

A HUNGARIAN WAR HERO, FACTORY FOUNDER AND REFUGEE IN THE UNITED STATES – TIVADAR ROMBAUER

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Tivadar Rombauer was a less well-known, but important personality in Hungarian history. His entrepreneur career contains several business and technological innovations in iron industry, among which the foundation of the Metallurgical Factory in Ózd stands out. During the Revolution and War of Independence his role for managing arms supply nationwide is rarely emphasized by the regular commemorations of the most important historical momentum in Hungarian collective remembrance, although its relevance is undisputable. His Protestant Saxon origin interweaved with his patriotism resulted a typical Hungarian middle-class civic virtue, which never disappeared in later generations in the US, after his obligate immigration. In this study we scope on both the origins and influence of this value-system detailing Rombauer's life-span, complemented with the family roots and some descendants' fates.

Keywords: Hungarian Revolution, history of industry, Rombauer, genealogy, migration

In the following we are going to describe the life of Tivadar Rombauer in details, who established the first large-scale Iron Factory in Hungary at Ózd and later became the leader of arms supply for the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence during 1848–49, but finally had to flee to America. His talent and role in Hungarian history is interesting and important in itself, but putting it into the context of his family's origin and the fate of overseas descendants gives more dimensions to the heritage and values he represented in Hungary. Such exemplary

lifespans are carrying virtues never disappearing in forthcoming generations and show how modern western civic culture was built up from the smallest elements. Nevertheless, he was the founder of a family line with divergent branches in the US one and half centuries ago; Tivadar, his wife and their surviving children left Hungary between 1848–52 for a new world.

The Lutheran Family from Lőcse

The Rombauer Family had German origins, but lived for centuries within the walls of Lőcse in Upper Hungary, now Levoča in Slovakia. This small city, founded in the 12th century, was one of those in the region with mostly Saxon inhabitants reserving their language, culture and integrity in a mainly Slovak environment in Hungary until the beginning of the 19th century and even earned and kept a special legal position until the 18th century. The family roots go back to the 17th century, when Mathias Rombauer (1592–1640) was a city councilor (Demkó, 1897)¹ They lived their peaceful civic life for generations, accumulating wealth, achieving higher and higher education, but among these silent builders of the society not any outstanding personality was born with the exception of a painter, János Rombauer. He was born in 1782 as a son of a wealthy joiner and studied artistry from Hungary, through Copenhagen to France, but still became an official painter for the Russian Tsar, Alexander I (Petrová-Pleskotová, 1968). In a late eclectic-style, inspired by Rembrandt and Rubens, he created portraits of Alexander I, Prince Czartoryski and many famous scientists and public figures, about fifty paintings remained of his oeuvre (Bayer, 1908). His generation was the first who moved out of Lőcse: returning from Russia he settled down in Eperjes, but his brother, Gustave also moved to Pest in 1848 and even changed his name to the more Hungarian-sounding Romlaky (Divald, 1904). On another family branch a fourth cousin of János became clergyman, then livestock manager. Mátyás was born in Lőcse in 1759 and was a man of means (Tóth, 1912, 670), having seven children of whom the oldest was János Tivadar Rombauer (Vass, 1996, 3–130).

On the Way Becoming a Nationally Renowned Businessman

Tivadar Rombauer was born in Lőcse on January 23, 1803,² in the Elhard family's still existing house at 22 Főtér. His mother was a daughter of the famous physicist and surgeon, János Elhard. It did not take a long time and the family had to move to Kőrmöcbánya (Kremnica) following his father's pursuit, where he became clergyman, then livestock manager. Later Tivadar's father worked at the Révay family's manor of Túróc County in Prékopa (Priekopa), but, due to the lack of

schools there, the young Rombauer had been learning privately until he could finally enroll to the Lutheran Lyceum of Lőcse in 1811. The father frequently changed jobs moving to new cities from time to time thus Tivadar finished his elementary school in Selmecbánya (today Banská Štiavnica in Slovakia) with the best results. Selmecbánya was probably the best decision for the teenage Tivadar to stay, because of its internationally famed Academy of Mining and Forestry. The College was established in 1763 by Marie Therese, it was the first of this kind in Europe. The institution, being Academy since 1770, became soon one of the most important scientific centers of technology. By the turn of the century significant educational and scientific life characterized it: Alessandro Volta made experiments there, innovations, such as the modern wire rope, was sooner introduced than in its place of origin in Clausthal (Faller, 1954). Selmecbánya was the second largest silver producer in the world, behind Argentina, that time and the third biggest city in Hungary. The Academy was supplemented with a faculty of forestry in 1808 and its educational system was so modern that in 1794 even the newly forming École Polytechnique of Paris esteemed it (Dudich, 1992). Tivadar enrolled in the Mining Academy in 1822, and started to study forestry too in the following year. He graduated in 1825³ and married her cousin, Bertha Rombauer on September 11, 1827.

His career started in 1825 at the iron foundry in Rohnic as an apprentice, but the following year he went to the Schönborn manor next to Munkács (now Мукачеве in Ukraine) to work for the industrial plants. The manor extended over two-thirds of Bereg County, 2351 km² and 174 settlements belonged to it and the number of inhabitants exceeded the sixty thousand. Agriculture was neglected on this mainly wooded area, but, due to the sources of raw materials in the region, different industries, such as weaving, iron and chemicals were on their way to be developed. However, consumer markets were quite far and delayed development (Sas, 1955, 39–40). Rombauer, with his qualifications and diligence, soon became the overseer of the alum works in Pusztakerepes (name variant for Alsókerepec, today Нижній Коропець), next to Munkács and also participated in the development works of the metallurgical plants. A ten meter high forge was built under his direction in Selesztó between 1829 and 1832 and the foundry with its diverse casts became nationally renowned (Rempert, 1995, 123). The management was largely satisfied with Rombauer's performance since he could save forty percent of the fuels and ten percent of the ores with his newly introduced technology and tools. As a consequence the factory realized 1750 quintals production growth until 1831. New foundries were built and new depositories were installed in Sátoraljaújhely, Kassa (today Košice in Slovakia) and (Buda)Pest. Rombauer also initiated the production of machine parts (Sas, 1955, 56–57) that time, and in 1832 he already wrote about artistic moldings in a submitting: the result was that one-fourth of the sales catalogue next year contained artistic casts in fact.

Nothing could stop the progress: the factory received a gold medal (Nyárády, 1962, 133) in 1842 on the First National Industry Exhibition organized by Lajos Kossuth. Already in 1834 the management of the factory commissioned Rombauer by going to Gliwice, Poland, one of its foreign relations, to gain experiences, and in 1838 he was such a celebrity in the Monarchy that even Chancellor Metternich invited him for performing manorial services. However, Count Ferenc Schöborn retained him in Munkács by proposing higher position and salary. The offer was quite reasonable, because Rombauer boosted the factory's distribution to a large extent as in 1840 they had to refuse some orders from Pest on the grounds that only bigger casts are able to deliver, because of the huge demand.

In the 1930s Hungarian economy and industry received a boost by the increasing proportion of the arable land according to the inland water drainage and deforestation program. Increasing agricultural production influenced distance trade; wool became primary in export, but economy did not turn to monoculture yet. Accumulated capital was invested to build infrastructure: railway, banking, bridges and river regulation were all developing. Creating a national industry was first articulated by Lajos Kossuth, as an advocate of free trade, within the custom borders. He took a large part in the creation of the National Association of Industry (Iparegylet) and the Hungarian Trade Association (Magyar Kereskedelmi Társaság). After the First National Industry Exhibition in 1842 he ascertained that Hungary has no chance against the more developed Czech and Austrian industry thus protective tariffs are needed. Such questions were on the agenda in the Parliament during the decade. In the 1840s food industry developed the fastest, steam-engines became commonplace nationwide. Iron industry production doubled during a couple of years, employment growth was 135% (Kosáry, 2002).

The Factory Founder

In such a developing economic environment, in the following year after the successful participation in the exhibition in 1842, in which Kossuth specially praised the factory, Tivadar Rombauer nonetheless left his job in Munkács (that time he was the director of the factory) and became chief executive officer at the headquarters of the Coalition of Rima (Rimai Coalitio), one of the largest companies in Hungary, in Rimabrézó (today Rimavské Brezovo in Slovakia). In his new office, his tasks were larger scale: starting modernization by providing new iron ore licenses, for instance. He also proposed a plan for a new road, which was built for ten thousand forints. The investment was high-cost, but paid off soon since it helped to reduce transport costs with fifteen percent. He multiplied production with technical and organizational measures indicating a colossal profit growth for the company (Marton, 1906, 22).

Iron industry leaders held a meeting in the Andrásy mansion in Hosszúrét (Krasznahorka-Hosszúrét, now Krásnohorská Dlhá Lúka close to Rožňava in Slovakia) on September 6, 1843. This was already the second time to hasten progress in legislation: proposals for a mining act, founding a new Technical University and schools and developing infrastructure were discussed. Rombauer suggested a plan to build a new iron refinery and roller factory, larger and more modern than ever. Due to Széchenyi's and Kossuth's vision loads of rail were needed in Hungary for further development, but even the small metallurgical companies, which mainly characterized contemporary Hungarian economy, were unable for such production. For resolving this contradiction the government and the railway companies wanted to provide rails from abroad, from Wien in particular, but Rombauer had something else in his mind. He proposed the two largest companies in Hungary, the Coalition of Rima (Rimai Coalitio) and the Union of Murány (Murányi Unio) to be integrated to an even larger company (Jenei, 1980). Two important questions arose: whether the companies together have enough financial and human resources to apply the latest technology and whether the required technology is available in Austria to import or they should go further for it. For this reason the President and the CEO of the Rimai Coalitio, Pál Szathmáry-Király and Tivadar Rombauer were asked to travel to different Western-European countries for information and for probable negotiations. After their successful journey in England, Bohemia and Belgium the only remaining task was to find adequate coal sources, where the new factory could be installed nearby. After enumerating all possible places Ózd proved to be the most appropriate.

Abundant stocks of lignite were available there and experiments were carried out by Rombauer in the beginning in Germany, but later new furnaces were built in Hungary for testing the coal and to convince the skeptical land owners about future success (Óvári, 1967, 439). Ózd was a very small village that time, only 334 inhabitants were counted in the 1837 census by the conducting statistician Elek Fényes (Fényes, 1837). The Rimai Committee, led by Rombauer, was delegated to organize the new company and they developed the plan of the new iron factory by the May of 1845. The new Ironworks Association of Gömör (Gömöri Vasművelő Egyesület) was established under the technical management of Rombauer. The funds were 250 thousand forints and shared capital and entrepreneurs were both Hungarian, foreign subscription of shares were prohibited by its statutes to protect national interests. However, launching shares on the market was problematic, partly because of those land owners who were not wealthy enough to buy whole shares and partly because of political reasons. Count György Andrásy, a close friend of Széchenyi, with whom he travelled to England before the building of the Chain Bridge, was absent on negotiations, for instance. Since Rombauer belonged to the company of Kossuth – who had a decisive influence in factory building in Hungary at that time – Andrásy was afraid of being ignored

in the management. Rombauer himself became a shareholder too, even if only with half a share.

Negotiations with the Central Hungarian Railways (Magyar Középpontú Vasúttársaság)⁴ started in 1845, but soon failed without results and acquiring coal-beds came into focus. Rombauer himself has chosen proper sites and organized the building of factories and mines. It was a Herculean task to contract with the landowners one by one for the rights of transfer of coal.⁵ Major excavations began in September 1846 with sixty miners. Foreign steam machines arrived to Vác on board via the Danube and from there by storage cart to Ózd. They were assembled by technical experts from Brno and England; such international co-production was usual even in that period: a significant number of skilled workers came from abroad to Hungary in the 19th century. At the beginning of the industrial revolution workers in Hungarian factories were mainly Polish, for example.

While the number of industrial worker population was 88,000 in 1805, their volume increased to 125,000 by 1840, but only one inhabitant became craftsman out of eighty in Hungary in contrast to the more developed Austria, where the rate was one craftsman out of 13–15 inhabitants. The 45,000 surplus of this period worked mainly in the large-scale industry. The number of smaller manufactories and larger factories in Hungary was only 528 altogether even in 1847, in which 23,400 workers were permanently employed, but even larger plants were rather small compared to the more developed countries. This was the beginning: the number of foreign skilled workers began to increase substantially in the following period, and the number of factory workers increased to fifteen times higher during the following forty years (Rézler, 1974).

The factory, however, had financial problems due to the unrealized contracts, and losses could have been complemented only by shareholders' further investments, namely by raising the price of shares, and as a result that profiles had to be replaced and rail production was delayed fifteen years. Nevertheless, Ózd had an outstanding position in Hungarian industrial history. Although the construction of the iron factory had not finished by the time, the rolling friction stir process was practiced first in Ózd in Hungary in 1847 – fifty years after England and twenty years after Western Europe. Tivadar Rombauer is usually considered to be the founder of the whole production by establishing the factory. His work gave an impetus to further progress in industrialization, extending to such details as the production of the first ninety three meters long and seventy meters wide rolling mill and building the officials' and workers' houses, supplemented with ornamental gardens next to each (Faller, 1943, 370).

Perseverance in the Hungarian Revolution

The wave of revolution against feudal rule in the year of the Spring of Nations arrived in Hungary in March. The following one and a half years long war of independence determined the fate of industry too. Construction and production was ceased in Ózd at the outburst of the revolution in 1848 thus foreign workers returned to their homelands. Lajos Kossuth and Tivadar Rombauer had a close relationship since the Exhibition and Kossuth called Rombauer to be a staff member of the first independent government formed by him in 1848 April. Rombauer immediately left the Rimai Coalition and accepted to be the Head of Department of Industry in the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade in Pest, led by Gábor Klauzál (Bakó, 1942, 22), therefore, the whole national manufacturing and crafts industry was under his direction.

Being a politician of national importance his situation was rather difficult: he had to organize a mostly Austria-dependent national industry in a rather chaotic period. His very first action in May was to call the owners of mines, factories and industrial plants to Pest to hold a meeting. He wanted to import iron through Fiume and, at the same time, he had to deal with the production of saltpeter, gunpowder and cloth; fortunately wood, copper and tin was available in western Hungary. Opening a new sulfur mine in Kalinka and developing a new production method was also his merit, while the Austrian government has power enough to ban the import of sulfur from Sicily for preventing gunpowder production in Hungary. Because of the lack of arms production a large-scale production was also needed to be established in Hungary. The first factory was built in Pest next to the Rolling Mill in the Foundry and Machine Company Plant, these all were nationalized and later supplemented with smaller manufactories because of the constant sabotages.

Following Rombauer's proposal, the factory in Ózd was transformed for weapon production, and an engineer from Aachen was called to purchase equipment. Unfortunately he could not arrive because of border closures. Rombauer became the director of the nationalized armory in November, but also preserved his position as head of department. He had to adjust the factory for mass production thus recruited hundreds of workers from different factories, workshops and military troops. He developed regulations for workers, who were formally civilian, but were considered de facto deserters in case of leaving the factory without permission. At the same time, in November, the foundry stopped receiving proposals from Rombauer, a command from Kossuth ordered to produce cannon balls and grenades otherwise the factory would be confiscated. The forthcoming contract was signed by Lázár Mészáros, member of the government and by Vilmos Kubinyi, representative of the Coalition. Therefore, Rombauer was in a controversial position, since he became the director of the factory of which he re-

mained one of its shareholders. Nevertheless, he was interested only in increasing productivity from both sides. He helped the factory to a loan and undertook the production of moldings prepared for barrels.⁶ However, the president of the association of the factory did nothing to change for weapon production, only admitted the loan. Despite such difficulties arms production was managed to be ensured in many different places: fifteen settlements only in upper Hungary; and supply was provided in the whole country. One of the small participating manufactures was the Kachelmann Foundry in Selmecebánya (Koudela, 2013).

The government had to move to Debrecen on January 1, 1849 and, as a consequence, the armory of Pest also escaped to Nagyvárad (Oradea), running away from Windischgrätz. The equipment was delivered on sleighs; it was 25-degree cold in the winter. Rombauer had to tackle plenty of difficulties: the evacuation of all machines failed, the supply Rombauer promised for workers could not be fulfilled and housing conditions in Nagyvárad (today Oradea in Romania) were much worse than those in Pest (Hegyesei, 1999). Despite these problems arms production started at the end of January and the impatient Kossuth and Rombauer could be satisfied with the castle furnished perfectly to an armory. There were still many disruptions: Rombauer had to displace all the smiths in February because of their disobedience and refill the missing jobs. Despite such circumstances he never had a say in the provisions of Kossuth and the factory remained operable. Rombauer sent one part of the factory of Pest to Ózd under the supervision of Tivadar Karafiáth, armory inspector. He wrote a report about leasing the factory in Ózd for arms production in the spring, but later decided to cancel it according to Karafiáth's report for lack of technical conditions of production there.⁷ Since they had no intention to manufacture arms, the inspector made the machines returned to Pest. Meanwhile, the Iron Company of Gömör, a main supplier, was threatened with bankruptcy, from which it escaped only in 1853 by joining in the former union of the Rimai Coalition and Murányi Union establishing the Rimamurány Iron Works Association (Jenei, 1980, 62).

The Emigration – a New Life Established

After the capitulation at Világos in 1848 Rombauer, among Kossuth and many others, had to flee disguised as a journeyman. He travelled to Hamburg through Austria dressed like a poor man, then followed his runaway to Belgium and to England. Becoming aware of the newly emerged fact that even smaller officials could not avoid prison he had no chance left to return to Hungary, finally he travelled to America. Many prominent Hungarian politicians fled to different European countries, such as Mednyánszky to Germany, Gorove to England or Szemere and Teleki to France, but most of the *Émigrés* with a safe-conduct of

Komárom looked for and found shelter in the New World (Albert, 1998, 66–96). Rombauer asked the help of Ferenc Pulszky and György Klapka to travel to the United States. Pulszky already helped him to reach London and then gave 480 pounds for a ticket to New York and for insurance, beneficiating his wife in case of a possible shipwreck. They were close friends and in Rombauer's farewell letter he also offered his help and expressed his desire: I wish "that next time our incorrectly applied idea of humanism... (wouldn't disclose others, and) not only Hungarian, but other nations would take part in it and share the obtained fruit."⁸

As soon as he arrived in America Rombauer started to deal with mining and foundry (Forgáts, 1940, 181). He made a proposal for Washington in case of gold mining in California, but was refused. Later on he went on a tour to South America, where he met many Hungarian immigrants and gained experience. Returning from Argentina he settled down in a small village twenty five kilometers from Davenport, Iowa. He bought a land there to cultivate, but the farm was not prosperous thus the family soon moved to Davenport, the city full of French, German and English immigrants. During this period he also met Kossuth, with whom he discussed organizational questions, but politics increasingly played a smaller role in his life in America. In Davenport he became a co-editor at the German-language newspaper *Der Demokrat*, but only a few years had passed, and he died. He was only fifty-two years old when he passed away in 1855 (Vass, 1996, 3–130).

His wife, Bertha actively participated in the War of Independence as a nurse and followed her husband to America in 1850, since nothing else arose, she was busy to translate Hungarian poems to German (Rombauer, 1889). Tivadar and Bertha had eleven children of whom three died in the war: Richard was only eighteen when he fell in the Battle of Vízakna, Clara and Irma died during their persecution. The oldest daughter, Bertha,⁹ who was a schoolmistress, also followed her father to the USA and settled down in Davenport, but in the second year of her emigration, in the December of 1852 she died too. Her sister, Emma, married Gustavus A. Finkelnburg, a German immigrant, who became one of the prominent lawyers in St. Louis that time. Another child, Roland¹⁰ was a merchant and a Captain of the Cavalry during the Civil War and later became a member of the legislative body in Florida and Montana.

Ida, their sister, became also a schoolmistress and taught in a school founded by their mother until 1853, when she married Captain John Fiala, who was born in Temesvár (Timișoara) and later became Colonel under General Antal Vetter. Robert¹¹, after finishing the Lutheran High School in Pozsony (Bratislava), moved to Vienna in 1848 and as a freshman in the Polytechnic joined the Legion of the Academy and later entered the army as a Lieutenant in artillery. After the fall of the Revolution he was enlisted in the Austrian Army as a private, but in 1850 he was freed with ransom and migrated to America with his mother. He also fought in the Civil War becoming Colonel of the 1st U.S. Reserve Corps,

Missouri Volunteers on the side of Lincoln. For his bravery, shown in defending the Pacific Railway, he was promoted to Brigadier Commander. Later he settled down in St. Louis becoming the president of the Board of Assessors St. Louis County and also a publisher of a newspaper and an accountant. He published a military treatise, titled *The Contest* (Rombauer, 1863) in 1863 and a mortality map of St. Louis in connection to the 1866 cholera (Rombauer, 1884). He wrote a study about education (Rombauer, 1913) and reminiscences about the events of 1861 (Rombauer, 1909). Robert also published books on nationalism and European state structure (Rombauer, 1915; Rombauer, 1916). He had a great cultural impact in St. Louis: the St. Louis Public Library was his idea, for instance, but he was also the president of the Board of Assessors and member of Board of Education (Vida, 190). Robert married Emilia Hogl, the widow of Count Theodor Dembiński¹², nephew of the famous Polish General – both refugees due to their participation in the Hungarian Revolution.

Guido Rombauer¹³ studied as a craftsman at a machine manufacturer and also settled down in St. Louis. In 1861 he entered the Army as a sergeant at the Home Guard, and soon became a Major of the 1st Illinois Light Artillery under General Washburn, commander of Tennessee. He directed two artillery battalions until he was promoted to the commander of the whole Artillery Division. Soon he was dismounted and next year married Emily Thomas, with whom he had five children. Getting to the Missouri Pacific Railroad he started as a director of the forwarding agents then superintendent of the Southwest Branch of the company. Following his entrepreneur spirit, he left his job and established his own mine-coaling company, the Rombauer Coal Company in Novinger (Missouri). He was the head and the main shareholder at the same time (Pivány, 1913, 19).

Probably the most successful of Tivadar's children was Roderick. He studied at Dane Law School, Harvard and soon became a prominent member of St. Louis Society. Already at his studies he took an active part of the political campaign of John C. Fremont, later in Cambridge he supported the work of Prof. Emory Washburn, former governor of Massachusetts and at the outburst of the Civil War Roderick Rombauer had already proper investments and a large amount on his account, but for Lincoln's first call he enlisted as a volunteer in Missouri and soon became a captain (Rombauer, 1903, 22; [Roderick] Rombauer, 1915). After the Civil War he became the youngest judge in Missouri. As a consequence of a speech by him, the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis was founded (Wilson, 1974, 4, 457–460). In 1875 the new constitution gave chance to create the St. Louis Court of Appeals, in which Roderick became a member and since 1884 his legislative career was unbroken for twelve years (Parrish, 2001, 291). His works on the theme were numerous.¹⁴

Roderick married Augusta Koerner on December 28, 1866 (Koerner, 1909, 451–452). Her father, Gustave Koerner was one of the co-founders of the Repub-

lican Party and a close friend of Abraham Lincoln; he had an essential role in Lincoln's election for president in 1860 (Ecelbarger, 2008, 185). Some of his later descendants are also worth to mention: Roderick's second son, Edgar married Irma Starkloff, known as Irma Rombauer, the author of the *Joy of Cooking* (Mendelson, 1996). Roderick's third son was Alfred: his grandson, Koerner Rombauer is the founder of one of the largest vineyards in Napa Valley, California, where viticulture and oenology itself was founded by a Hungarian: Ágoston Haraszty establishing the Buena Vista Vinery between 1856 and 1869 (Sztáray, 1964; McGinty, 1998; Szente, 1978, 110–124).

Conclusions

As it is clear from the mentioned examples, the family found its place in America keeping the social position and values derived from the family's Protestant, Saxon roots in Lőcse. Tivadar was a successful entrepreneur and his innovations largely contributed to a faster progress of Hungarian industrialization and he also proved his bravery during the War of Independence. However, after finding asylum overseas there was not much time and chances left and only his descendants could continue the silent, hard-working life, which Tivadar and his ancestors set as an example. Life spans and social environment are in close interrelation both in vertical and horizontal meaning. A career shows the features of a social group (Levi, 1989, 1325–1336), the middle strata in this case, but in two different ways: representing its actual social environment and its origins. Despite their presence in Hungarian society for centuries those few decades at the beginning of the 19th century were worth more for developing a patriotic but also civic identity and culture and the Revolution had a special role in this process. A painter, a manufacturer, a judge, engineers and many other occupations: all typical middle class members, all Protestant and all with an indestructible will to create. Their values include frugality and diligence and the elements of the enhanced values of scholarship, rational systematization of government administration, and an increase in entrepreneurship ventures leading to a modern western value system – linked to Protestant origins (Bendix, 1977) – are also easy to find among them. Nevertheless, we shouldn't forget that from a recent geopolitical view these elements are part of the western civilization according to Huntington's interpretation and influence and this is clearly discoverable through the generations of this family.

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Notes

- 1 His name was actually written like Rompauer in the 1667 and 1728 registers.
- 2 A Lőcsei Evangélikus Egyház lajstroma 1803 (Levoča Lutheran Church Register 1803), 9/11. no. document. Cited in: Riecke, Paul, *Nachkommen von Dr. Johann Christoph Elhard*, Brassó 1900.
- 3 A Selmeczi M. K. Bányász- és Erdész-Akadémia évszázados fennállásának évkönyve 1770–1870, Selmecz 1871, pp. 229–230.
- 4 MOL RMST-Okmánytár (Hungarian National Archive Rimamurány-Salgótarján Document Bank hereinafter referred only as HNA), Z 366-155.
- 5 MOL RMST-Okmánytár (HNA), Z 366-153/a.

- 6 MOL RMST-Okmánytár (Hungarian National Archives, Documents of the Rimamurány-Salgótarján Ironworks), Z 366-6-197. – Pest, November 25, 1848. Rombauer Tivadar kötelezvénye: három hónapon belül az állami fegyvergyárban puskacső gyártása céljából két pár hengert öntet. (Promissory note of Theodore Rombauer: two pairs of cylinders to be cast in the state armory for gun barrel production within three months.)
- 7 MOL. RMST – Okmánytár (HNA), (Hungarian National Archives, Documents of the Rimamurány-Salgótarján Ironworks) Z 366-6-197. – April 7, 1849. Szerződéstervezet az állami fegyvergyár igazgatósága és a Gömöri Vasművelő Egyesület között az ózdi gyárnak puskacsővek gyártására való bérbevétele tárgyában. (Draft treaty between Board of Directors of the State Armory and Gömör Ironworkers' Association for the subject of leasing the Factory of Ózd for the purpose of producing gun barrels.)
- 8 OSZK Kézirattár (National Széchényi Library Archive), Rombauer Tivadar levele Pulszky Ferenchez 1849.
- 9 Born: 1828, Derizen (Munkács – Мукачеве)
- 10 Lived: 1837, Selesztó – 1898, Montana.
- 11 *1830, Podhering (Munkács) – 1924, St. Louis
- 12 Written in Hungarian sources like Dembinszky
- 13 Lived: 1838, Munkács – 1912, St. Louis.
- 14 Rombauer, Roderick, *St. Louis Republic*, 1869, May 22, *St. Louis Post-Dipatch* 1869, May 22, *Missouri Appeal Reports*, Vol. 16–68, *A model charge to a jury: Delivered before the High Court of the Legion of Honor of St. Louis : in a mock trial for breach of promise of marriage by presiding judge R.E. Rombauer* in May 1888, St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Print. Co., 1911, and *Instructions to the assessors of districts in St. Louis County for the assessment of state and county taxes: Based on date of first Monday in September*, Fred. Kluender, 1865

HUNGARIAN PSYCHOLOGY IN CONTEXT. RECLAIMING THE PAST

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The “contextualizing” and “internationalizing” of the history of psychology is an ongoing project, however, Central Europe, as a coherent perspective, and the history of Hungarian psychology specifically, is acutely missing in current surveys of international psychology, and more broadly, in “western consciousness”. This paper is an attempt at presenting a comprehensive, socially and politically contextualized framework of the history of Hungarian psychology, from its beginnings until the fall of communism. The paper situates the history of psychology in the history of Hungary since without this broader background Hungarian psychology cannot be treated as a contextualized phenomenon. Reconstructing the history of Hungarian psychology is, at the same time, reclaiming the past, since continuity with, and remembrance of the past was once forcefully obstructed by the communist regime, and the effects proved to be long lasting. Hungarian psychology was, in part, a genuine “extension” of psychology as it developed in Germany and more broadly in Europe, but also a unique and remarkable phenomenon greatly shaped by specific socio-political context. Scholarship on the history of Hungarian psychology is growing fast, but the richness of this history has yet to be more fully explored and appreciated, inside and outside of Hungary.

Keywords: history of Hungarian psychology, new history of psychology, contextualizing psychology, Budapest School of Psychoanalysis, Hungarian Phenomenon

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The “new history of psychology” (Furumoto, 1989, Harris, 2009, Pickren and Rutherford, 2010) acknowledges that psychology is a socio-cultural phenomenon with intricate roots in the particulars of time and space. This kind of history writing shows an increased appreciation of the sociological, cultural and political factors that are inexorably present wherever psychology as a field develops. In this framework of “contextualizing” and “internationalizing” the history of psychology specific national histories are important. Work has been published,

for example, in the context of India (Paranjpe, 2006), Argentina (Taiana, 2006), China (Blowers, 2006, Gao, 2012), Turkey (Gulerce, 2006), the Soviet Union (Kozulin, 1984, Valenstein, 2011), and the Ukraine (Holowinsky, 2008). De-centering from the Western perspective is a strong motivation behind this work, which has expanded our understanding of what psychology is. The “European perspective”, however, still has aspects that have hardly been elaborated as coherent histories. So is the angle of Central Europe – a region at the very heart of the birth of psychology. Central Europe, as a coherent historical – cultural – geopolitical perspective, and the history of Hungarian psychology specifically, is acutely missing in surveys of international psychology, and more broadly, in “western consciousness”.¹

Central Europe exists in the shared history and cultural heritage of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Following World War II, this region became politically divided. East-Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary – countries historically tied to the West – became part of the Eastern Bloc under Soviet rule. The dissident Czech writer, Milan Kundera calls the disappearance of the whole region from the West “the tragedy of Central Europe” (Kundera, 1984). Disappearance from the West brought along the disappearance of big chunks of collective memory. Communist regimes, as “engineers of memory and forgetfulness” (Schwarcz, 1999, 50) were so efficient in determining what and how could and could not be remembered, that collective amnesia was in effect up until recently, regarding many aspects of the past.

However, Central Europe was beset by calamities long before the communist rule. The multinational Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was the constitutional union of the Austrian Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom. Austria-Hungary was geographically the second largest country in Europe after the Russian Empire and the third most populous country after Russia and Germany. As one of the Central Powers it ended World War I defeated and collapsed. Along with the establishment of the successor states of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia, deep seated animosity among the new nation states was introduced in the region. In the Treaty of Trianon Hungary lost 70% of its historical territory and half of its population. Revisionism remained a major factor of political life between the two world wars and was the main reason for the participation of Hungary on the side of Germany in World War II.

During its existence Austria-Hungary had cultural coherence and became a significant place of intellectual life, with Vienna, Budapest and Prague leading the way. In a region where emerging national and group identities were repeatedly threatened while being formed, cultural and intellectual life grew especially intense and important. In spite, or rather, because of its complicated history, Central Europe became a creative space for human talent. Psychology as a new science was largely formed in the fertile intellectual soil of Germany, but it is more than

symbolic that the Austrian Sigmund Freud was born to Jewish Galician parents in Moravia (later Czechoslovakia), and that Budapest became the first cradle of psychoanalysis outside of Vienna.

Until the end of World War II Hungarian psychology was, in a way, a genuine “extension” of psychology as it developed in Germany, Austria, and more broadly in Europe, but also a unique and remarkable phenomenon rooted in local conditions greatly shaped by specific social and political history. The four decades of communist rule after World War II presented a sharply discontinuous period during which Hungarian psychology followed the Soviet model. Throughout this history, psychologists were not just victims of conditions but also actors who participated in forming and maintaining those conditions.

Even though reconstructing the past is well under way by contemporary Hungarian historians of psychology, many details, as well as the comprehensive, contextualized history of Hungarian psychology still remain to be explored and published nationally and internationally.² Social-political background and historical events are seldom discussed explicitly in the context of history of psychology. In the present case, however, situating the history of psychology in history proper is especially relevant, since without this broader background Hungarian psychology cannot be considered as a contextualized phenomenon. I treat Hungarian psychology as a phenomenon situated in history, embedded in socio-cultural context, and pursued by professionals who had to face sometimes extremely difficult situations imposed upon them by history. My aim is to weave together existing knowledge of the past in a coherent history that highlights how psychology as an academic and professional enterprise was both boosted and constrained by socio-cultural and geopolitical contexts in this specific region of Europe.

Political history marked distinct eras not only in national history, but also in the history of Hungarian psychology – therefore the presentation will follow these historical division points.

Society and intellectual life before World War I

Within the dual monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1914)

Within the boundaries of the dual monarchy (1867–1918) Hungary witnessed a strong economic and social development. Before World War I Budapest was the fastest growing city in Europe, attracting an inflow of newcomers from the countryside. Splendid buildings were raised, and cultural and intellectual life flourished, including philosophy, sociology, music, the fine arts, and literature. Coffee houses were centers of intellectual life, comparable to those in Vienna, and both cities had a vivid atmosphere, along with social tensions (Lukacs, 1990). Society was in a flux: industrialists established state-of-the-art factories, at the

same time urban poverty grew. While landlords in the countryside owned huge estates, nearly two million poor peasants and unskilled workers immigrated to the United States from the historical territory of Hungary (Várdy, 2012). The emerging bureaucratic systems of the modernized state: medical care, education, and the military, called for change and new professional practices. Intellectuals (social scientists, writers and artists) were keenly aware of these processes and conducted heated discussions about the ways to reform Hungary. Like other growing cities in Europe, Budapest shared the ambiance of modernity: the feeling that “all that is solid melts in the air” (Berman, 1982, title cited).

