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CONTENTS

Volume 8
Number 2

Albert Tezla: Klaniczay Tibor – In Memoriam

Samuel J. Wilson: Lost Opportunities: Lajos Kossuth, the Balkan Nationalities
and the Danubian Confederation

Tibor Frank: Pioneers Welcome: the Escape of Hungarian Modernism to US, 1919–1945

Denis Sinor: Duelling in Hungary between the Two World Wars

Anna Szemere: Bandits, Heroes, the Honest and the Misled: Exploring the Politics of
Representation in the Hungarian Uprising of 1956

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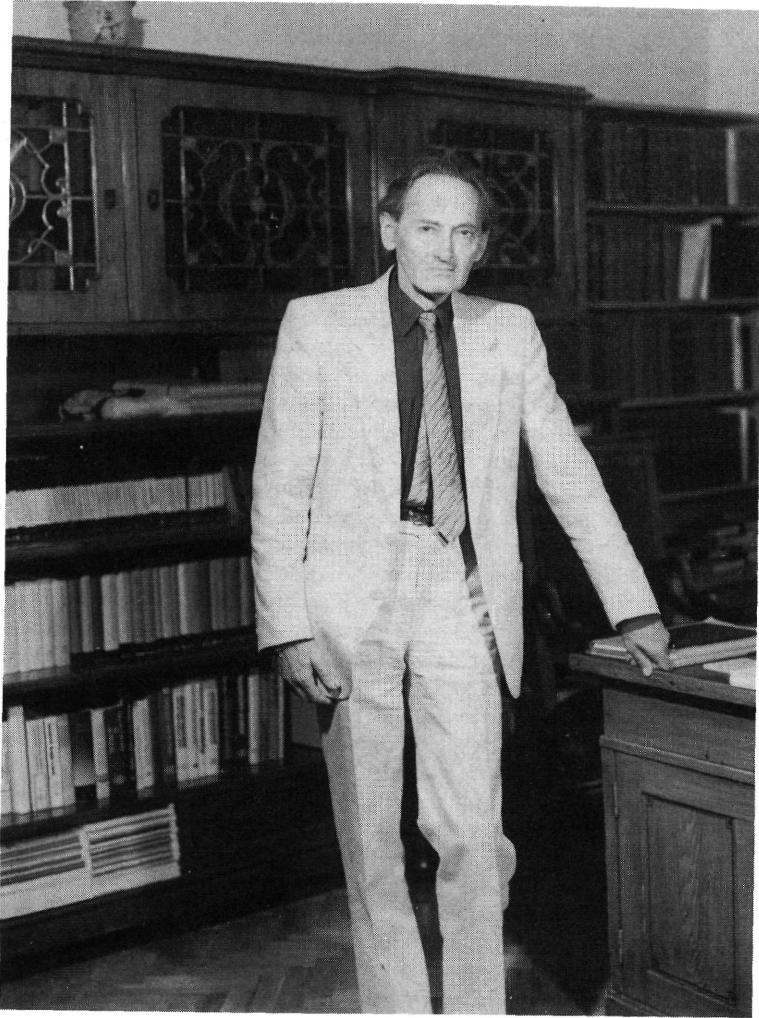
VOLUME 8, 1993

CONTENTS

NUMBER 2

<i>Albert Tezla</i> : Klaniczay Tibor (1923–1992) In memoriam.....	167
<i>Samuel J. Wilson</i> : Lost Opportunities: Lajos Kossuth, the Balkan Nationalities, and the Danubian Confederation.....	171
<i>József Ágoston Bogoly</i> : Les idéals français de Zoltán Ambrus et le journalisme de la fin de siècle; <i>Zoltán Ambrus</i> : Les journalistes et le public (Trad.: <i>Noémi Saly</i>).....	195
<i>György Bodnár</i> : Psychology, Fantasticality and the Truth of the Novel.....	205
<i>László Illés</i> : Die „Erzwungene Selbstkritik“ des Messianismus im Vorfeld der Realismus-Theorie von Georg Lukács.....	217
<i>Denis Sinor</i> : Duelling in Hungary between the Two World Wars.....	227
<i>Tibor Frank</i> : Pioneers Welcome: the Escape of Hungarian Modernism to the US, 1919–1945.....	237
<i>Ignác Romsics</i> : American War Time Policy Planning on Hungary 1942–1946.....	261
<i>Anna Szemere</i> : Bandits, Heroes, the Honest and the Mised: Exploring the Politics of Representation in the Hungarian Uprising of 1956.....	299
<i>Alexander Karn</i> : Post Modern Techniques in <i>Péter Esterházy's</i> Helping Verbs of the Heart.....	325

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KLANICZAY TIBOR
(1923-1992)

In memoriam

My first meeting with Klaniczay Tibor lives very vividly in my mind. I am seated in his office at the Institute of Literary Studies on a morning in early November 1959, his rapid-fire Hungarian buffeting, sometimes befuddling my inexperienced ear as he, flanked by the staff, welcomes me as

the first American academic to appear at the Institute since the end of the war and, after painstakingly exploring my project and needs, assures me of complete cooperation during the three weeks I shall devote to reviewing sources in the Institute's library for inclusion in my introductory bibliography to the study of Hungarian literature, time taken from a Fulbright year in Vienna. Four years later, in September 1963, I returned to Ménesi út to launch research on my annotated bibliography of *Hungarian authors*, also to be published by Harvard University Press, and once again received his cooperation and benefited from his guidance, this time for a period of nine months. It was during these months that I came to know Klaniczay as a colleague and friend and saw that he would play a historical role in restoring relations between the intellectual world of Hungary and that of other countries, a scholar who would forge the links required to advance knowledge of the Hungarian language and literature beyond his country's borders at a troubled time, when political factors and economic considerations originating in the Cold War and the aftermath of the '56 uprising cast dark clouds over the prospects for the undertaking.

