best expressed in the following phrase: "I have saved my beloved country from the attack of the robbers". Indeed, if he had not used this last chance in the spring of 1703, the country would have been plunged into a bloody civil war.

Rákóczi and his staff were faced with a peculiar task. Out of a popular uprising they organised a nation-wide war of independence, and with the help of this war of independence, started by the lowest social strata, they brought about a new Hungarian state. They knew that it was impossible to carry on the political system of Hungary from the point where the existence of the medieval country had been broken off after the defeat by the Turks at the disastrous Battle of Mohács (1526).

As a statesman, Rákóczi, in a peculiar way, combined in his own person Hungarian traditions and modern European requirements. From early childhood he had been brought up to rule, in the tradition of his predecessors, the Princes of Transylvania. Later, in a Jesuit college in Bohemia and at the University of Prague, where he studied with the sons of the court aristocracy of the Viennese Burg, he was prepared for carrying out the duties of a modern statesman. Those who worked with him had studied the authorities on governance of the day—Bodin, Machiavelli, Justus Lipsius, Grotius and Puffendorf—and relied on their own experience. In contemporary Hungarian politics there was a genuine current which called for reforms if the reuniting of the country was to be in the spirit of the times.

From the very moment that the flags were unfurled, the laying of the foundations for the reconstruction of the country was begun. Rákóczi's first orders forbade anyone to take the law into his own hands. Even in his first general order, issued from the castle of Brezan in Poland, calling men to the colours to defend the country from external forces and their supporters, he demanded of the riff-raff who were to be his troops "to keep their equanimity". He had to establish discipline, win over the nobility, organise the provisioning of his army, organise the economy and the civil administration, return the confiscated estates, establish trade, start minting money, and so on. Here I mention only a few important facts. The central bodies of policy making were established, such as the Consilium Aulicum (Conseil d'État), or ministry. Its members were recruited from a class whose erudition and refined manners could be counted on. They were familiar with contemporary writings on political theory, and they collected and copied out an immense amount of material which contained vast information on politics, covering the whole continent from Poland to Spain, from France to the Ottoman Empire. They kept in close touch with the Protestant countries, England and the Netherlands, and the Swedish and Prussian royal courts. With their command of languages, their practical experience in legal and administrative matters, their varied political past and substantial fund of learning and their open minds and creativity, they represented a precious type of the Hungarian lesser nobility. Outstanding amongst them were Pál Ráday, in charge of the Chancellery and the diplomatic service, and the most significant capitalist entrepreneur and director of the mines, Gottfried Hellenbach. In building up the diplomatic service, Rákóczi had to start from scratch and was not always able to find the right man for the right place. After 1705, the work of the Consilium Aulicum was taken over by the Senate. The Consilium Oeconomicum was in charge of managing the economy of the country, which was facing grave financial difficulties. The staff-officers of the army came from the aristocracy; some of them had served in the Imperial forces, including Count Antal Esterházy and Count Simon Forgách, who was noted for his theoretical qualifications; others, such as Baron Sándor Károlyi, had been county high sheriffs. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, the Transdanubian area was taken in the autumn of 1705

by the most gifted commander, General János Bottyán, who had risen from the ranks serving in the border fortresses. The organisation of a standing army was begun, on the understanding that serfs taking up arms, their families and descendants, were emancipated from seignioral bondage. A complaints office was set up and, as shown by the approximately two thousand documents known today, the serfs, the poor, the beggars, the orphans, the widows and the wounded soldiers who had made complaints or submitted petitions received a written answer signed by the Prince, generally within a month. A new formula was found for the national corporate body, observing the Dutch, Swiss and Portuguese models, the confederation of the four orders united to fight for liberty, the lords temporal and spiritual. The counties and the city burghers were joined by the representatives of two, so far unprivileged, estates, those of the market towns and the armed forces. At the Diet of Szécsény (1705) a law was passed to ensure freedom of conscience. The debate among the different denominations over the ownership of the churches was settled. The church building was allotted to the majority, but with the proviso that the latter were obliged to build a new church for the minority. Since the churches were the centres of vernacular culture in Hungary where several ethnic groups lived side by side, this law was rightly called by Hungarian historian Kálmán Benda the first law in Europe to protect minorities. Rákóczi's governing body changed the system of taxation, which meant that, in proportion to their income, the nobility also had to pay their share of taxes. All this involved tremendous difficulties in a war fought against the Habsburgs, who had the best army and the best diplomatic and information service in Europe, while Rákóczi had to rely on the two million "holds" of his landed estates (one "hold" equalling 0.57 hectare) and some financial and military aid granted by France.

In the spring of 1705, the Emperor Leopold died, and as soon as his son Joseph I ascended the throne he dismissed his father's aged counsellors. He declared that the Hungarians had good reason to rise up in arms to fight for their liberty, and he was ready to carry on negotiations to arrive at an understanding with Hungary as a state, with English and Dutch mediation. Rákóczi, who had been elected Prince of Transylvania in the middle of 1704 by the Diet of the Estates of Transylvania in Gyulafehérvár (Alba Julia), insisted in particular on the restoration of the constitution of the Kingdom of Hungary and the independence of the Principality of Transylvania. This, however, was detrimental to the interests of the Casa Austriaca. When characterising the Hungarian situation in a letter to Archduke Charles, Joseph's younger brother, who was fighting in Barcelona, Chancellor Wenzel Wratislaw also resorted to the often used metaphor of the times: "We have got into a terrible Labyrinth."

On the given level of civilisation, all that was happening in Hungary was in harmony with the developments in the rest of Europe. Just one example: In 1707 the Diet of the Hungarian Confederation convoked at Ónod refused, not quite

independently of French instigation, to accept Joseph I as hereditary king of Hungary, when his younger brother Archduke Charles was elected king of Spain. It was not Rákóczi alone who had an integrating view of modern Europe then in the process of taking shape. His dictum that "the freedom of the country can be secured only if the neighbour gives his consent to it" appears to be a set phrase taken from the political tracts of the period. From the very first months of his war of independence to the very end, even in Turkish exile at Rodosto, Rákóczi kept sketching out plans for a confederation of the countries of the Central European region. He may have been repeating earlier ideas, or—as the historian Gyula Szekfű believed—he may have been ahead of his time. There is, however, more than that in his ambassadorial credentials and proposals for alliance, sent to the Polish, Prussian and Swedish courts early in 1704. He suggested that the precarious European balance of power resulting from the confrontation of the two great powers could be recovered by a confederation of the states liberated from Ottoman influence. When Rákóczi spoke about attaining a European balance of power he probably thought of it as the task of the Central European region. Or, perhaps more correctly, he regarded it as a condition for the self-determination of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania.

Rákóczi established the governing body of Transylvania, the Consilium Transylvanicum, in 1704. The measures taken centrally, for example, with regard to the right to mint money, to trade, or to a central fiscal administration, were valid for Transylvania as well. As pointed out recently, there were some 20,000 Transylvanian soldiers, including Romanians, in Rákóczi's army. The decision he took with regard to the emancipation of serfs under arms is well documented by an appeal from the serfs of Marosszék: "We heard about his goodly promise to emancipate the serfs under arms, if he can manage to obtain the country." However, the Principality preserved its national institutions established in the course of history: the common diet of the Hungarian counties; the Székely *"szék"*s (districts); and Saxon Towns and lands ("universities"—*universitas Saxorum*). As decreed by the Diet of Huszt, held in the spring of 1706, the Principality was allied in a confederation with Rákóczi's Hungarian state. In spite of heavy military losses, the Diet of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) installed Rákóczi as Prince of Transylvania in the spring of 1707. It was then that the Prince established the Society of Noble Youths in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Klausenburg), which was intended to train the civil and military leaders of the two countries. Young men from Hungary and Transylvania were among its members, youths of Hungarian, Székely, German and Romanian origin. One of these was Kelemen Mikes, then 17 years old, who later followed Rákóczi into exile in Turkey, where he wrote a splendid memoir in the form of letters to a non-existent aunt. As Zsolt Trócsányi points out, "the traditions of a century and a half and considerations of the actual realities of the period went into the making of Rákóczi's Transylvanian state, the quality of which testifies to the gifts of an extraordinary ruler".

As decreed by the Diet of Huszt, the Principality of Transylvania was linked by confederation to the Kingdom, on the understanding that the two states, maintaining their self-determination, would harmonise their views concerning the peace negotiations, and the Kingdom and Transylvania would not conclude a peace treaty without mutual consent. As regarded Sweden, Prussia and Poland, Rákóczi asked these states to guarantee the inclusion of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania in the general peace. In his capacity as Prince of Transylvania he was acknowledged as the head of a state by the King of France; nor did the English and Dutch peace mediators disregard his title.

From 1704 onwards England and the Netherlands were increasingly active in trying to settle affairs in Hungary. They regarded the Protestants as their brethren. They granted the Habsburgs loans, which were covered by the output from the copper and quicksilver mines of Hungary and Transylvania. Pamphleteers dipped their pens in vitriol, protesting that the Duke of Marlborough's soldiers should not shed their blood for the Habsburg Empire. However, the vast numbers of documents tend to prove that the increasing sympathy for a Hungary fighting for its liberty was due to the recognition of the fact that, in the long run, the country's liberty might be a factor in establishing the European balance of power. As indicated by his personal papers, George Stepney, the English Ambassador in Vienna and the mediator of the peace negotiations, carried out the most systematic, almost scholarly, research in order to get a realistic picture of the conditions in Hungary and Transylvania. When the negotiations were broken off in July 1706, in Stepney's opinion as a result of the too rigid attitude of the Hofburg, he sent a report from Nagyszombat (Trnava) to Minister Harley, concluding that since the Habsburg court would not consent to the Principality of Transylvania retaining its independence, "this is laying the Axe to the Root of the Tree and any man who has had the happiness of living under a free Government cannot but be a little concerned to see a poor people (where 5 parts of 6 are of the Reform'd Churches) depriv'd of their Liberties at one Blow, and given up to servitude and future persecution, notwithstanding a Powerfull Mediation, of the same Profession with themselves, has been pleased to appear on their behalf." The significance of the historic moment was well expressed by Richard Warre, Under-Secretary of State, namely, that the breakdown of the negotiations, and the failure to bring about a peace with guarantees because of the militarist circles of the Imperial Court, would be detrimental to the "common Cause of Europe".

Though several plans were made for a French–Hungarian alliance, France never concluded one with Rákóczi, while the Russian–Hungarian league of 1707 essentially proved to be of no use. However, it is characteristic of Rákóczi's view of Europe as a uniform whole that he initiated and tirelessly carried on diplomatic efforts to bring about a French–Russian alliance, which, in his own words, should have been "a construct of world-wide political significance".

In 1708 the armed forces of the Hungarian Confederation lost a decisive battle, yielding to the superior numbers of the enemy. As regards the reforms accepted at the Diet of Sárospatak, there was neither the money nor the time to realise them. Nor was the country spared the ravages of the plague which was devastating all of Europe. The Hungarian and Transylvanian confederation, confined to a narrower field, had to take up a defensive position with a view to preserving the corporate body of the state. As soon as the peace conferences of the Hague (1709) and Gertruydenberg (1710) made it evident that Europe was preparing for peace, Rákóczi initiated negotiations with the Habsburg government in August 1710, in the hope that he would be able to conclude the war with an internationally guaranteed universal peace treaty in which Hungary and Transylvania would be included as countries in their own right. He informed Queen Anne to this effect. She sent a special envoy to Vienna, Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough (1658–1735), to act as mediator in the negotiations. However, he achieved little, even with the help of the English and Dutch ambassadors to Vienna. Still, he had a share in attaining what Rákóczi and his Senate so persistently demanded; Prince Eugene of Savoy, the head of the War Council, came to realise that it was not possible to vanquish Hungary by force of arms. The commander-in-chief of the Imperial army, Count János Pálffy, Ban of Croatia, contracted a formal peace with General Sándor Károlyi on 29 April 1711. The Peace Treaty of Szatmár (Satu Mare) was a compromise; it prolonged Habsburg rule in Hungary and the existence of the feudal national institutions of the Kingdom of Hungary.

The war of independence saved Hungary from being integrated into the Habsburg Empire. However, Rákóczi refused to accept the Szatmár agreement. From Poland he went to France, still hoping that he might get Transylvania included in the peace treaties concluding the War of the Spanish Succession. But there was no chance of that at the negotiations, either in Utrecht (1713) or Rastatt (1714). A great deal of what the state of Rákóczi's war of independence aimed at was attained only as late as the "Age of Reform" (1825–1847) and the revolution and war of independence of 1848/49. The Central European Confederation conceived in the spririt of Westphalia became a memory and a future hope. The surviving leaders of Rákóczi's war of independence were given shelter by Turkey. The life of the Hungarians in Rodostó was recorded by Kelemen Mikes. He drew a true portrait of the Prince, who continued firm in his belief that a European balance of power was the only means to secure the peace of Hungary.

The memory of Prince Rákóczi's war of independence became deeply imbedded in the cultural traditions of the Hungarian and other nations living in the Carpathian Basin. Poems by great Hungarian poets, like Ferenc Kölcsey, Sándor Petőfi, János Arany, Endre Ady, Attila József, István Vas also prove this. His likeness, his personality and the events of his war were depicted by Ádám Mányoki, Viktor Madarász, Simon Hollósy and other, known and unknown painters. The tunes of the war became immortalised by the Marche de Rákóczi by Berlioz and Liszt's Rákóczi March. ❧

R. J. W. Evans

Hungary in the Habsburg Monarchy in the Nineteenth Century

The British Dimension[1]

Much distinguished work on the history of Anglo-Hungarian contacts has been accomplished over the last 100 years, since Lajos Kropf, an erudite immigrant engineer settled in London, and Arthur Yolland, a young professor of English in Budapest, began to take an interest in the subject during the years around 1900. It was always strongest on themes of culture—especially what is nowadays called political culture—and literature, and dominated by contributions from the Hungarian side: from Sándor Fest, the pioneering Anglicist at Debrecen, the scholar-littérateur István Gál and the great lexicographer László Országh to the more recent expertise of Tibor Frank and Géza Jeszenszky, besides surveys by Aurél Varannai and Lóránt Czigány of interactions in the sphere of creative writing. The more narrowly British share in such research, led by George Cushing, has been far more modest.[2] I do not propose to retrace that ground directly, but rather to concentrate on the issues raised in this context by Hungary's shifting relationship with the rest of the Austrian Monarchy, on what might therefore be called the British co-ordinates of Dualism. What follows is a sketch from the years of the two states' closest co-operation, in the wars against Revolutionary and then Napoleonic France, to the eve of the widest breach, which was opened up between them by the war of 1914. More stress will be laid on the British side of the picture—not least because, however marginal Hungary might be to the country's public life, British attitudes enjoyed far greater international resonance. But I shall also seek at least to hint at certain Hungarian views which represent a kind of counterpoint.

British observers at the beginning of the period entertained two basic perceptions which might overlap, but seemed essentially incompatible: Hungary *as country* and Hungary *as province*. The former had been sustained by reminis-

---

R.J.W. Evans

is Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford. He has written and (co-)edited a number of works on the history of the Habsburg Monarchy, most recently and relevantly Great Britain and Central Europe,1867–1914, *Bratislava: VEDA, 2003.*

cences of the medieval kingdom, as mediated mostly through the anti-Ottoman literature of the early modern centuries. The latter derived from the growing body of knowledge about the Austrian Monarchy and its component parts, though much vagueness persisted—and not only in distant Britain—about where the role of the Habsburgs as emperors of the (German) Reich ended and their functions as sovereign rulers of an ill-defined Austria began.[3] A growing number of travellers, from whom at this stage most British information derived, encountered both options, in reverse order of succession, since they normally began their journey in Vienna. There they were fed Austrian stereotypes about the lands across the Leitha, only to react against these often enough on proper acquaintance, especially from the 1790s onward. 'Nothing can exceed the horror with which a true Austrian regards both Hungary and its inhabitants', wrote John Paget in 1839, and his entire book constituted a kind of refutation of that starting-point.[4]

Yet Paget, who married and settled in Transylvania, came to have his own reasons for being jaundiced about Vienna. As a geographical organizing principle—evident too in cartography—the traditional separate treatment of Hungary was surely weakened by the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 (likewise probably by the preceding extinction of an independent Poland, since the two commonwealths in the east of the continent had often been handled together) and the proclamation of a free-standing 'Habsburg Monarchy' or 'Kaisertum Oesterreich' in its stead. There is a curious simultaneity about the appearance at that very moment of the *History of the House of Austria* by William Coxe, a much-travelled cleric and minor diplomat. For all its failings—and it was a hidebound, pedestrian compilation from the first—this remained the only general history of the area for decades to come, perpetuating a subordinate view of Hungary, as exotic appendage within the patrimony of its august rulers.[5]

Though Coxe was evidently not much moved by his own visit to the country in 1794, an extending network of personal links in the earlier nineteenth century would help mould British views. Alongside the leisured travellers, many of whom can already almost be called tourists, since their itinerary was shaped by the new attraction of steamship cruises on the Danube, came others who carried employable skills. Most conspicuous in their effects perhaps were skilled workers in some of the young industrial trades, not least the bridge-builders who accompanied the two Clarks to work on the Budapest Lánchíd (Chain Bridge) and allied projects. More numerous, however, and continuing to be so throughout the next decades, were the grooms and stableboys, huntsmen, and jockeys who served the new equestrian establishments in the Hungarian countryside, where British models stood in equal reverence once they had been made respectable by the great reformer, Count István Széchenyi. It would evidently be impossible to divine much about the attitude of such men to the political culture of their host realm, or even about that of their immediate social superiors; though among the

200 or so British cavalry officers noted by Paget in the Austrian army, Richard Guyon, later a hero in the war of 1848–9, can hardly have been the only incipient Hungarophile.[6]

Altogether more can be known about the employers of those grooms and jockeys, Hungary's aristocrats, with their regular British connections, often through marriage. Paget's association with the barons Wesselényi—the truculent liberal, Miklós, was his brother-in-law—gave him an oppositional perspective; but other significant linkages were far more Austrian in allegiance, like those around Pál Esterházy, long-time ambassador for the Habsburgs in London. Prince Paul's son and heir Miklós married the daughter of the earl of Jersey, Lady Sarah Child-Villiers; though having borne him six children in a decade she died, still in the flower of her life, and rests in a family vault amid fair parkland in her native Oxfordshire. Still more conspicuous, because recorded in his precious *Diaries,* are István Széchenyi's British relations and friends. They included the sisters Caroline and Selina Meade, from an Irish clan settled in Vienna and both objects of his early passion, though the one married his brother Pál and the other a Bohemian rival. The Meades' brother Richard, 3rd earl of Clanwilliam, rose high in the British diplomatic service. Then there was István's niece Julie, with an Anglo-Welsh husband, and especially the radiant but capricious Charlotte Strachan, from another pair of eligible sisters, who married Manó Zichy-Ferraris and evidently captivated Hungarian high society in the 1840s. But she too, like Sarah Child, went to an early grave, though her vault, by contrast, adorns the Calvinist church in central Pest.[7]

Against the broadly loyalist stance of such people, with their direct line to Vienna, stood two features, one traditional and one more novel, which were registered as distinctive of pre-March Hungary within the Habsburg context. Protestantism had long been a factor in British perceptions of the country, and it retained a certain motivating power: not for nothing was Paget, though unimpeachably a landed gentleman, a rare example of upper-class Unitarianism (his Wesselényi spouse belonged to the Reformed church). There were even some missionaries, mainly Scottish, albeit direct contacts had by now become less intensive and their political implications less clear. Ancient in form but more recent in provenance was the constitutional link. Britons showed some respect for the famous parallel uncovered by Hungarian patriots in the 1790s between their Golden Bull of 1222 and the English Magna Carta of seven years earlier, which involved a sharp contrast with the Austrian historical experience, the more so as it played on Hungary's pre-Habsburg medieval heritage. Yet British commentators, such as the well-informed travel writers Richard Bright and Julia Pardoe[8], just as regularly censured the noble privilege which lay at the root of Hungary's inherited constitutional freedoms.

So far our two perceptions of Hungary's situation—*country or province?*—appear to have remained in fairly even but uneasy balance. To bring them together would involve engaging the whole issue of (con)federal elements within the

structure of Habsburg government, a subject largely taboo at home and long little discussed abroad during the age of Metternich. The first stage in unveiling it was the *Zollverein* debate, within and beyond Germany. The prospect of a customs union in Central Europe touched British economic interests throughout the region, and these were already prominent in commentary on Hungary from that quarter, as in the travel narratives of Townson and Bright.[9] That formed the main setting for the path-breaking activity of Joseph Blackwell, who became a semi-official agent in Pest-Buda in the 1840s and the first of his countrymen to look for a coherent British policy, especially in commercial matters, towards Hungary as such. Later he even embraced a precocious kind of 'Great Hungary' vision, including federal arrangements with the South Slavs.[10]

Blackwell found himself highly popular in pre-March Hungary, since he embodied most visibly a nation which had begun to excite genuine intellectual enthusiasm there. *'Angolország'* became a place of pilgrimage, with its industrial, mercantile and social progress and its well-modulated political freedoms, particularly after the suffrage reform legislation of 1832. English-language learning enjoyed a vogue, at least in higher society;[11] English cultural influence spread, especially in architecture and garden design. The practical sense of the English was valued: *"die Teutschen schreiben viel, die Franzosen sprechen viel, und die Engländer thun viel"*, as Széchenyi recorded in his Diary already at the time of his first visit to the United Kingdom in 1815.[12] This was not, however, perceived as mere dependence: under the title 'English Words of Hungarian Origin', an article in the popular scientific journal *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* listed over 300 (many of them with irreproachable Indo-European stems!).[13] Nor—more seriously—did it imply mere approbation, for some noted the shortcomings too. "Nowadays one is easily *accused* of Anglomania", as Széchenyi put it in his first book, *Hitel,* published in 1830. The disapproval included British colonization (not least on Széchenyi's own part).[14] Yet Hungarian observers apparently failed to connect this with their own 'imperial' or (to employ the native expression then gaining ground) *'közjogi'* problems inside the Habsburg Monarchy.

