HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 3–8
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.1

HISTORIC MOMENTS OF HUNGARIAN FOLK DANCE: FROM THE *GYÖNGYÖSBOKRÉTA* TO THE DANCE HOUSE MOVEMENT

LÁSZLÓ DIÓSZEGI

Hungarian Dance Academy, Budapest
Hungary

At the outset of the dance house movement, Sándor Csoóri, a prominent figure of contemporary Hungarian poetry, wrote that there were two outstanding events in the history of Hungarian folk dance. The first was when it got to the stage and the second when it got off the stage. This article expands on this poetically concise but pertinent thought, offers a short analyses of the defining periods of Hungarian folk dance, and gives some discussion of its main trends and representatives.

Keywords: Dance House, folk dance, staged dance, Hungarian, ethnography, folk music

Hungarian folk dance made its way to the stage relatively late, only in the first half of the 20th century, and it was then that it became widely known and acknowledged. This does not mean that isolated attempts to bring it into the limelight had not been made before, but what is certain is that earlier folk dance had not been known or appreciated by the Hungarian social elite.

Certainly, this statement does not go against the fact that at the time of our national culture's genesis, in the 18th and 19th centuries, during the eminent period of Hungary's history, the Reform Era, enlightened members of high society had already turned their interest to the folklore and thus also to the dances of the countryside. However, they were not terribly willing to view village life in its reality, but rather saw it in an imaginary and idealistic way. What they really wanted to show the public was not the alarming reality, but what they wanted to see in the art of the Hungarian people.

In fact, it was only in the 20th century that urban citizenry discovered the authentic life of the village. The *"díszmagyar"* raiment, (ceremonial attire) and the *"palotás"* (a dance of the nobility sensitive to national culture), thought to be traditional Hungarian costume and dance, turned out to have little to do with the genuine culture of the Hungarian village.

The performances of the *Gyöngyösbokréta* movement offered the first occasion for the public in Budapest to see authentic Hungarian folk dance. This move-

ment had risen and evolved in the 1930s under the leadership of a journalist, Béla Paulini. It was launched with the specific aim of facilitating the identification of villages that had preserved their traditions, promoting the establishment of folk ensembles in these villages, and assisting the performance of their productions in theatrical settings. Each year on August 20th the ensembles of these *"Bokrétás"* villages were invited to present a short ten to twenty minute performance on the stage of the City Theatre, the largest theatre hall in Budapest, as part of the festive events marking St. Stephen's day.

The troupes presented the dances, music and folk traditions of their specific regions in an unaltered and almost intact manner. Undeniably, the productions were immensely inspiring and the dances were performed with a compelling vigor and dynamism barely conceivable for our generation. However, reportedly all the ensembles, whether from along the River Karád in the western part of the country or from the Gyimes region in eastern Transylvania (virtually 550 miles distant from each other) were accompanied by the same 25-member Gypsy music band conducted by Zsiga Rácz. This undoubtedly raises questions regarding the authenticity of the performances, but when it comes to evaluating the Gyöngyösbokréta movement what deserves emphasis is primarily the fact that it was in the framework of this movement that the culture, dances and traditions of the Hungarian village people made their way to the stage for the first time in history, thus bringing the art of the staged folk dance to life.

In addition to these unquestionably positive aspects, however, the movement nevertheless had negative effects. One of the main weaknesses of the Gyöngyösbokréta movement, a weakness the effects of which are still palpable today, was that it did not seek to present the reality of rural life, but rather an idealized "Sunday folklore," a schematized tradition, thus reinforcing the distorted image that urban people had already developed of the countryside. The Gyöngyösbokréta movement was swept away by the Second World War and the ensuing political changes, when Hungary, along with the other East European countries, fell militarily, economically and culturally under the control of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, the new artistic taste that marked Hungarian staged folk dance was not set by the nobility of the Reform Era traditionally educated in Vienna or by the revisionist-nationalist elite of Budapest still suffering from the shock of the Trianon treaty, but by Moscow, which was pursuing global power ambitions and thus bringing hundreds of small nations and vast areas, from Berlin to Vladivostok, under their yoke.

It was an advantage or perhaps a disadvantage for folk dance that the communist cultural policy also attached great importance to it. The Soviet cultural ideologists favored folk dance, as it did not involve the use of words (unlike the theater, perceived as a potential danger) and was inherently "happy" and "dumb." Folk

dance acquired these latter features not least due to the inherited false genre-image that Gyöngyösbokréta also reinforced.

The only problem that folk art caused the Soviet authorities, who considered it to be the ideal form of art, was its national character. In order to overcome this, they developed a specifically sterilized and stylized type of folk dance, which was stripped of everything that was regarded as specific or national. The cultural ideologists did an excellent job, creating the Soviet people, the folk art of the Soviet Union, and an award bearing the name Folk Artist of the Soviet Union.

In the field of folk dance it was Igor Moiseyev, the talented, recently deceased artist, who managed to bring this "squaring of the circle" to completion in his art. The style marked by his name is devoid of defining stylistic features and displays a mixture of general forms of movement. And all this is done in a spectacular manner, with impressive choreography heavily enriched with acrobatic elements and performed on stage by an incredibly large number of dancers. An abundance of visually stunning elements, effects and show, with little if any authenticity, specificity or originality, is the essence of Moiseyevizm. It should be noted, however, that the phenomenon is not something unknown today in the world of folk dance. The only difference is that the choreographer is no longer Moiseyev, but Michael Flatley, and the dance is not the work of cultural ideologists from Moscow but by the financial magnates from New York. Impressive spatial forms, clichés often lost in a vague past, a reduced array of movements performed in a flamboyant manner in unison and by a large number of dancers, global music accompaniment and electronic instrumentation appealing to the modern ear, scenery provided with the aid of computers, and the inevitable smoke machine are the indispensable requisites of staged dance that falls under the category of entertainment industry.

As part of the Soviet block Hungary was clearly unable to withstand the cultural invasion of Moscow. Nevertheless, thanks to some prominent personalities who grew up under the influence of the Gyöngyösbokréta movement and who later became the most determining figures of both the science and art of Hungarian folk dance, Moiseyevizm could not gain absolute influence in Hungary. As a result, choreography of high artistic value based on the Gyöngyösbokréta movement, displaying the characteristic features of Hungarian folk dance, still managed to survive and maintain its presence alongside the Soviet style works in the folk dance of the 1950s.

Alongside the indisputable artistic accomplishments of the era, scholarly research of these years, which determined the future of Hungarian folk dance, should also be given due credit. The Folk Dance Department of the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences launched a systematic, thoroughgoing and outstanding (even by European standards) research project under the leadership of György Martin, a Hungarian folklorist of international renown. Within the framework of the project researchers managed to record and process

dance traditions of the villages in the Carpathians region in the final moment. The recorded material amounted to more than ten thousand meters of tape. Even today, after some 50 years, the collection still defines Hungarian folk dance, and in all probability numerous contemporary scholarly undertakings would be inconceivable without it.

When assessing the activities of István Molnár and Miklós Rábai, the two most outstanding choreographers of the time, we should not forget that the vast material collected by Martin and his team was not yet at their disposal. In fact they had only several documentary films of rather poor quality on which to base their studies. The silent, spring operated movie camera of the time was only suitable for recording short sequences. Moreover, as the spring grew more fatigued the recording became slower. Consequently it could only be replayed at a speed which made viewing almost impossible. Moreover, the prevailing cultural ideology dictated by Moscow, which did not welcome artistic trends dealing with or sympathizing with rural people and required that works display contentment, optimism and high spirits, made things even worse for Molnár and Rábai.

It should also be noted that prior to their efforts no pattern for folk dance choreography had been developed. They therefore had to cope with all the various problems of familiarizing themselves with the dance, arranging it for the stage, and dramatizing it. The roughness of their spatial forms and the simplicity of their motifs can be attributed to these unfavorable circumstances, as can the step combinations and the sequences that might seem of rather poor quality to the present day viewer. Nevertheless, their art, specifically that of István Molnár, was palpably different than that dictated by Moscow. Their activities not only lay the foundation for the Hungarian staged folk dance but created a new school of folk dance choreography. The majority of the authoritative choreographers of today, who started their careers in the 60s, regard themselves as Molnár's followers.

The 1960s marked the beginning of a new era in Hungarian folk dance. The creators and choreographers of the non-professional ensembles played an important role in exploring new creative avenues. The authoritarian regime, which was slowly easing its grip, focused its attention primarily on the professional ensembles and gave a certain freedom of movement to the non-professional troupes supported and supervised by the trade unions. It was among these troupes that choreographers Katalin Györgyfalvai, Károly Szigeti, Antal Kricskovics, Ferenc Novák and Sándor Tímár, all of whom acquired their knowledge of dance as professional dancers, carried out their activities from the 1960s on. The new generations were looking for new modes of expression and regarded dance as a means of self expression. They were determined to break with the Moiseyevist conception of folk dance. For this reason, instead of radiating the obligatory cheerful, content and carefree spirit or staging pseudo-conflicts, their choreographies reflected the problems of everyday life and were of a dramatic, somber tonality befitting the

prevailing mood of society. They often worked together closely with representatives of related arts, such as writers, poets and theater or film directors. Thanks to their undertakings Hungarian folk dance managed to break free from the political quarantine of the 1950s and grow up to become an art form in its own right.

The broadened artistic horizons of the 1970s and the findings of studies conducted in the field of folk music and folk dance brought about new developments in Hungarian folk dance. The role of tradition was reinterpreted and became the focus of interest. In the field of folk dance this led to the realization that tradition can generate artistic experience in its own right and at the same time exert influence with an overwhelming force to address the exigencies of modern times. An accomplishment of the 1970s that was perhaps even more remarkable was that folk dance ceased to be an enviable privilege of a few select artists, a staged attraction or an estranged work of art. Rather it was returned to its original context and regained its initial function. Within the folk dance movement, which started to unfold during these years, folk dance again became part of the lives of young people as a source of entertainment and a means of meeting one another.

Obviously young village people in rural dance houses or wedding celebrations entertained themselves not with choreographed dances but rather with improvised dance. It was, however, no easy task to learn an improvised dance, as the code language of the dance had to be deciphered first, its structure and grammar understood, and its words, which is to say the motifs of the dance, mastered. It is György Martin and Sándor Tímár who can be credited with this revolutionary discovery. After decoding the native language of the dance, Tímár developed a method by which he could effectively teach dances of various styles. Their discovery caused a global sensation in the 1970s and 1980s. It is no wonder that the master and his pupils were invited to teach dances of the Carpathian Basin and methods of improvised dancing in locales from the USA to Japan. It should also be noted that in the meantime the dance house movement had consolidated in Hungary. It is partly as a result of this that even today over ten-thousand students are acquiring the skill of improvised dancing through the art school network.

The dance house movement and improvised dance also led to major changes in the art of staged folk dance. The habit of staging dance tradition without alterations came to be customary or rather virtually exclusive practice. This required a high degree of knowledge of dance on the part of the dancers and varied spatial formation on the part of the choreographer. The colorful character of the performances, their expressiveness, the dramaturgy, and the use of theatrical means, however, were essentially ignored.

The folk dance of the 1970s and 1980s was marked by the discovery of the rich regional dance traditions of the Carpathian Basin. Each year the groups, particularly the Bartók Ensemble led by Sándor Tímár, came out with new choreographies composed of dance styles never seen before. The need to create some-

thing new and the excitement felt over the discovery of new directions pushed the desire for artistic renewal into the background.

With the exhaustion of the stock of new dance styles, however, it became clear that stage art cannot do without original artistic solutions, as forms applied with great success in the beginning soon grow conventional. Tímár's choreography comprises real dance sequences performed in unison usually by a great number of dancers and in attractively constructed spatial forms. This was apparent at the professional company of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble.

We should acknowledge, however, that Tímár composed his productions with such masterly skill and sense of proportion that these shortcomings were rarely apparent.

In the 1990s the stage for Hungarian folk dance was the scene of the appearance of new productions. These compositions placed emphasis on the individual, while the dance sequences, the music and the costumes were based on very thorough and scholarly research. Tímár's spatial-form choreography was replaced by a non-composed type of choreography that placed the dancer and the dance in the spotlight. Its representatives drew inspiration often and with great relish from folk traditions.

At the same time, there were other works coming to the stage, which after a 20-year hiatus carried on the traditions of the 1960s, pursuing new means of expression and demonstrating individual artistic approaches. However, only time will tell whether these works will be enduring, just as only time will tell whether it will be possible to bring a new Hungarian dance style to life similar to folk music, a style that will not merely be a masterly imitation of folk dance, but rather a creative and artistic rearrangement of it in such a manner that it can be both modern and deeply rooted in the present day and still retain the virtues, compactness, balance, plainness and simplicity of folk art.

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 9–29
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.2

DOES FOLK DANCING MAKE HUNGARIANS? *TÁNCHÁZ,* FOLK DANCE AS MOTHER TONGUE, AND FOLK NATIONAL CULTIVATION

MARY N. TAYLOR

Hunter College, City University of New York, NY
USA

This paper, based on participant research amongst folk revivalists, interviews with cultural managers, and extensive archival research, discusses the *táncház* (dance house) folk revival movement as the actualization of interwar efforts of "folk national cultivation" in Hungary. By putting the dance house in relationship with interwar folk critiques, the paper illustrates both continuities and discontinuities between them, most notably in conceptualizations of the relationship between the ethical or political roles of such critiques and of the folk itself. The paper argues that folk critiques, now and then, can play an important role in state formation by reproducing the folk and acting to secure its citizenship. Nevertheless, how the folk is defined is historically determined, as is the kind of citizenship entailed. Since folk national cultivation is premised on the idea that Hungarianness is produced through engagement with the folk and its traditions, the historical approach of this paper problematizes this process.

Keywords: Táncház, Dance House, Folk Revival, Hungarianness, nationalism, state formation, social movements, citizenship, ethical cultivation

In 1939, just as Hungary began, with the help of Germany, to annex a chunk of the neighboring territory forfeited nearly twenty years before at the end of World War I, István Györffy, "the father of Hungarian ethnography," published a pamphlet originally written in 1938 as a memo to the Ministry of Religion and Education entitled Folk Tradition and National Cultivation *(A néphagyomány és a nemzeti művelődés)*. The text prescribes a program for Folk National Cultivation *(Népi-Nemzeti Művelődés),* suggesting ways in which the cultural patrimony of the folk, the oppressed agrarian classes who made up two thirds of the population and who in Györffy's understanding made up the most Hungarian stratum of society, can be made that of all Hungarian citizens through the incorporation of folk *(népi)* culture into everyday life.[1]

This was not the first (or the last) time that Hungarian intellectuals would pursue such projects with the aim of cultivating Hungarianness. The nation-state aspirations of a Hungary subsumed within the Habsburg Empire had encouraged

magyarization (Hungarianization) policies, especially in the period after the Compromise of 1868, which resulted in the establishment of the Dual Monarchy. Such policies cajoled and coerced the multiethnic population of Hungary to "become Hungarian" by assimilating to the linguistic nation, or "sprachsnation" (Kann and David 1984). This language-based production of Hungarianness was influenced by the Romantic thought of Johann Gottfried Herder, who, countering the enlightenment idea that language is a tool for communication and thought, argued that national languages are historically produced treasuries of thoughts specific to any given nation and as such are "both representative of and constitutive of the volksgeist" (Taylor 2006; see also Burger 2003).[2]

Györffy's plan synthesizes many of the ideas espoused by folk oriented projects acting in the rich and complex sphere of Hungarian civil society in the interwar period. In a twist of the earlier romanticism surrounding language, composers-ethnomusicologists Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály advocated that musicians master folk music as a "mother tongue." In one example Bartók wrote,

> in this case, the composer has completely absorbed the idiom of peasant music, which has become his mother tongue. He masters it as completely as a poet masters his mother tongue (Bartók 1976, 343–344).

Drawing on this idea, Györffy writes in his pamphlet that Hungarian folk song is the other expressive form of the Hungarian language (1993, 24). Folk music here takes on the significance and cultivating power that language had had in the period mentioned above, and Györffy suggests that it needs the protection and care afforded to the language itself.

In the interwar period a group of *népi,* or so-called "populist," writers promoted similar practices of folk cultivation, inspiring a much broader "népi movement" that enacted the idea in myriad ways.[3] This body of people and projects occupied with the folk, folk culture, and the nation was heterogeneous and boundaries between groups were porous. "Village visiting" (so-called *falujárás*) represented a central activity intended to promote familiarity with folk practices and the village way of life and empathy for the villagers themselves. Populist writers and their followers debated amongst themselves over whether to remain a spiritual/intellectual movement, or whether to enter politics proper. Many saw it as their responsibility to bring the spirit of the movement to "every social and political frame" (Borbándi 1989, 255–256).

While Eric Hirsch (1997) has used the term "folk nationalist" to describe all those in the interwar period who were preoccupied with the folk, in truth successive interwar movements recognized populists both as a threat and a potential source of legitimacy. Government and populist interests converged in some folk oriented activities, especially in the late 1930s and during the war, reflecting both

populist commitment to permeate the entire political spectrum and government efforts to harness their intellectual influence. While ideological and practical tensions abounded, the extent to which the government adopted the language of folk national cultivation is reflected in the following. In 1940, while praising the Bouquet of Pearls folk dance movement, Prime Minister Pál Teleki was quoted as saying

> I have approached my allies… our greatest task is that we keep the Hungarian spirit *(lelki)* in this nation, that we teach it to think in Hungarian. Not to wander the world as a beggar *(koldus),* but rather to go on its own legs, to speak Hungarian, to sing in Hungarian, to dance in Hungarian. Because one who does that, also thinks in Hungarian (Teleki in Pálfi 1970, 124).

Despite the obvious emphasis on practice, it is notable that Teleki did not use the term *nép* here, using nation instead. One notable convergence of populist and government aims was their shared concern for the ethnic Hungarians living across the borders set in 1920. Not needing to explain further, Györffy simply writes, "the protection of folk tradition is most important in the occupied territories" (1993, 52).

In this paper I approach the text of Györffy's pamphlet as both a theory of collective memory and a plan for its reproduction. Asserting that the seed of Hungarianness does not lie in one's genealogy or name, he wrote, "Hungarianness is not a question of the body, the blood, but of the soul" (1993, 77). He believed that Hungarianness, a Hungarian soul, could be cultivated through specific practices originating with the folk. I aim here to use Györffy's theory of collective memory and plan for the reproduction of Hungarianness as a starting point for the examination of the *táncház* (dance house), a folk revival that emerged in Hungary in the late socialist period the central practice of which is the mastering of the paradigm of folk dance as social dance and its use in everyday life, what I term folk dance as mother tongue. Doing so will not simply illuminate this case in Hungary, but also, I argue, help us think through the historical tensions in the relationship of ethics and politics and conceptualizations of the terms *nép* (folk) and *népi* (of the folk). Indeed examining the relationship of nation-building and state formation in its historical dynamism should be an important avenue for the study of nation-building everywhere. The important lens of state formation, what I take to be the process of legitimation and the elaboration of social identities unfolding from the institutionalization, definition of, and practice of citizenship, allows us to understand the state as a 'form of rule or ruling,' thus focusing our attention on how rule is accomplished through dynamic relationships rather than on a state that rules (Corrigan 1994, xvii).[4]

By exploring the ways in which the dance house revival represents the actualization of Györffy's program, I illustrate the weakness of his implicit assumption that there is a timeless Hungarian soul that can be cultivated or a timeless folk that can be its source. I will show how, while folk critiques rely on the folk, a concept that like the German *"volk"* may be employed with class or ethnic connotations, state formation processes in 20th century have contributed to a collective memory that understands the folk in a primarily ethnic sense.

A note on definition is called for here. Györffy, populist writers and activists, and the dance house itself are bound together in this paper by their attention to the folk. Rather than calling them populist movements, the favored term of translation for the *népi* movement of the interwar period (but a term never to my knowledge applied to the dance house), I refer to these folk oriented projects as folk critiques.[5] I suggest that these movements function to do two things. First, through folk based critiques they reproduce and reify their object, the folk. Second, by engaging in such a critique, participants construct themselves as Hungarian. Given the folk's age-old role as seed of the Nation, folk critiques unsurprisingly play an important role in the production of a sense of the nation. Yet less acknowledged has been their role in state formation. This paper thus notes a consistent preoccupation with the *nép* (translated here as folk) and labeling of movements as *népi* (of the folk), while their conceptualizations flux. In other words shifts in the meaning of these terms, which reflects broader changes in citizenship regimes, are central to this analysis.

In what follows I will explore the links and ruptures between folk critiques of Györffy's era and the dance house revival. I will establish Györffy's project of folk national cultivation as both a theory of collective memory and a plan for its reproduction, embedding it within the literature on collective memory, before introducing the dance house as an actualization of the plan. I will then qualify this status by providing a historical contextualization of shifts in both conceptualizations of the relation of this ethical project of collective memory production and the political sphere and of the very meaning of the term nép (the most immediately available English translation of which is folk).

Collective Memory: History, Sense

Györffy tells us that while the use of writing allows us to pass intangible customs on to new generations, "if they do not remain in the memories of the living, they will become lifeless traditions that no longer have the powerful life directing force that living traditions or customs have" (1993, 7). In this sense, his definition of collective memory is very similar to that of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who took pains to distinguish collective memory from historical

memory and history as "the active past that forms our identities" (Olick and Robbins 1998, 111). Both Györffy and Halbwachs conclude that collective memory relies on material practices. Yet Halbwachs' attention to historical change challenges Györffy's assumption that a timeless and unique Hungarian soul can result from this perpetuation of form.

Halbwachs proposed collective memory to be a dialectical process resulting from the interaction of past and present. By applying interpretations influenced by contemporary circumstances to institutionalized material practices, he argued, groups produce a picture of the past (1992, 101). While such institutionalized practices may go virtually unchanged over time, giving an appearance of unbroken continuity, interpretations continue to change, renewing the contemporary relevance of collective memory (1992, 117). Other thinkers have also contributed to a nuanced understanding of the historical production of collective memory by looking at how such institutionalized practices are connected to the senses.

Arguing that the "National thing" is an effect of belief, Slavoj Zizek furthers that it is enjoyment, "materialized in a set of social practices and transmitted through a set of national myths that structure these practices," that provides its ontological consistency (1993, 202). Charles Hirschkind takes the relationship of collective memory and the senses even further. Offering an approach to "the relation between sensory experiences and traditional practice" (2001, 628), he suggests that practices of "ethical self-discipline" can serve to sediment emotions in practitioners "in such a way to incline them toward moral action" (2001, 631). Examining the case of cassette sermon listeners in Egypt, Hirschkind asserts that the link between listening and sense is not simply "established metaphorically, but also through discipline, the training and inculcation of sensory habits," including bodily dispositions (2001, 628). Hirschkind's intervention connects senses and sensibility by examining how disciplinary practices may inform emotions and judgments. He thus shares with Györffy the idea that the individual hones an ethical sensibility by engaging in practices institutionalized and given meaning to by a group. Finally, providing a nuanced view of collective action, Alberto Melucci (1988) argues that "frameworks of sense" underlie and inform social movements, thus allowing us to perceive a relationship between the cultivation of ethical dispositions and state formation. This relationship will be returned to later in the paper.

Györffy and his contemporaries believed that the cultivation of Hungarianness through folk practices would lead to empathy for the folk. In this view, such empathy would affect social relations and consequently the social structure itself. The dance house folk revival, which arose in the 1970s and is still active in Hungary today, represents in many ways the actualization of Györffy's program. Attention to this *népi* movement/folk critique that arose over three decades after the publication of Györffy's pamphlet illustrates the historical, political, and eco-

nomic dimensions contributing to the production of collective memory.[6] Indeed, the very fact that dance house incorporates the use of folk practices in everyday life and has a strong relationship to populist current helps to illustrate the weakness of his assumption that there is a timeless Hungarian soul or a timeless folk that can serve as its source. On the other hand, Györffy's plan does prompt us to consider how the production of a certain collective memory, or ethical cultivation, through dance house practices can influence political outcomes, affecting access to or definitions of citizenship. We witness in dance house a reproduction of a sense of Hungarianness based on the reproduction of its source, the alleged folk. Yet we also see that the folk has come to constitute something quite different than the conception of it that took form in interwar Hungary. To understand how this came about, we need to place Györffy's program in historical context.

The *Nép* in the Interwar Period

Györffy is no forgotten ancestor. Indeed, his pamphlet was republished by the István Györffy Ethnographic Association in 1993, while in 1991 ethnographer Bertalan Andrásfalvy, Minister of Culture for the first democratically elected government of the postsocialist era (Magyar Demokrata Fórum, or Hungarian Democratic Forum), published a lecture entitled "István Györffy's Program for the Spread of Elements of Folk Cultivation Throughout Society." Seeking to "translate" Györffy's use of the term "middle class" (középosztály) into "today's usage," Andrásfalvy writes: "in 1939, one third of the population counted as middle class" (1991, 159). Stressing that the term should be understood in "the cultural, not social sense," he counts within that group those who had "outgrown folk traditions" and made European culture their own through schooling and books. Defined in opposition to the middle class, he writes, was that two thirds of the population, the folk, that lived with folk traditions or was beginning to leave them behind, but who did not take part in Europe's common culture. These were mostly peasants. Andrásfalvy's insistence on the cultural sense of the term middle class at the price of its social sense obscures important differences in Hungary's social constitution and political economic circumstances between 1939 and 1991.

Györffy and his populist associates used this same statistic to discriminate between these two classes of Hungarians. However, they did not stop at noting "cultural differences," recognizing in addition the limitations on citizenship experienced by the folk.[7] By 1928 Hungary had been dubbed "Három millió koldus országa," the land of three million paupers, in reference to the rapidly proletarianizing stratum of manorial servants and their families, agrarian workers, dwarf-holders, renters, and sharecroppers, who made up a third of the total population and 67 percent of the peasant population (Borbándi 1989, 58).[8] Secondary

education was indeed a rare privilege for this group, for large landholders did not encourage the schooling of their servants, believing that "knowledge and culture will ruin them" (Borbándi 1989, 63). Landless and unrepresented in the political sphere, this class carried the more privileged classes on its shoulders (Taylor 2008). Furthermore, in this period the term middle class was used to refer to the officer and bureaucratic classes derived from the nobility, whose historical domain was the state apparatus (Borbándi 1989, 33, 48; Mócsy 1983).[9] Indeed, the governments of the Horthy era ruled with the conviction that only the "historical classes" (the aristocracy, the middle nobility, the land-holding gentry, and the bureaucratic, military officer, and intellectual layers that had developed from within them) should participate in the political sphere, for it was these groups, which together comprised the middle class, that would assure the country would remain Christian and National (Borbándi 1989, 37). Thus in a holdover from the feudal usage of "nation," meaning those with political rights, the term nation *(nemzet)* was associated with a regime that protected the property interests of the Catholic church and the aristocracy (Borbándi 1989).

In the period in which Györffy wrote, then, the terms middle class and folk were not merely the cultural categories that Andrásfalvy stresses. They were descriptions of social strata. This is why many people identifying themselves with the cause of the folk did not stop at preserving, spreading, or validating its culture, but also agitated for land reform and voting rights in its favor. Not all activities focused on the folk stressed social justice, however. Indeed, the Bouquet of Pearls Movement and the boy scouts troupes that learned folk traditions and danced folk dances (the so-called *regős* scouts, who were influenced by the movement that laid emphasis on "village visiting," mentioned earlier) can hardly be considered progressive. Yet in the Protestant folk high schools (népfőiskolák), the more overtly political Peoples' Colleges (Népi Kollégiumok), the 1932 March Front mobilization, and the National Peasant Party social justice was a dominant theme.[10] In his book *The Hungarian Populist Movement,* Gyula Borbándi notes that in the interwar period those actually labeled populist *(népi)* were not simply interested in using or preserving elements of folk culture. The use of folkloristic elements might have qualified a writer's work as *népies* (folksy), Borbándi writes, but such writers could not be considered *népi* (populist) because they "did not tie [their] representations and images of the village to a demand for the transformation of society and held [themselves] distant from 'radical political movements'" (1989, 133).[11]

It might be difficult to secure Györffy's role within the "*népi* movement," which itself remains a slippery category. While he appears in Borbándi's book as an important figure and his connections to the Peoples' Colleges are well documented, he also had close ties with the far from radical Bouquet of Pearls folk dance revival movement. Yet the fact that the exhibition he organized at the Insti-

tute for Regional and Folk Research (Táj és Népkutató Intézet) highlighting the oppression and poverty of the folk was shut down because it was an affront to the government and the large landowners that supported it (Borbándi, 239–240)[12] shows that he did not turn a blind eye to the social conditions of the folk.[13]

Divorced from the social and political platform pursued by populist activists, attention to the folk could be found in the efforts of the interwar governments to quiet, tame, or co-opt such critical forces to its "Christian national" program, which favored rule by the so called "middle class," made up of the military and bureaucratic classes derived from the nobility. One example of this was The New Spiritual Front policy pursued by Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös, designed to enlist influential intellectuals concerned with the folk to the Christian National cause. As the imminence of the permanent loss of much of the territory lost at Trianon and the threat of German occupation became more possible with time, these various approaches may have become less distinguishable, but there is no doubt that occupation with the folk in the interwar period was born of the continued social and political oppression of the agrarian classes.[14] Disembedded from this historical context, Györffy's program loses its connection to the interrelated social and cultural definitions of the folk in the first half of the 20th century. Here cultural validation was recognized as a cohort of social justice. Ethical cultivation, the production of Hungarianness through the engagement in folk practices, was thought to lead to empathy for the folk, the source of Hungarianness. This empathy, in turn, was to lead to the transformation of society.

Ethical Cultivation, Politics, State Formation

While populist activists of the interwar period pursued land reform and the franchise in tandem with cultural validation and the production of Hungarianness through folk practices, it is important to point out that a tension did exist within the movement concerning the proper sphere of action. Populist writers disagreed amongst themselves over whether the movement should enter politics proper. Seeing it as their responsibility to bring the spirit of the movement to "every social and political frame," many asserted that this should remain a spiritual/intellectual movement (Borbándi 1989, 255–256). Populist writer Géza Féja concluded in his article entitled *The March Front* that it should remain "a sociological and literary movement guiding the world view, because in today's politics things would only become stagnant" (Féja, in Borbándi 1989, 257). For populists, then, opposition was not simply a political matter. On the contrary, many opposed engaging in the formal field of politics in what they saw as a corrupt regime, working primarily in the spiritual sphere. Even when more overtly political manifestations arose, most notably the March Front mobilization and the National Peasant Party, populist ac-

tivists insisted that their work lay in the spiritual sphere. This conviction was only confirmed by the compromised position in which the Peasant Party found itself after the war, which I will consider later in this article.

Scholars have pointed out that conceptualizations of spheres of action are tied with political and economic circumstances of state formation. Partha Chatterjee (1986) suggests that anticolonial nationalism creates its own sphere of sovereignty within colonial society long before engaging in a political battle. This process establishes an opposition between the "outer sphere," the domain of statecraft and formal politics, and the "inner sphere," comprised of that which "marks cultural identity." Rather than seeing this dichotomy as unique to the colonial situation, we might see it as reflective of situations in which limitations on citizenship prevail for certain classes of people under conditions of coercive political dominance. Chatterjee's description of the Bengali case is reminiscent of the German context to which both Terry Eagleton and Norbert Elias point, the context in which the idea of Kultur was posited as a response to that of civilization. Elias suggests that this formulation resulted from the "long political impotence of the German bourgeoisie combined with the late unification of the nation" (1978, 27). He writes,

> the watchwords expressing this self image of the German intellectual class, terms such as Bildung and Kultur, tend to draw a sharp distinction ... between this purely spiritual sphere as the only one of genuine value, and the political, economic and social sphere, in complete contrast to the watchwords of the rising bourgeoisie in France and England (1978, 27).

As social conditions changed and characteristics of the bourgeoisie expanded to become national characteristics, this distinction, which had begun as a class distinction, became a national distinction (Elias 1978, 31).

The political and social situation in interwar Hungary shares some qualities with this case. While formal citizenship had been guaranteed since the 1840's, there were nevertheless practical limits to citizenship. The un-propertied agrarian classes remained unrepresented in the political sphere, with only limited access to education, progressive political parties were curtailed in their activities and intellectual production was threatened with censorship (Taylor 2008). In places in which "political dominance assumes… more openly coercive forms," as in the case of Germany in the 18th century (or, we might add, interwar or socialist Hungary), the response might appear, writes Eagleton, as "aesthetic counter strategy – a cultivation of instincts and pieties over which such power rides roughshod" (Eagleton 1990, 27).

The more overtly political activities of the populist movement have been obscured partly due to their strong orientation toward the spiritual sphere, but very

likely also due to the role populist activists played in the transition to socialism. With increasing censorship and the increasing difficulty of obtaining permits for their activities, the movement was faced with the choice of founding a political party or fading away. In 1939, with Germany now Hungary's next door neighbor, far right parties fared well in local elections (Borbándi 1989, 321). A circle of populist writers and their agrarian supporters formed the National Peasant Party, which, like the Communist Party, was illegal until 1945 (Borbándi 1989, 326).[16] Not all populist writers agreed with the formation of the party, many argued that no single party could represent the movement (Borbándi 1989, 325).

Part of the resistance (the Hungarian Front) during the war, The National Peasant Party coalesced with the Communist Party, The Social Democratic Party, the Civic Democratic Party, and the Smallholder's Party in The Hungarian National Independence Front, formed in 1944. While the overwhelming majority of votes in the 1945 elections were for the Smallholder's Party, the Communist Party was able to play "a decisive role" through this coalition (Hanák 1991, 214). The Communist Party further engaged in a series of purges and de-legitimations, aided by its merging with the Social Democratic Party in 1948 (Hanák 1991, 216). Despite having received only a small proportion of the votes, the National Peasant Party secured the Ministry of Public Works (Péter Veres, later József Darvas), the Ministry of Defense (Veres), and the Ministry of Agriculture (Ferenc Erdei) (Borbándi 1989, 445–447). While the Party would soon be dissolved along with other parties, the fact that many populists had been left-leaning meant that a number of them still continued to occupy positions of influence during the Stalinist era. Others suffered various levels of persecution.[17] Most, however, found themselves in the myriad positions of cultural management occupied by intellectuals.

Beyond those few Peasant Party politicians who worked for the regime and the brief reappearance of the party as the Petőfi Party in the months of the 1956 Revolution (when the decision was made not to allow such "collaborators" a leading role) (Borbándi 1989, 467), populist activists sought to continue their work in the spiritual sphere. Indeed, the image of the populist movement resonant today portrays them as oppositional to and oppressed by the Communists. In any case, while formal populist institutions were dispersed in 1948, populist influence lived on under changing political and economic circumstances.

The Dance House Movement: Practicing Folk Dance as Mother Tongue

In the 1970s the dance house movement arose from the interaction of state socialist cultural policy, the activities of populist cultural managers, global trends in folk revival, and spontaneous youth movements (Martin 1981; Striker 1987, 1989; Halmos 1994, 2000; Ronstrom 1998; Taylor 2008). The emergence of the

dance house revival was dependent on the convergence of the interest among "beat" (rock and roll) musicians in village instrumental music and that of performing folk dancers and choreographers in moving beyond borrowing isolated motifs to learning entire dances. Revivalists sought to become familiar with the internal logic of dances embedded in the social environments of village dance events, or dance houses. Modeled after dances, or balls, traditionally organized by adolescents in the Transylvanian village of Szék (referred to as *táncházak* or dance houses), the first Budapest dance house event was an attempt by the performing folk dancers to transcend staged choreography and competition and engage in Hungarian folk dance as social dance (Halmos 2000).

To be successful, however, these events required a live band able to play entire suites and participants able to dance entire dances and dance suites. In order to spread beyond the narrow layer of performing dancers and accompanying musicians, the movement required institutionalized pedagogical technologies. The solution was to provide dance instructors at each event to teach dance forms to newcomers and help dancers acquire folk dance as a "mother tongue," that is, to gain such familiarity with the rules of the dance that individuals would be able to innovate within their framework appropriately. Because the dance house was organized around teaching the entire dance suites of particular villages or regions, this mastery of the folk dance as social dance and its use in everyday life also meant an intimate knowledge of the traditions of particular places, the majority of them in Transylvania. Much like "village visitors" (interwar ethnographers and enthusiasts of the folk who traveled to villages to familiarize themselves with "folk culture"), dance house goers visited Transylvanian villages in droves, hoping to gain first hand knowledge and in the process making personal connections.

In its longevity, breadth of popular appeal, insistence on the systematic integrity of folk dance and folk music as complex social and aesthetic forms, pedagogical emphasis on folk dance as mother tongue, and success at getting urban Hungarians to visit villages (especially in the territories lost), the dance house movement appears as the realization of Györffy's plan. By all means, through its technologies, this movement not only introduced folk practices to a broad spectrum of Hungarian citizens who had not been exposed to them at home or in villages, but also helped them integrate them into their everyday lives as a regular social activity.[18] To have achieved Györffy's goal, however, this engagement in folk practices must also have contributed to the Hungarianness of participants. How might we evaluate its success on this front, when Györffy insists that external form is not enough? Recall that, according to him, even a person with pure Magyar pedigree does not have a "Hungarian soul" if all he does is "act like a Magyar" (magyarkodik) (160). Recall too that populist activists in the interwar period believed that the adoption of folk practices would result in empathy for the folk, which in turn could lead to social justice. Györffy and his fellow populist activists thus pur-

sued two interrelated goals. They wanted to bring social justice to the folk by making the entire nation more Hungarian through the adoption of folk practices and the practice of "village visiting." Finally, recall that the folk was not oppressed as Hungarians per se, but as the lowest stratum in a feudal-like social structure. If we accept that "Hungarianness" can be measured by sympathy for the folk, itself reflected in changes in the political sphere, then we must examine the consistent conceptualization of the dance house as apolitical by its participants in relation to the changes in the meaning of folk *(nép)* over time. While the terms drawn on to define the movement have been attached to political projects in the past, for dance house revivalists, "the people" have become "the ethnic folk."

Unlike the many populist activists of the interwar period, while they too identify themselves as *"népi"* dance house goers as a group have never been comfortable with the idea that dance house is political. Furthermore, despite their own tendencies to do so, dance house goers are apprehensive about the use of the term movement to describe their activities. Noting its use by the socialist administration in reference to political movements instigated and maintained by the Party itself (such as the "workers movement" or the "youth movement"), they suggest that the term represents a centralized and political initiative.

In interviews conducted during fieldwork in 2004, dance house goers and organizers stressed to me the non-ideological character of the movement. Arguing that it is simply the love of folk dance and folk music that brings them together, participants insist that there is no ideological thread that unites them. Despite this, many expressed that dance house goers share an ethical worldview. Indeed, in interviews, dance house goers described dance house as a community; a "virtual community" that comes together at certain moments (like the Dance House Meeting); a "virtual circle… which is not definable but rather a feeling – if a person says now that they are, 'I am a dance house goer (táncházas).'" The ideas that the dance house had an oppositional quality under socialism and that it teaches people important values were frequently expressed. Such a situation suggests that we take a nuanced approach to social movements, aided by our understanding of the historical production of collective memory.

Lamenting the conceptual fragility and overuse of the term "movement" in explaining the "social nature of collective action," Alberto Melucci suggests that in a number of social movements what collective actors have achieved is "to practice 'alternative definitions of sense'" by creating "meanings and definitions of identity which contrast with the increasing determination of individual and collective life by impersonal technocratic power" (Melucci 1988, 247). It is the networks made of those who share such "frameworks of sense" that make mobilizations possible, he argues, "rendering them visible in a punctual manner at moments when confrontations with public policy emerge" (1988, 248). Yet, stressing qualities quite different from those of the "rational actor" favored by many social

movement theorists, Melucci writes, "within these networks there is an experimentation with and direct practice of alternative frameworks of sense, in consequence of a personal commitment which is submerged and almost invisible" (1988, 248). While individuals engage in dance house activities for myriad reasons, they are bound together by a framework of sense produced, I argue, through the practices of dance, etiquette, sociable conversation, and village tourism: in the associative space of *dance house* events.

This framework of sense produced in the associative space of dance house events may congeal, I argue, into a fragile and contradictory "community of sense" in moments of collective action beyond participation in the social event.[19] It is thus that this shared framework of sense extends to the ways in which people act outside of the dance house setting. I find evidence that dance house participants, united by activities and practices promoting the perpetuation of 'folk tradition' in everyday life, share ideas about nation and citizenship on which they act in their private and public lives. While dance house goers do not agree on everything, it is clear that the associative events of dance house are socializing events, a characteristic that most dance house goers would acknowledge of the "original" village dance house on which revivalist events are modeled.

Submerged Senses, Sensibilities

How do we get, however, from a shared framework of sense to something like a political sensibility? Recall that Halbwachs argued that collective memory is produced through the interaction of institutionally preserved practices and meaning ascribed to them, influenced by contemporary circumstances, including available ideologies and political economic conditions. In the 1940s Györffy's students László E. Kovács, and Gyula Ortutay suggested that Györffy's "nemzetnevelő" (nation cultivating) prescription should be followed and vowed to take on this responsibility (Balassa 1993).[20] But from the 1950s on it was cultural managers more than academic ethnographers who pursued the work of *népi* (people's, folk) cultivation. In his assessment of the application of Györffy's ideas, Bertalan Andrásfalvy points out that the Népművelési Intézet (Institute for People's Culture) sponsored the so-called *hagyományőrző* (tradition-keeping) dance ensembles in the villages.

Founded as the Népi Művelődési Intézet (Institute for Folk Culture) in 1946 by populist *(népi)* writers Gyula Illyés and László Németh, with the support of the Szabadművelődési Tanács (Council for Free Cultural Cultivation), this Institute was funded by the Socialist state from 1950 onwards (Taylor 2008). Its direction was strongly effected by populist *(népi)* employees and directors, including Elemér Muharay, György Martin, and Iván Vitányi, who continued to have a

strong influence. The Institute did much more than support the village tradition-keeping ensembles, however. It was the main resource center for performing folk dancers, and the home to the Magyar Állami Népi Együttes (Hungarian State Folkdance Ensemble). Furthermore, folk dance and folk music collections were made by its employees and housed in its archives. Beyond this, a main task of the Institute was to guide associative life and to provide resources for cultivating institutions (such as the network of culture houses) and associative activities (usually held within them) (Taylor 2008).[21]

It is no coincidence that the Institute lent strong support to the infant dance house revival. In fact some call long time employee and folk dance scholar György Martin the "father of the dance house" because he introduced key musicians and dancers to one another and encouraged them to revive the village social dance environment. At the institute, Iván Vitányi, a populist *(népi)* since his youth, produced literature on the dance house as a realization of populist goals (1972). He became director of the Institute in 1973, and by 1976 plans had been made for a "dance house leader" course modeled on the "club leader" courses taught in previous years to facilitate club activities in the culture houses (Taylor 2008). His language was tempered by the socialist milieu, but was not at odds with his commitment to social democracy. He claimed that the formation of communities was at the heart of folk art.

"At the beginning," said Ferenc Sebő, musician and key actor in the emergence of the dance house in a 1976 interview, "we were immediately preoccupied with what folk art is about; that it creates community and spreads the basis of cultured recreation *(szórakozás)* and awakens the demand for more and better too" (Sebő, 1977, 5). Like folk, community is a malleable term. While youth at that time expressed the desire to counter what they saw as the alienation of socialist culture, as long as the community form was borrowed from "the folk" it was unclear whether such a community could be created or only continued. While he defended the dance house revival against charges of nationalism, in Vitányi's view, folk dance as a community-forming activity relies on the fact that it is practiced by a community. The folk was taken, unproblematized, as that community.

Personal accounts of dance house goers show that their varied and idiosyncratic ideas about dance house are influenced both by historical and contemporary discourses. Many use the ideas of the populist movement and Györffy without referring to them, especially when speaking of its apolitical but cultivating role, while some point explicitly to interwar populist activists. Influential choreographer and key figure in the first Budapest dance house events, Sándor Tímár, for example, cites Györffy in his 1999 book *In the Language of Folk Dance,* in which he links Györffy's program with "the right to speak one's mother tongue," a right he believes should be extended to dances (Tímár 1999, 7). Dance house goers

very rarely acknowledged to me, however, the broader political project that populist activists pursued in the interwar era, emphasizing instead the apolitical ethical role that those labeled *népi* were known for in both the interwar and socialist eras. Despite the breadth of interpretations of what dance house is or does, most dance house goers at one point or another associate dance house with some kind of ethical outcome.

Hungarian Soul?

Now we must return again to the question at hand. If collective memory, specifically, a "Hungarian soul", can be produced and reproduced through the incorporation of folk practices into everyday life, how might we evaluate its content? The goal of those who espoused "*népi nemzeti* művelődés" (folk national cultivation) was to produce a framework of sense through cultural innovation, the production of models of behavior and social relationships that enter into everyday life (Melucci 1988, 247). Yet Melucci further argues that it is the networks made of those who share such "frameworks of sense" that make mobilizations possible, "rendering them visible in a punctual manner at moments when confrontations with public policy emerge" (1988, 248). Györffy and *népi* activists hoped to cultivate in Hungarian citizens a sympathy for the folk and its practices not simply to create a community in itself, but because they hoped the creation of this community of sense would result in a transformation of the social system. We know that in dance house a preservation of folk form is achieved, but what about respect or empathy for the folk? What about social justice? What about the transformation of society?

If we take the folk to be best represented by Hungarian minority villagers in Transylvania, as many dance house revivalists do, then we might take as evidence the fact that most of those with whom I spoke asserted their responsibility to vote yes on a 2005 referendum calling for Hungarian citizenship rights for ethnic Hungarians in the neighboring countries, most of whom live in Transylvania. While the referendum was nullified by low turnout, dance house goers' expression of responsibility toward Hungarians living outside of Hungary may have translated into a significant proportion of the 51.5% of the population that went to the polls (35%) who voted yes. Indeed we might witness here a framework of sense manifesting as a mobilization. But if we recognize this "Hungarian soul" thus, then we are tempted also to examine the contemporary meanings of the word folk and their relationship to political and economic circumstances.

Györffy wrote in a period characterized by the cataclysmic loss of two-thirds of Hungarian territory to the neighboring countries. While the loss of this territory made the polity more homogeneous that it had been before, it also had two other consequences that are important in this context. The first was discrimination faced

by ethnic Hungarians under their new governments. The second was a demographic change on a massive scale caused by the change of borders and the resultant influx of refugees to Hungary. This influx of mostly middle class landowning Hungarians meant that those who remained beyond the borders were those who could not afford to leave, in other words those who comprised the folk. In Hungary the continued feudal-like structure of political and social life pursued by the Christian National government, in which displaced nobility cum middle class were overrepresented, was justified by the need to support these "immigrants." The size of the state apparatus, the historical role of which had been to employ the nobility, remained the same in a polity reduced to a third of its former size (Mócsy 1983, 185–186; Taylor 2006). Yet the loss of the territories was considered unfair by all, and both the government and populist activists were concerned with reproducing Hungarianness in Transylvania.

In the Socialist period that followed Communists attempted to co-opt the term folk to mean "the working classes" or "the people."[22] While the Hungarian word *nép,* like the German term Volk, had class connotations, it was strongly associated with the agrarian masses, and Communists were not able to wrest the term from its romantic and ethnic sense. With political engagement forbidden and social citizenship guaranteed, if differentially, the populist focus on social justice shifted toward those ethnic Hungarians oppressed in Transylvania. Why was this the case? First, processes of uneven development (collectivization included) guaranteed that agriculture was modernized more slowly in Transylvania than in Hungary. This meant that isolated Transylvanian villages retained "traditional" features, while Hungarian villages experienced rapid change. Second, ethnic Hungarians in Romania were subject to oppression, especially under the fiercely assimilationist policies of the Ceaușescu regime beginning in 1965 (Brubaker et al. 2006; Chen 2003). Third, beginning in that same period, Hungary "enjoyed" a kind of cultural thaw resulting from the legitimation policies of János Kádár, who came to power after the 1956 Revolution. In the later years of Socialism the Hungarian government allowed expressions of solidarity, culminating in massive protests in 1988, with Transylvanians as a kind of escape valve (or legitimation device) in the place of domestic issues (New York Times 1988; see also Kürti 2001). Finally, as Slavoj Zizek (1993) notes, conceptions of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft were united under the oppositional or "ethical civil society" (Renwick 2006) of the socialist period, when occupation with the folk helped to establish Communism as foreign, simultaneously strengthening the idea of the nation, and the ethnicification of the folk.

Using a lens of state formation and a nuanced approach to social movements, I have illuminated the continuities and ruptures between Györffy's plan for folk national cultivation and the dance house movement that arose over 30 years later, and contextualized the meanings that the concept of folk inhabits at different his-

torical conjunctures. Dance house represents the realization of Györffy and his contemporaries' plan to introduce folk practices into the everyday lives of Hungarian citizens and confirms their idea that such activities can lead to empathy and consequent political effects. Yet, while Györffy's theory also assumes that the content of Hungarianness is derived from contact with a timeless folk, we have seen that the folk with which dance house revivalists are occupied is conceived quite differently from that about which Györffy wrote. Dance house practices reify "the folk" even while affording it a meaning reflecting contemporary political and economic conditions. Indeed, the agricultural population in Hungary is of little concern to revivalists. Finally, while populist *(népi)* activists pursued political goals in tandem with populist "cultivation," the refusal of ideology that characterizes dance house goers does not allow them to recognize political upshots. This commitment to the purity of the spiritual sphere serves to obscure connections with the political sphere. Nevertheless, in this examination we have seen that ethical cultivation may indeed be a powerful element in the process of state formation. Therefore, we must take seriously Györffy's idea that the practice of folk forms, combined with a will to be Hungarian, will produce something – a particular collective memory about Hungarianness – and may lead to social change. Despite a lack of belief in the relationship between ethics and politics among contemporary dance house goers, these individualized practices of what Charles Hirschkind calls ethical self-discipline can cultivate frameworks of sense. Whether these frameworks of sense are evidence of "Hungarianness" is another question.

Notes

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the April 2008 symposium at Indiana University entitled the *Hungarian Folk Music Revival and Dance House Movement*. I would like to thank Ágnes Fülemile for inviting me to give this paper at the symposium and László Felföldi, László Kelemen, and Carol Silverman for comments on the presentation. I am indebted to Banu Karaca and Csilla Kalocsai for their close readings of and commentary on the manuscript.

1 The term *nép* is analogous with the German term *Volk,* and therefore reflects the same tensions between class and ethnic usages. The English term folk has lost its class and ethnic sense, retaining only the agricultural meaning. Reflecting these tensions and the breadth with which the term nép has been employed, translation into English can be problematic. In this paper I will at times use the term nép and its adjectival form, *népi* to illustrate both continuities and discontinuities in conceptualizations and uses of the terms.

2 Herder made specific reference to Hungary in Ideen zur *Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit,* in which he prophesized that, surrounded by a sea of Slavic and Germanic peoples, the Hungarian language, and thus the Hungarian nationality itself, was destined to disappear.

3 While based on the literary debates between the two groups, many define "populists," cultural and political advocates for the folk, as having been in opposition with urbanists, who represented an urbanite worldview and advocated its place in Hungarian society (and quite often espoused social democratic political views), it is important to note that in the interwar period both groups stood in opposition to the Christian National Government's feudal ideology of limited citizenship.

4 I am indebted to Corrigan and Sayer, Philip Abrams, and Charles Tilly for this vision of state formation, civil society and social movements.

5 The fact that Borbándi's book translates as "The Hungarian Populist Movement" reflects the prevalence of agrarian "populist" movements in East Central Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. This is interesting, as dance house participants quite freely refer to themselves as *népi,* the term that translates to populist in the interwar period, and prompts us to examine the historical dimensions of the word. See Held 1996 and Pirie 1997 for discussions of East Central European populisms.

6 Please see page 12, paragraph 2 revivalists refer to themselves as *népi,* but would not be happy with populist as a translation for their behaviors or stances. This reflects the tension bwteen understanding the term "*népi* mozgalom" as populist movement or folk movement.

7 In his now often quoted text, T. H. Marshall disaggregated citizenship into three elements: the political, civil and social. He defines political rights as the "right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body," civil rights as those "necessary for individual freedom-liberty of person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice [that is] the right to defend and assert all one's rights on terms of equality with others and by due process of law", and political rights as "the right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of the body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body". He defines social rights as "the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security [and the] right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society." (T. H. Marshall, quoted in Seligman 1992, 113–114). This aggregate approach to citizenship allows us to view citizenship, and thus, state formation dynamically.

8 Journalist György Oláh published a book entitled *Három millió koldus* in 1928. The term was adopted in public debate and literature to refer to the poorest stratum of peasant society (Borbándi 1989, 58; Vitányi, personal communication).

9 The term *polgár* (derived from Burgher) was used to refer to the bourgeoisie and often used as a gloss for Jew (Borbándi 1989, 33, 48; Mócsy 1983).

10 For a detailed discussion of the interrelations and differences between these activities, see Taylor 2008 and Borbándi 1989.

11 Borbándi insists that style alone was not enough to make one populist or urbanist (Borbándi 1989, 195).

12 It was Györffy's good friend Pál Teleki, Minister of Culture at the time, who made it possible for the Institute to open, but who also berated the researchers for what he saw as bad science and an affront to his class (Borbándi, 239–240).

13 Even Andrásfalvy (1991, 161) points this out after he insists on the cultural meaning of middle class.

14 We can find folk writers adopting anything along the spectrum of far right to far left stances in this period, while still usually not supporting the Christian National view. Populist activists, however, did work within government institutions, where they believed they could influence the direction of events.

15 Féja was one of the organizers of the March Front and a NÉKOSZ activist.

[16] The main founders of the party were Imre Kovács, Pál Szabó, Ferenc Erdei, Ferenc Farkas, Péter Veres (Borbándi 1989, 323–326).

[17] István Deák challenges the popular view of the Populist Writers as oppressed by the Communists. He argues that they were actually favored by the Party leadership. Because they were not Jews, they were seen as "likely to serve as a bridge between the Party leadership and the people" (Deák 1999, 56).

[18] Dance house events are held daily in Budapest. They are held several times a week in provincial cities and towns, and hardly at all in rural areas of Hungary. Dance house "folkdance as mother tongue" techniques have become standard training for performing folkdancers, who may or may not attend dance house events.

[19] Melucci (1988) used the phrases framework of sense and community of sense interchangeably. In this work I use framework of sense to represent the common set of senses and sensibilities discussed in this chapter, while I reserve "community of sense" for those moments in which this network of dance house goers can be seen to congeal into a community in relation to the formal political process.

[20] See Hofer (1980) for a discussion of the role played by the discipline of ethnography in East European nation building.

[21] It was called Népművészeti Intézet (Institute for Folk Art) from 1951–1957, Népművelődési Intézet (Institute for People's Culture) from 1957–1986, Országos Közművelődési Központ (National Center for Public Cultivation) until 1992, and the Hungarian Institute for Culture since then. In 2001 an independent Institution (also state funded) emerged from the departments dealing with folk art. This Institution, Heritage House, continues to share a building with the Institute.

[22] There was some precedent for this, as the Social Democratic party had long used the term *nép* to represent "the people."

