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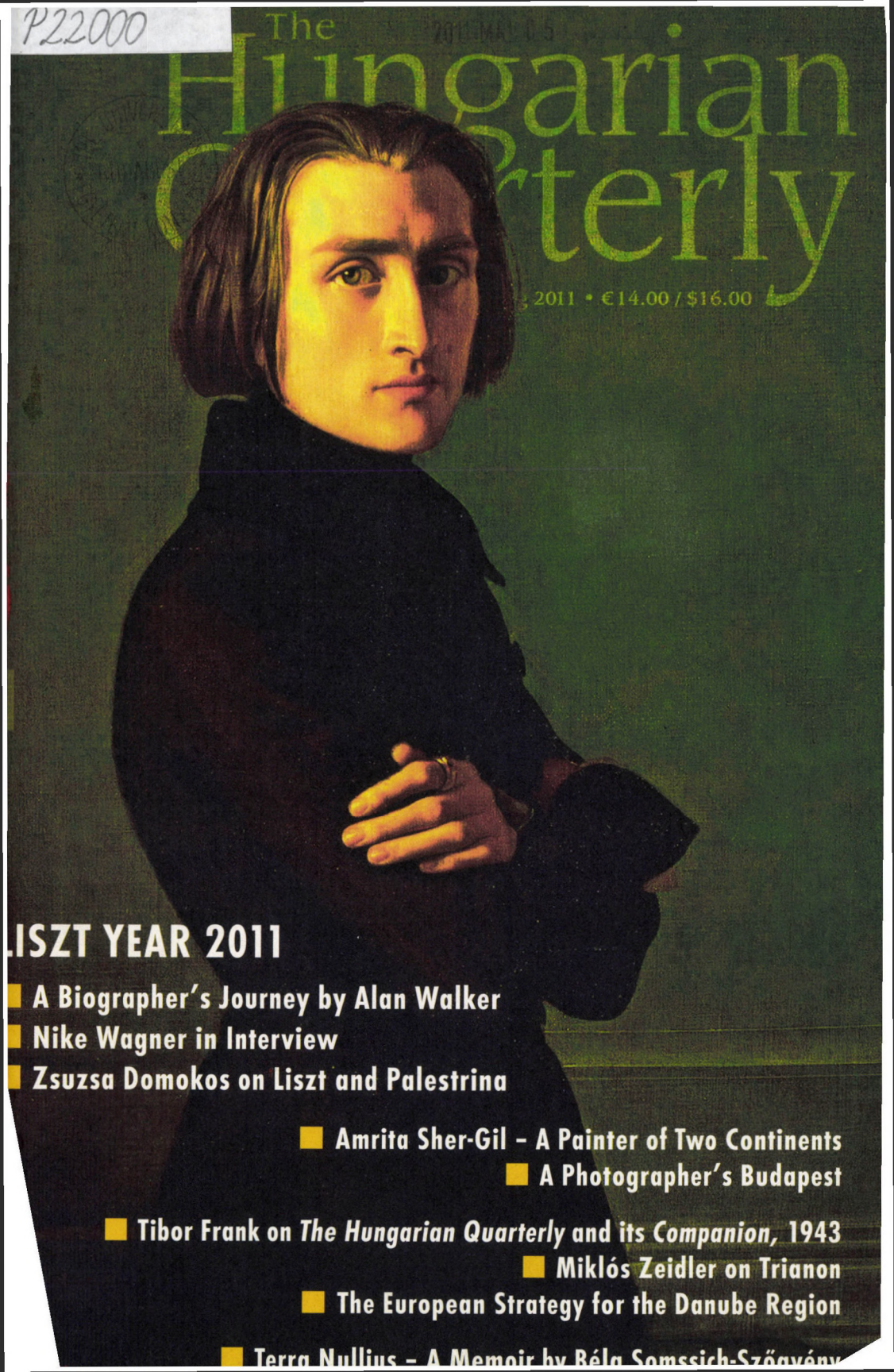

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Cover: *Franz Liszt, 1839, an oil painting by Henri Lehmann. Courtesy of the Hungarian Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest*

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Tibor Frank

"A National Cause"

The Hungarian Quarterly and Its *Companion*, 1943

The rich and intricate history of *The Hungarian Quarterly* (1936–1944), the pre-war predecessor of today's *Hungarian Quarterly,* has been discussed by the present author in this journal and elsewhere a number of times.[1] The way this early history ended, however, has never been treated though it reflected some of the tragic illusions shared by the Anglophile circles of the Hungarian ruling élite.

Hungary entered World War II only in 1941, when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union and Hungary found itself in a state of war with both Great Britain and the United States, right after Pearl Harbor. Up until 1941, *The Hungarian Quarterly* continued to be published with the hope of presenting a non-belligerent, quasi-neutral, pro-Western image of the country thereby hoping to avoid the tragic end that was waiting for it. Under the political leadership of the conservative statesman and former Prime Minister Count István Bethlen (1874–1947) and his group as well

1 ■ Tibor Frank, "Editing as Politics: József Balogh and *The Hungarian Quarterly*," *The Hungarian Quarterly* XXXIV:(129), pp. 5–13, (1993), 2nd ed, complete with notes, in Tibor Frank, *Ethnicity, Propaganda, Myth-Making. Studies on Hungarian Connections to Britain and America 1848–1945,* Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999, pp. 265–275; Tibor Frank, "To comply with English taste: The Making of *The Hungarian Quarterly,* 1934–1944," *The Hungarian Quarterly* XLIV:(171), pp. 112–124, (2003); Tibor Frank, "Anglophiles: The 'Anglo-Saxon' Orientation of Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1930s through 1944," *The Hungarian Quarterly* XLVII: (181), pp. 60–72, (2006); Tibor Frank, "Patronage and Networking: The Society of The Hungarian Quarterly 1935–1944," *The Hungarian Quarterly* L: (196), pp. 3–12, (2009). For further studies on *The Hungarian Quarterly* and its world see Tibor Frank, *Ethnicity,* op. cit., pp. 276– 308.

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as the Editor of the journal, József Balogh (1893–1944), the *Quarterly* tried to give the impression of a country with an ancient, Christian civilization, sophisticated Western culture, and Anglophile leanings. Until it was technically possible, the Editor regularly visited Britain and recruited major names to contribute to his paper, selected exclusively anti-Nazi members of the Hungarian political élite as potential authors, and courted the English-speaking countries in whatever way he could.

After the end of 1941 it became obvious that these policies must come to an end. At the very end of 1941 Balogh reported to Count Bethlen that "the most recent, and at the same time for some months perhaps the last, issue of the HQ has appeared."[2]

In early January 1942 Professor Gyula Kornis (1885-1958), a former speaker of the Lower House and member of the Upper House, took farewell of the *Quarterly* as chairman of the Society of The Hungarian Quarterly. "After its last, already unmailable number was published ... the HQ will have to cease publication. We hope it will be resurrected next year."[3] By April 20, 1942 Balogh informed of plans already under way to substitute the 1942 issues by a collective volume, "so that our subscribers should not go short in terms of quantity and value, and the continuity of the journal should not be broken."[4] Potential authors such as Dezső Laky were approached in the spring of 1942.[5] The "collective volume" that came to be called *A Companion to Hungarian Studies* was ready by December 4, 1942 when József Balogh, the Editor, turned to Count István Bethlen as the President of the Society of The Hungarian Quarterly asking him to sign the preface, "if found acceptable". It took some time to finalize the manuscript and get the signature of the former prime minister as the preface was submitted in actual fact to Count Bethlen for his signature as late as December 29, 1942. By then the *Companion* was about to be printed, publication being planned for the first half of February 1943.[6]

When finally published in the early spring of 1943, the *Companion* made it very clear that "This Volume constitutes the 1942 issue of *The Hungarian Quarterly*".[7] The bulky book of 532 pages was written by Hungarian authors only, who contributed some 19 chapters in their native language to be translated into English by the author, playwright, and translator Elza de Szász, the outstanding future translator Klára Szőllősy (a niece of József Balogh), and Klára Schiller. Recruited

2 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, Budapest, December 29, 1941. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [OSzK] Kézirattára [Kt] [MS Collection of the National Széchényi Library], Fond 1/322. For Bethlen see Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874–1946. New York:* Columbia University Press, 1995.

3 ■ Gyula Kornis to József Balogh, Budapest, January 5, 1942. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1828.

4 ■ József Balogh to Gyula Kornis, Budapest, April 20, 1942. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1828.

5 ■ József Balogh to Dezső Laky, Budapest, January 8, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1893.

6 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, Budapest, December 4 and 29, 1942. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.

7 ■ *A Companion to Hungarian Studies.* Budapest: Society of the Hungarian Quarterly, 1943, [IV]. Cf. Ernő Flachbarth to József Balogh, Debrecen, May 6, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1041.

mostly by Balogh, authors were selected from amongst anti-Nazi and Anglophile members of the Hungarian professions. Professors of Hungarian universities outside Budapest (the linguist Géza Bárczi and the historian Ernő Flachbarth of Debrecen, the geographer Gyula Prinz of Kolozsvár (Cluj), the historian László Tóth of Szeged), librarians such as Pál Török, archivists such as Győző Ember and István János Bakács, curators of museums such as Zoltán Farkas, Béla Gunda, Tibor Nagy, and Count István Zichy, journalists such as András Frey (of *Magyar Nemzet*) and the expert on matters British István Gál were those who accepted Balogh's invitation to be part of this "national cause".[8] Dezső Laky, a former cabinet minister, and Zsombor Szász, a former member of parliament represented the world of (Liberal) politics. A couple of authors were Jewish, such as the musicologist Bence Szabolcsi and the literary historian and writer Antal Szerb and as such, already hard hit by the Anti-Semitic legislation of 1938, 1939 and 1941.

Some of the articles were shown to, and vetted by, Aladár Szegedy-Maszák, then Deputy Head of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Szegedy-Maszák, however, was also a member of this circle and this meant indeed a sympathetic furthering of their anti-Nazi cause.[9]

Most probably written by József Balogh, the preface as signed by Count Bethlen made it very clear that the "*Companion to Hungarian Studies* is ... the offspring of *The Hungarian Quarterly*, and is intended to assist the work of the latter. Apart from this it constitutes our 1942 issue. This year, when it has been practically impossible to despatch our usual quarterly numbers, we have devoted our organisation to supplying this long-felt want." The preface made it also obvious that the *Companion* was intended to serve the interests of Hungary after the war and to be "read in time of peace by all those who are interested in the problems of Central Europe."[10]

One may reasonably presume that by 1942–43 a Hungarian "national cause" made emphatic by the name of Count István Bethlen meant a decisively anti-Nazi, anti-German attitude in these circles. Those promoting the interests of *The Hungarian Quarterly* were Bethlen's closest friends and allies in 1941–42, including aristocrats such as former Prime Minister Count Móric Esterházy, Count Iván Csekonics, Count Antal Sigray, former Speaker of the House Gyula Kornis, former Cabinet Ministers Kálmán Kánya and Lajos Walko, President of

8 ■ József Balogh to Dezső Laky, Budapest, January 8, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1893.
9 ■ Aladár Szegedy-Maszák: *Az ember ősszel visszanéz. Egy volt magyar diplomata emlékirataiból* (Looking Back in the Autumn. From the Memoirs of a Retired Diplomat) Ed. by László Csorba, afterword by Mihály Szegedy-Maszák. Budapest: Európa – História, vols. 1–2, 1996, (Extra Hungariam series). – That *The Hungarian Quarterly* was heavily censored, particularly during the war years, was discussed by József Balogh e.g. in his letters to author and literary historian László Bóka whose article on Ferenc Széchényi was not allowed to be published in 1941. Cf. József Balogh to László Bóka, Budapest, September 19, 1941 and February 14, 1942. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.
10 ■ *Companion*, p. XII.

the Hungarian National Bank Lipót Baranyai, the former Hungarian Minister to Britain György Barcza, representatives of the Jewish bankers and industrialists such as Ferenc Chorin and Baron Móric Kornfeld, and a few younger influential politicians such as Aladár Szegedy-Maszák and Antal Ullein-Reviczky, both of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These people were united by their Western orientation and by one particular idea: they were all looking to the West, and particularly to Britain, for a political solution at the end of the war. These friends of Bethlen were carefully selected, almost handpicked by Balogh, to attend the intimate and confidential *déjeuners* the President of the Society of the Hungarian Quarterly gave in his Budapest house.[11]

The former cabinet minister and statistician Dezső Laky was invited to introduce the volume by a chapter on "Country and People". His contribution was designed to "persuade the reader to take to the not-so-easy material and sum up right away all the most important knowledge and impressions which we would like readers abroad to get from this bulky volume."[12] Balogh had difficulties with Laky's text, which proved to be three times as long as required and anything but a real essay. Balogh wrote somewhat indignantly to Laky asking him for a much amended version.[13] Historians contributed seven chapters on Hungarian history, followed by chapters on Hungarian geography, the language, ethnography, the constitution and the Holy Crown of Hungary, the economy, the minorities, literature, art and music. István Gál contributed a chapter on "Hungary and the Anglo-Saxon World".

The first chapter of the *Companion* volume gave an overview of Hungary, the country and the people. Special emphasis was given to the Treaty of Trianon (1920) and its consequences. Ever the reputable statistician, Dezső Laky provided all the statistical evidence necessary to make an impact on foreign readers in the English-speaking world. He indicated that

> There was a good cause to suppose that a country thus mutilated would be unable to carry on its simulacrum of life and would be forced to perish.
>
> But Hungary did not perish. And if ever the time comes when impartial historians measure a people's fitness to survive by the intensity of its efforts towards recovery, it is hoped that they will have a good word for this country.[14]

Laky thought that the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian population was Magyar "proves that to the Magyar people must be assigned the merit of passing successfully through an exceptionally severe social and economic test and showing to their kinsfolk in the severed territories that it is

11 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, Budapest, June 9, 1941 and October 22, 1942. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.
12 ■ József Balogh to Dezső Laky, Budapest, January 8, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1893.
13 ■ *Ibid.*
14 ■ Dezső Laky, "Country and People," in *Companion,* p. 10.

possible for a people to rise out of the deepest abyss if it has the will and the capacity to do so."[15]

The prehistory of the Treaty of Trianon, described in great detail by László Tóth in his voluminous chapter on "the long nineteenth century", was based on a study of Hungarian national Liberalism. Tóth suggested that the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 "secured Hungary's independence and territorial integrity and the political ascendancy of the Hungarian nation."[16] Soon after 1867, however, "symptoms of exhaustion and torpor began to appear in Hungarian public life..."[17] This author thought that it was "rigid political dogmatism that prevented agreement with the non-Magyar nationalities,"[18] while a doctrinaire Liberalism became detrimental to the state and brought about the fall of Liberalism itself. The theme of the Treaty of Trianon permeates other chapters, such as that on geography by Gyula Prinz.[19] The situation of the various ethnic minorities is discussed by the Debrecen scholar Ernő Flachbarth, who also gives special attention to the Treaty of Trianon and the Hungarians in the successor states.[20]

Another theme running through the *Companion* is Hungarian constitutionality. Historical aspects are discussed by László Tóth in his chapter on the modern history of Hungary;[21] contemporary aspects are being treated in a substantial chapter by Zsombor Szász, who gives ample space to the institution of the Regency and the powers and prerogatives of the Regent, Adm. Miklós Horthy.[22]

Presented right at the beginning of the book, the Holy Crown of Hungary further strengthens the significance of this as an overarching symbol of Hungarian nationhood. Many of the illustrations show churches such as the Cathedral of Pécs, the Abbey of Ják and the Cathedral of Kassa (Košice). The Christian image of the country is further underlined by the image of the Crucifix of King Matthias, by a portrait of Cardinal Haynald, and the statue *St George and the Dragon* in Prague.

The image of a Christian nation looms large throughout, the Roman Catholic Church being discussed in a number of chapters. In fact, history makes up about one half or more of the book that leans heavily towards the past rather than the present. The *Companion to Hungarian Studies* is essentially a history text which tries to present historical material to emphasize the long history of Hungarian sovereignty even at times of international invasions and occupations. The discussion of the independent principality of Transylvania and the anti-Habsburg revolutions under Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi and Lajos Kossuth highlight this effort.

15 ■ *Ibid.*
16 ■ László Tóth, "From Holy Alliance to First World War," in *Companion,* p. 253.
17 ■ *Ibid.*
18 ■ *Ibid.*
19 ■ Gyula Prinz, "Geography," in *Companion,* p. 355.
20 ■ Ernest Flachbart, "The History of the Minorities," in *Companion,* pp. 387–388.
21 ■ László Tóth, "From Holy Alliance to First World War," in *Companion,* pp. 194–253, *passim.*
22 ■ Zsombor Szász, "The Constitution and the Holy Crown," in *Companion,* pp. 305–338, esp. pp. 330–331.

The exhaustive bibliography[23] of books and articles in English, French and German appears to contradict the preface attributed to Count István Bethlen, who argued on the very first page that "the information... on the subject of Hungary and the Hungarian people is almost entirely in the Hungarian language. There is virtually no literature upon general subjects connected with Hungary in the great European languages apart from the articles which have appeared in the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie* and, in the last six years, *The Hungarian Quarterly*."[24] A solidly compiled index completes the *Companion*.

The *Companion to Hungarian Studies* was hardly off the printing presses when Bethlen and his circle started to plan a second volume. Some background work had already been done in late 1942 and the first half of 1943, the product of which became a paper on "The Spiritual and Economic Questions of the 'Transitory' Period". This was seen by Count Bethlen in mid-June 1943. The unsigned and undated document made a clear reference to *The Hungarian Quarterly* and the *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie,* which were ready to identify and work upon the political subjects of the "transition". The word "transition" of course meant a change from a German to a pro-Western, pro-British political orientation and all that was to go with it.[25]

Actual work on the *Companion II* (as Balogh and his associates referred to their next plan) was started in the summer of 1943. Before making a commitment to another set of potential authors, Count Bethlen wanted to consult the Foreign Ministry on the chapters on interior and foreign policy. Balogh urged Bethlen on July 2, 1943 to talk to "the gentlemen of the Ministry" as he wanted to go ahead collecting material, commissioning authors, and preparing translations.[26] Spending the summer on his country estate at Inke, Somogy County, Bethlen immediately answered and asked Balogh to discuss these issues with Aladár Szegedy-Maszák. "I will naturally accept the decision of the two of you," Bethlen wrote to Balogh.[27]

In Balogh's mind, *Companion II* was supposed to cover the Hungarian history of the last 25 years. It was to consist of a chapter on foreign and domestic policy, a chapter on the social historical background, a chapter on the Jewish question, and one on social policy. Balogh also pondered on a chapter on the development of the army. His choice of potential authors was equally interesting, particularly because of his remarks on the personalities he suggested. For the chapter on foreign policy he suggested Count Sándor Khuen-Héderváry, an experienced diplomat and former deputy Foreign Minister, who was supposed only to sign

23 ■ "Bibliography," in *Companion* pp. 514–521.

24 ■ Count Stephen Bethlen, "Preface," in *Companion,* p. XI.

25 ■ "Az átmeneti időszak szellemi és gazdasági kérdései" (The Spiritual and Economic Questions of the 'Transitory' Period), n.p., n.d, with a handwritten reference to Count Bethlen studying the document as of June 18, (1943?); cf. József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, September 7, 1942 on the beginning of some work on this paper. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.

26 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, Budapest, July 2, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.

27 ■ Count István Bethlen to József Balogh, Inke, July 5, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.

"a relatively finished article". As to the issues of domestic policy he counted on a former Foreign Minister, the historian Gusztáv Gratz, who would write the chapter himself, as opposed to the son of Count Albert Apponyi, Count György Apponyi, who would definitely just sign a text. He proposed Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky for the chapter on the Jewish question; for the chapter on the social history of the last 25 years he thought of the historian Gyula Szekfű or Baron Móric Kornfeld, or indeed György Trócsányi, Director of the Library of Parliament.[28] Eventually, he suggested, this chapter could be divided into three parts, with the younger and progressive economic and social expert Mihály Kerék or the poet Gyula Illyés as one author on the village, "a Social Democrat" covering the industrial workers, and György Trócsányi the middle class. Balogh suggested Vilmos Nagy, later to become a humane Minister of Defense, for the chapter on the armed forces.[29]

In late May 1943 Balogh also turned to the noted literary historian and author Dezső Keresztury and asked him to contribute a chapter on the Hungarian literature of the last 25 years "for the HQ" by August 1, 1943.[30] It is highly probable that what Balogh had in mind was the *Companion II.*

Bethlen was unhappy with some of the suggestions. He did not think of Bajcsy-Zsilinszky as a suitable choice and wanted to entrust with the chapter on the Jews Gusztáv Gratz, "who is a lot more objective and also more suitable by virtue of his foreign political vision."[31]

He was also reluctant to divide the chapter on social history into three parts, especially to entrust parts "to Kerék or a Social Democrat as I would be afraid of gaffes."[32] Bethlen emphasized "the importance of looking at the studies on domestic policy and the Jewish question again, repeatedly, and with critical eyes."[33] In the middle of July 1943 Balogh thought it advisable to report to Professor Gyula Kornis, "about editorial issues of *Companion II* (The history of the last 25 years), referring to which discussions are taking place in keeping with instructions by Count István Bethlen."[34]

As usual, Balogh was quick to discuss his plans with the authors he thought of. However, neither Count Khuen-Héderváry, the son of a former Prime

28 ■ It is possible that though the *Companion II* never materialized, some of the prospective authors appreciated the initiative and started to work on their respective chapters. Baron Móric Kornfeld was one of those who wrote an essay along the lines suggested by his good friend Balogh. Baron Kornfeld's essay "From Trianon to Trianon" was first published decades after he finished it by 1947, see Baron Móric Kornfeld, *Reflections on Twentieth Century Hungary: A Hungarian Magnate's View,* ed. by Ágnes Széchenyi. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, pp. 191–303. The articles by Gyula Szekfű in the then leftist-Liberal *Magyar Nemzet* between November 1943 and January 1944, as well as his post-war essay *Forradalom után* (After a Revolution), Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1947, may also have been inspired by the idea of his unwritten chapter in the aborted *Companion II.*

29 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, Budapest, July 8, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.

30 ■ József Balogh to Dezső Keresztury, Budapest, May 24, 1943, OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1742.

31 ■ Count István Bethlen to József Balogh, Inke, July 10, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.

32 ■ *Ibid.*

33 ■ *Ibid.*

34 ■ József Balogh to Gyula Kornis, Budapest, July 14, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.

Minister, nor Gratz undertook to write the chapters assigned to them. "Khuen-Héderváry is unwilling to provide a text which could not include his unfettered criticism."[35] Gratz pointed out that "he would not wish to cause now or in the future any trouble to you, Your Excellency [Count Bethlen], with his criticism."[36] Instead of Gratz Balogh now suggested Count Móric Esterházy "whose name perhaps carries more weight in the West than that of [Count György] Apponyi, who only takes care of his father's name and has no authority of his own."[37] The open reference to the required impact on "the West" clearly indicated the inclination of the Bethlen group. That the Bethlen group intended to align not only the British in favour of Hungary but also the Hungarians in favour of the British became obvious in Balogh's plans to publish a series of small books in Hungarian providing information for Hungarian readers on the Anglo-Saxon world."[38] By mid-September 1943, Balogh started to discuss plans of ten such small volumes including one by Kolozsvár University Professor Barna Horváth.[39] Such a plan was never implemented. Nor was the second volume of the *Companion* to materialize. With the German occupation of Hungary just half a year away, Anglophile policies and publications were doomed, and destined to die.

In a letter to Count István Bethlen, József Balogh wrote on March 6, 1941: "...the HQ is not the mouthpiece of official Hungarian foreign policy, but a social foundation and as such the synthesis of a national foreign policy."[40] What Balogh thought of *The Hungarian Quarterly* was equally true of his idea of the *Companion to Hungarian Studies.* He thought of both as the embodiment of his service to a national foreign policy, an idea that he contributed to the vision of Count István Bethlen and his small group of Western-oriented politicians and scholars. Count Bethlen, however, was by then an elder statesman of much influence, but limited real power. His increasingly Anglophile notion of Hungarian foreign policy in 1942–43 was very different from those who still believed in a German victory, the importance of the Axis powers, and their potential support to further Hungary's revisionist ambitions. Just as in Germany,[41] there was no national foreign policy in Hungary, there were only foreign policies of different sorts. The *Companion to Hungarian Studies* served the foreign policies of a somewhat isolated, naïve and unfortunately ineffective group, which was destined to see the tragic end of its illusions in 1944–45. ❧

35 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, Budapest, July 17, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.
36 ■ *Ibid.*
37 ■ *Ibid.*
38 ■ József Balogh to Barna Horváth, Budapest, September 15, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1495.
39 ■ József Balogh to Barna Horváth, Budapest, September 21, 1943. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/1495.
40 ■ József Balogh to Count István Bethlen, Budapest, March 6, 1941. OSzK Kt: Fond 1/322.
41 ■ John F. Montgomery, "Conversation with Foreign Minister de Kanya, Budapest, December 1, 1937". In: Tibor Frank, *Discussing Hitler: Advisers of U.S. Diplomacy in Central Europe 1934–1941*. Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2003, p. 166.

János Háy

The Kid

Excerpt from the novel

That word, scholar, caught the kid's ear. If the neighbours or, when he was going to school, the peasants at the village bus stop asked him, what're you gonna be, kid, all he said was, a scholar. Scholar?—the peasants asked, and the kid again said, a scholar, but he didn't need to go into detail, say, a doctor of historiography or professor of theoretical physics, because to the peasants scholar meant an occupation, it didn't have to be broken out into this or that kind of scholar, whoever rises to that level certainly is an expert in all those things, even involving the most up-to-date research in the field of biology and, of course, history too. One of the first steps toward becoming a scholar was when the kid won the countywide history competition. By then not only the parents, but the teachers were also convinced that by all indications this kid is bound to become a scholar, or, to put it a bit humorously, as the shop teacher did when he said, not even God can save you from being one.

My dear boy, the principal said to him the first time he went to school after the competition, you're going to make something of yourself yet. Then he patted the kid on the shoulder for doing credit to the school. True, the kid didn't succeed on the national level, but still, in the county, which was Pest county, the biggest one, the smartest too, he was the best. And that's a big deal, proving that kids from the lowlands, because the village where the family lived was in fact on the edge of the Great Plain, so, contrary to the malicious opinions of some, kids from the lowlands are just as smart as kids from the highlands, in this case even smarter.

János Háy

is a novelist, short story writer, playwright and poet, who has published more than twenty volumes since the early eighties. His plays have been staged, among other countries, in Germany, Italy and the United States. See Eugene Brogyányi's review on The Kid *on pp. 141–144 and Tamás Koltai's review of* Hard, *a play by János Háy on pp. 151–155 of this issue.*

The principal even went out to celebrate the occasion with the history teacher, who'd been in the field just a few years. She'd gotten her diploma at the teachers' college in Szeged, where she'd had an outstanding education, making her first rate not only in factual knowledge, but also in the area of methodology. She was the first in the village to change from that outdated single-focus classwork to teaching in differentiated groups. That way she could nurture aptitude, which is of vital importance, because without nurturing, talent becomes like flowers, which, no matter how beautiful they are, if they're not watered and their soil isn't loosened, nothing comes of them, they might as well be weeds, the principal quoted these words from his speech for the opening of the school year, but Erika, that's what the history teacher was called, you know this very well. And, on the other hand, she was able to give the less capable the kind of attention their level of intelligence demanded. So if we were to again quote the speech for the opening of the school year, we'd find the appropriate simile for that too, according to which even today's noble vegetation came from weeds. And in this observation the weeds referred to the less-capable students, of whom the school unfortunately had an abundance, while the noble vegetation referred to their future descendants, who'll be just as smart as, for example, the kid, because after all the kid's forebears weren't all that smart either, one of his grandfathers, who's not alive any more, what a brainless man he was. He drank away his assets, his lands, his workshop, because the way everybody later recalled was not that this was all taken away from him, but that he drank it away, and then he drank away his clothes, part of the furniture, and finally he drank away his internal organs too, especially his liver, so that there weren't any organs in him when they opened him at the hospital in Vác, rather it was as if a shovelful of shit had been tossed in there, and it stank just as much.

In any case the new history teacher knew all that, and maybe the first tangible result of that knowledge and practice was the success of the kid in bringing back that certificate—said the principal as they were approaching the first station of the celebration, the café. Hi there, Princie—he was greeted inside, because they were all buddies, the council secretary, the district delegate, the district doctor, the horticultural division head, in other words everybody who was there, to which the principal said he and Erika are celebrating the success the kid brought to the school, and through the school to the whole village, including the café, since the café is also part of their community. The spirits were high. Not just the principal, the council secretary and even a man from the bus company picked up the tab for Erika. Then, with the arrival of closing time at nine, they stepped into the street and, on the principal's suggestion, after waiting for the others to shuffle away, the two of them went back into the principal's office, because there, said the principal, he's got a little brandy hidden in the file cabinet, and it'd be worth their giving it a taste.

The principal's wife meantime was home watching TV, then she turned down the bed for herself and the man. She knew he'd be home late today, and he'll be drunk too, because a principal has to socialize with the higher-ups of the village, the council president, the doctor, who in turn have to socialize with the principal. She accepted that. At one time, though, she cried and shouted at her husband over when he's coming home already, when is she going to once spend the evening with him, but the principal explained to her that he can't come home when the council secretary is still there, he can't, because then he won't be part of their group. And don't tell me it doesn't matter to you—he said in a calm but firm tone of voice—where the lands that come with my position are located, and that the street gets paved all the way to our house so we don't have to tramp around in mud up to our knees all year, don't tell me that doesn't matter.

The woman understood and accepted this state of affairs, and went to bed alone from then on, and thought about it as her lot in life, which could be better, but it could be worse too, much worse, if for example her husband beat her, because there are cases like that even among the teachers. She heard, for example, that the shop teacher beats his wife at least once a week, for no reason at all. The wife doesn't know what to do, because she wouldn't dare get a divorce in a village. She might as well kill herself. Everyone would take the husband's side, and nobody would believe she's not a slut, that all she did all evening was wait for the husband to come home, but her husband came home only to beat her, not to love her, and that by now, at the end of her rope, she ought to get a divorce, and live alone with the children. But she didn't dare do that, because she was afraid she'd be ostracized, that's what the village was like, especially the women. They particularly hate it when someone among them is able to change her fate. How dare she—goes their whispering all over, behind the back of somebody like that—how dare she give up what we'd never dare give up, even though our husbands smack us around not just on Thursday, but on Monday and Saturday too. But the principal never beat the woman. So she couldn't be considered ill-fated in the classic sense, having to bear a martyrdom for which later, in the afterlife, a woman is accorded a more favourable judgment. The woman regretted this a little, not being able to say her fate is bad, because from the outside it didn't count as bad, even though it was.

The principal opened the office door. Inside was a large desk and two armchairs. He offered the teacher a seat, she sat down, the principal got the brandy from the file cabinet. When nothing else remains to do, the ruddy cup will comfort you—he said laughing, and asked whether she'd learned that in college, he asked who wrote it, because the teacher's other specialty was Hungarian. No—laughed the teacher. It's a classic, though—said the principal, and if you don't believe me, look it up in an Ady volume at home. After the second glass he grabbed the woman, he was a strong man, whereas the teacher was hardly even fifty kilos. He lifted her body and deposited it on the table, the way that's done in

films, when a boss forces himself on his secretary, that's just how everything took place. It's only when you really see something like this that it strikes you, because nobody thinks there's any truth to what you see in the movies. Whereas this seems to indicate that films depicting scenes like this are exact reflections of reality. He tugged off the pantyhose. Yes, maybe that's different in films, where there aren't any awkward episodes, when let's say the pantyhose get caught on a shoe because the principal forgot to take it off her, and the woman didn't kick it off either, and then he didn't succeed in undoing his belt fast enough, so he's fumbling on his knees between the woman's unclad legs. And when in a film the man has theoretically long since achieved penetration, in reality the principal was still preoccupied with his clothing, but finally he was able to overcome all obstacles. He gained entrance and, by having his way with the teacher, claimed the reward he had coming to him as principal. The teacher also presumably considered the matter a reward, partly because it was a year since she'd been with a man, during which time she could at best satisfy herself alone, and that does, after all, always leave a certain dissatisfaction in its wake, and also because the older man appealed to her. She was the kind of woman who was in love with her father's age group. A little gray at the temples, a bit of a gut, and a serious, settled, grown-up face, from which passion bursts with enchantment. What the man was capable of wasn't enough for the teacher, so she asked him to bring matters to a conclusion with his hand and tongue. He did. The principal brushed his teeth at home. He didn't want to breathe the woman's scent on his wife. Which was, after all, a decent thing, the least he could do.

This relationship between the principal and the teacher lasted eight years. By then the kid had long since moved away from the village, and the young teacher became an older, embittered, rural wife. She'd married a farm-equipment mechanic with a reputation as a decent man. But he was only a mechanic after all, which, to be frank, meant she'd married down. And of course you can't tell whose aptitudes are going to be passed on to the children, her learning abilities, or the mediocre grades the man got in general school, then later in trade school too. The woman succeeded in convincing the man to get a diploma and even a technician's certificate. As a result he became a branch manager at the agro-collective, not a big branch, just maintenance, but that's a management position too, with commensurately higher pay. The principal, though he was interested only in sexual partnership, felt that if he was going to get some of that, he'd better make an intellectual investment and pay her the kind of attention the mechanic couldn't muster because he'd never witnessed that sort of thing in his own family. His parents weren't attentive to each other in that way, his old man was always at the wine cellar, and when he did come home, he preferred spending his time in the stable rather than with the wife in bed, he preferred heaving the cows a few pitchforks of hay to giving the wife a

few kisses or caresses, and he sat there in the stench on the milking stool, or he lay by the animals, in the spot left empty when they sold the young heifer not long ago. In his childhood the mechanic never stopped to think that this might not be all right, in fact, he thought it couldn't be any other way, and when he got married, when he married the teacher and thanked his lucky stars for landing such a cultured girl, he didn't know how to handle that woman. And not long after, as soon as the youthful passions died down, he came and went about the house in silence, considered child rearing the sum of his duties, and sometimes tinkered with the tools in the workshop, by then they didn't have any cows, he paid no attention to the wife. He was especially at a loss whenever the teacher, after some film or other, which of course was fundamentally boring, and if that weren't enough, these boring films always started at ten at night, by which time he was already exhausted, in other words, whenever the teacher wanted to chat with the man about how the film was. The man got only as far as it was good or it was bad. Later, when he no longer had to worry about the wife bothering him with questions like that, he'd fall asleep during the first scene. He didn't even notice, but he began to see his whole life as if it had just a beginning and not yet an end. This was all thanks to the TV, to the beginnings of films, or maybe to fatigue, because of which he was always having to fall asleep, even during films with good-looking women in them, which he would have gladly watched, but couldn't.

The principal made up for the shortfall that sprang from the mechanic's nature, and for a while he was able to satisfy the teacher. She wasn't taking note of the principal's waning sex drive, to put it delicately, of his extraordinarily modest carnal capacities, and while a certain body part no longer grew in size, other parts, for example his stomach and his jowels, proved to be very prone to growth. So much so, that in the eighth year the principal could no longer see past his stomach to his groin. That's when the teacher said, let's stop this. Suddenly everything that had eluded her became clear. Of course no one knows why utterly bad things seem so good for such long periods of time, what that inner capacity might be that makes the outside world conform so closely to the patterns laid down by desire. This, in any case, was why for years the principal was able to be the embodiment of attentiveness, intelligence, and manliness in the eyes of the teacher. And no one knows why, when all this comes to an end, everything the teacher had believed about this matter is destroyed so mercilessly that nothing remains of the good, of what she projected onto the principal. As a matter of fact, the principal stayed the same person he'd been, it was only in the woman that the components changed. So it's not enough that she lost the object of her love, she also lost something inside of herself, the ability to project an object of love into the world. Probably from this point on—she thought about this too, inasmuch as self-pity is considered a form of thinking—she never falls in love again. And indeed she

did not, that capacity simply ceased to work in her, that particular power of imagination. And when a young physical-education teacher appeared on the scene, who was mad about well-groomed women around forty years old, and for the moment our teacher was in that category, she became a prime goal for the phys-ed teacher. When this man put in a claim for the woman, she didn't even understand what he wanted, and when she finally did, she rejected him out of hand with: what can you be thinking, even though, I won't go into details, suffice it to say that this man was the kind that nine out of ten women wanted for themselves. Too bad the teacher happened to be the tenth.

The mechanic never noticed anything of the liaison, that's how satisfied he was with having so cultured a wife, and with the wife's not doing anything bad to him, not humiliating him in front of the children, not telling him this is all you are, not even making him feel that way. When the kids were entering adolescence, and his relationship especially with the older boy was beginning to deteriorate, only then did he begin getting suspicious. How did that happen? Well, that's when he took note of a random statement in the tavern, hey listen, you could have paid more attention to the wife, too. What are you saying—he asked. I'm not saying anything—the man said—but the principal's involved. And at that point he seemed to remember that he'd heard this and that about the relationship between his wife and the principal, but at the time none of it registered with him, but how interesting that it was still there in his consciousness. How is that? At the time he'd dismissed it as nonsense, but still hadn't forgotten it to this day, and now the statement and the kid's reaching puberty activated it.

He looked at that kid as if he weren't even his son. He thought that's why this kid is so different, because he's not his child, but the principal's. He thought that blood bonds have these kinds of inexplicable, secret signs, which determine the connections among relatives, and because there's no such connection here, that's the reason their relationship is so bad, that's why the kid doesn't do anything he tells him to, that's why he dumps on everything, looks like a tramp, and seemingly nothing will ever come of him. A real man, as he put it, that's what he'll never amount to. Be that as it may, the boy, maybe not inside but outside, was so like the mechanic, that the mechanic would've been hard put to deny paternity, though he himself didn't see it that way, all he saw was that the kid was the product of his wife and the principal. So he couldn't have any connection with him. All that care, all that money he'd earned for the sake of this kid, all of it turns to nothing at this juncture, precisely as a consequence of the absence of a blood connection.

If he'd followed his heart, he would have killed the woman who foisted a kid like this on him, another man's child. If at least he were a nice kid, then maybe he could bring himself to love him, but this way it's just impossible, if at least he showed a little gratitude to him for raising him even though he isn't his kid.

She's the one he would have killed if he'd followed his heart, because the principal wasn't to blame. In the principal's place he too would have roped in the young teacher. The principal was almost fifty when the teacher got there, and for a man around fifty it means a lot if a twenty-four year old woman goes to bed with him. Then he doesn't think his life is over, and that from here on all that's left for him is to watch his kids descend into utter idiocy and unbridled spitefulness as they treat him with ever more meanness, only because by now he's not able to support them out of his pension, and when his illness makes him dependent on them, they try to avoid even the least bit of contact, and if they're obliged to visit him even so, or indeed to care for him perhaps, because the neighbour telephoned explaining that he's not a relative and can't make arrangements, but their father found their phone number, and he thought he'd call and tell them that the man needs help, and how much he'd welcome a visit from his children, and then, if they're compelled to go to the old man, as soon as they rush into the apartment they open a window and wretch from the smell, the smell of the old man, wretch from everything still left there from their childhood, and they stay the shortest possible amount of time, not a second longer, and half of that very short time is spent preparing to leave, and maybe they even take some item, saying father won't be needing this any more. Finally he passes into the hands of strangers, together with the wife if she's still alive, and then it's in those hands they breathe out their souls, if those strangers happen to be there, otherwise just in the cold hospice bed, of course this is an image, the bed having gotten cold only later, after death. From here on this is what's left for him to observe, in addition to his wife, on whose face he can study, as if in a mirror, how the human body turns repulsive, how that which he was so crazy about twenty years ago has by now gotten so hideously wrinkled, and even her smell is bad, no matter how much cream and cologne she applies, something still comes through that skin, some pitilessly bad smell still strikes the nose. He thought of it as the smell of doom. But the young teacher came along, and this young woman brought into his life the delicate aroma that was the opposite of his wife's smell, because it was the smell of life. In any case he would often tell the woman that all he needs to do is smell her skin and he gets younger, that's how good that smell is.

Why would the mechanic be angry with this man, seeing as he's approaching fifty himself, and could go for some of that too, but who needs a maintenance-branch manager? What young woman would think of him as someone who not only wants to pick up a monkey wrench, but a woman's skirt too, and that a hand hardened by heavy labor can still caress? Nobody would think that, which is why the mechanic neglected shaving for example, something the principal would never do. He sometimes went to the tavern in work clothes, in greasy, tattered rags he'd worn for weeks, and with a stubbled face. Since he couldn't imagine a thing like that happening to him, it didn't take him long to give up on

himself, lest his body should even accidentally seem as though it had a chance. He thought his lack of prospects would make him feel even more like a loser if he acted as though he had any, going into the shop full of young female commerce students well dressed, veiling his extended belly with his clothes, shaved, his face giving off the scent of a fine aftershave, and, so dressed and scented, were he to try his luck with one of those students, or preferably with someone in her thirties whose marriage is unbearable, giving rise to a certain justification for an outside relationship, whom he would address with familiarity right off the bat, saying: hi there, Kati, how's it goin', at which this woman would say to that close-shaved face and that scent and those nice clothes which were able to hide the protruding belly, kindly leave me alone.

Later, when the kid, who by now was in an academic secondary school, where he was accepted on the basis of an interview without an entrance exam since, after all, his competition achievement was evident, when he went back to the teacher later on, he wondered about this marriage, how it was possible. Then one time the teacher, and this one time was long after the secondary-school years, said that she couldn't make a go of it in college, and whoever can't make a go of it in college doesn't have a chance, getting a position in Budapest is the most you can hope for, but she couldn't, all she could do was go someplace where the council guarantees teachers' housing. And this was that kind of place. And that from then on she had to take the givens of the place into account, and that her basic requirements were just that he shouldn't be an alcoholic or repellently ugly, and he should love his future children. And the mechanic fit the bill. As a matter of fact, if the kids hadn't reached adolescence, he would have stayed that way. If those kids had stayed little forever, and were happy whenever their father lifted them onto the tractor, and thought this father of mine is so important he can even put his kids on a big machine like the tractor or the combine. Not a lot of kids get to sit on something like this, but we can, because of our father. But the kids got bigger and entered adolescence and seized every opportunity to deal the father, whose chest was bursting with pride, some good kicks to the stomach, till finally in a few years he turned into a miserable sorry figure, his head perpetually hanging down, hardly daring to look anyone in the eye, the old cheer with which he used to tease the kids vanished from his face for good, to be replaced by some stiff relentless wrinkle, indeed by a wrinkle-network that covered not only the one-time face in a latticework, but the soul too. Then—to jump ahead a little and bring up things the teacher couldn't have told the kid at the time, since they hadn't happened yet—he soon got very ill, something with his heart, underwent four years of treatment, medicines, taking things easy, the wife cared for him dutifully, the kids also came to the hospital when he happened to be there, then he died. The wife at first felt loss, because she didn't know what she'd be doing during those times when the man's concerns used to keep

her busy, finally she became a liberated, cheerful widow, whose relations with her children, her children's wives, and eventually also with the grandchildren, were harmonious. She held big Sunday dinners at which they ate to their hearts' content. Then, with a few funny stories, they also reminisced about the mechanic, who'd made this house possible with his money as well as with his two hands, since he took on a number of tasks during construction, all by himself. But the mechanic couldn't have known about this at the time, nor about his early and painful death, though in the countryside it isn't considered early if somebody lives to be almost sixty, nor about what a liberating effect his demise had on his wife. There are those who know this version of the teacher's life, but others know of a different one, in which it wasn't the husband, or not only the husband, who got sick, but the wife too, maybe she had a nervous breakdown from the ever-deteriorating behaviour of the pupils, though it could be that that was a different history teacher, and a different tractor mechanic, a person can't remember every history teacher, every tractor mechanic, or every illness that afflicted history teachers and tractor mechanics.

In the end everybody understood everything. Because things can be understood, after all if something happens, it's clear that it happened. The mechanic understood the principal, he understood that the reason his relationship with his son turned out the way it did was that he was the principal's child, the kid understood the teacher, why she chose this course for her life to take, he understood that there was no other course, so she couldn't have chosen another one. The principal and the teacher often talked about the kid, about their relationship being based on his talent, because if the kid hadn't won the competition, presumably they couldn't have gone to celebrate it, and so on. The principal clearly would still have found a way to try out the new colleague, as he'd already done so often with the young women colleagues years ago, but it's undeniable that till then no one at this school had won the county scholastic competition. ❧

Translated by Eugene Brogyányi

Ákos Györffy

Poems

Translated by Clare Pollard

Divinity

(Isteni)

A green god was running up
the path. This happened,
in childhood, thereabouts.
His body was moss, glitter
of rain. Fresh spring moss, all
the valley a rain-smell for days.
I saw him turn and for a moment
look in my eyes. Right then
forest sprouted in me, his eyes
began it, instantly, his gaze
grew fear in me, the fear
in stone and heart and cloud,
in stone and heart and god:
divine fear. He ran up, I watched
a god running. A god afraid.

How

(Hogyan)

Not that I know about evil.
No, I don't know evil: oak-leaves stuck
to flesh, strings looping hind-legs hung
from the hovel's mouldy rafters.

Ákos Györffy
has published several volumes of verse, one of which also appeared in a German translation.

Dog, rabbit, fox: I don't know as they cut
off the head. Rain, no, thin drizzle starts
in this maimed forest, as the fear starts,
for the road is impassable—forestry trucks

churned it up; the heavy wheels of machines.
We're ankle-deep in mud, with no roads;
an inverted cross on the hut's door.
The woodpecker stabs the oak. The cross is clumsily daubed.
The woodpecker changes tree, still stabs,

and cold hasn't stopped the body's stench.
Why must I look at this headless beast?
Was there pain? Did they peel it alive?

There's a bird I don't know. Its cry
is the only voice in this forest. No roads
and nowhere to go, as the blank dusk starts
as it moves, as the skinned body swings, though I swear
that the air doesn't move.

Crossing

(Átkelés)

Let stillness bloom in me,
let it overflow, as fog fills
the ferry's cabin. Driftwood dashes
on the mooring rope. I come to you.
Crossing does not start
or end; tears us in two.
Muscles tremble with each pulse
of these waves; a seagull
preens on the fog-light's mast.

László Szilasi

The Harp of Saints

Excerpt from Chapter 1

Makovicza, 1924

On the night of 24 December 1924, at roughly the same time, a few minutes after half past eleven or a bit later, three men set out for town in a blizzard so that they too should welcome the birth of your Holy Son, the Saviour, in a gathering of the greatest possible number of the faithful in the decorated Great Church at Árpádharagos.

