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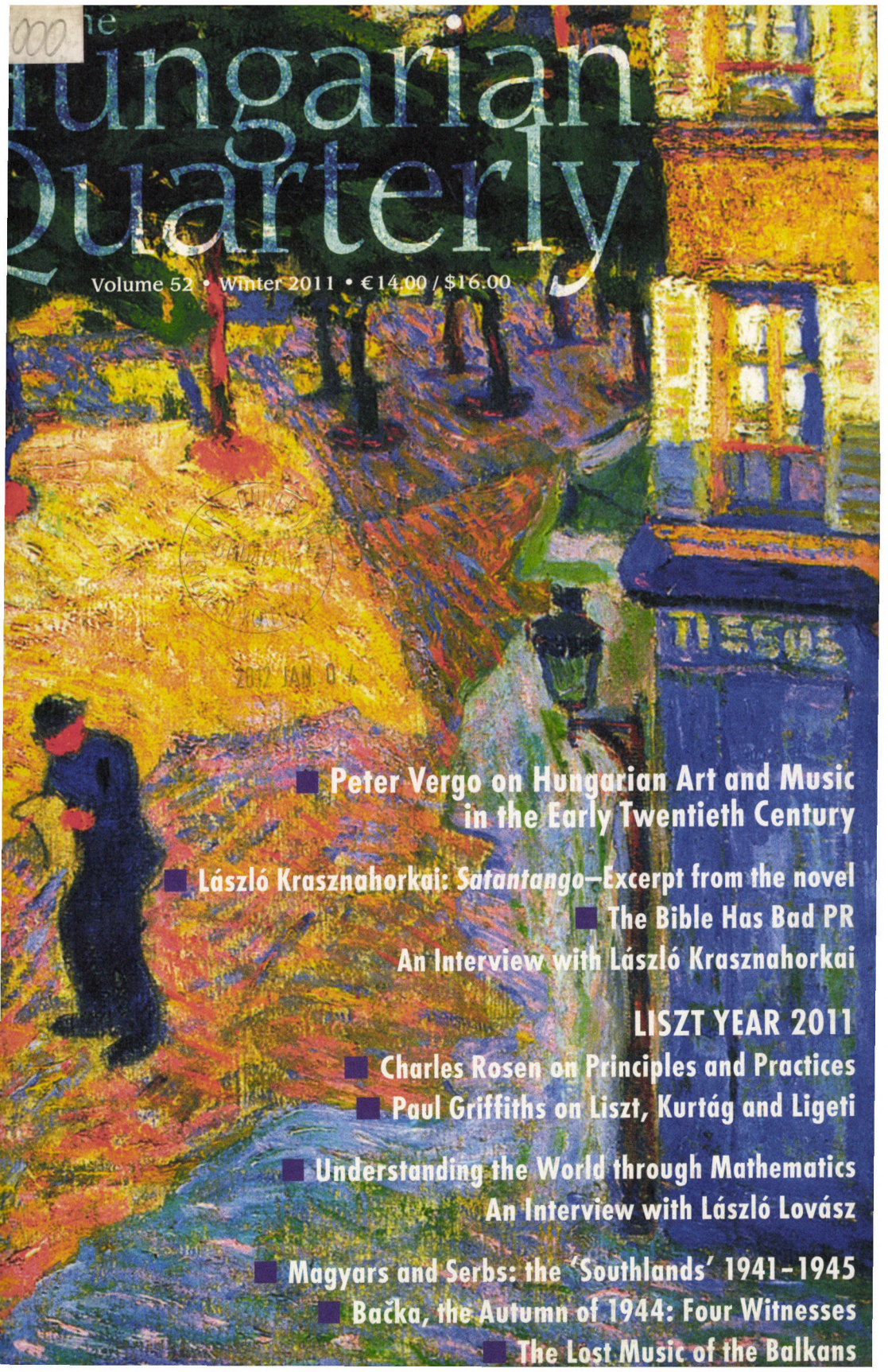

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Cover: Street in Paris *by Béla Czóbel, 1905, oil on canvas, 73 x 100.5 cm. (Detail)*
Private Collection
Back cover: Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály with the Waldbauer–Kerpely Quartet.
A photograph by Aladár Székely, 1910

Charles Rosen

Principles and Practices

An Interview by Judit Rácz

Judit Rácz: *You are what we call a polymath. This species is getting very rare today—we have, at best, great specialists. Often, people even take pride in indicating their limitations in interests. Don't you feel somewhat lonely today?*

Charles Rosen: That's interesting. I never thought about that. I'm used to people who do have a very wide knowledge. My professor was the pianist Moriz Rosenthal, a Liszt pupil, who had a degree in philosophy from Vienna University. He could read Greek when I knew him. One of my closest friends is Professor Henri Zerner of Harvard University; we have written a book together about the mythology of 19th-century art. So I don't have that problem you mention.

Charles Rosen

is a renowned pianist and writer on music. He has given recitals and has appeared in orchestral engagements around the world. He has outstandings recordings to his name. Composers who invited him to record their works include Stravinsky, Carter, and Boulez. Sony Classical recently reissued his recording of the late Beethoven Sonatas and Carlton Classics the Diabelli Variations. He has also recorded, among others, the original editions of various piano works by Schumann and two discs of Chopin. After teaching at MIT and SUNY Stony Brook, he taught for ten years at The University of Chicago. He also held distinguished chairs at the University of California in Berkeley, Harvard University and Oxford University. His highly influential scholarly works on music include The Classical Style *(1971),* The Romantic Generation *(1995),* Critical Entertainments *(2001),* Beethoven's Piano Sonatas—A Short Companion *(2001) and* Piano Notes, The Hidden World of the Pianist *(2004). A veritable polymath, he has also published a number of acclaimed books dealing with broader issues in cultural history and art:* Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art *(1985)* Romantic Poets, Critics, and Other Madmen *(2000) and* Freedom and the Arts: Essays on Music and Literature *(2012, forthcoming). He is a regular contributor to* The New York Review of Books, *and he has made frequent appearances on the BBC and various European and American radio stations.*

Judit Rácz

is a journalist who has translated numerous books on music.

Your first big and lasting success as a musicologist was The Classical Style. *That was about forty years ago. Later you revised the book. Why did you feel you had to add something?*

The revised edition appeared together with a CD of Beethoven's op. 106 and 110 piano sonatas, which is almost the best recording I ever made. The thing that prompted me to add a chapter is that there is always a question of the status of late Beethoven. The great Haydn scholar, Jens Peter Larsen said that you couldn't classify late Beethoven with Haydn and Mozart because Beethoven was much louder—which of course is true. But the point that I tried to make was that there was a change of the fundamental musical language. Beethoven brought a great extension of the classical language but the change came after his death—the basic aspects of musical language stayed the same with late Beethoven. He was the last composer for whom the modulation to the subdominant was the opposite of the modulation to the dominant. After him most composers confuse this. For Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, this does not exist as a distinction. There was no difference between the flat modulation and the sharp modulation. This is partly due to the development of equal temperament, because there it is the same thing. Although on the whole equal temperament was used by the late18th-century composers, they still had a sense whether the modulation was to the flat side or the sharp side. That made 18th-century music considerably more complex, not *less* complex, than 19th-century music (this latter is chromatically more complex). So I added a chapter to point out the extent to which Beethoven still held the principles of the music that he learned when he was 14–15 years old. What I tried to show was that at the end of his life he was expanding everything that he had learned from Mozart and Haydn, but he didn't change the basic 18th century principles. The expansion is so huge that you would think that it is something different, but it isn't.

Could you say that Beethoven had no followers?

He did have—many people tried to write like him but it was no longer possible because the principles he followed have gone out of the language. People were not interested any more in them. You have of course unbelievably complex harmonic relationships in Mozart, too—sometimes the most extravagant modulations you could possibly use in the 18th century, although ending with the most conventional development. This may sound complicated but it is perfectly clear for those who play the piano.

One of the most significant changes in the last half century concerning performance practice was the early music movement. It made an enormous impact on performance practice in general, including those who reject it. What is your attitude towards this phenomenon?

This is of course a complex issue. The search for "authenticity" is often forced to remain content with the ways the composer's contemporaries understood his music, and this can amount to perpetuating misconceptions rendered obsolete by centuries. The true sadness of "authenticity" is that its scholarly and idealistic interest in the sound of music as it once was divorces music and performance from the life of which they were a part. The effort to revive ancient instruments and early performance practice is not strictly modern: it can already be found in the first half of the 19th century. But the early music movement has taken on the character of a crusade, above all as it has moved beyond the sphere of medieval and Baroque music and into the late 18th and the 19th centuries. On the other hand, greater expertise at handling old instruments in recent years, coupled with the ability of the sound engineers to make a chamber group sound like large symphony orchestra, has brought early music closer to conventional sound. In fact, the more professional an early music orchestra becomes, the more it sounds like a conventional one; in addition, the most successful conductors of early music—Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Roger Norrington, and John Eliot Gardiner—have turned increasingly toward engagements with established orchestral groups. One has to listen carefully now to a recording of a Handel concerto grosso or a Mozart symphony to decide whether it is an execution on old instruments or a regular symphony orchestra that has picked up some of the new ideas on old performance practice from early music.

My difficulty with enthusiasts of early performance practice is that sometimes they think that there was only one way to perfrom, when there were in fact a variety of styles of performance in the 1700s and 1800s. I do not think anyone will revive the practice of conducting an opera by Lully or Rameau by hammering on the floor with a large stick, although that was surely an important aspect of the experience of sound at that time. When music is written down, not every parameter can be notated; this means that a score can be interpreted in different ways, even by the contemporaries of the composers. And practice at any time was much more fluid than we may think. Brahms, for example, arpeggiated all his chords in performance; this may be authentic, therefore, but it annoyed many of his contemporaries, so it is not a fixed element of the time. Also, we should not separate original sound from everything that gave it meaning: "authentic" sound is not only insufficient but often an illusion. Sound is dependent on function: Bach's harpsichord concerto became a concerto for organ, chorus, and orchestra when it was used for a church service. Mozart's instruments were largely intended for much smaller halls. A Mozart opera was never given in halls that seated more than 700 people. The whole question of orchestral size is very complex. Many of the 18th-century performances were not public but private or semi-private. If you want to perform old music in an "authetic" way, you should know about the context in which they were played. As for the Baroque revival of operas for instance, sometimes it seems to me very good—I heard excellent performances.

But for instance, people got very excited about the *notes inégales,* the dotted rhythms in French Baroque music. I remember Boulez went completely crazy when he had to conduct a Baroque opera which was prepared by an early music specialist—he said that the whole piece sounded like an infernal boogie-woogie that never stopped.

It remains to acknowledge that early music has been and is a remarkably beneficial movement: it has made us realize how contrasting are the demands of concert life, which force us to play Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Debussy and Boulez with the same instruments, the same kind of sound—looked at rationally, an insane result. The early music movement has laid bare the deadening uniformity of today's conventional concert world.

Although 18th- and 19th-century music can be called your special territory, you played and wrote about 20th-century composers, too—at least up to a certain point. What about the last 40 years? How much contemporary music do you listen to?

I lost a little bit of touch with contemporary music—I played Boulez and Carter, but that's now really old. Of the younger composers the one that I heard is Marco Stroppa, who writes very interesting music. I'm mostly interested in music that I play myself. I lost contact with younger composers.

When I ask about the apparent difficulty a large part of the music-loving public has listening to contemporary music, various music professionals quote a variety of reasons for this aversion. Of course, they always quote some instances of disinterest or lack of understanding for some works of Mozart, Beethoven etc. Nevertheless, it is obvious that up to the early 20th century, music lovers waited eagerly for new works—and since then, they don't. It is a fact that for about a century now, the public's attitude changed: concert-goers prefer to listen to music by dead composers.

This is not specific to music: it is true for all the arts. It is true for painting: Picasso, Matisse, Jackson Pollock, and true for literature: James Joyce, T.S. Eliot... But Mozart was difficult for his time, and Beethoven was exceptionally difficult. Wagner was attacked by everybody. Richard Strauss was frowned upon, and so was Schoenberg. This break with contemporary music—or art in general, for that matter—happened gradually, not in the early 20th century. There is something else: fifty years ago, 80 per cent of concert-goers were made up of people who knew how to play a piano or another instrument. Today, among those who go to concerts, the number of people who play an instrument is much smaller. Maybe some of them play the guitar... but we have an audience who knows music only from recordings. And even that has been seriously jeopardized, because record companies consistently refused to make their records available to schools, where musical education should happen. Now they complain there is no audience for even classical music—but it is

logical: they never created an audience for it. As for contemporary music, anything new is going to take much longer to be appreciated. When I was asked by Boulez to record his music, and my recording of the 1st and 3rd Piano Sonatas won the Edison Prize, six months later it was taken out of the catalogue. All the arts became, already from the middle of the 18th century, more difficult to appreciate at first contact. As I said in another interview, the public always demands something original, and then they resent it when they get it. In order to absorb a new and difficult style you have to listen to the pieces several times, and well played. Who hears contemporary pieces several times? And to complicate it further, you have to know how to play well a piece which represents a new language.

Maybe the last 5–6 centuries were a golden age which simply has ended? There were inexplicable golden ages in other arts as well—why was there such an unbelievable multitude of talents in Dutch painting for about a century, and why not afterwards? You can have bits of explanations, but none of them explains it really. Was there a golden age of Western music?

Well, that is an old theory. It takes us back to 1770, when Charles Burney went to Italy and visited a lot of composers, among others Rinaldo di Capua, who said to him: "Music is finished! All the beautiful melodies have been written!" When Burney decided to publish his diary in 1805, he added to the story: "Let Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart answer this." But even the ancient Greeks thought that music is finished when after the Dorian mode the "terrible" Ionian mode came. There are periods in which interesting composers emerge, and then for a time there is nothing. In the period from 1810 to 1825, the only important composers were very old—the younger composers started to write good music only later. In the 1930s and '40s the only really interesting composers were very old, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Webern. It's not until the late 1940s that interesting composers started to come along: Boulez, Stockhausen, etc.

Music that we call "Western" also comes from a "golden place", in that it originates from such a tiny part of the world, namely Europe. We take a justified pride in that (which sometimes even turns into arrogance), but we practically ignore the music of the 90 per cent of the world's population, while Mozart can be heard in the small shop of a remote village in Cambodia or Ecuador.

Yes, because Europe is the only place in the world where people invented a system of notation. Cultures with ancient roots, like China, may have had their music but they never wrote anything down.

I have the impression that composers—regardless of their time—are either focused on structure or on sound.

Where would you put Debussy?

Reading you, this division seems to be valid chronologically: before the Romantics, structure, after them, sound...

The history of Western musical tradition is very curious. You have a notational system which largely only wrote down pitch and certain aspects of rhythm. It's not until the late 18th century that tone colour and dynamics enter into the actual composition of music. About music written earlier, we have no idea what it sounded like; as for the 15th century, Josquin des Prés for instance, we don't even know what some of the pitches were, or even which instruments they used. And Bach sounds quite good no matter what you play it on... It is only in the late 18th century that for instance the *sforzando* would become a part of a theme.

That brings us close to Liszt, the bicentenary of whose birth we are celebrating this year. Writing about Liszt, you said he put sound and colour on equal footing with pitch and structure.

Yes: Liszt taught the piano to make entirely new sounds; he made a new range of dramatic piano sound possible. He was a master in transforming sound into musical gesture. He gave real musical significance to new techniques of execution. As a result of thousands of hours of performance and improvisation, the new techniques became inventions of sound. His performance techniques become integrated into his compositions. Of course, many composers before him had some specific sound in mind for their compositions, but Liszt seems to be the first for whom the realization of sound is more important than the actual musical text.

Liszt's critics say that his music shows little invention.

The real inventions are in tone colour, density and intensity of sound, texture. By that, he challenged the basic assumptions of previous Western music, that pitch and rhythm are the most important elements of music.

You wrote that in Liszt's compositions realization took precedence over the underlying structure. Doesn't it make his music more vulnerable to performance? His greatest biographer, Alan Walker notes that if Mozart is played badly, the audience blames it on the performer, but if Liszt is played badly, it turns the audience against the composer, not the performer.

I think if Mozart or Bach is played badly it is just as terrible. On the other hand, it is unfortunately true that a great deal of Liszt is performed mainly for showing off your technique. He is the only major composer of whom this is true. Some of his harder pieces are close to impossible.

Transcriptions, paraphrases, arrangements and operatic fantasies are typical and very popular genres of the 19th century, and Liszt is probably their greatest representative.

I believe that it is a simplification and a useless misinterpretation to think that the "faithful" transcriptions are inferior to the "free" and therefore more "interesting" paraphrases. His transcription of the A minor organ Prelude and Fugue by Bach is very recognizably Liszt's, although there is not a note added, no indications of tempo or dynamics. The transcription of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* is a "simple" transcription, but it is peerless in its imaginative richness. Just as the Schubert song arrangements were not mere popularizations of the songs.

Liszt's critics deplore his alleged indifference to the quality of material he uses for his transcriptions and paraphrases.

Because he knows that he can transform the quality by the way he treats it. He knew that he was able to use almost any kind of material. One of the Chopin songs he transcribed is not esspecially interesting, but the transcription is highly original. The song is an ordinary mazurka, and Liszt decided it would sound much better as a nocturne, so he makes an imitation of a Chopin nocturne which is very beautiful. If you look at the six songs which Liszt welded into a cycle one is moved by the sympathy and understanding of another composer's idiosyncrasy. I reject that the "serious" pieces are the great ones and others like the operatic fantasy *Réminiscences de Don Juan* is just a popular joke; on the contrary, this fantasy is one of his most original pieces. It has little to do with Mozart—he rewrites the opera in a very Romantic way. Some operatic fantasies are just cheap, but the *Réminiscences de Norma* or the *Réminiscences des Puritains de Bellini* are very remarkable. They are changed into a piece by Liszt in a highly original manner. In them, Liszt juxtaposes the different parts of the operas in a highly personal way that brings out a new significance while never challenging the original sense of those parts. I would venture to say that composition and paraphrase are often impossible to separate.

Liszt remains controversial, even so long after his death. Why?

It is true that while the controversies that surrounded many musicians during their lifetime tended to disappear with time, this is not so much the case for Liszt (and for Berlioz, by the way). Posterity acknowledges his greatness, but this same greatness is not well understood. Many of the old criticisms prevail, and he still appears to need rehabilitation, because we still did not have the proper critical understanding of him. Even admirers seem sometimes to be ashamed to admire his most successful works, and tend to rest their case on less well known pieces like the *Lieder*—where Liszt stands closer to the French tradition—and the late piano works, much of which was not published during his lifetime.

When musicologists look at Liszt's place in music history, they also emphasize his influence on other composers and on the development of musical language.

Liszt is a major figure among composers. His influence was indeed great. The late piano works foreshadow Debussy and the atonal works of the early 20th-century composers, but they were little known. The influence on Ravel is undeniable for instance. One of the most quoted direct influences is his setting of Heine's *Die Lorelei* on Wagner's prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*; but when we follow the history of *Die Lorelei* to which he returned many years later, we see that its real depth is revealed if we consider it in its own terms, not by comparing it to Wagner's use of it.

We regretted that health problems prevented you from chairing the jury of the Liszt Piano Competition in Budapest last September. How does the career of Charles Rosen, the polymath, the pianist and the writer on music evolve in the near future?

Next spring, I'm invited to Finland to give a lecture and a recital and to a recording session in London. ❧

Paul Griffiths

Solitary Islands

New Releases by BMC: Kurtág, Ligeti and Liszt

A clutch of recent releases from Budapest Music Center includes a first chance for most of us to hear something from György Kurtág's ninth decade. Famously hesitant in earlier years —when he turned fifty his catalogue did not extend beyond Op. 12—Kurtág has been accelerating with age. Lately there have been *Brefs messages* for nine players (his Op. 47) as well as smaller instrumental pieces, all emerging in the interstices of a long delayed opera: a setting of Beckett's *Fin de partie*.

The composition on the new disc (BMC CD 162) is *Four Poems by Anna Akhmatova,* which he set for soprano and ensemble as his Op. 41, a score he finished in 2008 for a première in New York on January 31, 2009—and it is this first performance that is recorded here, along with other pieces from the concert, given in the Zankel auditorium of Carnegie Hall: Kurtág's *Troussova,* and his friend Ligeti's *Melodien* and Cello Concerto. (The programme also included a third work by each composer: Kurtág's *Splinters* and Ligeti's *With Pipes, Drums, Fiddles*.) Péter Eötvös conducts the UMZE Ensemble, with Miklós Perényi in the Ligeti concerto and Natalia Zagorinskaya in both *Troussova* and the new cycle, which Kurtág dedicated to her.

One hardly needs to hear *Troussova* on the same album to recognize that the Akhmatova songs come from a different Kurtág—in terms of the smoothness of the vocal line and the centredness of the harmony, with a lot of motivic repetition and strong hints of folksong modalities—but also from very much the same composer, where the immediacy of expression and the almost tastable instrumental colours are concerned. The new vocal character brings forward

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Paul Griffiths
is the author of books on Stravinsky, Bartók, the string quartet and, more recently, of The Penguin Companion to Classical Music *(2005) and* A Concise History of Western Music *(2009).*

memories of Stravinsky's Japanese and Russian songs, especially in the first and second numbers, both of which are brief (1′ 20″ and about twice that), the latter also having very Stravinskian appoggiaturas. Kurtág here enfolds the voice—or illuminates it, or represents an illumination radiating from it—with an ensemble of woodwinds, strings and percussion (including piano and cimbalom), constantly changing in timbre but swimming through time with the vocal line.

The third song, as long as the other two put together, takes us into more familiar Kurtágian territory, not only in repeating the trio of violin (often scratching the ceiling), cimbalom and double bass from *Scenes from a Novel* but also in being a funeral flower. There is the cold air of a cemetery here, continuing to the end, where—after tubular bells have poignantly echoed the last line of the poem—a succession of muffled chimes suggests also a favourite Kurtág image out of Bartók, a lake of tears.

Similar in length, the final song moves onto a larger, louder plane. Brass join the ensemble, stimulating a wilder anxiety in the vocal line, but then everything dies back to the essentials: the almost numb voice, at once serene and alert, and the gathering of instruments around it. The trajectory, through four poems all about poets, has come from playful bewilderment to a stark vision of "the poet in disgrace" at work within a frozen city. Placed here, after death, this final song seems to remind and warn us of art's immortality, of how the artist can still speak, and bear witness, from beyond the grave.

By contrast with *Troussova,* where the singing voice is closely identified with the suffering persona of Rimma Dalos's poems, the Akhmatova cycle puts forward a more elusive vocal personality—more abstract, perhaps, but perhaps also more telling. We are not observers, now, of someone's distress. Rather, this is distress, expressed at one moment with hair-raising shock.

Audience noises are acceptable in such a vivid memento of an important occasion, an occasion given further lustre by a beautiful performance of Ligeti's *Melodien* and an account of his Cello Concerto in which Perényi's wonderful playing is matched in tone and sensibility by his colleagues.

Eötvös had Ligeti's music in front of him earlier that winter in Cologne, and another disc (BMC CD 166) perpetuates some of the results: a thrilling and powerful performance of the Requiem, framed by *Apparitions* and *San Francisco Polyphony.* Like the extremities of register out to which Ligeti filters his music at points in various works (including the Cello Concerto and the Requiem), the categories of wild humour and cold solemnity in many of his pieces reinforce one another, as this account of the Requiem marvellously shows. Comedy is incipient, for instance, in the Kyrie, beneath, below and maybe even within the more prominent awesomeness, which is vividly communicated by the choir and also by the orchestra, in fused tones that sound like metallic resonances held in time. Conversely, strangeness and loss haunt the following movement, along

with the musical slapstick with which the Dies Irae text is delivered. Barbara Hannigan's floating high notes here, whether pianissimo or forceful, are extraordinary, like beams of light suspended in the air with no source visible. Altogether the movement has the drama and colour of an opera collapsed into nine minutes, after which the glowing ashes of the final Lacrimosa are all the more poignant.

The two accompanying orchestral works are Ligeti's most neglected, and fine, characterful new recordings of them (only the third in nearly four decades in the case of *San Francisco Polyphony*) are welcome. In this context, and in these performances, connections with the Requiem come to the fore, whether incidental, as with the bundling of the brass out through the door in *Apparitions* and the luminous stacked tritones in *San Francisco Polyphony,* or general, a matter of dramatic, even operatic punch.

Along with these important expositions of recent and very recent music come three discs brought out to mark the Liszt bicentenary, one of them devoted to a repertory that still seems new, or at least unassimilated: piano works from the composer's last few years (BMC CD 185). One can find pre-echoes in these pieces of Scriabin, Bartók (not least in the big *Csárdás macabre,* with its stamping rhythms and surprising pentatonic episodes) or Ravel *(Quatrième Valse oubliée),* but of course all these composers were unknown to the aging Liszt, who seems to have been in an island of time all his own. It was a small island. Certain features—especially diminished harmonies and other tritonal elements—recur in piece after piece, and one may not want to listen to the whole seventy-minute programme at one go. It is, nevertheless, an island that remains unfamiliar, and some of its flora—the *Bagatelle sans tonalité,* which disappears itself out of existence, or *La Lugubre Gondola,* of which both versions are offered here—are remarkable after no matter how many hearings.

The pianist is Adrienne Krausz, whose cool approach may in its way be as surprising as her splendid virtuoso control. In the march of *Unstern!,* for example, she is straight to the point of baldness. But one sees the point. A lot of musicians perform Liszt's weirdness as the expression of weirdness, as if pointing out to us all the time how untoward this music is. Krausz, by contrast, just lets it happen—or rather, of course, she makes it happen, while having it seem that the notes themselves, not her hands and mind behind them, are responsible for these bizarre musical zooms and somersaults. She commands great resources of colour and nuance, from delicacy to imposing strength and starkness, but makes it appear all through that the music is in charge. The record's beautiful *envoi* is the sweet and strange, melancholy and whimsical *En Rêve,* magical.

Greater rarities are included in the two albums of pieces for men's choir, some of these settings apparently unrecorded before. They are all ably put

forth by a group directed by Tamás Bubnó, the Saint Ephraim Male Choir, whose singing is rhythmically strong and thoroughly in tune without eliminating the characters of particular voices, their various tangs helped forward by the close recording. The selections are divided between secular (BMC CD 168) and sacred (BMC CD 178) compilations, and there are choice pieces on both.

The only overlap with Krausz's album in point of period is provided by a *Pax vobiscum* of 1885, decisively affirming how important repetition became to Liszt in his last years while of course having a quite different harmonic character from that of the contemporary piano pieces, whose message is not one of peace. In other ways, though, these choral works, the German as well as the Latin, convey an image in accordance with that of the late piano music, an image of statelessness, unrootedness, solitariness—qualities that make Liszt of any period a peculiarly modern spirit.

Bubnó builds his sacred programme around the mass Liszt reworked for a performance at Szekszárd that failed to take place; organ solos as introit and recessional, together with interleaved motets, give the semblance of a "Liszt liturgy". Those aforementioned traits make the result coherent, however varied, but if there is one piece that stands out, it is the eucharistic prayer *Anima Christi, sanctifica me.* This suggests how Liszt's respect for plainsong worked in alliance with his harmonic venturesomeness (as in Bruckner's sacred music, which Liszt's occasionally recalls) and also how his devotion to the Church by no means led him to silence his devotion to contemporary opera.

The secular collection, which includes the twelve items published in 1861 under the title *Für Männergesang* and three other pieces, offers several further gems, interspersed with lusty march-tempo numbers. "Es rufet Gott", to a text set twice in the 1861 group, has a striking idea, again circling in repetition, and "Der Gang um Mitternacht" is an atmospheric nocturne that counterpoises unison with chordal singing. Two short Goethe songs also stand out: "Gottes ist der Orient" and "Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh". Besides the pleasure these recordings give, they will surely stimulate other choirs to investigate this little known region of the Lisztian continent. ❧

László Krasznahorkai

Heavenly Vision? Hallucination?

An excerpt from the novel *Satantango*

As soon as they rounded the bend and lost sight of the people waving and hanging around by the bar, his heavy-as-lead sense of exhaustion vanished and he no longer felt any of the agonizing sleepiness that had practically glued him to the chair by the oil stove, because ever since Irimiás had told him something he had never even dared to dream of ('All right, go and talk it over with your mother. You can come with me if you like...') he couldn't bear to close his eyes, and spent the whole night turning over and over in his bed with his clothes on so as not to miss the arranged dawn meeting; and now, when, through mist and half-light, he saw the road ahead arrowing into infinity his strength was redoubled and at last he felt 'the whole world opening up before him', and he knew that whatever happened he would stay the course. And however great the desire in him to give voice somehow to his enthusiasm he

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Published in 1985 and made into a seven-hour film by Béla Tarr that has by now attained cultic status, Satantango *is Krasznahorkai's breakthrough work. The novel takes place in a dilapidated, weather-beaten village, unnamed but unmistakably Hungarian, whose inhabitants eek out a miserable existence. "Their world is rough and ready, lost somewhere between the comic and tragic, in one small insignificant corner of the cosmos. Theirs is the dance of death," writes George Szirtes, the translator of the novel. With the onset of autumn rains, life has come to a virtual standstill for the villagers when two vagrant characters arrive. Long believed dead, Petrina and the grandiloquent Irimiás are small-time swindlers who promise redemption while craving it themselves. In this excerpt they are joined by the kid, a character responsible for the suicide of his sister. As they march along in the battering rain they are surprised by a chilling apparition: the girl's veiled corpse hovering in the fog.*

Satantango, *translated by George Szirtes, is forthcoming in February 2012 by New Directions. This excerpt is published by arrangement with New Directions Publishing, New York,*

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controlled it and unconsciously measured his steps in a more disciplined fashion, following his master even while burning with the fever of his election, since he knew he could only carry out the mission granted him if he responded not as a snotty-nosed kid but as a man—not to mention the fact that if he did speak without thinking the constantly irritable Petrina was bound to come out with some new mocking remark and he couldn't bear to be humiliated before Irimiás, not even once. It was perfectly clear to him that his own best option was faithfully to copy Irimiás in every small detail because this way he was sure not to get a nasty surprise; first he watched his characteristic movements, his long easy stride, his proud bearing and raised head, the now challenging, now threatening movements of his raised right forefinger the moment before he made a significant remark and, most difficult, the falling cadence of his voice and the heavy silence between the distinct elements of his speech, noting the control of his resonant proclamations, and trying to capture something of the undoubted confidence that so generously permitted Irimiás to articulate his thoughts with such precision. Not for a moment did his eyes leave his master's slightly stooped back and narrow brimmed hat pulled firmly down so as to prevent the rain beating against his face; and seeing that his master paid no attention whatsoever to him because his mind was clearly intent on something else, he too walked on in silence with an earnestly wrinkled brow, because by concentrating his attention like this he liked to think that he was helping Irimiás's own thoughts reach their goal more quickly. Petrina scratched his ear in agony because, seeing the tense expression on his companion's face, he himself did not dare break the silence, so, however he tried to give the kid a look to indicate that he should keep mum ('Not a peep out of you! He's thinking!') he too felt constrained and was so desperate to ask questions he could only breathe with difficulty, making first whistling, then dry hoarse sounds as he did so, until eventually it became plain even to Irimiás that the heroic figure holding his tongue beside him was practically choking, so he made a face and took pity on him. "Go on, out with it! What do you want?" Petrina gave a great sigh, licked his cracked lips and started blinking rapidly. "Master! I am shitting myself here! How are we going to get out of this?!" "I must say I'd be pretty surprised if you weren't shitting yourself," Irimiás replied, annoyed "Would you like some paper to wipe yourself with?" Petrina shook his head. "It's no joke. I'd be lying if I told you my sides were splitting with laughter..." "In that case shut your mouth." Irimiás gazed haughtily down the road fading in the distance up ahead. He stuck a cigarette in the corner of his mouth and lit it without breaking step. "If I were to tell you that this was precisely the opportunity we had been waiting for," he confidently declared, looking deep into Petrina's eyes, "would that reassure you?" His companion flinched a little under his gaze then bent his head, stopped and thought a little, and by the time he had caught up with Irimiás again he was so nervous he

could hardly get the words out. "Wha...wha... what are you thinking?" Irimiás made no reply but continued gazing mysteriously down the road. Petrina was so tortured by anxieties that he tried to seek some explanation for the profoundly meaningful silence and so—despite knowing the effort to be vain —tried to delay the inevitable disaster. "Listen to me! I have stood by you all this time, through good times and bad times. I swear, if I do nothing else with my miserable life, that I will flatten anyone who dares to be disrespectful to you! But...don't do anything crazy! Listen to me just this once! Listen to good old Petrina! Let's forget it, forget it now, immediately! Let's hop on the first train and get out! These people will lynch us the moment they discover the dirty trick we've pulled on them!" "No chance," Irimiás mocked him. "We are taking up the demanding, indeed hopeless, cause of human dignity..." He raised his famous forefinger and warned Petrina, "Listen, jackass! This is our moment!" "God help us then," groaned Petrina, seeing his worst nightmares realized. "I've always known it! I trusted...I believed...I hoped...and here we are! This is how it ends!" "You must be joking!" the "kid" behind them butted in: "Can't you take things seriously for once?" "Me?!" squealed Petrina, "me, I'm happy as a pig in shit, you can practically see me drooling..." Grinding his teeth he looked up to the heavens and shook his head in despair. "Be honest with me! What have I done to deserve this? Have I ever hurt anyone? Have I spoken out of turn? I beg you boss, have some regard, if for nothing else, for these old bones! Take pity on these gray hairs!" But Irimiás was not to be swayed: his partner's words went in one ear and out of the other. He just smiled mysteriously and said, "The network, jackass..." Hearing the word, Petrina immediately perked up. "Do you understand now?" They stopped and faced each other, Irimiás slightly leaning forward. "It's the network, that enormous spiderweb, as woven and patented by me, Irimiás ...Am I getting this through your thick head? Has a light come on there? Anywhere?" Life began to seep back into Petrina, first as the faint shadow of a smile flickering across his face, then as a distinct sparkle in his beady eyes, his ears reddening with excitement until his whole being was visibly moved. "Somewhere...wait... Something rings a bell...I think I'm getting it now..." he whispered hoarsely. "It would be fantastic if...how shall I put it..." "You see," Irimiás gave a cool nod. "Think first, whine later." The "kid" was following at a respectful distance behind them but his keen ears helped him pick up their conversation: he hadn't missed a word and because he had not the slightest idea of what they were talking about he quickly repeated it all to himself so he shouldn't forget it. He pulled out a cigarette, lit it and, like Irimiás, slowly and deliberately pursed his lips and blew out the smoke in a faint straight line. He did not try to catch up but followed, as he had done, some eight or ten steps behind because he felt ever more hurt that his master had not chosen to "let him into the secret", though he should have known that he—unlike the constantly complaining

Petrina—would have given his soul to be part of the plan: he had, after all, promised to be unconditionally faithful to the end. The tortures of jealousy seemed infinite, the bitterness in his soul growing ever more bitter since he was obliged to see that Irimiás thought him unworthy of a single remark, not one! His master ignored him altogether, as if "he simply wasn't there", as if the idea, "Sándor Horgos, who is not after all a nobody, has offered his services" meant absolutely nothing to him... He was so upset he accidentally scratched an ugly acne spot on his face and once they reached the fork at Póstelek he could bear it no longer but rushed to catch up with them, looked Irimiás in the eyes and, trembling with fury, cried: "I'm not going on with you like this!" Irimiás regarded him with incomprehension. "What was that?" "If you have any problems with me tell now, please! Tell me you don't trust me and I'll get lost right now!" "What's up with you?" Petrina snapped. "Nothing in the world is wrong with me! Just tell me whether you want me with you or not! You haven't said a single word to me ever since we set out, it was always just Petrina, Petrina, Petrina! If you're so fond of him, why invite me along?!" "Now hold on a second," Irimiás calmly stopped him. "I think I understand now. Listen hard to what I tell you because there won't be time for this later... I invited you because I need a capable young man like you. But only if you can do the following: One, you only speak when I address you. Two, if I entrust you with anything you'll do your best to get it done. Three, get used to the idea of not giving me lip. For the time being it is up to me to decide what I tell you and what I don't. Is that clear?..." The "kid" lowered his eyes in embarrassment. "Yes, I just..." "No "I just". Act like a man. In any case, I know what you're capable of, my boy and I don't think you'll let me down...But enough now. Let's get going!" Petrina gave the "kid" a friendly slap on the back but then forgot to remove his hand and propelled him along. "See here, you little piece of shit, when I was your age, I didn't dare open my mouth when there were adults present! I fell silent, silent as the grave, if an adult was anywhere near! Because in those days there was no back talk. Not like today! What would you know about..." He suddenly stopped. "What was that?" "What was what?" "That...that noise..." "I don't hear anything," the "kid" said, puzzled. "What you mean you don't hear anything! Not even now?" They listened, holding their breath: a few steps ahead of them Irimiás stood stock-still too, listening. They were at the Póstelek fork, the rain gently pattering, not a soul to be seen anywhere, only a few crows circling in the distance. It seemed to Petrina that the noise was coming from somewhere above him, and he silently pointed to the sky but Irimiás shook his head. "From there, rather..." he pointed towards the town. "A car?..." "Maybe," his master answered, clearly troubled. They did not move. The humming neither strengthened nor weakened. "Some kind of plane, perhaps...," the "kid" tentatively suggested. "No, not likely...," said Irimiás. "But in any case we'll take the shorter route. We'll go down the

Póstelek road as far as Wenkheim Manor, then we'll take the older road. We may even gain four or five hours that way..." "Have you any idea how muddy that road is?!" Petrina protested in fury. "I know. But I don't like this sound. It would be better for us to choose the other road. There we are sure not to meet anyone." "Meet who?" "What do I know? Let's get going." They left the metalled road, and set off toward Póstelek. Petrina was continually looking back over his shoulder, nervously scanning the landscape, but didn't see anything. By now he could have sworn that the noise was coming from somewhere above them. "But it's not a plane...It's more like a church organ...ah, that's crazy!" He stopped, went down on hands and knees and put an ear to the ground. "No. Definitely not. It's crazy!" The low hum continued, no nearer, no further away. However he searched his memory the humming wasn't like anything he had ever heard before. It wasn't the roar of a car or a plane or of distant thunder... He had a bad feeling about it. He swiveled his head left and right, sensing danger in every bush, in every scraggy tree, even in the narrow wayside ditch covered in frogspawn. The most terrifying thing was that he couldn't even decide whether the menace, whatever it was, was close at hand or at a distance. He turned a suspicious eye on the "kid." "Look here! Have you eaten today? It's not your stomach rumbling?" "Don't be an idiot, Petrina," Irimiás remarked over his shoulder. "And get a move on!"...They were some quarter of a mile from the fork now, when they noticed something else beside the worryingly continuous humming. It was Petrina who first became aware of it: incapable even of saying a word, it was only through his eyes he could register the shock. His dull eyes started from their sockets, gazing at the sky, indicating the source. To the right of them above the marshy lifeless ground, a white transparent veil was billowing in a particularly dignified fashion. They hardly had the time to take it in before they were startled to see the veil vanish as soon as it touched the ground. "Pinch me!" groaned Petrina shaking his head in disbelief. The "kid" stood there open mouthed with wonder, then, seeing that neither Irimiás nor Petrina were incapable of speech, firmly remarked. "What's up? Never seen fog before?" "You call this fog?!" Petrina snapped nervously back. "Jackass! I swear it was a kind of...a wedding veil...Boss, I have a bad feeling about this..." Irimiás was staring puzzled at the place the veil had disappeared. "It's a joke. Pull yourself together Petrina and say something sensible." "Over there!" cried "the kid". And not far from the last sighting of the veil, there was a new veil slowly drifting in the air. They stared mesmerized as it too touched down and then, as if it really were fog, disappeared..."Let's get out of here, boss!" Petrina urged, his voice shaking. "The way I see it, it'll be raining frogs next..." "I'm sure there's a rational explanation for this," Irimiás firmly declared. "I just wish I knew what the devil it was!...We can't all three have gone mad at once!" "If only Mrs. Halics was here," remarked the "kid" grimacing. "She'd soon tell us!" Irimiás suddenly

raised his head. "What's that?" Suddenly it was quiet. The "kid" closed his eyes in confusion. "I'm just saying..." "Do you know something?!" Petrina demanded in fright. "Me?", grimaced the "kid." "Course I don't. I was just saying it as a joke..." They walked on in silence and it occurred, not only to Petrina but to Irimiás too, that it might be wiser for them to turn back immediately, but neither of them was up to making the decision if only because they couldn't be sure that retracing their steps would be any less dangerous. They started to hurry and this time not even Petrina complained, quite the opposite in fact: if it was up to him they'd have broken into a run, and so, when they saw the ruins of Weinkheim ahead and Irimiás suggested a brief rest ('My legs have completely gone to sleep...We'll build a fire, eat something, dry out, then go on...') Petrina cried out in despair, "No, I couldn't bear it! You don't imagine I want to stay in this place a moment longer than I need to? After what's just happened?" "No need to panic," Irimiás reassured him. "We're exhausted. We have hardly slept in two days. We need a rest. We have a long way to go." "OK, but you go ahead!" Petrina demanded, and gathering up what courage he had left followed some ten paces behind the other two, his heart in his mouth, not even prepared to respond to the teasing of the "kid" who, seeing Irimiás calm, relaxed a little and aspired to be regarded as "one of the brave"...Petrina waited till the first two turned down the path leading to the manor then, carefully, anxiously glancing left and right, scurried after them, but as he came face to face with the main entrance of the ruined building all his strength left him—and he saw in vain how Irimiás and the "kid" had quickly ducked behind a bush—he himself was incapable of moving. "I'm going to go mad. I can feel it." He was so frightened his brow was covered in sweat. "Hell and damnation! What have we got ourselves into?" He held his breath and, with muscles tense to the point of snapping, he finally succeeded in sidling — literally sideways—behind another bush. The sound of something like sniggering grew louder again: it was like a cheerful bunch of people having a lark nearby, it being perfectly natural for such a jolly crew to seek out this particular deserted spot, and to spend their time carousing here in the wind, rain and cold...And that sniggering—such a strange noise. Cold shivers ran down his back. He peeped out to the path, then, when he judged the moment to be opportune, set off like a lunatic and bolted over to Irimiás the way a soldier might leap, under enemy fire and at risk of his life, from trench to trench during battle. "Here pal...," he whispered in a choking voice as he settled by the squatting figure of Irimiás. "What's going on here?" "I can't see anything at the moment," the other answered, his voice quiet and steady, in full control of himself, never taking his eyes off what used to be the manor gardens, "but I expect we'll find out soon." "No," grunted Petrina, "I don't want to find out!" "It's like they're having a proper party...," said the "kid", excited, breathlessly impatient for his master to entrust him with something. "Here!"

squealed Petrina: "In the rain?...In the middle of nowhere? ...Boss, let's run now before it's too late!" "Shut your mouth, I can't hear anything!" "I can hear! I can hear! That's why I say we—" "Quiet!" Irimiás thundered at him. There was no sign of movement in the park where the oaks, the walnuts, the boxwood and flowerbeds were all densely overgrown with weed so Irimiás decided, since he could only see a small part of it, that they should carefully creep forward. He grabbed Petrina's wildly waving arm and dragging him behind him they slowly made their way to the main entrance, then tiptoed along the wall to the right, Irimiás at the head, but when he reached the corner of the building and warily looked towards the back of the park, he stopped dead in his tracks for a moment then quickly drew back his head. "What's there?!" Petrina whispered: "Shall we run?" "You see that little shack?" Irimiás asked, his voice tense. "We'll make for it. One by one. I go first, then you, Petrina, and you last, kid. Is that clear?" No sooner had he said it than he was off in the direction of the old summerhouse, running, keeping low. "I'm not going!" muttered Petrina, clearly confused: "That's at least twenty yards. We'll be shot full of holes by the time we reach it!" The "kid" pushed him roughly forward—"Get going!"—and Petrina, not expecting to be pushed, lost his balance after a few steps and lay sprawled in the mud. He immediately got up but then within a few yards threw himself face down again and only reached the summerhouse by crawling on his belly like a snake. He was so scared he didn't even dare to look up for a while, covering his eyes with his hands, lying perfectly still on the ground, then, once he had realized that "thanks to God's mercy" he was still alive, he plucked up his courage, sat up and peeked at the park through a gap. His already wrecked nerves were not up to the sight. "Down!" he screamed, and once again threw himself flat on the ground. "Don't scream, you idiot!" Irimiás snapped at him. "If I hear another peep out of you I'll wring your neck!" At the back of the park, in front of three enormous naked oaks, in a clearing, wrapped in a series of transparent veils, lay a small body. They might have been no more than thirty yards from it, so they could even make out the face, at least the part not covered by a veil; and if all three of them hadn't thought it impossible, or if they hadn't all helped place the body in the crude coffin Kráner had constructed, they could have sworn it was the kid's sister lying there, her face ashen white, her hair in ginger ringlets, in peaceful slumber. From time to time the wind lifted the ends of the veil, the rain quietly washing the corpse, and the three ancient oaks creaked and groaned as if about to fall...But there was not a soul anywhere near the body, just that sweet, bell-like laughter everywhere, a kind of carefree, cheerful music. The "kid" stared at the clearing, mesmerized, not knowing what he should most fear, the sight of his sister, dripping, stiff, clad in white as pure as snow, or the thought of her suddenly getting up and walking toward him; his legs trembled, everything went dark, the trees, the manor, the park, the sky, leaving only her, glowing painfully bright, ever more

distinct, in the middle of the clearing. And in that sudden silence, in the total lack of any sound, when even the raindrops broke silently as they fell, and they could well have thought they'd gone deaf, since they could feel the wind but couldn't hear it humming, and were impervious to the strange breeze lightly playing about them, he nevertheless thought he heard that continuous hum and tinkling laughter suddenly give way to frightening yelps and grunts, and as he looked up he saw them moving towards him. He covered his face with his arms and started sobbing. "You see that?" Irimiás whispered, frozen, squeezing Petrina's arm so hard his knuckles turned white. A wind had sprung up around the body and in complete silence the blindingly white corpse began uncertainly to rise...then, having reached the top of the oaks, it suddenly rocked and, bobbling slightly, started its descent to the ground again, to the precise spot it had occupied before. At that moment the disembodied voices set to a fury of complaint like a dissatisfied chorus that had had to resign itself to failure once again. Petrina was gasping. "Can you believe that?" "I am trying to believe it," replied Irimiás, now deathly pale. "I wonder how long they have been trying? The child has been dead almost two days now. Petrina, perhaps for the first time in my life I am really frightened." "My friend...can I ask you something?" "Go ahead." "What do you think...?" "Think?" "Do you think...um...that Hell exists?" Irimiás gave a great gulp. "Who knows. It might." Suddenly all was quiet again. There was only the humming, a little louder perhaps. The corpse started to rise again, and then some six feet above the clearing it trembled, then with incredible speed it rose and flew off, soon to be lost among the still, solemn clouds. Wind swept the park, the oaks shook as did the ruined old summer house, then the tinkling-chiming voices reached a triumphant crescendo above their heads before slowly fading away, leaving nothing behind except a few scraps of veil drifting down, the sound of rattling tiles on the fallen-in roof of the manor, and the frightening knockings of the broken tin gutters against the wall. For minutes on end they stood frozen staring at the clearing, then because nothing else happened they slowly came to their senses. "I think it's over," whispered Irimiás, then gave a deep hiccup. "I really hope so," whispered Petrina. "Let's rouse the kid." They took the still trembling child under the arms and helped stand him up. "Now come on, pull yourself together," Petrina encouraged him while just about managing to stand himself. "Leave me alone," the "kid" sobbed. "Let go of me!" "It's all right. There's nothing to be scared of now!" "Leave me here! I'm not going anywhere!" "Of course you're coming! Enough of this pitiful blubbing! In any case there's nothing there anymore." The "kid" went over to the gap and looked over to the clearing. "Where...where has it gone?" "It vanished like the fog," Petrina answered, hanging on to a projecting brick. "Like the...fog?" "Like the fog." "Then I was right," the "kid" remarked uncertainly. "Absolutely," said Irimiás once he finally managed to stop his hiccupping. "I have to admit you were

right." "But you ...what...what did you see?" "Me? I only saw the fog," Petrina said, staring straight ahead and bitterly shaking his head. "Nothing but fog, fog all over the place." The "kid" gave Irimiás an uneasy glance. "But then...what was it?" "'A hallucination," Irimiás answered, his face chalk-white, his voice so faint that the "kid" instinctively leaned towards him. "We're exhausted. Chiefly you. And that's hardly surprising." "Not in the least," Petrina agreed. "People are likely to see all kinds of things in that condition. When I was serving at the front there'd be nights when a thousand witches would pursue me on broomsticks. Seriously." They walked the length of the path, then for a long time down the road to Póstelek without speaking, avoiding the ankle-deep puddles, and the closer they approached the old road that led straight as a die to the southeastern corner of town, the more Petrina worried about Irimiás's condition. The master was all but snapping with tension, his knee buckling now and then, and often it seemed that one more step and he'd collapse. His face was pale, his features had dropped, his eyes were staring glassily at nothing in particular. Fortunately the "kid" spotted nothing of this partly because he had been calmed by the exchange between Irimiás and Petrina. ('Of course! What else could it be? A hallucination. I must pull myself together if I don't want them to laugh at me!...'), and partly because he was quite excited by the idea that Petrina had acknowledged his role in the discovery of the vision so he could now march along at the head of the procession. Suddenly Irimiás stopped. Petrina leapt to his side in terror, to help if he could. But Irimiás shoved his arm away, turned to him and bellowed, "You creep!!! Why don't you just fuck off?! I've had enough of you! Understand!!?" Petrina quickly lowered his eyes. Seeing that, Irimiás grabbed him by the collar, tried to lift him, and failing gave him a great push so Petrina lost his balance and, having scrambled a few steps, finished on his face in the mud. "My friend..." he pitifully pleaded, "Don't lose your—" "You still talking back?!" Irimiás bawled at him, then sprang over, and with all his strength, punched him in the face. They stood facing each other, Petrina desolate and in despair, but suddenly sober again, utterly exhausted and quite empty, feeling only the mortal pressure of despair like a trapped animal that discovers there is no escape. "Master..." Petrina stuttered: "I...I am not angry..." Irimiás hung his head. "Don't be angry, you idiot..." They set off again, Petrina turning to the "kid" who seemed to have been turned to stone and waving him on as to say, "Come on, no problem, that's done with now," sighing from time to time and scratching his ear. "Listen, I'm an evangelist..." "Don't you mean an Evangelical?" Irimiás corrected him. "Yeh, yeh, that's right! That's what I meant to say..." Petina quickly answered and gave a relieved sigh on seeing his partner was over the worst." "And you?" "Me? They never even christened me. I expect they knew it wouldn't change anything..." "Hush!" Petrina waved his arms in panic, pointing to the sky. "Not so loud!" "Come on, you big dope..." Irimiás growled. "What does it matter now..." "It may not matter to you, but it does for me! Whenever I think of that blazing

comet thing I can hardly breathe!" "Don't think of it like that," Irimiás replied after a long silence. "It doesn't matter what we saw just now, it still means nothing. Heaven? Hell? The afterlife? All nonsense. Just a waste of time. The imagination never stops working but we're not one jot nearer the truth." Petrina finally relaxed. He knew now that "everything was all right" and also what he should say so his companion might be his old self again. "OK, just don't shout so loud!" he whispered: "Haven't we enough troubles as it is?" "God is not made manifest in language, you dope. He's not manifest in anything. He doesn't exist." "Well, I believe in God!" Petrina cut in outraged. "Have some consideration for me at least, you damn atheist!" "God was a mistake. I've long understood there is zero difference between me and a bug, or a bug and a river, or a river and voice shouting above it. There's no sense or meaning in anything. It's nothing but a network of dependency under enormous fluctuating pressure. It's only our imaginations, not our senses, that continually confront us with failure and the false belief that we can raise ourselves by our own bootstraps from the miserable pulp of decay. There's no escaping that, stupid." "But how can you say this now, after what we've just seen?" Petrina protested. Irimiás made a wry face. "That's precisely why I say we are trapped forever. We're properly doomed. It's best not to try either, best not believe your eyes. It's a trap, Petrina. And we fall into it every time. We think we're breaking free but all we're doing is readjusting the locks. We're trapped, end of story." Petrina had worked his own way up to fury now. "I don't understand a word of that! Don't spout poetry at me, goddamit! Speak plain!" "Let's hang ourselves, you fool," Irimiás sadly advised him: "At least it's over quicker. It's the same either way, whether we hang ourselves or not. So OK, let's not hang ourselves." "Look friend, I just can't understand you! Stop it now before I burst into tears..." They walked on quietly for a while, but Petrina couldn't let it rest. "You know what's the matter with you, boss? You haven't been christened. "That's as may be." They were on the old road by now, the "kid" eager for adventure scanning the terrain, but there were only the deep tracks left by cartwheels in the summer, nothing looked dangerous; overhead, an occasional flock of crows, then the rain coming down harder and the wind too seeming to pick up as they neared the town. "Well, and now?" asked Petrina. "What?" "What happens now?" "What do you mean what happens now?" Irimiás answered through gritted teeth. "From here on things get better. Till now other people have told you what to do, now you will tell them. It's exactly the same thing. Word for word." They lit cigarettes and gloomily blew out the smoke. It was getting dark by the time they reached the southeastern part of town, marching down deserted streets where lights burned in windows and people sat silently in front of steaming plates of food. "Here," Irimiás stopped when they reached The Scales. "We'll stop here for a while." ❧

Translated by George Szirtes

László Krasznahorkai

The Bible Got Bad PR

An Interview by Ági Dömötör

Ági Dömötör: *Many people have the impression that your books are hard to read and to understand. That's a myth, but don't you think you've got some bad PR?*

László Krasznahorkai: You know, the problem is that anything that's the least bit serious gets bad PR. Kafka got bad PR, and so does the Bible. The Old Testament is a pretty hard text to read; anyone who finds my writing difficult must have trouble with the Bible, too. Our consumer culture aims at putting your mind to sleep, and you're not even aware of it. It costs a lot of money to keep this singular procedure going, and there's an insane global operation in place for that very purpose. This state of lost awareness creates the illusion of stability in a constantly changing world, suggesting at least a hypothetical security that doesn't exist. I see the role of the tabloid press somewhat differently. I can't just shrug it off and say to hell with it. The tabloid press is there for a serious reason, and that reason is both tragic and delicate.