References

Andrásfalvy, Bertalan (1991) "Györffy István programja a népi műveltség elemeinek össztársadalmi elterjesztésére" in *Népi kultúra és nemzettudat,* ed. Tamás Hofer (Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet).

Balassa, Iván (1993) "Györffy István" in István Györffy, *A néphagyomány és a nemzeti művelődés* (Debrecen: A Györffy István Néprajzi Egyesület).

Bartók, Béla (1976) "The Influence of Peasant Music on Newer Composed Music" in Béla Bartók, *Essays* ed. Benjamin Suchoff, NY Bartók Archive Studies in Musicology 8. (New York: St Martin's Press).

Borbándi, Gyula (1989) *A magyar népi mozgalom* (Budapest: Püski Kiadó).

Brubaker, Rogers – Feischmidt, Margit – Fox, Jon – Grancea, Liana (2006) *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Burger, Hannalore (2003) "Language Rights and Linguistic Justice in the Education System of the Habsburg Monarchy" (Unpublished paper given at Seminar entitled Official and Scholastic Language in Austria and in Multilingual Areas at the Institute for Central European Cultural Encounters, Gorizia, Italy.)

Chatterjee, Partha (1993) *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Chen, Cheng (2003) "The Roots of Illiberal Nationalism in Romania: A Historical Institutionalist Analysis of the Leninist Legacy" in *East European Politics and Societies* 17(2), 166–201.

Corrigan, Philip (1994) "State Formation" in *Everyday Forms of State Formation,* eds. Joseph Gilbert and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press).
Deák, István (1999) "On the Leash" in *Hungarian Quarterly* XL (156).
Eagleton, Terry (1990) *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (London: Blackwell 1990).
Election Profile for Hungary, "Election Guide, Electronic Document", http://www.electionguide.org/election.php?ID=297, accessed February, 2005.
Elias, Norbert (1939, 1994) *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell).
Györffy, István (1993) *A néphagyomány és a nemzeti művelődés* (Debrecen: A Györffy István Néprajzi Egyesület).
Halbwachs, Maurice (1992) *On Collective Memory.* Ed., translator, Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
Halmos, Béla (1994) "The History of the Táncház Movement" in *Explorations in Finnish and Hungarian Folk Dance Music and Dance Research,* Volume I. Eds. Luukola and Hannu Varpu (Kaustinen, Finland: The Folk Music Institute).
Halmos, Béla (2000) "The Táncház Movement" in *Hungarian Heritage* 1.
Held, Joseph (1996) ed., *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism and Society,* Eastern European Monographs No CDXL (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs).
Hirsch, Eric (1997) "Voices from the Black Box: Folk Song, Boy Scouts and the Construction of Folk Nationalist Hegemony in Hungary, 1930–1944" in *Antipode* 29/2(1997), 197–215.
Hirschkind, Charles (2001) "The Ethics of Listening: Cassette Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt" in *American Ethnologist* 38/3.
Hofer, Tamás (1980) "Ethnic Symbols from the Elements of Peasant Culture" in *Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe,* Peter Sugar, ed. (Oxford).
Kann, Robert A. – David, Zdenek V. (1984) *The Peoples of the Eastern Hapsburg Lands, 1856–1918* (Seattle: University of Washington Press).
Kürti, László (2002) *Youth and the State in Hungary: Capitalism, Communism and Class* (London: Pluto).
Martin, György (1981) "Beszélgetés Martin Györggyel az új folklórhullám és néptáncmozgalom előzményeiről" in *Kultúra és közösség* 81/4, 42–52.
Melucci, Alberto (1988) "Social Movements and the Democratization of Everyday Life" in *Civil Society and the State,* ed. John Keane (London: Verso).
Mocsy, István I. (1983) *The Effects of World War 1: Hungarian Refugees and Their Impact on Hungary's Domestic Politics, 1918–1921* (New York: Columbia University Press).
New York Times, *"Hungary–Rumania Rift Unresolved"* New York Times, September 1(1988).
Olick, Jeffrey K. – Robbins, Joyce (1998) "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices" in *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, 105–40.
Pálfi, Csaba (1970) "A Gyöngyösbokréta története" in *Tánctudományi Tanulmányok 1969–1970.* eds. Zoltán Dienes and László Maácz (Budapest: A Magyar Táncművészek Szövetsége Tudományos Tagozata).
Pirie, Paul (1997) "Review of Joseph Held, ed. Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism and Society" in *Slavic and East European Journal* 41/3, 525–527.
Renwick, Alan (2006) "Anti-Political or Just Anti-Communist? Varieties of Dissidence in East-Central Europe and Their Implications for the Development of Political Society" in *East European Politics and Societies* 20/2, 286–318.
Ronström, Owe (1998) *Revival in Retrospect. The Folk Music and Dance Revival* (European Centre for Traditional Culture, Bulletin IV).
Sebő, Ferenc (1976) Semmi újat találtunk ki – Beszélgetés Sebő Ferenccel. *Kritika* 77/2: 4–6.

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 31–42
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.3

THE HUNGARIAN STATE FOLK ENSEMBLE AS A DYNAMIC INSTITUTION IN HUNGARIAN ETHNOGRAPHY

LISA OVERHOLSER

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
USA

Every year thousands of individuals come to know Hungarian folk culture through staged performance. From children's ensembles to amateur ensembles to the most professionally organized groups, audiences in Hungary are treated to a wide variety of creatively reinterpreted Hungarian folk dance and folk music traditions. Staged folk dance has become a unique and powerful mode of cultural expression. This article attempts to illuminate staged folk dance's potential for commentary, focusing on the choreographies and work of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble (Magyar Állami Népi Együttes, or MÁNE as it is commonly referred to). Established in 1951, it is one of the oldest folk ensembles on the European continent and is the only professional ensemble in Hungary that is referenced as a *State* ensemble. Much more than a static or isolated organization that provides a pleasant evening's entertainment, the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble is integrally woven into the fabric of social life, qualitatively shaping and contributing to an ongoing socio-cultural dialogue. It accomplishes this through its dependence on source folk genres presented in the amplified artistic frame of the stage.

Keywords: *táncház,* Dance House, folk dance, folk music, Hungarian, staged folk dance, Miklós Rábai, Sándor Tímár, Gábor Mihály

A Brief History

The staging of folk dance forms has a significant history in Hungary, dating back to the late 19th century and continuing to the present day. In conception and output, staging strategies have resiliently adapted to dramatic social, political and economic changes, and I first want to briefly outline the important predecessors of today's ensembles. The following is not a deep exploration of staged folk dance's history. Instead I provide a quick overview that highlights the most important antecedents of the State Folk Ensemble, including the 1896 Millennial Exhibition, the Pearly Bouquet Movement, and amateur folk ensembles.

The 1896 recreations of village life at the Millennial Exhibition in Budapest attempted to present folk genres in as authentic a frame as possible, literally trans-

planting artifacts, cultural expressions, and even villagers to the heart of Budapest for the exhibit. Influenced by 18th and early 19th century trends of romantic nationalism, these re-creations of village life were couched in the belief that folk genres developed organically from the uneducated masses who were tied to the land and therefore represented the essence of a nation. For the occasion of the 1000-year commemoration of the Hungarian tribes' migration into the Carpathian Basin in 896 A.D., this was a symbolically significant mode of commemoration.

The *Gyöngyösbokréta* (Pearly bouquet) movement of the 1930s and 1940s occurred in the context of interwar period populism. It placed Hungarian villagers on the stage for purposes of touristic presentations and celebrations of national holidays. Amidst the rigid ethnographic work of scholars and ethnographers that had begun at the turn of the century (with scholars like Bartók and Kodály leading the way in the field of folk music research), and with the stamp of ethnographic approval from such institutions as the Ethnographic Society, placing villagers themselves on the stage to dance their own dances in their own way lent an air of authenticity to the performances and determined the criteria for what would be considered "authentic" in terms of staged folk music and dance.

An outgrowth of the Pearly Bouquet Movement as it disintegrated, amateur folk ensembles also sprang up around the country. This tendency intensified throughout the political upheaval of the 1940s. Organizations connected to social and economic life, including factories, worker's unions, student groups, and so on, often had a folk dance group associated with them.

The Choreographic Eras of the State Folk Ensemble

Miklós Rábai

The order for the formation of a national performing folk ensemble came from the central government in 1950. Loosely modeled after the Soviet Moiseyev Ensemble, the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble came into existence in 1951. As the first professional folk dance ensemble in the country, its creation ushered in an era of professionalism in staged folk dance that lasts to the present day. The presentation and further development of folk genres were among the main goals of the organization:

> The task of the ensemble should be to collect, preserve, further develop and present the traditions of the Hungarian people.[1]

Miklós Rábai (1921–1974) was one of the names under consideration for the position of choreographer of the Ensemble, and he ultimately gained the title. As a participant in the amateur folk dance movement who came from a background of

physical education training, Rábai's helm as choreographer was marked by a highly stylized form of choreography. The first dancers of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble all had ballet training, evident in the highly technical execution of their movements. Synchronized choreography was another signature stamp of the Rábai era, as were the plotted stories and folk tales that formed the basis of his works. Some of the more representative and well-known Rábai choreographies that still remain in the Ensemble's repertoire are *Kállai kettős* (with music by Kodály) and *Ecseri lakodalmas*.

His goal was to create great Hungarian dance art, and towards this end he envisioned a three-tiered process.[2] First was the choreography of simple folk-tale plays, followed by pieces that had a historical theme and ultimately ending with great dramatic works. The three-step process bears remarkable resemblance to the artistic conception of Béla Bartók in Bartók's creation of a new national art music deriving from folk music several decades earlier.[3] Essentially, Rábai wanted to create a new "formal language" of dance art by relying on folk dance genres and folk customs, but also by developing them to a higher level.[4] *Kisbojtár* and *Latinka ballada* are good examples of some of his more stylized, dramatic works.

With his emphasis on technical execution, synchronization and stylization, Rábai's choreographies tended to be more aesthetically oriented than any choreographic style that had come before. He appeared to be less concerned with faithfully representing the source folk genres as they actually might appear in the source contexts, highlighting the debates circulating at the time about the direction of staged folk dance choreography. Central to these debates were the opposing obligations to what I call the theoretical categories of "folk" and "art," the ultimate challenge for any professional, performing ensemble that derives its source material from folk genres but must also depend on creativity and innovation to thrive. Given the directions towards perceived notions of authenticity (as established by the Pearly Bouquet Movement, for example) that previous folk choreographies had taken, in other words towards the "folk" end of the spectrum, Rábai made the bold choice to lead the Ensemble more in the direction of "art," emphasizing the aesthetically apparent qualities of cultural expression.

Sándor Tímár

After Rábai's sudden death in 1974, the State Folk Ensemble was left in a state of flux, and a temporary directorship was given to Dezső Létai, who essentially continued in Rábai's style. Rábai had changed the choreographic vision of staged folk dance, but the same choreographic debates that had flared up at the time of the Ensemble's creation had never fully died down and were brought to the forefront again with the transition. One of the main criticisms in Hungarian dance circles

was the seemingly increasing distance from the original folk sources of Rábai's choreographies. According to the minutes of a meeting of the Magyar Táncművészek Szövetsége (Hungarian Dance Federation) on May 30, 1979, in which members debated the growing problems within the Ensemble, several reasons were given for this period of crisis, one of the most important being the lack of ethnographic knowledge within the Ensemble, or at least as reflected in their choreographies. Létai himself frames the problem in this way:

> The familiarity with and use of folk tradition. Summarizing briefly: In this respect we have fallen behind, yet it is a requirement of the ensemble to be familiar with and apply the results of scholarly folklore research! The name and the task of the Ensemble ties it to this. Today, this is where the problem lies, that within the Ensemble many languages are spoken, the language is not uniform. It is not possible to establish a literary language without a familiarity with the mother language.[5]

A new choreographic era ensued with the appointment of Sándor Tímár. Like Rábai, Tímár was involved in the late 1940s and 1950s with the amateur folk dance movement, but in 1958 he established the Bartók Ensemble, a professional ensemble that was named in recognition of the pioneering ethnomusicologist and music ethnographer. Acknowledging the work of music ethnographers was indicative of the times, as the ethnographic collection of folk dance consumed many scholars, particularly Tímár's colleague György Martin. The mood for the collection of folk dances was fervent, and it led to an increasing familiarity with still vibrant folk dance traditions, including the more improvised styles of Hungarian folk dancing.

In this context, Tímár became much more concerned with choreographic considerations of authenticity. As one of the founding members of the dance house movement, he was committed to presenting folk dance as a living tradition that still had relevance in people's lives, and this guided his choreographic choices. His appointment as choreographer of the State Folk Ensemble in 1981 was made in part because of his commitment to what was perceived as a more authentic folk style. His principles of dance as an "anyanyelv"[6] (mother tongue) transformed how staged folk dance choreographies looked within the Ensemble.

As an example, one of his most revolutionary choreographes was *Öt legény tánca*. The choreography begins with a single man on stage dancing in a *legényes* style. There is no musical accompaniment except for the music he creates on his own body with leg slaps, clamps and stamps. He is eventually joined by another male who matches his actions, and it appears as though a sort of competition will ensue. A few more males join in, as does the music, and the choreography goes into full swing. The emphasis on individuals or individual groupings as opposed to large groups of dancers, the lack of synchronized gestures, the less ballet-like

movements and the constantly moving use of space are choreographic choices that were all driven by Tímár's involvement with the dance house movement and the deepening ethnographic knowledge that was disseminated as a result. As a kind of corrective to the artistic directions of the State Ensemble's previous choreographic era, Tímár led the choreographic vision back to a "folk" emphasis.

Gábor Mihály

Following a choreographic era that was perceived as highly authentic, the present choreographer of the State Folk Ensemble, Gábor Mihály, has taken the State Folk Ensemble in yet another direction. Having admittedly no significant knowledge of folk dance or music as a living tradition when he was a young child, Mihály came to know folk dance through staged performances as a youngster in Jászberény and thus became familiar with the power and beauty of staged folk dance early on. He joined a local group and eventually was invited to dance in the State Folk Ensemble by Tímár himself, and even danced in the *Öt legény tánca*. He worked his way up as a dancer in the Ensemble, becoming a dance leader and eventually staging a few choreographies himself, until he was named as artistic director in 2002.

The drastic social, economic and political changes that occurred in Hungary in the late 80s and early 90s led to another period of crisis for the Ensemble, and once again brought to the forefront the ongoing negotiation of the Ensemble's vision. The emphasis on what had been regarded as Tímár's highly authentic choreographic style, influenced by the dance house and larger folk revival movements, had increased the public's knowledge of Hungarian folk dance traditions through presentation. But there was also a sense that it had limited the full artistic and creative potential of what staged folk dance could do in cultural life at a time when Hungarian society was in great flux. The new choreographic staff responded.

Mihály's vision for the Ensemble has been to move forward by circling back. In many ways, he and his staff have resumed Rábai's original artistic vision of creating great, uniquely Hungarian dance. But rather than framing the choreographic debate as an opposition between "art" and "folk," they carry the vision on with the knowledge that their artistic palette has only been enriched with the increasing knowledge of Hungarian folk styles, in other words "art" has been enriched by "folk." Works like *A földön apám fia volnék,* among others, contain a gestural vocabulary and a use of space that are considered to be much more authentic than anything that Rábai ever staged, and thanks to the Tímár era, the dance house movement, and the larger folk revival movement, these elements are also recognizable as much more authentic.

This has the potential to make the performances more real and personal, or in other words, more relevant, to the audience. For audience members who attend performances in search of this kind of authenticity, it has the ability to create a more real sense of "us." But the use of the stage as an artistic frame to momentarily suspend time and insert present-day choreographies bears more resemblance to the Rábai era than it does to the Tímár era. For those who attend Ensemble performances to have their aesthetic senses or imaginations more keenly stimulated, this is a useful technique.

Dynamic Work

Consideration of these three choreographic eras as a whole suggests that the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble is a dynamic institution. It has changed and adapted as the various political, economic, and social circumstances around it have changed. But it has also had to change and adapt according to what was taking place in other folk dance contexts, and in this regard, what was happening on the stage has always been highly responsive to what was happening in other folk dance contexts. As there was a change in each of the contexts suggested in Diagram 1 below (the basic triangular structure was first suggested to me by László Felföldi), other related contexts had to adapt. For example, with the increasing knowledge of what existed in the "field" with the "original" folk sources, the dance house movement flourished. In turn, this affected what happened on the stage, prompting a change in the choreographic direction of staged folk dance towards a more traditionally faithful representation. Other dynamic relationships were also established and are more fully explored in the scholarship produced as part of the 2008 György Ránki Hungarian Chair Conference at Indiana University, of which this article represents a part.

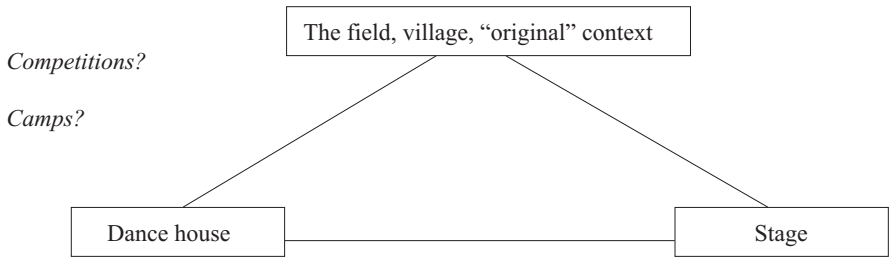

Diagram 1. The various contexts of Hungarian folk dance and their dynamic relationships

I suggest the addition of some new contexts for folk dance, that of dance camps and of dance competitions. Hungarian folk dance camps are numerous in Hungary, but especially in Transylvania. They have become a significant factor in how folk dance is learned and disseminated, and they also have important implications for notions of authenticity, since they offer a chance to interact first-hand and in an extended format with vanishing village life. Competitions have served to raise the technical level of various kinds of folk dance, which has implications for the aesthetic quality of staged folk dance. Both of these would be interesting areas for future research.

The Artistic Frame

Before I analyze very briefly two choreographies by the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble to illustrate their dynamic nature and the potential folk dance choreographies have for socio-cultural commentary, I first want to clarify what I mean when I say that staged folk dance exists in an artistic frame. The genre of staged folk dance necessarily relies on the theoretical categories of "folk" and "art,"[7] categories of which I made mention earlier. While staged folk dance is often evaluated in terms of its relevance to the former category, it is not often evaluated or analyzed in terms of the latter.

There are many crucial elements that the audience doesn't see that serve to define the Ensemble and also serve as criteria for placing an Ensemble in an appropriate theoretical category. I refer to some of these elements in my discussions of the choreographic analysis. These include:

1. *Selection of dancers.* This can mean selection for the ensemble as a whole or for one particular choreography. In the first case, selection can determine the gestural makeup of the whole Ensemble. In the Rábai era, for example, the dancers in the Ensemble were trained in ballet style. This led to a gestural vocabulary that was not considered "authentic" and was thought to be stylized. Presently, some dancers have ballet training, but many do not and have only danced folk dance in either an "authentic" village context or in a dance house setting. The movements appear to be more genuine. In the second case of selection for a particular choreography, if there is one dancer who is particularly skilled in a regional dance or happens to come from that particular region, then the selection of that dancer lends a more authentic element to the choreography, a factor about which the audience knows nothing.
2. *How dances are learned (transcription vs. incorporation)*. The difference between learning a dance by, for example, watching a video tape (transcribed knowledge[8]) and learning through working with an actual person or through an

actual experience (incorporated knowledge) may not seem great, but in Hungarian folk dance, it matters. As ethnography emphasizes the fact that folk culture is dead or dying, there are fewer living folk masters from whom to learn. The next best thing, according to ethnography, is video documentation of the folk master performing the dance, and increasingly this is being used in many ensembles as a marker of authenticity.

3. *Range of genres.* Anyone who goes to see a single Ensemble performance does not see the range of what the Ensemble can do. The fact that an ensemble has works in their repertoire that are considered to be more authentic, for example, indicates that the ensemble places value on authenticity, no matter how vague the notion, and that they have a particular understanding of how that should manifest on the stage. A range of genres also represents a more complete picture of the Ensemble's vision and intentions.
4. *What did not make it in*. There is a range of artistic choices that are made when assembling a choreography over time. What the audience sees is the end-product, but gestures, music, steps, etc., are edited along the way. Unfortunately, the audience is not able to see in a single performance what was edited out and why. These things can help clarify artistic intention.

The most important element that staged folk dance possesses to cue it as an artistic performance is the stage itself. This alone often places it in the category of "art" rather than "folk." It is one of the main reasons why, for example, most people are so ready to say "That's not folklore!" even when they see a villager on stage performing a dance from his or her own community. But the subject of staged folk dance is folk dance. One of the things staged folk dance does (at least one of the goals of the State Ensemble) is present its subject, folk dance. Dance ethnography also presents folk dance, but of course in a very different way.

As an artistic frame, there are many things that a staged performance allows or amplifies that folk dance ethnography cannot. These include a qualitative approach, narrative, differing concepts of chronology, and differing concepts of location.

1. *Qualitative approach*. The goal of ethnography is to document tradition with the use of rigid scientific methodology. But as it has mostly been practiced in Hungary, with an emphasis on technical movement and comparison, ethnography can do little to point out relationships convincingly other than provide quantitative data. It also can do very little in the way of providing interpretations of what that data might mean. With a close relationship to ethnography, staged folk dance offers the possibility for speculation and interpretation and allows the chance to ask questions such as "What if?" Connections can be sug-

gested and relationships between seemingly disparate elements can be put forth with few repercussions.

2. *Narrative*. Staged folk dance allows the possibility to tell a story, complete with a beginning, middle, and end, and to play with how that narrative is told. The importance of how something is told versus what is told, as well as what this contributes to meaning, has been a crucial avenue of thought in many studies of folklore. Performance theory, for example, holds the manner in which a story is told as key to understanding something about the message itself. The narrative conventions followed can borrow directly from literary sources such as novels, short stories, novellas, tragedies, etc., as well as theatrical conventions or oral bodies of work.
3. *Chronology, differing concepts of time*. Staged folk dance allows the possibility to stay in real time, but also to travel throughout a narrative in other kinds of time (i.e., Bakhtin's "folkloric time").Time can pass at lightning speed, or a single moment can be drawn out to create different illusions of the passing of time or chronology.
4. *Differing concepts of location*. Like the play with time, a staged performance allows the possibility to travel to any location, whether abstract or real.

Choreographic Analysis

In the following brief analyses of two of the most recent Ensemble choreographies, all of these frames are used to some degree in the creation of meaning. By analyzing these choreographies, my intention here is to explore how art can be used in the creation of meaning, and more specifically, how the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble has utilized strategic artistic devices to create meaningful performances that have relevance to their audiences. It is not my intention to suggest that these are the sole interpretations intended by the Ensemble. I recognize that every individual viewer will ultimately have their own interpretations and meanings, and the choreographic staff acknowledges this as well. But I also believe that there is an inner logic to how these choreographies are constructed, one that takes into account the importance of aesthetic qualities and artistic choice as much as it does the basis in folklore.

(The following choreographies are available at www.hagyomanyokhaza.hu/mane.)

A földön apám fia volnék

This show, premiered in 2004 and touted as one of the more authentic choreographies of the present-day Ensemble, contains many elements that are im-

mediately striking. The most obvious of these is that all of the dancers are dressed in black and white costumes which, while formally similar to the original folk styles, are limited in their chromatic palette. A second striking technique is the play of time. Periodically throughout the show time is slowed down so that dancers are sometimes dancing in very slow motion, only then to resume dancing at normal speed several seconds later. Dances sometimes overlap as well, and overall there is a very fragmentary, unfinished feel to many of the dances.

At the same time, audio-visual materials are also utilized. For example, video projections onto the back of the stage wall depict natural landscapes as well as skillfully done sand drawing. Additionally, opaque screens are sometimes pulled down in front of the dancers so that only a shadowy profile remains. Aside from this, there is even one point in the choreography where all of the dancers, while singing a folk song, dramatically turn to the back of the stage towards the natural landscape that is being projected on the back stage wall, creating for the audience a frame-within-a-frame moment.

When asked my opinion of this show by the choreographic staff, I told them that although the movements and use of space did indeed seem more faithful to original folk styles, I was confused by the elements of the black-and-white costuming, the distortion of time, and the use of films and screens. The staff indicated that the idea was to focus on the beauty of the dance itself, the literal movements and the subtle kinetic variations that distinguish one regional dance from another. But the choreographer also mentioned that many of the techniques mimic how individuals remember, often in fleeting, vague glimpses and many times in a neutral black and white palette.

Thus, while there are many elements that stay faithful to the folk sources and stamp this choreography as more "authentic," including the technical movements themselves, use of space, and the unseen effort by the choreographer to have dancers themselves choose to dance the regional or stylistic dances with which they were most familiar, this is also a very artful presentation of folk dance loaded with meaning. Aside from the focus on the dancers' movements, this choreography is a self-reflexive commentary on the role of staged folk dance, the role of audiences, and the role of memory in the preservation of heritage.

Pannon freskó

A newer choreography that I was able to witness from beginning to end was *Pannon freskó,* which premiered in 2005. The title of the production refers to lost fresco fragments that were discovered in a ruin in Hungary, which at the time of the Roman Empire was known as Pannonia. More than just a reference to archaeological excavations, however, this show uses narrative devices to suggest histori-

cal connections between many of the cultural forms of Eastern, Central, and Western Europe.

The production is essentially a story-within-a-story, complete with a prologue, intermission, and epilogue, and a clearly marked separation between the dancers when they dance with masks on and when they dance with masks off. Additionally, the use of circular and cyclical imagery is prevalent, from the use of the seasons to mark off the sections of the show to the reference to life cycles and a figure of Death himself. Musically, the recurrent use of the *Dies Irae,* the Latin tune from the *Mass for the Dead,* in various strategic places throughout the show provides a kind of narrative unity, similar to the cyclical techniques used by musical composers such as Beethoven, Wagner or Berlioz in their great musical masterpieces.

Along these same lines, circle dances are used to provide a time reference at various points in the drama. With the presentation of the first circle dance in the first few minutes of the choreography that comes out of amorphous abstraction, the crucial relationship of circle dances to the past, a relationship also emphasized in folk dance ethnography, is established early on. As the narrative proceeds, the reference to the past is facilitated through the technique of employing a circle dance.

Circle dances are used as universalizing elements as well, since various circle dances from other cultural regions are choreographed into the production. And finally, the clearly modern, non-traditional clothing of the dancers places the audience in a neutral, non-specific location, further universalizing what is seen on stage.

All of these elements combine to suggest meanings that are complex and yet relevant in a globalized world. The program pamphlet itself makes reference to this idea, and thus the audience is invited to ponder the concept of globalization even before they sit down to watch the show:

> The scenic dance vision's monumental… moments evoke the European, and within it, the Hungarian culture's mighty, world-forming influence. It is worth reveling in its beauty once again, before the globalization that is spreading from within completely unifies its varied colors.

This choreography demonstrates that staged folk dance is far better suited than any other current mode of expression for launching a larger discussion about globalization or Hungary's response to globalization. This is not to say that globalization does not exist or affect any other folk dance context in Hungary, or that globalization has not been discussed in any of these other contexts. Indeed, globalization's perceived threat to all of these other contexts may be precisely the reason why it is discussed at all in the context of staged folk dance. All too often, however, staged folk dance choreographies like *Pannon freskó* are simply ana-

lyzed on the basis of their relation to the authentic, folk sources and judged accordingly, without consideration of the crucial contribution that the artistic frame makes. This is what I have intended to address in this article. To judge all choreographies as such is to misunderstand the work of the ensembles that produce them. The unique qualities of staged folk dance in Hungary, including the use of artistic frames that have been enriched by ethnography and also by the history of the genre, allow for a unique contribution to a larger socio-cultural dialogue.

Notes

1 Vadasi, *Szálljatok fiókáim…,* 33.
2 *Ibid.,* 35.
3 Bartók, "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music", in Béla Bartók, *Essays,* 340–344.
4 Vadasi, 35.
5 "Szövetségi viták...", 10.
6 These concepts are more fully explained in Tímár's book, *Néptáncnyelven*.
7 It also involves other theoretical and cultural categories, such as "popular", but for purposes of this article I focus on these two categories, as they are often seen as oppositional.
8 The terms "transcription" and "incorporation" are terms I have borrowed from Paul Connerton in his discussions of cultural and social memory; see his *How Societies Remember,* cited in the References. Other dance scholars have borrowed these terms as well in reference to dance (see Buckland 2001, for example).
9 See Richard Bauman 1986, for a basic introduction to Performance theory.
10 Bakhtin 1981.

References

Bartók, Béla. 1976 [1931]. "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music". In Béla Bartók, *Essays,* selected and edited by Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 340–344.

Bakhtin, M. M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press).

Bauman, Richard. 1986. *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press).

Buckland, Teresa. 2001. "Dance, Authenticity and Cultural Memory: The Politics of Embodiment." *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 33: 1–16.

Connerton, Paul. 1989. *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

"Szövetségi viták: A Magyar Állami Népi Együttes munkája" (Federation Debates: The Work of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble), recordings of the minutes of the Hungarian Dance Federation's folk dance department meeting, on May 30, 1979. Found in: *Táncművészeti dokumentumok* (Budapest: The Hungarian Dance Federation), 3–28.

Tímár, Sándor. 1999. *Néptáncnyelven* (Budapest: Püski).

Vadasi, Tibor. 2001. *Szálljatok fiókáim…: Rábai Miklós-portré* (Fly my Birds…: Portraits of Miklós Rábai) (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza).

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 43–62
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.4

CULTURAL ALTERNATIVES, YOUTH AND GRASSROOTS RESISTANCE IN SOCIALIST HUNGARY – THE FOLK DANCE AND MUSIC REVIVAL

BALÁZS BALOGH – ÁGNES FÜLEMILE

Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest
Hungary

The paper aims to look at those community-organizing phenomena that provided alternatives to officially supported, mandatory youth activities and played a vital role in the everyday life of young people in socialist Hungary in the 1970s and 80s. The urban folk dance and music revival, the so-called *táncház* (dance house) movement, is highlighted. The authors argue that the dance house as a subculture with its concept of "authenticity" was able to create common identity with the intrinsic notion of oppositional stance. Parallels are drawn between sports, rock music, literature and the dance house. The process of disintegration and folkloristic discovery of traditional peasant culture in Hungary and in Transylvania, communist peasant policy, and the connections between cities and villages are discussed alongside the phenomena of revival and issues of identity.

Keywords: communist peasant policy, socialism, disintegration, folklorism, folk music and dance revival, urban youth movement, authenticity, Transylvania, solidarity, rock music

Hungary has a uniquely wide spectrum of activities in the revival folk dance and music scene. The perception, reinterpretation and representation of peasant art by non-peasants have seen many waves since the first part of the 19th century. The rich variety of regional peasant traditions evolved gradually from late medieval and early modern antecedents, peaked in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and has been disintegrating over the course of the 20th century up to recent times.[1] In Hungary state-of-art ethnography developed at this time, coinciding with the hey-day of folk art. The living phenomena of peasant culture in the field and the rich data of ethnographic recollection both served as sources of folklorism.[2]

One of the most recent waves of folkloristic discovery was the so-called "dance house" movement (táncház[3]), an urban grassroots youth revival movement that emerged in the 1970s and 80s in the period of late socialism.

Several prominent intellectuals writers, poets, and scholars had leading roles in the revival movement. Ethnomusicology and dance study provided a serious

scholarly background and gathered together with the young amateurs an enormous amount of field material into archives, which was possible due to the longevity of peasant culture in some regions of the Carpathian basin.[4]

The movement reinvented the institution of the village dance house in urban settings and focused on the process of learning freely varied, improvisational, yet rule-bound dances for live musical accompaniment. Young people, who were searching for a "true," "authentic" tradition, started relearning the technique and the style of dance and music from the "last" remarkable personalities of peasant performers in the field within Hungary and among minority Hungarians in neighboring countries. In a way there is a unique continuity in the transmission of knowledge from the "last preservers" of traditional knowledge to the first generation of dance house musicians and dancers. As a result there is a rich repertoire and a very high standard of quality of dance and musical knowledge in the consecutive dance house generations.

Pilgrimages made to the "sources" revealed the narratives, unspoken until then, of Hungarian minority existence in the neighboring socialist countries for a subgroup of the young people. The movement, in addition to fostering pride in "national culture", was able to mediate a flexible, tolerant attitude toward other ethnicities through the interactions that took place in the field, in the dance-clubs, and in festivals.

In the period of milder political suppression of late reform socialism, the dance house established strong communities of young people with similar tastes, values, sets of identities and critical ideas deviating from the official view.

The fresh experience of improvisational dance that started as an amateur movement soon revolutionized the concepts of choreographed performances and created a new sensibility and politics of staged dance as well.

More than 35 years after its beginning, the revival is now a complex half-professionalized and institutionalized movement with several music bands, professional dance-ensembles, amateur groups, choreographic workshops, music schools, folk-clubs and summer-dance camps with arts and crafts activities within and outside Hungary.

One of the key components in the strength of the attraction of the dance house movement was the sense of belonging it gave to young people. This article discusses the ability of the dance house to create a deep sense of uniting community in the period of late socialism in the 1970s and 1980s in Hungary. We argue that the dance house as a subculture with its interpretation of tradition was able to create common identity and worldview with an intrinsic notion of an oppositional stance to the prevailing political doctrine. The dance house, together with rock-music, self-organized sports, literary circles, film clubs, and amateur theatres, was part of the everyday recreational activities of urban young people and the channels for the expression of freed emotions and critical opinions. These circles

of activities provided alternatives to the official, centrally organized, communist youth movement's mandatory ideology. To understand the context of the birth of the revival movement, the antecedents of the 1950s and 1960s should be briefly elucidated.

From the end of World War II to the change of regime in 1989–90 the rural population in Hungary underwent staggering social changes. Although World War II was a cataclysmic upheaval, it did not bring about a direct change in social structure, mentality or culture. Rather, with the agrarian reform of 1946 a "re-peasantization" phenomenon occurred. There are quite a few examples of communities, the last small enclaves, where the abandonment of some aspects of peasant culture took place only between the 1950s and 1980s. After the lean period following the war came the harsh dictatorship of the fifties, with the oppression of the well-to-do peasantry. The political change of 1948, with the communist takeover of power, immediately began the introduction of the Soviet-type, intolerant anti-peasant policy. Persecution, kulak-lists, imprisonment, deportation to labor camps, political trials and coercive requisitions marked the period.

Until World War II, many forms of organizations, clubs, and associations operated even in the smallest villages, which strengthened the communities' awareness of belonging, from reading circles to the fire brigade, brass-orchestras, artisan circles, and church youth organizations. These communities organized from the ground up were completely smashed and banned by the post-war communist dictatorship.

The ruling ideology labeled peasants (more than half of the population) as a reactionary vestige of feudalist clericalism and capitalism, a class targeted for elimination. Communist demagogy sharpened conflicts between towns and villages. Newspapers, schoolbooks, products of the new socialist film industry, and ten-minute newsreels (a compulsory must before movie screenings, even up to the 1980s) aimed to illustrate the bluntness and shrewdness of those who insisted on outdated traditions, the "haunting shadows of the past", in comparison with the enlightened modern socialist heroes and heroines of the new age. Young boys and girls of agrarian proletarian background who were taught in the newly set up People's Colleges (Népi Kollégium)[6] with the aim of transforming them to loyal cadres of the regime were supported and in fact turned against their past. The political and ideological stress and the burden of devaluation and deprivation of self-pride urged peasant communities to step out of their traditional cultural expressions, which was decoded by this hostile environment as a badge of "kulak-ness."

On the other hand, a Janus-faced rhetoric began to exploit a falsified vision of "folk culture" within the realm of socialist realist "art." Gigantic frescoes and monumental statues in public spaces and staged choreographies of state folk ensembles all advocated the myth of friendship between the "happy" peasants and workers.[7]

Like other aspects of culture, dancing as a stage-performance was also an ideologically controlled activity. In addition to the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble (established in 1951) some ministries (for example the Ministry of Interior, the most feared organ of the 1950s) and the trade unions financed the management of dance groups.[8] Dance on stage was accompanied by symphonic orchestras and big choirs. Choreography was characterized by highly stylized genre scenes of folk customs: subject or "character" dances using folk dance steps without accurate knowledge of whole sequences of improvised traditional dance.[9] Following the Soviet model, the demonstration of folk dance at public political and cultural events, official festivities, commemorations, and Labor Day processions mediated the aspired triumphal message: "the peasantry belong to us, they are loyal to us." State and party apparatchiks were responsible for keeping an eye on the artistic activities of these groups and traveled with them to festivals to control and report the behavior of their members (even as late as the 1980s). Instead of bringing folk art closer to people, the engineered folklore-show presentations, a tool in the production of ideology, taught many to abhor and distance themselves from it.

For those few local peasant communities that continued to insist on their traditional outlook and customs, the decisive moment towards assimilation was the period of wide-scale and violent collectivization in 1959–1961. Soviet-style collectivization was consistently carried out after the crushed 1956 anti-Soviet revolution, bringing an end to traditional peasant existence. The land, which was the basis for the sustenance of family households around which values and institutions were organized, was pulled out from under the feet of the peasantry. An avalanche of changes ensued. It was following forced collectivization that the hitherto traditional culture of the villages dissolved with extraordinary rapidity. Individual farming, which had provided the basis for the village way of life, ceased, so-called "cube houses" appeared everywhere in place of the old long peasant houses, and villagers who still wore costumes dropped their traditional attire. The profound changes could be listed at length, right up to the overturning of the system of norms and the hierarchy of prestige of the community.[10]

Between 1948 and 1965 two-thirds of society was socially mobilized. Villagers were forced to work in the cooperatives and people became commuters in big industrial estates. In fact it was a long-awaited and needed mobilization process after the hierarchic semi-feudal social system of the pre-World War II period. It is also true that for many people of poor peasant or worker origin the 1960s was the first period ever in their lives during which there was adequate food to soothe their hunger. But the rhythm of the social change was too fast-paced, too dynamic and above all engineered from above for the initiation of an absolute regime which smashed any seeds of real democratization. The high rate of intra- and intergenerational mobility had all the negative side-effects of forced rapid mobiliza-

tion: suicides, alcoholism, negative birth rate, split families, divorces, social trends in which Hungary is regrettably among the forerunners in Europe.

From around 1963–64 a more pragmatic, milder form of economic planning was introduced. Instead of exclusive concentration on heavy industry, light industry started to be developed as well. Socialist consumerism evolved shops and warehouses were established alongside the construction of big housing estates in which the obtainment of an apartment entailed prestige and a rise in living standards. Public transportation was improved. The increase in the number of active workers included the entrance of one-million women into the workforce. An improved network of day-nurseries, schools and health service were needed. The idea of leisure was born for large masses with the network of vacation houses for workers. Work collectives and school classes began to travel on excursions or visit theatre performances. Magazines and the start of television broadcasting (in 1957, although possession of a television set only became widespread in the mid-1960s) provided strong role models of speakers and actresses. All this made the urban model popular and inviting for the young generations of the rural countryside. Young people in the 1960s working and studying in the urban-industrial centers who brought mates from outside the traditional marriage circle began to find the divergent cultural expressions increasingly uncomfortable. These forces of modernization and urbanization sped up the process of the disintegration of peasant culture. Folk dance in its original social environment started to fade away together with the traditional family and community occasions.

There is a long cultural and social history behind the phenomenon according to which the acceptability, prestige and place in collective consciousness of peasant culture is characterized by a sort of duality. Even though interest in folk culture in Hungary goes back more than 200 years, and even though it has become one of the cornerstones of modern national culture, the attitude of society towards it is nevertheless full of contradictions. Practices of symbolization and expropriation produced a rich array of connotations (real or imaginary qualities) attached to the concept of folk as attributes. In addition to enthusiastic acceptance, negative emotions of a similar intensity can be observed in the rejection. In Hungary there is a long history of the discourse dichotomizing dipolar values such as rural versus urban, East versus West, and national versus international.[11] Fixated stereotypes about both sides often prevented the possibility of understanding and increased the manipulative exploitation, accusative attribution or expropriation of certain qualities and values. These often politicized discourses of intellectuals went on without the peasants, the carriers of the culture under discussion, being aware of it at all.

Children of the 1960s were brought up in the spirit of an ambiguous attitude toward folk culture. Compulsory elementary music education based on the praised Kodály-model introduced folk songs to the curriculum, but it was felt as an obli-

gation by many. The radio broadcast arranged orchestrated or choral compositions based on folk tunes, a musical genre that never gained popularity among the young people. School books showed images and stories on peasants, the rich peasants appearing with negative badges and the agrarian proletarians with positive badges as the ideologically correct segment of rural society. But all this was not enough and in fact did not aim to dispel the general pejorative stereotypes of everyday communication and public discourse about the peasant village. The negative stereotypes were definitely milder than the "kulak-slogans" of the 1950s anti-peasant propaganda. But this tamed image was still sharply sarcastic. Anyone coming from the countryside, i.e., from outside Budapest, was teased with labels, such as "mucsai paraszt" (peasant from Mucsa), a mocking epithet meaning hopelessly stupid and unprogressive.[12] That children willingly mocked each other with such expressions represented the public thinking of the time. Pedagogues and nurses often expressed their dislike of "old-fashioned" everyday customs and practices to families of peasant origin in a patronizing manner. One of the urban traffic centers from where the long-distance buses started was nicknamed "peasant-distributor" (paraszteloszto) for decades. This hierarchy, the over-exaggerated superiority of Budapest, often caused wounds of inferiority complexes.[13]

Urban youth of the 1970s may have childhood nostalgia for the world of the grandparents they visited in the villages during summer vacations. But for most of their childhoods they were brought up in a general climate that lacked appreciation for and looked down on the countryside. The framework of most of the daily activities outside of the family were the school, the communist youth-organizations (from first elementary class), choir-singing (with the dominance of the songs of the international communist movement), and the state-sponsored sport and summer camps. From the centrally defined yearly topics of pioneer activities to stamp-collecting and pen-pal connections with children of the socialist camp, the whole machinery propagated the triumph and ethical superiority of socialist modernization, urbanization and internationalism.

Sport life was also organized on the Soviet model, with the two pillars of club sports and mass sports movement. In the sport bureaucracy there were several jobs for the party nomenclature. The display of healthy bodies of young athletes symbolized the strength of the People's Democracy over the decadent West. The socialist media helped create a messianic atmosphere. Sports provided almost the only opportunity for a decent carrier and travel abroad for those who came from politically and socially declassee peasant and middle class families. From the fifties sport events offered the only opportunity for fans to declare their national feelings openly. The party leadership was well aware of this and tried to exploit it. In order to gain popular support for the Kádár regime sportsmen were among the first to be rehabilitated after the 1956 revolution. Nevertheless, until the regime change in 1990 sport events provided almost the only occasion when the Hungar-

ian flag could be used without the Soviet red flag that symbolized the power of the workers.[14]

From the early 1970s some musicians (first the Sebő band and soon after the Muzsikás,Virágvölgyi, Jánosi, Vuicich, Téka, Kalamajka, etc.) and amateur dance groups, most importantly Sándor Tímár's Bartók Folk Dance Ensemble, turned toward the rediscovery of live folk dance and music.[15] The dance house was at once based on the collection, examination and processing of the now fading folk culture, as well as the demand for the experience of a strong emotional sense of community. The doors of the first clubs were opened for and attracted wider urban audience, students, intellectuals, and white and blue-collar workers who had no family tradition of dance and music on which to rely and had to learn everything from the very basics. That is why dance instruction became an indispensable part of the revival of the dance house in order to share the "knowledge" with anyone interested. Soon clubs formed around music bands and dance instructors (who were members of the best amateur ensembles) started to mushroom in Budapest and in provincial cities (Székesfehérvár, Szeged, Pécs, Jászberény, etc.). György Martin, Hungary's foremost academic dance scholar, helped shape and direct the movement with his advice, field expertise, and network of connections right from the very beginning. As the movement advanced and more and more regional traditions were highlighted, the knowledge of the musicians and dancers deepened, and they became familiar with many styles of dance in their complete sequences of dance suites, from men's dances to slow and faster couple dances from singular regions and localities. Behind dance and music a larger context of a complex integrative culture was discovered and appreciated.

There are some important antecedents to the movement.[16] Among the folk ensembles, the amateur groups of the trade unions were less strictly controlled than the state folk ensembles. In the 1960s some important choreographic experiments started to be carried out in these workshops, which served as a hotbed of the dance house movement. The other immediate antecedent was a televised folk song talent show entitled "Röpülj páva" ("Fly Peacock") in 1969–1970.[17] The only TV channel of the country was the single medium and enjoyed enormous popularity. The show accelerated the establishment of several Fly Peacock circles ("Pávakör") in many localities of the country. Parallel to the dance house, a movement of the so-called tradition-keeping ensembles emerged in the 1970s. The contests of the "tradition keeping ensembles" brought singers, choirs and zither bands of peasant villages, and middle aged women and men garbed in traditional or quasi-traditional costumes of their villages to the spotlight, singing the folk song repertoire of their communities. As a result people began to attribute value to their recently abandoned local folk culture or to a lesser extent to the residues of the yet vibrant elements of that culture. The Fly Peacock movement started to prove that folk songs can stand on their own, without being transformed into orchestrated,

semi-classical compositions. The idea of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, Hungary's foremost composers, concerning music education based on folk music as the means through which to create a Hungarian "musical mother-tongue" ("only from pure spring") offered legitimacy and a sort of "brand name" for the movement. That the Fly Peacock repertoire consisted mostly of the so-called "new style" songs performed by peasant women's choirs, a sound that became boring after a while for the younger generations, is another question. When the more archaic musical heritage of Transylvania was discovered by the dance house musicians it sounded very different from the Fly Peacock movement's new-style repertoire. It sounded like a revelation, a voice of an unknown archaic sunken world. Although the dance house built on the popularity of the folk song established by the Fly Peacock movement, it immediately contrasted the freshly discovered archaic sound as "authentic" against the more "vulgar" popular sound of the Fly Peacock style.

There were international trends as well, which served as wider context. In the late 1960s and early 1970s a new interest in folk music and dance developed in many countries.[18] Scholarly studies about revival movements, whether they concentrate on the USA or Europe, underline similar motifs: the new aesthetic; the emphasis on active, creative participation;[19] the movement's conception of itself as a legitimate form of continuity of an "authentic tradition" and a sense of community.

As happens in many nostalgic revival movements, the turn to the past primarily valued and sought what was possibly the most archaic phenomena. But this archaism had to have a specific feature, notably it had to be a *living phenomenon* that could be experienced in the present and through personal involvement. It had to be a kind of "living past," which at the moment of discovery was not a reconstructed display-event, but a functional, 'in situ' integral performance of dance, music and community customs.

Although led (remarkably) by intellectuals, the movement was "amateur" in that the admiration and the interest turned not (or not only) towards single fragments of a one-time complex system of knowledge (fragments that could be interpreted only by experts trained for scholarly reconstruction), but rather towards the *complexity of culture* itself. Young people searched for an integral entity of community being in which the local community did not figure merely as a passive consumer of cultural goods and practices coming as a service from the outside, but rather maintained the ability to create and periodically reproduce culture of its own in accordance with its traditional system of knowledge, practices and estheticism. 'Traditional' in this aspect meant that the transmission of knowledge was through personal, face-to-face communication between consecutive generations.

As a consequence of the above mentioned motivations, the dance house movement had a specific ability to establish a wide network of small circles of peoples who behaved not as part of a passive audience but from time to time actively participated in the re-creation of a cultural product. One of the strengths and successes of the dance house lay in the *improvisational character* of dancing. The face-to-face transmission of knowledge, the technique of playing music, the rules of building up an improvisational performance, the sensitive interaction between the dancers and the musicians or among the dancers is very similar to the traditional circumstances of dance in the original context. While improvised dancing requires skill and effort to learn, it can be done on very different personal level of knowledge, no one is excluded, and first and foremost *participation is voluntary*. On the other hand the process of the active creation of dance gives exceptional joy in comparison with the keenly memorized mechanical processes of fixed choreography.

These grassroots circles of voluntary groups of sociable young people sharing similar ideas, tastes and world-views provided a real alternative in the period of socialism, when participation in the communist youth movement, school events, commemorations and political demonstrations were all mandated and ideologically manipulated. It was a real shift from the disfavored compulsory passive presence to a voluntary, emotionally supported active participation, which also created a strong feeling of commonality and solidarity.

These circles have wide and loose, flexible boundaries, so in the strict sociological sense they cannot be defined as communities. They are "instant communities" with a temporary and spontaneous composition of people who show up randomly for a particular event at a particular place. This flexibility results a "loosely-knit association of informal communities."[20] But the feeling of community can be easily reproduced at any time by the uniting act of singing and dancing together. The awareness of belonging is coded by the participating persons, even by those who meet for the first times in their lives, with the meaning of you are one of us, we have similar taste, we think in the same way and understand each other.

Given the intensity of emotional identification, the dance house has influenced the shaping of identity, although it should be emphasized that at least within Hungary proper this does not coincide or does not entirely coincide with ethnic lines. (The case was different among minority Hungarian communities outside Hungary because of the differing context and dynamics of majority–minority relationships.) Ethnicity played a role, though not a primary role, in the vital appeal of the movement. From the very beginning the dance house has had a general appreciation for any ethnic traditions that represented a similarly "authentic," "original" sound.[21] Béla Halmos, the fiddler of the Sebő Ensemble, the very first band of the dance house movement which had a decisive role in shaping and disseminating the new attitude towards folk traditions, writes the following:

> From the very beginning, the dance house movement has treated the folk cultures of Hungary's non-Magyar ethnic groups, and indeed, of every nation, as treasures of coequal value (and, in this sense, followed a principle and a practice that anticipated the 'Common European House' idea by some twenty years).[22]

The archetype of the creative peasant village with unspoiled, integrative culture and the dream of the site where the clock of civilization ticks more slowly was sought and in fact found in the Transylvanian community of Sic (Szék). While fragments of traditional culture along with the last good musicians and dancers were found in quite a few regions of Hungary proper, none of these localities could provide the complexity that Szék and afterwards other Transylvanian communities offered. In fact the localities in Hungary proper largely remained research fields of dance experts such as György Martin and choreographers such as Sándor Tímár. But the wider interest turned primarily towards Transylvania as a depository of traditions, a momentum that shaped and strengthened the identity of the dance house.

Dance house fans started to travel to the regions of Transylvania inhabited by Hungarian speakers and hunt for events with traditional music and dance, balls, dance houses, weddings, and farewell parties for soldiers. At this point the traditional dance and music subsisting in Transylvania converged in its encounter with the urban revival movement, both in Budapest and in the field, and the bringing of "informants" to the Budapest dance clubs and the travel of dance house participants to the field. Personal contacts, narratives of minority grievances, the experience of the hardships and anomalies of life in Ceaușescu's Romania, the warm emotional welcome by the Transylvanian Hungarians, who felt long-forgotten and neglected by the government of the "mother country," all opened the eyes of an entire generation of young dance house fans, who otherwise hardly heard anything about Hungarians outside Hungary. A student could easily finish schooling without ever hearing about the Székelys (for example), the largest regional Hungarian minority group consisting of some one-million people. Novels of Transylvanian writers of the interwar periods were censored as dangerous works and were closed into prohibited library stocks in Hungary. In the name of fraternalism among the peoples of the socialist camp, discussion of national conflicts was stifled, leaving minorities at the mercy of the majority. Mention of the pre-1920 formerly Hungarian territories was immediately labeled as imperialist revisionism and chauvinism. On the other side of the border memories and repositories of the Hungarian past of large regions of Czechoslovakia, Romania or Yugoslavia were muted, closed away, left in decay or systematically destroyed. Given the need to maintain the (illusion of) the common consensus of Socialist Friendship (which in reality meant distrust, severe police control, and the imprisonment of progressive minority intellectuals), the grassroots discovery of

minority Hungarians and their folk culture through personal contacts became highly inconvenient for the regimes on both sides of the border.

With the growing interest in the Hungarian communities the Romanian government started to make border crossing more difficult and prohibited staying in the private homes of acquaintances who were not close relatives. The decree to report oneself immediately with the police when spending a night in Romania further encumbered this highly controlled ethnic-tourism. To travel to Transylvania was a risky adventure, especially in the last decade of the Ceaușescu regime. Standing in the line at the border for some twenty hours, being body-searched and sent back to the end of the line because of an innocent children's story book or Hungarian weekly magazine and the feeling that the police could stop and interrogate you at any time within the country gave the Transylvanian visits a notion of traveling to the land of an Orwellian totalitarian irrationality, and in fact it was a liberating feeling to arrive home safe to Hungary to relative freedom and economic prosperity.

A specific symbolization and sacralization process had been taking place. The improvisational dance, moving and breathing together and responding sensitively to the movement of other bodies, and interacting with live music gives exceptional joy incomparable to any other form of recreational sports. Dancing the dances of the "marveled" Transylvanian communities and dancing together with the Transylvanian villagers created powerful emotions of solidarity. In stage performances the complex "mimicry" of dressing in local garb, holding one's body and behaving as if one were one of the locals, singing local songs and listening to local music created an exceptional opportunity to become one with the bearers of traditional culture. That the performance-like manifestation of the traditions of suppressed minority Hungarians in the neighboring countries on stage was perceived as a strong statement against the neglectful attitude of the communist leadership toward Hungarian minority issues is another matter.

In this context the new authentic sound folklore performance gained an intense manifest meaning. The archaic Transylvanian regional musical styles have been over-represented and the most popular "pop-songs" or "protest-songs" of the dance house, such as the "Wind blows cold" or "It is not like as it was in the past, it is not the same sun which shines," were also from Transylvania. In this respect "authenticity" started to mean the "revealing of the hidden truth." The new-wave (authentic-sound) revival music and dance as an act of "protest" in the making and the demonstrative character of the stage performances has become a new channel for the expression of collective memory and identity.

The dance house spread not only among Hungarian minorities of Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, but also reached West European, North American and Australian Hungarian emigrant communities as a trans-political-border national phenomenon. It created an opportunity for a young generation to develop

connections among distant groups of the territorially fragmented Hungarian people in a period when there was much distrust in the older generations of Western émigré communities toward anything that came out of Kádár's socialist Hungary. The dance house was a force that was able to unite young people in the belief that there existed a cultural nation that transcended political borders. With the growing popularity of the dance house movement, its influence acquired international dimensions. Dance enthusiasts from Sweden to Holland to the USA to Japan started to visit Hungary and Transylvania regularly. This Western folklore-tourism created the first opportunity for the Hungarian youth of the late 1970s and 80s to build personal friendships reaching beyond the Iron Curtain and awake the interest of people in the West in Hungarian minority questions.