Hungarian national identity was complex: it incorporated the sense of being the defender of Christian Europe for the 150 years of Turkish occupation, the tradition of rebelliousness in fighting the Habsburgs, the sense of “standing alone” with an isolated language, and a long tradition of the assimilation of various ethnicities. Paul Lendvai, for example, pointed out as paradigmatic that Hungary’s greatest poet-patriot, Sándor Petőfi was of Slovak descent, and Franz Liszt, although spoke only a few words of Hungarian, had a deep sense of Hungarian identity (Lendvai, 2014).³

A significant Jewish population lived in Hungary (mostly in Budapest), who enjoyed a period of unprecedented upward mobility and prosperity. In 1867 an emancipation bill granted equal civil rights to Hungarian Jews. The modernization of the economy needed the Jewish entrepreneurial spirit and soon their contribution to economic growth, as well as to art, science, and culture rose to unparalleled levels. Assimilation, secularization and conversion to Christianity became prominent trends among Hungarian Jews. Wealthy Jewish industrialists received titles of nobility from the Emperor-King Francis Joseph I. In this “golden age” of the Hungarian Jewry (Patai, 1996) Budapest became a significant center for Jewish culture. While anti-Semitism was an ever-present current, the Jewish population was assimilated and secularized beyond the European average (Nye, 2011). Talented Jewish youth flocked to the universities and into the free professions such as journalism and medicine (as Jews were still being banned from state office employment, showing the limitation of “equal rights”). This was all the more so as the Hungarian upper and middle class, with traditional feudal mentality, favored jobs in the state bureaucracy over market-related professions such as law, engineering and medical practice. Jewish contribution to psychology was substantial, and, in fact, neither modern Hungarian history and culture, nor the history of Hungarian psychology can be understood without understanding the significant role played by Jewish-Hungarians.

Hungarian universities were much weaker and lesser in number than their German and Austrian counterparts, but they also significantly developed by the turn of the century. The major university of Hungary was in Budapest. Its predecessor was founded in 1635 by Cardinal Péter Pázmány as a Catholic school. In the 18th

century it moved to Pest and became Pázmány University, with German as the official language of operation. After the 1848 Hungarian Revolution and War for Independence from the Austrian Empire was crushed, the Habsburgs-appointed government modernized the university in the spirit of the Humboldt reforms. As a result the university greatly expanded both in the natural and the social sciences. A Technical University was also founded in 1872 in Budapest, the first of its kind in Europe. A major university was established the same year in the city of Kolozsvár (today: Cluj, in Romania), the largest Hungarian center in Transylvania, also as continuation of a Jesuit academy dating back to 1581. A fourth university was established in 1912 in Pozsony (today: Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia), followed by two modern universities in the same year in Pécs and in Debrecen (two Hungarian cities where higher education had strong roots in medieval history). The faculty in all of these universities consisted of qualified scientists who were strongly integrated in the German speaking academic world. They spent time typically in Austrian and German universities or research institutions and published in German, in addition to Hungarian.

By the turn of the century Hungary also had a strong secondary level education. In the 1880s a reform was initiated at this level of the school system by Mór Kármán, who also instituted teacher training. The reform modernized the curriculum and the educational practice in the framework of Johann Friedrich Herbart's theory, who founded pedagogy as an academic principle in Germany and worked out a systematic method of education applicable for all subjects. In the secondary schools – called “gymnasiums” – teachers were often themselves publishing scientists, and the curriculum combined the Greek and Roman classics with knowledge of the sciences. Strong emphasis was placed on character development and moral education, as well as on national history and literature, and the unity of national and European culture, in accordance with the values of national liberalism (Pukánszky and Németh, 1996).

Hungarian psychology emanated in this ambiguous state of emerging Central European modernity, and showed overall development until the end of the 1930's, in spite of political upheavals.

The beginnings of psychology

Phrenology, characterology and other trends pointing towards psychology appeared in Hungary parallel with other regions in Europe. Discussions of the new science of psychology emerged as soon as the idea started to spread in the second half of the 19th century. Several authors in philosophy, pedagogy and linguistics started to work on making the new science known for the wider public, and they made original contributions to ongoing topics and debates in psychology.

Well before the turn of the century psychology was introduced in the framework of university lectures and even in the curriculum of the gymnasiums. Professors and teachers of philosophy, pedagogy and medicine incorporated the new field into their subject matter (Deák, 2000, Pléh, 1997, 2009, Pléh, Bodor and Lányi, 1998). These developments were certainly facilitated by the fact that Hungary was an integral part of the German-speaking culture of Central Europe.

As elsewhere, psychology as a praxis emerged as a response to various social demands. Due to urbanization mental health problems greatly increased and in 1868 the first state mental hospital – The National Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology – was opened in Budapest, formed in the fashion of similar state-of-the-art European institutions (for a detailed discussion see Lafferton, 2003, 2004, Kovai, 2015). This marked a boost for psychiatry and raised interest in problems of mental functioning and in the new science of psychology. Well educated professionals were ready to employ the new knowledge in innovative ways. An early representative of this trend was, for example, Károly Lechner (1850–1922), born to a Hungarian family of German roots, who conducted his medical studies in Vienna and Budapest and spent two years working at the most advanced psychiatry and psychology centers in Europe, including Wilhelm Wundt’s Laboratory in Leipzig and Jean-Martin Charcot’s Clinic in Paris. After returning to Hungary he organized a later internationally famous Clinic of Psychiatry and Psychology at the University at Kolozsvár, developed a theory of mental functioning and pursued empirical psycho-physiological research using reaction time measures (Fodor and Kós, 1995).⁴

Another major social demand was related to the changing position of children in a changing society. Social tasks in this regard were numerous: the problem of abandoned, “morally depraved” and criminally involved children had to be addressed. Children also had to be filtered for the purpose of schooling, what brought up the problem of the “feeble minded”, however, it became also desirable to identify talented children, and provide families with advice on how to raise children. Psychology offered scientific means to deal with these problems (Kovai, 2015).

Reform-minded educators and teachers started writing and lecturing on the scientific study of the child already in the 1890s (Deák, 2000). László Nagy (1857–1931), lecturer at the Hungarian Teacher Training College became the main leader and organizer of the Hungarian child study movement, which soon became highly successful, even by international standards. On Nagy’s initiative, the National Congress on Education in 1889 put on its agenda the discussion of scientific child study. Representatives of Herbartianist pedagogy criticized the positivist “psychotechnik”⁵ promoted by the field of child study, but the idea that children’s welfare and bodily, mental, moral and social development should be based on empirical data and should be addressed as an integrated issue, as well as

the idea of scientific measurement gained popularity. Published reports written by teachers on their observations and measurements of school children increased following the Congress (Deák, 2000). László Nagy established the Hungarian Child Study Association in 1906 and launched the journal *A Gyermekek* (“The Child”). The agenda included the preparation of school reforms, the establishment of a state institution for “nervous children”, cooperation with parents, workshops for teachers, and the promotion of legal reforms for children involved in crime. Child study laboratories were established in several high schools, and in the Hungarian Teacher Training College, on Nagy’s incentive. Even a Child Study Museum was opened in order to disseminate research results. Members of the Hungarian movement were active in international gatherings, such as the International Conference of Child Psychologists in Jena and the International Congress of Psychologists in Rome (Deák, 2000, Pukánszky and Németh, 1996). William Stern visited Budapest in 1914, and subsequently he maintained a personal relationship with László Nagy (Deák, 2000).

With all the prevailing trends in German psychology appearing in Hungary, the establishment of experimental psychology was to be expected. This field found its prepared mind in the person of *Pál Ranschburg* (1870–1945), who played a vital role in Hungarian psychology throughout his career. Ranschburg came from an orthodox rabbinic Jewish family from western Hungary. He received his M.D. at the University of Budapest in the 1890s, and went for a study tour in Leipzig, visiting Wilhelm Wundt’s Laboratory, then to France and Switzerland. After returning to Hungary he established the first Psycho-Physiological Laboratory at the Nervous Disease Department of the Medical Faculty in Budapest, in 1899 (Torda, 1995). Because of the hostility of the Medical Faculty against the natural science methods to study the mind, combined with lingering anti-Semitism, the lab eventually had to move under the roof of the Training College for Teachers of the Handicapped. Ranschburg became interested in child psychiatry and conducted, among many other topics, comparative studies of normally and abnormally developing children. Pál Ranschburg was a founding member of the Hungarian Child Study Association, where he became head of the Experimental Psychology Division (Deák, 2000). He produced a network of follower’s, which resulted in close interconnections among experimental psychology, special education, and the child study movement, which was a special feature of Hungarian psychology (Gordosné, 2013, Pléh, 1997). Ranschburg mainly pursued research on memory, related to neuro- and psychopathology. He became internationally renowned when he published a paper in 1902 on a new phenomenon that he observed and named “homogeneous inhibition”, describing the difficulty in recall presented by similar or homogeneous elements in a learning list. Homogeneous inhibition, or the “Ranschburg effect” is still a relevant topic in memory research (e.g. Kahana and Jacobs, 2000). Besides his scientific

work Ranschburg also served as the first president of the Hungarian Psychological Association and was leading member of other professional organizations (Pléh, 1997, Lányi, 2013a)

Experimental psychology was also pioneered by Géza Révész at the Pázmány University of Budapest.⁶ However, it was psychoanalysis that quickly became dominant in Hungarian psychology. The leader and initiator of Hungarian psychoanalysis was *Sándor Ferenczi* (1873–1933), who came from an assimilated Jewish Hungarian family. His father changed the family name to the Hungarian-sounding ‘Ferenczi’ out of patriotism. After receiving his M.D. from the University of Vienna in 1894, Ferenczi returned to work in Hungary as a neurologist. When he first met Sigmund Freud in 1908, he was already 35 years old, and author of a great number of medical publications. Upon meeting they immediately formed a close relationship that Freud later described as “community of life, thought, and interests” (cited by Haynal, 1996, 27). In the following years Ferenczi became a member of Freud’s inner circle and they were in intense, often intimate and mutually formative correspondence for 25 years. He often visited Freud in Vienna and accompanied him on many travels, including the journey to Clark University in the United States in 1909. In 1910 Ferenczi initiated the foundation of the International Psychoanalytic Association, and soon founded the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society in 1913. During the war he set up an informal psychoanalytic clinic where “war neurosis” cases, and also people who could not afford paying were treated. He organized the first International Congress of Psychoanalysis in 1918 in Budapest. In the meantime he established a circle of followers, later known as Budapest School of Psychoanalysis (Erős, 2012, Haynal, 1996, Moreau-Ricaud, 1996).

Ferenczi was strongly involved in the coffee-house culture of the Budapest intelligentsia, and, specifically, in the modernist avant-garde circles in Budapest, represented among others by the prestigious literary magazine *Nyugat* (“The West”) and the social science periodical *Huszadik Század* (“Twentieth Century”). He maintained friendship with leading literary figures, such as Ignotus (editor of *Nyugat*) and writer Sándor (Alexander) Márai. Under his influence several famous poets underwent therapeutic analysis (Moreau-Ricaud, 1996, 2012). Modernist literary forums disseminated psychoanalysis, which became popular in lay upper circles. Ferenczi rightly wrote to Freud in 1912 that “analytic fever hit Budapest” (cited by Moreau-Ricaud, 1996, 50). Thus, Ferenczi became a catalyst not only for the international psychoanalytic movement, but also for the cross-fertilization of psychoanalysis and wider Hungarian culture (Mészáros, 2012). For years Freud considered Ferenczi as his main successor in the psychoanalytic movement. In a letter to Karl Abraham in August 1918, Freud claimed that he believed Budapest was well on its way to becoming the center of the psychoanalytic movement (Mészáros, 2012).

Ferenczi was also involved in radical socialist circles, as a devotee of social change. At the turn of the century intellectuals hotly debated ways of modernization and fighting backwardness. Young sociologists and politicians led by Oszkár Jászi believed in positivist science and were in favor of radical social reforms, including land ownership. In the group called “Vasárnapi Kör” (“Sunday Circle”) anti-positivist, later Marxist philosophers, social scientists and aestheticians (including philosopher György Lukács, sociologist Karl Mannheim, and art historian Arnold Hauser) discussed necessary social change along with problems of the social history of art and the sociology of knowledge. In the “Galilei Kör” (“Galileo Circle”) led by Károly (Karl) Polányi radical atheist – antimilitarist university students gathered. Sándor Ferenczi was also a member of the Galileo Circle where he held lectures on psychoanalysis. Around the aforementioned journal *Nyugat* (“The West”) a wide circle of significant writers clustered, attracted to Symbolism, Jugendstil, and psychoanalysis. Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók championed new avenues in composing music, the group of painters called “Nyolcak” (“The Eight”) and other avant-garde activists worked on renewing fine arts. Issues in art, science, and social commitment were intertwined, and trends and persons were in complex interrelationships (for profound discussions of this era from the point of art and culture see Pók, 1994, Szegedy-Maszák, 1994, Szabó, 1994). Representatives of this intellectual tapestry not only were decisive in culture, but many of them entered politics during the short-lived revolutionary governments after the First World War.

In summary: before World War I Hungary was not just close to the scholarly space where psychology was formed, but it was a constituent part of this creative space.

Social demands of modernization and cultural–intellectual preparedness met each other and produced a developmental trajectory, which resulted in a kind of psychology rather typical in Central Europe. No language or cultural barriers existed to the exchange of ideas in the region, as the working language of the Hungarian academic community was still German. Hungarian scientists had original contributions and they were in personal contact with leading European scientists. Following these beginnings, history took a dramatic turn in the aftermath of World War I, and psychology was not exempt from these events. Following the collapse of Austria-Hungary, Hungary became, in many ways, a different country than it was before the war.

Between the two World Wars
Cataclysms in the aftermath of World War I

We have to digress briefly into the chaotic and catastrophic events around the end of the war at this point. Armed hostilities of World War I ended by November 1918, when Germany signed the armistice with the Allied Powers. Fighting, however, continued along the Hungarian border, where the seceding nationalities aspired to realize their territorial claims. The economic situation deteriorated and following strikes and uprisings a revolution broke out in October. A liberal socialist government took over and terminated its union with Austria, proclaiming the Hungarian Democratic Republic on October 31, 1918. Hungary soon had to face the Czechoslovak, Romanian and Serbian armies crossing the borders and occupying significant parts of Hungary, in order to carve out territories for their to-be established nation states. When the republican liberal government collapsed, the Communist Party of Hungary (led by Bela Kun) grabbed power.⁷ In the spring of 1919 Hungary was the second country in the world after the Russian Soviet State to be ruled by the dictatorship of the proletariat, which lasted for 133 days. The Hungarian Soviet Republic was soon followed by the anti-communist-conservative Horthy regime. On June 4, 1920, Hungary was forced to sign the Trianon Treaty. These events, which exerted a profound influence on the 20th-Century Hungarian psyche, had ramifications for psychology.

In November 1918 (the last month of the war) Ferenczi organized the Fifth International Psychoanalytic Congress in Budapest, where he was elected president of the International Psychoanalytical Association. In spite of the hectic situation government officials of the Hungarian Republic attended the Congress because of the general interest in the psychoanalytic treatment of war neurosis. The liberal government was sympathetic to reforms in higher education, and when medical students demanded in a petition that Ferenczi get an academic position at the Pázmány University, a nomination procedure started. The university council was against it, but after the communist take-over the Bolshevik government granted Ferenczi a professorship and approved the establishment of a Department of Psychoanalysis against the will of the Council of the Medical Faculty (Erős, 2009, 2011, Mészáros, 1998, Moreau-Ricaud, 1996). At a time when psychoanalysis was at the periphery of international academic life and nowhere in the world was it present in universities, the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic presented an unprecedented opportunity for psychoanalysis to establish itself as an academic discipline.

During its brief existence the Communist state took dictatorial measures to raise the poor, abolish private property, nationalize banks, industrial and commercial enterprises, housing and cultural institutions, liquidate the Church, and collectivize agriculture. At the same time they had to fight the Czechoslovak,

Serbian and Romanian troops entering Hungary. Radical intellectuals, many of them of Jewish origin, were attracted to social reforms and became leaders in the liberal and the communist governments. Jewish involvement in the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic was significant: the great majority of people's commissars (ministers of the communist government) were of Jewish descent – among them Jenő Varga, an economist and psychoanalyst, who was commissar of finance, and philosopher György Lukács, who was commissar of culture (Gyurgyák, 2001, Patai, 1996).

Measures were taken with an iron fist, including hostage taking from the civilian population and daily executions by revolutionary tribunals to prevent counterrevolutionary attempts. Even Pál Ranschburg was arrested because formerly he received military officials in his office (Ranschburg, 2013). The communist rule was rejected by the great majority of the population, including the substantial number of middle- and upper class Hungarian Jews, involved in banks and commercial and industrial establishments. In four months the communist regime lost all of its social support and military power, and Romanian troops entered Budapest in August. Communist leaders fled Hungary and right wing former admiral Miklós Horthy took power and signed the Treaty of Trianon. A brief period of “white” (anti-red) terror followed the collapse of the communist regime, with a campaign of revenge, torture and murder. At Pázmány University both Ferenczi and Révész were dismissed (along with other professors who could be associated with the revolutionary regimes) and the initial steps taken by them to organize a psychoanalytical and an experimental department were disrupted.

The heavy involvement of Jewish intellectuals in the liberal socialist and communist regimes helped spread the notion of a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy. Fearing the worst, the father of Edward (Ede) Teller, who later became a famous physicist, told his son that anti-Semitism was inevitable because “too many of the communist leaders are Jews” (Nye, 2011, 15). Indeed, anti-Semitism intensified. Although atrocities were fundamentally over by the end of 1920, the remaining anti-Semitic atmosphere (marked by a “*numerus clausus*” law which restricted the number of Jews entering universities) sparked the first wave of post-war Jewish emigration. Hungarians’ emigration was actually already in progress, however, in the 1920s emigration was a choice increasingly taken by intellectuals. As Szegedy-Maszák put it: “Hungary was about to lose one of her finest generations” (Szegedy-Maszák, 1994, 21).

Among those who left the country were young people who later reached extraordinary achievements in science, in the United States: Noble laureate radio chemist György (Georg von) Hevesy, contributor to research on nuclear chain reaction, physicist Leó Szilárd, who patented the idea of atomic reactor with Enrico Fermi, Noble laureate physicist Eugene (Jenő) Wigner, contributor to nuclear physics and quantum mechanics, theoretical physicist Edward (Ede) Teller,

colloquially known as the father of the hydrogen bomb, mathematician and polymath János (John von) Neumann, known as the father of the modern computer and game theory, physicist Tódor (Theodore von) Kármán, known as the father of modern aerodynamics and supersonic flight, and the first director of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and Nobel laureate physicist Dénes Gábor, inventor of holography. Later in science folklore this group was called "the Martians", because it was joked that their close connection to each other, their strange and heavy Hungarian accent, and their seemingly superhuman intellect was explained by their coming from Mars (Marx, 1994, 2000).

The phrase "Martians" referred mostly to those of the above, who later worked on the development of the nuclear bomb in the Manhattan Project, between 1942–46. However, the emigrant group was much larger and included prominent scientist from various fields. Amongst them were: Arnold Hauser art historian, George (György) Lukács philosopher, Karl (Károly) Mannheim father of sociology of knowledge, Michael (Mihály) Polányi physical chemist, economist and antipositivist philosopher of science – to mention some of the most famous. These scientists, who had already known each other from Hungary (Leo Szilárd and Ede Teller even attended the same gymnasium), never ceased to maintain their Hungarian network, and kept their Hungarian identity (Hargittai, 2006).

Emigration caused a severe loss in psychology, as well. About one third of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society left the country, among them Sándor Radó (who was analyzed by Wilhelm Reich and Heinz Hartmann in Berlin, and later became director of the New York Institute of Psychoanalysis) and Melanie Klein, who was not of Hungarian origin, but lived in Budapest at that time and was analyzed by Ferenczi (Mészáros, 2009). Most of them left for Berlin, the rapidly expanding cultural and scientific capital of the Weimar Republic (Nye, 2011). Among the immigrants was Géza Révész, appointed head of the to-be-organized department of experimental psychology at Pázmány University, who settled in the Netherlands and became an outstanding researcher of the psychology of hearing and music (see endnote 6).

Besides emigration, Hungary had to face immense difficulties caused by the Treaty of Trianon. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was an integrated and interdependent economic unit. In the post-war situation the fragmented, protective economies of the successor states took over and the whole region faced a deep recession. Post-Trianon Hungary lost over 70% of its public roads and its railway system, more than 50% of its industrial plants and banking institutions, lost its markets for the agricultural products and almost all of the resources of raw materials. Out of the 30% of ethnic Hungarians who found themselves living outside of Hungary, several hundred thousands left their homes and immigrated into Hungary where many lived in railway carts for years, for lack of housing. While the successor states regarded the Treaty of Trianon an act of righteousness, for

Hungarians it was felt as disastrous and caused lasting bitterness and revisionism, which was a dominant theme of political discourse between the two wars (Sugar, Hanák and Frank, 1994).

Territorial dissection caused significant problems in the cultural-educational infrastructure, as well. Major cultural centers (Kassa, Pozsony, Nagyvárad, Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely, Brassó) were now outside of the borders. Two of the major universities – one in Kolozsvár (Cluj) and the other in Pozsony (Bratislava) did not belong to Hungary anymore. The Romanian troops entered Kolozsvár in November 1919 and overtook the university by military force, along with Lechner's Clinic (Iványi, 2008). Kolozsvár University, a university of great practical and symbolic importance to Hungarian academic life, ceased to exist and, through a torturous process, had to "repatriate" in the newly defined Hungary. The geographically close Hungarian city, Szeged volunteered to take in the refugee university. Lechner, who also lost his son on the front, moved to Szeged to rebuild his Clinic there, but soon he died.

The Budapest School of Psychoanalysis in the consolidated Horthy regime

After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Council Ferenczi was dismissed from the professorship and even expelled from the Medical Society. Jewish students were beaten at the Medical Faculty, and all of the Jewish professors were dismissed. The first emigrants (among them Michael and Alice Bálint, and Franz Alexander) left for Berlin, and, in the meantime, Anton von Freund, the financial patron of Hungarian psychoanalysis, died. Ferenczi himself considered emigrating, but in a letter of March 15, 1920, Freud advised him to stay, in order to prevent the total collapse of psychoanalysis in Hungary (Moreau-Ricaud, 1996). By the mid-1920's atrocities basically stopped and due to the political and economic consolidation of the Horthy regime under Prime Minister István Bethlen life got back to normal. Ferenczi stayed and due to his efforts the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society kept working, even growing, and introduced novel directions in psychoanalysis. The decade between the mid-1920's and mid-1930's became the heyday of Hungarian psychoanalysis.

By that time Ferenczi grew more independent of Freud and introduced innovations both in therapy and theorizing. Eventually, he departed from Freud in questioning the hierarchical nature of the relationship between the analyst and the analyzed and emphasizing the interpersonal dimension of the analyst-patient relationship. He also questioned the sexual interpretation of the emotional needs of the child and emphasized the importance of the parent in healthy development. Although later these ideas became important sources of post-Freudian psychoanalysis (specifically, the object relations school), at that time they were consid-

ered highly controversial by Freud and members of the international psychoanalytic movement (Vikár, 1996). By the 1930s personal and professional tensions caused a rift in the Ferenczi–Freud relationship. Ferenczi became somewhat of an “enfant terrible” in the psychoanalytic movement (Bergmann, 1996, Haynal, 1996, Nemes, 1996, Keve, 2012). His name was also tainted by the unfounded stigma of mental illness, suggested by Ernest Jones. Ferenczi continued his “dissident” career, visited the United States for a couple of months in 1926–27 at the invitation of the New School for Social Research, but suffered a sudden death of pernicious anemia in 1933. In the history of the international psychoanalytic movement his work was neglected, in spite of Freud’s vow in his farewell speech at Ferenczi’s death that he would not be forgotten (Nemes, 1986, Keve, 2012). Nevertheless, Ferenczi was highly effective in generating a dedicated and talented group of disciples who eventually came to be known as the Budapest School (Harmat, 1995, Mészáros, 2009, 2012).

In the late 1920s and 1930s, when anti-Semitism became more and more brutal in Germany and Austria, the psychoanalytic movement was freely functioning, even flourishing in Budapest. In 1931 the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society established the Psychoanalytic Polyclinic in Budapest. This was the second to the Berlin Polyclinic, which opened in 1920, after plans in setting up the first polyclinic in Budapest were crushed by the political events. The Polyclinic was a training institute but also a place for scientific meetings, courses organized for mothers, teachers and doctors, and outpatient care for children and adults including those who could not afford paying. Psychoanalysis maintained an extensive following among the lay public, and kept influencing literary life. Great Hungarian literary figures (Mihály Babits, Géza Csáth, Attila József, Dezső Kosztolányi, Sándor Márai, Antal Szerb) were deeply influenced by Hungarian psychoanalysis, which by that time presented a group of significant personalities and novel ideas. The main originality and cohesion of the group came from drawing on Ferenczi’s shift from the Oedipal conflict to the early mother–infant dual unit (Mészáros, 2009, Nemes, 1986).

After the death of Ferenczi, Mihály (Michael) Bálint (1896–1970), one of his most significant followers assumed a leading role in the movement and became the head of the Polyclinic. Bálint, who in the 1920s worked in the Department of Biochemistry of the Wilhelm Kaiser Institute in Berlin, kept his interest in general medical practice and used psychoanalysis in the training of doctors. This work led to the group-discussion technique, later called “Bálint groups”, for medical doctors to analyze the psychodynamic factors in the doctor–patient relationship. Following Ferenczi’s interpersonalist approach he considered “primary love” between mother and infant the basis of healthy emotional development, and the breakdown of these relations – which he called the “basic fault” – the source of neurosis. In letters to Freud Ferenczi mentioned Bálint’s case study of a heart

condition caused by somatic transference, as well as István Hollós's publication in which he proposed humanistic psychiatry (Hollós was chief doctor in the National Psychiatric Hospital [Lipótmező] where he reformed treatment of patients and introduced psychoanalysis in treatment methods [Moreau-Ricaud, 1996]).

Another leading figure, Imre Hermann (1889–1984) was looking for the biological grounding of psychoanalysis, relating the psychoanalytic instinct concept to the ethological notion of instinct. Hermann, who was initially trained in experimental psychology (by Géza Révész), followed primate studies in the 1920s and recognized that the instinctual clinging of the baby ape to the mother is preserved in the human infant. He proposed that mother and infant create a biological unit and physical closeness transforms into emotional attachment. This was antedating the work of Bowlby (who then inspired Harry Harlow's work with rhesus monkeys), Mahler and Winnicott (Geyskens, 2003).

While all the distinguished psychoanalysts who worked at that time in Budapest cannot be acknowledged here, two more pioneering figures must be mentioned. Géza Róheim (1891–1953), trained originally as an anthropologist, trying to find an alternative to “consulting room analysis”, traveled in 1929 to the Australian Aborigines, New Guinea and Mexico, to pursue psychoanalytic-anthropological studies – the first of its kind in psychoanalysis (Moreau-Ricaud, 1996). Lipót (Leopold) Szondi (1893–1986) developed a unique approach that combined genetics and psychoanalysis. Initially also working with Pál Ranschburg, later succeeding him as the director of the reorganized research lab at the Budapest College of Special Education. Meanwhile he developed a unique theory of „fate analysis”, which holds that a person's life (destiny) unfolds in a series of elections realized in choices of occupation, friends, partners, and these life decisions implicitly select illnesses and ultimately the way of death. His concept of the familial unconscious describes the role of the family ancestry in grounding the choices (Gyöngyösiné Kiss, 1996, 2010).

By that time psychoanalysis was a well-established movement, with its own infrastructure. Adlerian influences also found their way in Hungary, and in 1927 the Hungarian Association for Individual Psychology (Magyar Individuálpсихológiai Egyesület) was founded (Kiss, 1991). For mainstream culture psychoanalysis still was as a “suspicious outsider”, however, its popularity grew in certain urban middle class circles. Psychoanalysis became known for its theory and clinical work with children, but it also attracted politically minded individuals who took it as an intellectual revolt and infused it with anti-capitalist sentiments (Kovai, 2015).

The strengthening of the psychology profession in the inter-war decades

With a multi-party system without a universal secret ballot and a relatively free press, Hungary under Regent Horthy was a restricted democracy with semi-feudal features, such as maintaining the concentrated ownership of land and the exclusion of poor people from political elections by a restrictive voting law.⁸ Interwar Hungary was a Christian conservative nationalist country, where, as observed by Szegedy-Maszák (1994), the cultural atmosphere radically changed compared to the pre-war period. Bourgeois liberalism and all sorts of radicalism were discredited. From a geographically large, multinational, multicultural country with a large number of urban centers Hungary became a small country, less open to cross-cultural influences and modernity. Values of the national past and peasant culture became dominant, and a fatal dichotomy ensued between the proponents of urban culture (dominantly Jewish and German) and the countryside's rural culture (for a deeper discussion see e.g. Szegedy-Maszák, 1994).

The Horthy era did see some social achievements. By far, reforms in the educational system, championed by minister of culture Kuno Klebelsberg in the 1920's, brought the most significant changes. Klebelsberg realized that for Hungary the way to compensate losses was to develop its culture and educational system. At his initiative 3,500 elementary school classrooms were built in five years in the Hungarian country-side to fight illiteracy (Palló, 2007). He initiated reforms at all levels of education and began the modernization of universities. He initiated a new university in Szeged, where the expelled university from Kolozsvár could move, and another university in Pécs, where the expelled university from Pozsony (Bratislava, Slovakia) could relocate. Klebelsberg also supported the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, multiplied the number of research institutions and introduced a scholarship system in science education. He also contacted the Rockefeller Foundation (which started its activities in Hungary right after World War I) to extend support for Hungarian science (Palló, é.n.). Klebelsberg also supported the child study movement, specifically the reform school (called the "Új Iskola"/"New School") of Ms. Domonkos Emma Löllbach, a former student of László Nagy (Sáska, 2008).

The Child Study movement kept growing between the two wars, and was joined by some well-known Christian priest psychologists, such as Dezső Várkonyi Hildebrand, who also was the chair of the "Educational–Psychological Institute" in Szeged. The Benedictine "priest professor" Dezső Várkonyi Hildebrand (1888–1971) was invited to Szeged in 1929 to set up the first psychology institute at a Hungarian university. Before this engagement, he spent two years at the Sorbonne in Paris studying the work of Jean Piaget, Eduard Claparede, and Henri Bergson. At Szeged he introduced a psychology that focused on the pedagogical aspects of child development, emphasizing the role of action (Völgyesy,

1995, Csomortáni, 2009). He was in contact with Ms. Domonkos's New School in Budapest, but also helped set up an experimental elementary school in Szeged, and launched the journal *Cselekvés Iskolája* ("The School of Action"). Várkonyi had a research laboratory in his Institute established with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, and was surrounded by doctoral students. He became one of the leading figures of Hungarian psychology, serving as the chief editor to the *Hungarian Psychological Review*, and later as the president of the Hungarian Psychological Association (Csomortáni, 2009).

Besides the Child Study movement, the Hungarian Association for Individual Psychology also took great interest in educational psychology, and contributed to the extension of educational counseling services. Psychology reacted to the needs of changing family life: this was the time when families started to down-size the number of children and an increasing number of mothers entered the work force (Lisznyai, 1999). Individual psychologists offered their services for free, to help in a situation which was characterized by István Máday, the leader of the Association as follows: "Due to the present existential problems parents manage their children in a nervous and impatient way which may cause behavior problems or illness in early childhood. The spreading social problems related to children – alcoholism, prostitution and other immoral manners – push children towards maladaptive models of coping." (Cited by Lisznyai, 1999, 170). In the 1930s a number of child counseling offices opened, following the first one that worked within the framework of the National Child Protection League (Gyermekvédő Liga). The Education Department of Budapest popularized these services in every school, thus this opportunity was well known for parents (Lisznyai, 1999).

Hungarian psychology at large enjoyed a time of substantial development. Society increasingly needed psychological expertise and in the wake of the worldwide economic crisis in the early 1930s, applied psychology was supported by the government also as part of social policy to help maintain social peace. Importantly, in 1928 the Hungarian Psychological Association was formed by Pál Ranschburg and others, and the journal *Hungarian Psychological Review* ("Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle") was launched. In addition to Szeged, psychology was academically institutionalized in universities in Debrecen and in Budapest. In 1931 the Royal Hungarian Child Psychology Institute was established in Budapest under the leadership of János Schnell, Ranschburg's student. At the Institute a well-equipped psychological laboratory focused on the differential diagnosis of the handicapped and new methods of "healing pedagogy", in which leading experimental psychologists, such as Pál Ranschburg and Lipót Szondi also participated (Gordosné, 2013). In 1927 Lipót Szondi was entrusted to lead the research laboratory at the Teacher Training College for Special Needs Education. Here he created a hub of research, involving dozens of co-workers, and a close-knit intellectual "family" consisting of thirty-some members, who met in his apartment on

a regular basis. (Bürgi-Meyer, 1996, Kovai, 2015).⁹ “Psychotechnical” laboratories were set up in several factories for vocational counseling and aptitude testing (Völgyesy, 1995, Kiss 1983). These laboratories were part of the effort to train a work force, in the style of Taylorism, for the increasing needs of the industry (Kovai, 2015).

In Budapest, it was *Pál (Paul) Harkai Schiller* (1908–1949), who realized in 1936 what Géza Révész wished to accomplish 17 years earlier: setting up an institute for experimental psychology at the Péter Pázmány University. Harkai Schiller, born with a Catholic background, graduated in 1930 in Budapest, worked in Ranschburg’s Lab, and then went to Berlin to cooperate with the Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler. On his return he became a highly effective organizer: he set up institutions for aptitude testing in the Hungarian Army and in the Hungarian Railways Company. He founded and edited a book series “*Lélektani tanulmányok*” (“*Studies in Psychology*”). He was, however, also a remarkable experimentalist in comparative psychology and a theoretician in psychology. In the 1930s and 1940s he developed an original theoretical synthesis based on the ideas of Aristotle, Jakob von Uexküll, Franz Brentano, Wolfgang Köhler, Karl Bühler and Kurt Lewin, arguing against Cartesian dualism. Building this synthesis around the importance of action he developed an “action theory of behavior” (Dewsbury, 1994, 1996, Marton, 1996).

An intellectually and artistically gifted strong woman character of this era, the deeply Catholic Valeria Dienes (1879–1978) was the first woman to get a doctoral degree at the Péter Pázmány University, where she studied mathematics, philosophy and esthetics. She worked with Henri Bergson in Paris, then translated and mediated Bergsonian ideas and helped the propagation of French educational functionalism (Pléh, 2005). She also launched an artistic dance movement called “orchestrics”, based on her own systematic study of human movement (Jakabffy, n.d.). In the meantime, the biophysicist György (Georg von) Békésy (1899–1972), who later won the Noble prize in physiology in 1961 for his work on the function of the cochlea, quietly worked at the Research Center of the Hungarian Post Office, then at the Department of Physics at the Pázmány University of Budapest (Pléh, 2005).

In the 1930’s nationalist and anti-Semite political forces became gradually more and more influential. Such views started to appear in psychology, dressed in prevalent eugenic and racial biological frameworks, represented by lesser known psychologists. However, not the Nazi type racial theory was most influential, but a nationalist discourse focusing on the concept of national character (Erős, 2015).

At this time Hungary’s foreign policy moved closer to Nazi Germany, driven by the logic of economic dependence and territorial revisionism. Following World War I, Hungary got deeply indebted so it could stabilize its economy and pay reparations imposed upon the country in the Treaty of Trianon. During the Great

Depression in 1931 Hungary became insolvent, and an economic treaty with Germany meant the only geopolitically available solution to maintain the economy (Sugár, Hanák, Frank, 1994). Hungary grew more and more dependent on Nazi Germany, which was, at the same time, its only hope to aid territorial revision.