László Krasznahorkai
is an internationally acclaimed writer. Most of his novels are available in translation. Satantango, *his first major novel, appeared in 1985 (See excerpt on pp. 15–24). Similarly to* The Melancholy of Resistance *(2002) and* War and War *(2006),* Satantango *was translated by poet George Szirtes for New Directions (forthcoming in February 2012). Extended travels in China and Japan inspired Krasznahorkai's "eastern" novels including* The Prisoner of Urga, *an excerpt from which was published in no.195 of* The Hungarian Quarterly *(Autumn 2009, pp. 28–45).*
Since 1985 most of the films made by director Béla Tarr are adaptations of novels by László Krasznahorkai, including 7-hour-long Satantango *(1994),* Werckmeister Harmonies *(2000) and, most recently,* The Turin Horse *(2011).*

Ági Dömötör,
a journalist, is cultural editor of origo.hu, *Hungary's most visited news portal.*

The tabloids satisfy our primal hunger for gossip, like old peasant women sitting on village benches long ago.

The old peasant women gossiped on a level that the modern, industrialized gossip factories of the tabloid press miss by several orders of magnitude. An old woman in the village will stir up shit in a human space that she can take the measure of. It's not the same story when you're dealing with ten million people. The tabloid press doesn't necessarily work from the premise that people don't need anything else or couldn't understand anything else. The structure of vulgarity is very complex.

Does pop culture reach you in any form?

Absolutely. I'm sure I could name ten new rock groups from 2011 that you haven't even heard of.

So you go to record stores and concerts?

When I was staying with Allen Ginsberg in New York, the studio of David Byrne, the former leader of Talking Heads, was very close by. Byrne would often come over to Ginsberg's place. Sometimes we would make music together in the kitchen, and I became part of this polygon with Byrne, Philip Glass, Patti Smith and Ginsberg, where artists would give their CDs to one another. They still do that, to this day. For instance, I never heard of Vic Chesnutt while he was alive; and yet I think he is one of the best in this whole rock culture. An American friend sent me Chesnutt's entire life's work. But I go to concerts less and less. The last thing I saw was a fantastic show in Berlin: it was Joan Wasser and her orchestra, billed as "Joan as Police Woman." It was insane. But I've got a bad leg and I can't stand for four or five hours at a concert.

Are you interested in TV and movies?

I can't watch movies, but I've got a TV set and I mostly watch documentaries. I don't watch much Hungarian TV, but rather English, American, German, French or Spanish channels.

How do you divide your time between New York, Berlin and Pilisszentlászló in the Buda hills?

I'll go to New York again in 2012. I live mostly in Berlin, but I've been spending a lot of time in Pilisszentlászló, and I would like to spend as much time there as possible. I love that place.

Many of your works deal allegorically with the end of the world or the demise of civilization. In what other era do you think people might have felt similarly: "that's it, one kind of civilization has failed?"

I thought you'd ask at the end of which era people did not feel that way. There have been many eras like ours when people not only thought an era was over but that the whole world had come to an end. We know little about the end of the earliest golden ages, the Incas, the Egyptians, the Minoans, the Zhou Dynasty in China. Much better known is the decline of the Roman Empire, because the endgame lasted for several centuries, and it is very well documented. And it is clear that to a citizen of ancient Rome, when Rome fell, it wasn't just the end of his world but the end of the world as such. What had been round till then, an image of perfection, suddenly became a triangle. Yet for the Christians, this became the starting point—on the way to their own failures and grave crises. European and non-European history is nothing but a series of failures and crises. It's a terrible cliché, but it's true: crisis is the default state of history.

Our age differs from the ends of earlier eras in that we live in a global culture, and furthermore, we are not fighting enemy ideologies. Can you imagine how our time will be seen 200 years from now?

If there will be such a thing as "200 years from now," then they will find us very amusing. Humour will play a more significant role in their judgments about the past. Because if we survive another 200 years, which I doubt, then we will have good reason to be cheerful as we look either ahead or back to the past. I have the feeling that if someone reads this conversation 200 years from now, they'll have a lot of fun. They will be surprised that anything has survived, you know, anything at all.

In other words, you don't see our era as particularly apocalyptic. But then, why do you write about destruction so often in your books?

I'm personally involved in the apocalypse... It's interesting how your relationship to that changes in the course of your life. You think about it most when you're young, particularly in connection with death, because you still have a certain courage that you're going to lose when your own death is getting closer. Later you're just afraid. When I was young, I didn't feel the sanctity of birth. I tended to consider birth as the starting point of a journey toward failure, and I'd sadly look out the window for days on end into this grey light that was all that had been given to me. Anything that could arouse compassion had a great impact on me. I was particularly responsive to those aspects of reality and the arts that reflected sadness, the unbearable, the tragic. And I didn't know what to do with anything positive or joyful. Happiness bothered me.

And when did that change?

There is no single moment we can name, not because such moments don't exist but because we never know in which particular moment the transformation occurs.

One of your most conspicuous trademarks as a writer, since your very first work, have been your long sentences. It seems to me that these long sentences fit your most recent works, which deal with Oriental themes, better than the older ones. Their slow pace reflects an Oriental concept of time. They're in no hurry, just like a monk working on a mandala. Did this different concept of time in Oriental cultures really influence you?

What would reflect an Oriental concept of time would be not long or short sentences, but silence. The sentence structures that I use result, rather, from an internal process. I generally spend my days alone, I don't talk much; but when I do, then I talk a lot and continuously, never ending a sentence. Many people are like that. You may notice that the majority of people talk the way I write.

Do you ever look up on the internet what readers have to say about your work? There are online reading groups where your books are discussed; other sites make comments on your interviews.

If you mean Hungarian sites, I don't know too many of those. Recently one blogger suggested that I should be hanged. I immediately put on my space suit, started the engine and went to the moon for a while.

I notice that your greatest fans are not intellectual types wearing fashionable shoulder bags; they're mostly average young people.

That's reassuring but, as a matter of fact, not too surprising. Perhaps young people are the hardest to influence; perhaps they like to be seen as free, and they like it even more if they see someone confronting anything and anyone for their sake. For them, nothing has been decided yet. I think we're talking about those who haven't yet decided how to deal with their forebodings, or where to hide their imagination, their desires and their dignity in this rotten world we live in. We're talking about those for whom a book is not just a book; they know that while we hold on to the book forcefully, there is something before the book and something after the book, and that's what the book is for.

How do you relate to your fellow Hungarian writers? Do you ever e-mail one another? Would you tell György Spiró, for instance, "I liked your last book, Gyuri?" I'm asking because in an earlier interview you seemed to see yourself as an outsider on the literary scene.

I don't just see myself as an outsider, I am one. Which doesn't mean I'm not happy to see colleagues I admire; after all, we share the same fate. But I also worry about them. I worry, for instance, because they're in literature, something that you can still sell for awhile, but it's getting harder and harder. This kind of communication is really over and done with. Its disappearance is

a rather obvious process; it is happening faster at some points of the world than at others. I'm afraid this kind of literature is not sustainable.

You mean it's not just the authority of literature that's finished but literature as such?

The so-called high literature will disappear. I don't trust such partial hopes that there will always be islands where literature will be important and survive. I would love to be able to say such pathos-filled things, but I don't think they're true.

And those who are still reading today, what will they do then?

They probably won't read. Could it be that people will once again begin to think for themselves? By thinking, I mean original thinking, without someone holding their hand. If I read the works of thinking people, they inspire me to think, but at the same time they give me categories and don't set me free. Between them and Heraclitus's rippling stream, they interpose a book. Maybe at some point in the future, there will be nothing between them and the rippling stream. And they'll get nice and soaked.

You mean we'll lose the habit of reading because we're too lazy. But it takes more energy to think than it does to read.

You're forgetting that human history is full of catastrophes, and it's the catastrophes that force people to think. But I have another suggestion: we will return to a post-post-postmodern kind of sacrality. The spoken word will once again have a sacred force, which the written word will serve to record. I don't mean some kind of archaic world, where we're going to moon about by Stonehenge; on the contrary: the circumstances having changed, a completely transformed view of the world will be considered natural. I can imagine many possible scenarios, except that things will go on the way they are.

Your works were praised by W. G. Sebald and Susan Sontag; Allen Ginsberg was a friend of yours. Whose recognition has meant the most to you in your life?

Those I received as an adolescent. That's the time when one is really at the mercy of what others think. One recognition came from my classroom teacher in high school, József Banner, who helped me by continually encouraging me. He always put me on display in Hungarian class: this is how it should be done. I was incredibly proud, because we feared and venerated him, and praise coming from a man like him meant more than one can express in words. Then, when my first piece was published, it became part of a literary network that I hadn't known existed. To me, literature meant Sándor Weöres, János Pilinszky, Péter Hajnóczy. When I was first introduced to Miklós Mészöly, and he told me how much one of my short stories had influenced him, you can't

imagine what that meant to me. Maybe if that hadn't happened, my whole life would have been different.

Suppose someone who has never read anything by you picks up this interview and says: what an interesting guy, which one of your books would you recommend to them? What would be a point of entry to your life's work?

The Old Testament. The Book of Revelation. Let them choose from my books at random.

When was the last time you laughed and when was the last time you wept?

Aside from the fact that I have a daughter I have practically not been allowed to see since she was five, which makes me cry, internally, all the time—I really cried last when we were shooting the pub scene from *Satantango* with Béla Tarr. One of the characters was singing a song, drunk out of his mind, with accordion accompaniment. That song, and the way he sang it, was so moving that, as I was sitting there, I suddenly felt tears pouring down my face. My left leg fell completely asleep. Then it was over, I realized where I was, sitting there with Béla and watching the monitor. And that's when I realised that Tarr, who was also misty-eyed, had been squeezing my left leg with enormous force the whole time. In order to hold on to this wonderful moment. So that nothing would happen and we got the scene right. And we did.

When did I laugh last? When I saw and heard you, I laughed for joy. Because of the way you ask questions. Because you care. And because I again have someone to talk to. Someone I can tell these things to. ❧

Traslated by Peter Laki

Zsuzsa Takács

Poems

Translated by Ivan Sanders and George Szirtes

Dedication

Ajánlás

In Memory of My Parents

If my father, as mayor of the town, didn't stand in front of the Arrow Cross men who were about to loot a fabric shop, to tell them, with his service revolver in his right hand and his wallet in his left, to take the wallet but better not break into the store or else he'll shoot, because it was his duty to protect the property of citizens of the town who were called up for labor service—if father didn't do that, I would have fled the family home, to remind myself of the stories I had heard about better times, when Roman law still commanded respect in the legal profession and among the people.
If my mother didn't bend over her children so as to absorb with her body pieces of the window that was shattered by a bullet, I would have said: How dark it is here! as I stepped up to her sickbed in her room with its swing-out window, in the projects. If my father, pale with anger, didn't go after the looting soldier, telling him to take everything but give back my doll, then, twenty years later, while running down the stairs like crazy, I would have almost knocked over the cleaning woman who with pail and mop would have been in a hurry to get to our place. If mother didn't give blood so she

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Zsuzsa Takács

published eleven volumes of poetry since 1970, a book of children's verse, three volumes of essays and prose, as well as translations of poetry from Spanish, Italian and English. A highly acclaimed poet, she is praised for her elegiac voice, subtle irony and the enigmatic, dreamlike intensity of her verse.

could use the money to buy a pair of shoes for my kid brother, I would have asked: Did you close the window too? while standing in that stuffy room which would have been locked in, put in the stocks, as it were, by a brick wall looming in the neighboring yard. If during father's detention she didn't provide for us by stitching shoulder pads; if in March of '57 she took the outstretched hand of a member of the security police and hearing him complimenting her on her good looks, even smiled involuntarily, just before father was herded into their heavily curtained Pobeda car, then, like a starveling grabbing the last bite, I would have grabbed the railing that separated our street from the river, and leaped over it. But like this, under the weight of the love and gratitude I felt for them, I sat in the world's big top, all the way up, my face red and white, my eyes fixed on the skinny equestrienne who was goaded on by the ruthless circus director's cracking whip, amidst the unceasing blare of the band, the whirr of fans and the spectators' thunderous applause. It could well have been drops of my own sweat and blood that were soaked up by the insatiable sand in that ring, but I applauded the child-bodied lady's act just the same, so as not to take the fun out of our entertainment. Seek the one and only Moon and Sun that will light up infinity just for you, the circus fanfares blasted in my ear; and if in my loneliness I found my relatives among the clowns, the trapeze artists, the lion tamers and the caged lions, and cried in tight, tiled corners, I had to concede that if there's one, there can be two or three, and if two, then six or six hundred billion Moons and Suns in the sky, while behind the swing-out window of our death chamber, glistening with the waxy coat of birth, a single one rises from the ocean. Between the source of light and the place where we stand we cannot see everything at once, in our eyes the nearest star is the same as it was years ago. And if all of a sudden every light source was extinguished, we would keep staring for centuries at which is long gone. The young child, whose hand the two of you held, sniffed around like a dog in a familiar doorway, and holding her head heavy with wise mysteries on her thin neck, sucked into her wide eyes a world rich and frightful. ❧

Translated by Ivan Sanders

A Hat

Egy kalap

How perfect it is, this hat,
hung on the copper hook next to my own.
It's green but of a rather subtle shade,
the ribbon black, threaded through with gold.
How many terrible thoughts have brewed beneath it,
what thoughts have dashed themselves to death within it.
Surely it has passed from father to son.
It disturbs me like some kind of family heirloom.
It's rather tight but has been brushed to a shine.
Just looking at it the blood drains from my face.
Its owner is a swollen-faced fat man
who will eventually come to claim it,
and when he does I won't look, let him not see me.
I'd like him to put it on as he was leaving,
but I'm sure he'll stand there and take a look around,
and no one will fail to rise in honour of him.
I wish I could forget that I have met him
or that I might have to meet him again.
If possible let him have no family,
nor dog that he could put in a sack and beat.
If he's a judge, let me not come before him.
If he gets violent, let his first blow be fatal.

Translated by George Szirtes

The Adoration of the Body

A test imádása

When they were making love for the last time
and, wide-eyed, she watched herself doing it,
squirming with lust, her whole face
twisted, practically screaming with
excitement, with the ecstasy
of annihilation, of being annihilated,
of destruction, of the burning of bridges,
the putting of a spoke in the wheel of time,
of bending time's own spokes, the dance
of metallic slivers piercing their skin, the thousand
cuts in what tied them together, the final
slicing apart, the recognition of the familiar strangeness
of the body falling on her body, of movements
that radiated such utter resolution, she cried for the joy
of the sigh-like departure of love from their flesh,
she cried because she felt it was appropriate for
what they were punishing, that months-long sense,
the insiduous pain spreading through everything, the soul.

Translated by George Szirtes

Our Master's Absence

Gazdánk távolléte

The Master was away and it was pointless waiting
to be let in. One of us eventually
plucked up courage to enter the open house
but as the dogs drew closer, howling, a hand gripped
and captured him. Fear unhinged him,
and he lost control, breaking and wrecking things,
until he escaped through a smashed picture window
and joined us. The Master called us to account.
We trembled before him and lied our heads off,
but never revealed the rebel's name to him.
We are, after all, servants, and easily offended.
Our self-regard is ridiculous in his presence.

Translated by George Szirtes

Endorphin

Sense of completeness, tears of gratitude.
Is it the chemistry of broken bodies?
A happiness hormone? I really cannot tell
what's up with me, but I'm guessing it is you

who's responsible. Those raven-black hairs, the rainbow
spread of light fabrics, the graceful movements when
the long fingers are pouring tea into
those red-spotted enamel-covered mugs

and extend one to me. Why do I feel so festive,
why the brilliant blackness of those eyes?
It's as if someone who had been saying, you know

I have nothing to say, her teeth icily chattering,
had been forced into acts of speech, and was now
dancing and singing—I simply dare not move.

Translated by George Szirtes

János Székely

German with Dog

Short story

Our mounts held out well.

Only now did it become clear just how hardy and undemanding, just how truly excellent military steeds those small, shaggy-haired bays, hairy greys and marbled blacks were! Even outwardly they could not be faulted as in point of fact they were all half-breds, the products of multiple crossbreeding between Hungarian peasant stock and English Thoroughbred, and even splendidly held their own to look at. But, as I say, as to their nature! I can speak from experience, they united all the valuable features of both breeds, raised as they were with diametrically opposed purposes: from the English bloodline came extraordinary strength, ambition and self-discipline; from the Hungarian just as extraordinary fortitude, patience, easy-goingness, and—how to put it?—a fatalistic acceptance of fate.

János Székely *(1929–1992)*
was a Transylvanian Hungarian poet, writer, playwright and translator. The short story "German with Dog" comes from the book A nyugati hadtest *(1979, The Western Corps), a slim volume of seven interlinked short stories that bears comparison with Babel's* Red Cavalry *and is one of the most compelling literary works about war. Presenting the vicissitudes of the Western corps of the defeated Hungarian army in the Second World War through the optic of a young cadet, Székely's book is an autobiographically based catalogue of violence, shame and coercion, which examines the workings of the war machine with unsparing precision. From the portrait of a cadet bullied by the whole company, through the tale of a teacher forced to execute a student of his who deserted the army, to the story of the German soldier and his dog who methodically kill weak prisoners who dropped out on a death march, each of these stories offers a detached analysis of the ethics of defeat, full of unforgettably intense images. Székely shows how war moulds everyone and everything to its purpose, combining fear, honour and cruelty into a ceaseless monstrosity.*

Admittedly, now, in the course of the 600-mile winter trek it was not so much the aristocrats as those of serf origin which proved useful. Their lordships on this occasion were no doubt saved by the bygone mésalliances of many of their illustrious forebears, just as it was that they had to thank for their incredible good nature. Who feeds, waters, rubs down, curries, combs and, above all, is keen to ride a haughty, flighty (and, above all, finicky) thoroughbred earl? Alongside a notability like that over time a person is either bent out of shape into its lackey or turns into a clod. It is always possible, however, to get along well with an affable, good-natured peasant colt; nor is it any shame to burden him or do him services in return—too true: with a son of the people (even if a tad of noble blood flows in his veins) it is possible to jest, tease, banter—in a word, live! That was why we were so fond of, set such great store on our agreeable horses, to say nothing of their huge usefulness, being willing to carry us on their back for hundreds and hundreds of miles ungrudgingly in snow, wind, in dreadful winter weather, and never did one of them (not a single one) flake out, or even go lame.

The splendid, cream-coated East Prussians, purchased from Trakehner by the Vistula, those well-built Junker purebloods with which we replenished our stock, could only stagger by the third day; flees in their droves settled on their matted coats to sunbathe in the sunny hours of the afternoon; some of them had to be put down on the spot, at the roadside ditch, so as not to hold back the escape. On our rustic half-breeds no sign of exhaustion was evident even weeks later. Yet for them it counted as a feast day when we were able to give them at least some oar straw; after 20 miles or so of trekking they usual lay down to sleep in the open air. I shall never forget that on the second day of the big retreat, in a quiet, medieval small town, which lay under a fairy-tale snow cover, to boot, and at the time went under the name of Krone (to this day I haven't looked up its Polish name), the poor things, for lack of a stable, were hitched to the fence round the church. There was a superb old, Gothic church right in the middle of the quadrangular main square; around that was a small square garden, with what may have been silver firs, and around it an iron chain suspended from tiny wrought-iron posts—a kind of ornamental fence. That was what we tethered our horses to for the night even though during the day they had been chilled to the bone on account of the fleeing tide of caravans of carts and the waiting that this entailed. We tied them up to the chain all round (as a result the square was transformed into a veritable stage stable); of course we draped each and every one of them with blankets, even fastening the blankets on with girths, but all that without tossing them as much as a single handful of hay. That was when we retired to rest ourselves in some gym with broken windows, leaving just two or three men as guards in the square.

It was mid-January, plenty of snow, a hard frost, terribly windy. At times like that horses are in the habit of turning their hindquarters to the wind, "lining up" their rears dead on like weathercocks of some kind, as if they were withdrawing

into the windshield of their own bodies. There they were not able to do this because they were tethered, but in their great haste, stamping, tugging of heads to "line up" despite everything, the blankets slipped off them. Horses have the further habit when they are freezing excessively, when the whole of their big body just shivers and shakes like a Diesel engine which is running on empty, they are not disposed to stand in one spot any more: they attempt to trot or gallop, just to move to keep warm. But they could not do that either (for the aforesaid reason): our clumsy ministrations had condemned them to freeze standing.

Ignoring the efforts of the guards to whoa down, they backed sharply, at times even to the point of sitting on their cruppers, and tore off their halters (in one place even ripping the chain off the church fence), after which they scattered to the four winds. When we stumbled out of the gymnasium the next morning, we were met by a sight beyond our wildest dreams, a weird hallucination: a marvellous, medieval small town, lying under a thick carpet of snow and chock-a-block with horses—a snow-white fairytale chock-full of neighing and whinnying creams, bays and blacks galloping in every direction; as far as one could see from the square, they could be seen scudding everywhere, with phantom horses flashing across the furthest streets, coming to a standstill every now and then on the narrowest alleyways which clambered up the hill, then once again bolting, without saddle and blanket, neck bolt upright, snorting clouds of vapour, nice and free; like so, to be sure: black and cream amidst the snowy-gabled, half-timbered, fairytale houses, on an immaculately white background of snow, like in some kind of woodcut or painting!

It was a picture such as someone like the elder Breughel might have painted, and indeed we would have found it amazingly pretty had it not been so disheartening. Because of course it meant that the runaways would have to be hunted for, caught up with, rounded up and led back to the square so that we could saddle them up, which in turn meant that the town was also packed full with soldiers haring after horses, furiously waving their arms around (and loudly cursing), which made the picture even more unreal, more Breughelesque—just a pity there was no art lover about to notice the beauty of it all. I don't know whether it was that day or later, but I recall very clearly that it was on such an occasion that Palkovics downright wanted to shoot his horse. He had struggled to dash after it, then cautiously crept up to it in waist-high snow, soothed and cajoled it with hushes to lower its guard, but at the very moment he would have reached for it, when he could almost feel its rein in the palm of his hand, the horse tossed up its head and with a few graceful leaps bounded further away. Palkovics had to begin the whole process of approaching it from the beginning—struggling to dash after it, then cautiously sidling up to it, cooing cosily, but the playful beast, damn the shifty character, again jumped away at the very last moment. The whole process was repeated another four or five times, and it was only then that we noticed Palkovics snatch his carbine off his back, load it with

a big clatter with live rounds, take up a regular straddling position and take aim at the snickering dapple-grey. He even bawled at it (I can still, to the present day day, hear his voice), threatening to riddle it with bullets, if it dared to budge again. He was shaking with with rage and we had a job calming him down.

Anyway, our sweet horses were exposed to perils like that; that was how they went hungry and froze for week after week, month after month, and still kept going, lugging us dutifully, carefully jumping across ditches hidden under the snow, avoiding obstructions, and if we sometimes managed to get them a warm stall or hay, or at least oat straw, the next day their coats would just gleam with contentment!

Our mounts held out well, us—barely.

Chronic trots had already taken hold of us in the very first week. On the whole, it was with our bellies that we had the most trouble throughout the great trek; we paid little heed to our white ears, purple noses, soles of our feet frozen black—freezing evidently anaesthetises itself. Our guts, though, tormented us sorely, incessantly having us on the run, giving us colic for months on end. The food was to blame, that was obvious. Because there was nobody else behind us; we were the hindmost. Decent soldier's grub, of "drawing rations" was out of the question, we lived off what we were able to forage here and there—God knows where: vacated villages, deserted remote farmsteads.

What were we able to scavenge? Mainly pigs and piglets: not one owner bothered to drive off with his small livestock. I recollect that on the third day of our ride, we took up quarters in one old grange or other in the very middle of the great Polish plain. It was a marvellous farmstead, remarkably similar to the church square in Krone; both expressed the same attitude to life, indeed view of the world. In the middle was an enormous, snow-covered lime tree, around it a farmhouse, a barn, hayloft, and granary (all half-timbered buildings imbued with a medieval feel) all lined up as a regular rectangle, enclosed like a castle. Anyway, it seems news of the Warsaw breakthrough had only reached this remote farmstead after delays; the owners must have been lucky to save their own skins and were not in a position to take anything with them, not even the most valuable livestock. There were a dozen dinky speckled-black cattle lowing in the barn; seemingly naked pink porkers were squealing in their sty (from hunger, naturally), and we, for our part, mercilessly slaughtered the whole herd and drove the cattle from their stalls in order to assure food for ourselves and a stable for our horses.

Those poor, wretched cattle were left to run about up and down the farmyard en masse all night in the snow, wind and appalling cold just as our horses had done the previous night (in Krone's main square), only in this case they also created an uproar, mooing loudly and bitterly, all night long, holding our consciences under constant siege and not allowing any sleep.

The pigs, on the other hand, held a profound peace because we put them down without wasting any time that first evening. They were all killed with pistol shots

by lamplight, we aimed between their eyes; they croaked it on the spot and there were no further squeals from them. They were then opened up, cleaned up, then the cadavers, covered in blood, quickly slung on sledges (sleds robbed from the owner which we came across there, hanging on the walls of the barn). We laboured at that until well after midnight so as not to be left with any bother on that score the next morning. Our haste proved overdone. After stumbling bleary-eyed from our beds the next day and leading out the horses (letting the cattle happily regain their stalls), saddling up, breakfasting and thus at the point of setting off on our way, it suddenly became obvious by the sobering light of day: that stacking the steaming flesh on three of the large sleighs had been futile. We could take none of it with us, there being no horses to pull the sleighs.

Still, we did manage to take one of the sleds. There may have been some among us who in the interest of the end-goal (probably counting on a place on the sleigh) volunteered or perhaps rearranged the packs on the carts; suffice it to say, when we finally moved out of the quadrangle of the farmyard around eight o'clock that morning it was a horse-drawn sleigh overloaded with meat which led the way. I shall never forget the scene: a big, pink-tinged desert of snow all around; a big, pink-tinged sky at daybreak; and behind us, a big, pink-tinged expanse of snow in the yard where the blood had been spilled and trampled into a mush as on some kind of battlefield; in front, on the road was a sleigh piled high with flaming-red flesh, with blood still dripping down from it in tiny red, frozen droplets.

We ate that pork for weeks thereafter. At first that was fine and in order as for a couple of days we also managed to scavenge some potatoes, and the sleigh team cooked up some splendid goulashes. But adages about how ill-gotten gains never prosper or go astray spring to mind—that was precisely what happened in this case! In our heedless greed we wolfed the delectable boneless meat; even if we did not feel like it, and gobbled up the greater part of the pork, scoffed it, in double-quick time so that after that all we were left with was the fat. I have eaten my fair share of crummy-tasting food in my life, but a thing as disgusting as cubed pork-fat boiled into a broth with melted snow, barely coloured by a pinch or two of paprika—well, anything as disgusting as that I have never eaten since!

Little wonder that the chronic trots gained a hold on all of us already in that first week. That was not only a problem in itself, not just because it tormented, harassed and exhausted us at precisely the time when we had most need of our strength, but also because on account of it many was the occasion when we fell behind on the way. Getting lost, getting separated from the unit, falling behind was our greatest fear then and there just like with birds of passage. It was the greatest possible peril we were able to imagine; ruin itself, the very end! There was no one behind us; we were the hindmost. Anyone of us who fell behind would never find his way back to our unit, would never have anyone

hurry to assist him; what awaited him was that big wasteland of snow, the night, the terrifying thirty degrees of frost, and dying of hunger or, at the best, being taken a prisoner of war, only there was no way of telling if the Russians would overhaul one in time, and if they did, whether they could be bothered to help—whether they even spotted you.

The first time I dropped behind like that, obeying an urgent call of nature, I experienced the full range of the horrors of dropping behind. The attack struck unexpectedly at a time when we had not yet established a routine for dealing with that sort of event and therefore I simply jumped off the horse and handed over the reins to Porubski for him to lead it until I got back; I even, self-denyingly, waited a bit (on the grounds of modesty) and when the unit had moved on a little, I went ahead undisturbed, easing my bowels at the foot of a roadside telegraph pole. I then tidied myself up and set off after the squadron—but where were they by then? A tiny nebula in the purple haze of the horizon, an infinitesimally small motion, a tranquil progression somewhere on the boundary of the whole great prairie; I would not have noticed them at all had the hoof prints not pointed in that direction.

I immediately grasped what was in store for me and panicked. I broke into a run, raced with all my might to catch up with the troop, meanwhile knowing full well that it was wasted effort; every exertion was futile. The horses got along somehow in the three feet of snow; they picked their long, sheer legs up high and were somehow able to make progress that way, but people had to wade in the snow as if they were moving about in waist-high mush, as if they were snow ploughs! Lungs could cope with that for at most 80 or 100 feet, and even then it was merely to follow the cavalry troop as it was swallowed up in the distant fog, never mind approaching it or catching up! After 80 or 100 feet I fell flat on my face in the snow, panting to catch my breath, sweating from head to foot. I kidded myself by saying: right then, I'll take a breather now and then make a further run, but I could already feel it getting colder, how the perspiration was freezing on me within seconds; how the icy air was stinging my overheated lungs; and, worst of all, how desperation was getting mingled with a peculiar, irresponsible blind trust.

I mean, I couldn't croak it out there, could I? In my alarm I bounded up from the snow. And still with that gratifying belief that someone was watching over me, I broke into a run after the receding troop. This time, however, I did not manage even 50 feet. That was when I abandoned the struggle, realising that my trust had been misplaced, indeed, that living had been all for nothing, because the end was nigh (I hiccupped out the sobs to myself) when something did after all catch up with me, and somebody set me back on my feet. It was the meat sleigh which had caught up, the sled driver who hauled me to my feet; one hand holding on to the sledge, I was now able to walk on in tranquillity towards our quarters, which were not all that far away in any case.

In that way my peculiar blind trust had proved justified; someone had been watching over me, but what would have happened that day if the meat sleigh, by accident, had not been left behind but had taken the lead as it was wont to do—even just thinking about it was ghastly.

From then on, whenever nature called two of us together would stay back from the troop, with one holding the horses, the other attending to business. Even so it was a hazardous enterprise. There was another occasion on which I was left behind (Porubski and me), but the need turned out to be so pressing that even while dismounting I had to lift my right leg over the saddle because the damage had already been done. Oh Lord! What was I going to do now? There was no way I could change underwear there and then, standing in waist-high snow. Was I really going to have to take off my boots and britches in order to pull off my underpants? Instead I tore my freezing-cold bayonet from its scabbard, cut the shameful underpants off from all around myself and so, without drawers admittedly, I was able to remount with my bowels eased.

All that took time, of course, and by the time I had completed my ingenious manoeuvre the squadron was again far ahead. That could have been the trigger for a big scare and frantic galloping in the snow, but even that would not have enabled us to catch up (our horses would have collapsed before that happened) had they not noticed and stopped to wait for us. After many such instances, I came to the conclusion that one was best advised simply to remain seated on the horse and put up with the unpleasantness like a man, and I declared as much to others, and having offered it to others, it was advice I too accepted because it was better one rode for a few hours in one's own mess (apologies for being so frank) than answering the last roll-call.

When I say that there was nobody coming behind us, I mean none of those who were retreating or fleeing, no one from among the ranks of the Hungarians or the Germans. Because the Russians, naturally, were present everywhere behind our backs and had latched on to our tracks, never allowing us to get too far ahead. For every day that we managed to win a small advantage, the next day they would have caught up; I recollect nightmarish midnight alarms when, in snow storms and in pitch blackness we were obliged to saddle up and push off straight away because their tanks were already firing in the next village. Don't ask me on whom or what they were firing as the civilian population, down to the last soul, whether of their own free will or under duress, had fled and we really were the very last of the defeated army.

That winter it was unusually cold and the snows were particularly heavy. We got our bearings on the buried road not from the ditch but from the telegraph poles and not from the caravans of the fleeing population only got their bearing on where they had left a buried road, having deviated from it or taken a shortcut, not from the ditch but the telegraph poles. Just the poles, I tell you, because the wires had all been torn down by the ice and the poles, in their decoration of thick

rime, dangled mutely and despondently in the snow on both sides of the road. All along, we made our way in a gigantic white wilderness—not a hill or wood anywhere, not even a tree, only the dark rows of telegraph poles and the distant, murky silhouette of a farmstead! Nobody was living in those by now; there wasn't a soul to be seen in the whole area, not a ground squirrel or crow; it was truly spooky to ride tens and hundreds of miles without meeting a living creature.

Only the dead multiplied from day to day on the road.

The dead, whom I have not mentioned yet, though ever since we had reached the Stettin road we were riding past by them, all the time lying either on their back or on their belly, some of them already somewhat covered by snow, some not yet; in every direction they lay some ten to fifteen paces from the ditch—unsettling, silent, black. The further we progressed, the greater the number of corpses we saw; we couldn't possibly keep count of them, and even from the safe height of the saddle we could not help staring at them spellbound because some of us were fortunate in not having seen a dead body before.

How the dead ended up at the roadside none of us could even imagine. Maybe they had fallen behind the caravans of civilian carts fleeing the fighting; maybe they only had trouble with their guts, had wanted to relieve themselves and then were unable to catch up with the advancing column. We glimpsed our own as-yet-evaded fates, our own futures, one might say; that was what we were fleeing from each and every time, when in a near-miraculous fashion, we succeeded in catching up with the troop or we carried on riding in our own ordure. Whoever they may have been, when it comes down to it they were ourselves; they represented us as personal mementoes—or to be exact: graphically—the perils of falling behind. If the meat sled had not by chance been left behind yesterday or the day before (I–would often muse at the sight of them), then by now I myself might also be a dark little pile in the yawning, white deserted vastness all around.

The first time we encountered a German soldier was on the seventh day of the retreat.

We had reached hillier country and the road had begun to wind and in places was even becoming more passable. He was sitting on the saddle of a stranded motorbike, in a bend of the road, calmly smoking a cigarette. He was wearing knitted earmuffs under his combat helmet; slung across his chest was a submachine gun; his dark green uniform was decent and clean. It wasn't just because he was the first battle-fit man we had encountered since crossing the Vistula that we took note of him, not even because his stiff military garb all at once made us conspicuous in our patriarchal corruption (making us almost ashamed of our sleigh wrapped up in a blanket and the rags wrapped round our stirrup-irons), but because his Zündeapp motorbike had been fitted with, instead of a sparsely puffing side-car, a nifty little pulpit, a sort of plank, and on that plank sat a superb German Shepherd dog.

An unusual sight, to be sure! That well-built, intelligent-looking German must have been fond of his dog if, jettisoning his kit and any other of his belongings, then and there, in a bitterly cold winter in the vast wilderness of snow, even under the noses of a hectically advancing enemy army, he lug it around everywhere with him! Man and dog in splendid harmony, on one and the same bike (especially seeing that the man had a weapon slung around his neck—that reminded of hunting in peacetime. We cavalrymen, who had similarly deep-seated links to the animal world, were in a good position to respect the mutual loyalties.

The German took close note of us, but not in the least tactlessly, after which, as soon as we moved on he flipped away the butt of his cigarette, made a professional job of kicking off and revving up his motor and, the deep snow notwithstanding, overtook us swift as the wind. The superb, ash-grey dog sat on its pulpit in a disciplined manner throughout, not swaying back even when they set off or when they changed gear—by then he must have had immense experience of riding a motorbike. The German dashed by, as I said, his figure diminishing in size and eventually disappearing, dog and all, round the bend in the road, whereas we continued quietly to trot on between hills now glittering in the sunshine. Later that day we also came upon the dead body of a man in a jacket: he was lying face-down on a snowed-over ploughed field, quite far—20 to 25 paces—from the road; on his sprawling legs were brand-new boots of Morocco leather which seemed—how to put it?: conspicuously superfluous. We also came across an elderly woman; she, yellowish-white hair loosened from under her headscarf, was quite close, stretched out directly in the roadside ditch; tiny red droplets of blood, being unable to clot, had frozen on the corner of her mouth and chest and on the snow around. The pigs' blood dripping from the sled came to mind as well as the pain when yesterday, or the day before, I myself had been stretched in the snow and the ice-cold air that streamed into my heaving, steaming lungs as they fought for air—already I could see before my eyes the scene as an exhausted old woman, caught up a in hopeless pursuit by foot, of a distant caravan of carts, all of a sudden submitted to her fate, tumbled into the ditch and blood bubbled up from her tormented lungs. Of course, it could never have so much as entered the minds of her relatives to wait for or even hurry back for her because the Russians were again getting perilously near, almost snapping at our heels, and we cavalrymen and our mounts too had to make haste lest they overtake us. We did not encounter any other creature that day.

We took up quarters that day as evening was drawing in the school premises of one of the larger villages. It was a rare exception on which even the horses had a warm stable. We got a splendid fire going in the classroom's stove and were able to bed down on wheat straw from a nearby barn, snuggling down in it, maybe even pulling boots off in order to rub some life back into our toes, which had frozen purple (it is precisely the feet of

cavalrymen that, not being used, are the first to get frozen). It seemed to me that we were barely given time to fall off to sleep and an alarm was raised. We saddled hastily and set off at breakneck speed, no longer even on the road but directly north-west as the crow flies to cut out the corners and to avoid the danger posed by advancing tank sweeps. That night we spent fourteen hours in the saddle and rode thirty miles. In summer that was nothing, but in winter, in snow reaching up to the hocks and chest, it is an inordinate amount especially considering that (on top of everything) a storm blew up. The wind was blowing from the right, perpetually from the right. That I shall not forget until the day I die: whenever the weather changes, excruciating pains on my right side always remind me of that easterly wind. It howled bitterly with, here a there, a great flurry of snow being snatched up from the ground, fluttering around like some sort of veil then blowing it as a horizontal strip into the night. By the next day we were able to scoop out from our breeches handfuls of drift snow that under the high atmospheric pressure had been driven through greatcoat, shsort coat, and jacket to reach our skin. By the morning horses and riders were caked with a uniform white swathing: a perfect camouflage had been moulded onto us. Snowmen riding on snow-white snow horses; we were invisible on fields of snow; we did not even recognise each other.

The wind died down at daybreak; minute, vivid stars sparkled in a clean-shaven sky; it was cold, but a sunny day was in prospect. As soon as it had grown light enough for us to look back anxiously, we were able to ascertain that nobody moved on the skyline (the Russians themselves had been brought to a standstill during the night), As soon as the sun rose we, with our armour of as yet unmelted ice, again took a chance by once again taking to the road and overtook an eerie procession. There must have been 100–120 of them—men and women, old and young. One might wear a winter overcoat but another in a waistcoat and shirtsleeves; some had boots on, others—rags wound around their feet (barefoot, effectively), but they were all deadbeat, frozen to the bone, iced into sleet armours like ours—that was how they were staggering over the whole width of the highway, marching in ranks of eight, with us having no way of knowing where they had come from or where they were going. One thing was plain, though, they had marched the whole of the foregoing night. We ourselves had experienced it, and it was terrifying for us even to imagine what they must have had to put up with when the snowstorm was at its height. They walked along, tottered, struggled to proceed in the snow amidst their guards, world-weary ethnic German popular militiamen (who seemed not a whit less tormented); they marched along in silence, their dead eyes staring in front of them, ghostly white, frozen cold and obviously famished; they went in twenty degrees of frost with some sort of fatalistic acceptance of what fortune had in store for them: one could not comprehend how they had held out that long, to say nothing of how they would be able to hold on thereafter. They offered a

spectacle that outdid the Apocalypse, the underworld, or the imaginations of Dante or Edgar Allen Poe, and in our stupefaction, to our shame, not sparing our already tortured mounts, we galloped around them, giving them a wide berth.

Say what you will, we never, even in our wildest dreams, supposed that a thing like that could occur. Nor did we have any idea, nor do I know now, and do not know to the present day, who those lost souls might be: Russian partisans? Polish insurgents? Or just Jews, that's all? I did not know, and still don't know, but this much I clearly saw even then: I needed to forget about them as soon as I could if I wished to preserve any will to live.

That was how the secret of the dead by the roadside was revealed. They had nothing to do with the civilian refugees as the caravans of carts—only now did it dawn on us—even the cart wheel tracks had vanished from the road long, long ago. Evidently, the dead had dropped out of the ghostly march—it was from that that they had succumbed. Unable to bear the unbearable, they had been left behind, they had toppled over into the snow and had frozen to death just as we too would have frozen if we had been left behind. Keeping our minds on our own troubles, we tried to forget them (at least I did). The thing was, though, that it was precisely our own troubles which put us in mind of them. Freezing? How they must be freezing! Hungry? How famished they must be! Weary, sickly, unable to endure any more? Only they truly knew what it means not to be able to endure more! But then why did they keep moving together? Why did they not scatter to the winds? I wondered up in the saddle, casting my eye back at the road along which, before too long, they too would have to proceed. Why did they not break up at the edge of the very next village and just make a laughing stock of their guards? Nothing worse than death could befall them, and that sentence had already been pronounced over them as it was! Were they still holding out hope? Did they believe that anyone who could hold out beyond their strength and ability be able to escape? Were they that blind to the situation they were in? Was that universal human streak of self-deception so stubborn in them? Were they capable of perishing right there, by the side of the road, in lingering agony, merely in order to avoid a death which was voluntary, pain-free (albeit instantaneous and certain) and more fitting for a human being? Good Lord! How does it work? Are faith and obedience so tenacious in certain souls? Are weapons in the hands of others such a terrifying power? I strove with all my might to forget about them, but can one forget the unforgettable?

From then on, day after day, we would be reminded of them.

The next day we did not start until noon because the Russians, due to the snowstorm, were a fair bit behind us and our good horses were in absolute need of rest. The moment we turned onto the highway we spotted their dead: so many black piles on the white snow, but there were some stretches where there would be one for every 20th or 25th telegraph pole. Not long after that we

overtook the ghostly marching column itself. By then there were only about fifty of them: in the course of the night through which the column had kept on the move more than half of them had perished. Dumbfounded I tried to guess how many had set off when they started their march (and from where) if, after such a paltry half-life as one day a few had still survived. They had staggered just as apathetically, trampled through the snow, stared ahead in the same way; it seemed that even the limbs of the survivors no longer felt freezing. They had so diminished in numbers that there was just about a popular militiaman to guard everyone. The loose, straggling group, arranged in ranks of eight between the compact, straight battle formation of the soldiers on both sides were, if anything, even more shocking than they had been yesterday.