Moreover, the more appeal was made, via the Golden Bull, to Magna Carta, the more the model seemed to be that of a purely *English* political and social system. Thus Scotland and all it stood for—David Hume, Adam Smith, Walter Scott, the superb medical tradition, the visits to Edinburgh and to the romantic but largely tamed Highlands—these were the fruits of Anglicizing tendencies and belonged organically to the rise of the *'Engländerek'. 'Irlandia',* by contrast, was a stain precisely because of being left out of that prosperity. Several Hungarian visitors experienced there the "appalling penury, the like of which I had never seen elsewhere", as the future premier, Bertalan Szemere, observed. "Ireland speaks", wrote Baron József Eötvös, the liberal theorist, "and the nimbus dissolves. Now the tyrant steps before us, who having oppressed a nation for seven

centuries, once nationality, religion, and with them every other pretext has been exhausted, begins to quake before his servant..." "How is it possible"—asked Széchenyi in *Hitel*—"to exclude such a large part of a nation from its patrimony? That would be as if somewhere all of a country's burdens were carried by the ploughman, in a servile capacity, and a few thousand families lived like useless drones off the fat of the land!!!"[15]

His three exclamation marks signify that Széchenyi was not thinking just of the United Kingdom. And yet Ireland still did not rank as a fundamental flaw, or as a serious analogy to the Austro-Hungarian relationship. Széchenyi—preparing his book during 1829—soon relaxed when he heard the news of Catholic emancipation.[16] The young Queen Victoria should pay a visit to correct the abuses, reckoned Szemere a few years later. Even Eötvös, who saw most deeply and wrote an earnest historical study of the underlying religious-cum-racial discrimination and repression, trusted in the British government's newly-implemented measures and urged the O'Connell party to forbearance. He did not regard the Irish issue as a question of either nationality or self-government. István Gorove and Lőrinc Tóth, two further travellers from the ranks of the liberal opposition, likewise both met O'Connell, but they detected no kind of political similarities with the Hungarian situation.[17] Thus O'Connell did not become a paragon for Hungarian reformers, as would be the case, thanks to the journalist Karel Havlíček, with their equivalents in Bohemia. Besides, the best-instructed Irish observer of the Monarchy at that time, the physician William Wilde—Oscar's father—was strongly Austrophile.[18]

When the Continent exploded in revolution in 1848, there was widespread British acclaim for young nations breaking free from their ancien regimes. But that meant in the first instance Italy and (more guardedly) Germany, not yet the Hungarians. The official view continued to be that "the British government has no knowledge of Hungary except as one of the component parts of the Austrian Empire", in Palmerston's notorious words to László Szalay who had arrived in London to seek support for the new regime in Pest-Buda; and the public at large hardly seems to have disagreed until the spring of 1849, when the Habsburgs called on Russian troops to restore their authority.[19] Then suddenly Hungary became, to most British eyes, a *country* with the right to self-defence, not a *province* at the mercy of ruthless autocrats. That sympathy came too late for Blackwell, who had been forced to abandon his campaign. And it issued in a passion for Blackwell's bête noire, the man whom this best-informed Briton of his day regarded as a dangerous agitator: Lajos Kossuth.

Kossuth was, of course, a liberal hero, and his triumphs abroad consolidated Hungary's constitutional claims. However, we should note that his cult in the United Kingdom—however much the Lutheran Kossuth himself scrupulously eschewed religious issues—coincided with a peak of revived anti-Catholic agitation there, and that he excited particular fervour among Nonconformists.[20] At all events the extremer wave of adulation rapidly subsided. It had again, as with the

Hungarian connection in the pre-March years, involved a number of high-status women, like Lady Langdale and her daughter Jane, who married Count Sándor Teleki, or Lady Stafford, who was involved with Széchenyi's son Béla. Such people mainly soon passed, or reverted, to Italophilia, whose symbiosis with Hungarophilia in the mid-nineteenth century would merit further study (Italy was also a main focus of the Protestant crusade).[21]

The British—with the ironic exception of Blackwell—manifested next to no interest in confederal plans for Danubian Europe, of the kind formulated by the exile Kossuth. But nor did an independent Hungary, within whatever borders, make any sense. The post-World War One scenario still lay far in the future. Rather the Kossuthist enthusiasm left a sediment of support for the events which led to Hungary's reconciliation with the Habsburgs in 1867. Indeed, by dint of some slightly creative diplomatic activity in the Blackwell tradition by Graham Dunlop and the young Robert Morier, the government in London marginally contributed to that outcome.[22] Tibor Frank has ably chronicled British satisfaction over the Compromise: the very word, as a translation of *kiegyezés* or *Ausgleich,* hints at a degree of decent moderation on both sides. Altogether the 1860s witnessed a peak of British interest in the Monarchy, most of it broadly favourable to the constitutional outcome.[23] It went with pleasure at seeing the Austrians cleared out of Italy and Germany, Catholic views—like those of the young (Lord) Acton—carrying little weight. Not by accident was the fledgling James Bryce, author of a dazzling and highly influential account of the history of the old Reich which viewed the Habsburgs as its chief gravediggers, already moving towards that favour for Hungary which he would sustain throughout his long life.[24]

Britons perhaps initially saw the place of Hungary in the Dual Monarchy as a quasi-Dominion arrangement, a point to which I shall return. Then increasingly they may have come to endorse enhanced Hungarian influence as a counterweight to the growing political confusion inside Cisleithania. But the equilibrium with Austria was crucial. It formed a platform for closer contacts with Hungary over the later Victorian decades. They were facilitated by the foundation (at last) of a consulate in Budapest, a post earlier coveted to no avail by Blackwell. Beginning with Edmund Monson in the earlier 1870s, the consuls sought, alongside low-level information-gathering in the region, to promote commercial intercourse.[25] Prominent among economic initiatives were not only the import of Hungarian produce and export of finished goods, but interactions in the machine sector, involving British market-leaders in agricultural machinery, such as Clayton-Shuttleworth, on the one hand, and the innovative Hungarian milling technology—Ganz, Haggenmacher and the rest—on the other. Then there was a cultural nexus: the reception of Hungarian authors, especially the novelist Maurus Jókai (as definitively recorded by Czigány); the first bilingual dictionaries for those more ambitious to find out about the other side; the activities of Arthur Patterson, Yolland's pioneering predecessor in English studies at Budapest. The whole nevertheless operated

squarely under the aegis of the Monarchy as a whole, and often via Vienna, as with the Anglo-Austrian Bank. Monson returned as ambassador there in the 1890s.

With the satisfactory ordering, as it seemed, of Hungary's relation to Austria, the constitutional issue shifted to the political and cultural claims of nationality within the country. Of course, that problem was nothing new. Even standard compendia in faraway Britain knew that Hungary was "peopled by numerous distinct races, speaking different languages [of whom] the chief are Hungarians/Magyars, Slavonians, Germans and Wallachians"; and that 1848 had revealed the consequent underlying tensions, with 'the predominant power of the Magyars destroyed and the rival nations who helped to secure the victory to Austria rewarded [!]'[26] Yet Hungary's ethnic diversity appears to have been regarded by Britons in the complacent Victorian era as an essentially ethnographical curiosity, like the yet more complex and picturesque pattern of peoples scattered across the huge expanses of their own empire.

Disapproval of Hungary would gradually grow in Great Britain, in good part from new or revived worries about threats to the authority of the Monarchy which might be exacerbated by the domestic politics of the Hungarian government—and of her Austrian counterpart—vis-à-vis subordinate nationalities. It derived also in roughly equal measure from the beginnings of more generalized pro-Slav views. Whereas earlier Polonophile sentiments in the United Kingdom had sat easily with sympathy for the Hungarian cause, above all in 1848–9, now South Slavs, Czechs and Slovaks (and even to some extent Rumanians) entered British consciousness, bringing much less compatible agendas. There was, for instance, the eloquent advocacy of the cause of the Balkan Slavs by the historian Edward Freeman and his son-in-law, the celebrated archaeologist (Sir) Arthur Evans; the philological work of William Morfill, who had contact especially with Czech scholars; and the writings about Bohemia by Frederick Maurice, and then by that country's noted Anglophile aristocrat Francis Lützow from the turn of the century. Not least there was the mighty vogue for the music of Antonín Dvořák—he toured England nine times between 1884 and 1896—and the revaluation, both cultural and political, of Britain's attitudes towards Russia, upon which her dealings with Austria-Hungary would ultimately depend.[27]

These partially critical voices, however, as yet lacked almost all contact to Hungary's non-Magyar oppositional forces. Meanwhile the Magyars themselves, and those who increasingly assimilated to Magyar culture (above all from within the Jewish community), came in ever greater numbers to be personally acquainted with British life (which was likewise marked by the rapid integration of Jews). Examples are the Orientalist Arminius Vámbéry and the historian Henrik Marczali, as well as—more to the present purpose—Lajos Kropf and his close contemporary Emil Reich, who compiled the first English-language account of Hungarian literature. Again well-born diplomats—now a Count Apponyi and a Count

Károlyi in place of an Esterházy—and other officials were to the fore. But at the same time the Protestant connection gradually attenuated, apart from pockets of intensive co-operation, as amongst the Unitarians;[28] and the constitutional parallel lost much of its thrust, beside its important rhetorical uses, even though scholars (or semi-scholars) engaged with it more and more.

And what about 'Great Britain', in the eyes of such visitors or those who stayed at home? The rarity in Hungarian of that expression and its cognates tells its own tale. *'Anglia'* was what mattered. It is true that England anyway represented a far more preponderant element within the whole of the United Kingdom than it had a century earlier, particularly in terms of population statistics (where its share had risen from circa 50 to circa 80 per cent). In that respect the 'English' were far more successful than the 'Magyars'. But the narrowness of focus went deeper, as the Welsh case can show. Wales became, through a famous poem by János Arany, a major symbol of the infraction of Hungary's state rights after 1849. Yet she never meant much more to Hungarians than her (supposedly) butchered bards, despite the ardour of her people for Kossuth. Wales was "an *English* principality *[hercegség],* the western part of England proper", according to a typical encyclopaedia entry. Little had changed since Ferenc Pulszky and the Bohemian patriot Leo Thun in the 1840s, arguing about the Slovaks, agreed with each other on one thing: that the modern Celts and their cultures counted for nothing.[29]

Much the same applied even to Scotland. The same compendium remains suspiciously terse on the recent history of this 'kingdom united with England'—until we realize a little further on in the work that Adam Smith is regarded as a renowned *English* writer on political economy. And Britain's Achilles heel? As far as I am aware, Ireland's troubles—and it was famine and emigration there which had done much to massage those population figures in England's favour—came to feature less in Hungarian public opinion by this stage (at least they have not yet been revealed by research). Now the Irish question took on, for some, rather the function of mirroring relations under Habsburg governance. The most notable commentator was Gladstone—the man who already back in 1832, while travelling through Innsbruck, had set eyes on the aged Emperor Francis, and who much later espoused the cause of insurgent Southern Slavs, accompanying it with some thinly-veiled censure of the Habsburgs. From the 1860s to the 1890s Gladstone several times adduced the Dualist pacification as a possible model for Home Rule ("the altogether new experience of Austria-Hungary' [etc.] require consideration of the whole position")[30]. Likewise Bryce, one of the most respected Constitutional theorists of the age[31]. And such views anticipated the Sinn Fein leader Arthur Griffith's fairly detailed and informed *Resurrection of Hungary,* with its very different spin[32]. Already Florence Arnold-Forster, author of a life of Ferenc Deák, had pondered with her Dublin circle the necessity of an 'Irish Deák'.[33] But Hungarians either paid little attention—or else feared anything which might look like intrusion into British affairs. One wonders what the Budapest press made of Parnell.

If we review these developments at the turn of the twentieth century, we should avoid too much hindsight. The "lost prestige" identified by Jeszenszky, the blackening of Hungary by 1920, is another story. Certainly there was already some recognition of the country's own multinational status as a potential problem. But it would take the constitutional schism of 1905–6, followed by a degree of diplomatic estrangement from 1908, all aggravated by larger fears of German hegemony and the increasingly radical dictates of some liberal consciences, to create the climate in which Robert William Seton-Watson and Henry Wickham Steed could move to their root-and-branch censure of Dualism. Even then the die was by no means cast before the political and military outcomes of the Great War. In some ways quite the reverse: 1907, the year of Seton-Watson's first critical examination of the future of the Monarchy, witnessed the triumphant London premier of Lehár's *Merry Widow,* that apotheosis of the operetta as a vehicle for Austro-Hungarian loyalism.[34]

By the *fin de siècle* Hungary at last seemed an established, even familiar element on the European scene. A degree of convergence is reflected in the common interests of a Kropf and a Yolland. In social terms too the old aristocratic and diplomatic preference for Austria, still embodied at the end of the century in such as Horace Rumbold, Monson's successor as ambassador, was now to all intents and purposes reconciled with the gentry, middle-class, intellectual and Protestant bases of Hungarophilia.[35] And equine mutualities remained strong, now in both directions: Hungarian horses were sold to the British army for service in the Boer war.[36] Dualism still looked a balanced, even model constitutional arrangement. Hungary was no longer perceived to be either a separate *country* or an incorporated *province,* but an integral part of the 'bipartite state called the Austro-Hungarian Empire' (or some similar formulation), the more so given the apparently final uncoupling of Austria from the geopolitical space of the Reich, alias Germany, since her defeat by Prussia.[37]

In fact 1867, the very year of the Compromise, had been a pivotal year in the constitutional history of the British Empire too: the British North America Act brought together Upper and Lower Canada with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (thus creating an *integral realm* at home) as a *federal union under the crown,* autonomous except for certain *common affairs* with the motherland, after a long period (since the Durham report in the late 1830s) of *instability* and threat of foreign invasion. Have we not heard all that before, in a central European context? Thus Canada became the first formal Dominion—Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, even Ireland in due course, would follow. Did Hungary take notice of this? Probably not much. Yet such themes offer exciting perspectives in the comparative study of empire: the oldest European incarnation of the idea, long furiously impugned from within by the Hungarians, as against its most vigorous contemporary global manifestation.[38] British-Hungarian linkages afford some of the wherewithal which gives us scope to juxtapose the two. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ This is the revised text of a talk given to the Britannia-Kör in Budapest on 4 April 2003. Some related reflections in R.J.W. Evans, 'Hungary in British Historiography: C.A. *Macartney and his Forerunners'*, in *Mives semmiségek. Elaborate Trifles. Tanulmányok Ruttkay Kálmán 80. születésnapjára,* ed. G. Ittzés and A. Kiséry (Piliscsaba, 2002), 476–92; and id., 'Austria-Hungary and the Victorians: Some Views and Contacts', in *Great Britain and Central Europe, 1867–1914,* ed. Evans *et al.* (Bratislava, 2003, 11–23).

2 ■ The main titles for present purposes, here once for all: essays of Sándor Fest now collected in *Skóciai Szent Margittól a Walesi bárdokig. Magyar-angol történelmi és irodalmi kapcsolatok* (From Saint Margaret of Scotland to the Bards of Wales) ed. Lóránt Czigány and János H. Korompay (B[uda]p[est], 2000); István Gál, *Magyarország, Anglia és Amerika, különös tekintettel a szláv világra; vázlatok a nemzetközi vonatkozások köréből* (Hungary, England and America, with Special Regard to the Slav World. Sketches of International Relations. Bp. [1944]); Tibor Frank, *The British Image of Hungary, 1865–70* (Bp., 1976); Géza Jeszenszky, *Az elveszett presztízs: Magyarország megítélésének megváltozása Nagy-Britanniában, 1894–1918* (The Lost Prestige. Hungary's Changing Appraisal in Great Britain. Bp. [1986]); Aurél Varannai, *Angliai visszhang* (Bp., 1974); Lóránt Czigány, *A magyar irodalom fogadtatása a viktoriánus Angliában, 1830–1914* (The Reception of Hungarian Literature in Victorian Engand. Bp., 1976). The contributions of Országh and Cushing remain widely scattered.

3 ■ Much miscellaneous material is listed in György Kurucz (comp.), *Guide to Documents and Manuscripts in Great Britain Relating to the Kingdom of Hungary from the Earliest Times to 1800* (L[ondon], 1992). Cf. Grete Klingenstein, 'The Meanings of "Austria" and "Austrian" in the Eighteenth Century', in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe,* ed. R. Oresko *et al.* (Cambridge, 1997), 423–78.

4 ■ Paget, *Hungary and Transylvania* (2 vols., L., 1839), i.2.

5 ■ Apart from the inclusion as a supplement from the 1850s of Count Franz Hartig's thoroughly conservative 'Genesis of the [1848] Revolution in Austria', successive editions of Coxe remained substantially unchanged.

6 ■ Grooms etc.: *Gróf Széchenyi István naplói* (The Diaries of Count István Széchenyi) ed. Gy. Viszota (6 vols., Bp. 1925–39), ii.368, iii.10; cf. Evans, 'Austria-Hungary and the Victorians'. Officers: Paget, Hungary, ii.46; István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution. Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–9* (New York, 1979), 11.

7 ■ Cf., in general, R.J.W. Evans, 'Széchenyi and Austria', in *History and Biography. Essays in Honour of Derek Beales,* ed. T.C.W. Blanning and David Cannadine (Cambridge, 1996), 113–41. Important information on the Clanwilliam family and their papers is at http://www.proni.gov.uk/records/private/clanwm.htm. I plan to draw together elsewhere the story of Charlotte Zichy-Ferraris.

8 ■ Bright, *Travels from Vienna through Lower Hungary* (Edinburgh, 1818); Pardoe, *The City of the Magyar, or Hungary and her Institutions in 1839–40* (3 vols., L. 1840)

9 ■ Robert Townson, *Travels in Hungary, with a Short Account of Vienna in the Year 1793* (L., 1797). For contemporary British views on the Zollverein and related questions, see most recently *British Envoys to Germany, 1816–66,* ed. Sabine Freitag and Peter Wende (Cambridge, 2000), vol.i, and Franz L. Müller, Britain and the German Question. Perceptions of Nationalism and Political Reform (Basingstoke, 2002).

10 ■ *J.A. Blackwell magyarországi küldetései, 1843–51* (J.A. Blackwell's Missions in Hungary) ed. Éva Haraszti-Taylor (Bp. 1989); Tamás Kabdebó, *Blackwell küldetése* (Blackwell's Mission. Bp. 1990): two simultaneous but quite separate editions/commentaries.

11 ■ Ernő Solymos, 'Angol nyelvtanulás Magyarországon' (The Learning of English in Hungary), in *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok,* ii. (1937), 118–30.

12 ■ *Széchenyi naplói,* i.158.

13 ■ Reproduced in *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* [válogatás], ed. István Juhász (2 vols., Bp., 1985), i.397–409.

14 ■ Széchenyi, *Hitel* (Credit) 115; *Naplói,* iii.76, 220, 306.

15 ■ Szemere, *Utazás külföldön* (Journey Abroad) ed. Ágota Steinert (Bp., 1983), 354ff. 'Szegénység Irlandban' (Poverty In Ireland), in Eötvös, *Reform és hazafiság,* (Reform and Patriotism) ed. István Fenyő (Bp., 1978), 133-205, at 133; translated in *Ireland through Continental Eyes,* ed. M. Hurst (Bristol, 2000), 1–63. Széchenyi, *Hitel,* 115–17.

16 ■ Ibid., n.: 'azon időközben, mig ezen munka iratott, Irlandia természetes jusaiba lépett.'

17 ■ Cf. László Országh in *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok,* iii(1938), 112–30 at 124–5.

18 ■ *Oscar Wildes Vater über Metternichs Österreich,* ed. Irene Montjoye (Frankfurt a.M. etc., 1989).

19 ■ Charles Sproxton, *Palmerston and the Hungarian Revolution* (Cambridge, 1919), still covers this ground. Cf. Thomas Kabdebo, *Diplomat in Exile: Francis Pulszky's Political Activities in England, 1849–60* (Boulder, Colo./New York, 1979), 7; Jeszenszky, *Elveszett presztízs,* 45f.

20 ■ For background see the superb account of Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church.* I: *1829–59* (2nd edn., L., 1972), ii, esp. 232-309. Welsh Dissenters: Marian Henry Jones, 'Wales and Hungary, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion',* 1968, 7–28.

21 ■ Some reflections on that phenomenon in R.J.W. Evans, 'Linda White és Gál Polixena: egy barátság (Linda White and Polixena Gál: A Friendship), 1857–63', *Aetas,* 1995/4, 71–100.

22 ■ Lajos Lukács, 'Anglia és a magyar kérdés 1860–61-ben. Mr Graham Dunlop magyarországi küldetése' (England and the Hungarian Question in 1860–61), *Századok,* cxxiv (1990), 242–74; id., 'Anglia és a magyar kérdés 1865–66-ban. R.B.D. Morier magyarországi küldetése', (England and the Hungarian Question in 1865–66. The Hungarian Mission of R.B.D. Morier) *Történelmi Szemle,* xxxiii(1991), 185–202.

23 ■ Frank, *Image of Hungary,* 177ff. Harry Hanak, 'Die Einstellung Großbritanniens und der Vereinigten Staaten zu Österreich(-Ungarn)', in *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848–1918,* ed. A. Wandruszka and P. Urbanitsch. Vol. VI: *Die Habsburgermonarchie im System der internationalen Beziehungen* (2 vols., Vienna, 1993), ii. 539–85.

24 ■ Ágnes Deák, 'Lord Acton és Ausztria az 1850–60-as évek fordulóján' (Lord Acton and Austria at the Turn of the 1850 and 1860s), *Századok,* cxxxi (1997), 1157–91. On Bryce, for present purposes, see József Balogh, 'Lord Bryce and Hungary', HQ, 4 (1938), 750–6.

25 ■ Károly Tüzes, 'Hungary in the Dual Monarchy as Reflected in British Diplomatic Materials', in *Great Britain and Central Europe.*

26 ■ A. Keith Johnston (comp.), *A General Dictionary of Geography* (L., 1882), 654–6.

27 ■ A still largely untold story? Hints in R.J.W. Evans, *Great Britain and East-Central Europe, 1908–48. A Study in Perceptions* (London, 2002).

28 ■ E.g. John J. Taylor, 'Narrative of a Visit to the Unitarian Churches of Transylvania', *Theological Review,* vi (1869), 1–48.

29 ■ Wekerle László (comp.) Kislexikon (Bp., [1886]), col. 1978.; cf. in general R.J.W. Evans, *Wales in European Context. Some Historical Reflections* (Aberystwyth, 2001).

30 ■ *The Gladstone Diaries,* ed. M.R.D. Foot and H.C.G. Matthew (14 vols., Oxford 1968–94), entries for 27–8.6.32; 4.5.80; 8.9.85; and cf. 17.7.85.

31 ■ Frank, *Image of Hungary,* 194f. & n. 470.

32 ■ Arthur Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary. A Parallel for Ireland* (Dublin, 1904). Cf. most recently Thomas Kabdebo, *Ireland and Hungary. A Study in Parallels* (Dublin, 2001), 19–46.

33 ■ *Florence Arnold-Forster's Irish Journal,* ed. T.W. Moody *et al.* (Oxford, 1988), esp. 214, 252, 369.

34 ■ Graphic description in W. Macqueen-Pope and D.L. Murray, *Fortune's Favourite. The Life and Times of Franz Lehár* (London 1953). Cf. the argument of Moritz Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne. Ein kulturhistorischer Essay zur österreichischen Identität* (Vienna, 1996).

35 ■ Cf. the argument of Jeszenszky, *Elveszett presztízs,* 31ff.

36 ■ Hanak, 'Einstellung Großbritanniens', 561f.

37 ■ Quoted from Johnston, loc. cit. The terminology of 'empire' was, of course, strictly inapplicable—as Hungarians insisted—to the Habsburg Monarchy after 1867, though it continued to be widely used abroad (and unofficially in Austria too).

38 ■ Masterly new reflections on this whole subject in D.C.B. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (L., 2000).