Hungary had a mixed relationship with Hitler's Germany. The two Vienna Awards – arbitrations in 1939 and 1940, when Germany and Italy returned territories to Hungary – seemed to justify revisionist hopes. However, a substantial Anglo-Saxon orientation was also present in the political elite. In his memoirs John Flournoy Montgomery, the American ambassador at the time, described Hungary as the “unwilling satellite” (Montgomery, 1947), referring to the fact that many in the political and military elite, including Regent Horthy, realized how dangerous the alliance with Hitler was. Nevertheless, they were unable to change course and Hungary drifted more and more to the side of Germany. After the Anschluss of Austria, Hungary introduced in 1938 the first Jewish Law, which established a quota system to limit the participation of Jews (defined on the basis of religion) in the economy, in the press, and among physicians, engineers and lawyers to 20%. The Second Jewish Law in 1939 defined Jews by race, thereby affecting those who had formerly converted from Judaism to Christianity. In addition to these restrictions, employment at any level of the government was forbidden. Jews could not be editors at newspapers, and even private companies were forbidden to employ more than 12% Jews. Some quarter of a million Hungarian Jews lost their income (Patai, 1996).

These laws, along with increasing anti-Semitism, evidently affected psychologists with a Jewish background, and, since many of the leading psychologists were Jewish Hungarians, these measures had ramifications for the whole psychology profession. From 1937 on, the secret police started to watch psychoanalytic meetings. Due to the Jewish Laws Lipót Szondi was dismissed from his directorial appointment at his laboratory and was even banned from private practice, along with other Jewish psychoanalysts. Pál Ranschburg (who previously converted to Christianity) was excluded from the Chamber of Hungarian Physicians (Ranschburg, 2013).

In January 1939 István Hollós, president of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society turned to the International Psychoanalytic Association, requesting help for emigration (Mészáros, 2012). Right after the Anschluss the American Psychoanalytic Association established a committee to aid the emigration of European analysts – to counter the restrictive immigration laws of the US and the fear on the part of American authorities of importing leftist–communist ideology. After the first wave in the early 1920s, a second wave of emigration of intellectuals took place between 1938 and 1941. Among the second-wave immigrants were Michael (Mihály) Bálint and his wife, Alice Bálint, Géza Róheim and the

27-year-old Dezső (David) Rapaport, student of Harkai Schiller, who fulfilled his career in the United States (Mészáros, 2009).

Between 1938 and 1941 about 150 analysts arrived into the United States from Europe, causing some tensions in the profession. As pointed out by Mészáros (2012), the émigrés perceived themselves as representatives of the authentic tradition of psychoanalysis and had a sense of superiority over their American colleagues, who, in turn, thwarted the Europeans' practice and wanted them to conform to regulations prevalent in the US. In spite of these difficulties, Hungarian émigré psychoanalysts of the first and second waves were typically successful. Sándor Radó became the first educational director of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute established in 1931, and was effective in introducing psychoanalysis into the curriculum at Columbia University. Franz (Ferenc) Alexander, the first graduate of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, and a person Freud once considered to be one of the strongest hopes for the future, was invited to be the first director of the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis in 1932 and became the emblematic figure of psychoanalytically minded psychosomatic medicine. David Rapaport became the organizer and head of the Research Department at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas. Several émigrés became training analysts. Presidents of the New York Psychoanalytic Society included Sándor Lóránd, Robert Bak, Margaret Mahler and Andrew Pető (Mészáros, 2009).

Others stayed in Europe. Mihály Bálint became Director of the Child Guidance Clinic in Manchester, England, then worked at the Tavistock Clinic in London and became president of the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1968. In addition to "Bálint groups", he also earned fame for his innovative "focal psychotherapy". Szondi worked and trained students in Zurich and spent four decades of prolific work there before his death in 1989. Other psychoanalysts settled in places as far as New Zealand and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) (Mészáros, 2012).

Those who stayed at home eventually had to face persecution of the worst kind, due to the tragic turns of events. Becoming aware of secret negotiations by the Hungarian government with the British and the Americans, Hitler ordered the occupation of Hungary by German troops in March 1944. Adolf Eichmann came to Hungary to organize the deportation of the Jews and the Gipsy population – in two months 437,402 people were deported to Auschwitz, mostly from the country-side. In August Horthy stopped deportations and on October 15th he announced that Hungary signed an armistice with the Soviet Union (in September the Soviet Army had already crossed the Hungarian border). The armistice, however, never took affect. The Germans kidnapped Horthy's son and forced him to appoint Ferenc Szálasi, leader of the Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross Party, the Prime Minister of Hungary. In cooperation with the Nazis Szálasi stepped up the effort to execute the deportation of the Jews in Budapest, who were by that time forced into the ghetto (Sugar, Hanák and Frank, 1994).

In 1944 Ranschburg had to move into the ghetto. By the help of friends he narrowly escaped deportation. Lipót Szondi, was, however, deported from Budapest to Bergen-Belsen with his family. Eventually they were released as a result of a deal between Rudolf Kastner, a Jewish-Hungarian lawyer who, on behalf of the Budapest Aid and Rescue Committee, negotiated with Adolf Eichmann to allow a number of Jews to escape, in exchange for gold and cash. Pál Ranschburg and Imre Hermann stayed and survived the worst months of the persecution in Budapest, in hiding.

After World War II

Psychology under the harshest years of communist dictatorship

After World War II there was a resurgence of activity in Hungary and great optimism to rebuild the country and create a new democratic system. Psychology was part of this revitalization. Initiatives were taken to recreate the institutional basis of psychology, for example, the nationwide network of State Child Psychology Stations. Journals and professional organizations were renewed. The Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society started its activities again¹⁰, with Imre Hermann as president. Psychology and psychoanalysis were once again introduced in the university. Psychoanalysts were very active politically, in fact, many of them held key positions in the reorganization of the mental health system and education (Mészáros, 2012).

Ferenc Mérei (1909–1985) returned to Hungary from Moscow, and became a leading figure of psychology and a leader in “NÉKOSZ” – a network of “People’s Colleges” established after the war, in order to promote social mobility of the underprivileged youth.¹¹ Mérei got his degree at the Sorbonne in the early 1930’s, and became a follower of the child psychologist Henri Wallon. Wallon became a communist, and Mérei, too, joined the French Communist Party in 1930. Between 1938 and 1940 he worked with Lipót Szondi at his laboratory at the Special Education Teacher Training College in Budapest, researching the role social rules played in, however, later on he was expelled due to the second Jewish Law. He was taken to forced labor service, but he escaped and joined the Soviet Army. Upon returning Mérei was appointed the head of the Budapest Institute of Psychology (Fővárosi Lélektani Intézet) in 1945. Here he conducted internationally acclaimed experimental work on the “collective experience” of groups (Bagdy, Forgács and Pál, 1989, for more on Mérei see Borgos, Erős and Litván, 2006).

In the shadow of the Soviet Army occupying Hungary, aspirations for democracy and freedom were put to an end in 1949. As a result of the Soviet military occupation and the Yalta agreement between the Allies and the Soviet Union it was actually ordered that Hungary would remain under Soviet influence. Many of

the Communist leaders of 1919 returned from Moscow, and with Soviet help the Hungarian Communist Party grabbed power and introduced a Stalinist dictatorship with Mátyás Rákosi as leader. The country was reorganized according to the Soviet model: by 1950 the state had full control of the economy and the society, including ideology and the academic world (for a detailed discussion of this period see Golnhofer, 2006, Kovai, 2015).

The communist system worked to uplift the working class and replace the former ruling classes. After the Horthy regime, for many this meant social mobility and social justice. However, it soon became clear that the country had to pay for these social advancements with a Soviet-style terror: an estimated 2,000 people were executed, over 100,000 were imprisoned, about 44,000 put in forced-labor camps, and an estimate of 15,000 reactionary “class enemies” – former aristocrats, industrialists, military leaders and other upper- and middle-class people – were deported from their homes to live in villages and perform agricultural labor (Patai, 1996).

For the surviving Jewish population¹² the situation was precarious. Zionism had its call: between 1945 and 1949 approximately 45,000 Jews emigrated, most of them into Israel¹³. Other Holocaust survivors put their faith into the new regime, hoping that the communist system will abolish anti-Semitism and introduce a just society. The majority of the communist leaders, including the secret police, were of Jewish origin, including Mátyás Rákosi himself. On ground that the Jewish population was exempt from the infection of fascism, people of Jewish origin were trusted by the Rákosi regime and were often put in leading positions. Ironically, while communists of Jewish origin typically stopped perceiving themselves as Jews, in line with the ideology of internationalism, the wider population still viewed them as Jews. In addition to this, a number of factors maintained anti-Semitism – significant was that many Hungarians took possession of the assets of deported Jews, or were just idle by-standers of the deportations, and were therefore negatively affected by seeing Jewish people coming back from the camps and taking up leading positions (for a deeper discussion see Gyurgyák, 2001).

Ideological control meant that views not in line with the official interpretation were severely persecuted. The Trianon issue became a taboo in the name of communist internationalism. Paradoxically, the issue of Hungarian participation in the genocide and all related “Jewish questions” became a taboo, too.¹⁴ In 1945 the painful analysis of Hungarian participation in the genocide began and until 1948 this issue was at the center of public debate. A group of psychologists, many of them Holocaust survivors, published a book by the title: „The mental epidemics of the recent past. The disordered group mind and its cure” (Gleimann, Harkai Schiller and Herman, 1945). However, after the Communist Party came to power, such discussions came to a halt, because the official line denied the relevance of the special situation of the Jewish population, presenting all of history

as the struggle between the anti-Fascist working class and the Fascist bourgeoisie (Patai, 1996). The Communist Party was keen to abolish the past while building the future, and in this framework much of Hungarian history was reinterpreted or purged from collective memory. Importantly, taboos were internalized not only by those who identified themselves with the regime, but also by the wider population.

These conditions presented a complex situation for psychologists. Emigration was, again, an option. Pál Harkai Schiller and his wife left Hungary in 1947 and went to work at the Yerkes Laboratories of Primate Biology in Orange Park, Florida, at the invitation of Karl Lashley. He spent two proliferate years there before his untimely death in a skiing accident in 1949, following his visit to B.F. Skinner at Harvard University (Dewsbury, 1996). Gyögy Békésy also moved to the United States. Those who stayed had to put up with conditions that were modeled after the state of Soviet psychology.

In the 1930's the Soviet Union went through a new wave of terror (also called the Great Purge) that Stalin initiated in order to crush all resistance.¹⁵ This brought along the "Bolshevization" of science, which meant a sharp turn in academic life towards the persecution of "pseudo-Marxist" and "bourgeois" elements. The formerly popular mental health movement and psychotechnics were condemned for the "uncritical use of tests of bourgeois authors" (Joravsky, 1989, 339). In July 1936 the Party Central Committee accused Soviet pedagogy for willfully demonstrating the defects of children of worker and peasant family background – what meant the end of testing. According to the voluntaristic Party line children's capabilities were only shaped by pedagogical means, and biological or social circumstances did not play a role. Child psychology was subordinated to Marxist pedagogy (Joravsky, 1989).

Up until October 1932 Pavlov had a mixed evaluation by Soviet officials. Some praised his "enormously important scientific work", even described his theory as "a weapon from the iron arsenal of materialism" (Joravsky, 1989, 380), while others held him to be a reactionary. As Joravsky points out, Marxist intellectuals had a hard time squaring Pavlov-style physical materialism with Marxian dialectical historical materialism, and both with the Bolshevik insistence on the supreme power of communist conscious will. This situation, however, sharply changed when Stalin decided to elevate Pavlovism to the status of a unifying theory and the only acceptable Marxist–Leninist psychology. Before his 1936 death Pavlov also changed his attitude towards the Soviet regime: he gave up his internal exile and declared open support for the communist fatherland (Joravsky, 1989). Following World War II Russian chauvinism greatly strengthened and the supremacy of Russian science became a doctrine. Stalin himself intervened in matters of science and in 1947 initiated the purge of scientists of Jewish origin under the banner of fighting cosmopolitanism. This led to the attack of the distin-

guished psychologist Sergey Rubinstein, among others. Such was the state of affairs when Soviet psychology became relevant for the course of events in Hungary.

In Hungary the first attack came on psychoanalysis. After the Third International Mental Hygiene Congress in London in 1948, where several Hungarian psychoanalysts participated, Dr. István Tariska (neurologist-psychiatrist and a high ranking administrative official) published an article in which he denounced psychoanalysis for spreading retrograde ideas. He claimed that the Mental Hygiene Congress in London showed that imperialism “has tamed psychoanalysis into its own private psychology” (cited by Mészáros, 2012, 98). Tariska also suggested that communist psychoanalysts were with the Party only because of being Jewish. Lilly Hajdu and Imre Hermann, successive presidents of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society, both Jewish, and members of the Hungarian Communist Party, wrote a letter to philosopher György Lukács, who was then academician and member of the communist Parliament¹⁶ asking for his protection, while claiming that they themselves agreed with the Marxist–Leninist critique of psychoanalysis. The answer made it clear that the Communist Party considers psychoanalysis to be “socially reactionary”. Hence, after conforming to Party discipline, Hermann and Hajdu suggested to members that the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society be dissolved. The Society, which legally functioned even under German occupation, and existed continuously since 1913, was dissolved (Borgos, 2009, Mészáros, 2012, for more details on Lilly Hajdu see Borgos, 2009). This event was a major exercise in the “self-cleaning” of psychoanalysis – a practice in which the Communist Party expected its members and various communities to engage in self-criticism (Kovai, 2015). Psychoanalysis could no longer be practiced openly until the mid-1960s.

Another attack came in 1949, in the year when László Rajk, Minister of the Interior in office, and himself an organizer of the communist secret police under Rákosi, was accused of being a Titoist spy in a show trial and was executed. In the general atmosphere of terror a resolution of the Hungarian Communist Party condemned pedagogy in 1949, modeled after the 1936 Party resolution in the Soviet Union. Psychology was meant to become an ancillary science of socialist pedagogy (Sáska, 2008). Professors with the wrong kind of class background, or with a Catholic background (such as Dezső Várkonyi Hildebrand), were dismissed from employment. But as the case of László Rajk shows, paranoid communist policy was looking for enemies also among those who were committed communists.¹⁷ Ferenc Mérei, himself a communist, who was shortly before awarded a high medal (Kossuth Prize) for his pedagogical work, was observed by the secret police (Litván, 1999), and in 1950 he was fired and his institute was liquidated. The absurdity of the situation is revealed by the fact that shortly before this Mérei himself, as “the” leading psychologist of the country, condemned psychology and

pedagogy for “psychologism”, which referred to the charge that the representatives of these practices did not pay enough attention to the mission that pedagogy and psychology has to fulfill in shaping the new generations who will build socialism (Kovai, 2015, gives a detailed presentation and analysis of this era).

The Hungarian Psychological Association and its journal were shut down. Although the training of psychologists at the university ceased to exist for 14 years, nevertheless psychology was still represented in a small number of institutions. The Institute of Child Development, the descendent of the Ranschburg institute, was attached to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1955. At the National Neurological and Mental Hospital (Lipótmező) psychoanalyst Lilly Hajdu became director and she was able to set up a new Work Therapy Institute. The Psychology Institute in the Special Education College also survived under the leadership of Flóra Kozmutza, although with a research profile on topics like the character improvement of workers. Another refuge of psychology existed in the Vocational Aptitude Testing Station at the Hungarian Railway Company, and another at the No.1 Child Clinic in Budapest, led by Lucy Lieberman (Máriási, 2015).

The Department of General Psychology at the Budapest university represented the only remaining stronghold for academic psychology, under the leadership of Lajos Kardos, one time student of Karl Bühler in Vienna, and successor of Pál Harkai Schiller as chair. While practically all the contacts with western psychology came to a halt, an extensive scholarship program was set up to send scholars to Leningrad and Moscow. A Pavlov Committee was established at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to advance the rapid Pavlovization of medicine and psychology. Despite the hugely negative effects of this intended unification of thoughts, remarkably, Pavlovization had a positive effect by declaring psychology a biological science, thereby saving it from being completely integrated into the field of the highly ideology-driven pedagogy.

The 1956 revolution and the re-establishment of psychology in the consolidated Kádár regime

With Stalin's death in 1953 changes began in Hungary, as well. Anti-Rákosi opposition in the Party grew stronger, at the same time Rákosi fell out of favor in Moscow with the rise of Nikita Khrushchev. Rákosi was ordered to make Imre Nagy, his chief opponent within the Party, Prime Minister. Nagy closed forced labor-camps, let previously imprisoned communist politicians back into the Party, and cautiously encouraged reforms. This policy earned him popularity in Hungary, but scorn in Moscow. By that time many communist intellectuals got disappointed with the Soviet model and participated in the Petőfi Circle – a dis-

ussion group supporting Imre Nagy. A secret informer whose job was to surveil Ferenc Mérei reported in 1955 that Mérei was active in the Petőfi Circle (Litván, 1999). He also participated in the on-going “pedagogy-debate” in which his 1949 condemnation was withdrawn (Szabolcs, 2006). Mérei got active in the 1956 revolution as the teacher president of the Revolutionary Student Committee of University Students in Budapest.

The 1956 revolution broke out on October 23rd and was crushed by the Russian intervention by the end of November. Imre Nagy was arrested and replaced by János Kádár, new leader of the Party, who carried out a brutal retaliation, including large-scale executions and imprisonment. Imre Nagy was executed and György Lukács, who was minister in the revolutionary Nagy government, was also persecuted.¹⁸ Miklós Gimes, son of Lilly Hajdú and a committed communist before 1956, was also executed for his revolutionary activities – the mother committed suicide in 1960 (Borgos, 2009). Mérei was charged with subversive activities and was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Approximately 200,000 people (2% of the population) emigrated as it became clear that the revolution would be crushed (Lénárt, 2012).

Seeking stability and social support Kádár started to introduce pragmatist and reform-oriented policies in the early 1960's, while still being a loyal satellite to the Soviet Union, where Khrushchev launched the second wave of de-Stalinization. Due to moderate economic reforms the standard of living rose and political oppression was relaxed. In a wave of amnesty imprisoned 1956-ers, including Ferenc Mérei, were freed. The secret police, using a network of ordinary people recruited to be secret informers was still in the business of surveillance of a large segment of the population. Political dissents were persecuted, and the Communist Party (called now the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party) exercised full ideological control. However, the consolidated Kádár regime combined oppression with limited cultural and academic freedom, which gradually increased throughout the following decades.

Psychology started to revitalize in this political atmosphere. The usefulness of professional knowledge provided by psychology and other previously condemned sciences (genetics, cybernetics) became acknowledged in the Soviet Union, and also in Hungary. Gradually psychology's position changed from being considered as “hostile” to acceptable (see Kovai, 2015, for a detailed discussion). In 1958 the Psychological Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was set up, with eight sub-committees, presenting wide-scale plans for the future. The Committee decided to re-launch psychology as a major at Eötvös Lóránd (formerly Péter Pázmány) University, beginning in the 1963–64 academic year (Pléh, 1997). The first small class of psychologists graduated with a diploma in 1968 (Pléh, 1999) – at a time when psychology was for long a well-established profession in the West.

In the 1960's academic psychology had some room to develop under the Pavlovian umbrella. In the still overly politicized world of science (as well as in other areas of intellectual life) a general social game was to balance between the official Marxist line and meaningful autonomous work. This was done easier in fields of psychology closer to natural sciences, such as psychophysiology. In this area significant experimental work was conducted by researchers Endre Grastyán at the university of Pécs, and others (e.g. György Ádám, György Karmos, and Magda Marton) at the Institute of Psychology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In less naturalistic research areas scientific positions gained hidden political messages and symbolic meaning. Specifically, the study of instrumental conditioning over Pavlovian classical conditioning (the orthodox official line) became a subtle stand against "forced" associations and a passive organism – eventually based on the implicit analogy of classical conditioning and political indoctrination. Likewise, research on motivation and informal group processes were in a way hidden agendas to explore agency and freedom in human activity (Pléh, 1999).

During the 1960s Imre Hermann had his weekly seminars for a handful of selected followers who attended these meetings in his apartment. Although, requests to organize a legitimate psychoanalytic society were rejected by the officials, slowly and gradually psychoanalysis became tolerated instead of being banned (Hidas, 1998). Nevertheless, it remained very difficult for psychoanalysts behind the Iron Curtain to keep contact with western colleagues. In 1968 they initiated negotiations with the International Psychoanalytic Association to work out ways for Hungarians to join again. In 1968, twenty years after the abolishment of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Association, Hungarians painfully had to apply for IPA membership and go through individual accreditation, including Imre Hermann, a founding member of the Budapest School (Hidas, 1998).

From 1964 Ferenc Mérei worked at the National Neurological and Mental Hospital (Lipótmező), where he founded the Clinical Psychology Laboratory. These years Mérei became a central figure in the re-emerging Hungarian psychology. The Laboratory served as an unofficial training center and Mérei himself grew into the role of an "archetypal network guru" promoting informal professional group life, which turned out to be highly effective in nurturing a new generation of psychologists (Bagdy, Forgács and Pál, 1989, Pléh, 1997, Erős, 2005). Mérei further developed his developmental – social – sociometric research agenda and with his collaborates published books of educational and clinical relevance that have been used by generations of psychologists.

Starting in 1974, young psychoanalysts informally organized the so-called Psychotherapy Weekends (Harmatta, 2006). It took certain courage to participate in these weekends because psychoanalysis was still under ideological attacks and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Hungarian Academy of Science conducted "examinations" to decide if psychotherapy weekends were related to

the political opposition. Finally György Aczél, the iconic cultural politician of the Kádár era decided that the movement belonged to the “tolerated” category of intellectual life (Hidas, 1998).¹⁹ The psychotherapy movement was important in the formation of a new generation of clinical psychologists.

By 1989, when the rule of the Communist Party ended, Hungarian psychology had a long and difficult history. Its roots and avenues were diverse, but continuity with its past, and in many ways even the awareness of it, was multiply broken. Yet, this history also proved that in the 20th century psychology has become an integral part of the social world and that it was far from being a field that politics could ignore.

Psychology as a “Hungarian Phenomenon”

Stanislaw Ulam, the famous mathematician invented the phrase “Hungarian Phenomenon”, referring to the outstanding Hungarian mathematicians, physicists and chemists of the 20th century by stating: “Budapest, in the period of the two decades around the First World War, proved to be an exceptionally fertile breeding ground for scientific talent ... their names abound in the annals of mathematics and physics of the present time” (Ulam, 1958, 2, see also: Palló, 2000, Nye, 2011). We can safely say, however, that the concentration of talent in Hungary in the first part of the 20th century extended beyond the physical sciences, and it included psychology. The “Hungarian phenomenon” in this wider sense was rooted in Central European–Hungarian culture in several ways.

Hungarian intellectual life in the early 20th century had a variety of cultural traditions, but perhaps the most basic element was being part of the wider social–cultural space, which was in the dynamic change of belated modernization. Being part of this space meant the lack of barriers regarding language and ideas, but with a special Hungarian point of view, rooted in the love and hate relationship with the Habsburgs and Austria, including a long history of freedom fights. This mix of identity might have played a role in launching Hungarian intellectual creativity.

Members of the Hungarian intelligentsia were broadly educated: classical culture, the arts and the sciences were jointly present and expressly supported by the school system. Ideas were interbreeding. For Leó Szilárd it was matter-of-course to read Freud and to recommend it to others (Békés, 2004), and it was commonplace for the Polanyi family to host psychoanalytic lectures in the family home (Békés, 2008). For a psychologist like Ferenczi it came naturally to nourish friendship with literary figures, and Franz Alexander recounts how much he was influenced by the networks around his father, Bernát Alexander, who was a significant philosopher at the time (Pléh, 1997). Cross-fertilization across professional circles

and schools of thought was characteristic in psychology. As pointed out, the psychoanalyst Leopold Szondi worked initially at Paul Ranschburg's experimental laboratory, the psychoanalyst Imre Hermann was assistant to the experimental psychologist Géza Révész, the developmentalist and social psychologist Ferenc Mérei was a devoted disciple of Szondi. David Rapaport worked at the same time as a psychoanalyst and a student of Harkai Schiller in Budapest (Pléh, 1997).

Considering the social-cultural background of the "Hungarian phenomenon", the major role of Jewish Hungarians has to be highlighted. The Hungarian Jewry, in many ways a non-homogeneous social group, produced an unprecedented number of young talents in Hungarian cultural and scientific life, including psychology. The "Martians" were all of Jewish background, like many leading figures in Hungarian psychology. As young people they grew up typically in nonob-servant or even converted families that placed great emphasis on achievement in a Janus-faced society which, on the one hand welcomed assimilated Jews, on the other hand raised glass walls for them in various ways (Patai, 1996, Nye, 2011). It is no accident that Hungary became the first cradle of psychoanalysis outside of Vienna, and Hungarian psychoanalysis developed in such a rich and distinctive way. The shared experience of being Jewish within the Austro-Hungarian socio-cultural conditions evidently created mutual resonance among Jewish intellectuals in Vienna and in Budapest. Scholarship suggests that psychoanalysis does in fact have its roots in Jewish identity and the Judaic traditions (Bakan, 1958, Frosh, 2005, Yerushalmi, 1991, Zborowski and Herzog, 1995). The outsider status, along with a sense of "secularized messianism" made minds ready for a critical and radical theory, especially at a time when modernization shook the region. For a Hungarian Jewish intellectual, with a medical degree, western orientation, German language skills, the attraction of psychoanalysis, as well as interest in psychology as a natural science, came naturally.

Dismally, the heavy Jewish presence in psychology and intellectual life in general concluded either in repeated emigration or in persecution and genocide. Paradoxically, this happened with an assimilated Jewish scientist population, for whom their Jewish background was typically insignificant. In the context of Hungarian psychology we find the general norm of joint work of scientists regardless of religious background (just to mention Ranschburg's, Szondi's, or Mérei's environment). Those who stayed (e.g. Ranschburg, Hermann) experienced the help and support of gentile friends (Ranschburg, 2013). These facts, however, could not hinder the severe and tragic losses suffered.

Between the two World Wars Hungarian psychology was strong enough to flourish and extend its infrastructure in a social-economic-political setting which was constraining as much as it was supportive. Characteristically, academic brands of psychology, as well as psychoanalysis had strong connections with applied practice. Hungarian depth psychologists not only were object-rela-

tion theorists decades before the term was coined in the psychoanalytic literature (Deri, 1990), but also used the insight on the importance of early mother–infant relationship to develop practical interventions in education (Vajda, 1995). Likewise, Ranschburg, Szondi, Várkonyi, Harkai Schiller and others showed a vivid interest in applied problems of child psychiatry, special education, and vocational training (Völgyesy, 1995). The child study movement was especially instrumental in influencing and integrating various approaches and direct them to support social progress.

As much as the aftermath of World War I brought unredeemable losses, so did the aftermath of World War II – only this time Hungarian psychology got fully severed from the West, where it always belonged. Initially it seemed that communist psychologists, many of them in significant positions (e.g. Ferenc Mérei, Imre Hermann, Lilly Hajdú) could have greatly contributed to the emerging post-war new world. But the Stalinist system soon showed that it did not tolerate any autonomy even by those who fought for its victory. The consolidated Kádár regime created a deal: those in power tolerated a certain amount of intellectual freedom, and those who received this freedom accepted the rules of the communist regime. Collective memory became a tool of collective loss of remembrance (Máriássi, 2015). A citation analysis (Pléh, 1979) showed that between 1958 and 1975 in Hungarian journals no citations were made to non-living pre-war Hungarian psychologists. By the 1970s amnesia was prevalent in the psychology community about many pre-war leading Hungarian psychologists. The Hungarian Catholic tradition almost completely faded out of national and international consciousness (Pléh, 2005). Hungarian historians of psychology have made great strides in recent years, but one of them still asks today: Why do we not have Ranschburg’s legacy as a living tradition? Why do we still not have a monograph on his life and work? (Lányi, 2013b, 44).

Coming back from forgetfulness

To reconstruct a deliberately forgotten past takes time, especially as oblivion was not only a national, but also an international phenomenon. Writing about the Hungarian avant-garde artists, Mansbach (1994) noted that “*the entire culture of »Mitteleuropa« has been overwhelmed by the tumultuous events of political history, to the extent that this entire region (geographical as well as cultural) has been forcibly propelled from the center of our consciousness to the periphery of Western awareness*” (Mansbach, 1994, 10).

Actually, the past is making its way into the present, as it is the case with Ferenczi’s legacy. Since the publication of his Clinical Diary in 1985 and the Freud–Ferenczi correspondence (Brabant, Falzeder and Giampieri-Deutsch,

1993, Falzeder, Brabant and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1996) his work has been gradually reevaluated and given substantial acknowledgement (Rudnytsky, Bókay and Giampieri-Deutsch, 1996, Szekacs-Weisz and Keve, 2012). The opening of the Sándor Ferenczi Center at the New School for Social Research (New York) in 2009, and the Budapest-based international Ferenczi Center and Ferenczi house in 2011 also attest to the reinforced interest in his work. Ferenczi is now considered as having initiated a paradigm shift in psychoanalysis that has made his work highly important for post-Freudian psychoanalysis and contemporary psychotherapy at large (Rudnytsky, 1996, Giampieri-Deutsch, 1996, Curtis, 1996). The work of Melanie Klein, Margaret Mahler, René Spitz, and Harry Harlow is clearly recognized as having roots in Ferenczi's approach to psychoanalysis (Klein was Ferenczi's analyzed; Mahler and Spitz, being also Hungarians, were influenced by Hungarian psychoanalysis, see Vikár, 1996).

However, the reclaiming of the past is a much more complex process than making good on the intellectual accomplishments of those "unjustly forgotten" (which is, nevertheless, an obligation). Along with their achievements we should also see psychologists of the past as actors in historical times. The Hungarian perspective makes a vivid case against the apolitical, decontextualized view of psychology. The history of Hungarian psychology was intertwined, in a very tangible sense, with the political history of the Central European region. Not only as being victimized by the circumstances, but also by psychology being sensitive and actively responsive to social and political demands.

We have to explore in greater depth the particular social-cultural conditions in this specific Central European region that inspired and constrained the phenomenon of psychology, but we also have to uncover how psychology acted to build a modernized society under these conditions, and how it thrived, suffered, and survived under dictatorships and undemocratic regimes. We have to explore, in greater depth, what Hungarian emigration meant for international psychology. We also have to ask how Hungarian psychology tried to come to terms with its own past during the Kádár regime, and how Hungarian psychology, as it stands today, is embedded in its own past, in spite of the "tradition of broken traditions".²⁰

To know the past is especially relevant where remembrance was once so forcefully obstructed. The scholarship on the history of Hungarian psychology is growing at a fast pace. The richness of this history, however, has yet to become more fully explored and appreciated inside and outside of Hungary.

Notes

- 1 In the *Handbook of International Psychology* (Stevens and Wedding, 2004), for example, “East Europe” is represented by Poland, Russia, and Turkey. In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Psychology: Global Perspectives* (Baker, 2012) there is one chapter on Czech psychology (Hoskovec, 2012). Mansbach (1994), on speaking about early 20th century Hungarian avant-garde art, observes how “Eastern Europe”, and along with it Hungary, was, to a considerable degree, lost to western consciousness after W.W.II, as a periphery.
- 2 Csaba Pléh (1997, available in both Hungarian and in English) provided a brief overview of Hungarian contributions to modern psychology, and highlighted characteristics of Hungarian development, and he authored substantially on the history of experimental psychology and other topics. The historiography of certain topics – for example, Hungarian psychoanalysis – has received ample attention in the past decades (see the references by Ferenc Erős, Judit Mészáros and many others). Other topics and periods – the post World War II, for example, have moved into focus recently (e.g. Máriási, 2015, Kovai, 2015). The literature on the history of Hungarian psychology is definitely growing.
- 3 About the complexity of Hungarian identity from a narrative social psychology perspective, see László, 2014.
- 4 Lechner also won first prize in the World Exhibit in Paris, in 1900, for the cephalograph (an instrument to measure the outlines of the head) he invented (Fodor and Kós, 1995).
- 5 “Psychotechnik” was the generally accepted original German term for the field of applied psychology (Benjamin and Baker, 2012).
- 6 Révész studied at various German universities and became friends with pre-Gestalt phenomenal psychologists David Katz and Edgar Rubin, worked with Karl Stumpf in Berlin and was in close relationship with Franz Brentano. In 1906 he returned to Budapest and started to work at Pázmány University, doing experimental studies on hearing and music. He worked hard to establish the new science, and was appointed professor of psychology and head of a to-be-organized experimental psychology department in 1918 originally by the administration of the royal government. The appointment was approved by the liberal burgeois government and then by the Hungarian Soviet regime. He had no time to fulfill his appointment because of the quick fall of the communist regime. In 1920 he emigrated and moved to the University of Amsterdam where he continued successful research. (About Révész see Piéron, 1956, Pléh, 2009).
- 7 During the communist rule between 1949 and 1989 this event was officially regarded as a revolution by the people. In the past two decades a re-evaluation has taken place among historians, several of them calling the take-over a coup d’etaté, pointing out that the communists came to power as a result of back-stage negotiations without the knowledge of the state president Mihály Károlyi. The nature and role of the Hungarian Soviet Council is still a debated subject.
- 8 The Communist Party was illegal in the Horthy regime. The nature of the Horthy regime, likewise the evaluation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, is an unsettled issue in Hungary even today, debated by historians.
- 9 Szondi exerted lasting influence on prominent later figures in Hungarian psychology, for example Ferenc Mérei, István Benedek, Lajos Kardos, and Flora Kozmutza.
- 10 Legally the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society was in business even under the German occupation, due to the fact that a non-Jewish leadership took over in order to save the organization (Mészáros, 2012).
- 11 On the NÉKOSZ see Pataki (2005) and in English: *The generation of “Bright Winds”*: A generation denied, by Judith Szapor (2013).
- 12 According to estimates from an original population of approximately 800,000–861,000 Jewish population about 80,000–255,000 survived (History of Jews in Hungary, Wikipedia).

