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VÖRÖSMARTY AND THE ROMANTIC FRAGMENT

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Although Sándor Petőfi (1823–1849) may be internationally more famous than Mihály Vörösmarty (1800–1855), it is possible to argue that the older author can be regarded as the most representative poet of Hungarian Romanticism, who in his best lyrics has a force that not even Petőfi could attain. Petőfi's descriptive and humorous poems could be characterized as representing a Biedermeier reaction against the sublimity of the most important works of the older poet, but it would be a distortion to deny that some of Petőfi's finest lyrics – the cycle of epigrams called *Felhők* (Clouds, 1845–46) or the longer poem *Tündérálom* (Fairy Dream, 1846) – show the decisive influence of Vörösmarty's Romanticism. In any case, Vörösmarty is an author who cannot be neglected in any international history of Romantic poetry.

His works were often called fragmentary. "*A földi menny* (Earthly Paradise, 1825), *Helvila halálán* (On the Death of Helvila, 1822–23), and *Helvila* (To Helvila, 1822–23) resemble chaos (Zerrbild),"[1] János Erdélyi (1814–1868) wrote in 1845 (Erdélyi 1991, 27). What this important critic missed in his contemporary's poetry was a metonymic structure. In his view Vörösmarty "merely juxtaposes the constituents of the story, instead of linking them together"[2] (Erdélyi 1991, 37). Taking the example of the short epic *Cserhalom* (1825), he insisted that causality was hardly perceptible in the works of Vörösmarty, so that the knightly virtues of the early medieval King Ladislas I "were not given proper poetic justification; they seemed accidental"[3] (Erdélyi 1991, 69). What he meant was not simply that Vörösmarty was an imperfect story-teller for he detected a similar weakness in the lyrics: the poem entitled *Fóti dal* (A Song Composed in Fót, 1842) "does not constitute a whole; it is a disorderly heap of beauties. (...) Its course is meandering, instead of moving in a definite direction; it is full of arbitrary and accidental elements"[4] (Erdélyi 1991, 36). Such observations lead to the following conclusion: "He has undeniable great poetic strength, but he *creates* mere chaos rather than a finely *shaped* world"[5] (Erdélyi 1991, 37).

What Erdélyi described as Vörösmarty's main shortcoming is comparable both to Friedrich Schlegel's concept of irony as the consciousness of infinite and total

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chaos[6] (Schlegel 1967, 263) and to the charges brought against some English Romantics by *Quarterly Review* (Hayden 1969). If "architectonic rules," "preliminary planning and a sense of proportion," as well as "formal maturity, structural wholeness"[7] are the criteria (Erdélyi 1991, 80), it becomes understandable that such works as *A Délsziget* (An Island in the South, 1826) and *Magyarvár* (A Hungarian Fortress, 1827) are not even mentioned. Erdélyi's ideal of form is a far cry from Friedrich Schlegel's view that a fragment can be regarded as a finished work of art[8] (Schlegel 1967, 197). Although it is often maintained that Erdélyi – in contrast to the literary historian Ferenc Toldi (1805–1875), a great admirer of Vörösmarty – was a spokesman of Petőfi's popular style and viewed Vörösmarty's works from the perspective of his own interest in folklore, in this respect the difference between the two interpreters was negligible. The earlier of the two above-mentioned poems was characterized by Toldi as an example of "symbolic" expression in which "adventureous imagination slips into the bizarre, so that allusions become entirely incomprehensible"[9] (Toldy 1987, 247). As for *A Hungarian Fortress*, this work attracted Toldy's attention on account of its subject: the poetic reconstruction of the beliefs of the pagan ancestors of the Hungarians. In his view the poet had left it as a fragment, because "he lacked historical and legendary material for it"[10] (Toldy 1987, 247).

For Erdélyi a poem was successful only if "it constituted a whole (...), in the same way as different tones created harmony in music." It was a serious flaw if some element "surprised the reader on account of its being unexpected, in the sense that it could not be traced back to any perceptible cause"[11] (Erdélyi 1991, 81). The analysis of *A Rom* (The ruin, 1830) makes it clear that Erdélyi associated artistic perfection with "poetic judgement." His idea that the function of literature was to illustrate moral lessons and render instruction to the readers was in conflict with Vörösmarty's natural inclinations. "Since it is difficult to identify the meaning of this allegory," the critic wrote, "the poet should have published this poem as a fragment" [12] (Erdélyi 1991, 234). Toldy's observation that in this poem "Ruin is mistakenly raised to the status of a god that controls human fate"[13] (Toldy 1987, 247) is even more symptomatic of contemporary critics' inability to recognize that Vörösmarty was a master of the disruption of the reader's expectations who brought a new complexity and new uneasiness to the art of poetry.

In the first half of the nineteenth century Hungarians used the word "fragment" very much in the same way as most other Europeans: they referred either to objects that had lost some of their parts or to unfinished products. Born in Transdanubia, a region full of Roman (Pannonian) and medieval (Romanesque and Gothic) ruins, Vörösmarty was keenly aware of the first of these meanings. At the same time, he was the first major Hungarian poet to publish works that were meant to remain fragments. As such, *An Island in the South* and *A Hungarian Fortress* marked a radical departure from a widely respected convention. They

raised the fragment to the status of an aesthetic form that represented the relation between the individual and ideal unity.

English poems describing ruins had been known in Hungary before 1800. Such lyrics as *Régi várban* (In an Old Fortress, 1825) or *Huszt* (1831) by Ferenc Kölcsey (1790–1838) treated ruins as metonymies of national history, and the broken horn of a pagan Hungarian warrior was evoked to remind the reader of the destructive force of time in *Lehel kürtje* (Lehel's Horn) by János Garay (1812–1853). Similar connotations can be discovered in *Rom* (A Ruin) by Lőrinc Tóth (1814–1903), a poem published in the almanach *Emlény* (Memoirs) in 1838. All these lyrics may have been inspired by the campaign started by Miklós Jankovich (1773–1846). His article *Esedezés a magyar régiségek iránt* (In Defence of Hungarian Antiquities), published in the scholarly journal *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* (Scholarly Collection) in 1818, urged contemporary Hungarians to discover "important historical ruins" in order to learn how much had been "destroyed irrevocably" during the Ottoman occupation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Marosi 1999, 15).

While other poets looked upon ruins as reminders of the vicissitudes of Hungarian history, Vörösmarty interpreted them as symbols of the mode of existence of artistic creations. In this sense even his longest epic, *Zalán futása* (The Flight of Zalán, 1825) could be called fragmentary. Erdélyi characterized it as such, on the basis of its lack of a hero and a focus. János Horváth, the most influential Hungarian literary historian of the first half of the twentieth century, argued in a similar way when he published a selection from this work, insisting that each "lyrical passage" had to be read "as a separate poem" (Vörösmarty 1925, 4). Many of the sentences slip by like fleeting visions, giving the poem a sense of caprice and fragility, so that the writing gives the impression of an unconstrained improvisation that refuses to bend to any formula. Characteristically, Vörösmarty insisted on the similarities between his dislocated and truncated syntax and the rhapsodic, improvisatory, rubato playing of his great contemporary in *Liszt Ferenchez* (To Ferenc Liszt, 1840) and described the gypsy fiddler as his "Doppelgänger" in *A vén cigány* (The Old Gypsy, 1854). The poet's malaise experienced with large, unified forms testifies to a loss of faith and interest in the calculated balances and clear articulations that an epic implied. It corresponds to a mistrust of the Enlightenment interpretation of progress that is most explicitly formulated in the long meditative poem *Gondolatok a könyvtárban* (Thoughts in a Library, 1844), a radical questioning of the utility of books.

Erdélyi's essay and Horváth's selection played a major role in the history of the reception of Vörösmarty's poetry. Both insisted that the uncertainty of progress, the missing link, discontinuity, and the unexpected make the impression that this poet's works are fragmentary in nature. It is true that Vörösmarty had such models as Virgil's *Aeneid* and the Ossianic poems, but he succeeded in making it seem as if his poetry had been created *sui generis*. His work is marked by a continual

disparity between traditional form and innovation, public expectation and a penchant for introspection. Instead of focusing on Árpád, the warrior who led the ancestors of the Hungarians into the Carpathian basin, he made the defeated Zalán the main character of his epic. Untimely death, life cut short by some unexpected event is the recurrent motif of *The Flight of Zalán* as well as of the elegy *Kis gyermek halálára* (On the Death of a Young Child, 1824), *A két szomszédvár* (The Two Neighbouring Fortresses, 1832), a verse tale in four cantos, the romance *Szép Ilonka* (Fair Ilonka, 1833), and the epitaph *Hubenayné* (Mrs. Hubenay, 1844). Using the splintering into fragments as a formal principle, he liberated Hungarian verse from the academic requirements of the past. There is great originality in his ability to move from one vision to the next without preparation. From *The Flight of Zalán* to *Előszó* (A Foreword, 1850) and *The Old Gypsy* his poems are full of visionary images highlighting the unpredictability of natural forces.

The title *A Foreword* refers to a missing centre. The introduction starts as if in the middle of an already initiated narrative:

When I wrote this, the sky was clear,[14]

The three stanzas are of unequal length, and this irregular division is at odds with the equally uneven segmentation based on tenses. The structure is determined by a disturbed solar system: a full summer is suddenly interrupted by a winter of nothingness, and the future is presented as a spring not associated with youth, but with old age (cf. Szegedy-Maszák 1988, esp. 236). The syntax is so fragmentary that sometimes it suggests the inarticulate:

Now it is winter and silence and snow and death. [15]

The narrative of an unfulfilled promise refers to a second creation that remains incomplete. Vörösmarty was not a poet whose object was pleasure. The cosmic catastrophe is found contrary to all experience, yet is presented as true. A spiritual life is imparted to nature: the visionary offers an account of how nature assists in making the human mind aware of its mirror in what it sees. The poem is a preface to an unwritten work. The history of the 1848 revolution has been transformed into cosmic events.

The sudden interruption of continuity is often linked to the image of the sublime in Vörösmarty's poetry. Similarly to Wordsworth (Wordsworth 1988, 267), the Hungarian poet interpreted the sublime as a state of consciousness. What deeper principle may underlie the unexpected, sudden ("rasch") changes between past and present, present and future? Such are the questions asked in *A Foreword*. For the title hero of *The Ruin* and the warring families in *The Two Neighbouring Fortresses* the world is not given but is in a state of constant deconstruction. The fifty-six-line monologue on night at the beginning of the fifth act of Vörösmarty's

verse play *Csongor és Tünde* (Csongor and Tünde, 1831), a "Menschheitsdichtung" with characters taken "from the age of pagan Cumanians," presents nothingness as existing before the creation and after the dissolution of the universe:

> There will be dark nothingness, I alone will exist,
> A dreary, silent, uninhabited night. [16]

Csongor and Tünde is one of the most important among Vörösmarty's major works suggesting that the world lacks unity and lies broken in fragments because man is disunited with himself. In certain respects, this five-act lyrical drama, inspired by fairy tales, *História egy Árgirus nevű királyfiról és egy tündér szűzleányról* (The Story of Prince Argirus and a Fairy Virgin) – a verse narrative composed by Albert Gergei in the late sixteenth century — and *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* may be regarded as the poet's refuge from adult tumult, the manifestation of the Romantic belief that a man of creative genius has retained the spirit of infancy into the era of adulthood. Vörösmarty's poetry, however, is almost never free of dark connotations. There is often, even in the most serene sections, an undercurrent of turbulence. The text of *Csongor and Tünde* is dominated by metaphors of fragmentary existence. In Act I Ilma, a peasant woman in the service of the heroine, compares her fate to a broken ship that cannot reach its goal, and Tünde's hair – suggesting magic power – is cut by an old witch. In Act II Csongor is tortured by a vision of incompleteness:

> Perhaps the road never ends
> But is lost in infinity,
> And life fades away
> As the images we draw on ice.[17]

Each of the three wanderers the hero meets – the Merchant, the Prince, and the Scholar – talks of plenitude, but in the final act the ideal of each turns out to be fragmentary: what they lack seems to be more essential to human existence than what they possess. Market-oriented utilitarianism, political power, and knowledge are presented as equally defective. The comic counterparts of these wanderers, three goblins inherit three objects which cannot be used separately, so each has a legacy that is of no value (cf. Szegedy-Maszák 1994, esp. 302–304).

In contrast to the interpretation of human existence characteristic of the works of such Romantics as Wordsworth, Coleridge, or Emerson, Vörösmarty's apocalyptic vision implies a denial of the belief that "nothing can befall on the poetic self which nature cannot repair." His image of a disjointed, tortured, cruel, and alienated nature is closer to Baudelaire's interpretation: nature is seen not as the nurturing, mothering, healing, educating solace of life but as a system of spiritual signs warning of the primacy of destruction, a force that conspires with the supernatural to ruin mankind. At least two of the later lyrics, *Az emberek* (Men, 1846)

and *A Foreword,* give a vision of history as a self-destructive process governed by eternal recurrence. In the earlier poem disruptions catch the reader by surprise, beginning with the first words:

> Keep silence, stop singing,
> Let the world speak.[18]

Reason and evil, law and oppression are depicted as natural allies, Cain is regarded as the originator of an everlasting tradition, and in the final stanza of the same poem the human species is called "the teeth of a dragon." In *A Foreword* spring is portrayed as an old whore who has killed her children, and in *The Old Gypsy* a question is asked about the identity of some creature crying "as a mill in hell." In the first two of these major poems the violation is of such a nature that no ultimate resolution can be imagined, because the terms of resolution have been basically denied.

During the first half of the nineteenth century Vörösmarty was not the only Hungarian poet to believe that the workings of consciousness were comparable to sudden illuminations rather than a continuous stream. In the third (and final) stanza of *Egy töredék alá* (On a Fragment, 1840), by Boldizsár Adorján (1820–1867), the idealist emphasis on completeness was discarded as irrelevant in view of the fragmentation of the soul. Images of the double were often linked to loss of sanity, in the same way as "fragments of most touching melody" were used as a metonymy of madness in Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo* (1824). Following the lead of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Hungarian authors gave a psychological justification for syntactic fragmentation. The predominance of coordinate sentences is conspiculous not only in *Men*, *A Foreword*, and *The Old Gypsy* but also in the verse of lesser poets. Vörösmarty was the most important but not the only poet to publish fragments. In 1836 even Sándor Kisfaludy (1772–1844), of the previous generation, presented his work *A somlai vérszüret: Rege a magyar előidőkből* (Mass Destruction in Somló: A Legend from the Hungarian Prehistoric Era) as a fragment to the members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the following year he published it as a (deliberately) unfinished text. What sets the works of Vörösmarty apart from those of his Hungarian contemporaries is that it is possible to see a deeper justification for fragmentation. The unity described at the beginning of *An Island in the South* is replaced by a division. The island is split and each of the two main characters (Szűdeli and Hadadúr) is surrounded by a fragmentary world, separated by an abyss that is both frightening and sublime. The absence of verbal predicates characterizes not only this poem but also *A Hungarian Fortress*. The legendary hero of this second fragmentary epic is a fugitive prince who is compared to both Prometheus and Lear. At the end of his life Vörösmarty translated *King Lear* into Hungarian. This highly imaginative translation, together with the Hungarian Romantic's "original" works can prove that

metaphoric writing may be closely related to a denial of continuity, rationalism, and progress. Although the Russian intervention of 1849 and the sad end of the Hungarian revolution deeply shocked Vörösmarty, and his life gradually ebbed away in a twilight state, illness and the progressive desolation in his spirit did not rob him of creative vigour: *A Foreword* and *The Old Gypsy* were written shortly before his death.

The fragmentary vision of existence that was criticized in the nineteenth century by those who spoke of Vörösmarty's awkwardness in handling the great forms made him one of the most original Hungarian poets in the eyes of later generations. The reader may find a powerful verbal innovation in his best works, the genius of a decision to break new ground in the expressive potential of metaphoric writing. What his contemporaries saw as a refusal to accept the responsibilities of large-scale form has proved to be an instransigence admired by twentieth-century poets. The old hierarchy of genres still ruled in the nineteenth century, although Vörösmarty's work, along with that of Petőfi, had shaken it. The final destruction came with the beginning of the twentieth century. That is one of the reasons why the poetry of Vörösmarty has more affinity with the style of the avant-garde than it does with the verse of the later nineteenth century. Mihály Babits (1883–1941), one of the leading poets of the Modernist movement, who called Petőfi "a petty bourgeois wearing the mask of a genius" (Babits 1910, 1586), discussed Vörösmarty's poetry as the most significant Hungarian contribution to Romantic literature (Babits 1911). The Romantic poet's apocalyptic visions of cosmic catastrophes exerted a profound influence on the verse of János Pilinszky (1921–1971), the most original Hungarian poet of the decades of Communist dictatorship. It could be said without exaggeration that Vörösmarty's work served as a constant source of inspiration for later poets. Like other major Romantics, he set an example for those who desired to make inherited diction untenable and create a new poetic discourse.

Notes

1. "*A földi menny, Helvila halálán,* és *Helvila* mindegyik ráma és körrajz nélküli szanakép (Zerrbild) vagy töredék."
2. "nem fűzi össze lánccá, hanem csak egymás mellé teszi a történet szemeit."
3. "László udvariassága nincs kellőleg, azaz, költőileg vive, mert csak mint *eset, véletlen történet* adatik elénk."
4. "*a Fóti dal nem egy, nem egész,* hanem szépségek rendetlen halmaza, összetákolása (...) a dalmenet irányt vesztve, kalandozni kezd (...) mintegy erővel behúzva, és véletlenül."
5. "Őbenne nagy költői erő lakik, tagadhatlan, de véve a költő értelmét ugy is, mint aki nemcsak puszta chaoszt *teremteni*, hanem belőle szép formáju világot is tud *alkotni*, akkor máskép fog esni válaszunk."
6. "Ironie ist klares Bewusstsein der ewigen Agilität, des unendlich vollen Chaos."

7. "architektonikus szabály", "átgondoltság s bizonyos lelki szemmérték", "az arányosság, kimért tisztaság, formai meglettség, alaki teljesség."
8. "Ein Fragment muss gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebunden Welt ganz abgesodert und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel."
9. "egy nagyobb jelves (szimbolikus) költemény eleje, melyben a kalandos képzelem a bizarrig tévedez, s célzásaiban teljesen érthetetlenné lesz."
10. "mondai és történeti anyag hia miatt végre is abbanhagyta azt."
11. "úgy alkotna összehangzó egészet (...), mint zeneművész különböző hangokból harmóniát (...) meglep váratlansága miatt, mert nem látjuk elegendő okát előbbeniekben."
12. "Mi legyen ezen allegoria értelme (...). Kivenni bajos (...), azért jobb lett volna ezt is töredékül adni ki."
13. "Romisten helytelenül tétetik az emberi sors intézőjévé."
14. "Midőn ezt irtam, tiszta volt az ég,"
15. "Most tél van és csend és hó és halál."
16. "Sötét és semmi lesznek: én leszek,
    Kietlen, csendes, lény nem lakta Éj."
17. "Vagy tán vége sincs az útnak,
    Végtelenbe téved el,
    S rajta az élet úgy vész el,
    Mint mi képet jégre irunk?"
18. "Hallgassatok, ne szóljon a dal,
    Most a világ beszél."

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MIKLÓS WESSELÉNYI AND NATIONALITY ISSUES IN 1830–1849 HUNGARY

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I. Introduction

In April, 1806, nearly four hundred nobles met in a session of the Közép-Szolnok county assembly in Northern Transylvania. The speaker before them came from a prestigious family whose ancestors had addressed that body for two centuries. None of this was unusual. What was extraordinary was that the speaker was nine years old. In his youthful voice, he announced to them his intention to become a patriot:

> Fathers and Patriots! ...
>
> I already feel such a love for my country and to you. Fathers! I also want to be a patriot. You work with a noble fire. And why? So that you may bring us happiness.
>
> Oh, fathers, please believe that my spirit is so ready to follow in your footsteps. But my nine-year-old body is my obstacle. I am not like Alexander the Great who envied his father's achievements. There is enough work for all of us to do. But what sort of work? We will raise the pillars skyward for you. And what you do not finish, we shall complete with your same noble fire ...
>
> ... Keep your eyes on me. And do not forget that today I have dedicated myself to become a patriot. In just a short time you will see that I have not disappointed your expectations of me.[1]

The lad was Miklós Wesselényi who, faithful to his promise, became a leader in the Hungarian Reform Movement from 1830 to 1849. At times his dreams for renascent Hungary seemed so bright with promise. But the patriot's path was also strewn with disappointments, treason trials, imprisonment, blindness and an early "civic death."

There was also the conflict between the nation's Magyars and its nationalities. Wesselényi saw the ethnic battle lines forming much earlier than did most Hungarians. He was partly a sage, partly a product of his time. In hindsight some of his proposals seem naïve today and a number of his ideas were ill-timed because of

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domestic or external political conditions. His analysis of a problem was sometimes sharper than his solution. But in a time of rising ethnic nationalism, he tried to find a common ground on which Magyars and non-Magyars could meet in order to avert what may have been an inescapable clash. He saw that unless the nationality divisions and conflicts were resolved, they would be exploited to weaken, or perhaps destroy, the Hungary he knew.

Wesselényi has not been ignored by historians of Reform Age Hungary, but his role has been overshadowed. His time of greatest political influence (1830–35) was wedged between the meteoric rise of his early friend, István Széchenyi, before him and the towering later figures of Lajos Kossuth in 1848–49 and Ferenc Deák in 1867–68. Wesselényi's modern biographer, Zsolt Trócsányi, calls him the "Father of Hungarian Liberalism."[2] But more important than his title is the answer to the question: "Was Wesselényi so important to Hungary's Reform Age that the period cannot be truly understood without knowing of his role in it?" Were this question asked about Deák, Széchenyi or Kossuth, the answer would clearly be in the affirmative. A case can be made that Wesselényi also should belong to that select group.

One Wesselényi biographer divides his public life into two periods, one basically encompassing the 1830 years, the other the 1840s. During the first, Wesselényi drafted his reform program, much of which is found in *Balítéletekről* (About Prejudices). In the second, he addressed nationality issues in his *Szózat a magyar és szláv nemzetiség ügyében* (An Appeal in the Hungarian and Slav Nationality Matter).[3] This bifurcation of his public life provides a useful yardstick, but may be a little incomplete. Reform legislation and the nationality question were not isolated, but related and intertwined, events. Enactment of Wesselényi's program was complicated by the demographic reality that more than fifty per cent of the Hungarian population was non-Magyar.[4] The nationality issue was an obstacle to the passage of reform legislation in a nation led by a feudal Magyar ruling elite. Yet *Szózat*'s plan to pacify the non-Magyars was to offer them the very constitutional rights *Balítéletekről* had already outlined a decade earlier.

Another problem with the two-part analysis is its assumption that Wesselényi retained his *Szózat* views until he died in 1850. More recent scholars claim that in 1848, Wesselényi modified some of his *Szózat* views regarding the Romanians and the South Slavs. These writers suggest that after 1848, Wesselényi doubted whether such groups would remain in Hungary and proposed the nation should go forward without them.[5]

Rather than compartmentalize Wesselényi's public life into just the two periods, a more complete analysis of his nationality ideas might consider:

1) the pre-1830 formative years during which he shaped a rough vision of a Hungarian and Transylvanian political renaissance;

2) the 1830–38 period highlighted by his confidence in liberalism, land reforms and constitutionalism all of which he believed would modernize Hungary;[6]

3) the 1840–47 years dominated by the nationality issue; and finally,

4) the 1848–49 Revolution years in which he became at least partly disillusioned with some of his earlier assumptions and concluded that a number of the nationality groups were unlikely to remain as part of the Hungarian nation.

The *leitmotif* of Wesselényi's public life was the need for a Hungarian national revival. But three important sub-themes were interwoven within that dominant idea: hope characterized the 1830–36 years; *angst* colored 1840–47, and resignation to reality settled over him during his last years. Seen together these three themes offer a kind of kaleidoscope which may help us better understand him.

II. Prelude and Preparation

Baron Miklós Wesselényi (the younger) was born on December 30, 1796 in the family castle at Zsibó, Közép-Szolnok county, Transylvania. The Wesselényi family had been prominent in Transylvania for centuries, although often controversial and not always *kaisertreu*. Wesselényi's father (also named Miklós) was an intriguing figure who was influenced by both the Enlightenment and Magyar nationalism. Zsigmond Kemény wrote of him that he was "a restless soul like a stormy petrel, who yearned for the storm and for excitement which he endeavored to satisfy with every breath."[7] In 1792, Transylvania's Diet met to consider the *Supplex libellus Valachorum*, which proposed that the region's Romanians be treated as a nation equal to the three historic national groups. Midway through the reading of *Supplex* a fire bell rang outside causing many delegates to rush from their seats to see what was burning. Amid all this turmoil, the elder Wesselényi climbed on his desk and called on the delegates to return as there was already fire enough to put out within their own hall.[8] Ironically, a larger nationality fire would erupt in Transylvania in 1848–49, despite the efforts of his son to avert it.

During young Wesselényi's lifetime, Hungary and Transylvania were caught between currents of change and historic inertia. One factor was a rapid population growth which altered the nation's demographic composition. After the Austrian expulsion of the Ottomans from the Habsburg lands, there was a significant population growth in both Hungary and Transylvania, much of which was due to an influx of non-Magyars. The figures are only approximations, but in the early eighteenth century there may have been about eight million people living in Hungary (including Croatia) and Transylvania. By 1850, the population in the same area had risen to nearly fourteen million souls. While the Magyars were easily the largest single ethnic group, comprising about forty per cent of the total inhabitants

in the Kingdom of Hungary, there were more combined non-Magyar peoples than there were Magyars in Hungary.[9] The Romanian population constituted an absolute majority in Transylvania.[10]

By the nineteenth century, Hungary had been touched by the Enlightenment, the Hungarian national awakening and a Magyar language revival. But the nation was also a product of its feudal past. While Hungary was part of the polyglot Habsburg Empire, it viewed itself as a separate kingdom within that realm. During the eighteenth century the Habsburgs tried to centralize their Empire, but Hungary retained considerable self-rule in its own domestic affairs.[11] Hungary's feudal nobility dominated the nation's political, social and economic life. Approximately five per cent (perhaps 700,000) of the population was "noble," although "sandaled nobles" were often as poor as common folk. About 100,000 Hungarians could vote, while perhaps 30,000 were permitted to take an active part in politics.[12] The bulk of the population lacked significant political or economic power. The country was primarily agrarian with rural peasants comprising approximately eighty to ninety per cent of its peoples.[13] The non-Magyar peasantry was a concern, not simply because of its raw numbers, but because of budding tensions between the Magyars and the nationalities.[14] During the reign of Emperor Josef II, national consciousness increased among both Magyars and at least some nationalities. To a degree Hungarian and Croat nationalism rose in reaction to the Emperor's reforms, while Romanian national aspirations were furthered by them.[15]

Transylvania had been part of medieval Hungary from the Árpád conquest until the Ottoman occupation of central Hungary during the sixteenth century. When middle Hungary was controlled by the Ottomans, Transylvania became semi-autonomous and experienced a kind of Golden Age which fostered Hungarian cultural continuity. After the Ottomans were driven out of Hungary in the late eighteenth century, and especially after the 1711 Treaty of Szatmár, Transylvania came under direct Habsburg control.[16]

Wesselényi was the only Transylvanian among the early Reform Age figures and one of the few who had lived among any of the nationalities. He entered Transylvanian politics in 1818–19 and became popular by opposing the kinds of reform he would later support. In 1818, the Empire tried to impose urbarial legislation on Transylvania's nobles while bypassing the traditional county assemblies. Wesselényi sided with the nobility in opposing the reforms and played a significant role in defeating them.[17]

A crucial factor in Wesselényi's political development was his early friendship with István Széchenyi, the "Greatest Hungarian." In 1823, Wesselényi and Széchenyi became friends with common interests and complementary strengths.[18] During their travels through Europe the two decided to devote themselves to reviving Hungary by taking part in the nation's public life.[19] In 1828, each began

writing a book, although Széchenyi's *Hitel* (Credit)was published while Wesselényi was still working on *Balítéletekről*. Because of their close association and familiarity with each other's thoughts, there are similarities, even overlapping concepts, in the two works. Of these Wesselényi wrote:

> Our feelings and opinions are so largely similar and both works are so similarly constructed that each of them could have been mine.[20]

The common themes caused Wesselényi both pleasure and sorrow, and for a time he considered not finishing his book since he feared *Hitel* made it superfluous.[21]

Even before *Hitel* appeared, the two friends had begun to drift apart. The basic dispute was over Hungary's relationship to Austria. Széchenyi was convinced that Hungary should continue to work within the Empire, while Wesselényi thought Austria was a major reason for Hungary's problems. Széchenyi wrote that while he saw "only a donkey's long ears," Wesselényi perceived "devil's horns" behind every act of Vienna.[22] The issue came to a head in late 1831, when Széchenyi wrote Wesselényi:

> I see that our paths have branched apart ... we simply do not travel on the same road [anymore].[23]

By 1830, his life's preparatory phase had ended, and a not yet thirty-five-year old Miklós Wesselényi strode from the wings to the center stage of Hungarian politics.

III. The Period of Hope

> Only the liberal program can save Hungary from the consequences of its oppression of the nationalities over the centuries. This can be done by giving all citizens of the nation full legal rights without regard to their class ranks or national differences.[24]

Although reforms came haltingly at first, the 1830 years ushered in a new era for Hungary.[25] During the first half of the 1830s Wesselényi enjoyed his greatest political influence. He purchased lands in Hungary so that he could participate in the Upper House of the Hungarian Diet and soon became a leader in the "*ellenzéki*" or opposition group. That faction was vocal in the 1830 Diet but was unable to pass significant reform legislation. When Wesselényi tried to put together a parliamentary coalition to enact a program of liberal reform legislation, he thereby antagonized the Habsburg government in Vienna.[26] In the 1832–36 Reform Diet, he emerged as a major opposition leader and proposed a comprehensive social

and political reform program. However, his efforts were crowned with only limited success. Peasants were relieved from minor burdens, but the essence of his program was enacted only years later.[27] Midway through the Diet's term, Wesselényi left Hungary for Transyvania to build support for liberal reform there and the reunification of Transylvania with Hungary. When he returned in 1835, Kossuth and Deák had assumed leadership of the opposition group.[28]

In his speeches, Wesselényi generally did not address the nationality question as such. But forcible recruitment of peasant soldiers, land reform and equality under law were issues with strong nationality overtones. He emphasized the need for reforms, but did not advocate universal suffrage or dividing the nation along ethnic lines. He wanted Hungary to be Magyar and nobility driven.[29] If his reforms were adopted, he believed, an almost idyllic society would emerge, but he warned of dangers if change did not occur.[30] Much of his reform program is found in his 1830–36 speeches and in *Balítéletekről.*

Perhaps the greatest speech Wesselényi ever made was his January, 1833 "Sybil" speech to the Diet in which he emphasized the urgency of reform legislation. He spoke of the mythical Sybil who appeared in antiquity with her books of wisdom. Each time she proffered her volumes, she was rejected because her price was too high. After each rebuff she burned three of her books. Wesselényi likened prior Diets to the ancients who spurned the Sybil and he criticized earlier nobles for blocking peasant reforms. The Sybil was appearing for the last time; a rejection of her last offer would spell doom:

> ... Following her Christian duty, Marie Therese was ... forced to further this cause apart from the Diet. True, she acted illegally, but did so for the higher good of mankind, which is the highest law. It was then that the Sybil appeared to our nation the first time offering her nine books. But we found them too expensive, rejected them and thus, three of her books were thrown into the flames.
> In the last quarter of the previous century, Josef [II] ... [also] by an unlawful action which still deserves blessing, abolished serfdom, this blight on humanity. In 1790, the Empire's Councils approved this action and began consultations about relieving conditions of the peasantry. It was then, that the Sybil appeared a second time, offering now her six remaining books. But we found them too expensive and so she threw three more books in the fire leaving her with only three books left. We should have abolished serfdom, eliminated all of its remnants, and washed off its filth in order to save the peasantry from the burdens of oppression and insecurity which pressed upon their person and landholding [rooted] in serfdom; instead, we clumsily abandoned the laudable work, referring it to committees for forty-two years.

> Today the Sybil reappears with her last three books. We must not allow these [last three books] to be thrown into the flames, for I declare before heaven that if these burn to ashes, our homeland will be wasted and consumed.[31]

The "peasant question" was the most important socio-political issue Wesselényi's reformers faced.[32] The problem included the need to: 1) ease or abolish archaic feudal dues and services which peasants owed landlords; 2) enact reforms so peasants could own some of the land on which they worked; 3) reform or abolish the nobles' immunity from taxation and create more equitable tax burdens; and 4) abolish serfdom. Peasant land reforms were inextricably intertwined with the nationality question. The latter complicated the former, but one could not be resolved without the other. Nationality and peasants' issues were often simply different sides of the same coin.[33] Wesselényi feared the prospect of peasant revolt and believed that unless the nation took prompt steps to reduce discontent, it faced potentially dangerous consequences. He proposed to defuse the underlying causes of peasant resentment by a gradually implemented land reform program in which peasants would make redemption payments for the property they would acquire. This son of the "stormy petrel" wanted to restructure Hungarian society by progressive, peaceful consensus rather than abrupt social upheaval.[34]

In 1831, Wesselényi announced that minor revisions to the *robot* and feudal dues would be insufficient since peasants needed to actually own some lands on which they worked.[35] In his Sybil speech, he attacked feudal dues and an outmoded legal system which gave landowners excessive controls over the peasantry. The nobles' exemption from taxation was fundamentally unfair. Those who earned the least should not have to bear the heaviest tax burden.[36] In a November 10, 1833 speech in Szatmár county, he deplored landowner oppression of the peasantry and called for a revision of feudal laws which caused indescribable peasant misery. Owners were being unjustly enriched by peasant payments and services, yet the peasantry paid most of the nation's taxes and supplied the bulk of its soldiers. He attacked an ossified legal system which allowed a small privileged minority to unjustly dominate millions of fellow citizens.[37]

If the peasant question were the most pressing issue Wesselényi's liberals faced, the idea of equality before the law was both the crown jewel and the Gordian knot of their program. The basic concept was that all Hungary's citizens should stand equally before the law, regardless of class, religion or nationality. This legal equality required that the nobles give up some of their previously exclusive power, even though they still would play a major role in the nation's political transformation. Hungary's progressive nobility would continue to define the Magyar "nation." If by revolution or election the nobility were supplanted, their place would most likely be taken by non-Magyars, and Hungary would cease to be Hungarian.[38] But

legal equality was necessary for those Hungarian and non-Magyar citizens who had previously been victimized: "... [T]he yoke of tyranny must oppress no one; the shield of the law must protect everyone equally."[39] He yearned for a Hungarian national state, but if that state's survival:

> ... 'could only be won at the cost of keeping millions of people deprived of their human and civil rights,' he would rather ... bow his head and submit the nation 'to the curse of annihilation.'[40]

Wesselényi hoped that if the nation implemented constitutional reforms and full legal equality, the nationalities would voluntarily choose to become assimilated Magyars.[41]

He criticized government recruitment and impressment practices by which military age males (often peasants) were involuntarily forced into the army.[42] Such heavy-handed actions dislocated lives and ripped apart peasant households. In an October, 1830 speech, Wesselényi deplored the impressment practices used by the government and detailed the economic hardship and domestic trauma they created.[43] In 1831, he boldly (and perhaps intemperately) announced that on his own lands in Transylvania he would personally resist any governmental attempts to draft unwilling peasants in the army.[44] In January of 1833, he told the Diet that forcing non-consenting peasants into the army constituted both landowner and state oppression. Later that same year he informed a county assembly that feudal privileges which allowed landlords the right to force unwilling peasants into military service was a classic unjust dominion exercised by the few over the millions.[45]

But in the 1830s, Wesselényi also took positions on two issues which irritated at least some nationalities. The first of these was his belief that Magyar, rather than Latin, should be the official governmental language in Hungary. With his strong support, the Reform Diet passed a law which made Hungarian the official governmental language in certain situations. The Croats expressed their bitter objection.[46] Secondly, in the mid-1830s, Wesselényi was a major figure in an attempt to bring about the reunification of Transylvania with Hungary. While he proposed that reunification be conditioned upon Transylvania's Diet granting liberal peasant rights and land reforms, and that any future merger had to be approved by Transylvania's Diet with royal approval, some of the nationalities were alarmed at the prospect of a Transylvanian reunification.

Wesselényi completed *Balítéletekről* in 1831, but it was not printed until 1833 because of censorship problems and printing delays.[47] As its title indicates, the work identifies types of distorted perceptions which cause faulty decisions. Its chapters are arranged according to kinds of prejudices people have (i.e., "Misjudgments of Birth and Political Status," etc.). While many of Wesselényi's reform concepts are contained in *Balítéletekről*,[48] they are not specifically identi-

fied by chapter headings, but interspersed throughout the work, often as solutions to various kinds of muddled thinking.[49]

Wesselényi specifically raised the nationality question in *Balítéletekről*, although of the book's nearly three hundred pages only a few deal with it. His primary purpose was to identify the divisive ethnic tensions which were splitting Hungary into factions. In *Balítéletekről,* he described the problem, but also presented in embryo basic concepts which later dominated *Szózat*.[50] Wesselényi mused:

> Imagine what we could do in Hungary if the multitude of different national groups and religions would overcome all of these conflicting view-points and petty prejudices so that all of the nation's citizens, regardless of nationality, could join hands to bring about unity and a single national state by sacrificing their mutual animosities and suspicions upon the nation's altar?[51]

He was profoundly troubled by the ethnic contention he observed:

> We have among us all kinds of languages, many religions, countless different customs and many nationality types. And therein lies the danger. It is difficult, if not impossible, to bridge all of these differences. Only a [single] national fervor for the homeland, the law and the constitution can bridge these contentions by extending constitutional blessings to all these disparate tongues, religions and national groups. Only thus can we achieve the result that no one [ethnic] group can harm or torment another.[52]

While *Balítéletekről* illustrates, rather than solves, the nationality problem, Wesselényi suggested that "the homeland, the law and the constitution" could create a unified nation. Constitutionalism would dominate his later *Szózat*, but *Balítéletekről* presaged its theme. At a time when rising nationalism was just beginning to surface, he saw the wisdom of trying to build a broad national consensus in a multi-national state:

> ... Blessed is every effort which tries to root out the prejudices and differences which pit one nationality against another and tries to resolve national separations. On the other hand, that which breeds separation and incites national passions, even when done in jest, is detestable and harmful.[53]

Wesselényi's early nationality ideas expressed the Hungarian liberal position and exposed its basic contradictions. By the 1830s, some ethnic consciousness had already surfaced among Hungary's nationalities. In opting for a "one nation, one language" pattern borrowed from Western Europe, Wesselényi and his liberals may have chosen a model which would not work in multi-lingual, multi-cultural Hungary. While he and the liberal reformers wanted to extend broad consti-

tutional rights to the nationalities, the "nation" they intended to create was to be Magyar centered:

> On the one hand, there was implicit in their dedication to civil rights for all an impetus to the national development of every ethnic group; on the other, there was their determination to recognize as a nation with collective rights no ethnic group within the country but the Hungarian. This, in a nutshell, was the irreconcilable internal contradiction at the heart of liberal nationalism.[54]

In *Balítéletekről* Wesselényi also addressed the need for land and tax reform. There were two major flaws in Hungary's constitution: 1) the lack of legal protection for the peasantry; and 2) the nobles' immunity from taxation.[55] Put simply the issue was:

> ... As soon as possible, the nation should allow its peasants to have title interests in lands upon which they work and to become landowners under uncomplicated conditions.[56]

Reforms needed to come about incrementally rather than by revolution, as abrupt changes engender national instability. But they needed to begin lest the lower economic classes become desperate.[57] He proposed a uniform formula for determining how peasants should pay for land and a similar schedule for property redemption payments. The goal was for peasants to eventually own at least part of the land on which they worked, freed from feudal dues and services.[58] But Wesselényi's solution to the peasant problem was more than just removing economic restraints. The nation needed to lift up its peasants, abolish conditions which impoverished them, and repeal the feudal system which allowed nobles to exploit peasant labor. There were deeper social factors since poverty carried within itself destructive seeds of oppression. Servitude followed in the wake of poverty, enfeebling the soul and weakening the state. But economic freedom would provide an opportunity for secure financial life and mental development.[59]

The other major economic problem was the nobles' immunity from taxation. Wesselényi boldly announced: "I say publicly that we, the Hungarian nobility, must pay taxes." While some imagined that freedom required nobles to be exempt from taxation, those with the highest incomes and abilities also needed to make financial contributions toward the national good. Every citizen had the obligation to pay taxes; each was also entitled to develop its wealth without stifling feudal burdens.[60]

Balítéletekről echoed Wesselényi's basic theme that all Hungarians should be equal under law. Sometimes he addressed the equality issue indirectly while criticizing prejudices grounded in pedigree *(kutyabőr)* or wealth which denied civic equality to those not nobly born.[61] Depriving a person of basic legal rights was

tyranny because all were entitled to a fair reward for their honest labor. To the oppressed he wrote:

> ... Peasant, dry thy tears! In the stirrings of the nation's noblest hearts the dawn is breaking. The time is here and the age is now when the law offers you a fate worthy of your human existence and merit.[62]

The greatest freedom existed where the interests of all were guarded by properly appointed representatives. But reforms which existed only on paper would not suffice:

> ... Standing alone, neither statutes, constitutions nor favorable political conditions enrich a nation. Unless as a result of inner development and progress a legislative program is given life, the wisest law will remain a dead letter; the strongest government will simply die a painful death. Public order and constitutions do not always produce a national spirit. Rather, spiritual and moral progress is that which inexorably carries good laws along with it ...[63]

Although at times it is critical of the status quo, *Balítéletekről*'s message is optimistic. There were serious problems in Hungarian society, but Wesselényi was confident of his remedy. If the nation would make the needed changes, Hungary could have land reforms which provided security for both peasants and landlords, equality of the nationalities under law, more equitable taxation, credit reforms to stimulate the nation's economic growth, the abolition of feudalism, a constitution which guaranteed human rights, and freedom of the press.[64] Reality was different, but when Wesselényi finished his book, he was hopeful that Hungary stood at the threshold of a new age.

In 1835 and 1836, criminal actions were filed against Wesselényi in Transylvania and Hungary. Metternich saw him as a dangerous radical who needed to be heeled.[65] The government claimed that in November, 1833, and December, 1834 (both in legislative sessions), Wesselényi made treasonous speeches.[66] The specter of the trials haunted him and undermined his health. On October 18, 1837, Széchenyi wrote that he had met with Wesselényi and that "... the poor devil looks as if he had already spent ten years in prison."[67] In March, 1838, while awaiting his trial verdict, Wesselényi was in Pest when a massive Danube flood inundated the city and destroyed almost half of its houses. He requisitioned a boat and spent the next 72 hours rescuing trapped souls and rowing them to safety, personally saving some six hundred people from a watery grave. In February, 1839, Wesselényi was sentenced to serve three years in prison. During that imprisonment, first in Buda, then in Gräfenberg, Bohemia, he began to go blind. After serving less than a year in prison he was pardoned, but never again regained his earlier political influence. At Gräfenberg he was treated to save his failing eyesight, but by 1844, he was

almost completely blind.[68] Wesselényi's "Era of Hope" ended with imprisonment and blindness. His parliamentary achievements were mostly symbolic, but if his dream of the 1830s was not attained then, neither did it die. Although he was no longer a major political figure, a number of his reform ideas were adopted in 1848.

IV. The Period of Anxiety

> ... I tell you that now is the midnight hour of danger. And I will tell you the cause of the danger. The threat has ripened, and for that reason Europe needs to be on guard. The Northern Giant [Russia] threatens both present and future conditions which weigh heavily upon Europe. And I shall tell you, and particularly our homeland, what that danger is and what must be done to withstand the threatening peril.[69]

Increasingly engulfed in a world darkened by blindness, politically emasculated and largely forgotten in Hungary, Wesselényi began the 1840s broken and enfeebled. But soon he began to focus on the nationality topic which would dominate his life's last decade. Gräfenberg spa attracted notable people from all around as Germans, Czechs, Poles, South Slavs, Romanians, Russians and Western Europeans gathered to "take the waters." Because of his imprisonment and health Wesselényi's actions were somewhat limited, but he could still talk to people. He joined the casino at Gräfenberg and met intellectuals from other Central European nations who discussed with him the Slavic awakening and its potential meaning for Europe. He paid particular attention to their observations about Hungary and its non-Magyar peoples. At Gräfenberg many of his *Szózat* ideas ripened, enriched by the thoughts of those with whom he shared ideas.[70]

After 1836, Kossuth and others advocated a more aggressive agenda with respect to both the nationalities and Austria. The focal issue of whether Magyar should become Hungary's official language widened the gap between Magyars and some nationalities.[71] Efforts to assimilate Hungary's ethnic groups intensified, but a number of Slavs and Romanians were awakening to their own ethnic consciousness. By the time serious "Magyarization" actually began, some nationalities were strong enough to resist.[72]

After his release from prison Wesselényi wrote a December 8, 1842 newspaper article in *Pesti Hírlap* in which he attacked Széchenyi's earlier speech on the nationality issue at the Magyar Tudományos Akadémia. Széchenyi's speech criticized Kossuth and Pulszky and claimed that their chauvinist attempts to assimilate the nationalities had damaged Hungary's reputation abroad and hardened non-

Magyar opposition at home.[73] He implied that the Slav nationality movements had arisen as a reaction to these heavy-handed "Magyarization" and language efforts. Wesselényi responded hotly:

> ... I declare that this [Széchenyi's] statement that the Slavic movement is a reaction caused by excessive Hungarian language zeal is without foundation ... and these false statements make us hated at home and abroad ... Besides that, the Slav movement threatens both our homeland and all of Europe with grave danger ...
>
> ... I deny that Hungarians who cherish the spirit of constitutional freedom would tolerate or could tolerate persecution or hatred of the Slavs by any overzealous efforts. And I firmly state that those who try to stir up our nation by acts of force or oppression against foreigners or other nationalities violate the dictates of law and reason. But in the same vein, those who would work against the Hungarian language and people or who knowingly or unknowingly promote movements contrary to our nation, are enemies of our most sacred interests.[74]

Despite Wesselényi's florid language, there were substantial similarities in the positions of the two former friends. They did disagree about what caused the rise of the Slavic movements, but they acknowledged that the failure to timely extend civil rights to nationalities had created a major problem. Each admitted that a policy of overzealous Magyarization was ethically and logically wrong. They both conceded that the Slavs had legitimate grievances and suggested the need for caution and patience in dealing with them and that a too vigorous attempt at assimilation would not succeed.