In the 1970s that sharp national line of "sinful rock music pouring in from the West" appeared, which also offered the experience of community solidarity and which opposed the ideology of the internationalist socialist regime, at first subtly, then ever more openly. The regime did all it could to stop it: it censored song lyrics, denied certain bands the right to release records, banned concert performances in Budapest, etc. The creator of the culture-policy guidelines, later infamous as the "three T's" (named after the Hungarian words for supported, tolerated and banned), was György Aczél. The period of cultural politics bearing his name lasted from the mid-1960s until the early to mid-1980s, thus coinciding with the successes of the Kádár regime. At the same time, not even he knew what to do about a phenomenon within the cultural public's stratification in Hungary, whereby in the late 1970s and early 1980s the various anti-regime underground rock and punk bands broke on the level of subculture with the previous allegorical-metaphorical mode of speech.[23] One of the most sharply delineable subcultures of this period was the group Beatrice, which was prohibited to make records. Its audience expressed its solidarity by wearing red and white polka dot kerchiefs (babos kendő) around their necks. Its Budapest fans gathered in the underground passage at Batthyány Square, directly opposite the Hungarian Parliament on the other bank of the Danube, where the police regularly rounded them up and checked their papers precisely on the basis of their easily recognizable kerchiefs. At Beatrice concerts the group regularly performed a block of folk songs set to rock music as well.

How and where rock music instinctively connected to the world of folk music is a topic deserving separate introduction. At that time both rock music and the dance house movement were a thorn in the regime's side. In the rock opera *Stephen the King* (István a király, 1982), an enormously influential musical work of the period preceding the change of regime, these threads came together in an obvious manner.[24] The drama is about the conflict between two worlds, that of tradition and modernization, and possible directions of national destiny. The pagans opposing the Christian authorities sing to music built largely on folk elements and

accompanied by folk instruments, bagpipes and fiddles. All at once on stage the icons of the dance house movement and rock music were singing together. Leading folk singer Márta Sebestyén with the Muzsikás band and many other folk musicians with a large group of folk dancers embodied the pagan camp, together with iconic vocalists of underground rock music. Feró Nagy (of the Beatrice group), Gyula Vikidál (of the P. Mobil group) and Gyula Deák "Bill" (of the Hobo Blues Band) represented the pagan leaders rebelling to preserve tradition and against defeat by the Christian forces. At the end of the open air musical thousands in the enthusiastic audience were singing the Hungarian National Anthem, which was incorporated into the music of the finale, together with the performers. The time of Saint Stephen, Hungary's first Christian ruler, obviously symbolized an unbroken unity comprising all the people of the historic country prior its fragmentation. It is with good reason that Hungarian pop and rock music, and first and foremost "Stephen the King," became immensely popular among minority Hungarians outside Hungary in the 1980s and 90s.

However, it is also worth noting the divergent paths the two musical trends have traveled from the moment of the change of regime to the present day with regard to the expression of a community world of feeling. While folk music ensembles and the dance house movement in general cannot be accused of having given space to extreme views, such a feature was characteristic of the "national rock" current of rock music. In the life of rock music, by singing lyrics proclaiming extremist ideals bands often gather around themselves an audience (in fact rather sparse) that is open to this mode of speech. One could also say that the dance house movement derives its emotional experience of community from a reinterpreted 'tradition' for which the demand is unbroken, and under socialism it was precisely because of its tradition-preserving character, difficult to harmonize with internationalism, that it vexed the regime. For that reason, after the change of regime the movement was not emptied, rather its social background remained. Rock music as a genre was squeezed to the background by the more recent currents of light music, and opposition to the regime lost its relevance following the change of regime, so the background that fed the communal emotional experience was weakened and its mass base ceased to exist. With the marginalization of the genre a portion of these bands tried to recruit an audience along some sort of ideology, which in the case of bands playing "national rock music" inevitably led to distortions manifesting themselves in an overemphasis of national elements, often in dissonant outward forms. Thus, the dance house movement has preserved its societal support, independent of ideological-political changes, across a well-defined though broad circle of society.

Literature also merits mention here, and specifically the role of poetry. It was during the period of the rise of the dance house movement in the 1970s and 80s that one could speak for the last time of a markedly populist profile in Hungarian

poetry, which bore the names (first and foremost) of Gyula Illyés, István Sinka, László Nagy, Ferenc Juhász and Sándor Csoóri. At the beginning of the dance house movement the folk-inspired scoring of poems with folk instrumentation was frequent, primarily in adaptations by the Sebő Ensemble. The bulk of the participants in the dance house at the same time also belonged to the readers' camp of the "populist poets." The constant guests of the dance house clubs were poets and writers whose readings regularly enhanced the evenings. In his poem written about Muzsikás, one of the definitive music ensembles of the dance house movement, Sándor Csoóri (whose son was a member of the band) called the group "brave lads facing death with copper axes," which aptly expresses the strength of tradition, the resolve in opposing the regime, and at the same time its hopelessness. László Nagy dedicated his poem *Táncbéli táncszók* (Dance-verses[25]) to the Bartók Folk Dance Ensemble, and the group performed a dance on stage to the rhythm of a loud recitation of the verse. László Nagy's text is reminiscent of the condensed forceful expression of the dance-verse genre of folk poetry, and the rhythm of the text was in fact shaped to the exiting asymmetric rhythm of dance music from the Gyimes valley in Transylvania. The poem is the rebellious voice of a pure generation that deserves ethical triumph over the corrupted world and whose only weapon is tradition: "Nem vagyok jó, nem vagyok jó senkinek Rám ugatnak égiek és földiek… Most rúgjon a sarkad szikrát Égesd el a világ piszkát… Mert mibennünk zeng a lélek, Minket illet ez az élet!..." (Nobody needs me, nobody needs me, all earthly and heavenly forces bark at me…your dancing heels ignite sparkle, burn the rubbish of the world…because the soul sounds in us, we deserve the life).

Beginning with the period of the change of regime, poetry has become marginalized, and as they usually joke in Pest: "only poets read on another's poems now." According to a resigned president of the Hungarian Writers' Union, the poet József Tornai, the utter marginalization of lyric poetry is connected to the change of regime and the collapse of communism:

> I no longer believe that there will again come that time when a poem by Gyula Illyés or Feri Juhász could rouse the entire country. Today it is inconceivable that a Hungarian poem or a good volume would mobilize even the complete scale of the entire Hungarian linguistic territory. During the harsh, total dictatorships the true word and its most noble outlet, poetry, were appreciated. So shall we create a dictatorship for the sake of poetry? Nobody seriously wants this. Today it is the TV stars and reality shows that interest people here, as in the civilized world.[26]

It must be mentioned that in addition to the phenomena discussed above, there were also alternative theater and film clubs, primarily amateur, that struck a chord for the most part among members of the young intellectual university community,

but these could not address wide masses of people in the same way that sports, music or poetry could. (In Poland, on the other hand, alternative theaters enjoyed a popularity and social weight comparable to the Hungarian dance house movement.)

Looking back on this era as a period in our own lives, we can declare without the slightest doubt that sports (first and foremost soccer), rock music, literature and the dance house movement were the most important community-organizing forces in the everyday life of the late 1970s and early 80s. Each of these areas of community-organizing forces supported and reinforced the others. In our generation and in our circle of friends it was completely natural for someone to be a fan of the Ferencvárosi Torna Club, take the national flag to international matches, play football with friends in an amateur championship, attend P. Mobil and Beatrice concerts, subscribe to the literary journals *Élet és Irodalom, Mozgó Világ* and *Tiszatáj,* purchase the annually published poetry anthology *Szép Versek,* travel to Transylvania, frequently visit the dance house, and listen at home to the latest folk music cassettes of the Muzsikás Ensemble and Márta Sebestyén. Day-to-day life was organized around these cultural alternatives, and we might even say that (apart from our romances) this occupied all of our free time.

It is also important to see that among the community-organizing forces detailed above, the dance house movement succeeded the most in maintaining its mass base. The marginalization of rock music, poetry and the soccer has been mentioned. For unlike success in sports, which depends on talent and especially money, poetry that opposes the regime by speaking the truth between the lines, or rebellious rock music, the dance house movement has been constantly able to show value in and of itself.

Nonetheless, political parties attempted to appropriate the dance house after the 1990s democratization. The dance house resisted and did not become the terrain of political demonstrations because this was not its primary meaning or content. The original content of creative art-activity and the complex enjoyment of dance, music and singing as entertainment within a friendly circle of people in which a feeling of community and solidarity can thrive remained the primary intent.[27]

Notes

[1] In large parts of Western Europe, where an earlier, more integrative embourgeoisement and a smoother transition from rural to urban had occurred in the early modern period, the culture of common people was not so strongly independent from the elite culture and general influences of fashion as was the case in East-Central Europe. In Hungary there was a deep social gap between classes, and although there were certain opportunities for social interactions, social mobility and trickle-down effects, on the whole the culture of Hungary's rural population started

to become urbanized later, and it remained much more autonomously "peasant-oriented" and "peasant-flavored" than in the West. Thus, the most flourishing period of regional peasant culture was the 19th and the first part of the 20th century. (See among others: Hofer, Tamás: Peasant Culture and Urban Culture in the Period of Modernization: Delineation of a Problem Area Based on Data from Hungary, In: I. P. Winner – Th. G. Winner (eds.): *The Peasant and the City in Eastern Europe. Interpenetrating Structures* (Cambridge, MA, Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc. 1984), 111–129.)

Compared to the central part of the areas of the Carpathian Basin inhabited by Hungarian speakers, the peripheral territories of one-time historic Hungary that were handed over to the neighboring countries after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1920 often preserved an even more archaic state of rural culture. For example in several communities of Transylvania elements of traditional culture including music and dance were still preserved and practiced in the 1970s and 80s.

2 *Folklorism* in this context means a conscious fabrication of value, which is a result of the interests of other social groups: aristocrats, the elite, artists, intellectuals, the urban middle class and scholars on peasant culture. In search of the "authentic," certain elements of an "integrative" culture were elevated out of their original context, special values were attributed to them, and they were reapplied, "inserted," reinterpreted, and often distorted to achieve new meanings.

The definition of folklorism has awakened vivid scholarly interest. A useful summary concerning the ongoing discourse among various schools of European and American scholars can be read in Guntis Šmidchens: "Folklorism Revisited", *Journal of Folklore Research* 36(1) (Jan. – Apr. 1999): 51–70. In the study of Hungarian folklore Vilmos Voigt has extensively analyzed folklorism phenomena. See: Voigt Vilmos: *A folklorizmusról.* Néprajz egyetemi hallgatóknak 9 (Debrecen, 1990), in English Vilmos Voigt: "The Concept of Today's Folklore as We See It from Budapest, Hungary, Europe", *Journal of Folklore Research* 21(2/3), *Culture, Tradition, Identity Conference, March 26–28, 1984* (May–Dec. 1984), 165–175.

3 The term *táncház* comes from the Hungarian community of Szék (Sic, Transylvanian Heath, Romania). It refers to the weekly organized dance occasion of the unmarried youth in the first room of a rented private house to the music of a hired local music band. The term and the institution, together with the dance repertoire of this community, were borrowed by the organizers of first folk dance clubs in Budapest from 1972. The anachronistically late traditionalism of this Transylvanian community was a revelation, a kind of time travel to the past. Szék has become the focus of folk pilgrimage since then. See: György Martin: "Discovering Szék", *Hungarian Heritage* 2(1–2): 31–40 (2001).

4 Ferenc Sebő, the decisive figure of the first dance house band and club (Kassák), mentions in an article that "the club movements of the 1970s emerged against a background of 150,000 collected and transcribed tunes, with much research and practical experience" Ferenc Sebő: "The Revival Movements and the Dancehouse in Hungary." *European Centre for Traditional Culture (ECTC) Bulletin* IV. Budapest 1998. 34–38. Since Béla Vikár, who recorded folk songs using a phonograph for the first time in Europe in the 1890s, several Hungarian musicologists (including Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, László Lajtha, Pál Péter Domokos, János Jagamas, Benjamin Rajeczky, Pál Járdányi, Lajos Vargyas and others) have collected folk tunes and instrumental music systematically and in accordance with high methodological standards, also providing descriptive analysis, scientific classification, and comparative investigation of historical and stylistic strata. The editorial board of the *Magyar Népzene Tára* (Complete Edition of Hungarian Folk Music) was established in 1948 under the leadership of Kodály. In 1953 the team was officially declared to be the Folk Music Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. It was headed by Kodály until his death in 1967. The archaic

folk music of Transylvania, including the richly ornamented polyphonic instrumental music, had been discovered by scholars already in the 1940s and 50s (Sânmartin (Szépkenyerű-szentmárton), Chidea (Kide), Sic, Crișeni (Kőrispatak), preceding the dance house movement.

5 The authors of this article, who are now senior research fellows at the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, have personal memories as one-time active participants in the dance house and audience members at underground rock-concerts. Ágnes Fülemile started to visit the Budapest dance houses from the mid-1970s. She was a member of the Bartók Ensemble, the leading dance group of the dance house, from 1978. Balázs Balogh has a degree in literature and has published poetry since the age of 14. He was a "serious" soccer and rock-music fan, who sang in an amateur rock-band and continues playing soccer in a team of one-time university fellows in a competition which has been going on since the 1980s. A similar personal encounter of the time can be read from the angle of a British anthropologist Chris Hann, who did years of fieldwork in Hungary in the 1970s and 80s and remembers experiencing rock and folk music and sport through personal involvement in friendly circles of young Hungarians. Chris Hann: "Memory Tracks: State, Nation and Everyday Life in 1970s Budapest," *Berliner Osteuropa-Info* 23: 17–23.

6 NÉKOSZ abbreviation for National Alliance of People's Colleges.

7 Giurchescu says about the cultural products of the period, "sophisticated performances, staged according to the Soviet model, were meant to symbolize through good technique, beautiful appearances, homogeneity, colorful costumes, and decoration, etc., etc. the achievement of the socialist policy, the happy life of the youth in the Communist countries, etc." Anna Giurchescu: "Power and the Dance Symbol and its Socio-Political Use (Keynote paper)." In: Irene Loutzaki (ed.): *Proceedings. 17th Symposium of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology. Dance and its Socio-Political Aspects: Dance and Costume* (Nafplion, Greece: Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation/International Council for Traditional Music, 1994) 15–22, esp. 17.

8 About the wave of establishing professional state folk ensembles on the powerful example of the Soviet Igor Moiseyev's ensemble in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Latin America and about the politicization of dance-stage and the claim of representing a nation in essentialist entirety in social and ethnic sense see Anthony Shay: "Parallel Traditions: State Folk Dance Ensembles and Folk Dance in 'The Field'", *Dance Research Journal,* 31(1) (Spring, 1999): 29–56, University of Illinois Press.

9 What Anna Ilieva writes about the Bulgarian state-supported socialist official folk dance movement is reminiscent of the pre-dance house situation of folk-ensemble dancing in Hungary: "These groups were not formed as a leisure pastime but were demonstrative in character… Invented, artificial dances, which bore a faint resemblance to the rhythms, intonations, costumes and steps in original folklore, replaced Bulgarian ideas about the essence of folklore. From an integrated culture with a rich spirituality, the notion of folklore became associated with music with an untypical harmony and orchestral arrangement, and newly invented story and subject dances on a folk base which was a far cry from the original… Bulgarians could not sing a single song or dance a horo – they were helpless without a stage. The dancers were like cogs and wheels: screwed off the production, they were nothing." Anna Ilieva: "Bulgarian Folk Dance during the Socialist Era, 1944–1989", *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 33 (2001): 123–126.

10 Ágnes Fülemile studied the process of disintegration of peasant culture in the period from World War I to the 1980s in 30 communities of Hungary in 1982–1988 under the tutelage of social anthropologist Edit Fél. Balázs Balogh carried out the fieldwork for his doctoral dissertation in the second part of the 1980s and first part of the 1990s. He studied farming and rural society in a Transdanubian community in 1920–1959. He furthermore did interviews with all

the men of that generation who lived through collectivization as young adults and were forced to give up private farming.

11 See among others Tamás Hofer: "Construction of the 'Folk' Cultural Heritage in Hungary and the Rival Versions of National Identity", *Ethnologia Europaea* 21(2) (1991): 145–170.

12 Even at the moment characteristically extreme opinions for and against are burdened by many kinds of historical antecedents and previous political-ideological overtones, and numerous prejudices make assessments difficult. Today's creative folk artists carry on a valuable intellectual legacy and attention to folk culture has been continuous among a relatively wide audience, but the general image of folk culture is still characterized by superficiality. It appears that anyone can mock folk art, and advertisements and commercials appear in the media and in mass communication at its expense. On television one bank can make itself popular by telling the clients, who stare uncomprehending at people unexpectedly breaking into folk dance, that they aren't awaiting you with such surprises, but rather with good interest rates. A few years ago Budapest was full of advertising posters according to which "In life one must try everything, except for syphilis and folk dancing." A constant figure in theater and TV cabarets is the stupid fake peasant speaking a fake dialect. In Hungary the mass communication of the globalizing world is thus not indifferent to folk culture: it presents it as old junk to be tossed out, along with the outdated, obsolete peasant world. The presence in every field, alongside genuine creations of living folk art, of commercially more successful junk, which everyday people and tourists (and in many cases the various media as well) can barely distinguish (if at all), makes it difficult to advocate these values. In many cases even those who deal with culture or cultural management as a profession are unfamiliar with the prized assets of folk art. And in the conviction that whatever they are unfamiliar with must be worthless, they make no secret of their prejudices.

13 In fact the hydrocephalic role of the capital in every terrain of life was a historic consequence of the Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920, after which two-thirds of the territory of the country, including several large cities, was lost, leaving Budapest the only metropolis in the country. The uneven distribution of administrative, economic, cultural and educational institutions headed by the all-encompassing principle of centralization remained a real structural developmental problem of the whole country in the period of socialism.

14 Fradi (an unofficial abbreviation for the Ferencváros Athletic Club) represented the oppressed nationally-minded sports community against the teams favored by the regime, national defense (Budapesti Honvéd), the police (Újpesti Dózsa), labor (Vasas) and numerous rural mining communities (Tatabánya, Diósgyőr, Oroszlány, Komló, Ózd, etc.). To this day, although Fradi now plays only in the Hungarian second division, every sport-loving Hungarian from beyond the borders roots for Fradi. Émigré Hungarians who fled Hungary after 1945 always invited Fradi to tour Western Europe, South America and the United States. During the years of socialism many outstanding Hungarian football players were not permitted to sign with Fradi as an attempt to put the brakes on the team's popularity. While in Europe soccer attracts the biggest crowds, it has sunk to such a low level in Hungary since the mid-1980s that it has lost its fan base. It is primarily team sports that attract fans, but the still successful water polo and handball teams are incapable of moving masses like the Hungarian football that won the UEFA Cup in 1985 and beat the Brazilian national team 3-0 in 1986.

15 See chronology of events at this early phase in Ferenc Bodor: *Nomád nemzedék – The Nomadic Generation* (Budapest, 1981), László Maácz: "Folk Dancing and the Folk Dance Movement," in Edit Kaposi and Ernő Pesovár (eds.): *The Art of Dance in Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1985), 57–65, 105–108; Sándor Striker: "The Dancehouse – Folklorism in Hungary in the 1970s," in Joseph Katus and János Tóth (eds.): *Forum,* vol. 1 (Papers from the Hungarian–Dutch Cultural Symposium) (Budapest: Institute of Culture; Leiden: Department of An-

thropology, 1987), 100–131; Judit Frigyesi: "The Aesthetic of the Hungarian Revival Movement," in: Mark Slobin (ed.): *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe,* Durham: Duke U. Press, 1996, 54–75; Béla Halmos: "The Táncház Movement." *Hungarian Heritage* 1(1–2) (2000), 29–40, 37–39; László Kürti: *The Remote Borderland. Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (State University of New York Press 2001), Chapter: Youth and Political Action: The Dance House Movement and Transylvania 107–137.

16 See also Béla Halmos, *ibid.* 35–36 and Mary Taylor: "Institutional Precedents of the Hungarian Dance-House Movement", in *Fulbright Student Conference Papers* (Budapest: Hungarian–American Commission for Educational Exchange, 2004), 95–103.

17 In 1961, with the first "Who knows what" (Ki mit tud?) show, Hungarian Television introduced a new genre of media entertainment: the talent contests, which gained immense popularity. Each year new contests were invented. In 1966 and 1967 the first and second Pop Song Festival (Táncdalfesztivál) legitimized the beat sound. Television needed singers in other genres as well. Encouraged by the popularity of the pop song contests, the first folk and popular art song contest was organized with the name *Nyílik a rózsa* (The Rose is Blooming) in 1968. The *Röpülj páva* (Fly Peacock) contest started in 1969. The competition lasted for a year and a half and had enormous influence. New voices (Laura Faragó, Kamilla Dévai-Nagy, Ilona Budai, Éva Ferencz) started their carriers with the Fly Peacock contest. Laura Faragó who won the Grand Prize, brought home a first prize from England a year later in 1971 from an International Folk Song Competition from Middlesbrough. In 1972, on the 90th anniversary of the birth of Zoltán Kodály, a singing competition was also organized that popularized the folk inspired art music of Kodály and Bartók and brought successes to classically trained opera singers. The 1973 *Arany páva* (Golden Peacock) contest was an international folk music competition in which instrumental musicians and bands were also competing along with the folk song singers. Further Fly Peacock contests were organized in 1977, 1981 and 1983. Counties competed in the 1977 Fly Peacock contest. In addition to the musical program, regions and villages of competitors were introduced by short ethnographic documentary reports. The main organizer and speaker of the program, choir leader Lajos Vass, himself helped organize many of the Fly Peacock circles, which were established in the countryside as a result of the popularity of the program.
The TV director of the Fly Peacock show, Miklós Lengyelfi, himself had a degree in ethnography.

18 Neil V. Rosenberg (ed.): *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Chris Goertzen: *Fiddling for Norway: Revival and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Guntis Smidchens: *A Baltic Music: The Folklore Movement in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, 1968–1991*. Ph.D. diss., Indiana University.

19 Owe Ronström writes about the parallel between the Swedish and Hungarian revival movement: "…the stress on improvisation became in a way a stress on self-determination and re-establishment of the individuals' roles in the large structures, in society at large... So, here's where ends meet: reproduction, copying, which in fact was what many did, became equated with passivity, taking orders from above, centralization, mass consumption. To improvise, or at least to try, became a way of taking command, acquiring power at least over yourself and your own actions. Thus dancing and music-making became a field where individuality could be developed and expressed, in a society which seemed to leave too little room for individual expressivity." Owe Ronström: "Revival in Retrospect. The Folk Music and Dance Revival". *European Centre for Traditional Culture,* Bulletin IV. Budapest 12–13/9, 5–6.

20 Béla Halmos, *ibid.,* 29–40, 29.

21 Among the very first dance cycles in the dance house and the repertoire of dance-groups right from the very beginning there were Romanian, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Greek and then a

bit later Slovak, Polish-Goral, Gypsy and Jewish music and dance as well. In addition to the so-called Hungarian dance houses, where the mix of styles appeared, there were separate Serbo-Croatian, Greek etc. dance houses that developed around music bands such as the Vuicsics band, which were absolute contemporaries of the first Hungarian music playing bands. In fact there was a great permeability among the visitors and musicians of the dance clubs.

22 Béla Halmos, *ibid.,* 30.

23 See László Kürti: "Rocking the State: Youth and Rock Music Culture in Hungary, 1976–1990", *East European Politics and Societies* 5 (1991): 483–513.

24 The composer of the music and the author of the text, Levente Szörényi and János Bródy, were members of the bands Illés and later Fonográf, one of the most progressive and popular bands of the late 60s and 70s.

25 In traditional balls and weddings dance-verses were shouted by the dancers to encourage or tease one another's dancing.

26 Interview with József Tornai by Zoltán Pósa, *A zsurnalizmus kora olykor megdöbbent* – Beszélgetés a nyolcvanegy éves Tornai Józseffel. http://www.mno.hu/portal/538014?searchtext=A%zsurnalizmus%20kora

27 See the results of a survey by István Fábri and Katalin Füleki: "A táncház közönsége: szociológiai jellemzők, értékek, életmód," in *A betonon is kinő a fű: Tanulmányok a táncházmozgalomról,* ed. Ildikó Sándor (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, 2006), 41–66.

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 63–76
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.5

IF THE TUNE IS JEWISH, WHY IS THE STYLE HUNGARIAN?

JOSHUA HOROWITZ

Madison, CT
USA

Within the past fifteen years, the klezmer (East European instrumental Jewish Music) music scene has included music of Transylvania (usually Kalotaszeg) that is stylistically specific to that region, even when the tunes played are considered Jewish. Popular groups such as Muzsikás and Di Naye Kapelye have circulated and popularized a limited standard repertoire, which has served partially to redefine what were formerly considered the elements of klezmer style. Motivations for the dissemination of this sub-trend are at the same time musical, commercial, academic and ideological. The needs of presenters and venues to vary their music programs has further aided in the dissemination of the sub-trend. The results have inspired some participants of klezmer music to observe what makes their music ethnically specific and to critically re-examine the tenets on which historical assumptions are made.

Keywords: Klezmer, dance house, táncház, folklore revival, folk music, Transylvania, Hungarian, East European instrumental Jewish music, Jewish style, Kalotaszeg, Muzsikás, Di Naye Kapelye, sub-trend

Since the mid 1990s music has been introduced into the Klezmer scene from the regions of Maramureș and Kalotaszeg.[1] Following the lead of the Táncház[2] (dance house) Movement of Hungary, first non-Jews, then later Jews began to redefine what were formerly considered the stylistic and repertoire parameters of Klezmer music. If we contextualize these processes historically and then pose questions as to what is accurate in the relationship between the promotion and actual content of the promotion of the participants involved, we can come closer to an understanding of their function in both the Klezmer and dance house scenes. The development of the dance house movement and the Klezmer Revival[3] took place independently of each other, respectively in the early and late 1970s, specifically 1972 for the dance house and ca. 1976 for Klezmer. Common to both scenes at the outset was the motivation to preserve, revive and perform folk music of certain areas and ethnicities. But these movements, or scenes, differed at that time in their methods and sources.

The early era of the dance house movement focused first on the style of music from the Mezőség region,[4] specifically from Szék.[5] The second style that came to be integrated into the dance house scene was from the region of Kalotaszeg, which is more cosmopolitan, with influences from the city. The harmonic rhythm is typically quite dense, with frequent changes of harmony to support the melody.[6] The early era of the American Klezmer Revival[7] focused on the other hand on the core Klezmer repertoire as found on early 78 r.p.m. recordings issued in the USA primarily by immigrants, roughly from 1911–1942. Although the Israeli Hasidic clarinetist Moussa Berlin was learning Klezmer tunes from early 78 r.p.m. recordings of Dave Tarras and Naftule Brandwein in the 1960s, the American Klezmer revival got its start in the mid 1970s with the work of *The Klezmorim, Andy Statman and Zev Feldman, and Kapelye,* then later *The Klezmer Conservatory Band* and *Brave Old World.*

The groups featured on the early records were predominantly from the areas of the Russian Empire where Jews settled, known as the Pale of Settlement, especially what is today western Ukraine. Their styles and repertoire are remarkably uniform in many details, despite the geographic spread of the regions. The styles that came to define the earliest of the revival groups were based more or less on these styles, but the more traditional styles were soon supplanted by groups coming after the above-mentioned ensembles, with their aesthetic shaped by American music, such as swing and the New York brands of Yiddish Theater. The more traditional stylistic elements that came to define the Klezmer Revival were those found east of Transylvania and did not seem to encompass any of the styles that came to define the dance house movement; the styles of Maramureș, Mezőség and Kalotaszeg are entirely absent.

Similarities between the Dance House and Klezmer Movements

- Educated urban-dwellers, most notably in Budapest and New York, have propagated both scenes. Many of the musicians have been active in other genres of music, such as jazz and various types of folk, classical and rock music.
- Both scenes have sought to and succeeded in integrating three generations of audience members and participants.
- Both scenes have developed camps and festivals, not only in Budapest and New York, but worldwide.

Differences between the Dance House and Klezmer Movements

- From the outset, dance house has relied heavily on informants for repertoire and style, whereas Klezmer has relied primarily on commercially issued early 78 r.p.m. recordings.
- The dance house movement has worked with and received information from ethnicities which themselves were not geographically displaced (although the regions fell under Hungarian and then Romanian rule), whereas the majority of the early Klezmer musicians of the 78 r.p.m. recordings were immigrants who were displaced to America, so their original style and repertoire developed thousands of miles away on foreign soil.
- The dance house proponents distinguished between village and city music, especially Mezőség and Kalotaszeg, and later Carpathian and Jewish music, whereas Klezmer musicians developed urban music (Jewish village music was rarely if ever recorded commercially) with little attention to the question of urban and rural styles.
- The dance house movement emphasized interaction with informants professionally, whereas Klezmer musicians have had few informants with whom they could interact.[8]
- In its early stages the dance house movement exhibited an element of protest against state-sanctioned culture, whereas the Klezmer Revival developed in an atmosphere free of state artistic control.
- The dance house movement included dance from the outset (as implied by its name), whereas the Klezmer scene integrated dance only later in its development, most notably since the 1990s.

Ten Stylistic Characteristics of Dance House and Klezmer

Dance House

- *Düvö* technique – undulating, often asymmetric legato bowing technique
- *Apraja* – high connecting phrases between tunes
- Chaining – fluid connection of dance tunes or sections
- String-based music, including 3-string basses, violas, cimbaloms
- String based esztam (contra offbeats[9])
- Sophisticated harmonic techniques, including major chords over minor tonalities (usually on 1st and 4th degrees), bVI chords moving to V chords, and frequent use of V7 chords
- Formalized cadences specific to the genre of the tune
- Short-long melodic phrasing of groups of dotted eighth-sixteenth notes

– Pronounced wide violin vibrato
– Less use of Freygish (DEbF#GABbCD) and Yishtebach (DEbFGAbBCD) modes

Klezmer

– Bulgar pattern (3+3+2) forms the basis of the backbeat of faster duple meter dance tunes
– Vamps connecting slow tunes with fast tunes
– Clarinet and Brass based music
– Simple harmonization, often influenced by jazz
– Formalized cadences specific to the genre and mode of the tune
– Clipped 2-note phrasing articulation of sixteenth note groupings of four notes
– Pronounced use of Freygish (DEbF#GABbCD), Yishtebach (DEbFGAbBCD) and Mishebarakh, or Ukrainian Dorian modes (DEFG#ABCD)
– Pre-war Klezmer music is typically simply harmonized, often with one implied or stated harmony serving for entire sections regardless of implied modal changes
– Violin "sweet sound" using vocal gestures of the synagogue
– Use of *Krekhts* (sobbing escape tone)

Historical Background of Jewish Music in Maramureș

Kaliver Hasidic Dynasty, Maramureș[10]

Jews living in Maramureș from the time of the first Rabbi of Hungary in the early 19th century till the present day were predominantly Hasidic. Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Taub from the Hasidic Kaliver Dynasty Kaliv *(Kalov, Kalev, also Nagykálló)* of Hungary, now northeastern Maramureș, was known as the "Sweet Singer of Israel" (1744–1828). He composed many popular Hasidic melodies and often adapted Hungarian folk songs by substituting Jewish words for Hungarian ones. He was famous for composing the traditional Hungarian Hasidic tune, *Szól a kakas már,*[11] as well as the tunes, *Sírnak rínak a bárányok* (Mournful bleat the sheep) and *Erdő, erdő* (Forest, forest). He taught that the tunes he heard were really from the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and had been lost among the nations over the years until he found them and returned them to the Jewish people. He supported this claim by asserting that the Gentiles who taught him the songs soon forgot them as soon as the Rabbi learned them.

Vishnitzer Hasidic Dynasty in Maramureș

Vishnitz, Bukovina Hasidim, who were ardent followers of Rabbi Israel Hager (1860–1936)[12] and the Szatmar Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Teitelbaum (1880–1926) settled in Maramureș. The brand of Hasidism that developed among the Vishnitzer Hasidim was of a folksy variety. They were mostly farmers and became well known for their melodies, which have been collected extensively in Israel.[13] There were also tunes collected and published before the war.[14]

Maramureș Jewish Instrumental Style

While many of the tunes sung by the Maramureș Hasidim were and still are widespread among many Jewish and Hasidic communities to date, we know little about the instrumental style of the music. The tunes we have, which were at some point found to be part of the Maramureș musical landscape, have a modal structure that does not deviate from what we know of Klezmer tunes today. They consist of the common Klezmer modes *Freygish* (scalar form: DEbF#GABbCD), *Ukrainian Dorian* (scalar form: DEFG#ABCD) and minor modes with occasional flatted 2nds in their cadences. Although the accompaniment of the Jewish music we know of from most of the regions of the Jewish Pale of Settlement east of the Carpathians is usually quite simple with accompanying harmonies that don't deviate from the mode, some of the examples we have of Gypsies performing Jewish music show Maramureș "indicators," such as a major chord used to accompany a minor melodic cadence.[15]

We know that The Kaliver Rabbi loved Hungarian music and co-opted many of its tunes. But did he also encourage the klezmorim to play those tunes with major harmonic accompaniments over minor melodies, such as we find today in the non-Jewish folk tunes of Maramureș? Based on the Kaliver Rabbi's need to redefine Hungarian tunes as Jewish, we could conjecture that he may have encouraged his musicians to make the style more Jewish, in the style of many of the Jewish tunes coming from the heartland Gubernias of the Pale of Settlement. However, even were we to find evidence of this, there is no longer any way to make a sampling large enough to draw substantive conclusions about "regional" Jewish instrumental styles in Maramureș.

Mukachevo[16]

There was a strong relationship between the Jewish communities of Maramureș and Mukachevo (Munkács), the latter of which was headed by Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira. There is a rare historical film recording of the wedding of Rabbi Spira's daughter in 1933, in which a short military march was played, followed by a Khupe[17] march in the Freygish mode.[18] The musicians were probably from Galitsia and had played on the Hungarian side of the Carpathians, yet nothing in their playing hints at any of the Hungarian styles as we know them today. The style is typical to Klezmer music throughout the regions east of the Carpathians, through western Ukraine. There were three violins, a viola, a *baraban* (frame drum) and C-melody saxophone or alto saxophone.

Bartók and Jewish Music

Whereas for the most part the modern Klezmer scene from the 1970s to the present has used as its source material a corpus of less than 1000 78 r.p.m. recordings made by immigrants to America between 1911 and 1942, with only scattered notes concerning sources, the dance house scene has used field recordings, mostly modern, but also historical as their primary sources. Regarding the use of historical fieldwork, the question as to why Bartók did not include Jewish music in his research is important.

According to Judit Frigyesi,[19] Bartók perceived there to be a chasm between the Hungarian countryside and the cosmopolitan musical life of Budapest, the latter which he considered to be predominantly German/Jewish. Yet in spite of his early perceptions concerning Jews, Bartók's first supportive audience came from Jewish circles, as many publishers, editors, and University professors in his milieu provided financial backing. Bartók's initial disillusionment about Jews was based on the feeling that Germans and Jews were an intrusion upon Hungarian life. When he came to Budapest, he expected the modern bourgeoisie to be Hungarian and Christian, but soon labeled German and Jewish. Despite his preconceptions about Jews, Bartók himself ran the danger of being stamped Jewish by the Nazis, and his publisher, Universal, asked him to issue a statement in which he avowed not to be of Jewish ancestry, but he refused.

In light of Bartók's omission of Jewish music as an integral part of his definition of folk music and the fact that the early dance house movement was primarily concerned with Hungarian music as it was found in the villages of Transylvania, it is understandable that Jewish music was left out of the original stages of the dance

house movement. In addition, the Jewish communities of Transylvania and Maramureș did not have highly profiled dance traditions, as the Mezőség, Kalotaszeg and Maramureș regions did.

"World Music" and Industry Pressure

One of the factors contributing to the swift movement away from the traditional styles of Klezmer was the pressure exerted by the music industry itself. Beginning in the 1980s ethnic music became increasingly difficult to sell. Prior to 1987 ethnic music did in fact have followings, but record companies, broadcasters and journalists[20] found it ever more difficult to reach larger and crossover audiences. At the meetings leading up to the first 1987 World Music Month of WOMAD[21] the most urgent concern was to select an umbrella name through which to sell "new" ethnic music. Suggestions included "World Beat" and the addition of prefixes such as "hot" or "tropical"[22] to existing genre titles, but "World Music"[23] won after a show of hands. In spite of the fact that World Music came to denote ethnic music with modern developments, it also included traditional ethnic music. And although there was a continuing interest on the part of audiences in both traditional as well as modernized ethnic music, the pressure from labels, journalists and presenters was relentless for traditional groups to diversify their music. For example, the German record label, Tropical, published a credo on the internet which read as follows:

> Tropical Music offers a platform for those artists who do not wish to have their musical and artistic individuality bought, changed or compromised by the capital of large multinationals under creative conditions with no respect for either music or message.

In their contract negotiations however, the directive was quite the contrary:

> Traditional music is very nice and we need it, but the world is moving on... can you make the product different? ... one may reach this by modernizing arrangements, adapting themes for different instrumentation [and] inviting guest soloists from other musical fields...[24]

Muzsikás and "The Lost Jewish Music of Transylvania"

The year after the WOMAD World Music Month, the group Muzsikás was invited to play Jewish music at a 1988 photo exhibition on Jewish religious life. At that time they were introduced to the Jewish musicologist and former student of

Kodály, Zoltán Simon, who had carried out field research in Jewish music in Maramureș in 1946. They wrote,

> When we asked him about the performing style, he explained that it was no different from the style of the Hungarian region, since the same group of musicians played for both Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Muzsikás went out into the field to research their project, contacting Gypsies whose fathers had played for Jews before the war and who occasionally included them on gigs. Georghe (Cioata) Covaci and Toni Árpád remembered some of the tunes but admitted that they did not know the styles.

The field research of Muzsikás resulted in a broadening of the contributions of the dance house movement with their seminal 1993 CD, "Maramaros: The Lost Jewish Music of Transylvania,"[25] with liner notes written by Professor Judit Frigyesi, a Hungarian born Jew presently working as Associate Professor at Bar Ilan University.[26]

Marketing and the Spread of the Muzsikás Aesthetic

But in spite of the title, which led buyers to believe that they are purchasing a newly discovered cultural treasure trove, the majority of the pieces on the record, while perhaps having fallen out of use in the regions of Transylvania through the destruction of the Jewish communities there, were not "lost" at all. In fact, most of the tunes on the record, for example *Mayn SHTETELE Belz* and *Hat a Jid a Wejbele* have remained staples in the Jewish musical landscape to this day. The melody to the prayer *Ani Maamin* is still performed in synagogues and by choirs and Klezmer bands across the globe, and continues to be sung on Holocaust Remembrance Day. There is also a tune on the CD, *Haneros Halelu,* which is culled directly from an important historical Klezmer reissue LP.[27]

Muzsikás was aware of the American Klezmer revival, and gave due credit in the liner notes to their sources. But in spite of the discrepancy between the title and the content of the CD, promoters of their music and their recording pushed the idea of a "Jewish Atlantis". Here is an example of an advertisement for the Muzsikás CD:

> This exceptional album is the ancestor of Klezmer – the forgotten old Jewish music of the Carpathian Basin. Muzsikás has recorded these songs after years of research, collecting music from Gypsies, authentic players of Klezmer.[28]

Promoters followed suit. The album became the biggest all time seller of the Hannibal Record Label.[29]

The Toronto Ashkenaz Festival of 1995, the first and to this day still largest Jewish festival in North America, offered a program emphasizing groups with a modern bent, i.e., Jewish World Music. The three groups that filled the traditional slot were Brave Old World, Budowitz, and the freshly included Muzsikás with their "Lost Jewish Music" program. Muzsikás was treated as an archaeological find. In spite of the rainy weather, the packed audience at the outdoor Harbourfront Amphitheater braved the entire concert and went wild with enthusiasm. Much of the music on the Muzsikás program that evening was made up of Hungarian language songs and Kalotaszeg pieces, mixed with the Jewish pieces of the CD.

So What's New?

If the majority of the pieces on the Muzsikás CD were not "new" to those familiar with Jewish music, what was? In fact, the style of the pieces they played were perceived as unusual to those familiar with the typical Klezmer revival sound. Their group used a Gardon,[30] a 3-string viola, a small cimbalom, a gut-strung bass, a violin, a Turkish drum and featured a singer (Márta Sebestyén) who used ornamentation. The clarinet was missing and the instrumentation was string-based, something that Klezmer enthusiasts had read about but rarely if ever heard as being a common characteristic in Klezmer music before the advent of recording.

Since these pieces were in fact at one time actually played before the war in the regions where Muzsikás found them, their inclusion in the dance house context could be justified if needed. No further justification was needed in the Klezmer scene. The dances, however, were missing. Sue Foy, an American living in Budapest since the 1980s began to teach Jewish dances in and around Budapest.

Di Naye Kapelye and the Inclusion of the Dance House Aesthetic

In the mid 1990s, Bob Cohen, an American musician who moved to Budapest in the late 1980s, began playing violin with the Budapester Klezmer Band (now called the Budapest Klezmer Band), which claimed to be the "first Jewish band founded in Hungary since the Holocaust."[31] The Budapester Klezmer band was started in 1990 by Ferenc Jávori and modeled its early sound on the American versions of Klezmer tunes, as heard in Kapelye and The Klezmer Conservatory Band, but did not seem to be affected by the parallel developments happening underfoot in the dance house movement. Cohen left the Budapester Klezmer Band around

1994 and began his own band, Di Naye Kapelye, (The New Band). Cohen was aware of the existence of the American Band, Kapelye.[32]

In the fall of 1995 Cohen and I went on a field trip to visit the informants cited on the Muzsikás record[33] to find out if there were more Jewish tunes or tunes played for Jews. When I asked Béla Bácsi, the accordionist of Mera (Méra), Transylvania what he thought characterized Jewish style before the war, he said,

> It was simple, with only two chords. The Jewish contra players only used simple chords. But after the war when the accordion came around, it was easier to play more chords, so the accordion players put more chords to the tunes, and then the contra players started to play what the accordion players were playing.

Following the lead of the dance house movement, Cohen gradually began introducing first the tunes of the Muzsikás record, then other tunes that he had gotten from tapes from friends and from his own field recordings and eventually from the players themselves.[34] Cohen's vocal performance style was modeled on Carpathian male village singers, and he would joke on stage about being distinguished as the loudest Jewish singer in the history of Jewish music. Like the promotion surrounding the Muzsikás project, Di Naye Kapelye's critiques and promotional material placed emphasis on the buzzwords "village," "roots," "authentic" and "tradition," both by the group itself and by journalists:

> This is village-style Klezmer, foot-stomping, percussive, and earthy, played with gusto and brio.[35]

> This is roots Klezmer in the best way, played in the style that would have had folks dancing madly all night a hundred years ago.... It is hard to imagine anyone else playing such a diversity of music, not only authentically, but with such heart and skill.[36]

Summary: Has There Been a Marriage of Dance House and Klezmer?

Since the advent of the Muzsikás CD and later, the sporadic contributions of Brave Old World and eventually Di Naye Kapelye, the Klezmer scene has witnessed scattered attempts to integrate versions of mostly Kalotaszeg and Maramureș styles into the canon of the Klezmer repertoire.[37] In addition, at the 2007 annual Klez Kamp[38] gathering (the largest of its kind in the world) a new workshop was offered entitled "Carpathian Jewish Wedding Ensemble" in which the repertoire and style of the Covacis and the Muzsikás CD as well as various other dance house tunes were included in the context of Klezmer music. Recently the Técsői Banda (Tyachiv or Tetsh in Yiddish) has garnered interest in the dance

house scene,[39] and their repertoire includes some little known Klezmer tunes as well as variants of familiar Klezmer tunes that have found their way into both the dance house and Klezmer repertoires.

Although it is tempting to view the connection of dance house and Klezmer as a trend, its propagation has been too limited on both sides to qualify it as such to date. While some repertoire has been introduced from each side to the other, it is too early to consider the interaction to be symbiotic. Rather, we could view the promotion of the early Muzsikás CD (with very little development since that time, however) and the recent works and promotion of Di Naye Kapelye, Jake Schulman-Ment, and some scattered groups in both the dance house and Klezmer scenes as an indication of an attempt to create a trend through the addition of tunes from each other's repertoires.

If we look at the pressures placed on the participants of both movements and their artistic motivations it would seem that the dance house scene has sought to increase and widen its stylistic parameters as well as its appeal in order to broaden its ethnic definitions and garner more interest in the traditional music of the regions with which they have dealt. On the Klezmer side, the motivations are similar, with the added need to redefine Klezmer music as including rural music, which in the absence of documents that would reveal how these traditions sounded, uses the dance house styles and model as its foundation.

Notes

1 In 1908 Dezső Malonyay edited a volume of art entitled *Kalotaszeg, Art of the Hungarian People*. It introduced the concept of "folk art" into Hungarian public awareness. In the first part of the 20th Century, the Carpathian Society of Transylvania, which funded the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest and the Ethnographic Museum in Cluj (Kolozsvár) featured the majority of its articles from the Kalotaszeg region. Béla Bartók and Béla Vikár were fascinated by the music of the region and collected folk music there.

2 The term *dance house* is derived from a Transylvanian tradition of holding dances in private homes. Since the 1970s Hungarians have been researching the music and culture of ethnic Hungarians outside of Hungary, such as those in Transylvania, Slovakia, and the Siret River valley of Moldavia.

3 The term *Klezmer Revival* refers specifically to the movement created first in the USA beginning around 1976 which promoted interest in East European Jewish instrumental music as a genre. By the 1980s klezmer bands performing in Europe, such as The Klezmorim, Kapelye and later Brave Old World, inspired dramatic growth in the interest of young European musicians in learning klezmer music. The movement is characterized by an initial interest in the styles of the 78 r.p.m. recordings, mostly produced in the U.S. between 1916–1942. The term implies a type of resurrection, though it should be noted that Klezmer music did not actually "die" prior to this period, although the 78 r.p.m. styles and instrumentation did in fact change later on American soil.

4 Mezőség or Câmpia Transilvaniei is an ethno-geographical area in Transylvania located between the Someș and Mureș Rivers.

5 The area of Szék has three main roads. The marriages in Szék typically joined families living on the same street. There were often family feuds with families on the other streets. It is an isolated region, as the city ends at the mountains, so the only way to get beyond it is over the mountain by foot. The first collections in Szék were performed in the 1940s by László Lajtha. The Szék style is partially characterized by simple chords with limited use of changing harmonies and formed the first style of the dance house movement, led first by Zoltán Kallós (singer and music collector, Cluj) and György Martin (dance pedagogue, Budapest). The most venerable performer in Szék was István Ádám [Icsán], whose violin style was rough and pronounced. István has been jokingly called the Mezőség "hard rocker" due to the prevalence of I, IV and V major chords in his style.

6 The reason given to me for the use of extended harmonies by Béla Bácsi, the accordionist from Mera, Transylvania, was that the accordion was taken on by the Hungarians when they served in the Russian army in World War II. The left hand buttons of the accordion enabled easily created harmonies that could also be changed quickly. Therefore, the number of harmonies as well as the harmonic rhythm influenced the accompaniment of the music, and the main string instrument to play chords was the viola, which took on these characteristics.

7 Often, revivalist tendencies skip a generation: immigrants hold on to their traditions; the children of immigrants distance themselves from traditions. The grandchildren of immigrants may return to the traditions. Even if we consider the Klezmer revival to be based on "traditional sources," the end product of their styles quickly departed from a parroting of the styles on the records to more modernized and personalized versions. Aside from the early works of the Klezmorim, Andy Statman and Zev Feldman, and Kapelye, the period from around 1980 to 1992 did not yield many new works striving after the traditional except Brave Old World, Rubin & Horowitz and later Budowitz.

8 Learning music directly from informants did however occur. Michael Alpert and Stuart Brotman learned from Ben Bazyler and Leon Schwartz, Andy Statman and Zev Feldman learned from Dave Tarras. I learned from Majer Bogdanski, Leopold Koslowski and Yermye Hescheles and Cookie Segelstein learned from members of her family from Veretski (Verecke) and Mukachevo. But the bulk of the tunes and their styles came from records.

9 The term *contra* or *kontra* usually refers to the 3-string viola, which has its bridge filed down flat to enable easy bowing of chords, but is also used to indicate the style of playing offbeat chords.

10 If we compare the delivery of *Szól a kakas már* as sung by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Taub, who is the sixth generation descendant of Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Kaliv, with that of Márta Sebestyén and Muzsikás we notice differences in style. First, the context of the Taub version is for a Hasidic gathering and is used as a prayer, while the Sebestyén version is for a CD and is used as folk art. The *a capella* version sung by Taub uses free rubato, while the Sebestyén version is stricter and aesthetically harmonized, with instrumental interludes. Also, Hasidism forbids the use of the female voice in prayer with men.

11 Hager eventually moved his court to Oradea in Transylvania, within easy access of Maramureș. His sons established themselves as the Rabbis in the Maramureș towns of Viș eul de Sus and Vilchovice.

12 During World War I sizeable Hasidic communities flourished in the areas of Sighetul Maramureș, Satu Mare, Mukachevo, Oradea, Carei Mare, Beregovo, Uzhgorod, Viș eul de Sus, Khust and their vicinities. The Hasidic courts were headed by the following Rabbis: Teitelbaum (Sziget-Szatmár), Sapinka (Weisz) and Spira (Mukachevo).

13 In 1938, the conductor of the Opera and of the Goldmark Symphony Orchestra in Cluj, Alexander Boskovitch (1907–1964), called for the collection and preservation of the music of the Jews of Hungary, Romania and Transylvania, inspiring Max Eiskovits, a musicology student and later harmony and counterpoint professor at the University of Cluj, to collect and publish the niggunim of the Hasidic Jews of Maramureș, some of which eventually found their way into the 1980 publication, *Songs of the Martyrs*.

14 We have some untitled recordings of the musicologist, Harry Brauner from the 1970s of alleged Gypsy musicians performing a Jewish March and Doina on violin with string accompaniment.

15 The city of Mukachevo was part of the Kingdom of Hungary from 1000–1918 and 1938–1944, and of Czechoslovakia from 1918–1938 and 1944–1945. Culturally it was a combination of Galician and Hasidic.

16 Yid: Wedding canopy, under which the Jewish marriage blessings are made.

17 http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1622609518319953327&q=munkatch

18 Frigyesi, Judit, *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century* (Budapest, University of California Press, 1998).

19 It should be pointed out that presenters generally have a three-fold objective:
1) To get as large an audience as possible;
2) To vary their programs;
3) To have a good personal profile and public image.

20 World of Music, Arts and Dance.

21 The term "Tropical" was later taken on as the name of a German label, which eventually specialized in Latin American music but then wished to expand its catalogue to include Klezmer music.

22 The term "World Music" was first used in 1982 in France at the Fete de la Musique to designate folk music and eventually all music related to ethnic genres. Following the release in 1986 of Paul Simon's album *Graceland* the term began to be increasingly used by the industry in order to boost record sales by encouraging crossover appeal. By the mid 1990s the term itself and the dogma behind it became so pervasive that music that was considered traditional was often attached to an image of backwoods, ethno-centric, even racist, especially in Germany, where folk music became branded as the property of the Nazis, thereby making it unpalatable for post-war generations of musicians who were drawn to ethnic music. Germany is the largest country in Europe with the most widespread music industry. It follows that the edicts of the German music industry would have far-reaching effects on the musical economy of Europe and the rest of the world.

23 Email correspondence between Joshua Horowitz and Claus Schreiner of Tropical Records, Germany, 1999.

24 Hannibal Records, Rykodisc HNCD 1373, 1993.

25 Professor Frigyesi was, for a time the life partner of Zev Feldman, the noted scholar and tsimbl player of the duo with Andy Statman.

26 Klezmer Music: Early Yiddish Instrumental Music, The first recordings, 1908–27 from the collection of Dr. Martin Schwartz, Arhoolie Folklyric 7034, 1983. This record was one of the earliest and most seminal sources for performers of Klezmer music during the late 1970s through the 1980s.

27 http://www.passiondiscs.co.uk/rjc/Klezmer01.htm

28 Conversation with Simon Broughton, editor of Songlines Magazine, April 5, 2008.

29 Gardon or Gardonko is a folk cello that is struck with a thick stick, typically played in Gyimes, Transylvania.

30 http://www.jmwc.org/Artists&PerformingGroups/performers_b.html

[31] Cohen played second violin in my group, Budowitz for a short while in 1997. His cellist, Géza Pénzes, and I met in 1995, (I had been living in Graz Austria since 1984) shortly after I formed Budowitz. At that time Pénzes, who was an active member in the dance house scene with his group Újstílus, played in Di Naye Kapelye, and joined Budowitz in 1996. At that time gigs for Di Naye Kapelye were slim and I offered to help out, occasionally playing with the band and helping Cohen with contracting. The band at that time was struggling to affirm its existence in the Klezmer scene and dabbled in dance house music.

[32] Some of the musicians who have been the informants for the dance house movement: Fodor [Neti] and Ferenc Árus from Kalotaszeg; Kodoba Béla and his family from Magyarpalatka; István Ádám [Icsán] from Szék; István Jámbor [Domnezu] and Ferenc Mezei [Csángálo] from Szászcsávás.

[33] I was also invited to play at a Budapest festival with the Gypsy cimbalom player Toni Árpád. In 2000 Cohen began to integrate Árpád into their February 2000 tour of Holland and Belgium, and eventually also Mihály Sípos and Péter Éri of Muzsikás.

[34] Seth Rogovoy, The Essential Klezmer. http://www.dinayekapelye.com/recmazel.htm

[35] Ari Davidow, Klezmer Shack. http://www.Klezmershack.com/articles/davidow/2001_1201_more_hot.html

[36] Tim Meyen of Canberra, Australia, leader of the Trio Triplika, "counts Toni Arpad, the septuagenarian Gypsy master from Vajdaszentivany (Voivodeni) who was featured on the Muzsikás album 'the Lost Jewish Music of Transylvania,' among his influential teachers."

[37] http://livingtraditions.org

[38] The dance house group Fonó (formerly Hegedős), led by Zsolt Kürtösi, has incorporated Klezmer tunes into its repertoire, borrowing both from the Técsői Banda, Budowitz and other sources. Three members of Fonó have been longstanding members of Budowitz and are considered specialists of Klezmer music.

[39] The trio Veretski Pass has included some Técsői Banda pieces as well. Its director is Cookie Segelstein, and both Stuart Brotman of Brave Old World and I are part of the trio. These pieces quickly became integrated into the repertoires of other bands in both scenes via bands that learn them from the Técsői recordings.

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 77–88
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.6

THE HUNGARIAN FOLK DIVA: ARTIST, ADVOCATE, BUSINESSWOMAN

BARBARA ROSE LANGE

University of Houston, TX
USA

In the 1980s, a single female performer, Márta Sebestyén, defined Hungarian folk singing. Sebestyén's voice, with the heavy ornamentation and chest timbre of the Hungarian-Transylvanian sound, became popular worldwide. Even as Sebestyén's voice was popularized via electronic dance mixes and film soundtracks, in live performances and interviews she emphasized the ethnic minority Hungarians in Transylvania who served as her musical sources. The 21st century has seen the ascent of several young female singers in Hungary. They have taken the advocate role in a different direction, dramatizing the experiences of other underprivileged groups and of women. They face additional challenges: currently in Hungary, every sphere of artistic life, including folk music, must demonstrate economic independence. The young folk divas front their own groups and develop high concepts for their albums and performances. It remains to be seen whether their forthrightness will gain the same success as the modest image of the classic singer of the Hungarian folk revival style.