Károly Kincses

Remembrance of Things Past

Two Hungarian Photographers in Britain

Two photographers, two lives, two centuries—both were Hungarians, both found a new home in Britain, and both spent their lives in search of something. One was a man of the Hungarian revolution of 1848/9, the other a woman of the 1956 Hungarian revolution. One became, as an artist, a wholehearted Briton, devoting his life to portraying Scots and English gentlemen. The other, wherever she stayed, was always in transit to some other place, using each stopping place simply to recall a previous one, or to remind us of a place, person or situation that had never been. One worked in the early days of photography, doing everything by hand. The other was able to use the most modern techniques. They probably differed strongly in what they sought as well, although only they could tell. There are other similarities and differences I could list, but that would be missing the point. The important thing is that they are both photographers whom I am particularly fond of, and that is why I have chosen to write about them.

For there are plenty to choose from. If I were asked for an account of the Hungarian photographers who have lived and worked in Britain, I could fill half an encyclopaedia with them. Stefan Lorant (István Lóránt) was among the most gifted of editors, associated with *Picture Post, Lilliput* and the *Illustrated Weekly.* The entire legacy of Michael Petho (Mihály Pető), a hundred thousand pictures, is kept at the University of Dundee. Dezso (Dezső) Hoffmann was the legendary photographer of the Beatles. László Moholy Nagy and György Kepes also worked in Britain before the war. Ferenc Berkó, György Fiedmann, Andor Kraszna-Krausz, György Fayer, Zoltán Glass, Olga von Koncz, Tom Hackett,

---

Károly Kincses

is Director of the Museum of Hungarian Photography in Kecskemét and its sister organisation, the Hungarian House of Photography in Mai Manó House in Budapest. He is the author of several books on photography and photographers.

Miklós Világ and Ata Kando are better known there than in their native Hungary. Nowadays, the reputation of Hungarian photography is well served in Britain by Kati Arkan (Katalin Kenyeres). And there are younger ones too, many of them very promising.

Iván Szabó arrived in Scotland when photography was in its infancy. Details are not known, but he must have served in Görgey's army in the 1848/9 war, under the command of Richárd Guyon. As a captain, he would have been about 25 years of age at the time. Having survived the battles, he fled the Austrian reprisals.

He arrived in Scotland as an exile in 1849 and settled in St. Andrews, Fife. The town was the cradle of Scottish photography, where John and Robert Adamson had been born and where Sir David Brewster lived. For a time, Szabó taught German and French to Scots, but then he learnt photography from Thomas Rodger, a local resident who had, in his time, been a pupil of John Adamson's. Szabó learnt quickly and thoroughly. In August 1856, he was put up for membership of the Photographic Society of Scotland. His pictures were praised and exhibited alongside those of David Octavius Hill, Adamson and Rodger. He was asked to take a photograph of the philosopher and pioneer photographer William Henry Fox Talbot and family. Not a bad start.

In 1857, Szabó moved to Edinburgh and opened a calotype studio at 4 Salisbury Place, Newington. Julie Lawson, a Canadian author and historian of photography, who has devoted several studies to Szabó's life and work, draws attention to the marked enthusiasm of Szabó's contemporaries. His few surviving photographs were taken when the attention of those seeking the most artistic prints was focused on Britain and the calotype or talbotype invented by William Henry Fox Talbot. (France, with the daguerrotype, was supreme in photographs on ground silver plates. Recently a splendid exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay showed the finest.) In Hungary in those days photographers of note were few and far between, outstanding photos even fewer. Szabó seems to have been the only eminent Hungarian exponent of calotype although his work as a photographer is connected to Scotland.

Iván Szabó produced some unique achievements in a working life that lasted only six or seven years making a living out of photography in a city where the world's best photographers lived. He (rather than they) would sometimes be singled out in accounts of exhibitions. He exhibited with Talbot and John and Robert Adamson, and he was asked to take a photograph by David Octavius Hill, to whom he wrote letters on 20 and 26 June 1857. Hill asked Szabó to photograph *The Pursuit of Pleasure,* a painting by Noël Paton. Szabó replied that it would take time, for it was indeed a complicated task at that early stage in the development of photography. One problem was the size of the painting and the possibility that it would move during the long exposure, for the shot was to be taken outdoors. "The wind...puts me to great uneasiness," he wrote, for negatives of that period were less sensitive and lenses smaller, so that an exposure could take long min-

utes, in which time the canvas might flap in the breeze. Unfortunately, it is not known whether the photograph was ever taken, or, if so, whether it pleased Hill.

Others, meanwhile, including the *Edinburgh Evening Courant,* were praising Szabó for several portraits he showed at the Photographic Society of Scotland exhibition in 1856–7:

> The gain is ours, that he has exchanged arms for art, the sword for the camera. Considering the limited time which Mr Szabo has as yet devoted to the cultivation of photography, his success is not only remarkable in itself, but holds out the promise that he will ere long attain the very highest position among photographers. Mr Szabo is particularly happy in the natural and pleasing pose of his figures, his works being worthy of admiration equally as pictures and as likenesses.

The same exhibition included a portrait of Szabó by Thomas Rodger. *The Caledonian Mercury* of 29 December 1856 had also been taken with him:

> Some portraits by Ivan Szabo, of Salisbury Place, Newington, a pupil, if we remember rightly, of Mr Rodger's, are in many respects equal to those exhibited by his instructor, and are decidedly superior to any others in the exhibition.

In the following year it was reported that Szabó had won a prize at the World Exposition in Brussels. At the Edinburgh exhibition of the Photographic Society of Scotland he showed, among other pictures, a portrait of Sir George Harvey, president of the Royal Scottish Academy at the time, and won praise again from the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* on 12 January 1858:

> Among our own portrait artists, we give the first place to Mr Szabo. We have already mentioned his picture of Mrs Findlay, so much admired at Brussels. The portraits of Rev. Dr. Keith (367), Mr G. Patton (339), and several pictures of children (382 etc.) are as successful as the art seems capable of, and quite equal to some of Mr Rodger of St. Andrews, whose style Mr Szabo adopts, we will not say imitates.

The following April, during the last spring of Szabó's short life, he took a photograph of William Henry Fox Talbot, his wife and children at their home, Lacock Abbey, which has become a splendid museum. In the archives there, this note was found:

> From I. Szabo, 4, Salisbury Place, Newington,
> Edinburgh, June 1858.
>
1 Calotype Portrait of Miss Talbot, first impr.	£1. 3. ..
1 " " Miss A. Talbot "	1. 3. ..
1 " " Miss B. Talbot "	1. 3. ..
1 Copy of Miss B. Talbot	– 7. ..
1 Calotype Portrait of Mrs Talbot, first	1. 3. ..
1 " " " copy	– 7. ..
1 Copy of Sir D. Brewster	– 7. ..
To Mrs Talbot	£5. 13. ..'

So the pictures were taken and paid for. Another survival is a letter from Fox Talbot on the notepaper of the Athenaeum Club, to Amélina Petit De Billier in Edinburgh:

> I am glad Ivan Szabo has made the portraits. If unsuccessful they should not be preserved, as it is easy to try again with some other photographer. Szabo should let us have the negative as well as the positive copies as we do not wish other copies to be made except for ourselves.

Three or four other letters between them mention the same subject over the next month. In April 1858, Constance Talbot wrote from Athole Crescent to 'dear Henry', her husband:

> I send you this little letter by Charles because I think it will save time, and perhaps you may write me a line in answer from London. Charles will tell you how he & I hunted up & down Edinburgh for photographs today, with very indifferent success. I shall wait for further instructions, but we think all that we saw today were too large or too small—and none can be had unmounted. I will try Ross & Thompson, but should not have done so without your order, for I concluded you had settled it yourself. Professor Forbes has been ill and I believe that he and Mrs Forbes are going almost immediately into the country for his benefit... Szabo's portraits are I understand to be 23/- or 28/- each. Making £6.50 if we are all taken; and the girls seem really anxious to have my picture done as well as their own—if you wish for a second copy there will be an addition of 7/- for each copy. Ela & Charles were taken on Monday—but we could not see the likenesses then. Mr Szabo gave 2 sittings to each, with the intention of offering me the choice of the two portraits, but he said himself that Charles's second sitting produced a bad result & was not worth copying and that the first would certainly give me satisfaction. I must admit that he has spared no pains in placing them, pushing about the hands and legs till he got everything in focus—and arranging Ela's gown in graceful folds of drapery. He seemed to consider everything, and particularly to get the attitudes natural & free from stiffness. I am to go with Rosd. & Matilda on Monday and then we shall see the result of Charles & Ela's sittings.

Those pictures of Fox Talbot and his family at Lacock Abbey were probably among his last. News of his death on 15 July 1858 appeared briefly in *The Scotsman* two days later:

> Sudden Death. Mr Szabo, the able and well-known calotypist, was, we regret to say, found dead in his bedroom on Thursday morning, although in perfect health during the previous evening. Mr Szabo, who was a Hungarian, was held in very high respect, both for personal and professional qualities.

Further information about his death and funeral followed in the paper on 21 July:

> The late Mr Szabo. The funeral of this much lamented young artist took place on Monday in the Grange Cemetery. The number of gentlemen assembled, representative of so many classes and professions (among them some of the most eminent members

of the R[oyal] S[cottish] A[cademy]), bore testimony to the high esteem which Mr Szabo had won for himself during his brief and promising career in this city, no less as an artist than as a man. He was one, indeed, whom to know was to love... cause of death, apoplexy.

He presumably lived and died without family or heirs, as his executors sent round a circular, to Hill among others, offering prints from negatives executed for clients at £1.11.6d for single figures, and £2.2s for groups. His equipment and studio were bought by Kenneth MacLeay, a miniature painter and photographer. His camera can be found in the Scottish National Museum.

The Gothic Revival tomb in the Grange Cemetery reads, *"Artem photographicam per cursum nimium brevem summa coluit laude"* [He gained acclaim in the art of photography during a brief career]. On the other side of the obelisk is written, *"Arma pro patria honeste cessit MDCCCXLIX. Exsul venit ignotus desideratus abiit civis* [The arms he took up for his country he laid down with dignity in 1849. An unknown fugitive he came, an honest citizen he left]. In memory of Ivan Szabo born at Marosvasarhely in Transylvania 1822. Died at Edinburgh July 15 1858."

Szabó's pictures were exhibited in a few places after his death, and he was remembered at the meeting of the Photographic Society of Scotland on 9 November 1858. According to a report in No. 22 of the *Journal of the Photographic Society*, "The Chairman [W. Scott Elliot]...referred to the melancholy death which had occurred since their last meeting, of their distinguished member Mr Ivan Szabo."

Iván Szabó's tombstone at Grange Cemetery, Edinburgh

After conventional respects had been paid, "on the suggestion of the Honorary Secretary, a subscription was afterwards entered into amongst the members to aid in the erection of a memorial to Mr Szabo..." Some notice was taken of his death in Hungary as well, where the *Erdélyi Naptár* (Transylvanian Calendar) wrote in 1860,

> Iván Szabó, a son of M-Vásárhely, won a great reputation in Scotland as a photographer, and the Edingburg [sic] papers strongly recommended his public exhibition. According to the Nord British [sic] it was hard to decide who took the first place, he or Glaudel or Rogger [sic]. The papers particularly lauded the tender charm emanating from the faces in his portraits of women.

The same issue of the paper also informed readers, a year and a half after the event, of Szabó's death:

> The letter of a fellow Transylvanian countryman living in London lies before us, stating that Iván Szabó, one of the staunchest of the Hungarians scattered abroad, has died, more particularly in Scotland, where no Hungarian was ever honoured as he, who took outstanding photographic pictures, and was a very pleasant-spoken, thoroughly cultivated man, and above all a loyal son of his country, and a credit to our nation in the best circles abroad.

*

Writing of herself, Mari Mahr said, "I live between two countries and have four nationalities, but as my parents were Hungarians and I myself lived the most important period of my life there, from the age of 8 to 32, I count myself one as well." Her photos are accordingly imbued with remembrances of things past. They document a private, esoteric world, like drawers in a private chest, each containing a memento of her mother or a fragment of her grandmother's life: an elegant little turn-of-the-century shoe, a charming parasol, or a glacé glove buttoning up to the elbow. Allusions, full of signs and undiscovered secrets. Excuses to pull open a drawer. Mari Mahr's photographs look into the questions of our time: the question of affiliation, of being neither of one place nor another, of partly losing a culture and obtaining another.

If anyone was in a position to do that, she was. She was born in Santiago de Chile, where her Hungarian parents had fled the anti-Jewish persecutions of the Second World War. The family returned to Hungary in 1948, when Mari was still a little girl. She completed school in Budapest, attended the Journalists' School, and then started working as a photo reporter. She was 22 years old when she was employed by the cultural department of the Hungarian News Agency, MTI. Among her colleagues and mentors were such outstanding photographers as Endre Friedmann, Edit Molnár, Jenő Pap and Gábor Pálfai. She was also helped by Péter Korniss. She worked extremely hard, but nonetheless she was dismissed four years later. Why she lost her job (or what was the reason) is difficult

to establish after so many years. Things like that could easily happen at the time. She recalled later,

> I loved my job and I liked my colleagues, but after a time there was a disciplinary action and I was dismissed. I then laid down my camera and I didn't start taking pictures again until much later, in England. Meanwhile, I went to work for Pannónia Film Studios.

There she met her second husband, who was busy in Budapest directing a feature-length cartoon film called *Hugo the Hippo.* She moved to London in 1972 and studied at the Polytechnic of Central London for three years, where she obtained a diploma in photography.

> In Budapest, at the Journalists' School and at MTI, I'd simply learnt the craft of a photo reporter (which has been very useful to me, of course), whereas here it was left entirely up to me to choose what branch of photography I was going to work in... I sought a new formal idiom and tried out various techniques.

It is interesting to follow the process. Marianna Maár, the photo reporter in Hungary, would set out from the news agency every morning with precise ideological and aesthetic instructions, to capture a particular event. Now, in her new environment, she became a photographer interested in the affairs of the world exclusively in their own context, subordinated to the mood, feelings and ideas of reality. These are not pictures of Reality, but Ideas, Feelings and Dreams that have come to life and taken shape, as if time had stood still and a piece of it had been extracted and preserved for ever. No, unfortunately not. Although I agree with that important doctrine of photography, Mari Mahr's pictures do not make time stand still. Indeed they reconstruct it, creating continuity and a transition between yesterday and today, with allusions and coded messages valid, of course, for tomorrow as well.

> Here in Hungary I worked as a photo reporter and believed that photos were meant to uncover reality and thereby serve as an accurate document for the future. Once I was in England, I found myself in a world where I couldn't really find my way. I didn't understand the country, I didn't understand the language, and I lost my self-confidence. I wasn't sure any more what reality was. I felt I had to seek a new idiom for my photography, technically and thematically as well.

When she had completed college, she took her portfolio of photographs to the Photographers' Gallery, which each year gives twelve young photographers an opportunity to exhibit their work. She was fortunate enough to be chosen, and it was no hasty decision, as is clear from the fact that she has regularly exhibited new work there since. Slowly people learnt her strange-sounding name. In the mid-1980s, she began to be better known. Lengthy, consistent efforts have brought her to the point where she has created an emphatically and ex-

Iván Szabó: Mrs Sarah Watson Gardiner,
daughter of Mary (Hill) Watson, niece of David Octavius Hill.
Salt paper from glass negative. Scottish National Photography Collection / Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

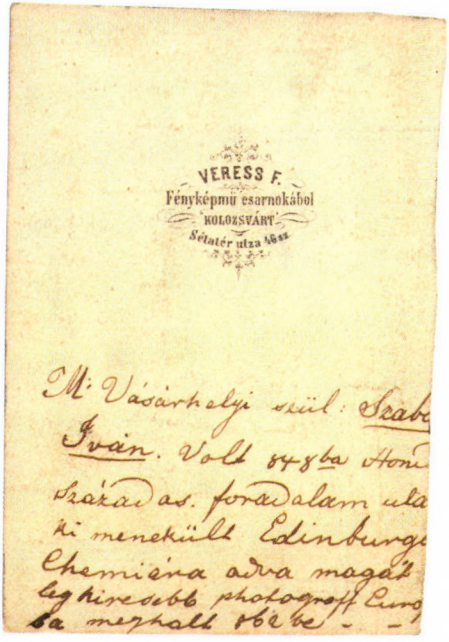
Iván Szabó: Unknown Woman, Holding Eyeglass.
Salt paper from glass negative.
Scottish National Photography Collection / Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

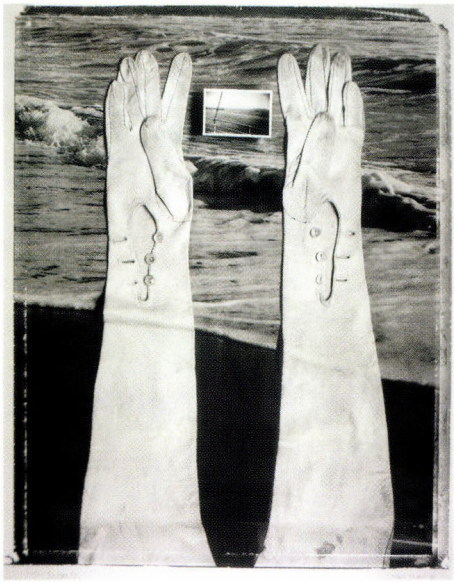
Iván Szabó: Unknown Man.
Salt paper from glass negative.
Scottish National Photography Collection / Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

Iván Szabó: Mrs Mary (Hill) Watson (sister of David Octavius Hill).
Salt paper from glass negative.
Scottish National Photography Collection / Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

Iván Szabó: Unknown Man.
Salt paper from glass negative. Scottish National Photography Collection / Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

Ferenc Veress: Portrait of Iván Szabó and its resrve side.
Albumen, carte de visite. Museum of Hungarian Photography, Kecskemét.





Mari Mahr: Life Chances – Europe, 1930s. *1996, 78 x 88 cm.*

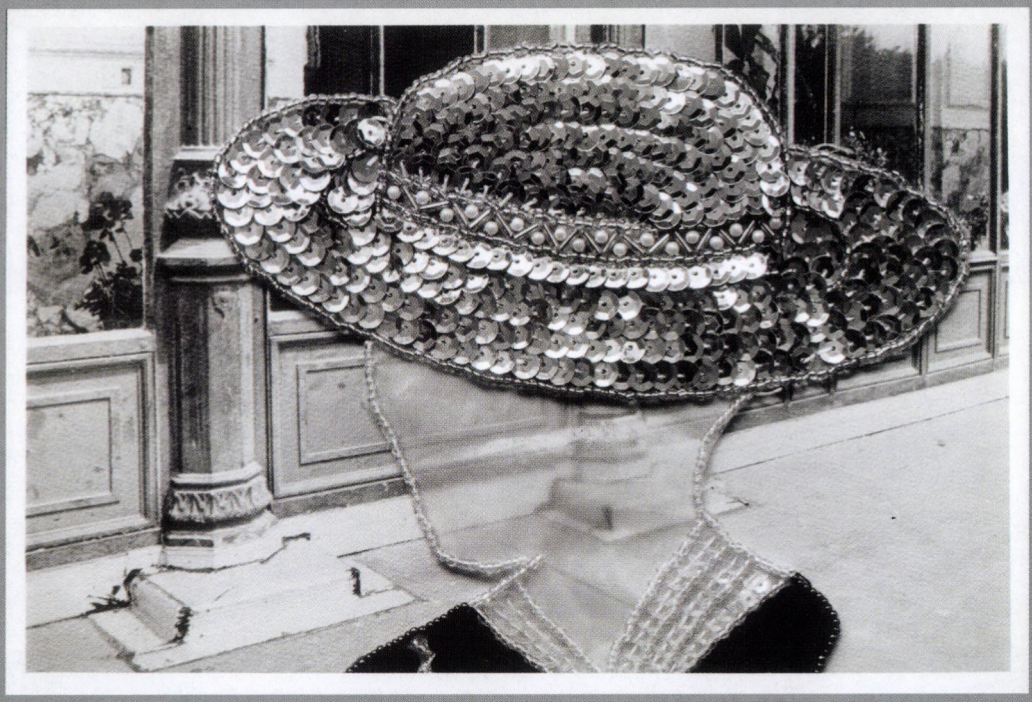
Mari Mahr: Life Chances – Hungary, 1950s. *1996, 78 x 88 cm.*

Mari Mahr: Life Chances – Postscript Great Britain, 1980s. *1996, 61 x 91 cm.*

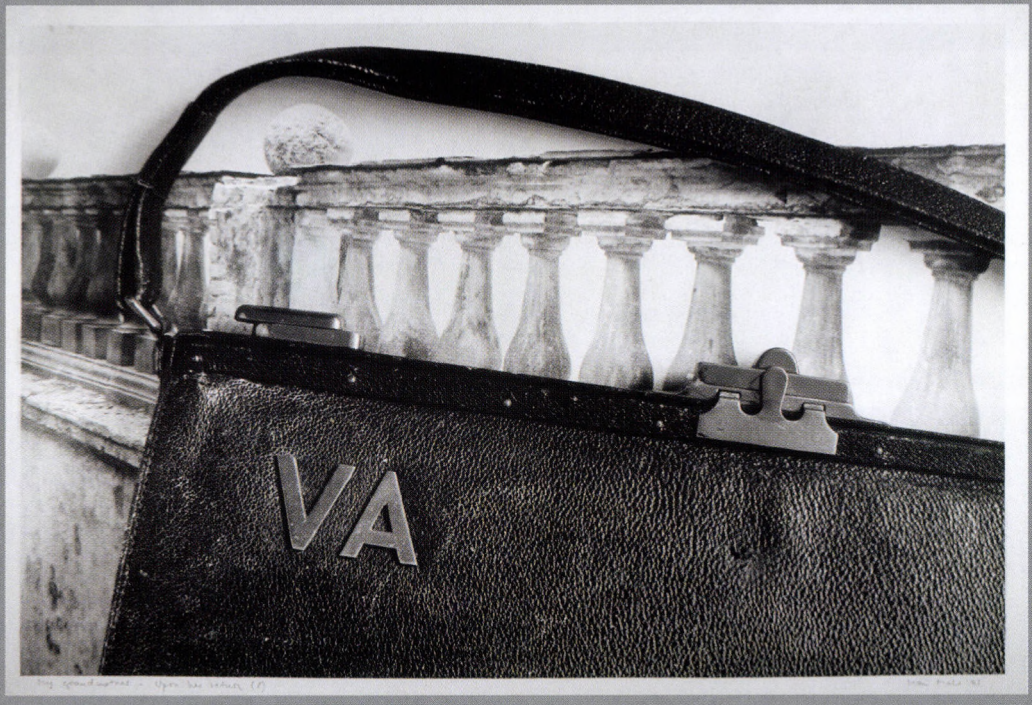
Mari Mahr: A Few Days in Geneva. *1985, 61 x 91 cm.*

Mari Mahr: About Photography. *1985, 61 x 91 cm.*

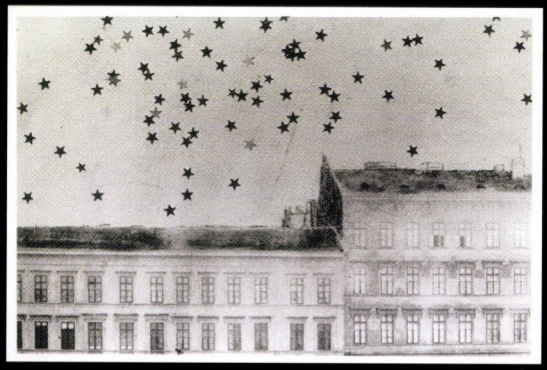
Mari Mahr: Autograph. *1984, 61 x 91 cm.*

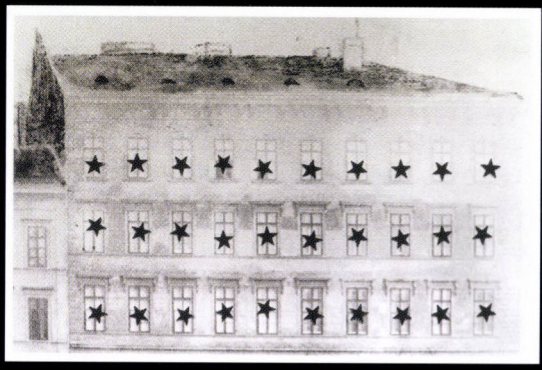


Mari Mahr: Upon Her Return 1-2. *1991, 61 x 91 cm.*

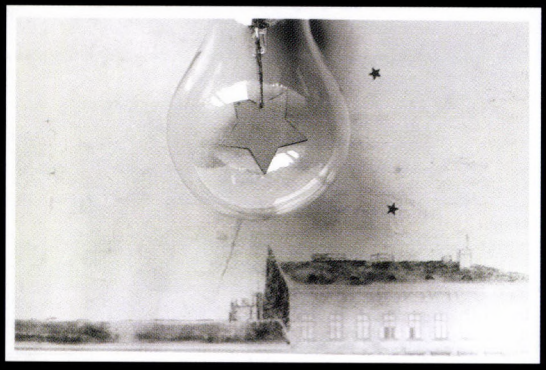


Remembrance of Things Past





Mari Mahr: The Dreamer's Birthday, *1–4. 1992, 61 x 91 cm.*



pressly subjective photographic style, giving a prominent role to memories, which can be easily recognised even if there is no signature at the bottom of the picture. She often enlarges scenes into series, sequences and pairs of pictures, which extend the moment and bounds of the picture in time and space. When she composes her pictures, she gives a new context to pages of books, stills from films, and objects that are familiar but that nonetheless bear special significance. These she uses to build up her installations, which are mystical in their effect. Through her pictures, her real, dreamt or invented occurrences are experienced again by those who view them, as freely reinterpreted experiences of their own. Each picture is latently about affiliation. They are attempts to clarify her relationship to three main areas: the family, the world and photography. Are there any further important things apart from these, I wonder. Mari Mahr first did a long series each for her mother and her grandmother, and then it was the turn of a third woman, her daughter. But the series devoted to the three female family members all, from start to finish, concern a fourth female member of that family, Mari Mahr. There was no real need to say who they were about. The three series were shown in 1994 at the first Hungarian exhibition by that fourth member, held at the Museum of Hungarian Photography.