But as bleak as the outlook was that fall for initiating steps in that direction, some signs of western interest in Hungarian culture and of cooperation on the part of Hungarian agencies were beginning to appear. Personages, some under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of State and the assistance of the Institute of Cultural Relations were seen in the Gellért lobby: Edward Albee came to address a group of Hungarian writers, John Steinbeck to discover authors for possible publication in America, Edmund Wilson to scrutinize Hungarian translations of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* for his review of Nabakov's own recently published version, and C. P. Snow and Walter Lippmann together to observe the political scene. As a less glamorous portent of the changing climate but one more pertinent to future exchanges of scholars, two other academics were at work for the year at institutes in Budapest – Thomas Mark on his translation of Katona's *Bánk bán*, Richard Allen on his doctoral dissertation – both, like myself, under the joint auspices of the Inter-University Committee of Travel Grants and the Institute of Cultural Relations, the first Americans given this opportunity since the end of the war. And a representative of the Ford Foundation, Shepard Stone, came in November to prepare the way for a committee of distinguished scholars, headed by John Lotz, who were scheduled to arrive in February to refine the details of the Foundation's fellowship program for Hungarian scholars seeking to conduct research in the United States, and to interview prospective applicants. All these stirrings represented a striking change in the climate I found in November 1959, when the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party was holding its first session since 1956, and a reporter from *Magyar Nemzet* was interviewing guests breakfasting at the Gellért so he could inform readers that foreigners were again coming to Hungary.

The need to expand relations between academics of East and West entered our conversations independently of these harbingers of improved circumstances very early that fall. By December we were discussing the major barriers hampering the growth of the knowledge of the Hungarian language and literature in the United States, barriers encountered to varying degrees in other nations of the world: the lack of supportive curricula at universities, the inadequacy of Hungarian holdings in libraries, even at such prime institutions as Columbia and Harvard and the New York Public Library, and the shortage of funds supporting research in Hungarian studies. These realities did not dampen Klaniczay's determination to act. He found hope in the fact that, despite these formidable obstacles, serious activity in Hungarian studies was stirring among determined, dedicated scholars outside Hungary, and that the Hungarian language and literature and subjects related to their study were beginning to attract increasing numbers of academics as fields to which they were ready to commit their energies even though they had only a limited opportunity, if fortunate to have any at all, to teach the subject of their research.

Determined to break ground, Klaniczay, sifting through the options at hand for viable action, went to the heart of the matter: The implementation of the efforts of this growing band of

academics trying to expand knowledge of Hungarian culture abroad. Hungary, he concluded, was unable, in its current circumstances, to contribute to the development of university programs (an initiative to come much later with the establishment of the Hungarian chair at Indiana University by the Academy, in which he played a major role), or to build Hungarian holdings in libraries, or to fund research, but, he believed, steps, however gradual they had to be, could and must be taken to create a formal community of academics engaged in the study of Hungarian language, literature, and ethnography abroad and in Hungary as a forum in which to exchange ideas and share work in progress. His prodigious energy, perseverance, and administrative skill buttressed by the great esteem in which he was held by scholars at home and abroad, he soon began to lay the foundation for the International Association of Hungarian Studies: recruiting like-minded supporters, securing financial backing from the Academy, setting up a competent staff, compiling lists of potential members in various countries, organizing an international working committee to draft a constitution – all this while tending to his many other responsibilities and scholarly pursuits. The achievement of his aim required many years, but his energy, persistence, and persuasiveness produced results. It was, indeed, a moment of celebration experienced by all who had shared this genesis with him when the draft constitution, proposals for two journals, and other matters essential to activating the Association were presented for action at the first session of the Executive Committee, representing seventeen countries, September 18–19, 1977, and again when the Association held its first congress August 10–14, 1981, at the Academy with members from twenty-five countries present.

In the time since those formative years, members of the Association have reaped the benefits of his vision. Once scattered over the world, accustomed to working in isolation, in silence, we have witnessed the development of Hungarian holdings, the growth in financial support, and the increase in the number of those seriously engaged in Hungarian studies abroad, including students. We now know what is transpiring in the areas of our professional interests. And Klaniczay's ultimate aim has been achieved: we are now no longer strangers, names and works now have faces and voices, for we have met, talked, argued, and broken bread together. To him we owe this enrichment of our personal and professional lives, and to him we pledge the perpetuation of his vision.

My last visit with Klaniczay also lives vividly in my memory. I was in Budapest to conclude a project and begin another and to mark the thirtieth anniversary of my first days at the Institute. Since that visit so long ago, the bell had tolled for many of my colleagues at the Institute who had helped me, born of immigrant Hungarian peasants from the Bánát, to find my legs in Hungarian literature. As I summoned them up in the stillness of the night, the litany of their names so tightened my throat that I could not continue them: Gerézdi Rabán, Kemény G. Gábor, Sótér István, Vargha Kálmán, V. Kovács Sándor... I made my pilgrimage to Ménesi út, to the library where I had spent so many days, months on end digging, exploring, discovering, to be surrounded once again by the works of authors who had become such an intimate part of my existence and to sit at that large table I kept piled high with books for annotation. But I went there above all to express my deepest gratitude to Klaniczay for having opened the way for me three decades ago by putting on his desk a copy of every work I had published since then. I did that, but I bade him farewell with an apprehensive heart, fearful that his presence would never grace my life again.

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