Wesselényi began to write *Szózat* in early 1841, but ill health and poor vision slowed his efforts. Despite his growing blindness, Wesselényi finished the book in 1843 and sent it to the printer in Leipzig where it was published later that year.[75]

Szózat begins with Wesselényi calling himself "civically dead," an outcast cut off from the circle of active politics. He had been one of his nation's brightest lights, but because of illness he could no longer play that role.[76] But notwithstanding his physical afflictions he must try to awaken his country to the danger which threatens it:

> ... For out of the grave the spectral voice sounds the alarm. Danger threatens, Oh Homeland! Danger such as there has never been before.[77]

He called upon the nation to awaken and heed the impending threat or it would perish. Wesselényi believed the root cause of the nationality problem was the Magyar nobility's failure to allow nationalities the right to participate in Hunga-

ry's political system. For nearly a millennium the Hungarian ruling class had failed to allow the nation's non-Magyars any significant voice in government or society.[78] Centuries of shortsighted exclusion by the Magyar aristocracy had oppressed the nationalities and made them resentful. As a result, the country's non-Magyars had become estranged and Hungary was a powder keg ready to explode. The nation's situation might have been totally different had the conquering Árpáds not treated the non-Magyars as merely subject peoples. How much wiser it would have been to grant them full Hungarian citizenship.[79] Instead, a few hundred thousand privileged people held total political power while many millions lacked basic civic protections. But the ruling elite had also made paupers of Hungarians who were not nobles. As a result, the non-Magyars and most ethnic Hungarians were excluded from government and deprived of constitutional rights.[80] The consequence of this narrow-minded elitism was a legacy of bitterness. But in the nineteenth century new forces had arisen, partly as an outgrowth of the French Revolution, including yearnings for constitutionalism and greater political freedom. These feelings fostered ethnic consciousness and aspirations for self-determination.[81] Powerful external propaganda forces had stirred these yearnings, all of which presaged disaster for Hungary and the Habsburg Empire unless past mistakes were rectified.

Wesselényi was among the first to sense a danger in the growing discontent among Hungary's nationalities. Some scholars have questioned his premise that the root cause of nationality unrest in mid-nineteenth century Hungary was the Árpád conquerors' failure to grant citizenship to the conquered peoples nearly a millennium earlier.[82] At the time of the Conquest, Magyar society was tribal, rather than feudal. It would have been unusual for any European people in the tenth century to offer full civic rights to peoples they had just vanquished. Wesselényi may have overlooked the reality that Hungarian society had permitted some non-Magyar membership in the nation's nobility. A survey dated near the time Wesselényi wrote *Szózat* suggested that perhaps fifteen per cent of the nation's nobility was non-Magyar and did not speak Hungarian.[83] However, the crucial factor is not whether the nationality estrangement had its roots in early Árpád times or later ones, but Wesselényi's observation that the nationalities (and Magyar non-nobles) had long been systematically excluded from participation in the nation's political process and deprived of legal protections in Hungarian society. One may question Wesselényi's postulates, but he accurately concluded that an unresolved nationality problem posed an increasingly serious danger for multinational Hungary.

A major Wesselényi purpose in writing *Szózat* was to expose what he saw as a Russian attempt to manipulate the Pan-Slav and Illyrian movements in order to weaken Slavic ties to Hungary and Austria.[84] He reiterated his *Balítéletekről* opinion that Slavs distrusted each other because of their conflicting national aspira-

tions and traditions.[85] Because of past injustices suffered by Slavs and Romanians, Wesselényi was convinced they held strong negative feelings toward Austria and Hungary. He felt that because of their similar Slavic languages and cultural heritages the Hungarian Slavs looked to Russia as a more likely protector of their nationality aspirations than either Austria or Hungary.[86] As Ottoman power waned in Southeastern Europe, he feared Russia would fill the resulting vacuum with the help of the South Slavs. This expansion into the South Slav regions posed a dire threat to both the Empire and to Hungary.[87]

Wesselényi believed there were two kinds of Slav propaganda which undermined South Slav loyalty to Hungary: 1) Russian (by far the most dangerous); and 2) Western Slav (mostly Polish) which advocated the creation of several independent Slavic states in Central Europe. In the end, both would inure to Russia's benefit.[88] He feared Russia would either swallow whole the smaller Slavic peoples, thereby making them part of a Greater Russia; or that it would fashion a weak assemblage of Slavic puppet nations. Such politically non-viable mini-states would be inescapably drawn into the Russian orbit because they could not independently survive without Russia's protection. He believed Russia was the black-hatted villain whose propaganda aimed at weakening multi-national states with large Slavic populations (such as Austria and Hungary). At the same time, the tsar tried to solidify pro-Russian feeling among Slavs prior to the outbreak of what Wesselényi felt would be an inevitable great war between Austria and Russia.[89] The Russian danger was serious for all Europe, but absolutely life-threatening to status-quo nations such as Austria and Hungary with large Slavic minorities.[90]

Wesselényi has been criticized for his belief that 1840s' Russia was the power behind the Pan-Slavic and Illyrian movements.[91] For all the emphasis he placed upon the Russian danger, *Szózat*'s author gives few specific instances of Russian propaganda efforts involving the Western Slavs.[92] Non-Hungarian scholars of both Pan-Slavism and Illyrianism have suggested that there was little active Russian involvement in either movement during the 1830–50 period.[93] While Wesselényi correctly sensed there would be a future Russian threat to Hungary, the Russian action which undercut Hungary's 1848–49 Revolution was not the Great Northern Power's intervention in support of Hungary's Slavs but its fraternal assistance to its then ally, Austria. During Wesselényi's lifetime Hungary's struggle was primarily directed at Austria, not its nationalities (although Transylvania's Romanians, the Croats and Serbs fought against Hungary in 1848–49).

Of the nationalities treated in *Szózat,* Wesselényi's views about the Transylvanian Romanians were the most faulty in their short-term perceptions yet most accurate for the future. His thoughts meandered through three difficult to reconcile themes: 1) a similar Uniate-Orthodox cultural and linguistic tradition; 2) a Romanian-Russian cultural connection; and 3) a Transylvanian Romanian affinity toward Moldavia and Wallachia which he feared would lead to the eventual creation of a

Greater Romania. While his theories were not always consistent, he may have been the first Hungarian to see the possibility of a potential Romanian threat to Hungary.[94]

Wesselényi believed that Transylvania's Romanians, both Uniate and Orthodox, had similar traditions which united them in the face of persecution by those who neither understood them nor shared their beliefs. He wrote of the Romanians' "... common suffering and mutually oppressive fate" which increased their own national feelings.[95] He also conceded that Transylvania's Romanians had cause for anti-Magyar bitterness and that they might already be irretrievably alienated from Hungary. Hinting at the theme of his 1848 Klauzál letter, Wesselényi questioned the loyalty of Transylvania's Romanians to Hungary. He also thought that the Romanians in Hungary had strong cultural ties to Russia on account of their similar eastern orthodox faiths. If a future war were to break out between Russia and Austria, he believed the Romanians would likely side with Russia because of their common religious beliefs.[96] Wesselényi's most intriguing observation was his concern that in some future time, the Transylvanian Romanians would join with Wallachia and Moldavia in forming a Greater Romania.[97]

Wesselényi's Romanian observations have evoked negative scholarly comment. Trócsányi notes that *Szózat* only hints at the historic oppression of the Transylvanian Romanians by the Hungarian nobility and the consistent exclusion of Romanians from Transylvanian politics.[98] Others assert that Wesselényi misperceived Transylvanian-Romanian aspirations of the time and overestimated the danger of a Russo-Romanian alliance grounded upon an orthodox faith orientation.[99] While one modern scholar claims that Wesselényi based his opinion on ethnicity and geography, rather than on facts,[100] Wesselényi's fear of a Greater Romania and its grave implications for Hungary became reality after the 1919 Treaty of Trianon. Some of his Romanian perceptions were flawed, but in light of later developments Wesselényi should be given credit for observing what were perhaps the first stages of later powerful trends.

To counteract the Russian propaganda Wesselényi returned to his *Balítéletekről* ideas of constitutionalism. He was convinced that the "infallible" tools which would win over the nationalities to Hungary were guaranteed constitutional rights and full equality before the law. If Hungary would give her non-Magyars these political freedoms, they would see they had more to gain by staying in the Empire than by allying with Russia. Thus, Russian influence over the South Slavs would cease.[101] The task was to convince the Slavs that Hungary would not deprive them of their national languages or traditions, but would accept them as full participatory members in a new Hungarian society in which ancient prejudices were replaced by constitutionalism and mutual respect.[102]

Wesselényi pled for a more humane, equitable Hungary. If part of a nation's people is oppressed, that nation will not be great even if a dominant group has a

strong national consciousness. Those who would subordinate or sacrifice nationality rights in the name of state interests, merely play into the hands of the Slav or Illyrian movements.[103]

Perhaps *Szózat*'s most controversial feature was its proposal that the Habsburg Empire be transformed into a constitutional confederation which would consist of five governmental units all loosely bound to the Habsburg monarch, but with rather broad local autonomy.[104] Wesselényi believed this reconfiguration would counteract Russian threats and honor nationality aspirations.[105] Under his plan the Austrian section of the Empire would be split in four parts, while the Hungarian portion would be expanded by adding Transylvania. The South Slavs, Slovaks and Romanians would stay in Hungary rather than form separate administrative units of their own. Even a brief glimpse of this plan discloses two major problems: 1) Austria would almost surely have had significant reservations about being carved in pieces while Hungary not only remained intact, but expanded; and 2) the Serbs, Croats and Romanians would likely have strongly objected to staying in Hungary while other nationality groups were given autonomy.

Nonetheless, Wesselényi assumed that if the Empire were reconstructed into the five federative components, peoples who had historically opposed each other would become allies, thus decreasing ethnic tensions.[106] The Empire would become a symbol of freedom instead of reaction and would also strengthen itself for a later battle with Russia. While Russia might attempt to evoke vague notions of Slavic kinship, she could not offer the Slavs constitutional protections or a meaningful role in its government.[107]

From today's perspective, Wesselényi's proposed solutions to the nationality problem seem rather utopian in light of what happened afterward. His confederation idea was almost surely impractical and had no real chance of adoption. The linchpin of *Szózat*, that constitutionalism would have stronger appeal to the non-Magyars than Slavic or Romanian nationalism, was almost surely erroneous. With remarkable incisiveness, Professor Varga observes:

> ... [A] number of Hungary's ethnic groups already had a national consciousness strong enough for their leaders to have set their sights on building their own nations, and these same men were hardly likely to consider national rights an acceptable price to pay for civil liberty.
>
> In fact, their reaction to the idea of "constitutional" Magyarization and to attempts to spread the use of the Hungarian language left no doubt that the proposed "liberties" were hardly attractive enough for them to subscribe to the "one nation" principle. As Károly Nagy aptly noted, equal rights would not engender jubilant ethnic groups rushing to assimilate to the Hungarians.[108]

One other *Szózat* point is worth noting. Wesselényi perceived that Hungary was geographically vulnerable because she was surrounded by Slavs and Roma-

nians who he felt would be probable Russian allies if war came.[109] The nation was surrounded by ethnic groups and the nationalities held the high ground which encircled the country. When the Magyars came into Hungary, they had settled on the fertile plains, leaving the mountainous, agriculturally less productive areas to the nationalities. From a military point of view these mountains were of obvious strategic advantage.[110] If a Romanian or Slav invasion of Hungary occurred, he worried that the invaders might form states or confederations which would be built on the ruins of historic Hungary. All or part of Hungary would then be ruled by enemies who would either destroy the nation or create new states out of what had been old Hungary. The Magyars would be confined to a truncated part of central Hungary which would be reduced to a minor power.[111] Wesselényi also saw a cloudy future for Austria. With haunting acuity he wrote:

> ... Austria's existence can be maintained best by peace; war,even a victorious war, may well result in her annihilation.[112]

Szózat certainly has weaknesses in both its analysis of the nationality problem and in its proposed solutions. But while fairness requires that we disclose its faults, we should also acknowledge its strengths. Wesselényi observed that his own aristocratic class had drawn the circle of political participation too tightly, particularly in an age of the French Revolution and national consciousness. The sins of the fathers could be visited upon the sons unless changes were made in the way Hungary treated its non-Magyar nationalities. Wesselényi's flaws in short-term vision have already been noted, but he accurately foresaw the direction in which nationality movements were headed and the dangers these movements posed to Hungary if a solution were not found to the nationality problem. He sensed that Russia would try to expand its influence into the Balkans, and that it would justify its actions by claiming to be the protector of the Slavs. He saw Hungary's vulnerability in the event of a major European war and feared that the minorities would try to create national states out of historic Hungary, leaving the Magyars confined to middle Hungary. *Szózat* raised issues which were central to Hungary's survival as a multi-national state, but in 1843, no one wanted to listen to a "civically dead" blind man who called for moderation in an age of rising nationalism.

V. The Period of Reality

The lack of interest in *Szózat* was a tremendous disappointment for Wesselényi. However, when the March 1848 Revolution broke out in Hungary, he was given a brief new political life and again became active in Transylvanian politics. On April 12, 1848, he warned Hungary's Transylvanians that the Romanian peasants there would react angrily unless feudal laws were abolished and land reforms

enacted. Otherwise he feared that the Romanians in Transylvania would join Moldavia and Wallachia and try to create a new Romanian state which would include at least part of Transylvania.[113] On June 6, 1848, he addressed Transylvania's Diet which had abolished some of the relics of feudalism. Wesselényi recalled the lives of those who had suffered under laws which impoverished those who worked and enriched those who did not. He concluded:

> ... My prayer is this. That we raise up to ourselves those who have suffered so much already. Let us raise them to where God created them. Let Transylvania's peasants and serfs no longer be the oppressed, the people of the dust, the *misera plebs*, but rather let them be free citizens. Let them be equal with us in responsibility and may they be constitutionally empowered fellow citizens who stand equally before the law; let them have the same legal rights and common freedoms that we do, and thus serve their homeland and be called our brothers in defending her.[114]

But the Romanians, who originally supported the revolution, began to turn away, at least partly because of an unwillingness of Hungary's leaders to negotiate with them.[115] Almost immediately after the Austrian government agreed to Hungary's 1848 proposals for internal self-rule, the Croats became hostile. By the late spring of 1848, Croatia's Ban, Josip Jellačić, assembled South Slav forces to invade Hungary. On April 20, 1848, Wesselényi wrote Hungary's new Prime Minister, Lajos Batthyány, to share his concern that if war broke out between Croatia and Hungary, Russia might become involved.[116] Wesselényi emphasized the need to keep the conflict contained and that if the price for peace was greater Croatian autonomy, Hungary should cut its losses:

> ... I think we must avoid everything that might serve the Ban [Jellačić] and his Croats as an excuse to openly declare their secession and carry it through. We cannot keep Croatia for our own; let's give up all efforts to do so, which can bring no benefit, but can result in harm.
>
> ... Let's make an agreement with the Croats, one that recognizes them, and guarantees their independence, but guarantees also our trade and gives us joint ownership of a piece of coastline.[117]

His letter to Batthyány suggests Wesselényi recognized that his *Szózat* idea of constitutionalism would no longer work with the Croats. Whatever earlier opportunity there might have been to retain Croatia had been lost. And rather than jeopardize Hungary's political existence, he was prepared to allow Croatia to go its separate way.

Wesselényi was also concerned about events in Transylvania. On June18, 1848, he wrote Gábor Klauzál, the Hungarian Minister of Agriculture, Industry and

Trade,[118] that there were many ethnic Magyars living among Slovaks, Romanians, and Serbs who were needed as citizens of Hungary. There were also large numbers of Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary. If they wished, these Romanians could join with their Moldavian and Wallachian cousins in those areas of Transylvania where Romanians comprised a majority of the population.[119] To resolve existing tensions Wesselényi proposed that Transylvania be peacefully partitioned along nationality lines, thus creating a Romanian Transylvania which would join with Wallachia and Moldavia, and a territorially smaller, but ethnically homogenous Hungarian Transylvania to be united with Hungary. The part of Transylvania which would belong to Hungary would consist of people who either considered themselves Hungarian or who wanted to be citizens of the Hungarian state. He assumed that the majority of Romanians in Transylvania would want to leave Hungary and become part of a new Romania.[120] The consequence of more than a half-million Hungarians being submerged into a Romanian state could be avoided by this peaceful, voluntary partition.[121]

Wesselényi envisioned a consensual relocation and exchange of peoples in which Hungarians living in Transylvanian areas where Romanians predominated could trade homes and properties with Romanians "... who lived close to lands inhabited by Hungarians." He optimistically assumed that Transylvania's Szekelers and Germans would join the new Hungarian Transylvania.[122] He was confident that this:

> ... unprecedented, but not impossible ... migration of peoples ... [should] be realized through peaceful discussions in keeping with the culture and spirit of the present age.[123]

In conjunction with this transfer of peoples there could also be an adjustment of the political borders of Romanian and Hungarian Transylvania which would reflect the changes caused by these voluntary migrations.[124]

Wesselényi's ideas in the Klauzál letter seem to reflect his begrudging recognition that Romanian nationalism was a stronger force than constitutionalism or equality under the law. Klauzál did not respond to Wesselényi's letter. Hungary was plunging headlong into a military conflict which threatened its existence, so there was no chance in 1848–49 to seriously consider, let alone implement, Wesselényi's partition proposal.

In a final attempt to keep all of Transylvania within Hungary and pacify the Romanians there, on August 17, 1848, Wesselényi introduced a nationality bill in the Transylvanian Diet. On August 25, he spoke before the Upper House noting that the situation he had warned about in *Szózat* had become a horrible reality. In order to ease Romanian distrust, his nationality bill would show the Diet's good faith and grant full citizenship plus constitutional, religious and language protec-

tions to Transylvania's Romanians.[125] He told the Diet that passage of his bill was urgent:

> ... because I am convinced that this bill at the present moment is as crucial as it is useful ... I know that this bill will achieve what is vital for the interests of our homeland and the preservation of our nation, namely harmony and peace [in Transylvania].[126]

Wesselényi's nationality bill was approved by Transylvania's Lower, but rejected by the Upper House.[127] Thereafter, the situation in Transylvania took a bloody turn as many Romanians sided with Austria and took up arms against the Hungarians there.

With Hungary facing an imminent Austrian invasion, Wesselényi left his home in Transylvania and took his family to Gräfenberg. When the revolt collapsed in 1849, a gravely ill Wesselényi returned to Hungary, intending to die at Zsibó. On his journey home aboard a steamer, he contracted pneumonia and died in Pest on April 21, 1850.[128]

VI. Conclusion

Perhaps the final question is simply: "What is there about Wesselényi's life that merits our attention a century and a half after his death?" He was not the scholar Eötvös was, not as effective a negotiator as Deák, not as attuned to the country's mood as was Kossuth, nor as brilliant a writer as Széchenyi. The latter spoke with some truth when he noted that Wesselényi continually tried to swim upstream.[129] But his stubbornness was often born of a remarkably refined idealism. While one finds instances of his own class consciousness in his writings and speeches, more often his dominant concern was what would benefit the nation. Unlike Dessewffy, or perhaps even Kossuth, Wesselényi was more than a spokesman for his social class. And therein lies something enduring. There is statesmanship when a member of a privileged elite asks his group to voluntarily surrender some of its advantage for the overall good of the country. There is wisdom when a human tries not just to defend his own position, but listens to his opponent's argument in an attempt to find a mutually acceptable compromise.

Some of Wesselényi's writings and speeches reveal a far-seeing intellect. His Sybil speech and his June, 1848 speech on the abolition of serfdom in Transylvania are true masterpieces worthy of any nation's canon of great political oratory. *Balítéletekről*'s even-handed analysis of land reforms and its eloquent admonition for legal equality reveal a man who looked beyond the narrow interests of his own social heritage. *Szózat* describes the unhappy consequences of an unresolved na-

tionality conflict and contains a chilling portrait of a nation divided against itself. Amidst his dark fears, quantum leaps and premature calls for a confederation, one also finds a first-rate understanding of imploded nationalism's potentially destructive power and the challenge it poses to a multi-national state's social stability, if not to its very existence.

It might be intriguing to ponder whether timely adoption of his ideas could have altered subsequent Hungarian history. But prognostication is an extremely slippery subject with a dizzying array of variables. And when one must factor in the horrendous influence of World War I and the myopia of the post-war Western Powers, any opinion may be so fraught with hazard as to be worthless. An American-Hungarian historian suggests that by 1848, it would have been "extremely difficult" to establish a permanent integration of the nationalities within the Empire and "impossible" thereafter.[130] If that analysis is correct, Wesselényi's ideas may have come too late in any event.

This much seems certain. Wesselényi had a vision for a more humane Hungary. In the end, his inability to persuade his nation to adopt a more balanced nationality policy failed, not so much because of his lack of political adroitness, but because he was ahead of his time. He endured ridicule, imprisonment, blindness, and perhaps most painful, being ignored. The depth of his convictions are perhaps best shown in 1848, when this frail, blind, and forgotten "museum object" again charged into a battle for tolerance in his beloved Transylvania. Perhaps he deserves to be judged not just by achievements alone, but also by his struggles, by what he tried to do. Mankind's struggle to raise itself is a common theme in Hungarian literature. In the winter of 1859–60, another Hungarian whose life was also rent by the failed 1848–49 Revolution, wrote these words which he gave to a hero in his dramatic poem:

> It's not ... fool illusions [that] drive me on.
> A hundred times I'll miss the goal, I know.
> No matter. Truth to tell, what is a goal?
> [It is] the termination of a glorious fight.
> ... Life is struggle, strife,
> And it is [striving] itself that is man's goal.[131]

While Wesselényi's life ended in disappointment and darkness, his silent hand can be sensed not just in the 1848 April Laws, some of which survived the revolution, but in important legislation in 1868,[132] and in Article 68 of a free and democratic Hungary's present constitution.[133] Perhaps the most precious seeds are those which require time to germinate and sprout. Wesselényi's political legacy may have been overshadowed, but some of it remains today in the laws and life of the land he loved.

Notes

1. Samu Kardos, *Báró Wesselényi Miklós élete és munkái*, 2 Vols. (Budapest: Légrády Testvérek Könyvnyomdája, 1905), 1:71; Zoltán Fónagy, *Wesselényi Miklós.* Válogatta, a bevezetést és a jegyzeteket írta Fónagy Zoltán; *Magyar Szabadelvűek* (Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1998–1999), 161.
2. Zsolt Trócsányi, *Wesselényi Miklós* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1965), 148. *See also* Gyula Barla, *Kemény Zsigmond főbb eszméi 1849 előtt.* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970), 41. Trócsányi claims that Széchenyi was more a traditionalist with liberal economic views than a classical liberal. For a contrary view see Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, "Enlightenment and Liberalism in the Works of Széchenyi, Kemény and Eötvös," in György Ránki (ed.), *Hungary and European Civilization, Indiana University Studies of Hungary.* Budapest: Adadémiai Kiadó, 1989), 12.
3. Miklós Asztalos, *Wesselényi Miklós az első nemzetiségi politikus* (Pécs: Karl Könyvesbolt Kiadása, 1927), 21.
4. Domokos Kosáry, trans. Zsuzsa Béres and Christopher Sullivan, *Culture and Society in Eighteenth-Century Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1987) (reprint), 17, 22.
5. György Szabad, "Hungary's Recognition of Croatia's Self-Determination in 1848 and its Immediate Antecedents," in Béla Király (ed.), *East Central European Society and War in the Era of Revolutions: 1775–1856, War and Society in East Central Europe*, vol. 4, no. 13 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 599–609; Ambrus Miskolczy, "Társadalmi és nemzeti kérdés az utolsó erdélyi rendi országgyűlésen," *Századok* (1979), 851–883.
6. But even during this second period he began to think about the nationality question and to formulate in embryo some of the solutions he would later propose in *Szózat.*
7. Zsigmond Kemény, "A két Wesselényi Miklós," *Báró Kemény Zsigmond munkáiból* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1905), 27–29, 43–44.
8. Keith Hitchins, *The Rumanian National Movement in Transylvania: 1780–1849* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 127–28.
9. Andrew C. János, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825–1945* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 63; György Spira, trans. Zsuzsa Béres, *The Nationality Issue in the Hungary of 1848–49* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1992), 13; Professor Spira's estimates on population of Hungary (except from Transylvania) are generally corroborated by estimates of Professor Kosáry. Kosáry, *Culture and Society,* 17.
10. Spira, 13; *See also* Hitchins, 9.
11. Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1974), 174, 199–202.
12. János, 63.
13. Kosáry, *Culture and Society*, 22.
14. Gyula Szekfű, in introduction to Domokos Kosáry's, *A History of Hungary* (New York: Arno & New York Times Press, 1971) (reprint), ix; Spira, 22.
15. Peter E. Sugar, "The Rise of Nationalism in the Habsburg Empire," *Austrian History Yearbook,* Vol. 3, Pt., (1967), 91–120, 96; Elinor Murray Despalativic, *Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrian Movement,* East European Monographs, No. 12 (New York: Columbia, 1975) 13–14; Hitchins, 33–37.
16. Béla Köpeczi (ed.), trans. Adrienne Chambers-Makkai, *History of Transylvania* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994), 415.
17. Fónagy, 11–12. His victory, however, was Pyrrhic. Kemény suggested that had the peasant legislation passed, Transylvania might have been spared bloodshed which resulted thirty years

later. Kemény, 56. Wesselényi publicly admitted his mistake in an 1846 newspaper article. Fónagy, 44–53.

18. George Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism, 1791–1841* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 104–105.
19. Kemény, 59–60; István Széchenyi, Gyula Viszota (ed.), *Széchenyi István Napló* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1978), 238.
20. Fónagy, 12.
21. Trócsányi, 123.
22. Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi*, 234.
23. Kardos, 1:109–110; Fónagy, 211.
24. Kornél Szentkúti, *Művelődési viszonyok báró Wesselényi Miklós műveiben* (Budapest: Grafika Nyomdavállalat, 1937), 89 (citing Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik,* 113).
25. Gyula Mérei (ed.), *Magyarország története, 1790–1848*, 2 Vols., (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983), 2: 669.
26. László Csorba and Ferenc Velkey, *Reform és forradalom (1790–1848)* (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 1998), 93, 105–06.
27. István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution: Lajos Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–49* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 27–28.
28. Mérei, 2: 1266; Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi*, 313.
29. János Varga, trans. Éva Pálmai, *A Hungarian Quo Vadis: Political Trends and Theories of the Early 1840s* (In Hungarian *Helyét kereső Magyarország: Politikai eszmék és koncepciók az 1840-es évek elején)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993), 26, 33, 36, 47–48.
30. Miklós Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről.* Válogatta, a bevezető tanulmányt írta és a jegyzeteket összeállította Veress Dániel (Bucureşti: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1974), 120–23; Trócsányi, 145–46, citing Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről* (original version), 99–101, not all of which was translated in the Romanian-printed excerpts; Lajos Kossuth, *Országgyűlési tudósítások* (reprint), (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1948), 1: 290–91.
31. Kossuth, 125; Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi,* 290–91 (much, but not all of Barany's translation of the Sybil speech is used in this quotation); *See also* Trócsányi, 127.
32. Köpeczi, 467.
33. István Deák, "István Széchenyi, Miklós Wesselényi, Lajos Kossuth and the Problem of Romanian Nationalism," *Austrian History Yearbook,* 12–13 (1976–77), 69–77, 71; Asztalos, 25.
34. Trócsányi, 127; János, 44; Mérei, 2: 688–9; Veress Introd. Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről*, 32–3.
35. Mérei, 2: 688–89.
36. Kossuth, 126–27.
37. Kardos, 1: 406–07.
38. Varga, 26, 36, 47–48; Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi*, 272.
39. Kossuth, 125; Asztalos, 14; Kardos, 1: 169.
40. Varga, 33.
41. Köpeczi, 464–65.
42. While lifetime military duty had become rare by 1830, service terms of up to fourteen years were not uncommon. Kann, 239.
43. Kardos, 1: 135–39; Asztalos, 13; *and see* Kemény, 67.
44. Csorba–Velkey, 107.
45. Kossuth, 126; Kardos, 1: 406–07.
46. Deák, *Lawful Revolution,* 28.
47. Asztalos, 21; Fónagy, 14.
48. Veress Introduction to *Balítéletekről*, 32, 39; Mérei, 1: 688; Asztalos, 22.

49. The problem is compounded because the most common modern version of the book contains only excerpts from the original work. Quite frequently a secondary source will refer to a passage from *Balítéletekről*, yet that passage is not included in the excerpts. In this article, a citation contained in the excerpts will be identified as *Balítéletekről*. But where a secondary source refers to a *Balítéletekről* reference which is not found in the excerpts, the secondary source will be cited and, if that secondary source cites a page in *Balítéletekről*, the notation "Original *Balítéletekről*," will also appear.
50. Trócsányi suggests that in 1831, the nationality issue was not as important for Wesselényi as it would become a decade later; and therefore, he gave the ethnic controversy only limited treatment in *Balítéletekről*. Trócsányi, 129. *See also* Asztalos, 25.
51. Fónagy, 85 (citing Original *Balítéletekről*, 80); Trócsányi, 145.
52. Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről,* 116–17.
53. Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről,* 116–17.
54. Varga, 43–44.
55. Asztalos, 24.
56. Mérei, 689 (citing Original *Balítéletekről*, 237).
57. Wesselény, *Balítéletekről,* 250; Trócsányi, 132.
58. Köpeczi, 462; Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről*, 234–36.
59. Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről*, 123; Trócsányi, 126–28.
60. Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről*, 120–22, 224.
61. Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről*, 70–71; Trócsányi, 124–25.
62. Asztalos, 22 (citing Original *Balítéletekről*, 57, 282).
63. Wesselényi, *Balítéletekről,* 120, 133.
64. Trócsányi, 145–46.
65. Erzsébet Andics, trans. Zoltán Jókai, *Metternich und die Frage Ungarns* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973), 70. Metternich told French delegates he only wished to "intimidate, rather than punish" Wesselényi and terrorize Hungary as an object lesson. Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi*, 344–45.
66. In one speech he reportedly said that the government had sucked the peasants' blood for centuries. In the second, he allegedly asserted that the government had bled white the nation's nine million peasants. C. M. Knatchbull-Hugessen, *The Political Evolution of the Hungarian Nation,* 2 vols. (New York: Arno Press & New York Times, 1971) (reprint), 1: 295–96; Mérei, 1:756. The anti-Wesselényi charges may have been defective since he was under political immunity when he spoke. His speeches may have been unwise attacks on both the government and nobility, but may not have been treasonous as he did not criticize the King or advocate overthrow of the Habsburg dynasty. *See* Asztalos, 16; Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi,* 301, 347; Szentkúti, 10, 12; Kardos, 1: 191.
67. Széchenyi, *Napló*, 814–15, 836, 846. April 10, June 20, August 5 and October 18, 1837 entries.
68. Asztalos, 16–17; Deák, *Lawful Revolution,* 32–33.
69. Miklós Wesselényi, *Szózat a magyar és szláv nemzetiség ügyében* (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1992) (reprint), 17.
70. Trócsányi, 450–51; Asztalos, 17.
71. George Barany, "Hungary: The Uncompromising Compromise," Vol. 3, Pt. 1 *Austrian History Yearbook* (1967), 240.
72. Varga, 80–82.
73. Varga, 174–76; Francis S. Wagner, "Széchenyi and the Nationality Problem in the Habsburg Empire," *Journal of Central European Affairs* (1960), 302.
74. Kardos, 2:50; *See* Wagner, 304–5.

75. Trócsányi, 452–53; Fónagy, 249.
76. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 15; Trócsányi, 453.
77. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 17.
78. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 19, 21–22; Trócsányi, 453.
79. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 19–23.
80. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 19, 22–23; Trócsányi, 453–54; Asztalos, 26–27.
81. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 29–31.
82. The early twentieth-century Hungarian scholar, Gyula Szekfű described Wesselényi's analysis of the nationality problem as "touchingly naive," and wryly noted that Hungary's late ninth century *honfoglalás* conquerors would have been acceptable to Wesselényi only had they been endowed with Rousseau-like rationalism. Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik* (Budapest: Maecenas, 1983) (reprint), 111–12; *See also* Varga, 44, 46–47.
83. Deák, "Széchenyi, Wesselényi and Kossuth, 70 (citing Elek Fényes, *Magyarország statisztikája*, 3 vols. Pest: Trattner Károly tulajdona, 1842–43), Vol. 1, 64, 118.
84. Varga, 151.
85. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 87.
86. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 199; Trócsányi, 461.
87. Mihály Horváth, trans. Josef Novelli, *Fünfundzwanzig Jahre aus der Geschichte Ungarns von 1823–1848*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1867), 2: 114–15.
88. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 51–54; Trócsányi, 455.
89. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 51–55.
90. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 33–35; Horváth, 2:114.
91. Endre Arató, *A magyarországi nemzetiségek ideológiája* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983), 130–31.
92. Wesselényi does refer to a speech given by Tsar Nicholas I of Russia (who was perhaps not a prime candidate to inspire unity among the Slavic peoples), but otherwise deals in more general assertions. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 50–51.
93. Hans Kohn, *Pan-Slavism: Its History and Ideology* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 1953), 4–5, 99; Despalatovic, 116–17, 119–20.
94. Asztalos, 28–29.
95. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 78. *See also* Dániel Veress, *Wesselényi Miklós* (Budapest: Móra Ferenc Könyvkiadó, 1983), 162.
96. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 77–79, 84–85; Szentkúti, 89.
97. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 80–82; Asztalos, 29.
98. Trócsányi, 456.
99. Hitchins, vii-ix; Deák, "Széchenyi, Wesselényi, Kossuth," 74.
100. Hitchins, 169.
101. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 151–54, 182–83, 189–90; Horváth, 2: 116.
102. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 219–20, 261–62.
103. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 46–47; Trócsányi, 455.
104. The five confederative units would include: 1) the German lands (Upper and Lower Austria, Styria, Tirol and Silesia, together with the mixed population of Carinthia and Carniola; 2) the Italian lands (Lombardy, Venetia and Istria); 3) the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia); 4) the Polish lands (Galicia and Austrian Lesser Poland); and 5) the Hungarian lands (Central and Northern Hungary, Croatia, Transylvania and Slavonia). Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 186–89; Knatchbull-Hugessen, 1: 324 (footnote 3); Horváth 2: 116; Trócsányi, 460.
105. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 186–88; Trócsányi, 460; Horváth, 2: 116.
106. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 189–90.

107. Horváth, 2:115–16. Wesselényi's confederation idea was destined for stillbirth and had little chance of serious consideration at the time. In a way, the 1867 Compromise, which gave Hungary essential domestic self-rule, might be seen as a hybrid version of Wesselényi's idea. But in 1843, neither Austria nor Hungary showed any enthusiasm for a confederation, although the idea was resurrected by Kossuth nearly twenty-five years later and by Oscar Jászi after the First World War. Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929) (reprint), 313. Nationalism, not confederation was the dominant theme of Wesselényi's age.
108. Varga, 46–47. Trócsányi also argues that the liberals made a serious mistake in believing the nationalities would be satisfied with constitutional rights. Trócsányi, 460–61. Yet assimilation was not without its successes. While largely unsuccessful with the Romanians and Croats, it was quite successful among German and Jewish Hungarians. Perhaps one can better understand the liberals' faith in Magyarization if one considers the large numbers of German and Jewish citizens who adopted their new nation in rather large numbers and often became enthusiastic Hungarian citizens.
109. Trócsányi, 461.
110. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 196–97.
111. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 204; Szentkúti, 90.
112. Wesselényi, *Szózat*, 107–08; Barany, "Uncompromising Compromise," 236; Asztalos, 30.
113. Asztalos, 18.
114. Benedek, 237–38.
115. Deák, *Lawful Revolution*, 125–27, 220.
116. Trócsányi, 528–9; Asztalos, 18.
117. Szabad, 600; Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815–1918* (New York: Longman, 1989) 8th ed. 96.
118. Köpeczi, 498.
119. Miskolczy, 877.
120. Köpeczi, 498, Miskolczy, 877.
121. Miskolczy, 877–78.
122. Köpeczi, 498.
123. Köpeczi, 498 (citing Miskolczy, 878).
124. Miskolczy, 878.
125. Trócsányi, 545–46. Wesselényi's nationality bill provided that: 1) all of Transylvania's Christians, whether Orthodox or related faiths, would be entitled to equal religious treatment; 2) vital statistics kept by religious authorities could be filed in either the Hungarian or Romanian languages; 3) primary school instruction could be in either Romanian or Hungarian; 4) official records which were filed with a notary could be written in either Romanian or Hungarian; 5) documents written in Romanian could be filed in any government office provided those documents were written in Latin, as opposed to Cyrillic, letters. Fónagy, 87–88; Trócsányi, 546.
126. Asztalos, 20.
127. Trócsányi, 546.
128. Fónagy, 20.
129. Kemény, 62.
130. Sugar, "Rise of Nationalism," 91, 110, 120.
131. Imre Madách, trans. Thomas R. Mark, *The Tragedy of Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), scene XIII, 121.
132. Elementary Education and Nationality Acts of 1868.
133. Article 68: (1) The national and ethnic minorities living in the Republic of Hungary share the

power of the people; they are constituent factors in the state; (2) The Republic of Hungary grants protection to national and ethnic minorities, it insures the possibilities for their collective participation in public life and enables them to foster their own culture, use the mother tongue, receive school instruction in the mother tongue and freedom to use their names as spelled and pronounced in their own languages.

1848–1849 IN HUNGARY

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There can be no doubt that the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 and the subsequent war of independence belong to the events that significantly contributed to the development of modern Hungarian historical consciousness. Decisive alternatives emerged during this critical period: national sovereignty *versus* development under foreign power, or the cultivation of friendly compromises reached through negotiations *versus* violent confrontations. The patterns of thinking associated with these choices also imposed their influence on the interpretations of other recent historic turning points such as the events of 1956.

For a better understanding of what happened to Hungary during the years 1848–1849 we need to divide the events into three distinct but interconnected spheres. First, we need to consider the discussions between the spokesmen of the last Hungarian feudal assembly, the Diet of 1847–1848, and the leaders connected to the court of Emperor Ferdinand I (as King of Hungary: Ferdinand V) (1835–48) in Vienna. These discussions were followed by the negotiations on the formation and recognition of an independent and responsible Hungarian government in 1848. Second, we have to delineate the revolutionary mass movement organised by leftist and radical intellectuals in Pest on March 15, 1848. Third, we need to examine the civil war, which began in autumn 1848, between the National Guard army of the Hungarian government, the Austrian troops, and the insurgents of the non-Magyar nationalities.

Due to the expansion of the Turkish Empire and to the rise of the House Habsburg, the kingdom of Hungary, one of the leading states in East-Central Europe during the late Middle Ages, had lost its independence during the sixteenth century. From this time on the lands of the Hungarian crown became parts of the realm of the Austrian Habsburg dynasty. The upper stratum of the population, the Hungarian landed-estate-owner nobles, were, however, able to preserve a considerable portion of their rights in local administration and retained the opportunity to assert their privileges and influence in the government of the realm at the diets. From the 1830s, during the so-called Reform Period, these diets contributed deci-

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sively to the abolishment of feudal institutions and took the initial steps toward democratisation and modernisation.

One of the most important demands of these diets was to make Hungarian the official language of the kingdom. This was satisfied at the diet of 1843–44. Act II, 1844 made Hungarian, instead of Latin, the official language in all branches of administration.

The aspirations of political nationalism were preceded or accompanied among the Hungarians, as well as among other nations in East-Central Europe, during the first half of the nineteenth century by phenomena of cultural nationalism. During that period the activities of such writers as György Bessenyei (1747–1811), Ferenc Kazinczy (1759–1831), József Kármán (1769–95), Ferenc Kölcsey (1790–1838), and Mihály Vörösmarty (1800–55) began a new era for literature in which patriotic themes were rendered by original artistic texts, written in the vernacular. Institutions of Hungarian literature were established as well, bringing into existence the foci of cultural memory. The Hungarian National Museum and Hungarian National Library opened in early 1848, based on a generous gift from Count Ferenc Széchényi's (1754–1820) private collection in 1802. The establishment of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was initiated in 1825 by his son Count István Széchenyi (1791–1860). Furthermore, the first scientific and literary periodicals were also launched at that time. These included: *Uránia* (1794–95), *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* [Scholarly Collection] (1817–41), *Aurora* (1822–37), and *Athenaeum* (1837–43). The harbinger of modern political journalism in Hungary, Lajos Kossuth's (1802-94) *Pesti Hirlap* [Pest News] (1841–49) began in January 1841. The members of the pre-March [1848] generation, working in these institutions, publishing in these newsletters, undertook the task of transforming and modernising Hungary in 1848. Spurring the political revival, Count István Széchenyi in his epoch marking studies at the beginning of the Reform Period: *Hitel* (Credit, 1830), *Világ* (Light, 1831), *Stadium* (Stage, 1833) "put into words the ideas already circulating among many of his contemporaries" (Niederhauser 205). Credit, in Széchenyi's idiom, meant first of all an economic modernisation program in opposition to the institution of the ancient law of family entail, which constituted a powerful obstacle to credit operations in Hungary and made "the sale, and even the mortgaging, of farms [...] virtually impossible" (Kosáry, *History* 192). But "credit" also had a wider sense; it referred to trust in Hungary's better fortunes. "Many think," so says the very last sentence of Széchenyi's work, "that Hungary is a thing of the past; I like to believe its greatest achievements lie in the future" (Kosáry, *History* 193).

Another important political program was adumbrated by centralists such as Baron József Eötvös (1813–71). In his important study *Reform* (1847) Eötvös made use of the contributions of his allies – above all László Szalay's (1813–64) and Ágoston Trefort's (1817–88) – and elaborated a modernisation project for

Hungary. The principal political requirements of this project included suppressing the municipal system of feudal counties and establishing a government with a responsible ministry.

The pace of the events that led to the democratic transformation speeded up during the first days of March 1848. Having received in Bratislava [Pozsony/Pressburg], where the Diet was convened, the news on French February Revolution, Kossuth, the leader of the Hungarian liberals, delineated the demands of many Hungarians in an address on March 3rd. Kossuth asked for "a separate and independent financial board for Hungary." He called for a change in Austria, too, reminding his audience that "the constitutional future of our nation will not be secure, till the King is surrounded by constitutional forms in all the relations of his government" (Headley 64). Some historians hold that this speech was not so much a systematic expounding of his political views, but rather an example of "Kossuth's political genius" that "rose to the occasion," "[s]ensing in a flash the relevance to the situation of the centralists' demand (which he had previously not taken very seriously) for a responsible government for Hungary" (Macartney 155).

On March 13, 1848 revolution broke out in the imperial capital of Vienna. Prominent figures of autocratic policy, including Chancellor Prince Metternich (1773–1859) and others, were dismissed. Ferdinand introduced freedom of the press, allowed the arming of the people, and promised to issue a constitution. (The western part of the empire duly obtained a constitution on April 25, 1848.) The Viennese revolution suddenly leapfrogged the events in Bratislava, and under these circumstances, all further discussions about the Hungarians' claims and demands appeared superfluous. A delegation under the leadership of Kossuth and Palatine Prince Stephen (1817–67) embarked for Vienna to gain acceptance of the Hungarian claims and to induce the ruler to appoint a responsible Hungarian government. Soon the delegation returned with good news. On March 17 Ferdinand consented to appoint Count Lajos Batthyány (1806–49) Prime Minister, and Batthyány formed his government with the most prominent liberal figures of Hungary. These included, among others: Count István Széchenyi as Minister of Communication and of Public Works, Kossuth as Minister of Finance, Baron Eötvös as Minister of Education and Religion, and Ferenc Deák (1803–76) as Minister of Justice.

The Diet of 1847–1848 therefore concluded its legislative work in the enthusiastic atmosphere of the trans-European revolutions. The April Laws, which constitute a charter of the breakthrough to modern Hungary, were approved by Ferdinand on April 11, 1848.

The literary movements of the 1840s formed by another intellectual group – more radical than that of bourgeois liberal nobility – played a leading role in the revolutionary events in Pest. A great many of the adherents of this "March Youth" – the term "comes from a poem of Sándor Petőfi (1823–49) with the same title"

(Kalla 93) – belonged to a circle, which met regularly in the Pilvax Café. The group united the editorial staff of several literary papers (e.g., the *Pesti Divatlap* [Pest Vogue]) and chose as its spiritual father Mihály Vörösmarty from the older generation. Members of this group included, for instance, Petőfi, Mór Jókai (1825–1904), Dániel Irínyi (1822–92), and József Irányi (1822–59).

The radical youth in the Pilvax' "Opposition Circle" became more and more discontented with the legislative work of the *Status et Ordines* and summed up its claims in twelve points. These demands went beyond reform and assumed an "openly revolutionary character" (Deme 17). According to the final formulation of József Irínyi, the young radicals desired the following:

1. Freedom of the press and the abolition of censorship.
2. Responsible government in Pest.
3. Annual meetings of the parliament in Pest.
4. Equality before the law in civil and religious matters.
5. A national guard.
6. Equality of taxation.
7. Abolition of the feudal burdens.
8. Jury system on the basis of representation and equality.
9. A national bank.
10. The armed forces should swear allegiance to the constitution; and our Hungarian soldiers should not be removed from our soil.
11. Political prisoners should be freed.
12. Union with Transylvania. (Deme 16–7)

After the arrival of the news about the Viennese Revolution in Pest, on March 15 the time was ripe for the young radicals to make their demands. A mass demonstration, organised by the "March Youth," hoped to wring during that same afternoon some concessions from the Viceroyalty Council, the head of the domestic administration in Hungary. The most important demand was the proclamation of liberty of the press. True, during the morning, a *de facto* liberty of the press has already been attained by the seizing a printing press by the revolutionary mob and the printing of the "Twelve Points" as well as Sándor Petőfi's *Nemzeti dal* [National Song].

During the following months the voices of the heroes of the "Great Day" were conveyed through the newspaper *Marczius Tizenötödike* (March Fifteenth) "which bore the date of the Pest revolution as its symbolic name" (Kosáry, *Press* 85). Furthermore, the parliamentary opposition of the new Hungarian government was recruited from the ranks of the young radicals.