The pictures are remarkable for their system of tones consisting of fine transitions of grey. She usually works with emulsions applied to very large surfaces, strongly reminiscent of the grain of hand-made paper, which gives her pictures a timeless quality. I would compare them to the shorter sketches of Gyula Krúdy, —although those are alien in style to photography—because of the way her work has a narrative element, recalling the past and telling a story. Or if not Krúdy, then Gabriel García Márquez. His mystical world, built of elements of reality, is likewise closely akin to the pictures of Mari Mahr. Most of her pictures are made using the photo-in-a-photo principle, in other words, a piece of depicted reality steps in as quasi-reality behind the real object or person being photographed, and creates the situation that the photographer wished to photograph. Her photographs can be broken down into layers, in terms of feelings, ideas, and the process of creating them. Just as one nears the centre of an onion by removing its layers, so one penetrates ever more deeply into her pictures. She asks only for our attention, giving the rest herself. And although her photographs are not easy to interpret, calling as they do for some prior knowledge, some inclination towards free association, and some gift for self-examination, the effort they demand pays a good return. The objects that appear once or several times in Mari Mahr's photographs, and the scenes in the background, form a subjective biography whose lyricism speaks and addresses us directly. ❧

PERSONAL

Ádám Nádasdy

A True Romance

It all began when I was about nine. One of my classmates, Isti Berényi, a serious, long-faced boy, said his elder brother was taking English lessons from a certain Aunt Ella further down our street. We agreed that it would be a good thing to study English. We asked another classmate, Arnold Ziegler, if he was interested. He was—all the more so as his family was preparing to emigrate to Australia. He didn't tell us about this, of course, it was strictly illegal even to *think* of emigration in 1955, and his father was in prison anyway.

The same afternoon we met outside Aunt Ella's building, a grey, pompous, once elegant block, went upstairs, and rang. She was surprised and asked who we were. Berényi said his brother came there for lessons and we wanted to study English too. Yes, Aunt Ella said, but did our parents know we'd come? No, we said, wondering slightly why that was relevant—there was nothing wrong with taking language lessons, was there? We assured her that we were willing to pay. She laughed and insisted that our parents wrote to her or phoned her. They did, and the next week the lessons began. Aunt Ella wasn't old, it was the custom to call adult women "Aunt". She was palpably bored, smoking and varnishing her nails during the classes, often both at the same time. Her husband would walk into the room half dressed, looking for his tie, "Oh, the little professors", he would say, pretending to be surprised. When the revolution broke out in October 1956, the whole thing came to an end. Ziegler and his family left the country, and Berényi and I were ordered by our parents to stay at home.

With hindsight, Aunt Ella was no good. Her English must have been minimal, she had no idea of teaching, the lessons were ridiculous and ineffective. There

---

Ádám Nádasdy

has published several volumes of poetry, translated Shakespeare, and teaches linguistics at the School of English & American Studies of Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest.

was no textbook. This wasn't her fault: English wasn't taught in schools and you couldn't buy English books anywhere. You either had them or you didn't. But at least she taught us *do-does-did,* and *he-she-it,* and the like. She dictated Hungarian sentences, which we had to translate into English for homework. "When does the Easter Rabbit come? The Easter Rabbit comes at Easter." Many years later I realized that her teaching amounted to a vicious caricature of the Grammar-Translation Method. She also said, I still remember, that the word *man* is peculiarly irregular, because in the plural the spelling changes to *men,* but the pronunciation remains the same! But I had been initiated, and this was the first foreign language I had consciously begun to study.

Less consciously, it had begun much earlier. When I was three, my maternal grandmother, who oversaw our upbringing (my parents both being very busy with their work), had decided to send me to kindergarten. Not one of the newly established state-run ones, which in 1950 were teaching songs about Uncle Stalin and Communism, and (shudder!) mixing children of different classes—but a private one. It was run by an ugly, old, extremely kind lady called Aunt Ida. It had a speciality: English! It was called "English Kindergarten", and we learnt games and nursery rhymes and little stories in English. The kindergarten was the same as her flat, spacious and clean. She was a professional, you could tell that even at the age of three. I went there for three years, and at the end, when I had learnt the alphabet, I remember looking at a picture book in which a very angry man said "Give me my dog!" repeatedly, the letters becoming larger and larger as he became more and more angry, and finally it was there in block capitals, filling a whole page: "GIVE ME MY DOG!!!" Frightening. I told my mother about it.

Twenty years later I was walking in the same Buda neighbourhood, and a very old lady cried out in English: "Adam! How nice to see you! How are you?" Yes, Aunt Ida recognised in a grown man the child she had last seen at the age of five. She spoke English fluently, with a painfully thick Austro-Hungarian accent, which brought back all my memories. I was almost ashamed to answer, for by then I had acquired a good English pronunciation and I didn't want to show it off or anything. But she didn't seem to mind (or notice), and we had an impeccable little conversation. I told her I'd done an MA in English. She tilted her head to one side and said: "You see?"

But back to when I was three. My family took this whole English thing with amusement and incredulity. *Give me my dog?* Is there really such a language? We were a bilingual family, half German half Hungarian speaking, since my grandparents were Austrian. We were three brothers, and had picked up German as a mother tongue alongside Hungarian, without really being aware of its rules or anything. And suddenly little Adam came home from his English Kindergarten singing something about "a green field" instead of "ein grünes Feld"—everyone had to laugh! It sounded like spoilt German. My brothers, both older than me, started "speaking English", that is, distorting German and Hungarian words

according to what they heard from me. My father joined in, and soon the whole family called potatoes not *krumpli,* as in plain Hungarian, but *crumply* (to rhyme with *crumb-fly*), and everybody asked *How do you do?* (which they took to mean "How are you?") whenever I entered the room.

English was the only language that nobody in the family knew. The grown-ups and my brothers had learnt French and spoke it tolerably, as became a Central European upper-middle-class family. My parents spoke Italian because they were musicians, and Grandma did so because she was half Italian. But English? Why? It was a distant language of little practical value, unless you wanted to travel to England (but even then French would suffice). Grandpa actually remembered a few distorted words of English, as he had been to the Far East as a young naval officer and was, in the first half of 1904, a member of the Singapore Hockey Club (not ice-hockey, mark you). He still had his membership card. But otherwise, nothing. I never heard anyone speak English. This made it attractive in my eyes, almost romantic. The mountain that nobody had climbed, there's a challenge for the young mountaineer!

There is indeed something romantic about English, at least for the naive observer, which I was as a child and teenager, and which I am no longer, having studied linguistics and having taught it to others. But when I try to recollect how English seemed to me, I get a distinctly romantic image, romantic as defined by aesthetics or literary criticism. The impression that English has few explicit rules, that you just have to *feel* things, without needing to explain logically why this sentence is good, or this word well pronounced and the other not, makes English similar to a romantic work of art. You might think of it as something organic, grown naturally, like the English garden, not a planned one like the Classicist French garden. There is no visible layout, no right angles, no parallels and perspectives; everything is a matter of feeling, coincidence, and inexplicable sweet tradition. It was fascinating that the main difficulty of English seemed to come from pronunciation (or, conversely, from spelling), since nothing was pronounced or spelt the way it should be by ordinary continental standards. Even the alphabet began "ay-bee-see" instead of "ah-bay-say". This had its advantages: when some member of the family bent over my shoulder to see what I was reading or writing, they couldn't correct me *en passant,* they couldn't even pronounce what they saw, and if they tried, I would condescendingly correct them. My brothers called me "Double-U" for a while, they found the name of this letter so hilarious. "Come here, little Double-U", they said, and then twisted my ear or pinched my nose. I think I can call myself a martyr to the study of English! All in all, it seemed that grammar was very easy in English, but style and idiomaticity were all-important. Indeed, Uncle Paul (see below) went as far as saying that English had no grammar: it had idioms. This is in line with George Mikes's observation that the English have no sex life: they have hot-water bottles.

I know now that this impression of English is basically wrong. English has rules like any other language, otherwise babies wouldn't be able to learn it as their mother tongue. The 2,000 pages of the Randolph Quirk grammar are not filled with romantic impressions but with rules and their discussion. Yet English is peculiar in a way. Most of the rules of this language are in its syntax, that is, the possible arrangements of words and what they express (e.g. *It is certain that he will come* is possible, but *It is sure that he will come* is not, though both are possible if you begin the sentence with *I'm...*). Another component of English where rules abound is its phonology, that is, what sound arrangements are possible (e.g. English words can end in—*own,* as *town, down, renown,* but never in *-owm* which is a normal phonetic ending in, say, German: *kaum, Raum, Schaum*); and there are subtle rules as to how sounds change when the word-class changes or suffixes are added (e.g. *sane–sanity, social–society*). The one component of English that is really poor in rules is morphology, such as the conjugation of verbs *(I speak–he speaks)* and the declension of nouns *(dog–dogs).* Morphology is the most shallow and uninteresting part of English grammar.

Well, you might say, such is life: a snake has no legs, English has no morphology, but they are still perfect creatures in their own way. The trouble is that, traditionally, and still so in the middle of the twentieth century (and even today in lay circles), the common belief was that grammar equals morphology; that when you learn the grammar of a language you learn the conjugation of verbs for person, mood and tense, and the declension of nouns for gender, number and case. This is what you have to learn; the rest is "logic", "style", and "pronunciation", things that embellish the basic component but are not essential. So strong was the yearning for morphology in grammarians and teachers that we actually had to conjugate English verbs even where there were no endings to change—because that was the way to learn a language. *I had, you had, he-she-it had, we had, you had, they had.* This was our answer when the teacher said, "Conjugate the verb 'to have' in the past tense!" We had to learn these "conjugations" by heart, which, of course, was ridiculous compared to French or Latin. The real difficulties, the real rules of English were hardly mentioned. For example, nobody told me until I went to university that there was a sharp difference between sentences like *What expresses the irony?* and *What does the irony express?* I thought these were stylistic alternatives, both possible in both meanings (since English has no hard and fast rules!), except that the one containing does sounded more English, it had a more English feeling to it, so one should preferably use that. I was probably saying the right thing instinctively, but I didn't realize that this was a rule-governed phenomenon. It was only at university that I learnt, with reluctant surprise, that these were structurally different sentences, equally good English, but they expressed different things, and the choice was not a matter of feeling or style. An exciting discovery: what you took to be a Gothic ruin was actually the gas meter for the whole estate.

By the time the revolution of 1956 swept away the Aunt Ella project, I was almost eleven. The family agreed that I should continue with English, and Grandma found another teacher: Aunt Mimi. She lived round the corner, so I was allowed to go on my own, from about the end of November, when fighting had ceased and the neighbourhood was quiet again, at least during the daytime. After dusk you could often hear people shouting or running, and the occasional shot too. Children were rarely seen in the street, except for those two or three hours in the morning when the grocers opened and everybody was queueing for food. School would not resume till January 1957. I was proud to have something to do while my classmates were just hanging around at home, but then I was also angry for the same reason. Aunt Mimi was decent and experienced. She lived alone and had a pupil come every hour—this is how she made some extra money, obviously undeclared and illegal, but nobody bothered. I think she was a teacher of German. She had old textbooks, in which a very middle-class England appeared, with stories that were meant to be funny, usually about trains and restaurants. One was about a boy having dinner with his strict uncle, who wouldn't allow him to interrupt his tirade about his military adventures and only asked him at the end of the meal what it was that he had wanted to say so urgently. The boy said, "There was a caterpillar on your lettuce, but you've eaten it." Communication in English had started: the language began to express things beyond itself. Aunt Mimi did her job well, I just didn't like her. She didn't varnish her nails, but she was old-womanish and colourless. I needed a man.

Grandma asked around her social network (at church, I suppose), and someone recommended Uncle Paul. He was a great leap forward. He was a skinny, tired man of about forty-five, with a thin moustache. There was something about him that made me feel he had been in prison. He had studied economics in England and had a PhD, so he was Dr Paul B., but was now working in a miserable job which forced him to travel twice a week to the remote village of Szőreg (even the name sounded ridiculous), and probably he had other jobs elsewhere, which meant that he hardly ever slept. He regularly fell asleep during lessons, especially when I was speaking or reading and he just had to listen. I would watch his eyelids, and the moment they closed I would go silent, waiting for them to open again, when I continued exactly where I had broken off, like a released pause button. Occasionally he noticed and said, "Why don't you go on? I'm listening", but mostly he didn't, as my technique improved. He had interesting textbooks, fallen into disuse like himself, published in Hungary before the war, fascinatingly Boy Scoutish and vaguely Christian. I understood (by now I was twelve) that if the Russians hadn't come in and banned Western languages and Boy Scouts, these would be my English books at school. Uncle Paul spoke English really well; so well that at first I didn't understand him. He had an authentic pronunciation. I'd never heard anything of the sort! He said, "These trees a' nice", and I protested—little cleverclogs that I was—that surely it should

be "These trees are nice", shouldn't it? Plural sentence, no? He explained that some words were slurred (he couldn't tell which or why), and this was the natural way to pronounce English. I was suspicious, but the breaking point came when in one passage an English boy called Arthur appeared (coming to Hungary for the Jamboree), and I pronounced his name in the good German-Hungarian way, "artur", and Uncle Paul suddenly said "ah-thuh". I looked at him. Beg your pardon? He said it again, pointing at the name Arthur in the book. It took some time before I realized that he wanted me to pronounce this name as "ah-thuh" (as is correct in refined British), with my tongue sticking out for "th", and all that. It sounded so objectionable, so outlandish, that I had to tell my parents. For a week the family were sticking out their tongues and saying "ah-thuh". Uncle Paul was the first real English speaker I met, God bless him, but he didn't know how to teach. After two years he disappeared—I vaguely remember that he fell ill. No wonder. He took caffeine pills during class, one after the other.

Grandma had become old and frail, so now it was my mother who looked for a teacher, and the result was very different from Grandma's crowd. One of her colleagues suggested Jenő Z., an "official" teacher of English at the Economics University, who was very expensive (forty forints per hour in 1961!), but who knew his job, no doubt about that. He was willing to squeeze me into his very tight schedule. The only problem was that he was a Communist, or at least a Party member, as my mother warned me, so I should be careful what I said. No stories about Uncle Paul's Jamborees and open-air masses please. I was big enough to hold my tongue and established a good working relationship with Jenő Z., which went on for five years. I never called him Uncle Eugene, partly because I was a teenager now, not a child, and partly because he was a stranger, a business partner, so to speak. He was a jovial, corpulent man, with a cutting sense of humour. He was sorry, he said on the phone, he couldn't receive me in his university office, because they had just forbidden staff members to give private lessons on the premises. But since the weather was good we could meet outside the building and have our lesson on a bench. We tried, but it didn't really work. I felt so self-conscious I insisted that he should teach me at his home, which was quite far away. You had to change trams twice, but I didn't mind—another part of town, another country. I owe most of my English knowledge to this man. As I progressed fast, we often just talked about things or read poems or reconstructed Rolling Stones lyrics. I avoided politics, and he also stopped bringing it up after a few attempts. I don't know if he was really a Communist. He spoke British English, and since I'd had a good grounding from Uncle Paul ("Arthur" and all), soon my pronunciation was better than my teacher's. Jenő Z. was the first to tell me about American English, and demonstrated it on the word *pullover,* repeating it at least eight times. Even his facial expression changed to indicate that we were now on the other side of the globe.

In the meantime I turned sixteen, it was 1962, and the Beatles were having their first successes. My friends and I were listening to Radio Luxembourg ("208 metres medium wave and 49.26 metres short wave, coming to you right from the heart of Luxembourg"), an offshore-type radio station geared towards England, where commercial broadcasting was not allowed at the time. It had advertisements ("Four kinds of Sunsilk shampoo, one is for you"), football pools and Irish Hospital Sweepstakes, which I never understood and still don't. Most importantly, they had pop music. The Stones. The Who. Marianne Faithful. Was this the same country as that of Aunt Mimi's train and restaurant stories? I would spend night after night glued to the radio, listening to the fading and occasionally distorted sound on short wave, and learnt and learnt and learnt. "My mother was a tailor, sold my new blue jeans"—doesn't make much sense, what did he wear then? Ah! "Sewed my new blue jeans"! Soon my friends and I formed our own pop group, like everybody else at the time. I played the piano, and because I had a good English accent, I sang. The aim of these bands was to replicate as faithfully as possible what we heard on Luxie (as we called it), or on Radio Free Europe. I didn't understand everything that I was singing, I must confess. But my accent was convincing, and I knew more English than anybody else around, so they couldn't check. We never had any real success, playing at school balls, local dances and similar occasions.

My love for English reached its maturity with the almost carnal experience of actually going to Britain for a week in the summer of 1963, when I was seventeen. We just went to Edinburgh, nowhere else, but it was fabulous. I could actually talk to native speakers, read the road signs, watch people talk to each other (I said "watch", not "listen", because I didn't understand much of their Scottish accent). When I took the milk bottles back and asked for a refund, the woman said, "You are not charged for the bottle". A real English sentence. She had to say it three times before I understood.

Nothing could stop me after that from choosing English as a career. Jenő Z., the Communist, prepared me for my university entrance exam. "There are also questions about one's political views, aren't there?" I asked him. "That's no problem", he said. "Always say what you think." Then, after a pause, he added, "But make sure you think what you have to say."

I was admitted, and began my studies at Eötvös Loránd University in 1965. But that is another story. This essay is about love; from now on, it would be marriage. ❧

Péter Medgyes

Speaking in Tongues

I was born on 6 August 1945, the day when the nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Year after year, my birthday is made rotten by some grim reference in the morning papers to the calamity. How will I be able to compensate for my unlucky date of birth when I grow up, I asked myself as a child.

By the time I reached nursery school age, Communists had seized power, nationalised "burgeois" property and banned all foreign languages other than Russian. Nevertheless, I was fortunate enough to attend a private nursery school in Budapest run by Aunt Ida. It boggles the mind how she managed to stay private and, on top of that, to teach English, the chief language of the imperialists.

I never learnt English at school. Instead, my parents paid for private lessons. The first were with Aunt Franciska, a soft-spoken former nun, whose contribution to my education ended when, on entering the children's room, my mother saw me turning Hungarian somersaults instead of practising English grammar. My second teacher was Aunt Ila, who had lived the better part of her life in India married to an Englishman. Once she presented our family with a mah-jong set from China, which I still treasure though I can't play.

However, the teacher I remember most vividly is Privatdozent Dr Koncz, who had lost his university job by being stigmatised as a relic of the old regime. He was a severe and unhappy man in his fifties. When I rang the doorbell, his wife would come and open the door. As I sat down, I heard Dr Koncz cleaning his teeth in the adjacent bathroom. A minute later he would join me, always wearing

---

Péter Medgyes

is Deputy State Secretary in the Hungarian Ministry of Education, responsible for international relations and the promotion of foreign language education. His publications include *The Non-Native Teacher* (Macmillan 1994; winner of the Duke of Edinburgh English Language Book Competition); *Changing Perspectives in Teacher Education* (Heinemann 1996, co-edited with Angi Malderez; *The Language Teacher* (Corvina 1997); *Criss Cross* (Hüber Verlag 1999) and *Laughing Matters* (Cambridge University Press 2002)

the same old tie and grey cardigan. Learning English with him was not fun: his facial muscles would tighten whenever he caught me not knowing something I was supposed to have learnt. The coursebook we used was in sharp contrast to his gloomy character: Eckersley's four-volume *Essential English for Foreign Students* was full of jokes and light-hearted anecdotes. Once, I confided to him that I had won a small amount of money on the lottery. At the end of the next lesson, he asked me to fill in his lottery ticket. He didn't win, yet he asked me again next week. Tough luck. This end-of-lesson gamble became a ritual; I never helped him to win a single forint, but his trust in my lucky star survived.