- 13 Zionism was the idea of Tivadar (Theodor) Herzl, a Hungarian Jew. On Herzl see Shlomo Avineri: *Theodor Herzl and the foundation of the Jewish state* (2013).
- 14 Erős: in many families children were raised so that they were not aware that they were Jews.
- 15 The Great Purge infected many communists. Among others, Béla Kun, leader of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, who lived in the Soviet Union, was also arrested and executed.
- 16 After participating in the Hungarian Soviet Republic György Lukács lived in Vienna, Berlin, and then in Moscow. In 1945 he came back to Hungary, became member of the Academy of Sciences and member of Parliament. In the 1950's he conducted ardent criticism against non-communist thinkers and writers. At the same time, he was also criticized by the leading ideologist, József Révai.
- 17 The novel *Darkness at noon* by the Hungarian born British novelist Arthur Koestler (1968) engagingly describes the psychology of such trials in a story of a Bolshevik revolutionary.
- 18 Lukács engaged in self-criticism and remained loyal to communism, but following the crush of the uprising in Czechoslovakia in 1968 he became critical of the Soviet Union and the Kádár regime. In the 1960's he formed what later became called the Budapest School in philosophy, adherent to the renewal of Marxism. The school exerted significant influence on the development of western Marxism. As a brief summary see "The Development of the Budapest School", by George Lukács, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, No. 3615, June 11, 1971.
- 19 It was widely known that Aczél's cultural policy was based on the "3 T's" – meaning that any cultural product or phenomenon had to be classified in one of three categories: either "supported", or "tolerated", or "unpermitted".
- 20 Csaba Pléh, Gusztáv Lányi, psychoanalyst Ferenc Erős, Judit Mészáros, along with others, including more recently Kovai, 2015 and Máriási, 2015 (from a critical psychology point of view) have taken substantial steps in this direction.

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**“WHO IS WHO—THE FACE AS A MASK”
PÉTER ESTERHÁZY’S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PACT
WITH HIS READERS (*CELESTIAL HARMONIES,
REVISED EDITION*)***

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The much-cited theorist of autobiography, Philippe Lejeune, uses the term *autobiographical pact* to describe the silent contract between the author and reader, in which textual (and extra-textual) signals about referential and autobiographical nature of a narrative are understood as coming from the author and are accepted by the reader (Lejeune, 1989, 3–30). Autobiographical themes, connections and concrete allusions have always been present in Péter Esterházy’s fiction (e.g., *Termelési regény*, 1979; *Helping Verbs of the Heart—A szív segédigéi*, 1985; *The Book of Hrabal—Hrabal könyve*, 1990; *Celestial Harmonies—Harmonia caelestis*, 2000; *Not Art—Semmi művészet*, 2008). In this context, the text *Revised Edition (Javított kiadás*, 2002), written in the form of a diary, which describes a real event in the form of one of the most authentic autobiographical genres, signifies not only a change in the author’s understanding of the relationship between autobiography and literature, but also changes the reader’s expectations, i.e. the aforementioned silent covenant between him and the author. I will attempt to explicate the character of Esterházy’s autobiographical writing (understood on the one hand as autobiographical referentiality and on the other as an autobiographical way of writing¹) on the basis of the texts *Celestial Harmonies* and *Revised Edition*.

Keywords: Péter Esterházy, autobiographical pact, intertextuality, Hungarian literature

Autobiography and referentiality

One of the most interesting issues in the discussion on autobiography is undoubtedly the question of referentiality. At the same time it forms one of the key criteria of the various, often diverging definitions of autobiographical writing and reading. One way of understanding autobiography is to see it as an “honest” presentation of the narrator’s own life corresponding to *the truth/truthfulness*; it assumes a *faithfulness to reality (total referentiality)* and language transparency (*mimesis*)

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(the Aristotelian tradition, Lejeune and others). The other way of theorizing autobiography emphasizes that an autobiographical text is a speech act and as such represents the intention of the narrator. Faithfulness to reality is replaced by its *construction*, which is conditioned, besides the psychological or special interest motivations of the subject, also by the impossibility to fully recover life material (the problem of *self-knowledge*—G. Gusdorf, *Mémoire et personne*) (Varga, 2002, 247–257). The demand for *truthfulness* introduces other views into the discussion: according to some, fiction (the novel) can be more true-to-reality than autobiography (A. Gide, F. Mauriac, J.-P. Sartre). In this sense, the concept of faithfulness to reality shifts towards a model of mediation, or—as suggested by Umberto Eco—referentiality is created by the mimetic function of structures (Eco, 1989, 180–236; Mekis, 2002, 259–264). However, in any case referentiality must be confirmed—someone must acknowledge that the autobiographical text represents the real life story of the narrator. Lejeune solves this by introducing the concept of the *autobiographical pact*.

Another way of understanding autobiography is the concept by Paul de Man, which denies the referential character of autobiographical text in the sense of involving textual references that gesture to actual situations, events, etc., that are “actual and potentially verifiable” (de Man, 1979, 920). On the contrary, de Man emphasizes the tropology of autobiography, or its function in the mirror model of cognition, which is created during reading through tropological exchanges (de Man, 1979, 923). By suppressing referentiality, the autobiographical character of a text shifts away from the original (Aristotelian) understanding towards ways of reading and becomes a *figure of reading* (de Man, 1979, 921).

The Hungarian postmodern author Péter Esterházy seems to operate in his texts with various possible ways of understanding referentiality in relation to autobiographical writing. In the next section I will attempt to sketch the character of Esterházy’s referential web created in his works *Celestial Harmonies* and *Revised Version*. According to Lejeune’s classification the first is an autobiographical novel (since *Celestial Harmonies* contains besides autobiographical and fictional elements) and the second is an autobiography.

It should be pointed out, however, that neither satisfies Lejeune’s definition of “pure”, “classical” autobiography in the sense of “*retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality*” (Lejeune, 1989, 4).² *Celestial Harmonies* is a family saga about the author’s own family, at the centre of which is the figure of the father. The possibility/need to widen autobiography towards a family saga as an alternative form of autobiography has been pointed out by K. Bednárová with reference to French theoretical discourse. If autobiography plays a role in the understanding of one’s life, undoubtedly it also has a function in the understanding of the story of the ancestors (Bed-

nárová, 2011, 26). *Revised Edition* on the other hand focuses on the narrower story of two years in the life of the author’s father, discussing his role as police informer.

Celestial Harmonies

Celestial Harmonies (orig. *Harmonia caelestis* [2000], English translation Judith Sollosy [2004]) tells of the fame and fall of the House of Esterházy through the eyes of a contemporary—a son coming to terms with the paternal legacy. Such coming to terms always involves searching for and defining own position, forming/formulating own identity, it “*has the function of gaining self-knowledge in confrontation with the other*” (Bednárová, 2011, 26.).

Péter Esterházy’s text fits into the context of a currently widespread sub-genre in Hungarian literature—the so-called “father novel” (*aparegény*), which deals with recent past and its consequences on personal narrative through a son’s reflections on the father. Typically, these texts are based on autobiographical elements and represent works of authors socialized in the dead-end times of the totalitarian communist regime. L. Jánossy (one of the authors of the so-called “father novel”) mentions in this context that totality deprived the word adulthood of its meaning: “*the freedom to deal with the moral consequences of an act*”; these books thus signify “*attempts to liberate oneself from childhood perspective*” (Jánossy, 2006, 18). In the background of a son’s efforts to come to terms with a paternal authority, whether it is understood widely as repressive power of the state or more narrowly as parental authority that commits oneself, are psychological motives.³ If the figure of the father becomes the centre of a narrative, a text can at the same time be understood as part of a long tradition of this theme in literature, which has over time accumulated various connotations (Balassa, 2003, 47–50). However, in no sense is it a light, malleable material.

In *Celestial Harmonies* the author chose a strategy that destructs the figure of the father by erasing his uniqueness. He takes him apart, or rather writes him apart into multiple figures of the father from the concrete author’s father or more distant ancestors of the Esterházy through figures of Hungarian history, the winners and the losers from every social layer and side, to allegorical and fictitious literary characters. Considering the field of connotations, including cultural, historical, literary, psychological dimensions, etc., he widens the idea of the father to an extent in which it starts losing its meaning. The figure of the father in an anthropological sense thus becomes a figure in a poetological sense, some sort of force. It loses its *face* as an expression of individuality, or more precisely, its facial features are so richly “depicted” that the concrete features of a particular figure/person are erased.

Theoretical literature on autobiography, with a reference to the fine art genre of the auto-portrait, often uses the term *face* as a metonymy for a specific hero and simultaneously the author-narrator of autobiography (Lejeune, de Man, Abbott). The issue of the *face* in autobiography relates to referentiality, besides another basic assumption: whether autobiography relates to a particular person (referent) as for example photography does, but also questions such as whether and how the face of a referentially-understood author is created by an autobiographical text, or whether the process of reading performs a sort of *de-facement* (de Man) as a result of the construction of one's own idea about the protagonist/author of an autobiography.

Since *Celestial Harmonies* is not a pure autobiographical novel, the figure of the protagonist and author-narrator do not overlap and the image of the protagonist's face is described through a mediator. However, all the more focus is put on the questions of cognition: what is reality, what channels of access to it there are, whether and how it can be approached, described with language. The text seems to undermine its own aspirations at veracity with mentions of the theory of relativity and other related scientific theories—e.g., quantum mechanics in sentence number 183; Schrödinger's hypothesis of multiple universes in sentences number 141 and 142; Gödel's thesis in sentence number 187: "*My father resorted to the use of logic to prove—my father's thesis, 1931—, that within any given system, it is impossible to deduce all the truths that can be formulated within that system. Surely, one or two, my mother muttered under her breath*" (217).⁴ Referential relationship is destabilized by natural laws also in relation to the referent himself, since the shape of his existence is *a priori* inaccessible, appearing to the observer only partially. According to this, the truthfulness/validity of a referential text is not the result of a narrative effort, which loses its relevance based on the very "way" of the world. Citing Schrödinger's well-known virtual experiment with a cat, the narrator sums up his thoughts on the accessibility of his narrative subject: "*Schrödinger locked my father inside a thick-walled box. (...) Schrödinger's question is as follows: Just before we disassemble the box to ascertain whether my father is alive or dead, what can we say? Does it contain a living father or a dead one? (...) At that particular moment (...) the most we can say is that my father is either alive, or he is dead, i.e., that there is a 50 percent probability that he is alive and a 50 percent probability that he is dead. That is all we can say. Naturally, if we open the box, we can assess whether my father is alive or dead. (...) if we had not opened the box, (...) the box as a system would have functioned like a box in which there was a 50 percent probability of a living father, my father. Is it possible that the observation itself, the observation of the son, could kill (could have killed) my father, or unequivocally restored him to life from the 50% state of death (...)?* That is why it is forbidden to touch one's father. Who wants to be his father's murderer, even if the probability of it occurring is only 50

percent?” (138–139). However, the narrator opens the box and takes the risk, he wants to catch his father *in flagrante*, he wants to reveal, despite all doubts about it being possible, his real, unique “*face she [the mother] thought she knew, but which she never really did to his dying day (nor, for that matter, did anyone else)*” (220). His method of autobiographical testimony is close to those concepts of literary truthfulness (see above) that on the basis of a mediating model, structural correspondence, situate its expression more into fiction. Father’s face emerges from a row of masks piled narratively by the author from various sides/aspects, it is formed by their mutual interaction and conflict through the process of reading.

While some reflections in the text and the creative approaches weaken the referential understanding of the novel, others confirm it. This game characterizes all levels of the text.

In terms of composition, the novel consists of two parts, each of which uses a different narrative strategy. *Book One, Numbered Sentences from the Lives of the Esterházy Family*, is concerned mainly with the historical past of the noble family, connects individual textual parts associatively, ignores temporal-causal logic, eliminates narrativity: not only is there no story, but it cannot even be reconstructed from the fragments. *Book Two, Confessions of an Esterházy Family*, uses transparent language to mediate the story of the narrator’s family. While the narrative strategy of *Book One* supports the artificial character of the text, that of *Book Two* supports its real character. While the “artificial” novelistic world of *Book One* contains self-referential (autobiographical) allusions, the “real” novelistic world of *Book Two* introduces fictitious elements. This strategy represents an ironical gesture of the author, referring as much to the literary tradition or own text, as to the process of reading, in which the inherited or newly-created meanings result in a new final significance.

As part of attempts to classify autobiographical texts, H. P. Abbott proposes modes of reading. He observes that while the reader of a literary (fictitious) text participates in the creation of narrative and construction of meaning, etc., thus erasing the author (his *face*), the reader of an autobiographical text tries to “keep him or her in view” (Abbott, 1988, 608). In this sense, he calls the mode of reading fictitious texts *fictive*, characterized by creative readings, and the mode of reading autobiographical texts *factual*, characterized by analytical reading (Abbott, 1988, 611). He also distinguishes two types of *factual* reading depending on the kind of reader’s engagement: while some readers “accept the text’s authority [and] read the narrative not as an autobiography as a biography of the author” (Abbott, 1988, 601), a *suspicious* or *autographic* reading wants to catch the author lying (Abbott, 1988, 603–611). The mixing of narrative strategies and other text-making elements, which appear autobiographical or, on the contrary, derail an autobiographical approach, is undoubtedly aimed at destabilizing the reader’s position, acquiring his empathy and his creative collaboration.

Below, I will analyze the question of reference in *Celestial Harmonies* based on particular examples.

Celestial Harmonies, Book One—Numbered Sentences from the Lives of the Esterházy Family

Book One, Numbered Sentences from the Lives of the Esterházy Family, employs a narrative strategy that implies a so-called *creative reading*, which is characterized, among others, also by the erasing of the author's *face*. However, Péter Esterházy will not allow his *face* to be lost: he inserts into his text various elements that make it necessary to read this at first sight fictitious world (also) referentially. In his article on historiographic or literary approaches to history in *Celestial Harmonies*, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák even suggests that if Esterházy biography was written, it would turn out that similarly to Beckett in his works, "he also constantly 'writes apart', re-evaluates his own life" (Szegedy-Maszák, 2010, 196).

The titles of the novel's two parts (*Numbered Sentences from the Lives of the Esterházy Family*, *Confessions of an Esterházy Family*) instantly demarcate the author's family as the narrative space. The family name of the protagonist is emphasized in the text by the insertion of the constant periphrasis "and here my father's name followed", which repeatedly accentuates also the narrator's filial relationship to the protagonist. The unambiguous overlap between the narrator and author, i.e., the identity of the protagonist's son, is repeatedly confirmed by textual signals in the form of, for example, reflections on the origin of the form of the family name (9th numbered sentence), description of the family genealogy (10th numbered sentence), references to well-known works, deeds, possessions of the Esterházys (e.g., in the 6th numbered sentence). At the same time, it needs to be said that this identification of the narrator with author, which seemingly identifies the protagonist as his father, is accompanied by the blurring (multiplication) of the figure of the father as the protagonist. The *face* of the author is further emphasized by explicit references to concrete persons, as for example in the 103rd numbered sentence of *Book One*, where in a narrative told as an old family story (gesturing to the story of Oedipus) we read the sentence that Grandmother "was about the same age as Gitta is now" (116), whom the reader can identify as the author's wife.

Historical references in the text refer primarily to the members of the House of Esterházy and the related events. These are both private persons, the narrator's ancestors (the fathers of his father and their fathers), and personalities from Hungarian history, known from various sources. However, they are not presented under their real names, their identity erased, but become symbolic figures of the

richness and variety of an old noble family with historical significance. Nevertheless, the text leaves enough clues to allow the reader to recognize them.

Here are a few examples of how the text works with historical and referential elements.

“... my father, this ferocious-looking baroque grand seigneur who was in a position, nay under obligation, to raise his eyes to Emperor Leopold (...) leaped upon his chestnut steed, Challenger, and galloped off into the discriminating seventeenth-century landscape (or description thereof)” (5).

This excerpt is about an ancient ancestor Pál Esterházy (1635–1713), a palatine who received the title of Prince from Leopold I (1687) for his part in expelling the Turks and was also the compiler of the religious hymn book *Harmonia caelestis* (1711). The horse named Challenger (Zöldfikár) is also known from the Esterházy history. It was a Turkish horse that never belonged to Pál—it was only promised to him. His brother László rode it in the battle near Nagyvezekény in August 1652, the horse tripped and László died together with other three Esterházy cousins, leaving the sixteen-year-old Jesuit student Pál responsible for the entire family. These details are known from the journal of the young Pál,⁵ excerpts from which are identifiable also in the novel (without mentioning the sources). The event of László’s fall is repeatedly referred to in the novel (Görözdi, 2014).

The excerpts illustrate the way in which *Book One* inserts referential elements (historically documented events) into the text in the form of allusions, rather than as narrative “historical retrieval”. This method simultaneously reveals and conceals the historical references. The question is how the reader responds to this. The fictitious or referential/autobiographical character of a text will thus depend on the way of reading: if the reader lets himself/herself be carried away by authorial codes and textual strategies supporting literariness, and erases the *face* of the author in favor of the textual universe, his/her reading will be (according to P. Abbott’s terminology) fictive. On the contrary, if he/she decides to follow the historical references, he/she will search for the facts referred to and (focusing on the *face* of the author) his/her reading will be factual. The text supports both ways of reading and at the same time disallows the application of only one of them. This is self-reflectively commented on here: “*the places, the hips and waterfalls, the events and persons in this book are real. They accord, or correspond, to reality. For instance, my father’s steed really did slip in the mud of the August gully. (...) My father’s son (...) wrote only what he remembered, and there will be readers who, thinking of this book as a factual account, will discover 1,001 inadequacies. Though the author dealt with real life, he thinks it ought to be read as a novel; in other words, without asking either more or less of it than a novel can give (everything)*” (378–379).

In the case of *Celestial Harmonies*, the sentence “*he wrote only what he remembered*” (378) needs to be understood more widely, since the private memory

of the noble family, whose members were for centuries involved in public life (in politics, the army, the Church, culture, economy, etc.) merges with the collective memory of the Hungarian nation. In this context we must mention the observation by P. Balassa, who distinguishes the forms of memory used in the novel: while *Book One* relies on external remembering in the sense of *Gedächtnis*, *Book Two* focuses on interior personal remembering in the sense of *Erinnerung*. This distinction not only creates a basic contradiction between the two parts of the novel, but at the same time articulates the novel's "position on tradition, history versus the unique, original and individual, while (...) as the only source of the truth presents a man of confessions" (Balassa, 2003, 35–37).

Collective memory consists of historical materials, art works, autobiographical texts, (journals, correspondence) of individual persons, even anecdotes and legends. The novel uses them as a source, and at the same time calls attention to the fictitious elements of that "reality" recovered by these sources perceived as the origin of the references. For example, in the 10th numbered sentence, it undermines the power-verified "authenticity" of the family genealogy *Trophaeum nobilissimae ac antiquissimae domus Estorasiensis* (Vienna 1700), compiled by Pál Esterházy on the occasion of receiving the title of Prince and which was (also on this occasion) officially verified by the court. By mentioning this document the novel points to the suspicious nature of its own referentiality.

Why then would an anecdote about the origin of the term "the Esterházy fairy land" be less reliable? Its source is a Frankfurt illumination provided by Prince Miklós Esterházy, also known as "Fényes"—"light-lover" (1714–1790) at the coronation of Joseph II in 1764, described by J. W. Goethe in his autobiographical work *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: "We admired the various brilliant representations and the fairy-like structures of flame by which each ambassador strove to outshine the others. But Prince Esterhazy's arrangements surpassed all the rest. (...) This eminent envoy, to honour the day, had quite passed over his own unfavourably situated quarters, and in their stead had caused the great esplanade of linden-trees in the Horse-market to be decorated in the front with a portal illuminated with colours, and at the back with a still more magnificent prospect."⁶

In his reference to this passage from Goethe, Péter Esterházy emphasizes the problem of fictionality/reality, bringing it to the centre of attention: "*The youth flushed, then awkward but proud, proclaimed that the idea of a, and here my father's name followed, type of fantasyland has now become reality. Not bad, my father nodded, and told someone to make a note of it, though he then also said to the youth in his most friendly manner, this here is merely dichtung und wahrheit, poetry and reality, and nobody knows the difference between dichtung and wahrheit better than he. This time, it was the youth who made a note of it*" (21–22).

As we can see, the novel’s narration, even though it uses confident and convincing diction, is in the context of a wider understanding of autobiographical material constantly undermining the possibility of telling, linguistic accessibility and the limits and of its interpretive nature, the very possibility of cognition. The author articulates this narrative instability in relation to the truth and fictitiousness already in the first sentence of the novel: “*It is deucedly difficult to tell a lie when you don’t know the truth*” (5).

This instability is expressed through references. On the one hand, some references have an almost documentary value (I will give an example from *Book One*)—it is an extreme case of literary faithfulness to reality. On the other, there are comments referring to other fictitious worlds, i.e., other texts—which is the other extreme. These textual references work through intertextuality. If we are analyzing referentiality in this postmodern work, we should also ask the question whether it is possible to understand referential relations traditionally as a relationship between the text and reality in the sense of the palpable/visible/experienced (etc). world, or whether the signified to which the textual references gesture may not be understood as textual reality, i.e., the world created by other texts. In any case such understanding reflects the postmodern philosophy of Péter Esterházy, who has often declared that he sees the world textually and linguistically, and this is also the basis of his poetics.

The novel’s mixing of autobiographical material with references to other fictitious texts is unusual, it subverts the assumptions of autobiography. In *Celestial Harmonies*, this is related to the mosaic way of writing through which the portrait of the father emerges, as well as all of the themes that this family narrative brings up (how it is possible to own the past, what memory is composed of, etc.). The author inserts into the text longer or shorter passages from various authors, which are either adopted verbatim or with minor changes. For example, the story of the golden chain from the times of the Republic is from Kosztolány’s novel *Anna Edes*—Chapter 45 in *Book Two*⁷; the novella *Slavno je za otadžbinu mreti* by Danilo Kiš, which thematizes a motif from the Esterházy legends and had been referenced by Péter Esterházy already in 1986 in his novel *Bevezetés a szépirodalomba—Introduction to Fiction*, is here cited in the 24th numbered sentence⁸; lengthy citations from Donald Barthelme’s *The Dead Father* are included for example in the 144th numbered sentence of *Book One*; there are many other excerpts from Magda Szabó, Peter Handke, Ernst Jünger, Sigfrid Gauch, Frank McCourt, Natalia Ginzburg and many others.⁹

This inter-textual saturation (often perceived as over-saturation) has been the subject of discussions both in Hungary and abroad.¹⁰ The author concedes the extremeness of his method and argues that he “*perceives inter-textuality always from the point of view of the text (...) the method arises from the experience that we live in one linguistic area, in which there are sentences with a different sta-*

tus and we work with these sentences."¹¹ Esterházy's inter-textuality at the same time represents a methodological answer to one of the basic ontological questions about the nature of reality, which he constantly engages with in his writing.

Celestial Harmonies, Book Two—Confessions of an Esterházy Family

The subject of *Book Two, Confessions of an Esterházy Family* is the family's recent past—the period which the author more-or-less witnessed and experienced. We are dealing here with a "pure" autobiographical material processed on the basis of genre conventions of a family saga. The author applies methods that confirm referentiality in the traditional sense of faithfulness to reality. In terms of narrative strategies, the text utilizes conventional realist narration moving from a beginning to an end, observing temporal and causal logic. Language appears to be transparent and does not constantly question the possibility of knowledge. The characters are unambiguously identifiable members of Péter Esterházy's close family; the central protagonist continues to be the father. The referential character of the text is confirmed also by plot elements which correspond with the family history, known from other sources (the expropriation of their farmsteads after the land reform of 1945; the declaring of the aristocrats class enemies and their exclusion from society after the communist grabbing of power in 1947; forced removal of the family to live with a peasant family in the village of Hort as part of a national program of aristocracy internment in 1951; etc.).

An example of how autobiographical and referential character of the narrative is reinforced are chapters 99 and 101, which provide (in quotation marks without a mention of the sources) the memories of the author's grandfather count Móric Esterházy (1881–1960), briefly Hungarian Prime Minister, active politician in the interwar period arrested by the Arrow Cross Party and deported to Mauthausen, then interned together with his family (including the little Péter). His memories, referring mainly to inter-war Hungary's politics, have been written and published in German¹², but not yet in Hungarian; in this context, the excerpts in the novel have an almost documentary character (for the reader who can decipher them).

As I discussed, *Book One* emphasizes the artificiality of the textual universe, which is interrupted by references. *Book Two* represents the opposite strategy—its mimetic character is interrupted by elements that undermine its referential validity, pointing to the illusoriness of mimesis. "*Its 'realism' is in itself a stylization*"—observes P. Balassa, which he explains as "*a rejection and criticism of the uncomfortable pressure of the immediacy of the confessions*" (Balassa, 2003, 36).

Among the misleading elements in the text we can mention fictitious family members (a younger sister of the author, uncle Robert—an informer), or the motto of *Book Two*, i.e., a paratext which, in contradiction to Lejeune's understanding

of paratext, rids the author of his *face*, performs the gesture of *de-facement* (de Man). It suggests a fictitious character of the text to follow, only to then employ all possible narrative strategies (diction, narration, composition, etc.) to convince the reader of the contrary: its referential autobiographical character. The motto is from *Memoirs of a Burgher*, an autobiographical novel by Sándor Márai (unattributed):

“The characters of this adventurous biography are creatures of the imagination. They are authentic only within the context of this book. They are not living characters, nor were they ever” (395).

In connection to the “repeated interruption of the illusion of referentiality” of *Book Two*, P. Szirák brings attention to the trope of irony (Szirák, 2003, 143). I maintain that it is precisely irony (whether we understand it as a figure of speech, or according to de Man as a trope) where we can find Péter Esterházy’s position on the interface between truth and fiction. In contrast to classifying observations, irony always represents opening and confrontation of issues. In this sense the author’s irony points also to our traditional and seemingly straightforward ideas about what is history, what is personal history, whether they correspond with the narratives, whether “facts” can be separated from modes of processing (the questions of cultural memory, textual tradition, linguistic-literary representation).

Revised Edition

Two years after *Celestial Harmonies*, its sequel was published, titled *Revised Edition—a supplement to Celestial Harmonies*. It is a novel that discusses the process of writing. The impulse for its origin was the fact that after finishing the manuscripts of the family saga Péter Esterházy discovered documents that prove that his admired and lovingly described father in *Celestial Harmonies* was an agent of the communist secret police.

If in relation to *Celestial Harmonies* we talked about a game with referentiality, the destabilization of the reader’s sense whether (and to what extent) this is a “real” (autobiographical and family-historical) story, in the case of *Revised Edition* we must observe an aggressive expression of a historical reality understood in the most commonplace sense of the word. It is well-known that communist regimes in Central Europe eliminated people who were dangerous or uncomfortable either for their dissident thinking or origin: brutal methods such as physical liquidation, violent displacement of entire ethnic or social groups were gradually replaced by “more sophisticated methods” such as the obstruction of one’s social integration or professional career, exclusion to the margins of society and coercion into corruption. The aim of forcing someone into corruption was a moral liquidation of a person or a group which that person represented and one way

to do it was by enlisting the person into the secret police as an agent, which was often achieved by physical and psychological torture. The targets were non-communist intellectuals, artists, people representing the religious circles, “enemy” classes and especially the aristocracy, every free-thinking individual, etc. This led to a social and moral crisis that the post-communist Central European societies are still dealing with. Péter Esterházy’s book is part of this processing¹³ and represents—both in the sense of the author’s intention, as well as the reader’s expectations—a different form of literary testimony that seems to contradict the notions (presented in the rest of Esterházy’s work) about the textual and linguistic nature of the world and the philosophical skepticism about the possibility of mimetic representation.

Revised Edition follows the narrator’s (author’s) story of coming to terms with the fact of his father’s role as secret police agent. In a diary form, he reproduces his father’s notes about his reports, own reflections and self-reflections in the process of confronting oneself with this fact. The text has attributes that unambiguously constitute an autobiographical text according to Lejeune’s “narrow” definition (with the exception of the criteria of the retrospective).

The text explicitly identifies the first-person narrator with author: “*I, Péter Esterházy, am speaking here; I was born on April 14, 1950, my mother’s name is Lili Mányoky (Irén in her ID, but she hated Irén), my father’s name is Mátyás; my ID number: AU-V. 877825. This, then, is the ‘I’ (but I’d rather not go into the details, no details, please)*” (19).¹⁴

The narrator emphasizes the veracity of all facts and figures, the world he makes accessible is fully verifiable (he describes how he accessed the archival volumes in Hungary’s Historical Institute and how he studied them, family members and acquaintances from everyday life, the quotidian life of a writer, etc.).

Autobiographies always express a narrator’s intention, whether explicitly or implicitly. In this case the intention is moral, the author—besides continuing in the basic intention of *Celestial Harmonies* to sketch/reveal/get to know the real face of his father—seeks to participate, through his book, in the collective confrontation with the past: “*historical responsibility is not abstract, but personal*” (272–273).

The text excludes the aesthetic function of language and narration. Its documentary function is emphasized by citations from reports, which (contrary to *Celestial Harmonies*) are attributed to a concrete source and are even distinguished by font color.

The referentiality and autobiographical character of the work are not undermined by other levels of the text. While in *Celestial Harmonies* the reflections on referentiality, the “*fiction-non-fiction seesaw*” (189) were part of compositional, narrative, and discursive strategies, in *Revised Edition* they exist on an explicitly reflective level. Péter Esterházy reflects on his attitude to these issues especially

in passages where he comments on his new reading of the family saga. (In this sense, the description of a game in which an editor of *Celestial Harmonies* tries to guess which passages about his father are true and which are invented is interesting as it describes a particular reading experience that is both *fictive* and *factual* at the same time.) The fact that led to the writing of the *Supplement* to grandiose family saga also marks the author’s thinking. In the following selected excerpts he comments on the issues of the narrative subject in (autobiographical) prose text, the strategies responding to theoretical discussion on the (in)distinguishability of the real and fictitious basis of a literary work, the reader’s positions. It is thus concerned with the basic criteria of Lejeune’s definition: the object—the real private life of the narrator, and the narrator—the real person identical with the author.

“I am I. I wouldn’t be at all surprised if someone were to doubt this now. I had my share in raising such doubts, it took me quite a bit of doing. This whose who, the face as a mask, role playing and citation upon citation – altogether, probing the soft boundaries of fact and

fiction – perhaps this is the most characteristic – what? my theme? my subject? my ability? In any case, over the past decades – and this includes Celestial Harmonies – I have set many traps for the reader in this field. I’m not saying that I fell into it myself; still if I were suddenly to refer to my honesty now, my personal, civil honesty, you’d wave it off” (19).

“I knew that many would take it [Celestial Harmonies] word for word; continually and in a vulgar manner; the text plays (works) with the boundaries of fiction-nonfiction. But I did not count on the consequences of history appearing in the book, the fact that the book is not just family history, but national history as well” (35).

“-You’ll die for the country, won’t you, boys?

-Yes, Papi, dear, we’ll die.”

“At which I start crying again. Ridiculous. Whereas it’s (just) quoted from an outside source, no such scene occurred in my life. I’m gradually beginning to think of Celestial Harmonies as fact, the primitive referential reader has come out of me; so much for our postmodern reputation” (111).

The cited passages declare the shift of the author’s understanding in the context of postmodern deconstruction, the repositioning of the basic questions of referentiality: the boundaries of reality, textuality, fictitiousness. Even though this shift does not affect his further creative work, it is symptomatic of the book *Revised Edition*, where the father’s real story re-evaluates aesthetic reflections and also—as has been pointed out by G. Angyalosi—“does change the meaning of the original text” (Angyalosi, 2003, 174–175), i.e., it had and probably has an effect on the rest of Péter Esterházy’s work. While the autobiographical pact (in Lejeune’s understanding) represents in literature—including *Celestial*

Harmonies—the object of authorial irony pointing to the readers’ assumptions and bias in the process of reconstructing the world of a literary work, *Revised Edition*, on the contrary, validates the autobiographical pact, and in this way willy-nilly undermines his own authorial irony. I consider it a significant gesture in a work that participates in a processing of Hungarian communist past not only through its subject, but also its attitude, in which the author was able to radically re-evaluate his own positions.

Translated by Dobrota Pucherová

Notes

- 1 By autobiographical writing I mean a mode of writing that engages with the methods and strategies of autobiography, but does not result in an author’s report on own life.
- 2 I refer to this widely known (also corrected) definition also below in the sense of “pure” autobiography, i.e. autobiography in a narrow sense. Lejeune himself also used several definitions. See e.g., LEJEUNE, Philippe. 2002. Az önéletírás meghatározása, transl. Zoltán Z. VARGA. In: *Helikon*, Vol. 48, No. 3, pp. 272–285.
- 3 E.g., the Oedipus motif in *Celestial Harmonies* has been analyzed by SCHEIN, Gábor. 2010. Baleseti jegyzőkönyv. In: PÉCZELI, D.–PALKÓ, G. (eds.) *Találunk szavakat. Válogatott írások Esterházy Péter műveiről 1974–2008*. Budapest: Magvető, pp. 208–215.
- 4 ESTERHÁZY, Péter. 2005. *Celestial Harmonies*. Transl. Judith Sollosy. New York: Harper Collins Publishers. All following citations are from this volume.
- 5 ESTERHÁZY, Pál. 1989. *Mars Hungaricus*. Ed., transl. from the Latin by Emma IVÁNYI. Budapest: Zrínyi.
- 6 GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang. 1848. *Truth and Poetry: From My Own Life*. Transl. from the German by John OXENFOKD. London: Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, pp. 173–174.
- 7 See e.g., SZEGEDY-MASZÁK, Mihály. 2010. A történelem elképzelt hitele. In: PÉCZELI, D.–PALKÓ, G. (eds.), p. 200; SZIRÁK, Péter. 2003. Nyelv által lesz. In: BÖHM, G. (ed.), pp. 144–145.
- 8 The destiny of the novella in the texts by Péter Esterházy and in translation practice has been analyzed by LADÁNYI, István. 2006. Amikor a hóhért akasztják. Egy posztmodern gesztus és fordítói utóélete. In: *Jelenkor*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 383–386; the parallels between the work of Danilo Kiš and Péter Esterházy are analyzed by BOJTÁR, Endre. 2005. Kis Esterházy. In: *2000*, Vol. 17, No. 12, pp. 61–65. Compare: ESTERHÁZY, Péter. 2003. Der Ich-Erzähler als Provokation des Mimetischen im Diskurs der Phantastik. In: *Harmonia Caelestis Marginalienband*. Berlin: Berlin Verlag, pp. 28–34.
- 9 The list of the cited authors and texts was published in the supplement to the German edition of the novel: *Harmonia Caelestis Marginalienband*, pp. 36–43 and also in the appendix of the English edition: *Celestial Harmonies*, pp. 843–846.
- 10 Hungarian internet literary journal *litera.hu* ran a forum about *Celestial Harmonies* called *Ajtó ablak nyitva van – szövegkereső társasjáték* (2007–2008), in which readers could share their findings of other texts in the novel – which often raised passionate discussions on the nature of authorship. Translations of the novel also sparked discussions in some countries on the ques-

- tion of authorial rights. These discussions led to the publishing of the lists of cited authors and texts in some translated versions of the novel. For a detailed analysis, see KULCSÁR-SZABÓ, Zoltán. 2011. Idézet vége. In: *Alföld*, Vol. 62, No. 7, pp. 69–83.
- 11 GÖRÖZDI, Judit. 2012. Citovat' nie je jednoduché. Rozhovor s Péterom Esterházym. In: *Romboid*, Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 21–22.
- 12 GECSÉNYI, Lajos. 1990. Die Lebenserinnerungen von Moritz Graf Esterházy. In: *Ungarn-Jahrbuch*. München: Ungarisches Institut, pp. 179–204. Also available at: http://epa.oszk.hu/01500/01536/00018/pdf/UJ_1990_179-204.pdf [Accessed Nov. 13, 2015]
- 13 The book received a great acclaim not only in Hungary, but also in other Central European countries after the publication of the Slovak (2006), Serbian (2006), Polish (2008), Romanian (2008) and Czech (2014) translations.
- 14 I would like to thank Judith Sollosy for the translation of the excerpts from this novel for the purpose of this study. Page numbers refer to the original: ESTERHÁZY, Péter. 2002. *Javitott kiadás*. Budapest: Magvető. The novel has not yet been published in English translation, with the exception of the Preface: ESTERHÁZY, Péter. 2009. REVISED EDITION: AUTHOR'S PREFACE. Transl. by Judith Sollosy. In: *The Wall in My Head. Words without Borders Anthology, Words and Images from the Fall of the Iron Curtain*. University of Rochester.