When the oldest stepped out of the front door of his house on Garay Street, the southerly carrying the snow swept beneath his heavy, long greatcoat, but he paid it no attention: he pulled his fur cap down to his eyes, and booted, carrying a stick and a lamp in his big hands, he struck out in the direction where he suspected the brick pavement, laid in early autumn, under the knee-deep snow. Mistress Maria, the young gentlewoman who was his spouse, fastidiously but confidently stepped in his tracks in her thin-soled, high-heeled, lace-up boots, slipping her tiny freezing hands into a soft fox-fur muff. After them followed their four older children, the boys in front, then the two little girls holding each other's hand, and at the very back, smallest of all, Master János carried under a big black shawl in the arms of his wet-nurse. The procession was brought to an end by Czirok, the one-armed family factotum. Under his peaked cloth cap his snow-white mustachios were turned up pugnaciously, and he too carried a lamp with his one arm, raised high, and for

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László Szilasi

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See also János Szegő's review of the novel on pp. 137–40 of this issue.

once continuously muttered something, either cursing to himself or maybe secretly paying court to the wet-nurse. Their lengthy shadows, like a tracery of strange old lettering awaiting deciphering, were thrown ahead on the freshly fallen, driven snow, like blotting paper as it were.

They passed below my windows, in front of the big rear gate of the Great School, along the old artesian well frozen into an amorphous statue by frozen vapours, and then, at the south-east corner of the church garden, the greatecoated man turned onto the small lane which led to the northern end of Main Square. They could have taken the town's most handsome carriage, or a huge sleigh, or even a motor car, but on festive occasions the head of the family made it a rule that his own should walk.

Ne vrav nich! No, sir, I was not there, yet I am quite sure that at home, in his big townhouse, before setting off and preparing for divine service, he would have uttered that sentence at least once on that holy night as well. As to what I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears later on that night in the pine-scented candlelight in the Great Church and afterwards, outside in the square between the churches, because I was there too, I am far from certain, sir. I never was.

But I started and I finished, and now I finally want to understand.

Quiet there! Listen! Keep you trap shut! That was his way. He spoke like that to everyone indiscriminately, without respect for God or man, if they had annoyed him. He just stood there with his burly body, nodded impassively in that fur cap, before all at once there would be a *Shush, ne vrav nich*! He would give a piece of his mind even to Burgomaster Bertóthy, the major, and growl even to the old Count's face. There was an occasion last summer when he gave Miss Connie such a dressing down that she scampered in tears on her dainty feet to poor Master Anton, even though she could not have understood what the ruddy-faced, sheepskin-coated peasant clod was telling her.

That, in the end, was all that was left of him. There had been a time when he was a garrulous, booming, jolly man; eyes sparkling, with his moustache and his polished boots as he strode along Station Street under the dusty acacias in the first bright spring sunshine. Black suit, dazzling white shirt and hat; he attended to everything at the city hall and all offices in a twinkling of an eye with that swish, sprightly manner of his. We children scrambled after him, waiting for him in swarms in the small square, and before long he would come by, whistling, tossing us a fiver or standing us an iced lemon drink in the Hotel Fiume. Women were nuts about him, and he just raked in money.

His father did not set much store by him. What he thought about him, his youngest child and only son, was that he was not tenacious enough. *Young Matyi? He puts his shoulder to something and right away he shits himself.*

He would then give a dismissive wave of the hand and spit out a big gob. Even if things might have looked like that for a while, he was not right.

A few years later, young Matyi inherited everything. The huge fortune of the barefoot millionaire from Fürjes, Old Mátyás, who had waxed rich in America—land, farmsteads, machinery, horses, livestock, the lot. But Matyi quickly tired of just grubbing the soil or having others grub it, all day long. He was sent to the famous school in town, the Great School, and the world opened up a bit to him. He passed his matriculation, so he was not content to sink the heels of his shiny knee-high boots in pig shit. He bought carts and horses and took his place among the carters. Six months later it was no longer him sitting on the box. He hired six lads on the grain market, had them outfitted as liveried coachmen, had the carriage painted blue so that everybody would immediately notice what his men, saved from beggary, were carting, and to whom. For his twelve black Nonius thoroughbreds and for the lads he took out a lease on a plot of land on Smart Street in the inner city. It cost an arm and a leg, but it was worth it; he put up stables and quarters on it, and from then on they were always first on the scene. Even the harnesses were dyed blue, the uniform was green, and a crimson bowler of felt, along with white cotton gloves that were changed daily, were part of the kit. Those enormous wagons were crowd stoppers. In single file, they carried Berger ale, Rosenthal flour, Reiss-Porjes cupboards, and Suk-Wagner or Bohn bricks in quantities sufficient for another fairly big city.

For all that he was massively wealthy, he still lived on his farmstead out of town. He kept the machinery going from a distance, issuing instructions by telephone and only occasionally coming into town if there was no option and he had to take care of something in person. Eventually he also acquired a townhouse, backing on to the Prophet, in a small street behind the Great Church. He and his family moved in there for the winter, at Martinmas. He had an attractive wife, lots of children, and a lot to do, but all the same at times he seemed still to be a bachelor, sitting out with us for hours at length on a cane chair in front of the Fiume, humming songs, telling stories and making plans while we looked up to him as if we were already lads in his employ. One of Omaszta's lads—that gave you status in Árpádharagos at that time.

Then came the war, and they all scattered to the winds. Mihály Bencsik, Ferenc Filyó, Gustav Riegler, Ferenc Zsiga and the handsome Obuszt boy perished. He was the only one to come back, slowed down, quietened. Even the one lad who survived, his batman, lost an arm, to a grenade. The one-armed man's moustaches had gone grey, and he only spoke when he was spoken to.

They alighted from the Budapest express in the late autumn of 1920 when all of this was long over. They walked along Station Road in the piercing, whistling November, all the way from the station to the theatre. A few years earlier they would have taken two separate hansom cabs, now it was still beneath their dignity to take the Motor. They had never liked the Cockerel, the Pannonia, the

Stampa or the Palatine, so in the end they kicked open the door of the Fiume sitting down as they were, grubby and unshaven. Omaszta, his head propped up on his big paws on the table said without even looking up: *Vodu!* The waiters did not recognize him, yet they did not try to pretend they had not heard or understood. And indeed all he ever drank from that moment onwards was water.

They were in uniform, threadbare rags, torn boots, their puttees hung from their legs like fringes. They were smelly and full of lice, and coughing. Taking out a tasselled pouch, using papers, tobacco, roller and saliva, the batman rolled cigarettes with his one hand. Omaszta chewed baccy, hawking great gobs on the snow-white marble of the floor. When the other fellow upset the labelled coffee-house matchbox, Omaszta cast a glance at the pile and in amazement said: twenty-eight. They counted them up, that's how many there were. Another go, then yet another. They drank twelve pints of tap water, six tankards each, said nothing, paid and left. Omaszta gathered up his odds and ends in a broad leather soldier's belt that had been polished to a back shine, with notches filed on the buckle running around it but breaking off about two thirds of the way. Never again did he take that belt off.

On the way home he bought a loaf of bread at Kresnik's the baker's. From that moment on, he always had a crust of bread on his person. He had a bath in his townhouse, then slept for three days. He threaded the belt into a pair of thick, black serge trousers, pushed them into a freshly laundered white shirt, and slipped his ungainly feet into boots with uppers of coarse felt. He then put on a lambskin jerkin, slapped a fur cap on his noddle and drove out to the farmstead in Fürjes. There he slaughtered the Mangalitsas, all six of the expensive prize-winning breeding boars, flayed them and left the flesh for his killer Kuvasz dogs. He tossed the bloody pig skins onto his cart and drove to Miszlay, the furrier, telling the panic-stricken little chap to make a greatcoat out of them.

It became a dreadful object. Tufts of bristle formed patches on it, dried-up blood vessels showing bare pigskin. It was hard, big and heavy, weighing over forty pounds, but from then on he wore it all the year round, summer and winter, whatever the weather or the occasion, only demeaning or honouring the servants' big New Year's Eve ball and a rural wedding party here and there with a dinner jacket and a well starched shirt front. When he went to bed he stood up the coat next to the bunk, as a guard. He slept on his own—in the stable, next to his horses. He hardly ever made love to his wife and even then he struck her. Every woman calls for a beating, that was his theory and practice.

He roared with laughter over István Nagyatádi Szabó's land reform in 1920, but of course milked the respectable bourgeois profit due to him. Two years before Mihály Bali retired, he put in an application, on his own initiative and in his own hand, for the post of state executioner when it was due to be vacated. At the beginning of August 1923, in memory of the great victory of Komarestie Slobodzia, Archduke Joseph with great military pomp and circumstance

unveiled Belanka's monument to the Haragos 101 in Franz Josef Square. By next morning someone had shat a huge turd at the foot of the artificial stone obelisk with its white marble plaque, neatly sticking a tiny Hungarian red-white-and-green pennant in the middle of the sizeable, tripartite brown pile.

He sold the carts and put the Noniuses out to grass at the farmstead at Fürjes. He branched out into stock breeding. People said, mistakenly, that in the early days a Berber prince who had stuck like a limpet to Hungary was engaged as his permanent expert adviser. Then, all of a sudden, he had six huge American trucks shipped from across the ocean. He no longer employed any of his earlier coach hands, just one whom he had kept on at his side as, so he called him, his secretary; he hired drivers for the trucks and treated them like dogs. His radius of operation first covered the county, but before long his vehicles went as far as the capital and they even crossed the country's new frontiers, though not for a moment, said Omaszta, did he ever take it seriously that thousand-year-old national borders could be changed for good overnight. In the scorching hot summer of 1924, though, he at last purchased a small aircraft from a new factory in Bamberg, and with that it was now indeed possible to reach even the sea.

It was not conspicuous, but he limped noticeably on his left foot though that was not why he used a walking stick, a massive, hook-ended cherrywood shepherd's crook, a black beast that had worn to a shine with a good four pounds of copper studs, gnarls and nails set in it. He never leaned on it but took it everywhere, flourishing it, tossing it up and twirling it around, rapping a copper stud on the doors of officials. He used it to mark business triumphs and as a weapon on his way home to break the back of an attacking rabid dog. It was rumoured that when unscrewed, it was hollow inside and contained a long, slender blade and twelve genuine South Sea pearls strung on a silk thread. He spoke fairly good German, and as a POW had also learned English. After he died a regular little library came to light, black-letter editions of Goethe, a hefty volume of *Poeta Mixtus*, the whole Staunton Shakespeare series, as well as all the Georg Ebers, Felix Dahn and Gustav Freytag rubbish as an extra. In fact both his mother and father had been Slovaks, and although naturally enough he had learned to speak perfect Hungarian at his grammar school, he was only ever willing to speak in Slovak in town. *Ne vrave. Vodu. Yebem ti toho.* That much and the stick. They were afraid of him as soon as his moustache twitched, though he generally said nothing after that. Could be he had nothing in mind. He broke off a crust of bread. He put it in his mouth. Chewed.

Byelik, Darida, Gavenda, Koczisky, Omaszta, Suchu. They had lived here for two centuries or more. Everything was theirs, the town included. Germans, Italians, Frenchmen, Jews, Armenians, Romanians, Hungarians—all came but nonetheless it stayed theirs. A tongue of land maybe just two hundred yards wide and roughly a mile long, which barely rose above its surroundings. A

small tillable ridge, a fertile *terra firma,* with a fringe of woodland around it. Beyond it lay the endless marshland of the Körös: the Haragos marsh. The wildest of the local Hungarians to this day presume to know the present street corner on which, on his way to Buda, the legendary Miklós Toldi killed a whole family of wolves. On sultry summer nights one can hear them growling, howling and wailing under the cobblestones. When the emperor granted the first of the Kehrheims the county that had been hastily reorganised after the Turks had left, a big tract of land fit for nothing, he brought people from the counties of Nitra, Hont and Nógrád. Six families from the mountains of Upper Hungary. Wretched Slovak Lutheran mountain shepherds, they forced their way all across the scorched land. They left their timber huts back home and built themselves new mud-brick homes. They slaved away like horses, surviving famines, fires, cholera, and floods, to build the first proper churches a scant thirty years later. The marshland was drained, and bit by bit a town grew up around the church and the ridge.

Factories.

The first postmaster of Árpádharagos went by the name of Daniel Omaszta Mastitius. His great-great-grandson is now sitting on the terrace of the Fiume, a glass of water in front of him. It is summer, the sun is blazing—that suits him down to the ground. He has a view, diagonally from where he is, of the brand-new building of the palace of the Hungarian Royal Mails where Saint Stephen and Franz Josef Squares meet. He knows that this too belongs to his empire. He watches the present parade. Bogus farmers and opera counts, quotation Jews and true blue Magyars, comic whores and renewed virgins, shop-window Christians and gala heathens, prematurely old children and childish old men, stock-exchange knights and black market countesses, Slovaks by necessity and Express Romanians, martyrs by profession and pseudo-fanatics. He does not see them. He feels no regret for a future after his death, it will not be his anyway, but for a past that went before him and never was. Daniel Omaszta Mastitius, who never stepped out on the street without his flint-lock gun. He slapped on his capacious calfskin satchel. *Our letters. Only if I am killed can they be yours.* Omaszta gives a great thump with his stick. He settles up and leaves. He walks off, limping in the direction of the Great Church. My eyes follow him all the way from under the awning of Samuel Kugel's ironmongers and general store right up to the Regdon apartment house, at which point his gesticulating figure fades into the wind-swept dust of the Main Square and he is lost from sight.

The second, the youngest boy, I knew from my time at the Great School.

In early 1914, when the winter exam period was over, a meeting of the distinguished teaching staff of the Rudolf Central Grammar School of the Lutheran Church under the chairmanship of the headmaster, Mr Bukovszky, and as proposed by Dr Albert Leel-Össy, teacher of geography and history, finally decided, without

room for appeal, that I would not be allowed to continue my secondary-school education and would be expelled outright. Still, on the benevolent intervention of Dr Rell, another teacher, I was offered (for a six-month probation period!) a post as one of the school's assistant janitors. I asked for time to think it over. To quote Horace: *quot capita, tot sententiæ,* as Dr Rell said in his own room. His eyes were twinkling; he did not want me to come to nothing. We sat down, he offered me a cigarette; I kept quiet. The fire was crackling in the small stove. The pine trees soughed and rustled. An icy, snow-packed wind sweeping from the foot of the Zárand Mountains buffeted the north-facing windows of the Great Church.

Qui habet tempus, habet vitam—He who wins time wins life. In the end I got that far.

Only the first six months were hard, the time of probation, until my former classmates had left. I started work at crack of dawn. By the time the small bell in the schoolyard went and lessons began, I completed my main duties. I saw to the smaller tasks while classes were in progress; during the breaks I would smoke a cigarette at a window in our tool-shed, and I took good care to avoid the second floor at all times. I spent my afternoons in the school library as no student would ever darken its door at that time of day. I would go through the material that had been taught that morning, prepare to be tested, was tested, set myself essays that Dr Rell would read through, correcting them with red ink and allotting a mark. In mid-April 1915, in Rell's home, in front of several of his colleagues from the girls' high school, I successfully sat my matriculation, the school-leaving exam. It was not possible, of course, to mark my certificate *summa cum laude* though that was how I passed, but to have passed was more than enough. Every now and again some deluded basketball player or swat who was late to bed was able to flick at my ear as I was staggering with the lead weight of a bucketful of clinkers brought down from one of the iron stoves on the upper floor as he passed me in the dark Kossuth bend: "Your arms are long as an ape's, Makkers!", but I had the satisfaction of knowing I was well ahead of him. "Do you mind getting out of the way? Excuse me, young man!" Then eventually they too matriculated and sauntered off so that, bit by bit, there was virtually no one left who remembered who Bálint Makovicza Jnr, perennial hand at the Great School, had been. After the main exam period for the summer term was over. I was promoted and confirmed as permanent in my job and in the late July heat wave, on a solitary Monday afternoon, I moved into the janitor's cottage, which stood under seven gigantic plane trees in the schoolyard.

That much Rell certainly knew that two years or so later, from the start of a new scholastic year, the headship of the school would be his. What even he could not have suspected was that another two years later, in the spring, Romanian troops would flood our squares, the town would be occupied, and the pillaging—*déprédation* they called it, *Schnäppchen* we did—will break loose so that a demented lancer from the Old Kingdom would clop up on

horseback to the second-floor landing and smash the precious plaster cast of the bust of the big statue on Kossuth Square with a pick. The bare pedestal has stood there ever since, the statue's memory preserved only by the name of the landing. Since the man went on killing and fire-raising in the building (the peephole in the door to the teachers' room is where a bullet passed) his captain finally had the drunken soldier arrested and shot him in the head himself in the square in front of the chemist's. Teaching was suspended, the school building became a military hospital; students and teachers alike took to their heels. In a manner of speaking, I became commander of the building; there was really nowhere else I could have gone anyway. Doctors, nurses, nuns, medicine, bandages, and then of course all the blood, the masses of detritus. I got through that month in good trim, after which Rell blindly trusted me. My cottage had electric lights and a fully equipped bathroom installed at municipal expense, and I had several minor honours conferred on me by the city. The school granted me the right to supervise simpler alternative individual pursuits during the afternoons. I was proud and also anxious, attentive to every detail in my job, until they got used to my services. Work to start with is a pastime next to living, but then slowly life becomes subordinated to work, and in the end work is all that's left in life.

We sit in my little library, tossing ideas around. We drink cups of tea, occasionally wine, and I bake a bread basket of scones for them. They leave when it grows dark. Of an evening if there is serious trouble, they rap on the window, *Lapis ignis?* Light anyone? Old smokers might get the drift. A sweet bun, local spiced sausage, slivovitz, and desultory talk. If that's not enough, then they're beyond human help. It tends to be enough.

Tamás Grynæus turned up at my place in the late autumn of '22. Without knocking he popped his angelic fair head round the door, took a look around and gave no greeting but abruptly asked, with curious, wide-open, bluish-green eyes, virtually all at once and certainly in a single breath, whether anybody here really *understood* the Fermat last theorem, the ancient Magyars' religious beliefs, the early plays of József Katona, János Garay's epic poetry, the seventh canto of János Arany's *Toldi,* and, for good measure, the building of the pyramids. On top of all that, he wanted to know all there was to be known, really everything, about the origin of the Medico della Peste, *you know*, those hideous beak-nosed masks that Venetian aristocrats put on for Carnival. We were evasive in our responses, but he stuck around for a while before making tracks in a hurry.

He was slim, tall, slightly round-shouldered, strange, and extremely handsome. His learning bled from many wounds. He was tense, unmethodical, much more at home, much more than the others, but it was clear that this could not be a normal state for him either. After conferring with Rell, I started to devote time to him in special lessons.

Take it slowly, delimit, dig deep, and last but not least, finish what you started! I beg you, Tamás! By Christmas he had calmed down, passing tests with flying colours. By the next summer he was allowed to go home, having been given a research topic of his own. He had written that up by September, then rewrote it by November and yet again by December. The first publication that was all his own work was published in the closing issue of the *Rudolf Gazette* for that academic year. *Exercitus antiquus (Wütischend Heer, Mesnie furieuse): late traces of an ancient belief among the Slovaks presently living in the Árpádharagos area: Addenda—First draft*, with Dr Rell as the author, it goes without saying. Bit by bit, he was drawn into collecting material for the monograph on Árpádharagos which was taking shape. He acted all on his own but delivered the goods.

After his disappearance, Rell and I found around eight hundred cards on his writing desk registering beliefs, names, numerical and factual data.

Tuesdays and Thursdays, from two until four—that was all I saw of him for the last year. Twice two hours before basketball training, and I was glad to have even that. He was the only one who was allowed, in private, to call me Makkers, but eventually I had to let go of him so that he could stand on his own feet in the Pázmány University of Budapest. *June, young man, June. After that I don't want you to set foot inside my door.* In the end you won't even want to, though that's not something you need to know right now. I really mean that: I shall not tolerate it.

Grynæus came from a long way away, from the county of Orava in the Uplands, beyond the fortified Zvolen and the Liptau Carpathians, from further north than the old settlers had come. Unlike them, though, he was the scion of impudent and posh Hungarian gentlefolk swaddled in opulently embroidered, but largely threadbare linen. Brought up by exquisitely turned-out girls and women—until his father finally realised that his son Tamás, a last fragile Magyar among Slovaks, should rather be equipped with lots and lots of old and new, Magyar and foreign learning by the very best, the distinguished teaching staff for Slovaks among Hungarians at the famed Great School in Haragos.

Nor was he much mistaken about that. Grynæus's Hungarian classmates gladly spread an old story. The Czechs vigorously asserted that the Slovaks in Hungary happened when the Hussites frigged a few escaped archiepiscopal monkeys, and in their fury they tossed those born of that coupling across the Danube so hard they rolled all the way to Árpádharagos. Well, at least in his early days, Baron Tamás Grynæus de Bártfaszombat and Füzérradvány gladly accepted that as true coin, yet as time went by the silent, yet prone to outbursts temper of the Drienovskys and Seberéňiks, Haáns and Ondřečiks, and in addition their well concealed, expansive, well-disposed, and perhaps crude intelligence, nevertheless taught him to be humble—a humility which was totally alien to his nature.

He received the first big kick in the pants when at the end of his first year it turned out that he was simply incapable of learning German and English. They

did not fail him and he was not expelled, was not even obliged to change classes. He was outstandingly good at Latin, so from the beginning of Year 2, he was obliged to go to Dr Leckage and learn French. He was unable not to feel grateful, but then again he had no wish to suck up to short-arsed, shitkicking, lowlife rejects, so that sooner or later he was nevertheless forced to acknowledge the hefty dose of magnanimity of the offer which was implicit in this edict. That was when he came over to me.

By Year 3 he had broken off virtually all contacts with his family. He still accepted their money, but there were times when he did not go home even on special occasions. He acquired friends instead. First of all there was the brainbox Frigyes Thoricht, then, out of sheer spite, János Nánássy, the local bigwig Hungarian's good-looking, orphan grandson. Later, Alessandro Benandante-Bottone, son of an Arad fencing master, because of an amorous affair temporarily stuck in the area, and, along with him, ever-game young Petár Kresnik, younger son of the baker at Premantura. Last of all there was Ibrahim, the unfortunate postumus son of Acsaboglán, an ancient polished up sweets seller. They were interested in the sciences, especially meteorology. Happenstance sensations of sense organs, regular readings of instruments; lists, tables, graphs. Wind speed, cloud formations, the cause of unexpected whirlwinds, the chances of thunder storms, maps of lighting. I left them to it; in their eyes burned the loopy, clear light of eternal promise that they too would try, futilely, to fulfil over a long and completely uneventful life. It was all over for all of them. The matriculation dinner at the Redoute in the park was their last throw—perhaps.

The boarding school, naturally, was not good enough for him. After the first week he packed his things, summoned a cab and quit, and without so much as a word to his father moved into Regdon House on Main Square, into the empty servant's quarters in the home of one of the impoverished Kehrheims. Miss Hetta was a plump, even-tempered, as yet barely wilting lady. She took care of him, fed and watered him, attended to him and, with a nigh-on ostentatious pride and profuse greetings to left and right, walked arm in arm with him, though in reality, on Monday and Wednesday nights, she was my devoted and inventive lover. *"O lente lente currite noctis equi. Why horses of the night of all things?! Silence! Silence gentlemen please. Thank you. Well, naturally, that is surely because they pull Time's chariot, is it not? He cannot stop it, so he tries at least to slow them down. If I'm not mistaken, the person speaking here is with his lady-love, is he not? He wants, you see, for the night, to last as long as possible.* So as to spend more time with her. Hetta, my Hetta.

About which those in Apóstelek château clearly knew, of course. The widowed Count and Master Anton. Miss Connie Reeves, perpetual guest and truly horse-mad. At nights ritual communal listening to the radio. Chess: not a game, not practice, not refreshment, but a concentrated glittering self-assurance, the strict discipline of a schooled mind—that is what they liked to think. In the

background soft, refined music, jazz, another world. That big red eye gleams in the dark. Sometimes someone knocks to report. They discuss, evaluate; they knew everything. *And little sister Hetta, the dah-ling? Wegdon is a weally pwetty house, centwal position, nice view, if it weren't for that back woom all the same, is it not comfier in Nadoh? And that Motoww... It's as if the little train were always rattling towards Llanwddyn.* They always know everything. *The poor relation and the janitor, our assistant groom weekends. Whom she cuckolds with that student. Well, you know.* They feared for her, dear Hetta, the speed with which she was slipping downhill. How quickly everything wears. Try laughing so it does not show. Don't let the wear on them show either.

But they had fine horses; they kept them very decently and did not begrudge them their diminishing wealth. Stables, horsemen, full-time veterinarian. Meticulously kept in-house stud-book. Races in Berény, Pest and Paris. Gala hunts with hounds and horse. A picturesque, profitable, declining little Potemkin-estate and a dash of jaded Alexandrian self-irony. In the shade of a past considered to be exalted and definitively over they were so wary of any passion, pathos, kitsch and the smell of sweat; of appearing ridiculous so much so that they even avoided, indeed had long forfeited, even the pretense of any serious conversation about serious subjects. There would have been no profit for them in regaining it, if things were somehow rearranged for them. The whole matter was of little interest to me: I was fond of the horses.

Worldspan, Sabre. Galileo. The remarkable Amadeus. Rubbing him down and saddling him. Waiting for him, then watering him when he finally came back. He has muscles to agitate his skin, tiny, lightning-quick twitches, the like of which we lack. And those eyes. A sad angel with a sword imprisoned in a magnificent, huge body. There is no going back: there are lumps of sugar, and the familiar rough, warm palm of the hand on the side of the neck. I can last out until roughly Sunday noontime. I get clothes there, quarters and my wages; one or two good pals, and a few cosy haystacks. I was in the habit of turning up on Friday afternoons. The gents—sticking together as by then it was hardly worth even rubbing shoulders with them. Industrialists, bankers and the more reputable merchants had long ago petered out and gone elsewhere. A few stray snobs or middle-ranking municipal and county officials, who once upon a time had been installed by them—that was the most they ran to. After Sunday dinner I cycled home, parking the bike in the lean-to. I drink six tots of rum in the Prophet, and if I'm in luck that is enough, but if not, then I drink what's left of the slivovitz at home. That's the end of taking it easy, the end of the week; from tomorrow, slaving away, work, lovemaking. Peace, tranquillity for the soul, if there is such a thing, if that is given to one, maybe it does indeed stem from eternal life. An advance on that, a foretaste, to which our properly carried out petty duties, preceding us, return.

The third man was me. When the Omasztas turned at the corner turret of the church railing, I stubbed out a last cigarette on the stone bollard of the locked courtyard. I cut across the snowed-over courtyard, then across the school's dark entrance hall. *Be mindful of your appearance!* I read the notice on the shiny brass plate dangling under the big mirror for the n-thousandth time. I was, and stepped out of the main entrance onto the square, because that is what I usually do on these occasions. I checked whether the nightlight was on in the little window of Madrony the chemist's, turned left, and in the thickening throng of people I reached the main door of the Great Church at exactly the same time as they. I greeted them with fitting humility before letting them proceed ahead of me. Mistress Mary, Miss Hetta, after you! Grynæus grins self-consciously. The women don't move. They stamp the snow off their expensive footwear—thoroughly to gain time and look dignified. "Ladies first!" Omaszta finally growls in exceptional good humour. We enter the fragrant darkness between the first pillars of the organ loft. The governor tips his head slightly to one side in order to pass through the door; he does not bow. ❧

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

Imre József Balázs

Poems

Translated by Jonathan Garfinkel

The Lights of the Night

(Az éjszaka fényei)

The lights of the night are opened up,
the bottle caps removed from the stars,
the lights are poured on the far-off trees,
they melt into the rivers and our veins.

Up, at the edge of a ravine, the otter,
the light, the swirling water-in-the-vale,
hot silver images, steam in the night:
in molten translucent metal, fish swim.

About the Route of the Otter

(A vidra útvonalairól)

The otter swims toward the willow,
something stirs at the willow's base,
the stirring means food,
he dives down and catches the water shrew,
now the otter stirs at the willow's base,
eating.

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The otter swims towards the poplar,
something preens itself on the poplar,
the preening means patience.
The otter watches his own patience,
sniffs leisurely at the poplar's base,
resting.

The otter swims towards the backwaters,
the water is green and unclear.
Green means the proliferation of life,
trailers catch the otter's skin,
crabs and pikes circle under it,
watching. The otter watches.

The otter swims towards the oak,
something glimmers from around the tree.
The glimmer means the she-otter,
they swim together, not touching,
an invisible chord strains between them,
they watch it.

Stories of the Grass

(A fű történetei)

The otter rests by the water's edge,
reading stories of the flattened grass.

A mouse passed through here, says the grass,
its feet were writing this terrain.
Its nose was here, resting right here,
here was the nose, and lower, here, the feet.

Later a heron, a big specimen
came along, perhaps looking for something.
It must have seen something, it went by quickly,
he saw or was looking for something.

I also preserved the glance of a weasel,
says the grass. It soaked into me,
or it was only the sun, you decide,

the smell of the sun or a weasel which I hide.
The otter listens to the chatter of flattened grass,
or does not listen, only stretches itself,
letting the tracks ramble or stray.

(I went to take leave...)

(Búcsúzni indultam...)

I went to take leave today at noon,
and I still don't know
from where I returned.
A ship was waiting, ready to leave,
I stood there too, waving my hand,
the people were boarding.

Sometimes the waving tightens the connection,
sometimes, however, you're still filled with anguish, heavy reflection
that one more leave-taking, you'd be there entirely,
and there will be nothing left of you to witness your departure.

Jürgen Dieringer–Johann-Jakob Wulf

The European Strategy for the Danube Region

The European Strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR) is among the key policies of Hungary's six-month rotating EU presidency. Hungary has been active in working out a concise programme and promoting it within the European Union.

The latest round of eastern enlargement has added a highly diverse but socially and economically unbalanced political entity to the EU fanning out from Atlantic icebergs to the shores of the Mediterranean and stretching from the Eastern Carpathians to the Black Sea. The EU has started to divide this geographical swathe into macro regions, but only for certain purposes and does not cover the whole territory. Such subdivisions, or macro-regions, cover various countries or regions associated with common features or challenges. They are meant to help devise strategies so as to iron out spatial imbalances and combat threats to the environment, among other aims. The Baltic Sea regional strategy was adopted in 2009; the one for the Danube region is in the process of being adopted. Advocates applaud its efforts to halt regional fragmentation and dispense with plodding, one-size-fits-all schemes. Detractors complain the strategies merely duplicate existing programmes. The Danube Strategy's three central doctrines—no new legislation, no new institutions, no fresh money—are either liberating or constraining depending on your point of view. What can the EUSDR, scheduled to be passed into law in June 2011 at the tail-end of the Hungarian EU presidency, realistically accomplish?

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The idea of an integrated Danube Region is not new and was mooted in various proposals in the Habsburg Europe. Lajos Kossuth outlined such a plan for a Danube Confederation in 1862 to accommodate the forces of nationalism. Neither his proposal nor that of Oszkár Jászi for a federal "United States of Danube Natons" in 1918 met with serious support. Time was not ripe for genuinely international cross-border cooperation. Since then several international arrangements have emerged, one, for example, regulating shipping on the Danube. Yet the institutions of cooperation are weaker than in Western Europe due in part to nationalism, minority issues, underdeveloped social capital, a high level of corruption, disjoined cross-border infrastructure, weak industrialization, and so forth. The Danube area beyond Vienna, a minefield of conflicts, lacks cohesion. The EUSDR encourages self-governance and subsidiarity, as well as boosting cross-border cooperation between a multitude of social, economic and political actors.

Europe's blue ribbon traverses lands from the Black Forest in Germany to its Black Sea delta. Around 2,850 km long, the Danube is the longest river in the EU and its basin, with a population of 115 million, covers about 800,000 sq km with three sub areas: upper Danube from the source to Bratislava (132,000 sq km), central Danube from Bratislava to the Iron Gate (450,000 sq km) and the lower Danube from the Iron Gate to the Black Sea (220,000 sq km). Hop across these areas and economic performance drops along the way, from rich (Germany, Austria) to comparatively developed countries (Slovakia, Hungary), and those which have some catching up to do. (Serbia still suffers from the fallout of the Balkan Wars; Bulgaria and Romania are still striving to become fully integrated into the EU; Ukraine and Moldova are not even consolidated democracies.)

Assorted political systems are dotted throughout the area. Officially 14 countries participate in the programme: seven EU member states (Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), one candidate country (Croatia), three potential candidate countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina), and two countries with no current membership agenda (Ukraine and Republic of Moldova). Long established democracies meet transition countries and new democracies, and even authoritarian regimes. Huge economic players juxtapose developing countries, while federations with powerful regions rub against strongly centralised states. The differences are vast.

Critics claim the macro-regional approach, far from joining things up, splits EU territory and sets up clubs. Treaties stipulate that member states must form a consensus on the use of EU instruments. Governance of the EUSDR, therefore, relies on flexible policy tools without any new inputs: as noted above, there are no new regulations, fresh money or novel institutions—existing administrative

Map 1: Countries and regions participating in the EUSDA

Source: European Commission

capabilities must be employed. These strictures were the precondition for acceptance by countries not affected, or covered, by the Strategy. The Commission is more of a coordinator than a driving force. Governance is asymmetrical, even diametrical: federations like Germany and Austria may shift competences to the *Länder,* (Germany participates officially as a country, but the action centres on two *Bundesländer,* Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria) whereas other states may keep them with the central authorities; municipalities and civil society may interact with central governments and vice versa. This is possible even between member states and non-members. The watchword is flexibility.

The process of formalizing the strategy within the European institutions takes around two years. It all started officially when the European Council, the body of heads of government and heads of state, called on the European Commission, to present a strategy for the Danube Region until the end of 2010 modelled on the blueprint of the Baltic Sea Strategy. The Commission started by organising stakeholder conferences in order to establish a network of actors with an interest in the process. Governments were asked to contribute national coordinators to the Commission (which was, at first, rather hesitant to engage in the project; a strong intergovernmental bias was clear from the start). In this phase, the Commission almost entirely ignored civil society organisations and territorial units below the national level—surprisingly, as it was these that were the most active in the process of elevating interests to the European level. In autumn 2010 the Commission drafted the documents and set up a horizontal structure spanning several EC directorates such as those dealing

with regional policy, energy policy and the environment. The Commission announced the EUSDR on December 8, 2010. The Strategy is formulated in two documents: a Communication from the European Commission to the other European institutions and an accompanying Action Plan. After finalising the draft the document was presented to the stakeholders and passed to the Council and the European Parliament.

Because EUSDR policy-making had to be structured alongside existing challenges, it was hard to avoid duplicating programmes. The EUSDR is designed as a tool to merge existing programmes, so one might expect it to have been organised horizontally in order to maximise functionality. Surprisingly this is not so. Its many vertical structures seem to be part and parcel of path dependence: when formulating policy preferences, the Commission proposed three pillars, namely *connectivity* (essentially transport, energy and culture/tourism), *the environment* (protecting air, water, biodiversity), and *prosperity* (socio-economic development); all national governments took the three pillars as a framework for their policy proposals formulating national or regional positions. Some of these proposals were very detailed and thorough; others were obviously cobbled together. Some innovative ideas were presented, whereas some countries did not hand in any proposals at all. The Serbian government pushed for security as an additional issue, including topics such as illegal migration, human and drug trafficking, and these were incorporated into a fourth pillar which was meant to draw guidelines for governance and is now called—for whatever reason—*strengthening the Danube region*.

Connectivity and *environment* (see Chart 1) are the heart of the Strategy. But instead of mainstreaming them, they have been set up as a vertical, sectoral structure. Worries about duplication and disconnection appear justified. *Prosperity* is oversized and lacks an internal structure—a kind of melting pot. The big challenge is to combine economic issues with social issues. The decoupling of economic interests and social needs is typical of South-Eastern Europe. Against this background, the EUSDR could provide a helpful antidote. Restructuring the prosperity bracket is unavoidable and improvements are likely to be made during the first evaluation round.

The overall objective of pillar A is to improve the linkage of infrastructure systems and social capital within the region. The Commission sees problems in this area, largely connected with a lack of coordinated planning, funding and implementation. Intergovernmental bodies are needed and tighter political cooperation. Pillar A strongly supports the EU 2020 Strategy (former Lisbon Strategy) and aims to contribute smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Chart 1: The four-pillar structure

Pillar A: Connectivity	Pillar B: Environment	Pillar C: Prosperity	Pillar D: Strengthening the Danube Region
(1) to improve mobility and multimodality (e.g. to coordinate national transport policies in the field of navigation in the Danube basin) (2) to encourage more sustainable energy (e.g. to develop gas storage capacities) (3) to promote culture and tourism, people to people contact (e.g. to establish the Danube Region as an important European tourist destination)	(1) to restore and maintain the quality of waters (e.g. to promote measures to limit water abstraction) (2) to manage environmental risks (e.g. anticipate regional and local impacts of climate change through research) (3) to preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of the air and the soil (e.g. to decrease air pollution)	(1) to develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies (e.g. to emphasise Danube Region specifics in the curricula of university programmes) (2) to support the competitiveness of enterprises, including cluster development (e.g. to improve business support to strengthen the capacities of small and medium enterprises for cooperation and trade) (3) to invest in people and skills (e.g. to fight poverty and social exclusion of marginalised communities in the Danube Region, especially the Roma communities)	(1) to step up institutional capacity and cooperation (e.g. to increase knowledge of public finance management) (2) to work together to promote security and tackle organised and serious crime (e.g. to intensify the prosecution of Internet crime)

Source: European Commission

Pillar B proposes direct contributions to the EU 2020 Strategy, such as tackling climate change and the sustainable use of resources. The priority areas are strongly intertwined with other policy fields such as transport and mobility. Its goal is to balance the interests of desirable economic growth with the most sustainable environmental solution. The priority areas have to mesh with EU environmental legislation and require no extra jurisdiction. The pillar

attaches particular importance to the Danube River Management Plan. Most of the actions are to be led by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (IPCDR).

Pillar C is quite mixed. It places emphasis on electronically related issues such as e-health and e-government services without missing important aspects such as how to best invest in human capital. This is to achieve higher regional coherence in sectors where the region has existing strengths. Legislative improvements, best practice and the implementation of joint projects again focus on the EU2020 Strategy and stress the need for an integrated approach.

In pillar D very little direct leadership for projects is named. This comes as a surprise since the Serbian government, in particular, pushed towards inclusion of security issues. For the list of priority areas and project leadership see chart 2.

Chart 2: Priority Coordination

Priority area	Project leader
1) To improve mobility and intermodality	
– inland waterways	Austria, Romania
– rail, road and air	Slovenia, Serbia
2) To encourage more sustainable energy	Hungary, Czech Republic
3) To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts	Bulgaria, Romania
4) To restore and maintain the quality of waters	Hungary, Slovakia
5) To manage environmental risks	Hungary, Romania
6) To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils	Germany (Bavaria), Croatia
7) To develop the knowledge society (research, education and ICT)	Slovakia, Serbia
8) To support the competitiveness of enterprises	Germany (B-W), Croatia
9) To invest in people and skills	Austria, Moldova
10) To step up institutional capacity and cooperation	Austria (Vienna), Slovenia
11) To work together to tackle security and organised crime	Germany, Bulgaria

Source: European Commission

Priority areas 1–3 are closely linked to Pillar A, priority areas 4–6 cover Pillar B, 7–9 Pillar C and 10–11 Pillar D. The mix of countries taking over leadership functions with respect to economic development is quite balanced. There seems to be no split alongside a bias "materialistic/Lower Danube" and "post-materialistic/Upper Danube" as was hypothesised at several

conferences. Not surprisingly, a governmental overweight is visible, governments take the lead, not regions and cities. With the exception of Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria) only Vienna as a sub-national unit is attributed project leadership, although the EUSDR is meant to foster better cooperation amongst such sub-units. New member states and accession countries again missed a chance to shift some responsibilities to territorial and social actors. Amongst non-EU states Serbia and Croatia play a strong role. Others are not visible, with the exception of Moldova in priority area 9.

The European Parliament and Council are expected to adopt the plan soon. It is not yet clear how strictly the financial, regulatory and institutional curbs will be enforced. The financial "No" is already heavily discussed internally as there seems to be some money left from regional and cohesion policies, even in the current financial period of 2007–13. Several billion euros may still be available with the support of the European Regional Development Fund, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Instrument for Pre-Accession. However, given the fallout from the financial crisis, many construction sites—in every meaning of the term—in the EU are in need of fresh money. It will only become obvious whether regulations are needed after the first implementation phase. However, EU officials will not allow the EU acquis (the body of EU law) to be broken apart. In reality, the euro, Schengen and the economic governance of the euro zone now being discussed already established clubs within the club. And European treaties allow for flexible integration. With respect to new institutions: there may be no new European institutions, but on the national and sub-national level and on the level of civil society, institutionalisation is highly likely. The newly established Civil Forum is the first such example.

The limited inclusion of territorial and social actors is problematical. Besides Vienna and the big German *Länder,* which do not really fit the category, not even the proactive city of Budapest was given project leadership. The Commission belatedly conceded that civil society needs help to form the Civil Forum. Particular challenges need to be addressed more coherently, for example the development of an inclusive Roma policy, an issue pressed by the Commission and eventually picked up by Hungary. Without help from the Commission, civil-society involvement will be extremely unbalanced due to a lack of resources in the lower part of the Danube region.

Besides all the problems, dangers, shortcomings and unresolved questions, the usefulness of the EUSDR is obvious: it forces political, administrative and social actors to interact across borders and develop forms of mutual understanding, action, policy formulation and implementation. A very good example in this respect is that Hungary has obtained joint leadership in programmes with both Romania and Slovakia. Such mutual programming

helps to soften minority issues and develops social capital and new institutional links. The cross-border character of actions is a must, as it balances structural policies which are often domestically rooted. Here, with a successful integration of social and territorial actors (counties, cities, youth, minority and environment NGOs etc.), even highly politicised matters can be reduced to local or regional issues. There they can be tackled by the mutual understanding of local and regional elites. Only under this precondition is the Strategy acceptable. Yet success is not guaranteed. ❧

Alan Walker

Franz Liszt: A Biographer's Journey

Part 1

I

The impulse to write my three-volume biography of Franz Liszt arose from a variety of circumstances. First, there was a simple desire to do his life and work full justice. When I entered the field of Liszt scholarship, more than fifty years ago, hardly anything worthwhile existed in English. The best-known biography was Sacheverell Sitwell's *Liszt*, while the most thorough book on the music itself was Humphrey Searle's *The Music of Liszt.* But the first was an evangelical work, not based on original research; while the second was a slim and surprisingly dry volume containing a great many reservations about the compositions themselves. Then there was Ernest Newman's character-assassination *The Man Liszt* (1934), which was reprinted after World War II and continued for many years to tarnish Liszt's reputation in English-speaking countries. Three books do not constitute a library.

Second, I had always been immensely attracted to Liszt's magnetic personality, and in my childhood I was drawn to the legend of his piano playing as to few other topics. They say that in every biography is an autobiography trying to get out. The idea would be diverting if it were not so sobering. I have come to believe that the best biographies choose their biographers, not vice versa. The lucky biographers write their work not because they have a choice but because they have no choice at all.

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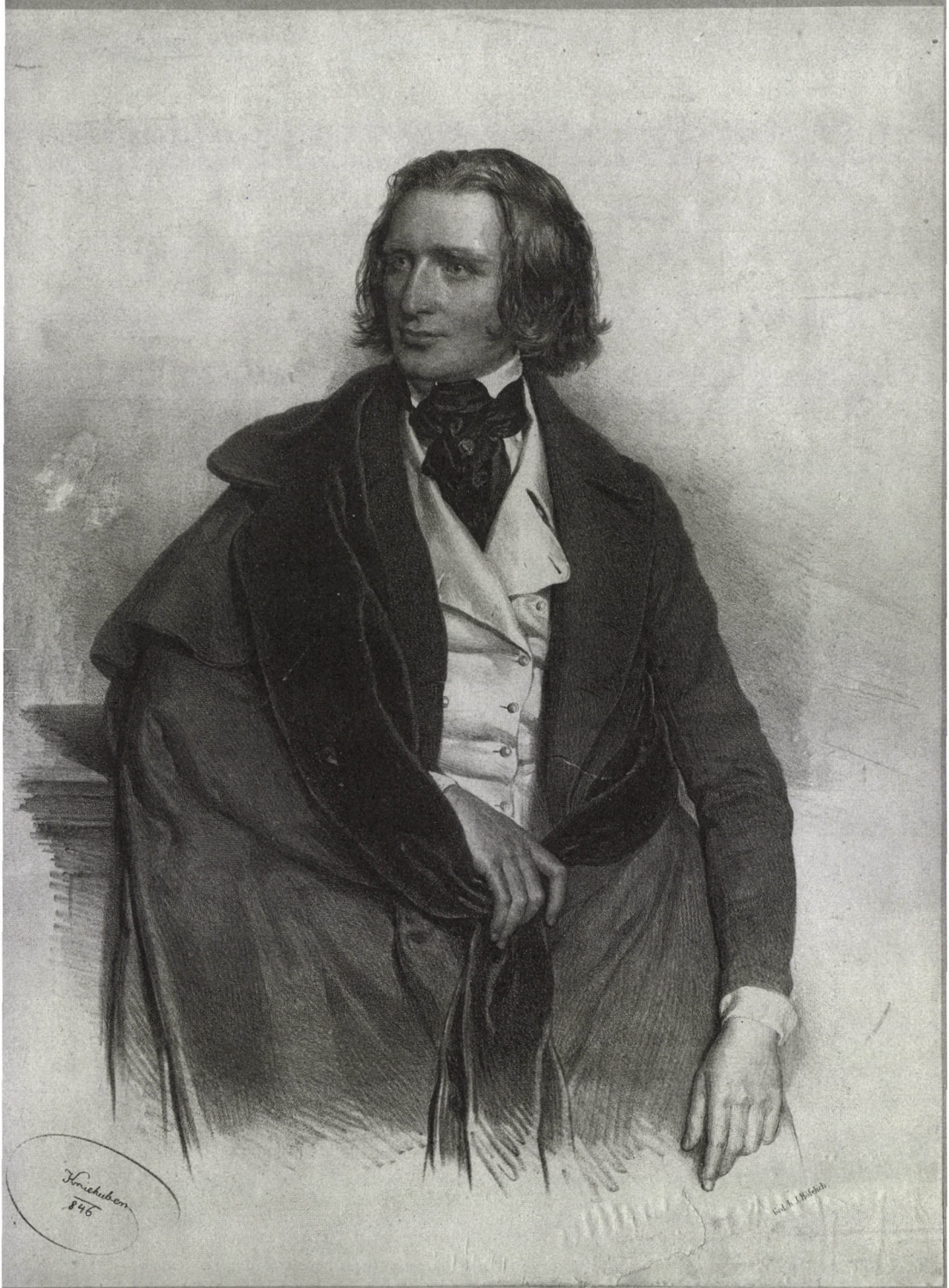
Third, and most important, was the time and place in which I grew up as a musician. It is a fact well-documented that until recent times Liszt was never popular in England. That was reflected in the absence of his music in concert programmes, as well as the avoidance of all mention of the man and his music in the colleges and the conservatories. Sir George Macfarren, the Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, once tried to discourage his students from listening to Liszt's music lest it corrupt them. As he himself put it, 'were you to preach temperance at a gin-shop door, and let your congregation taste the poison sold therein, that they might know its vileness, they would come out drunkards.'[1] True, that was in the late nineteenth century, but the conservative streak in conservatories runs deep, and such attitudes were still being reflected in the London music colleges when I was there in the 1950s, symbolized by the conspiracy of silence surrounding the composer himself.