Why English, I often wondered. After all, we were a family rooted in and surrounded by German language and culture. In fact, my grandmother's first language was German and she never learnt proper Hungarian. (Ironically, this wasn't much use to me as she was deaf.) My father, too, spent many an hour brushing up his broken command of German. I found a German vocabulary book even by his deathbed, as if this were his umbilical cord to life. Family legend has it that he longed to follow the footsteps of his elder brother, Uncle Lajos, who had graduated in medicine in Germany and then became a ship's doctor. Unfortunately, he died young of beriberi (or an overdose of morphine) in Shanghai (or Batavia) during the war. Nevertheless, my parents insisted that their two sons learn English, as Great Britain was their ideal of liberty and sophistication, and they were convinced that English was the language of the future. Hence I took my English lessons for granted. I must have been around ten when my elder brother gave up his piano lessons. I wanted to follow suit. My mother said: "All right. You may quit the piano, but only if you promise never to quit English." That was a deal.

A few years after I had begun to learn English, Dr Koncz added German to my menu. Admittedly, he set much higher store by German, claiming that English was German turned primitive. When I decided to study languages at university, he insisted that I choose German plus either English or Russian. Rejecting his advice, I went for English and Russian—he never forgave me for this treacherous act. Many years later, I once bumped into him in a park. Frail, he was propped up by his wife as they were tottering along. While she was twittering away, all Dr Koncz contemptuously said to me was: "So you've become an English teacher, eh?"

But let me flash back to my school-days. Although by the time I reached grammar school age, "Western" languages were gradually allowed back in the curriculum, I was sent to a class which specialised in Latin and Russian. Why Latin? The answer is: tradition. My father belonged to a generation capable of reeling off the long list of Latin prepositions backwards and forwards. He also had a more rational argument: Latin helps learners cope with other, much simpler languages. He didn't seem to be bothered that I had already picked up the basics of two languages before Latin emerged on my horizon.

And why Russian? It was compulsory for every school-child between age 10 and 18, but the class I joined had twice as many Russian lessons as a normal

class. I believe that my father's choice was influenced by the realisation that a good command of Russian was an asset in Communist Hungary. Be that as it may, my initial ill-feelings about parental pressure evaporated before long, and Russian became my favourite subject at school, largely thanks to our young teacher, Mrs Ganczer. She was not only an attractive woman, but also a great teacher, who succeeded in giving life to a language which was all but dead in Hungary. This was no small feat in the 60s when a mere three per cent of the population claimed to speak it. With the benefit of hindsight, I can see that the method Mrs Ganczer adopted was communicative at a time when communicative language teaching as such was still waiting to be invented.

I was only a slightly above-average pupil, so I had every reason to be scared of the complex school-leaving examination, especially in mathematics and physics. As I was preparing for the exam, in dismay I promised to myself that if I were to pass it, I would indulge in nothing else in the rest of my life but language learning. I did pass it, though not with flying colours. When my mother (my father died when I was sixteen) learnt about my decision to study English and Russian, she was concerned. "I don't want my son to become a slave of the nation," she cried, echoing a cliché which was grounded in the fact that teaching was (and still is) one of the worst-paid professions in Hungary. In vain did I try to assure her that teaching for me was out of the question and I wanted to become a translator. (And a writer and a poet—the secret aims of my life).

I was a freshman at university when I first met a native English speaker in the flesh. Miss Galton was an elderly language instructor recruited by the British Council. She began her first tutorial by asking us which English-language newspaper we were in the habit of reading. When we replied in chorus that it was the *Morning Star,* the daily of the British Communist Party and the only English-language paper available in Hungary, she was flabbergasted—and left Hungary soon afterwards. Her successors were more open-minded and enjoyed the privilege of being pampered by the affection and, quite often, adulation that Hungarians felt due to samples of a rare species. Some of them went as far as marrying Hungarians and settling here, adding to the tiny British expatriate community.

My university years were fairly busy, though not as successful as I would have fancied. As a member of the junior national fencing team, I had a training session every day plus competitions at weekends. Although my hopes of becoming an Olympic champion were not fulfilled during my university years or thereafter, I made more friends than enemies. I fondly remember an Irish fencer, who was kind enough to invite me to Dublin. Waving the official translation of the invitation, I went to the district military headquarters, as you had to in those days, to apply for permission to make the trip. Taking a quick glance at the translation, the officer said: "You wanna go to Dublin, eh? And you know where you gonna go? To f—ing nowhere." So I stayed at home.

Meanwhile, I also had my first steady relationship. When I was offered the opportunity to spend a year in Moscow to study Russian, I turned it down for fear of losing my girl-friend during such a long absence. Instead, I chose a one-month grant to Kiev, but even this proved to be too long—she broke it off two weeks after I had gone. I was still a student when I tried my hand at translating and submitted my first piece to a publisher. I was told that my translation had not yet reached the level of editability. Never again have I given translating another chance.

Although I didn't intend to be a teacher, a condition for graduation was to complete a one-month period of teaching practice in the country. I happened to land in the lovely town of Sopron, near the Austrian border. My teaching duties involved two groups of secondary school students with an overwhelming majority of girls. Their eyes were glued on me, a strapping young man to replace Aunt Aliz, who would doze off as soon as I started the lesson, only to wake up for the bell and say: "Splendid! You're a born teacher, Peter." On graduation, I was offered seven teaching jobs—this had much less to do with my competence than with the fact that I was a male in a female profession and that English was more and more in demand. I accepted a job in the school named after a great Hungarian poet and Holocaust victim, Miklós Radnóti.

At this point, I was haunted by the spirit of Dr Koncz one more time. The headmaster signed my contract in June with the proviso that I take up German at university, because he was short of qualified German teachers. I was directed to the Chair of the German Department, who advised me with a stern face to study *der, die, das* during the summer and come back for the entrance examination at the end of August. I spent the whole summer poring over *Deutsche Grammatik,* but no notification about the exam came along. I lay doggo. The school-year began, and there was still no news. At the end of September, my conscience urged me to make a confession to the headmaster. It took him a while to realise what I was getting at. He told me that the situation had changed in the meantime, so I need no longer worry about German. I was terribly relieved, but now as I come to think of it, I believe it was a missed opportunity, as my German was thus left to rust for ever. A real shame for someone who lives in Mitteleuropa and claims to be a language expert into the bargain.

French is another sore point. For several years, a fellow teacher in the school taught me French and in return I would give him English lessons. When I was sent in as a substitute to cover a French lesson, I began to talk to the pupils in French. They responded at a level way beyond mine. My command of French has only deteriorated since then.

Nor has my Russian fared much better. Well-known for the high level of Russian instruction, Radnóti School had many excellent Russian teachers, many of whom were native speakers of the language. Albeit deprived of the opportunity to teach Russian, at least I had the chance to practise it with them. My speaking skills in Russian have since shrunk to a minimum.

Thus there was nothing else for me to teach but English and, like everyone else, I was teaching from the one and only mandatory coursebook written by Hungarian authors. I found this book so boring that I decided to supplement it with extracts from British publications. Rewarded by my pupils' (and their parents') positive feedback, I finally chucked the Hungarian book altogether and began to use imported books only. One day I was summoned by the school principal. He said that my illegal use of foreign books had been brought to the attention of the Ministry of Education. My heart sank. Then he asked, "Do you find those books any better than the compulsory ones?" I stammered that I did. "Well, you should know. You're the expert," the principal said. "Carry on. I'll take care of the rest." I carried on as before, unruffled under his protective wings.

I had been a teacher for five years when I had my first chance to go to Britain. That British Council summer course for teachers of English was a real experience: I was suddenly faced with the harsh reality that my listening comprehension skills were far too limited to understand an accent as thick as the Geordie spoken in the north of England. On my first day I went for a walk in the city centre and I lost my way. I stopped a man to ask the way back to the university campus. As I couldn't make head or tail of his explanation, I repeated the question. Seeing that I was still at a loss, he made a third try, but then shrugged his shoulders and went on his way. My subsequent travels confirmed that indeed English was spoken with enormously different accents throughout the world. I no longer made a big fuss about the pronunciation of my pupils or that of my own, for that matter.

I was in my late twenties when I was commissioned to write my first coursebook, followed by many more for both primary and secondary pupils. In all fairness, my work was not hindered by political dictates; while I was never forced to include specific content, I instinctively knew what not to include. The most serious objection of a political nature was raised by an editor who insisted that I delete the word "godfather" from my text, because it had religious connotations. I complied. In general, English teachers were considered a suspicious lot, even in the era of "Goulash Communism" of the 80s. When I applied to the Hungarian Ministry of Education with the idea of establishing an English teachers' assocation, I was flatly rejected. I realise now that my plea was considerably weakened by the unfortunate choice of an acronym—ATAK.

The coursebook, *Linda and the Greenies,* which was a great success in Hungary, was written for 8 to 10-year-olds. This is a story about a teenage girl who is kidnapped by the Greenies to teach them English. The Greenies are cute little monsters, who live under the ground, mostly in the urban sewage systems, and speak a language called *Ündürixi.* The book introduces about a dozen Greenie words, such as *Hömöpö apor Ündürixi,* and *flik primuli/primur* (translated as Welcome to Greenieland and silly girl/boy, respectively). While the book went down pretty well with the children, some parents wrote angry letters, calling me a

flik primur, for teaching their kids nonsense words. I replied by arguing, in all seriousness, that *Ündürixi* was a language in its own right and the only reason why they had never heard of it was that they had not yet been to Greenieland. This must have convinced them that I was mad, not just silly.

I wrote most of my coursebooks in collaboration with others and frankly it was not always easy to get along with them. One elderly collaborator was convinced that a coursebook must be boring lest it should divert attention from the language itself. He not only strove to be dull in the bits that he produced, but systematically killed whatever humour there happened to be in my parts.

I also owe gratitude to my editors and reviewers. Mind you, it was not always easy to contain the resentment I harboured as I was reading their caustic remarks. The most devastating comment came from a native English-speaking reader: "The manuscript is perfect as it is, apart from the fact that it smacks of foreign authorship from the first letter to the last." In an attempt to outsmart his readers, a fellow author confided to me that he would deliberately leave typing errors to the manuscript. Upon receiving the list of suggestions, he would correct the typos and pass over comments which would call for fundamental modifications in the text. "Surely they can't expect me to accept everything they say. Ha, ha, ha!"

Having worked at the chalkface for fifteen years, I eventually left Radnóti School to become a teacher trainer at university. Although my new job offered lots of new challenges, I was constantly haunted by reminiscences of my years as a school teacher. After a gap of some twenty years, I plucked up enough courage and asked to teach a group of 15-year-olds in the same school where I had set out as a teacher. No sooner had my request been granted than I was attacked by a series of doubts. Will I be able to cope as an ordinary school teacher? With my university gown off and my hair going grey, will teenagers still appreciate me? Anyway, what are students like these days? What is their attitude to English? To cut a long story short, I did a stint of two years in the classroom, in quest of finding answers to my questions. Even though I often had a hard time coping, it was a most rewarding comeback.

I trust that what I've said so far proves my love of languages. Or rather my love of English, the only foreign language I speak and write decently enough.The trouble is that whenever I decide to brush up my Russian, French or German, by default I reach out for an English newspaper or an English dictionary, change to an English-language TV channel or watch an English-language video. As far as I'm concerned, English certainly implies far more than a means of earning a living or a tool of communication. It is my most loyal companion. For better or for worse, I'm desperately in love with it. For me, uttering an English word is, to quote Wittgenstein, "like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination."

Speaking of keyboards, I wonder what would have happened if my brother had insisted on giving up his English and not his piano lessons, with me toeing the line? I might have ended up as a concert pianist. Hm. ❧

Alan Walker

Liszt as Cultural Ambassador

"Liszt was what a prince *should be.*"
Grand Duke Carl Alexander to Busoni[1]

Two or three years ago, *The New York Times* ran an article on Benjamin Britten, and hailed him as "The Musician of the Twentieth Century." The choice pleased me. The reasons given were obvious, but are worth repeating. Britten was not only a composer of genius, but he was also an advanced pianist, a conductor, a teacher, a festival organizer and a writer and speaker of style and polish. He did many things well. Towards the end of his life he was elevated to the British House of Lords, a rare distinction for a musician, and had become a cultural ambassador for his country.

The same article then went on to ask the question: "Who was the Musician of the Nineteenth Century?" Again the answer pleased me: "Franz Liszt." And again the reasons were obvious. Liszt was not only the greatest pianist of his time, but he was a remarkable composer, a conductor, a teacher, a writer and a festival organizer. That is, he possessed in abundance all the qualities exhibited by Britten. And there was another remarkable parallel. In due course, Liszt, too, was elevated to the Hungarian Parliament, the first time such a distinction was ever granted to a musician in Hungary. It is a fact that for much of his life Liszt was far better known abroad than Hungary's leading politicians. He was his country's cultural ambassador.

What qualifications did Liszt possess for such a position? At first glance he displayed few of the attributes of a diplomat. A diplomat has been well described as "someone who thinks twice before saying nothing." Still less flattering descriptions come to mind: "A diplomat is a person who can tell you to go to hell in such a way that you actually look forward to the trip." Culminating in: "An ambassador is an honest man who has been sent abroad to lie."

1 ■ Busoni: *The Essence of Music,* p. 138. Translated by Rosamond Ley. London, 1957.

Alan Walker

is the author of a three-volume, prize-winning biography of Franz Liszt, published by Alfred A Knopf. This article is a modified version of the keynote address delivered at the American Liszt Society Conference in Gainesville, Florida, on March 27, 2003.

None of these definitions fits Liszt, who usually thought long and hard before saying anything at all about music. But when he spoke, he spoke with conviction. Manifestos, letters to the press, summaries of meetings, the formation of societies, all these ambassadorial activities Liszt pursued to the full. It was well said of him that had he not been a pianist he could have become the first diplomat of Europe. And Liszt had the skills to do it, to say nothing of the contacts. He spanned the Romantic Era. As a boy he met Beethoven; as an elderly man he was introduced to Debussy. In between this Protean personality was intimately acquainted with many of the leading artists of the age. His circle was not confined to musicians like Wagner, Chopin, Berlioz and Schumann, although he knew them well. Among his friends and colleagues were painters, poets, writers and sculptors, such as Delacroix, Heine, Lamartine, George Sand and Bartolini. He mixed just as easily with politicians, and could count several of the crowned heads of Europe among his friends.

Liszt's position in the world of musical diplomacy was well illustrated when he went to London, in 1840. He mixed with high society, met royalty, including Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and had an encounter with Lady Blessington, an intimate of Lord Byron, whose claim to literary fame still rests on her "Conversations with Byron." She examined Liszt admiringly through her lorgnette, paused, and exclaimed: "What a pity to put such a man to the piano!" That was at the beginning of the Victorian Era, when the career of a musician was not considered to be a suitable activity for a gentleman. Even so, the remark went deeper than we may realize. Liszt's diplomatic skills were already well honed. He had assumed a position of leadership in the profession of music. When Liszt walked on stage wearing his medals, and his clanking sword-of-honour given to him by the Hungarians, it was not merely to display them to the world, but rather to raise the status of musicians everywhere. "Here," he seemed to say, "is a musician with as many decorations and titles as a prince."

Consider his famous reply to Tsar Nicholas I of Russia when the two men had their first encounter in St. Petersburg, in 1842. Nicholas made a noisy entrance in one of Liszt's recitals, and continued chatting to his entourage during the performance. Liszt stopped playing, and sat before the keyboard with bowed head. When Nicholas inquired why he had stopped playing, Liszt replied: "Music herself should be silent when Nicholas speaks." The remark has earned a place in the history of musical diplomacy. As Sacheverell Sitwell pointed out, "It was the first time in history that 'Music herself' had answered back."

To another reigning monarch, Napoleon III of France, who complained that the burdens of office were now so great that he often felt as if he were a century old, Liszt replied: "Sire, you *are* the century!" Who would not feel the burden roll away after receiving such a compliment?

Finally, there is a much more private incident concerning Robert Schumann, which throws light on Liszt the man. Liszt visited the Schumanns in Dresden, in

1848, and got into an argument about the merits of Felix Mendelssohn who had just passed away. Schumann became so agitated in defence of Mendelssohn that he struck Liszt on the chest and disappeared from the room. Liszt calmly turned to Clara Schumann with the remark: "Please tell your husband that he is the only man in the world from whom I would take so calmly the words just offered me."[2] Liszt showed exceptional grace under pressure. These anecdotes, with their verbal adroitness, suggest that he was cut from the same cloth as an ambassador, a man for all seasons, someone who rose to every occasion. Incidentally, Clara Schumann went on to ban Liszt's music from the Frankfurt Conservatory when she eventually became Head of the piano department there, while Liszt never ceased to play and promote the music of Robert Schumann.

In the third volume of my life of Franz Liszt, I tried to enumerate all the titles and medals that Liszt received during his long and productive life. Altogether I counted forty-eight, and I am sure that the list is incomplete. Even so, it ranges from an Austrian knighthood to the Freedom of the City of Weimar; from Commander of the French Legion of Honour to the Hungarian Sword of Honour; from the Order of St. Michael of Bavaria (bestowed on him by King Ludwig II) to the Freedom of the City of Jena. It would be an impressive enough catalogue for an aristocrat. For a musician it probably remains unmatched in history.

Towards the end of his life, when his pioneering battles to secure a better deal for musicians had been won, Liszt noticed that such decorations were being devalued, especially by the French, because unworthy people were receiving them. That explains his acid remark: "Whenever one is in Paris one must wear one's medals, otherwise one is so noticeable on the boulevards."

Liszt was the first musician in history to articulate a great idea. Namely, that music functions best when placed in the service of some ethical or humanitarian cause. He had a watchword: *"Génie oblige!"*. Genius has obligations. Liszt argued that because music is a gift from Nature, even from God, we have a duty to give something back. During his lifetime a river of gold poured in, but a river of gold also poured out. Liszt gave generously to all and every charitable cause: to the victims of the Danube floods; the casualties in the great fire of Hamburg; to the building fund of Cologne Cathedral; to the establishment of schools and music conservatories; to the erection of statues to Beethoven and Bach. And he also did much good by stealth, giving money away to people who needed it but were hardly known to him. His Hungarian pupil Janka Wohl recalls seeing Liszt in old age, sitting at his desk putting bank notes into envelopes and addressing them to people in Budapest who had pleaded with him for help. Liszt called it "playing Providence." It is a compelling image.

Because Liszt believed that Art was God-given, he often likened the vocation of music to that of the priesthood. He wrote: "A sacred predestination marks him at

2 ■ LCS, vol. 2, pp. 121–22; and JRS, p. 523.

birth. It is not he who chooses his profession—it is his profession which chooses him."[3] The musician, like the priest, was the intermediary between God and Man. We could almost call the musician a Spiritual Ambassador. Music was divine fire brought down to earth from heaven, so that lesser mortals could warm their spirits and enrich their souls. Liszt once famously defined the musician as "The Bearer of the Beautiful".

It often comes as a surprise to learn that Liszt practiced what a later generation would call "music therapy". He was music's ambassador to the poor, the sick, and the down-trodden as well. As a young man Liszt visited hospitals, insane asylums, and prison-cells containing those condemned to die. He brought music to society's outcasts, and gave these unfortunates a degree of comfort in their hour of distress. The gripping account of his visits to the Salpetrière hospital in Paris, in 1833, where his piano-playing eased the symptoms of an incurably autistic woman, or to the insane asylum in Cork, Ireland, in 1841, make haunting reading still. When he entered the asylum in Cork, it was with the intent of playing the piano to the inmates—his usual practice. But he was so overcome at the horrors he witnessed that after a time he was obliged to withdraw. About thirty females were confined to one area, some howling, some bent up like animals, some scraping the walls, others rolling on the stone floor. To this menagerie of depraved human beings he offered the balm of music. We cannot begin to imagine what his distinguished contemporaries Brahms, Wagner, Mendelssohn, or the fastidious Chopin, would have made of his attitude. Without exception, they would not have gone near the building.

Music, for Liszt, was there for the common good, not for personal aggrandizement, and especially not for the accumulation of wealth. His dislike of Mammon-worship came out strongly at the time of the death of the famous pedagogue Theodor Kullak, who ran one of the largest music conservatories in Europe, with hundreds of pupils enrolled in its courses. One day a student handed Liszt a Berlin newspaper containing details of Kullak's will. It revealed that Kullak had made a fortune of more than one million Deutsche marks which was to be divided among his sons. Liszt exploded in anger, and remarked: "You cannot be allowed to rake in a million marks from teaching without making some sacrifice on the Altar of Art."[4] He then wrote an open letter to the editor of the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* accusing Kullak of "forgetfulness" and pleading with his sons to establish scholarships for needy musicians.[5] Of course, nothing happened. Not everybody shared Liszt's idealistic views. Is not a man's hard-earned wealth his to dispose of as he himself thinks fit? But if anybody had the right to protest, it was Liszt, who at this late stage in his life was living in genteel poverty, having given away most of the vast wealth he had acquired in earlier years.

When Liszt wrote, "The musician does not choose his profession; his profession chooses him," he was not only telling us that music is a vocation, but more

3 ■ RGS, vol. 2, p. 135.
4 ■ RL, p. 298.
5 ■ LLB, vol. 2, p. 382.

importantly that music is innate. This is a deeply Romantic notion. Music, Liszt argued, must not be confused with a trade, although it frequently is. The butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker can all exchange places with one another; but not one of them can exchange places with a musician. No one is chosen to become a candlestick-maker! Even in Liszt's time, he knew that there were candlestick-makers in the music profession, people for whom music was a mere trade, a way of making a livelihood. Liszt despised them. They not only lacked a sense of vocation, they lacked what he called "a sacred predestination."

If we think this through, it would mean that one could no more determine to become a musician than one could determine the colour of one's eyes. You can develop your talent, but you cannot acquire it. This is a deeply Freudian notion, and Freud himself found the words for it in his timeless aphorism, "We are lived". We are not drawn from in front, but are pushed from behind. Such a fatalistic notion was not unknown to Arnold Schoenberg, who once declared that the true musician is in the grip of forces he cannot understand but has no alternative but to obey.

These were among the ideas that Liszt brought with him to Weimar, where he settled in 1848. He had already given his last recital for money in Elisabetgrad, in Ukraine, and he now took up full-time duties in Weimar bearing the grand title of "Kapellmeister-in Extraordinary", with a salary that was so small he called it his "cigar money." (It did indeed just about cover the cost of the cheap cigars that Liszt smoked and regularly handed out to his friends.) But Weimar had attractions for Liszt. It had an orchestra, an opera house and a strong theatrical tradition. It was the city of Goethe and Schiller, and Liszt wanted to restore the place to its former glory. He wanted it to become, as he put it, "the Athens of the North."

In Weimar, Liszt's diplomatic skills were put to wonderful advantage. Here, if anywhere, we may call him "a cultural ambassador". He not only mustered the whole of Weimar's musical resources, but those of the entire province of Thuringia as well. He reached out to the satellite towns of Jena, Eisenach and Erfurt, and brought them all into his orbit. He often pooled their orchestras and choirs and put on great Wagner and Berlioz festivals with combined forces of 150 players and choruses of 200 singers or more. His work in behalf of both composers is well known. What may not be so well known is that Liszt mounted the world première of *Lohengrin,* an opera that Wagner had dedicated to him, and was obliged to arrange forty-six rehearsals of this complex work before everything came together. Forty-six rehearsals! To read the background correspondence is to see a great cultural ambassador at work.