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SARTORIAL HEROISM AND NATION-BUILDING: FEMALE CROSS-DRESSING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY HUNGARIAN FICTION (A CASE STUDY)*

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The article investigates the uses of the motif of the Warrior Women in János Arany's epic poetry. The author of the article claims that the motif of the Warrior Women in Arany's poetical discourse stemmed from the romantic literary tradition of the 1820–1830s. Furthermore, she argues that an old Scottish ballad, purportedly known by János Arany, provided the pattern that had been imitated by the Hungarian poet. Hence, the romantic image of the Hungarian Warrior Woman has become a highly symbolic and propagandistic content in Arany's poetry during the 1850s. It reveals a genuine nineteenth-century endeavour of the nation-building process in order to promote the nation's ready-to-fight patriotic women as models to be followed.

Keywords: Romantic nationalism, Hungarian nation-building, Female Warrior motif, cross-dressing

Introduction

In 1847 the prestigious Hungarian Kisfaludy Society (a literary society named after the dramatist Károly Kisfaludy) invited applications for historical narrative poems about one of the notorious female protagonists of early modern Hungarian history: Mária Széchy. The call has been announced as part of a series of other requests concerning narrative poems about adventures and deeds of famous Hungarian women due to propagandist endeavours to mobilize women to take part in nationalist movements of the Hungarian Reform Era. Indeed, historicist inquiry and historicist genres have become a favorite topic for analysis in nationalism studies. That is to say, scholars have recently followed a clear approach to dealing with the cultural dimension of nineteenth-century European nationalism.

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Furthermore, the conceptual splicing of Romanticism and nationalism has also become increasingly widespread. For Romantic nationalism, according to Joep Leerssen “is the celebration of nation (defined by its language, history and cultural character) as an inspiring ideal for artistic expression; and the instrumentalization of that expression in ways of raising the political consciousness” (Leerssen, 2013, 9). Leerssen also asserts that Romantic nationalism opposed to social and political analyses concentrates on the process of the “cultivation of culture” during the first half of the nineteenth century. In his approach among the investigated cultural fields language, the discursive realm of literature and learning, the material culture and various cultural practices receive special attention. In addition, cultivation is the equivalent of intended instrumentalisation of the national culture by means of three types of endeavour: salvage, fresh productivity, and propagandist proclamation (Leerssen, 2006, 569–570). Moreover, he considers Romantic nationalism to be a truly international European phenomenon. Finally, Leerssen concludes that it should be studied as part of a comparative cultural history (Leerssen, 2013, 566).

Although considerable research has been devoted to the conceptualization of cultural and Romantic nationalism, there is still much to be done in understanding specific cases of its manifestation. The aim of the present paper is to illustrate how the motif of the Female Warrior in János Arany’s epic poetry has become a symbolic marker of Hungarian Romantic nationalism in the 1850s. János Arany, who was regarded and promoted as Hungary’s national poet during the second half of the nineteenth century, also relied on this topos in some of his epic poetry of patriotic content after the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849. Again, it was the motif of the Female Warrior that became a symbolic representation of love, heroism and patriotism with propagandist targeting during an extremely difficult period of Hungarian political history.

This article intends to investigate the uses of the motif of the Female Warrior in János Arany’s epic poetry. I will establish that the aforementioned motif stems in Arany’s poetical discourses from the romantic literary tradition of the 1820–1830s. Furthermore, I will claim that an old Scottish ballad, purportedly known by János Arany, has provided the pattern imitated by the Hungarian poet. Hence, the romantic image of the Hungarian Female Warrior becomes a highly symbolic and propagandistic content in Arany’s poetry during the 1850s. I will conclude by stating that the use of the topos consists of a genuine nineteenth-century endeavour of the nation-building process in order to promote the nation’s ready-to-fight patriotic women as models to be followed.

Warrior Women in János Arany's Epic Poetry

The image of the Female Warrior appears in János Arany's three narrative poems, all of them written during the 1840s and 1850s. While the first one was conceived as a result of the Kisfaludy Society's call for historical narrative poems about Mária Széchy, the second and the third poems were written posterior during 1853. This chapter provides a detailed analyses of the occurrence of the motif in Arany's above-mentioned poems and also reflects upon those Hungarian and Anglo-American traditions that the topos of the Female Warrior stemmed from.

Széchy Mária's figure could hardly have been familiar from historical sources to those intending to respond to the Kisfaludy Society's call at the time of its announcement. For the historical biography written about her life based on archival sources was only published later during the second half of the nineteenth century (Acsády, 1885). Moreover, the quasi-historical narratives of the siege of Murány castle thoroughly imbued with fictional elements appeared mostly in the period following the Kisfaludy Society's call. Indeed, the contemporary version of the famous assault unfolded by the French Jean le Laboureur is unlikely to have been an easily accessible item in the mid-nineteenth-century Hungarian environment (Laboureur, 1647, 83–99).¹ Furthermore, János Kemény's autobiography mentioning the adventurous surrender of the Murány castle came out in print only in 1856 (Szalay, 1856, 368–369). Finally, the work of Georg Kraus, a Transylvanian Saxon historian also relating the siege of the Murány castle was published only in 1862 (Kraus, 1862, 144–147).

However, the occupation of the Murány castle conjoined with a thrilling love story was widely known in the first half of the nineteenth century from a grandiose baroque literary account written by István Gyöngyösi and entitled *Márssal társolkodó Murányi Vénus* [Mars Joining Venus of Murány] (Gyöngyösi, 1998).² The work of Gyöngyösi was widely known in Hungary during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its first edition in 1664 was so popular that all the exemplars were ruined because of the frequent usage. Only two copies survived up to the present day. Its second edition issued in 1702 was followed by five more publications during the eighteenth-century. As a consequence of its multiple release and fame the Hungarian Reform Era also revealed special interest towards the story. When responding to the Kisfaludy Society's call for historical narrative poems, besides Gyöngyösi's baroque poem, one could most easily choose for help one of the story's adaptations written in the 1840s: either a drama (Kisfaludy, 1820) or a romantic historical short-story.³

Before discussing the relationship between János Arany's work and the sources available at the time, I will briefly sum up the story of the siege of Murány. It was the story of a successful military and love campaign whereby the castle of Murány, which at the time of the action was under the rule of György Rákóczi I,

Prince of Transylvania, had been handed over by Mária Széchy to the royal troops led by the Captain of Füle, Ferenc Wesselényi. In the aftermath of the siege Mária Széchy married Wesselényi. In 1663 the poet István Gyöngyösi became the man of trust of his new patron, Ferenc Wesselényi, by that time Palatine of Hungary. Gyöngyösi intended to comply with the requirements of the baroque representation when immortalizing the story in his poem. He enhanced the cunning takeover of the strategically insignificant castle and the story of this marriage of convenience turning it into the tale of his patron's heroic actions.

Indeed, the poet Gyöngyösi's intention was primarily to record the story. He narrated the story of the castle's handover entangled into personal life situations, circumstances and interests. The widow Mária Széchy at a certain moment found herself in quite a difficult financial situation because of her relatives. Consequently, the alliance with Wesselényi became her life-belt. Wesselényi, on the other hand, wanted to do the king a service and increase his funds. Their alliance thus provided a satisfactory solution for both sides. However, Gyöngyösi's poem does not mention that the woman handed over the castle to Wesselényi as commander of the fortress. Nevertheless, she found the solution to her vulnerable situation by means of a stratagem. For Gyöngyösi's poem strongly emphasized the rational character of Mária Széchy's and Ferenc Wesselényi's alliance.

The image of Mária Széchy as commander of the fortress of Murány has been an additional construction in the Hungarian literary tradition, its appearance dating back to the period of the Reform Era. The primary objective of the baroque poet was to preserve the romance for posterity transforming at the same time his patron's deeds into heroic actions. On the other hand, the story's adaptations from the Reform Era concentrated on the figure of Mária Széchy. The leading idea of the drama and the short-story mentioned earlier were focused on the transformation of the masculine woman. That is, in these works the valiant, soldier-like woman playing the role of a man overwhelmed by love becomes aware of her womanliness and returns to her own gender. Consequently, the adaptations of the Reform Era present Mária Széchy as crossdressed with a helmet on her head, sword in her hands and armour covering her body.

János Arany used only two sources to write his version of the story: Gyöngyösi's baroque poem and the short-story conceived during the Reform Era. In other words he elaborated the concept of his own version on the basis of the available fictional narratives. That is he employed fiction to create another fictional narrative to adjust it to external influences and to update it to present requirements. Hence, the image of the soldier-like, warrior Mária Széchy should be regarded as a fiction that emerged from the Reform Era, and its genesis originating from a Romantic tradition.

After having seen the Hungarian romantic tradition from which the motif of the Warrior Woman stemmed out in János Arany's poetry, I intend to introduce

another relevant tradition that clearly influenced the poet's writings. János Arany relied upon the topos of the Female Warrior two more times during the 1850s in his ballads entitled *Rozgonyiné* [Mrs Rozgonyi] and *Az egri leány* [The Girl from Eger]. The former unfolds the story of a woman named Cecilia Rozgonyi, who joins the battlefield against the Ottomans on her husband's side. The latter relates the adventures of a Hungarian girl who has taken revenge on the murderers of her lover during the accession to throne of Ulászló I, king of Hungary.

It is well known from János Arany's correspondence that the Hungarian poet possessed thorough knowledge about the tradition of the Scottish ballads. For instance, he was familiar with Thomas Percy's collection entitled *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. After its first edition in 1765, the collection had been reissued several times during the first half of the nineteenth century, thus became an easily accessible item in the Hungarian environment as well.⁴ Besides Percy's collection Arany also made use of Walter Scott's collection of ballads entitled *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Moreover, he was also in the possession of the anthology called *The British Classical Authors*.

Previous research has already proved that János Arany's model in writing his ballad *Rozgonyiné* [Mrs Rozgonyi] was one of the ballads published in Thomas Percy's collection, the one entitled *Mary Ambree* (Elek, 1912). However, ulterior interpretations and even the notes of the critical edition of János Arany's works have assigned little attention to these remarks, whereas the similarity between the two ballads is quite striking. Mary Ambree, like Mrs Rozgonyi was a valiant, warrior woman. According to Thomas Percy, her heroism cannot be certified with historical sources despite the fact that she has become a source of inspiration of many literary works. The subject of the ballad has most probably been connected to the events of the year 1584. At that time the Spaniards under the command of the prince of Parma began to gain great advantages in Flanders and Brabant by recovering many strong holds from the Hollanders as Ghent and Antwerpen. When preparing for the siege of Ghent, the bravest soldiers were selected among which Mary Ambree proved to be the best (Percy, 1846, 164–167).

Mary Ambree became a soldier so that she could revenge her lover killed before her eyes. She dressed in armour with a helmet on her head, gauntlet and sword in her hands. She encouraged enthusiastically her soldiers to destroy the lines of the enemies. When being betrayed, she withdrew with her troops into a castle. When the troops of the enemies sieged the castle, the reckless girl carried on fighting bravely. Her enemies thought her to be the commander of the fortress, but she finally revealed herself to be just a simple English girl. The uncovering of her true gender filled with admiration even her enemies. The prince of Parma, when hearing about her bravery, rewarded her richly and asked her to marry him. However, the girl, claiming that her honour was not for sale, rejected him.

But, according to the ballad, her heroism has been regularly immortalized in various literary works ever since.

The resemblance of János Arany's ballad *Rozgonyiné* [Mrs Rozgonyi] to *Mary Ambree* may be identified in three respects. The preparation for the battle, the presentation of the heroine's valour and the spread of the fame surviving the heroine are central structural elements in both texts. In addition, Mrs Rozgonyi wears the same fighting equipment as Mary Ambree: helmet on her head, armour on her body and sword in her hands. The epic punch of the heroine's praise in the lines concluding the writings is also quite striking in both ballads. On the other hand, János Arany's aforementioned ballad, *Az egri leány* [The Girl from Eger] does not bear the same similarities with *Mary Ambree* as the ballad relating Mrs Rozgonyi's deeds. However, it resembles the Scottish ballad in its pattern regarding the girl's revenge for her previously murdered lover.

Consequently, in the light of these similarities it is now possible to claim that János Arany has successfully connected the Romantic tradition of the Female Warrior (most possibly itself an adaptation of an international topos) with the tradition of a specific Anglo-American corpus. All in all, the ballad entitled *Mary Ambree* has played an outstanding role during the development of this tradition. For it was this ballad that initiated the bequest of the motif of the Warrior Woman in the Anglo-American popular balladry from the Renaissance up to the Victorian Era.

***Mary Ambree* and the Female Warrior motif in the Anglo-American Tradition**

Having examined the significance of the Female Warrior motif in János Arany's epic poetry, I will now describe the Anglo-American tradition to which it might presumably be connected as well. According to Dianne Dugaw the broadside and chapbook literature operating with the motif of the Female Warrior surfaced in the street literature of the British Isles and North America at the turn of the seventeenth century. By the Restoration Era the motif became a conventional pattern of commercial streetsongs. The Female Warrior motif had a lower-class provenance. That is, the typical audience for broadside and chapbook literature were the semi-literate lower classes. Romantic narratives like the Female Warrior ballads constituted the favourite reading material for apprentices, servants, farm-workers, laborers, soldiers and sailors. The typical composer of a Female Warrior ballad was generally a professional hack employed by the street-ballad publishers (Dugaw, 1989, 15–30).

As for the conventional characterization of the ballads' heroine the composers portrayed her both romantic and heroic, as the embodiment of Venus and

Mars at the same time (Dugaw, 1989, 31). Dianne Dugaw convincingly argues that the Female Warrior motif in English popular balladry has begun with the ballad of *Mary Ambree* (Dugaw, 1989, 32). The text of the ballad plays out the preoccupations and structure of the entire Female Warrior motif. The necessary and conventional ingredients of the literature elaborating upon this topos are the heroic poles of Love and Glory; the separation of the lovers which prompts the heroine's valor; proofs in action of her "womanly" love and "manly" courage; a final courtship episode; and a celebratory ending. The congruence in the heroine of both "Mars" and "Venus" constitutes the key feature of the Female Warrior ballads. On the other hand, however pugnacious and daring Mary Ambree may be, her "valorous" deeds result ultimately from her love. Passion becomes thus the heroine's ultimate motive in venturing to find or to accompany a lover (Dugaw, 1989, 35–36).

The events in *Mary Ambree* are directed unmistakably by the gendered oppositions of Love and Glory, of heroic womanliness and manliness. Moreover, the pivotal preoccupation of the entire Female Warrior motif has been the separation of these categories and their characterization by means of distinctive "costumes". This duplicity has been the essential element in the functioning of the masquerading heroism. For this gender-conflating double identity is crucial to the Female Warrior topos. For the truth of the matter, the ballad of *Mary Ambree* shows how the Female Warrior motif negotiates gender as a bipolar system of costuming. In addition, the motif's heroine plays out this system precisely because it costumes the heroic ideal, the forms of worthy manners. The Female Warrior is in fact a model for heroic behaviour. Therefore her figure encompasses in her heroic cross-gendering both sides of the heroic ideal: Love and Glory, woman and man (Dugaw, 1989, 40–41).

By the eighteenth century the subject of the Female Warrior became a regularized and coherent motif. In fact, some one hundred new ballads operating with this topos came into print between 1700 and the middle of the nineteenth century. However, with the emergence of new Female Warrior ballads, interest in *Mary Ambree* took a new turn. For the old ballad suddenly became the subject of antiquarian study. Thomas Percy's collection also known by János Arany played a major role during this process. Percy, once chaplain to George III, then Bishop of Dromore published his collection of archaic songs and romances entitled *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1765. The collection contained in its second volume a version of the ballad *Mary Ambree*. He claimed to have acquired the ballads from an old manuscript. However, Dianne Dugaw presumed that a significant number of the "reliques" had probably come from outdated broadsides and chapbooks purchased by Percy earlier (Dugaw, 1989, 49).

Indeed, Percy highly stressed the antiquity of his ballads in the introduction written to the volume. As a result of his endeavour the collection became un-

questionably one of the most influential books of the late eighteenth century. As Dugaw claimed, it marked the point at which an interest in antiquities and in the common people swept literary circles. In addition, Percy's collection also began the "museum life" of *Mary Ambree*. Consequently, as an antique, the ballad was also considered "worthy". By the second half of the eighteenth century the female soldier or sailor became a regular motif of polite songs of elite literary circles and of the theatre. The topos becoming highly symbolic by that time, also portrayed stirring examples of both love and patriotism (Dugaw, 1989, 50–52).

On the other hand, the "museum life" of *Mary Ambree* signaled at the same time the waning of the Female Warrior idea and of the ballads operating with this motif. The once normal topos became increasingly curious, rare, exotic, archaic and almost extinct. By the mid-nineteenth century Female Warrior ballads almost entirely vanished from the popular market. At the same time, new permutations of the motif and parodies both of individual ballads and of the topos showed unmistakable signs of the erosion of the Female Warrior as an ideal of heroic behaviour (Dugaw, 1989, 65–90).

Fact and Fiction: Warrior Women, Cross-Dressers in Early Modern Europe

After I have provided an evaluation of the Female Warrior motif in a well defined Hungarian oeuvre and its possible Anglo-American connections, this chapter discusses the social historical context which has led to the appearance of the topos in various literary works. The ballads operating with the Female Warrior motif confront their readers in fact with a distinctly pre-modern conception of female identity. As Dugaw pointed out, they also integrate three important features of early modern social history. First, the age in which the ballads flourished required from women the same physical toughness and energy that characterized the female warriors of the ballads. These expectations were especially natural in case of lower-class women. Second, the constant warfare of the period and the conditions of that warfare made women's participation in military activities in many cases a necessary part of survival. And third, the early modern period itself, during which the ballads flourished, showed particular interest, in fact obsession with disguise and cross-dressing (Dugaw, 1989, 122).

The business of war in the early modern era also made possible such "border crossings". That is, war was by modern standards a decentralized and very differently organized affair in the eighteenth century. This system did not yet segregate the civilian from the soldier, nor to some extent women from men. The bureaucracy of military service was also significantly different from later, post-Napo-

leonic proceedings. For instance, there were no such strict medical inspections that could have easily made possible the disclosure of the women dressed as men (Dugaw, 1989, 128–129).⁵ For in the early modern period women often cross-dressed to work as soldiers or sailors. Among their motivations one could usually find romantic, patriotic and economic reasons. In many cases cross-dressing provided the only possibility to remain with their families or lover. (Following her husband was in fact Mrs Rozgonyi's motivation in János Arany's ballad as well.) Among patriotic reasons defence of the fatherland had the utmost importance. In other cases economic motivations, that is poverty, made women cross-dress and join the army. In other words, by becoming a "man" they could much easily find work than otherwise (Dekker, 1989, 27).

Nevertheless, there were also women who went to battle and to sea undisguised. But making her way in the military environment thus, a single woman was subject to harrasment and violence. Furthermore, by being a soldier's wife she neither was financially independent. Therefore, cross-dressing was the only means for women to move about in the military space with safety and freedom, and to get paid for their services as well (Dugaw, 1989, 130).

Under these social and historical circumstances, no wonder that the process of gender coding became one of the pivotal preoccupations of the Female Warrior motif. On the other hand, the perception of gender as cultural construct also had another wider social context in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Fashions at that time by their very nature exploited the transforming properties of apparel. Wigs and tinted facial powders equally used by women and men could significantly alter appearance. The decisions made in the morning regarding the toilette often affected the recognizability of the respective person during the day. These metamorphosing powers of dress haunted the imagination of the entire eighteenth century. Therefore, in this period also called "the age of disguise" pervasive metaphors of masquerading conditioned the terms in which people thought and behaved. Consequently, it was certainly not an accidental development that the flourishing of the Female Warrior ballads coincided with a special cultural interest towards disguise, performance and potential discrepancies between appearance and reality. The ballad heroine, as Dugaw established it, dramatizes only one aspect of this preoccupation with cross-dressing, the one regarding gender identity and eighteenth-century codes for women's behaviour (Dugaw, 1989, 132).

In view of these developments it is possible to conclude that in England preoccupation with the semiotics of gender started to influence behaviour early in the seventeenth century. At that time not only practical reasons (for example traveling at liberty, without requiring masculine guardianship) explained the frequency of cross-dressing. Masquerading, disguising was in itself a popular social practice during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Carnival celebrations,

for instance, were common and extremely popular forms of entertainment for all levels of society at that time. In other words, as Dugaw stated it, disguising as cultural phenomenon could be regarded a social fad, a literary trope and a settled and continuing way of conceptualizing behaviour during the early modern period (Dugaw, 1989, 135–139).

However, the nineteenth century put growing emphasis on the fictional character of this masquerade, carefully demarcating it from “real life”. With the spreading of a polarized perception of gender-roles cross-dressing became an increasingly disturbing phenomenon at the end of the eighteenth century. Consequently, the separation of fiction and reality in the interpretation of literary works became more and more accentuated. For instance, the readily accepted cross-dressing on the stage, which routinely occurred in the theatre, became a disturbing spectacle by the end of the century. For the phenomenon started to be interpreted as an obvious challenge to the rigid binary system (men vs. women). The potential dangers of cross-dressing concerned critics and moralists alike. They considered its utmost danger the experiencing of the condition of liminality, a voyage towards an uncharted bourne from which no (female) traveller returns unchanged. As a result, critics made significant efforts to deny even the possibility of androgyny by emphasizing the audience’s shared awareness of the absurdly fictional status of the woman-as-man.⁶ The disappearance of the Female Warrior motif was of course also influenced by the changing social conditions. An agenda of centralization and reorganization significantly transformed military life during the nineteenth century. The modern army has not left spaces in the system anymore for women to easily become “soldiers”. Real-life Female Warriors became much less tolerated, much less possible, thought of as not entirely impossible during the nineteenth century (Dugaw, 1989, 140).

It should also be noted that the phenomenon of cross-dressing presented above mainly in a Western-European context has not been studied by Hungarian historiography so far. Nevertheless, cross-dressing could not have presumably been present to such an extent in early modern Hungarian culture than in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century northwestern countries: the Netherlands, Germany and England. It is also questionable whether further research would eventually reveal occurrences of Hungarian cross-dressing. However, it is quite remarkable that Hungarian cultural memory also preserved its female warriors’ nineteenth-century fiction playing an important role during this process. It is surely not a coincidence that all three of János Arany’s examples were provided by early modern Hungarian history. It could also be possible that the phenomenon of cross-dressing appeared mainly only in fictional works in the Hungarian culture. In any way soever, its occurrences and meanings may only be reconstructed in specific historical contexts. That is why before a systematic investigation of the phenomenon the article may only formulate hypotheses.

János Arany's Warrior Women and Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Nation-Building

Having seen the presence of the Female Warrior in János Arany's works, its Romantic and Anglo-American roots, as well as the social historical context the motif stemmed out of, it is now possible to identify how this topos has become part of the nineteenth-century Hungarian nation-building process. The Kisfaludy Society's call for application provided a suggestive example of the Romantic nationalist cultivation of culture. The aim of the call can hardly be regarded an unbiased one. It has not even called into question whether Hungarian history has its notable female figures. In addition, its obvious purpose has been to place these prominent female figures in the foreground of Hungarian cultural memory. Thus its utmost motivation may be regarded as a preserving one. Furthermore, the call also attests to a consciously planned (re)production of culture. Finally, the appeal made for noble efforts and fervent participation to Hungarian women of the Reform Era demonstrates a strong belief in the nationalist passion-building role of poetry.

The appointed historical subject has imposed a suggestive example of Romantic nationalism's historicist inquiry. The literature depicting famous deeds of women from the past is meant to connect the present with its own historical roots. Literature thus becomes a suggestive expression of a mental continuum between the nation's present and its past, this continuum also expressing and constituting the nation's enduring identity.

The presence of the Female Warrior in János Arany's epic poetry besides preservation also provides illuminating conclusions regarding fresh productivity by means of fiction. The call for application launched by the Kisfaludy Society did not contain instructions concerning the figure of Mária Széchy. However, at the time of the announcement alternative interpretations of Mária Széchy's character were in circulation. Her soldier-like, warrior figure was in fact a fiction dating back to the Reform Era. Neither the story's first interpretation, István Gyöngyösi's baroque poem, nor Mária Széchy's later biography did support her warrior-like presentation.

Moreover, neither the portayal in armour of Cecília Rozgonyi with helmet on her head and sword in her hands was influenced by historical sources. The sources only mentioned her bravery against the Ottomans during the siege of Galambóc castle in 1428 (Zlinszky, 1900, 273). Her depiction in full military pomp, the detailed account of the process of her cross-dressing in Arany's ballad was again influenced by the same Romantic tradition that played a crucial role in Mária Széchy's presentation. Cross-dressing with its obligatory accessories (helmet, armour and sword) becomes thus the symbol of ardour and of activity in both cases.

János Arany has successfully interwoven the Romantic heritage of the Female Warrior with the tradition of a specific Anglo-American corpus of texts. Cross-

dressings in the presentation of female heroism played a crucial role in both cases. On the other hand, Thomas Percy's collection that reevaluated and familiarized elite literary circles with the ballad of *Mary Ambree* has been the expression of the same Romantic nationalist endeavour resembling the many folklore collection projects of the Kisfaludy Society. The language seen as the essential soul of a nation's identity and position in the world played a crucial role during this process.

The Romanticism's urge for authentic simplicity led to the appreciation of the vernacular and of folk poetry and to the use of the literary registers of lyricism and balladry. Arany reflected on the key position of the language in *Murány ostroma* [The Siege of Murány] when he attempted to create an epic poem between the educated writer's and that of a powerful folk language's (Arany, 1975, 172). In *Rozgonyiné* [Mrs Rozgonyi] the poet expressed his same intention by the imitation of an authentic folk genre, the ballad.

At the same time, the Female Warrior topos in Western Europe had its serious social historical background. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of early modern Hungarian cross-dressing has not been studied so far. Although Hungarian cultural memory also preserved its warrior women, among which Cecília Rozgonyi was one of the most famous, historical sources did not document the fact that they were real cross-dressers. However, it is quite striking that all János Arany's examples were provided from the early modern period.

It seems that the legacy of the early modern period and that of the Napoleonic wars for the nineteenth century was that the female soldier carried with her overtones of radicalism. Before the end of the eighteenth century the world turned upside down with its cross-dressed women could be imagined as a social reversal without wider political consequences. After 1793 individual gender revolt corresponded to some kind of revolution in the state as well as in the home. As a result, every period of revolutionary turmoil witnessed the re-emergence of the motif of the Female Warrior amongst the consumers of popular culture (Hopkin, 2009, 88). János Arany's *Murány ostroma* [The Siege of Murány] also appeared in 1848 and his two other ballads after the failed Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849, in 1853. Thus the Female Warrior motif conjoining Love and Heroism, and patriotism as primary motivation of cross-dressing became a highly symbolic and propagandistic content in Arany's poetry during the 1850s.

It seems plausible to conclude that the history of Mária Széchy and Cecília Rozgonyi's deeds and the objective of the Kisfaludy Society's call consisted of a genuine nineteenth-century effort of the nation-building process in order to promote the nation's ready-to-fight patriotic women as models to be followed. In this process, the various fictional narratives written and circulated during the nineteenth century had crucial importance. Moreover, the phenomenon had also been reinforced by the fine arts. For illustrations of János Arany's ballads were also produced

during the nineteenth century. Two outstanding examples were the illustrated albums of Arany's ballads published on the occasion of two highly symbolic and ritual events: the first one in 1868 after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 (*Arany Album*, 1868), the second one in 1894 on the eve of the Hungarian millenium celebrations in 1889 (Arany, 1894). When the latter appeared, its introduction did not fail to emphasize that the ballads together with the illustrations belong to the best of the Hungarian intellectual creative power. The illustrated albums celebrating two special events of the Hungarian nation also provided visual evidence for their readership of the existence of the nation's ready-to-fight patriotic women.

Conclusion

The aim of the article has been to contextualize the uses of the Female Warrior motif in János Arany's poetry. I have demonstrated that the motif of the Warrior Woman rooted in Arany's poetical discourses originates from the Hungarian literary tradition of the 1820–1830s and an old Scottish ballad that constituted one of its most significant sources. Consequently, the romantic image of the Female Warrior became a highly symbolic and propagandistic content in Arany's poetry during the 1850s. It is this Female Warrior topos that fulfilled the function of promoting the nation's ready-to-fight patriotic women as elevated conduct patterns to be imitated during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Notes

- 1 Laboureur was a member of the embassy accompanying the French bride of the Polish king to the city of Warsaw at the end of 1645. Upon her return in the spring of 1646 the Queen spent four days in Bratislava with Laboureur. They heard the story of this exceptional enterprise from Wesselényi himself.
- 2 István Gyöngyösi. 1998. *Márssal társolkodó Murányi Vénus*. [Mars Joining Venus of Murányi] Ed. József Jankovics. Budapest: Balassi. Régi Magyar Könyvtár. Források 8. This particular version of the text edited by József Jankovics follows the editio princeps of 1664.
- 3 Mednyánszky's short story was first published in a collection containing German legends in 1829: Alois Freiherrn von Mednyánszky. 1829. *Erzählungen, Sagen und Legenden aus Ungarns Vorzeit*. Pesth: Konrad Adolph Hartleben, pp. 194–209. (*Die Brautwerbung*). The Hungarian translation of the collection came out in 1832: Alajos Mednyánszky. 1832. *Elbeszélések, regék 's legendák a' magyar előkorból*. [Stories, Tales and Legends from the Hungarian Prehistoric Times] Transl. Nyitske Alajos–Szebényi Pál. Pest: Hartleben Konrad Ádolf, pp. 139–152. (*Mátkásítás*) [Engagement].
- 4 Percy's collection had been reissued several times during the nineteenth century; see the editions of 1803, 1806, 1810, 1812, 1839 and 1846. I've made use of the following: Thomas Percy. 1846. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of old heroic ballads, songs, and*

- other pieces of our earlier poets, together with some few of later date.* Vol. II. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street.
- 5 Regarding the late occurrences of female soldiers see: David Hopkin. 2009. “The World Turned Upside Down: Female Soldiers in the French Armies of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars” In: *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians. Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790–1820.* Ed. Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann and Jane Rendall, War, Culture and Society, 1750–1830. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 77–95. Concerning the journal of a Russian woman officer in the Napoleonic Wars see: Nadezhda Durova. 1988. *The Cavalry Maiden. Journals of a Russian Officer in the Napoleonic Wars.* Transl., introd., notes Mary Fleming Zirin. Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. Although the phenomenon was primarily relevant during the early modern period, one could also find examples of its late exceptional occurrences. For instance, the military service of the Romanian Ecaterina Teodoroiu during the First World War. (See: Maria Bucur. 2000. “Between the Mother of the Wounded and the Virgin of Jiu: Romanian Women and the Gender of Heroism during the Great War” In: *Journal of Women’s History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 30–56.)
 - 6 For the interpretation of eighteenth-century cross-dressing in the theatre see: Jean I. Marsden. 1993. “Modesty Unshackled: Dorothy Jordan and the Dangers of Cross-Dressing” In: *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Vol. 22, pp. 21–35.

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BÉLA HAMVAS (1897-1968). RECONSTITUER LA TRADITION PERDUE DE L'HUMANITÉ. L'INDIVIDU ET LA NATION À L'AUNE DE L'ÊTRE

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Le langage de Béla Hamvas, tel qu'il apparaît notamment dans son ouvrage inachevé, *acta sacra*, dont la première partie fut terminée en 1944, est riche en terminologie particulière. Hamvas fait notamment référence, en écho à René Guénon, à une « tradition archaïque » renvoyant à un « état primordial » qui était, en quelque sorte, celui du rapport direct entre l'homme et Dieu, là où régnait l'harmonie, l'amour fraternel et la charité. Hélas, la corruption s'est emparée du monde, par le péché originel. Ces éléments qui relèvent de l'époque mythique ont laissé place à des régimes et à des religions spécifiques aux diverses communautés humaines. Hamvas considère cela comme un temps de crise. D'ailleurs, le temps historique est un temps de crise dont il s'agit de sortir en « renormalisant » le monde. Parmi les diverses religions, le christianisme occupe une place spéciale, selon Hamvas, car il offre en lui-même tous les moyens de l'existence « normale ».

Mots clefs: René Guénon, Jacob Böhme, tradition archaïque et christianisme, universalisme

Les lecteurs de Béla Hamvas seront probablement d'accord pour dévoiler un secret qui en même temps est une évidence : Hamvas n'est ni un philosophe, ni un artiste. La manière singulière dont il se voit lui-même et dont il voit le monde est profondément différente de ce que l'on désigne, en général, comme la vision du monde propre aux artistes et aux philosophes. Il est, disons, un « homme disponible » par excellence et c'est bien cette disponibilité de Béla Hamvas qui va former le thème central et le « leitmotiv » de notre propos ci-dessous. Que voit-il donc, lui, que les autres ne voient pas ? En reformulant la question, nous entrons en pleine problématique : comment Béla Hamvas voit-il le monde ? La réponse la plus commode est connue des lecteurs, assez nombreux, de son ouvrage le plus populaire qui porte le doux nom de *Philosophie du vin* : il semble bien que l'élément constant de sa vision du monde soit une idyllique sérénité concordant avec la contemplation des unités organiques de l'univers. Or cette disposition d'esprit est la conséquence directe de son admiration pour le Créateur ; il existe

donc une réponse plus complexe à la question « Comment Béla Hamvas voit-il le monde ? », celle qui nous invite au préalable à pénétrer dans un univers hermétique dont la découverte passe par la lecture d'autres ouvrages sur lesquels nous allons nous pencher.