While we were again skirting their column, this time at a more leisurely trot and in a tighter arc, an unprecedented scandalous event occurred. Palkovics, the same fiendishly undisciplined kind-hearted Palkovics, who had threatened to shoot and even taken aim at his horse in Krone, well that Palkovics unbuckled his saddlebag and from his iron rations (on which it was forbidden to draw, nausea and diarrhoea notwithstanding) tossed two packs of hard tack among the captives. The hard tack was instantly confiscated by the guards; Palkovics was taken to task by our own commanders. He was demoted, even threatened with being tied up in the open, though that was never carried out because there was barely one of us (including officers) who, in his heart of hearts, did not approve of his action. At most we regretted that he had dared to do something that we had not even dared to think about and thus he alone had saved—admittedly, to little profit, and even that was not in the world's eyes but merely in those of the captives—actually what? What was it that he had saved anyway? Perhaps I can put it this way: the honour of our squadron.

On the tenth day of the retreat we caught up with the ghost march for a third time. The distance that we forged ahead by day they would make up at night; they never rested but kept on moving night and day. Only twenty or thirty of them were left; the guards were now definitely in the majority and for that reason they were not just flanking them on the left and right but enclosed the captives fore and rear as well, forming a tight rectangle around them. They marched along like some sort of phalanx or mobile farmyard: there were just enough of them to do so. And we had hardly spotted them when the German with his dog also showed up. He arrived from our rear, gave a friendly wave and even smiled at us before, kicking up snow, he took a sharp bend in overtaking us, the dog barely managing to stay on his pulpit. The superb animal whimpered as he kept his balance on the motorbike, his vigorous ash-grey body simply radiating approving endeavour.

At that spot, the road dropped down the hill in a huge semicircle; viewed from the top one could see a section of one or two miles, so that put us in a good position to witness a scene that I will likewise not get out of my mind until the

day I die, just like those painful twinges on my right side. Far below, the ghost march appeared on the far spur of the bend; the German had overtaken us from behind with a wild swerve. The gentle slope between the two was not empty, however. Fairly close to the silently trudging batch of captives, more or less at the belly of the curve, someone was seated on the snow at the edge of the road—spent, sunk in themselves. From such a distance it was not possible to make out whether it was a man or a woman, only that it was a human being. The motorbike was racing round the bend, swerving all the way but then, as soon as it had reached the detached person in the dark coat, it quickly pulled up. The dog was actually thrown off balance but immediately jumped back onto the pulpit and stayed motionless, transformed almost into a statue in its remorse. The German alighted from the bike, stepped over to the seated figure and indicated with an expressive gesture that the person should get to their feet pronto. The figure stood up with great difficulty. With official, stiff but equally eloquent gestures the German then went on to explain something before pointing with his finger that the person needed to move on, and be quick about it. The person in the dark coat attempted to get going but had barely covered a couple of yards before coming to a stop again; it was obvious the person could not take another step. The German pushed back his helmet and again started explaining something; the encouraging, go-on play of his hand was now polite, almost pleading: I have seen traffic police make similar signs. Even so the figure in the dark coat did not move off but stood swaying in the middle of the road as if inebriated; it was quite evident that staying on the feet in itself was a huge effort. The German gave a sharp whistle, and all at once the magnificent, supple, powerful Alsatian, which up till then had observed the scene stock still, lept into action. With swift, space-covering bounds it threw itself at the dark-coated person; snarling, baring its teeth, it attacked and all but tipped the figure over. The latter, throwing arms up to protect his or her face, drew back a few paces, but was unable to step over the ditch and so once more came to a halt.

Any bike rider should have been able to judge that it was pointless bothering any more: that would never get going because the fuel tank was empty. At that the German grabbed hold of his submachine gun and without even unslinging it, not even looking, from close range fired a brief, barking burst at the straggler. The latter spun round before toppling slowly, silently into the ditch as in a slow-motion film. Master and dog stepped over to convince themselves the person was dead, then the first again took his seat on the bike's saddle, the other on his pulpit, and they roared away after the ever-more distant column of ghosts.

We watched the scene from the top of the hill. Without any words of command being uttered, the whole squadron thronged to the side of the road up to the tragedy that was played out in the distance forming, as it were, a cavalry line. All around there was a deathly hush: the customary stillness of

snow fields that would at most be broken by the snorting of the horses or jingling of a bridle but now, after the distant echo of the submachine gun's rattle had died down, nonetheless all at once it intensified many times over. So that's what it is like when someone is unable to take it any more (the realisation flashed through my mind); that's what one gets for falling behind one's unit. That was how the dead we had been coming across for days originated. They were not products of the night or the freezing cold; they were not due to a haemorrhaging of the lungs. They had been produced by a single, intelligent-looking, well-groomed German with his exemplarily disciplined Shepherd dog! The popular militia men ahead had nothing to do with it; they happened to be on the move just like captives. They were surrounding them like some kind of farmyard, that was true, and they would confiscate any charitable gifts, but other than that they would do nothing. They would gladly look the other way even when someone who was weary became detached from the ranks and stretched out at the side of the ditch, but God help you if you accepted the inevitable! Destiny was on its way from the rear and would strike. After a polite, then almost pleading request to scoot and reach the unreachable which was vanishing into the mist, he would simply shoot you in the belly. The East Prussians taken from Trakehner by the Vistula came to mind. Those dead-tired, stocky, cream-coated horses that we too not so long ago had shot in just the same manner (and likewise at the side of the road) so that they should not suffer needlessly. I was also reminded of those seemingly stark-naked, pink farmstead porkers that we—aiming right between the eyes—had finished off at similarly close range so as to have something to eat. Palkovics came to mind as, legs apart, he took aim at playful, perfidious snickering Wanda because she had taken him to the limits of his patience. But the German, who plainly had exterminated a whole consignment of captives, that peculiar German who was not even hungry for their flesh, let alone been infuriated by them, and who in fact had nothing personal to do with them (he did not even know them)—how many people had that intelligent-looking, spick and span German executed so far? How was he capable of doing that, and, above all, why did he do it? Why? They were human beings too, not animals; he could just as easily leave them for God to deal with, or the freezing cold, the winter, the Russians snapping at our heals. We were the hindmost; behind us there was nobody else! He though kept going and, maybe with repugnance but still conscientiously, discharged his duty in every single case. Was he acting on orders? Undoubtedly: there was no executioner who, for the sheer pleasure of it, would slaughter cripples who were anyway already condemned to die by hunger, bitter freezing and exhaustion. He was acting on instructions, that was obvious; the order was that during his flight he was to blow out the brains of any escapee. But then it was not just those who left the formation who counted as escapees but also those who were left by the formation; not just those who actively opted for a

separate direction but also those who through helplessness (passively, so to say) relinquished the common direction. But was such an idiotic sophism sufficient reason for him to butcher hundreds of them?

He might well do it on orders, fair enough! But how could he do it all the same, irrespective of any sophism, for nobody else was coming behind; apart from himself there was no one to enforce the order. Obviously he must have sworn an oath at some point (perhaps in childhood) to carry out anything his superiors ordered, and that was indeed what he was carrying out even if it were a mortal sin, and even if it could never be checked. It is not good to lace one's oath of loyalty in another's hands because a lot of things can happen (the other might go mad, for instance), and who can tell what it might commit one to later on. Woe betide any people which constructs its fate on a sense of duty. It may conquer the world in double-quick time, but then again, then again that same people might be beaten to a pulp just as rapidly!

We were standing at the edge of the ditch, backs to the road, a regular line of phizzes like at some parade, and every one of us was looking intently at the same distant point. My horse's forelock, when it tossed up its head and as it nodded in general, however, fell precisely in my desired line of sight, so it continually blocked my view. On that account I stood up in the saddle to be able to see as much as I could, as a result of which the bend in the road appeared precisely between my horse's ears. That was where I saw the German coming and going, with the dog sniffing around—between a pair of now recumbent, then again pricked-up horse's ears, and that aroused in me vague suspicions, distant associations. It struck me that my shaggy-coated, half-breed horse, a product of some mésalliance, preferred to break his halter rather than freeze whereas the German's pedigree shepherd dog would rather have frozen to death than tear off his leash. It occurred to me that the intelligent-looking young German had no doubt been trained to obey, been brought up to be disciplined, in just the same way as he had trained the dog. Exploiting the noblest virtues of the race (reliability, keeping one's word, a sense of honour) and straight away taking unfair advantage of them with crafty and brutal means, the insurmountable cramps of drilling and terror had no doubt also accustomed him to discipline; he had been brought up to give absolute obedience to the point that it was now a veritable symbol of keeping one's word—and where that leads. That is why he murdered the captives just as readily as they proceeded in front of him instead of scattering to the winds and laughing in his face (after all, nothing worse than death could befall them). That was why he served his dishonourable task with honour even though he could just as well entrust it to the night, the wind and the dreadful cold: it would never come to light. The German got on his motorbike, the exhaust wafted out sparse puffs of haze; a sharp whistle ordered the dog to take its

place beside him, and as they sat there, one in the saddle, the other on the pulpit, they bowled along in such splendid harmony that it was hard to distinguish which was the German and which the dog.

Those were the thoughts and associations which passed through my mind there, by the ditch, as I shuddered at the distant scene, yet still standing up in the saddle lest I miss anything. I recollect clearly that two or three trains of thought were present in my mind—successively but all the same concurrently, with a slight time lapse, one might say the conjectures relating to the German's conduct, and somehow that made the scene itself become replicated, as if over and over again it were starting again from the beginning. Once more the tragedy of the dark-coated figure flickered before my eyes, again and again, as on some kind of screen or in some *nouveau roman*. Then the repetitions came to an end, the screen switched off, leaving me (glancing from the corner of my eyes) to finally cast a look at my companions. They were craning in their saddles just like me, gazing intently at that certain distant point just like me; nothing, not so much as a twitch disturbed the military uniformity of the line. I switched glances back and forth more than a few times, looking now (above my horse's two ears) at the speedily receding German, then at the rigidified cavalry detachment around me until, all of a sudden (midway between them as it were) I discerned a further ghostly connection. Why did the German kill? For all that he was a rational animal, why had he butchered the laggers so irrationally? Why was he undertaking an executioner's job when he could so easily look aside, there being now nobody coming behind him? I glanced all along the valley, along the troop, and the realisation struck me, as if a light were unexpectedly going on in my head! We were coming!

The last. We were the very last in the routed army. After us there was no one else. After him, on the other hand, came us, and if we overtook him during the day, by the night we would again be left trailing him. The German did have witnesses: he could not be merciful. He carried out his orders for exactly the same reason as every soldier always carried out orders. It was not discipline, not duty, not even obedience but, first and foremost, *fear* which drove him to carry out the executions: we were compelling him by our mere presence! He was just as afraid of us as his captives were of him. He was saving his own skin just as the captives were saving theirs. Because everyone fears someone, because someone is afraid of everyone, because this whole wretched earth is in the hold, the grip, of a universal terror, and woe betide anyone who attempts to pass judgement in case in the end he signs his own death warrant.

I am not claiming that I thought literally all this through at the time as it is only now, in the wake of more than thirty years of quiet brooding about it that I have been able to formulate it in the way I am doing here, but even back then some kind of aversion (in which there was a good measure of self–accusation), a kind of unbearably sickening nausea and disgust got the upper hand on me.

There I was, standing among my comrades in arms at the top of the hill, with the rattle of the submachine gun still fresh in my ears, standing in a line of cavalry facing a tragedy which was unfolding in the distance, and I was shaking with fury from head to toe. The German then roared away, and at a fast gallop we cut across the bend so as not to have to pass by the victim.

The next day I myself had no idea what to be prepared for. In the morning, before we set off, I withdrew behind the barn and surreptitiously, making as little noise as possible, loaded the magazine of my semi-automatic rifle with cartridges. It was one of those well-tested Karabiner 35s produced by Mauser; an excellent weapon. I rarely missed the target with it. With the magazine loaded, I carefully checked that the safety catch was on: if anyone had asked why I did that I could only have said: "The world is a dangerous place these days," "better so" and "to meet any eventuality."

We glimpsed the ghost march straight away at the edge of the next village. There can have been ten or twelve of them: there was now a surrounding double ring of surplus guards around them in a tight, compact quadrangle to escort their steps. The nightmarish rectangle moved ahead, tottered on with painful slowness in the mist along the spans of the fallen telegraph wires of the telegraph poles dressed in their rime decoration, a good mile away from us. That meant, it was futile their having marched the whole night long, without a rest, they were incapable of catching up with our horses another time, I reflected. Today we were going to overtake them for good, and we would never see them again.

At the same moment we also spotted the German. He was sitting, smoking a cigarette, on the saddle of his motorbike, which was idling on a bend of the road; his dog was displaying itself, stock still, on the pulpit. As I write this down now, looking back hard into the past, I am myself astounded how alien he was still at that time, and how much more familiar he has become since then even though in the meantime I have never seen him again, not even once. As we trotted past in front of him he smiled at us, and greeted us with an eloquent hand gesture. At that point I peeled off from the far side of the column. I gave my horse the short rein to pull it back and painstakingly, casually slipped off the strap of my rifle as if I were preparing to fall behind in order to do my business. That was a commonplace scene so it could not have hit the eye as anything out of the ordinary, especially not in the morning, as not everyone (and not always if it comes to that) was willing to ride a horse all day long sitting in his own mess. In the end I managed to peel off the weapon, but I did not dismount from the horse as might have been expected but took a seat as firmly as I could and as soon as the third troop had passed and the field in front of me was free, from twelve feet coolly, openly shot the German with the dog in the head. I recalled how not so long before we had dispatched the exhausted East Prussians, and before that the farmyard porkers: I aimed there, right

between the eyes. I saw his head shattered into smithereens, almost exploded, in that combat helmet. I don't know what happened after that, I did not wait to see because I galloped back to the deserted village just as fast as my dear horse would carry me, ahead of the speedily advancing army which by now was at times almost snapping at our heels. I looked back just once from the edge of the village: no one was following.

That's not true; that is not how it was. I planned it in my head ten, a hundred times over, spent long hours fantasising about it (in the saddle by day and on a school floor or hay in a stable at night), but I never dared to carry it out. In reality, whimpering with fear, my eyes cast downward, I rode past the German with the dog just like the others did; in reality, it was with blushes and a heavy heart that I overtook the few ghosts in their eternally sombre, closed rectangle just like the others did. For a good while I rode on with my eyes shut, not even looking back so as never to see them again. And to see them forever. ❧

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

Zoltán Ötvös

Natural Science Research: Changing Priorities

In November 2011 the World Science Forum (WSF) was, for the fifth time, hosted by Hungary. First summoned in 2003 in Budapest as an event initiated by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, UNESCO and ICSU, the International Council of Science, in the frame of the UNESCO World Science Day for Peace and Development (10 November) it was a follow up of the 1999 World Conference on Science held in Budapest. Further World Science Forums were held, as envisaged, every other year in Budapest, Hungary, in 2005, 2007 and 2009.

The 2009 event was attended by 2,000 visitors from all parts of the world. Speakers included the editors of *Nature* and *Science,* the two most important scientific journals in the world, and the Nobel laureate scientists Werner Arber and Ahmed Zewail. Among those present were the Chairman of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Director General of UNESCO.

The title of the 2011 World Science Forum was "The Changing Landscape of Science: Challenges and Opportunities" and the list of participants was just as long and distinguished.

The purpose of the event was to create a framework for responsible common thinking for research scientists, science policy managers, decision-makers and other influential persons of the scientific great powers, and to introduce new scientific fields, defining their social, environmental, economic and cultural significance. Here, as at many international events, the changing role of science was examined, with such rising superpowers of science and technology emerging as Brazil, China, India, Korea and Singapore. New scientific disciplines and new research topics have come to the fore and highly significant changes are occurring very rapidly in certain areas.

Hotly debated subjects and such disciplines as stem cell research and synthetic biology, can no longer be ignored. Topics such as genetically modified crops divide the scientific community. WSF decided to cover this latter, highly sensitive topic by inviting countries to future forums that have experience in the production and

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usage of genetically modified organisms. Another subject was the new crisis-ridden global environment and the need to determine what kind of knowledge is required to overcome it and to avoid similar crises in the future.

According to the leading science policy experts at the Forum, it must be made clear to the public that science is an essential part of our lives. In the absence of up to date science and technology able to tackle challenges, ever newer social and economic problems are bound to emerge, indeed life on earth may be endangered. Scientific results, however, cannot simply be lifted off a peg. Investments are needed, and now, to achieve results which can be appreciated only decades later.

Hungary tends to perceive herself as a scientific great power and, indeed, a few first-class minds have achieved international fame. Hungary, however, is not on the map as having a decisive role in global science and the future does not look too promising either. Higher education, which has switched to the mass production of graduates, shows itself less and less suitable for the discovery and nurturing of talent. Nor does Hungary devote sufficient resources to R&D; consequently, for the best minds, it is a logical choice to move their careers to one of the Western institutions, involving less hassle and greater financial rewards. Finland has been the only country so far that has succeeded in overcoming the shortage of new young scientists, something prevalent in Europe and America, due to a lack of finances and the dramatically diminishing quality of teaching almost everywhere.

Quality secondary and higher education is needed, which brings out the best even in the less talented, and provides all necessary help for talents to fulfil their potential. For the most able in Hungary, well-equipped university and Academy institutions and industrial research establishments should create the opportunity for further progress as there are numerous signs that Hungary has reached the limits of its potentialities as regards international competitiveness, or rather has already exceeded them.

Despite the fact that each year the state allots significant sums (at least in relation to what is feasible in Hungary) in support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences under whose umbrella most institutions operate, scientists are confronted by serious cutbacks, the number of institutes is being reduced and the network itself requires renewal. In 2011 the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was allotted 35.9 billion forints (120 million euros) funding by the state budget; the planned income is 14.4 billion forints (48 million euros). In 2011, 12.2 billion forints (40.6 million euros) goes to the research institutes in mathematics and the natural sciences, 7.5 billion forints (25 million euros) to those in the life sciences, and 4.8 billion forints (16 million euros) to those in the social sciences. 2.3 billion forints (7.6 million euros) goes to fees payed to academicians. Corresponding members (66) receive 353,000 forints (1200 euro), full members (288) 455,000 forints (1500 euro) per month before tax. One billion forints (3.3 million euros) is spent in support of the research institutes' applications for EU and domestic funding; of much greater importance are the 5.43 billion forints used by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA) to fund basic research.

According to figures made public at the May 2011 general assembly, the

capital of the Academy amounts to 86.6 billion forints (289 million euros). At first sight this appears to be a large sum; what makes it less impressive, however, is that only 16.4 per cent of the machines and instruments parks of the natural science research institutes is new and in several research institutes this figure has fallen below ten per cent. In other words, the great majority of the equipment is out of date. There has been little chance in the past decade or two to renew larger research equipment, which makes it difficult for Hungarian scientists to hold their own in keen international competition. The Academy cannot do much to change this situation relying on its own resources, nor does the system of competing for grants really provide for the planned development of the domestic research infrastructure. The Academy is faced with an impossible task also as regards the renewal of its buildings. A great many of its institutes are housed in old buildings, some of them historic monuments, which increases maintenance costs. A further relevant fact is that in Hungary there are only 4.5 scientists for every 1000 in employment, while this number is higher than 10 in fifteen member states of the EU, and in Finland it is around twenty.

The amalgamation of the research institutes, planned for early 2012, serves the better utilisation of resources. This is to be decided on at the extraordinary general assembly convened for the beginning of December 2011. After the amalgamation, there will be 15 research institutes instead of the current 38. The 500 million forints thus saved will be devoted to improving the competitiveness of Hungarian science. But how can a country be competitive if it is a growing problem that fewer and fewer young people choose the technological sciences as a career? This is, of course, a worldwide phenomenon; even in the developed countries interest in natural science training has significantly declined.

Young people today are no less talented and capable than earlier generations were. The problem lies in their prior studies, their standards of learning, and in frequent references to natural science subjects as something to be afraid of and shunned. Changes spanning the whole educational system are needed so that Hungary can hold its own in scientific, intellectual, cultural and educational competition in Europe and in the world. As József Pálinkás, the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, who in May 2011 was re-elected for a further three years, emphasized on several occasions, the institutional conditions must be changed so that research can become an attractive career.

The Academy's network of institutions was established on the Soviet model. It is not customary for academies in the West to maintain a research network.(The German Max Planck Institutes operate as independent non-profit entities.) Serving technological progress was the major purpose of research institutes in socialist Hungary. The large number of scientists employed had to produce results that were competitive east of the Iron Curtain, as well as providing substitutes for state-of-the-art western equipment the export of which to socialist countries was prohibited by COCOM regulations. After the socio-political system changed, it is no longer copying and imitation but innovative research that assures survival.

It was with this aim that József Pálinkás launched the Momentum "From Brain Drain to Brain Gain" Programme in

2009. Within its framework five research teams were formed in 2009 and seven in 2010. A hundred applications were submitted in response to the 2011 competition of which sixteen were successful. Winners of the Programme are to receive funds for establishing their own internationally competitive research teams. For the first time this year, ladies —and straight away three—were successful. The maximum sum obtainable is 60 million forints (200,000 euros) yearly, which the scientist receives for five years. This year the Academy is allotting 1.1 billion forints (3.6 million euros) to this programme, which includes payments due for earlier competitions.

A novelty as regards the competition this year is that the Academy extended the Momentum Programme to include university institutes. Another change is that those applying to head research teams can compete in one of two categories, depending on their age. In one category, applications were expected from those aged between 30 and 40, at the beginning of their careers and doing independent research, and in the other category from those between 35 and 45, who were already pursuing successful independent research with outstanding achievements in the international field. Some of the successful return to Hungary, others, thanks to better working conditions and more generous resources ensured by the grants do not move abroad. It has been a problem for the research centres for years now that far more graduates gain PhDs than they can provide employment for. Those who do not get jobs generally move abroad. The situation would be different if—as is customary in more developed countries—industry could employ scientists with such qualifications.

The list published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in July 2011 gives much less welcome news. Fifty-four Academy research teams will in the 2012–2016 period receive altogether 1457 million forints (4.9 million euros) funding—which means that twenty-five fewer teams will continue to carry on work than in the cycle ending in 2011. In 2006, it still led to a huge outcry that the number of funded research teams for the period 2007–2011 declined from 171 to 79, now no-one has protested against this further reduction. The situation has further deteriorated as in the 2007–2011 period 1750 million forints was available for this purpose but in the 2012–2016 period there is almost 300 million forints (one million euro) less.

By way of contrast, the EU is increasing resources devoted to research and innovation. It was announced, also in the middle of July 2011, that Brussels was providing seven billion euros for innovation in 2012. Of this, one billion euros are earmarked to be competed for by small and medium-sized enterprises. Basic research will receive 1.6 billion euros. Ten thousand researchers can hope for funding from the more than 900 million euros allocated to Marie Curie Fellowships. More than 650 million euros goes to health services research, and 1.3 million euros to info-communications. 174,000 new jobs are hoped for in the short term financed by this larger than ever volume of funding.

Despite the difficulties, Hungarian scientists are successful at EU competitions. So far, with more than 800 competition wins, they have obtained resources for scientific purposes worth 160 million euros. This places Hungary 15–16th among the 27 member states. Among the twelve countries which

became members of the EU in 2004 or later, however, we are generally in second place, in some disciplines we do even better than the much larger Poland.

It is worth looking at the longer-term tendencies as well. In 2001, 140 billion forints was devoted in Hungary to R&D; by last year the corresponding figure was 310.2 billion, more than double. The latter figure is 1.14 per cent of GDP; not something we can boast about, since the EU average is 1.8 per cent. According to a report made public by the Central Statistical Office in the middle of 2010, in that year there were approximately 54,000 people in 3,000 research establishments engaged in research and development; of this number, 35,700 were scientists and the others support staff. The R&D activity varied from sector to sector: the activity of the enterprise section continued to strengthen, though less dynamically than in previous years, while that of the research institutes and research in higher education declined somewhat. Between 2001 and 2010 enterprises trebled their expenditure on research—from 49 billion to 147 billion. The sum of foreign resources also increased dynamically—from 12.8 billion to 38.3 billion. In the same period the expansion of state funding was barely 55 per cent: in 2001 75.4 billion were available for this purpose, 122 billion in 2010. Despite all the difficulties, however, Hungarian scientists are still holding their own. Their competitiveness is demonstrated by the fact that in research leading to discoveries Hungary is performing well: on the list of the 2009 World Economic Forum Hungary was placed 24th out of 134 countries, and in the same year there was a Hungarian scientific result that was ranked among the ten most significant in the world.

A few examples of outstanding achievement: Professor László Lovász, who has pocketed all the major mathematical honours in the world, among them the Kioto Prize in 2010, was for years the chairman of the International Mathematical Union. Another mathematician, Endre Szemerédi, won the Rolf Schock Prize in 2008 awarded by the the Swedish Academy (which also awards the Nobel Prize) and was awarded the 2008 Leroy P. Steele Prize by the American Mathematical Society, one of the highest distinctions in mathematics for a seminal contribution to research.

Hungarian particle and nuclear physicists are also performing well. According to a compilation in sciencewatch com in the past decade, their articles are, on average, the most often cited. Between 1 January 2000 and 30 June 2010, American researchers published 6,250 papers on high-energy particle collisions, and Hungarians only 194. However, there were 7,750 references in other articles to these 194 papers—that is, forty references per article—American papers were referred to in other articles thirteen times on average. These 194 articles were not enough to place Hungary among the twenty most published countries during this period, but the Hungarian particle physicists, with their on average forty mentions, nonetheless count among the most productive scientists in the world.

The above data clearly shows that Hungarian particle physicists make maximum use of the minimal budgetary support provided for them. Owing to the scarcity of resources, they do not participate in all spheres of research, but show good judgment in selecting key subjects. About fifty physicists work in this field,

commuting between Hungary and abroad; most of them naturally spend much of the time in CERN in Geneva.

When a new international scientific prize is founded, and in particular if the amount of the award is not much less than a Nobel Prize, who receives it first, whose name will act as a "hallmark" in the future, carries an important message. It is therefore of great significance that in the spring of 2011 the Danish The Brain Prize was awarded to three Hungarian neuroscientists: Tamás Freund, Director of the Experimental Medical Research Institute in Budapest, György Buzsáki, who works in New Jersey, and Peter Somogyi from Oxford, the latter two are also Hungarian born.

Information processing in the brain is one of the greatest challenges for modern neuroscience. The hippocampus, located in the medial temporal lobe of the brain, plays an essential role in the formation of memories of location in space and of personal experience. In recent years there has been great progress in demonstrating that the human hippocampus is involved in personal memory formation, and in describing the functional properties of nerve cells in the hippocampus in animals. Although the work of these three neuroscientists has been aimed at a basic understanding of the brain function, it illuminats the causes and symptoms of a variety of clinical conditions, from epilepsy and Parkinson's disease to anxiety and dementia.

The successes do not however extend to the Nobel Prize. The last time a Hungarian who was a Hungarian citizen at the time the prize was awarded received a Nobel Prize in the natural sciences was in 1943. He was György Hevesy, who received the Nobel Prize in chemistry. György Oláh, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1994, was born in Budapest, and graduated from the University of Technology here. He, however, also settled in the United States after 1956. That same year, János Harsányi, also a US citizen, was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics. In 2004, the Nobel Prize in chemistry was won by Avram Hershko, an Israeli citizen born in Karcag in Hungary as Ferenc Herskó. A small partial success is that the work of an American physicist, who in 2011 won one of the Nobel Prizes in physics was helped with essential calculations by the Hungarian physicist Tamás Budavári.

Academy President József Pálinkás has for years expressed his conviction that in a stable and predictable financing system it is necessary to separate moneys for discoveries and inventions, targeted research and technical development. Support for basic research aimed at discoveries must be increased. This growth must be achieved gradually and in order to ensure it, significant investment over several years to produce an immediate renewal of the infrastructure of research is indispensable. The President of the Academy of Sciences will head the Academy until 2014, which gives him the time to achieve his objectives. ❧

László Lovász

Understanding the World through Mathematics

An Interview by Gyula Staar

Gyula Staar: *You served as president of the International Mathematical Union (IMU) between 2006 and 2010. Have there been any major issues in the last few years which the IMU paid special attention to?*

László Lovász: What was perhaps the biggest and most important job to be done was the organization of the 26th IMU Congress held in India in the summer of 2010; my presidency ended soon after that. IMU considers the support of developing countries in the Third World as most important. This is a complicated and multilayered undertaking, since the developing countries themselves are also diverse. For example India, with its several-thousand-year-old culture, has a rich mathematical tradition. Today they boast of many great

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László Lovász

is Director of the Institute of Mathematics of Eötvös Loránd University Budapest. Between 2006–10 he was president of the International Mathematical Union. The proof of the weak perfect graph conjecture as well as the Kneser graph conjecture established his reputation. In 1979 he solved the Shannon problem, a key problem in information theory. His relevant article was the mathematics publication of the year. His name is also associated with the Lovász local lemma and the Lovász basis reduction algorithm. He has pioneered the dissemination of algorithmic thinking and is one of the leading figures in theoretical computer science. His famous collection of exercises covers almost the whole field of discrete mathematics. He has taught at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, the University of Szeged, Princeton University, Yale University and worked at Microsoft. Awards he won include the Wolf Prize, the Kioto Prize, the Széchenyi Grand Prize and the Bolyai Prize. The interview published here is the edited version of what appeared in the volume of interviews, 12 Scientists on the 21st Century *(Budapest, 2009).*

Gyula Staar

is Editor of Természet Világa, *a monthly journal of science founded in 1869. He published numerous volumes of interviews with outstanding scientists.*

mathematicians and mathematical research centres which whould be considered of high standard anywhere in the world. Cambodia is in the same category, but it is a country where intellectuals were exterminated. As a result there are virtually no mathematicians.

Why is it so important to you to introduce mathematical science everywhere in the world?

Because we think it is a worthy task. But there are also rational considerations. Mathematical talent is probably born everywhere at the same rate. Everything depends on whether there exists an environment where it can grow and perfect itself. The results of the International Mathematical Olympiad support this statistically. In a small country every 2–3 years a child is born who will later become a gold medallist. Hundreds of such children are born in China every year; six of them are chosen, who will all win gold medals.

Some of the young Chinese students win gold medals wearing the colours of other countries. Thus Chinese names are often found on the American student team.

That's right. The law of large numbers is at work, along with a culture of hard work and respect for the sciences. One of the objectives of IMU is to further the opportunities of mathematical talent in every part of the world as much as we can. We finance schools and organize conferences in Third World countries, we invite their mathematicians to our events. Today the government in Cambodia at least supports our endeavours. Vietnam is rapidly developing too: they have some really good mathematicians.

It is said that our new electronic world gives rise to a number of problems that have to be solved.

The integration of the new ways of electronic publication into the already established system of research gives us plenty to think about. How should we archive articles that are published in electronic journals? Can articles published on the Internet be considered as publications of full value? These are questions we must focus on, because the electronic journals are gradually taking over from traditional printed papers. Countries subscribe to the electronic versions of journals from major publishers and split the costs proportionally among universities and research centres which use the service.

Doesn't electronic publication loosen the system of controls which works well for printed journals?

The quality electronic journals are peer-refereed just the same. Moreover the better ones use typography to make reading their articles easier, and pay attention to how they are displayed. This sort of development is inevitable. Just look at the huge quantity of papers piled up on my desk! I haven't got a hope

of reading them all in a month. Skimming is easier on a computer screen, but I wouldn't read a book on a screen. Articles are different. Suppose I have a look at 10-20 articles in a given time. I read all the abstracts, I browse through three of the articles. Finally I print one of them out, and read it thoroughly.

Mathematicians don't really like the impact factor which is based on citations. Why don't they?

IMU prepared some material about this based on citations calculated from the data for the previous 3 years. First, it emerged that the peak of citation comes after 10 years: that is when somebody is the most cited. Knowing this, there is no way you can meaningfully measure impact by concentrating on the first three years of a citation graph which peaks at 10 years.

Do mathematicians read more slowly?

They work more slowly. Of course there are articles to which we respond quickly. But more time is needed to process longer publications, which use more complex technical instruments. It may be that in time these will turn out to be fundamental studies, which will open up new possibilities and start new processes in mathematical research. They will become part of monographs and universally known, and from then on we no longer refer to the original article, but to the more accessible books or simply to the universally known result, since everybody knows who did the original research. But this way the number of citations does not grow.

If I mention "theory of relativity"

... everybody knows you are thinking of Albert Einstein; we are referring to him. Let me give you an example. At the latest convention of the International Mathematical Union, Fields-medallist Terence Tao based his opening presentation on a theorem by Endre Szemerédi, and called it a result of the 20th century which had a great impact. Well, Endre Szemerédi provided his by now famous proof in 1975. He published his results in a 100-page article, which was very hard to read, so at the beginning not many people referred to it.

However in 2008 he was given the Leroy P. Steel award of the American Mathematical Society in the "Seminal Contribution to Research" category.

More than 30 years after publication! Today one of these results is simply mentioned as "the regularity lemma" in every article published about this subject. Every intelligent mathematician knows that it is associated with Endre Szemerédi. Doesn't this mean more than any citation index?

What kinds of changes have taken place in mathematics and in mathematical research in the last 50 years?

In the middle of the 20th century most mathematical research shifted in a truly abstract direction. There was a clear separation between applied mathematics and theoretical, what was called pure mathematics. There was the risk that mathematics would be divided into fields and everyone would only struggle with his own problems. Nowadays this is less true.

Has the appearance of computers played a role in this?

Yes, the appearance of computers has given momentum to applied mathematics, and it has changed research work. Today the work of a mathematician is concentrated less and less on calculation; it focuses more on creative thinking. Computers carry out the calculations instead of the mathematician. The task of the mathematician is to find effective algorithms and to develop theories for them. Moreover the theory of algorithms is also getting cleaner; they have to be applied to really large problems. We can no longer say that "we'll see which algorithm works best".

Because there isn't enough time.

There isn't, so we have to carefully consider what kind of algorithm we should use. Because it does matter whether it takes 2n or n2 steps to get the solution to a problem. Another striking change compared to the middle of the 20th century is that the number of mathematicians has multiplied.

Are mathematicians really so well-paid?

It's not that. It's the work itself that makes the profession so attractive. I recently read a survey conducted by an American company in which they asked people how satisfied they were with their work. The top three professions were: first, mathematicians; second, actuaries; third, statisticians. It's a fact that the number of mathematicians has increased greatly and their influence has also increased somewhat because of this. But it's still dwarfed by the number of chemists and physicians.

The increase in the number of researchers has various consequences. In recent decades the number of mathematical publications has increased exponentially. Any individual knows a smaller and smaller fraction of this world; the whole system is harder and harder to assess and manage. The unity of mathematics can only be preserved if we find a way to make the enormous volume of new results coherent and easy to process. Summarising, surveys and expository works may be a solution. Today more and more conferences do not focus on reviewing interim technical results: instead, they invite speakers to give introductory, summary lectures about a given subject. Many conferences are now preceded by a one-week training course for Ph.D. students in a given subject, so that later they will better understand the big summary presentations which review the

major results. Without such preparation one might lose one's way in the sea of problems.

Another change is that in mathematics too, teamwork has come to the fore, and is getting steadily more important. This is no surprise for Hungarians who know Paul Erdős. During his journey around the world Erdős introduced and popularised a multitude of problems suitable for collective thinking. His genius lay in his ability to see and formulate the open questions awaiting an answer. He published a large number of articles with co-authors, even decades ago. Nowadays researchers travel a lot more, organize more conferences and can meet each other more often. Communication through the Internet also helps collective work. It's needed, because our area of science has become more and more difficult and technical.

I suppose mathematics will never reach the "level" of particle physics, where the number of authors of a publication sometimes exceeds a hundred.

No, actual cooperation in mathematics means the collaboration of at most 3–4 people. At the same time, even when working in small groups it is necessary to withdraw for days and process the information and ideas given by the others, and to compare these with your own thoughts.

But surely there are still loners in mathematics: people who try to conquer single-handed what are often hopelessly difficult problems.

Of course there are. I need only mention two really big achievements: Andrew Wiles, proving Fermat's Last Theorem and Perelman and the Poincaré Conjecture. These were the results of individual work, but they were exceptions. Most mathematicians are sometimes obliged to submit proposals for research, which are expected to involve several people. This system encourages teamwork. I myself like teamwork, where we move forward by pooling our knowledge.

Which recognition in mathematics do you think had the greatest effect in recent decades?

One very influential recognition is that algorithms lead to really exciting problems, which can be examined with mathematical methods.

The other important development is that, in quick succession, differing fields of mathematics have begun to think in terms of the probability method. An article published by Pál Erdős in the 1950s is often regarded as the starting point. It became clear that probability offers algorithms which cannot be achieved by other means. For example, the RSA system running on our computers, which provides security. When we type in "https": we open a security coding which operates by number theory methods. This security coding is an algorithm which implements the public key encryption. As one

step of this we have to decide if a number is a prime number or not. This also happens with the help of the probability.

The Szemerédi lemma also belongs here. It was formulated in 1976, and states that if a graph is very large, then parts of it are inevitably random-looking. This isn't a disadvantage: on the contrary, probability brings a lot of good things with it. Based on the law of large numbers many properties of such structures can be predicted because we know that these structures are random. This new principle has become one of our effective instruments. For example, if we examine a tremendously large structure we can get an idea about its properties: if we separate out certain parts of it, which are random, we can describe the remaining structure. Since then many areas have applied this method, where the examined structure is produced as the combination of a random part and a simple, highly structured part.

For a long time one of the open questions of classic mathematics was whether there are arbitrarily long arithmetic progressions amongst the prime numbers. 3, 5, 7 is a three-element arithmetic progression of prime numbers. If one thinks a bit, and experiments a bit, it is easy to find a four-element progression, and with a bit more patience a five-element one too. With the help of high-performance computers we have reached the point where we can find roughly thirty-element arithmetic progressions of prime numbers. Some years ago Terence Tao, whom I mentioned earlier, and Ben Green proved that prime numbers can form arbitrarily long arithmetic progressions.

They proved this by using ideas in the article Szemerédi published in 1976: they achieved their goal by dividing the problem into a random part and a part that can be described well. So the impact of Szemerédi's article reached its peak after 30 years. We could say that randomness as a phenomenon has become an important part of contemporary mathematics, even in areas where there is no trace of it: after all, the progression of prime numbers that I have just mentioned is completely deterministic and defined.

The increasing number of fields of contemporary mathematics which are successfully applied to practical problems should also be mentioned. Once the phrase "applied mathematics" was more or less synonymous with the theory of differential equations; perhaps with numerical analysis and statistics included. The explosive expansion of scientific research in the second half of the 20th century made the deeper and more varied use of mathematics necessary, which reaches far beyond the methods of classic analysis. Discrete mathematics, algorithmic theory, complexity theory and computer science, which are considered an essential part of mathematics today, play increasingly important roles. A number of discrete optimisation problems have emerged: thus we have to find the optimal structure of a graph, or the maximal flow in a network, and so on.

In your opinion what kinds of priorities are beginning to emerge in 21st-century mathematics? To what area of mathematics would you direct the attention of your son, who is studying to become a mathematician?

Let's rather say, to which area I'd like to, if I could... Of course, I understand the question. I think the greatest challenge of the future is the understanding of life with the help of the methods of mathematics.

Are you referring to the organization of life?

Yes. There are several different levels. We can look for the possibility of using mathematics on the level of evolution and on the level of a single life form, like a bacterium, or on the level of the workings of the human body. The system which we'd like to understand consists of interacting discrete elements: cells, neurons, maybe animals or plants. Their interaction is described by a complex network, which can be expressed in mathematical terms as a giant graph. Then new questions arise: how does this network work, what are its structures?

Until now traditional applied mathematics only considered such physical movements and chemical reactions as could be described using differential equations. Now these are combined with the interactions that can be described in the simplest way as a graph.

For example there is the genome, containing all of the reproductive information of an organism. The human genome has been mapped, with great effort. A multitude of questions arise as a result. How much of its content is actually information, how much redundancy is there, how much of it is random, and what part of it is not? These are fundamental questions, which are similar to the problems studied in computer science: how much information is there in a dataset, can it be further compressed, and by how much? There is no space in the genetic code for all the connections among all the brain cells. It could not be coded into it. Some of the connections are random, created during use. It would be great to understand all this, and to describe it using the methods of mathematics. This is an immense challenge for mathematicians.

We managed to understand the physical world through mathematics: we described the motion of the planets 400 years ago; later we described the properties of electrostatic fields. Quantum physics allowed us to understand chemical reactions... We don't really understand biology yet. I strongly believe that mathematics will be just as successful there too; it's only a matter of time.

There are several major unsolved problems in mathematics. Which of them would you most like to see solved? Or I could put it this way: if you could travel 100 years forward in time, what is the first question you would ask the mathematicians of the future?

I think what I'd most like to know is whether "P equals PN" is true or false.

That is one of the fundamental questions of algorithmic theory, isn't it? Could you clarify it a bit?

Many mathematical problems have a structure which makes it easy to check if the answer is right or not. It is difficult to tell if a very large number is a prime or not. But if we find one of its proper divisors, verifying that it is indeed a divisor (and so the original number is not a prime) is easy. These problems are called NP, which stands for Nondeterministic Polynomial. The question is: if a problem has a structure like this, does it follow that the answer can be effectively calculated. In other words, can we find the object whose correctness can be easily verified? This is the problem class P. P=NP would mean that an effective algorithm can be created for this search.

Surely you have some idea of what mathematicians 100 years from now would say about this?

That there is no such algorithm. In other words P doesn't equal NP. But to prove this, we'd need a much deeper knowledge about how algorithms work. I have an analogy for this. Imagine that Archimedes is talking to a friend, who asks whether regular heptagons can be constructed with the help of a ruler and compass. "I don't think so," answers Archimedes. "How could we prove that?" asks his friend. "I have no idea," says the master. Indeed, in 200 B.C. they couldn't even imagine proving such a negative result. The notion of real numbers, the concept of field extension, and Galois Theory had to be developed about 2,000 years later, for us to be able to prove that a regular heptagon cannot be constructed. The independent development of mathematics brought forth the structure, with which this problem too could be easily proved. I don't think it will take another 2,000 years to solve the P=NP problem. Nowadays mathematics is developing much faster: a mathematical theory that can answer this question may emerge more easily. It won't take even 100 years.

I assume many great mathematicians struggle with this difficult problem. In today's world this might not be the best way to further their careers. Others, solving smaller problems in succession, get a lot further.

Sadly, this is true.

Does working on hopeless problems pay?

I don't think anybody could give a definitive answer to that; after all, the research style mostly depends on the individual. There are mathematicians who take the risk that maybe they won't be able to solve the problem, even after five years of intensive work. There are people with really exceptional work styles, for example the American three: Neil Robertson, P. D. Seymour and

Robin Thomas (a Canadian, a Briton and a Czech). They get money from somewhere, so they don't have to lecture, and they meet every day for 6 months: from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. they write their ideas and deductions on a blackboard, they get into the analysis of complicated details and disjunctions which would scare away most people. Working alone, you might lose the thread among the many details, but they achieved great success cooperating in this way. They used it to solve some really old, really difficult problems.

When they had achieved their first great success, they set themselves an even bigger goal, the Strong Perfect Graph Conjecture. I talked to one of them a year later. I listened to his lecture, where he told us that they had tried numerous ideas, but not one of them worked: they only experienced failure. Even so, they persevered and continued to work. Two years later they proved the perfect graph conjecture. Towards the end another American joined them, Maria Chudnovsky, a Russian-born Israeli lady, who added an important idea: they reached their goal after that.

I personally don't really like these long-drawn-out proofs which need a lot of calculation. When I get to the 6th of 7th case distinction, I've already forgotten the first.

We digressed a bit from the P=NP problem. Is there any other problem which you'd really like to see solved?

There is another one: the Riemann hypothesis, which is a truly classic mathematical problem. There are so many points in mathematics connected with it that it would really be exciting to know if it can be solved or not.

Have many people worked on it?

Yes. For more than 100 years so many smart people have been trying to solve it, and have made so much partial progress, that it's a bit frightening. If somebody begins to work on something like this, they are taking the risk that, in the last 120 years, somebody has already thought of their first 50 ideas.

Will this problem be solved in our lifetime?

It's not impossible. Nobody expected that unyielding Fermat Theorem to be suddenly proved. Originally Fermat's Last Theorem was a self-contained question, all on its own. Can the sum of two nth powers be an nth power, for n larger than 2? That's it! What if you have an exception? Then they linked this problem to mainstream mathematics. We have understood quadratic curves since the Greek Apollonius; but on the other hand cubic curves are still a mystery. The Austrian Gerhard Frey (with the help of others) managed to reduce the Fermat problem to a problem concerning cubic, so-called elliptic curves. This helped Wiles to find the answer.

By the way, the best computer security codes are based on elliptic curves. When the cryptographers at Microsoft were talking to each other, if you listened to their conversation, you could hardly distinguish it (or at least the words they used) from what Wiles said.

Do you think it important to make mathematical results, mathematical thinking, accessible to the general public?

Of course!

Why?

Why is it important? It's important in today's democratic society that more and more people should have an idea about what the different sciences do. Nobody should think that exact sciences are unnecessary. But there's much more to it than that. Everybody should be taught to think more rationally. More people should be encouraged to think in a more precise, mathematical way. When we listen to the news or read an analysis in the paper, we should be able to evaluate it, to really understand the numbers. If somebody says to me that last year 100 people died of some horrible disease worldwide, then I shouldn't be afraid that I might get infected too; the probability is too small. When they talk about exponential growth, I should know what it means. When politicians talk and try to reason on television, I like to find quantitative thinking and numerical data behind what they say. When they say "a lot of money", that in itself means nothing. We should continuously refine our intellects. We should start as soon as possible. By the way, most children like puzzles that make them think, and they like chess too. We can build on this: we should make better use of it. Most sciences clearly have better opportunities than mathematics for reaching out to the public, since they produce more spectacular, tangible results. It's hard to talk about mathematics in an attention-grabbing way, but it isn't impossible and we should strive to do it; it is important.

Perhaps it's a rhetorical question, since you are a successful mathematician, but looking back to your high-school years, do you think you chose the right path?

I chose well: mathematics was the right way for me. I'm satisfied with my profession; with myself, not so much. I haven't been able to carry out most of my plans. But no one who has goals in science should ever be satisfied. ❧

Peter Vergo

The Lost Rider*

Hungarian Art and Music in the Early Twentieth Century

I am very sorry that my Hungarian is not yet fluent enough to be able to deliver the whole of this evening's lecture in your beautiful language—so beautiful that surely it must have been created specifically in order for poetry to be written. But I am also conscious of my own relative lack of knowledge. After all, what can I, an English art historian, tell you about Hungarian art—your own art? What can I add that might contribute to your own knowledge or enjoyment or understanding? Certainly, I shall not be presenting you with new *facts*—although perhaps that doesn't matter. The German philosopher Nietzsche once wrote that "facts" are the very things that don't exist. What *do* exist, Nietzsche claimed, are "interpretations". It is a great honour for me to have the opportunity of sharing with you some of these interpretations of my own. Not only that: I also hope to be able to share something of my own sense of joy and wonder that I experienced on first discovering Hungarian art of the early twentieth century.

For me, the past two or three years have seen the beginning of a passionate love affair with early modern Hungarian painting. Only recently have I begun

* ■ Title of a poem written in 1914 following the outbreak of the Great War by Endre Ady, the first and greatest pioneer of modernism in Hungarian poetry.

Peter Vergo

is one of Britain's leading experts on modern German and Austrian art. His books include The New Museology *(1989);* Art in Vienna 1898–1918 *(1994);* That Divine Order *(2005) and* The Music of Painting *(2010). Exhibitions he curated include Abstraction: Towards a New Art (Tate, London, 1980); Vienna 1900 (Edinburgh Festival, 1983) and Emil Nolde (Whitechapel Art Gallery and Arken, Copenhagen, 1995–96). He will curate an exhibition on the art of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the Royal Academy in London in 2014.*

The above text is the edited transcript of a lecture delivered at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, on 28 July 2011, on the occasion of the exhibition The Eight.

fully to appreciate and delight in the beauty and expressive power of this art—the same qualities that are so wonderfully demonstrated in the exhibition of the Eight on show at the Museum of Fine Arts. But what is also striking about this art is its variety. Among the Eight, Róbert Berény at once emerges as one of the most powerful figures. In some paintings, he was obviously influenced by French art (*Woman with Glass,* 1905); but in other works, Berény is also capable of speaking with a distinctively Hungarian voice (*Self-Portrait with Top Hat,* 1907*). And other artists, not members of the group of Eight, also came as a great discovery for me: Vilmos Perlrott Csaba, for example, whose early work was also influenced by Parisian painting but who, in his later career, struck out in a much more independent, and to my eyes remarkable, direction (*Park*, 1916, Plate 4).