Keywords: world music, Hungarian folk song, gender, music and entrepreneurs, jazz, Transylvania, Csángó, Márta Sebestyén, Ágnes Szalóki, Bea Palya

The Hungarian Folk Diva: Artist, Advocate, Businesswoman

In opera reception the term "diva" refers first to vocal virtuosity, and second to the compelling figures behind the voices and the unique ways in which these singers dressed, acted, and lived out the dramas they played on stage. Recently the idea of the pop diva suggests the astounding vocal capabilities of such singers as Mariah Carey and indicates how singers like Madonna take an active hand in shaping their own images. The diva has become a marketing concept with concerts and albums featuring whole collections of female singing personalities in the classical, popular, jazz, and world music idioms.[1] There is a significant history of fictional and real divas in Hungary, including opera characters, opera singers, *nóta* singers, actresses, dancers, and film stars. Folk music is a sphere for divas in Hungary because it conveys passion, meaning and value to a wide spectrum of the

modern Hungarian public, attracts devoted fans, and helps the world sympathize with the issues of this culture of just a few million people. Conditions for folk artists in Hungary today demand that they be larger than life: folk divas fuse artistry with advocacy for underprivileged groups and business acumen.

That a performer show artistry seems self-evident. The dance house movement helped native and foreign audiences appreciate the Hungarian folksinger's parlando phrasing and ability to render the intricate ornamentation of Transylvanian folksong. Dance house instrumentalists tried to render instrumental music as faithfully as possible to the source musicians' sounds, and solo singers from the dance house environment tried to do the same. The communal dance house atmosphere produced a dedicated audience for folksong when it fostered wholehearted participatory singing and appreciation of the texts of songs. Those who wanted to sing as soloists had to dissect and study field recordings as intricately as dance house instrumentalists, and counted their experiences in the field as equally crucial. Rhythm, timbre, harmony, ornamentation, accents, and dialect differed within the microregions of Transylvania, from fiddler to fiddler and singer to singer. It could be argued that the details of singing were even more subtle than revival instrumental music, simply because there could be more singers than instrumentalists in the source villages. Like the dance house bands, each solo singer of Hungarian folk songs developed a unique stylistic and genre profile.

Burton Peretti has described how jazz in the US became "formalized" as critics, pedagogues, and musicologists incorporated jazz into the academy.[2] Even though Bartók, Ortutay, and others assigned a high aesthetic value to the folksong, revival musicians in Hungary experience themselves as in a long struggle to formalize folk music and thereby prove that it is equivalent aesthetically to Hungary's art music. The dance house proponents participated with source musicians and analyzed music and dance for the purpose of performance, whereas Hungary's research institutions developed theories of folk music according to a European academic model. Thus the dance house proponents worked within alternative institutions for research and study, such as the Institute for Folk Culture. In the competitive atmosphere since 1989, even after they established the House of Traditions, the revivalists experienced how classical music has a privileged spot in Hungarian public funding, academia, public broadcasting, and performance venues. László Kelemen wrote in the music magazine *Fidelio,*

> Bartók delved in the deepest way possible into the mine of Carpathian Basin folk music… in our superficialized world, except for a few exceptions, I do not see that purpose fulfilled…[in the dance house movement]… we rank the cultivators who are steeped in the folk music of the Carpathian Basin next to the cultivators of high art, because they share goals and means.[3]

Dance house advocates did partly formalize folk music by establishing a canon. In the 1980s, when the release of both revivalist and source recordings expanded, audiences came to know and admire source singers from Transylvania and later those from the Moldavian region just to the east of the Carpathian mountains. As Lydia Goehr has argued, the reception process elevates music from a life activity to the status of a work.[4] Dance house musicians and audiences came to love specific songs for their texts, their unique modes and ornamentation, or their association with ethnic minority regions for which Hungarians have particular sympathy.

Advocacy activity stretches back to before the time of Bartók. Concerning oneself with folk music meant concerning oneself with the disadvantaged or oppressed state of the people who originally performed that music. Bringing the music to an audience meant bringing the disadvantaged conditions of the source musicians and the villages in which they lived to the attention of the public. Folk revivalists of the 1970s dance house movement were therefore advocates for the purveyors of the musical sounds and peasant environments supporting those sounds, especially within the rustic province of Transylvania, lying outside the borders of Hungary. This advocacy came out of direct involvement. László Kürti argues that dance house participants, having lost their own peasant roots due to the rapid industrial development of Hungary under socialism, tried to reconnect elements of society that had become atomized, such as village with city, elderly with young, the educated with peasants, and region with region across national borders, especially via musical tourism to areas in Transylvania in which members of the Hungarian minority lived.[5] The revivalists, taking their cue from the sensitive work of Bartók, László Lajtha, and the dance scholar György Martin, treated the source musicians as equals. The art historian and urban-culture critic Ferenc Bodor wrote in *Nomad Generation,* a photo-essay on the Hungarian folk revival,

> for me, a layperson, the simultaneous indifference and officiousness of the people who handled the peasant musicians was stupefying. Old men put on the stage, torn from their environment, made victims of sugary reporters, exploited by collectors, withstood everything helplessly… and how many decades passed until the village musicians and singers met with people who did not need this music merely for scientific works and studies, but who also wanted to play this music, who didn't consider the musician and singer simply as a source of data, but also as partner?[6]

From the beginning of their activity, dance house proponents also followed a model of "positive discrimination" in highlighting the music and dance of Romanian, south Slavic, and Roma ethnic minorities within the borders of Hungary.[7] From the 1990s onwards, a general style of advocacy continued to explore the model of Hungary as a multiethnic society, including Roma and Jews. As the

country has become aggressively capitalist, concern for other people in an unequal position (the poor, children, women, the elderly) has emerged as a major theme.

The business end of folk music has been especially apparent in the 21st century. Angela McRobbie has pointed out that European unification and the equalizing of the markets across borders may have strengthened the hand of recording companies (at least until the collapse of the compact disc medium). The notion that European unification freed individual musicians to be flexible with their tour and contract arrangements actually obscured the fact that they had almost no leverage as individuals with the expanded music businesses.[8] Hungary's market orientation is harsh, but it has stimulated creativity. In a 1999 essay the sociologist Erzsébet Szalai analyzed Hungarian entrepreneurs and found that the successful ones took risks, clearly foresaw alternatives, maintained personal connections with those in power, and kept a core of symbolic capital intact.[9] Hungary's folk divas are entrepreneurs; they have taken the risk of establishing individual careers separate from known instrumental folk ensembles. Nonetheless, they depend on their personal connections with those same instrumentalists because they make sonic innovations. In their experiments they utilize a variety of arranging styles and depend on those instrumentalists to create the arrangements. They also try to maintain connections with the powerful Hungarian media. Critical reviews are a sparse component of the current Hungarian press coverage, but the singers are able to arrange interviews. These interviews cover issues of interest for the audiences of a given newspaper or television or radio channel, thus helping to increase the singer's exposure. The divas build on the symbolic capital of a voice skilled in the rhythmic and ornamental nuances and variations in timbre of Hungarian folk music.

Divas contribute to the stage performance element of the dance house movement, although the teaching and participation aspects of dance house activity have shaped their artistic development. They have varied repertoires and vocal styles, but all keep a core of Hungarian folksongs. The singers have undergone a journeywoman period during which they were members of touring performance groups and/or bands staging weekly dance house events. They thereby became competent in one or more of the canonic regional and ethnic-minority repertoires associated with dance house activity. Another key element, very unusual for women in Hungarian society, is that these singers are independent artists. This has meant a loss to the ensembles they served as journeywomen, and audiences fondly remember the periods and recordings of these ensembles when the divas were members. To stand as soloist is a major choice for them as entrepreneurs, and means innovative projects and artistic directions. As part of their larger-than-life quality, these singers enact fictional roles. Some singers, like the original instrumentalists of the dance house movement, set works of the noted Hungarian poets

to music in the genre referred to as "sung poetry." Several have engaged in musical meta-commentary with interpretations of folk music in jazz, classical, rock, or electronic idioms. The Hungarian state and other musical organizations have recognized these singers with many prizes.

Márta Sebestyén, the most famous Hungarian folksinger, has combined artistry with advocacy throughout her career. Sebestyén is like other revivalists in that she learned musical genres and styles from an etic standpoint. Sebestyén did not participate in the analytical or teaching arms of dance house. She taped, transcribed, and picked up songs from source musicians by ear. She even worked up convincing performances solely from manuscript notations. Sebestyén emphasizes experience and passion over other styles of musical learning. She stated to the British writer Ian Anderson,

> I couldn't explain to anyone how to sing. How should you feel when you sing. I can only say, 'Come and hear these old people playing,' then you get impressed and I'm sure you will have the feeling for it.[10]

The Hungarian word for "impression," *benyomás,* connotes a literal experience and not intellectual evaluation. Sebestyén stresses that she was drawn to the sounds of Transylvanian source singers from the very first moment she heard a field recording as a teenager. Even in describing her own artistry, Sebestyén gives credit to the source culture. She states,

> In truth, a person can only perform that which is tied to his or her experiences faithfully… If Muzsikás [and I] hadn't traveled so much in Transylvania and other Hungarian villages, if so many unforgettable moments had not stuck to the material of the music, then we wouldn't be able to make it our own.[11]

The broadest segment of the Hungarian public became fans of Sebestyén's voice when she sang the role of Réka, the peace-loving Christian daughter of the pagan leader Koppány in the 1984 film *István, a király* (Stephen the King) about Saint Stephen, the first king of Hungary and a Christian. In the late 1980s, when Muzsikás and Sebestyén released *The Prisoner's Song* on Hannibal Records, British reviewers and audiences loved the arranged song *Repülj, madár, repülj* (Fly, Bird, Fly) because it sounded like progressive-folk fusion with Irish music.[12] This song illustrates that Sebestyén had mastered the ornamented Hungarian folksong style. She recreated it only from a transcription. Hungarians valued the source locale of this song, Armășeni (Csíkmenaság), a village on the eastern edge of the Székely Land in Transylvania, historically an important territory for Hungarian speakers.

Sebestyén had a second burst of stardom when the French electronic-music duo Deep Forest featured her voice on the 1995 album *Boheme*.[13] Deep Forest

sampled and electronically mixed a performance by Sebestyén for *Marta's song,* which sold more than four million copies, and the duo won a Grammy for the album. Deep Forest was legally able to sample a recording by Sebestyén, having purchased the rights from the Belgian firm Fonti Musicali. But Sebestyén has stated that she is ambivalent about the artistic results: "When I first heard it, I was horrified. I found it strange that I only learned about it afterwards… so I had very mixed feelings. On the other hand, by means of this Hungarian folk music reached many millions of people."[14] Sebestyén complained that the worst part of having her voice mixed in the *Boheme* project was that the music *elüzletiesedett* (had been commercialized away). Sebestyén's voice, in a song that she learned under harsh fieldwork conditions, became even more well-known when it was featured on the soundtrack for the film *The English Patient*.

In addition to the many arrangements of folk songs of which Sebestyén has thus been a part, she has maintained a compelling on-stage image, restricted yet concentrated and forceful. She wears elements of folk costume, including vests, jewelry with folk motifs, and blouses, and often pulls her hair back severely like a peasant woman. In her appearances with the band *Muzsikás* she started at the back of the stage, moving in modified female dance steps, and she continued these movements while singing. This image parallels the way that Sebestyén emphasizes the value of the rural source musicians living outside Hungary. Sebestyén's activities since 2006 have included a concert tour of Transylvania and a series of interviews. In these interviews, Sebestyén chatted with equal energy about her children and about the high pinnacle of her success, signified by the fact that she received fan letters from European royalty.

Other folksingers in Hungary must take Sebestyén's successes and her stage demeanor into account. In fact there is a twenty-five year gap between Sebestyén and the current generation of female folksingers. The first female folksingers to succeed her made a mark in teaching, not performance. By the mid-2000s, however, at least five young folksingers had emerged, all cultivating diva images. Sebestyén's success enabled this by changing the balance of power within folk ensembles. Young female folk singers are now able to have independent careers and receive quite respectful treatment from the instrumental players with whom they work.

Ágnes Szalóki, aged 30, has made a strong mark on Hungarian concert life by creating jazz interpretations of folk music, by including Roma music in her programs, and by appearing as a singer with Hungarian folk bands. An urbanite, Szalóki was not raised with folk traditions in the home, but began performing this music in public at an early age. Szalóki commented that she first fell in love with Hungarian folk music as a child at the Óbuda folk music school in Budapest. This program had been in operation since the 1970s, when arranged folk music was the norm. After the end of socialism the dance house musicians inaugurated a system

of teaching their knowledge of folk music based on village practice.[15] The Óbuda school, along with dance house evenings, helped create a canon of dance house substyles that participants considered the most important, among them the music of the Moldavian Csángós, an ethnic group that lives to the east of Transylvania. Playing music of the Csángós symbolically casts light upon their situation. They faced extremely strong assimilationist pressures to the point that although they retained Roman Catholicism as a religion, in language, music, and folk arts they blended with Romanian culture.[16] Szalóki learned to play the Csángó percussion cello *ütőgardon* at the Óbuda school, and comments that she found a pressure-free atmosphere there that contrasted with the seriousness of academic school.

Szalóki started performing with Hungarian stage folk groups in her late teens. She began singing with the veteran dance house band *Ökrös* and still works with the group regularly. In addition, she worked for several years as a singer with *Besh O Drom*. This band gained international popularity by creating fast arrangements of music in a Balkan Roma rather than a Hungarian folk style. Szalóki then decided to become an independent musician, combining solo projects with bids from *Ökrös* and the jazz player Béla Szakcsi Lakatos to serve as their vocalist. Szalóki now performs revivalist folk music, fusion sounds, and jazz. She has achieved consistent successes in the meta-commentary of jazz-folk. She prepared and released solo CDs in 2005 and 2006. Both were jazz-based projects, and both received national prizes. Szalóki's projects illustrate how entrepreneurialism can combine with aesthetic elevation and a larger vision of humanity represented, in the view of many Hungarians, by folk music. Her solo projects, while recognized for their artistry, are at the same time business ventures. Szalóki musically symbolizes that Roma and Hungarian styles of folk music in Hungary, and by implication the two peoples, mix and coexist. At the same time, by interpreting this music in jazz and in well-known popular idioms, she illustrates the cosmopolitan sensibility of modern Hungary.

Szalóki's 2006 children's CD *Cipity Lőrinc* illustrates this combination. Children's concerts blend artistic, advocate, and business purposes quite harmoniously. Children's music is thriving commercially in Hungary; Szalóki has been in demand for years all over the country and in neighboring Hungarian-speaking areas, staging her children's concert about once a month. Children's concerts featuring folk music are well accepted and well attended. CDs of children's music performed by folk groups sell briskly and are well stocked in all record stores. There is also at least a thirty-five year history of creating fusion sounds in children's music, especially in the genre of sung poetry. *Cipity Lőrinc* intersperses sung poetry with Roma and Hungarian folk texts and melodies. These are set to reggae, bossa nova, Cuban, jazz-rock, Township jive, and other jazz accompaniments. In 2007 it won the title "Children's Album of the Year" from Fonogram, the organization of the Hungarian Association of Record Publishers (MAHASZ). For *Pergető,*

Szalóki selected a Hungarian folksong text and then set it to a Transylvanian Roma melody. Szalóki is Roma but not a Romany speaker. Following folk revivalist practice, she learned this melody from an ethnographic collection compiled by the Roma poet and painter Károly Bari. The jazz setting connotes a high art concept to Hungarians. Guitarist Dávid Lamm made the instrumental arrangement of chords and instrumentation. The tempo is sped up and the vocal tone is light, making Szalóki's *pergetés* or vocables into virtuosic scatting. Lamm's stopped offbeat or *esztam* and its added sixth and seventh chords evokes Django Reinhardt's Gypsy-swing style, but his articulations are much drier and lighter.[17] In live performance, Szalóki creates a focused rapport with the audience of small children. Before each number Szalóki encourages the children to do an activity. She has children make gestures indicating animals and natural landmarks, thus grounding the folksong motifs of flying birds, hills, and valleys in their bodies. Szalóki and her musicians fuse different varieties of folk music and lighten the mood via jazz, while still educating the children.

Szalóki has assumed the role of one of Hungary's best-loved divas, performing the songs of the 1940s film star Katalin Karády. Karády was famous for her over-the-top roles that dramatize failed love, fitful passion, and even rebellious female independence. Here, the canonic text is not the field recording, but Karády's commercial audio and film material, with theater orchestral accompaniment and a distinctive singing style. Karády's voice embodied a femme fatale ethos, legendary and unusual among Hungarian actresses for its low pitch, smoky tone, and exaggerated pitch glides. Interest in Karády revived in the late 1970s, and the social psychologist Ágnes Hankiss argued that this was because she was so kitschy. An interest in kitschiness was actually dissident because it was purely fun, without the serious and progressive purpose that socialism required the arts to demonstrate.[18] Audiences today enjoy and contribute to Szalóki's act. A crowd of university and older couples attended her 2007 performance of Karády songs at the West Balkan nightspot in Budapest. Szalóki entered in a black dress and sat on a high stool and her musicians, dressed much more informally in jeans, sat behind her. As Szalóki sang (and chatted with the audience in an ironic tone about how tight her dress was, how high the stool and made other arch meta-commentary), the camera shutters of at least four photographers clicked continuously. Szalóki plays with elements of Karády's hallmark style, choosing a higher tessitura, singing more melodically, and utilizing pitch glides much more sparsely than Karády. The accompaniment is supplied by a small number of jazz musicians with a great deal of variety, including rock arrangements.

Beáta Palya is another young singer who illustrates a combination of artistry and advocacy. Palya, in her early thirties, officially represented Hungary at the opening concert of the 2004 Olympics, as the Ambassador of Equal Opportunities in 2007, and as a Global Ambassador of Hungarian Culture in 2008. In her teens

Palya established herself in Budapest as part of the *Zurgó* ensemble formed around the weekly dance house held in Marczibányi square in Budapest and specializing in the music of the Csángós. In the 1990s she began experimenting with improvisation in *Laocoon,* a multidisciplinary arts group spearheaded by the composer Samu Gryllus. Gryllus is from the second generation of the folk revival. He is the son of the 1970s folk musician Dániel Gryllus. In 2006 Palya and Samu Gryllus created a CD project in the sung poetry genre. They set Sándor Weöres's cycle *Psyché* to music. This famously difficult cycle, completed in 1972, is a collection of poetry by a single fictional author named Psyché or Erzsébet Lónyay, who supposedly lived at the turn of the nineteenth century. In Biedermayer syntax, the poems relate her harsh fate and passions as a woman. Palya has often commented in interviews that she felt a parallel between herself and the passion, sensuality, and mixed-ethnic background of the Lónyay character (Palya is one-fourth Roma and Lónyay is half Roma):

> it was... important how a very passionate, erotic woman just discovers... I saw that this woman is suffering a lot... she lives excessively. She goes to every excess and then she doesn't even want to come back, and in this way she is very lonely. But I felt [it] very, very deeply.[19]

Presenting the poetic cycle in performance, Palya dramatizes the creative tension in Lónyay, singing in a sensitive and tender vocal style much admired in Hungarian folk music, segueing into the explosive energy of Romany dance music and shifting tonality and rhythm for the most dramatic sections of the cycle.

Palya and Gryllus's setting of the *Psyché* cycle did not have many reverberations in the high-arts sphere. The CD prompted few reviews (although it did receive many publicity announcements) and the group performed the entire cycle only a few times, in Vienna in 2006 and several times in spring 2008. Conjunctly with her cameo appearance as a bar singer in an erotic scene in Tony Gatlif's 2007 film *Transylvania, Psyché* enhanced Palya's commercial image. She explained to Zoltán Végső of the literary periodical *Élet és Irodalom* (Life and Literature) that her setting of this cycle had made her something of a sex symbol and that she'd been getting extremely passionate fan mail.[20]

In the early 2000s Palya sang Hungarian folk songs, Hungarian Roma music, and also Bulgarian (especially Thracian), Persian, Indian, and other music. She varied her vocal tone according to each style, rendered the ornaments in detail, and had clear diction. In 2007, Palya concertized with a small group of accompanying instrumentalists under her own name and with other European artists. She had a CD release pending with the French label Naive, and in the music for that CD she further explored and improvised on vocal timbres, pitches, and ornaments. In several 2007 performances she played the role of St. Elizabeth, the thir-

teenth-century Hungarian princess who was canonized for dedicating herself to care for the sick. In that role she sang almost no texts. A November 2007 dramatization of the St. Elizabeth legend was staged in the Budapest cathedral of Saint Anthony of Padua. Veiled and dressed in white robes at this performance, Palya paced through the resonant cathedral space, making vocalizations that resembled Indian *dhrupad* meditations on pitch and mood, but adding dynamics, timbre variations, melismas, and extra pitch glides. Palya has thus recreated historical and fictional Hungarian female figures covering a spectrum of passion, artistic aspiration, and humanism.

The extremely demanding conditions for folk music performance in Hungary elicit a divas' response. Building on the success of Márta Sebestyén, younger folk singers have stood independently, devising artistic projects together with trusted groups of instrumental musicians. They add to their own stature by reinterpreting important female figures and divas of the past, whether fictional or real. Audiences interpret this once again, appreciating dimensions that are relevant to the contemporary setting, in which sexuality is frank, poverty is shocking, humanism is officially embraced, and each person must make a place for himself or herself in the vigorously competitive artistic environment.

Acknowledgments

This article is based on field research conducted in Hungary from 1990–1992 and 2006–2007 with the support of grants from Fulbright and the International Research and Exchanges Board in 1990–1992, Small Grants from the University of Houston in 2006 and 2007, and the Joint Austrian–Hungarian Fulbright Research Fellowship in 2007. None of the organizations is responsible for the views expressed here. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of many musicians, in particular the generous friendship of the Cserepes family.

Notes

1 Leonardi and Pope note that female singers of both pop and classical genres take risks with their voices, experiment with gender roles, and attract groups of fans devoted to their dramatic musical personalities. See Susan J. Leonardi and Rebecca A. Pope, *The Diva's Mouth* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers U. Press, 1996).

2 Burton Peretti, *Jazz in American Culture* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997).

3 László Kelemen, "VilágDivat," *Fidelio,* January 2005, 3. In 2007 folk song achieved another step in formalization when it was established as a component of the curriculum of the Liszt Conservatory. A musician who had been active in dance house, András Jánosi, was hired to teach the subject.

4 Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992).

5 László Kürti, *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 150–159. The dance house participants continued a significant tradition of advocating for the rural poor in Hungary.

6 Ferenc Bodor, "Peasant Musicians," in *Nomád nemzedék,* ed. Ferenc Bodor (Budapest: Népművelési Intézet, 1981), 17. My translation.

7 Kürti, *The Remote Borderland,* 145.

8 Angela McRobbie, "'Everyone is Creative'. Artists as Pioneers of the New Economy?" LabforCulture.org BeCreative Text Archive (2004), http://www.k3000.ch/becreative/texts/text_5.html (accessed June 26, 2006). Hungarians and other Central Europeans continue to generate and support a market in compact discs, creating mementos with beautifully photographed and printed CD covers and oversize boxes, all with complete lyrics.

9 Erzsébet Szalai, "Kaleidoscope: How do Large Hungarian Companies, Company Executives and Entrepreneurs Innovate?" in *Post-Socialism and Globalization* (Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1999), 171–200.

10 "Marta to the Cause: Ian Anderson Meets Marta Sebestyén and Peter Eri from Muzsikás," *Folk Roots,* December 1987, 35.

11 Veronika Eszter Kiss, "Nem tudnék éneklés nélkül élni. Sebestyén Márta a hitelességről és kedves emlékeiről," *Magyar Nemzet,* December 25, 2003. My translation.

12 At the time British critics commented much less on the unaccompanied, haunting *Szerelem, szerelem* (Love, Love) and were somewhat confused by the aggressive style of *Hidegen fújnak a szelek* (Cold Winds Are Blowing). In the late 1980s political repression inhibited Muzsikás and other dance house proponents from explaining the protest subtext of the latter song.

13 Deep Forest had bought the rights to African field recordings and sampled them for their 1992 album Deep Forest, causing an ethical debate in ethnomusicology and in the popular music world. See Stephen Feld, "Pygmy POP: A Genealogy of Schizophonic Mimesis," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28 (1996), 1–35.

14 Veronika Eszter Kiss, "Nem tudnék éneklés nélkül élni." The remixing of Roma singers on *Boheme* has caused major ethical controversies to this day. The heirs of one Roma singer, Károly Rostás, have sued to receive additional compensation and their efforts were tracked in a documentary film that symbolized the divide in wealth and privilege between Western and Eastern Europe as well as the unequal position of Roma in East Central European societies. See Tibor Borzák, "Ellopták apám hangját!" *Szabad Föld Online,* May 12, 2006, http://www.szabadfold.hu/cikk.php?cikk=6152 (accessed June 3, 2008).

15 Óbudai Népzenei Iskola, "A magyar zenei anyanyelv iskolája. Bemutatkozás," http://www.nepzeneiskola.hu/ (accessed June 10, 2008). My translation.

16 Starting in the early 1990s Csángó music became quite popular with Hungarian dance house participants. There was a cultural infusion as Csángó young people started attending gymnasium in Budapest. Csángó line dance movements were much easier than the complex vocabulary of the dance house movement's popular partner and male dances from Transylvania.

17 Hungarian players, because of their long experience with the *esztam* upbeat, can give very subtle renditions of bossa nova.

18 Ágnes Hankiss, "Karády Katalin – 1979/80," in *Kötéltánc* (Budapest: Magvető, 1984), 286–316.

19 Interview with author, Budapest, May 6, 2006.

20 Zoltán Végső, "Meztelen vallomás," *Élet és Irodalom* 51/25 (June 22, 2007), http://www.es.hu/pd/display.asp?channel=INTERJU0725&article=2007-0624-2005-56SSDH (accessed December 15, 2007). My translation.

References

Bankó, András. *Muzsikás évtizedek* (Budapest: Kós Károly Alapítvány, 1994).

Bodor, Ferenc. "Peasant Musicians," in *Nomád nemzedék,* ed. Ferenc Bodor (Budapest: Népművelési Intézet ,1981), 15–21.

Feld, Stephen. "Pygmy POP: A Genealogy of Schizophonic Mimesis." *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28 (1996), 1–35.

Goehr, Lydia. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (London: Oxford, 1992).

Hankiss, Ágnes. "Karády Katalin – 1979/80." *Kötéltánc* (Budapest: Magvető, 1984), 286–316.

Kelemen, László. "VilágDivat." *Fidelio* (January 2005).

Kürti, László. *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 2001.

Leonardi, Susan J. – Rebecca A. Pope. *The Diva's Mouth* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

"Marta to the Cause: Ian Anderson Meets Marta Sebestyén and Peter Eri from Muzsikás." *Folk Roots* (December 1987), 34–37, 39.

McRobbie, Angela. "'Everyone is Creative'. Artists as Pioneers of the New Economy?" LabforCulture.org BeCreative Text Archive, 2004. http://www.k3000.ch/becreative/texts/text_5.html (accessed June 26, 2006).

Óbudai Népzenei Iskola. "A magyar zenei anyanyelv iskolája. Bemutatkozás." http://www.nepzeneiskola.hu/ (accessed June 10, 2008).

Peretti, Burton. *Jazz in American Culture* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997).

Szalai, Erzsébet. "Kaleidoscope: How Do Large Hungarian Companies, Company Executives and Entrepreneurs Innovate?" in *Post-Socialism and Globalization* (Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1999), 171–200.

Végső, Zoltán. "Meztelen vallomás." *Élet és Irodalom* 51/25 (June 22, 2007). http://www.es.hu/pd/display.asp?channel=INTERJU0725&article=2007-0624-2005-56SSDH (accessed December 15, 2007).

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 89–101
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.7

PERFORMING THE OLD WORLD, EMBRACING THE NEW: FESTIVALIZATION, THE CARNIVALESQUE, AND THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FOLK MUSIC AND DANCE CAMPS

LYNN HOOKER

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
USA

Every summer devotees of Hungarian folk music and dance attend camps in idyllic rural settings in Hungary, Romania, and North America where they study "authentic" repertoire with expert instructors. At such camps, traditional material is elevated on the altar of authenticity through constant comparison to the "real thing." These comparisons underline the fact that North American camps are far away from the "homeland." In other ways, however, these North American camps are their own homeland: they are a powerful nexus connecting people from different regions, creating what some frequent participants call an "instant community." The unique character of these events is clearest at after-parties, when the "authentic" repertoire of scheduled programs is often displaced by popular forms from Hungary and Romania as well as genres from beyond the region. As the days and nights wear on, the atmosphere transforms from sacred rite to carnival. Drawing on fieldwork at camps in Hungary, Romania, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Quebec, and Michigan, I discuss how camps organizers and participants canonize "authentic" folk repertoire through conscious festivalization strategies. I then examine how the carnivalesque atmosphere of these camps both undermines purified concepts of "authenticity" and creates a sense of connection unique to North American camps.

Keywords: Festival, festivalization, carnivalesque, Hungarian folk music, Hungarian folk dance, revival, camp, diaspora, North American Hungarians

You cannot inherit culture. Ancestral traditions disappear rapidly unless each generation re-conquers them for itself.[1]

Every year, a handful of camps (*táborok* in Hungarian) and weekend workshops across North America brings instructors from Hungary and Hungarian-speaking areas in neighboring countries to teach "authentic" folk music and dance repertoire, usually in idyllic rural settings. North American Hungarians and non-Hungarian dance and music enthusiasts travel great distances to imbibe au-

thentic traditions from these visiting experts. Despite the emphasis on authenticity, however, participants are acutely aware that they are far away from the "real thing."

Frequent comparisons with source villages and activities in Eastern Europe also emphasize that these North American camps are only a substitute for the "homeland." In another sense, however, these North American camps are their own homeland: as Kálmán Magyar wrote about the Hungarian Folkdance and Folk Music Symposium (Sympo) that he directs, they "become an instant community, a 'Who's Who in Hungarian Folkdance in America'."[2] (For a listing of camps and other important events in North America, see *Table 1*.) The unique character of these events is clearest not at scheduled events but at spontaneous after-parties, when the "authentic" repertoire of scheduled programs may be displaced by popular forms from Hungary and Romania as well as genres from beyond the region, including North America.

Drawing on fieldwork at camps and workshops in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Quebec, in this article I first describe how these events establish their official ideologies of authenticity; second, I consider how participants further the canon-

Table 1. Selected list of Hungarian folkdance camps and workshops in North America with locations and dates of operation

Now ceased operation:		
Hungarian Folkdance and Folk Music Symposium (Sympo)	Enon Valley, Pennsylvania	1978–2002
Barátság [Friendship] Hungarian Dance and Music Camp	Mendocino Woodlands, California	1982–2001
Aranykapu Tábor (Golden Gate Camp)	Russian River Valley, California	2002–2005
One-time events:		
Tisza Ensemble 25th Anniversary Workshop	suburban Washington, DC	September 2002
"Le Buli" (The Party)	Laurentian Mountains, Québec	December 2002–January 2003
Ongoing:		
Ti Ti Tábor Hungarian Music and Dance Camp	Raft Island, Washington	1992–present
Cifra Tábor Hungarian Dance camp (both children's and adult camps)	Niagara Falls, Ontario	1990s–present
North American Hungarian Festival	Montreal, Québec	2002–present (irregular; 3rd took place in February 2007)
Csipke Tábor Folkdance and Folkmusic Camp	Sauk Valley, Michigan	July 2007–present

ization and festivalization of Hungarian folk music and dance; and finally, I examine how the carnivalesque atmosphere of these camps both undermines purified concepts of "authenticity" and creates a sense of connection unique to the North American camps.

A Brief History of Organized Hungarian Folkdance in North America

North Americans of Hungarian descent, like other diasporic communities, have long used music and dance as a point of focus for community events. In particular, folk music and dance act as an organized activity for youth, a social activity to inspire enthusiasm about their ethnic identity and to ensure continuity of that identity into the next generation.

Embracing folk music and folkdance as a marker of ethnicity did not always come naturally for the Hungarian migrants of the mid-twentieth century. Both the post-Second World War wave of immigrants and the larger group that arrived in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution were largely urban and middle to upper class in origin, and Andor Czompó, an early member of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble who migrated to the US after 1956 and became an important teacher of Hungarian dance in the west, reported to me that when he first began teaching in the United States some parents were upset to find their children costumed in "peasant clothes" (personal communication, September 2002). They seemed to overcome this scruple, though, for as the children of the revolution came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, folkdance groups in New York, New Jersey, the San Francisco Bay area,[3] Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Calgary developed and became fixtures in the Hungarian communities in those places. Although these locations where Hungarian folkdance developed earliest are mostly larger cities with substantial Hungarian communities, groups have also come into being in cities with smaller Hungarian populations: Washington DC, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, San Diego, Los Angeles, Spokane, and Detroit, among others.[4] Participants in these groups include not only mid-century immigrants and their children but also more recent immigrants and substantial numbers of non-Hungarian dance enthusiasts.

The Dance House Movement and the Ideology of Authenticity

Hungarian folkdance as currently practiced both in "the homeland" and in North America must be understood in the context of the *táncház* (dance house) movement, which redefined what Hungarian folkdance meant in North America as it had done in Hungary. Before the advent of the dance house movement, the

folkdance of urban Hungarians in both Europe and North America was usually highly choreographed and stylized, influenced by Moiseyev's dance troupe in the Soviet Union and the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, which was modeled after it. In contrast, in the dance house setting people learn to dance regional styles in an improvisatory fashion, thus developing what Kálmán Dreisziger, director of the *Gyöngyösbokréta* Ensemble in Montreal, calls a "living relationship … to the traditions they practice," a relationship that, according to Dreisziger and other Hungarian folkdance leaders around the world, those who learn folkdance exclusively through choreographed routines do not have.[5] New Jersey folkdance maven Kálmán Magyar also emphasized how the conception of Hungarian folkdance shifted in the groups with which he was involved, and he stated that by the early 1980s the pedagogy at the Hungarian Folkdance Symposium that he organized was "totally in sync with the dance house movement" (personal communication, June 2002).

Incidentally, one element of the antipathy towards the contemporary tradition of staged choreography was anti-Soviet and anti-communist, a rejection of the style developed by Igor Moiseyev's ensemble in the Soviet Union and propagated throughout the Soviet sphere of influence.[6] But the ideology that has evolved out of the dance house, which has since completely transformed Hungarian staged folkdance as well (see Overholser 2008), also rejects the commercialized folk dance of the West. In his program notes on a 2000 stage show by a Hungarian company touring North America, Kálmán Dreisziger both emphasized improvisation and implicitly contrasted it with the Irish megahit *Riverdance* when he wrote:

> In CSÁRDÁS! there are no artificial geometric forms in the choreography and there is no precision drill teamwork… the dancers are often left to improvise and show off their individual character and ability. The total effect is a more natural, more authentic presentation … (Dreisziger 2000, 7)[7]

Authenticity and Diversity in the North American Dance House Movement

Béla Halmos, the violinist in Budapest's first dance house band, describes the dance house as "a form of recreation in which folk music and folk dance appear in their original forms and functions as the 'native language' – musical language and body language – of those taking part" (Halmos 2000, 29). A recent study conducted at Budapest's annual Dance House Festival *(Táncháztalálkozó)* suggests that recreation may be an even more important motivator than the fact that this is a "native language" or other kinds of national feeling (Fábri and Füleki 2006, 55). This conclusion may apply even more in the North American context, given the substantial participation by non-ethnic Hungarians. The appeal of the dance house

reaches well beyond ethnic sympathies or nostalgia for the homeland. It also emerges from the musical and choreographic achievements in the repertoire, particularly the previously mentioned emphasis on improvisation, the almost mandatory use of live music, and long forms (dance cycles can last anywhere from five minutes to several hours). Both participants and leaders often interpret these characteristics as "more authentic" than the fixed choreographies and pre-recorded music so often used in the International Folk Dance [IFD] movement in the United States. The dance challenges of Hungarian repertoire appear to have been what drew many non-Hungarians in the United States from IFD into Hungarian dance. Ferenc and Mary Tobak, the directors of the *Barátság Tábor* [Friendship Camp] that operated in the Bay Area for almost twenty years, report that roughly sixty to eighty percent of the participants there (depending on the year) were non-Hungarians, most of whom "had been involved in International Folk Dance and at some point became more interested in the Hungarian dances [… and] music" (email communication, November 2006). Their assessment is supported by my field contacts in the Eastern half of North America. Debbie, a New Yorker and avid dancer of many styles whom I met at the Hungarian Folkdance Symposium (or Sympo) in western Pennsylvania, told me she was first exposed to Hungarian dance through what she called the "three-minute gee-whiz csárdás" with an International Folk Dance group. She had a turning point when she attended a folkdance festival in the Bay Area, where an expert dancer "dragged [her] through the Mezőségi," the complex Transylvanian Hungarian csárdás that ends most dance house evenings. At this point she was hooked (personal communication, June 2002). Kathy, the leader of a folkdance group in the Washington, DC area said that she and her group had begun as an International Folkdance group. They gradually shifted to the Hungarian repertoire not due to ethnic connections but simply because they found it more interesting (personal communication, June 2002). Several non-Hungarian dancers I met in North American camps have now traveled to Hungary and Transylvania, some multiple times for extended periods, in order to study the dances and their context in more depth.

In the Canadian Hungarian dance scene, International Folk Dance is not as important a source of participants, but there are still important international elements. *Le Buli* ["The party" in French and Hungarian], the 2002–2003 New Year's Eve camp I attended northwest of Montreal, was a trilingual experience (Hungarian, English and French, the language of the several Quebecois who attended, members of Montreal's *Bokréta Ensemble* and a handful of others. Additionally, *Le Buli* was co-organized by a Peruvian-born member of *Bokréta,* and a Toronto-based band that played at the camp featured a Polish lead violinist and lute player (although the rest of the band were ethnic Hungarians).[8] Overall, my experiences at dance house events in both the United States and Canada have been

of a more multicultural character than those in Hungary and Romania, even though the focus in all these cases is on similar, even identical, repertoire.

Camps as Festivals

Despite the ethnic diversity of those interested in Hungarian folkdance in North America, however, the combined numbers of Hungarian and non-Hungarian dancers in any given community are relatively small, and the number of musicians able to play for the dance houses is tiny. The presence of performing groups does not translate into a regular dance house scene (as opposed to regular rehearsals). In North America only the New York/New Jersey community can support a dance house as often as once a month, and even there events are usually less frequent. As traveling great distances for an evening of dance is not always practical and such an evening can rarely provide enough instruction time for those who want to learn new material, traveling to a camp offers an important outlet for North American dance. I have listed major camps in North America in *Table 1*.

Camps share the social and pedagogical functions of a regular dance house, but unlike a regular dance house, which lasts only a few hours, camps last several days. In Europe, such camps have developed into a significant tourist niche attended mostly by regulars in the Hungarian dance house scene. In North America, in contrast, the North American Hungarian folkdance community is formed for and through camp, an "instant community" in the words of Kálmán Magyar (quoted above) and of some participants with whom I have spoken. Because of this function in the sustenance of a community, the North American camps, though not as numerous or well attended, are, I argue, even more important to Hungarian folkdance on this continent than the ones in situ are for the movement in Europe. They allow for a coming together of a wide range of participants from the East Coast to the West, with time both for focused transmission of the "authentic tradition," guided by guest teachers of both dance and music from Hungary or Transylvania, and for partying and catching up with friends. Some weekend urban workshops have this quality, but camps facilitate a "virtual village" feel both through their relaxed rural setting and by housing participants closely together.

Hungarian dance camps in North America, like North American's Hungarian-dance movement as a whole, reflect larger parallel institutions in Europe, where there are dozens of camps every summer. Both Hungarian and North American camps elegantly fit anthropologist Beverly Stoeltje's definition of festivals as "collective phenomena rooted in group life," which "express group identity through […] memorialization, the performance of highly valued skills and talents, or the articulation of the group's heritage" (1992, 261), in this case the transmission of folk music and dance traditions from the Carpathian Basin, especially

Transylvania. Most camps in Hungary and Romania bring in bearers of these traditions, dancers and musicians from the villages where the material taught at the camp has been collected. These "tradition bearers" *(hagyományőrzők)* are revered as representatives of the "pure source" *(tiszta forrás)* of which Béla Bartók wrote, the only place the "authentic" tradition can be found.[9] Eastern European camps also draw authority from their geographical proximity to the village. Participants at North American camps are always aware that they are far removed from that "pure source," although as the work of Victor Turner and others shows, festival rites have the power to transform. Thus according to the website for the camp *Ti Ti Tábor,* Raft Island, Washington, becomes "virtual Hungary" for a week. According to one organizer of "Le Buli," a youth camp in the Laurentian Mountains became the remote Transylvanian village of Csíkszentdomokos (Sândominic).[10]

A few of the imported instructors at North American camps qualify as "tradition bearers," as either dancers or hereditary Romani musicians who grew up in the home region of the music and dance "dialect" of which they teach.[11] But they are exceptions. Most of the instructors at North American camps are city-trained, either leaders of dance troupes or teachers in the urban dance house revival in Hungary or in Transylvania. Usually "tradition bearers" at the North American camps I have attended are present only virtually, through audio and video recordings.

In fact technology saturates these camps. Near the end of most North American camps, a "video review session" encourages participants to film the dance teachers demonstrating the dances that have been taught, using an array of state-of-the-art equipment. With these video review sessions, participants have a memory aid and are more confident that they have accurately received the tradition. In this sense, these sessions are a component of festivalization: as Bakhtin writes, they "sanction the existing pattern of things and reinforce it." (Bakhtin 1968, 9) In this case the "existing pattern of things" is the existence of one authoritative, "authentic" version of the music and dance, even with room for improvisation.

Learning and recording these dances and music transforms us as campers not into "peasants" but ethnographers, as we model ourselves after idols like pioneering folk music scholars Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály and folk dance scholar György Martin. We can see the elevation of the participants' role from mere observer or student into collector through the active role they might take in policing the text they have recently learned. At the end of most of the video review sessions I have witnessed, one of the participants will point out to the teacher/demonstrator some figure that has been left out and ask that it be added. On the other hand, the goal of creating a clear "authentic text" for video leads to activities that are not associated with traditional village culture, such as moving demonstrators around the "stage" to make sure viewers can see clearly or get better lighting and camera an-

gles and worrying about some of the problems that arise from the operation of all this technology. At the 2002 session I noted the bemused comments of the Hungarian guest musicians and watched while one of them photographed the array of cameras just as I did.

The Carnival Element at Folkdance Camps

But it is not only the serious work of learning the authentic tradition that draws people back to these camps, it is also the carnival atmosphere that lives alongside this serious transmission of the authentic tradition. To cite Bakhtin, whereas "official feast asserted all that was stable, unchanging, perennial" (1968: 9),

> Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order … This experience, opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretense at immutability, sought a dynamic expression; it demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms. (Bakhtin 1968, 10)

Within the camp but outside the bounds of the official events (classes, evening dance houses, and the review session), in spaces occupied not by transmission or recording of the tradition but by play (particularly at after-parties), the anxieties of maintaining the authentic tradition fall away. It is in these settings where people indulge in repertoires outside the bounds of "authentic Hungarian folk music." A primary example is Hungary's composed folk-style song tradition, *magyar nóta.* Scholars since Bartók and Kodály have vilified this tradition as inauthentic or "fakelore,"[12] and it is rarely heard in regular dance houses. At *Le Buli,* however, during several of the breaks between dance sets, our guest star musician, Rozália Duduj of Csíkszentdomokos in Eastern Transylvania, accompanied the crowd in nóta singing on the cimbalom. After the more "official" dance program ended on New Year's at about 2:00 AM we moved to a room in another building and kept singing until well after dawn. Many in the North American Hungarian community know these songs and appear to associate them with nostalgia for the homeland, despite the "official" condemnation of this repertoire by the dance house movement.[13] When I interviewed Kálmán Dreisziger, director of Montreal's Bokréta Ensemble, during Sympo 2002, he used "Az a szép," a *nóta* by Pista Dankó (1858–1903), as an example of this "inauthentic" genre. At the end of that year at Le Buli, this same song became a site for carnivalesque hybridization. Not only did many of the participants sing along lustily, but one of the most enthusiastic singers, a Hungarian-American dancer-musician, also danced a strutting dance somewhat inspired by hip-hop. By the outlandish way he brought together old-fashioned urban Hungarian popular music with contemporary urban Ameri-

can movement vocabulary, this dancer illustrated to me the way one Hungarian in diaspora was able to bring together the so-called "old" and "new" worlds.

Another event, during the *Csipke Tábor* in 2007, brought together additional repertoires from outside the usual bounds of dance house repertory. When the evening of standard dance house repertoire had come to a close (ending, as is usual in dance house circles, with the Mezőségi csárdás), the group spent some time gathering and snacking around a campfire. After a few hours, the male dance instructor began to sing songs from Őrkő, a Romani settlement near Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy) in the Székely region of Transylvania. The songs and dances of Őrkő have recently been taught at some dance house camps in Transylvania, but their most remarkable feature for much of this audience (at least those who understood the Hungarian-language text) was probably their sexually explicit nature and the style of accompaniment using a water can and oral bassing,[14] the latter almost always performed by men, but in this case, much to the amusement of the observers, by a handful of women. This singing eventually developed into an extended "Gypsy set," featuring a handful of tunes in the popular *"mahala"* genre (also known as "manele" or "muzica orientala"), a Romanian popular music of Turkish origin which István Pávai singled out in a 2003 lecture titled "That which does not belong to the tradition."[15] While many danced the somewhat freestyle mahala, a Bulgarian immigrant who dances with a Washington DC based group led a čuček, a line dance associated with Bulgarian Roma which uses the same rhythm, much to the enjoyment of many participants who were alumni of International Folk Dance. The introduction of repertoire from beyond the official boundaries of the dance house (indeed, beyond Hungarian music and dance) became a highlight of the carnival space of this after-party.

Conclusions

The catholicity of repertoire choice on that particular evening and the spirit of absurdity and improvisation of these camps in general infuse them with the "sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities" that, according to Bakhtin, allowed the camp to construct a "second world of folk culture" (1968, 11) through the carnivalesque mode, or to invoke the Kodály quotation I used as an epigraph, to allow the next generation to "re-conquer the ancestral traditions for themselves," alongside these other unorthodox elements. I believe that it is this element that makes North American camps work. Unlike Hungarian and Romanian camps, most North American camps are not able to bring in "authentic tradition bearers." Moreover, the North American camps are always already "inauthentic" and mediated, based solely on their distance from the "pure source." Since the late 1990s the number of camps operating in Hungary and Romania has

mushroomed, and some might argue that the North American camps are no longer necessary when travel to "real villages" is so much more convenient than it once was.[16] But even when the camper makes the pilgrimage to a "real village" in Transylvania to learn the dances and music of that village, the place is both less and more than it would be in the absence of the camp. Certain contemporary practices, including popular musical genres like the mahala (see Hooker 2006, 56–57), are suppressed or pruned away, while many modern appurtenances, such as registration fees, regular schedules for classes and meals, musicians who do not need tipping, intensive music and dance pedagogy, not to mention souvenir T-shirts and CDs and the presence of hundreds of outsiders, are added. A camp in a Transylvanian village thus becomes a simulacrum of itself, an actuality and a virtuality "at the very same place."[17]

In contrast, North American camps tend to be more intimate and, because of the smaller number of camps available on this continent, draw a large percentage of "repeat customers," facilitating the constitution of the "instant community" Kálmán Magyar described as a feature of the Sympo and perpetuating it across the continent. A quotation from the web announcement of the three-day (and night) Third North American Hungarian Dance House Festival, held in Montreal in February 2007, both captures the community-forming function of North American Hungarian events and hints at the carnival that awaits those who attend:

> Who will you see?
>
> All your friends and acquaintances from that last-best festival, from that Symposium 10 years ago, from that pálinka-soaked Transylvanian camp…
>
> Musicians and dancers (maybe even dance groups) from, like, Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Washington, New York/New Jersey, Detroit, Cleveland, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Of course.[18]

My experiences at North American camps and conversations with other participants indicate that the concept of "instant community" evoked here, in addition to being an advertising slogan, is something that participants in that and other North American camps and workshops do value and talk about. Although the passing of the *Sympo* and *Barátság* camps is symptomatic of financial and organizational struggles that this modestly-sized affinity group faces in North America, other institutions, *Ti Ti Tábor* in Washington state and *Cifra Tábor* in Niagara Falls, are thriving, and new ones, such as the *Csipke Tábor* in Sauk Valley, Michigan, outside of Detroit, are off to a very promising start. To some, they might seem like a poor substitute for camps in Hungary and Romania, since like those institutions they justify their existence by offering a sort of "festival of tradition," the opportunity for Hungarian dance and music enthusiasts to add to their repertoire, refine their skills, and learn more about traditional expressive culture in Hungar-

ian-speaking Eastern Europe, a function that arguably could be better served in situ. For both North American Hungarians and non-Hungarian dance enthusiasts, however, the peculiar brand of play found in these camps sets them apart. The specifically North American Hungarian version of the carnivalesque mode is crucial to sustaining Hungarian folk cultural activities on this continent.

Acknowledgements

Research for this essay has been supported by Indiana University's College of Arts and Humanities Institute, the University of Richmond, and the Global Partners Project. A preliminary version was presented at the 51st Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Honolulu, Hawaii, November 2006. Thanks are due to Michael Siciliano and Celia Cain for their feedback on earlier drafts and to Ágnes Fülemile for her support and for providing the opportunity to present a revised version at the 2008 György Ránki Hungarian Chair Conference at Indiana University.

Notes

1 On the page "About Bokréta" [Gyöngyösbokréta Ensemble, Montreal Hungarian folkdance ensemble], written by artistic director Kálmán Dreisziger, http://www.bokreta.ca/AboutUs.htm, accessed November 5, 2006.

2 In American Hungarian Folklore Centrum (AHFC) – Amerikai Magyar Folklórközpont, "About the Hungarian Folkdance and Folk Music Symposium", http://magyar.org/index.php?projectid=3&menuid=86, accessed November 5, 2006.

3 The Eszterlánc Magyar Népi Együttes of the San Francisco Bay Area, formed in 1977. For more information, see "Hungarian Online Resources (Magyar Online Forrás)" http://hungaria.org/han/index.php?topicid=703&messageid=758, accessed November 5, 2006.

4 A useful source for North American Hungarian folk music and dance organizations is the American Hungarian Folklore Centrum's "Hungarian Online Resources", http://hungaria.org/han/index.php?subcategoryid=36&type=2, accessed May 27, 2008.

5 On the page "About Bokréta," written by Kálmán Dreisziger, http://www.bokreta.ca/AboutUs.htm, accessed November 5, 2006.

6 For more on the role of the Moiseyev Ensemble in the history of staged folk dance see Anthony Shay's *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 57–81.

7 The reference to, and rejection of, "show dancing," particularly better known styles of staged folkdance, is explicit in the following quotation from "About Bokréta": "Our repertoire is free of the artificial bravado so loved by 'show' tradition (whether Broadway or ballet – whether Riverdance or Moisoyev)." [From Kálmán Dreisziger's notes on the webpage "About Bokréta", http://www.bokreta.ca/AboutUs.htm, accessed June 1, 2008.

[8] A series of anthems sung at midnight on New Year's Eve – the culmination of the four-day camp – further illustrates the international character of the event: depending on language competence, we sang the Hungarian national anthem; the "Székely Himnusz" (Transylvanian anthem); "O Canada"; the Quebecois anthem; the Star-Spangled Banner; the Polish national anthem; and finally Auld Lang Syne.
In a related point, Kálmán Dreisziger writes proudly of the "multicultural nature" of Montreal's Gyöngyösbokréta Ensemble, which he directs, in the webpage for the group http://www.bokreta.ca/AboutUs.htm, accessed November 8, 2006.

[9] Bartók used this expression as the closing line of the text to his *Cantata profana* – "Only from pure sources/springs" (Csak tiszta forrásból); following the 1936 Hungarian premiere of the work, in the words of Klára Móricz, this phrase "was soon interpreted as expressing the essence of Bartók's entire oeuvre" (2000: 244). Bartók also used concepts of purity vs. impurity in a handful of his essays (see Móricz 2000: 248–249) and emphasized the importance of the untainted rural source in several of his writings on folk music research methods, perhaps most notably "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music?" (Bartók 1976 [1936]: 13). The expression *tiszta forrás* is still a common epithet in references to Bartók and folk music in Hungarian folk music circles.

[10] For information on *Ti Ti Tábor,* see http://www.tititabor.org/, accessed May 28, 2008. The reference for "Le Buli" is recorded in the author's field notes for December 31, 2002.

[11] The exceptions that prove the rule are Csaba and Ági Sándor, dance teachers for Le Buli, the New Year's Eve camp I attended in Canada in 2002–2003, featuring the dance and music of Csíkszentdomokos. Publicity for this camp advertised that they had grown up in the region and had been doing its dances all their lives. However, as the leaders of a dance troupe in Csíkszentdomokos and long-time participants in the dance house movement in Transylvania (Csaba spent his university years in Cluj dancing in dance houses there, and in recent years the couple has appeared at dance house camps in Transylvania demonstrating and teaching dances of their home region), the Sándors do not fit the profile of "authentic tradition bearers," who should be those who have traveled the least and had little to no education (see Bartók 1976 [1936]: 13). Csaba Sándor's presentation during "Le Buli" of the folkdance customs of Csíkszentdomokos, illustrated using videos he made of the village's "real" tradition bearers, members of the previous generation, performing the music and dance of the village, further positioned him as a semi-professional expert rather than a tradition bearer.

[12] See among many other examples Bartók's 1911 statement that "these amateur compositions […] are not even representative of national music, since they are not Magyar but Gypsy-type music." (Bartók 1976 [1911], 301)

[13] I base this on observations made at a variety of events and a handful of conversations since 2000. Jim Cockell, violinist and leader of the Edmonton, Alberta based Cifra Hungarian Folk Music Ensemble, also addresses this topic in his unpublished essay "Folk or Fake? 'Gypsy Music' and the Construction of Hungarian Identity."

[14] That is, rhythmic accompaniment patterns of non-lexical, often guttural, syllables made with the voice. For further description of these elements, see section 4 of Irén Kertész Wilkinson, "Gypsy [Roma-Sinti-Traveller] Music," in Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41427 (accessed June 2, 2008).

[15] Fieldnotes for July 16, 2003.

[16] I've heard some say "why pay all that money to go to Sympo or *Ti Ti Tábor* when I could just go to Transylvania."

[17] Barbara Kirshemblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 131. Both in spite of and because of the em-

phasis on the "authentic," the dance house movement has transformed the meaning of whatever the original might have been. Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum thus resonates strongly. This quotation from his essay "The Precession of Simulacra" is particularly apt: "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality […] an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared." (Baudrillard 2001 [1983], 1736)

[18] See "Bokreta Home Page," <http://www.bokreta.ca/index.html>, accessed November 9, 2006.

Selected bibliography

Bakhtin, Mikhail: *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968).

Bartók, Béla: "On Hungarian Music," in Béla Bartók, *Essays,* ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976 [1911]), 301–303.

Bartók, Béla: "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music?" in Béla Bartók, *Essays,* ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976 [1936]), 9–24.

Baudrillard, Jean: "The Precession of Simulacra," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism,* ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001 [1983]), 1732–1741.