En guise de point de départ, Hamvas constate que tout en partageant avec tous la même capacité de voir les choses, l'individu n'apprend véritablement à *voir* qu'au travers d'efforts qui exigent de lui une concentration intense. Cet effort de concentration est rendu nécessaire par la rupture qui s'établit entre *celui* qui veut observer et *ce* qu'il veut observer, dès lors qu'en raison de cette rupture (entre le sujet et l'objet de l'observation), les fragments de la réalité s'effacent dans l'obscurité omniprésente. Nous allons voir que Béla Hamvas fait sans cesse référence à ce qu'il appelle le « statut absolu », c'est-à-dire à une disposition primordiale dans laquelle la lumière et l'obscurité se complètent l'une l'autre. Par exemple, l'existence en parallèle du jour et de la nuit est pour Hamvas une métaphore qui annonce la plénitude : la réalité, certes, est corrompue par le mal, mais aussi porte-t-elle en elle-même le souvenir éternel de sa création divine. À chacun de décider s'il veut mener une existence déterminée par le bouleversement de la situation initiale, ou s'il préfère pratiquer la sérénité idyllique, autrement dit garder la faculté d'observer avec sagesse. Or cela exige un travail conscient, lui-même fruit d'un effort épuisant.

Il ne va pas de soi de rapprocher ces données sur l'activité intellectuelle avec les éléments de la vie personnelle de Béla Hamvas, né en 1897 à Eperjes (Prešov), une ville septentrionale du pays. Après avoir suivi des études à l'académie militaire, Hamvas fut mobilisé en 1915. Au lendemain de la guerre, l'effondrement de la monarchie austro-hongroise intensifia chez le jeune homme une profonde crise personnelle et psychologique. C'est alors qu'il découvrit Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche et Dostoïevski – les maîtres qui lui révélèrent la fausseté et les tromperies du modèle européen des deux derniers millénaires. Il se rendit à Budapest pour y suivre des études universitaires, tandis qu'il vivait de menus travaux journalistiques. À partir de 1927, il travailla comme documentaliste à la Bibliothèque centrale de la capitale. Tout au long des années 1930-40, il mena une riche activité intellectuelle et créatrice. La grande rupture dans sa vie se produisit en 1949 : suspect aux yeux des communistes qui venaient de consolider leur pouvoir, Hamvas fut mis à la retraite. Dès lors, il allait être marginalisé et méprisé, tant du point de vue existentiel qu'intellectuel. Les vingt dernières années de sa vie montrent néanmoins un certain paradoxe, à savoir que la contrainte de se taire a fait redoubler chez l'homme la verve intellectuelle. L'énergie créatrice de Hamvas n'a en effet jamais été aussi intense et radicale qu'à l'époque où il a cessé toute activité publique en menant l'existence des fantômes – nous faisons allusion ici aux individus dont l'existence était tolérée par le régime totalitaire, mais dont la présence sociale était inacceptable. C'était le cas, parmi beaucoup

d'autres, de Béla Hamvas, qui travailla d'abord comme jardinier, puis comme ouvrier dans la construction de centrales énergétiques. Finalement, il fut terrassé par un hémorragie cérébrale en 1968.

Quels sont les grands axes de l'œuvre que Béla Hamvas nous a léguée ? Et que peut-on dire de cet héritage, dont une grande partie n'a vu le jour que tardivement, la plupart étant publiée au cours des quinze dernières années ? Le christianisme – étroitement lié à la notion de « tradition » – en est l'un des thèmes récurrents. Par contre, la nation en tant que telle occupe une place plus instable et moins bien définie dans l'univers personnel de l'auteur.

Le chemin qui nous mène aux idées de Béla Hamvas sur le christianisme est jalonné de notions telles que traditionalisme, crise de la tradition, « statut absolu » et révélation. À propos de la première de ces notions – le traditionalisme, que l'on peut concevoir comme un courant conceptuel majeur en Europe occidentale au début du XX^e siècle – Hamvas prend constamment appui sur René Guénon. Il faut cependant préciser que le penseur hongrois a remanié pour son propre usage la pensée de Guénon, il a notamment, par rapport à ce dernier, accordé une place plus importante à l'art et au christianisme. Hamvas considère l'art et le christianisme comme absolument et parfaitement identiques à l'esprit européen. Du fait qu'il trouve opportun de les analyser en tant que « traditionalisme » issu à la fois du savoir des âges archaïques et de l'inspiration métaphysique des cultures orientales, il conclut de son analyse un fondement qui se révèle commun au monde occidental et au monde oriental.

Dans la conception de Kierkegaard sur la crise générale, le point de départ est une espèce de « vide » qui règnerait sur le monde : de profondes « ténèbres » qui aggravent la responsabilité de l'individu dans sa propre corruption. L'État et la société étant relégués dans l'arrière-plan, c'est l'existence humaine qui est identifiée au bouleversement et à la corruption dans lesquels se trouvent le monde et l'homme. Mais quand la corruption est-elle apparue, quel fut le premier moment du chaos ? Hamvas dénonce l'erreur primordiale de ceux qui, pour répondre à ces questions, s'efforcent de remonter dans le temps jusqu'à différentes époques historiques. Il est convaincu d'avoir trouvé la bonne méthode : si l'on veut connaître le point initial de tout mal, on a tort de le chercher hors de soi-même. C'est une erreur typiquement européenne – explique-t-il – de construire des systèmes et des concepts et de prétendre trouver dans ces derniers l'origine de quoi que ce soit. Le seul moyen efficace offert à l'individu est, selon lui, de pénétrer jusqu'aux racines de l'existence. En outre, cet acte essentiel doit être complété par la reconnaissance de son état de pécheur. Hamvas désigne cette reconnaissance du péché comme la première condition de la vraie existence humaine. On se demande à juste titre de quel péché il peut s'agir : c'est bien du péché que la terminologie religieuse appelle « péché originel » et que Béla Hamvas identifie avec l'acte de détérioration, l'acte maléfique que l'homme a commis contre l'ordre et la nature

et de la Création. Toute réflexion authentique sur l'existence humaine nécessite, par conséquent, la conscience d'être responsable de la corruption du monde. Parler de progrès scientifique, de politique et de culture ne sont, pour Hamvas, que différentes méthodes de refoulement du problème essentiel, autrement dit ce sont des tactiques pour « faire semblant », des « impasses » qui éloignent l'humanité de la solution qui consisterait à interrompre le processus de détérioration et lancer un autre processus, opposé au premier, que Hamvas désigne sous le terme de « renormalisation ».

À chaque communauté humaine correspond une tradition. Quant à la Tradition commune de toute l'humanité, elle se traduit par le fait que les individus sont conscients de leur existence absolue et totale. Ce savoir, cette connaissance de l'existence absolue est la première condition primordiale de la crise de l'humanité. Ce savoir est une base, il est un point de repère et une mesure absolue. Le caractère problématique du concept de la nation chez Hamvas relève de la question de la Tradition et du savoir absolu : il n'existe pour lui qu'une seule communauté authentique, c'est l'humanité, la civilisation humaine. Le peuple, la nation, les couches sociales, les castes et les religions ne peuvent avoir un sens qu'en relation et à l'intérieur du grand ensemble auquel tout est subordonné à tous égards.

Les conceptions de Béla Hamvas sur la communauté humaine, sur les communautés humaines, parcourent l'œuvre du penseur. Dans son traité intitulé *Őt génius* (Les cinq génies), paru en 1948, il donne de la société, de la nation et du pouvoir politique une approche à la fois particulière et voilée. L'idée organisatrice de l'ouvrage est l'universalisme, autrement dit la structure universelle, aussi bien de la vie en communauté que de la vie individuelle. Nombreux sont les reflets et les manifestations de cet universalisme dans les différents domaines de la vie sociale. Ainsi, par exemple, indépendamment de l'époque historique et de l'espace géographique, Hamvas discerne quatre castes sociales qui se distinguent par l'activité principale de leurs membres (on reconnaît ici la proximité de sa pensée avec celle de René Guénon, dont Georges Dumézil a popularisé à peu près aux mêmes années la théorie de la « trifonctionnalité » indo-européenne). Les quatre castes et les quatre activités sont les suivantes : les serviteurs assument le travail physique, les commerçants sont liés à tout ce qui s'achète et se vend, tout ce qui se mange et se fabrique. La caste des guerriers et des gouverneurs a pour principale activité la réglementation des affaires publiques et des réunions régulières. Hamvas termine avec la caste des dirigeants spirituels, dont l'activité se concentre sur le domaine des cérémonies et des fêtes. À ce propos, il nous faut tout de suite souligner que Hamvas n'a pas manqué d'observer la disparition de cette dernière caste, constatant par conséquent l'incapacité croissante de l'homme, désormais entièrement gagné par le mal. Hamvas se réfère en même temps à une idée de Nietzsche, qu'il développe à son tour : ainsi, de nos jours, on aurait tort de parler d'une confrontation entre les classes sociales,

d'une confrontation qui viserait *in fine* l'instauration de la justice sociale. Il s'agit plutôt – explique Hamvas – d'une manipulation de l'ordre social par ceux qui sont hors caste, ceux qui n'appartiennent à aucune des quatre castes tout à l'heure mentionnées. Leur but ultime est de supprimer tout ordre dans la société humaine et d'effacer toute hiérarchie sociale ; or, en cela, ils ne créeront pas la société unie et égalitaire, au contraire ils sèment la crise et le chaos fonctionnel et mental.

La question de la nationalité apparaît dans le même texte de Béla Hamvas. Pour résumer la problématique, nous allons constater avec lui que les problèmes nationaux remontent à la naissance du nationalisme au XV^e siècle. Ce principe erroné doit sa naissance à la disparition de l'union et de l'harmonie spirituelle qui régnaient auparavant entre les différentes populations. Le nationalisme est apparu après l'effacement de l'État universel – le mot « État » renvoie ici au régime politique et social. Une fois l'universalité organisatrice et unificatrice de la civilisation humaine disparue, on a tenté de la remplacer par des unités élémentaires, c'est-à-dire par des nations, des « microsociétés », ce qui a donné naissance aux rivalités, à la concurrence, ainsi qu'aux différentes formes de l'orgueil et du mensonge. Citons Béla Hamvas : « Le monde dont la base est constituée par des États nationaux est un non-sens politique¹. » À cette idée, il ajoute que l'ultime tâche de toute autorité politique doit être de favoriser l'esprit universel. Or, l'esprit universel est nécessairement supranational, supraracial, et il ne dépend point non plus des classes sociales.

Mais revenons à la question de l'héritage commun de l'humanité. Comme nous venons de constater, la Tradition est un savoir absolu qui ne dépend ni des âges ni des nations. La Tradition, c'est le savoir du « statut absolu » de l'existence humaine, ce que René Guénon appelle un « état primordial ». Cet état primordial apparaît chez Hamvas aussi sous le nom d'« ordre primordial » : un ordre qui est le fondement des textes sacrés de l'humanité, parce que cet ordre est unique et préexistant, non sans qu'il dispose de faces particulières d'une région à une autre. Il est de caractère métaphysique en Chine et en Inde ; il reflète les règles objectives du cosmos chez les orphiques ; il a une dimension religieuse et morale dans les cultures iranienne et hébraïque ; enfin, il est l'ordre de l'ici-bas et de l'au-delà proposé par l'Évangile.

À la notion d'ordre qu'il affectionne, Béla Hamvas oppose la notion de régime. Les différents régimes sont nés pour combler les lacunes qui se sont établies lors de la disparition du savoir lié à l'état primordial. Un régime est toujours un état qui se veut primordial, mais qui ne peut l'être jamais.

À propos de l'état primordial et de la connaissance ultérieurement perdue de la Tradition, il nous faut introduire une nouvelle notion, celle de Révélation. Loin d'être définie par un degré de canonisation, la Révélation englobe l'enseignement authentique sur l'existence authentique. L'unique critère de la Révélation étant la force du « logos », le langage le plus intense se révèle dans les textes sacrés qui

nous laissent découvrir le fond des choses, les racines de la vie humaine sur terre. La Révélation primitive peut également s'annoncer indépendamment des grands livres de l'humanité. Ainsi, par exemple, Béla Hamvas désigne l'œuvre de Jakob Böhme comme la révélation par excellence de la Tradition en Europe. Autrement dit, ce cordonnier de Silésie, cet autodidacte qu'était Böhme eut recours à des notions de base qui sont en parfaite analogie avec à la fois la tradition hindoue, chinoise et hébraïque. C'est Jakob Böhme qui s'est servi de la notion d'« imagination », qui apparaît chez lui comme exprimant la totalité physique, spirituelle et mentale de l'existence. Chez Böhme, tout comme chez Hamvas, il est question d'imagination à propos de la corruption et de l'avilissement des créatures. Pour en expliquer la cause, les différentes civilisations mettent l'accent sur tel ou tel aspect d'un même processus. Les Hindous parlent ainsi du manque d'équilibre dans l'esprit, dont la conséquence directe serait la perte de vigilance et de l'état d'éveil. La tradition hébraïque trouve la racine du mal dans le péché moral, ainsi que dans l'hétérodoxie spirituelle. L'interprétation grecque dénonce finalement la corruption physique et la maladie comme fondement de l'avilissement existentiel. Si Béla Hamvas a recours à la notion d'imagination telle qu'elle apparaît chez Jakob Böhme, c'est pour partager l'opinion du penseur silésien sur la nécessité de considérer les trois secteurs de l'existence en leur union ontologique. L'imagination ne couvrirait pas alors la seule intelligence, comme elle ne couvre pas non plus les seuls sentiments, ni la seule volonté. Au contraire, elle en est l'union tripartite, elle est l'acte créateur élémentaire et primordial.

Avant de nous pencher sur la place du christianisme dans la pensée de Béla Hamvas sur le rapport de l'humanité avec la Tradition archaïque, il nous semble important de souligner, au point où nous en sommes, le rapport étroit qui relie le savoir sur les vérités fondamentales et l'attitude que l'on adopte dans un moment historique concret. La nécessité de se perfectionner au niveau intellectuel doit être complétée, autant que possible, d'une certaine réalisation ou mise en application des dites connaissances dans le domaine pratique. Le signe le plus important de la corruption, selon Hamvas, est précisément l'absence de concordance que l'on observe souvent entre la théorie et la pratique, c'est-à-dire l'absence d'harmonie entre les propos et les actes des individus.

L'éditeur de Béla Hamvas décrivait son auteur comme une personne « génétiquement sensible au christianisme » ; en effet, maintes fois, Hamvas nous invite à nous poser la question : quel rapport existe-t-il entre la Tradition archaïque de l'humanité et le message évangélique ? Son intention était de développer la question dans un ouvrage qui lui serait entièrement dédié, en l'occurrence au second volume de l'œuvre intitulée *Scientia sacra*, dont le premier volume est consacré à la Tradition archaïque de l'ère préchrétienne. Si le manuscrit de ce premier volume fut achevé en 1944, Hamvas n'allait commencer à rédiger les chapitres du second volume que seize ans plus tard, en 1960. Il prévoyait douze chapitres,

dont finalement quatre ont été conçus, car la mort de Hamvas en 1968 a interrompu l'entreprise ambitieuse.

De prime abord, Béla Hamvas ne suit pas exactement le chemin parcouru par exemple par Kierkegaard : ce dernier ne faisait pas de distinction entre la religion et la Tradition archaïque, étant donné qu'à ses yeux, l'homme de l'Évangile ne recouvrait pas le chrétien d'Europe. D'autre part, Kierkegaard parlait bien du scandale du christianisme, ainsi que de la perte de la religion originelle et primitive. Hamvas, quant à lui, a souligné le caractère disharmonique de la religion qui ne permet à l'individu qu'une existence dans la « tourbe », c'est-à-dire le désarroi plongé dans le temps. Outre son lien direct avec la tourbe, la religion propose le salut seulement comme un remède aux souffrances d'ici-bas, tandis que la Tradition, ayant précédé le désarroi du temps historique, doit aussi remplacer à l'avenir le trouble, la tourbe. Toutefois, au lieu d'opérer avec la notion de salut, la Tradition archaïque cherche à rétablir l'état primordial, le statut absolu, créant ainsi les circonstances nécessaires de la résolution. Or, selon Hamvas, les origines de toute religion remontent à la Tradition archaïque. Il faut en même temps préciser que les religions sont chacune un reflet particulier de cette Tradition : un reflet contrarié, enchevêtré par le temps historique. Le caractère le plus fâcheux des religions, pour Hamvas, c'est finalement que loin d'être un savoir sur les vérités issues de l'état primordial, elles sont plutôt des réponses possibles aux difficultés que l'homme connaît dans sa vie terrestre.

L'unique Tradition, indépendante du temps historique, a connu bien des variantes à travers les âges et les régions de la civilisation humaine. Il suffit de penser aux Védas, au Tao, à la Cabale, ou encore, par exemple, aux traditions soufi et orphique. Mais le christianisme – explique Hamvas – est identique à la forme originelle de l'enseignement du Christ. Le christianisme est ainsi le message évangélique proprement dit. Il est désigné par Hamvas à la fois comme Tradition archaïque et statut absolu. Nous venons de dire avec le penseur hongrois que l'origine de toute religion remontait à l'unique Tradition. Il existe cependant un facteur qui – à l'exception du seul christianisme – corrompt ces religions. Nous songeons notamment à leur caractère ésotérique : elles sont entièrement et nécessairement victimes des cycles de tout ce qui est venu au monde, c'est-à-dire a connu la naissance et l'anéantissement, ainsi que toutes les modifications qui interviennent entre l'apparition et la disparition ici-bas. Le Tao, les Védas, la Cabale et le Talmud se basent communément sur l'incompatibilité entre la divinité, nécessairement parfaite, et l'homme, que la corruption destine à l'échec. Il ne peut donc plus être question de les réunir, ni sur terre ni dans l'au-delà. Dans sa réalité historique, le christianisme est seul à considérer que *tout* garde ses propres traits particuliers au sein du grand ensemble, dans l'union universel. Le pronom « tout » renvoie ici aux races, aux peuples, aux différentes civilisations : tous ces éléments, toutes ces réalités disposent donc, dans la conception

chrétienne, d'une place particulière et de traits particuliers au sein de leur ensemble, dans leur coloris. Le christianisme ne considère pas l'humanité dans ses fragments où chaque unité correspond à un individu autonome. Au contraire, avec Jésus, une nouvelle valeur et un nouveau sens de l'existence sont confiés à chacun et à chacune : il s'agit de la notion de l'accomplissement – Hamvas, quant à lui, se sert du mot « réalisation » – qui correspond au message évangélique proprement dit. Sous cet aspect, le concept de l'état d'éveil et de vigilance, auquel Hamvas ne cesse de se référer à la suite de Kierkegaard, se complète d'un nouveau sens, celui de la fidélité chrétienne : être fidèle au moment concret suppose de la part de tout le monde une attitude bien complexe. C'est une tâche singulière, une mission et une responsabilité particulières qui ne peuvent se réaliser que par le biais de l'amour évangélique. L'Évangile – explique Hamvas – nous laisse pénétrer aux racines les plus profondes de l'existence. Tout en laissant intactes les vérités et les valeurs des autres composants de la Tradition, l'Évangile nous fait découvrir le point où culminent toutes les vérités de la Tradition archaïque. L'Évangile nécessite la réalisation d'une vie essentiellement basée sur l'amour fraternel qui n'est rien d'autre que l'état primordial, le statut absolu, la rédemption elle-même. De ce point de vue, Béla Hamvas considère le christianisme non pas comme une religion ou une philosophie, mais comme l'enseignement sur l'attitude et sur le comportement que l'on fait sien si l'on veut mener une existence « normale ». Le christianisme est – selon Hamvas – le seul moyen qui puisse faire obstacle au processus de la corruption de la vie humaine.

Pour conclure, nous allons définir la position de Béla Hamvas par rapport au christianisme : il s'agit d'une conception existentielle et indépendante du temps historique. Après vingt ans de réflexion, Hamvas examine de nouveau les défis des temps modernes en remontant à l'idéal antique. Finalement, il identifie l'idéal évangélique comme étant l'unique existence sans bornes ni contraintes. Il traduit les textes archaïques des différentes cultures et civilisations, il en fait le commentaire. Cependant, le noyau de son œuvre est l'ouvrage sur lequel nous nous sommes penchés, intitulé *Scientia sacra*. Tout ce qui précède la *Scientia sacra* dans l'œuvre spirituelle de Hamvas nous semble conduire vers ce recueil ; de même, ce livre a été une source d'inspiration pour ses écrits ultérieurs. Le message que Béla Hamvas y transmet à ses lecteurs peut se résumer ainsi : l'intelligence divine étant accessible dans la Tradition archaïque, l'ultime objectif des connaissances est le rétablissement de l'état primordial, c'est-à-dire un rétablissement du rapport direct entre l'homme et Dieu, son Créateur. Autrement dit, l'homme doit rechercher l'harmonie qui est le fondement absolu de sa vie, qui est l'unique principe organisateur acceptable pour l'univers : c'est l'amour fraternel, la charité. Cette union harmonieuse de l'intelligence et de l'amour se découvre dans le christianisme qui est l'accomplissement sur terre de la Tradition. L'enseignement

évangélique est accessible pour l'homme par la grâce divine, indépendante de tout facteur (la religion, la nation, la situation sociale). Le rapport entre le christianisme et la Tradition est étroit : le christianisme est la Tradition par excellence, selon Béla Hamvas, et il n'existe pas d'élément dans la Tradition qui n'aurait pas sa place dans le christianisme. Les racines de l'une remontent exactement là où remontent les racines de l'autre, c'est-à-dire à l'Absolu. L'Absolu, selon Hamvas, n'est cependant pas incarné par Jésus, même si le penseur hongrois partage sans condition l'avis de Saint Paul : c'est « Jésus-Christ, par qui sont toutes choses et par qui nous sommes². » Jésus est pour Hamvas une figure singulière qui réalise un important enseignement métaphysique. Il faut en même temps souligner une vérité incontestable qui concerne la réalisation de la théorie évangélique : cet enseignement ne peut avoir un sens qu'à travers l'amour dont Jésus nous a donné un modèle. Et cet « amour-modèle » peut être l'unique élément organisateur de la vie de chacun car – comme on l'a vu tout à l'heure – il ne faut pas oublier que la vie de tout le monde est jalonnée d'impasses. L'idée d'une nation, par exemple, en serait une, par laquelle on prétend remplacer – explique Béla Hamvas – le caractère universel et originel du monde. Ceci ne signifie pas que Béla Hamvas refuse les valeurs de la vie communautaire. Au contraire : sans être l'ultime objectif de la vie individuelle, la vie communautaire est selon lui le seul terrain qui puisse garantir le développement et la perfection des individus.

Notes

- 1 «A nemzetiségi államokra épített világ politikai nonszensz [...]» – Hamvas, Béla, *Őt génusz*, In Hamvas, Béla, *A magyar Hüperion II.* Budapest : Medio Kiadó. 2007, p. 75.
- 2 Première épître aux Corinthiens 8,6.

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LE VOYAGE DE GYÖRGY OTTLIK EN EUROPE EN 1942¹ L'AVENIR VU DE VICHY ET DE BERLIN

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Au cours de l'été 1942, le journaliste György Ottlik fit un grand voyage en Europe au cours duquel il rencontra en particulier le maréchal Pétain, à Vichy, et le ministre de Hongrie à Berlin, Döme Sztójay. Ce fut pour lui l'occasion de prendre connaissance des réalités de l'antisémitisme en France et en Allemagne au moment où, en 1942, venaient d'avoir lieu les premières grandes rafles en France et où, en Allemagne, se profilait la mise en application de la solution finale. On peut notamment comparer les opinions d'Ottlik et de Sztójay sur la « question juive ».

Mots-clés : György Ottlik, Döme Sztójay, maréchal Pétain, Pierre Laval, question juive et antisémitisme

Une carrière de diplomate et de publiciste

György Ottlik est né en 1889 dans une famille de la noblesse moyenne hongroise. Après avoir obtenu un diplôme de droit, il entra dans la carrière diplomatique, exerçant successivement ses talents aux légations austro-hongroise puis hongroise de Sofia et Berne (de 1912 à 1929). Ses fonctions de diplomate et de publiciste se chevauchèrent, car dès le milieu des années vingt, il collaborait au *Pester Lloyd* et au *Budapesti Hírlap* (deux quotidiens gouvernementaux, dont le premier était de langue allemande). D'autre part, il resta, jusqu'en 1934, délégué suppléant de la Hongrie à la Société des Nations, dont il dirigeait en outre la publication de l'annuaire. Après sa démission des affaires étrangères, il dirigea plusieurs organes de presse hongrois : la *Nouvelle revue de Hongrie* (1932-1939), le *Budapesti Hírlap* (1934-1935), le *Hungarian Quarterly* (1935-1939) et le *Pester Lloyd* (1937-1944). Enfin, il fut admis à la Chambre haute en mars 1940.

Malgré ses accès de colère contre les bureaucrates, notamment ceux du Ministère des affaires étrangères (plus loin : le *Külügyminisztérium*), Ottlik demeura toujours un patriote loyal à son gouvernement et surtout à la ligne fixée par ce dernier : la révision des frontières établies par le traité de paix de 1920. Jusqu'à l'inflexion fatale des années quarante, il s'efforça de montrer une égale disposition envers toutes les puissances européennes, à la recherche de tout appui extérieur capable de soutenir la Hongrie dans la réalisation de ses objectifs. (Compte tenu de la situation géopolitique, cette approche ouverte des relations internationales

était jugée bien trop occidentaliste par bon nombre de ses compatriotes, au point que certains doutaient même de sa loyauté. Il en souffrait.) En mars 1939, il quitta la direction de la *Nouvelle revue de Hongrie* et du *Hungarian Quarterly*, ces deux revues sœurs fondées par le cercle du comte Bethlen soutenu par l'aristocratie et le grand capital juif hongrois, en coopération avec le *Külügyminisztérium*. La situation des deux revues allait devenir de plus en plus inconfortable, au fur et à mesure que les hostilités allaient s'étendre et le piège sur la Hongrie se refermer : septembre 1939 (Hongrie neutre, France et Angleterre en guerre contre l'Allemagne), juin 1940 (Hongrie neutre, France neutre, Angleterre en guerre contre l'Allemagne), juin 1941 (Hongrie en guerre contre l'URSS, URSS alliée à l'Angleterre). Quant à Ottlik, prenant acte de l'échec de sa stratégie d'équilibre et de la faillite de la paix, mais conservant plus que jamais de toutes ses années de lutte son attachement à la grande Hongrie, il se replia sur le *Pester Lloyd* dont l'objectif était double (et non dénué de contradictions), d'une part, contribuer à maintenir la communauté allemande de Hongrie (les *Volksgrup*) dans la droite ligne du patriotisme hongrois, d'autre part s'efforcer de sensibiliser le lectorat d'Allemagne aux affaires de Hongrie.

Le grand voyage européen en 1942

En août 1942, György Ottlik entreprit un grand voyage à travers l'Europe au terme duquel il allait remettre au *Külügyminisztérium* un rapport de seize pages dactylographiées daté du 10 octobre 1942. C'est ce document dont nous allons ici extraire les principaux éléments.

On y lit notamment qu'Ottlik fut accueilli dans une bonne ambiance en Italie, où les fruits et légumes étaient abondants. On y apprend également que les Suisses croyaient en la défaite de l'Allemagne, mais craignaient aussi le chaos en Europe et surtout les bombardements anglais en représailles aux fournitures de guerre livrées à l'Allemagne.² Voyons plutôt ce qui concerne la France.

À Vichy

Les commentaires de György Ottlik sur sa visite en France (à Vichy) couvrent plusieurs pages. En voici la traduction en français, successivement de son entretien avec le maréchal Pétain, puis avec Pierre Laval, redevenu chef du gouvernement en avril 1942.

Pétain m'a reçu le mardi 8 septembre à cinq heures de l'après-midi, dans une modeste chambre d'hôtel, avec courtoisie, mais sans chaleur. En quelques phrases simples, je lui exprimai ma gratitude pour l'honneur

d'être admis en sa présence, tout en affirmant que nous autres, Hongrois, nous pouvions particulièrement ressentir les peines de la France troncquée et les difficultés auxquelles était confronté le maréchal, puisque la situation de la France était fort similaire à celle dans laquelle notre régent avait trouvé la Hongrie et sur laquelle il avait dû commencer son œuvre de reconstruction. Peut-être plus délicat encore – ajoutais-je – est le défi du maréchal (j'allais dire la même chose à Laval), parce qu'on ne savait pas encore en France quel serait le point de départ et d'où il faudrait commencer le travail. C'est tout à fait exact – répondit le maréchal – nous ignorons encore ce que sera la nouvelle Europe, il est donc impossible de savoir comment nous pourrions nous y intégrer. « Nous sommes face à un tunnel, et nous n'avons aucune idée de ce qui nous attend dans ce tunnel, ni non plus du paysage qui nous accueillera à la sortie, lorsque nous arriverons enfin à en sortir. Moi, j'attends (en français dans le texte). Dans l'intervalle, je m'efforce d'éduquer le peuple français – car mon rôle est avant tout celui d'un éducateur – de l'éduquer dans un esprit qui donnera la force et l'efficacité capables de convaincre les autres pays européens. C'est cela que je souhaiterais insuffler dans le caractère français. D'ailleurs, ces principes figurent dans mon livre, dont je vais vous donner un exemplaire. » Tout ce qui dans la conversation relève des principes du gouvernement ne mérite pas d'être rapporté ici. Le maréchal ne toucha en réalité que deux questions concrètes : la première était la situation militaire et les conséquences de la victoire, la seconde était la question juive. Avec des yeux brillants, il affirma que si les flottes aériennes allemandes arrivaient à se libérer du front russe, elles feraient table rase de l'Angleterre. (En français dans le texte). Je lui répondis avec une question, que j'ai aussi posée à tous mes interlocuteurs : une victoire des forces anglo-américaines est-elle possible, sur la seule base des attaques aériennes ? Il me répondit à son tour que la victoire était impossible sans infanterie, or les Anglo-saxons étaient selon lui incapables de réunir les armées nécessaires, et moins encore de les faire débarquer.

Ensuite, c'est le maréchal qui de lui-même engagea la conversation sur la question de la déportation des juifs étrangers – exactement comme lorsque j'ai rencontré Laval ou Joseph-Barthélémy, le ministre de la Justice – ce qui prouve combien ce problème les occupe, les touche et même les blesse profondément, et finalement qu'il constitue le facteur déterminant de l'atmosphère politique actuelle en France. Le maréchal me confia que depuis des années, les réfugiés juifs avaient afflué en France et finalement envahi tout le pays. Face aux difficultés du ravitaillement, il ne voulait pas prendre au nom de son pays la responsabilité – disait-il – de charger la France de l'entretien de ces 30 à 40 000 personnes.³ C'est pourquoi on avait d'abord interné les juifs étrangers, et qu'on devait désormais les déporter. « Je n'agis que dans l'intérêt de la France, et voici que même le clergé de France se tourne contre moi ! » ajouta-t-il avec humeur. « Et ces pays qui aujourd'hui condamnent le fait que nous déportions les juifs apatrides (*sic*) en Allemagne, rappelons-nous qu'ils ont eux-mêmes refusé de leur accorder le refuge, quand nous le leur avons demandé. À savoir les Etats-Unis, le Portugal, les Etats

d'Amérique du sud. Ils proclament tous l'humanisme, mais en laissent la charge sur la France. »

Depuis le début de notre conversation, mon questionnaire était posé sur la table de travail, bien en vue devant le maréchal. Je lui demandai : ne souhaitez-vous pas répondre ? À cela, il répondit : « Et que pourrais-je répondre ? Sur ce que sera la nouvelle Europe, personne n'en a la moindre idée. Les relations culturelles franco-hongroises, je m'occuperais volontiers, mais nos deux pays sont bien lointains, de plus, ils sont séparés par trois frontières. Je ne vois donc pas la possibilité d'une coopération fructueuse. Allons, ne m'obligez pas à répondre : quoi que je dise, on l'interprétera mal et cela portera préjudice à mon pays et à moi-même, et à en même temps à vous autres, aussi, les Hongrois. » Comme je n'étais pas loin de penser la même chose, je renonçai promptement à mes questions en faisant connaître au maréchal mon admiration pour sa sagesse. Ce qui, comme j'allais bientôt pouvoir le constater, me fit gagner le cœur du vieil homme. En vain, en effet, on lui signifia par deux fois la présence dans l'antichambre d'un autre visiteur, il ne se résignait pas à me donner congé, mais nous étions alors revenus à des considérations plus générales sur les principes du gouvernement.

Pétain ne donne en rien l'impression d'être un vieillard. Au contraire, au moral comme au physique, on lui donnerait volontiers vingt ans de moins. Le seul indice qui peut-être signale une certaine fatigue est le fait qu'il s'intéresse au futur lointain et reste peu sensible, en revanche, à la puissance irrésistible des problèmes de la politique quotidienne. En définitive, il est un interlocuteur plutôt rassurant, de lui émane une sorte de "force tranquille" (traduction proposée pour : « nagy és böles nyugalom erejével hat »).

Ce ne fut pas le cas de mon expérience chez Laval.⁴ Cet avocat auvergnat corrompu, cynique et rusé capable de toutes les roueries parlementaires, prend désormais la pose d'un patriote mélancolique faisant le don de sa personne. Mais est-ce bien ainsi, est-il vraiment convaincu d'accomplir un sacrifice pour sa patrie ? On est bien en peine de s'en convaincre soi-même. D'une part, la pureté de ses motivations n'est point garantie, d'autre part, il n'est pas avéré que la France se trouverait dans une posture encore plus mauvaise si personne n'avait pris sur lui la tâche dont Laval s'est de lui-même chargé. Il est l'homme de la tactique et du compromis. Mais il considère que la faillite de la France provient du système parlementaire et des cliques de politiciens dont ce dernier a favorisé l'éclosion. Il m'a ainsi confié, sous le sceau de la confidentialité (depuis, il a rendu tout cela public), son projet de nouvelle constitution dans laquelle les conseils municipaux et départementaux, ainsi que l'assemblée constituée des délégués des conseils locaux, joueraient un rôle consultatif auprès du pouvoir exécutif jouissant lui-même du pouvoir absolu.⁵

Au cours de la conversation, Laval me remercia d'abord de l'attitude du *Pester Lloyd* à l'égard de son pays. Je répondis que cela était naturel, compte tenu de nos relations séculaires avec la civilisation latine et de l'esprit chevaleresque des Hongrois. « C'est bien hongrois, ce que vous dites là » (en français dans le texte) répondit Laval. Ensuite, il s'exprima

sur Albert Apponyi⁶ avec beaucoup d'admiration et de respect, montra beaucoup d'égards et de l'intérêt pour Tibor Eckhardt,⁷ qu'il qualifia de droit et brillant, et dit enfin quelques mots sur Kálmán Kánya,⁸ « ce diplomate accompli de la vieille école ». En ce qui concerne la Hongrie, il montra quelque intérêt pour la question magyaro-roumaine, soulignant qu'elle causait beaucoup de difficultés à la presse française, car si un des deux pays venait à obtenir un peu plus d'espace que l'autre dans un journal, le représentant de l'autre pays ne tardait pas à formuler des protestations, et vice versa. « Quant à moi – ajouta-t-il – afin de faire cesser ces troubles, j'ai simplement ordonné à la presse d'éviter à l'avenir le mot Transylvanie ». (Il ne m'a pas semblé nécessaire de donner mon avis sur la question, car je venais d'apprendre de notre ministre à Vichy qu'il avait lui-même déjà fait tenir au chef du gouvernement une réponse officielle.) En outre, Laval affirma qu'il ne voyait aucun intérêt pour que la France prît partie sur la question transylvaine, parce qu'il souhaitait conserver de bonnes relations avec les deux pays, ajoutant tout de même que les Roumains étaient en meilleure posture, car ils avaient beaucoup plus de contacts en France, du fait qu'ils y avaient pour la plupart fait leurs études.