Fig. 1. János Vaszary: Balance, *1912*

By contrast, some artists, contemporaries of the Eight, also had the courage to create "unbeautiful" paintings, sacrificing conventional beauty for expressive power: I think of Egry's astonishing painting *Clown* (1911), now in the Rippl-Rónai Museum in Kaposvár. But for me, perhaps the greatest discovery was the work of János Vaszary: in his painting *Balance* (1912, Fig. 1.) he seems determined to compete with Raphael and Michelangelo and some of the greatest masters of the Italian Renaissance. And no one could fail to be struck by the vitality and vivid quality of Hungarian graphic art of this period, especially the work of Mihály Bíró: his famous poster advertising the Budapest Zoological Garden, for example, as well as his later, politically engaged works such as his famous 1919 poster (*1 May 1919*).

* ■ See colour plate 7 in no. 183 of *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Autumn 2006 of "Challenging the Canon" by Ilona Sármány-Parsons, pp. 88–99.

But if I am right about the quality of this art, why is it not better known outside of Hungary? One of my tasks at present is to help prepare an exhibition for the Royal Academy in London, which will survey art in Central Europe during the years around 1914. I talked, of course, to museum colleagues in Vienna about borrowing works by famous and popular artists like Klimt and Schiele and Kokoschka. For some of our Viennese friends, that was clearly rather a boring idea. From their perspective, by now there have been far too many exhibitions of precisely those artists, too many "Vienna 1900" shows. They only started to become interested and intrigued when I explained that we would not be restricted to Austrian art, but would also show the Hungarian and Czech and Polish art of that period; and I mentioned some of the Hungarian artists we wanted to include. But when I said "probably, these names will be familiar to you", they shook their heads. "No", said one of my Austrian colleagues. "Such an exhibition would be very interesting for us, because we don't know this material either!"

Unfortunately, the same is true in my own country. There *have* been exhibitions of modern Hungarian painting, including prestige venues like the Barbican Art Gallery and the Hayward Gallery in London. Even so, their impact on the exhibition-going public has been only limited, and names like Berény, Kernstok and Tihanyi remain almost unknown in Britain. But why should this be the case?

One reason is, I think, a general lack of historical awareness of what writers sometimes refer to as "Central Europe". This, surely, is just one of the many consequences of 50 years of communism. As early as 1946, Winston Churchill famously remarked that an iron curtain had descended across the continent of Europe, dividing East from West. Since then, we have tended to think and write about "Western Europe" and "Eastern Europe"—but much less often about what was once so important: "Central Europe". And while British school-children all learn about Sarajevo and about "the spark that ignited World War I", only very rarely do they have any accurate sense of the military or political or even geographical background to that event, nor any clear mental picture of what, at that time, the map of Europe actually looked like.

But without adequate knowledge of the historical context, inevitably we risk losing any vivid sense of Central European identity, by which I also mean *cultural* identity. I want to argue that, in any definition of Central European culture of that period, Hungary played and continues to play a vital role. Not only that: Hungarian art in fact *shares* many of the essential, defining characteristics of European modernism, as it emerged during the early years of the twentieth century. As an example, let me single out just two aspects of early modern Hungarian art which are especially striking in this respect, particularly if we compare what was then happening in Hungary with developments elsewhere.

The first of these characteristics is the use of religious subject-matter for new, expressive purposes. Of course, the representation of religious themes

in art is far from new: themes such as *Madonna and Child* or *The Crucifixion* are commonplace in Western painting of all periods. But, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, many of these subjects appear to be no longer straightforward depictions, nor even allegories. Instead, they become emotionally charged in profound and often disturbing ways. In particular, images of suffering seem to take on a new relevance: subjects like the *Flagellation, Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, or *Christ Crucified.* As early as 1891, the Austrian writer Hermann Bahr had declared in prophetic language in his 1891 essay, "The Conquest of Naturalism":

> Our age is pervaded by a wild torment, and the pain has now become unbearable. Everyone cries out for a saviour, and crucified figures are everywhere.

Sometimes, these images appear to symbolize the suffering of mankind in general. But they may also allude to the suffering of the artist and his alienation from society. In some cases, what claim to be images of Saint Sebastian or Christ with the wound in his side are also, recognizably, self-portraits. We can see this clearly in the Austrian art of this period: for example, in the 1910 design for a poster held in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest that Kokoschka produced for *Der Sturm.* Kokoschka evidently considered this particular image to be highly effective, since he re-used it two years later for a poster advertising one of his own lectures. And his contemporary Max Oppenheimer was savagely accused of undisguised plagiarism when he used a very similar image for a poster advertising an exhibition of his own works in Munich in 1911.

Nor are these kinds of rather shocking images confined to Austrian art. In Czech painting, we discover something very similar in the works of the still little-known artist Jan Autengruber. Significantly, before the war Autengruber produced landscapes and portraits that are highly accomplished and aesthetically pleasing but, for the most part, psychologically unremarkable. Only from 1915 onwards did he start to create images that are disturbing even today: a fettered Saint Sebastian, drawn in a pose that speaks unequivocally of cruelty and bondage, or blood-soaked crucifixions that look almost as if they were created in a kind of agonized, sadistic frenzy.

And in Hungarian art? Again, something strange appears to be happening as regards the use of traditional religious imagery. Conventional subjects now appear charged with a new, highly subjective or emotive meaning. Evidently, János Kmetty's work of the years around 1912 is pervaded by his consciousness of the work of El Greco, then being rediscovered by modern art historians and collectors. Both Kmetty's *Ascension* (1913) and Dezső Czigány's *Burial of a Child* (1910)** might be considered traditional subjects, but they acquire new layers

** ■ See colour plate 6 in no. 199 of *The Hungarian Quarterly,* Autumn 2010 of "The Eight and the European Avant-Garde" by Krisztina Passuth, pp. 114–124.

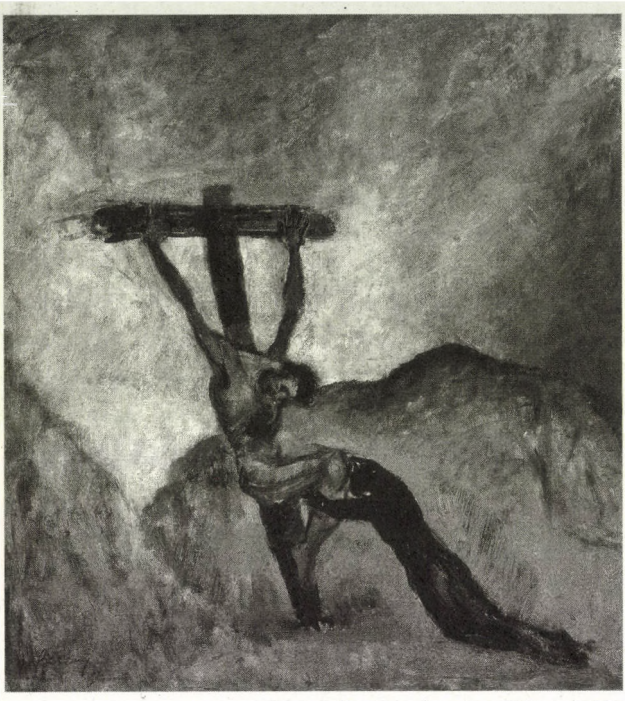

Fig. 2. Róbert Berény: Crucifixion, *1912*

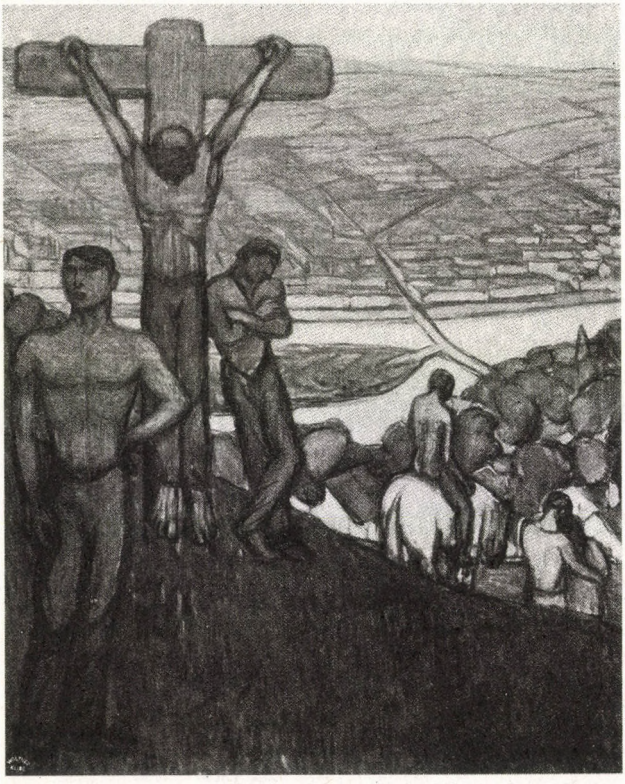

Fig. 3. József Egry: Symbol, *around 1912 (lost)*

of meaning, especially the unbearable grief that pervades Czigány's *Burial.*

Berény's *Crucifixion* (1912, Fig. 2), on the other hand, is a distinctly non-traditional treatment of a traditional subject: no group of mourners, no Roman soldiers, only a single, distraught figure who grasps Christ's legs in what looks like utter despair. Stranger still is Egry's *Symbol* (around 1912, Fig. 3), which seems to depict the crucifixion not of Christ but of a modern worker, while a naked horseman rides away downhill, indifferent to the tragedy taking place behind him. Is it really a crucified figure—or just a carved representation, a hillside calvary? We cannot tell, and various layers of meaning seem to conflict with one another, the dividing lines between different possible meanings becoming blurred and confused in the process.

In some later works, the problem of alternative meanings becomes even more acute. Consider, for example, Vaszary's *Mourning over a Dead Body* (1918–20, Plate 2). Is this the traditional religious subject of mourning over the body of the dead Christ, even though Vaszary himself does not provide us with enough visual information to positively identify any of the figures as Christ, or the Magdalene, or the Virgin

Mary? Is it, perhaps, simply a universal image of sorrow and suffering? Or does it show relatives or comrades bent over the body of a dead soldier? Is it, like Autengruber's later works, also a response to the horrors of war? I find the comparison between Autengruber and Vaszary fascinating: in my mind's eye, I see Vaszary's great *Crucifixion* from around 1920 in the Hungarian National Gallery (Plate 1) juxtaposed with the kinds of images by Autengruber that have been mentioned earlier. But the more important point is that, in all these respects, Hungarian art of this period is clearly rooted in that same emotional and intellectual milieu that characterizes much of modern Central European art at this time.

A second characteristic of Hungarian art of this period involved artists exploring beyond the boundaries of their own art forms. This tendency manifested itself in different ways. In some cases, artists merely looked over the garden wall to see what their neighbours were doing on the other side—their neighbours being, of course, poets and playwrights and musicians. This, too, was one of the defining features of European modernism more generally. In his 1912 book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* the Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky identified this tendency as part of an ongoing search for new sources of inspiration:

> From this effort there arises of its own accord the natural consequence—the comparison of one's own elements with those of other arts. In this case, the richest lessons are to be learned from music, [which] has for several centuries been the art that uses its resources not to represent natural appearances but to express the inner life of the artist.

But some artists didn't just look over the wall; they jumped over it and created works in other media—media in which, strictly speaking, they had little or no formal training. This, like the depiction of religious subject-matter, is not a new phenomenon. Earlier artists also experimented with a variety of artistic forms: one thinks of the sonnets of Michelangelo, for example, or the poems and paintings of William Blake. But in the early twentieth century, the phenomenon of the "doubly talented" artist became more widespread than at any earlier time. Kandinsky not only painted but also wrote poems and composed strange, abstract stage plays with "synaesthetic" titles such as *Yellow Sound.* The Viennese artist Oskar Kokoschka, in addition to painting, also wrote plays and poems. The poster for his play *Murderer Hope of Women* (1909) shows the artist, once again, re-using religious imagery in a new and decidedly shocking context. Here, the man—the principal character in the play—lies dead in the lap of the woman who has killed him. But, in the positioning of the figures and the overall composition, this gruesome image also calls immediately to mind a Pietà: Christ lying dead in the lap of his mother, as depicted by numerous artists from the Renaissance onwards,

including both Raphael and Michelangelo. And the composer Arnold Schoenberg not only wrote new, increasingly radical music; he also produced paintings and stage designs including profoundly disturbing images of a seemingly naked woman alone, in a wood, in the middle of the night: the setting for his 1909 psycho-drama *Erwartung.*

This "crossing the boundaries" is equally characteristic of Hungarian art of this period. Like their counterparts in Western Europe, Hungarian artists looked closely, even intensely at other art forms, including both poetry and music. It is a well-known fact in Hungary—but not nearly so well-known among international art historians—that the first exhibition of the Eight was not in fact called "The Eight" but "New Pictures". In this way, they made it clear that they considered their works to be the visual counterpart of Endre Ady's 1906 *New Poems.* Music, too, played an important part in the consciousness of the Eight. Especially significant is the fact that they, an association of painters, should have organized one of the most important concerts of the "new music", given at the National Salon in Budapest on 18 May 1911. Here, surrounded by the paintings of the Eight, visitors to the exhibition could hear works by Bartók, Kodály and Leó Weiner—that is, those composers most closely associated with the foundation of the New Hungarian Music Society.

Presenting a concert of "new" music in the context of an art exhibition was, in itself, nothing new, either in Hungary or elsewhere in Europe. As early as 1894, Claude Debussy's String Quartet had its first performance in Brussels at an exhibition organized by an artists' society calling itself *La Libre Esthétique.* And, as Zoltán Rockenbauer has pointed out, a year before the exhibition of the Eight, works by Bartók and Debussy also featured in a series of recitals that accompanied the International Impressionist Exhibition at the Művészház—The House of Modern Art—in Budapest. What *was* new was the insistence that the "new" art and the "new" music were united not by any formal similarity, but rather by an *inner* identity. In his essay in the *Catalogue* of the Eight, Mr Rockenbauer uses the expression "intellectual comrades", and I think that is exactly right. Intellectually, and also spiritually, artists, musicians and poets of this new avant-garde were convinced that they shared the same goals and ambitions. The question which art form was best suited to expressing their ideas and ideals—poetry or painting or music—did not matter.

This aesthetic belief was very similar to that professed by the Blue Rider artists in Munich, with Kandinsky at their head. One explicit aim of the *Blue Rider Almanac,* published one year later in May 1912, was to make clear what Kandinsky called the "identity of inner striving" that united all modern art, regardless of "merely external form". These similarities were evidently recognized at the time. The Budapest periodical *Nyugat* (West) not only gave prominent coverage to art exhibitions. It also reviewed the new music of

Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School and even the "musical supplement" of the *Blue Rider Almanac,* in which Schoenberg's music had appeared.

Musical subject-matter also occurs frequently in paintings produced by the Eight: for example, Ödön Márffy's portrait of the cellist Jenő Kerpely (around 1913, Plate 5), who had performed in that epoch-making recital of the new music in May 1911. And one member of the group, Róbert Berény, was deeply interested and also proficient in music. He became friends with Hungarian composers Béla Bartók and Leó Weiner and painted their portraits (Plate 3). He himself was also perfectly capable of composing a string quartet movement according to the strict principles of sonata form—a piece that is very far from being just a curiosity, but which is a highly accomplished piece of music in its own right.

Sadly, Berény's music is now largely forgotten, whereas Bartók, of course, soon became recognized as a prominent figure, someone whose contribution was central to the shaping of modern Hungarian art. Much later, in February 1918, a special number of Lajos Kassák's periodical *Ma* paid tribute to Bartók and to the leading position he occupied within the Hungarian avant-garde. That famous issue of *Ma* contained not only articles about the composer's life and work but also poems written in his honour, alongside a reproduction of Berény's portrait of the composer.

That later period really goes beyond the scope of the present discussion, a period in which Kassák played a vital role in bringing together not just artists and poets and musicians but also intellectuals and political activists within the pages of *Ma*. But, returning for a moment to Bartók, a comparison with the painters of the Eight appears significant in another, very important sense. From start to finish, Bartók's individual voice remains distinctively, unmistakably Hungarian. For a time, his music seemed new enough and challenging enough to startle and even alienate audiences; yet it was also deeply rooted in the soil of his homeland. Without the vital inspiration of Hungarian and Romanian folk melody, it would have been very different. On the other hand, the question whether or not we are struck by the Hungarianness of Bartók's music is, in a sense, irrelevant, since his works have long since taken their rightful place on the stage of world music. The Hungarianness of his artist-contemporaries is just as important a feature of their art; yet international recognition still mostly escapes them. Hasn't the time now come for these wonderful painters to take their proper place on the stage of world art? Or, to make the same point in other words: isn't it time for the "Lost Rider" of Hungarian painting to find his way back home: back into our consciousness of the mainstream of modern European art, as it developed during the early years of the twentieth century? ❧

Gyula Kemény

How 'Fauve' Are the Hungarian Fauves?

Synthesizing Experiments, Alternative Tendencies, 1906–1914

The term "fauve" ("wild" in French) describes the aesthetic sources for the work of a diverse group of Hungarian painters who shuttled between Hungary and Paris at the beginning of the 20th century and were open to experimentation. Their divergent experiments, which otherwise lack cohesion, were only subsequently organized under the appellation *fauve*. This label, which had described their French contemporaries one hundred years earlier, was applied to the Hungarian painters by art historians on the occasion of the first comprehensive exhibition in 2006, in Budapest. The significant difference is that when French painters showed their work at the Salon d'Autumne, this label was a stigma; now posterity interprets it as a seal of quality.

To present a comprehensive and characteristic picture of the essence of the Hungarian Fauve style, it is worth commencing our analysis by comparing it to French Fauvism, pointing out the similarities and significant differences in everything that falls under the category of painterly devices such as colour, contours and line, treatment of space, and perspective. Mine is not an art historical approach. Much rather it endeavours to shed light upon problem-solving experiments from the aspect of painterly practice. In doing so, I will choose the most telling compositions to illustrate these problems, not necessarily the most significant ones.[1]

Gyula Kemény

is a restorer and art collector. He had a triple role in the 2006 retrospective of the Hungarian Fauves at the Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest as restorer, contributor to the catalogue and one of the private collectors who lent works. He repeated this triple role at the centenary exhibition of The Eight in 2010 at the Janus Pannonius Museum in Pécs and in 2011 at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest.

Experiments away from tone to colour

The young painters visiting Paris, still looking for direction, did not immediately endeavour to adopt the finished results of their French colleagues. They were more intrigued by the road leading there, the process of maturation, and the new view of painting. They reached back to the same sources and tried to walk the same path as their French models. In part, they identified with the ideas found in Matisse's early experimental pictures that dissected the problems of tone and colour.

Fig. 1. Henry Matisse: Mme Matisse in a Japanese Robe, *1901*

A good example of this is Béla Czóbel. He was struck by Matisse's so-called proto-fauve[2] experiments, which preceded Fauvism. Czóbel, too, sought a similar path to free himself from conventional Hungarian tone painting, in a breakthrough from tone to colour. In a 1901 work entitled *Mme Matisse in a Japanese Robe*, Matisse draws the interior motifs into the homogeneous dark tones of the transparent field. This puritan drawing conforms to the flat surface of the canvas and eliminates the illusion of deep space (Fig. 1). In contrast to the monochrome background, the colour composition of the figure assumes even greater emphasis. Béla Czóbel's 1905 composition *Little Girl Standing in Front of a Bed,* with the combination of the seated girl emphasized through colour and the contoured elements delineating the form of the room, demonstrates a similar painterly solution (Plate 6).

Another early Matisse work that deals with the problem of colour and tone is his 1902 *Studio under the Eaves,* which depicts an attic submerged in a lightless brown tone. The gloomy atmosphere of the inner space is counterbalanced by the fresh sight of a richly blooming tree, seen in the bright exterior world through the open window—picture within a picture—framed by the background. Matisse eventually viewed this piece as a significant step from tone to colours.

Matisse would later return time and time again to this theme of harmony between inner and outer space. In his 1908 composition *The Dessert: Harmony in Red* (Fig. 2, on p. 80), he arranges the interior and an extract from the

Fig. 2. Henry Matisse: The Dessert: Harmony in Red, *1908*

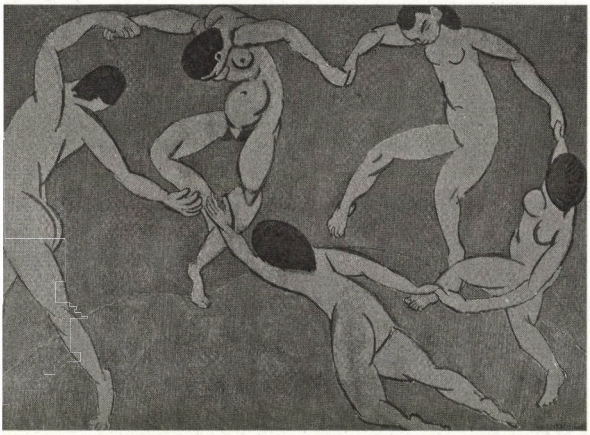

Fig. 3. Henry Matisse: Dance *(II), 1909–10*

exterior beside each other on the picture surface in a decorative, ornamental fabric. In this period, Matisse had already banished the convention of interpreting deep space, which we find in *Studio Under the Eaves*. Here harmony in colour contrast replaces monochrome tone contrasts.

When Tibor Boromisza, in 1912, depicts the world in a similar manner in *Romanian Threshers* (Plate 7) it is as though he is summarizing the lessons of these two painterly periods. He also depicts two contrasting worlds, in the same manner as Matisse's attic studio, however, in its emphatic flatness, Boromisza's painting is analogous to *The Dessert: Harmony in Red.* Behind the foreground scene—drawn in contour, in a monochrome brown tone—the emblematic Nagybánya motif is presented in a frame of intense colours: the Calvinist church with a red roof and a blue row of hills. The flat expanses of exterior and interior sliding along each other—as well as the contours thrown on the canvas, expressing the wide arching momentum of the threshers' activity—evoke a stylized, drawn world reminiscent of Japanese woodcuts. (We also find a reminiscence of Eastern cultures in the extensive pattern that adorns *The Dessert: Harmony in Red*.) At the same time, the movements of the five threshing workers relate it to the pictorial choreography in the variations of Matisse's *Dance* of 1909 (Fig. 3) and 1910. In his synthesis of style, Boromisza makes tone and colour equal elements in the composition. Locked in a mutually polemical relationship, they give each other significance and, according to the concept, can form a whole only together. In the same way, he expresses an organic symbiosis between genres through technical means. The scene in the foreground, drawn in charcoal, dovetails harmoniously with the colourful landscape, *painted* in tempera.

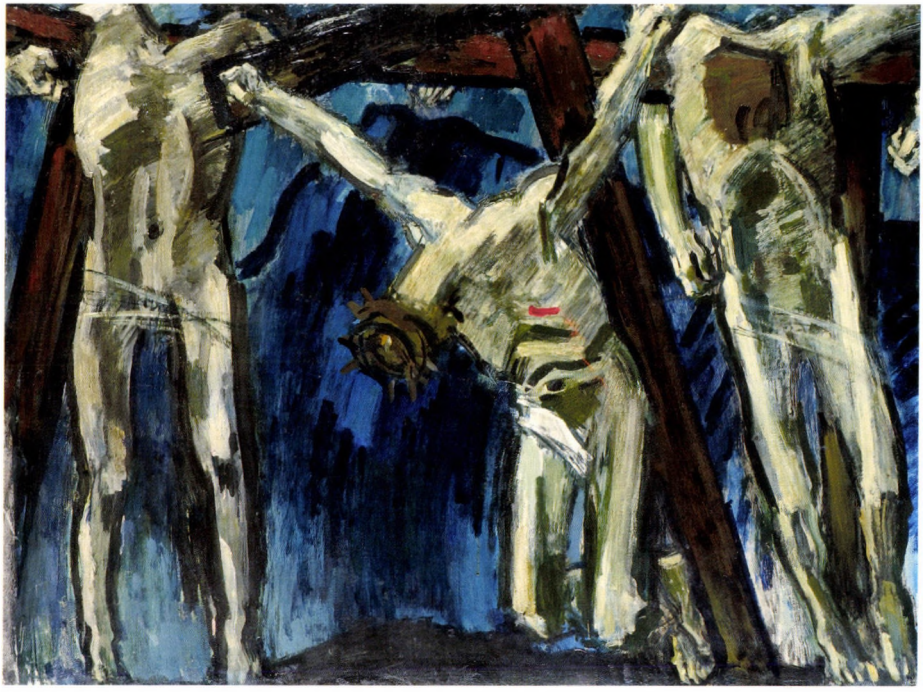

Plate 1. János Vaszary: *Crucifixion,* around 1920
Oil on canvas, 100.4 x 134.5 cm.
Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

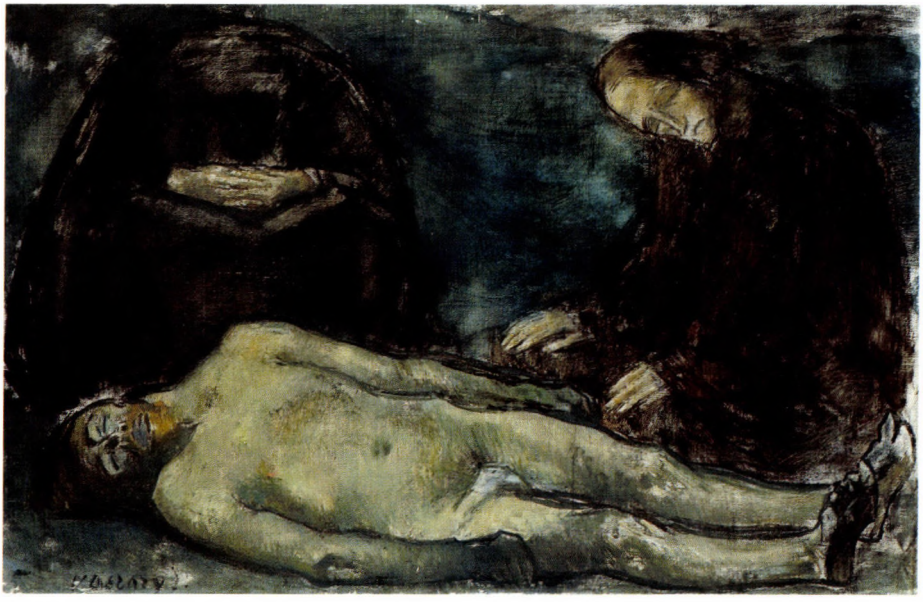

Plate 2. János Vaszary: *Mourning over a Dead Body,* around 1918–20
Oil on canvas, 70 x 109 cm.
Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

Plate 3. Róbert Berény: *Portrait of Leó Weiner,* 1911
Oil on canvas, 63 × 78.5 cm
Portrait Gallery of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Plate 4. Vilmos Perlrott Csaba: *Park,* 1916
Oil on canvas, 101 × 124 cm.
Kieselbach Collection

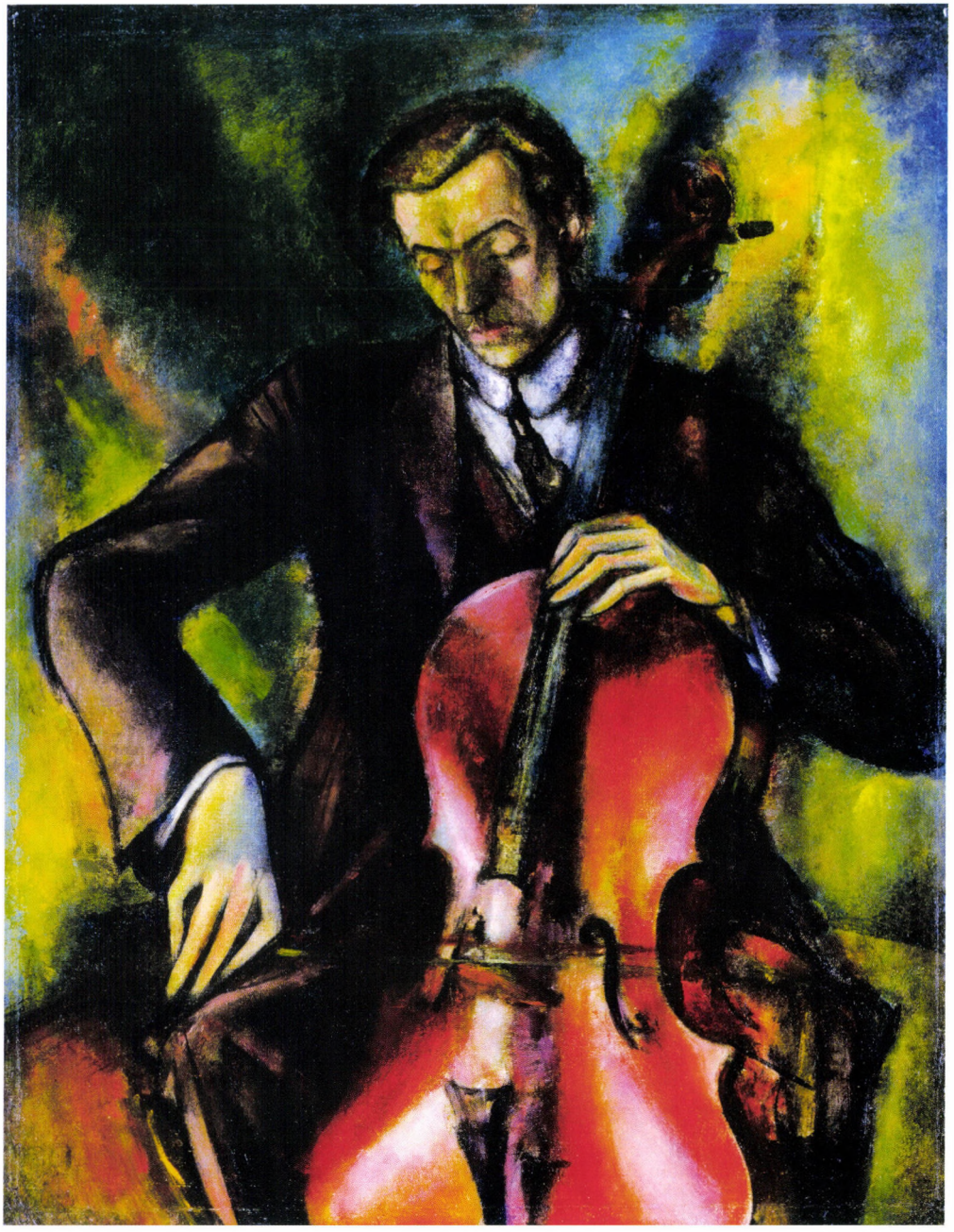

Plate 5. Ödön Márffy: *Portrait of Jenő Kerpely,* around 1913
Oil on canvas, 127 × 97.5 cm.
Private Collection

Plate 6. Béla Czóbel: *Little Girl Standing in front of a Bed,* 1905
Oil on canvas, 90 × 150 cm.
Private Collection

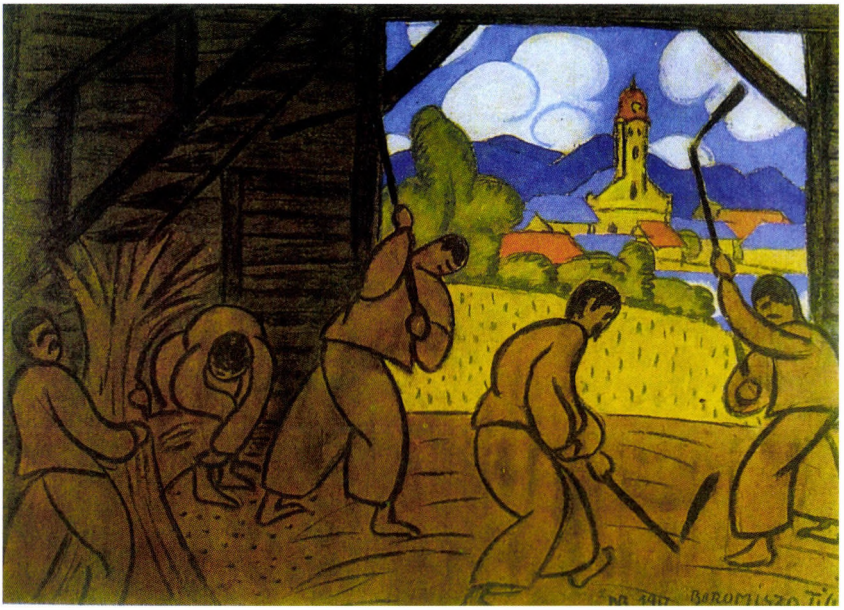

Plate 7. Tibor Boromisza: *Romanian Threshers,* 1912
Oil on canvas, 168.6 × 119 cm.
Private Collection

Plate 8. Sándor Ziffer: *Baross Square,* 1907
Oil on canvas, 88 × 89 cm.
Private Collection

Plate 9. Sándor Ziffer: *Woman in an Armchair,* 1908
Oil on canvas, 80 × 80 cm.
Private Collection

Plate 10.
Vilmos Perlrott Csaba:
Park, 1908
Oil on canvas, 60 × 66 cm.
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and
H. Kirk Brown, Ill. Denver, USA

Plate 11. Béla Czóbel:
Man with a Straw Hat,
around 1907
Oil on canvas, 58 × 60 cm.
Ursula and Stanley Johnson
Family Collection

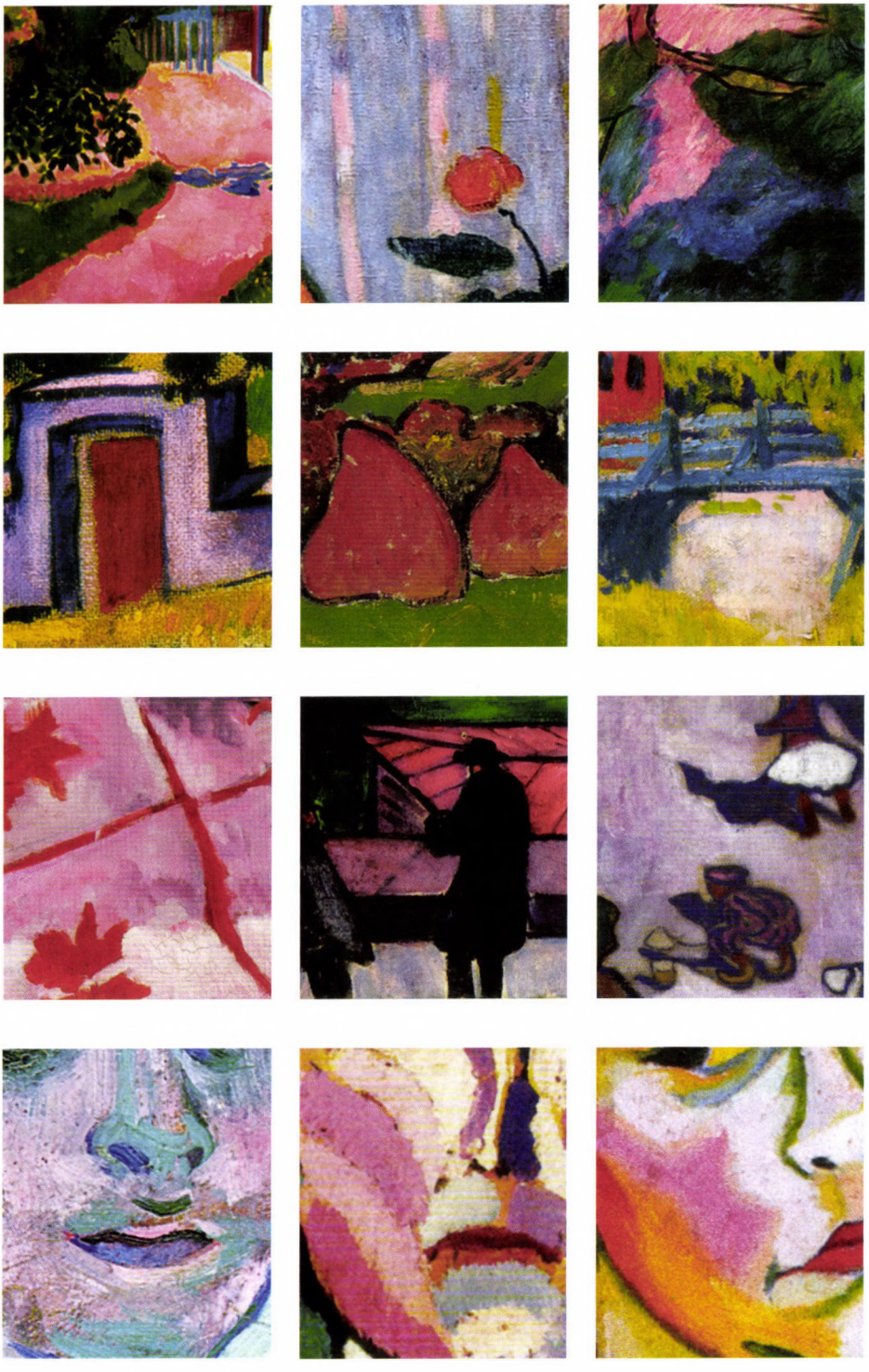

Plate 12. Pink: The Hungarian Jolly Joker Colour

Plate 13. Róbert Berény: *Reclining Nude,* 1907
Oil on canvas, 33 × 44 cm.
Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

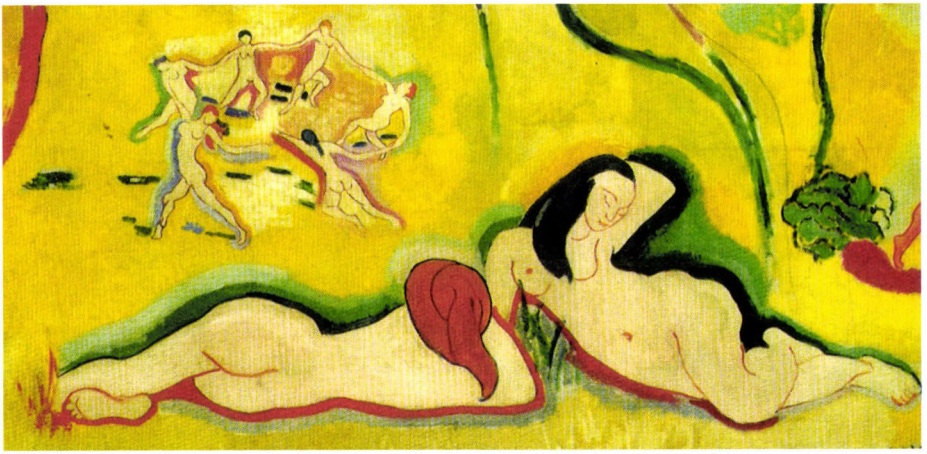

Plate 14. Henri Matisse: *Le bonheur de vivre,* 1905–1906 (Detail)
Oil on canvas, 174 × 241 cm.
Barnes Collection, Lower Merion Township, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Divided colour, 'breathing' colour texture or the loosening of the surface

Similar to French Fauvism, in the case of the Hungarian Fauves as well, the periods associated with this trend can be classified by two distinct painting methods: colour patches arranged in a breezy, light, airy tapestry followed by the reign of vast, uninterrupted, decorative colour surfaces. During the first period of Fauvism, in an arbitrary interpretation of the Divisionist heritage, painters applied irregularly scattered, isolated patches of colour to the canvas. In addition to or around the clean patches—sometimes dispersed more densely, sometimes more loosely—they let the white of the base canvas show through. This functions as a "halo of colour atoms", ensuring the bright power of the colour. Viewed from an appropriate distance, the colour patches dispersed nearby each other on the canvas create new colours. This, in combination with the "halos", lends the picture a pulsating or shuddering effect, and an overall radiant brightness. There is an extraordinary difference in the application of this method between the Divisionists, who handle it in an impersonal and ascetic way, and the Fauves, who use the technique in a more free and spontaneous manner. This discrepancy is most clearly demonstrated in the matter of divided colour, an effect where painters create the optical impression of a hue by breaking it up into its component colours. Whereas Divisionists strived for a balanced order in complementary colour relations (yellow–violet or orange–blue) and the natural chromatic harmony of light, Fauves rather concentrated on *intensifying colour*. In their distribution of neighbouring colour patches, they used contrasts to raise tension to the extreme.

This is admirably illustrated by the well-isolated warm and cool colour gradations in André Derain's London pictures from 1905. In Derain's painting, in the interactive game of distant green-red, blue-yellow, purple-orange dots of paint and patches of colour, a large, extensive, virgin, "passive" white surface from the base becomes active. It shines forth, becoming an integral part of the colour fabric. In accordance with the notion of divided colour, this white is none other than the optical origin of the complementary colour pairs in the picture. The energy generated among the colour polarities intensifies the white to the force of a blinding light. "Multi-coloured patches on the white canvas, one patch, one line, a drop of clean colour: this is all they need to express the brutality of sunshine."[3]

Among the Hungarian painters, the first to use the technique of loose colour patches applied in the Fauve spirit was Béla Czóbel. He was followed by Sándor Ziffer. This technique of loosely applied colour patches, however, is not completely identical with the French method of seeing, and this is not by chance. French painters were schooled in Impressionist light painting, while Hungarian art has no Impressionist traditions based on divided colour. In the

French technique of divided colour, next to the coloured brushstrokes, the overlooked base white serves as a colour halo; it makes the accompanying hue radiant and fills it with light. On the canvas of the Hungarians, in the loosened-up texture of the solid, homogeneous colour surface, the base white (or other colour) patches shine through like "breathing pores" in the colour texture. These momentary intervals between the brushstrokes fill the surface with life. Thus, while the radiant, light-bearing character of colours is reinforced by the French; in the case of the Hungarians, we rather speak of a *breathing colour texture.* This is admirably illustrated by Sándor Ziffer's *Baross Square* cityscapes from 1908 (Plate 8) or József Pechán's 1912 masterpiece entitled *Assembly of Wiseacres.*

In another experiment from 1908, *Woman in an Armchair* (Plate 9), Ziffer combined a loose colour fabric with the Vienna Secessionist's concern for line and a sophisticated Nabis palette. The orange bulk of the woman's dress, traced with Veronese green, is complemented by a purple patch of colour in the fence, resulting in a harmonious effect; and the colour harmony proportions practically illustrate the words of Paul Signac: "Does the knowledge that the proportion 3:2 is harmonious prevent the composer, and that the colour orange forms a triple combination with green and purple prevent the painter from losing himself in his work and affecting his audience?"[4]

We encounter a different method, a loosened-up scheme of patches with spontaneous drawing and painting, in Bertalan Pór's work—namely, his 1906 *Self-Portrait* and 1906 *By the Stone Bridge.* Ödön Márffy's *Colourful Female Nude,* from 1908, shows the same solution Matisse found in his oil sketch *Nu assis,* (1906) in the Barnes Collection.

This method of imitating Neo-Impressionist brushwork also seems to apply to the paintings of the Hungarian Neo-Impressionists, the Neos, members of the short-lived Balaton painters' colony including Tibor Boromisza, Géza Kádár, and Miklós Némethy, as well as the young Béla Balla, who joined them later in Nagybánya (Baia Mare, Romania). Nevertheless, it is ultimately a Nabis-rooted approach that the painting is essentially a flat surface coated with colours applied in a certain order .[5]

This concept was introduced to Hungary through the mediation of Rippl-Rónai, whose Nabis culture of seeing inspired the Neos, too. In their "surface-livening" technique, the play of colour contrasts barely ever breaks up the uniformity of their decorative colour patches. Instead, they use an interrupted handling of the brush to loosen up the homogenous colour fabric—like tiny ripples on a smooth sheet of water—enlivening the surface structure. These rhythmic, divided brushstrokes fill the otherwise uneventful, flat colour patches with vitality.

Projected light and scattered light

We come across different solutions regarding the interpretation and depiction of light in the works of Sándor Ziffer, Vilmos Perlrott Csaba, and Béla Czóbel. In his tight-focus compositions, *Red Gate Entrance* and *Old Bridge in Nagybánya,* both from 1908, Ziffer presents sections of landscapes lit by sunlight where, in the interplay of light and shadow, the masses of decorative colour and form in the elements of the picture preserve their spatial nature in the *projected light.* We encounter this same concentrated, Gauguin-inspired method in Vilmos Perlrott Csaba's compositions *Park* (1908, Plate 10) and *Street in Nagybánya* (1909), where the landscape motif is made up of masses of form and decorative colour masses alike. Here, as in Ziffer's work, in the texture of these pictorial elements, the rhythmic patches of light and shadow organize the composition and fill out its spatiality.

Neither Tibor Boromissza, nor Ödön Márffy, nor Lajos Tihanyi was interested in light-painting based on divided colour, rather in the contrast of homogenous, decorative expanses of colour. The Far East-inspired green–red colour combinations of Van Gogh, which form a contoured decorative surface filled with thick material, fascinated them. Similar stylistic features also appear in Lajos Tihanyi's 1908 *Interior,* Tibor Boromisza's 1910 *Portrait of Uncle Csorba,* and Ödön Márffy's *Green Room* from 1907.

In contrast to Ziffer's and Perlrott Csaba's presentations that *describe* light, Béla Czóbel's concept conforms more closely to French Fauvism. He expresses the ability of light to dissolve and dematerialize the body volume in *Painters Outdoors* (1906) and *Man with a Straw Hat* (circa 1907, Plate 11). In the fabric of loosely assembled colour patches, all the picture elements—the figures and the scenery vibrating in *projected light*—have a consistent, translucent, "dissolved" quality. The objective contents and formal elements taking shape seem to float in the homogenous picture fabric's open structure. Like the French Fauves, who constantly sought *the path that led ever onwards*, opting for a state of perpetual journey instead of arrival at an order bounded by rules, Czóbel did not strive for a *finished* effect. In the course of developing the picture, he expressly avoided all closure. This is an important aspect of the Fauve concept, whereby the artist would always leave open the possibility for the creation of formal elements, dazzling us with the free play of spontaneously formed patches of colour and lines. Hence, the painted mass is imbued with energy and life, and we can directly witness the moment of its "becoming something".

The Hungarian 'jolly joker' colour

Salmon pink, punch, peach blossom, hollyhock, and geranium pink—or the colder variant of these, cyclamen—make up the *tuning fork* of the Neos' palette. Their presence also re-interprets the other colour relationships on the canvas. Since this colour is used freely, irrespective of what it depicts at times,

its appearance is capable of lifting the shades it accompanies from their natural implications. With this colour, the Neos paint sky, earth, trees, water, or figures. Any element of the picture can come to life in it, and as a result, the motifs instantly become re-written elements in the composition. This is where the "jolly joker" function of the colour lies (Plate 12).

This artificial colour is at home laid out over a flat surface. It is unsuitable for expressing any illusion of deep space. As far as its temperature is concerned, it is equidistant from cold and warm tones. Thus, it is able to adapt itself to neighbouring shades and, by forming a decorative texture with them, it spreads the accompanying hues over a two-dimensional field. Within this colour, there exist the most distinct variations—from warm pink to a cold near-purple—which can radiate with different intensity. It is mixed from a maximum of three shades, one of which is white. The tone of the colour depends on the amount of violet and vermilion added to *alizarin krapplack.*

We encounter these flat patches of exceptional, decorative pink spread over a plane first on canvases by Gauguin, as well as in works by the Nabis. The Nabis, however, drew the archetype for this abstract, "universal" basic colour from the palette of primitive, early Renaissance panel paintings, where the pink shade dominated interiors and architectural elements. (A good example of this is the small Sassetta panel, *Saint Thomas Aquinas at Prayer,* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.)

We often encounter distinct variants of pink on Hungarian Fauve and Neo canvases. Nevertheless, while this colour bears symbolic weight in Gauguin's "emotional equivalencies"; among the Fauves it functions as a purely decorative element with no background significance. The Hungarian Fauves and Neos combined these blended pink shades very effectively with cold oxide green and blue, giving their pictures a uniquely cool tuning, and these colour combinations became distinctive features of the Neos' palette. Nearly all of the former members of the Hungarian Fauves and Neos, moving between Paris and Budapest, made this cool-tuned colour assembly their own; and they carried it on their palettes to Nagybánya, Kecskemét, and Nyergesújfalu. Later, the group of painters known as the Eight would exchange this hue, which had remained in fashion for 15–20 years, for dark burgundy, as well as blue and cold shades of green.