Cockell, Jim: "Folk or Fake? 'Gypsy Music' and the Construction of Hungarian Identity." Unpublished MS, n. d.

Dreisziger, Kálmán: "Notes on the Dances," in *Csárdás! The Tango of the East, program booklet* (New York: Columbia Artists/Centrum Management, 2000), 7.

Fábri, István – Füleki, Katalin: "A táncház közönsége: szociológiai jellemzők, értékek, életmód," in *A betonon is kinő a fű: Tanulmányok a táncházmozgalomról,* ed. Ildikó Sándor (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, 2006), 41–66.

Halmos, Béla: "The Dance House Movement," *Hungarian Heritage* 1 (2000): 29–40.

Hooker, Lynn: "Controlling the Liminal Power of Performance: Hungarian Scholars and Romani Musicians in the Hungarian Folk Revival," *Twentieth-Century Music* 3/1 (March 2006): 51–72.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara: *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Móricz, Klára: "'From Pure Sources Only': Bartók and the Modernist Quest for Purity." *International Journal of Musicology* 9 (2000): 243–261.

Overholser, Lisa: "The Hungarian State Folk Ensemble as a Dynamic Institution in Hungarian Ethnography." Presented at: Folk Music Revival and the Dance-House Movement in Hungary, 28th György Ránki Hungarian Chair Symposium, Bloomington, Indiana, April 4–6, 2008 (see in this volume).

Shay, Anthony: *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

Stoeltje, Beverly J.: "Festival," in *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communications-Centered Handbook,* ed. Richard Bauman (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 261–271.

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 103–117
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.8

THE FIRST DECADE OF THE HUNGARIAN DANCE HOUSE MOVEMENT IN TRANSYLVANIA: A SUBJECTIVE HISTORY

LÁSZLÓ KELEMEN

Hungarian Heritage House, Budapest
Hungary

The rise of the Hungarian Dance House Movement in Transylvania had both cultural and political implications. As an expression of interest in ethnic or national traditions, it constituted in part a gesture of resistance to the official cultural politics of communist Romania. This article offers a personal narrative of the growth and development of the dance house movement under these precarious circumstances.

Keywords: dance house, táncház, Hungarian folk dance, local culture, urbanization, communism, Romania, Transylvania

Private History

I became a folk musician by sheer chance in the summer of 1979 on the stairs of the Cluj (Kolozsvár) Academy of Music. Fate greeted me in the person of András Tőtszegi ("Cucus"), a folk dancer from Mera (Méra), who, together with Alpár Kostyák, asked me to learn to play the viola, as there was nobody at the local dance house who could. Their two former viola players, Alpár Kostyák and András Sinkó, were both in their final year of study at the Academy of Music and would soon be graduating and leaving. I had just been admitted to the Academy and thus felt rather euphoric. Happy as I was, I promised to learn to play the viola right away. Satisfied with the success of their recruitment efforts, Cucus and Alpár immediately took me to Zoltán Kallós, who was to equip me with a viola, since I did not have one at the time. While "Uncle Zoli," as everybody called him, was looking for a viola, his mother offered me cabbage soup. I finally got a huge, red, and quite roughly constructed "joiner's viola," which was too big to fit in a case, so Uncle Zoli gave me a haversack in which I could carry it. After this I skipped an entire year, doing my compulsory military service before entering the university. The summer after my year in the army I went to the first folkdance camp in Gyimes in Eastern Transylvania, where I met all the key persons of the dance house movement, such as Zoltán Kallós, Ádám Könczei and Ádám Katona

from Odorheiu Secuiesc (Székelyudvarhely), as well as several of my fellow musicians. After this there was nothing to stop me: folk music has become a vital part of my life, all thanks to the Transylvanian dance house movement.

As I was born in the Transylvanian countryside, this might seem something of a surprising statement for me to make. I was born into a traditional Székely peasant family, so I was in close contact with Transylvanian folk culture. My walk of life can be considered typical, since at that time many village children were raised, as I was, on the ruins of the disintegrating rural civilization, being suppressed by forced urbanization.

My grandparents lived according to traditional peasant culture, and wanted to pass this on to their descendants. But my parents already turned towards the new urban way of life. I grew up on this line of rupture: my grandparents' generation wanted to adhere to cultural traditions in their entirety, but my parents' generation, though having inherited these traditions, did not want to be part of traditional culture anymore.

My first musical instrument, which I began to play at the age of four, was my grandfather's zither. My grandmother regularly took me to different social singing occasions. I was there with my first fiddle among my grandparents' friends and tried to play music as they were singing traditional tunes. My parents on the other hand bought a record-player and listened to the newest pop songs at their social gatherings.

I grew up in the 1960s, when due to forced urbanization and the creation of the collective farming system many people thought it preferable to move to large cities. They still regularly visited their native villages on holidays, but their children wanted to get rid of the traditions, perceived as outdated and old-fashioned, of their parents. I myself experienced this as a child, since my father's sister had moved to Miercurea-Ciuc (Csíkszereda), a larger town. When her children came to visit us they wore urban clothes and brought factory-made toys with them. They looked down on us, village kids, and thought we were provincial.

Many people chose to commute instead of moving to the cities. My father commuted to Miercurea-Ciuc. As a result of this he had a chance to earn a better living than most of our peers in the village community. We got a television set quite soon, as this was a measure of urban civilization at that time. It was humorous and rather symbolic to see aunt Rózsa once, our eighty-year-old neighbor, yelling at the "little people" to come out of the television box.

I lived in this dual culture until the age of ten, at which point some teachers from the Târgu Mureș (Marosvásárhely) High School of Arts came to our village as sorts of talent scouts and suggested to my parents that I study music on a scholarship in Târgu Mureș. For a long time I lived detached from peasant culture. I became "colonized" by classical music and spent my holidays back in my home village as if I were some distinguished foreigner. This was not even changed by the

fact that sometime in 1977 some boys in my high school class began to play some unusual folk tunes, and the Hungarian division of Romanian Television began to broadcast a program entitled "Kaláka", which focused on our local traditions.

I mention all this because my personal view of the Transylvanian dance house movement is rather typical. Many of my fellow musicians and ethnographers have life-stories quite similar to mine. Most of us have rural roots, but it was the Transylvanian dance house movement that made us realize what a treasure our traditions are.

The Origins of the Transylvanian Dance House Movement

Founding

One of the vanguards of Transylvanian folklorism and the dance house movement, Ádám Könczei, gives the following account of its origins:

> The birth of the dance houses is closely connected with theater and especially with school performances. There was a growing demand for a truly authentic presentation of the local traditions on school stages, instead of the fake-folk shows that had often been presented at school celebrations. It was a very sensible initiative of High School number 3 in Cluj to establish a cultural exchange with the school of (Sic) Szék, a nearby central Transylvanian village. Although this connection did not become a permanent one, it was still quite consequential. It was significant that stage performance was not the only purpose of studying the dances of Sic. Propagation and teaching of these dances in wider circles was also an aim.
>
> However, the lack of live musical accompaniment was a great hardship that eventually put an end to the initiative. This failure was in turn a factor that led to the formation of the dance house music bands. The high-school literature teacher Éva K. Tolna invited her music students to several school performances. As a result of this, the boys (Pál Havaletz, Botond Kostyák, and Árpád Könczei) formed a flute band, although none of them majored in flute playing. Their interest in authentic instrumental folk music gradually increased, partly due to the encouragement they got from their families. The band switched to a flute (Könczei), viola (Kálmán Urszuly) and cello (Havaletz) configuration, and kept it for quite a long time, but this also proved to be but a step towards the formation of an authentic folk band. In 1976 the band finally decided in favor of the authentic representation of Transylvanian folk music. In order to carry out their plans, they began a thorough and meticulous process of study. They consulted László Lajtha's notes on authentic village music and frequently visited rural folk musicians to make recordings and to join them playing. The actual dance house opened on a Thursday in Feb-

> ruary of 1977 at the club of the Cluj Puppet Theater, due to the hospitality of Ildikó Kovács, director of the Puppet Theater, who, together with László Szabó, leader of the County Cultural Committee, was a constant and steadfast supporter of the dance house movement through all the hardships it experienced. The first dance house music band consisted of Levente Székely (fiddle), Árpád Könczei (flute, song- and dance master), Kálmán Urszuly (viola) and Antal Porzsolt (double bass). From then on there was a dance house every Thursday. For a short time it was held in the Vasas Community Center and later it moved to the Monostori Community Center. The first dance house band struck its audience as something completely new, since their music was of a different quality than the popular music of cities. It was likened to the music of Ferenc Sebő and his folk band in Hungary (Könczei, 5).

The first music band later expanded, and eventually split into two. One consisted of Dezső Sepsi (fiddle, 3rd year college), András Sinkó (viola, 2nd year college), and Árpád Könczei (double bass, senior high school). The members of the other band were József Székely and István Papp (fiddle, senior high school), Alpár Kostyák, (viola, 1st year college), Antal Porzsolt (double bass, 1st year college).

The only person Ádám Könczei (1926–1982) left out from his article was himself, though he played a pivotal role in the formation of the Transylvanian dance house. His devotedness as a folklorist, his uncompromising Protestant faith, his experience in team-building, and his steadfast Hungarian ethnic identity all predestined him to the invaluable organizing activity he carried out in support of the Transylvanian dance house movement. He was fully devoted to the cause of the Transylvanian dance house. He published on it, organized it, and took part in dance house occasions as frequently as he could. Through his children he also played a decisive role in the development of the Cluj dance houses and in the development of Transylvanian folklorism. It is no wonder that the Securitate (Departamentul Securității Statului), the secret police force of the Communist Romania, held him as well as Zoltán Kallós to be a dangerous person. He was constantly monitored. The secret reports of the Securitate on the leading figures of the Transylvanian dance house movement have been published on Csilla Könczei's (his daughter) blog (http://konczeicsilla.egologo.transindex.ro/).

According to István Papp, one of the founders of the Cluj dance house:

> That February saw the first Transylvanian dance house ever. I remember this quite clearly, since I took part in it as a dance instructor. My mother is from Suatu (Magyarszovát), a Central Transylvanian village, and as a child I spent most of my school breaks with my mother's family there. My classmates and fellow musicians, Levente (József) Székely and Árpád Könczei, knew this, so thinking that I had a certain background knowledge of Central Transylvanian

> dances, they asked me to learn the dances of the men from Sic, whom we invited to the dance house, and to teach their dances on subsequent occasions (Papp, CD-booklet, 2).

Ádám Könczei's account does not mention a parallel initiative, which was carried out as a joint venture of *Visszhang* [Echo] Radio and the Students Union at the University of Cluj. This endeavor in turn encouraged many other Transylvanian cities to join the dance house movement. In István Pávai's opinion, these initiatives led to the later formation of the first dance houses in the Székely Land:

> These occasions were organized by the editors of the Hungarian radio of the Cluj Students Union, led by Miklós Patrubány. First these nights were held at the club of the Faculty of Philology, and later they moved to the clubs of other faculties. This was also the place where Katalin Panek sang Transylvanian folk ballads at that time, István Pávai, József Simó (who later became members of the "Barozda" folk music band) and Imre Kostyák (brother of the dance house musicians Attila and Alpár Kostyák) held public debates about folk art and folk music, and Dezső Sepsi sang folk songs. The discussion went beyond the public occasions: it went on even behind the scenes as to what band could provide authentic musical accompaniment for Katalin Panek. Eventually a village band was taken to the TV shooting in Bucharest. The "Harmat" ensemble was soon joined by the fiddler Dezső Sepsi and Erzsébet Zakariás, who learned to play the gardon. In the fall of 1976 they performed their Gyimesi Csángó song suite (Gagyi, 8).

This parallel initiative presents another folklorist dynasty in Cluj: all six sons of the Kostyák family became musicians, and together with the Könczei dynasty they played a vital role in the formation and development of the Transylvanian dance house movement. Naturally some rivalry between the two dynasties was inevitable, but they always joined in cooperation if the cause of the dance house was at stake.

As can be seen from the above accounts, the dance house movement initially centered around musicians, especially the students of the Cluj Academy of Music.

The Rise of Dance Houses

There are several features of the Transylvanian dance house movement that make it different from the parallel movement in Hungary. Naturally, the occasion to have a good night out and make new acquaintances was quite enjoyable. The dance house also presented us with a sensible and valuable pastime. As I had only studied classical music before, learning the language of folk music constituted a considerable challenge to me. Being a folk musician also posed the possibility of

traveling abroad, which was otherwise impossible under Ceaușescu's regime. These were all quite obvious advantages of our activity; however, the most vital feature of it was the maintenance and preservation of our Hungarian culture in the ethnic minority position in which we lived.

The "Hungarian Connection"

Although it was not a thing to advertise widely, it was obvious that there was an analogy between the Transylvanian dance house movement and the similar movement in Hungary, initiated by the musicians Ferenc Sebő and Béla Halmos. The connection is marked by the time-lag between the two, as well as by several references of Transylvanian folklorists to the leading figures of the Hungarian dance house movement. Könczei's reference to Sebő's music has already been cited. In his book entitled *Barozda,* István Pávai comments:

> Zoltán Hajdú participated in a dance house camp in Székesfehérvár, Hungary in 1976, where he contacted Ferenc Sebő and Béla Halmos. Back at home, in his high school, he and Erzsébet Győrfi listened to Sebő records to reproduce its songs and also tried to launch a dance house at the high school (Pávai, 35).

Still, the connection between the Hungarian and Transylvanian dance house movements was initially sporadic and occasional, since it was hard to travel abroad from Romania in the 1970s, even though that was a period of thaw compared to the system of the 1980s.

The Hungarian connection was initially facilitated by the travels undertaken by Hungarian ethnographers with the purpose of collecting folk songs in Transylvania in the 1960s. The work of György Martin, Ferenc Pesovár, Bertalan Andrásfalvi, Tamás Hofer, Ferenc Novák or Sándor Tímár would have been impossible without the numerous local contributors who offered their assistance. Zoltán Kallós was glad to take the role of a constant assistant, and many ethnographers, especially György Martin, made friends with the villagers of Kalotaszeg region in Central Transylvania. These villagers had also helped Kallós survive the years of hardship after his release from prison. These eminent Hungarian scholars thoroughly followed the development of the Transylvanian dance houses and helped with whatever they could: they gave advice and also financial assistance (in the form of technical equipment and data media). In the course of their collecting tours in Transylvania they paid regular visits to Cluj after the inception of the dance house there. They were followed by representatives of the first generation to grow up with the Hungarian dance houses. The musicians Péter Éri, Sándor Csoóri Jr., László Porteleki, Csaba Ökrös, and the dancers Antal Fekete "Puma",

László Diószegi, Zoltán Zsuráfszki, and Zoltán Varga all became regular visitors of Transylvanian dance houses. Being younger, they obviously made friends with their peers, who had been brought up in Transylvanian dance houses. This connection resulted in several enduring friendships and intimate relationships between the members of two dance house movements. The Ceaușescu regime did not weaken these strong personal bonds, but rather in some cases even strengthened them. Our friends from Hungary who worked at the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (in particular György Martin) gave us invaluable assistance. We got a recorder, a continuity desk, and regular raw material, all of which were great treasures in those days. In return, they regularly smuggled our folk song collections out of Romania and deposited them in the Archives of the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Unique Transylvanian Features

Alongside the similarities that it shared with the Hungarian dance house movement, the Transylvanian initiative bore aspects that made it highly different from that in Hungary.

Living as an Ethnic Minority

The 2–2.5 million Hungarians living in Transylvania were the largest European ethnic minority in those days. Their strong ethnic identity and organized system of cooperation was a constant annoyance to the antidemocratic communist regime in Romania. However, in the second half of the 1960s and throughout the 70s the formerly penetrating oppression thawed slightly for a time. After the forced collectivization of village society, the abolition of Hungarian ethnic and administrational autonomy, and the closing of the only Hungarian University in Transylvania, the Romanian communist system had to justify itself and its unique management of foreign affairs with the introduction of a relative political laxness in its formerly rigid and highly oppressive system. Luckily, the dance house movement emerged in this period. In the course of its seventy years of existence as a minority, Transylvanian Hungarian society had learned that the preserving and cultivation of its cultural heritage is the key to survival as a distinct ethnic group. Dance house emerged as an opportunity to maintain Hungarian cultural heritage and as an original means of strengthening Hungarian ethnic identity. As in Hungary, the Transylvanian Hungarian cultural elite also welcomed this initiative and strongly supported it. We had a vivid connection with the opposition organization

called *"Ellenpontok"* (Counterpoints), and there were dance house occasions in László Tőkés's flat in (Dej) Dés.

Unlike in Hungary, where the Balkan, Greek and Gypsy dance houses soon emerged as "mutations" of the Hungarian dance house initiative, the Transylvanian dance house movement remained unified and concentrated fully on local Hungarian peasant culture. We chiefly learned and popularized traditional Hungarian folk music and dances, incorporating little Romanian, Gypsy and urbanized culture into our repertoire. As is natural for minority initiatives, we soon attracted the suspicion of the governing bodies and of the Securitate. Our plan to encourage our Romanian friends to organize similar dance houses based on their culture also failed. What is more, we were often accused of having stolen Romanian folklore.

Relationship with Village Musicians and Dancers

The chance to have a close relationship with the last "great generation" of village musicians and dancers is another feature that differentiates the Transylvanian dance house movement from the one in Hungary. Although dance house occasions took place in the larger Transylvanian cities, folk culture was still vivid in the surrounding villages. This provided us with a chance to learn the skills of the trade directly from the greatest masters of folk art. People from Sic, musicians from Palatka, and Sándor Fodor "Neti," the outstanding fiddler of the Kalotaszeg region, were regular guests at our dance houses in Cluj. This connection worked vice-versa too: we also frequented village celebrations, where we had the chance to join the villagers dancing and playing music. First we went as a band, for instance playing for a wedding party in Suatu, together with the "Barozda" band. Later we also went one-by-one. I personally had built a close artistic companionship with Sándor Fodor "Neti." We played together in many wedding parties, balls and spring folk festivities. On these visits we also collected local music and dance. The memory of a wedding party in Sânmartin (Szépkenyerűszentmárton) lingered in my mind as especially memorable, as did another in Bodonkút, where I had the only chance of my life to see a *"ritka magyar"* ("slow Hungarian") men's dance from the Kalotaszeg region. András Tőtszegi "Cucus" contacted the best village dancers and videotaped their dances.

Villagers frequented our dance houses in Cluj from the very beginnings. It was not only the youth of the nearby village Sic who came, but also were young dancers commuting to Cluj from other surrounding places. According to Ádám Könczei:

> The dance house in Cluj boasts an invaluable feature in comparison with the dance houses in other Transylvanian cities: while most of the other dance houses are detached from the culture in which they are rooted, the Cluj dance house comprises both original village artists and their urban followers. These occasions therefore provide an opportunity for constant cultural exchange. Urban youth have the chance to see the breathtaking men's dances performed by István Filep or János Csorba, and can learn the dances directly from their clearest sources, as well as compare the urban dance teacher's movements and style with its original version. However, the most significant effect of this cultural exchange between rural and urban youth is its democratic unifying power. Their frequent meetings at the Cluj dance house establishes a free and easy relationship between members of very different social layers: university students, village youth and young workers made friends with one another as if they all had come from the same place (Könczei, 5).

The proximity of living folk culture was an advantage all newly-formed Transylvanian dance houses wanted to utilize. In Miercurea-Ciuc, for example, the nearby music and dance of Upper Csík (Felcsík) was a constant program of all the dance house occasions, just as the local "marosszéki" dances were in Târgu Mureș (named after the Hungarian name of the city) and the Gagy dances were in Odorheiu Secuiesc.

Media

> The 'Kaláka' programs of the Hungarian broadcast of Bucharest Television and the later dance house festivals both played a significant role in popularizing dance house culture. Dance houses and the "Kaláka" television program were regular topics in the press too: opinions about them varied towards both extremes (Pávai, 26).

Zoltán Csáky and Katalin Simonffy, the editors of the TV program, were efficient not only in popularizing the movement, but also in unifying it. As Simonffy put it:

> Our aim is to create a healthy mass movement! Why can't we dance Széki and Szováti folkdances [dances named after the Hungarian names of the towns from which they are known, Sic and Sovata or Szék and Szováta in Hungarian] at our parties in the city? They could fit just as well alongside the modern dances, couldn't they?
>
> It is the noble responsibility of the directors of community centers and youth clubs, as well as of dance teachers and musicians, to shape the image of the new-born Transylvanian dance house movement. We, at the Hungarian broadcast of Romanian Television, want to

> contribute to this activity by showing this phenomenon to wider circles, and by shaking up the ones who are reluctant to move (Simonffy, 4).

In addition to the Hungarian broadcast that took place once in a week on the only Romanian television channel, the radio and the press were also significant and efficient means of publicizing the dance house movement. The Hungarian press in Cluj took a leading role in this, with special respect to the monthly *Korunk* (Our Age), for which Ádám Könczei worked, and *Utunk* (Our Way), the only Hungarian weekly paper in Cluj in those days. The weekly Hungarian edition of *Ifjúmunkás* (Young Worker), the paper of the Communist Youth League, is also worthy of mention. In addition to publishing widely about dance houses, the Youth League organized poetry readings called "Young workers' matinees" and regularly invited dance house groups to perform as part of these occasions.

Thanks to Piroska Demény and Zoltán Borbély, we were able to record demos at the local offices of the Cluj and Târgu Mureș regional radios. *Electrecord,* the only Romanian record producer company, initially allowed us to make recordings of original folk performers and dance house musicians.

The Outplacement System

The spreading of the dance house movement was aided not only by the media and an encouraging Hungarian intellectual atmosphere, but (against its own will) by the Romanian administration itself. Following their graduation from university, young professionals were assigned three-year internships at a location prescribed by the administration. This system enhanced the exchange of intellectuals on a national level: Hungarians were displaced from Transylvania to territories in which the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants were Romanian, while Romanian intellectuals were forced to move to the Hungarian-inhabited parts of Transylvania. This however had a positive effect on the dance house movement. As there were two other music academies in the country, both in the Romanian parts, graduates of the Cluj Academy were allowed to stay inside Transylvania, where they were able to continue their dance house activity. This is how István Pávai, József Simó, Alpár Kostyák, and Zoltán Szalay all ended up in Miercurea-Ciuc to form the "Barozda" folk music band. András Sinkó got to Târgu Mureș and Attila Kostyák to Satu Mare (Szatmárnémeti), where they both continued to play dance house music.

This in turn meant that the Cluj dance house needed more and more new musicians every year to replace the ones who had graduated and left. This is how I became part of the "recruitment scene" described in the beginning of this article.

Schools

Compared to the situation in Hungary, the attitude of high schools and universities towards the growth of the dance house movement in Transylvania was quite different and much more favorable. While at Budapest universities, especially in the Department of Ethnography, dance house activity was not entirely welcome, we in Transylvania met with our teachers' complete support. Hungarian and Romanian folklore was a part of our core curriculum, and our teachers always welcomed questions on these topics. Professor Ilona Szenik even organized trips for us to collect folklore.

We tried to use our connections with high schools in order to promote dance house culture there. The Hungarian high school system was so developed and well-organized in Transylvania that Romanian educational politics were not able to strangle it, though they kept a close eye on Hungarian high schools. We therefore cautiously disguised our dance house occasions as tea parties, quiz nights and club meetings. Our centers were the Ady High School in (Oradea) Nagyvárad, High School no. 3 and Brassai Sámuel High School in Cluj, Bolyai High School and the High School of Arts in Târgu Mureș , the Teacher-Training College in Odorheiu Secuiesc, and several high schools in Miercurea-Ciuc and Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy). Students of these schools were regular participants in the Kaláka television program and formed the core of the dance houses in their local communities.

Centers, Exoduses, Festivals

Due to its favorable location, its central role in education, and the presence of talented and devoted leaders (such as Kallós and Könczei), Cluj was the cradle of the Transylvanian dance house movement. It was soon joined by other big Transylvanian cities, such as Miercurea-Ciuc, Târgu Mureș, Odorheiu Secuiesc, and later Sfântu Gheorghe. Assigned positions across the country following their graduation, young Hungarian professionals tried to establish dance houses in several other cities too, but the local conditions, the gradually increasing state prohibition, and people's fear and indifference all worked against their plans. Dance house goers of the central cities were happy to take all invitations and charged no fee for their visits. The complete dance house movement operated on a non-profit basis anyway. Everybody did their work out of goodwill and for no money. Those of us from Cluj went to hold dance houses in Dej, Turda, Huedin (Bánffyhunyad) and Oradea (Nagyvárad), while our fellows in Miercurea-Ciuc visited Sfântu Gheorghe and Odorheiu Secuiesc, occasionally going as far as (Gheorgheni) Gyergyószentmiklós.

From the very beginning we were keen on organizing dance house festivals, where the dance house communities of different cities could meet. Our festivals between 1978 and 1982 were hosted by Odorheiu Secuiesc, and there was a festival in Cluj once too. We initially managed to win the benevolence of the Communist Youth League of the Hungarian-inhabited Hargita County, in which Odorheiu Secuiesc is also located. As a result of our initial cooperation (which was later ruined becauase of political manipulations), we organized our first and only folkdance camp in Lunca de Sus (Gyimesfelsőlok) in Hargita County.

Transylvanian Dance Houses Go Underground

Dance Houses and the Securitate

Zoltán Kallós, Ádám Könczei, and Ádám Katona, the founding fathers of the Transylvanian dance house movement, had unclear records at the "Securitate," so their activity around the dance houses soon aroused the suspicions of the Romanian secret police. Espionage was present in the dance houses from the very beginnings. All our moves were being monitored, and many reports were compiled. Under these circumstances it was a miracle that there was even a period when we were able to organize dance houses relatively freely. Pressure was initially exerted upon our leaders. Then it gradually spread to any of us who had made some contribution to the dance house movement, leading to the never-ending, humiliating process of generating fear: summons, being forced to make a declaration, being roped in, refusing, and being punished. Each of us had his or her personal story of harassment by the Securitate. Sometimes we told our stories to one another in small circles to release the anxiety that had accumulated in us.

I offer the following true story as an illustration of the situation in which we had to live. On New Year's Day, 1982 three dance house goers set off from Cluj to go on a collecting trip to Moldova, where the easternmost groups of Hungarians live. On their way they were joined by a Hungarian girl who was an American citizen. They got gas (which was impossible to get at gas stations) and traveled East to Moldova. On the second day of the trip they were raided and taken to the nearest office of the Securitate in (Bacău) Bákó. They were deprived of all their official documents, recorders and cameras, and were interrogated separately for the whole day, then sent off to sleep in a local hostel without their documents. This continued the next day. On the morning of the third day it occurred to one of them that he had a spare key to their car. They decided to flee. They set off, but chose a long and complicated route, since they knew the roads were being monitored too. They stopped on their way to put the American girl on a train to Bucharest, where she hoped to ask for refuge in the American Embassy. After making several loops

on their way, the others finally got to Târgu Mureș , where they first called an acquaintance who was a lawyer, then visited the Hungarian writer András Sütő to ask for his advice. As they said goodbye to Sütő, they were arrested by Securitate officials waiting for them outside the writer's house. They were immediately taken to the commander-in-chief of the Marovásárhely Securitate. There they were first asked about the location of their American companion. On learning that she was planning to seek refuge at the American Embassy, the officers became infuriated. A series of lengthy telephone calls began, which strangely calmed the officers down. In a much more civil manner, they told the three young people to go back to Bákó for their documents and to "kindly forget about" the whole affair. They even got gas in their car for the ride. Under police escort, they drove to Bákó in the constant fear of being pushed into the abyss by the accompanying police cars. It was later that they learned that the American girl had saved their lives. She had made it to the Embassy, where she had met Tom Lantos, who was to meet with Ceaușescu the next day. Learning what had happened with the girl and her companions, he strongly protested against such treatment. It was at his intervention that the three young people were released without any major repercussions. However, from then on they never got passports and their activity was closely observed.

This story is meant to illustrate the circumstances in which we had to work in those days. Even simple dance house goers were monitored. The enormous intimidating mechanism started to grind up the enthusiasm, nerves and personal relationships of those who wanted to promote a vibrant Hungarian folk culture in Transylvania. This process ultimately ended in a ban on all dance house activity and the intimidation and sanctioning of its devotees.

In her blog Csilla Könczei published one of the plans for the abolition of dance houses. We have no reason to doubt that the systematic obliteration of the Transylvanian dance houses between 1984–1986 was carried out on the basis of quite similar plans. In order to "finalize the dance house issue", captain Ghiuruțan outlined the necessary course of action in seven points.

> Regarding the virulence and extent of the case, we find it necessary to launch an informative-operative action. We wish to carry it out in cooperation with respective institutions of education, and as a result, wish to neutralize the harmful activity of the persons concerned. Therefore, in accordance with the 000875/15.05/1976 decree of the Ministry of Home Affairs, we recommend that
>
> 1. The local party and CYL (Communist Youth League) bodies be informed in order to induce the necessary action of the Socialist Cultural and Educational Committee of Kolozs County. Necessary action means the obliteration of this movement, and the creation of an

appropriate political atmosphere at the dance houses on Monostori út/road and in the CFR/Vasutas Community Center.

2. Persons concerned (Könczei, Kallós) be warned [which means intimidated] in our offices.
3. The behavior of the students listed in Appendix 1. be subject of a discussion at their educational institutions, on faculty, departmental and study group levels. This process is to be aided by the Communist Youth League [in other words the students in question were to be discredited in the eyes of their professional community].
   In order to make this method more effective, we see it necessary to ask the faculties for permission about the preliminary interrogation of 2 or 3 students. These students may later be used as negative examples in further actions.
4. Other students who participated in dance house activity are to be positively influenced by the deanery, professors and the Communist Youth League.
5. The Passport Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Kolozs County is to be informed about the deed of ____ person living in ____, who hosted a Hungarian citizen without permission. Action should be taken according to the 225/1975. decree.
6. ____ [Kallós] is to be warned in the form of interrogations and by action taken by the Socialist Cultural and Educational Committee of Kolozs County. He is to be discredited and isolated from his followers.
7. Incorporation of those who display their willingness to cooperate with us. (In other words roping in dance house goers who were willing to cooperate with the Securitate.)

The first dance house to be banned in Cluj was the one on Monostori út/road. Later, in the spring of 1984, we were expelled from the Vasutas Community Center on the pretext of redecoration. We were never able to return to any of these places.

From then on the Cluj dance house was forced into illegality. We held our meetings in private flats, only to be followed by the Securitate's regular interrogations, attempts to co-opt us, and other repercussions. With the outplacement of the first dance house generation and the intimidation of prospective supporters it became impossible to hold dance house occasions on a regular basis in Transylvania. The horrifying "deep dictatorship" and agony of the Ceaușescu regime had begun. In these years, a high percentage of the Transylvanian Hungarian intellectuals (including numerous members of the dance house movement) left their homes to settle in foreign countries, from the U.S. to Israel, in the hopes of finding a better and freer life.

In 1984 I was assigned to a position in Nagyenyed (Aiud), from where, due to continuous denunciations, harassment and the practical ban on my professional activity, I moved to Hungary in 1986.

After the changes of 1989 the Transylvanian dance houses, much like many other things, had to be rebuilt from their ruins. But this is yet another story.

Bibliography

Gagyi, József: "Tények és kérdőjelek. A táncházmozgalomról" (Facts and question marks. About the dance house movement). *Igaz Szó* (1980).

Könczei, Ádám: "Tárt kapujú táncházakért" (For dance houses with open gates). *Művelődés* 11 (1977).

Papp, István: "Gázsa". *Gázsa*. CD, preface, ABt 1998.

Pávai, István: *Barozda 1976–2001*. Csíkszereda: Alutus, 2001.

Simonffy, Katalin: "Néptánc a képernyőn" (Folkdance on Screen). *Művelődés* 11 (1977).

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 119–133
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.9

THE HUNGARIAN TRANSYLVANIA: SYMBOLIC RECONSTRUCTION OF LOST TERRITORIES

MARGIT FEISCHMIDT

Institute of Minority Studies, HAS, Budapest;
University of Pécs, Pécs
Hungary

This study is about how Transylvania, the multiethnic region that was once part of the Hungarian Kingdom and later the Habsburg Empire and the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy and which since 1920 has been part of Romania, was rediscovered by Hungarians over the past twenty years. More precisely, it examines what the Transylvania that citizens of Hungary discovered and created was like in Hobsbawm's sense of the invention of traditions. The theoretical focus of my analysis is the symbolic construction of places through discourses and performative acts of identification and occupation. My primary claim is that the restoration of a territorial approach to the nation, a national re-territorialization, is taking place in rediscovered Transylvania, accompanied by a new discourse of national authenticity. [1]

Keywords: nationalism, authenticity, territory, symbols, tourism, ritual, Transylvania

Identity Discourses and Locality

Over the past decades many social scientists have found that people's lives and their views of themselves and the world are less and less determined by location or the feeling of belonging to a place. The spatial determination of identity is disappearing as different forms of globalization and transnational movements are accompanied by a re-evaluation of lifestyle and cultural identity (Gupta-Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 2001). However, there is a trend in the opposite direction as well. Re-territorialization means that certain places are (re)discovered and invested with new symbolic meanings, making them the target and locale of identity-search and creation. Imagined communities are tied to certain places, imagined landscapes or distant sacred places, especially if those communities live in diaspora or are nationalities with extra-territorial minorities not tied to a certain area or territory. The increasingly rich literature on diaspora has to a significant degree been influenced by an idea from William Safran (Safran 1991). Accordingly, the image of a distant homeland, living in the collective memory or recre-

ated by a collective memory work, determines the constitution of diaspora communities. The original source of this idea is, naturally, the Jewish diaspora and its relationship to the Holy Land, but this works in a similar way in the Chinese, Greek, Irish, Maghreb, and Palestinian diaspora communities. In what follows, by examining the relationship of Hungarian people (mostly citizens of Hungary but partly assisted by local ethnic Hungarians as well) to Transylvania, I will come to the conclusion that the reinvention and occupation of symbolic places that have been lost in the political sense for 80 years makes re-territorialization an important tool not only for diasporas that come into being as a result of migration, but also for those diaspora-nations that have come to being as a result of changes in state borders.

The symbolic strategies of territorialization or re-territorialization can be well appreciated through Arjun Appadurai's analytical framework. Appadurai speaks of two strategies related to nation states: for the first part the nation state attempts to create "a flat, contiguous, and homogeneous space of nationness"; and simultaneously it creates "a set of places and spaces (prisons, barracks, airports, radio stations, secretariats, parks, marching grounds, processional routes) calculated to create the internal distinctions and divisions necessary for state ceremony, surveillance, discipline and mobilization" (Appadurai 2001, 16). At first glance it appears as if Appadurai were describing the political and cultural process through which the territory of a country is turned into a *homeland,* more precisely into the homeland of one and only one nation, by clothing it with cultural, cognitive and emotional content. This generally happens through the cultural and symbolic domestication of territories lying within political boundaries. In our case, however, the situation is a little different. We will discuss how the symbolic *expansion* of national life through the symbolic tools mentioned above can occur on territories to which the nation belongs in a historic sense, but not in the political sense of the nation state. Another method to create locality, the marking of symbolic places necessary for the establishment of national movements and discipline, is most relevant in connection with Transylvania; especially through the creation of sacred places that in themselves (and especially through associated rites and performative acts) are strong transmitters of national sentiment. To make geographically bounded spaces and physically existing places able to transmit these symbolic messages they need to be "culturally worked" (Hennig 1997). In what follows we will speak of three strategies used to work on Transylvania culturally as a geographic space: (1) the symbolization (historicizing or folklorizing) of places, which means at the same time the localization of certain symbols and discourses; (2) the occupation of symbolic places through sacred and secular rituals, which through personal and bodily participation in performative acts produces a high degree of identification and (3) the creation of a national imagination about the entire geographic area, that of an authentic national space.

Localization: Hungarian Symbolic Places in Transylvania

According to Anthony Smith two of the most important ways through which nations come into being are in the acting out of cults of the golden age, heroes, and myths of foundation and independence and the transformation of a geographical territory into a homeland. About the latter he first speaks of a poetic use of space: "A modern romantic historiography of the homeland turns lakes and mountains, rivers and valleys into an authentic repository of popular virtues and collective history." The second transformation occurs through the naturalization of the connection between homeland and nation through places. "Tells, temples and stone circles are treated as natural components of ethnic landscape with a historical poetry of their own" (Smith 2004, 222–223).

Researchers on nationalism, particularly those who stress the similarities between national and religious communities, between the imaginary world of the nationalist and religious imagination, especially call attention to the similarities between the relationships of the two types of ideological and symbolic systems to places (e.g., Anderson 1983; Hastings 2002). Sacred spaces brought to being for the nation work in a similar way to those of religion, and both arise from the very old folk belief that the sacred can come into contact with particular places. To visit these places is to meet the sacred, and they offer the possibility of washing away sins. According to Appadurai the sacred or cultic sites were brought into being by nation states in two ways: primarily, by filling already existing sites of religious pilgrimage with national meaning. In other words, pilgrimage is simultaneously sacred and national, and thus the sacred places where this happens are attractive in both a national and a religious sense. Second, by assigning a mythos of origin or foundation of national history to geography, as Anthony Smith also points out. Excellent examples of this are the Serbian national cult of the battlefield of Kosovo Polje or the Hungarian national shrine at Ópusztaszer (Vucinich and Emmert 1991; Zirojević 1996; Kovács 2006, 15–113).

Sacred national sites that lie outside the boundaries of the nation state are under foreign occupation, or are in territories of disputed status, have particularly strong emotive power. Jerusalem is such a place, as is the holy site at Ayodhya in India over which Hindu and Muslim nationalist political and religious communities compete and are in conflict (Veer 1994; Brass 1996). The Catholic pilgrimage site at Șumuleu (or Csíksomlyó to use its Hungarian name) is another such place. Csíksomlyó lies at the foot of the Eastern Carpathians in Romania some 400 kilometers from the Hungarian border. It has been a pilgrimage site for the almost exclusively Catholic and ethnically Hungarian villagers of the Ciuc Basin for several hundred years. The pilgrimage was banned for a time under communism, but the tradition, which was kept by a few hundred people in the interim, gained new life after the change of regime in 1989. Participants came from farther and farther

away, most of them, some 200,000 to 300,000, coming from Hungary. Regular television coverage over the past several years has made the pilgrimage a media event and has spurred the Catholic Church to identify with pilgrims, whose journey has acquired a nationalistic overtone.

The unique attraction of Csíksomlyó comes from the sacred experience evoked by the traditional order of the pilgrimage and the feeling of authenticity and community that arises from meeting with Csángós and Székelys (the most traditional ethnic Hungarian groups living in Romania). The national symbols carried by participants or built into the surroundings, which include Hungarian national flags, songs, and the great open altar the shape of which imitates the triple hill and the double cross, ensure that national imagination is attached to the experience. For many, Csíksomlyó has become the most important sacral center of the Hungarian communities. It is unique, because as media coverage and many of the participants have expressed there is no other sacred place or ritual center on the territory of Hungary today that would be visited in such great numbers by such diverse groups of Hungarians, Catholic and Protestant, civic and religious alike.

The pilgrims with their church flags and the altar in front of them, which bears the shape of a national symbol
(Photo: Gabriella Vörös)

Young bicyclists from Budapest at the pilgrimage in Mircurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda)
(Photo: Gabriella Vörös)

National sites of memory, to use Pierre Nora's term (1990), constitute the second largest category of symbolic places maintained by Hungarians (both Hungarian citizens and local ethnic Hungarians, sometimes even involving the Hungarian state). We must not forget that the zenith of Hungary's establishment of national memorials was at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, when Transylvania was still part of Hungary. However, a significant number of the Hungarian national monuments in Transylvanian towns were taken down after the changes of regime in 1919 and 1945. Some of them still stand or have been re-erected since 1990. From a Hungarian point of view the national memorials of Transylvania have been "liberated" or "freed," put back in their places and retaken, or need to be "protected" from the desire of the majority to take them over, re-name them or relocate them. The Martyrs' Statue in Arad is an excellent example of the former, while the statue to King Matthias in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár) is the best example of the latter. It had to be protected from attempts made to have it moved or removed by the Romanian nationalist mayor of the city (Feischmidt 2002; Bodó and Bíró 1993).

Arad, a city in present-day Romania, is the site of memory of the defeat of the Hungarian revolution of 1848, and can be seen as a ritual center of a different sort. The statue, erected in 1890 to commemorate the leaders of the 1848 Hungarian revolution executed in the city, is considered a great work of historical art (its creator, György Zala, designed the Millennial Memorial at Budapest's Heroes' Square). After the change of borders due to the Treaty of Trianon, the Romanian leadership had the statue removed, but did not destroy it. After 1990 it was given to the Catholic Minorite Order and then, as a result of the initiative of conservative parties in Hungary and the Democratic Alliance of Romanian Hungarians (RMDSZ), it was restored to its original site. The agreement between the Hungarian and Romanian government concerning the statue again came about as a result of the positive mood created by Romania's accession to the European Union. Thus, in April 2004 the statue, then called the Statue of Liberty, was unveiled in the so-called Park of Reconciliation, created to evoke the European spirit in this region near the border between the two countries. However, this statue of liberty is not an "ordinary" statue of liberty: it represents the victorious or resurrected

The Hungarian Statue of Liberty in Arad
(Photo: Margit Feischmidt)

Hungaria (the female symbol of Hungary), as Ibolya Dávid, leader of the Hungarian political party Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), confirmed in her dedicatory speech: "This marvelous statue of liberty is also the symbol of the resurrection of the Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin, of our common liberation." Since its restitution the statue has become the central site of the Hungarian national holiday on October 6th, the National Day of Grief, which was held for decades in Arad. Unlike the pilgrimage in Csíksomlyó, which excels in popularity, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of people yearly, the significance of the national day of grief, which never had more than a few thousand participants, is the product of the rank of the event in the Hungarian calendar of political rituals. The main commemorative speeches are held every year by Hungarian state officials and the political leaders of Transylvanian Hungarians and broadcast on national television (Feischmidt 2006).

The significance of symbols and symbolic places grows when they are threatened (or perceived to be threatened) or used for commemorative practices. There are, however, other objects and places (churches, castles, cemeteries, statues and memorials) that are significant only because they are considered parts of a national cultural heritage. They are associated with individuals (authors, poets, politicians, revolutionaries), or events (national assemblies, battles, etc.) taught in the Hungarian public schools as part of the Hungarian national history. Other places have become important because they represent the material folk-culture considered the most traditional in the territories that once belonged to historical Hungary. Examples include some of the Székely villages with their adorned gates and headstones, Korond with its pottery, and the villages from Kalotaszeg region distinguished by their needlecraft.

The last category of symbolic places is the product of what Anthony Smith calls the naturalization of the homeland and nation through places. Zoltán Ilyés has given us a vivid description of how the "millennial borders" at Gyimes (Ghimeș in Romanian), the only part of the historic boundary of old Hungary that has an ethnic-Hungarian populace, has been incorporated into the repertoire of nostalgic Hungarian ethno-tourism (Ilyés 2005). The "millennial borders" are a mnemotopos (as Jan Assmann put it); a sign that the culture of memory plants into the environment which in this case serves to remind one of a history that centers on losses and tragedies:

> Here at the thousand-year-old boundary Trianon hurts more than anywhere else. We have seen, and every day we see sick attempts to wipe away the beautiful traces of our history. We have seen and see figures with crow-bars who overturn the stones of the 400-year-old castle… (Váradi and Lőwey 2001, 24, cited in Ilyés 2005).

The process of creation of symbolic places has not ended. A recently completed study describes how tourism provides a strong impetus for the creation of new places and objects to fit within the system. A work by József Gagyi examines how this process works through the concrete case of the memorialization of the Székely gates at Satu Mare (Máréfalva). Gagyi introduces the processes motivating local leaders, organizations and ordinary people through which everyday objects (in this case gates) are raised into the national canon, becoming "Székely gates," while the village thereby comes to be featured on the virtual map of places in Transylvania that are part of the Hungarian national patrimony (Gagyi 2005).

The Occupation of Symbolic Places: Tourism and Pilgrimage to Transylvania

Most of the examples presented above can be considered acts of invention of tradition. As such they are initiated and designed by the state authorities, in this case by the Hungarian state or other institutions with high prestige – the Catholic Church, political parties or civic organizations. However, as Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, the invention is successful only if followers are found, which seems here to be the case (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). We have studied all sorts of activities both of locals and those coming from other areas, devoting particular attention to the cultural practices of people who come to visit Transylvania from Hungary. Concerning their physical movement and their acts of symbolic appropriation we found that three social practices play the main role in this regard: a folk-movement (the dance house movement), ethnic or heritage tourism, and a nationally recoded catholic pilgrimage.

In the 1970s, in defiance of bans by both communist countries, hundreds of young people from Hungary set out for the villages in Romania said by folklorists to maintain the most archaic Hungarian folk culture: Sic (Szék), Mera (Méra), Răscruci (Válaszút), Gyimes, and the Csángó villages of Moldavia. Solidarity against a common enemy, the communist party system, with the politically oppressed and economically depressed Hungarians of Transylvania motivated opposition intellectuals in Hungary and Transylvania alike (Gal 1991). Zoltán Szabó, who has examined the connection between the dance house movement and tourism, estimated that some twenty-thousand people took part in the movement at the start of the 1990s (Szabó Z. 1998). He also called attention to the different sorts of tourists that formed part of the dance house movement: The first were dancers and musicians who were followed to the prime destination, ethnic-Hungarian regions of Transylvania, by visitors to the dance houses. From the 1990s one of the major goals was to take part in a momentous event, such as a wedding party or a village or church celebration. Later camps of various sorts became pop-

ular where one could learn to sing, dance, and play music from "knowledge providers." Szabó also mentions movement in the other direction by "knowledge providers," who traveled to dance house events in Hungary.

Some two and a half or three decades after the first appearance of dance house followers these Transylvanian villages underwent dramatic economic transformation. The dances, which were carried out according to tradition when they were discovered in Sic, have disappeared in the village due to the fast pace of economic change or have "moved" to Budapest. While the majority of young villagers in Sic go to discos, some of the migrants from Sic working in construction in Budapest take part in intellectual efforts to bring dance house culture to clubs in Hungarian cities and, through camps, to take them "back" to their villages of origin (Molnár 2005). But the choreography is prepared in Budapest, while Sic, Răscruci and Sîncraiu (Kalotaszentkirály) are now just "authentic locales" for Hungarian folkdance club camps. Sic, with its mythic image in which the traditions conserved because of the isolation and relative underdevelopment of the village were highly valued, has changed drastically as the village's inhabitants dropped their old customs with dramatic speed after 1989 when they became able to earn significant income by working abroad. Their "undressing" (in other words the abandonment of traditional peasant attire), the gathering of new types of consumer and symbolic goods, and the greater value placed on earning wages are seen by the "guards of tradition" who visit Sic as a form of "spoiling," as a loss of values. They try to convince the youth of the village and workers from the village in Budapest that re-traditionalization is a path away from the negative effects of fast modernization (Pulay 2005).

At the start of the 1990s tourists arriving by bus and families who came for a quiet vacation joined youths backpacking in Transylvania as visitors to the region. In our research so far we have seen how tourism from Hungary takes two forms. In the first case tourists primarily stay in villages and peasant houses in the Székely Land or Kalotaszeg region or buy such houses for themselves because they are attracted to the natural beauty of the landscapes and the way of life of the villages. However, those who stay in village houses also spend a significant amount of their time visiting sites mentioned as parts of the national heritage by Hungarian guide books and local tourist guides. So we can say that Hungarian tourism to Transylvania is well on the way to becoming a sort of heritage tourism (Szilágyi 2004). Heritage tourism in Transylvania focuses on folk tradition and historical memorials. The primary concern with regard to memorials, churches and village houses is that they be (as a tourist interviewed by us put it in 2002) "beautiful, interesting places with a Hungarian background that are worth seeing." So we are faced with a special sort of heritage tourism (which I call ethnic tourism) in which an important motivation is to meet with and experience a shared ethnic and cultural background with people from distant "Hungarian regions."

Heritage tourism is a sort of pilgrimage in the search for authenticity. We experienced in many cases during our research how difficult is to distinguish between the two sorts of motivation and action, the profane (tourism) and the sacred (pilgrimage). Religious tourism usually connects the two, people generally visit sacred places or shrines on the occasion of religious festivals. This sort of pilgrimage, which has a spiritual side, is comprised in Catholic tradition of a sort of penitence through which grace can be won. At the same time, sightseeing along the way provides it with a secular side.

In the 1990s, following the fall of communism, Hungarian pilgrim-tourists discovered the pilgrimage site in the Székely Land and Csíksomlyó and, as we have seen, turned it into a national pilgrimage site. This is how a pilgrim put it to one of my colleagues:

> Not everyone comes here because of the Catholic religious thing. There were a lot of Calvinists and Lutherans on our bus. … The few hours here are, practically, the site of meeting for Hungarians from throughout the world. This is what brings us. We show we are here, and every year there are more of us.

An examination of speeches made at the pilgrimage and its representation in the media shows that above all statements with nationalist overtones prevail among the utterances made by religious leaders from Hungary and the diaspora, as well as among the comments made by politicians to the press. "The nation must be forged into one body and one soul through its faith and its Hungarianness" is how a Hungarian Bishop living in emigration put it in 1994.[2] The assistant bishop of Kalocsa-Kecskemét (Hungary) put it in a similar way in 2001: "We stand at the foot of the Virgin Mother of Csíksomlyó, where the solidarity of the nation is expressed not merely as a theory, but in practice."[3] The primarily religious and Catholic nature of the pilgrimage is stressed (without conflict with the aforementioned) by the Franciscans who organize the events and the Archbishop of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia). The power and significance of these differing goals is determined by a third factor, the presence of the media. Csíksomlyó is depicted by the Hungarian satellite channel Duna TV as the most significant religious-national celebration. One of the directors of the station put it this way in an interview:

> More than half of the people here come because of their Hungarian identity. In fact, this is the greatest Hungarian celebration. … People cannot experience the power of collectivity anywhere else. National holidays in Hungary, even March 15th, have been emptied of meaning and have become protocol events where various organizations lay wreaths. ... Șumuleu did not used to play such a significant role, it wasn't even in the public's consciousness. Now it is the prime pilgrimage ... certainly from the point of view of the media in terms of

> numbers of visitors and interest. This is precisely why I say that here faith and the nation are intertwined (Vörös 2006).

The combined roles of the media, politics, and the Catholic Church enable us to describe the pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó as a national celebration. But the great number of participants and the emotional behavior of the crowd cannot be explained solely by the efforts of these institutions. The numbers, behavior, national rhetoric and politics of symbols also come from below, and are based on the experience of commonality arising from the participation and work of congregations, civic and religious organizations, informal groups in villages and cities all over Hungary and Transylvania. National symbols play an important role in the development of this collective national experience. "Just imagine, I went up and saw the Hungarian flag flying, and I started crying!" said one interviewee. Over the past several years, as the result of changes in meaning, Csíksomlyó has become more than an ordinary national celebration, it is a demonstrative ritual of Hungarianness, of those who identify themselves with an ethno-national discourse recreating the unity of all ethnic Hungarians who live inside the country and outside it, on the "lost" territories that once belonged to Hungary.

Imagining an Authentic National Space in Transylvania

Michel Foucault uses the term "heterotypes" for places simultaneously representing and localizing utopia and authenticity. Time also works differently here; they are places of movelessness and stationarity within a world in permanent motion. Late modern societies, however, have created cultural practices in which people living their everyday in the latter can come in their holydays in contact with the former. As a cultural phenomenon tourism creates a sort of alternative world that serves as a place of refuge from our everyday lives and gives security and protection by offering an alternative way to organize life. For tourists from Hungary, Transylvania serves in this sense as an alternative world, as an escape. The discourse about this alternative world, however, grows far beyond the experiences of tourism. Tourism merely brings a far broader discourse closer and makes it a palpable discourse on authenticity. The admission of someone who once backpacked through Transylvania demonstrates what I mean:

> People still walk in Transylvania, they drink well water, and live in houses designed for humans. Their Hungarian identity is still important to them. There's something there that we don't have (Bárdi 1992).

Tourism to Transylvania is an excellent example of the search for authenticity of the sort that, along the general lines laid out by Dean MacCannell (1976), is

considered the essence of a tourist's behavior. In Transylvania, or at least in the villages of Transylvania that are the goal for Hungarian tourists, there are not yet many of the things that with modernization have come to be part of everyday life (or rather, the presence of such things is ignored). Nature is untouched and people live in communities in which they help one another. This is why people have the feeling expressed by many of our interviewees that: "A trip to Transylvania is different."[4]

Discourses of authenticity that evoke nature and a golden age of human relations center on certain values and ideals. The discourse on authenticity associated with Transylvania stresses national culture in an essential way that has been characteristic of this region since Herder. It transmits the idea that the nation expresses its essence in "a" culture, "a" tradition that is more authentically represented by certain parts of the nation than others, for example by villagers as opposed to city dwellers, or by Hungarians who live as minorities outside of Hungary as opposed to the majority. People at the center of this discourse are "real Hungarians", and the place where "real Hungarians" live is Transylvania. There are further distinctions within this. A century ago Kalotaszeg was considered the ideal region, now the villages of the Székely Land are regarded as the most authentic form of "Hungarian being." This discourse also contains a very important dimension in time. Transylvania is a remnant of a one-time Hungary, now filled with nostalgia, a memento of "the old Hungarian world." This is what Nándor Bárdi has called the Fairy-garden vision that appears in Hungarian discourse about Hungarian minorities outside Hungary; that is the imagination that "the old world of Hungarians still exists beyond Hungary's borders" (Bárdi 2004).

The historical background of this idea is the romantic ideal of the Hungarian village established by folklore and grounded in popular culture. In his book about Transylvania László Kürti shows how a Transylvanian myth entered Hungary through the dance house movement and contributed to a transformation of the language and symbols of national culture (Kürti 2001, esp. 137–165). I believe this process has continued, even with the fall of popularity of the dance house movement, and is part of the motivation for the throngs of tourists and pilgrims in numbers never before seen to the areas that it evokes and creates. Just as the village is imagined as an island in a sea of modernity represented by the city, so the constant, stable image of Transylvania is contrasted to indifference to the nation in this age of moving, hybrid identities. This Transylvania is a world opposed to changing and modernizing urban Hungary.

Summary

Above I have examined how symbolic and expropriating practices directed towards Transylvania have created an area thick with symbolism. Representations of Transylvania follow a strategy of nation creation by attempting to show a place to be copied and disseminated where the nation exists in an "unspoiled," "original" nature. Richard Handler, in his book on French cultural policies in Quebec and their selection on ethnic bases, says that for nationalists authenticity is the "proof of national existence" (Handler 1988; Linnekin 1991). This authenticity, the proof of the existence of the nation, is assigned to Transylvania, more precisely to the image of Transylvania that was created by Hungarian discourses. This "Transylvania" is the most important myth for Hungarian nationalism today. Adapting Anthony Smith's insightful term, we could call it a mytho-motor. Its concrete effects lie above and beyond average political myths in its attachment to places that one can visit and to specific locales and people with whom one can meet to experience the ideology and feeling of community first-hand. This is how an old idea, that of the nation, is placed into contemporary surroundings and thereby renewed.