As for my work with Hans Keller, with whom I was studying privately, and who was the chief musical influence on my life at that time, I do not think that we uttered more than a couple of sentences about Liszt. We spent most of our time analyzing the symphonies of Beethoven and the string quartets of Mozart and Haydn. My first book, *A Study in Musical Analysis* (1962), is dedicated to Keller and reflects the kind of analytical work with which we preoccupied ourselves. When he learned of my interest in Liszt, however, he allowed himself to observe that Liszt's position in history probably lay somewhere between Beethoven and Paganini—a remark that was deliberately crafted to mean all things to all men. What I failed to ask him at the time was 'just how near to Beethoven?' Keller was a string player by training, steeped in the chamber music of the First Viennese School, and although I had discovered that he was deeply interested in Chopin, he seemed indifferent to Liszt. It therefore came as a welcome surprise to hear him, many years later, heap lavish praise on the first volume of my Liszt biography and predict that it would win the Yorkshire Post Music Book Award for 1983. His forecast came true, and I have often wondered whether he had a hand in the decision.[2] It was a source of sadness to me that Keller did not live to see the second and third volumes published, although he had followed their progress with interest. The third volume actually won the same Yorkshire Post Music Book Award, in 1996. 'What was wrong with the second volume?' I hear him asking.

1 ■ Henry C. Banister, *George Alexander Macfarren: His Life, Works and Influence,* London, 1892, p. 296.
2 ■ I raise the question here because Keller was equally convinced that two other books short-listed for the same prize, Peter Heyworth's biography of Otto Klemperer and Hildesheimer's biography of Mozart (which had just appeared in an English translation), could not possibly win. He drew up a small betting contract with me. I recall that it was in the sum of five pounds which he won and I was happy to pay. The original contract, bearing our signatures, is today in my personal archive at McMaster University, Canada. Box 5, f. 7.

Franz Liszt, 1846. Lithograph by Josef Kriehuber
Courtesy of the Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum and Research Centre, Budapest



F. Liszt

II

By training and by temperament I was not well fitted to become a biographer. My earlier books had been about musical analysis and the theory of musical criticism. A turning-point came in 1961 when I joined the British Broadcasting Corporation as a music producer. William Glock had recently been appointed Controller of Music, and in his determination to sweep the musty corridors of the BBC clean, he had started to appoint a number of younger producers to the staff of the Music Division. He knew of me because I had published an article in *The Score,* a magazine that he himself had founded some years earlier and still edited. Hans Keller, with whom I was still studying, was instrumental in getting me a crucial interview with Glock at his office in Yalding House (a building which was in those days the headquarters of the BBC's Music Division), an encounter that seemed to do me no harm, despite the fact that shortly after our conversation began I inadvertently started to criticise the music of Hector Berlioz after being invited to deliver an opinion on it. I did not know of Glock's love of this composer's music, otherwise I might have maintained my silence. Shortly afterwards, however, when a suitable vacancy arose at the BBC, Glock showed little hesitation in appointing me.

My job at the BBC was twofold: to write 'presentation notes' for the announcers to read for the famous (and now defunct) Third Programme music broadcasts; and to engage artists for national broadcasting and help them plan their programmes. The first part of the job taught me the essential difference between the spoken and the written word, and it helped to sharpen my communication skills. The second part of the job brought me into contact with performers from all over the world. More about that in a moment.

Being placed in charge of the BBC's Music Presentation Unit was an exacting challenge. I had two secretaries and a formidable archive of material which was kept in old, open files on dozens of feet of shelving. The material had been accumulated over many years by my predecessors Harold Rutland and Ralph Hill, and most recently by Deryck Cooke, in whose wakes I felt privileged to trail. It represented a mass of information on every conceivable composer and every known piece of music. An older archive still, containing documents going back to the mid 1930s at the very start of the Corporation's existence, was contained in a huge wooden box, affectionately known to the three of us in my office as 'the coffin'. Every day was taken up with answering requests from the Announcers' Office, half-a-mile away in Broadcasting House itself, which wanted scripts on programmes about to be broadcast—symphony concerts, piano recitals, choral concerts, and suchlike—and which had to be written in such a way that they could immediately be read at the microphone by a BBC staff announcer and understood by the ordinary listener. It was not unusual for me to issue two to three thousand words a day, although much of this material

was re-cycled from previous broadcasts. But even this seemingly mundane activity taught me much about the relationship between words and music.

It was at this time that I conceived the idea of a comprehensive series of broadcast recitals of the piano music of Franz Liszt. To the best of my knowledge it had never been done on radio, and I engaged a number of concert pianists to play this vast repertory. London in those days was properly regarded as the centre of the musical world, with an average of 25 public concerts taking place every night somewhere in the Greater Metropolitan Area. It was moreover full of excellent pianists who resided there, either because of birth or adoption. I had little difficulty in planning twenty or more recitals and finding pianists who were ready to devote the necessary time to learning the pieces, some of which were not well known. The series included John Ogdon, Louis Kentner, Valerie Tryon, Norma Fisher, David Wilde, Shura Cherkassky, Joseph Weingarten and Béla Siki (the last two of whom had years earlier been pupils of Dohnányi at the Liszt Academy in Hungary). When the recitals were all recorded, I invited Sir Sacheverell Sitwell into the studio in order to introduce everything. Sir Sacheverell had been a founding member of the British Liszt Society. Moreover his early, pioneering book on Liszt had given him a particular connection with the composer. He was a unique character and I eventually came to count him as a friend. I told him then of the strong impression that his biography of Liszt had made on me as a young boy, and I think that he was pleased with my remarks. After he had recorded his talk we went into nearby Soho for lunch, and while we were en route by taxi he told me that he would far sooner have been a musician than a writer. I was surprised at this confession, for he was the author of more than sixty books and a member of a famous literary family. But he went on to explain that a musician normally receives a public response for his work immediately after the performance. A writer may have to wait for years, he said, before he meets anybody at all who has even read and likes his work. It was only later that I learned of his difficulties with the critics, which had already begun to bother him to the extent that for a time he declined to publish his work in order to save himself the trouble of responding to them.

I still had not prepared the scripts for the BBC announcers to introduce the Liszt recitals (which were to be broadcast at weekly intervals, and some of which lasted for two hours or more) and it was only then that I became aware of the absence of reliable sources. Nothing at all seemed to have been written about many of the works in the series, some of which were being broadcast for the first time in England—including the Third 'Mephisto' Waltz, the 'Scherzo and March', and the Grosses Konzertsolo. Even a last desperate search in 'the coffin' yielded no results.

That is how I entered the field of Liszt scholarship. I moved in by default, so to speak. I could not think of another case in the whole of music of a major composer suffering such benign neglect. Only later did I realise that the

situation had begun in Liszt's own lifetime. The words of Saint-Saëns were at that time unknown to me, but I have often thought of them during the intervening years. 'The world persisted to the end in regarding Liszt as the greatest pianist in order to save itself the trouble of considering him as a great composer.' I met the pressing deadlines, wrote all the scripts myself, and suddenly found that I had become a biographer.

III

My work at the BBC had meanwhile given me a unique opportunity to contrast and compare the various pianists with whom I was now in regular contact. This was a particularly valuable experience when they happened to be playing the same compositions at close intervals. I heard many performances of Liszt's B minor Sonata during my BBC years and the lesson was a salutary one. I started to keep a log of the various timings that emerged from these recording sessions, and I was surprised to observe that this particular Sonata could be as short as 26'.00" and as long as 35'.00". That made me think about what constitutes an ideal performance, not only of this, but of other works by Liszt. I gradually formed for myself a set of principles by which I began to judge the many so-called 'Liszt pianists' who crossed my path. In those days Liszt playing had started to be dominated by the 'Earthquake School', a brutal approach to his music that seemed to have but one aim: namely, to drive the piano through the floorboards. Today the situation is, if anything, worse. Because Liszt's music nearly always contains some technical challenge, it tends to attract players of the wrong type, those who feel that their work is accomplished only if they play Liszt fast and loud. Where have all the Swiss-watchmakers gone? Where are all the pianists who know how to bring out the nuances of Liszt's keyboard music? The fact is, Liszt's music is not performer-proof. In this he is the opposite of his great contemporary Chopin. I like to explain the matter like this. How often have we heard a Chopin recital that has gone badly, and hear someone exclaim: 'What a poor pianist!' And how often have we heard a Liszt recital that has gone badly, and hear someone exclaim: 'What a poor composer!' The sins of the performer are visited on Liszt in a way that makes him almost unique. He was always the best interpreter of his own music. That is surely because he was one of those musicians who composed with the outlook of a performer and performed with the insight of a composer. In him these two things inevitably went together.

In 1970 I published my *Franz Liszt: The Man and His Music,* a symposium whose eminent contributors included several who had earlier performed in the broadcast series. The book has flaws, but it was the best of which I was capable at that time. In any case, the participants were all well known, and the book soon sold out and went into a revised paperback edition. From these modest beginnings I began to think along bolder lines. Why not a full-scale biography?

Was I up to the task? And could I find a publisher? I was not lacking in enthusiasm, but there was clearly no point in re-hashing the sorry material that currently served for the story of Liszt's life. I had already discovered that biographers in general were indolent. Their preferred method of work was to write a 'new' biography by staying at home and joining two or three old ones together. With one or two notable exceptions, that had been the history of Liszt biography for the past one hundred years or more. One can almost understand why this was so. Because of Liszt's fame as a pianist, it was necessary to generate instant information about him in order to pacify the demands of the crowd. If much of it turned out to be false, what matter? During his lifetime a Niagara of ink was spilled in this way. The many newspaper puffs, pamphlets, and short biographies went on repeating the same mis-information, and they have poisoned the chalice from which his modern biographers continue to drink. Merely to continue along such a path would have represented an idle use of my time. It was already evident that the true story of his life lay hidden in the European archives, and that story must be excavated. It was going to be a long and difficult process.

If anyone had told me in 1971, the year in which I began serious work on my Liszt biography, that it would take me twenty-five years to complete, I would have thought them deluded. This was surely a work that could be despatched in four or five years at most, or so I thought. It was on my first visit to Hungary, in 1977, that one of the country's best-known musicologists took me aside and told me, 'Remember that it takes a life to study a life.' I never forgot that phrase. It provokes me still. It suggests that I wrote and published my life of Liszt far too quickly, its twenty-five year gestation notwithstanding.

Alan Walker in the BBC's Maida Vale Studio, producing a Liszt lieder recital. London, 1968

The first task was to persuade a publisher to take on the three volumes which I had already begun to sketch out, first mentally, and then in written chronological form. Because the firm of Faber & Faber had already published two of my earlier books I approached them with the idea. Donald Mitchell, who was at that time the music editor, was enthusiastic about a Liszt biography; but when I mentioned that my narrative could not be unfolded across fewer than three volumes the conversation flagged, or so it seemed to me. But at a follow-up lunch with one of the directors Peter de Sautoy (publishers still took their authors to lunch in those days), I received a green light, and started to draw up a detailed outline for my book.

IV

Shortly after signing my contract with Faber, in 1971, I relocated to Canada, and took up an academic appointment there. On the face of it, the decision was inexplicable because I had now placed four thousand miles between myself and the main European archives in which I was already planning to work. In reality it secured better conditions for my Liszt biography. My new position as Chairman of the Music Department at McMaster University in Ontario gave me unparalleled access to research facilities, contact with other scholars, and the sort of freedom to get on with my writing that had been denied me at the BBC. Moreover, the job offered the prospect of a Sabbatical leave every seven years. Altogether I enjoyed three of them, and each one of them I spent in Europe, writing.

Nothing had prepared me for the Canadian winter, and the blizzards that could isolate whole communities for several days. I quickly learned to like them, precisely because of the silence and isolation in which they cocooned one from the rest of the world, a condition so essential for writers—at least for this writer. One such storm I recall especially. The roads were impassable, the university had been closed for the weekend, and the snow was already up to the window-sills. I was in my study reading, taking an occasional glance at the blowing snow outside, wondering how much deeper it would get. My 'phone rang, and I heard an unfamiliar voice at the other end of the line: 'This is Robert Gottlieb, from Alfred Knopf, in New York. I would like to talk to you about your Liszt biography.' Gottlieb was the renowned chief editor of one of the most prominent book publishers in America. It transpired that my literary agent in London had sent him a copy of the first few chapters of my Liszt biography, that he had read them while on holiday in Vermont, and had decided that he wanted to publish the book. He invited me to go down to New York later in the year in order to meet him and work out some reciprocal arrangements with Faber.

When I walked into Gottlieb's office the first impression I got was of a man besieged by ornamental Borzoi dogs, placed at strategic points in the room—they were sitting by the chairs, by the desk, along the window ledges. There must have been a dozen of them, the largest of which was close to life size. The Borzoi, of course, is the house symbol for the firm of Knopf, and you will find it on the spine of every one of their books. I am told that it was Mrs. Blanche Knopf's favourite dog, which she kept as a household pet for many years.

We came to the point of our meeting. Knopf would publish the Liszt biography on condition that Faber would relinquish control over the book and cooperate with Knopf to the extent of joining them in a print run and importing copies for distribution in Britain. I doubted that Faber would agree to untangle a contract they had already negotiated with me, and said so. But Gottlieb put through a crucial 'phone call to Faber while I waited, and within ten minutes everything had

been transformed. When I left Robert Gottlieb's office I was a Knopf author. I do not know what conditions at that firm are like today. But in 1973 I was given whatever I asked for. The typeface, the map designs, the case, the stitching, were all submitted to me for my scrutiny. Even the jacket design did not go forward until I had approved its layout. And as a bonus I was given a desk with office space whenever I was in town and my editors had something they wanted me to check. This was a world I was not used to. The difference may be summed up in a single sentence. In England the author was the enemy; once the book had been handed over and had gone into production, the publisher regarded you as a complicating factor and wanted as little as possible to do with you. In America I found the exact opposite to be the case. The author remained his editor's leading expert, there to be consulted about his book until it had come off the production line.

I was already disciplined as a writer. I loved creating expository prose and found no difficulty in setting aside a portion of each day to build a biographical narrative that in the end would amount to more than 1700 pages.

V

I am a morning person. I find it difficult to write in the afternoons, and almost impossible in the evenings. Over many years I have built up a routine that works well for me. My day begins at about 8:00 am with a light breakfast, and by 8:30am I am usually at my desk where I may remain until noon, with frequent breaks for cups of tea or coffee. I write slowly, between three and four hundred words a day if all goes well. When I contrast that with the daily output of a Dickens or a Balzac I blench. Ten thousand words a day was not unusual for these heroes of pen and ink. But I console myself with the thought that they were writing novels. A biography is a very different genre; you cannot make it up as you go along. Every fact is an obstacle along the path towards the finishing line, because it has to be checked and cross-checked. I have worn out an entire carpet walking back and forth to my bookshelves in search of foreign dictionaries, maps, iconographies, and reference books of all kinds. The best advice I ever received about writing came from my mentor Hans Keller. It was meant to counter 'writers' block', and took the form of a paradox, so typical of his kind of thinking. 'Always stop when you still have something more to say.' It sounds absurd, but it reflects something profound. When you pick up your pen next morning the creative engine is still running and ready to go, ready to express those thoughts that were deliberately locked up for the night, and might bring new ones in their train. For the rest, three hundred words a day is quickly turned into a very large book indeed, so perhaps my snail-like progress is not such a great impediment after all. Because I am an inveterate reviser, I spend a lot of time looking over the results of yesterday's toil, deciding just how much of it I want to keep, and just how much of it I am obliged to jettison. For many years I kept over my desk a famous

aphorism by Voltaire: 'If you would be dull, tell all'. An important part of revision, for me, lies in heeding Voltaire's advice. Something may be lost by not telling all, but much more is to be gained by leaving the reader wanting more.

That said, I cannot resist the following aside, because it concerns the chief crisis facing musicology today: namely, that of weighing the relative importance of whatever new information comes to light, and treating it accordingly. Facts that take much effort and weeks of toil to uncover may, in the end, turn out to make no difference whatever to the sum total of things. They are best discarded as the trivia that they are. The younger generation of scholars, especially the ones attached to universities, finds this all but impossible to do; it is as if they were incapable of making any attempt at discrimination, as if all facts were of equal importance—somewhat like the 'facts' in a telephone book. Part of the problem is the self-love of the piece, which can be so powerful that to be asked to cut any part of it is like being invited to amputate one's own limbs. The rest of the problem has to do with institutionalized training, which sees in research the means to climb the ladder of academic promotion. 'Publish or perish', runs the saying. It is poor advice. Many have published but they have perished anyway.

The first two volumes of my Liszt biography were written entirely in longhand. My preferred method was to use children's multi-coloured Jumbo Pads which I bought from the local grocery-store. The relief afforded by a new colour every time the page was turned produced a special kind of stimulus. The colour pink was exceptionally conducive to superior prose, or so I thought, and I even entertained the notion of switching to pink writing-pads in their entirety. But I was wise to abandon that idea since the joy of the contrast would have been lost; so I remained with what worked for me. I came to computers and word-processing very late. Such tardiness was a distinct advantage for me. My prose has to flow down my right arm, otherwise I feel that I have not earned it. I remain suspicious of computers, even though the whole of the third volume was eventually set up with their help. This may have something to do with my early Protestant upbringing, and the work-ethic which went along with it. And now I think about it, that may also explain why I find it difficult to relax and enjoy myself in the evenings if the work has gone badly during the day. Pleasure, too, has to be earned.

One of the major differences between a biography of someone still living and someone long dead is the obvious one: the dead cannot be interviewed. In many cases their family, friends and contemporaries are also dead and cannot be interviewed either. This is not necessarily a disadvantage where the subject of the biography has left a sufficiently generous paper-trail. And in the case of Liszt, there are paper-trails to satisfy the most intrepid of scholars. They stretch across the western world. So I renewed my passport, bought a very large suitcase, and began the first of many journeys in pursuit of Lisztiana.

VI

By far the largest Liszt archive in North America is to be found in The Library of Congress, Washington. Its holdings are considerable, and no Liszt scholar can afford to overlook them. Since Washington was now in closer proximity to me than any of the European archives, that is where I began my research, in the early 1970s. In those days, the Music Division was based in the old Jefferson Building, and its large collection of Liszt volumes, many of them rare editions, were all stacked on open shelves, to which one had free access. It was like Christmas, with all kinds of pleasant surprises lying in wait just round the corner. My contact there was Edward Waters, Chief of the Music Division, who was himself a leading Liszt scholar. I knew from my earlier discussions with my editors at Knopf that Ed Waters had been working on his own Liszt biography for many years, and I wondered how he might receive me. I need not have worried. He was amiability itself and drew my attention to many sources I might otherwise have overlooked. After our first meeting he and his charming German-born wife Lily (who was an excellent linguist) took me out to dinner so that they might get to know me a little better. Ed Waters's own book on Liszt was long overdue, and I was curious to know why he had not yet finished it. He seemed reluctant to talk about it but later told me that this was a work over which he wanted to take his time, and that his basic research was not yet done. From the many conversations I had with him, I privately deduced that he had fallen into that most common of scholarly traps: he could no longer see the wood for the trees. He had assembled a mountain of information about Liszt, and knew more than most about the composer's life and work, but the task of writing the narrative had already begun to elude him. This observation was later confirmed when he died in 1991, his work unfinished. He showed me the still-unpublished letters of Liszt to Baroness Olga von Meyendorff, which Harvard University Library had recently acquired, and on which he was now expending much energy as an editor. A few years later he published them in collaboration with their English translator William Tyler, and I had the pleasure of reviewing the volume in *The Musical Quarterly*. At first I felt constrained by his close proximity to my work-desk in the Library, and the fact that he knew exactly what documents I was consulting. We had some earnest arguments about such matters as the young Liszt's famous encounter with Beethoven, and the possible reasons why Liszt never appeared to have met Verdi, although Liszt lived in Italy for many years and had paraphrased a number of the Verdi operas. These and other issues sparked a correspondence between us and ensured a lasting relationship. The last time I saw Ed Waters was when he came to a lecture I gave on 'The Young Liszt' in the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, in the summer of 1986. During the course of dealing with some follow-up questions, someone

asked me about my work-in-progress and I found myself referring to some important documents in the Vatican Library that I had just brought to light, and that it was my intention to publish. These papers deal with one of the most perplexing problems surrounding Liszt's personal life: the tangled matter of his thwarted marriage to Princess Carolyne von Sayn Wittgenstein, and her long fight to secure an annulment of her first marriage. I saw Lily starting to bristle, and she eventually got to her feet and exclaimed: 'Alan, you had better be right about that!' I was somewhat taken aback by the remark, and by her sharp tone of voice. It was only later that I discovered that Ed had been in contact with the Secretariat of the Vatican's Secret Archives in Rome, and had received the usual bland assurances that they held no papers relating to Franz Liszt. In this he was badly misled, as were all previous scholars who had approached this problem through the usual channels. In 1991, my colleague Gabriele Erasmi and I published more than 140 of these documents in a separate volume entitled *Liszt, Carolyne, and the Vatican: the Story of a Thwarted Marriage,* a publication about which I shall have more to say.

Going back to the Library of Congress has never been the same to me. The Music Division is now housed in the magnificent Madison Building, its staff as courteous and helpful as ever, its collections as impressive as before. But it is no longer Christmas when I work there. The books are now kept under tight security, literally held under lock and key; and you are encouraged to scan the vast array of titles on a computer screen. The days of browsing for pleasure along open shelving are gone forever.

VII

It was now time for me to make my first trip to Hungary, which took place in the autumn of 1977. One of the highlights of my sojourn in Budapest was meeting a group of Hungarian scholars in the Institute of Musicology, on Táncsics utca, in the Buda Castle district, in order to consult them about my plans for a Liszt biography. Among the group were Dezső Legány, Mária Eckhardt, Zoltán Falvy, Veronika Vavrinecz, and László Eösze. In those days Hungarian scholars were hardly ever allowed to travel to the West, so research in foreign archives was difficult for them. After chatting to the group for about an hour, and seeking their advice on a variety of topics, I recall their willingness to share their personal research with me, which saved me countless hours of work, particularly with regards to Hungarian sources. One or two of these scholars became lifelong friends, and to Dezső Legány and Mária Eckhardt in particular I owe a debt of gratitude for the help they continued to extend to me across the years. I was especially interested in finding out more about Hungarian Gypsy Music, and its relation not only to Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies but to Magyar folk music itself—a difficult

question that had confused Liszt himself, a confusion with which I knew that I would eventually have to deal. I was put in touch with Hungary's leading expert on this topic, Bálint Sárosi, who had just published a book on Gypsy Music. I well recall the day that I was shown into his office in a building in the Buda Castle area that later became the new National Széchényi Library. He was listening to some transcription tapes of Gypsy Music, an activity he willingly set aside as we began our conversation. Like most Hungarian scholars, he had an enviable grasp of foreign languages. After offering to conduct the conversation in whichever one of the several tongues he spoke well, we settled on his excellent English as the most practical way to proceed. Whatever clarity I eventually brought to bear on the difficult problem of Liszt and Gypsy Music was due in part to Dr. Sárosi's insights. What that problem boiled down to was simply this. How much genuine Magyar folk-music is contained in Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies? Many of the themes Liszt incorporates into his Rhapsodies he first heard performed by Gypsy bands, and he wrongly attributed the creation of this musical material to the Gypsies themselves—a conclusion for which he was much criticised in Hungary, and later by the world at large. We now know that the Gypsies were merely the purveyors of this material, which they had purloined and re-cast in their own image.

It has been well said that one must deserve one's luck. While I was working in the National Széchényi Library[3] in Budapest during that same year of 1977, I came across an entry in the card-index system describing a manuscript of Schumann's C major Fantasie, op. 17, that the Library had purchased in 1906. There would normally have been no reason for me to consult such a document, except that at that moment I happened to be writing a section of my biography dealing with the first encounter between Schumann and Liszt, and something compelled me to scrutinize it. As every scholar of the topic knows, the Fantasie is dedicated to Liszt, and represented a pivotal moment in their early relationship. When the manuscript was brought to me I could hardly contain my pleasure. It was signed and dated 19 December, 1838, by Schumann himself, and it turned out to be the manuscript that he had prepared for the printers just a few weeks before the work went to press. He appears to have been in a hurry. Instead of himself making a fair copy for the engraver, he took a beautifully prepared professional copy of the original version (first composed in 1836, it had languished on his desk for more than two years) and pasted his revisions over the manuscript. He also made a number of marginal comments in his characteristic handwriting and added expression marks and phrasings throughout. The result is a document of even greater significance than an autograph. One can see at a glance exactly what Schumann's revisions were. Chief among them are two worth mentioning here. The dedication to Liszt has been inserted into this copy in Schumann's own hand,

3 ■ This was the old building, in Pest, near the Hungarian Radio building, long before the National Széchényi Library was rehoused on the other side of the Danube, in the Buda Castle district.

proving that it was a last-minute idea: the work had originally been intended for Clara Schumann. The second revision is more important still. It shows that Schumann had originally intended to round off the entire Fantasie with the same quotation from Beethoven's song *An die ferne Geliebte* with which the first movement ends *('Accept, then, these melodies that I sang for you, my love')*. At the last moment he changed his mind, and substituted the arpeggio figures with which the work now ends, and with which everyone is familiar. After publishing an article announcing the discovery of this manuscript[4] I received a number of inquiries from pianists around the world anxious to know more. It had not occurred to me that anyone would actually want to play the Fantasie in this unfamiliar form, since the only logical conclusion to be drawn from my article was that Schumann intended the published version to replace the original one. But such is the present state of musicological curiosity that it soon became evident that if I did not encourage a public performance someone else would. I therefore contacted the American pianist Jeffrey Siegel, who became enthused by the prospect of performing the Fantasie in its first version, and he gave the world premiere on November 19, 1981 at the 'Y' on 92nd Street, New York.[5] Ever since that performance, the suppressed ending has become known in piano-playing circles as 'the alternative ending', but of course it is not that at all. It is the ending that Schumann finally discarded. Still, I am the first to admit that there is a certain fascination in entering a composer's workshop, examining the rejected artefacts, and even retrieving the odd chipping from his workbench if it throws light on the creative process. The original ending of the Schumann Fantasie certainly does that, and I am glad that it is played from time to time.

A few years later I was to approach Jeffrey Siegel once more, this time to give the world premiere of Liszt's paraphrase of Verdi's *Ernani* (1847), the unpublished manuscript of which I had come across in the Weimar archives on one of my visits there. This version of *Ernani* should not be confused with the better-known example which Liszt published in 1859. It is essentially a different work, even though it employs similar material in its second half. Siegel gave the world premiere at the Budapest Liszt Academy in November 1984. A few months later he gave the first American performance at Carnegie Hall, in May, 1985.

VIII

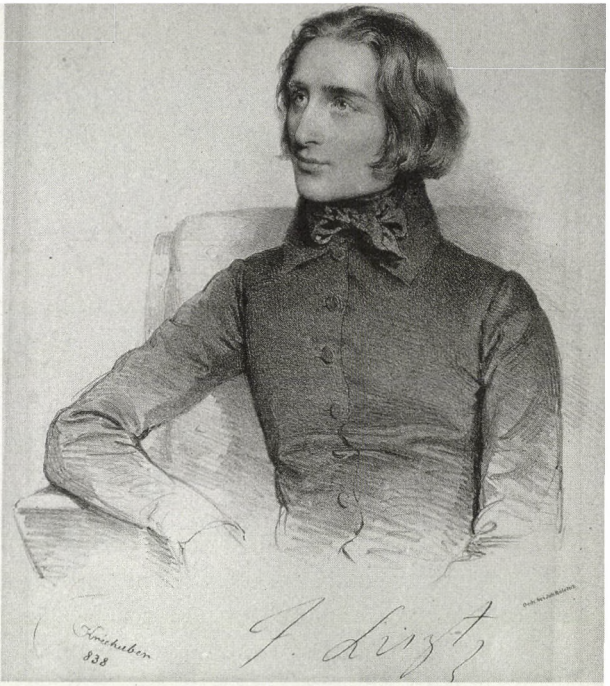
It was on my second trip to Hungary, in 1979, that I first heard the name of Imre Achátz. I had noticed that whenever I put a question about Liszt to my Hungarian friends which they themselves could not answer, they would say: 'We must ask Achátz.'

4 ■ 'Schumann, Liszt and the C major Fantasie, op. 17: a declining relationship.' *Music and Letters*, no. 60, 1979, pp. 156–65.

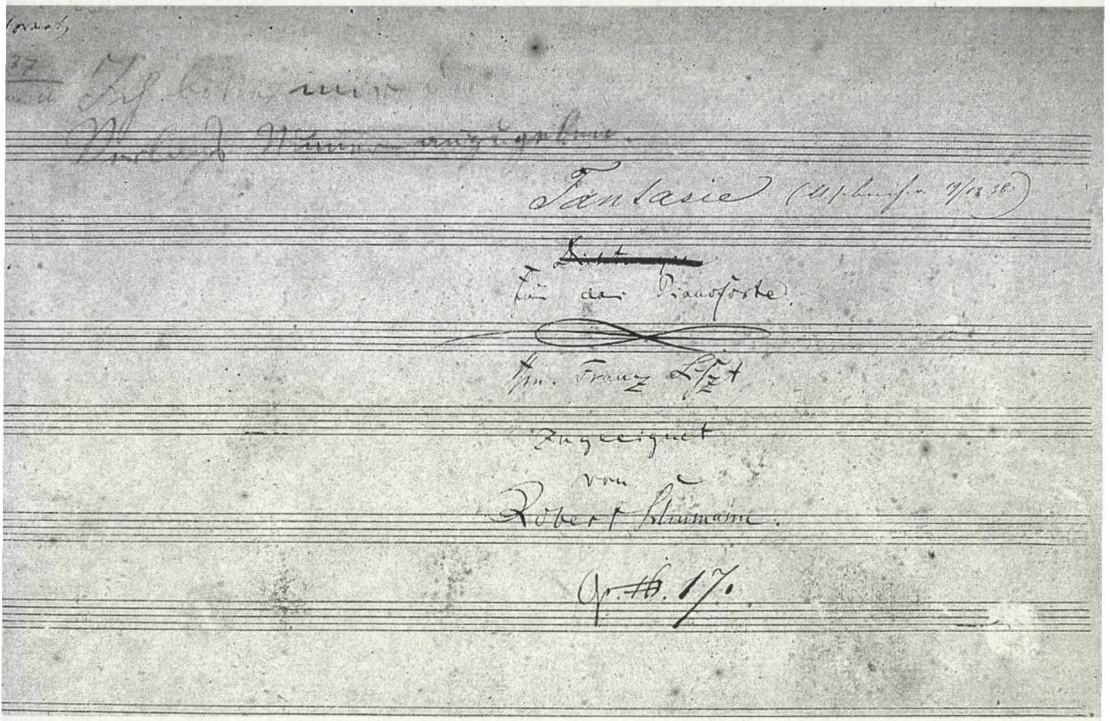
5 ■ See the *New York Times Review*, November 23, 1981.

Imre Achátz was a retired schoolmaster who lived in Pécs, about three hour's drive from Budapest. Years earlier he and Dezső Legány had been university students together at the University of Pécs, and it was Legány who early one morning drove me to Pécs in order introduce me to his old friend.

Achátz was waiting for us, and after his wife had served the mandatory cups of strong, black coffee, without which Hungarians seem unable to start their day, he led us into his enormous library. His bookshelves had long since been filled, but because he could not stop collecting books they had



Franz Liszt, 1838. Lithograph by Josef Kriehuber
Courtesy of the Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum and Research Centre, Budapest



The dedication to Franz Liszt on the manuscript title page of Schumann's C Major Fantasie, op.17.
Courtesy of the Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest. Ms. mus 37

overflowed throughout the rest of the house—they were piled on chairs, beneath tables, and in precarious pyramids on the floor. It quickly became evident that his knowledge about Liszt was encyclopædic. Achátz seemed to know more about the composer than anyone else I had ever met, which at this point in my researches put him at the top of a distinguished league. Yet he never entertained the slightest desire to write his own book about the composer. His sole joy lay in collecting information, and in this capacity he was a biographer's dream.

It was Achátz who provided me with a number of esoteric details about Olga Janina, the so-called 'Cossack Countess', who had threatened to shoot Liszt and then commit suicide by swallowing poison, failing in both endeavours. Janina had become a pupil of Liszt in Rome, in 1869, had become hopelessly enamoured of him, and had pursued him to Weimar and then to Hungary. She was unstable, imbibed opiates, dressed like a man, and sported a dagger with a poisoned tip. For all that, she appears to have been a splendid pianist, which is why Liszt initially encouraged her. Because the other students were nervous of her erratic behaviour, and because of her repeated threats to commit suicide if Liszt did not respond to her advances (threats which the Catholic Liszt must have regarded with apprehension), he attempted to rid himself of her by despatching her to New York with a special commission: She was to take a copy of his recently completed *Technical Studies* in three volumes, and give them to Julius Shubert who had promised to publish them for an advance fee of one thousand dollars. Olga walked into the trap and departed for the New World in July 1871. Once in New York, she fell on hard times. She not only pocketed the one thousand dollars, but lost the third volume of *Technical Studies* as well.[6] Moreover, the performing career that she had hoped for in the New World, and in support of which Liszt had written letters of reference, failed to materialize and she returned to Europe with venom in her heart, having first issued a death-threat against Liszt. Julius Shubert, thoroughly alarmed, cabled Liszt and warned him of the danger he faced. By the time Janina burst into his Budapest apartment waving a revolver, Liszt was waiting for her. She may have been under the influence of drugs. Their dramatic confrontation, and the nightmare scene in which Liszt wrested the revolver from her, and then got the hysterical Olga back to her hotel, must have represented one of the most difficult episodes in his life. Liszt's powerful friends Baron Augusz and Ödön Mihalovich issued Olga with an ultimatum: either leave Budapest voluntarily or be deported by the police. She left and settled in Paris, where she exacted her revenge by publishing a series of so-called 'autobiographical novels' which were intended to cause Liszt embarrassment.

6 ■ It was re-discovered in modern times and finally published in 1983. The first two volumes had already been published by Liszt's student Alexander Winterberger, in 1887.

Achátz and I talked at length about Olga Janina. He came to Budapest to meet me and together we went to Nádor Street, in order to view the site of the old Hotel Europa where Olga had lived, and inspect for ourselves the place where Liszt had summoned a doctor to help the 'dying' Olga, only to be told that the 'poison' was harmless. Liszt's own account of this traumatic event, written in letters to Princess Carolyne and Baroness von Meyendorff, is still the best that we have, although it is too rarely consulted.

Because Olga has always been the topic of much speculation in the Liszt literature, I decided to devote an entire chapter to her in my biography.[7] This was a decision which could have been misconstrued by the reader as an unnecessary diversion. But I was motivated by a desire to correct what I took to be a bias in the literature. The fact is, the four novels that Olga wrote, describing in vivid detail her imaginary love affair with Liszt, were taken at face value by Ernest Newman in his one-man crusade to expose Liszt as a philanderer and a liar. His book *The Man Liszt* has been so widely quoted, both in England and America, that it seemed necessary to compare Olga's fictions against the facts as we know them. Newman's distorted approach to Liszt was a thing of his own making because, as we now know, he saw everything through the prism of his landmark, four-volume biography of Richard Wagner —and especially of the second volume, the writing of which, so he himself tells us, he temporarily abandoned as Liszt came to the forefront of Wagner's life and had to be dealt with separately.[8]

Achátz also accompanied me to the former home of Baron Antal Augusz many miles away in Szekszárd. The house is today a music school, but it still contains some Liszt memorabilia. In Szekszárd, too, we saw the Hotel Szabó on the other side of the street, in which Olga had stayed during her ongoing pursuit of Liszt. She had even taken part in a concert there, together with Liszt, on October 18, 1870, to raise money for the French soldiers recently wounded in the Franco-Prussian War, a cause with which Liszt identified. A few days later, on October 22, Liszt's fifty-ninth birthday, Augusz himself put on a big party for Liszt which was celebrated by the entire village and culminated in an impressive display of fireworks. These trips all helped to add colour and vivacity to a chapter that I very much enjoyed writing.

IX

From Hungary my travels took me across the border into the Austrian Burgenland. There are many reasons for a Liszt scholar to visit Eisenstadt

7 ■ 'Of Cossacks and Countesses'. Vol. 3, pp. 171–90.

8 ■ Newman's widow Vera, in her *Memoir of Ernest Newman* (1964), has some interesting things to say about the situation in which Newman found himself after the publication of his book *The Man Liszt*. See especially pp. 124–26.

and the nearby village of Raiding. Eisenstadt contains a number of documents of interest to the biographer which are housed in the Landesmuseum; more importantly it became in modern times the fortunate recipient of some of the contents of Liszt's so-called 'Blue Salon', the room he occupied whenever he stayed with his 'cousin-uncle' Eduard Liszt in the Schottenhof district of Vienna, and which has been lovingly reconstructed in Eisenstadt. Thirty miles away lies the village of Raiding where Liszt was born. The Hungarians know it by its Magyar name of Doborján. In Liszt's time it was a German-speaking village in Western Hungary, which was ceded to Austria after World War I under the terms of the Treaty of Trianon. The house where Liszt was born is still there (although part of it was long ago demolished) and is today a Liszt museum. Nearby is a recently built concert hall, a worthy tribute to the composer's memory.

My stay in Eisenstadt was enlivened by my friendship with Dr. Emmerich Horvath, the director of the European Liszt Centre, who willingly drove me all over the Burgenland in search of places connected with Liszt's childhood. We explored a number of villages associated with Liszt's forbears, visited their village churches scattered across the Burgenland, and examined a number of baptismal registers, including that of the small church in Unterfrauenhaid where the infant Liszt had been baptised. It was time well spent. I gradually acquired a very great deal of information concerning Liszt's family background and wrote a long chapter under that title in the first volume of my biography, complete with family trees, which may well be the most detailed account of Liszt's genealogy to appear in a biography. Again there was good reason to devote so much space to a family chronology that literally ended before Liszt's life began. Liszt's nationality has been the subject of scholarly dispute for more than a century. He has been variously claimed as German, as French, as Austrian, and even labelled by some as 'cosmopolitan,' because he spent so much of his life travelling through numerous countries. How his Hungarian nationality could ever have been doubted is a topic for a book. But in the absence of a book it can be dealt with in a single sentence. Liszt was born on Hungarian soil; his father Adam was born on Hungarian soil; his grandfather Georg was born on Hungarian soil; and his great-grandfather Sebastian was born on Hungarian soil. What more is necessary to qualify for Hungarian nationality? Evidently it is the ability to speak Hungarian, which Liszt was never able to do, and which some scholars deem to be a crucial factor in the determination of one's nationality. But tens of thousands of Hungarians who were born in those nineteenth-century German-speaking villages dotted all over Western Hungary could not speak Hungarian either. It is sometimes forgotten that even some of the leaders of the Hungarian government were strangers to the Magyar tongue, including István Széchenyi, who only learned it in later life.[9] For the rest, Liszt often told others that he was Hungarian. He never once described himself as

French or German. He always declared himself for Hungarian causes, and sometimes donned Hungarian national costume, of which there are many instances in the Liszt iconography. In the twilight of his life he uttered a remark that summed up his feelings: 'Despite my lamentable ignorance of the Hungarian language, I may surely be allowed to remain from my birth to the grave Magyar in heart and mind'.[10]

At Eisenstadt I broke my right foot. That is the sort of thing that can easily happen on field trips, but there is a moral to this particular story. On my first Sunday morning in Eisenstadt, I decided to neglect my Liszt studies and pay my respects instead at the tomb of Joseph Haydn, who is buried in the Bergkirche there. I adore Haydn and his music, and it was unthinkable not to meditate for a few moments at his last resting place. Had not Liszt's father played the 'cello in Haydn's summer orchestra in the Esterházy Palace at Eisenstadt? And had he not sometimes relaxed in the company of the great composer, playing cards with him and the other orchestral musicians when the day's music-making was over? Everything is grist to the biographer's mill, I reasoned. As I was leaving the Bergkirche, and started to descend the steps outside, I missed my footing. Observers tell me that I described an interesting somersault on the way down, and as I hit the last step I heard an ominous crack in my right foot. I was unable to stand, let alone walk, and was helped across the road to a nearby restaurant, where I tried to compose myself and think of what to do. Medical help was not forthcoming that Sunday morning, and in any case I had no sure idea at that point that I had sustained any broken bones. Later that evening I somehow struggled to the home of Dr. Horváth who, together with his elderly sister, was expecting me to join him for dinner. There I poured out my story. When Frau Horváth observed my condition, she immediately asked me to remove my shoes and socks so that she could examine the damage for herself. A large balloon-like structure, giving off all the colours of the rainbow, now replaced what used to be my foot. Frau Horváth, a women of the soil, appeared to know exactly what to do about it. She went to the cellar, brought back a bottle of local red wine, poured half of it onto a towel, and proceeded to wrap the resulting poultice around my foot, with instructions to keep it there for twenty-four hours. The remaining half bottle, she declared, was 'for the man inside'. And the 'man inside' was by this time more than ready to imbibe it. I have never had much faith in folk medicine, but

9 ■ Until 1847 the business of the Hungarian legislature was conducted in Latin. The first time that Magyar was ever spoken in Parliament was on November 12 of that year when Ferdinand V opened a historic session held in Pressburg, with eight Hungarian words. István Széchenyi later wrote in his diary (in German), 'Alles war ergriffen, viele weinten' ('Everyone was deeply moved, many were weeping').

10 ■ Letter to Baron Antal Augusz, dated May 7, 1873. Margit Prahács, ed. *Franz Liszt: Briefe aus ungarischen Sammlungen,* 1835–86. Budapest-Kassel, 1966, p. 160.

the next morning the swelling had almost vanished, and with it much of the technicolour. It was only when I got back to London, two weeks later, and had the foot x-rayed at my local hospital in Epson, that I learned that the bones had not only been broken but had meanwhile begun to re-set themselves, albeit in the random position they still occupy today.

And the moral of the story? Although it happened many years ago, my right foot still throbs whenever I neglect my Liszt research. I have formed a powerful, and quite unconscious nexus between the two things. This private alarm-system is a useful reminder not to listen to the siren song of diversion, even when sung by Joseph Haydn.

X

The city of Weimar beckoned, with its vast store of Liszt documents housed in the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv. It was 1978, and Weimar was not easy to visit. It lay in Communist-controlled East Germany, and travel restrictions were severe. I flew from Toronto to Amsterdam, and from there via the former East German airline Interflug into Schoenefeld Airport, in East Berlin. It was a depressing experience. Interflug succeeded in losing my luggage, and I faced a five-hour train journey to Weimar that same evening. It was well past midnight when I arrived in the city in the pouring rain, minus a suitcase containing my notebooks. Weimar's only taxi was nowhere to be found, and I was obliged to walk the couple of miles separating the Hauptbahnhof from the Elefant Hotel, situated in the old Marktplatz, which was to be my home for the next two or three weeks. Drenched and mud-splattered I eventually arrived at the hotel, a difficult perambulation that gave new meaning to the phrase 'field work'. Since the next day was a Sunday and the day after that a national holiday, three days elapsed and I was still wearing the same unspeakable garments that I had donned in Canada. On the other side of the Marktplatz I noticed a men's clothing store, but the only apparel that came even close to fitting me was a boy scout's camping shirt, complete with epaulettes and a lanyard. And it was in this unlikely attire that I marched across the small bridge over the River Ilm, the so-called Kegelbrücke, and from there up the incline to the Goethe-Schiller Archiv on Hans-Wahl-Strasse, and presented myself to the director Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz Hahn. He gave no sign of surprise that anyone would dress in such a fashion in order to conduct research into the life and work of Franz Liszt, doubtless concluding that this was the standard kit for field workers from North America. It was an unusual beginning to my work in an archive that I came to love. Dr. Hahn and his staff were unfailingly polite, and I eventually succeeded beyond my best hopes in locating documents that were required for the early stages of my work. By the end of the week I had even retrieved my lost luggage and had soon settled into my daily routine, although the Communist

authorities obliged me to travel all the way back to Berlin to identify myself before releasing my suitcases and notebooks, a round trip of about ten hours. Altogether I have been to Weimar a dozen times, and on each occasion I have had productive experiences there.

Weimar taught me the value of graveyards. A pleasant afternoon's walk around a cemetery, together with an inspection of its tombstones, can reveal more about a community than an entire encyclopaedia. Once you know where the bodies are buried you are in business. The Stadtfriedhof in Weimar is a particularly beautiful and well-kept depository of things past. Many of the city's illustrious dead slumber there, aside from Goethe and Schiller themselves. They include Hummel and his family, Bernhard Stavenhagen, the von Schorn family, Peter Raabe, the Hecker sisters and countless others associated with Liszt and his circle. Franz Liszt himself is absent, of course, being buried in Bayreuth. It was on one of my many forays in search of necrophilia that I was inadvertently locked in the sepulchre of Goethe and Schiller. The Saturday afternoon was getting late, and I had decided at the last minute to descend the stone steps into the royal burial vault that houses the remains of Germany's two greatest men of letters, before returning to my hotel. Their polished wooden coffins stood on a raised dais, the brass nameplates gleaming beneath a pair of spotlights. The thing that struck me at the time was that the lead coffins of the illustrious members of the Royal Household, the thirty or so descendants of Grand Duke Carl August, who had brought Goethe and Schiller

The Altenburg, Liszt's residence in Weimar between 1848–1861. A pencil drawing by Friedrich Peller

to Weimar in the first place, were pushed into the anonymous darkness of the recesses of the vault, as if they were no longer of any interest to history. It was only when I heard the iron gates above me clang shut, that I realised that the elderly woman in charge of the tourist shop directly above me had forgotten all about me and had locked up for the weekend and vanished. I pondered my fate. It was a singular experience to be alone with the remains of Goethe and Schiller, to say nothing of all those unknown dukes and duchesses of the line of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, and I settled down for the weekend. After all, those lead coffins represented a treasury of dates and names, and in the absence of anything else better to do, surrounded as I was by dead bodies, I started to fill my notebook with this irreplaceable store of information. Fortunately for the rest of the story, some German friends had arranged to meet me for dinner at the Elefant Hotel, and when I failed to appear they raised the alarm. Within a couple of hours I was back in the land of the living, not only wiser but, thanks to those gravestones, much better informed.