Despite being in the numerical minority and in relative isolation, the "March Youth" filled indeed a very important social role in the Hungarian Revolution, especially because they "should be considered [...] the intellectual vanguard of the

strata intent on bettering themselves – the petite bourgeoisie in the making" (Kosáry, *Press* 27). In addition, it is also true that "[t]he story of March 15 became a national legend in Hungary; to this day the average Hungarian thinks of the events of this day when he thinks of 1848" (Deme 21).

Hungary's first representative Parliament convened in Pest on July 5, 1848. According to a relatively liberal franchise law, one quarter of the male population over twenty years of age voted for the 377 contested seats in the House of Representatives. The liberal wing of the land-owning gentry retained its political predominance with an overwhelming majority – only about thirty to thirty-five seats were allotted to the opposition with its radical-leftist views.

The House passed one of its first resolutions in favour of strengthening the independent Magyar army. Kossuth, as Minister of Finance, demanded of the House in a long speech on July 11, 1848, a masterpiece of traditional Hungarian rhetoric, "200,000 soldiers, and the necessary pecuniary grants" (Headley 103). Effective recruiting began in September.

Although during the summer of 1848 the Hungarian government and the legislative body found themselves in a rather awkward situation vis-à-vis the imperial court at Vienna, the members were well aware of the firm legitimacy of the government's work. This situation changed suddenly with the issuing of the Austrian Ministry Paper of August 27, 1848, which declared that the activities and the very existence of the independent Hungarian ministries of finance and war were illegitimate.

In consequence, during the autumn of 1848 the political process for precipitating an armed confrontation between the troops of the Hungarian government and the army of the Austrian imperial court accelerated. On September 11 Baron Josip Jellačić (1801–59), Governor of Croatia and supporter of the policy of Vienna, crossed the river Drava (Dráva/Drau) in southern Hungary and mounted an offensive in the direction of the Pest. Two weeks later, after his arrival in Pest, Count Ferenc Lamberg (1791–1848), appointed by the emperor to be commander-in-chief of the Hungarian armies, was assassinated in a crowd on the pontoon bridge over the Danube.

Unable to maintain the legal order sanctioned by the king in April, Prime Minister Batthyány resigned on October 2, and the executive power was transferred to the National Defence Committee. Kossuth, head of this board, became the country's supreme leader. On December 2, 1848 Ferdinand V abdicated and his nephew, the young Francis Joseph I (1848–1916) ascended the throne of the Emperor of Austria. The new monarch, whose hands were not bound by the April Laws, initiated the operations for the pacification of Hungary immediately.

During winter 1848–49 these military operations brought considerable successes for the armies of the emperor, when the Hungarian government and Parliament were forced on December 31, 1848 to move to Debrecen.

The promotion of the young and highly talented Artúr Görgey (1818–1916) to commander-in-chief of the Hungarian National Guard on March 31, 1849 resulted in a change in the fortunes of war. During the spring campaign the National Guard reconquered a great part of the land taken by the forces loyal to the Habsburgs (the reoccupation of Pest and Buda came on May 21, 1849). In the exuberance following the fortunate turn of events in the civil war, the Parliament decided to take a radical step toward independence. On April 14 the House declared the Habsburg dynasty deposed and elected Kossuth as Governing President. A new government was formed on May 2 under Prime Minister Bertalan Szemere (1812–69).

In this critical situation Emperor Francis Joseph I asked for help from Russia. Tsar Nicolas I (1825–55) proclaimed on May 9, 1849 his willingness to intervene in the conflict. The invasion of Hungary's territory began in the very same month, and the united Austro-Russian forces, enjoying a strong numerical superiority, piled success on top of success. The National Guard suffered a decisive defeat on August 9, 1849 at Timişoara [Temesvár/Temeschwar]. Kossuth and the government resigned, and Görgei in the possession of plenipotentiary power surrendered on August 13 at Şiria [Világos]. Soon Kossuth, with hundreds of army officers, fled to Turkey.

The aborted war of independence was followed by a heavy-handed revenge on the part of the Austrian authorities. Prime Minister Count Batthyány was executed in Pest on October 6, and the execution of thirteen generals of the Hungarian National Guard took place in Arad on the same day. In 1850 Hungary came under absolutist administration under the leadership of Minister of the Interior Alexander Bach (1813–93) who initiated strong restrictions on political and civil rights. In administration Transylvania, the Serb Voivodina, and the Temes Banat were decoupled, and Hungary's central territory was divided into five districts, "delimited to some extent according to nationality lines" (Kann and David 347). The five headquarters were at Budapest (Magyars), Bratislava (Slovaks), Košice [Kassa/Kaschau] (Slovaks and Ruthenians), Oradea [Nagyvárad/Grosswardein] (Rumanians), and Sopron [Ödenburg] (Germans).

The achievements of the spring of 1848 could not be completely revoked. The law on perpetual redemption of serfs was not, for instance, annulled. The socage writ of March 2, 1853 declares in the spirit of the April Laws that "the former serfs 'are granted full ownership and free disposal rights over the socage land they hold'" (Orosz 76). The sum of the indemnity paid to members of the landowner class by the new absolutist government as a result of the regulations in 1853 fell, however, far below planned levels. As a result the middle-nobility, which came to be compelled to choose civil professions, ended up being short-changed by the process of serf emancipation. This gave rise to the landed gentry middle class, a

predominant group of fin-de-siècle Hungarian society, "whose relatively modest means were quite disproportionate to their social prestige and national pride" (Kann I 110).

The nationality issue constituted a third main sphere of events in revolutionary Hungary. Reference has already been made to the fact that the forces of the Hungarian bourgeois government were tragically tied down by the management of ethnic conflicts with non-Magyar nationalities. These peoples, filled with enthusiastic optimism in the first weeks of the revolution, and united against the Old Order in the spirit of the slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" inherited from the French Revolution of 1789, soon realised that the Hungarian government was not ready to satisfy the political claims of the non-Magyar nationalities. Instead, the Hungarian elite regarded the new legal independence as an assertion of the Magyar nation's historical rights. It is no wonder then, that other peoples living in Hungary turned to the Austrian imperial court with their petitions. Moreover, their unaddressed grievances led to bloody interethnic confrontations.

The House of Representatives, holding its sessions during the summer of 1849 in Szeged [Szegedin/Segedin], had in the desperate military situation no other choice but to give on July 28 the non-Magyar nationalities far-reaching concessions concerning their cultural and administrative autonomy. The House declared in its resolution the right for the "free development of all nationalities living on the territory of Hungary" (Irányi and Chassin I 357). (Emancipation was given to Hungarian Jews as well.) Although "[t]he Hungarian government [...] announced it immediately and tried to utilise it both in its European propaganda and in the appeasement process" (Gergely 55), the Nationality Resolution was overshadowed by the fact that "as long as it did not consider the danger to be sufficiently serious, the Hungarian liberal leadership tried to avoid granting even minor concessions" (Spira 203).

All in all, "[w]ith the Russian intervention, the fate of the Magyar Revolution was sealed" (Kann I 126). Acts VIII and IX 1849 are, and remain, spectacular proof of the fact that ethnic reconciliation projects always come too late in East-Central Europe.

The Hungarian Revolution of 1848 and the ensuing war of independence in 1848–49 raised the crucial questions – political, social, and intellectual – in nineteenth-century Hungary, without being able to answer them, at least not in a reassuring manner. The dispute over constitutional law came to a half-century long rest with the Constitutional Settlement of 1867, the year of the foundation of Austria-Hungary's Dual Monarchy. A solution of social conflicts – in particular of interethnic conflicts – was made, however, impossible by the Hungarian elite's insistence on political supremacy and on the historical principle of Hungary's territorial integrity. The conflicts between Magyars and Slovaks, Serbs, Croats,

or Rumanians presented themselves during the second half of the century with an increasing intensity, contributing ultimately in a decisive way to the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918.

On an intellectual level, it was neither philosophy, nor history, but literature in Hungary that confronted the dilemmas of bourgeois society. This literature – lyric poetry above all – accompanied the events of 1848–49 as well, "producing an abundant military poetry not seen since the age of the war of independence at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Hermann 339). The poetry of 1848–49 includes a rich variety of genres that range from pieces of trashy propaganda literature all the way to patriotic works by Hungary's very best poets – such as *Nemzetőr dal* [National Guardist's Song] by János Arany (1817–1882), and *Harci dal* [Battle Song] by Vörösmarty – to Petőfi's revolutionary-republican romanticism.

Literature also cherished the memory of 1848–49 and tried to draw lessons from the tragic events as well. One of the dominant patterns of this 1848 literature was its heroic-mythical immortalization, above all embodied in Mór Jókai's late romantic novel writing. Jókai, a member of the "March Youth," during his long life described the events of 1848–49 from ever newer and newer aspects, always obeying the rules of a mythology created by himself. It is partly due to these novels – the most outstanding of them is *A kőszívű ember fiai* [The Sons of the Stone-hearted Man] (1869) – that 1848–49 has an extraordinary reputation in Hungarian history. *The Sons of the Stone-hearted Man* delineates the most impressive moments of the revolutionary years with the instruments of a romantic epos: the alliance between revolutionaries in Pest and in Vienna; the adventurous desertion of Hungarian *hussar* troops from the emperor's army to join the national guard; or the scene of Buda castle's siege and liberation by the Magyars.

True, it would be an exaggeration to speak of a philosophy of history in the case of this novel. It remains, however, also true that Jókai, with an extreme idealisation of the title-role heroes' mother (Mrs. Baradlay) – assigning her some of the attributes of the Holy Virgin, *Patrona Hungariae* – is indeed able to connect 1848 with essential values and predilections of Hungarian history.

On the other hand, the representatives of the pre-March Hungarian liberal intelligentsia were also confronted with the memory of 1848. Thinkers who believed in a doctrinairian, French-style liberalism, were now to lose their illusions about man's ability to improve himself, and political institutions able to be improved by laws and philosophical doctrines. It was Baron József Eötvös who drew the consequences of 1848 with all their pessimistic implications in his *Einfluss der herrschenden Ideen des 19. Jahrhunderts auf den Staat* [Influence of the Prevailing Ideas of the 19th Century on the State] (1851–54); and it is also this disillusionment to which a magnificent dramatic poem of Hungarian literature – Imre Madách's (1823–64) *Az ember tragédiája* [The Tragedy of Man] (1861) is due.

A third distinguished writer of mid-century Hungarian literature, Baron Zsigmond Kemény (1814–75), contributed not only with both of his post-1848 essays, *Forradalom után* [After Revolution] (1850) and *Még egy szó a forradalom után* [One More Word after the Revolution] (1851) to understanding the sociopolitical factors that had led to the revolution, but also attempted to explore some deep-lying determinations of Hungarian history in his novels *A rajongók* [The Devotees] (1858) and *Zord idő* [Hard Times] (1862), which contain tragic stories set in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hungary and Transylvania. Finally, the conflicts between old and new values, produced by great political changes, and the issues of a possible reconciliation are represented, with hints of an elegiac resignation, in the novel of the literary historian Pál Gyulai (1826–1909) *Egy régi udvarház utolsó gazdája* [The Last Master of an Old Mansion] (1857).

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THE RECOLLECTIONS OF A MOVEMENT: MEMORY AND HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF PEOPLE'S COLLEGES

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Today, with the full benefit of hindsight, it would be redundant to write about the inevitability of the Stalinization of Hungary in the post World War II period. But to those who lived through this tumultuous time, it was a period replete with contradiction and uncertainty, when even the most astute political thinkers, such as István Bibó, were unable to predict what was to come. This work will explore Hungary's postwar period through the looking glass of the history and memory of NÉKOSZ, the National Organization of People's Colleges, a short-lived youth movement in postwar Hungary that fell victim to political purges but remains alive today in the memories of many of its participants.

The work will be divided into two main parts based on two different methodologies employed. The first part will contain a traditional narrative history of the movement in which I will trace the ideological origins and development of the movement, describe how NÉKOSZ contributed to the Stalinization of the country, and recount its demise in the Stalinist purges and the unsuccessful campaign for its return. This half will emphasize how the movement helped shape and simultaneously was itself shaped by the political events of the period. The second part will be a study of memory and the art of oral history. In this half, I will briefly describe how the movement was remembered during the Kádár period and contrast that with individual memories recorded in a series of interviews conducted in November 1999. It is hoped that this work will offer the reader a more complex picture of the period by presenting one small but significant slice of Hungarian society at a critical juncture in the transition to Stalinism.

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Hey, our banner blows in the bright winds
Hey, here it's written, Let Freedom Live!
Hey winds, blow! Bright winds, blow!
For tomorrow we will overturn the entire world!
(The NÉKOSZ anthem)

Section I
History of a Movement

In the late 1930s, in the wake of a new wave of Hungarian populism, a group of university students of peasant origin, under the tutelage of the ethnographer István Györffy, took part in a series of sociological studies of the peasantry. Like the village explorers,[1] these students sought to present an objective picture of the stark realities of peasant life in the hope of stimulating discussion about the need to reform Hungarian society. In the course of their research, these students came into contact with an amalgam of ideologies and personalities that would have an immense impact on their lives. In addition to working in the Region and Folk Research Center *[Táj- és Népkutató Központ]*, an institute founded by Pál Teleki,[2] these students also established close ties with nationalist groups, like the Turul League, and the Populist writers, a motley crew of right and left-wing intellectuals who, like them, were committed to alleviating the plight of the peasantry. Following the death of their friend and mentor, István Györffy, the group of students decided to establish a people's college *[népi kollégium]*;[3] a dormitory that would not only afford university students of peasant origin with food and lodging but also provide them with a forum to discuss issues of social justice and how best to fulfill the "college's moral obligation to work for the goals of the peasantry."[4] In 1940, just one year prior to Hungary's entrance into World War II, the Bolyai People's College, later re-named the Györffy István People's College, first opened its doors.

Ideology and Activism

The original ideological makeup of the Györffy István People's College is difficult to determine with certainty. Initially, the political and ideological loyalties of these participants, or collegians *[kollégisták]* as they were called, seemed to be divided between their populist, nationalist, and moderate conservative sponsors and peers. Most influential was the populist ideology then propagated in a number of studies and journals dedicated to serving the peasantry. Hungarian populism colored the political worldviews of the collegians and strengthened their belief, which remained central to the movement throughout its history, that they would

one day become members of the political elite in Hungary. "I think you are well aware", wrote collegian József Pál in a 1941 letter to his friend, "that this is the beginning of a 'silent revolution' which should not be mistaken for any fashionable trend, but might best be described as the 'second Dózsa revolution.' Its goal, the introduction of the peasantry into the axis of the administration."[5]

Nationalist ideology also influenced the collegians during the first year. The Turul League, a right-wing nationalist youth organization that emerged in 1920 as an organ of the counter-revolutionary government, supplied the students with a building, financial backing and the juridical framework necessary to function in Hungary. Although the relationship between the two groups later became strained – the people's college broke ties with the league in 1942 – the original collegians were active Turul members and espoused many of the group's beliefs.[6] More significantly, the collegians enjoyed the support of several key members of the Horthy government, such as Pál Teleki before his tragic suicide in 1941, and Ferenc Zsindely, the Minister of Trade under the Kállay government (1942–1944).[7] This support proved critical following the break with the Turul League and surprising when it continued even after it became clear that the collegians had strayed considerably from the government's ideological camp.

The gradual shift leftward began in late 1941 with the emergence of a Communist cell of four collegians. Lajos Fehér, brother of the then acting principal, Gyula Fehér, arrived from Debrecen with a group of populists-turned-Communists of the March Front.[8] With the help of his colleagues, Ferenc Donáth, Sándor Zöld and Géza Losonczy,[9] Fehér introduced several of the collegians to the tenets of "Leninism-Marxism."[10] Within a short period of time, the influence of the Communist cell grew and it began to exert a significant influence on the other members.

In September 1942, two events further strengthened the hand of the Communists. First, following a long string of conflicts with the Turul League, the collegians proclaimed their independence and broke all ties with the League. The Ministry of Interior, at the behest of Ferenc Zsindely, not only reimbursed the people's college the entire sum lost in the break up but also granted the people's college full autonomy, unprecedented for a youth organization funded by the state. Shortly thereafter, the Communist members were able to persuade the rest of the collegians to replace the then acting principal, Lajos Horváth, with the 21 year old student László Kardos, the future architect and undisputed leader of NÉKOSZ.[11] Though not yet a member of the Communist party, Kardos was the obvious choice to head the people's college. Intelligent and charismatic, Kardos transformed the loosely organized group into a well disciplined tightly-knit collective based on radical democratic principles that would form the linchpin of the people's college movement, e.g., open debate, democratic selection of leadership, and emphasis on the interests of the group over those of the individual.[12]

Kardos also convinced the collegians to be more politically active. Initially, the collegians participated in a number of small-scale anti-war demonstrations, as well as the relatively large 1941 demonstration at the gravesite of Lajos Kossuth organized by the Social Democrats' National Youth Committee.[13] But as the war dragged on, the members of the Györffy People's College became progressively more radical and leftist. The number of collegians in the Communist Party more than doubled by 1943,[14] and in conjunction with the popular front tactics of the illegal Communist Party, the people's college formed strong ties with other leading left-wing organizations involved in the anti-war campaign. Collegians wrote articles for left-wing journals like *Népszava* [People's Word][15] and *Szabad Szó* [Free Speach], and distributed pamphlets for the Peace Party *[Békepárt]*, the front organization of the Hungarian Communist Party.

The 1943 conference at Szárszó in which populist writers and other intellectuals gathered together to protest Hungary's participation in the war was a pivotal event in the development of the Györffy István People's College. Presaging the dilemma that would soon plague Hungary, a debate emerged during the conference between the so-called third roaders, led by László Németh, who opposed both Nazism and Bolshevism equally, and the left-wing intellectuals led by the crypto-Communist Ferenc Erdei, who, whether out of conviction or *realpolitik*, espoused a more radical ideology and sought to forge an alliance with Moscow. Among the proponents of the Soviet-oriented faction were László Kardos and the attending collegians. In his speech given at the conference, Kardos juxtaposed the third road with his "more developed" position, which he claimed had "already touched the truth." He invited others to join him on the "path of Sándor Petőfi," the radical poet laureate of the 1848 Hungarian revolution. He added, "Here is the opportunity for the entire Hungarian youth to demand and create with their Hungarian strength an independent, free democratic Hungary."[16] By aligning themselves with Erdei, the collegians had crossed the line tolerated by the government. After the conference, Ferenc Zsindely personally berated Kardos for his speech and admonished the students about their radical activities. However, the collegians did not heed his warnings but intensified their involvement in the anti-war effort and strengthened their contact with the Communist Party. Three months later, the collegian Antal Gyenes was arrested on grounds that he was a Communist.

In a 1988 interview Sándor Györffy stated that he and most other collegians were not aware of the leadership's role in the illegal Communist Party until after Gyenes was arrested in early September 1943. "On the outside we denied it, but inside we had a feeling that the leadership was actively involved in the Communist movement, which [in our eyes] enhanced their influence."[17] In the course of that year, several others were taken into custody, imprisoned and tortured for their reputed involvement in illegal Communist activities.[18] Yet, in a relatively short

span of time, most of the collegians joined the party and continued to participate in the anti-war campaign. In March 1944, after the Germans had occupied Hungary, the government revoked the people's college's autonomy and the majority of the students either returned to their villages or participated in the underground National Resistance Student Movement led by two collegians, and long standing Communists, Antal Gyenes and András Hegedűs. This group continued to print anti-Nazi propaganda and to cooperate with other left-wing organizations until the Arrow Cross and German army had retreated from the city. [19]

When Budapest was finally "liberated" by the Red Army, the regrouped collegians wasted no time in tailoring their political activities to suit the changed environment. In December 1944, the Györffy collegians occupied a former German language school and, under the guidance of the Communist Party, established the Hungarian Democratic Youth League (MADISZ). According to several sources, the collegians had originally wanted to name the organization the Communist Youth League, but Zoltán Vas, one of the most influential Moscow-trained Communist leaders, convinced the students of the more urgent need to create a mass organization in the spirit of a popular front.[20] Moreover, because the major political figures of the Peasant Party, such as Imre Kovács and the crypto-Communist Ferenc Erdei, were in their own respective counties, several collegians were also charged with the task of re-structuring the National Peasant Party in Budapest.[21] In the initial months, they filled the lion's share of the party's leadership positions.[22]

Suffice it to say that the fifty-member people's college, despite being disbanded, emerged from the war a well-disciplined organization with clear leftist, even Communist, credentials, and had amassed an enormous amount of moral capital. It was an ideal ally for the fledgling Hungarian Communist Party. Not only did the leadership and most collegians consider themselves to be Communists – or at least sympathetic to Communism – the fact that the overwhelming majority of members also came from the peasantry afforded the Communist Party inroads into village life, where their appeal was traditionally low. This perhaps explains why, when radical land reform was enacted in the early months of 1945, the Party entrusted the collegians with the distribution of land in more than half the counties in Hungary.

Land Reform

The agrarian reform of 1945 was an event in the history of the Györffy People's College that bestowed a great deal of pride on the participants. For those peasant students in their early twenties, it meant that they had become the arbiters of a grand-scale land distribution program which their own parents and grandpar-

ents probably never would have imagined possible.[23] József Pál, a member of the National Cooperative Council and former collegian, recounted his joy in returning to his village to distribute land. "Next to the Church was a mansion with a gigantic, beautiful park that was not open to the public. The villagers had never before been inside. Well, as ministerial commissioner I ordered it to be opened...and after church on Sunday the park's gates were unlocked and I told them to go inside...that day the park was filled with people, walking in and out to have a look for themselves...and within a week all the land was redistributed."[24]

But land reform did not always go so smoothly. In a 1989 interview, András Hegedűs explained how revolutionary the concept was to many of the peasants and how reluctant they were at first to claim the land. "Farmhands, day laborers, landless peasants. For them taking the land presented several ethical problems, 'it is not his, [they said.] Why is he taking someone else's land?' This problem arose in four or five communities in Zemplén [county]. When it did arise, I was forced to go out and canvass *[agitál]* support. I had to convince the people to accept the land. Later, when I was land distribution commissioner in Sopron County the same problem cropped up. In the end, most people accepted it. Their hunger for land was stronger than their reserve."[25] It is not surprising that this experience had a profound effect on the participants and emboldened them to participate more fully in Hungarian political life.

The Birth of NÉKOSZ

The influence and membership of the people's college organization grew exponentially in the subsequent months. People's college life resumed as a second generation of collegians replaced those veterans who had finished their coursework and received their degrees. In 1945, the veterans established the Society of Collegian Graduates and continued to live a communal life together in the hills of Buda. They also remained active members in people's college life, overseeing its operation and later filling leadership positions within the NÉKOSZ movement.

The actual events surrounding the establishment of NÉKOSZ have yet to be clarified by historians. In 1946, university students founded the Petőfi People's College basing it on the Györffy People's College model. According to a 1947 article published in the NÉKOSZ journal *Március Tizenötödike,* a minor "internal conflict" broke out in the people's college and the "Györffy collegians were called in for assistance." After the "traitors of the progressive youth" were purged, the two independent people's colleges voted to merge together and form the National Organization of People's Colleges (NÉKOSZ).[26] A more plausible explanation is that there was a struggle for power between those students who wanted to merge

into the NÉKOSZ structure and those, like the principal, who did not. In an interview, Maria Pogány, the widowed wife of László Kardos, candidly admitted that the Györffy collegians orchestrated the takeover by sending enough students to the Petőfi People's College to form the majority needed to vote in favor of the merger.[27]

Despite these dubious beginnings, a movement was born which helped shape the political and social transformation of post-war Hungary. Owing to a massive recruitment campaign in the villages and factories, people's colleges mushroomed throughout the country. By 1949, the year of its demise, the number of people's colleges had exceeded 150 with a combined student body of over 8000 collegians.

Life in the People's College

To visualize the degree to which ideological factors influenced these peasant and, to a lesser extent, worker students in life in the people's college, it is first necessary to describe the unique aspects of the people's college which emerged during the initial years of the movement and took full shape in the postwar period. Like normal dormitories, each university people's college was furnished with an open library, dorm rooms and a dining room. However, the similarities end there.

The internal structure of the people's college served to foster a closely-knit community based loosely on a combination of democratic and Marxist ideals. The smallest unit of organization within the people's college was known as a "cooperative." This was a dorm room, housing between 5 to 20 members, which functioned as a virtual collective. Care packages from the villages were distributed evenly among the members, there was no private property *per se*, and everyone was given a set of responsibilities, including such tasks as organizing sporting activities, writing articles for one of the two NÉKOSZ journals, or fulfilling a leadership position within the group.

In order to preserve each people's college's autonomy, every semester the members selected their own principal, first secretary, and other officers.[28] Most often collegians themselves, these leaders were responsible for ensuring that life in the people's college ran smoothly, tasks from the NÉKOSZ central office were fulfilled, and that the community retained certain cohesiveness. To help promote unity and discipline, certain mechanisms became permanent structures of the college. For example, the people's court *[népbíróság]* was an elected body of collegians authorized to mete out punishment to those members who did not follow the rules of the college. In rare cases, the sentence could even include expulsion, though most often the penalty was less severe.

Another important internal mechanism was the so-called criticism/self-criticism. This was a two to three day exercise whereby each collegian, including the

members of the leadership, had to undergo a series of cross examinations by their peers and was expected to practice self-criticism. According to several collegians, criticism/self-criticism was first employed during the war when it acquired its religious undertones; many liken the process to a confession in which the students could purge themselves of their sins against the community.[29] Those collegians who defend criticism/self-criticism contend that the process was most often carried out humanely and that it promoted unity and understanding among the members. It was only in the final year of the movement, they claim, that the practice assumed a bureaucratic, Stalinist quality and was strictly used force members to toe the party line.[30]

Because each people's college was autonomous, a quota or "norm" system was adopted to promote a higher degree of uniformity between the different colleges and a more professional environment. In addition to the school work expected of normal students, collegians were also required to fulfill daily and monthly "norms" that were determined by the NÉKOSZ central administration. A typical day as recounted by one collegian included waking up around 6 o'clock, eating a light breakfast of milk, a latté and some bread. After breakfast, there was an hour of silence during which students worked on their homework in the people's college library. If they finished early, the students were expected to read quietly – usually one of the 30 or so books prescribed by the central leadership.[31] Then the students attended foreign language class or chorus in the people's college until lunch. After lunch the students headed off to school on foot and were expected to return to the people's college for dinner. Each evening at 8 o'clock, the group gathered to sing folk and "revolutionary" songs.[32] In addition to this, twice a week there was a guest lecturer (a well-known writer, journalist, politician or scholar) who would visit the people's college and speak on a prearranged topic.[33] These speeches were always followed by open discussion, sometimes lasting well into the night.[34] If there was no guest lecturer scheduled, then the students might take part in a meeting of one of the numerous political youth organizations or planned cultural events. On the weekends, students often conducted the required sociological studies on village or factory life or participated in several intramural activities such as sports and folk dancing.

One key element to NÉKOSZ's success was the active recruitment of talented peasants. Collegians were selected on the basis of a complex system of testing. Each summer, the collegians organized "application camps" for peasant students whom they had recruited from villages throughout the country. These applicants lived with the collegians for three days and endured many stressful hours of exams. In addition to writing an autobiography, critiques of theater performances, and several essay questions, students were also asked by a committee of collegians a series of "lightning questions" to test their intellectual acumen and, judging from some of the questions, locate their political loyalties.[35] According to a

1947 speech given by Kardos to those collegians responsible for selecting new members, the criteria for acceptance included the following. Socially, "we should admit only proletarians, peasants, and the most progressive from the petit bourgeoisie." Politically, "that is from a class standpoint, it is necessary that the students be 'suitable' and appropriate for all circumstances." And finally, pedagogically, "students must be able to adjust to collective life"; in other words, they must be community oriented.

Parallel to the rigid disciplinarianism of each people's college, there existed a unique democratic spirit not found in the Stalinist organizations that would supersede it. Open political discourse and the expression of a variety of opinions were tolerated, even encouraged, within the walls of the people's college. This does not mean, however, that the views expressed in the people's college spanned the entire political spectrum. They did not. The selection process ensured that applicants who were hand picked by the leadership shared a general worldview. On the other hand, although these students overwhelmingly supported a radical transformation of Hungarian society, their individual brand of radicalism often strayed from that of the Communist Party, and even from that of the NÉKOSZ leadership. In the December 5th, 1946 sitting of the Hungarian Communist Party's Youth Secretariat, the NÉKOSZ representative, Gergely Szabó, informed the committee that their biggest problem was that the Communist peasant party instructors recommended by the NÉKOSZ central leadership are not always chosen by the members of each people's college. He also complained of a "renegade" people's college run by a "right-wing National Peasant Party priest" and the fact that that there were not enough "appropriate" teachers to run the lyceums.[36] Although Marxism was prescribed by the central leadership, the large degree of autonomy within the people's college led to the emergence of highly individualized and sometimes outright contradictory ideologies. It was not uncommon, as one diary entry reveals, for a collegian to attend mass in the morning and then, having returned to the people's college in the afternoon, read a Hungarian Communist classic such as *The Four Hundred Year Struggle for Independence*.[37] In fact, there were people's colleges in which the entire student body attended mass on a weekly basis despite their materialist education.[38]

The Golden Years

The years between 1946 and 1948 marked a golden period in the history of NÉKOSZ. During this time, the movement attained power and political influence far exceeding all other educational movements in Hungary. Initially, even the Smallholders Party, the Communist Party's most formidable opponent, supported the movement's ambitious plans for expansion. This need not be surprising since

its message was inclusive and appealed to a broad audience. In the true spirit of the popular front, NÉKOSZ was touted as a nonpartisan institution which promised to bestow upon poor peasant and worker students an education that would not only help to bring about an eradication of the inequalities of the Horthy regime, but also assist in the creation of a new democratic Hungary. István Bibó also expressed this need in his 1947 article entitled, "Intellectuals and Professionalism." In order to set high standards of professionalism, he argued, it was necessary "to create the conditions that would give special educational opportunities to talent that has been thus far denied proper schooling. Above all, the largest share of opportunity must be extended to the isolated, impoverished peasantry."[39] The expansion of education that took place in Hungary during this time contributed further to the rapid rise of the movement. The number of university students in Hungary during the 1946–47 academic year doubled that of the 1937–38 year.[40] NÉKOSZ was able to select among the brightest from this influx of new students.

Despite the movement's popular front policies and its democratic and diverse ideological makeup, there is enough evidence to suggest that the Communist Party exerted an overwhelming influence on the people's college movement. The Communist party compromised the most influential leaders of the movement. On the one hand, there was a small group of collegians that quickly rose through the ranks of the party *nomenclatura*. To list just three, András Hegedűs, who would later become the prime minister of Hungary, was then a representative in Parliament and the leader of the Communist Youth League; and László Tőkés and Béla Szalai served as the secretaries of László Rajk and Mátyás Rákosi respectively. These men were sent to party schools and, not surprisingly, most often toed the party line.[41] Their role in the NÉKOSZ movement was as influential as it was colored by their subordination to the imperatives of the party. There were also leaders of the movement such as László Kardos and his loyal followers, who were members of the Communist Party and also remained directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the NÉKOSZ movement. Like the first group, these members were well informed of party decisions and had direct access to key leaders in the Communist Party hierarchy, especially to the two benefactors of the movement, László Rajk and József Révai. However – as will become evident later in the work – unlike the first group, these men also attempted, with limited success, to preserve the autonomy of the movement.

Although it is difficult to determine to what degree either of these groups can be considered "Stalinist," both ensured that NÉKOSZ would back Communist agendas when deemed necessary and that the education provided in the people's colleges would not only be Marxist but also supportive of the Hungarian Communist Party.[42] The significance of this dynamic should not be underestimated in judging to what degree ordinary members were Communists. Since most of the

students did not enter college life with set ideological loyalties, and their knowledge of Marxism-Leninism was most likely minimal at best, it was up to the leadership to shape their education and provide the proper direction. According to Antal Gyenes, the president of NÉKOSZ in 1946, a Communist education was central from the start despite pretensions that it was a nonpartisan organization. The claim that NÉKOSZ was a popular front organization "is simply not true," he argues. "We wanted to raise Communists, Marxists or Marxist sympathizers, and that is the truth, whether it was right or wrong...In the beginning we enjoyed good relations with all parties, even with the president.[43] They even attended our celebrations. Nevertheless, the education was a Marxist education."[44]

Evidence that NÉKOSZ was a Communist organization can be also gleaned from the reactions of the Smallholders and Social Democrat parties. In October 1946, the Smallholders Party decided to establish people's colleges of their own, calling it the Hungarian College Alliance, or MAKE. In his speech, József Varga, the secretary of MAKE, rationalized the decision stating that despite the many similarities with NÉKOSZ, "we are not and will not be Marxists."[45] Seven months later, the Social Democrats followed suit and formed the National Organization of Worker People's Colleges (DOKOSZ). The reasons for their decision to create an alternate network of people's colleges were expressed in the letter written by the Social Democratic party's Secretariat of the Intelligentsia *[értelmiségi titkárság]* to the Party's First Secretariat. It stated that

> NÉKOSZ (which is for all purposes entirely under the Hungarian Communist Party's control) maintains more than 30 people's colleges in Budapest ... 90 percent of NÉKOSZ leadership is made up of members of the Hungarian Communist Party, the rest are of the National Peasant Party. There are no Social Democrats. There is a total of around 20–30 Social Democratic members who suffer for their party membership. In the case of NÉKOSZ we should not expect compromise on party lines, but rather a battle.[46]

Both MAKE and DOKOSZ were unable to secure the financial backing to effectively challenge NÉKOSZ's monopoly on the people's college movement.[47] Poorly funded and lacking proper organization, these people's colleges paled in comparison to the well-run people's colleges of NÉKOSZ. After a series of conflicts (on one occasion even resulting in blows) between the NÉKOSZ and DOKOSZ students, the Communist Party forced both organizations to merge with NÉKOSZ in 1948.[48]

Ostensibly a nonpartisan organization, from the outset the collegians participated in national politics and exerted a strong influence on the various youth organizations throughout the country.[49] This they were able to do with striking efficiency. Owing to their discipline and organizational skills, many collegians played

leading roles in such mass youth organizations as the League of Hungarian University and College Unions (MEFESZ) and such Communist organizations as the Hungarian Democratic Youth League (MADISZ). The participation of collegians in these organizations created the conditions by which the Communist Party could better direct the course of debate and even shape the actions of each group. Although these organizations may not have been under the complete control of the party – nor, for that matter, were the actions of each collegian – the influence of the Communist Party was strongly felt as a result of NÉKOSZ participation, providing a useful "popular front" ally that was publicly non-affiliated with the Communist Party, but privately supportive of its aims.

Again it should be emphasized that initially it was not in the interest of the party to draw a clear line between Communists and non-Communists – either in these organizations or in the NÉKOSZ movement.[50] Even MADISZ was touted as a popular front organization and included non-Communists in the leadership. This explains why the Communist Party tolerated a wide variety of ideological freedom within NÉKOSZ. Politically, popular front politics better served the interests of the Communist Party in the first few years because it bought them needed time to strengthen their forces and gain democratic credibility with the population. Moreover, international circumstances would not allow open confrontation between the two antagonistic parties in Hungary. Yet, as the Hungarian Communist Party began to consolidate its power, Communist leaders and many NÉKOSZ members gradually began to adhere less and less to popular front tactics. By 1948, it became clear to most everyone that the popular front coalition was merely a facade. Even NÉKOSZ no longer maintained its original nonpartisan pretense.

One method by which NÉKOSZ supported the party was through its press. The two NÉKOSZ journals, *Kollégista* and *Március Tizenötödike*, often served to propagate Communist ideology and policies. For instance, in June 1948, NÉKOSZ published an open letter in one journal supporting the nationalization of schools. On the same page, the editor attacked the policies of those Catholic circles that afforded education not to "talented worker and peasant children, but to the privileged rich."[51] By 1948, articles were published on a variety of Soviet themes such as the educational techniques of Makarenko, the writings of Pavlenko, and paeans to Mátyás Rákosi, a standard during the subsequent period known for its "cult of personality."[52]

With varying success, many collegians also took part in several "Communist" projects. In his diary, Sándor Pető explains how he and other Györffy collegians were sent to villages to garner support for cooperatives in the summer of 1946. Although this was an exceptional case, his writings offer insight into the psychological relationship that some collegians had with Communism and provides an example of the challenges faced by collegians who were branded as "janissaries" of the Communist Party by the non-Communist press.[53]

> 25 July: [At the office of Bolhó director of land claims, Ferenc Lukács] In his room on the wall was a giant picture of Horthy...Why leave it on the wall? What does that mean? I think that it only means that sooner or later he will express the views of Horthy's party, which are not the most democratic. Because of religion (theoretically because of that, but in truth because of his feudal way of thinking) the Communists consider his right to exist incompatible [with a Communist society].[54] He also declares, like so many other nitwits, that the peasant party is the countryside subsidiary of the Communist Party. He complains that they want to get rid of him because he has always served the interests of the people, and is serving the people's interest now as well.
>
> 28 July: I argued so much. I have butted heads with many dim-witted, stubborn, feudal-type characters. You can hardly get them to understand the truth...
>
> 31 July: The village judge is the most closed-minded peasant, and is perhaps the shadiest politically as well...When I told him about my mission he stated: We don't accept anything that is from the radical left...We don't need any kind of cooperative here, the Peasant League [run by the Smallholders Party] was established and we will be farming with the Danish model.
>
> 3 August: The director, Lukács, is now speaking with Jadi, the obstinate Peasant League member from Bolhó who is the most opposed to a fm. cooperative. He already promised to give me a beating and told those people we are negotiating with that I am Jewish, etc. They have already accused me of bribing the director with a new job.[55] The people are very distrusting, they still do not want to believe what they hear with their own ears and see with their own eyes.

According to Pető, József Lukács of the Smallholders Party gave a speech the next day in which he told the residents of Bolhó and other surrounding villages, not to join the cooperative. Pető was forced to return to the people's college empty handed.[56]

Mobilizing the masses became one of the most effective means of the Hungarian Communist Party to control the political discourse and force the adherence of their demands. In the latter years, the people's colleges became a reliable source of manpower for the Communist Party. On a number of key occasions, the collegians marched the streets in support of the party's agenda. Ádám Szirtes, a former collegian, recalled in 1970 that,

> Before election we took to the streets, sang, danced and lectured [szavaltunk]. But not just on the streets, I remember on the HÉV[57] as well...and we lectured to the people returning home from work who

> were reading the newspapers, playing cards or looking for something to occupy themselves with...we would just jump in front of some young person and start to sermonize. What a strange situation it was...we went home with such feeling of victory if we had managed to win the attention of one or two people...Before the elections, we would jump into a huge truck, ten or fifteen of us would hold on as we drove to the mining camps, Salgótartján, Dorog, and to areas surrounding Miskolc. [There] we gave lectures and held cultural programs; two to three hours of announcements, singing and sermons.[58]

The disciplined and politicized nature of life in the people's college, the inculcation of Marxism-Leninism and Communist propaganda, combined with the turbulent period, created the perfect conditions for a radical youth organization that often, though not always, played into the hands of the Communist Party. Although it was neither necessary nor really desirable for the party to integrate the entire movement into the party *nomenclatura*, these students, along with other segments of society, proved more than willing to support the Hungarian Communist Party when asked to do so. The reason for this can partly be explained by the guiding influence of the Communist leaders in the movement and because the Communist Party offered them an ideology of hope, promising to eradicate the inequalities of the Horthy regime and create a society that would cater to the peasantry and to the working class. In the same vein, the party convinced the students that they would become the future leaders of the nation, a belief strengthened by the apparent omnipotence of the Hungarian Communist Party in dictating the course of events in the country. It is not surprising, then, that as the Communists gained the upper hand in Hungary, Marxism-Leninism became increasingly more central to collegian life.

The Final Year

On 15 March 1948, unaware of the dramatic events in store for them, five thousand collegians marched in procession singing hymns to commemorate the centennial celebration of the 1848 revolution. It was a spectacular day for László Kardos as well. Not only had he marshaled an impressive army of collegians for the celebration, but he also received the nation's most prestigious honor, the Kossuth Award, for his "pedagogical and organizational" work in the service of democracy. His future and the future of NÉKOSZ seemed promising. But "underneath the unsuspecting celebratory and auspicious appearance," recalled Kardos, "the historical powers were preparing something entirely different."[59] Four days later, in a meeting of the HCP Central Leadership Organizing Committee, attended by Mihály Farkas,[60] József Révai, László Kardos, Antal Gyenes and others, the Com-

munist Party ordered the NÉKOSZ leadership to sit down with the Communist Youth Secretariat and work out the movement's "ideological errors."[61] The die had been cast.

Within the next several months, the HCP leveled a series of criticisms against the NÉKOSZ movement and even contemplated its incorporation into the state school structure. Initially, everything was kept behind closed doors. The party accused the movement of embodying a harmful chauvinistic and independent spirit tainted with avant-gardism and *narodnyik* romanticism that threatened the relationship between the students and the Communist Party. As a consequence, the Györffy István People's College, the prototype of the people's college, was closed down indefinitely, the leadership intensified the political activism of the movement and restructured the summer application camps to emphasize the tenets of Marxism-Leninism.[62] But reform proved too little too late. Come middle of summer, criticisms by several factions within the Communist leadership surfaced in the press. NÉKOSZ was thrown on the defensive yet again.

"What was virtue yesterday, is backwardness today, and will be tomorrow negligence, indeed, a crime," wrote the Marxist philosopher György Lukács in a June article in which he criticized NÉKOSZ's "lack of professional training" and "sectarianism." "A new type of person is needed," he argued, one that is "a convinced democrat, socialist and educated professional, who is able to effectively work in public life."[63] One month later, the newly formed Györffy István People's College Communist Committee issued a statement that blamed the movement's sectarianism, "the replacement of democratic centralism with dictatorship" and other "ideological errors" on László Kardos and accused him of creating an "un-party-like atmosphere" in the movement.[64]

To make matters worse, just one week after László Rajk, NÉKOSZ's staunchest supporter among the Communist elite, was replaced as Minister of Interior, László Kardos was called in front of the HCP Central Control Committee for alleged crimes of sexual misconduct and promptly forced to resign from his post.[65] Included in the charges to discredit him was the claim that, "as a married man he conducted relationships with more than one woman at the same time. He accused those who were not willing to fulfill his desires of having petty bourgeois inhibitions unworthy of a Marxist."[66]

No sooner had the leadership been replaced when József Révai, who up to this point had always staunchly defended the people's college movement, gave a scathing invective before a NÉKOSZ Communist committee in which he accused the movement of peasant romanticism, sectarian isolationism, and neglecting their professional training which, he intimated, were remnants of their contact with right-wing ideologies under the Horthy regime. Adding a premonition, he stated, "We must ask the question: does NÉKOSZ speak forever? No, it doesn't, and no collegian should regret this. It is not the form but the essence that we are in love

with. It is not so important that we win over the Hungarian youth for democracy and Communism with NÉKOSZ, but that we win."[67]

At this point, those aspects of the people's college that had once served to strengthen the unity of the community began to tear at the very fabric of life in the people's college. NÉKOSZ became more bureaucratic and centralized; the selection of new students was restricted to party cadres from the proletarian class; the quota system intensified as participation in political youth organizations became compulsory; more power was placed in the hands of each people's college's principal and first secretary; and a simplified Marxism-Leninism infiltrated all aspects of educational life. Before long the internal cohesion of the people's college began to unravel. Without any restraint, criticism/self-criticism took the form of a Communist Inquisition. Members accused one another of harboring reactionary beliefs, expulsions occurred on a daily basis, and the community was split apart. This state of disarray is depicted in the diary entry of one student. He writes,

> 6 February: Unfortunately, we had to expel ten members from the people's college today, among them Gyenes, Ruszkai and Sándor Barna too, all of who were my good friends. I did everything I could to get them to stay, but [my efforts were] in vain. I feel sorry for them because we were such good friends, but I just wasn't able to reach a positive outcome on their behalf.[68]

Newly appointed NÉKOSZ leaders, such as Ferenc Pataki, accelerated these trends by calling on principals to intensify "the class struggle" by "rooting out" harmful elements in the people's college and implementing the pedagogical methods of Soviets like Makarenko."[69] By the end of the 1948–49 academic year, it was clear to everyone that NÉKOSZ, as they knew it, was through. In fact, by the time NÉKOSZ was implicated in the László Rajk show trial of June 1949, it was already in the late stages of nationalization,[70] having suffered the same fate that had befallen other semi-autonomous organizations. In the summer of 1949, the people's colleges were officially handed over to the state – many to be duly transformed into dormitories for the *szakérettségis* program – and the collegians were dispersed and sent to various schools within the new state educational system.[71]

With the opposition out of sight, it was only a matter of time before the party would turn on itself in the interest of eradicating all autonomous or even semi-autonomous elements. To quote Arendt, "Totalitarian movements are mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals. Compared with all other parties and movements, their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member."[72] NÉKOSZ was the logical target of the purges since it was easier for the Party to start from scratch and establish a new educational system than to rely

on the reforms of a movement with strong democratic and ideologically questionable traditions, even when the movement had been so useful to the party during the transitional period. NÉKOSZ had served its purpose and had become expendable.

Revolution Revisited

In the course of a few years, the collegians went from being the "janissaries of the Communist Party" to the "janissaries of Tito," and the movement passed away, an institutional pariah in a society it had helped to create. Under the reign of Rákosi, there was little attempt to change this status and virtually no mention of NÉKOSZ in the press. But following the death of Stalin and the elevation of Imre Nagy to the Hungarian prime ministership, László Kardos and István Márkus, another former collegian, authored a memorandum in which they argued, among other things, that the liquidation of NÉKOSZ had caused harm to the peasant youth movement, and that people's colleges should be re-established if only to create a "civic" intelligentsia, one that was sorely needed in the country.[73] Initially, the memo sparked fierce opposition, especially from the Democratic Youth League, and the plan was shelved under the threat of prosecution. However, at the behest of the Petőfi Circle,[74] led by the former collegian, Gábor Tánczos, the plan surfaced during the dramatic months preceding the 1956 revolution. Although the ten-year anniversary celebration of the movement was cancelled by the Party due to certain "anomalies" within the Petőfi Circle, the tide had turned in NÉKOSZ's favor. The leadership of the Democratic Youth League adopted a more conciliatory approach in tune with the political climate. Ervin Hollós, the league's secretary, publicly admitted that NÉKOSZ had been wrongly accused of conspiratorial designs against the state.[75] Moreover, in a September session of the Political Committee, the leadership even approved a plan to re-establish people's colleges throughout the country.[76]

But in yet another ironic twist of fate, these plans were dashed by the revolutionary events. For a second time, the collegians found themselves on two opposing sides of a conflict. It was the Petőfi Circle, led by Gábor Tánczos, that spurred the revolution in the first place, and András Hegedűs, as prime minister of Hungary, who invited the Soviet troops to squelch it.[77] Once the revolution was put down, the "counter-revolutionaries" were tried and imprisoned. Among those imprisoned for the participation in the uprising were Kardos, Tánczos, and other collegians.[78] Tánczos received ten years imprisonment of which he served four and Kardos received a life sentence of which he served six.