Notes

1 The statements made in this paper are based on research started in 2002 and a book project, published with the title *Erdély-(de)konstrukciók. Tanulmányok* (Feischmidt 2005). I would like to express my gratitude to the participants in the research: Anita Bodnár, József Gagyi, Zoltán Ilyés, Kinga Kánya, Tamás Kiss, Péter Molnár, Gergely Pulay, Adrien Sebestyén, and Gabriella Vörös. A later version of my thoughts was presented at the conference "Regionalitás, közösségépítés, szórványgondozás Nemzetközi összefogás a szórványkérdésben", 8–11 June 2006 in Jebucu (Zsobok), Romania. I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of the conference. The translation was realized with the generous help of Eric Waever, many thanks for this.

2 Excerpt from the interview with Attila Miklósházi by György Stoffán, "Oltalmad alá futunk, Istennek szent anyja", *Kapu,* 1994/6–7.

3 Excerpt from the speech by László Bíró in Frigyesy Ágnes, "A szél kihívásaira a fa gyökereivel válaszol", *Kis Újság,* 8 June 2001.

4 This was the title of a study by Adrienne Sebestyén examining the image of Transylvania in Hungarian tourist literature. (Sebestyén 2005). The quote is from an essay by Pál Péter Domokos often cited by travel guides and web pages about Transylvania. The full text is: "A trip to Transylvania is different. We go to Transylvania, and we are all seized by the Transylvanian emotion so characteristic of our people. If you were not born in Transylvania, then the warmth all we Hungarians feel towards Transylvania fills you. The ingredients of this warmth are: gratitude towards this bastion that guarded Hungarian independence, respect for national conscience that is stronger here than anywhere else on the territories of the former Hungarian Kingdom, a motherly care for those who are smaller, and an excited expectation of the natural and historical beauties of the traces of our traditions that live within us." (Pál Péter Domokos: *Várad felé ragyog az ég*)

References

Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. (1983): *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).

Appadurai, Arjun (1996): "The Production of Locality." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 178–199.

Bárdi, Nándor (1992): "Mi van az erdélyi hátizsákban?" *Valóság* 12, 81–98.

Bárdi, Nándor (2004): *Tény és való. A budapesti kormányzatok és a határon túli magyarság kapcsolattörténete* (Pozsony: Kalligram).

Bodó, Julianna – Bíró, A. Zoltán (1993): "Szimbolikus térfoglalási eljárások." *Antropológiai Műhely* 2: 60–85.

Brass, Paul R. (1996): "Introduction: Discourse of Ethnicity, Communalism and Violence," in *Riots and Pogroms.* P. R. Brass, ed. (New York: New York University Press), 1–55.

Brubaker, Rogers – Feischmidt, Margit – Fox, Jon E. – Grancea, Liana (2006): *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton University Press).

Feischmidt, Margit ed. (2005): "Erdély-(de)konstrukciók," in *Tanulmányok* (Pécsi Tudományegyetem – Néprajzi Múzeum).

Feischmidt, Margit (2006): "Lehorgonyzott mítoszok. Kőbe vésett sztereotípiák? A lokalizáció jelentősége az aradi vértanúk emlékműve és a millenniumi emlékoszlopok kapcsán." In: Bakó, Boglárka – Papp, Richárd – Szarka, László (eds.) *Mindennapi előítéletek. Társadalmi távolságok és etnikai sztereotípiák* (Budapest: Balassi), 370–392.

Fox, Jon E. (2003): "National Identities on the Move: Transylvanian Hungarian Labor Migrants in Hungary." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29(3): 449–466.

Gagyi, József (2005): "Örökségesítő Máréfalva. Az örökségturizmusra való berendezkedés első lépéseiről egy székelyföldi faluban," in *Erdély-(de)konstrukciók,* 85–102.

Gal, Susan (1991): "Bartók's Funeral: Representations of Europe in Hungarian Political Rhetoric." *American Ethnologist* 18(3): 440–458.

Gupta, Akhil – Ferguson, James (1992): "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropologist* 7(1): 6–23.

Handler, Richard (1988): *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press).

Hastings, Adrian (2002): "Holy Lands and Their Political Consequences." *Nations and Nationalism* 1: 29–54.

Hennig, Christoph (1997): *Reiselust. Touristen, Tourismus uns Urlaubskultur* (Frankfurt am Main–Leipzig: Insel).

Hobsbawm, Eric – Ranger, Terence (eds.): (1983) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Hofer, Tamás (1991): "Construction of the 'Folk culture heritage' in Hungary and Rival Versions of National Identity." *Ethnologia Europaea* 21: 145–170.

Ilyés, Zoltán (2005): "A gyimesi 'ezeréves határ' olvasatai." In: *Erdély-(de)konstrukciók*. 35–49.

Keményfi, Róbert (2002): Az etnikai táj kultúrnemzeti mítosza. *Regio* 4: 93–108.

Kovács, Ákos (2006): *A kitalált hagyomány* (Bratislava: Kalligram).

Kürti, László (2001): *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

Linnekin, Jocelyn (1991): "Cultural Invention and the Dilemma of Authenticity." *American Anthropologist* 2: 446–449.

MacCannell, Dean (1976): *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books).

Molnár, Péter (2005): "A táncház mítosza és valósága: amit a 21. század néprajzosa Széken talál," in *Erdély-(de)konstrukciók*, 123–142.

Nora, Pierre (1989): "Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations* 26 (Spring): 7–25.

Pulay, Gergő (2005): "A vendégmunka mint életforma. Széki építőmunkások Budapesten," in *Erdély- (de)konstrukciók,* 143–162.

Safran, William (1991): "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora* 1: 83–99.

Smith, Anthony D. (1989): "The Origins of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12(3): 340–367.

Smith, Anthony D. (2004): *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Szabó, Zoltán (1998): "Indulj el egy úton. Adatok a táncházas turizmus kérdéséhez." In *A turizmus mint kulturális rendszer.* Fejős Zoltán, ed. (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum), 169–182.

Szijártó, Zsolt (2003): "Szimbólumtermelés – élményfogyasztás: a tér szerepe a turizmusban," in *Helye(in)k, tárgya(in)k, képe(in)k. A turizmus társadalomtudományos magyarázata*. Fejős, Zoltán – Szijártó, Zsolt (eds.) (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum. Tabula könyvek), 5, 19–39.

Szilágyi, Eszter (2004): *Gyimes kevéssé devalvált vidék. A gyimesi turizmus antropológiai megközelítése* (Masters thesis). Miskolci Egyetem Kulturális és Vizuális Antropológia Tanszék.

Veer, Peter van der (1994): *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Vörös, Gabriella (2005): "A szakrális, a nemzeti közösség és az egzotikum élménye. A magyarországiak részvételének motivációiról a csíksomlyói pünkösdi búcsúban." In: *Erdély- (de)konstrukciók,* 69–83.

Vucinich, Wayne S. – Emmert, Thomas (eds.) (1991): *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota).

Zirojević, Olga (1996): "Kosovo in the Collective Memory," in Nebojša Popov (ed.), *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis* (Budapest: CEU Press), 189–211.

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 135–156
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.10

VOIVODINA'S AUTONOMY AND ITS MINORITY PROTECTION DIMENSION

BEÁTA HUSZKA

Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research, Budapest
Hungary

This paper presents the autonomy movement of Voivodina, what has been achieved so far and why the pre-1990 autonomy could not have been attained. The Hungarians of Voivodina have traditionally been enthusiastic supporters of provincial autonomy despite the fact that Voivodina's autonomy is not a kind of ethnic autonomy. This issue will be explored through a focus on the case of the Hungarian minority and the ways in which the autonomy of Voivodina benefits ethnic minorities. I will demonstrate that the current powers of provincial institutions have been sufficient to implement minority rights in Voivodina better than in the rest of Serbia, yet were not enough to prevent inter-ethnic incidents. I will also consider why provincial authorities could be better trusted regarding minority protection than the central government, including in dealing with future ethnic violence.

Keywords: Serbia, Voivodina, minority rights, autonomy

The province of Voivodina, situated in the North of Serbia on the border with Hungary and Romania, has been throughout most of its history famous for its multiethnic character and the lack of serious ethnic tensions. Voivodina traditionally has been home to more than twenty different nationalities, among which the Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats, Montenegrins and Romanians are the most numerous after the Serbian majority, which as of today constitutes around two thirds of the province's population.[1] Voivodina also had a historic legacy distinct from that of the rest of Serbia, as until World War I it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, while the rest of the country was under Ottoman rule until the end of the 19th century. In addition, Voivodina belonged to the group of so-called developed regions in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, being the third most developed federal unit after Slovenia and Croatia if measured by regional GDP per capita, and the most developed region of the latter Federal Republic of Yugoslavia comprised of Serbia and Montenegro.[2] Before 1989 Voivodina enjoyed far reaching autonomy, which was stripped away by Milošević; its status was similar to that of the republics in the former Yugoslavia. Since the democratic changes in

2000 some of the previous competencies were reinstated, in particular by the so-called Omnibus Law in 2002. However, the pre-1989 autonomy has not been restored and cannot be expected to be restored any time soon. Hopes regarding more autonomy have vanished for the moment following the adoption of the new Serbian constitution in 2006.

Ethnic minorities have traditionally been enthusiastic supporters of provincial autonomy, despite the fact that Voivodina's autonomy is not a kind of ethnic autonomy, and has always been led by local Serbs. Provincial autonomy in itself does not even grant special political representation for minorities, as there are no reserved seats guaranteed for them in the provincial assembly in proportion to their percentage of the population. Furthermore, Voivodina's autonomy could not function as a substitute for any kind of ethnic autonomy given that even the largest minority community, the Hungarians, makes up only 14% of the province's population. However, the political autonomy of Voivodina became one of the five fundamental pillars of the Hungarians' autonomy-model, in addition to personal, ethnic-territorial, political and municipal autonomy.[3] This indicates that Hungarians consider provincial autonomy a means of guaranteeing their minority rights. The question arises why exactly Voivodina's autonomy is favored by minorities. I will address this question by focusing on the case of the Hungarian minority and the ways in which Voivodina's autonomy benefits ethnic minorities. This discussion will demonstrate that even though minorities in Voivodina are in a privileged position compared to other groups living in the rest of Serbia, such as the Albanians in the Preševo valley or the Bosniaks in Sandžak, Voivodina's minority-protection regimes also have their limits, which particularly manifested themselves during the inter-ethnic incidents in 2003 and 2004. I will therefore also offer an explanation as to why strengthening provincial autonomy would be desirable from the point of view of preventing future ethnic violence. First, however, I offer a short discussion introducing the history of the movement for autonomy in Voivodina.

A Brief History of the Movement for Autonomy

The contemporary movement for the autonomy of Voivodina was born in the early 1990s. It grew out of the lost autonomy the province had enjoyed before 1989.[4] The Yugoslav constitution of 1974 endowed the federal units (the republics and provinces) with far-reaching legislative, executive and judicial rights: they had their own parliament and ministries, were able to ratify their own constitution, and had control over education, economic and social welfare policies. Since Serbia had two autonomous provinces, Voivodina and Kosovo (and as such was unique among the Yugoslav republics), a peculiar situation emerged in which

Serbia could not amend its own constitution without the consent of its provinces, while the latter were able to alter their own constitutions without the consent of Serbia.[5] Furthermore, in the federal bodies the provinces could veto the decisions of the Serbian authorities. Individual republics and provinces also gained considerable economic autonomy, especially with regards to fiscal policy, including defining credit conditions.[6] As a result, national grievances were on the rise in Serbia from the early 1980s over the growing sovereignty of the provinces, which started to behave more and more like "states within the state."[7]

In 1988, Milošević forced the provincial leaderships to resign and practically abolished Voivodina's and Kosovo's autonomy, an edict which was enshrined in the new Serbian constitution adopted in September 1990. The provinces lost most of their legislative, executive and judicial powers, and their right to veto constitutional changes in Serbia.[8] Thus, Milošević effectively centralized Serbia and responded to Serbian concerns over the fragmentation of the Serbian nation in Yugoslavia.

In the early 1990s regional parties began to be formed that sought the restoration of autonomy. They called for the reinstatement of institutions supporting ethnic and cultural diversity and demanded the return of the previously held political and economic competencies. The most significant autonomist parties, the Reformist Democratic Party of Voivodina (the Reformists), the League of Social Democrats of Voivodina (LSDV), and the Alliance of Voivodinian Hungarians (AVH), emerged mostly from the dismissed or marginalized provincial political and cultural elites.

By now autonomist political groups have been trying to mobilize people for almost two decades without much success. It is surprising the extent to which these parties have failed to win public support from the early 1990s until recently, indicated by their poor performance during elections. The question as to why this has been the case throughout this period is especially puzzling since according to available opinion polls Voivodina's autonomy has been supported by the majority of its population, regardless of the arrival of nearly 200,000 Serbian refugees from other parts of former Yugoslavia. A survey of the SKAN institute from October 2003 showed that 75.5% percent of the province's population favored cultural and economic autonomy within Serbia, which would mean an increase in Voivodina's rights.[9] This and previous surveys demonstrated that the majority of the population of Voivodina's supported improving the status of Voivodina over maintaining the status quo. Although most of the time Belgrade is blamed for the lack of progress, it will be argued here that the failure of the movement for autonomy cannot be explained solely by the resistance of Belgrade, but also by the weakness of autonomist parties.

After 2000: A Lost Chance for Autonomy

After the fall of the Milošević regime, hopes emerged for the restoration of autonomy. These hopes were reinforced by the political campaign of the 'Democratic Opposition of Serbia' (DOS) coalition before its coming to power, since it declared that "it will respect the need for decentralization of the state government, with a special regard to regionalization of Serbia, affirmation of autonomy of Voivodina and Kosovo and Metohija."[10] Despite such rhetoric, in practice the eight years of DOS rule in the form of various coalition governments set up by its former member parties since 2000 did not testify to a genuine commitment to decentralization. Carrying out the task of decentralization would have required, first of all, the adoption of a new republican constitution, which has been continuously postponed, with reference to plausible and less plausible excuses; as a result Serbia has been essentially operating under the constitution of Milošević until November 2006. Moreover, even though the constitution was eventually adopted, it did not reinstate the powers Voivodina had lost, which will be explained in more detail below.

However, it is not only the central government that is to blame for the fact that Voivodina did not get back its extensive former rights. Any kind of solution regarding autonomy or regionalization has to be homegrown, meaning it has to rely on wide public support. Unfortunately, regionalist parties so far have been unable to mobilize sizable political support for their autonomist aspirations.

During the local elections, held in September 2004, the autonomist parties were unable to unite in a single platform representing Voivodina. As during previous elections, their campaign was marked by mutual accusations and a fierce competition for the title of who would be the "real" representative of the interests of the population of Voivodina. Whereas the Alliance of Voivodina Hungarians (AVH) stood primarily for the interests of the Hungarian minority, the other two main autonomist parties, the League of Social Democrats of Voivodina and the Voivodina Reformists, campaigned intensely against each other and against Belgrade. By 2004 their discourse had acquired a radical tone in comparison with previous elections. Economic arguments still dominated the pro-autonomy rhetoric, yet the campaign turned increasingly negative as the parties vehemently accused each other of incompetence and opportunism. Furthermore, their attitude towards Belgrade could be called almost paranoid, as they repeatedly referred to vague threats coming from the capital. The pro-autonomy discourse was considerably more moderate during the Milošević era even though the threat had been much more real.[11]

It seems that the negative discourse and disunity among the parties was not popular among the voters. Their electoral chances were also weakened by the fact that during the period of 2000–2004 they were in power as members of the DOS

coalition, but fell short of meeting their campaign promises, since autonomy remained an unfulfilled wish. Consequently, in the 2004 provincial elections they performed poorly. The Together for Voivodina coalition led by LSDV received 7 mandates, the Reformists 2, while the Hungarian party came out as the strongest by gaining 11 seats in the provincial assembly, which was also a failure considering that the party had 17 mandates before 2004. This outcome meant that the position of the autonomist parties weakened considerably in the institutions in Voivodina in comparison with the preceding political term. The strongest single party became the Serbian Radical Party with 36 mandates, yet the governing coalition was formed by the leadership of the Democratic Party, which won 34 seats in the assembly.[12]

It should be stressed, however, that even if there has been no return to Voivodina's pre-1989 status, there were some steps taken towards the restoration of autonomy. In February 2002 the republican parliament adopted the so-called "Omnibus Law" *(Law on Establishing Particular Competencies of the Autonomous Province),* which transferred some competencies to provincial authority, among them jurisdiction over education, labor, pensions, health care, environmental issues, culture and language policy, human and minority rights, media, social services, agriculture, tourism, sport, etc. However, since the law did not grant any legislative rights or control over finances, its success was only partial and far from satisfying, especially in comparison with Voivodina's standing in the former Yugoslavia.

While the Law gave back quite a few responsibilities to Voivodina, it failed to return any economic rights, including property rights. Voivodina did not receive its own sources of revenue, but still depended entirely on Belgrade's grace to cover its expenditures, as all the funds it used were redistributed back from Belgrade. In practice the money was often delayed, which caused serious tensions. Due to the delays, public services did not function properly and provincial institutions provided poor quality health care, education, and other public services, also undermining the legitimacy of the autonomy issue.[13]

From the autonomists' point of view, this situation was especially frustrating in light of the apparent development gap between Voivodina and the rest of Serbia. Per capita national income is considerably higher in Voivodina than the Serbian average and the province contributes considerably more to the state budget in proportion to its percentage of the population.[14] Foreign investors also prefer Voivodina to the rest of the country, which indicates a generally better investment climate.

Autonomists often point to the province's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character as a basis of demanding legislative and judicial rights and more economic autonomy. They generally argue that Belgrade cannot grasp the special situation in Voivodina and the needs that result from it. Beyond any doubt, implementing a

multi-lingual administration itself requires a lot of money, as translators and bilingual documents, signs, minority schools, etc. are expensive. Minority media can rarely function according to free market principles, but usually need considerable extra funding. It is a general problem that the scarcity of adequately trained teachers and proper textbooks makes secondary school education especially difficult for national minorities. Projects promoting inter-ethnic tolerance at the grass roots level also need significant financing. All these aspects of sustaining and fostering minority cultures and building a multi-ethnic society are generally expensive.

It should be mentioned, however, that the financial situation of the province was somewhat improved recently, as the new Serbian constitution significantly increased the budget of Voivodina (to at least 7% of the national budget). However, financial autonomy, meaning the province's ability to raise its own revenues, is still lacking. From the point of view of establishing financial autonomy, the single most important measure would be to transfer state property to the provincial and local governments, which still do not have ownership rights. Since provincial and local governments currently have the right to manage state property, and are responsible for a number of functions, it would make sense to devolve to local and provincial governments the properties that are essential to their functions.[15] Property devolution is currently on the political agenda, and the law has already been prepared by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, the biggest interest organization of local governments in Serbia. Moreover, the new Serbian constitution already recognizes the category of municipal property and property of autonomous provinces, and asserts that the devolution of state property will be regulated by law.[16] Property transfer would be a simple and much anticipated next step in Serbia's administrative reform, without which one cannot talk about real local or regional autonomy. As all Central and Eastern European transition countries, including present EU members and countries of former Yugoslavia, have finished or at least initiated the process of property devolution, there is no reasonable argument for Serbia further delaying this process.[17]

As provincial institutions have not been in a position to accomplish the desired level of autonomy since the required laws have to be approved by the republican parliament, some symbolic steps were taken in the direction of autonomy. The constitution of Voivodina, which would endow the province with extensive rights in all three areas of authority, was prepared to be presented in the Serbian parliament.[18] The proposal included a very ambitious wish list, such as the establishment of the post of president of Voivodina, a Voivodina High Court of Justice, a two chamber provincial parliament and a Voivodinian National Bank, among others.[19] These demands have remained illusory, since the national assembly has had enough authority to jeopardize such aspirations.

Nevertheless, highly visible, demonstrative initiatives continued, which were expressive of aspirations for sovereignty. The province managed to set up the post

of its own ombudsman, acquired its own label of "Made in Voivodina" on some characteristic export products, and decided to have its own coat of arms, which had to be used together with that of Serbia.[20] The provincial parliament decided that Novi Sad would be the capital and not merely the seat of Voivodina,[21] and adopted the flag of Voivodina.[22] The intense fostering of international relations, such as participation in Euro-regional cooperation, representation in Brussels, and the establishment of cultural and economic ties with the Netherlands, Belgium, and some German Bundesländer also had symbolic implications. The message often sent to Belgrade was that the issue of autonomy would be brought to the level of international politics.[23] Furthermore, the provincial government initiated several measures regarding minority rights, allowing for their implementation more effectively than in the rest of Serbia, which will be discussed in what follows.

Implementation of Minority Rights in Voivodina[24]

The constitution adopted in 1990 under Milošević deprived Voivodina of its legislative rights. Until then Voivodina was entitled to adopt its own laws; this right was withdrawn in 1990. As of November 2006 the new constitution of Serbia did not introduce anything new in this regard either, as it did not extend provincial competencies as much as an inch.[25] Yet as was discussed above, in 2002 the Omnibus Law authorized the Autonomous Province of Voivodina (APV) to regulate in greater detail some specific areas that fell under provincial jurisdiction, among them the official use of the languages and scripts of national minorities on the territory of APV, including supervision of the regulations' implementation.[26] As a result, provincial authorities were able to initiate a wide range of lower level legal measures that ensured more effective implementation of minority rights in Voivodina than in the rest of Serbia. Some of these positive achievements, which owed their success in particular to the work of the Provincial Secretariat for Regulations, Administration and National Minorities (practically a ministry in the provincial government), will be outlined first. At the same time, I will stress that despite the proactive attitude of provincial authorities, the existing minority protection measures have been insufficient to address the inter-ethnic incidents in 2003–2004 and their root causes. In fact, provincial authorities lack the capacity and the authority to influence the state's response to such incidents, as they do not have any control over the work of the police and the judiciary. Therefore, in the second part of this section the recent inter-ethnic incidents will be discussed with a view towards possible solutions.

According to law, minorities are entitled to far reaching rights in Serbia, as inscribed by the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities adopted in February 2002.[27] The law originally was legislated at the federal level

while Serbia was still part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Once the FRY ceased to exist and was transformed into the state union of Serbia and Montenegro all federal laws became valid at the republican level of Serbia. The most important provisions of this law were also enshrined in the new Serbian constitution. This law guaranteed a wide range of rights for national minorities, such as the right to use their mother tongue, including in official contexts, the right to preserve minority languages, cultures and national identities, the right to education in the mother tongue until high school, the right to use national symbols, the right to access to public information in minority languages, and the right to appropriate representation in the public sector, among others. Moreover, the law offered the possibility for minorities to set up national councils through which they would be able to exercise their cultural rights. This means that minorities in Serbia are thus entitled to institutional cultural autonomy:

> The persons belonging to national minorities may elect national councils (hereinafter: the council) with the purpose of exercising rights of self-government regarding the use of language and script, education, information and culture.[28]

The law can be regarded as a good legal basis for minority protection, but implementation often falls short of the rights granted in principle. The reasons for this are manifold and include shortage of money, harmonization of various laws regulating specific issues with the law on national minorities, and the absence of staff that can speak the languages that are official locally. Yet in Voivodina, due to the activities of the provincial institutions, these rights are exercised more commonly than in the rest of Serbia.

Language Rights

A recent shadow report prepared by the Voivodina Center for Human Rights on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities found that there are considerably better guarantees for language rights of minorities in Voivodina than in the rest of Serbia.[29] The official use of minority languages is much more common in multi-ethnic municipalities in Voivodina than in the rest of Serbia.[30] In addition to Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Ruthenian and Croatian are official on the territory of the province (and there are several other languages that are official locally).[31] According to republican law, the language of a minority becomes official in a municipality if that minority makes up at least 15% of the population or if the proportion of all national minorities reaches 10% of the population locally. However, the law also allows municipalities to recognize a language as official if the share of the minority

group in question does not reach the 15% threshold. Moreover, in Voivodina, due to provincial regulation, if a minority's share does not reach the required 15% in a municipality, but reaches 25% in certain settlements within the municipality, in those settlements the language of that minority becomes official.[32]

As the Omnibus Law empowers the province to regulate some issues in detail in accordance with the relevant republican law,[33] the province could also order and regulate the issuing of bilingual birth certificates. The republican law on official language use originally authorizes the relevant ministries of the Serbian government to create such documents. This means that if the ministries fail to do so, bilingual documents cannot be used, which has been the case outside of Voivodina. Since the ministry of justice and administration never produced such bilingual birth certificates, the Albanians in Preševo valley for instance cannot write their names in their original form.[34] In Voivodina this problem has been solved by the provincial bodies. Moreover, the Serbian Ministry of Interior issued bilingual forms of identity cards for some minorities in Voivodina, but not for minorities in the rest of Serbia.[35] In principle, persons belonging to a national minority could ask for a bilingual form of personal identification, yet these forms were first printed and made available only in May 2006 and only in Voivodina.

Proportional Representation

A provincial decree declares that public authorities have to take into account the ethnic make-up of the local population when employing their staff. In order to support the use of more languages in public institutions, the province is now entitled to issue language certificates proving the language skills of employees. A person knowing more of the official languages of Voivodina is now in an advantageous position when applying for certain jobs in the public sphere. The provincial bodies also regularly monitor whether national minorities are proportionally represented in public administration and public companies. Except for the managerial positions of public companies, where Serbs still dominate, with the exception of the Roma community minorities in general are adequately represented in most municipal and provincial institutions.

However, while provincial authorities can look after the proportional representation of national minorities in provincial and municipal institutions, they cannot oversee republican institutions, where employing persons belonging to national minorities has not been a priority. Consequently, according to the estimates of the Provincial Secretariat for Regulations, Administration and National Minorities, national minorities were the least represented in bodies of the various republican ministries, such as the police and the judiciary, and in bodies of state administration managed by districts. As in district branch offices of state authority the ethnic

composition of a district is not observed while employing civil servants, minorities practically cannot use their languages while communicating with these state institutions, hampering the exercise of minority language rights.[36] As a result, for instance, Hungarian is hardly used during court procedures in practice even in those municipalities in which Hungarians constitute a majority.[37] These estimates are also supported by the table below showing the representation of the Hungarian minority in judicial institutions and in the bodies of the Ministry of Interior.

Owing to lobbying activities of the provincial government, in 2006 the republican government adopted an action plan aimed at improving the representation of ethnic minorities in central state institutions operating on the territory of Voivodina.[38] The action plan seeks to increase the share of minorities employed in such institutions, and until the desired level of representation is reached underrepresented minorities will be subject to positive discrimination. Although the action plan reflects the good will of the government, there are no sanctions in the case of non-compliance. The future success of its implementation is therefore questionable. Nevertheless, some positive steps were already taken by the police, reflected by the fact that job advertisements are being publicized in minority languages as well. Since the police took over border policing from the army, many new positions were opened, which provides opportunities for persons belonging to ethnic minorities to enter the police forces. However, a minority-sensitive attitude and a true commitment to proportional representation could be much more expected if the police and judiciary were under provincial authority.[39]

Table. Share of Hungarians in the Police and Judicial Bodies in Voivodina[40]

Population of Voivodina	14.28% (census, 2002)
Judges of municipal court	9.7%
Judges of districts	4.4%
Municipal public prosecutors	8.0%
District public prosecutors	9.3%
Judges of commercial courts	10.2%
Departments of the Ministry of Interior of Serbia	
1. Heads of departments and chief superintendents	4.16%
2. Superintendents	8.33%

Political Representation

As was mentioned before, minorities have no guaranteed seats in the government or the assembly of the APV. However, parties representing minority groups can influence politics at the level of the province much more than at the national level. Today, the parties of the Hungarian Coalition have nine members in the pro-

vincial assembly and control three secretariats in the executive body. Although no legal guarantee exists for minority representation in these institutions, it has been the practice since 2000 to include Hungarian parties in the governing coalitions. Hungarian ministers control important functions, as they are currently responsible for the secretariat of national minorities, economy, education. Clearly, their chances of having an influence in Belgrade are much lower, even if they managed to send four MPs to the national parliament during the recent elections in 2008.

The significance of participating in the executive bodies can be also demonstrated through the provincial government's investment and development policy. Due to local Hungarians' political influence, municipalities inhabited by Hungarians receive development funds from the province in accordance with the percentage of Hungarians in the population, which they can spend according to their own priorities.[41] Certainly the adoption of this practice can be at least partially explained by the fact that since 2000 István Pásztor, the current president of the Alliance of Voivodina Hungarians, has been responsible for the ministry of privatization, which also manages the allocation of finances from the Voivodina Development Fund accumulated from privatization revenues.[42]

The provincial government's sensitive attitude to the problems of minorities was also manifested recently during the process of media privatization. Since the continued existence of radio and broadcast media in minority languages would have been threatened by privatization, the Executive Council of the APV launched an initiative to halt the privatization of multi-lingual radio and television stations.[43] As the state decided that all print media had to be privatized, the ownership of minority print media was transferred from the province to the national councils. Yet as the financing of these newspapers and magazines remained unresolved, the province continued to contribute significantly to the maintenance of these forums from its own budget.[44]

National Councils

Recently, the provincial national council was established, including the directors of all national councils and provincial ministers. The function of such a body will be to provide a forum where representatives of national councils can discuss all issues related to national minorities with the ministers, initiate proposals, and give opinions about legal proposals. Provincial bodies in general closely cooperate with national councils and involve them in decision making related to national minorities. For instance, the province consults the national councils on the question of which cultural institutions of national minorities should be supported and how much funding they should receive.

It can be also argued that the institutional development of the Hungarian National Council has been the outcome of close cooperation between Hungarian politicians of Voivodina and the provincial government.[45] This has been the case on the one hand because many key figures in Voivodina's government personally played an active role in establishing the Council, such as Tamás Korhecz, Provincial Secretary of Regulation, Administration, and National Minorities and István Pásztor, Provincial Secretary of Privatization. On the other hand, many competencies bestowed on the Council used to belong to provincial jurisdiction. Endowing the Council with real powers has been a long process that has been underway since its founding in 2002, while its authority has been extended over more areas gradually. Giving real clout to the Council involved extensive negotiations with the central government and provincial authorities, thus what has been achieved so far can be considered a result of an extensive bargaining process. Even today the Council's powers are not defined by law, as the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities only states that the council "shall participate in decision making or decide on issues in these fields [the use of language and script, education, information and culture]".[46] This means that the law determines the competencies of national councils only approximately; moreover, it proposes only temporary rules concerning the councils' election. Therefore, a fundamental aspiration of the Hungarian members of parliament in Belgrade is to determine clearly the national councils' spheres of authority through legislation.[47] They also want to set the financing of the councils' programs aiming at the preservation of national identity on a sound legal basis. Currently, only the operating costs of the Hungarian National Council are fully covered by the state and province, the programs it runs are not.[48] In addition, the election procedure of the council members has to be clearly spelled out by law. This law is still waiting to be adopted, even though the current term of the Hungarian National Council already expired in December 2006.[49]

One area in which the Hungarian National Council is already in the process of gaining more authority is minority education. According to law, national minorities can exercise authority over minority education through their national councils, yet this field used to be under provincial authority.[50] In Voivodina ultimately the province has the authority to pass curricula for minorities and approve textbooks in agreement with the Ministry of Education, while in the rest of the country passing curricula and approving textbooks is solely the responsibility of the central government.[51] In cooperation with the provincial government, the Hungarian National Council has been slowly taking control over Hungarian minority education over the last few years. By now the Council has to be consulted on matters such as the selection of school directors or members of school boards in those institutions where Hungarian is among the languages of instruction.[52] Moreover, the Hungarian National Council has been taking an active part in designing Hun-

garian educational curricula, including choosing textbooks, which are often imported from Hungary.[53] The ultimate aspiration of the Hungarian minority, represented by the National Council, is to gain full authority over the schools in which instruction is exclusively in Hungarian and to run their own Hungarian school network.[54]

The Incidents

Despite all the minority protection efforts of the provincial government, ethnically motivated violence was on the rise in 2003 and 2004. This coincided with the electoral success of the Serbian Radical Party, having gained the highest share of votes in Voivodina during the 2003 parliamentary and the 2004 local elections. In 2003 the minority government led by Vojislav Koštunica was formed with the outside support of the Serbian Socialist Party. These political developments represented a nationalist turn after the four year rule of the Đinđić (after March 2003 the Živković) government and were somewhat surprising considering that during the 1990s Voivodina was mostly spared from ethnic violence.[54] Nevertheless, the share of ethnic minorities significantly decreased over the course of the decade due to their mass emigration and the large influx of Serbian refugees. Some 172,000 Serbs from other parts of Yugoslavia settled in Voivodina permanently, while the population of the three largest minorities (Hungarians, Slovaks, and Croats) declined significantly. Between 1991 and 2002, the proportion of Hungarians in the population of the province fell from 17% to 14%, partially due to the emigration of tens of thousands.[55] Altogether, the share of Serbs climbed from 57% in 1991 to 65% in 2002, which was a sign of Voivodina's weakening multiethnic character.[56]

Various organizations presented different numbers of incidents, reflecting not only their divergent political leanings but also the difficulty of defining what exactly can be called an incident. The Provincial Secretariat for Regulations, Administration and National Minorities recorded 206 incidents between December 2003 and November 2004.[57] The Ombudsman for Voivodina counted 76 incidents between January and September 2004.

The incidents included nationalist graffiti, damaging objects of symbolic value to religious or ethnic minorities, damaging private property, verbal attacks, physical attacks and fights. It should be stressed that only a minority of the incidents included violence against individuals, and no one was killed. However, the incidents cannot be regarded as being only isolated cases, but were part of a widespread phenomenon in Voivodina. The victims were persons belonging to national minorities, the majority of them ethnic Hungarians. Most of the perpetrators were young people between the ages of 15 and 25, and they acted mostly spontaneously.[58]

As was concluded by a study prepared by Florian Bieber and Jenni Winterhagen, this upsurge of violence can be associated with the alarming distance between ethnic groups and the high ethnocentrism of youth. They further argued that the incidents reflected deeper inter-ethnic divides and "a new form of grassroots nationalism," which if it goes unaddressed may lead to new waves of ethnic tension and may "radicalize the political scene."[59] Thus, the incidents revealed deeper social problems that were aggravated by the nationalist backlash at the center in Belgrade and the nationalist attitude of the media.

The weak response of the police until October 2004, marked by the low number of perpetrators arrested and by light sentences, indicated the attitude of central authorities, who did not see the resolution of this problem as a priority. International attention was needed for central authorities to take firm action, after which the frequency of incidents dropped sharply.[60]

The incidents were much politicized within and outside of Serbia. The rhetoric of the biggest Hungarian party, the Alliance of Voivodina Hungarians (AVH), became increasingly dominated by the incidents carried out against Hungarian individuals. Owing to the intense propaganda of the Hungarian parties, the Hungarian government also got extensively involved, and after it failed to address the issue on a bilateral level with Serbia and the state union it turned to the EU and the Council of Europe.[61] As a result, the Council of Europe raised its voice several times in 2004 against the violence in Voivodina.[62] Moreover, in a resolution drafted by its Hungarian members, the European Parliament condemned the violence and called for the restoration of Voivodina's pre-1990 autonomy in September 2005. The resolution reflected the view according to which central authorities mostly ignored the incidents and failed to react properly, thus demanding on this basis more autonomy for Voivodina.[63]

The Serbian media initially generally ignored the problem and hardly reported it. This was true even of the regional media in Voivodina, such as *Dnevnik*. After the issue attracted international attention local media began to blame the Hungarian party and Nenad Čanak, a prominent Serbian autonomist politician, for inciting inter-ethnic tensions.[64] Until the fall of 2004, Belgrade officials mostly denied the ethnic character of the violence and questioned its significance by making references to the young age of the perpetrators. Altogether the government has been slow and reluctant to react, which has contributed indirectly to the escalation of violence. The number of cases noticeably decreased after the government put some pressure on the police to respond more firmly, which also brought about an increase in judicial procedures.[65] According to the data of Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, incidents targeting ethnic Hungarians significantly decreased in 2005, yet the level of incidents was still higher than in 2003.[66]

In recognition of the fact that the weak response of the judiciary and police was at least part of the cause of the escalation of violence, the need to have some sort of

local influence over the selection of the heads of police, judges and prosecutors was brought up by the AVH and by Nenad Čanak, as well as the need to create a multiethnic police in Voivodina.[67] One can conclude, in agreement with Bieber and Winterhagen, that the initial weak state reaction to inter-ethnic violence reflected a general skepticism towards minorities and a lack of sensitivity to their problems. At the same time, since 2000 provincial authorities have demonstrated a very different attitude and testified to a true commitment to minority related issues. This is also a consequence of the fact that politicians belonging to ethnic minorities, especially Hungarians, have actively participated in their work. Recognizing that the incidents reflected deeper social problems, in 2005 the Provincial Secretariat for Regulations, Administration and National Minorities initiated a project promoting multiculturalism and tolerance and targeting young people.[68] The program was not supported by republican institutions, but it did receive funding from the Hungarian government, the OSCE mission, the US embassy and a private company. While more of such programs would be needed to reduce the distance between ethnic communities in Voivodina and to improve the level of personal inter-ethnic contacts, delegating the police and the judiciary to provincial authority could be a guarantee of a more minority-friendly response to future inter-ethnic tensions in light of the past performance of provincial institutions.

Conclusion

Although several opinion polls testify to the fact that the majority of Voivodina's citizens would be in favor of autonomy, the movement for autonomy has remained insignificant and has not been able to mobilize considerable support.[69] After 2000 the autonomist parties could not use the political leverage they gained during the September 2000 elections and they gradually became marginalized. Their shrinking popularity can be explained by several factors. First of all, they were not in a position to restore Voivodina's autonomy, as such decisions have to be made by the republican parliament. However, their inability to gain electoral support was mostly the result of their political behavior. Since the early nineties there was no single election during which the parties representing Voivodina's autonomy would have been unified. The coalitions they joined revealed their priorities. This communicated to the public that even for autonomist parties the issue of autonomy was not of the highest importance. Moreover, the negative campaign against one another and Belgrade probably further weakened their popularity.

At the same time, Belgrade has also been reluctant to grant the autonomy it promised in 2000. The current powers of provincial institutions have been sufficient to implement minority rights more effectively in Voivodina than in the rest of Serbia, yet were not enough to prevent inter-ethnic incidents. It can be assumed

that were Voivodina to have more powers, coupled with the necessary financial autonomy, this would benefit minority groups. Proportional representation in public institutions could be implemented on a wider scale, extending to institutions currently under central control. Bringing the judiciary and the police under regional authority could reduce the chances of inter-ethnic incidents and could ease inter-ethnic tensions. More money could be spent not only on minority education and culture, but on programs fostering inter-ethnic coexistence. Last but not least, more financial autonomy could contribute to more efficient economic development.

It is worth noting that the pro-autonomy agenda has always been part of a pro-European, democratic discourse. In addition to the autonomist parties and the young but small Liberal Democratic Party of Čedomir Jovanović, there is also a faction in the Democratic Party that supports Voivodina's autonomy. They have not been too outspoken recently, probably because the present moment is not the right one in which to push such agendas due to the issue of Kosovo. However, if Voivodina's autonomy would be taken up by any significant political party in the future, the EU should encourage such an endeavor. Granting support for political forces fighting for Voivodina's autonomy would not only constitute a sign of support for national minorities but could potentially reinforce a more democratic, pro-EU identity for Serbia. As the EU needs allies in Serbia in order to bring Serbia into its ranks, autonomist forces could be such partners during the process of Serbia's accession.

The elections held in May 2008 in Serbia brought about a further weakening of autonomist forces in Voivodina. The Hungarian Coalition managed to secure only nine mandates as opposed to its previous eleven, while the number of seats held by the Together for Voivodina coalition in the provincial parliament dropped from seven to six. The true winner was the Democratic Party, as its coalition, "For a European Voivodina," controls the absolute majority of seats in the assembly (64 of 120). Even if part of the Democratic Party supports Voivodina's autonomy, it fundamentally won the elections on the democratic ticket, not on the issue of autonomy, as it positioned itself as the guardian of democracy in the face of the threat posed by the Serbian Radical Party. Consequently, its overwhelming success can be interpreted as a popular vote for democracy and Serbia's European future, while people were probably less influenced by concerns over autonomy.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the Democratic Party could comfortably form a government on its own, it decided to include the Hungarians and the LSDV in the ruling coalition alongside the Serbian Socialist Party, which became its partner at the national level. Consequently, in spite of the Hungarians' weakening political weight indicated by their poor performance in the provincial elections, AVH managed to keep its strong position in the province's institutions, which is a promising sign that it will be able to uphold Hungarian interests through the next

political term. The most curial posts from the Hungarian minority's point of view, the ministries of economy, minorities and education, were retained by the party. Moreover, AVH nominated the president of Voivodina's assembly.[70] Thus there is a good chance for the continuation of institution building and the assertion of minority rights, even if the number of Hungarians in the provincial parliament decreased by two. A recent communication of the newly formed provincial government also indicates that its former sensitivity to minority issues and its increased attention to minority rights will be sustained in the future. At the end of July, the government concluded that the implementation of the law on minority languages in local administrative and judicial bodies was unsatisfactory and called on local governments to take decisive steps in order to ensure that minority languages could be used more widely in practice.[71] In addition, the fact that Tamás Korhecz kept the office of the Secretariat for Regulations, Administration and National Minorities is a further guarantee that the existing policies related to minority protection will be maintained.

Finally, the new provincial government can be expected to continue the struggle to strengthen Voivodina's autonomy, as Bojan Pajtić, an enthusiastic autonomist of the Democratic Party, has again become prime minister. Due to the governing coalition's overwhelming weight in the provincial assembly, it will be easy for them to pursue their political agenda. Yet ultimately the key to their success lies more in Belgrade than in Novi Sad, as the national assembly has the authority to expand Voivodina's jurisdiction over more areas and to grant it financial autonomy. The implementation of minority rights depends also on Belgrade to a considerable extent, since for the proper functioning of national councils the Serbian parliament has to adopt the necessary laws, such as those regulating the election of national councils and the financing of their programs. Therefore, power relations in the Serbian parliament will fundamentally determine what can be achieved in terms of asserting minority rights and further developing Voivodina's autonomy. Since the Democratic Party at the head of the Serbian government does not have to prove its democratic credentials, there is a fear that as during the previous period it will not view these issues as a priority. In this respect it was probably a wise decision on the part of the Hungarian Coalition not to join the government but to support it from the outside. This might secure the four Hungarian deputies a better position from which to represent Hungarian interests and push through their political agendas.


SERBIA
National capital
Republic capital
Autonomous province capital
Town, village
Major airport
International boundary
Republic boundary
Autonomous province boundary
Highway
Road
Railroad
Canal
HUNGARY
CROATIA
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
MONTENEGRO
ALBANIA
ROMANIA
BULGARIA
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REP. OF MACEDONIA
V O J V O D I N A
S E R B I A
K O S O V O
Adriatic Sea
Beograd (Belgrade)
Novi Sad
Priština
Podgorica
Sarajevo
Skopje
Timişoara
Szeged
Subotica
Pécs
Mohács
Osijek
Vinkovci
Sombor
Kikinda
Zrenjanin
Vršac
Pančevo
Šabac
Valjevo
Kragujevac
Čačak
Kraljevo
Užice
Kruševac
Niš
Leskovac
Vranje
Pirot
Zaječar
Bor
Negotin
Kladovo
Smederevo
Požarevac
Jagodina
Novi Pazar
Kosovska Mitrovica
Peć
Prizren
Đakovica
Gnjilane
Uroševac
Tetovo
Shkodër
Bar
Ulcinj
Kotor
Cetinje
Nikšić
Herceg-Novi
Foča
Pljevlja
Bijelo Polje
Ivangrad
Vidin
Fruška Gora
North Albanian Alps
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Map No. 4269 UNITED NATIONS
June 2006
Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Notes

1 Hugh Poulton: "Rising Ethnic Tension in Voivodina," *RFE/RL Research Report,* Vol. 1, No. 50, 18 December 1992, 14.

2 GDP/capita Slovenia USD 5821, Croatia USD 3733, Voivodina USD 3478, Serbia USD 3037. 1991, Federal Institute of Statistics. In: Daniel Ottolenghi – Alfred Steinherr, "Yugoslavia: Was it a Winner's Curse?" *Economics of Transition* 1(2) (1993): 235.

3 Autonomy Concept of the Hungarian Coalition, Viewed at the official website of the Hungarian Coalition. April 18th, 2008. http://www.magyarkoalicio.org/.

4 Autonomy struggles in Voivodina date back to the 17th century, as the expression of demands put forward by the Serbs of Voivodina. Their calls for autonomy mounted, especially during the 19th century, and were realized for a short period between 1849 and 1860.

5 Ivan Vejvoda, "Yugoslavia 1945–91 – from Decentralization Without Democracy to Dissolution", in David A. Dyker – Ivan Vejvoda, eds. *Yugoslavia and After* (Pearson Education, 1996), 15.

6 Ottolenghy and Steinherr, "Was it a Winner's Curse?", 222.

7 Jovan Teokarević, "Neither War nor Peace, Serbia and Montenegro in the First Half of the 1990s," in: *Yugoslavia and After,* 181.

8 Jovan Teokarević, 183.

9 Žolt Lazar – Dušan Marinković, "Regional Identity, Voivodina's Urban Public Research Survey," in Nadia Ćuk Skenderović, ed. *Essays on Regionalization* (Subotica, March 2001), 180; "Voivodina: Multiethnic Jewel of Serbia," *Axis, Global Challenges Research,* June 3, 2006. http://www.axisglobe.com/article.asp?article=896.

10 Jovan Komšić, "Unitary or Assymmetric Regionalism," in: *Essays on Regionalization,* 158.

11 Our focus here is the elections in 2004, because the outcome of these elections determined the political weight of autonomist parties during the period between 2004 and 2008. During the most recent elections in May 2008, autonomist parties again joined different coalitions. Although some of them ran together under the name "Together for Voivodina", the Hungarian parties set up their own coalition, and a former member of LSDV, Igor Kurjački, formed his own party.

12 Website of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Voivodina, http://www.Voivodina.sr.gov.yu/Engleski/index.htm.

13 Interview with Duško Radosavljević, Novi Sad, Sept. 8, 2003.

14 The last data is from 2005, when per capita income was 17% higher in Voivodina than in Serbia as a whole. Source: official website of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. http://webrzs.statserb.sr.gov.yu/axd/en/pok1.php?ind=1; In 2003 Voivodina provided almost half of the state budget. In: "Kevesebb is jó lett volna", *Magyar Szó,* Feb. 27, 2003.

15 This was the conclusion of the authors participating in a project launched by SLGRP, which was meant to formulate policy recommendations for Serbia with regards to property devolution. The Serbian Local Government Reform Program (SLGRP) began in 2001. The project was also supported by USAID and LGI OSI Budapest. http://www.slgrp.usaid.org.yu/.

16 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, *Document,* Articles 86–87.

17 This argument was stressed by Charles Jókay in his study prepared for the SLGRP project. Charles Jókay, "Policy Recommendations for Returning and Transferring Property to Local Governments in Serbia," in Gábor Péteri (ed.) *From Usage to Ownership* (Budapest: LGI OSI, 2005), 130.

18 Legislative, executive and judicial.

19 "Mi kerül bele?", *Magyar Szó* Nov. 12, 2002.

20 "Címere lesz a Vajdaságnak", *Origo* June 27, 2002.
21 *Origo* Oct. 11, 2001.
22 "Voivodina Wants Hymn as well", *Blic Online* Oct. 25, 2003.
23 "A Vajdaságnak már lesz helye az EU-ban", *Magyar Szó* Oct. 7, 2002.
24 Based on an interview with János Orosz, Provincial Secretariat for Regulations, Administration and National Minorities, Novi Sad, Sept. 25, 2006.
25 Lawyers of Forum Iuris concluded about the constitution that "it does not guarantee its [Voivodina's] original competences, legislative authority, or even its right to enforce its own decisions (there is no guarantee of executive authority), as well as its participation in the election of judges in the courts taking part in the protection of provincial autonomy. The constitution stipulates declaratively that Voivodina will be entitled to direct revenues, but the type and amount of these revenues will be determined by the laws which are adopted by the Republican Assembly. Also, the Province cannot enact its statute autonomously, only upon approval of the Republican Assembly. The constitution does not guarantee that the Province will decide about its territory by itself, nor does it guarantee its autonomy, because it can be abolished." Quote from Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, *Human Rights: Hostage To the State's Regression,* Annual Report, Serbia 2006 (Belgrade, 2007), http://www.helsinki.org.yu/doc/Report2006.pdf., 312–313.
26 Shadow Report, Voivodina Center for Human Rights, "Alternative Report submitted pursuant to Article 25 Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities," September 2007, http://www.minelres.lv/coe/report/ShadowReport_Voivodina_VHRC.pdf, 74.
27 "Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities," *Official Gazette of FRY No. 11, 27 February 2002,* translated by OSCE Mission to FRY.
28 Article 19, "Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities."
29 Shadow Report, 76.
30 "Határozat a Nemzeti Kisebbségek Nyelvének és Írásának Vajdaság Autonóm Tartomány Területén Való Hivatalos Használatával Kapcsolatos Kérdések Részletezéséről," *Vajdaság Autonóm Tartomány Hivatalos Lapja, Újvidék* 2003. május 22, 8. szám.
31 Shadow Report, 74.
32 *Ibid.,* 76.
33 Article 2 and 3 of the Omnibus law: "Law Establishing Particular Competencies of the Autonomous Province," Document, Published in the *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia,* No. 6, on February 7, 2002.
34 Shadow Report, 87.
35 Particularly for Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats, Romanians and Ruthenians. In Shadow Report, 88.
36 Shadow Report, 22.
37 It should be mentioned though that this is also often the case even if all the participants in the trial know Hungarian, including the judge. The main reason for this is that if there is an appeal all materials have to be translated into Serbian, putting a significant financial burden on the court. Shadow Report, 85.
38 "Decision on the measures to increase the participation of national minorities in state administration bodies", Shadow Report, 124.
39 Interview with János Orosz, Provincial Secretariat for Regulations, Administration and National Minorities, Sept. 25, 2006, Novi Sad.
40 Data from Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, in *National Minorities and Law,* Helsinki Files N. 15, Belgrade, 2002, 87–88.

41 Presentation of Tamás Korhecz, Provincial Secretary of Regulation, Administration and National Minorities at the conference *Autonomy from another angle,* organized by the Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research, Budapest, May 26, 2008.

42 After the last local elections in 2008, he became the secretary of economy.

43 Shadow Report, 54.

44 Shadow Report, 61.

45 This opinion was voiced by Tamás Korhecz, Provincial Secretary of Regulation, Administration and National Minorities at the conference *Autonomy from another angle.*

46 Article 19, "Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities."

47 Bálint Pásztor, Member of the Serbian parliament representing the Alliance of Voivodina Hungarians, at the conference *Autonomy from another angle.*

48 László Józsa, President of the Hungarian National Council, at the conference *Autonomy from another angle.*

49 "Report about the Activities of the National Council's Executive Board in 2006 and 2007," website of the Hungarian National Council, Feb. 29, 2008, www.mnt.org.yu.

50 "Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities."

51 See Article 12, 13 of the Omnibus Law.

52 Communication about the visit at the Ministry of Education, website of the Hungarian National Council, Sept. 26, 2006, http://www.mnt.org.yu/hu/frame.php?content=doc_show&e_id=211&e_tipus=HTML.

53 Report about the Activities of the National Council's Executive Board in 2004, website of the Hungarian National Council, Zenta, March 10, 2005. http://www.mnt.org.yu/en/frame.php?content=doc_show&e_id=174&e_tipus=HTML.

54 Program of the Alliance of Voivodina Hungarians, Subotica, June 19, 2004, http://www.vmsz.org.yu/hu_new/dokumentumok/program.htm#5b

55 With the exception of some Croat villages, such as Hrtkovci. Humanitarian Law Center, *Human Rights Violations in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia 1991–95* (Belgrade, 1997), 83–105.

56 Between 1991 and 2002 the number of Hungarians decreased by 14.5%, that is by roughly 50,000 people. However, even before 1991 the Hungarian population was declining by a rate of 10% per decade on average. (In "2006. évi jelentés a vajdasági magyarok helyzetéről," Website of the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, http://www.nemzetpolitika.gov.hu/data/files/84190142.pdf, 11.) This would imply that "only" around 20,000 fled or emigrated from Serbia in the nineties. The demographist Károly Mirnics, however, estimates this number to be between 40,000 and 60,000. In: Károly Mirnics, "Ámítás és hiszékenységünk," *Forrás* June 2004, http://www.forrasfolyoirat.hu/0406/mirnics.html.

57 Florian Bieber – Jenni Winterhagen, "Ethnic Violence in Voivodina: Glitch or Harbinger of Conflicts to Come?", *ECMI Working Paper* #27, April, 2006, http://www.ecmi.de/download/working_paper_27.pdf, 3–4.

58 Data from Florian Bieber and Jenni Winterhagen, 9.

59 The research of Florian Bieber and Jenni Winterhagen demonstrated this point. Florian Bieber – Jenni Winterhagen, 11.

60 Florian Bieber – Jenni Winterhagen, 26.

61 *Ibid*.

62 "Bemutatkozott Goran Nikičić, a Vajdasági Szociáldemokrata Liga magyarkanizsai polgármesterjelöltje," *Magyar Szó* Sept. 08, 2004.

63 The Secretary General, the Committee of the Ministers of the CoE and the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE addressed the problems in Voivodina in 2004 in several resolutions. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, ResCMN(2004)12, Nov. 17, 2004. See https://wcm.

coe.int.; Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, *Resolution 1397, Functioning of the democratic institutions in Serbia and Montenegro,* 2004.

64 European Parliament, *European Parliament resolution on the defence of multi-ethnicity in Voivodina,* P6_TA(2005)0369., Sept. 29, 2005, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Notice.do?val=433738:cs&lang=mt&pos=1&phwords=&checktexte=checkbox.

65 This view was promoted by Večernje Novosti. Source: Florian Bieber and Jenni Winterhagen, 36–37.

66 Florian Bieber and Jenni Winterhagen, 26–27.

67 Data from Florian Bieber and Jenni Winterhagen, 38.

68 This was the finding of the shadow report published by the Voivodina Center for Human Rights, cited above.

69 Provincial Secretariat for Regulations, Administration and National Minorities, *Promotion of Multiculturalism and Tolerance in Voivodina,* Novi Sad, February 2005.

70 Žolt Lazar, Dušan Marinković, 185.

71 It should be noted that AVH lost one office, that of the ministry of environmental protection, yet the significance of that post does not compare to the gain represented by the right to propose the assembly's president.

72 "A vajdasági kormány elégedetlen a hivatalos nyelvhasználatról szóló törvény alkalmazásával," VajdaságMA.info, July 25, 2008. http://www.vajdasagma.info/universal.php?rovat=cikk&ar=vajdasag&id=7137.