And like the good ambassador that he was, Liszt also formed a number of musical societies for the promotion of modern music. He established the Neu-Weimar-Verein in the 1850s. It was a kind of musical club that held regular meetings in Weimar's Erbprinz Hotel. It had an executive committee, a constitution,

and even a newsletter called *Die Laterne* ("The Lantern"), by whose light the members were presumably meant to find their way. Then came the Deutsche Tonkünstler Versammlung, with Liszt as its inspirational force. In 1861 the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein appeared with Franz Brendel as president, a national organization that still exists. Liszt became its honorary president for life. After his death, the position was assumed by Richard Strauss.

These organizations involved Liszt in an enormous amount of labour. Yet he felt that it was the most effective way to promote the music and musicians of his time. In order to undertake this vast amount of administrative work, he often had to shelve his own musical activities until a better moment came along. And let us not forget that during all the time that he was conducting new works, teaching, composing, and burying himself in letters and messages connected with his various festivals, he was also writing books and articles. The articles usually took the form of topical commentaries on works and composers that were being featured in the Weimar concerts, and they served as detailed programme-notes. There were essays on Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, Wagner, Robert Franz, Berlioz, Beethoven, John Field and Gluck. A question-mark may still hang over the exact authorship of some of these writings. But more and more holographs are turning up. The burden of proof has now shifted to those who do not think that Liszt was the author.

Liszt eventually came to regard his years at Weimar as a failure. He had long since borne the brunt of all the criticism levelled against the musical avant garde, because he offered the best target. Most critics in Germany dismissed his music as either trivial or experimental. The first performance of the *Dante* Symphony was a disaster, while the Symphonic Poem *Mazeppa* was greeted with catcalls and boos. His long-standing plan to turn Weimar into a centre for the arts crumbled to dust. Moreover, the massive help that he had extended to Berlioz, Schumann, and above all to Wagner, had not only gone largely unacknowledged by them, but had been repaid with criticism and sarcasm about his own place in musical history. It has been well said that no good deed remains unpunished. Nevertheless, Liszt kept his ideals, even though he was by now beset with grave family troubles as well. His long struggle to marry Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, his companion of thirteen years standing, had gone nowhere, because she was unable to secure a divorce from her husband, Prince Nicholas; she had meanwhile left Weimar for Rome in order to deal directly with the Vatican. His son Daniel had died of tuberculosis, aged twenty. Not long afterwards his daughter Blandine would die of complications following the birth of her first child, at the age of twenty-eight. In the summer of 1861, in the midst of this sea of troubles, Liszt tendered his resignation and left Weimar.

Just before he departed, the Grand Duke elevated Liszt to the rank of Court Chamberlain. This effectively made him a roving ambassador for the court of Weimar.

In 1874, when Liszt was approaching his twilight years, he was invited by the Hungarian government to assume the Presidency of the newly-formed Royal Hungarian Academy of Music, an institution that would later bear his name. He had never sought this post, which he at first described as "a noose around my neck", but he accepted it because his country had called him. And he put the best of himself into the job. Liszt knew that it would take him away from other activities in the years that remained to him, especially composing, to which he now devoted the major part of his energy. The Hungarian government, for its part, knew that Liszt was the best-known living Hungarian, and by securing him for the Royal Academy, they were ensuring that the institution would receive world attention. He refused to accept a salary. The only recompense he received was the free use of an apartment above the Academy building.

Liszt now had an unprecedented opportunity to set the curriculum of the Academy. Because he believed in the one-ness of music, and not in specialization, he insisted that all pianists take composition lessons, and all composers take piano lessons. For the entrance examination the bar was set very high. All students had to pass a sight-reading test, an improvisation test and a transposition test—sight unseen. Those who failed were not admitted.

Since I have opened the door, I must say a few words about Liszt as a teacher, because it is in the field of pedagogy that the image of Liszt as a cultural ambassador strikes us with peculiar force. Liszt's masterclasses never lost the social origins with which they began. They started in Weimar, in the 1850s, with Liszt and a few of his pupils—Karl Klindworth, Carl Tausig, Hans von Bülow, Hans von Bronsart and others—meeting with Liszt in the music room of the Altenburg (his home in Weimar) two or three times a week to make music informally. Eventually the group was enlarged by visiting writers, painters, historians and scientists, some of them distinguished, who joined the circle as observers. Liszt's students played and Liszt would make some comments about the performance. The classes were sometimes attended by the Grand Duke and Duchess of Weimar. Liszt's housekeeper Pauline Apel would serve cookies and wine, and afterwards Liszt and his circle would go down to the Erbprinz Hotel, where the social atmosphere would be lubricated with yet stronger libations. Sometimes the group would not disperse until after dark. It was as if Liszt were presiding over a never-ending party.

In teaching Liszt was a perfect example of what I have elsewhere called "the Guru principle". It goes to the heart of the teacher–pupil relationship. You must find your Guru before anything worthwhile can be achieved. There is a certain "chemistry" in all such connections, which often results in a paradox. We are all familiar with teachers who seem to know everything, but their students learn nothing. Likewise, there are teachers who seem to know nothing, but their students learn everything. There is no causal connection. That is the meaning of Schopenhauer's pessimistic observation, "If teaching were of any avail, how could Nero be Seneca's pupil?"

Liszt's pupils embraced many nationalities. By the 1880s they came from Germany, France, Italy, England, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Russia, Hungary, Turkey, and especially from the United States. At one time Liszt had about forty American students in his class, so many in fact, that he once referred to his situation as "too much America." Liszt liked the idea of America, however. In later years, he even made a point of celebrating July 4 in spectacular style. Pauline Apel would bake a large cake decorated with the stars and stripes, and share it among the students. "Today we are all Americans!" Liszt would exclaim. On one such occasion he even arranged a "Stars and Stripes dinner" at Armbrust's restaurant in Weimar, with American-style cuisine and a large flag of the Union draped over a tree in the garden. The musical highlight of that particular celebration was a performance of the "Yankee Doodle Dandee" Variations by Anton Rubinstein. It was a well-intentioned choice, but Liszt found the work so tedious that he insisted the performance be spread across two days. Friedheim and Rosenthal took turns to finish off the "monster work", as he called it.[6]

As Liszt approached old age he suffered from bouts of depression—idealism and depression often go together. His mental gloom became so serious that, reading between the lines of his correspondence, he may even have contemplated suicide, an act from which his strong Catholic faith preserved him. He was gripped by melancholia, however, and sometimes lost the will to live. He told Baroness Meyendorff, "Sometimes sadness envelops my soul like a shroud." And on another occasion he wrote, "I am reaching the end—even succumbing—I no longer want an extension." And he adds, "I am extremely tired of living; but as I believe that God's Fifth Commandment "thou shalt not kill" also applies to suicide, I go on existing..."[7]

We are deeply impressed with Liszt's stand against the death penalty, which must have been formed early, and which was advanced for its time. Already he regarded it as state-sponsored murder. He wrote to Meyendorff: "[It] is an abominable social crime. It is obvious that we are all more or less guilty, deranged, or crazy, but it does not follow that we ought to be guillotined, hanged, or, as an act of mercy, shot."[8] That last phrase "an act of mercy" reveals a special irony. How kind of the state, Liszt seems to say, to put on display for the benefit of those condemned to die the varied forms of its final solution—only to deny them any choice in the matter.

Liszt's general opposition to suicide sprang from the same source: his abhorrence of all killing. He knew that the Roman Catholic Church forbade suicide, of course, and that those people who discarded their lives in this way would not be buried on consecrated ground but would be excommunicated, their souls sent to purgatory. But even on this issue he was ahead of the Church, and foresaw a

6 ■ BSLW, pp. 659–62.
7 ■ WLLM, p. 299.
8 ■ WLLM, p. 418.

time when all that would change, as it has. Meanwhile, Liszt understood very well what it was to confront what Sir Winston Churchill used to call "the Black Dog", and he empathised with those who were overcome by it.

What has all this to do with Liszt as an ambassador? Everything, in my view. It made him a more complete human being. He understood that the life of the mind is a complex place, and if you are to be a cultural ambassador (as opposed to the kind who is sent abroad to lie for his country), it is the life of the mind that you are representing, in all its diversity.

It is in the final years of his life that the image of "Liszt as Cultural Ambassador" assumes its full significance. Liszt himself described his life after 1869 as "Une vie trifurquée", a life split in three, divided each year between Weimar, Rome and Budapest, in an endless circle, with visits to Paris, Vienna, Brussels and other cities thrown in. We have calculated that he traversed more than six thousand miles a year on such journeys, which were often accomplished at night, sometimes by horse-drawn coach, sometimes by train. Also, Liszt never missed attending the annual festivals of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein, and he usually attended every concert. He undertook all this travelling not because he was restless (one of the more preposterous claims put forward in the popular biographies) but because he was fulfilling his ambassadorial duties. In Weimar it was to teach his masterclasses and maintain his links with the Grand Duke; in Budapest, it was to undertake his duties as President of the Royal Academy; in Rome it was to strengthen his ties with Roman Catholic clerics (he had taken minor orders in 1865), and to sustain his life-long relationship with Princess Carolyne. Remove these reasons, and you remove the need for Liszt to have travelled at all. He covered those miles not for himself, but for others.

In his twilight years, Liszt was often likened to a "grand seigneur". That shock of flowing white hair, the lined but kindly face, the piercing green/gray eyes, the abbé's collar, and the overwhelming sense of authority that emanated from everything that he did, gave him an aura that all who bathed in it never forgot. By now, most of the musical world turned to Liszt for help and support. He was weighed down with an avalanche of correspondence, mostly from people he had never met, but who wanted his assistance. He himself tells us that he received upwards of fifty letters a week. "Some write for money, some ask for letters of reference, some ask for concerts and for decorations, others send parcels of their manuscripts for me to read."[9] A lesser man would have ignored them. Liszt responded, often with unparalleled generosity.

His large-heartedness, allied to his sense of duty, may well have hastened his end. The only reason Liszt went to the Bayreuth Festival during that fatal summer of 1886, was to lend his name and fame to an enterprise that had started to flag. Wagner was dead and the Festival, which was now run by his widow,

9 ■ WLLM, p. 213.

Liszt's daughter Cosima, was almost bankrupt. Liszt saw through the situation and described himself as "Bayreuth's poodle", but went anyway. He arrived in poor health, and after a life-and-death struggle which lasted for ten days, he died in Bayreuth, on July 31, 1886.[10]

When we survey Liszt's life complete, and compare it with those of his great contemporaries—Chopin, Schumann, Brahms, Berlioz, and above all Wagner —we see at once what makes him different. Great as they were, the others were ambassadors only for themselves. Liszt was an ambassador for them all. Imagine Chopin as a fund-raiser for needy musicians! Or Brahms as a promoter of national festivals for Berlioz and Wagner! Or, as a final absurdity, the self-absorbed Wagner as the lifelong President of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein. It could not have happened. Wagner, after all, was the first Wagnerian.

With the passing of time, Franz Liszt has become the paragon of much that is best in human nature and in the profession of music generally. We do not really know him if we see him merely as the world's greatest pianist, or as the nineteenth century's most prolific composer, or as its most charismatic teacher. It is only when we see him as a cultural ambassador for his generation that his greatness shines forth in its totality. Whatever the final verdict on Liszt may be, one thing is sure. He was a powerful historical force. Liszt made things happen. Voltaire used to say that if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him, otherwise the world would remain inexplicable. To borrow Voltaire's image, we can say that if Liszt had never existed it would be necessary to invent him. Remove him from the nineteenth century and you create confusion and error, effect without cause. Return him to his rightful place, and musical history once more makes sense. ❧

SOURCES

■ BSLW Bagby, Morris. "A Summer with Liszt in Weimar." *Century* Magazine (New York), vol. 32, September 1886.

■ JRS Jansen, F. Gustav. *Robert Schumanns Briefe: Neue Folge.* Leipzig, 1904.

■ LCS Litzman, Berthold. *Clara Schumann: Ein Künstlerleben.* 3 vols. Leipzig, 1902–08.

■ LLB La Mara, ed. *Franz Liszts Briefe.* 8 vols. Leipzig, 1893–1905.

■ RGS Ramann, Lina, ed. *Franz Liszts Gesammelte Schriften.* 6 vols. Leipzig, 1880–83.

■ RL Ramann, Lina. *Lisztiana: Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt in Tagebuchblättern, Briefen und Dokumenten aus den Jahren 1873–1886/87.* Herausgegeben von Arthur Seidl. Textrevision von Friedrich Schnapp. Mainz, 1983.

■ WLLM Waters, Edward N., ed. *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Olga von Meyendorff, 1871–1886.* Translated by William R. Tyler. Dumbarton Oaks, 1979.

10 ■ I have presented the harrowing story of these last ten days in my recent book *The Death of Franz Liszt,* based on the unpublished diary of his pupil Lina Schmalhausen (Cornell University Press, 2002). It tells a tale of medical malpractice and family neglect. The subsequent struggle over the possession of Liszt's remains was filled with drama and intrigue that matched anything he experienced during his long and colourful life.

Paul Griffiths

Eötvös and Kurtág—with a Difference

New Budapest Music Center Releases

The first syllable of Peter Eötvös's name has to be imagined with an accent gently flickering over it, for here is a musician who has made his name—or remade his name—largely in western Europe while keeping some sense of himself as Hungarian. One token of that is his fondness for the cimbalom, which features not only in his virtual concerto *Psychocosmos* (1993) but also in a longer and broader orchestral score, *Atlantis* (1995), where a baritone and a boy soprano are like Prospero and Ariel in a sea of sounds. In *Atlantis,* indeed, the episodes for cimbalom—and that for violins at the end of the first part—suggest that this ancient civilisation boasted at least one Hungarian restaurant.

Both these works have re-emerged on one of several important records from the Budapest Music Center (BMC CD 007), and it is good to have them back. They show the composer-conductor's sure sense of orchestral blendings and placements, his way of making bold gestures and odd ones come out of a seething sensibility, and his keen ear for drama. *Atlantis*, on a text by Sándor Weöres, has a subaqueous, reverberative sound that suits the subject but is also very typical of Eötvös's music, where it often arises from a duality of times: events will be going at dizzying speed on one level, while on another the pace is slow. The album is completed by *Shadows* (1996), half-remembered folk music for flute and clarinet with a much smaller ensemble. Here the conductor is Hans Zender; Eötvös himself, in the other pieces, works with the WDR and BBC symphony orchestras, and with Márta Fabián as cimbalomist in both compositions.

A selection of his vocal works (BMC CD 038) is perhaps even more exhilarating, not least because it enables one to hear how much the composer has changed in almost 40 years—and how much he has stayed the same. In some ways *Two Monologues* (1998), an offshoot from his widely staged *Three Sisters* opera, is far more conservative than the electronic and music-theatre pieces he was producing in the late 1960s and early 70s: it is a linked pair of arias. But Eötvös at once consummately realizes a traditional genre and takes it in new directions—not so much by giving his baritone soloist touches of falsetto as by providing a line that is lyri-

---

Paul Griffiths
writes regularly for The New York Times.

cally expressive yet fresh (and that clearly excites the artistry of Wojtek Drabowicz, the soloist here), and also by creating an orchestral score that is supportive yet also has intentions of its own to explore. At the same time, *Two Monologues* curiously fulfils possibilities inherent in the old experimental pieces. The orchestra's independence develops the stark obliviousness of the solo wood-chopper in *Harakiri* (1973), who goes on with his task while the vocal soloist declaims her lament and self-examination on the point of suicide. And the braiding of fast and slow times (slow time now fully expressed as non-tonal harmony in *Two Monologues*) turns out to have been present right from *Tale* (1968), in which recordings of a story-teller are overlapped at different speeds.

Most of these vocal works, so varying but so uncannily alike, are offered in recordings made when they were new. That is unavoidably the case with the two tape compositions: *Tale,* created in Cologne, and *Cricketmusic* (1970), from Budapest, where the playful and formally perfect montage of crickets' chirping (the only material) gives the impression that the insects have things they wish to communicate with an almost human vocality. There is a neat connection with *Insetti galanti,* from the same year, a comedy madrigal in which the text of a Gesualdo madrigal, where the author sees himself as a mosquito and a butterfly at his lady's mercy, is reset in the manner of Ligeti.

With *Harakiri* we have the world première, given by performers who knew they had something extraordinary to deliver. Kaoru Ishii, delivering the text by István Bálint the composer had translated into Japanese, is chilling, and the two wonderful shakuhachi players—Shizuo Aoki and Katsuya Yokoyama—leave it an open question whether they are commiserating with the soloist, weeping the false tears of Job's comforters or standing by as dispassionately as the wood-chopper (Yasunori Yamaguchi). There were many attempts at western noh around the time of *Harakiri,* by composers from Britten to Stockhausen, but Eötvös's clarity and his refusal to sentimentalise—coupled with his sagacity in asking questions about this culture and not just clasping it in an embrace—make his piece unusually moving.

His more recent mastery of the orchestra is demonstrated again in *zeroPoints* (2000), which he wrote for the 75th birthday of his colleague Pierre Boulez, providing an appropriate atmosphere of fizzing celebration, but also much more: a chain of beginnings which are all, whether exultant or ominous, brilliantly and characterfully played by the Gothenburg Symphony under the composer in the recording (BMC CD 063), and that convey his usual feeling of music in an echo chamber. The coupling this time is not more Eötvös but Beethoven, which Eötvös conducts as if it were by an admired living colleague. His orchestra is the Ensemble Modern, whose players sound electrified to be playing music so far outside their normal repertory: inner voices come alive, and wind solos are beautifully played. Eötvös uses a modest string section, not so much in order to mimic period practice (which, in any event, was wildly inconsistent in this matter) as to profit from the modern possibility of adding volume by amplifying electronically. This is barely audible, though: the big change is rather in the driving sense of rediscovery.

That same sense is present again in an astonishing Bartók record (BMC CD 058), where Eötvös conducts youth orchestras: the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie in *The Miraculous Mandarin* and the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester in the Concerto for Orchestra. The *Mandarin* performance is quite unusually, perhaps unprecedentedly, expressive: it tears and snarls with

tension, gasps and slurps with erotic desire. All one's hopes and fears for this score are confirmed: it really does exude that oily mixture of fascination and distaste, to which Eötvös is close not only as a conductor but also—on the evidence of *zeroPoints,* especially—in his composing. Perhaps inevitably, the account of the Concerto for Orchestra is less revelatory, and might even seem like a successful effort on the composer's part at closing the box on his demons.

Two further albums on the same label present alert performances of works by György Kurtág, created in collaboration with the composer. In the case of *Hommage à R. Sch.,* that collaboration goes back a while. Gellért Tihanyi, the clarinettist, was Kurtág's pupil, and gave the first performance in 1990, along with the two other musicians who rejoin him here (on BMC CD 0048): the viola player Zoltán Gaál and Márta Kurtág at the piano. Tihanyi shows the quality of his attention right from his opening phrase, rising to a high note that is subtly moulded in colour. Later he is as remarkable in washed-out, almost toneless moments as in ferocious or desperate seizures of departing initiatives. Gaál's high viola near the start of the long adagio finale—keening, or perhaps watching the disaster from a great height—will be unforgettable. The only mistake, and an understandable one, was to put this piece first on the disc rather than last, where its ultimate gesture, that of a despairing but also merciful soft beat on a bass drum, could have been left undisturbed.

As it is, the programme goes immediately into Bartók's *Contrasts,* done with earthy liveliness, and continues with Béla Faragó's *Gregor Samsa's Desires,* a surprisingly genial interpretation of Kafka. Tihanyi is admirable all through, as he is by himself in two solo works profitting from his realisation that the clarinet can be elegant and rustic at the same time, and gaining also from his superb control of each note's shape: Stravinsky's Three Pieces (which he plays on clarinets in rising steps, from bass to E flat) and Reich's *New York Counterpoint.*

Ildikó Vékony brings us back to the cimbalom, for a remarkable and musically captivating recital (on BMC CD 046). She shows the power and poetry of the instrument, its range from bell-like authority to touches suggestive of string pizzicatos, and the beauties of its resonances. Sombrely punctuating her programme are solo pieces by Kurtág: his early *Splinters,* in which her timing is exact and her expressivity immense (like the much later *Hommage à R. Sch.* the work is a set of very short movements followed by a big adagio, where what has been avoided has to be confronted), and two more recent samplings, both with haunting melodies that resonate with memories of plainsong and folk music. Pieces by László Sáry, Zsolt Serei and Zoltán Jeney provide attractive space.

Vékony is also partnered by András Keller in a magnificent performance of Kurtág's Eight Duets for violin and cimbalom—music that one might suspect these café instruments play when they do not think anyone is listening. In Kurtág relationships are to be cherished precisely because they are so much at risk, and in such early Kurtág as this (1960–1), the dangers are often severe. It seems the instruments can come together only to mourn, and even then they may not be able to help mocking each other. Eventually, in the adagio that is the seventh piece, they agree on the identity of their sorrows. But then the finale is a musical game, which ends when the two instruments go in opposite directions, each believing it has made the winning move. This performance leaves one thinking they are both right. ❧

Miklós Györffy

Homing

András Pályi: *Megérkezés* (Arrival). Kalligram, Pozsony (Bratislava), 314 pp.
László Krasznahorkai: *Északról hegy, Délről tó, Nyugatról utak, Keletről folyó* (A Mountain from the North, a Lake from the South, Roads from the West, a River from the East). Magvető, Budapest, 143 pp.
Péter Bíró: *Hazafelé* (Homing). Magvető, Budapest, 385 pp.

András Pályi, 61, is not a prolific writer of fiction. From 1978 to 2001, with long intervals in between, he published three volumes of short stories, the third of which contains mostly a selection from the first two, and three novellas. Between 1989 and 2001 he published only essays and criticism. He spent the better part of this period in Poland as a cultural diplomat. This may have been the reason why the protagonist of his new book, *Megérkezés* (Arrival), his first novel in fact, is a diplomat.

True, Dániel Baróti, the protagonist, is a diplomat of the Kádár regime rather than the post-socialist period. Apart from this fact, however, diplomatic service hardly plays any role at all in the plot. Though the hero is a grey apparatchik in the foreign service, in the present tense of the first-person singular narrative—which gives the epic form and which comes at the time of the change of the political system—politics, foreign affairs and secret diplomacy are of no concern to either the narrator or the author behind him. Oddly, all that this party functionary, and the easily discernible narrator behind him, are interested in is the emotional and sensual life of this gradually depoliticised man—or, more precisely, the schizophrenia of politics and sensuality. It is a general feature of the book that the author is keen to offer a precise expression, a formulation, a naming of everything he talks about. What the novel means could amply and thoroughly be analysed by means of an adequate breakdown of text samples. The fundamental problem in Baróti's life is that, as the son of a Communist unflagging in his faith, who, owing to his father's influence and support, himself becomes a faithful functionary, he consistently subordinates his physical and sensual life to the political service he performs for the sake of the great ideology. "For a long time I concentrated on the idea alone. I wanted to discover the great thought that can turn the world out of its corner and put an end to exploitation; this is what I believed in..." And this belief, we may add, which later turns out to be superficial, is present in the novel merely in the form of similar declarations in the self-probing passages related by the reminiscing narrator. More lively motifs show up only in elements of the relationship between father and son: the father is an authority

---

Miklós Györffy
reviews new fiction for this journal.

to account to, who has determined his son's behaviour for the duration of his life.