The Goethe-Schiller Archive is undoubtedly the most important in the world for Liszt studies. His manuscripts and letters used to be housed in the Hofgärtnerei, Liszt's home in Weimar for the last fifteen years of his life, and which within a few months of his death in 1886 became a Liszt museum; but as these materials grew in size and importance, and as other musicians and scholars with Liszt connections bequeathed their own archives to Weimar as well (including Lina Ramann, Martha Remmert, and Peter Raabe), the Goethe-Schiller Archive became the obvious depository for Liszt's legacy too, and everything was moved there after World War II.

Among the many treasures at Weimar are the nearly 2000 unpublished letters of Princess Carolyne to Liszt. I made it my task to copy as many of the more important ones that I could. This had to be done by hand, since there was only one photocopy machine in the archive, and it was reserved for official use — code language for the Communist Party. These letters are the 'missing' half of a long correspondence that lasted for almost forty years. Liszt's letters to Carolyne were published a long time ago, in four of the volumes of his *Gesammelte Briefe*. I have often been struck at how ready biographers are to quote from these letters without knowing anything at all about the other side of the correspondence. One would not listen to one side of a conversation while remaining deaf to the other, and expect to take away a proper understanding of the subject. Yet that is what Liszt scholars had been doing for years.

XI

Every discipline has its unsung heroes, and Liszt scholarship is no exception. On my first Visit to Weimar I was befriended by a gentleman who, so I later discovered, ran the local Fleischerei. His name was Heinz Hergesell and once

a week he and his fiancée Karin used to dine at the Elefant Hotel, as a diversion from the otherwise grey social life of the city. On the evening I turned up for dinner the dining-room was full, so the waiter did what waiters in East Germany always did: he showed me to a vacant seat next to theirs. In the Weimar of the 1970s, the luxury of dining at one's own table, to the exclusion of strangers, was unheard-of. You might be shown to your seat, never to your table. We exchanged a tentative greeting, and then, because the alternative would have been unthinkable, began to chat. I learned that Heinz was a good amateur singer, with an amateur's passion for music in general; I recall that he could sing much of Franz Lehár from memory. When he discovered who I was, where I came from, and what I was doing in Weimar, he made it his mission to help me in every way possible. Heinz was the proud possessor of a small 'Wartburg', a type of motor vehicle then made in East Germany. It had a small (and very loud) two-stroke engine, cramped seating, unyielding springs, and uncertain brakes; but it moved. Heinz became my chauffeur. Every weekend he took me on long journeys throughout Thuringia—to Jena, Tiefurt, Eisenach, Zwickau, Gotha, and many other places associated with Liszt. On all my subsequent trips to Weimar, I could be certain of seeing one thing as my train pulled into the railway station, screeched to a standstill, and emerged from clouds of steam: Heinz and his 'Wartburg' would be there, waiting to transport me to wherever my research led me.

Although he did not know it, Heinz was enriching my biographical narrative as we zig-zagged our way across Thuringia. I had with me both camera and notebooks, and made verbal and visual records of everything that we saw. Our journeys even included visits to a number of castles that fell within the domains of the grand dukes of Weimar—Wilhelmsthal, Belvedere, and Ettersburg among them. All three castles vibrated with the memory of Liszt and his times, and I felt that I would be wise to open myself to their influence.

Belvedere and Ettersburg were especially well known to Liszt. He was often summoned to one or the other place whenever Carl Alexander wished to confer with him about matters musical, and he would occasionally stay overnight as a guest. There is even a record of him attending a court function at Belvedere wearing livery, one of those occasions on which one wishes a photographer had been present. Belvedere Castle lies about two miles from Weimar's city centre. It was a favourite summer resort of the grand dukes of Weimar. Both Grand Duke Carl Friedrich and his wife the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna died there, the one in 1853 the other in 1859, and it was from Belvedere that their respective funeral processions set out on the sad journey to the Weimar Stadtfriedhof, to the accompaniment of muffled drums.

XII

It was to Ettersburg Castle that the young Heir Apparent, Carl Alexander, summoned Liszt in that fateful summer of 1853, within days of the death of Carl Friedrich, in order to discuss the royal plans for the expansion of the arts at Weimar. They walked in the surrounding woods together, and Carl Alexander paraphrased Goethe: 'Now must the Word become the Deed'. Liszt understood the meaning. He had been on the brink of tendering his resignation under Carl Friedrich, and this was Carl Alexander's way of telling him that he wanted to keep his distinguished Kapellmeister in Weimar, and would do his best to provide him the resources hitherto denied him. Liszt writes at length about this day-long meeting which was filled with promise for him. The conversation lasted until after dark, and when Liszt took his leave of Ettersburg it was nearly midnight. Before he departed, the young Duke commissioned Liszt to compose a *Huldigungsmarsch,* or 'march of homage', for his official inauguration as the new Grand Duke of Weimar, on August 28, 1853, the birthday of Goethe. Liszt worked out the main theme in his head on the way back to Weimar, and commenced work on the orchestration the following morning.[11]

I made my first real exploration of Ettersburg Castle in the early 1980s, a trip that was arranged through the good offices of one of the city's architects, Herr Arnulf Brieger, whom I had met during an earlier sojourn in Weimar and who was now in charge of the castle's restoration. Herr Brieger informed me that we would soon be going for *'eine kleine Wanderung',* and he instructed me to wear some good walking shoes. It was a glorious Sunday morning when we met in Weimar's Marktplatz, and began the five-mile walk across open country in the general direction of Ettersburg. Frau Brieger and one or two of her female friends joined us en route, carrying some food they had prepared for our midday repast, and our party walked up hill and down dale beneath a scorching sun. The going was rough at times, made tolerable for me only by the knowledge that Liszt himself had accomplished one such journey in the 1850s. I recall a welcome pause at 'Herder's Repose' in the woods approaching Ettersburg, so-called because it was a favourite haunt of Weimar's dead poet. As we resumed our journey I caught my first glimpse of Ettersburg about two-and-a-half hours after the *'kleine Wanderung'* had begun. As I mounted the steps to the main entrance, I could not help noticing the rusting iron hand-rails, which had originally been painted over to make them look like marble. It was a telling image. Nothing was ever quite what it seemed at Weimar, where, as Liszt quickly discovered, the 'Word' was always more important than the 'Deed'. Ettersburg was a totally neglected structure under the East German Communists, badly in need of repair, and Herr Brieger had a roving commission from the local authorities to restore

11 ■ S.357 (orchestra), S.228 (piano).

it, an impossible mission because he received no help from them to enable him to achieve this goal. I discovered that it had become a kind of weekend hobby for him, and he spent most of his spare time pottering around Ettersburg—repairing windows, strengthening floors, cleaning the exterior stonework. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the takeover of historic sites by the authorities in the West, Brieger's labour of love was brought to a sudden end. In the 1970s, however, the only way he could raise money was from visitors like myself, the exchange rate for the East German mark being highly favourable towards his project. For one hundred dollars, as he pointed out, it was possible to clean and restore one of the many gargoyles that graced the exterior walls. I duly observed one that appeared to be in greatest need of repair and made a donation.

When I first started to work in Weimar, in the late 1970s, very few scholars from the West were to be seen, and they tended to turn up during the month of August, a predictable time for American academics especially to be there. The rest of the year was fairly quiet, and the month of December the best time of all if you wanted to work in solitude. I always enjoyed my winter visits to Weimar. The town was quiet, the only irritation being the occasional rattle of the windows as the Soviet air force practised breaking the sound-barrier at 25,000 feet above the city. It was an annoyance that the townsfolk barely noticed, so frequently did it happen, although I was told that on one or two occasions the window panes of the archive had actually been fractured as the 'planes swept across Thuringia.

XIII

The pursuit of a paper trail can often lead one into uncharted territory. I had long wondered where the birth certificate of Daniel Liszt was located. After all, the birth certificates of Liszt's other children, Blandine and Cosima, had long since been published. But when I began my Liszt biography the whereabouts of Daniel's baptismal records was unknown. What *was* known was that he had been born in Rome, in May 1839, and had died in Berlin, in December 1859, and that led me to suppose that there might be some trace of the tragedy of his early death in the Weimar archives for that year. Sure enough I discovered that Princess Carolyne had written an anonymous obituary notice of Daniel, that she had had a few copies privately printed, and that a solitary sample of this rare document was still preserved there. As I read it, I came across a sentence that rivetted my attention. She identified Daniel's baptismal church as San Luigi de 'Francesi, in Rome, the first time, to my knowledge, that anyone anywhere had mentioned such a fact. Rome was a thousand miles from Weimar, but armed with this new information I set out for the Eternal City to find the church in question, and with it the baptismal records. ❧

This is the first part of a two-part memoir

Play Liszt, My Friends!

Nike Wagner Talks to László Győri

László Győri: *Miss Wagner, in a Budapest interview some years ago you spoke about how little the music of Franz Liszt was cultivated in your family. Do you remember when you became aware that not only Wagner, but Liszt, too, belongs to the family?*

Nike Wagner: Of course I had always known that Liszt belonged to the family—historically. Yet somehow Franz Liszt was not really present at the Wagners' in Bayreuth in Villa Wahnfried. He was always ignored, I would say. There were rarely concerts of Liszt's music in Bayreuth and nobody of the family ever said a good word about him. Too Catholic! A Virtuoso! It was only later that I became really aware of Liszt, and that was because of my interest in contemporary music and its protagonists. I could observe that Liszt, and the late Liszt in particular, was held in high esteem by composers like Pierre Boulez. Then I listened more carefully to his music and saw that in his late works—the late piano pieces, *Via crucis*, or *From the Cradle to the Grave*—Liszt was a fabulous composer; I started studying his music more intensely. And when I was asked to organize a festival in Weimar, it was clear that I had to create that festival in the spirit of Liszt and dedicate it to him.

Nike Wagner

is the daughter of Wieland Wagner, the great-granddaughter of Richard Wagner and the great-great-granddaughter of Franz Liszt. She studied music, theatre and literature in Munich, Berlin and the United States. Her doctoral dissertation, published in 1981, is on Karl Kraus. A freelance author since 1975, she has published numerous studies on literature, music and theatre. Since 2004, she has been the director of the Weimar Kunstfest. She named the festival "pèlerinages", after Liszt's piano cycle Années de pèlerinage.

László Győri

is a radio broadcaster of MR3-Bartók Rádio and a translator.

You have been directing this festival for seven years now. Its very name,"pèlerinages," refers to Liszt. How does one work in the spirit of Liszt? What is the basic idea of this festival, and how do you connect new music with the Liszt tradition?

That is very easy. Weimar was a central place for Liszt, he lived there for a long time and turned here from the virtuoso to a composer. First of all, we play his music and understand his spirit that way. But because Liszt declared himself "musician of the future"—and indeed he was—the main emphasis of this festival is on contemporary music. Remember that Liszt organized festivals of new music in Weimar—famous people like Berlioz, Schumann or Wagner were represented. But also, there is an accent on all other contemporary arts as well—theatre, dance, exhibitions, literature, discussions. After all, Liszt had developed great plans for Weimar, in the so-called Goethe Foundation, representing all the arts in a kind of "Olympics of the arts". I simply adopted this idea of Liszt and continue to do what was not possible for him to do. His "Olympics" did not come true.

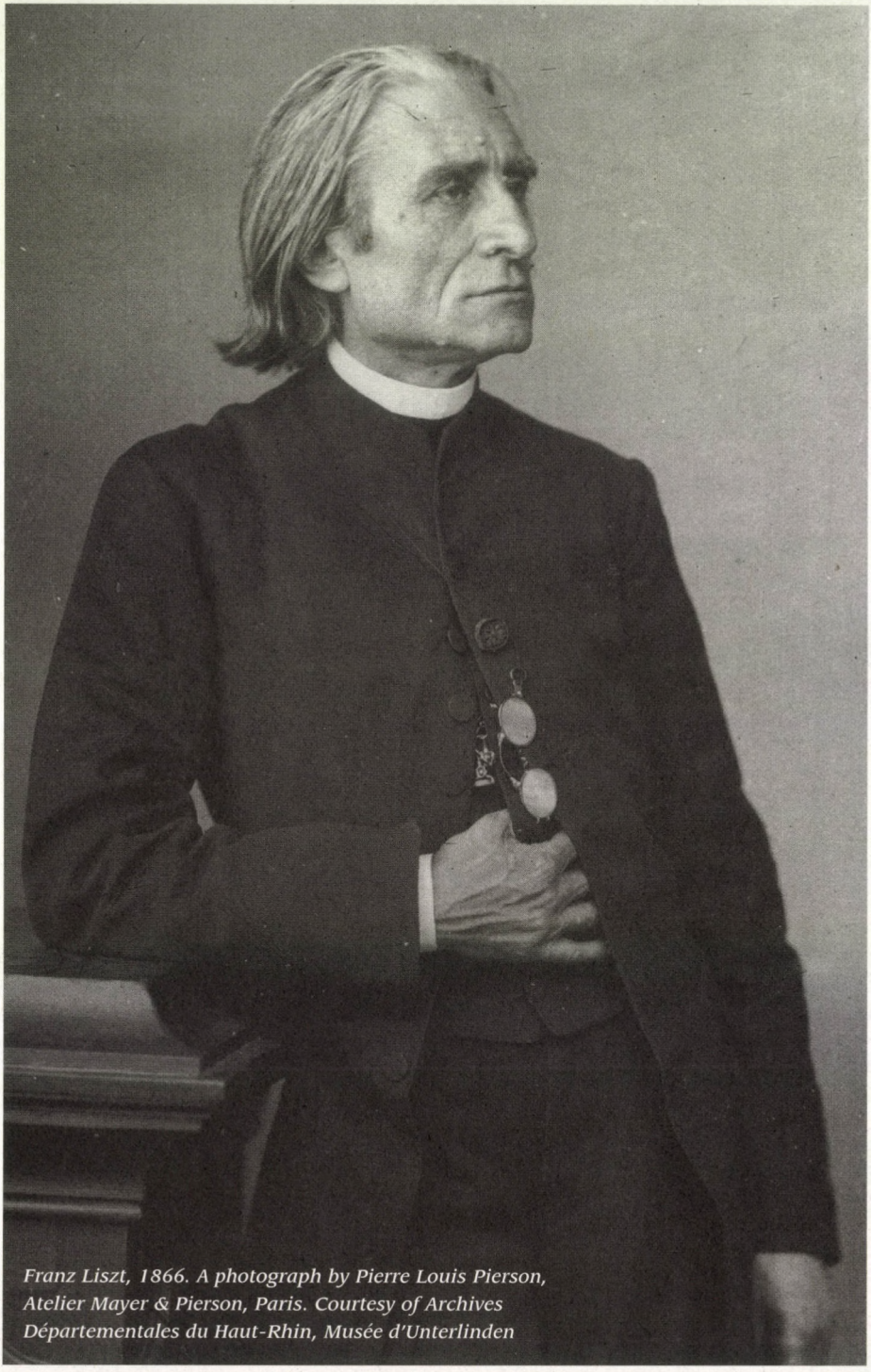
We shall come back to the festival again, but I think Liszt is one of the most innovative composers in the entire history of music; without him, the music of the twentieth century would be unthinkable. Which facets of his work do you want to show? I think the late Liszt is OK, one can show it in connection with modern music, but Liszt the virtuoso and pedagogue produced a very large output. What are, in your opinion, Liszt's most important works, and what do you find most important in Liszt?

The pedagogue Liszt is part of history, and the virtuoso as such also. We cannot listen to him anymore. Remains his work.

I don't know what is "his most important work"—for me, it is his late work. But he wrote such a tremendous amount of music! And there is so much re-writing! But Liszt has still to be discovered, especially his symphonic poems. Unfortunately, his music is not really part of the concert repertory. Thus, his fantastic romantic musical language has become unfamiliar to us, their literary background is gone. Neglected is also the sacred music, the choral works, the Masses. In his piano works, though, he is alive, still obligatory for young pianists and you can meet Liszt's piano music quite often. Therefore, I always try to say that during the great Liszt commemoration year in Thuringia, play Liszt, my friends, he still needs to be brought to the audience's attention.

Yes, his oeuvre is enormous. What else needs to be discovered? OK, the oratorios, and probably the Masses, and probably a couple of the symphonic poems. What else do we still owe him?

We owe him, simply, a greater appreciation of his work. We need to get to know him better, this incredible musician who really pointed the way to the



Franz Liszt, 1866. A photograph by Pierre Louis Pierson, Atelier Mayer & Pierson, Paris. Courtesy of Archives Départementales du Haut-Rhin, Musée d'Unterlinden

future, with the dissolution of tonality for example. He must be played more. This seems very simple but, as you know, it wasn't so easy even with Schumann. But I think that Liszt's time has come. People are fascinated when they get to hear the symphonic poems, the piano works, the twelve etudes, which are so difficult to play. Whether piano music or orchestral, the fascination is there. Those who are in charge of our musical heritage—in concert halls—should be aware of that!

Yes, but how *do we have to play it? I think we have a living tradition of performing Liszt—or do we? There are no recordings of Liszt, but his students, and their students made some. There seems to be a straight line in performance history, at least as far as the piano works are concerned. But how should he be played?*

As Alfred Brendel recently pointed out in Weimar, Liszt is very hard to play. Yet a pianist must be able to make us forget about the high technical demands. If I may use a metaphor: the playing must lift off like an airplane. One shouldn't notice at all how difficult it is. I think the challenge with Liszt has always been, and will always remain, to reach this level of effortlessness. Only then, his poetic mind, comes to full expression.

And what about the orchestral works? The historical performance movement has not yet taken possession of Liszt; he is not yet played by the historians, or only very rarely. What does historical research have to say about the right way to interpret Liszt?

You know, I'm not a Liszt scholar. I'm an enthusiastic fan of his music; I love his multifaceted personality and am trying to sort out his work for myself. At the 2011 festival in Weimar, there will be one concert devoted to historical sound. I'm excited to see what Jos van Immerseel will do with the orchestra Anima Eterna; he will perform Wagner and Liszt in original sound. Then we will hear things a little differently. But this is only one possibility. There is no single "correct" interpretation.

Could you say a few words about this year's "pèlerinages" festival? I think it will be a very special festival this year since Liszt will be really in the focus: he will be the protagonist.

Yes, but, as you can see from the name "pèlerinages," Liszt is in our focus every year, sometimes more and sometimes less. This year is of course a special anniversary year. I wondered how should I best celebrate him, what would he have liked? And I am sure he might have enjoyed my having new commissions given out to seven composers from seven countries where he had worked; these productions will fill two long nights, and they will of course emphasize Liszt's all-European character as well. I'm really looking forward to that. And I thought, we should program *Années de pèlerinage* in their entirety.

All three parts! Not everyone is prepared to do that. I have engaged the extremely dynamic Canadian pianist Louis Lortie. In addition, young pianists will play Liszt as well: somebody like the young Gábor Farkas who has won the last Liszt Competition in Weimar, and a very young student of Alfred Brendel's, his genius student as he calls him, an American named Kit Armstrong. So I've got two young Liszt pianists. Wait a minute, what else are we doing? As I said, Jos van Immerseel will give us the "historical" sound of *Les Preludes* and other pieces, and since Liszt performed a lot of Berlioz in Weimar, we'll do *The Damnation of Faust*—with the Hungarian National Orchestra under Zoltán Kocsis. We will also have literary events and discussions about Liszt's music, I am planning those at the moment.

Liszt's life and works are extremely well documented. I don't think there are very many nineteenth-century composers about whom we know as much as we do about Liszt. How do you see the current state of Liszt research?

First of all, a valid list of his oeuvre has to be prepared. But I think this is on the way, it is forthcoming. There is of course a multitude of very good books. Alan Walker is still the gold standard; Serge Gut is outstanding. And I've just read Klára Hamburger's new book. It is wonderful and I hope Klára Hamburger will come to us in Weimar. There are many fine detailed studies; a lot is happening.

As a descendant, what do you find most attractive in Liszt's character? You would probably like to meet him. What attracts you to him the most?

Oh, I would love to meet him. Just imagine time-travelling to one of his triumphant concerts! What attracts me to Liszt is this: he appears in so many different roles and in so many styles. Yet I feel there is somewhere a mysterious centre where everything comes together; the multiplicity of roles and identities was probably the source of his musical creativity. What I particularly like is his "limitless" quality. Of course that's a criterium valid for all Romantics, but in Liszt we see it everywhere. He never kept to boundaries—in the best sense of the word. Geographically, he is very European, changing countries, changing languages, and in an age of increasing nationalism, he remained a European. This is extraordinary—especially when you compare Liszt with Wagner.

His "limitlessness" can also be seen in the imaginative ways in which he handled existing musical forms. We know that he had his roots in Viennese Classicism and its fixed forms. But see how he transcends those forms by his free imagination—for instance in his Sonata in B minor. That's a masterpiece. Furthermore, Liszt transferred his unconventional mind to real life. It was unconventional to help promoting other composers like he did—Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner—and in his love life, he went counter to the conventions of society. Yet all his Romantic capabilities to exceed limits and boundaries had their roots in his marvellous personality of great integrity. ❧

Zsuzsanna Domokos

Liszt and Palestrina

Palestrina and the "Palestrina style" as interpreted in the 19th-century

The term "Palestrina style" had several different meanings in the 19th century, yet those meanings (referring to the works of Palestrina himself; the *a cappella* works of his contemporaries and the generation following him; strict style in general) were often blurred in actual practice. In Italy, the expression *alla Palestrina* designated the musical language of Palestrina and the Roman school of the 16th and 17th centuries, as represented by Felice and Giovanni Francesco Anerio, Francesco Soriano and Gregorio Allegri (who was the most famous of them all in the 19th century); it could also be used as a synonym of *stile antico*. "Palestrina style" could further refer to an abstract concept; the glorification of Renaissance music, with Palestrina as its emblem, implied a strong contrast with more recent musical styles.

References to Palestrina by Liszt and his contemporaries reflect not only the influence of any Palestrina works that were known to them, but encompass the entire *a cappella* literature of the 16th and 17th centuries. In particular, Liszt often mentions Orlande de Lassus alongside Palestrina. Unlike most German contemporaries, however, Liszt did not typically use "Palestrina style" as a term for strict polyphonic writing in general.

Liszt's view of Palestrina is a composite of multiple influences that interpenetrate and complement one another. At different moments in his life, one sees the impact of German, French or Italian approaches on his thinking. Since Palestrina was thought of differently in the German-speaking world than in France or Italy, one may arrive at a much more nuanced understanding of Liszt's ideas if one differentiates between these different viewpoints, placing each in its

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own timeframe. In the early 1860s, after he had just moved to Rome and turned his interest to church music reform, the Italian tradition was predominant for Liszt. The tradition of the Sistine Chapel was distinguished by the fact that Palestrina's works had been performed there without interruption since Palestrina's own time—even though the performance style had changed to reflect characteristics of the present day. A similar continuous performance practice, dating back to the 17th century, can also be demonstrated at the Vienna Hofkapelle, yet by the early 19th century, theorists and musicians alike felt the need to rediscover this music for the purposes of church music reform.

In the late 1860s, and especially the 1870s, Liszt was in contact with two outstanding representatives of the Cecilian movement to reform Catholic church music in Germany, Franz Xaver Witt and Franz Xaver Haberl. He would have liked to invite Witt to become the head of the church music department at the Academy of Music in Budapest, but because of Witt's illness, this did not come to pass. As for Haberl, he was responsible for launching the complete edition of Palestrina's works in 1881 after earlier publishing ventures by Pietro Alfieri (*Raccolta di Musica Sacra,* 1841) and Carl Proske (*Musica divina,* 1853). These various editions allowed musicians better access to Palestrina's works, in a less haphazard way and using texts containing fewer errors.

The influence of the French tradition of sacred music on Liszt has yet to be thoroughly explored; in any case, the French contribution to Liszt's sacred style had less to do with Renaissance polyphony than with the rediscovery and restoration of Gregorian chant. When preparing his reform plan for the Catholic Church in the early 1860s, Liszt wanted to rethink all previous initiatives.

The various interactions of Italian, French and German plans of reform constitute an intricate web of interrelationships whose full examination, based on the work of Karl Gustav Fellerer, still remains to be carried out. In his history of 19th-century Cecilianism, Fellerer understandably focused on Germany, where the reform first took shape in an institutionalised form (Bamberg, 1868); yet the reform had some antecedents in Italy and France which are forgotten today but represented living reality to Liszt, shaping his thoughts and artistic ideas.

If we compare German, Italian and French editions of Palestrina's works from the 19th century, we find significant differences among their respective approaches. Those differences are reflected in the formulation of the reform plans, since the editors and the authors of the reform plans were often the same individuals. It was due to these divergent ways of thinking that the German reformers, including Haberl, failed to understand Liszt's freer, more broad-minded approach, which bore a certain resemblance to the Italian trends.

Even within the German reception of Palestrina and the *stile antico,* one must distinguish between the more historically oriented, traditionalist approach of the Protestant North and a very different tendency prevailing in the Catholic regions of southern Germany and Austria. The latter strove to rediscover the tradition of

Renaissance music and to revive the *stile antico*. Similarly, within Italy, Palestrina was treated differently in the North (geographically close to Germany) than he was in Rome and in the South. Liszt was in touch with Northern Italians like Jacopo Tomadini and Guerrino Amelli, as well as Romans such as Fortunato Santini and Salvatore Meluzzi, who transmitted to him the practice of the Sistine Chapel.

Furthermore, it is important to know which works by Palestrina were popular in the 19th century, and which were staples of the Sistina's repertoire. It turns out that they preferred motets with a homophonic structure; among the Masses, they felt closer to the free compositions *(Missa Papæ Marcelli, Missa brevis)* than to the *cantus firmus* Masses.

Sources informing Liszt's image of Palestrina

If one wants to investigate the influence of Palestrina, and early music in general, on Liszt's music, the fundamental question concerns the extent of Liszt's knowledge of Palestrina and his contemporaries, as well as the channels through which the works of those composers reached him. Of course, he got to know more and more Palestrina works as time went on. He heard his first Palestrina Mass as a boy in Vienna. Equally important in expanding the young musician's horizons were some later Parisian experiences, including the early-music concerts of François-Joseph Fétis and Étienne-Alexandre Choron as well as Choron's editions of some of the scores. A draft for church music reform dating from as early as 1834 already mentions Palestrina among the great predecessors.

Yet Liszt's first defining Palestrina experience occurred in the spring of 1839, when he visited Rome for the first time. He stayed there from January through the end of May, exploring the historical and artistic treasures of the Eternal City. His later correspondence bears witness to the strong inner connection between his studies of Palestrina and memories of his first Roman sojourn. Of crucial importance were Fortunato Santini's extensive library collections as well as the Palestrina performances given at Santini's home, with Liszt as a frequent participant.

In January 1855, Liszt wrote to one of his best Hungarian friends, Baron Antal Augusz:

> Even before I had the privilege to meet you, I had undertaken extensive studies in the art of the masters of the 16th century, particularly Palestrina and Orlando di Lasso.[1]

A year later he told Agnes Street-Klindworth about his studies, recent and older, encompassing the history of music from Palestrina and Orlande de Lassus all the way to Bach and Beethoven. Liszt was always eager to hear

1 ■ "Avant d'avoir l'honneur de vous connaître j'avais fait à Rome des études assez approfondies des maîtres du 16me siècle, *Palestrina* et *Orlando di Lasso* en particulier." 27 January, 1855, Weimar, in Wilhelm von Csapó, ed. *Franz Liszt's Briefe an Baron Anton Augusz 1846–1878*. Budapest: Franklin, 1911, p. 51.

performances of Palestrina and his contemporaries. In several of his letters, he mentions listening to Palestrina in Vienna and in Germany. In 1869 and again in 1872, he visited the city of Regensburg, the centre of German Cecilianism.

In the early 1870s, Liszt conducted several Palestrina motets, including *O bone Jesu, Panis angelicus* as well as the Mass *Iste confessor* with the Buda Church Music Association at the Matthias Church in Buda as well as at a matinée of the Liszt Association.[2] His music library, preserved in Budapest, contains three Masses and one motet from the series *Musica divina* published in Regensburg. These contain numerous marginalia, textual emendations and rehearsal markings offering evidence of thorough study; it is quite possible that he was preparing some of these works for performance.[3]

In addition to the series *Musica Divina,* Liszt's Budapest library contains four more church music collections with motets by Palestrina and many other Italian composers (Pitoni, Constantini, Nanini, Vittoria, Lotti, Lasso, Baini). Of primary importance is a volume of organ music compiled by Alexander Wilhelm Gottschalg after 1869, revised and augmented by Liszt. This compilations contains a motet by Orlande de Lassus, *Regina cœli lætare,* arranged for organ by Liszt himself. In another important collection, edited in two volumes by Georges Schmitt for one or more voices with organ or harmonium accompaniment, we find several longer motets by Palestrina, including the *Magnificat* for two choirs. Liszt's markings in blue and red pencil prove that he studied this edition closely. He took extensive biographical notes on Francesco Anerio, author of the *Te Deum* from volume 9 of the second collection; the most important piece of information, for him, was that Anerio had studied with Nanini and was Palestrina's successor at the Sistine Chapel. In a letter to Repos, the publisher of the collection, dated November 8, 1867, Liszt praised Repos's historical editions and compared them to *Musica divina,* emphasizing the presence of Palestrina, Orlande de Lassus and other authors from the 16th and 17th centuries.[4]

Liszt's Budapest library further contains the most important 19th-century book on Palestrina, written by Giuseppe Baini, translated into German and revised by Franz Sales Kandler, who added the results of his own research. Again, we know from the marginal notes that Liszt had perused the book very carefully. His interest in new publications on Palestrina's life and works never

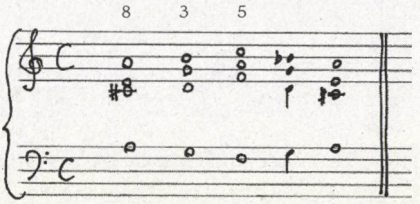
2 ■ La Mara, ed. *Franz Liszt's Briefe.* Vol. I–VIII, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1893–1905.: Br. VII. p. 62.
3 ■ *Missa Ascendo ad Patrem:* (Liber Missarum Annus II, Tomus I, Missa VI) Z 8042/III, *Missa Papae Marcelli:* (Liber Missarum Annus II, Tomus I, Fasc. VII) Z 8042/IV, Missa *"Tu es Petrus":* (Liber Missarum Annus IV, Tomus I, Missa IV) Z 8042/I, "Vidi turbam magnam", 6 vv, *Liber Motettorum* (Annus II, Tomus II, Fasc. III.) Z 8042/VI in: Mária Eckhardt, ed. *Liszt Ferenc Hagyatéka / Franz Liszt's Estate II. Zeneművek / Music.* Budapest: Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Főiskola, 1993, pp. 391–392.
4 ■ "Revenons à vos publications. Palestrina, Lassus, les maîtres du 16me et 17me sont vos patrons par excellence. Vous en avez pour de longues années à éditer leurs admirables ouvrage, et vous mettre au pair avec la collection publiée (à bon marché) à Ratisbonne sous le titre de Musica divina." in Br. II. 111.

waned; as late as 1880, he was reading Wilhelm Bäumker's biography of the Renaissance master.

Speaking of the transcriptions of Beethoven and Palestrina by Richard Wagner, he called the latter "the master of masters," and as late as 1885, he still considered Wagner's work the model when it came to editing Palestrina's music. A letter to Lina Ramann reveals that Liszt had advised Guerrina Amelli, one of the leading representatives of the Cecilian movement in Italy, on his edition published in the journal *Musica Sacra:*

> I persuaded him to add a few performance markings to his edition [of the *Missa Papæ Marcelli*], because in my opinion the music of Palestrina and Lassus, those two Cardinals of old Catholic Church music, are suited only for study and *not* for practical performance. Of course, no one can provide perfect performance directions for Palestrina and Lassus, yet there are a few points of reference one can rely upon. The best example is and remains Wagner's arrangement of Palestrina's *Stabat mater,* complete with performance directions and a division of the parts in sections for half-choruses, solos and full choruses. Wagner made this *exemplary* arrangement when he was a conductor in Dresden. It was published 15 years later by Kahnt. It is to be hoped that it will soon be understood and followed.[5]

Liszt himself had a hand in Wagner's edition; the German composer sent his manuscript to Liszt, who added his own comments and corrections. This edition may be part of the reason why, of all of Palestrina's motets, this eight-part *Stabat mater* acquired symbolic significance for Liszt and his German contemporaries. Most important was the progression of three chords that opens the work:



5 ■ "(Sogleich sende ich Ihnen, verehrte, liebste Freundin, die bei mir in Weimar vorhandenen Partiturbände. Die hochberühmte *Missa Papae Marcelli* ist nicht dabei, aber leicht aufzufinden: deren letzte Ausgabe, von *Amelli,* Mailand, Chef-Redacteur der dortigen *Kirchen-Musik-Zeitung.*) Ich veranlasste ihn einige Vortrags-Bezeichnunkgen beizufügen, weil meines Bedünkens, ohne solche fernere Ausgaben von Palestrina und Lassus, — die beiden grossen Cardinäle der alten katholischen Kirchen-Musik — nur für das Lesen, *nicht* für die wirklichen Aufführungen dienen. Gewiss kann Niemand für Palestrina und Lassus absolut giltige Signaturen bestimmen: doch giebt es Anhaltspunkte, wonach man sich richtet.

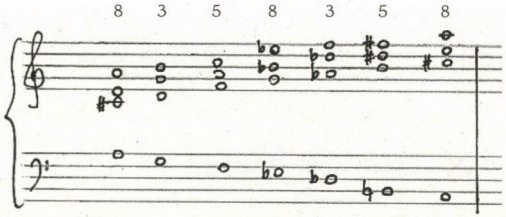
Das allerbeste Modell ist und bleibt: Wagners Einrichtung von Palestrina's 'Stabat mater' — mit Vortrags-Bezeichnungen und Angabe der Vertheilung der Singstimmen — halber Chor, Soli, Ganzen Chor.

Zur Zeit seiner Kapellmeisterschaft in Dresden fertigte Wagner diese *musterhafte* Bearbeitung an. Sie erschien 15 Jahre später in Kahnt's Verlag. Hoffentlich wird man sich allmählich danach reguliren mit Vernunft und Weile." To Lina Ramann, 27 April, 1885, Weimar, 1885, in Br. II. pp. 378–379.

Palestrina's "Stabat" chords in Liszt's oeuvre

The performance of Palestrina's *Stabat mater* was part of the Holy Week service at the Sistina. The best-known quotation of the opening progression in Liszt's music, mentioned by several scholars, is to be found in the oratorio *Christus,* where Liszt develops it in the "Paradisi gloria" section of the "Stabat mater dolorosa" movement. This progression had a specific meaning in Liszt's sacred music, yet, characteristically, he used it in instrumental compositions as well.

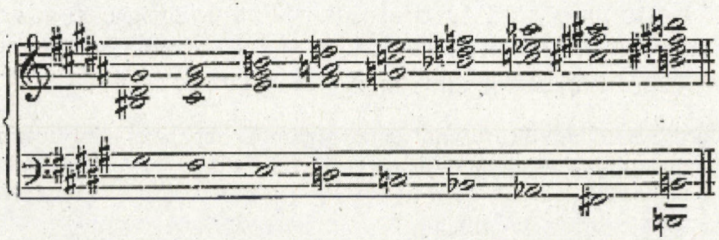
Among Liszt's manuscript notes, there is an extremely interesting listing of scales and harmonic progressions, one page of which bears the date 1875. This manuscript is housed in Weimar under the title *Beispiele harmonisierter Skalen aus Werken Liszts* (Examples of Harmonized Scales in Liszt's Works). Here, on the top of one of the pages, Liszt notated the first five chords of the *Stabat mater* in piano score, and specified that the descending chords at the beginning of Palestrina's motets were in octave position, first inversion, and root position, respectively. Immediately underneath, he placed the harmonic skeleton of the Hosanna-Halleluja section occurring just before the end of the *Dante* Symphony, where the bass also descends in whole tones, here covering an entire octave. The ascending chords over this bass line follow the same succession of positions seen in the motet:



The next work in the list is an excerpt from *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne* ("Bergsymphonie"), "gegen Schluss" (towards the end), as the composer remarked. It is followed by part of *The Legend of St. Elisabeth,* identified as "nach dem Tod Elisabeths (Engel Chor") (after Elisabeth's death: angels' choir), then the above-mentioned detail from Christus. Liszt further mentioned the ending of his Concert Etude in D-flat *(Un sospiro)* in this context.

This document reveals the extent to which the inspiration received from Palestrina's chord progression led Liszt to various possibilities of harmonizing the whole-tone scale, challenging his musical ingenuity. These solutions may be found both in his sacred and his secular works, since Liszt was interested in exploiting the purely musical implications of the chord progression in question. He himself said as much, discussing the *Dante* Symphony in a letter dated August 20, 1859. This excerpt shows how proud Liszt was of the results

of his harmonic experiment, which he even illustrates by a musical example within the letter:



P.S. At the end of my Dante *Symphony, I attempted to evoke the* Magnificat *intonations known from the liturgy. You may be interested, furthermore, in the scale of triads built on* whole-tone steps; *to the best of my knowledge, this has never been used before in the whole length of the scale.*[6]

Another lesson to be drawn from the excerpts in Liszt's manuscript is that the chord progression (in sacred works in particular) becomes a musical symbol for transfiguration, the vision of heaven, transcendence and the song of angels. This may have something to do with an aesthetic view in Liszt's time that considered Palestrina's music to be the earthly counterpart of the song of the angels.

The *Dante* Symphony and the tone poem *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne,* both mentioned in the document under discussion, date from the same period as the "Gran" Mass. In the Credo movement of the latter work, Liszt used the above progression twice, combining a gradually descending bass line with ascending upper voices. This occurs for the first time in measure 53, at the words "consubstantialem Patri per quem omnia facta sunt," and again at the end of the movement, which parallels the "In Paradisi gloria" passage from the "Stabat" movement in *Christus.* Starting in measure 153, at the words "et vitam venturi seculi," Liszt transforms the whole steps of the descending bass line into enharmonic thirds. Again, the subject matter is eternity.

The "Stabat" progression forms no less an integral part of Liszt's oeuvre than the so-called "Crux" motive, which is well known in the literature. James Garratt has investigated the "Stabat" progression in the works of Wagner, Bruckner and several German contemporaries working in the Cecilian movement. He concluded that the progression in question, inherited from Palestrina, was rather wide-spread in Germany and Austria.[7] Among Wagner's works, Garratt mentions several excerpts from *Parsifal,* and, as the best-known example, the magic sleep motive from *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*. This confirms the reading suggested by Liszt's manuscript: Liszt and Wagner adapted the *Stabat*'s novel harmonic progression to the musical idiom of their own time, in

6 ■ Br. VIII. p. 148.

7 ■ James Garratt. *Palestrina and the German Romantic imagination. Interpreting Historicism in Nineteenth-Century Music.* Cambridge: University Press, 2002. pp. 192, 195.

order to achieve the same effect with their own audiences as Palestrina had done with his.

In 19th-century Germany and Austria, this harmonic progression was explicitly considered Palestrina's specific legacy, as one of the most outstanding musicologists of the era, August Wilhelm Ambros, made amply clear:

> These three chords were, and still are, considered not only symbolic of the Palestrina style but a singular (unique) example as well.[8]

Polyphony

The Liszt literature usually refers to the Kyrie movement from the Missa choralis if it wants to exemplify the influence of Palestrina's polyphony in Liszt's oeuvre. In this Mass, Liszt clearly took it upon himself to follow Palestrina's style; after all, the work was originally destined for the Sistine Chapel. Yet the same polyphonic thinking may also be found in the opening orchestral movements of both oratorios, where the goal was to portray a uniform basic mood, defining the entire work. In both introductions, this mood encompasses an element of transcendence. The use of polyphony is entirely consistent with an interpretation of Palestrina and the Renaissance according to which, as Liszt said in so many words, the expression and the message of the movement is determined by the harmony resulting from the combination of all the voices. Uniformity of the expression was a general priority for Liszt in the performance of strict contrapuntal music. Speaking of Joachim Raff's *Dornröschen* in a 1856 study, he writes:

> When the old Italian and Flemish masters—such as Palestrina or Lassus—or the German Bach, or some other famous composer using counterpoint, condensed eight, sixteen or more different voices in a single fugue or other polyphonic structure, and had all the parts played together, they followed the principle of the entire work and did not wish to give the individual voices, whether it is the leading voice or any other, any nuanced character or definite expression. Instead, they strove, especially in sacred music, to give the entire work an expression fitting the general content of the text, rather than emphasising the words by using melodies of singular dramatic power.[9]

8 ■ *"Diese drei Akkorde galten und gelten nicht nur für eines der Wahrzeichen des 'Palestrinastils', sondern auch für ein Unikum"* in August Wilhelm Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik* IV, Hugo Leichtentritt, ed. Leipzig: 1909 p. 56. Quoted by Garratt. Op.cit, p. 192.

9 ■ "Wenn die alten italienischen und niederländischen Meister — ein *Palestrina,* ein *Lassus* —, wenn der deutsche Bach oder andere berühmte Kontrapunktisten acht, sechzehn und mehr verschiedene Stimmen in einer Fuge oder in Stücken anderer Art zusammenfügten und zusammengehen liessen, so folgten sie hierbei dem Prinzip der architektonischen Struktur des Ganzen und forderten von der Einzelstimme weder nuancierte Charakteristik noch die Fähigkeit einen bestimmten Ausdruck, den gewollten und keinen andern, zu geben. Sie sahen, besonders gegenüber dem Kirchenstil, viel mehr darauf, dem Ganzen eine mit dem allgemeinen Inhalt des Textes übereinstimmende Haltung zu sichern, als die Worte durch an sich ausdrucksvolle Melodien zu dramatisiren." Franz Liszt, "Dornröschen. Genast's Gedicht und Raff's Musik gleichen Namens" (1856), in Lina Ramann (Hrsg.). *Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. V. Streifzüge. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1882, p. 169.

In an 1862 letter to his daughter Blandine, Liszt compared Palestrina's music to the flow of the river Jordan:

> On Sundays I go to the Sistine Chapel to bathe and steep my mind in the dark waves of the *Jordan* of Palestrina.[10]

Interestingly, Wagner also likened the essence of Palestrina's music to the uniform motion of a river, in which tiny waves merge into the larger whole. In his 1870 study of Beethoven, Wagner wrote:

> For the most speaking likeness of that inmost (dream-) image of the world perceived thereby, we have only to listen to one of those famous church-pieces of Palestrina's. Here Rhythm is nowhere traceable save through the play of the harmonic sequences; as a symmetrical succession in time, apart from them, it does not exist at all. Here, then, Succession *(Zeitfolge)* is still so rigidly bound to that timeless, spaceless essence, Harmony, that we cannot as yet employ the laws of Time to aid us in the understanding of such music. The sole idea of Succession in such a piece is expressed by wellnigh nothing but the gentlest fluctuations of one ground-colour, which presents us with the most varied modulations within the range of its affinity, without our being able to trace a line in all its changes.[11]

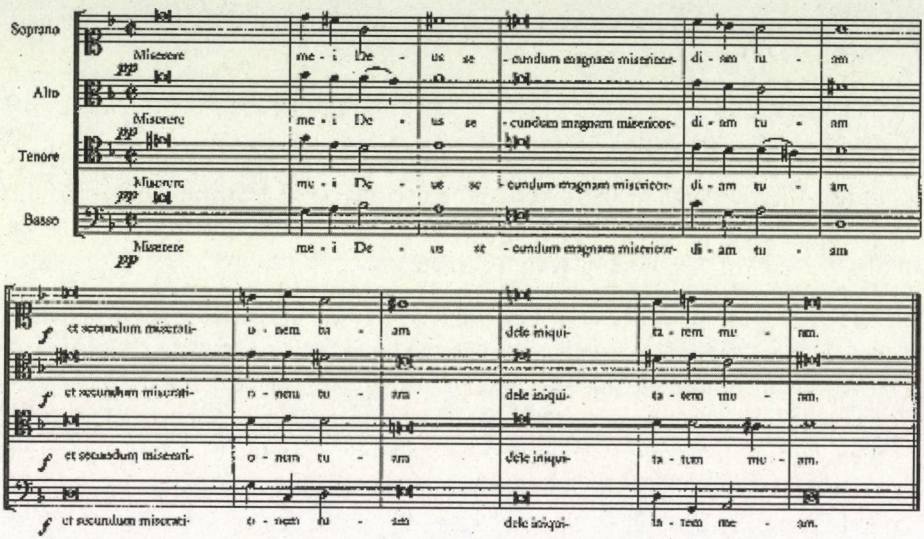
The orchestral introduction of *Christus* is based on the Gregorian melody *Rorate cœli* ("Drop dew down, ye heavens"). The entrances of the various orchestral instruments launch a flowing musical process in the course of which the sound spectrum is gradually expanded, as if the heavens opened up. This differs from the unified soundscape of Palestrina's *a cappella* chorus which consisted of men and boys alone. A large symphony orchestra is naturally capable of much more diverse sound combinations, and the composer can unfold the polyphonic musical material on a much larger scale.

"Miserere d'après Palestrina"

Miserere d'après Palestrina," the eighth movement of the piano cycle *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses,* has posed many enigmas for researchers. All we used to know was that its theme came from a sketchbook of Liszt's, labelled N5 and assigned by Rena Mueller to the years between 1845 and 1848. The sketchbook contains a copy, not in Liszt's hand, of an entry entitled *Miserere von Palästrina (wie es in der Sixtinischen Capelle gesungen).*

10 ■ "Les dimanches, je vais régulièrement à la Chapelle Sixtine pour y baigner et retremper mon esprit dans les ondes sonores du *Jourdain* de Palestrina.. " in *Correspondance de Liszt et de sa fille madame Émile Ollivier 1842–1862* publiée par Daniel Ollivier, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1936 p. 298. Quoted by Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt.* 3. *The Final Years 1861–1886.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996 p. 35.

11 ■ Richard Wagner, "Beethoven," in: *Actors and Singers,* trans. William Ashton Ellis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 79.



"Miserere von Palästrina" in Liszt's notebook, 60/N5. 114.D-WRgs

The theme, however, does not resemble any of Palestrina's *Miserere* settings found in the complete editions. The most recent studies have found our theme, with the same title, on p. 459 of the July 1824 issue (No. 28) of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung;* in all likelihood, this was the source someone had copied out for Liszt. In any case, this was not the first time the theme had been printed in the *AMZ*; it had appeared in the periodical in 1810 and again in 1818.

If we examine the three appearances of the theme in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung,* we find, to our surprise, that the music is not exactly identical. A single note in the soprano solo differs from version to version; yet the singular way of psalm-setting, which departs from usual practice, is the same each time. The editor, Friedrich Rochlitz, added a brief commentary to the musical examples in 1810 and 1818, to the effect that those examples had been taken down from a live performance rather than borrowed from a printed edition. Rochlitz was probably unfamiliar with the Miserere settings in use at the Sistina; all he knew was that the psalm was performed antiphonally by two alternating choruses, without instrumental accompaniment. He assumed that all the lines of the text were sung in *falsobordone* style; thus, after a first line containing monophonic recitation, he suggested a polyphonic performance of the verse in the second line. The 1818 commentary points out that the music came from a connoisseur and friend of music who was well acquainted with the singing at the *Sistine Chapel;* after notating this brief *Miserere,* he gave it to Rochlitz for publication. As before, Rochlitz still attributed the *Miserere* to Palestrina.