The Movement Evaluated

If we look at the history of NÉKOSZ strictly from a political perspective, it is evident that the movement played into the hands of the Communist Party. Not only did NÉKOSZ contribute to the popularization of Communism, but more significantly, it also provided the Hungarian Communist Party with an ample and reliable source of cadres necessary to carry out Rákosi's ambitious Stalinist policies. Judging from this point of view, it appears that NÉKOSZ's trajectory followed a familiar path: genuine coalition, sham coalition, consolidation of Communist power followed by internal purges. The participants, it would seem, were led effortlessly down the path to the denouement.

Herein lies one flaw of traditional history. Although the reader is presented with a coherent narrative that recounts the chronology of noteworthy events and is left with a general understanding of the political significance of the movement, something is missing from this account. This history of the movement lacks a convincing explanation as to *why* these students allowed themselves to become the tools of the Communist Party, and it fails to present the everyday experiences of "ordinary" collegians. What is missing from this history are complex characters. For the remainder of the work, I will complicate my interpretation of NÉKOSZ by presenting the movement from the perspective of the participants as they look back on their experiences.

Section II
Memory of a Movement

This second half of this work will be divided into two sections. The first examines the "authoritative memory" of the movement as depicted during the Kádár period. By "authoritative" memory, I mean memory that both falls outside of the private sphere and is presented – and often received – as a definitive interpretation of how events actually transpired to such an extent that the "authoritative" memory often shapes "individual" memory when people attempt to recall their own experiences. The analysis in this section will include a brief outline of the five-volume collection of documents edited by a number of former NÉKOSZ leaders as well as the controversial film directed by the former collegian Miklós Jancsó.

The second section explores how "individual" memories can not only offer insight into the motivations behind the actions of these students but also complicate some of the assumptions of the first half of the work. In this section, I use excerpts from a collection of personal interviews conducted in November, 1999. Though the pool of informants is admittedly small (only eight in all) and not as varied as would be ideal (the informants were provided by three sources and they

represent three separate groups with minimal inter-group contact), the purpose of this section is not to provide the reader with a broad sociological survey but rather a collection of individual interpretations that might shed light on different aspects of the movement's history. It is intended that both sections will give a more colorful and complex interpretation of NÉKOSZ, and leave us with a better understanding of how memory and oral history intertwine.

Divided Memory

In 1969, György Aczél,[79] the Central Committee Secretary of Cultural Affairs, Kardos, and several former NÉKOSZ members, sat together in a pub, drinking and singing old revolutionary songs. When it appeared that Aczél was in good spirits, Kardos asked him,

> "Hey Gyuri, do you think that NÉKOSZ was progressive?"
> "Naturally," he answered.
> "The progressive line of the worker movement too?" asked Kardos.
> "Yes."
> "And don't you think that now would be the time to clear up exactly what was NÉKOSZ, the criticism of the party, and everything else?"
> "Of course." stated Aczél.
> "Well then, help us." [80]

Not long afterward, György Aczél gave Kardos and others official permission to gather material on NÉKOSZ and eventually publish their findings.[81] In the late 1970s, four volumes of NÉKOSZ documents and an ambitious survey appeared in selected bookstores in Budapest. The publication of these works served as a vindication of the charges leveled against the movement during the Rákosi period; NÉKOSZ once again attained its rightful place among the pantheon of "progressive worker movements." More importantly, to the former collegians these works comprised a memento of *their* movement, forming a veritable "imagined" community of times past. In the words of one editor, these publications constitute "a confession of a generation," a confession all the more compelling in light of its "scientific" credentials – over 3000 pages of primary documents, detailed questionnaires and statistical charts that pooled over 900 out of the almost twelve thousand participants of NÉKOSZ – and its appearance of objectivity and tolerance for a multiplicity of views.[82] All essential aspects of the movement were dealt with separately and placed in their logical order, e.g., the ten-year history of the original people's college, the movement's internal structure, its "golden age" followed by the "professionalization" period and the final year when NÉKOSZ was merged into the state educational system. Included in this impressive collection of information were interviews, diary entrees and even a debate on the infa-

mous film about NÉKOSZ, Bright Winds *[Fényes Szelek]*, directed by the highly acclaimed filmmaker and former collegian, Miklós Jancsó.

The format was simple. The editors introduced each theme with a short summary, a suggested interpretation if you will. Following each summary, they offered a compilation of carefully arranged primary documents, usually abbreviated and set in chronological order. For the most part, the documents corroborated the preceding summary, but in several sub-sections there were contradictions as well. The reader was left with a choice, either to accept the interpretations offered by the editors, or to create his or her own interpretation. The fact that these five publications were the fruits of a collective project of former collegians, including the most influential leaders of the movement, lent greater credibility to its claims. It was after all, an *internal* affair. Over 20 former collegians are included as editors and assistants, including Kardos, Gyenes, Tánczos, S. Györffy, and even Ferenc Pataki.

It is not the purpose of this work to give a detailed critique of this enormous work; it is enough to present some of its more prominent characteristics and arguments. It must first be stated that the work represents the efforts of collegians that sought to portray NÉKOSZ in a positive light. It was also the product of the Kádár period. The authors were faced with the difficult task of presenting a movement that was on the one hand, progressive and Communist in the "popular front spirit" and, at the same time, unaffected by the Stalinist predilection towards violence and terror. Understandably, the authors omit some information that would have blackened the movement's image. For example, there is no mention of what really happened with the Petőfi People's College when it voted to merge with the Györffy People's College, nor do they give an accurate account of their role in the liquidation of the DOKOSZ and MAKE people's college movements. It is also no surprise that there is no mention of the events of 1956, or of attempts to re-establish the people's college movement. And yet, despite these lacunae, the breadth of the work is enormous. The authors made a point of including a variety of interpretations that at times present a rather conflicting picture of the movement. This gives the work a pretense of objectivity and complexity that is absent in many historical works written in the Communist period.

There are several motifs that remain stable throughout. Most importantly, the authors repeatedly refer to the NÉKOSZ ethos, that is, the movement's emphasis on democracy, diversity and a commitment to each people's college and the community-at-large. Also essential to their interpretation is the "Györffy Legend," i.e., the heroic struggle against Fascism, the claim that NÉKOSZ was one of the first victims of the Stalinist purges, and the recurring reminder that these participants sincerely believed in the NÉKOSZ anthem; that they were the "bright winds" that would "overturn the entire world."

The influence that these five works have on the memory of many of these former collegians should not be underestimated. As will be evident later in this work, not only did virtually all of the persons with whom I spoke refer to the five-volume work, but the ideas presented seemed to still resonate in their minds, especially among those participants who did not play a leadership role in the movement. During my first week in Hungary I attended a meeting of the Friends of the Bright Winds *[Fényes Szellők Baráti Kör]*, a group of ex-NÉKOSZ students – all in their seventies and eighties – who are actively campaigning to reintroduce a NÉKOSZ-like movement in Hungary.[83] After a speech on contemporary Hungarian politics, delivered by a Hungarian Socialist politician and former people's college principal, the floor was opened for debate. More than twenty years after the five volumes of documents were published, an old man stood up, shaking in anger, and criticized "that NÉKOSZ work" which "did not even mention my name" despite the fact that he had participated in the 1939 meeting in which the idea for such a people's college was first purposed.[84] He felt that he had been unjustly barred from history.

Bright Winds

The only counter-memory of NÉKOSZ to emerge in the Hungarian socialist press is the controversial 1969 film entitled Bright Winds. The film offered another interpretation of the movement and reached a much larger audience than did the five-volume work that was published later.

Rather than recount the movement's entire history, Miklós Jáncsó decided to depict the movement metaphorically in its transformation from democracy to dictatorship. The movie opens with a group of collegians who break into a Catholic school and begin to preach to the students. Because of the volatile political situation of the period, the priests are powerless to stop them. They are forced to watch from a distance as a group of enthusiastic collegians round up their reluctant students and preach to them about democracy and freedom. In the first half of the film, there is little dialogue, only the constant barrage of revolutionary songs. There is a surreal sense of optimism and unity among the NÉKOSZ members. As the film progresses, however, unity turns to chaos. The people's college leaders, all students, begin to bicker about whether or not to use force against the unresponsive Catholic students or try to convince them with words of the error of their ways. One police officer, and former collegian, even wants to arrest some of the recalcitrant students. The tension and conflict within the group intensifies and one leader resigns on the spot and leaves the premises. Meanwhile, other collegians dressed in priestly garb run through the halls singing and laughing. At that point,

the NÉKOSZ central leadership enters, and, after a quick survey of the situation, they decide that the college leaders should be expelled. A meeting is held without the presence of the accused and the students are told to vote for their expulsion. Just when the accused are read their verdict, the NÉKOSZ leadership reconsiders and allows them to remain in the people's college. What began as a symbol of democracy and freedom ends in the arbitrary rule of the NÉKOSZ leadership.

The film also influenced the way in which the movement is remembered. In the course of my interviews, the topic of the film always came up. Interpretations varied greatly. While some thought that the film was not at all about NÉKOSZ, but rather about the Stalinist period in general, others gave more complex answers. For example,

> Inf. #7: I didn't want to see it. But then it was on TV and so I saw it. I thought it was very childish and simply not true. But I thought about it and about half an hour later it hit me. It came to me that when they told us it was democracy, it wasn't exactly. I don't know if you are familiar with the film, but there was one scene where the students were singing, dancing, and playing all types of games in the open air, and meanwhile, the leadership determined how things would be. It occurred to me about an hour later, with my husband, that it was true. Really. It was true because many times when we thought that "now, we are deciding," and "it is truly democracy," most likely it was the leadership that decided. It was just masked. So it was a terrible feeling then. I don't know if that is what Jancsó had in mind when he made the film, but for me, years after [NÉKOSZ], with this film, it occurred to me that there wasn't true democracy, and that perhaps, there doesn't even exist the real democracy that we imagined.[85]

The fact that this film was able to influence this woman and the publications were able to anger the man who had been left out indicates that these histories were successful on at least one level. They offered the participants a backdrop against which to remember the movement and created a guideline by which to judge all subsequent statements about the movement.

Nevertheless, these works cannot monopolize discourse but only present their versions for further interpretation. Like all "authoritative" memories, they are transformed in the process of coming into contact with personal "lived" memory. These memories always fall outside the authoritative discursive framework, as there is always more than one dynamic at play, e.g., the unique life experience of the individual, the present political situation, counter-memories, and contact with other individuals and their interpretations. More importantly, memory is not repetitive and stable, but highly inventive. Memory is constantly re-constructed to adjust to new situations.

Thus, in order to understand the complexity of these events and how meaning of these events is constructed, historians must turn to the individual. Flawed as individual memory may be, it is here where the collective and the personal collide; where meaning is constructed. For a number of obvious and not so obvious reasons, the task of recalling fifty-year old events was not easy for the informants. Coming into the interviews, I expected to hear a good dose of unreflective references to the above-mentioned books, especially since three of the eight informants contributed directly to their creation. As was later confirmed, all of them, with the possible exception of one, owned copies of the books and were familiar with their contents. It turned out, however, that although there was the occasional reference to the works like "It's in the book" and "I don't know, the book can tell you," the references were mostly indirect. One got a feeling that the majority of the informants still believed in a NÉKOSZ ethos, a common idea that somehow, despite all the "mistakes," the movement was a constituent part to their lives and distinctly positive. In fact, the positive aspects of the movement were often emphasized and there was a reluctance to discuss anything negative. Not surprising, the subjects were unable to look at the history of the movement with emotive detachment.

Without Embellishment

In the introduction to his autobiography, András Hegedűs, former prime minister of Hungary and collegian, commented on the biographical genre and his struggle to remember the past, the past that is often better forgotten:

> To find the proper form of expression creates countless problems. How do I avoid introducing myself as I would like to see myself at the time of writing? This type of endeavor falsifies not only the history of our lives, but also our formed picture of histories of the outside world. Danger of this remains even if we determine to be extremely earnest and objective. So, I should introduce both the living and thinking me of today, as well as the person who searches his past and looks for explanations of his past actions, and at the same time, in regards to the motives of these past actions, is still unsure of so many things. In such cases, I have had to hand the leading role from the distortions of subjective memory over to "refined-filtered" facts, thereby giving the reader the possibility to decide for him. Moreover, I ask from the reader that he accept my statements with the proper skepticism, even when objective data are being discussed. No matter how hard I try, I cannot free myself from the great pitfalls of biographical writing. While attempting to give a true picture of my past and everything that happened around me, I am forced to rely, in the

> first place, on my memory. Memory, however, selects mercilessly and those facts that do not fit into the picture often fall out of view, while others become objects of rectification to such an extent that in the end the truth becomes lies ... often biographers do not know either themselves or the time in which they lived. Often, they simply paint a picture of the world that pleases them, and what they think will please the reader.[86]

In the course of my interviews not only did I encounter these "pitfalls" but, for various reasons both obvious and not so obvious, many of the participants also refused to openly discuss certain sensitive aspects of the movement.

Pitfall I
History as Mission

The first woman I met came from a poor displaced family that was forced to leave their home in Slovakia after the war. After NÉKOSZ was liquidated she finished her studies and went on to become a newspaper writer and high school teacher. In the beginning of the interview, she stated with pride that she had read the entire corpus of NÉKOSZ documents and even helped type the finished draft. She was excessively optimistic about NÉKOSZ and had nothing but good things to say about her life in the people's college. In fact, much of what she said reflected the views presented in the five-volume NÉKOSZ narrative, with the sole exception that she tended to downplay the role of Communist ideology in the movement. When I asked her about the selection process she stated,

> Inf. #1: They administered the selection process very intelligently and humanely. They looked at how much concrete knowledge was in [an applicant's] head. But more importantly, whether one had an imagination. So was there enough intelligence? Could they learn, and would they be able to learn? They also looked at a person's worldview, but it was never a criterion, no way, though it is possible that you might find the contrary in the speeches against it,[87] in no way was it a criterion that one had to be a Communist.[88]

Later, I asked if there were conflicts between the different backgrounds and again her answer was apologetic.

> Inf. #1: Tight friendships formed. But not in any way according to social status. I also had more intimate friends, but I got along with everyone. NÉKOSZ, from this standpoint, was a miracle, that such an inter-dependence was born is difficult to describe. It happened once, later in my life when I was a newspaper writer, that I met with

> a NÉKOSZ student who I did not know ... within ten sentences it was obvious that he was also [a member of] NÉKOSZ. We both figured it out. It is not really a mystery, but just difficult to explain.

One cannot help but note the reference to the indescribable common ethos of collegians and her emphasis that class distinctions were not important within the people's college, despite the fact that the criterion was decidedly class-based.

One good example of how "memory mercifully selects" was our discussion of the last year of the movement's history. Our conversation went like this.

> Interviewer: The expulsions started in 1949?
> Inf. #1: No, no. In 1949 it was not even worthwhile [expelling students]. Everything was mixed up. By 1949 it was not even a true people's college. No, there were expulsions earlier. I do not know, I do not know. I couldn't tell you names ...
> Interviewer: I have read quite a lot of diaries' entrees about it. How on so and so day ten students were expelled.
> Inf. #1: You are right. Of course! 1949 is when the political expulsions began, but by then it was not NÉKOSZ. No it wasn't. [pause] They also expelled me! It just occurred to me, for what-do-ya-call-it, immoral behavior. (chuckle)

But when I was just about ready to end the interview, I discovered why, perhaps, she had painted such a rosy picture of the movement.

> Inf. #1: From the very beginning, when I had heard that someone from the other side of the ocean was researching this, I became almost feverish. The same enthusiasm, curiosity, and how should I say it, same kind of excitement filled me, because the beautiful dream, which for us was not fulfilled, that the beautiful dream could live further, even if only in a critical study, that someone can refer to it after such a long time, so that once again the flame is rekindled, not for the sake of praise, nostalgia, or old memories, but because I know how much of an influence and help it was for me and many others, and I know that in this poverty stricken world many talented children need this assistance, because they should get it.

There was a similar discussion with Informant #4, the widowed wife of László Kardos. She admitted to me that she had spent years trying to interest UNESCO in the NÉKOSZ model, and would have succeeded had not the movement been labeled Communist.

> Inf. #4: If someone with the same capabilities of my husband could create a movement using the pedagogic methods [of NÉKOSZ] ... If they could in some way bring out the minorities [pause] because with us, after 1945, those who were accepted into the people's col-

> lege were in the country's minority, they were poor in a rich country. If they could take these minorities, I don't know what the blacks or gypsies are like, I can just guess, but if we could make an organic intelligentsia it would free them, those from the ghetto. This is extremely important and they don't understand it here either, that soon the population of the gypsies will be ten percent in the country. They need their own intelligentsia. This idea, this is the essence, I think.[89]

From a historian's perspective, motives like these make it difficult to glean the "facts" of NÉKOSZ – it is impossible to get an objective perspective when personal motivations are so much at play. But to these women, these motivations belong to the history of the movement. History is worked out in the present through the attempt to achieve "dreams" left unfulfilled. These statements say something about how historical meaning manifests itself in the present. It is as if the establishment of a new NÉKOSZ would make their personal experiences historically significant.

Pitfall II
Identity as History

One informant, who lived in a poor apartment in Budapest, was unable to separate her time in NÉKOSZ from those past and future events that had also shaped her life. Being an orphan, she was accepted into one of the people's colleges when it was in the process of nationalizing. However, after being a collegian for one year she was permitted to continue her studies in the same people's college as a *szakérettségis* student.[90] When we sat down, she immediately started talking. Without stopping, she spoke for the first half hour about all sorts of events not related to NÉKOSZ. Somewhere in the middle of her remembering she said,

> Inf. #7: So when the questionnaire came, I answered it, and at that time as well my feeling was such [pause] so very [pause] so probably I didn't answer it as they would have liked, because then my feeling was such that the whole thing should never have been.[91] Because ah, I don't remember what year it was, but I am sure that it was not a very democratic period when the NÉKOSZ researcher called. And now it is my opinion that it didn't matter what period it was, it had to be written because a lot would be lost. You know, many have died since then and everything, so there was the chance to really gather [information]. It was very important, but then my feeling was that for me, NÉKOSZ actually caused harm. Because it raised in me a kind of democracy that, well, later did harm. (chuckle) Perhaps, a small reason was that my life did not turn out how I planned because I

> wasn't totally happy and with real bitterness I answered the questions, the NÉKOSZ questions. Not because, you know, I have many friends from the people's college and everything, but nevertheless, it was my feeling that that was the year when, well, something glimmered before us, which possibly arose from society and then nothing came of it, just like in 1956 where something glimmered, and then also disappeared, so that a person felt that there was nothing of it, everything disappeared without any usefulness at all.[92]

When I asked her how she got into the people's college she gave me more information than I could handle. She began, "our family background was not a common one." Her father was an orthodox Jew who was "proud that under the Trianon proviso, he was granted Hungarian citizenship because his family had already been in Hungary [before the war]." Because he divorced his first wife and married her mother, who was a Székely Christian from Transylvania, his family broke off all relations with him. In 1941, he first volunteered to fight on the front lines as a sergeant.

> Inf. #7: Then, when I was four, my mother died. So we children remained. I was the middle child. Then they took my father and we remained alone ... it did not get better later either. My big brother had to hide, and we ... we had to move into the ghetto. So we were attacked by the Christians. But we were lucky because we were able to visit our father. Even when he was stationed in the countryside we got to see him once. In that respect, we were in a lucky position. However, after the war we did not hear anything about him. He lost his life, they probably got him in the countryside. So this does not really belong here, but since you asked.

Later, she described the big celebration of March 15th,

> Inf. #7: We were in the theater, and I remembered, as if it was at that point when Révai gave the critical speech on NÉKOSZ. When it meant so much for us to celebrate March 15th. It was a wonderful feeling that at this time we were young and we "would overturn the world." That it would overturn! And then after – I also wrote this – I met with someone and it turns out that it was Péter Veres who spoke at the theater, and Révai spoke on some other day, somewhere, and made all those charges. But for me it all flows together. Afterwards, there was a huge street ball in the square, where all of the collegians stood. Everyone was there and everyone danced with everyone else. It was an amazing feeling, I don't remember what kind of music was playing, but everyone was in a good mood ... it was a sort of ... I don't even remember. So, perhaps there was a similar feeling of community in 1956. That there were so many young people together. On

> the other hand, I could not experience this, because in 1956 I was not one of the people who lined up [in the streets]. My boy was only a few months old. But my husband was there and I heard everything about it.

During the course of the interview it became obvious that the historical facts did not matter to her as much as the meaning that she attributes to these historical events in the formation of her own identity. No matter how many times I tried to get her to talk about NÉKOSZ she always found a way to intertwine her years there with the rest of her life.

For example when I asked her whether or not she believed in the charges leveled against Rajk and NÉKOSZ, she answered,

> Inf. #7: No. I never believed it. Nor did my husband. I think that many others did not believe it either. Especially [the charges] against NÉKOSZ, nor [those about Rajk] because if someone helped NÉKOSZ it was László Rajk. Well, the Study in Russia camp, which I wrote about, was entirely in the shadow of these charges. We just didn't realize it then. Here they were looking for and chasing the petit bourgeoisie. After the change I also became a member of the petit bourgeoisie. And that is why I was forced to leave, because I was a careerist and bourgeois. Is this possible? (chuckle) So it was a horrible nightmare this Study in Russia camp.[93]

Then when I asked her about Communism and whether or not she became disillusioned with the ideology after the charges, she answered, "No, we thought that it was all a big mistake and not that the leadership or the ideology was flawed." She then digressed again. This time she told me about her life in the university and how it was only in 1953 when her opinions of the Communist Party began to change. Once she went into the countryside to help harvest the crops and seeing the extreme poverty she knew that something was wrong.[94] Then, when Imre Nagy was forced to resign, "we realized that it is the upper leadership, the Rákosi and Farkas types that are to blame." She continued by explaining how she was a philosophy lecturer at the Eötvös Loránd University and Law University in 1956 (though she stressed that she did not belong to "the Lukács group" as György Lukács was too bourgeois.) Then, attempting to return to our original discussion, my colleague asked her what she thought about the *szakérettségis* period.

> Inf. #7: It opened up a lot to me. Afterwards I became a teacher. I taught them and there were excellent students. But there was disappointment too, I met with fewer personalities like I had before [in NÉKOSZ]. When I taught after 1956, it was terrible. They transferred me to an elementary school. It is especially terrible when a

> person goes from teaching in the university to an elementary school without any preparation. I had no idea what to do with children.

When I asked her why she was sent to the elementary school she explained,

> Inf. #7: The head of the department said to me "You can remain in the department if you break off all relationships with Domokos[95] and your husband too, because they were associated with the counter-revolution." It was terrible that a woman with three children was expected to break off relations with her husband just to stay in the department ... so I said that I can't break off my relations with my husband ... Then they asked me my opinion of the present government. Well, at that time there was a common saying that went around, Kádár, Apró, Dögei. (laugh) [These are the last names of three leading Communists but when put together they also mean Kádár's puny carcasses.]
> GM: And then you were transferred to an elementary school. (more laughter)

Throughout the interview we made several attempts to talk just about the topic of NÉKOSZ and the *szakérettségis* program but we never really succeeded. She wanted to tell us the *whole* story. To her, it did not make sense to separate the events – they belonged together. Everything, as she said, "flows together." In the end, we too lost interest in the original theme and had become engrossed in the events of her life. In a fitting article entitled "From Memory to History" Andrew Lass writes that, "the very act of reminiscing meant the possibility of explaining historically significant events in terms of their own 'whereabouts.'"[96] This is a perfect example of the opposite; how historically significant events determined her whereabouts. History had shaped her identity. Agency was almost completely absent in her account. Everything she had become, or did not become, was determined by history. Because of "significant historical events" her father was killed, she became a teacher, she was prevented from studying in Russia, and she was sent to an elementary school.

Just as we were about to leave, she handed us the memoir of her year in the movement which she had written just after her husband had committed suicide. She said, "I wrote it then, and actually, I started writing the memoir under the impact of what I was feeling then, when my husband died. So, there will be references to the time or period when I started writing, [interruption] well, I don't know if you will like it, but then, it is not very interesting what I did, it is not very historical, but rather it gives the milieu of the period."

Pitfall III
History as Lacuna

One major obstacle to oral history is that not everyone is willing to talk openly about their past; that is why oral historians must be extremely mindful of what is left unsaid. Despite numerous attempts, not one of the informants I met with wanted to discuss in any detail the role of Communist ideology in the movement. It was not something that they wanted to be reminded of, especially in Hungary's current political climate. Most simply stated it was not really essential to college life. And if they did confess to being a Communist, they always emphasized the fact that they were *not* Party Communists.

One informant, a well-respected representative of the Hungarian Socialist Party admitted that Communism did play a major role in the movement, but he emphasized, "not *that* Communism, but another type of Communist ideology which was far from the Communism of Rákosi. [The Communism of NÉKOSZ] resembled more what later became known as Euro-Communism than the Stalinism of the time."[97] Another informant, when asked about the role of Communist ideology in her people's college, said, "Yes, I came into contact with certain personalities who believed in Communism, but they were not that kind of Communists...'Party soldiers' were not common in NÉKOSZ. I would say that a critical and rebellious attitude was more characteristic."[98] In both interviews, they assumed that I knew what they meant by *that* Communism. It was clear that they did not want to be associated with Rákosi and the Stalinism of the period, for that would have been tantamount to admitting that they were the pawns of the party, or an "army of janissaries," as the non-Communist press had put it at the time.

At least one of my informants was associated with *that* kind of Communism. Not only did he replace Kardos as first secretary of NÉKOSZ, but he also authored several articles – replete with Stalinist rhetoric – about reactionary elements in the movement (thereby confirming the party's criticisms) and the need to merge into the educational system of the state. So when I called to ask him for an interview, I expected to encounter some reluctance. And of course there was. After some discussion, he finally agreed to meet with me provided I would send him my questions prior to the interview, which I did. Of all the interviews, his was the most formal and, on the surface, least helpful. When I asked him about the political situation during the last year of NÉKOSZ, he skirted the question entirely and gave me a history lesson on Stalinism. After an hour of discussing the Soviet purges of the 1930's and the international events after World War II, he finally tried to explain his actions.

> Inf. #2: I was a very disciplined party member, who held certain characteristic NÉKOSZ beliefs, but the university reforms were made.

> They professionalized NÉKOSZ as they had planned. They took out the critical opposition from the movement. They started the nationalization process. The entire people's college was financed by state funds, and we convinced ourselves (I also was of this mind) that it was our task to take the NÉKOSZ experience and expand it to the entire Hungarian people's college system; to make it all the same. So, there would be a united state people's college system that would naturally be an institute of the state. Here you must see that the last year of NÉKOSZ the political purges occurred, the Rajk purges, this happened in NÉKOSZ too. There were expulsions for whatever reason ... but NÉKOSZ was an elite movement, and not a mass movement. An elite movement was extremely important for society, if you can save your autonomy. But it was impossible. It is as if every university in America would be Harvard. NÉKOSZ lost its importance once it gave up its autonomy.
> Interviewer: When you became the First Secretary of NÉKOSZ, did you know that it would come to an end?
> Int. #2: Yes, just as I said, it would cease as an independent movement and be absorbed into a great unified people's college [system]. Now, afterwards, I also saw how manipulated I was, from what I read in the documents.[99]

One obvious characteristic of memory is that it is highly constructed. Even someone like the above informant who was a professed Stalinist can reinvent his past in such a way as to render himself a victim of the period.

Mobility, Motivations, and Meaning

While it is true that the interviews I conducted do not always fulfill the objective standards of traditional history, they can help us to better understand the motivations of the actors, or at least, provide us with a backdrop with which to view the period. What I discovered while interviewing some of the participants is that there was another aspect of this movement that was not only political, but social as well. At the heart of NÉKOSZ was the "beautiful dream," a truly modernist project whereby talented poor peasant students would be transformed into a progressive intelligentsia and serve as the harbingers of a new democratic social order. As Iván Vitányi, former collegian explained, "This is the revolution of NÉKOSZ, that these boys and girls from the villages were told that they were going to be the intelligentsia, and they did become the intelligentsia."[100]

I believe that this aspect distinguishes NÉKOSZ from other more bureaucratic transmission belt organizations. Not only did these students participate in politics, they also faced the psychological challenges of upward social mobility. Many left

their villages and families behind, moved to the city, and literally re-invented themselves. Adapting to their new urban setting was for many the most difficult challenge. Some had never before sat in a car or seen an English toilet or used a toothbrush. According to one woman who grew up in the small community of Beled in Western Hungary, when the NÉKOSZ students convinced her to go to Budapest, the people in her village were shocked. They wondered "what will happen to me in the big city, they couldn't even conceptualize it, what will happen to me. It didn't matter that I would live in a people's college, it didn't matter that the people's college members promised to watch over me, they did not want to let me go. And a girl study? For what? Girls get married, and that's it."[101] When she first arrived at "*bűnös*," [sinful/wicked] Budapest she recounted how difficult it was for her to adjust. "I cried more often than not, because I hated being down here so much. Gray, tall houses, and everything was in ruins due to the bombing. I hated it. I hated this city, and I sobbed."[102] Another participant who attended a secondary people's college in Budapest remembered that the adjustment was all the more difficult because her principal was unprepared to help them deal with the shock of city life. As they entered the people's college for the first time, they noticed that the principal had decorated the walls with dried corn and hot peppers in order to make them feel more at home. Of course this inaccurate depiction of peasant life only served as a further reminder of the gap between the two worlds.

Part and parcel of this modernist project was the belief that the people's college would bring culture to these talented peasants. According to the principal of the Dance and Choir people's college, the students "had to study more than other university students. Not only did they have to go to the theater and concerts, but there was also a quota of books that they were required to read and debate [in addition to their normal studies]. This was not easy, it was a burden that not everyone could handle."[103] In fact, it was a burden made all the more difficult because of their peasant origins and the lack of opportunity during their youth. In order to catch up and fit into their new intellectual environment, these students were put through intensive cultural instruction. According to one of the founding members, now a member of the National Cooperative Council, in addition to two foreign languages, and their normal university tasks, "every day there was a cultural task that we duly fulfilled ... You could say that we received a surrogate education, a substitute for what city kids could experience on their own, but we villagers could not. We attended every museum exhibition. There was also an opera course. We met once a month at the opera house and they acquainted us with one production. Of course they didn't just lecture to us, they also played a few arias, spoke about its history and told us why it was interesting. In this sense, there was an attempt to give the students the benefits enjoyed by a student from the city."[104]

When I asked one people's college member about how the peasants adapted to city life, she answered,

> Very harshly. There was a serious case of decompression sickness, tunnel disease that broke out in me and other students, in part because of the city life, and in part because of my teachers. I wasn't forced to take just one leap, but fifteen! I met so many intellectuals for the very first time, and in such a society, one always strives to rise above and find one's place. This is tension. It was a very good thing but it came with enormous tension ... I must read this much, I should know this much ... Some people could handle it, some people could not.[105]

But despite the many challenges of city life, the people I spoke with, and the large majority of members, did eventually adjust to their new surroundings. Many became professionals (doctors, professors, lawyers and teachers). Others attained leadership positions in the government or the Communist Party. One woman, who later became a radio producer, told me, "I am entirely sure that I would not have gone to the university if it hadn't been for NÉKOSZ. So to me, this meant my entire life. I met so many types of people I would never have been able to meet in the village. A great intelligentsia."[106] As for the women who for the first few months cried more often than not, she told me that she eventually came to love the city and *people's college* life. In fact, when she did visit her old village, a rare occurrence because she could not afford a train ticket, she confessed that she was no longer able to relate to her old friends. While they had gotten married and had children, she had shed much of her peasant past and had become a different person.[107]

There are many pitfalls in oral history. It is impossible to get an "objective" account of history, or even one that meets the standards of traditional history; inevitably something gets in the way. The first person I interviewed wanted to convince me that the NÉKOSZ pedagogical model was applicable in America. Whether intentional or not, she did not say anything negative about the movement even though not everything was as idyllic as she claimed; she was even expelled from her people's college. It is as if she adjusted her memory to reflect her youthful ideals. The second woman could not confine her story to the history of the movement. Perhaps she felt that NÉKOSZ had meaning only in relation to other events in her life; that they all "flowed together." Perhaps to her, the movement was incomprehensible when viewed independently. She wanted to tell the whole story. Finally, in the last section, the man I interviewed did not want to confide in me for obvious reasons. Now a well-respected scholar, who quit the Party in 1956, he did not want to reopen memories of a difficult period in his life, or implicate himself before the public. Thus, in all of these interviews, it was impossible to

separate "fact" from "emotion" and manipulation, and construct a more objective narrative.

But it is this subjectivity that renders oral history so useful as a genre. Most importantly, oral history explores how meaning is constructed. Authoritative memories do not constitute closed discursive fields; they are always re-interpreted. The individual, in the process of remembering, picks and chooses what will be emphasized depending on personal experiences, intentional or unintentional lapses of memory, confabulations, and the individual's relation to the present. As individuals remember, emotions and values are emphasized and "facts" lose their meaning.

Near the end of my last interview, I asked the subject whether or not she felt that something was missing in the five-volume work? The rest of the discussion is telling.

> Inf. #8: Somehow, ah, I don't know, perhaps I should ask you the same question. As an outsider, when you finished reading them, did you get an authentic picture?
> Interviewer: I did and I didn't.
> Inf. #8: Yes, this I did and I didn't. Yes, I had the same problem. Too much material, unfiltered, not really aimed at anything. Among too many details, one loses the essence. I think that often.
> Interviewer: Just what is the essence?
> Inf. #8: So many personalities, that it could influence so many different personalities. How can it be, to this you did not get an answer, how can it be that for so many people, after 40 or 50 years, it remained a fundamental experience. Did you get an answer to that question?
> Interviewer: No.[108]

Conclusion

In this work, I have tried to focus on the micro-level events through the analysis of the network of people's colleges. The NÉKOSZ movement, operating in the trenches of Hungarian society, did maintain a link with the political forces above and even contributed to the Stalinization of the country. Nevertheless, the interview segments included in my work also demonstrate that politics was just one of many aspects of life in the people's college. They also present the reader with possible motivations behind the political activities of the collegians. As the oral historian Larry Holmes stated, "Oral history may tell more of what people wanted to achieve or what they believed they were doing rather than what they did."[109]

In fact, the construction of meaning – part and parcel to the act of remembering – renders it difficult for oral historians to reach definitive conclusions as to the

motivations of historical actors. In the end, we can only speculate about the true intentions of the collegians. On the one hand, it can be convincingly argued that these students were opportunists who gained personal advantage from the Communist transition in Hungary. No doubt, they were among the generation of young intellectuals who profited from the brief period of upward mobility[110] and many went on to find jobs in the government and the Communist Party. However, it is possible to make just as compelling an argument that many of these men and women also acted out of conviction. The inequalities of the Horthy regime and its financial and moral collapse during the war made it easier for the Communist Party to manipulate segments of the population that would not, under normal circumstances, have been attracted to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. Not only were these students afforded an opportunity for upward mobility, but they were also presented with an ideology of hope; a hope not afforded to them in interwar Hungarian society. As the widowed wife of László Kardos explained, "The father of one people's college student cried when he got land. Now that child whose father cried when he received five holds of land thereby realizing the dream of his great grandfather, how in the world would he not have become a Communist?"[111] Of course, many men who received land did not become Communists. We can only guess as to the intentions of the collegians that joined the Communist movement. No doubt, like other political actors who wittingly acquiesced in the will of the Communist Party, most of these students were unaware of what lay ahead. They did not realize that much of the allotted land would later be collectivized, nor did they foresee that freedom and democracy, as they understood it, was a "beautiful dream" that would not be fulfilled.

Notes

1. The village explorers were a group of populist writers and other academics who in the mid-thirties published ethnographical studies of village life in Hungary.
2. Pál Teleki (1879–1941) was a major political actor in interwar Hungary and a notable geographer as well. He was prime minister in 1920 and in 1941 when he committed suicide in protest of Hungary's participation in the attack on Yugoslavia.
3. The word *népi* can mean either "of the people" or "populist". The Hungarian word *kollégium* is rather ambiguous and has many meanings. The first definition in the *Magyar Értelmező Kéziszótár*, and the most appropriate for this study, states that a *kollégium* is a dormitory that also provides its members with spiritual direction. This, too, is slightly misleading. Not only did the *népi kollégiums* provide students with spiritual direction, but they also made up self-contained communities that functioned both in and outside the walls of the dormitory. It is also important to note that there were also elementary and lyceum people's colleges. *Magyar Értelmező Kéziszótár* (1992), s.v. "*kollégium.*"
4. Quoted in a paper written by Lajos Turczel in 1940 entitled "*Szelekció és a Bolyai-kollégium*"

[Selection and the Bolyai People's College] found in the archives of *Politikatörténeti Intézet* [Political-Historical Institute] (PTI) 302.f.1/216.

5. The term "silent revolution" was coined in 1937 by the well known populist writer, Imre Kovács, who later became vice president of the National Peasant Party (1946–1947). Dózsa György was the leader of a large-scale peasant revolt in the early 16th century.
6. Initially, the Turul League required all incoming students to prove that both their parents and grandparents were of pure Hungarian blood. One informant recounted to me that this practice became a bone of contention between the Turul League and the people's college. Apparently one applicant, Juszkó József, was barred from the people's college by the Turul League because his name was Slavic. The collegians secretly accepted him into the group and this and other issues led to their break in 1942.
   József Pál, Interview by author, 16 November 1999, interview 3, tape recording, personal collection.
7. Zsindely was introduced to the collegians through his wife, Klára Tüdős, an "ethnographic fanatic" who became good friends with the group in the 1930s while working at the Region and Folk Research Institute *[Táj- és Népkutató Intézet]*.
8. The first March Front was established in 1937 by left-wing intellectuals, including Communists, in order to present Hungarian society with an alternative to both Fascism and Capitalism. For more information see, "*Mit kíván a magyar nép: A Márciusi Front programja*" [What the Hungarian People Want: the March Front Program.] *Válasz* [Answer] (June 1938), 121.
9. All of these men were active politically in the Communist Party after the war. Lajos Fehér went on to become one of the architects of Kádár's economic reforms (NEM), Sándor Zöld, who became the Minister of Interior in 1950, committed suicide during the Stalinist purges. Both Donáth and Losonczy filled important political positions in early 1950s – Donáth was the president of the Secretariat of Central Leadership, and Losonczy was head of the Szépirodalmi Kiadó [Literature Press] – when they were imprisoned during the Stalinist purges. Later, they played leading roles in the 1956 revolution. As a result, Losonczy died in prison before his trial in which he would have been put to death, and Donáth received a long prison sentence only to be released in 1960.
10. In the course of a series of Sunday excursions in the Buda hills, a great deal of Marxist literature was made available to these students, such as the Schönstein notes, works of Lenin, the Dimitrov letter, and the influential article written by József Révai, under the pseudonym Sándor Vörös [Red], entitled "*Marxizmus és népiesség*" [Marxism and Populism]. The later is significant because it was the first positive overture of the Hungarian Communist Party to the Populist writers. For a detailed account of this see Lajos Fehér, *Így történt* [It Happened Like This] (Budapest: Magvető, 1979), 145–149.
11. András Hegedűs explained in an interview that the Communist cell was "rather militant" and "to a certain degree" it "terrorized the rest of the group." In a 1986 interview Antal Gyenes, the first collegian to join the Communist Party, also admitted that the Communist cell manipulated the group. It was a "general law that an organized small group could impose its will on a larger heterogeneous group. The Fascists also were able to do this. It was a rather general rule. We knew what we wanted, and the collegians accepted it, in fact there were only two candidates, one who the Patrons [*Pártfogók*, i.e., the Institute of Patrons was a governmental organization led by Zsindely] would have wanted and our own candidate who already was a collegian ... It was clear that together the entire people's college voted for Kardos, the collegian." Antal Gyenes, interview by István Hegedűs, February 1986, *1956-os Intézet* [The 1956 Institute], Budapest.
12. Democracy meant a number of things to the group. On the one hand, it meant that each member had the right to express his or her opinions publicly and the right to vote for the principal and other officials of the people's college. On the other hand, in contrast to liberal democracy,

it also meant that individual needs often had to be sacrificed for the imperatives of the group.

13. See László Svéd, "A szervezett munkásifjúság politikai tevékenysége és részvétele a fegyveres ellenállásban (1939–1945)" [The Organized Political Activity and Participation of the Worker Youth in the Armed Resistance. (1939–1945)], in *Magyarország 1944* [Hungary 1944] (Budapest: Nemzeti Könyvkiadó, 1994), 258. According to the article, over 500 people took part in the demonstration.
14. By then the Communist members were Antal Gyenes, Lajos Fehér, Ottó Tőkés, Gyula Sipos, András Hegedűs, Gábor Kerek, Ferenc Szücs, Sándor Filip, Barló Szabó Ödön, László Komló and most likely László Kardos too. According to the 1971 answers to the questionnaire, most of the other Györffy collegians sympathized with the movement during this time. PTI 302.f 1/284.
15. Although the *Népszava* was the organ of the Social Democrats, many of its editors and contributors were Communists. See Lajos Fehér, *Így történt* [It Happened Like This] (Budapest: Magvető, 1979), 136.
16. For a good account of this conference and the Györffy People's College's part in it, see *Szárszó 1943,* (Kossuth: Budapest, 1983) and Györffy Sándor, "Szárszótól Szárszóig, 1943–1993" in *A népi mozgalom és a magyar társadalom* [The Populist Movement and Hungarian Society] (Budapest: Napvilág, 1997) Kardos' quote taken from former p. 232.
17. Gyenes interview.
18. In the case of Antal Gyenes, Ferenc Zsindely and Fisher-Keresztes eventually negotiated for his release after he was tortured and spent several months in prison. Other students, like András Hegedűs actually escaped while being transported to a prison workshop. See András Hegedűs, *A történelem és a hatalom igézetében* [In the Enchantment of History and Power], (Budapest: Kossuth, 1988), 72–76.
19. One of the collegians was even shot and killed by the Arrow Cross in the closing months of the war. Out of the fifty or so students, 20 received Hungarian Freedom Virtue awards from the Hungarian government, see *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 354.
20. This was part and parcel of the Communist Party's Popular Front tactics whereby the Party sought to create a united front, or the illusion of a united front, and at the same time infiltrate the other parties with crypto-Communists, i.e., those members of the Communist Party who hid their party allegiance and joined other parties. For an account of this particular organization see Hegedűs 72, and the interviews of Antal Gyenes and Sándor Györffy. According to Sándor Györffy, the organization did function in a popular front manner until the non-Communist members left the organization. Hegedűs also emphasized that the organization remained democratic until György Nonn was sent by the party in 1947 to create a more hierarchical institution. Hegedűs interview 90. I believe a strong Communist influence was present in the organization from the outset and that is why youth leaders from other parties eventually left the organization and formed their own youth movements.
21. In the interest of creating an image of a popular front, the Communist leadership encouraged many collegians to join the National Peasant Party instead of the Communist Party. In his interview, Antal Gyenes states, "Naturally in the life of every Györffy collegian, he or she came into contact with Communist ideas, ideology, viewpoints and the process of becoming a Communist, at the same time, in the interest of legality we often had to deny this fact in front of the outside world, our organization and even between each other. This process continued even after the war as well, when most likely 70 percent of the collegians were members of the Communist Party. Révai nevertheless, was right to slow down our entrance into the party." Antal Gyenes, interview by István Hegedűs, Budapest, Feb. 1986, *1956-os Intézet* [The 1956 Institute].

22. *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 364. Corroborating Gyenes' account, Sándor Györffy, who joined the Peasant Party as a crypto-Communist, stated that, "there was an agreement between Kardos and Révai, and perhaps Sipos was also involved. In other words, [Révai and] the two people's college principals made an agreement that the majority of Györffy collegians would join the National Peasant Party, because it was important then that the Communist Party have an ally in the National Committee." Interview conducted by István Hegedűs April 1988 found in the archives of the 1956 Institute.
23. András Hegedűs, interview by Zoltán Zsille, in *Élet egy eszme árnyékában* [Life in the Shadow of an Idea] (Budapest, 1989), 79. In hindsight, it is now known that the quick and comprehensive land reform program, ostensibly championed by the National Peasant Party, was decreed without debate in parliament at the insistence of Marshal Voroshilov, head of the Allied Control Committee, as a temporary tactic to gain public sympathy for the war that was still being waged in the western part of the country and to gain mass support for the Communists.
24. József Pál, Interview by author, 16 November 1999, interview 3, tape recording, personal collection.
25. *Élet egy eszme árnyékában,* 79–80.
26. For the complete article see *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 517–518.
27. This account seems to me to be the most convincing. Unfortunately, I could not find evidence to corroborate or dispute her testimony. Interview #4, interview by author, 17 November 1999, tape recording. personal collection.
28. In the elementary and lyceum people's colleges a teacher was chosen to be principal by the central leadership and was not selected by the collegians themselves. This work will focus on the university people's colleges because they were more actively involved in the day-to-day decisions of life in the people's college and took part in politics on a national level. According to the people I interviewed who attended a lyceum, besides the singing of revolutionary songs and occasionally marching in demonstrations, they did not participate in political activities. Still, the internal structure, i.e., student-run cooperatives and the *népibíró,* was the same.
29. Antal Gyenes stated that the emotional strength of the practice was so great that some of the serious *collegians* would "stand up and tear off their clothes like religious Jews at the burial of the dead." Interview 1986.
30. For some pros and cons see *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 1192–1196; 1454–1472.
31. The only reading list that I could find in the archives was from the 1948–49 academic year. The vast majority of the works on the list were written by Marxists, among them were fourteen works by Marx and Engels, ten works by Lenin, five by the Hungarian philosopher György Lukács, four by Josef Stalin, and three by the Hungarian Communist leader Mátyás Rákosi. PTI 302.f.1/173.
32. No one to my knowledge has analyzed the emotive role played by the repetition of singing political songs and the contribution it made to the strengthening of Communist ideology. In the people's college, this type of propaganda attained a populist flavor and was central to the formation of collegian identity. The memoirs of one student of worker pedigree reads, "Around 8 o'clock everyone gathered to sing, usually this was accompanied by folk song lessons. They even explained the contents and type of songs they were. My first experience with this group folk lesson came as quite a shock ... There were singers who believed in Kodály['s emphasis on folk traditions] who came and taught us folk songs and other singers as well. Perhaps [it was a shock] because it was the first time that I had experienced adults, or near adults, take folk songs so seriously. They were so aware of the contents, the melodies. I would say that these evenings of folk singing developed a cohesion between us, and the sense that we are the people. All of these folk songs were taken from our native land and we learned the songs. We also sang revolutionary songs ... All of us believed in the contents of [the NÉKOSZ anthem] "Hey,

our banner blows ..." It would have given strength to our rags and poverty had we not believed in the future." Gabriella Ősz's unpublished memoirs. See the text of the NÉKOSZ anthem at the beginning of Section I in this work, esp. the last line, "For tomorrow we will overturn the entire world!"