Autonomy in the treatment of space

Variations on the Fauve concept of space as presented here cannot be generalized to cover all Fauve painting. Individual artists are just as arbitrary in their treatment of space, and their devices are just as unique, as their use of colour. The following examples illustrate their individual modes of expressing energy and temperament, manifested in the arbitrary handling of space.

In my opinion, the question of space (unlike colour) has been unjustly ignored in the analysis of Fauvism. When Derain, in a letter written from Collioure, declared "a new conception of light consisting of this: the negation of shadow!"[6] it did not amount to a denial of space. He attacked only the imitative, illusory conventions wherein shadow serves the bodily character of objects and the presentation of these in space. If we examine the 1905 work of Derain entitled *Fishermen in Collioure,* it is obvious that we cannot talk about the denial of shadow here. Indeed, the flat patches of colour that join the fishermen's shadows in a sloping direction delineate the composition's diagonal axis. Czóbel's ultramarine patches perform the same role in his 1905 painting *In the Square,* which is related to Derain's work on account of its diagonal compositional order and presentation of space from an elevated point of view. To summarize, in Fauve pictures, shadows are two-dimensional colour patches that do not express plasticity. They are organizing elements of the flat composition, but do not destroy the illusion of space.

In the pictures Derain painted of the banks of the Thames—for example, his 1906 *London Bay*—in the interest of expressing a monumental experience of space, he summarizes the sight in the horizontal and vertical extremes of the same point of view. He depicts the ships close to the distant horizon pushed up high in horizontal profile, while he presents the barges docked in the foreground as though looking down from a high vantage point. By placing these two views beside each other, he evokes the notion of a deep space, radical in its vertical orientation, falling forward.

In Lajos Tihanyi's 1908 canvas *Pont Saint-Michel,* the artist uses the same method as Derain, only in a reverse fashion. He depicts the bridge in the foreground, together with the vehicles passing over it, from a side view, in a horizontal projection. Meanwhile, he raises the section of the river from behind the bridge, together with the entire background, to a vertical plane, so we can see the barges tied up in the distance. Thus, both the blue-coloured bulk of water and the arch of the bridge appearing in the upper left corner become well-proportioned parts of the composition. Following the practice of Cézanne, he omits details that distinguish between distant and close, and, as we have just pointed out, he varies the placement of different points of view. Tihanyi helps unite separate dimensions of space by employing uniformly thick contours. The barges in the background and the arc of the riverbank beside them bear the same sharp black contours as the motifs in the foreground. As a result of the contouring—which lifts all the colour surfaces, so they lie beside one another on the picture surface—we get an intimate view of the two banks of the Seine that one can simply "carry in one's pocket" like a portable toy city. (See drawing and reproduction on Plate 3 of no. 183 of *The HQ*). This is another manifestation of taking possession of a spectacle by condensing it to an intimate scale. Hence, in the case of Derain and Tihanyi as well, the illusion of space is preserved; however, the organizing principle is no longer a linear perspective. The pictorial structure that governs the rotation of spatial planes to the picture's surface,

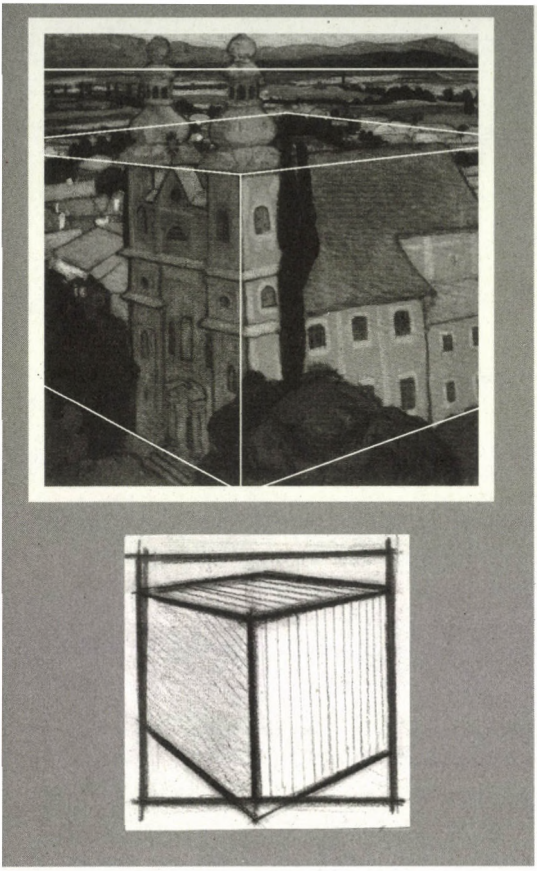

Fig. 4. Sándor Ziffer: View from István Tower, *1908*

as well as their playful arrangement side by side, is mixed and more improvisational. With respect to the ability of the fully-developed ego to perceive a sight and take it into possession, there is virtually no difference between the painter who concentrates the world down to a 55 x 65 cm. canvas and the person who takes in a bite-size Paris, looking down from his "second-floor universe".

We find a further example of the background and the foreground falling forward in Sándor Ziffer's 1908 *View from István Tower* (Fig. 4). In the perception of depth, levels are brought closer to each other by contours of uniform thickness. The organization of space within the composition is very simple, but still tricky. Ziffer paints the Cistercian church in Nagybánya in an orthogonal projection—from the moving point of view of the eye rising in a vertical direction, but sweeping strictly in the horizontal dimension. He does not show the vertical shortening of the building's bulk. Consequently, the church building exerts a more massive and static effect. The building's cubic proportions harmonize with the rectangular picture format. The nucleus of the composition completely fills out its core. This formal arrangement is emphasized by the contours that surround the church and are parallel to the canvas's vertical sides. Starting from the line of the horizon—indicated at the top edge of the picture at the foot of the row of hills—the horizontal level, constituted by a dense texture of lines representing the scenery elements, reaches the spine of the church roof, at which point it seems to tumble over, suddenly descending in a vertical direction. The bulk of the building standing in the foreground dominates the canvas so much that the composition is left without a focal point. As a result, the picture, made up of perpendicular levels, depicts the sight as though it were a spatial construction folded into a cube. The background level makes up the top side of the cube; while the foreground, the immense yellow walls of the church, forms its vertical sides. The conscious selection of a square format also helps him maintain this space-organizing order. In his later periods as a painter, Ziffer adhered with maniacal conviction to the use of a foreground falling steeply forward.

In order to express monumental effects, the Fauves liked to employ a virtual, spherically-spreading visual field, where the motifs of the landscape are placed on a perceptibly bending surface. As a result of this technique, we seem to be in possession of a visual space beyond the frame, embracing the sight as on Raoul Dufy's 1907 *Boats at Martigues* (Fig. 5), where a "fish-eye lens" vision of space with a curving horizon is condensed into the picture frame, creating a tension-filled composition. This is another embodiment of the Fauves' unlimited energy, which lies not only in their use of colour, but also in their subjective view and organization of space.

Fig. 5. Raoul Dufy: Boats at Martigues, *1907*

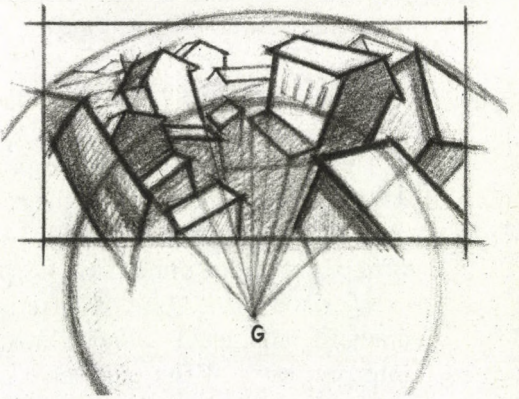

Fig. 6. Sándor Galimberti: St. Raphael *(lost). Three points of perspectives shortening the spherical organization of space*

The conception of space in Sándor Galimberti's *chef d'oeuvre,* the cityscape *St Raphaël* (1912–14, Fig. 6), is related to Dufy's work. It is as if the dynamic spatial system of levels straining against each other, intersecting and chasing each other on the surface, curving in all directions, was organized around the centre of gravity of an imaginary ball. The forceful black contours cordon off the colour patches, which are "smeared on" with sweeping gestures. The consistent and complete realization of this method can be found in Galimberti's work *Amsterdam* from 1914–15. The depiction of the space bending into itself (the motifs of the picture organized in concentric circles) makes it seem as though the artist is capable of capturing the wholeness of the universe within a single frame. On the basis of its formal features, however, this painting is much closer to Cubism than Fauvism. In the *Catalogue* for the 1914 exhibition he shared with Valéria Dénes, Galimberti wrote the following:

> At this new stage in our artistic development, we have striven to refashion nature on the canvas, and we have tried to compress panoramic motifs onto canvases of smaller size. These attempts and endeavours have led us to the present day—that is, our objective to leave behind anything superfluous, to emphasize what is significant, and to increase this emphasis to the extreme. We do not want literature in painting. For us, the topic is secondary. We are attempting to solve the problems emerging before us with complete freedom lacking any restrictions. For instance, [...] painting the objects that fall beyond the horizon into the picture.

Format

The Hungarian Fauves, especially the Neos, showed a predilection for a square picture format (Plates 8–11). Like single-line contouring, this, too, was a legacy of Vienna Secession style. Among the Hungarian Fauves, Sándor Ziffer, Tibor Boromisza, and Lajos Tihanyi favoured square fields the most; although practically all the Neo painters experimented with it. Within the square format, a compositional order arranged along a diagonal axis is common. When combined with an exceptionally tight focus (for example, on a fragment of the whole), it guarantees an exciting effect and evokes tension. We do not encounter the use of a square picture format among the French Fauves.

Expressive linear representation of two- and three-dimensional space

Also tied to this era is a certain formula for figure painting with a motion or pose that is as characteristic as the *contrapposto* in Antiquity. In his nude drawings from 1907 and his oil composition *Montparnasse Nude,* Róbert Berény displays a variety of supra-dimensional space constructions using this very pose exaggerated to the verge of absurdity. The approach is similar to those in Fauve drawings, characterized by spontaneity, freshness, and an altogether subjective interpretation of the subject. Essentially, the concept, which borders on caricature, is to use a heightened view of reality, exaggerating truth to a certain degree in order to register the defining impression made by the whole in the heat of the moment when the viewer first takes possession of the sight. Berény preserves this initial fresh impression in drawing and in the later stages of the picture's development as well. Furthermore, he gives full play to this practically grotesque irony as he shapes the three-dimensional figure. The selection of a rather close "virtual angle of view"poses a particular challenge to the artist, since

Fig. 7. Róbert Berény: Study to the Montparnasse Nude, *III, 1907*

Fig. 8. Róbert Berény: Study to the Montparnasse Nude, *V, 1907*

he must simultaneously display the monumental experience of seeing the nude and express his absolute power as creator. From this subjective vantage point, the painter sees the model as though she were standing in the vanishing point of a strong visual perspective, shortening her bulk within the tight space of the picture. With the spirally twisting movement and the over-dimensioned play of limbs, he rewrites the otherwise simple *contrapposto* as a virtual space-constructional sensation (Figs. 7–8).

On canvases and in drawings by the contemporary Hungarian Neo and German Die Brücke painters, figures stepping in a horizontal direction with crossed legs appear in configurations that conformed more naturally to the flat surface. The extremities of these nudes move over the plane in a relief, conjuring a spectacle every bit as suggestive as the "sculptural" exaggerations found in Berény's drawings. It is worthwhile to compare the standing female nude figure in Max Pechstein's *In the Dunes* of 1911 with Vilmos Perlrott Csaba's *Male Nude,* painted earlier in 1907–1909 (Figs. 9–10).

Fig. 9. Max Pechstein: In the Dunes, *1911. (Detail)*

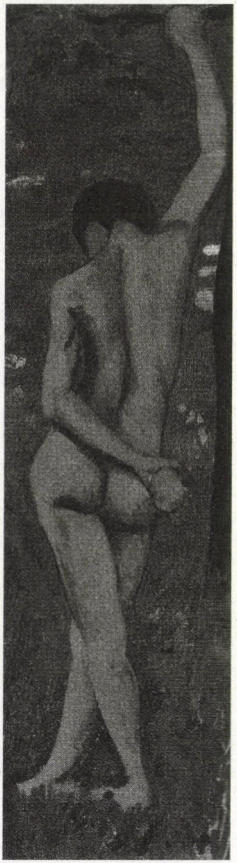

Fig. 10. Vilmos Perlrott Csaba: Male Nude, *1907–1909*

Furthermore, the figure taking a step in Tibor Boromisza's *Stepping Nude* from 1910 is the mirror image of the female figure seen stepping out of the water in Pechstein's *At a Lake,* 1910, see Figs. 11–12 on p. 90).

Colour and plasticity: The nudes of Róbert Berény and Vilmos Perlrott Csaba

Róbert Berény begins painting his *Reclining Nude* (1907, Plate 12) following Cézanne's principles. He assembles the tone construction tectonically, applying the yellow patches of colour next to each other, building an organic unit through the balancing act of colour and mass. He uses the technique of colour enhancement when he interprets volume with some twenty kinds (!) of well-segmented shades of the colour yellow. This unbelievably rich, linearly-

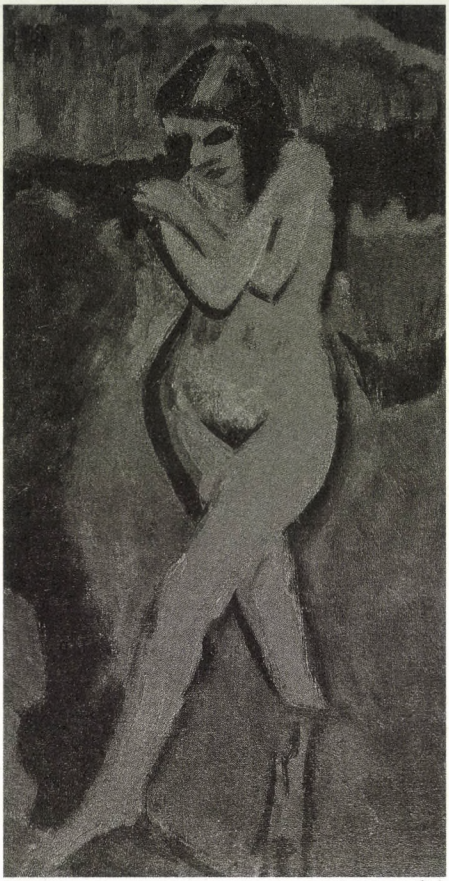

Fig. 11. Max Pechstein: At a Lake, *1910 (Detail)*

Fig. 12. Tibor Boromisza: Stepping Nude, *1910*

spreading abundance of *valeur* amounts to a monumentality of form. To sum it up in Cézanne's words,*"quand la couleur a sa richesse, la forme a sa plénitude."*—where there is plenty of colour, form is complete.[8] A solution typical of Berény, though, is when, into the richly-dosed system of a certain colour—in this case, yellow—with an unexpected twist, he performs a huge leap along the scale of tonal grades, surprising us with the cold contrast of a deep Veronese green. With this green hue, he emphasizes the form's plasticity. He places stress upon the barely decomposed green colour by drawing up close beside it the complementary, a small but intense amount of vermillion.

We see this solution in his nude *Italian Girl* (1907), too. He selects the colour of the shadow not on the basis of natural light's chromatic harmony; it is not blue or purple that appears next to yellow, but green—the complementary of another basic colour, red. He does away with the light–shadow interpretation of the Impressionist tradition, preserving the solidity of form by withdrawing it from the dissolving, dematerializing effect of light. The green–red colour contrast—unexpectedly entering the harmonious order of the yellow tone construction that moulds the Italian model's curvaceous figure—plays a joke on

our conditioned concept of form, which is based on conventional tone interpretation. With the painterly dramaturgy so typical of him, Berény misleads us. First, he lets our eyes, lingering on the body mass's *valeur* construction, begin processing the form in the usual way. Then, with a surprising dodge, he breaks with this concept, which is rooted in standard tone transition, by unexpectedly deviating from the linearly-ordered rich yellow colour enhancement. In the interpretation of the body volume in shadow, it changes into a red-green contrast. This way, by emphasizing the mutual stimulation between red and green, Berény transforms the plastic experience found in the full-figured female form into a colour sensation. In Berény's own terminology, this is the meeting place of "colour eroticism" and the "erotica of form", aroused in "the sensation of tension".[9] When Berény places this "mark" of the new trend at the shadow boundary of a just protruding-turning form—for instance, under the belly—where this red-green pair of colours, with its brutal freshness, serves to express the plastic form about to emerge, to come to life, we can catch the moment of *becoming something,* the Fauve solution!

Ödön Márffy also used this vermillion effect under the eye sockets of his *Girl from Nyerges,* and we encounter the same joke in Berény's *Montparnasse Nude.* Through a blend of Fauvist and Cézanne techniques, he creates a subjective and markedly original version of spatial and plastic presentation that flies in the face of Fauve doctrine, which completely banished three-dimensional forms. This not only widens our concept of Fauve "irregularity", but where his unique solutions differed from par excellence Fauvism, they also opened up a path to new trends in experimentation dissecting the relationship between planes and space.

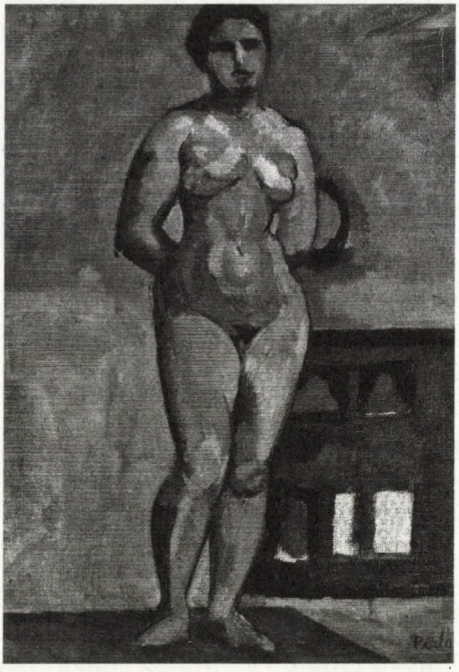

Fig. 12. Vilmos Perlrott Csaba: Female Nude, *1910*

While Berény's presentations of nudes go well beyond the nature of studies, the same cannot be said about the *Female Nude* that Vilmos Perlrott Csaba composed in 1910. It lacks originality and does not experiment with form or colour. In the picture, we are presented with a concoction of rules governing tone grades and colour contrasts, an unsettling mixture of different concepts. The painter looses the Fauve colours derived from the palette

of Matisse, but not in their independent quality as colour contrasts. Within the composition, the colour red does not signify red, but the dark shadow; the colour yellow does not mean yellow, but the pale shade of the body volume in light. We find overwhelming proof of this when we place the black-and-white photograph of the picture next to its colour reproduction (Fig. 12, and Plate 2 of no. 183 of *The HQ*). Here the arrangement of Fauve colours into tonal grades only serves to interpret the plastic form. This marks an important breach between Perlrott Csaba's approach and the French Fauve concept.

Nudes have always been a fruitful area for artists. Freed as they are of clothing, nudes shed the parameters of geography and time, so the artist can provide a clear portrait of contemporary humanity, as well as his relation to it, in the pure "aesthetic construction" he creates. Although not a nude, similarly telling is Berény's *Self-portrait with Top Hat* (1907, Plate 7 of no. 183 of *The HQ*). In Berény's aesthetic self-interpretation, we find no room for praising human God-granted beauty. *In the new age, man is his own creation,* and he paints the composition accordingly, with cruel self-irony. "I may do so!" suggests the arrogant, conceited face, because Berény is presenting us with an individual whose identity is a matter of his own will. Berény proclaims with pagan self-knowledge that he was not made by the Creator.

Contour

When contrasting the output of the French and Hungarian Fauves, their different use of contour is striking. A picture field made up of closed, bound colour patches was alien to the Fauve concept, which revelled in freedom. Among the French, contours only reappeared in the period after Fauvism—initially in the paintings of the Fauve master Matisse. Although Matisse did not employ contours in his earlier par excellence Fauve compositions, it is worthy of note that he integrated outlines with apparent artlessness—in fact, he even gave them a leading role—in his watershed masterpiece *Le bonheur de vivre* (1905–1906, Plate 14). In the harmonious balance of flat, decorative colour patches, contours in a rich variety of colours, and lines of various thickness, he achieves a synthesis that concentrates and summarizes the results of several trends—beginning with Gauguinesque symbolism and closing with Fauvism.

For Hungarian Fauves as well, the use of contours as formal elements is embedded in a synthesis of style, since they drew inspiration from both French and native traditions. The Hungarian Neos were already familiar with the Vienna Secession's cultivation of the line as interpreted by Károly Ferenczy, János Vaszary, and József Rippl-Rónai in freely flowing, elaborate contours. Thus, at the 1907 exhibition at the National Salon,[10] they would have encountered this element again, as an acquaintance, in the *"cloissoné"* technique of Gauguin.

Nevertheless, in Gauguin's and Matisse's syntax, the outline, together with colour, is always a many-faceted, complex means of expression. The complexity lies in how the artist unites different layers of time and space in an "emotional perspective" (Matisse's wording) and spreads this synthesis over the picture field. On the surface of Matisse's *Le bonheur de vivre* (Plate 14) the fluidity of the pictured elements is realized through an ingenious variety of thin line drawings and contours of different thickness—often fattened to pools of colour in the superimposed layers of hues. This structures his work in a multi-layered intellectual manner as well. Architecturally, the contours can be understood as buttressing the picture's intellectual content, or as being supported by the ideas themselves.

In works by Hungarian Fauves, we do not encounter this interrelationship in such complexity. For them, the contour was rather a mechanically applied tool that they primarily used to emphasize the decorative picture field. Having banished the atmospheric effects of *plein air* perspective—including, for instance, the blurred contour—they turned instead to unambiguous definite contours which "zoom" forward all the motifs in the picture with the same sharpness, placing them alongside each other on the two-dimensional plane. With this, the concept of illusory deep space became outdated.

Contouring may also serve the following functional roles:

■ Contour, like mortar, can provide a structural framework for the composition.

■ As a summarizing stylistic device, contour in itself thwarts the realistic, detailed depiction of nature.

■ Due to the technique of divided colour, the patches of colour dispersed spaciously have a radiating effect spreading *outwards.* Contours thicken and concentrate the surrounded colour patch *inwards*. Contouring enhances the intensity and strength of pale pastel colours.

■ Along the contours, any two colours can be placed next to each other. Moreover, the contour accentuates the decorative character of their co-existence and prevents two shades that normally do not go well together from generating irritating tension.

Below we examine the Hungarian painters' idiosyncratic use of contour both in their choice of colour and drawing style:

■ Béla Czóbel uses blue-coloured contours almost exclusively. In his 1906 *Painters Outdoors,* he indicates the contours with loose-structured dark Paris blue; while in *Man with a Straw Hat,* from 1907, it is not even contour we encounter, but the initial sketch of the motif, a drawn framework loosely applied in brushstrokes of thin ultramarine.

■ Lajos Tihanyi uses nervously fretting, dissolved black contours—for instance, in his *Pont Saint-Michel from* 1908.

■ With Sándor Ziffer, we encounter tracing that is more reserved and restricted, recalling the undulating, braided structure of the Vienna Secession line. Ziffer applies both blue- and green-coloured contours. For example, in his *Main Square of Nagybánya* from 1908 the contours are blue; while in *Woman in an Armchair* (also from 1908, Plate 9) and his recently discovered early *Self-Portrait* (circa 1908), he uses Veronese green contours.

■ Tibor Boromisza usually uses blue or black contours. One exception is his *Shepherds at the Nativity*, which features multi-coloured contours of red, yellow, blue, and purple. Variation in the outlines' thickness mitigates the mechanical, ingrained nature of the contouring and, at the same time, lends the work a "story-telling" quality and an expressly narrative content. That the painter consciously sought to narrate, to "describe" the scene meticulously, is attested to by the accompanying text, in which Boromisza interprets and explains the work.

■ Sándor Galimberti creates dynamics on his canvases with strong black space-structuring lines.

■ During his Fauve period, József Pechán usually bordered decorative, unbroken patches of colour with dark-toned Prussian blue contours. Typically, he did not foreswear the presentation of deep space in perspective; however, he neglects to use his contours for plein air perspective effects. (*Assembly of Wiseacres* from 1912.)

The rage for contouring also held sway over the German Die Brücke group, who emerged at the same time as the Hungarian Fauves and maintained ties to French Fauvism as well. Their main role models were Van Gogh and Gauguin. These German painters generally preferred conspicuous black contours. What is more, after his first visit to Germany in 1908, Matisse converted to forceful black contours for a time. The bulk of his work from 1909 testify to this—for example, *Nude with a White Scarf.* Hungarian pupils at Matisse's school established in January 1908, namely, Géza Bornemisza and Vilmos Perlrott Csaba, also use black contours that can be traced back to the very same source. Placing side by side Max Pechstein's 1911 *Prone Reclining Nude (Liegender Rückenakt)* and Géza Bornemisza's *Reclining Nude* from 1913 proves this.

Summary

By examining typical features of colour, contour, painting technique, and treatment of space, as well as the painted picture fabric, the intention was to illuminate the fundamentally unique and complex character of Fauve or Fauve-inspired painting. At first sight, Fauvism appears so straightforward that we could believe its visual manifestation depends upon strict doctrines and inviolable rules which are easy to summarize. Actually, however, the very nature of Fauvism suggests an improvised or spontaneous manner of painting,

which resists generalizing definitions. The glorification of the individual's power of self-expression ensured that the painting would not become a collective game of searching for solutions of general validity (see Neo-Impressionists)—thus proving that the power and viability of Fauvism lies precisely in its wide array of individual temperaments, glowing at different heats, and their arbitrary means of expression. Through a brief analysis of certain French and Hungarian artists, I have ventured to present this integrating and synthesis-forming trend in style (experimental in nature and offering rich opportunities for diversity) with the help of examples that testify to the self-vindicating *lawlessness* of Fauvism. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ The bulk of the paintings discussed in the essay can be found in reproduction in the French and Hungarian catalogues for the "Hungarian Fauves" exhibit or the Hungarian and English catalogues for the exhibit "The Eight". See also the illustrations in "Challenging the Canon" by Ilona Sármány-Parsons and "The Eight and the European Avant-garde" by Krisztina Passuth, *The Hungarian Quarterly,* Autumn 2006, vol. 47, no. 183, pp. 88–99 and Autumn 2010, vol. 51, no. 199, pp. 114–124 respectively.

2 ■ Alfred H. Barr Jr. introduced this terminology in *Matisse: His Art and His Public.* New York, 1951, p. 49.

3 ■ Maurice Denis, *Théories 1890–1910. Du symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique.* 4. ed. Paris, 1920, p. 220. This remark by Maurice Denis, sharply critical of the Fauves, was cited in the foreword of the catalogue of the Henri-Edmond Cross exhibition in the Gallery Bernheim in April 1907.

4 ■ "L'Éducation de l'oeil", *La Revue blanche* 16 (1898) in: Paul Signac, *D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionisme,* Paris, 1921, p. 365.

5 ■ Préface de la IXe exposition des peintres impressionistes et symbolistes. Chez Le Barc de Boutteville en 1895. Maurice Denis, idem 1920, p. 26.

6 ■ André Derain in a letter to Maurice Vlaminck from Collioure, dated July 28, 1905. Philippe Dagen, ed., *Lettres à Vlaminck.* Paris, 1994, p. 181.

7 ■ Éva Hárs–Ferenc Romváry, *Modern Magyar Képtár. Pécs* (Modern Hungarian Gallery. Pécs). Budapest, 1981, p. 104.

8 ■ Quoted by Maurice Denis, "Cézanne". *L'Occident,* September 1907, in: Maurice Denis, *Théories 1890–1910. Du symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique,* Paris, 1920, p. 25.

9 ■ Róbert Berény, "Pór Bertalan kiállítása a Könyves Kálmán-ban III." [Bertalan Pór's Exhibit at the Könyves Kálmán III]. *Nyugat,* 4. 1911, pp. 406–409. Árpád Tímár: *Az utak elváltak, III.*: Pécs–Budapest, 2009, p. 46.The terminology applied by Berény to the artwork of Bertalan Pór stands for his own painting as well.

10■ *Nemzeti Szalon tavaszi kiállítás: Gauguin, Cézanne stb. művei* (Spring Exhibition at the National Salon: Works by Gauguin, Cézanne, etc.). May 1907. Budapest. On this occasion, paintings by Gauguin were exhibited in great numbers for the first time in Hungary, within the framework of an exhibit of French Post-Impressionist art. Gauguin was represented by sixty-seven works altogether. They consisted of wood engravings, sculptures, and thirty-one (!) oil paintings. Two paintings by Van Gogh, five by Cézanne, and two drawings by Matisse were also exhibited. I am indebted to Attila Rum for these data.

Ágnes Szemerkényi

Ceramic Art in the Carpathian Basin

István Csupor, *Erdély népi kerámiaművészete* (Ceramic Folk Art of Transylvania). Budapest: Novella, 2008, 251 pp. • Gabriella Balla, *Holics, Tata és Buda kerámiaművészete* (Ceramic Art of Holics, Tata and Buda). Budapest: Novella Könyvkiadó, 2009, 230 pp. • István Csupor, *Ceramic Folk Art of the Great Plain.* Budapest: Novella, 2010, 272 pp.
(Vols. I–III of the series *A Kárpát-medence kerámiaművészete* [Ceramic Art of the Carpathian Basin])

The three books here reviewed are in essence the undertaking of a single person: Ferenc Vörösváry, the Series Editor, though unquestionably they would not have been published without art historians who wrote them, the contributions of sponsors, and the assistance of the private collectors and curators of public collections who granted access to the works of art themselves. Admiration and appreciation for works of art have been part of our culture for centuries, possibly millennia, as has the desire to possess them. Unique masterpieces have become public property thanks to the generosity of the many people who either founded museums or enriched the collections, donating sometimes hundreds of works and sometimes only a few precious pieces they thought important.

Economic conditions in Hungary in our time do not favour the foundation of new museums. All the more welcome that there are still collectors and patrons of art ready to give access to their collections to the wider public. Ferenc Vörösváry's work and initiatives, testifiying to his humility and unselfish commitment, have similar value, albeit financially they cannot be compared to donations to public institutions. He has been an engineer all his life, but his admiration for pottery goes back to his childhood. He gathered the illustrations that were eventually included in the volumes with great energy, and often with

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is head of the Department of Folklore Studies of the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She has published widely on folklore genres, including three books on proverbs. She is the editor of a series entitled Folklore in Hungarian Cultural Studies. *Currently she is working on an* Encyclopaedia of Hungarian Folklore.

A pitcher showing a monk at prayer who is selling Tokay wine. *"I cannot sell it for less, it cost me a lot too – Agree to the price, will you. I have paid enough as it is."* Holics (Holič/Holitsch), circa 1800

Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest
László Alapfy

Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest
Ferenc Vörösváry

Soup tureen with lid, Holics (Holič/Holitsch), 1750–60

Janota Family Collection
Andrea Ádámková

Soup tureen with lid, Holics (Holič/Holitsch), 1755–70

Kuny Domokos Museum, Tata
Ferenc Vörösváry

Platter showing Tata Castle, Tata, 1770–80

Hungarian National Museum, Budapest
Judit Kardos

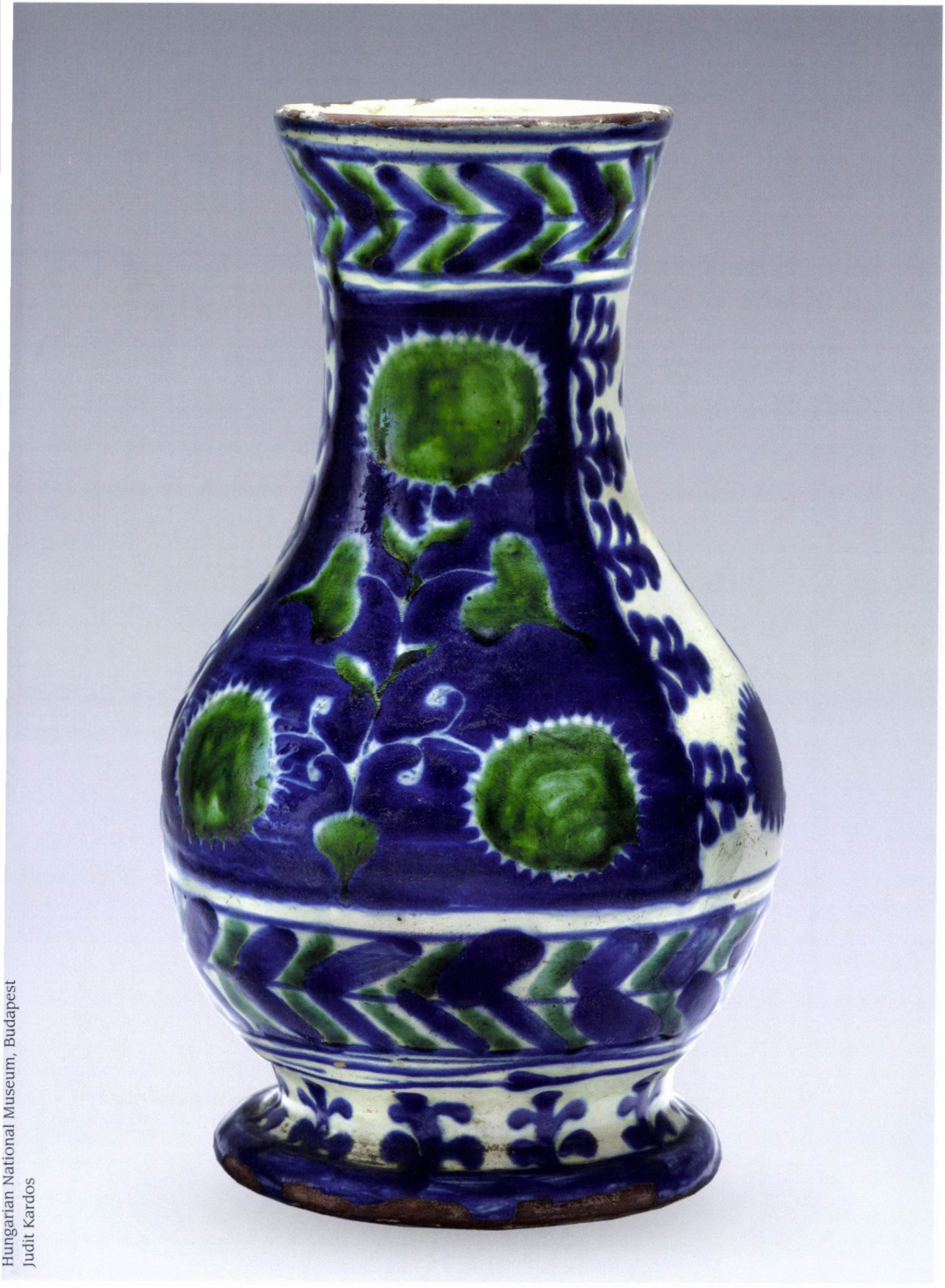
Platter showing mounted hussar, Tata, circa 1770

Dish. Nagyszeben/
Hermannstadt/Sibiu,
Transylvania

Ferenc Vörösváry Collection

Dish. Homoróddaróc/
Draas/Drăuşeni,
Transylvania, second
half of the nineteenth
century

Ferenc Vörösváry Collection



Hungarian National Museum, Budapest
Judit Kardos

"Bokály" pitcher, dated "1750". Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt/Sibiu, Transylvania

Ferenc Vörösváry Collection
Ferenc Vörösváry

"Bokály" pitcher with the inscription "Klárának 1843 Szeretője" (For Klára from her lover", 1843), Torda/Thorenburg/Turda, Transylvania

Toby jug inscribed "1887". Mezőcsát, Hungarian Great Plain, the work of Sándor Horváth

Museum of Ethnography, Budapest
István Csupor

Figures, Hódmezővásárhely, Hungarian Great Plain, 1880s

Mihály Szegedy-Maszák Collection
Ferenc Vörösvary

Brandy flasks, known as "butella", Tiszafüred, Hungarian Great Plain, last third of the nineteenth century

great difficulty as well, as for the most part his selection was made not on the basis of existing publications, but rather that of pieces in the depths of museum storage rooms or on the jealously guarded shelves of private collectors. This obliged him to establish contacts with private collectors and to thoroughly survey the holdings of museums. Despite his great knowledge of the material, he was well aware that the writing must be left to art historians and folklorists, so he recruited Gabriella Balla from the Museum of Applied Arts and István Csupor from the Museum of Ethnography. The former is curator of the Holics material, while the latter is the head museologist of the pottery department, which houses nearly 30, 000 items.

Vörösváry is driven by a commitment to pottery, an obsession (in the best sense of the term) that motivates him to seek out what has survived of the products of potteries in Central Europe. Familiarity with objects held in Hungarian museums and private collections does not provide a sufficient foundation for an exploration of the region's material culture. One must also have an equal knowledge of the holdings in neighbouring countries. Thanks to an extensive network he has built up over time, Vörösváry is on good terms with numerous collectors, both in Hungary and abroad. He was able to include outstanding items from private collections, as well as valued pieces in famous or at times small museums in the country. As a result, the larger part of the material presented in these volumes was unknown not only to the general public, but also to specialists in the field.

So far three volumes of the series *The Ceramic Art of the Carpathian Basin* have been published: a volume devoted to the three ceramic manufacturies of Holics, Tata and Buda, which had a tremendous success in the eighteenth century, and two volumes discussing the pottery of Transylvania and the Great Plain.

The arrangement of the volumes is clear and easy to follow. Introductions acknowledging the cooperation of museums and collectors are followed by an essay on the topic in question, each written by the curator most familiar with the given subject. The high quality illustrations in colour accentuate the peculiarities of objects of a given group. There are also many full-page reproductions, images which may say a great deal more about a piece than any narrative description. Although in all three cases the selection had to be made from a large number of photographs, the authors prudently decided to place the emphasis on hitherto unknown or unpublished pottery, particularily pieces in private collections. In the case of the latter, the journeys the objects have made as they passed from one owner to another cannot always be retraced and it can be more difficult to reconstruct information about their origins than would be the case with museum holdings. The images are followed by bibliographical data concerning the literature of the subject matter and the names of the photographers, as well as a list of collections with a list of the items they contain. The list of inscriptions found on some of the objects follows, though regrettably they were printed in too small a typeface. The inclusion of these texts is all the more useful given that most of

the objects are photographed from one side only. The volumes conclude with lists containing the measurements of the items. It is clear that it was important to the authors to create a work that satisfies the highest standards of both scholarship and aesthetics, and they succeeded.

The first volume of the series focuses on the pottery of Transylvania, but I will begin with the volume on the ceramic art of Holics, Tata and Buda as it presents the most famous manufacturies. The ware these manufacturies produced went to a market that differed considerably from that of the potteries from Transylvania or the Great Plain. While these manufacturies all closed down a long time ago, the potters of Transylvania or the Great Plain have to some degree preserved the traditions that have come down through the ages. I will therefore discuss those two volumes, covering a living tradition, together.

Gabriella Balla, the author of the volume on Holics, Tata and Buda, has been studying these objects for many years. Her erudition and knowledge of these objects has enabled her to summarize in a limited space (15 pages) everything that is worth knowing about this group of ceramics of considerable historic importance.

The Holics—better known in German as Holitsch—manufactory was relatively close to Vienna in Upper Hungary at what is now called Holič in Western Slovakia. Balla briefly describes the founding of the manufactory. Francis of Lorraine, the husband of Maria Theresa, purchased the estate of 24,000 hectares in 1736, and in 1743 established a faience factory that was to be the earliest and most important in all the Habsburg domains. Several manufactories in the Austrian hereditary provinces followed. He invited skilled craftsmen from Alsace and Lorraine who laid the foundations of the reputation of their ware. All this was further complemented by Haban craftsmanship in the area, a major influence in style and technique.

The golden age of Holics was between 1750 and 1780. By 1750, 43 skilled craftsmen worked there, including 9 decorators and 8 modellers. The skills of the foreign immigrant potters fundamentally defined the style of Holics faience. Flower motifs typical of Strasbourg are prominent, but the influence of French workshops—such as Montpellier—can also be detected, most notably in the large number of table sets painted in yellow and lavender blue and based on *chinoiserie* patterns. Louis XIV patterns called *lambrequin* common in Rouen were also transmitted by Alsatian craftsmen. In addition to French rococo and *chinoiserie* patterns, the influence of some Italian manufactories can also be discerned. The Holics craftsmen ingeniously transformed the motifs taken from an assemblage of European sources, thereby creating a distinctive style. The types of objects that were made were determined by the societal and financial circumstances of the clientele who were principally members of the aristocracy, which explains the large number of richly decorated table sets. The diverse

forms of tureens, dishes, platters and other tableware suited to serve a variety of meals are captivating. The platters and their lids were decorated with various fruits, insects and birds. They featured vegetal (cabbage, asparagus) and animal motifs (hen, rooster, parrot), often with a hint of clumsy charm. One sees evidence of the vivid imagination of the Holics craftsmen on the richly decorated and colourful variations of tabletops, such as fruit and delicacy containers and tulip vases (each individual tulip stem is placed in a separate tube) and their sense of humour is conspicuous on the containers made to hold spices.

In addition to tableware and decorative objects made for the tabletop, the Holics potters also made small sculptures. The statuaries depicting mythological figures served as decorations. Sacred objects were accessories of both private and communal devotion. Familiar examples include a wide array of Mary statuaries, Stations of the Cross, saints and pietàs. The best-known and presumably the most frequently made religious object was the holy water stoop depicting Saint Veronica holding the Sudarium. Statuaries with secular subjects were also made in Holics, including many grotesque, humorous figures. Sometimes they appear on functional objects, decorating candlesticks or behind a small dish that serves as an ashtray.

Holics faience was unusually rich, not only in its variety of form but also in intricate decorations and motifs. The first collector of Holics faience, the Bishop of Kassa (Košice, Slovakia), Zsigmond Bubics, distinguished forty-five types of ornamental motifs when he donated his collection to the Museum of Applied Arts in 1890. In addition to the motifs mentioned above, peony and chrysanthemum in all shapes were also common. One popular combination of motifs involved a depiction of a rose surrounded by tiny field flowers on one side of an object and a single tulip on the other. As of the second half of the 17th century, Oriental motifs were a prevalent fashion throughout Europe. In Holics, too, many faithful copies of Chinese porcelain were made in addition to a large quantity of *chinoiserie* tableware, the latter adorned with ornamentations originally based on Chinese models, though dramatically altered. Objects used in daily life included wash basins and jugs, medicine bottles and the *faience cradle,* which was undoubtedly a rarity.

Following the example of Holics, József Esterházy built a faience manufactory in Tata. Due to better quality clay, highly skilled potters and Esterházy's entrepreneurship, the manufactory developed into a thriving business. There had been a considerable number of pottery workshops in Tata, and the good "porcelain clay" contributed. Craftsmen were called in from Holics, and the owner even managed to attract one of the most eminent Holics decorators. The faience of Tata corresponds to the shapes of pewter, silver and porcelain objects. The patterns resemble those of Holics, though they are more restrained and not as opulently decorated. There are also similarities in forms: the platters in the

shape of cabbage leaves or asparagus-decorated caskets made in these two places are difficult to tell apart. Two distinctive groups of objects stand out: decorative objects moulded in the shape of a secretaire and the dishes decorated with crayfish. The former functioned as tabletops, and they are rarities in Hungarian faience. The secretaires are miniatures, but accurate versions of a Baroque furniture type popular in Austria and Hungary, complete with functioning drawers that can be pulled out. The dishes decorated with crayfish and snails are distinctive of Tata. They functioned as ornamental pieces.

Domokos Kuny, who established the faience manufactory of Buda, offers a good example of the ways in which master craftsmen travelled and spread the skills of their trade to cities. As a child he lived in Holics, where his father was a foreman. After his father's death he moved to Tata with his widowed mother; there he obtained more thorough training in his trade, knowledge he would later put to use in his manufactory in Buda. This manufactory, however, was not in use for long (from 1784 to 1810s), for faience was soon replaced by a new material, stoneware, that was fired at a higher temperature and was, consequently, harder.

István Csupor wrote the essay introducing the volume on Transylvanian pottery. The majority of the pieces photographed belong to private collections, but there are also a large number held in the Museum of Ethnography and the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest, and various Transylvanian municipal museums. I emphasize the large number of objects from private collections in part because their inclusion presents them to the wider public in a manner unlikely to be repeated for some time to come. This adds to the significance of a publication, which, as the product of arduous research, presents the reader with pottery that he was not aware of. Csupor arranges Transylvanian pottery in terms of the main centres of production. The coexistence of three national communities—Hungarian, Saxon and Romanian—resulted in an extraordinarily colourful culture the diversity of which is also manifest in the material culture.

Csupor begins with the Saxon region and then turns his attention to the Székely Land, followed by the pottery of Kolozsvár (Cluj, Romania) and environs, concluding his account with Romanian pottery. Given space limitations, he was not able even to list all the workshops in the area, let alone provide a qualitative assessment. Some of us would have welcomed longer discursive essays, but the emphasis on the publication of photographs is certainly understandable. Readers looking for more information receive all the help they need in the bibliography.

Three main influences can be discerned in the development of pottery in Transylvania. Pottery made by the Habans, a local name of the Hutterer religious community in Transylvania; the survival of folk traditions linked to the Byzantine style; and the third—possibly most significant—influence, a treasury of Renaissance motifs.

Csupor surveys the motifs found on individual items, describing their origins, histories, and transformation. He focuses primarily on the wealth of motifs, the palette and its variations, and the diversity of ornaments. There is not as much on the individual potters as in the volume on the pottery of the Great Plain, presumably due to the scarcity of preliminary studies. The author does however call our attention to a few interesting facts: for example, in Torda (Turda) the inscriptions were always incised by women whose names we know. Within a single day a woman could provide inscriptions for forty to fifty items.

Dated items are mostly Saxon. Csupor argues that Saxons were keenest to preserve their possessions and they also liked to document what they did. On their dishes and vessels we find the tree of life—a flowering twig made up of three tulips and leaves (a motif originating in the Renaissance), as well as the pomegranate and the bird. Outstanding workshops of Saxon pottery were in Nagyszeben (Sibiu-Hermanstadt), Szászkézd (Saschiz-Keisd), Homoróddaróc (Drăuseni-Draas), Beszterce (Bistriţa-Bistritz), and the Barcaság (Tara Bârsei-Burzenland). A pottery's guild in Nagyszeben is first mentioned in a regulation for the guilds there in 1376. This centuries-old tradition explains why by the 18th century—a time from which objects have survived intact—vessels executed with high skill and moulded with artistry were highly prized objects in most dwellings. These carefully finished pitchers and platters were part of ceremonies, and were not made for everyday use. Tableware from earlier periods are glazed blue, yellow and green. By the mid-1740s blue and white glazing became general, and flowering open tulips and carnations became the dominant motifs. As time passed the colouring changed, red and blue, and later green and yellow, appeared in addition to blue and white, and ultimately green became so dominant that anything produced around 1810 was glazed just in green, and the patterns were less detailed or elaborated. In the 18th century guilds still operated according to strict rules, the burghers who bought the pottery expected sound craftsmanship, and could afford to pay for it. By the first half of the 19th century the value of pottery began to dwindle. As a result, the style, the decorations, and the workmanship suffered.