By 1824, the editorship of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* had been

taken over by Gottfried Härtel, who added no commentary to the example but simply reprinted the music as *Miserere d'après Palestrina,* accepting Rochlitz's attribution. By so doing, he included the *Miserere* among Palestrina's works, citing the performance tradition of the Sistina as his source. It is this final publication that Liszt knew and used in his piano piece. For the moment, we must leave open the question as to whether all three versions came from the same original source, and if so, what may account for the differences among them.

What is certain is that this musical quote has nothing to do with Palestrina's works; nor does it reflect faithfully the tradition of the Sistine Chapel. It is interesting that during the 1810s and '20s, the *AMZ* printed several descriptions of the *Miserere* compositions performed at the Sistina during Holy Week services. In September 1817, Louis Spohr gave a different account of that year's *Miserere* performance, identifying the authors of the music: Gregorio Allegri and Tommaso Bai. Then in June 1825, G. P. Sievers devoted a series of scholarly articles to the performance tradition of the Sistina Chapel Choir, mentioning of course the *Miserere* as well. Sievers listed practically every composer whose *Misereres* had been performed by the papal choir since the 18th century; here, in addition to Allegri and Bai, we find the names of Anerio, Scarlatti, and Baini, but there is no mention of Palestrina in this context.

The yearbooks of the papal choir are crucial sources of information for researchers. They reveal exactly what was performed by the choir at any given time. Since the first appearance of the *Miserere* melody in the *AMZ* occurred in 1810, whoever notated it must have heard the choir either the year before or a few years prior. According to the yearbooks, the choir had only sung the settings of Allegri and Bai from 1805 on; the former on Holy Wednesday and the latter on the two other days. This schedule was observed until 1809, when Pope Pius VII was captured by Napoleon. Services at the Sistina did not resume until 1815, after the end of the French occupation, with the same two *Misereres* (their order, however, had been switched).

In 1821, the choirmaster of the Sistine Chapel, Giuseppe Baini, composed a new *Miserere* at the Pope's request. It was first performed on Good Friday of that year, and sung on a regular basis in subsequent years. Baini's composition, however, is in ten parts and its character is completely different from the fragment that Liszt arranged; it can be ruled out as a source. If, therefore, the music printed in the *AMZ* is based on a *Miserere* composition heard at the Sistine Chapel, as both Rochlitz and Härtel affirmed, then it must have been the work of either Allegri or Bai.

We further know from the descriptions that the *Misereres* of Allegri and Bai were performed by soloists, the most experienced singers of the choir; after all, this was the most prominent musical production during the Holy Week services. According to testimonies, the true magic of the *Miserere* compositions, indeed their definitive form, was created by the singers during performance. At the same time, several foreign musicians, including Spohr,

Nicolai and Mendelssohn, complained about jarring parallels and harmonic irregularities due to excessive ornamentation. In fact, the slight discrepancies among the three *AMZ* examples may have to do with improvised embellishments and other variants introduced in performance.

One thing, however, is certain, attested by extant manuscripts and prints: the compositions of Allegri and Bai, even in their ornamented versions, are definitely recognizable and distinguishable from one another. There are several written sources from the 19th century documenting the interpretive practice of the *Misereres* in the Sistina's repertoire. Clearly, the original melodic outlines and harmonic progressions of the Allegri and Bai compositions remained unchanged in all the different interpretations. Yet the characteristic plagal turn at the end of the third line of Liszt's *Miserere* theme can be found neither in Allegri nor in Bai. Now if this striking progression does not come from the original works and cannot be attributed to the singers either, we must conclude that this particular *Miserere* must have been composed by the same person who wrote it down and gave it to the *AMZ*. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the musical example is practically nothing but a harmonic skeleton that corresponds neither to the five-part, nor the four-part sections in the works in question.

If all this is true, why was the theme labelled as a "*Miserere* by Palestrina?" It is unlikely that the author would have wanted intentionally to mislead the readers of the journal. But it wasn't customary at the Sistina to indicate the composers of the selections performed, so anyone not already familiar with the selections would not have known what they were listening to. The notation of the example and Rochlitz's introductory words both suggest that the author may not have been a professional musician. Conceivably, the title derives from the expression "alla Palestrina," which did not necessarily mean that the work was actually by Palestrina. As I mentioned before, there were many shades and nuances in which the expression was used in the 19th century, in connection with Palestrina's music and the old style, and aesthetic ideals of church music associated with his name. The caption of the musical example, "*Miserere* von Palestrina," may simply be the result of a misunderstanding of the expression, or an imprecise translation from the Italian. In any case, it is noteworthy that Liszt used the form "d'après Palestrina"—which corresponds exactly to "alla Palestrina"—in his French title, although there the title refers to the entire piano piece. It is almost impossible to decide whether he himself thought this excerpt to be by Palestrina or whether he intended the designation in a more generic way. Yet, in view of the fact that in Rome under the influence of Fortunato Santini and his house concerts Liszt had already begun serious study of Palestrina's work, it is more likely that he took the term in its broader sense, referring to *stile antico* in general. ❧

Géza Bethlenfalvy

Amrita Sher-Gil: A Painter of Two Continents

On December 5, 1941 a beautiful woman passed away twenty-eight years young. She died, but her spirit, bound up in her art, is "deathless". Aptly *A-MRITA* means immortal in Sanskrit (*A* - denotes "-less", *-mrita* "death").

Amrita Sher-Gil was one of the most celebrated artists of pre-independence India and among the founders of Indian modern art, uniting European and Hungarian traditions with ancient Indian art. Despite her youth, she left behind an oeuvre of almost two hundred scintillating paintings. Yet she found it hard to sell them. Securing her independence was a perennial challenge.

Times change. In the first days of March 2006, the Delhi-based industrialist Nand Khemka successfully bid 69,000,000 rupees (USD 1.5m) for *Village Scene* at the Delhi auction house Osian's. Sher-Gil's works rarely appear on the market, so it is understandable that this undoubted masterpiece fetched such a vaulting price. Following a period of neglect, Amrita Sher-Gil now takes her place among the nine masters whose works, according to the Archaeological Survey, are art treasures of India and cannot be taken out of the country.

Amrita Sher-Gil was born in Budapest on January 30, 1913 into a family of art-lovers. Her mother, Marie Antoinette Gottesmann, was Hungarian, and her father, Umrao Singh Sher-Gil of Majithia, a Sikh aristocrat. Marie Antoinette (Mária Antónia) Gottesmann of Erdőbakta learned to play the piano as a child and wanted to become an opera singer. For this purpose she was packed off to Rome, where she also became fluent in Italian. Music and art were family traditions in their affluent bourgeois home. Her mother,

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

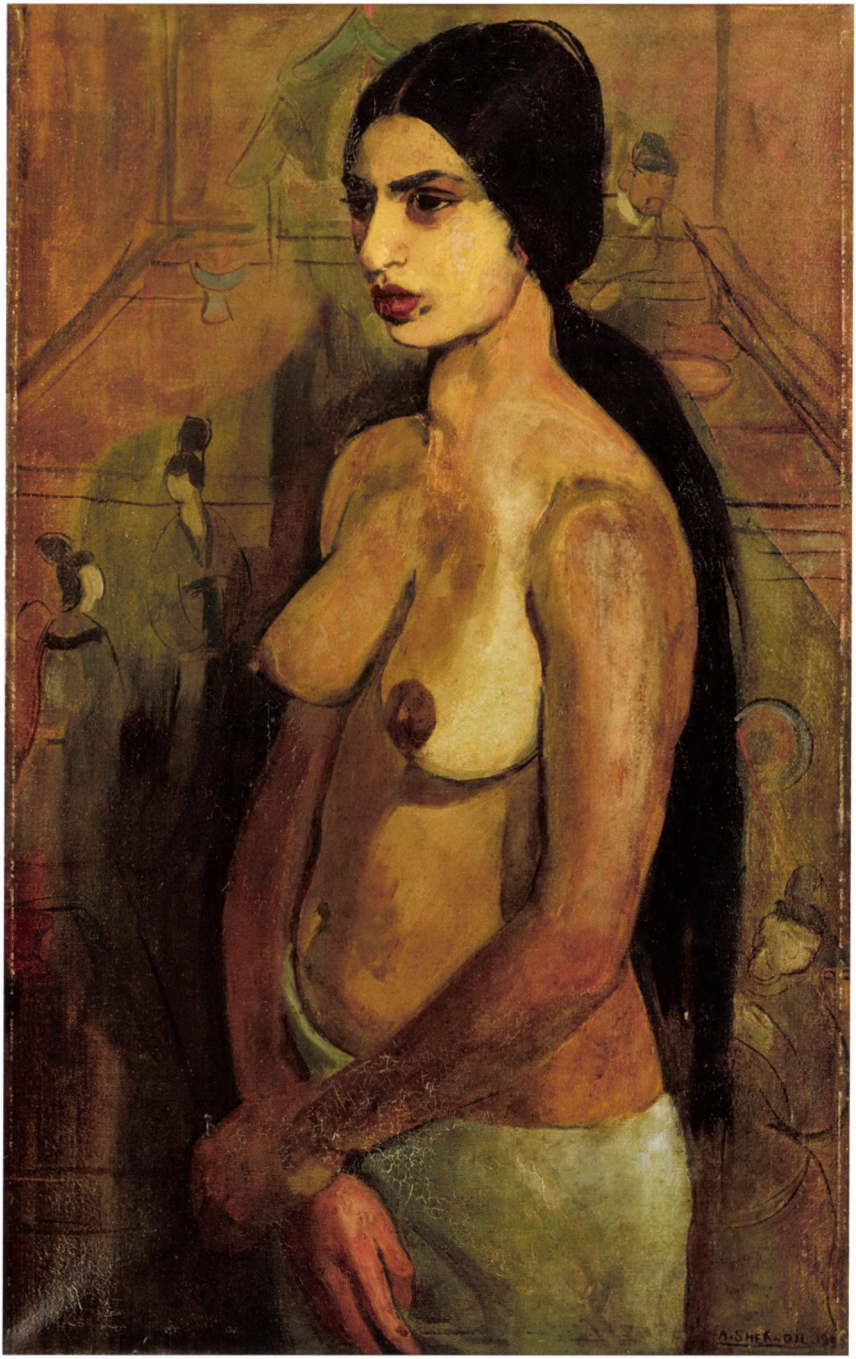
Antonia Levys-Mártonfalvy, was also well known for her brilliant singing and piano playing.

Amrita's mother was an adventure-seeker. When she was around twenty-nine she visited London to continue her musical studies and became acquainted with Princess Bamba Sofia Jindan. This meeting changed her life. Princess Bamba was the granddaughter of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839), the Sikh ruler of Punjab for nearly forty years, the last stronghold of resistance against the British occupation in the whole of India. Many foreign soldiers were employed in his court, and a Hungarian painter, August Schoefft, whose paintings depict the grandeur of this great epoch of Indian history (it was Shoefft who made the only lithograph portrait of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös). Some time after the British finally defeated the Sikhs Ranjit Singh's youngest son, Duleep Singh, was taken to England, where Princess Bamba was born much later.

Marie Antoinette accompanied the Princess to Lahore, the old capital of the Punjab. The Princess and Umrao Singh Sher Gil had already met in London, and their future marriage was the source of gossip. But when he met the Hungarian friend of the Princess, both of them became attracted to one another, and in 1912 Umrao Singh married Marie Antoinette Gottesmann.

Let us say a few words about Umrao Singh's background. Guru Nanak founded the Sikh religion, which differed from Hinduism and Islam, in the sixteenth century. The Sikhs do not worship deities; the "One Timeless Being" represents the divinity. One can learn about him in the teaching of the "Gurus", which are found in the holy book *Guru Granth Sahib* kept in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The Sikh community follows strict moral rules: no stealing, no hemp, opium or liquor, and no caste system. One must make an honest living by lawful work. Sikhs have always been considered reliable soldiers who fought in the armies of various powers. The name of every Sikh male includes "Singh" (meaning "lion"), while female names are graced with "Kaur" (meaning "princess").

Umrao Singh Sher-Gil was born into a family which descended from the aristocratic Sikh clan of the Shergil Jats. His father Surat Singh stood for the Sikh identity of warriors. His predecessors helped Ranjit Singh with their specially bred horses, which were much needed by the Punjab Army. Surat Singh had difficulties with the British, too, but was loyal to them, and was rewarded with the rank of "Honorary Magistrate" and the title of "Raja". His first two wives remained childless, but the third produced two boys and a girl. The first was Umrao Singh. He was just eleven years old when his father died. By this time the Sikh community felt the influence of the ideology of "new Bengal"; even Christianity played a new role in their thinking. Although the father left landed property to his sons, Umrao Singh was more interested in scholarship, philosophy, religion, the arts, astronomy and astrology. He learned Sanskrit and Persian, collected books and developed skills in photography.



Collection Vivan and Navina Sundaram, Delhi

Amrita Sher-Gil: *Self-Portrait as a Tahitian,* Paris, 1934, oil on canvas, 56 × 90 cm.

In a letter, dated 1933 Paris, Amrita writes about her trip to London, where she visited art galleries. "And then this painting of Gauguin's—I felt like kneeling before it!" According to Vivan Sundaram this was probably Gauguin's *Tahitian Pastoral (Faa Iheihe)*.

Amrita Sher-Gil: *Elephant Promenade,* Saraya, 1940, oil on canvas, 92.5 × 126.5 cm.

Amrita Sher-Gil: *Hungarian Village Market 2,* Saraya, 1940, oil on canvas, 73 × 100 cm.

Both *Hungarian Village Market* and *Elephant Promenade* were painted in Saraya, and one can feel that the two worlds of the painter, her two identities, in fact express a oneness, the union of East and West.

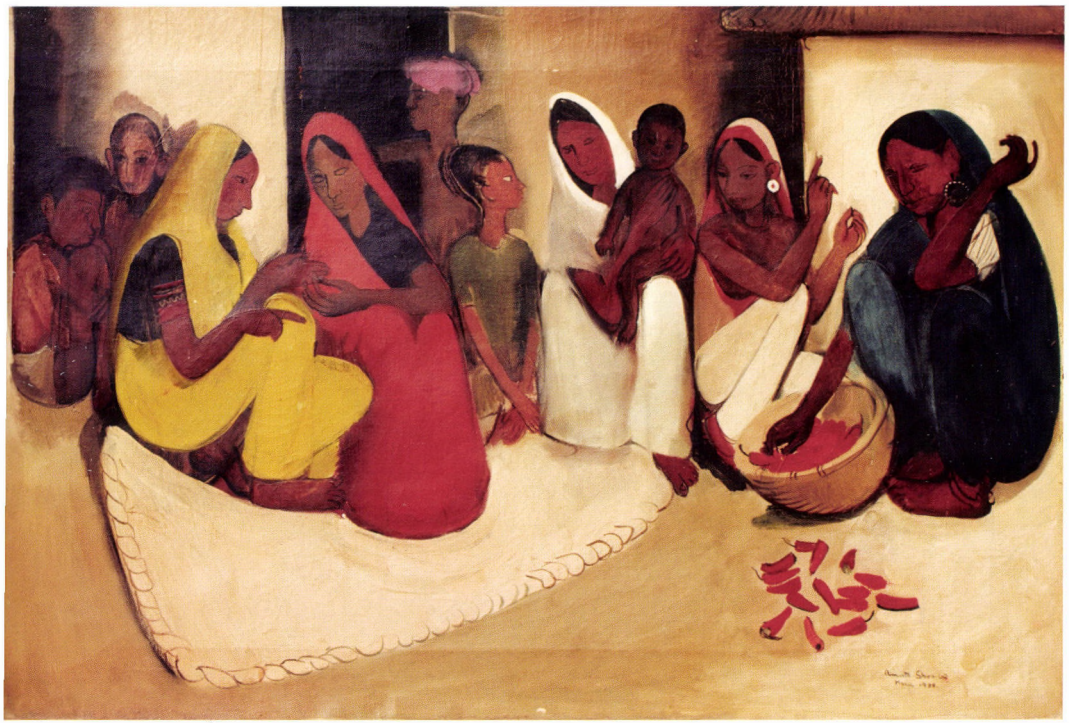
Collection Khalid Tyabji, Delhi

Amrita Sher-Gil: *The Storyteller,* Simla, 1937, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 70 cm.

National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi

Amrita Sher-Gil: *Brahmacharis,* Simla, 1937, oil on canvas, 144.5 × 86.5 cm.

1937 is the time when Amrita was reborn as an Indian woman. She writes in a letter dated 8 May, to a friend: "I have been working extremely hard since my return to Simla, concentrating exclusively on large compositions which in pictorial content are regurgitations of my South Indian impressions and in pictorial form are manifestations of the great lesson I learnt at Ajanta…"



Amrita Sher-Gil: *Village Group,* Saraya, 1938, oil on canvas, 95 × 66 cm.

The same painting also has the title *Village Scene*. It was auctioned by Ossian's in 2006.

Amrita Sher-Gil: *Ancient Storyteller,* Saraya, 1940, oil on canvas, 70 × 87 cm.

This painting obtained the "Best Composition in Oil" award at the Amritsar exhibition of the Indian Academy of Fine Arts, October–November 1940.

Amrita Sher-Gil:
The Merry Cemetery,
Zebegény, 1939,
oil on canvas,
73 × 98.5 cm.

National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi

Zebegény is a picturesque village on the Danube bank, popular with painters. The Baktay – Gottesmann – Sher-Gil family often spent their summers there. Amrita was inspired by the various elements of this hilly landscape. The cemetery in her painting has also been painted by István Szőnyi, whom Amrita might have met in the village.

Amrita Sher-Gil:
Winter, Zebegény, 1939,
oil on canvas,
73.6 × 52 cm

National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi

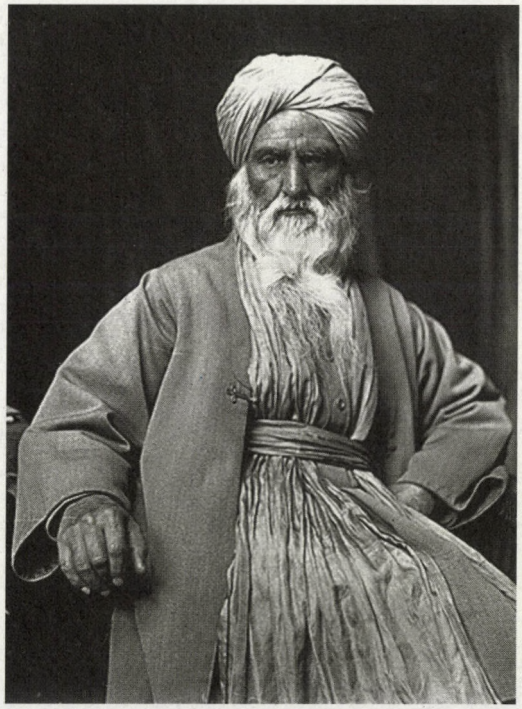
Amrita Sher-Gil: *(Without title),* Lahore, 1941, oil on canvas, 65.7 × 87.5 cm.

The last, unfinished painting of Amrita presents a view from her studio above the city of Lahore, where she was conceived and where she died. The robust colours and surfaces convey deep feelings and a message: much more should come, more intensive feelings, deeper qualities.

After their marriage Umrao Singh and Marie Antoinette remained in Lahore, but when the birth of a child was expected, she wanted the child to be born in Budapest. They moved to Hungary, and on January 30, 1913 their first daughter, Amrita was born and in the following year a second girl, Indira.

The first eight years of Amrita's life were spent in Hungary with her parents and sister, as the First World War and political troubles forced them to stay on. Umrao Singh soon became a popular figure among the intellectuals of Budapest. He taught yoga to a circle of interested friends, among them Mari Jászai, the famous actress, Charles L. Fabri, the art historian and Indologist who later settled in India, and Ervin Baktay (1890–1963), Marie Antoinette's youngest brother who became a charismatic figure of Indology in Hungary. After the war ended, the family left Budapest in 1921, to settle in the beautiful and lively summer capital Simla in North India, in the foothills of the Himalayas.

While in Budapest, Umrao Singh also used his time to introduce every aspect of Indian thought to his brother-in-law, Ervin Baktay, who, due to his experiences in the First World War, became increasingly disillusioned with European belligerence. He used this opportunity to learn Sanskrit, Indian philosophy and yoga from Umrao Singh. It was also Umrao Singh who handed over to him the 12 volumes of the



Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, date and place not known

Ervin Baktay in Simla, 1927, photo Umrao Singh

The Gottesmann family with the Sher-Gils in Budapest, 1930, photo: Umrao Singh. Front row sitting: Indira Sher-Gil, György Szepessy, Amrita Sher-Gil, Klára Szepessy; Middle row: Armand Mártonfalvy, unknown person, Ella Szepessy, Blanka Egán, Antónia Gottesmann, Marie Antoinette, Ervin Baktay, Umrao Singh, unknown person; Standing behind: Lajos Szepessy, Viktor Egán

Sanskrit Tales by Francis William Bain, all of which were published in Hungarian in Baktay's translation within a few years. In the same period, roughly between 1917 and 1923, Baktay translated some sections of the *Mahābhārata,* the *Rāmāyana,* another collection of Indian stories and the *Kāmasūtra.* He also published two books on Tagore and one volume on Mahatma Gandhi in 1926, becoming one of the most colourful personalities of Indian studies, who popularised Indian thought and art in Hungary.

Ervin Baktay studied painting around the turn of the century in the epoch-making Nagybánya–Técső–Munich art school of Simon Hollósy whose brother József Hollósy founded the first Hungarian Buddhist sangha community in 1895. Between 1926 and 1929 Baktay visited India, a formative event in his life, the result of which was a series of books published in the nineteen-thirties and forties, among them ten travelogues, books on the Indian freedom struggle, on Hindu religious philosophy, yoga and astrology. After the Second World War, in Communist Hungary, he was persona non grata, as his works were frowned

on for spreading religious ideas. In the revolutionary autumn of 1956, the Indian ambassador in Budapest Mohammad Ataur Rahman helped him and his wife Aditi over the border to Austria so that he could proceed to India and participate in the events of the "Buddha Jayanti" celebrations and conference commemorating the 2,500th anniversary of the birth of Buddha.

A life in documents

Three childhood diaries by Amrita survive in part and are published by Vivan Sundaram alongside letters and other documents. The Sher-Gil family has never been coy about documenting their lives. They collected family photos, letters, news clippings, artefacts, and, art works with great verve. Vivan Sundaram turned all this material into a proper archive. In his book he not only reproduced Amrita's witty, stinging and frankly opinionated letters and diary entries, which begin in 1920 when Amrita was barely seven years old, but presented it all in a new way. We can see how between the age of six and ten, then between ten and twelve and between twelve and fourteen her drawing skills developed, how she started painting in watercolours and drawing movie stars.

Antónia Gottesmann with her two daughters, Indira and Amrita

The documents tell us that in 1924 the two girls were taken by their mother and the sculptor G. C. Pasquinelli to Florence where Amrita was a student at the Santa Anunciata Paggio Imperiaion School. She did not like the atmosphere of the school, and they soon returned to Simla. The arrival of her maternal uncle in 1926 in Simla was an important staging post in her artistic development. A lecture delivered by Baktay in Calcutta during his visit to India in 1956 (an unpublished typescript is amongst his papers) testifies to this:

> In 1926 I spent a few months at Simla, where the Shergil family used to live. Amrita was thirteen years old at that time. From her early childhood she liked to draw and paint, but up to that time she had no regular training at all. She depended on her imagination. Even so she was mainly interested in the representation of the human figure. Her early compositions were illustrations of fairy tales and the myths of India. I saw that she was extremely talented, and judged it was time to begin her regular

artistic education. I discussed her drawings and paintings with her, and when I pointed out the excellent features of her work, at the same time, I also pointed out its shortcomings, explaining to her that she would always have to struggle with the difficulties unless she acquired a fundamental knowledge and thorough understanding of the structure of the human figure and of nature in general. I called in the gardener and made him sit as model for Amrita and told her to make drawings from nature. After she finished her first drawing of the head of the man, I pointed out the shortcomings of her work and explained to her the organic build-up of the human head and face, making her realize that there is a perfect, architectonic construction in everything produced by nature. Amrita was not only very talented but also exceptionally intelligent. She very soon grasped the idea of the teachings, and proceeded to make use of it in practice. In a few weeks she almost mastered the fundamental principles of organic drawing, and the studies she made could have been worthy of an artist twice her age and experience. Her vision opened as it were to the fundamental reality of nature without committing the artistic mistake of copying; that is, imitating nature in a servile manner. For I never intended to teach her naturalism, and she instinctively found her secure path in art.

When a few years later she was working in Paris, and already in the first year succeeded in winning very prominent prizes and gold medals at the exhibitions there, she wrote to me in one of her letters: "As far as I can see, very few artists seem to have any knowledge of those fundamental principles I have learnt from you—and this goes for masters, too—but I shall never forget them, and will always make use of them, because they give me a sort of certainty and assurance." I may add that she was working for about a year in the school of the well known French master Lucien Simon; and before the year was over, he addressed her with the following words: "I cannot teach you anything more—but one day I shall be very proud indeed of having been your teacher..." So excuse me for being proud for having been Amrita's first teacher, for I know that I succeeded in giving her a basis, which she always found sound and firm.

This important visit to Europe, to Paris, was undertaken between 1929 and 1934. On the advice of Ervin Baktay, and with the help of his friend József Nemes, a Hungarian painter who lived in those years in Paris, Amrita joined the Académie de la Grande Chaumière under Pierre Vaillant, near the former atelier of Gauguin, and later the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts under Lucien Simon. In 1930 she saw Rabindranath Tagore's exhibition, and she too exhibited with the Beaux Arts Student's Circle of Women. Her exceptional painting skills won her a prize in 1931 for her *Portrait of a Young Man.* She also exhibited *Young Girls* and was elected Associate of the Grand Salon, Paris. In the years 1933–34 she worked in a studio she shared with her friend Marie-Louise Chassany. In summer vacations she visited her relatives in Budapest and the picturesque village of Zebegény, a popular haunt of painters, and became interested in Hungarian painting—especially the *plein air* painters of the Nagybánya school—visiting exhibitions and

meeting artists. In France she was influenced by the masters of modern European painting, the works of Cézanne, Gauguin, Picasso, Braque et al.

After returning to India in 1935 she acquainted herself with the great monuments of the ancient Indian tradition, visiting Ajanta, Elora, Cochin, (Mattancheri frescoes), Mathura and Madurai, she studied Mughal and Pahari miniature painting, and worked out a modern approach to Indian life. She portrayed herself, friends and the poor, yet colourful lives of local people, making her art a true fusion of East and West. Her attitude towards Indian art is revealed in a letter dated 25 January 1937, written from Cochin to her sister Indu:

> I spend my days from morning till evening (that is to say till the light fails) at a deserted palace here. It contains some perfectly marvellous old paintings that haven't been "discovered" yet. Nobody knows about them and the local people—even so-called responsible people like the Diwan—would destroy them, I am sure, if that were in their power, because some of the panels depict erotic scenes. Animals and birds are depicted copulating with the utmost candour. But curiously enough the human figures are never depicted in the act, although they are shown making love in every other way. [...] In spite of the complexity of the design the general effect, particularly the treatment of the faces, is primitive and highly simplified in character, and it is only when one starts copying them [...] that one realises what an astounding technique these people had, and what an amazing knowledge of form and power of observation they possessed. Curiously enough, unlike the slender forms of Ajanta, the figures are extremely massive and heavy here. The drawing, perhaps the most powerful I have ever seen (even more powerful than Ajanta, although Ajanta is superior from the painting point of view).

She writes in a letter to her mother and father, dated September 1934:

> Our long stay in Europe has helped me to discover India, as it were. Modern art has led me to the comprehension and appreciation of Indian painting and sculpture. It seems paradoxical, but I know for certain that had we not come away to Europe, I should perhaps never have realised that a fresco from Ajanta or a small piece of sculpture in the Musée Guimet is worth more than the whole Renaissance!

She mentions the Cochin frescoes in an enthusiastic letter to art historian Karl Khandalavala, and it is clear they influenced her deeply, just as Breughel and Renoir did. She became convinced that "all art, not excluding religious art, has come into being because of sensuality; sensuality so great that it overflows the boundaries of the mere physical". She writes, only partly ironically, of choosing to depict

> principally the sad aspects of Indian life ... It may be that the sadness, the queer ugliness of the types I choose as my models (which to me is beauty that renders insipid all that which, according to the standards of the world, goes under the category of the word 'beautiful'), corresponds with something in me; some inner trail in my nature which responds to things that are sad, rather than to manifestations of life which are exuberantly happy or placidly contented.

In 1938 Amrita Sher-Gil made a short trip to Hungary and married her first cousin, Victor (Győző) Egán, a doctor, who went with her to India. In 1941, just a few days before the opening of her first major solo show in Lahore, she fell seriously ill, probably from an acute peritonitis. She slipped into a coma and died at around midnight on 6 December 1941. The real cause of her death has never been ascertained and remained a riddle to her contemporaries. A failed abortion has also been suggested. She was cremated on 7 December 1941 in Lahore, in the presence of her father, mother and Victor, who was with her on her last night.

Late recognition

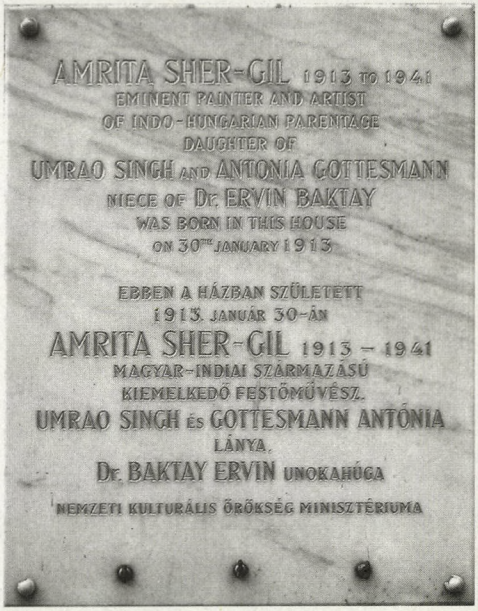
According to art historian Geeta Kapur, the wife of Vivan Sundaram, in her short life, Amrita Sher-Gil tried to conquer all at once: the alienation caused by her class, her Indo-European ancestry and her gender. This alienation, however, also enabled an encounter with India as the experiencing and recognition of the other; this distinguishes Amrita Sher-Gil from Gauguin and the Orientalists, for whom the Orient was primarily an archive of stereotypes and projections for their own suppressed desires. The modernism of Amrita Sher-Gil was based on her completely autonomous understanding of India and her ability to bring together sources of inspiration from both the modern West and historic India.

Some of her paintings were sold at exhibitions in India (1935: Simla, where she rejects an award; 1936: Bombay, Taj Mahal Hotel, Gold Medal; Hyderabad; 1937: Bombay Arts Society, Gold Medal; Allahabad University; Hotel Imperial, New Delhi; Faletti's Hotel, Lahore; posthumous exhibition at the Punjab Literary League Hall in Lahore.) Many paintings, however, remained in the possession of her family, and more than half of those on record are now in the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (NGMA), where a good number of her paintings are on permanent display in two or three galleries. The collection was acquired in the years 1949–50 as a donation by her father and her brother-in-law K.V.K. Sundaram. A further thirty-five of her paintings were bought by the NGMA from her husband. Together, the Amrita Sher-Gil corpus consisting of ninety-six paintings has become one of the most important treasures of the National Gallery of Modern Art. An exhibition of fifty-nine paintings from this collection was mounted in 2001 April in the National Gallery and in the Rabindra Bhavan galleries of the Lalit Kala Academy in New Delhi.

Abroad her recognition started slowly. The first exhibition outside India, at which six of her paintings were shown, was arranged at the 1982 Festival of India at the Tate Gallery in London. In 2001 about 30 paintings were exhibited in the Ernst Museum in Budapest, with a catalogue edited and with an essay by Katalin Keserü, who also published an illustrated album in 2007 (*Amrita Sher-Gil,* Budapest: Kelet Kiadó) with more than 60 reproductions, including reproductions

of paintings by Hungarians such as István Szőnyi, Béla Iványi Grünwald, Vilmos Aba-Novák, whose works Amrita may have seen at exhibitions, or whom she met during her summer holidays in Zebegény and Budapest. Honouring her contribution to Hungarian art life a memorial tablet has been placed on the house where she was born, in Budapest.

From October 2006 through January 2007, Haus der Kunst in Munich was the venue of the truly important exhibition *Amrita Sher-Gil. An Indian Artist Family in the 20th Century*. It presented the story of three generations of an Indian family of artists by putting on display paintings by Amrita Sher-Gil, photographs by her father, Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, and digital photomontages by Vivan Sundaram. The same exhibition was staged in the Tate Modern, London, in 2007, from February 28 to April 22. The photomontages by Vivan Sundaram were recently exhibited in the Sepia Gallery in New York.



Text of the memorial tablet at 4 Szilágyi Dezső Square, Budapest: AMRITA SHER-GIL 1913–1941 Eminent painter and artist of Indo-Hungarian parentage daughter of UMRAO SINGH and ANTÓNIA GOTTESMANN niece of Dr. Ervin Baktay was born in this house on 30th January 1913

Amrita Sher-Gil in photographs

Umrao Singh Sher-Gil started to take photographs in 1892 at the age of twenty-two, and became a passionate recorder of his surroundings, especially of the life of his family. Vivan Sundaram mentions a Blair Stereo Hawkeye and a Voigtländer camera he used, and also autochromes (colour positives on glass). He was a pioneer of photography in India.

Vivan Sundaram meticulously collected all the documents and any material connected with the Sher-Gil family, resulting in a meaningful archive. The Munich exhibition shows some of the special photographic material he created, a genre he calls "re-take". This is a kind of digital photomontage based on a computer manipulation of analogue material—in this case, his grandfather's photographs. These photomontages were published by Tulika Books in 2001, entitled *Re-take of Amrita*.

The beautifully constructed and lavishly illustrated book *Amrita Sher-Gil. A Self-Portrait in Letters and Writings*[1] was created, as it were, to ensure the further survival and an extension of Amrita's "Deathlessness" and is based on

1 ■ Vivan Sundaram ed., Amrita Sher-Gil. A Self-Portrait in Letters and Writings. New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2010, Vols. 1–2, XLIII, 821, XII. pp.

four decades of work. The nephew of Amrita Sher-Gil, Vivan Sundaram is an artist, too, a painter in his own right, experimenting in various fields of art, including installations, film and photography. He conceived this book as an artistic creation, composed by an archivist, historiographer, art historian, painter, photographer, photomontager and geographer.

Volume 1 is introduced by Salman Rushdie's preface, the genealogy of the Gottesmann-Erdőbaktay family and the Sher-Gil of Majitha family follow and an introduction by Vivan Sundaram, including the life story of Amrita Sher-Gil. The real subject, the letters by Amrita, covers 782 pages with the diaries and notebooks of the child Amrita coming first, then the letters before 1934, and letters and articles up to 1938. The second volume continues with letters and articles up to 1941. It projects the adult painter and her correspondence with dealers, patrons, writers and art society officials. It shows Amrita's struggles in a male-dominated art world. The book closes with an epilogue by Vivan Sundaram. To aid the reader, a full list of paintings, thumbnail sketches of all the 172 known oil paintings of Amrita is included and a bibliography and index

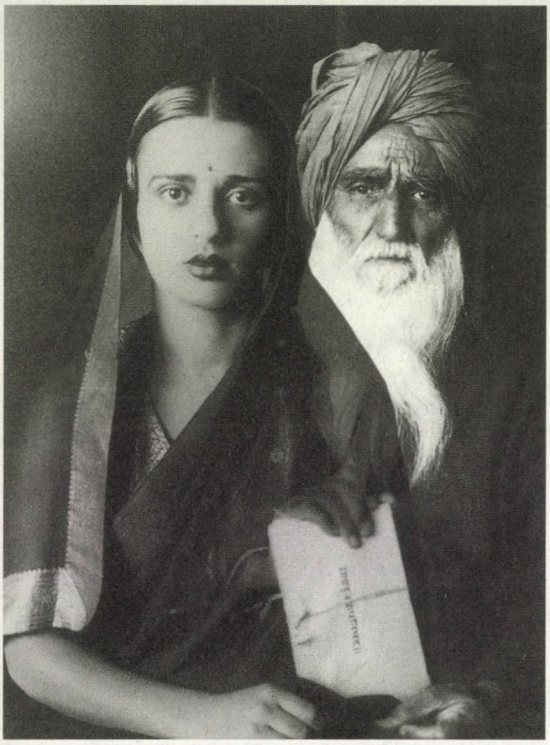
A bourgeois family, with many ladies looking into mirrors. In the middle Marie Antoinette, a European lady in an Indian robe. She is pregnant with the baby that will be named Amrita. On the right we see the grown up Amritas, one Indian, one Hungarian—an index of her mixed parentage. Indira, the mother of Vivan Sundaram, is also there, and so is Vivan Sundaram himself, as a child on his grandfathers lap. The grandfather holds his Voigtländer camera. Re-take of Amrita, digital photomontage by Vivan Sundaram

The portrait of Boris Taslitzky (painted in 1930), classmate and lover of Amrita, is in the middle of the montage. Umrao Singh is in a yoga position. Amrita sits in a party dress and commands the meaning of this tableau.
Re-take of Amrita, digital photomontage by Vivan Sundaram

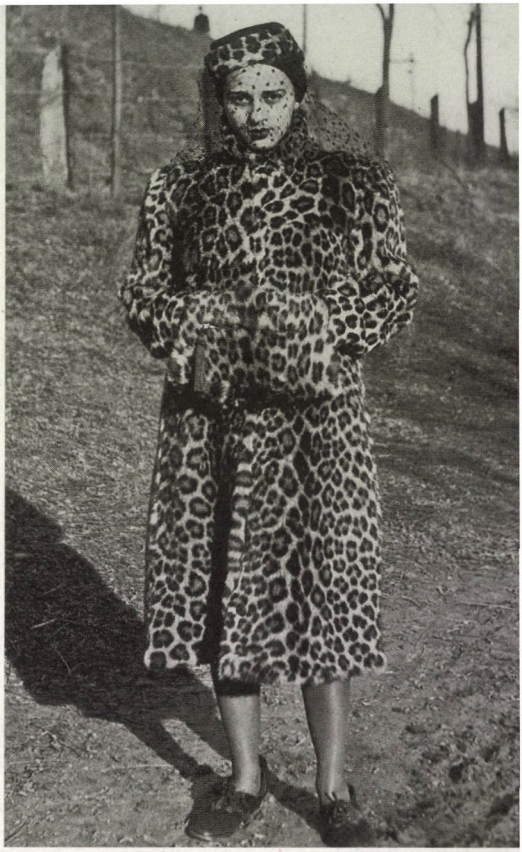
of all the names together with a facsimile of a letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to "Dear Mrs Sher-Gil".

Many friends, scholars, art historians and writers have authored studies, criticism, articles and whole volumes about various aspects of the life and work of Amrita Sher-Gil, such as Karl Khandalavala, Rudi von Leyden, Mulk Raj Anand, Yashodhara Dalmia, Geeta Kapur, Gayatri Sinha, Gyula Wojtilla, Katalin Keserü, all duly listed in the more than two hundred bibliographical entries. Vivan Sundaram's work is equal to all these, and even surpasses them.

The novelty of the method lies in the originality of structure and presentation. The writings of Amrita appear on the right-hand page with notes and comments, and her early drawings, sketches and paintings are arranged on the left. Sepia-tinted photographs taken by her father Umrao Singh, who had a natural talent for photography and spent many of his days meticulously documenting the family, are scattered throughout the book. Many of these had been previously published, but quite a few new ones were added by Vivan



Amrita and Umrao Singh stare into the lens of the camera. The two photographs were taken in 1936 and 1946. The frontality of the image bears a message of self-knowledge, and death. Re-take of Amrita, digital photomontage by Vivan Sundaram



Distance, Amrita in a Hungarian landscape Re-take of Amrita, digital photomontage by Vivan Sundaram

Sundaram, placing them alongside "remarks", which situate the letters in their context. There are also full-page reproductions of Amrita Sher-Gil's paintings, a delight for all who have learned to "read" these works.

Vivan Sundaram has been involved in writing papers and books on his aunt, helping art historians in similar projects, as well as creating two of his own works, the document and material collection of The Sher-Gil Archive, the result of which is the presently discussed publication, and the book *Re-Take of Amrita* (New Delhi: Tulika Books – 2001). His family ties and his many years of toil have led him to an abundance of material unavailable to any other biographer. For this reason alone, his *magnum opus* is well worth reading. ❧

When Voting "Yes" Means Rejection

Miklós Zeidler Talks to András Schweitzer

András Schweitzer: *Before the Hungarian Parliament ratified the Treaty of Trianon in November 1920 lawmakers protested that the pact proclaiming Hungary's dismemberment was unjust and violated mankind's common interests. They also complained that the population data on which the treaty was based were incorrect. Hungary lost two thirds of its territory, and three million Hungarians. The parliamentarians appealed "before divine justice to the conscience of mankind." Collectively they recited the irredentist prayer "I believe in one God, I believe in one homeland..." Don't you find it astonishing that an international agreement should be ratified under such circumstances?*

Miklós Zeidler: Trianon was a momentous international treaty which couldn't be entrusted solely to diplomatic channels; it needed parliament's approval to be legally binding—this was true of every signatory state, not only Hungary. The Hungarian constitution requires that a bill first be discussed in committee before being debated in the chamber. The spokesmen for the committees of external, constitutional and economic affairs put forward not a single word in the bill's favour. Force of necessity compelled them to accept it. By invoking divine power they made clear that Hungary was under coercion while declaring the treaty null and void before a "higher power". Such gestures were not singular: instead of using the ornamental pen provided at Grand Trianon, for example, one Hungarian delegate maintained he had demonstratively signed with one that was worn out (the ornamental pen, nevertheless, was displayed in the Museum of Military History between the two world wars). To this day the

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Miklós Zeidler
teaches at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest and has published widely on the history of inter-war Hungary. His books include Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary 1920–1945 *(2007, also in Hungarian).*
András Schweitzer
is on the staff of Heti Világgazdaság, *an economic weekly.*

terms 'peace treaty' and 'peace dictate' have been used interchangeably in Hungarian.

All the same, would it not have been more honourable for the National Assembly to reject the Treaty and for the country to choose passive resistance, or indeed active resistance, as Turkey did under Kemal Atatürk?

The Hungarian Parliament could look to a variety of models. Trianon was not the first of the treaties to be signed, ratified and put onto the statute book. In Germany too opposition to signing and ratifying the Treaty of Versailles was sizeable. There too a government crisis unfolded and it took months before Parliament finally agreed. The process was speedier in Bulgaria and Austria. The Turks did not even ratify the proposed peace settlement, putting up armed resistance until they managed to win better terms. But no one at the end of 1920 could have foreseen the outcome of the Turkish events, as the diplomatic and military conflicts dragged on for three years. Threats by the Allied powers were ineffective in such a huge country; its capital was far from any armed forces the Allies might have mobilised. Moreover, the newly established USSR came to Turkey's aid where Allied interventions had failed. Small, landlocked Hungary, on the other hand, could be forced to accept the terms of peace with relative ease. Nothing would have been simpler than to impose an economic blockade, as had been done in spring 1919, at the time of Hungary's short-lived Communist regime. Back then Hungary had been highly dependent on foreign trade. It had no allies and barely any diplomatic relations—it was literally surrounded by hostile states. At the time the armies of the three Little Entente states were about ten times bigger. The only frontier that could be crossed was the Austrian, but relations with the government of the left in Vienna were far from cordial, and the two countries confronted each other in a dispute over western Hungary. The attempt to stabilize finances in autumn 1920 had failed and bankruptcy threatened. Then again there was the fate of ethnic Hungarians under foreign rule, in many cases losing their livelihood, but who, legally speaking, were still Hungarian citizens. The Treaty of Trianon had provisions regarding their legal status and citizenship, and offered a guarantee that the world generally would recognise Hungary as a new, independent state, one of the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. (The victorious Great Powers only regulated their diplomatic relations with Hungary on 26 July 1921. With the exchange of the ratification documents the state of war was formally brought to an end.)

The peace treaty was thus signed in the summer of 1920, ratified in November, but it only acquired the force of law at the end of July 1921, after Regent Miklós Horthy signed the document. Why the delay?

There were also arguments within the government. Thus, when the Hungarian government received an invitation to attend the Paris Peace Conference at the

beginning of December 1919, Count Albert Apponyi, who had been picked to lead the delegation, tried to delay its departure because he believed that time was working against the Entente, and the Russians would also have a say in how power relations were to develop in Central and Eastern Europe. Miklós Horthy, on the other hand, opposed delay because he felt that Hungary was under an obligation to the Entente, which in mid-November had forced the Romanian forces to withdraw from Budapest, thus assisting the process of normalising the political situation in Hungary. For a time the situation in Europe had been unclear, which some countries—not just Turkey, as mentioned, but also Poland, Romania and Italy—tried to exploit by acquiring ever-newer land. And indeed in Hungary there were those who were ready enough to fish in troubled waters. The end result of all this was that Hungary managed to regain, on the basis of a plebiscite, 100 square miles along the Austrian frontier which lay around Sopron. Alongside that, up until August 1920, the Hungarian government engaged in secret talks with the French to obtain an adjustment of the borders in keeping with ethnic realities. In exchange, the French would have been granted major investment opportunities in Hungary in railways, shipping on the Danube, and also some important financial institutions and industrial enterprises. More valuable still: were Hungary incorporated into their alliance system a barrier would be erected stretching from the North Sea to the Adriatic, i.e. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia, which would have protected France against both Germany and Russia. The Hungarian government therefore did not wish to ratify the Peace Treaty while there was still hope that these negotiations would be successful. Also contributing to the delay was the Hungarian government's fear of public resistance. The bulk of the members of the National Assembly elected in January 1920 were new to the legislative process, and very few possessed any international political experience, so it was hard to convince them to back Hungary's dismemberment.

What arguments were deployed by those who opposed signing?

The opposition did not dispute that Hungary had no choice, but they took the line that agreeing to dismembering historical Hungary had no constitutional foundation. The constitutional tradition always declared the continuity of the historical territory of the country, even when it was split three ways at the time of the Turkish occupation of the 16th and 17th centuries. Estate owners, for example, made efforts to collect feudal dues in territories occupied by the Turks and the territories under Habsburg rule regularly. These regions were looked on as inalienable parts of the lands of the Hungarian crown. This school of thought was still alive in 1920. Another argument was that the National Assembly, representing as it did only a small fraction of the total population of historical Hungary, was not entitled to speak on behalf of the whole nation. In fact it was not just that the elections did not cover the whole of historical Hungary, but

they did not even cover the whole territory of truncated Hungary. In zones that had been under Czechoslovak, Romanian and Yugoslavian occupation stretching beyond the planned frontier lines elections could only be held after the troops had been withdrawn. Admittedly several representatives for what was to become the Burgenland in Austria (at the time still under Hungarian rule) were returned to the National Assembly, so they had the chance to raise their voices in Parliament to protest against the planned detachment of the territory.