33. For example, the Zalka Máté People's college list of speakers for the 1947–48 academic year included such figures as Géza Hegedűs, Ferenc Erdei, József Darvas, Miklós Vásárhelyi, András Hegedűs, and Aladár Mód. *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 1048–1050.
34. The account was found in the memoirs of Gabriella Ősz.
35. Some of the questions asked in the summer of 1946 were, "Can you go to hell if you swear?"; "What do you know about the populist writers?"; "What is a reactionary priest?"; "Who are the Communists and what do they want?" *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 943–944.
36. László Svéd, *Megforgatott Világmegforgatók* [World Overturners Overturned] (Budapest: Political-Historical Institute, 1994) 74.
37. Sándor Pető's diary entry PTI 302.f.1/184. *The Four Hundred Year Struggle for Independence* was written by the Hungarian Communist Aladár Mód.
38. This seems to be the exception rather than the rule, especially with people's colleges located in Budapest and other major urban centers. According to several of the people I interviewed, the degree of Communist dogmatism varied extensively from college to college.
39. István Bibó, "Értelmiség és szakszerűség" [Intelligentsia and Professionalism], *Demokratikus Magyarország,* (Budapest: Magvető, 1994), 341.
40. Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században* [The History of Hungary in the 20th Century] (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 321.
41. There are some exceptions. For instance, as we shall see later, Gyula Sipos risked his position on the editorial board of the journal *Új Hang* [New Voice] because of his participation in the distribution of a memorandum on the re-establishment of NÉKOSZ. That is, after it had already been liquidated by the Hungarian Communist Party.
42. According to the NÉKOSZ statistical survey conducted in March 1948, 37.8% of the officials (principals, dormitory supervisors [nevelőtanárok], and secretaries) were members of the Communist Party, 25% were members of the National Peasant Party, and 20.5% were not members of any party, 8% were members of the Social Democratic Party and the remaining 8% was unknown. Moreover, 73% of the student body was not affiliated with any party. In what appears to be a stark contrast, the survey taken in September 1948 states that 140 of the 180 principals and dormitory supervisors [nevelőtanárok] were members of the Communist Party. In the period when the second survey was taken, the NÉKOSZ leadership wanted to prove its Communist credentials. However, the disparity between the two surveys is not as great if we consider that the National Peasant Party was little more than a sister party to the Communist Party, the members of the non-affiliated leadership were likely to be sympathetic to the Communist Party, and that the second survey does not take secretaries into account.
43. The prime minister of Hungary at the time was Ferenc Nagy of the Smallholders Party.
44. It is revealing that in the November 1946 exam entitled, "Who are the enemies of the people?" the Györffy collegians consistently labeled reactionaries, kulaks, priests/church, capitalists, bourgeoisie, the Smallholders Party, and those Social Democratic and Peasant Party politicians, like Károly Peyer and Imre Kovács, who did not acquiesce in the demands of the Communist Party as being the enemies of the people. PTI 302.f.1/40 ő.e.
45. On the similarities, he wrote that "we [also] agree that the lengthy oppression of the Hungarian peasantry and workers is a crime. No matter what the cost, we should not shrink from bringing them to power and we should give compensation for the past twenty years of anti-peasant, anti-worker political and economic discrimination." *Megforgatott Világmegforgatók* 199.

46. MAKE was established in September 1946 by the Smallholders Party, and DOKOSZ was established in May of 1947. *Megforgatott Világmegforgatók* 178.
47. This further strengthens the argument that the movement was under the influence of the Communist Party more than has been previously admitted. Unlike NÉKOSZ, these alternative people's college movements were unable to secure the financial resources necessary to operate effectively. Although there are very few available documents that describe how the movement was funded, it is reasonable to conclude that the Hungarian Communist Party financed the movement. The Hungarian Communist Party, by virtue of its relationship to Soviet officials and the Supreme Economic Council had access to a huge supply of funds. According to published documents, only one quarter of the five million five hundred thousand forint budget of 1946–47 came from state coffers and almost half the budget was financed by so-called "public support." The Hungarian Communist Party was the only party with the capital to finance such a large operation. For information on the NÉKOSZ budget see *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 688 and for a list of companies that supported the Zalka Máté People's College see page 1020.
48. It is difficult to establish from the available documents how this merger actually transpired. In the case of DOKOSZ it appears that negotiations were held between Révai and Social Democrat representatives and it was up to Zoltán Vas, as head of the Supreme Economic Council, to approve the transfer of state funds to DOKOSZ: Apparently this did not happen and the Social Democrats were forced, due to lack of financial resources, to give up their people's colleges. See *Megforgatott Világmegforgatók* 193.
49. For example, according to the principal of the Zalka people's college, the collegians were "not normal university students" as "60 percent took part in youth politics [ifjúságpolitikában]" in the school year of 1947–1948. *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 1132–1133.
50. Arendt writes, "For the front organizations of sympathizers are not less essential to the functioning of the movement than its actual membership. The front organizations surround the movements' membership with a protective wall which separates them from the outside world, normal world; at the same time, they form a bridge back into normalcy, without which the members in the pre-power stage would feel too sharply the differences between their beliefs and those of normal people, between the lying fictitiousness of their own and the reality of the normal world. The ingeniousness of this device during the movements' struggle for power is that the front organizations not only isolate the members but offer them a semblance of outside normalcy which wards off the impact of true reality more effectively than mere indoctrination." Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest Book, 1973) 366.
51. József Molnár, "Nyílt levél az iskolák államosítása ügyében" [Open Letter on the Nationalization of Schools], in *Népi Kollégista* [People's Collegian] (1948) June 4, no. 164, 1.
52. By the last year, the journals were completely Stalinized. For example on March 9th, 1949 the *Népi Kollégista* published this note, "Dear Comrade Mátyás Rákosi, Budapest. NÉKOSZ would like to express its warm thanks to Mátyás Rákosi on the occasion of his 57th birthday. Comrade Rákosi's foresight has shown our movement the proper path and life, the example of his battles teaches us and raises our collegians for self-sacrificing work. We hope that he leads our people on the victorious path to the building of socialism for decades to come. The NÉKOSZ Leadership." *Népi Kollégista,* (1949) April, 3. See also, "Épül a Szovjetunió", "Ilyen a Szovjet Munkásifjúság", "Mátyás Rákosi: Építjük a nép országát", "Éljen a Szovjetunió ifjúsága! A Komszomol dalai", "A kommunista nevelésről", "Stalin: Lenin élt, Lenin", "Pavlenko: Boldogság" in *Népi Kollégista* (1948–1949) and "Makarenko a fegyelemről" and "Részlet Makarenko "Új ember kovácsa' című könyvből" from *Március Tizenötödike.*
53. The "janissary" label was applied to the collegians on a number of occasions. The term was first used by Béla László in connection with the Györffy István People's College in his Sep-

tember 1942 article "Should we raise the peasantry for the lords?" *[Neveljen-e a parasztság uraknak?]* and Gyula Illyés in his article "Heroes and Janissaries." *[Hősök és janicsárok]* In their articles both authors warned the collegians against becoming the "janissaries of the middle class." see *Fényes Szelek,* 129–130. Then, in August 1946, Halassy Nagy József attacked the collegians for being the janissaries of the Communist Party. *ibid.,* 580–581. After a speech given by Sándor Karácsony, a NÉKOSZ teacher, in January 1947, a person from the crowd accused the people's colleges of raising janissaries. *ibid.,* 698. Finally, the label was well used by the Communist Party during the show trials. This time the collegians were labeled the "the janissaries of Tito."

54. It is revealing that religion and Communism are compatible to Pető. In other excerpts, he admits that he is religious, but opposed to reactionary priests. In one such entry, his own godmother would not let her daughter visit him because he accused one priest of being a reactionary and refused to kiss his hand. Pető writes how he still believes in God but does not respect some priests. Later, in a letter to Kardos, Pető defends his sister's choice to join the nunnery. PTI 302.1/184
55. Note: this is the same person who had the portrait of Horthy on his office wall.
56. Other "Communist" projects were more successful. NÉKOSZ developed strong relationships with neighboring Communist movements, especially with the partisans in Yugoslavia. In 1947, NÉKOSZ organized a Vasvári Brigade of over one hundred collegians and sent them to Vojvodina to assist the partisans in the rebuilding of their railroads. Perhaps as a token of his gratitude, Tito spent time with the Györffy collegians during his 1947 visit to Hungary.
57. Train-like public transportation that takes passengers to and from the suburbs of Budapest.
58. *Ibid.* 1135. The person is most likely referring to the 1947 national election.
59. Kardos' recollections quoted in *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 1245.
60. Mihály Farkas and József Révai were among the four most powerful Hungarian Communist leaders at the time. Farkas was the infamous secretary of the Ministry of Interior who was held responsible for marshalling the police in support of the Communist Party. Révai directed the press, propaganda, and intelligentsia of the Communist Party.
61. It was not uncommon for people to be awarded a prize or promotion and then arrested for activities against the state. The same thing happened to Rajk before he was executed as a Titoist-American spy.
62. Judging from the summer schedule and the required reading list, it is clear that the NÉKOSZ leadership took the criticisms of the Communist Party seriously. All of the reading sources were written by Marxists, the vast majority being works by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. (21 out of 40) PTI 302.f.1/63.
63. György Lukács, "A fordulat problémái" [The Problems of the Transition] *Fiatal Magyarország.* June 28, 1948.
64. *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 1259.
65. According to Iván Vitányi, Antal Gyenes had approached Kardos the day before and said, "Be prepared, tomorrow we will expel you." Iván Vitányi, Interview by author, 18 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
66. Svéd 244.
67. Although it is not in the scope of this work to analyze how ideology and pragmatism coexisted in the minds of the Communist leaders, both György Lukács's and József Révai's speeches represent how ideological criticisms were often orchestrated for practical aims during the Stalinist period. [emphasis mine] *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 1270.
68. Kálmán Rem's diary entry from the Lajos Kossuth People's college in Miskolc. PTI 302.f. 1/99

69. *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 1324.
70. According to the testimony of both Béla Korondy and Dr. Tibor Szőnyi, Rajk, as an American and Yugoslavian agent, wanted to use NÉKOSZ to raise a partisan army of kulaks to rebel against the state. *László Rajk and his Accomplices Before the People's Court.* (Budapest 1949), 157 and 183.
71. The *szakérettségis* was an educational program created at a time when the Communist Party needed cadres. The program, which replaced the people's college movement starting in 1949, granted high school diplomas and university admittance to students (mostly workers) after the completion of one to two years of study. For more information on this movement see Mária Kovács and Antal Örkény, *Káderek* (ELTE Szociológia és Szoc-politikai Intézet: Budapest, 1991).
72. Arendt 323.
73. "*Fiatal írók memoranduma.*" For a complete copy of the memo see *Megforgatott Világmegforgatók* 340–354.
74. The Petőfi Circle was a group of intellectuals who sponsored a series of controversial debates in 1956. These debates, attended by such figures as György Lukács and the former president of Hungary, Ferenc Tildy, were partly responsible for radicalizing the intellectual opposition that led to the revolution. See György Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956* (London: Longman, 1997), 39–41
75. Erwin Hollós, Secretary of the Democratic Youth League, issued the statement in *Szabad Nép* [Free People] the official daily of the Hungarian Communist Party. For an excerpt of that article see *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 1374–1375.
76. See *Megforgatott Világmegforgatók* 389–402 and "*A Politikai Bizottság határozata...*" *Szabad Nép* September 16th.
77. Literally, the Communist Party asked Hegedűs on the 26th to write a letter requesting military assistance that was predated to the 23rd when he was still prime minister of the country. This letter was used to justify *ex post facto* the Soviet occupation of the country.
78. Kardos was lucky to receive only six years. Originally Nagy had wanted to name him Minister of Culture, but Hegedűs convinced him to stick with Lukács. Gyenes was even luckier. He was appointed Minister of Appropriations but was stricken with an illness, taken to the hospital and never got the chance to fill his post. He literally slept through the revolutionary events. Hegedűs 309.
79. György Aczél was one of the most influential politicians of the Kádár period. During the time in question, Aczél was the man responsible for shaping cultural life in Hungary.
80. Interview #1, interview by author, 14 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
81. In fact, in 1969 Aczél gave permission to publish an article entitled, "László Rajk és a népi kollégiumok" [László Rajk and the People's Colleges] as a tribute to Rajk and the movement but the article never saw print because of a conflict between Rajk's widow and Aladár Mód, one of the contributers. Levente Sipos, "Kardos László visszaemlékezése Rajk László és a népi kollégiumok kapcsolatára." *Múltunk* (1993), no. 3, 234.
82. *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* 11.
83. All but one of the persons I interviewed told me that they do not attend these meetings. Either they did not agree with the group's politics, did not have faith that anything good will come out of the meetings, or simply did not want to participate in "remembering the olden days, just like a high school reunion" or adopting the attitude of "old nostalgic men, the 'Oh, how good it was' attitude." Interview #4, interview by author, 17 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection. Interview #8, interview by author, 22 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.

84. Budapest Conference, 11 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection. (Ironically, the speaker's name does not come out clearly on the tape.)
85. Interview #7, interview by author, 17 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
86. *A történelem és a hatalom igézetében* 6.
87. The *Fényes Szelek Nemzedéke* work included a number of articles and speeches by leading public figures, like Cardinal Mindszenty, who accused the movement of only accepting those students who have Communist leanings.
88. Interview #1, interview by author, 14 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
89. Interview #4, interview by author, 17 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
90. Because my friend, György Majtényi, is researching the *szakérettségis* program, I invited him to participate in the interview. For a brief description of the program see footnote 79.
91. She is referring to Gábor Tánczos' survey published in the 1970s. Gábor Tánczos *A kollégisták útja 1939–1971* [The path of the collegians 1939–1971] (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1976).
92. Interview #7, interview by author, 22 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
93. She was sent to the Russian Study Camp well after the fall of NÉKOSZ.
94. According to her account, the harvesters were so poor that after they had finished their work, three men shared the two sparrows they had shot earlier in the day.
95. Most likely, she is referring to the historian Kosáry Domokos who sympathized with the revolutionaries.
96. Andrew Lass. "From History to Memory." in *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism.* ed. Rubie Watson (New Mexico: School of American Research, 1992) 93.
97. Interview #5, interview by author, 19 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
98. Interview #8, interview by author, 22 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
99. He is referring to the Stalinist speeches he made during 1948–1949 that were published in the five-volume collection. Interview by author, 16 November 1999, interview 2, tape recording, personal collection.
100. Interview #5, interview by author, 19 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
101. Interview by author, 22 November 1999, interview 6, tape recording, personal collection.
102. Unfortunately, I was only able to meet with those former *collegians* that had attended *people's colleges* in Budapest. The people's colleges in Budapest were the most influential and made up about one-third of all the people's colleges and more than half of the university people's colleges. It should also be added that not every collegian was unaccustomed to city life. Sons and daughters of the "progressive" intelligentsia and workers were also accepted into the people's college, especially in the final year (roughly 30% of the student body), see Tánczos 19.
103. Interview #5, interview by author, 18 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
104. Interview #3, interview by author, 16 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
105. Interview #8, interview by author, 22 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
106. *Ibid.*
107. Interview #6, interview by author, 22 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
108. Interview #6, interview by author, 22 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.
109. Larry E. Holmes. "The Oral Record and Moscow's Model School No. 25, 1931–1937." *Slavic Review* vol. 56 no. 2 (Summer 1997) 285.
110. See Antal Örkény. "Social Mobility and the New Elite in Hungary." *Social Structure, Stratification and Mobility in Central and Eastern Europe,* ed. Rudolf Andorka and Miklós Hada (Budapest: Soros Alapítvány, 1990) 257–267.
111. Interview #4, interview by author, 17 November 1999, tape recording, personal collection.

(NATIONAL) CANON, (NATIONAL) THEATRE AND (NATIONAL) IDENTITY: A DEBATE OVER A 1928 *BÁNK BÁN*-MISE EN SCÈNE IN HUNGARY

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> I would not suppose that the excellent, scholarly and well-educated director of the national theatre, the classical consignatory and home of Hungarian theatrical literature and public spirit, would touch József Katona's masterpiece with profane hands. (That's right! That's right!) Not a single letter must be added, not a word must be taken away from it. Otherwise Katona would be turning over in his grave. I can understand that the director of the national theatre would like to re-direct the play in series of performances; to change and synchronise that masterpiece with the taste of the contemporary decadent and sick psyche, and – I would say – with the rotten morals of the contemporary era; to make Katona's masterpiece a hugely popular and literary success. Instead of these changes, however, I would rather say that Katona's masterpiece should remain unperformed. Let it be a book of prayers for the inhibitors of the peaceful and sorrowful Hungarian settlements, the Hungarian intellectuals who would rather read it in silence; and then mourn, be passionate, and contemplate silently on its eternal values. But that masterpiece cannot be put on the most important stage of the nation in an altered form. I think it would be an assault against the living conscience of the Hungarian nation. (That's right! That's right!) I would not question the good will of the director of the national theatre, but it is impossible to carry out such an assault. (Agreement all around.)
>
> (quoted in Németh 1935:185 – my translation, Z. I.)

The above speech was delivered by Gábor Jánossy, a member of Parliament, in the Hungarian Houses of Parliament on 26 October 1928. His protest was provoked by an interview with Sándor Hevesi, the Hungarian National Theatre's director, which had been published few days earlier in the *Pesti Napló* (Pest Journal) on 21 October 1928. In that interview Hevesi announced that he would at-

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tempt to make dramaturgical changes in and re-direct József Katona's play, *Bánk bán*. Apart form the MP, several well-known Hungarian writers, scholars of literature, literary historians, politicians, public figures, high-ranked officials, editors of popular magazines, and journalists expressed their opinions about Hevesi's plan (see –é–á 1928). Exceptional as such in the history of the Hungarian theatre, the debate over a *mise en scène* of a dramatic text was connected to various symbolic and real territories, institutional relations, and power structures. These included: the (national) canon, the (national) theatre, (national) politics, as well as authorisation, legitimisation and (national) identity. This paper will focus on the debate and its interconnected fields. It will examine some aspects of canonisation and the theatre through the example of a classical text, the *Bánk Bán*; and the theatre's attempt to perform this play in the specific cultural, political, and social context of Hungary of the late 1920s.

Canon and National Canon

In *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, Jan Assmann argues that the concept of canon is central for the investigation of the mechanisms and channels of cultural continuity.[1] Assmann differentiates between the ancient (Babylonian, Summer, Hebrew) and the later clerical use of canon. The etymology of the word, *kanón*, goes back to a sort of reed, which was appropriate for straight beams and columns, and reveals that it was basically the instrument of architecture. From the concrete meaning, the figurative meanings were arranged around four focus points: 1. measure, direction, criteria; 2. example, model; 3. rule, norm; 4. table, list (Assmann 1992:107). The first meaning was used in art as a metric system in which the proportion of details and the whole gives an absolute calculable form and also makes the whole a regularised and normative system. Here the rigour of the form and ability for continuity were connected and the principle of canon fulfilled its function by classical "mimesis, aemulation, imitatio" (Assmann 1992:108). In the second sense, canon indicates the frontiers to which one can go within defined institutional law or ethical norm. The third sense designates that canon defines and fixes the norms and rules, while the fourth refers to the astronomers' and chronographers' lists as the symbolic order of time and history. From these Assmann concludes that the instrumental criteria was decisive in its ancient use as it was considered as an instrument of orientation, which made available of punctuality, and gave definite references and directions (Assmann 1992:112).

In the 4th century AD, however, the concept of canon, though still kept its ancient meanings, was changed. The debates over the canonical texts and their interpretations ended with the Catholic council's decisions, which summarised the list of sacred and authoritative texts and their interpretations. That list was also called

canon. Here, however, as Assmann reminds us, the term referred to the concept of a set of texts which became the principle of compulsory power, basement of everything, and former of existence – the idea of the textual canon was thus born (Assmann 1992:114). Though canon lost its instrumental quality, its semantic field was widened a long the line of normativity and the category of general values and validity. The instrumental sense was replaced with the theological as the idea of "sanctity" was attached to it. For Assmann, the canon was regarded as "sacred." On the one hand, it possesses absolute authority and compulsory power; on the other, it commands untouchability (Assmann 1992:116). Therefore, a canonical text is and represents authority, gained by tradition and/or declaration by the power of authority; and prescribes that it cannot be changed and/or altered.

Though the contemporary use of the term is still based on the sacred tradition of the textual sense, canon can also be defined as a term argues Mihály Szegedy-Maszák that "stands for a standardized *corpus* ... with rules of its own" (Szegedy-Maszák 1990:17). Here, corpus is much wider then the list of texts, as it refers to texts, pictures, films, theatrical performances, pieces of music, etc., and their verbal and non-verbal interpretations, organised in the form of lists, systematically organised along the line of certain rules. That implies the concept of canon as list and as system.

Canon as list is considered as a carefully selected list of the great masterpieces of culture and tradition. These masterpieces are considered to possess formative and normative values, authoritative power; and they are displayed as examples and models. The researcher's task is to analyse these masterpieces and to define how and why exactly that list of texts has evolved.

Although the study of the list of great masterpieces is part of our inheritance from positivism, which emphasised collecting of data, ordering it, and then drawing conclusions from the material; the idea of the canon also refers to a principle "beyond" or "outside" the texts included in the list, to something as György Kálmán C. points out transcends, transforms them like traditions, values, ethics, esthetical qualities or similar principles. These, however, refer to a *system* beyond the texts (Kálmán C. 1998:253). That system can be modelled as a lingual one, the Saussuerian *langue*, as a sort of knowledge beyond the individual utterances, or masterpieces as Kálmán C. did it (Kálmán C. 1998:253–4). In this respect canon however as the stack of selected great masterpieces belongs to the sphere of system and can also be considered as Mihály Szegedy-Maszák argues as "cultural grammar" (Szegedy-Maszák 1992:119).

For Szegedy-Maszák, the canon not only defines the cultural artefacts that possess unquestionable values, it also mediates knowledge and embodies history. The canon is a fixed tradition in which certain texts and their interpretations become selected and established as models. The examples are considered valuable to preserve for a certain interpretative community. For that community, the canon cre-

ates and preserves knowledge, value-system, and interpretative customs as well as strategies. Moreover, it has an important function in the creation and establishment of the identity, self-respect and self-representation of a certain community (Szegedy-Maszák 1992:120–126).

In his article "Kánon és trópus", Gábor Bezeczky argues that canon cannot be simply considered as a list of texts and authors, brought together by chance, but must be seen as a system with its own rules and inner structure, which define what can be included and the relations among its elements. The canon as system works by reduction and selection as it stands for literature, modelling the wholeness of literature (Bezeczky 1998:266). The canon can only be a part of literature. But as the relationship between the two is metonimical and synechdochal, the canon can be considered as the representation of literature as such. Though Bezeczky applied it only to texts and literature, the concept of representation of the canon can also be extended to other fields. Through its great masterpieces, the canon represents literature, music, theatre, film, painting, sculpture, etc. as such. Moreover, in an even wider sense, the representative function of canon can also be utilised for the formation, maintenance, and reform of certain virtual and real communities.

The model setting, direction giving, value preserving, and representative function of canon was also utilised for the formation of national communities. As Benedict Anderson has remarked, the formation of a nation implies an obvious problem deriving from the fact that it is "an imagined political community, as we can only imagine that it can be confined by nature as a sovereign entity" (Anderson 1983:15). A nation forms a real community only in the imagination, since its members do not connect to each other with real links in their everyday lives, and there is no physical space where a whole nation can be found and seen together. In *The Body of Spirit*, Allucquere Rosanne (Sandy) Stone calls those communities *virtual* where the physically separated members are connected through mutual beliefs and practices (Stone 1995:298). Thus, nation can only be realised as a *virtual community*. For the creation, maintenance, self-definition of such a community a nation needs the link(s) between the physically separated individuals to be presented and manifested through various means.

The link is supposed to be based on a collective identity that is shared by most of the members of the community. That collective identity is to be evolved from the past. The past, however, does not exist in itself, but as Jan Assmann rightly claims that "the past ... comes into being at all, when one gets into connection with it."[2] The past has to be constructed un/consciously through the selective process of remembering and forgetting in a retrospective way. The past is remembered collectively and socially in a collective memory that is active backwards and forwards, because memory does not only reconstruct the past, but organises how to experience present and future (Assmann 1992:35–43). The past, however, cannot

be "authentically" reconstructed in its complexity. Thus, it is *re*-constructed again and again *from* and *in* the present and is constantly utilised *for* the present. The past serves as legitimisation, reinforcement for and – or symbol for the lack – of the present, and basis for the future.

Although Assmann also mentioned that memory needs locations and has a tendency for localisation (Assmann 1992:39), it was Pierre Nora who argued in detail that for remembering the past, a community needs certain means which he calls the 'places of memory' *(lieux de mémoire)* (Nora 1984). The creation of these places results from a process in which the spontaneous and privately lived individual memories are transformed into collective history. The places of historical remembrance can be manifested in various forms as institutions, topographical sites, objects, cultural creations, canons, social habits, even buildings. Just as the places of memory, canon cannot be realised and maintained without its own places, such as schools, libraries, journals, universities, and theatres. Though it depends on and is legitimised by the power of the places, these places also depend on and are legitimised by the power of the canon (Szegedy-Maszák 1992:128–130). Therefore, these places are connected to power and can also be considered as the instruments of power. These symbolic, real or even virtual places are utilised not only for memory, but as places on and in which cultural/national identity can be confirmed in the present and projected onto the future by certain performative manoeuvres, which refer to various, but not stable, symbolic meanings.

In the nineteenth century, an authentic community came to be considered as organised on a national basis, and the establishment of the national canon was one of the (obvious) means for its justification. Since then canon and national identity have been merged. Their merge is not static, however, because canon is (re)created when traditions are fragmented and values are polarised, when it is to (re)decide the order to be followed. In these cases the canon (re)claims itself to be the most appropriate tradition, based on universal ratio and/or power of divine declaration. Those who accept a canon accept a sort of formative and normative self-definition. Therefore, the acceptance of a canon is at the same time the acceptance of a collective identity defined by the canon as a set of sacred masterpieces, rules, and values. The canon establishes and forms collective national identity. "The sanctification of a given tradition [as canon] always aims at the sanctification of a given community. Thus the canon becomes ... the survival strategy of cultural identity."[3] Therefore, canon not only establishes a national community by providing it with an identity, but a canon can also serve as the depository of evidence testifying to the survival of that community under (foreign) oppression. Moreover, it possesses the possibility to change and/or alter that identity by changing and/or altering the canon.

Theatre and National Theatre

Theatre is very often defined as the interpretation and/or adaptation of a certain text. This text-based approach focuses above all on the dramatic text and then focuses on the various presentations or dramatizations of the text, namely its appearance in changing performances. In this way theatre is identified exclusively with the performance. Parallel to that approach, theatre is often defined as a building where dramatic texts are performed. Neither of these definitions, however, takes into consideration the complexity of theatre. The definitions emphasize only certain aspects of theatre: the dramatic text, or the building, or the performance. Nevertheless, theatre is multifunctional and works simultaneously on multiple layers. Its multifunctionality and various levels can be approached through its various relations. First, theatre can be understood in terms of *process:* process between text, if any, and performance, performance and audience, and audience and text. Second, theatre may be viewed as an *institution* with its own structural and hierarchical relations and supported by and reflecting on society. Third, theatre may also be seen as a *phenomenon*, which is deeply rooted in the social, cultural, historical, ideological and political network of a given society. A national theatre is both multifunctional and multiple layered because the concept of the theatre of a nation is methonimic: what is presented in and by it serves (supposedly and intentionally) as the expression(s) and representation(s) of a nation.

Investigating the notion of theatre of a nation and its relation to cultural legitimisation, Loren Kruger based her analyses on the assertion in *The National Stage* that

> the notion of staging the nation, of representing as well as reflecting the people in the theatre, of constituting or even standing in for an absent or imperfect national identity, emerges in the European Enlightenment and takes concrete shape with the Revolutionary fêtes (Kruger 1992:3).

After this general statement, however, Kruger focuses on merely three countries, England, France, and the United States because for her the full force of that "notion" emerges only with the rise of mass politics. What she is thus interested in is a phenomenon, which she calls "theatrical nationhood," that "manifested itself fully in the course of the nineteenth century with the rise of the mass party politics, 'universal' (male) suffrage, and the demand of the people for legitimate representation as protagonist on the political stage" (Kruger 1992:3). Therefore, she only deals with relatively late realisations of the notion of a national theatre in functioning and independent states (France) within imperial context (the United States) and when the imperial context had just been lost (England).

In other countries of Europe, however, national theatres were established much earlier. Among the first ones, the Hamburg theatre, which was established in 1767, and came to be utilised as an institution of German cultural identity and values; and as a phenomenon for expressing the will to unite the separate small German states (Carlson 1989a:94 and Brown 1995:292–294). In Austria – following the practice established by Frederick the Great of Prussia as early as the 1740s in Berlin (see Carlson 1989b:73–74) – it was also the central authority that established its national theatre when the Burgtheatre was renamed as the Austrian National Theatre by Joseph II in 1776. As part of the ruler's reforms, the multifunctional nature of the theatre was utilised by Joseph II. His aim was not only to establish territorial integrity but also to integrate the multicultural territories and multilingual ethnic groups into a centralised, modernised and fully bureaucratised civil state under the rule of the Austrian Monarchy (Simhandl 1999:182–191).

While the notion of the national theatre was regarded as one of the means for the integration of an empire in the countries of Western Europe, in Eastern Europe the debates over and later the realisation of the national theatre took place within the context of an oppressive *imperium*; and the national theatre was utilised for uniting and preserving the nation. Here, national theatre was conceived and later employed for creating and maintaining national identity, national culture and a national state.

Analysing the basic practical premises of forming a national state in the nineteenth century, Eric J. Hobsbawn argued in *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* that people who did not posses an independent territory and functioning administrative institutions were supposed to create these through cultural institutions and practices (Hobsbawn 1997:50–53). In the Hungarian context such "substitute" cultural institutions and practices were also important. As early as the second decade of the nineteenth century the importance of national language was recognised by the so-called "neologist" movement, which was spearheaded by leading Hungarian writers and thinkers. They thought that Hungarian needed to be modernised in order to be able to express properly the ideas of contemporary everyday life. Since language could serve as one of the links between the members of the virtual national community, it soon came to be seen by contemporaries as the 'key factor' for national survival. Language, through literature, could also be utilised as one of the basic propagators of a mythical national past and the formation of a desired future. The official language had been Latin, but German was widely used; and among the aristocracy French had also been fashionable. As a result the renewal of Hungarian was also seen, especially by the censors of the Habsburg monarchy, as a sign of passive resistance against Austrian political leadership as well as against Austrian, German, and French cultural influences. Hungarian has

kept these functions ever since, and the importance of Hungarian has often been (over)emphasised, especially when the territorial integrity, sovereignty, cultural heritage of Hungary were/are (or felt to be) threatened.

In addition to language and literature, and often in connection to them, physical objects, institutions, and sites have also been transformed into symbolic means, into "places of memory". These places were semiotised, providing symbolic meanings for the national past and present. Institutions such as the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1825), the National Museum and Library (1808), or even a bridge across the Danube (*Lánchíd* 1842–48), in addition to their obvious practical and modernising functions, were seen as monuments to express the power and the values of the nation – and their founders – by means of their size, design, ornamentation and, not least, their location. These newly established institutions in Pest-Buda included the Hungarian, later national, theatre, which came to be seen as one of the sites for cultural performances by which the nation's longed-for independence could be expressed. Therefore, right from its inception the Hungarian (national) theatre in Pest was connected to politics, especially national politics.[4]

The theatre was not only used for disguised, or overt, political purposes but played a significant role as a cultural institution. Since the renewal and usage of Hungarian deemed important for everyday life and for national survival, the theatre was also connected to creating, spreading and maintaining language through playing foreign dramas in translation, adapting them to Hungarian circumstances, presenting "original" national dramas, and establishing a national repertoire. One of its main functions was also to discover an event in Hungary's past that would prove effective for communicating the nation's heroic history. Thus it could be used for articulating and remembering a once distinguished Hungarian past with which the much-desired Hungarian independence could be achieved and dominance over some of the Habsburg monarchy's other ethnic groups, such as the Serbs, the Croats, the Romanians, and the Bulgarians, could be maintained and legitimated.

In addition, the political and cultural functions were connected to moral and social ones. Contemporaries saw the theatre as necessary to establish and represent the characteristics of the 'good' Hungarian citizen/patriot. The theatre was to prepare the members of the audience for the roles that they would need to play in a reformed and modernised capitalist society, while at the same time maintaining their national character. The theatre was also to express and to show the appropriate costumes, habits and behaviours of the day. At the same time it was to propagate current political and social views through contemporary Hungarian and foreign dramas (see Kerényi 1990:259–263 and 1999:40).

Due to the limited number of seats the Hungarian (national) theatre could not operate as a business venture. Thus, right from its inception and for its own legiti-

misation and financial security, it was (financially) supported by the national government. Therefore, the national theatre functioned as political institution and was regarded as a political phenomenon with obvious political purposes. Performing in the national language, establishing national character, and creating a national past, it served as a means for forming and maintaining Hungarian national identity. Consequently, the Hungarian national theatre was initiated and later utilised as a multifunctional national phenomenon and was seen as a semiotised institution with political, cultural, and moral functions, which were connected to national identity and survival. Later, these functions were consciously preserved, remembered and/or even (re)u(tili)sed for national purposes when the existence of Hungary as an independent state was threatened after 1849. It was also expected to (re)define its cultural, political, and moral status and its national identity, after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. Therefore, the national theatre has been connected closely to national politics, national culture and national identity.

In the 1928 debate, the national canon and the national theatre met in national politics. In this debate, I would like to focus on the dispute over a new *mise en scène* of a by-then Hungarian national drama in the Hungarian National Theatre in the specific cultural, political and social context of Hungary during the late 1920s.

National Canon – National Theatre in Hungary: the Debate over *Bánk bán* in 1928

From MP Jánossy's speech, it is clear that by 1928 Katona's text was not considered merely as a dramatic text, but it was understood to be canonical in various ways. Thus, before investigating the debate in 1928, I want to sketch the progress of the play to canonical status by mentioning some of the "key" players both on and off the stage. The canonisation of Katona's text and its performance in the National Theatre combine literary, theatrical, institutional, political, cultural and social practices, strategies, and institutions. It demonstrates how a dramatic text could become a national tragedy in literature, how it was canonised as national dramatic text in the theatre, and how by merging literary, institutional, social, political, cultural and theatrical factors, it came to be regarded as a national celebration of Hungarian culture.

Bánk bán till 1928

The first version of *Bánk bán*[5] as a literary text was submitted to a drama competition sponsored by Erdélyi Múzeum, a literary periodical. The aim of the contest was to find an appropriate play for the opening the first permanent theatre

in Kolozsvár. *Bánk bán,* however, was at first ignored. Rewritten, it was allowed to be published in 1820 by the author himself, but the Austrian censor prohibited it from the stage and condemned it for inciting hatred against the Habsburgs. Its premier was on 15 February 1833 in Kassa, as a benefit performance for Gábor Egressy, one of the leading actors of the company. By 1835 it had been performed only three times by the same company, while Kotzebue's plays were given twenty-three times in 1833, forty-four times in 1834, and thirty-three times in 1835. Its first performance in the Pesti Magyar Theatre (from 1840 the National Theatre) was given on 23 March 1839 again as an Egressy's benefit production. After that performance, it was not presented again until 1845. Then it became a part of the repertoire, although its average number of performances did not exceed five per year. Yet the *Bánk bán* became part of public knowledge, the theatre performed it, while the spectators came to see it year after year. Its road toward canonisation received a boost when it was performed as a part of the celebration on the night when the Revolution of 1848 broke out in Pest on 15 March. Only the first act was performed; and the play was followed by the *National Song* written by Sándor Petőfi and the declaration of the aims and claims of the revolution, expressed in *Twelve Points or What the Hungarian Nation Wishes.* After that the performance of *Bánk bán* came to be identified with the revolutionary occasion. Consequently, after the failure of the Revolution of 1848, it was banned and would not be played until 1858. The renewed performances were then connected to the memory of the heroic days of the Revolution. Its ten-year prohibition only helped to reinforce the process of associating the play with the Revolution; and *Bánk bán* came to be considered as part of the passive resistance against the Habsburg regime. Until 1867 and then during the Compromise between the Habsburg monarchy and Hungary, the performance of *Bánk bán* was not simply concerned with a *mise en scène* of a literary text as a theatrical performance, but as an important part in the preservation of Hungarian cultural memory it was considered as an expression of both Hungarian independence and the benevolence of the revolution. These memories were reinforced by the fact that the theatre fixed the dramatic text and its *mise en scène* as first used by Egressy in 1839 (see Orosz 1979 and 1984).

Parallel to its canonical status in the theatre, by then it had been accepted by the literary elite as the drama that embodied the national tragedy. Before 1848 the critics had not appreciated *Bánk bán* (see Vörösmarty 1969:205–206 for instance). The critical acceptance of József Katona's play began with a piece by Ágost Greguss in 1854. Other writers such as János Arany, the poet laureate, Pál Gyulai, a prominent critic, and Károly Szász, a translator and influential literary critic, soon joined their appreciative voices to that of Greguss. But Szász never completed his analysis, while Arany's piece remained in fragment and was only published in 1879. Gyulai on the other hand gave his inaugural lecture on *Bánk bán* when he became

a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In that lecture, published in 1860, he designated *Bánk bán* as *the* Hungarian national tragedy (see Orosz 1999:36–45 and 49–51).

After 1860, the play's literary acceptance and theatrical status was reflected in the fact that the text became part of the national curriculum in primary and secondary schools, as well as in higher education. Textbooks and sourcebooks on Hungarian literature provided detailed surveys of Katona's life, analyses of his *Bánk bán*, and often inserted scenes from the play that were to be learned by heart. The text with different commentaries was regularly republished in various series of the national writers, or of famous Hungarian writers. In addition, each monograph written on the history of Hungarian literature, theatre, and drama had a chapter on Katona and his *Bánk bán* (see Orosz 1983:513–532).

Consequently, Katona and his *Bánk bán* had become a part of the Hungarian literary canon by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The text and its interpretations were available in various editions. Its performances, with a formally accepted dramatic text and *mise en scène*, could regularly be seen in the National Theatre on national celebration days such as 15 March and 6 October, as well as during the opening and closing performances of the theatrical season.

The Debate – Over Theatre (?)

Two years before the centenary celebration (sic!) of Katona's death, Sándor Hevesi, the director of the National Theatre, stated his desire to make dramaturgical changes in the text and to re-direct its *mise en scène*. Earlier Hevesi had expressed some serious reservations about *Bánk bán* (1896:36–50). In an interview, published on 21 October 1928, Hevesi had noted that *Bánk bán* was "supposed to be the best Hungarian classical tragedy. Nevertheless, the play has not enjoyed much theatrical success" (quoted in Németh 1928:183). Hevesi was well aware of the canonical status of the text, and he had accepted this; but he also expressed dissatisfaction with how it had still been performed in the National Theatre during the 1920s. He clearly articulated his wish that in the future "it would not be played once or twice a year merely as a rite of reverence for the young, but it should be performed as a huge theatrical success" (quoted in Németh 1935:183). This could be achieved, Hevesi argued, "when the piece is totally re-arranged and undergoes serious dramaturgical changes. With these changes the piece will be ... a popular success as well" (quoted in Németh 1935:183). Hevesi's plan to re-make *Bánk bán* can best be understood as part of the modernist attempt to revolt against tradition that began among theatre directors during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Hevesi's position as an artistic leader in the Hungarian theatrical reform movement, the Thália Társaság, helps to explain his ideas on *Bánk bán*. The Thália Társaság, initiated in 1904 with László Bánóczy, Marcell Benedek, György Lukács served as the center of the reform movement; and the Thália Társaság appeared with two connected aims designed to renew the Hungarian dramatic canon,

> occasionally performing such old and new plays which cannot be found in the repertoires of theatres of [Budapest], but which possess great artistic and cultural values and interests; [and to renew the methods in acting and directing in the staging of these plays] by the [Társaság's] own efforts and sources, in which professional actors or actors under contract cannot take part (Thália in Gábor 1988:64) [my translation, Z. I.].

Therefore, the Thália Társaság, like the other European independent theatres, including André Antoine's Théatre Libre in Paris, or Otto Brahm's Freie Bühne in Berlin, presented plays by modern naturalist, symbolist, and secessionist authors such as Hauptman, D'Annunzio, Ibsen, Strindberg, Wedekind, Schnitzler, Giacosa, Mirbeau, Alma Tadema and others. Their works were usually translated by the members of the company, which also propagated new Hungarian plays for the stage. Their *mise en scéne* and the acting were recognised by contemporaries as modern and were shaped as an "organic whole" by the overall concepts of director Sándor Hevesi. Having published various articles on theatre and drama, Hevesi was invited, before he joined the Thália's company, to become a director's assistant at the National Theatre. Actually, he was the only member of the Thália's artistic leaders, who had had some previous experience working in the theatre. In his *mise en scènes* Hevesi used the various methods that he had observed on his visits to contemporary European theatres. But in order to explore the possibilities of the text in performance, he kept the theatrical interpretation subservient to the authority of the dramatic text. The company consisted of amateurs as well as young professional actors and actresses who had been brought up in the school of the association and trained by the director during a relatively long rehearsal period. The rehearsals could often last more than two months.

The Thália adapted to the Hungarian stage the canon of modern Western European drama and theatre and incorporated its acting and staging methods. In their productions, however, the main emphasis fell on the text, which was often formally published by the time of the premiere. This revealed the literary preponderance of the context in which Thália operated and came to be later much appreciated. The performance was totally subordinated to the pre-written text, the director to the playwright, and the actor to the character. The notion and scope of the reforms, however significant, were situated within that traditional structure. They

did not question, rather strengthened, the supremacy of the written text, the hierarchy of the stage, and the relevance of the entire logocentric of theological structure. In consequence of this, even when the company still existed, its achievements could be continuously incorporated into the institutionalised theatres of the day, employing their actors and directors, inserting the acceptable dramas of the Thalia into their own repertoires, and using some of the Thalia's methods in their own rehearsals. When the Thália actually ended in 1908, it was quickly absorbed into the official Hungarian theatre system, which was being reformed within the existing logocentric structure that thus remained unperturbed until the 1930s.

Hevesi was also absorbed by the official theatre system. He went back to the National Theatre where he became the director from 1922 to 1932. By the late 1920s he had attempted to establish in the National Theatre the practice, which had been developed earlier in the Thália Company. For that practice, the repetition of the *mise en scène* of a classical text, handed down over generations, was intolerable. For this would make the play a museum piece rather than a living theatre. What Hevesi attempted can thus be understood as the negation of a tradition, which he considered already dead, and the re-interpretation, or the reanimation, of a classical dramatic text for the contemporary stage.

The Debate – Over Identity and Legitimisation

The lively debate over Hevesi's plan and the various, mostly negative, reactions against both theatrical and textual changes, expressed most clearly by MP Jánossy, throw light on the complexity of the situation. Hevesi was not the head of a small and independent alternative theatre company. Instead, he was the director of a national institution; and he had to face the fact that the institution, which he led, was deeply embedded in the complex political, cultural and social matrix of the time. The status of *Bánk Bán* in that complex matrix can be addressed through Jan Assmann's concept of ritual and textual coherency.

In *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, Assmann argues that past and knowledge, providing identity and coherency for a community, are formed not only by the various formations of memory, but also by cultural practices. Analysing the practices of cultural reproduction of past and knowledge, Assmann differentiates between ritual and textual coherency. In ritual coherency, the location of knowledge is the rite in which knowledge is staged as a sacred recitation. Only with the exact delivery of the order of the rite, the world can be ordered, seen meaningful and authorised. Otherwise it will immediately collapse. Though rite reproduces a given order without modification to its previous executions, its repetition is not the only exact reproduction as it brings its sacred meaning into present. As Assmann points

out, "the ritual repetition is only the form of meaning, which preserves and brings it into presence."[6] Since rite continuously refers to memory, its meaning falls into both the absolute past of the gods and the relative past of history (Assmann 1992: 90–91).

Textual coherency appears when an oral community is transformed by writing. Then coherency of existence is not located exclusively in ritual repetition, but provided by written texts as knowledge is located in canonised, founding texts and their interpretations. Within textual coherency, Assmann, however, distinguishes between sacred and canonised texts. In the former, ritual coherency is transplanted in the textual as it is also handed down literally, because it does not endure variation. As Assmann argues, the sacred text is a sort of lingual temple, the appearance of sanctity in the medium of human voice. The sacred text demands not interpretation, but rather recitation, defended by ritual with consideration of the exact regulation of location, time, cleanness and so on (Assmann 1999:94). As opposed to sacred, canonical text is considered as the representation of normative and formative values of a community, therefore the "Truth." "As the fixed letter cannot at all be changed, while the human world is in constant change, there is a distance between the fixed letter and changeable reality, which can only be bridged by interpretation."[7] The canonical text needs interpretators as its meanings can only emerge through the threefold relation between text – interpretator – listener. Thus

> the normative and formative impulses of cultural memory can only be attained through the constantly and continuously renewed and reinvented interpretation of the textual tradition which establishes identity. Interpretation thus becomes the gesture of memory, the interpretator remembers, and reminds us of the truth, already forgotten[8] [my translation, Z. I.].