This is obvious above all in Baróti's first marriage, which he enters with the subconscious aim of pleasing his father. Klára Cséplő is in love with the Communist Party, with Comrade Kádár in particular, rather than with her husband. For her, married life is a fleeting discomfort, amply compensated for by the Party duties she performs in the Budapest's White House—as the Party headquarters were commonly called—and by the fervour of the movement. Apart from the slightly sketchy figures of the mercilessly consistent and puritanical father and the hysterically frigid first wife, Baróti's personality bears the imprint of two more, similarly didactic, motifs. One of them is his mother, who having cheated on her strict and rigid husband, fled the country in 1956 and disappeared from her son's life for good. The other is the traumatic sexual experience that Baróti underwent in 1944, at the age of 14, when, under the Arrow Cross regime, a whore in boots, a member of the Arrow Cross (i.e., the Hungarian Fascist party) and the Hungarist movement, dragged him down into a cellar and had him eat her until she reached orgasm.

To summarise, while Baróti's father is taken prisoner by the Arrow Cross men and his son humiliated by an Arrow Cross whore—who, incidentally, also initiates him into the thrillingly dreadful secrets of sensuality—until his adulthood Baróti lives in the belief that sexuality is a weakness to be ashamed of and to hide, something that is unbecoming to a Party worker intent on serving the cause of progress and world revolution. With a degree of exaggeration, for him sexuality is the 'enemy's doing'. This impression is reinforced in him by the fact that his mother—who, with her sensual tenderness and confessed sins, had to some extent counterbalanced the fanatically 'faithful' father—eventually turned out to be a 'traitor'. Another secret sin harboured by his mother is that her other son, Alex, is in fact only Baróti's half-brother. Alex had been fathered by a Russian soldier, who, during the 'liberation', raped her, and in doing so gave her genuine sexual pleasure for the first time. The incident is clearly a counterpart to the incident of the violent Arrow Cross whore; both are examples of the schizophrenia of sensuality and politics, or, more precisely, of a citizen's allegiance. These basic experiences continue later in Baróti's everyday life during the Kádár era, in which a career in the Communist Party was looked upon as incompatible with sex.

The situation changes when, towards the end of the sixties—the timing is scarcely accidental—Baróti meets Ica. Both she and her father, a 'good comrade', belong among those loyal to the regime, yet sensual love is not at all alien to her. For some time Baróti leads a double life; he keeps up an appearance as a reliable Party cadre who conducts an exemplary life, but he enters into sensual and emotional escapades and explores as yet unknown sensual dimensions with Ica. The author's main intention here, as indeed in all his fiction in general, is to give expression to this 'sacred' sensuality which verges on the transcendental, and to the liberation and redeeming strength that goes with it—to this 'arrival'. He describes sexual acts—and at times acts that are, to this day, commonly looked upon as acts of perversion—in fiery, concrete detail and with great emotional intensity. The concrete details bring to mind pornography, while the emotional intensity adds romantic overtones to the description of ecstasy and rapture. In addition, he offers abstract analyses of sexual pleasure, which can only be read as some sort of supplementary interpretation, and the reader wonders who they are to be attributed to.

Soon Baróti divorces his first wife and marries Ica, who, in time, gives birth to three sons. Their sexual life slowly fades into the utmost banality. Although Baróti no longer accords such great significance to ideology, he still tries to please his superiors, and the foreign affairs functionary turns into a second-rank diplomat posted in various foreign countries. In any case Baróti, in love with sensuality, falls in love while still at home. He becomes infatuated with Zsuzsa Zengő, director of a cultural centre in the country and winner of a Communist Youth Organisation prize, who has an enchanting voice. She is a married woman, and it soon turns out that she is merely leading Baróti on and does not want to go to bed with him. Yet Baróti is unable to rid himself of the dream image that he has projected onto this woman. It becomes clear later, in the course of an awkwardly didactic chapter, that he seeks in her his lost mother, and he equates Zsuzsa Zengő's various 'treacherous' acts (after 1990 she turns to religion among other things) with his mother's earlier treachery.

The novel ends on an ambivalent note. At Christmas, in 1989, Baróti, now aged 59, while posted somewhere in Asia and after a long period of impotence, experiences a sexual pleasure incomparable to anything he has known before.

> In eighty-nine, far from the milling December crowds at home, this day suddenly became a holiday of my own in the truest sense of the word, or rather a holiday for the two of us, as though we had just then truly found one another, or, if this sounds like an exaggeration, we gave ourselves to one another without restraint. I sensed that if the body, my own body, opens up to another, it means more than simply sensual rapture; it is some sort of unimaginable openness to infinity—I can find no better word—and the best thing was that behind our everyday barrenness we sensed the unhoped-for magic of at-homeness (...) and it is exactly this crazy lust that turns the infinite into our home.'

At the same time, the change of political system puts an end to his career—the new ambassador no longer needs his services. After another, and final, sensual catharsis, Baróti, back at home, dies of a heart attack.

Pályi undertook a fascinating and conceptual task. On the one hand, he describes the final climax of the development of a personality as 'arrival', in the course of which a political animal turns into a sensual, corporeal person. This is, of course, in sharp contrast with the political credo, the negation of which is the cult of the senses. But in addition, Pályi's novel is about the superiority of sensual freedom to any kind of political freedom, but mostly the defective and false. All this is in parallel with the historical developments of the recent past in *Arrival:* Baróti experiences his 'liberation' and 'arrival' as a sensual being in 1989/90, at just the moment when he fails as a political animal.

Arrival is a double-faceted novel. The text itself in fact reads as reminiscences in the form of monologues addressed to Ica and Zsuzsa, in an imaginary present tense. Though the first-person confessional narrative can be said to work, the self-interpreting and self-probing capacity displayed by the protagonist at a high intellectual level is hard to accept, for in the course of the life that he relates he shows no signs of such capacity. In addition to the problem of an overly contrived motivation, a further objection can be leveled at the fact that if Baróti is a Communist diplomat, the elaboration of this theme is fairly inevitable, even though the narrator, who identifies himself totally with the protagonist and his 'arrival', considers this fact to be of secondary importance in a quite provocative way: "Why would I have been

interested in the murder of a Party leader; in bed, we had been light years away from any Party leader" (the reference is to the execution of Ceausescu and his wife). But where would we be if Party officials, however insignificant, could defer all political responsibility under the pretext that they had, meanwhile, 'arrived' in bed?

Not for the first time, László Krasznahorkai—whom both W.G. Sebald and Susan Sontag have praised highly—has come out with a book that is also special in appearance. The words that make up the long title, *Északról hegy, Délről tó, Nyugatról utak, Keletről folyó* (A Mountain from the North, a Lake from the South, Roads from the West, a River from the East), are arranged on the cover in a form reminiscent of a Japanese ink drawing. The text is divided into fifty chapters, some of which are in fact no more than passages of a few lines or a couple of pages, and is printed in a small area on unusually narrow pages. The book opens with chapter two. The blurb informs us that "There is no first chapter in this novel. There exists a first chapter, but not in the novel. It is in a different space, and each sentence in this novel takes its strength from this other space." Krasznahorkai's new novel—if indeed it is a novel: I would much rather call it a narrative, in the wider sense of the German *Erzählung*—should then be interpreted as the book and the textual form of some transcendental meaning, again based on esoteric and philosophical ideas.

The protagonist—and again this term is approximate, as it designates a shadow only, a void, the place of the protagonist—is 'Prince Genji's grandson'. In fact we learn of a single 'human' quality he displays, his sensitivity, his unstable nerves, which occasionally cause in him a physical indisposition close to fainting. The first sentences of the second chapter reveal that the setting is the southeastern district of Kyoto in Japan. Prince Genji's grandson arrives in the city by the ultra-modern Keihan express train. "Why him?", the uninitiated reader may wonder, possibly suspecting some Japanese cultural background behind it all, especially on learning later that the hero has led his ageless existence there for a thousand years already. And indeed, his name connects him to the protagonist of an important thousand-year-old literary work, *Genji-monogatari,* written by the lady-in-waiting Murasaki. Yet we are offered no more essential information about Krasznahorkai's protagonist. The essence emerges in the course of the novel—he embodies the continuity of a thousand years, of tradition, or, more precisely, of confidence in tradition.

The plot—again a term that has a highly restricted relevance in the novel—is played out in a fictitious spiritual space. Alhough, for the duration of the novel, it has a 'real' counterpart, a deserted, ruined Buddhist monastery in the Kyoto district, the relevance of its reality is weakened and eventually retracted from the narrative. In the first passages we are told that Prince Genji's grandson arrives in an empty train at the first station after Sichijo, then, in the eighth chapter, we read that no one had either alighted or boarded the train at the said spot. The same retraction takes place again at the end of the narrative—Prince Genji's grandson is waiting for a train from the opposite direction, and, when it arrives, no one boards it from the empty platform. In between the two hypothetical events at the station, the actual plot of the narrative unfolds: Prince Genji's grandson makes a dream-like visit to a monastery. The monastery stands on its own site, and again it does not. When he tries for the first time, Prince Genji's grandson easily finds his way to the gate of the monastery, walking in the implausibly empty streets with

the certainty of a somnambulist. However, on the second occasion, having returned to Keihan station, when on the point of leaving he is, for some reason, urged to make his way again along the same route, but he is no longer able to find his way to the monastery he had visited shortly before.

Ever since "the last decade of the Tokugawa age", Prince Genji's grandson has been in search of a garden. He first glimpsed it in an illustrated book called "One Hundred Beautiful Gardens", in which it was the last, the hundredth picture.

> From that moment he was captivated by this secret garden; he could never banish it from his memory, he saw it always before him, though unable to get palpable evidence of its existence. He saw it, and eventually it was taken for granted that he wanted to see it in reality.

He gave orders for the garden to be found. The search had been carried on for centuries to no avail, when, at a certain point, through his exceptional sensitivity, Prince Genji's grandson felt that he would find this garden in the monastery in Kyoto. According to the book, the small garden in question is

> a final consummation of the idea of a garden, for it can be described most precisely as one in which its creator 'had achieved simplicity'; a garden of which the author had written, with evident passion, that it expressed the infinitely simple through infinitely complex forces...

Prince Genji's grandson keeps running away from his regular escorts, who, drunk and perplexed, occasionally show up in various passages of the narrative, looking for their master in the empty streets, at the stations. He goes to the once meaning-laden, labyrinth-like space of the deserted monastery and walks though the shrines, at one point he loses consciousness for a long time, and he visits the disappointingly shabby, unkempt residence of the superior of the order, which is seemingly deserted yet filled with the requisites of civilisation. In the course of his dazed stroll he takes a fleeting look through a doorway.

> For a brief moment he saw the doorway and what was behind it; he saw that seemingly unassuming, indeed deserted, even neglected garden; then he walked on, and after taking a few steps he forgot all about it; it bore no significance whatsoever for him; indeed, he neither sensed nor perceived that he had seen anything at all...

It turns out—for the reader but not for Prince Genji's grandson—that this was the garden he had been looking for and which he had failed to find again; it was this unbroken patch of moss with eight Hinoki cypresses, just eight by sixteen steps in area. Two perspectives are projected onto one another in Krasznahorkai's narrative. On one plane of the text we see through the eyes of Prince Genji's grandson, as his impressions are conveyed; on the other, we have the author's perspective, which is not separated formally: on the contrary, the tone is emphatically similar. In this latter perspective, everything that comes to Prince Genji's grandson's attention—the covered walkways carved of Hinoki cypress, the holy sutras inscribed on bamboo strips, the statue of Buddha with its head turned away, and even the small, hidden garden that did not really come into his sight—are seen, and on occasion interpreted, within a geohistorical and evolutionist perspective. Serious scientific knowledge is embedded in these passages, which emerge in the large-format composition of ritually surging periods. In several passages, for instance, we are told how "the terrible, because immeasurable and invisible, yet not infinite labour of billions of years" have created "that single, irreproducible moment of the garden" when Prince Genji's grandson walks by the en-

trance unseeing; another informs us, again in the ceremonially elevated tone typical of the narrative and in a mode that brings together narrower and wider perspectives, that the garden has nothing to do with amenity or entertainment because its essence is simplicity; it is a concentration of beauty impossible to augment further, "a strength of magic of simplicity, the impact of which no one could resist, and those who have seen it never wished to resist..." Whoever chances upon it and takes a glance at it refuses to talk about it afterwards; this garden demolishes their will in the first place, their intention to say a word of it.

The classical literary *topos* of the garden is to be interpreted in Krasznahorkai's narrative as an archaising, oriental symbol of the absolute or final truth, or perhaps of redemption. The garden exists, and Man is imperfect enough to find and see it. One is reminded of Kafka's *The Trial,* in which the parable "Before the Law" says that one cannot exclude the fact that the law exists, however, Man is designed as unsuitable enough not to get to it. According to Krasznahorkai's parable, of oriental ornamentation and rhetoric, it has not always been so, for the author of the book "One Hundred Beautiful Gardens" once saw and described the garden. So did the Buddhist monks who had died out in the monastery; they obviously saw and lived with the garden. Prince Genji's grandson is a 'grandson', a descendant of an ancient culture, in whom the religious desire for beauty and truth still survives, though in the meantime he has lost his way in a medium in which the fulfilment of this desire is no longer possible. The drinks machine at the station, the dog beaten to death, the drunken ghost rambling around, the Buddha statue turning its eyes from the 'rotten world', the whisky bottles found in the superior's room, the images of meaningless devastation in the shrines, and various other motifs clearly signal what sort of medium it is. The grandson's indispositions may also be understood as signs of a general malaise.

With his cult of beauty and tradition, Krasznahorkai's parable, both esoteric and critical of our civilisation at the same time, is obviously a Quixotic gesture. There are bound to be readers who are irritated by his stylised, ceremonial and aesthetising manner of expression and the ritualistic order of the text. My own example also proves that if one allows oneself to be carried away by the magic of this ritual, by the current of sentences at times gleaming with some dark irony, and by the scenic play of various overlapping planes and perspectives, one will preserve lasting memories of a book that is beautiful in the incorruptible sense of the word.

Krasznahorkai's publishers, Magvető, one of the most respected publishers of contemporary Hungarian literature, have brought out another book with a design that is elegant and tasteful. To be published by Magvető in itself gives an author a certain distinction. For this reason alone Péter Bíró's lengthy novel *Hazafelé* (Homing) should be received with attention, even though the author is hardly known at all. But, after all, this is generally the case with newcomers who are at best known from their small magazine publications by the initiated few. However, not even this much information was available on Péter Bíró, since he has never published any work in periodicals, not even excerpts from his forthcoming book. At the same time, it turns out that he is not in fact a newcomer, as his novel *Csak ami van* (All There Is) came out as early as 1991, although it received no critical acclaim. At thirty-nine he is not so young to be publishing a second book. His, then, may be one of those not so rare cases when, in literary life, an author does not re-

ally count as a writer: he is not one of the 'in' crowd, he probably holds down a decent civilian job and writes, probably for the time being, for the love of it, as a hobby. He is an amateur. But as literary history attests, this is no obstacle to creating works of lasting value. On the contrary.

Péter Bíró's novel, autobiographical in inspiration, is certainly an ambitious work. For want of a better term it may be classified as a family story, a saga. It is a saga, though, from which the family is more or less missing, in the classical sense of the saga at least. Instead of a family we find fragments, surrogates, and at best fleeting appearances of a family, or incidental relationships and communities which are of vital importance just because they fill a gap. Whether these are family, kinship, friendly or perhaps incidental relationships (formed in sublets, for instance), or even 'bottle friendships', is of little importance: they are vital. One interpretation of the title, *Homing,* might be that the protagonist, working out the consequences of his past and his relationships, is on his way home, to a family of 'his own', a home of his own in the strict sense of the word, and the story is about this progress. The frame story is that the hero, a mature man and a father who lives in the capital city, tries to sell the house bequeathed to him, in which he had grown up, in the hope of being able at last to buy a flat for himself and his family from the money he gets for it. He had grown up very much left to fend for himself in this house, to which no return is possible. Still, it was the scene of his childhood, he is tied to it by lifelong bonds that he cannot deny in the new life that he has created for himself. Another interpretation of the title might be the search for his past and his memories that the narrator undertakes while trying to sell the house, which he fails to do for a long time. And while he says goodbye to it all, he also finds his way home.

Though this is hardly an original conception, it has potential. One form, tailored to the author, would have been the depiction of life in a small town after the Communist takeover, as it survived from pre-Communist times, an ironic–satirical description of the lifestyle of the *petite bourgeoisie* and artisans in the country. Had he taken this line, Bíró would have joined a great tradition of Hungarian fiction, or, as some leads suggest, he may have followed Central European models such as the works of Hasek, Hrabal, Caragiale and Ödön von Horváth. Another possibility would have been the depiction of survival techniques in the Kádár regime, in a similar vein. And the third opportunity was to create the novel of a generation—people, who grew up in the country in the early Kádár era, then went on to start their professional careers in the capital city in the 1980s, to become the protagonists, and mostly the major losers of the changeover. Péter Bíró identified all these possibilities and tried to realise all three of them, condensed into a single novel. This attempt was doomed to failure from the start. *Homing* falls apart into at least three novels of different types.

Roughly the first third of the novel is the story of the grandfather and his environment. He is a house painter, and his best friend, Mr. Hrudeczky, is a photographer and, by force of circumstances, a pig slaughterer. A memorable, Hrabalian passage tells the story of how, on one occasion, Mr. Hrudeczky, a gentle soul, had to play the role of toreador and slaughter a fattened pig, deputizing for the professional pig slaughterer who had had an accident. For decades to come it is taken for granted, even if only by the grandfather, that the noble task of pig killing is to be performed by none other than Mr. Hrudeczky, since it is looked upon as a privilege. Although the novel opens emphatically with the narrative in the first person singular, it becomes

arbitrary after a time, and it is at one time the grandfather, at another Mr. Hrudeczky or some other person, who conveys an inner point of view so intimate that the narrator, who was not yet born at the time (nor for some decades to come), could not have adopted it in such great depth. Nor does the author find any way of explaining how he could have adopted such a stance.

The next third of the novel is about the author's childhood, which corresponds roughly with the 1960s and 70s. The grandfather and his friends, of whom the grandson preserves so many fond memories, are still alive and at last perform some notable deeds. Soon, however, grandfather's daughter, Klára the hairdresser, takes over control of the raising of the grandchild. She is a notorious man-eater; men run after her madly and succeed one another closely and stormily as beaus, lovers and live-in companions. The first-person narrative is more or less adequately employed here: the memories are arranged so as to appear from the viewpoint of the relatively innocent, uninitiated grandchild entrusted to Klára. We only learn later that Klára is his aunt. This middle section of the novel is more or less as it should be.

The last third is the most deficient. Throughout the novel Bíró introduces a great number of figures, calling them by their Christian names only, and in the majority of cases the reader has great difficulty making out the relationships between them. In the last part, however, Christian names proliferate to such an extent that the reader is unable to follow who is who in the chaotic melée of humans surrounding the protagonist, first in the 1980s, when he studies at university in Budapest, then in the partly overlapping circle, when the protagonist finds love and marries. Alhough Klára, slowly growing old in the by then almost deserted family home, still makes an occasional appearance in the novel until she dies of cancer, by now one definitely feels as if one is reading a different novel, even less successful than the earlier parts. Particularly conspicuous in this section is Bíró's intention to exclude entirely from the novel any mention of history, politics, public life, even the street—an intention that is evident throughout the novel. It is as though history, public life and the public medium are entirely missing from the lives of his characters from the First World War onwards, until the change of political system. This must have been a conscious decision on the part of the author and obviously has a significance: a genuine story is always a personal story. But this would be absurd with respect to the story of any Hungarian in the twentieth history. That this is a case of a misunderstood form of abstraction or generalisation is further proved by the fact that the lives of Bíró's characters lack not only a historical and public context, but also emotional and mental aspects.

The ironic-jovial-serene tone of the narration also presents a problem. Bíró certainly has a knack for using this tone. It is here that he approaches his models the closest, or, rather, he gets near to that unique East-Central European mentality, the characteristic and, to this day, inadequately researched features of which are euphemism, understatement, or scepticism and quiescent humour expressed through its exact opposite—absurd overstatement. This mentality is manifest in the irony and scepticism of contemporary intellectual speech in Hungary. However, Bíró's narrator is prone to indulge in these ironically convulsive, overgrown sentences, the qualifying structures self-complacently pleased with their own multiplicity. However virtuoso his handling of expression, after a while the continuous stylistic acrobatics become tedious and exaggerated. Just as the unfocused and directionless proliferation of the novel becomes tiring and, eventually, unfollowable. ❧

Tamás Koltai

Talking about the Politically Actual

Zsigmond Móricz: *Rokonok* (Relatives) • *Úri muri* (Gentlemen's Fun)
György Spíró: *Az imposztor* (The Impostor) • Howard Barker: *Scenes from an Execution*

Zsigmond Móricz, the outstanding Hungarian novelist of the first half of the twentieth century, captured the workings of an oligarchy abusing its power in public administration so well that his book *Rokonok* (Relatives) has lost none of its relevance to this day. The alternatives open to a newcomer determined to put things right have not changed much since the date of publication (1932). Today's Kopjássy —this is the name of the central character, a newly appointed public prosecutor in a small town— faces the same dilemma that confronted his archetype in the novel. Swim with the tide or fight it—this is the crucial question, and the thorough discussion of this dilemma proves to be just as important as the portrayal of corruption. The latter is a textbook example of a town's elite abusing its influence, and the "fight or swim" predicament is a valuable one from the viewpoint of dramatic adaptation. Móricz himself used a double-barrelled model: in addition to scrutinising the state of municipal administration, he was extremely thorough in drawing Kopjássy's human portrait. It is hardly surprising that soon after the publication of *Rokonok* people realised the book's potentials as a drama. The first stage adaptation was by the author's daughter, Virág Móricz.