Je félicitai Laval pour ses succès diplomatiques, pour être notamment parvenu à normaliser ses relations avec les Etats-Unis⁹ sans préjudice pour la dignité du pays ou pour l'intégrité du territoire de l'empire, j'exprimais par contre mon affliction pour le bombardement de Rouen. Laval répondit que les relations avec les Etats-Unis devenaient de jour en jour plus difficiles, dont il ne comprenait pas la politique, puisque leur participation au bombardement des villes françaises n'allait avoir pour autre résultat que de les faire haïr autant que les Anglais, à l'égard desquels la population française était de plus en plus hostile.¹⁰ D'une manière générale, il paraissait très déprimé, mélancolique, soulignant, d'une part, que les bombardements et la nouvelle attaque sur Madagascar aggravaient la situation, d'autre part, qu'on exigeait de lui en même temps la déportation des juifs, la livraison de 150 000 ouvriers qualifiés français et la remise des bateaux mouillant dans les ports du sud de la France ayant naguère battu pavillon des petits pays anciennement alliés (grecs, norvégiens, hollandais, etc.). Je demandai si la question des travailleurs et des prisonniers de guerre français était en voie d'amélioration. Il me répondit que non, sans ambages, en ajoutant : « je vais devoir m'exécuter » (en français dans le texte). Il pensait sans doute au décret publié une semaine plus tard organisant le Service du Travail Obligatoire.¹¹ Sur ce point, Laval s'est heurté à une forte opposition, tant au sein même du cabinet que dans l'administration, où l'on souhaitait qu'il refusât le projet en bloc ou au moins que l'appareil d'Etat français ne soit pas mêlé à son organisation. Laval, comme on me l'a expliqué, n'était pas favorable à cette dernière solution, d'une part, car cela aurait mis en danger l'unité de l'administration française et l'emprise de cette dernière sur la population, d'autre part, parce que le contingent entier des 150 000 ouvriers aurait dès lors été prélevé dans les territoires occupés, où le chômage était moins important qu'au sud. Sur le plan politique, on peut ajouter l'hypothèse que Laval est devenu l'otage de sa propre

politique : il ne peut plus rien refuser, de peur d'avoir à avouer la faillite de toute ses conceptions. À propos de la question juive, il exprima des idées similaires à celles du maréchal.

Sur le plan des opérations militaires, son opinion était que si les Allemands parvenaient à prendre Stalingrad « où se déroulent des luttes véritablement dantesques » (en français dans le texte), alors, par le Caucase, ils iront jusqu'à l'Océan indien et pourront serrer la main des Japonais. Dès lors, ils auront à leur disposition un espace économique en face duquel les Etats-Unis seront impuissants. Et la guerre pourrait durer cent ans que les forces de l'axe ne pourraient être défaites. En ce qui concerne l'avenir de la France, il exprima les idées suivantes : « Mon but est de sauver l'unité et l'intégrité de l'Empire français et d'assurer à la France la place en Europe qui lui revient. Il n'y a pas de paix dans l'Europe sans la France. » (En français dans le texte). En définitive, il n'était pas capable de dire sur sa politique autre chose que des lieux communs. Il affirma toutefois qu'avec les Allemands, il n'est possible de travailler que dans la sincérité entière et brutale. « Je ne mens jamais aux Allemands. » (En français dans le texte). Puis il ajouta : « Le nombre de ceux qui comprennent ma politique va en augmentant dans des proportions intéressantes. »¹² (En français dans le texte) C'est ce que disent sans doute les rapports des préfets.¹³ (Le même type d'information est chez Weizäcker). Du reste, en causant de manière plus confidentielle avec les messieurs des affaires étrangères, l'impression n'est pas la même. Et mon impression personnelle, qui reste superficielle, mais qui est confirmée par celle de beaucoup d'autres, français ou étrangers, est que le peuple français ne s'intéresse à rien d'autre qu'au ravitaillement, à sa propre survie, « il se fout de la France » (en français dans le texte), ce qui sur le plan purement biologique est le signe d'un instinct bien réglé, mais ne constitue pas les bases d'un mouvement politique. D'autre part, d'après les révélations des mêmes honorables agents des affaires étrangères, « le communisme couve sous la surface et nous allons devoir passer par un incident Béla Kun. » (En français dans le texte). Il semble en effet que ce soit la seule force politique effective.

Tout compte fait, le régime repose essentiellement sur l'autorité du maréchal Pétain. Si ce dernier venait à mourir, je ne donne pas beaucoup de temps à la France de Vichy. Darlan est beaucoup trop maladroit et impopulaire, Laval est un peu moins exécré qu'auparavant, mais à lui seul, il n'a pas l'autorité nécessaire. Les autres – par exemple Doriot – parviendraient même à provoquer une révolution chez les foules pourtant passives. En conclusion, mon analyse, du point de vue hongrois, est qu'il nous faut maintenir de bonnes relations, nous montrer amicaux, compenser autant que possible l'influence roumaine, mais, selon moi, la France de Vichy ne mérite pas un grand investissement politique.

Le constat dressé par l'observateur hongrois et surtout sa conclusion rendent un écho mortifiant aux paroles de Pétain sur l'espoir d'insuffler à la France l'esprit capable de donner la « force de convaincre les autres nations européennes ». De fait, en 1942, Vichy et son étrange gouvernement étaient loin de pouvoir assu-

rer à la France « la place qui lui revenait en Europe » (pour reprendre, cette fois-ci, l'expression de Laval). D'autre part, les équivoques d'Ottlik sur la popularité de Pierre Laval et ses questionnements sur les forces réelles dont disposaient les Anglo-Saxons reflètent bien les préoccupations qui tourmentaient alors les Hongrois, c'est-à-dire la nature, le réalisme et les moyens de leurs propres objectifs géostratégiques, d'une part, et, d'autre part, la définition de limites morales et politiques à l'action, réflexions inséparables de la résolution de la « question juive ». D'ailleurs, la modération du commentaire d'Ottlik sur les réflexions de Pétain à ce sujet ne signalait pas un désintéret de sa part, comme nous allons pouvoir le constater un peu plus loin, avec la partie du rapport consacrée à sa visite en Allemagne, qualifiée de « très amicale », mais aussi très délicate. Pour l'heure, encore quelques mots sur les Anglo-Saxons.

Ottlik racontait en particulier comment il avait parlé à deux Américains séjournant à Vichy, dont le premier, un vieil ami, était d'avis que les Etats-Unis, contrairement à l'Angleterre, ne croyait pas à une victoire de l'aviation seule et préparaient par conséquent une opération de débarquement réalisable dans un horizon d'un an ou un an et demi. « En ce qui concernait la Hongrie – ajoutait Ottlik à propos de son ami américain – il ne voyait qu'une seule faute impardonnable, celle d'avoir attaqué la Yougoslavie, et sur ce point il n'était disposé à écouter aucune explication. »¹⁴ L'américain considérait finalement que l'avenir de la Hongrie dépendrait de ses capacités à maintenir sa position actuelle jusqu'à l'approche des soldats américains. En outre, Ottlik avait rencontré le correspondant de l'agence *United Press*, qui lui avait parlé d'un plan pour l'après-guerre dont le principe serait de séparer l'Autriche et la Bavière de l'Allemagne, afin de former ensuite un bloc avec la Pologne et la Tchécoslovaquie. Comme il invitait la Hongrie à se joindre à ce nouvel ensemble, Ottlik s'était contenté d'exprimer des doutes sur la possibilité de séparer les Allemands les uns des autres.

À Berlin

Dès son premier jour à Berlin, Ottlik passa trois heures dans le bureau du ministre de Hongrie, Döme Sztójay. Ce dernier lui fit quelques remarques d'ordre politique et militaire (il était notamment optimiste sur la victoire de l'Allemagne), mais consacra la majorité de son temps à enseigner à Ottlik la politique de l'Allemagne sur la question juive, expliquant en particulier les raisons du choix de la solution qualifiée de « radicale ».¹⁵ D'une part, disait Sztójay, les juifs sont considérés comme des ennemis irréductibles et dangereux (pour les Allemands, « c'est eux ou nous », « avec les Américains et les Anglais, la paix est possible, avec les juifs, c'est impossible »). D'autre part, toujours selon l'analyse de Sztójay, les juifs plaçaient leur « talent » et leurs « réseaux » au service de la résistance contre l'ordre

allemand, à ce titre, ils devaient être chassés de l'Europe. Dès lors, pour les Allemands, « celui qui offre un refuge amical ou aide les juifs ne peut être considéré autrement que comme un ennemi. » D'après le diplomate, cette doctrine était en cours d'application en France. Et devait prochainement être étendue à la Hongrie, car, à l'heure actuelle, les relations germano-hongroises étaient altérées par deux questions pendantes. La première, celle du mauvais traitement réservé à la Volksgruppe allemande de Hongrie, était en voie d'amélioration. La seconde, celle de l'influence juive en Hongrie restait, au contraire, d'une entière actualité. Tant que rien ne serait fait,¹⁶ affirmait Sztójay, les Allemands ne pourraient accorder leur confiance aux Hongrois. Le ministre suggérait lui-même de prendre les devants, avec la déportation de 300 000 juifs de Hongrie vers les territoires russes occupés (nombre qu'il réduisit, au cours de la conversation, à 100 000).

Ottlik ayant fait remarquer qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'une déportation, mais d'une véritable mise à mort,¹⁷ Döme Sztójay acquiesça, sans faire de mystère. Comme Ottlik lui faisait aussi remarquer que les Hongrois chrétiens, particulièrement ceux d'ethnie magyare, étaient bien incapables de prendre les places occupées par les juifs, Sztójay éluda le problème en répliquant que si le gouvernement hongrois ne se chargeait pas de cette tâche, les Allemands s'en chargeraient eux-mêmes après la guerre.

Tout de même, Ottlik récusait cette mesure « brutale » prise à l'encontre de « citoyens hongrois » (*souligné dans le texte*) qui provoquerait une « grave crise » dans le pays. Du reste, il considérait comme une nécessité de restituer le capital et le pouvoir économique et moral aux gentils, mais, selon lui, cela devait être accompli au cours d'une génération (c'est-à-dire en 30 ans).¹⁸ Afin de donner du poids à son affirmation, il révéla au ministre qu'il avait lui-même « dans les limites du bon sens et de ses compétences, tout fait pour remplacer ses employés juifs par de vrais Hongrois », mais qu'il n'était pas pour autant disposé à « mettre en danger le niveau intellectuel, et donc l'avenir du *Pester Lloyd* » puisque cela signifierait « la perte d'une valeur et d'une arme hongroise. »¹⁹ « Toute valeur, concluait-il, doit être remplacée par une autre valeur, à moins de courir à la révolution » (entre le fanatisme offensif de Sztójay et la défense craintive d'Ottlik, notons l'étroite marge de manœuvre...).

Voilà un étrange face à face entre les paroles d'un « antisémite de salon » (qu'on pourrait rapprocher de l'antijudaïsme chrétien) et celles d'un « antisémite de boulevard », qui ont valeur de sombre prophétie, puisque Döme Sztójay, en devenant chef du gouvernement après l'invasion du pays par les troupes allemandes, en mars 1944, allait rompre avec la politique en vigueur essentiellement consacrée à la discrimination économique et sociale des juifs. Sztójay ordonna en effet dès sa prise de pouvoir la mise en place de la déportation de masse (500 000 juifs résidant en province déportés en camps d'extermination entre mars et juin 1944, dont l'immense majorité n'est pas revenue). On remarquera, à la lumière

de ce document datant de 1942, que les convictions de Sztójay semblent avoir été longuement mûries et même s'être amplifiées entre 1942 et 1944. Quant à György Ottlik, qui a consacré plus d'une page de son rapport (sur seize) à décrire ses propres conceptions sur la question – il est vrai, telles qu'il les exposait au cours d'un entretien, mais, en général, l'objectif d'un rapport de voyage n'est pas d'exposer ses propres idées – on pourra lui renvoyer le commentaire qu'il faisait à l'encontre de Pétain et Laval : il semblait être lui-même très préoccupé par la « question juive » et ses « solutions ».

Après une dernière visite chez le baron Weizsäcker, secrétaire général de la *Wilhelmstrasse*, György Ottlik conclut ainsi son voyage :

« Toute choses considérées, la Hongrie se trouve dans une situation extrêmement délicate. Ce serait une grave erreur, sous prétexte de l'affaiblissement des Allemands ou en comptant sur leur prochaine défaite, de les provoquer ou de s'en éloigner, d'éveiller chez eux la suspicion. Mais ce serait une erreur non moins fatale de perdre notre dignité en les servant aveuglément. La situation économique de la Hongrie – les Allemands eux-mêmes le reconnaissent – est en voie d'amélioration. Son potentiel militaire va devenir un facteur d'une grande importance et nous pourrions alors compter sur plus d'égards. Si la situation évolue de la façon que j'ai esquissée, nous devons marcher sur le fil du rasoir pendant une ou deux années, voire plus, qui sait ? Nous devons témoigner d'une intelligence et d'une sagesse surhumaines si nous voulons, en tant que nation aussi bien qu'en tant qu'État, survivre à cette guerre. »

Il paraît que la Hongrie a survécu à la guerre. Aujourd'hui, la guerre est terminée, et avec elle son cortège d'horreurs, et la persécution des juifs. Le communisme est aussi passé, avec son propre cortège d'horreurs. Mais il est toujours, de plus en plus, question de la « situation économique de la Hongrie ». « En voie d'amélioration », peut-être. « Sur le fil du rasoir », toujours. Et toujours aussi le même dilemme pour les Hongrois entre l'efficacité (supposée) et la dignité (invoquée). Et toujours, aussi, l'Allemagne et la France, chacune à sa place. György Ottlik, quant à lui, émigra en 1945 à Paris où il (sur)vécut, paraît-il, jusqu'en 1966.

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Notes

- 1 Rapport de György Ottlik sur son voyage en Italie, Suisse, France et Allemagne, 18 août au 28 sept. 1942. MOL (Archives nationales hongroises). K64. 1942-41-437. *Külgyminisztérium, politikai osztály rezervált iratai, 1942, különböző* [Documents réservés du service politique du ministère des Affaires étrangères, 1942, divers].
- 2 Du reste, ces fournitures étaient limitées (estimée à 0,5% de la production allemande), mais l'exportation de machines outils était effectivement destinée à la production d'armes. Yves Durand, *Histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, Editions Complexe, p. 348. (En ligne : http://books.google.fr/books?id=OTdUwGc_BUGC&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gs_bse_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false. Consulté le 6 février 2013.) Yves Durand note aussi une anecdote qui avait cours en Suisse après la guerre : « Les Suisses ont travaillé six jours pour les Allemands et ont prié le septième jour pour la victoire des Alliés. »
- 3 Les chiffres de la déportation ont longtemps été sujet de controverse. Le bilan donné par Serge Klarsfeld au terme de longues recherches est le suivant. En France en 1939 vivaient environ 330 000 juifs dont 200 000 de nationalité française. Le nombre de victimes s'élève à 80 000 (24%), dont 24 500 français et 56 500 étrangers. Consulté sur internet, le 27 février 2016. <http://www.akadem.org/medias/documents/--bilan-france-6.pdf> (Akadem est une réalisation du Fonds Social Juif unifié avec le soutien de la Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah).
- 4 L'avis d'Ottlik, exprimé avec toute la morgue d'un hobereau hongrois, était celui de ses contemporains français et aussi, d'ailleurs, celui qui prévaut depuis dans l'historiographie. Pour Pierre Pucheu, secrétaire d'Etat à l'intérieur jusqu'en avril 1942, Laval « se croyait au fond capable de régler [...] n'importe quel problème, pourvu qu'il pût toucher à temps l'interlocuteur idoine, avec lequel il fallait causer. » (cité dans Cointet, Jean-Paul. 2003. *Histoire de Vichy*, Perrin-Tempus, p. 230) Selon l'historien Robert Paxton, Laval fut « un homme sans parti, pragmatique, flirtant avec la gauche et avec la droite, faisant tout reposer sur des contacts personnels ». Paxton, Robert. 1997. *La France de Vichy*, Seuil-Poche, p. 70.
- 5 Le 17 novembre 1942, le chef de l'Etat français décréta l'acte constitutionnel n°12 dont l'article unique disait : « Hors les lois constitutionnelles, le chef du gouvernement pourra, sous sa seule signature, promulguer les lois ainsi que les décrets. » Laval semble donc avoir obtenu gain de

- cause, du moins en ce qui concernait l'extension de son propre pouvoir. Non sans quelques confusions, d'ailleurs, car, quelques jours plus tard, l'acte constitutionnel n° 12 bis du 26 novembre 1942 décrétait l'article unique suivant : « L'article unique de l'acte constitutionnel n° 12 du 17 novembre 1942 est complété par la disposition suivante "Le chef du gouvernement pourra exercer le pouvoir législatif en conseil de cabinet dans les conditions prévues par l'article premier (§ 2) de l'acte constitutionnel n° 2" ». Or l'acte constitutionnel en question, en date du 11 juillet 1940, stipulait que le chef de l'Etat « exerce le pouvoir législatif, en conseil des ministres : 1° jusqu'à la formation de nouvelles assemblées ; 2° après cette formation, en cas de tension extérieure ou de crise intérieure grave, sur sa seule décision et dans la même forme. » Les actes constitutionnels de novembre 1942 ne sont en rien une nouvelle constitution à proprement parler, mais plutôt l'extension institutionnelle (du chef de l'Etat au chef du gouvernement) et temporelle d'une situation présentée à l'origine comme exceptionnelle. D'ailleurs, le seul projet constitutionnel complet du régime de Vichy fut signé par le maréchal Pétain en juillet 1944, un peu tard et bien entendu jamais appliqué. Ce dernier ne prévoyait pas d'attribuer le pouvoir législatif au chef de l'Etat ni au chef du gouvernement, en revanche, il attribuait au président de la république (dénomination du chef de l'Etat) des droits très étendus de dissolution des chambres. (Toutes les références constitutionnelles sont disponibles sur <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/co1940.htm#12>. Consulté le 7 février 2013.)
- 6 Albert Apponyi (1846-1933) : homme politique issu d'une ancienne famille hongroise, il occupa au cours de sa longue carrière des positions éminentes au parlement et au gouvernement hongrois. Il était surtout connu à l'étranger, notamment en France, pour avoir dirigé la délégation hongroise à Paris, en 1920, lors des négociations préliminaires du traité de Trianon, et pour sa contribution dans les années vingt aux débats de la Société des Nations, notamment sur les questions des minorités et du désarmement.
 - 7 Tibor Eckhardt (1888-1972) : président du Parti des petits propriétaires de 1932 à 1940. Malgré le début de sa carrière dans les années vingt, marqué par l'extrémisme raciste, il évolua vers la critique de l'alliance allemande et fut chargé d'une mission aux Etats-Unis en 1940. Dès lors, il resta en Amérique, où il allait être après la guerre l'un des chefs de l'émigration anticommuniste.
 - 8 Kálmán Kánya (1869-1945) : ministre des Affaires étrangères de Hongrie entre 1933 et 1938, il concrétisa le rapprochement avec l'Allemagne en signant le Pacte tripartite ; il tenait en même temps à conserver de bonnes relations non seulement avec l'Italie, mais aussi avec les forces alliées. Il représente la *realpolitik* hongroise, c'est d'ailleurs lui qui dirigea les négociations avec la Tchécoslovaquie pour l'application du premier arbitrage de Vienne. Dans les années quarante, il allait pencher vers le rapprochement avec les Anglo-Saxons.
 - 9 La « normalisation » évoquée par Ottlik n'était qu'un trompe-l'œil ou une flatterie. L'amiral Leahy, ambassadeur des Etats Unis, avait quitté la France après la nomination de Laval, pour être remplacé par un chargé d'affaires par intérim, S. Pinkney Tuck. Le 27 mars 1942, Roosevelt avait adressé un message personnel au maréchal Pétain : « La nomination de M. Laval à un poste important dans le gouvernement de Vichy mettrait l'Amérique dans l'impossibilité de persister dans son attitude actuelle de bienveillance à l'égard de la France. » (Cointet, Jean-Paul, opus cité, pp. 226-227.)
 - 10 Entre août et septembre 1942, les préfets attirèrent au contraire l'attention du gouvernement sur l'hostilité de la population à l'égard du tournant collaborationniste. Un exemple : « le discours de Laval a heurté le sentiment anglophile de 70% de la population ». (Préfet du Var, 1^{er} août 1942. Cité dans Cointet, Jean-Paul, opus cité, p. 247.
 - 11 Entre juin et août 1942, la France avait fourni environ 60 000 travailleurs à l'Allemagne. Par la loi du 4 septembre sur le Service du Travail Obligatoire, le gouvernement français jeta les fondements de ce que l'on a appelé la « relève », c'est-à-dire la livraison à l'Allemagne de 150 000 ouvriers qualifiés français en échange du retour de 50 000 prisonniers cultivateurs. Jean-Paul Cointet souligne les résistances opposées à Laval, au plus haut niveau de l'Etat, notamment la

- stupéfaction face au fait que Laval eût même devancé la formulation officielle des exigences allemandes. (Cointet, Jean-Paul, pp. 248–249.)
- 12 Laval n’y croyait pas lui-même. Plusieurs auteurs ont rapporté son échange de paroles avec le général Weygand, qui lui reprochait de conduire une politique à laquelle s’opposaient 95% des Français. Laval corrigea : plutôt 98% ; mais il ajouta qu’il ferait le bonheur des Français contre eux.
 - 13 Certainement pas ! Cf. la note ci-dessus, sur le rapport du préfet du Var en août 1942. Pour une étude plus générale : Laborie, Pierre. 2001. *L’opinion française sous Vichy*, Point-Histoire, pp. 282–283 (chapitre « Le choc de l’été 1942 »).
 - 14 En dépit d’un traité d’amitié perpétuel signé avec la Yougoslavie le 12 décembre 1940, le conseil des ministres de Hongrie autorisa, le 28 mars 1941, les troupes allemandes à traverser le territoire hongrois pour attaquer la Yougoslavie, dont le nouveau gouvernement affichait une position favorable aux alliés. En avril, les soldats hongrois prirent possession des régions yougoslaves majoritairement peuplées de Hongrois (Bácska, Bánát).
 - 15 Rappel : la conférence de Wannsee, qui décida de la mise en place de la « solution finale » avait eu lieu en janvier 1942.
 - 16 Il était inexact de dire que la Hongrie n’avait « rien fait » contre « l’influence des juifs ». Certes, les Hongrois refusaient de procéder aux déportations massives et aux exécutions, contrairement à d’autres pays d’Europe occupés ou inféodés à l’Allemagne, mais plusieurs lois discriminatives avaient été votées en Hongrie en 1938, 1940 et 1941–42, fixant des quotas aux ressortissants juifs dans la plupart des activités intellectuelles, industrielles et commerciales, les plus récentes (en 1941 et 1942) ayant même imposé des critères raciaux (et non religieux) ainsi que certaines mesures inspirées du statut de Nuremberg (comme l’interdiction du mariage mixte), de même que l’expropriation de certains biens (en particulier forestiers) et surtout mis en place un service obligatoire sur le front de l’Est, non armée et mal équipé, qui fut fatal à de nombreuses recrues. Malgré tout, en 1942 et même en 1943, la Hongrie restait un refuge pour les juifs en Europe centrale. La situation allait changer en 1944. (Sur les lois juives [antisémites], voir Vértes Róbert [éd.]. 1997. *Magyarországi zsidótörvények és rendeletek 1938-1945 [Lois et décrets juifs en Hongrie 1938-1945]* Budapest : Polgár, p. 392.)
 - 17 Ces paroles d’Ottlik (la déportation signifierait la mise à mort massive) ont attiré l’attention d’Elek Karsai, qui les a citées dans sa vaste compilation de documents officiels sur la politique antisémite en les plaçant en perspective du compte-rendu d’une réunion du cabinet tenue en mai 1944 où le chef du gouvernement (Sztójay) évoquait la nécessité de « démentir les rumeurs » d’exécution massives des juifs déportés. Karsai Elek. 1967. *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez [Compilation de documents sur la persécution des juifs en Hongrie]* Volume III. A Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselői Kiadása, p. 64 n1. J’adresse ici mes remerciements à László Karsai qui m’a fait connaître cet ouvrage.
 - 18 Comparons aux débats sur la 2^e loi juive, l’année précédente à la Chambre haute de Hongrie. Le comte Gyula Károlyi, ancien chef du gouvernement et catholique conservateur, avait présenté plusieurs propositions d’amendements dont l’objectif était de former des catégories intermédiaires ou provisoires. Par exemple, un juif converti pourrait entrer dans le droit commun 30 ans après la date de sa conversion. Gergely Jenő, « A magyarországi katolikus egyház és a fasizmus » [L’Église catholique hongroise et le fascisme], *Századok*, 1987/1, 121^e année, p. 37.
 - 19 Parmi les « valeurs » juives en question, on peut mentionner la correspondante du *Pester Lloyd* en Suisse, Ágnes Szekula, qui fut, à ma connaissance, jusqu’à la démission d’Ottlik en 1944 maintenue au journal malgré ses sautes d’humeurs (Joseph Balogh–Ferenc Honti 11 août 1943. Bibliothèque nationale Széchényi, manuscrits, Fond Balogh 1/1474). Et malgré ses audaces, par exemple quand elle attaqua publiquement le consul d’Allemagne et le ministre de Bulgarie (Szent-Iványi [consul de Hongrie à Genève] – Ullein-Reviczky [chef du bureau de la presse au ministère des Affaires étrangères] 18 septembre 1939. Archives nationales de Hongrie. K66. 1939 415 cs. III.-4 R-V)

LA CRUCIFIXION TRANSPORTÉE. L'EXEMPLE DE L'ART CONTEMPORAIN HONGROIS (1900-1980)

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Comme dans d'autres régions de l'Europe, un nouvel art religieux s'est développé au seuil du XX^e siècle en Hongrie, un art religieux, plus exactement au thème religieux, qui se situe en dehors des commandes et de la surveillance de l'Église. Adoptant les styles de l'époque, expressionnistes, cubistes, surréalistes, ces oeuvres posent la question du rapport entre le sacré et le profane, dans le contexte politique complexe échangeant qui fut celui de la Hongrie pendant cette période.

Mots-clefs : peinture hongroise contemporaine, art religieux, christianisme, crucifixion

Depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle un grand nombre d'artistes ont peint, dessiné, gravé, sculpté des crucifixions en dehors des commandes d'Eglise et de toute forme d'encadrement religieux. Depuis le *Christ jaune* de Gauguin (1889), le *Christ vert* de Maurice Denis (1890), le *Christ à la lande* de Charles Filiger (1894), le *Christ tourmenté par les démons* de James Ensor (1895) ou le *Golgotha* d'Edvard Munch (1900), ces crucifixions ont transporté le principal symbole chrétien loin de son terreau d'origine et l'ont replanté en terre séculière, avec tout ce que cela suppose de changement de style et de sens. Du côté de Budapest, on pourrait citer à titre d'exemple József Rippl-Rónai, le « Nabi hongrois », l'ami de Gauguin et de Maurice Denis. Sa tapisserie de la naissance et de la mort du Christ¹ montre comment il a su intégrer de manière très personnelle les recherches postimpressionnistes tout en réinterprétant l'héritage des Préraphaélites anglais mais aussi de l'art médiéval et populaire magyar. Avec ses aplats de couleurs pures et cette très savante naïveté de la perspective qui met en valeur le crucifié et les saintes femmes sur un mode méditatif et poétique, la crucifixion de Rippl-Rónai se dégage de l'aliénation académique comme de la reproduction sans fin des épigones de Raphaël. S'agit-il pour autant d'une œuvre sécularisée ? Oui, parce qu'elle ne s'inscrit pas dans les codes et canons ecclésiastiques de l'époque ; en 1895, elle était irrecevable dans un lieu de culte.

Mais pourquoi Rippl-Rónai et tant d'autres avec ou après lui ont-ils figuré le Christ crucifié s'ils ne songeaient pas à soutenir la prière, illustrer la prédication

ou orner la liturgie ? La sécularisation de la croix est importante du point de vue artistique, il est peu de peintres qui ne l'ait pratiquée. Mais ses causes ne sont pas toujours simples ni explicites. À qui veut les débrouiller, la Hongrie offre une belle série d'œuvres de premier plan mais encore trop peu connues en France, en dépit d'importantes expositions comme celle qui a été consacrée aux Fauves hongrois à Dijon au printemps de 2009. La période choisie correspond à la grande vague de sécularisation des motifs religieux, mais en s'arrêtant aux années 1980, pour garder du recul. Avec deux grandes guerres, un traité de paix calamiteux et trois régimes politiques très contrastés, la Hongrie fournit tout ce qu'il faut pour vérifier le lien – ou l'absence de lien – entre les tumultes du monde et les dérives iconiques du crucifié.



Rippl-Rónai József, *Krisztus születése és halála*

1. La croix sans l'espérance

a. *Grünewald revisité*

Beaucoup d'artistes contemporains ont été fascinés par les représentations anciennes du corps souffrant ; le retable d'Issenheim de Matthias Grünewald en constitue une sorte d'archétype ou « d'horizon insurpassable ». La crucifixion chrétienne, depuis très longtemps, et la crucifixion sécularisée depuis un siècle ont ceci de commun qu'elles veulent montrer la destinée humaine dans ce qu'elle a d'essentiel, et le montrer par l'image d'un corps torturé, mort ou agonisant. Mais si la crucifixion chrétienne représente une dramaturgie où la mort sacrificielle annonce la résurrection, la crucifixion sécularisée sert assez souvent à illustrer la tragédie de la souffrance absurde où, sous un ciel vide, le dernier mot appartient à la mort. Tragédie universelle, souffrance liée à la condition même de l'homme. On peut la dépeindre sans la situer dans une époque où un pays précis. D'où la possibilité de recourir au symbole de la croix qui devient,

par un renversement de sens, la métaphore de la souffrance sans espoir. Ces crucifixions subverties sont souvent simplifiées (disparition des stigmates et de la couronne d'épines) et dépeuplée : plus de larrons, plus de bourreaux, plus de foule : le Christ est seul avec sa mère désespérée. Ou bien la crucifixion est très peuplée, mais la violence de la croix contraste cruellement avec l'indifférence de la foule.

La simplification tragique est illustrée de manière saisissante par le *Christ en croix* (1912) de Róbert Berény,² où Marie, une ombre noire tordue au pied de la croix, embrasse les genoux de son fils mort. Disparus les larrons, les bourreaux, les disciples. Dans un paysage de cauchemar, un Christ souffrant, très Grünewald, se trouve écartelé, les bras distendus, la cage thoracique hypertrophiée, la tête effondrée. Mais ce qui à la fin du XV^e siècle ou au début du XVI^e signifiait l'incarnation du sauveur et sa souffrance rédemptrice se réduit ici à une double violence : violence des couleurs, violence de la composition, pour représenter une solitude à deux, le fils et sa mère abandonnés des hommes et de Dieu.



Berény Róbert, *Krisztus a kereszten*

Avec son *Golgotha* de 1912, Lajos Gulácsy illustre bien la tragédie peuplée. Le Christ crucifié, auréolé, figure d'icône entre les deux larrons, est rejeté au second plan. Au pied de la croix, comme chez Berény, la silhouette noire de Marie. La mère et son fils sont abandonnés par la foule qui, au premier plan, s'écoule en tournant le dos aux suppliciés.³ La scène est à rapprocher du *Golgotha* de Kálmán Istókovits (gravure publié en 1926 dans la revue *Nyugat*) et celui de Béla Kádár (c.1920), où des cavaliers vont et viennent (et, chez Kádár, des personnages nus) en toute indifférence (ou autonomie, si l'on veut) par rapport au crucifié. Encore plus tragique que chez Berény, l'homme qui souffre est seul dans la foule. Non seulement le ciel est vide mais les hommes sont cruels.



Gulácsy Lajos, *Golgotha*

b. Le massacre des innocents

Il en va autrement quand il s'agit d'exprimer non pas la souffrance en général, celle à laquelle tout homme est voué, mais plus précisément la violence de l'histoire, la violence que l'homme inflige à l'homme : injustices de toutes sortes subies individuellement ou collectivement, et, surtout, les malheurs de la guerre, la torture et les massacres. S'il est toujours possible de symboliser ces fléaux de manière intemporelle, il arrive aussi qu'ils soient situés par des détails précis. Dans l'entre-deux-guerres, il était fréquent d'associer à la croix la Hongrie mutilée par le traité de Trianon. Tantôt elle est représentée par une femme crucifiée, vêtue d'une longue robe et coiffée de la couronne de Saint Etienne ; tantôt c'est une carte de Hongrie qui est clouée sur la croix et couronnée d'épines. Ce n'est pas de ce côté qu'il faut chercher des oeuvres d'art. L'extermination des Juifs de Hongrie, en 1944-1945, a au contraire inspiré des peintures et dessins inoubliables qui font de la crucifixion le symbole absolu de la souffrance innocente et de l'humanité persécutée, torturée, exterminée.

Nándor Szúdy, peintre mais aussi pasteur protestant à Budapest, a représenté l'irruption du mal dans le monde avec d'autant plus de force que dans ses tableaux le mal ne pèse pas, il danse. Son archange Gabriel apeuré, son Christ difforme ou son centurion-squelette peuvent être interprétés comme une manière chrétienne d'illustrer le texte biblique par un alliage très personnel d'expressivisme et de surréalisme. Il en va autrement de sa représentation de la Shoah, une

suite de tableaux exposée en 1947 où Szúdy recourt au symbole de la crucifixion. Il ne s'agit pas de donner une signification chrétienne à l'extermination. Face au mystère d'iniquité, il ne saurait être question de sacrifice rédempteur ni d'espérance de la résurrection. Szúdy ne représente pas le Christ en Juif, mais le Juif sous les apparences du Christ. Il s'agit bien ici de la croix sans résurrection, sous un ciel vide creusé par un astre dont on ne sait trop s'il est un soleil qui se décompose ou une lune cancéreuse. Dans *À la manière de Caïn* le Juif martyrisé est grotesque : ses bourreaux lui ont tout pris, y compris son humanité. Nous sommes dans un monde sans rédemption possible. Quant à la mise en situation dans le temps et dans l'espace, elle est sans équivoque : le Juif est crucifié sur un champ de bataille, une étoile jaune sert de titulus, et le soldat est hongrois.