Jánossy's speech can be located in textual coherency, but he considered *Bánk bán* above all as a sacred text and its performance in the National Theatre as a rite: the ritual delivery of the sacred text. For him, that sacred text needed literal repetition in which the performance is about to reproduce the text written by the author, minimising the differences between the two media, caused by the transition from text to performance. The fixed and canonised *mise en scène* of *Bánk bán* was thus seen as a rite, handed down from generation to generation as the appropriate and traditional custom. Therefore, the sacred text in ritual performance enforced the continuity and security of national identity and cultural memory.

The problem of national past and national identity was especially acute in the political, social and cultural milieu of the late 1920s. That milieu was basically defined by two factors: Hungary had been defeated in World War I, and in consequence of this, she had been forced to sign the Treaty of Trianon. The Trianon

Treaty cut off three million Hungarians from the mother country, along with two thirds of the country's pre-World War I territory, and caused severe economic, bureaucratic, social, and cultural problems. The newly formed countries surrounding Hungary (Czechoslovakia, Romania, the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom) formed the Small-Antante and its politics separated Hungary internationally. Apart from that, Hungary was ordered to pay a huge amount for compensation of the damage caused in the war. By the middle of the 1920s, the country's economic, political, and social state had been more or less stabilised. Hungary was independent, but its territory, power, and respect were only a fragmentary of its pre-World War I. Moreover, the Treaty rendered much of the Hungarian cultural heritage inaccessible. Countless places of memory, including institutions, topographical sites, objects, and buildings, were lost and there was little evidence of any continuity. That was a situation in which Hungary was to re-define itself (see Romsics 2000:127–203 and Berténvi–Gyapay 1997:514–540).

The Hungarian state's official ideology, elaborated to redesign national state and identity, was organised around two basic principles known as "Szegedi Gondolat," or the Szeged Ideal and the "Szent-István Gondolat," or St. Stephen Ideal. The former heralded "Christian-national" values and traditions, as well as independence (Szegedy-Maszák 1999:430). The latter emphasized that Hungary's mission was to unite the various ethnic nationals under its own leadership (Berténvi–Gyapay 1997:537). The revision of Trianon remained as a hope that the historical Hungary would be re-created within a few years[9] (Berténvi–Gyapay 1997:520). Therefore, cultural creations, canons, social habits, institutions, and sites were officially utilised to maintain the memory of historical Hungary and to create a national identity on this basis.

Consequently, for a conservative national politician like Jánossy, Katona's *Bánk bán* was seen in the theatre of the nation as a piece of continuity. For him and many others, the precise delivery of the text, used by the earlier generations, and the rituality of the performance served to connect the contemporary moment both to the mythical past of Hungary, when Hungary had been regarded as imperial force and possessed the power to conquer; and to the relative past of the Revolution of 1848 and the Reform Era when modern Hungary had been created. For Jánossy, the punctual delivery of the rite was compulsory in order to give coherence and continuity to the present and to establish Hungary and Hungarian national identity. The national theatre, controlled and utilised by official ideology, was thus considered as a monument of the past, recreated in and for the present; and as a lingual temple, where the sacred text is delivered in faithful recitation that displays and reinforces the contract with the selective moments of the heroic past. Furthermore, it indicates to arrange and experience the present and imagines the future along this line. Jánossy's fear of changing the text and its ritual delivery in performance was therefore connected to the fear of changing the national past and

the national identity. Therefore, Jánossy's argument brought back the ancient use of canon as an instrument that provides orientation and direction.

In his interview and later article Hevesi pointed out the differences between the literary and performance texts of *Bánk bán*, by referring to the fact that Egressy also adapted it for the stage by cutting and re-arranging the scenes. Therefore, for Hevesi, it was clear that Jánossy was arguing merely for tradition. Hevesi had no intention to change or even slightly alter the national canon. For him, however, Katona's *Bánk bán* was considered as a canonical text in which knowledge is located. He regarded *Bánk bán* as a representation of the normative and formative values of a Hungarian community, therefore as the "Truth." But that "Truth" does not open itself up simply by delivering the rite, but through its interpretation. As he argued in an article, written as an answer to the attacks, "the tradition was misunderstood by the national theatre, and it turned into mechanical repetition, not enthusiastic re-creation" (Hevesi in Németh 1935:198). For him, the distance between Katona's and his worlds could only be bridged by the power of interpretation: changing the text dramaturgically and the *mise en scène*. Only these changes would open up and re-create the meaning of the text. These changes, however, would have re-defined, or at least re-considered the past, including the ritual celebration attached to the previous *mise en scène* and the tradition within and outside the theatre, and therefore national identity itself.

Conclusions – Performing History/Performing Memory in the Contemporary Present

Due to the huge outcry, Hevesi only partly realised his plan. He made some minor dramaturgical changes and had the scenery and costumes redesigned. The performance of *Bánk bán* with the new *mise en scène* served as a part of the national celebration of Katona's Centenary on 2 April 1930. The celebration was centred in Kecskemét, Katona's birthplace. On the commemorative day various articles, essays, pictures, reports, interviews appeared in the local and national press, while Katona was honored with a public statue in the central square of Kecskemét. MP Jánossy had been correct two years earlier when he had predicted that Katona would turn over in his grave. On 2 April 1930 he actually did turn over in his grave when he was exhumed and later reburied in a honorary grave with a Roman Catholic liturgy. On the same night, the company of the National Theatre played Hevesi's altered *mise en scène* of *Bánk bán* in the local theatre of Kecskemét. The following day local and national dignities gave memorial speeches and inaugurated Katona's memorial room in the museum of Kecskemét.[10]

With Katona's exhumation a slice of the past had been brought to light and then buried again in the contemporary present. With that slice, the past was con-

sciously re-constructed *from* the present and *for* the present. The reburial constituted a gesture toward continuity between the past and the contemporary present. The centenary celebrations performed history in which the history of a heroic and mythical Hungarian past, the history of early nineteenth-century Hungary, and the history of the day in 1930 merged. The centenary celebrations also performed a memory in which cultural memory was inscribed in Katona's life, time, and text. That performed memory was consciously utilised as a memory of and reminder to the past, while its performance in the presence established continuity between the past and the contemporary present. Therefore, Katona and his text were officially utilised as legitimisation for the contemporary present. The question of whether it had been an exercise in nostalgia, which aimed to re-create the past in the present as mimesis, hence as an exact imitation, or as a negotiation about its meaning in the present is still debatable, though.

Notes

1. All the extracts from Assmann's book are given in my translation.
2. "Die Vergangenheit nun, ...; entsteht überhaupt erst dadurch, daß man sich auf sie bezieht" (Assmann 1992:31).
3. "Denn die Heiligung einer bestimmten Tradition läuft immer auf die Heiligung einer bestimmten Gemeinschaft hinaus. Aus dem neutralen Orientierungsinstrument Kanon wird dann eine Überlebensstrategie kultureller Identität" (Assmann 1992:127).
4. The theatre established in 1837 was called Pesti Magyar Színház (Hungarian Theatre of Pest), then it was renamed as National Theatre in 1840.
5. For those who are not familiar with the text, Joseph Reményi summarises it in *Hungarian Writers and Literature*: *Bánk bán*, written in iambic meter, consists of five acts. The central character, Bánk banus, is a medieval nobleman of lofty ideas. The background of the plot is Hungarian Kingdom in the year 1213. The country, surrounded by hostile forces, is in a tragic position; the people are poor and downtrodden; the king, Endre II, is engaged in warfare abroad. His wife, Gertrudis, a former German princess, disregards her duties as the mate of a Hungarian ruler; she prefers the entourage of her German kinsmen. Banus Petur, a patriotic nobleman, considers her an enemy of the nation. With other discontented noblemen he organizes a plot against the queen. Petur and his plotting collaborators feel morally justified in their plan. Prince Otto, the brother of the Queen, is infatuated with Melinda, the wife of Bánk, the Hungarian palatine. Bánk, as a loyal servant of the king, decides to disarm the plotters. Meanwhile he discovers that his wife has been attacked by Otto, and it seems to him that the queen condoned her brother's act. Of course, he is outraged, forgets prudence and loyalty and murders the queen, who in fact knew nothing of her brother's intent to dishonor Bánk's wife. The play ends with Melinda's becoming mad, Otto escaping from the court, and with the return of the king abroad. His warriors assassinate Petur. Although the king forgives Bánk, his conscience tortures him. He is punished by his own deed, and sees himself as a murderer who lost the ethical basis of his life (Reményi 1964:63–64).
6. "Die rituelle Wiederholung ist nur die Form für den Sinn, der in ihr bewarth und vergegenwärtigt wird" (Assmann 1992:90).

7. "Weil der Buchstabe fest ist und kein Jota geändert werden darf, weil aber andererseits die Welt des Menschen fortwährendem Wandel unterworfen ist, besteht eine Distanz zwischen festgestelltem Text und wandelbarer Wirklichkeit, die nur durch Deutung zu überbrücken ist" (Assmann 1992:96).
8. "Die normativen und formativen Impulse des Kulturellen Gedächtnisses können nur durch unausgesetzte, immer erneuerte Textauslegung der identitätsfundierenden Überlieferung abgewonnen werden. Deutung wird zum Gestus der Erinnerung, der Interpret zum Erinnerer, zum Anmahner einer vergessenen Wahrheit" (Assmann 1992:96).
9. That concept was based on A. F. Millerand's letter, attached to the Treaty of Trianon, in which there was the possibility of its future reconsideration; and also on the separate peace agreement with the USA, which had no references to territorial claims, and fueled from time to time by Hungarian and foreign articles and speeches, such as Lord H. S. Rothermere's article on Hungary's revision in the *Daily Mail* on 21 June 1927 (Bertényi–Gyapay 1997:520 and 524).
10. For the centenary celebrations see Hajnóczy (1930), and Németh (1935:199–208).

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STRUCTURAL METAPHORS IN THE ENGLISH AND HUNGARIAN VERSIONS OF GEORGE ELIOT'S *MIDDLEMARCH*

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When we are trying to decide whether the translation of a particular novel is good or bad, we shall usually find that there are quite a few equally valid points of view and powerful arguments on both sides. It should also be noted that in order to reach a decision it seems necessary to by-pass temporarily the views according to which languages are incompatible and translation is either impossible or illusory. Putting aside the views on linguistic relativity does not simplify matters, it just makes the decision possible. The temporary suspension of such views is, to some extent, justified by the practice of those people who correlate texts in different languages and look upon them as saying the same thing. They may be wrong and the supposedly identical texts can turn out to be different, but it must be admitted that identity in cultural matters is always arbitrary. If people insist on translating as they obviously do, there should be some criteria within the theoretical framework of translatability to judge the relative merits and failures of what they produce.

One of the possible approaches to the translations of literary works of art is fairly simple. We can take the interpretations of the original as our guide, and try to find out whether the translation allows the same, or at least similar interpretations. J. Hillis Miller's essays on George Eliot's *Middlemarch* seem to be ideal for this purpose.[1] His interpretation is linguistic in the sense that it is based on identifiable linguistic structures and he quotes the text of the novel more than seventy times. The goal of the investigation is to see whether and how the linguistic structures he relied on are present in the Hungarian version of the novel.

Miller says that some of the masterworks of Victorian fiction are engaged in the enterprise of totalisation. They "have many characters and employ multiple analogous plots. They cast a wide net and aim at inclusiveness, in part by a method of accumulation."[2] The methods of totalisation vary from novel to novel. The narrator of Eliot's novel employs "certain all-encompassing metaphors which are proposed as models for Middlemarch society. Such metaphors are put forward as a means of thinking of all the people in Middlemarch in their interrelations through time. Each metaphor is an interpretive net which the reader is invited to cast over

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the whole society, to use as a paradigm by means of which to think of the whole. I shall argue that there are three such totalizing metaphors, or rather families of metaphors."[3] The first group of metaphors includes woven cloth flowing water.[4] Visual and optical metaphors belong to the second group, while reading, signs and interpretation makes up the third group. Miller adds that "Each group of metaphors is related to the other, fulfilling them, but at the same time contradicting them, canceling them out, or undermining their validity."[5]

The new context in which the metaphors Miller points out ought to emerge is somewhat different from the original. The general characteristics of the translation are easy to establish.

First of all, the Hungarian version must be considerably shorter than the original. Words, clauses and even whole sentences are missing. The examples are too numerous to list.

Shift the pegs a little, he said to himself, and Mr. Brooke might be in the Cabinet, while I was Under-Secretary. That is the common order of things: the little waves make the large ones and are of the same pattern. I am better here ... (p. 501.)	Nem is kell hozzá csoda – bizakodott –, és Mr. Brooke egy szép napon beül a bársonyszékbe, én meg az államtitkárja leszek. Megteszi ő is, ha nincs jobb. Könnyebben beletalálkozok ebbe az életbe, ... (II/42.)

Actually, this is one of Miller's examples. He says that the first group of metaphors relies on the assumptions that society "is open to the same kind of objective scientific investigation as may be applied to such a field, for example, to flowing water" and that "the structure or texture of small-scale pieces of the whole is the same as the structure or texture of the whole and so may be validly described with the same figures."[6] However, both the structural metaphor of flowing water and the reference to the identity of the small-scale and large-scale pieces are missing from the Hungarian version. In addition, the function of the missing sentence is to connect the first and second group of metaphors, which include visual and optical metaphors.[7] The metaphor of weak and strong lenses, for example, partly fulfills, partly undermines the metaphors, which assume that no change of perspective can yield different results.[8] With the sentence missing, these aspects of the novel must remain unknown for the Hungarian reader.

Secondly, there are quite a few passages in the Hungarian version which do not even remotely resemble the English text.

Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesi-	Más meg nem akadályozhatta, mint a szélsőségek iránti vonzalma, és ragaszkodása olyan életszabályokhoz, amelyek alkalmasak az óvatos kérő

tate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers (31).

elgondolkodtatására, vagy éppen elrettentésére (I/11).

"...lead her ... to refuse all offers" and "...éppen elrettentésére" are certainly different. The Hungarian sentence, as opposed to its English counterpart, makes no mention of the possibility that it is Dorothea who may refuse the offers. The Hungarian sentence says something else instead.

Let us take another example:

I at least have so much to do in unraveling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe (170).

Nekem legalább az emberi sorsok gombolyítása körül annyi tennivalóm, bogaikat oldozván-kötvén, hogy a gubancra rámegy a napom, ezért érdeklődésemmel nem fordulhatok a világegyetemnek nevezett csábítóbb s tágabb terek felé (I/173).

One of the important differences between the two texts is that the narrator of the first is only an observer while that of the second actively participates in the creation of the events that happen to the characters of the novel. The narrator of the Hungarian version not only creates the events, he makes mistakes, that is, unwanted knots, 'gubanc' as well. This is, again, one of Miller's examples presenting two of the structural metaphors, the woven cloth and seeing.[9] Due to the fact that the narrator is turned into a participant, the second metaphor is altogether missing from the Hungarian version and the first is somewhat distorted. 'Web' is certainly not 'gubanc' or 'érdeklődés' and "all the light I can command" is rather different from "a gubancra rámegy a napom." In addition, the function and tone of the sentence is also different: the English counterpart of "a gubancra rámegy a napom" is an explanation, while the Hungarian text appears to be a complaint bordering on a slightly hysterical exclamation. Finally, the Hungarian text places the narrator in the wrong social context. A sentence like "a gubancra rámegy a napom" belongs to the register used by low-level secretaries or administrators. It is no wonder the word 'relevancies' is also missing.

In general, the Hungarian narrator uses a vocabulary from which the theoretical vocabulary and the learned words are either absent or in which they are exchanged for more concrete words and phrases: what is "inconsistency and formlessness" in the original becomes "handabandázás" in the Hungarian version.

Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfold-

Azóta is sok Teréz született. Magasztos életük nem bontakozhatott ki messze hangzó tettekben. Talán csak

ing of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion. With dim lights and tangled circumstance they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggles seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness (25).

csetléssel-botlással teljes sors jutott nekik, a lelki nagyság és a kisszerű lehetőség tökéletlen illeszkedése. Talán tragikus bukás lett az osztályrészük, úgy merültek el a könnytelen feledésben, hogy megéneklőjük sem akadt. Szűkagyúan, a körülmények gubancában próbálták eszményüket tetteikkel egybehangolni, a közvélemény előtt végül mégis minden küzdelmük handabandázásnak látszott (I/5–6).

The Hungarian narrator speaks some sort of purified language in which there are no words of Latin, Greek or German origin. As a corollary, 'metaphor' is replaced by 'hasonlat.' Is the Hungarian reader not supposed to know words like 'következetlenség,' 'formátlanság' or 'metafora'?

for we all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of them. (111).

Mert mi mindnyájan, szántsunk bár mélyen vagy a felületeken, hasonlatokba bonyolódunk, s ezekhez képest járunk el, vesztünkre (I/104).

When we are describing the relationship and movement between the two texts, outright mistakes, like the correlation of "the very eye of the research" and "a kutatás szeme" in the following example, are somewhat less interesting than the characteristic transformation of the original.

But these kinds of inspiration Lydgate regarded as rather vulgar and vinous compared with the imagination that reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any sort of lens, but tracked in that outer darkness through long pathways of necessary sequence by the inward light which is the last refinement of Energy, capable of bathing even the ethereal atoms in its ideally illuminated space. He for his part had tossed away all cheap inventions where ignorance finds itself able and at ease: he was enamoured of that arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more

Lydgate részeg nagyzolásnak minősítette a képzelet efféle ihletét, ha finomabb folyamatokat feltáró munkájával vetette egybe, az olyannal, amiben górcső nem segít, csupán belső fényük vezet a külvilág keserves útvesztőin át, mert szövétneke az energia tovább alig bontható elemi oka, mely akár a légi semmi porszemeit is világosságba foglalja. Lydgate maga elutasította a gyenge lelkek minden olcsó segédeszközét, és egyedül a belső fény szövétneke után haladt, amely a kutatás szeme egyszersmind: befogja a tárgyát, és a lélek következetességébe vonja részleteit. Azon finom folyamatok sötétjébe kívánt bele-

exactness of relation; he wanted to pierce the obscurity of those minute processes which prepare human misery and joy, ... (194).

világítani, amelyek az emberi szomorúság és öröm okozati láncát teszik, ... (I/201).

The relationship of the two texts is too rich to mention all its aspects. To begin with, 'invention' becomes 'segédeszköz.' This is one of those examples when the theoretical aspects of the original is turned into something more concrete. Besides, the Hungarian version uses the type of strange and rare words, 'górcső' and 'szövétnek,' which are sometimes considered to have some kind of poetic quality in themselves. Both are less straightforward than 'lens' and 'light' of the original. The phrase "légi semmi porszemei" also seems to be more artistic and much less clear than "ethereal atoms." It creates, at least for the Hungarian reader, an allusion to Attila József, even though no such reference can be justified. But not even the allusion to the Hungarian poet can make the contradiction of "semmi porszemei" acceptable. The English passage describes the pains Lydgate has to take in order to pierce obscurity; the Hungarian version goes in the opposite direction. It uses uncommon and obscure words, and thus raises both explicit and implicit, but in any case, premature doubts whether Lydgate will ever reach his goal. How many readers know, without looking it up in a dictionary, what 'szövétnek' is? Again, where the English text speaks of "long pathways of necessary sequence," the Hungarian version refers to the "külvilág keserves útvesztői."

Another characteristic of the Hungarian version is exaggeration. In the following example 'drab' becomes "örömtelen tehén."

Old provincial society had its share of this subtle movement: had not only its striking downfalls, its brilliant young professional dandies who ended by living up an entry with a drab and six children for their establishment, but also those less marked vicissitudes which are constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse, and begetting new consciousness of interdependence (122).

A régi vidéki társadalom is széles országútja volt ezeknek a finom mozgásoknak, nem útvesztője csupán azon bámulatos tehetségű fiatal arszlánoknak, akik végül egy örömtelen tehénnel és hat gyermekkel együtt gyepesedtek be, hanem terelte a kevésbé ismert sorsokat is, a társadalmi szövevény új mintáit tervezte ily módon (I/116).

The passage shows some of the characteristics mentioned above: 'arszlán' is an archaic, uncommon word. And why is a considerable part of the last clause missing? Which English expression is the counterpart of "társadalmi szövevény"? "Social intercourse" or "consciousness of interdependence"? Are they too abstract? What can explain the appearance of 'minta' and 'tervez'? The answers to these

questions cannot be found in the original. The emergence of these words can only be explained in terms of the context the translation creates.

There is also a degree of exaggeration involved when "great resolve" (p. 25.) becomes "szent elhatározás" (I/5). The word 'szent' is not entirely bad in the context of the opening passage of the novel. However, the expression "szent elhatározás" recalls, almost automatically, Endre Ady, and creates misleading intertextual connections and connotations.

Similarly, "züllöttek bele az átlagba" is much stronger than "to be shapen by the average." It is also very unclear why the expression "the story ... is hardly ever told even in their consciousness" is translated as "elmondani alig tudnánk."

The story of their coming to be shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross, is hardly ever told even in their consciousness; ... (174).	Elmondani aligha tudnánk, hogy züllöttek bele az átlagba, s hogyan lett belőlük tizenkettő egy tucatban, ... (I/177).

The most common characteristic of the relationship of the English and the Hungarian versions seems to be harmless enough at first sight. In these instances, an English expression is not translated by the expression that might be expected but by another expression that is quite appropriate in the given context. However, as the following three examples show, this operation upsets the metaphorical structures of the original. The words 'thread' and 'current' are parts of the first group of metaphors. 'Current' occurs eighthteen times in the novel. Only twice is it translated by 'áramlat' or 'áram.' This is, actually, the type of operation that demolishes the metaphorical structure of the original.

he felt no agitation, and had no sense that any new current had set into his life (193).	Izgalmat nem érzett, az a sejtelem sem környékezte, új kor nyílt életében (I/200).
For the first time Lydgate was feeling the hampering threadlike pressure of small social conditions, and their frustrating complexity (210).	Lydgate most érezte magát először a vidéki társadalom szorításában, apró bonyodalmainak útvesztőjében (I/219).
But in Dorothea's mind there was a current into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow – the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards the fullest truth, the least partial good (235).	Dorothea lelkében azonban forrás buzgott, melynek vizébe beletorkollt minden gondolat, minden érzés előbb-utóbb – s ez a teljes igazság a lehetséges legfőbb jó felé áramlott (I/246).

The last example correlates 'current' and 'forrás.' In other contexts, this may be perfect. Here, however, it is rather unfortunate. We have a 'forrás' into which

"minden gondolat, minden érzés" 'beletorkollt.' Needless to say, 'forrás' and 'torkolat' are hard to reconcile.

Finally, it should be mentioned that every Hungarian schoolgirl and schoolboy is taught that the repetition of words is one of the seven stylistic deadly sins. This is probably the reason why repetition is avoided – even in translation when the repetition is not the translator's but the author's responsibility. Is the translator entitled to 'correct' a stylistically underdeveloped author like George Eliot?

Let us suppose that somebody translates J. Hillis Miller's essays into Hungarian. Can he or she quote the published translation of the novel? Miller used more than seventy examples. With the possible exception of, perhaps, five of them, all his examples would have to be retranslated.

Translation criticism is a non-existent genre in Hungarian journals. Hungarian translators are not accustomed to the public criticism of what they produce. And it is quite easy to understand the reasons. It takes some time and effort to compare the English and Hungarian texts of a 900-page novel (the same argument applies to shorter books and non-fiction as well) – and why would you do that if what you find will never be published? As a consequence, the level of linguistic awareness is not very high. The situation may or may not change in the future, but until it does, nobody can complain that the world does not understand Hungarian literature.

Notes

1. J. Hillis Miller, "Narrative and History" *ELH* 41 (1974) 455–473, and J. Hillis Miller, "Optic and Semiotic in *Middlemarch*" in Jerome H. Buckley (ed.), *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975. 125–145, George Eliot, *Middlemarch*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965, George Eliot, *Middlemarch*. Trans. Bartos Tibor. Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1976.
2. Miller mentions ("Optic..." 125) Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Dickens' *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, *Our Mutual Friend*, and Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*.
3. Miller "Optic..." 128.
4. "That the texture of Middlemarch society as a whole may be accurately represented in a metaphor of woven cloth is taken for granted throughout the novel." Miller "Optic..." 130.
5. Miller "Optic..." 128.
6. Miller "Optic..." 129.
7. "A pervasive figure for the human situation in Middlemarch is that of the seer who must try to identify clearly what is present before him. This metaphor contaminates the apparently clear-cut objectivist implications of the metaphor of the flowing web." Miller "Optic..." 136.
8. "The part is 'really like' the whole, and an investigation of a sample will lead to valid conclusions about the whole." Miller "Optic..." 129.
9. "Each of those nodes in the social web which is a separate human being is endowed with a power to see the whole. This power is defined throughout the novel as essentially distorting." Miller "Optic..." 137.

RELIRE LES TEXTES TRADUITS

L'HÉRITAGE STRUCTURALISTE DE LA THÉORIE DE LA TRADUCTION

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Mon exposé sera plutôt une série d'observations que j'ai faites lors de la réflexion sur la nécessité d'une nouvelle méthode de lecture ou de relecture des textes traduits et celle de la critique ou théorie de la traduction. Ceci ne sera donc pas le texte définitif d'une quelconque théorie, mais la présentation de quelques étapes d'une recherche en cours.

« Respecter l'altérité du texte »[1]. Quand nous nous permettons de citer cette demi-phrase d'Antoine Berman, nous trahissons l'esprit de sa réflexion. Puisque finalement, par cette notion d'altérité il remplace ce qu'on a l'habitude de nommer « fidélité »: « la traduction *respecte* l'original, elle peut et *doit* même dialoguer avec lui, lui faire face, et lui tenir *tête* »[2]. Quant à cette définition, il a certainement raison. Mais pour nous, au contraire, *respecter l'altérité du texte* signifie que la base de la réflexion sur le texte traduit doit commencer par la reconnaissance de l'altérité du texte traduit: le texte traduit est un *autre* par rapport au texte « original », il est quelque chose de fondamentalement différent. Donc, pour point de départ de toute analyse textuelle (il s'agit maintenant d'analyse de texte traduit) et de critique de théorie de la traduction on pourrait poser *l'impossibilité fondamentale de la fidélité en traduction*,[3] mais nous avons pris le parti de ne pas le faire; car nous pensons plutôt que la notion de fidélité n'est pas un terme applicable dans le vocabulaire de la critique littéraire.

L'idée qu'on vient d'exposer peut paraître, dans le contexte actuel de la théorie et critique des traductions, bien radicale. Pour nous défendre, nous nous permettons de citer Jauss qui a raison de dire dans son étude de *Spleen II* de Baudelaire: « La chance d'un nouvel interprète tient à ce qu'il y a encore des questions à poser. Elles ne visent pas à rendre nulle la réponse que le prédécesseur a trouvée dans le texte. Le cycle question/réponse dans l'histoire de l'interprétation est conditionné en premier lieu par les catégories de l'enrichissement de la compréhension (qu'il s'agisse de complément ou de prolongement, de déplacement d'accent ou de nouvel éclairage) et subsidiairement par la logique qui mène à la preuve de l'erreur dans l'interprétation »[4].

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Or la réflexion théorique sur la traduction, et surtout en Hongrie, n'a pas réussi, du moins depuis les années 60, à revoir les fondements ou à moderniser le questionnement du domaine.

Et ceci est vrai bien que les méthodes d'analyse des textes poétiques aient beaucoup évoluées au cours du siècle dernier confirmant la raison d'être et la nécessité absolue de la relecture. De nouvelles questions et de nouvelles réponses ont jailli, concernant le poème, du formalisme ou du structuralisme, de la déconstruction ou de l'herméneutique littéraire, etc. Pourtant, cet ensemble bien spécial de textes, les textes (poèmes) traduits, les traductions pour ainsi dire, restaient – par prudence ou par défaut de malice – le tabou des analyses. Ou peut-être pas le tabou, puisqu'il existe quelques œuvres toujours valables qui ont la capacité de révéler bien de choses sur ce processus qu'est la traduction, comme en Hongrie les *Belles infidèles* de György Rába ou en France *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne* de Antoine Berman. On doit quand-même confirmer, qu'il s'agisse de la France ou de la Hongrie, qu'il y a peu d'auteurs qui ont réfléchi sur le texte traduit d'une manière originale, qui ont osé aborder les textes traduits en partant des aspects de la traduction, de cette contradiction qu'affirme par exemple le nom de Baudelaire en haut des poèmes écrits en hongrois ou le mot « la Bible » sur la couverture d'un livre en français. D'une règle générale, on constate que la réception de la littérature étrangère dans une autre langue et littérature qui est la sienne à l'origine – nous soulignons que ceci est aussi bien vrai pour la France que pour la Hongrie – se passe de l'étude des aspects créateurs ou recréateurs, c'est-à-dire de cette analyse ou interprétation que j'appellerais « interprétation-en-tant-que-traduction ».

Pour en revenir à l'exemple de la Hongrie, on peut constater qu'aucune invention de la théorie littéraire n'a pu marquer la théorie de la traduction et l'accueil des textes traduits depuis au moins le structuralisme. Ceci ne veut toujours pas dire que les critiques n'ont pas dit de choses valables dans leurs analyses des poèmes traduits ou que ce qu'ils ont dit ne soit pas juste. Bien au contraire! Toutes leurs constatations sont raisonnables et ont une grande valeur. Ce qu'ils n'ont pas réussi à faire c'est de s'approcher de l'épistémologie du traduire. Parce que l'idée de base dont la théorie part le plus souvent est que le texte traduit n'est qu'une création verbale secondaire[5] par rapport à un texte écrit et lu dans la langue de son auteur d'origine. Selon eux, si le texte est bien traduit, le plus qu'il peut faire, c'est de donner l'illusion d'un original sans l'être réellement. Le texte traduit est donc, dans ces analyses, un texte qui ne peut être lu que dans un contexte de comparaison avec un autre texte, ce dernier étant reconnu comme son original doit être préalable au texte traduit. Par ce *défaut*, qui se caractérise dans le vocabulaire de cette théorie comme une imperfection du texte, le texte traduit manque d'autonomie de lecture. On se demande si cette comparabilité n'est pas un aspect inhérent

au texte traduit qui devrait être reconnu à l'intérieur du texte et à travers les signes que le texte traduit nous en laisse voir.

L'œuvre majeure de György Rába, les *Belles infidèles*, traitant les traductions de Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi et Árpád Tóth doit certainement être considérée comme l'œuvre majeure de la théorie et de la critique (analyse) de la traduction du XX[e] siècle hongrois. Ce livre est sans doute exceptionnel dans sa qualité aussi bien que dans son ampleur. Il est certainement impossible de dépasser son génie. Toutefois, il existe quelques aspects qui doivent être revisités. Les idées que nous allons repenser rapidement ne sont pas uniquement les siennes. Elles caractérisent toute une époque de la théorie de la traduction partant de la période qui suit les grandes traductions des écrivains de la revue Nyugat et allant droit jusqu'à nos jours.

Dans la réflexion théorique sur la traduction de Rába, l'héritage des grands traducteurs de Nyugat est renforcé par la théorie poétique du (début du) structuralisme. Le côté jakobsonien de la critique de Rába est de rechercher et de retrouver d'abord la forme du texte traduit et la fonction du nouveau texte dans l'œuvre de son traducteur ou dans la littérature qui l'intègre. L'idée de Jakobson que la traduction est un genre créateur et que toute énonciation poétique est unique[6], a donné une base théorique aussi stable et rassurante pour Rába et les critiques des années 70–90 qu'aucune réflexion n'a été faite à son sujet.

L'étape de la critique poétique qui n'a pas été franchie par la théorie de la traduction est donc celle qui se résume à notre avis dans les débats autour du poème *Les Chats* de Baudelaire et dont l'axe principal s'est créé à 16 ans de différence en premier par l'article de Claude Lévi-Strauss et Roman Jakobson (*« Les Chats » de Charles Baudelaire* en 1962) et puis la critique de cet article par Michael Riffaterre en 1978[7].

Dans son article, Jakobson a donné une analyse minutieuse des signifiants du poème de Baudelaire, à un tel niveau que beaucoup de critiques lui ont reproché, et à juste titre, qu'il a donné, « dans un souci d'objectivité » « une pure analyse des formes »[8]. Plus tard, Riffaterre, en esquissant une analyse qui ne se passe pas de l'analyse des aspects du style dans le poème, a démontré que la grammaire du texte ne suffit pas à définir la littérarité du texte. L'un des principaux intérêts de cette critique est que Riffaterre a réussi à réintroduire le destinataire dans le processus de communication[9]. (On se permet d'avancer l'hypothèse d'une recherche à mener à terme qui voudrait introduire l'aspect du lecteur dans la réception du texte traduit. Cette hypothèse pourrait être un catalysateur dans la réflexion moderne et contemporaine sur le traduire.)

Pour en revenir aux *Belles infidèles* de Rába, on doit constater que le théoricien hongrois transpose directement la réflexion de Jakobson sur les traductions des poètes de Nyugat. Par exemple, quand Rába analyse les traductions des poèmes

de Baudelaire par Mihály Babits, son intérêt principal reste l'étude des limites de « l'interférence du style de départ et du style d'accueil ». Ainsi, l'hypothèse et la conclusion de Rába est que « les solutions textuelles de la grande génération de Nyugat donnent « le diagramme » de cette interférence »[10]. (On note entre parenthèses que la notion de style chez lui est plutôt définie comme le choix de vocabulaire et cette notion est très différente du sens riffaterrien du style.)

Dans ses études, Rába applique la même méthode d'analyse textuelle que Jakobson et Claude Lévi-Strauss dans leur analyse des *Chats* de Baudelaire. Ce qui est l'observation des rimes du poème chez Jakobson devient chez Rába l'analyse de la *convenance* des structures de rimes entre le texte original et le texte traduit[11]. "Jakobson met en relief « la parenté sémantique » des pairs de rime, ce qu'il souligne, ce n'est pas la divergence de la signification des mots en position de rime, mais leurs interdépendances conceptuelles ou leur force démonstrative. (...) Une dissonance à l'intérieur d'un pair de rime, qui ne s'étend que sur un ou deux sons, est capable d'exprimer la disharmonie sentimentale ou conceptuelle des vers. L'une des assonances étonnantes du poème *A macska*[12] (*szeráfi macska, macska*-démon, / *kiben mint egy angyalba*, finom / *minden tag*...) introduit un ton grotesque dans le poème. Le choix du traducteur n'est pas gratuit: la sonorité et la signification de la rime dans l'original crée une tension: « ... chat *étrange*, En qui tout est, comme en *un ange* »[13]."

Deux objections majeures sont à faire donc à Rába. D'abord que cette analyse de formes ne permet pas de créer une conception cohérente du rôle du texte traduit donné dans aucune des perspectives (ni par rapport aux textes traduits par le traducteur en question, ni par rapport à son intérêt dans la réception de l'auteur traduit).

La deuxième objection est que Rába (et d'ailleurs la plupart des critiques jusqu'à nos jours) parle comme s'il y avait quelque chose, une lecture définissable idéale et commune, un certain consensus tacite sur la *signification* du texte traduit et de sa traduction, et comme si cette lecture, inchangeable dans le temps, serait là, prête à se dévoiler pour nous tous. A propos de la traduction du poème *Le Chat* (Dans ma cervelle se promène...) par Babits, Rába note: quant à la construction des phrases du texte hongrois « on a affaire avec le phénomène de la circonlocution du sujet. Ce choix n'est pas adéquate au texte original car le Baudelaire idéal hongrois, c'est-à-dire la traduction hongroise idéale exigerait une plus grande densité, même si son traducteur est le jeune Babits qui, dans d'autres traductions, s'efforce à garder le ton du texte original »[14].

Aujourd'hui, il est clair que cette critique doit être revisitée du point de vue d'une théorie langagière plus moderne de ce qui était la base de la réflexion de Rába. Rába dit, en se référant à Saussure, « dans chaque langue, les significations se rattachent à des champs sémantiques différents »[15]. L'idée de la préexistence des significations est sous-entendue dans cette thèse.

Pour relire le texte traduit et pour pouvoir formuler une critique ou théorie moderne de la traduction, le théoricien doit recourir à une autre conception de langue. Il faudrait partir de l'idée que les significations ne sont pas pré-construites dans un univers langagier théorique, mais qu'elles se créent lors d'un processus de réception.

Rába, aussi bien que les critiques qui le suivaient, oubliaient souvent que l'idée de la fidélité de la forme, plus exactement ce consensus sur la versification (par exemple, dans le texte hongrois on ajoute une syllabe à la fin des vers à rime féminine à l'original, etc.) n'a été fixé définitivement qu'avec les traductions des grands poètes de Nyugat. Aujourd'hui, et sous la lumière des changements intervenus dans la poésie, aussi bien que dans quelques phénomènes de la traduction (je pense surtout à H.Ö.L.D.E.R.L.I.N de Endre Kukorelly et des traductions des pièces de Molière de György Petri) cette convention doit être renvoyée parmi les faits de l'histoire de la convention traductive.

Malgré que Rába définit, avec Jakobson, la traduction comme la représentation d'un acte de création unique[16] et que ses observations concernant la construction des textes traduits soient justes et vérifiables, les perspectives dans lesquelles Rába dispose ses observations – l'inventaire des outils poétiques de l'original, la place théorique du texte traduit concret dans la vie et l'œuvre du traducteur, et son « niveau de fidélité » à l'original et par rapport aux autres traductions du même texte – ne permettent pas de voir le texte traduit dans sa propre valeur, c'est-à-dire comme si le texte traduit, tout en étant une œuvre autonome et lisible[17] sans son original, remplissait un rôle autonome dans la littérature de sa langue.

Une question se pose alors. La traduction, si elle est réussie, ne doit-elle pas engendrer la capacité d'être lue en dehors du paradigme original/traduction, où et dans quelle mesure serait-il nécessaire et possible d'annuler le paradigme original/traduction[18]. Ou peut-être plus exactement, comme on l'a dit plus haut, le rôle du critique est d'étudier ce paradigme dans ses aspects qu'ils laissent voir à l'intérieur du texte. Je me demande d'ailleurs s'il s'agit vraiment d'un simple système binaire.

Alors, on s'arrête là, sans faire de conclusion. Nous voudrions signaler par là que tout ce qu'on vient de dire n'était qu'une réflexion qui n'a fait que partir et qui est loin d'arriver à son terme.

Notes

1. Antoine Berman, *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 93.
2. Jean-Yves Masson cité par Antoine Berman, *ibid.*, 92.
3. Cf. Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó, « A nyelvek közti viszony (Kukorelly Endre: H.Ö.L.D.E.R.L.I.N.), » *Alföld* 50/4 (1999/4), 83.

4. H. R. Jauss, « Le texte et le changement d'horizon de la lecture (Baudelaire: Spleen II.) » in: H. R. Jauss, *Pour une herméneutique littéraire,* trad. par Vincent Kaufman (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 415–416.
5. György Rába: *A szép hűtlenek* [Les belles infidèles] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1969), 72. « ayant l'apparence d'une œuvre originale », « az eredeti nyelvi alkotás látszatát keltve »
6. Roman Jakobson, « Aspects linguistiques de la traduction », in: *Essais de linguistique générale* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1964), 86.
7. Michael Riffaterre: « La description des structures poétiques: deux approches du poème de Baudelaire, « Les Chats », in: M. Delcroix – W. Geerts, *Les Chats de Baudelaire* (Paris: PUF, 1981), 37–76.
8. Maurice Delcroix, « Le dossier des Chats. Présentation » in: M. Delcroix–W. Geerts, 11.
9. Cf. *ibid.*
10. Rába, 29.
11. Voir *ibid.*, 30–39.
12. Traduction de Mihály Babits du poème Le chat (Dans ma cervelle...)
13. Rába, 35 et 36.
14. *Ibid.*, 41.
15. *Ibid.*, 27.
16. *Ibid.*, 28.
17. Cf. Berman, 87.
18. Cf. Kulcsár-Szabó, 80–85.

SPEECH FROM THE MARGIN: GERTRUDE STEIN'S *TENDER BUTTONS* AND AGÁTA GORDON'S *KECSKERÚZS*

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The various feminist projects converge on the idea that language (constructed in its largest sense, as the varied system of discourses through which the world becomes constructed) is the primary cultural agency through which the masculine dominates and represses the feminine. To effect a change at all, it is necessary to undermine language from within, or to mark the ways in which language reveals its own undermining. In much feminist thought, language is understood as a wholly phallogocentric and monolithic domain, which has no place for the "woman" who becomes in her difference and otherness the figure for all that remains repressed and silenced.[1] I am analyzing two works by women writers that foreground the issues of marginality and textuality. They belong to different literary traditions: Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* to the American modernist, and Agáta Gordon's *Kecskerúzs* to the contemporary Hungarian literary context. The reason I read them together is that they both address the problem of identity as it is constructed by discourse. Also, they are exemplary works of an experimentalist feminine literary discourse that has a long tradition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Friedman and Fuchs summarize:

> Although the woman in the text may be the particular woman writer, in the case of twentieth-century women experimental writers, the woman in the text is also an effect of the textual practice of breaking patriarchal fictional forms; the radical forms – nonlinear, nonhierarchical, and decentering – are, in themselves, a way of writing the feminine. In subverting traditional modes of narrative, writers from Gertrude Stein, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf to Christine Brooke-Rose, Eva Figes, and Kathy Acker have been undermining the patriarchal assumptions that inform these narrative modes ... In exploding dominant forms, women experimental writers not only assail the social structure, but also produce an alternate fictional space, a space in which the feminine, marginalized in traditional fiction and patriarchal culture, can be expressed.[2]

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Thus, one of the most important characteristics of women's experimental writing is that a certain marginal and feminine speaking position is accompanied by the radical questioning of traditional literary forms. The focus of my interest in this paper is the relation between experimentalist textual devices and the marginal, feminine speaking position.

Tender Buttons is often considered to be a pure language play that departs from familiar conventions and celebrates the free play of writing. It is not easy to decide weather we should read it as poetry or as prose. Agáta Gordon's work also stays somewhere between poetry and fiction since most of its chapters start with a poem that introduces the following narrative. The narrative parts are dissected into paragraphs that have no punctuation. The semantics of the sentences are basically recognizable but the syntax is ambiguous most of the time. *Tender Buttons* is often interpreted as expressing female points of view, mainly those of lesbianism. *Kecskerúzs* clearly raises the issues of homosexuality, for the narrator is a lesbian woman who speaks about the hardships of her love affairs. The main similarity I am interested in is the joint appearance of marginality (as theme and as speaking position) and experimental literary language. I am looking for an answer to the question of what happens to the reader when he or she is faced with the close connection between language games and lesbian points of view. Analyzing recent essays on Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons,* I will focus on the problem of the narrative of reading. I intend to illustrate that these underlying narratives naturalize and assimilate the strangeness and otherness of the work. I will argue that while experiencing the position of the *other* during the reading and interpreting process, the reader, in both cases, may realize the otherness within him or herself that challenges the notion of the reader as a coherent and stable identity.

Gertrude Stein's experimental language plays had been considered unreadable, or meaningless, for a long time. A reassessing of Stein's work has been developed throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Employing a number of critical perspectives – poststructuralist, feminist, psychoanalytic – this contemporary renaissance in Stein criticism has opened multiple new configurations of meaning in her works. It is definitely the merit of recent Stein criticism that it made Stein's critique of representation available for contemporary readers. In other words, by offering coherent interpretations, critics made Stein's texts accessible and readable. I am interested in the underlying contradiction of these readings, namely, how is it possible to interpret a text that obviously challenges the reader's interpretative strategies.

Play on Words and Play with the Reader: Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*

From *Three Lives* to *Tender Buttons* Gertrude Stein created a series of texts that engage, relatively early and in a radical faction, what we have come to recognize as the most critical issue of modernist art – the problem of representation. *Three Lives* was her first major assault on the conventions governing literary representation in the nineteenth century. This text gradually came to be regarded as a central force in reshaping the tradition of American fiction in the twentieth century. Long before *Three Lives* received recognition, Stein had gone on to invent far more radical ways of manipulating language. *Tender Buttons* enacts the principles of fragmentation and difference and celebrates the free play of writing as a combinative game limited only by systematic laws of language. The more radically a literally text departs from familiar conventions, the more actively the reader must struggle to determine how to read it; and many readers have simply declared Stein's works meaningless."[3]

Tender Buttons describes a female world of domestic objects and rituals — of dresses, hats, tables and curtains, mealtimes and bedtimes, cleanliness, and dirt. The iconography of domestic life dominates the text. But in its artful rearrangement of these details, the text models a world in which objects, foods, and rooms are liberated from their normal subordination to human routines and purposes.[4] According to Walker, the particular pleasure that *Tender Buttons* provides is this kind of artful reordering of the familiar world. Beginning with Cézanne's and Picasso's still lives, modernist artists have revealed the strangeness of familiar objets. Duchamps's famous exhibition of the urinal inaugurated a new fascination with "found objets", removed from their normal contexts and habituating functions. Oppenheims's fur cup and, more recently Oldenburg's fans and other "soft" re-creations of manufactured objects transgress the order of everyday experience more violently, by transforming these domestic objects into bizarre artifacts that totally violate the functionality of cups and fans. Stein's objects cannot be seen or touched. But concrete nouns and adjectives call things to mind, and syntax can bind them together in startling new combinations [5]

Ellen E. Berry, in her study on Stein, *Curved Thought and Textual Wandering: Gertrude Stein's Postmodernism* (1992) raises many of the questions informing my project here. Reviewing recent feminist interpretations of Stein, Berry identifies two narratives of reading among them. The one implies the narrative of the struggle against the Father. This assessment recounts the tale of the woman writer's struggle against internal and external patriarchal censors. In this scenario of reading Stein's texts are anti-authoritarian, inscribing her sometimes playful, often painful, efforts to transgress phallocentric norms, logic and structures. The other narrative of reading follows an escape scenario: Stein's texts escape from

the law of the Father [to an intersubjective] space of perfect mutuality. Stein's texts permit and affirm a kind of writing (l'écriture feminine, women's writing or experimental writing) in which the artist unmakes patriarchal structure by inscribing an other-than-Oedipal measure of desire. As readers, we play blissfully with her texts and wander through the text instead of controlling and mastering it.[6]

Berry points at a dichotomy inherent in the feminist narratives of confrontation and escape. She claims that these narratives of reading prevent us from acknowledging the pains and desires evoked in the reader and the difference of the other woman with whom we are engaged in our textual dialogue. "Stein's works remind us that we cannot always know the other's desire and that we may not always speak for or with the other woman whom we see in order to explain from a feminist perspective."[7] She argues for a reading perspective that moves beyond the above narratives. Stein's "unreadable" texts "help to suggest the necessity for and the difficulty of moving beyond the oppositions implicit in the feminist narratives of confrontation and escape. Such a movement is necessary in order to seek more subtle and inclusive theories of reading capable of taking into account non-oppositional differences among women."[8] On the other hand, Ellen E. Berry admits that such a movement is difficult, partly because narrative is a persistent and powerful mode of structuration that tends to retextualize itself in critical practices and institutional discourses. Difficult, also, because these feminist narratives of the reading process are enabling narratives that have grown out of real necessities.[9]

Narrative, indeed, is a powerful frame and concept of literary approaches. For instance, when criticizing narratives of reading, Berry immediately repeats another scenario, another pervasive narrative of scholarly discourses, the narrative of always moving beyond others' theories. On the one hand, I do agree that *Tender Buttons* challenges our categorization system and our basic concepts – the concepts of narrative are included in this radical questioning process. On the other hand, I would be hesitant to make such a definite statement that we should move beyond the narratives of reading.