Over the years the novel has given birth to several dramatic versions. Since the late 1970s, the most successful adaptation—the one that has stood the test of several revivals—was by director László Babarczy. With time, the conceptual framework used in the novel changed, as did the political superstructure of the social system known as "socialism". But nothing changed regarding the fundamentals. What was formerly called a big swindle turned into unlawful profit making in the post-war years; an inducement became known as a backhander; and a consortium became known as lobbying. Although mayors were a thing of the past (the fashion was for "Council Chairmen" instead), and opposition became a redundant notion in a one-party system, things were done in much the same way as in Móricz's novel. The programme of one of the revivals could not resist the temptation to quote passages from a Party paper of the time, which talked of "the necessary fight against corruption in public administration". Then, the late 1980s brought the "change of political system", and history

Tamás Koltai
editor of Színház, *a theatre monthly, is* The Hungarian Quarterly*'s regular theatre critic.*

once again converged with the world portrayed by Móricz, with parliamentary democracy, the world of banking and endless opportunities to exploit power. Today, *Rokonok* plays in the political framework that existed at the time the novel was written: the "Bermuda Triangle" of corruption, nepotism and career building. In fact, the depth of the changes is comparable to that associated with the reorganisation of an office, as described in the novel. The seating arrangements have been altered: those who sat on the left now sit on the right and vice versa. During one performance in 1999, the audience roared out on hearing the word "mine". In the novel one of the "relatives" offered to sell to the town a large supply of prime-quality brown coal; and indeed the sample material, one freight car of brown coal, was found to be of excellent quality. It turned out later that he had bought the sample from the best mine of the region, while the coal from his mine, which he offered for sale at the same price, was of poor quality. At the time of this particular performance the press was running reports about the strange dealings taking place in the family business of the then prime minister—a mine...

The latest revival of the play was directed by Géza Bodolay of the Hungarian section of the State Theatre of Nagyvárad (Oradea) in Romania. The director, who, in Hungary, holds the position of manager/senior director of the Kecskemét Theatre, has a reputation as a combatant and provocative person, known for his adaptations of literary material. Although he did use Babarczy's adaptation, he cut down on the realistic details and added more ironic comments. The play's structure is provided by the recurring motifs from the overture of Beethoven's *König Stephan,* which seem to underline, with some sarcasm, the meeting of Eastern and Western cultures just a few months before accession to the EU. The stage set depicts "Balkan" conditions, yet leaves no doubt that the references to corruption at the highest levels apply to the Western world, too. Doubled up in a show of humility, men dressed in business suits escort the "big-timers" in a brisk march rhythm set by the music. One of them is running up and down carrying a head of cabbage in an ugly metal bucket of the kind normally used in restaurants to ice the champagne. This is an ironic reminder of the central character's clichéd programme speech, in which he informs his audience that his main ambition is to make sure that "We get to have our cake and eat it" (the corresponding Hungarian proverb has cabbage instead of cake). This recursive gimmick illustrates the production's superficial wit, which had a mixed reception. Rumour has it that some teachers actually discouraged their pupils from seeing the play, denouncing it for its frivolous treatment of a Hungarian classic.

Gentlemen's Fun (1928), another of Móricz's novels, was adapted for the stage in the 1930s by the writer himself. The novel is a ruthless masterpiece. The play, which he rewrote several times, is a pallid salon piece grafted onto a folk operetta, which simultaneously demonstrates the author's skills in condensing the storyline and the contemporary theatre's proclivity to iron out conflicts and focus on entertainment. The novel paints a naturalistic as well as metaphorical picture of early-twentieth-century Hungary as a backward country. The story is set in the *puszta,* the Great Hungarian Plain, where "there is mud, dust and putrid air", and where well-heeled peasants, landowners constantly boasting of a thousand years of glorious history, army officers and scoundrel gentry engage in drunken revelry to the sound of Gypsy violins. Zoltán Szakhmáry, a hero who deserves a better fate, tries to keep away from this "great Asiatic carousel" and "high-class

stable" (these, too, are Móricz's expressions). He runs a model farm, introducing foreign farming methods—as well as heart and mind—into the land of languor. "Here Hungarian despair wrestles with the future", he remarks in the style of the great symbolist poet Endre Ady, a contemporary and friend of Móricz's. Naturally, he is destined to failure, as lonely heroes invariably are. In his despair he takes refuge in a peasant girl's love. And when he is disappointed in that, too, he finds all his dreams shattered and ends his life with a bullet.

Since then, several further adaptations have been produced, some of them bringing some sort of success to their directors, but most flopping dismally. Nowadays, everyone tries to do away with the original milieu, which appears distinctly archaic, attempting instead to grasp the essence of the play through stylisation and condensation. The words "Csárda to the Horseman" appear in mirror-writing over the entrance facing backstage in director Bertalan Bagó's production at the Zalaegerszeg Theatre. What was a drowsy tavern in Móricz's novel becomes a modern "catering establishment"—what Hungarians now call a pub. The wall and the swing door are made of wood, and the bar stools imitate saddles. This is a typical commercial environment, familiar from contemporary experience. The guests are welcomed in the foreground by folk musicians. The illusion of buzzing flies is created by the tremolo of the violins, reinforced by the silent turning of the heads of the customers who are sitting on the stools. The guests drink imaginary beer in a coordinated choreography. The original characters are turned into contemporary types. The wealthy peasant, who raised pigs in the novel, becomes a successful entrepreneur. The sophisticated civilities of Móricz's gentry are transformed into the bonhomie of the business crowd. The dusty and muddy farmhouse, which was the original scene of the drunken revelry and accompanying Gypsy music, here becomes the interior of a hunting lodge. The casual, nonchalant group choreography of the "great Asian revelry" takes the form of an ironic rite rather than the usual naturalistic carousing. At the climax, the participants return to the stage dressed in historical Hungarian costumes, which smell of mothballs. This is a satirical critique of nationalist frenzy.

Not every component or character of the original work can be mapped onto contemporary life, which gives the production a somewhat hybrid character. But at least it tries to pick out the elements from Móricz's oeuvre which still have a message for the contemporary audience.

Something similar is attempted by the Pécs National Theatre's production of a much more recent play, *The Impostor*, written twenty years ago by György Spíró based on an episode in his large-scale historical novel *Az ikszek* (The Xes, 1981). At the time of the original production, the allegorical meaning was plain. The play takes place in early-nineteenth-century Poland; its central character, the actor Boguslawski, was an actual person, "the father of Polish theatre", who arrives in Vilnius for a guest performance. The Vilnius troupe expects a living legend but finds only a cynical and decrepit old man. The situation is rather a delicate one. In the second half of the 1810s, when the play is set, Lithuania (and therefore Vilnius also), with its large Polish population, was annexed by the Russian tsars. Nurturing national culture under such circumstances was doubly patriotic. Boguslawski's guest performance could have a number of very different consequences. The Maestro, as his admirers addressed him, was a one-man national institution, a symbolic figure, whose presence was capable of igniting

dangerous emotions. However, he was in bad shape, both financially and physically, and as a toothless lion he not only seemed harmless but could even be used by the authorities to demonstrate national unity.

Historical authenticity is irrelevant here since Spíró, who chose a single episode from *Az ikszek* for dramatisation, had no intention of writing a historical play. He wanted to hold up a mirror to the theatre in order to show, in a grotesque light, the distortion of the idea of national theatre. Nor was it any longer just about theatre, anyway, but about something broader in one sense, and narrower in another. It was about something broader, since the existing conditions invested the theatre with a direct political role that it could only discharge by using means outside the realm of aesthetics. And it was about something narrower, because it was aesthetics itself that suffered in the process: the very thing that could have transformed it into art. As one of the "actors" explained, when it is not necessary to act well, since delivering the lines in Polish guaranteed eliciting tears and applause from the audience, then it is downright impossible to act well—in other words, the theatre will go to the dogs.

So, what can you do if you cannot "do" theatre? Well, you can do mischief. The disillusioned, down-and-out, cynical impostor Boguslawski first gives back to the theatre what belongs to the theatre: the play, the meaning, the authentic emotions and passions; then, at the performance, he brings down his own creation with a single gesture: by overacting he turns the performance into a scandal and makes a laughing-stock of the political authorities, while at the same time disgracing the very theatrical ideal he had stood for. Here is how it was done. On the manager's instructions, the Tsar's portrait is to be lowered from the fly loft at the moment of royal grace in the last scene of *Tartuffe,* the play selected for the guest performance, so as to demonstrate the theatre's political loyalty to the Russian governor, the play's censor as well as sponsor, who is sitting in the royal box. However, the leading actor, Boguslawski, has previously dropped some hints regarding an attempt on the life of the governor, implicating the actor playing the police lieutenant, whose entrance was to signal the lowering of the picture. As the actor is taken away by the police during the play he cannot enter the stage at the time of the picture's appearance, and Boguslawski uses the resulting confusion to ridicule the Tzar and the political authorities in an impromptu verse.

It is easy to imagine what kind of message the play conveyed in 1983 about the methods of dictatorship and the helplessness of the arts. It was a political pamphlet in the guise of a historical play. This concealed meaning, this metaphorical content meant for those able to read between the lines, has since lost its relevance. However, so as to save at least the social message, the director of this production has moved the story forward in time by about 150 years, to coincide with the time of writing. As a result, the person whose picture is lowered in the ominous scene is not the Tzar, but Brezhnev. Commenting on the decision, the director explained that he wanted to portray an age of which he had childhood memories, and of which the generation of the actor playing Boguslawski's part had direct, tragic experiences. But recent history represented on stage actually means very little to the audience. To the young, Brezhnev's picture is just as unfamiliar as the Tzar's would have been, while older people find the limping analogy between the two historical periods rather laboured. Earlier audiences were able to reconstruct the present from a concrete historical situation; in other words,

they generalised, abstracted, used their imaginations and read between the lines. This simply does not work the other way. We cannot "unmask" our recent history, partly because we have already unmasked it, and partly because it tends to tether our imagination instead of firing it, transforming all the familiar, lifelike details into a bunch of narrowly interpreted documents.

In writing *The Impostor,* Spíró used more or less the same method that Howard Barker followed in *Scenes from an Execution,* originally a radio play of the same year. Both plays are placed in a historical milieu, and both are characterised by a modern usage of the language, a modern conceptual framework and modern social conditions. In accordance with their own historical fiction, the relevance of each can be expanded in time. Significantly, Baker's play, which had already been staged in Hungary, was recently also revived by the Madách Kamara theatre. Both plays explore the same phenomenon: the artist's relationship with the authorities. *Scenes from an Execution* illustrates what it is like when the authorities want to have a made-to-order culture. Galactia, a sixteenth-century Venetian painter, depicts the Battle of Lepanto in an "unpatriotic vein". The historical fresco is lacking in national pride. Those still standing show little enthusiasm for holding the flag, while those already fallen have their faces distorted, and their mutilated limbs are mixed up with those of the enemy. This is unacceptable in the eyes of the authorities who commissioned the work: a battle cannot be portrayed as a slaughterhouse when the authorities want to celebrate their own ideology through the painting. Therefore, the painting—history—must be repainted.

The play's première happened to coincide with the "repainting" of a hero's death in a state-financed historical film with the largest ever budget in the history of Hungarian cinema. Although it is true that the hero, Count István Széchenyi (the greatest figure of the Reform Age in nineteenth-century Hungary; the creator of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and of the Chain Bridge over the Danube, an economist and racing fanatic, a cosmopolitan and diarist) ended his life by committing suicide in an Austrian mental home, as every Hungarian schoolchild knows, this was an unacceptable blot on the Roman Catholic/national ideal. At least according to the actor who played him, and whose unique brand of religious ideology and close friendship with the then prime minister were both publicly known. Thus in the film, Széchenyi does not commit suicide. This only goes to show that there is justification in reviving Barker's play in Hungary. It was one of history's strange jokes that the première came between the two rounds of parliamentary elections in Hungary, and actually coincided with the day on which people attending a mass demonstration organised by one of the parties chanted nationalist slogans attributed to the historical personalities featuring in the play. Incidentally, in the play Galactia is ordered to use more of the colour orange in her paintings, as it conveys optimism. Orange also happens to be the colour of the above-mentioned Hungarian political party. Pál Mácsai, who directed the production, confessed to having been unsure whether to leave this reference in the text. He was worried that people might think he was the one who had put it in. In the end he left it in. The audience laughed. One week later the party in question lost the election. The production was invited to the national theatre festival held in the summer of 2003.

So, history does sometimes deliver the punchline. ❧

Erzsébet Bori

A Lean Year

The Hungarian Film Week

Over the last few years, the Hungarian Film Week showed a promising upturn and some of the films actually lived up to expectations. However, that trend seems to be broken as the feature films shown at the 2003 Week were largely something of a disappointment.

Ferenc Grunwalsky and György Szomjas are two noted directors of the middle-aged generation. They have worked together on several significant films. (Even now, Szomjas asked Grunwalsky to be his director of photography.) In their most recent films, both of them found music and dance as a form of expression. Grunwalsky, who has shot Miklós Jancsó's films in recent years, created a dance film with music by György Kurtág and no dialogue (except for a single Ottó Orbán poem). In *Táncalak* (Dancing Figure), Andrea Ladányis provided enthralling movements and dance, which is complemented by the brush strokes of the painter István Nádler, photographs, memory images and documents from our tumultuous 20th century.

György Szomjas also looked to music and dance to open up a new dimension in the life of Karesz, a boy growing up in a state-run childcare institution. For kids like him, the road leads to truancy, minor and not-so-minor mischief, alcohol, drugs, then on to crime and eventually prison. Karesz, however, meets a girl who takes him to a "dance house", and the prospect of a whole new life opens up before him. Dance houses were at their most popular during the 70's and 80's, the second half of the Kádár-era. They were an opportunity to learn folk dances in pairs or groups, by live music played on real folk instruments. A lot of young people found an alternative here, new customs, new sets of values, form of entertainment and self-expression. Vagabond is Szomjas's attempt to mould his earlier, sociographic full-length documentaries and feature films about folk music and folk musicians into a unified whole. But the film's greatest virtue as a documentary is also its greatest drawback as a work of fiction: the dancing and the music are neither accompaniment nor part of the background, they are as important as the characters themselves. The film (and audience) keep having to jump back and forth between fiction and reality and not smoothly.

Erzsébet Bori
is the regular film critic of this journal.

Whilst György Szomjas is opening up a new path for himself, Emil Novák has decided to build on Szomjas's great discovery when he started out with films about the betyárs, the legendary 19th century Hungarian outlaws of the Great Hungarian Plain. The "Wild Easterns" of the 1970's *(The Wind Is Whistling Under Their Feet, Wrong-Doers)* created a new genre, capturing the romanticism of the betyárs roaming the puszta, combining action-packed adventure with good humour. Novák, who returned to Hungary having worked as the director of photography on Sacra Corona a few years ago, has attempted something similar in his new film, Sobri. Here he hasn't turned to the "Eastern" to establish a new genre (unique to the Danube region) but looked rather for an interesting subject—which he has rendered in the spirit of the post-modern eclectic. *Sobri* (this is a name of a famous *betyár*) combines motifs and ideas from numerous sources, from French costume dramas, through classic Westerns and the old screen adaptations of Mór Jókai's novels to the Hong-Kong martial arts films.

2003 could well turn out to be the year of the "Eastern" in the Hungarian film industry, for Tamás Tóth has also turned to the genre as inspiration for his *Rinaldo.* What Tóth has created is a Hungarian remake of the American remake *(The Magnificent Seven)* of Kurosawa's *Seven Samurais.* The village seeking protection is now an old, dilapidated tenement building in Budapest, the enemy are a bunch of crooks trying to get their hands on the tenements. The protagonists are unemployed hard hats, who receive unexpected help from Rinaldo, a circus knife-thrower. From this point on, it is only a question of time, intrigue, love, fights and adventure, until the good guys triumph.

Another specifically Hungarian genre is the bittersweet comedy, where we bid a cheerful goodbye to our turbulent past, while heartily identifying ourselves with the nobodies stumbling around on the screen, whose only aim is to somehow survive the hard times that are, needless to say, none of their own doing. This is a genre hallmarked by directors such as Péter Bacsó, Róbert Koltai and Péter Tímár; they are now joined by Sándor Kardos and Illés Szabó with an archetype of the genre in *Telitalálat* (Winning Ticket). Béla Hackpacher, a trolley driver, hits the jackpot in football pools for an enormous sum of money. But the date is October 23, 1956—not exactly the best time to start building a stable future. So Béla goes through a string of adventures, some funny some appalling, as he becomes more and more involved in the "regrettable events" of the uprising. In the end, he loses the money as well as his family, but finds new love, and ends up where he started—on a trolley. Indeed, he can consider himself lucky not to have been imprisoned or shot for "counter-revolutionary activities". Although *Winning Ticket* leaves nothing to chance, the tried and tested gags fail to hit the jackpot this time. All that remains is a dreary recital of clichés.

Sometimes hits are born in unexpected places. Zsombor Dyga is still astonishingly young. His new film Tesó (Bro') is his seventh feature. His earlier, amateur, low-budget productions hardly expected an audience larger than his own family and friends. So, not even anyone keeping an eye on how he was developing expected him to come out with an entertaining film for a wider (primarily young) audience. The story line, brisk, resourceful and crafty, can be taken as an antidote to 1960's and 1970's films that criticised the life afforded to people living in high-rise housing estates. The concrete jungles of the Socialist era, inhabited by people who deserve better, play just as important a part—and are just as lovable as the protagonists themselves.

New films by Andor Szilágyi, Tamás Sas and Péter Gothár were the most highly awaited premieres in the Festival. So far, Andor Szilágyi only had his hand in a couple of scripts as writer. *A rózsa énekei* (The Rose's Songs) is his debut as a director. The film, also scripted by Szilágyi, is set in Budapest in 1944, during the dark days when the Arrow-Cross ruled. His protagonists are Jews in hiding, whose only joy in life is the voice of Imre Rózsa, a world-famous opera singer, which they can hear every evening from the tower of the villa where they are concealed. As long as Rózsa is among them, as long as he does not flee, they feel safe. They cling onto this last straw and only a fourteen-year-old boy has the courage to uncover the truth. The film is really about the boy's coming of age in extreme circumstances. Unlike the characters in the film, the audience quickly realizes the truth: this is another rendering of Jacob the liar (or a variation on Tornatore's Oscar-winning version, *La vita e bella*).

The success of these films and the failure of Andor Szilágyi's is proof that a well-crafted script and a faithful rendering of literary values do not necessarily guarantee a success on the screen. The conventions of film as a profession and as a language (as a form of representation, expression, and narrative) simply cannot be disregarded without suffering the consequences.

Tamás Sas, an outstanding cinematographer, made a directorial debut with his minimalist *Presszó* (Espresso) in 1997. His new film is once again limited to a single location, a cramped tenement flat. A radical addition this time is that the film essentially has only one character. Monodrama is difficult even if when performed live on a stage, let alone on the film screen: it only succeeds when a strong presence is created by an exceptionally talented actor. *Szerelemtől sújtva* (Down By Love) is the story of a young woman who had been seduced by her foster father during her childhood. She clings onto him manically as an adult, unable and unwilling to break free from this bond. The film depicts the claustrophobic isolation and the despondent solitude in which Éva spends her hours, days and years, waiting, longing for the man, entangled in thoughts and memories. The incompatibility of the monodrama with the screen is eased by Éva's reminiscences bringing the past back to life, but the two forms of expression do not form an organic whole; rather, they snuff each other out. Tamás Sas probably drew his inspiration from the French *The Banned Woman,* which portrays an adulterous affair with the camera focused continuously on the woman. Down By Love shies away from consistently applying this radical handling and thus deprives itself from everything that would have made it unique.

Péter Gothár's *Magyar szépség* (Hungarian Beauty) seems to be a fit into his string of films providing a grotesque depiction of public sentiments during the Kádár-era (*Ajándék ez a nap*/A Priceless Day, *Megáll az idő*/Time Stands Still, *Idő van*/Time). These are stories of the generation that had its eyes opened after 1956, caused the "youth problem" of the 1960's, grew up in the 1970's and 80's, established their families, began careers, more or less found their place, became disillusioned, embittered and cynical, and, after 1989, realised that they simply had no place in the Brave New World that everyone had been waiting for. Values and priorities changed, tried and tested methods of surviving and scraping by no longer work. People are dancing to a different tune, which they are simply unable to learn. They are still trying, struggling like a fly in the soup, coming out with plans and ideas, but find themselves brushed aside by the younger

generations. Their only hope is that their children, soon to reach adulthood, will be able to provide for them.

Disillusionment, an almost ruthlessly critical voice are immediately apparent in *Hungarian Beauty*. Gothár portrays the young with gentle affection and a forbearing humour, but the best he can do for their parents is pity. The bittersweet comedy is not limited to the grotesque. Sometimes tending towards the absurd, sometimes to farce, it sketches a vivid and not exactly flattering portrait of the age.

If we had to name a newcomer whose arrival made the Festival worthwhile, it would be Benedek Fliegauf, with his *Rengeteg* (Forest). (He had made a name for himself a few years ago with *Beszélő fejek* (Talking Heads) and his minimalist short *Hypnos*. Fliegauf's invention, his trademark is a puritanical, authentic and true-to-life style, characteristic of documentaries. The plot is entirely fictional, but it unfolds within the framework of a documentary. Whether Fliegauf will be able to transpose the virtues of his shorts into a feature remains to be seen, since Forest is a compilation of seven loosely connected episodes, some superb and some not so superb. Nevertheless it is clear that Benedek Fliegauf shows some of the greatest promise in the new generation. His talent is confirmed by the fact that besides collecting two awards at the Festival (best newcomer, foreign critics' prize), he also received the newcomers' grand prize at the Berlin Film Festival.

Even if 2003 is something of a lean year, there are still enough promising productions for us to be able to say: filmmaking in Hungary is far from being dead and buried. ❧

MAGYAR MAGIC
HUNGARY in FOCUS 2004

www.hungary.org.uk

Monday, 24 November 2003, 7.30 pm.

NEW END THEATRE

27 New End, Hampstead, London NW3

Chairs above the Danube

an evening of poetry and prose from the pages of

The Hungarian Quarterly

A taste of the absurdities, the madness, the tragedy and the hilarity of life in Eastern and Central Europe in the twentieth century, encapsulated in poetry and prose read in English translation by British actors and introduced by **George Szirtes** and the editor, **Miklós Vajda**

Writers featured in the programme:

Imre Kertész • Péter Esterházy • George Szirtes
Zoltán Zelk • Sándor Weöres • István Örkény
György Petri • Mihály Kornis • Zsuzsa Rakovszky
Szabolcs Várady • Nicholas Parsons

THE HUNGARIAN QUARTERLY is a quality journal devoted to Hungarian society and culture. First published in 1936, it appears exclusively in English. It will be on sale at the theatre.

This is the first of the Literary Salons to be staged at the New End Theatre, one of London's best-known fringe venues, as part of the year-long series of events of the Magyar Magic festival.

Box office 020 7794 0022 * £5

Current Affairs

History

Documents

Fiction

Poetry

Essays

Reportage

Books & Authors

Theatre & Film

Music

Personal

HU ISSN 1217-2545

02003

9 771217 254005

LONDINUM, where I was amazed above all at the people's ignorance of Latin, because I went along three whole streets among merchants, furriers, tailors, etc., and nowhere found a single person that could speak to me in Latin, but after a long time I came upon an Italian on whom I expended the little Italian that I know, and who directed me to the common master of the Italians, saying that there was there a young Hungarian gentleman, at which I was highly delighted and sought him most assiduously, but although he called himself a Hungarian he could not speak a word of Hungarian to me because he was a Czech, and had only wished to give himself a good name in coming from a distant land and therefore had called himself Hungarian.

From:
Europica Varietas, *a 1620 travelogue by Márton Szepsi Csombor, pp. 31–43.*

171

1200 Ft