Csupor outlines similar developments in other pottery workshops. One learns not only about the shapes and motifs of these objects, but also about their social functions, the uses to which they were put, when they could be said to come to life. In the section on the pottery of the Székely Land he not only clarifies certain mistaken notions with regards to the origins of certain groups of pottery, but also briefly but convincingly formulates characteristic traits of the centres he deems important. Pottery made in Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc), for instance, is characterized by incised brown and green motifs depicting mostly human figures, deer, birds and harmonically arranged flowers. The most unusual and beautiful of these motifs is a deer with fruticose antlers, which lend the depiction an airy and graceful quality. Like the pottery workshop of Nagyszeben, we also

have early documents relating to the workshop in Kolozsvár. By 1502 it had obtained guild privileges, and a record concerning litigation complaining about the presence of Haban merchants survives from 1732. The legal document reveals that potters in Kolozsvár attempted to restrain the expansion of Haban merchandise, though they had little luck. The authorities allowed the further sale of Haban ware and compelled the Kolozsvár potters to produce pots of equal quality. It is from that time that the influence of Haban pottery can be documented in Transylvania. Their patterns and ornaments prompted a creative flowering in the activity of potters in Kolozsvár and surroundings. To mention just a few examples of the influence of the Haban potters, the deer on Haban vessels also began to appear elsewhere in Transylvania. But while Haban deer were always frontal, those on other Transylvanian pottery mostly looked back. Birds on Haban jugs also made their way onto the Transylvanian pitchers, but they are always depicted with a round flower under their feet.

Transylvanian pottery absorbed other influences as well, such as the "Chinese tree", which appeared on Delft faience following the arrival of Chinese porcelain wares in Europe, and then made their way onto late Haban and eventually other Transylvanian items. Birds also appear in a highly stylized manner as do deer, which play an important role in the legends of the Magyar conquest. Figural decoration is not common in Hungarian folk pottery, but it does occur, usually in the form of a mounted or dismounted hussar.

In his well organized, pithy essay Csupor mentions all of the important centres of Transylvanian pottery. These include Zilah (Zalău), Torda (Turda), and Bánffyhunyad (Huedin) and Transylvanian Romanian pottery as well. There is not much variety of shapes amongst the vessels, what is auspicious, however, is the variation in the motifs of the decoration. Alongside guild pitchers, platters, dishes, jugs, and wine jugs, there are also many images of the small pitchers known as *bokály* (the name derives from the Italian word *boccala*). This is justified by the high esteem in which they were once held. The number of *bokály* a peasant family displayed hanging on pegs reflected its financial standing. They were found in other places as well, but the true home of the *bokály* is Transylvania. Wine was stored in them, and on festive occasions guests were served from them.

István Csupor also wrote the discursive essay on the folk pottery of the Great Plain and he also assisted in compiling and selecting the illustrations. After a brief historical overview, he discusses the region's pottery centres, with special emphasis on smaller, lesser known workshops. In the second half of the 20th century scholarship no longer focused narrowly on the objects (or in the case of folklore, the narratives) but examines them in their context, looking at the people who made the objects and told and retold their stories. In the case of pottery, research is not limited to the morphological examination of the decorations and the differentiation of styles, but also includes consideration of

the personalities of the people who made these objects. Thus scholarship also addresses the influences exerted by various craftsmen on a given potter and the social and family relationships that often shaped his or her life and work.

The Turkish occupation of Hungary between 1541 and 1699 made a powerful impact on pottery in the Great Plain. Thriving trade connections were severed, and the people of the Great Plain were compelled to become increasingly self-sufficient. Cooking pots were not made in the region for lack of the necessary raw material. Only when they had to be self-sufficient made craftsmen do by mixing sand into the clay. Everyday contacts between Hungarians and Turks affected innumerable areas of life. The Hungarian communities gained a familiarity with different techniques and motifs, out of which a style of remarkably high quality evolved, called by scholars "the occupation style." The distinguishing characteristics of this style include a white background with motifs outlined in brown and coloured red and green. A spirally twisted flowering branch is one of the typical motifs, often appearing with a bird. The bird motif was used in the Renaissance and also had eastern, Persian antecedents, but the placing of the motif is unique, and it is part of a typically Hungarian pottery style produced by an inner development, a style that lasted well into the 18th and 19th centuries.

The pottery of the Great Plain shows an incredible wealth of forms. Platters, dishes, jugs, various types of pitchers, flasks, candle-dippers, ink-pots, and many other types of objects were made here. Of these, two in particular merit separate mention, as they are peculiar to the area and are also unmatched in their variety of forms and decorations. They are the *miskakancsó,* anthropomorphic wine pitchers which resemble Toby Jugs, and brandy flasks called *butella.*

The *miskakancsó* are well known and continue to be a favourite form among potters today, but the industrially manufactured items cannot be compared either in quality or style to their ancestors. Although *miskakancsó* enjoy widespread popularity now, in earlier times they were only made in a few workshops in the Great Plain, in places such as Mezőcsát, Hódmezővásárhely and Tiszafüred. These pitchers are generally around 30 centimetres in height and show a plump, podgy, whiskered man (whose form follows the shape of the jug) dressed up as a hussar. One often finds a snake applied on the handle or the bulge. According to folk traditions snakes are a symbol of renewal. The snake is often surrounded by rosemary twigs. On occasion there is a date or possibly a short verse, as well as the name of the maker or the person for whom it was made. In addition to the stylized hussar get-up, flowers, leaves and polka dots are used decoratively or as applications. The shape and decorations, the reddish glow of the man's cheeks (which suggests vitality), and his rakish waxed moustache (which expresses dignity but also a touch of humour) understandably made these examples of folk pottery highly sought-after objects among collectors and museum curators alike.

The other famous and characteristic product of Great Plain pottery is the brandy flasks known as *butella.* A flat vessel that was used for fruit brandy, it could be carried in a pocket and eventually came to replace its glass predecessor. In the treeless areas of the Great Plain it was well nigh impossible to make glass, which required a great deal of wood in its making. Trade was difficult at the time, and importing glass would have been expensive. For this reason potters in this area began to make earthenware vessels. True enough, this material allowed some of the brandy to seep through but such flasks were not meant to store drink, they were small anyway, holding only enough to be drunk in a couple of hours. *Butella* came in a variety of shapes: at the top a *butella* had a narrow, tight mouth so that it could be easily corked. They were flat and therefore could easily be fitted in a pocket. Some were equally wide at the top and at the bottom, others were wider at the bottom, and some had flattened edges. Brandy flasks made in the shape of books were very popular. Many had the form of prayer books; they were humorously called *psalters.* Many figural brandy flasks have survived. They are in the shape of farmer's wives with their arms akimbo, farmers, priests, hussars, firemen, gendarmes, and even animals, such as boars or bears. The decorations varied according to the centres in which the flasks were made. The range is fairly wide, from the brandy flasks of Tiszafüred, which were lavishly decorated with flowers, sometimes in bunches, to those made in Mezőcsát by Mihály Rajczy (which featured birds) or the chess-board-like ornamentation typical of Hódmezővásárhely. One often comes across the Hungarian coat of arms and the image of a soldier or hussar, or a short text. Brandy flask verse is a genre of folk poetry all of its own, a late flowering of the epigram. The craftsman inscribed the lines, usually doggerel, on the flat side of the brandy flask. In most cases they encourage drinking, and sometimes they present the owner, occasionally seriously, but more often than not jocularily.

The pottery of the Great Plain is highly varied as it provided primarily items for everyday use; few were made to be exclusively decorative. Over the centuries the craftsmen developed shapes that were eminently sensible and practical. After all they too lived amongst the people who used what they made, and they were perfectly aware of what their customers wanted.

The first three volumes of this promising series contribute to our understanding of an important area of everyday material culture in Central Europe. The shapes, decorations and motifs preserve traditions that are several centuries old. They crossed borders and migrated from one culture to another, making everyday tasks more bearable by adding a touch of beauty. Familiarity with the objects also involved knowledge of people as itinerant merchants, artists, and potters mediated not simply motifs, but other cultures. Editors and publishers of these volumes continued the tradition of a multinational region by issuing, alongside the Hungarian original, German and Romanian versions of the Transylvanian volume, and an English version of the volume on the folk pottery of the Great Plain. ❧

Enikő A. Sajti

Magyars and Serbs: the 'Southlands' 1941–1945

The 1941 occupation of the Southlands and the 1942 round up

On 10 April 1941, four days after Germany attacked Yugoslavia and the day Croatia seceded from the state, Lt.-Col. Nenad Krnjajić commander of the 14th Garrison Regiment stationed in the Palić area in the Vojvodina region of Serbia, noted in his regimental journal: "Windy and cloudy; sleet. It is peaceful on our sector of the line. Minor Hungarian troop movements in the border area. On the radio the news is bad everywhere... The Germans broke through at Bela Crkva and are pushing forward... Lt.-Col. Ružić, commander of 13th Garrison Regiment, informed me that Lt.-Col. Ivovnur [a Croat—E.S.], his second-in-command, has deserted."[1]

The next day, on the orders of Miklós Horthy, the Regent of Hungary, units of the Hungarian Third Army and the Mobile Corps crossed the Hungarian–Yugoslav border. The main military objective, besides re-annexing the Bačka (Bácska) region to Hungary, was to secure the rear of the German troops, advancing in the direction of Belgrade. That was done without any major engagement with the Yugoslav army, and within three days they had recaptured the Danube–Tisza interfluve, the Bács and the southern Baranja 'Triangle', thereby closing the era of Hungarian territorial gains. The last sentence of Lt.-Col. Krnjajić's journal entry for 13 April runs: "As the best solution, I have ordered the destruction of all war material and am dispersing the unit."[2]

In an autobiographically inspired novel by Attila Balázs, a writer from Vojvodina, István Szilágyi, Hungarian army soldier recalls the reoccupation of Bačka in the following terms:

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> They waited until every single one had closed ranks on the top of the hill, from which a far prospect opened onto the Bácska. Onto that blessed chunk of land so saturated with tears, which had now become Hungary once again... there was no order but everyone prayed. Here, too, there were some who blubbed.[3]

Hungary reacquired 11,601 sq. km. (or 55%)—though other statistics put it at 11,475 sq. km.—of the 20,551 sq. km., with a population of 1,145,000 (1.3 million by other counts) that had been part of Hungary (not counting Croatia-Slavonia) and had been ceded to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes by the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. Of the inhabitants 26.3% were ethnic Magyars, 17.2% ethnic Germans, 21.2% Serbs, 19.2% Croats, 7% Slovenes, 3,5% Slovaks, 1,3% Ruthenes, and 1.3% were Jews. The Banat, despite earlier promises by Hitler's Germany, was left under German occupation and later tacked onto occupied Serbia for administrative purposes.

The marching in of the Royal Hungarian Army was celebrated by the Magyars of the Délvidék—the 'Southlands'—as marking an end to "Serb oppression" and national liberation from "23 years of slavery." Second-class citizens of a minority, they were once again the members of the constitutive nation. Their grievances led them to expect compensation, social standing, indeed privileges. Solemn masses were said where thanks were given for the re-annexation; the national flag was ceremoniously dedicated with girls festively arraigned in national costume.

The celebration by the central Hungarian authorities took place a good three months later, on 27 July 1941, in Subotica (Szabadka). Horthy and his wife, accompanied by high-ranking personalities, including Prime Minister László Bárdossy and the Minister for Internal Affairs, Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, arrived by train. They were met at the station by György Sánta, the former President of the Hungarian Party of Yugoslavia, to be driven "amid scenes of indescribable jubilation" to the main square, now once more bearing the name of Saint Stephen, King of Hungary, where the re-annexation was praised by the Prime Minister as a just and everlasting deed. After a ritual involving the breaking of a loaf of "Bácska bread" Horthy decorated officers and soldiers who had distinguished themselves in the Yugoslav campaign.

What was experienced by Magyars as an intoxicating national liberation was burdened by "Chetnik gunfire", armed clashes with Serb nationalists, most of them members of local Chetnik organisations. Major casualties included many innocent civilians, the vast majority of them Serbs. "Protection against Serb Secret Organisations", confidential material produced by the Hungarian General Staff for officers of the Royal Hungarian Army provides a reliable account of Chetnik organisations "allotted to divisions and organized as proper, military units. Members receive military and special training and are supplied with appropriate weapons." Their task in peacetime was keeping

national minorities under observation, counter-espionage and state security, in wartime, on the other hand, their duties were destruction and sabotage in hostile territory, murders, the spreading of rumours, disrupting the battle order of enemy troops, subversion by systematic propaganda in enemy-occupied territories, and finally guerrilla fighting.[4]

Maj.-Gen. Pál Peterdy, commander of the Kaposvár 10th Infantry Brigade entering Sombor (Zombor) on 13 April, in his daily report described one incident as follows: firing lasted the whole night but "in the darkness it was not possible to pin it down with certainty. Everybody suspected the larger housing blocks whereas most of the firing came from inconspicuous small houses." Some officers reckoned to have located the Chetniks in the attic of the Gymnasium, others in the Sokol House, but by morning they were given news that the shooting came from the "Serb steeple" that is from the direction of the Orthodox Church. Five shells were fired at it: "All five bull's eyes and the sniping ceased."[5]

The events at the Serb hamlet of Sirig (Szörgepuszta) NW of Temerin, just north of Novi Sad (Újvidék) led to one of the many partisan actions against Magyars in the autumn of 1944. The Hungarian home guards of Temerin herded the Serbs out to the village fields at the time of the welcome of the Hungarian army. Immediately before that however there had been a minor clash between withdrawing Yugoslav forces and the Hungarian vanguard. Although the Serb settlers waved white flags, under circumstances that have remained unclarified to the present day, the Hungarian units suddenly surrounded them killing, some estimate 111, others 470 (the lives of 150 Serbs locked in a fire station at Temerin were, at the same time, saved by a Magyar solicitor and a physician, who vouched for their not being Chetniks). In connection with the Chetniks' willingness to resort to sniping regardless of circumstances or the consequences, one incident debated down to the present day happened in the village of Gospodjinci (Boldogasszonyfalva). The daughter of the local Serb priest standing among a crowd enthusiastically welcoming the Hungarian troops stepped over to one of the officers, a captain, and drawing a gun (or a grenade according to other sources) concealed in her bouquet killed him.

Military history records only a single armed clash involving regular troops of the Hungarian and Yugoslav armies, at Bački Petrovac (Petrőc), which resulted in 65 dead and 212 wounded. According to data which are accepted nowadays, the number of Hungarians killed in regular army conflicts was 7 officers and 119 other ranks, 22 officers and 239 other ranks being wounded. Hungarian statistics put the number of civilian victims of reprisals for "Chetnik shootings" and what was referred to as "pacification" of the area at 1,242 and 1,122—predominantly Serbs—lost their lives in "irregular warfare". The number of summary executions, 313, for taking part in armed actions against

the Hungarian military, brings the total of civilian deaths to 2,870, though Yugoslav estimates compiled immediately after the war put the number of civilian fatalities in the first days of the occupation at 3,506.[6]

As soon as the territory was regained and during the subsequent military rule reliable local Magyars were co-opted into five- and ten-man committees to examine the national loyalties of the population (not just the Serbs) during the 20-odd years that the region had been part of the Yugoslav Kingdom as the Danube Banovina. Local Hungarians would go round towns and villages, often from house to house, and point out to soldiers where reliable people and where "suspect" elements lived. On 14 April, Lt.-Gen. Elemér Gorondy-Novák, commander of the Hungarian 3rd Army, ordered "the pacification of territories under guerrilla threat." This commenced with the deportation and internment of Yugoslav post-Trianon settlers and anyone considered "suspect" in regard to national loyalty. Around 12,000 people, the bulk of them volunteer *(dobrovoljac)* settlers and their family members already interned in camps, were initially expelled over the border into German-occupied Serbia, but as this met with the displeasure of the German government, who sent them back to the Serb–Hungarian border, negotiations were initiated concerning their official transfer. Indeed, the notion of resettling the entire Serb population of the Southlands in Serbia and of the Croats in Croatia was mooted. As the talks flaundered the settlers considered unreliable were for the most part taken from local internment camps to camps in the interior of Hungary (Sárvár). Some of those who appealed individually were released in the summer of 1941 or detailed to work, but the majority remained in internment until the end of the war.

From what is known today, around 50,000 Southern Slavs and their families—including public servants, teachers, lawyers, or any others who could be considered as linked in one way or another to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia—most of whom had settled in the region after 1918—fled after the territory was re-annexed by Hungary. The number of Hungarians, Szeklers from the Bukovina, Csángós from Moldavia, and members of the Magyar minorities in Croatia, Bosnia or Serbia, all those who resettled in the Southlands in state-sponsored schemes is estimated at 25,000–30,000, and it is next to impossible to guess the scale of additional spontaneous population movements.

The reintegration of the Southlands in Hungary was accompanied from the start by heightened ethnic antagonisms, further aggravated by Hungary's entrance in the war on 27 June 1941 and her participation in the German invasion of the Soviet Union.[7] Increasingly potent armed movements which threatened Hungary's integrity emerged along the southern marches directly in contact with Serbia. Royalist Chetniks were implacably anti-Communist, and their struggle against Communist Yugoslav partisans eventually culminated in civil war. But despite the socio-political hostility, both paramilitary organisations—the one under Draža Mihailović, the other under Josip Broz

Tito—had as a primary goal the restoration of dismembered Yugoslavia to its pre-1941 state and therefore represented a permanent threat to Hungary.

Amid all these difficulties, by January 1942 Hungary had achieved significant progress in respect to consolidating the legal, cultural, administrative, economic and political reintegration of the Southlands.[8] Successive Hungarian governments regarded it as a prime task to stress the local continuity of Hungarian statehood and made every effort to do away with the nationalistic and crudely anti-Magyar institutional framework that had been created by the Yugoslav state since 1918, replacing them with appropriate Hungarian institutions.

From the outset it was made plain that a sharp line would be drawn between "the indigenous Serb population", that is, Serbs living there prior to 31 October 1918, and Serbs who had moved to or been settled in the area since that date. Lt.-Gen. Béla Novákovits, head of the military administration for the Hungarian 3rd Army, starting out from the premise that "part of the indigenous Serb population has the inclination to become loyal citizens of the Magyar homeland," instructed the local heads of the military administration to promote that process "in an appropriate manner." He forbade arrests of Serbs "in the absence of well-founded suspicion of wrongdoing," numerous instances of which had occurred from the very start. In his order he emphasised that "even if certain measures are unavoidable in a particular case, they should be carried out with the greatest tact and always in such a manner as to make it patent that the measure is not directed against the aggregate of the ethnic Serb indigenous population, but only the particular individual affected by it" He urged local commanders to promote manifestations of loyalty towards the Hungarian state on the part of indigenous Serbs "with due understanding and tactful conduct."[9]

Barely had that consolidation process been embarked on than it was sundered by an incitement to revolt in the name of the approaching proletarian revolution by the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. That Party, at the back of an ever-growing number of subversive exploits, was tightly bound to the Soviet Union, a country with a social structure not only vigorously rejected by Hungary but at war with her. The first act of sabotage took place on 19 July at Stári Bećej (Óbecse) where the harvested grain was set of fire. By October there were over 30 similar incidents, accompanied by armed clashes with the Hungarian gendarmerie as well as the army. Perpetrators were in all cases tried in a military court-martial and summarily executed, and firm steps were taken to disband Communist organisations. On 1 October, however, the central police station in Subotica was tipped off that "more widespread incendiarism, explosions and Communist unrest" was to be expected, with weapons and explosives being supplied by revolutionaries in Croatia. In essence it was under the influence of that tip-off that General Ferenc Szombathelyi, after 6 September the Hungarian Chief of the General

Staff, advised Prime Minister Bárdossy that martial law be declared in the Southlands to suppress hostile conspiracies and acts of sabotage aimed at the Hungarian gendarmerie or army. As cases of that nature, he emphasised, overstepped the bounds of acts of disaffection, he proposed that such cases be dealt with solely by the Chief of General Staff, or in other words that the right to exercise jurisdiction be removed from other commanding officers:

> Subversion has recently increased vigorously in Bačka and is supported with armed support from Croatia. It is a Communist organization operating on a pan-Slav basis and its military aspects (acts of disaffection and sabotage aimed at weakening the army's striking power) occur in much greater number and in a more dangerous form than Communist conspiracies heretofore.[10]

In the course of anti-Communist investigations carried out that autumn, according to Szombathelyi, 2,367 persons were arrested and tried by a summary court with Captain Vilmos Dominich as Judge Advocate and the "flying court", so called because it was was always locally convened in ever-different towns, sentences also being carried out on the spot. Between 1 October and 1 December 1941 around 600 cases were charged; 342 arrested persons were tried by General Staff Court Martial of whom 116 were adjudged guilty of a charge of disaffection; 79 were condemned to death by hanging and 64 actually executed, the sentences of the others being commuted by Szombathelyi. In all cases sentences included the sequence of execution, with the other condemned men being obliged to watch the earlier executions. Less serious cases were passed on to five-man special panels of law courts in the cities of Szeged and Pécs.

It may be noted at this point that the Chetniks also strove to build up their organization in Bačka, but those attempts were nipped in the bud and thus they failed to commit any acts of sabotage. The sole attempt drawing mainly on 97 former Yugoslav army officers, was wound up in the autumn of 1943. Two of their leaders were condemned to death by the court martial, but neither sentence was carried out.[11]

Nonetheless, by late October 1941 it was clear that for all the severe sentences handed down by General Staff Courts Martial, this failed to stop the partisans, who were continuously being reinforced from across the border. At the end of December 1941 the gendarme post at Žabalj (Zsablya) was reliably informed that "suspicious elements infiltrated" from Banat into Bačka. A few days later several suspected partisans were arrested in Zabalj, then in early January 1942, at a nearby farmstead, gendarmes were involved in a gun battle with armed men who were hiding there. Seven Hungarians were wounded and ten partisans were killed. This marked the start of army reinforcements in Šajkaška, ("boatman country")." To be more specific, on Szombathelyi's orders on 6 January there commenced "a systematic combing through and mopping

up" of the area, a round-up aimed at eliminating "Communist and Chetnik agitation." The Germans also embarked on a series of raids in a hunt for partisans, and it is now known that the two actions were co-ordinated by the Hungarian and German authorities. The raids were extended to Novi Sad, with Szombathelyi from the outset entrusting the unified command of the Hungarian military and gendarme units to Lt.-Gen. Ferenc Feketehalmy-Czeydner.

In the course of secret Hungarian negotiations with the British in 1943, and of contact with Chetnik leader Draža Mihailović (he was acquitted in Serbia a good few years ago of all responsibility for war crimes and rehabilitated), the Hungarian representative Károly Schrekker sent a voluminous memorandum to the British ambassador in Ankara in April 1943 including an account of the raid:

> In Novi Sad, Serb partisans on the pretext of a revolutionary uprising by"Chetniks" (an uprising did indeed break out and had to be put down), the local commanding officers gave an order for the mass killing of Serbs and Jews and gave permission for brazen looting. Telephone cables to Budapest were deliberately cut to ensure that counter-orders could not be transmitted, and it took 48 hours for Budapest to learn what had happened. Orders for atrocities to cease promptly were then sent off by aeroplane, but by the time these arrived hundreds of victims had died—a massacre for which there is no parallel in Hungarian history. The affair provoked horror in Budapest, but the government was weak-kneed in punishing those responsible because the German legation and generals declared their solidarity with the transgressors.[12]

It was alleged in the indictment of Feketehalmy-Czeydner and associates in the autumn of 1943 that the round-up claimed 3,309 victims. The statistics assembled by the command of the Hungarian 5th Army suggest that a total of 3,340 individuals disappeared, among them 2,550 Serbs, 743 Jews, 11 ethnic Hungarians, 13 Russians, 7 Germans, 2 Croats, 1 Slovak, and 13 Ruthenes (they included 792 women and 147 children); in Novi Sad specifically, there was a total of 1,246 victims, the majority of them Jewish.

The "raid" did a great deal of harm to Hungary's international reputation. It was not just the Yugoslav government in exile which reacted furiously. General Walter Kuntze, deputy commander of the German 12th Army reported to the army high command (Oberkommado der Wehrmacht) as early as 5 January that the armed clash with the Šajkaška partisan detachment had been "blown out of proportion" in Budapest, and that the disproportionate counteraction was meant to prepare the ground for Hungarian troops to enter the Banat.[13] The true foreign-political message of the action that was addressed to the Germans was not, however, a preparation for entry into the Banat as Kuntze supposed. Much more to the point was the temporal coincidence with a visit paid in January 1942 by Jochim von Ribbentrop, the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Field

Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces. It is known that von Ribbentrop arrived in Budapest on 6 January in order to demand the wholehearted engagement of the entire Hungarian army at the eastern front, whereas Keitel arrived on 20 January for discussions concerning the details. By then plans for clearing Novi Sad were ready. It was not just a matter of that temporal coincidence alone, however. That is supported by a 10 January letter that Regent Horthy wrote to Hitler as well as by the complete official record of a court martial which commenced on 14 December 1943.[14] According to the record Ferenc Fóty, a liaison officer sent by the Department of Counter-Intelligence (VKF 2) to Novi Sad alleged that in respect of von Ribbentrop and Keitel's visit to Budapest he was given the order that it was "in the nation's interest" to be able to supply proof that partisan activity was being directed from the Banat, and that Hungary's action had been part of the German mopping-up operation of the Banat partisans. At the talks with Ribbentrop, Prime Minister Bárdossy did indeed ask, with reference to the situation in the Balkans, for moderation in the German requests. Horthy in his 10 January letter to Hitler, likewise with reference to partisan activity that flowed over from the Banat onto Hungarian territory, asked Hitler to be permitted to withdraw the Hungarian armoured corps from the eastern front and/or a reduction in the number of Hungarian units to be sent to the eastern front. Hungary managed to secure that latter reduction by dint of permitting the Waffen SS to recruit in Hungary. With particular reference to the extension ("overdimensioning" was the then-current jargon) of the raid in Novi Sad, it should be mentioned that from the start of 1942 German military circles had been vigorously pressing the Hungarians to intensify the struggle against Tito, culminating in the German request in 1943 relating to the Hungarian occupation forces in the Balkans.[15]

In the autumn of 1943, with a view to seeking a more favourable assessment of Hungary after the war, Horthy, the then premier Miklós Kállay, and Colonel General Ferenc Szombathelyi were prepared to call the guilty to account (Horthy's decision can be dated 11 October 1943) something that no other government in German-dominated wartime Europe was prepared to do. The history of the trial which went ahead, or to be more accurate the escape of the accused officers, is one of the better known aspects of the round-up, so let it be noted that even before the trial had got under way the Hungarian government had made a start on estimating the damage done to Serb families, primarily those in Novi Sad (Jews were not included). The Government allocated two million *pengő*"[16] to the committee charged with distributing compensation with the instruction that support be paid out primarily to families that had been left without an income earner and to promptly pay for minor, readily assessable material damage. By doing so, it was argued, "the political, social and moral effect of taking this step should become immediately apparent."[17] The committee put the material damage at 9,327,930 *pengő* and the income support due to death of

the family head at 452,040 *pengő*. Of the two million pengő that had been allocated the committee had actually paid out 717,410 *pengő* by the time Germany occupied Hungary on 15 October 1944, at which point the newly appointed Sztójay government prohibited any further disbursements.[18] The Kállay administration returned to the relaxation of the "iron-handed" policy, restoring an even-handed minority policy in education, use of the mother tongue, the functioning of certain clubs, wider scope for culture, etc. benefiting Serbs.

The raid left indelible marks in the twentieth-century history of both Hungary and Yugoslavia (Serbia); for a while, indeed, it strained to the utmost relations between Magyar and Serb inhabitants in what is now the Vojvodina. József Sombor-Schweinitzer, Deputy Chief Commissioner of Police in Hungary, whom the minister for internal affairs dispatched to Bačka immediately after the raid with the objective of "restoring [in Serbs] the shattered trust they had placed in civic loyalty," wrote wrily towards the end of the visit: "there is barely a Serb who could be declared willing to serve the Hungarian interest."[19]

Hungary's status as vanquished and Yugoslavia's as victor at the end of WWII meant that any favourable effect that may have been made by the conciliatory steps Hungary had taken was reduced, or rather, completely nullified. But it was not just the unfavourable denouement of the war for Hungary and its foreign policy implications which neutralised the appeasement offered to the Serbs by Kállay's government. A segment of the civilian population including the intelligentsia led by Milan Popović, who sat as their representative in the Hungarian parliament and, in his own words, distanced himself from "the apostles of hatred and impatience"—i.e. the Yugoslav resistance movements—and would have been willing to reassimilate as a national minority within the framework of a Hungarian state, were political featherweights both at home and abroad. Their policy of seeking a modus vivendi with Budapest was regarded by both wings of the Yugoslav resistance as a betrayal. (In Yugoslavia, after the war, Popović and the entire editorial board of the only Serbian-language daily newspaper in the Southlands were tried as war criminals, sentenced to death and executed.)

By the autumn of 1944 Europe's future was not being settled in Berlin, but in London, Moscow and Washington. The Southlands were not governed any more from Budapest but again from Belgrade. Its Serbs had become proud citizens of a victorious Yugoslavia that now enjoyed an international respect such as it had never previously had; its Magyars again ended as an exposed ethnic minority, losing all the advantages and privileges when being integrated in the motherland. They also had to bear the burden of the 1941 to late 1944 period. During the months when the end of the war was already in sight, the victors knew no mercy.

The autumn of 1944: Retake and retribution

By the spring of 1944, the partisans had liberated a sizeable part of Serbia, and by late July–early August their vanguard had reached pockets in the Southlands where local sympathisers joined them. On 6 September, the Red Army crossed the Romanian–Serb frontier at Kladovo and, joined by partisan units, made a start in repossessing the Banat, laying the groundwork for a breakthrough toward Bačka and Baranja and thus freeing the way for the Red Army to push on towards Budapest and Vienna.

Towards the end of September the evacuation of the Hungarian civil administration from the Southlands began, and on 4 October the district command of the Szeged 5th Honvéd division ordered the evacuation of the territory south of the Ferenc Canal. The Szekler of Bukovina also set out, and, on October 7, the organized evacuation by German troops of the ethnic Germans of Bačka and Baranja started.

No armed clashes occurred in the re-annexed southern areas between the retreating units of the Hungarian Army and the Yugoslav Popular Liberation Army or Red Army regulars. The Magyar inhabitants in no way resisted the incoming partisans nor did they do anything to hinder their advance.

The decree establishing Yugoslav military rule in the Banat, Bačka and Baranja was signed by Tito on 17 October, the day after he arrived in Vrsac in the Banat. This lasted until the end of January 1945. Tito justified this measure referring to "the extraordinary circumstances under which these areas existed at the time of the occupation" (i.e. at the time when they were re-annexed by Hungary). The aim of military administration, the decree continues, "is to remove as speedily and fully as possible any misfortune the occupiers and foreign elements whe settled in the region caused to our people as well as the full mobilization of the economy in the interest of the successful prosecution of the war of popular liberation."[20] Major-General Ivan Rukavina, the head of the military administration, openly spoke of its nationalist and punitive functions. In his view the introduction of a military administration was necessary in order "to safeguard the nation's future and the South Slav character of the region. In the *Slobodna Vojvodina* newspaper of the United Vojvodina Popular Liberation Front, a member of the Vojvodina Territorial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia is even more to the point:

> We may have routed the German and Hungarian conquering hordes and have driven them westwards, but the poisonous weeds that they have scattered have not yet been eradicated (...) the tens and hundreds of thousands of foreign elements—who were settled on territories where our ancestors cleared the forests and drained the marshes to create the conditions necessary for a civilised life—are still sniping from the dark on our fighters and on Russian soldiers, and doing everything they can to prevent the normalization of conditions, getting ready for the time when, in this, for us, difficult situation they can once again stab us in the back.[21]

The repressive measures covered Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, indeed each and every ethnic or social group in multi-ethnic Yugoslavia classified as "enemies of the people" or "war criminals" by those in power. The ethnic German minority were collectively declared to be guilty, and although the Hungarians were not officially labelled as such, in the autumn of 1944 they were treated in much the same way and were reckoned unreliable for many years to come. They were not admitted to membership by the newly formed local Popular Liberation Committees and in many places even the public use of Hungarian was prohibited. Exploiting (or rather exceeding) opportunities created by the Hungarian ceasefire, there were mass expulsions across the border of Hungarians as well as Germans who had settled in the region after 1941. The Serb inhabitants of three villages—Čurug (Csurog) Žabalj (Zsablya) and Možorin (Mozsor)—referring to the role played by local Magyars in round-ups, specially requested that the entire ethnic Hungarian population be expelled, and on that basis they had them interned and legally barred for good from their own homes. According to Hungarian statistics at least 65,000 were expelled from the Southlands or forced to leave their homes, which is almost double the number of those who fled from the region in 1918 at the end of WW1.

Executions and torture on a mass scale, indiscriminate and, at first, usually without due legal process, using methods reminiscent of the Middle Ages, were employed by partisans as soon as they entered the Southlands at the beginning of October 1944, and retribution proceeded in several waves until the end of that year. It remains impossible to the present day to give even an approximate estimate of the numbers involved. Various publications, both in Hungary and abroad, basing themselves on the number of victims who can be identified by name, have put the total at 5,000–6,000, but other estimates have ranged from 20,000 to 60,000. Lesser repressive measures continued even after mass executions of Magyars abated, and efforts were made to keep them, in the parlance of the times, within the bounds of "revolutionary legality".

The first reports about the cruelties inflicted on the region by partisans reached Hungary even before the country's collapse and the end of the war. They were sent by the already disintegrating but still functioning Hungarian civil administration to the Department for Minorities of the Prime Minister's Office in the short period that General Géza Lakatos held that office (29 August–16 October). Those from the Medjumure gendarmerie and National Assembly Member Iván Nagy arrived on 31 August. The latter forwarded a letter dated 7 August by a woman called Rózsi Lajkó, a resident of Čakovec (Csáktornya). She had written to a brother in Doroslovo (Dorozsló) to describe the circumstances under which their father had died. According to her harrowing tale, partisans had occupied the village on the night of 22 July 1944. They assembled 68 people, driving them out to the village outskirts where

there was a marshy area. The older ones, including their father, were gunned down. To quote from the letter, written in mangled, misspelt Hungarian:

> ... and they were made to sing and they were beaten, prodded, shot in the head and left in the underbrush still tied up even though still alive to drown there... there were no more dead, only those old men, but we do not know why that had to be done. Dear Brother, we have been orphaned, Father is no more, our hearts are in mourning.[22]

József Grősz, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kalocsa and Bács wrote a longer memo on behalf of the episcopate at the end of April 1945 to draw the attention of Foreign Minister János Gyöngyösi to the expulsions and executions, protesting against them and requesting the government to take vigorous action:

> The ethnic Hungarians of the Southlands were sorely troubled at the end of last year, when, as far a I have been able to ascertain from credible reports available albeit the border is closed, thousands and tens of thousands of Hungarians were carried off by Yugoslav partisans to places unknown. According to reports that are barely possible to check the number of Hungarians killed by the Yugoslavs amounts to many thousands. (...) Adding to that, in recent days the Yugoslav authorities have been expelling in their thousands from certain areas Hungarians who moved to the Southlands after 1941 and so are not Yugoslav citizens, as well as those who fled from their homes anticipating the arrival of the Russian army but returned later. I am well aware that under the terms of the armistice the Hungarian government is responsible for transporting back to Hungary all non-Yugoslavs citizens, but I protest, and I am impelled to ask for vigorous action on your part, against the way in which these expulsions are actually taking place (...)Those being expelled were assembled more or less simultaneously parish by parish, without any warning, being allowed barely enough time to gather the most essential clothing and, on average, *500 pengő,* in ready cash. The homes of the expellees and all the furniture and fittings within them were placed under lock and key, sealed by the Yugoslav authorities, but in many places an immediate start was made on carrying away furniture and fittings.[23]

According to minutes recorded on 2 August 1945 at the border station of Nagyszéksós:

> a partisan detachment of around 150 men aimed submachine guns at the patrol and placed machine guns and heavy machine guns at both ends of the bridge. With guns behind their backs, 157 Swabians [i.e. ethnic Germans] were then driven by partisans onto Hungarian territory.

When the captain commanding the Hungarian border patrol, in keeping with orders, asked for them to be taken back, the Serb company commander replied:

if need be, he would resort to arms to prevent the Swabians being sent back over; he was not going to take orders from a Russian, because Russians were nobodies. Tito was the only one to give orders to him, and if need be he would chase the Russians back to the line of the River Tisza. [...] if there was much more gassing then they would be in Röszke within half an hour and in Szeged within two hours (with a bit of fighting) and the Danube–Tisza line would be the frontier.[24]

On 17 July 1946 Archbishop József Mindszenty of Esztergom, the Prince-Primate of Hungary, forwarded to Foreign Minister Gyöngyösi anonymous reports titled "Hungarian Fate in the Southlands" and "The True Situation of Hungarians in Yugoslavia" that had been given to him personally by a deputation from the Southlands. These made special reference to the executions of Hungarians at Bezdan, the deportation of Hungarians from Čurug and Žabalj, and the tragic death of Antal Reök, the Lord Lieutenant of Subotica:

Dr. Antal Reök, Lord Lieutenant of Szabadka [(Subotica], was lured over, and a few weeks later he was thrown down from a balcony at the Ban's Palace in Újvidék (Novi Sad). Dr József Bogner, a newspaper editor, was executed after prolonged torture; the parish priest of Torontáloroszi [Rusko Selo] was beaten to death in a cellar by Tito's Gestapo; Abbot István Virág, the 84-year-old parish priest of Horgos (Horgoş) dropped dead when he was about to be executed. Lajos Varga, the parish priest of Moholy [Mohol] was dragged for miles behind a cart until he died and his corpse was them mutilated; Rev. István Köves of Mozsor [Mošorin] was carried off to Újvidék from Hungarian territory.

The case of Hungarians executed on charges of sabotage in the mine at Vrdnik was reported as well as the notorious slave market at the Novi Sad internment camp:

At half past four at down, men and women from the camp are separately marched off; at half past five they line up in front of prospective employers who take their pick and take them off. There are some employers who are only on the look-out for women and girls; they are usually from one military unit or another. The number of those who have syphilis is a dreadfully high. Towards the end of April at daybreak, at 3:30 a.m., a soldier came to the camp and made for the women's dormitory and chose a girl, saying that "he only needed her for a couple of hours,' and true to his word she dragged herself back at 6 a.m. half dead. Ordained priests are used to clean out lavatories or to cure raw horse and cattle hides and pig skins for months on end. They are not allowed to say mass, or administer sacraments to the sick (this being reactionary), not even to go out onto the street.[25]

By now a huge body of sources and recollections gathered by local historians provide unequivocal evidence that the mopping-up operations conducted throughout Yugoslavia were planned centrally by the highest military and

political circles and also directed from there. The goal of the cruel, indiscriminate retribution in the last phase of the war was the annihilation of every possible and presumed enemy. No political opponent was to remain in a position of power, and the new, as yet weak state bodies had to be consolidated by arousing fear (in this context, the Serbian historians expressly mention a "forest" psychosis from which the new power elite suffered).

Units of the Department for the Protection of the People (*Odeljenje za zaštitu naroda,* OZNA) throughout the entire territory of Yugoslavia received orders personally from Aleksandar Ranković, the minister for internal affairs and head of OZNA, to undertake a purge and to liquidate and carry out mass executions. Political and class enemies, POWs and civilians, collaborators, Ustashi, Chetniks, Germans and Magyars and a long list of other groups were mentioned, which, in practical terms meant that anyone of any ethnic or social origin could be labelled an enemy of the people apart from partisans. In a telegram to the leaders of OZNA in Croatia dated 15 May 1945 Ranković made his position clear. He was dissatisfied with the activities of the internal-affairs organs in Zagreb, he wrote, and relieved their commander of his post for "unsatisfactory work" as during the 10 days which had elapsed since the liberation of the city, contrary to his orders, "altogether just 200 bandits" had been executed".[26]

OZNA was formed on the Soviet model by Tito's order on 13 May 1944, as "the sword of the Revolution," to detect and deal with enemies at home and abroad. At first it comprised four sections: 1) intelligence, 2) counter-intelligence, 3) army security, and 4) a technical/statistics department. In August 1944, however, a notorious OZNA corps was created, expressly for the liquidation of "enemies of the people", the seven divisions and numerous brigades of which operated throughout Yugoslavia. The activities of these execution brigades in areas with mixed ethnic populations such as the Vojvodina were supported by the local Slavs; indeed, in many instances they played an active role in the settling of accounts. Initially these executions went ahead without any formal procedure, on the basis of suggestions by informants, membership lists of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party left behind by the Hungarian authorities, membership of Béla Imrédy's similarly right-extremist Party of Hungarian Renewal, holding public office during the period of re-annexation by Hungary, having been a Levente[27] instructor and often priests and teachers as well as having enthusiastically welcomed the Hungarians in 1941 was enough for inclusion in the list of "war criminals".

There are hundreds of sources published in Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia which show that often enough courts martial dispensing summary justice were only set up *post facto,* on orders from the central government, to produce sentences to indicate that those executed had been war criminals and the like. Laws and decrees at the time made it possible for an individual to be declared

a war criminal or enemy of the people on the basis of a simple denunciation, and the need to produce any evidence and argue the case could simply be ignored. This was particularly true in late 1944 and early 1945.[28] That is also supported by the findings of ongoing research in the Vojvodina Archive at Novi Sad within the framework of a joint Hungarian-Serb committee established in 2010 to look for data concerning reprisals against Magyars and Serbs during WWII. That Archive holds around 284 boxes of informants' reports sent to the Vojvodina Commission of Investigation into the Occupation and their War Crimes (the War Crimes Committee as it is called more informally). Charges were concocted and criminal proceedings started on the basis of reports such as those held there.[29] Following a public appeal to report war crimes by the War Crimes Committee a countrywide total of 938, 828 informants' reports were received by its local and central agencies on which basis 66,420 persons, including 899 ethnic Hungarians, were classified as war criminals, not including "enemies of the people," a less serious category.

Ongoing research initiated by the Hungarian-Serbian Historians' Joint Committe is expected to shed light on such so far unanswered questions as to how many of those informants' reports originated in Vojvodina, and a breakdown by town and village. Another issue to be clarified concerns the list of war criminals. It should be established who among them was sentenced to death, a prison term or confiscation of property. The list moreover contains the names of many well-known and less well-known Hungarian politicians who were not charged or sentenced. To mention just a few: Regent Horthy figures in the list but the Yugoslavs did not request his extradition nor did they charge him. Equally, one might mention Iván Nagy, an ethnic Hungarian politician in the Southlands who between 1941 and 1944 was a member of parliament, and who fled to South America, or alternatively there is László Baky, Undersecretary in the Ministry of the Interior under Sztójay, who was sentenced to death by a Hungarian court and executed. (His name occurs twice over in the list as Baky and Baki, both times with the same case reference number and occupation and war crime charges). The only reason for bringing this up is that this source has often been misinterpreted and it is falsely claimed that 899 Hungarians were executed for war crimes. The list is merely of those against whom an allegation of war crimes was confirmed but it gives no guidance on what court proceeding may have ensued, what the judgement of the court was, or even whether or not an execution took place.

The horrors of the retribution were meant demonstrate the victorious final end of war and civil war in 1944. By arousing fear, terror and collective amnesia, every trace of the re-annexation was meant to be erased from the memories of ethnic Hungarians in the Vojvodina so as to strengthen the initially extremely weak loyalties which bound them to a state so alien to them with its radically new social ideology and structure. Nor should it be forgotten that Hungary, being on the losing side, was made to sit in the defendant's

dock, and the great powers reformulated the disharmony which had existed between ethnic and state boundaries since 1918. In 1945 some three million members of the Hungarian nation once again found themselves outside Hungary's borders. Yugoslavia was able triumphantly to take its seat at the side of the victorious Allies and so to reunify a country which had been dismembered in 1941. There was no power in the world which could have compelled Yugoslavia to face up to the atrocities committed against innocent civilians. As a result, to the best of my knowledge, in Serbia not one person has been sentenced for the part they played in reprisals against ethnic Hungarians.

The dissolution of the Yugoslav state created the conditions for the new states emerging out of its ruins to recreate their identity allowing people to become acquainted with this particular chapter of their Yugoslav (national) Communist past and to mourn, at last, not only its Serb victims but also ethnic Hungarians and Germans. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ Cited by Aleksandar Kasaš, *Jedno svedočanstvo o Apriliskom ratu u Bakoj 1941* [An Eyewitness on the April 1941 War in Bačka]. Godine Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju, [Historical Collection of the Serb Matica] br. 49/1994: pp. 172–173.

2 ■ Ibid., p. 177.

3 ■ Attila Balázs. *Kinek észak, kinek dél vagy a világ kicsiben* (To Some the North, To Some the South, or the World in Miniature). Budapest: Palatinus, 2008, pp. 383–384.

4 ■ Hadtörténelmi Levéltár (War History Archive = HL): Records of the Kaposvár 10th Infantry Brigade, 1941-42/I.b.

5 ■ HL: Records of the Kaposvár 10th Infantry Brigade, 1941-42/I.b. The Sokol (Falcon) was a flamboyantly nationalistic gymnastic and physical fitness movement started in 1862 by Miroslav Tyrš primarily for middle-class students but over time increasingly for the working class, in the Bohemian (i.e. Czech) region of what was soon to become the Austro-Hungarian empire. The Slav nationalist aspect led to the first Sokol club being established in what was then still the Hungarian city of Novi Sad (Újvidék). Nowadays Sokol clubs again have a strong presence primarily in the Czech Republic but also in Serbia.

6 ■ I have no access to data for Yugoslav army casualties, only the total of those taken prisoner of war, Hungarian military sources state that in April 1941, 150 Yugoslav officers and 2,000 men were captured. After a time those Serbs who were not natives of Old Serbia were released. The remainder—70 officers and 1,200 other ranks—were handed over to the Germans [MOL (Hungarian National Archive) XIX-J-1a-IV-107.II. 30 October 1945.]. The number of Yugoslav Royal Army POWs of Danube Banovina, who had been captured by the Germans or Italians and were released due to the activities of a POW selection committee in Vienna came to 9,521 by the end of May 1942, of which 4,282 were Magyar, 1,682 Slovene, 1,195 Serb, and 689 Bunjevac, i.e. southern Slavs mainly from the Bačka region.

7 ■ Great Britain delayed a declaration of war on Hungary until 7 December 1941.

8 ■ For further information see the articles on "Délvidék 1941–1944 I.II." (Southlands 1941–1944) in *Limes,* Nos. 2 & 3 (2009).

9 ■ MOL K-63. A Külügyminisztérium politikai iratai [Political Documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 1941-47-4,90.

10 ■ MOL K-28. A Miniszterelnökség kisebbségi osztályának iratai [Documents of the Prime Ministerial Office's Department for Minorities], 1941-R-22,498.

11 ■ See Enikő A. Sajti in "Délvidék 1941–1944," op. cit. pp. 228–238.

12 ■ Gyula Juhász, ed., *Magyar-brit titkos tárgyalások 1943-ben* [Secret Talks between Hungary and Great-Britain in 1943] Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1978, doc. 21/c., pp. 121–122.
13 ■ Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije. Dokumenti Nemačkog Rajha 1941. [Documents and Facts about the War of Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia; Documents of the German Reich 1941] T. XII.Knj.1. Belgrade, 1973. Doc. No. 2, p. 13.
14 ■ Enikő A. Sajti and György Markó, "Ismeretlen dokumentum az 1942 januári délvidéki razzia résztvevőinek peréről. 1943. december 14–1944. január 14" [Unknown Document about the Trial of Participants in the Raid in the Southlands, January 1942: 14 December 1943–14 January 1944]. *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények,* 1985, no. 5, pp. 426–456. Miklós Szinai and László Szűcs, eds., *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai* [Nicholas Horthy's Secret Writings]. Budapest: Kossuth, 1962, Doc. No. 62, pp. 313–318.
15 ■ For a fairly recent article on this issue, see Gábor Kovács, "Szombathelyi Ferenc és a 'Balkáni megszálló hadosztályok ügye'1943-ban" [Ferenc Szombathelyi and 'the Divisions Occupying the Balkans' in 1943] *Századok,* 2005, No. 5, pp. 1371–1425.
16 ■ At then-prevailing exchange rates, 1 pound sterling was worth 27.8 *pengő,* 1 US dollar 5.7 *pengő,* and 1 German mark 1.4 *pengő.*
17 ■ MOL K-28. [PM Office, Department for Minorities], 1941-R-27,709.
18 ■ Enikő A. Sajti, *Impériumváltások, revízió, kisebbség. Magyarok a Délvidéken 1918–1947* [Changes of Empire, Revision, Minority: Hungarians in the Southlands 1918–1947]. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2004, pp. 305–306.
19 ■ Enikő A. Sajti, op.cit. p. 292.
20 ■ Josip Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela,* (Collected Works), vol. 24. Belgrade, 1984, pp. 96–97.
21 ■ *Slobodna Vojvodina,* 28 October 1944.
22 ■ MOL K-28. [PM Office, Department for Minorities], 1941-R-25,965.
23 ■ Archive of Kalocsa Archdiocese (KFL) I.1.a. Generalia de Archidioecesis. 9145. 476.
24 ■ MOL KÜM XIX-J-1-k-Jug.-16/f-32.338/pol.-1945. Box 22.
25 ■ MOL KÜM XIX-J-1-a-IV-109-1981/Bé.-1946. Box 55.
26 ■ Zdravko Dizdar, Vladimir Geiger, Milan Pojić & Mate Rupi, eds. *Partizanska i komunistička represija i zločini u Hrvatskoj 1944–1946.* [Partisan and Communist Reprisals and Crimes in Croatia] Dokumenti, vol. 1, doc. 28, Slavonski Brod, 2005, p. 113.
27 ■ With archaic associations with knight errantry, the Levente was an organisation membership of which was obligatory for boys between 12 and 21 years. They received regular physical training and army-type drill including the basics of weapon handling.
28 ■ See Dizdar *et al.,* vol. I, doc. 14, p. 91.
29 ■ Zsuzsanna Mezei, "Rendszerváltás a Vajdaságban 1944/45-ben a Vajdasági Levéltár fondjainak tükrében" [Change of Régime in Vojvodina in 1944–45 in the Light of Documents in the Vojvodina Archive], in: Karol Biernacki and István Fodor, eds., *Impériumváltás a Vajdaságban (1944)—Promena imperije u Vojvodini 1944 godine* [Change of Rule in Vojvodina in 1944]. Szeged–Senta, 2010, pp. 119–148.