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 157–167
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.11

DRAWING INSTRUCTION AND THE CULTIVATION OF TASTE: HUGÓ SZEGEDY-MASZÁK'S VIEWS ON DRAWING INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

ZSUZSANNA SZEGEDY-MASZÁK

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
Hungary

This article situates the ideas on drawing instruction of Hugó Szegedy-Maszák within the larger context of shifting trends in conceptions of art and art education. It considers the pedagogy outlined in his 1871 handbook on drawing instruction and the ideas expressed in two later essays of a more theoretical nature, which were written in part under the influence of his exposure to the ideas of American, German, and English art pedagogues at the Paris World Congress of 1900. Essentially, Hugó Szegedy-Maszák viewed art instruction not merely as an occasion to develop drawing as a practical skill, but as an opportunity to cultivate and refine taste.

Keywords: art education, pedagogy, drawing instruction, taste, aesthetics, Paris World Fair, Paris World Congress, Hugó Szegedy-Maszák, Kálmán Györgyi

> "It is among the foremost of pressing duties, in my opinion, to cultivate the taste of the people (…) For this reason the ministry will recognize the necessity of making sweeping reforms concerning our entire approach to the instruction of drawing, in part by making drawing instruction an obligatory subject in every educational institution and also by establishing national public drawing schools at the expense of the state."[1]

Hugó Szegedy-Maszák published three longer writings on drawing instruction in primary schools. The first of these, a practical handbook entitled *Utmutató az elemi rajztanitásban* (Guide to Elementary Drawing Instruction), was written for teachers in the late 1860s. Decades later he approached the subject matter from a more theoretical and methodological point of view, the fruit of which, an essay entitled *A rajztanítás a párisi kiállításon és teendőink* (Drawing instruction at the Paris World Fair and the tasks that await us), was submitted to the Ministry of Education and published in the art journal *Műcsarnok* (Kunsthalle).[2] The third and last of Szegedy-Maszák's texts, similar in approach and subject matter but larger in scale, appeared in 1906 in the journal *Budapesti Szemle* (Budapest Review).

Hugó Szegedy-Maszák was born in 1831 in the town of Aiud (Nagyenyed), Romania and received most of his schooling there at the reformed Bethlen College. In 1848 he fought in the revolutionary army, but following the devastation caused by the uprising led by Romanian popes Axente Sever and Prodan Simion he fled the city, only to return to the college in 1851 as instructor of drawing and calligraphy. Six years later he moved permanently to Pest, as did many of the intellectuals of the city. In Aiud he had become acquainted through his friend Nicholas Zeyk with so-called Talbot photography. In Pest he began taking drawing and painting lessons from renowned painter Miklós Barabás and acquired knowledge of how to make lithographs. At this time he frequently drew and wrote for contemporary Hungarian journals, among them *Vasárnapi Újság* (Sunday Paper) and *Pesti Napló* (Pest Journal). In addition, his essays and critiques on exhibitions, art, linguistics, and education appeared in numerous literary and political periodicals, such as *Magyarország* (Hungary) and *Ország* (Nation). In the summer of 1863 he traveled with Zsigmond Kemény to see art collections in Germany. Of this trip he writes in his diary, "I began to see." In 1866 he married Ilona Barabás, one of Miklós Barabás' daughters, with whom he had ten children. As his own private endeavor in 1864 he began the short-lived art periodical *Magyar Képzőművész* (Hungarian Artist)[3] and from 1868 to 1869 he edited *Kunsthalle,* the journal of the Association of Fine Arts.[4] In 1871 Minister of Religion and Education Tivadar Pauler appointed him as the secretary of the newly formed Council of Fine Arts, a position he held for 18 years. At the request of József Eötvös, minister of education and religious affairs at the time, he participated on the national board on school textbooks. In addition to evaluating works submitted for competitions by elementary students, together with his fellow board members (the school inspectors József Menyei and László Nagy) he collaborated in designing illustrations to be used in schools the majority of which were based on works by Hungarian masters.[5] During this time he wrote his instructor's handbook entitled *Guide to Elementary Drawing Instruction,* a publication that was soon translated into German for use by the Budapest Israelite Teacher's College (an English translation was also commissioned by the Ministry) and was used in Hungarian state primary schools for decades.[6] In 1882, in the interests of freeing the Hungarian press from the pressures of the Viennese news agency, he established the Hungarian News Agency, which he headed for 16 years. In 1887 he was granted nobility. The letter concerning this states,

> in recognition of your achievements in the areas of public education and the fine arts you are most graciously granted Hungarian nobility and the use, exempt from any fees, of the "Pesti-Szegedy" title of nobility.[7]

He died in 1916.

The Historical Antecedents of Drawing Instruction in Primary Schools in Hungary

In 1777, in accordance with the Ratio Educationis, Maria Theresa made the establishment of drawing schools (schola graphidis) mandatory in royal free boroughs and school districts annexed to the so-called standard schools (schools consisting of four grades), while in municipal schools in which there were at least three teachers and which were able to employ a drawing instructor drawing was made a facultative subject.[8] The establishment of national drawing schools and the introduction of drawing education, which corresponded for the most part to applied geometry and industrial drawing, was a matter of economic state interest. In these schools most of the drawing instructors were engineers, priests or painters of minor talent,[9] and the method of instruction and curriculum was set by a 1783 German-language handbook the Hungarian title of which was *A cs. kir. államokban létező normáliskolai rajzosztályok szervezete, rendtartás és a tanítás módszeres utasításai* (The structure, regulations and methodical instruction of drawing classes in standard schools existing within the imperial royal states). This first curriculum of drawing instruction in Hungary prescribed that, "in primary schools drawing should be taught with rulers and compasses as well as free-hand." It was in the spirit of this directive that instruction in national drawing schools and the Sunday drawing schools associated with them was practiced until the public education act of 1868 countermanded drawing schools.[10] The first Hungarian-language drawing handbook was written in 1804 by Pál Sárvári (1765–1846), instructor of the reformed boarding-school in Debrecen.[11] In this he discusses, in addition to the methodology of drawing education, the "taste for beauty." In other words, aesthetic education was a subject of interest as early as the first Hungarian drawing textbook. However, this was written and used only by the students of the boarding-school in Debrecen.[12]

The XXXVIII. statute introduced by József Eötvös in 1868 pronounced that every community in which at least thirty children between the ages of six and twelve live but in which there were no denominational schools would be compelled to establish an elementary school. The elementary school curriculum issued in accordance with this statute in Buda on September 15th, 1868 determined that although drawing is not designated as an obligatory subject,

> as it is almost the only formative tool for improving visual and manual deftness, which serves the improvement of taste and therefore the improvement of the nation, it is most desirable that where possible this subject should be made part of the curriculum of primary schools.[13]

The subsequent curriculum is from 1877. Although it changed little with regards to the material taught, it nevertheless made the instruction of drawing compulsory from the third grade. The most dramatic change was brought about by the Curriculum and Instruction of 1905, which was implemented in the following academic year in all state and municipal primary schools (it did not affect denominational schools).[14] This established the goal of drawing education as the "development and instruction of the aptitude for observation and illustration in close unity" and placed drawing through observation at the core of instruction: "it leads the child to develop awareness of perception, sharp judgment, and finally the recognition and appreciation of nature and human industry." It was at this point that drawing became an artistic subject in schools. It was also the first time that the importance of viewing works of art was formulated in the official curriculum. Development of an aptitude for observation and depiction, as well as aesthetic and artistic training, were key notions in the curriculum. It repealed the use of pre-dotted pattern sheets and notebooks with net-like dotted lines. However, in practice the curriculum remained impossible to realize. The capital reduced the curriculum and the requirements and in 1913 published a revised version.

In the beginning of June 1905, the Association of Hungarian Drawing Instructors held a three day long general assembly in the Library of the Royal Drawing School. Bertalan Székely and Lajos Rauscher were the presiding chairs. For the most part the assembly discussed drawing in secondary schools, but there was also a debate concerning drawing instruction in primary schools. This revolved around the question of whether drawing should be an independent subject taught in schools or merely a series of exercises designed to improve manual dexterity. According to the minutes of the meeting a wide range of opinions were voiced. József Simkó proposed that the curriculum of head school-inspector Kálmán Györgyi be disregarded. Ultimately the panel decided it was not the opportune moment to take a stand on a single method of teaching.[15]

Guide for Drawing Instruction in Primary Schools

Hugó Szegedy-Maszák finished his first outline of the *Guide for Drawing Instruction in Primary Schools* in October of 1868.[16] He recalls this occasion in his diary in the following manner:

> I have been invited to the Ministry of Culture on Sunday to a meeting of drawing instructors with regards to primary school textbooks, of which I have been asked to write the one on drawing method. I have completed the first outline of my proposal (October 22, 1868).[17]

The handbook was reviewed and accepted on July 23rd, 1870 in a meeting presided over by Lőrinc Imre and Sándor Péterfy and including such members as Antal Ligeti and Gusztáv Kelety, director of the Hungarian Royal Drawing School. It was first published in 1871 in 1,000 copies, followed by another 2,000 copies two years later and subsequent printings in 1879, 1885 and 1899.

The *Guide* stresses that the instructor should not deviate from the given order, as "just as in the field of sciences, there should be no leaps in the acquisition of art."[18] The author emphasizes the importance of the knowledge of drawing at the beginning, but one can already discern in his argument the pretension of nurturing good taste. Szegedy-Maszák claims that knowledge of art is necessary in all fields, therefore all children, both boys and girls, should be taught to love drawing.[19] In an article he wrote decades later he expressed a similar view:

> School instruction should provide true understanding and judgment of art and an advanced sense of taste. And drawing education should begin in elementary schools.[20]

Szegedy-Maszák's teacher's handbook therefore corresponded to the objections of contemporary cultural and educational policy, which was responsible among other initiatives for the foundation of the Hungarian Royal Drawing School (later to become the Academy of Fine Arts). This is no surprise. Given that the book was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, the publication rights belonged to the state and it was in use for decades in state schools.

In his *Guide* Szegedy-Maszák deviates from the Prussian-type, so called stygmographic method (the essence of which was to copy individual points onto the paper and later connect them with lines). This technique hampers the development of the ability to estimate with the eye. Nevertheless the use of such pre-dotted pattern sheets was common until the publication of the 1905 Official Curriculum.[21] Instead, Szegedy-Maszák recommends the so-called "drawing-calligraphy" method, i.e., the use of demonstrative images or drawings made on the board by the teacher in front of the children. This approach, which establishes as its goal the correct drawing of various lines, was in use well into the 1930s.[22]

Szegedy-Maszák considered himself a follower of Rousseau and regarded it as important not to rush children's development. Instead he believed that the goal of drawing instruction should be to aid the free advancement of a child's own abilities. His critiques make plain that his approach to art and his understanding of the importance of drawing are inseparable. As in the assessments of his father-in-law Miklós Barabás, his objections are frequently limited to technical considerations. In other words, it wasn't just the acquisition of artistic tricks of the trade (as it were) that he considered important, but also their maintenance. He claimed that drawing should not be understood strictly as a skill,

> because the mechanical activity of the fingers and the progression of manual skill should advance together with judgment, otherwise where judgment overtakes the hand an artist whose skillfulness is deficient will be the result, one who draws and paints in a faulty manner.[23]

Drawing Instruction at the Paris World Fair and the Tasks that Await Us

The content of the article printed in the third issue of *Műcsarnok* entitled *Drawing Instruction at the Paris World Fair and the Tasks that Await Us* corresponded for the most part to the report the author handed in to Minister Gyula Wlassics. Its second half, entitled "The tasks that await us," contains his suggestions with regards to reforming drawing instruction in Hungarian schools. According to this:

- Drawing should be a compulsory subject (a view that was accepted by the 1900 Paris Congress) and should begin as early as preschool or the first grade of primary school;
- Imaginative drawing and drawing from memory should be practiced;
- Instruction should focus on drawing scenes from nature;
- The teacher should use a collection of hand-drawings;
- Summer courses should be organized for drawing instructors;
- A superintendent of drawing instruction should be appointed.

Turning Point in the Area of Drawing Instruction

In 1906 Szegedy-Maszák's essay *Fordulat a rajzoktatás terén* (Turning point in the field of drawing instruction) was published as an offprint of the journal *Budapesti Szemle* (Budapest Review). Among other things, it discussed conclusions drawn from lectures given at the 1900 International Drawing Instruction Congress in Paris. Along with another 150 congresses of scientific, industrial, and social interest, this congress complemented the Paris World Fair, which for the most part formulated the theoretical bases of achievements in the arts and sciences on view at the exposition. There were three different groups of delegates at the congresses: those who officially represented the Government, representatives of local and national organizations, and those who attended out of personal interest. Those belonging to the two latter groups paid a membership fee to attend. In 1900 all congresses were organized under the auspices of the Exposition, many of them meeting within the Exposition grounds in the Palais des Congres erected especially for this purpose. The Congress concerned with the teaching of drawing was

held between August 29th and September 1st.[24] In all probability Szegedy-Maszák attended the Paris Congress as an official delegate, as in a copy of a letter addressed to Gyula Wlassics (November 15, 1900) he expresses his gratitude for the financial support that he received (600 crowns) and provides the minister with a report several pages in length on the lectures given at the congress.[25]

In addition to the congress an exhibition of school drawings was organized within the confines of the World Fair. Institutions from the United States, Europe and Japan submitted the notebooks of their pupils, from preschool all the way to secondary school. In the course of surveying this Szegedy-Maszák concluded that, "in the infancy of art the adult depicted things as the child does now." It must be noted that behind the reformed pedagogy lies an increase in interest in children's art elicited by Corrado Ricci's 1887 book entitled *L'arte dei bambini* (The art of children).[26] Ricci wrote his book on the basis of research he pursued in Bologna. His main thesis was that exaggerations and omissions in children's drawings should not be corrected, but rather appreciated.[27] The essence of the reformed pedagogy that took form as a result of his book is that the child should be regarded as an autonomous being and the method of instruction should be adjusted to the natural strengths of each individual age group.

Szegedy-Maszák begins his essay with the following statement: "A propitious reform has taken place in recent years concerning drawing instruction methodology in the states of the old and the new worlds." He quotes Rousseau's Emil: "So I shall take good care not to provide him with a drawing master, who would only set him to copy copies and draw from drawings. Nature should be his only teacher, and things his only models."[28] Hereupon he discusses the curriculum provisions of the French public educational ministry (from which the city of Paris deviated) at length. Namely, that although this curriculum divides drawing instruction into free-hand drawing and geometrical parts, even in the free-hand curriculum the use of a ruler and a compass is prescribed, as drawing on the whole was fundamentally centered around the depiction of architectural ornaments. Szegedy-Maszák then turns to a discussion of the lectures and debates that took place during the congress. One such debate, or more precisely a resolution, concerned the future exclusion from schools of the so-called Viennese Hillard-type sketchbooks or any kinds of notebooks in which the pages were divided into grids. He mournfully remarks that in the end the congress decided in favor of upholding the geometrical method. Szegedy-Maszák dwells on three lectures, two given by Englishman Ethal Speeler and German Susanne von Nathusius and one given by the American Mary Colman Wheelert, (principal of a secondary school in Providence, member of the directorate of Brown University's school for girls, and a well-known personality in the literature on drawing education whose name still graces schools in the United States).[29]

At the beginning of the last third of the essay, entitled "Turning point at home," Szegedy-Maszák joyfully asserts that, "we have stepped out of the cold, soporific haze of architectural ornaments." He is referring to the fact that István Bárczy, then the director of education in the capital (later mayor, then head mayor), had asked Kálmán Györgyi to lay out a new system and method of drawing instruction. Incidentally it was under Bárczy's three-year plan that 36 new school buildings were built in Budapest.[30] Györgyi was the school-inspector of lower elementary schools from 1903 and of higher elementary schools from 1917. As such he began the sweeping reforms concerning artistic education in elementary schools. His program was accepted and subsequently he organized courses in which 40 drawing instructors of the capital were trained, then with their help another 250 teachers were introduced to the new method.

He presented the fruits of his endeavors with great success at the International Drawing Education Congresses of 1908 (London) and 1912 (Dresden).[31] However, prior to these events, Szegedy-Maszák mentions the 1905 drawing exhibition as proof of the efficacy of the new method, of which he says that on the whole, "the capital Budapest has anticipated the policies of the country's government."

The drawing exhibition mentioned in Szegedy-Maszák's last essay is also referred to in the minutes of the meeting of the 1905 general assembly of Hungarian Drawing Instructors. According to this at the end of the first day the participants in the assembly visited the exhibition organized by Kálmán Györgyi, which featured the drawings of elementary school students from the capital. However, Györgyi cancelled the lecture he was to deliver the following day. In the list of more than 200 participants of the assembly the name Hugó Szegedy-Maszák is missing.[32] Nevertheless, he saw the exhibition and he identifies Györgyi as the person behind the turning point discernible in Hungarian primary school drawing education.

Izsó Szüts wrote his booklet entitled *Az elemi rajzoktatás reformja* (The Reform of Elementary Drawing Instruction) following the 1900 Paris World Fair.[33] In this Szüts gives account of lessons that emerged in the course of the Paris exposition, giving special attention to the educational policies of the United States. Of the American drawing exhibition he claims that this was the most frequented educational show: "a swarm of instructors and teachers examined this room, making drawings and taking notes on what they saw."[34] He then makes proposals for the reformation of drawing instruction in Hungarian elementary schools, the goal of which would be to awaken the students' aptitude for observation, to animate their imaginations, to teach them to draw from memory, and to arouse the desire to work.[35] The fundamental difference between the booklets of Szüts and Szegedy-Maszák is that while the former writes exclusively on the observations made during the exposition, Szegedy-Maszák also emphasizes the conclusions issued at the

congress, presumably thanks in part to his command of numerous foreign languages.

The introduction and postscript of Szüts's essay was written by Márton Mártonfy, who himself visited the Paris World Fair on assignment from the Ministry and also handed in an official report.[36] The following quote is from his postscript:

> The Paris World Fair marks a new era, a turning point in the field of drawing instruction, as methods have been initiated to cultivate the students' independence, their ability to observe and judge, and their aesthetic sense.

Among Hugó Szegedy-Maszák's manifold interests, drawing instruction, which in his view was the basis for cultivating artistic taste, occupied a prominent place. In his youth during the fifties in Aiud he applied his views in practice. Fifteen years later he wrote the first state-commissioned Hungarian–language drawing handbook for elementary schools, while his essays published around the turn of the century address the methodology that he deemed correct from a theoretical point of view. The subject and method (the teacher drawing on the board as a guide and the order of teaching first straight and then curved lines) of the Guide written in 1868 and published in 1871 for the most part harmonizes with the contents of the official 1869 elementary school curriculum. Where there are deviations they incline towards the more progressive, for example his conviction that drawing instruction should begin in the first grade (even the official curriculum eight years later only prescribed compulsory drawing classes from the third grade on). His handbook corresponded to the cultural and educational policies represented by ministers József Eötvös and Tivadar Pauler and eloquently articulated by Gusztáv Keleti in his thoughts concerning the cultivation of the nation's taste. In 1900 Szegedy-Maszák again received an official state assignment when minister Gyula Wlassics financed his trip to Paris. In the lectures given at the congress he recognized his own old teaching methodology, which in his view Kálmán Györgyi later realized in Budapest schools from 1905 onwards. The basis of this methodology is the cultivation of perception through the exercise of measure taken by the eye and, in the interests of developing the intellect and judgment, the independent, unmediated observation of nature.

Notes

1 Gusztáv Keleti "Teendőink a képzőművészet ügyében" (Our tasks concerning the fine arts). In *Budapesti Szemle* (Budapest Review) (1869): 108–134.

2 *Műcsarnok* (Kunsthalle), 30 (December 9 1900).

3 A journal devoted to the fine arts, archeology and literature, it appeared twice a month between April 1864 and June 1864. *Magyar Hírlap-irodalom statisztikája 1780–1880-ig* (Statistics of

Hungarian journals between 1780–1880). Assembled by Antal Szalády, introduction by József Ferenczy (Budapest, 1889), 140.

4 Appeared twice a month between March 3rd and January 16th, 1869. *Ibid*. 160.

5 "His drawings also had a pedagogical aim. He drew demonstrative wall-drawings for schools, together with Thán, Székely, Telepy, Újházi, Orlai Soma and Jakobey Károly (1873)." Károly Lyka: "Szemlér Mihály", *Művészet* (Art), 1904: 112–116 (http://www.mke.hu/lyka/03/3-2-7-szemler.htm) (Date accessed: November 26, 2007.) The names of the above mentioned painters are from the manuscript letter from ministerial advisor Pál Gönczy (January 23rd, 1880) (in possession of the author).

6 "I send a manuscript version of the German translation of your work Utmutatás az elemi rajztanitásban by Ábrahám Lederer, principal of the Israelite Teachers' College of Budapest, so that you can examine it and, should any changes be made, bring them to our attention as soon as possible." Budapest, February 18, 1876. Manuscript letter from the ministerial advisor, Pál Gönczy. In connection with the English language version: Manuscript letter from Under-secretary Gedeon Tanárky (in possession of the author).

7 Manuscript letter from Under-secretary Albert Berzeviczy, Budapest, July 12th, 1887. (1624) (in possession of the author).

8 Csőregh, Éva. *Rajzoktatásunk története* (The history of our drawing education), Eidos füzetek (Budapest, 1991), 13.

9 Csőregh, 13.

10 Csőregh, 14.

11 *A rajzolás mesterségének kezdete* (The beginnings of the craft of draughtsmanship).

12 Csőregh, 16.

13 Csőregh, 47.

14 Csőregh, 48–49.

15 "A magyar rajztanárok orsz. nagygyülésének jegyzőkönyve" (Minutes of meeting of the national assembly of Hungarian drawing instructors) in *Magyar Rajztanárok Országos Egyesülete,* 8(3) (1905): 143–157.

16 Manuscript entry of Hugó Szegedy-Maszák.

17 Manuscript of Hugó Szegedy-Maszák's diary, October 22nd, 1868. 103–104.

18 *Utmutató az elemi rajztanításban* (hereafter *Guide*), 7.

19 *Guide,* 9.

20 "Wlassics rendelete és a művészi nevelés" (The statute of Wlassics and artistic education). *Egyetértés* (Accordance) (November 20, 1898): 9.

21 Csőregh, 20.

22 This method used no patterns, the teacher drew on the board and instructed the students with key-words to draw with him/her. Csőregh, 21.

23 *Guide,* 7.

24 "The Congresses of the Paris Exposition", *Science.* New Series, 11(283) (June, 1900): 872–874.

25 Letter from Hugó Maszák to Minister Gyula Wlassics (in possession of the author).

26 In Hungarian literature Magyar László Nagy wrote numerous essays and books on the subject, including *Fejezetek a gyermekrajzok lélektanából* (Chapters on the psychology of children's drawings) (Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1905).

27 Ourania Kouvou: "About child art: an examination of the historical identity of an influential art educational practice." Paper presented at the European Conference on Educational Research, University College Dublin, 7–10 September 2005. http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/143833.htm (Date accessed: November 25, 2007).

[28] English translation by Barbara Foxley. http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/emile10.txt (Date accessed: May 26, 2007)

[29] "Miss Wheeler was born in Concorde, MA, and studied in Berlin and Paris after having taught in the Concord schools for two years. She established Miss Wheeler's School in 1880. She was a delegate from this country to the Congress of Secondary Schools in Paris in 1900 and to the Congress of Teachers in Berne in 1904." *The New York Times* (March 11, 1920): 11. http://www.wheelerschool.org.

[30] http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.btm.hu/ihm_anyagok/Ujkor/erdei/img/kepek/02_farbaky_01.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.btm.hu/ihm_anyagok/Ujkor/erdei/esszek/02_01_epiteszet.html&h=167&w=200&sz=20&hl=en&start=19&sig2=eDZvxBfZi55mwX4yBNcQoA&um=1&tbnid=3QvkIc-9SCi_vM:&tbnh=87&tbnw=104&ei=SuZJR42MKoeOwAGBsajuCg&prev=/images%3Fq%3D%2522B%25C3%25A1rczy%2BIstv%25C3%25A1n%2522%26start%3D18%26ndsp%3D18%26svnum%3D10%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26rls%3DRNWE,RNWE:2006-17,RNWE:en%26sa%3DN (Date accessed: November 25, 2007)

[31] http://www.giergl.hu/index.php?eid=033cb0ba733d95ff# (Date accessed: November 25, 2007)

[32] Although it cannot be completely ruled out that he was present as the list contains only the names of those who registered until May 15th. *Magyar Rajztanárok Országos Egyesülete,* 8(1) (1905): 1–15.

[33] Izsó Szüts: *Az elemi rajzokatás reformja (A műízlés nevelése)* (The reform of drawing instruction in elementary schools. The nurturing of the taste for art) (Budapest, 1901). Reviewed by Károly Holló: "Szüts Izsó *Az elemi rajzoktatás reformja*" (Izsó Szüts' The reform of drawing instruction in elementary schools). *A Magyar Rajztanárok Országos Egyesületének Értesítője,* 3(1900): 318–319.

[34] Szüts, 15.

[35] Szüts, 32.

[36] Szüts, 50.

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 169–181
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.12

AMBIGUOUS SPACE: ÁDÁM BODOR'S *SINISTRA DISTRICT*

BORBÁLA ZSUZSANNA TÖRÖK

Central European University, Budapest
Hungary

In the first decade after the collapse of state communism, Transylvania-born Ádám Bodor's novel *Sinistra District* has been praised as one of the most accomplished allegories about Ceaușescu's totalitarian regime. Reread today, the novel reveals its virtue as a historiographical reflection of much larger time-span. Looking at the "natural history" and ethnography of *Sinistra District,* the author draws parallels with Transylvanian regional historiographies, from the Enlightenment to the 20th century, including references to the local lore.

Keywords: symbolic geography, history of Transylvania, nationalism, Cold War

There is hardly any space in Europe with a more notoriously ambiguous character than Transylvania. Since Bram Stoker's *Count Dracula* established itself as a bestseller in the early 20th century, the region has gained a reputation as the fictional land of unworldly creatures, a no-man's land where the civilized world can speculate on its dark and unleashed significant others. The latter aesthetic quality of Transylvania has become so dominant today that the average Anglo-American reader (although not the German or Eastern European educated public, conscious of the continuity of Saxon lore and Protestantism in the region) is little aware that the province has other, more mundane historical narratives of its own about shifting political regimes, elites who ruled and fell, public spheres and so forth.[1] Beyond the natural curiosities of the Transylvanian Carpathians that impressed the British myth-maker and his learned predecessors, the socio-cultural diversity of the region has been indeed remarkable. Wedged between the cultural centers of Hungary and Romania, it has been an ethno-cultural meeting ground, a frontier zone of several cultures, and its inhabitants have maintained until the present day a sense of historical and geo-cultural frontier.

The cultural demarcation of the micro-region has been a major goal of the historiographies that emerged locally since the late eighteenth century. These were nationally oriented and mutually emulative, yet at the same time bound by a shared local patriotism. A staple of this local belonging has also been a hierarchi-

cal ethno-civilizational self-image of a highly fragmented and conservative society in which the different ethnicities were assigned distinct roles according to their presumed level of advancement. It took several decades of post-war state socialism as well as politics of ethnic un-mixing and re-mixing in Romania to disrupt this mentality, which matured during the Enlightenment, though its roots reach back to the Middle Ages. Ádám Bodor's masterful pseudo-novel *Sinistra körzet. Egy regény fejezetei,* excerpts of which have been translated into English by Paul Olchvary under the title *Sinistra District. Chapters of a Novel,* illustrates this shift eloquently, while it also allows interpretations as a satire of interwar regional Hungarian patriotic narratives. My analysis deals with this shift and this satire.

A product of the crisis of the imperial breakdown after World War I, Transylvanism sought a redefinition of Hungarian collective identity in a situation in which the formerly dominant nation had became a minority. Repeating to some extent the pre-war history of former (Romanian and German) "nationalities," Hungarians in the newly enlarged Romanian state experienced variably harsh attempts at the instigation of the local administration and the central government towards "integration" (or, according to many minority members, "assimilation") into an infrastructure that appeared more than alien to them. Many historical sources testify to the fact that the integration remained incomplete, and not only in the case of Hungarians. Pre-war regionalism matured during the interwar decades among the intellectual elite – here too their history resembles the earlier regional Romanian and Transylvanian Saxon cultural and political ethos. In its "strong" version, the apologetic regionalist ideology of Hungarian "Transylvanism" emphasized as well as "invented" the heritage of distinct though peacefully co-existing Romanian, German, and Hungarian populations. The utopian nature of this ideology, which was too tolerant to become mainstream, was exposed particularly by the triumphant nationalist extremism of the 1930s. After the war the domestic "adaptation" of Stalinism and the ensuing national communism dictated the rest: while the state increasingly pursued ethnic homogenization, the official propaganda maintained the false ideology of ethnic cohabitation. Spleen, resignation, nihilism, the retreat into the private realm, and a troubled relationship with one's history have been among the responses of Eastern European post-avant-garde art and literature to totalitarianism, as the famous film *Stalker* so powerfully demonstrates. Bodor's novel, characterized by an ambiguous and fearful "district," has often been compared with Tarkovski's masterpiece. Like the latter, the novel diagnoses the symptoms of physical and moral decay caused by a brutally totalitarian regime on humankind and its environment.

The Critics on *Sinistra District*

When the Transylvanian writer Ádám Bodor left his homeland to settle in Hungary at the end of the 1980s his short stories were well known among the readers of the small circulation Hungarian literary periodicals in Romania. Bodor went on publishing in Hungary, won a literary award given by the journal *Holmi* with the short story *Természetrajzi gyűjtemény Sinistra körzetben* (Natural History Collection in Sinistra District[2]), and published the volume *Sinistra District. Chapters of a Novel*. As the subtitle indicates, stories that had been previously written were modified and reshaped into a loose narrative structure. Each chapter featured a different event linked by the common setting, the narrator, and the district.

A mysterious ambiguity enveloped the prose and puzzled and fascinated its critics. Already the genre of the book "had to be clarified," as László Márton commented (Márton 1873). But most obscure was the scene, visibly the central motif of the narrative. Márton interpreted Sinistra as a "post-historical" site, a "Tarkovskian zone," and placed it among other "demonic landscapes" the features of which shaped the fate of the people living in it. Indeed, the district displays contradictory attributes; it is simultaneously uninhabitable and crowded, spacious and claustrophobic, diverse like a cabinet of curiosities and yet monotonously homogenous. It was seen by Márton as a wilderness never tamed by civilization, yet at the same time mapped, poisoned, fenced off, and divided by a ruthless government, itself a half-fictional mutant of civilization. He gave three interpretations of the space. One was its concrete geographical meaning. It was a border zone between Romania and the Ukraine with a road from Poland towards the south to the Balkans. The Prislop pass, the Pop Ivan ridge, the Colinda forest and the Punte Sinistra colony are or could be real. The second interpretation was based on the stylized mode that brought the book close to the Transylvanist tradition of landscape representation. The third gave an allegorical reading. Literary critic Margit Ács described the bottomless forest of Sinistra as an archetypal motif with demonic force, replete with the novel images of prison camps (1992).

Another source of ambiguity was the nature and identity of the characters, the inhabitants of the Zone, stripped of historical and moral consciousness. Márton noted how these individuals were barely human, resembling animals, insects, even objects. Margit Ács stressed their amorality and explained it as a local feature of what she refers to with an orientalizing gesture as the "Balkans", where allegedly shrewdness and lack of scruples were necessary in the struggle for survival. (Even a superficial reading exposes the ideological stance of the critic; in the novel the Balkans represent the domain of freedom, of "sunlit Greece".) Yet another critic, Béla Bodor, explained the proper names as signs of the mixed ethnic background of the characters (Andrej Bodor, Béla Bundasian, Mustafa

Mukkerman, Jean Tomoioaga, Cornelia Illarion, etc.) and as such the violation of the classic mandate of ethnic purity. Béla Bodor interpreted this as a sign of a vision of the impending doom of the Hungarian minority under Ceaușescu. In general, *Sinistra District* was received as a tragic and nihilistic vision of ethnic Hungarian history, fallen victim to totalitarianism. Finally, the comparison with *Stalker* marked the book as a late product of the Eastern European 1980s and their rhetoric concerning the political "Ice Age."[3]

There are other aspects of the space in Bodor's novel that open up horizons of historical interpretation wider than the one focusing on the Hungarian minorities' experience of the latest decades of Cold War. *Sinistra District* is strongly reminiscent of the "invention of Eastern Europe" as a symbolic wilderness in Western travelogues especially since the Enlightenment, as described by Larry Wolf (1994). The way Ádám Bodor mixes reality with fiction resembles the "synthetic association of lands, which drew upon fact and fiction," the techniques of exoticization characteristic of the writings of educated travelers on the fringes of civilized Europe (Wolf 356). The manner in which Bodor manipulates geographical descriptions and clichés of natural history, as well as topoi of local lore, is akin to the techniques of foreign travelers who put Transylvania on the map of European civilization as a generic composite space, uniting the opposite features of civic urban culture and unenlightened rural ignorance. *Sinistra District* is an echo chamber of these accounts that carries them to the extreme. The facts are presented by the main character Andrej Bodor, himself a traveler and an outsider (although a former inhabitant of Sinistra), whose arrival to and departure from the district frames the story. The characters, described from the cold distance of the seemingly impartial observer, evoke the barbarians of Count de Ségour. Bodor's book is first and foremost a study of individual encounters with naked power and timeless despotism, whether feudal or communist.

Constructing Sinistra

Sinistra may be mapped in several ways. As a pseudo-natural historical account, the narrative begins with a precise geographical localization in the northern Romanian mountain region close to the Ukrainian border. The district is a national park and simultaneously forced domicile of its inhabitants on the Southern slope of the Pop Ivan ridge, an actual mountain in the Maramureșul Carpathian cluster. It is on this slope that Andrej moves northward and upwards, from Dobrin village near Sinistra river to the Colinda forest, an army post and morgue, past the Sinistra Colonia mental hospital, until he reaches the Punte Sinistra mountain resort. After the ascension he walks Southward towards Greece. He leaves in the refrigerator van of Musztafa Mukkerman, who smuggles him out of Sinistra.

The next layer is the symbolic description of the place along the north-south axis. North is associated with chill, ice, night, foreignness, and a lethal illness called the Tunguz cold (the name Tunguz denoting a seminomadic people in eastern Siberia, and connotes, among others, Stalinist Soviet Russia, but also a natural catastrophe, called the Tunguz) carried by the bone-feathered birds:

> This bird moves to the valleys of Sinistra when the chilling winter winds approach from the north....The bone-feathered was not welcome here; they hassled them with stones, the smarter ones simply spat at them, it was believed that wherever the birds flocked, the tunguz cold followed. (It was) the fever that devoured even colonel Borcan in the end (9).

The northern peaks are always covered in snow, and the northern sky is chilly. The warm southern wind melts the ice in Sinistra once only, giving way again to snow. South, the Balkans is designated by the sunlit resorts of Greece: Saloniki, and the Dardanelles. The Balkans, i.e., a transmuted classical Greece, is the counter-image of Sinistra; here "night and day the lights of freedom glimmer," it is the imaginary space of wealth and refinement. After Andrej escapes with the truck driver Musztafa he revisits Sinistra driving a brand-new Suzuki land-rover from Greece. His "classical elegance" differs dramatically from the rags and sandals of the locals.

The symbolic north-south distinction evokes particular historical reminiscences. The dark and barren north contrasted with the warm and mild south conjures the classical division of Europe into the southern/Mediterranean sphere of civilization in contrast with the barbarism of northern intruders.[4] It can also be read as a Cold War distinction between the Eastern Bloc and the West. The internment camp Sinistra is separated from the rest of the world by "a web of fences, trenches and obstacles." It is totally controlled by the army. This "shadowy place" epitomizes Churchill's "Eastern States of Europe" behind the iron curtain, under "totalitarian control" (cited in Wolf, 1). Conversely, the Balkans, the fictional land of freedom, echoes the actual exemption of Greece from Eastern Europe. To quote Churchill's famous formulation again, "Athens alone – Greece with its immortal glories – is free" (cited in Wolf, 2).

The quality of Sinistra as an "Eastern European" realm is further compounded by the savage characteristics of local nature and folks, which may be read as the symbolic others of "Western" civilization. Geographically still in Europe, the space becomes the realm of dream, imagination and invention through the attributes of its inhabitants, who in their turn reveal their own often clumsy imaginings about freedom and happiness (where the industrial design of a Suzuki jeep is characterized as "classical" and "elegant"). The effect is an impression of confusion familiar from travel literature on the Eastern European margins. Together with

Count Louis-Philippe Ségur, who in the late 18th century traveled through Central Europe as minister of the French court to Russia, the reader is no longer sure whether she is in Europe or has left it by moving backwards in time (see Wolf, 17–25). In Sinistra time leaps backwards in history and carries the reader into the mythical time of tales. When colonel Borcan dies of tunguz cold his body is fixed to the ground for fear that griffins will carry him away.

Read against the Transylvanist literary tradition (the novel is complete without it, and there is no explicit reference to the topic) Bodor's writing may also be interpreted as the dystopia of collectivist ideologies. Seeking markers of belonging beyond politics, interwar Transylvanism rediscovered regionalism and *kultúrmagyarság,* that is, the cultural definition of the nation transgressing political boundaries. Praising the particularities of the regional and local, it emphasized ethno-cultural diversity against nationalizing politics. According to the somewhat mystifying formulation of Károly Kós:

> …the cultural production but also the Transylvanian man of this wonderfully unique land has two characteristics, one of them being Hungarian, Romanian or German, but the other one being Transylvanian. This is the squaring of the circle that makes the Transylvanian or: Transylvania incomprehensible to everybody outside (1921, 3).

Landscape symbolism received distinctive importance in the new-fangled sentimental myth of the homeland. Homeland nature thus stood for solidarity (symbolized by the choir of trout in the poem *Pisztrángok kara* by Lajos Áprily), stability and persistence (in poems of Sándor Reményik such as *A kinyujtott és a visszahúzott kéz* (The Extended and the Withdrawn Hand), tolerance and friendship (in the novels of Károly Kós), teacher (in the Bildungsroman trilogy *Ábel* (Abel) by Áron Tamási), or treasure (in *Varjú nemzetség* [Crow Nation] by Károly Kós). These values marked the return to a romantic understanding of nationhood based on public virtues.

How does Bodor's *Sinistra District* relate to this tradition? There is a strong similarity in the stylized and symbolic appearance of the landscape. Like his predecessors, Bodor endows nature with characteristics that foretell the fate of its characters. *Sinistra* suggests their doomed life; they either escape by the skin of their teeth or die a violent death. The weather is an important agent, as the only genuine love story in the novel starts and ends with a dizzying spring day. This love story, the only narrative revealing the noble sentiment of love (and not merely the desire of the flesh), carries a loose biblical connotation; the lovers meet on Palm Sunday, and after an interment and torture in a mental hospital, the woman finds liberation in death on Easter Sunday.

Beyond the structural similarities, Bodor's *district* is not the continuation of Transylvanism's idyllic landscape literature, but rather its violent and dystopian anti-statement. Sinistra is an anti-homeland. Most of the characters are interned or sent there (colonel Coca Mavrodin, from Dobrogea) or are foreigners or spies (Andrej Bodor, who came to find his interned son), and the intimacy of the homeland landscape is entirely missing. The space has degenerated into a military camp and forced domicile, its caves have been filled, and its mine has become the feeding site for the government's bears. So Andrej's statement upon arrival in *Sinistra* that, "here my life will be completed," evokes Transylvanism's romanticism only to refute it through its sheer absurdity. He will have to do the dirty work for his superiors, including killing a man, and finally escape in the refrigerator truck of the half-Turkish, half-German smuggler. The space thus evokes antagonistic interpretations that exclude its unequivocal characterization. In the end, *Sinistra District* remains the ambiguous, half-real, half-imagined space of doom.

The People of *Sinistra*

The ambiguity of the novel also resides in the inhabitants. László Márton mentioned the Babel-like confusion of names. He finds them both amusing and horrifying. Indeed these names are made up of unusual combinations. Some of them carry permanent attributes in the fashion of epic poems that contribute to their extraordinary, archetypal aura. Here is a list of the most important names: *Béla Bundasian,* Andrej's half-Armenian foster son; *Elvira Spiridon,* Andrej's lover with the "velvet bottom;" *Aranka Westin,* "the old mare," another of Andrej's lovers; *Bebe Tescovina,* the girl with glowing red eyes; Colonel *Puiu Borcan,* whose black umbrella starts flying after his death like an oversized bat; Colonel *Coca Mavrodin,* alias *Izolda Mavrodin-Mahmudia, from Dobrogea,* the substitute for the late colonel Borcan; *Musztafa Mukkerman,* the homeless track driver; *Géza Hutira;* the albino twins *Hamza Petrika; Doctor Olinek,* the stinky bear officer; *Connie Illafeld,* alias *Cornelia Illarion,* Béla Bundasian's green-eyed lover; the spy called *red rooster;* the *grey ganders,* Mavrodin's twenty informers dressed in grey suits: *vain stags*. The Babel of names is also one of languages and ethnicities, since Romanian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Jewish, German (as well as its Zipzer dialect), and Rusin are all used in the district. In addition to the consociation of the numerous nationalities, the mixed ethnicity of the characters (Andrej, Béla Bundasian, Coca, Musztafa, etc.) is also a dominant feature.

Bodor's ethnic potpourri is a sarcastic grimace indeed at Transylvanism's emphasis on national purity. Transylvanism opted for cultural pluralism for Romanians, Hungarians and Germans, but not for mixed marriages. The premise of harmonious coexistence of the aforementioned nations was the maintenance of

the wall between each of the cultures, despite the homogenizing politics of the state. The following passage from Kós' *Kultúrtörténeti vázlat* exemplify this notion:

> ...during thousand years on the land of Transylvania no people and no culture could or wanted to shape the other in its image. External forces tried it sometimes, at great sacrifice but with little result and no ultimate success. Contrarily, the never totally fading purpose of the three coexisting cultures was to acquire such common features, while they maintained the racial character that made them typically Transylvanian despite their distinct features... These manifest common features build up that special Transylvanian psyche that no national brethren of the Transylvanians could ever understand.... Transylvania's lot was the happiest when her peoples accepted together the separate Transylvanian life and contributed to it with their distinct Transylvanian minds (88).

Transylvanism presumed the existence of pure and distinct local identities. The "Transylvanian psyche" shared by the "three nations" distinguished them from their co-nationals outside the region. Obviously, the focus was on Transylvanian Hungarians. To quote Kós again: "the Transylvanian differs from the dweller of Hungary, but especially different and foreign for us is the Hungarian from Budapest" (1912, 5). *Sinistra District* addresses the theme of local identity and patriotism that disturbs and caricatures the Transylvanist utopia. There is no special focus on the fate of Hungarians or any other ethnicity in the narrative. (In this light, Béla Bodor's contention that Bodor wrote on the tragic fate of the Hungarian minority under communism may be misleading.) On the contrary, the individual stories prove that under a dictatorial regime all the nationalities suffer. Bodor's narrative creates an inverted democracy of multinational underdogs. Ethnicity has no more value than other physical traits, such as hair color, the texture of one's skin. Historical references are built into the text in the form of allusions, especially to the torture, deportations, and imprisonments associated with the change of political regimes in the whole region of Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and South-Eastern Europe, well documented since the end of World War I.

The mixed origin of the characters challenges the Transylvanist ethno-cultural utopia. Ignoring the myth of the coexisting but never inter-marrying three "main" ethnic clusters, Bodor fills the space with half-breeds, as well as exotic minorities from the fringes (see the names listed above): Ukrainians, Turks, Rusins, Zipzers, Serbs, Armenians, marginalized by patriotic historiography. *Sinistra District* generates a regional existence indeed, but a violent and artificial one, without links to the past. Since the characters lack any historical consciousness, the problem of identity related to national past does not exist. The lack of past is linked to the lack of future; Sinistra's inhabitants do not plan to change their lives. The only riot, a

minor plot at the end of the narrative, is easily suppressed. The actions of the characters lack inner drive, let alone intellectual reflection. They have no influence on the events. On the level of meta-narrative, they are excluded from history. This a-historic character is another feature of Bodor's archetypical savage realm.

Instead of cultural tradition there is the fictional account of cultural devastation, the eternal characteristic to political dictatorships. An exemplum is the life story of Conny Illafeld, Béla Bundasian's beloved, the last descendant of Boyars from Bucovina. It is not revealed to the reader if martyrdom, which evokes parallels with Christ's Passion, was caused by her privileged ancestry, her exceptional beauty and intellect, her contacts with Jews from Cernowitz and Lemberg, or her selfless love. Yet it is typical to the brutal sarcasm of the narrative that her cultural riches, especially the knowledge of languages, are revealed at the point when she arrives from the mental hospital, insane, covered in fur, mixing German, Romanian, Hungarian, and several other local dialects. This frugal reference to cultural and human loss is even more shocking, as it reveals the bestiality of her mental destruction and the treason of her former lover:

> Her face was covered with fur as well, in the shaggy fur her green eyes were glowing. She did not even know her name. I still tried to see it from the funny side. I tried to catch the eye of colonel Titus Tomoioaga for a knowing look. And though I wasn't really in the mood, I smiled off and on, as one does with the nutty (100–101).

In the Transylvanist utopia the cult of homeland used to be the very basis of human existence. The iconography of the nature of the homeland, with its mountains and forests, embodied purity and was contrasted with the image of towns and valleys, the vilified image of civilization. In Bodor's prose this moral order is destroyed both in the landscape symbolism and in the portraiture of the characters. The degeneration of homeland into a zone of imprisonment is correlated with mutations in the personalities of the figures. The characters of the district are moral amputees. Elvira Spiridon leaves her husband to become Andrej's mistress without the least revolt when captain Coca Mavrodin orders her to do so, Géza Hutira talks politely with the foresters while he poisons them, and the dwarf Gabriel Dunka reports the unfortunate Elvira without the least hesitation, knowing that she will not survive it.

The characters take after the corrupted natural world mentally and physically, acquiring its characteristics. They become similar to animals, insects, even plants, sometimes even machines. No feelings are expressed when one of the twins discovers his brother's suicide: "Well, doc, I see you brought his boots. Then I won't even ask where the feet of my brother from them are." (90) Andrej evinces a similar lack of emotion in the scene in which he gets a new job: "On the damp, grey

stone table there laid the late roadman Zoltán Marmorstein, his pants stuffed with his guts. He did not stir, (and) I already felt his drying foot cloth to be mine." (61)

Resembling the layered construction of the space, the shaping of characters involves several perspectives. One is the topos of misery. The characters of Sinistra live in the most austere circumstances, and their customs are primitive: "Gathering in the forest in hard times was safe bread, one could fill his own satchel beside the treasury bag. The blueberry, the blackberry and the chanterelle can make one happy, really." (28) "The methylated spirits, filtered through the white of the bread, spongy mushroom, or mashed blackberry, are the favorite drink of the forest region." (83) The inhabitants of Sinistra are anthropological mirrors of the "thoroughly rude and barbarous people" of 17th century French mercenary Captain Jacques Margeret or the Russians of Adam Olearius, German envoy, with their "vile and loathsome words" (the characters of Sinistra casually mix polite expressions with common references to sexual organs), "noisy farts" (when he leaves, the surviving Hamza Petrika breaks wind "as if his spirit were departing"), "lusts of the flesh and fornication" (think of the pleasures Andrej enjoys with Aranka Westin and Elvira Spiridon), and even "the vile depravity we call sodomy" (the twins and doctor Olinek, Musztafa Mukkerman) (cited in Wolf, 10–11). The "checking out" of Severin Spiridon's wife for Andrej's pleasure resembles Casanova's purchase of the twelve-year old sexual object. Obviously, the reduction of the figures to mere animals or objects results from their comparison to the latent norm of Western civilization, outside the symbolic space of Sinistra. This perspective reduces the individual differences between the characters and creates the motive of demi-sauvage.

The presentation of power structure in *Sinistra District* invokes Orwellian motifs: omnipresence, total control, Big Brother-surveillance, complicity of the church, spying, plots. The motifs evoke late totalitarianism: bears under governmental protection, electricity cables destroyed by the officials, a ban on accumulation of goods, the unpredictability of life. Almost everyone, including the main character, lives in an intimate relationship with power and is ready to do a favor, even kill, in exchange for a job, a passport, or simply to be left alone. The characters, previously described as barbarous, bear the stamp of the regime as well. They enter the row of literary figures testifying the effects of communist history.

When Chernyshevski created the ideal of the Russian Revolutionary in the second half of the 19th century he was planning the perfect executioner of social reforms. To this end one had to leave tradition behind and "simplify" oneself in spirit and flesh, to inscribe oneself entirely into a material order of existence. The revolution was taking place intellectually, it was a process of reeducation. The end-result was the New Man, disciplined, deliberately banal, ascetic, and rational. He was placed in a materialist cosmology, without transcendence but purely mechanistic and scientifically pragmatic. Morality became instrumental, it was

translated into social usefulness, and freedom meant understanding the necessity of devoting oneself to the system. According to this logic, being an outsider, being cynical, refusing to learn, forgetting what one has learnt, all of this meant sinning. The reader's attention is drawn to the proto-ideological character of this portrait, its precedence to ideology or political program (Besancon 124).

Yet since his birth, the Chernyshevskian hero has not fared very well among critics of scientific materialism. During the last hundred-and-fifty years the criticism of the revolutionary type has dealt with the moral degeneration encoded in him, as the eloquent essay of Czesław Miłosz reveals it (1981). Instead of demonizing him like his great Russian predecessors, Dostoyevsky or Bulgakov, Miłosz treats the idealistic image of the hero with ironic distance, that finds resonance in the portraiture in *Zone Sinistra*. The characters of Bodor's novel are the image of the Chernyshevskian figure come to life. Their portraits are completed with the attributes of the imprisoned personality: fear of being on the wrong side in the political wrangling, spying and denouncing as the basis of social ascendance, the art of concealing feelings and opinion behind a mask of commonplaces.

Bodor's characters reflect a mix of various historical interpretations of 20th century Eastern European human types. Their simplicity recalls the machine-like hero of Chernyshevski. But their complicity with the regime, their slyness and corruptness indicates that these portraits were drawn in disenchantment with and mockery of the Soviet-type hero. When Andrej arrives for the first time in Sinistra he is received by the messenger of colonel Borcan:

> "This is it," said Nikifor Tescovina. "This is the place where you can shelter. Nobody will ask you anything."
>
> "How did you know that I would come?"
>
> "Ever since you set foot in Sinistra District colonel Borcan knows about your every step. This land attracts people like you. If someone starts upwards along the Sinistra he doesn't stop until reaching Dobrin."
>
> "You have reassured me. Then the colonel knows too that I am a plain wanderer."
>
> "Of course he does. And tell me, plain wanderer, what do you wish to do? You seem to be a versatile person."
>
> "I love the forest a lot, the trees, the bushes. Let's say, I know something about mushrooms, fruits, I have already worked in markets. I can go, if you want, to timberyards, to woodpeelers. Or, if needed, I can set traps."
>
> "That doesn't sound bad. I will talk to the colonel. But until he visits you personally, please, do not leave this place. I mean, do not even step out of the house."
>
> "And to relieve myself, if you don't mind, where can I do?"
>
> "It is best if you stick out your behind out of the window."

In Sinistra everyone is useful and can be used. But usefulness is not the idealistic, unequivocal good of the interpretation of the revolutionaries. It has already acquired the ambiguity captured by Miłosz, it can refer to the interests of the system, concealed, circumscribed, seldom spoken, yet clear to everyone. The self-disciplining of the body has been transformed into the wooden mask worn by the heroes of Miłosz. The ridiculously stiff camouflage of Sinistra's characters is sometimes penetrated by a weak manifestation of personality (the velvety warm look of Musztafa Mukkerman, the love-suicide of one of the Hamza Petrikas, the moving love story of Bebe Tescovina and Géza Hutira, the ironical remarks of Aron Wargotzki before being built into a wall alive.

The stylized presentation of characters, the use of topoi and clichés in their construction, suggest the author's interest in types rather than individuals, in a certain historical and geographical setting. But what a bitter irony is revealed in the treatment of these characters! It is not the community of the tragic patriots as in the case of inter-war heroic literature one finds in *Sinistra District,* but rather the random collective of prisoners chained to the locale.

Bodor does not strive to create a flattering image. His iconoclasm vis-à-vis national and political utopias, the avoidance of creating positive heroes, the suspension of the characters in a subpolitical, subhuman, sub-temporal context, and their grotesquely overdrawn portraits evoke patterns of ethnic and social stigma (Antohi, 216, 242, 244). Bodor creates the symbolic geography of misfortune that echoes the orientalist division of Europe into regions of salvation and regions of the doomed. Nevertheless, *Sinistra District* does not apply the pathos of the great laments in the fashion of national prophets like Chaadaev or Cioran. There is no specific ethnic group to address, let alone victimize or scapegoat.[5] Bodor creates the ethno-cultural hodgepodge of underdogs. Beyond the veil of national uniqueness, he discovers the awful face of self-devouring political power. Colonel Borcan falls victim to the Tunguz cold, Coca Mavrodin freezes solid in the forest. Her death, like everything else in the narrative, is grotesque; what remains of her is a "wet, insect-smelling pile of cloth, crammed with army stars" (43).

Notes

1 The political claim of the power structure was generally so strong that often the very name of the region was censored in public speech (e.g. in the post-war decades until 1989).

2 The translation of titles and quotations from the works of Ádám Bodor are mine.

3 I borrowed this motif from a lecture by Sorin Antohi, who relates the Eastern European topoi of the 1980s referring to chill and coldness to a general crisis in dealing with history and historiography.

4 The ancient north-south cultural dichotomy between the civilized Hellenes and the barbaric invaders from the north mentioned by Wolf (4) is elaborated by Koselleck.

5 Antohi, 216.

Bibliography

Ács, Margit: "Az erdő démonikus vonzása" (The demonic attraction of the forest). *Holmi 4(12)* (December 1992): 1880–1883.

Antohi, Sorin: "Cioran si stigmatul Românesc. Mecanisme identitare și definitii radicale ale etnicitătii" (Cioran and the Romanian stigma. Identity mechanisms and radical definitions of ethnicity), in idem, *Civitas imaginalis. Istorie și utopie în cultura română* (Civitas Imaginalis. History and Utopia in Romanian Culture) (Bucharest: Litera, 1994) (second revised edition, Iași: Polirom, 1999), 208–290.

Besancon, Alain: "The New Man," in *The Intellectual Origins of Leninism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981).

Bodor, Ádám: *Sinistra körzet. Egy regény fejezetei* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1992).

Bodor, Ádám: "*Sinistra District. Chapters of a Novel* (excerpts)." Trans. Paul Olchváry. *The Hungarian Quarterly,* No. 149 (Spring 1998).

Bodor, Ádám: *Vissza a fülesbagolyhoz* (Back to the long-eared owl) (Pécs: Jelenkor Kiadó, 1997).

Bodor, Béla. "Andrej a rengetegben" (Andrej in thick woods). *Holmi 4(12)* (December 1992): 1883–1885.

Koselleck, Reinhardt: "The Historical-Political Semantics of Assymetric Counterconcepts," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 159–197.

Kós, Károly: "Erdély és a pesti közvélemény" (Transylvania and public opinion in Pest). *Kalotaszeg,* 2 (1912): 1–5.

Kós, Károly: "*Kultúrtörténeti vázlat"* (A sketch of cultural history) (Cluj: Erdélyi Szépmíves Céh, 1934).