In any event, the vote was unanimous.

When, after much prompting, the Entente finally fixed a deadline for 15 November, the parliamentary parties reached agreement on how they would ratify the treaty smoothly. The way the session was to be conducted was choreographed in advance. It was agreed that those who rejected ratification would speak first and then leave the debating chamber. This also suited Prime Minister Pál Teleki since under those circumstances a unanimous 'Yes' vote amounted to a powerful protest, given that the voting would demonstrate the undeniable duress that had been emphasized by earlier speakers. What happened was that forty-some members who voted against ratification threw a spanner in the works! After they had delivered their dissenting speeches they moved over to the adjoining Central Hall where they signed minutes to declare that they were unwilling to contribute to the dismantling of historical Hungary. Then they all sang the national anthem. Meanwhile in the debating chamber Teleki had started his own speech in which, as head of the government, he advised accepting the peace treaty and passing the appropriate bill. At that moment the sound of singing filtered into the chamber: the other representatives joined in and sang the national anthem right through—not a few of them sobbing. As far as I am concerned, this was one of the most harrowing moments in Hungarian history because it demonstrates that at the very moment of collapse, when the supreme requirement would have been for a rallying of forces, not for the first time in Hungarian politics, dissension emerged triumphant. The position of those members who were willing to join with Teleki in making the sacrifice must have been agonizing. The course of action adopted by the protesting representatives was particularly unworthy. They had not only refused to accept responsibility but wanted to show off their moral superiority by formulating their patriotism in a separate document. Teleki gave voice to that on the spot, saying: "I do not consider it to be fair and proper for someone to present the issue in such a way as to suggest that there is one person here who 'supports' this bill... there is not one person here, and I include myself, who is ratifying the peace treaty in the belief that it is just in even a single point." The next day sharp rebukes for the members who had marched out appeared in the press. Teleki, by the way, from 1918 onwards, had done nothing other than defend historical Hungary by every means at his

disposal both as a geographer and a politician; there can be no doubt that he had strived this way more than any one of his colleagues. He had played a key role in the preparations for peace; he was one of the senior delegates within the peace delegation; he had been foreign minister at the time the peace settlement was signed; and he was prime minister when it was ratified. For a politician who committed suicide two decades later at seeing his cautious foreign policy collapse and Hungary marching fatefully towards World War II, the speech he delivered during the ratification debate was a tragic station on a personal Calvary at the end of which he tabled a parliamentary motion of censure against himself. It was highly irresponsible of politicians who had no wish to share in this responsibility to present themselves as stouter patriots than he. It was much like a sort of further Trianon—this one being internal, psychological. It was not enough that Hungary had been divided, but there were people who sought to split the Hungarian nation further: into good and bad Hungarians.

Others suffered even more from accusations of being unpatriotic. It is paradoxical that Mihály Károlyi, the first post-war President of the Republic of Hungary, preferred to resign and the Communist Béla Kun took up arms to fight the country's dismemberment, whereas the Horthy regime, which blamed both of them for Trianon, was forced to sign the Treaty.

That's right. The leaders of the revolutions were blamed for their lack of patriotism throughout the inter-war period. Yet then, at the time the counter-revolutionary regime assumed power, there was no question of resistance since three quarters of the country was under enemy occupation.

Would the situation have been any different if Károlyi had not been reluctant to fight?

It is important to stress that the pacifism of the Károlyi government did not spring from any impotence or incompetence but from a conviction held by the president himself and his intimates. Károlyi's pacifism, his pro-Entente sympathies, and the faith he placed in the principles of Wilson's Fourteen Points were well-known. They were repeatedly proclaimed by him and his supporters in Parliament. It was with this programme, indeed, that Károlyi came to power, and in the autumn of 1918 he was the most popular politician in the country—something his opponents, whether wistfully or despondently, had to admit. During the final days of the Monarchy's collapse essentially the whole of Hungary's political elite could see that rapprochement to the Entente was necessary. István Tisza himself said as much in Parliament when he admitted that Hungary had lost the war. Károlyi entered into an armistice in Belgrade on November 13th on the basis of which the foreign forces, Serbian and Romanian, which had begun encroaching on Hungarian territory, would only have been permitted temporarily to occupy about one quarter of the

country, and the Hungarian local administration would have stayed in place. Károlyi wished to stick to this agreement, which he deemed favourable from the Hungarian viewpoint, lest he were to forfeit the Entente's trust before the peace talks. That was both a logical and principled stance, and the only reason it failed was because the Entente could not care a hoot about the Belgrade agreement signed by "their irresponsible general". Károlyi was a pacifist but also an integrationist. It was the National Commission for Propaganda that he had set up which came up with the slogan "No, no never!" to reject compromise over any loss of territory, but he rejected armed resistance and he carried out repeated Entente demands to evacuate. He only demanded determined resistance from the retreating Székely division when the Romanians had advanced almost as far as Hungary's present-day frontier. By that time, however, the government had demobilised an army which at the end of the war was still more than 1 million strong. The force of eighty thousand which replaced it was not operational. A recruiting drive started at the beginning of 1919 made very slow progress, and in six weeks only about five thousand men rejoined the army even though there were places where land was offered to those who did.

What would have happened if Károlyi had not allowed the army to disband in the autumn and had not placed his trust in the Entente?

If one supposes that Károlyi were to have dumped a policy which made him popular and which helped to bring him to power, and which he certainly meant to carry out, and if one further supposes that he would have been able to maintain the fighting spirit and reinforcements of a million-strong armed force—though a good half of them were not ethnic Hungarians and that in a situation when supplies had been stalling for months—then there is little doubt that much of the territory could have been preserved. It is pure fantasy, however, to make such a supposition. The ethnic Serb, Croat, Romanian and Slovak soldiers in the Hungarian army were well aware that new states were in the process of being formed on the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, so why would they have fought for Hungary in a war that they detested? And even if half the army, i.e. the soldiers who were ethnic Hungarians, could have been retained, provision would have had to be made for the logistics of keeping a military force of half a million men supplied with weaponry, ordnance, rations and clothing. By that stage Hungary was incapable of doing this. In the late autumn and winter months there were shortages of wood and coal; the whole country was freezing, output in the manufacturing industries fell and rail traffic was subject to constant interruptions. Under those circumstances one would not have given the country much of a chance against an army of half a million operating in the Balkans plus the forces that the successor states were gradually arming. But in

any case, as I said, that was not Károlyi's policy: he had attained power on a tide of popular support for his slogan that he would bring the war to an end. It would be more to the point to ask if any other political force existed in Hungary at the tail end of World War I capable of convincing Hungarians that a final push was all that was needed. By the autumn of 1918 not even István Tisza possessed the necessary authority to do that; indeed, by then he was the most hated politician in Hungary. He himself did not believe that he could regain power, and he had been advised by several quarters that plans were afoot to assassinate him. He could have retired from Budapest to his country estate, but he did not. Perhaps his reason for not doing so was because as a Calvinist he believed in predestination. He was assassinated on October 31st, on the day that Károlyi attained power. Károlyi was thus left for months without a potential right-wing opponent. So a considerable number of factors played a part in Hungary's break-up: alongside historical processes of *la longue durée* there were was the turmoil of that particular period, the collapse of Hungary's ability to defend itself, and the impotence of revolutionary governments.

How, in that case, was it possible in the Horthy era to shift the blame for that onto revolutionary governments?

The notion which became dominant in public discourse and in schools essentially "forgot" the inconvenient fact that Hungary, a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was one of the Central Powers which lost World War I. It had been bled white economically, and dissension between the nations that inhabited it had undermined the country's political unity. This interpretation in essence pinned the blame for the dissolution of historical Hungary on three factors: 1) the erroneous policies of the revolutionary governments; 2) endeavours on the part of ethnic minorities to secede; and 3) mistaken power politics on the part of the victorious western Great Powers. In the public imagination all three factors were lumped together as treachery, thus all those supposed to be responsible were described as morally despicable. The leaders and activists of Hungary's revolutionary governments could do very little to counter such prevalent views; a fair number of them were obliged to emigrate, and a number of those who remained in Hungary ended up in a court or internment, forced underground, or became victims of the White Terror. During the subsequent consolidation period, and following a relaxation of press censorship, Octobrist and left-wing explanations also won a place in various liberal and Social Democrat publications, but a direct link between the revolutions and Trianon was still left as the overwhelming accepted opinion.

What was the role of the Soviet Republic of Hungary in the peace settlement? Many people reckon that Communist power tuned the Entente even more against Hungary and thereby set the seal on their decision to truncate it. If one

applies the same logic differently, though, Hungary might even have benefited from the Entente recognising that every excessive dismemberment of the country invariably led to an extremist government.

As far as the Peace Conference was concerned, Bolshevism was a genuine threat, but it did not play a decisive part in fixing Hungarian borders. By the time the Soviet Republic was proclaimed, expert opinion on proposed frontier changes was already available and it only needed the assent of politicians. It is true that this took place at the time of the Soviet Republic as did the idea to tack on the loss of the Burgenland. Indeed, the political decision on most of Hungary's frontiers was made in May 1919. The ceding of Western Hungary was agreed on in July 1919. Then again the Peace Conference found it hard to decide how it felt about the Soviet Republic of Hungary. One of Lloyd George's favourite colleagues, the Prime Minister of South Africa, General Jan Smuts, travelled to Budapest as a "star" diplomat in order to size up the political position and to hold talks about possible modifications to the armistice demarcation lines. After that mission failed the Peace Conference permitted a Romanian advance in Hungary, but it also sent an invitation to the government of the Soviet Republic to attend the Peace Conference. The telegram containing the invitation, however, was not forwarded to Budapest by the Entente's representative in Vienna, more aware of the danger of Bolshevism, and, in any case, receptive to anti-Bolshevik Hungarian émigrés in Vienna headed by István Bethlen. Then, in June 1919, the Peace Conference sent an ultimatum ordering a halt of the succesful northern offensive action by the Hungarian Red Army, which had started in May. The Hungarians withdrew and this ultimately led to a counter-offensive by the Romanian army and the Romanian occupation of Budapest early in August, putting an end to the Soviet Republic and the Trades Union Government which succeeded it. Hungarian counter-revolutionaries also played their part. It was they who passed the Red Army's plans for the Tisza offensive to the Romanian High Command and with the assistance of a Romanian army unit arrested the members of the Trades Union administration on August 6th.

How did the Western powers regard the fact that Hungary's domestic policies set not only the reacquisition of ethnic Magyar territories but the restoration of historical Hungary in its entirety as a goal from the start?

There are some raw facts in politics, and one of these is that Hungary signed the peace treaty and placed it onto the statute book. Compared with that, Hungarian dreams were of minor importance. The report of the U.K. Chargé d'Affaires in Budapest on the ratification debate on November 13, 1920 is typical. It concludes: "I consider the wording of the resolution and the subsequent chauvinistic and fiery speeches of the irredentist members of the

Chamber quite natural under the circumstances. It would be too much to expect the National Assembly 'to kiss the rod'. The main fact remains they have accepted their defeat and its consequences, and if a little eloquence will help them to retain some shred of self-respect, it would be both unchivalrous and unwise to reproach them for a few passionate words uttered from the abyss of their humiliation and the sacrifice of their nation."

When, earlier, the Hungarian government received the peace terms, a covering letter from the French Prime Minister Alexandre Millerand mooted possible subsequent frontier revisions.

The aim of the letter suggested by the British was to sugar the pill for the Hungarians. Even though Albert Apponyi, who headed the Hungarian delegation, immediately declared that this covering letter held out hope for a revision, Hungarian diplomats recognised that the letter placed no binding obligation on the Entente as it anyway entrusted possible border adjustments to bilateral talks between the countries on specific stretches of the border. The victorious Powers on more than one occasion made it crystal clear to Hungarian diplomats that the Millerand letter could not be used as the starting point for wholesale frontier revisions. However, Hungarian revisionists continued to refer to it as being a document which tacitly recognised that the peace dictate had been unjust. ❧

Béla Somssich-Szőgyény

Terra Nullius

Part 1

The ship had been loading since morning, and night had fallen by the time the last DP[1] had boarded and the gangway had been raised. There was no waving or throwing of streamers—no one was at the quayside. Instead we went down to the ship's dining room, to get to know our travel companions and find our bearings. I soon found the two Hungarian boys who had jumped to my aid when an overfilled case had slipped from my hand and its contents had spilled out on the of the quay. Its handle had given way, but I had not been able to reach for it, as my other hand was clutching the handle of our small home-made bag, in which my six-month-old son was slumbering. My wife Panni was grasping the other handle of this improvised bassinet while leading our four-year-old daughter Ancsi with her left. The two boys, Kálmán and Tibor, had stuffed our scattered belongings back into the case, bound it with twine, and carried it to the sleeping quarters in the hold of the ship. They had then vanished just as abruptly as they had appeared. The dining room was thronging with people, we couldn't hear our own voices above the din, when suddenly I felt the floor move under my feet. Of course it was not the floor, but the ship: we had set sail. I stepped out of the smoky babble of voices and went up on deck. With a quiet shudder the ship's hull began to tremor to the rhythm of the engines, our constant companion all the way to Australia. My new-found friends also came up, and I thanked them for their assistance. Leaning on the

1 ■ Displaced Person.

Béla Somssich-Szőgyény

was born in Budapest in 1918. He was educated at home in the parental château at Kivadár in County Somogy and at Pius College in Pécs. While studying at the Academy of Music in Budapest he also attended university courses. During the War, he served as an Anti-Aircraft Gunner. After it, until 1949 when he left Hungary, he worked in music publishing and for the Education Department of Hungarian Radio.

We wish to thank Anna Major for help in editing the English version of this memoir.

rails we looked back at the receding coast and the string of twinkling lights of Bremerhaven. Seagulls were fluttering overhead, and as we stood there with the sea breeze in our hair we felt as if we belonged together, and we would keep an eye on one another during the voyage to the distant island continent, the promise of adventure helping us forget the necessity of our journey.

We had arrived in Bremen after a train journey of a day and a half from the Bagnoli refugee camp near Naples. We spent three months in the IRO[2] huts, where refugees who had drifted in from any number of places were waiting to be granted asylum in a host country, like the debris of a big flood waiting to be cleared away. We lived in partitioned units called paravans and had our meals in a long hall reminiscent of a sheep-pen, eating off tin plates that we had to rinse under cold-water taps in troughs along one wall. The head of the camp's personnel department, a Hungarian named Márton, was said to be a half-brother of the writer Sándor Márai. He employed me as a payroll clerk. I used to accompany him on trips to Naples, and on one occasion he showed me the famous bordellos the staff of which included some Hungarian girls. Stepping out of the camp's miasmal atmosphere, I would breath a sigh of relief in the bustling city with its frenzied traffic, where the world seemed to have been stood on its head, yet everyone knew where he was headed and what they were doing. I longed to get back to the routine of *normal* life as soon as possible. Australia held out the promise of an early passage, and the state would pay our fare in exchange for a two-year work contract. I signed the papers and we were put on the list. Before they sent us on our way they had us disinfected. Stripped naked, women and men separately, we took our turn in front of an orderly (also a DP) with a bored expression on his face, who puffed a yellowish powder over us from a contraption resembling a sausage-stuffing pump, the hairier men dusted twice, better safe than sorry. This was DDT, a poison if there ever was one.

It would have been simpler to sail from Naples, but the IRO[2] bureaucracy had other ideas, probably because the majority of those waiting to embark—Poles, Balts—had been gathering in Bremen. So two days later, en route for the Suez Canal, we were again treated to a view of the Mediterranean. Taking a long, roundabout route, we bade farewell to Europe, *the source of all our woes,* or so we thought at the time. The ship was the SS Fairsea,[3] but in the Bay of Biscay she hardly held true to her name. The 13,000-ton vessel, with 1,909 emigrants on board, was tossed about by huge waves; we tied our son's cradle to the leg of the bed so he would not be swept away. The separate dormitories for men and women were big open spaces with triple-decker bunk. Panni slept on the lowest bunk, Ancsi in the middle one and an Italian girl on the top. There were many Italians on the ship, from Venezia Giulia, the part of Italy that

2 ■ International Refugee Organisation.

3 ■ During World War II she was an escort aircraft carrier. After the war she was converted into a troop carrier and eventually into an immigrant ship.

the Yugoslavs annexed after the war. Panni soon established her authority among them when they saw how she defended Ancsi from the badgering of a portly *signora* in the foul-smelling washroom. She lifted up a wet mop-rag and told her in eloquent Italian that she would fling it in her face if she did not desist. From then on the womenfolk looked favourably on Panni, and they welcomed me, too, in the mornings when I brought milk, which we warmed up on a portable cooker using Meta cubes.

Panni had learned to speak Italian in Rome, and I had picked up a little at the time I had studied at the Summer University in Perugia in 1939. We went to Rome in order to make arrangements for emigration at the IRO office there. While sightseeing we went into a shop selling light fittings. The woman who ran the shop overheard us saying that we were preparing to emigrate and offered to teach us how to make lampshades. We seized the opportunity and started work the following day. Panni cut and sewed the material and I worked at the foot-operated machine used to solder the wire frames of the shades. The seamstresses' melodious chirping rose above the clatter of the sewing machines, and I could hear the sound of Panni's voice in the chorus, which was counterpointed by the sober rapping of the soldering machines.

We spent the last of our money in Rome. We lived on cheese and milk in a small boarding house on the Via Gregoriana, and when my old friend Hubertus Pallavicini treated us to freshly-made pizza at the street vendor's it seemed like a veritable banquet. We washed the meal down with Coca Cola, the magic elixir of the day. Hubertus worked at the Grand Magistry of the Knights of Malta on the Via Condotti, where he also got board and lodging. My visit was interrupted by a valet in knee-breeches announcing that the Grand Master of the Order was on his way to the refectory. One of the virtues of the Knights of Malta was punctuality, and to be late for a meal was more than bad manners, so I left with a grumbling belly.

In the evenings Hungarian émigrés would meet at a nearby *trattoria.* The good local red wine was cheaper than Coca-Cola, and if we had enough money we had calf's liver or lungs, as these were the cheapest dishes. This was where we came across the painter János Hajnal and the Sulner couple. Hajnal painted pictures of ecclesiastical subjects, his talent being recognised by the Vatican itself, and for that reason he sought to stay in Rome. Hannah and László Sulner as handwriting experts had forged documents that were used in Cardinal Mindszenty's show trial in early 1949. Revolted by what they had done, they had fled Hungary and once they were abroad they disclosed the forgeries to the US press. László Sulner himself unexpectedly dropped dead later the same year in Paris. He was thirty years old. Heart attack, they had said, but Hannah insisted that he had been poisoned by agents of Hungary's secret service police, the ÁVÓ. I spotted Feri Juranovich, a former classmate, on the terrace of a café on the Via Veneto; his father had been a hotel proprietor in Pécs. As

he stirred his espresso he would let his eyes wander over the throng of passers-by. All who counted as a celebrity who passed through Rome, whether film actor, artist, American millionairess, aristocrat or courtesan, would feel almost obliged to put themselves on show on the famed corso, which later was immortalised by Federico Fellini in his classic 1960 film *La Dolce Vita.* I sat down next to him. We were pleased to see each other again. He recounted that he was working as an extra in a film studio. "Ever since I went through the refugee camps I have felt that I am a kind of extra," he explained. "and a film studio pays me to boot!"

Feri's words came to mind as I went around the ship. The emigrants who swarmed the deck could be extras in a crowd scene, I thought, guided by an invisible director to act out the scenes of an imaginary drama. The next act would be disembarkation, but we were still a long way from that! Until then we had to strive to make life on a crowded ship tolerable. The Hungarians and Poles soon set the tone, despatching deputations to the Italian captain. Both officers and crew were Italian, so we did not have to spend much time explaining things. They knew what being crowded meant. Former air-force officer Jenő Péterfy and his rather forthright French wife were the most outspoken. They managed to ensure that better provisions would be provided for mothers with children and their families. Gábor Csáky, a fellow soldier in the war, made himself popular by organising parlour games and taking photographs, as well as playing the piano. He was never seasick. When most of us, going green at the gills, would lean at the ship's rail, he would sit contentedly with a glass of rum in the dining room. His plan was to set up a pig farm in Australia, following in his father's footsteps, who had been the director of the Budafok state pig farm. Kálmán kept a diary, which he readily showed me if I asked (unfortunately it was lost). He made friends with the Italian girl who had the bed over Ancsi, and one morning he brought Panni the milk. He was a lanky lad, his head reached the top bunk, and when he handed the milk to Panni he gave the girl a kiss. We became close friends with the Aczéls, a married couple older than us. They became very fond of Ancsi and paid her a lot of attention. Joe Aczél had been chauffeur and trusted servant of Jenő Weisz, one of the two sons of renowned armaments manufacturer Baron Manfred Weiss of Csepel Island. He had relatives waiting for him in Sydney and he planned to start a car-repair business there. He befriended the ship's engineer and often lent him a hand. We did not suffer the same fate as another ship, which was stuck for weeks on end in the tropical heat of the Indian Ocean because of engine failure.

At Port Said the Arab vendors rowed out to the ship to offer their trashy wares, thrusting them up on long poles while the money was sent back the same way. I brought up from the sleeping quarters a brown winter coat of coarse cloth that I had been given by the Germans in Bremen and, showing it to one of the Arabs, asked what he would give me for it, the bargaining all done

with hand signals. When we had come to a deal he pushed up the money and I hung the coat on the pole, glad to be rid of a rather unattractive overcoat. Fellow passengers shook their heads but later congratulated me for having outwitted the Arab—after all, who would need a winter coat in Port Said? Meanwhile of course the Arab was no doubt already calculating the profit he would make later by selling it to a passenger on a ship returning to Europe.

We crossed the Equator in the Indian Ocean on New Year's Day, arriving at one and the same time in the southern hemisphere and the latter half of the twentieth century (1951). Would either be better than its other half? No bottles of champagne were uncorked in the ceremonies, but Ancsi won first prize in the girls' beauty contest and as a reward was allowed to dine at the captain's table. Wiener schnitzel was served, and Ancsi asked the captain to cut it up for her. Gábor Csáky played hit tunes, and at midnight he jumped up on the piano and did a headstand, as if to illustrate our geographical and personal situations. The piano was being taken by one of the officers to his sister in Melbourne. To save having to pack it, he had put it in the dining room; but he had not reckoned with Csáky. Due to the heat, a lot of people slept on the deck. It seemed a bit as if the waves were gently rocking the couples entangled under their blankets, though the ocean was as smooth as a mirror. As the familiar image of the Great Bear slid into the water, the Southern Cross began its ascent on the other side. The Italian girls romped about in the officers' cabins.

In Melbourne Harbour the dockers boarded the deck and handed out bananas as if we were monkeys before slinging our bags and baggage across to a train waiting alongside the ship, which took us to Bonegilla Migrant Camp. Through the windows of the train all I saw was parched fields and barren hills. Blackened tree stumps were the only sign that the area had once been a verdant woodland. Halfway there we halted at a station. Along the length of the platform there was a row of tables laden with plates of sandwiches and cakes. Behind the tables women is summer frocks were bustling about, pouring tea into china cups. They gave the children milk. Never has a cup of tea tasted so good. The ladies were members of the Country Women's Association, the wives and daughters of local farmers. Without any fuss or ostentation they made us feel welcome.

We had been almost five weeks at sea. As I queued up for breakfast in the camp's canteen I was almost surprised to find myself standing on firm land. In addition to porridge we had toast, a lamb chop and a rasher of bacon, and it took us awhile to get the cooks to understand that this was not exactly the most appropriate food for babies. The former army camp comprised timber 'blocks' (huts) alternating with one-room shacks. We were quartered in one of the latter. The iron bedsteads had kapok mattresses with sheets and a blanket, and when I lifted the blanket a huge brown spider scuttled away, reminding me

of a warning I had been given by a German factory-owner when he heard that we were bound for Australia: "What will you find there? Snakes, spiders and crocodiles," before cautioning us that we would be best advised to stay in Europe. In fright I stamped on the spider and took its remains to my neighbour, who laughed: "It's a Huntsman! Totally harmless. It's the little black ones with a red spot on the back whose bite can be deadly." The interpreter for the officer interviewing newly arrived emigrants was Erzsébet Barcza, daughter of György Barcza, the Hungarian Minister in London from 1938 to 1941. The officer, an Englishman, was utterly polite while speaking to me, but Erzsébet told me later that he had commented afterwards that he had had the feeling I was holding something back. I racked my brains wondering what it might have been: there was so much.

Single immigrants were sent off to pick fruit or fell trees, families were allotted to farms which provided them with quarters. Qualifications did not carry much weight, as the most pressing need was for manual workers. Bonegilla was in Victoria, and most of those in the camp were assigned to farms in the area, but we were trying to get to Sydney, where our friends lived, which is in New South Wales. One was not supposed to leave the camp without prior permission. Jóska Aczél acquired a motorbike with which he went on a long trip without permission (and indeed without a licence). He did not wear a helmet or a cap and was so badly sunburned when he returned that he had to spend days recovering in the camp's infirmary. I preferred to take a train. The railways of the two states used different gauges, and it was necessary to change trains at the border station of Albury. The New South Wales service was waiting on the adjacent track, and changing trains amounted to little more than getting off one coach and boarding another, while porters took the luggage from one luggage van to the other.

Vilmos Sebők had been a lawyer in Budapest. He had left Hungary right after the war, a few years ahead of us. He was now renting a place in seaside Vaucluse, one of the loveliest suburbs. It was on the way there that I first saw the dazzling city lying along the harbour, shimmering in the reflections of sea and sky. Sebők was the manager of a hotel in the nearby Blue Mountains. He offered to give me a job and put me up until I was earning enough to rent a place. The hotel offered recreation to businessmen from Europe. They retreated with their families from the steamy summer heat. I went back to Bonegilla with the good news and within a week we had set off—without permission.

We arrived early one morning at the Karraweera Hotel in Blackheath, near the top of the Blue Mountains, in the middle of a big park and within walking distance of Govetts Leap, a lookout offering spectacular views, clothed in a bluish haze, of the Grose Valley with its nearby waterfalls and hills. We were given quarters in one of the lodges surrounding the main building. After the

cramped conditions and filth of camps and boat, it seemed like heaven. On the first morning I awoke to an infernal cacophony like nothing I had ever heard before. It was a large-beeked kookaburra, its cackling song keeping its fellow birds—and us too?—informed of the boundaries of its territory. I was unable to pick out from the ominous snickering whether it was pleased or annoyed by our presence. The Hungarian owner of the hotel, a Mr Mandel, and the bulk of his guests had moved to Australia before the war, having left their homeland because of the persecution of the Jews. When war had broken out, those who had not yet been naturalised were considered enemy aliens and were interned, though later they were released. Once they had created a secure living for themselves in their new homeland they led comfortable lives. However, they never forgot the tastes of home cooking, and they found what they craved at the Karraweera Hotel: Central European, Magyar cooking, which at the time was still largely unknown in Australia. The clear, sharp air of the Blue Mountains merely whetted their appetite and it fell to me to clear up the piles of dishes after their bounteous repasts: I became a dishwasher. My fellow worker, Luigi, spiced up work with Neapolitan songs and it went like clockwork. I reported my employment at the Government Employment Office in nearby Katoomba. The sole employee, an elderly man, paid me not the slightest attention when I entered. He was scouring the newspaper, looking for something. When he deigned to raise his head he protested that he was checking to see whether his lottery number had been drawn (it hadn't). This was a foretaste of the traditional Australian love of gambling, which manifested itself in a whole gamut of activities, from the state-run lottery to horse racing. The official sanctioned my job, relieved he didn't have to worry about me and could return to his paper.

Once I had a few weeks' wages in my pocket, I rented lodgings in a house owned by another Hungarian, Friedman, an upholsterer, who had his workshop there. The Friedmans themselves lived in a roomier house, travelling between their home and the workshop. Mrs Friedman came over more or less every day, and she taught Panni the various tricks of Australian housekeeping, including how to iron a man's shirt in under three minutes. She was a great admirer of our barely one-year-old son, who had acquired the pet-name Pubi back in Austria. We were near a Catholic primary school, so Ancsi was enrolled, though we had to fib a bit, as she was not yet six. Nor were the nuns disappointed in her, for in her first year she was outdoing classmates who were quite a bit older. We also made friends with some Australians. I helped two old maids with their gardening. They baked a cake and brought it with them when they paid us a visit. Seeing the double bed, they warned Panni that if she wanted the marriage to last, we ought to sleep in separate beds. Panni would have loved to have a job, but doing what? It had to be work that she could do at home. Someone suggested having a word with Mr Hilton, a manufacturer of women's underwear and brassieres, who happened to be a guest at the hotel. He employed innumerable outworkers in

addition to those at the factory. Outworkers did work they were handed out by the factory at home for a fraction of the pay of a factory worker. Mr Hilton "received" Panni at the side of the swimming pool in his swimming trunks, but he managed to put her off with his haughty manner. Any inclination she might have had to ask her compatriots for help vanished. She looked on them with distrust, for she felt that the fate of "new" immigrants was only of interest to them insofar as they could be exploited. Panni, as our own experience showed, was not really fair, but she stuck by her opinion all the same.

As autumn set in I looked for work in Sydney. I was given a lift by Mr Mandel in his huge American limousine, he lived in a small mansion on the North Shore. Initially I found work in a spinning mill and then a mill, where I was bagging corn flakes—at both places working night shifts from Monday night to Friday morning. This also solved the separate beds problem, except for weekends, which I spent "at home" in Blackheath. By then we had rented another house where we froze, it was so cold in the mountains in winter. The brown coat would have come in handy. In Sydney I shared an upstairs room in a terrace house with Jóska Aczél's son by his first marriage, who also worked in the mill. The ground floor was a sandwich shop run by a German relative. The previous day's ham and other cooked meats stood in a big cooking pot in the back kitchen, so we were able to tuck-in handsomely before turning in to bed. Both factory and shop were in Pyrmont, an inner suburb. In the afternoons I wandered around town, went to the movies or the City of Sydney Library, where, to my great surprise, I found quite a lot of good Hungarian books.

As soon as the lease on the flat in Blackheath had expired we moved to Sydney, where we rented a holiday flat in Cronulla, a beachside suburb, for very little, for these lodgings, which were rented out for a fortune in the summer, were empty in winter. There were two flats in the ramshackle timber cottage—it was probably built around 1900. The windows of our rooms opened onto a verandah which encircled the house. The other rooms were rented by a young couple while their own house was being built. Their flat was only separated from ours by a wooden partition, so we would have needed earplugs to avoid hearing the racket accompanying their lovemaking, which we reciprocated with the din our children made during their nightly baths.

Hot water was supplied by a cylindrical boiler-shaped chipheater next to the bathtub. Anything combustible—wood chips, paper, pine cones, etc.—could be chucked into the iron stove. The boiler suddenly flared up and after a few minutes of huffing and puffing it would spew boiling water into the bath. To the great amusement of the children, it was rather as if a steam engine were bowling along through the flat.

I worked the afternoon shift at my new job, as a yarn winder at the Marrickville Davis Coop Textile Mill. Jóska Aczél taught me how to make a

weaver's knot, knowledge of which was indispensable. A bonus system was in operation, with dawdlers getting no more than the basic wage, which was pretty low. I would arrive at my machine five or ten minutes before the shift in order to get the spools ready and not lose a single second when the hooter sounded. The foreman, having watched me for several days, eventually came over and, with his head tipped slightly to one side so as not to look directly at me, muttered from the corner of his mouth, "We don't do that here!"

From then on I would only walk across to the machine when the hooter went off. I later came to understand that the foreman was simply trying to safeguard the work norms; if everyone had done what I did, then with the growth in productivity the bosses would have raised the norm. I had not even realized that there was a sort of cooperation: workers on the previous shift would leave the machine for the relief man (if he was a mate) in such a state that it could be started straight away without any preliminary setting. They would pay not the blindest bit of notice to a novice, especially if he was a foreigner. All this was explained to me by a table companion during a supper break; he had cast only a fleeting glance at me when I sat down next him, as he had been reading while he ate. Full three-course meals including cake and fruit were on offer in the self-service canteen, and by then I was already nibbling at my lamington, a traditional Australian cake, when I asked my neighbour what he was reading. He took a look at me before turning the front cover of the book towards me: it was Vol. 1 of Paul Hindemith's *The Craft of Musical Composition.* I rubbed my eyes to check to see if I was seeing straight. I was familiar with the original pre-war German edition from having turned its pages in Rózsavölgyi's music shop in Budapest. "Are you a musician?" I asked. He nodded, and now it was his turn to be amazed: how did I know what the book was about? I gave a hurried explanation, and we began to chat. It turned out that my fellow worker, James Murdoch was getting ready to travel to Europe and was working at the factory because he needed money to pay for the fare. Mornings he was a student at the Sydney Conservatorium.

"It's odd how things work out, with me coming here, you going there," I noted somewhat wryly, as I was suddenly struck by the thought of what I had left behind when I boarded the ship in Bremerhaven. "You were driven here by necessity," James replied, "whereas I'm driven by sheer curiosity to get to know England and Europe. I would like to find work as a répétiteur in an opera house or with a ballet company and learn more. I have never been overseas."

"Overseas!" I savoured the word. From an Australian viewpoint everything was indeed overseas, and the music that James played on his piano too having been composed in far-off Europe, on "the Continent" or in the" Old Country," in England. For the time being, though, I had more pressing concerns than meditations on my geographical situation. We had to move from the place in Cronulla, for any stay of over three months terminated its status as a holiday

flat and thereby the freedom of the landlord or his agent to charge several times the fixed rent in summer. Rents had been fixed during the war, but this did not apply to holiday lettings. We moved to another timber house by the sea, one with a garden the foot of which was lapped by the water at high tide. On stormy nights we could just as well have been a ship driven onto the shore, carried off by the tide at any moment.

There were Hungarians living in the next street, a married couple with children. A young Frenchman, Claude, lived with them. In fine French tradition he had transformed his status as lodger into a *ménage à trois,* and he treated the woman of the house, who was in an advanced stage of pregnancy, with the greatest tenderness. Claude was a chef, and on Sundays he would cook delicious meals, on some occasions in our house. I invited James over so that he could accustom himself to French cooking. With his hooked nose and black hair, James could have passed for a Spanish Gypsy had he not been blue-eyed. He lived in Marrickville close to the cotton mill. I paid a visit to his place: his room was full of musical scores and books. His friend Charles Blackman often stayed with him, a painter whose favourite subjects were girls and cats, and who was a devout reader of Proust. He was planning to go to Paris.

As summer approached we were finally obliged to leave Cronulla for good. While James studied Hindemith's book during our dinner breaks, I would comb through the to-let ads in the *Sydney Morning Herald.* I soon came across an appealing proposal: a big house near the water. I still had a few minutes to put in a call to the person who had placed the ad. It was not long before it turned out that he too was Hungarian. We arranged to go and see the place the following day.

No wonder James had smacked his lips when I had told him where I would be going to look at a home: the bus took me to Hunters Hill, Sydney's oldest garden suburb. The street was covered in pale purple jacaranda petals, and there were peach trees in blossom in the garden of the slate-roofed house. Mr Gruber had left Hungary before the war, had founded an import business and, together with his wife, was planning to travel to London to renew contacts there. He had no plans to include Hungary in his itinerary; none of his relatives there had survived. As my wages would barely have been enough to pay the rent, the plan was to share the house with another family until Panni's parents managed to come, at which point we would need more room anyway. This satisfied Mr Gruber, so we sealed the deal by telephone and later at his solicitor's office. The move itself did not involve very much as we had only two items of furniture: a kerosene heater, which an "old" Hungarian acquaintance had lent us (he later asked us to return it) and a Hoover washing machine. The latter had been sold to us by Ödön Paizs, a fellow immigrant, on the instalment plan. He had got round the contract of employment by becoming a door-to-door salesman. We packed the various odds and ends we had acquired on the back of a hired truck and made the move.

We felt at home in the spacious house. The garden's cast-iron garden furniture imported from England reminded me of the park of my childhood home, Kivadár château. From the terrace we had a view of Sydney Harbour, and the wind wafted the blasts of ocean-going vessels our way. There was a regular ferry to the centre of town. The depot of the Vacuum Oil Company sprawled at the end of a headland jutting into the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers. It jarred with the area's atmosphere, but it suited me, as I was able to get a job there with the assistance of the local employment office.

Within days we had found tenants to share, the Kuchinka family, though quite how that happened I no longer recollect. There was plenty of room for all of us in the big house. It soon emerged that Tádé Kuchinka was an irascible, cantankerous chap, who was always either bickering with his wife or lecturing his daughter. Back in Hungary he had been a journalist on the *Pester Lloyd.* Unable to find employment in that field, he was perpetually dissatisfied with his fate, despite the fact that his wife Carla, who was Austrian and much younger, also worked, so they had two incomes, whereas we had to live off what I made as Panni could not leave our son Bert, still barely more than a babe in arms, on his own. The Kuchinka's daughter, Csibi, went to the same school as Ancsi and they became close friends. Her parents did not have to worry about where their daughter would go after school. A kind of order was established, but under the surface a swamp of frustration continued to bubble, from which Tádé was unable, and maybe was unwilling, to extricate himself. His rows with Carla sometimes went on late into night, the tranquility of which was shattered more than once by her screams and her rush to the bathroom. It's possible that he struck her, though otherwise he proved to be a polite gentleman, even apologising when he flared up at me over a camera. As it happened, the Kuchinkas were not around for very long as Tádé returned to Vienna and Carla, having found a gentler partner, moved out with Csibi.

Up until then oil drums were things I had only seen in garages; at my new workplace I came into direct contact with them. The work entailed shifting 44-gallon drums that had been trundled off ships onto pallets. The pallets were then shelved by forklift in a draughty, tall warehouse, from which they were distributed by truck all over the city. A pair of thick leather gloves was provided for the job, which was hard going. Anyone who failed to get the hang of tilting the drums would struggle with a single drum while his mates hoisted dozens. I soon regretted having quit the job as a shuttle winder. When a drum slipped from my grasp I would curse profusely, in Hungarian. On hearing this, a skinny but sinewy young man came over and with a "Will you permit me, sir," in old-fashioned, respectful Hungarian, and without waiting for an answer, he proceeded to show me how a tilted drum could be lifted onto a pallet by its own weight. That was how I got to know László Pintér, born in Makó, an Arts student at Szeged University, who had to skip the country because of

something political he said. He lived in neighbouring Gladesville. From then on we worked together as a team, but however hard I tried I never really got the knack with the drums. Bill, the foreman, watched my clumsy efforts with a scowl, but he only snarled at me once—admittedly with unexpected ferocity. During loading and unloading there would always be short pauses when we stood around idly, waiting for a forklift or a ship, and Bill didn't mind, as he himself would sit down in the little cabin that he called his office to listen to the latest sports news. This time, however, he had barely gone in and he was right back out, for he had spotted something that proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back of his patience with me. He tore me off a strip, and all I could make out from the flood of words was "akimbo", so I was left guessing what had set him off. "Because you were standing around hands on hip," László explained at the lunch break. "In convict days a hand on the hip was a symbol of loathed authority—the pose struck by supervisors and officers. Bill considered the way you were holding yourself to be a challenge, a piece of New-Australian effrontery, and it made his blood boil." It reminded me of the strange way in which the foreman at the textile mill had spoken to me. "Well yes," László enlightened me. "Talking out of the corner of your mouth has also come down from convict times; it's how they outwitted the guards. And look at the way they hold their cigarettes with the live end inside the fist." It was possible that László, influenced by what he had read, was exaggerating a bit, and that the convicts had actually been protecting their cigarettes against the wind. But the fact that Australia's first settlers were convicts and marines who guarded them had left its mark on the psyche of a people that had grown into nationhood since the penal colony days. From then on I strove to make friends with all my Australian fellow workers, for whom the influx of immigrants must have been just as big a change as fitting into their world was for us.

It may have been thanks to this incident with Bill that I was transferred to the bottle-washing section, where returned kerosene bottles were cleaned. The premises where this was located were dominated by a huge, old-fashioned furnace which supplied steam to the bottle-washing machine. The furnace was tended by Jóska Kalmár, a tall peasant lad, and I was made his assistant. The furnace turned out to be a capricious beast, but Joe tamed it with self-confident authority. He would have stood out even in a village blacksmith shop. "If you feed it too little coal, it goes out; too much and it blows up," he explained, as he handed me a shovel. Ensconced on a high throne, he himself regulated the steam with which the kerosene bottles, running round on a conveyor belt, were washed out; any bottles from which the deposit of dirt could not be shifted he would pluck from the line and toss in a big arc into an iron bin, where they shattered. The throw and the shattering provided a welcome relief from the monotony of the circulating bottles, and there were times when Joe, for

reasons best known to himself, would also chuck away the odd clean bottle. He gave me a conspiratorial smile when he saw me following his example.

At lunchtime there were always visitors who would brew tea using steam from the furnace. Joe would stay on duty beside the furnace while I would go off to the canteen on the first floor to eat the sandwiches cut for me by Panni. On one occasion a hulking bear of a character settled down next to me. This was Kurt von Wolff. He asked me if I knew how to play bridge. I politely said yes, and he indicated a pair of other players, one a retired Dutch ship's captain, the other a diminutive Latvian lad whom I already knew as he had come by the furnace room to dry his clothes one day when he had fallen into the water. His workmates had roared with laughter as, ashen-faced, he had dragged himself onto the pier (against which the lighter could have easily crushed him). We sat together, and the ex-skipper didn't lose any time in dealing. From then on we would play cards as we ate lunch in our oil-stained overalls. After work I would stroll home with Kurt, as he lived nearby. He was a Baltic nobleman, a baron, his wife Dita Cobb had fled with her Jewish family from Berlin to London, which was where she had met Kurt after the war. They had come to Australia after they were married. We became friends and Dita often came round for a chat. This is where she learned how to change nappies. She served as a baby sitter on the rare occasions when we both had to leave the children at home. She later became a highly regarded newspaper columnist and radio broadcaster, and eventually a TV personality.

One of our more remarkable new acquaintances was Ödön, a fellow Hungarian, a man no longer young. He had been an art collector and dealer but had lost everything during the war, and anything the fascist Arrow Cross Party members had not stolen from him while he was on forced labour service, the Communists had taken after the war. He had managed to hang on to (and get out of the country) a painting by the highly regarded József Rippl-Rónai, the sole decoration in his sublet lodging. I met him in a shop selling antique furniture and trinkets. It was owned by Bruce Arnott, a member of the famous Arnott's Biscuits family.The diffident Bruce was fond of talking to Ödön, an older man, and what might be described as a shop-talking camaraderie developed between them. Ödön would also pay calls on us, and during one of these conversations—I don't remember in what context—he said, "When I get up in the morning and look at myself in the mirror, I spit myself in the face." Whether he intended this as a joke or a tragic confession, I do not know because I never asked. It smacked of Budapest cabaret humour, but still—why? "It's a Pest thing," Panni declared, and I left it at that.

The timing of Tádé's departure and László becoming homeless (he was given notice) somehow coincided, so I suggested that he move into our place as a lodger. The lonely young man who replaced the irritable Tádé instantly aroused Ancsi's interest, and she besieged him with all sorts of questions, such

as why did he eat fried calf's liver with onions (well seasoned with paprika) for breakfast. When she grew up, she warned him, she would be his wife, and if he resisted, she would hold his head under a tap.

Our neighbours on one side were the Pickering sisters, on the other there were nuns. On that side the house had been converted into a convent of the Josephite teaching order. They immediately took Ancsi under their wing, and as her sixth birthday was approaching they prepared her for her first Communion. The Pickering ladies (a widow and her younger sister) invited us round for tea. They were the offspring of an Australian family that went back a number of generations, and we learned much from them about Australian customs and life. They presented me with a wonderfully illustrated book about native birds. I used it to get to know the songbirds that visited our garden. The sisters attended services at an Anglican church, and on one occasion I went with them. They pointed out that the rearmost two or three pews had once been curtained off from the rest because that was where the convicts used to sit. The church, like many other public buildings, was of sandstone, since it was easily available: half of Sydney sat on sandstone. After the service the sisters introduced me to the vicar, and he cordially invited me to come again. When I pointed out that I was Roman Catholic he replied that it did not matter, he would still be glad to see me. There was no lack of goodwill on the part of Australians, but it was not rare for someone to grumble on a bus or tram about "bloody foreigners" or "wogs". The White Australia policy was still in force. A dictation test was used to exclude unwanted—including non-white—immigrants. There was no disagreement among the parties on this. Anyone who was unable to take dictation in Welsh, or any other European language, was turned back, and nobody could accuse the Immigration Department of racial discrimination. Exceptions were generally made in the case of shipwrecked crews. The Aborigines were segregated in missions or reserves, and they were not even included in censuses until 1967: they were not citizens of their own land, which the British colonists declared to be *terra nullius,*[4] or no man's land. This act of annexation, and the total disregard for the rights of the indigenous Australians which implied that the hunter-gatherer Aboriginals (at least what remained of them after massacres by early settlers) were not viable and would therefore become extinct. They intended to "salvage" half-caste children (black mother and white father) by seizing them from their mother, if need be by force and with police assistance, placing them in state or religious institutions. The goal was that these half-caste children, brought up amongst whites, should merge with the conquerors' society becoming servants and labourers. "Forced Removal" was the official policy from early in the twentieth century until the end of the 1960s. The policy of

4 ■ In International Law 'terra nullius' describes empty land that no one owns.

assimilation also applied to us, the post-war influx of Europeans, with every possible effort being made to preserve the predominantly Anglo-Celtic character of Australian society. The dictation test was no longer used in the 1960s, but the "White Australia" policy continued to the end of the 1970s. We were labelled "New Australian". Later, when it became obvious that the assimilation policy had failed, "New Australian" was replaced by "ethnic" within the general notion of multiculturalism.

László, with his Makó-Szeged accent and knowledge of Hungarian poetry, was well armed to resist Anglicisation (or Australianisation), but he played along. He drank tea and scotch (with water but no ice), chatting away with our Australian friends like a character in a P.G. Wodehouse novel. On the day of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation (2 June 1953) we raised our sherry glasses to drink to the health of the young queen, to whom we would be loyal Magyar subjects, declared László's friend Kornél, who had come round to visit. Kornél 'Sigmond was a stocky, strong and hirsute man sporting a monocle. Of noble Székely stock (present occupation: tram driver), he wore an ex-British Army greatcoat—"the Queen's uniform" since the weather had turned cold. In Hungary he had been secretary to the Research Institute for Public Opinion, which operated under the aegis of the Department of Psychology at the Pázmány Péter University in Budapest. When the Communists had taken over, he told us, he had been an immediate target, so he had skedaddled. His family had resettled from Transylvania (by then part of Romania) after Word War I, so Kornél had already known from childhood what it meant to lose one's home. He had been promoted from tram conductor to driver, which counted as a career promotion under present circumstances; his monocle must have reassured his superiors that he would not derail a tram entrusted to him. László introduced his friend with all the enthusiasm of a disciple: Kornél was equally at home in literature, history and psychology, and simply dazzled whomever he talked to with his ability to juggle the ideas of both antiquity and the modern age. At the same time, clothed in a garb of conservatism, he raised himself above bourgeois conventions and a bourgeois way of life, so on that day he not only drank a toast to the health of the Queen of England (and Australia), but also to our own uncrowned King of Hungary (as a member of a future loyal Opposition).