Bačka, the Autumn of 1944: Four Witnesses

For many long years Yugoslav historians and political discourse kept silent about partisan revenge during the last months of the Second World War and in its aftermath. The aim of silence and denial was, from the beginning, to redraw, purify and paint in heroic hues the history of the coming to power of the new partisan elite, and the genesis of their minority policy. The political message of this pseudo-history was that revenge and retribution were alien to the new political elite and to the Communist regime, and that the calling to account was just as it was directed exclusively against war criminals and the "enemies of the people".

At the time of the falling apart of Tito's Yugoslavia, from the beginning of the 90s, works began to appear in Vojvodina which, partially based on documentary evidence in the registers of deaths and on oral history, studied how the partisans had acted against Hungarians.

What is published here can be said to be typical of dozens of stories that are on record. They testify that the arrests were carried out in an organized manner, largely on the basis of denunciations by the local population, often motivated by personal quarrels, and that in the course of interrogations the prisoners were maltreated. The relatives learned only much later of the death of those executed, and the cause of death was falsely entered in the registers of deaths. The last of the recollections commemorates the tribulations of the Hungarians of Žabalj (Zsablya). They—just like the Hungarians of Čurug (Csorog) and Sbobran (Thomasberg/Szenttamás)—were collectively relocated and had all their property confiscated. They were not allowed to return to their villages even later, because, allegedly, in those villages Hungarians had directly or indirectly participated in the round-up of Serbs in January 1942.

Enikő A. Sajti

Letter by Károly Balogh jun. concerning his father (1880–1944), resident of Senta (Zenta)*

Budapest, 27th February, 1995

Dear Professor,

It is hard to sum up briefly a lifetime that ended in tragedy, particularly since the whole of my father's life was one long series of tragedies.

Nonetheless, I'll try..

[...] He was born in Zenta on 20th July, 1893, into a poor but honest and industrious family. [...] One of three children of a large family who survived infancy, he was the only one whom, with the help of a scholarship, his parents could afford to educate. He completed secondary school in Zenta. As soon as he matriculated, the First World War broke out. He fought at the Italian frontline and was wounded at the Isonzo. He was awarded every existing decoration and was demobbed as a first lieutenant. When the war was over, he returned to his parents' house. He could not put up with Trianon and the occupation. Already then the occupiers were looking for him to kill him, but grandfather, using his peasant's wits, hid him in a pit he dug in the yard. At that point he still succeeded in evading death. When the danger was over, he left the parental home and native town and crossed the border to the mother country. He cleared the roads of snow, worked hard and studied. He studied law and became a judge. [...] In 1939 he retired for health reasons. We lived in Szeged then. I attended the sixth form of the Piarist secondary school when, in 1941, the Southlands were re-annexed by Hungary.

It was a great joy to us to move back to Zenta in July 1941. My father was happy that he would be able to help support his elderly father and his sister, Katalin. I completed grammar school at Zenta, matriculated in June, 1943, and in the autumn started my studies at the faculty of law of the University of Kolozsvár (Cluj). After two months in Kolozsvár, I had to look for a job because my father's pension was not enough to finance my studies. [...] I was at Szabadka (Subotica) at the time of the liberation. [...] The fighting began around two in the afternoon. We moved to the cellar. The building, together with the railway station, was occupied by German and Hungarian soldiers; it was from there that they provided cover for the trains that took part in the retreat. A terrible bloodbath, street fighting all night, till morning. By the morning Yugoslav partisan and Russian units coming from the direction of the park occupied the station and our building. It was a hot situation: the Germans believed there were partisans in the cellar, so they threw bundles of hand grenades in; those moving in thought that German or Hungarian soldiers were

* ■ János Szloboda, *Zentán történt* (It Happened at Senta), Pomáz: Kráter, 2005, pp. 112–21.

there. With the help of an interpreter, we managed to tell them that we were civilians who lived in the house.

Two weeks later we succeeded in returning to Zenta on a goods train. My father, sensing that it was a repeat of the post-First World War situation, went out to Tornyos, to one of the homesteads that belonged to Ignác Rudics. In the parental home, at no.249 Gyepsor, the room looking out into the street that my father used was sealed by the partisans. When searching it, they had taken the Remington typewriter. The red paper bearing the seal bore the slogan: *"Smrt fasizmu, sloboda narodu!"* Death to fascism, freedom to the people!

I lived then with my father's brother's family where I had stayed as a small child, up to the age of five. I courted a girl, whom I later married, whose mother was Hungarian and her father a Serb.

At the end of October, 1944, the situation appeared to be normalising. I then made a mistake that could not be made good. I sent a message to my father to come home from the homestead because his room had been sealed and they were looking for him. On 31st October, 1944, at ten in the morning, we went, in good faith, to the Town Hall to tell them we were at home, lest they imagine we had escaped. (If only we had!) We told them the purpose of our coming, they looked at each other and ordered us to wait. Two or three minutes later, however, instead of being given the key to our home, two armed men stood behind us and told us that we were under arrest. They took us down to the police lockup, where 40–50 people were in a large room. One of the armed men was my fiancée's friend's father. I should imagine that is how the family learned what had happened to us. It was permitted to bring in lunch. The nights were terrible. We slept on straw; during the night drunken partisans came in with torches looking for their personal enemies, to take revenge on them, or to beat them up. They took them next door; I remember a fat fireman who was given a terrible beating. Two days later we were taken to the district court prison. This was a building with a courtyard, the cells opened from long corridors. There were six, eight, or even ten men crowded together in a small cell. Once when going to the lavatory I saw Imre Szabó in the corridor. He was a bank clerk, a good-humoured man, always smiling. We were both shocked to see each other. Imre, how did you get here? I asked. Just like you, was the answer, but the guards were hurrying us on, telling us that talking was forbidden. We never saw each other again.

In the afternoon of 4th November, 1944, the "interrogations" began. Those who were summoned were taken by a guard from the cell to a larger office at the end of the corridor. It was quite dark by the time they called out my name. Unwashed, with a four or five-day stubble, I entered the large room. Civilians wearing what looked like rags sat by a table, some on chairs, others on the table itself. Because of the cigarette smoke and the bad lighting it was difficult to make out the terrifying faces. I was questioned by an interpreter. (He was dressed in a relatively normal fashion.) He must have been Vas, the restaurant owner,

because after a few questions (had I been a soldier, where did I go to school, where did I work), he asked me, was I not the little boy, then aged four or five, who was taken along by Aunt Mariska—the wife of my uncle, Mihály Balogh—when she went to them to buy drinks for the shop. I said yes, I was that little boy. It was either that, or my fiancée—later my wife—and her mother, or both, who saved my life. Those sitting at the table spoke Serbian with each other, of which I understood nothing. All they said to the guard was: *"Mozhe"*. Allowed. This meant life, as I found out later, but at that moment I did not know that, nor did I sense it. When they said *"Ne mozhe"*—not allowed—that meant DEATH!

The guard took me back to the cell, so I could collect my coat. I asked my father if I should wait for him (because I took it for granted that he would be next), but he told me to go home, we would meet there. We said good bye to each other, kissed each other, but neither of us suspected that we would never see each other again. [...]

Once I was set free, for the next four days I took my father his lunch at noon. One day I brought jam rolls baked with a brief letter inside, describing the questions they had asked me so my father would be familiar with my "confession". Unfortunately the guard who was taking the food basket inside noticed it. He took out the letter. I thought I would be back in the cell, but I got away with it.

When on 10th November I tried to take in his breakfast, they told me, the prisoners had been taken during the night to Southern Bácska for agricultural work, corn snapping, since much of the produce remained unharvested because of the war. Even that we believed. It was only days later that the news spread that that night shots were heard from the public gardens by the Tisza bridge.

Till the end of April, 1945, I lived with the family of my wife-to-be, in their house opposite the station. One night at the end of April, around midnight, 10–12 armed partisans woke us, came in, and gave us 10 minutes to get dressed, saying that we could take belongings that fitted into a briefcase with us. My wife's sister, Sztojanka, her husband, Lajos Németh, and their two-year-old daughter, who were Hungarian citizens, were taken to the barracks, then next day were put into cattle trucks and taken to Szeged. That is how we were expelled from Yugoslavia on the basis of the armistice. Later my fiancée and I returned illegally, then tried to make it back to Szeged, but at Röszke the Yugoslav border guards noticed us, fired on us—though by then we were on Hungarian soil—took us back, interrogated us, but then let us go, only keeping our luggage.

That is how the Southlands tragedy ended for me. From May 1945, the time when I reported for service, I worked at the Szeged District office of the Ministry of Public Supply. One morning a simple, barefoot peasant came to see me. He asked to speak to me in private. We went into an empty room. He asked whether I recognised him. I did not, because I have a very bad memory for faces. He told me that we had been locked up together at Zenta. He had been there throughout with my father. He came to see me to tell me that on that certain night, on 10th November, they were taken one by one, wearing only underpants, to the

courtyard of the Zenta Town Hall lockup. They were lined up and wires were inserted under their armpits on both sides, holding them together. It was a dark, rainy night. They started in the direction of the public gardens. He knew immediately that there would be no escaping from there. At a street corner, as the line of men was turning, he freed himself from the wires and slipped out of the line. The partisans accompanying them were about six–eight metres from him. He decided: if they discover him, they'll shoot him on the spot, but by leaving the line he might save his life. He clung to the wall while the men passed him, then, barefoot and only in his underpants, he ran to the house of one of his relatives where he stayed for a few days. After that he escaped over the border to Szeged. I was so surprised, I could not speak. I listened to the shocking story without uttering a word. He finished his tale, said good bye, and left, without even telling me his name. To this day I do not know what his name is, or what became of him. I could not even ask him how he had found me, how he knew that I lived in Szeged and where I worked. I think he was the last living witness who had been, almost to the last moment, with the 65 Hungarian martyrs from Zenta, who were killed mercilessly, unjustly, without the verdict of a court.

Well, this is our sad tale. There are so many whys. Why did we have to move in 1941 from Szeged to Zenta? Why did we wait in the autumn of 1944 for the front to arrive, when my onetime Zenta schoolfellows gave me well-meant warnings that the "parachutists" would do better to return to the mother country? We had nothing to fear. We had hurt no-one, our consciences were clear. I was courting a Serbian girl; we recognised no national, religious or racial differences. That was not enough. I can see now that we should not have been so naïve.

I now live in Budapest. For the last six years I have been caring for the two elderly sisters of my mother, who died in 1925. The older one was a teacher at Sárospatak; she died on 28th September last year, at the age of 101. I now look after the youngest sister, who is 94. My son is a chemical engineer. He lives in Miskolc and works at Sajóbábony, at least until the famous firm he works for is liquidated and he will lose the first, and probably the last, job of his life.

Forgive me for writing at such length but such a bloody drama cannot be described in a few words.

I hope that your work will contribute to the preservation of the spirit of the fragmented Hungarian nation; may the memory of the martyrdom of innocent people be preserved for later generations.

A few years ago I went over to Zenta by car and took photos of that part of the Tisza embankment and flood basin to which they took so much gravel. I think the remains of my father and of his fellow martyrs must be resting under that gravel.

With best regards in the hope that I have succeeded in making a small contribution to your research.

Károly Balogh
Retired Head of Department

Dr. Sándor Zagyva's testimony concerning events in Sombor (Zsombor)*

I was in the same class as those who, together with their form mistress, Irma Eszes, disappeared in the autumn of 1944. As far as I remember, it was on 22nd–23rd October that they began picking up people. Commissioners went from street to street, from house to house. They picked up anyone who looked suspicious in the streets as well, but looked for others by name in their homes. To the best of my knowledge not five but six of my classmates disappeared: Lajos Csejuszka, Richárd Keller, István Mayer, Dezső Márki, János Németh and Imre Pastrovich. Not two but three teachers were with them, they also disappeared; I only remember the nickname of the third, and that she was the wife of Fenyvesi, the chemist. We knew her as Babi; at the time of their disappearance she had a six-month old baby. Her husband disappeared with her. He was also with the pupils and teachers who were snapping corn. Six pupils disappeared, with three teachers and the husband of one of the teachers. Of the six, János Németh was executed in Bezdán (Besdan), with that big crowd.

This is how it happened. Irma Eszes was our form mistress from the start. She had a very close relationship with us. Her principle was that we should become used to manual work, so that we would respect it later. She arranged that we could work at the town gardening department in the summer holidays. We all took part, at least all of us who did not look on that work as humiliating.

On 15th October teaching came to an end. For a while we were idle and played ping pong. The Russians and the partisans arrived on the 20th—after that we went on just as we had done before. A few days later my friend Dezső Márki came to see me, saying that the others were going to the Bosnyák homestead to snap corn, will I go with them. He listed those who had already been. I had a cold, running a temperature, so we agreed that I would join them after a day's rest. It was on that day that they disappeared. The owner of the Bosnyák homestead disappeared with them also and his son, who was about the same age as we were. The Bosnyáks were not Hungarians but Bunevatsi Catholic local Slavs.

Mária Kulcsár taught physics and chemistry in the *gimnázium;* the laboratory and store were in the school building, and she went up there even in those chaotic days. From there she had a good view of the courtyard of the police building, and right after the events she told us what had happened. There in the yard she saw them all, and recognised them, though they had all been beaten and tortured. According to what she said, they were beaten so badly that they could hardly move. When it came to taking them away in a cart, they could not get up by themselves but had to be lifted onto it. From there onwards they disappeared without a trace.

István Mayer had a younger brother, who soon afterwards joined the Bulgarian soldiers as a volunteer. Thus he was able to find out something about his lost brother and his fellows. He learned that two or three partisans

* ■ Márton Matuska, *A megtorlás napjai* (Days of Retribution), Budapest: Montázs Press, n.d., pp. 46–48.

escorted them all from the homestead. None of them showed any resistance; obviously they had no idea what lay in store for them. They went in good faith to where they were sent or taken.

I should imagine that our classmate, János Sztrilich, who is today a Catholic priest in Eszék [Osijek, Croatia], also knew what happened.

I escaped, but my father vanished. He had been picked up on the first day. He had already been there for a day or two, when a Serbian acquaintance of his saw him.

"St ces ti odve?" What are you doing here, the man asked. Following his intervention my father was released, but he was so beaten about his legs he could not walk. For about two weeks he stayed in bed, nursing his wounds. He was on the mend when one day two partisans came for him. He was dragged out of bed and shoved around. They kept saying: *"Videt cemo, kome si psovao majku srpsku"*—We'll see now whose Serbian mother you were cursing.

This was in response to my father explaining that he had been taken in once already, but had been released because he was innocent. He said to the later accusation that he had never even thought of such curses; his own sister-in-law was a Serbian. My mother ran to fetch the Serbian sister-in-law who lived nearby to come and save my father. She came rushing and would have spoken on his behalf, but was not allowed to speak; they just pushed her aside and took my father with them.

The Zombor court declared him officially dead in 1952. The document states, verbatim: *"Pocetcom novembra 1944 nepoznata naoruzana lica Romana odneli iz njegove kuce"*, that is: Román was taken from his house by unknown persons at the beginning of November, 1944. This is a literal repetition of what other contemporary documents declaring a person dead said. It is remarkable, however, that the court admits that Román Zagyva was taken from his house by armed men, yet at that time unknown armed men did not go from house to house in daylight in the streets of Zombor.

(To Dr Zagyva's knowledge, István Erős of Szabadka, the father of the pastor of the Philadelphia House of Prayer, climbed out of his open grave.)

Antal Pásztor's testimony concerning events in the Šajkaška region*

In the autumn of 1990, Antal Pásztor and some other Hungarians from Sajkáslak (Lok) bought out what had once been the knacker's yard and came to an agreement with the owner of the land that they would not cultivate it. Instead, Pásztor put up a sign saying that this was where the remains of local Hungarians executed at the end of 1944 were buried. He fenced off the area and put a cross in the middle of it. Then he began collecting the data concerning those executed, identifying the names of nearly thirty of the dead. The following is taken from Pásztor's testimony.

* ■ Márton Matuska, pp. 236–37.

The execution was carried out here, at the wall of the village hall. The prisoners were tied together in lots of three or five and made to stand against the wall. The corpses were taken to the knacker's yard. For some time it was out of bounds, but my grandmother secretly took me there at each anniversary. She started to cry as soon as we crossed the railway lines and went on crying all the way. I made sure that I would remember how to get there; that is how I knew where the sign had to be placed. I heard recently that one of the locals denounced me to the authorities for putting up the cross; his name is Stevan Radosavljević, and his nickname is Šćefko or Koljać.

My father took part in the left-wing movements from the thirties onwards. Because of that, he was sacked by the Zrenjanin sugar refinery in the wake of the Marseilles regicide. They wanted me to join the Party in '48, but I said that I would never join any party because my father had been killed by his own comrades, the Communists. The fact that he had been executed had consequences for me even much later. In 1956, I was a soldier, a foreman in the workshop in our unit. Then the news came that soldiers would be sent to the Sinai peninsula. A few of us from the unit were selected, and everything was ready for our departure. Those of us who were selected arranged to have an identical tattoo on our arms, as a memento. But before we left, my personnel report came through, which stated that I was the son of a war criminal and unreliable. I was not taken, and also lost my rank as foreman.

After I was demobbed, one day in the inn Jovo Belin, who is Hungarian on his mother's side, called me over and said: "Anti, you mustn't think that it was me who had your father beaten to death." I replied that I did not know who was responsible and turned away, to which he said that I was just as stubborn as my father had been. I wanted to know what my father's crime was so a month ago [October 1990], I went to see Tomo Prekajać, who was party secretary here in Lok in 1944. I asked him what my father was guilty of. He said: *"Antika, nema problema. Ja cu kazati istinu."*—Anti, no problem, I shall tell you the truth. Your father had to die, because in 1941–42 the Hungarians killed fifty-seven people in Lok, and this was the revenge, though the guilty had fled.

My father was the last to be taken to join those about to be executed. What happened was that he went by cart to the village hall to sort out some business, and someone with whom he had quarrelled had him taken off his cart. This person was angry with him because as lads they had a quarrel and my father had given him a beating. My father was not tortured as the others were, because he was executed soon after he was taken off the cart. It was proclaimed that everyone over the age of fourteen had to go to the village hall to witness the execution. As far as I know Russian officers, or just one, were opposed to the execution, but a local by the name of Vasić got some hooch from somewhere, and got the Russian drunk. That is when the execution took place, between the first and third of November. My uncle, György Zórád, was allowed to go home once to change. His wife for a

long time kept the bloody underwear that her husband had taken off then. She kept it for a long time, because he was executed soon afterwards. They could not load the fallen men onto the carts tied together as they were, so they loosened the wires; many of those wires were found in the knacker's yard.

Get the children dressed, they are driving us out!*

Told by someone who did not wish give his name as recorded by László Morvai and published in Temerini Újság, *a local Hungarian-language paper, 8 March 2001.*

I was born in Zsablya [Zabalj] in 1937; in January 1945 I was eight. Being a child, there was much that I could not make sense of but what I went through in those years has become part of me for good.

In the morning of 12th January our mother got up early, as always, to get a roaring fire going in the oven to bake our breakfast. It so happened that a few days earlier we killed not one but two pigs. On that morning our mother put potatoes and raw lard into a large baking tray and pushed it into the bread-oven. She was probably happy that she was going to please us children with such a tasty breakfast when we woke up. It was around seven, or half past seven, when our father's sister-in-law rushed in alarmed and all out of breath and said to our mother, "Get the children dressed, they are driving us to the camp!"

Unfortunately she was right.

At the time there were eight of us living in our house in Zsablya. Six siblings; our youngest brother was born in the camp.

I remember that we were all driven to the centre and then herded into a large hall. We were there for a good while. We children cried. The grownups' faces showed they were in the dark about what was going on not knowing what to do.

Then a woman came in and said that everyone must hand in all jewellery they had with them. The same night old people, children and the sick were put on carts. We were off to Járek [Tiszaistván—Jarmesch, a German village]. The healthy and young walked. We got there towards morning. It was still dark.

Here we were allotted to houses. Straw was spread in the rooms; that was where we had to sleep. Families who knew each other tried to share the same place or to stay close to each other. In the morning they rang a bell.

"Breakfast is ready," we were told.

We had no crockery; everyone used what they could find: chicken-dishes, broken plates, whatever. We were given some mush for breakfast, but could not eat it: it was not cooked properly and was totally unsalted.

* ■ István Ádám–Béla Csorba–Márton Matuska–István Ternovácz, *A temerini razzia* (The Temerin Raid), Temerin: History Committee of the Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians, n.d., 181–82 pp.

For lunch we were given some sort of soup thickened with flour; there was also supper, but I cannot remember what it was. Some sneaked out to Temerin to get some food, but if they were caught, the food was taken from them and they were given a good beating.

Two months later our young brother was born. There was a house where they took the women to give birth, but two days later my mother was back with us on the straw. One of our Zsablya neighbours stuffed some of the mush we had for lunch into the baby's mouth. We were scared, thinking the two-day-old baby might suffocate, but thank God he came to no harm. Every morning a partisan with a limp came into our room and using a rubber truncheon gave a good hiding to anyone he found inside. He could never catch us children; we escaped to the granary. The grownups were herded out to the fields to work.

We were at the Járek camp for three months, then taken to Gajdobra in open railway goods waggons.

At Gajdobra we slept on straw once again. For breakfast we were given soup thickened with flour, for lunch always a thick bean stew. I shall never forget that when we got there, we were herded into the church yard. The older of my younger brothers suddenly told our mother: "Look what I found, mum!" and showed us a piece of dry bread, which he then began to nibble at voraciously. It crunched under his little teeth. We spent six months in the Gajdobra camp.

My mother wanted to give three of us away to someone; she could not bear the thought that the seven of us went hungry. A couple came from Szenttamás [Srbobran/Thomasberg] and took us "home", that is, to their place, on their cart. They had two sons, but both were soldiers. The people who adopted us went to work in the fields, a grandfather looked after us. We huddled together in one corner of the house every morning and cried. We kept saying that we wanted to go to our mother. This went on for a week, until the grandfather said to the couple: "Take these children back!"

All three of us were put on the cart and taken to Temerin. By then the Gajdobra camp had been wound up; my mother and the family found temporary accommodation with relatives in Temerin.

They took everything that we had at Zsablya: our house, carts, horse, furniture, all our clothes; we lost everything. ❧

PERSONAL

Géza Bethlenfalvy

Mongolia: a Scholarly Adventure

It was almost a year ago that I received an invitation from the leading scholar of Medieval Mongolian History, Prof Shagdar Bira, Member of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and Secretary-General of the International Association of Mongolian Studies, to the 10th International Congress of Mongolian Studies, held between 9 and 13 August 2011 in Ulan Bator. But time flies and now I can look back with warm feelings to the exciting days spent there in August, the most pleasant summer month.

Mongolia was a "first love", my first experience of an Asian country. In 1968 I got a scholarship and spent three months in the library of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences in the National University of Mongolia in Ulan Bator, mostly in the Department of Mongolian Studies and in the Department of Languages, where scholars of Tibetan and Sanskrit worked as well. I visited monasteries in the capital and in the countryside, as well as historical monuments.

Travelling was not easy for a lack of proper roads. The car had to take to wheel-tracks in grasslands, and sometimes we had to travel on watercourses to cross a mountain pass. If our driver noticed a white dot in the distance we took the track towards it, arriving at a tent called *"ger"* or *"yurt"*, a wooden frame on which layers of sheep wool felt were fixed, the whole covered by waterproof canvas. There we found an unlocked entrance, and even if nobody was at home, a thermos of hot tea awaited guests who arrived without notice. We would enjoy a warming drink, leave a small present, and continue our journey.

Mongolia's territory is about three times the size of France and in those days the population was less than one million. Now around 1.5 million people

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Géza Bethlenfalvy,

a scholar of Indian, Tibetan and Buddhist studies, has taught at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Delhi University and, as a guest professor, at the University of Vienna. Between 1994 and 2000 he was the Director of the Delhi Hungarian Cultural Centre. Two catalogues of the Kanjur, *the 105-volume Tibetan holy scriptures of Buddhism, are the most noteworthy of his many publications.*

live in Ulan Bator alone, which has changed immensely. One walks between thousands of new buildings and on newly built boulevards chock-a-block with new cars imported from Japan and Korea. Cooperation with these countries on opening up the treasure of mining ventures has brought in wealthy partners, and in a short time Mongolia has become a rich country.

The new face of Mongolia and its new thinking was certainly apparent at the Congress. During my first visit in 1968, when there was a strict dependence on Soviet Communism, any mention of Genghis Khan was strictly forbidden. History started with the 1921 revolution led by Sukhe Bator, and Choibalsan, followed by an anti-religious drive to destroy almost all the Buddhist monasteries and to kill all the lama—about one hundred thousand people.

After the 1990 transition to a democratic free society, the concept of Mongolian history also changed. Genghis Khan has become the greatest hero, establishing the world's greatest empire, a nice emperor, "democratically" elected by tribal elders, who promoted the exchange of cultures between the East and the West by securing commerce on the Silk Road. Now his picture can be seen everywhere, on the walls of public buildings, on the slopes of the mountain beside Ulan Bator, and on postage stamps.

Chaiji Lama monastery, built about 100 years ago

In his lecture Professor Bira reinforced this new picture of the international role of the great Khan, arguing against the "misinterpretation" of the cruelty of the so-called Tatar hordes by European public and scholarly opinion: "Without bad things good things do not exist and vice versa. Therefore, the westward conquest by the Mongolians not only brought suffering but also created a gigantic empire which connected East and West. Mongolians built post stations along the route from Beijing or Harhorin to Iran, then to the West, thus speeding up travel between East and West and easing the exchange of cultures. Trade and other economic exchanges also used this channel. Therefore, it can be interpreted as an early form of globalization. Globalization was started in the ancient times. It was launched by Mongolians." To be sure, the medieval kingdom of Hungary had its share of bad things in 1241–42, when the Mongol expansion all but devastated the country, chasing Béla IV as far as Dalmatia.

We are aware, what is more, that the glorious history of the Mongols started much earlier, before the empire of Genghis Khan, more than 2200 years ago. Recent international research, and especially the discovery of Chinese written

sources, has brought to light new evidence about the early Hun (other names used: Hunnu, Khunnu, Hsiung-nu, Xiongnu) empire, a dominant power on the steppes of eastern Asia the Great Wall of China was built to contain. It was their descendants who settled for some time in the Great Hungarian Plain under Attila the Hun, a feared enemy of the Western and Eastern Roman Empires. Consequently, one of the main topics of the 10th Congress was devoted to the "2220th anniversary of Mongolian statehood" as the core territories, the original homeland and main centre of the Huns was in what is today's Mongolia.

A keynote address of the Congress was devoted to the Khunnu dynasty. D Tseveendorj, of the Institute of Archaeology, in his lecture "The Xiongnu, the Ancestor of the Mongols", discussed this period and the results of the archaeological excavation of about 5000 graves and stone monuments. The Xiongnu state was established by Maodun Chanyu in 218 BC in a war with the Chinese Han Dynasty armies. It was made up of Mongolian, Manchu-Tungus, Turkic, Indo-Iranian and some smaller clans and tribes, such as the Yuezhi and Jiankun. But the binding force of this state was not "nationality" or language, but territory. As Chinese sources record, the dominant idea of Maodun was a *"Land is the basis of the State"*. Tribes of a given territory, speaking a variety of languages, established a joint Governing Body, and this could lead them to victory over their neighbours.

To quote D Tseveendorj: "The Xiongnu was the first state that was the bridge to connect countries such as Han State in Central Asia, Korea in the South, middle Asia in the West, the Middle East, Eastern Europe (Uighuria, Germany, Greece and Rome) and even Egypt." Its majority population was basically related to the Mongols: "According to DNA findings based on over 80 graves studied by a Mongolian-French joint excavation of the Burkhan Tolgoi, in the Egyin Gol river of Bulgan Aimag, the DNA was similar to the DNA of people who now live actually in this region". One may add that an International Conference on Xiongnu Archaeology was held in Ulan Bator in 2008, and about twenty international scholars participated at that meeting and presented important papers. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, also participated.

In his opening address President of Mongolia Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj raised this new model of history to a canonical status with a message for the future. Let me quote: "I consider that the basis of the existence of any nation is its history, heritage, culture and tradition. Therefore we aspire to preserve and develop our national uniqueness, history, culture, tradition and heritage so that it flourishes while we coexist with other nations in the era of globalization. Globalization does not mean standardization. This year Mongolia has been commemorating the 2220th anniversary of the establishment of Mongolian Statehood. We are talking about the Hunnu Empire, which was established on Mongolian territory 2220 years ago. Many Mongolia experts, including Mongolian and international scholars and scientists, showed that the Hunnu Empire is Mongolia and Mongolia is Hunnu. The way of life, culture etc. of the Hunnus was the same as

that of Mongolia. Thus it is considered that the first nomadic statehood established by Hunnus on Mongolian soil is the beginning of Mongolian Statehood established by Mongolians."

Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj was born into a herder's family in western Mongolia, in the province Khovd. He experienced nomadic life as a child. He started his studies there but was able to continue his higher education in Lviv (Ukraine) and later at the Department of Economics of the University of Colorado at Boulder, before winning a full scholarship to Harvard University, where he graduated from the John F. Kennedy School of Government. Politically, he supports a free, democratic society.

Listing topics at the 10th Congress sounds like a roll-call of anniversaries: the 2220th anniversary of Mongolian statehood; the 805th anniversary of the establishment of the Great Mongolian Empire of Genghis Khan; 100 years of achieving national independence after the Chinese-Manchu domination; 90 years since the People's Revolution; and the 50th Anniversary of Mongolian membership of the United Nations. The work of the Congress was subsumed under the following five sections: Prehistoric and Historical periods of Mongolia's relations with various civilizations; Mongolian Language and Culture and their Urgent Problems; Mongolia's Economy and Politics; Mongolia's External Relations and Diplomacy; Independence and Revolutions in Mongolia. Among the 300 participants were seven Hungarian scholars presenting papers.

Mongolian Studies has a special significance in Hungarian scholarship, as it is associated with a region from where the ancient Magyars migrated. Before settling in the lowlands surrounded by the Carpathian mountains at around the end of the 9th century, the ancestors of the Hungarians lived somewhere in the East, on the great steppe between China and the Roman empire. On their arrival in Central Europe they were a confederation of seven tribes under independent leaders. This was a typical structure for nomadic peoples; much like "states" in Siberia. They were engaged in the same pastoral way of life with some agricultural features and basically similar religious customs as the others surrounding them. Their system of beliefs and practices can be described as Shamanism. Shamans were the religious leaders, and the shaman had a say in political decisions as well. When the Hungarian state was organized in Central Europe, around 1000 AD, it was a kingdom under a Christian king, and the tribes and their chieftains survived only in name. It is interesting to note, however, that the names of Hungarian tribes are mostly of Turkic origin. Byzantine chronicles, too, refer to Hungarians as Turks. Although Hungarian belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family, it contains many Turkic loanwords and structures. Archaeologically the route of the Hungarian tribes can be followed back to the southern Uralic region, where they may have been also in contact with Finno-Ugric tribes, which, for their part, were moving in a northwestern direction.

In Hungarian historical literature the theory that the Magyars are relatives and even descendants of the Huns has been persistently present, although it is nowadays generally held in doubt. Already in the early chronicles, such as the *Gesta Hungarorum* by the author calling himself Anonymous, it is mentioned that the Huns settled in the plains of Hungary first, and were followed by their kin, the Magyars. Legends and chronicles abound describing how Attila's Huns left the Carpathian Basin after the death of the great emperor, how his son, Csaba, returned and how some of them settled in eastern Hungary.

Since the early nineteenth century, the belief that tribes related to the Magyars survived in their original homeland in Asia has also been current. Travellers went to the East to find the descendants of the Huns. Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, a Transylvanian Székely, also firmly believed that the Székely were descended of the Huns. He walked towards Central Asia looking for the ancient homeland of the Magyars and their kin, in an area north of Tibet, west of China and east of Russia, but had to stop in Ladakh in India, since, at that time, no foreigner was allowed to cross Tibet. He ended up as a pioneering scholar, a founding father of the study of Buddhism and Tibetan language and literature.

Linguists have tried to analyse the few known Hun names in Hungarian, as practically no written text of the Huns who "visited" Europe have survived. Most such studies conclude that the best guess is that their language was some kind of ancient Turkic. Nowadays Chinese scholars have found more Hun words, mostly in Chinese transcription, and they have come to the same conclusion. But nothing is known clearly; nothing at any rate that could be called sound etymology. Archaeology is more promising, as early Hungarian gold jewellery and other surviving metal objects display motifs of the early "animal style" similar to those in Central Asia and on stone pillars still standing in Hunnu locations in Mongolia.

In connection with Mongolian Studies in Hungary, Professor Lajos (Louis) Ligeti (1902–1987) should be mentioned. He founded the Department of Inner Asian Studies at the University of Budapest in 1942, with Mongolian and Tibetan as the major subjects, though Chinese and other languages were also studied and taught. He was followed by György Kara, who now teaches in Bloomington. Ágnes Birtalan, a pupil, is now the successor of Professors Ligeti and Kara as head of the Department of Inner Asian Studies. She is a scholar with a wide range of interests and a successful organizer. The topics covered by her team and their list of publications cover a wide range, with a stress on the study and publication of important texts. Besides texts in Mongolian and Tibetan, sources of various dialects and related languages are included, like those of Buryat, Oirat, Kalmyk, Dzakhchin, Tuvinian, and of the Darkhad valley, as well as Manchu-Tungus and Korean sources.

Another field Birtalan and her colleagues are doing outstanding work in is research into Shamanic traditions. She published narrations and descriptions

concerning various games, sports and competitions, and texts of *obo* (or *ovoo*) worship, including descriptions of the symbolic meaning of the *obos* and stone cairns. The *obo* is a ritually worshipped stone mound positioned on high and dangerous mountain passes. Cars usually stop at the pass, and travellers circle the *obo* three times in a clockwise direction. People may add stones, or may offer sweets, milk or *kumis* (fermented mare's milk) for the mountain god, hoping for a safe journey downhill. There are skulls and horns of various animals on an *obo,* and the especially important symbol of the open sky, blue *khadags* (ceremonial scarves), offerings for the sky spirit Tengger, or Tengri, one of the main nature deities of the early Mongolians. At the time of communism, *obo* worship was forbidden. Nonetheless all of us and the driver of our car, too, used to circle the stones in the prescribed way.

The study of Shamanism includes questions and descriptions of *scapulimancy*—purifying ceremonies and the invocation and ritual initiation of a Shaman by means of various ceremonies using drums and dance. Shaman weather magic and Mongolian etiological myths, the cult of the spirits of sky, earth and water are also important topics for study. Dr. Birtalan has also written on the great Mongol empire of Genghis Khan and the Great khans' successors, Ögödei, Güyük Möngke, and Kublai Khan, already leaders of the Chinese Yuan dynasty. An interesting question shedding light on Mongolian–Hungarian kinship, and discussed in an article by Dr. Birtalan, was how the Hungarian *"táltos"* tradition relates to the Mongolian shaman *"böö"*.

Close contact with the Mongolian Academy has been established with the Altaic Studies research group of the Department. It was financed by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, allowing Mongolian scholars to spend time in Budapest, using literature not available there, and making it possible for us to study the written documents and the traditions of living folk literature and art in Mongolia. The research group published an important series of studies and initiated a series of books "Treasures of Mongolian Culture and Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhism". Rare and sometimes unique original works were photographed in Mongolia and published with introductions by Mongolian or Hungarian scholars. The most recent volume which appeared this year presented an original Tibetan-Mongolian block-print with pictures and descriptions of Buddhist cells. The volume was presented to Mongolian institutions at the Congress by the authors, Alice Sárközi and myself.

Scholars and students of the Department of Inner Asian Studies visit Mongolia regularly, study the written sources, and travel around filming and describing "resurrected" Shaman rituals in Ulan Bator and in the countryside. Buddhism has also been revived; old monasteries are reconstructed all around the country and huge new monasteries constructed. There is a new monastery for nuns in Ulan Bator. Cooperation is flourishing, and we all hope that this close scholarly contact between East and West will continue. ❧

Bernard Adams

Ex Turcia nulla redemptio

Mikes's *Letters from Turkey* in English Translation

The year 2011 has seen both the 300th anniversary of the end of the War of Independence (1703–11) and the exiling of Ferenc II Rákóczi of Transylvania (1676–1735), and the 250th of the death of his courtier Kelemen Mikes of Zágon (1685–1761). Mikes followed his prince first to Poland, then to France and in 1717 to Turkey, where they spent the rest of their lives—the title of this essay is Maria Teresa's reply to Mikes's request for permission to return home from exile, which he had spent mostly in the small town of Rodosto (modern Tekirdağ) on the Sea of Marmara. There Mikes produced a quantity of writing, much of it translation and correspondence, but including a memoir which is widely considered the finest Hungarian prose work of the eighteenth century, *Török-országi levelek*. This consists of 207 "letters" ostensibly addressed to an aunt in Constantinople, which speak of the life of the exiled court, current affairs in Turkey and Europe and much besides. Found among his effects after his death, it was first published in 1794 and numerous editions (in whole or part) have followed, as have translations into nine languages and a huge corpus of academic literature.

The *Letters from Turkey* first became known to the English-reading world through the publication in 1906 of *A History of Hungarian Literature*[1] by Frigyes Riedl. He is described in Wikipedia as the first significant Hungarian representative of modern literary history, and his book, which appeared only in English, was the first general account in English of Hungarian literature; Sir John Bowring's much earlier *Poetry of the Magyars* dealt only with verse. On the title

1 ■ *Short Histories of the Literatures of the World:* XIII, pub. William Heinemann, London, 1906.

Bernard Adams's *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) numerous novels by Kálmán Mikszáth and Zsigmond Móricz, and co-translator, with Kálmán Ruttkay, of* The Viceroy *by József Katona (2003).*
The piece published here is the edited text of a paper presented at the International Mikes Conference of the Institute of Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, October 2011.

page Riedl is described as Professor of Hungarian Literature at the University of Budapest, though I believe that in fact he followed Pál Gyulai as head of the Hungarian Department at Pázmány Péter University, Budapest. In the introduction to this book Sir Charles Hagberg Wright, Secretary and Librarian of the London Library, tells of his own part in encouraging the writing of the work as the result of a visit to Hungary some years before. Of the three pages that Riedl devotes to an account of Rákóczi's exile, two are mainly concerned with Mikes and the *Letters*. He comments "It cannot be said that as a writer Mikes was a powerful or remarkable personality, but his style is wonderfully attractive", and he comments on "the most charming humour" and

> earnest religious feeling, but—and this is characteristically Hungarian—there is (in the *Letters*) absolutely no sentimentalism. There is nothing in contemporary Hungarian literature to equal their pleasant, fluent, conversational style. There is no pompousness, no affectation; all is life and grace and transparent sincerity.

Riedl quotes from the final *Letter*:

> A curious world. How many changes have I witnessed? When I wrote my first letter to you, dear cousin, I was but twenty-seven, and now sixty-nine years weigh upon me.

In conclusion, Riedl comments that

> The *Letters* give us a perfect picture of the inner and outer life of a man whose strength was sustained by the priceless blessings of a calm confidence in God and a happy, optimistic view of the world around him.

That tiny quotation from *Letter 207* is the first published English translation from Mikes. It comes from Riedl's translator Ilona Győry, daughter—according to Hagberg Wright—of a Hungarian poet, wife of an Englishman, and better known to Hungarian letters by her married name, Gineverné Győry Ilona. She wrote a number of things, including Hungarian translations of Dickens' *Dombey and Son,* Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair,* and her book *Angolok* of 1914 is still a work of some interest. I have no evidence of a full translation of the *Letters* by her, and certainly none was ever published. She did, however, leave posterity slightly misinformed, firstly in mis-spelling the name of Rákóczi with a final -y, and secondly in translating Mikes's *néném* as "cousin". In the latter she is followed by the second English translator, Elsa Szász, who published in *The Hungarian Quarterly* in 1940[2], and who addressed the recipient of the *Letters* as "My dear Coz".

This particular point is a recurring problem that the English translator has to face. We now accept, as neither Riedl nor Elsa Szász did, that the addressee of the *Letters* was entirely fictitious, and that gives us a free hand to some extent. The translator has, however, to say something that makes good sense, and I question whether either "dear cousin" or the abbreviated form "dear Coz" satisfies that requirement. The Hungarian word *néne* has a range of meanings from "older sister" and "sister of a parent" to "older female relation". I have never heard it suggested that Mikes had an older sister in Constantinople, so perhaps that possible translation can safely be ignored. A cousin—the child of a brother or sister of one's parent—can certainly be older than oneself and female, but as a form

2 ■ Elsa Szász, "Clement Mikes's Letters from Turkey", *The Hungarian Quarterly,* vol. 11, no. 3. (Autumn 1940) pp. 481–498.

of address "Dear Coz" sounds rather Shakespearean and therefore archaic by Mikes's time; the *Oxford English Dictionary* includes under "cousin" *a title used by a monarch in formally addressing another monarch or a nobleman of the same realm,* and traces this usage back to the fifteenth century; Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* quotes the historian Sir William Blackstone, who points out that the English King Henry IV (reigned 1367–1413) was related to almost every Earl in the country and constantly referred to them as "cousin" in all public documents; this usage has come down to modern times and is still found in royal commissions. The use of "cousin" or "coz" as a form of address, therefore, was both archaic in the eighteenth century and narrowly restricted in use, and seems best avoided. A less specific term denoting an older female relation is required, with possible use as a familiar or honorific address or term of reference in cases where no blood relationship exists, and my feeling is that Aunt is more suitable than "cousin" or "Coz".

That aside, Elsa Szász's work is significant. Her article consists of an essay in which she outlines the background to the *Letters* followed by partial translations of thirty-one of them; none is translated in full. Clearly, the space available in the *Quarterly* must have restricted her considerably, and although her essay is an admirably succinct account of the subject the translations suffer by the enforced pruning. After the opening five letters we are shown a series of snapshots of incidents and persons. There is political comment and wars are mentioned, as is the severe European winter of 1740. And yet there are striking omissions: Rodostó is described when the Hungarians arrive, but there is no account of the remarkable journey there by galley; Prince Ferenc's death—surely the most important single event in the entire work—is given a mere five lines, yet the tale of Lady Bercsényi's nose is given in full (22), as is the famous description of the elephant (127); the expedition to Orsova is thinly described (131–147), and the death of József Rákóczi (144) is not mentioned at all. Mikes's affection for Zsuzsi Kőszeghy and his sadness when she marries Bercsényi, is widowed, and leaves for Poland (49–51, 66–68, 73–76) are fully recorded, but his carefully detailed thoughts on education are omitted, as are his translations, while almost no mention is made of his religious views. Anyone, however, who has tried to make a coherent and representative selection from the *Letters* will know what difficulty Elsa Szász faced, and while her choice does not quite enable her to achieve her declared aim of faithfully depicting the daily life of the exiles, it certainly gives us the glimpse which she promises in her essay of the sane, humorous and singularly engaging personality of their author. Let me read you Elsa Szász's account of Lady Bercsényi's nose:

> It happened that, being already married to my lord Bercsényi, the lady was smitten with smallpox. Immediately a whole army of doctors was summoned to her bedside, and this and that was proposed for preventing the disease from leaving its mark and spoiling her beauty. One doctor suggested that the patient's face should be covered all over with gold leaf. This was done, but when she recovered the gilding could not be washed off with any kind of toilet water. It had to be removed piecemeal at the point of a needle, and it stuck to her nose worse than to other parts of her face. In the end the nose too was scraped clean, but it was found to be black as you see.

As in the case of Gineverné Győry Ilona, I cannot say for sure whether Elsa Szász did or did not make a full English translation of the *Letters.* From the extent of the quotations that she offers one might well believe that she did, but again, no such translation was published. The same applies to a third English translator of the *Letters,* the Oxford don D. Mervyn Jones. In an article in *The New Hungarian Quarterly* in 1963[3] he translated and commented on Letters 111–114, those on the death of Prince Ferenc, as a forerunner to an extended work which appeared in 1966: the book *Five Hungarian Writers.*[4]

This is a set of five extended essays explicitly aimed at introducing the non-specialist to five major figures in pre-1849 Hungarian literature: Miklós Zrínyi, Kelemen Mikes, Mihály Vörösmarty, József Eötvös and Sándor Petőfi. Forty pages, in the course of which Jones refers to 106 of the *Letters,* translating them in whole or part, enable him to present a very much fuller account of the historical background than Elsa Szász's. He also goes beyond the *Letters* themselves, referring to Mikes's correspondence and other primary sources. Twenty-four of the *Letters* which he quotes are among those translated by Elsa Szász, of whose work, however, he seems unaware. Károly Horváth, in *Irodalomtörténeti közlemények* (1967/4, pp. 497–498), describes the book as a valuable contribution to the enlightening of the English public, and praises a love for Hungarian writers and literature which few foreign writers on the subject can boast.

Jones does not separate analysis from translation but blends the two together most successfully. The work is fundamentally a historical account of Mikes's time in Turkey with copious translations incorporated into the text. Károly Horváth comments on a few slight factual inaccuracies, but insists that these do not detract from the excellence of the work as a whole. As I have quoted from the versions of both Ilona Győry and Elsa Szász, let me give you Jones's translation of Letter 112:

> What we feared is now upon us. God has made orphans of us, and today has taken from our midst our dear lord and father, some time after three o'clock in the morning. Today being Good Friday, we must mourn the death of both our heavenly and our earthly father. God has postponed the death of our Prince till today, to sanctify the sacrifice of his death with the merits of Him who died for us on this day. Such was his life and such his death, that I believe the words 'Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise' were spoken to him. Let us shed copious tears, for truly has the mist of grief descended on us. But let us not weep for our good father, because God has taken him after so much suffering into the heavenly abode where He gives him drink from the glass of bliss and joy . . .

I fear, however, that despite his scholarship and enthusiasm, Jones's work made negligible impact on the English-reading public. My own copy of this book, bought second-hand, had previously been the property of the library of California State Polytechnic College; in forty years on their shelf it had not been borrowed even once. Although other books by Jones are listed on the website Goodreads, which carries over six million titles, this one is not to be found there.

3 ■ January–March 1963, pp. 79–82.

4 ■ Published by Oxford University Press, 1966. The chapter on Mikes is pp. 62–102.