Ámos Imre rajza

Des peintres et dessinateurs juifs ont repris la symbolique de la crucifixion. Dans *La croix offensée*, Tibor Jankay, qui a pu s'évader du train qui l'emmenait à Auschwitz, a représenté les déportés, gardés par des soldats empanachés, qui défilent devant le Christ crucifié dont le visage se détourne et le titulus s'effondre. Imre Ámos, le Chagall hongrois, n'a pu s'évader du train ; il a disparu dans la nuit et le brouillard à la fin de 1944 ou au début de 1945. En mai 1944 il a réalisé dans l'urgence et la certitude d'appartenir à un peuple perdu une série de dessins, intitulée *Szolnoki vázlatkönyv* (le *Carnet de dessins de Szolnok*) où il ne représente pas directement l'extermination mais la symbolise par des scènes de l'Apocalypse de saint Jean et la mort du Christ sur la croix. Comme dans certains tableaux de Szúdy, c'est vers un ciel vide où les astres meurent et tombent que le

crucifié tend sa face. Pour symboliser ce que la condition humaine a de tragique, la crucifixion n'a pas attendu la Shoah. Mais c'est bien avec la Shoah qu'elle est devenue l'un des emblèmes du génocide. Et cela suffirait presque à expliquer le succès du thème de 1945 à nos jours.



Szúdy Nándor, *Káin útja*

2. La polysémie d'un symbole fort

a. *Le sacré surréaliste*

Presque. Parce qu'il s'agit tout de même d'une amputation sémantique, de la réduction monosémique d'un symbole fort qui s'est caractérisé longtemps, comme tous les symboles forts, par sa polysémie. Pendant une quinzaine de siècles, c'est-à-dire pendant toute la période où sa signification est restée exclusivement religieuse, la crucifixion a porté simultanément deux sens différents et complémentaires, au moins : la mort bien entendu, mais aussi la vie sous la forme chrétienne de la résurrection. La sécularisation du thème n'a pas effacé cette ambivalence. On la retrouve dans toute une série d'œuvres contemporaines, et d'abord chez les surréalistes. Non pour des motifs théologiques, évidemment, mais parce que beaucoup de surréalistes s'intéressent d'une part aux grands mythes dans la mesure où ils expriment la nature irrationnelle de l'homme, et d'autre part à la notion de sacré, un sacré sans transcendance mais qui manifeste l'hétérogénéité du monde et la possibilité de rencontres entre des univers différents.

C'est ainsi que la polysémie fondamentale de la croix est bien suggérée par une gouache sur papier rehaussée d'or réalisée au pochoir à 50 exemplaires par Aurél Bernáth en 1922 : la *Croisée des chemins (Keresztút)*.⁴ Bernáth était athée, ce qui ne veut pas dire que toute dimension religieuse soit exclue de cette œuvre. Bernáth s'est en effet inspiré d'un tableau peint un an auparavant par son ami János Schadl, un *Christ* dans une spirale. Schadl, lui, était croyant, et il a

repris avec cette spirale une thématique chrétienne : celle du Christ cosmique, qui existe depuis l'origine de la création et emplît l'univers qu'il résumera à la fin des temps. D'autre part, la spirale peut aussi bien se refermer (la mort) que s'ouvrir (la résurrection et la vie). De l'ambivalence de la spirale de Schadl, Bernáth a retenu la polysémie de la croix qu'il suggère par métaphores : le partage du tableau entre un champ noir et un champ blanc ; la croix comme croisée de chemins, lieu de passage ; l'ombre d'un Christ médiéval, un Christ crucifié, souffrant ; le dédoublement de ce Christ noir sur fond blanc par un Christ blanc qui passe du champ clair au fond noir ; et ce Christ blanc est auréolé, les bras non plus crucifiés mais ouverts. S'agit-il d'une résurrection ? Sans doute pas, mais de l'exploitation très réfléchie de la surabondance sémantique d'un symbole qui débord de sens et que l'on ne saurait réduire à une agonie sous un ciel vide. Ici il y a du sacré parce qu'il y a la rencontre de deux univers différents et la possibilité d'un passage de l'un à l'autre. Ce n'est pas encore de la transcendance, mais ça peut y conduire.

Schadl János, *Christ*Bernáth Aurél, *Keresztút*

Parmi d'autres exemples de crucifixion surréaliste et polysémique, il faut citer le *Crucifix II* de Dezső Korniss (1947), où un Christ blanc sans visage s'étire sur une croix aux bras étagés comme les branches d'un arbre. Cette croix rappelle le fameux *Cèdre solitaire* de Tivadar Csontváry (1907). L'identification de la croix à un arbre est une très ancienne métaphore qui rappelle que cette potence n'a vraiment de sens que si elle est vivante et source de vie. Quant à Lajos Vajda, compagnon de Korniss et adepte du « surréalisme constructif », il s'est attaché à manifester la présence active du sacré dans le profane. Ses *Maisons avec un*

crucifix à Szentendre (1937) montrent un crucifié immense, renversé, qui plane sur la ville, la démonte et la réorganise dans un ailleurs figuré par un vaste ciel bleu. Attentif à toutes les formes de l'art populaire, Vajda est de ceux qui balisent le retour des icônes traditionnelles dans l'art contemporain.



Vajda Lajos, *Szentendrei házak feszülettel*

b. Le Christ paysan

Menyhért Tóth n'est pas un peintre solitaire, il a même vécu dans l'une de ces colonies d'artistes qui caractérisent l'histoire culturelle de la Hongrie moderne. Mais après avoir fini ses études à l'Académie des Beaux-Arts de Budapest, il est retourné dans son village, gagnant sa vie en travaillant la terre, en repeignant les maisons et en peignant des tableaux. Son art n'a rien de folklorique ni de naïf ; il n'en n'est pas moins puissamment enraciné. Il a peint plusieurs crucifixions. Celle qu'il a intitulée *Corpus* (1940) est bien une icône, ses rutilances dorées créent une distance et écartent la mort. Le corps du Christ est droit, hiératique ; la tête du Christ est droite, son visage serait indiscernable s'il n'était percé de deux yeux clairs grands ouverts. On retrouve là une figure ancienne, le Christ triomphant, souverain, cosmique, victorieux de la mort et rédempteur des mondes. Deux ans auparavant, Menyhért Tóth a peint un grand Christ Pentocrator avec, inscrit dans le tableau, le verset de saint Jean (14, 6) : « Je suis la voie, la vérité et la vie ». Pas solitaire mais franc-tireur, Tóth a travaillé loin de toute régulation ecclésiastique, son *Corpus* serait impossible dans une église. En dépit du retour du sacré, nous restons dans un art sécularisé dont l'objectif n'est pas culturel mais culturel.

Tóth préfigure un courant artistique durable qui s'épanouit après guerre et s'attache à sauver la culture populaire en réinventant les principales expressions, à commencer par le *Paraszt Krisztus* (le Christ paysan) et le *Pléhkrisztus*, le Christ d'étain, ce que les Anglais appellent le *roadside crucifix*, le crucifix au

bord des carrefours, des routes et des chemins, abrité des intempéries par un auvent métallique. Il faudrait citer ici Margit Kovács⁵ mais aussi Piroska Szántó, qui a rejoint en 1937, à Szentendre, le groupe des jeunes artistes réunis autour de Dezső Korniss et Lajos Vajda. Dans les années soixante, elle s' alarma de la disparition rapide de la *folk culture*. Son *Magyar Krisztus* de 1968, dûment recouvert de l' auvent métallique, rappelle le Christ triomphant de Menyhért Tóth avec ses yeux grands ouverts, ses bras horizontaux. Mais il est simple, si simple, le visage apaisé, le regard attentif. Au pied de ce Christ familier, bon gardien des âmes et de leurs espérances, Marie n' est plus une forme noire figée dans le désespoir, mais une figure médiatrice et recueillie. La même année, Piroska Szántó peignit deux autres Christs paysans, le *Crucifix d' Izbeg (Izbégi feszület)* et le *Crucifix aux corbeaux (Varjak és feszület)*, ornés de fleurs ou de gerbes offertes par les fidèles.



Tóth Menyhért, *Corpus*



Szántó Piroska, *Magyar Krisztus*



Kovács Margit, *Crucifix*

De la décennie suivante il faut citer Győző Somogyi, une personnalité atypique, aussi indépendante que Menyhért Tóth. Ordonné prêtre à Esztergom il fut curé de paroisse jusqu'en 1975, quand il rompit et choisit de réinvestir son sacerdoce dans l' art. Son *Le Corp de Csobánc* (ca. 1970) est situé, enraciné dans un terroir: il se détache sur l' une des collines qui bordent le lac Balaton. Il est sanglant mais paisible et nimbé de vives couleurs qui nous promettent qu' il ressuscitera le troisième jour ; la croix est toute rouge, la couronne d' épines est verte, le Christ est nimbé d' or, la vigne pousse à ses pieds et la colline est bleue. Ces vigueurs picturales effrayèrent ; elles étaient dignes d' un fauve ou d' un nabi, et tournèrent par la suite à un expressionisme violent. Aucun prêtre, aucun évêque, aucune commission d' art sacré ne fit jamais appel à Győző Somogyi pour orner une église. Et son art resta aussi séculier que celui de Menyhért Tóth.



Somogyi Gyöző, *Csobánci korpusz*

c. Du retour du sacré à sa réinvention : le cas Béla Kondor

L'intérêt des Christ paysans est double. D'abord ils rendent la crucifixion à sa polysémie fondamentale, image de mort, image de vie. D'autre part il n'est pas impossible qu'ils contribuent un jour à combler le fossé entre l'art moderne et l'art d'église. Le risque est qu'à force de récupérer plus que de réinventer, certains artistes ne donnent dans le pastiche, l'archéologisme, le folklore. Le risque existe. Parmi ceux qui l'ont évité, Béla Kondor se signale par une symbolique à la fois très personnelle et très intelligible. Vrai dissident, artiste reconnu mais incontrôlable, mort jeune en 1972, Kondor a compris et exploré les ambivalences du sacré. L'un des nombreux anges qui peuplent son œuvre joue de la harpe, un autre tient un couteau entre ses dents. Les anges ne sont pas gentils, ils ne sont pas méchants, ils sont les signes annonciateurs d'une rencontre.



Engelsz József, *Paraszt Krisztus*

Un article du *Hungarian Quarterly*⁶ rapproche Kondor de Lajos Vajda dans une volonté commune d'intégrer le sacré dans le quotidien (Forgács, 2006). Pour le surréaliste Vajda, le sacré n'est pas un motif, n'est pas un ornement, n'est pas un élément du décor, mais la rencontre du monde des hommes et du monde des dieux. Et c'est bien cette rencontre qu'il veut rendre visible en utilisant le symbole commun de la religion chrétienne, comme ce grand crucifix renversé planant sur les maisons de Szentendre. Mais chez Vajda le sacré reste du domaine de la différence, de l'hétérogénéité.

Avec les crucifiés de Kondor, on passe très clairement de l'hétérogénéité surréaliste à la transcendance chrétienne, à ce que le christianisme appelle l'incarnation dont la croix est l'expression la plus dramatique. Dramatique mais non tragique, car la violence de la scène s'ouvre sur une espérance. D'où les teintes chaudes, cette gamme de rouges que Béla Kondor utilise dans son *Christ paysan* de 1964, cette couleur de sang qui est à la fois celle de la mort et celle de la vie. Les bras et les mains du Christ sont démesurées : chez Kondor, la main est la marque de l'humain, tandis que l'aile est le symbole du divin. Pour manifester de manière intelligible ce qui constitue le sacré, c'est-à-dire la rencontre de l'humain et du divin, Kondor associe la main et l'aile, l'ange et le crucifié dans son *Pléhkrisztus*, son Christ d'étain de 1971 : l'ange, ailes déployées, nous présente le crucifié et nous en révèle ainsi la nature divine. Cette fresque ensoleillée d'or et d'orange évoque une vieille église de campagne, si ce n'est qu'à l'arrière-plan, dans la grande plaine rouge sombre, un tracteur s'est échoué. Kondor préfère les anges aux tracteurs. Il n'a jamais orné aucune église. Il a obtenu des prix mais n'a reçu que deux commandes, en 1968 et 1972. Des commandes profanes avec des motifs religieux.⁷



Kondor Béla, *Pléhkrisztus*



Kondor Béla, *Krisztus a kereszten*

3. Pour conclure

a. La circulation entre le profane et le sacré

Des artistes comme Gizella Dömötör,⁸ János Schadl, Menyhért Tóth, Győző Somogyi ou Béla Kondor s'affirmaient chrétiens. Ils ont si bien bousculé les traditions et réinventé la figure du Christ que leurs œuvres n'ont pas trouvé de place dans les lieux de culte. Mais d'autres peintres ont lancé des passerelles, ils ont su infuser un peu de l'art profane dans l'art d'Eglise. Le premier a tout de même servi de laboratoire au second, en s'adaptant aux exigences propres des lieux de culte qui doivent être lisibles et consensuels. Les plus importants de ces passeurs sont peut-être Vilmos Aba-Novák (1894-1941) et Pál Molnár (1894-1981). Vilmos Aba-Novák a peint en 1922, alors qu'il fréquentait la colonie d'artistes de Nagybánya, un *Golgotha* en clair-obscur, dense et mouvementé, une grande dramaturgie sacrée avec, au premier plan, le Christ portant sa croix et, au centre du tableau, les saintes femmes qui se lamentent. Après avoir séjourné à l'Académie hongroise de Rome, Aba-Novák a réalisé des fresques pour plusieurs églises, dont celles de Jászszentandrás (1933) et de Városmajor à Budapest (1938). Pour Pál Molnár le christianisme était à la fois un humanisme, une philosophie et une éthique. En tant qu'artiste, il voulait proclamer « la sainte Trinité de la beauté, de la vérité et de la bonté ». Son oeuvre profane abonde en sujets religieux. Il les traite comme un Fra Angelico qui serait passé par le cubisme, l'expressionnisme et le surréalisme. Il a aussi peint des fresques dans une trentaine de lieux de culte, dont l'église paroissiale de la Cité à Budapest (1948), l'église Saint-Elisabeth de Szombathely (1954) et l'église de Józsefváros à Budapest (1959).⁹



Borsos Miklós, *Feltámadás*

b. *Quel rapport au politique ?*

Pál Molnár travailla toute sa vie, y compris durant les années les plus dures de la République Populaire. Il semble difficile d'établir un lien direct entre les drames de l'histoire hongroise et les aventures de la crucifixion. Que l'on considère celle-ci comme une dramaturgie sacrée ou une tragédie humaine, l'intérêt qu'elle suscite transcende les clivages politiques. Róbert Berény, Károly Kernstock¹⁰ et Sándor Bortnyik¹¹ ont été des membres actifs de la République des Conseils de 1919, et Gyula Derkovits¹² a adhéré à la fin de 1928 au parti communiste autrichien. Pirooska Szánto s'est fait expulser de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts de Budapest pour ses activités gauchistes et a adhéré en 1934 au groupe des artistes socialistes. Après la deuxième guerre mondiale, un sculpteur comme Jenő Kerényi réalisa des statues de héros du travail, d'ouvriers de choc et d'officiers soviétiques avant de produire un *Saint Jean Baptiste* debout devant la croix (1957), un Moïse présentant les *Dix Commandements* (1973) et un *Golgotha* massif mais solidement construit (1972). Il semble qu'il faille en venir à Béla Kondor pour trouver un lien explicite entre les icônes de la transcendance et cette exigence politique, humaine et métaphysique que l'on appelle la liberté. Kondor a été un véritable dissident. Il n'y en a pas tant que cela dans l'histoire mondiale des arts visuels.¹³

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- Fig. 2 : Berény Róbert, *Krisztus a kereszten* [Le Christ sur la Croix], 70×60cm, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest, 1912.
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Fig. 16 : Borsos Miklós, *Feltámadás* [Résurrection], crayon et encre, coll. privée, 1975.

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Forgács, Éva. 2006. « *Hands and Constructs—The Art of Béla Kondor* » In: *Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. XLVII n°184, pp. 68–72.

Notes

- 1 *Krisztus születése és halála*, Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 1894-95.
- 2 Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest.
- 3 De Lajos Gulácsy on peut voir dans la Collection Deák à la Galerie municipale de Székesfehérvár un autre Golgota, une esquisse au crayon de 1910, qui constitue peut-être l'expression la plus simple d'un désespoir absolu.
- 4 Il s'agit de la sixième œuvre de son portfolio *Graphik*.
- 5 L'une des plus importantes céramistes du XX^e siècle. Son *Crucifix* de 1948, conservé au Musée Ferenczy de Szentendre, illustre bien sa volonté de sauvegarder l'art populaire hongrois.
- 6 Forgács, Éva. 2006. « *Hands and Constructs—The Art of Béla Kondor* » In: *Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. XLVII n°184, pp. 68–72.
- 7 La *Légende de la bienheureuse Marguerite* pour la Margitsziget – l'Île Marguerite - de Budapest ; et la *Procession des saints dans la ville*, qui aurait dû être un mural à la mexicaine mais a fini au Kiscelli Múzeum de Budapest.
- 8 Cf. sa *Crucifixion* (1925) très construite, cubiste, qui se trouve à la Magyar Nemzeti Galéria de Budapest.
- 9 Il faudrait citer aussi la céramiste Margit Kovács, qui a réalisé un décor mural pour l'église Szent Imre de Győr.
- 10 Cf. ses *Pèlerins d'Emmaüs*, sa *Dernière Cène* (1920), sa *Mise au tombeau* (1920-1921), sa *Descente de Croix* (1930).
- 11 Cf. sa *Mise au tombeau* (1917).
- 12 Cf. son *Christ mort* (1917), sa *Dernière Cène* (1922), sa *Lamentation sur la mort du Christ* (1924).
- 13 Sur l'utilisation par Kondor des images religieuses comme métaphore de la liberté, cf. Éva Forgács, « *Hands and Constructs* » opus cité.

ICÔNES ET *ICÔNES DES GRANDES VILLES*

MÁTYÁS VARGA

Poète

János Pilinsky admirait Dostoïevski pour la sincérité de son rapport avec la vérité, sans style. Cette vérité qui sans doute se trouve à l'arrière-garde de l'avant-garde, toujours en décalage. L'icône, œuvre religieuse enracinée dans un environnement culturel, fut une inspiration majeure de l'art du XXe siècle, non seulement pictural, mais aussi littéraire, en ce qu'elle invite à mettre en évidence le fond des choses ainsi que le cheminement de l'homme vers l'accomplissement. Un cheminement à travers un labyrinthe, disait Simone Weil.

Mots-clés: art et littérature, religion et tradition, icône et modernité, génie et talent, Pilinszky, Dostoïevski

Je m'intéresse depuis longtemps à la question suivante : au-delà de son influence évidente sur l'histoire de l'art, faut-il considérer l'hypothèse d'une influence *non visuelle* du concept d'icône, influence visible sur des matériaux de nature narrative – principalement *littéraire*. De ce point de vue, il est sans doute justifié d'accorder une attention particulière à l'œuvre emblématique de János Pilinszky intitulée *Nagyvárosi ikonok* (« Icônes des grandes villes »), publiée en 1963 sous forme de poèmes, puis en tant que volume à proprement parler en 1970, qui supposait non seulement la réinterprétation du concept d'icône, mais aussi une analyse détaillée du concept *statique* de l'icône.

Parmi les étapes les plus importantes de la « carrière » artistique de l'icône figure sans aucun doute l'exposition organisée à Moscou en 1913,¹ dont l'ambition était de présenter pour la première fois l'icône au visiteur, non en tant qu'objet religieux, mais plutôt comme un objet particulier et représentatif, enraciné dans l'histoire russe, de la peinture sur bois. Le catalogue de cette exposition contenait 147 reproductions d'icônes. En 1926, le professeur à l'Université de Berlin, Oskar Wulff, originaire de Saint-Pétersbourg, allait organiser dans la capitale allemande une exposition qui, selon Hans Belting, allait « solidement établir l'intérêt du public allemand pour les icônes » (Belting, 2000, 21).

Nous savons d'autre part que la découverte romantique de l'icône avait précédé les efforts scientifiques entrepris au cours des premières décennies du XX^e siècle : *face* aux arts occidentaux fortement sécularisés des Lumières et du classicisme, l'icône représentait un art des *origines*, de l'*authenticité* liée au *caractère national*. Autrement dit, on souhaitait revêtir l'icône de nouveaux caractères qui,

selon toute évidence, *s'écartaient* des intentions initiales des peintres d'icône des époques précédentes. D'ailleurs, la référence aux icônes, la plupart du temps, accompagnait une critique ouverte ou dissimulée de tout ce qui en Europe relevait de la modernité, des Lumières, du rationalisme, reprochant d'une manière générale à l'art moderne de s'être « vidé de son sens ». Et pourtant, Belting venait soudain suggérer que l'influence de l'icône s'était au contraire imposée dans certaines œuvres du symbolisme et de l'Art nouveau, que Malevics avait perçu dans l'icône une véritable alternative aux traditions de l'art occidental, enfin rappelait les paroles de Matisse affirmant à Moscou, en 1911, qu'on rencontrait, en tant qu'artiste, de meilleurs modèles en Russie qu'en Italie (Belting, 2000, 20–21).

L'icône est un sujet de réflexion permanente, or elle échoit dans le discours sur l'histoire de l'art – en tant que forme particulière de la peinture sur panneau de bois –, sans que l'on évoque son influence éventuelle *au sein même* de ce discours. De fait, on ne peut dissocier de l'icône son *intention religieuse*, bien que plus d'une fois on se soit efforcé de le faire (particulièrement dans les pays où le communisme a mis en place sa propre herméneutique de l'art). Dans la terminologie occidentale, l'icône ne relève pas véritablement de l'art. De fait, bien qu'au XX^e siècle se soit développée une théologie de l'icône riche et productive,² le rôle et la véritable place de l'icône est dans la liturgie et dans la prière.

Ce n'est pas un hasard si au milieu du XX^e siècle, le concept d'icône et la geste artistique de la peinture d'icône se sont peu à peu mués en principe poétique de plus en plus *général* – particulièrement au sein des cercles artistiques définis d'une manière qui ne pouvait, volontairement ou non, s'assimiler à la tradition de l'avant-garde.³ La référence sera ici et de plusieurs points de vue Dostoïevski.⁴ Dans le volume déjà évoqué, *Nagyvárosi ikonok* (« Icônes des grandes villes »),⁵ János Pilinszky a publié des poèmes écrits entre 1959 et 1970. Dans un interview donné en 1972, il disait : « Dostoïevski fut, en quelque sorte, – et il reste encore le seul, à ce jour – celui qui au XIX^e siècle a senti qu'il existait une avant-garde contre l'avant-garde. Il fut celui qui est né démon. Du moins en lisant ses livres, on croit lire un journal, le journal de quelqu'un qui est né dans l'état démoniaque, dans un état hors de l'être, et qui est parvenu à devenir un homme. Selon moi, l'histoire de la plupart des membres de l'avant-garde – sans préjudice de quelques exceptions – est celle d'un passage du berceau vers l'enfer. Dostoïevski, au contraire, de l'enfer est arrivé à la Croix. » (Pilinszky, 1994, 121). Le 23 juin 1977, Pilinszky donna les confessions suivantes à la radio française : « Dans mon cœur, j'aimerais appartenir à ce que Dostoïevski appelait l'arrière-garde, comme les véritables artistes modernes, qui sont pour ainsi dire toujours en exil de leur temps, tandis que d'autres sont les pigeons du moment présent. Je crains que les artistes des Temps modernes aient jaloué l'exactitude des sciences de la nature. On croit désormais pouvoir parler de perfection stylistique : l'extase de la confiance en soi propre aux sciences s'est imposée, en littérature, sous la

forme du style artistique. Dostoïevski était un mauvais stylisticien, ses phrases tombaient au hasard, sans ménagement. Mais elles avaient du poids. » (Pilinszky, 1994, 163). Pilinszky est revenu à maintes reprises sur la question du talent, de la génialité dans son rapport avec l'absence totale de talents. Ses deux archétypes étaient Mozart et Dostoïevski. Exprimée brièvement, sa formule était la suivante : « Mozart naquit pourvu de tous les talents, Dostoïvski naquit dépourvu de tout talent – ils arrivèrent au même résultat. Avoir du talent n'est pas moins dangereux que de ne pas en avoir en étant prêt à mourir si on ne les obtient pas. » (Pilinszky, 1994, 194). Dans une note inscrite à son journal en 1972 – intitulée *encore Dostoïevski* – il avait déjà écrit : « Dostoïevski n'était sans doute pas particulièrement doué, mais il était condamné à la vérité. Et cela – semble-t-il – était suffisant pour qu'aujourd'hui encore, après avoir lu, par exemple, *Les frères Karamazov* ou *Les possédés (Les démons)*, un volume de Brecht nous paraisse aussi poussiéreux que s'il était resté sur la table de nuit d'une vieille grand-mère de province, les pages intercalées de fleurs séchées. » (Pilinszky, 1995, 173). En Mallarmé, Pilinszky ne voyait pas autre chose que l'âme offensée d'un narcissique. En guise de contre-exemple, il évoquait Dostoïevski qui n'était pas intéressé par le style (« il faut bien admettre que dans chacun de ses romans, il y a toujours une trentaine de pages qui sont presque illisibles »), qui « tourna le dos au miroir », qui était « aussi aveugle qu'Homère : qui s'était aveuglé lui-même, comme Œdipe roi » (Pilinszky, 1994, 249) ...

Dans *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, Albert Camus reproche à Dostoïevski de s'être réfugié dans la consolation procurée par la foi, après avoir admis l'absurdité du monde. Pilinszky réagissait d'une manière différente : « C'est seulement qu'après avoir constaté l'absurdité du monde, il reste un pas à franchir – et certainement pas dans le sens d'une fuite vers un quelconque refuge – un pas plus conséquent, plus absurde encore, si l'on veut, qui consiste à reconnaître l'aberration, l'incapacité totale du monde. » (Pilinszky, 1994, 24). Contrairement à Camus, Pilinszky s'accordait avec Dostoïevski lorsque ce dernier admettait, *en même temps*, le bonheur de la vie éternelle et l'absence de bonheur propre à la vie terrestre. Selon Pilinszky, la reconnaissance des contradictions de l'être n'était pas un signe d'humiliation, mais, bien au contraire, d'humilité. Cette poétique esquissée pour le créateur ne correspondait donc en rien à un mécanisme de reproduction, mais bien plutôt à un plongeon dans la réalité de la vie et de la foi. De toute évidence, Pilinszky attribuait à Dostoïevski l'idée d'une différence essentielle distinguant le petit *homme* et le petit *bourgeois*, il pensait lui-même que pour l'humanité, il n'existait pas de plus grand danger que le petit bourgeois qui formellement respecte toutes les lois. « Le petit homme est une graine souterraine, dont tout peut germer, qui se fait piétiner, qui des plus petites choses peut faire advenir les plus grandes. Une victoire éternelle en forme de défaite, qui pourrait être la définition de la culture. Face à cela, le petit bourgeois se ferme.

Dostoïevski n'emploie même pas le mot. Pour lui, le petit bourgeois est un fou irrécupérable. » (Pilinszky, 1994, 122) Ailleurs : « Dostoïevski n'est pas trompé un instant par les apparences. Derrière la sottise égoïste, il voyait bien dans le petit bourgeois le démon informe de l'époque, l'ingénieur du danger imprévisible. Et il savait, il connaissait le chemin qui conduisait à lui. Le vrai démon ne naît pas démon. » (Pilinszky, 1982, 290). Le petit bourgeois craint les questions, il craint la crise spirituelle, il consacrer ses dernières forces à sauver la sécurité⁶ et prend volontiers sur lui la représentation des intérêts du petit homme. Le mode de pensée du petit bourgeois apparaît dans le discours d'Ivan Karamazov sur le Grand inquisiteur, qui rend ce dernier totalement incapable de rencontrer Jésus. Pilinszky acceptait le monde moderne comme une donnée, une fatalité, mais il considérait comme inacceptable la *perte d'altitude*, c'est pourquoi Dostoïevski était pour lui un « écrivain éternel », un exemple à suivre pour l'éternité. Dans un texte de 1971, il disait : « mais [...] en cherchant le visage de "l'écrivain éternel", pourquoi ai-je pensé aussitôt à Dostoïevski ? C'est dans les années trente que la critique évoquait à son propos le combat intérieur entre l'ange et le diable. On écrivait cela du Dostoïevski qui croyait à l'ange et au diable, mais ceux qui écrivaient cela pour la plupart ne croyaient ni à l'ange ni au diable. [...] Nul autre écrivain ne connaissait comme lui la réalité de la sainteté et l'irréalité de la chute. Nul écrivain n'a osé rester dans la même solitude que lui face à Dieu, face au pécher, face au pécher purement métaphysique. [...] Il a glané les "messages" les plus purs et les plus dérangeants avec une naïveté élémentaire. Non, il n'était pas saint, et encore moins un héros de la moralité. Et pas non plus un "instituteur" à la Tolstoï, grâce à Dieu... » (Pilinszky, 1982, 290–291).

Pour Pilinszky, Dostoïevski ne correspondait peut-être pas aux critères de la sainteté, même dans le sens donné au mot par Florensky, mais il était tout de même ce peintre d'icônes *par excellence*, capable de reconnaître d'un seul coup la réalité de la sainteté et l'irréalité de la chute. Pilinszky attire souvent l'attention sur le fait que les romans de Dostoïevski ont souvent pour décor la ville (la grande ville), où tout est possible ; dans ce sens, ce n'est pas un hasard s'il a donné à son livre le titre de *Nagyvárosi ikonok* (« Icônes des grandes villes »). La grande ville, en tant qu'apparition symbolique de la scène propre à l'être moderne, s'est aussi imposée dans son livre de prose intitulé *Beszélgetések Sheryl Suttonnal* (« discussions avec Sheryl Sutton ») qui se passe à New York. Cette interprétation, – comme l'a souligné Sándor Radnóti – « est de toute évidence liée au fait, que le "grand pécheur" et la ville de tous les péchés sont des saints travestis en canailles. Leur mode de vie rempli de dangers est plus proche de l'accomplissement, de l'irruption de Dieu dans le monde (ce qui signifierait pour le monde la défaite et la capitulation), que le mode de vie dans lequel l'enchevêtrement des faits masque Dieu. » (Radnóti, 1988, 357).

Pilinszky suscite des opinions fortes, qu'on lui soit favorable ou non. Ses goûts en matière d'art et de musique, vus d'aujourd'hui, nous paraissent sans faille. Parmi les artistes hongrois, il s'est surtout intéressé à l'œuvre de Lili Ország, Erzsébet Schaár, Béla Kondor. Dans son mot d'adieux prononcé lors de l'enterrement de Lili Ország, il exprima de manière évidente la proximité qu'il éprouvait avec l'artiste disparue dans ses conceptions radicales de la beauté : « Simone Weil a écrit : "Le labyrinthe de la beauté. Nombreux sont-ils à y pénétrer, mais ils s'épuisent en chemin. Seulement quelques-uns ont assez de force pour parvenir au centre du labyrinthe. Là où Dieu les attend et où Il les dévore puis les vomit. Et alors – quelques élus – ils sortent du labyrinthe, s'arrêtent au bord de la sortie du labyrinthe et accueillent gentiment ceux qui s'approchent d'eux." Et toi – dit Pilinszky – tu es déjà à l'entrée de ce dédale épouvantable et seul désirable, invitant gentiment ceux qui s'approchent. » (Pilinszky, 1984, 494).

Ainsi, de l'icône – celle qui s'écrit avec une minuscule comme dans *icônes des grandes villes* – est né comme résultant d'une *dissémination* particulière une conception nouvelle, *dynamique*, dont la portée est forte (à différent niveau de la conscience) dans plusieurs disciplines artistiques ; particulièrement dans les beaux arts.

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Notes

- 1 À ce propos, Hans Belting a écrit: « La glace fut rompue à l'occasion de la grande exposition organisée en 1913 à l'occasion du tricentenaire du règne de la Maison Romanov, au cours de laquelle parmi les antiquités russes les icônes occupèrent le premier plan. Les yeux des Russes s'ouvrirent sur la valeur esthétique et la signification historique d'un genre de peinture qu'on avait jusqu'alors simplement considéré comme un article de l'inventaire religieux. Le succès de l'exposition fut favorisé par l'ouverture des églises et l'accès aux icônes des « vieux-croyants », restées longtemps invisible et intouchées. » Belting, Hans. 2000. *Kép és kultusz – A kép története a művészet korszaka előtt*. Budapest : Balassi Kiadó, p. 20. (édition en français : Belting, Hans. 2007. *Image et culte – l'histoire de l'image avant l'époque de l'arts*. Éditions du Cerf.)
- 2 Par exemple : Pavel Florenski (1882–1937), Vladimir Lossky (1903–1958), Paul Evdokimov (1901–1970).
- 3 Ici est l'explication de la « désacralisation » de l'icône au sein de l'avant-garde russe, autrement dit pourquoi la définition du rapport à l'icône occupe une telle place dans la façon dont Malevitch définissait lui-même son propre art.
- 4 « Selon plusieurs interprétations, la sémiotique de l'icône est l'un des principes créateurs caractérisant la poétique de Dostoïevski. Elle n'est pourtant jamais revêtue d'un caractère dominant, mais, au contraire, entre souvent en contradiction dans son dialogue avec la vie de Dostoïevski. D'après le chercheur norvégien, Jostein Bortnes, dans la poétique de Dostoïevski se manifestent deux tendances concurrentes : la première est l'esthétique iconologique « urbild-abbild », la seconde est la tendance déconstructive ». Fryszman, Alex, *Kierkegaard és Dosztojevszkij Bahtyin prizmáján át* [Kierkegaard et Dostoïevski à travers le prisme de Bahtin], <http://www.c3.hu/~prophil/profi024/alex.html>
- 5 Le poème éponyme est paru en 1963 dans le numéro de février de la revue *Kortárs* [Contemporain].
- 6 De plusieurs points de vue, on peut rapprocher de la pensée de Pilinszky les réflexions d'Andrej Tarkovskij sur la raison pour laquelle la tradition culturelle russe de Dostoïevski ne s'est pas développée jusqu'à l'accomplissement : « d'autre part, la crise spirituelle inspirée par Dostoïevski et ses héros, et par le travail de ses successeurs, fut accueillie avec précaution. Mais pourquoi craint-on à ce point dans la Russie d'aujourd'hui la "crise spirituelle" ? La "crise spirituelle" est pour moi toujours salutaire, puisqu'elle n'est pas autre chose qu'une tentative de se trouver soi-même, de trouver une nouvelle Foi. » Tarkovszkij, Andrej. 1998. *A megörökített idő*. Budapest : Osiris Kiadó, p. 188. (édition en français : Tarkovskij, Andrej. 2004. *Le temps scellé*. Cahiers du cinéma.)