Kós, Károly: "Kiáltó szó Erdély, Bánság, Kőrösvidék és Máramaros magyarságához" (Outcry to the Hungarians of Transylvania, Banat and Maramureș), in Kós-Zágoni-Pál, *Kiáltó szó. A magyarság útja. A politikai aktivitás rendszere* (Outcry. The path of Hungarians. The system of political acticity) (Cluj, 1921).

Láng, Gusztáv: "Egy önmeghatározás tanulságai. Jegyzetek a transzilvanizmusról" (The lessons of a self-definition. Notes about Transylvanism). (Unpublished lecture notes 1997) 1–26.

Márton, László: "Az elátkozott peremvidék" (The Doomed Periphery). *Holmi 4(12)* (December 1992): 1873–1880.

Miłosz, Czesław: *The Captive Mind*. Reprint (London: Penguin Books, 1981).

Tánczos, Vilmos: *Keletnek Kapui* (The Gates of the East) (Cluj: Kriterion, 1997).

Wolf, Larry: *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization and the Mind of the Enlightenment* (California: Stanford University Press, 1994).

HStud 22 (2008)1–2, 183–206
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.22.2008.1–2.13

THE POLITICS OF MOOD: ÁDÁM BODOR AND EASTERN EUROPE

ROLAND VÉGSŐ

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN
USA

My reading of Ádám Bodor's novel *Sinistra körzet* (Sinistra District, 1992) shows that the political dimension of literary production cannot be reduced to the problem of referentiality (the correct representation of an empirical reality in a realist or an allegorical narrative). In fact, Bodor's fiction suggests that it is precisely the breakdown of the referential paradigm that is the privileged political moment in literature. As I argue, Bodor's text suggests that beyond the political realism of historical referentiality we find a new kind of geopolitics based on a regionalist aesthetics of "mood." In this regard, it becomes clear that the "Sinistra District" is not an allegorical representation of a historical reality (the world of totalitarian regimes) but a rhetorical figure which stages the ideological fantasy that structures that given historical realty.

Keywords: politics and aesthetics, ethics, geopolitics, identification and misidentification, ideological fantasy, mood

Although by the time Ádám Bodor moved to Hungary from Transylvania in 1982 he was a fairly well-published author in Romania (his first volume came out in 1969) who had received appreciative criticism from important figures of the Romanian–Hungarian cultural elite, his Hungarian reception was rather sporadic and meager. Györgyi Pozsvai explains this critical attitude by pointing out that Bodor refused to be a "minority author" at a time when the official state-run cultural machinery expected an explicit engagement with the work on "collective consciousness" from Hungarian artists living in neighboring countries (200). With the Hungarian publication of two of his volumes, by the second half of the 1980s his literary reputation was definitely on the rise. This appreciative critical tendency reached its climax with the publication of the novel *Sinistra District* in 1992, which was immediately hailed as a "true masterpiece."[1]

But one of the most salient features of the contemporary reviews of Bodor's novel was a rather antagonistic polarization of the critical responses, a polarization that could be interpreted as a historical symptom of the reorganization of critical discourses after the collapse of the socialist system. The debate was mainly

centered around the novel's relation to the experiences of the socialist past. One of the camps seemed to take it for granted that the novel was primarily about the political and ethical structures of a given socio-political system,[2] while the other camp tried hard to do away with the geopolitical reading by emphasizing the formal (or in their own term, hermeneutic) complications of the work.[3] To put it differently, the basic matrix for one set of the readings was geopolitical territory, while for the other it was (narratological) poetic space.

In the more recent criticism on the novel this polarization is explicitly addressed as a critical heritage, but instead of asking for its conditions and limits newer readings often seem content simply to describe the two poles and declare affiliation with one of the extremes. For example, in her monograph on Bodor, Györgyi Pozsvai discusses the reception of *Sinistra* in the following way:

> Although the majority of the readings is based on narratological analysis or devotes a considerable amount of attention to the structural features of the work, this criticism still displays a duplicity based on whether the given readings stay within the limits of an aesthetic universe or, by moving beyond it, engage in external adequations (for example, historical or political) (204).

Pozsvai makes her own stance obvious on a number of occasions, for example, when she insists that *Sinistra* "was not written as a response to an actual political situation or as a work with didactic content" (163). Commenting on the ethical complications of the novel, Béla Kovács, as a part of his summary of the polarized reception, writes

> To the same extent that the above-mentioned [geopolitical] readings take it as self-evident that the ethical aspects of the novel are tied to the political history of a region, those who pay more attention to the poetic complications of the work are uncertain about the validity of such claims. As a consequence, the question as to whether the *Sinistra District* is essentially amoral or not can still be seen as a legitimate question for readings of the novel, but it appears to be almost definite that the area around Dobrin City is not such an easily defined geographical region as the above-mentioned readings would have it (131).

In this regard, László Bengi's reading of the novel is important in that it builds its own construction upon the insights of the narratological readings, yet it also points out the limitations of this kind of criticism by reference to a philosophy of subjectivity. This is how Bengi describes the two critical poles: one group of criticism, by paying rather little attention to the actual form of the text,

> takes for its point of departure the anthropological determinations (or worse, the political adequations) mediated by Sinistra District and interprets the text as a reflection on being or existence (95).

The readings that belong to the other pole, however, start from narratological considerations, "but they either cannot or are not willing to apply their findings to the field of the reflection on being" (96). Consequently, while still acknowledging his ties with the hermeneutical camp, he formulates his own project as an attempt "to move from a narrato-poetical analysis of textual organization, from the interpretation of poetic construction, to the question of subjectivity" (97).

Let us, then, take Bengi's argument as our starting point in formulating our disagreement with both of these critical camps. Since the critical heritage frames a set of problems in a strictly exclusive manner, the question emerges whether it could be possible to bring back into the discussion the problem of the "geopolitical" in such a way that (to use Bengi's expression) "the reflection on being" becomes a political problem. Simply put, it is not the mere fact but the manner of the earlier geopolitical readings that we should find objectionable, since they reduce the political dimension of the aesthetic to a realistic content or an empirical referent. My problem with the narratological readings in the present context is that, although this should not be a necessary consequence of their premises, in their discourse "politics" becomes an absolutely untheorized blind spot, and as such it is simply dismissed even before it could become an object of critical reflection. Staging the debate in these terms presents us with a false alternative. On the basis of the texts of these critics, it seems as if we have only two choices: we can either choose to read the political in a rather simplistic way or we have simply to dismiss political readings in general. As I would like to believe, however, our task is not to *dismiss,* but to *think through* the complications of geopolitics in Bodor's text.

The Mood of a Not Too Distinctly Defined Region

If we choose to speak in geopolitical categories, first we must settle the meaning of the term "Eastern Europe." In order to set up this discussion, I will start with a reading of *A Börtön szaga* (The Smell of Prison), an extended book-length interview with Bodor edited by Zsófia Balla. On the basis of this interview, it becomes excessively obvious that Bodor is intensively preoccupied with the question of Eastern European identity, yet he shows himself somewhat hesitant to give this identity a primarily political meaning in the restricted sense. First, we must point out that he considers it to be a much broader historical category that goes far beyond the effects of Communist dictatorships. In light of this insistence on the centrality of the geopolitical theme in his fiction, it seems somewhat absurd that the complete evacuation of this theme could ever become a serious program for literary criticism. It is equally obvious, however, that according to Bodor's definition of the function of art, the geopolitical moment cannot be reduced to a realistic content that simply refers to and mirrors an extra-textual political reality. Hence, the

critical question has to be formulated in the following terms: inasmuch as literature cannot be reduced to an exclusively political meaning, how do we talk about the equally irreducible political component? My point is that the political moment is precisely the failure of this mimetic component and not the realistic recognition of a historical reality. In other words, it is precisely the failure of the mimetic representation of an Eastern European reality that is the irreducible geopolitical moment in Bodor's art rather than its successful recreation in an allegorical narrative.

I will quote here at length the passage that most concisely summarizes Bodor's *ars poetica:*

> I am primarily inspired by the existential landscape of the homeland and the whole Eastern European region, by its primitive morals, lethargic mood; I could hardly have written about anything else or in any other way. Consequently, right from the very beginning, my writings seemed to be the products of the publication industry of a democratic society – always staying clear of the terminology of any power structure. There is not one word in them about the social conditions that surrounded me in reality, only about the mood [*életérzés*] of a not too distinctly defined region – which indirectly might of course project the ominous image of a fictive political system. Nevertheless, not so concretely and not to the degree that the actually existing system could have taken offense at it. This was so much the easier for me since I was really not preoccupied with the anatomy of communist despotism, the litany of its incidental crimes, or the critique of its ideology. As I have already mentioned, my main interest was the general moral and existential landscape of the region which, as it already appeared to be at the time, is mostly independent from the ideologies of the political systems that happen to be in power. We are talking about a finely tuned system of communication, the keys to which point towards aesthetics and ethics and not politics. To this very day I am still embarrassed by taking concrete political stances, when a piece of writing has a primarily political and not an ethical and aesthetic message. And while the writer is still trying to talk about the most important things, the general feeling of threat and helplessness, in the course of the ceaseless search for modes of expression the language of writing gets refined: through its obligatorily elliptical structure, writing gained in artistic surplus. At the same time, coaxed into the labyrinths of the aesthetic, the attention of the censor also tended to fail him – it became possible to circumvent him. Although my short stories were undeniably the products of and about a strictly controlled world, in their fictitious, timeless space, resigned atmosphere, sometimes grotesque internal relations, the political system was ashamed to recognize itself. The most important thing was that the censors did not know what to do with them (152–154).

Three significant tensions come to the fore in these lines: first, there is an opposition between politics and ethics/aesthetics; second, we find an assertion of a certain regionalist aesthetic based on the contrast between historical reality and mood; and third, there is a tension between the renunciation of the political content of literature and a simultaneous affirmation of political critique through art (after all, the system is ashamed to recognize itself in these works). The first two of these oppositions can be easily aligned to form a coherent system. On the one side, we find the aesthetic and ethical function of art connected to a regionalist realism of "mood." At the same time, Bodor rejects political content reduced to a realism of facts. This is why the third opposition seems to disturb the equilibrium of the argument, since it raises the possibility of a political function that goes beyond historical realism.

As we can see, Eastern Europe is defined in the passage cited as the primary object of representation, only the reflected reality is not an empirical reality of the author's life experiences but rather a much more elusive entity referred to as "the mood of a not too distinctly defined region." Right away it should be obvious that this expression, in an almost contradictory manner, posits the unity of mood of an indefinite entity. As if the unity of a region, elusive in concrete physical determinations, could be allocated to the actual unity of an immaterial instance like a mood. Bengi has already implicitly indicated the significance of this shift in Heideggerian terms when he wrote of *Sinistra District:*

> Therefore, I do not claim that the world of the district is or could be independent in all respects from the experience of dictatorships. I only insist that for the poetic interpretation this experience is not already given and does not fulfill its actual role in an extra-aesthetic dimension. It is rather, as a (world-interpreting) component of the form-giving function, created in the process of reading, as *a universal moment of man's attunement in being* (98, my emphasis).

One is thus tempted to speak of Bodor's art in a Heideggerian language, in *universal* existential terms that refer us to "the (uniform) state of thrownness in facticity" (111). As we have seen, however, Bodor himself does not speak in universal but in regional terms. Furthermore, Bodor discusses Eastern Europe as a source of identity that secures a historical continuity more fundamental than the accidental political formations that happen to superimpose themselves on this quasi-ontological region:

> As I have already mentioned, my main interest was the general moral and existential landscape of the region, which […] is mostly independent from the ideologies of the political systems that happen to be in power.

Therefore, the issue is not just the opposition between the experience of dictatorship and the universal human condition, but the problem of a regional identity that incidentally includes both, yet cannot be reduced to either, and primarily has the mode of existence of a "mood." This is why I agree with Bengi's point that the "political experience" brought into the aesthetic field cannot preexist the act of reading but must be produced by it. *We have to add, though, that the universal existential condition does not preexist the aesthetic experience either.* To put it differently, art cannot be a simple metaphor for an abstraction called the human condition, since the latter does not exist until the act of reading creates it. Hence the significance of the regional for Bodor: the universal will always only appear as it is produced within the experience of the regional.

In the quoted passage, after dismissing the political, Bodor defines the function of art itself as that which goes beyond the world of transient political formations to the more fundamental level of ethics and aesthetics. We also learn, however, that under the rule of the given political system the political dimension of the text is only manifested through absences, or through the very absence of the political as such: the censorial intervention necessitates a politics/poetics of omissions and ellipses. That is, while Bodor rejects realistic political content, he maintains a potential political function for his fiction. And as the passage makes clear, this poetic and political strategy is based on a double movement: a missing element produces an artistic surplus ("through its obligatorily elliptical structure, writing gained in artistic surplus").

Bodor discusses the significance of this double movement of ellipsis and artistic surplus in quite precise terms. First of all, let us consider the missing element that generates the artistic surplus. It is important here that we distinguish two different forms of ellipsis: the prohibited and the impossible. In the passage quoted above the missing element is primarily defined as the empirical reality that is not represented for both artistic and political reasons. This incidental censorial omission, however, is based on a more fundamental understanding of the missing element as a traumatic kernel of personal experience. Commenting on his childhood and the lack of his childhood experience in his works, Bodor says the following:

> Thus, this abstinence from actual experience is equally a question of principle and instinct: I have no other choice but to obey myself. […] Therefore, my childhood is also missing from my writings. Or maybe this is how it actually really appears in it. […] But if I touched its shell, if I tried to extricate the real events from below their skin, I would deprive the memory of its mystery, its living force, its virginity, all in all, of its artistic stimulus. This is why I do not write prison novels either (183).

The logic of this omission is not the same as that of the political intervention of the censor. In the present case, "personal experience" is missing from the texts

precisely because of its very significance: its most authentic artistic "representation" turns out to be its designation as the locus of the lack that produces artistic surplus. On the one hand, then, we find the strategic movement to circumvent the censor; on the other hand, we have the impossible confrontation with the traumatic kernel of "personal experience" which simply cannot be represented – it enters the field of representation as that which is absent.

In order to understand the function of the artistic *surplus* produced by this lack let me recount one of Bodor's rather amusing anecdotes. Apparently sometime in the early seventies a whole socialist brigade of basket weavers took offense at one of his short stories (entitled "A Place Where They Weave Baskets") and dispatched its delegates to the editor of the journal that published the story to set the facts right. Here is Bodor's summary of this little farce of collective misreading:

> The writer comrade was right about a number of things, especially what concerns the comrade who did some jail time, but certain details need to be corrected. Anyway, how does he know all this when none of us seems to remember that he had ever visited the workshop in person? As it turned out, the imaginary milieu, the region within the short story, had an almost identical replica in our proximity, only in a more commonplace, more mundane version, without the artistic surplus of deviant elements. The objectionable part was this excess with which the honorable basket weavers did not know what to do; they wanted to take out of the story precisely that which was the reason why it was written in the first place. […] It seems as if when something is well-made-up, it is a part of reality (185).

Whether the story is real or not, it can be read as a parable of misreading: it represents the "realist fallacy" that cannot come to terms with an artistic excess. By identifying an excess with which they themselves cannot identify, the basket weavers' reading can be translated into the following interplay of recognition and non-recognition: "Yes, that's me. But this is not how I should be seen." In other words, the short story provoked a certain mismatch between imaginary and symbolic identification: to be more precise, it caused an excess of symbolic identification (an identification with the position from which you are observed, the ego-ideal) at the expense of an imaginary identification (an identification with the ideal ego, the exemplary communist worker).

The censor and the basket weaver are the two main characters of the same system of misreadings. The basket weaver identifies with the position of the censor and wants to intervene in the story; the censor, in order to locate the potentially harmful elements of the story, has to identify with the point of view of the ordinary worker-reader (e.g., that of a basket weaver) and ends up tolerating but not censoring the piece because, as Bodor puts it, "the political system was ashamed to recognize itself" in his stories. The significance of this little comedy of

misreadings is the symmetrical structure of *misrecognitions* in Bodor's stories: in his own words, the artistic essence of his texts is precisely the fact that they allow for this double play of identifications and non-recognitions.[4] What Bodor is suggesting here is that the reason why his fiction actually "works" is not only that it makes this double misunderstanding possible (as an amusing, comic episode), but that this misrecognition is structurally encoded in the very texture of his work: his fiction is a privileged region of misrecognition. In other words, and Bodor is very explicit about this point, the point of art is precisely to disrupt identification rather than fully accommodate it. What we find beyond this imaginary identification is merely a mood.

What appears to be significant from the perspective of the reception of the novel is that the field of ethics is also structured by a similar moment of misrecognition. According to Bodor, both truth and the authentic ethical act necessarily arise from misrecognition. Responding to Zsófia Balla's question concerning the seemingly unavoidable fate of alcoholism and Transylvanian patterns of survival and self-destruction, Bodor recounts two similar stories of misrecognition that go beyond the situational comedy of mistaken identities and describe Eastern European ethical patterns. The protagonist of the first story is the author himself. He tells us about a party that he organized at his own house after he finally received his passport from the Romanian authorities so that he could move to Hungary. During the celebration he got so drunk that, although he was at home, at one point of the night he started asking his wife if they had enough money to take a cab home: "This would be, then, the meaning of perfect diversion [*kikapcsolódás*], when even your usual surroundings are completely alienated" (160). While diversion and alienation are exact opposites (since diversion temporarily restores identity to itself), "perfect diversion" coincides with its seeming opposite, "complete alienation." Although the home is supposedly a refuge from alienation and it should provide a secure haven for the restoration of identity threatened by an alienating reality, in Bodor's anecdote this structure is reversed, or better, pursued to its paradoxical conclusion. Diversion turns out to be an alienation from alienation; and this alienation to the second degree ("complete alienation") is pursued as a form of recreation. To be completely at home is to misrecognize the home. In other words, the truth about the home cannot exclusively come from knowledge of the home – it has to emerge from a misrecognition. We find the only authentic relation to the home in this uncanny homelessness, when home is revealed as a fantasy.

The second anecdote relates the strange case of László Csiki, Bodor's friend, who ended up cheating *with* his own wife:

> In a state similar to mine, he started wooing his own wife ferociously. In the frenzy of the revelry, he took a liking to her, and without hesitation started pursuing her. After reaching the conclusion that things

> had taken their intended course and he had managed to seduce her, he ventured the indecent proposal that they should disappear from the party together, only they can't go to his place because his wife is at home. The wife had the quick solution: no problem, they can go to her place, because her husband is out somewhere drinking again. They departed together happily. Such is the tragic case of the ideal husband who can only be unfaithful with his own wife. These are doubtlessly deplorable moments, but without similar vices our lives would be infinitely drearier and poorer. We would know less about ourselves, each other, and the place where these things happen (160–161).

While the first anecdote describes complete alienation from the "home" as the source of truth about the home, the second story gives a somewhat tragic and pathetic ethical meaning to the formula "cheating with your own wife." What is common to both, however, is that these moments of misrecognition are necessary for the emergence of an ethical relation to the home. The only way to know your "home" and the people who inhabit it with you is to place yourself in a state of complete homelessness. The misrecognition of your "own" (home/wife) receives a positive value, since it is misrecognition that produces real knowledge and not recognition which, in the final instance, is reduced to a mere illusion ("csalóka káprázat" [160]).

The ethical content of the husband's misguided decision is based on the conscious choice of immoral behavior that reveals the inadequacy of "moral doctrine" (the command not to cheat) to be either the guarantee of an ethical act or to provide authentic knowledge. While it might be morally acceptable, there is nothing inherently ethical about the fact that a husband and a wife sleep together. The only way to give this act an ethical content is to inscribe misrecognition in the moment of decision that will allow the subject to step outside the law and reinstitute it once again, *as if for the first time*. The message of the husband's act is that "I choose you once again beyond the law." In other words, I am not choosing you because the moral law demands that I only sleep with you; rather, I reinstitute the law because I *choose* (actively and not passively in obeisance to the law) you again – this is a real new choice and the object of the choice happens to be you again. This ethical formula, however, should be distinguished from the classic formula of doing evil from which good may come. In the latter case, in order to serve the ultimate good, I will do evil things, so that in the end the good will be realized (as if the Hegelian ruse of reason were at work here). This position implies that I know what the good is, and my actions are guided by this good, even if I have to do bad things to achieve it. In the end, the final achievement of the good will cancel out the evil of my previous acts. But in Bodor's anecdote, although the husband knows what the good is, he simply chooses not to be good without the knowledge that this choice might lead to a good that will retroactively exonerate

him. The fact that his action leads to the good that he renounced in the first place and that this realization takes on the character of a (re)institution of the law, shows that *"the good" cannot pre-exist the ethical act, it must be produced by it.*

Let me recapitulate the argument up to this point. First of all, Eastern Europe is identified by Bodor as the primary "object" of representation. This Eastern Europe, however, is not a factual reality but a mood. Since this mood cannot be reduced to the objective reality we recognize as Eastern Europe, it will have to be marked by a surplus element in this reality. Therefore, Eastern Europe as mood enters the field of literature as an "artistic surplus" produced by its absence in that field. Due to its excessive nature, it is located beyond identification both for the subject and power. Therefore, the function of art is to interrupt identification in order to make the experience of this artistic surplus possible. The move beyond identification takes the form of a misrecognition. On the level of politics, the subject misrecognizes its position with relation to power; on the level of ethics, the subject misrecognizes the good it chooses to serve by identifying this good with the law as moral doctrine. But if the subject necessarily misrecognizes its position in ideological interpellation, the move beyond identification is only possible by way of a misrecognition to the second degree (rather than a final recognition of reality as it really is). In other words, the secondary misrecognition does not restore the original identity of recognition beyond ideological distortion; rather, it makes possible the creation of a different relation to the unrepresentable kernel of experience.

Reading for the Mood

Thus, the task of reading appointed by Bodor is threefold: first, we have to read for a rhetorical surplus produced by elliptical movements; second, these rhetorical strategies should initiate a politics beyond identification; and third, this politics should be inscribed in the geopolitical determination of mood named by the term "Eastern Europe." Let us first examine how these three motives come together in the central metaphor of *Sinistra District:* the district itself. The most apparent achievement of the text is the staging of a fantasy of Eastern Europe: namely, that Eastern Europe exists, and it does so with a particular mood, since it is a sinister district. The novel illustrates how spatialization and territorialization of an identity (which is always a failed identity) come about. The staging of the territorial fantasy, however, is not based on a metaphoric substitution according to which the district stands in for something (Eastern Europe) that could be located outside the text as its direct reference. Rather, as the excess produced by a lack, the figure of the district is catachrestic in nature: a territorial metaphor of impossible Eastern European identity.

The novel is composed of fifteen chapters, all of which bear a title with a genitive construction that names an excessive element that organizes the figurative field produced by the elliptical movements of the text (for example, "Andrej's Dogtag," "Bebe Tescovina's Blood," "Petrika Hamza's Love," "Connie Illafeld's Hair," and so on). This object or other possession does not appear to have a central role for the plot sequence revealed in the given chapter. Rather, it puts into focus a partial element that itself reduces the plot to a subordinate position with regard to this object. Since it is always something that belongs to a character, we could think of these metonymic objects as figures of impossible identity. For example, the title of the opening chapter, "Colonel Borcan's Umbrella," names the object that, as a supplementary prosthesis, ensures the identity of the character, since we learn about Borcan that he is the only one who always carries an umbrella with him. On the other hand, as the first line of the novel already announces ("Two weeks before Colonel Borcan died […]" [5]), the umbrella will also be the figure for his death. As a matter of fact, it is the first independent appearance of the flying umbrella that announces the Colonel's death to the community. After his death, however, the umbrella takes on a life of its own and keeps reappearing in the text, through an additional figurative displacement, as virtually undistinguishable from a bat. We can see that the same object ensures the Colonel's identity and stands in for the story of his demise. In a similar fashion, for example, the title "Béla Bundasian's Fire" could be understood as a reference to Béla's all-consuming, excessive love for Connie Illafeld that defines his identity,[5] as well as the more immediate allusion to his suicide narrated in the chapter in which he sets himself on fire after he murders Connie Illafeld and learns of the literal loss of his identity when his official files are destroyed.

The movement of lack and excess, however, pervades every layer of the novel. As commentators were quick to note, the subtitle of the text, "Chapters of a Novel," already raises important questions about the genre and the unity of the text. First of all, the subtitle declares the totality of the novel to be absent. It effectively claims that the novel is not here, only its chapters (even if all of the chapters of the novel are here!). Therefore, this absence, as Bengi points out, leads to repetitious attempts in the individual chapters to recreate this missing totality (109). According to this reading, the chapters turn into independent attempts at recreating totality: the lack of novelistic totality leads to its excessive recreation in fifteen different attempts. On the level of plot we encounter the exact same structure. Due to the lack and excess of novelistic totality one does not have to be an overly alert reader to start counting inconsistencies and "mistakes" in the continuous retelling of certain fragments. While parts of the story are clearly re-creatable, it is interrupted by these excesses of plot that therefore refer to absences in the story.[6]

Thus, we have to point out that the unity of diegesis in the novel is based simply on the unity of tone, since the novel does switch narrators who, however, seem to

be speaking in the exact same voice. We get an excess of points of view over unity of voice. It is also significant that the first switch from first-person narration by Andrej to third-person narration by an unidentified narrator occurs in chapter 7, which relates the crucial anticlimactic scene of Andrej's encounter with his adopted son, Béla Bundasian. It is as if Andrej could not have narrated this encounter (or at least not in the first person), which produces an excessive split in the narratorial positions. Furthermore, later on we read chapters that narrate events that Andrej could not possibly have witnessed, either because he was not present or because they occurred after he had left the district. The uniformity of the language of the novel that cuts across characters and narrators has often been commented upon. Language as such seems to be reduced to a limited number of often repeated available formulas. The same happens to the tropological movements of the text, since certain recurrent motives are capable of sliding between the different textual layers and appear in places that seemingly defy the consistency of the novel.

The ethical and political dimensions of the text surface here. Let me evoke here a recurrent motif of the text, the search for unidentified "objects" of characters who simply do not possess these objects. This motif illustrates the kind of ideological fantasy at work that makes possible the double misrecognition that defines the relationship of the censor and the basket-weaver. While power needs to look for these illicit objects in its subjects to maintain the illusion that it has full control over everything, the subjects start to look for similar objects either in power or beyond the law to explain why they are not yet fully themselves. Furthermore, the text also suggests that the very same structure is repeated in the act of reading itself: while we want something from a text that it does not possess, the act of reading should surprise us with something else.

The significance of the search for these unidentified objects is underscored by the fact that the whole first chapter of the novel narrates the failed transaction of such a mysterious entity. Shortly after his arrival in the district Andrej is confronted by Colonel Borcan with a question that we could paraphrase as: "Do you have It?" As it turns out later, Borcan and the stranger only known as "the red rooster" used to communicate by hiding their messages in the belly of a fish. This time, the red rooster was supposed to leave this fish with Andrej. Since Borcan refuses to believe that Andrej does not have the fish, he starts blackmailing Andrej by taking away all his papers. Eventually, Andrej does receive the fish, but only after Borcan's death, a fact that he fails to communicate to the red rooster when he takes the fish. Since Borcan died with Andrej's file in his pockets, Andrej loses his official identity. In other words, while Andrej supposedly has what Borcan wants, Borcan supposedly has that which is necessary for Andrej to complete his mission. Both of these assumptions are wrong.

The most important scene figuring such an unidentified object can be found in chapter 5, "Mustafa Mukkerman's Truck." This chapter is crucial because by the end Andrej understands that he was exposed to a "secret" of power: that the object either does not exist or power does not always find it. Therefore, from now on, Andrej is considered to be an "insider" and an intimate aid to Coca Mavrodin. The scene takes place at the crossing on the Ukrainian border where Coca Mavrodin, Andrej (as a substitute for the official photographer), and two of Mavrodin's thugs with Dobermans await the weekly arrival of Mustafa Mukkerman's truck. Apparently, the authorities received information from "the Polish colleagues" that Mukkerman is going to have something on him, but they never said exactly what. Significantly, the story takes places during a snowstorm that suspends the spatial and temporal conditions of the narration. Space becomes a formless "grayness" and time stops flowing: "When Mustafa Mukkerman arrived, everything turned quiet, the wind stopped blowing, and the snowflakes stopped moving in midair. Only the thick grayness remained" (48). It is the contrast with these conditions that highlights the excessive nature of the truck:

> The silver walls of the truck were decorated with the kind of nonsense only a homeless truck driver like him could think of who aimlessly wanders through all kind of borders: blue palm trees and green monkeys under the purple sky, and on one of the sides a lonely, sagging female breast (48–49).

When nothing is found in the bodily recesses of the benevolent, but confusingly insolent giant (who in response to the search, calmly states that he doesn't mind at all when his balls are being scratched), Mukkerman tells Coca Mavrodin that he doesn't have "the thing" with him because he had a dream about this search. The story, however, moves beyond the absence of the object when, as an unexpected gesture, Mukkerman gives a present to Andrej and offers to rescue him from the district anytime he has the money to pay for it. The lack of the object and the surplus of the present are figured by the detail that one of the gifts is a so-called "Kinder Egg": a Western surprise candy that hides a secret little toy inside the chocolate shell. While the mysterious object remains a secret in its absence, the present itself turns out to be a secret.

The most significant object, however, is Béla Bundasian himself. We have to remember that our protagonist, Andrej Bodor, is on an ethical quest: he wants to rescue his adopted son. Andrej penetrates the district because he believes that at the heart of this closed area he is going to find the supreme good, the only thing worth living for that was taken away from him. In order to achieve this goal, he is willing to do anything. He dissimulates full complicity with the system, eventually to the degree of actually committing murder for them. This supreme good is never explicitly defined, but we can suppose it to be a certain sense of belonging, a

vague sense of familial ties, or the singularity of the father-son relationship. During the crucial scene, when after five years Andrej finally finds Béla, the son turns out to be completely uncooperative and simply asks his father why he is there at all. Andrej responds, "You are the only one I've got" (73). Béla raises an empty bottle to his mouth until the last drop of alcohol is drained. Then, letting his saliva grow long, he spits in front of himself and says: "Horrible" (74). We already know this much: at the heart of darkness one finds horror. This horror is the breakdown of the fantasy that gave form to one's life. Later on the same day, while Andrej is still trying to convince his son to escape from the district with him, the irate Béla protests: "What are you thinking? You are one of them now. Otherwise you couldn't be here." (77) The paradox is clear: had you been ethical, you would not be here to claim the prize. In other words, the ethical quest failed to produce its own good. This final confrontation stages the failure of the fantasy that is necessary for complicity with system.

But Béla himself acts in a way that aims at maintaining the system: he reports his father to the authorities and later demands his own punishment for the murder of Connie Illafeld from a system that refuses to acknowledge his existence. The next morning, after the meeting with his son, when Andrej is getting ready to return to his usual quarters from the reservation where his son lives, the following conversation takes place between him and Nikifor Tescovina concerning Béla:

> – Just so that you know, he went to the village last night. Although he is not allowed to and usually he doesn't.
>
> Andrej was in the process of unhooking the chain of the speeder from the bumper. He slowly stood up and felt his stomach with his hands. He opened his mouth and vomited in front of himself on the seat. In the sparkling thick saliva, the small pieces of mushroom were shaking under the threads of coagulated blood.
>
> – You upset your stomach.
>
> – Nonsense. As I bent over, it accidentally slipped out of me.
>
> – It is just like your brain (78–79).

The elliptical conversation between Andrej and Nikifor Tescovina makes it clear that Béla actually turned his father in to the authorities and reported his real purposes in trying to infiltrate the district. On this level too, the elliptical construction of the text produces an absence (we are not told directly what happened the night before) and Andrej's response is equally elliptical. He speaks his mind by producing brain-like vomit. The absence of a verbal response creates an excess of bodily excretion that takes upon itself the role of a displaced, figurative expression. In this respect, it is important to point out that the novel pays close attention to bodily excrements. Descriptions of defecation, urination, vomiting, spitting, bleeding, and bodily odors saturate the text. In fact, the excessive figures by definition assume the role of excrements in the novel. They take the form of a dis-

avowed part of the identity that is externalized as excrement, which nevertheless is given the role of an alienated (figurative) expression. In this sense, the district itself is such an excrement of Eastern European identity.

The point of this reading is to show that it is not enough to say that the world of Sinistra is without "moral values," as quite a few commentators claimed. Andrej's problem is not that he inhabits a world without morals and therefore gets caught in the evil mechanisms of power. As his encounter with Béla makes it clear, the problem with Andrej is that he presupposes the existence of a transcendental good, a good beyond the legitimacy of the positive order that he inhabits, and he believes that any action can be justified in the name of this goal. In other words, he fails to produce the good through an ethical act. (He is like the drunken husband who believes he is sleeping with his wife but ends up cheating on her.) In Andrej's case, it is precisely "a moral value" that prevents an ethical act.

There is a double fantasy at work here. On the one hand, the district functions as the mise en scène of the fantasy of Eastern Europe as a fully controlled, self-enclosed area. A sinister district in which power reduces every human being to mere animality, destroys family values, and presents itself in an inscrutable bureaucratic form. On the other hand, another fantasy is also at work, which claims that beyond this system, there is a world of (moral) values, a world of human freedom, just power, and full expression without alienation. The fantasy of subjective deliverance is part of the same ideological mystification as it makes the fantasy of the omnipotence of power bearable. The promise of this "beyond" makes the whole situation livable and is therefore essential to achieve the complicity of the subjects of power. We could call the experience of the failure of this double fantasy, the closed territory and its beyond, the real of "Eastern Europe."

I certainly agree with Bengi's analysis of the mechanisms of the discourse of power represented in the novel as a totalizing and mythologizing tendency that fails due to the central role of non-identical repetition:

> From the point of view of the myth, the Sinistra District is a closed and self-sufficient model of the world, which at the same time is identical to its interpretation as fully organizable and controllable (105).

Repetition serves the purposes of power to the degree that it creates the space of control and reduces identity to ultimate substitutability, yet iteration fails to maintain this power because it also constantly displaces the repeated identity. Nevertheless, I disagree with the conclusion that such a reading can at most lead to an "existential" but not a geopolitical reading.

First of all, I would translate Bengi's terms into psychoanalytic terms by substituting fantasy for myth. In other words, when the novel represents power as an agent of full control that creates a closed world of its own, it effectively stages the

ideological fantasy that maintains the reality of dictatorship or a geopolitical identity (rather than this reality itself). In this sense, what the novel represents is similar to the mutual misrecognitions of the censor and the basket weavers. On the one hand, the inhabitants of the district (as subjects of power), even when they perceive the internal inconsistencies of the system, actively participate in maintaining the fantasy of its omnipotence. On the other hand, the representatives of the system are "ashamed" to recognize themselves in the lack of the illicit object whose elimination is supposed to maintain their power.

Second, the "universal condition" located by Bengi, what I would call the failure of identity, has no other mode of existence than the failure of the particular. It would be a mistake to imagine this failure as an abstract condition that exists independently from the particular identities that it displaces. Rather than a fully transcendent condition, we can only speak of a quasi-transcendental one that has no other existence than the inconsistency of the field it institutes. The particular, however, is not simply "one," but the local collection of a multiplicity in a situation without inherent consistency. This is what we could call, after Bodor, a "region" which is the intermediary category between an abstract universal condition and the particular political identity instituted by a system. Geopolitics, in the present context, is nothing but the institution of the identity of such a region. Therefore, the existential condition of failed identity has no other mode of existence than the way it appears through a region in which the natural and the political are almost inextricably intertwined. The geopolitical marks precisely the point where the natural and the political both reach a certain limit.

Theoretical Post-Script: Eastern Europe as Mood

Bodor's fiction allows us to think "Eastern Europe" as the excessive figure of the constitutive lack of Eastern European identity. In this sense, Eastern Europe names the repetitious history of the failure of an identity. This repetition has the effect of a "territorialization" in that it simultaneously spatializes and temporalizes this impossible identity. The novel shows how a community, intimately tied to the geography of the region, creates a home for itself among these subhuman conditions. The natural world, as Attila Simon points out, assumes the ambiguous role of a sublime power, which "as the frame of the scenery, simultaneously appears for the inhabitants of Sinistra as a figure of security and protection and as a mysterious, alien force" (73). The brutalizing world of political power is carved out of this timeless "metaphysical" background that comes to signify, for Simon, the universal condition of decay as the highest form of power. But if the universal condition itself cannot preexist the act of reading (since it must be produced by it in the first place), the geopolitical moment for Bodor is precisely

the interaction of the natural world and the world of power: the district is instituted in nature through repetition, but the impossible closure of the district is marked by the irruption of the natural into the political. "Nature" as such is not simply a metaphor of a universal condition. Rather it has to be taken literally as a particular region, and the universal condition will come about as a partial metaphoric articulation within this region.

Thus, the geopolitical moment can be located at the meeting point of the mood of the region and the *ideological fantasy* of the political district. As we have seen, for Bodor regional identity is based on a certain unity of mood. The mood of the region, however, is not to be found on the level of identification. Inasmuch as mood is beyond identification, it is also irreducible to ideology. In other words, Bodor is trying to define mood as the objective component of a region that belongs to it in such a way that it is impossible to equate it with ideological fantasy or a fully subjective determination. Just as the subject is located beyond ideological interpellation because it is more than the mere effect of subjectivation, the region is beyond the ideological fantasy because there is something in its objectivity that cannot be reduced to ideology. A region has an objective identity manifested in its mood. But as a mood, this objective content is irreducible to the field of objectivity. Therefore, the question is: How does the subject participate in this mood?

But let us first raise the question, what is a mood after all? Who or what can have a mood in the first place? A subject or an object? When we speak of the mood of a region or the mood of a novel, it appears that we automatically attribute mood to the field of objectivity. In order for an objective entity to have a mood, the totality of the object (even if it is understood to be unachieved or fragmentary) must be presupposed. When a region has a mood, this mood is not one component among many that make up its totality, but an attribute of the totality itself. Similarly, in the case of an aesthetic object, if it has a mood, it does so as a totality. Its mood is not something that could be isolated as an independent entity in itself. That is, mood belongs to the field of objectivity in such a way that it remains irreducible to this field. In the case of an objective reality, mood cannot be one object among the many that make up this reality, while in the case of a novel, for example, it cannot be one particular textual component. Even if totality is only present through its absence, its existence can be ascertained through a mood.

Second, this posited objective totality has to assume an expressive function that will convey its mood. Inasmuch as totality expresses something essential about its own being, it possesses a mood. Mood therefore always expresses totality. It claims that an object exists as a whole, and it does so in a particular manner. The mood of an objective reality is never simply what this reality appears to be, since mood is not identical with any of the objects that appear in this reality. Nor is mood identical to what this reality wants to be perceived as, a mere appearance be-

hind which we could identify its true being. In this sense at least, mood must be a genuine expression of being or it is not a mood at all. But if this totality is posited, if it only comes about as an articulation, totality is this expression and nothing else. Mood is the only way in which this totality exists. The absent totality of the field of objectivity will be signified by a subset of its elements, a vaguely defined cluster of signs, which beside their particular positions in the structure will also signify the totality of the structure. They assume an additional expressive function: besides expressing their particular identities, they also convey the mood of the totality that they belong to. That is, while mood is irreducible to the field of objectivity, its only mode of existence is the split identity of these particular objects. Therefore mood has no other being than what these objects allow to come about.

But what happens when a subject finds itself in a particular mood? Is there a subjective mood at all? When we happen to be in a good or a bad mood, are we in something or is something in us? Whatever this mood might be, we perceive it as intimately ours. When a mood takes over, it might do so without any apparent reason, but it takes over completely. One component of the soul emerges from somewhere and affects the whole of our psychic disposition. Mood saturates the totality of our being. It claims us with full authority. So we say that we are in a mood to indicate the lack of control we have over mood. As if moods were given independently of our personal existence, as if they were objective, even impersonal, categories after all. Moods are not passing whims of erratic souls, vague impressions of melancholic minds given to capricious musings. They are not subjective categories, if by subjective we simply mean personal opinions, that everyone has the right to feel any given way about any given subject matter. They exist in the subject in such a way that the subject experiences them as alien, as coming from somewhere and doing something to the subject. They affect the subject, but from a location that appears to be beyond the subject. Moods are irreducible to subjective agency, yet they affect every element of subjectivity.

Moods exist for us as affective judgments concerning a totality that either fully includes or affects our own lives as well. The cause of the mood appears to be external to the subject, as if it were inscribed in the structure of the situation, which includes the subject, an objective totality, and the mood as well. Mood comes about as an objective category when the subject perceives itself to be a part of a certain objective field and passes a judgment on the way it is inscribed in the situation. Therefore, mood is the affective judgment on an objective totality as the subject appears in it. And the primary surface of appearance of a subject is always a region, a restricted domain of objectivity that provides a familiar terrain for the construction of identity.

This is why we could say, following Bodor, that the subject is always represented and always inhabits a region (a more or less structured situation in which nature and history form a difficult unity). The subject is part of this region, but not

as an object. As a subject, it is represented for this region. Something in the region, besides representing its particular identity, also assumes the task of representing the subject for that region. As an inhabitant of a region, the subject comes about as the statement: I am the one for whom the totality of this region is expressed through this given element. Mood is the coincidence of the representation of the subject with the representation of the totality of the region. When it is in a particular mood, the subject passes judgment on its situatedness in the world, its position within its region, in such a way that it posits the totality of the region (as represented by one of its elements) and invests this element with its own representation as well. The judgment of mood says: such is the totality of this region; it is best represented by these particular elements; and I relate to this totality in a particular way; I am represented for this totality through partaking in its mood. Inasmuch as it expresses an objective totality that the subject becomes a part of, mood is the subject's mode of participation in the construction of the totality of the objective region it inhabits. Mood names the way we become parts of our regions.

We also know that works of art are capable of evoking moods. The aesthetic experience produces moods. Mood as judgment can therefore be an aesthetic judgment as well. The world disclosed in the work (not a realistic representation of an empirical reality, but the world made possible through an aesthetic experience) provokes a judgment: the totality of the work comes about in this judgment, just like the totality of the world. In this respect, it might be useful to consider a short fragment by Adorno in which he moves beyond Hegel's objectivist theory of art via Benjamin's concept of "aura." Inasmuch as the latter is an objective determination of the artwork that nevertheless designates a moment of transcendence, art cannot be reduced to a fully immanent aesthetic objectivity:

> Here what is called aura is known to artistic experience as the atmosphere of the artwork, that whereby the nexus of the artwork's elements points beyond this nexus and allows each individual element to point beyond itself (274).

But, according to Adorno, the other extreme, sentimental subjectivism, is equally mistaken since it confuses the effects of art with the properly aesthetic dimension of the constitution of aesthetic objectivity. Adorno's dialectical aesthetics rejects the two extremes of objectivist and subjectivist aesthetics by locating the "aesthetic subject" within the aesthetic object as its collective component that should not be reduced to the psychology of production or reception. The objective meaning of an aesthetic object is that which remains irreducible in it to a subjective determination. Therefore, Adorno rejects the category of mood in the following terms:

> The concept of mood, so opposed by Hegel's objective aesthetics, is therefore insufficient, because it is precisely mood that reverses what

> Hegel calls the truth in the artwork into its own opposite by translating it into what is merely subjective – a spectator's mode of reaction – and represents it in the work itself according to the model of this subjectivity (275).

While Adorno criticizes Hegel for his blindness to the element of mood, he commends him for avoiding the "twilight between the aesthetic and empirical subject." The internal conflict of the fragment is precisely that this "twilight between the aesthetic and empirical subject" simultaneously functions as the condition of aesthetic experience and that which must be done away with if the specificity of aesthetic experience is to be accounted for.

In spite of Adorno's rejection of the category, mood could still be defined on the basis of this fragment as that which makes art irreducible to either pure objectivity or pure subjectivity. As a matter of fact, the only way to salvage the category of mood is to relegate it to the field of objectivity (as the aural character of objectivity) rather than to the subjective field as "a spectator's mode of reaction." In the case of the aesthetic object, we learn from Adorno that it cannot be reduced to subjective projections since it possesses an objective truth beyond all subjective determinations; yet its objectivity cannot be reduced to the sum of its objective elements either, because it possesses the aural quality we could call an "objective mood." In the case of empirical experience, we learn that nature is the primary locale of the production of this aural effect and that therefore "the artwork is more deeply related to nature in this element than in any other factual similarity to nature" (274). Natural and aesthetic mood mirror each other since the recognition of the former requires "recognizing in nature what it is that essentially makes an artwork an artwork" – which is its irreducibility to subjective determinations.

Benjamin introduces the concept of aura through the definition of a necessary distance: the subject can participate in the aura of a natural scene by establishing a certain distance from it. The precondition of art is this distancing: the moment nature is not "merely" nature anymore, the possibility of aesthetic comportment is present in experience. This is why, while it is true that art requires a certain identification, the subjective component is not to be confused with the identification with an empirical personality:

> Just as the exemplary instance of the philistine is the reader who judges his relation to artworks on the basis of whether he can identify with the protagonists, so false identification with the immediately empirical person is the index of complete obtuseness towards art (275).

There is a necessary move beyond identification here both on the level of artistic experience and the more immediate experience of subjectivity. What makes this double move possible and necessary is precisely mood. Inasmuch as the sub-

ject cannot be reduced to the immediate experience of empirical personality (that is, it is capable of having a mood), there is an openness towards art, which cannot be an identification with a realistically represented empirical reality, but rather proceeds through the experience of that which makes it impossible to equate the aesthetic object with its mere objectivity (that is, the mood of the object). Mood is the way the subject, irreducible to the field of pure subjectivity, appears within the field of objectivity as that elusive element that makes objectivity impossible.

Accordingly, mood appears in *Sinistra District* as that which is irreducible to the field of historical objectivity and names the affective cathexis of the constitutive failure of this objective reality. This failure, however, is not a fully transcendent negativity, since it assumes a positive form through a figurative substitution. One objective element of the region takes on the role of signifying the unity of this region which is absent. This element, therefore, receives an excessive signification that no longer refers to an objective element of the situation itself but to its constitutive lack. The split in the identity of this particular object is what evokes the mood of the region. The ideological fantasy, the figure of the district as a catachresis of impossible Eastern European identity that provides its consistency, is revealed to be a lot less dependent on the barbed wires and strictly controlled borders than by a repetition of the figure itself. The repetition of the figure phenomenalizes its referent, but in such a way that it can never fully coincide with the entity designated by the physical borders. Therefore, the catachrestic figure of the district in the novel functions as the trope that has no other function than to signify the closure of the tropological field of the text. What on the level of representation appears as the unity of style (figured by the excessive trope of the district as a unity), appears on the level of the represented as the unity of mood. Andrej's relation to the district is not expressed by the physical enclosure of the district, but by the unity of mood.

The opening of the novel already sets the mood precisely in these terms. As Andrej returns to the district many years after the events narrated, the whole narrative is inscribed in a politics of memory. In the first and last chapters of the novel, the constellation of three particular motifs serves the purposes of the encryption of mood: the horrifying and unbearable squawking of wild geese, the "orange cloud of sadness" (14), and the ski tracks left behind by Andrej himself. The bird metaphors of the novel are central to the construction of the whole text. In this instance, the wild geese direct our attention to a repetition, the migratory territorialization by an expressive function (squawking) that belongs to the domain of nature. The territorializing effect assumes a surplus expressive function that is variously described by Andrej in the following terms:

> The frosty deaf and dumb nights of silence were filled with the squeaking and squealing of the migrating birds. Their shrill dying sounds – sometimes like those of the watchman's clarinet – climbed

> down the chimney and kept stirring in the ashes of the fireplace until the break of dawn. Their nerve-wracking whining always brought me back to my solitude (12).

At the conclusion of the novel, the birds appear again: "I swear there is no more unsettling word than theirs. […] Their sounds resonated even in the depths of my bowels" (158.) The orange clouds of sadness assume a similar function, in that (as a background to the flight of the wild geese) a particular element of nature takes on an additional expressive function. This time, however, rather than the horror associated with the district, the clouds remind Andrej of a metaphysical condition, the passing of time.

The ski tracks, on the other hand, represent Andrej himself for the region. Since it is implied by the text that these marks will never disappear, Andrej realizes that through them, he has become an objective part of the region. The important thing about these tracks, however, is that they serve as evidence of Andrej's crime. Andrej was participating in the liquidation of a group of bear-keepers supposedly infected by the mysterious illness periodically decimating the population of the district. Aron Wargotzki was the last member of this group hiding in the underground tunnels of the reservation. Andrej, at the order of Coca Mavrodin, started to fill up the tunnels with concrete. The ski tracks mark his itinerary as he was carrying the heavy sacks of cement on his back. Nevertheless, these are the marks that represent the subject. Hence the somewhat ambiguous closure of the novel, where the sight of the tracks evokes a feeling of "pleasant warmth" (157) and happiness in Andrej because he is not going to disappear without a trace from this region.

So, what is at stake in this figure of Eastern Europe is similar in structure to the Orientalist fantasy invented by the West,[7] only this time we have to scrutinize the ideological fantasy created by the East itself that sustains its very reality. Eastern Europe as a mood, however, is not a "merely fictional" Eastern Europe, but a "real" Eastern Europe that has no other existence than the interruption of both the geographical and the political fantasy of regional identity. In Bodor's case, as the properly geopolitical agency (which means that it is neither geographical nor political in the restricted sense), mood is an attempt to establish an affective community beyond ethnic, cultural, and other differences. Participating in the mood of a region means recovering an "objective" point of reference beyond ideological or mere subjective determinations which nevertheless remains irreducible to the field of objectivity. Its elusive nature, its very precariousness, and its openness to numerous types of manipulation, however, do not detract anything from its reality. And neither does the fact that region, mood, subject, and totality simply do not preexist the actual articulation of their configurations. As the regional, "ontologized" condition of political experience inscribed into the sanctity of unrepresentable personal experience, which makes political identity "impossible"

(not non-existent, but rather always threatened), the mood of a region shows that the "universal" condition in its abstract emptiness does not exist without regional contamination. A community is never without history, which is its repetitious attempt to inhabit different kinds of regions. The ontological limit is given a particular "local flavor," a recognizable mood, since it exists only as the internal limit of particular systems of symbolization but never completely independent of them. The repetitious emergence of this limit creates the history of a region.

Notes

1 See, for example, Angyalosi, Bán, and Kardos.

2 See Ács, Bán, Béla Bodor, Angyalosi, and Márton.

3 See, Simon, Szirák, Kovács, Bengi.

4 For different formulations of the role of recognition see: Reményi ("the duplicity of the *never-experienced* and that which *exists in memory*" [93]); and Pozsvai (56).

5 Andrej describes this love after reading Béla's diary in the following way: "He wrote that it was impossible to have enough of her. Whenever he looked at her, he had the feeling that even between her toes there are tiny little hungry pussies hiding. The best thing would have been to drink the whole woman up like a glass of water. A love like this, of course, was already secretly nearing its end." (97) We can also see here that excess is more than just an external trait; it is a cause that defines the outcome and destiny of the narrative.

6 Furthermore, the very concept of character seems to have been invaded by this excessive logic. For example, Mustafa Mukkerman, the only true outsider in the district, who in contrast with the other characters emanates an excess of humanity, is described as a 600-kilogram giant, whose undulating bodily excesses and flaccid folds of flesh mesmerize the border guards as he appears totally naked in the middle of a snowstorm during a strip search. Connie Illafeld, Béla Bundasian's true love, after abusive psychiatric treatment in Colonia Sinistra, is reduced to an unrecognizable hairy monster who speaks an incomprehensible mixture of languages – and the suggestion is entertained that she might even have grown a penis. As the narrator comments, she moves from being a fairy to an animal: that is, she moves from an excess to an absolute lack of humanity, but the properly human status is constantly denied to her (101). Béla Bundasian, in turn, becomes a surplus element when his very existence becomes excessive after his official file is destroyed and, receiving no recognition from the system, he ends up committing suicide. Furthermore, at a certain point Colonel Coca Mavrodin dies frozen in a block of ice, but when spring comes and the ice melts, only her clothes remain behind, revealing her to be some sort of substanceless entity. The novel also presents more direct interventions into the concept of character through the technique of reduplication. The two Hamza Petrikas, for example, are described in the following way: "They were albino twins and so similar to each other that their thick bear-keeper overalls creased in the exact same spots. As the path of the mist released from their nostrils indicated, they even breathed to the same rhythm. And on top of all that, according to the little tin plates hanging around their necks, they were both called Hamza Petrika." (80) A similar reduplication happens with the heroic bear-keeper, Géza Kökény, who becomes almost indistinguishable from his statue.

7 See, for example, Larry Wolff's book on Eastern Europe, where he argues that "It was Western Europe that invented Eastern Europe as its complementary other half in the eighteenth century, the age of Enlightenment. It was also the Enlightenment, with its intellectual centers in West-

ern Europe, that cultivated and appropriated to itself the new notion of 'civilization,' an eighteenth-century neologism, and civilization discovered its complement, within the same continent, in shadowed lands of backwardness, even barbarism. Such was the invention of Eastern Europe" (4). Furthermore, he explains "the construction of Eastern Europe as a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, Europe but not Europe. Eastern Europe defined Western Europe by contrast, as the Orient defined the Occident, but was also made to mediate between Europe and the Orient. One might describe the invention of Eastern Europe as an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization" (7).

References

Adorno, Theodor W.: *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

Angyalosi, Gergely: "A kiismerhetetlen remekmű." *Kritikus határmezsgyén* (Debrecen: Csokonai, 1999).

Ács, Margit: "Az erdő démonikus vonzása." *Holmi* 1992/12: 1880–1883.

Bán, Zoltán András: "A főmű." *Kritika* 1992/7: 16–17.

Bengi, László: "A szövegszegmentumok iterációja mint az epikai világ megalkotása." *Az elbeszélés kihívása* (Budapest: Fiatal Írók Szövetsége, 2000), 95–116.

Bodor, Ádám: *A börtön szaga – Válaszok Balla Zsófia kérdéseire* (Budapest: Magvető, 2001).

Bodor, Ádám: *Sinistra körzet. Egy regény fejezetei* (Budapest: Magvető, 1992).

Bodor, Béla: "Andrej a rengetegben." *Holmi* 1992/12: 1883–1885.

Kardos, András: "Bodor Ádám: *Sinistra körzet*." *Alföld* 1992/9: 74–80.

Kovács, Béla Lóránt: "Baljós alakzatok – Bodor Ádám: *Sinistra körzet*," in *Vándor szövevény: Az Alföld Stúdió antológiája* (Debrecen: Csokonai, 2001), 130–148.

Márton, László: "Elátkozott peremvidék." *Holmi* 1992/12: 1873–1880.

Pozsvai, Györgyi: *Bodor Ádám* (Pozsony: Kalligram, 1998).

Reményi, József Tamás: "Törzskönyvezett sorsok – Bodor Ádám: *Sinistra körzet*." *Kortárs* 1992/6: 93–96.

Simon, Attila: "Bodor Ádám: *Sinistra körzet*." *Alföld* 1992/9: 70–74.

Szilágyi, Márton: "A Tárnicsgyökér fanyar illata – Bodor Ádám: *Sinistra körzet*." *Tiszatáj* 1993/2: 82–86.

Szirák, Péter: *Folytonosság és változás* (Debrecen: Csokonai, 1998).

Wolff, Larry: *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).