László, though taller, was the Sancho Panza to Kornél's Don Quixote. As the evening wore on, we switched from sherry to table wine and the conversation grew ever merrier. Kornél bore a strong grudge against Gyula Ortutay, the eminent ethnographer, for carrying out the nationalisation of all Hungarian schools as the Minister of Education and also collaborating with the Communists in the destruction of his own party, the Smallholders. Kornél would have "sentenced" his former friend to a place on a sprinkler truck on the streets of Budapest. On the cleaning vehicles in use at the time one worker sitting in the back facing the street, had the job of revolving the various spray heads so that

pedestrians and other vehicles would not be soaked by an unexpected shower, and if he did not succeed he was assailed by a flood of abuse. We laughed at Kornél's wit. Hungary was a long way away, and we had next to no knowledge of the real horrors that were taking place there, behind the Iron Curtain.

The next morning a grim-faced László drew me aside: "Kornél is challenging you to a duel and he has asked me to be his second," he said (László had been informed of the challenge while accompanying Kornél to the bus stop, by which time both of them were pretty drunk). "On what grounds?" I asked with a chuckle, "What kind of prank is he contriving now?" "Because you smiled when the pianist Kornélia Kovács was mentioned. Kornél is deeply attached to the lady, and he thinks that by smiling you were casting aspersions on her morals. He demands an apology and satisfaction." "On what terms?" I enquired "Pistols." László replied. "In the Botanical Gardens at dawn within three days. Name a second of your own." I was quite happy that the scene of the duel was to be the picturesque Botanical Gardens, and I wasn't too bothered about the pistols (I would be able to shoot into the air), but sadly I had to strip László of his illusions. "I haven't the slightest intention of fighting any duel. Where does Kornél think we are? In Hungary, or the Wild West?" "Yes," László responded. "That's what he thinks, and he also has a pistol, which he purchased not long ago. As a Primor[5], it is not only his right but his duty to bear arms." Having discharged his mission he went over to the stove in order to cook his fried liver. For my part, I pictured Kornél with a pistol in his pocket as he tinkled the bell on the tram, dreaming of Gary Cooper, or the Spanish knight and his Dulcinea, turning the pages of Vilmos Clair's *Code of Duelling* in his mind, which Kornél had possibly taken down from his father's bookcase as a boy. "I need to speak to him," I announced to László, seized by a desire to enter the fantasy world that burgeoned around Kornél like a jungle.

We met in the ground-floor bar of the venerable Hotel Australia. Labourers, shopkeepers hobnobbing with company directors were drinking at the bar, where the silvered head of Bob Menzies, the legendary prime minister, could also be seen on occasion when he visited Sydney. Kornél shepherded me to a corner table from which he could safely observe all who entered (gangsters, cowboys). I immediately got to the point, his chivalrous concern, and told him that I was not acquainted with Kornélia, sad to say, and that the smile which he had thought sarcastic and even malicious might have been prompted by a passing, involuntary scrap of thought that had come to mind, but certainly had nothing to do with her. (I made no mention of the fact that there must be something about my facial expression, the set of my mouth—something Panni had already brought to my attention—which people thought was a sarcastic or supercilious smile, the sort of thing that the English call a smirk; I later found

5 ■ Székely nobleman.

out that my elder brother Józsi suffered a week in solitary confinement at the notorious Kistarcsa prison camp for the same sort of thing. A guard had been explaining something and had thought that Józsi had been mocking him.)

Kornél accepted my explanation and got off his high horse; he produced his cigarette case and offered me a smoke. We both lit up, a peace pipe so to speak, he apparently resigning himself to the fact that I had no intention of reciprocating his show of courage, though I could see from his eyes that he regretted having to abandon the scenario: he had demanded a duel by the light of the rising sun (if not pistols, then swords) on the lawn of the Botanical Gardens, and afterwards a handshake that would mark the beginning of our friendship. All of this in front of László, his disciple-second (for the latter's edification). It was past five, we stretched out on our armchairs, but the spirit of Kornélia was still there, between us. "Tell me about her," I asked him. "It was a long time ago," he gestured disdainfully. He drew deeply on his cigarette and then exhaled. "She initiated me to the world of music and love. I loved her, but our paths parted: she went to Paris, and I exiled myself to the Antipodes, to a white man's island in a sea of Asians. Now we are glad to have shaken off the chaos that is Europe, but who can tell: perhaps it's a case of out of the frying pan, into the fire. We are now living in a Kali Yuga age,[6] and we are all in the hands of the dark demon of destruction, who, having reduced Europe to ruins, is continuing his work in the East and the southern hemisphere. From our near neighbour, Indonesia, to India and China the nations are in ferment, blood is flowing. The dreadful monster is holding the bomb in one paw: that's his trump card," Kornél went on. "And how long does such a Yuga last?" I asked with some trepidation. "Roughly 4,325 years," Kornél answered, "though opinions differ about the duration." That reassured me. I thought of our favourite beach, Balmoral, shaded by its centuries-old fig trees, the peace that prevailed there, as if there had been no war, and the feeling I had deep down that here there was nothing to be afraid of. It was the same sort of feeling that had come over me in Bonegilla when I realised that the floor under my feet was no longer moving. "Here's hoping that we shall find ourselves in a peaceful pocket of that horrendous length of time in which we shall have an opportunity to put right our ruined lives." "Let's trust in the mercy of the gods," Kornél concluded the conversation, and never again was Kornélia mentioned. ❧

2009 Chatswood, NSW Australia

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

This is the first part of a two-part memoir

6 ■ According to Hindu philosophy—and Kornél—the world goes through four ages,—*yugas* which change cyclically like the seasons. The last of these is the Kali Yuga, after which the universe will be destroyed, then reborn, and a new cycle will begin.

Krisztina and Szabolcs Osvát

Down Under

Australia is a magnet for immigrants. It has been for generations and still is—even though Australians stopped trying to lure settlers with Gold Rush fantasies long ago. Now strict quotas and rules ensure the application process is long, knotty and costly. Unless you apply on humanitarian grounds, you must show your financial background is solid and professional credentials pukka. Today the influx of Sri Lankan and Afghan boat people is a thorny political issue.

Hungarian emigration to Australia faithfully mirrors Hungary's troubled history of the past 150–200 years. Always, some have sought refuge in Australia from prosecution or hardships. A few arrived after the cholera epidemic of 1831. The politically persecuted followed on the tail of the 1848–49 revolution. Then, at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, they ventured on the treacherous journey to escape grinding poverty. The data for the period show astonishingly low numbers: only 88 people originally from Hungary embarked on a journey by ship to Australia, official immigration records of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1883–1910 show. Still, intriguing tidbits of Hungarian history emerge, especially in Victoria. A 26-year-old tradesman called Isaac Friedman (Izsák Friedman), with his wife and child, was the first to arrive in 1833.[1] After the freedom-fight was crushed, many refugees were drawn by the gold mines of Victoria. A monument erected in their honour is still there today in Bendigo. Ernest Leviny, a Budapest goldsmith settled in Castlemaine also in Victoria, and named his house "Buda". His descendants were prominent citizens of Castlemaine. The Buda Historic Home and Garden, now a museum, is main-

1 ■ As a point of interest, there is fragmented data from 1829 referring to Hungarian origins. In the records of Tasmanian prisoners transported to the city of Hobart, there is a 45-year-old man by the name of Raphael Harris who was sentenced in England for stealing a fob watch, and whose birthplace was indicated as Hungary.

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tained by local enthusiasts and hosts many community events.[2]

The 1920 Treaty of Trianon could have precipitated a major influx of Hungarians but only a few went to Australia, records from the 1920s show. In 1933 a total of 272 individuals born in Hungary lived there. Hungarians of Jewish origin fleeing persecution during World War II chose Australia as their new home, but not in large numbers.

It was after World War II that tens of thousands fled Down Under to escape the tentacles of the Communist regime. The exodus after the thwarted 1956 Revolution leeched 15,000 people, doubling the number of Hungarian-Australians, which exceeded 30,000 by 1961. Immigration continued in the decades after 1956.[3] From the 1960s more and more members of Hungarian minorities living in countries neighbouring Hungary fixed their sights on Australia, especially Hungarians from Vojvodina in northern Serbia in the 1960s and 1970s.

Those who have left Hungary in the last few decades are a far less homogeneous group. Many have migrated to Australia in search of a better life and in spite of their financial success, see life in Australia as a temporary stay and plan to repatriate.

Waves of immigration little altered how Hungarians were spread within the country. Most settled in Sydney while fewer are found in Melbourne. The other three big cities with a population of over a million—Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth—are home to far fewer Hungarians. From the seventies, more and more elderly Hungarians moved to the balmy Gold Coast holiday resorts in the vicinity of Brisbane, where Australians, too, like to retire in their golden years. In contrast, there are hardly any people of Hungarian origin in the classic country areas. Census data from 2006 indicate just below seventy thousand Australians of Hungarian origin, just over twenty thousand living in New South Wales[4] (including residents of Sydney); twenty-two thousand in Victoria (including Melbourne); just under ten thousand in Queensland (with Brisbane and the Gold Coast), around five and a half thousand in South Australia (with Adelaide); just over four thousand in Western Australia (with Perth); around one and a half thousand in the Australian Capital Territory (i.e. Canberra). In country areas Hungarian communities are in the hundreds. It is not typical of people with Hungarian roots to form settlements. The only exception is in New South Wales where Hungarians originally from the "Southern Territories" (now northern Serbia) settled in and around Blacktown, a western suburb of Sydney.

Hungarian organizations and community life

For decades Hungarian communities have organized themselves into associations and clubs. Besides the family, these communities provide the best way of preserving a Hungarian identity in this remote corner of the

2 ■ History of Immigration from Hungary – Immigration Museum, Melbourne Australia.

3 ■ Anna Ambrosy, *A Survey of the Hungarian Community in Victoria.* Adelaide: Dezsery (Publishers), 1990, History of Hungarian Immigration, 11–12.

4 ■ Australia, similarly to the United States, is a federation, with the union of six states and two territories including the Australian Capital Territory, which enjoy considerable scope for self-government.

world. An important cohesive element is Hungarian language and culture, alive particularly in folk customs, folk songs and folk dancing. Another important cohesive element is sport.

Clergy of the traditional churches[5] founded the first organizations. Church communities were swiftly followed by social, sport and youth organizations, whose numbers proliferated. In the capitals of states with larger Hungarian communities, local umbrella associations were formed. These associations organized common national celebrations,[6] provided unified representation, and, importantly, fought for toppling the hard, then later the soft dictatorship which emerged in Hungary.[7] The associations of the three state capitals of Sydney,[8] Melbourne and Adelaide in 1955 joined forces to form the Australian-Hungarian Association (Ausztráliai Magyarok Szövetsége – AMSZ). The AMSZ was formed, and operates, democratically. Its leadership changes every three years and the outgoing office-holders cannot be re-elected. It is the member association which assumes responsibility for organizing the next Meeting of Hungarians in Australia, which then elects the leadership for a three-year term in a rotating system.

Thanks to this early cooperation, institutions created partly out of their own resources were being established in the bigger cities of some of the states: Hungarian houses, centres and clubs were founded. Houses for scouts, parks and homes for the elderly were built, including a Hungarian village in Sydney, which has a home housing 100 elderly people and a nursing facility for a further 40, space for folk art exhibitions and a library. The Hungarian centre in Melbourne[9] is so impressive in size, and so attractive with its chapel and sports field, that Budapest could be proud of it. Larger cities have a Hungarian cemetery or at least a separate Hungarian section, and there are monuments honouring heroes of the freedom fights and the heroes and victims of the two world wars in many places. A Hungarian-language printed press came into being at the start of the 1950s and a quality weekly newspaper has been published ever since. The weekly *Magyar Élet* currently has 16 pages and is printed in thousands of copies. It covers the main issues on the Hungarian and international political

5 ■ The cohesive powers of church communities is well-illustrated in a recent book: *Megvalósult álmok, a North Fitzroy-i magyar református gyülekezet története Antal Ferenc igehirdetéseinek tükrében.* (Dreams Come True: The history of the North Fitzroy Hungarian Calvinist Congregation as reflected in Ferenc Antal's sermons) Melbourne: Hungarian Life Publishing Co, 2009.

6 ■ A recent publication of the Hungarian centre in Melbourne has relevant information: József Hajdú–Charles Kövess–Ildikó Ámon (eds.), *1956–2006, Hungarian Revolution Commemoration, Melbourne, Australia 2006: A chronicle of events.* Hungarian Revolution Commemoration Committee, Melbourne-i Magyar Központ, 2008.

7 ■ See Endre Csapó: "Az ausztráliai magyar emigráció." In: *A világ magyarsága, Latin-Amerika, Dél-Afrika és Ausztrália.* (Hungarian Immigrants in Australia. In: Hungarians in the World: Latin America, South Africa and Australia) Budapest: Magyarok Világszövetsége Nyugati Régiója, 1998. pp. 123–153.

8 ■ A review of the history of the association in Sydney is given by Béla Kardos: the Hungarian Association of New-South-Wales has existed for more than fifty years. The chairman's report prepared on the association's 50th anniversary, *Magyar Élet,* July 4, 2002.

9 ■ Éva Kövesdy–Erzsébet Atyimás–Imola Galambos (eds.), *A melbourne-i magyar központ 1997–2008* (The Melbourne Hungarian Centre 1997–2008). Melbourne-i Magyar Központ, 2008.

arena as well as all areas of community life.[10] Many other Hungarian-language publications of lesser importance have also been published, and are still being published nationwide, concentrating mainly on local events and the lives of smaller communities.

During the transition to democracy and in the period immediately after, the pace of events affecting Hungarians accelerated, both in Hungary and in other parts of the world. The diaspora of Hungarians in Australia enthusiastically tried to keep abreast of developments at home, backing the first democratically-elected Hungarian government. They also supported the government's latest efforts targeting Hungarians living outside the country's borders. The AMSZ met biannually in the period between 1989 and 1994 and drew the New Zealand diaspora into talks, too. So from this point on it is best to refer to the meetings as those of Australia and New Zealand. As one of the results of these jointly-organized meetings, the Hungarian Association of New Zealand joined the AMSZ. Thus since 1990 the official name of the umbrella organization spanning the Tasmanian sea is Association of Australian- and New Zealand-Hungarians (AUZMSZ).[11] Institutional and community life looks back on a good half a century long past,[12] but due to decade-long differences, a sharp divide has developed between certain organizations, resulting in the impossible outcome that the chapters with the largest membership are not part of the AUZMSZ.

Following the ins-and-outs of the life of Hungarian organizations it is possible to stumble upon another difference, though it would be an exaggeration to call it a division or opposition. The associations of Hungarians from the Carpathian basin were founded in a time sequence proportionate to the chronology of the waves of immigration. Amongst these, Hungarians from the Southern Territories are best represented, but Hungarians from the Upper Lands (now Slovakia) and Transylvania (now part of Romania) have formed associations of their own, too.

The problems of the Australian Hungarians

For the past century, Australia was one of the main target countries for immigration. Until the 1960s, much like other major Anglo-Celtic recipient states, Australia, too, had a policy of assimilation, encouraging immigrants to adapt to the prevalent cultural norms and, with time, to assimilate. The argument for this requirement of Anglo-conformity was political stability. The Anglo-conformity resulted in the recipient country rejecting applications by people it judged impossible or difficult to assimilate. In the case of Australia, this meant that it only welcomed white immigrants. From the seventies onwards, immigration target countries slowly began to abandon the idea of assimilation becoming more

10 ■ Endre Csapó has useful comments in Endre Csapó: *Ilyen a világ. Az* Ausztráliai Magyarság*ban és a* Magyar Élet*ben 1961–1983 között megjelent vezércikkek.* (This Is the World. Leaders published by *Ausztráliai Magyarság* and *Magyar Élet* between 1961–1983.) Tóthfalu: Logos Kiadó, 2002.

11 ■ Details on the association and its cultural events can be found on http://www.magyaronline.net

12 ■ Béla Kardos, "Magyar szervezeti élet Ausztráliában és Új-Zélandon." In: *A világ magyarsága, Történeti áttekintés és címtár, Latin-Amerika, Dél-Afrika és Ausztrália.* (Hungarian Associations in Australia and New Zealand. in: Hungarians in the World, a Historical Survey and Data base. Latin America) Budapest: Magyarok Világszövetsége Nyugati Régió, 1998. pp. 154–156.

tolerant regarding immigrants' cultural identities and customs. It soon became evident that immigrants with a marked cultural identity and well-developed ethnic consciousness are able to integrate into the recipient country's institutional system, to learn the country's language, and in general, to become useful citizens. The idea of furthering assimilation gradually lost ground and an attachment to an inherited identity became acceptable. This however did not mean that immigrants demanded a parallel society and an institutional network of their own, in other words, they did not begin to behave as a national minority. They insisted on preserving their ethno-cultural particularities within the recipient society's institutional framework, and their interest was primarily to become recognized and equal citizens of the mainstream society.[13] This general set of conditions influenced the framework of the lives of Hungarians, too.

Australian laws today allow, and even promote, that individuals with ethnic identities should organize into communities, nurture their language and cultural traditions. This society, described as multicultural using the modern term, gives ethnic groups collective rights: they are freely able to set up and maintain schools, church communities, old people's homes, clubs etc. They can freely speak their language, use national symbols and register their names in their birth certificates and use them as they wish. The state-funded public-service Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and community radios broadcast in Hungarian several days a week, and there is a TV programme in Hungarian at least once a week. Still, the "arrival" of satellite broadcasts from Hungary's Duna Television was a great step forward regarding Hungarian-language programmes.

Facts and figures

A good starting point for presenting the social stratification of Hungarian-Australians is to look at available reliable data. The 2006 census recorded 67,500 people in Australia who claimed they were of Hungarian origin. According to estimates by the leaders of Hungarian communities, the actual number of people with Hungarian roots could be higher if we add second or third-generation "Australians" who are not actively involved in nurturing their ancestors' traditions or who have chosen to abandon them. This estimate however cannot be translated into the language of numbers, as there are no credible sources available on "hidden Hungarians", therefore 67,500 must be accepted.

It is worth looking at the marked changes since the census 15 years earlier. The 1991 census recorded just over 27,000 individuals born in Hungary.[14] This is a concrete number, but it is much less precise in terms of accounting for Hungarian-Australians, as it does not include persons born in the Southern Territories, Transylvania or the Upper Lands (now outside Hungary), nor second or third-generation Hungarians. Egon

13 ■ Levente Salat, "Szempontok a multikulturalizmus fogalmának romániai értelmezéséhez; A multikulturalizmus fogalma a kisebbségi jogok liberális elméletében" (Approaches to the Interpretation of the Concept of Mulitculturalism in Romania. Multiculturalism in a Liberal Theory of Minority Rights) *Magyar Kisebbség,* 2000/1. (19.)

14 ■ A further interesting fact which suggests aging among the "classic" waves is that among those who identified themselves as Hungarians in 2006, only 20,166 were born in Hungary.

Kunz estimated the total population of Hungarians at around 38,000,[15] which can be cited as a benchmark estimate, but with the warning that these are not official data. An earlier estimate suggested 55,000, which we are also not in a position to deny. What probably lies at the bottom of this is that the different estimates were arrived at using different criteria, and a "more loose" set of criteria resulted in higher numbers. The concrete figure of 22,000 and the estimates of 38,000 or 55,000 all show that there is a growth tendency,[16] and support the conclusion that the 67,500 registered in 2006 reflects people with Hungarian origins and their descendants together, with relatively few "hidden" persons.

Hungary's membership of the European Union and the Australian legislation allowing dual citizenship[17] triggered a move towards the rediscovery of Hungarian roots. In the second half of the decade the number of Australians who applied for Hungarian citizenship on grounds of their descent saw a sharp rise. This is not a Hungarian tendency, it was also apparent in the case of other new EU member states. The "citizenship nostalgia" was not only emotionally based. An important motivation is that as an EU citizen, study scholarships or jobs are easier and cheaper to obtain on EU territory. Having worked at the consulate of the Hungarian Embassy in Canberra, we can say that Hungarian passports have a great reputation and its applicants do not target only English-speaking countries.

Aging community

Despite a far-reaching institutional network, communities are faced with serious difficulties. The aging membership of clubs and associations and of the leadership is a growing problem, which ultimately could threaten their existence. The second or third generation's attachment to local Hungarian community life is looser, and the nostalgic world of elderly grannies and grandads does not appeal to their taste. Over the past one or two decades, the younger generation has looked less and less to contacts with the "historic" institutional network, few of them joined Hungarian clubs. Meanwhile, the aging community has strong emotional ties with Hungary, and they welcome attention and interest from the home country with gratitude. Their values are predominantly conservative, which used to make cooperation with Socialist-Liberal coalition governments difficult. Young people differ from their elders in their political views, too. For them, the

15 ■ Egon Kunz, "Magyarok a kilencvenes évek Ausztráliájában: számok és megoszlás." In: idem. *Magyarok Ausztráliában.* (Hungarians in Australia in the Nineties: Numbers and classification. in: Hungarians in Australia) A Magyarságkutatás Könyvtára XXI., Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1997, pp. 167–168.

16 ■ The growing number of people of Hungarian origins is remarkable, since this does not necessarily verify the aging-hypothesis. However, an aging trend is most definitely valid for the "hard core" of the classic waves of immigration, who had originally organized community life and operate it to this day. What these numbers mean can be understood in the context of the dual pressure of aging and "dilution".

17 ■ Section 17 of the Australian Citizenship Act of 1948 regulated dual (or multiple) citizenships. Based on an amendment on April 4, 2002 of Section 17, Australia allows its citizens to assume dual or multiple citizenship without limitation. In accordance with the law, Australian citizens can freely apply for citizenship in another country.

Hungarian domestic political battlefield is at most a curiosity, and news of a Hungarian election or even a change in government will not motivate them to follow events in Hungary more closely.

One distinct group of Hungarians living so far from their native land, includes those who have had successful careers in business, politics, the sciences and the arts. These are highly-qualified people, many of whom only occasionally participate in community life. To complete the picture, we must add that many of these successful people are Jewish Hungarians. According to authoritative estimates, some 15 per cent of immigrant Hungarians are of Jewish origin. Some of the early immigrants and the wave preceding and following the Second World War were mainly made up of Jewish people, but others, too, included a high proportion of Jewish-Hungarian immigrants. Their feelings towards Hungarian organizations are ambivalent. They include a mutual arm's length approach with the aging Christian communities of Hungarian organizations, though at the same time these Hungarian Jews have stayed a part of the Hungarian émigré scene and they carefully nurse their knowledge of Hungarian.[18]

Even with a simplified classification a third group can be distinguished.[19] This includes mainly high-fliers, young people who arrived in the country over the past two decades in the hope of higher living standards and a more peaceful life. Their fortunes have been totally unlike those of the refugee generation. They did not feel the weight of pressures on them, their experiences are about something else, their motivations have different roots. To many belonging to this group, a demonstrative identification with "Hungarianness" does not appeal, they are unreceptive towards organizational efforts to preserve a Hungarian identity by observing anniversaries and nurturing traditions in a place as far as can be from Hungary. A generational conflict is apparent there, but a significant difference compared to second- and third-generation Hungarians is the fact that these people had left Hungary after the transition to democracy, they have a realistic image of Hungary and they speak Hungarian as their native language. They could fulfil an important role on the long run in the advancement of cultural and institutional life of Hungarians in Australia.

The deterioration of language

The nurturing and preservation of the language is a major problem for language diasporas in the western world where in some cases the disappearance of community life must be reckoned with. Despite all efforts of organizations, Australian-Hungarian communities are no exception. The Scouts and Sunday schools are still most active, just as previously, teaching and preserving the Hungarian language. From the mid-nineteen- seventies a multicultural approach prevails and in states with a larger Hungarian community, the

18 ■ Egon Kunz, "Magyar zsidók Ausztráliában." (Hungarian Jews in Australia) In. op.cit pp. 220–221.

19 ■ A less detailed presentation of the three groups of Australian diaspora Hungarians can be found in the 2010 report of the Hungarian Embassy in Canberra, in the chapter "The Situation of Australian-Hungarians" on pp. 9–10. The document is the embassy's email report no 10. for the year 2010.

Hungarian language was introduced as an exam subject for the school-leavers' certificate in secondary schools.[20] There have never been more than one or two dozen pupils annually who took advantage of this opportunity. In the eighties, the idea of establishing a university department of Hungarian studies was mooted, but it did not materialize.

The use of Hungarian in the best of cases is left to the family, but among young people a knowledge of the language often completely dies out. Such deterioration of language use cannot be offset by support for and community organization of Hungarian language teaching. It must be accepted as a fact that fewer and fewer people among Australian-Hungarians or people with Hungarian roots speak the language and that the existing knowledge of Hungarian is less and less of native speaker standard. For the young it increasingly resembles knowledge of a foreign language learnt out of interest. In this respect, Hungarian scholarship study programmes, which go back several decades, offer help. During the Kádár regime, the Hungarian diaspora looked at this option with doubts in their mind and regarded language instruction as a kind of political (re)training camp. These anxieties are a thing of the past, but still only a few Australian students take advantage of these scholarships each year.

Another grave problem is the lack of Hungarian books. There has never been tertiary Hungarian-language instruction, so universities do not hold stocks of Hungarian books. Many immigrants had smaller or larger libraries including books on Hungary or in Hungarian, but these deteriorated with the passing of time. One or two decades ago the reason was disinterest and low-level language skills of the second and third generations, but the new century is additionally that of the crisis of the Gutenberg galaxy. Books may be obsolete, but the hope remains that the digital era will offer different instruments of learning, which will be as useful in nurturing a Hungarian identity as books have been.[21]

Churches have always been a mainstay.[22] Cultural activities, folk dancing and folk music come second as motivation in the present circumstances. But, as times change, other resources will be accessible to those who, aware of their roots, want to live a double identity. ❧

20 ■ Victoria, New-South-Wales and South Australia introduced Hungarian as a matriculation subject. This is now available in ACT also.

21 ■ The library of the Embassy in Canberra holds the books owned by the former Hungarian club of Canberra, which were passed onto it when the club closed. The library's collection is steadily growing with new contributions from members of the diaspora. It is a wealthy and valuable library in Australian terms. Additions are donated because the books' owners die or they are too old to need the books. Neither they, nor their family have any need of them. But no one uses the Embassy library either, there is simply no need. The Embassy has accepted the books to preserve them, but whether the library will be of use in the future, is unpredictable.

22 ■ There are Calvinist congregations in eight towns, Roman Catholic parishes in six, and there is one Hungarian Baptist Chapel.

Virág Böröczfy

In Search of Ourselves

On Miklós Gulyás's Photographs

The title of Miklós Gulyás's 2007 album is *Hon, Magyarország keresése,* or *Home: In Search of Hungary*. The subtitle is telling and gives an apt summary of what is characteristic of Gulyás's entire career as a photographer. All of his portfolios have been produced in Hungary,[1] and the captions of most of the photos show simply the place and the year in which they were taken. Yet I would venture to say that he could have taken them anywhere and the results would have been essentially the same, for the visible world is merely one of their components, ultimately of far less importance than the personal world of the photographer.

The photographs show real scenes in real, everyday settings, they are "maps" of reality. Almost nothing is manipulated. Gulyás did not arrange the persons included, nor did he remove or add objects. He photographed everything as it was. Still, it is the magic of photography that the elements of the visible world, liberated from their original spatial and temporal interdependencies, can be made to serve an entirely new message. This only functions, however, if the photographer is deliberate and systematic in his work and able to decide in a split second what to include, what angle to employ and how to assemble the individual images to form a series.

Gulyás's pictures are superb examples of this magical process. They are authentic, objective snapshots in the traditional sense of the term, moments captured in their immediacy, with elements that seem incidental, yet are part of a carefully considered creative concept.Whether part of a natural or man-made

1 ■ Gulyás Miklós' portfolio on the internet: http://www.fotografus.hu/hu/fotografusok/gulyas-miklos

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environment, or people caught at work or play, every detail figures both as an independent, distinctive unit and part of the series as a whole. Many attempts have been made to categorize this mode of picture-making in various eras and according to various methods and criteria. In the secondary literature in Hungary the term "autonomous report" was used, as well as, more recently, "subjective documentary", the latter being more widely used in the international discourse.

Miklós Gulyás's photographs from the 1990s were archetypal, even definitive, works of this distinctive kind of photography then very much in vogue. The pictures were taken in emblematic parts of Budapest, for instance the Eastern Railway Station and the surrounding area, the Széchenyi Baths, the Race Track, the City Park, Moscow Square, and other bustling nodes of the city, as well as the Kerepesi Cemetery. Sometimes people look into the camera, sometimes they turn their backs. Sometimes they lean into the picture, sometimes they step out of it. Sometimes one can read their motions and gestures, sometimes one cannot. They quite obviously are not aware that a picture is being taken of them, for they do not do anything worth recording. As Gulyás explains:

> Spaces and architectural elements are important to me, but I tend to use them more as props behind the more dominant human faces and figures. But my photographs are not portraits. They do not aim to present a personality and neither do they highlight characteristic features, but often figure as statues: how they (we) appear as impressions or imprints in the image. I treat them a bit like objects, not out of disrespect for the people they depict, but rather because I believe in the informational capacity of the imprint. A face is itself an imprint, showing the quality of life behind it and as such related to the question of personality, but the two are not the same. Beyond being merely an expression of your genes, a face is the imprint of your relationship with the surface world. Personality is the emphatically internal matter of the soul. I am interested in the outside visible to everyone, the layer we all carry with us in public. I strive to achieve a homogenous. system of motifs because it is interesting to build a fictitious world in which, as they become elements of an image, humans and natural and man-made surroundings exude the same mood and atmosphere. This is standard in figurative painting but it can be done with photography and even journalistic photography as well. One can portray radically different elements in radically different scales without any abrupt shift in style. In my pictures objects often come alive, while living people seem lifeless. Statues play a particular role in this game as junctures between humans and the world of man-made objects.

This approach clearly distinguishes Gulyás (and all subjective documentary compositions) from journalistic reportage. While the essence of the work of the journalist is the precise documentation of an event, Gulyás has no interest in the "news" whatsoever, even if the photos were taken on the occasion of a momentous event, such as a protest, a festival, or a demonstration. In contrast

with the "here and now" of photo-reporters, these pictures elevate the events to the level of timelessness, a quality emphasized by the use of black and white, alienating and lyrical at the same time.

Each of the pictures of Gulyás's Budapest series of the 1990s is a unique enlargement done by his own hand. The frequent use of homogeneous surfaces and the effects of the sharp contrasts of light and shade are marks of the photographer's individual style. In his later, digital period the *object d'art* quality of the enlargements plays a prominent role in the big prints of high-resolution photos. In 2002, Gulyás collected photographs, taken over some twelve years, as part of a photo album of his own design titled *1 Second*. "The average exposure time for a photograph is 1/125 of a second. This album consists of 129 pictures. It therefore records almost precisely one second in the life of a city. From a single perspective, that of passers-by."[2]

This single perspective is the point of view of an artist, who happens to dwell in the city, which is his setting in the wake of the regime change. Images follow each other, the various sections of which are equally sharp and have been arranged to form a sort of montage. The planes of time (more distant past, recent past, present) meet and intertwine to form a single, far from optimistic vision.

The dissonance already present in the 2002 portfolio series is even more marked in the 2007 *Home: In Search of Hungary* album. Raw capitalism as it takes shape on the ruins of socialism is juxtaposed with the historical background, its buildings and props. The distance between the living and the lifeless, the decorative and the people living alongside, is ever smaller and the planes of time ever more blurred. Looking at the photographs, one has the impression that the malaise and disillusionment visible in people's faces have been around for decades. Various remedies, a devotion to tradition or to the latest fashion, are all in vain, the blank stares reveal everything. The critical tone of the photographs targets the reality behind them. They speak about a state of internal conflict and the concomitant search for identity that flooded East Central Europe as a consequence of accelerated social and cultural processes. Are we indeed as perplexed and confused?

Commitment and compassion are discernible in the photographs. Some of them are shockingly crude and revealing while others sparkle with irony and wit. They may occasionally incline towards a lyricism verging on the sentimental. A kind of visual dialogue develops as well, sometimes explicitly, sometimes through allusions, with Hungarian schools of photography, particularly with two, the often folkloristic "Hungarian" style, on the one

2 ■ Gulyás Miklós: *1 másodperc, Budapesti fényképek*, Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, Magyar Iparművészeti Egyetem, 2002.

hand and the social realist approach on the other. Their saccharine, artificial pictorial topoi, which gloss social realities, continue to linger in many coffee table albums.

The 2008 *Pannon Visual Discount* portfolio can be interpreted as the creation of the image of a kind of minus sign. The switch from black and white analogue technology to digital colour is accompanied by a certain degree of manipulation. Gulyás arranges the pictures, taken in various places and on various occasions, into tableaus, severing them from their original contexts in the interest of creating new truths. The portfolio is made up almost exclusively of pictures representing the objects and furnishings which surround us. In a few, a person pops up, not as an agent, but rather as a stranger intruding into a surreally disproportional world of visual stimuli, in search of a handhold.

Gulyás's most recent photographs use state-of-the-art colour and digital technology, and the setting is once again Budapest. He searches, in a manner considerably more objective than in his earlier series, for the mien of an age the characteristic features of which are the advertisements enshrouding everything in a torrent of visual stimuli, the brilliantly colourful garments and articles of personal use, the over-the-top strivings for uniqueness as they decline into kitsch. The transformation of the city notwithstanding there is still poverty, sorrow, and despair, particularly keeping in mind that there is little hope that the situation will ever improve.

There are very few pictures in the series that could be described as dramatic in the narrower sense of the term. Rather, it seems as if we were watching a cleverly contrived comedy of the absurd where every event, object, person and gesture is a caricature of itself. Laughter becomes snickering, the tourist bus suddenly sets sail, the Rubik cube becomes a trendy bag, and the right extremist, demonstrating in the inner city dressed up to suggest a very distant Hungarian past, raises a video camera on high to record the "ruckus." As is often the case in Gulyás's photographs, characters belonging to differing sections of society and different generations stand for types. As Average Joe appears who has been conditioned to his role as consumer, so do the social "elite," the "rebel," and the passer-by, who simply observes it all without being able to influence it.

By presenting moments that seem banal and conjunctures that are barely noticed by the people living their everyday lives in Budapest, Gulyás prompts us to consider the actual extent to which we are able to shape our lives and the environment in which we live. Who are we anyway, and what direction are we headed for now, in Central Europe, in the second decade of the twenty-first century? ❧

Miklós Gulyás: *Széchenyi Baths,* Budapest, 1997

Miklós Gulyás: *Elisabethtown,* Budapest, 1995

Miklós Gulyás: *Apajpuszta,* 2002

Miklós Gulyás: *Oroszlány,* 2004

Miklós Gulyás: *Margaret Bridge,* Budapest, 2010

Miklós Gulyás: *Andrássy Avenue,* Budapest, 2009

Miklós Gulyás: *Ulászló Street,* Budapest, 2009

Miklós Gulyás: *Farkasréti Cemetery,* Budapest, 2009

Miklós Gulyás: *Illés Street,* Budapest, 2011

Miklós Gulyás: *Elisabeth Square,* 2009

Miklós Gulyás: *Thereza Boulevard,* Budapest, 2010

Miklós Gulyás: *Kincsem Park Racetrack,* Budapest, 2010

Miklós Gulyás: *Károly Boulevard,* Budapest, 2009

Miklós Gulyás: *Szabad sajtó út,* Budapest, 2009

Miklós Gulyás: *Bethlen Gábor Square,* Budapest, 2010

Miklós Gulyás: *Bosnyák Street,* Budapest, 2010

János Szegő

Epics of Nuclear Fission

László Szilasi, *Szentek hárfája* (The Harp of Saints). Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 2010, 317 pp. • László Csabai, *Szindbád a detectív* (Sinbad the Detective). Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 2010, 380 pp.

Two exciting stories; two intriguing genres. One is a densely packed, taut novel, the other a slowly unfolding string of stories. What unites them is the riddle; the thrilling presence of a secret, and also the setting: the action, in both cases is played out in a highly particularised micro-environment and leads the reader into a distinctive fictional microcosmos. An unambigous large-scale epic framework is replaced here by the indeterminacy of tiny particles.

What must we know about the author before we read a book? Does it matter whether we are familiar with his or her appearance, his or her potted biography? The more information we have, the greater will be our expectations and also our prejudices. Take, for example, Szentek hárfája by László Szilasi. If one adds that this is his first full-length novel, that is already telling us something more, or perhaps less, about him. An if one also shares the information that the author is a professor of the history of literature, and is also an innovative and important literary critic, then that will most likely play a large part in influencing the way in which we read the book. All the same, put those extramural matters in parentheses as there is quite enough going on, including mysteries within the book.

Time freezes on the first pages of the novel (See the excerpt on pp. 22–33 of this issue). Rather like frames in a black-and-white film that gradually slows down until time comes to a standstill. An event, a scene is being filmed from different angles, by different cameras. Will it ultimately remain the same scene after the reader has become acquainted with it from so many different perspectives?

On Christmas Eve 1924, one of the wealthiest citizens of a provincial town in Hungary sets off with his family for the midnight church service. As the camera closes on the group one can feel the crunch of the snow under their feet. The leasurely flow of the narrative suggests an impending dramatic turn of events, but everything at present is muted and tense. No sooner have we arrived in the fictional reality of this particular town than we can sense that the intricate web of streets, crossing or parallel, hides shared secret

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accumulated by individual lives going back several centuries.

Where are we? The real-life model for the fictional town of Árpádharagos ('Árpád-Irate' so to say, a pun on the author's native 'Peaceful-Csaba', Békéscsaba, in SE Hungary) is located in a region which has become known colloquially as the 'Stormy Corner'. An apt name, this alludes, first and foremost, to the mentality of the predominantly agrarian-socialist cultivators of the land who lived there in the latter half of the nineteenth century and who were prone to rebel and to resist.

Albeit in the south and close to the borders with both Romania and Serbia, the inhabitants are mostly Slovaks culturally and in origin, Lutheran Slovaks who settled there at the end of the seventeenth century. They came from what was then Upper Hungary (i.e. the area that since the Treaty of Trianon is today's Slovakia) and were settled in a region largely depopulated and devastated by 150 years of Turkish rule. They moved down from isolated mountain villages to begin a new life in the middle of nowhere, among total strangers, in the wide lowland seas of the Hungarian Great Plain. Roman Catholics lived to the West, Calvinists to the North, Greek Orthodox to the South. They were an island of Lutherans in the middle of the steppe. In time, they rebuilt the town from scratch.

These are all important details because Szilasi's novel lays bare Árpádharagos's historical strata with its social fossils, tracing back the family trees of the re-founding families to their roots and following them forward, at the other end, so that the present day is there too, with its American-style shopping centre. On the way we get to know how the town responded to that Treaty of Trianon, which marked the official end of the Great War when, overnight, the town found itself located on what were now the marches of a greatly diminished Hungary. In the novel the town lives through the destruction of the Second World War, with precise details being given of Allied bombing raids, and we are privy to the local events in Hungary's 1956 Revolution (and here Szilasi plays a twist on the fictional game by introducing references to the real-life town of Békéscsaba.)

The narrative, however, centres in the second quarter of the twentieth century. More precisely it is the authentic record of a single minute, and the troublesome experience of the untellability of this event is at the very core of the novel. What the novelist attempts is a process of nuclear fission unpacking from that one minute the history of a town and community which is lost in the mists of the past. Szilasi's novel displays various layers, parallel stories, and conflicts of diametrical opposites. That is assisted by the position of the narrator which is hard to determine at a first reading—a device whereby Szilasi brings out the inherent uncertainty of the enterprise. The sense of indeterminate hovering is complemented by a precise and rich vocabulary and the fine texture of sentences. Szilasi, the accomplished literary historian, is thoroughly familiar with the mechanisms by which his textual devices work and is aware of the hazards of an over-flowery style, but he is fully alive to the stimulus a well-judged rhythm switching between short and winding sentences can lend to the storytelling. He likewise rings the changes on anecdotes and apparent diversions with the main storyline only for it to turn out that what had earlier been a subsidiary then takes over as the organising thread.

Szilasi uses adroit narrative tricks to dismantle the underlying story then put it together again. A reader is needed in order

to reassemble the jigsaw as completely as possible, but even his or her attentive presence is no guarantee that every single piece will be laid in the right place as indeed there is more than one piece in a life history for which a place cannot be found.

The Harp of Saints is therefore composed, as much as anything, of lacunae and questions. On December 24th of 1924, student Tamás Grynaeus murders a well-to-do farmer by the name of Mátyás Omaszta in the Great Church of Árpádharagos. Both corpse and perpetrator disappear. Like a huge unappeased question mark, the riddle of those disappearances hangs over the town and from time to time calls its population to account. The story is carried by four narrators at four different points in time who in huge soliloquis make a start on telling the truth. Or rather what each believes to be the truth as each of the texts is set in a different time, uses a different vernacular, as well as a different viewpoint even though the stake remains the same: to approximate the truth.

In the first and last (fifth) chapters Bálint Makovicza, a school janitor, reports on what was going on around Christmas 1924 as a contemporary and eyewitness. In Chapter 2 two mysterious figures, Dalmand and Palandor, tell of an investigation, its failure and its tragic consequence, four years later in 1928. Those activities were recorded in writing by István Ladik in the 1950s, himself a mysterious character, a spy (or perhaps a counterespionage agent). As the reader plunges deeper into the text(s) and the story(ies), a new narrator is encountered in Chapter 3. This time Ladik's shady activities are reported by an anonymous agent. The text here is presented complete with insertions and deletions, inviting the reader to read what has been crossed out with enhanced attention. These texts are found, in due turn, in Chapter 4, in 1989, the year in which Hungary began to throw off the leaden hand of the Communist regime, by a certain Norbert Kanetti, a college lecturer in the making (the same age as László Szilasi and whose name will instantly remind one of Elias Canetti). This Kanetti, though, is portrayed as a boyhood friend of young Endre ('Bandi') Omaszta, a descendant of the murdered wealthy farmer. The pair of them take on the same enterprise as their predecessors in seeking to make sense of something that cannot be understood. The more they dig around, and the more details come to light, the bigger the enigma. The final chapter provides a frame for the still open (because unsolvable) investigation as we can read the notes which are ascribed to a school janitor by the name of Makovicza—a text that none of the characters in the novel had been able to find. In other words, the reader is being dragged into the novel's world, being put in the same position as the characters. The end of the novel provides an ironic resolution in the sense that the site of the murder, the church, is moved over to the other side of the road to make room for a shopping mall. The scene of the crime is no longer accessible.

With intellectual sensitivity and linguistic gusto, shrewdly but without mannerisms, László Szilasi narrates a simultanously unstable and static past and the compelling freedom to go on with the investigation. *The Harp of Saints* is a tour de force, clever, effortless and yet also highly personal, with the author not pushing himself forward but also not hiding his light under a bushel. The novel, long in gestation, is a testimony to its author's own relationship to the past and to his native town, the tension between bonds that tie one and the cutting of

those bonds. Anyone wishing to know more about the backstage secrets of a multinational town will be delighted and thrilled, as will anyone who enjoys the complex textual games of that engrossment, of hunting for and wiping out evidence, and finding new evidence.

The volume by László Csabai in some respects resembles Szilasi's work in that here too we are given a glimpse into the twentieth-century history of an imaginary medium-sized town. Csabai's book has just one protagonist: the celebrated Sinbad, although one should add straight away that this figure is only a namesake of the legendary Sinbad the Sailor of *The One Thousand and one Nights* (*The Arabian Nights* as most English readers know it) or, indeed, of Gyula Krúdy's alter ego, albeit one who has certain traits in common with both. Our hero's father is a Hungarian doctor, who, at the time his son is born, in the early 1900s, is active in Baghdad. Sinbad is 14 years old when the family moves back home to Hungary, or to be more specific, to the fictional town of Nyárliget ('Summer Grove'), the principal model for which is the town of Nyíregyháza in northeastern Hungary, which happens to be both Krúdy's and Csabai's birthplace.

When the story opens a twenty-year-old Sinbad obtains a job with the Nyárliget police. He is a familiar figure in the town but due to his exotic childhood, at one and the same time also a stranger in a small world where people have long been accustomed to each other's face. Sinbad is clearly different, the Catholic church immediately puts him in mind of a mosque in Baghdad. Csabai had sound good instinct in shaping his tale—or, to be more exact, tales—as a linked string of short stories, a genre which can call on a fine tradition in Hungarian literature. It is a genre which provides assurance that the reader's imagination and memory will glide breezily from one story to the other without feeling bound to look for links, but if any parallels are hit on, knows how to relate to them.

The book can be read in one go as an unputdownable crime story, or sipped at leisure as a series of finely wrought short stories with the 14 self-contained tales being held together by the person of Sinbad and his job as a detective as he clears up mysteries, and also by a cavalcade of small-town embroilments. In the Hungarian provinces time may resemble that resting time which generally comes when a fast train, following a long trip, chugs into a station slowing down before coming neatly to rest. That is one of the sensations that may be noticed, but meanwhile another sort of time is passing by. Another express train is due on the fast track.

The detective solves his first case in the early 1920s, the last after Hungary's liberation at the end of World War II. The turbulent years of unpeaceful peace thus serve as a historical backdrop. There is information about prostitution and black marketeering that are likely to be new to readers. But by that same token it is inadvisable to read the book on an empty stomach. Detective Sinbad, taciturn and melancholic as he may be, has a taste for impeccably prepared food. His method is quite simply to keep quiet and follow his instincts. He pays attention to suspicious details, chance slips of the tongue, the vistas that open up between lacunae.

László Csabai employs a similar method in his writing, sending his protagonist off on a journey between criminal cases with journalistic flair in the best possible sense of the term. ❧

Eugene Brogyányi

Háy Time

János Háy, *A gyerek* (The Kid), Budapest: Palatinus, 2007, 345 pp.