First, because by adding more narratives of reading to the present ones, one might be able to extend the restrictions and limitations inherent in narrative concepts. It seems also important to define narrative when one uses the term narrative of reading. As is well known, narrative is a highly contested concept. Not only does it have several definitions within narrative theories but also it is a widely employed concept in several contexts such as history writing, psychology, political theory and cognitive theories. It seems though that Berry means a certain plot, a scenario that tells the story of confrontation or escape from the Law of the Father. Jonathan Culler uses the term story when he talks about narratives of reading: "reading is divided and heterogeneous, useful as a point of reference only when composed into a story, when constructed or construed as a narrative."

Culler's concept of the stories of reading is different from the former one; it stays on a more abstract level. One could summarize his notion in the following way: stories of reading tell us what happens to the reader during the reading process. Culler distinguishes several stories of reading: for instance, Wolfgang Iser tells of the reader actively filling in gaps, actualizing what the text leaves indeterminate. Stanley Fish tells a more dramatic story. His story of manipulation is full of dramatic encounters, moments of deception and surprises, which portray reading as a process of discovery. The result for the reader after an unsettling experience could be as well a self-conscious understanding of the process by which we construct meaning.[10] The outcome of such reading, summarizes Culler, is always knowledge. These stories follow an innocent reader, confident in traditional assumptions about structure and meaning, who encounters the deviousness of texts, falls into traps, is frustrated and dismayed, but emerges wiser for the loss of illusions."[11] Reading Stein's frustrating and exciting play on words, a basic question was raised for me: is it really knowledge that we gain from the literary encounter with the text? The stories of reading can be of course further discussed. Let me just finally refer to Teresa de Lauretis' comments on the nature of narrative logic that is of importance to my study. "All narrative, in its movement forward toward resolution and backward to an initial moment, a paradise lost, is overlaid with ... an oedipal logic."[12] According to de Lauretis, narrative works to authorize and legitimize the male status of the subject, whose desire for illumination cannot be distinguished from his desire for stable identity.[13] Put it in another way, any narrative (including narrative of reading, I suppose) that moves toward revelation, in other words, towards knowledge, reestablishes the reader's identity as a coherent subject. The quoted narratives of reading are strongly based on a formalist concept of narrative in which a self-identical subject discovers the world, or the world of the text. The reader in these stories of reading is a coherent, united subject, a Cartesian ego. It seems that the notion of narrative of reading cannot be distinguished from a self-identical reading subject. The concept of the stories of reading relays on the concept of narrative as logical structuration, and not on those concepts that emphasize the discursive characteristics of narrative. Narratives of reading (even feminist ones) indeed become problematic in the case of *Tender Buttons*. The work refuses to give us any revelation, any sort of knowledge. Therefore, it undermines the concept of narrative as well as the reader's coherent subjectivity.

Since the most striking peculiarity of *Tender Buttons* is that it refuses to offer any decipherable meaning, I take this refusal as a poetic function that makes problematic the reader's customary activities such as meaning-making, categorization, and imposing order on distinct features. In other words, the text defends itself from "approaching" in the very literal sense of the word, and forces the reader to reevaluate his or her own concept of understanding the text.

Categorization as a basic form of conceptualization is called into question in several ways. The reader is urged to face the problem of how to make categories with clear definitions and clear boundaries. Titles, for instance, are often misleading, which undermines the custom of naming a thing and then describing it. The passage under the title *A DOG* talks about a "little monkey that goes like donkey" (26). The *SALAD* turns to be a winning cake (57).

Tender Buttons undermines the categorization system as such. The first two chapters *(Objects* and *Food)* are definitely written in nominal style: categories of things and categories of abstract entities. The names or the categories make sense, but they refuse any intention of the reader to impose a system, or an order on them. The unfunctionality of the system reveals the problematic nature of categorization as a system.

In the first two chapters of *Tender Buttons* the reader sees nothing else but categories. Under the name of an object comes a text that looks like a description. Usually a few paragraphs, or sometimes a few lines. The typographic outlook raises the expectation that the text is a description, then it violates immediately the reader's desire to find a clear definition. The texts are usually nicely cut into pieces and paragraphs. The reader looks into the empty container of the category and does not find *in* it what he or she is looking for.

Similarly, we look into the third chapter *(Rooms)*, we look into the room, but this place seems empty. This chapter talks about the room itself, as a frame or as a 'table' in the Foucaultean sense: "a table where for instance the umbrella encounters the sewing machine, and also a table, a tabula, that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes ... the table upon which, since the beginning of time language, has intersected space."[14]

The closing section, *Rooms* seems to be a coherent prose fiction at first sight. The title is followed by paragraphs that seem to be connected to each other. Of course, it is far from a coherent narrative; still the reader has the impression that one way or another it tells a story. *Rooms* recalls some typical conventions of a traditional narrative: a chronological order for instance can be clearly followed. It starts somewhere in a mythical past when basic distinctions and basic discrimination came into being. An elementary event had happened that has – according to the passionate and sometimes even furious tone of the speech – outrageous consequences for the present. "Act so that there is no use in a center. A wide action is not a width. A preparation is given to the ones preparing. They do not eat who mention silver and sweet. There was an occupation." The tenses of the verbs follow this chronological order. In the first part of the chapter, the verb form is mostly past tense, and later on it turns to be present tense. Also, *Rooms* employs characteristic narrative phrases, such as: to begin, it was done, and then there was, the

truth has come, it happened in a way, the conclusion came, the time came when, then came the time for. Therefore, the work recalls and challenges the concept of narrative at the same time.

We may recognize a fragmented story about a distinguishing and discriminative act, but it comes to the surface only in random moments. Most of the time it is a free play of signifier that characterizes the text. And these tendencies are connected with another one: subversive and displacing references to gender categories: "the sister was not a mister," or "replacing a casual acquaintance with an ordinary daughter does not make a sun," or "Then there is a way of earning a living. Who is a man."

It follows that the critique of logocentrism that occurs throughout the whole text is connected in Stein's view with the critique of stable sexual identities. This invites the reader to realize the relation between the discursive practice of metaphysics and uniform sexual identities. Stein's characteristic language and language plays are in accordance with Judith Butler's argument that western metaphysics requires a compulsory heterosexual order that retains gender as a substance and as a self-identical being. In a binary framework, compulsory heterosexuality constitutes coherence or unity of either gender: man or woman. Thus the critique of stable sexual identities implies a critique of western metaphysics.[15] As Nicola Pitchford in a recent article emphasizes: Stein's critique of representation presents a standard modernist view: the text is about the process of cognition itself. What may be unusual is that Stein presents cognitive process as dependent on a gendered set of binary structures embedded in language. In *Tender Buttons* an alternative emerges to the heterosexual binary contract on which representation is founded. Therefore, the lesbian desire, which is often identified among the interpretations of *Tender Buttons*, may be as much about a strategy of representation as about actual physical sexuality.[16]

We have the idea that we are listening to a story but it is not clear at all what it is about. The voice of this story is sometimes passionate, sometimes cynical or playful using paradoxical or tautological phrases. As if a foreign speaker would try hard to explain something to us. We are carefully listening, are engaged in communicative situation, and sometimes are getting to grasp some meaning sometimes we are completely lost and frustrated, but we can as well be fascinated by the play on words. We are in an in-between comprehending situation, somewhere between understanding and not understanding the text. Still, the communication and the reading process continue.

The reader stays in an in-between situation and is becoming uncertain about his/herself. Who can be this "I" who read the text? As the text provides no revelation, just partial understanding, it follows that it does not provide and does not reassure any stabilization of identity. On the contrary, communication with the

strangeness and unknowable part of the text draws the reader into a situation in which a person has to realize the difference within his/herself, one has to recognize the unknown parts of his or herself.

Chiastic Structures Involving the Reader: Agáta Gordon's *Kecskerúzs*

The characters' situations in *Kecskerúzs* are marginal in many senses. They are students and young intellectuals with no prospects for any promotion. Typical objects and behavioral patterns of the 1980s can be traced in the text that seeks to reactivate the Hungarian reader's historical and personal experiences rooted in the depressive atmosphere of the last days of communism. We see students in rented flats, two–three of them sharing the same room, the dismal surroundings of the student's hostels, the living and working conditions of young professionals, the clumsy official management, and the like. The characters are dependent on the political regime to such an extent that they are hardly able or willing to realize this dependence. They are homeless in their own country in several senses of the word. Leona (the first person storyteller) and Izolda are a lesbian couple, which has to go through long and humiliating procedures to be able to live together. Izolda, who was born into the Hungarian minority somewhere outside of Hungary, needs to marry Leona's friend Lala. A Hungarian reader exactly understands the situation; at that time there was no other way possible to move to Hungary. Izolda moves from "home to home," as the novel puts it. The duplication of the notion of home, which is normally mentioned in singular form, creates a displacement. One who needs to move from home to home might as well be considered as a homeless person. The unusual expression "from home to home" also displaces the original meaning of the word. Home as a final reference disappears in a similar way as the final signified disappears in a derridean concept of language. And language is a crucial issue in this resettlement theme of the novel because one of the main reasons one decides to move from Hungarians to Hungarians is the language itself.

The awkward situation of lesbian love and fake marriage with a man form a series of lies that slowly poison the protagonists' lives. The main characters' private lives are emphasized all the time, and the main reasons for the difficulties are marginalized by the storyteller. They are mentioned casually as irrelevant facts. The expression "human rights," for instance, is hidden even in the following minor remark of the text:

> A ránk kényszerített szituáció kínozni kezdett mindannyiunkat és akármelyik szálát kezdtük kibogozni már mind a négyünkön elszorított fojtogatott felhorzsolt vagy megbénított valamit de tehetetlen-

> ségünkben sem gondoltunk az emberi jogokra eszünkbe sem jutott annyira nem is voltak Izoldának és nekem sem.[17]

Homelessness and marginality may be interpreted in further senses. Leona hides Izolda for more than a year in her one-room apartment, which is provided to her by her employer. Then they move to a deserted place, to a small house in the woods, which is thirty minutes walking distance from a small village. Leona and Izolda's story is framed by another narrative that takes place in a mental hospital. Leona tells her love story to a psychiatrist, called Orsolya Hostell, who offers Leona shelter, saves and cures her. But as the name indicates, the shelter is just a hostel, an institute where the patients' complaints are aired and receive a sympathetic ear; and Orsolya Hostell is not a person who is able to offer Leona a home. Homecoming, or arriving to any final reconciliation, never occurs in the novel. The continuous atmosphere of exile may be related to the language of the work. The sentences never end; instead they just run on into each other. Furthermore, the poems and the narrative chapters refer to each other in that way that they provide no clear connection.

There is hardly any sign in the text that refers to a direct speech by a character. The characters never speak in a straightforward manner about their lesbian feelings. The reader is informed about it in indirect ways. For instance, other characters talk about their suspicion, or in other cases the storyteller turns to another sense, seeing. Visual effects are often included in these descriptions of homosexuality:

> Egyszer aztán világossá vált minden de annyira hogy be kellett csuknom a szemem és utána még hónapokig lehunyva tartottam feltűnés nélkül az órákon és a tanulóban lehajtott fejjel mintha olvasnék és alvást szimuláltam járműveken és minden szabad percben mert vakított a felismerés még sokáig ostrom alatt tartott szüntelen képzelgésekkel egy Sarolta-arcú lényről de nem akartam hogy nyitott szemeimben felismerje őt valaki rajtam kívül (32).

In the following quotation we can recognize an exchange between different organs of sensation. It is not speech and silence that are opposed to each other but seeing and silence.

> hiába faggattam az arcokat most kellett megtudnom ebben az ázsiában egy télifürdőben hogy otthon az orrom előtt szereti egymást két lány akik Emese szerint kétségtelenül nyíltan és tudatosan leszbikusok mert Emese nem tételezte fel hogy amit ő olyan világosan *lát* azt pont az érintettek nem és nem akarják komolyan venni és magukra szabadítani hanem elássák és rémülten és gyomorfájósan hallgatják még évekig a nyüszítését (52). (my emphasis)

A relevant passage regarding the sense of seeing and focalization occurs later on in the novel. Orsolya Hostell and Leona analyze a poem that talks about the speaker's memory of his or her grandmother. Leona would like to follow the psychiatrist's thoughts, but all of a sudden, as an involuntary memory, images of her own childhood come to her mind. She *sees* herself in her adolescence.

> őszintén erőlködtem hogy *lássam* azokat a *képeket* amiket ő de hiába mert nekem az aranyos oválban egy ismeretlen figura jelent meg aki egy pillanatig ismeretlen maradt de a következőben elszörnyedve ismertem magamra
>
> ünneplőben voltam hiszen a vizsgázó öltözékemet viseltem egy sötét kosztümöt de ez valahogy olyan benyomást keltett rajtam mintha kezdő transzvesztita viselné egy nőnek öltözött fiú aki a tartásával és a mozgásával persze állandóan leleplezi magát és a fejem még fokozta is ezt a hatást valamiért talán a hajam ami ritkásan keretezte az arcom olyan félhosszú formán ez előnyösen lágyítja a férfiarcokat míg a nőket inkább fiússá teszi
>
> ám hiába jelent meg széttartó nemiségem ilyen világosan beszélő jelekben mert körülöttem a vájtszeműek mit sem *láttak* belőlem vidáman poharazgató társaságban álltam hanyag tartással és az arcomon már fáradt félmosollyal mint aki aznap már nem hasad tovább és *visszanéztem* magamra a csillogó keret meszi mélyéről egy feslő fiatal kentaur megértően okos *tekintetével* (85). (my emphasis)

Leona, the narrator, makes an effort to see what the doctor means but instead she sees something else, her own earlier self. We look through a double focalization, and see how she views herself. In her view, a family event emerges about which she gives a detailed and perceptive description. In this visual narration a family photo with a young woman at the center, a kind of still life, appears in front of our eyes. The woman looks back to the viewer and to the reader as well. We are faced with an unstable and insecure homosexual adolescence. The picture is not clear, it is disturbed by the interference of the double focalization. Not only do we see this figure through multiple perspectives; it is exactly these perspectives that constitute the figure. The reader cannot exclude him or herself from the multiplicity of perspectives. Moreover, as the figure from the picture looks back to us, readers, we see ourselves as we are reflected in her eyes. In this view, we cannot have a clear picture of ourselves, either. The reflecting gaze undermines the reader's clear focalization and clear image of oneself. The instability of the figure that stands lonely on the family photo destabilizes the reader's fixed identity.

The language of the novel is a lyrical and rhythmical prose language. The short chapters are usually introduced by poems that are related to the following narrative. As mentioned earlier, the chapters are divided into paragraphs that are not distributed further into sentences. One may follow a vague sentence structure, but

the text often disturbs the reader's sense about the borders of the sentences. The new information, an adjective or an adverb, is connected to the earlier words in a way that we do not know exactly if it is additional information or already a new sentence. In other words, certain phrases can belong to the former and to the following clause at the same time. An A-B structure turns to be a B-A or B-C structure, which may be seen as a chiastic figure. Rhetorically speaking, chiasmus is an inversion in the second phrase of order followed in first, or any structure in which elements are repeated in reverse, giving the pattern ABBA. Usually the repeated elements are specific words, and the syntactic frames holding them (phrases, clauses) are parallel in construction, but may not necessarily be so. Chiasmus may be manifested on any level of the text or (often) on multiple levels at once: phonological (sound patterning), lexical or morphological, syntactic (phrase or clause construction) or semantic/thematic. Chiasmus can also be seen as an envelope pattern, as one form of inversion within repetition. Others define it as the criss-cross placing of sentence members that correspond in either syntax or meaning, with or without verbal repetition.[18] The last two concepts of chiasmus, or chiasmus in a wider sense, may apply fairly to the present novel. Chiastic syntactic constructions are such typical and ubiquitous figures of *Kecskerúzs* that they occur on almost every page. Let us see a few random examples!

> így hát széttártam a kezeimet ezt azonnal és hálásan beleegyezésként *értelmezte Hostell felállt* és rögtön intézni kezdte a formaságokat nekem pedig ott kellett várnom a teljesen jellegtelen szobácskában ahol ezután minden nap eltöltöttem egy-két órát vele de most még zavarban voltam (13–14). (my emphasis)

Hostell may belong both to the former *(értelmezte)* and also to the latter word (felállt).

> görnyedten ültem a *kényelmetlenül mélyre süppedő fotelban* nem dőltem hátra hanem az újságokat néztem az asztal alatti polcon (14). (my emphasis)

A *kényelmetlenül mélyre süppedő fotelban* can be the ending of the first or the beginning of the second sentence.

> a nagy napon amikor némi késéssel befutott Izolda sebesvonata és rohanvást értünk albérleti szobáinkba átöltözni *déli egy órakor* már mind a négyen ünneplősen és izgatottan toporogtunk a házasságkötő terem művészbejárójánál (98). (my emphasis)

Similarly, *déli egy órakor* adverbal clause can be the part of two different sentences. More precisely, the sentences follow each other so quickly that they pile up (accumulate) upon each other. The excitement of the speaker is clearly sug-

gested by the technique in which it is hard to tell the events as fast as they happened. Beside chiasmus, insertion is the most frequent rhetorical strategy. The speaker inserts new information into the sentence and then returns to the old one. Chiastic structures are recognizable in many different senses. In fact, the figure of chiasmus is changing all the time, and it returns in different configurations. The continuous transformation of the figure, the metamorphoses itself becomes an omnipresent meta-figure of the text that enacts the way that chiasmus functions.

Chiasmus and insertion prevent the linear reading process. The reader is forced all the time to look and see back and forth in the process of making sense of the sentences. In the case of chiasmus it is even possible to constitute two different sentences, and we cannot decide which is the correct one. Therefore, undecidability immediately comes into play. The criss-cross figure of chiasmus is closely related to the metaphor of *woods*, that is a recurring trope of *Kecskerúzs*. It seems significant that on the cover of the book we see woods with leaves and bushes in a close-up focalization. When progressing in the text, one might have the strange feeling that one is walking in the woods. As we step back and forth and see which phrase belongs to which clause, it is like bending the branches and the bushes in front of us in order to be able to move ahead. During this process, "walking in the woods" as a figure of reading emerges to us. The reading experience is like walking alert in an unknown forest and watching every step carefully. The concept of woods gains special significance as we come across it in different senses and in different contexts throughout the novel. In some cases it means a refuge from the culture that leaves no room for any alternative life. Leona and Izolda live together in the woods far from the controlling eyes of civilization. Izolda likes walking in the forest with her dogs like the goddess Artemis, and these strolls provide a mythological backdrop for the events. Interestingly, the novel ends with this motif. The dogs lacerate small animals in the forest. Most of the scenes of the introductory poems refer to wild nature with trees, bushes, wind, and birds. The metaphoric of the poems often relay on this semantic field. The first word of the last poem is "Erdő" (woods) and that stands alone in the first line. One may consider it as the title of the last poem. Woods, on the other hand, are also conceptualized as an intimidating and fearsome entity. After Izolda's leaving, Leona feels as if the woods move toward her:

> csak annyi történt hogy közelebb jött és fenyegetőbb lett ami kinn volt eddig és nehezebben és mélyebbre kellett magamba húzódnom hogy védett helyet találjak.

When talking about the hopeless relation with Izolda, Leona uses the metaphor "woods." This is the place where she lost her way, from where the doctor may lead her out:

> nagyon csodálkoztam azon is hogy mély apátiámba milyen rövidke idő elmúltával belopódzott az új kapcsolódás izgalma és vezetett kifelé az erdőből ahová Izoldával tévedtünk.

In the final chapter the characters leave the woods behind them. After climbing a hill, a grand view and a wide perspective open up before them. For Leona and Emese it also means an opening of a new relationship. The reader also gets out of the bushes and branches of the text and almost arrives at a reconcilable solution. But on the very last pages the narrator and main character Leona changes her mind and walks back into the woods. This time Izolda's murderous greyhounds accompany her. The novel ends at this point and the reader may wonder if he or she could really find the way out of the forest of the text.

The relationships among the four characters, Emese, Lala, Izolda and Leona form a chiastic configuration. Lala marries Izolda, but Izolda lives in a love relationship with Leona. Emese is friend with Leona, but at the end of the novel she steps into Izolda's place. Though Lala married Izolda just because of the political situation, he falls in love with her, and thus assumes Leona's position for a while. The relationship of these four characters can be mapped on the four shanks of the letter chi, X (the basic figure of chiasmus). The people next to each other, Lala and Izolda, Izolda and Leona, Leona and Emese have love relations with each other; the people, who stay at the opposite sides of the shanks of the letter X, Lala and Leona, Izolda and Emese form friendships.

Izolda and Leona befriend with another lesbian couple, Gerle and Paloma, who live in the neighborhood. They visit each other, stay overnight from time to time, and another love affair appears among them. The four persons, Izolda, Leona, Gerle and Paloma formulate an exact chiastic figure as they lay on a bed next to each other.

> semmivel sem lett volna könnyebb ha Gerle bevallja léhaságát és elmeséli hogy a nagyon széles kihúzható ágyon ahol ő aludt belül Izoldával talán félreérthető meghittséggel suttogtak egymás között és nem is a simogatásoktól volt mégiscsak csalás az a néhány éjszaka amikor mi olyan mélyen és ártatlanul aludtunk az ágy két szélén Palomával hanem attól hogy mind a ketten ráismertek ebben a kezdetben egy korábbira ami pedig még nem fejeződött be de hagyták mégis hogy megszülessen kettejük között amit aztán el kellett ásniuk mint egy kutyakölyköt (160).

The figure of chiasmus as a replacement between characters seems another significant version that involves the figure of the reader as well. The interchange between the characters can be illustrated by the following example.

> ... mélyebbre kellett magamba húzódnom, hogy védett helyet találjak

> többnyire találtam is csak üreset és valahogy sivárat mert senkit se tudtam beköltöztetni senkinek a szeretetét vagy érdeklődését amely közönsége lett volna magányomnak csak Izoldáét és túl pontosan tudtam hogy ez nem igaz mert igazi beszélgetések már régóta csak az elmémben zajlottak vele ahová betelepítettem távol lévő lényét aki végre beszélt hozzám és más szemmel nézett rám mint én magamra (164).

Izolda, the beloved person (third person singular) becomes an imaginary second person figure who speaks and looks at the speaker. The narrator (Leona) speaks from the position of an "I". In Izolda's gaze she recognizes a self that is different from her own view of herself. Paradoxically, in this remote perspective the "I" becomes a she, the familiar and self-identical figure becomes a more distinct one, yet it seems more acceptable and closer to the speaker's notion of herself. The play of identity goes on in the following passages:

> valószínűleg túl nyílt és elővigyázatlan gesztus tőled egy ilyen mosolyféle több mint amennyit adni szeretnél – magyarázta elégedetten titkos belső Izoldám és ez elgondolkodtatott
>
> nem örültem neki hogy már megint nyitott könyv vagyok és néhány gyakorlatba kezdtem a fürdőszobai tükrök előtt hogy kifejezéstelen legyen az arcom még véletlenül se kiismerhetetlen hanem egyszerűen csak bamba amin a primitív érzések is csak hosszú reakcióidővel láthatódnak félénken és tétovázva (165).

An actual mirror is involved in the play that further multiplies the dichotomy of the "I and you" structure. The multiplicity of perspectives invites the reader to look into the mirror, in other words, to participate in this confusing yet playful game. In the end, it is hard to answer the simple question: who is who? The clause "nyitott könyv vagyok" (I am an open book) functions, perhaps, as a mise-en-abyme narrative device, a mirror in the represented room in which the reader can recognize himself or herself. More correctly, the reader is urged to face the fact that even his or her own self cannot be formulated as a coherent self-identical figure. The idiom "open book" in this context undermines another established distinction: the distinction between the literal and the figurative. The figurative meaning is displaced here and the literal becomes foregrounded. We have literally a book in our hand that makes fun of us. In a manner similar to *Tender Buttons,* the text reflects on us. Not only do we read the text but it also it reads us.

Conclusion

The omnipresence of the figure chiasmus in *Kecskerúzs*, just as the radically subversive language games of Stein, invites the reader to participate in a constantly transforming textual play. At the end we become totally uncertain of what the difference is between otherness and identity. While getting involved in the undecidability of textuality, one step by step challenges the notion of the reader as a united and fixed identity.

During the reading process we listen to the otherness of the text that makes us realize the otherness of ourselves. We would like to read the text and approach it, but instead, the text speaks back; and it is the text that reads us. Instead of a revealing narrative of reading, Stein's *Tender Buttons* and Gordon's *Kecskerúzs* offer us another figure of reading, which is a self-subversive, a self-questioning act. Not only do we see diverse characters but we also see our diversity in the reflection of their eyes. The otherness of these texts may be taken into consideration only in that case when the reader recognizes the difference within him or herself. As a result, another figure of reading appears, it is not a narrative of reading, but the figure of self-dividedness as a way to communicate with the difference of the other.

Notes

1. Elaine Showalter, Lea Baecher, and Walton A. Litz (eds), *Modern American Women Writers* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 336.
2. Ellen G. Friedman and Miriam Fuchs, "Contexts and Continuities: An Introduction to Women's Experimental Fiction," in: *Breaking the Sequence: Women's Experimental Fiction,* ed. Ellen G. Friedman and Miriam Fuchs (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 3–4.
3. Harriet Scott Chessman, *The Public Is Invited to Dance: Representation, the Body, and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 1.
4. Jayne L. Walker, *The Making of a Modernist: Gertrude Stein from Three Lives to Tender Buttons* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 127.
5. *Ibid.,* 128.
6. Ellen E. Berry, *Curved Thought and Textual Wandering: Gertrude Stein's Postmodernism* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 12–15.
7. *Ibid.,* 34.
8. *Ibid.,* 34.
9. *Ibid.,* 34.
10. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 69–77.
11. *Ibid.,* 79.
12. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 121.

13. *Ibid.*, 125.
14. Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1994), xvii.
15. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 6–7.
16. Nicola Pitchfold, "Unlikely Postmodernism: Stein's Tender Buttons" *American Literary History* (1999/4): 646–648.
17. Agáta Gordon, *Kecskerúzs* (Budapest: Magvető, 1997).
18. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 183–184.

« LE CHRIST ET SISYPHE » LECTURE PILINSZKYNIENNE DE L'ŒUVRE DE CAMUS

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« Je ne crois pas en Dieu, c'est vrai. Mais je ne suis pas athée pour autant. »
(Albert Camus)

« Je ne suis pas poète catholique. Je suis poète et je suis catholique. »
(János Pilinszky)

Pilinszky découvre l'œuvre de son contemporain, Albert Camus dans les années '60, et cette rencontre spirituelle déterminera toute une période de son art, notamment celle d'entre 1961 et 1968 où il consacre plusieurs articles à l'auteur français.[1] L'influence de Camus est considérable non seulement quant à la notion de l'absurde, notion fondamentale de la première période poétique de Pilinszky, mais – en rapport évident avec cette dernière – également quant au problème du mal. Ce rapport, quelque peu polémique vis à vis de la conception existentielle de Camus, reste néanmoins présent, bien que d'une manière implicite, dans la poésie des années soixante-dix où le changement poétique radical doit beaucoup aux questions soulevées par Camus, plus précisément au dialogue intense des deux œuvres.[2]

Le côté critique (et plus vivement critique que dans l'ensemble des portraits d'écrivains tracés par Pilinszky) de la lecture de Camus-théoricien de l'absurde relève une position similaire du poète face au paradigme de Sisyphe à la position de Camus face au christianisme. Le parallélisme des deux – contenant non seulement un aspect polémique, mais souvent de véritables fausses interprétations – se montre extrêmement révélateur du point de vue de notre conception. Il s'agit d'autre part d'un aspect d'ordre plus psychologique que poétique de l'œuvre pilinszkynien qu'il nous importe de révéler, mais que les cadres de cette étude ne nous permettent pas de traîter en profondeur. C'est notamment le caractère abstrait de son christianisme, de sa foi, du moins en ce qui en concerne la représentation poétique. D'après notre interprétation, le psychisme – de type fondamentalement schizoïde – de Pilinszky serait plus proche de la déchirure de l'homme absurde d'un Camus (ou de l'être perdu d'un Kafka), c'est-à-dire d'une expérience existentielle

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désespérée (propre aux existentialistes non-chrétiens) que de l'unité psychologique que suppose être croyant. Ce qui explique l'attrait profond du poète pour un type de penseur tel que Camus. Cependant, ce caractère disons anthropologique du poète se tourne – d'une manière paradoxale et d'une authenticité plus qu'indiscutable – vers la foi chrétienne. D'où l'aspect essentiellement paradoxal (et non contradictoire!) de la chrétienneté de cette poésie et son identification à des philosophes, écrivains et penseurs à foi paradoxale tels que les mystiques chrétiens, Dostoïevski, Kierkegaard ou Simone Weil. Il est fort significatif que les auteurs de référence que Camus cite – quoique d'une manière critique – dans ses essais sont pratiquement sans exception des penseurs de l'existentialisme chrétien ou proches à la pensée mystique. De plus, les écrivains et philosophes qui servent – surtout en tant qu'antithèse – à illustrer l'idée du *Mythe de Sisyphe* sont les représentants d'une foi fondamentalement paradoxale. Nous pouvons en conclure que non seulement il existe une coïncidence entre le canon des deux auteurs, mais que ces maîtres spirituels (que l'auteur soit en relation d'identification ou de polémique avec eux) s'adhèrent à une tradition spirituelle identique qui, à l'apparence, n'est pas propre à Camus. Ce qui présuppose donc un rapport au christianisme plus élémentaire que l'auteur ne l'avoue.

Dans un de ses essais, le poète définit lui-même la duplicité mentionnée en parlant de « la tentation du croyant » par l'absurdité de l'être[3]. Ce qui explique sa position si passionnément polémique face à l'absurde camusien.[4] Dans la période de ce dialogue polémique, Pilinszky relie dans un écrit en prose la notion de l'absurde à celle de la foi: « Tout comme les existentialistes choisissent l'éthique, je choisis la foi, même si pas un seul de ses mots n'est vrai. C'est l'unique réponse authentique qu'on puisse donner à l'absurdité de l'être, à cette absurdité de plus en plus évidente. Une réponse sous forme d'une autre absurdité qui, même si elle n'existe pas, est plus forte que l'absurdité de l'existence pure. »[5] On a l'impression que le poète reproche à Camus de ne pas le suivre dans la réponse donnée à une expérience existentielle identique, comme s'il éprouvait des sentiments ambivalents face à cette personnalité si proche psychologiquement et si lointaine idéologiquement! (Il faut savoir que non seulement Camus (en 1936–37), mais Pilinszky fut également tenté par l'idée du suicide, du moins par un dégoût de la vie qui prenait la forme d'une sérieuse dépression nerveuse dans les années '60!) Il est intéressant de constater que le propos critique de Pilinszky se constitue souvent de la confrontation de Camus à des auteurs considérés par le poète comme autorités spirituelles incontestables, le plus souvent justement à Dostoïevski critiqué par le Camus du *Mythe de Sisyphe*:[6] « Albert Camus, dans son livre intitulé *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, reproche à Dostoïevski de ne pas avoir écrit un roman absurde, d'avoir, malgré sa révélation du monde absurde, recouru à la consolation de la foi. Il existe cependant, par-delà la révélation de l'absurdité du monde, une voie plus logique, si l'on veut plus absurde – qui ne tend pas vers la fuite – qui est l'assimi-

lation à l'absurdité du monde. C'est dans ce sens-là que «la réponse de Dostoïevski est l'humilité», mais cette humilité, l'identification au poids de l'absurdité du monde tout en se revêtant du poids des contradictions de l'être et de nos propres contradictions, c'est tout sauf du renoncement. »[7] Par ailleurs, Pilinszky ne conçoit pas la foi comme consolation, il pense que c'est justement la foi qui assure la clairvoyance, idéal de Camus: « seul le croyant a le courage de faire face à l'absurdité totale de la vie », puisque « la foi n'est rien d'autre que le dépassement de la détresse »[8] (Dans le même passage de son Journal, Pilinszky parle du suicide à propos du désespoir, en se référant d'une façon évidente à la pensée de Camus, sans nommer cependant ce dernier.)

Dans son essai de 1967, intitulé « Le Christ et Sisyphe », consacré à Camus, le poète propose une interprétation du *Mythe de Sisyphe*, et retrace le rapport qui existe entre la figure du Christ, figure emblématique de son art et la figure du Sisyphe camusien. Le dialogue des deux personnages mythiques, qui naît de cette lecture, ne sert pas simplement à illustrer le dialogue Pilinszky-Camus, mais en constitue le fondement et le point d'Archimède. Le point de départ à fond commun est donc l'absurdité de la condition humaine qui se manifeste dans l'absence de réponse à l'appel de l'homme, du moins en ce qui concerne le Pilinszky de la première période poétique. (Bien que le terme absurde disparaisse presque entièrement du vocabulaire des essais des années '70, selon notre hypothèse, le caractère du rapport à Dieu, dont témoigne l'ensemble de l'art de Pilinszky, garde le souvenir de l'absurdité de l'existence. C'est pourquoi il paraît évident de traiter le dialogue Pilinszky-Camus en rapport étroit avec le dialogue des deux auteurs avec Kafka. Ce qui nous trace une fois de plus les contours d'un cercle herméneutique autours des trois auteurs.) La différence radicale se présente pourtant dès l'interprétation de la racine de cette condition absurde qui révèle pour Pilinszky le problème du péché. Ce qui est en rapport étroit avec le fait que chez Pilinszky le rocher absurde de Sisyphe se dessine à l'intérieur de la croix, à la notion de l'absurde se mêle ainsi la notion de la grâce. A part les bornes évidentes de sa lecture, c'est justement cette différence idéologique qui fera dire à Pilinszky que l'œuvre de Camus, en tant que fruit du pur intellect, ne constitue pas de l'art, mais simplement de la «littérature». Cette réflexion quelque peu discutable révèle cependant un aspect essentiel de la création camusienne sur lequel nous reviendrons par la suite. Pour le moment, nous nous contentons de souligner un élément de ce débat: notamment la question de la mort des enfants:[9] « L'intellect voit du scandale dans la souffrance des enfants, l'art y voit une profondeur secrète. »[10] Dans son art poétique en prose, *Pour un art poétique* (Ars poética helyett), il reprend ce même sujet: « Le sang de Dieu transperce la toile du temps et de l'espace. La souffrance de l'enfant innocent est son incarnation dans la création. » Pour Camus, la souffrance des innocents est signe incontestable, de plus source de l'absurdité de l'être. Pour Pilinszky, elle est également sujet omniprésent des méditations, et jusqu'à

une certaine dimension, elle est également perçue comme scandale. Cependant, la tâche de la créature et de l'artiste-créateur est, dans sa conception existentielle, de dépasser cette dimension et de découvrir dans la souffrance humaine la réincarnation de la souffrance du Christ crucifié (voir le paradigme d'Auschwitz), la dimension du stade religieux de Kierkegaard face à laquelle Camus adopte une attitude profondément sceptique et polémique. Cependant, c'est Camus même qui atteste la possibilité d'un fond de dialogue (tout en gardant ses distances) entre sa pensée et la pensée chrétienne, lorsqu'il dit dans sa conférence de 1946 faite au couvent des Dominicains (où il se compare à Saint Augustin qui cherchait, comme lui, la source du mal): « Je partage avec vous la même horreur du mal. Mais je ne partage pas votre espoir et je continue à lutter contre cet univers où des enfants souffrent et meurent. »[11]

La tendance par laquelle Pilinszky s'éloigne de plus en plus de l'effroi de l'absurde et s'approche d'une vision religieuse plus approfondie, se présente – entre autres – dans le contexte de la problématique de la souffrance des innocents et s'attache à la révélation élémentaire des années '60: celle de la philosophie mystique de Simone Weil. Il paraît que l'éloignement de la question de l'absurde se lie dans l'œuvre de Pilinszky à la découverte de la théodicée weilienne.[12] C'est en 1967, année de la parution de l'essai « Le Christ et Sisyphe », qu'une distance plus évidente se manifeste vis-à-vis de la pensée camusienne. C'est à partir de cette période-là que l'identification à Dostoïevski devient prédominante avec l'apparition de la notion de l'humilité si étrangère à Camus. Il s'agit ici d'un changement d'optique évident dans la pensée du poète où l'être se montre moins absurde que personnalité à deux dimensions.[13]

Alors que pour Pilinszky, la source de l'absurde est d'une manière évidente, le péché originel, il s'agit pour Camus du fait inévitable de la mort.[14] Les deux préceptes sont donc diamétralement opposés dans leurs genèses: l'un partant de l'événement de la création, des débuts du monde, l'autre de la finitude inévitable de l'existence. (Et ici, comme d'une manière générale, on voit que les liens se forment surtout dans le mode de questionnement, et bien moins dans les réponses proposées.) Pour Pilinszky, la réponse authentique donnée à la condition absurde avait toujours été placée dans une dimension au-delà de cette condition, soit l'espoir, de plus l'espérance avaient été présents dans ses méditations poétiques dès le début de son œuvre, la différence des périodes n'étant marquée que par le degré d'équilibre entre l'absurde et l'espérance. Pilinszky place donc au centre de sa pensée existentielle et religieuse l'idée fondamentale de la métaphysique chrétienne, l'idée que Camus traite dans son *Mythe de Sisyphe* de suicide philosophique. Il emploie d'ailleurs ce terme justement à propos des penseurs existentialistes, tels que Kierkegaard, Jaspers ou Chestov dont János Pilinszky est disciple.

Les trois conséquences de l'absurde camusien: la révolte, la liberté et la passion seront évidemment contestées par Pilinszky qui travaille justement à cette

période-là sur des commentaires du livre de la Genèse centrés sur le problème du péché originel: la question qu'il médite ici est le contraste du bien de la création (Dieu crée l'homme bien) et du mal introduit par l'homme que nous pouvons qualifier, d'après Camus, de révolte métaphysique[15]. Cependant, le contraste de la position radicalement anti-métaphysique de Camus et de la perception métaphysique de Pilinszky n'est valable que sur le mode du paraître. Et là encore, il n'est pas simplement question de la première période poétique de Pilinszky où l'on retrouve les traces évidentes d'une révolte contre Dieu tout en restant dans les dimensions d'une théodicée. Mais il s'agit aussi bien d'un rapport étroit qui s'établit entre l'ensemble de l'œuvre poétique reposant sur une idée négative de la présence de Dieu (voir ses liens à la théologie négative) contenant des éléments proches de la révolte (voir l'omniprésence du thème de l'enfant prodigue) et l'attachement évident, quoique polémique, de Camus-penseur à la tradition métaphysique du christianisme. Cependant la révolte de Camus face à la création est d'ordre radicalement différent de celle de Pilinszky qui résulte du fait que Camus se situe dans la position de l'homme fondamentalement opposé bien qu'inhérent à la création, alors que la révolte de Pilinszky ne déborde pas les cadres d'une idée religieuse de la créature[16].

Ce sont les textes poétiques de la toute première période qui paraissent particulièrement révélateurs: les pièces du premier recueil (*Cratère,* 1940–46) et de la première partie du recueil suivant (*Au No Mans Land* [Senkiföldjén] *dans Au troisième jour*, 1946–48) qui datent donc bien d'avant l'époque où Pilinszky propose une interprétation de l'œuvre de Camus. Il nous semble important de signaler que l'époque citée coïncide curieusement avec les dates de naissance des premiers chef-d'œuvres camusiens: celles de *L'Étranger* et du *Mythe de Sisyphe* (parus identiquement en 1942). Il s'agit ainsi non seulement de la coexistence de l'air du temps déterminé par le « mal de l'esprit » *(Le mythe de Sisyphe),* mais d'une affinité spirituelle semblable, d'une congénialité identique des idées.

Le fait que les premiers poèmes représentent une expérience existentielle plus proche de celle de Camus que l'essai intitulé Le Christ et Sisyphe tient également dans la différence ontologique des deux types de discours littéraire: dans l'ensemble de son œuvre, le statut de Pilinszky poète croyant est bien de fois plus problématique que celui de Pilinszky penseur chrétien.[17] La poésie de Pilinszky paraît donc être plus proche de la déchirure anthropologique traitée ci-dessus que les écrits en prose.

« Je ne crois pas en Dieu, c'est vrai. Mais je ne suis pas athée pour autant. »[18] Par ce qui suit, nous tenterons de retracer les points cardinaux qui créent une différence entre le christianisme et la pensée de Camus, et de reproduire cependant les liens évidents – quoique souvent contestés par l'auteur – avec la tradition chrétienne, de plus l'idée de Dieu, les « préoccupations chrétiennes » de cette « nature païenne ».[19]

Nous adhérons aux critiques qui voient dans l'œuvre de Camus un lien profond aux questions soulevées par le christianisme et une incapacité de se détourner de la question de l'existence de Dieu, tout en prenant en considération la position profondément agnostique de l'écrivain face à ces questions. Nous espérons pouvoir reconstituer par cette démarche les éventuels rapports qui existent entre le questionnement camusien du christianisme et le christianisme profond, mais spécifique et souvent problématique de la poésie de Pilinszky. Ce dernier doit beaucoup, d'après notre hypothèse, au dialogue polémique avec Camus, comme si souvent dans l'expérience de tous, l'opposition spirituelle renforcent l'éclaircissement de notre conception du monde.

Ingrid di Méglio parle de « la pensée à la fois religieuse et antichrétienne de Camus »[20] que nous tenterons de confronter au christianisme paradoxal de Pilinszky, surtout en ce qui en concerne la représentation poétique.

Pour Camus, la cause première de l'antireligiosité réside dans l'idée qu'il se fait de Dieu dont la toute puissance le sépare de l'homme.[21] Cette image de Dieu qui rappelle (du moins dans sa genèse) celle de Franz Kafka, elle-même reposée sur l'image de Dieu de l'Ancien Testament (tradition religieuse que, curieusement, Camus ignore dans ses réflexions!), recouvre un rapport négatif et dialectique: celui de la toute puissance divine et de l'impuissance humaine.[22] Une conception manichéenne du monde, le rapport de l'homme à Dieu vu comme déséquilibre de la hiérarchie métaphysique, caractérise également la poésie de la première période de Pilinszky. Ce rapport déséquilibré est – selon Camus – la cause de la révolte prométhéenne de l'homme contre l'Omniscient. Nous découvrons dans ce propos une des nombreuses contradictions de la philosophie (anti-)religieuse de Camus: son refus de Dieu, son « athéodicée »[23] se trouve en contradiction avec la logique de son antireligiosité: comment peut-on faire abstraction de Dieu (qui est, on le sait bien, le défi majeur de Camus penseur), si Dieu est «l'ultime cause de l'incroyance humaine» dans «Perte de l'être aimé». Camus définit sa propre incroyance comme «refus du salut» dont le modèle littéraire est Ivan Karamazov, et dont la solution est fournie par une autre figure de Dostoïevski, Kirilov qui décide de « vivre sans appel » tout en faisant abstraction de Dieu, et procédant ainsi à une liberté « fondée sur la privation de l'espoir et de l'avenir. » Non seulement dans ses premiers poèmes, mais dans une pièce du recueil *Échardes*, Pilinszky aborde le problème de l'être sans appel. Le poème intitulé *Entouré d'attraits* (Vonzások közt) semble être une véritable paraphrase de l'idée centrale du *Mythe de Sisyphe*. La réponse proposée par le poète est à l'opposé de celle de Camus des années '40: le poème exprime – tout en invitant (d'une façon fort implicite) l'écrivain français à un dialogue polémique – l'insuffisance d'une existence sans appel et le besoin de l'humilité face au ciel taciturne et à l'homme révolté de Camus.[24] Par l'introduction de l'idée d'humilité, c'est, comme nous

l'avons constaté plus haut, encore Dostoïevski qui triomphe sur Camus selon la vision pilinszkynienne. Nous voyons donc que la pensée de Camus ne cesse d'être présente dans les années '70, elle est cependant confrontée à une idée approfondie de l'existence et de la foi. C'est pourquoi Pilinszky reprend la question du *Mythe de Sisyphe*: « Peut-on vivre sans appel? » de manière à la paraphraser tout en s'éloignant de la perspective originelle de la question: le poème devenant un exemple imminent de la prémisse fondamentale de cette poésie: l'homme est dans l'état de l'appel, du dialogue avec Dieu dont la forme poétique (fondée sur un principe de dialogue) est la représentation poétique de la prière.

Il nous semble nécessaire de résumer ici l'essentiel du principe dialogal de la poésie pilinszkynienne. Le principe esthétique du dialogue recouvre tout un art poétique chez Pilinszky, c'est la poésie même qui est, par son essence, dialogue (cf. la notion d' « esthétique évangélique »), ce qu'on peut parfaitement illustrer par un extrait du *Méridien* de Paul Celan: « Le poème tend vers l'Autre. Il a besoin de cet Autre, il a besoin de la confrontation (...) dans laquelle il acquiert un sens. » Le principe dialogal se fonde, dans les poèmes pilinszkyniens, sur un acte d'appel. L'appel de l'Autre (qui doit beaucoup à l'influence du personnalisme) est un aspect profondément personnel dans cet œuvre lyrique. Le discours poétique fondé sur le personnalisme de l'appel est bien évidemment un trait qui sépare clairement la poésie de Pilinszky de l'auteur de l'homme absurde de *L'Étranger*. La question se montre pourtant plus complexe, vu que ce côté personnel de la poésie de Pilinszky s'attache à l'impersonnalité de la forme poétique objective, ce qui est la source d'un contraste si particulier et si impressionnant. Le rapport apparemment impassible du moi poétique/du narrateur à son œuvre d'art constitue, du moins sur un premier registre, une correspondance entre les deux œuvres.