The fourth and most recent English translation of the *Letters* is that which I made in collaboration with Kálmán Ruttkay[5]. It contains the complete texts of all 207 *Letters,* together with notes and an introduction. I learnt of the existence of the *Letters* many years ago while studying Hungarian at Cambridge under the late Dénes Sinor[6], and in fact found a copy of the *Magyar Klasszikusok* edition in a Cambridge bookshop. It was not until I began translating seriously, however, in the 1990s that I discovered that the Transylvanian memoir writers were almost unheard of in the West, and turned my attention to them. I translated the *Letters* in 1998 and sent samples to three English publishers who claimed to be interested in such material. Two rejected my submission but no answer came from the third, Kegan Paul, and so after a decent interval I telephoned to enquire if they had yet considered the project. My submission had been lost. but the editor that I was speaking to asked what it was about. I got no farther than mentioning "Ferenc Rákóczi" when I was interrupted with "My romantic hero! Send it again at once!" That I did, was promptly asked for the rest, and it was accepted very quickly. A plan was then devised for joint publication with Corvina. This eventually came to nothing, but it did lead to my meeting Kálmán Ruttkay, with whose invaluable assistance my translation was much improved and an introduction written. Publication, supported by the Hungarian Book Foundation, came in the year 2000, and the translation was generously reviewed in *Times Literary Supplement, Slavonic and East European Review* and, rather later, *Helikon.*[7]

What did not please me, however, was the very high price that Kegan Paul charged for the book—even ten years ago, £65. That, in my view, would have a lethal effect on sales, and very few copies were indeed sold outside the world of academic libraries. The book is still available from the English booksellers WH Smith and Waterstone, now at the even higher price of £125, or from Amazon at $332 (used, $168). It is flattering to see that one's work is considered so valuable, but I would prefer to see a price that encouraged more people to read it. Kegan Paul have now gone into liquidation, and my attempts to find a publisher for a second and cheaper edition have so far been unsuccessful.

As I have quoted three incomplete translations of three *Letters,* allow me, in conclusion, to quote the entire text of Letter 207 in my own version:

> Dear Aunt! Not only we but all the race of men are like prisoners under sentence of death who know not when it is to be carried out. Such is our fate. How many lords, how many noble persons had we buried, one in one year, another in another, until only Lord Zay and I remained? God took him too from exile on 22 Octobris.

5 ■ Kálmán Ruttkay (1922–2010), from 1963–1996 a much-loved docent in the English department at Eötvös Loránd University, in retirement a lecturer at Pázmány Péter University, with a considerable scholarly oeuvre to his credit. His wife, Prof. Ágnes Várkonyi, is a leading authority on eighteenth-century Hungarian history.

6 ■ Dénes Sinor (1916–2011), an Orientalist. In my time at Cambridge a fellow of Magdalen College, he moved in 1963 to Indiana University where he spent the rest of a distinguished career. He used to say that the University employed him as an Orientalist, but that as he had rather few pupils for Mongol and Manchu, as a patriot he taught Hungarian without fee!

7 ■ *Helikon* xvii. 2006/5 (III.10)

Now I alone remain of the exiles, and I cannot say as hitherto 'Let this one or that be brought forth', for being left alone I myself have to come forward as the sacrifice. After the death of Lord Csáki the Porte made Lord Zay head of the Hungarians that are under the protection of the Sultan in this country. After his death I had to go to the Porte to announce his demise. As is the custom, I have been made *başbuğ*. For you must know that of those that came to this country with old Rákóczi I alone remain. Those that are with me now are newcomers. What a world! How many changes have I lived through, but God's care has always been with me and with us all. I could preach a whole sermon concerning our inconstant life in this vale of tears, which inconstancy we shall continue to experience until we ascend into the hill of delight.

It is a few days now since I returned here. What will the Lord ordain for me in the future? I am in His hand. But I know that dust must return to dust. And happy is he that dies not to the Lord but in the Lord. After so lengthy an exile, can I desire any other happiness?

When I wrote my first letter to my Aunt I was twenty-seven years of age, and this one I write in my sixty-ninth year. With the exception of seventeen years, the remainder I have spent in fruitless exile. I ought not to have said 'fruitless', for in the ordinances of God there is no fruitlessness; for He ordains all things to His glory. We must therefore beware that we too turn everything to that end, and thus all His ordinances concerning us will be to our salvation. Let us, then, wish for nothing but the will of God. Let us ask for an edifying life, a good death, and salvation. And then we shall cease from asking, from sin, from exile and from insatiable desires alike. Amen. ❧

Mária Domokos

'A Sign of the Times'

Ferenc Bónis, ed, *Rákóczi March by Hector Berlioz.* Facsimile edition of the autograph score. Budapest: Balassi, 2010, 86 pp.

Having recently published two Bartók scores (*Dance Suite,* 1998; *Duke Bluebeard's Castle,* 2006) in handsome facsimile editions, Balassi Press has now added an early autograph of Berlioz's celebrated *Rákóczi March.* Imitation leather binding, paper of high quality, and an appendix of illustrations in colour are prominent features.

Following the Pest premiere in 1846, Count Kázmér Batthyány bought the autograph of the *Rákóczi March,* scored for large orchestra, and presented it to Ferenc Erkel. After Erkel's death, the score found its way from his collection of scores to the National Széchényi Library.

In this facsimile edition, the score is followed by a long analytical study by Ferenc Bónis, which includes numerous musical examples, 25 tables with melodic comparisons and as a special bonus, the facsimiles of several early manuscript and printed versions of the *Rákóczi March.* In compiling this material, Bónis benefited greatly from Ervin Major's rich collection of nineteenth-century music.[1] Thus, the manuscript of Miklós Scholl's *Rákóczi March,* here first published, originates in Major's collection.

Bónis has written extensively about historical symbols in Hungarian music. He is also familiar with earlier writings on the subject, having edited the musicological writings of Zoltán Kodály, Ervin Major and Bence Szabolcsi, who contributed the most to our understanding of the origins of the Rákóczi tunes and their interrelationship.

Bónis's book-length essay traces the history of these melodies linked to Ferenc II Rákóczi, the prince and statesman who was the leader of the Hungarian uprising

1 ■ The valuable library and manuscript archive of musicologist Ervin Major (1901–1967) was purchased by the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Mária Domokos,

an ethnomusicologist, is a research fellow on the staff of the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She collaborated on the Corpus Musicæ Popularis Hungaricæ, *editing volumes IX and XI, and on the publication of the textual and musical sources of Kodály's works based on folk music. Her researches include the comparative analysis of the folk music of Hungary and its neighbours, the relationship between folk music and art music, and the history of 17th- and 18th-century dance music.*

against the Habsburgs in 1703–11, a history full of interesting twists and turns. He had to take into account several different layers in its genesis, its evolution and its variants. There were two songs associated with Rákóczi. One is known as the *Nóta "Haj régi szép magyar nép"* (Hey, you good old Hungarian people) or *"Haj Rákóczi, Bercsényi"*), the other as the *Kesergő* (Lament: *"Hallgassátok meg magyarok, amit beszélek"*—Listen, Hungarians, to what I am saying). The two melodies are closely related. The texts belong to the literary tradition, but were sung and transmitted orally, like folk songs. No two of the surviving versions are exactly identical; there is no "original," only variations.

Béla Stoll's bibliography[2] lists about 30 sources containing versions of *"Haj régi szép magyar nép"* and *"Haj Rákóczi, Bercsényi."* The melody has come down to us in nine or ten different variants, dating from the years between 1780 and 1820. Most of these are in song collections compiled by students; the major source of Hungarian song, Ádám Pálóczi Horváth's manuscript *Ötödfélszáz Énekek* (450 Songs, 1813) records it as well. The *Rákóczi nóta* was first printed in the 1810s, as part of an article on Transylvanian music published by the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung of Leipzig*.[3] Presumably written by a Transylvanian Saxon author, the article adds the following comments, of which only a single strophe was printed:

> Speaking of Hungarian-Transylvanian music outside of the church, one might mention that the Széklers supposedly played some kind of shawm (called *Török-Síp* or "Turkish pipe,' also *Tárogató-Síp* or 'military pipe') in times of war. This instrument was used to signal during the Rákóczi troubles at the end of the 17th century and was therefore also known as the "Rákóczi pipe'. Many people still affirm that the instrument was banned by the government along with the melody and the words by Bercsényi, a supporter of Rákóczi.[4]

The full Hungarian text of the *Rákóczi nóta* was not published until 1849. János Erdélyi printed it at the time of the Revolution with the following comments:

> To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time in more than a hundred years that this historical lament sees the light of day. The Hungarian people, faithfully concealing their pain, have preserved it for us. I have seen fit to publish it now that times have changed; so far, all efforts to bring it to the world were doomed to failure.[5]

For *Rákóczi's Lament*, we have no old sources at all, even though it, too, has a text of literary origin. The earliest source of the lament is dated 1860; György Rozvány, a notary public, transcribed its text and melody in Nagyszalonta (Salonta, Romania) after it was sung by Péter Kenéz. The greatest poet of the time, János Arany (1817–1882),

2 ■ Béla Stoll, ed. *A magyar kéziratos énekeskönyvek és versgyűjtemények bibliográfiája.* (Bibliography of Hungarian Manuscript Collections of Songs and Poetry). Budapest: Balassi, 2002.
3 ■ "Geschichte der Musik in Siebenbürgen." *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung,* Nos. 46–47, November 1814. Hungarian translation by Ervin Major in *Muzsika* I (1929), No. 3.
4 ■ *"Uebrigens kann aus altern Zeiten von der ungarisch-siebenbürgischen Musik ausser der Kirche angeführt werden, dass sich besonders die Seckler bey Kriegsaufgeboten einer Art Schalmey (Török-Síp, türkische Pfeife, auch Tárogató-Síp, Heerpfeife, genannt) bedient haben sollen. Sie war auch zu den rakotzischen Unruhen gegen Ende des 17ten Jahrhunderts das Signal, und erhielt darum auch die Benennung Rakotzi-Síp; und es wird noch jetzt von Manchen behauptet, dass man dieses Instrument sammt nachfolgender, von dem rakotzischen Anhänger, Bercsényi, herrührender Melodie und Dichtung, von der Regierung verboten habe."*
5 ■ *Szabad hangok* (Free Voices) by János Erdélyi. Pest, 1849, pp. 32–35.

a native of Nagyszalonta, forwarded it to Kálmán Thaly, an expert of the Rákóczi period, who printed only the words; the melody was published in 2004 in the most recently printed volume of Arany's collected correspondence. Notes in the latter describe the circumstances of Arany's involvement. It appears that even as late as 1860, *Rákóczi's Lament* was a "sensitive" subject.

Both words and tune look back to a long history of prohibitions, censorship, and police reports. The *Nóta* is sung in Mihály Csokonai Vitéz's play *Cultura* (1799), and Count György Festetics, who attended the performance, reportedly said to Csokonai: "For this, our school could be destroyed, down to its very foundations! Let us be careful!" He also expressed his disapproval in a letter.

The instrumental version of *Rákóczi nóta,* as a slow-fast pair of movements and the *Rákóczi induló* (march) appear in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Gábor Mátray (then still called Rothkrepf, 1797–1875) was the first who published the instrumental *nóta* in Vienna in 1826. Entitled "Rakótzy Nótája—Rákótzy-s Favourit," the piece was part of a collection named *Pannónia vagy Válogatott Magyar Nóták* (Pannonia, or Selected Hungarian Songs); the edition was probably supported by Count Lajos Széchényi, whose children were tutored by Rothkrepf. This version is closely related to the vocal *nóta* and may have been at the origin of the march. The exact genesis of the melody, however, is hard to trace, owing to the paucity of the sources. It was most likely a transcription of an instrumental performance, perhaps by a violinist, who masterfully concealed the *nóta* amidst a cascade of complicated violin figurations. That violinist could well have been the celebrated János Bihari (1764–1827) who, according to numerous witnesses, often performed the *Rákóczi nóta.* Today it would take nothing short of detective work to disentangle these motivic connections, but it is certain that nineteenth-century audiences were able to recognize the melody even in a richly ornamented rendition.

Bónis's comparative charts help us with the needed detective work to recognise other connections among the different melodic variants. With great sensitivity, Bónis points out numerous Hungarianisms in the music of the Viennese classics. He finds melodic and cadential elements of the *Rákóczi nóta* (including the repeated perfect fourths that the *tárogató* used to play) in several works by composers of the time, both major and minor. The comparison with a theme from one of Mozart's violin concertos is particularly illuminating (A major, K. 219). At times, the chain of variants proposed by Bónis do seem a little too far-fetched, but at other times, he is right on target, as in the case of Kodály's *László Lengyel* for children's chorus. Here Bónis astutely noticed that the opening of the *Rákóczi nóta* is concealed not only in the sighing figures of the upper voice (echoing *"Haj régi szép magyar nép"*) but also in the dialogue of the bridge-crossing game.

Speaking of the *Rákóczi March,* Bónis argues that it must date from the spring of 1820 at the latest. That is when it was published in Vienna for two separate arrangements for piano (two hands and four hands), edited by Miklós Scholl, the bandmaster of the 32nd, "Esterházy" Infantry Regiment. Scholl wove into his arrangement some motifs from the two-part instrumental *Rákóczi nóta.*[6] The

6 ■ On the motivic relationships between the *Nóta* and the *March,* see Bence Szabolcsi, "Rákóczi induló." (Rákóczi March) in *Zenei Lexikon* (Musical Dictionary), ed. by Bence Szabolcsi and Aladár Tóth, 2nd, expanded edition. Budapest, 1935.

former first shawm player of the band, who was also a copyist, recalled having copied out the march innumerable times, for a fee of 5 forint per copy.

In the course of the nineteenth century, we encounter the march in a number of different functions. Military bands played it at the enlistment of recruits. During the second quarter of the century, it was heard with increasing frequency on patriotic occasions becaming a veritable symbol of the independence movement. According to a secret-police report dated April 14, 1836,

> [Baron Miklós] Wesselényi travelled to Pest on the steamer Pannónia... He was lionized by the young people of Pest just as he had been earlier in Pozsony... After much acclaim, the festivity ended with a performance of the Rákóczi March. Then the entire procession, together with the band, went to the house of Count István Széchenyi, who was greeted in a similar fashion.[7]

Széchenyi recorded in his diary: "At the theatre, they played the Rákóczi nóta during intermission: the young people demanded it after each act. A sign of the times!

Yet the march was played not only by military and Gypsy bands. It was a staple at instrumental recitals as well, usually as the final selection, or as an encore. Even then it preserved its rebellious character—otherwise it would not have been mentioned in police reports both before and after the revolution. When Liszt gave a benefit concert in Pozsony (Pressburg/Bratislava) in 1839, he responded to the tempestuous applause by performing the *Rákóczi March* in his own arrangement. His playing was accompanied by shouts of "Bravo" right from the opening bars. The secret police immediately reported the event. The same happened in Pest, where, according to newspaper accounts, "one felt the endless jubilation might cause the entire house to collapse," and "the enthusiastic outbursts could have revived a dead man." Liszt's frequent performances of the march were attributed to his Hungarophil feelings. (The Viennese censors forbade publication of his first arrangement of the march.)

Liszt was keenly aware of the significance of the melody. He incorporated the opening motifs of the *nóta* in his 1853 *Hungarian Fantasy,* and arranged the *March* several times, the best-known version being his *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 15. Violinist Ede Reményi (1828–1898) always ended his recitals with the *Rákóczi March,* invariably to huge applause. This became an accepted custom with artists both Hungarian and foreign. (Even today, Hungarian orchestras are expected to play the march as an encore on their international tours though no longer with the connotation of national resistance but simply as a symbol of identity.)

It was after such antecedents that Berlioz gave his first concert in Pest in 1846. He chose to include the Rákóczi march at the suggestion of an anonymous well-wisher, counting the favour of local audiences. Seeing the enormous success of his masterful orchestration, Berlioz decided to incorporate it in his dramatic symphony *La damnation de Faust* and thus a military march became part of the world musical heritage. Bónis's discusses how Berlioz enriched the march with new elements. The subdued beginning following the opening fanfare, the dramatic intensification and the quasi battle scene made the piece irresistible and catapulted it to international fame.

Berlioz's concert in Pest had other consequences as well. Recent research

7 ■ Communication by Sándor Takács.

has shown how his orchestration of the *Rákóczi March* changed Viennese opinion about Hungarian national music. As Mária Eckhardt has written,

> The Viennese press, which until then viewed Hungarian national music merely as of exotic interest, now became downright hostile, and went on to put obstacles in the way of performances abroad of Erkel's opera *László Hunyadi.* The response of the Pest audiences to Berlioz's march made the court realise what a great impact music could have on the growing self-awareness of a nation. Yet they could not stop Berlioz including the march in his *La damnation de Faust,* and as a result, this music was heard everywhere in Europe and America.[8]

Particularly beloved by Hungarians, the Rákóczi tunes have been discussed more extensively than any other family of melodies: poets, scholars and composers have all given it special attention. Arany transcribed words and music in his own song collection under the title "Rákóczy fragment" (1874) and, as mentioned before, he forwarded the *Lament* to Kálmán Thaly, in Peter Kenéz's version. Kodály transcribed Kenéz's successors performing the *Lament* in Nagyszalonta (Salonta, Romania) in 1914; twelve years later, he transcribed another version in Nagyecsed, Szatmár county. His achingly beautiful arrangement for voice and piano was published in Volume 7 of his series *Magyar népzene* (Hungarian Folk Music). This composition was memorably recorded by the tenor Ferenc Székelyhidy, accompanied by Béla Bartók.

When he edited Arany's song collection in 1952, Kodály also provided a commentary that is melodic analysis at its scholarly best, offering additional versions of the *Rákóczi nóta* that had either been previously unknown or known only in faulty editions. In addition, Kodály clarified the relationship between the vocal and instrumental forms of the *Rákóczi nóta.*[9]

Kodály's approach to the Rákóczi songs, the way he included them in his compositions and his research into the sources and history of this family of melodies, are emblematic of his deep commitment to the Hungarian past and Hungarian destiny. In his *A magyar népzene* he showed that these songs are part of an extended and many-branched family of melodies. In addition, he found a folk version that transmitted the original text of the *Rákóczi nóta* in the oral tradition. This recording was made in 1913 in the village of Gicze, Gömör county (Hucín, Slovakia); the singer was the 79-year-old István Beke. The phonograph recording is still enjoyable.

No other Hungarian melodies have ever had such an enduring impact on the entire nation. By virtue of their musical and textual significance, the Rákóczi songs have effectively unified the nation, and still do so today. The melodies belong to both the folk music and the art music traditions and they also perform a function in public life. They have inspired various genres including the highest forms of concert music and in Berlioz's arrangement of the march, they have truly conquered the world.

We are grateful to Balassi Press and Ferenc Bónis, the editor for this facsimile of the *Rákóczi March* and for an expert guide to the world of the Rákóczi melodies. ❧

8 ■ Mária Eckhardt, "Berlioz látogatása Magyarországon" (Berlioz's Visit to Hungary), *Magyar Zene* XLII/2 (2004): p. 108-09.

9 ■ *Arany János népdalgyűjteménye* (János Arany's Folk Song Collection). Ed. Zoltán Kodály and Ágost Gyulai. Budapest, 1952; 2/2011, p. 72–75.

Simon Broughton

Plucked Strings

'Söndörgő' and the Lost Music of the Balkans

It was an extraordinary set. On the one hand the agile mandolin-like *tamburas* of Söndörgő and on the other, the wild wailing of Macedonian Gypsy saxophonist Ferus Mustafov. Singer Ágnes Herczku was bravely performing a sultry Gypsy song as Ferus stalked around her preparing to undress her with his sax. This was on stage at MÜPA, Budapest's Palace of the Arts, in a concert to mark the 15th anniversary of Söndörgő—hard to say, but easy to listen to. They are hardly a new band, but they are at the top of their game, with this groundbreaking collaboration with Ferus Mustafov and their first international release—*Tamburising*—this year.

Söndörgő's music is that of the South Slav communities of Hungary. It is delicate yet fiery with an irrepressible spring to it. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as the Ottoman Empire expanded into Serbia, many Serbs fled north up the Danube. The South Slavs founded a number of towns along the river which, in many cases, still have a strong Serbian or Croatian flavour. These include Mohács, Ráckeve (with the most beautiful Serbian Orthodox church in Hungary), and Pomáz and Szentendre, close to Budapest. Szentendre is a popular day trip from Budapest and is where Söndörgő are based.

At home, next to the Orthodox church in Szentendre, Áron Eredics, the leader of Söndörgő, introduces me to the *tambura*, the plucked instrument that gives their music its character. "The *tambura* is probably of Turkish origin, but it was brought into Hungary by the South Slavs," explains Áron as he plucks it with a plectrum in his right hand and runs the fingers of his left hand over the five strings of the instrument. "My father bought me a *tambura* when I was five years old," he adds, "although I didn't play it at that time. It was when my cousin Dávid said they wanted to start a band at school that we began in a serious way. But it was very easy because I'd heard all this music around me."

Áron's father, Kálmán Eredics, is one of the founder members of Vujicsics, Hungary's first professional band playing South Slav music. Kálmán and his brother Gábor Eredics grew up in the town of

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Pomáz, just next to Szentendre. It was there they formed a band in 1974 inspired by a local group playing South Slav music for weddings and parties, but "they drank a lot and so you couldn't really rely on them, but they knew some really old tunes," explains Kálmán. This coincided with the folk revival in Hungary and the start of the *táncház* (dancehouse) movement. This was a grassroots revival of traditional music, with a whiff of political opposition. In place of the choreographed state dance ensembles, the *táncház* musicians preferred to seek out the real musicians in the countryside and learn from them the music and dances. It was a vibrant, unofficial scene with numerous *táncház* venues dotted around Budapest working virtually every day of the week.

Also living in Pomáz was a composer and ethnographer of Serbian background called Tihamér Vujicsics (1929–1975) who composed for the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble and collected Serbian and Croatian tunes from the communities in Hungary. Sadly Vujicsics was killed in an aircrash in 1975 and the band adopted his name in his memory—"and we'd been given this horrible official name—the Pomáz Young Folk Group of the Minorities—so we were very glad to get rid of that", Kálmán chuckles. Before his death Vujicsics had virtually completed *Musical Traditions of South Slavs in Hungary*, a collection of melodies and songs, which was published post-humously in 1978. It was from this book and from the tunes they'd learned from the drunken old-timers that Vujicsics built their repertoire. They released an award-winning debut CD in 1981 and became one of the country's best ensembles and, till Söndörgő started, the only professional band performing the music of the South Slavs in Hungary.*

Söndörgő are three brothers, Áron, Benjámin and Salamon Eredics plus cousin Dávid Eredics on *tamburas,* sax and accordion, with Attila Buzás on bass *tambura.* While Kálmán Eredics prepares goulash in the traditional way in a pot over an open fire in the garden, his sons take me through the *tambura* family. The small lead *tambura (prímtambura)* takes most of the melodic lines, but is backed up by the larger bass-lead *tambura (basszprím-tambura)* while the guitar-like kontra *tambura* plays accompanying chords. The bass *tambura (tamburabőgő)* looks deceptively like a regular double bass, but is played with a plectrum and has frets. While Áron's lead *tambura* is exquisitely made by a master luthier (Dule Rajkovic) in Vojvodina, he also has a tiny home-made instrument that looks almost like a toy. He finds this three-stringed *samica tambura,* which he bought in a street market near Budapest, particularly exciting because it is the same sort of instrument that Bartók recorded in one of the field recordings he made of *tambura* music. He plays a tune Bartók recorded from a musician called Milan Marković in the Banat region in 1912. In fact it was Vujicsics who first used the Serbian material that Bartók collected and recorded their own arrangements of the melodies.

* ■ **Select Discography: Vujicsics: Southern Slav Folk Music** (Hungaroton, 1981). Excellent Vujicsics debut with vocals by Márta Sebestyén amongst others. • **Vujicsics: Samo Sviraj** (Vujicsics Association, 1997). Great Croatian and Serbian tunes, one from a field recording by Bartók. • **Söndörgő & Ferus Mustafov: In Concert** (Sonodisc, 2008). A great live album with Ferus Mustafov. • **Söndörgő: Tamburising** (World Village, 2011). New album with *tambura* player József Kovács and singers Kátya Tompos and Antal Kovács.

As we tuck into the goulash with slices of hot pepper and white-wine spritzer, I get to discover the family history. They believe the Eredics name is Croatian, but the family now only speak Hungarian. Kálmán's grandmother was Serbian (and the last Serbian speaker in the family), but she married an Austrian (there was some anger in the family about this). Kálmán married a Jewish wife from what is now Ukraine and they are proud of their totally mixed ethnicities. It certainly means that their commitment to the music can't be described as nationalistic.

Although Söndörgő, and Vujicsics before them, are now primarily a concert band, they have roots in the *táncház* tradition which still feeds strongly into the Hungarian folk scene. If you think of the sound of a Hungarian folk band, the chances are you'll imagine a fiddle or two, perhaps a *kontra* in the middle of the texture and a strong sawing double bass. The staple repertoire of the *táncház* is music from Transylvania with its rich and elegiac sound of bowed strings. It's very different to the delicate, transparent sound of Söndörgő's plucked strings. Of course, far fewer people in Hungary know the South Slav dances that are part of Söndörgő's repertoire, but they assisted the Serbian dance group in Pomáz and have often played at *táncház* parties in Szentendre, Pomáz and Budakalász, the towns near Budapest with South Slav communities. They've also asked colleagues up from Mohács and Pécs in the south of the country to teach some of the old dances.

Whereas Vujicsics took much of their repertoire from around Szentendre and Tihamér Vujicsics's book, Söndörgő have taken their inspiration from the scene in Mohács, a town on the Danube in the south and the heartland of *tambura* music in Hungary. "In Mohács, *tambura* playing is more ornamented and stronger in the style of playing," explains Áron and demonstrates. As he strikes the strings, it is clearly much more percussive and incisive than the softer Serbian style of Szentendre. Down in Mohács, he introduces me to the maestro of Gypsy *tambura* music, József Kovács, or Józsi as everyone calls him. He's been an inspiration for a generation of young players in Mohács and was a guest on Söndörgő's recent *Tamburising* CD.

Söndörgő and Józsi Kovács (fourth from left) at home in Szentendre

Józsi came from a family of musicians, but he tells me he only started playing (aged 8 or 9) because he broke his leg and needed something to amuse himself. He played for 20 years in a riverside restaurant in Mohács "and you have to know all the repertoire—Serbian, Croatian, Hungarian as well as operetta tunes," he chuckles. He was always in demand at local weddings and now teaches *tambura* to a new generation of pupils. "These days the weddings are less common and more often I'm playing at funerals," Józsi admits. "The people whose weddings I played for 20 or 30 years ago are now dying and want me to play at their funerals." But he is optimistic about the

future: "It's starting again. There's a new interest amongst young people in this music. It used to be mostly Gypsies playing, but now it's fifty percent Hungarians, probably as a result of the *táncház* scene."

In Hungary Mohács is notorious for the battle that took place here in 1526 when Hungary was defeated by the Ottoman troops of Suleiman the Magnificent. It marked the end of Hungary's golden age and the beginning of Turkish and Habsburg domination—the Turks left in 1699 and the Habsburgs were in control until the First World War. In Hungarian "more was lost at Mohács" is a resilient expression meaning "things could be worse".

On a more cheerful note, Mohács is also famous for its *Busójárás* Lenten carnival with sheepskin costumes, scary masks and lots of *tambura* music—with Söndörgő taking an extremely active role. According to popular belief, the tradition started after the Turkish occupation when the population carved themselves masks, re-entered the town making lots of noise and scared away the Turks. After the Turkish occupation, south Hungary and Vojvodina was left one of the most ethnically diverse regions in Europe, with five nationalities—Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Germans and Slovaks—each representing more than 15 per cent of the population. Many migrated to the area to work the land and it made the territory culturally and musically rich.

Söndörgő have described their repertoire as the "Lost Music of the Balkans" and it's true. Hungary is famous for its Gypsy fiddle music, Serbia is famous for its brass bands, but here lost in the cracks between them is the delicate and distinctive sound of *tambura* music that's virtually unknown. Across the border in the Serbian province of Vojvodina, *tambura* music is hugely popular—Söndörgő tell me there are 40 bands in the region of Novi Sad—but it has no international profile. And the interest in folk music that has developed in Hungary thanks to the *táncház* means that the *tambura* music in Hungary has survived in a more traditional form.

In 2006 Söndörgő beat the local orchestras and were the first Hungarian band to win the hotly-contested Prize for *Tambura* Orchestras in Vojvodina, and it was in the provincial capital Novi Sad that they decided recorded their last album where they are much more used to capturing the elusive sound of the *tambura* than in Budapest. Another way they have expanded their repertoire is by taking tunes from Southern Serbia and Macedonia—outside tambura territory—and arranging them for tamburas. It works extremely well.

So Söndörgő are doing many things in their music—they are continuing the living tradition of players like József Kovács, they are reviving old tunes collected by Bartók and Vujicsics, and they are creating new tambura repertoire with music from outside the region. A great example is "Zajdi, Zajdi", a well-known Macedonian song arranged for *kaval* flute, accordion and *tamburas* and sung by their brilliant singer Kátya Tompos. When they performed it in London at the Songlines Encounters Festival earlier this year, it was a breathtaking moment and showed the power they have to speak to a wider audience. A London-based Serbian guy next to me was suggesting we get together enough money to pay them to play all night! Sadly, that's not so easy to do in London. But Söndörgő have just appeared as part of an impressive Hungarian showcase at WOMEX, the world music expo, so we should expect to see more of them on the international circuit soon. ❧

Tamás Koltai

Classics for Today

György Bessenyei: *A filozófus* (The Philosopher) • József Katona: *Bánk bán* • G.B. Shaw: *Saint Joan* • Shakespeare: *Measure for Measure*

Now we know what it is like for an English audience to watch Shakespeare, the poet and linguist Ádám Nádasdy remarked after the Budapest premiere of György Bessenyei's comedy *The Philosopher.* Bessenyei's plays are rarely performed and his language is hard to grasp. It sounds strange to a modern ear, barely understandable at times. In fifty years of theatre-going I cannot recall a performance of a single play by him. He was seen as a hard-sell. That is until the Katona József Theatre's bold foray.

The Katona is not the kind of theatre which puts on plays to celebrate an anniversary or for some other protocol reason. As an independent playhouse it hasn't even bothered perform even one play by Katona (the author of *Bánk Bán*), whose name it inherited after taking over the studio stage of the National Theatre. It is obvious from this production that the ensemble saw magic in Bessenyei's play and trusted that living theatre could be made out of it.

Written in 1777, *The Philosopher* follows French styles of the period, reminiscent of Marivaux. Think of the nobility and their servants as they gossip about everyday things, morals, fashion, food and drink, literature, history, politics, and above all about love. Bessenyei was an educated nobleman who served in the Hungarian body-guard of Maria Theresa in Vienna, where he began to take an interest in writing, translating and philosophizing. Not unlike young Parmenio, the philosopher of the title role, who reads Descartes and Locke and deliberates abstractly, mainly on how life can be lived in a world without a providential deity. Bessenyei's tragedies show how people live their pseudo-lives at court given an uncaring deity. Parmenio, the philosopher-hero of this comedy, is at least allowed to move in familiar surroundings musing on his loneliness. Finally he who cares about being loved for himself and not for his rank or wealth gets a girl who is just right for him. It is a match helped along by her less scrupulous and more frivolous younger sister who also gets her man. Then there's Pontyi, the rustic squire, one of the more colourful characters, all common sense, delighting in the

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pleasures of the table and market gossip—a foil for abstract philosophising.

Péter Gothár, the director, has cut the script right down and dispensed with the lengthy soliloquies. But the language is pretty much the same, so we're left to struggle with archaic turns of phrase and outdated grammar, which has an ironic effect. Furthermore, Gothár dispenses with the conversational style. The actors perform dialogue full of animation and emotion, blending wit, humour and poetry. They move about a lot. The front of the stage is bordered by an arc of candles as in theatres of old. Light streams through the gaps in the lattice fence at the back. Revived with stylistic bravura, the performance convinces us that the play did not deserve to sink into oblivion.

Bánk Bán, a classical fixture of the repertoire, is another thing altogether. In 2009 the National Theatre mounted a revival of the play with the title *Bánk bán —Junior* (see no. 197, pp. 138–39 of this journal) Since then the production was also shown in Kecskemét, where the theatre is also called the Katona. A young cast performed in a novel way, departing from the text and giving a provocative performance. *Bánk bán* was written in the flagrantly dramatic, powerful, somewhat pathetic style of the nineteenth century—a more succinct and theatrical language than György Bessenyei's, but still cumbersome and sometimes hard to follow. Many have tried to modernize it, including the poet Gyula Illyés. For a long time it was considered taboo to rework the play. In Kecskemét they managed to cut the Gordian knot. A young writer, Borbála Szabó, translated it into modern Hungarian. She did not try to write in a modern poetic language but simply turned it into everyday prose. In fact she has written a new play.

Bánk bán is a patriotic work; it is one of the intellectual precursors of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. It pays tribute to the idea of independence by basing itself on a historical episode in which the wife of the legitimate king of Hungary—a foreigner who hated Hungarians and a bawd—is murdered in her husband's absence. The subject is majestic and grave but the treatment in certain respects reads like a parody for a contemporary audience, much like a modern French farce. The actors are in the wrong place at the wrong time, arrive without warning, are always running into one another, overhear fragments of words and misunderstand each other. Bánk, the Palatine—later murderer of the Queen—moves around in secret through hidden doors and accidentally enters a room where he catches his wife in flagranti. He doesn't understand the situation; all he sees is that someone is paying her court. His ad hoc confidante, a peasant, moves inside the carefully guarded palace like a secretary. If questioned he states he is there with his master, and once let past, he can use this password to get absolutely anywhere. Only by accident does the all-powerful Queen, proud as she is of her familiarity with the arts of ruling, learn that Bánk bán, the country's second in charge, has unexpectedly returned home (even though, that night, he even pays a visit to the conspirators), and that a knight has been killed not far from her room. Bánk bán's wife is seduced after a love potion is poured into her drink. (Let us stop to consider what Shakespeare was capable of in *Richard III* in the seduction scene with Lady Anna!)

Just as Szabó has adapted the text, Bertalan Bagó, the director, has

translated the forms of behaviour into "contemporary Hungarian". The performance begins with the fifth act, in old-fashioned costumes and style, as a parody—letting us see theatrical conventions we are abandoning—and it is looking back from this, in flashbacks, that he starts to tell the story in present-day surroundings. This is strange because it is precisely the last scene that is the most modern, with the most "echoes from the past". The Queen is dead, the King is campaigning abroad, there is no law and order, and rioting ensues: they are looking for a murderer but they don't know where. Everyone is misinformed, chaos rules, and questionable characters break into the palace. Finally the King arrives but does not dare to punish anyone because he is weak and does not feel his power to be truly legitimate.

The Kecskemét performance presents a chamber drama on a chamber stage. In place of walls, the space is everywhere demarcated by thick, stiff lamellas possible to pass through, hide behind or eavesdrop from anywhere, at any time. Everyone crosses the walls as they please. The uncertain conspirators in dinner jackets and endlessly about to flee can vanish in an instant. The finale is a high-speed choking scene reminiscent of a thriller: we see only a woman's arm drooping through the gaps in the strips of the fence. Then we hear the famous aria *Hazám, hazám* (My homeland, my homeland) from the play's iconic, nineteenth-century opera adaptation by Ferenc Erkel, the composer of the Hungarian National Anthem. Thus the denouement revokes the introductory parody. But the pointlessly crackling record nevertheless states, the poetic tone nothwithstanding, that Katona's play can no longer be performed nostalgically. Neither its use of language nor its dramaturgy, nor the ethos present at its conception, are up to it. We have to approach it from today's perspective. The Kecskemét production is a successful step in this direction.

Nádasdy, who mentioned Shakespeare in reference to the linguistic difficulties of *The Philosopher,* retranslated G. B. Shaw's *Saint Joan* for the Hungarian National Theatre. Shaw's use of language is of course far from incomprehensible, whether in English or Hungarian translation. His spirit has not dated, and his sardonic attitude to history is as fresh as ever. But we do use different words, not those of almost ninety years ago, and translations better remind us of this change than performances in the original. Nádasdy's translation is quite innovative. Joan is known as "the Girl" instead of "The Maid" (or "the Maiden" in the old Hungarian translation) and Nádasdy uses the informal "you" instead of "thou" (the Hungarian equivalents are "te" and "maga".) The ultimate effect is to see the play, in line with Shaw's intentions, through contemporary eyes.

As a rational, ironic thinker Shaw is more interested in plays of ideas than in historical drama or romantic picture-book theatre. Still, it is usual to perform *Saint Joan* with visible passion. The parodying of political skulduggery often slips into a broader comedy style, mostly in scenes where the cynical church and secular dignitaries Chauchon and Warwick appear. This is precisely what director Róbert Alföldi breaks with. The drama pits a lone girl against the world; a girl with faith against all the vain, cunning, power-hungry or simply cowardly others. The world without Joan is an empty one. This is Shaw's message to us, and even today it would be rejected.

Joan confronts the world's emptiness. With Alföldi, even the giant stage is empty. The young Eszter Bánfalvi in the title role stands at the centre of the huge space as if nothingness were about to collapse on her. The public loves scenery in historical plays. They demand that the stage be as well furnished as their everydays. We want everything to be user friendly. We do not want to think for ourselves or use our imagination. The emptiness of the empty space makes a point beyond the aesthetic. Alföldi, who designed the sets himself, sweeps away the ready-made and gives us a *tabula rasa.* Only the inner life is real, and in the play it is Joan alone who has one. She hears voices, her own inner voices. The "saints" speak from their own convictions, she is the only one who is sure of anything, and this is the thing that even the sarcastic Shaw is moved by.

"No eggs! No eggs!! Thousand thunders, man, what do you mean by no eggs?" The first sentences are uttered in a poultry yard. Chickens mounted on boards fill the stage, where the constable awaits a dizzy chicken, a harum-scarum female. Joan arrives through the small centre door in the enormous wall in the background, through a mouse-hole into the mundane barn. She arrives twice; twice she starts what she has to say, because the door automatically closes in front of her. Without a twitch, she says it all again. She slaloms between the fake chickens, bumping clumsily into her own train, and reports, like a soldier, because a soldier is what she wants to be. No chattering, no entrancement. There is no art of acting here; the actress' personality is enough. The Girl concentrates on the job. She first cuts her hair short, then shaves it off. She throws off her pegtop skirt at once, then steps onto the road, ducking past the fake chickens in her knickers. Trousers, breastplate, boots—a medieval and yet modern soldier girl dressed in layers; and a sizeable sword lifted above her head, which throws her off balance. In the cathedral the monumental altar painting rolls down in parts, as if meaning to crush her, and at the end of the scene she has to slip out through the crack made in the huge panel like some tiny figure. (Her supporters, whose war she has just won, deserted her earlier than in the original play, and the reproach addressed to them is really addressed to the audience.) It is with her hands tied behind her back that she tries to shake hands with her "defender" at the trial. "Joan" – "Ladvenu" is the profanely modern way they introduce themselves to each other in the austere space between the desks at the trial, before the black monolith made up by the impersonal priests. (The unusual group of extras are amateurs, loyal fans of the National Theatre's, who undertook the job without pay.) With a handful of brushwood they light a stake at the front of the stage. Projected fire backstage. In vain the blackened, stripped Girl runs about in despair, asking for help from those judging her. In the much-shortened Epilogue everyone runs for their lives at the suggestion that Joan, canonized, might be resurrected. All that is needed is an abstract Saint—Ingres' well-known canvas of Saint Joan crawls up gracefully at the end—and not a Girl who has faith.

The slightly wordy dialogue has been streamlined by the dramaturge. In Cauchon and Warwick's scenes, it is not cynical manipulators but politicians of great format who decide on the buying and selling of the Girl. Or rather on her destruction, as she has become a threat to their power. As the two ideologues

"discover" Protestantism and nationalism on the scene—from the words *protest* and *nation*—this conforms exactly to Shaw's anachronism and our knowledge as observers. The laconic style of the performance offers us something we have great need of: less theatricality to stupefy us and more ideas which keep on snowballing.

Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* is not dramatically akin to a play by Shakespeare, the latter's intellectual influence can, however, still be felt. Shakespeare was no stranger to the presentation of political manipulations. *Measure for Measure* at the Hungarian State Theatre of Cluj (Kolozsvár) in Transylvania, directed by Matthias Langhoff, is emphatically socially-motivated theatre. Reflexive, political, even Brechtian. Langhoff has created a fiery, sardonic and highly entertaining production. Its unquestionable main character is the manipulative Duke. He retires from public life as an uppity high-ranking bureaucrat, and incognito, as a hedonistic cynic, he further worsens the evils he was responsible for. He entrusts his deputy, Angelo, with establishing order. Angelo is a mix of careerist Puritanism and power-fed unscrupulousness. He does not resist his attraction to the blackmailed Isabella for long and bombards her with ever greater intensity, meanwhile preaching morality, as he starts a reign of terror. The Duke returns in the role of the one who can clear everything up, and this is when his hidden character emerges: he is a dictator. The actor in this role, András Hatházi, paints a brilliant psychological portrait. He also plays Pompey the bartender with wonderful improvisations—which differ in every performance—he adds the clown dimension to the man of power. In this context Angelo is no other than the subservient employee who wants to use his unexpected power to make his subjects subject themselves voluntarily to him. Quite literally. Nervously making too much of an effort, he tries to convince Isabella to offer herself. Lucio, who we usually know as a big-mouthed layabout, here becomes a highly original figure. His performance seems to embody one of the archetypal characters of our own age, the intellectual "know-all" of liberal democracy. He has something to criticize at every turn, as long as his opinion carries us weight. But as soon as basic rights are abolished, he offers his services to the state in the most cowardly way. The Brechtian nature of the performance is confirmed by the Shakespearean sonnets set to music as songs, which are sung by a different character each time, sometimes fitted into the action, sometimes stepping outside it—an alienating device. We cannot for a single moment forget that we are watching a classic whose every word and stage image is addressed to us. ❧

Erzsébet Bori

Coping

Ágnes Sós: *Invisible Strings—The Talented Pusker Sisters*
Attila Kékesi: *Motalko—The Chronicle of a Petrol Station*

Both daughters of a provincial Hungarian family are violinists of great talent, winning prestigious international competitions. There is an intimate sibling bond between them. This offers material for a report of some seven minutes. Those interested in more should attend one of their concerts. They have performed at the Liszt Academy of Music, the Opera House and several of the country's cities. That a documentary filmmaker like Ágnes Sós has shown an interest in them suggests that there is more to their story than their talent and success. Sós started making films in the 1990s and first came to notice (to the extent that a documentary film is noticed in Hungary) with *Twentysomething Businessmen* in 1993, about young people now leaving university for the free market, in a new field, leasing. Almost a decade later she looked up the same people again—now thirty-somethings and millionaires.

We have seen countless documentaries about the losers in the transition after the change of regime, but the winners were largely limited to ones ending in horror stories or the stuff of urban legends. The notion of success became suspicious at best, and the word "entrepreneur" was revived in everyday parlance as a form of abuse, so it is no surprise that there was much interest in *We Are the Moneyed Class, or Whatever you Call It...* (2002), which filled a real void.

There's Always Prison, Baby, made with Gábor Ferenczi, stood out from the crowd with its eye for detail and the attention it paid to the subject; it asked whether those imprisoned had a chance to reintegrate into society, to live without getting into trouble, and to make ends meet. It followed the lives of three of them for over a year from the moment they were let out of prison.

Ágnes Sós has known and filmed the Pusker girls since 2004. They first appeared in the 2005 documentary *Hangköz,* which she made about the students at the Kodály School of Music in Kecskemét. "There are no great dramas taking place before our eyes," said the director. In comparison, in *Invisible Strings,* we indeed witness great dramas.

For a long time a terrible secret lurked in the happy family of the two music

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teacher parents and the two girls, Ágnes and Juli, six years her junior. Juli was not the first child to bear that name. Her predecessor had died at the age of two, and the little girl born one year later was given the same name. For many years she was not told that her sister had died, but she sensed something was not right. To lose a child is a tragedy without compare, one that some can never get over as long as they live. In the year of mourning the Puskers were already expecting their next baby. And a paradoxical situation emerged: they were offered the best possible compensation, but their delight could not be unclouded, poisoned as it was by the pangs of conscience felt about the lost child. A family legend emerged about the way the first Juli had been reborn in the second Juli; even the physical likeness was uncanny, and it was hard to distinguish photographs of the two (something that commonly occurs with siblings). Most of all it was Ágnes who was affected by this burden. She was just six at the time of the first Juli's death, and seven when the second Juli was born, but felt obliged to throttle within herself any envy, anger, jealousy, which is the most natural thing in the world between siblings. This situation was made more difficult since Juli was a child prodigy and could match what Ági worked so hard to achieve at a faster rate and with less effort. But in a family so rich in solidarity and empathy Juli could not be left out of the general burden: our hearts sink when, between her tears, she tells how sorry she is for having caused pain with "her death" in that previous life.

For a long while the viewer fears there is no way out of all this, however much the relationship between the two girls is an intimate and loving one (the parents are in the background throughout the film, but the warmth and security they so amply provide is clear). Despite the musical successes, there is no escape from the pent-up grief and repressed feelings. Ultimately time brings a solution. Not merely the passage of time, but the time devoted to so much work brings about an intellectual and emotional ripening. Ágnes Sós followed the progress of the two girls over almost seven years and shares it with us in an unusually discerning and beautifully edited documentary. The overall effect is one of great catharsis.

Motalko, or motor alcohol, is petrol blended with ethyl alcohol, formerly used as a fuel for combustion engines. It is a Hungarian invention of the 1920s, and however strange it may sound, it was the precursor of bioethanol. There is a place where they still sell it, at a family-run petrol station that has by some quirk of fate survived on the old Balaton Road.

Attila Kékesi's documentary tells the story of the oldest petrol station in Hungary, established in 1936 by the present owner, Tasziló Landthaller's father. It tells how Taszi bácsi—Uncle Taszi, which he is to young and old—succeeded in hanging on to the petrol pump in 1945 after his father's suicide, protecting the building against every attempt to nationalise it. He still serves customers in his petrol station at the side of the Old Balaton Road, and there, in a bin, Motalko, that is E85, is still available for those who want it, just as it was 76 years ago.

Taszi had read the Nationalisation Act of 1952 so he knew that it only covered buildings with more than six rooms and a sole owner. He divided the house in three, registering his mother, his sister and himself as owners. But history would not let go. Like an infuriated hyena it attacked

the Landthallers tooth and claw. In the fifties the state appointed a manager and ÁFORT, later renamed changing the acronym to ÁFOR, the fuel retail trade monopoly, operated the petrol station, like all others. Tasziló was accused of endangering the interests of public supply as a private trader. Gaoled for eighteen months, followed by two years' forced labour, his was a not uncommon fate in those days.

Once freed, he lived above the shop, in his own house. He found employment as a buyer, later as a trading enterprise executive. His sister worked in the petrol station as a state employee.

Soon after Tasziló, as owner, sued ÁFOR as the operator, for the rent. Believe it, or not—he won. Then, in 1991, the fairy tale ending. It was the age of privatisation, and ÁFOR was about to privatise the former Landthaller petrol pump as if it had been their own, for 22 million forints, not peanuts, even now after 20 years of inflation. But once again Tasziló was on his guard. He held all the papers that showed him to be the owner and ÁFOR a mere tenant. And so, having given proof of his staying power and ingenuity for 45 years, Tasziló Landthaller recovered the family fortune. Keep a hold of the petrol pump, his father had asked, and Tasziló had done just that.

The old petrol pump is still going strong. Those who know its story and happen to travel the Old Balaton Road are happy to stop and fill up. There is no café, no shop, the door does not open automatically when you go in to pay. Customers are spoken to courteously in the small office where only cash is accepted. While you are waiting for your change, you look at the ancient, faded photocopies on the wall. 1936, 1939, 1945, 1991... all stations in the life of the old petrol pump.

An old gentleman produces the handwritten bill. Tasziló Landthaller, Taszi bácsi, Uncle Taszi, to regular customers. He still works there. Again, at last, in his own petrol station. ❧

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Music, too, played an important part in the consciousn of the Eight. Especially significant is the fact that they, an association of painters, should have organized one of the most important concerts of the 'new music', given at the National Salon in Budapest on 18 May 1911. Here, surrounded by the paintings of the Eight, visitors to the exhibition could hear works by Bartók, Kodály and Leó Weiner that is, those composers most closely associated with the foundation of the New Hungarian Music Society. Presenting a concert of new music in the context of an art exhibition was, in itself, nothing new, either in Hungary or elsewhere in Europe. ... What *was* new was the insistence that the 'ne art and the 'new' music were united not by any formal similarity, but rather by an *inner* identity.

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