At first glance *The Kid,* the most recent novel by János Háy (pronounced "high"), strikes the reader with its style of narration. (See the excerpt on pp. 11–19 of this issue.) A playful hand is at work here. Goings-on are described with droll detachment, motivations are insightfully suggested. Reading *The Kid* is like riding a wave. Sentences hurtle forward yet seldom seem to get where they're going or at first appear to be going. Indeed, a period often falls not where grammar would dictate, but where a train of thought has run its course, where the narrator has, as it were, run out of breath. Tenses change mid-sentence from past to present, then back again. Thus sentences don't necessarily follow a syntactic schema. This lends the novel a concrete immediacy to which Hungarian, a relatively youthful literary language, is much more hospitable than is English, which tends to demand more abstract rigidity. The challenge for the translator of *The Kid* is to test the limits of what English will tolerate, right up to the breaking point. The entire novel reads like one long, mordantly humorous sentence. Only gradually does it dawn on the unsuspecting reader that this lightness is delivering a tragic fate, in the most pointed and ingenious way.

The Kid's structure is integral to this style of narration. The basic story is linear: the life of the "kid," or more precisely his rise and fall, told chronologically. The people the kid crosses paths with, however, trigger narrative digressions into their lives; those lives in turn sometimes trigger further generations of digression. The simple linearity of the kid's story anchors a kaleidoscopic array of spinoffs—hundreds of them, ranging from a few paragraphs to a few pages each. These move back and forth in time, through the entire period the novel covers and beyond,

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in one case going even two centuries into the past. This striking narrative structure is conveyed in the ever-shifting viewpoints of the not entirely omniscient narrator. Narration, commentary, direct and indirect dialogue, speculation, and even—as mentioned—tense, are in flux.

Set in Hungary during the last half century or so, *The Kid* follows the life of the eponymous character, born in a peasant village amidst the great expectations of his family, who see him as their vindication. Accordingly he goes off to study in the capital, but fails to become the scholar he sets out to be. He settles for much less, and returns to the village to be a school teacher, then the principal. We follow him through social, professional and marital failure and descent into alcoholism, to his final psychological and physical breakdown. Not until the last few pages, when the kid is made to confront his complicity in how his life turned out, do we learn his name.

Each digression triggered by the kid's life contains a convincingly complete story, however briefly told. In sum, these stories add up to a multi-faceted, critical image of Hungarian society in the present and recent past, i.e., on both sides of the regime change of 1989. Háy's criticism, like justice, is blind. To use an American expression, he is an "equal-opportunity" offender. He spares middle-class urban intellectuals no less than he spares the rural folk the kid originates from; women no less than men; almost everyone is driven by greed, opportunism, lust, vengeance, remorse or resentment. So, though Háy's narrative is rooted in a particular historical moment in a particular place, his psychological insights are universal.

There is also a metaphysical side to Háy's work, which *The Kid* manifests in the way time continually turns back on itself in the novel's digressions. Through these digressions, the kid is presented not as an entity located within the envelope of his ever-aging skin; his being is spread out over a region, over the world of his concern. This region is temporal as well as spatial. Temporality as a basic fact of human existence is expressed through the very structure of *The Kid*.

About two-thirds of the way into the novel, we're introduced to the kid's uncle, who hanged himself out of misplaced jealousy. The uncle's story is triggered by a memory the kid has at a particularly self-pitying moment. While speculating that the sole purpose of the creation was to make his life unendurable, he remembers his uncle, who had what it took to end it all, something the kid at this point wishes he too had. In the midst of the page or two it takes to relate the uncle's tragic story, we read the following:

> Love between two people seems to be the kind of thing that can overcome or override even the creator's will. Because when love is in play, it's possible to escape the ceaseless dread that the creator's infinite time will crush what little time you have, and you're going to die, of course without knowing when or how that will come about. It was because of this sense of freedom that the creator so hated lovers, and whatever remaining maintenance he performed after the creation was aimed at making a turbid mess of this feeling, and the resulting number of tragedies is beyond calculation. But interesting to note, he often acts against his own will even so, as in the case of the uncle who, by the agency of love, achieved not life but death, though in this way he still managed to slip out from under the creator's will, just as happy lovers do.

In this passage, Háy identifies the radical finitude of human existence, and how fragile, temporary, and unreliable any antidote necessarily is. Caught in a particular historical and social context, Háy's characters play out their finiteness against the backdrop of the infinite. The tension between the finite and the infinite, which defines modern man and makes the individual's life at once meaningful and pointless, underlies much of Háy's work.

Indeed, this tension underlies the most groundbreaking Hungarian drama of the post-1989 era: Háy's Géza-boy (A Gézagyerek). This play and three subsequent dramas, which together may be regarded as a tetralogy, are set within the dark underbelly of the region that once formed the western periphery of the Soviet Empire and now forms the eastern periphery of the European Union. This zone is spotted with localities trampled by the march of "progress," from communist collectivization to capitalist privatization. One such place is the unnamed Hungarian village in which Géza-boy is set. Its inhabitants are defined by two negatives: no longer and not yet. They are no longer subjects of the East but not yet fully integrated into the West; they are no longer peasants but not yet part of a viable working class. They inhabit their own historically-determined present, a state of being that, in Háy's treatment, places in high relief the nothingness at the core of the modern human condition. Their existential anguish is manifest in their quest for oblivion, as this excerpt from a tavern scene demonstrates:

> Pityu: It doesn't make any difference to me what we do anyway, by morning I won't remember anything. I couldn't tell you the last time I laid my wife.
>
> Béla: You mean you did?
>
> Pityu: Sometime, sure, but I don't know when, I just don't remember exactly when.
>
> Lajos: Good thing.
>
> Pityu: What is?
>
> Lajos: That you don't remember, that's what.
>
> Pityu: Why's it a good thing if I can't remember?
>
> Lajos: 'Cause you forget what happened to you, see?
>
> Pityu: But why's it good if you forget?
>
> Lajos: 'Cause you don't remember, see, that's why life's worth living, see, so we forget what happened.
>
> Béla: And we need to drink so we don't get bored while we're forgetting, see, so the time'll pass, that's why.
>
> Pityu: But what did Lajos say, what did he say about his wife? I can't remember.

In the novel, Háy's kid hails from among such characters. But the kid's father has come up with a way out. Having disavowed his own father, he decides that the family lineage is to begin with him; he is to be the first father. So he sends his son, the kid, into the world as the first descendent of a line whose founder will always be remembered. Through his son, he is projecting a past into the future. But the son arrives in the city as someone seeking to assimilate into a world that inevitably views him as an outsider. Uprootedness is his fate, and he is not allowed to forget it. By contrast, the natives of the big city—with their inherited apartments and connections in the right places—are permitted to forget theirs. But the kid's very presence is a reminder to them, on some level of consciousness, that ontologically they stand on the same shaky ground he does. Háy makes this very point in a more generalized way in a recent essay, "The Assimilant" (Az asszimiláns), published in the weekly *Élet*

és irodalom. The piece ends in this extraordinary way: "When you see the assimilant standing there at the mercy of elemental forces, be fearful. For his very existence is a reminder that not only do the gates of the city stand open, so do the gates of time, through which we all will pass without a trace."

The kid enters those city gates in order to become a philosopher specializing in the history of Hungarian anarchism. His choice of career betrays an underlying desire for a world free of outside constraints. He never achieves that career. Nor does he die at the end. When his world finally collapses, he collapses along with it into a vegetative state. The kid's development begins with his father's desire to vindicate his own life through that of his son, and ends in that son's living death, the non-culmination of a life. Thus Háy has written an anti-Bildungsroman, and has done so with an unconstrained bravura that conveys the condition of uprootedness. The kid, an exile from a once-traditional world, embodies this condition. His attempt to gain entry into the middle-class world reveals only that the big city is itself a paradigm of rootlessness, and he returns to his native village, now doubly exiled. He too is perpetually hovering between the *no longer* and the *not yet*, holding up a mirror in which a modern reader anywhere will, if he dares, recognize his own dilemma. ❧

Graham Avery

A Passion for Communication

Géza Vermes, *Searching for the Real Jesus*. London: SCM Press, 2010, 160 pp. • *Jesus in the Jewish World.* London: SCM Press 268 pp.

Géza Vermes is a scholar of Hungarian Jewish origin who has lived in Britain for many years and now resides in Oxford where he was the University's first professor of Jewish Studies until his retirement in 1991. This review examines two of his recent publications and considers them in the wider context of his life and work.

Searching for the Real Jesus brings together 29 essays, lectures and newspaper articles written by Vermes during the last decade. *Jesus in the Jewish World* is a collection of 15 articles published by him in academic journals and elsewhere over the last thirty-five years. Notwithstanding his age (he is 86) Vermes is still an extraordinarily prolific writer. In fact the year 2010 saw not only the publication of these two books but also *The Story of the Scrolls*, his account of the discovery and significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and his book *Jesus: Nativity—Passion—Resurrection* bringing together in one volume three books already published separately.

The parents of Vermes were Jews who in the 1930s—like many of their generation—chose for reasons of security to be baptised as Catholics. After education at the Catholic gymnasium in Gyula, Vermes decided to train for the priesthood, and in 1942 he went to study at the seminary in Szatmár. Despite his Jewish origins, he survived the war there and at other religious institutions with the connivance of the Church authorities, but his parents were deported and perished. He left Hungary in 1946 to study with the Order of Sion in Louvain, Belgium, and pursued theology, history and Christian-Jewish relations there and in Paris. Then, on a visit to England, he met a woman with whom he fell in love, and in 1957 he left the Sionists to join her, obtaining a post as a lecturer at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne before moving later to Oxford.

Vermes made his name as an author initially with the analysis of the scrolls discovered in 1947 at Qumran, of which his English version is the standard translation. Later he turned his attention to the life and work of Jesus as seen in the context of Jewish history and theology,

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beginning in 1973 with his *Jesus the Jew* and continuing with *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* in 2003.

Perhaps the most striking impression that Vermes gives is his passion for truth in the scholarly sense: an insistence on digging through the sediment of subsequent interpretation and dogma to try to discover what the texts actually say, and how they would have been understood at the time when they were written. In *Searching for the Real Jesus* he writes that "the best advice that a non-Christian historian of Christianity can give is to go back to the authentic teaching of Jesus ... formulated in his own language and teaching for his mostly uneducated Galilean Jewish audience".

This 'detective work' characterises his approach to the accounts of *Jesus in the New Testament,* where he strips away the additional material supplied by Paul, John and other members of the early Church, to try to establish what Jesus himself said and taught. Although Vermes has been described as the greatest Jesus scholar of his time he also has critics and detractors, which is hardly surprising since he has from time to time questioned the basis of Christian teachings.

But Vermes is more than a scholar: he has communicated his historical and biblical work to a wider audience, and in fact *Searching for the Real Jesus* is a collection of shorter popular pieces written mainly for the British daily press. When he presented it earlier this year at a book launch in Oxford, Vermes recalled that it was his father, a Hungarian newspaper editor, who gave him a respect for the profession of journalism; indeed, at the age of 12 he was writing a sports column for his father's newspaper. Vermes regrets that many academics have neither the inclination nor the ability to communicate with the public, and tend to disdain "popularisation". He observes that the French language has a word "vulgarisation" meaning "making things attractive to the general public", which is quite different from its English connotation of "making things coarse and unrefined".

Most of the pieces in *Searching for the Real Jesus* deal with topics that interest the general public, including questions such as what we can know about the real Jesus, the media frenzy generated by the *Da Vinci Code* stories, or the Catholic church's views on homosexuality and women. Vermes reminds us in the article "What's Sex Got to do with It?" that although today's religious headlines often focus on matters of sex and gender (contraception, abortion, homosexuality, female priests) this was not the case in the past; at the time of the Reformation the debate was all about scripture versus tradition, and in the early Church the hot question was whether the Son of God existed since eternity. He warns us that on questions such as homosexuality, celibacy, or the ordination of women, the Gospel of Jesus is ambiguous or silent, and that those who appeal to the Bible to justify their views on these matters are on unsafe ground.

In view of his intimate knowledge of Catholicism, I asked Vermes whether he could predict when the Roman Church would abandon the celibacy of priests and accept the ordination of women. His first reply was characteristically modest: "no, I am not a prophet" but then he added wryly "however, when it does, I am sure that theologians will be able to argue that this was always the doctrine of the Church".

The pieces in *Jesus in the Jewish World* are scholarly in nature. In "Flavius

Josephus, the Fifth Evangelist?" he analyses the references made by this Jewish historian, born soon after the death of Jesus, to biblical figures including John the Baptist, James the brother of Jesus, and Jesus himself. In "Hanina ben Dosa: A Galilean Contemporary of Jesus" he explains what is known of this first-century charismatic who—like Jesus—was a non-conformist in matters of religious observance and came into conflict with the establishment through the exercise of personal authority. The sayings, miracles and other acts attributed to ben Dosa suggest that, if things had turned out differently, he too —like Jesus—might have become the subject of a gospel. But these articles are not all cerebral. In "A Dream" Vermes recounts amusingly how he dreamed of Jesus returning to the world today: he reports that he said to the Jews "Forget the lies about me, I'm one of yours" and to the Christians "You can learn more about the real me from Luke, Matthew and Mark than from the rest of the New Testament. I wish I'd taken the trouble to write myself!"

Vermes has been honoured as a scholar by academies in Britain and Hungary, which he first revisited in 1992. In Britain today his esteem extends wider than biblical studies, for he is considered an eminent intellectual and a grand old man of Oxford. He is quoted, for example, in recent books about the university (*This Secret Garden—Oxford Revisited* by Justin Cartwright, Bloomsbury, 2008) and the symphonies of Gustav Mahler (*Why Mahler?* by Norman Lebrecht, Faber & Faber, 2010).

To learn more about the ideas and the extraordinary life of Géza Vermes, you should read his autobiography *Providential Accidents* (SCM Press, 1998) which has been published in Budapest as *Gondviselésszerű véletlenek – Önéletrajz* (Osiris, 2000). ❧

Balázs Ablonczy

Hungarians of Another Kind

Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, László Szarka (eds.), *Kisebbségi magyar közösségek a 20. században* (Minority Hungarian Communities in the 20th Century). Budapest: Gondolat Publishing House—Ethnicity and Nationality Minority Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2008, 508 pp.

"*Le Hongrois, c'est un monsieur qui vous approche avec une carte à la main.*" This was said by a French journalist between the two world wars about Hungarians who approach you map in hand to argue their case the moment you meet them. The Treaty of Trianon deprived Hungary of two-thirds of its former territory. This was perceived as the dismemberment of historic Hungary and the trauma held public opinion captive after the war, after-effects of varying intensity being palpable to this day.

The huge territorial losses, a source of grief very difficult in itself to cope with, were aggravated by other, no less painful circumstances. Some ten-million people lived in the ceded territories, 3.2 million of whom spoke Hungarian as their native language. Between 1918 and 1924 some four-hundred-thousand of them left to settle elsewhere. This fundamentally changed Hungarian public thinking. Territorial revision became one of the most important aims of Hungarian foreign policy in the inter-war period. Roughly one-third of the Hungarian speaking population of Central Europe now found itself outside the borders of Hungary (not including the hundreds of thousands who emigrated to Western Europe, the United States, or Canada) what people in Hungary knew about them, however, diminished.

With the Communist takeover in 1947 and particularly in the aftermath of the 1956 Revolution with János Kádár at the helm, the Hungarian minority communities in the Carpathian Basin became a taboo subject. Kádár's Hungary was perhaps the only Soviet satellite state that did not, in its attempts to legitimize its rule, make use of the rhetoric of nation building, a rhetoric employed even by the German Democratic Republic, notwithstanding the bizarre nature of its creation. Anyone who mentioned the Hungarian minorities in the surrounding states inevitably spoke of Trianon, and in doing so threatened the cohesion of the Eastern Bloc and offended neighbouring states that did not hesitate to exploit their own nationalist armory. Any reflection on the fragmented Hungarian nation living both

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within and beyond the political borders of Hungary inevitably raised other memories, too, those of the great traumas of the recent past, including 1945 and particularly 1956, and the question of national sovereignty, something that questioned the foundations of the Kádár regime.

Beginning roughly in the mid-1970s the leaders of the Soviet Union excused and even implicitly condoned the mention from time to time by Kádár and other party figures of the plight of the Hungarian minorities in Romania, in part because they sought to demonstrate to Romania, which at the time was beginning to pursue a seemingly more independent policy, that political and territorial settlements are not eternal. Much more was not allowed. Raising issues connected with Hungarian minorities was not encouraged. This applied to both the media and culture in general. That it was indeed one of the prominent concerns of Hungarian public opinion became apparent in the 1980s, in part because of the crises faced by the Communist system. In June 1988 the first spontaneous demonstration in Hungary since 1956 involving more than one-hundred-thousand people, a protest against the planned destruction of villages in Romania, took place in Budapest.

The issue of the Hungarian minorities of the surrounding states has been a continuous theme of public discourse in Hungary over the past twenty years. It is nonetheless somewhat surprising that the first book dealing not simply with the history of individual minority communities (the Hungarian-speaking communities of Serbia, Ukraine, or Slovakia or of other countries), but rather with the minority communities and their history as a whole, was not published until 2008. The publication of the collection of essays, which make up a textbook that can be used in universities, required not only the determination and resolve of the three editors, Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec and László Szarka, but also a younger generation of scholars, educated over the past two decades, familiar with the various archival sources, who have already demonstrated their competence as historians. Árpád Popély, Attila Simon (born in Slovakia), Csaba Zoltán Novák, Stefano Bottoni, Márton László, Mihály Zoltán Nagy, Ágoston Olti (born in Romania), Árpád Hornyák (born in Serbia), Attila Kovács (born in Slovenia), Balázs Vizi, and Z. Attila Papp are all scholars whose work, alongside the contributions of the editors (whose remarkable organizational talents are evident) and other authorities on minorities studies (Enikő A. Sajti, László Szarka, Tamás Gusztáv Filep, Béni L. Balogh, János Vékás), contribute to a balanced, concise and comprehensible discussion of the questions at hand.

The title itself carries an unambiguous message: the Hungarians in the surrounding states are not a "nationality" or a "minority," but rather a national community that has its own, independent conception of society, its own past, and its own survival strategies, which at times may distinguish between its own identity and the identity of Hungarians in Hungary.

The six chronologically arranged chapters (the years following the First World War, the inter-war period, the Second World War, the transitional period between 1944 and 1948, the years of the party-state, and the period following the change of regime) include sixty-nine essays addressing specific themes. The articles, which are between four and eight pages in length, are accompanied by numerous illustrations, citations, time-lines, and bibliographies. Statistics and maps are at

the end of the volume. In the sixth chapter a few essays dealing with issues of legal rights and education and communities that are connected in some way with the question of Hungarian identity (such as the Roma or Jews) as well as Hungarian communities beyond the Carpathian Basin break the chronological order. Bearing in mind the complexity of the subject, this section is perhaps too short.

Given the strict formal requirements, the book offers a fairly consistent and cohesive picture, and one can only approve that the editors allowed authors a free hand, regarding the style of their contributions. Thus Tamás Gusztáv Filep chose to write an essay, others preferred a drier scholarly prose, sticking to bare facts.

One could, of course, raise all sorts of objections concerning, for instance, chapters in which the periodisation is not accurate or in which the narrative seems to falter. One might complain that the very large format is not ideally suited for use in higher education or, one might suggest other, more appropriate, illustrations in places. As a whole, however, the volume seems the product of careful consideration and reflection, a work in which the shared relevance of seemingly distant events and phenomena is made clear. The Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) proclamation of the unification of Transylvania with the Old Kingdom of Romania and parliamentary addresses fit in well with an appeal by a preacher of Sub-Carpathia to Stalin to convert; the distinctive social history of the Hungarians of the Burgenland (covered by a highly informative contribution by Gerhard Baumgartner), and the story of the Szatmár Hassids in the United States.

The volume could have given more attention to Hungarian communities outside the Carpathian Basin. After all, with the possible exceptions of Italy, Ireland or Poland no nation in Europe has left its homeland in such great proportions over the course of the past one-hundred-and-thirty years. The brief but well-written essay by Ilona Kovács regrettably does not give a sufficiently nuanced picture of the complexity of the cultural identity that has taken shape among Hungarians in the United States over the past several decades. According to the most recent census, 1.4 million Hungarians live in the United States, but barely one-tenth of them use their mother tongue. This phenomenon, almost incomprehensible to Hungarians outside the borders in Central Europe, for whom language is the most fundamental part of cultural identity, would have deserved more ample explanation.

The book is a clear, concise, and considered embodiment of the scholarship that has come into being here in the course of the past two decades concerning Hungarians outside Hungary's borders. In comparison with most textbooks it has the enormous advantage that its focus is not limited to past events, nor do the essays lapse into self-pity or lament. It does not pass over the past and recent blunders of Hungarian politics and its minority policy, nor does it ignore the roles of various totalitarian ideologies in some Hungarian communities. At the same time, however, it indicates, in discussing the many kinds of identity, current international legal institutions and educational systems, the reasons for the disappearance of some communities. It also documents that the evolution of the Hungarian communities outside Hungary is an ongoing process. The book prompts sober reflection on the underlying changes in the past and the prospects for the further transformations of Hungarian identity. The Hungarian gentleman carrying a map in one hand now holds a reference book in the other. ❧

Tamás Koltai

Messages from Past and Present

Pál Závada: *Magyar ünnep* (National Celebration) • Endre Fejes: *Jó estét, nyár, jó estét, szerelem* (Good Evening, Summer, Good Evening, Love) • János Háy: *Hard*

Traumatic events of the past live on in the present. We must retrace our old selves in order to better understand ourselves. Occasionally the theatre complements the lessons of history and in doing so contributes to the shaping of collective memory.

Pál Závada's play *Magyar ünnep* was written for a competition by the National Theatre calling for works for theatre thematically arranged around the Ten Commandments. Závada chose the third: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." The basic dramatic setting is 1940 when, under the terms of the so called Second Vienna Award, northern Transylvania was re-joined to Hungary. This act constituted a revision of the Treaty of Trianon, signed after the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy following the First World War, when Hungary, one of the vanquished Central Powers, lost two-thirds of its territory to neighbouring countries. Hungarian historical consciousness has still not recovered either from the trauma of Trianon or the fact that in the Peace Treaty of Paris signed at the end of the Second World War Transylvania once again became Romanian. (Romania, which had also been a German ally, changed sides in 1944, while Hungary merely made an abortive attempt to withdraw from the war.)

Theatre cannot manage to achieve what historians and schools have so far been unable to do: to make known the past and its consequences in all its complexity. Naturally there have been numerous scholarly works on the topic and attempts to uncover the causes of events, in the meantime, however, the trauma of the loss has often been soothed with empty slogans and comforting illusions instead of a candid examination of the facts.

National Celebration does not attempt to provide an historical analysis. It rather records, comments and shows mingling journalism, fiction and abstraction. With its eclectic approach it is at times similar to a realist drama, at other times to Greek tragedy or a music hall performance. The action centres around the arrival of the Hungarian army in the Transylvanian city of Kolozsvár (Cluj), the festive celebration itself, the enthusiasm of the Hungarian

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inhabitants, the processions, folk ensembles, official speeches, and a radio report sent to Budapest. Wandering back and forth both in time and place, the author embeds a family history in this chain of events. He looks back to Trianon and forward to 1947, the time of coalition after the war, when the so called bourgeois order had not yet fallen apart, but the Communist takeover was already in the wings. We see the intertwining personal lives of family members, relatives and friends. The characters are typical members of the Christian and Jewish middle classes. Among them we find a merchant, an army officer, a journalist, a clergyman, and an inmate of a labour camp. They live their everyday lives in Budapest, Kolozsvár, or other cities writing letters, starting sexual relationships, and reacting to events as varied as the celebrations, the passing of anti-Jewish legislation, the use of ethnic slurs, book burning, the resistance movement, and post-war political manoeuvring. Sometimes they are active, at other times passive. Sometimes the two roles are combined. Sometimes the same character plays the role of partisan, racist, traitor and informant. "Since childhood we have been bound together by a thousand threads, we must offer a helping hand to one another," says one of the characters. He is referring to personal relations founded on tragic differences, but may as well be warning society as a whole.

The writer, and the director Róbert Alföldi, use varying stage devices. Stories taking place at different times run parallel. An epistolary dialogue is staged. A chorus partly narrates events and partly figures as one or another of the minor characters and occasionally it sings. At other times it performs song and dance inserts tainted by folk, operetta, liturgical, madrigal, or popular song flavours. The main characters may recite their text in the manner of an operatic recitativo. All this is meant to allude to ancient Greek drama, but at the same time attempts to mythologize one Hungarian historical mentality. The Brechtian technique of alienation is also employed: from time to time actors step out of character and context, prompting reflection on the part of the audience. They are no substitute for a history lesson, but they do draw attention to the relationship between the past and present.

Hungary's Roma, living in abject poverty and increasingly marginalised, pose a growing problem to society as a whole. As it is phrased in vulgar everyday language, "the Gypsy question" is a burning social trauma. The increasing strength of the political far right and its recent successes in parliamentary elections (the extreme right-wing party received 16 per cent of the votes in the last election) both demonstrate and fuel ethnic hatred. A year and a half ago several racially motivated murders occurred in Hungary; a "death squad" of four people hunted randomly chosen Roma people living on the outskirts of villages. They killed six, among them a five-year-old boy, and wounded five others. It took months to arrest them and charges have been laid, but the trials have not yet begun.

Few plays dare to tackle hatred of the Roma in the Hungarian theatre. One of them, *The Gypsies,* was staged by the Katona József Theater. Playwright Krisztián Grecsó and director Gábor Máté chose an interesting form. In the first act of the two-part performance the first scenes of the play *Gypsies,* written in 1923 by the outstanding Hungarian writer Józsi Jenő Tersánszky, are performed. The

production explores a theatrical find. After the first act, present scenes are superimposed, as if an attempt were being made to see how past and present overlap, what "Gypsy" meant then, what it means now, what the theatre showed at that time, and what it shows today.

At the time the acclaimed writer, poet and critic Dezső Kosztolányi wrote of Tersánszky's play that it was "a masterpiece even judged by strictly literary standards." This is perhaps something of an overstatement. In fact, the play is more like the slapstick comedies of the age. The Gypsy is little more than folkloristic presence in it, similar to the background tavern music accompanying the story, in which the young, fickle, newly-wed lead violinist of the band is firmly bound to his fiery, temperamental wife. The girl's mother, who is of mixed Gypsy and Hungarian stock, does once lament that she, "a decent middle-class woman," has got mixed up with this "dark Gypsy gang," but this is little more than a jocular whim of the age with no real significance. There is no hatred here. The image is idyllic and unclouded. In 1930 even the National Theatre performed the play.

Today's performance is interrupted at this point. A person wearing a black mask stands up in the auditorium and fires a hunting rifle in the middle of the act, a typical *action gratuite,* as no reason, antecedent or explanation is given. Just as it happened in real life. A Gypsy man, the head of the family, is killed. The investigation begins. Just as it happened. The characters of the play are the same, but we have jumped forward in time. New characters arrive. Police officers, detectives, a journalist, a minority politician, who is also a member of parliament. Haste, confusion, manipulation. Assumptions instead of professionalism, a clash of prejudices and tensions. (This is also based on real life: at one of the crime scenes the investigation was dilettantish, visible clues were obliterated, the gun wound went unnoticed.) Premeditated murder, having been combined with ethnic discrimination and racism acquires a political tone and reveals the conscious strata of ignorance, malignancy, and enmity. By no means is the issue black and white. Rather it is bizarre and tragicomic. It is not merely about murderers, victims and the indifferent public. It is about a situation impossible to handle, a trap. The behaviour of the Gypsies is outrageously anti-social. They stick to their way of life, their traditions. They steal the corpse, theatrically bewail his death, and refuse to allow the body to be taken for an autopsy. They curse, beg and kiss hands. They demand their rights and act humble. "They bring ill luck upon us. By their very being," says one of the characters. It would be better if there were none. If they could be relocated. Not to mention a more radical solution.

Gypsies pushes the "Gypsy question" to extremes, almost to the point of absurdity. It does not go deep, does not attempt to uncover the root of the problem, and many have found this aspect of the play wanting. It only exhibits the procedure in the course of which the false (social and theatrical) idyll results in a series of seemingly insoluble conflicts leading to tragedies. Some asked why the two acts were not linked, why a new play began in Act 2. The same characters appeared on stage, but in a contemporary attire and talking and behaving in a way which had no relation to Act 1 whatsoever, with the actualities of the day crammed into the plot. But the real question is not whether the second act is an organic

sequel to the first, but rather how we relate to this new and sobering reading of "Gypsy folklore". What is reality for us? In the real world and in the pseudo world, that is in the theatre? And will we stand by reality? Will we take reality into consideration, reckoning with this "inconvenience" that, through its mere existence, it might "bring ill luck upon us"?

The "Gypsy theme" dominates the new production of the Pintér Béla Company, in which, as is their habit, the eponymous founder of the company directs and plays the lead role in his own play. *Dirt* is also about how a community is shattered by the unsolved, unsettled and unspoken. We find ourselves in a small community in which nothing in particular happens until a married couple, having learned that they cannot have a child of their own, decide to adopt two girls from an institution. One of them is a Roma. The two girls are very close to each other, and following the first moment of perplexed astonishment, the village also accepts them. However, conflicts soon arise. Within the small community moral norms and attitudes vary; there are different opinions on family, love and work. The Roma girl, in an almost atavistic unconscious state, steals a wallet, and there is nothing childish about her relationship with her foster father, who in the meantime has become estranged from his wife. The girls also grow apart and sisterly affection is replaced by dislike. The other girl is unable to tolerate the idle "Gypsy" living according to a tribal morality and expecting a baby, and thus ends up among the racist members of the far right Hungarian Guard, which, since the elections, sits in Parliament. The husband turns out to be Jewish. And a murder also takes place, here too unexpectedly, and furthermore the corpse is incinerated in the oven of the village baker, apparently a bizarre allusion to the Holocaust.

'Dirt' is the nickname or sobriquet of the girl who becomes a member of the Guard and comes to a bad end. As a common noun, dirt means filth, grime, figuratively it refers to the foulness and turbulence produced by incitement. It may be difficult to believe that the plot nothwithstanding the production is replete with grotesque, humorous scenes, but anyone familiar with the company will not be surprised. The Pintér plays are typically eclectic in their style and atmosphere. This time, too, the micro-community of the play is a social model, and it draws attention to everyday phenomena in contemporary Hungary. Parodied rituals are mixed with cabaret elements, and, like several other productions by the company, this one, too, is accompanied by folk music— but folk music with a difference. The amateur theatrical company within the play performs its folk ballad to the title song of the movie *Emanuelle.*

A theatrical production from the past that unintentionally reflects on one from the present constitutes an interesting variation on a message from the past.

Endre Fejes wrote his outstanding novel *Jó estét, nyár, jó estét, szerelem* (Good Evening, Summer, Good Evening, Love) in the 1960s. Later he adapted it for the stage. A young workman poses as a Greek diplomat. He goes hungry during the week and in the evenings he buries himself in a dictionary. Twice a month he puts on his dark suit, meets girls, takes them to exclusive restaurants, and generously tips waiters. He speaks broken

Hungarian and disappears for weeks on account of "diplomatic assignments". Why does he do this? Does he want to show off? Is he suffering from identity confusion? Is he a compulsive liar? Or does he just want to bed the girls? The explanation lies elsewhere. The dark-suited lad is neither an impostor nor a criminal, unlike the man on whom his character was modelled, who was executed for murdering the girl using a razor after she has uncovered his secret. The dark-suited boy is a member of the "ruling class" of Communist Hungary ("Hungary is ruled by the working class"— this was one of Kádár's most cherished slogans). The age however only offered ideology but no future. Though he never realizes it, the lack of future prospects has induced the dark-suited lad to lie, dissimulate in order to achieve a higher social status. His lies are spontaneous responses to the lies of the age. Thus, at the time, the novel and the play were very much perceived as criticizing the regime. By now the story has lost this particular characteristic, but it still bears an always timely critique of aborted attempts to deal with the lack of future prospects. In the performance of the National Theatre directed by Roland Rába the emphasis shifts from the young man who feels ill at ease in his own life to the "victims," who want to believe lies and illusions at all cost. Today's populist sentiments attempt to resolve social malaise through self-delusion. The performance powerfully portrays the moral confusion and sense of uncertainty of the petty bourgeois families and girls at the mercy of the lying dreams embodied by the dark-suited lad.

János Háy's[1] play *Hard,* directed by László Bérczes at the Bárka Theatre, seems a modern copy or sequel to the theme. It portrays the crisis of a first-generation professional man who moves from the country to Budapest. In the first act the main character, the Man, tells of his life in a long soliloqui, then retrospectively enlarged moments of his life are shown in Act 2. Háy's horticultural engineer is just as unable to integrate into society as Fejes's young workman. Despite having obtained a degree, taught at a university, and started a family, he feels a stranger in the capital, among his colleagues, and among students, who were handed everything on a platter (books, command of foreign languages, financial security) he had had to struggle for. He is unable to resolve this handicap mentally. He starts frequenting pubs, becomes an alcoholic and loses his family and job—he systematically demolishes his life. Unlike Fejes's dark-suited lad, for whom introspection is not typical (indeed he steps out of himself and we see him from the outside, like some piece of objective evidence), Háy's Man as a character is cursed with self-torture. He is unfit for pretence; in fact his problem is how to break from his roots, past and life. The dark-suited lad feigns a false world, the Man is unable to distance himself from his own world. Both are victims of the lack of future prospects, and both inevitably plunge into nothingness. ❧

1 ■ On János Háy see also Eugene Brogyányi's article on pp. 141–144 and the excerpt from *The Kid* by János Háy on pp. 11–19 of this issue.

Erzsébet Bori

Stormy Times: The Way the World Ends

Béla Tarr: *The Turin Horse*

Of its many outstanding film directors, Hungary can point to two who enjoy cult status, two major auteurs who have exercised a clear influence on the art of film-making and excited the imaginations of audiences. Much as new works from Miklós Jancsó were eagerly awaited in the Seventies and Eighties, the premieres of Béla Tarr's films have captivated moviegoers since 1979, when he first boldly trespassed into the strictly controlled territory of the feature film. He shot his first film, *Family Nest,* without having completed any form of post-secondary education and without formal qualifications of any sort, let alone a diploma from the Academy of Film and Theatre. It was awarded first prize at the Mannheim Festival and a special prize at the Film Week in Budapest the same year.

Family Nest was made in the 'documentarist' style that emerged in the sixties and went under the names *cinéma direct* or *cinéma vérité.* The novel approach was essentially made possible by the introduction of more compact and portable cine cameras and sound recording equipment. The Hungarian variant was not a straight copy. 'Documentarists' in Hungary, or the Budapest School as they came to be called, developed a production methods of their own. They sketched out the broad outlines of a story before shooting and organized it around situational nodes, deliberately looking for lay persons belonging to the social stratum in question to whom the events in the story, or something similar, either had happened or could easily have happened. After the scene had been set up (who was acting with whom and who represented what, two cameras were set up to record the actors as they improvised. The scene would then last as long as it took the given action to conclude and the uncut footage would be incorporated into the film. Dialogues, soliloquis and, less commonly, series of actions, were subject to real-time recording, which allowed for the creation, with well chosen situations and actors, of an exceptionally strong screen presence and sense of authenticity. The method constituted a challenge to the ossified rules of feature film-making.

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As Tarr put it in his explanation of his artistic intentions: "Until then [in Hungary], actors had been put in a working-class dwelling and told to behave as if they lived there, whereas my actors didn't have to pretend to live [in working-class homes] because by and large they really did."

The new method had drawbacks of its own, including long-windedness, monotony, lack of focus and appropriate editing, and the abandonment of artistic means of expression. From the outset, Tarr sought to overcome the limitations of the technique and give the real-life material drama and form creating tension and a surplus of meaning first and foremost through the use of montage and the juxtaposition of sequences of shots.

Having exhausted the various opportunities offered by the genre in his subsequent documentary films (*The Outsider,* 1981; *Prefab People,* 1982), in 1984 Tarr produced a colour chamber play entitled *Autumn Almanac,* a work which marked a surprising turning point in his oeuvre. The novelty of the film, palpable in its perspective and style, was reinforced by the fact that the old theme of the housing problem returned in a new guise. In the fictional framework, the seemingly familiar thematic elements (the struggle for housing; the power games, betrayals and manipulative conniving of people living in close confines) bear a significance extending beyond the flaws of the various characters and even the evils of an era conducive to corruption, suggesting a "systemic failure" of a more general validity. As for what Tarr was looking for—that was more readily understandable after he had found it in *Damnation,* a 1988 film in which two new names are listed in the credits: writer László Krasznahorkai and editor Ágnes Hranitczky (composer Mihály Víg had been working with Tarr since *Damnation*). One more name is worthy of mention, producer György Fehér, who is listed as 'consultant' in the credits. The change in subject and style of *Damnation* is due in part to their participation, and they continued to play influential roles in his later films.

Tarr's subsequent endeavours as a filmmaker were a bit more complex than a chronology of his works might suggest. He read Krasznahorkai's novel *Sátántangó* ('Satan's Tango', 1989) in 1985, when it had not yet been published. They met and began to collaborate on a screenplay, which they submitted to the studio Társulás (Association), to which Tarr belonged at the time. The studio, however, was soon shut down, and as he had little luck peddling the film elsewhere, Tarr finished *Damnation* instead. He referred to it as a *'Zugfilm"* ('Nook Film'), by which he meant that he worked outside the studio system, using guerrilla tactics to find financial support wherever he could. But find it he did, and *Damnation* became the founding cult film of a new school.

After the success of *Satan's Tango* (1994), an undeniable masterpiece that constituted the crowning achievement of an oeuvre on which Tarr had worked for some fifteen years, the question remained as to whether the unusual structure and handling of time in this seven-hour large-scale format could be recreated in a film of ordinary length. In *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000), which maintains the point of view of a single protagonist, Tarr did not even attempt to do so, and *The Man from London* (2007) represents

a departure in other directions. The *Turin Horse**, however, does appear to give an answer to the question.

Although the seemingly endless rainfall in *Satan's Tango* at times almost obscures any other memory of the film, one does nonetheless recall one particularly memorable gust of wind as we follow Irimia and Petrina down a city street as they are being tracked. In *A torinói ló (The Turin Horse),* the wind is constant, unflagging, like the bora, the cold north wind of the eastern Adriatic. There is nothing one can do to counter its hurricane force except close one's eyes, draw one's head in, batten down the hatches, and take cover. That common intention and compulsion motivates both coachman and horse, driving them onwards. The "horse of Turin" in question is not some skittish filly from a horse-racing stable or the world of costume films and elegant carriages, but a bull-necked, rheumy-eyed dobbin. It is not old, on the contrary, it is still in fine fettle, but the years of work have left their mark, on horse and owner alike.

Three spirited living beings—a man, a woman, and a horse—totally dependent on one another. A father and daughter, a coachman and his horse. They barely speak, for there is little to speak about: the mundane activities of carrying water, lighting a fire, chopping wood, cooking potatoes and carrying manure hardly call for explanation or conversation. Just as the horse is harnessed and unharnessed, the daughter dresses and undresses her father, whose right arm has been paralysed, so that both will be able to work and then retire to rest in preparation for the next day, when the routine will start again from the beginning. It is a timeless and infinitesimally spare existence, without the slightest trace of frill or frippery; always with as few words as possible, with the most economical use of the body.

The film covers six days in the lives of the three characters. The bleak minimalism serves two goals, or rather it simultaneously corresponds to a dual purpose, as meaning and form remain inseparable. The world depicted has been reduced to a bare minimum and is set entirely on a weather-beaten plain. It seems to lack virtually all the material attainments of so-called civilization and is utterly devoid of any of the adornments of culture; there is nothing that would make the suffering more bearable or hide the barrenness of an existence maintained and indeed given substance and form by struggle. From one day to the next the same sparse actions are repeated time and time again, so that after the third day viewers have come to know the daily routine of the characters better than they do their own.

The recurrent, concentric structure creates the form of the film. The edifice is similar to the structure that held audiences captive in *Satan's Tango,* but there it became apparent only retrospectively, whereas in *The Turin Horse* it unfolds throughout the film. As a temporal process, it makes use of devices employed in musical composition; the constant elements give the ostinato, and the theme returns in a range of variations interwoven with new elements (washing,

* ■ Béla Tarr announced at the 2007 premiere of *The Man from London* that he was retiring from film-making and that his upcoming project would be his last. After several delays, *The Turin Horse* was finally premiered as a competition title at the Berlinale International Film Festival on 15 February 2011 and won the Prix Silver Bear and the Fipresci Prize.

the repairs to the harness, the arrival on the scene of a neighbour and a group of Gypsies). One of Tarr's unmistakable stylistic features is the long take. Single takes in *Satan's Tango,* which is 420 minutes long, often last as long as 8–10 minutes, and *The Turin Horse,* which is 150 minutes long, comprises only thirty takes, which in more than one case are moved on by internal intercutting. The long take serves not only to make time and duration palpable, but also contributes to the structuring of space.

In *The Turin Horse,* the changes of perspective famous from *Satan's Tango* create the impression that over the course of the six days the camera has (almost) completed a full circle inside the house, singling out the various characters turn by turn. The claustrophobic atmosphere inside the house is lightened somewhat when the father or the girl sits down on the 'thinking bench' by the window or go out to the well, the stable, or the cart shed, but a more spectacular opening-up of space is provided by the delayed presentation of the road leading to the house. The dirt road merges with the landscape, and it is visible only because of the cart trundling down it. The impression of one big, blurred whole is further intensified by the fact that the road (almost) completes a full circle, and for a stretch anyone coming to the house appears to be leaving. First the motion of the Gypsies' cart delineates the path in space, and then the family as they try to escape by a horse-drawn cart, only to turn back.

One highly plausible reading of *The Turin Horse* is that it is a metaphysical thriller. The six days are the six days of the creation of the world in reverse order. Between the elements, which vary from time to time, are clues and signs—the rapid tappings of the deathwatch beetles fall silent; a neighbour delivers an apocalyptic soliloqui; the horse balks, refusing to set off or eat or drink anymore—which begin, as we finally see the dried up well, to awaken suspicions. The arrival of the Gypsies is only conspicuous because there are barely any characters in the film, so the question inevitably arises as to what are they after. Do they sense impending disaster, are they trying to flee? Or are they merely a distraction that postpones the final recognition of the truth (they are the last to use the well and before leaving they spew their customary curses, then by the following morning the well has run dry) that this world is doomed. This is the way the world ends and there is no explosion. The horse realizes this before the man, then the man realizes it too, but he is unable to accept it. In his language the command 'One must eat' means one must live.

In the film there is no seventh day when only the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters. The facile response to this would be, "but God is dead!" This is probably the most famous pronouncement by Nietzsche, to whom the title of the film alludes. Except that the radical paradox of *The Gay Science* (one which has since worn down into a commonplace *bon mot*) has nothing to do with a God who is absent in this world. If this really is the Turin horse and its coachman, then the film gives credence to the legend according to which Nietzsche, the very man who once condemned sympathy as a form of hypocrisy or dangerous human weakness, suffered a nervous breakdown after having witnessed a horse in Turin being whipped. ❧

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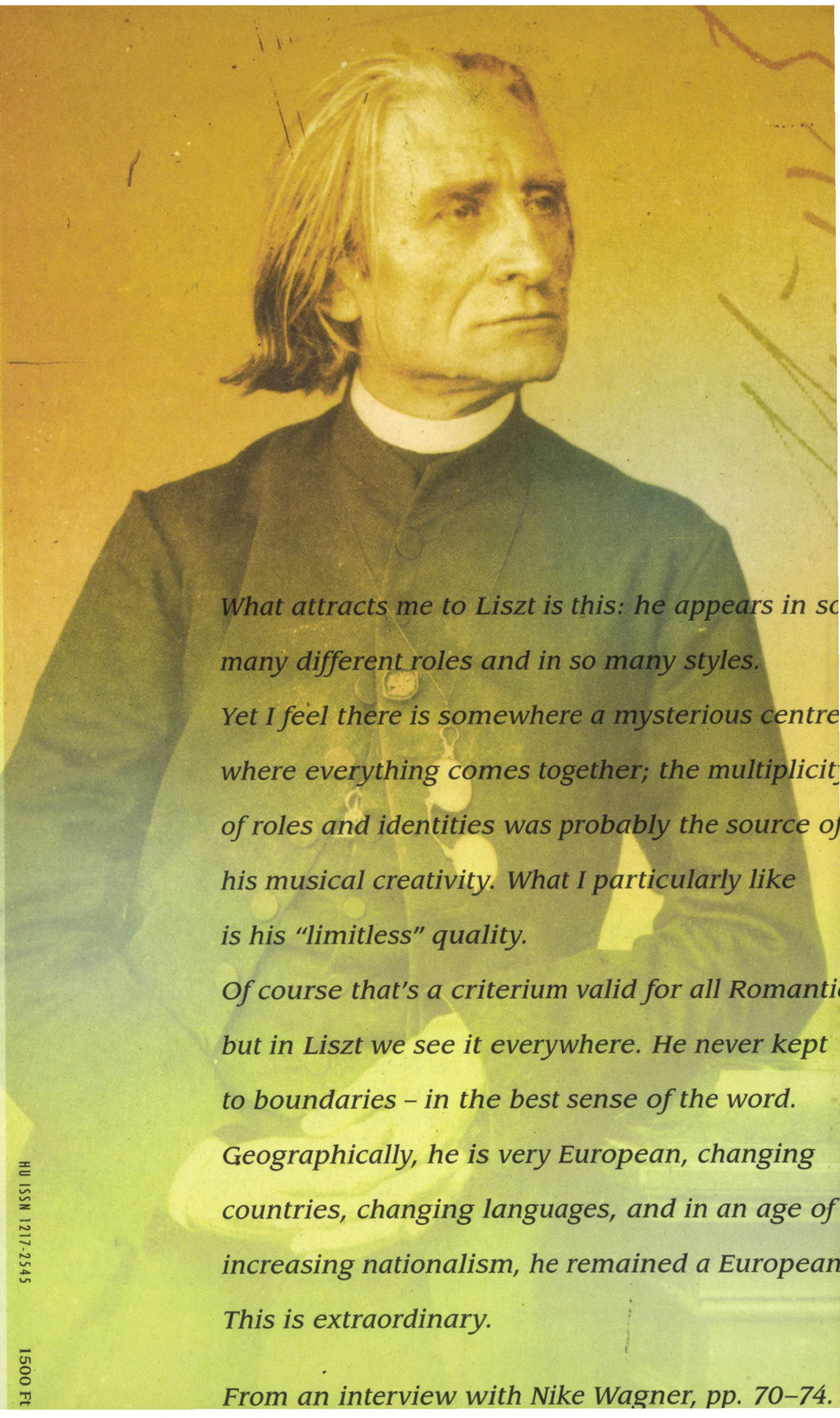

What attracts me to Liszt is this: he appears in so many different roles and in so many styles. Yet I feel there is somewhere a mysterious centre where everything comes together; the multiplicity of roles and identities was probably the source of his musical creativity. What I particularly like is his "limitless" quality. Of course that's a criterium valid for all Romantic but in Liszt we see it everywhere. He never kept to boundaries – in the best sense of the word. Geographically, he is very European, changing countries, changing languages, and in an age of increasing nationalism, he remained a European. This is extraordinary.

From an interview with Nike Wagner, pp. 70–74.

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