La critique de la philosophie camusienne prend ainsi la forme d'un art poétique chez Pilinszky.[25]

Entourés d'attraits, mais sans appel,
satisferait-ce peut-être le ciel,
mais non ce misérable
qui voit, qui entend, ou bien aveuglé
lutte contre le froid, la chaleur, la distance.
Mais comment pourrais-je devancer
le ciel entier, sinon
pour le froid, la chaleur et la
distance humiliante.
(Trad. par D. Sz.)

Il est inutile de rappeler que la dialoguicité est certainement étrangère à l'auteur de *L'Étranger* qui thématise justement (en particulier pendant la période de l'homme absurde) l'existence sans appel et la résignation de l'être en absence de

dialogue. La confrontation de sa pensée à la dialoguicité pilinszkynienne dépasse cependant les cadres de la simple opposition dialectique. D'une part, nous sommes témoins d'une certaine évolution – en avançant chronologiquement dans l'œuvre camusien – quant à l'espoir d'un dialogue, du moins dans la sphère intersubjective: il s'agit-là de la fameuse idée de solidarité exprimée dans *La peste*, diamétralement opposée à l'idée de l'isolement absolu excluant toute possibilité de (véritable) dialogue pour Meursault, homme absurde. De plus, en rapport étroit avec la capacité ou l'incapacité de dialoguer, le concept de péché et de mal connaît une réelle évolution de *L'Étranger* à *La peste*.[26] D'autre part, les textes de Camus témoignent d'un dialogue constant avec Dieu qu'ils prétendent paradoxalement nier: ce dialogue reposant sur une position de « duel » de l'homme révolté: il s'agit donc du dialogue passionné d'un Job qui rappelle, dans un certain sens, le Job des premiers poèmes de Pilinszky. S'agirait d'un dialogue involontaire avec l'au-delà? Si l'on admet le sens commun de la critique selon lequel *La chute* illustrerait quant à la question de la solidarité, soit du dialogue, une « récidive » par rapport à *La peste*, nous devons préciser que ceci n'est valable que vis-à-vis de la dimension humaine. Le dialogue, quelque peu sceptique, souvent sacrilège, que le juge-pénitent tient avec Dieu et surtout le Christ, paraît épanouir la suite des dialogues « négatifs » tenus avec Dieu qui ont toujours été présents dans le cours des récits. Même si leur fonction est de démontrer l'absence de l'appel, l'absence de la grâce et la premisse que Dieu n'existe pas. Tel est l'un des aspects du rapport paradoxal qui attache Camus, malgré ses intentions, au christianisme.

Certes, l'hypothèse de Camus, tout au long de son œuvre, « est l'absence de Dieu, mais sa lutte incessante contre l'idée même de Dieu prouve bien qu'il n'arrive pas à en faire abstraction. »[27] Di Méglio parle directement d'une « théologie » camusienne à la Nietzsche qui doit beaucoup à Kierkegaard, à Pascal et à Dostoïevski.

Selon Camus, le christianisme est une doctrine de l'injustice: c'est la réponse qu'il donne à la question de la théodicée, est c'est-à-dire au paradoxe de l'existence omnipotente de Dieu et de l'existence du mal. Cette question primordiale de la théologie, l'une des plus complexes et des plus difficiles (à laquelle les plus grands, tels que Saint Augustin, ont du mal à trouver une réponse!), est également au centre de la pensée de Pilinszky. Ce problème qui se montre de premier ordre dans notre questionnement, se pose dans des perpectives distinctes chez les deux auteurs dont la racine est dans une vision différente de l'existence et du péché: chez Camus la théodicée est abordée et limitée par le sens éthique de l'intellect pour lequel l'omniprésence du mal ne peut être vue que comme scandale de l'être et négation de la création. Alors que pour Pilinszky, le mal a une double dimension: la dimension éthique du scandale dont la réflexion intellectuelle ne peut se passer, s'enrichit d'une dimension insondable par la pensée discursive de la première dimension, d'une dimension au-delà de l'éthique et de l'intellect, accessi-

ble justement par le fameux « saut » kierkegaardien que Camus reproche – comme suicide philosophique – à tout esprit religieux.

La réponse que Camus donne au problème du mal nous paraît plus simpliste: « La seule excuse de Dieu, c'est qu'il n'existe pas. » Pilinszky, au contraire, voit dans le mal, une incarnation secrète, dont le modèle est celle du Christ, de la présence du Dieu caché. L'homme révolté a cependant besoin de Dieu pour pouvoir s'opposer passionnément à lui, d'où la contradiction élémentaire du Job camusien. Le « duel » (Camus) de l'homme avec Dieu, la situation de Job est également au centre du questionnement de Pilinszky: d'une façon plus explicite dans la première période poétique, d'une façon plus implicite dans l'ensemble de l'œuvre. L'image du Dieu cruel, injuste et sans pitié – rappelant celui du *Procès* et autres récits de Kafka – est représentative des débuts poétiques de Pilinszky (quoiqu'elle soit plus nuancée que chez Camus), à seule différence que son Job se constitue dans la perspective entière de son modèle narratif biblique, c'est-à-dire en atteignant l'état de réconciliation avec Dieu, soit la grâce, perspective que le Job camusien non seulement n'atteindra jamais (comme tel héritier des héros de Kafka), mais qu'il tente de nier comme possibilité à atteindre.

Il est cependant plus que significatif que le thème de Job occupe une place si importante dans la littérature du XX^{e} siècle, ainsi que dans sa théologie « brisée » (Karl Barth) qui adhère à la plainte et à la révolte de Job dans son rapport à Dieu. Un véritable dialogue se dessine ainsi entre le Job pilinszkynien et le Job camusien reliés par l'idée de la théologie « brisée » selon laquelle le mal est une réalité inconciliable avec la perfection de Dieu et de sa création. Pilinszky atteste, dans ses poèmes de jeunesse, la même attitude de révolte face à l'absurdité de la souffrance que l'auteur de *La peste* et de *L'homme révolté*. La théologie moderne paraît établir un dialogue avec la pensée de Camus lorsqu'elle affirme que « si la souffrance semble absurde (le discours chrétien sur le salut se montre souvent insuffisant face à l'expérience de l'absurdité de la souffrance), le chrétien a – suivant le modèle biblique – le droit de se plaindre à Dieu. »[28] Karl Barth va encore plus loin en disant que « l'unique attitude possible du religieux contemporain face à Dieu est celle du Job biblique. La vocation de l'homme sur terre est le questionnement sans réponse, la résignation souffrante, la contradiction impuissante, la révolte et l'incapacité totale de réagir autrement que de crier ou de devenir muet. » Telle est l'attitude de Pilinszky croyant et de Camus se prétendant incroyant, le premier optant plus pour le mutisme, le second plus pour le cri du révolté, chacun cherchant « une réponse, neuve (...) à la vieille question de Job. »[29] Camus restant plus dans le questionnement, Pilinszky approchant d'avantage la réponse de Job.

« Je ne crois pas à l'Éternité » – dit l'homme absurde, faut-il rappeler l'épigraphe du *« Mythe de Sisyphe »*, tiré de Pindare: « O mon âme, n'aspire pas à la vie immortelle, mais épuise le champ du possible. » Le problème traité ci-dessus est

donc en lien étroit avec l'idée que les deux auteurs se font de l'au-delà et de la fin du monde. L'objet de la critique religieuse de Camus étant le christianisme, nous devons prendre en considération l'image du Christ dans la conception de Camus et dans celle de Pilinszky.

« Tout mon royaume est de ce monde ».[30] La négation de l'éternité aboutit chez Camus à une idée de Dieu qui est « le père de la mort et le suprême scandale »[31] Nous reviendrons aux figures du père et du fils qui ont leur importance dans l'art de Camus et qui forment une problématique centrale dans la poésie de Pilinszky (voir la parabole de l'enfant prodigue).

La figure du Christ réapparaît constamment dans les écrits de Camus, de plus dans une connotation positive face à l'image négative de Dieu. Di Méglio parle d'une véritable « christologie » à propos de Camus[32], quant à nous, nous estimons que l'idée camusienne du Christ demeure en fragments, dans le sens où elle révèle des aperçus extrêmement fins qui se mêlent de véritables incompréhensions. C'est peut-être ce côté contradictoire qui est perçu par le poète lorsqu'il dit qu'un seul pas séparait l'écrivain français du christianisme, mais que ce pas restait pour lui infranchissable. L'importance du Christ est inséparable de l'attrait de Camus à l'esprit grec: c'est l'idée de la médiation des gnostiques, donc le « côté grec » du christianisme qu'il confronte à son « côté judaïque », c'est-à-dire l'image du Fils médiateur à celle du Père inabordable. Dans l'idée camusienne du christianisme qui est « centré autour de la personne du Christ et de sa mort »[33], Pilinszky a pu retrouver le reflet de sa propre idée religieuse, de plus de son art poétique profondément christocentrique. La théologie paulienne décrite dans le mémoire de diplôme de Camus, selon laquelle par l'incarnation, Dieu est descendu jusqu'à l'homme, le Christ ayant ainsi comblé la distance entre le Créateur et sa créature, est une idée chère à Pilinszky poète et penseur. De plus, l'influence que la théologie de la croix a exercée sur Camus, entre en véritable dialogue (peut-être méconnu par le poète?) avec l'univers poétique de Pilinszky, se dessinant autour de l'image de la croix.

La compassion extatique de Pilinszky pour toute sorte de malheurs et de souffrances, s'introduit à l'intérieur d'une idée d'existence se fondant sur l'imitatio Christi: l'image centrale du Christ exprimant, dans cette poésie, l'identification au seul modèle vraiment authentique de l'existence. Le christocentrisme est chez Pilinszky, en rapport causal avec le concept de péché: l'existence déterminée par le péché originel est vécue comme drame par la créature qui se trouve, par la conscience aiguë de son existence pécheresse, en état de déchirure.

> « Tels les larrons – selon la magnifique parole de Simone Weil –
> nous hommes, sommes attachés sur la croix
> de l'espace et du temps. »
> (A Jutta, trad. par Lorand Gaspar)

Cette déchirure en tant que conséquence d'une perception aiguë de notre état pécheur est une caractéristique essentielle de la pensée de Camus. De plus, ce dernier établit – tout comme le poète – un lien entre la croix de l'existence pécheresse, qui n'est autre que la souffrance et la croix du Christ. La différence se montre une fois de plus dans l'indication divergente de la perspective du problème posé: pour Camus l'exemple du Christ semble résider au niveau du modèle mythique et éthique qui – malgré l'authenticité suprême de son exemple – ne peut anéantir la croix de l'être. C'est ainsi une idée d'existence fondée sur le concept du péché « sans prière » (Camus) qui s'oppose à une idée d'existence fondée sur le concept du « péché avec prière » (Pilinszky). C'est donc l'idée d'un Christ salvateur, l'idée du Messie qui est entièrement absente de l'image camusienne. A l'opposé de ceci, Pilinszky fait du Christ crucifié non seulement le centre de ses méditations et le fondement de sa vision du monde, mais aussi le motif poétique le plus fondamental de son œuvre lyrique. D'où la mise en relief de l'image des échardes dans la poésie des années '70.

L'on aurait tendance à croire qu'à ce point précis se formule une différence fondamentale entre les deux œuvres examinés. Au contraire, la vision du Christ crucifié est, nous le pensons, le centre du dialogue Camus-Pilinszky. La première partie du propos de Camus concernant le christianisme pourrait très bien être le propos de Pilinszky: « s'il nous a touchés (...), c'est par son Dieu fait homme. Mais sa vérité et sa grandeur s'arrêtent à la croix, et à ce moment où il crie son abandon. » [34] Inconsciemment peut-être, Camus adhère à ce point-là à une certaine tradition théologique centrée sur l'essence humaine, soit le côté personnel de Jésus (ce qu'on appelle théologie anthropocentrique) et qui interprète la scène de Gethsémani en tant que représentation par excellence de la double essence humaine et divine du Christ, c'est-à-dire en tant qu'aspect dramatique de la passion. Pour Pilinszky, qui est poète croyant et dont la poésie est profondément imprégnée par l'eschatologie, l'histoire de Jésus ne s'achève pas, bien évidemment, à la croix. La croix reçoit cependant une telle importance dans sa pensée existentielle et son idée du péché qu'elle semble dominer sur l'idée – également et (authentiquement) présente – de la résurrection. L'histoire de la passion du Christ a une si grande importance dans sa poésie que la critique parle d'une véritable « poétique des trois jours ». Il y a certes, dans l'évolution de l'œuvre poétique une tendance qui va de l'événement du Vendredi Saint vers la résurrection de Pâques qui paraît plus dominante dans la poésie des années '70 (à partir de la parution *d'Échardes*). Il est cependant caractéristique que la représentation de l'abîme de la passion, de l'agonie du Christ se présente plus dominante. Le recueil intitulé *Au troisième jour* est représentatif de ce point de vue où le sujet du scandale d'Auschwitz est confronté et transposé à la dimension sacrée par l'identification de la victime des stalags à la victime du Christ: le poème portant le nom du recueil poussant cette identification jusqu'à son extrême:

Car ont pu le tuer de vils mercenaires
et son coeur de battre a pu s'arrêter –
Au troisième jour il vainquit la mort.
Et resurrexit tertia die.
(*Au troisième jour*, trad. par Maurice Regnaut)

Les pièces pascales nées sous le signe de l'extase de la résurrection sont pourtant suivies des poèmes de l'abîme de la crucifixion, tel que *Apocryphe* ou *Apocalypse VIII.7.*[35]

Il s'agit, dans le vocabulaire pilinszkynien, de « l'abysse » (ou « le point le plus bas » dans la traduction de Lorand Gaspar) se procurant une représentation poétique si expressive: il suffit de citer un morceau tardif qui exprime la même expérience existentielle que les premiers poèmes, proche du « degré zéro » de la crucifixion:

car être homme c'est regarder
avec une pupille vissée sur les enfers.
(*Pupille*, trad. par Lorand Gaspar)

L' « abysse » a cependant sa « fête » chez Pilinszky, telle la descente aux enfers de l'enfant prodigue qui aboutit dans un dénouement de retour à la maison paternelle et de réconciliation exprimé par l'image du festin. Citons, afin d'illustrer notre propos le poème portant le titre de *La fête du point le plus bas*:

Dans la chaleur sanglante des porcheries
qui ose lire?
Et qui ose
dans le champ d'échardes du soleil couchant, à marée haute du ciel à marée basse de la terre prendre la route pour n'importe où?
Qui ose
les yeux fermés s'arrêter à ce point le plus bas,
là où
il se trouve toujours un geste de dépit, un toit,
visage ravissant, ou même une seule main, un signe de la tête, de la main? Qui peut le coeur tranquille se glisser
dans le sommeil, qui déborde l'amertume de l'enfance et lève la mer telle une poignée d'eau à son visage?
(Trad. par Lorand Gaspar)

Pilinszky se réfère constamment (à propos de la situation de l'homme absurde) à l'agonie de Jésus, à l'événement de la nuit de Gethsémani, à la figure profondément humaine et profondément solitaire du Christ, délaissé par son Père. Dans l'un des nombreux essais consacrés à ce sujet, il dit même que la scène du jardin des Oliviers est pour lui le moment le plus authentique de l'histoire de Jésus. « Dès lors, une immense ombre enveloppe la nature divine de Jésus. (...) Dans le

jardin des Oliviers, Jésus se retrouve seul entre Dieu et l'homme, au No man's land du néant. (...) C'est un véritable drame qui s'est joué ici entre Dieu et l'homme. (...) 'Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, pourquoi m'as-tu abandonné?' (...) C'est tout de même cette phrase de Jésus que je préfère, comme si, par cette phrase, il avait compté justement sur ma foi. Cette parole est pourtant une parole 'scandaleuse' par laquelle Jésus semble nier toutes ses paroles précédentes. (...) Cependant, tout ce grand drame ne pourrait être authentique sans cette parole. »[36]

Pour les deux auteurs, l'événement de la croix représente le moment suprême de l'histoire: pour Camus, il est le «résumé de l'histoire universelle»[37], de plus « la seul tragédie chrétienne de l'histoire » [38], pour Pilinszky le « degré zéro » de l'histoire auquel répondra le degré zéro de l'Antéchrist d'Auschwitz. (La vision historique de la pensée pilinszkynienne se construit autour de trois degrés zéro de l'histoire: celui de la crucifixion du Christ, celui du scandale d'Auschwitz et celui de l'événement eschatologique de l'Apocalypse.) « Comme l'a dit le pape Jean-Paul II à Auschwitz: je m'agenouille sur le Golgotha. S'agenouiller, c'est l'unique réponse qui dit le plus. »[39] L'analogie qui s'établit ainsi entre le Christ et Auschwitz se constitue du paradoxe du souvenir (plus précisément de l'anamnèse) irrémédiable des stalags et de la présence immuable de la poésie par la force des mots, paradoxe qui se dissout dans l'acte parallèle du témoignage.[40] Le paradigme de l'agonie, comme l'illustre l'image d'Auschwitz chez Pilinszky, se construit ainsi à l'intérieur de la problématique du péché: la situation de Getshémani sert de modèle non seulement à l'aspect universel et sacré de la souffrance, mais aussi bien au sentiment de culpabilité historique: le péché « impersonnel « (terme repris par Pilinszky de Simone Weil qui l'oppose au terme de péché « collectif »!) est la source essentielle du sentiment de culpabilité du moi poétique. Or ce sentiment de culpabilité rentre en rapport paradoxal avec l'existence de Dieu: « Dieu, de temps en temps, transperce la toile de l'histoire, et, par la grâce de cette situation, l'homme devient à nouveau obéissant. Auschwitz est désormais un musée. Mais l'usure des objets qui se trouvent dans les vitrines devient les chiffres du siècle, les chiffres de la vie. Un témoignage éternel. »[41]

L'interprétation de la croix en tant que symbole archétypal de l'homme abandonné par Dieu est une prémisse en commun, mais les conséquences qui en seront tirées sont diamétralement opposées. Camus voit dans le Jésus de Getshémani un allié de l'homme contre Dieu, Jésus comme archétype de l'innocence persécutée (qui semble être une idée influencée par Dostoïevski: voir Kirilov dans le *Mythe de Sisyphe*) « n'est qu'un innocent de plus, que les représentants du Dieu d'Abraham ont supplicié spectaculairement. »[42] C'est un exemple éminent des incompréhensions en matière de religion de Camus en contraste avec l'affinité profonde de Pilinszky pour les paradoxes de l'existence chrétienne dont une illustration classique est justement la parabole d'Abraham, interprétée – d'après Kierkegaard – à plusieurs reprises par Pilinszky. Même, si nous faisons abstraction d'éventuelles

insuffisances de son interprétation du christianisme, il est certain que Camus surestime – dans la perspective d'un esprit chrétien tel que Pilinszky – le côté historique du christianisme et refuse l'idée de l'incarnation et du rachat du péché du monde: « Je n'ai que respect et vénération devant la personne du Christ et devant son histoire: je ne crois pas à sa résurrection. »[43] Il est en même temps frappant de voir un reflet, bien que négatif, de l'hérésie camusienne dans l'un des essais du poète: « Je pense beaucoup à Jésus, mais comme tous les croyants authentiques, je suis à la fois un hérétique. Car seul celui qui ne croit pas, n'est pas un hérétique. »[44]

Bien que pour Pilinszky le Christ incarne également l'archétype de la souffrance humaine des innocents, il adhère ici à l'interprétation traditionnelle du christianisme, soit à l'idée de l'imitatio Christi – dont il fait non seulement sa profession de foi, mais également son art poétique. Selon cette dernière, par le mystère de la souffrance humaine, le Christ n'est pas «complice» prométhéen de l'homme contre Dieu, mais au contraire: participant – dans la souffrance – du mystère de la Création qui est, selon le penchant mystique du poète, la seule voie (quoique paradoxale) vers Dieu, autrement dit un aspect de théodicée. Alors que pour Camus, la mort d'un enfant (sujet qu'ils retrouvent tous les deux dans *Les Frères Karamazov* de Dostoïevski, qui est un exemple de plus du parallélisme des maîtres!) est en soi preuve contre l'existence de Dieu, Pilinszky, profondément préoccupé par ce scandale de la création, y voit un mystère semblable à celui de la crucifixion (sans voir pour autant un rapport causal entre la souffrance des innocents et la grâce), et ne conclue pas – dans la comparaison de la mort d'un enfant et de l'agonie du Christ – à la manière du Camus de *La Peste* où même Paneloux, figure représentative du croyant semble perdre confiance en la bonté de Dieu. Pilinszky, recourt, dans sa lecture de la scène de Getshémani, à l'étymologie du terme agonie dont le champ sémantique original recouvre non seulement l'angoisse de la mort, mais aussi un autre élément, celui du combat, de la révolte momentanée contre la volonté du Père, donc un aspect évoquant l'interprétation camusienne. La différence fondamentale se manifeste dans le fait fort significatif que Camus ne cite jamais en entier les mots du Christ prononcés au jardin des Oliviers, mais seulement la fin du verset: « Lama sabactani» sans le début « Éli, Éli », soit sans l'interpellation du Père qui reprend la prière d'un verset des Psaumes. Camus omet donc un aspect essentiel de la situation de Jésus agonisant, notamment « que sa relation avec Dieu n'est donc pas du tout rompue »[45], un aspect qui apparaît comme essentiel pour Pilinszky. L'interpellation de Getshémani n'est autre qu'une prière de Jésus adressée a son Père, c'est donc un attribut essentiel du verset biblique cité qui paraît être entièrement nié par la lecture camusienne. C'est à ce point précis que s'articule la distinction essentielle d'une pensée fondée sur l'état de l'homme en prière et d'une pensée exprimant l'incapacité de rentrer en dialogue avec le trans-

cendant, donc l'incapacité de prier. Ce qui est en rapport étroit avec la différence des deux types de rapport à la mort, à la finitude existentielle qu'on peut très bien illustrer par la confrontation d'un poème de Pilinszky d'une beauté exceptionnelle, intitulé *Agonia Christiana* et d'un propos des Carnets de Camus:

> Avec ses brises, avec ses fleuves,
> l'aube est si loin encore!
> Je mets ma chemise et mes vêtements.
> Je boutonne ma mort.
> (Trad. par Maurice Regnaut)

« Arrachons les dernières pages de l'Évangile et voici qu'une religion humaine, un culte de la solitude et de la grandeur nous est proposé. »[46] C'est la doctrine de la résurrection qui est profondément étrangère à Camus, provenant d'un curieux rapport paradoxal au christianisme que l'auteur même résume ainsi: « J'ai le sens du sacré, et je ne crois pas à la vie future. »[47] Nous en sommes à la problématique posée ci-dessus: celle de l'au-delà dont la négation camusienne est probablement la conséquence de ce que F. Chavanes présente ainsi à propos des premières œuvres de Camus: « le refus du christianisme, tel qu'il est exprimé dans les premières œuvres de Camus, provient pour une bonne part, de son amour passionné de la vie. C'est cet amour de la vie qui le conduit à refuser l'espoir en une autre vie, car cet espoir, selon lui, dévaloriserait la vie présente. (...) Peut-on être chrétien par surabondance à la vie? »[48] L'alternative qui se pose ici est donc celle de l'espoir et de l'espérance.

Di Méglio parle de l'aspect kénotique de la christologie de Camus se manifestant dans sa lecture de la nuit de Getshémani centrée autour du « doute affreux du Christ à l'agonie »[49] qui se révèle extrêmement important de notre point de vue. Puisque la christologie de Pilinszky se montre fondamentalement kénotique dans le sens où elle souligne avant tout l'importance de l'événement de la croix où même Jésus vit l'expérience du néant. Mais Pilinszky – face à Camus – comprend le sens de la kénose dans sa complexité: soit le fait que l'identification du Christ au néant de la kénose inclue son pouvoir de triompher sur l'état kénotique. Son moi poétique s'identifie entièrement à ce que Karl Barth appelle l'« opus alienum », soit la main gauche de Dieu, qui veut dire que son absence est tout aussi propre à Dieu que sa présence. Pilinszky est penseur chrétien dans le sens où pour lui, même les « opus alienum » révèlent l'existence de Dieu, à l'opposé de Camus qui ne voit dans l'agonie du Christ que l'essence divine échouée de Jésus et la souffrance insondable de son être humain. Dans les théologies modernes de la prière, nous connaissons une définition de la prière à partir de la notion du néant: selon Gabriel Marcel, la prière n'est autre que le paradoxe de l'expérience du néant et de la maîtrise de ce même néant qui est la révélation de l'humilité.[50] L'opposition

des deux expériences kénotiques s'explique ainsi par le contraste de l'importance (Pilinszky) et de l'absence (Camus) d'une attitude de prière et d'humilité.

C'est par rapport à l'aspect kénotique que la critique parle de « mystique souffrant » à propos du poète.[51] La souffrance a une telle importance dans la poésie pilinszkynienne que l'on peut établir un véritable lien entre celle-ci et les théologies de la souffrance, surtout celles qui ne voient pas de rapport direct entre souffrance et péché, entre souffrance et salut. Ces courants théologiques, comme la théologie de Karl Rahner, interprètent ces rapports complexes centrés autour du mal en tant que mystère de la foi. Ce concept du mal est tout proche de l'interprétation de la mystique de la souffrance selon laquelle la souffrance et l'anéantissement kénotique sont une voie authentique par laquelle le mystique accède à l'union extatique avec Dieu, la souffrance des innocents n'est cependant pas nécessaire pour le salut. La vision de Pilinszky diverge ici de celle de son maître, Simone Weil, qui interprète la souffrance des innocentes d'une façon opposée et s'approche plus de l'idée de Camus. L'opposition des deux interprétations de la kénose se manifeste également dans le fait que – en contraste avec la structure de la pensée de Camus – Pilinszky, « mystique souffrant » tente de dépasser les catégories de l'intelligence discursive telles que le péché; le mal ou la souffrance. Il s'agit là de la problématique du mal, soit de la théodicée dont la formule de Paul Ricoeur contient le résumé: le mal est une énigme qui est la source commune du péché et de la souffrance.[52] La différence radicale des deux pensées s'articule clairement à ce point précis: Camus, horrifié du scandale du mal dont il fait constamment son sujet littéraire, n'admet cependant pas l'explication énigmatique et le dépassement des structures de la pensée discursive, propres à la mystique chrétienne. C'est ainsi qu'il recherche en vain dans ses œuvres ce que les poèmes de Pilinszky révèlent dans leur lecture du mal qui s'y trouve un certain équilibre, du moins sur le mode du paradoxe où la souffrance ne rentre pas en rapport causal avec le péché.

T'avons-nous aveuglé?
Tu nous as à l'oeil.
T'avons-nous dépouillé?
Tu t'es enrichi.
Muet, même muet tu nous accuses.
(*Pour le mur d'un stalag,* trad. par Lorand Gaspar)

C'est ainsi que l'explication que Camus propose du mal se construit plutôt comme vide, donc comme absence d'explication ce qui représente une explication encore plus insuffisante que ne le serait, dans la logique camusienne, l'interprétation pilinszkynienne reposant sur l'énigme. La sentence camusienne « Je ne crois pas en Dieu, c'est vrai. Mais je ne suis pas athée pour autant. »[53] entre en véritable dialogue – ainsi l'envers avec l'endroit – avec la fameuse sentence

pilinszkynienne « Je ne suis pas poète catholique. Je suis poète et je suis catholique. »

La critique jungienne de la doctrine de « privatio boni » de la théologie chrétienne semble particulièrement instructive du point de vue de notre raisonnement. Dans son « Aion », Jung démontre l'aspect insoutenable, du moins pour l'homme d'après la deuxième guerre, de cette doctrine chrétienne selon laquelle le mal ne s'oppose pas au bien, et ne représente pas une réalité autonome, mais simplement l'absence du bien. La situation historique du XX^{e} siècle a posé avec une telle force le problème de l'omniprésence du mal que même les meilleurs courants théologiques ont suivi la trace de Jung. La présence du mal est devenue tellement étouffante que l'esprit religieux se sent obligé d'incorporer la déchirure existentielle tragique dans sa profession de foi. Le mal qui s'est produit à Auschwitz renonce à la perception de l'intellect et se transpose dans la sphère du questionnement métaphysique. (Il est important de noter que dans le contexte de l'homme pécheur, Pilinszky se réfère aisément à l'idée de la privatio boni afin de prouver l'authenticité de la compassion eschatologique des « bons et des mauvais », fondement de son christianisme dépassant les cadres de la pensée éthique!) Dans l'univers poétique de Pilinszky la coexistence du bien et du mal, pourtant paradoxalement incompatibles, se met au centre du questionnement existentiel.

C'est nous seuls qui brisons, cassons en deux,
nous seuls et nous même
ce qui est un et indivisible.
(*A travers une vie,* trad. par Lorand Gaspar)

Pilinszky doit être considéré comme poète chrétien justement dans sa recherche désespérée de l'unité de ce qui est une fois pour toute déchiré, dans sa recherche d'une certaine « évidence ». C'est ainsi que Dieu peut se manifester également dans le « Septième cercle de l'enfer », que d'une façon paradoxale, sa présence peut rester intacte même dans les ténèbres de la souffrance et de l'absence de la grâce.

Le premier et le deuxième,
le troisième et le quatrième, puis le cinquième et le sixième,
et finalement le tout dernier cercle de l'Enfer.
Je suis chez moi.
Permets-moi de me reposer
et de m'endormir recroquevillé puisque même ici tu es présent.
(*Le septième cercle de l'Enfer,* trad. par D. Sz.)

Pilinszky enregistre donc une déchirure et une tentation de révolte identiques à l'homme absurde se trouvant dans une duplicité existentielle. Il formule en même temps, dans son essai cité ci-dessus, les idées qui le distinguent radicalement de

l'esprit camusien: notamment par l'idée de l'innocence originelle qui, dans la tradition théologique, est étroitement liée à l'idée du péché originel que Pilinszky définit comme mystère. Or nous estimons que ce sont justement ces notions-là qui séparent Camus du christianisme (ou de sa réception approfondie). Plus précisément, c'est la négation radicale du péché et de l'innocence originels qui tournent les méditations de Camus vers une « athéodicée ». (Voir les trois grands récits!) Cette négation passionnée fait paradoxalement preuve d'une perception profondément tragique du caractère pécheur de l'existence humaine, plus tragique que ne l'est la perception chrétienne qui inclut l'idée du salut. Camus montre la négation des propos de Jung ou encore l'incapacité à s'y identifier: « Le péché originel n'a pas détruit en l'homme l'image de Dieu, il a simplement abîmé et déformé celle-ci, par conséquent cette image peut être rétablie par la grâce divine. »[54]

Notes

1. Voir à ce sujet Tamás Hankovszky, « Krisztus és Sziszüphosz » [Le Christ et Sisyphe] in *Merre hogyan. Tanulmányok Pilinszky Jánosról*, ed. József Tasi (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 1997), 121–131.
2. « A kezdet és a vég » [Les débuts et les fins] in *Tanulmányok, esszék, cikkek* [Études, essais, articles], ed. Zoltán Hafner (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 1993) I. 239.
3. Cf. Hankovszky, 122.
4. *Naplók, töredékek* [Journal et fragments] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1995), 20.
5. Cf. Hankovszky, 122.
6. « Ars poetica helyett » [Pour un art poétique], in *Pilinszky János összegyűjtött versei*, (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1987), 82.
7. Journal, fragments, 59-60., cf. Hankovszky, *op.cit.*
8. Cf. *ibid.*
9. Journal, fragments, 69. La problématique est posée à l'origine par Dostoïevski qui est – dans le cas des deux auteurs – le modèle du problème de théodicée représenté par la souffrance innocente des enfants.
10. Albert Camus, *Essais*. Introduction par R. Quilliot. Textes établis et annotés par R. Quilliot et L. Faucon. (Pléiade I.) (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 374.
11. Cf. Hankovszky, *op.cit.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. La notion que Camus se fait de la finitude doit beaucoup à la philosophie nietzschéenne, de plus le penseur-romancier semble s'inspirer des métaphores de l'auteur de Zarathoustra également quant à ses motifs fondamentaux comme la pierre (soit le rocher de Sisyphe) ou le désert de Meursault.
14. Cf. Hankovszky, 123.
15. Cf. *ibid.*
16. L'analyse du rapport de la poésie et des essais exigerait une étude entière que nous n'avons pas la possibilité de réaliser dans le cadre de ce travail.
17. Albert Camus, *Théâtre, Récits, Nouvelles*. Introduction, textes établis et annotés par R. Quilliot. (Pléiade II) (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 1872.
18. Camus II, 1615.

19. Intervieuw du *Figaro Littéraire* du 21 décembre 1957, in Camus II, 1615.
20. Cf. Albert Camus, *Le dialogue de Dieu avec son âme.*
21. Cf. Ingrid Di Méglio, « Camus et la religion. Antireligiosité et cryptothéologie » in *Camus 11. Camus et la religion.* La Revue des Lettres Modernes. 1982. 8.
22. *Ibid.,* 11.
23. Tout ceci est soutenu par le contexte des poèmes qui entourent *Entouré d'attraits*, par exemple *Pour qui, pour quoi? (Kiért, miért?)* où l'idée de l'humilité est reprise: « Mondes, je ne suis que peur / et qu'humilité. » (Trad. par Lorand Gaspar)
24. Cf. Hankovszky, *op. cit.*
25. Nous adhérons donc aux critiques qui voient une certaine évolution dans l'œuvre de Camus.
26. Di Méglio, 10.
27. K. Rahner – H. Vorgrimler, *Petit dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 454. « souffrance »
28. Karl Barth cité par Béla Hamvas, *Szellem és egzisztencia* [Esprit et existence] (Pécs, 1987), 77.
29. Hans Jonas, *Le Concept de Dieu après Auschwitz, Une voix juive* (Paris: Éd. Payot et Rivages, 1994), 13.
30. Camus II, 49. qui est la paraphrase négative de Jean 18,36
31. « L'homme révolté », in Camus II. 436.
32. Di Méglio, 14.
33. Camus II. 1233.
34. *Carnets I, mai 1935–février 1942* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 206.
35. Cf. István Jelenits, « Költői pálya a szent és a profán metszésvonalán », in *Merre hogyan*, 16.
36. *Nagyhét* [Semaine Sainte] (1963), in TEC I. 264–265.
37. *L'homme révolté*, Camus II, 718.
38. Camus I, 1704.
39. « A címzett ismeretlen » [Destinataire inconnu] in TEC II., 320.
40. Cf. les correspondances avec la poésie de Paul Celan.
41. « A teremtő képzelet sorsa korunkban » [Le sort de l'imagination créatrice de nos jours] in *Összegyűjtött versek*, 77.
42. *L'homme révolté*, Camus II, 446.
43. *Camus II*, 1615.
44. « Tragikum és derű » [Tragique et sérénité] in *Beszélgetések* [Intervieuws], 124.
45. Di Méglio, 18.
46. *Carnets,* Camus 1, 206.
47. Camus II, 1923.
48. F. Chavanes, *Albert Camus, «Il faut vivre maintenant »* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 53.
49. Camus II, 444.
50. Gabriel Marcel, *Foi et humilité* (Paris: Aubier – Éd. Montaigne, 1967), 112.
51. Cf. Sándor Radnóti, *A szenvedő misztikus (Misztika és líra összefüggése)* [Le mystique souffrant (Rapport de la mystique et du lyrisme), Opus Irodalomelméleti Tanulmányok 7. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981.)
52. Paul Ricoeur, *Le mal. Un défi à la philosophie et à la théologie* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1986).
53. Camus I, 1872.
54. Carl-Gustav Jung, *Aion, Études sur la phénoménologie du Soi.* Trad. de l'allemand par Étienne Perrot et Marie-Martine Louzier-Sahler (Paris: Albin Michel, 1983), 54.

THE BALTIC STATES AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION: APPENDIX

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Two population tables, which were to have accompanied my article in the previous issue of *Hungarian Studies* (14/2 [2000], 275–284), were inadvertently omitted. They are published here as an appendix to that text.

Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of the evolution of the ethnic composition of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania since the interwar era. They indicate a notable divergence in demographic trends in Lithuania in comparison with the other two Baltic states. Despite suffering the same kinds of population losses in World War II and under Stalinism as the Estonians and Latvians, the Lithuanians displayed a strong demographic dynamism, based on higher birth rates, and maintained a remarkably stable share of the total population of their country. On the other hand, demographic growth in Estonia and Latvia had already slowed considerably by the interwar period, and the native population in those two countries was much less able to withstand the disasters of the 1940s. It is striking that in 1989 there were *fewer* Estonians in Estonia and Latvians in Latvia than in the 1930s. It is also noteworthy that the number of ethnic Russians in Latvia throughout the Soviet era was more than double the combined corresponding figure for Estonia and Lithuania, a phenomenon that reflected Riga's attractiveness and size as the one true metropolis in the Baltic states.

During the 1990s, Estonia and Latvia witnessed an immediate population decline, caused mainly by initially high levels of out-migration, while Lithuania managed to sustain some demographic growth until 1993. Nevertheless, the native proportion of the population in Estonia and Latvia gradually increased during this decade, mainly because Estonians and Latvians were less likely to emigrate permanently than Russians and other non-Balts. By the second half of the 1990s, demographic trends in Lithuania finally began to converge with those that had prevailed earlier in Estonia and Latvia, especially with regard to a negative natural increase and a decreasing total population, although the rate of decline remained slower in the Lithuanian case.

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Table 1. Ethnic composition of the Baltic States (in 1,000's)

ESTONIA

	1934[a]	1959	1970	1979	1989	1999[b]
Estonians	993.5	892.7	925.1	947.8	963.3	942.5
Russians	92.7	240.2	334.6	408.8	474.8	406.0
Ukrainians	–	15.8	28.1	36.0	48.3	36.7
Belorussians	–	10.9	18.7	23.5	27.7	21.4
Finns	1.1	16.7	18.5	17.6	16.6	13.0
Jews	4.4	5.4	5.3	5.0	4.6	2.3
Germans	16.3	0.7	7.9	3.9	3.5	1.3
Others	18.4	14.4	17.9	21.9	26.9	22.4
Total	1,126.4	1,196.8	1,356.1	1,464.5	1,565.7	1,445.6

LATVIA

	1935[a]	1959	1970	1979	1989	1999[b]
Latvians	1,472.6	1,297.9	1,341.8	1,344.1	1,387.8	1,357.8
Russians	206.5	556.4	704.6	821.5	905.5	788.4
Belorussians	26.9	61.6	94.9	111.5	119.7	95.6
Ukrainians	1.8	29.4	53.5	66.7	92.1	70.8
Poles	48.9	59.8	63.0	62.7	60.4	53.1
Lithuanians	22.9	32.4	40.6	37.8	34.6	31.1
Jews	93.5	36.6	36.7	28.3	22.9	8.6
Germans	62.1	1.6	5.4	3.3	3.8	1.5
Others	15.3	17.8	23.6	26.9	39.8	32.5
Total	1,950.5	2,093.5	2,364.1	2,502.8	2,666.6	2,439.4

LITHUANIA

	1923[a]	1959	1970	1979	1989	1997[b]
Lithuanians	1,739.5	2,150.8	2,506.8	2,712.2	2,924.3	3,024.3
Russians	50.7	231.0	268.0	303.5	344.5	304.8
Poles	65.6	230.1	240.2	247.0	258.0	256.6
Belorussians	4.4	30.3	45.4	57.6	63.2	54.5
Ukrainians	–	17.7	25.1	32.0	44.8	36.9
Jews	154.3	24.7	23.6	14.7	12.4	5.2
Germans	88.6	11.2	–	–	–	–
Others	55.1	15.6	19.1	24.5	27.6	24.9
Total	2,158.2	2,711.4	3,128.2	3,391.5	3,674.8	3,707.2

[a]Prewar borders

[b]Figures for the late 1990s are estimates; all others are based on census data.

Sources: Egil Levits, "Die demographische Situation in der UdSSR und in den baltischen Staaten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von nationalen und sprachsoziologischen Aspekten," *Acta Baltica,* 21 (1981), 63, 90, 119; *Eesti arvudes 1920–1935* (Tallinn, 1937) 12; Kalev Katus, "Rahvus: sakslane; elukoht: Eesti," *Aja Pulss,* no. 22 (1990) 10; *Eesti statistika aastaraamat 1999* (Tallinn, 1999), 33; *Latvijas statistikas gadagrāmata 1999* (Riga, 1999), 58; *Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 1997* (Vilnius, 1997), 32.

Table 2. Ethnic composition of the Baltic States (%)

ESTONIA

	1934[a]	1959	1970	1979	1989	1999[c]
Estonians	88.2	74.6	68.2	64.7	61.5	65.2
Russians	8.2	20.1	24.6	27.9	30.3	28.1
Ukrainians	–	1.3	2.1	2.5	3.1	2.5
Belorussians	–	0.9	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.5
Finns	0.1	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.1	0.9
Jews	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2
Germans	1.5	0.1	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.1
Others	1.6	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.5
Total[b]	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

LATVIA

	1935[a]	1959	1970	1979	1989	1999[c]
Latvians	75.7	62.0	56.8	53.7	52.0	55.7
Russians	10.6	26.6	29.8	32.8	34.0	32.3
Belorussians	1.4	2.9	4.0	4.5	4.5	3.9
Ukrainians	0.01	1.4	2.3	2.7	3.4	2.9
Poles	2.5	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.2
Lithuanians	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.3
Jews	4.8	1.8	1.6	1.1	0.9	0.4
Germans	3.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Others	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.5	1.2
Total[b]	100.2	100.1	100.1	100.0	100.0	100.0

LITHUANIA

	1923[a]	1959	1970	1979	1989	1997[c]
Lithuanians	80.6	79.3	80.1	80.0	79.6	81.6
Russians	2.3	8.5	8.6	8.9	9.4	8.2
Poles	3.0	8.5	7.7	7.3	7.0	6.9
Belorussians	0.2	1.1	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.5
Ukrainians	–	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.2	1.0
Jews	7.2	0.9	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.1
Germans	4.1	0.4	–	–	–	–
Others	2.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.7
Total[b]	100.0	100.0	100.1	99.9	100.0	100.0

[a] Prewar borders

[b] Due to rounding off totals are not always 100.0%

[c] Figures for the late 1990s are estimates; all others are based on census data.

Sources: Egil Levits, "Die demographische Situation in der UdSSR und in den baltischen Staaten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von nationalen und sprachsoziologischen Aspekten," *Acta Baltica,* 21 (1981), 64, 91, 120; *Eesti arvudes 1920–1935* (Tallinn, 1937), 12; Kalev Katus, "Rahvus: sakslane; elukoht: Eesti," *Aja Pulss,* no. 22 (1990), 10; *Eesti statistika aastaraamat 1999* (Tallinn, 1999), 33; *Latvijas statistikas gadagrāmata 1999* (Riga, 1999), 58; *Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 1997* (Vilnius, 1997), 32.

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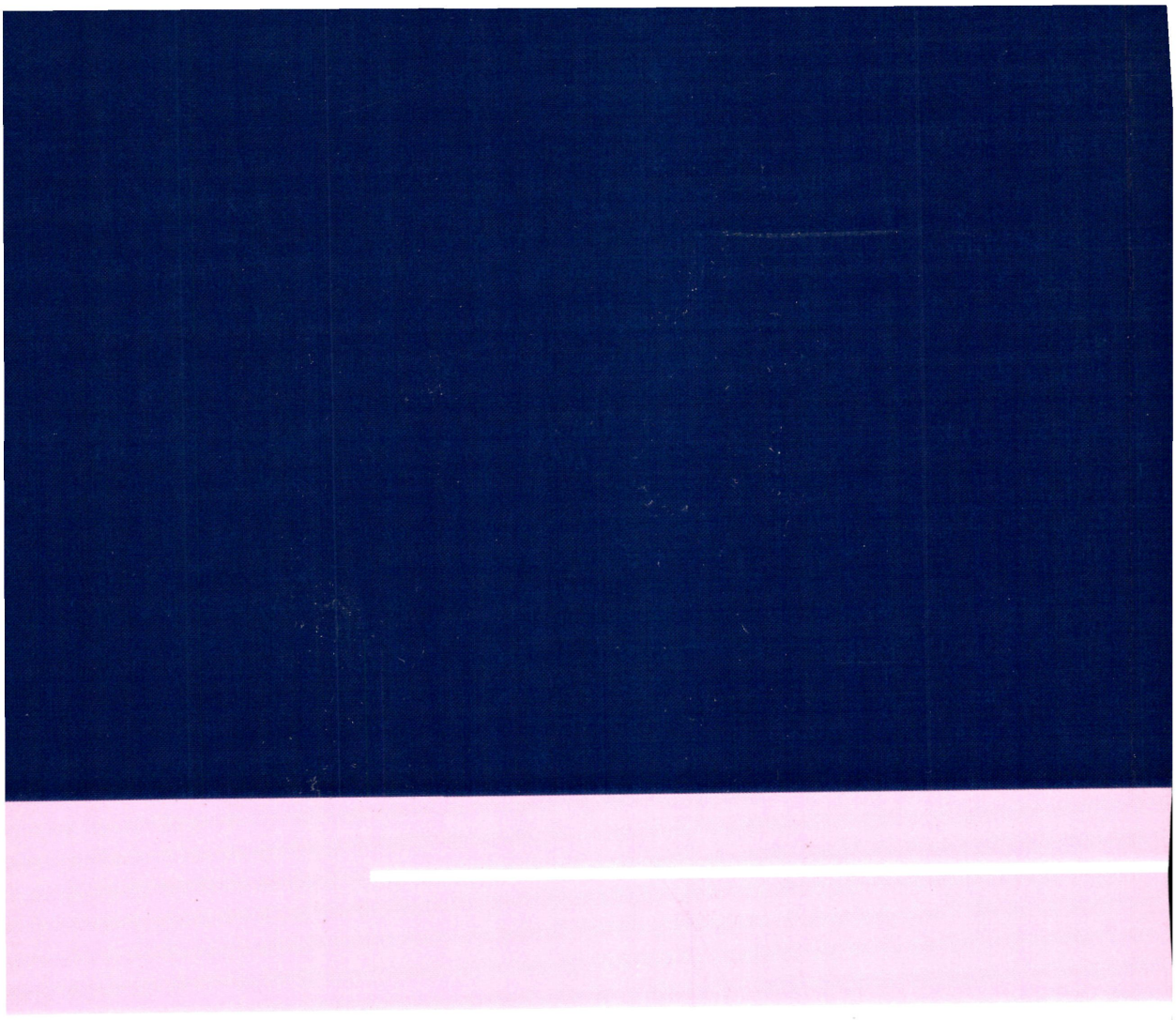

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